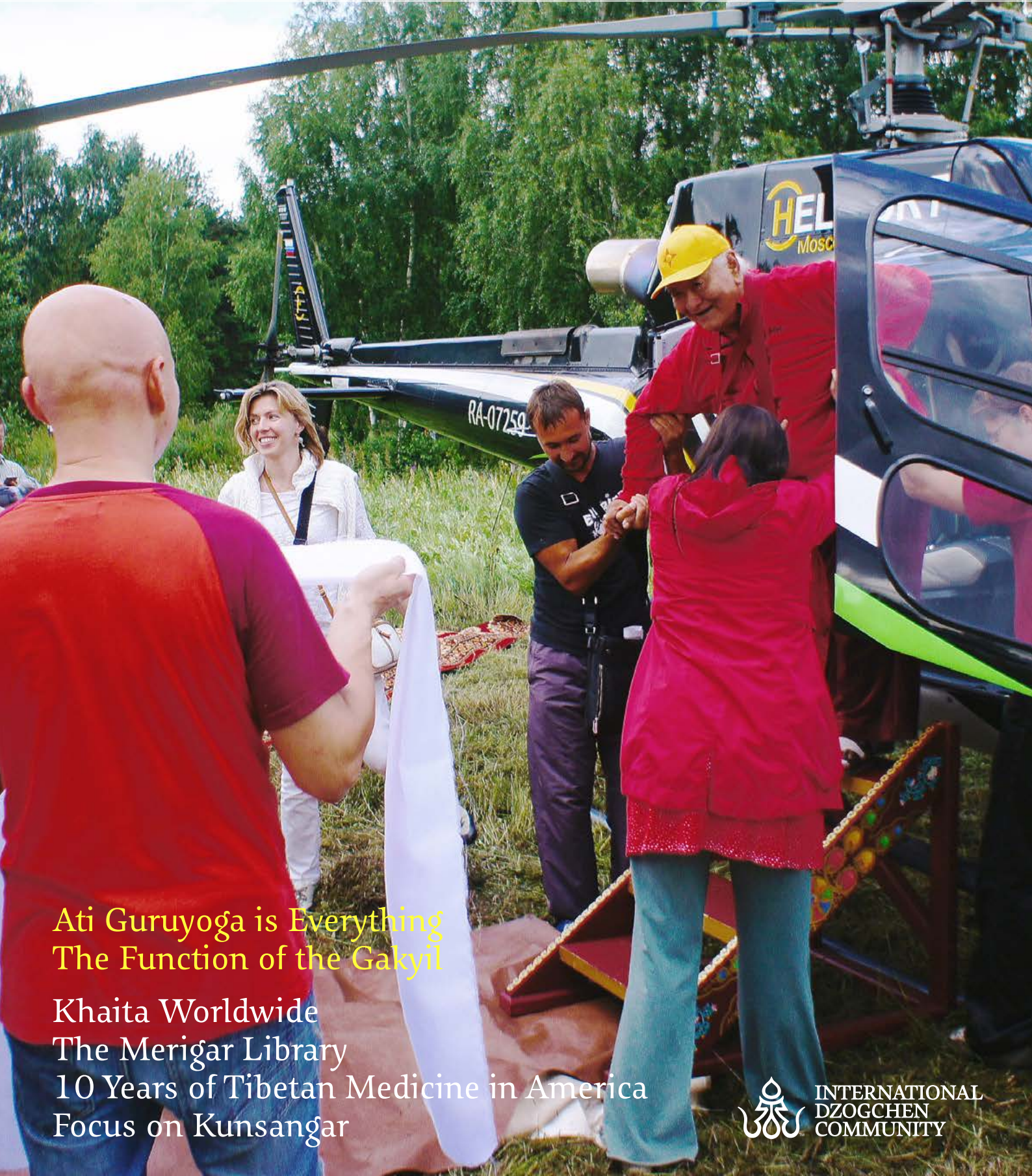


THE MIRROR

No. 129
September 2015



Ati Guruyoga is Everything
The Function of the Gakyil

Khaita Worldwide
The Merigar Library
10 Years of Tibetan Medicine in America
Focus on Kunsangar



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY



Upcoming Events with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Photo: P. Fassoli

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2015

China
Samtengar
October 2–7, 2015
Teaching of Longsal Ati'i Gongpa
Ngötrod

Beijing
October 10–12, 2015
Public Talk and Dharma Art
Exhibition

Japan
Kyoto
October 15–18, 2015
Bardo Teaching Sealed with Hum

Taiwan
October 23–27, 2015
Tregchöd Terma of Rigdzin
Jangchub Dorje

Worldwide Transmission
November 6, 2015
Anniversary of Adzom Drugpa

Australia
Namgyalgar North
November 3–8, 2015
Namgyalgar Retreat

Namgyalgar South
November 13–15, 2015
*The Namgyalgar South retreat
has been cancelled*

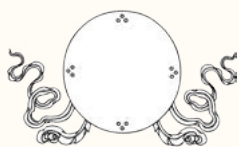
Argentina
Tashigar South
December 4–8, 2015

December 11, 2015
Rinpoche travels to Tenerife, Spain
New Date!

2016

Worldwide Transmission
February 21–22, 2016
Anniversary of Garab Dorje

Front cover: This year the retreat at Kunsangar North, near Moscow, Russia, was attended by a record number of people – more than 1500. In order to save time and energy, instead of waiting in traffic jams on the way from the airport, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived at the Gar by helicopter.



THE MIRROR

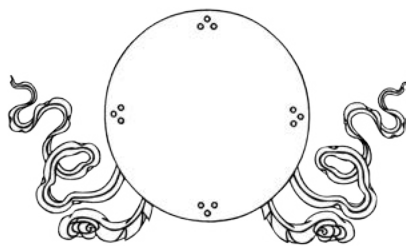
Newspaper of the
International
Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Editorial

Working with Others Finding Balance

Elio Guarisco for The Mirror



Dictionary define collaboration as working with others to do a task and to achieve shared goals. So on one hand we have “working with others” and on the other “the task and to achieve shared goals”.

The precondition here is to have shared goals. But to share something it is not easy. We always feel an intimacy with what we have that does not want to share it with others. We feel that the teacher is “my” teacher, “Oh, he gives special attention to me!” and the teaching is for “my” personal realization. The others seem almost out of the picture.

It is definitively easier and more comfortable to be individualists. But we need to comprehend clearly that even our inner fulfillment or benefit alone does not occur unless we interrelate with others. Others are the field where we train and ripen the fruits of that training. This is an inescapable reality.

Thus we can really have shared goals only if we manage to break through our limited personal objectives.

Having a common goal we work with others to achieve that. Working with others is much more challenging than working alone. When one works alone one is in the dimension of the individual perception of things. And to oneself one’s individual perception of things always appears as the best and the only one possible.

When we try to work with others, we are placed in the arena of other people’s subjective perceptions. What results is a clash between different ideas. Often this clash leads to a lot of misunderstandings and animosity between the people, influencing the quality of the work in a negative way.

So in working with others we need first to step down from the level of personal ideas to the practical plane. The more we deal with something practical, the less our subjective feelings and opinions count. At this point, what counts is experience, expertise, and capacity. If we keep to the practical plane, things flow more smoothly

and faster, and the outcome of our endeavours will be of a better quality.

Of course there will always be differences of opinion between others and us. Countless beings, countless concepts. That is just the nature of how things are. It is the nature of our diversity as human beings and there is nothing wrong in it. In any case, what is important is that these differences of opinion do not stick to our minds as labels. What is important is that we sleep at night and forget them.

Like the following story tells us. Once two monks arrived at the bank of a river. There a pretty girl was trying to cross the water but was too afraid to do so. Monastic rules forbid them to touch women, and even to cross a river with them. Putting aside the rule, one of the monks took the girl in his arms and carried her over to the other side of the river and left her there. As the two monks continued on their road, the other, who had witnessed his fellow monk carrying the girl, reproached the other saying: “You should not have done that! It is prohibited by our rules.” The other monk, who was obviously wiser: “I took that pretty girl across the river and left her there. But you still carry her in your mind!”

Where do we find the inspiration for participation in working with others? Although it is indispensable to remind oneself of the importance of the teacher, and the rarity and preciousness of the teaching, its benefits for future generations etc., etc., that alone in the course of time becomes an empty mantra. In the end, even if we are stimulated by outer circumstances, true inspiration comes from within oneself. And we must find it through our experience of the benefits one has witnessed in oneself by working with that teacher and with that teaching.

If we work with others without seeing through the tricks the mind plays on us, we end up doing things to affirm various egoistic aspects. That kind of collaboration represents the negative connotation of the word collaboration, the one that came into use during the Second World War, “Collaborating with the enemy”. Ironically, however,

people who cannot see their limitations are always the ones who are more eager than others to take on responsibilities. Those who are more focussed on working to see through their limitations are more careful in assuming responsibilities, as the saying goes, “the sage takes few responsibilities”. But to be preoccupied with one’s spiritual development alone, as if practical responsibilities are the domain of short sighted and worldly people, is a great shortcoming.

Thus, we need to find the right balance between an outgoing approach and inward contemplation. If this happens automatically one will enhance the other. But finding balance is an ongoing process and one does not wait until balance comes. One should work with others even though one is not perfectly established in one’s own ground, continuing to observe one’s attitudes and behaviour.

Working with oneself and working with others are thus the ground of participation. On top of that we can apply collaboration as a skill to be developed through various methods as is done nowadays in business. These methods are certainly useful and need to be followed also in running the organizational aspects of a spiritual community. But we should be aware that these methods, which work in business because there is the inspiration to get money, in a community that has a spiritual vision, become dry and do not create inspiration, and if the inspiration is missing there can be an “enforced” but not real collaboration.

To conclude, a first-hand knowledge of the validity and benefit of the teaching is the base for real participation, not only in one’s community but this is needed everywhere. In that case, the impulse to reach an identical objective occurs and is enacted spontaneously. When we don’t have first hand knowledge, but we are interested, by seeing the limitations of sleeping in one’s personal benefit alone, and the inescapable reality that working with others is also the source of one’s fulfillment, we enter the infinite possibilities of collaboration offered by the modern world and technology in order to actualize and preserve the valuable Dzogchen teaching as offered to us by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. This is emphasized in a nutshell by Shantideva: “Working for oneself brings all suffering, working for others brings all happiness.”



Photo by Yulia Mikheykina

Ati Guruyoga is Everything

An excerpt from the Kunzang Monlan, The Invocation of Samantabhadra, Retreat Russia, Kunsangar North, Monday 27 July 2015

In general when we do Guruyoga, it is very important, if there is the possibility, to add the Song of the Vajra because in the Dzogchen tantra it is explained that for practitioners of Dzogchen the base is discovering our real nature. In the Dzogchen teaching this is related to what is called 'direct introduction' in the first statement of Guru Garab Dorje.

There are many ways we receive direct introduction. A very simple way is receiving instruction of Ati Guruyoga when the teacher explains how we should do visualization. This is our mental condition and from this mental condition we arrive at the state of Guruyoga or the state of contemplation. This is how we apply Dzogchen practice.

In Dzogchen practice it is very important to know what mental concept is and what is beyond mind. There are many Dzogchen practices such as Khorde Rushen and different kinds of Semdzin – Rushen means separating mind and the nature of mind, which is the main point – that make us understand that the nature of mind exists and goes beyond mind. We live in time and space, judging and thinking. These are mental concepts. When we discover that there is mind and nature of mind and that Dzogchen practice means going directly from mind to nature of mind, we receive introduction and apply that method. The teacher explains Ati Guruyoga for that purpose. It is a very simple way.

We visualize a white A and a thigle which represents our primordial state, our primordial potentiality, sound, light and rays. This is always a mental concept. The teacher explains, and we think and learn that and prepare how we can get from mind to nature of mind. When we do this visualization, then after a little while we relax. Relaxing doesn't mean we are doing something else or doing it in a different way. If we are doing something there is always a mental concept – it can be visualization, concentration, anything. Relaxing doesn't mean that we are doing nothing. It is just relaxing and this is what we want to learn and develop.

For example, when we learn Dzogchen Upadesha, it explains and speaks very much about the methods of Tregchöd and Thögal. Thögal is a secret teaching because we need to have a very precise base in Tregchöd [before we can learn it]. We can find this explanation in the Upadesha. What does Tregchöd mean? It means total relaxation. 'Treg' means binding an object, such as binding wood or herbs with a cord. In Tibetan if it is wood we say 'shing treg'. 'Shing' means 'wood', 'treg' means 'bound'. So you can understand that 'treg' means 'bound', bound by our limitations, by our concepts. We always think that things should be in a certain way, and not in another. This is intention in our mind and when we live in the relative condition it is as if we are 'bound' by everything in our aspects of body, speech and mind and then we have many tensions.

Chöd means freeing that. There are two different ways to free that: we can free something actively, that is we can take action, because taking action means always with mind. Or we use some methods and [the thing that is bound] breaks apart by itself. This is different from active [breaking]. In Tibetan we use the word 'chöd' [spelled chod] for breaking apart by itself. Nobody is cutting or doing anything. When we say 'chöd' [spelled gcod] it means we are cutting. It is a verb and it means there is someone who cuts. We actively cut through our ego. The root of all problems is ego. We use Machig Labdron's Chöd practice. Chöd means cutting through. We actively cut through our ego because we know that the root of all problems is ego.

We speak about this in Sutra teaching and many people learn about these kinds of words but not in a practical way. Machig Labdron discovered this. When she was young she had this quality of being able to read very quickly. In Tibet when someone has this quality they are invited and asked to read books like the Prajnaparamita, the words of the Buddha, in twelve volumes. They read to the family and the potentiality of the words of the Buddha eliminates negativities. This is a simple way that Tibetan families invite people to read. When there are heavy problems they even try to have all 108 volumes of the Kangyur read. In this case they invite 3 or 4 or 5 good readers who read for many days.

In Tibetan we call this type of person amchös, one who has the capacity to read very quickly. Machig Labdron did this kind of work for many years when she was young and many families invited her to read. In particular she read the Prajnaparamita many times and understood that the root of all problems was ego. She discovered that by herself in the Sutra. Later when she followed Vajrayana teachings, even though they don't explain that directly, she understood that it was connected with that principle. Then she received Dzogchen teaching and in the same way she discovered that that is related.



For example, in Dzogchen teaching we know very well that the problem is our emotions and that what we do is self-liberate them, so it is necessary we should be totally in the state of contemplation to self-liberate everything. This is the method: not acting directly, not cutting through ego, but breaking itself, and then liberating. So the way of presenting the Chöd practice of Machig Labdrön and the Dzogchen way is presented differently although the substance is the same. This is important to discover. The meaning of the words chöd (chod) and chöd (gcod) is the same but the way they work and the pronunciation is different. When we talk about Tregchöd it is about something that is bound, breaks free on its own and liberates. In the Dzogchen Upadesha there is an explanation of the Tregchöd: we liberate all these limitations to aspects of our body speech and mind.

In the instructions of the Upadesha people talk about the Four Chogshag. The main methods of all Dzogchen teachings are always explained as four methods. That is not indispensable, but when the characteristics of the teaching are presented, they are explained in four points. In the Dzogchen Semde, first is Nepa, like the state of shine. The second is called Miyowa, discovering that movement is part of our real nature, not remaining only in a one-pointed way in the state of emptiness but integrating with movement. When we integrate with movement then we discover that problems with movement don't exist: the nature of each element is not contrary to itself, for example, fire doesn't burn fire. When we are integrated then movement is being in the state of contemplation. We should not think that movement is negative.

Then the third state is called Nyamnyid or Nyimed, which means non-dual. Whether we discover our real nature through the experience of emptiness, or through the experience of clarity – clarity is not emptiness, emptiness is not clarity, they are two completely different things – when we are in the state of contemplation this difference doesn't exist. For that reason we say that being only in emptiness is not Dharmakaya and not the state of contemplation. It is only the experience of emptiness. It is the same with the experience of clarity; we are [only] in that state, not the state of contemplation. With this [experience] we discover and are in the state of contemplation. In this moment in that state we discover that there is no difference between emptiness and clarity. We are in what is called Nyimed, the unique state, in contemplation. In the relative condition we say good and bad cannot be together. If we say that good and bad are the same then that means we are in the state of contemplation, we are beyond mind, otherwise it cannot be that way. This is very important to know. This is the third state of the Dzogchen Semde. When we are in that third state then we are 100% in the state of contemplation. We are not in mental concepts thinking that maybe we are [in] the state of contemplation.

The fourth level is called the state of Lhundrub. In the Dzogchen Semde what does the state of Lhundrub mean? It means that now we are 100% sure of having knowledge of being in the state of contemplation. What should we do? What should we develop? What way should we be in our real nature? We should integrate our aspects of body, speech, and mind in that state. When we succeed in being totally in that integration, it means we are totally

realized. Until we have that kind of condition, what we need to apply and do is that.

If we want to do Dzogchen practice, what should we do? We not only chant mantras or do visualizations and so on. We know that we live in dualistic vision and we have many problems to overcome. We do our best, which means we know how our situation is. But when we feel that we are Dzogchen practitioners we should be totally in the state of contemplation, integrated totally in that state.

Number one is being in the state of contemplation next is being present. Being present we can do slowly, integrating everything in the state of contemplation. Already this is being present, not distracted. Even if there is intention and desire we can go beyond that so it becomes easier to integrate. This is more connected with mental concept. Then slowly we can integrate our energy and physical level. This is most important for Dzogchen practitioners. For that reason we need to know that Ati Guruyoga is really very important particularly for Dzogchen practitioners. Ati Guruyoga is everything.

We also know that we live in the relative condition and one day we will die. What can we do [at] the moment of death? If we can, when we know that we are dying we do Ati Guruyoga. This is much better than any kind of Phowa, the practice of transference of consciousness. Even though we do not transfer it, in any case when we die our consciousness is transferred. When we learn Phowa the way of transferring is a little different depending on our condition. In general it is not so difficult to learn Phowa in a more traditional way because when we learn it we do not have the problems of the moment of death. However, at the moment of the bardo of death our condition is not normal: at that moment all our elements and our functions of the senses are dissolving and we have very strong feelings and experiences. When we learn Phowa we do not have these problems, we are healthy and we can learn. When the teacher asks us to do certain visualizations, invocations and then transference and so on, we are always working with our mind. This is called the Phowa of the relative condition or Nirmanakaya.

There are three kinds of Phowa: supreme Phowa is the Phowa of the Dharmakaya, which means we are in our real nature. The second Phowa is Sambhogakaya, which means that throughout life, a practitioner has developed and become very familiar with the development stage and accomplishment stage and can transform instantly, so when they notice that they are dying, they can transfer with whatever practice they have done, such as Kalacakra, Hevajra, Chakrasamvara. They need to have perfect capacity in that moment. It doesn't mean that they only know about that idea. This is also the reason that in Tibet we have many colleges for Vajrayana practitioners, which require seven years of study. It is not so easy.

More important is that when we do Dzogchen practice, we do Ati Guruyoga every day and become familiar with that, then, when we notice that we are dying, we do that. What is dying is our physical body related to the mental aspect. If we are already in a state of contemplation we also have fewer problems. And, of course, if we are really in the state of contemplation, immediately after death we have the state of the bardo of natural mind. There are no obstacles of the physical body at that moment for the manifestation

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of our primordial potentiality. We can recognize that immediately. During our lifetime we received teaching of sound and light and rays, which is our primordial potentiality. Now we recognize that.

During our lifetime we listened [to this teaching] from our teacher but we did not really have contact with that. It is only a kind of idea. But in the state of the bardo of natural light, it is naked and we can discover it. This is called the famous meeting of mother and son wisdom. Son wisdom means that in our lifetime we received teaching and we know that we have that potentiality of sounds and light and rays. Now mother wisdom is in the state of that moment. When we recognize that, immediately we have total realization of the Sambhogakaya. In the Dzogchen teaching having realization in our lifetime means that. It isn't necessary that we have realization of the Great Transference like Guru Padmasambhava or the Rainbow Body. The most important thing is that we are not in the ordinary state of bardo. Before that we already have total realization. This is what we should concentrate on. In this case Ati Guruyoga is very important.

In our lifetime it is also very important to do this practice of Ati Guruyoga in the morning and evening. When we do this practice in the evening, we become familiar with it for our dream practice. If we do that practice in our dreams they become awareness and there is a continuation of this presence and we can also do practice in our dreams. If we become familiar with our dreams, we also become familiar with the state of bardo. Before the ordinary bardo, we have the dharmata, the nature of the mind, the moment of natural light. For example, in dream practice we can understand how the process of death is. Firstly we are in the bardo of the moment of death. At that moment if we are only in mental concepts, we feel afraid and have many problems. But if we have the capacity to be in the state of contemplation, we overcome these problems. Then when we die there is no function of the mind until the state of the bardo. The moment of natural light means that suffering and all functions of the mind do not exist.

