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Ati Yoga Teaching Retreat
Four Verses of Advice from Ugyen Tendzin
Not Giving Too Much Importance to Problems
Chülen
Pictures from the Past



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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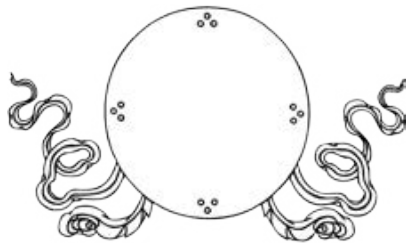
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Top photo by Ralf Plüschke
Front cover: Green Tara by Wilvin Pedersen, watercolor on rice paper, Dzamling Gar 2020.
Back cover: The Song of the Vajra, calligraphy by Giorgio Dallorto.

Editorial

This issue of The Mirror magazine finds our planet in an unprecedented moment in time, in circumstances that have encompassed our world with incredible speed and that affect each and every one of us, with little regard for geography, nationality, social position, or spiritual inclination. The powerful effect of the corona virus have brought a halt to the daily lives of most of us and we are no longer running about to do the many activities that usually fill our daily lives. We are at home, without our normal rush and bustle, at rest and may even be starting to give some space to our busy minds.

Although this period is a time of concern for our health and the health of those around us as well as for the rhythm of our daily lives, it gives us an opportunity to pause and take a global look at our environment. We may consider how our 21st century way of life has been taking its heavy toll on the natural world around us. We may think about those who are less fortunate struggling to protect themselves and their families in difficult circumstances. Then those who have been struck by the virus and suffering, as well as the battle of the doctors and nurses who are risking their own health and safety to bring help to the sick, and all those who are involved in the care of the sick. Although this modern plague has struck ferociously at the global human population it may also serve as a catalyst to help arise in us a feeling of compassion, empathy, towards our fellow humans, to make us aware of the frailty of human life, and the importance of caring for others. Most certainly it is a very direct experience in interdependence – we are all linked and our well-being is closely tied up with the well-being of our family, neighbors, fellow citizens, and even those in far away lands.



In a future that appears to be unpredictable we know that our Dzogchen Community is holding its course steady through one of the roughest storms of our era. ©

The editors

For those of us in the Dzogchen Community, on the individual level the situation has given us the occasion for reflection, for practice, for developing awareness of the world around us and its inhabitants. As a group we have been able to draw closer to each other surmounting obstacles of time and space. Our International Gakyil and our Gars have met the challenge of the time and, with the support of our Community instructors and the unflagging work of the webcast team, have set up a program of daily practices that are webcast across the globe – from Yantra Yoga and Khaita Joyful Dances to Green Tara and Ekajati practice, as well as explanations on Shantideva's Bodhisattvacaryavatara – giving us a space to join together and practice, for ourselves and for others. To get updates on the Global Webcast Practices please visit our webpage melong.com.

The type of future we are facing is uncertain but we can do our best in these difficult times to help to shape it in a way that will make it more beneficial for ourselves, our environment, and the myriad of beings who inhabit it by applying as much as possible the teaching we have received. As Chögyal Namkhai Norbu said in an informal talk in December 2012:

“Problems always exist for everybody because we are in samsara, not in paradise ... but if we are practitioners, we know that and don't get anxious. It is normal. We can always have problems but we don't give too much importance to them and we relax. When we relax, there are no secondary causes for creating more problems and it is much better.”



Ati Yoga Teaching Retreat

Day 3 morning
December 30, 2017,
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife
Explanation of how important and indispensable the teaching of Thung-mong is in our relative condition, and how we start with the Refuge, cultivating Bodhicitta and so on.



Photo by Ralf Pluschke

Importance of Correct Melody

When we do a practice, for example, like the *thun*, at least Guruyoga, the way we start with the melody is how we should continue. We should not change after a little while. For example, when we are doing Ati Guruyoga, I start “Ema...”, with this tone. When you are finishing “RA RA RA” etc., you are all lower. That means you have changed the tone somehow. I didn’t change it. For example in the *thun* you start with “Aaaa”, and then you continue with this melody, not “Aaa” [higher tone] or “Aaaa” [lower tone]. This is not the correct way because I have never heard that we change the tone in the middle. Most of the melodies that we use in practices, I learned mostly in my dreams. I try to do my best to sing how I learned and I apply in that way and I also teach my students that way. So, when we are following any kind of teaching, when you change and modify it, it doesn’t work because it’s related with transmission.

That’s why when we are doing practice, for example, like the Ganapuja, I don’t like it when someone else is leading and I am following because I get nervous. We have done these practices for thirty years and forty years. Even if you have not learned how to discover your real nature, at least you should have learned after many years how we do practice.

So, it is not really the main point, but it is related with transmission. We should always pay respect to the transmission. I want to explain this morning one of the most important aspect of the teaching is when we say *thung-mong* and *thung-min*; these are two words I wrote here.

What does *thung-mong* mean? *Thung-mong* means, for example, that the teaching of Buddha is for all sentient beings. It is not only for human beings, but also for animals, if they can understand, but animals cannot understand easily. That’s why, for example, in the biography and history of Buddha, it is said that Buddha manifested sometimes like a bird, sometimes a fish, etc. Buddha manifested in that way because if even we human beings cannot

understand well the *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, or *nirmanakaya* manifestations, how can animals understand them? But if you are a small ant or a monkey and a teacher becomes a small monkey or an ant, it is much easier to communicate. Because animals have their own way of communicating and making things understood, that is like a language, etc. So, this is called *thung-mong*; it means the teaching is for all sentient beings, not only human beings or monasteries of monks and nuns.

You can observe that, for any kind of teaching we are following, not only for the Dzogchen Teaching, even if, in general, I am not explaining the *thung mong* aspect very much, we should apply *thung mong* and *thung min* in the correct way.

For example, if you want to do a practice like Yantra Yoga, it is related to the physical level and the energy level. You see, in Yantra Yoga we also have the open part of Yantra Yoga, which everyone can learn. There is also a part of Yantra Yoga that cannot be learned by everyone, it has to be learned and applied in a specific way. This is the distinction between *thung-mong* and *thung-min*. *Thung-min* means it is not for everybody.

In the same way, if you practice the Vajra Dance, in the Vajra Dance we have the Dance of the Three Vajras. We teach the Dance of the Three Vajras so that one can understand the essence of the body, speech and mind. Even in the Santi Maha Sangha I prepared for children, we teach and help them to understand OM, A, HUM, which represent the three existences. Of course, we have also the six syllables HA A HA SHA SA MA; these are more elevated and related to the state of contemplation.

One of the very important practice in Dzogchen and Anuyoga is the Purification of the Six Lokas. When we say A SU NRI TRI PRE DU, these syllables are the essence of the relative condition of our dualistic vision. We can get in the real state of that condition, for example through HA A HA SHA SA MA. So, these syllables have the quality of *troldrug*, which means the six liberations. For example, seeing



those syllables make cause for liberation, hearing them makes the cause for liberation, as in the *thödro*, *tagdro* or *nyongdro*.

These are related with our five senses and then all together they become liberation through the six senses. The senses are also the cause of samsara, just like the emotions. So, in that way, when we are pronouncing these syllables after we have received that transmission, they have that kind of function. For that reason also in Dance of the Vajra we have the six syllables of the dance.

These six syllables are not to keep particularly secret. So, when we make open, public these dances, everyone can learn and study. When we go a little deeper, we enter the Song of Vajra, for example. The Song of Vajra is the essence of the Dzogchen Teaching. So, you need to know its real sense, how it is related with the transmission, and how it is related with our existence. That is related with the Dzogchen Teaching, so we cannot diffuse it everywhere. So, this is called *thung-min* which means not for everybody.

So, these two aspects of *thung-mong* and *thung-min* are very important. Why I am explaining this today? Because also in the Drathalgyur it is explained that this is important when we teach to all sentient beings. Particularly in the Longsal teaching, you know I am giving that teaching, there are three root texts of the Longsal at the beginning and *thung-mong* and *thung-min* are separated. I have given Dzogchen Teachings for forty years, and I have followed that in a perfect way. I have not disregarded that.

For that reason I tell my students who are Santi Maha Sangha instructors, "You should understand which kind of teaching you can teach, and which kind of teaching you cannot teach." Of course we have not yet prepared a project, a program of how we can teach these, but the main thing is that we are going into this area, and that is something important.

