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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu 1938–2018.

Senior student Costantino Albini's testimonial at the ceremony at the Great Stupa in Merigar on October 3, 2018, to say farewell to and honor Master Namkhai Norbu

Dear Sisters, dear Brothers, dear Friends – also you who represent the institutions, today I will call you all only in this way: Friends.

On behalf of the entire Dzogchen Community and of the Namkhai family, I greet you and thank you for having come today, October 3rd 2018, to honor and to remember Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, an extraordinary man who has meant so much to those who have had the fortune and the privilege of knowing him, and who has brought about, to a lesser or greater extent, profound changes in our lives. His birth name is Namkhai Norbu, which means in Tibetan “Jewel of the Sky”. For his colleagues at the Oriental University Institute of Naples he was professor Norbu. For the Tibetan world, in which he is not only a cultural figure but also and above all a spiritual one, he carries the title of Chögyal, King of Dharma, that is, of the Teaching of the Buddha. For us, his students, he was and forever will be, affectionately, Rinpoche. Precious Teacher. It is not easy to talk comprehensively in a few minutes of the life of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a man of inexhaustible versatility and of a sagacious and multifaceted intellect, which I would call brilliant. His

Dear Friends,

On Thursday 27 September, 2018, at 9pm our beloved Master left this earthly existence in a serene and peaceful way, at his residence, Gadeling, Merigar.

The Namkhai Family

innumerable cultural, moral, and spiritual dimensions cannot be compared even to the sparkling and surprising facets of a diamond.

If today I were to attempt to talk about all the good that he has done, of all that he has given us and the world, the whole day would not suffice and I would certainly finish by omitting far more than I could succeed in mentioning.

I will limit myself to listing some aspects of his work on the cultural level: numberless publications document his continuous historical and archaeological research, particularly in archaic Tibet and in the ancient and forgotten kingdom of Shang Shung.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is an example of immense wisdom, kindness, lucidity and indomitable free spirit

His findings revolutionized ideas long held as certain by the scholarly Tibetological establishment.

As Professor of Tibetan and Mongolian Language and Literature at the University in Naples, he created, among other things, a system of Tibetan language transliteration that allowed his students to pronounce the Tibetan language perfectly.

An expert as well of Traditional Medicine and Tibetan Astrology, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded in 1991 here in

Merigar, in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Shang Shung Tibetan Institute of Studies, to further knowledge of these disciplines and of Tibetan culture in general.

In recent years the Professor has also catalogued, translated, and published more than three hundred folk ballads and Tibetan songs, reworking and encouraging the study of the choreography of the dances associated with them.

But the love and passion of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the history and culture of his land were not limited to its remote past. Now I want to illustrate some aspects of the high morality of the life of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Recognized at birth as a Tulku or living Buddha, that is, a reincarnation of a great Master of the past, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu never availed himself of his status for his own political, economic, or religious advancement, as was often customary among his contemporary peers. Throughout the course of his life his successes, his every conquest was attained solely through his tireless work and his, yes, superior skills.

For those who knew him and were close to him, during his whole life he manifested the qualities of an enlightened being whom we call a Bodhisattva, that is, an incarnation of supreme generosity, loving kindness and compassion.

In 1988 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded ASIA (Association for Solidarity in Asia), a non-governmental organization that to this day carries out projects of cooperation and solidarity in Tibet and other disadvantaged regions of the planet.

ASIA brings humanitarian aid to the regions struck by natural disasters, builds schools and hospitals, and facilitates the professional training of people in need. However Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was not only a great scholar, an audacious researcher and explorer, and a highly moral, generous and compassionate man, always ready to help people and populations in difficulty.



Photo by Edith Casadei

The most extraordinary and important trait of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is certainly his exceedingly elevated spirituality. Custodian and practitioner of the ancient knowledge called the Dzogchen Teaching that is at the root of Buddhist spirituality, for us Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is above and beyond all, our beloved Master, a Master of life who taught us to become complete human beings, the Sacred Master of the Vajra who introduced us to the deepest knowledge of ourselves, revealing to us our true nature.

For more than forty years during which he has poured an ocean of marvelous and profound teachings into us, he has known how to speak to each one of us personally, intimately, answering our yet unexpressed questions.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is an example of immense wisdom, kindness, lucidity and indomitable free spirit.

His vision is that of a trailblazer: from the beginning he has always taught us clearly that the path of inner evolution is a path of personal responsibility.

At the conclusion of the first retreat of Dzogchen teachings, at Subiaco in the summer of 1976, he explained his vision for our future:

"We will not only make a Buddhist center," he said, "but rather, we will form a community of practitioners... Every Dzogchen practitioner is a living center of knowledge of the Teaching, a free, relaxed person, independent of titles and schools... A community of practitioners can extend anywhere, even across the earth. Every practitioner wherever he goes will find his family, his brothers and sisters who, sharing his same knowledge, will welcome him and support him in his practice."

Now, Master, we, your students, are thousands and are all over the earth. Today there are many of us and we are here to pay homage to you but this is not a farewell, it is not a goodbye.

You, Master, live in the heart of each one of us. Thanks to your compassion we are now your Body that continues to live.

Let us continue the journey together, to bring your vision to fulfillment.

We will carry your projects, your ideas, your endeavors forward and we will evolve in every corner of the planet.

We will be with you again and again, for many lives to come, until Supreme Realization.

This is your promise.

This is and will be our life.

Master, Rinpoche, thank you. ©

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Front and back covers: Wall paintings
from Lamayuru Gonpa in Ladakh, India.
Photographer Dorjay Angdus
Courtesy of Elio Guarisco



Guru Padmasambhava – The Tibetan Book of the Dead and Vajrayana

Presentation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* as Part of the Tibetan Cultural Week
October 14–23, 2011 Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain

First published in *The Mirror* issue 114, 2012. Revised in 2018 by Susan Schwarz.

Photo by Lesya Cherenkova

Good day to everybody and everywhere. Here we are at the University Hall in Laguna in Tenerife. I would like to give a little information about *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* because it has become very famous in the Western world.

That book is based on a teaching that was originally given by Guru Padmasambhava, who was also the first to introduce Vajrayana in Tibet. The Buddhist tradition in Tibet actually started earlier than Guru Padmasambhava, but not Vajrayana in particular. The ancient Tibetan king Trisong Detsen first invited a famous Indian pandit called Shantarakshita to Tibet. He was a well-known teacher of the Mahayana tradition, but when he arrived in Tibet and started to teach, he could not succeed in spreading Buddhism in Tibet because people were already following a tradition called Bön. Today we still have the Bön tradition in Tibet, though it is different from the ancient form. The Bön way of seeing the elements and many other aspects are different from the Buddhist approach. This is why people were not very interested when Shantarakshita started teaching Sutra. In that period there were many famous teachers of Bön and many powerful ministers following that tradition. So in the end Shantarakshita said he could not spread this teaching in Tibet and he went back to India. He advised the Tibetan king that if he was interested in spreading Buddhism, he should invite Guru Padmasambhava. Guru Padmasambhava was not only a teacher of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, but also a teacher of Vajrayana, which has far more emphasis on knowledge of the energy level. For that reason he thought that if Guru Padmasambhava were to transmit the Vajrayana teaching he may have been more successful in converting the Tibetans.

When Guru Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet there were many problems. But Guru Padmasambhava was not only a scholar, but a very powerful realized being. He subdued all the negativities of the Bön tradition and for that reason succeeded in teaching all over Tibet. To this day, the Buddhism in Tibet is based on the Vajrayana tradition, and even though different schools and traditions exist in Tibet, the source of all of them is Guru Padmasambhava. Guru Padmasambhava taught the practice of *shitro* (*zhi khro*), which is the source of the teaching contained in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The Shitro teaching that is diffused in the Western world through this book is not the only Shitro. There are many kinds in

Tibet, but of course the most important version is the one from Guru Padmasambhava.

Shitro

What does Shitro mean? First you should understand the title of this teaching. *Shi* means peaceful manifestation, *tro* means wrathful manifestation. These wrathful and peaceful manifestations represent the condition of the individual. Everybody has that condition. When we say “peaceful” it means that it represents mainly the mental condition, and also the real nature of the mind. Wrathful manifestations represent the function of our five senses and the mind. For example, we have five senses, or organs of the senses, then objects of the senses and their functions. When we see different forms and colors, when we hear with our ears or smell with our nose, all these are functions. Functions are movement and movement manifests wrathful forms, while peaceful is something like the real nature or calm state. For that reason, the practice of Shitro is based on these two states, the calm state and wrathful manifestations.

How can we understand that we have that condition? For example, if I ask you what mind is, then you think, “What is mind?” This thinking is mind. We cannot find anything. We find emptiness, nothing, but there is some movement because we are judging and thinking, and this is called mind. When you observe and thoughts arise, I ask you, “Where is thought?” When you search for thought the thought disappears immediately and you cannot find it anywhere. This is emptiness, which represents the calm state. If you are in emptiness then you are in a calm state, but you are not in a calm state for long because another thought arises immediately. So you see, there is also movement, but when you search and try to find the thought, it disappears and there is emptiness. So we can understand that we have that kind of condition.

In order to realize and use that condition in the practice, we have the practice of Shitro. In all the various Shitro practices, there are two aspects of the visualization. One is to visualize the manifestations of the peaceful forms at the center of our body. The essence of our physical body is at the center of our physical body because the essence of any dimension is at its center. When we say “at our heart” it means the center of our physical body.



When we ask where our mind is, many people consider that it is in the head. But the mind is not in the head, it is in the center because it represents the potentiality of the individual. Mind is related to its real nature, the nature of mind, and that is what governs this dimension. People generally think that the mind is in the head because when we do the visualization of the wrathful manifestations, we imagine them to be in the head, not in the center of the body. So our potentiality, our real nature, is represented by two different aspects, although two different things do not exist.

Even if our real nature, which is called the nature of the mind or our potentiality, is in the center, all our sense functions or sense organs are on the head. Our two eyes are on the head, and if we close our eyes we cannot see anything; the mind cannot not see without them. The two ears are on the head, and without ears we cannot hear anything. The nose is also on the head. Just about everything that receives information from the objects of the senses is on our head.

In general, in the Vajrayana teaching, and also in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we say that we have our consciousness, which is the mind that is judging and thinking. But we also have the five sense consciousnesses. However, even though we call them sense consciousnesses, it doesn't mean that they have the capacity to judge and think. Their only function is to see and hear, and so on, and when they have received that information, they immediately communicate it to the mind. Then, in the head, we have what we could call the office of the mind, where the information is processed. Without the sense functions, the mind cannot do anything. The sense consciousnesses do not think and judge because they do not have that potentiality. But in the real sense, there is no difference between the consciousnesses and the mind although the way they manifest is different. This is how our real nature or potentiality, our primordial state, manifests as an enlightened being or form or figure. In Shitro, the wrathful forms manifest in the head because like the head, wrathful forms represent movement.

Three Kinds of Logic

Why do we use this book, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and why is this knowledge important for death? First of all, we must think about how we can understand what comes after death. We use log-

ic for everything and establish things using logic, and in this way we can accept and believe. But how can we establish what happens after death when we do not know? Many scholars and practitioners studying different systems and traditions consider that things must be this way or that way after death. People who study philosophy try to understand things logically, although it is not so easy.

We have three kinds of logic when we study. The first is direct logic, which is very simple. I show you something and you see what it is; it is a box and we can all see that this is a box. If I say that this is a small box you do not ask why, because you can see it and that is logic. So everything we see and believe, we establish with our logic. In our country, for example, we have rules that are established when people in a group are in agreement. We have many politicians and parties in each country because people cannot agree with each other. Some people think they belong to this or that party, they establish something, believe it, and apply it in that way. So it is easy to understand what direct logic is.

However, we cannot establish everything with direct logic. We use indirect logic when we cannot see or touch something concrete and have to rely on some kind of reasoning to establish something. For example, if someone says there is a fire on the top of a mountain but they cannot see the fire, how can they understand that there is fire? They say that there is smoke and we already know that where there is smoke, there is fire. If we see seagulls flying, we can understand that water is nearby - the ocean or the sea - because we see this bird flying. This is indirect logic and we can establish many things with indirect logic.

In philosophy, Chandrakirti, a famous student of Nagarjuna, debated with some people who did not accept what happens after death. He tried to explain with indirect logic saying that everything has its continuation: if we observe our breathing, after we inhale we exhale and after we exhale we inhale. If we do not inhale or exhale there is no life. That is an example of how we continue everything - it is a consequence or continuation. But this is completely indirect logic, and we cannot establish anything with only this. So it is not easy to say what happens and what exists after death.

Many people follow teachers and teachings based on a belief in the existence of enlightened beings who are omniscient and know everything. That is the third kind of logic. I believe in Buddha, for example, and therefore I believe that what Buddha said is correct. That logic is useful for people following Buddhist teachings. If I discuss what the Buddha said with other people, such as Muslims, there is no value for them. If I want to discuss something with Islamic people, then I must find some words from the Koran because they believe that. If I say your book says this or that, then they accept it and that is logical.

So in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (which is the Western title for what historically was called "The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States"), Guru Padmasambhava gave explanations. We consider him to be an enlightened being, so that means Guru Padmasambhava did not invent what he taught. Guru Padmasambhava followed many ancient teachings and different kinds of tantras and in many tantras the state after death is explained. This is what we find in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

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» *The Book of the Dead* continued from previous page

The Bardo

What is most important here is what we call the intermediate state or the *bardo*. If we do not understand what the bardo is we cannot understand the function of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. According to the teaching of Buddha, every being transmigrates by cause and effect, and everything is produced by it. And this applies to our life. In general, bardo refers to a period between dimensions of time. Three or four kinds of bardo exist. Our life, for example, where we are now, is called *kyechi bardo* (*skye 'chi bar do*), *kye* meaning birth and *chi* death: it is our life in our human dimension from birth to death. When we are human beings we have birth and death and all the different activities in a lifetime, studying, working, following teachings, doing practice, and so on. What we learn in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is that the *kyechi bardo* is very important because if we believe that some bardo, some continuation, exists after death, then we must understand and do our best during our lifetime.

Many of you may have read in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that when we are in the state of bardo we will encounter wrathful and peaceful manifestations. A lot of Westerners ask me how we can have these kinds of manifestations because we do not have an Eastern culture or this kind of knowledge. In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* the form of these manifestations, such as sambhogakaya figures, Buddha Shakyamuni, the five dhyani buddhas, and so on, and also the wrathful manifestations, are described like princes and princesses from ancient times in India. In Western art and knowledge these forms do not exist, so people wonder how we can see these kinds of manifestations. But in the real sense, it is not like that because in our lifetime if we are interested in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a teaching of Guru Padmasambhava, we can receive the teaching and transmission. The teacher transmits and empowers the teaching and then we know how to do that visualization and use that method. In our lifetime we may do that practice sometimes, and even if we do not do it for a long time, at least we have had a little experience in our lifetime. Then when we are dying, at that moment, we have these kinds of visions because we have received that transmission, that empowerment, and now that represents our potentiality and our real nature.

Mother and Son Wisdom

During our lifetime we live in our physical body, so even if we have that potentiality and do that visualization, we cannot see that potentiality. When we are dying we have the obstacles of our physical body, then the physical body goes to the cemetery and our consciousness goes to the bardo. At that moment, our potentiality is naked because it no longer has the condition of the physical body or the sense organs. In this moment, according to the famous words of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we have the meeting of the mother and son wisdoms. We have wisdom in our real nature - everybody has that wisdom in his or her nature - but even if we have it, we do not know and are ignorant. But when we receive the teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, there is the introduction and when the teacher introduces you and empowers

you with mantra, then you notice your condition and there is that potentiality. When we are dying, the experience we had in our lifetime is what is called son wisdom. Mother wisdom is beyond our physical body and our organs of senses; it is the potentiality of our real nature, which is naked in that moment. Of course, in that moment, the son wisdom recognizes the mother wisdom. That is the moment when we can have that realization and that is why it is so important that we have the experience of the teaching in our lifetime. Otherwise there is no reason why we should have visual manifestations of the peaceful and wrathful in the bardo. It is not related to culture.

Some people say, "We have no Eastern culture so how can we have those manifestations that are not from our culture. If this is not cultural, then why does Vajrasattva and all these dieties look like princes and princesses in ancient Indian style?" They look this way because this is how they manifest the transmission from emptiness to manifestation.

The real nature of the individual is called *kadag* in Tibetan and means pure emptiness since the beginning, not concrete or visible, with no color or form. We all have this state of emptiness as our real nature. But our real nature is not only emptiness, because even emptiness has infinite potentiality. Without this potentiality, emptiness has no value. How does that potentiality manifest? It can manifest when there is a secondary cause. All these kinds of manifestations from emptiness need a secondary cause. Secondary causes can just as much produce figures of princes and princesses as terrible, wrathful beings. We don't know what all sentient beings in the universe are like. We know only human beings and some animals, and we imagine that other beings in the universe are just like that. For example, there is a nice film called *Star Trek* where they travel everywhere in the universe. Sometimes they meet someone whose face is a little different, but they always speak English. This is our limitation. We do not know how the universe is, even though people think there may be many beings in the universe that they do not know. But if they do not see them, how can they believe in them? Some people don't believe because they have never seen.

When we study logic in Buddhist philosophy, we learn about a famous scholar called Sakya Pandita. In his teaching he says it is not logical to say that just because you do not see something it does not exist. Of course in time and space there are many things that we cannot see, for example, what is behind this wall. We cannot negate that it does not exist and in the same way we cannot negate what we cannot see in past and future time. It is not logical. When it is nice weather in the night time we can see, for example, how many stars exist in the universe. We know very well that like most stars, like solar systems, many sentient beings exist. How can we believe they are just like human beings? If you want to know a little about this you should learn about the Vajrayana teaching because the Vajrayana teachings are very open since many of them have been introduced into the human dimension from other dimensions.



Buddha Amithaba and his consort. From a mural depicting the visions of the bardo. In the Avalokiteshvara chapel in The Temple of Lamayuru, Ladakh.

The Yamas

We can see how many different forms of manifestations of deities exist, not only human forms. Some are just like human forms but have many arms and legs while others are similar to some animals. These kinds of sentient beings exist in the universe, and higher level beings also exist, not all are lower level or ignorant. Yamantaka is an example of an important manifestation in Vajrayana. Sometimes you can see pictures in Vajrayana style in which the head looks like the head of the bull. In the description it also says that the manifestation has the “head of a bull” as well as many arms and legs and so forth. However, it is not really the head of a bull; it is a sentient being from what is called the class of Yama. But

since we do not know what a Yama is, if I describe this head as the “head of a Yama,” no one can understand what it is. The head of a Yama is similar to the head of a bull and that is why we say the “head of a bull.” But of course the body, the arms and legs are not those of a bull. There are some very high level Yamas among the sentient beings of the class of Yama who have had contact with the dimension of the state of real enlightened beings called dharmakaya, the real nature of all phenomena, which is emptiness and has no form, so the figure of Yama becomes the secondary cause for communicating.

When a Yama is in front of that enlightened being, the dharmakaya can manifest just like this Yama being. Now the dharmakaya has the possibility to transmit to that Yama, otherwise the Yama cannot see or hear and the dharmakaya can do nothing. So this manifestation called Yamantaka is like a reflection of that Yama being to whom it transmitted.

In the real sense Yamantaka is the manifestation of the enlightened being. It does not mean that enlightened beings transform in a different way every day just like actors in the theatre; that is not the way it works. Just like a mirror, the dharmakaya has infinite potentiality for manifesting reflections. When a being is in front of the mirror of the dharmakaya, the dharmakaya manifests like that being in front of the mirror. The reflection comes from the dharmakaya and transmits to that being in front.

All Vajrayana teachings developed that way from different dimensions and have been introduced into our human dimension by enlightened beings called mahasiddhas. This is very important to understand. In the bardo, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, there are many manifestations. Manifestations represent our consciousness and the different functions of our five senses, and everything manifests in personified forms. When ordinary people know this, they have a kind of realization. In our lifetime we have day and

night and in the night time we fall asleep. Sleeping, dreaming, and waking up are very similar to dying, being in the state of bardo, and then being reborn in different kinds of dimensions. So we should become familiar with the experience or knowledge of the bardo when we are sleeping.

Signs of Death

Another bardo is *chi khai bardo* (*skye 'chi kha'i bar do*), which is the bardo at the moment of death. The moment of death means we already have the signs of death; there is no possibility that we can be saved or liberated from that. If you read *The Tibetan Book*

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» *The Book of the Dead* continued from previous page

of the Dead you will find many explanations, one of which is the explanation of the signs of death. Practitioners often check them. If you have signs of death and you check, your death may not be so far off. In this case then you should prepare for dying. But if there are only one or two signs that correspond, you should not think it is dangerous.

Some of the explanations of the signs are explained with dreams, for example. If you dream that you are in a place full of red flowers it says this can be a sign of death. For example, I always have this dream and I am not dying, so this does not always correspond to everything it says in the book, so you shouldn't worry. Some people read this book and start to worry. They say, for example, if you dream of going down to lower parts or you are naked and going down, it is a sign of death. Sometimes you may have this kind of dream, but you should not completely consider that it is a sign of death. At least four or five signs should correspond for it to mean something. In this case you need to know how they are described and you should check.

