



THE MIRROR

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June 2016



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY



Upcoming Events with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Photo: P. Fassoli

2016

Italy
Merigar West
July 9–15, 2016
Longsal Ati Gongpa Ngotrod,
Introduction to the State of Ati

Worldwide Transmission
August 12–13, 2016
Anniversary of Padmasambhava

Czech Republic
August 12–14, 2016
The Teaching of Ati Yoga

Slovakia
Bratislava
August 19–21, 2016
Discover the Nature of Mind

Italy
Merigar West
August 26–September 1, 2016
Merigar West Retreat

Spain, Tenerife
Dzamling Gar
November 11–15, 2016
Teachers Training for SMS, Vajra
Dance and Yantra

November 16, 2016
Awarding the Diplomas including
I.D.C. Diplomas

Worldwide Transmission
November 23–24, 2016
Anniversary of Adzom Drugpa

November 29–30, 2015
S.M.S. 3rd Level Exam
December 1–7, 2016
S.M.S. Fourth level Training

Italy
Merigar West
December 9, 2016
Intensive Practice
of Naggon

New Event!

December 10–11, 2016
Inauguration of the Asian Art
Museum in Arcidosso and
Celebration of the 35th Anniversary
of Merigar West

New Event!

Spain, Tenerife
Dzamling Gar
December 28–January 3, 2017
Yangtig Retreat

Contents

Schedule	2
Editorial.	3
Knowledge of Our Real Condition, pt. 2	4
Shang Shung Foundation	8
ASIA	11
Update on the Dzamling Gar Gönpa	12
An Overview of the Dzamling Gar Project.	13
The Vase Burial Ceremony	14
The Garland of Jewels That Connects Us	15
Culture and Khaita Dances	17
Jo-gur Meditation Platform for Dzamling Gar.	18
Journey Among Tibetan Nomads	19
Rainbow Body and Resurrection	24
Rasayana (chulen) History & Literature.	25
Focus on Samtengar and the Lings in Asia.	27
Hospice Training with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo.	38
The Hypocrisy of the Technique of Positive Thinking	40
Interview with Ans Swart.	42
How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.	46

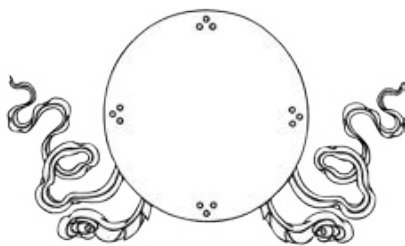
Editorial

It is 40 years since Chögyal Namkhai Norbu began to teach Dzogchen to a group of students in Subiaco in 1976. During the recent Tsalung retreat in Dzamling Gar, Rinpoche told us that the Mandarava retreat earlier in the year was the 600th retreat he has taught, and the Tsalung retreat the 601st – he told us that he has kept a record of every retreat and the teaching he gave.

As well as giving transmission of Dzogchen, Rinpoche has transmitted many Longsal Terma teachings which he received in dreams, as well as many important texts he received from his teachers, especially those of his root teacher, Changchub Dorje. So ensuring that these priceless treasures can remain available into the future, as well as being available for us to practice here and now.

During this time, he has established 11 Gars and many Lings and regional groups have formed around the world. The formalisation of an International (global) Dzogchen Community is in process. The original Italian Shang Shung Institute for ensuring the preservation and continuation of a living Tibetan culture has recently been reborn as a European Foundation, and there are Shang Shung Institutes in the USA, Russia, Austria and Australia, with Schools of Tibetan Medicine in USA, and Russia, with another being established in Australia and projected also for Dzamling Gar. He also established ASIA, a highly successful Aid and Development organisation, primarily for the Himalayan region.

There are now 40 Santi Maha Sangha instructors, of whom 7 are authorised to the first level, and 3 to the second level. Later



this year there will be Level 3 SMS exams and 4th level training – Rinpoche has prepared everything to go further, depending on the students' progress.

At the time of writing, the first Level 3 Yantra Yoga instructor supervision is in process, with 5 instructors being supervised. In addition to the two main Teachers, there are 73 First level instructors, and 24 2nd level Instructors.

In addition to the two main Teachers of Vajra Dance, there are two international instructors, 35 first level instructors and 28 2nd level instructors.

Earlier this year, the first training for Khaita Instructors took place and 60 diplomas were awarded, with further training about to commence.

And yet – all of this is only a beginning, it is the base from which these most profound Dzogchen Teachings given by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche can grow and flourish in this globe, providing benefit to countless beings both here and in many dimensions.

Rinpoche, there are no words to express the depth and heart of our gratitude! Knowing our own inadequacy for all there is still to do, please we ask that you remain with us for many years to come, to continue the unfolding of your work for our benefit and the benefit of countless beings! May you have the good health, happiness and long life to stay with us! ©

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Front cover:
A view from inside the Jo-gur Meditation Platform
at Dzamling Gar. Photo by Renata Nani



THE MIRROR

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International

Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Knowledge of Our Real Condition

Part 2

The second part of a public talk given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Beijing, China, October 9, 2015. The first part was published in The Mirror, issue 130.

Point of View

When we learn about Atiyoga, the first important thing in the teaching is the point of view, our consideration of how we think things should be. I studied the Buddhist tradition in college for many years, firstly sutra philosophy for five or six years and later on I deepened my knowledge at college. I thought that I knew the principle of the Buddhist sutra teaching very well. After that, I received a lot of tantric teachings and instructions and thought that I knew them. But what I learned and what I knew was the point of view, which is a more traditional way. A traditional way means that if there are four or five schools, each school has its own way of seeing. The origin is considered to be the teaching of the Buddha, but the people following the teaching of the Buddha are different types of human beings. When people follow the Buddha's teachings, they do not immediately obtain a state like the Buddha's.

Everybody has his or her individual way of seeing and judging, and human beings in particular have very strong egos. We always think that we know better than others, that our way of seeing is more perfect than that of others, even though we don't say that to other people in order to be polite. If we were to say that our way was better, then nobody would have anything to do with us, so we show that we are very open. But in the real sense we insist on our way of seeing and for this reason people discuss things for hours and hours, even if those things are not very important. We need to convert other people to our way of seeing and thinking, although this is not very easy because other people also have their egos. I have my condition in the same way another person has his or hers.

In this case what Buddha explained is very important. He said that everything is interdependent, that there does not exist a single thing that is not interdependent. So when I talk to and do something with another person, it is very important that I know that we are interdependent and that just as I have my condition, so does the other person.

There are some very important words of the Buddha in the Sutra teaching

རང་གི་ལུས་ལ་དབེ་ལོང་ལ། གཞན་ལ་གནོད་བར་མ་བྱེད་ཅིག
rang gi lus la dpe long la / gzhan la gnod par ma byed cig



Photo by Cheong Thoong Leong

He said that we should take ourselves as an example, pay respect to and not create problems for others. For example, if someone insults me, I don't like it. Remembering that I didn't like it I take this as an example and don't insult other people. I pay respect to them. This means that we are interdependent and we work that way.

When we have that knowledge of *nalma* [real condition] then we know that all sentient beings, not only human beings, have this condition. In the Buddhist Sutra teaching it explains that we should increase our compassion for all sentient beings because if we do something bad to them, they have a bad sensation and suffer. This is the reason that we pay respect to other sentient beings. When we have this knowledge of *nalma*, that everybody has their real condition, then we can understand how to pay respect to and work with others.

Recognizing our real nature

I've been to many important international peace conferences. They were all very nice to attend because they were well prepared and many important people participated. We would spend time together and get to know each other, particularly if we were attending for a few days. Everyone would say that it was very important to create peace and, of course, it is very nice topic, but after a few days when the conference finished, we would leave and nothing very concrete remained. Each time I would reflect a little that in the real sense it was very sad because they had organised an expensive conference and people had participated with good intention, but the conclusion was that nothing had manifested.

In this field I thought that Atiyoga is really very important for all sentient beings. What we should learn regarding the aspect of the point of view in Atiyoga is that we should not think that our way of thinking is perfect, that our way of seeing is perfect. We are always limited that way. We must observe our condition. This is how it is explained in the *Dra Thalgyur tantra*. In general when we



Public Talk at Beijing University.

ask which point of view in the Buddha's teaching is the best, then all traditions claim that their path of knowledge and point of view is perfect and there are many discussions between the different schools. At the time of the Buddha, he explained his teaching: the essence of the teaching of the Buddha is recognizing how our real nature of *nalma* is. Buddha said:

ཟབ་ཞི་སྤྱོད་བྲལ་འདྲ་གསལ་འདྲ་མ་བྱས། བདུད་ཅི་ལྷ་བུ་འཛིན་ཤིག་ཁོ་ཙོས་རྟེན།
 སྤྱོད་བྲལ་ལྷ་ཀྱང་གོ་བར་མི་རྒྱས་པས། མི་སྤྱོད་ནགས་འདབས་འདི་ཅུ་གནས་པར་བྱ།
zab zhi spros bral 'od gsal 'du ma byas / bdud rtsi lta bu'i chos shig
kho bos rnyed / su la bstan kyang go bar mi nus pas / mi smra nags
'dabs 'di ru gnas par bya //

ཟབ་ཞི་སྤྱོད་བྲལ་ (*zab zhi spros bral*) means that I have discovered very deep knowledge. Peaceful. སྤྱོད་བྲལ་ (*spros bral*) means beyond all concepts

འདྲ་གསལ་ (*'od gsal*) means luminosity, its real nature.

འདྲ་མ་བྱས་ (*'du ma byas*) means something that is not aggregated because everything that is aggregated is related to time and space.

I have discovered very precious teaching and knowledge, but when I communicate it to people, nobody can understand it easily. What I should do now is I should be in that knowledge myself.

Buddha taught that kind of knowledge of the teaching. He didn't teach any kind of tradition. Up to the moment when Buddha manifested *Parinirvana*, the manifestation of death, all his students were following Buddha, and there were no schools or traditions. However, as soon as he manifested *Parinirvana*, 18 different schools of Hinayana arose because his students formed different groups. One group would say that they understood what Buddha had taught while another group would present it in a slightly different way, just like we have different kinds of political parties in our society. This is called limitation.

In Atiyoga what we need to learn is not to judge or look outside, or try to convert someone. If we go in that direction, in any case, sooner or later we lose. Instead of that what we need to do is to observe ourselves within. When I met my precious Dzogchen teacher who introduced me to real knowledge of Dzogchen, he explained the correct point of view by telling me that I should understand the difference between the function of a pair of glasses and a mirror. When we use a pair of glasses, even though they may be very strong, we are looking outside, and if there are very tiny things, we can see them very well. This is the function of the glasses. That means that even if we know many things very well intellectually, it is dualistic vision: I am here and I see something there. But we do not know or discover how our real *nalma* is.

The Example of the Mirror

The most important way to understand the point of view in Atiyoga is to observe ourselves. The example is the mirror. The mirror does not look outside. When we look in the mirror our face appears. This is an example of us observing within ourselves. When we observe inside ourselves we can understand and discover the infinite limitations we have in our condition. When we discover them and are no longer within those limitations, no longer conditioned by them, then we are in our real nature. That is the principle of Atiyoga. And even though we live in the limited condition of society, we become aware of and know how the situation of our relative condition is. We live in time and space and have our physical body – we need to sleep at night and eat and drink to maintain our physical body. We cannot say that because we are practitioners of Atiyoga we don't need those things. We need to pay respect to and become responsible for them. Then there is more possibility that we can work a little in our real condition. And we can also understand how we should pay respect to others.

This is something very important, particularly when we talk about the peace of the world. Peace in the world is very possible if we pay respect to the dimension of others. We should discover this in our individual condition. In Western languages it is called 'evolution' and it means that we know what the real condition is and we work with that, also regarding others. In this case everything we do will correspond with how our real nature is. For that reason knowledge of Atiyoga is also very important for living in our society.

We should think a little more about evolution in each of us, and develop that knowledge, being present and knowing how we should work in the relative condition, in time and space, knowing very well that the relative condition is indispensable. But if we ignore our real nature we will have no base for evolution, and will always have revolution and will need to change and convert others. If you convert cats and dogs, they will never be happy. Even if you try to convert cats and dogs, they will not be happy. So as Buddha said, we should take example from ourselves, this is very important.

Being Dominated by Mind

All of us who exist have our physical body, our energy level and our mind. When we live in an ordinary way then we follow our

» continued on the following page



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minds, judging and thinking, and our energy and physical body serve our minds. Mind should become aware of that. When we know that we all have *nalma*, our real nature, since the beginning, then we try to do our best with the mind in the relative condition. We need to understand how our real nature is, and then when we have this kind of presence and knowledge, mind no longer dominates our physical body and energy. When we are ignorant of that, then most people always follow their minds.

Some people say that they have a lot of confusion, agitation and many problems. Why do we have all these kinds of problems? Because we go too much after mind, not knowing or completely forgetting how our real nature is, so that mind becomes more and more powerful day after day and we are ruled by it. When we go ahead that way then mind completely dominates us and we become completely dependent on mind. When we become like that, mind becomes much more powerful and can also dominate our energy level and we can have many problems.

Some people may think that a bad spirit has entered their body and even though we tell them that there is no bad spirit, that it is only their mind, they don't believe it. Why? Because mind succeeds in working at the energy level and the person feels something concrete. Someone might even say that they hear someone talking in their ear, telling them to do this and that. When we tell them there is nobody talking, that it is only their mind, the person doesn't believe it. Sometimes mind succeeds in dominating the energy level and there is no vital *prana* energy circulating in some of their channels and these people can see and hear very concrete things. Some people even kill themselves, jumping off a house or a rock. That is an example of being conditioned by mind.

So it is very important that we know how the condition of our real nature is. Mind is its function, it is related. Mind is indispensable and very useful for everybody. If we have no mind, we couldn't think or do anything. But we need to use mind, not be used by mind. People who are following Atiyoga must understand this.

Overcoming Problems

For example, in Atiyoga we have practices that are related to the physical level such as yantra yoga, in which there are hundreds of movements and positions combined with *prana* energy. If someone has this kind of problem of being dominated by mind, there are some movements and practices related to the physical level and breathing in order to return to a normal condition. Many practices are also related to the energy level. When we have some problems in the relative condition it is much easier to overcome them. For example, if there is some problem at the physical level, something we can see and touch, then there is also something to do physically. If we have some problems only related to the energy level, it is much more difficult because we can see the physical level but not the energy level, even though we may feel something through our experience. It is even more difficult with mental concepts. For that reason when we follow Atiyoga, there are practices related to the physical body, the energy level and the mind.

Many people like to do breathing practices or some movements, but when we talk about meditation, many people don't understand



what we should do. I'll give you a very simple example. A person has a lot of confusion and many problems so we tell them to relax. That person says that they know very well that they should relax but they don't manage to, so they go to a teacher to receive some advice. What can a teacher do when someone like this comes? The teacher may suggest that when the person is feeling nervous that they do some breathing, for example, inhaling and exhaling while raising and lowering the arms 20 times. After that they should lie down and relax. So that person does that and discovers that it helps.

Today when that person is nervous, they do that. But it doesn't mean that they do it today and that tomorrow the person is relaxed. Tomorrow is another day, another circumstance. There are many secondary causes for being nervous in our circumstances. Every time the person gets nervous they do this practice and it may help a little, but for us it is not sufficient only to overcome that problem in the moment. If we wish to learn and do something definitively to reach a calm state then we have to go to the energy level and there are practices, exercises to relax. Then finally there is also our mental level.

In general we don't know how to relax. We only know this word and think that relaxing means not doing anything particular for creating tension. For example, when we go to a doctor for an examination, he asks us to lie down on the examination couch and relax. What do we do? We try to relax our physical body a little. But our existence is not only our physical body it is also our energy level and particularly our mind. Even though we may appear to be physically relaxed we are very tense and worrying about what the



Public Talk at Beijing University.

doctor wants to do. Our energy is charged and so is our mind so there is no relaxation. In the real sense we don't know how to relax.

Tregchöd

In Atiyoga we have a teaching method called *Tregchöd*. These are instructions. *Tregchöd* means total relaxation and this name comes from an example. In Tibetan *treg* means something that you bind together with a cord such as pieces of wood. In Tibetan we say *shing* for wood. When we bind pieces of wood together with a cord we say *shing treg*. If we bind some herbs, this is called *tsa treg*. Sometimes in videos you can see Tibetan country people carrying many bundles of herbs bound together. So in *Tregchöd*, *treg* means bound.

In our ordinary condition, we have body, speech and mind. All these three existences are charged up and we are always bound [by them]. We never relax in our condition. When there is something to be done, we give it too much importance, considering that it must be done in this way or that. When we give this importance to things, it means that we are charged up, and when we are charged up we are bound by body, speech and mind, all together. This is the meaning of *treg*.

Chöd means that these three break. In Tibetan there are two words whose meaning is a little similar but whose sound is different. One of them is pronounced *chöd* [spelled *gcod*] while the other is *chöd* [spelled *chod*]. When we say *chöd* [chod] we exhale. With *chöd* [gcod] we do not exhale. *Chöd* [gcod] means cutting through something, for example, chopping through a piece of wood with an axe. In the same way there are many practitioners in Tibet called *chödpa*, who do *chöd* practice, cutting through the ego, because they have discovered that the ego is the root of all problems. There are many methods that they use and somehow they cut through.

When we say *chöd* [spelled *chod*], nobody is cutting, but that which binds breaks by itself. It breaks by itself because we are entering knowledge. All our tensions are in the relative condition so when we are really in our condition of *nalma*, there are no tensions. It is beyond any kind of tensions. When we are in that state it is

as if the thread that binds is breaking by itself. When that thread breaks by itself, what was bound finally relaxes. This means we are using that Atiyoga method, that aspect of the practice, at the physical level, the energy level and the mental level. Combining them together and applying them, we discover how we can really relax. This is very important in the lifetime of a human being.

Integration

Our lives are not only made up of bad things, there are also some very nice things. When we understand how our lives are then we also need to enjoy them. Some practitioners really dedicate themselves to practice and make sacrifices, just like when we follow Sutra teaching. But when we become practitioners of Atiyoga, what we need to do is integrate in our relative condition.