For example, also in Dzogchen, we can receive the Dzogchen Teaching which is *tung-min* in general, not in any particular way. In Dzogchen there are three series — *semde*, *longde*, and *upadesha* — related to the statement of Guru Garab Dorje, so in this case we keep these very secret. We need to keep secret in order to receive those Teachings; we need to request and then we check the persons and after checking them, they can receive teachings like *thögal* and *yangti*.

People who have no knowledge or understanding, they think, "Oh, *thögal* and *yangti* are very special methods", and they can have realization quickly. "The teacher doesn't want to teach these methods to everybody. This is the reason for keeping them secret." People have this idea, I know very well.

For example, when we went to visit Mount Kailash many years ago, we traveled from Lhasa in the direction of the Mt Kailash and on the way we needed to cross the river that is the origin of the Brahmaputra. The river was very big and we couldn't cross it. There was no bridge, so we had to cross on boats. We had many cars, many people, etc.

Then we waited there for the river to go down, and we were told we needed to wait one week; but after one week the river did not become smaller. While we were waiting there, there were many people who came to our retreat, and some of them asked me, "Oh, in these days we are free and you should teach *thögal* to us." I said I could not teach *thögal* in that way. For teaching *thögal* I must

understand if people have a base, knowledge, or not. So, when I refused to teach they were not satisfied. They thought my character is not very open and generous.

So we couldn't go directly from Lhasa to Kailash. Later we turned around and went to Chinghai, and from Chinghai we went to Western Tibet. We were traveling for many days on two big buses. There were many people in those buses. We also had Tibetan and Chinese drivers. A person had a *thögal* text translated by a Chinese person living in California. Someone had a copy. Every day that person read the text in the bus using a megaphone and many people were satisfied. You see, they thought, "Oh, even though Namkhai Norbu doesn't want to teach this, we discovered." You see, this is the attitude of the human being.

When I follow a teaching, I know why I follow a teaching — for having realization. We can only have realization when we follow a teaching in a perfect way; in a correct way. For that reason, without knowing the condition of an individual, it is not so easy we teach this kind of teaching. Then some people are teaching these teachings and when, for example, I am not teaching them then these people say, "Oh, come to me and I will teach you." These people are not thinking about realization. They are thinking to get more students, "my students".

Most people don't understand and they are jumping there. I am always asking my students that to be really serious and open their eyes and do their best for following the teaching. Otherwise, we create so many problems. For example, someone is saying, "Oh, there is a very important lama, a reincarnation" and they do not know who it is, but they go and receive teaching. After one or two years they discover, "Oh, that teacher is not serious." In that moment they are criticizing. You already received some kind of teaching and even it is not so perfect, it is a Vajrayana teaching. You have already created a relationship of the Vajra. So, even if you discover that the teacher was not serious, you should not criticize. If you criticize you are accumulating problems for you, not for that teacher. So, when I say this they do not accept and are continually criticizing.

Nine Vehicles According to Drathalgyur Tantra

So, it is very important that we open our eyes and follow the teaching in the correct way. When we are learning the Dzogchen Teaching, when we are learning *tantra* or instructions, first of all there is an explanation of how that teacher must be, how the student must be, and how their relationship must be. This is very serious, a very, very important point. So, for that reason it is very important to know which kind of Teachings we can receive. When we say Dzogchen Teaching, you know very well what the Dzogchen Teaching is; Dzogchen Teaching is the essence of the all Teachings. It is not only the essence of Buddhist Teachings, but of all Teachings.

We can understand that from the explanation given in the root text of the Dzogchen Teaching — the Drathalgyur Tantra — the most ancient origin of the teaching. In Buddhist tradition, for example, in the Nyingmapa, Anuyoga and Dzogchen Teaching we explain that we have Nine Vehicles. What is a vehicle? A vehicle is just the name of the teaching of the Buddha; the most important and complete

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teaching is called a vehicle. If you want to get to some place very far and difficult to arrive to, then if you have a car or airplane you can reach your destination. At least, if we have a bicycle we can reach our destination much earlier than if we are walking, for example. For that reason, the symbol of the Buddhist Teaching is *dharma-chakra*. Chakra means vehicle.

When we classify something as a vehicle it means it is complete. Complete means has the consideration of how is the base, the path and the realization. In Buddhist tradition, in general, in Nyingmapa, etc., when we say nine vehicles, we say: "*shravaka*, *pratyeka* and *bodhisattva*". This mean that in Sutra the vehicles are divided in three: Hinayana divided into two (*shravaka* and *pratyeka*) and the Mahayana. Then we have the three lower or outer tantras. Then we have three inner tantras: Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga. That is presented officially in the Nyingmapa tradition.

I studied the Drathalgyur Tantra very well, and the Drathalgyur Tantra does not present the first three vehicles as just mentioned. It does not divide Hinayana in two vehicles. Hinayana is considered only one vehicle, but before Hinayana it presents a vehicle called *jigten lha mi'i thegpa*. *Jigten* means worldly in general. *Lha* means deity, that some people believe in. *Mi* means human, humans judge, think like in philosophy; they say, "The final goal must be something like this", like we study scientifically. All these kinds of aspects are considered the base, path and fruit - forming one vehicle. In this case, we can understand that we have so many different kinds of religions, not only Buddhist, there are many different kinds of philosophies, etc. So, all of these are considered to be the first of the nine vehicles.

The final goal, the real essence of the Nine Vehicles, is Atiyoga. That is our real nature. So, this is how it is explained in the Drathalgyur Tantra, for example. You see, the Dzogchen Teaching is the essence of all the teachings, the final goal. We have all these different vehicles because we have different circumstances; time and space are different. In these dimensions the capacity of the individual is also different. For that reason we have different kinds of vehicles, but all the vehicles in the real sense deals with topics: the relative condition and how the real nature is.

When it becomes easier to get in our real nature, the vehicle we use is a little higher vehicle. If we have less capacity and it is more difficult to get in that knowledge, the method is lower. So, it is very important to know what *thung-mong* and *thung-min* mean. When I say, "Oh, I am teaching Dzogchen Teaching", it doesn't mean everybody who follows my retreats has the knowledge of Dzogchen. It also doesn't mean I am communicating all Dzogchen Teaching. I am asking people that even if you cannot understand all the explanations, at least you should understand Ati Guruyoga. The application is also very simple, so you try to apply Ati Guruyoga. I am insisting on that because in the relative condition we have no capacity to understand how our real nature of the state of Dzogchen is. We cannot understand the state of Dzogchen only by judging, thinking or through logic and analysis, we cannot get in that knowledge. ❀

Transcribed by Anna Rose

Edited by Naomi Zeitz with the kind assistance of Elio Guarisco

Four Verses of Advice from Ugyen Tendzin

Webcast from Merigar, August 13, 2002 and originally published in The Mirror issue 62, 2002

KYE HO!

Intelligent being, listen!

If you practice the Dharma according to the real situation, all becomes virtuous.

The instant presence of your primordial state Is self-perfected in its very nature.

This is marvelous!

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all people who are interested around the world! We are very happy to have this communication and to be together spiritually and mentally. We are here at Merigar at our August retreat. We have a very nice day, not so warm but very nice. We also know that there are many people in the cold weather these days, in the snow, but we also know that many of you are having warm weather so let us enjoy this moment together in any case.

I want to communicate some very simple teaching to you. Among many of my Dzogchen teachers, one of the most important was my uncle who was called

Ugyen Tendzin (*U rgyan bstan'dzin*). He was not an intellectual person but he was an excellent Dzogchen practitioner and I received many Dzogchen Upadesa teachings as well as many teachings and knowledge of Yantra Yoga from him. He was one of the foremost students of Adzom Drugpa.

Adzom Drugpa was a very important Dzogchen teacher who spent most of his life doing practice and had a really very high realization of Dzogchen. My uncle was an excellent practitioner and teacher, but not like those teachers who have studied for a long time in an intellectual way. When I last saw him in 1954 or 53, I don't remember which, I had gone to see him to receive some particular knowledge of Yantra Yoga. I spent a few days with him and when I left I asked him to give me some advice. In general we have that attitude when we are following a teacher, we ask him to give us some advice. It doesn't mean that I am telling you to do that, (laughter) But we have that attitude.