For example, if you go out in the early morning when the sunshine is very clear and you look at your shadow, a kind of bubble should manifest in the head. If you do not have this it says it is a sign of death. Also there is a way to check in the full moon. In the night time when there is a very clear moon, you go outside to some comfortable place and look at your shadow. In the early evening you can see the shadow clearly, so you look at your shadow for five or ten minutes and then you look into space for a while. If your shadow manifests in empty space with no head, that is a sign of death. This sign is a little more important. Sometimes we are missing our arms or legs, for example, and sometimes the physical body is perfect and then there is no problem. This is called *tsezug* in Tibetan, meaning form of life. *Tse* means life and *zug* means form. There are many different kinds of signs like these.

You can check in this way and if you have these kinds of signs, you can do a ritual called *chilu* (*chi bslu*) to prevent death, and there are many other things you can do as well, like doing practice, saving animals, and so on. Sometimes when you do these things you can overcome death. But if there are many signs combined together, it is not so easy to prevent it. Then there are signs that say that you can still live for three weeks, one month, two months, or three months, for example. In this case you should prepare well.

Phowa

And then when you have an illness and are really near death, at that moment your elements slowly diminish their functions and dissolve inwardly. The function of the senses also slowly dissolves inwardly, and at this moment you can have a very strong feeling. It is not so very easy. Some people know the practice of Phowa. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* also contains a Phowa practice. The word *phowa* means to transfer; in this case you transfer your consciousness to a pure dimension. When you learn this during your lifetime it is not so very difficult, and if you know the visualizations, receive the precise transmission and do practice, you can obtain signs in seven days. But if you do not do the visualizations in a perfect way, there is no guarantee that you will succeed in seven days.

I remember when I was in college, once we received these kinds of practices and teachings from our teacher, and all the students were given permission to train in Phowa for seven days. At that time I was eleven years old and did not know the visualization very precisely, only a little. I was very young, just a small boy, and I always enjoyed it when people shouted "hic" or "phat," and I was always shouting and replying to them. In our college there were many rooms and everyone was shouting "phat," and I replied to everybody instead of doing the visualization. At the end of seven days when we checked, most people had signs. We had to do the visualization of the central channel, and there was a kind of very hard herb we put on the top of the head to see if it would remain, and most people succeeded in doing this. I did not. My teacher was very angry with me at the time. He told me I must do this practice and that for me it was very important. The next time I succeeded, even before the end of seven days.

Bardo of Death and Bardo of Dharmata

When we are comfortable in our room doing visualization is not very difficult, but the objective is to transfer our consciousness when we are dying. When we are dying we are in the bardo of the moment of death and this is not easy at all. We can have strong experiences of each of the elements or senses dissolving inwardly. Of course people who have trained very well can succeed, but it is not easy. In any case this is called the bardo of the moment of death. It is just like in the evening when we gradually fall asleep. In that moment the function of all of our senses dissolves inwardly; when we fall asleep we cannot see or hear. This is called falling asleep in the ordinary way and in the bardo of death we are dying in that moment. Then it seems dark and there is no function of the mind or senses because all functions of the senses have dissolved inwardly and what is associated with consciousness and the mind has been transferred. The body is a dead body now and there is nothing. Then, just like falling asleep we can have dreams immediately, or sometimes it takes a long time to have a dream.

When we are dying, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we need to be in the state of the bardo of the dharmata, the nature of the mind, for three days. The mind is what judges and thinks, while the nature of mind is the source of this manifestation. But it is not the nature of mind that is judging and thinking. It is very important that you distinguish between what mind is and what nature of mind is. In this case, you should learn with the example of the mirror; it is a very good example. The mirror reflects good and bad and everything, the mirror does not need any program, any kinds of objects in front of mirror manifest immediately.

We say the mirror has infinite potentiality to manifest, but how can we understand this potentiality of the mirror? We cannot see or touch this potentiality, but we can understand that the mirror has it because we can see the reflections. The reflections are not the potentiality of the mirror, they are something manifesting from the potentiality of the mirror, just like in our minds. Mind is judging and thinking, just like reflections, but the nature of the mind is the source of this potentiality. So we need to distinguish that. Mind does not have this function, mind has died, or not really died but has dissolved into its origin.



If there is nothing in front of the mirror, nothing manifests in the mirror. But it does not mean that the mirror does not have that potentiality. In our real nature in that moment it remains that way. For that reason we say after someone has been dead for three days, there is no function of the mind. The nature of mind, on the other hand, has no function. Its nature is naked, and for that reason when we recognize the meeting of the son and mother wisdoms then we can have realization.

The Moment of Natural Light

In the Dzogchen Teaching, the teaching I am giving, that moment is called natural light; the moment of natural light. Just when we are falling asleep, before any dreams arise, we have this moment of natural light. It is difficult to specify exactly when it takes place. According to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or Shitro it takes more or less three days, similar to the way dreams start about a half an hour after falling asleep, for example. But we cannot say exactly when we have that dream. Sometimes a dream starts in a very short time.

I had this experience once when I was teaching at the University of Naples. When I was giving exams, I would feel very tired and when returning to Rome on the train, I would sometimes fall asleep. I would fall asleep and my head would fall forward and then wake up. But once I fell asleep for a short time, woke up, and realized I had had a long dream. I had fallen asleep for just a very short time. I immediately remembered what I dreamed, but considering everything that had happened in the dream it seemed like a long time had passed. That is the example of the bardo of the dharmata and it is difficult to say exactly when it arises. When we fall asleep after a little while we dream. In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* this state is called the bardo of existence. The bardo of existence means we have already passed the bardo of the dharmata.

People who have no knowledge or understanding of the teachings, of course they do not notice anything about this bardo of the dharmata. Even if there are sounds and lights, they still lose that presence; that is all. Then we are in the state of existence and this means now our mind wakes up, you remember the mind has dissolved into nature of mind and now there are secondary causes and now it manifests. With secondary causes our sense functions wake up. But now these sense functions are no longer dependent on organs. In daily life we are completely dependent on our sense organs. If we close our eyes we cannot see anything. Even though we have the function of the sense consciousnesses, without the sense organs we could not have that function because we live in a physical body. In the dharmata we are no longer in the physical body. We are already free from that. For that reason in the bardo of existence when the mind wakes up, it wakes up with the associated sense functions. How can we understand that?

Karmic Dreams and Dreams of Clarity

We can learn with our dreams, when we dream in the nighttime. You have two kinds of dreams. One is called a karmic dream, dreams related with tensions; if we have tensions in our lifetime we always repeat this kind of dream. For example, when I was in Tibet, before I left, we had many problems in that period because

there was a revolution and we were escaping, and also we were afraid of the Chinese soldiers day and night – if we were meeting with each other and they arrived we had so many problems. So it affected my condition profoundly. For that reason even today when I have a karmic dream, I still dream this kind of dream. I do not have problem with Chinese soldiers today. I went many times with Chinese soldiers and we had dealings with Chinese soldiers and their commanders, there was no problem. But in my dreams it is different and always I feel afraid. This kind of dream is called a karmic dream connected with our tensions. But then when we practice more and more and have more knowledge of dreams and so on, dreams of clarity develop more and more. What is it like to have such dreams of clarity? It means that our mind is then associated with function of senses and not dependent on the physical level. For that reason we have has much greater capacity and clarity in that kind of dream.

For example, in our lifetime we might read some books explaining some interesting things. If we have a dream that we are reading this book or thinking of the subject of the book, in the dream we can understand easily.

Also in our lifetime if we have complicated situations, in a dream of clarity they become very clear and we can easily resolve them. This is called the dream of clarity and it is very important; it becomes important in the bardo of existence and then we can understand. We are in a bardo state, which is not about accumulating good or bad karma or experiencing the consequence of producing good or bad karma. It is called the intermediate state for everybody, for every sentient being, not only human beings. It is just like we are in a moment of the dream. In a dream, when we think that this is this and that is that, we believe it, but when we wake up we understand it is unreal. Even if it is unreal, it is somehow related to our karmic potentiality, and most people who are not practitioners follow their karma.

Bardo of Shitro

For that reason, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* says we can have pure vision or impure vision. Of course we can have pure vision if we are practitioners and have received the transmission and so forth. Then we have access to that kind of method. There are visions, there are appearances, like specific kinds of visions and lights. Some people, some practitioners, when they are dying, we can give them instructions, what we call *bardo ngotröd*, the introduction to the bardo. We read this book telling them they will see this and they should see this kind of light, follow this light, and so on, and if they are not practitioners they mostly follow their potentiality of karma. This book also contains the instructions for which lights to follow and which light or path not to follow, we are introduce this to the dying person. But for people who have no experience of the teachings in that moment, it is very difficult that they can listen and believe that. This is why the teaching of the bardo of Shitro is so important. It is something to be applied, otherwise it is just something nice to read or to say this is what Tibetans believe, and then it does not help very much. Ok now we are finished. I hope you understood something! ❀

Honorary Title of 'Commander of the Order of Merit' Awarded to Master Namkhai Norbu

On 10 September, in the Arcidosso Town Hall, the Prefect of Grosseto, Cinzia Teresa Torracco, conferred the honorary title of 'Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic' on Prof. Namkhai Norbu, for having dedicated his life to activities that have brought benefits to the community and the nation.

In thanking Master Namkhai Norbu, who inspires an exemplary model of life and represents for all a living testimony of the highest human values, both ethical and cultural, the Prefect recalled the importance of honoring charismatic figures such as his, capable of inspiring virtuous actions and behavior with the strength of their example and with the values of an authentic testimony expressed by life choices fully coherent with the thoughts of a noble and elevated nature.

During the ceremony the Prefect underlined the fact that in view of the very high profile of his personality, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers had decided to directly confer recognition of the honorary title 'Commander', the highest honorary award of the Italian Republic.

The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Arcidosso, Jacopo Marini, and the President of the Regional Council, Eugenio Giani, in addition to the territorial authorities, the Mayor of Castel del Piano, Claudio Franci, the Mayor of Santa Fiora, Federico Balocchi, and the Prefect, Marco Valentini, director of the legislative affairs office and parliamentary reports of the Ministry of the Interior.

Prefect Cinzia Torracco, expressing her confidence that Master Namkhai Norbu's message of peace and brotherhood would be auspicious for different and better future prospects with the hope of continuing his teaching activity, conferred on Master Namkhai Norbu the honor:

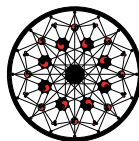


L-R: President of the Regional Council, Eugenio Giani, the Mayor of Arcidosso, Jacopo Marini, the Prefect of Grosseto, Cinzia Teresa Torracco, Prof. Namkhai Norbu, and his son, Yeshi Namkhai.
Photo by Enzo Russo



The President of the Republic
*In consideration of particular merits,
on the proposal of the President of the
Council of Ministers,
after hearing the Council of the Order of
Merit of the Italian Republic,
on 2 June 2018,
has conferred,
the honorary title of
Commander
on Master Norbu Namkhai
with the right to wear the related insignia.
Signed: Mattarella*

At the end of the ceremony the Mayor of Arcidosso presented a banner to the Master to recall the importance of the Community of Merigar for the territory, while the President of the Council of Tuscany presented a second banner from the Amiata Municipalities. and reaffirmed the value of the honor of Commander from the President of the Republic in recognizing the spiritual and human values that Master Namkhai Norbu has brought to Amiata, recalling the strong spiritual energy of the territory. ©



Updates from International Dzogchen Community

Recently, the International Gakyil has been focused on a variety of issues within the Dzogchen Community.

In a recent communication between Rinpoche and the IDC, Rinpoche has agreed that during this period when it has not been possible for him to give the Transmission that it will be possible for all those people, without Transmission but with sincere interest in the Dzogchen Teachings and desire to participate, to attend to Ganapujas, take Santi Maha Sangha base courses, and First level Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance Courses. Furthermore, after three years even if they don't have Transmission they can become members of the Dzogchen Community.

It should be noted, however, that at the first possible opportunity to receive the Transmission, those persons should make sincere attempts to be present.

In other news, IDC has started to support the development of Shedra, a new project created by Kamil Selwa, which is now in its user interface testing phase.

Shedra is an online Educational Platform that organizes a consistent and user-friendly framework for all educational activities (both residential and online) across all institutions under the new ATIF (Atiyoga Foundation and International Dzogchen Community). In its core, Shedra manages courses and certification for students on diverse educational paths, working as authorized instructors and participating in courses presented by The Dzogchen Community.

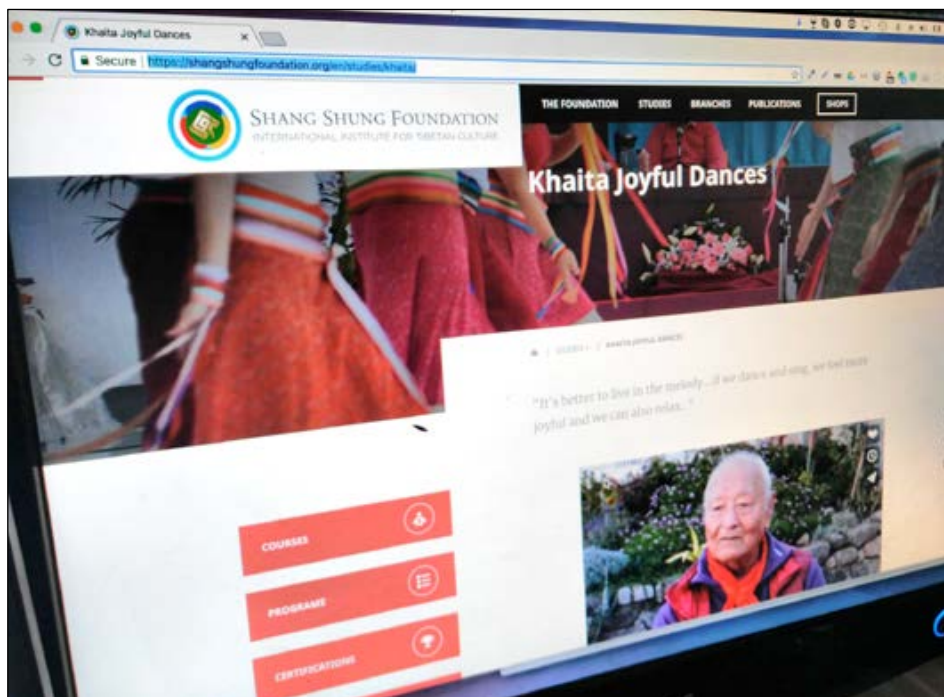
The program facilitates both simple one-time courses and complex interdisciplinary academic style educational programs.

With Shedra in its final testing phase. If you are interested in giving it a test ride, please contact k.selwa@atiyogafoundation.org

IDC is also supporting event preparations for The Inauguration of Dzamling Gar Gönpa and the Celebration of Rinpoche's 80th Birthday in the beginning of Decem-

Shedra – Educational Platform

Shedra – Educational Platform is a complete suite of applications managing on-site and online courses. In a user friendly way it automates enrolment, payments etc., saving students and management effort.



It allows organization of simple courses as well as complex academic interdisciplinary educational programs.

Shedra is a Tibetan word (བཤད་གྲ་, bshad grwa) meaning "place of teaching" but specifically refers to the educational program

ber. This event will be an important milestone for The Community and large numbers of people are expected to visit Tenerife to attend and participate in the festivities. Collaboration between practitioners is an indispensable aspect of creating an event of this scale, so the project managers need all the help they can get. If you would like to get involved and be of service preparing for this special occasion, please follow this link <https://goo.gl/u4wBHk>

in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries.

At the end of 2015 Shedra started as a simple application managing the growing number of certificates issued within Shang Shung Institute. It has developed and included new features up to the point that it has now become a full blown Educational Platform.

Shedra is written mainly by Kamil Selwa (ATIF IT Director) using Python language. It will be released with Open Source licensing allowing the whole Dzogchen Community to use and improve it, etc.

The IDC International Gakyil has recently chosen to use Shedra to manage all internal courses within the DC such as Yan-

tra Yoga, Vajra Dance, and Khaita courses.

Now Shedra is in the final beta stage where everybody is welcome for a test ride. Simply log-in using your IDC Member credentials at <https://shangshungfoundation.org/accounts/login/>.

The official launch will most likely take place within a few months once everything has been tested. Shedra will operate under the umbrella of the Atiyoga Foundation but will be used by the International Dzogchen Community as well as the International School of Tibetan Medicine and the International School of Tibetan Language.

For more information contact Kamil Selwa k.selwa@atiyogafoundation.org ©



l-r Alex Siedlecki, Marco Baseggio, the notary, Oliver Leick, Pia Bramezza, Ester Escudero, Carlos Ramos, seated Nancy Simmons.

The International Atiyoga Foundation

Officially Born on July 2, 2018

On July 2, 2018, two of the founding members and the board of directors of the International Atiyoga Foundation signed the constitutive act in Santa Cruz, Tenerife. On July 4, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu formally ratified with the notary the constitutive act and thus the new International Atiyoga Foundation was officially born! Since ratification has a retroactive effect, the founding date must be considered July 2, 2018. ©

Organization of the Atiyoga Foundation

Marco Baseggio

The Atiyoga Foundation (ATIF) is the cultural foundation founded by Master Namkhai Norbu, together with Nancy Simmons and Carlos Ramos. In the future the Foundation will communicate to the world the different "areas of the mind" and the different "fields of human knowledge" that the Master has developed over his many years of work in the national and international academic world, in the Dzogchen Community, and in the many organizations he has founded in the course of his life.

The Board of Directors is composed of Ester Escudero, Pia Bramezza, Alex Siedlecki, Oliver Leick and myself, Marco Baseggio.

I am the Chairman of the Board and acting Legal Representative. The task assigned to me by the Master and Rosa Namkhai is to create the framework of ATIF in a legally correct and precise way as well as to supervise the process by which the assets of Shang Shung Foundation will merge with ATIF, with Merigar and new legal entities (probably Shang Shung Publications). Even the Museum of Asian Art and Culture



(MACO) will merge into the new cultural foundation in the course of this complex process. At the end of this first phase of construction a new Chairman will be appointed.

Ester Escudero will deal mainly with Communication, support me in many activities and is the secretary of the Board for the Articles of Association.

Pia Bramezza will mainly supervise the management system (management software with "cost centers" for each department).

Alex Siedlecki will be primarily responsible for the Foundation's museum activities (MACO).

Oliver Leick will be primarily responsible for the new Shang Shung Institute.

The Board as a whole will take care of the overall management of the Foundation and in particular the start-up of an "institutional" fundraising activity.

Then there are the individual Departments.

ATI Movement and Mind Department (AMMD)
Director Fabio Andrico

The department will take care of courses of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Khaita Joyful Dances and Meditation that are open to

the public. The contents of the Department will be developed by a Scientific Committee made up, at the moment, of Laura Evangelisti, Prima Mai, Adriana Dal Borgo and Fabio Andrico. New members of the Scientific Committee will have to be appointed.

Shang Shung Institute (SSI)

Director Oliver Leick

The department for Tibetan culture, in which all the activities of SSF merge, with the exception of the courses that are part of AMMD and Publications.

There are three sub-departments:

SSI Tibetan Culture

Director Julia Lawless, based in London. This will act as a network between all SSIs around the world. Julia will further develop the purposes and activities of this sub-department.

SSI Tibetan Language

Director Fabian Sanders.

For the Tibetan and *drjor* language courses. Online courses will also be developed.

SSI Tibetan Medicine

Director Dr. Phuntsog. For the development of Tibetan medicine in the world.

Museum of Asian Art and Culture (MACO)

Director Alex Siedlecki. For the management of the Foundation's museum and cultural activities.

Information Technology Department (IT)

Acting director Kamil Selwa. In the coming months Kamil will implement the Shendra system created by him in collaboration with the International Dzogchen Community. Depending on the results of this system, it will be evaluated in the future how to proceed with the IT department.

Health and Wellbeing Department

Acting director Oliver Leick. The department will manage the relationship between ATIF and the new Integrative Medicine clinic created in Tenerife. Oliver gave his availability for the first few months. We have to find a managerial profile for this role.

Website (under construction):

<https://atiyogafoundation.org>



Envisioning Integrative Public Courses

On Presence And Awareness
Merigar West August 16–17, 2018

Elio Guarisco

Last year, from 7th to 9th July, interested Santi Maha Sangha instructors held a conference at Merigar West to exchange experiences on teaching the public. Igor Berkhin, Costantino Albini, Fabio Risolo, Oliver Leick, and Elio Guarisco presented their perspective of teaching Presence and Awareness to an audience made up exclusively of SMS instructors, some actually present, some following online. As a result of this meeting a Conference on Presence and Awareness was planned and held in March 31–April 4, this year, at Dzamling Gar in Tenerife.

The main aim of the conference was to provide an occasion where experienced instructors of the Dzogchen Community would present their method of teaching in public courses, and an occasion for others to listen and learn.