In the knowledge of Atiyoga there is nothing to change. If, for example, a person works in a hospital, he can be in his knowledge of *nalma*, do his best and go ahead with his work. His attitude and what he should do in Atiyoga is that. Or if a person works in a shop and needs to go there every day, or if he is a university or high school student going to school every day to study, he knows that this is the relative condition. We become responsible for ourselves, we know what our responsibilities are and we do our best, dealing with and not being overly conditioned by mental concepts. That way we can also have the possibility to enjoy our lives. This is important. When we are living our short lives we also need to enjoy them.

Many people think that because they are young that they don't have these problems and they will have a very long life. But life has no guarantee. We don't even know if tomorrow will exist or not. This is the real condition. So we are present and we do our best. We become responsible for ourselves. Learning Atiyoga means helping ourselves. Helping ourselves means we become aware of how we should work with circumstances. When we want to create benefit for others, finally we do it in a perfect way because we know what really benefits other people and other sentient beings. And we become aware. This is the principle of the teaching of Atiyoga. I think that not everybody really needs to become a practitioner of a spiritual path, but it is very important to have this knowledge. ✱

Transcribed and edited by L. Granger

Tibetan courtesy of Margherita Pansa

Ka-Ter Tibetan Language Courses 2016 Program

Summer Courses

14th Tibetan Translator Training

Merigar West, Arcidosso (GR), Tuscany, Italy
July 18–July 31, 2016

Join us and learn to translate ancient texts from the Tibetan tradition. If you are already skilled you can deepen your knowledge, discuss techniques, compare with others, and train your ability in a collaborative environment inspired by the ancient practice of translating in groups. The training for translators from Tibetan is an initiative of the Shang Shung Institute Austria and first started in 2003. In 2016 we will hold the 14th training.

The training will be divided into two levels. Students will be assigned to them according to their ability and experience. Both levels will be held at the same time.

1. Intermediate Level

Intermediate students Level will be given a relatively simple text and work on the translation individually or in small groups. Their work will then be reviewed and corrected in group-sessions. The instructor will be available for clarifications. The objective is for students to become familiar with vocabulary, grammatical structures, and syntax in context.

2. Advanced Level

Advanced students will translate in groups with the instructor and focus on all aspects of the language as well as on theories and techniques of translating. They will read and translate without any advance preparation. The text will be more complex both grammatically and in terms of content. The goal is to produce publication-ready translations. Note: A maximum of 5 people can participate in this course via skype conference with shared screen and shared docs. The price and the conditions for participation



are the same as participating in the course in Merigar.

Fee for the 2 weeks summer-training:

160€, 144 if you pay before May 15

Special fee for people who also follow the 3 weekend-courses for advanced or intermediate students: 120 Euro, 108 if you pay before May 15.

In order to be able to participate in this course all participants need to be members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria in 2016. The membership in 2016 costs 75€.

3rd Classical Tibetan Language Course for Beginners

Merigar West, Arcidosso (GR), Tuscany, Italy
August 16–23, 2016
with Prof. Fabian Sanders

A week to set the base for learning the Classical Tibetan Language and to exert yourself in reading, writing, and understanding the texts of the Tibetan tradition. We will have a general introduction to the sacredness, importance, and structure of the language, the lettering system and so forth. Then we will examine the morphology of syllables, word formation and all the main features of the grammar.

Four hour lectures daily: 10–12am and 2–4pm
Fee: 85€ with 10% Early-Bird discount (76.50) until July 15th 2015

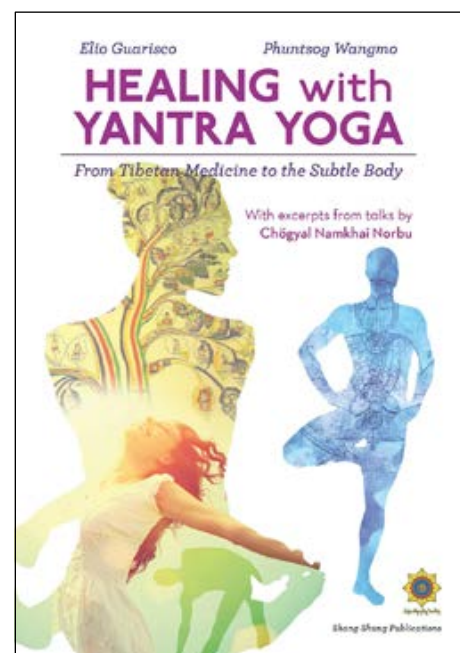
In order to be able to participate in that course all participants need to be members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria in 2016. The membership of 2016 costs 75€. Contact: The instructor: fsanders@unive.it
How to join: ghita.pansa@gmail.com
Membership and payment: office@ssi-austria.at

Healing with Yantra Yoga

From Tibetan Medicine to the Subtle Body

With excerpts from talks by
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
By Elio Guarisco and Phuntsog Wangmo

Sergio Quaranta



Yantra Yoga, originally transmitted in Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava in the eighth century, was first introduced to the West by Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the 1970s.

Working primarily on the physical and energetic structure of the body, the practice profoundly affects the functions of body, energy, mind, producing benefits that begin with deep relaxation and better health in general and can go all the way to complete realization.

Healing with Yantra Yoga aims to convey an understanding of the workings of the specific health benefits of the practice.



New Shang Shung UK Activities for 2016–17

At the end of May 2016, we concluded a successful programme of events, with an outstanding lecture on Tibetan Divination by Prof. Donatella Rossi. Earlier in May we held an experiential psychotherapy workshop with Nikki Simmons while a few weeks earlier, Jamyang Oliphant gave an excellent lecture on the history and value of the practice of chüdlen.

In the Spring, we held a spontaneous book launch for the release of 'Mount Kailash and the Lost Kingdom of Shang Shung', together with a film show of original film footage from the 1988 trip to Tibet, which was very well received! This was accompanied by an exhibition of prints from the trip based on original photographs by Brian Beresford. These will be auctioned live on June 25th, where 50% of all profits will go towards supporting the Gumpa at Dzamlingar.

The main emphasis during the past year, however, has been on the study of Tibetan Language for beginners, with Fabian Sanders from the University of Naples. We plan to follow this up in the coming academic year with a series of weekend courses for advanced beginners – see below for dates. At the same time we are developing our existing online platform for learning classical Tibetan and furthering the study of the language on an individual basis. This is an aspect of Tibetan culture that Rinpoche is increasingly encouraging amongst his students, especially in the context of the Khaita joyful singing and dancing.

Following an overview of the basic principles of traditional Tibetan medicine by Phuntsog Wangmo, a Tibetan physician, and Elio Guarisco, a Tibetan translator with extensive experience in the field, this book examines the positive health effects attributed to each of the 108 movements of Yantra Yoga.

The final part is dedicated to the chakras and channels of the subtle body as elucidated in Tantra. ©

Watch out for our new 'Insight Tour' to Nepal later this year!!

Note: Please visit our website for more details on our upcoming courses:

shangshunguk.org

2016–2017 Highlights

Tibetan Art Conference

Exploring Sacred Space

October 1–2, 2016

SSIUK Lecture Series

'Dream Yoga'

with Michel Katz

Friday Dec 9, 2016

Tibetan Language Programme

Advanced Beginners

with Fabian Sanders

(skype available for those unable to attend in person)

November 4–6, 2016

December 16–18, 2016

January 13–15, 2017

Losar Event

Tibetan New Year Celebrations

February 27, 2017

Tibetan Medicine Programme

Tibetan Medical Conference

March 25–26, 2017

Kun Nye: Tibetan Massage Course

April 2017 – two 10 day courses

Update from Shang Shung Institute USA

New Intern

This summer Shang Shung is fortunate to have Intern Grace Engelman with us! Grace is a freshman at Brown University, and served as the student liaison to her high school's Board of Directors. She is working with us on the process to seek accreditation for the School of Tibetan Medicine, and to publicize our many cultural events, as described below.

News about the School of Tibetan Medicine

A new class just started the Four-Year Tibetan Medicine program. With this new class, we have a full house – a class of students in each year of the Four-Year program. In addition, preparations are underway for the start of the Three-Year Advanced Tibetan Medicine Program.

Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo has been much in demand this year. Amid her rigorous schedule of live teaching and recording lessons for the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine, Menpa Wangmo recently gave these public talks:

Public talk at the Conway Historical Society in Conway, Massachusetts on March 22, 2016, as seen in an online video from our partners at Frontier Community Access Television;

Public talk at the Chesterfield Council on Aging in Chesterfield, Massachusetts on April 10, 2016;

Keynote address and panel presentations at the annual Integrative Medicine Conference in Barcelona, Spain on April 15–17, 2016, on Cardiovascular Diseases: A Dialogue between Conventional, Homeopathic, Tibetan, Chinese and Ayurvedic Medicines;

A well-attended week-long seminar on Hospice from the Traditional Tibetan Medicine perspective in April 2016, as seen in The Mirror;

A well-attended Master Class entitled Tibetan Medicine: Theory and Practice, on May 10, 2016, at the Cultural and Scientific

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Center of the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru Cultural Events

Spring 2016 Events

Steven Landsberg – Shang Shung Institute of America hosted Steven Landsberg on May 14, 2016 for a public talk in Northampton, Massachusetts, called Beyond Hope & Fear: The Application of Presence, co-sponsored by SSI and the International Dzogchen Community in America.

Yeshe Tsomo – Continuing our efforts to provide opportunities for people in the area to experience traditional Tibetan culture, Yeshe Tsomo gave a wonderful two-day seminar on Tibetan cuisine at the United Congregational Church in Conway, Massachusetts in May, 2016. This session featured a rare, traditional baked momo or dumpling.

Khaita – A contingent of Khaita* dancers from Kundrolling and Tsegylgar East participated in the 10th International Dance Parade in New York City on May 21, 2016. As reported in The Mirror, "...there were dancers from 147 organizations representing 81 distinct dance styles from the US and other countries, totaling over 6,000 participants." This was a wonderful opportunity to bring Khaita to a larger audience in the U.S., and the spark that was lit continued online, as the video posted on the Shang Shung Institute's Facebook page now has 12,000 views!

Summer 2016 Events

Upcoming events that we are looking forward to in the Summer of 2016:

Open House July 2nd:

Experience the Joy of Mindful Presence in Conway, Massachusetts

Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings with Bodhi Krause
July 16–17

Introduction to Yantra Yoga with Naomi Zeitz
July 23–24

Khaita* Joyful Dances: Practice of Presence in Joy & Movement
August 8–13

Tibetan Language with Tenzin Norbu
August 25–30

We hope you will join us for these events and spread the word about them. More information can be found here: <http://www.shangshung.org/home/events/calendar/> and interested individuals can always

contact Shang Shung at (413) 369-4928 or secretary@shangshung.org for more information.

With many tashi delegs,
The Shang Shung Institute of America



*Khaita is promoted by the Shang Shung Foundation – International Institute for Tibetan Culture, in collaboration with Shang Shung Institute of America

Join or Renew Your Membership Online:
http://shangshung.org/store/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=82
or call us at 413-369-4928 or email us at secretary@shangshung.org ©



Khaita dancers at NYC dance parade.



Intern Grace Engelman and SSI Administrator Caroline Hotaling.

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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Let's Not Forget Nepal

Dev is 6 years old and one of 35,000 Nepalese children who, due to the earthquake of 25 April 2015 and the aftershock of May 12, saw their lives change in an instant.

He lives with his family in the Rasuwa District, a steep and difficult to access region north of Kathmandu, 60% of which is at an average altitude of 3000 meters. Here the earthquake caused 95% of the buildings to collapse and it was very difficult to reach the area due to landslides and the partial or total destruction of roads after the quake.

ASIA has been in Nepal since 1996, and was the first to intervene in this area that remained isolated and without aid for days.

In the Rasuwa District, as in other areas affected by the earthquake, ASIA has distributed over 55,000 aluminum panels to build temporary shelters, and create 58 temporary classrooms for 2,345 children as well as other activities that you can read about in more detail in the **Report on the emergency intervention in Nepal** (<http://www.namaskarfornepal.org/docs/report-nepal-i-en.pdf>). ASIA has helped more than 26,000 people in total.

Now the goal is to rebuild the schools destroyed by the earthquake. The first step will be to start with the **rebuilding of four schools** to accommodate around 591 children in the VDC (Village Development Committee) of Yarsa and Saramthali, and also bring help to the community (about 10,000 people).

This project is not limited to reconstruction. **It will make the schools become Centers for families:** training on children's rights and the danger of child trafficking, advanced teaching methods, recycling techniques, organic farming and permaculture will be some of the activities.



In the last 20 years in Nepal, ASIA has established long distance support projects for Tibetan refugee children and monks, principally at the Manasarovar school and the Bönpo Triten Norbutse monastery in the Boudhanat district of Kathmandu.

In 2009 ASIA started up a project for water purification, training in health and hygiene, and education in the districts of Rasuwa, Kavre and Dolpo, in order to improve the health of the population and to increase the literacy rate by giving support to 21 schools.

In 2015 ASIA started a new food security project by creating family vegetable gardens and giving training on organic farming methods in addition to all their activities linked to the emergency earthquake.

Now our efforts are concentrated on the reconstruction of the schools destroyed by the earthquake, a major commitment to the future of Nepal. If you also want to participate in the #namaskar4nepal project, you can do so with a donation at <http://www.namaskarfornepal.org/en/>

Whether big or small your donation will be a brick that will contribute to the reconstruction of the future of Nepal. ©

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Update on the Dzamling Gar Gönpa

Based on a presentation by
Benedetta Tagliabue,
architect of the Project
May 19, 2016 Dzamling Gar

Recently there have been some important changes to the Project for the Gönpa at Dzamling Gar, which we would like to inform the whole Dzogchen Community about.

You already probably know that the Gönpa will be situated at the top of the land on a large terrace and covered by a big roof resembling a bird in flight [see The Mirror issue 131 p.13–15]. It will be possible to arrive there from all different sides: from the inside, from the left, the right, the front and also from the street at the back of the building.

We have been dealing with all the difficulties of project permissions and square meters and when we presented this project to the Community in February of this year, we thought that the Gönpa, which will be situated on the upper terrace of the building, would just have a roof and that perhaps the walls would not be so stable. We also didn't really have the permissions for them.

But after the presentation, we received comments from people suggesting that the Gönpa should be made more stable, and also be approved legally. We made some changes to the project and went to the town authorities to try and arrive at another solution. So now we have a more stable situation for the Gönpa: the new project plans to have a much bigger Gönpa of about 2000 sq.m., that will be able to

Making an Effort

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu comments on the Dzamling Gar Project

I am very happy. It is also very nice. This [project] is something more related to our epoch because we exist in time, and time is going ahead. We are not going back. We are going ahead. For the future we still don't know how many more new things will manifest, but we know that we are trying to develop that, to deal with that, because one of the very important things in the Dzogchen teachings is that we need to integrate, not be separate. This is very important. We need to integrate in time, in conditions, in circumstances, in the epoch.

Some people have the idea that this is not a kind of temple like a Tibetan sacred place. But we are not going back. We are going ahead. We are working for future generations, not for those of the past. This is already sufficient, so we should understand this. For that reason I am really very happy.

It is fantastic but we are not going too much into complicated or luxurious things. Some people say that we should do this or that, but we have to see 'how long our legs are' and work with circumstances. Then we can build, we can do, and everything is perfect.

And I always tell our engineers and architects that we should work with circumstances and do what is indispensable, not spending money on useless things. And then we should make an effort, because the Dzogchen Community is not small today. There is a big Dzogchen Community in this world and this is the base for the Dzogchen Community in the future. So we try to do our best.

hold 1000 people. It will be closed but with the possibility to open it to the rest of the terrace. In addition, the new project has been accepted by the town authorities and is legal. This is the situation at the moment.

The new approved project has a larger Gönpa, which can be closed and will be really visible from the distance. Most probably the walls will be made of glass so they will be transparent and from inside the Gönpa we will be able to see to the outside. Of course we are trying to make these walls in a way that they can be opened in special situations such as when we have a greater number of people so that the whole terrace can be used.

We wanted to give everyone an update on these changes to the Gönpa. The increase in size was a work that we did with everybody and with the help of the town authorities and it was very helpful for us to receive your comments and doubts which really helped us to improve the project. Work on the building will start during the summer of 2016 and we will try to finish the work of the first phase [the Gönpa] before the end of 2017 and the complete project by the end of 2020.

At the moment we are studying the situation of the heat inside the building and also the shade so that we can see if we will have a complete glass façade or possibly make

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An Overview of the Dzamling Gar Project

June 2016 Update

[This Update is based on a proposal that is being presented to the Gakyils of the international Gars but which has not yet been finalised – hence some details on management of accommodation could undergo changes.]

Rosemary Friend (on behalf of Giovanni Boni/Meriling, and Marek Riesz/Dzamling Gar)

Dzamling Gar in Tenerife, Canary Islands has a special character as it is an international Gar formed by the cooperation of all the Gars of the International Dzogchen Community on the planet. All the Gars will have their headquarters there, as well as organizations such as the Shang Shung Foundation (SSF), the ASIA Foundation (AF), the International Gakyil (IG on behalf of the International Dzogchen Community IDC), and/or other associations including those not directly connected to the Community.

The complex consists of 13 houses, the *Jabyig* (a basement under the cafeteria used for events, courses, exhibitions and as an office), the main building currently under construction and destined to become the therapy center and the congress center (Gönpa), a large swimming pool, and an underground garage.

The Houses

Four of the thirteen houses are designated as common use houses: Dzamling Gar (house n.4), the Master's house (house n.2), Meriling SL (legal/umbrella organization – n.1), and the Guest House (n.9). Six of the houses have been assigned to the various Gars – Merigar, Tsegylgar, Kunsangar, Tashigar, Samtengar, and Namgyalgar

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some louvers that will cover the façade underneath the roof. Outside the Gönpa we will have the roof, which probably at the beginning will remain with holes in it so it will create some kind of shade. There is also a big extended terrace around the Gönpa.

