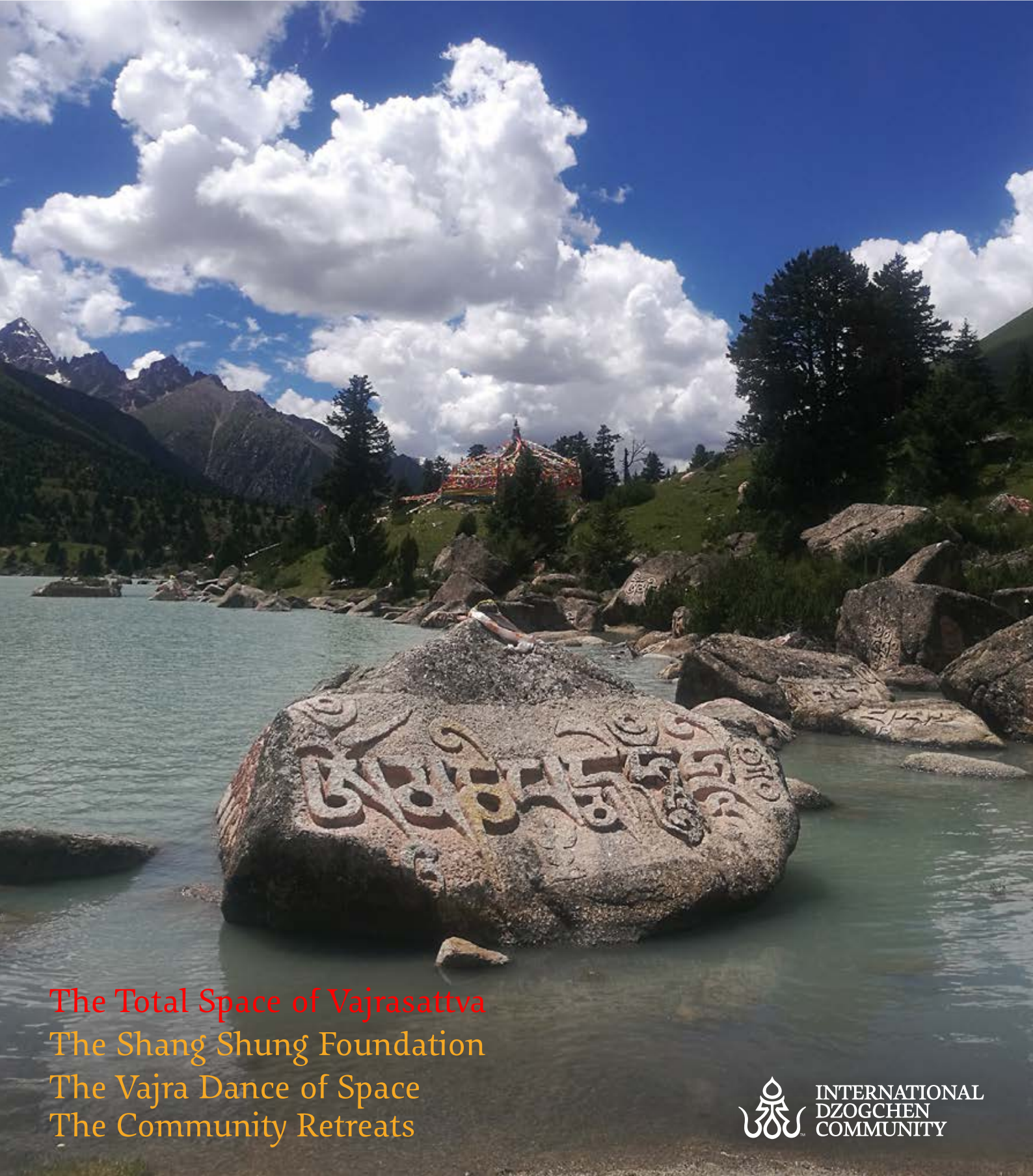


# THE MIRROR

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The Total Space of Vajrasattva  
The Shang Shung Foundation  
The Vajra Dance of Space  
The Community Retreats

 INTERNATIONAL  
DZOGCHEN  
COMMUNITY





Above: East Tibet. Mantras on the hillside written using white cloth.

Front cover: Om mani padme hum mantra carved in rock at Yihun Lhatso lake, East Tibet.

Back cover: Woodblock printing press in Derge Parkhang.

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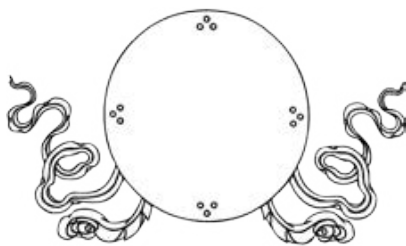
# Editorial

## The Resilience of the Dzogchen Community

Arcidosso, Paris, Munich, Vienna and Kyoto, what is the common thread found in all these places for the International Dzogchen Community? The common thread is that each of these places that was originally on Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teaching tour for 2017, became locations where very successful Sangha Retreats were held this summer.

Due to health challenges, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was unable to follow his proposed teaching schedule for 2017. Instead, much to the relief of the Community, Rinpoche chose to take time to rest, recover and heal. We are all aware that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu does not make these decisions lightly and we sensed how difficult it was for Rinpoche to change his program, with the wish, however, that if all goes well, the same schedule will be reproduced next year.

The French Community led the way by coming up with a last minute plan B when, shortly before the planned dates early in June, Rinpoche announced that he would have to cancel his visit. Of course there was a natural disappointment with the physical absence of the precious Master, but the presence of the Master is always there and manifested in all its brilliance at these events. With the collaboration of a team of



senior students and instructors, and the generosity of the Sangha Rimay of Denys Rinpoche in Paris who kindly offered their venue, "the best of everything", the first Sangha retreat of the season was very successfully held in Paris.

Merigar West in Arcidosso, Italy, soon followed suit early in July, where some 650 people, many of whom were newcomers, were able to attend a very rich and full five-day Sangha Retreat. The event turned out to be a wonderful opportunity for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's senior students to come together to present his teaching in its many aspects to old and new students and for the Community to be present, practice, and enjoy together.

Moving on to Munich, Germany, in mid-July, organizers and instructors created a similar inspiring and powerful retreat atmosphere for three days in which about 350 people participated. Then at the end of July the Vienna Sangha Retreat brought together over 80 people coming from many different places to experience the deep connection within the Sangha and the strength that arises from it. Finally, early in September, there was a joyful and amazing opportunity for the Japanese students

of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to reunite for five days and also introduce the Teachings to many newcomers to the Dzogchen Community in the beautiful setting of Kyoto.

What can we learn from this? We can learn about our own capacity and resilience as an enormous international, often unwieldy, Sangha. The Community rose to the occasion and allowed Rinpoche the space to relax in the knowledge that the Dzogchen Community can take care of itself when the need arises. This can only be a support for Rinpoche, Rosa and the Namkhai family, and enhance the healing process for our beloved Master.

So bravo and hats off to all the Dzogchen Communities that took up the challenge and offered wonderful experiences for old and new students alike. We are grateful for their diligence and willingness to persevere while providing inspiration and guidance for the entire International Community.

The Editors

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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has recently returned to Dzamling Gar in Tenerife. His health continues to improve although he has decided not to undertake the journey to ASIA this year. His program will be forthcoming.

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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu with Dr. Jamyang Oliphant at the presentation of SHAR RO, a book honoring Rinpoche's achievements, teaching and research, in December 2016 at Merigar West. Photo by Izabela Jaroszevska

# The Total Space of Vajrasattva – Dorje Sempa Namkhai Che

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Introduction to his Oral Commentary

I told you already that Ati Guruyoga is the most important essence of the practice. And the practice is very important because if we learn something we should apply it. If we apply the very essence of a practice like Ati Guruyoga, then we can have realization, we will have benefit. If we are not applying it and we are just thinking and learning intellectually, there is no benefit. I already gave you the example of medicines; if we are going to a doctor we discover which kind of illness we have but if we are not using the medicines and applying the doctor's advice there is no benefit. The same is true for the teaching. It is very important that we apply the practices concretely, not remaining only with a nice idea. This doesn't help. We always start with Ati Guruyoga. I also told you I'm teaching Dzogchen. Maybe you can find many different titles. People run very much after titles, names and forms, but this is not the principle of the Dzogchen teaching. Its principle is

knowledge and understanding. We should discover what is Dzogchen, which is our real nature and then we try to be in that state. What I'm doing in all retreats is Dzogchen teaching, and even if we use different titles what I teach is mainly Ati Guruyoga. For that reason I tell people, "If you don't remember what I taught don't worry, but remember that I explained we should do Ati Guruyoga." This is what I'm asking you. I'm not asking you to chant mantras or do visualization of deities. If you like you can do everything, in the Dzogchen teaching there is no limitation. You can apply anything if you have a base, but base means that you have to know which is the essence of the teaching. That is what we need to discover.

In the Dzogchen teaching we should first know that the essence of the teaching is our real nature, and we need to discover it. If we don't know the essence of the teaching, then it is just like working in a very nice field for growing something but without planting any kind of seed. So what will grow? Nothing. In the same way discovering our real nature is the base, then we work with practice, and finally we manifest our realization. For that reason Ati Guruyoga is very important, everybody should remember it, old and new practitioners.

In this retreat I want to present a work that I did for many years and now it is ready. It is something related to a very important and famous text, called Dorje Sempa Namkha Che, that Guru Garab Dorje was chanting when he was a small boy. It is the essence of the Dzogchen teaching. Dzogchen teaching is also the most ancient teaching we have. How do we know that? In the Dzogchen tantras it is explained that twelve Dzogchen masters from ancient time until today existed in different epochs. The first, the most ancient of the twelve masters, is called Tönpa Nangwa Tampa. He was a human when the human condition began. In history it is said that at the beginning humans were just like Devas, they had those kind of qualifications. But then, as emotions increased more and more, these qualifications slowly decreased, so that now we have this human condition.





Tönpa Nangwa Tampa lived in that very ancient time, and as the first teacher of the primordial teachers he taught the Dra Thalgyur, a tantra having six chapters. Some time ago I gave the complete lung transmission of this tantra. This is the root of all Dzogchen tantras, the real source of the Dzogchen teaching. Dzogchen masters studied it because the Dra Thalgyur is the root of everything. How was it developed? A very learned teacher of the Dzogchen teaching was Longchenpa who wrote the Seven Treasures. These seven texts are related basically to the Dra Thalgyur. Of course we do not understand all explanations of the Dra Thalgyur. If you read it you can understand some things but many things you cannot understand. We remained that way for centuries. Maybe at the time of Guru Padmasambhava they had more knowledge, more texts. For instance a commentary of the Dra Thalgyur tantra was written by Vimalamitra. Vimalamitra and Guru Padmasambhava were the most important sources of Dzogchen teaching in Tibet. Vimalamitra wrote a commentary of the Dra Thalgyur, but we had no knowledge of this text in Tibet. In Tibet I knew the Dra Thalgyur because I received the transmission of lung of all Dzogchen tantras, but we were not aware of the existence of this commentary. Many teachers such as Longchenpa, Jamgön Mipham and Paltrul Rinpoche, were writing instructions of Dzogchen teaching but nobody said that this commentary existed. So we were ignoring it. If we had it we would have understood better the meaning of the Dra Thalgyur. 500 years ago the 5th Dalai Lama was interested in the Dzogchen teaching. He received many Dzogchen teachings from the most important teacher of Mindrolling monastery, Minling Terchen. The 5th Dalai Lama had this knowledge and the 5th and 6th Dalai Lamas painted Thögal visions in the temple. At that time the commentary of Vimalamitra was discovered but of course they were keeping it very private, not public. The 5th Dalai Lama's personal library was found in the Drepung Monastery because when he was young, before becoming governor of Tibet, he was living in the Drepung Monastery so he had his personal library there. Later when he became very famous and important, he moved to Potala Palace, but his library remained in the Drepung monastery. No one particularly made use of this library, but it remained there, and was considered very important as it was the library of the 5th Dalai Lama. To enter, a special permission was needed but they did not give permission easily, so many centuries passed in this way.

After the Cultural Revolution the Vimalamitra commentary was discovered there. How? When the Cultural Revolution started, Tibetans were afraid that everything would be destroyed, so all the 5th Dalai Lama's books were hidden in a small room. After the Cultural Revolution some young Tibetan students discovered the hidden library and they asked permission to the local government to use it. But they got permission only for doing a list or catalogue of the books. So they made a list. These students were attending a school in Lhasa called Tibetan Scientific School where many young tibetans are studying after finishing university. I went to that school twice to teach ancient history and Tibetan culture, so we knew each other very well, and those who did the list showed me a copy. When I looked at it I saw the commentary of Vimalamitra of the Dra Thalgyur tantra. I was very surprised because I never knew

it existed, so I asked them to make a copy of it because for me and for the Dzogchen teaching it was very important. They said they were not allowed to as they had no permission. I told them to make a copy secretly, and after one year they made a photocopy and sent it to me. It consisted of 334 pages. Tibetan writing pages are quite wide and in general one page has only six lines but this text had nine lines and it was written on both sides of the sheet so that each page contained 18 lines. I found many mistakes because they were handwritten copies. Some parts had more mistakes, some parts less, because they were copied by different persons. Some copyists had some knowledge and wrote a little better; others had less knowledge and made more mistakes. Then I thought that since it was a very important text, I should type it in the computer to make it readable for everybody.

I started that work and continued for some weeks. Then I thought it was impossible because I'm getting old and it has so many pages that I would never finish, so I stopped. However, after some months I thought that even if I don't finish, better to give it a try, otherwise nobody will. And this book is very important for all people interested in Dzogchen teaching. So I continued even if I didn't have much time because I was going around giving teaching retreats, but when I had time I dedicated myself to writing it down day and night. After two years I finished to type it all in my computer. Then I became aware that I did not copy it well because I was reading and writing it in the correct way without marking the mistakes in the original text so that my digital copy was not the copy of the original book. Scientifically we have to know that, otherwise nobody will know how was the original book. I did it again correcting and putting back all the original mistakes. So it became two volumes at the end. After one or two years I finished it, marking what was the original text and which were my corrections, otherwise it had no value. But meanwhile I found another original copy of the Dra Thalgyur tantra.

Previously in Tibet this book was not known but later in East Tibet lived Kathog Situ Rinpoche, a very learned teacher. He was a highly important reincarnation who was very interested in the Dzogchen teaching. He went everywhere in central Tibet and also to Nepal and India searching for original books of the Dzogchen teaching. He found many commentaries of Dzogchen tantras, copied them and brought them back to his residence, Kathog monastery. His idea was to print them to show that they were important texts and commentaries of Dzogchen. But when he returned from his journeys he didn't live long and after a few years he passed away. His library remained there, but no one understood what it was. In ancient times that monastery was very famous for Dzogchen Semde and Longde. They were studying and applying these teachings and there was a very rich transmission and tradition. But recently all the lamas of Kathog monastery had become very famous reincarnations that were interested only in developing nice temples, etc., not in studying very much. So they lost some of those qualifications and no one thought about Kathog Situ Rinpoche's library anymore.

Then recently a learned khenpo had the idea of looking at the texts in that library and discovered all the Dra Thalgyur commen-

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taries and small commentaries of Dzogchen Upadesha tantras, and he tried to publish all these texts in the Nyingma Kama series. When I discovered these copies I compared the 5th Dalai Lama's and Kathog Situ Rinpoche's copies and I understood that their source was not the same. Originally both were handwritten, but I had no handwritten copy of Kathog Situ Rinpoche's, only the publication of the khenpo. Also I found that sometimes in the 5th Dalai Lama's copies some lines were missing and some words were different. Comparing all these versions I worked on them for two years and did many corrections. Later I removed all the corrections for those who are interested in reading the amended version of the Dra Thalgyur tantra. Altogether, with the version showing the corrections and the original text I prepared six volumes that I presented during the Dzogchen Forum in Moscow many years ago. This was one of my works.

The Dra Thalgyur Tantra is a very important root of the Dzogchen teaching. When we go to the essence of the Dzogchen teaching the most important text is the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che. It is not a tantra, it is a lung. In the Dzogchen teaching a text that contains all complete explanations of base, path, and fruit is called a root tantra. In the Vajrayana teaching a root tantra has ten qualifications. A text that is explaining only some of them is not a root tantra. In Dzogchen teaching it is different but base, path, and fruit must be complete; then it becomes a root tantra. A lung contains the most important points of a tantra. If a tantra, for instance, has ten chapters, maybe some of them are not the very essence of the teaching and only two or three chapters represent the essence of everything. When a teacher like Guru Garab Dorje, and also some of the mahasiddhas in the different dimensions, found these tantras they took the essence of them and compiled a lung. Dorje Sempa Namkha Che is a lung, the essence of the Dzogchen teaching. When Vairochana started to translate Dzogchen teaching in Tibetan, he first translated five texts. Four of them are lungs, not tantras, the tantras were translated later. Lungs are more essential, more important. One of the first lungs translated by Vairochana was not an original lung of the teaching, it was a text, Changchub Sengön, written by Mañjushrimitra for introducing the Dzogchen teaching to buddhists. Among these five is Dorje Sempa Namkha Che that Garab Dorje was chanting when he was a small boy, not because he learned it from someone but because he was an emanation of Buddha Shakyamuni.

The first of the twelve primordial teachers is Tönpa Nangwa Tampa, the last one is Buddha Shakyamuni who didn't teach directly Dzogchen teaching. Indeed among the twelve teachers someone taught the Dzogchen teaching directly, someone indirectly. Buddha Shakyamuni did not transmit the Dzogchen teaching, but we consider the Dzogchen teaching a Buddhist teaching because Garab Dorje was an emanation of Buddha Shakyamuni, so his teaching is considered Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching.

When we follow a buddhist teaching it is important to know that Buddha's teaching is not only the oral teaching he gave in India. Buddha is omniscient, a totally enlightened being having many possibilities to communicate; so the Buddhist teaching has many aspects, not only what was taught in India. In Tibet we have

the collection of all the teachings of Buddha called Kangyur. Ka means word of Buddha, gyur means translated in ancient times from Sanskrit to Tibetan. The Kangyur comprises 108 volumes. It does not mean that all these were taught in India at Bodhgaya or somewhere else as oral teachings. In sacred places of India, like Rajghir at Vulture Peak, Buddha taught Mahayana, but most Mahayana teachings are not oral teachings developed in India.

When Buddha manifested parinirvana or death, 18 different schools of Hinayana immediately appeared. There was no Mahayana at that time. Mahayana was really weak and no one was presenting himself as a Mahayana follower. Hinayana schools were fighting each other. Today in South Asia what is left is Theravada, one of the 18 schools but Theravada doesn't represent all Hinayana schools.

Mahayana developed in different dimensions, not only in the human dimension. So how was it developed in the human dimension? Not only through Buddha's mouth. We have three or four different aspects of Buddha's teaching; one is shalme sungpai ka, through Buddha's mouth: people listened to his teaching and then wrote it down. These are the sutras.

The second aspect is jesu nangwai ka, that means people empowered by Buddha, not Buddha himself. For instance the Prajñāparamitahridayasutra is the very essence of paramita in Mahayana and is very diffused in China, Japan, and India. This sutra is also saying there are no eyes, no ears, no nose, etc. and at the end it is saying there is no path, no wisdom, no attainments, etc., only total emptiness or shunyata.

This is a very important sutra and from its introduction you can understand its origin. In Buddha's thangkas there are two standing monks, Shariputra and Maugdalyayana or Mogallana. They are representing the Hinayana tradition but in a real sense Shariputra had full knowledge of Mahayana, so he asked Buddha, "How can we understand total emptiness?" Buddha said, "Please ask Avalokiteshvara." So Shariputra asked Avalokiteshvara while Buddha remained in a state of contemplation. Then Avalokiteshvara explained there are no eyes, no ears, etc.; all these explanations were given by Avalokiteshvara. But we do not say that this sutra was taught by Avalokiteshvara, we say it is a sutra of the Buddha; even if the words were pronounced by Avalokiteshvara it is a teaching of Buddha. Buddha was in a state of contemplation and in that moment there was no separation from the state of Avalokiteshvara, so this became Buddha's teaching. The difference lies in our dualistic vision. This is not the only sutra of that kind, we are just using it as an example. If you read the Kangyur you can find many sutras Buddha gave permission for and they became Buddha's teachings. Many teachings of Buddha in Mahayana are called chingyi labpai ka: Buddha empowered something and from it came a teaching that was not pronounced through his mouth. Many teachings like this exist, the most important example is a sutra in the Kangyur stating that in the dimension of the Devas there was a big drum which emitted a sound that was a teaching. When Buddha empowered objects in this way there was a reason. It was necessary to have this kind of knowledge and teaching in that moment and that dimension. Somebody wrote it down and that sutra became Buddha's teaching. There are many similar teachings of Buddha.



Also in some places teachings came out from stupas, rocks, trees, by looking into Kangyur you can understand this.

In India Buddha manifested tantras like Kalachakra, but not orally, it was a manifestation. Buddha manifested as Kalachakra and transmitted it; the same is true for Hevajra and Chakrasamvara manifestations, peaceful, joyful, wrathful, etc. These teachings are related to transformation and manifestation; in the Kangyur there are many tantras as teachings of Buddha.

Another way is lungdu tenpai ka: these are Buddha's prophecies. For instance Buddha gave teachings on cause and effect in the four noble truths and it was developed in Sutra. Then someone asked him how can we get beyond cause and effect and Buddha answered that in due time there will be a teacher giving teachings beyond cause and effect. For this reason Garab Dorje is recognized as an emanation of Buddha Shakyamuni.