An invitation was extended to instructors, not only SMS instructors, who 'considered' themselves experienced in teaching public courses, and the Conference was made public in order to provide a live audience for the speakers, so that they did not have to simulate speaking to a virtual audience; and also webcasted.

Steven Landsberg, Lukas Chmelik, Oliver Leick, Stoffelina Verdonk, Elio Guarisco, Fabio Risolo, Igor Legati, Patrizia Pearl, Igor Berkhin, Fabio Andrico, Maaja Zelmin and Gino Vitiello offered a sample of their style of teaching to the public.

Upon evaluating the work of that Conference, some proposals for the future were made and presented to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for approval. Among the proposals was the idea to prepare public courses on presence and awareness, as well as courses for schools. The courses for the public would involve a group of expert instructors developing a program integrating explanations such as those contained in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's 'The Mirror', basic techniques of meditation, and practical elements related to breathing and movement from Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khai-

ta Joyful Dances. In particular there was a project to develop a non-religious program to teach Presence and Awareness in schools and similar institutions, in order to contribute to the improvement of society as often indicated by the Master's words and wishes.

The proposals received Rinpoche's blessing and, as a result of that, a few instructors, in an unofficial way, began to work toward creating the conditions for the preparation of a suggested blue print/s for teaching public courses.

The preparation was twofold: the experimentation of integrative public courses and the calling for a Working Meeting to prepare a blue print for public courses. The experimentation took place in a limited fashion due to time and other circumstances, with courses led jointly by Fabio Andrico and Elio Guarisco, Fabio Andrico and Igor Berkhin, and Elio Guarisco and Stoffelina Verdonk.

The calling for a working meeting began with weaving a net of communication to invite people. To make the working meeting more effective, the invitation was extended to all SMS instructors, and a limited number of YY and dance instructors.

Some therapists whose work was particularly connected to presence and awareness were chosen from a large number who had responded to the request of collaboration. Therapists were invited for several reasons: to inform about what is happening in the world nowadays regarding presence and awareness; to help us to understand how to communicate in a modern way with the public; and so forth.

The meeting was intense, every day it began at 9.30 in the morning, ending around 12.30 pm; and in the afternoon starting at 4 pm and ending usually around 6.30 pm, or later. It took place mainly in the Mandala Hall at Merigar West. It was not webcasted to connect with all instructors because of technical difficulties.

The participants held meetings in three separate groups called 'Mind', 'Movement', and 'Therapy' groups. The Mind Group was mainly composed of SMS instructors (Gabriella Dalesio, Elio Guarisco, Fabio Andrico, Igor Berkhin, Lukas Chmelik, Julia Lawless, Igor Legati, Steven Landsberg, Fabio Risolo). The Movement Group included Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaita instructors (Stoffelina Verdonk, Fabiana Esca, Laura Evangelisti, Prima Mai, Alessandra Policreti, Rita Renzi).

» continued on the following page

» *Public Courses continued from previous page*

The Therapy Group was made up of Maria Amparo, Liyana Petrova, Marek Vich, Chris Norre, and Sicilia D'Arista.

In pre-defined sessions, the groups met among themselves to present to others the results of their findings. The Mind Group discussed among themselves fruitfully and then presented to the other groups many different methods considered appropriate for public courses, in a nutshell, methods for fostering presence and awareness, focusing the mind, and developing an effortless presence.

The Movement Group had more difficulties in coming up with concrete precise well-structured proposals, maybe because of lack of prior preparation and the complexity of the task. But many of their proposals came in the form of emails prior and toward the end of the working meeting, and also from a meeting of an expanded Movement Group on the 22nd of August. So it is just a matter to work a little more together to develop things.

The Therapy Group worked quite well, and the presentations of their findings to other groups were warmly welcomed. These included attitudes that foster presence and awareness; modern ways of communication; benefits and drawbacks of the practice of meditation as explained in the modern world; modules and timeframes for public courses; the need to know about-so called secular mindfulness.

Overall, the proceedings took place in a civilized atmosphere of collaboration. And on the afternoon of the third day, a module of a 12 week progressive integrative course for the public was read out to the participants. The module course is just an example of many possible models having different timeframes and emphases of content. It has been set up for a 12 week period in order to accommodate the many meditation methods suggested, but framed in a way that the proposals of derivatives from breathing methods, exercises of YY, and VD and Khaita can be inserted to fill the missing gaps.

It is not definite. It and each of its parts can be shortened, or expanded. It is a base for development. It is a draft of strategy, and it is not an official document of the Dzogchen Community. Advice was also given to have a shorter module/s to be introduced to the public at the beginning, and only later to introduce longer models.

These module/s of integrative courses are intended mainly for the 'uninitiated'

public, and for this reason are presented in a totally lay perspective.

After the 12 week model was read out at the meeting, instead of focusing on the content of the model, maybe because the participants needed to digest what was given birth to, the discussion shifted to ways of communication within the project group and other people involved, the need to involve more people on the project, the working methodology, and other issues.

It would be wonderful if the work on the Module/s could be continued in order to integrate the methods of breathing and exercises of YY, and aspects of VD and Khaita in the near future, possibly in November in Tenerife.

In conclusion, the basic idea of the meeting was to initiate a process in which the Dzogchen Community can open up to the external world, offering the treasure of learning and experience of practitioners of the various 'disciplines'. The central idea rotates around Presence and Awareness, because this offers a completely lay platform for public courses, that is accessible to everyone, and that has a great potentiality for benefitting many people. Integrative because Presence and Awareness relates to our Body, Energy and, Heart, not only to Mind, and moreover, it is obvious that there are many ways to induce the experience and development of presence and awareness; and these ways could work better if combined together.

Thus it is not only a matter of presenting to the public the disciplines we have, we are already doing that. It is important to find ways to communicate our knowledge and methods in a modern more accessible language and way; this is crucial point to keep in mind.

We are happy to notice that The Working Meeting on the Blue Print has sparked and initiated a multitude of proposals and experimentations that for certain will continue, and give meaningful fruit.

Many people say, "I want to propose. I want to propose." That is wonderful. It seems important however, that people do not go off on their individual roads, but work in unison and collaboration. Only in this way can the various modules of public courses we develop become, if approved by the Master, an official activity of the Ati Foundation. ©



Library Talks

Meetings, studies and insights

A new initiative – 'Library Talks' or 'Racconti in Biblioteca' – started on August 4th 2018 at the Zikhang Library in Merigar. Thanks to the valuable offers of knowledge and experience given by various scholars, experts, teachers and enthusiasts in the Dzogchen Community, we have been able to create a series of cultural meetings, open to the public, useful to deepen and learn about different themes, such as the lives of the great masters, ancient and contemporary, Tibetan calligraphy, books, yantra yoga and medicine. The initiative will continue during the autumn, with insights on the rainbow body, on good sayings (*legs bshad*) in Tibetan literature, and on eroticism in China and in the Land of the Snows, with stories related to Kailash and sacred places and much more.

The Zikhang library of Merigar serves as a center for culture, above all Tibetan culture, and, over the years, several events have been organized, mainly related to the study of Tibetan language and calligraphy. With these 'Library Talks' we would like to expand our cultural contribution, and, at the same time, ensure that more and more people can come the Library and start to use it. These meetings are also an opportunity to make the Library known and encourage visitors, as well as to collect donations useful for its continuation.

Many people have been happy to share their knowledge. Our gratitude goes to all of you, and we hope to continue organizing these meetings in the future and find the right moment for the various talks.



16th Ka-ter Training for Tibetan Translators

Mio Sylvester

The 16th Ka-ter Training for Tibetan Translators (TTT) took place in the Zikhang Library, Merigar, between the 16th August and 7th September 2018. Led patiently and kindly by Dr. Fabian Sanders and ably assisted by Dr. Margherita Pansa, students from Argentina, America, France, Germany and the UK joined local students who aspire to improve their Classical Tibetan language skills, with the aspiration to translate precious Tibetan texts.

The students divided naturally into two groups: the advanced group translated the 'Introduction to the Cuckoo of Presence' (rig pa khu byug) by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, while the beginners/intermediate group concentrated upon texts by Tāranātha, Padmasambhāva and the Prajñāpāramitā sutra in one letter. During the course, one of the local students, Giorgio Dallorto, also gave an open lecture in the Library, upon the various Tibetan calligraphies which was both an illuminating and interesting adjunct to the work of the TTT group.

The translation work was interspersed with visits to local towns, spas, wineries and local restaurants to ensure that work was well balanced! The TTT continues to grow strongly and to attract and welcome new interest. ☺



In particular we would like to thank those who participated and will participate in this first edition:

- Fabio Andrico, *The unexpected journey. Video and commentary on his travels to sacred places of East Tibet and Yantra Yoga, the strength of breath*
- Adriano Clemente, *Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: the years in Tibet.*
- Giorgio Dallorto, *Tibetan calligraphy: introduction and practice of the art of writing.*
- Cristiana De Falco, *Woman of Wisdom: Yeshe Tsogyal and Oriental fairy tales for children*
- Andrea Dell'Angelo, *ASIA in Asia. Archive footage showing with talks about Asia's first trip to Tibet in 1993 with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.*
- Iacobella Gaetani, *Pilgrimage in the sacred places of the Himalayas: lakes, mountains and hidden valleys.*
- Elio Guarisco, *The Life of the 84 Siddhas: An Ethical Contradiction in Buddhism?*
- Igor Legati, *Which book should I read? Orient yourself among the texts of Shang Shung Publications*
- Fabio Risolo, *Creative writing workshop on imaginary archetypes.*
- Fabian Sanders, *The Buddha's voice: Languages and books*

· Father Francis V. Tiso, *Rainbow Body and Resurrection. Religious experiences in dialogue.*

· Gino Vitiello, *Harmonizing body, energy and mind. The benefits of yantra yoga according to Tibetan medicine and 30 years after the trip to Kailash with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: projection of images and stories.*

· Paola Zamperini, *Eroticism in China and Tibet. Imaginary dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and Gendün Chöpel.*

· Lobsang Zatul, *Good sayings (ལེགས་པ་འདད་) in the Tibetan tradition*

We also thank Merigar for supporting the initiative and the Atiyoga Foundation for its collaboration.

You can find the program of the meetings on the Merigar West website (www.dzogchen.it) and on the Facebook page of the library (<https://www.facebook.com/zikhanglibrary/>). We hope to see you at the next talk!

Upcoming program of talks 2018

September 7:

Father Francis V. Tiso, *Rainbow Body and Resurrection. Religious experiences in dialogue.*

September 15:

Fabio Risolo, *Creative writing workshop on imaginary archetypes.*

September 29:

Lobsang Zatul, *Good sayings (ལེགས་པ་འདད་) in the Tibetan tradition*

October 13:

Cristiana De Falco, *Woman of Wisdom: Yeshe Tsogyal*

October 20:

Iacobella Gaetani, *Pilgrimage in the sacred places of the Himalayas: lakes, mountains and hidden valleys.*

November 1:

Gino Vitiello, *30 years after the trip to Kailash with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: projection of images and stories.*

November 3:

Paola Zamperini, *Eroticism in China and Tibet. Imaginary dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and Gendün Chöpel.* ☺



SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS

ཡེ་ཤུག་ཤུག་པུ་བླ་མ་གྱི་འཕེལ་འགྲེལ་ལྟུང་།

An Update on Shang Shung Publications

Gaetano Ruvolo
and the staff of Shang Shung Publications

Did you know that Shang Shung Publications is the oldest organization founded by our master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu within the Dzogchen Community?

In 1983, a couple of years after the foundation of Merigar, the first Dzogchen Community Gar in the world, Rinpoche asked some of his students to create a cooperative publishing organization to start printing, for the benefit of Dzogchen practitioners and everybody interested in Dzogchen teachings, his own writings, teachings, his masters' biographies, and many other related subjects, such as Tibetan medicine, Yantra Yoga, Astrology, Divination and, more recently, Vajra Dance and Khaita

My personal collaboration with SSP started a few years after its foundation, around 1986, by helping Giovanni Arca, then in charge of the publications activities and organization, to expand SSP distribution, increase the volumes, refine the graphic layout, plus everything else which could help the publishing cooperative grow. I was never alone: beside Giovanni many other practitioners got involved, and some of them still are, in the development of the Publishing House, mostly in karma yoga. From 1992 to 2013, when I took the role of SSP general manager, I focused on different professional and personal commitments, but the production of books, CDs, DVDs, games and more recently digital downloadable products never stopped. There have been different legal set ups from that time, but the core activity of making CHNN's teachings available to all DC practitioners has always carried on without interruption, passing through changes and, at times, difficult circumstances.

The main characteristic of Shang Shung Publications is that it is the only publishing house in the world authorized to translate, edit and distribute teachings from our

The Cuckoo of Instant Presence: The Six Vajra Verses

We're happy to announce the availability of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's commentary on original Dzogchen Semde text, The Six Vajra Verses, also known as The Cuckoo of Instant Presence: <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/books/806-the-cuckoo-of-instant-presence-9788878341647.html>

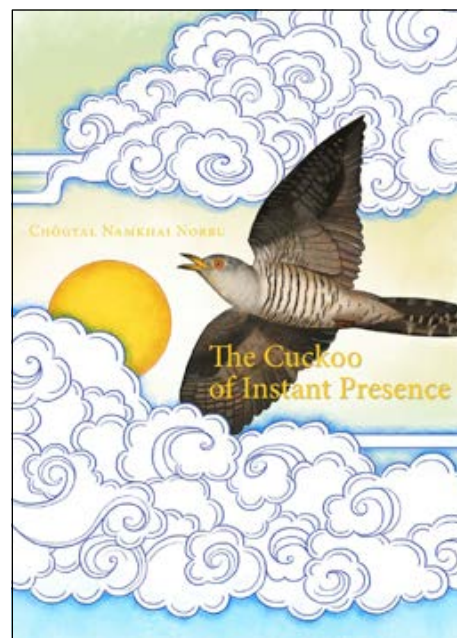
Many years ago this book has been published in Singapore but has long been out of print.

The Six Vajra Verses is a short text brought to Tibet by Vairocana, and together with The Total Space of Vajrasattva and three other lungs it makes up the famous Five Early Translations of Dzogchen Semde, the first original Dzogchen texts brought to Tibet from Oddiyana by the great Tibetan translator and Dzogchen master Vairocana.

The Cuckoo of Instant Presence is a very short lung, but it contains a precise explanation of the Base, Path, and the Fruit of Dzogchen. To facilitate understanding of this important text, Rinpoche explains the meaning of each word and verse in a clear way, using several examples. Both a short and long commentary is included. We hope that all those who read this text will concretely understand the real meaning behind these explanations. ©

Master. This means that we have a particular responsibility of remaining as close as possible to the meaning of Rinpoche's writings and words.

All this careful work does not come free of charge. Our translators and editors spend many hours checking the true meaning of a single sentence, refine its translation and make it understandable in many different languages. At SSP we publish books in English, Italian and in Spanish. This is for the national and international world, but in many different places in Europe and Asia, Rinpoche's books get

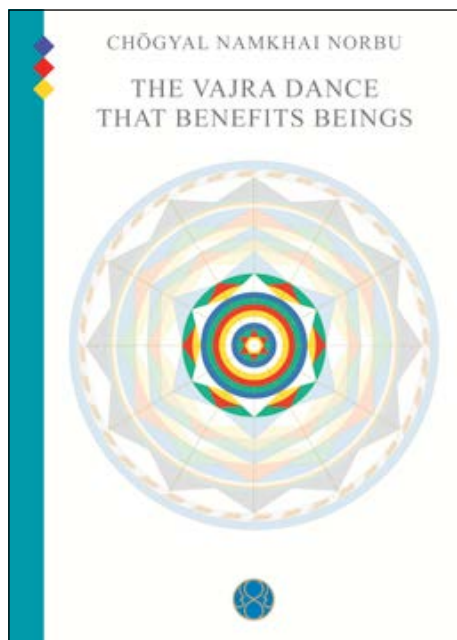


"The Dzogchen teaching is a living knowledge that is transmitted and applied. It is not reserved for spiritual adepts. The teaching is useful for those who want to live agreeably. For someone with strong faith, it is extremely useful. Even those who do not believe in anything and think that nothing exists after death could find a more peaceful life through it. To enjoy tranquility, you must have experience of the state of knowledge and know how to relax. When you discover your true condition and actually find yourself in it, you finally understand the real meaning of relaxation. The Dzogchen teaching is a way of relaxing totally, so you can understand why the learning, application, and practice of Dzogchen is indispensable for every individual."

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

translated into the local language and we lead a very precise process to make sure that these translations reflect the original intention of the Master and his teachings. There are almost 20 people working in our central organization plus many more around the world making our books available to the local Gars and Lings.

I often say, when I talk about the particular characteristics of SSP, that our Publishing house can be equated to a University Press Publishing House, at the level of Cambridge University Press, Oxford, Harvard, etc. Like them we publish books for



The Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings

The Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings is one of three Vajra Dances based on Upadesha teachings first transmitted in 1990 by Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Part of the Longsal cycle, its complete title is The Light of the Precious Lamp – The Symbolic Manifestation of the Dance of Vajra That Liberates the Six Classes of Beings in the Six Pure Dimensions.

The Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings is a symbolic dance of the interrelationship of all sentient beings. Up to twelve dancers (six females and six males) dance and sing together on a large Mandala of five colors representing the correspondence between the

internal dimension of the individual and the outer dimension of the world. The intoned syllables are closely related to the purification and harmonization of our main chakras.

In all Vajra Dances, by moving with the body, singing mantras with the voice and entering into a state of contemplation with the mind, the three main aspects of our existence are balanced, producing serenity and awareness.

This tutorial reflects our current understanding of the movements and mudras. It is intended as an aid for all dancers who have followed courses with qualified instructors.

The Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings can be integrated within any spiritual path and can also be practiced by those who have not received direct transmission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ☺

a small readership, with the same careful high quality, but with two main differences: firstly we do not have a University backing us up by securing a substantial salary to our translators and editors; secondly we price our books at a level that does not cover the work behind their making. Our external fiscal consultant has recently calculated that the industrial value of our books amounts to at least 50% of our selling price. Consider that the industry standard is less than a third of that. In order to reach a wide distribution, which requires heavy discount along the chain, the cost of a book should be around 16% of its selling price. Many books published by University Presses, when very specialized, can be sold for as much as €100 each, to cover costing. We do not do that because we mainly provide a service to Dzogchen Community practitioners and we want everybody to be able to buy the publications they need for their practice.

We maintain a catalogue of 375 books, 26 CDs, 41 DVDs, 59 e-books, 43 downloadable audio and 66 video products, dating from 1983 up to now. We are also trying to keep up a steady production to make all our books available in digital format to allow a quicker and less expensive distribu-

tion all over the world. We inaugurated our new online webshop in April 2015, serving so far over 3,000 customers, mostly DC practitioners around the world. This means that we need to upgrade and maintain our servers to keep up with these digital distribution loads.

A series of concurring events over the last 12 months have greatly reduced our income, creating a financial crisis which has heavily affected our organization.

More recently, our Community has been undergoing some major changes that have affected SSP and, as often happens in a period of transition, we are currently going through some financial challenges. We took the temporary action of reducing everybody's salaries to 50% in July, but we cannot dismiss or shrink at leisure our organization made up of expert practitioners who have specialized in translating and editing in order to offer you our best quality products. Our organization is made up of people, who can dedicate and devote their skills because they do not have to spend time hunting for jobs. Our salaries are really very low; they only provide for basic needs like lodging and food. We are driven by passion and big motivation, but still

need to eat every day and have a roof over our heads.

In order to let the Shang Shung Publishing House survive and keep up its work, we need first of all your recognition and support. You are our main, and at times, only customers. Therefore, I invite you to be active in one of the following ways:

Visit our webshop at <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/>, browse through our catalogue offers and select the books, audio and video material that attract your attention and curiosity

Give us your suggestions and feedback at publications@shangshungfoundation.org. Please tell us what you like about our work and production and what you would like to see improved

If you think you can help us by collaborating in our activities, please write us at publications@shangshungfoundation.org

Freely donate to us if you believe that our activity is worth supporting at www.shangshungpublications.org/donate. You can also make it a monthly donation by clicking on the "Imposta come donazione mensile" ("Set it as a monthly donation") button.

Thanks a lot for your attention and generosity. ☺



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Newspaper of the International

Dzogchen Community of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Shang Shung Institute UK Events 2018

21st September

SSIUK Lecture Series: Murals of Tibet
with Jakob Winkler

29th–30th September

Weekend Course: Yantra Yoga – Beginners
with John Renshaw

11th October

SSIUK Lecture Series: Luminous Emptiness
with Francesca Fremantle

20th–21st October

Weekend Course:
Vajra Dance – Tibetan Sacred Dance
Open Event with Cindy Faulkner

24th–25th November

Weekend Course:
Khaita Tibetan Circle Dances
with Lena Dumcheva

6th December

SSIUK Lecture Series:
Working with the Body: a discussion on
Buddhist, Taoist & Western approaches
with Master Chris Chappell

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As a non-profit, we rely on the generosity of our volunteers and donors in order to continue and develop our groundbreaking cultural programme. Here are some ways in which you can support us:

Volunteering

We aim to create a rewarding and engaging atmosphere for our community of volunteers. We regularly need help with: The setup and running of courses, talks and workshops, Audio Editing, Video Editing and Graphic Design. If you are interested in volunteering, please email us: info@shangshunguk.org

Fundraising

If you have experience in large or small scale fundraising and would like to offer your help, we would love to hear from you. please email us: info@shangshunguk.org

Networking

If you enjoy our courses, events and products, tell your friends verbally, by email and social media. The more the merrier!