We are currently making some other changes to the general project which are, I think, really nice. These are ideas from the



(n.13). House n.7 has been allocated to be shared by Shang Shung Foundation (SSF), Asia Foundation (AF) and International Gakyil (IG) representing our International Dzogchen Community (IDC). House n.3 will be used for catering, cafeteria, dining, free time activities, guest house and vivarium, and House n.8 will be given to doctors for their activities, such as courses and visits.

center, a library, a treatment room, a yoga room, a dance room, and some rest rooms with two or three beds. In addition to all of these, there will be warehouses and storage rooms.

On the Center's terrace above the main centre there will be a cafeteria and the conference room or Gönpa (900 sqm closed and 1000 sqm open), which will be accessed



Two of the houses (n.7 and n.3), previously at risk of being demolished due to the project extending beyond the maximum floor space allowed by local authority regulations, have been saved by a redesign of the Main Center which also permits us to "close" the Gönpa.

The Main Center

In the Main Center there will be spaces reserved for the administrative offices, a reception area, the medical center for moxabustion and hydrotherapy, a massage

directly from the municipal road at the back-side entrance to the building, or with stairs and a lift if you are coming from the lower floors of the center.

Broadly speaking, the general common spaces for community use include the *Jabyiq* (nest), pool, Main Center, Guest House no.9, Cafeteria/vivarium no.3. Apart from the pool and those places expressly assigned, spaces in general also includes all internal paths and gardens.

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Master and other people suggesting that the houses should be colored and not remain white. I think it's really beautiful, and it's starting to happen so from the distance you have this happiness of recognizing the place.

So the houses are now being finished and there are plans explaining how some of the houses will have offices on the ground floor and bedrooms on the upper floors while some other houses will have rooms

and beds depending on the necessities. This explains how the houses can be changeable, how you can use them in different ways.

So this communication today was very quick but I think it is important to be informed about the changes that are happening in the project, especially because we understand that your help is really important and the participation of everybody in the developing of the project is fundamental. ©

The Vase Burial Ceremony

Julian King-Salter

On May 19th at 11:00am Tenerife time, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu performed the Vase Burial Ceremony at the new Gönpa at Dzamling Gar, the Global Gar in Tenerife, along with a Fire Puja, Sang and Serkyem practice.

The morning started cloudy, but warm and without wind. Seats for over 100 people were brought up to the centre of the Gonpa site the night before, and more were needed. The hole was ready, with fill and concrete lid nearby – a temporary Sangkhang was burning brightly and fragrant smoke filled the air.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu sat happy and relaxed until the appointed moment for the practices of Sang and Serkyem, followed by a short rite of consecration of the



Photo courtesy of Lesya Cherenkova

vase. As we all sang the Song of the Vajra, the clouds parted and the sun shone down.

Afterwards in the Gonpa, architect Benedetta Tagliabue and project manager Giovanni Boni gave an update on the plans

for the Gonpa and its facilities. The plans are prepared, permissions granted, and work can start very soon, with a completion date aimed for 2017. Rinpoche is very happy! ©

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The management of the Center, as it will be the heart of the Gar, will be under the direction of Meriling SL. In addition to being in charge of the support of construction and maintenance expenses, Meriling SL will also arrange the agreements with the various entities that will use the center's facilities.

House n.9 will provide hospitality to needy people from the Community, for example those who do not have the chance to be helped by family members or in other ways. The management of the house will be assigned to a Medical Solidarity Committee that will handle the maintenance and use of the house according to the rules to be agreed between the Foundation and the representatives of each Gar, including Dzamling Gar.

The houses assigned to the various Gars will be managed directly by each assigned Gar's Gakyil, according to an agreement with a local management structure that would take care of the allocation of the apartments of every house in a unified manner.

Managing the Gar Houses and the Accommodation Enjoyment Service
Pancho Company (dzamlingghoa@gmail.com) has offered his service as coordinator and manager in the transitional period

until the Gar houses are completed. He will be in charge of coordinating and supervising the maintenance and cleaning of the houses as well as checking the availability of accommodation. Diane Campbell (Belize, condominium professional) has offered to assist in developing Memorandum and Articles of Association in order to ensure clear communication and relationship between the Gars and Meriling SL. as the umbrella legal organization. Booking for each Gar house should be made directly to the Gar prior to arrival in Dzamling Gar. The management structure will be in charge of facilitating usage of the spaces when there are no DC activities going on.

It has been proposed that members of each Gar will have priority to reserve their preference by the end of, for example, the first 3 months of the year. After this the Gar accommodation will be available to other international members and on the waiting list it will be first in first served.

Proposals for Furnishing the Apartments
While we agree that the best idea is to purchase similar furniture for all of the apartments, this remains the decision of each Gar. Monica Patino and Giorgio Minuzo from Tsegvalgar West have donated a €5,500 simple, elegant IKEA complete furnishing for one Tsegvalgar apartment. Maria Herrera, also from Mexico City, recently

organized the fit-out of a 2nd apartment. Photos of the Tsegvalgar apartment have been published in the Mirror (issue 131, p.16) and the IKEA kitchen (€2,166/kitchen) has since been completed. Merigar has just completed a local Adeje company (SAGRE-RA) installation of 5 kitchens (€3,000 / kitchen) in their house – 4 downstairs and 1 upstairs.

Monica and Giorgio also presented a Fundraising Proposal whereby each Gar commits to provide a 12 month accommodation service of two of their apartments (@ €30/day = €10,000/year in advance) as a means to purchase the furniture for the other 2 or 3 apartments (e.g. Samtengar plans to present their upper apartment as Tibetan style office space). In the instance of Tsegvalgar, each apartment serving a maximum of 4 people and costing €5,500 includes – a kitchen with fridge, stove, sink, cupboards and utensils, kitchen table and chairs, lounge, bedroom and bathroom furniture (beds, linen, study desk, chair, cupboards, standing light, wall clock, storage table etc). Regarding laundry/washing machine usage, Pancho has researched going off-site in the manner of hotel management, however this may be more relevant in the future. In the meantime, it is recommended that each Gar include a common washing machine for each house that is capable of servicing all apartments. ©



The Garland of Jewels That Connects Us

On February 19, 2015, during the Mandarava retreat at Dzamling Gar, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu set in motion a highly original and effective effort to raise funds for the future Gönpa of Dzamling Gar. From that date forward, under the name Evolution Creations, he has been personally making hundreds of jewel ornaments offered in exchange for donations for the project. Of course anyone can also offer any amount independently. All of the donations go toward the construction of the new Gönpa. The first Evolution Creations were necklaces, but Rinpoche soon added other types of protection ornaments to ensure that there is something for everyone. To date, he has created more than 800 necklaces, 700 bracelets, 600 car protections, and 600 key protections. The Jewels are offered in two different ways: During teaching retreats a new selection is offered each day until 9:00 p.m. (retreat location time) in exchange for donations pledged both at the retreat location and online. Once a month, in between retreats, a single selection is offered online only for an entire week, starting on Monday and ending on Sunday at 9:00 p.m. (Dzamling Gar time). People from around the world can participate. Both retreat selections and online-only selections are announced to past participants and to Norbunet subscribers. For more information, contact evolutioncreationsbychenn@gmail.com. This article, in Rinpoche's own words from recent teaching retreats, explains the special benefits of these unusual and priceless creations.

As you know, we need to build a Gönpa so we do not have to remain in a temporary structure like this tent for many years. Two years have already passed like this. So we are trying to build a Gönpa. It is very expensive in a real sense. We need to make money.

Sometimes I am asking all of you to participate and make an offering. And when I ask people that, everybody is participating. It is really wonderful. Even if you have no way to make anything but a small offering, no matter how much it is, it is very, very important to participate in any way.

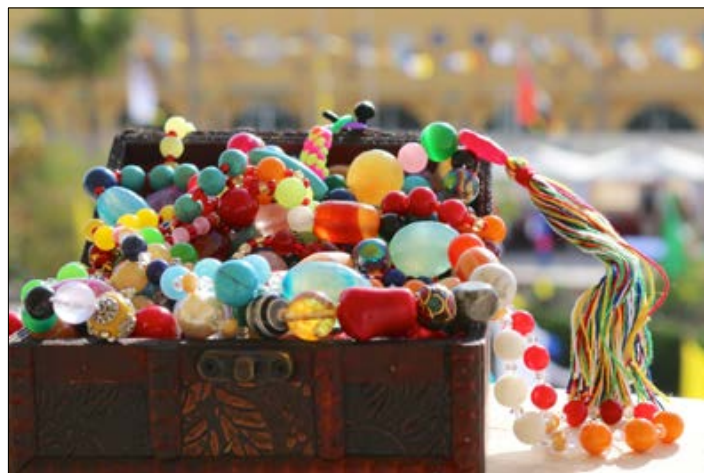
Any offering, big or small, is a very good way for you to make a connection with the Gönpa, because as you know when we have the Gönpa every day people will be doing practice here and dedicating. Particularly in retreats we will be singing the Song of Vajra, the Six Liberations. Even when we are no longer on this earth, our generations will continue and our families and descendants will receive benefits. Knowing that, try to do your best.

When you make an offering, it is very important that you write your first name and your last name, because the names of everyone who makes an offering will remain in the Gönpa for centuries and centuries.

I am also doing my best, I know very well it is something very important. And day and night, whenever there is time, I am making



EVOLUTION
CREATIONS



necklaces and also jewel ornaments for protecting cars and so on. I am doing this work because it is my contribution for the Gönpa. Your contribution is when you participate by making an offering.

Now I would like to introduce to you a little background about the things I am making, because maybe you do not have a very precise idea. I am not only making necklaces. I am making necklaces that also serve as a protection. I always empower them with mantras, and not only mantras: what is most important is being in the state of contemplation. This is supreme. Then there are also mantra visualizations connected with Guru Traggphur, Green Tara, and so on. This is how I am making the necklaces.

I am not only adding precious stones, but always precious stones with the quantity of five colors. The five colors are related with the five elements that everybody has. You see, this is something very important. For example, when we make a namkha, it is for harmonizing our elements. I also prepare protection cords for children or people who are not practitioners. Practitioners can do practice, children generally do not, so I prepare protection cords for them. This also harmonizes the elements, because we have many things that are not harmonized in our condition. This is a problem we can all have and it is very important for us to coordinate our energy, whether with a protection cord or with some kind of ornament. If it is empowered and coordinated with the elements it has this kind of benefit.

So most of the necklaces I made have five colors because then all five elements are complete and you can see the relationship of the elements and how they are harmonized. If you know a little about elemental astrology you can understand.

When not all five colors are present, it means I mainly did protections with Wözer Chenma, for example, if there is a lot of yellow,



or if there is a lot of green, with Green Tara. If there are many greens at the beginning that also means Green Tara. Then there is also the combination of OM AH HUM, the three vajras, the essence of all: white, red, and blue.

So this is my way of making protection necklaces, and then I am also preparing other things. The same applies: even if not all five colors are present, instead of putting blue water and red fire, which is not so nice, I choose a combination of elements that increases and harmonizes, like green air element and red fire element.

I am also making things like protections for cars. First of all, they contain many knots of protection, and then there are also five precious stones in various combinations. Even when not all five elements are present, the combination is harmonized. The protection cords I say are for cars can be good for an elegant car. But this is just my idea; they are not only for cars. You can also put them in your house. For example, they are a protection for not receiving negativities.

I also make some that are a little smaller; at first I thought they are for people who have a motorcycle, because they have only a key, so they could put this on the key since it is small. But you can also use this one for a car, not just for a motorcycle, or anywhere else. So this is another form of protection.

In addition, I make bracelets that you can put on your wrist. These are also combined with harmonized elements.

It is important that you know a little about how it works and how it benefits because I never told anybody; I have just been making them. But sometimes I thought it's better to let you know more about them.

When people buy these jewels, they also give their names, and we will always keep these names as well. This means the merit continues for generations and generations.

By making a little offering for the Gönpa, everyone becomes connected, then it is very positive. When we feel we are really part of the Dzogchen Community, like a family, then we all have this responsibility. If you are not participating it means you do not feel like you are part of this family. So your participation is also very important symbol. For that reason I would like to thank all of you for your participation. ❀



On June 19, 2016, four hundred people attended the second International Yoga Conference in Adeje, Tenerife, co-organized by different yoga schools of the island, the Hindu and Hare Krishna communities. Nataly Nitsche and Maxim Leschenko gave the participatory presentation of Yantra Yoga and Nataly offered a small class of Kumar Kumari for children and Yantra Yoga for pregnant women.

Culture and Khaita Dances

Before the Diplomas for the newly qualified Khaita experts were presented at Dzamling Gar on March 31, 2016, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Prof. Alkis Raftis, president of the International Dance Council, talked about the importance of the Khaita dances.

Presenter: We are very pleased to welcome Prof. Alkis Raftis here to participate with us in this very special event. Prof. Raftis is the president of the International Dance Council, a non-governmental organization founded in 1973 and based in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. The International Dance Council is an official partner of UNESCO and brings together the most important international, national, and local dance organizations as well as individual dancers.

Prof. Namkhai Norbu first met Prof. Raftis in Moscow in 2011 at the Dzogchen Forum organized by Yeshe Silvano Namkhai and soon after a collaboration began with the entry of the Vajra Dance into the Global Dance Directory of the International Dance Council.

Recently Khaita Joyful Dances have also been included in this directory.

It is our great pleasure to present our Vajra Dance instructors and Khaita qualified experts who will be receiving certificates from the International Dance Council.

Thank you so much for being with us on this special occasion.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: I am very happy to be here at this meeting of international Khaita Dance. I consider this to be a very important event and for that reason I am very happy that we have the president of the CID, Prof. Alkis Raftis here. Their recognition of what we are doing is very important and many people do not know about it. This is a more worldly situation.

We also have here Master Denys of the Shangpa tradition who is very important in that field of knowledge.

In general when we say 'dance', it is part of art. In art we have the arts of body, speech and mind, not considering that only painting is art. Dance is very important at the international level so for that reason we are supporting it.

Another reason that we are supporting it is that we are using Tibetan songs and



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu conferring the certificates.

Photo by Mila Marchulenete

dances. Why are we using them? Not because I am originally Tibetan. Many people think that. But this is not the principle. The principle is the situation of Tibet today. Tibet is a country that has been isolated for centuries and centuries. But isolated also with their culture and knowledge which have been authentically maintained for centuries and centuries.

Today, for example, when we speak about the spiritual path, like the teaching of the Buddhist tradition, *sutra* and *tantra*, this teaching has spread everywhere. However, in the real sense its original source is the collection of the 108 volumes of the *Kangyur* and its commentary etc. translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan in ancient times. We still have all of this [teaching] alive, not only in books but also the knowledge of it, the transmission, everything. We have more than 200 volumes of the *Tengyur*. This exists nowhere in this world, only in Tibet, and it is in the Tibetan language.

Today there is the danger of losing Tibetan language. Tibet is part of China and the official language is Chinese. And even though people study and learn Tibetan language, it is of no use for ordinary people, and in that way in one or two generations we can lose the language. So it is also very important that we support this culture, keeping it alive so that it does not disappear. For this reason we work with what we call *Khaita*: singing, dancing, and enjoying.

But this is not only for supporting Tibetans, it is also for supporting our own citizens. Today people are very agitated. If we dance and sing we feel more joyful and we can also relax. This is a kind of particular practice for all citizens in general and is very useful.

For that reason this authority is present here today. Thank you very much for being here. I am very happy that they are collabo-

rating with us, it is very important. For that reason this meeting is very important and I feel very happy to be here with all of you. Also our representatives of the Dzogchen Community at the international level are present.

Now we will present the 60 dancers who qualified. They trained for many days. This is something concrete. Not only are they dancing, but they are qualified and they can teach. Everybody welcome and thank you for being present.

Prof. Raftis: Dear Friends, dear professor, thank you for inviting me here. I'm glad to be with you. It's my first time in the Canaries. I'm particularly happy to greet the first qualified teachers of your dances. But of course every time I give certification to teachers I'm happy, but today I'm more than happy because the dances you are doing have something special. You might think that Alkis Raftis goes to every country and says the same things to everyone, but you see I really mean it.

These dances have something more than the other dances. First of all they fully embody the ideas of UNESCO and the United Nations. They bring together people from dozens of nationalities and these people not only dance together, but they live together, they know each other and they go to their communities around the world and promote peace and understanding through dance.

As you know UNESCO gives priority to countries that are small and poor. Spain and Russia and the other countries you are coming from are not small or poor, but you promote the ideas of UNESCO because you consider yourselves part of a wider community, not only of your country, but citizens of the world. This world in the present situation in which we have so

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Jo-gur Meditation Platform for Dzamling Gar

Julian King-Salter

Last year, Dzamling Gar gekod Rabgyi made a Jo-gur at Dzamling Gar – a kind of circular tent of lungta. So then this year, Rinpoche remarked that it would be very nice to build a meditation platform within the space enclosed by the lungta, and that there is a special practice which can be done there. So Maxim Leshchenko made the design, a site was chosen below Rinpoche's house and beyond the swimming pool, and despite a full schedule of Yantra Yoga activities, he managed (with several helpers) to complete the construction in time before Rinpoche's departure. More willing hands raised the central pole topped with a golden Longsal symbol, and enclosed the whole space with many strings of Lungta.



Photos by Renata Nani

Then after the Full Moon Ganapuja on June 20th, Rinpoche gave explanation and Lung of the practice for the Jo-gur, the Jo-Gur Drib-Jyong, which was webcast so that it could be received by as many as possible. In this way people who are interested can come to Dzamling Gar and do this practice with the wind element, in a place where the wind is often active! Rinpoche also remarked that in future there could be similar Jo-gur built in other places. Until then, please come, in a relaxed way, and do the practice here! ☺



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many problems with terrorism, with lack of respect for human rights, with illiteracy, with discrimination, with the economic crisis and so many other ills, it is important to get away from all of this and present an answer to it. You are an answer to that. So this is one very important reason why what you are doing as dance is special. This I say as president of the official organization for dance in the world.