At the beginning nobody knew it. When Garab Dorje was a small boy chanting the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che, there were many royal teachers in Oddiyana because the king, being very devoted to Buddha Shakyamuni, invited many pandits and they became royal teachers. When they heard the boy Garab Dorje explaining how you should go beyond cause and effect and how all teachings not going beyond cause and effect are not perfect complete teachings, only provisional, the pandits were worried because Buddha's teaching was based on cause and effect, so Garab Dorje could be dangerous. Therefore they sent a message to the famous University of Nalanda, in India, where many pandits of Yogachara school resided. They said, "A boy is chanting in this way, when he grows up he can become dangerous for our teaching. We must go to Oddiyana to defeat this small boy and eliminate this idea."

At that time Garab Dorje asked his mother the princess to discuss with the pandits and she said, "You cannot discuss with pandits, you have not changed your teeth yet." After a while a group of pandits from Nalanda travelled to Oddiyana and Mañjushrimitra, the best pandit of the Yogachara school was among them. They travelled many months because at that time Oddiyana was in the current Pakistan, now a Taliban place. When they arrived, they visited Garab Dorje and started arguing with him. He replied with only a few words and Mañjushrimitra, because of his good karma, woke up immediately and understood that Garab Dorje was an emanation of Buddha. He said, "I have accumulated very bad actions because of not knowing that you are an emanation of Buddha Shakyamuni, what can I do for purifying this?" Garab Dorje said, "Don't worry, you can write a book explaining what you understood in the language of Yogachara." So Mañjushrimitra wrote Changchubkyi Sengmön or Dola Serashun.

Changchubkyi Sengmön equals meditation on bodhichitta, where bodhichitta means primordial state, not compassion as in the Sutra style. In Dola Serashun, do means stone. When you do not have knowledge you only see a stone. But then you discover that it is pure gold; serashun means very purified gold. Mañjushrimitra wrote this book and sent it to Nalanda where everybody understood that Garab Dorje's teaching was the essence of Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching. Mañjushrimitra became the most important student of Guru Garab Dorje. Also Thuwo Rajahasti, another pandit of the group, became his student, and they learned Semde, Longde, and

Upadesha. At the time of Guru Garab Dorje no Dzogchen tantras existed, but today we have all the Dzogchen tantras because they were all taught by Garab Dorje. Most of the teachings taught by the twelve Dzogchen teachers were retransmitted by him.

Luckily today we have all these tantras thanks to Garab Dorje. He did not compose them, but he wrote some books himself, for instance a commentary of a tantra of Mañjushri, and also some Dzogchen Semde instructions that we are using today. Many lungs, not only these five, are called Dzogchen teaching. When Garab Dorje manifested the rainbow body, Mañjushrimitra received his three statements explaining how to transmit them to students, how Dzogchen practices should be applied and how to continue in the Dzogchen state. These are the three statements of Garab Dorje.

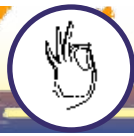
Knowing that they were extremely important for keeping Dzogchen teaching alive, Mañjushrimitra divided all of Garab Dorje's teachings into three series that were related to the three statements. The first statement is "direct introduction." Someone says that traditionally we have to do preliminary practices, ngöndro (meaning preparation), before receiving the real teaching. Still the Gelugpa and Sakya traditions do not include Guruyoga in ngöndro. They do prostrations related to the physical body, Vajrasattva practice for purifying, and offering of the mandala for accumulating merits. Kagyüpa and Nyingmapa traditions at least include Guruyoga, but it is difficult that at this stage you can understand the real meaning of Guruyoga.

This is the traditional way for maintaining schools, etc., but not for having realization. If you like you can do that, but sometimes it doesn't correspond to our condition. During my first visit to USA, in Boston there was a Kagyüpa center that invited me to talk about dharma teaching. When I arrived there I saw a very elegant gentleman and I thought he came to listen to my talk but he said, "I want to talk to you about an important thing." I answered that this was not the right moment because I had to give a lecture and we could talk later. Then I lectured in a hall, and through the windows I saw that gentleman outside going up and down, so I understood that he was not interested in my talk. At the end he came to me and said, "I want to ask you something because I heard that you are not only a teacher but also a Tibetan doctor." He explained his problem and it was clear that a paralysis was starting to overtake him. I said that it was related to negative provocations, not to a normal illness, and that he should do a practice for controlling this negative energy. I asked if he was doing some practice and he said, "Yes, I'm following a teacher and I'm doing preliminary practice or ngöndro." I said, "You are lucky to have a teacher, ask him to give you the transmission of the practice of Vajrapani, then you practice it intensively and in this way you can control your negative provocation. And if you use medicines, therapies, etc., they will become very useful because you have controlled negative provocations." He said OK and went away without asking me for Vajrapani transmission because I was not his teacher.

Next year I went to that place to give a talk and that gentleman arrived again before the teachings. I asked him, "Did you do Vajrapani practice?" He said, "No, because my teacher didn't want to give me that transmission because I have to finish the ngöndro." He was

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doing the ngöndro for seven years already but because of his nerve illness he could not finish prostrations. But still he didn't ask me for that transmission. I told him to insist with his teacher to receive the transmission of that practice. That time he came to my teachings and knowing he was present I explained what are negative provocations, how we can receive them and deal with them in daily life very clearly. But he didn't ask me for Vajrapani transmission.

Then I didn't see him for some time and after three or four years, when we did a retreat in Tsegylgar, he appeared there. A little older, he was blind, coming with a dog and a cane. The first time he was a very elegant man but now he had completely changed. This time he was interested in my teaching and followed my retreat; of course I transmitted Vajrapani but it was too late. After a few years I asked people where was that man and they said he died.

It is not sufficient only preparing. It is necessary to practice. Otherwise, as I'm always telling my students, if you do only preparations and do not understand the real sense of the teaching it is becoming just like pigeons, as we say in Tibet: in the evening they are flying somewhere to sleep during the night. They turn to the right side, then to the left side, always trying to find a comfortable position without ever finding it, always preparing and never sleeping till morning.

Really, in the teaching we should go to the essence otherwise there is not much benefit. When I started to give Dzogchen teachings many Tibetan teachers criticized me directly or indirectly saying that Namkhai Norbu was giving the Dzogchen teaching to students who had not done the ngöndro. But I'm not worried because I know the Dzogchen teaching. Garab Dorje said that the first point is direct introduction from mind to nature of mind, which is the main path for having realization. This is what I already explained. Ati Guruyoga is an introduction. There are different ways of introducing but essentially I'm teaching that way. I'm not asking people if they did preliminary practices or not. I'm not teaching them. We know very well that we have a very short life and we try to do our best for having some benefit. So I'm not worried because Garab Dorje did not say to do preliminary practices first. Since he was omniscient, he would have said it and would have given four statements if it was necessary; first preliminary practices, then direct introduction.

The second statement is not remaining in doubt. If you remain in doubt you cannot have realization; for this reason you follow teachings such as Longde. Finally, when you are 100% sure about your real nature, you integrate everything in that state. This is the third statement of Guru Garab Dorje.

Then later also teachers who criticized me gave teachings to people without preliminary practices because they discovered how we should work in this society; we cannot always do complicated things. This corresponds to Buddha's teachings; we have to give teachings according to the conditions of individuals, their capacity and desire. If they are interested you should give without limitations. Buddha said this in the Sutra teachings. Preliminary practices are like a passport, to whom do you show this passport to when you die? You cannot bring your passport, you must leave everything behind. In your lifetime no one is checking this pass-

port. Limitations in Dzogchen teaching are the root of samsara, you should discover this and be free from them.

Now I'm explaining the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che, a very important text that is also the essence of Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching. I worked very much on this text. There are many original versions of the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che. First I compared all the verses of five different original texts, then I completed the final text. This is one work I did for a long time. After that I checked how each verse of the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che is explained in Vairochana's commentary. Vairochana translated many Dzogchen teachings. He went to Oddiyana where he met Shri Simha who also wrote a commentary of this text. We have different editions of these commentaries. The most important edition of these texts is the Vairo Gyübum, a collection of tantras and teachings of Vairochana that were recently discovered in Ladakh. In Tibet I never heard that a collection of Vairochana's texts existed; even when I arrived in India I did not hear about it.

In Ladakh there was a Togden maybe of the Kagyüpa tradition. On the border between Ladakh and Tibet lived an old ancient family and when a family member died, they invited this Togden to do pujas for 49 days. While living there he discovered a very ancient handwritten edition of Vairo Gyübum. He was not an expert on these teachings, but he knew they were very ancient and important texts. So that family offered those books to him. The Togden was happy and brought them to Ladakh. Later they were published in Ladakh in Tashi Gönpa. When I received the information that someone had published these texts in Ladakh I immediately got a copy of them. They contain all Dzogchen root lungs, the five lungs translated by Vairochana, and some instructions not available in general. Some of them were handwritten texts; I copied and corrected all of them for some years. Now I have all these books, particularly the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che root text, a commentary of Shri Simha and a commentary of Vairochana. I typed them all in my computer.

Later, in the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che I established the words in a perfect way and I did a weekly calendar for Dzogchen practitioners. So now there is the possibility to study it, sometimes only one verse, or sometimes two verses for each of the 52 weeks in a year. Our translator Adriano translated the Dorje Sempa Namkha Che and now everything is ready. I want to give you the transmission of this text explaining it just a little so that you can read it. ☸

Oral teachings given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Namgyalgar, Australia, November 3–8, 2015.

The text 'An Oral Commentary on The Total Space of Vajrasattva', a restricted publication, is available from Shang Shung Publications webstore, <http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/>





## Offering Your Service to The Dzogchen Community

Interview with Oliver Leick,  
director of the  
Shang Shung Foundation  
September 4, 2017, Conway MA

**The Mirror:** The Mirror published your article called *My First 100 Days*, about becoming the international director of Shang Shung Foundation. Since then you have been traveling around and had a lot of contact with branches of the SSI around the world. You have also been serving the Community and SSF for many years, as a Yantra Yoga teacher, managing Ka Ter, the translation committee, establishing and taking care of Shang Shung Institute, Austria. You have been on several Gakyils, and most recently you became a base level Santi Maha Sangha teacher and the director of SSF. So what does it mean to serve the Community?

**Oliver Leick:** Yes, I have been in the Dzogchen Community for many years now and I have always tried to do my best to give courses and do something. One of the major things in all these years that I have understood is that working for the Dzogchen Community is not easy. I have seen many people joining the Community or the Shang Shung Institute or Foundation, start to do projects and in the end become upset or frustrated. I try to understand what the reason could be and I think it is that one really needs to understand what it means to work with the Dzogchen Community, or the Shang Shung Foundation, or ASIA, these three entities that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded.

Working for the Dzogchen Community, serving Rinpoche in that way to put into action all his visions is 100% based first of all on transmission. Without transmission it is very difficult to work. It is possible, but not easy. The second aspect is that you must participate in certain aspects, you must be dedicated to certain aspects, you must have a vision of where you want to go and what



Dr Phuntsog Wangmo (left) and Oliver Leick in the Tsegyalgar East Library.

you want to do, and without this participation and dedication, it is very difficult.

If you look around the Community and see the people who have served for many years, that is 100% based on their dedication towards the Master, towards the Teaching and towards the Community. But dedication alone is not enough. You must also have diligence. And what is tricky and not easy to understand is that we are in the Dzogchen Community and although it is said that Dzogchen is the path of self-liberation beyond cause and effect, that is only true when we are in the state of contemplation. When we check ourselves, how many moments are we in the state of contemplation every day? You can answer that yourself. I know my own capacity, and that is hardly ever.

Rinpoche said that each Dzogchen practitioner is also the best practitioner of Mahayana. What is the principle of Mahayana? It is trying to serve others. And how can we apply that? With the Five Paramitas, the sixth one being related to *prajna*. But the first five are more or less your attitude, your behavior, what you do. And the best example of the Five Paramitas is to observe what Rinpoche has been doing all his life. He is the best example of these Paramitas in the most perfect way.

When you offer your service, your knowledge, your time, your money, everything for the Dzogchen Community, you must understand that you will not be im-

mediately beloved by everybody. When you go on the stage, of course the spotlight is on you, but immediately there will be people saying, "I don't like that." It is absolutely natural. And if someone is looking to be loved by everybody, then working for the Dzogchen Community is the wrong thing for you.

The more you are active in the Dzogchen Community, the more criticized you will be. But that is normal and it is fine, because you can always do better. Many people have the idea that they want to work for the Dzogchen Community or the SSF because it is a kind of job that should be paid. If one sees working for the Community or the Foundation as a kind of job, it's better not to start. That is completely the wrong motivation. Money should not be the starting point – of course it is important – it should be the last consideration.

The most important thing is that everyone who wants to work for the Dzogchen Community should check their intention. That is basic in Mahayana. Do I have a good or bad intention. What this all means is written in 'The Precious Vase' by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and when you study Santi Maha Sangha you understand that. What is your intention? If you have bad intention, change it. And if you have good intention, apply it. Everyone who works for Shang Shung Foundation and the Dzogchen Community should not look at this as ordinary

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## All Hands Meeting of the Worldwide Shang Shung Foundation

Webcast from the Gönpa of Merigar West on July 6, 2017

Report by Liz Granger

On July 6, 2017, in the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar West, a whole day was dedicated to presenting the activities of the Shang Shung Foundation, the International Institute for Tibetan Culture, with its eight seats all over the world.

The new director of the SSF, Oliver Leick, opened the meeting by stating that all the bodies of the International Community, in-

cluding the SSF and ASIA Onlus, are part of the vision of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, its founder and spiritual leader. The first conference on Tibetan medicine in the West organized by the Dzogchen Community in 1982 could be considered the 'cradle' of the founding of the SSF.

Oliver then went on to speak a little about the history of the organisation. At the beginning most of activities were related to medicine, and then the translation and publishing of books, through Shang Shung Edizioni (Publications). After the inauguration of the Shang Shung Institute, as it was called previously, with the visit of H.H. the Dalai Lama, the SSI organized conferences on Tibetan language, and gradually activities related to Tibetan culture began to manifest in other places outside Italy.

Oliver explained that according to Buddhist tradition there are five fields of science or knowledge. The first of these is art

in its many aspects: with traditional forms such painting, calligraphy, and sculpture, and then Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, and Khaita being the art of the body. The second field of knowledge is **language**. The SSF started with Congresses on Tibetan language and currently has courses for qualified translators to translate Dzogchen texts in addition to courses for beginners and intermediate level.

Next is **medicine** and in this field, particularly in the USA branch and later in Russia, they have been working with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo to successfully set up a 4 year training course on the Tibetan medical tantras.

Then there is **logic**, represented by the SSF IT department and digital archive. The 5th science is **inner knowledge**, which is linked to training Santi Maha Sangha teachers authorized by Rinpoche, who can offer their knowledge to the Dzogchen Community and people outside it by giving public talks, conferences etc.

Oliver also mentioned that the SSF has an international board of directors consisting of Yuchen Namkhai, Julia Lawless from the UK, Kirill Shilov from Russia, and Oliver Leick who is the director.

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work, like working at the university, in schools, as a dishwasher, as a toilet cleaner or gardener. It is not that. Even if you mow the lawn, teach at the university, clean the toilets, it could be the same work, but the work itself for the Community or Foundation is completely different. Everything is based on your intention and your dedication and especially on your presence. And that is the presence in all different aspects that Rinpoche talks about.

So you see, these are already the first three qualifications that a student of Buddha should have: participation, diligence and presence. And then, of course, recognizing the value of contemplation and from there comes *prajna*. So if you really want to work for the Community, you should try and focus on these five aspects. Money is at the very end. Maybe you will get some, maybe not. But you should also not worry about that too much.

**M:** That is quite clear. Is there anything else you would like to say in conclusion?

**OL:** There is one more thing. Many people ask, "What is the relationship between the Dzogchen Community and Shang Shung

Foundation?" The main aspect to understand is that the International Dzogchen Community and International Shang Shung Foundation are not different. We are one. We have one president, one founder and that is our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Shang Shung Foundation and the International Dzogchen Community are like the two sides of one coin, both have the same value, there is not one better than the other. The main activity of the International Dzogchen Community is the responsibility for keeping the transmission of the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as pure as possible, and trying to train Rinpoche's students in order to become qualified instructors to continue the teachings in some special way.

Shang Shung Foundation has the responsibility to open up to the general public. To offer people outside the Community this unique understanding of Tibetan culture in a language that Westerners can also understand. Shang Shung Foundation is one of the oldest institutions in the West that started to take care of the preservation and teaching of Tibetan culture in the West. The activities actually started in 1982 when there was the first Congress of Tibet-

an Medicine in Venice and today we have eight branches of the Shang Shung Foundation worldwide.

The Foundation works so that people can follow our courses, apply this unique wisdom of ancient Tibet and put it in action so it becomes part of their daily lives in the West. So actually, it is not different at all to the responsibilities of the Dzogchen Community, it is just that the Foundation takes care more of the public aspect.

We should not forget about the third institution that Rinpoche founded and that is ASIA. ASIA has done such an enormous and fantastic work for the support of people living in Asia.

So the International Dzogchen Community, the Shang Shung Foundation and ASIA, are considered to be like the three children of our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We are not different. The fields of activities are on different focuses, or like ASIA, in different locations.

**M:** Thank you very much Oliver. ©

[Oliver's article called *My First 100 Days* can be read at <http://melong.com/shangshung-foundation-meeting/>]



In 1989 the Foundation started with one location in Italy but now there are eight: in Italy, USA, Austria, Russia, Argentina, UK, Australia, and Spain.

### Italy

Gaetano Ruvolo, general manager of Shang Shung Publications, spoke on behalf of the Foundation in Italy. He explained that the first seat of the SSF is at Merigar where the Foundation takes care of the library, the archive, open courses related to Dzogchen teaching and other aspects of Tibetan culture, and publications. He said that the aim of SSP, the first cultural organization founded at Merigar in 1983, is to be of service to all members of the Dzogchen Community and at the same time allow people who do not know our Teacher and the Community to become acquainted with them through their products.

### The USA

The second seat of the SSF to be founded was in the USA, in Conway, Massachusetts. In the last 10 years the American branch has focused on the Tibetan Medical School and related activities under the direction of Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo. Many people have been able to follow the four year training and successfully qualified. More recently the medical program has had some challenges, which Dr. Phuntsog and the board of directors of the SSI USA are trying to resolve together.

### Austria

The third place where the Institute was founded was Austria where Oliver Leick has been the director for the last 17 years. The main activity of the Austrian branch is the Ka-ter Translation Project, which started in 2002 and has as its mission the guarantee of qualified translation of unique and sacred Tibetan texts. The Austrian seat carries the financial responsibility for these translations as well as the creation of courses for qualifying translators from Tibetan.

### Russia

Kirill Shilov, on the board of the SSF and SSI Russia and director of SSEd. Russia, explained that the SSI Russia was created as part of SSI Italy in 2008 when Khyentse Yeshe and Luigi Ottaviani, director of SSI Italy, came to Russia. Finally in 2012 it was formally founded and registered as a non-profit.



l-r. Julia Lawless SSI UK, Gaetano Ruvolo SSPublications, SSF director Oliver Leick, Alessandra Policreti translator, Kirill Shilov SSI Russia.

From that time the SSI Russia has had two main activities: Shang Shung Editions Russia and the school of Tibetan medicine which opened in 2013 under Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo.

### The UK

Julia Lawless, board member and one of the founders, explained that SSI UK was established in 2010 and has a lecture series in which they invite speakers who are expert in Tibetan or Himalayan culture. Originally hosted at SOAS they are now held at the Dzogchen Community center, Lekdanling. SSUK also organises other courses such as Vajra Dance, Khaita, Yantra Yoga, in addition to art workshops. The London branch is currently planning to hold an art conference in October and a Festival of the Mind in spring 2018.

### Australia

The director of SSI Australia, Bruno Irnici, sent a report. The SSI in Australia was officially opened in April 2012 on occasion of the retreat at the new Gar, Namgyalgar North. The school of Tibetan Medicine is the main flagship project and based on the course program taught by Dr. Phuntsog at Tsegyalgar. The SSI also has an art department that is very active in the performing arts directed by Topgyal and Tsering, who have organised more than 27 Khaita events in Australia since their arrival there. The Institute also provides a bookshop service that provides significant support for the Dzogchen Community in Australia.

### Spain – Tenerife

The executive secretary of the recently founded Shang Shung Foundation in Tenerife, Spain, Ilaria Faccioli, explained how the Foundation there is closely connected with

Dzamling Gar, the Global Gar. The founding members are Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Rosa Namkhai, with patronage from the International Gakyil represented by Mark Farrington, the IDC of Dzamling Gar represented by the Director, Yuchen Namkhai, Oliver Leick, Julia Lawless, and Kirill Shilov. Many of the activities of 2017 concern legal work, but the Foundation has already opened a bookshop and set up a Spanish branch of SSF publications.

One of the houses at the Gar which is now under the responsibility of SSF has been renovated and furnished and is available for visitors. Long term plans include visits by Dr. Phuntsog to give training on external Tibetan therapies, and organisation of another big event on another of the Canary Islands. Next year there are plans to organise workshops in thangka painting, calligraphy, and photography.

### Archive Project at Merigar West

Mirella D'Angelo, in charge of the archive project at Merigar, explained that it contains 40 Years of the history of the IDC around the world – films, photos, audio, and written material, most of which has been donated by practitioners. Physically the archive has 2200 audio cassettes, 4000 video cassettes, more than 16,000 images (negatives, slides, prints), more than 2500 Tibetan manuscripts and *pecha*, as well as a collection of magazines and journals. The digital part is on two servers and has more than 40,000 files of images and 18,000 video and audio files in 100 terabytes.