When we talk about the bardo, we say the bardo of dharmata, our real nature. We are in that state of our real nature and for that

reason, there are no thoughts, no judgments, because mind is not working. It is the same way when we sleep: we do visualization of the white A and thigle, relax and fall asleep. When we fall asleep there is no function of the mind or the senses. When we fall asleep, we do not see or hear. There is nothing. That is the same as dying. When we are dead there is no function of the mind. But if we have knowledge of the practice of the night, there is the continuation of presence, the same as dying. Then when we are in the bardo of dharmata, the period of natural light, when sound and light and rays manifest nakedly, we recognize that and are in just that state and ordinary bardo no longer exists.

You might ask how we can have total realization in that moment without purifying our infinite negative karma. We have very heavy negative karma. For example, it is said that if we chant the 100 syllable mantra once in a perfect way we can purify the negativities that we have accumulated over 1000 kalpas. We consider this mantra to be very powerful. We could do a retreat of Vajrasattva for a week, for example, and instead of chanting the mantra one time we can chant it a thousand times. When we finish, we observe our condition and see if we feel that our negative karma is lighter or not but it seems just like before even though we have done this powerful practice. That does not mean that Vajrasattva practice is not working but that we have a very heavy accumulation of negative karma. But even though we have this infinite accumulation of negative karma, when we recognize our primordial potentiality, sound and light and rays, in the bardo of dharmata, just this potentiality completely purifies our negative karma. It is like a room that has been in the dark for a thousand years. If we bring a light inside, the dark finishes instantly. We do not need to slowly eliminate the dark. In the same way we can have total realization through the potentiality of the meeting of son and mother wisdom and discovering our real nature. For that reason it is important to do Ati Guruyoga. For that reason I am always asking people to do it. It is very easy and everybody can learn it easily. *

Transcription and editing by Liz Granger

Rinpoche's Commentary Included in New Edition of Nyingma Kama

We are very pleased to announce that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's commentary on the Dzogchen manuscript from Tun Huang, *The Hidden Collection of Buddhagupta (Sbas pa'i rgum chung)*, has been included in volume 102 (NE) of the *Snga' gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, the most comprehensive collection of orally transmitted Nyingmapa teachings.

The collection is a new edition of "the extremely large [collection] of the transmitted texts of the old translation" which

means that it includes those texts and teachings which have been translated and transmitted within the ancient school (*rnying ma*) since the beginning. In other words this includes all those texts which have not been hidden and rediscovered as *termas (gter ma)*.

This canon is not considered to be 'closed' and admits new entries as new editions are prepared. This edition is the most extensive so far and has been produced via digitally input text.

This is certainly recognition of Rinpoche's important role in the history of Tibetan Buddhism for his transmission and exegesis of ancient Dzogchen texts. ©



The Function of the Gakyil

At the Annual General Meeting of the Merigar West Sangha at the Gonpa on August 18, 2015, during the choosing of the gakyil for the coming year, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spoke about the function of the gakyil and gave advice on putting together the new gakyil.

First of all I would like to thank this gakyil for doing a good job. Then there is something important that we should all know when we talk about the Dzogchen Community: it is not only an organization related to our limited society but is fundamentally related to the Dzogchen teaching, otherwise we don't need the Dzogchen Community. In our society we have plenty of different kinds of organizations. We shouldn't forget that. It is fundamental.

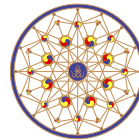
Then we should know what we have to do when we talk about the gakyil. The gakyil is not a tradition. Before the Dzogchen Community existed there was nothing called 'gakyil' anywhere. We created the gakyil in order not to become too much of a social entity. According to the teaching every individual has body voice and mind. When these three aspects are joined, there is a person who functions. In relation to this we set up the gakyil system that would not be bureaucratic or hierarchical. Those who wish to enter the gakyil should know what the principle of the gakyil is and what they should do.

Many people think that when they are gakyil members they 'own' this potentiality, as if they were governing the Dzogchen Community. Those who have that type of idea shouldn't be in the gakyil. When you are in the gakyil you shouldn't create any type of personal position otherwise you cannot be in the gakyil. Everyone should remember this. We have to continue like this as long as the Dzogchen Community exists.

When there is no Dzogchen Community then we won't need a gakyil. We can live quietly in our society. But since we live in a limited society, in a country with its system, even though we are Dzogchen practitioners, we have to relate to this in order to deal with it. This is something I always tell you.

Every now and then we do some kind of voting [to elect the gakyil members]. This type of limited system is fine in our society, but if we go to the meaning of the teaching, this is not the principle. Many people vote without knowing anything, simply based on whether or not they like someone, for example. How can it correspond? Before you put up your hands [to vote], you should think a little. We should observe ourselves and do our best. I cannot judge [the candidates]. I'm a Dzogchen teacher but I'm not the boss of the organizers. The organization should do what it needs to do, working with and understanding the circumstances. You have to understand how to create this new gakyil so try to do your best.

It is very important that people really collaborate with the gakyil. If someone joins the gakyil and creates trouble and makes problems, we don't want this. As I said before if someone wants to put their personality and their ideas into their position on the gakyil, that is not fine. If a person is ready to work, to collaborate, create something and do something positive for the Community, we need this. So it is very easy to choose people [for the gakyil]. ✱



Communication – the Big Picture

The main themes for this year for the IG are still the alignment of Statutes of Gars and Lings, and the implementation and development of the membership management system.

Other fundamental work is also being done, and in particular we are in the process of a thorough review of how and what

we communicate, both internally with our own members, and externally to the world at large.

This includes discussion and decisions about the infrastructure of our web presence, needing a central hub while also respecting the distributed nature of our Community and its diversity of activities. The Management Systems Committee of the International Gakyil has produced a comprehensive report whose results are the basis for IG policy decisions which will soon be made available.

That is part of the 'how' – there is also the 'what'. Efforts have been made over the years to produce standard materials for communicating about, for example, Rinpoche's biography, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and so on. We should recognise that there may need to be different approaches for the general public, compared with what we can say to our own members. There is also a need for translators in the main language groups, who are also qualified in conveying the real sense of the teachings in their language. So much is already being done in so many of these areas, but what is still needed is overall coordination, a framework for collaboration – and this is what the IG hopes to provide, once again with guidance (at a professional level but

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A New Exciting Development for Khaita Worldwide

Dear all in the Dzogchen Community, We are pleased to announce that, following the indications of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, starting from September 2015, the Shang Shung Foundation – International Institute for Tibetan Culture – will be in charge for the coordination of all the worldwide activities related to Khaita Joyful Dances.

Rinpoche's decision aims to further deepen and foster the practice of Khaita dances and the public diffusion and appreciation of modern Tibetan dances and songs, under the umbrella of an institution, like the Foundation, whose specific mission is to support the continuity and development of the Tibetan culture and its contribution to the contemporary world.

The program will entail the management, implementation and coordination of all the aspects related to Khaita: artistic production, media production and communication, public diffusion, didactics and certifications, publications, human resources, collaborative tools and finances.



All the different projects will be supported by a dedicated organizational structure within the Foundation, to ensure that all aspects are handled with competence and with a coordinated and collaborative approach.

Adriana Dal Borgo will support the general coordination of all Khaita related activities working in extensive consultation with Rinpoche, the staff of the Foundation and all people involved in the program.

In the same way, choreographers, dancers, instructors and those supporting the technical requirements of the program

(websites, audio and video production, fundraising, etc.) will work with the Foundation to continue and develop the great work already started.

All the activities and resources are coordinated by the Shang Shung Foundation in collaboration with the Gars and Lings of the International Dzogchen Community and all its members.

Anyone, gar, ling or individual, wishing to launch events, workshops, courses or other activities related to Khaita or to simply request information, can contact the Foundation emailing khaita@shangshungfoundation.org.

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» *IG continued from previous page* without payment) from a member of the Management Systems Committee.

Internal communication

The International Gakyil also has a role in supporting the Gakyils of the Gars and Lings, sometimes with very challenging circumstances. Strong, open channels of communication are vital for this role to be effective.

It is very clear that it is not our job to 'govern' the Community. The Gakyils of Lings, Gars and IDC are all on an equal footing, only with different roles and responsibilities; the particular function of the IG in this context is to be a central hub which holds together the different elements of

our community, preventing isolation and fragmentation, and working to preserve the unique way of functioning that is a Gakyil. For that reason also, the flow of information and communication from the Gakyils to the IG is very important, as well as from IG to other Gakyils, and it is very important that if there need to be elements of confidentiality on some issue, the IG can be considered to be within the circle of confidentiality of any other Gakyil.

Gakyil members and office bearers should never feel that they carry burdens of responsibility in isolation - they are merely representatives of the whole membership. Transparency and communication with its members (as well as with the IG) are of paramount importance. In-

forming members of critical information is not the same as making things public - it is in effect the same as informing oneself. Sometimes it is important to communicate as much as possible while not disclosing some sensitive or personal information - but such cases are actually quite rare. When members in good standing request more detailed information, this should be given to them as much as possible.

Greater communication naturally leads to increased collaboration, so is a fundamental basis for a healthy and prosperous International Dzogchen Community!

And on that note, here again is the address to contact the IG:

blue@dzogchen.net



The Foundation will assist in:

- The selection of instructors and/or performers
- Providing guidelines for the preparation of the course and/or event programme
- The coordination of the activities with the educational and artistic direction and committees
- The creation and maintenance of the budget
- The preparation of promotional materials
- Providing guidelines for Communication and launch

Certified Instructors

The instructors authorized to teach Khaita courses will be certified by the Shang Shung Foundation. The Foundation is currently working steadily for the preparation of the diplomas, and the establishment, under Rinpoche's direction, of guidelines and curricula for the certification of instructors and their financial retribution. These will be announced as soon as defined, together with the first list of certified instructors.

Support Us

Your professional help in developing Khaita is very much needed! If you wish to offer your volunteer collaboration in the following roles:

- Video Maker, Editor, Producer
- Audio Editor, Producer
- Web Developer, Admin, Marketing, SEO

Contact:

khaita@shangshungfoundation.org

Diffusion and Communication Channels

While we are working with our Web Production Committee to launch the new web page of the Foundation, which will also host the Khaita program, these are the official resources to be used to gain information about the current activities and resources.

Website: <http://khaita.me/>

Youtube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/HarmonyInTheSpace/featured>

Social: <http://www.facebook.com/harmonyinthospace> ©



The traditional Tibetan Pecha format.

All Photos by Magda Zych

An Inexhaustible Treasure of Knowledge

Restructuring, reorganizing and cataloging the Merigar library (Zikhang Library)

Many of you may have been to see us during the summer and the various retreats held at Merigar and discovered the library and the treasures that are kept here – from the works of Changchub Dorje, that we finished scanning in 2013, to the publications of Shang Shung Institute, from thousands of texts in Tibetan, collected mainly by the Master, to the many thousands of works in Western languages that cover teaching, art, medicine, language, history and all other aspects of Tibetan culture. Many of you have asked to visit the library and its treasures, looked with devotion at the works of the Master and of Changchub Dorje and deepened your knowledge regarding traditional Tibetan texts, the language and the different types of writing. Many people have stopped to read, study, and broaden their knowledge of specific aspects of the teaching and Tibetan culture. Each of you has certainly had this experience among their memories of Merigar. Now the library is open!

The library was originally created from the need to preserve the texts that the Master brought with him from Tibet and the works that gradually became necessary for his studies. Hence what was and is essentially the personal library of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is now accessible to scholars, practitioners, and also to those who

are simply interested in some aspect of Tibetan culture. There are not many libraries like this in Italy and even in the world so it was only fitting that this treasure was developed and made available.

The skillful renovation work of 2012 brought about larger rooms that were comfortable and pleasant. The reading room is decorated in Tibetan style and overlooked by a statue of a contemplative Guru Rinpoche, while the new surrounding shelves display works that deal with different aspects of Tibetan culture in various Western languages organized by topic and available for consultation.

For the section of texts in Western languages the main idea was to order the texts according to the Five Traditional Tibetan Sciences (*rig gnas lnga*): the first part focuses on the Dharma, the teachings, in turn divided into Sutra (Hinayana and Mahayana), Tantra and Dzogchen and then into different Tibetan schools (Bon, Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Gelugpa etc) with a section on biographies. The second section is on Tibetan language and grammar, followed by a section on medicine and the arts (visual arts, music, dance etc) and a small collection of texts on Logic. In addition to these five sections divided according to the five sciences, we have a section on places of pilgrimage, and a shelf dedicated to India, Nepal and Mongolia. There are also sections that contain scholarly works (such as a large collection of East and West magazines and other publications from ISIAO / ISMEO in addition to Tibet Journal) and one with the works of authors of the Dzogchen Community. Sections on Chinese Buddhism, Zen and China in general will be exhibited later in new shelves.

» continued on the following page



The reading room.



Different translations (English, Italian, French, German, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Russian and Greek).

From the reading room you go up a wooden staircase to an area overlooking the reading room which houses manuscripts and texts of the Master (many of which have already been scanned) and his works published in Tibetan. There are also texts published from the early years of the Dzogchen Community and by Shang Shung Publications, with areas dedicated to their translation into different languages (English, Italian, French, German, Spanish, as

generally consist of unbound sheets that are rectangular and read horizontally. The page is changed by turning the sheet on the upper horizontal pivot (which means that the back of the sheet has to be upside down in relation to the front). Since they are not bound these texts are wrapped in squares of cloth (*dpe ras*) with cloth strings that guarantee the compactness of the text and its preservation. In our library, many of these fabrics have been brought directly

logged, wrapped in the fabrics that had been gradually cleaned and provided with highly descriptive labels. The more than two thousand books were divided according to the school to which they belonged with appropriate sub-categories (authors, genre etc), Dharma history and biographies (*chos' byung* and *rnam thar*), history and law (*lo rgyus* and *khriims yig*), places and local deities (*gnas yig*, *gnas bdag*), the Epic of Gesar, Medicine (*gso rig*), Astrology (*rtsis*), Gram-



well as Polish, Czech, Russian and Greek).

The upper floor continues into the area of Tibetan texts, which houses the main collections of the various traditions of the Land of Snows, such as the Bon and the Buddhist canons, the Tantras of the Ancient School, the fundamental texts of Dzogchen, the complete works of Longchenpa, of Adzom Drugpa, of Shabkar, and of Lopon Tendzin Namdak as well as a section with the manuscripts of Changchub Dorje and those of the Master. The sub-division here has firstly taken into consideration the size of the texts. More than 2,000 works are in traditional Tibetan format (*dpe cha*), namely woodblock prints or manuscripts, or copies of them made on paper made from different organic materials depending on the location and time of production. These texts

from Tibet or from the areas of the diaspora, in India; others were produced locally.

In addition to the texts in traditional format we have a good collection of works bound in Western format, called *deb* in Tibetan. This section is further divided into the texts of large size, that is bound copies of texts in traditional format in which one or more sheets are reproduced on each page, and bound Tibetan texts in digital format.

All this patrimony has been in the phase of being reorganized and cataloged from the summer of 2012.

The cataloging started with the Tibetan texts. The texts in the traditional format (*dpe cha*) were 'stripped' of the fabric in which they were wrapped, then studied, and placed according to the school of origin and content. They were then cata-

loged, wrapped in the fabrics that had been gradually cleaned and provided with highly descriptive labels. The more than two thousand books were divided according to the school to which they belonged with appropriate sub-categories (authors, genre etc), Dharma history and biographies (*chos' byung* and *rnam thar*), history and law (*lo rgyus* and *khriims yig*), places and local deities (*gnas yig*, *gnas bdag*), the Epic of Gesar, Medicine (*gso rig*), Astrology (*rtsis*), Gram-

mar (*sgra rig*), Art and Architecture (*bzo rig*), and Logic (*tshad ma*). The use of fabrics of different color now makes it clearly visible where a work (which may be composed of several volumes) finishes, while the color of the label changes depending upon the topic. The cataloging of texts in traditional Tibetan format (*dpe cha*) was completed in August of 2014. Some months were then devoted to cataloging and photographic documentation of the original manuscripts. Besides the works of Changchub Dorje and those of the Master another 39 manuscripts (plus handwritten notes contained in eight texts of woodblock prints) whose dating and origin is still under study are kept in the Zikhang library. Most of these works con-



Margherita Pansa.

10 Years of Tibetan Medicine in America!

Naomi Zeitz for The Mirror
Assistance from Jacqueline Gens and the
Tsegyalgar East Blog at
<http://tsegyalgar.blogspot.com>

Around fifty plus happy participants were seen at the Gonpa of the Yellow Schoolhouse at Tsegyalgar East on Sunday, September 21, 2015, gathered for the joyful celebration of the 10th anniversary of Shang Shung Institute's School of Tibetan Medicine, directed by Dr. (Menpa) Phuntsog Wangmo.

Participants included Dr. (Menpa) Wangmo, several active and former Board members of the Shang Shung Institute, the Conway Town Administrator Tom Hutcheson, six Tibetan Doctors who had just completed their Ku Nye training and received their diplomas: Doctors (Menpas) Jigmey Sonam Yhesur, Nyima Youdon Namseling, Sang-jieban, Tsepak Tsepak, Tsering Youdon, and Wangdu (see photo), alumni and current students of the Ku Nye and Medical Program, members of the American Tibetan Medical Association Board, members of the Dzogchen Community and local friends from Conway and the surrounding towns.

The celebration formally began with welcoming presentations, starting with an opening introduction by the eloquent treasurer and eternal Shang Shung Institute Board member Will Shea, where he compared the evolution of the Medical School



Main presenters from left to right: Menpa Karen Prestwood, Conway Town Administrator Tom Hutcheson, Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo, Will Shea, Menpa Anasuya Weil, Drew McGlathery.
Photo by N. Zeitz

to the story of David and Goliath, with David being the Medical Program and Goliath the seemingly insurmountable challenges along the way. The first presenter was Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo, who spoke of the history of the program, the plans for the future, which include a three-year advanced degree program approved by the state, an expanded programming at the undergraduate level and the achievements of the students and graduates. Menpa Wangmo expressed her gratitude and dedication to the founder of Shang Shung Institute, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Menpa Wangmo poetically encouraged the students to "dive into the deep ocean of wisdom of Tibetan Medicine" and said that even though the student body was not enormous, the quality was exceptional. Following Menpa Wangmo, Tom Hutcheson, the Conway Town Administrator, spoke of the value of the Institute and the community for the town of Conway, and that

even though not many people in the town may be consciously aware of the activities in the Schoolhouse, on some subtle level the healing effect was felt. Then Drew McGlathery, a psychiatric nurse practitioner currently living in NYC, enrolled in the four-year online program and a student liaison to the Shang Shung Institute Board, gave a compelling account of how he came to recognize the efficacy of Tibetan Medicine through a dramatic healing of his sister from a heavy cancer. Dr (Menpa) Anasuya Weil, alumna and active member of the Shang Shung Institute Board, spoke about the importance and value of Tibetan Medicine and the need for more awareness and education as to its value. At the last moment, Dr (Menpa) Karen Prestwood arrived after treating patients all-day and landed on her feet to speak as an allopathic physician of thirty years and a graduate of the Tibetan Medical School. She spoke

» continued on the following page

» *Merigar Library* continued from previous page consists of copies (namely reproductions for the purpose of preservation) produced by more or less experienced copyists. Among the manuscripts are mostly texts from the Bon and the Nyingma traditions (among the most valuable works there is a volume containing the works from the terma of Longsal Nyingpo named *Ye shes rab 'bar* and another containing texts on the Zhikro) on medicine, astrology, and more. Some of them contain miniatures, others have special seals or affixing fingerprints.

At the moment we are proceeding with the cataloging of the bound Tibetan texts. At the end of August 2015 we have a total of 3195 volumes!

In the catalogue only the texts of the Tibetan section are available at present.

Expanding on the previous inventory, in addition to the title, the author's name and the number of pages, the new catalogue is enhanced with reference to the codes assigned to the same work by the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (TBRC), the largest online library of Tibetan texts, and by the Library of Congress. This makes it possible to search through the catalogue also using a single code used by the TBRC and the Library of Congress. It also generally provides a brief description of the content and keywords; where necessary the table of contents (*dkar chag*) has also been entered. You can request partial scans of the texts by contacting the librarian, Margherita Pansa m.pansa@shangshunginstitute.org, who can also guide you in visiting the library and library research.

The library is open and everyone can come to visit and see the texts. There is also a loan service for most of the texts on display in the reading room for those staying longer. So if you are at Merigar, resident or passing through, come visit us!

To view the catalogue (for now only the texts in the Tibetan section are available in the catalogue):

<http://opac.libraryworld.com>
libraryname = SSI ZIKHANG LIBRARY
no password required

To contact the library staff: library@shangshungfoundation.org

Join our work and support the cataloguing and accessibility of the Zikhang Library. Make a donation today using the following link: <http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/content/14-green-donation>



Menpa Wangmo with current students, alumni, faculty, Ku Nye graduates and friends.