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While we make every effort to cover our costs through income from courses, events and our shop, we continue to rely on donations and bequests in order to develop our groundbreaking programme. Make a donation and or bequest today! www.shangshunguk.org/support ©

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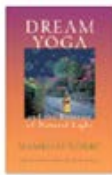




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Video Journal Downloads

The Video Journal was a set of video recordings documenting the activities of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the years 2004–2010. Each volume consisted of three sections: Teachings, Archives and Chronicles. These recordings document not only the life of the Master, but also of the Dzogchen Community in different parts of the world. The Archives section contains selected video recordings from the Archive of the Shang Shung Foundation, such as the footage from Rinpoche's journey to Tibet.



These recordings are now available as a video download in the MP4 format based on physical DVDs produced between 2004 and 2010.

Please note that these recordings contain the Teachings of the Master for His students, therefore they're restricted to those who have received the Transmission from Him.

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



Journey to Tibet

Alexander Popov

The year 2018 was marked by an exciting event: the first graduates of the Shang Shung Institute Russia School of Tibetan Medicine successfully complet-

saw obviously impressed and inspired us, leaving no one indifferent!

The Museum of Tibetan Medicine and Culture is a huge modern building constructed in Tibetan style. The first floor is dedicated to expositions on the history of Tibetan medicine, a collection of ancient manuscripts, medical thankas from the atlas on Tibetan medicine, surgical instruments, medicinal herbs and minerals. In

welcomed each other. The whole ceremony was covered by the local media who later interviewed the participants.

The three-month internship program consisted of theoretical classes at the University, practice at the hospital and a journey to the mountains in order to study medicinal herbs. The theoretical classes at Qinghai University lasted three weeks. There were lectures on the basics of Tibetan medicine, some particular topics and diseases. The magisterial staff consisted of the leading University scholars. The lecturers were Professor Lusham Gyal, who shared his knowledge on the basics of Tibetan medicine, the three humors; Professor Kelsang Dorje, who analyzed with



Graduation.

ed a three-month internship in Xining, region of Qinghai, China (ex-Amdo region).

The group of sixteen graduates and two translators came to China at the end of April. In Xining airport we were met by the representatives of the Qinghai University's Medical College, Professor Kunchog Gyaltsen and teachers Phuntsog Dorje and Palchen Sangdag. That was the first time that we saw people who became our guides, patrons and assistants for all three months we spent in Xining.

After resting for several days, we had a lucky opportunity to go on interesting excursions organized by our hosts: to the Arura Tibetan medicine clinic, the enormous Museum of Tibetan Medicine and Culture, and the factories for production of medical materials. The scale of what we

the museum there is a big exposition on astrology, everyday objects and the religious life of Tibetan people.

Special attention should be paid to the great thanka on canvas 618 meters long, which entered the Guinness Book of Records. This thanka is dedicated to the culture, history and religion of the Tibetan people. About 400 painters worked on this thanka for 27 years, using traditional painting techniques and paints composed of precious metals and minerals.

On May 3rd, there was an official ceremony marking the start of the internship in which the warden of the Tibetan Medicine College, professor Lusham Gyal, participated, representatives of the senior Qinghai University and the representative of the Russian Shang Shung Institute, who

us critical inflammatory diseases, diseases *nyen*; Professor Tsuntar Gyal, who gave teachings according to the book *Zintig* written by Jamgom Kongtrul, adding also commentaries from his own experience; and Professor Tsibha, a leading expert in pharmacology and medicinal plants, taught us the principles of natural medicines, their qualifications and benefits. In the building of college there is a demonstrative collection of medicinal plants available for all students for look and study.

At the University, students received a huge amount of theoretical knowledge which should be "digested" and mastered with time and then integrated with the practical activity. The teachers gave all the material using a very accessible language

» continued on the following page



Qinghai Regional Hospital.

» *Journey to Tibet* continued from previous page and clarifying all unclear moments. The teachers also generously shared their practical experience. Our translators, Gombo Radnayev and Garmazhab Matorov, did a great scope of work as medical specific translation requires the knowledge of terminology. A big difficulty was using the Tibetan dialect of Amdo; the pronunciation is much different from the dialect of Central Tibet.

The practical part of the training passed in the Qinghai regional hospital of the Tibetan medicine (Tso Ngon). The hospital represents a multi-faceted treatment and rehabilitation institution with 600 beds. The medicinal staff counts of about 250 employees who work in 11 branches of different specializations. The hospital accepts 83000 people a year, and 5000 people undergo a ward treatment there yearly. Many patients come from different countries, including Russia. The hospital is fitted with modern diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, here one can take any laboratory or instrumental test. The hospital runs its own pharmacological production, which prepares about 400 types of medicinal compositions of Tibetan medicine. The medicines regularly pass quality inspection according to the governmental standards. The territory of the hospital is a green area with convenient infrastructure, garden, fountains, shady trees where the patients and their relatives have rest.

The unique department of the hospital is a balneology complex in which patients with joint, spine and neurological diseases undergo treatment. The distinguishing feature of the complex is a system of medicinal infusions delivery directly to the bath of a particular patient. Chief of department, Doctor Kunchog Tsering, for several days

conducted detailed excursions throughout the department discussing clinical cases and patiently answering all questions.

The practice in hospital was guided by the experienced doctors of different specializations. The main gynecologist of the hospital, Doctor Tso Kyi, taught the basics of pulse and urine diagnostics. Professor Nam-lha Khar is a renowned specialist in diagnostics and treatment of the digestion diseases. Doctor Pema Thar is a chief of cardiology department. The oldest hospital Doctor, Pema Wangdrak, specializes in external therapies. Neurologist Chagjam Tserang told in every detail about the nervous system disorders and the principals of their treatment. The department of external therapies is headed by the genius Doctor Nyima Tsering.

The trip to the mountains was the most astonishing event as in the mountains one could feel the spirit of Tibet and its majesty. On July 6, our group visited the mountain Chukar Ritro, which is famous for the fact that Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug school, lived and practiced there. Guided by our teachers Tsuntar Gyal and Choying Rangdrol we examined and studied herbs.

On July 9th was our second trip, to the mountain Chungkya Gotse with professor Tsibha, Rigdzin Dorje.

On July 11th we took an examination on distinguishing the medicinal herbs. All students successfully passed this test. Irina Pankevich was the best and manifested the highest capacities in distinguishing plants. After the exam there was organized a big celebration which was attended by teachers and doctors who participated in the practice and the students. It was so wonderful to be in the sacred places among extraordinary scholars and doctors! ©

The Tibetan Medicine Family

Irina Pankevich

I always perceived Tibetan medicine as a huge topic of human knowledge, and staying in a Tibetan hospital, dealing with Tibetan doctors and patients, strengthened this feeling of touching something very significant and majestic. But in reality, the daily life for the participants looks very common. Tibetan doctor's appointments and Western doctor's appointments are very different. A Tibetan doctor begins working while only approaching the office, when he or she puts on the scrub, the process is on, doctor is already answering questions and solving problems. I have never seen patient who came alone, people usually take relatives with them, and very often this support group consists of several people. All these people are crowding beside the doctor, children are darting about, telephones are ringing, assistants are mixing medicine in iron mortars (and it's a great noise!), and among all this mess, the Tibetan doctor is accepting patients — absolutely calm, absolutely benevolent, full of sympathy and kindness. I never noticed any irritation, any discontent, no one ever said, "You, guys, get out, you are disturbing here!" You feel only a friendly and sincere interest in the patient's problem, only an intention to help, there is no difference who is in front of the doctor — Chinese or Tibetan, nomad or monk, old man or a child. These people with Buddha like smiles on their faces with mild and gentle ways of dealing with people can give you the main teaching in your life — the teaching of compassion to all sentient beings.

Our medical internship was very eventful. We improved our skill in pulse diagnostics greatly. It's very strange for a Westerner to recognize, that the doctor can feel the condition of all inner organs by touching your hand, and even the pulse on the two sides of one finger can be different. We have been studying this science for several years in Russia, and in Tibetan clinic used the opportunity to deepen our knowledge by the side of real masters of pulse diagnostics. Basically, a Tibetan doctor heals everything, but, as we were in a large clinic, we studied the treatment of different diseases separately. We learned

gastroenterology, cardiology, neurology, etc., checking pulse and observing the patient's disease histories and treatment that doctors prescribed. It was a happy chance for us to study pulse diagnostics with Doctor Namlha Khar, who is a real legend in this region, a great master in his profession. Every day crowds of patients from distant regions, nomads, farmers and local citizens are waiting patiently by his office, and doctor works till the last patient. He radiates tranquility, confidence and professionalism, and it seems that he can heal just with his spiritual strength.

Of course, one of the strongest impressions was watching the external therapy, acupuncture and bloodletting. Acupuncture is a very effective method of treatment in Tibetan medicine and is used very often. The external therapy department is always full of patients, because the head of the department, Nyima Tsering, is a very famous doctor and a real magician of acupuncture. His movements are sharp and instantaneous, his knowledge of channels and bioactive points of the body is perfect, so watching him performing the acupuncture is like fascinating show. No one can



Students with teachers, doctors and SSI Russia representative, Vladimir Belyaev.

Medicinal baths, compresses, massages are soft methods of Tibetan external therapy and are also used widely in the healing programs. It's hard to believe how many diseases can be healed by these mild, safe methods, almost without side effects, using only natural ingredients for the medicine components. In a special balneology department the patient doesn't need to go

methods of *lum* treatment (*lum* is a Tibetan name for medicinal bath).

With great devotion and gratitude we remember our precious teachers: Doctor Padma Wang Drag, who by making moxa relieved severe chronic pain in joints, Doctor Tso Kyi, who with few precise movements made gynecological operations, Doctor Chagjam Tserang, who very patiently answered our endless questions about treatment, and all others, who helped us in the clinic.

Our mountain trip for herbs is a very special topic. We visited several places in the mountains, sometimes climbing at more than 4000m high, to find some rare and common herbs. In general, we just followed the teacher who showed us some plants, and we tried to memorize its appearance and Tibetan name. But this wasn't a simple task, because the teacher was moving fast, and we were not accustomed to such walks on foot on the high altitude. It was twice complicated because most of the herbs were absolutely unknown, we saw them for the first time in our life. So you need to force the way through your sixteen classmates, take photo, hear the right way of pronunciation, write down the name and not lag behind. But how beautiful were these flowers, growing so high on the rocky screes! When you reach it, sliding and crawling on all fours, you feel really happy. The surrounding landscapes were amazing, the beauty of this holy land is so solemn and magnificent, that you can hardly hold back tears watching it. We enjoyed taking photos of yaks and sheep grazing on the mountain slopes, and eating Tibetan strawberries, that is also a very medicinal herb, used in many very im-

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Medicinal Atlas at the Museum of Tibetan Medicine and Culture.

blink an eye, and needles are already in their points in the human body. We heard many amazing stories about healing complicated diseases and saw patients that began moving after heavy stroke, great improvement in cases of serious chronic neuromuscular diseases, watched the cases of almost immediate relief of severe pain; we saw the eyes of numerous patients looking at doctors with hope for help and receiving this help for sure.

to some place for the treatment; the bath is located just by his/her chamber. Patients take baths with dozens of medical herbs twice a day, each receiving their personal formula. Just staying there for a while and breathing in a pleasant smell of boiled herbs you feel cured. The head of the department, Doctor Kunchog Tsering, with great enthusiasm and competence shared with us his experience in using different

» *Tibetan Medicine* continued from previous page
 portant formulas. On the day of the final herb exam we had a party, in which all our teachers and doctors took part. Together with them we visited a monastery Chukar Rithro, located beside the mountain, where we studied herbs. That was really a blessed day for us students. To stay in such holy place with our Teachers – Bodhisattvas, eating and dancing with them, receiving this living teaching – this was like staying in Medicine Buddha's temple. The soft sun rays, the short summer warm rain, beautiful mountain landscapes, quiet conversation in Tibetan (sorry, we didn't understand a word), staying so close to these wonderful people – seemed like divine blessing streaming from heaven, filling the soul with quiet joy and happiness.



Visit to Chukar Rithro Monastery.

But all good things end sometimes, and our internship came to an end. Fortunately, all of us passed the final exam and got our diplomas. And now, do you think this is the end of the story? Not at all, everything is just beginning. Fortunately for us and all future generations of the Shang Shung Institute's School of Tibetan Medicine students, the Qinghai University and the International Shang Shung Institute signed a memorandum about further cooperation, so we can continue our education and improve our knowledge for the benefit of all beings. The important result of our experience was the understanding that it is necessary to study the Tibetan language, it is the obligatory condition of successful study of medicine. As people



Trip to Chungkya Gotse Mountain.

say, the reward for a well fulfilled task is a more complicated task. We are ready to move further.

We would be happy to return to this hospitable place to meet our precious Teachers again. Now we understand that the main teaching we received was the Tibetan people, their pure mind and kindness, benevolence and unselfishness. We saw it in every step, beginning from Tibetan patients, who kindly answered our questions and let us check the pulse with such touching trust, to our Teachers, Important Persons, who treated us like their beloved relatives. My favorite was Dr. Phuntsog Dorje, a really versatile person. He could become a singer or an actor, but somehow became a PHD Tibetan doctor, scholar and University teacher. He was so kind, so friendly, so patient, always ready to help, solved all problems, answered all questions (sometimes very strange ones), always with gentle smile, never showed negative mood, and be sure, sometimes we deserved absolutely

the opposite attitude. Once when we for the tenth time tried to express our gratitude, he simply said, "We are the family. You also work for the benefit of Tibetan medicine".

We were amazed, when our Teacher Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo's brother came from Lhasa to congratulate us with graduation on behalf of the family and gave us precious gifts, we were happy as children but a little bewildered. For our European minds such openhearted, sincere, unselfish attitude is unfamiliar, we forgot what people can be. Maybe in Tibet, where the influence of Western civilization has not yet become total, people are closer to their nature. Maybe nowadays Buddha's Teaching is the only traditional teaching that influences people's minds to make them treat each other like their own kind creatures, not enemies or objects to use for some purpose. It's a pleasure and pride to feel yourself the part of this society, to be part of the Tibetan medicine world community. So, Tibet, wait for us, we will come back! ☺

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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The Monasteries, the Cradle of Tibet's Spiritual Heritage

This year we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of ASIA. It was 1988 when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu founded it with the aim of preserving Tibetan culture in its cradle of origin.

Since then, among the many projects that this Association has realized, there are those dedicated to the Monasteries and to the Buddhist and Bönpo Study and Practice Colleges in Tibet and Nepal.

The Monasteries and Study and Practice Colleges are the places in which it is possible to continue to preserve the identity, the patrimony of knowledge and spirituality of the Tibetan people. And these places are made up of people, of monks and nuns who safeguard a unique cultural heritage in the world.

One of the monasteries in which ASIA works is Singhkri Monastery located near Singhkri village, in Tongde County, Hainan Prefecture. This is one of the most important Buddhist monasteries in the entire region, in particular for the Nyingma tradition (the oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism).

This Monastery is a reference point for the local community and for the surrounding villages scattered along this wonderful valley full of woods and pastures. The entire Tibetan population of this area is nomadic and the local economy is based on breeding (yak, cattle and sheep).

Here the monks and nuns of the area have the opportunity to learn and practice traditional knowledge and the original teachings of Tibetan culture. Among the main activities that ASIA has carried out for this Monastery is the construction of new dormitories and the restoration and enlargement of the Practice College.

Another Monastery in which ASIA works is Galingteng (Derge county, Kham region), to which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is particularly linked and where he spent part of his childhood studying with his uncle, Khyentse Choekyi Wangchuk.



Since 1993, a integrated project has begun for the development of this area, from the creation of the Study College to the restoration of historical monuments, from the construction of a school to the creation of two clinics, and more. Now, with great effort, work is being carried out for the construction of the Temple of the retreat center that has just been built.

In 1997 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu went to **Dzongsta Monastery**, belonging to the Sakyapa tradition, and asked ASIA to support him in rebuilding the Study College.

Among the activities carried out in this Monastery there has been the building of the Study College, a Temple, a Library with 200 books and much more.

The Association has also worked at **Dzölung Monastery**, which was the residence of A-Yu Khadro, the *yogini* master of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, building a Practice College and distributing various types of equipment and furniture such as beds, tables, bookcases etc.

Since 1996, ASIA has been creating a lasting relationship with the **Bönpo Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal** which aims to protect the Bonpö culture and religion outside Tibet.

Over the years the monastery has become an important center of studies, able to give a complete education to Bonpö monks in exile, who, once their study cycle is complete, return to Tibet to teach and keep the precious Bonpö teachings alive.

Currently, work is under way to build the first Tibetan traditional medicine school in Nepal.

In all these monasteries Long Distance Support is active with the aim of supporting students who come from very poor families. Offerings from the local communities, exhausted by difficult economic conditions, are no longer sufficient to cover the daily expenses of all the monks and nuns, especially during the long cold Tibetan winter.

Thanks to **Long Distance Support** monks and nuns can have the opportunity to eat hot meals every day, keep themselves warm appropriately, have the necessary materials for education and have access to health care when needed.

Together with ASIA it is possible to give a future to Tibetan culture that, if we do not do something now, risks disappearing.

It is possible to contribute to this important goal with Long Distance Support of a monk or nun, the last guardians of a spiritual heritage that we can not afford to lose.

All information for adopting a monk or nun can be found at adopttibtet.org ☺

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The Khaita Photo Album

Interview with Elena Dumcheva
September 6, 2018

The original idea and intention behind the Khaita Photo Album we presented to Rinpoche at Losar, 2018, in Dzamling Gar, was that we, as Khaiteros, Khaita singers and dancers, understand that Khaita has changed our lives completely, and has brought so much joy, so we wanted to transmit our gratitude to Rinpoche. We wanted to create a tangible, physical object that transmits the joy of Khaita.

Together with Edith Casadei, we decided to make this photo album. She knew of a very good printer who could print art album quality in small quantities, even one album, so we took it from there. We collected photos from all over the world, which had to be of very high resolution and quality, and that is why we were not able to publish many photos that we wished to publish.

The version we printed for Rinpoche is a premium art album quality version, in a golden box and with the five colored ribbons, with the golden Khaita knot on the cover. The conception, the original idea, was that the album conveys the joy of Khaita, more than as an historic documentation.

We have also printed a copy of lesser quality and it is kept in the Dzamling Gar Gönpa for people to look at. Also many people looked at the album at our Khaita table during the 2018 Mandarava retreat



and we had so many requests for this album that we are now doing a new edition. We are amplifying it with photos from the last Losar and also from the British Museum performance. There will be a more affordable printed copy available and it will be ready for the Dzamling Expo Conference Center Inauguration in December 2018. We will make an announcement with cost and contact details when that is established. People will be able to download a PDF copy from online for a donation. All the revenue taken from sales and donations of the album in will go into the Khaita fund.

We would like to extend our deep thanks to all the people who collaborated in the production of this beautiful album:

Design

Jiri Langpaul www.jirilangpaul.com
Riki Watzka

Concept

Elena Dumcheva

Photo Credits

Alyona Kazakova, Chris Cook, Daniyal Ibragimov, Edith Casadei www.edithcasadei.eu, Enrico Dell'Angelo, Jiri Langpaul, Jiri Starha, Jitka Prokop, Lesya Cherenkova, Maciek Sikora, Oleksander Zhytko, Paolo Fassoli, Topgyal Gontse, Tsering Dolker

Special Thanks

Adriana Dal Borgo, Edith Casadei, Tamara Vinokhodova



Updates on Ongoing Projects at Merigar West

New road

After the planning and bureaucratic phase, in spring 2018 the excavation and construction of the new road that leads from the main parking area above the Gönpa, passes below the Yellow House, and leads to the road to Zikhang was carried out. This new road will keep traffic away from the Yellow House in anticipation of the creation of a green area with gardens and a pedestrian area.

Restoration and preservation of the Gönpa
From 2017 we took stock of the degradation of our precious Gönpa.

In order to involve a qualified consultant we turned to Donatella Cavezzali (Director of the School of Higher Education and Study Institute for the Conservation and Restoration of Rome – Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities), who was already collaborating with the MACO, and the technicians of MOST – Monitoring & Structural Testing, a group of engineers and geologists working on important international projects, and the support of the architect Massimo Pelliccioni.

Following the Report for the conservation, restoration and maintenance of the Gönpa of Merigar by Ms. Cavezzali at the end of 2017, and the Technical Report, Investigations and tests on the wooden structure 29 June 2018, reports of the investigations carried out for the restoration and maintenance of the Gönpa of Merigar have been completed.