But there is a second reason which is more personal to me and more to my heart. And it does not have to do with UNESCO or CID. It is dear to my heart because the dances you do are not only practice but also theory. If you go out and go to any dance school – it could be ballet or tango or salsa or hip-hop or belly dance or anything you want – you would be doing practice in that school. But your dances are linked to a theory. Professor Norbu just said it: this is part of a wider culture. You don't do the dances

only for fun. Of course, the dances are fun, they are so many things, but you are doing dances as part of a culture, and your dances are inseparable from that culture. These dances are not only like any other dance. They are more than that, because they are part of culture and part of history. As a person, as a dance historian, and as a cultural manager, I present my deep respect for what you are doing. Thank you. ☺

Transcribed and edited by Liz Granger



First course of the Dzamling Gar Song and Dance with Adriana Dal Borgo at Dzamling Gar June 11–12, 2016.



First Khaitya course for teachers June 14–21, 2016.

A Journey Among Tibetan Nomads

Emanuele Assini and Basilio Maritano
Translated from Italian by Carol Chaney

Introduction

The Tibetan Nomads, usually known as Drokpa (འདྲོག་པ།), are the heirs of a fascinating and ancient way of living that in the past decades has gone through many changes. Their lifestyle is now facing the challenges of modernization, but in spite of this it's still quite simple and their possessions are few. In the remote grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau, nomads herd yaks, sheep, and horses. Even if most of these groups are now becoming semi-nomadic, they still live in tents for most of the year.

In the tents, they sleep on thin mats around the central stove, where they cook and make butter tea. Their food is usually limited to tsampa, dough made of roasted barley flour, and to dried yak meat and dairy products such as cheese, butter and yogurt. Since there are no trees in the nomadic regions, the main fuel for the stoves is dried yak dung. They live in harsh conditions, due to the high altitude of the area and its cold and long winters, and even though many of them now have homes where they can spend the cold season, their camps are still set up for at least 6–8 months a year.

Nowadays, all the areas of the Tibetan Plateau are still highly populated by nomads, despite urbanization, and many nomadic groups can also be found in certain areas of Sichuan and Xinghai.

In the past two years both of us, Emanuele Assini and Basilio Maritano, have had the opportunity to get in touch with nomadic customs and traditions during our trips to Ladakh and West Sichuan. Then, in autumn 2015, while living in Vienna, we both read a book by Namkhai Norbu, "Journey Among the Tibetan Nomads", a summary of the main cultural aspects of the Tibetan Nomads living in the areas of Sertha and Dzachuka. The book is based on the diaries of the then seventeen-year-old Namkhai Norbu, which describe his experiences among the eighteen tribes living in those areas. The book, which addresses a public interested in Tibetan culture, was published by Shang Shung Editions in 1983. This reading, as well as our personal experiences, inspired us to plan a trip among the Tibetan Nomads living in the same areas, with the



Apa Aolei explaining the Mo.

desire to understand more deeply and directly what is left of their ancient traditions. This is the main reason that brought us to China. We arrived on 20th April 2016, and until the end of June we travelled through West Sichuan and South Xinghai, especially the areas of Dzachuka and Sertha, with the aim of experiencing the traditional Tibetan nomadic lifestyle. During this period we visited schools and monasteries, and spent some time with a Tibetan nomad family, experiencing their culture and collecting stories and visual material.



Basilio and Emanuele.

Today is the ninth of June. We have been in China in the Tibetan Provinces of Kham and Amdo for almost seven weeks starting eight months ago when we began planning this trip that is now coming to its end.

It seems like yesterday we were in Vienna discussing the possibility of starting a project in this area. Everything seemed so far away and unreal that only our imagination could make it happen. Instead, here we are, today writing this report of what has been, until now, a few intense weeks before the end of our journey. With no small sadness we realize how time has flown without our noticing it and in a short time we will be returning to Europe full of memories and materials to work on and develop.

Inspired by the book "Journey into the Culture of the Tibetan Nomads" by our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and full of memories of our preceding experiences with the Tibetan people, we took our backpacks, filled them with photographic equipment and lots of good will, put them on our shoulders and flew to China at the end of April. We had heard much fascinating information about Tibetan nomads which inspired us to begin this project with the desire to understand about the reality of the nomads of today and be able to share the results of our work with the Dzogchen Community. Obviously many things were not as we expected and this only made it more interesting, to the point of considering the idea to return again.

By the end of April, after a few days of preparation, we left Chendu, the capital of Sichuan. After a six hour bus ride, we arrived in Kangding, the point of entry to the province of Kham. It was our choice to travel by hitchhiking so we could save money on transportation and also have immediate contact with the local people. We could not have chosen better. Full of baggage and knowing only a few words of Chinese and Tibetan, we were helped in each part of our long journey. Today we can say definitely we hitch hiked at least 3000 kilometers along the road that goes from Kangding to Xining and returns to Chendu, across canyons, high mountain passes and the vast grasslands of the Tibetan plateau. With the eyes of two young travelers open to cultural impact, we crossed a large part of Tibet "open" to strangers, asking questions, observing, listening to every opinion, and discovering something new every day. We tasted the hospitality of a culture that, divided between grasslands and resettlements, between mountains and cities, and mixed with different ethnic groups, is



Arrival in Kangding

We finally arrived to Kangding. It was a rough night, the traffic was blocked the whole night because of a landslide, but we made it! Ready to hitchhike to Danba County!

moving in an uncertain direction which I dare say will be full of surprises.

Throughout our travels, thanks to hitchhiking, and some good fortune, we met with many diverse people and we heard many different opinions. From the Chinese policeman who offered us hospitality to the old monk who let us put up our tent in his garden, to the nomad returned from India less than a year ago after 20 years of absence, all the people we met shared with us their point of view giving us the chance to learn more about this culture in the process of change.

It is a pleasure for us to share these experiences with the readers of The Mirror,

besides giving us the possibility to remember these very important moments in our travels and fix them on paper. For this reason we have decided to write about a brief episode that happened in the last few days which for us was very meaningful, instead of giving a step by step account of our trip overlooking moments of rich significance.

A few days ago, after a long trip with only a few short stops, we arrived in the village of Xiuma, where we had the pleasure to spend a few days in the company of an elderly nomad named Aolei, staying in his house, 30 minutes outside the village. After a few days we became familiar with his routine and discovered many interesting things.



Ba Mei-Larun Gar 36 hours

You never know where the road brings you. After leaving Kangding, we made our way to Bai Mei, intending to reach Danba. It was getting late, but we finally got a lift from a really nice man, a Chinese police officer who brought us to Daofu in the opposite direction to Danba. He invited us to stay at his house for the night, where we had dinner with his family. In the morning, we walked for a couple of kilometers out of town and got the first lift of the day. It was a long day, but we finally reached Larung

Gar, a huge monastic complex in the area of Sertha, at an elevation of 4000 meters, one of the biggest in the world, with about ten thousand monks. We decided to spend the night here, and after a little bit of searching, we found a welcoming monk who let us set up our tent in his garden, right behind the monastery!

Carving Mani Stones

Yesterday we reached Garze, after spending a couple of days in Larung Gar where we had the chance to learn more about monastic life in such a big institution. Many of the monks were engaged in other tasks during their daily routine, such as debating, wood chopping, cooking and stone carving. Some of these old monks were covered in dust, with big eye masks, carving huge Mani stones for hours, with great precision.

After a night in Garze, we had a bad surprise. In the morning, we took a walk in town looking for an ATM because we had no cash, but discovered that none of the ATMs accepted foreign cards. Some police officers told us to go back to Kangding to withdraw money - a three days hitchhike! Still with no breakfast in our stomachs, we spent the whole morning trying to figure out what to do. But after a few hours we found a solution. Almost everyone in China uses a mobile app called WeChat, which is basically some kind of Whatsapp, but way more useful. Not only can you send messages, sound files and pictures; money can



be easily transferred from one mobile to another. It wasn't easy to find somebody in town willing to receive money on his phone and give us cash back, but somehow we made it, and thanks to our good friend Romeo we didn't have to go all the way back to Kangding.

The journey continues, tomorrow we are heading to Arizha!



In this period, all nomad families are busy searching for *yarsagumbo* - caterpillar fungus. This small and expensive fungus often represents 80% of the yearly income for these families. For this reason during the *yarsagumbo* season, even children are busy searching for it. Only elderly people remain at home to take care of the household duties while the rest of the family spends the days climbing the surrounding mountains with their eyes fixed on the earth.

So we found ourselves alone with Apa Aolei, a cheerful old man extremely happy to have us as guests. Self-educated and very dedicated to fulfilling his religious practice during the day, Aolei told us a lot about his youth and his family and gave us very interesting opinions regarding the cultural changes happening in Tibet.

We were very struck, upon entering his house, at the number of books on the typical wooden shelves where they usually keep photos of the Masters, the Dalai

Lama, religious scriptures and various other objects. We visited many other families in that area and rarely we saw more than a couple of books in the house. So we were curious and asked why. We were told that many of these books were classical, historical and religious texts written by scholars who are very famous in Tibet and China. Not only that, one of his two sons was now in Japan to complete his studies, something very rare in this area.

Not having the possibility to go to school, it was very important to Aolei that at least one of his sons receive a good education and in this he was satisfied. The whole bookshelf was about 5 meters long and besides being full of books and objects, it was covered with badges and trophies collected by his son during his scholastic pursuit. Not only this, but many of these badges were higher on the shelves than the Buddhist texts and the photos of the Masters would usually be placed. This was an evident sign of how important education was considered in his home.

Again our curiosity posed more questions.

Apa Aolei had lived through the Cultural Revolution when he was 8 years old, the son of a nomad family that lived in a tent all year around. When he was an adolescent, just after the "revolution" his life was extremely poor and they passed the rigid Tibetan winters in a tent with very little food. Nevertheless, his memories are positive telling us about the nomadic costumes and the traditional tents made of yak hair and how the land was still equally shared by all the inhabitants of the village. Today, every single piece of grassland has been fenced in by the Chinese government. Every single member of the family had to learn to do all types of work like spinning yak wool for clothes or putting up a tent or building the kitchen out of mud; things that the new generation now don't know how to do.

When his children were born, with the help of government subsidies, his family was able to build a house for the winter. The majority of nomad families live like this today; in houses for the winter and in tents in the summer. Now the tents are modern structures and easier to put up.

Regarding the religious life, Aolei is an extremely dedicated man. While not having had the possibility to go to school, he educated himself so as to be able to read religious scriptures. With great honesty, he told us how he was not able to acquire a

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deep knowledge of Buddhism but as years went by he felt the capacity to be able to divine the future using dice. This practice is called *Mo* and is usually reserved to monks and lamas for making important decisions. It is said that the answers read from the dice come directly from Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. After the Cultural Revolution, practicing religion posed many problems. Aolei tells us that in the 70s, families would often meet in secret to practice far from the eyes of the Chinese. Today, he tells us, fortunately we can practice freely.

Aolei told us many things, too many to put in one article. It was a great experience for us to be with him and listen to his point of view about the changes in the last fifty years.

In conclusion, we would like to share a metaphor he used to respond to our question "What would you like to say to the world and to the people who will read this interview?"

It made us smile and think deeply of the cultural changes in the high plains of Tibet where the new generations will hold great responsibility for the future. After having spoken about the evolution of the culture in Tibet and of the differences compared to the years of his youth, Aolei wanted to leave a message for young people regarding the continuing of traditions in the years to come.

Somewhat paraphrasing, this is what he said: "In my youth, when nomad families killed a sheep to eat, we used every single part from the head to the skin so as to not waste the life of this animal, even though it often meant a lot of work. Young Tibetans should, in the same way, conserve their traditions, without ignoring any aspect of their cultural inheritance just because it might be uncomfortable; for example, traditional Tibetan dress might be considered out of style or too heavy. They should continue to eat *tsampa*, dress themselves traditionally and preserve their cultural values."

We believe this affirmation, in its simple way, hides many questions that should be reflected upon, in order to understand closely the reality of the nomads today. From our side, we are doing everything to return home with a complete vision that we hope to share with the members of the Community. ©



Entering Dzachuka

Yesterday we finally entered the nomadic area of Dzachuka. We reached Arizha, a 40 km drive off

the road, where we had the chance to sleep at Drukdrak Rinpoche's house.

Today we arrived in Quinghai province, driving through the Mount Anbala pass (4700 meters).



Aolei walking alone.

Days of Silence in the Wastelands of Golok



Overnight snowfall.



Yarsagumbo, Mushrooms

Everyone is super excited around the county of Tongde. Between May and June, all around the grasslands of Tibet, everyone's after one thing: *Yarsagumbo*, the so-called caterpillar fungus believed to have magical properties, such as being a remedy for diseases related to lungs, kidney, and erectile dysfunction, and used as an aphrodisiac and against tiredness and fatigue. It also represents the main economic source for nomadic families. In fact most of the yearly income of a family comes through the sale of this small yellow mushroom.

We spent a few days in the village of Xiuma, following one nomadic family in the quest for the *yarsagumbo*, and realized it's seriously hard work. We left early in the morning, with a little bit of bread and some tea for lunch in our bags, and started hiking up the mountainside, with our bodies on the wet ground, looking for the precious mushroom. The whole of the family is involved in the search, not even children are

left behind, and only the old people stay at home, taking care of the house.

At first I thought it would be an easy task, but after a few hours of searching, with my nose dripping from the cold and humidity, my back aching, having found none, I gave up.

One must have good sight and a lot of tenacity to distinguish this tiny little mushrooms from the surrounding blades of grass that look exactly the same. We followed the family in the search until evening, not even realizing how far we had actually walked, and we came back tired, with our bones aching, but full of admiration for the tenacity of these people.



Rainbow Body and Resurrection

Spiritual Attainment, the Dissolution of the Material Body, and the Case of Khenpo A Cho

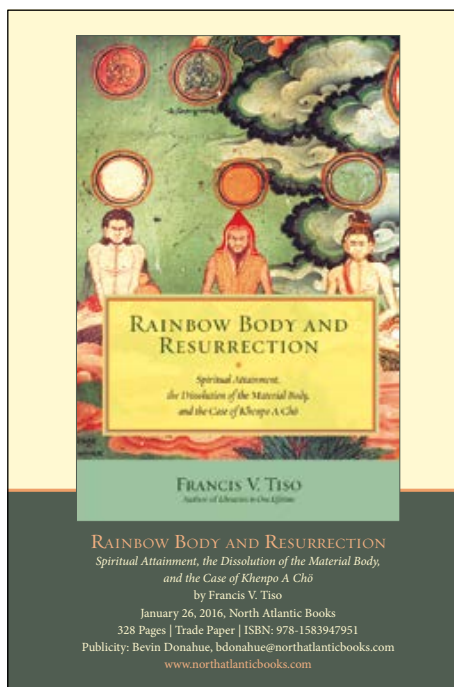
By Francis V. Tiso
North Atlantic Books, Berkeley,
California 2016, 393pp

Review by Alexander Studholme

In the modern encounter between Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism, there are few more iconic images than the photograph, taken in 1968, of a beaming Thomas Merton, the most famous Christian monk of his time, standing beside a young Chatral Rinpoche, who is casually dressed in a woolly hat and nylon anorak. In his diary, Merton wrote that Chatral was “the greatest rimpoche [sic] I have met so far and a very impressive person.” Chatral repaid the compliment in spades, calling Merton a *rangjung sangay*, or “self-awakened Buddha”.

This new volume, *Rainbow Body and Resurrection* stands in direct descent to Merton and Chatral’s auspicious meeting. Its author, Father Francis Tiso, an Italian-American Roman Catholic priest, who has already published a learned translation and study of an early biography of Milarepa, embarked on this project at the behest of his spiritual mentor, the Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast, a mystic, scholar and social-activist, with a distinguished record in interfaith dialogue, who was both a spiritual friend of Merton and is, some say, his natural successor.

Having secured funding from the Institute of Noetic Sciences, a Californian forum for consciousness research, Steindl-Rast sent his protégé off to Eastern Tibet in the summer of 2000, to investigate the rainbow body realization of a monk called Khenpo A Cho, which had occurred two years previously in 1998. The first chapter of the book, then, consists of an absorbing travelogue of Tiso’s journey to Kham to interview witnesses of this remarkable event and a fascinating biography of Khenpo A Cho, gleaned from Tiso’s translations of Tibetan sources.



Khenpo A Cho, we learn, was born in 1918 and educated in both Nyingmapa and Gelugpa monasteries, receiving a life-changing Vajrakilaya initiation and essential instructions on the Dzogchen practices of *tregchod* and *thodgal* from the late Dudjom Rinpoche. By the end of his life, he had become a venerable enough figure in Tibet to receive a gift of Buddhist statues and a letter of well-wishing from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Upon breathing his last, his face quickly became smooth and youthful looking. After seven days, his body – left underneath a cloth – had entirely disappeared, whilst outside his hermitage many people saw spectacular rainbows and other unusual lights.

In the course of his fieldwork, Tiso is clearly affected by his first-hand experience of the Tibetan religious world. After an interview with key witnesses, he feels “surrounded by a sphere of great peace and luminosity”. An audience with one of the Khenpo’s *dharma* brothers – a formidable sounding yogin called Lama A Kh-yug – pushes Tiso into the “natural state of contemplation” that lasts for six weeks. Like Merton, he considers doing a retreat under the instruction of a Tibetan teacher. And he appears convinced of the reality of the rainbow body, partly due to a reassuring conversation in Nepal with the Bonpo master Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

Given that Tiso is so happy to acknowledge the benign influence of the Tibetan milieu on his own Christian sensibility, he is surprisingly reluctant to consider the

ramifications of the rainbow body for the traditional Christian worldview. The notion that someone like Khenpo A Cho could have attained something akin to the resurrection of Jesus is, he states simply, theologically “highly problematic” and “a very great challenge”. Indeed, he seems inclined to pre-empt any sort of Dzogchen- or Buddhist-hued approach to Christian doctrine by spending a very large part of the book arguing that the rainbow body is actually a by-product or result of the Christian resurrection, serving to maintain a sense of inviolable Christian primacy.