For example I asked my teacher at College and he gave me some advice. I also asked other teachers like Ayu Khandro and they gave me some advice. This advice is mainly about how to integrate teaching and go ahead with our practice. Some teachers write pages of advice. For example, when I asked advice from one of my teachers, Kangkar Rinpoche, he wrote me a little booklet of more than fifteen pages.

If someone is a practitioner and also has intellectual knowledge it is easy to write it down. But when I asked my Uncle Togden, he said, "OK then, get a pen and some paper. You write and I will tell you." He only gave me four verses.

This was his advice. Of course I considered this to be something very important and I want to explain these four verses to



Photo by Gianni Baggi

ཀྱེ་རྟོ།
 །སྐྱེས་བུ་སྒོ་གྲོས་ལྡན་པ་བྱིང།
 །ཚུལ་མཐུན་ཆོས་སྤྱོད་དགོ་བར་འགྱུར།
 །ཨ་ཏི་རང་རིག་སྒྲིབ་ཅིག་མ།
 །དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་དུ་སྒྱུར་གྱིས་གྲུབ།
 ཨ་ལ་ལ་རྟོ།

you so you too can maybe understand how advice on the essence of knowledge is given.

This is the first verse. *Kyebu* (*skyes bu*) means person. When we say 'kyebu' in Tibetan, it could be male or female. In English we say 'person', which could be male or female. *Lodrö denpa* (*blo gros ldan pa*) means not only a person but one who has a capacity of understanding, for example, what is a good way, what is a bad way; a person who can understand and also apply that understanding. In general we say that this is the characteristic of human beings. Human beings are different from animals. Animals do not have that capacity. People can explain, can talk, can communicate, not only communicate but they can judge and think.

Some people are able to communicate and distinguish the difference between good and bad. That kind of person is called *lodrö denpa* and has this kind of intelligence. So this was addressed to me, "You

are the kind of person who has that capacity". It means, "You aren't stupid"; if I explain something, you know how to understand and apply it. This is the first verse.

The second verse has a very condensed meaning. *Tsulthun chöchöd gewar gyur* (*tshul mthun chos spyod dge bar 'gyur*). *Tsulthun* means we know how to apply everything according to its condition. It is a very important word. In general we human beings know a lot of things. But even if we know a lot sometimes we tend to go more with our fantasy and interests. This, however, doesn't correspond to the real condition. The real condition means how it is, its real function.

We are in samsara and we know what the condition of samsara is like. It is not always pleasant and is made up of a lot of suffering and problems. When they have problems, some people get upset immediately because they do not notice or understand what the condition of samsara is like. If

we are aware that we are in samsara and know what the situation of samsara is like, when we have a problem there is no reason for us to be too upset. Of course when we have some problems, it isn't very nice and we are not happy, but we know what the situation is like so we can accept it the way it is and do our best to overcome and diminish problems. This way we don't get charged up and accumulate tensions and even when there are problems, they become lighter instead of heavier. This is called knowing how the situation or the condition is.

Then, in general, when we are following any kind of teaching, first of all our teachers introduce us to or teach us the Four Mindfulnesses. Why do they teach the Four Mindfulnesses first? Because it is not something that we have invented or created but is the real condition of our lives. But even if it is our real condition, we are not aware that it is. For this reason, teachers make us understand and be aware that the situation is like that.

The First Mindfulness talks about being aware of the preciousness of the human condition. When we study in a more intellectual way we say that there are eighteen conditions. We are free from eight of these conditions. For example we are not in the hell condition, we are not in the condition of animals, we are not *prêtas*, we are not people without the capacity to judge or to speak. We are not in a country or place where there is no teaching, no transmis-

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sion, where we don't know what the teaching or the path is. Even if we have a human birth, if we are in only one of these conditions then it is not so easy to be on the path. So there are eight different categories. But these eight do not really totally represent our condition. This is only a kind of example. We are free from all negative conditions; this is the real sense.

And then there is *jorwa chu* (*sbyor ba bcu*), which means the ten things that are perfected. Of these, five perfections are related to the individual and five are related to our circumstances. Those who are interested in intellectual study learn these topics one by one and when they have learned them they think that they have realised that knowledge. If we want to explain these type of details to someone, then we will be able to explain better, but in the real sense, the principle is not doing analysis; the principle is knowing, understanding concretely what the real sense is. For instance, if we compare ourselves to an animal such as a dog, a nice dog, a very famous dog, even though that dog may be very famous, very good-looking, it cannot judge and think and follow teaching and do practice as we do. So it is very simple to compare ourselves to any type of being in order to understand that we have a very special opportunity.

When we speak about realization such as that of my Uncle Togden we are not talking about ancient history; it happened very recently during the Cultural Revolution. So if this type of realization still exists that means that there is this possibility and that this possibility is related to transmission, to a method of practice. We have method, we have transmission, we have a teacher. Also the transmission has not been interrupted. We have all these things which means that we have a very good opportunity to follow teaching and do practice.

So we can really reflect on how precious our human existence is because we can truly have some realization. Having realization means that we are totally free from samsara, free from all suffering. Not only do we become free ourselves but we can help many other sentient beings. Some people say, "Oh, I want to help others". It is a very good intention but before we can help others we need to have some realization ourselves. If we have no realization or knowledge, we cannot help other beings.

Helping others doesn't mean that we go and give a little food or water or some other type of help. That kind is necessary but it is not real help for sentient beings because they are transmigrating continually, infinitely in samsara. Helping means that we liberate someone from that type of samsara, we do something directly or indirectly. So to do these things we need to have certain realization and knowledge. If we want to help someone who is ill, we really need to be a good doctor. That means we need to study to become a good doctor. It isn't enough that we go to that person, offer a little water and say that we are helping them. That is an example.

Our realization is very important. All these possibilities are in our hands. Many teachers give advice saying that realization is in our hands. That means that the teacher gives us transmission, methods, and we know what we should do now. Now realization is more or less in our hands but whether or not that realization becomes complete depends on us. Remember what Buddha said,

"I give you the Path, but realization depends on you." We have that kind of condition so this is the First Mindfulness.

The Second Mindfulness is something that we should always remember: the knowledge of impermanence. Even though we have this precious path and transmission in our hands, we exist in time. Today we think, "Oh, I've received a wonderful teaching and in a few days I want to do a personal retreat. I want to practice!" But after a few days we go back to our job and meet lots of problems and think, "Oh, I can't do this today because I've got a lot of important things to do, but I'll do it next week!" When the next week arrives we still think, "Ah, I've still got a lot of important things to do. Maybe I'll do it the following week." Next week never finishes, it always goes ahead and one day we arrive at the end of our lives and we have a surprise. "Oh, this is the end of life! What do I do now? What did I do?" And we observe and discover that we have spent all our life thinking of practicing next week but what we have concretely is a collection of teachings. We have always written everything down but we don't really need it because when we die we can't take anything with us. That means we have not been aware of time and we have lost that good opportunity. So even if there is a good opportunity, if we do not understand and apply it, it has no value.

In the Dzogchen teaching we say that everybody has infinite potentiality. Our real condition and primordial potentiality is just like that of Enlightened Beings. But we are ignorant and are not in that knowledge. If we are not in that knowledge, even though we have that quality it does not function. So it is very important that we apply our knowledge and realise something.

Time always passes very quickly. If we observe children when they are growing up, after a year or two has passed when we see them again we think, "How much they have grown!" We only notice the children growing but don't notice that our time is passing. Even when we look in the mirror it is difficult to notice because we look there every day and the changes are gradual not immediate. We seem more or less the same. Spiritually we always feel young.

When I was very small one of my Chöd masters told me, "I never had time to be a young man." And I asked him, "How is that possible?" He replied, "Because I still considered myself to be a child. I always felt like that. Then one day someone called me an 'old monk' and I discovered that I was already old!" That is very real because we still have the same feeling that we had when we were young. So it is very important that we know that time is passing.

Now it is summertime and if we think about next summer it seems a long way away but actually it arrives very quickly. When I draw up my retreat program I always notice that after a month, four months, five months we will do this and that retreat. I still think we have lots of time until we reach that point in time but then going ahead, day after day passes and becomes history.