Over the years the material has been catalogued according to different criteria. In 2002 the first project of digitalisation started up. In 2014, with the birth of a platform of digital archiving developed with-

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## All Hands Meeting of SSF

Summary of the group work  
July 6 afternoon

### Shang Shung Publications

A group of 14 people, 10 of whom SSP staff and collaborators, met to discuss ideas and proposals to improve Shang Shung Publications products line-up for the next few years. Some areas were highlighted such as children books, including coloring books for children and grown-ups, apps, games and books for beginners. A few special projects were mentioned as well, particularly "Dzamling Garden", an illustrated hard cover table book with pictures of the rare and beautiful plants now adorning Dzamling Gar. All these proposals will need additional help from DC members sharing their expertise in the fields of editorial projects management, book editing, apps design and children books design.

### Library department

The Tibetan section (*pecha* and *deb*) has been completely reorganised, catalogued and partially labelled (for the catalogue see

<http://opac.libraryworld.com/opac/index.php> library name SSI ZIKHANG LIBRARY. The Tibetan journals are in the process of being catalogued, and the Western section will follow suit. We offer bibliographic assistance, loans, scans, assistance in reading room and guided tours in which we introduce the library, its content and traditional Tibetan books. The interest in, and the use of the library is in this way increasing.

It will be good to have some initiatives at the library, such as presentations of new Shang Shung Publication books and theme-based tours of the library contents. The new SSF website should help in collecting suggestions for new acquisitions and funds to purchase them.

### Tibetan Medicine

SSF is already offering courses of mindfulness and Ku Nye, mindfulness of diet, the benefits of YY, and Harmonious Breathing. It would be good to work on herbs, oils and tinctures if SSF could collaborate with spas

Although Tibetan Medicine is not recognized as a valid medicine, SSF should not give up all its efforts to implement the various aspects of Tibetan Medicine and offer possibilities to study and apply them.

### IT

IT technologies are an inseparable part of life in modern society as they are in SSF.

They have main 2 missions-dimensions: *External* – They are a tool allowing us to reach people all around the world preserving and spreading Tibetan culture in new engaging ways;

*Internal* – They serve as organizational tool to improve management, communications, align programmatic activities between branches and provide mechanisms to ensure overall consistency, efficiency, and quality of undertaken projects

This year we will conclude the development of the international SSF website which will embody the mentioned goals. A team of 20 editors will ensure that the website will always be full of new and interesting content (in 5 languages including Mandarin)

SSF also will offer its know-how and developed software to IDC in collaboration particularly in areas of Event Management, Educational Platform and Fundraising.

We are committed to building the internal culture of Open Source development in the spirit of generosity and collaboration where programmers from all the world can contribute freely to our projects. To start this initiative on August 27 we organized the 1st Merigar Hackathon under the theme "Programmers for Tibetan Culture".

### Future Vision for SSF

The theme of openness came up very strongly. How to be open to the wider world & see through the eyes of the public at large.

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in SSF, a different phase of perfecting the process of archiving and preserving this multi-media material began. Currently the archive is undergoing another process to make uniform the criteria of cataloguing all the material of all the branches of the SSF both at Merigar and around the world.

### International Dzogchen Community and Shang Shung Foundation

Mark Farrington, Vice-President of the IDC spoke about the relationship between the IDC and the SSF.

"One of the very important points that has already been made is that we are all one community, the International Dzogchen Community, and Rinpoche has made this point very clear and we just take this as a natural fact. These organisations that

have been formed such as ASIA, SSF, and IDC are just ways of organising ourselves for a specific mission or to show a particular face to the outside world. But behind the scenes, we can share all levels of resources such as IT, financial understanding, organisational planning, etc., as we are one group.

There are many reasons for organising ourselves in three separate organisational structures, but ignoring the more technical ones and just focussing on this idea that we also want to be more open and connect with more people, the SSF is this ideal legal entity that is best for us to have contact with the external world in the different areas you have heard about today. So it is over-simplistic, but the responsibility of the IG is to facilitate and take care of the students in the IDC. Dzogchen is a living

transmission and so it is our responsibility to work with the students and the teacher in order to preserve the Dzogchen teaching within ourselves. But the SSF and ASIA have this external responsibility of helping to preserve some of the conditions that are also necessary to preserve the Dzogchen teachings. Of course the best way to preserve the Dzogchen teachings would also be to increase the membership of the Dzogchen Community and SSF plays the important role of having first contact with many potential students and people who have a natural interest in Dzogchen and Buddhism. So I think it is very easy to see why it is so important for us to support them to do this function because ultimately it helps us to achieve our mission." ©



How to approach new people is very important & to be conscious about how to involve them whilst being welcoming, inclusive & collaborative.

Shang Shung Foundation has an important role in this process, as it is the interface between the IDC and the public.

In opening to the world, we need to give time for feedback – maybe adopt a 6 monthly review period & encourage people to contribute ideas on an ongoing basis, not just at a conference.

This two way communication also applies to Tibetan culture itself as culture is not static: it is always evolving so if we want to be a bridge between Tibetan people and the West, this requires a 2 way communication & a shift in understanding.

### Tibetan language department

We have been offering the long training for translators (two weeks to one month) every year. In the last couple of years we have added weekends to allow students to continue their study of Tibetan texts between the intensive courses, with guided translation of practice texts for Community people and translation training of other texts for all others. We tried different formats for the beginners' courses to make them fruitful.



We are planning the development of on-line tools to study Tibetan and we are designing new courses in a school-like institution imparting training in both classical and spoken Tibetan. We are also working on shaping Drajor courses for teachers and general users.

### Archive

The Archive of Merigar is now pursuing a new important process that will also in-

volve all SSF branches in the world. The project concerns the possibility to refer to a unique Classification Scheme to organize and catalogue the new input and output material in every format, in addition to the existing one. It will make possible to search very quickly for data and materials for different purposes as, for example, historical reconstructions, presentations of the International Dzogchen Community, administrative and legal requests. ©

## Shang Shung Foundation Meets the International Gakyil

Scott Diamond

During the recent Sangha Retreat in Merigar West, under the shade of trees swaying in the breeze, the Board of Directors for Shang Shung Foundation had an enjoyable and productive meeting with the International Gakyil.

After a round of introductions, the group discussed closer collaboration under the shared umbrella of The International Dzogchen Community. Oliver Leick, President of SSF, described the current objectives of the Foundation, and presented an optimistic look at some of its challenges. Members of the two groups brainstormed and developed a host of avenues in which the two groups can synchronize and share their knowledge and resources as one family.



In many areas, including IT, offering courses, presentations, and events, the SSF and International Gakyil Boards acknowledged their mutual energy to collaborate with a new level of unity. Everyone understood that they are working towards the same outcomes and there was a strong de-

sire to actively coordinate the activities of the two organizations going forward. They discussed a variety of fruitful paths to traverse together in the year ahead and beyond. ©



## Tibetan Language Courses

The Shang Shung Foundation – School for Tibetan language is happy to announce two new initiatives for the study of Tibetan language at Merigar West this autumn!

A Tibetan Language Beginners' Course in three weekends (September 23–24, October 7–8 and 21–22) dedicated to learning reading and writing Tibetan language, with frontal lessons, calligraphy workshops and exercises.

A 5 day course (October 16–20) for spoken Tibetan, Lhasa dialect with Lobsang Zatul, a native Tibetan.

Places are limited. Please write to [m.pansa@shangshunginstitute.org](mailto:m.pansa@shangshunginstitute.org) to enrol.

### Tibetan Language Beginners' Course at Merigar West

With Fabian Sanders, Giorgio Dallorto and the special participation of Lobsang Zatul

#### First Module

Three weekends dedicated to learning reading and writing Tibetan language, with frontal lessons, calligraphy workshops and exercise.

September 23–24: on the first weekend we will study the pronunciation and the form of the thirty letters and four vowel signs of the Tibetan language in uchen form (block letters).

October 7–8: the second weekend will be devoted to the study of the structure of Tibetan syllables in their various parts.

October 21–22: we will refine our pronunciation with the help of Lobsang Zatul and will learn simple sentences in colloquial Tibetan (Lhasa dialect).



Fabian Sanders.



Giorgio Dallorto.



Lobsang Zatul.

In the second module we will dive into the grammar of the Tibetan language and refine our mastery of Tibetan calligraphy in uchen and umed (cursive). The course will be divided into several weekends, starting November 18–19 with the following weekends to be announced.

#### Participation

The course is based on a free donation (suggested 45€ per weekend, 108€ for the three weekends of the first module). All are welcome, both complete beginners as well as students of Tibetan language.

Number of participants is limited!

### Colloquial Tibetan course

with Lobsang Zatul  
October 16–20

A 5 day course dedicated to those who know a little Tibetan and want to deepen their knowledge of the colloquial language, Lhasa dialect, learning simple sentences and the underlying grammatical principles under the guidance of a native Tibetan with extensive teaching experience.

A free offering for the course is welcome (suggested donation 85€)

#### The instructors

Fabian Sanders has studied Asian languages, traditions and cultures extensively. In recent years he has concentrated on teaching classical Tibetan Language at university level and for the Shang Shung Foundation. He has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for more than twenty years

Giorgio Dallorto is a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and since the seventies has cultivated his knowledge of Tibetan culture. In recent years he has studied Tibetan classical Tibetan language and Tibetan calligraphy with Fabian Sanders and Tashi Manno respectively.

Lobsang Zatul was born in Tibet, left Tibet at the age of eleven and has lived in Switzerland since 1963. He was fortunate to grow up with his parents who taught him correct Tibetan. He has been teaching Tibetan, both language and script, to Tibetans and non-Tibetans for more than thirty years.

As a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu he is devoting his time and energy to the preservation of the Tibetan language. ©



# Ka-Ter 15th Training for Translators from Tibetan

Tom Greensmith

7<sup>th</sup> July marked the beginning of the 15th year of Tibetan training for translators organised by the Shang Shung Institute Austria and held at Merigar West. This years' primary text was a terma discovered by Dorje Lingpa called Dorling Humkor Shyü Len, a dialogue in the form of question and answer between Guru Rinpoche and Vairotsana on the topic of Dzogchen.

This years' attendees came from six different countries, including a strong home team from Italy, two from Argentina, and single entries from the UK, Ukraine, France and Finland. This year also marked a new method of learning and study, one where any categorisation of level was neatly dispatched and instead each of us attempted to render our translations in a semi-instantaneous fashion.

This method exposed very interesting stylistic approaches to translation, from cacophonous silences to more verbose explanations of the intricacies of the gram-



matical particles and very often its complete absence.

This terma text could best be described as "awakening" in every sense. As the attendees began to gently tease the meaning of each line from the words, subtlety of grammatical particles and intuition we were offered a tantalising insight into the view of Dzogchen as presented by Guru Rinpoche himself. There were times when class became divided between two and sometimes three differing interpretations of a sentence and a heated discussion would ensue. It would not be until our teacher (Dr Fabian Sanders) would corral us into decorum with the cry of "bambini!"

The study of the Tibetan language serves to sharpen ones' knowledge of the teachings providing a firm basis in which to delve further into the many treasures that Tibetan Buddhism offers. What I find particularly inspiring is that many of the texts that one can discover may have never been looked at by non Tibetans, and as such these moments of translation offers a mine of wealth and learning, one which is a galvanising thought of inspiration. I would very much like to thank Dr Fabian Sanders for his silo of patience and knowledge and I sincerely encourage anyone thinking to learn the Tibetan language to join the next course. ©

## Tibetan Calligraphy Course at Merigar West

August 4-5 & August 11, 2017

Martin Fernandez Cufre



The recent calligraphy course, led by Giorgio Dallorto, was an initiative of the Shang Shung Foundation School for Tibetan Language and Translation

For some of us attending the Tibetan Calligraphy course with Giorgio Dallorto in Merigar it was not the first contact with the alphabet, some of us even had some experience with the language, and for others it was the absolute first time. But in any case, for all of us the first contact had been challenging, so it was an adventure!

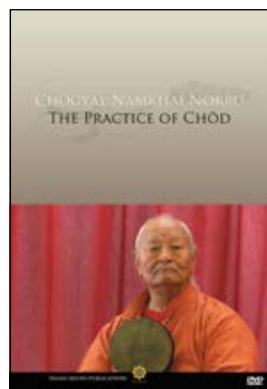
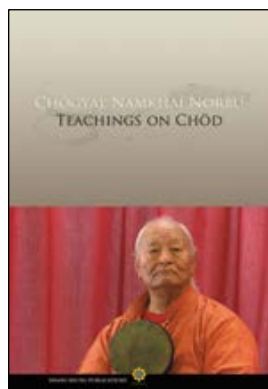
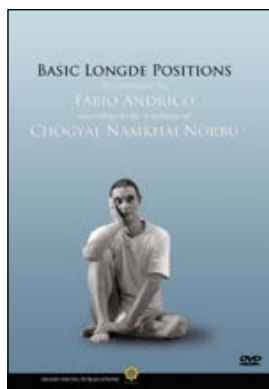
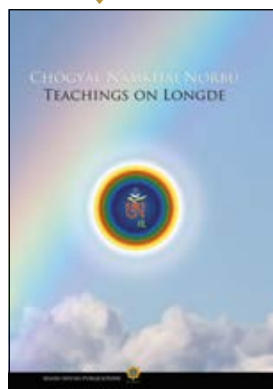
I would say the general process and result was very positive. The first course was two days long. We started with a

general introduction of the Tibetan language and alphabet, the materials used and the proportional scheme used to draw the letters. We were learning üchen script (Tibetan: དབུ་ཅན་, Wylie: dbu can) of Tibetan so this was our focus. We went through each of the 30 letters of the Tibetan alphabet plus vowels, the proportions and the sequence of strokes used to write them. Then we immediately started to practice using it! We set out writing the Song of Vajra in the üchen, for which also we had to add the superscript and subscript and stacked letters, and some

special letters used to transcribe Sanskrit letters and sounds.

After this, and if it wasn't enough, we continued our practical use of üchen, this time in order to write the famous Six Vajra Verses, also called Rigpa'i Khujug, or the Cuckoo of Instant Presence, the very first Atiyoga text translated into Tibetan by Vairochana, which synthesizes all the Ati teaching in just six lines. Quite a practice! We went line by line, seeing also some elements of grammar so as to get a glimpse of the meaning, and it went very well!

The next week we had only one day for class but in any case it was a very juicy day. In the morning we again did a calligraphic exploration of the üchen script, and in the afternoon we learned yet another Tibetan script, called u-med (Tibetan: དབུ་མེད་, Wylie: dbu-med), which is used much more extensively in Tibetan hand writing and calligraphy. So it was also another condensed and productive day. It was a great experience and I sincerely hope we get to enjoy more calligraphic tours with Giorgio as a guide! ©



## New Downloadable Videos

Several new downloadable videos are available in the webshop of the Shang Shung Publications.

### Teachings on Longde

**This recording is exclusively for those who have participated in a Dzogchen Longde retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.**

In this series of seven videos Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explains the practice of Longde, or series of Space, the second in the three series of the Dzogchen teaching (Semde, Longde, and Upadesha) according to the division made by Manjushrimitra, and corresponding to Garab Dorje's second statement "not remaining in doubt." The practices of Longde help a practitioner in strengthening the experience of contemplation, making it stable and certain.

These teachings were given in Tenerife in November 2012.

### Basic Longde Positions

**This recording is exclusively for those who have participated in a Dzogchen Longde retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.**

In this DVD Fabio Andrico, international Yantra Yoga instructor, demonstrates and explains in detail the main positions used in the practice of Longde, as well as the use

of the belt and stick as physical supports in many of these positions.

### Chang Chog

In our modern western world, when our father, mother, friends or relatives die, we remain helpless and disheartened witnesses of the transient nature of life without the possibility to help those who have departed and are moving on to another life. Here, going beyond the delusion that our existence will end after death or will last eternally in some other world, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu presents, for the first time in the Western world, a ritual whose aim is to purify the negative karma and obstacles of the deceased, giving them a chance of accessing a higher knowledge. This ritual embodies a new and authentic approach to death which allows us to help the deceased thanks to the special relation we had with them in our life, while providing us with the strength to overcome the suffering of our loss.

Connected to the Shitro Teachings of Namcho Mingyur Dorje, this short form of the Chang Chog ritual can be performed by all those who have received the transmission and wish to help their dear ones who have passed away. It is equally valid and beneficial for those who died recently and those who departed years ago. The video contains the explanation of the meaning of the different phases of the ritual along with the practice and related preparations, based on a retreat held by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in November 2007 in Merigar, Italy.

### The Practice of Chöd

In this DVD, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu performs the practice of Chöd with damaru and bell.

The practice is performed in three different versions:

- The Chöd of Khandro Kejang (*The Loud Laugh of the Dakinis*) from the Longchen Nyingthig;
- The Chöd with Ganapuja (Chöd Tsog)
- The standard or concise Chöd practice as used in the Dzogchen Community.

The first two were recorded in Tenerife, 2012; the third was recorded in Merigar in 1998. All practices are subtitled with the Tibetan text in Drajyot transliteration. This video does not contain explanations: practitioners who have received transmission are invited to study the available books, audios or videos containing the indispensable, detailed teachings on the Chöd practice by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

### Breathe

With the help of Yamilla Diaz and Fabio Andrico, beginner and expert yoga practitioners will find simple but effective exercise that deepen and clarify their experience of breathing. This ground-breaking technique enables the discovery of a new dimension of relaxed energy in modern life.

The Tibetan tradition of Yantra Yoga emphasizes the importance of a complete, calm and harmonious breath. The exercises in this program, inspired by this ancient

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Shang Shung UK – London Institute for Tibetan Studies in collaboration with the International Shang Shung Foundation presents:

## SSIUK: Workshops & Courses for 2017

Warming up for a Fresh Season of Cultural Events!

We are delighted to start our new Shang Shung UK autumn programme with a lecture in September by Dr Fabian Sanders on the value of studying *classical Tibetan* for Dharma practitioners; an 'Introduction to Yantra Yoga' with our long-term and experienced teacher, John Renshaw at the end of the month, followed by a *Himalayan Arts Festival* over the weekend of the 7–8th October.

Please put the following dates in your diary and visit our website: [shangshunguk.org](http://shangshunguk.org) for further details, ticket prices, venue information and contact details.

### Autumn 2017 Programme

#### SSIUK Lecture

Thursday 14th September: 6.30–8.30 pm

#### 'Introduction to Classical Tibetan

4 Part Course' with Dr. Fabian Sanders  
15th–17th September  
Skype Connections Available!

The Classical Tibetan Language course for beginners is designed to equip the student with the basics of the language: reading and writing, the structure of the language, and the functions and application of all the

most important grammatical connectors found in the language. All functions will be illustrated with examples from classical Tibetan literature.

#### Course Dates:

Part I: 15–17 September 2017  
Part II: 12–14 January 2018  
Part III: 9–11 February 2018  
Part IV: 9–11 March 2018

NOTE: It is not necessary to attend all weekends to apply for the beginners course, although this is advised.

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tradition, are designed as a simple way to apply this invaluable knowledge in everyday life. Program Highlights include:

- Discovering and training abdominal breathing
- Innovative exercises to clarify the four phases of complete breathing
- Easy routine for everyday life
- Breathing with awareness and relaxation

### With a Lama Around the World

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visits the gars, the communities of practitioners throughout the world, during a long trip to Tibet, Nepal, India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand,

Hawaii, Argentina, the United States, Great Britain and Italy, tirelessly transmitting the Dzogchen teachings. The footage was shot between 1988 and 1990 by Fabio Andrico and Paolo Brunatto and is a rare document that underlines the commitment and dedication of the Master and the international character of the Dzogchen community.

These and other downloadable videos can be purchased in the webshop of the Shang Shung Publications:

<http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/41-downloadable-video>

For watching the videos, especially on macOS, we recommend using VLC multimedia player that can be downloaded for free from <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/index.html>. ©

'Beginners Yantra Yoga'  
with John Renshaw  
30th September–1st October

During this weekend course, experienced instructor John Renshaw will introduce the fundamental aspects of the practice of Yantra Yoga.

\*\*\*

#### 'Himalayan Arts Festival' of Music and Dancing

October 7–8th

Over the this weekend of the 7–8th October we will be focusing on a range of authentic **Himalayan** and **Mongolian** dance and musical traditions with plenty of practical workshops together with performances. On Saturday evening starting at 6.00pm there will be a 'momo' party with performances, music and dancing which is open to all.

\*\*\*

#### SSIUK Lecture Series

#### 'Child Shamans & Other Guardians of the Lake'

with Premila van Ommen  
October 26th

This evening's presentation is a visual narrative of the speaker's journey to Gosaikunda led by shamans, monks and family. It details the sacred rites and spaces along the way and the meeting of child shaman initiates of other villages. Giving a personal insight into the Tamang bonpo tradition, we invite you to this talk to have a glimpse of this Himalayan culture.

\*\*\*

#### 'Zen & Dzogchen'

Seminar with Igor Berkhin  
28–29th October

This seminar presents an overview of the theory and practice involved in two great contemplative traditions showing their similarities and differences as well as their place in the general landscape of Buddhist teachings.

\*\*\*

#### Ku Nye Tibetan Massage – Residential Training at Kunselling, Wales

October 29th–November 4th  
Ku Nye Massage Training – Part 2.

» continued on the following page



## Five Years of the Shang Shung Institute in Russia

Interview: Anastasia Eremenko

Photos: Yulia Mikheykina, Lesya Cherenkova and others

This year the Shang Shung Institute in Russia turns 5 years. On this occasion, we decided to talk to the Institute's board members – Kirill Shilov and Vladimir Belyaev. They told The Mirror how the Institute and the School of Tibetan Medicine appeared in Russia, how it all developed, and shared their plans for the future.