Photo by N. Zeitz

» *Tibetan Medicine* continued from previous page about how her understanding and practice of Tibetan Medicine impacts her work as a western physician and expressed her deep gratitude to Menpa Wangmo and the Institute for the existence of this valuable education and training. In closing, Menpa Anasuya Weil read a celebratory letter from Dr. (Menpa) Yangdron Kelzang, a long time friend and colleague of Menpa Wangmo's and a member of the ATMA Board.

After the presentations, diplomas were given to the six Tibetan doctors who had completed training in Ku Nye and had also spent the weekend at the Schoolhouse studying Business Ethics with Janice Luzzi.

Once the diplomas were in hand, a photo session ensued of instructors, students and alumni. And then, of course, the long awaited sumptuous feast of delicious momos and other delights was blissfully devoured. After food, the room was filled with Tibet-

itage of providing *dewa* through Tibetan Medicine is protected and continues to flourish. Through the Dewa Fund, you can support the continuing instruction of Tibetan Medicine, the development of the professional field, and the strategic growth of the School. We are asking all who value this ancient treasure to please join us and contribute to support Tibetan Medicine. Give the gift of long life and safeguard Tibetan Medicine by donating to the Dewa Fund.

To donate: www.shangshung.org/home/support/dewa-fund ©

The Dewa Fund

The Dewa Fund is a newly organized Fund of the Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine. The Tibetan word *dewa* means Happiness, Bliss or Comfort, and the name of the Fund reflects the function of Tibetan Medicine, to help people enjoy longer and healthier lives so that they can benefit their families, communities, and the larger world.

As we look to the future we ask for your help to ensure that the rich cultural her-

an songs and people participated in some Khaita dancing. The celebration ended with the final dance of the Dzamling Gar Song and as the notes of this lovely song drifted through space, the wonderful and satisfying evening came to a sweet end.

Many thanks to the hard work and collaboration of Caroline Hotaling and Bret Bourman, the administrative directors of the SSI-USA and the Tibetan Medicine School respectively, as well as many others too numerous to name. Bret is also currently enrolled in the Medical School and the person responsible for filming, editing and uploading the on line programs.

10 Year Chronology of the Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine

2005

Licensed by the state government as a Private Occupational School in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

First four-year on site Tibetan medicine program of the Shang Shung Institute of America began in Conway, Massachusetts, as approved by the State Department of Education.

2009

SSI STM students were able to participate in an internship at Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) Provincial Tibetan Medical Hospital, China. The Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) University Tibetan Medical College is located in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

First class graduated from the SSI School of Tibetan Medicine's Four-Year TM Program.

2011

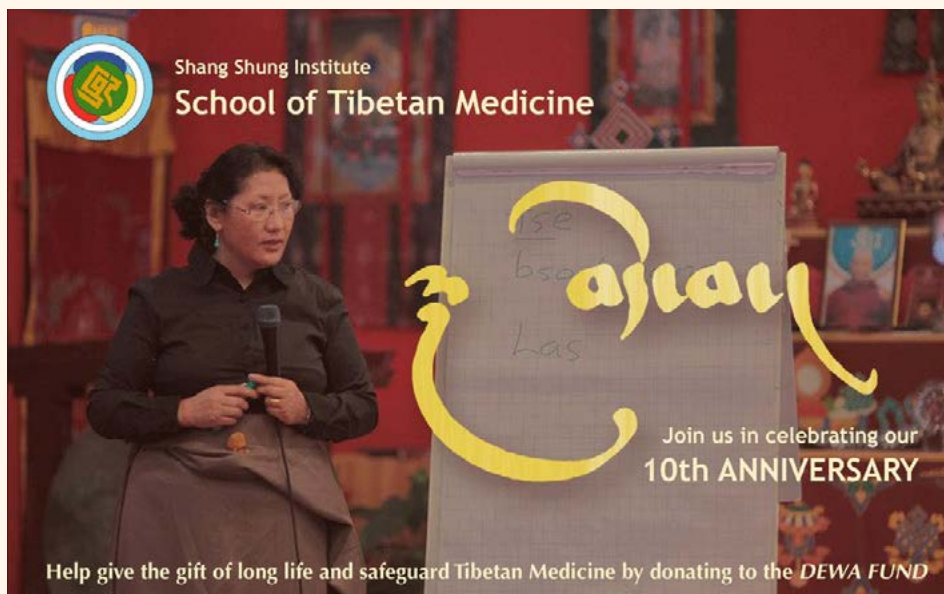
SSI STM established the first Ku Nye Therapy Certification Program. This program grants licensure in external massage therapy.

2012

Serious interest in Tibetan Medicine arose in Italy, Mexico, Australia, Russia and Spain, and Dr. Wangmo was appointed International Director of the SSI School of Tibetan Medicine. Enrollment opened in Ku Nye Therapy Certification Program.

2013

First class graduated from SSI STM Ku Nye Therapy Certification Program.



Journey to Dongche School

Roberta Marranca, in charge of ASIA Long Distance Sponsorships, visits Dongche school, the first school built by ASIA in Tibet, opened in 1997 in the presence of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



Sponsorship project at school. Even here, their welcome is really moving; you can see in these people's eyes and actions how deeply grateful they are to ASIA... and I am so proud to be part of it. We go straight to the Headmaster's office, where the usual meeting takes place...

Read more on <http://www.adoptibet.org/wp/en/my-travel-journey-dongche/> ©

After driving for just less than 150 km south-west of Hainan, we reach Guide, the main town of Guide County. Here we find beautiful flowery trees and green barley fields. The local population is mainly sedentary – in fact, one can find many farmers here. The landscape is so different from the wide pale grazing lands of Gonghe County that I can't help asking Jimpa, our beloved driver, to stop as soon as we cross one of the bridges over the majestic Yellow River. Today is Wednesday

15 April, and the sun is unexpectedly hot: even here, at an altitude of around 3,000 meters, spring has already arrived.

We leave our backpacks in our hotel rooms, and head to Dongche Primary School – the first school that ASIA built in 1997, near a tiny farmers' village about 10 km from Guide. The first thing I notice is how beautiful the school actually looks, with its traditional architectural design. We are welcomed by three teachers and by Ringzin, the Headmaster and also the teacher in charge of the Long-Distance

ASIA Branches

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Förderverein ASIA Deutschland e.V.
c/o Gisela Auspurg
Königswieser Str. 2, 82131 Gauting
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» *Chronology continued from previous page*

SSI STM began a Four-Year TM hybrid program combining on-line & on-site learning to serve its burgeoning community of domestic and international distance learners.

2014

SSI & SSI STM cosponsored a groundbreaking international event, the Tibetan Medicine Conference: Ancient Medicine for Modern Life: Tibetan Solutions for Stress Management, Chronic Illness and Mental

Health, held at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art, New York.

2015

State department approves SSI STM Three-Year Advanced Tibetan Medicine Program; the first three-year graduate program outside of the Himalayan region.

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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Shang Shung Institute UK
The London School of Tibetan Studies
The London Centre for the Study of Traditional Tibetan Culture and Knowledge
10a Chalcot Gardens, London, NW3 4YB
www.shangshunguk.org

Future

Looking ahead, Dr. Wangmo and the entire team at the Shang Shung Institute's School of Tibetan Medicine are working closely with ATMA and other partners to continue to expand the field of Tibetan Medicine in the U.S., including opportunities for accreditation and licensure that exist in the U.S. for both western and immigrant *sMan pa*. As always, the support of the Community is crucial to the preservation of Tibetan culture – of which Tibetan Medicine is at the heart – and to the success of the Shang Shung Institute. ©

Dzamling Gar Update

A Report from the Project's Engineer, Giovanni Boni

The Gonpa

In July we had a workshop to study how to design the roof of the Gonpa at Dzamling Gar. Originally we had started with the idea to have the roof in the shape of a shell, then we worked on an elliptical design laying on a kind of web of wooden beams. However, with the last presentation that we made, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu asked us to do a more in-depth study of how to make the roof covering of the Hall.

The workshop was held at architect Benedetta Tagliabue's studio in Barcelona, Spain, inviting various architects to work on four or five new proposals for the roof. At the moment we are looking at these proposals with the Master in order to choose the best one, after which we will draw up the final detailed project for the



A model of the upper area of Dzamling Gar showing the area where the Gonpa and the Centre will be built.

done the Gonpa will be built on the terrace. When the upper part has been completed, then we will work on the area that is below the terrace. This last work will take longer because there are different floors below the terrace. So we are working on the main project in this way. The final project will be ready at the end of the year, then next year we will work on the structural part and then go ahead according to the amount of funds we have coming in.

Our Master is really dedicating himself

used right away. They will be ready to be furnished, to be connected to the water, electricity systems etc., and to be reached by road. Then we will have to apply for a certificate of use and occupancy from the Municipality which they will only give if the house can be accessed from outside the area of construction. This means that all the work has to be finished before we apply for this certificate because they come and check before giving it.

Houses 8 and 9 which are towards the back of the Gar on the left are close to and accessible from the street that runs along the side of the Gar where, at the moment, there is the entrance for the construction site. In order to be certified for use, they will have to have their own access that does not go through the construction area. In addition, in order to create this separate access for the two houses, first of all the project for access to the Centre and the Gonpa must be clarified so that access to the houses does not have to be redone once the Centre is in use. In other words, it is a fairly complicated situation.

Then there are the other houses for the Gars which are linked to the lower part of the Gar and can be reached from below via the existing road that enters the Gar from the main road at the side of the tent. This road passes by the Dzamling Gar house, continues past the Master's house where there will be a parking area, and then proceeds to the various houses of the Gars. Obviously there will not be enough space for cars to park within the Gar so they will have to remain outside. If they need to deliver material, once they have done this, they will have to park outside. The main entrance to the Gar is only for pedestrians. The idea is that the Gar will be accessed from below and comes together as you go towards the upper part.



Participants in the workshop held at Miralles Tagliabue EMBT in Barcelona.

design that is chosen. At the moment, the project is still in the phase of being studied. There are several proposals and we may take parts from different projects and put them together, but at the moment we have not decided. It is still a work in progress. We are planning to have the final project for the Gonpa ready at the end of this year because we would like to start work on it in 2016.

The work on the Gonpa will be done in two parts as we have said before. First of all there will be a structural work done in the central part of the area where, at the moment, there is no existing structure. This first stage will also include making a large terrace on top of the structure. Once this is

to raising funds for the Gonpa with his Evolution Creations. Just the other day before leaving for Bhutan, he worked up to midnight in order to have some pieces ready to send to Dzamling Gar for the auctions.

The Houses

We have been working on the houses for some time now, not only those of the Gars but also houses 8 and 9. House 8 is to accommodate doctors and health workers and house 9 is for those in need of healing and care. Work is going ahead on these two houses and we expect that they will be ready by the end of the year.

Although these two houses should be finished, it doesn't mean that they can be

All the six houses for the Gars should be finished by April 2016 while at the beginning of the year, some of them may be more ahead of others. For example, the first three that we are working on, houses 10 (Merigar), 11 (Kunsangar) and 12 (Tashigar) will be finished by the end of this year. However, this doesn't mean that they can be used. Since phases 2 and 3 of the project include the eight houses (6 for the Gars and houses 8 and 9) and the swimming pool, we can only ask for the certification of use and occupancy for phases 2 and 3 when we have finished the work of phases 2 and 3, that is to say when all the houses have been finished. So most probably people will not be able to use the apartments until the summer of 2016, even though they may be finished earlier. Or they might be able to use them in the same way that we have been using other houses at the Gar (Rinpoche's house and the Dzamling Gar house which are part of phase 1 of the project) for the last year while waiting for certification. We will be receiving this certification now.



Fundraising

We have sent all this information out to the Gars which are doing their best to collect funds for the project. Some of the Gars such as Tsegyalgar East have sent proposals for raising money. It is important for the Gars to understand that money spent on their individual houses can be considered like an investment because with the renting of the apartments, that amount will come back to the Gars quite quickly, especially because the rental rates around the Gar are increasing year by year.

Management of apartments

There is also another factor that has not been established yet – organizing a single centre that would manage the apartments in all the houses at the Gar. A centre where people can come to make reservations for the apartments and can find out which apartments are free and which are not, for all the different houses. This means that if there is no space at a particular Gar house, space may be available in another house. We are working on some common internal regulations for managing the houses and the communal areas and will be sending copies to the Gars and those using the houses.

August 29, 2015



Inauguration of the Cinerarium at Merigar West

Below the octagonal Temple of the Great Contemplation situated on a hilltop at Merigar West in Tuscany lies the newly constructed cinerarium, the first to be built in the Dzogchen Community to house the ashes of practitioners. Similar in form to the Temple, over the last few months, this smaller replica has been minutely ornamented internally with three different *tagdrol* mandalas that give liberation through different types of contact, including seeing, as well as eight panels with the *tigles* of the six Lokas.

The exterior of the building has recently been decorated with the mantra of Simhamukha depicted in vermilion red in elegant Ranjana script on each of the walls creat-

ing a chain of fire. Between the mantras there are colorful flower decorations and below benevolent mythological animal offering jewels (*norbu*).

On Saturday August 15, 2015, on the third day of the retreat on 'The Bardo Instructions Sealed with the HUM' (*Bar do'i gdams pa hum gi rgya can*) after the morning session of teachings, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu officially opened the cinerarium with a short ritual and a practice of Ati Guruyoga together with many of his students gathered there. The ashes of several practitioners were placed in niches there during the event.

There are plans to create a pleasant garden around the building in the future. Funds are still needed for this project and we warmly invite readers to donate to the project. To find out more information on the cinerarium and the regulations for placing ashes of the deceased there, please see the following link:

<http://www.dzogchen.it/il-cinerario/>

Regulations on the Use of the Cinerarium

Introduction

The Merigar West Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzog Chen, on the recommendation of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, has initiated the building of a CINERARIUM, a building to house the cremated remains of members of the Community.

I – Conditions for Access

In order to have access to the cinerarium a member should have followed and fulfilled some practical indications when he/she was still alive and of sound mind.

1. The member must have been registered with the Associazione Culturale Comu-

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

nità Dzog Chen or the International Dzogchen Community, at any of the centers, Gars and/or Lings of the International Dzogchen Community.

2. The member must have followed at least one of the Master's retreats.
3. The member must have declared or left instructions in their will asking the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen and/or the International Dzogchen Community to accept their cremated remains in the Columbarium.
4. The member must contribute to the costs of construction and/or maintenance of the Columbarium in one of the following forms:

- by having made a donation of at least € 500.00;
- alternatively, the legal heirs can make the above donation;
- by having left a bequest or having appointed the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen as their heir, subject to the rights of the "legitimate heirs" to the inheritance, for an amount equal to or greater than € 500.00. The accompanying notes give more information about this.

II – Specifications for Access

The cremated remains must be contained in appropriate urns, of types and characteristics conforming to Italian legislation (http://www.governo.it/Presidenza/USRI/confessioni/norme/legge_130_2001.pdf) or the country of origin.

The specific form of the urn is not specified.

As per current legislation, the urn must have a plaque bearing the name and dates of birth and death of the member.

Transport to the cinerarium of the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen at Merigar West will be the responsibility of the legal heirs or those who have been

appointed by the member as will the expenses involved.

The Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen at Merigar West will accept delivery of the urn at the cinerarium.

III – Obligations of the Dzogchen Community

The Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen at Merigar West will keep a special registry of the urns stored in the cinerarium.

It will provide for their maintenance and material care.

It will periodically activate and perform special rituals of the Dzogchen Community as directed by Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

IV – Decisions of the Dzogchen Community

The Gakyil of the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen at Merigar West reserves the right to decide on the acceptance or not of cremated remains, according to various factors, for example, satisfaction of the above conditions for access, problems arising with the legitimate heirs, availability of adequate space, etc..

A. C. C. D. at Merigar West, Arcidosso, February 11, 2013

Notes on the Last Will and Testament

The decision of the member to ask the Community to accept their cremated remains at the cinerarium must be formalized in the form that current Italian legislation allows.

The Merigar cinerarium is intended as a final destination for urns containing ashes. It is not the responsibility of the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen at Merigar West to cremate or to transport the urn to the cinerarium.

The member is required to make a will, which can be public, in the presence of two witnesses (neither relatives nor beneficiaries of the will), or a holographic will, that is issued, dated and signed (with name and surname) entirely by the member in his/her own handwriting on a simple sheet of paper. In the case of holographic will it is advisable to file the original of the will with a notary, while retaining a copy.

Depositing the will with a notary may be a safer way to protect the wishes of the member. ©

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Traveling the World



July 1–5, Tsegyalgar East, Massachusetts, USA

A rainbow appeared the morning of Rinpoche's arrival at his home over the barn at Lower Khandroling in Buckland, Massachusetts, while practitioners were preparing a Khaita dance to welcome him. There was a five-day retreat at the Mohawk High School in Shelburne Falls from July 1–5 entitled The Twenty-Five Spaces of Samantabhadra attended by three hundred people.

Photo by Sean Quinn

July 10–12, Naropa University, Colorado, USA

It was extraordinarily fitting and auspicious that the teachings in Colorado in July 2015 by our teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, began with a retreat at Naropa University, and resulted in the creation of a new Dzogchen Community of Colorado. The retreat was prefaced by a meeting between Rinpoche and the President and other important officials of Naropa University, and a public talk on "The Three Vehicles: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen" in the evening that the same officials attended. The topic of the retreat sessions was Ati Dzogchen. In the photo we see Rinpoche with Naropa officials at a pre public talk tea, from left to right: Charlotte Rotterdam, John Weber, Judith Simmer-Brown, Chuck Lief, President of Naropa University and Tom Hast.

Photo by Richard Eagleton



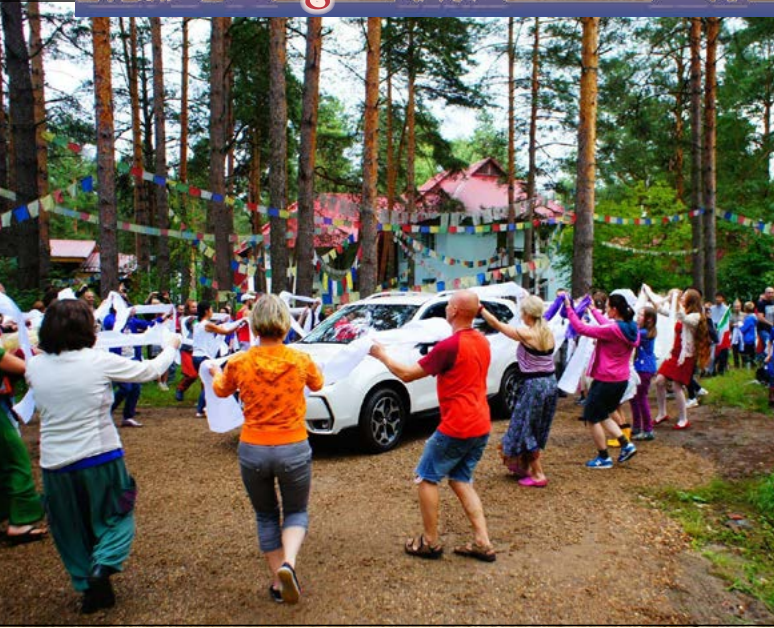
July 15, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Following the Boulder retreat, Rinpoche traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to rest in preparation for his retreat the following weekend at Tara Mandala as he had done in 2013. New Mexico has had a Dzogchen Community and local Gakyil for around 20 years, and with the generous cooperation of Rinpoche's hosts, Lama Tsultrim and Tara Mandala, it became possible for the Community to hold an evening of Khaita dancing and an evening Ganapuja with Rinpoche while he was there.



July 17–19, Tara Mandala, Colorado, USA

Rinpoche's retreat at Tara Mandala, located near Pagosa Springs at an altitude of 7,500 feet and up, formally began the evening before Rinpoche's arrival with an extraordinary practice of Rinpoche's Chöd. The topic of the retreat was "The Concise Daily Practice of Urgyen Menla'i," a Medicine Buddha terma practice discovered by Namcho Mingyur Dorje. The final session of the retreat began with the consecration of what will become a traditional cremation site for practitioners who have passed on, probably the first such facility in the U.S.



July 24–28 Kunsangar North, Russia
Kunzang Monlan, The Invocation of Samantabhadra

The retreat was attended by a record number of people – more than 1500. In order to save time and energy, instead of waiting in traffic jams on the way from the airport, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived at the Gar by helicopter. The team of organizers succeeded in accommodating everybody on the territory of the Gar with comfort and ease.

Photo by Yulia Mikheykina



August 5–9 Merigar East, Romania
Longsal Dorsem Melong, The Mirror of Vajrasattva

This year the first Stupa was finished and the new Multi-Fun House ("multi-functional") provided space for eating during the retreat. The strong presence of the elements: full Fire from the sun, strong-blowing Air, a huge body of Water called The Black Sea, the cracked Earth and All-pervading space, with nothing above or around made itself felt.