These surveys are aimed at solving current degradation problems inherent to timber and reinforced concrete structures, to waterproofing and channeling rainwater, relating to external impacts and systems, as well as problems related to the conservation of paintwork both internal and external.

In detail the investigations have detected some anomalies of the wooden structures, in the foundation, some imperfections in the junction of the rainspouts, as well as a covering of the roof that does not allow a regular flow of rainwater, causing stagnation and consequent damage to the points identified.



Photo by
Michele Gandolfi

In order to solve the problems presented above, specific restoration and periodic maintenance interventions are necessary to allow the structure to fully respond to the static and architectural requirements for which it was designed.

These interventions can be summarized as follows:

- Replacement of the damaged wooden elements or part of them, if necessary interventions for the consolidation or replacement of masonry structures in the foundation;
- Replacement of faulty rainpipes, with consequent verification of the entire covering waterproofing layer. Where necessary improvements of the slopes for a regular flow of rainwater;
- Elimination of mould and wood parts affected by fungal attacks;
- Elimination of water leaks in the covering and rainwater spouts;
- Protection of the most exposed structural elements with covering and cleaning of the partial or total structures;
- Restoration of internal and external paintings with suitable pictorial techniques, also taking into account the Tibetan pictorial tradition.

The interventions listed above obviously require an accurate preliminary, definitive and executive design, drawn up by competent qualified technicians in order to implement the subsequent phase of restoration work, which may take place in progressive functional sections based on a time schedule that takes into account the needs of use of the Gönpa itself, the best seasons in which to operate, and last but not least, the economic resources necessary.

Maintenance of the Gar

Throughout the year, work has continued on the ordinary maintenance of buildings, roads, greenery, where and when needed. This year new water meters have been put in different points of the water network, for a better control and monitoring of consumption.

For safety reasons, gates were installed at the entrance to the Gönpa, at the entrance to Merigar 2 and on the road to Gadeling.

The kitchen has been equipped with new equipment.

The bureaucratic practices of registration with the land registry and practicability of some areas of the yellow house have been completed.

Work spaces have been adapted to safety regulations.

General courses on health and safety at work for employees and collaborators were held. ©



From the Distracted to the Contemplative Mind

The Practice of Fixation
Merigar West, August 10–14, 2018

Annamaria Moscatelli

On the morning of August 14, the sky above Merigar is a deep gray. A thick blanket of clouds, suddenly cut by stunning streaks of lightning and mighty peals of thunder. It's windy, pouring with rain, and those entering the Gönpa on the last day of retreat have the dazed expression of people who have just come through a storm. A river of water, but also a river of people. More than three hundred people, 330 to be exact, participated in the five-day retreat that is about to end. Many others did so via webcast.

The title of the retreat is simple and clear – learn the practice of contemplation – and refers to the instructions that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave in 1980 during a famous retreat in Monte Faito, near Naples. From the first, simple transcription of that retreat, Costantino Albini put together in 2002 *An Introduction to the Practice of Contemplation*, an elegant edition that Shang Shung Publications now offers in a lower-priced version.

Costantino Albini, Fabio Andrico, Elio Guarisco, Steven Landsberg, Igor Legati, Fabio Risolo and Stoffelina Verdonk, in turn, lead the morning and afternoon sessions in



the Gönpa. They are all students who have acquired experience in this practice and who make it available to newcomers but also to old, somewhat rusty practitioners.

All those present train in finding a calm state of mind using fixation on an object and without an object. For the fixation with an object each person has a stick on which the Tibetan letter A is fixed, a simple yet effective tool that everyone can take home at the end of the retreat to continue to practice in everyday life.

Each session is enriched by the participation of highly experienced Yantra Yoga instructors, Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti. This way we learn to breathe naturally and correctly, and the nine purification breathings, the first of the eight movements and the basics of rhythmic breathing are explained in detail.

The instructions and practice related to fixation and breathing are the backbone of

the retreat, but activities do not end there. Along with the traditional afternoon appointments with Khaita Joyful Dances and Dance of the Vajra, there are presentations in the library and in the Mandala Room in order to offer the most complete picture of the main activities and practices of the Community.

Once again Merigar shows its generous hospitality: everyone is offered something to eat at lunchtime and the opportunity to take a trip to the sea. The weather is beautiful and Merigar shines with all the colors of the summer.

Only on the last day a storm reminds us that everything can change suddenly. But there is something joyful in the fierce rain, in the lightning and thunder, like a gigantic laugh. So when we finish the ganapuja we are not surprised that the sun is shining once again. ©

Yoga On a Chair... And Not Only

Yantra Yoga with Fabio Andrico at Merigar, September 1–2, 2018

Sergio Quaranta

As a Yantra Yoga teacher I had been waiting, together with many others I'm sure, for an official and coordinated way to present Yantra Yoga to those who are not flexible enough to apply Yantra Yoga at its full potential. Many people who come into contact with Yantra Yoga



as beginners are extremely interested and keen, but not all are fit enough to apply it to a satisfactory degree.

We know that breathing, in coordination with the sequences of movements, is one

of the most important and qualifying aspects in Yantra Yoga, and it is the one that students appreciate the most, because the benefits are evident and amazing, so it was really good to see the entire sequence of the *Lungsang* performed on a chair, complete with the characteristics of inhaling, exhaling and holding in the correct way.

In addition Fabio Andrico presented a number of warm-ups for the body and for the breathing that can be very useful for people with limitations, but also for anyone wishing to do something in a normal situation, like sitting at a desk in an office, on an airplane, bus and so forth.

This can of course be very helpful, but the idea that really almost anybody can perform the Eight Movements sitting on a

Khalongdorjekar of the Song of the Vajra

Rita Renzi

In the intense and well-participated summer 2018 program at Merigar, ample space was given to several courses and retreats of practice of the Dance of the Vajra. In particular, from 18 to 21 August, there was a meeting of the study group of the new dance, *Khalongdorjekar* of the Song of the Vajra, or in short "Dance of Space".

The original text, written by our Master Chögyal Namkai Norbu, was translated a few years ago by Adriano Clemente and then studied deeply by Prima Mai. First of all we had to understand how to draw the symbol of the *Longsal*, following the indications and proportions indicated in the text; then move on to the 'path' and steps to be performed on the Mandala. Another fundamental aspect was to understand how many people could dance simultaneously on the Mandala, avoiding "collisions" or difficult passages.

From the first study groups, started about a couple of years ago, slowly progress and familiarity with the steps and with the dimension of this new dance were clarified and it was possible to also add the *mudras*, as indicated in the root text.

The initial program was therefore to have two groups, a beginner's, to learn the steps and timing, and the other of slightly more experienced practitioners, to devote more time to the *mudras* and to the interaction of the dance, to find harmony with

chair, I find particularly precious! This really opens up the possibility to a huge number of students.

Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti have worked together and, with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's advice, found an easy and accessible solution that not only allows people to experience the various types of breathing, but maintains the correct sequence and rhythm, which is also crucial in the practice of Yantra.

A video has been shot, so we will have a base to check, remember and hopefully develop this very important tool. I just can't wait to apply it myself and to introduce it in my classes. ©



Photo by Sasha Popov

the movement and with the sound of the Song of the Vajra.

It was a wonderful surprise when Roberto Cacciapaglia, who gave a beautiful musical performance in the Merigar west Gönpa, invited us the day after the concert to professionally record a chorus with the melody of the Song of the Vajra, the Dance for the Liberation of Beings, and the Dance of the Three Vajras. So the Khalong Dance Study Group gathered to practice and then professionally record all the melodies of the three Dances, aided by a conductor of the caliber of Roberto Cacciapaglia and by Prima Mai. A wonderful experience for everyone, which certainly made us understand even more the importance of the integration of sound with the dance movements.

The following days were a continuous training, with the most experienced people collaborating with those who were taking their first steps, and with continuous repetitions of the Dance, in an atmosphere of heartfelt participation. At least a hundred people were able to enter, even if only for a short time, in the harmony of this dance and to remain enchanted. In the apparent simplicity of the steps and the path to follow on the symbol of the *Khalong*, this Dance brings us face-to-face with the need of an absolute presence of the dimension of time and space since every wrong step or movement out of time breaks the harmony of everything, making us therefore aware of the absolute non-separation with the other dancers.

In our tests and following what is indicated in the root text, at least 36 people, that is, 18 pairs of *pawo* and *pamo* can dance simultaneously on the *Mandala*, each singing the Song of the Vajra in a sort of canon, creating a collective vibration of sound that is particularly interesting.

There are still many things to discover about this Dance, but the great participation and interest shown by so many practitioners will certainly lead to an even greater harmony and deeper knowledge. Our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu continually gives us wonderful teachings and dancing on the *Khalong* spontaneously and naturally gives rise to a deep gratitude for his enormous generosity and compassion.

As Prima Mai wrote in the introduction to the booklet published by Shang Shung, "Keeping at least good intentions in our hearts at all times, let's dance!"

For those interested, Shang Shung Publications has published a booklet edited by Prima Mai where it is already possible to study at least the 'path' and the different syllables of the Song of the Vajra linked to the steps on the Mandala.

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/search?controller=search&orderby=position&orderway=desc&search_query=dance+of+space&submit_search= ©



Concert at the Merigar West Gönpa with Roberto Cacciapaglia

On Saturday August 18, 2018 the Gönpa at Merigar West became the venue for a marvellous concert with world famous composer/pianist and long-standing member of the Dzogchen Community, Roberto Cacciapaglia. The event was open to all and an enthusiastic audience from both the Community and the local villages filled the hall to capacity. Roberto's unique music and the magical atmosphere of the Gönpa set against the backdrop of a striking sunset over the gently rolling Tuscan hills combined to make this a very special and memorable event.

The concert was organised to raise funds for the long awaited renovation of the Merigar West Gönpa and participation was based on donation. The total amount of 5,700 euro was raised including Roberto's generous gesture of donating the proceeds of sale of his signed CDs to the Gönpa fund.

The whole event was made possible with the participation of Roberto's assistants – sound technician Giampiero Dionigi, Claudio Bertini stage and billboards, Fabio Di Marco piano transport, and Luca Gnudi tour manager – as well as Merigar's general sound technician for the Gönpa, Alessandro di Maio, and numerous volunteers from the Gar, all of whom made this one of the highlights of a very busy summer season at Merigar West. ©



Khaita Joyful Dances – Notes

Adriana Dall Borgo

Since the beginning of Khaita Joyful Dances in November 2011, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has been continuously and actively suggesting, modifying, and elaborating some movements of our dances or 'simply' empowering them with His Presence!

How fortunate we are! For some years we have enjoyed and counted on His support and infinite compassion to develop, side by side with the Master, a method called "Harmony in Space", that harmonizes our most cantankerous qualities through melody and movement and concretely teaches us the profound meaning of the word 'collaboration'.

Today we have more than 200 dances! From the easiest to the more complex ones, all of them reflect one main principle: dancing together harmoniously. Rhythm guides our steps and we dance together in a unified flow, the symbolic *mandala* of the Dzogchen Community. Our joy and deep harmony as well as our mistakes or worries, all represent an offering, the supreme offering that is, as practitioners, the state of integration.

We have different kind of Khaita dances:

- *kordros* (*kor*=circle + *dro*=dance) that we have slightly elaborated or totally taken from the original videos;
- dances with choreography that our dancers have created, inspired by the music and the meaning of the songs;
- the Dzamling Gar Dance, a unique dance, composed by Rinpoche and choreographed in collaboration with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and myself.

A few words about the Dzamling Gar Song and Dance

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu composed the song of Dzamling Gar at the end of 2012, on the occasion of the birth of Dzamling Gar, the Global Gar of the Dzogchen Community. At that time Rinpoche was living in a house in La Caleta, swimming every day in a nice open pool with a view of the ocean. It was in a relaxed and joyful moment when the melody and the words of the song arose in His mind.

The dance

In those days, following Rinpoche's request – "Now we should create a dance for this song" – Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo suggested some movements from traditional Tibetan dances and I combined them with some others: this way the first choreography of the Dzamling Gar Dance was created. At that time, we repeated the same steps for all three parts of the song.

A few months later, while we were dancing at Tashigar South and Rinpoche was carefully watching us and writing down some notes, at one point He decided to change the second and third parts and clearly explained to me how to do it.

In the second part a step called *teng-dros* – a way of moving and the directions of the dance (proceeding toward the center of the circle and then opening outside) – was introduced. This new dynamic is the application and represents the meaning of the second part of the song.

The third part is completely different: here the movements are more essential and symbolic, each one being strictly connected to the corresponding words.

In the following years, Rinpoche suggested some more changes, such as the way of turning: we were almost always turning to the left but, as we are Dzogchen practitioners, "We should also turn right, balancing both ways".

In the most recent video of the Dzamling Gar dance, shot in Dzamling Gar in August 2018, you can clearly see all the movements done precisely by our Khaita dancers. We were fortunate to have the support of professional people and equipment (Elena Ihlicik with her drone, Carles Jaz cameramen, Thomas Simoen shooting and editing). We also shot the new video to support the preparations for the upcoming inauguration of the new Conference Hall. During the celebration in December, those who know it well will perform and offer the Dzamling Gar Dance to Rinpoche, Rosa and all the guests.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBivlCJolik&t=1s> ©



51st World Congress of Dance Research

Athens, Greece, July 4–8, 2018

The International Dance Council CID founded in 1973 is the official organization for all forms of dance in all countries of the world, and an official partner of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Their 51st World Congress of Dance Research held in Athens, Greece, July 4–8, 2018, invited experts in all forms of dance around the world to present lectures and demonstrations of dance during the event. The invitation was also extended to instructors of Vajra Dance and Khaita Joyful Dances from the International Dzogchen Community.

Links between the International Dzogchen Community and the International Dance Council go back to 2011 when Prof. Namkhai Norbu first met Prof. Raftis in Moscow at the Dzogchen Forum organized by Yeshe Silvano Namkhai. Shortly after that meeting, collaboration began with the entry of the Dance of the Vajra into the Global Dance Directory of the International Dance Council, and more recently Khaita Joyful Dances. Prof. Raftis travelled to Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, in March 2016, and together with Prof. Namkhai Norbu presented CID certificates to Vajra Dance instructors and Khaita qualified experts.

Most of all the participation of dancers from the Dzogchen Community in a public event like this has been very much inspired by Rinpoche and Rosa as an opening outside the Dzogchen Community. Today this is the direction in which our dancers are moving, providing a bridge that can link the Community to a larger public, particularly through Khaita Joyful Dances.

Four dance instructors from the International Dzogchen Community travelled to Athens to take part in this important event: Rosemary Friend from Australia to give a talk on the Vajra Dance, Salima Celeri and her daughter Giulia Yangcen Mimaciren came from Italy to present Khaita Joyful Dances, while Adriana Dal Borgo led a workshop on Khaita Dances.

The event was attended by 225 participants from 34 countries of the 5 continents, who presented traditional dances, modern dances and others that were more innovative. During the four day congress, there were 66 lectures, 49 classes, 66 performances, 4 video projections, and 4 exhibitions. Although there were great differences in costumes, language, and style, the common factor of dance was a cohesive element during the days of the gathering. In fact, one of the missions of the CID is to encourage different groups to meet, communicate, and spend time together. As our representatives reported, the conference was very open, joyful and welcoming.

The Greek Dzogchen Community also played an important supporting role to the event by welcoming and hosting the Community dancers with great kindness during their stay. Many thanks to the Community of Athens and also to Luna Lattarulo who helped to coordinate the trip.

On the same days as the Congress, instructor Elisha Koppensteiner led a course on the Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings with the Greek Community and on the last day, our CID dance instructors were able to participate together with the Greek Community and Elisha in a ganapuja at Garab Ling, the Athens ling, during which they performed the Dance of the Vajra. As a final sign of good auspiciousness for both events, a strong rain closed the session on the last day. ©

Journey to the East

Empowering the Merigar East Mandala

As you probably know, Merigar East is a place of great power and for us practitioners very special because of the possibility of being together, and creating a space that still reveals its infinite potential and great possibilities. Part of these wonderful experiences of being together is the camping area, a place particularly related to the energy of our relationships – joy, discovery, preparation of meals, sitting by the fire, singing songs, dance...

Over the past few years, this empty space has begun to grow and take on its own character. The Gönpa, three platforms with mandalas for the Vajra Dance and recently a dormitory with a kitchen, dharma shop, bathrooms and guest rooms, and sun protected terrace have appeared like flowers from fruitful crop fields. Modesty and functionality are aspects worth valuing in Merigar East, because those are the circumstances here. We are also aware that the economic aspects of staying at the Gar are of great importance to its visiting practitioners and thanks to the aforementioned camping and dormitory their stay and practice is more accessible.

This incredible comfort of staying in a place of such great power arose mainly thanks to our Master and the joint work of many practitioners from all over the world, and from this place we would like to thank all of them, as well as the great carer, the Gekö, and hundreds of people who have visited this place over the years. We feel that it is our home – a piece of land near to our heart surrounded by fields of sunflowers and a strong wind coming from the wild Black Sea. It is empty, open space with a stunning starry night sky, joyful trips to the sea, swimming naked during the full moon, dancing to breathlessness and warm evenings by the fire. That is how our joint meetings are, which are sometimes life-changing.

Caring for our mutual relationships is as important as formal practice, which in fact is a great discovery at Merigar East, as well as the satisfaction of working together for all of us. This place is still wild and unbridled, showing our capabilities and lim-



itations. The space of the elemental power and the empowerment of our Master is in itself a teacher and shows that there is a strength in us and strength to work with this place for the benefit of all beings, trying to make Rinpoche's vision vivid and meaningful. It is not really about land and buildings, but about us, about our relationships and joint actions for the benefit of maintaining teachings and mutual relationships, because we become more and more mature and understand the responsibility entrusted to us by the Teacher. This requires participation and cooperation. Rinpoche's dedication exceeds our understanding and many times here at Merigar East we have been able to be really close to him and feel the enormous joy that he draws from this place and from our commitment. Just the fact that we are able to act together with joy and courage was it possible to feel that the Master was cheerful and relaxed in this place during the transmission of teachings.

We want to take care of this place and the people who come here. We have a few projects that we are working on and ask you to support, which we have presented on the ME website and in our newsletters. In short, it is about expanding and improving the conditions in the camping area (finishing the ecological toilets, renovating the bathrooms and expanding and improving the campsite itself); creating garage space and tool storage; finishing the construction of the stupas, one of which requires only finishing and cosmetic work, while the other is in very rough condition and requires financial support.

Next is the kitchen in the dormitory: buying professional kitchen equipment, installing a ventilation system, making furniture and optimizing the space for the best possible use during retreats. It is also necessary to improve ventilation in the bath-

rooms and toilets. Another thing is the care of the Gar surroundings – a huge area that is extremely difficult to keep in good condition including a grassy area, paths around the Gönpa, and the campground. If you have ideas on how to deal with such a space and give it a practical, sustainable and aesthetic character, let us know.

We are also waiting to renovate the Gönpa because weather conditions are extremely severe in Merigar East and corrosion proceeds very quickly. We will have to paint the Gönpa from the outside and get rid of moisture inside. Recently we launched a so-called "camping rental," (short/long term rental of tents and sleeping bags). The upcoming plan is to buy a few bicycles to rent for magnificent rides by the coast or practical shopping rides in the village. Last but not least on the "to do" list is renovation of the Gekö's (in Tibetan the word Gekö means "virtuous" or "guardian of virtue") house, because we want to care for all comers.

Merigar East depends on the power of karmayoga – us practitioners. The priority is to create optimal conditions for joint work – which in practice means the possibility of sleeping at the Gar, common practices, rest and relaxation. We can offer optimal conditions for short term and long term stay for karmayoga or work exchange. We have a wonderful sea, nice restaurants, many wellness sites, spa and mud baths, a well-stocked market in Mangalia, and an ecological shop. In addition to this there is the famous local Ursus beer and house one wine, which combine well with sunsets or bonfires.

We invite all of you to come to Merigar East, because karma yoga is a perfect practice – the effects can be seen right away, and the dedication to others is simply obvious.

Your Merigar East Team



Merigar East Annual General Assembly and New Gakyil

The Annual General Assembly Meeting of Merigar East was held during the summer retreat entitled 'Introduction to the practice of presence and awareness' with Fabio Risolo in 23 August (the village name) on 29 July 2018. A new Gakyil was unanimously elected in the presence of members of the Gar, Lings and community members. We managed to enlarge the group from 3 to 6 Gakyil members in order to be able to cover all the duties and activities that are necessary to support the Sangha and for the smooth running of the Gar.



L-r: Kveta Svedova, Magda Ourecka, Erika Motylova, Veronika Mihai. Front row: Piotr Marcik, Marcin Piniak, Alexandru Anton.

As new members we would like to say THANK YOU to the previous Gakyil: Lucian Maidanuc, Csaba Molnar and Magda Ourecka (she decided to continue) who did a great job, and gave a lot of support and collaboration. We hope we can continue to improve and develop all the qualities of this place so that it can become a place for joy, collaboration and relaxation for all beings.