So it is very important for practitioners to remember that time is passing quickly. It isn't necessary that we concentrate on our death. If we concentrate on our death too much we become pessimistic and also feel bad. We don't need to do lots of visualisation of death but we should understand that it is something real. We must be aware and present about everything that is real. Being present about time is very important. First of all it is very important for the teaching and the practice. That way we can realise something.



It is also very important in ordinary life. For example, if you are a young person, you should go to school and study. This is your duty in our society in our human condition. If you do not study and travel around instead, then you lose time. At the end, when you are thirty years old and start to study it is not so easy. When you know that time is passing you can study and do what you have to do so that you will have more time later on to practice and do other things.

It is also very important for relationships in families and between people such as husband and wife who marry and stay together. When their emotions diminish, then all sorts of problems manifest. At that moment they think, "How can we live all our lives this way?" They think like this, get charged up and accumulate and develop tension. If you are aware of time when you get married, then you think, "We want to be together, helping each other and collaborating, we want to spend our lives together". When time passes and your emotions diminish you won't have this idea, "Oh, how can we spend our lives together?" because you know what life means. Life can be one day. Life can be one week, or even some years. There is no guarantee. Our life is just like a candle lit in an open place.

There are three very precise facts. One is that we really die one day. Another is that there are plenty of secondary causes for dying. Another thing is that there is no guarantee whether we live a long or short time. When we know these things we can become more aware of the situation. If we become more aware of time then we can relax the arguing and not paying respect to each other. Time is passing and it is impermanent.

We exist not only in time, but in general everything depends on our actions. We cannot exist without doing something; we are always in action. In this case it is very important that we know that we must not create negative karma and that the situation of karma is related to time. We must always be aware of karma, too. If we accumulate negative karma in any case we experience the effect of it. So instead of accumulating negative karma, when we are aware and the potentiality of negative karma arises, we try to purify and eliminate it. That means that we are doing our best. This mindfulness of karma is also very important. Why do we need to be aware of negative karma? Because we are also able to be aware of the situation of samsara. We know that samsara is full of painful problems and that all of the suffering of samsara is produced by karma. Karma is produced in time so in this case it is very important that we are mindful of this. With mindfulness we don't create negative karma and in that way we have fewer problems of samsara.

So you see these Four Mindfulnesses are not something that we have invented in a theoretical way but are something concrete. First of all we need to know this and then apply this knowledge in a correct way. I'll give you a very simple example. If we go to a foreign country which is very different from our own, such as a country where there are some very heavy and terrible rules, then we must be aware of the rules and the situation in that country. We cannot do anything against the rules of that country. It does not depend on whether we like or dislike the rules, whether we agree or disagree. If we want to return from that country then we must be aware, pay respect, and not argue with the people. This is called, 'how the

situation is'. We know about the situation, apply ourselves to that so then we will have fewer problems. In the same way, the Four Mindfulnesses are the universal situation of our condition.

Not only the Four Mindfulnesses but there are infinite things. We cannot make a dictionary of them all and even if there was a dictionary, we couldn't use it. But it is much better that we use our awareness, applying it as we should. That is why in the Dzogchen teaching when we speak of our attitude, we always say that we should work with circumstances. Circumstances mean that whatever the situation is like, we apply our knowledge in that way. Some people say, "Oh, I couldn't come to this retreat. I'm really sorry

**Life, life is wonderful,
all you need is an
umbrella to shade your
head during these days
of happiness.**

because my mother is really ill and in the hospital". Or others say that they have some illness or problem. Or some say that they can't come because if they do they will lose their job. So then I reply to them, "Don't worry. When you have the possibility one day, you go and study and follow the teaching."

Remember that the most important thing is that we work with our circumstances. If circumstances indicate that you shouldn't come to this retreat, that you should do these other things and you don't pay respect and come to the retreat, maybe later you will have a lot of problems. So you see, then, what working with circumstances means.

In general it is very important for our practitioners to learn how to work with circumstances. That is why I really like this Italian song that goes, "La vita, la vita è bella, basta avere un ombrella in queste giorni della festa per coprire la testa". [Life, life is wonderful, all you need is an umbrella to shade your head during these days of happiness.] That means it is sufficient to have an umbrella. But it doesn't mean that if we have an umbrella we don't have any problems. For example, today we don't need an umbrella. A few days ago, however, when there was heavy rain, we needed one. That is called circumstances.

According to the circumstances if we need certain kinds of practices then we can apply them. In the Dzogchen teaching we say that if we don't feel like doing practice, we should never force ourselves. Some people say, "Oh, if I don't do practice then my laziness will be stronger than me and I will lose my possibility of doing practice," and you fight with your laziness. This is a method that is used more in the Sutra style of practice.

If we follow a Dzogchen teacher and ask him, "What shall I do? I don't feel like practicing today," the teacher will say, "OK, don't do any practice. Relax, enjoy yourself". But don't relax and enjoy yourself without having presence. You always need your presence. If there is a continuation of your presence then you relax, you don't practice. After a few days you will discover why you don't feel like practicing. You can't feel that you don't want to do practice without

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having a cause. There is always a cause, a factor. It's very important that you give yourself more space, relax and discover what it is. When you discover what it is then you can work with that, you can do practice and have fewer problems.

Practices are not only done in one way. Sometimes we do practice in a formal, ritual way for one, two three, four days or more, then one day we don't feel like doing it. We feel tired of doing it. That's normal. But it isn't necessary that we do that kind of practice. We can do practice in a relaxed way simply relaxing in a state of Guruyoga or doing recitation of the Vajra.

There are many ways of doing practice and that is why we should learn them. We need to learn different kinds of practices so that we can work with circumstances. In Tibetan we say that if someone shows you their index finger, you should reply with your index finger, not with your little finger because it doesn't correspond. Not even with your thumb because it doesn't correspond. This is an example to show that we must work with the situation the way it is. It is called working with circumstances and is really very important.

So then you know how the situation is and how to work with that situation. This is the meaning of the word *tsulthun* (*tshul mthun*) in the advice from my uncle.

Ugyen Tendzin's advice continues with *chöchöd* (*chos spyod*). *Chö* means Dharma, applying with our attitude. When we follow Dharma, we try to apply it according to the real condition and according to the way it is explained in the teaching. Today we have many types of these problems in general because a lot of people use the word 'Dharma' for political and even economical situations. But this doesn't correspond. If we apply Dharma it must correspond with the meaning of Dharma.

There was a very important teacher called Atisha who was the source or origin of the Gelugpa tradition but is also considered to be very important in the

Sakyapa, Kagyupa, and all the, other traditions. Atisha gave some advice not only for a single person but for Buddhist practitioners in general. He said that Dharma must be applied in a correct way, otherwise it can become a source of samsara instead of liberating us from it. Of course, real Dharma never becomes that way, but Dharma teaching is practiced by human beings and those who practice it are called practitioners of Dharma. If someone has some qualifications then he is called "Lama of Dharma", a "reincarnation of Dharma", "head lamas of Dharma" then there are many levels, first, second, third and so on. At this point we must be careful because Buddha never taught many levels. Buddha only taught knowledge of Dharma. But we humans have created many of these types of positions.

Once I received a letter inviting me to go to India for a big meeting of reincarnations mainly organized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I felt that I was not a big or important lama and that perhaps it wasn't necessary for me to go. I also had work at the university because at that time we were preparing examinations. So I wrote saying I was sorry but I couldn't come because I had exams at the university. Later I received a letter from the Office of the

Dalai Lama; the Dalai Lama himself asked me to come. So then I decided to go.

One day we were doing an offering, a type of Ganapuja, in front of the big Stupa – I also participated with all these big lamas – and that night I had a very strange dream: we were going to do a Puja in front of this Stupa and they had prepared a very high throne for the Dalai Lama. It seemed to reach halfway up the Stupa. There was also a staircase for the Dalai Lama to get to the top. He arrived and started to go up the staircase. There were many other thrones there, first level, second level, third level and so on. All the big important lamas were running to take up their positions. Then I was a little surprised but I was worried about the Dalai Lama. I thought that when he got to the top his throne might collapse because it was too high and couldn't balance well. I was really worried and communicated this to the Dalai Lama mentally. He had climbed about five or six stairs when he turned around and I thought, "Oh good. He has understood my communication." And really, he then came back down the stairs. In front there was another throne that was much lower and quite stable so he went there and sat down. Then all the other lamas didn't have the courage to sit on the same level as the Dalai Lama and so everyone sat on the ground and I was very satisfied (laughter).