July 31–August 2 Warsaw, Poland
Akar Lamai Naljyor, The Guru Yoga of the White A

Over 1200 people attended the retreat. Khaïta singing and dancing was widely announced but we did not expect that so many people would join the dances. A big part of success of this retreat is owed to the generosity of members of the Karma Kagyu in Warsaw who shared much of their organisational experience, made many contacts available and participated in the retreat in person.

Photo by Małgorzata Lewińska



August 13–17 Merigar West, Italy
Bar do'i gdams pa hum gi rgya can,
The Bardo Instructions Sealed with the HÜM

The essence of the Bardo teachings that Rinpoche had received in five separate dreams were perfectly laid out for us to marvel at, like a string of pearls. This was part of Rinpoche's personal Terma, which is his legacy to this world. The first cinerarium in the Community was inaugurated by Rinpoche during the retreat, accompanied by a large group of practitioners.

Photo by Maïke Stellbrink

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Traveling the World



September 4–6 Bhutan

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave his second series of teachings in Bhutan to more than a thousand young Bhutanese students. The teachings took place in the courtyard of the Paro College of Education. In addition to inaugurating the new Palgyas Ling in Thimpu, he also visited several sacred sites accompanied by some of his Western students.

Photo by John Wong



September 11–13 Singapore Nyingthig of Ödser Chenma

Ngee Ann Cultural Centre.

Photo by MF Gutierrez



September 18–20 Malaysia Teachings based on Garab Dorje's text "The Three Statements that Strike the Essence of Mind"

Hai Tao Foundation, Kuala Lumpur.

Photo by Sherab Wong

A Visit to Leh, Ladakh

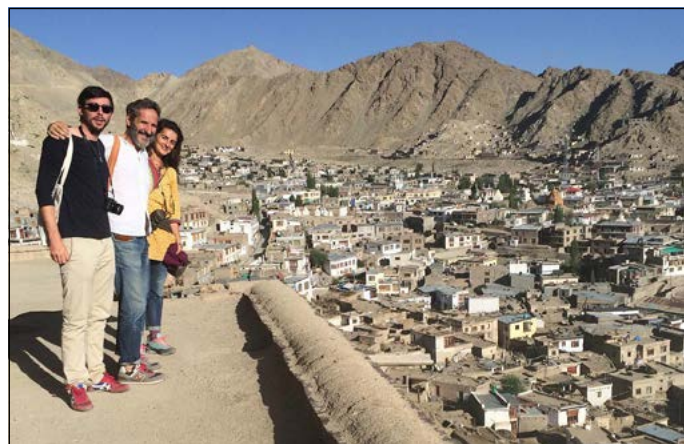
Jamyang Oliphant and Maria Jimena Navarra

Ladakh's stunning landscapes and the spirituality of its people left an indelible mark on my first visit in 2010. So I decided to organize a trip on behalf of Shang Shung UK's *Insight Tours*, our travel agency that specializes in visits to Buddhist sites. Joining forces with the formidable Dr. Sonam Wangchok, a highly regarded expert on Ladakh's Buddhist heritage and culture, we drew up a packed week-long program for a trip in August 2015.

Sixteen brave explorers responded to the call to adventure. Greece, Italy, Ukraine, North America, Colombia, Spain and France united, all eager for an in depth discovery of Buddhist history and culture in the towns, monasteries and retreat centers cradled in remote valleys on the highest plateau to be found along the Silk Route.

Leh, a windswept town nestled in the Himalayan mountains, was our point of arrival.

Perched at 3500 meters, temperatures can reach -30 degrees Celsius in winter. This isolated community is connected to the rest of the world by just two roads,



View of Leh. Photo by Maria Margherita Maglietti

both of which are closed in winter due to the extreme weather conditions. One can understand how this geographic isolation has led to the development of a unique culture and heritage. The region was closed to foreigners until 1974 and this has helped, along with the natural barriers, to create and preserve something unique. Several mountain passes, some at over 5000 meters, must be crossed to reach Leh, making it one of the most remote places on earth.

Despite its inaccessibility, Leh was for centuries a pivotal trading point on the Silk Road. In Ladakh the people, philosophies, arts and crafts of Kashmir, the Indian plains, Tibet and Mongolia all fused.

The region's history was turbulent. There were glorious moments when the Ladakhi kings of the Namgyal dynasty conquered parts of Nepal and western Tibet and some very low points such as the



Monastic affiliations and murals also testify to the historical intermingling; wonderful exotic murals, with Kashmiri influences, are the legacy of the famous Tibetan translator Rinchen Zangpo. He was instrumental in the second propagation of dharma in Tibet, translating several important tantras and bringing their practice to Tibet, as well as bringing over Indian artists who helped create icons and murals in his new temples. The stunning Alchi and Lamayuru monasteries, amongst the most beautiful in Ladakh, are attributed (subject to the inevitable ensuing academic debates) to Rinchen Zangpo.

Besides the surviving temples and paintings, the millenary yogic tradition lives on in Ladakh's windswept mountainous expanses. Yogis like those described in James Low's *The Yogins of Ladakh* are still alive and practicing. We had the good fortune to meet Kagyupa meditators who had spent several decades in retreat, at the hermitage of Khaspang.

It was a true blessing to visit a monastery off the beaten track, far away from tourists and institutional politics. The atmosphere was magical, with yaks grazing on the hill sides and eagles gliding in the sky above us. Natural life was everywhere, large marmots smelled our lunches, appearing from holes under the ground. They were very approachable and we could even pet and feed them biscuits!

We were allowed into the puja hall where the hermits who were performing a puja dedicated to Naropa. It was a mem-



Kagyupa monks performing a puja praising lord Naropa.

Photo by Jamyang Oliphant

orable spectacle to encounter yogis in this magical atmosphere, some of whom have been in retreat for over forty years, as they sang, blew longhorns and played cymbals. After the puja they explained that in Khaspang they practice the Six Yogas of Naropa, as well as practices from the lineage of Tokden Shakya Shri and esoteric forms of Yantra Yoga. They showed us the spacious room where they practiced secret yoga, which needs very high ceilings because of their leaps in the air.

On our trip we admired the murals, statues and thangkas of several monasteries. We went to several centres in a single day, as it is said that by seeing the three monasteries of Sumda Chun, Alchi and Mangyu in one day one will go to the Buddha land after one's life. Despite the destruction of a bridge in a recent flood, we managed to visit all the monasteries and to meet and chat with local monks, and hopefully to get on a fast track to the Buddha realms.

At Matho monastery, the only Sakyapa monastery in Ladakh, we were lucky enough to visit the French led conservation and restoration laboratory. They are restoring and safeguarding the monastery's art works and we saw how traditional tantric literary knowledge is being used, alongside the latest scientific advances in conservation, to preserve and reinterpret badly damaged ancient Buddhist artifacts.

Every day we travelled extensively, battling the discomforts of altitude and soothing our jittery nerves caused by Indian mountain driving. We laughed and

chatted across rugged landscapes, canyons and some of the world's highest mountain passes. We travelled to Nubra valley and on the way we saw the Karakoram mountain range (known more popularly as K2), the



Camel riding in Nubra valley.

Photo by Jamyang Oliphant

second highest mountain in the world. We rode the Mongolian Bactrian camels, prized for their long, soft and warm hair, used to make shawls as well as their endurance as carriers in the mountains. Before carrying excited tourists snapping pictures, for centuries this mountain species carried silks and spices.

That night we sat around a bonfire under the starry Himalayans sky and were

treated to many Ladakhi songs and dances, which we later joined in.

We also had a chance to witness other unique cultural practices, when we went to visit a very old woman shaman. She is connected to the deity Gyalpo Pehar; in her youth she was known for her strange behavior but later learned to use her wild wisdom through a lama's instructions and purification practices before finally being trained by other senior shamans. We visited her in her house, where she put on her ceremonial robe and a hat with the effigies of the Buddhas of the five families. After chanting mantras and ringing her bell for a long time, she went into a trance. At one point she also pulled out a long sword from its sheath and we were slightly worried but she was most gentle. We asked a wide range of questions, ranging from whether we had obstacles in our individual lives to whether and where and when we'd find true love. She cut through our fantasies and doubts with a simple and important lesson: "The answer to most of our questions is within ourselves, and we alone have the power to change the way we see the world."

To conclude, I would like to relate an

auspicious event that occurred when we reached Taktok monastery, a handful of buildings housing beautiful murals, built around a cave where Padmasambhava meditated. We visited the monastery on the tenth day of the lunar month, the day of Padmasambhava. As soon as we entered the cave, the local monks excitedly told us that after a dry spell lasting over a year,

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Bhutan – Visiting the Land of the Thunder Dragon

Jamyang Oliphant

At the beginning of September this year, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave his second series of teachings in Paro, Bhutan to more than a thousand students. Besides inaugurating Palgyas Ling in Thimpu, he also visited several sacred sites accompanied by some of his Western students. Jamyang Oliphant talks about this unique experience.

On September 1st our Druk Air flight took off from Delhi airport, its destination Paro. We had a pit stop in Kathmandu in typical Himalayan fashion. More passengers boarded, among them many fellow students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, bound for Rinpoche's second trip to Bhutan in two consecutive years.



Bhutanese Dances.

All Photos by A. Siedlecki

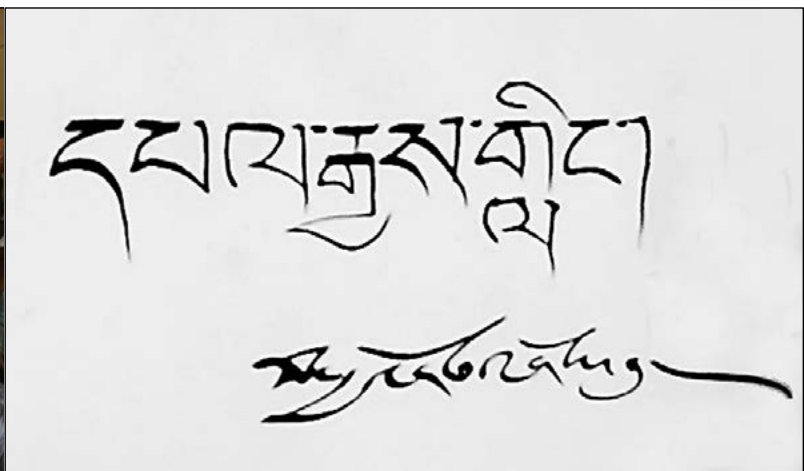
Several Vajra brothers and sisters met on board. Russian, English, Italian and Spanish voices chattered excitedly about the upcoming trip. Old friends caught up and new ones got acquainted, as we flew high above the Himalayas. Before arriving in the land of the Thunder Dragon, the

small country sandwiched between China and India, we saw the world's tallest peak, Mt. Everest, standing tall above the monsoon clouds.

On the short bus ride to the hotel we immediately noticed what a pristine land Bhutan still is. Green valleys covered in



Palgyas Ling. Bhutan's first Dzogchen Community Ling in Thimpu.



Calligraphy by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu of the name of Bhutan's first Ling.

» *Ladakh continued from previous page*
water came forth that very morning from the cave's rocks and we were offered some of the 'nectar water', that the local lama told us was imbued with blessings.

Ladakh caters to every desire, offering pure adrenalin rushes on the perilous drives on icy roads edging on deadly precipices as well as deep relaxation in the peaceful gardens of millenary monasteries. We shopped at a local Tibetan refugee market and went for a consultation at the Tibetan hospital mentsee-khang hospital. Some of us went to early morning yoga classes

with a famous Indian yoga guru, and saw a Bhutanese princess practicing yoga!

This trip to a very unique part of the world marked every single one of us, enriching us culturally and spiritually.

At Insight Tours our intention is to offer tours to interesting destinations in Asia, focusing on art, history, literary, religious and popular culture, with expert guides, efficient services and comfortable accommodation – at an affordable cost. Any profit made goes to the Shang Shung UK institute, whose primary aim remains the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan culture.

Our next scheduled trip will be in South East Asia in December or January 2015.

More details will soon be posted on our website www.shangshunguk.org/v1 ©



Cheri Monastery – Decorated Portal.

pine trees are dotted with old temples and forts and local people dressed in traditional dress waved at our bus with sweet smiles on their faces. Bhutan is a mystical kingdom that still seems to be set in ancient times and one can easily dream of when the lands were roamed by great saints

Khyentse Rinpoche. Just next to it there is a very large statue of Kurukulle, a very sensual and fierce goddess said to have magnetizing powers. Reciting her mantra is said to subjugate others and to bring many lovers, so the single ones among us made sure to stop for a moment to make offer-

est library with Dzogchen books, which new comers can come and read.

The following day we had the good fortune to visit Cheri monastery with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. After climbing up the steep hill, covered in lush trees and shrubs, we reached the monastery perched at the top. It was spectacular up there, with tall sequoia trees and monks scuffling around the monastic complex. We were all invited for tea and Rinpoche entertained us with humorous stories as well as very interesting ones about Sikkim, Ladakh and Bhutanese history. We were also fortunate to sing the song of the Vajra with him in this sacred place.

Cheri was founded by the first Shabdrung, said to have meditated there for three years. The Shabdrung lineage has been pivotal in Bhutanese history. In the sixteenth century Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651) came to Bhutan from Ralung, the birthplace of the Drukpa Kagyu order. When he was twelve he was recognized as a descendant of Pema Karpo, the abbot of Ralung, and when he was twenty three Ma-



Dungtse Monastery.

such as Milarepa, Guru Padmasambhava, the legendary *terton* Padma Lingpa and the 'divine madman' Drukpa Kunley.

Our first visit was to Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the one hundred and eight temples constructed by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. He built these all across the Himalayas, in specific geomantic spots, to subdue a demoness sprawled along the mountain range. Kyichu Lhakhang pins down the demoness's left foot. Guru Rinpoche also meditated there, making the ground even more sacred. We walked around and around the temple, spinning the prayer wheels and inside the temple we paid homage to the stupa housing the ashes of Dilgo



Bhutan 2015 Group.

ings and pray before that statue.

After spending our first night in Paro the next morning we headed to Thimphu.

Our first stop in Thimphu was the inauguration of the Dzogchen community's new ling 'Palgyas Ling' ('Place of increasing prosperity'). Chögyal Namkhai Norbu wrote the ling's name on a large piece of paper in his beautiful calligraphy and we all ate and drank to celebrate, before finishing the inauguration with a collective practice.

Palgyas Ling is already functional and will be used to host practices, Yantra Yoga sessions and to listen to webcasts of Rinpoche's teachings. There is already a mod-

hakala appeared to him, in the form of a raven, and directed him to Bhutan. In Bhutan he soon became a great ruler, known as the first Shabdrung. One of his innovative contributions was to unify the two systems, religious and political. Even today the Bhutanese flag pays homage to his system, the upper half of the flag being yellow - signifying the secular authority of the king - and the lower half orange - representing religious practice. The Shabdrung established a network of forts, impregnable military stations, which served civil and administrative functions as well as being monastic centres. Some of the forts he built and

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which are still standing are Simthoka, Paro, Punakha and Trongsa.

When we returned to Paro we visited the imposing 'Rinpung Dzong' (Heap of Jewels Fort). This dream-like fort is on a hill towering above the town and is so surreally big and high up that it brings to mind the proverbial 'castle in the sky'. A small covered bridge leads to Rinpung Dzong, making it even more impregnable. It was built both as a military fort and as a monastery by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Forts such as this one helped him unify the country under his rule. He consecrated this particular dzong in the mid 17th century, starting the tradition of cham dances which are still held there up to this day. Walking along the corridors and shrine rooms of Rinpung Dzong, admiring the murals and smelling the fragrant incense in the background, one breathes in the beauty of the centuries of art and dharma practice. Yet when you clamber the steep staircases and tight corridors, you remember it also was a military settlement, and one can sense the darker side, imagining the court intrigue and drama that unfolded alongside the holy dharma. We had fun exploring the inner chambers and taking pictures of the panorama from the rooftop terraces.

This historical monument is still very much alive in popular culture. Once a year *cham* dances are held in the fort's enormous courtyard. Thousands of people come together to watch these sacred dances, which honour Guru Rinpoche and celebrate his miraculous deeds through their performance. These are spiritual initiations, which were discovered in terma teachings by great masters, and they also turn into fun country fairs, with food and entertainment.

Another remarkable site we visited was the mahasiddha Thantong Gyalpo's Dingtse Lhakhang, a temple built in 1421. It was built on grounds where lepers were confined. In fact, mahasiddha Thangthong Gyalpo subdued the Naga spirits who were provoking illnesses of this type. The temple is truly remarkable and houses some of Bhutan's finest murals, found on each of the building's three storeys, which represent hell, earth and heaven. Luckily we managed to access the inner shrines despite the initial reluctance of the custodian. The inner core of the temple was pitch black and we lit up the murals with our cell phone lights. The darkness made the atmo-



View of Paro Valley. Red rice paddy fields.

sphere particularly spectacular. Whispering to each other in pitch darkness, we felt like explorers adventuring into a forbidden room, watched over by the fierce gazes of the Dharmapalas painted on the murals.

Because they are always in the dark, the colours of the murals are actually preserved very well. They are mostly deities from the Drukpa Kagyu school and amongst them I remember spotting Mahakala, Guru Dragpur and Phyag drug pa Gompo ('six armed protector').

On the topmost floor around the inner pillar there are gorgeous murals of the eighty-four mahasiddhas, including a very fine painting of Kukuripa, the yogi who lived with dogs and of Milarepa.

Besides visiting all these holy places connected with great Masters, we were treated to an incredibly intense three-day retreat. Over one thousand young Bhutanese came to the teachings, enriching the atmosphere with a youthful, fresh energy. Many more wanted to attend the teachings but it was not possible to accommodate everyone logistically. The teachings took place in the courtyard of the Paro College of Education. Rinpoche aptly sat under a large statue of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom. Over three days he gave an overview of Buddhism, explaining in depth the various forms and methods found in Buddhist teachings. He then went to the very essence of Dharma, explaining how to go to the essence and how to practice in daily life, doing away with rituals and form.

On the evening of the second evening the college students organised a cultural show. There were traditional Bhutanese dances, hip hop dances, theatre performances and comedy. We were entertained late into the night by the college's young students. On the last day of the teachings

we all danced Tibetan and Bhutanese dances in the courtyard.

To complete our trip we visited the unforgettable Taktsang, 'Tiger's Nest', a cluster of temples and shrine rooms hanging on the edge of an eight-hundred meter cliff. They were built by Desi Tenzin Rabgye, the civil ruler of Bhutan who reigned from 1680 to 1694. Guru Rinpoche was said to have flown there on a tiger, having transformed himself into one of his eight manifestations, Dorje Drolo. Guru Rinpoche would take on specific forms in order to tame and liberate evil forces, to redirect their powerful energies to serve the Dharma and aid those on the path. When he tamed Sengye Samdrub, the local deity who resided at Taktsang, Guru Rinpoche emanated as the fierce dark brown, short haired Dorje Drolo.

We took our time to climb up the steep hills and steps leading to Taktsang, telling stories, drinking tea, practicing in the caves of Machig Labdrong and Yeshe Tsogyal. When we finally reached Taktsang we visited the Dorje Drolo shrine room and made a "mo" dice divination. You roll three dice and each resulting number has a corresponding answer, which foretells the answer to the question you keep in mind while throwing the die. The impressive landscapes, rolling hills covered by trees hundreds of years old, and the beautiful buildings dangerously hanging on cliff sides make this seemingly impossible architectural feat all the more remarkable.

The trip to Bhutan was a magical experience and I particularly wish to thank Tshering Choeden. She gracefully took on the huge responsibility of organising a major retreat, allowing thousands of young Bhutanese to listen to Rinpoche's teachings and to plant a seed for the Dzogchen teachings in the holy land of Bhutan. ©



The Place of the Always Good One or The Place of Samantabhadra

The Russian-speaking Dzogchen Community

Anastasia Eremenko

Kunsangar North and Kunsangar South are the Gars of the post-Soviet multinational area which unify the communities of practitioners from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Latvia and Lithuania stretching from the southern coast of the Black Sea to the Far North, and from the Baltics to the Far East.

The first lings appeared on this territory in 1992 when Rinpoche came to Lithuania, Latvia and Russia for the first time, visiting Vilnius, Riga, Saint-Petersburg, Moscow and Buryatia, gave teachings and formed the first Gakyils. Since that time the Community has developed and became one of the biggest. Kunsangar North was established in 1998, and Kunsangar South in 2010. In Tibetan 'Kunsangar' means 'the place of the always good one, or 'the place of Samantabhadra'. ©



Rinchenling 'Precious Ling'

Moscow

Moscow is a dynamic and busy city crowded with people. They are always in a hurry, working hard, developing fast, and are interested in many things.