Tiso is a believer in the Turin shroud, but his efforts here to demonstrate any commonality with the rainbow body fall flat: no Tibetan witness appears ever to have seen a similar “negative” image on the cloths used to cover rainbow body yogins. Instead, he theorizes that Tibetans first conceived of the rainbow body due to the influence of Christian missionaries – and their teaching of resurrection – travelling east along the Silk Route. He produces three main strands of evidence: a Syriac text that contains instruction on meditation on light; a text found in the cave library at Tun Huang that is a synthesis of Christianity and Chinese Buddhism and, finally, elements of the traditional biography of Garab Dorje – virgin birth, the divine child amazing elders with his wisdom, for instance – that are suggestive of episodes from narratives of Jesus’ life.

With apologies to Father Tiso – as space does not permit a detailed analysis – after several careful readings, I still find these arguments unconvincing. Where Tiso sees a host of striking coincidences between the Syriac text and Dzogchen, I see only occasional, very mildly suggestive similarities, representative of a generic interest in “light” common to a wide variety of religious traditions. Similarly, though Tiso quotes large chunks of the Tun Huang text, I struggle to find much at all that seems relevant to Dzogchen: that this text sets a precedent for an interaction between Christian missionaries and Dzogchen yogis seems terribly speculative. As Tiso himself points out, the Mahayana sutra the *Lalitavastara* also includes an episode in the life of Sakyamuni Buddha in which he debates with his elders as a boy: we are surely dealing with a pan-Asian story telling tradition, whose tropes and motifs may inform Buddhist texts, but need not indicate convergence on a doctrinal level.

Finally, if Christianity really did provide the impetus for the emergence of the Dzogchen rainbow body, as Tiso argues at length, we could legitimately expect the Christian tradition to boast of its own rainbow body adepts (besides Jesus). Tiso does claim “a few rare cases of bodily dissolution”, which are however “hard to verify”: his footnotes refer to reports of two monks whose bodies “have the power to disappear” in a 6th or 7th century Byzantine text, and the tale of a Christian hermit whose body is said to have vanished after death in William Dalrymple’s historical travel book *From the Holy Mountain*. But again, this is not very persuasive.

Nevertheless, Tiso is generally extremely erudite: there is much in this book to admire and appreciate. He provides his own extended scholarly treatments of both the history of Dzogchen and the Dzogchen path – though some might question whether he is truly qualified to present a commentary on the latter. The book is, also, a bit disorganized: the early Dzogchen teaching, *The Six Vajra Verses* or *Cuckoo of Knowledge* (*Rigpai Kujuug*), for example, is quoted in full on four separate occasions, each time in a different translation.

But, above all, like Merton before him, Tiso is that comparatively rare thing: a senior church figure who is sympathetically attuned to the contemplative spiritual genius and virtuosity of the Tibetans. His work on the rainbow body will undoubtedly bring this point of view to many others, both Christian and non-Christian alike, and help create a basis for further constructive dialogue. I am personally in favour of another strategy he indicates to advance this process: a reading of the Dzogchen tantra *The All-Creating King* (*Kunjed Gyalpo*) that is consonant with a certain kind of sophisticated theism. But, I fear his protracted attempt to prove the rainbow body to be a Tibetan appropriation of the Christian resurrection is a wild goose chase. ©

Rasayana (chulen) History & Literature

Jamyang Oliphant

2-2016 Oxford University

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The Tibetan practice of *bcud len* represents a highly particular forging of diverse strands of spiritual and medicinal legacies.

Bcud len, literally ‘essence extraction’ [pronounced chew len], consists of varied methods whose goal is to extract nutrition or ‘essence’ through alchemical processes, ritual and contemplation. The extraction can occur from sources which may include plants, flowers, barks and roots, water, rock, sperm and blood and human flesh as well as other less tangible substances, such as the ‘essence of space’ and of stars.

Instructional *bcud len* texts describe how the practitioner’s meditative experiences and subtle energies can be reinvigorated through sexual practice, both actual and visualized in the mind of the *yogin*. The extraction of essence can either occur from actual solid, tangible objects or imagined in the meditator’s mind, working on the inner body’s subtle energies. *Mantra* recitation and visualizations of particular deities (very often Vajrayogini and Amitayus) empower the substances to make them ‘divine’. *Bcud len* exercises and techniques can involve preparations of alchemical compounds and medicinal concoctions, recitation of *mantra*, adherence to specific dietary regimes and a variety of exercises, mental, respiratory and physical. Unlike many other meditative practices, which focus mostly on mental exercises and visualizations, in the practice of *bcud len* the physical body is given great importance and concoctions are prepared according to the practitioner’s physical typology. The medicinal goal of certain texts is to nourish the body’s strength and organs and to increase longevity. Instead, *bcud len* texts, with a more spiritual emphasis, are directed at increasing wisdom and sharpening mental faculties as well as gaining various other *dnegos grub*, ‘attainments’. In Tibetan literature one can find reference to several variations of *bcud len* whose purpose is to allow the practitioner to live on negligible amounts of food, thereby puri-



From the Longchen Nyintig Terma Cycle.

fying the body and energy flow and sharpening mental focus while on the path to Buddhahood. Minimizing the need for food also means that meditators can spend prolonged periods of time in solitary retreat without having to worry about a livelihood.

Determining the origins of the practice of *bcud len* is complex, due to relatively sparse documentation and to the complications of establishing authorship of texts spanning several centuries. *Bcud len* never was an institutionalized practice. It was not undertaken in group but rather by individual meditators, and therefore it is hard to pinpoint distinct and continuous *bcud len* lineages of transmission. Many *bcud len* texts come from *gter ma* revelations and were recorded at later stages, complicating the identification of a text’s inception and its chain of transmission.

In several texts an Indian imprint can be detected through the deities invoked or visualized and in the ingredients found in recipes. Figures such as Kalachakra, Vajrayogini, Amitayus often recur as the central deities. Saraha, a semi-legendary figure from Orissa on India’s east coast, is identified in certain texts as the originator of specific water *bcud len* practices. Many ingredients found in recipes, such as *utpala* and *arura*, also are thought to derive from India. The Indian *rasayana* tradition was a probable influence in the development of *bcud len*, while many of the exercises to master the subtle body probably had Indian counterparts: the Tibetan term *bum pa can* is a translation of the Sanskrit *kumbhaka*. Several rituals described in *bcud len*

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Indian Adept (Siddha) Saraha.



Lama Tangtong Gyalpo.



Indian teacher.

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practices to empower nectars are remarkably similar to Indian Vajrayogini practices. While India may have been the source of and provided the model for many texts, this does not mean that a distinct form of essence extraction has not evolved on the Tibetan plateau.

Bcud len practices are found in all four Tibetan Buddhist schools as well as in the Bon tradition. Many of the teachings are said to derive from Padmasambhava and were rediscovered and set on paper by Tibetan treasure revealers in the Tibetan language. Some of the more well-known *gter ston* [Terton] who discovered *bcud len* texts attributed to Padmasambhava are: Padma gling pa (1450–1521), Ratna gling pa (1403–1479), Dri med 'od zer (1308–1364), Bdud 'joms gling pa (1835–1904).

However *bcud len* texts are not confined to the Nyingma school and instances of texts authored by masters affiliated with other schools include the second Dalai Lama Rgyal ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1475–1542) who authored a flower *bcud len* that has been translated into English by Glenn Mullin (2005). Also Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) wrote a *bcud len* text and in the Kagyu school the third Karmapa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) and Shakya Shri (1853–1919) authored *bcud len* texts. In the Bon tradition authors include Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1859–1935) and Dkar ru grub dbang bstan 'dzin rin chen (1801–1860).

The main subcategories of *bcud len* typologies, based on the substances employed, are: water, flowers, pills, rocks and *prana*.

Some of the most common ingredients found in texts are *cong zhi* (calcite), *rtag tu ngu pa* (*drosera peltata*), *dbang lag* (*dactylorhiza hatagirea*), *ra mnye* (*Polygonatum cirrhifolium*). Some recipes include unconventional ingredients such as human flesh, urine, excrement and sexual secretions as well as bile or brain of different animals. Specific ingredients possess qualities that aid the practitioner's health and meditation. In Tibetan literature we find mentions of masters who relied on calcite during retreats; for example, in the section on the life of Kong sprul in a work on *Ris med* philosophy by Ringu Tulku (2006: 17), we read that in his late teens Kong sprul subsisted for a week on extracted essences, obtaining all his nutrition from stalagmites. In images, Rma Rin chen mchog, one of Guru Padmasambhava's original twenty-five disciples, is often depicted holding a calcite stone rock. Such occurrences confirm that calcite has long been an integral part of Tibetan yogic practices. Similarly, there are stories of hermits surviving on flowers and herbs, foremost among them the great ascetic Milarepa whose body was said to have assumed a green hue from his nettle-based diet; indeed, it is not uncommon to find him portrayed with a greenish hue in Tibetan paintings. Another lama said to have mastered *bcud len* and attained longevity is Tangtong Gyalpo, often depicted with a long life pill in his hand.

A central feature of many texts is the practice of *kumbhaka* (*bum pa can*) a special method of holding the breath. The Tibetan term *bum pa can* is a translation of the Sanskrit term and literally means 'vase-shaped'

holding. The underlying idea is to guide the movement of energies and *prana* in the subtle body by using the air retained below the navel, muscular contraction and mental concentration and visualization. By directing one's awareness and *prana* into the central channel various meditative experiences can be generated. The regular practice of *kumbhaka* helps to coordinate breathing and since the workings of the inner body winds affect the overall health and mental states, proficiency in practices working with energies in the subtle body is crucial for the meditator aiming to master his mind.

The earliest recorded mention of *bcud len* in Tibetan literature of which I am aware dates from the eleventh century. It is found in writings by Ba ri lo tsa ba rin chen grags (1103–1111) and consists of a sole sentence telling of how to transform food into *bcud len* by reciting an Avalokitesvara *mantra*. The most recent *bcud len* practice made public is a Mandarava (one of the main disciples and consorts of Padmasambhava) *bcud len* revealed in 1984 by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (b.1938) which he is transmitting and teaching.

Almost never listed in separate compilations, *bcud len* literature is found scattered in large volumes of authors' collected writings and is therefore not easy to locate. In the past some *bcud len* texts were assembled by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, such as those in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, Chapter 48 and in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, Chapter 17 (*tse*). Probably hundreds of *bcud len* texts remain to be studied and translated, which will shed more light on a tradition that calls for more scholarly attention. ©



Focus on Samtengar & the Lings in Asia



Samtengar, China – The Gar of Asia

Before Samtengar was named by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on October 21, 2014, its name had been Samtenling since November 11, 2008.

Samtenling was a virtual Ling at the beginning because there was no actual place before 2011. Wes Guo used an Internet community software called QQ to provide information and translation of webcasts and texts etc. to people who were interested in the Dzogchen teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

At the beginning there were only some 30 people, but by 2016, there are nearly 1300 people, about half of whom are members of the Dzogchen Community. Over 50 books have been translated into Chinese and some of them are published publicly.

In 2011, Wes Guo and Tracy Ni found the place where Samtengar is located, after 2 years of searching. It was primitive at the beginning.

By 2014, Samtengar had over 2000 square meters of building area and its dormitories could accommodate 320 people. It has a main Gönpa, a Gönpa for Vajra Dance and another for Yantra Yoga. There are four dark retreat rooms and dozens of light retreat rooms.



The Gar is located in the city of Yichun in central China, which was the most important historical center of Chinese Zen Buddhism. The city is also famous for unique selenium hot springs which are very good for health.

Since 2012, Samtengar has held many courses of Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga etc. led by domestic and international teachers. Three retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu have successfully

» continued on the following page



>> continued from previous page

taken place since 2014. Hundreds of practitioners from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan have come and it has really become the Gar of Asia.

We look forward to provide better services to the Dzogchen Community, especially to the Chinese worldwide, in terms of providing courses, group practices and retreats and also translation of webcasts and materials related to the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

We are planning on the feasibility of Shang Shung Institute China which has the capacity to practice and develop in the field of Tibetan medicine, Art and Literature etc. It is probable that Samtengar will be able to open more to the International Dzogchen Community including Westerners before long. ©

Samtengar

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Gephelling “Ever-Increasing Goodness”

Taiwan

Invited by a local Chinese doctor, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche initially came to Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 1997, and the teaching of Dzogchen, one of the most precious gifts one can ever ask for, was the subject he taught. Later in 2000, Rinpoche granted us his second visit and gave the teaching of ‘The Song of The Vajra’. Then due to circumstances beyond anyone’s control, we had to wait until 2011 when Rinpoche regained his health from leukemia for his third trip to Taiwan. This time, he gave us the teaching on the practice of ‘Mandarava’, which was majorly responsible for his miraculous recovery. In 2012, Rinpoche came to Taiwan again and gave the teaching of ‘The Vajra Bridge of Longde’. In 2015, he gave his students in Taiwan the precious ‘Dzogchen Upadesha Tregchod Teaching’.

Deeply touched by Rinpoche’s unelaborated yet clear teaching, a few of us got together every Wednesday evening to practice for about 5 years, even though we were immature and without instructors, during the long 11 years of Rinpoche’s absent presence in Taiwan. Until November of 2009, under the kind guidance of Rinpoche, The Dzogchen Community of Taiwan Gephelling was established. There were about 50 members at that time. Seizing every opportunity possible, we either borrowed or rented places for group practices whenever and wherever we could.

Since 2014, we have had our own Yantra Yoga teacher (Jenny Chu) and we have now rented a permanent location in Taoyuan where group practices of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Mandarava, Six Lokas, Shitro, and Ganapuja take place regularly. Other cities such as Kaohsiung and Taichung also hold regular group practices. We now have about 80 registered members.

Also, due to Rinpoche’s kindness and blessing, we are extremely lucky to have organized retreats in Taiwan led by Kenpo Yeshe Wangpo who not only is authorized to teach several different practices, but also speaks our own language, Chinese, saving most of us from the need to listen to the translated version of Rinpoche’s teaching. The retreats Kenpo Yeshe Wangpo has led here in Taiwan include ‘Rushen and Sem-



‘The View of Dzogchen and Teachings of Longde’ in 2015 with Kenpo Yeshe Wangpo.



Rinpoche’s third visit to Taiwan when he gave teaching on the Mandarava practice.



2012 ‘The Vajra Bridge of Longde’.



2015 ‘Dzogchen Upadesha Tregchod Teaching’.



2014 ‘Rushen and Semdzin’ with Kenpo Yeshe Wangpo.

dzin’ in 2014, ‘The View of Dzogchen and Teachings of Longde’ in 2015, and ‘Practical Guidance of the Tsalungs of Mandarava’ in 2016.

We all know it requires tremendous merit to be a Dzogchen practitioner. While moving along the less travelled road, our dear

Rinpoche’s constant reminder “you need to relax” rings soundly in our hearts. We will always and forever be grateful for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s love and compassion. ©

Gephelling

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Jampalling

Shanghai, China

Before our master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu came to Yichun, China to give the first retreat in 2014, more than 20 Vajra brothers and sisters were already constantly practicing Vajra Dance in Shanghai. At the time we only had a temporary place where we could dance one day per week, and actually the place was the workshop of a fabric factory. We also didn't have a fixed place to do the practice, particularly when we wanted to do the Ganapujas on the practice calendar. That condition continued for quite a long time, probably more than a year.

And then with the contribution of many Vajra brothers and sisters, particular Wesley Guo, Tracy Ni and others, we were really happy that Rinpoche was able to come to China and give the retreat in Yichun as well as a public talk in Shanghai. During the retreat we asked Rinpoche if it would be possible to have a Ling in Shanghai and another in Beijing since there are many practitioners there, and he immediately replied saying "OK". He told us to cooperate with each other, people and people, Ling and Ling, and in that way we could develop the Ling in the correct way.

Just after the retreat, Rinpoche went back to Shanghai. Many people came to see him, to show their respects, offering money and gifts. Rinpoche gave all the money to the local organization in Shanghai and said that this was the money to create a base to build the Ling in Shanghai. A couple of months later, Rinpoche named the Ling in Shanghai 'Jampalling', a name that is connected with the wisdom and empowerment of Manjusri.

In order to have a fixed place to do the collective practices such as Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga, Ganapuja, and others, the local Gaykil decided to find a place, at least a rented place to make it happen. Actually in a modern city like Shanghai, it is not that easy to find a place which can contain our Mandala, is easy to reach and with a reasonable rental. For a couple of months we tried to find a suitable place but in vain. At a certain moment we almost thought it was not possible to find one, but by chance, just prior to the Chinese new year in 2015, we found the place.

The size of the place is over 300 square metres, somehow it is easy to reach, and



the rental cost is reasonable. Starting with the contribution of one Vajra brother (he personally donated over than 100,000 RMB for this collective practice place and was also the one who bought all the leftover lottery tickets during the first retreat. He is not as rich as we thought but really very generous due to his faith in Rinpoche's teaching), we decorated the place in a simple and clean way. Actually we are very satisfied that we are able to put two big size Vajra Dance Mandalas there, while in another separate space we do Yantra Yoga, Ganapujas and others collective practices.

In 2015, before the second retreat of the 1st level of SMS and another Ati Dzogchen retreat in China, while Rinpoche was in Shanghai, he empowered the Ling and in one hour he gave a complete teaching of

Ati Guruyoga and did a Ganapuja with food and wine that people brought to him. This was a wonderful introduction, easy to understand and to practice, just like Rinpoche always gives.

Since this starting point, we feel that the function of the Ling has been established. With the guidance of the local Gaykil, we constantly do the collective practices and since we have our own place, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga training courses are held very frequently. Fabio Andrico also came to give the Breathing and Lungsang training course over four days.