**The Mirror:** Kirill, how did the Institute's activity start in Russia?

**Kirill Shilov:** At the beginning of the 90s interested people in Russia started to translate Rinpoche's books into Russian. In fact, this was even before Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first came to Russia in 1992 and established the first five Russian lings of the Dzogchen Community. At some point, as the Russian Community became stronger, this translation activity started to be coordinated by the Community and Rinpoche's



Vladimir Belyaev, head of the School of Tibetan Medicine in Kunsangar North, administrative director of the Shang Shung Institute Russia.

students formed different editorial groups which later became the publishing house. It was not yet called Shang Shung Publications, but in fact it was: we were publishing many books – both for the general public and practice materials for the Dzogchen Community – and we were really inspired by the work of our Teacher and his continuous dedication to Tibetan culture.

Then, in 2008, when Khyentse Yeshe and Luigi Ottaviani, the director of the Shang Shung Institute in Italy, first came to Russia, Shang Shung Institute Russia was established as a direct branch of SSI Italy. From that time we started to organize var-



Kirill Shilov, director of the Shang Shung Publications Russia, member of the International Shang Shung Foundation's board of directors.

ious courses and events related to Tibetan culture and the mission of the Shang Shung Institute. We mostly concentrated on courses and publications and continued this way till 2012 when Rinpoche, during his retreat in Kunsangar North, announced the start of the 4-year program of the School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia. Later in 2012 the Shang Shung Institute in Russia was officially established and registered as a non-profit organization under Russian law.

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(‘Refresher’ places also available at a reduced cost – please visit our website)

The Shangshung Foundation in collaboration with the Shangshung Institute UK is please to offer the second part of this two-part residential training in Ku Nye massage at Kunselling, the Dzogchen Community's retreat centre in Wales.

A full Ku Nye professional qualification will be granted after attending both parts of the residential course (130 hours) – involving two long visits (11 days and 7 days) to Kunselling – and passing the final theoretical and practical examination.

This is the second part of the Ku Nye training (50 hours teaching and practice) – October 29th–November 4th. Students

who receive the **Shang Shung Institute Ku Nye Diploma** will be able to attend further advanced courses taught by Tibetan doctors on Ku Nye massage, as well as other practices and techniques related to Tibetan medicine.

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SSIUK Lecture Series  
**‘Himalayan Shamanism’**  
with John Reynolds  
November 16th, 6.30–8pm

\*\*\*

**‘Dzogchen and the Tibetan Book of the Dead’**

Weekend Seminar with John Reynolds  
November 18 to 19, 10 am–5 pm  
(Saturday & Sunday)

\*\*\*

**‘Khaita Joyful Dances Workshop’**

with Lena Dumcheva  
November 25th–26th

In recent years, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche has dedicated himself to compiling songs and dances by young Tibetan artists who with courage and devotion, celebrate the qualities and characteristics of Tibet and the Tibetan people. In this workshop, we will learn the basic steps of Khaita and several complete Khaita dances. ©





Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, international director and teacher of the School of Tibetan Medicine.

**M:** Which projects is the Russian Institute working on now?

**K.S.:** Now we have two main activities in the SSI Russia. Besides Shang Shung Publications, there is another activity that has become very important for us – the School of Tibetan Medicine. Actually, it was almost a surprise for us when during the retreat in Kunsangar in 2012 Rinpoche said, “Next year there will be a School of Tibetan Medicine here in Kunsangar North”. Even we, the staff of the Shang Shung Institute in Russia, were really surprised; it was impossible to imagine that something like this could manifest in a few months. Nevertheless, in 2013 the School of Tibetan Medicine was opened in Kunsangar North under the academic direction of Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo.

We started four years ago with the first group of students, around 60 people. And now the last trimester of the 4-year program is over, and those students, who managed to go through all the difficulties, passed their final exam. It means that now we have more than 30 new Tibetan doctors in Russia, thanks to Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo who has been doing an absolutely fantastic job all these years! Next year our students will go to China to practice and then they will receive their final diplomas.

**M:** Can you give us some more details about the School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia?

**Vladimir Belyaev:** The decision made by Rinpoche during the retreat on the Dark Garuda in 2012 in Kunsangar North became

a milestone in the process of establishing the school. As Kirill already mentioned, there Rinpoche announced that he wanted to develop Tibetan Medicine in Kunsangar North, that there would be a School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia, and that the classes with a 4 year basic educational program would start in May 2013. During that retreat Rinpoche once again highlighted the importance of preserving the unique knowledge contained in Tibetan culture and medicine which may greatly benefit all beings. He added that since the beginning of Kunsangar he had had a clear idea that Tibetan medicine and culture would develop here but the circumstances hadn't been right for many years.

The School of Tibetan Medicine is an international project. It has two branches. The first was opened in the USA in 2005 and by now they have already had several graduations of students who have done the full training program, including medical practice in Tibet. Education in the Russian and American schools is carried out according to a program corresponding to the traditional educational program on Tibetan medicine approved in modern Tibet, and is based on the uninterrupted lineage of transmission which has been upheld by Tibetan doctors and scholars for thousands of years.

**M:** Vladimir, can you tell us about Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and the first graduation of her Russian students?

**V.B.:** Doctor Phuntsog is an extraordinary doctor, scholar and practitioner. She is really dedicated to Rinpoche and fully engages in the realization of the projects which he has entrusted to her. It really inspires and helps to move forward and resolve complicated tasks. It's a blessing to be able to be next to her and collaborate and work together. Thanks to her knowledge, boundless compassion and wisdom we were able to realize such a painstaking project as the School of Tibetan Medicine. She is a completely unique teacher, a real knowledge holder. I think our students can tell you very well about this. You can find more details of her biography on the Institute's web-page.

The first graduates of the school are a wonderful and varied group of students, both in age, in life and professional experience. Some of them have had a Western medical education, others have been studying Tibetan medicine for many years, while others came to study from the



Practice of Kunye massage at the School of Tibetan medicine.

ground up. Now 34 students have graduated. They manifested great perseverance and patience, studied a lot, learned the theory and the practice, and, at the same time, trained to hold consultations under Dr. Phuntsog's guidance.

I would like to thank many of them for the assistance they provided for many organizational issues. There were a lot of tasks, but the students, in spite of being very busy, were always ready to help. This is something precious and instills confidence. The students are the school's future and I hope that all of them will become safe pillars for the development of Tibetan medicine projects in Russia and the world.

**M:** What are the school's plans for the future? And what are, in general, the perspectives of the Institute's development in Russia?

**V.B.:** As for the school and its educational system, moving in line with the modern life style and the development of technologies, as well as considering the great outstretch of our country and difficulties with constant residence in Kunsangar North, Moscow district, and at the same time taking into account people's great desire to study this knowledge about health, we decided to modify the program a little.

Now we are preparing to transfer to a part-time educational system, with most of the theory being taught long distance according to high-quality video recordings made beforehand and translated into

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# SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ИНСТИТУТ ТИБЕТСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ

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Russian. Practical knowledge will be transmitted during 2–3 week intensive courses, held once a semester, which will be organized at the base of our educational center in Kunsangar North. During onsite class-

In terms of the international SSI program we are working on elaboration of educational materials and books containing the full 4 year course, methodological materials for separate courses and seminars. And, of course, the school plans to continue col-

unique school of Tibetology and Buddhology in Russia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That is why we, the Shang Shung Institute of Russia, aspire, among other things, to become a kind of a link between the tradition of Tibetan studies that we have in Russia and this live stream of knowledge we receive from our precious Teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Among our priorities for the future is the development of the educational programs on the Tibetan language. Language is the heart of a culture, an environment that forms thinking, without which tradi-



es there will be clarifications on theory and at the end of the semester there will be an onsite examination. Each group of students will have their own adviser – the teacher's assistants who will be designated by Dr. Phuntsog from her students. They will help to follow the materials, organise homework and answer questions during weekly online meetings.

We suppose that the next group of students will start classes in September 2018. More detailed information will be published by the end of the year, the information will be on our website and through an email distribution list (VOICE).

In addition to the basic program we will continue open seminars on Ku-Nye massage, both basic and advanced. Such seminars turned out to be high in demand and useful. Now we have a wonderful group which reached the 2nd level Ku-Nye and plans to continue training. Also Dr. Phuntsog is going to conduct separate special courses for future teacher's assistants and Ku-Nye instructors with the participation of some of her students.

In addition we plan to conduct different public seminars on separate modules of Tibetan medicine, like, for example, courses on Nutrition and Behavior, Hospice, Nursing in Tibetan Medicine, courses on astrology, pharmacology, Tibetan language, etc.

laboration with organizations which represent Western medicine, scientific organizations which deal with traditional medicine, to work on integration of Tibetan medicine in the modern world, and conduct public talks and conferences. In this regard, there is still a lot of hard work to do but it's absolutely necessary.

At the moment, the Shang Shung Institute in collaboration with the Gakyil of Kunsangar North is preparing the project of the clinic of Tibetan medicine in Kunsangar. We gave received the last instructions from Dr. Phuntsog regarding what there should be. At first it will be, let's say, a basic clinic with necessary minimum of health-giving services. The students will be able to do their practice there and the graduates will be able to work. We also plan to open a consulting room of Tibetan medicine in Moscow.

**K.S.:** Regarding the perspectives of the Russian branch of the Institute, I would like to point out the uniqueness of our situation, in the sense that for many years, at least from the eighteenth century, a strong historical tradition of a very good connection with Tibet and the Tibetan culture has developed in Russia. This connection was made with the help of Mongolian, Buryat and Kalmyk people who live in Russia and many Russian scientists who actually started a very

tions and rituals lose their meaning and the objects of material culture becomes only artifacts. Particularly, for Buddhist and Dzogchen practitioners learning Tibetan helps to bring understanding of the Teaching to a completely different practical level – of course, given the essential knowledge has been received from the Teacher. Recently, I have noticed an actively increasing interest in the Tibetan language on the part of members of the Dzogchen Community, mostly thanks to the attention that Rinpoche gives to Tibetan songs and Khaita dances.

Another direction of the Shang Shung Institute's development is creation of infrastructure for conducting courses, both public and those intended for DC members. As you know, in 2015 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu asked the International Shang Shung Foundation to take on responsibility for coordination of all public courses on Khaita, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance. At the moment, the International Shang Shung Foundation is elaborating the educational platform called Shedra (tib. བཤད་གྲུ་, *bshad grwa* — "place of study") which will become an Internet-portal for organization of online and onsite courses guided by the instructors of the Dzogchen Community and teachers of the Shang Shung Institute. Our goal is to facilitate the organization of the



courses, making it more effective, and create a unique system of certification, both for students and teachers.

**M:** In what ways can people collaborate with the Institute and the School of Tibetan medicine?

**V.B.:** The School of Tibetan Medicine is, in the first place, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's project academically directed by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo. This project, in its essence, is inseparable from the Dzogchen Community. We are open for collaboration. Our work would be impossible without the support of the Sangha, concerned specialists of the Dzogchen Community in different areas who from the very beginning of the school's creation have tried to help and contribute to this project. Since we became a fully licensed organization providing educational services, the scope of work related to professional employees in the area of education has increased. This kind of assistance, more or less, is being performed by different specialists. But at anytime we may need additional help from Dzogchen Community specialists. Of course, all projects on Tibetan medicine need sponsors and volunteers. We invite everybody interested in the development of Tibetan medicine and who has got the necessary skills to collaborate. Get to know about our activity, become closer. We'll be very happy!

For general questions and collaboration with the Shang Shung Institute and the School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia please write to: [info@shangshunginstitute.ru](mailto:info@shangshunginstitute.ru).

**M:** Thank you!



The website of the Shang Shung Institute in Russia: <http://shangshunginstitute.ru/en/>

The website of the SSI School of Tibetan Medicine: [tibetanmedicineschool.ru](http://tibetanmedicineschool.ru)

The Shang Shung Publications internet-store: <https://shangshungstore.ru>

We are on social networks: <https://www.facebook.com/shangshungrussia/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/stmrussia/>  
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First graduates at the School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia.

Photo by Sasha Popov

## First Graduates of the SSI International School for Tibetan Medicine in Russia

**O**n 6 August 2017 the exams of the first group of students of the International School for Tibetan Medicine of the Shang Shung Institute in Russia took place. 33 students successfully passed and on 7 August, the 15th lunar day of the Wooden Bird month, the documents confirming termination of the 4-year educational program on Tibetan medicine were consigned at Kunsangar North.

The course started in May 2013 and consisted of 9 intramural semesters which took place once every half year in the educational center of the Shang Shung Institute in Kunsangar North.

In 2018 there will be a 3 month period of practice at Qinghai University for Tibetan Medicine (TAR of PRC), during which the students will do practical training in different departments of the Arura hospital and will take an internal exam with the local Tibetan graduate students.

The students really worked hard showing much sense of purpose and perseverance and now, thanks to the loving care of Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, the group is a real family which is to become an important pillar in the development and maintenance of knowledge of Tibetan medicine in Russia and the world.

With love,

Shang Shung Institute in Russia

<http://shangshunginstitute.ru/>

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## The Nepal Earthquake

Four New Schools – Looking into the Future

[namaskarfornepal.org](http://namaskarfornepal.org)

#namaskar4nepal

Video: <http://bit.ly/RicScVideo>

Construction work is progressing on 4 schools in an area where 95% of buildings were destroyed by the 2015 earthquake. the schools will accommodate 600 children and will also represent a reference point for the whole community; training courses will be held on themes such as child-trafficking and bio-agriculture. this is a project that in total will help 10,000 people.

Following on the catastrophic consequences of the earthquakes of 25 April and 12 May 2015: 9000 victims, 23,000 injured, 600,000 buildings destroyed and 300,000 damaged, Nepal is slowly rising again from the ruins caused not only to the earthquake itself but above all the slow and laborious progress in reconstruction, and an increase in the levels of poverty and in child-trafficking.

ASIA (Italian NGO) has been active in Nepal since 1996, remaining to rebuild the future of this Country starting with children and schools. Long and constant presence in the field has enabled this NGO to intervene immediately following on the 2015 earthquake, operating within the capital as well as in remote rural areas in the country. This has entailed the distribution of tents, blankets, mattresses, aluminium panels for building temporary shelters, solar panel kits and other prime necessity goods to over 26,000 beneficiaries. In the villages of Yarsa and Saramthali (Rasuwa District) we have built temporary classrooms, enabling the children to resume their school activities.

Now it's rebuilding the schools destroyed by the earthquake, starting from



the villages where we built temporary classrooms and where the earthquake destroyed 95% of the buildings.

The first four schools, that ASIA has started to build thanks to funds made available by Caritas Italiana, Clown One Italia Onlus, Save The Children Italia, Tavola Valdese and private donors within ASIA, are those of Arukharkha and Thangdor in Yarsa (Rasuwa District), and of Namuna and of Dupcheshwori in Saramthali (Rasuwa District). The schools are built applying earthquake-proof technology without architectural barriers and will be equipped with toilet facilities, bathrooms and drinking water. The energy-efficiency of the buildings is guaranteed through the use of insulating materials.

**Arukharkha Primary School** will house 122 children and 6 teachers. The size is 296 square metres, with 6 classrooms, toilet facilities and a staff room for the teachers.

**Thangdor Primary School** will house 102 children and 5 teachers. The size is 436 square metres, with 8 classrooms, toilet facilities and a staff room for the teachers.

**Namuna Primary School** will house 39 children aged from 5 to 8 years old (it will also be a reference point for children from nearby villages) and 4 teachers. The size is

185 square metres, with 4 classrooms, toilet facilities and a staff room for the teachers.

**Dupcheshwori Secondary School** will house 328 schoolchildren and 9 teachers. The school comprise 2 buildings for an overall surface area of 592 square metres, with 10 classrooms, toilet facilities and a staff room for the teachers.

The ASIA Project is not limited to reconstruction, but intends to turn the schools into reference points also for adults and families; 870 people will attend training courses on diverse themes such as children's rights and the risk of child-trafficking, advanced teaching methods, bio-agriculture and permaculture.

ASIA is helping the communities start up income-generating activities so as to improve economic conditions. Indirect beneficiaries of the reconstruction of these four schools will thus be the members of the entire community of Yarsa and Saramthali, amounting to nearly 10,000 people.

Moreover local builders, carpenters, blacksmiths and craftsmen are already actively engaged in the reconstruction and attending the courses on demolition and carpentry, thereby impacting the local economy.





ASIA is continuing to raise funds to fully equip these schools (desks, chairs but also school backpacks, pencils, exercise books, etc.), and to provide training activities for the schoolchildren, community and teachers.

To be part of this Project you can subscribe to the campaign "Namaskar for Nepal. Do something for the Schools" making a donation on this website: [namaskarfor-nepal.org](http://namaskarfor-nepal.org).

Many famous Italian celebrities are already taking part in this campaign, which started in September 2015: Bandabardò, Fabrizio Bosso, Antonella Britti, Beppe Brotto, Roberto Cacciapaglia, Giorgio Caputo, Giuseppe Cederna, Alessandra Celletti, Fortunato Cerlino, Carmen Consoli, Federico Costantini, Stefano Fresi, Paolo Fresu, Francesco Gabbani, Claudio Guerri, Jaka, Sandro Joyeux, Gianni Maroccolo, Carlo Massarini, Nada, Orchestra Operaia di Massimo Nunzi, Tetes de Bois, and Massimo Wertmuller. A special thought to Faustino Mesolella, who gifted his art to the children of Nepal.

To promote the campaign a commercial acted by Fortunato Cerlino and Antonella Britti was broadcast on national TV and radio channels.

#### ASIA

ASIA – Association for International Solidarity in Asia (Associazione per la Solidarietà Internazionale in Asia) – is a NGO founded in Italy 1988 by Emeritus Prof. Namkhai Norbu. Engaged in projects for the safeguard of the identity and cultural heritage of Asian countries, we promote processes of social, economic and health development centred on local populations with their own human, cultural and environmental resources. Over many years' experience ASIA has helped over 500.000 people in Tibet, Western China, India, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka.©

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# Khaita on the Hill of the Muses

Elena Dumcheva

Since 2011 Khaita has gradually become an intrinsic part of our community life, and more and more practitioners have come to appreciate and enjoy the precious gift of Harmony in the Space. Khaita is also manifesting as a powerful vehicle for spreading a message to the wider public – not only by supporting Tibetan culture, but also as a bridge to the Teaching.

Following Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Rosa Namkhai's wish to present Khaita to a wider public and thanks to their precious advice, this July our international Khaita group travelled to Athens, Greece to present Khaita Joyful Dances at the 50th World Congress on Dance Research organized by the International Dance Council.

The Congress featured five days of classes, lectures, performances and exhibitions, and gathered more than 350 participants



from 50 countries. The heart of the event were performances taking place at the beautiful national Dora Stratou Greek Dances Theatre, on a pine covered hill opposite the Acropolis - Philopappou Hill or The Hill of Muses, since the myth says it used to be the home of the nine muses.

The Dora Stratou Theatre is the only one of its kind in the world. Since 1953 it has been a living museum of Greek dance. Dances, songs and music are presented in their original forms that were or are still performed in their respective villages or islands. The theater has an astounding collection of 2,000 traditional costumes, the largest of its kind in the world. The theatre has a large permanent stage designed by the famous Greek painter Spyros Vassiliou



Congress organiser Alkis Rafts (centre) with the Khaita dancers and other Congress participants.

and has a seating capacity of 800 people. The theatre was founded by Mrs. Dora Stratou thanks to her desire to keep alive traditional forms of dance, music and song. She believed in the preservation of dances as a proof of the continuity of Greek culture since antiquity. We truly felt that presenting Khaita in such a place was extremely auspicious.

We performed at the Dora Stratou Theatre on the 7th of July. Our international

participants. Curiously enough, many conversations would end up with questions about and sincere interest in the Master and the Teaching, so we could witness in a concrete way Khaita acting as a bridge to the Teaching!

In addition to our theatre performance, Khaita was also presented at the exhibition dedicated to Tibetan dance "Meditation in Motion" organized by the Museum of Asian Art and Culture of Arcidosso, Italy. The exhibition featured four screens with 20 original Tibetan Khaita videos showing various types of dance, from traditional to modern. The screens were accompanied by panels explaining the Khaita project, giving a brief summary of the meaning of each song and some examples of complete song texts. [You can see the photos from the exhibition here]

Moreover, on the following days in Athens we did two street events that included both performance and dancing with the public. [You can see the photos from our street performances here]

We would like to thank the Athens Dzogchen Community for their help and for being such gracious hosts, Merigar West for their continuous support, all the Khaita team that participated in person and remotely, and, ultimately, our precious Master and Rosa Namkhai.

May this event contribute to laying the foundation of spreading Harmony in the Space around the world!

See the Facebook photo album of the event:

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/harmonyinthespace/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=2030687610498564](https://www.facebook.com/pg/harmonyinthespace/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2030687610498564) ©



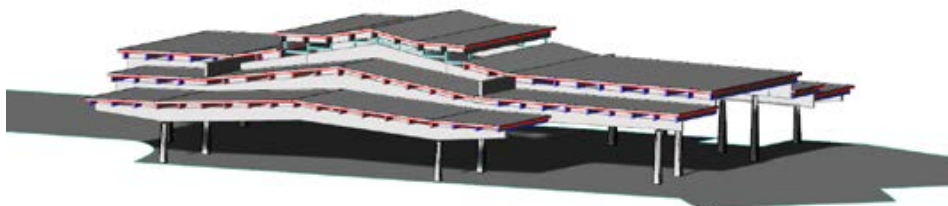
# Dzamling Gar Project Update

Giovanni Boni

Construction work on the large structure that will contain the Gönpa is now going ahead very quickly. By March 2018 the bulk of the structural work should be completed.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is always very happy when we send him photos of the work in progress.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to making this dream of our beloved Teacher possible. ©



## Dzamling Gar Autumn 2017 Program

October 8th–14th

Part 2 of the course on the Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra for beginners with Luda Kudryatseva

October 25th–29th  
Course on Drayyor with prof. Fabian Sanders

November 1st – 10th  
Tibetan language course with prof. Fabian Sanders

November 18th – 19th  
Public event on mindfulness in La Laguna with Elio Guarisco

November 24th – 29th  
Santi Maha Sangha first level course focused on the practices with Elio Guarisco

December 2nd – 5th  
Secret Rushens of Santi Maha Sangha Base with Fabio Andrico

December 8th  
Rinpoche's birthday celebration

## Merigar West New Gakyil 2017–2018

On Sunday morning, July 23, 2017, the Merigar West Annual General Meeting was held in the Temple of Great Liberation at the Gar, in Tuscany, Italy.