Rinchenling, the Ling of Moscow Dzogchen Community, is a little apart from this fuss and has found its place in a quiet street in the northeast part of the city. It

is located in the extension of a four-story building; from its windows you can see the top of the trees and the view of the city of Moscow with its famous Ostankino TV tower. The place of the Ling is a nice room (Gonpa) full of light, with a small entrance hall where practitioners can relax with a cup of tea.

Entering the Gonpa we face the image of our precious Master (depicted in a portrait painted by one of our Vajra brothers) and the symbol of the Longsal Teachings. There is not much furniture in the room: a few bookcases with the books of the Teachings, a small altar and a monitor, which we use

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Sangyeling 'The Land of Buddha'

Saint Petersburg

The Dzogchen Community of Saint Petersburg was born in the remote 1992, when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visited the Russian Northern capital for the first time. Rinpoche gave his first retreat here at the Datsan Gunzechoinei, the oldest Buddhist temple in North Europe built in the early 20th century. Symbolically, the construction of this temple was initiated by 13th Dalai Lama and his senior counselor, Buryat Lama Agvan Dorjiev. Since 1917 the temple, as all Russia, had been living through turbulent times. The late 1980's became the time of renaissance for the Buddha's Teaching in St. Petersburg and for the Datsan Gunzechoinei itself. His Holiness 14th Dalai Lama visited it in 1987, and in 1992 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived and gave Dzogchen Teaching in the temple. Rinpoche also gave name to the newborn



Dzogchen Community — Sangyeling, 'The Land of Buddha'.

Ironically 'The Land of Buddha' in St. Petersburg had for a long time resided in strange places: basements, semi-basements and even school classrooms. For some time Ganapujas and Webcasts took place at practitioners' apartments in various parts of the city. Anyway, no one strived for openness at that time. More than seventy years of ideological tyranny had made it a good habit not to display any



View on the Sangyeling gonpa.

» *Rinchenling continued from previous page*

for watching webcasts. The floor is covered with a soft carpet and pillows. There are some images on the walls.

Today Rinchenling is twenty-three years old, and its history goes back to 1990. At that time Vladimir Maykov, Elena Antonova and two other practitioners went to see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at a retreat in Conway, USA, and invited Rinpoche to come to Russia. They told him there were a lot of people interested in his Teachings in Russia waiting for him to come. In 1991, upon Rinpoche's request, Fabio Andrico arrived in Moscow to teach Yantra Yoga. For this practice we rented a school gym in the northeast of Moscow.

Rinpoche arrived one year later and gave retreats in Vilnius (Lithuania), Riga (Latvia), St. Petersburg, Moscow and Ulan-Ude (Buryatia). Right before the Master's arrival in Moscow the organizers got in touch with other Buddhist communities, and many people were interested and came to listen to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Teachings. Sessions were held twice a day and Rinpoche also transmitted the Vajra Dance.

At the end of the retreats Rinpoche established four lings, wrote down their names and presented each Community with its flag. The name of "Rinchenling",

the Ling of Moscow, means "the Precious Ling". In 1993 Rinchenling was officially registered as a religious entity.

After the first retreat with Rinpoche our practitioners often got together to do collective practices at our Vajra sister's artist studio and later at a small room in the center of Moscow. Then in the fall of 2007, after a long search, we found the place where Rinchenling has been until now.

Today Rinchenling counts around four hundred and fifty members, many of them are young people, and is one of the biggest communities in the Russian-speaking area.

Rinchenling is very active as is Moscow itself. The schedule is always tight: collective practices, regular sessions of the Base and 1st Level of Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga and Khaita. During SMS sessions, retreats and seminars with instructors Rinchenling often organizes open webcasts. More than forty towns in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Spain, Great Britain and Tenerife join these webcasts.

Recently upon request of many practitioners we have organized a Tibetan language class. The Moscow Community often organizes open events and participates in festivals and other events held by friendly organizations. We closely collaborate with the famous Moscow center "Open World"

where Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance instructors and Khaita coordinators conduct open classes and presentations. We perform Khaita Joyful Dances in Moscow parks, at festivals and celebrations, as well as organize regular training classes for all interested people. We also do Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga presentations during various summer festivals. Recently we have started to participate in a big city project "Yoga in the parks". Our local Yantra Yoga instructors collaborate with all interested people, enjoying sun, green landscapes and fresh air. Their classes usually bring together more than one hundred participants.

We are very happy to be a part of the International Dzogchen Community giving support to practice in Moscow and infinitely grateful to our precious Master for his Teachings and happy opportunities for cooperation that he graciously grants us! ☺

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activity in order to avoid problems, so various kinds of underground activity arose, as if by itself.

Despite the lack of a place that would be worthy of being 'The Land of Buddha', Sangyeling held many retreats with international instructors and in 2010 welcomed Rinpoche in St. Petersburg for the second time. The growing openness of the International Dzogchen Community, appearance of new local Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance instructors and the Petersburg practitioners' desire to make Rinpoche's Teaching available for all people interested in spiritual growth have brought into being 'Evolution – Piter' project. Open retreats became regular, the information about the Community Webcasts began to appear in the social networks and in some friendly Yoga centers.

Also it was as if we had a fresh look at each other again: the Dzogchen Community turned out to be a wellspring of experts and masters in Tibetan medicine, Ku-Nye massage, tea ceremonies, etc. This gave us an idea to organize lectures, film shows, presentations, massage sessions, to exchange knowledge and also enjoy the development and communication. More wonderful guests started to visit our small place, and we began to dream about larger space that would be comfortable and stylish and could represent the Community and, first of all, the Teaching in St. Petersburg with dignity.

Once again we ascertained the wisdom of Rinpoche's words: it was the energy of openness and cooperation that created our new circumstances. Our dream came true: Dzogchen Community moved to a lovely place in the historical center of St. Petersburg, nearby Moskovskiy railway station. Here the characters of Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky walked by, and from the station (then called Nikolaevskiy) the royal family made train voyages to Moscow. Only a few steps away from the Gonpa there is Nevskiy Prospect, the center of the city's cultural life. Our vast one hundred meter room is situated in the creative space of numerous two-storied warehouses. These are former warehouses of Northern Insurance Company, founded by Vasily Kokorev, a talented tradesman, one of the most prominent businessmen of the 19th century. Now in the buildings of Kokorevs' many warehouses there are offices, construction bases, studios, shops, creative communities, cafes and clubs. There are always many people here, yet it feels quiet and comfortable.



Kunsangar North

Moscow region

Roman Grachev

In 1998 with the help of Rinpoche's blessing and thanks to the efforts of devoted students an ordinary pioneer youth camp was transformed into a self-per-

Here we hold daily practices, weekend retreats with local and invited instructors, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga practices, Khaita dance sessions, open events as part of 'Evolution – Piter' project. We have a library and a shop. The room is cozy and full of eco-elements, plants and flowers. Sangyeling has a humble income that allows to cover some rental costs. Recently we found it possible to glue the Vajra Dance mandala on the floor. When the Mandala's rainbow colors glow in the sunshine, you can't help gazing at this beauty, so everyone coming around, even by chance, obtains a cause to return here again and again.

The place where Sangyeling lives now disposes to openness, cooperation and joyful practice free of limitations. 'The Land of Buddha' awaits the next visit of our Precious Teacher to Saint Petersburg! ☺

Sangyeling

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fectured space where the energy of wisdom, all qualities and activity of the Dzogchen Teaching, are preserved and developed.

In seventeen years many events, retreats, trainings and seminars have been held in Kunsangar North. Many people received here all possible transmissions of the spiritual knowledge, instructions for advancing on the path and obtaining realization. Teachers of all traditional schools of the Tibetan Buddhism bestowed many empowerments, conducted Drubchens and closed retreats.

All these conditions create the best circumstances for individual practice, collective retreats and promote the obtainment of different experiences connected to the recognition of the state of knowledge. The energy of the Russian-speaking Community is concentrated here, and so are the destinies of so many people, who from the intellectual ideas about the practice and vajra connections, receive a direct experience of altruistic collaboration, joyful interaction and recognition of belonging to the sons and daughters of all the Victorious ones.

Kunsangar North lives its life and as the favorable circumstances mature becomes more modern and comfortable for practice. Last year a new house for our precious Teacher and a big spherical tent for summer retreats were constructed. Living facilities were refurbished, our canteen has now fresh breathing of cleanness and freshness, and our food became tastier. We provided free internet for all our guests and successfully launched the project of collective practices Webcasts from Kunsangar North in order to unite energy and potential of all practitioners.

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Construction of the Stupa of the Perfect Victory is arriving in its final stage. Relations between the members of our family, as well as with relations with our neighbors, are getting clearer and more harmonious. Khaita Joyful Dances, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, working and relaxing together, communication between people and Ganapuja practices leave bright impressions for all guests visiting Kunsangar North.

Dear all, be happy and satisfied, beautiful and healthy, wise and compassionate, active and attentive and come to Kunsangar North for developing your practice of the Full Perfection! Sarva mangalam and many, many tashi deleg!

Stupa of the Perfect Victory

Kunsangar North

Nikolay Gavrilyuk

In 2012 by the Gakyil's initiative with the permission of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, we began the construction of a Stupa in Kunsangar North. In answer to our question about what kind of Stupa that should be Rinpoche replied that it should be the Stupa of Perfect Victory (Namgyal Chorten).

The Stupa of the Perfect Victory symbolizes Buddha's victory over the death and time. This is a Stupa of long life and is directly related to the long life deities.

In May of 2012, upon our request, lama Karma Puntsog Rinpoche performed a three-day Nenpa ritual (a ritual of suppression of the *damsi*, demons who violated samayas) and the ritual of the "redemption of land". After that we started active preparation for building the Stupa.

On July 6th, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, the first concrete works were carried out and the concrete foundation of the building was laid. That was the beginning of the Stupa construction in Kunsangar North.

In July, on an auspicious day together with our Precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, we did practices of Sang and Serkyem of Eight classes and then our Master laid in the Stupa's foundation the first laying – a *bumpa* controlling negativities and bringing prosperity to this area and to the whole country.

This *bumpa* was made by Rinpoche himself, and at the meeting with the Ga-

kyil and the Stupa construction committee he said important words:

The most important thing in a Stupa is what we lay in the bottom of it – it is necessary to control negativities. If we did this concretely, prosperity will manifest in the country, and this is one of the Stupa's functions. We put in Stupa different relics, zaza, statues, and due to this, the Stupa becomes more powerful. Why should it be powerful? Because thanks to what is laid beneath the Stupa negativities get under control, and you should know that this is the function of Stupa, no other.

These instructions inspired us very much to do everything properly: collect powerful original relics, statues, make correct zaza, attract funds required for construction and perform all construction works. We received great support from our Vajra brothers and sisters who continuously give us invaluable and various help in implementing this project. Generous support was also provided by friendly sanghas. Teachers of different traditions on request of their students handed over for the Kunsangar North Stupa various precious relics, filled statues, sacred texts. In particular, Kyabje Garchen Rinpoche, manifesting infinite compassion and generosity, offered an original relic of the Buddha Shakyamuni and an ancient text. A statue of Buddha was handed over from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's office. His Holiness XVII Gyalwa Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje handed over a statue of Vajrasattva. His holiness Sakya Trizin Rinpoche handed over a Stupa statue filled and consecrated by him and a *rilba*. Kyabje Chatral Rinpoche handed over clay zazas from his motherland and the texts of the liberating tantras. Also other Teachers handed over the relics of Longchenpa, Yeshe Tsogyal and many others. With big gratitude we received all these treasures and placed them in the Stupa of the Perfect Victory.

Guided by the experienced Stupa constructors Lama Dola from Bhutan and Lama Damtsik Dorje from the Chatral Rinpoche's monastery, our karma yogis made and laid all necessary zazas, *rilba*, *zungas*, as well as the *tsokshin* – the stupa's tree of life and central channel, various mandalas and vases and other necessary objects and substances.



As of today all of the most important and hard work is already done.



Now our task is to make and install the top of the Stupa consisting of thirteen rings, an umbrella and the sun and moon. All finishing works should be carried out and the area around the Stupa should be cleaned. We will do our best in order to complete this project successfully for the benefit of Kunsangar North, Dzogchen Community and all living beings! ©

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Kundrolling

Buryatia

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu came to Buryatia in 1992. The retreat was organized on Lake Baikal and at that time a group of people interested in Dzogchen Teaching was formed. During the next visit, Rinpoche gave his blessing for creation of the Community and gave it a name 'Kundrolling' – 'The Place of Total Liberation'. The Community started to actively develop and grow. Such people as Bair Ochirov, Nikolay Dudko, Maria Fedotova, brothers Dukhovnikov, Nadezhda Popova and Igor Sokolovskiy were the original founders of the Community.

At the beginning the members of the Community gathered at different flats, did collective practices, onsite retreats, studied and discussed the Teaching, as well as spent a good time and became a big united family. In 1999, thanks to their efforts and energy, the Community purchased a flat in a wooden house in downtown. Thanks to them the Community has always had a place where members of the Community could meet in the Gonpa for doing practices and Santi Maha Sangha sessions.

In August 2009 Khyentse Yeshe gave an open teaching in Ulan-Ude and visited our Gonpa. So this place has Khyentse Yeshe's power and blessing. Here we also did webcasts of the Worldwide transmissions using a videotape. Before harsh Siberian frosts we also used to prepare firewood at the backyard.

Since early 2000's the Community actively organizes retreats with invited instructors such as Nina Robinson, Igor Berkhin, Alexander Gomonov, Viktor Krachkovskiy, Evgeny Rud, Ludmila Kislichenko, Yana Sokolova and Ruslan Kim. We conduct retreats not only for members of the Community but also open courses and lectures at universities, libraries, etc. Many new people interested in the Teaching have appeared.

In January 2001, the Dzogchen Community of Ulan-Ude received an official status of a local religious Buddhist organization, Dzogchen Community of Kundrolling. In 2015, thanks to the long-term official status, the authorities of Ulan-Ude allotted to the Community a piece of land within the city.



The regional Dzogchen Community of Kundrolling unified under its wings practitioners not only from Buryatia but also from the nearest cities – Irkutsk, Angarsk, Krasnoyarsk, Altay, Chita, Yakutsk and Beijing.

Although we are a very small Community (about seventy people) our schedule is very intense. At the moment we conduct collective practices and classes. On Sundays we rent a hall for Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance sessions. We also organise onsite retreats in the suburbs of Ulan-Ude as well as on Lake Baikal where the Community has a land plot with a Gonpa for Vajra Dance and buildings for accommodation. Rinpoche gave this place a name of Namsenling. Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance instructors of the first level appeared in the Community – Sergey Sablin and Manidari Dabdonova, new generation of young instructors grows up. We have talented artists – thanka painters Nikolay Dudko and Seseg Dugarova. Nikolay Dudko studied painting in Buryatia and continued education with the personal painter of the Dalai Lama XIV Gen Sangye Yeshe. Exhibitions of his works are held in many Russian cities and abroad – Mongolia, Argentina, China, Italy, Spain, Ukraine and other countries. His thankas are very popular with religious Buddhists and Dzogchen practitioners.

Our Community also collaborates with ASIA helping one Tibetan nun, as well as supports some projects of the International Dzogchen Community such as KaTer and the construction of Dzamling Gar.

Kundrolling tries to constantly develop in the course of the precious Dzogchen teaching transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai

Norbu, we sing Tibetan songs and dance Khaita dances!

We invite everybody to practice together on the shores of the pure Lake Baikal! ©

Kundrolling

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Arkhangelsk Dzogchen Community

The city of Arkhangelsk is located on the shore of one of the most beautiful and full-flowing northern rivers in Russia called Northern Dvina, flowing into the White Sea. We can certainly confirm that far north is about us, since the temper of the people who live here is determined by a heavy environment with vast spaces, low sky, hard winter with evenings full of ice-cold silence, short summers and nights of midnight sun. Reserved and patient, often short-spoken and slow, but open to the world – this is how we are, the inhabitants of this land. The Arkhangelsk Dzogchen Community is one of the most northern Communities in Russia with its own unique history.

In 1998 a group of friends read the book “The Crystal and the Way of Light” and got in contact with Rinpoche’s teaching. They went to the retreat in Moscow where they got the transmission of the Dzogchen teaching. Three years later the first broadcast of the worldwide transmission using an audio-recorded tape was organized in two cities: in Arkhangelsk at the Dramatic Theater and in Severodvinsk at an apartment. Over 100 people participated. From that moment on the group of people seriously interested in the Teaching started to gather at someone’s flat and studied practices. Also people went to retreats and became members of the Dzogchen Community. Since that time the students organized possibilities to get the worldwide transmission on many occasions. The number of practitioners increased and in 2005 the Arkhangelsk Dzogchen Community was officially established.

Our Dzogchen Community is ten years old, and now we have a permanent cozy Gonpa. We are renting a flat in the city center where we conduct regular collective practices, listen to Webcasts and discuss books on Buddhism that we have already read. In 2007 we had our first Santi Maha Sangha retreat with Igor Berkhin, and then a Yantra Yoga course with Viktor Krachkovskiy. Now we organize open lectures and retreats about two times a year. Alexander Pubants, Alexander Gomonov, Evgeny Rud, Anna Neyman, Ulyana Sokolova, Maria Stepanik have already visited Arkhangelsk.

Now we are twenty-four people. We have our own Yantra Yoga instructor Sergey

Jigdralling

Minsk, Belarus

In January of 1991 a group of enthusiasts from Minsk interested in Buddha’s Teachings took refuge at the Buddhist Datsan in Leningrad. In July we went to Buryatia where His Holiness the Dalai Lama was giving the initiation of the eleven-faced Avalokiteshvara. Afterwards, having returned home, we regularly gathered for doing the practice of refuge and reciting “mani” mantra.

In September of the same year we found out that in May of the upcoming year the Dzogchen Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was going to visit Lithuania, Latvia and Russia. We got the book “Four Guru Yogas in Dzogchen Upadesha”. With a lot of enthusiasm we began studying and practicing the teaching given in this book although we didn’t have this transmission.

At the end of May of 1992 a group of eight people left for Vilnius, Lithuania, where the first Dzogchen retreat on the territory of the former USSR took place. In a month five more people went to participate in the retreat in Moscow.

Thus the first students of Chögyal Namkai Norbu appeared in Belarus.

For two years we regularly met for collective practices. In 1994 more of us came for the retreat held at the holiday center “Metallurg” near Moscow. We were joined by few more people interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and mostly in Dzogchen. At the audience with Rinpoche we asked him to give a name to our Ling. The Master generously complied with our request. He gave our Ling a name of “Jigdralling”, which means “Beyond Fear”.

Since 1992 to the present moment the practice in Minsk hasn’t stopped. Collective practices are held irrespective of circumstances in strict accordance with the calendar.

At present our Community of like-minded people counts more than thirty practitioners. Anyone can choose activity that he or she likes. We have created proper conditions for doing personal retreats and collective practices. Interest in Yantra Yoga has greatly increased following the two Yantra Yoga courses held in Minsk. We have found a convenient place for such activities. Recently we have started studying Khaita joyful dances. We have already quite progressed in it.

We are happy to live now, we are glad to have a lot of perspectives and possibilities for receiving invaluable knowledge, and we are very much grateful to our Precious Master for this! ©

Jigdralling

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Volgograd and Volzhskiy Dzogchen Community

Our Community spreads over two neighbouring cities: Volgograd (the administrative centre of the Volgograd Region) and its satellite town Volzhskiy. Being one of the most extended cities in Russia, Volgograd stretches for over 70 km. The city is mainly located on the right bank of the Volga River. At the northern border the city is adjoined to Volzhskiy via a passway that runs along the Volga Hydro Power Plant dam.

Both cities saw the first Dzogchen practitioners back in the 1990s. These first practitioners are however no longer in the Community – some people have moved out from the cities, others are engaged in different Buddhism traditions or keep low profile. Currently we are few, mere 13 members divided almost evenly between the two cities. Due to the long distances, we live quite far from each other. For convenience of the practitioners we do collective calendar practices in two places separately – in Volgograd and Volzhskiy. Yet this does not hinder our cooperation and interaction: all together, we practice Vajra Dance in Volzhskiy and do collective practice retreats in Volgograd.

We are very fortunate to have two instructors living in our place.

First of all, we have a Vajra Dance instructor Vera Andreeva. Every Saturday we practice the Dance with her in Volzhskiy. Vera is also our blue Gakyil. Thanks to her efforts we now have a very comfortable

place for practicing (a large hall with a parquet floor in the Philharmonic Hall). Besides, we also have regular dance training courses. Thus, we've learned and are now practicing the Om A Hum Dance, the Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings, and the Dance of 12 A. This autumn we are going to invite an instructor to carry out a course on the Dance of the Song of Vajra.

Secondly, we have a Santi Maha Sangha instructor Grigory Mokhin. From time to time he holds SMS retreats for the Community members, where any practitioner can ask questions related to the practice and receive a proficient answer.