This is a time and space outline of the development of Jampalling. May all Sentient beings transcend the limitation of time and space, being in the real state of our real nature, Dzogpa Chenpo. ©

Jamyangling

Beijing, China

From as early as 2009 up until today, the practitioners in the Beijing area have been organizing Yantra Yoga and other collective practices at the weekends. As of October 2014 Beijing had more than 70 Community members when Rinpoche named the Beijing Community “Jamyangling”, the Ling of Manjusri. Today Jamyangling has both authorized Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga teachers and holds courses and collective practices regularly.

In July 2015, many practitioners not only from Beijing but from many parts of China actively raised funds in order for Jamyangling to rent a flat as the seat for collective practices, like Ganapujas and Yantra Yoga, and several courses. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu came to Beijing in October of the same year when Jamyangling organized Rinpoche's public speech entitled “Ati Yoga: The path of total relaxation of body, speech and mind” led. *The second part of Rinpoche's talk in Beijing is published in this issue of The Mirror* at Beijing University, and an exhibition about ancient Tibetan murals and contemporary spiritual art with the theme “Dzogchen – The awakening art in life”, during which a demonstration of the Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings was held. These activities had a wide resonance on people from different walks of life and had a positive function for the spread of the teaching.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu also held a Ganapuja with the practitioners at the Community seat and gave presents for the place.

Following the increase in the number of practitioners in all kinds of practices, this year Jamyangling is planning to replace the seat with one that has a surface area big enough to hold a Mandala for the Vajra

.....

Jampalling

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Dance, so as to organize Vajra Dance and any kind of collective practice more easily.

May the teachings of our Master take root here and benefit more and more sentient beings!



Jamyangling

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Munselling

Japan

Kyoto Retreat

In October last year (2015), we had a great retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the first time in Kyoto. There were more than 200 participants from all over Japan and from overseas and this was the 11th retreat in Japan since 1989.

Rinpoche shed light on the Bardo teachings to the fortunate participants during those perfectly sunny autumn days, which enhanced the beauty of what used to be the ancient capital of Japan in the 8th century.

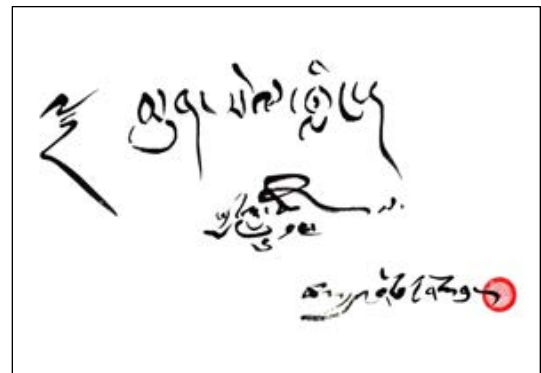
With this retreat, it is certain that Rinpoche's teachings penetrated even further in this country of the Far East where Buddhism has been embraced as its main religion since the 6th century.



Ganapuja in Kobe (Kansai area).

(run on a voluntary organization basis) has continued to gradually grow and develop until today thanks to the efforts of devoted students.

In 2011, with Rinpoche's advice for the Asian communities, the Dzogchen Community Japan set up its own administra-



Kyoto Retreat 2015. Also: <http://melong.com/chogyal-namkhai-norbu-visits-kyoto-japan-taipei-taiwan/>

Our History

The Japanese Dzogchen Community was formed by a relatively small but extremely passionate group in 1989, when Rinpoche gave his teachings to about 60 participants at Japan's first retreat in Tochigi. Since then, Rinpoche has been giving his teachings to Japanese students at retreats held throughout the country: Tokyo, Mt Fuji, Izu, Okinawa, Toyama and Kyoto. Along with these retreats, the Japanese community

tion separately from Namgyalgar Australia, to which it had belonged since 1996, focusing on establishing a Ling in Japan. Rinpoche coined the name for the Japanese community and chose to call it Munselling. In Tibetan this means "The island that eliminates darkness".

At the moment Munselling is affiliated directly with the International Dzogchen Community like the Bhutan Dzogchen Community.

Munselling Today

Currently Munselling has about 60 members who are spread throughout the country, within a radius of 2000km from Hokkaido to Kyushu. However, most of the members are concentrated in Tokyo and Kansai (Kyoto and Kobe). There are also 3 Gakyils, two in Kyoto and one in Tokyo (for 2016) and they communicate on a daily basis.

Our members are very varied. There are "old" students who joined in the 1980s and real novices who just joined this year. Ages range from 20 to 90 and no matter how new, young or old, everyone gathers together to follow Rinpoche's precious Dzogchen teachings as members of the Vajra family and members of the International Dzogchen Community.



The Japanese Dzogchen Community in the early years (1989).



(1992).



(1993).



Mandala painting work, Tokyo 2015.

We organize regular activities that bring us together. Our collective practices: Ganapuja and the secondary practices, Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga, Khaita, etc are mainly held in Tokyo and in the Kansai area at public halls or private houses. For members living in rural areas, we have started providing Skype connections to "practice together" whenever we can.

Along with those practices we regularly invite authorized Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga and SMS instructors every year. Last year, after the Kyoto retreat, we organized a 7 day Vajra Dance course for the "Song of the Vajra", led by Kyu Kyuno in Tokyo. The SOV course was held in Japan for the first time in 10 years and the 25 participants learned and enjoyed this beautiful dance with great enthusiasm.

In 2014 we invited Oni McKinstry from New Zealand and we held an intensive Yantra Yoga course for all 5 series in Tokyo and Kyoto. They were very successful retreats with about 40 participants. Early this year, we had two basic Yantra Yoga courses in Kyoto and Tokyo led by Yoko Morita, the only Japanese Yantra Yoga instructor since 2010. Kyu and Oni's courses are programmed to take place again later this year.

We are lucky to have qualified, Japanese speaking instructors of Dance, Yoga and SMS in our community since most of the



Japanese members are not familiar with English. And we are also looking forward to having more Japanese instructors including Khaita.

We are also proud to have Tetsu Nagasawa, who is our official interpreter/translator (Tibetan and English) and SMS instructor. Thanks to his dedication many texts have been translated into Japanese since the early 90s bringing opportunities for Japanese people to meet Rinpoche's precious teachings. The restricted texts have

been published by the Community and the open ones (5 titles), have been published and distributed through some major Japanese publishing houses.

We still don't have a fixed space for Munselling but we have been accumulating funds and searching for the land since 2011 hoping to be able to obtain our own fixed base in the future and to form a legal corporation.

As an Asian Ling

Munselling, as an Asian Ling is very happy to collaborate with Samtengar, Asia's first Gar in China, and with other Asian Lings. Rinpoche's advice in regard to Collaboration is crucial for us, especially his advice on how we should work together for the International Community. Since we are Samtengar's neighbor, we will be able to collaborate with them in various ways in the future and we look forward to sharing our knowledge and inviting instructors to both countries.

Establishing friendly and strong relationships with Samtengar through constant communications will be very beneficial and positive not only for the Lings in Asia but also for the International Community. We will strive to create harmonious and mutually benefitting ties, so that we can serve better for the development of our Community on a global scale. ©

2016 Gakyil

Yellow: Masumi Nakano (Kyoto)

Red: Shigeru Oyatani (Kyoto)

Blue: Taka Ogata (Tokyo)

Munselling

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<http://dzogchencommunity.jp>



Vajra Dance Course 2015 in Tokyo with Kyu Kyun.



Yantra Course 2014 in Tokyo with Oni McKinstry.



Yantra Course 2016 in Kyoto with Yoko Morita.

Namdrolling

Singapore

At the invitation of Cheh Goh, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche visited Singapore on January 2, 1985 after the Merigar Christmas retreat. The plane carrying our precious Master landed in Singapore in the late afternoon under the arch of a rainbow, his arrival heralding the beginning of an auspicious cycle of sixty years for this Lion City. On the night of his arrival Rinpoche had a dream. In his dream he saw a very big field and the other part of the dream is about the Song of the Vajra sung by many people in Tiananman Square, which Rinpoche has referred to several times in his webcasts. During his short stay Rinpoche introduced Dzogchen to a small group of fewer than twenty people, comprised mainly of members from the Sakya Tenphel Ling and Karma Kagyu Centre.

The second retreat was held in December 1987 at a function hall within a bowling centre that could comfortably hold a thousand people. The venue was offered free for the retreat by Mr Yong Choo Shin, a member of the Board of Directors of Kim Seng Bowling Centre and a member of the management committee of the Karma Kagyu Centre. The hall was located right at the end of the bowling alleys. To enter the hall one had to pass through the busy and noisy bowling alleys; and after receiving the most profound Dzogchen Teaching one would necessarily pass through the alleys again and come back to our normal lives.

At this retreat Rinpoche gave ten days of teaching, three sessions per day. There were more than 300 participants. From then on we began to meet regularly for Ganapuja and other collective practices at practitioners' homes, offices, and sometime at the function hall of Kim Seng Bowl before it was sold to a property developer. During the early years we did not have a Gakyil. Around 1990 or 1991 after returning from a retreat with Rinpoche in Hong Kong, a Vajra brother, Keng Leck, told us that Rinpoche had approved a list of proposed members to form a Gakyil. From then on, the Singapore Community has had a Gakyil. In 2002 the Community officially registered with the Singapore Registrar of Societies and became a legal entity.

As the Community grew, we needed to look for a more permanent place for group



Rinpoche at Namdrolling May 2012.



Song of the Vajra course with Rita Renzi January 2013.



Open Yantra Yoga course at the Ling with Emily Coeling Feb. 2013.



Gomadevi practice retreat with Elio Guarisco Dec. 2013.

practices rather than moving between various homes and offices of practitioners as during the earlier years. Keng Leck kindly offered his family temple, the Ean Keng Si, for the Community to meet for collective practices. As Ean Keng Si is a Mahayana temple, we met for Ganapujas at a separate venue. Initially we shared with a Nying-

mapa group the use of their centre twice a month for two to three years; from 2002-2003 we met at Cheh's office, after that for some years we met at a warehouse belonging to our Vajra brother Sam Chan for Ganapuja until the lease of the warehouse ended. We were then back to sharing venues with other Buddhist groups for Ganapuja until we became a Ling.

In March 2011 we moved out from Ean Keng Si to our current venue, a rented unit situated in Geylang, an area populated with



Celebrating Rinpoche's birthday at the Ling in 2013.



Khaitsa Songs at Namdrolling with Rinpoche Sept. 2014.

associations, temples, churches, mosques, eateries, massage parlours, and prostitutes. We asked Rinpoche for a name and he bestowed it - Namdrolling.

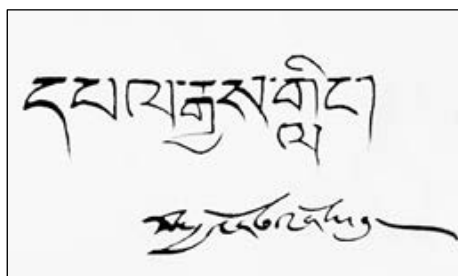
We continue to meet regularly for collective practices. We do Ganapujas on the four special days of the month. Most of our practices during the weekdays are con-

Palgyas Ling

Thimphu, Bhutan

Palgyas Ling is the name given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to the first Ling of the Dzogchen Community in Bhutan before his second visit to the country. However, the main inaugural ceremony for the Ling in Thimphu, Bhutan was officially done by Rinpoche himself on 2 September 2015 during his second visit to Bhutan, accompanied by some 50 foreign students and some of his Bhutanese students.

Palgyas Ling has a large collection of the Rinpoche's books as well as some relics and statues given by his Eminence personally. During the month of August 2015 Fabio Andrico led a yantra yoga course at Palgyas Ling for about 2 weeks. Moreover, devotees and students here in Thimphu frequently gather together at the Ling to do some practices. We have even attended the recent worldwide transmission given by Rinpoche. ©



Palgyas Ling

Motithang, above the Royal University of Bhutan office, Thimphu, Bhutan
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Khaita Dance during the retreat in Paro.

Photo by Alex Siedlecki



Palgyas Ling is established in Thimphu.

Photo by Alex Siedlecki

ducted in the evening. On Sunday morning we start Yantra Yoga practice at 8am, follow by other collective practices. Monday is Vajra Dance Day. Thursday is for the learning of SMS led by our local SMS Base level teacher Cheh Goh. On Friday evening we do three sessions of practice during which Keng Leck leads the practice of Powa, followed by Paul Griffin and the practice of Chod from the terma of our Master, and lastly Sam Chan with the practice of Kandroi Gadgyan.

Over the years we have invited the following teachers to teach in various fields:

- Yantra Yoga: Fabio Andrico, Laura Evangelisti, Emily Coeling and Patrizia Pearl;
- Vajra Dance: Prima Mai, Adriana Dal Borgo, Rita Renzi and Cosimo Di Maggio;
- Nina Robinson to teach Mandarava practice;
- Elio Guarisco to teach a Tsa-Lung course and Gomadevi practice;
- Khenpo Yeshe Wangpo for a Longde workshop and Mandarava Sogthig retreat.

If you ever come to Singapore, do visit Namdrolling and practice with us. Please check

our practice schedule from our web-site: www.dzogchen.sg. Namdrolling welcomes you. ©

Namdrolling

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Rabgyaeling

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Rabgyaeling is a little sweet home of the International Dzogchen Community in South East Asia, and was founded by a few friends, who are all students of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and enthusiasts of Dzogchen practice.

The seed of its formation came a few years back when Elio Guarisco, a senior student and translator of Rinpoche, was invited to Kuala Lumpur to conduct a Mind Training Workshop. However, this normal Dharma workshop ended up with a big surprise during which Elio presented the general principles of the view and the general principles of the practice of Dzogchen – the Great Perfection – to the participants for the first time. We were also blessed with another surprise during which a spontaneous live Dzogchen Global Transmission webcast was held, and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave us the quintessential transmission of the Great Perfection. All programs went well and the participants were filled with joy and enthusiasm. This successful event also planted a seed for Rinpoche's next visit to KL, which then smoothly ripened last year (October 2015) with great success and many blessings.

So in October 2015 (last year), after a long wait of more than 30 years, our beloved Guru, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, placed his feet on the Land of Malaya (the old name of Malaysia). His students and disciples were waiting and welcomed him with tears of joy and gratitude.

Under the collaboration of both Vajra-Link and the Hai Tao Foundation, we were allowed to use the grand hall located within Wisma Hrih Lotus – a modern, convenient and the most glorious Dharma hall in KL. Rinpoche taught a three-day retreat entitled "The 3 D – Dzogchen, Dream Yoga and Direct Pointing to the Nature of Mind" which was partially based on the sacred text of Garab Dorje, namely "Three Words that Strike the Vital Point".

This wonderful retreat was attended by more than 250 participants from all over the world. Everyone was blessed with many spiritual banquets of great joy and humor, and a dynamic Dharma energy could be felt in every corner of the hall.

On the auspicious day of 'double water' (26th Oct 2015), by the Blessings of our beloved Teacher Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche,



it was with great joy and love that we announced the formation of a new and only Ling in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with the name of "Rabgyaeling" (meaning 'Supreme Progress').

The new members of our Gakyil ("mandala of joy") are:

Blue: Sherab Wong; Tsewang Tsering; Chin How

Red: Angie Tan; Calvin Onn Yee Han; Patricia Snider

Yellow: Alan Chong; Ven. Tenzin (Tan Si Chu)

We have just registered ourselves as a legal entity in Malaysia, and are looking for a suitable venue to begin our Dharma activities. For Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance, we are currently using the Journey Within Yoga Studio. We are doing our group practice including Tun in an apartment in Bangsar at the moment.

Besides inviting Rinpoche and his students to teach and share with us the essence of Dzogchen, our future plans include organizing an International Seminar

on "Dzogchen, Zen and Vipassana" in which meditation masters and practitioners from these three traditions can share and exchange views on this interesting topic. We intend to organize more modern life related activities, and to present the essence of the Great Perfection in an integral and practical way to the public. Besides that, we also aim to organize some meaningful talks, sharings and workshops based on the concept of Integral Spirituality, trying our best to integrate the artful parts in Dzogchen with modern trainings of leadership, management, healing and mindfulness.

Sarva Mangalam – May this be Auspicious for all! ©

Rabgyaeling

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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Visits Kuala Lumpur

Patricia Snider

It was an auspicious day, September 18, 2015, when people from around the world came to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to participate in a three day retreat with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, based on the secret text of Garab Dorje, "The Three Statements That Strike The Essence of Mind," Dzogchen, Dream Yoga, and Direct Pointing to Mind's Essence.

The participants gathered in anticipation of his arrival and Wisma Hrih Lotus was humming with energy. It had been thirty years since Rinpoche's last visit to KL. In fact, many of us had not yet met him in person but had followed him in heart, word and spirit. I had been an admirer of this brilliant teacher for years, read his books and secretly, called him from afar through prayers and intention. You can imagine my excitement! I kept thinking, he's here, he's actually here. I felt like my heart was singing when he entered the hall and I know I wasn't the only one thinking that way. He expected no bows, nor did he allow sustained applause. I was struck by his clarity, humility and gentleness. Rinpoche embodies such gentleness and genuine charm. His palpable qualities and radiance filled the room as we sat holding our attention to his words.

Rinpoche introduced us to many things, like the benefits of chulen pills and mantras along with their significance and he even recounted a fascinating story about the Gyalpo protector. He spoke about being harmed and disturbed when he was young by the spirit but overcame it through the practice of Guru Dragphur (wrathful form of Guru Rinpoche) and Singha Mukha or Sinhamukha (Lion face dakini). He taught us many treasures; practices and Mantras of Sinhamukha, 5 Elements, and Mandarava Longlife Practice. The latter he applied to himself precisely in 1994 when he had an occurrence of cancer, which he overcame through great dedication.

We were introduced to the Vajra Dance, which is like dancing through an open moment on a mandala. A truly amazing experience designed by Rinpoche and not to be missed! One becomes the music, move-



ment, elements, pure joy! Last but not least, Fabio Andrico taught Yantra Yoga. Challenging and fantastic!

Thank you all, thank you Rinpoche for your compassion and wisdom, your teaching and your patience. Thank you for coming to Kuala Lumpur and gracing us with your presence. Many thanks to the IDC team and the entourage that travelled with Rinpoche to make his life more comfortable. May you all enjoy long and healthy lives free from suffering.