The Gakyil had prepared a full report of the activities at the Gar over the last year which they presented during the greater part of the meeting. The report was prepared as a pdf document that was shown during the meeting.

Two long standing members of the gakyil, Giovanna Natalini for the blue gakyil and Gianni Totino for the yellow, finished their 6 year term of office and retired from their duties. Dmitri Fieri, red gakyil, who still has a year to conclude his term of office, will remain.

Three others members of the current gakyil remain in office: Rocco Vassalli, yellow gakyil, Fulvio Ferrari, red gakyil, and Tiziana Gottardi, blue gakyil.



The Merigar West Gakyil for 2017–2018  
Blue: Tiziana Gottardi, Natasha Priymak  
Red: Dmitri Fieri, Fulvio Ferrari (assistant Massimo Pelliccioni)  
Yellow: Rocco Vassalli, Carla Gnechi, Salima Celeri  
Geko: Cvetko Jovanovic and Tanita Ferrari

In order to find new candidates and improve the way the gakyil members are selected, during the previous months a commission of three people from the Merigar West gakyil and SMS instructor Fabio Risolo conducted interviews with possible candidates. The names were then sent to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu who approved them.

The new gakyil members are: Natasha Priymak, blue, Carla Gnechi, yellow, and Salima Celeri yellow.

The Geko remains unchanged. ©

# Geometry in Movement – The Vajra Dance of Space, *Khalong Dorje Kar*

An Interview with Prima Mai  
Arcidosso, July 2017

**The Mirror:** A lot of people don't know about the Vajra Dance of Space, *Khalong Dorje Kar*, or the study groups working on this Vajra Dance. Can you tell us about its origins?

**Prima Mai:** This Vajra Dance is called *Khalong Dorje Kar*: 'Kha' meaning space, 'long' dimension or universe, 'dorje' the Tibetan term for *vajra*, and 'kar' meaning dance. So it is the 'Vajra Dance of Space' or the dimensional, magical 'Vajra Dance of the Universe'. We also have the 'Vajra Dance of Space of the 12 A', which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu also received in a separate dream, all around 1991.

Rinpoche's first dreams of the *Khalong Dorje Kar* of the Song of the Vajra started, to my understanding, in 1991 and then in the following years. In 1993 or 94 Rinpoche had more dreams of this dance on his pilgrimage to India and also Tso Pema, India. All these dreams of clarity were connected with Rinpoche's personal retreat of Mandarava practice, so these dances are very much connected to this practice.

In 1997 or 98, Rinpoche gave a photocopy of the text of the root *tantra* of this Dance of Space to Adriano Clemente and me. It was written in his handwriting, which Adriano is able to decipher, so for many years it was in our hands but there was no translation. Then in 2013 Adriano and I met in Tashigar North and he decided that he would directly translate the text. So I helped with the diagrams and the digital formatting to help him understand the text, and we went ahead like this. So by 2013, we had more or less translated the root text.

**M:** I came to the recent study group held at Merigar West June 26–29, 2017, and was quite amazed to see this enormous *khalong mandala* on which the dance is performed. Can you talk about that and also about the fact that more than 12 dancers can dance on it at the same time.

**PM:** I tried to understand the size of the *khalong mandala* from the text. It was not so easy to calculate. I had to figure out how

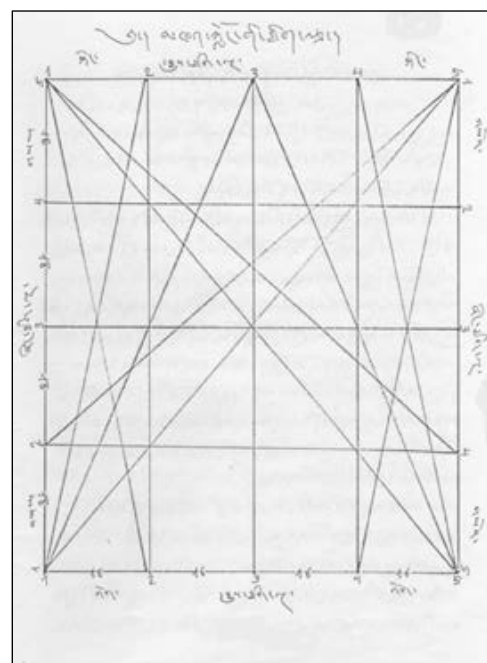


to calculate for the human dimension, our size, how big our steps are, and how one person can do the entire dance on this *khalong*. So from that I had an idea more or less what the size could be. The proportions are very important. I still have questions about the proportions because there are some interesting numbers appearing in the root *tantra*, 16 and 18, so I was wondering if the numbers have significance.

The making of the *Khalong mandala* and digital diagrams follow the instructions given in the root *tantra* and Rinpoche's fantastic drawings. The appearance of the numbers 16 and 18 made me research more and I discovered that Rinpoche used a similar grid as is used also in ancient art to create geometrically designed compositions using divine proportions.

Link: <https://artiseternal.wordpress.com/2008/04/10/divine-proportions/>

It seems that it is all about the proportions of the universe, the earth, our body, everything. Rinpoche's original drawings are very important. His original drawings are actually more oval, and more in the direction of the 'golden ratio' [a mathematical ratio commonly found in nature – the ratio of 1 to 1.618] and I still have some questions regarding the making of the correct proportion. Rinpoche had so many dreams about Vajra Dances and it is not easy to find all the answers immediately.



**M:** It seems that the Vajra Dance of Space is a work in progress and you are still working on the details of the Dance with the study group?

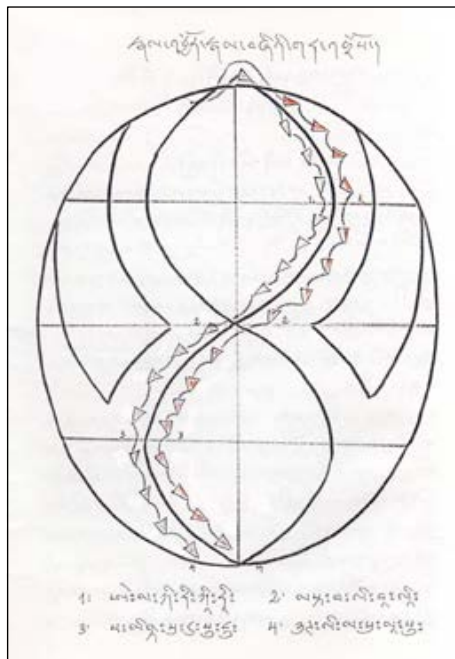
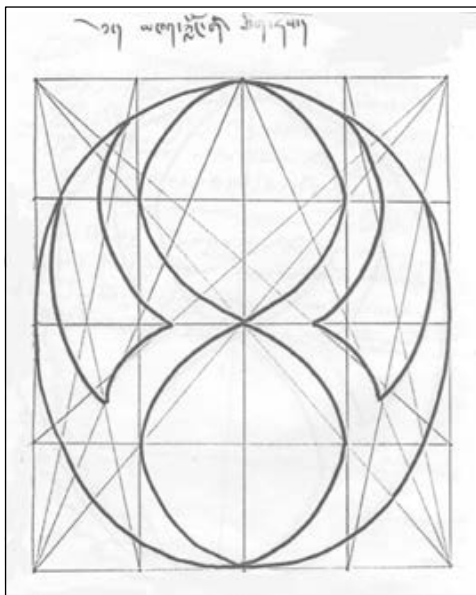
**PM:** My main work now is to define the size and proportions of the *khalong* and how we can do the steps on it. A couple enters the *khalong*, one *pamo* and one *pawo*, one female and one male, and they dance mirror like through the *khalong*. The steps are



very simple, mainly the *tsom* movement, and they use some *mudras*. They also sing the Song of the Vajra in a slow way, possibly more internally, probably in a low voice, not out loud.

Only one couple enters the *khalong*, but a certain point – which we are still working on – a second couple enters, then a third





and a fourth and so on. We are still studying how many people can really dance on one *khalong*. For now we think that 28 people can, perhaps even more. In our next study group we will try the number 36 also because it is a number in sacred geometry and sound. We are trying to discover all these things during our work in the study groups. So the dancers dance through the *khalong* in this very simple way.

to the *Khalong Mandala*, connecting more to the inner knowledge of the Song of the Vajra. In all the Dances of the Vajra there are always three, the Integration of Body, Speech or Energy and Mind into instant presence or contemplation. We have three *Mandalas* symbolizing the Earth, the Solar System and the Universe, like Manifestations, and then the *Khalong*-like symbol of more inner sound and again also always



In 1991 when Rinpoche had the first dream, he talked to me about the Vajra Dance of Space, (symbolizing more inner sound or knowledge of the universe) when we were in the Gönpa of Merigar [West]. He explained that he had had this dream that there was this very big *khalong*, which is like the egg of the *garuda*. We have the universal *mandala*, which is maybe more the symbol of the Universe manifesting with the elements and *chakras*. And then we have the symbol of *Longsal*, similar looking

integrating Body, Speech and Mind. Maybe something like this.

I think this *garuda* egg symbolizes the energy and how it manifests in everything, from where it develops. The sound is another issue, whether we should sing out loud or very low, because each couple starts singing at a different point. So far we have tried that when the first couple reaches *sa mun ta lin* the Song of the Vajra the next couple starts, and so on, and that is an interesting symphony.

**M:** But it will be difficult to have music with this Dance if everyone starts the Dance at a different point in the song. It will just be people quietly singing to themselves.

**PM:** From what I understand the sound is the potential of the energy; sound is energy and energy is movement. The sound is created by the number of dancers dancing together. We can also have a cluster of four *khalongs* together, and the dancers can dance infinitely probably through all four *khalongs*. You go from one *khalong* to the next and the one after, and there will be an immense sound coming from that. So you move from *khalong* to *khalong* as well as within the *khalong*.

The dancers all dance on different spots and sometimes we meet each other, so we have to study and determine how we pass each other. All these passages – when and where we meet, where the male is and where the female is, etc. – are complicated and simple at the same time. It is geometry in movement and it shows the energy of sacred geometry; how sacred geometry functions on another plane and how we look at sacred geometry. We have a resonance with it. This resonance is created vividly here with sound and dance and also the knowledge of it is fundamental. Being in that state.

This is a kind of essence of how everything evolves, let's say of enlightened activity, how the enlightened, pure dimension manifests. Uncorrupted, non-dual, where all is possible without following, modifying or creating, effortless, pure. So that is what this dance is about and probably what will evolve from it will be sound, a humming sound, and that sound is probably the universal sound. All the sounds are one sound and this one sound is actually the A. The A is the essence of sound and the A is all sounds. In our study we used simple music and the rhythm of one sound in C or DO in order to coordinate our movements in time and sounds together.

**M:** This was the third study group of this dance [held at Merigar West at the end of June 2017]. Do you think there will be a 4th and 5th study group and when do you think you might be able to present a final version of the Dance to Rinpoche?

**PM:** I hope to clarify some questions with Rinpoche when possible. It is maybe still too soon to present it to Rinpoche. I still have to discover myself answers to some

» continued on the following page





Participants in the Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra study group at Merigar West, June 26–29, 2017.

» continued from previous page

questions and for that we need to dance and study together. That is the only way we can discover.

When I started to study this dance I immediately understood that we needed to study it in a large group in order to discover it together. It is very good to do it in large group because everyone brings valuable insights and many parts came very well from that help. There is also a little booklet from which everyone can learn.

We will have a short 4th study group at Merigar West September 21–24 applying a modified drawing of the *Khalong*, and with the help of Maurizio Mingotti who is preparing an excel simulation, it seems we can try to possibly dance with 36 dancers, 18 male and 18 female, together in one *Khalong*. We also did a short one day study group in Khandroling (Buckland, Massachusetts) with the help of Carisa, Fanni and Jeremiah who prepared a big *Khalong*. In Dzamling Gar I hope we will be able to continue our study and possibly finalize in order to present it to Rinpoche. In Dzamling Gar and also in Khandroling, we could even prepare a cluster of 4 *Khalongs* and start to study dancing with possibly even 144 practitioners.

So my idea is that anyone who is interested in learning this dance can learn the basic movements and pathway on the *khalong*. It is not so difficult and there is this booklet to study. Then when we meet we can go ahead revealing how it manifests because we always spend a lot of time explaining the steps and pathway over and over.

Actually the dance is developing quite fast and everyone in the study group picked it up very quickly. Everyone was

very excited and there was a wonderful energy. So we are in the study phase. I still cannot say for sure how we do the crossings of *pamo* and *pawo*, how many *pamos* and *pawos* there are, how we dance in the cluster of *khalongs*, etc., this can only be discovered dancing together. I think the basic pathway, which is already clear, will be easy for a single person to study, even without a course.

**M:** How can people who are interested in learning more about *Khalong Dorje Ka* start to study it?

**PM:** The working notes in the E-booklet may be helpful to familiarise people with the basic directions and movements. If Rinpoche permits and I hope to ask soon, people who wish to study the dance could make a small *khalong* at home keeping the proportions, or a ling could put it on the back of a portable *mandala* just for studying the steps. I developed a system for creating the *khalong*, and when the final possible size is defined, there will be a final module for making a *khalong* so that people can draw it easily. With the E-booklet people can start to study it and when the text has been clarified we will also make a printed copy.

One of the difficulties of the Dance is when dancers cross each other. We also have *mudras*. However, the most difficult or important thing is the movement. Rinpoche said that we should do the *tsom* movement [an open turning movement] beyond physical limitation or very harmonious and nearly magical, because, if I understood correctly, the Vajra Dance of Space is the third level of becoming an instructor. Even now many people can learn it, and I want to ask Rinpoche if the other

Vajra Dance instructors can help others to learn the steps. To become an instructor of the Vajra Dance is when you have more the movement, when you know how to use the *tsom* in a particular way and understand the *mudras* well. It is a *tsom* so we should not walk it, we should really be able to dance, and manifest that dance, that energy in the movement.

This is most important to develop.

This year I started something to help develop that with everyone dancing in circles doing the *tsom* movement to the Song of the Vajra. It is wonderful to do because everyone can do it, we simply apply the sound with the step. In general we are missing how to connect sound with this movement. We can do it more freely dancing in circles and applying the *tsom* movement integrating with the Song of the Vajra. And then, instead of following the person in front of us, we can discover our own *tsom* and play with our body and the sound and move in different ways. We can discover what is possible and the potential of our physical movement. We can also feel that movement in connection to energy, to the sound and especially to the state, and we can engage in the symbol of dance in the activity of the enlightened ones. We can find that our real potential is not separate from the potential of enlightened beings. It is already there – even there is no visualization or transformation in the Vajra Dances, but sometimes we can also use some effort to overcome mental conditions and imagine, visualize ourselves to manifest like, for example, Tara, Avalokitesvara and we can imagine that. We have this divine core, all of us, and that is what actually connects us all beyond space and time.

**M:** Thank you Prima Mai

©

The E-booklet “Working Notes and Essential Diagrams for the Study of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra”, a restricted publication, is available at the Shang Shung Foundation online shop: <http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/37-ebooks>

Drawings by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from the original root text “Khalongdorjeikar of the Song of the Vajra”

# Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra Study Group

at Merigar West  
June 26–29, 2017

Liz Granger

This was the third meeting of the study group led by Prima Mai working on understanding and practicing the Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra. The dance is based on the translation of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's original root text *Khalongdorjeikar* of the Song of the Vajra and connected to his Longsal cycle of teachings. Prima Mai has studied and recreated the diagrams in the text in digital format and her studies have made it clear that it is important to study and practice this Vajra Dance in a large group of people in order to understand it and discover the correct way to practice it. Many



Vajra Dancers from far and wide came to join the study group.

Prima Mai had prepared a *Khalong* with precise proportions on which to dance and it filled much of the floor space on the Temple of Great Contemplation at Merigar West. 28 practitioners were able to dance together on the *Khalong*, with one couple entering, followed by another couple, and

so on. The steps accompany the sound of the Song of the Vajra.

At the moment the text of the Vajra Dance of Space is not available but once the editing process has been completed and all open questions clarified, the root text will be complete and in book form and can be consulted by all interested Vajra Dance practitioners. ©

## Santi Maha Sangha Teachers' Conference in Merigar

Fabio Maria Risolo

On 7, 8 and 9 July 2017, the first Teacher's Conference of Santi Maha Sangha was held at Merigar. The initiative was made possible in particular thanks to the approval of our Master and to the organizational commitment of Igor Legati and Lukas Chmelik.

30 SMS teachers attended, among people present physically or connected online. The main topic of the Conference consisted of confronting how to present meditation and mindfulness in open courses, both inside and outside the Dzogchen Community, for people who have not received the transmission of our Master. The demand for such courses is becoming more and more frequent.

Six teachers (Costantino Albini, Igor Berkhin, Elio Guarisco, Steven Landsberg, Oliver Leick and Fabio Risolo) offered the contribution of their experience on how to lead these courses. The meeting went to a



very open and fruitful discussion on the issues that emerged.

The variety of experiences and approaches has become a very important resource for discussion, within the sharing of some essential common points stressed by the Master. For open courses he suggested mainly the themes of presence and awareness, and more generally the meditation practices contained in the first part of the "Precious Vase".

Given the importance of this topic, it was decided to organize a new Teachers' Conference as soon as possible, so that it will be possible to further deepen in an experiential way the teachers' didactic experiences. ©



# Third Jewel Sangha Retreat at Merigar West

June 30 – July 4, 2017

Liz Granger

For the first time, the annual summer retreat at Merigar West in Tuscany, Italy was led by some of the main instructors of the Dzogchen Community, rather than our Teacher. At the last minute, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was unable to attend the retreat, which took place from June 30 to July 4, 2017, and the program was adjusted so that sessions were guided by some of Rinpoche's senior students.

More than 650 people from across the globe were present in the Temple of the Great Contemplation for the retreat, many of who were coming to the teaching for the first time. There were also more than 500 webcast connections.

Although initially there was some sadness that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was unable to teach at the retreat, as the days passed, this feeling was generally replaced by one of joy and satisfaction as the many and varied events unfolded. And indeed, there was food for thought for both newcomers and those who have been following teaching for some time, with a very rich program each day.

Most of the morning sessions presented basic tenets of the Buddhist teaching, with Fabio Risolo's explanation of the mind trainings, and Costantino Albini's talk on the practice of the four applications of presence, and then on presence and compassion. There were also sessions of detailed explanations of practices that many of Rinpoche's students have already received, such as Adriano Clemente's morning talk on how to sing the Ganapuja which included some musical pointers. During the afternoon sessions, the in-depth ex-



Photo by Marco Almici

planations continued with Nina Robinson on the Mandarava practice, Fabio Andrico on *kumbhaka* and *sogthig* followed by Mandarava practice, Laura Evangelisti's introduction to Yantra Yoga, Igor Legati on the Ganapuja, and Igor Berkhin on Purification of the Six Lokas.

Outside these more formal morning and afternoon sessions of explanations and practice there was a full program of practice activities starting early in the morning with sessions of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance, and later in the afternoon with Khaita Joyful Dances and Vajra Dance. And, as usual, during the summer at Merigar, moments to socialize and enjoy were not lacking with the opening of the "Lhasa and Beyond" photographic exhibition at the Museum of Asian Art and Culture in Arcidosso, a fundraising cocktail reception at the Yellow House, and a Khaita Tea Party!

This five-day retreat was a first time experience for the organizers at Merigar West and for those attending and, in all, turned out to be an unexpectedly joyful and harmonious event. It was an opportunity for Namkhai Norbu's senior students to pres-

ent his teaching in its many aspects to old and new students and for the Community to come, practice, and enjoy together.

The three cornerstones of Buddhism are called the Three Jewels, that is, the Buddha or Enlightened One, the Dharma or Teaching of the Buddha, and the Sangha or the community following the teaching. Firstly our profound thanks go to the First Jewel, our Teacher, for his untiring commitment to giving teaching, then to our Sangha, or Third Jewel, for sharing their understanding of the teaching and helping to create a very successful Sangha Retreat at the Gar. ©



## THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the  
International

Dzogchen Community of  
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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# Kumar Kumari All Year in School

Constance Ann Soehnlen

July 12, 2017

At Ambrit International School in Rome, Italy, Kumar-Kumari Yantra Yoga has been offered as an after-school activity for well over ten years. The hour long class, once a week, for children 6 to 9 years of age, has room for 12–13 students due to the teaching space which is a very large classroom where tables are moved aside and mats placed on the floor.

The class has always been full, and sometimes there is even a waiting list. Nearly all the children remain a full year even though they have the choice to change after-school activities twice in the school year. It has been wonderful to see some children remain even for two and three years. They become capable assistants in the class, leading warm-ups and demonstrating the more complicated movements and explaining the sounds used with the breathing in kumar-kumari yoga. At the end of the lesson, all the children help roll up the mats and sit down together for pizza, biscuits and something to drink.

This last year, some of the children thought we should get more students to join the group so they advertised the club by making and placing posters around the school stating, 'Yoga is COOL', 'Kumar-Kumari makes you the strongest' and even, 'K.K. Yoga makes you like Michael Jackson'. Well, interesting!