Interaction between practitioners usually starts with phone calls, e.g. to agree on the time and venue of collective practices or to make a bundle order of books from the online shop. Then the Gakyil sends text messages and emails to interested recipients. Our community has a good library with almost all books published by Shang Shung Publications over the years. The library also contains texts by other Buddhist teachers, as well as CDs and videos with practices. New materials are added to the library all the time.

When necessary and in favourable circumstances we organise retreats with SMS, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga instructors. We are always happy to welcome members of other communities at our retreats. This brings benefits to more practitioners and is more efficient from the organizational perspective. When our retreat agenda meets the needs of other lings, we try to cooperate when inviting an instructor. It helps to reduce expenses on hosting the instructor and organising the course.

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Istomin. The practices of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance are conducted regularly. We also visit retreats of Rinpoche worldwide. Several practitioners from our Community have already passed exams on the Base of Santi Maha Sangha.

Participation of all of us in the activity of Arkhangelsk Dzogchen Community gives confidence that our Arkhangelsk group of students consists of people who think one way and are very dear to each other. One feels warmth and support being next to his or her brothers and sisters.

We became a real Vajra family and we remain on our path. ©

Dzogchen Community of Arkhangelsk

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Ufa Dzogchen Community

South Urals

The Dzogchen Community has existed in Ufa since 2006. That is the year when the Community coordinator was elected for first time, also the Community consisted at that time of 5–6 practitioners.

The practitioners of Ufa got transmission at the beginning of 90s. From time to time we gathered together for doing collective practice, exchanging impressions and talking about the teaching. Growing activity and good organization appeared in 2005–06 when the first Webcasts appeared and teaching and information became more available.

Nowadays Ufa Dzogchen Community consists of 18 people, many practitioners have moved to other cities and countries.

In total over 100 people in Ufa got interested and received transmission since the Dzogchen Community was established. However the number of Community members in different years was always about 30 people.

From 2006 we have started to invite SMS and Yantra Yoga instructors to Ufa. We organize regular Ganapuhas, collective practices and regular SMS classes. We are deeply grateful to SMS instructor Sasha Pubants and Yantra Yoga instructor Zhenya Rud, who often visited us and have played an important role in establishing of our Community.

Ufa practitioners try to come to retreats with our Dear Teacher every year. We have been many times in Kunsangar North and Kunsangar South, Merigar East, some people even reached Tashigar North. Once Ufa

practitioners came together to Dzamling Gar. Three members of Ufa DC have passed exam of SMS Base level and now study the first level of SMS.

We did not have our own place yet and we gather alternately at someone's flat, renting spaces for Yantra Yoga practice. Our Community's atmosphere is friendly, newcomers and visitors from other Communities noticed peace and harmony among us. Gradually we are building good contacts with Communities of Saint-Petersburg, Moscow, Arkhangelsk, Yekaterinburg, Perm, Kharkov and other Communities. We hope that in upcoming years we will be able to get our own permanent place for regular meetings and practices and become more consolidated and responsible. The nearest future plans of the Ufa community include starting Vajra Dance practice on our own Mandala, learning how to dance properly Khaita Joyful Dances, as well as organizing new interesting retreats with international instructors.

Ufa is a capital of Baskortastan republic, it is a big industrial city with population over 1 million inhabitants. It is located in South Ural, 1500 km eastward from Moscow, where Europe and Asia meets. ©

Ufa Dzogchen Community

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» *Volgograd continued from previous page*

We also cooperate with the Volgograd Nyingma community of the Dudjom Tersar tradition of Volgograd. Together we've arranged Tibetan language courses led by Tsering Dava from the Moscow Buddhist Centre of Lama Tsonkapa. The majority of Nyingma practitioners have received the Dzogchen transmission from Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and sometimes attend our collective Ganapujas. For a long time our gonpas in Volgograd were close to each other. Currently, due to renovation activities we no longer rent rooms for the Gonpa and we meet at our members' places. But in future we are going to share space with the Nyingma community.

This is a brief information about our Community. It is quite small, but friendly. We do our best to be aware in practicing the Dzogchen Teaching for the benefit of all living beings and a long life of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ©

Dzogchen Community of Volgograd and Volzhskiy

Blue Gakyil of Volgograd:
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Sherabling

Perm

In 2009 the members of Dzogchen Community of Perm considered the idea of establishing an interregional retreat center. The point was that there were a lot of quite big cities with active Dzogchen Communities in the adjacent regions, such as Yekaterinburg, Izhevsk, Chelyabinsk, Omsk, Miass etc, but they didn't have the location geographically convenient for everybody, where the practitioners could get together for collective practice and retreats.

In 2009 Igor Berkhin came to Perm to hold his retreat. After Perm he planned to visit Yekaterinburg, and went there together with a few Perm Community practitioners. On his way, approximately on the border of Perm region and Sverdlov region, Igor and others spotted one picturesque site, located nearby small town, Suksun. They marked this spot on the map and took a few pictures.

Later at one retreat Community members approached Rinpoche with the proposal to organize the Ling at the crossroads of the big provinces of the Ural Region. Rinpoche asked for the map with the marked spot and the pictures of the location for one day.

The next day Rinpoche said, that he liked the idea to establish a Ling at this place. He presented a few objects for the Ling. They were the following: the entrance curtain, a small stupa and a white scarf.

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Precious Teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the Dzogchen Teaching. ©

Rabtanling

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Rabtanling

Chelyabinsk

The Chelyabinsk Dzogchen Community began to form in 2008, in the city of Chelyabinsk, the Southern Urals, Russia. At first only a few people were interested in the Teaching and they teamed up with some interested practitioners of the Kagyu tradition.

We gather to do collective practices and listen to the Webcasts at practitioners' homes or at the office of one our practitioners.

In 2006 six people from Chelyabinsk went to Crimea for the retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and after that the Dzogchen Community officially appeared in Chelyabinsk.

The Dzogchen Community of Chelyabinsk matured into its first retreat with an instructor by February 2011. We managed to organize an open Yantra Yoga retreat with the instructor Viktor Krachkovskiy. It was frightening to organize this event but the result was fine. The public lecture was a great success and the Yantra Yoga open retreat gathered 37 people! The most important thing is that after the retreat a group of 8–9 willing people wanting to practice Yantra Yoga was formed. Since then Yantra Yoga sessions continued in Chelyabinsk, changing places and sometimes breaking for vacations.

Then in 2012 the Yantra Yoga retreats with Viktor Krachkovskiy and the Santi Maha Sangha retreats with Oleg Troyanovskiy took place. Also in the end of 2012 in our city the first long-awaited retreat of The Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantha-bhadra Vajra Dance with instructor Anna Neyman was organized. All participants were so happy! By the way, some new peo-

ple attended this retreat and got interested in the Teaching and became the Community members. Almost immediately after this retreat we ordered mandala in Izhevsk. Since April 2013 we have regular Vajra Dance sessions.

In 2013 we invited our Vajra brother Andrey Kochurov, an experienced practitioner and a wonderful person, to share his experience. Also in April 2013 in Chelyabinsk the two retreats with Viktor Krachkovskiy, one open and another one for the Community members, took place. Many new people came to the open retreat and they had an opportunity to get acquainted with Yantra Yoga that is still little known in our city. In autumn 2013 Anna Neyman came again and we learned two more dances, Om A Hum and the Twelve A's. It was very interesting to see how every dance brings different experiences and introduces into the state of rigpa.

In autumn 2014 we organized our first Yantra Yoga retreat for the Community members with the experienced instructor Evgeniy Rud. We received absolutely different interesting experiences and new knowledge.

We are very happy that since 2013 we also hold regular sessions of Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga, and collective practices in our Community.

This 2015 year has been also marked with important events. Thanks to one Vajra brother we've got a place for a Gonpa in February. It is a fine comfortable space in the center of the city. The second great event is that we've acquired from Rinpoche the status of ling and a name 'Rabtanling', "the place of ultimate steadiness". At the present time our Community, though small, includes sixteen people, also there are non-members, but all these people are active practitioners, which makes us very happy. It is a great joy that we had a lucky opportunity to meet our

Namselling

Buryatia

In 1994 after receiving direct introduction from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during his visit to Buryatia, a group of people started to practice yantra yoga, do Ganapujas and study the Precious Vase under the guidance of Alexander Vyaznikovtsev.

We started to dream about creating a new retreat centre on Baikal, a powerful place, where Rinpoche gave his first retreat in Buryatia in 1992. For realizing this project we organised a small shop and acquired a piece of land in Bezymyannaya Bay.

In 2001 Rinpoche gave our Ling the name of Namselling which means 'Full Clarity'. None of us had skills in construction but we had a strong wish to realise our dream. We had some difficulties with delivery of construction materials and lack of financing. We hired builders, but some of them did not do their job in a qualified way so we did some parts of the work by ourselves. However the most important thing is that we learnt how to collaborate.



The Gonpa was established on 0,12 hectares of land. It is a nomads tent with 8 walls which holds a Mandala for Vajra Dance and serves as a summer dormitory of 3 rooms with 2-tier beds for 20 people. One of the rooms has a brick hearth and one can stay there in summer and autumn, and even in winter if you are not afraid of the frost. Also there is winter house with a terrace and an unfinished mansard. It contains a brick hearth, a water pump that works from a generator. Due to the financial crisis the completion of the house has been delayed but we are searching for opportunities and doing our best. If we manage to find financ-

ing in the near future it will be possible to use the winter house and practice there the whole year around. There is a summer kitchen being built on the territory (now under the tent), where we prepare food in a gas oven (using a gas bottle). We have also built a sauna. The toilets are outside. There is no electricity yet but we plan to install solar batteries. There are pines, birches and small cedars on our plot of land.

The Ling is located on the land of a cottage cooperative, 200 meters away from the shore of Bezymyannaya Bay, which receives enough heat in summer and is closed from the wind, has sand dunes and small cedars. The resort of Goryachinsk famous for its healing thermal springs is 13 km away. One can get to the Ling in 2-3 hours by car or bus as far as Goryachinsk and then travel by taxi.

During last 5-6 years we have conducted Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance retreats with Evgeny Rud, Yana Sokolova and Ruslan Kim here. When it's warm we organise Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance weekend retreats with our instructors Sergey Sablin and Manidari Dobdonova as well as collective practices and individual retreats. Silence, fresh air with the scent of the forest and the waters of Baikal, the sun and the special energy of this place predispose you to meditation and relaxation. Here you can relax from the city bustle, dancing on Mandala, doing yoga and enjoying Lake Baikal, nature and the presence of Vajra brothers and sisters! Come to visit us and participate in the retreats organized by our Community and do personal retreats. Please read our news on the web-site of Kundrolling. ©

» *Sherabling continued from previous page*

Rinpoche also presented Perm Dzogchen Community with the name for the Ling: "Sherbaling" (tib. shes rab gling) – "Ling of Superior Understanding". It all happened on the March, 30th, 2010. That is considered the foundation day of the Ling.

The Ling is located in the Suksun District, approximately 125 km from Perm and 230 km from Yekaterinburg. The ground of Sherabling is ready for camping. The electricity is conducted. And during retreats all the necessary conditions are provided

for participants' comfortable staying. The participants have also the opportunity of staying at the recreation center, which is located just a few kilometers away from Sherabling. ©

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Kunsangar South

Crimea

The story began over ten years ago when Rinpoche, at the Crimean retreat, told us to find the land for building the Gar. There were many attempts to find a suitable land plot, and eventually at the end of 2009 a land plot in the Goncharnoye village was found, not far from Sevastopol. It became possible thanks to the valuable instructions of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the great support of Khyentse Yeshe. And so yet another Gar of the World Dzogchen Community emerged and started to develop, a place where the Dzogchen Teaching is preserved and developed, and where everyone can come to do practice and to receive teachings.

Rinpoche has stressed many times that it is important for the Dzogchen Community to have its own land or premises where many people can come. Crimea is a place where many retreats can be conducted and it is possible to enjoy the sun at least from mid-spring till mid-autumn, it is a place where instructors willingly come and where it is convenient to travel from all the European parts of the Russian-speaking Community. Acquiring a land plot allows us to create on this land a firm base where we can practice and where the Dzogchen Teaching will be preserved.

The construction of the Gonpa, an octagonal 200 square meters large building, was launched in early spring, 2010. The project of the Merigar East Gonpa was used as a basis. We did our best to insure that when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived in Crimea all conditions for conducting the retreat were in place.

A group of responsible persons was organized, and in the beginning of April 2010, rapid construction work began in order to implement the project. The work began literally on a plain field with no preexisting infrastructure whatsoever. The group that arrived in Goncharnoye did not have either connections or builders, they had to start everything from scratch. But they had strong desire, good team spirit and support of the Teachers and Community. And everything worked well!

In two months we did the main part of the work and at the end of May 2010, Khyentse Yeshe arrived in the Gar. It was an important event, we did a collective practice and laid the *bumpa* (a precious vessel



with relics) given by Rinpoche in the foundation of the Gonpa. This day – the 27th of May 2010 we deem the birthday of the Gar.

Then Khyentse Yeshe gave the Teaching and instructions on the practice of Chöd,

well together and in this way the young Kunsangar South began its life and activity.

During 2010-2013 retreats with Rinpoche were held in the Gar every year, and about one thousand persons participated in each



and this was the first retreat in the Gar. About one hundred fifty persons came to this retreat from different countries, and many people were living in the tents right in the Gar. It was a wonderful retreat and we had a nice time together.

We prepared well for the Rinpoche's arrival in June. People coming to the retreat were getting immediately involved in the work, there was enough work for everybody in this new place. We organized two campgrounds, one in the Gar, and another one near the Gar in the forest, and about four hundred persons decided to live in tents; it was a real beehive!

Rinpoche was very satisfied and the retreat went well. At the end of the retreat there was a big picnic together with Rinpoche. Altogether we enjoyed food, songs and being together.

People were happy and satisfied, the good weather, the sea, the fresh Crimean air, were combining harmoniously with the practice and the teaching. We all worked

of these retreats. In these wonderful summer periods the Crimean Gar was filled with people and lived a very bright and intensive life. We received guests from all around the world – America, Europe, Argentina, and Australia.

In 2011 a very special two-weeks retreat with Khyentse Yeshe called the "Vajra Bridge of Longde" was held. During the retreat after the teaching we frequently went to the seaside together with the Teacher, visited different Crimean places of interest, enjoying the beauty and diversity of the Crimea and its nature.

As the Kunsangar South is an important place for developing the Santi Maha Sangha, in 2011 and 2013 the Base Level exams were held in the Gar, and also the Base Level and First Level Santi Maha Sangha trainings were conducted. Over two hundred fifty students interested in studying this unique course successfully passed the

» continued on the following page

Karmaling

Kharkov, Ukraine

The Kharkov Dzogchen Community springs from the Teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, from his visit to Leningrad in the distant past, 1992. But this union of the mind of the Teacher and his students became possible thanks to the thirst for knowledge of our Vajra brothers and sisters which, due to their karmic merits, met the Teacher through the books and brought the meeting with him closer by their actions.

At the end of 1980's, the works of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu came to the USSR and, finding a response in the hearts of people, began to grow in "practice". In 1990 in some cities of the USSR there were Communities of people who asked Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for advice: "How should we call the existing places of Dzogchen Teaching in the Baltic countries, Russia and Ukraine?" At the Conway, USA, retreat in July same year, where Russian students were present, Rinpoche took a decision to visit our country. And in September of 1990 a reply arrived with the names of the five lings. The fifth name 'Karmaling' was given to then the youngest Community of the city of Kharkov.

In the summer 1991 upon the blessing of Rinpoche and the invitation of the Dzogchen centers, Fabio Andrico visited Kharkov and he conducted retreats on Yantra Yoga and met with the people. The joyful 1992 was the year of the first arrival of the Teacher in the Russian speaking space...

» *Kunsangar South continued from previous page* exam and deepened their knowledge of the Dzogchen theory and practice.

In addition, in 2013 the teacher training and supervisions of Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga with the international instructors Fabio Andrico, Laura Evangelisti and Adriana Dal Borgo were conducted in the Gar. Six persons successfully passed the exam and became authorized Yantra Yoga instructors, and other four persons became Vajra Dance instructors.

In 2013 yet another important event took place: the foundation of the future Longsal stupa was laid and consecrated with the Rinpoche. The construction of the stupa is now almost completed.

Today the Gar is a wonderful retreat facility including:



- | | | |
|----|----------------|----------------|
| 1) | སངས་རྒྱལ་གླིང་ | SANG GYAE LING |
| 2) | དོར་ཇེ་གླིང་ | DORJE LING |
| 3) | རིལ་མེན་གླིང་ | RINCHEN LING |
| 4) | པདྨ་གླིང་ | PADMA LING |
| 5) | ཀར་མ་གླིང་ | KARMA LING |

Since then the Dzogchen Community has been growing and developing. Ganapujas were conducted on calendar (and not only) dates, collective practices were also performed. The practitioners studied Santi Maha Sangha together, and in 1996 the first Kharkovians passed the Base Level exam.

Later things continued to develop. In 1997 Adriana Dal Borgo visited us with a Vajra Dance retreat and taught the dances of Om A Hum and Six Spaces of Samantabhadra. That retreat was translated from English by Lyudmila Kislichenko, who

- Gonpa
- Geköe's house
- Rinpoche's house
- Dark retreat cabin
- Guest house
- Storage
- Children's playground
- Summer kitchen-veranda
- The Gar provides all conditions for comfortable practice and stay of practitioners. Please come! You are always welcome! ☺

Kunsangar South

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afterwards became a second level Vajra Dance instructor herself and visited Kharkov giving dance retreats many times.

In 2006 representatives of practically all the Dzogchen Communities of the Russian-speaking Sangha got together in Kharkov. Under the guidance of Yeshe Namkhai the conference was held in our city to discuss further development of the Dzogchen Community and the need to collaborate.

Currently the Kharkov Dzogchen Community has fifty members and rents premises in the downtown of Kharkov (photo 2). Collective practices, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Santi Maha Sangha Base and First Level sessions are conducted regularly. Also different retreats with instructors on the Base and First Level Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance are held.

During the visits of the Santi Maha Sangha instructor Alexander Gomonov, we organized public lectures for students of Kharkov universities. In 2012 within the frameworks of the Tavale festival, one of the biggest events in Ukraine in the area of practical psychology and spiritual practices, held near to Kharkov, a presentation of the Vajra Dance was performed under the guidance of the Vajra Dance instructors Ruslan Kim and Mariya Stepanik.

We collaborate with ASIA and support education of one Tibetan girl. We do our best so that Karmaling is a decent place of the Teaching in the World Community and it promotes spreading of the invaluable knowledge transmitted by our Precious Teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ☺

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Palphelling 'The Growing Auspiciousness'

Dnepropetrovsk

The Dzogchen Community of Dnepropetrovsk was established at the end of 1990's based on a small group of people interested in alternative non-traditional treatments and Tibetan medicine which included many doctors. For a long time practitioners were meeting in somebody's office or apartment.

In 2008 the desire to practice the Vajra Dance united all the Community and we created our Mandala with our own hands, which still today unites us in the dance every weekend.

In autumn of 2009 our permanent place for practice emerged and became our Gonpa. It was a rented office in the very center of the city where we could meet for collective practices and study. In February 2010 Rinpoche gave our ling the name of Palphelling, which means 'growing auspiciousness'. For five years this room in an ancient building in the very center of the city was the place of meeting with the Teaching.

In spring of 2014 some favorable circumstances emerged and we moved into a more spacious Gonpa, which is also located in the city center on the 6th floor with a wonderful view to the quay and the central bridge. Often our sessions take place after work, so the priority in choosing a place was given to the convenience of the transport connections.

Buying land and emergence of the Kunsangar South was a great joy to us and members of our community actively par-

ticipated in its construction, life and retreat organization.

Since 2013 open Yantra Yoga classes are held regularly in Dnepropetrovsk. Since 2014 we have a certified Yantra Yoga instructor Marina Baidak. Yantra Yoga classes are regularly conducted in a local yoga center where anybody who is interested can come.

Our community has close connections with the Zaporozhye Dzogchen Community. As our cities are located nearby we frequently visit retreats and events of each other.

Today our city is located practically on the frontline of the military conflict in Ukraine. Meanwhile we were trying to do collective practices, invited Santi Maha Sangha instructor Alexander Gomonov, continued our practice and learned to work with circumstances according to advice of our precious Teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We are a small Community consisting of thirty people, but we can sincerely call ourselves a family and are doing our best helping each other and participating both in learning practices and in life circumstances. ©

Palphelling

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Tobgyalling

Kiev

Tobgyalling, or 'The place of Royal Potentiality' is the new name given to us by Rinpoche in 2013, when it became clear that there were several Tashilings. Even in these hard for Ukraine, the circumstances of the Kiev Dzogchen Community develop favorably and we continue to actively conduct open events and Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses, as well as larger retreats with international instructors in which practitioners from other cities also take part.