Merigar East Gakyil 2018

Blue: Erika Motylova (SK),
Veronika Mihai (RO)
Red: Piotr Marcik (PL),
Marcin Piniak (PL)
Yellow: Magda Ourecka (CZ),
Kveta Svedova (CZ)
Geko: Alexandru Anton (RO)

Reflections and Recollections on the Summer Retreat

Merigar East July 27–31, 2018

We would like to share with you some of the experiences and beautiful moments from this place and also the time that we all spent together among the fields of gold near the Black Sea.

We were happy that we could host the precious teacher Fabio Risolo. The topic of the retreat was simple, 'The Path of Liberation, Introduction to the practice of presence and awareness'. Easy to say but...luck-



Our daily program ended with Khaita. We used songs from the collection 'Message from Tibet 108' with our local instructors Monika Walczak, Erika Motylova and Wojciech Torczynski.

This time of the retreat was special for many reasons. There was a partial solar



ily we had the chance to practice together and clarify all the experiences that manifested during the short practices.

The complete daily program was enriched with regular Yantra Yoga practice and an open course of Yantra Yoga for beginners with Magda Ourecka, who recently moved to the Gar and will be permanent resident, secretary and helper of the Geko and will continue in her role as yellow gakyil.

During the early mornings and afternoons it was time to dance on the mandala with Eleonora Folegnani who was leading the Three Vajras dance course for beginners and gave glimpses of simple, slow and fluid movements. But the time and space of this Gar in Romania also offered people the possibility to rest and enjoy the waves, the night shining plankton of the Black Sea which is just a 15-minute walk from the Gar.

eclipse in the sky, we had the inauguration of the new camping kitchen and fireplace, the meeting of the local lings and general assembly ending up with voting for the new Gakyil. The whole retreat had the atmosphere of collaboration and people cooked together national food, prepared and participated in the smooth running of the event. We had different nationalities collaborating and sharing local songs, food and fun. Thank YOU! This retreat would not have been the same without you.

We hope our description of the summer retreat will bring you closer to the atmosphere of the Gar, but if this doesn't work please come to Merigar East and experience it for yourself. Come to enjoy, to be together and continue what was established by our Master.



Vajra Dance Drubchen

Merigar East, August 2–7, 2018

The Danube River flows through several countries in Europe until it reaches its destination – the Black Sea. The sea from which, with the first rays of the rising sun, the dolphins welcome the morning. What could be more harmonious than following that up with a nice morning session

of Yantra Yoga. At Merigar East on the coast of Romania, participants from the countries of the Danube River took part in this intensive retreat on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra combined with the Practice of Gomadevi with Zoli Cser, August 2–7, 2018.

The Dance on the three outside solar mandalas at sunset was miraculous. The intense and colorful daily schedule ended with Chöd practice and on the August 6 we did a Ganapuja.

We had a bonus day with a 24 hour Vajra Dance Drubchen, an exclusive practice when the mandala was active from 10am to the next day at 10am. All the Pamos and Pawos were keen to dance during the Drubchen, so most of the time the mandala was full! Even at the hardest times (from 5am to 7am) the minimum were four dancers on the mandala. We had such a warm atmosphere with learning, practicing and dancing together. Merigar East is so spacey that you can see the whole horizon, all the stars, and some said there are glowing planktons in the sea! ©

Inner and Secret Rushen Practice Retreat

With Elio Guarisco
Merigar East, August 22–28, 2018

At the end of a wonderful summer season at Merigar East this year we had one final retreat with Elio Guarisco. The topic was very attractive for us all, as Elio was kind enough to offer essential explanations and plenty of opportunities to practice the rushens contained in *The Stairway to Liberation*, written by our dearest Rinpoche in 1976.

Coming from several corners of the world, the participants managed to add yet another adventurous episode to the Merigar East saga: people from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and the USA blended harmoniously, collaborated efficiently and had fun together, going beyond all cultural differences.

We were also honored to have Oliver Leick as a surprise participant, who offered many sessions of physical warm-ups and



rhythmic breathing – helping us recover our freshness for the next sitting practice.

Although the schedule was quite tight, starting at 5am, the Black Sea wild beach proved again to be irresistible for most of the yogis and yoginis during the afternoon break. In the evenings we did our best to balance the long sitting practices and so we had barbecues and various excursions into Italian cuisine thanks to the gastronomical benevolence of some of the participants who, after a long day, showed infinite compassion in filling our bellies. Others went beyond hope and fear and entered the joke-telling competition, transmitting

traditional wisdom in a most non-conventional way. Very enjoyable was also the improvised music around the fire – this time we were lucky enough to have three very talented guitarists among us – and plenty of other enthusiasts who shared songs.

All in all, together we set yet another precedent for the retreats to come: everybody is welcome to participate and enjoy, using the spacious potential of Merigar East to manifest spontaneously.

In the photo you can connect to the joy we experienced in the new camping kitchen as we were savoring one of the finest manifestations of Ukrainian borsch. ©



Putting up the sor shing.

Photo by Jiří Langpaul

So Ya Re Lo! What a Wonder!

Works on the Longsal stupa at Phendeling

This summer we experienced a very nice event of filling the stupa at Phendeling, the Community center in South Bohemia in the Czech Republic. Af-

ter 3 years of preparations the important day of 16th July (Anniversary of Dharma-chakra) was chosen to put the *sog-shing* inside and place all the precious objects inside the stupa. We were very happy that Migmar Tsering could join us and help with preparations and the filling.

Although this Longsal stupa is not finished yet – a statue of Garab Dorje still has to be inserted, the Longsal added and the consecration ritual needs to be performed – we would like to share with you a few photos and the feeling of the sangha, which was very precious to us.

We met around 50 practitioners and everybody who helped on that occasion and not only us, but also those who could not join us, those who supported the stupa with donations, preparation works, good thoughts and intentions not only during these days, but over all these years. Even people who were cooking and preparing the

food, cleaning and dancing Khaita, and the children playing around. Everybody has played an essential part of the whole. It was very nice to see, that even during small turbulences, we are able to cooperate together and help each other during the works on the stupa, which can bring benefit for innumerable sentient beings. We would like to thank all of you, our precious Sangha, for your participation and for creating this community experience.

We are still looking for the statue of Garab Dorje (size: 50 cm / 19.685 in). If anybody knows about a statue or would like to offer one, we would be very grateful. You can contact us on blue@dzogchen.cz. ☺



After ganapuja.

Photo by Alžběta Diringeroová



Summer Festivals in Czech Republic with Khaita Joyful Dances

Summer time is already over, but we would like to warm your hearts with joy from the summer festivals, in which we participated with Khaita Joyful Dances. For some of these events it was not

the first time that we had participated and we had become a regular part of their program. Already in early spring time we were invited to Tibetan Evening at the City Hall in Prague 4 (19 March 2018). There was half day dedicated to Tibetan life, lectures about life style in Tibet and food tasting with delicious tsampa balls and salty tea.

After that, the biggest event we have performed was in Prague at the Festival Kaleidoskop (June 9, 2018). This is a multi-

cultural festival that brings together a mixture of cultures, food and habits from all over the world. So we couldn't miss that with our joyful message.

Although it was raining, the sun popped up for a while and we were able to show our *kordro* (circle) dances – mixed choreography of 5 different songs. People appreciated that and at the end we just danced together a few circle dances until the rain started again.

The latest event we participated in was Himalaya Day in Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures (June 23, 2018). To present the cultures of different countries and regions, the museum regularly organizes cultural events. Our performance was held on a small stage in the courtyard of the museum.

A second performance took place inside in the conference room, where we were supported by great audience. At the end of the demonstration some of the people joined us in circle dance *Ling Lang Gyalmo* for perfect harmony.

We hope this will give you a small glimpse of the joy we always feel when we are dancing and collaborating together!

With best wishes from all Khaita dancers!

“Nature of Mind”

Retreat at Kunsangar North, Russia,
July 19–23, 2018

On behalf of all the participants and organizers, I express my heartfelt gratitude for the interesting and intensive Retreat “Nature of the mind” to:

- SMS instructors: Igor Berkhin, Alexander Pubanz, Grigory Mokhin, Alexander Mochalkin, Vlad Bespalov! Your explanations were interesting, exciting and exhaustive!
- Yantra Yoga instructors : Fabio Andrico, Victor Krachkovsky, Mira Mironova, Alexei Shadrov, Yanina Bekshibaeva, Asya Panfilova, Irina Novikova! Yantra Yoga was the most popular during the retreat!



- Vajra Dance Instructors: Tatyana Pronicheva, Olga Nimachuk, Natalia Makarova, Manidari Dobdonova, Ulyana Sokolova. The program was very interesting, intensive and well organized!
- Khaita instructors: Julia Petrova, Natalia Makarova, Ulyana Sokolova, Vladimir Belyaev and Victoria Adamenko. Thank you for the training and wonderful show!



Everything was useful and interesting!
About 200 people from different cities of Russia took part in the retreat of North Kunsangar. Thank you for being here!

By broadcast – the largest number of connections – 1074 connections to the Russian language channel and 170 connections to the English channel.

For all interested, a link to the recording of retreat sessions (in Russian) can be obtained by request at the address kunsangar.north.retreat@gmail.com.

Many thanks to translators: Elena Pakhno, Vladimir Smirnov, Andrey Emelyanov, Olga Yudina, Alexander Pubants.

Special gratitude to the organizers of the broadcast: Andrei Pushkarev and Roman Grachev!

Thanks to Lena Hertz, the leading practitioner of Ganapujal

Thanks to our kitchen and dining room staff ! Everything was on time and very tasty !

Thanks to the organizers of the photo exhibition to celebrate the 20th anniversary of North Kunsangar!

Thanks to the organizers, employees and karma yogis !

There is a proposal to do such retreats annually!

See you in North Kunsangar next summer!

©

Recent Samtengar Courses in China



Shenzhen Yantra Yoga Open course with Tracy Ni, July 28–30, 2018.



Guangzhou the Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings with Tracy Ni, August 4–5, 2018.

Renovations of the Fortress of the Dakinis

Khandroling, Buckland, MA

Miranda Shannon – Blue Gakyil of Tsegyalgar

The renovations and updates to the Fortress of the Dakinis (Rinpoche's retreat cabin) at Khandroling will soon be complete. Thanks to Paula Barry and Jim Smith for their dedication to this project, and for the hard work of the many karma yogis who assisted them.

As of Saturday, September 8th, the scaffolding was removed from Rinpoche's cabin, and is now set up around the Khandroling Stupa, which is dedicated to Rinpoche's long life. Jim Smith has begun the repairs with the assistance of karma yogis. ©



Paula and John work on cabin, September 2018.



Jim and Sarale on the stupa, 2018.

Tsegyalgar East's 3rd Annual Summer Sangha Retreat

Mark Alston-Follansbee

"It is wonderful to practice with practitioners from all over the globe. It means so much to those of us who live here to have the joy of practicing with you on Khandroling." – Paula Barry, Yantra Yoga Instructor

Tsegyalgar East's 3rd Annual Summer Sangha Retreat recently concluded with upwards of seventy practitioners together on Khandroling, The Land



Khaita with guest instructor Alejandra Krasnogar.

of the Dakinis. With concern and love for our precious Master and his health, we practiced the treasures he has given us

all day and into the evening for eight days. While all the teaching and practices were essential, I am left reflecting on the harmony and collaboration among all of the participants. This retreat really felt like the Community Rinpoche has taught us to be.

Organized by the Blue Gakyil's Miranda Shannon and Nancy Paris with a wonderful complement of qualified teachers, we practiced, danced, listened and studied. The wild – and unpredictable – weather played its part, especially during the full moon Ganapuja in the Vajra Hall when the thunder and lightning surrounded our practice. We were all grateful for the enormous work Community members have done that built our Vajra Hall with its Universal Mandala and kept us safe from the elements. We're also grateful to be able to drive all

» continued on the following page



Yancheng Retreat of Vajra Dance and Tun practices with Wes Guo, August 24–30, 2018.

» *Sangha Retreat* continued from previous page
the way to the top of the hill and park near the Hall.

"It was wonderful to see so many old friends and meet some new and eager to learn practitioners," reflected Mariano Gil, one of our Santi Maha Sangha instructors who taught and led practices on the short Tun, Ganapuja, and Guru Yoga, among other practices. "I thought the organization was great and I was able to focus on my courses and also attend fellow instructors dance, yoga and Santi Maha Sangha sessions. This area and this land hold so many memories of teachings and times with our precious Master, it was humbling to participate as an instructor for the first time. Thanks to everyone!" Thank you, Mariano, and to all our excellent instructors.

Nancy and Miranda created a daily program to ensure both new and old students of Rinpoche would have a good retreat. It was an excellent mix of practice and theory every day that kept us all engaged. The Community has many qualified instructors



Santi Maha Sangha with Mariano Gil.

Truly great to have this profound recurring dream together," said Michael Katz, a Santi Maha Sangha instructor who taught and led practices including the 25 Spaces of Samantabhadra and the Purification of the Six Lokas.

"I had a wonderful time at this year's Summer Sangha Retreat at Khandroling," said Brian Harris from Boston. "Community support has been a crucial factor for me in gaining confidence in these teachings. The

Brian concluded that "for as long as I can remember, my habitual bearing in daily life has been one of reserve, holding back from engagement so as to preempt the risk of being hurt. My pursuit of the paths of transformation and self-liberation has clarified my understanding that there is no way out but through. Rather than treating spirituality as a form of escapism, I have come to realize that the only way to establish myself and all sentient beings in causeless joy is the complete integration of ordinary experience in its natural state. I am deeply grateful to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for introducing me to this beautiful and authentic vehicle of liberation."

**Announcing Summer 2019
at Khandroling – Save the Dates!**

4th Annual Summer Sangha Retreat
July 20 – July 28, 2019

2nd Annual Dance, Dance, Dance
at Khandroling, August 1 – August 18, 2019

More summer programs to be announced.

For updates visit Tsegylgar.org or contact: bluegakyl@tsegylgar.org ©



Summer Sangha Retreat Group Photo.

either at the Gar or in New York. To have a qualified Khaita Joyful Dances teacher for the retreat, the organizers brought Alejandro Krasnogor, an instructor in Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga as well, from Argentina to teach and lead the daily Khaita dancing. Rinpoche would have been happy to see the joy and energy of these practices.

Paula Barry, who taught Yantra Yoga and Pranayamas with Naomi Zeitz, said, "It is wonderful to practice with practitioners from all over the globe. It means so much to those of us who live here to have the joy of practicing with you on Khandroling."

"It was a great inspiration and joy to dance and practice with our Vajra brothers and sisters on our sacred land Khandroling.

rich array of practices that Rinpoche has taught us for discovering our real condition and exploring its implications are unparalleled. At times, this very richness has been overwhelming; however, whenever I feel the need to find my bearings, Ati Guruyoga refreshes my view and sets everything in proper perspective.

"I appreciate both the opportunity to deepen my acquaintance with traditional Tibetan wisdom and the invitation to knowingly participate in a reality beyond the limits of space and time. This mode of engagement has enlivened my sense of interdependence, not only with fellow dharma practitioners or humanity but with all sentient beings of the six realms."

Warm Greetings to the International Dzogchen Community from Tsegyalgar West, Mexico

In these days that mark the end of the summer, the last preparations and work for the start of the new season are ending. The indications seem good also for this coming year, with an increasing interest and participation in the life of Gar by the local sangha from local people completely new to the Community, who more and more frequently visit to ask for information, know the place and know the activities that are organized.

The Gar is magnificent. The frequent and light rains of this year have already transformed the Gar into its best presentation of the sub-tropical climate. Canyons full of water, bright green and fresh from the variegated vegetation of big plants that go from the palms, oaks, different qualities of mesquite, secular Ficus of India, mango, the various of palo dearco, palo sorillo, palo chino, palo negro, PALO as they are called here, the varieties of local flora, and the wide variety of large and small cacti widespread in the most arid parts of the Terra del Gar. A real pleasure to which we hope



more and more numerous Vajra brothers and sisters can access and enjoy.

For the practitioners who have already reserved for the next months and for all those who are interested in visiting the Gar for a personal retreat, last year we finished to adapt four of the fifteen bungalows of the Gar with internal private bathrooms and kitchens, in order to guarantee a comfortable and completely autonomous private space. To practice outside and with the elements, the Gar is a property of 1300 hectares inside in a very large natural re-



serve inhabited by a few families of farmers. The staff of the Gar will help you to know which areas are the best and most suitable for practicing in absolute tranquility on the outside.

The Gönpa of the Gar is always available for those wishing to practice the Dance of Vajra or any other practice. A corner is organized with a screen for those who need



to watch a video of the teaching or something just to relax; please bring the material you need with you.

It may happen that on a week-end local groups use the infrastructure of the Gar for Yoga or Meditation retreats, but this should not disturb anyone who is on a personal retreat. We are facilitating the use of the Gar to local groups, since we would like them to connect with the Gar and this can be the secondary cause for these people to have a connection with the teaching of our Master. In fact, the Gar's infrastructure is ideal for group programs. There are fifteen houses for groups of fifteen to forty people, a Gönpa of 110 square meters, an outdoor and covered space of the same size, and a large professional kitchen with a refectory. Already some local yoga groups, meditation, personal motivation, ecologists, even the students of a local school have used the Gar for some very interesting programs.

We want to communicate that if there are people from the Dzogchen communities interested in bringing any teacher training program or intensive course of some practice for their group of practitioners, a city group for example, or some Dzogchen Community Instructor who could be interested in bringing their own study group of Santi Maha Sangha for a medium to long period of practice at Tsegyalgar West, remember that the Gar is your home and the Gakyil will be happy to meet you in all that is possible to facilitate for you. The same goes for those IDC instructors who would like to devote some time to a longer personal retreat. Tsegyalgar West Gakyil will be happy to facilitate your visit and your stay.



As for the group retreats organized by the Gakyil of Tsegyalgar West, we want to announce that Nina Robinson will be in TW from December 19, 2018 to January 23, 2019 to conduct the practice of Mandarava and for a shorter program of the Chöd. The details will be announced shortly via Norbunet.

From December 28th to January 1st we are planning "Vacation-Retreat" with yoga, meditation, dance, cooking and other activities designed to integrate new and local people with the reality of the Dzogchen Community.

For information:

secretary@tsegyalgarwest.org



Sacred Journey to East Tibet/Kham August 2018

Lidian King

In the middle of May I searched for a place to go in August when the Rogue Valley of South Oregon gets enveloped in toxic wildfire smoke. A link from Kunselling in Wales directed me to Shang Shung Institute, London, where Jamyang Oliphant of Insight Travels and Shang Shung Institute UK were offering a three-week pilgrimage to East Tibet/Kham in August. In a flash, I knew I had to go. To visit the land where our master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was born and raised, to experience directly the many outstanding monasteries and places connected with our lineage of renowned masters and *tertöns* (all the while revitalizing my memories of rich and fascinating stories Rinpoche has told over the years) became an imperative. Having applied practices from these masters for the past thirty years, I already felt deeply connected.

Our meeting point was Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. After lengthy flights from Europe, Russia, UK and America, nineteen people formed our group along with an intrepid Chinese driver and indefatigable Tibetan guide, Lobsang. I felt blessed that my daughter Leah could accompany me. After visiting some sites in the sweltering heat and humidity of Chengdu, we were anxious to get on our way. It soon became apparent that the Chinese are feverishly constructing new roads, tunnels, and super highways that will by-pass much of the traditional landscapes. Big hotels and apartment complexes are also a common site in many of the towns. Cement mixers, heavy construction vehicles and large transport trucks became a daily sight.

In Luding/Chaksamka we walked above the roaring Gyarong River on a famous iron suspension bridge reputedly built by the Mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo. His influence on Tibetan culture is unparalleled. Often called the “Leonardo of Tibet”, in addition to his artistic and engineering contributions, he was a great practitioner who tamed negative forces and constructed *stupas* and temples on sacred points throughout Tibet (and Bhutan). These sensitive “acupuncture points” connect and harmonize the whole of Tibet along energy lines. This is truly palpable. In 1857 Cho-



Dzogchen Monastery monks.

Photo by Rocco

gyur Lingpa's *terma* revealed the names of numerous sacred sites throughout Kham and Amdo that were blessed by Padma-sambhava and connect with the B-V-M-Q-A of enlightened wisdom. Kham was finally confirmed as a place for sacred pilgrimage.

Once we passed the border town Dartsedo, famous for its tea trade (and the lovely Dorje Drak Monastery), the land came alive with *stupas*, gilded temple domes, prayer flags and mantra carvings dotting the hillsides, rocky cliffs, river stones, etc., all inevitably serving as protective forces and a clear reminder that the power of the Buddha dharma is alive and well in Tibet. Not only that, the land became rich with the colorful and beautiful decorative arts of Tibetan village structures. We proceeded at a fast pace, but from Bamei to Tawu and Kandze we passed through rich green rolling hills with grazing yaks and swift rivers, farmlands, high peaks and many mountain passes. I delighted in the varied features of each region and the magnificent skies of ever-shifting white cumulous clouds against a brilliant blue expanse. In a flash the skies can turn into churning dark and ominous clouds only to revert quickly back to clear blue skies. The power of the raw elements of nature is the most intense I have experienced anywhere. And it was summer. I can't imagine the harshness of winter!