Sometimes we have these kinds of problems because people consider that positions are very important. In the real sense there are no positions in the teaching. What is important in the teaching is knowledge, understanding, and transmitting that, applying teaching that way, not using it for power or position. This is what we call *chöchöd* (*chos spyod*), applying Dharma in this way. This is the advice of my uncle.

When I told my uncle that I was going to central Tibet, he immediately said, "Oh, you reincarnations! You are always going around with lots of monks and horses. This doesn't correspond in the real sense." I told him that I had no intention of doing things in that way. In the real sense this is true because I traveled with my family in a very simple way. It was also part of the political situation of the moment. And even if we had wanted to do things in the old way, we didn't have the possibility. It didn't mean that I was very clever.

So *gewar gyur* (*dge bar 'gyur*) means that you work knowing how all the conditions are. If you follow Dharma you apply it as it should be applied, then everything becomes positive and virtuous and there will be no problems. This is the more relative condition.

Another verse says *ati rangrig kechigma* (*a ti rang rig skad cig ma*). When we talk about our real knowledge or understanding that means that we Dzogchen practitioners are following Atiyoga. Ati means primordial state: the primordial state of ourselves. We are not talking about the state of Enlightened Beings. *Rangrig* (*rang rig*) means our knowledge of instant presence of ourselves which is not something that we are building or constructing but rather that we discover our real condition. This is always beyond time. When we say beyond time it also means instantaneous, not first, second, third and so on. That is our real knowledge or understanding, and that understanding is not constructed in any way, it is simply knowing how our real condition is. It manifests as the self-perfected state.



In general we say that knowledge of the Dzogchen teaching is beyond effort, beyond construction. That knowledge is also related to our relative condition. That is why I always say that it is very important that we integrate all our experiences into practice. Life should become practice, not thinking that practice is something apart. For instance some people consider the *tun* book to be Dzogchen practice. How do we do this practice? If we have some time we do the short *tun*, if we have more time the medium *tun*, and if we have still more time the long *tun*, the Ganapuja and so on. Then people have the idea that the practice is that and think that they have to do *tun* practice and during retreats we do practice together and people are satisfied. When we finish the retreat we go home, some people to the city, others to the countryside, some people live very far away from other practitioners, and they say, "How good it was to do practice together during the retreat, but now I am alone I can't do any."

It is very important that we know what practice means. Practice means not only doing collective practice together. Collective practice is one way and when we have the circumstances, such as a lovely day when most people are free, then we can gather some place and do a very nice Ganapuja. But very often we don't have these possibilities. When we have no possibility we need to practice in an easier condensed way, such as doing Guruyoga with the White A in a *thigle*. We simply pronounce A and remain in that presence. With that presence we relax in instant presence. Just that is practice. It is not so difficult. And also if we simply try to be aware, aware of the Four Mindfulnesses in daily life and also aware of how the situation is, what we are doing at that moment, this is also practice. If we are doing practice of being aware, we notice if we are charged up and have a lot of tensions. Then we can relax and have more benefits and make our lives more comfortable. This is an example of how we go ahead with our practice during our lifetime.

Now we are living the 2000's, in modern times and communication is very easy. Even if we don't live near other practitioners it is not difficult to communicate with them. The same is true between groups of practitioners. It is very important that we communicate among ourselves and pay respect to each other. There are a great number of human beings on this earth but how many of them follow teaching such as the Dharma teaching of the Buddha? And in particular, how many of them are Dzogchen practitioners? If we compare them to the quantity of humans in the human condition on the earth, there are almost none. We only have a few practitioners on the earth and so it is essential that we communicate, pay respect to each other and collaborate among ourselves. We know that human problems are very much related to our egos. In particular, in these modern conditions, we are very busy and we don't have much time to dedicate to teaching and practice. That possibility is also very limited by our egos and the dualistic condition.

For instance, someone meets a teacher, follows that teaching, and creates a small group. Instead of learning the real sense of the teaching that person always remains blocked with this group saying, "We are students of this and that lama, this group, that group." I am not saying that you shouldn't follow different teach-

ers and different groups, but you must understand the limitation of schools, the limitations of groups, because all these limitations are the source of samsara. The teaching doesn't teach you how to limit. If someone teaches you that, it is not teaching, it is some special teaching of that person. You should know this and not follow that person. Teaching is for liberating us from limitations. If it corresponds to liberating us from problems then even if it has different names, it doesn't matter. It may even be called a Dzogchen group but if it teaches some kind of limitations it is better that you don't follow it otherwise it means you are not following the Dharma teaching as it should be.

It is very dangerous to spend a long time moving in the wrong direction because we lose all our precious opportunities. Life becomes practice.

The principle of the Dzogchen teaching is *tawa*, *gompa*, and *chödpa* (*lta ba*, *sgom pa*, *spyod pa*). *Tawa* means point of view, learning what our real condition is and how we can get in that state; all these types of considerations are point of view. *Gonpa* means that we are not only explaining or learning in an intellectual way, doing analysis, but we really apply [our knowledge] in order to discover how and what our real nature is. In the teaching, even in the Sutra teaching, in the Tantra teaching, in Dzogchen, our real nature is explained as being beyond explanation. But we can have knowledge of it with our practice and our experience. That is the reason we say that we must "taste", not just talk and make analyses.

I always give the example of sweet. If someone has never had the experience of 'sweet' in their life, that person cannot understand what sweet means. But if someone tastes a small piece of a sweet then they have already discovered what sweet means. There is nothing to change that idea. When we have no knowledge, then there is something to change. Sometimes we have the idea that we believe this or that, but it means that we have decided with our judgement. We believe that things are that way even though we have no real experience. If we have no experience, today we believe in white but tomorrow we may believe in red.

That is an example to show that we should practice meditation. And the knowledge that arises from meditation we need to integrate with our *chödpa* (*spyod pa*) or conduct.

Chödpa doesn't mean a series of rules about what we can or cannot do. If it is necessary we can always learn such things and use them. But no kind of rules can really correspond globally to how our situation is. They can only correspond if we are really being aware. When we are aware, we do our best and can really manage to overcome problems. For this we must develop our clarity and to develop our clarity we need to practice. With this knowledge finally we discover that we can develop our attitude in order to integrate in that state. Then, for practitioners, life becomes practice.

When we say 'Dzogchen practitioner', we don't mean someone who does a retreat for three years, three months, three days even though Dzogchen teaching doesn't say not to do that. If you like you can dedicate not only three years but all your life to practice, like my teacher Ayu Khandro who spent most of her life in dark retreat. There are no limitations. The teaching is for all sentient beings, not only for a few people who have the possibility to spend

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[their lives] in the dark, or in three or seven year retreats. Not everyone can do that. Most people have families; they are fathers and mothers with responsibilities.

Sometimes people who have this kind of responsibility decide to do a three-year retreat and leave their wife, their children, their house, job, and everything. Maybe they have a very nice idea that if they do a three-year retreat they won't need anything, they will be realised without need of a house or job. But three years passes very quickly and when it is over they are more or less the same. When they come out they have no wife, no job, no family, nothing! Their realization is that. It means that they are lacking awareness of how the situation is concretely. If they have a guarantee that they will become fully realised in a three-year retreat, then it is not so bad. But I think that nobody can guarantee that they can have realization in three years. That is why we do not ask people to do that kind of retreat.

People are free but it is very important that we have such knowledge and learn how to integrate our lives with practice. Following Dzogchen teaching means that we are not changing anything. In Dzogchen we say beyond modifying, beyond changing anything. How we were before, we continue in that way only now with knowledge and the capacity to integrate with it. This means that we go ahead as we were before but in instant presence, integrating. This is what we should learn.

When we really become a Dzogchen practitioner we are not conditioned by dualistic vision, we are not always distracted. When we speak with someone or we do something, our actions, our mind, everything is governed by instant presence. Many people ask how we can be in instant presence at the same time as thinking and judging. That is the reason we do Rushen practice at the beginning of Dzogchen. We do many kinds of Semdzin practices for noticing and distinguishing what is at the level of mind and what is beyond mind. When we are beyond time, although time can be within that dimension it does not govern us.