Over the years of teaching Kumar-Kumari Yantra Yoga, I have been approached numerous times by parents and teachers who are more than ready to send their 'over-active' boys and girls to the class in the hopes of an instant calming effect on the child. What I can see as results of the weekly class are children learning to form a group and work together, and each child beginning to understand his/her own breathing, and coordination of movements to that breathing. I sometimes read to them a description of the benefits of one of the Kumar-Kumari movements. The youngsters have their own way to describe the benefits using words like 'I feel calm, stronger, I just feel better'.

The opportunity to expand Kumar-Kumari Yoga within Ambrit's school took place this last year when I became free



from day to day work as a Nursery teacher – Yes, I finally retired after teaching 29 years at the school. And, all the more, the motivation to do this came when I received my Kumar-Kumari teaching certificate/diploma in Tenerife's Teacher Training last November, 2016.

When I sent an email to Ambrit administration and staff about being available to present yoga in classes, requests came in from a number of teachers as varied as a 10 minute warm up class for 3 year olds in Nursery to 'taking over' the Middle School physical education classes.

When the first grade classrooms had a unit on 'What Makes a Healthy Body', I was asked to present Kumar Kumari in each of the 3 classrooms for a 20 to 30 minute period. The children and space available in each class was different. But there was room to present the beginning purification breathing and some of the different *tsigjon* and *lungsang* exercises. Though brief, it gave the students a beginning experience and possible interest in learning more about children's yantra yoga.

Through the year, indoor and outdoor spaces were used. In the school early childhood garden, it was easy to call over a group of children, form a group and do some stretching and movements on the grass. As a substitute teacher in classrooms, a set of kumar kumari's purification breathing, a few other movements and closing breathing, was a new way to start the day.

In March, the school counselor asked if I would offer an hour long yoga lesson in each of the 8th grade classes (13 years old) as one of the activities in their study of handling stress. The large school classroom became a 'fitness center' with 20 mats placed on the floor. The young teens were surprised by how ACTIVE this yoga was, calling out 'hey this isn't yoga, this is a gym class.' They followed a set of warm ups, beginning breathing, and did nearly all the *tsigjon* and a sample of *lungsang* and

*yantra* movements. The emphasis was both to have them note their breathing and to attempt to tire them out giving them then the time to relax totally at the end, lying on their mats, noting how they felt. Their reactions about kumar kumari were varied, from 'yeah, I like it' to 'hey I might try it out', to 'now I'm even more stressed out, cause it



was something really new'. An article and photos about the yoga classes were sent out to parents and teachers in the school's monthly electronic newsletter.

What are the possibilities for the next school year? Certainly a continuation of the after school club, Kumar Kumari, Yoga to Grow On. A return visit to the 8th grade classes has already been requested. And there may be the development of a unit on kumar kumari yoga as part of the 5th–6th grade physical education program.... that's work in progress.

Again and again, I thank my Teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for this precious teaching to children; it is a great help for them and is a particular, wonderful means for yantra yoga teachers, child educators and parents to introduce yantra yoga movements and an understanding of breathing. Within a school setting, in whatever setting, the benefits are immense for children as they grow and develop. ©



# A Wonderful Sangha Retreat in Munich Germany

July 14-16, 2017

Loek Jehee

We have just returned from a wonderful retreat in Munich! Even though our precious Master, unfortunately, was not able to attend in person, his presence was strongly felt in the inspiring and powerful instructions given by qualified teachers. And also, Rinpoche was very present in the immensely huge portrait that decorated the walls of the Post Palace, located in a central spot in Munich. This picture must have had an appealing attraction to many new people, since more than 100 of them were present in the audience (of in total about 350 people). Although pride is generally not such good qualification, I feel that – as a sangha – we can be satisfied that we are growing in our ability to generate such inspiring retreat atmosphere on our own.



We are thankful to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, and to all teachers, instructors, organizers and volunteers that contributed to this retreat. Thank you! ©



## Vienna Austria Sangha Retreat

July 28-30, 2017

Mag.a Elisha Koppensteiner  
Projekt Koordinatorin  
Internationale Dzogchen Gemeinschaft Samdrubling Wien

We had a lovely gathering of over 80 people coming from many different places. We practiced together, listened to inspiring talks, danced, laughed, went for coffee & cake and had a beautiful time. To feel the deep connection within the sangha and the strengths that arises from it was very inspiring. Now that everybody has again spread in all directions, it feels like a dream... ©

[www.dzogchen.at](http://www.dzogchen.at)





# Summer Holiday in Merigar East

Alexandru Anton

This summer Merigar East opened its gates to practitioners coming from near and afar. We had an intense schedule and there was a lot of movement in the Gar! We are happy that altogether we managed to organize these special retreats, that the Gar was very alive and that we enjoyed and collaborated all together. We give thanks to everybody who participated and contributed in making this a very joyful and busy summer in Merigar East!

We started with a Yantra Yoga beginners' course with Magdalena Ourecka, where many people slowly but surely fell in love with practicing the Union of the Sun and Moon. We were especially lucky to have Magda stay in the Gar for one month



into the practice and integrate it into their daily lives. We are happy to hear that for some newcomers YY proved to be the perfect practice and that they now enjoy doing it every day in their homes.

Then after some time the full month of August started with the visit of Gianfranco Brero and Charo coming for the Communication course. It was just a few days, between 4-6 August, and although the schedule was quite busy, we managed to

possible, as it takes only 10 minutes to walk there from the Gar.

Gianfranco and Charo fell in love with the place and remained a few more days after the course, really being able to relax and enjoy – particularly the serene and “nutritious” atmosphere of the mud-bath lake called Techirghiol. The name is derived from the Turkish *Tekirgöl* which means “the lake of Tekir”. According to a legend, a blind and crippled old man named



Yantra Yoga with Magda.



Vajra Dance Course with Zoli.



21 Semdzins Practice retreat with Elio Guarisco.



Communications Course with Gianfranco Brero.

and a half. Magda offered everyday morning Yantra sessions after and before the course and helped beginners to really get

socialize and go out and check the fish restaurants on the Black Sea shore – not to mention going to the beach as often as

Tekir and his old donkey reached the shore of the lake by mistake. Trying to pull his

» continued on the following page





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stubborn animal out of the mud, Tekir was miraculously healed so he could see and walk normally again. Since then the lake has become famous for its healing properties. Tekir and his donkey are featured in a statue located in the center of the town.

The name also means (in Turkish) "Striped Lake" (tekir – striped, and göl – lake). This is because of the salinity of the lake; when the wind blows, white salt stripes appear on the surface of the lake.

A few days after the goodbye bonfire with Gianfranco and Charo, the Gar filled again with practitioners coming to learn the Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra. Our instructor was Zoli Cser from Budapest, who was brave enough to accept our invitation to teach the whole dance in one go! 11-20 August was a very busy time in the Gar: morning Yantra, VD learning session, lunch break, VD learning session, VD Thun outside on the mandalas, ending with Chöd in the evening. As noted by Zoli, Merigar East is perfect for doing such long VD retreats, as the spaciousness and remoteness of the place, the very active elements and the very nearby beach dissolve all stress and tensions that might come up during such a long time of studying and practicing. Not to mention the special connection that Merigar East has with the Vajra Dance Upadesha – and the three outdoor VD solar mandalas.

Even if this course meant more dancing than some of us could ever imagine, and even if the 10 days were filled with practice, our time together was full of joy and ended very fast. It was difficult to say "goodbye! See you next time on the mandala!"

Sunday 20th August, as Erwin was driving Zoli, Tibor and their newly found hitchhiker and YY instructor Magdalena Ourecka out of the Gar all the way to Budapest,

Elio Guarisco landed with the iron bird in the nearby airport of Constanta – about one hour drive from the Gar.

On 21st August we started our 21 Semdzins Practice retreat, on the auspicious day of the new moon and sun eclipse. For many of those who participated in both retreats, it was very interesting and challenging to switch from dancing so many hours a day to sitting around 4 thuns per day. Still, somehow we managed to settle down and bring the mind back, again and again. We greatly benefited from Elio's experiential instructions on these very simple methods of the Dzogchen Upadesha – which can prove to be very hard for the ordinary mind to understand or to apply. The Black Sea showed us again her support and so the participating yogis and yoginis were very happy to jump off the meditation cushion and move their legs in the refreshing seawater. Needless to say, this retreat was also sprinkled every evening with barbecues and wine or "palinca" tasting (a strong local spirit made of plums or other fruits which one can apply in order to increase clarity during long practice retreats).

And soon we had to say goodbye again to all those leaving the Gar. At the moment Merigar East is accommodating two great karmayogis: Anastasia Panfilova, YY instructor from Russia, doing a personal retreat taking care of the trees around the Gar, and Federico from Italy, perfecting his VD of the Song of Vajra and enjoying his daily intake of Karma Yoga. Soon other karmayogis are joining us and the Gar is happy to be taken care of by a constant flow of dedicated practitioners.

#### What comes next for Merigar East?

On 27th September we are hanging 500 lungtas in Merigar East, to bring good fortune and prosperity to this beautiful place.

You can also hang some for yourself if you like.

If you would like to participate, please tell us: <https://goo.gl/forms/X5kGxSeQwLgC49db2>

Then the following days we will be working on the camping extension, coordinated by Lubo Michna who will be joining us and who has a lot of building experience with alternative materials. If you would like to concretely contribute to the wellbeing of all the hundreds of practitioners who will be camping in the Gar in the future, now is the perfect opportunity! We will enjoy together, combining practice with karma yoga. If your heart jumps at this, please let us know: <https://goo.gl/forms/X5kGxSeQwLgC49db2>



Visiting the mudbath lake called Techirghiol.

Even if you cannot come to help us hammer the nails into the wood, it is still possible to support this beautiful project by donating whatever amount you can:

[https://dzogchen.ro/component/option,com\\_zj\\_donation/Itemid,101/id,20/view,campaign/](https://dzogchen.ro/component/option,com_zj_donation/Itemid,101/id,20/view,campaign/)

Last, but not least, we will soon receive the visit of yet another distinguished guest and SMS instructor: Elias Capriles. Elias is coming all the way from South America to share with us his experience in making the leap from mind to nature of mind. We will have a practice retreat focused on Rushens and Semdzins, between 13–15 October, benefiting from Elias' special instructions on settling into our own spontaneous perfection.

If you want to come, please register at <https://goo.gl/forms/plnmjwnsJDbYgdcT2>

We hope to meet you soon in Merigar East! ©

# Communication Courses in Russia with Gianfranco Brero

Kunsangar – Group 1 (July 24–27, 2017)



Igor Berkhin, Nadejda Kopaneva, Viktor Krachkovskiy, Evgeniya Lenkevich, Faziliya Nigmatulina, Elena Pakhno, Anastasia Panfilova, Nadejda Puro, Maria Shevchenko, Marina Sukhanova, Tamara Vinokhodova.

Kunsangar – Group 2 (July 24–27, 2017)



Vita Adamenko, Yanina Bekshibaeva, Vladimir Beliyev, Aleksandr Gomonov, Aleksey Jarinov, Adilya Mystafina, Irina Novikova, Tatiana Pronicheva, Margarita Solovtsova, Valeria Spasskaya, Elena Stalnichenko, Oleg Tonakov.

Kunsangar – Group 3 (July 29–31, 2017)



Vera Andreeva, Vladislav Bepalov, Medegma Budaeva, Manidari Dobdonova, Andrey Golovachev, Olga Gomilevskaya, Gennadiy Karpov, Tamara Khamdamova, Ruslav Kim, Alexandr Mochalkin, Olga Nimachuk, Nataliya Pazdniakova, Olga Pljaskina, Oleg Troyanovskiy.

Merigar East (August 4–6, 2017)

Orlin Karaivanov, Piotr Marcik, Oana Marcu, Erika Motylova, Stamatia Rori, Gabriella Schneider, Zsolt Somogyvári, Nina Tkachova, Monika Walczak, Petra Zezulikova. (See page 33).



## Yantra Yoga Teacher Training Level 1

at Samtengar – China  
September 7–16, 2017

This is the second of three intensive courses here at Samtengar expertly instructed by Fabio Andrico. There were fifty-two participants, most of whom stayed on from the first course of Teacher Training of the Eight Tibetan Movements. Some were new to the Yantras having only practiced the Preliminaries of Yantra Yoga. Some are practitioners and instructors of other yoga systems as well as Yantra Yoga.

All had received transmission from our Master as this was intended to be a closed course. The assistants (Tracy Ni – translator –, Marco Baseggio, Max Leschenko, Oni McKinstry, and Sunny Sun) took turns to demonstrate the five groups of Yantras, while Fabio gave thorough instructions on the precise details of the movements and clear explanations of the Pranayamas of Tsadul and the first two groups. The participants were divided into five groups and had one assistant assigned to each group, so all were able to receive personal attention. Halfway through the nine days, Fabio gave a short talk on how to communicate and present Yantra Yoga when teaching to the public. The last day of the course was reserved for a Power Point presentation on Anatomy of Breathing and relevant physio-

logical systems relating to yoga by Dr. Sam Lee, a former surgeon and physiotherapist who is currently focusing his practice on sports/injury rehabilitation. Dr. Lee divides his time between Auckland, New Zealand and Beijing, China.

There were two three-hour sessions everyday. Lunch and dinner were catered and available immediately at noon and 5:30 pm. Evenings were spent on the Mandalas for a Vajra Dance thun and for those with energy, a spontaneous gathering in the lounge area between the office and the dining hall, with jazz guitar played by Sean Read and impromptu singing performances. We even managed to squeeze in a trip or two to the local hot springs for a well deserved soak before bed.

The warm days were interrupted by a couple of thunderstorms, which provided a respite from the heat and replenished the rainwater tanks.

The facilities are excellent and the organization and collaboration of all those involved was evidently appreciated by everyone. The Gar is very well designed, accommodating a large number of people without seeming crowded and the surrounding hills give a sense of bucolic peace and tranquility. ©





## Munselling Japanese Sangha Retreat

September 2–6, 2017

Scott Diamond

The Munselling Japanese Sangha Retreat was held at the Rohm Theatre in Kyoto for five days at the end of this summer. The Retreat was well attended by over 60 participants from both the Kansai and Tokyo regions.

The schedule was full and extremely active. Each morning, Tetsu Nagasawa gave SMS Base instruction, followed by a bento lunch together. Each afternoon, Urara Taka led a course in Vajra Dance with two



full mandalas, then led two hours of Khaita in front of the famous Heian Shrine with the help of Svetlana Vajnine. Yoko Morita taught Yantra Yoga every morning and afternoon.

In addition, Keigo Yoneda gave an extensive explanation of Transmission, and the Retreat concluded with a wonderful Ganapuja and fantastic performance of Okinawan folk music.

It was a joyful and amazing opportunity for the Japanese students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to reunite and also introduce the Teachings to many newcomers to the Dzogchen Community. ©



Photo by J Shannon

## Summer Celebration at Tsegylgar East

June 17–23, 2017

Diana Sullivan

My husband, Michael, Sangha pal Jennifer Elliott and I attended this year's 2nd Summer Celebration at Khandroling. Former Wisconsinite, Sarale Lizdas, put together an awesome program of offerings and with the promise of gentle weather, we just couldn't let the opportunity pass by to reconnect with our Sangha

ers. Naomi led breathe and Yantra Yoga classes – thankfully she is very skilled at working with students of various ages and sizes and experience! Lynn Newdome led a number of classes on teachings in The Precious Vase, along with advice on practice and approaches to studying the material. We also spent part of each session doing practices from the text. Michael Katz took a similar approach in his classes on Khorde Rushen and Marme Monlam – we did practice sessions on a number of the Rushans, and practiced the Marme Monlam with him and subsequently also in the Ganapuja practices. One very interesting feature of those feasts was the use of live music for the dance – the feeling was



Ganapuja with Dance of the Vajra.

Photos by Fred Klarer

brothers and sisters. Michael took a plane, and Jen and I made the two-day road trip to and from western Massachusetts with good driving conditions, wacky radio announcers and sightings of many wonders of nature.

The schedule for our Summer Celebration retreat was actually very full. We started each morning with Mandarava practice for Rinpoche. Paula Barry and Naomi Zeitz led our sessions. Learning and practicing the 12 A's with Bodhi Krause was do-able for some of us rusty mov-

very organic and felt more integrated and self-contained. The evenings provided time for Vajra Dance and Guardian practice. Under Jeremy's direction we were able to further work on Rinpoche's cabin and the surrounding area. The Papermaking Cooperative was on-site for two noon sessions and we were able to flex our creative muscles making sheets of paper out of various natural matter and denim.

Along with this full week of practice, we were able to attend and participate in the two meetings that outlined the challenges

# An Embarrassment of Riches

Carisa O'Kelly

It has been an embarrassment of riches here at Tsegylgar East this summer of 2017. The only Jewel that did not present in person was our Precious Master; nevertheless his presence has been palpable throughout our time together here, both at Khandroling and at the Schoolhouse in Conway.

We began the season proper in late June, with the 2nd Annual Tsegylgar East Celebration of practice and collaboration, camaraderie, eating and drinking, enjoying the land of Khandroling, by the pond, on the Universal Mandala, among the trees and flowers. We had many sightings of black bears, wild turkeys, porcupines, etc. Participants (the humans) came mostly from North America, many camping on the land. There were a few overseas visitors from Poland and Hungary, which enriches the time all the more.

Then we had the good fortune to have two of our International Instructors visiting. This was not by happenstance, rather, there were several practitioners who were instrumental in inviting and coordinating their visits and activities, from which many derived great benefit.

First came Laura Evangelisti, who is one of our two International Instructors of Yantra Yoga. Laura supervised three candidates for the first level of Yantra Yoga and two for the second level, all presenting

and potentials our community will work with. People were generous with their energy and interest in joining teams to help guide new students, beef up membership, raise funds, and let people know that the Dzogchen Community is alive and well in the US. We also raised \$7,000! A wonderful picnic with the sounds of awesome music provided by our talented brothers and sisters helped to wrap up a memorable week of collaboration, practice, and making and renewing friendships with our Sangha.

This retreat/celebration would not have unfolded so smoothly without the good work of planning, coordination, and cheerfulness of all. Our experience was positive and we look forward to more opportunities of practice and working together. ©



Kumar Kumari with Laura Evangelisti.



Advanced Song of Vajra with Prima Mai.

their skill and understanding of the complex and profound method of Yantra Yoga. We then rounded off Laura's courses with two days of Kumar Kumari. As many of our readers know, sound is an integral part of Kumar Kumari, so accordingly, Laura gave special attention to the training in the correct execution of the ten syllables.

Following on directly was Prima Mai, who like Laura is one of two International Instructors, appointed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, in this case with special responsibility for the Vajra Dance.

First Prima offered a Teacher's Training of the first level. In the following weeks she supervised two candidates in courses of the 1st Level Vajra Dances, The Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings and the Three Vajra Dance.

In between all of that and the final course, which was an advanced course in the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, Prima also made time to present the Khalongdorjeikar (Vajra Dance of Space) of the Song of the Vajra. And so, we studied and practiced this new dance together. We had prepared a Khalong Mandala ahead of time according to the specifications just in case such an opportunity might arise.

Several people had the great good fortune to avail of the opportunity to attend their first courses of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance. For those inspired to continue, Tsegylgar East is a good place as we have active

practice groups with sessions throughout the week and several authorized instructors.

In addition, there were Intensive Courses of Tibetan Medicine with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, with her students coming from near and far.

There was a fruitful visit from the new Shang Shung Foundation Director, Oliver Leick, who in addition to carrying out his Foundation activities, offered two evening talks of the Santi Maha Sangha Base.

Also, Khaita continued throughout the summer, with participation in local festivals and the annual New York City Dance Parade

There is more, however, but this gives a general idea of the flavor of these past months.

A special thanks to Laura, Prima and Oliver, for traveling across the world to be with us and for being so generous with their time, energy and knowledge. We hope to see you here again soon.

And profuse thanks to everybody – our Master, our Gakyil, our Gekö, and all who participated in so many ways – practicing, coordinating, leading practices, road filling, cabin cleaning, cooking, Mandala cleaning, driving and on and on. Together we can accomplish so much.

We invite you to put Khandroling on your map and calendar for next year. The land of the Dakinis awaits you. ©



# Update from Tashigar North, Margarita Island, Venezuela

Rolo Carrasco

Even with the peculiar circumstances we are facing, we keep working to maintain this beautiful and sacred place. This year nature is being generous with us, and contrary to what we have experienced years before, the rain is refreshing us from time to time.

Those living in the Gar currently: Tania and children in lot number 1; Delma and daughter in lot number 2; Tata is in Elias and Mayda's; Berta, her mother and Manuel at Mark's; Marcel and Cesar in Anita's; Marina and Rolo at Jim's; Gilberto and Morella at Steven's; Dmitry, Olga and their three children in Gosha's; Douglas, Dayana and Amma (another child) in Rosemary's; Glory is at Lidian's and finally Raul and Paola in lot number 20.

The gakyil is composed by Tata (yellow gakyil and director), Paola (blue) and Raul (red). Raul it is still performing as caretaker, Rolo as administrator and Marcel as Gekō and security coordinator. They are the International Dzogchen Community members on the payroll of TDN crew. The team is completed with Rafael and Jose Luis in the gardens and five security guards: Frank, Douglas, Juvencio, Mariano and Miguel.

We would like to inform you about our life in the Gar, underlining that all works and activities are done in harmony between the Gekō, gakyil, caretaker and administrator, with a very strong team spirit.

## Collective Practices

Weekly schedule of daily practice itinerary: Shitro, Medium Tun with Naggon, Sang and Serkyem, Vajrasattva, Vajra Dance, Khaita, etc., in addition to those planned by the International Dzogchen Community.