The history of the Kiev Dzogchen Community began in 2002 after the Crimean retreat of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, when several interested new practitioners who just knew how to do the short tun started getting together for practice. The first local retreats were conducted a year after. Santi Maha Sangha with Igor Berkhin and Yantra Yoga with Victor Krachkovskiy, and then the first Gakyil made up of three persons was formed. After every retreat conducted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, increasing numbers of practitioners arose in the territories nearby to Kiev and generated more energy for development. In 2005 Rinpoche again came to Crimea with a retreat and, to our greatest joy, accepted our invitation to stop for a couple of days in Kiev to give a public talk for all interested. The conference hall was completely full, over six hundred people came to listen to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. After this event, the Kiev Dzogchen Community got officially registered as an organization. In 2009 the growing KDC started to look for a place for Gonpa, and soon we found our first Gonpa, and our Community received the name 'Tashiling' ('The place of Fortune') from the Teacher.

Eventually both the place of Gonpa and the name of the Ling changed. Today Tobgyalling has eighty registered members, of which about forty actively participate in the life of the Dzogchen Community. There are also people who are not DC members but received transmission from Rinpoche and take part in open events. There is a really friendly atmosphere in the Kiev Sangha and there are many young people. The Gonpa is located in the inner suburbs, in a quiet corner of the big city, but not far from the downtown. In this spacious and

» continued on the following page

Phuntsokling

‘The Place of the Perfect Conditions’

Donetsk

The history of Dzogchen Teachings in Donetsk started in 1996 when the group of Buddhist practitioners went to the retreat of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Moscow. Inspired by the Teaching they started to do practices together on a regular basis, renting apartments and moving from one place to another. Finally in 2003 they have found a permanent place. Rinpoche gave us the name “Phuntsokling”, which means “The place of the perfect conditions” and this name truly corresponds to our Ling – we have had regular Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance retreats and practice sessions, invited different teachers and organized public talks



and events. Of course the most important events were visits of Khyentse Yeshe in 2010 and 2011 when he gave Teachings not only for public but also in the Gonpa of Phuntsokling.

The years passed by and members and Gakyils of our Community changed over time. It's interesting to mention the very first Gakyil formed in 1998 were: Igor Berkhin –

Blue Gakyil, Viktor Krachkovskiy – Red and Tatyana Pronicheva – Yellow. All of them are now well known as Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance teachers who tirelessly help us to understand the essential Teachings of Rinpoche in the post-Soviet space as well as other places.

The conditions of time and space always change and in 2014 the war came to Donetsk. The Gonpa is located in the relatively safe district and fortunately remained intact after the artillery barrage. However most of the practitioners had to leave the city. Our Vajra brothers and sisters went to Kiev, Moscow and other cities where they can also practice with the local communities. But even during the toughest times of war, practitioners looked after the Gonpa and when in fall 2014 some people went back to the city – they continued to do Ganapujas and worldwide transmissions (also some new people joined us during this period). Many times at Ganapujas the practitioners experienced integration of the sounds of artillery into their state.

Although the situation in Donetsk still remains very tense, the spring came and we constructed the stage for Vajra Dance and started to do regular Yantra Yoga and Santi Maha Sangha sessions. Also we organize webcasts of some Santi Maha Sangha retreats in which up to ten local practitioners participate. Hopefully the present situation will improve soon and the Community of Phuntsokling will be able to freely invite teachers and practitioners. So far we take a commitment to work with circumstances and support the Community and the Teaching in Donetsk! ©



» *Tobgyalling* continued from previous page
light-filled room with windows all around and warm floor KDC members meet almost daily for collective practices, study of the first and base levels of Santi Maha Sangha and also open Yantra Yoga sessions with three first-level local instructors.

Many training courses and retreats with International Dzogchen Community instructors were conducted in these years. We were visited from far countries by Laura Evangelisti, Nina Robinson, Fabio Andrico, Jim Valby, Fabian Sanders, and Michael Katz.

Quite a few courses are planned in Tobgyalling until the end of this year, and there is also a project to design a special Mandala that would fit in the Gonpa around the central column. Practitioners from other cit-

ies/countries planning to come to Kiev for a retreat can always contact the KDC Gakyil for assistance in finding accommodation.

The program of open events is available on our web-site and the Facebook page. You can also receive all news and weekly programs of practices by e-mail, just ask the Gakyil to include you in the mailing-list. ©

Tobgyalling

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The Dance of the Vajra

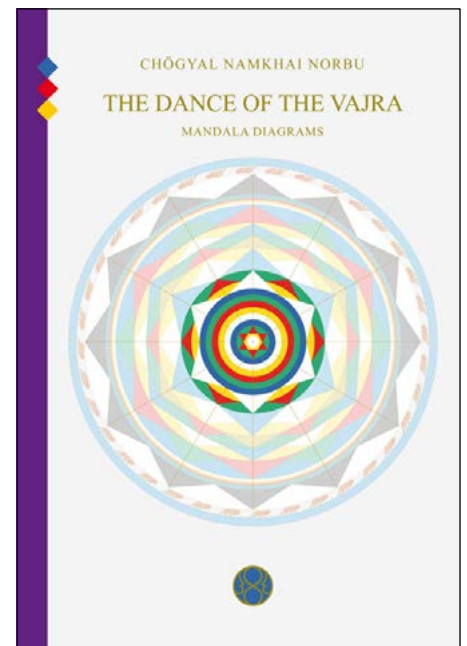
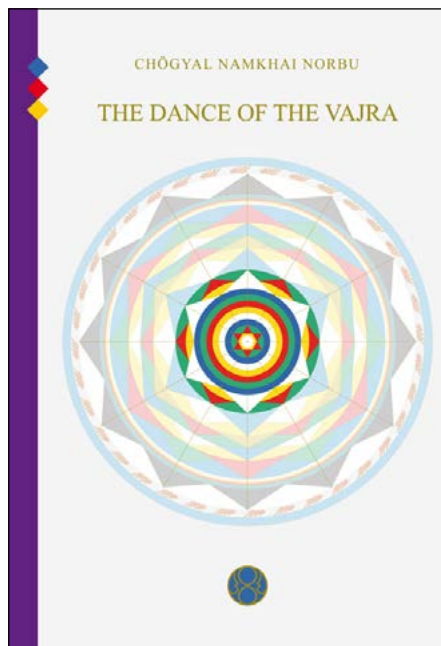
The Dance of the Vajra – Mandala Diagrams

by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

translated by Adriano Clemente
Shang Shung Publications 2015

This two-volume work constitutes the official translation of the Root Tantra of the Dance of the Vajra and its commentary, *The Light of the Precious Lamp*, by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In this commentary all the steps, mudras and movements of the three main Vajra Dances – The Dance of the Song of the Vajra, The Dance That Benefits Beings and the Dance of the Three Vajras – are described and explained in detail, with amazing precision.

Written by the author on the basis of numerous dreams of clarity (all contained in the book) between 1990 and 1997, and edited by him in its final form in 2002, the original Tibetan text of this extraordinary work was translated by Adriano Clemente in 2009–2010; subsequently the main Teachers of the Dance of the Vajra



thoroughly studied the steps and movements as described in the translation, and submitted any doubts to the Master, who kindly clarified them with infinite patience and compassion.

The Mandala Diagrams were originally included in the main text, however, for practical reasons, they are presented here in a separate volume, in full color. The original sketches drawn by hand by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu have been digitally re-

drawn with painstaking precision by Prima Mai, under the supervision of the author. Some reproductions of the original drawings are contained in the book.

In the process of translating and editing this precious text many discoveries were inevitably made, also regarding the drawings of the Mandalas. Some inaccuracies were found in the way the complete Mandala had been drawn so far. These inaccuracies

» continued on the following page

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Secret Map of the Body

Visions of the Human Energy Structure

By Gyalwa Yangönpa

Translated from Tibetan and annotated by Elio Guarisco

Edited by Judith Chasnoff

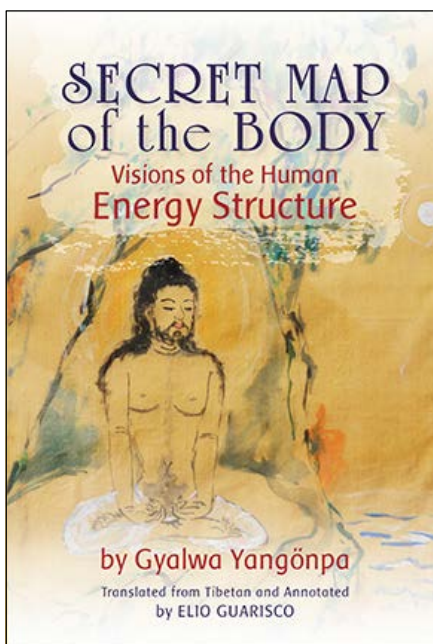
ShangShung Publications, 2015

Review by Alfredo Colitto

and Giorgio Dallorto

This book is an absolute “must” for practitioners, scholars and/or readers of Tibetan esoteric literature. It is the first English translation of *The Hidden Description of the Vajra Body*, a treatise on the human energy structure, written by the yogin Gyalwa Yangönpa (1213–1258), together with *The Great Mirror*, a praise-biography of Gyalwa Yangönpa, written by one of his closest disciples. The massive body of explanations and notes by Elio Guarisco make the reading understandable even for the layman reader.

Gyalwa Yangönpa realized the nature of the mind at the age of eight, upon hearing instructions on the Dzogchen mind cycle of teachings. He was a direct disciple of the most renowned masters of his time, among them Götsanpa, and Sakya Pandita. Götsanpa, famous siddha and poet in Ralung became the main student of Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorje (1161–1211), the founder of the Drukpa lineage.



At the hermitage of Namding, a rock formation on Shri Mountain, he sat uninterruptedly for eleven months in the lotus posture, thereby coming to a definite understanding and control of the energy structure of body and mind. The experience and realization he had in this retreat led Yangönpa to write *The Hidden Description of the Vajra Body*. His direct vision of the structure of energy channels, of the colors and flows of the energy winds and of the workings of the body's vital essences enabled him to present his own description of the vajra body.

Yangönpa's map of the human energy structure, while very detailed, is also presented in a very comprehensible manner by Elio Guarisco, who dedicated several years to unraveling the problems present-

ed by such an ancient and esoteric text. Guarisco starts by presenting to the reader the times and places where Yangönpa lived, the masters he met and the accomplishments he obtained. The second part of the book is the complete and annotated translation of the *Great Mirror*, the biography (*namthar*) of Yangönpa, including two praises, written by his main disciple Ngawa Rinchen Den. The third part is dedicated to the translation of *The Hidden Description of the Vajra Body*. The text describes the complete geography of the subtle body, including channels, chakras and the corresponding syllables. These are integrated with quotations from various Tantras, such as *Hevajra*, *Chakrasamvara*, *Kalachakra*, *Samputa* and others.

A very useful feature of this book are the appendixes. The first two include the complete bibliography of Yangönpa. Appendixes three to nine are maps describing in a synthetic and clear way the complete structure of the vajra body. These appendixes are, in practice, technical tables which resume in synthesis all the previous descriptions of the vajra body contained in part three of the book.

As usual in Guarisco's works, this book is completed by an apparatus of rich notes, very useful for researching the sources and clarifying the various facets of the root text, followed by a bibliography of the works cited by the authors.

The book is enriched by a foreword written by Drugu Chögyal Rinpoche, who also gave permission for reproducing his beautiful painting of Tönpa Garab Dorje sitting in yogic posture on the cover. ©

» *Vajra Dance* continued from previous page
racies affected the center of the Mandala (this was actually made public and corrected several years ago) as well as the outer ring of the Universal Mandala, along with the tone of the color of its first ring. Hence we can say that the correct drawings of the three Mandalas are reproduced here for the first time.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this work, not only for practitioners of the Vajra Dance, but for all the students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. The unique narration of the dreams will be familiar to the readers of the Longsal series, and contains invaluable instructions and

insights that are precious for all Dzogchen practitioners.

For those who practice the Dance of the Vajra, this is a long-awaited and indispensable text. In the words of the Master himself:

“If you really know this book,
then you know the Vajra Dance
very well.”

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Tsegyalgar 1992

This first edition has been printed on high quality paper, in a limited number of copies. We advise those who wish to secure their copies to place their orders now. Homage to the Master! ©

Shang Shung Publications

<http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com>

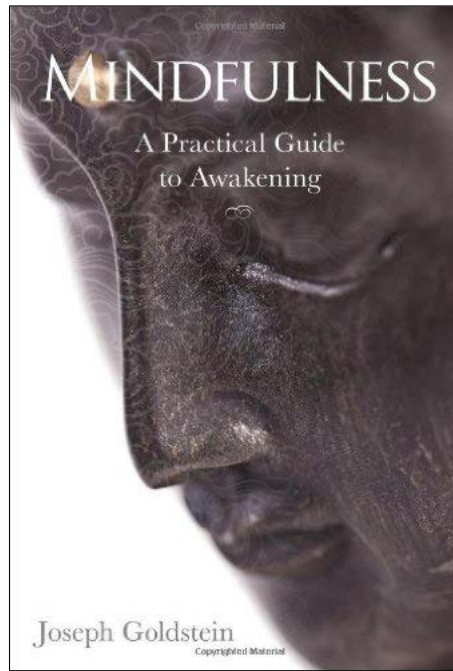
Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening

By Joseph Goldstein, Sounds True,
Boulder, CO,
457 pages, 2013

Book Review by Jacqueline Gens

Unlike most other spiritual traditions, the Buddha's path does not rely on deities and saviors, rituals, the Word or external dietary/dress regulations for Liberation but on each person's participation in a rigorous mind training that examines with ardor, comprehension and mindfulness first hand the nature of reality of self and phenomena. At the core of his teaching method, the Buddha urges us in the Four Reliance to rely on "experience" not on dogma; furthermore, to rely on *direct* experience (Nitharta), not *indirect* (Nethartha). While not the same as direct introduction by a living master, as we know it, the Buddhist path sets a precedent for personal individuation based on direct experience over doctrine from the very outset. This thread runs through the most basic teachings to the highest culmination- thru all of Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen. This is important to recognize because we are not alone but part of a continuity of yogins who have already traveled the path to realization for millennia. If they can do it, so can we. But we need to begin somewhere. For some of us it is at the very beginning.

For those interested in understanding meditative stability in Sutra, indispensable as a base, the gold standard among the Buddha's many teachings remains the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Sati Patthanna Sutta). These days the word 'mindfulness' is widely used for a variety of meditation techniques both within Buddhism and also in secular contexts. Goldstein, one of the primary Western teachers of Insight Meditation based in the Theravada tradition has provided here a commentary that elucidates the pure canonical tradition of the Buddha as outlined in the *Sati Patthanna Sutta* with brilliant clarity, humor, and most importantly accessibility for both beginners and advanced practitioners. It is



indeed a practical guide to refer to again and again.

In *The Previous Vase*, the Four Applications of Presence of body, feeling, mind, and phenomena [PV, p/138] are part of the base training drawn directly from the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. For those of you curious to go deeper, Goldstein's commentary will prove a useful reference to these essential teachings. Like many of the methods outlined in *The Precious Vase*, they are presented in the most abbreviated instruction. This does not diminish their importance. Rather it is up to us to regard the base practices according to our capacity and interest unfolding the deeper meanings as we experience them. Similarly, one simple definition can fill whole volumes if we have knowledge such as exploring the The Four Applications of Mindfulness of Presence in order to go beyond a taste of the experience.

The path of renunciation need not be about the grim reaper destroying our every joy but about renouncing our attachments, aversion, and blanket of delusion that solidifies a self and phenomena as separate outside ourselves. What we are renouncing is what causes us so much confusion and tensions so that we can really experience joy that is not dependent on outer conditions or dualistic thinking. That does not mean, of course, that we can't appreciate any moment with awareness – enjoy a sunset, smell a flower, see sky as blue, or taste a sumptuous meal. To some extend as long as we are alive, renunciation is part of our wisdom toolbox when needed if we

are practitioners. From renouncing our deeply entrenched sense of me me me, to renouncing that wily thief of distraction, renunciation is the cornerstone of wise discernment or as Goldstein says, exemplifies the "wisdom of no".

Goldstein's commentary is a treasure trove of information by someone who has spent most of his life in formal meditation under the severest conditions found in Burmese and Thai vihares. His many personal antidotes breathe life and pure joy into this living tradition. The author of many books on Insight Meditation, he is one of the leading Western teachers of Vipassana and it's introduction into Western culture.

As many long time Vipassana practitioners are now turning to Dzogchen, a natural progression, so we too on the Dzogchen path might turn towards Sutra, to our Noble roots on occasion to check our progress and drink at the well-springs of the Buddha's wisdom.

For the future it is important that we all know what is what and not mash up all the teachings into "one" big pot nor get caught up in petty sectarianism and pedantry. Rather as the first generation of Westerners in this great transition from East to West, let's all respect the enormous wisdom behind these centuries old teachings on their own terms in whatever form they manifest. A commentary like Joseph Goldstein's *Mindfulness*, guides us in knowing the profundity of the Buddha's teachings beyond a preliminary taste. Let's not forget who and what we are on the path. Otherwise we might just end up with a watered down Church of sorts, an ignorant orthodoxy that obliterates the profound heritage of direct experience into a lifeless system that loses sight of the purpose – which is to discover one's true nature.

Jacqueline Gens
August 2015

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The Long and Enduring Road Home

Revisiting The Precious Vase,
Instructions on the Base of
Santi Maha Sangha by Chögyal
Namkhai Norbu

Jacqueline Gens

The Base of the teaching consists in studying, meditating, and experiencing perfectly The Buddha's perfect teaching contained in the sutras and tantras

And the perfectly connected method and their essence, that is the teaching of the mind of Samatabhadra

By means of the tantras, lungs, and upadeshas of Total Perfection and of Yantra Yoga.

[Santi Maha Sangha 7, PV p. 21]

In the *Sati Patthanna Sutta* (Pali) commonly referred to as “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness” of body, feeling, mind and phenomena, the Buddha sets forth a bold claim that this path, based on his own personal spiritual journey, is the direct path to enlightenment.

Bhikshus, this is the direct path for purifying beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for vanquishing pain and distress, for attaining the right approach, for realizing nirvana—namely, the four applications of mindfulness.¹*

*Refers here to both monastic and laypeople, women and men

Clear and to the point, the Buddha tells us about our real condition and what we need to do about it—nothing more. The rest is up to each individual to take responsibility for their own happiness and overcoming “sorrow and lamentation” through a process of awakening to one’s authentic condition.

Typically through extended metaphors for a particular “path,” metaphors are often used to express the variability among the different “vehicles” or schools of Buddhism. These range from simple walking all the way to a space ship.

From the point of view of the space ship sometimes associated with Dzogchen, one might ask why would anyone ever want to

go back and “walk” the path of Sutra in the Buddhist tradition once one discovers how to be transported vast distances immediately and effortlessly through a non-gradual path?

Having returned last winter from a mostly silent and unplugged three-month personal retreat at a local Vipassana center, I have my own personal answer as to the benefits and limitations of the “walking” mode from the perspective of a Dzogchen practitioner’s view.

Sometimes it’s just more useful to walk in order to slow down and create the time and space required for studying, practicing and reflecting on one’s life in an environment free from worldly distractions and our habitual tendencies. This is especially important when trying to stabilize Shamatha/Shine as I was attempting to do yet again. Remaining silent for most of the time over a period of months proved equally beneficial in that it was so refreshing not to maintain a constant narrative about oneself. As a writer, who loves to think and create, it was a real challenge at times to drop my storyline and just abide in each moment in order to minimize concepts. In this respect, I found that temporary silence does cultivate an experience of spaciousness that loosens the mind from its usual stronghold of dualistic concepts especially for dislodging old grudges and tired storylines.

For me this down shift to slow “walking mode” offered a rare opportunity to look at the view, meditation and conduct of my “identity” as a Dzogchen practitioner in relation to the actual level of my awareness and presence by means of investigating with microscopic precision moment to moment mindfulness that Vipassana fosters. The very word Vipassana in Pali means “clear seeing” which defines this process. So in that sense, microscopic is not lesser but smaller, as in more focused. In traditional Vipassana, as in Dzogchen, it is not that our thoughts are the problem but that thoughts bother us and continually steal our precious jewel of awareness from the present moment like a wily thief. Noticing this on even the subtlest level can prove very fruitful to assess one’s development. It’s just so easy to delude ourselves otherwise into believing we are more aware than in actuality.

I’m no expert here on any of this and for decades struggled with trying to stabilize my Shamatha/Shine practice according to the common instructions found in sutra,

which is the base for further development. This process can be both rapturous and plummet one into the deepest despondency, which is why equanimity, one of the key factors of enlightenment according to the Buddha is so important to maintain balance as one develops. There is no right or wrong here, nothing much to attain but everything to discover in cultivating a bright wakeful awareness as training for entering into instant presence and continuing in the state of contemplation beyond a few moments. While the intention in Dzogchen is always to relax fully in unfabricated natural presence effortlessly beyond cause and effect, the actualization of this state only comes with developing our capacity through efforts.