For example, when we are the real potentiality of the mirror, it doesn't mean that the mirror cannot reflect all kinds of things. Everything related to time manifests in the mirror. First there may be a dog in front of the mirror, then the dog goes away and there is a man. The dog doesn't always remain in the mirror because now there is a man. That means being in time. If, for instance, we are on a plane when we go to the toilet there is a red light when it is occupied and we have to wait for someone to come out in order to enter. This means time: the time someone enters the toilet, the time they come out and the time we go in.

Beyond time is not that way. Beyond time is just like the mirror in which everything can manifest. When we are in the state of contemplation or instant presence, everything that is related to mind can manifest. When we talk for an hour, we don't have to be distracted. If we are good practitioners we can be in instant presence and talk, sing, judge.

It is for this reason that in the teaching it says that Enlightened Beings are omniscient. They have the wisdom of quantities and qualities because they are in the Dharmakaya, not in time, and can manifest everything. So we should know what the level of our

mind is, what our real nature is, and integrate our attitude with everything. When we have this capacity it means we are really becoming Dzogchen practitioners.

This is the aim, the point of arrival not only for Dzogchen practitioners but other kinds of practitioners – it is easy to understand that – but our way of applying methods and following teaching is different. The characteristics of the teachings of the Path of Renunciation and the Path of Transformation are different and they use different methods to get to that point. But we should not think that different methods mean some type of conflict. Everything is relative particularly for Dzogchen practitioners. Any kind of method whether it is Hinayana or Mahayana style, if we need it and know how to do the practice, we can apply it, even if it doesn't belong to the Buddhist tradition; it doesn't matter, we can use it. The principle is our knowledge, which is like a central pillar because then we can integrate everything. We don't need to be limited and should always try to free ourselves from our limitations. So this is the characteristic of Dzogchen teaching, how it is taught and learnt.

So I have explained a little about Dzogchen teaching because the last two verses of my uncle's advice are about that. I promised to explain these four verses, so now I have finished the explanation. ☸

Edited by Liz Granger



Not Giving Too Much Importance to Problems

An excerpt from an informal talk given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on his birthday, December 8, 2012, in Tenerife, after a session of Khaita Songs.

Most of these [Khaita] songs are like this – no-one is singing about being really happy. Some of the songs seem to be joyful, but this is Tibetan culture because when Tibetans feel very sad they don't show it. They don't look like they are desperate.

One of the songs says that when we walk up in the valley snow is falling down, but even though it is snowing, we are not worried. We know that after the snowfall there will be sunshine because we are living in time. Things are interdependent and there is good and bad. When we have bad things, after we will have good. It is impossible that only bad things exist. So even if they are suffering and have many difficulties, Tibetans have this kind of courage, they relax and don't get wound up. This is Tibetan philosophy and it works.

We have a song from East Tibet, *Kyong Khadro Chig*, that we sing very often [Rinpoche sings]. When we sing it, people think that it is a very joyful song because of the melody and they sing it in a happy way because it doesn't appear to be sad. Many people know this song but it isn't a happy song, it is sad, but the way it is sung is joyful. This is how it should be.

Some people get upset about just a little problem. It seems that tomorrow we are going to die. But it is not that way. Problems always exist for everybody because we are in samsara, not in paradise. In samsara all problems exist, but if we are practitioners we don't get upset; we understand how the situation is. If a person is not a practitioner when they get upset and consider things to be terrible, they don't know what to do. When some people have very heavy problems they even go to a high place, jump down, and die. But when they die that way, there is no guarantee of what will come next.

This is our condition in samsara. Many problems exist but if we are practitioners, we know that and don't get anxious. It is normal. We can always have problems but we don't give too much importance to them and we relax. When we relax, there are no secondary causes for creating more problems and it is much better. ❁

Transcribed and edited from the Dzogchen Community Video Journal, web edition, clip 2013-1, Shang Shung Institute.



Atiyoga Foundation

Guidelines for Public Courses

Dear teacher/gakyil member,
First of all, I wish you a **Happy Losar** and a prosperous and Happy Metal Mouse Year.

Secondly, I have the pleasure to tell you that, on the occasion of Losar, the **International Atiyoga Foundation** is publishing its **Guidelines for public courses** of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaita. We hope that we can soon publish guidelines for public meditation courses, too.

In the preamble of the Guidelines, you can read **who** the International Atiyoga Foundation is (ATIF) and what our **values** are. In any case, it was created following Master **Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's** wish and it was legally founded by him in July 2018.

We are convinced that a Cultural Foundation is a suitable instrument to communicate the **cultural heritage of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu** in the world and we are



also convinced that networking among teachers through the method suggested by the guidelines is an excellent approach to **collaborate**.

For this reason, we propose that you enter into a relationship with ATIF by following the instructions in the Guidelines attached, and by promoting your courses with ATIF's logo (which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu asked us to use) and eventually by suggesting to your course participants to become friends with ATIF.

The department that supervises these courses in ATIF is called **Ati Movement and Mind Department (AMMD)**, whose coordinator is Fabio Andrico. Fabio Andrico, Adriana Dal Borgo, Laura Evangelisti and Prima Mai constitute the so-called "**Scientific Committee of advisors of ATIF**", in particular for AMMD. However, ATIF has other departments and legal/cultural entities con-

nected to it in various ways, as ChNN's cultural heritage is broad. Among them: the International Dzogchen Community, the Tibetan School of Medicine – Shang Shung Institute, the School for Tibetan language and Translation, Shang Shung Publications and the Museum of Oriental Art and Culture (MACO).

Looking forward to developing a long and fruitful collaboration,

See attachments:

ATIF Guidelines for Public Courses

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BonTJj7L-GyZmxiaEYoaTUxdERFRWMxMzhqMmNCelJqX2hz/view>

The 27 Commitments by

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R5PxfF_4HJmLOQtDGyW7ySMYbGtjwcqk/view

List of delegates.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16F1jMYzbAsVeAcw-Epl38RkoWC5Ko6_2/view

Venice, February 24th, 2020.

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SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE
SCHOOL OF TIBETAN MEDICINE



Third Level graduation of students of Diet and Lifestyle According to Tibetan Medicine with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo, Director of the SSI International Tibetan Medical School on February 22, 2020.



Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo with her two dedicated assistants, Irina Pankevich (left) and Madegma Budaeva (right).



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Covid19 Emergency, Empathy and Interdependence

The global health emergency we are experiencing, at least here in Italy, is upsetting our daily lives, throwing our plans upside down, destroying the framework around which our daily lives revolve, and devastating our social contacts and cultural commitments.

All of this, like any crisis, can be a great opportunity, if we know how to seize it. As far as we are concerned, as an Association for International Solidarity in Asia, it can be a great opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of those values that are the root of Buddhist culture and the vision that led Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to found ASIA. Among these, in particular, awareness of the impact that thoughts, words and actions can have on our environment, and the consequent sense of responsibility that impels us to behave each day in a way that will safeguard the community in which we live and consequently also the communities that we support with our projects on the other side of the globe, in Asia. This is because the interdependence that binds all living things is increasingly tangible in this globalized world. And that's why our thoughts go to the beneficiaries of the projects, boys and girls, women, shepherds and farmers, university students, monks and nuns who count on our help to be able to continue to experience that excellent means that is improving their lives and making them more dignified.

Another value that this health emergency allows us to deepen is empathy. Now that we are experiencing this emergency it is easier for us to put ourselves in the shoes of those who constantly experience situations of crisis and sudden changes, such as the children of Nepal and their families who lost everything with the 2015 earthquake, the Tibetan population forced to undergo severe restrictions and policies of cultural annihilation, and all the Himalayan populations that suffer the tragic effects of climate change.



In this sense, the Covid19 emergency can help us to deepen our humanity, to develop an empathetic attention towards others, with the awareness that we are all part of the same human family.

To concretely demonstrate our closeness and support to the people of the Himalayas, we have created the ASIA FRIENDS campaign.