## Repairs (in progress) at the Gönpa

**Phase A:** Removal of broken and detached pieces of "caico" (tiles), the recovery of pieces in good condition and then pasting them properly (finalizing).

**Phase B:** Repair of cracks and water leaks in the roof (starting).

## Design and Purchase of 40 meditation zafutons (cushions) for the Gönpa



## Monitoring, maintenance and improvement of the security system

- Maintenance on the demarcation of the peripheral roads of the Gar, as well as dredging and rebuilding with a backhoe, of the channels through which the mountain water flows during the rainy season. The roads intersect with the canals and need cans to be able to circulate and monitor the electric fence and barbed wire and so on.
- Demolition of the old block structure, so-called "dog house", that made the electric fence vulnerable.
- Filling of the pit behind the inn (pool project)
- Repair and maintenance of the surveillance camera system
- Redesign and optimization of the electric fence
- Constant improvement of lighting in key sectors of gar, urbanism and aloe field. It is proposed as a short-term project, the structural modification of watchdog to reduce vulnerability of electronic equipment.

## Tashinet

Thanks to the offer of a space in the inn of Giulliana and Alain, in Juan Griego, we developed a link to Tashigar Norte and also an intranet within the Gar that we use to have internet access from the houses, Gönpa, secretary and for the images of digital security cameras.

## Use of agricultural spaces under the criteria of permaculture

- Development of "friendly garden" experiences. Some resident practitioners, for

example Dmitry, as well as village employees of our absolute trust, have taken responsibility for some land spaces for planting and producing edible crops such as cassava, sweet potato, corn, tomato, paprika, chili, aubergine, cilantro, parsley, chives, etc.

- Increase of Moringa plantation, famous medicinal plant anticancer, and other medicinal plants.
- Recovery of the aloe vera.

## Permaculture beekeeping pilot project

Rescue of honeycomb honeybee (medicinal honey producers) from Pedro González and its relocation in a beehive built by the beekeeper Jean François (friend of Tashigar Norte), near the pond of the lotuses.

## Perennial forest permaculture project

led by Marina in another sector of the land, having planted many species of trees and seasonal plants.

## Animal Rescue Project

it is also going on in the land close (and attached by the electric fence) to Tashigar, with the kind permission of Mark, Gilberto and Tania, led by Marina too, currently eight dogs are living there, giving us the surplus in the security aspect. In this very space Marina has also developed a little orchard to provide home. A little production of humus is in process. On top of this the project have successfully sterilized over one hundred animals in the last six months all around the island, mostly in Playa Manzanillo, Zaragoza, Pedro Gonzalez and Juan Griego.

Rolo and Marina have restarted the building of their home in the lot next to Pietro, in front Jim's. Some work still to go.

Administratively speaking there is not much to say. We keep running the association as we did before. Legally we are working in a formula to protect the property against any eventuality. Financially we are safe for a few months if the exchange rate conditions do not change that much. Keep supporting us!

# Journey Into Eastern Tibet

Shang Shung Institute UK Insight Tours recently organized a unique tour of important sacred sites in East Tibet. The tour, which took place July 31 to August 10 2017, was led by specialist tour guide Dr. Jamyang Oliphant. Will Shea, one of the pilgrims, shares his experiences of his travels with readers of The Mirror. Photos by Maria Simmons, Jamyang Oliphant, and Scott Diamond.

We arrived at the end of July and for the first two days we stayed in the southwestern city of Chengdu, (population around 14 million) to rest and adjust to the time zone after our long flights. The city has its charms, with a laid back feel, friendly people, good spicy food, parks and greenery. This Shang Shung UK trip was led by Jamyang Oliphant, who co-organised it with Romeo, a Swiss vajra brother who has been living in Chengdu since 2011. They entertained us for a few days before the departure for Kham. We visited the ancient Bao Guang Mahayana temple, went out for some classical Chinese cuisine and to a very loud Tibetan nightclub where singers performed Tibetan hits including some familiar Khaita songs. It was a lot of fun. The Tibetan population in Chengdu numbers in the hundreds of thousands and is the largest concentrated Tibetan diaspora in the world, living harmoniously with the local Chinese.

We made the compulsory visit to the huge Giant Panda conservatory, which was interesting, but mostly memorable for the sweltering heat and hundreds of people jammed together to photograph the pandas. Chengdu in the summertime is hot and humid, with heavy traffic, and stan-

We want to emphasize that the marine climate, the strong winds, the inclement sun and the water of the well very loaded with minerals make that we have to work all the time with the maintenance of many of the devices. On the other hand, hyper inflation complicates any budget, since the cost of both labor and materials increases daily.

So far Margarita in general it is not much affected by the conflictive environ-



Galenting monastic hall.



Yellow Jambala on a rock in Yihun Lhatso lake.

dard Chinese air pollution. This added to our eagerness to reach the Tibetan region.

On day three we hit the road to Tibet. We departed in our minibus with twelve on board, including a driver and our young Tibetan guide and translator, Stella. The bus's air-conditioning system needed repair after a couple of hours of driving. We found a hillside tea house and watched an old Kung Fu movie on TV for an hour or two while the repairs were being made. Later in the day, we walked across an iron bridge made by Thangtong Gyalpo at Luding. The site is now commemorated as a place where the Chinese Maoist forces had pushed back the Nationalist Koumintang in their struggle for power in the 1950's. We ate our first Tibetan meal of the trip and spent the night in Dartsedo, a border town marking the beginning of the Tibetan cultural area of western Sichuan province, a.k.a. Khams. We slept deeply in the fresh mountain air, already being at 2,550 meters.

Day 4. We crossed our first high mountain pass – 4,600m – and visited the first Sakya monastery built in the area, the ancient Lhakhang gumpa. As we drive along there are countless stupas and enormous Om Mani Padme Hum mantras written, by laying enormous white stones, on the hill sides. We reached Bamei – 3,500m – after a long ride along lush green hills and roaring rivers, a surprise to those expecting the desert like climate that western Tibet is known for.

Day 5. A team member became ill with a combination of stomach and altitude sickness. Jamyang stayed behind to attend and they caught up the next day after a quick recovery. Asides from this incident we coped relatively well with the altitude, using a portfolio of specified drugs (Diamox), herbs (rhodiola), vitamins and supplements. Checking and comparing our blood pressure became an evening ritual at the higher elevations, where one's blood pressure can soar up.

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ment we have in the mainland; today as we are writing this report the "Asamblea Constituyente" that is looking to create a new constitution to formalize the socialism system is happening. It is hard to say what is going to happen next, but it is clear that government no longer has as much support as before, we just can speak for ourselves as Tashigar North residents in the sense that we will keep doing our best to maintain the place

safely and well taken care of, expecting for Rinpoche and all of you to come back some on happy day.

We do not want to end, without first thanking all those who collaborate and, with their donations, make possible the existence of North Tashigar, in which we live and with great devotion we care.

With love,  
Tashigar North Crew







Yihun Lhatso lake.

» continued from previous page

We drove seven long but scenic hours to the village of Dzogchen. Along the way, jagged, snow capped mountains had begun to appear. We stopped for a short hike, with some opting for a horse ride, to the gorgeous Yihun Lhatso lake. Clear dark blue waters surrounded by high peaks and mantras carved on the shores. We arrived after dark to the family compound of our guide Stella, a native of Dzogchen. Upon arrival some were worried as it was quite basic, no showers and one common and very basic toilet. Rudimentary toilets and frequent bus stops for outdoor peeing along the road were a special feature of the trip, especially since we were advised to drink a lot of water to combat altitude sickness.

Day 6. We woke up to a gorgeous view of the glacial mountain behind nearby Dzogchen monastery. The spectacular views now made everyone happy with the simple but clean accommodations. We ate meals in a kind of nomad tent in the courtyard and had the best momo dumpling experience. We explored Dzogchen Monastery, a huge, dazzling place (Dzogchen Mar a Lago as Scott Diamond put it). Incredible amounts of gold and huge gonpas in the beautiful compound that fills a small valley, with a glacier towering above. In the afternoon we hiked up the mountain to a cave behind the monastery where Paltrul Rinpoche had written 'Words of My Perfect Teacher'. Serendipitously, the 7th Dzogchen Rinpoche (there is another emanation residing in India) was beginning to give the last teaching and *rlung* of a retreat he had been giving on the text 'Words of My Perfect Teacher', sitting outside of the cave, and we fortunately joined. Dzogchen Rinpoche said very appreciative things about Chögyal Namkhai Norbu when he learned who we were, and gave us a long life *khatag* silk scarf as an offering to him. Those attending the retreat were mostly from Taiwan, Hong

Kong, and Beijing. Throughout eastern Tibet large numbers of Chinese Buddhist on pilgrimage can be seen.

In the evening we visited a "crazy yogi", a reincarnation of Do Kyhentse, who used to be a *khenpo* (abbot) but renounced his role and started behaving eccentrically. He's been given a small house in Dzogchen village and is very much venerated by the local people. Tales of his healing powers and clairvoyance abound. We brought the recommended gifts of fresh fruits, cigarettes, and alcohol. We all, including a young Chinese boy, were offered and invited to smoke a cigarette with him. He redistributed our gifts and later we tried to ascribe some meaning to what we each one of us had received, but mostly could just laugh.

Day 7. A long drive, over a 5,000 m pass on a somewhat precarious road. We soaked our feet in a sulphur water hot spring, and in the early afternoon we arrived at Galenting, the monastery of Rinpoche's uncle Khyentse, featured in the film *My Reincarnation*. It is somewhat neglected and in disrepair, yet the gonpa is quite beautiful, with an authentic feel and ambiance, off the beaten track. In a smaller gonpa, a group of older Tibetan ladies were learning to read Tibetan. A local lama had told them that it is never too late for learning and so they all took to heart studying their own language. They were very friendly and we chatted with them for some time, then continued on to Derge, 3,200 m. We had a Chinese style dinner and walked around town, then retired for our first shower in two or three days. We were happy to be able to access the luxuries of hot water and to have choices of different foods. Instead our Chinese driver was unfazed, he was like a machine, with great focus for long drives most days over difficult roads, he ate and drank little (though copious Red Bull consumption was suspected), never stopped to pee and just smoked a cigarette during breaks.

Day 8 – Derge, a small metropolis. It has been the cultural capital of Kham for centuries. We visited the Derge Parkhang the celebrated wood-block printing house. Countless volumes of the great Tibetan master's collected works have been printed here and it is said that around 70% of all Tibetan literature that has been printed



The 7th Dzogchen Rinpoche giving teachings on The Words of My Perfect Teacher which was written in the cave in the picture, above Dzogchen monastery.

is kept there. The Derge king's enlightened attitude towards all schools meant that works of all four Tibetan Buddhist schools as well as Bonpo ones have been printed here. We shopped for deity prints like sharks in a feeding frenzy, using torches on our mobile phones to search through piles of posters in the printing house's dark attic.

We also visited the nearby Derge Gonpa, where Rinpoche received part of his education. We tried to visit a small temple in town honouring Thangtong Gyalpo, but it was packed for the full moon *tsok* (*puja*), with an overflow of Tibetans sitting in the courtyard. We didn't have time to wait so we moved on.

We drove along mountains ridges on to Dzongsar monastery; it is not huge, nor glitzy, but not neglected, with a genuine, strong vibe. We visited the gonpa, a small upper chamber housing the remains of previous Dzongsar Khyentses, and the res-





Stupas and mountains.



Husband and wife shop keepers.

idence of former and the current Dzong-sar Kyhentse. The lamas were gracious in showing us around and allowing us to practice in the shrine rooms. From the monastery we admired the sweeping views out across the valley.

When we started to drive out of the monastery, we discovered that large wood

tained the rainbow body just a few years ago. We joked that he had rainbow bodied to escape from our dilapidated hotel. In defence of the hotel, it was most likely the best, if not the only one in town.

Day 9. We had hoped to visit sites associated with Nyala Pema Dudul, an important master of our lineage who attained

Day 10. There was news overnight of a 7.0 earthquake not far from Gyarong, our next destination. With no other feasible route to proceed on, we drove onward despite the possibility of aftershocks. We were stuck for an hour at a roadblock while earthquake rescue vehicles were heading to the area, but otherwise we weren't affected.

The Gyarong region is on the fringe of the Tibetan area, with a unique architectural style and its own dialect. It is also known for its ancient stone towers, which Rinpoche has had dreams of.

Along the way we saw a large picnic with dozens of Tibetans dancing. We stopped, and to the surprised delight of the Tibetan dancers, a few of our Khaita dancers joined in. This was a festive highlight of our return route to Chengdu. We also stopped at a luxury hot spring Ramada resort for a soak. Jamyang made sure to photograph us in the luxurious surroundings for use in future SSI-tour promotional materials.

Day 11. We returned to Chengdu for a last dinner together, lasagna and bubbly, before some of the party departed for home and others stayed on for further activities in the region.

The Kham tour was a deeply felt experience, which was still sinking in after our return to Chengdu. It was wonderful to visit the places associated with Rinpoche's youth and other potent spots. These sites, the people, and the land itself make the whole region feel like a kind of bayul-hidden sanctuary. Jamyang proved to be a capable and compassionate guide without compromising his love of a good time. Despite long bus rides and variable amenities, this is an important and rewarding journey for anyone interested in the Dzogchen teachings. The special qualities of the places and the inability to visit some of our desired destinations suggest that a follow-up tour may be forthcoming.... keep August 2018 free in your calendars and await details! ☺



Old ladies studying Tibetan language in Galenting.



Live music in Tibetan dance bars.

planks had been dropped on the road, blocking the way. We spent some time moving enough of it to pass by and soon after had to stop at a collapsed concrete bridge in the lower valley. We got out of the bus while the driver dared to drive across.

As a consequence of the delays, and perhaps some lingering here and there, we arrived at the next hotel after the 10pm bus curfew, which resulted in a prolonged shouting match in Chinese between the driver and our guide Stella. She seemed to hold her own pretty well. We later gave the driver a few packs of our crazy yogi cigarettes to help him cool down.

As we approached our hotel in the village of Yarchengar, we noticed in the distance a huge, flashing neon statue of Guru Rinpoche. There was also a beautiful golden stupa next to our hotel. It is said (and chronicled by Tetsu Nagasawa in the *Sharro Festschrift* book) that yogi Achu Lama at-

tained the rainbow body, but recent floods meant road conditions prevented us from doing so. Instead we visited Adzom Gar, the seat of Adzom Drukpa. This was a spiritual highlight for many of us. The gonpa was perhaps the one of the few visited during the tour which had not been destroyed and subsequently rebuilt in the frenzy of the Cultural Revolution. A resident lama generously showed us around the gonpa and the reliquary stupas of Adzom Drukpa Pawo Dorje and other important lamas. On the top of the hill we visited the retreat cabin of Adzom Drukpa Pawo Dorje and hung numerous *lungta* flags.

We had been moving at somewhat of a breakneck pace and thought of slowing down, adding a day or two to the trip, but our hotel itinerary had been submitted to the governmental tourist authorities beforehand and it would be too difficult to change it.



# Artists in the Dzogchen Community

## Making Thangka Art Accessible

Damien Pascoe

It all started when I began working at a Dharma center here in Australia called Chenrezig. I found my way there because I had grown tired of my previous artistic working life as an animator. At the time there was an Artist in Residence at the center called Ray Furminger. He had been from England to work on some *thankas* and help paint *stupas* in preparation for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit. When I first became aware of Ray and his beautiful work, I asked him if he could teach me what he knew about *thankas* as I saw his paintings and had a real sincere connection to what they were.

Ray was a student of Andy Weber, one of the first western *thangka* painters. Soon after meeting Ray, I met Andy and began formal study under his guidance. Formal study usually takes a certain amount of years as you progress through learning different styles of painting, drawing and painting peaceful wrathful and semi wrathful deities, as well as learning all the symbolic aspects behind what *thankas* represent.

After studying with Andy and Ray for some time, I traveled to Nepal to study more at Tsering Art School, which is a part of Shechen monastery in Boudha. There my teachers' name was Ms. Lachom Tsogyal. In Nepal the class was very strict, we would have to arrive at school at 8am for daily prayers, and class would finish at 5pm with a half day on Saturday.

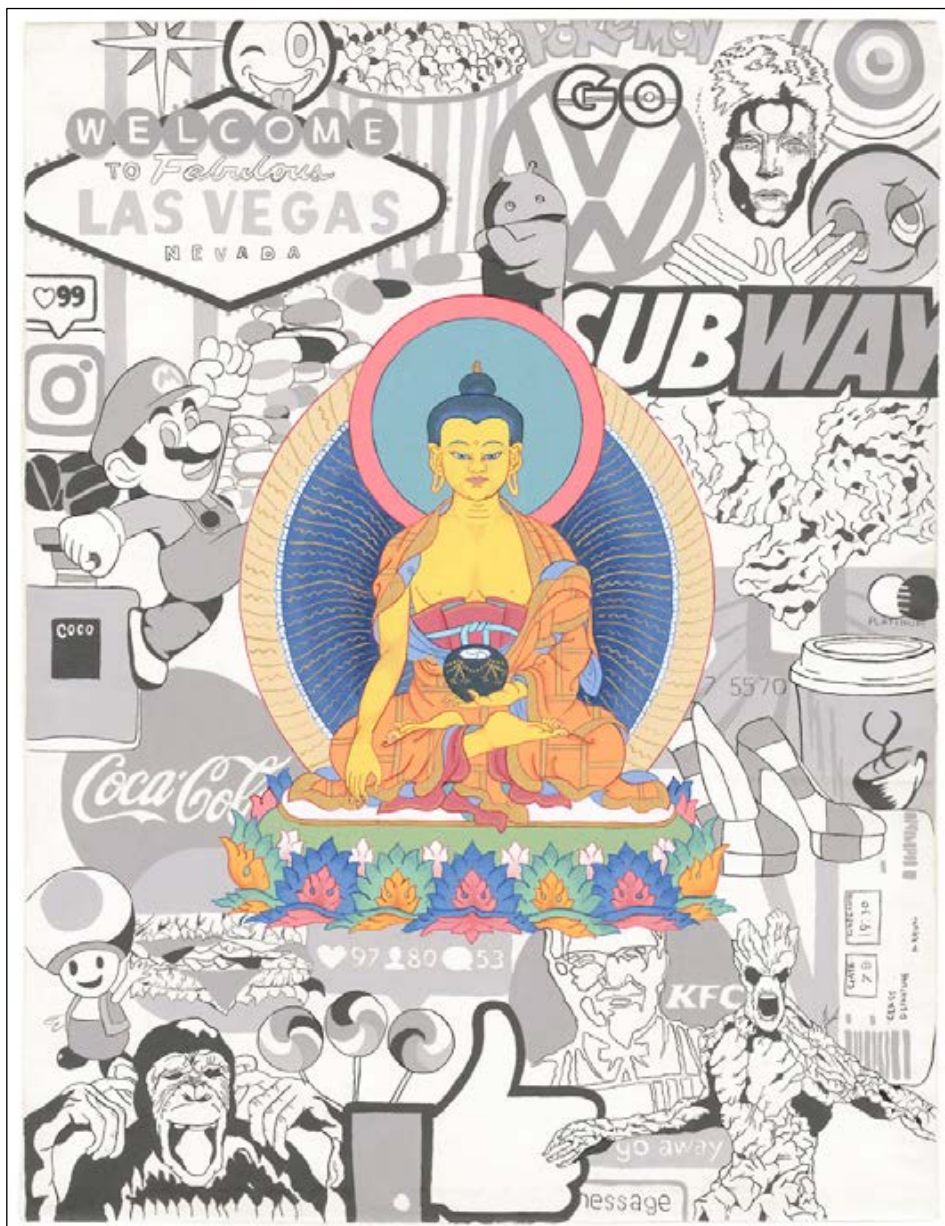
In the mornings drawing class was highly favored. We would have to prepare wooden boards with butter and chalk to draw on. After having claved our own pencils out of bamboo, we were allowed to draw on the wooden chalkboard. Instructions soon followed on what we were to draw, and most of the time you would start drawing leaves over and over again, perhaps for days at a time. Only when Ms. Lachom was satisfied with your drawing you were allowed to pass onto the next drawing. The same process applied in the



afternoon painting class, we were taught many different ways of shading the same leaf, but only when Ms. Lachom was satis-

fied with your brush work you could start another.

After having completed my formal study in *thangka* and was living back in Australia, I started working on some traditional works for fund raising at Namgyalgar, and had been requested to paint a few private commissions for friends overseas. There was this one thing that always irritated me though, I had reached this point where I thought, "I'm a Thangka painter now", and still many of my old friends and people interested in what I'm doing, they would ask me what I have been painting and what the paintings are about. It would take me







almost a discourse to describe the work to them, and I watched their eyes slowly glaze over, lost in all the terminology. After an explanation, the most common reply I would get was 'are you going to be a monk', to which my reply was a firm 'No'.

This thought stuck with me for a while, as I hadn't fully found the courage to resolve it until I went to visit my Tibetan friend Karma Phuntsok. Karma is one of the first Tibetans to start painting contemporary Tibetan Art back in the early 1980's, and luckily he lives only a three-hour drive from me. After seeing Karma I realized that he had found that resolve within his work, perhaps that's something I needed to find in my own, and the 'what' I wanted to communicate with people.

Finding the courage to start painting in a contemporary way wasn't an easy thing at first. I studied a lot, read a lot about Dru-gu Chögyal Rinpoche, Gonkar Gyasto, but I was always left with the thought that I am not Tibetan. Once I began to really dwell on these things, and how much all my *thanka* study and preconceptions where all binding me to my own limitations and ideals of how I think things should be, things really began to loosen up so I could move forward

in the direction I had felt I needed to. That is to be a little freer in how I choose to paint.