The truth of the matter is that without continuous presence of awareness, there can be no evolution on any path. It is not really something we can learn only from a book but must experience first hand many times. As they say – where there is smoke, there is fire and only direct experience leads to illumination. There is no faking here.

Direct experience, as we all know, leads to the true meaning of words. But experience alone is not enough. We need to coordinate our practice first through study and then reflection so that a deep understanding arises. In *The Precious Vase*, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu eloquently outlines this sequence to follow in establishing our base.

“So, in order to practice a teaching, whether it pertains to the Sutras, Tantras or Dzogchen, first of all it is necessary to eliminate the darkness of the mind by learning what to practice. Then by reflecting one must free oneself from the net of doubt with regard to the teachings one is following. This factor is indispensable in order to approach a path of realization and to practice the preliminary teachings. In particular to enter the supreme Dzogchen teaching, after having studied and reflected on everything that seems useful, it is necessary to understand the characteristics related eloquently to essence, nature, and specific aspects etc that distinguish an uncommon path from a common path.” [PV, p.35]

After many weeks in personal retreat, I experienced a deep appreciation for the methods of the Sutric path as taught by the Buddha so important in establishing the base for Santi Maha Sangha. I also began to see why establishing a base is so es-

Working with Injuries and Physical Challenges in Yantra Yoga

Emmanuel Jouan

After working in the Finance and IT business in London for few years, Emmanuel met Rinpoche in 2000 in Cape Town – South Africa, which changed his life. After that he travelled a few years following Rinpoche in the Americas, and returned to Europe, settling near Merigar West in Italy. He participates in the YY practice sessions at Merigar and also collaborates with the IDC.



Many people with injuries and physical challenges use them as an excuse not to do Yantra Yoga. My idea was to address this topic in The Mirror because I myself have had many physical problems in terms of physical challenges. In 1992, when I was twenty years old, I had a heavy ski accident and tore my ligaments. In those days the procedures were not noninvasive as they are nowadays, and the operation and my recovery was quite unsuccessful. For seven years after the operation I was in constant pain. Before the

injury, I was doing mostly windsurfing and all of that stopped immediately and I gave up on physical activity altogether.

In 1998 I had a second operation, and they basically removed everything they put in the first one and put in organic ligaments, not artificial ones like they did in the first one. That worked very well and three days after the second operation I had no pain anymore and I felt better than I had for the whole seven years after the first one.

I started to surf again – I had moved to South Africa, which is where I met Rin-

poche – and started surfing there right after my second operation. Then I started to be active, swimming a lot, but still no yoga. And then in 2000 I met Rinpoche in Cape Town and I saw Fabio Andrico doing a demonstration of the Eight Movements, and immediately felt attracted to that and started doing them, very carefully because I was a bit scared about my knee and all these contortions, and also I had no history of yoga at all at that point.

A month later I went to Argentina to do a course with Fabio and asked if I could attend because I was a complete beginner and he said it was good if I could come. And from then I started to do a lot of Yantra and very surprisingly my knee did not cause me any problem. I really did as much as I could, all the courses I could attend, to deepen my practice and understanding of Yantra and felt a very strong synergy with Yantra. In physical terms I felt there was no problem with my body until some accidents came again along my way.

In a skateboarding accident in Paris after the second operation on my knee but before learning Yantra I sustained other injuries, a shoulder problem. I still have this injury but have also had other accidents as well. For example, in Margarita, while picking some mangos for Rinpoche

» continued on the following page

» *Santi Maha Sangha* continued from previous page to enter fully into Dzogchen. With this appreciation arose an understanding that clarified how the Santi Maha Sangha training works to further our realization if we really apply its unique and special methods precisely as laid out. These methods introduced in the base when applied quickly introduce us to many experiences to enhance our understanding. Like pieces of a complex puzzle that seamlessly fit together, the emerging picture becomes clearer the more one engages. Most importantly I found myself deeply grateful for finding such a marvelous Master like Chögyal Namkhai Norbu who imparts the Dzogchen view, meditation and conduct as a guide for such an extraordinary and uncommon path in this very life. *The Precious Vase* provides a rare and unique opportunity to enter the gateway of Dzogchen in an authentic lineage under the perfect guidance of a supreme master whose depth of knowledge and kindness is as deep as the ocean and vast as the sky.

Now, I am old in years but feeling young in my understanding. It's never too late to discover anew presence in the vast continuum of one's mind stream. All the more so as one enters one's senior years. To start at the beginning again with fresh eyes with a more mature view of Dzogchen proved an inspiration to continue on the path. I encourage everyone to try it. The road may be long with many starts and bumps but it's enduring once we begin. We mustn't lose heart for we are indeed very very fortunate to have met these Teachings and such a master as ours whose deep learning and accomplishment is unrivaled among his peers.

The key here is to arrive at certainty free from doubt without arrogance but with a natural confidence in the Teacher and the Teachings, which comes from having concrete experiences and deep understanding. In itself, the base of Santi Maha Sangha found in *The Precious Vase* is an extraordinary introduction to Ati now and especially for the future.

We live in an increasingly tumultuous age some call the *Kali Yuga*. None of

us knows what conditions will prevail for such Teachings to survive in the future or moral degradations afflicting human societies. But one thing I am certain is that the Santi Maha Sangha training is a safeguard against corruptions within the transmission of Dzogchen brought forth from the loving kindness of its author; a true embodiment of these Teachings and all the previous Vidyadharas. To safeguard this legacy, I say to older practitioners, ...*Come back, there's still time!* For younger, I say... *Don't wait, it's a long road!* It's up to us, no one else.

Jacqueline Gens
Tsegyalgar East
August 2015



Jacqueline Gens first studied in the Masters of Buddhism program at Naropa University attending Trungpa Rinpoche's last seminary before his death in 1986. She met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1991 through Tsultrim Allione. She has been a continuous member of Tsegyalgar East since she first took her Santi Maha Sangha exam with Rinpoche in 1994 and hopes to continue further levels.

» *Yantra Yoga continued from previous page*

I jumped and twisted my ankle and was off the foot for a month. That was the beginning of my time in the Community and I could not do Yantra for a month and thought that was the end of it. However, I still wanted to do Yantra so I started very gently, and found that if I listened to what my body was telling me, what was painful and what was ok, and without losing too much of the movement, I could still do something and feel better after.

I have a history of hurting myself but I have always used this kind of approach, not to try and indulge in the excuse of having some pain so as not to do Yantra, maybe to do less and more gently, sometimes not doing because you cannot force it, but always keeping the body going. I have found this has always helped me. The positive effect of the second operation lasted thirteen years. Two years ago I had to have a third operation, since they had removed my meniscus in the second operation and there was no buffer for the bones and the pain was very strong. Then I had the third operation and now after two years there is almost no pain. I have been doing Yantra now for fifteen years and only in the last few months have I been able to get back into my regular routine.

The idea that people have, "Oh I have this and that pain, I don't want to do this, also Yantra is too strong and people hurt themselves when they do it", like with any activity if people are not careful and basically force too much, then injury can happen. Fabio and Laura always say, "Don't force!" so I listened to this advice as I had to from so much injury, and now the way I do Yantra is somehow different from the standard routine. I have had to adapt some movements and build my practice around my knee problem, adapting it so I can do the movement, keeping the idea of the reason for this movement. So I know my limitations and do the movements accordingly. Now I adapt the movement without losing its sense and I can still do something.

For me what was good was that I had an understanding of Yantra for quite a long time before physical problems dramatically impeded my practice and I always fall back on this experience and use it for my practice. So if I cannot do something, I know the desired effect of that movement and think how I can adapt it to my condition.

However, if people have no experience of Yantra and only come with an obstructed condition, with physical obstacles to do a

practice of Yantra, it might be a challenge. If those people have the proper guidance I think it is still possible to construct a base to understand what the principles of Yantra are, how it can be helpful for our practice and how it can be useful for other things, as Rinpoche is always saying, for example when we do some kinds of *tsalung* practices, etc.

What we try to achieve in Yantra can be achieved in many ways. All these holds we learn in Yantra, open hold, closed hold, directed hold, there is not just one way to train to do these holds, there are a variety of ways. What we are taught by Fabio and Laura and what we teach is that when we do a practice session we have to see what works for us. Then of course if there are movements you cannot do there are other movements that may be easier but still achieve the purpose. This is when having



the proper guidance is useful. For me, for example, I construct my practice by mixing the groups. To do five yantras, I take the yantras from different groups keeping the sequence of the holds, and sometimes some of the variations are easier for me than the basic movements. There are a variety of ways to do these movements and I can find one that works for me.

Of course, like with injuries, there will be certain limitations due to age and some movements will be more challenging, but just as one adapts for other physical limitations based on injuries or whatever, one can adapt and modify the movements of Yantra Yoga so it can still be a satisfying and functional practice for older people. Also once you have more of an understanding of the principle or aim of Yantra, you can focus maybe a little more on the pranayamas. These do not require a very

challenging position, as some can even be done in a chair, and you can focus on kumbhaka which is an integral part, if not a primary aim, of Yantra Yoga.

There are movements that may be particularly difficult for elders like sitting with legs crossed on the floor, and for example going from standing to crossing the legs on the floor, coordinating the movement with rhythm. For example if you cannot get to the floor in two beats, you can take a little longer, adapting your breathing, taking a little time to adjust your position, using a cushion etc. That's ok, it is not a blasphemy. I feel it is more important to do Yantra than not to, but being careful and gentle is very important.

Yantra for me has been the practice where I reconnect with Rinpoche's transmission. It is my most intimate connection and I think each of us may have a particular connection with an aspect of the teaching, and for me it has been Yantra Yoga, from the beginning. That is maybe why I have this motivation. It has been the space I could find - in the middle of the day, in the middle of all the activities, going around and being involved in daily life - where I could reconnect.

It has a tremendous quieting effect on all the hectic aspects of life, which, for me, is most important. I work with computers in a static position for many hours of the day and Yantra is a breath of fresh air for the body just moving and breathing together. There is this connection of the three aspects of body, voice and mind that are not just three words put together. Yantra is a very powerful set of exercises and the body becomes much looser and more flexible very quickly.

Because of my condition it is kind of a challenge being an instructor, but I want to try again. On the one hand I have the diploma and I like to teach, but many things I feel I am not doing in a perfect way. Now I want to start again and do more but with a certain focus and tell people to be careful and I want to pay a lot of attention to people who are not super flexible and have problems. I would like to really look after them; to really nurture them so they can feel safe, secure and comfortable doing Yantra.

Clearly Yantra is not easy, but not easy does not mean impossible and also Yantra has the advantage of being a very complete, very extensive system; there are 108 movements, that's a lot. And of course if someone with physical limitations attends a course where everything is presented

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Nick Dudka

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu & An Artist in the Dzogchen Community

The story probably begins in my childhood. I've always had this thirst for painting and sculpturing, and I never imagined myself as anyone but an artist. At first, I studied at art college in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia, where I learned from wonderful teachers of modern painting.

After that I served in the army for two years. Even in the army I always remained an artist: when everybody went to musters and roll-calls my friend and I were painting a fat soldier in the form of Bacchus. At that period I was interested in ancient Greek mythology. The fat soldier posed as a model and we painted him in a wreath.

By the time I got back from the army my parents had already moved to Kiev, Ukraine. By the age of 20 I had already done some personal exhibitions developing as a normal, positive painter. Later I studied at the Kiev Art Institute.

In 1986 something changed in my consciousness and I had some inner calling for Buryatia and Buddhism that I wanted to apply myself to. Returning to Ulan-Ude, I headed to Ivolginsky temple, in that period the only Buddhist temple that had been reconstructed after the repressions of the Soviet



government. There I met Darma Dodi lama, a great Gelugpa teacher, scholar, and geshe who had studied before the October Revolution. He was very kind towards Russian students and gave me tantric initiations. This old man who was born at the end of XIX century, spent fourteen years in Stalin's camps as a prisoner during the repressions.

My *thangka* painting began with this teacher. It was late 80s. At that time there was no *thangka* painting, no literature, no teachers. Of course, he knew and remembered something of *thangka* due to his education, but it was very little. Then I met another teacher Zhimba-Zhamso Tsibenov

who gave me instructions and then started to give me orders for deity paintings. I was a Buddhist amateur painter but I had always aspired to study.

At the same time there was a sudden enrollment at a Buddhist university in Mongolia. It was supposed that one should study to become a lama. I was eager to learn all this. At that time all documents were checked by the KGB and as a result my questionnaire was rejected and I was not allowed to go Mongolia to study.

Nevertheless my life went on. One of our local Buddhists gave me a copy of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's book called "Talks in Conway" to read. It was probably 1988, and this book made a great change in my consciousness and left a deep mark in my life. Before my encounter with this book I had tried to get any information on Buddhism, meditation, visualization, *thangka* painting and, basically, the spiritual path from lamas or learned people but when I read this very poor quality copy, that had been re-copied 15 times I understood: "This is that Teacher!"

So I started to aspire to meet Rinpoche as well as get some other books, knowledge, information, etc. Then, I tried by all means to get in contact with Merigar which was the only Gar of the Dzogchen Community at that time and as a result, in 1989 one of my friends Volodya Bardakov and I did our first retreat. We went to a winter hut in a forest for a few days and did practice without transmission or initiation from Rinpoche, never having met him in person, such was our inner need.

Then we started to think how to invite Rinpoche to Buryatia. Eventually he

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» *Yantra Yoga* continued from previous page they will feel overwhelmed. The first impact will be, my body is my limitation, and I cannot do anything. I would like to work with those people and show them there is something there for them in Yantra, that it is possible to have the benefits of Yantra even with a limited condition.

That is perhaps the responsibility of instructors towards Community members and also new people. When I started, I had no experience with Yantra, or even yoga, and my body was not flexible, but with motivation I could do this. And Fabio helped me with this motivation. So if there is the motivation, even if there are impediments, it is possible to do. Giving space for these people who may have lost confidence in

their ability to do physical exercise, and to do Yantra particularly, I think this is a challenge for the Yantra instructors.

One final thing I would like to mention from my experience is how people deepen the practice of Yantra. Motivation is important, regularity is important, how to combine having some problem with regularly being followed by somebody is not so easy. That may be something we need to think about how to resolve. I had the fortune when I started doing Yantra to dedicate two or three years to all the courses, and supervisions, all around Europe, and having this base was really helpful. I am not saying it is necessary for everyone, but if somebody has a physical challenge, it is very easy for the obstacle to become over-

whelming. Support is something very important, having other practitioners around is helpful, a kind of a push, to keep the motivation and activity to a certain level.

Most Yantra Yoga instructors have had challenges to their practice at one point or another, but being together as a group of instructors is very helpful for sharing these incidents. We are fortunate to have this support, but for people who are alone in one place, that is not so easy.

It is my hope that this story can resonate with other practitioners and can be of benefit to help them include Yantra Yoga in their daily practice. If anyone needs advice I am always available.

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In Dharamsala.



Painting the Merigar West gönpa.



Medicine Buddha.

>> *Nick Dudka continued from previous page* came in 1992 and we had a retreat on Lake Katakell near Lake Baikal. There were 120 people present at that retreat, 20–25 foreigners and all the rest were Russian people. It was my first meeting with Rinpoche, first transmission. Surprisingly, during this 5 or 6 day retreat I understood all of Rinpoche's words. Rinpoche often uses the expression "water dissolves in water" meaning that the natural environments unify. So were his words. Then I also told Rinpoche saying that I was painter, making *thangka*, and he invited me to paint the Gonpa of Merigar. I agreed with pleasure.

Next summer 1993 I went to Italy where I lived and worked for half a year. We did external painting according to Rinpoche's project. Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche, astonishing lama and painter, painted two of the Gonpa's walls, and I helped him to paint one of the twelve primordial teachers. I did not go back a step from him and asked him to explain how to stretch a canvas on the frame, how to prime, polish, prepare the colors. Although he was an important lama he agreed to show me how to prime, mix chalk with the glue, etc. It was a fantastic time.

In 1994 there was the second retreat with Rinpoche in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia in which from 500 up to 1000 people participated. People had already started to understand the importance and value of the teaching, teacher and transmission. I continued to develop as an artist, I painted but there were no more teachers. By that time Darma Dodi lama had passed away, and in

1995 I decided that it was time to go to Dharamsala, India.

I remained there from 1995 till 1997. When I came to Dharamsala to the teacher Gen Sangye Yeshe, by that time I had made many *thangkas* and considered that I already had some knowledge. I had held *thangka* exhibitions in Argentina, Italy, not to mention Russia. However, I went to study to Dharamsala in order to set myself up as a painter and pertain to a certain school. I brought with me a bunch of photos of my *thangkas* made from 1986 till 1995. The teacher attentively examined the photos of my unprofessional works made with gouache or water colors for two hours. Then he told me: "You don't have to study, you know everything very well." My heart gave a jump. I thought: "How can that be? I sacrificed so much to come here: had provided for my small children and wife, obtained a visa to India with great difficulty, found money to meet this teacher, and he says that I don't have to study and that I know everything." I answered: "No, I came to study, and I want to learn from you from the very beginning." He said smiling: "Ok, if you wish to study, go to the class and start to paint." I was absolutely happy.

I have to say that the education system at school is intended for five years. The first three years one only uses pencil and makes a set of drawings of different forms of the Buddha. Once the teacher approves a drawing, one can proceed to another category. The next two years the student has to paint three *thangkas*: a Buddha, a female form, for example, Green or White Tara, and a wrathful form, for example, Vajrapa-

ni or Mahakala. But I did not have these 5 years, only a six month tourist visa. I would draw day and night waiting the possibility to proceed to colors. In the afternoon I used to come to the Teacher's office and he would make some corrections with a soft pencil. It meant that the drawing failed the revision and that I had to start once again. Every day it was same thing. When the Teacher finally said: "Ok, now you can start to draw the Buddha without clothes", I was very happy. When my visa expired I came home, made another one and returned to Dharamsala.

New visa, new life. One day the Teacher told me that now I could paint *thangkas*. I was indescribably happy. In the end I succeeded in doing five *thangkas* instead of the three that were on the program and for this I was granted a diploma which is usually given after 5 years of study giving the right not only to paint in the ancient Tibetan style called *Menri*, but also to teach. For me it was a great honor to have such an opportunity. Throughout my life I have been lucky to meet teachers who opened a path and helped along the way and even after their passing they remain a beacon which guides me in life. When we had been granted diplomas I was deeply touched and asked how I could help the Institute. And my teacher told me: "Return to where you came from and be useful there." Since that time this phrase serves as my life motto.

How can I help people here in Buryatia? With what my teachers taught me. For example, such external manifestation as *thangkas*: they should be beautiful, gracious, correct. On a simple level a *thangka*



White Tara.

should represent the state of heaven, bliss and the deity which is superior to a human being. The human being is in *samsara* and the deity is beyond *samsara*. That's why it should be correct and beautiful, pure and radiant. The deity should attract a person who should aspire to the state of this divinity.

Since 1997 I have been teaching at the All-Buryat Association of Development and Culture and since 2000 at the East Siberian Academy of Art and Culture. But despite my busy schedule most of the time I spend in my studio. I try to paint 8–9 hours or more a day.

Among other things I try to make exhibitions wherever invited. We, who live here in Buryatia, are happy people because we have Buddhist temples. People who wish to practice on every level of their own understanding can come to a temple like to a church and pray, meet a teacher, receive instructions, read mantra, etc. The closest cities – Chita and Irkutsk – are 500 km away, but they already do not have such an opportunity. How can people get in touch with the teaching if I don't try to help them? That's why I went and started to make exhibitions in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Chita...

We know about the six liberations that Rinpoche has explained. Liberation through seeing is called *thongdrol*. A person comes and makes a karmic connection by means of his or her vision. The *thangka* is made correctly, purely, honestly and consecrated by teachers and due to that its energy attracts a person, purifies his or her consciousness, and when the secondary causes mature, this person will enter the path thanks to the fact that once he or she saw the image of some deity.

For people it's an opportunity, a bridge connecting them with their state. For example, when the information about Buddhism enters the consciousness of a modern person, how can he or she understand what *dharmakaya* or *sambhogakaya* mean? When there is an image which describes and explains everything, a person can perceive everything more easily. Besides, *thongdrol*, liberation through seeing, comes into force because a *thangka* is not just a picture but a *thongdrol*. It imposes a lot of responsibility on the artist: to do purely, honestly and engage fully. You are not just painting a picture but something that people use as a support in their spiritual practice.

That's why I follow the instructions of my teachers in a correct way ("return to where you come from and be useful there") and try to promote what they taught me. I am immensely grateful for the encounter with the book "Talks in Conway" thanks to which I consequently met Rinpoche. Having received the transmission from him I try to follow his words and instructions.

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