Rabgyaeling, our little Ling has a mighty roar. We are growing in numbers and have a lot of enthusiasm to be part of Rinpoche's vision for an International Dzogchen Community and as such part of the Dzogchen family mandala. We hope Rinpoche enjoyed his time here and blesses us again by returning. May we all join together in Long Life Practice and dedicate it to our dear Rinpoche. ©

All photos by Cheong Thoong Leong

Hospice Training with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo

April 19–23, 2016
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, Spain

April 19

Excerpt from the first day of the training

This program was designed to help people, like family members, or professional care givers. It was also designed as knowledge for the individual.

The Four Main Sections

The first part is death from the Buddhist point of view and the acceptance of death. The second part is observing the signs of death. The third part is how Tibetan Medicine can help with the final journey. The last part is what we do according to Tibetan culture after someone has passed away or gone on their final journey. Each section will take one day more or less.

Chikhama means close to the final journey. Nyekyong means taking care. Chitag are the signs of death. When we say the signs of the death, this is very special. In our life there are two special times, one is when we are born, one special day when we come in the world to be part of this globe. We are conceived and then our consciousness searches for its parents or like a shadow, and when consciousness finds it, it enters into the mother's womb. There need to be several conditions at the time of conception so the being can enter the mother's body. Most beings come from a windy place, with loud sounds, and they are pushed around with a forceful push and then they enter the womb. This is the case for most consciousnesses. There are a few consciousnesses that know where they are going so it looks like they are going in a more conscious way.

The metaphor is that when it is windy and raining outside, everyone tries to find refuge. It is the same when the consciousness is searching and enters that way. Once it gets inside the mother's womb it feels it is in a very peaceful, warm and quiet place, so the consciousness likes that. It feels very safe. After it starts to develop and gets into the 37th week, until that point the mother's womb is the most safe and happy place, but now it feels too small, too stinky, too



wet, and also a little cold. It is in the 35th week the baby starts to feel this and then in the 37th week, the baby definitely wants to leave from the mother's womb, and tries to find a new gate to escape from that region. When they are searching for the gate from which to escape the baby is turning the head down. Finally they are successful and they come into the world, so this is a very special day. So another special time is when we have reached the time of death, because now we are going back to the origin, from where we came, more or less.

At the moment of conception it is said that nothing is there; there is the father's sperm and the mother's egg, like milk and yogurt mixed together. Which means starting from the very empty nothingness, the consciousness and elements, and then we start from the physical body to decline. So then it starts from the big level and declines to the zero level. So it is the same for conception; we say that when we build our body, we go from space, to wind, to fire, to earth, and in that way we are built, in the declining time it starts from the earth to fire, fire to wind, wind to space and in that way the body declines. So death is very natural, very universal, except for the day of death. That day is not that easy. We know since we are born that the final day will come, we know that. But until that day comes, it is not so easy. A lot of fear comes; one thing is we are very attached to this body, we are very good friends and have been in this body for a long time, so we have a very strong attachment to our body.

It doesn't matter how it ends, but when it does there is a little suffering and in the meantime we have a little worry about what will happen after, that so that also brings a lot of anxiety. So this makes it very difficult to deal with it.

So for this reason in Tibetan Buddhism there is the practice of impermanence, so in Tibetan Buddhism the first thing they teach is suffering. Buddha started his teaching with suffering and suffering is universal. Everyone has suffering, no one wants to suffer, and everyone wants to be free of suffering. So this is the universal circumstance and goal. Then there is how we can be free of this suffering; like a key to get out of this suffering and the idea of the suffering, there is impermanence. This awareness of impermanence is a very important practice. So once we are able to understand exactly the nature of impermanence then we understand, ok I am one of the people who definitely is going to die.

So the first thing you do in the exercise of impermanence is that you observe all the outer nature. You observe how things outside change, like for example trees. How the trees are changing. This is a sign of impermanence because the trees are changing. In that way we have four seasons. Observing the moment of the changing, we have the first season, the first season is over, and then one year goes that way and in that way goes our life; moment by moment. There is not only natural change, but sometimes we have disasters, and we have a lot of problems and we do not have time to go from season to season, like spring, summer, autumn and winter, but suddenly we have a disaster and then the outer nature changes.

So today we have a lot of places that tourists go historically and all has changed. Before these places were used by people and today they have become a museum or tourist place because circumstances have changed. So sometimes it is good, you try to observe the outside, a very famous mountain, a king's palace, country or nature, whatever, the outside nature, observing it and how it is changing, what has happened, like this.

The second one is not only you are observing the external but you observe the internal. Internal means all the sentient beings. So when we are young we have a lot of friends. We have elementary school, middle school and high school classmates, college degree, masters degree, and we have many classmates. When we are younger we have



friends to play with. Now we look and see how many are left. All our great grandparents, where did they go? Their impermanence arrived before us so they left. This is also a good practice to think a little bit with our eyes closed, where did those people go? Some of my classmates have already gone, some will go and I am one of them, going somewhere. This is also, they say, one sort of good practice.

The third one is we think, my classmates are ordinary, I am ordinary, my grandparents are ordinary, but what about holy people? We are followers of Buddhism and so we try and see where are those enlightened beings, those Buddha families, where they are now? Now we have statues and thangka paintings but since the beginning there are not thangkas and statues. Once upon a time they were human. Then something happened and they disappeared and so we have thangkas and statues to remind us and we pray and make contact and we can have something better than nothing. So not only ordinary people but those enlightened beings also need to go somewhere somehow. So today everything is in the history books.

So Buddha took parinirvana because Buddha wanted to show the nature of impermanence to other sentient beings, so if you think this, that someone has such a big power like a king, then maybe they would have another option. Once upon a time every country had a king. Tibet had thirty-eight kings. After that we started counting with the Tibetan Central Government

and then we started counting to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. The same is also true for other countries. Where are those kings now, the king who had such a strong power, ruling all the nations, they ate all the best foods, had the best health care, but where are those people now? They also went in the same direction. Like in America now they say the 43rd president. For sure some of them are still alive, but many of them are under ground. Everyone goes in the same direction, to the same place. So we say even if you get to the highest power there is no permanent place to stay with your power. So those kinds of people are also inside the impermanent group. Also the army chiefs, they went. Every country has statues of their heroes and they have already died, so it is just for the future they have made these kinds of statues.

Now we reach the metaphors to help with the practice of impermanence. For example, we have a nice bowl. I had breakfast in that bowl and by lunchtime it was already broken and it does not even exist anymore. So this is a lesson in impermanence. I had, I wanted, I used it and then suddenly it is broken, so now it is not there anymore. And then some people go from here to there and are not able to return, something happened on the road, an accident or something, so those are examples of impermanence. All of this indicates how we need to practice the understanding impermanence. So first you start by looking outside, externally, to the world of nature, etc., secondly you observe sentient beings,

thirdly you read what has been written by all those enlightened beings who tried to practice impermanence, and fourth you try to imagine all those powerful beings and where they are now and lastly you think from your own experience about the nature of impermanence. All of these are methods to practice the awareness of impermanence.

Finally we need to understand that it is absolutely true that all sentient beings go the same way. There is no place to rest permanently, we are all guests. In Tibetan Buddhism they have a metaphor for our body in this life, our consciousness is like a guest and our body is like the guesthouse. So the people who live in the hotel, sooner or later ideally they are leaving. Someone is leaving today, someone tomorrow, someone in the morning, some in the afternoon, someone next week, the week after that, but somehow everyone must leave. At the same time someone is arriving. So they say the consciousness is the guest or the person and the body are like the guesthouse. So people who are living in the hotel, so somehow we need to help people understand that one day they will leave the hotel. Some people feel that this practice of impermanence is a little bit rough. They are not so happy to hear or discuss the death. Also they think that this is an inauspicious topic to discuss. It is true it is not such a nice topic to discuss, that is true. It is much nicer to discuss something like birth, than death. Birth we don't have a choice because it is because of our karma; we don't have any guarantee and no choice. After birth, death is for sure, that is 100% happening. It is not an easy topic to discuss but it is very useful to understand impermanence because death is not only for me, it is for everybody. It is universal.

I was a doctor in a remote area for a long time and I saw many people die. And sometimes a very strong and tough man, when the last moment came, it was not easy for them. And sometimes it was the opposite - a weak person could be very strong at the time of death. There is a big difference in how people are trained and how they accept or not this final day. It is very different. The one problem is that we all know we are going to die, that is for sure, but we don't know when. We never know if tomorrow comes first or the next life comes first, we do not know. Truthfully. We have an idea that tomorrow comes first and I will do this and that and that even next year comes

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first. We have a lot of plans but the reality is we don't know which comes first.

In Buddhism they say there are the three truths or three certainties. The first is that after some reflection, we understand that everyone will die. Death is a truth that no one anywhere has the possibility to escape. The second truth is that no one knows when that day will come. Ideally we all stay around for around 90-100 years and then slowly something happens. But many children, as soon as they are conceived, they are miscarried. Many develop very well for the 8 or 9 months, and then at the last minute when they turn the head and something does not go well, they are stuck there and they die. Many people die very young, some a bit older, some middle aged, and very few people are able to reach the mature age. There may be a few lucky people who live to old age. Like we say when we plant a fruit tree, to be able to get the fruit to eat is not so easy. We are not farmers so we don't have the experience, but if we were the farmer, or if we were planning the garden, getting fruit is not so easy and there are many obstacles before getting the fruit. Then the third truth, or sure thing, is that when we die we discover there is nothing useful to take with us, if we were very wealthy we cannot take the wealth with us. If we were very powerful and had many servants, we cannot take a servant with us when we die. That does not function. Someone has a loving wife, children or friends, also they cannot go with the person. So you will go just by yourself with your actions or the result of your actions, good or bad actions, that all goes with you. For this reason many people come to the last moment with a lot of regrets.

To prevent that regret, it is very important that you do something from now that benefits sentient or other beings, some positive action. When we say we dedicate to sentient beings, it looks like we need a special capacity to help other sentient beings but that is not true. We all have equal capacity to help; there are different capacities but from every level we can help. Each of us has some capacity way to help. Even if you think you cannot help the other sentient beings, you try and make a promise that you will not harm any sentient being. So if you have performed these positive actions when the time of your death comes, you do not have such a strong worry about what will happen with your consciousness

in the *bardo*. So these three things we call the three truths or three certainties.

- Death is for sure
- For sure we do not know when we die
- For sure the only thing that goes with us is the result of our action

There is a story of a man who made a good friend with a ghost. Ideally a ghost knows everything. So the man asked the ghost if the ghost could let him know a month before he, the man, will die. And the ghost agreed to do that. Then one day very late evening the ghost came to see that man, and he told the man that in the upper village a rich man died. The man said ok. Then another day he came very early in the morning. He told the man that one poor lady died in the lower part of the village. The man said ok. And then one day the ghost came and he told the man, "Tomorrow you are going to die." The man got angry and said, "Why do you tell me now, I told you to tell me a month before." I told you over a month ago the rich man died and then the poor lady died, everyone is going one by one, you are in the line. When we hear that someone dies that is a message for us, we hear that people on all sides of us are dying, then we are closer and closer to the window. So when we hear about someone dying we should remember this is a message for us about our life and that we are coming closer and closer to death. ©

Transcribed and edited by Naomi Zeitz

The Hypocrisy of the Technique of Positive Thinking

Elio Guarisco

"Whatever one frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of the mind."

Buddha

These words point to the importance of being aware of what kind of thoughts we have, of what kind of thought processes are occurring in us knowingly or unknowingly. This is because the more frequently we ponder or think in a certain way, the more the mind inclines toward that pattern of thoughts. It is the same in nature. When something arises in nature, it is much easier for that phenomena to occur again. The more often a kind of thought is repeated, the more probable its arising becomes.

In this relative context, of course positive thoughts and negative thoughts are very different, in particular in regard to their outcome. Positive thoughts may lead us into activities that bring benefit both to oneself and to others, and give a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in our life. While negative thoughts lead to self-destruction, to harming others and a sense of frustration and a lack of fulfillment.

When understanding this, we observe our thoughts, we begin to notice and become conscious of the particular habit patterns of our thoughts. It is important to observe thoughts intentionally for even though our thoughts patterns have long being established they often go un-noticed and we are not aware of them.

When our observation of thoughts is very precise and the power of our awareness has become strong, we can recognize the pattern of our thoughts very clearly, and that strength of awareness is in itself sufficient to de-condition ourselves from the negative pattern of thoughts.

Even though we clearly recognize the negative nature of the thought, we don't judge it, "it is bad". If our awareness is strong we do not need to do anything about the negative thought, we do not need to suppress it. In that very moment of seeing clearly, the force of the habitual pattern

of negative thoughts weakens, and we are no longer forced to respond, to react, to translate the energy of negative thoughts into some kind of unskillful action.

Thus, awareness in which there is clear recognition of the negative thought pattern allows us to observe without being caught up in it. It allows us to not identify with the thought, and in this way we are no longer feeding that negative pattern.

We also begin to see that thoughts are passing phenomena, and we don't personalize them by identifying with them.

Such observation is a choiceless awareness. It does not intentionally do away with negative thoughts and does not intentionally try to give rise to positive thoughts. Yet as our awareness expands to every aspect of our life, spontaneously, negative thoughts or negative mental states decrease in number, and positive thoughts or positive mental states become more frequent.

"There where you choose there is confusion. For the mind that sees clearly there is nothing to choose."

J. Krishnamurti

This way of dealing with our thoughts and mental states with a choiceless awareness is very different from the technique of positive thinking that has become popular in the US, and that attracts some people around the world.

This technique it is not based on awareness, it is the opposite of awareness, it involves choice, choosing to generate intentionally positive thoughts.

The assumption in this technique is that all that happens to one in life is the projection of one's thought. If one thinks positively "I am going to be rich" one will become rich. Euros and dollars will begin to fall into one's lap.

Aspirations are actually a powerful cause for what is aspired to come about, but it does not imply that aspiration brings the result immediately and without the presence of other necessary causes.

This technique is a superficial approach. It can help in some cases when indeed the state in which we are in is created by the mind. But we cannot say that everything we meet in life is created by our mind. So this approach actually increases our fantasies and illusions.



Elio Guarisco.

Photo by Cheong Thoong Leong

Moreover, the positive thinking technique is based on the idea that negative thoughts and mind states are extraneous to our nature, which they conceive as fundamentally good and positive. Therefore it leads one to suppress and push down one's negative thoughts and mental states into the recesses of the unconscious.

We can try to do that, but as common experience teaches, often when we suppress, we push down the thought or the emotion that becomes even stronger than before, and it will eventually find its way to reappear again possibly in a more perverse form.

Moreover, if we repress hatred toward a person thinking that mind state is not part of ourselves and make efforts to change it into love for that person, we know that we are deceiving ourselves. We are just conditioning the conscious mind with a positive thought, but hatred will remain below the feigned love; we are simply pushing the dirt under the carpet. And with the occurrence of any thought of any emotion, the dirt continues to accumulate, and on the surface we become hypocritical.

This also happens to those who follow spiritual paths and who try to condition their conscious mind with positive thoughts, and train in order to change their negative mind states into positive ones using conceptual reflection. As long as they live in the protected environment of a monastery, of an ashram, of a cave where they can have the luxury of showing love, their training seems to work, but when they find themselves in ordinary situations and among ordinary people, in situations of difficulty all their castle of fabricated love and compassion collapses.

In reality the technique of positive thinking is just hypocrisy. It is deceiving oneself and others, and does not bring any real change in the person. In addition it is a waste of one's own life because it gives false ideas about ourselves and fosters illusion.

"When I cry I cry, when I laugh I laugh."

Zen

The positive thinking technique teaches you that when you are upset you should feel happy. But how is it possible to be happy, for example, when, in the morning you go to where your car is parked to go to work, and find that someone has damaged the side of your car?

It is true that our mind has the particular leaning of finding faults, of criticizing, of not noticing what is good, of focusing on what is bad. Instead of this it is better to see what qualities, to focus on what is good. This means to shift the focus of our mind. But this is not a stupid mind that does not see the faults and does not see what is negative. Or that wants to change what is bad into good, or cover up what is bad. It is just a change of focus that occurs spontaneously when our awareness recognizes the patterns and conditioning patterns of our mind.

We cannot always choose what is positive, as the positive thinking technique teaches. Life and events take many courses, sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy, and often we cannot do much about that.

What we can do is to experience all kinds of thoughts, all kinds of emotions with the choiceless sentry of awareness. If we can do that, even sorrow will have its beauty and meaning, and our minds will open to a dimension which is higher than both the ideas of good and bad. ©

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Interview with Ans Swart

Dzamling Gar March 13, 2016

The Mirror: Ans Swart is a painter and long time practitioner in the Dzogchen Community. We would like to talk with her about her thangka painting and also about how she met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the Dzogchen Community.

Ans, recently a very beautiful Mandarava thangka that you painted was sold for the benefit of the construction of the Dzamling Gar Gumpa and Dzamling Gar. When did you start working on that thangka and how much did it sell for?

AS: I think I started already in the 90's to make the drawing that became the base for the painting. I did that with my first teacher, Andy Weber from London. Most people know him. Andy Weber pointed me to a Dutch woman thangka painter and teacher called Marianne Van der Horst.

M: When did you first start studying thangka painting?

AS: I started in 1994 when I made my first Buddha head at the Maiertraya Institute in the Netherlands. I went to visit my cousin there; he is a Gelugpa monk and a Geshe. Also in 1994 Andy Weber was teaching thangka painting at the Maitreya Institute and I took courses with him. So it was with Andy Weber when I made the first line drawing for the Mandarava thangka in black and white. I still have it. Then I transferred it to a canvas and started the thangka. I also used gesso because I also use that in my other artwork.

M: So you have also studied traditional western art?

AS: Yes and I did that before I began thangka painting.

M: How much money did your Mandarava thangka sell for?