From Kandze we gained altitude rapidly passing through more rural scenery and entering the heartland of Kham, where many famous masters lived and practiced

going all the way back to Dusum Khyenpa, the first Karmapa (12th c.). We stopped at the beautiful glacial lake of Yilhun Lhatso (where Kalu Rinpoche meditated as a wandering yogi in caves below the highest peaks topping 6000m). Later, above the



Sang at Dorje Drak Monastery, Dartsedo. Photo by L King

old dusty village of Dzogchen (4020m), we had a picnic by the famous monastery and hiked to the retreat hut where Patrul Rinpoche wrote “Words of My Perfect Teacher”. We also visited a crazy yogi and took a side



Stupas and mantra stones Galenting Monastery.



Thangtong Gyalpo clay statue, small temple in Derge.

trip to Zechen monastery where we met the friendly Khenpo Gyaltsen in his home, were kindly served Tibetan tea and snacks, and were spontaneously offered an empowerment of Vajrakilaya and Hayagriva. Marvelous!!

from all traditions are reverently stored and printed daily by hand in the way it has been done since its founding in 1729 by royal patrons. We also viewed Derge Gonchen where our master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, was trained at the young age of eight. At

a Swiss alpine-like valley, some of us meditated in a small temple housing the relics of *terton* Mingyur Dorje. At Adzom Gar, rare original murals survive because the Gar was used to store ammunition during the cultural revolution. My daughter Leah sensed the presence of many spirits here. On to Yarchen Monastery where we witnessed by chance a “sky burial”! Huge and voracious vultures descended en-masse for their meal. This is a monastic complex where large-scale demolitions took place in 2017 to control the sprawling and restless population of nuns and monks. Up to 15,000 were reputed to live here. We were closely monitored at a Chinese security “checkpoint”, a surprisingly frequent occurrence on our journey.

Nyarong was truly the highlight of the journey for me. It is a land of deep gorges, with unruly rivers churning at the base of steep narrow valleys covered in dense evergreen forests. There is a sense of wildness here at the mercy of the elements. A heavy rainstorm easily causes landslides. Fortunately we were blessed by good weather. This is the land of Nyala Pema Dudul (and the land of a fierce Khampa uprising in the 19th c declaring independence from greater Tibet). We spent one entire day trying to find the isolated Lhanglhangdrak Mountain where Nyala Pema Dudul spent nine years in retreat and discovered many *termas*, including one of *chudlen*, which he practiced himself. During the last three years, he is said to have lived on wild rhubarb flowers

» continued on the following page



Walking across Luding Bridge built by Thangtong Gyalpo.

Photo by L King

On to Galenting, then Derge, the cultural center of the region and home to the ancient lineage of kings. We explored the magnificent buildings of Parkhang Printing Press. Here thousands of woodblocks

a charming small temple of Thangtong Gyalpo in the old Tibetan section we circumambulated with local Khampas and viewed a lovely clay statue of his image inside. Later, at Pelyul monastery, set high in

Thomas Laird Murals of Tibet

Thomas Laird, Robert Thurman,
Heather Stoddard, Jakob Winkler,
Shigeru Ban

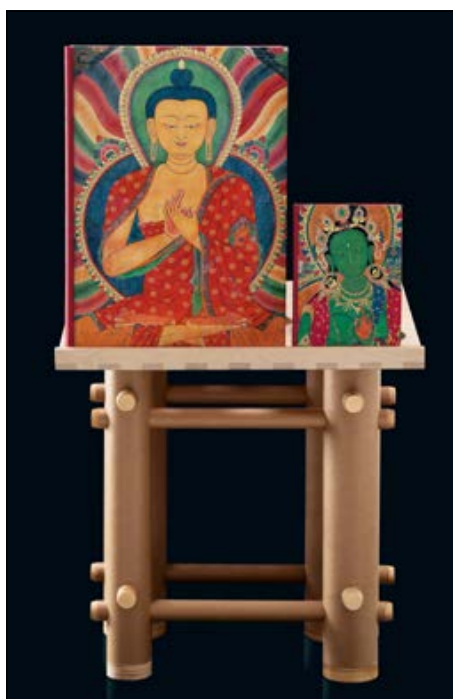
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Giorgio Dallorto

I am particularly happy and honored to
present in the pages of *The Mirror*, the
magazine of the International Dzogchen
Community, the work 'Murals of Tibet' by



Thomas Laird, produced by the well-known
publishing house of Benedikt Taschen in a
limited SUMO-size collector's edition, that
illustrates and describes more than 200 of
the most important murals of Tibetan Bud-
dhist culture still visible in Tibet today.

The opus is made up of a hard cover vol-
ume with exceptional dimensions of 50 cm
x 70 cm, with 498 pages of magnificent col-
or plates in life-size resolution including 6

fold-outs. The volume is furnished with a
modular bookstand designed by Shigeru
Ban and completed by a scholarly com-
panion hardcover volume of 528 pages. The
companion book, 25 cm x 35 cm, is an illus-
trated volume with texts and descriptions
of the murals.

From the visual and textual point of
view this magnum opus will be an author-
itative testimony to the most important
murals of Tibet that have survived the rav-
ages of historical events and the passage of
time. It will become a reference book for all
those who are interested in Tibetan art and
culture. The choice of collaborators, from
the authors to the designers to the pro-
ducers, reveals the care taken to present
a work that is not only striking externally
but also offers a unique editorial aspect.

The work, 'Murals of Tibet', make it pos-
sible for those who are unable to visit Tibet
to admire these marvelous masterpieces
in brilliant color and with an extraordi-
nary resolution using the most up to date
photographic/printing techniques. This
particular collector's edition was produced
in just 998 copies, each of which has been
signed by H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, making
the work an important document from the
historical point of view for all those fortu-
nate to have a copy.

Observing this magnum opus may be
considered a real "joy for the eyes" as Ti-

» *Sacred Journey* continued from previous page
and water dripping into his cave or sucked
from pebbles. In an extraordinary vision
following the retreat, he witnessed a thou-
sand Buddhas and an infinite array of en-
lightened beings in rainbow-like *thigles*. He
vowed to build Kalzang Monastery where
the vision manifested. Our bus finally ar-
rived there at 5pm after a treacherous jour-
ney traversing switchbacks on a narrow
dirt road climbing higher and higher until
we finally reached the base of the dramatic
mountain rising like shooting flames above
the tree line. Two lamas sitting outside the
Gönpa were delighted to welcome us! We
were shown the many precious treasures
hidden and preserved during the cultural
revolution, and we did a short tun.

It seems there are so many special ad-
ventures with our amazing group that
there is no more space to describe them
all. It was a delight to share cell-phone pho-
tos with the cheerful Khampas. We saw al-
most no other Westerners. We adapted to
daily routines of pee-stops wherever (yes,



L. to R. Lobsang (Tibetan guide), Jolanta (Poland), Marcin (Poland), Alida (Italy), Rocco (Italy), Alesia (Ukraine), Sasha (Russia), Leah (USA), Anne (France), Lidian (USA), Maria (Switzerland), Jamyang (UK), Ed (USA), Wen (China), Sergio (Italy), Emanuelle (France), missing Gerd (Germany), Cici (Italy), Marc (France).

I stepped in a yak pie and squatted on a
stinging nettles plant! Ouch!), consumed
electrolytes and numerous if-y Chinese
snack packs along with coca-cola (settles
the stomach after greasy spicy Chinese

meals.) Only a few times did we get tru-
ly yummy Tibetan food. This unforgetta-
ble journey ended far too quickly and the
friendships made have truly enriched all
our lives. Viva Kham!



Eleven-Headed Avalokiteshvara (15th century), Gyantse Kumbum.

© Thomas Laird, 2018/TASCHEN, Murals of Tibet

betans traditionally say when they look at a beautiful object. In addition to their exceptional beauty, many of the murals may even put a cause for liberation through seeing them.

The accompanying volume contains a visual index useful for fast and easy identification and consultation of the murals. The text starts with a short introduction by the author and well-known photographer, Thomas Laird, introducing and presenting the motivation and history of this particular work. After having had success with his previous work, *The Story of Tibet, Conversations with the Dalai Lama* and his photos of the Lukhang in Ian Baker's *The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple*, many Tibetan masters suggested that he extend his research to other famous examples of his-

torical iconography. *'Murals of Tibet'* is the result of this request.

The introduction is followed by the contribution of famous writer and Tibetan scholar Robert Thurman with a vast narration of the legendary origins of Tibet and the Tibetan people as well as in-depth research on the main themes of the murals and their underlying spiritual significance. Following this, one of the most famous Tibetan art historians, Heather Stoddard, author of most of the site descriptions and captions of the murals, introduces the origins and style of Tibetan art and discusses different architectural styles from Nepal to China.

The book takes the reader on a virtual journey to the most holy sites of Tibet starting from the precious 11th century murals of Drathang monastery, and moving on to

Samye, founded by Padmasambhava in the 8th century, Jokhang, the most sacred place in Tibet, the Potala, former residence of the Dalai Lamas, the Lukhang, a retreat place behind the Potala, Drepung and Nechung, Gonkar Chode, Gyantse Kumbum, Gyantse Palkor Chode, Shalu, Sakya, Jonang Puntso-ling, and Tsaparang and Toling.

Of particular interest is the section dedicated to the Lukhang Temple, written by Jakob Winkler, a long time student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, in which he describes the unique murals of this temple, a direct result of a vision of Tibet's great 5th and 6th Dalai Lamas. Among these magnificent murals he describes in detail the Shambhala wall, illustrating the origin of the Kalachakra Teachings, and, most importantly, the largest mural in the Lukhang, the Path of Dzogchen, dedicated to a specific cycle of Dzogchen teaching rediscovered by Pema Lingpa. Worthy of note in this section is the description of Tibetan yogis performing yantra or trulkhor exercises. There are also details of yogis doing advanced meditation and secret Dzogchen practices.

Among the well-known sites in Tibet, the book also presents a description of Jonang Puntso-ling, founded at the beginning of the 17th century by the famous scholar Taranatha. The surviving murals at Puntso-ling reflect his unique vision and include a beautiful yellow figure of Manjushri surrounded by Saraswati, Maitreya, and white Vairocana. This is an example of how, for more than 1000 years, Tibetan iconographers have remained true to the colors and proportions inherited from the Buddhist canons of India.

The book concludes by describing Tsaparang, the famous lost mountain fortress in Western Tibet, and nearby Toling Temple, both rediscovered by the well-known Italian Tibetologist, Giuseppe Tucci, in the 1930s. In 1949 Tucci's *'Tibetan Painted Scrolls'* was the most famous first complete work, at the time, on Tibetan art. That work was done in a unique and particularly grand style, consisting of two large volumes and an enormous box containing black and white and a few color reproductions of thangkas. An exceptional republication at the time. Thomas Laird's *'Murals of Tibet'* follows in the footsteps of this magnus opus, presenting this enchanting and beautiful work, an authentic legacy of Tibetan art and culture for this new millennium. May this priceless work become available to a wider public in the future with a compact edition. ©

Merging With The True Self While Dying

A talk by Elio Guarisco given on October 19, 2011 during the Tibetan Cultural Week held in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain.

First published in The Mirror issue 114, 2012.
Revised in 2018.

The photos were taken in the Chenrezig Lhakhang at Lamayuru monastery in Ladakh in September 2010 and were given to us courtesy of Elio Guarisco. The photographer is Dorjay Angdus (Kaya).

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

I would like to speak a little about the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. The 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' is connected to the belief that is held in the Himalayas and generally in the East that the mind continues after death.

The moment of death is a crucial moment of our life. When we die all functions of the senses and the respiration cease, but the mind and the subtle energies that serve as its mount remain in the body for sometime. It is during that time that one experiences the luminous clarity that is the nature of the mind.

For ordinary people that moment of seeing the luminous clarity can be very short, like a snap of the fingers and the experience passes almost unnoticed. But for one who in life trained in the recognition and in remaining in that luminous clarity which is the nature of our ordinary mind, that moment can last days and the experience is crucial.

That is why the teachings related to 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' speak about four *bardo* or intermediate states. The first intermediate state is our life itself, and if we want the moment of death to become really meaningful, we must not live like animals, only working for food, house and wealth.

We have to find the real purpose of our life. In Dzogchen, the highest teaching that we find in Tibetan Buddhism, it is said that the purpose of our life is to discover our true nature. That true nature is the very nature of the mind which is always with us, and that manifests nakedly at the time of death in all its luminosity.

The Nature of the Mind

When we say luminosity we do not really mean the appearance of a light. We are talking about the nature of the mind that has no form, no color, and whose nature is not easily expressible in words. We have mind and the nature of the mind, and just

On the contrary the nature of the mind is beyond judgement; it doesn't depend on time or space or on the circumstances we find ourselves in. For example, if we think about the sky, today it is not very nice, there are a lot of clouds. These clouds are like our mind. But when the clouds have



Two wrathful Herukas, visions of the bardo from the Chenrezig Lhakhang at Lamayuru monastery in Ladakh.

like fire and the nature of fire, these are not the same, yet not completely different.

Mind refers to the faculty I use, for example, now when I am talking, in order to coordinate some memories I have heard of the teaching. Mind is what you use when you try to understand what I am saying. But that mind is somewhat limited, it is judgement, it depends on the senses, on time and space.

Mind changes according to the time and the space or situation in which you are. For example, you may be in a nice restaurant for dinner and feel very happy. That is your state of mind because you are in that particular place, possibly with someone you like. But perhaps afterwards, in the street a person may make some comment about your girlfriend, your mind gets angry, and you get into a fight. That anger is also your mind. Mind changes quickly just like that.

Also the opinions we have about this world, politics, finances, ecology, spirituality etc., and to which we give great importance are mind: unstable and changeable. Yet these are something that changes just like the example I have just given, and most of the time the opinions we hold on to with great attachment are useless.

'On the second day the realms of complete joy and beatitude appear in the east direction with Aksobhya yab yum surrounded by his entourage appears.'

passed there is this blue sky that appears which is like the nature of our mind. In truth, the blue sky is always there even if hidden by clouds. The nature of our mind never changes, regardless of what we do. It is always the same.

Usually people who practice a spiritual path think that in this way their mind will somehow transform and become different: this is not true. Their nature of the mind is always the same. If they think they are progressing along a path it just means that they have the concept of progressing. Actually there is nothing like that.





Buddha Aksobhya yab yum.

In our selves there is a kind of space, luminous, that has always been there. A space that as it was it will be, that does not improve nor get worse. In Dzogchen this space is called 'nature of the mind'.

It is unchanging and yet, the nature of our mind is not like a stone: we have feelings, thoughts, and emotions. But when we don't recognize the space that never changes within ourselves, we become dominated by the clouds of mind - feelings, thoughts and emotions.

During the intermediate state of life, a Dzogchen practitioner learns how to rec-

ognize, became familiar with and abide in that space. If we are able to be in that, we can have thoughts, feelings etc., but instead of being dominated by them we can use them. Therefore our life is very important, very precious, for during life we have the opportunity to approach the understanding of the nature of our mind, of what we really are.

The Luminous Clarity of Death

But when we die what happens? It is almost like falling asleep. When we fall asleep our sense consciousnesses withdraw, and for

a while even our mental consciousness doesn't function: this is a kind of non-conceptual state.

The same thing happens when we die: all the functions of our senses, our thoughts and emotions dissolve and we have the experience of that nature of mind, clear like a sky free from any clouds. Those who, in life, trained to become familiar with this sky-like space within themselves, now, at the time of death will meet the nature of mind, in its fullest and without any obstructions.

If one does not have that familiarity, having practiced in the life the transference of consciousness, there is, however, the possibility to transfer one's consciousness to a pure land where one can continue one's quest for realization. If even this is not possible, an experienced master can be called in to conduct a rite for the transference of consciousness of the deceased.

What happens when we nakedly recognize the nature of mind that appears to us at that moment? We discover our ground or being, what we really are. In the Dzogchen system this is called enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something that we attain after following a spiritual path, creating merits and developing wisdom. Enlightenment is our own real nature. And if we have trained in life, and we have not recognized that nature fully, we have the possibility to realize it very much at the time of death. This is the highest form of transference of consciousness, in which the consciousness is not going anywhere but remains in its own natural state of enlightenment.

To help the person to recognize the luminous clarity that appears as his or her own nature, a passage of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' is read to the deceased, in order to help him to recollect what he practiced in life: this passage is a sort of pointing out the nature of mind.

In the Himalayan regions there is the custom of leaving the body of the dead person for three days without moving it because that person, if he or she is a spiritual practitioner, may be in the state of the luminous clarity. Some practitioners may stay longer in that state, 8 days, 10 days, or even a month. The body is clinically dead but the mind is still there and there are signs of this because the body does not decay, it remains seated, the head is still straight and the complexion clear.

For example a few years ago, when I was living in Darjeeling (India) working on

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First image of srid pa bar do. The inscriptions read: 'Many particular appearances arise: fierce winds, karmic flesheaters and cannibals brandishing many weapons, being followed by wild beast from the back, a very thick darkness in the front, hail storms, mountains collapsing, floods, blizzards, fire spreading, great winds, falling from a white, a black and a red mountain.

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translations, an old monk from the Drukpa Kagyu tradition helped me to understand details of the biography of Shakyas Shri, a famous lama of the past. After a year or so the monk died. When I came to know that he had passed away, I went to give my condolences at the monastery where he lived. The monks had arranged his body in the middle of the temple and kept it there for eight days. His body was exhibited so that everyone could see him. He was dead but his complexion was fair as if still alive, and there were no signs of degeneration of the body. When I visited his dead body, I saw rainbows that from the sky landed exactly over the house where his body was displayed,

There are also other signs indicating that the deceased is in a state of luminous clarity, such as a slight heat in the region of the heart, etc. Then, when the head droops, liquid comes out of the nose, and the complexion of the face changes, these are signs that the mind has left the body.

When the body of a good practitioner is cremated many signs of his or her realization can manifest. There can be external signs in the environment like rainbows, colored clouds, strange lights appearing in the sky, etc., and these signs are described in detail in some Dzogchen scriptures. Moreover, at the cremation, among the ashes there may appear many relics of different colors, originating from different parts of the body, and also a kind of red powder called *sindura*.

I remember that some years ago I was in Tashi Jong, a place in India where a wonderful yogin had passed away. Raimondo Bultrini, a journalist friend of mine, and I went by that monastery and the late Dorzong Rinpoche, the lama in charge of the monastery, showed us the relics of that yogin. These were very small, perhaps 1 mm in diameter, in nice colors like turquoise and red. He gave us a magnifying glass so that we could see them. When we looked through the glass we saw that they were perfectly formed miniature conch shells. Sometimes letters may appear or the form of letters or deities on the bones left after the cremation. So all of these signs indicate that a person has achieved a high level of realization.

Intermediate State of Reality

For one who, at the moment of death, recognizes his or her own real nature there is no intermediate state afterwards. But if a person does not have that understanding, after the experience of the luminous clarity he becomes unconscious for three and a half days and when he wakes up from this state he enters what is called the intermediate state of reality.

This is the intermediate state in which the real nature of the mind manifests fully and nakedly. During this intermediate state, our usual judgment, the thinking mind, is not active so the visions we have come directly from the pure potential of the nature of our own mind.

Therefore, if in life we have been introduced to the practice of the peaceful and wrathful deities, such visions can appear to us in the intermediate state. But of course, these visions do not appear to everyone, even those Tibetans who have not received that type of introduction, explanations and so forth, will not have these visions.

However, everybody will hear thundering sound and see blazing lights, which are the manifestation of the very nature of reality. If we have been introduced to the principle that things manifests from our real nature through sound, light and rays, when we have these experiences we will not be startled or afraid, but recognize them as one's energy.

And if we were introduced to the principle of peaceful and wrathful deities during our life, then in the intermediate state of reality we will recognize them as oneself and merging with that, attain realization at that time.

Now I want to explain a little what these deities are. First of all they are not something unrelated to ourselves: they represent our psychophysical makeup, that is, the various aspects of our body and mind, everything that constitutes our person. When we speak of the peaceful deities mainly we are talking about the five Dhyani Buddhas that represent our own psychophysical constituents. For example, there is Vairocana, white, that represents our body. Akshobhya, blue, that represents our consciousness. Ratnasambhava, yellow, that represents our feelings - pleasure, pain etc.



The assembly of the fifty-eight wrathful deities with their entourage.

Amitabha, which represents our mental recognition of things. Amoghasiddhi, which represents our volitions. Their female counterparts instead symbolize the elements of our body – earth, water and so forth.

The Five Buddhas also represent our emotions, the pure aspect of these emotions. Generally in Buddhism emotions are considered to be like poisons. Of course, if we have a low capacity this may be true, but if we have the ability to recognize the nature of our own mind, emotions can be helpful on the path to self-realization.