Most of my work now is based around the image of the Buddha and other Bodhisattvas. For some time now I've been working with traditionally drawn and painted Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with contemporary stylized pop backgrounds. My main intention was to make the image of the Buddha more accessible to people that have no connection to Tibetan Buddhism, and from my previous experience there always seemed to be a barrier that hindered people from engaging with the image when it was painted in a traditional context.

When I started to introduce familiar imagery into the contemporary works in a humorous, pop and fun kind of way, imagery that Western audiences would already know and be accustomed to in their culture, the shift in peoples' attention was fast and direct. The question was no longer 'are you going to become a monk', to 'Wow, that's really funny, and what a beautiful Buddha'.

Of course this is still a very dualistic comparison, but for me, it felt like the painting made it easier for people to relate to, easier to make a connection with, as

there was already some familiarity there in the guise of a humorous adaptation of our monkey mind. Then the audience gets to appreciate how traditional *thanka* painting is portrayed at the same time.

With great thanks to my teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for all of his infinite patience, and continuing questions from a very mediocre student, my wish is to continue painting to make Tibetan Art accessible all people with curious minds. ©

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# The Four Applications of Presence

An excerpt from a talk given by Santi Maha Sangha instructor Costantino Albini on Sunday July 2, 2017 during the Sangha Retreat at Merigar West. Costantino has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since the mid 70s, and is a musician and composer.



Photo by Marco Almici

We always start our practice with Guruyoga which is the core practice of the teaching of Dzogchen. The Dzogchen teaching is the essence of the Buddha's teaching. Buddha taught at different levels of understanding and application. 'Essential' means it goes right to the core of what the Buddha discovered.

Buddha means 'awakened', like someone who was sleeping and woke up. He awakened to the real understanding of reality. When he started to teach he had a moment in which he did not want to teach but just remain in this knowledge because what he had discovered was very special but not so easy to transmit in ordinary words and concepts to other human beings. However, the fact that he awakened totally meant that he also had totally free and absolute knowledge and omniscience so he found the way to teach to humans.

We humans have our mind. Our mind works and helps us in daily life. It's a dualistic mind and works with 'yes' and 'no'. This is the mechanism that we use in order to understand many things and to create our image. In order to discover what Buddha discovered which is something that is so deep that it is beyond this dualistic realm, it is necessary to have an extremely developed skill in concepts and words in order to communicate this to others. If we want to communicate something that is beyond concepts and words, how can we use concepts and words? But the Buddha managed.

He started the first teaching with the Four Noble Truths, which are something that we can understand if we put our mind to it because they work with cause and effect. Cause and effect are something that we are very familiar with: I do an action and this action has an effect. This is something very ordinary for us to understand. The Four Noble Truths are a teaching of the level of mind.

Dzogchen teaching, on the other hand, is a teaching that is beyond this level. That

means that we have a thinking mind, but when we follow Dzogchen teaching, we receive knowledge about how to go beyond the thinking mind. This kind of knowledge has to be transmitted to us, and it can only be transmitted by a qualified teacher, who we call a Dzogchen master. Once we have received this knowledge, it is like we have a connection. An example could be like plugging into the electric current: we have a connection and we can receive electricity. Once we have received this transmission of knowledge from the master, then we can develop it in our life, our work, our engagement. This is called the transmission, and means an uninterrupted flow of knowledge that we receive from our master, and that he received from his master, who received from his master and so on. If we cultivate this transmission, this particular knowledge, it is like watering a plant and this knowledge grows and flourishes in us day by day, week by week, year by year.

You may ask 'How do we cultivate this knowledge?' Precisely with this practice that we just did, Guruyoga, which is a very simple practice and very essential. But since I am not a Dzogchen master, I cannot explain more than this to you. For those of you who don't know it, I just wanted you to know what we are doing. So when we open a session with so many practitioners and people interested in the teaching, it is very good and powerful if we connect with the transmission of the master and the masters. It is important for the people who listen because like this their minds are ready and open to receive whatever is to be explained. But it is even more important for the 'older' student who is sitting here and trying to explain!

We are all here today. It is a beautiful day. We woke up this morning and decided to go to Merigar to sit together in the Gönpa. This means that we are all here, present, with our body, our energy, and

our mind. Our mind is at this moment focusing on the words that I am saying. That is a very powerful moment because to be present is an incredibly powerful instrument for our daily life. However, as we all know, we are not always present. Sometimes we are sitting someplace, but our mind is wandering somewhere else. Or we walk someplace, but in our mind we are in a different time. So space and time are two material things that we continuously jump between, like ping pong, with our minds. This is normal. We all do this. We started doing it when we were born. We use our memory of the past to construct our actions of the present. And we also use our hopes and fears of the future to imprint our actions in the present. There's nothing wrong in this. We are using our mind, which is an instrument for living. However, it is extremely useful if we learn how to use our mind in a more complete way. Our mind is a precious instrument that we have and with it we can do many things.

The teaching of Buddha is mostly about understanding. We call it 'teaching'. It is not a teaching of a religious type in which what we have to learn from the teacher is like a mythology of the gods. And it is not a teaching of the philosophical type in which we have to just learn about philosophical tenets. Actually it is a teaching about reality. It is called *dharma*. The complete name is *Buddhadharma*. What does *dharma* mean? *Dharma* are all phenomena, everything that exists in the universe, what we call reality. *Buddhadharma* because it is a teaching about reality from the point of view of an awakened being, a realized being.

From the time we were born and our five senses started to function, we have collected data about the things around us. This collection of data that we have been doing up to now helps us to construct our vision, our image of what we call reality. It is our representation of reality and it depends on what we have gone through, what has happened to us, and what we have perceived. But there is no guarantee that what we perceive and what we call reality is reality in itself.

Just an example: when we walk down the street our five senses are active, we receive images, sounds, smells, different things. On the other hand, we really do not perceive everything that is there. Our senses perceive a lot of things but our mind filters certain things that we are not interested in and we just don't see them. We can walk down the street and our eyes see someone going by,

but our mind does not register that person. We just don't see them. The reality was that there was this person on the street, but our reality doesn't have that person in the street. So when we get to our destination, someone might ask us, "Oh, did you see Pablo going the other way?" and we reply, "No I didn't. He wasn't there". We do not have this memory. This happens to everybody. It is a filter that we apply and it means that we do not perceive reality as it is.

Like when we are in a disco, for example, talking with friends, there is a lot of noise and different sounds there. So in order to understand what our friend is telling us we have to filter out a lot of that and concentrate on the lip movement and sound of the voice of our friend. Otherwise if we just remain open, our friend's voice will just be one of the different sounds and we won't understand it. So in order to focus we have to filter out all this.

This is an example of how we use our mind in daily life. It is just to say that if, from the teaching of *Buddhadharma*, we learn how to use this precious instrument, our mind, we can do marvellous things. We can even arrive at awakening, enlightenment. So that is the reason that we have this topic of presence today.

I would like to tell you a few things from the teaching of Buddha about presence. First of all, using our mind is like a training, just like when we train our body we use some movements such as gymnastics and have to learn to do some movements that we don't do normally. For example, all of us here have at least one thing in common – we are alive. That means that we are all breathing. We have been breathing since we were born, up to now. We have never stopped, although most of the time we are not aware that we are breathing. Actually to breathe we need to do a movement. There is another function, our heartbeat, which goes on its own. We don't need to do anything. But for breathing we need to participate. However, we are so used to it that it has become automatic.

One thing that we have to understand is that most of the distraction in daily life has the same quality of being automatic. Many things in our life have become automatic. When something becomes automatic, we usually think of something else and in this moment it can easily happen that we become distracted. I'm not saying that it is important that we always remember that we are breathing in and breathing out but it's really not a bad thing to do.

One of the most basic trainings that Buddha taught is to be aware of our breathing. It is something simple. We don't need to do acrobatic thoughts or incredible constructions. We are already breathing. All we need to do is be present.

I'd like to do a simple exercise of this with you now called *Anapanasati*, being present with our breathing. [*Costantino guides this breathing exercise.*]

When you do this exercise something happens. It happens that we are right here, right now. We are present. So you see it is not very complicated or hard to be present. It is just a question of remembering.

This is a basic but very powerful instrument for beginning the practice of meditation. It is powerful because we always breathe, it never leaves us, so we can apply it in any moment of the day. And in that moment when we apply it, we are present, especially if we don't start thinking. If we are thinking, we are using our mind and we are not very present about the breathing unless we become very good at it. However, if we can do it for a while and be present in our breathing, then we can be present in whatever we do, with our hands and also our mind. That means that we can be present in the present moment.

When we look at what our mind does in this moment, we can see that it does many things. It goes to the past and we relive some moments and images of past times. Or sometimes it goes to the future and we envision what may happen. Many times if we really follow these thoughts, emotions linked to our memories or to our projections in the future also arise. This happens not only for time but also space. We might think of someone we know who is not here with us now. That means we cannot see that person and have to rely on our memory of them. So we go away in space and time at the same time. But we still go away. We are not here. We are not present.

The first thing I wanted to say is this about being present. The point is that we have experience of our mind as a thinking mind. And the thinking mind we usually call 'I'. It is like the thinking 'I'. This is something that we have been constructing all our life. But there is much more to it. The teaching says that the ego, the 'I', does not really exist. But it doesn't mean that there is nothing there. It is just that what is there is beyond the thinking mind. So in order to discover that, we need to get into practice of meditation and contemplation and receive the transmission. I have an image

of the mind like an Easter egg because when we break open the Easter egg there is a surprise. In the same way if we break out of our habitual patterns of mind we will be surprised about what we find. And the key to overcoming our habitual patterns is presence because we apply this presence observing ourselves. Observing what we do in daily life, how we live, how we decide to do this or that. And going more inside, going deeper, observing ourselves, and observing how our emotions and thoughts condition our choices and actions.

So we can see that the thinking mind is really responsible for the way we live our lives. But in reality it is irresponsible. Why? Because it is distracted, because it is conditioned by emotions, by thoughts, by preconceived ideas. We have constructed many ideas about how to live and now we go in that direction. And this is our 'cage', this is the dream we are dreaming. But it is not reality. This is why Buddha is called awakened because in ordinary life we are dreaming, we are asleep. Instead if we actually go beyond our habitual patterns, beyond our dualistic mind, then awakening happens. If we are able to break or dissolve our thinking 'I', then ... surprise – an awakening. And this is the path of Buddha in a nutshell.

The four applications of presence are based on a quest, a research. We are going to see how things are. Until now I have lived this way and I have noticed that I have been struggling against problems and suffering but I have never succeeded in dissolving them and being totally happy. Instead of putting the blame outside on other people and other circumstances, maybe I can look inside, at myself. That means, like Shantideva says, a beautiful thing. There are thorns and stones on the ground and when I walk I hurt my feet. But instead of trying to cover the whole world with leather, I can cover my feet with leather. This is an image of looking inside, looking at ourselves. Nobody else is responsible for my problems, my suffering. Only I am responsible. We need to make this discovery in a way fresh. It is not that someone tells us. We have to find out. Actually if someone tells us that we only have ourselves to blame for our problems we get upset and have more problems. Instead, if we just relax and look inside our minds and see how we do things then we also find some solutions. The solution – if we study and follow *Buddhadharma* and the Dzogchen path we find many ways. ©



# How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

**M**y name is Martin Fernandez Cufre. I've now orbited around the Sun 39 times in this strange blue cosmic carriage we all ride on. I was born on one of its southern dry slopes, in the city we call Buenos Aires, in the country we call Argentina. In that city I was born and grew up, went to school, then started studying Philosophy in college, but half way through I switched university and career to Psychology. The abstraction of Philosophy is rich and interesting, but at that point in my life, my young mind which already had the tendency to intellectualization, had too much. I needed to work with something closer to the concreteness of human life and its experiences of joy and suffering, without neglecting the processes of learning, evolving and healing, or the opening to the great mystery of life which I sensed intuitively as the key of our experience.

I studied Psychology, and particularly I went into the therapeutic schools of Jungian Analytic Psychology and then Gestalt. My mind has this basic poetic insight and inclination, so although Psychology is fascinating in a sense, as the study of mind, I found it a bit too locked into the confines of ordinary mind, so I had to explore other inspirations.

At the same time, I was following other interests. I felt strongly drawn to art, and I started studying music mainly through two instruments, guitar and piano. I also started learning and practising painting, and exploring poetry in a very free but personal way, meaning that I wasn't doing poetry readings or publishing. It was mostly an individual and quite introverted process. I also felt more and more interested since adolescence in the transmissions of essential knowledge, which in the West have been called "esoteric". I did all my primary and high school in a catholic school, St. Augustine, in Buenos Aires, but paradoxically, maybe drawing from the inspiration of Augustine's rebellious drive, I wasn't satisfied with the religious instruction. I could sense that there was some truth at a deep level, but clearly that was not what I was being taught. It was some sort of "dumbed down" version of something fundamental which I actually felt burning in my blood and mind. It was quite frustrating, to be honest. I had this feeling of being somehow tricked, "sold



a post box" as we say in Argentina. Also through some of my readings of that time, mainly Hermann Hesse and Nietzsche, I had glimpses of references of transmissions of a type of knowledge that was "primordial" so to speak. Not the knowledge of information or even processing, but rather a sort of primordial quality of everything. Which actually seemed rather obvious to me, but of course, not quite manifest.

My main initial connections in that sense were three: through Zen Buddhism, the "shamanic link" of Carlos Castaneda, and through the Western Esoteric Tradition. The latter refers to lineages of essential knowledge that were living in Europe mainly coming from Egyptian, Babylonian, Judeo-Christian and Neoplatonic sources (and some claim even much further in time before that, through the mythic continents of Atlantis and Mu), which around the time of the Renaissance grew strongly but still had to remain "unofficial" due to political and religious pressure. I studied in some schools at a distance, mainly Servants of the Light and also Dragon Rouge, which connects these Western sources with some Runic knowledge from the North of Europe. But my main influence in that aspect was the Order of the Golden Dawn. It was an esoteric school established in England in the 19th century, integrating transmissions and knowledge from different sources: Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Kabbalah, Tarot, Astrology, Alchemy, Gnosticism in an integrated framework. I studied there for 12 years and it was a very powerful influence. It has an initiatory system based on the structure of the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah and it is grounded on all of the sources mentioned before. It is beautiful, powerful, and has real initiatory power,

working with symbols energized through visualizations, invocations and uses deity forms mainly from Egyptian sources. Also experiences of lucid dreaming and integrating everything in a symbolic-magical system based on the Tree of Life but integrating also Tarot, Astrology and Alchemy. It was a very fascinating time of exploration and learning, but anyway, at some point, something started to feel "stuck" or suspended. Time was passing and something seemed to be frozen.

As for Castaneda, I was quite thrilled and shaken by his books. I felt as if they were expressing some sleeping knowledge, but of course a good teacher is necessary. I had my first Teacher, who was strongly influenced by Castaneda but his lineage was South American. Also for a while I participated in a group of Tensegrity, which are physico-energetic movements and practices supposedly coming from the lineage of Castaneda.

In relation to Buddhism, my first connection was through Sutra sources and again, although I sensed a treasure trove, I felt that something important was missing. I couldn't tune in to that frequency completely. It was through Alan Watts in his book about Zen and Ch'an Buddhism that the spark really grew and eventually I found a local sangha around one of the students of Taisen Deshimaru and practiced there for a couple of years. It was a great experience and inspiration also, drawing closer and closer to the Source I felt but which seemed to evade me. Zen is essential in the sense of being very "clean" and not loaded with symbolic complexities. Probably, that is what my mind needed at the time.

But at a certain moment, the feeling of being suspended or "between worlds" was growing. Everything seemed stuck, stopped, in some kind of suspended animation. I couldn't find great motivation anymore in Psychology or any of the things I was doing. At a certain point of that process, something happened which I feel as the initial spark that drew me to the Ati transmission. There is a set of Buddhist relics that had been on tour for several years through different parts of the world. I didn't have a very strong attraction to Tibetan Buddhism at that moment; I perceived it as too religious, with too many saints and gods. Zen Buddhism in that sense was more aligned with my perception: clean and simple, with no "unnecessary stuff". Then the Relic Tour came to Buenos Aires.

I went there with no particular expectations, as far as I could consciously tell, just to see what was there. To make it short, I came out with tears pouring down my cheeks. I had never experienced anything similar. All the relics seemed to be shining from within. One of the guardians of the relics seemed to me that day to be a holy person; she also seemed to have some sort of inherent light coming from her eyes. I don't know what happened then, but something happened.

After that, things seemed to take place by themselves through some inherent link, as if a chain of sequential events had been triggered by that initial contact. I met a Tibetan khenpo that was in Buenos Aires coming originally from Tashi Jong and belonging to the Drukpa Kagyu lineage. I always remember him with great love. He was a great inspiration. After him, I met the great translator and teacher living in Argentina, his name is Gerardo Abboud. He is actually quite well known in the Dharma world. He is the main translator into Spanish of the Dalai Lama and other Kagyu or Nyingma teachers such as Tsoknyi Rinpoche. He was just the catalyst I needed at that time. An extremely clear instructor, his mind and words are razor-sharp, at the same time remaining humble and faithful to the lineage. It was a balance of qualities which I didn't really expect to find, and took me over completely. I started to go to his every teaching and practice and also to the retreats of the teachers he invited. His center in Buenos Aires, called Dongyuling, is directly linked to a great group of lamas from Tashi Jong and I had the fortune to receive teachings from some of them.

It was not long after meeting Gerardo that I wanted to go deeper in this path, with greater commitment, and people told me that "taking refuge" was the next step. Also, apparently I couldn't receive the transmission for Vajrayana practices without taking refuge, so that is what I did, and since Gerardo was the key figure in this process, I asked him and he agreed.

There I was on a cold autumn morning, ringing the bell of his door. He received me and we did this very simple and short ceremony, together with Gerardo's lovely wife, Juani, who was also a devoted student and practitioner and a very valuable link for many practitioners (sadly, she passed away last year while Gerardo was translating a retreat led by Tsoknyi Rinpoche in Tashigar Sur). Actually, when I was reading the lines of the commitments of the refuge in

Tibetan, Gerardo advised me something which I also followed later on and continues to this day. He suggested that since I had a good pronunciation and I seemed to understand Tibetan easily, I should study the language.

After the small ceremony, while we were talking in a relaxed way, Juani mentioned something that intrigued me. She asked me if I had met this Tibetan teacher called Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who was teaching Dzogchen very directly, and that he had a center in the province of Cordoba, in Argentina! She told me that given my interests, I would probably find his teaching useful. But she warned me that the sangha was ... "peculiar". Of course, this just made me more curious and interested. I did a little research online and just around that time, Rinpoche had finished the Mandarava Drubchen in Tashigar Sur but since his computer had been stolen in Venezuela, he didn't want to go back there and decided to extend his stay in Tashigar Sur and added another retreat, unexpectedly, based on the Vajrapani peaceful and wrathful practice called Lhalung Sangdag. This was May of the year 2010. A friend from the sangha of Gerardo at that time started insisting that we should both go to the retreat with Rinpoche. This was curious, because he was a hardened Vipassana practitioner, fanatic of the Hinayana approach, and didn't trust very much anything beyond Mahayana, but in any case he was also a devoted student of Gerardo.

Around that time, I don't remember exactly when, I had a very lucid and intense dream. It was very long, but I will summarize it. I was in a strange country looking for something. Then inside one house, someone told me very clearly: "You are about to meet your real father". I felt a shock of electricity. Several things happened then, but eventually, flying, I arrived at a strange large building made of wood, looking like a pagoda. On top of it, a large golden symbol was shining and next to it was a great figure which I identified as a teacher. Years later, when I arrived at the Vajra Hall in Tsegyalgar East, United States, I felt a shiver come down my body when I saw the roof of the hall from below and noticed that it was the same pattern of woodwork as my dream. Also, on top of the Vajra Hall, the huge golden Longsal symbol shines. Since then I had all sorts of strange dreams involving Rinpoche, including a series of very curious but detailed dreams about China, which are still a mystery to me.

And so it was that finally, early in May of 2010, other three practitioners and me loaded my car more than it had ever been loaded and departed from Buenos Aires to Tashigar Sur on a mythic trip. The trip was an adventure in itself, but finally when we arrived, the connection was clear from the beginning. And when finally I met Rinpoche in person, any remnant of doubt vanished. Every word he uttered was almost as a reflection of a voice that had been dormant in me and just waiting the circumstance for its emergence. I had had a lot of practical and theoretical experience in esoteric things, so the teachings regarding energy, colors, sounds and the elements were quite clear. It was as if they were finding their right location in a living transmission. I have had strong connections with some other teachers, but always Rinpoche, his transmission and the living vibration of A are the gateway of the primordial magic of all mandalas.

I have been more and more connected with body-related trainings, for example martial arts and dance, and interestingly, a great breakthrough came when finally I learned the Vajra Dances starting in 2014. Then the daily experience of the mandala really took another dimension. I had already departed my home country in 2013 by invitation of Keith Dowman to Mexico to render into Spanish his English translation of Longchenpa's Treasury of the Dharmadhatu (now published in Spanish as "Espaciosidad") and this was the start of a global journey which still continues. After 2014 the journey really became global and I ended up visiting and living in several countries, including of course Mexico, but also Costa Rica, United States, Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Turkey, Russia, Thailand, in most places finding great connections with the Community and dear Vajra Brothers and Sisters.

Now I work in translation, in different places of the world, as long as I have an Internet connection. I collaborate with translations, study and practice Tibetan language and calligraphy (thanks to the great guidance of Fabian Sanders, Margherita Pansa and Giorgio Dallorto). The path has become a variegated and sometimes chaotic dream, but always, always, Rinpoche and the transmission are the center of the mandala. I feel infinitely thankful to Him and to all Vajra Brothers and Sisters and allies, whether aware or unaware, that have participated in this mysterious path and continue to do so. ©





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