It is a way to guarantee continuous help over time and continue to carry out our projects in the field, with different ways of contributing:

- * with € 9 per month you become Drokpo (Friend, in Tibetan)
- * with € 20 per month you become Jindak (Supporter)
- * with 50 euros per month you become Yon dak (Benefactor)

If you share our values and our mission, become a friend of ASIA

Find out more

<https://asia-ngo.org/en/what-you-can-do/support-us/become-a-friend-of-asia/> ©

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Standing on Our Own Feet

An Interview with Thubten Rabgyi and Urara Taoka

This is an interview done on March 12, 2020 at Dzamling Gar with Gekö Thubten Rabgyi and the Gakyil Director and Yellow Gakyil, Urara Taoka, about the latest challenges faced by Dzamling Gar and a look towards the future.

The Mirror: Since Dzamling Gar is the Global Gar there is international concern, and there have been some strong winds (literally) passing through in the last while, between the very strong sandstorm called Calima and the Corona Virus, The Mirror wanted to check in with Rabgyi, the gekö, and Urara, the current Dzamling Gar Gakyil President, about how the Gar is weathering the various challenges of late and plans for the future. So let's start with the situation of the Calima in terms of damage and recovery.



Urara: I think Rabgyi has been cleaning so much there is nothing left to clean.

Thubten Rabgyi: The very heavy storm was one night and one day, but it lasted for some days altogether. The old Gönpa, the white tent, was damaged, some trees and balconies, and the roofs of the balconies, as well as some fences. The Gönpa was ok but it got very dusty. The storm started on



New Gakyil elected in April 2019 at Dzamling Gar. Rabgyi is on extreme left and Urara second from the right.

the night of February 23, Losar eve, and got really bad on Losar, the 24th. We had the famous *guthuk* soup and that night after we went home the storm really got bad and the next day we were not able to have our Tibetan Losar Celebration; we had prepared



many things, dancing, games, the cafeteria bought something to make lunch, we made *khapse*, and also we were going to make a nice breakfast but we could not do any of it because of the storm. Now the corona virus, so we were and are a little restricted.

M: Are we still repairing and cleaning from the storm?

TR: Yes our maintenance team and the gardeners are still working. There is still cleaning to do. We cleaned everything in the tent but we cannot repair it anymore so maybe we will have to sell it. Now it is almost three weeks from the storm, we haven't finished all the repairs but more or less the cleaning is finished. The swimming pool needed more than one week to clean.

M: So we are slowly recovering from the sandstorm and now we have entered another kind of a storm with the virus. The Gakyil is taking appropriate actions according to advice from the government health officials such as social distancing and asking people to stay quiet in their homes and people who have just arrived by plane should stay quarantined for fourteen days before entering the Gar. Also Dzamling Gar is collaborating with Merigar West in webcasting practices. Now we are webcasting morning Yantra Yoga, the Dance of the 12 A's in the afternoon, a course with Elio Guarisco, the Medium Thun at 5pm alternating with Merigar West, soon Fabio will teach some Yantra Yoga and Breathing, and Khaita singing. So maybe we are busier than before. In any case, aside from the virus, how do you see the development and future of Dzamling Gar at this time? How is the financial situation?

UT: We have really stabilized the financial base after a difficult period with the help of the international community and their col-

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laboration. Now the debt has been covered so we are at a starting point and from now on we have to think about how to really sustain the Gar; how to create sustainability. This year we are managing to cover the costs of the Gar.

Currently we still depend on fundraising but we have to reduce our dependence on fundraising and start to create income.

M: What are some of the ideas about how to create income?

UT: One way is to activate an accommodation program. Before in the Dzamling Gar House, we did not have enough accommodation to rent, but now we have. This will be rentals – long term, short term, for practitioners and guests who join our activities (or programs). We have thirteen houses altogether in the Gar. Dzamling Gar has its own house and now we have made it so we have more potential rentability with the Dzamling Gar house itself. Before we could not receive income because we were using it for other purposes; karma yogis, etc., and also some instructors stayed there. But now we can fully use the Dzamling Gar house for renting and having some income. Dzamling Gar/Tenerife is perfect place for holiday for the family and I would like to open more to IDC family members, in this way naturally they could have a connection to the teaching combined with holidays.

M: What is the current legal situation of the Gar and what does that mean exactly for the Gar?

UT: We can now use the entire facility of Dzamling Gar legally and that means that our events are legal and we can also rent our facilities if we want; we can rent the Gönpa, or accommodations, or the jyagcip. There was a group that was thinking to organize some courses and rent the jyagcip, but in this moment all of that is put on hold.

M: Is that how you see the future of the Gar, by bringing people in or also possibly integrating with the local community outside through open activities?

UT: The moving out into the local community has become a difficult topic. The previous gakyil tried to promote activities outside and tried to integrate with the local community, but we are located in the south of Tenerife island and the local people who work here live in the north, so there is not really a local population to offer to, unless

they are tourists. So for us it's quite difficult to reach them.

For us it would be easier to reach to the tourists who are coming here; this location is more of a touristic place and in the past we have had many people who have come for a holiday from Europe and discovered Dzamling Gar on the street, by walking by. Sometimes they drop in and they found out about Khaita and they started to know about our activities; then they ask who we are, start to have interest, and take our brochure and information about who to contact when they return home. So Dzamling Gar really has this function of opening the door to the Dzogchen Community and I believe this is really its function. In the past with local people it has been quite difficult, but there is still a possibility.

M: So Rabgyi how do you feel about the future of Dzamling Gar and do you have a vision of how the Gar might become more self sustaining without relying always on fundraising and asking the Community for financial assistance? Do you have any ideas or suggestions about how to go ahead?

TR: I don't have particular ideas of what we should do, but we have the opportunity to make this Gar self sustaining because we

money through donations, lotteries, and auctions, plus our membership numbers are not very high, so we have no income really. Until now we have been dependent on Rinpoche.

Luckily, until recently, Rinpoche always stayed here for around six months of the year, and so people came because he was here and we had more income. Also people have a lot of energy and they come here because of the nice weather and they can escape the winter, but they don't just come for the beach, they can work in the Gar, go to the beach, and help with the maintenance of the Gar. I feel very much if we organize in a correct way that things will go well. There are many opportunities for this Gar.

M: Have we ever thought about hiring a business manager?

UT: Yes we have discussed that but since our financial situation has been challenging we did not have the money to think about another salary. We have talked about paying the person with the money they can bring in as income through their management activities.

TR: I think if we hire someone from outside the Community it can also be very difficult.



have many facilities and also the opportunity that we can do many things here, but it depends on the organization and how we manage things. The Gakyil is changing every three years and it doesn't mean that every Gakyil has such capacity, particularly in the area of business. We really lack the people who have this kind of experience and it is something we really need.

Then I feel we should do more maintenance, but we have a lot of expenses for this. Comparing our income to what we must spend on maintenance and infrastructure costs, if we just look at this straight on it seems like an impossible situation to maintain this Gar. We make

Our system is a little different than other companies and businesses and it would be very challenging for a business person from outside who is used to normal business procedures. We need someone from inside the Community.

For me Dzamling Gar is for maintaining Rinpoche's transmission; His vision and teaching. That is why we are all here. If we lose that it doesn't matter how much money we have, we have lost the purpose; we have lost the tree and we try and grab the branches. This we do not want to lose. This is the main point and it is not so easy to discover how we can go ahead.

Before Rinpoche was here and he was the center of the mandala and he manifested everything we needed; he gave everything, so we didn't need to worry. Even if we had a discussion or disagreement or something we could not decide, we would go to Rinpoche and ask if this was right or wrong and he would give an answer and we would go ahead.

Also it's not so easy, some things have not been decided by the Gakyil or internationally, so we do not have anyone to make those decisions anymore. We need to lead.

M: Can we talk about concrete projects. What are some of the concrete projects?

UT: One of the projects is what to do about the damaged tent and there is someone who still wants to buy it so most probably we will sell it very soon.

M: Some other different projects are the acoustic system in the Gönpa, the garden around the Gönpa, etc. Maybe we go one by one?

UT: We are now collaborating with a Czech company from our Vajra brothers for the acoustic system, which is a very important project, and they are providing a very good plan and so soon we will start to install a professional acoustic system.

We have decided to postpone the garden around the new Gönpa because there are not the right conditions yet. Since we haven't paid the big taxes, construction tax and land transfer tax, and we have not been informed of the amount yet, we are still not sure how much we have to pay and how much that leaves for other projects. So first we have to finish these payments and if there is something left we can start the garden.