AS: It sold for 25,000 Euro! I have never sold anything for that amount of money in my life. Actually it was not a personal sale, the Dzamling Gar Gakyil sold it. The thangka



Ans with Rinpoche in the Gönpa of Merigar West.

was hanging near to Rinpoche during the Mandarava Drubchen Retreat.

M: How did you feel when it made that much money for the Gar?

AS: I had hoped that it would make at least 7000 euro. I was very happy!



The sale of Mandarava thangka at Dzamling Gar.

M: Let's go back to the beginning. Before you ever met Rinpoche, you were an artist and you studied formally at an art institute?

AS: I studied art at the art academy in Arnhem in the east of the Netherlands. In the 80's I went to Berlin with a studio exchange. It was there that I developed my painting in space, with dancing and using my voice and making big paintings on the wall. I also danced a lot in Berlin at that time; I was half dancer and half painter. The dance was free modern dance and I did a lot of contact improvisation. I worked with Ruth Zaporah from the action theatre. She also taught at Naropa Institute and she lived in Berkeley at that time. I studied with her in Holland, in Berlin and also in 1988 I went to Berkeley to study with her and at the end of my study there I also did a performance. It was very nice. There was also a woman

there who was a musician who also came to the Dzogchen Community later, Sylvia Nakkach. I was looking for a way to merge the arts, with dancing, music and color painting and we worked together. It was a funny accident that I worked with her and she also came to the Dzogchen Community. So then I had to integrate all of this into performance art, because alone in your art studio you can feel free, but performing with an audience you don't feel free and my mind was making a lot of noise during the performances. If I would do a performance now I would have learned a lot more to make my mind calm and not focus on all these things.

M: Now you are more focused on the visual arts and thangka painting?

AS: In my performances I used to express myself – my anger and emotions. It was really an expression. I think I needed that. But I already had a tendency that I wanted to be “in” my paintings, so I was in this kind of environment for making a painting. They were abstract and I called them sound paintings. You see a result and the performance is in time, so, you cannot really speak from music, and the layers cover the music. I made one of these in Berlin that was 40 meters long and 240 meters high, and this was amazing. With this one I could run along the wall and dance. My studio was in a big abandoned factory so there was enough room.

M: How did you go from there to thangka painting?

AS: In thangka painting you are working more inwardly and I do not need this



Mandarava Thangka by Ans.



Goma Devi Thangka by Ans.

expression any more, so much. Thangka painting is more internal.

M: So then you went to the Maitreya Institute?

AS: I went to visit my cousin Jan and he made me make the first Buddha head. Thereafter I followed the thangka making courses of Andy Weber. And this was my first experience of making thangka paintings.

M: Did you continue to study with Andy Weber?

AS: Yes I continued with him and he is also the one who helped me shape the figure of Mandarava. I finished the painting with Marian van der Horst because her style different from Andy, her style is more fine and subtle, with a lot of shading. Andy's style is more like filling everything with color. I liked Andy's style in the beginning but now I like Van der Horst's style more, which is the Karma Gardri style. She studied with Geka Lama in Nepal or India. In 1999 I went

to Merigar West to do a workshop with Lama Gyurmed and Paola Minelli, where we made a Medicine Buddha.

M: Do you paint every day? Are you still producing thangkas?

AS: I am a slow painter; I do it for my pleasure. At first my thangkas took four years to finish. Now it takes me less than one year because I take my thangka and it fits in my valise and bring it to Tenerife and work there as well.

M: Do you ever have shows of your work?

AS: Yes I did a thangka show with other thangka painters at the Maitreya Institute in Amsterdam.

M: Are you able to sell your work?

AS: Yes, at the moment, and also because I am now able to show my pictures in printed reproductions. I did that at Merigar West and now at Dzamling Gar, so people come to me and ask me if I can make this or that thangka. So in the last two

years I had two commissioned thangkas. And now I have another new commission, which is a wrathful deity. I have not done wrathful deities before. There are a lot of flames around. Before I focused on white and green Tara, Mandarava and Akshobya. Now I am working on Simhamukha. I am very happy with that.

M: Is there a different experience working on a wrathful deity as opposed to a peaceful one?

AS: In a way there is no difference, but there is also an experience that there is more energy in the wrathful deities, and it says also that the wrathful deity is about movement.

M: Are there certain practices that thangka painters do?

AS: I learned from Lama Gyurmed that even when you wash your brush you say a mantra. Also you bless your paints. And bless the water. And while you are doing

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» *Artist continued from previous page*

the painting you say the mantra of the deity. And the Lama said when you paint on the deity; you are in yab yum with the deity. So this is a really deep connection.

M: So tell us about the evolution of your artwork overall.

AS: It went from very expressive to very inward. Now I am on pension and I have more time to devote to painting, especially thangka painting. But I still need to do my own artwork; I need the freedom when I feel the necessity to express something.

M: Do you feel a change in your own artwork as a result of the thangka painting?

AS: Yes I do. In a way it is a little the same because I am in silence and more connected with myself when I paint. I feel more when I do my own work, what is necessary and what I want to tell. I mostly work abstractly. I am more open to what could happen; in thangka painting it is more structured in where it should go and what it should be totally. I am also happy with that because it gives you a structure.

M: How long do you have to study to make the grid, the base of all thangkas?

AS: If you already know how to draw and paint, you can master it easily. Actually anyone can learn and develop the coordination.

M: Do you also do calligraphy?

AS: I studied at the art academy and I made the syllables for the Vajra Dance film, A AH HA SHA SA MA.

M: Do you want to talk a little about the relationship of your personal work and the thangka painting? Do you find that your personal work drops away more and more or?

AS: My own free work was also very influenced by the teachings. I made a series around the time of changing of the centuries about the Six Lokas. So I chose the complementary colors to be the wisdom side of each loka, and the colors touched each other, and then it becomes grey in the middle when they are true opposites. So this took me some time to play with and this series is called Transformation. It is very big, 1.20 x 2 meters and there are six in a row, so you really can face it when you are in front of it. Later other artists inspired me and I wanted especially to make the *thigles*, but it does not mean I had these



Ans painting in her studio in Amsterdam.

visions. I am not so much a visionary person. It is more about one pointed concentration where you see, and you are going inside the painting; it takes you. I made big ones and also small ones. So the practice has influenced my personal art. For example, I made a series when my mother died; I painted out a diary she kept, a daily diary from the last year of her life, especially about the weather. The Dutch word for weather is "weer". The second meaning is "again". So "Weer is mijn moeder" means "weather is my mother" or "again is my mother". My mother was very keen on the weather, which you find mentioned many times in her diary, and I shaped her "again", but now in paintings. This painting helped me to digest her death.

But I am also happy I am out of this chasing after galleries and finding sellers, especially in these difficult times and Holland is not so much art minded. Even in Amsterdam you have to have a name, but with this Mandarava I became a little famous, in the Community! It is a nice side effect.

M: So now are you living in Tenerife part time?

AS: Yes part time and also part time in Holland. I also give painting lessons both places.

M: One more question about the actual process of thangka painting and then we can go into how you met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. So what is the sequence of a painting?

AS: First you make the grid, and the drawing, and with the drawing you begin with the deity, with the head and the clothes and then you form the landscape around and you do not make the eyes yet. Then you transfer the drawing to transparent paper and prepare the canvas and put the line drawing behind it. Then there is a light box and you can draw over that image with a soft pencil so the drawing is transferred and you don't have to erase or anything directly on the canvas. Then you begin first with the landscape, then the deity and all the ornaments, clothes, the fire around and all the surroundings, and then you begin filling in with color. You begin with the sky. So you shade the sky with pointillism, and you have millions of tips of paint, so you always begin with the sky and the clouds and then the landscape, and then you make the lotus and the sun and moon. Then you put the deity on it with all the entourage



The painting called Transformation.

around, and then there is the lining, then after the lining you add the gold for the jewels etc., and then you also line the gold and then you do the eyes. The eyes are always painted last on a special day.

I learned something similar studying the painting of yantras at the end of the 70's. In these paintings you circle around in the right direction and make the lines first and then the paintings and when the painting is ready, you add the dot. And then the deity is implanted, like with the eyes of the thangka. I didn't learn anything about mantras at that time. I could not bring this to the art academy because it was too structured; at the academy it was encouraged to be very free and we were even dancing. We would put the easels aside and dance. So that is where I first was introduced to movement and visual art.

M: So now we would like to know about how you met the teachings.

AS: It is very much connected to my art because I came from Berlin and then back to Arnhem, and then I wanted to go back to Amsterdam because I come from the west, kind of close to Amsterdam. So I made an exchange with an artist, who wanted to go back to Arnhem, and I went to his house in Amsterdam and it was exceptionally good and I still live in this house, which is also my studio. And when I was in Amsterdam and I wanted to dance. I found announcement that said, "Dancing with the Dakinis", or "as the Dakinis"...and the name under it was Stoffelina Verdonk. This was in 1988. I

did her course with all the colors, movements and singing, and it was very interesting and then she asked if we could do a performance together. The theme of the festival was "death". So to prepare for our performance we interviewed some people and we went to see a man who had written a very important book and what he said to us was, "You need a master in your life." And then we went to see Sogyal Rinpoche and Stoffelina said, "Go to the front and feel what you feel", and I did feel something heart to heart with him. I did not know that Stoffelina had a master at that time. So we did our performance. Then she invited me to come to Finland where she was teaching young dancers. Also I did some drawing sessions with them. It was very nice. Then I would see her sitting in her room silently and I asked her if she was meditating and she was very secretive and would not tell me very much. I told her I was interested and then I went along to a "meeting" and the first meeting was a Ganapuja. What was talking to me the most was the Song of the Vajra and I was always happy when we were singing it. This was in 1989. Then people said to me, "You have to go to Merigar and meet the Master!" I did not really know what it was all about but I said, "Ok, I will go." So then I went at Christmas time in 1991. Stoffelina was there also.

Everything was new to me, I didn't know anything, even about Buddhism. Also the teachings, I did not understand them. There were many difficult words. Also it was translated from Italian to English and

my English was not so good. I did not really understand but I felt something. So then I heard they were dancing the Song of the Vajra and I became even more interested.

Then I started to have dreams of the Master and what I understood from my dreams was that the teachings are very complete. They are complete teachings and you don't need anything else, everything is in it. So I didn't have to look any further. And now here I am living in Tenerife. Also many nice things happened this year and it makes me very joyful and grateful to Rinpoche for bringing me on this path.

M: Thank you Ans.

©



Self-less self portrait.

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How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Sarah Laguzzi

I come from a family that has been involved in spiritual research and even before I started university I was on this path. My father was a student of esotericism, a Freemason, so instead of watching television at lunchtime, as most Italian families do, he would talk to us about the symbolism of comparative religions. Later on I also became a female Freemason for three years. My father was a layperson but he gave me a religious education because he believed that without it we would have become antisocial seeing as everyone else at school followed religious studies, was baptized, etc. He wanted us to understand about the culture we had been born into.

I was happy about this because as a layperson I was free. We didn't have to go to church on Sunday, only if we felt like it. We would go at Christmas and Easter but for the rest it wasn't necessary that we went. Our home was full of books on spiritual research by great masters.

During my university years I often went to Paris because we were in love with the city and it was also a mine of esotericism – texts, books, churches – and as the daughter of a Freemason I went to continue my research in the libraries and bookshops there. In Italy there was nothing like that at the time so we frequently went there. But we didn't understand much. It was mostly at the level of sensations and emotions. So my spiritual research started like this.

When I was 13 my mother had given me a book set in 14th century France in which the hero travelled the road to Santiago de Compostela. In all the books I read on that pilgrimage, the character that struck me the most was the pilgrim who was full of shells. I loved medieval history and ended up getting my degree in it, specializing in pilgrimage, in particular on the pilgrimage to Santiago.

I actually did the pilgrimage several times but in an intellectual way with the aim of doing research rather than a religious one. The first time I did it was in 1985 – I set off as an intellectual but arrived in Santiago as a pilgrim. There was really some kind of transformation along the way. The main transformation came about in Cebreiro which is the principle point

on the pilgrimage linked to the Holy Grail. That which inspired Goethe in the *Parsifal* is what you find today at Cebreiro. The route started from Roncisvalles and after all the Camino Frances, you arrive in Galicia, pass through the mountains and start to enter into the real *mandala*.

The actual walking was only about 200–250 km and took me a few days walking about 30 km a day. I came from a background of intellectual research but I had some very special moments during that walk and ended up writing quite an unusual thesis on The Way of St. James, practically a literary one, a narration, for my degree.

I met Rinpoche because my husband passed away in 2003. Before that I had worked together with my husband – we had a cinema production company with his brother and we used to work with the Rai [Italy's national public broadcasting company]. Before I met him he was already doing some big productions for cinema and television with many important directors. Then when the Italian cinema went into crisis in the 80s and 90s he reinvented himself as a director of documentary films. I met him at this time and we started to work together and have a relationship.

I had always liked Fosco Maraini [an Italian photographer, anthropologist, ethnologist, writer, mountaineer and academic] very much – as a teenager someone gave me his book "Secret Tibet" which became a sort of bible for me – and I really wanted to work with him. At the time he had written a wonderful book entitled *Le Fanfole* in which he invented a language. I called him and said that we would like to do some work with *Le Fanfole* because we had a friend in common, Massimo Altomare, who had done a fantastic concert on the *Fanfole*. From this concert came the impetus to do a documentary film on the life of Maraini, Tucci's photographer in Tibet – so Tibetan and Japan. We were able to have access to the Istituto Luce in Rome where most of the important documentaries on the history of Italy and are preserved. It was an important moment for our work.

Just to backtrack a bit, before this for three years I had been a student of Filippani-Ronconi, a colleague of Prof. Namkhai Norbu at the University of Naples. In fact,



the first time I heard Namkhai Norbu's name was when Filippani-Ronconi mentioned him. At the time I had a friend who was quadriplegic and I asked Filippani-Ronconi if there was anything that could be done for him on the esoteric level. He said that the only person in the world who could do anything for him was one of the greatest living doctors of Tibetan medicine, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. When I said that I wanted to go and speak to him, Filippani said that it would not be possible because at that time Namkhai Norbu was being cured for cancer at the Sloane Kettering in New York.

Then my husband became gravely ill with leukemia, and in spite of a bone marrow transplant, he passed away. With his death I went into crisis because I was very attached to him and I started to have these dreams that were very different to any dreams that I had had before then. It was as if my husband was present, as if I was meeting him in some intermediate area between life and death. My dreams were very powerful and I wanted to develop them to dream about him more and more. It was a period when I felt very low, not going out of the house very much and really feeling like not continuing to live, wanting to reach my husband.

Then I remembered that some time earlier a friend had given me a present of a

book about the yoga of dreaming by Namkhai Norbu. I had read it but not understood much about it so I decided to read it again. The book said that by developing one's dreams, the goal was not to dream any more which was exactly the opposite of what I wanted to do! I checked on internet to see who Namkhai Norbu was and discovered that he was the person that Filippini-Ronconi had told me about some years earlier. The contact number for him was Merigar so I telephoned in January of 2004 but they told me that he was in Venezuela and gave me the number of Zhenphenling, the center in Rome. When I called there I found that there would be a presentation by ASIA at the Ling two days later and I met Andrea Dell'Angelo. When I went to Zhenphenling straight away I felt as if I was at home.

The week after that there was a direct introduction – at the time it wasn't done by webcast but with a cassette tape – and I thought I would go to Merigar for it. I went with two friends, one was the person who had given me the book on dreams and the other was my sister-in-law. At Merigar, Costantino Albini gave an explanation about direct introduction and sang the Song of the Vajra. That was the first time I would hear it and I was really affected by it.

At that point I decided to go to Venezuela even though I didn't know anyone there. When Andrea Dell'Angelo heard I was going he asked me to take some documents for the Master. So I went to Margarita Island. When I arrived there I met a practitioner who was from my town in Italy, Alessandria, who told me that I should give this package of documents to Rinpoche immediately. I went to where he was staying, knocked at the door, and when it opened it closed behind me with a big bang which reminded me of a dream I had had the night before receiving the direct introduction. It was a dream about a door slamming and a very particular house. This dream came to mind straight away and I had a different sensation of space between outside and inside the house.

I found myself in front of Fabio Andrico and tried to give him the package of documents for Rinpoche because I was afraid and I wanted to leave. But he told me to take them to the Master. So I went into the kitchen where there was an enormous statue of the Buddha. It felt like I was in a temple. And there was the Master wearing this cap with a big Tibetan letter A on it. He was sitting there and I approached



him from the side and – this memory is very strong – and I had a sort of crack in my head. I hoped that he wouldn't ask me anything. I told him my name was Sarah and that I had brought the documents from Andrea.

When I left there I was in a state that was something completely new for me. Years after I understood that it was a type of direct introduction but at the time I felt his great compassion. There was the suffering of the world in his eyes. After that meeting I cried for three days. I thought of my first master, Jesus Christ, and what incredible luck his disciples had had to know him in flesh and blood. I had never understood his phrase in the Bible: Take up your cross and follow me. When I left Rinpoche's house I understood it – the weight of the world, the compassion of Christianity – because I was a Christian. And I finally understood my path and had no more doubts.

Instead, I recognized Rinpoche immediately and directly and I became one of his students. I was in Margarita just a few days but I arrived in a world and left in another. I arrived there filled with extreme sorrow and left singing. I felt like a newborn child. I didn't understand anything he said the first time I heard him teach but I heard the sound of his voice and I was struck by it. This is the beautiful aspect of meeting – you are pure, you have no preconceptions, you don't understand anything. After the teaching, I went to him with my question to which he answered that it was just my attachment. And it was as if in that word there was a whole encyclopedia.

In the evening of that day I watched Rinpoche and his students dancing the Song of the Vajra. At the time the Gönpa was a type of barn. And I couldn't stop crying – it was like having a great purification. The following morning I went to the beach but I was singing all sorts of songs that I hardly even remembered. I was there in Margarita for 15 days and I decided that I did not want to separate myself from Rinpoche, but wanted to follow him, so I started to study. And my story started there. ©



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