Also the nature of our mind it is not mere empty space, a nothingness; it is also energy, potentiality of perceiving and appearing as anything whatsoever; these two aspects of calm emptiness and moving energy, are the very principle connected to the peaceful and wrathful deities, respectively.

So when we wake up from the unconscious state that follows the experience of the luminous clarity in the intermediate state of death, on the first day we have a vision of Vairochana and his entourage. Vairochana represents the pure aspect of ignorance as the wisdom of the true nature of reality. As for all the other four wisdoms, we should know that the wisdom of the true nature of reality is not the wisdom of some enlightened being separate from us, but a facet of the nature of our own mind.

At that time a bright light appears which symbolizes that wisdom which comes from the heart of Vairochana and reaches our heart. The light that symboliz-

es the wisdom of Vairochana is like a rope that connects us to that vision in front of us which represents Vairochana's wisdom, a bridge to our true Self. But at the same time we have another light that reaches our heart. This is the dim white light of the world of celestial beings and is like a path which has been created by our own habitual tendencies that we accumulated during our life.

For example, if we had a lot of ignorance, this habitual tendency becomes the path that leads to an existence in the future that bears the same aspect. Maybe we will become a celestial being who, out of ignorance, spends its life completely distracted by pleasure. So we have these two possibilities – either we recognize the light of wisdom that is our own wisdom or we go for a light that is a path that has been created by our habitual tendencies and will lead to another conditioned and repetitive form of life.

On the second day Akshobya appears, a blue Buddha which represents the pure aspect of anger as the mirror like wisdom.

On the third day there is a vision of Ratnasambhava which symbolizes the pure aspect of pride which is the wisdom of sameness.

On the fourth we have the vision of Amitabha which symbolizes discernment and the pure aspect of attachment which is the wisdom of discernment.

On the fifth day there is the vision of Amoghasiddhi which symbolizes the pure aspect of jealousy, the wisdom which accomplishes all actions.

So on each day we have a light of wisdom from the heart of a Dhyani Buddha that reaches our heart as well as a faint light from one of the realms of existence. The bright lights are those of wisdom and the faint lights those of the realms of existence. When our emotions, such as attachment, have piled up throughout our life, like a pile of cow dung, when we die, their potential becomes our vision or life in the future.

We have six main emotions corresponding to the six realms of existence: ignorance-celestial realm; jealousy-realm of the titans; anger-hell realm; pride-human realm; attachment-realm of tormented spirits; and all different kinds of emotions-animal realm. This is the particular association emotions- realms that we find in 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead'.

For example, if we accumulate enough anger in our life, at the moment of death we enter a vision of hell, so this is what is meant by taking birth as a hell being. Some people may ask whether this vision of hell is real or not. It is real, just as every subjective perception and vision is real for oneself. Yet hell does not exist anywhere outside one's vision. However, other beings who have the same *karma* may share that vision, and for that reason the realms of existence are basically visions created by the shared collective *karma* of beings.

When the bright lights of the wisdoms of the five Dhyani Buddhas appear together

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Elio Guarisco.

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with the faint lights of the six realms of existence, we have the choice to let ourselves be taken by the light of wisdom or by the light of a realm of existence. But of course, we are dead and the habitual tendencies we created in life may influence this choice. Thus reading the instructions of 'The Book of the Dead' works as a reminder for the deceased to follow the light of wisdom.

Thus, on the first day of the intermediate state of reality the instructions of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' read, "From the centre of the universe appears Vairochana, white, from his heart the light of wisdom comes towards your heart, but there is also another light from the celestial realm created by your habitual tendencies. Don't go after the light of the celestial realms but follow the light of wisdom." If, listening to the instructions, the deceased follows the light of wisdom, he or she will merge with Vairochana.

This does not mean that the person will merge with a statue or a painting, or with another being which is different from himself, but with aspects of himself that manifest outside. Realizing that whatever vision we see outside, is in reality ourselves, we come back to the original ground of being which has always been enlightened before the dualistic vision of subject and object emerged from it. We overcome the sense of duality of us being the observer and the world the observed. We realize that everything that appears, all the universe, is in reality our own self.

If we were to realize this in life we would know that, as Tilopa, a famous Indian *sid-dha*, said: "Vision is not a problem. Clinging to the vision in dualistic terms is the prob-

lem." So it doesn't matter whether we have good or bad visions, that is fine. But if we cling to them, it means that we see something different from ourselves, and this is a deception.

On the sixth day of the intermediate state of reality the wisdom of the five Dhyani Buddhas manifests simultaneously from the hearts of the Rigdzin or awareness holders, together with the faint light of the animal realms.

Thus each day, when a different peaceful deity appears we have the possibility to attain freedom from dualism. If this does not occur, the same deities will manifest to us in wrathful forms, more difficult to recognize as our own self-manifestations if we have not been familiar with them during our lifetime. These wrathful deities inspire fear. Compared to their huge bodies, we are like small insects in front of their feet. If that deity moves a toe we will be squashed like a small ant.

The Words of the Book of the Dead as a Reminder

On each day of the post mortem state a part of the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' is read to the deceased so that he can recognize the visions that appear to him or her.

At this point, we use the instructions of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' which is especially related to the post mortem state. The post mortem state is also explained in classic Buddhism, but in the tantra the explanations are more extensive, and for some reason became crucial and very detailed in the Dzogchen teaching.

The 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' belongs to a particular tradition which in Tibet is known as the *terma* tradition in which some teachers discover scriptures, objects, etc., that have been hidden for a long time in rocks, mountains, temples etc. Sometimes these teachings are not material objects that are discovered in the outer environment but revelations that come to a person, in dreams or the waking state.

In the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism they say that these kinds of revelations are connected to the original teachings of Padmasambhava, the master who brought Buddhism to Tibet. The guidance and instructions contained in 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' are considered to be teachings of Padmasambhava.

The book was discovered in the 14th century by Karma Lingpa when he was a fifteen-year old boy in the mountains in

Tibet. Its teachings, which became widespread in Tibet, present specific instructions to guide the dying person to recognize what happens to him or her at the moment of death, to recognize the visions of the intermediate state of reality, and to assist him or her to choose, if liberation has not been attained before, a favorable rebirth.

But the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' gives instructions to the dead person – "Now, such and such wrathful deity, which is such and such color, with such and such face, holding such and such implements, etc., will manifest to you. Don't be afraid! That deity is issuing from your own mind. Again you have a possibility to recognize this. Again you have a possibility to rejoin with your original ground of being".

Thus, if we have had introduction to and are familiar with those deities during our life, 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' can be an important tool to re-awaken recognition in the deceased. If we did not develop such familiarity during our life, recognition becomes difficult.

Intermediate State of Rebirth

When the intermediate state of reality ends we enter the intermediate state of rebirth, which means that we are on the path to take another body. During that time, the imprints of our past actions all come back to influence us, like clouds amassing in the sky. Now, it is more difficult to have recognition of our real nature. Sometimes we may have the vision of a crowd of angry people that chase us from behind with war cries trying to catch and kill us, like in a war and when, in fear, we run away, we enter darkness, or a hurricane, snow blizzard, or hail. Wanting to escape from this suffering the desire for another body and another existence grows.

At this point the many instructions in 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' can help the person first of all not to take rebirth and then if he has to, to choose a good one. In fact at that point, while running away from various sufferings the deceased has visions of his future parents in sexual intercourse and wants to enter into the midst of their union. If he does, he is reborn. He may be reborn as a human, but if they were two dogs having sexual relations he may wake up as a small dog, perhaps as a pet in a nice house or as a dog abandoned on a street in India.



The inscription reads: 'On the seventh day from the pure land of Khechara, the Vidyadhara deities come to meet [the deceased]. From the Vidyadharas appear the five consorts and around them, a numberless assembly of dakinis appears: those from the cemeteries, those of the four families, those of the three places, those of the twenty-four sacred places, along with male and female warriors, protectors and guardians.' Each Vidyadhara is identified by an inscription: rNam par smin pa'i rig 'dzin, Sa la gnas pa'i rig 'dzin, Tshe la dbang ba'i rig 'dzin, Phyang rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin, Lhun gyis grub pa'i rig 'dzin. A five-coloured light of co-emergent pristine cognition (Lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes) emanates from the heart of each Vidyadhara and reaches the heart of the deceased, together with the green dull light of the animal realm (dud 'gro'i 'od ljang-khu).

Moreover, the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' instructs the deceased on the signs that he or she should follow or not. These are signs that indicate the realm or the continent in this world where he may be born. These instructions will help the deceased to find rebirth in a favourable place where he can continue the path of self-realization he or she started in the previous life.

The main crucial message of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' is connected to recognizing the vision you have as your own self and that is why this teaching is very much connected to Dzogchen and in particular to *thogal* practice.

Thus the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' it is not just a fabulous book to read, but a reminder of the need to apply and practice the teachings in life so that one will be prepared to face the moment of death and the after death. ©



Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Translating Feeling into Form

Sofia Cacciapaglia

When I was a child I used to entertain myself for long periods of time creating fantastic worlds, drawing, playing, dressing up, telling imaginary stories and drawing imaginary visions. Nothing in my games touched on reality.

My father, Roberto, a composer and musician, certainly influenced me in my path as an artist. For me art has always been at home, not something abstract and distant but very concrete and part of daily life. Through his work and himself as an individual, my father taught me how to translate emotions into creation and, most of all, he gave me a love of and discipline for work.

Through him I understood on a profound level that art comes firstly from the heart, and that mind and "rational thought" only come later on. In that way you arrive at the emotion.

As for my education, I attended a Montessori primary school, which gave me a free vision of the world and I can say that it has influenced my choices over the years. Later on I went to art school where I defined my direction in choosing art as a profession and where I met extraordinary professors who nurtured my passion for art. I then went to university at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, choosing painting as my course of study. I believe that the people I met during the educational years of my life have played a fundamental role in my life choices.

My parents have been following Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teaching for many years. I think they met Rinpoche for the first time in 1988, when we children were very young and I've grown up with the teaching ever since. I think it's the greatest good fortune you can get. It's a fortune that is probably not a coincidence but a kind of karma. Having such close contact with such a high Master as Namkhai Norbu is the base on which my life rests and obviously the starting point of my work.



Photo by Yuliya Kave

I say this because for me painting starts from contemplation, from silence, from seeking presence in the moment I am living, from self-observation. It is a "sacred" and solitary occupation for me: shapes, colors, and images, are born and manifest themselves in the "empty" space of the canvas.

My research into painting is not in any way conceptual, but rather starts from the void of space / time and arrives at describing something that belongs to everyone. In the studio nothing moves, everything is still, motionless, and the action bursts out suddenly and "Creates". This action in itself brings something unique and unrepeatable, each time different and new.

Painting means going out of oneself and translating one's own feeling into form by choosing "the invisible" rather than the "visible". In a society where there is an excessive and violent competition toward Visibility, painting with its strong and at the same time calm gestures, with its surfaces

of strokes of infinite stratifications bring me back to observing, to the "contemplation of every moment", to the "magic of life".

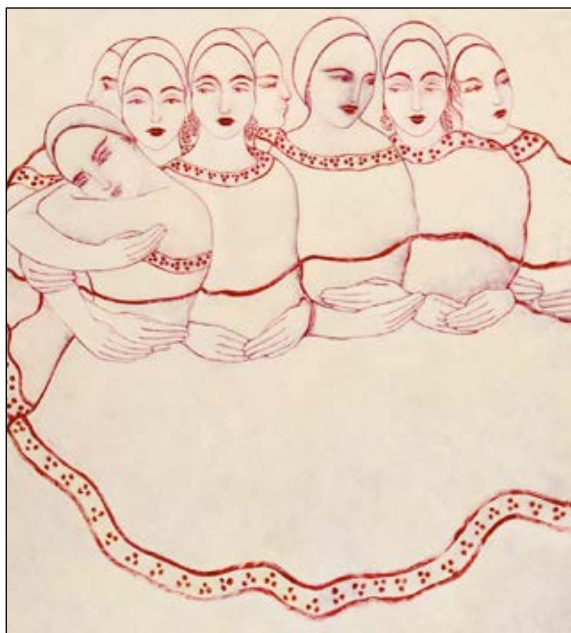
My work focuses on women. My figures live on very large canvases suspended in a dreamlike dimension; the metaphysics of fairy tale and enchantment.

There is nothing real in the way they are portrayed; they are figures that belong to another time. Ethereal and at the same time monumental, they seem to emerge from the dream dimension of an ancient and "eternal" world.

They support each other through a secret equilibrium that originates from the human contact that guides and is the common thread and point of origin of the composition. Even the position of the hands has a symbolic meaning even though it is random. The essential closed forms and rhythm give the figures a contemplative dimension in a message of solidarity and empathy with the women in the world.



Untitled. 2013, Oil on Canvas, 240 x 200 cm.



Untitled. 2017, 200 x 200 cm.



Untitled. 2018, 100 x 150 cm.



For me painting is the window on the inner world of each of us. Also for this reason I choose never to give titles to my works so as not to contaminate them with the world of words and meanings that each of us sees and wants to give when looking at a painting.

Painting is a window on a world where everything is possible; where there are no rules if not those dictated by the work itself. It is a bridge to connect to our inner feelings that, in this digital age we are living in, we struggle more and more to have deep contact with. For me it is the continuous "journey" between my inner and outer world. Backwards and forwards!

I've been inspired by many artists. They are like the companions of an adventure

that you always carry with you and depending on the period you are living in, you have a closer "friendship" with one or another of them ... such as Balthus, Matisse, Casorati, Domenico Gnoli, Piero della Francesca, Giotto, Constantin Brancusi... just to name a few. The list would be long.

I had my first personal exhibition in New York in 2007 organized by Fabrizio Ferri, a photographer who immediately believed in my work. From there I had several exhibitions in spaces and galleries. In 2011 I participated in the Venice Biennale in the Italian pavilion.

I am currently working in Milan, my city that I love very much. Being able to work in Italy is a luxury for me. I love this country and even with all its difficulties I would

choose it over and over again. I work with a gallery based in London and Beijing. I recently participated in the Beijing International Art Fair.

In addition to painting I've been collaborating on different fashion and design projects. In my opinion this type of collaboration is very important: getting out of my own world to create new combinations with other worlds such as design and fashion. When I have been asked, I have always considered it an opportunity, a test of the strength of my work outside its normal context. We live in an era where distances have been torn down and the boundaries between the different worlds are increasingly subtle. We need to get out of our

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How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Francesco Carpini

My story is very ordinary. I'd always had this keen but vague interest in Buddhism and the East but it didn't find many opportunities to materialize. It was the 70s and I was living on the outskirts of Florence, in a family of atheists, materialists and libertarians who would have expected anything of their son short of developing an inclination for mysticism.

The occasional incursions that Buddhist imagery made through chinks in my young mind always left a deep impression. Those unwatchable "Kung Fu" B-movies set in improbable Chinese Buddhist monasteries, the decorations in the local karate gym, documentaries, travel stories, and long-haired hippies in weird clothes just back from journeys to India.

In the chapter on ancient India in my history textbook in the first year of high school, there was an image of a Tibetan yogi from the Dunhuang manuscripts. Bored stiff, I was flipping through the book during a lecture when I suddenly found it. It took my breath away. I was overcome by a surge of excitement, then relief and then real euphoria. I thought, "But then there are normal people!" Today it makes me laugh a lot but it's exactly what I said to myself then. Ordinary people.

My years at high school were obviously years of exploration, reading, travel, and attempts at meditation. I soon met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in books and specialized magazines. His prestige intimidated me a lot and his teaching that was so "secret" but also open and accessible bewildered me.

I devoured "Dream Yoga" which immediately became an object of worship, then other titles and some "cassettes" borrowed from friends of friends. My fear, however, did not diminish. In fact, the closer I got to the Master, the more it increased. I visited other Dharma centers with a cool offhand-



edness, but the trip to Merigar was always postponed with one excuse or another.

And here we come to the only part of my story that is perhaps a bit original and even funny. My parents had certainly not looked favorably on my "path" and had often asked me worriedly to let go of all those eccentricities and dedicate myself seriously to my studies. In his good-natured ironic but insistent way, my father invited me to "return to reality" and to let go of Buddhism which, like all religions, was nothing but a pile of comforting fantasies for weak intellects.

One day, suddenly, Father invited me to sit next to him with a hint of solemnity.

As if it was the most normal thing in the world he began to tell me with great respect and sincere wonder about a Tibetan Lama who lived in Naples and who had spoken to him that morning at work. The story went on for a while and included some elements that I would call "metaphysical" and that I would have never ever expected to hear from my father. I listened astonished. When the story ended, father nodded and I took my leave perplexed.

Then everything returned as before. The bickering returned to enliven our dinners and Buddhism was again relegated to the

idiocies that the immature and idlers mess around with.

After a few months there was another episode: one of my father's clients, the well-known Orientalist Fosco Maraini, had told him about this Tibetan lama. Father told me about the interview in great detail.

I was more and more disoriented ... I tried to convince myself of the need to at least make a visit to Merigar, but my sacred fear of the fire mountain remained unsurpassable. And then it must be said that my father's incomprehensible intermittent admiration for Rinpoche was truly incomprehensible and perhaps contributed to my disorientation.

We come to the paradox. One evening while we were having dinner at home with a guest, a medical friend, my father called for my attention just when I was already thinking of sneaking out of the house and stirring up some trouble.

"Francesco ..."

Oh no, what does he want now?

"You know he is a disciple of Norbu Rinpoche. He told me that he is a great Tibetan meditation teacher, you really should go and meet him."

Hang on: this friend of my parents is a Tibetan yoga practitioner, he's having dinner with us, and my father is in favor of this path? At that point even a stone would have understood that "something" was moving in the air.

Then between embarrassment and enthusiasm I could only manage to say: "But I know him, he teaches Dzogchen, right?" Just to make me sound like a Tibetologist, as if to say, I know all about it.

The guest smiled affectionately, secretly amused by my presumption.

From that day the profusion of coincidences, strange meetings and episodes became increasingly intense. It often happened that friends who had never given a hint of interest in spirituality began to torment me with questions about this "Tibetan Lama". Someone remained mesmerized by a rib in my library, another by a pendant, someone by a photograph. Even some friends to whom I had only lent a book or a magazine rushed to meet Rinpoche and then become his real students before me. These same friends then also began to encourage me, bombarding me with stories

» *Artist continued from previous page*

tracks without fear and open ourselves to this "new world" that has been breaking in faster and faster every year.

For this reason I accepted to collaborate in fashion collections with prints of my paintings, such as the one used by design-

er Caterina Gatta. I've also created design for chairs and velvet wallpaper with my figures.

My plans for the future? I'm going to participate in an exhibition in London opening on October 4th at The Palm Tree Gallery, 291 Portobello Road, London. ©

about their experiences with Rinpoche and infecting me more and more.

At the end in 1995, returning from an unfruitful four month period of mystic wandering/bumming around in Nepal, I accepted the fact that the truth is a "serious" thing and that perhaps my period of intellectual romantic fantasies was over. I prepared my backpack and left for my first retreat.

When I had passed the last hill and the valley of Merigar opened before my eyes I could hardly hold back my tears. I met that "smell of Merigar", that "light of Merigar" that since then have been the cornerstone of my inner life and in some way, intimately, for me are the Maestro.

The first retreats were overwhelmingly intense.

Just like the ones that followed.

Like all very intellectual people I took long pauses in getting to know the community in order to process my experiences intellectually, to study, to metabolize. I was trying to bring everything back to the tenets of philosophical mysticism in the vain hope of being able to manage on my own, inside my head, this process that is, however, a relationship. A relationship with the Teacher, the teaching and the Community.

For about ten years I have practiced in relative isolation, attending the retreats but without being noticed very much.

In 2008 I received an invitation from a Gelugpa lama, Zopa Rinpoche, to take care of a city center and of the resident lama: Tulku Gyatso. It was lightning in a clear sky because I did not know Zopa Rinpoche nor had I ever practiced the Gelugpa path. I accepted a little reluctantly ... but I have to say that thanks to those years of service I finally began to understand the importance of the jewel of the Sangha. Life in the Sangha is an acid bath of the wisdom of the Guru that corrodes all our impurities, all those encrustations that make us inept, unpleasant, presumptuous.

And so thanks to this experience of intense, we could say "forced" community life I have managed to give up the fantasies of the "solitary yogi" and since then I have spent time with the Dzogchen Community with more relaxation and openness. ©



Dzamling Gar Gönpa Conference Center Inauguration

The International Dzogchen Community and International Atiyoga Foundation announce that the event of the Inauguration of the Dzamling Gar Gönpa/Conference Center will take place as scheduled December 7th, 8th and 9th 2018.

We hope and wish that all of you will participate since this event is extremely important for the future of the Dzogchen Community.

The Program

December 7

Conference Center
Inauguration and Ceremony

Museum of Oriental Art
and Culture
Exhibition Opening

Dzamling Gar Expo Opening

December 8

Anniversary of the Birth of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Vajra Dance and Khaita
Presentations

December 9

Public Workshops

Closing Celebration

<https://dzamlinggar.net/en/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dzamlinggar/>





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