Another project is to change the metal front gate to a nice wooden gate. Benedetta is designing a simple, not very expensive, gate. We think it's very good to have a nice, welcoming door.

The next project is the development and the usage of the big hall that has already been constructed below the main hall of the Gönpa. There is a very big space to the left side facing the Gönpa where originally there were supposed to be accommodations. We have some ideas and one is to put an art gallery there; an art gallery is low maintenance.

TR: I think we should have all activities in that same space where there were supposed to be accommodations: the bookstore, cafeteria, all the offices, info point, and then we can rent the spaces where we



Photo by Elena Kalistova

now have the offices in the Gakyil house. Now everything is scattered, it's better to have everything in one area.

M: What would you like to tell the International Dzogchen Community about your hopes for the future of Dzauling Gar and how the international community can participate on many levels, not only financially?

UT: Rinpoche said that Dzauling Gar is physically the collaboration point for the entire Dzogchen Community, the concrete place to manifest collaboration, so it is really good we have all the various Gar houses here, but we have not been able to organize a collaboration event yet for a variety of reasons, so we can host many kinds of events for the international Community. If some other community wants to do an event maybe they can rent and use Dzauling Gar, this could be something interesting. We also need to collaborate with the Atiyoga Foundation in a good and efficient way because the Foundation is our interface to the outside for public activity.

M: What kind of activities were you thinking to rent the Gar or space in the Gar to?

UT: For example two Russian practitioners were thinking to rent the jyagcip to do a course just for Russian speaking people on Harmonious Breathing and Psychotherapy. These kind of things for example: they can come and enjoy Tenerife and nature, and also organize some Russian language tourism. We have the opportunity and infrastructure here to organize these kinds of events. We could also do this for Chinese, or Japanese, there are many possibilities.

M: Are there things we still need to repair and/or develop in our infrastructure and public access places, like the swimming pool, before we can do this kind of renting?

TR: Our swimming pool needs a lot of repair and the paint is coming off so the next solution should be to put tiles. We also might make it more shallow so that we do not need lifeguards. If only members use the pool we do not need lifeguards, but if we want to open up to the public and the pool is too deep, we do. We have had many discussions about the swimming pool but it seems the best solution is to put tiles; they last a long time and require much less maintenance so in the long term the tiles are economical.

I think the priority in Dzauling Gar is the acoustic system because if we rent the space or do our programs, sometimes it is difficult to hear and so this is a main priority. Then after that I think it would be very nice to finish the garden around the Gönpa, also there would be less dust inside the Gönpa. Then the Gönpa would be cleaner and nicer and if someone comes to see it, it looks better. Then of course there are many things to do. Also Yantra Yoga needs a place.

M: So it sounds like we are going ahead with a lot of hope.

TR: I think in Dzauling Gar there is a lot of opportunity. As we mentioned we can manage it with awareness and look at every angle, all the aspects of the Gar and the expenses, how to make money, many things, it is a tough job but we can get it done.

The difficult part is that the Gakyil is voluntary work and it is difficult for Gakyil members to dedicate two years to work

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Dzamling Gar.

A time when we all come together as one big family...

Anca Rusu

Dzamling Gar Accommodations Manager

I am thinking about writing an article on Dzamling Gar's accommodation new summer program for a while now, so I rolled up in my mind a lot of storylines on how to get you all charmed with our wonderful projects, assuring you of how the Global Gar will just glow this year. But though I thought about multiple scenarios, I would have never thought that this article will be less about what we are preparing for this summer and more on how in Dzamling Gar (and all over the world actually), these hard times taught us how to come together and really do our best (as the Master was always telling us) so we can champion such a distressful situation. I guess you know and saw all over the news and Facebook the eerie showdown of the last calima, the strongest in the last 40 years, with a wind that ran through the island at 130 km/h for more or less two days, caking the island with a thick layer of dust, knocking down shorefronts, blowing up roofs, ravishing this beautiful island and forcing the authorities to cancel the most beloved annual event, the Tenerife Carnival. Also in Dzamling Gar we had to can-

cel the Losar festivities for which so many people were preparing for such a long time and just watch how the nature unleashed itself over our beloved Gar. But, as you also must have heard, the casualties weren't serious and the people who came to attend the Mandarava retreat teamed up with Rabgyi, the Gekö, Alix, the head gardener, and Prezme, infrastructure manager, to clean, repair and tend to the garden. This was our first heavy situation in which Losar wasn't celebrated in the best attires, with feasts and dancing, but working together on restoring all the damage made by the calima. This hard condition transformed in a golden opportunity to welcome a year that is all about standing together shoulder to shoulder facing anything this tricky Metal Rat might have installed for us. Immediately after calima, the coronavirus situation exploded, taking us all by surprise. The Gakyil and the houses management team had to take many swift decisions in order to protect the Gar and the people and it hasn't been easy. It still isn't... Every day comes with new challenges, difficulties that we must face and champion, but we stand together as one big team and this is why I don't worry no matter what this Metal Rat year has ready for us. This being said, I want to thank the whole accommodation team of Dzamling Gar for an amazing work! I am proud to be part of such an efficient and dedicated team. In the end of this article full of praises for all Community members who dealt superbly with the situation, I would like to



tell you a bit of our future plans for accommodation because we all know that the best thing about impermanence is that also the bad times come to an end... I won't give you many details because one feels that talking too much about big plans in such a distressful circumstance is somehow inappropriate. So, we are planning to create a special and enjoyable program for families full of fun activities to do either separate or together, a getting to know Tenerife agenda with small cruises, outdoor picnics in amazing places, yoga, meditation and Khaita in nature, but also a detox plan for mind and body in collaboration with the Tibetan Medicine School in Tenerife, a month full of goings-on related to finding and maintaining awareness in movement and this is just a small piece of what we have to offer once this pandemic will let us breathe with ease and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Tenerife. Hope to see you all in Dzamling Gar soon and especially healthy and happy! May you be safe and in peace wherever you are! ☺

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and do this hard job and receive many complaints on top. But we should say that anyone who wants to do something for the Community, and for Rinpoche's vision and his legacy, they are welcome. This is very important. We are missing human resources. Dzamling Gar is not just for residents living here, Dzamling Gar is for the worldwide Community, to enjoy Rinpoche's songs, dances, everything.

Rinpoche passed away and his legacy is fresh to put in our hands. Every individual has a responsibility; it's not only the Gakyil, or the International Gakyil, or the Atiyoga Foundation. People should not worry too much about the future of the Community, it is normal when the Master passes away that the students take responsibility. How many thousands of years since Garab Dorje passed away and his transmission is alive.

Also many Tibetan masters have passed away. So we should take this opportunity and this responsibility and take care and not abandon things and look for someone else to take responsibility. The Dzogchen Community can do that. Rinpoche built the Community in a very good way and also most of our people, there are so many people in the Community, who have genuine capacity. We can put all our capacities together and go ahead. But if everyone is looking at each other and blaming each other, then of course it will disappear. Dzogchen will not disappear because Dzogchen has been maintained for centuries and centuries and other masters and students are alive, but the lineage of Rinpoche, if we do not take care, will disappear. This we should really convey to the people and look forward to take care of the lineage and the teachings. I think like this: if I do things

in this way will Rinpoche be happy, if I do that he will not be happy, so I myself know very well which way I should go that would make him happy.

The Dzamling Gar Gakyil has really done very well. After Rinpoche passed away we had many debts and many things to deal with, it was a very heavy time for everybody, in so many different ways, but the Gakyil handled it very well and, as Urara our yellow Gakyil person said, we have paid off the debt, and now we are maintaining the Gar. Now we are standing on our feet and we have to see how we can walk forward and in which direction; before we were just trying to stand up. Rinpoche left everything in our hands and gave us many tools, and so equally we are all responsible.

M: Thank you both for your all your work and your time for this interview. ☺

Mandarava Retreat in Stormy Times

Dorothea Franck

Like every year since quite a while, Dzamling Gar offered the Mandarava retreat at Losar time in the beautiful new Gönpa. It turned into a truly special one.

It had a stormy beginning. The day before Losar a devastating Calima sandstorm hit the Canary islands. The air turned into a dense yellowish fog of fine Sahara sand, wind gusts with up to 140 km per hour or more were bending the palm trees and made it impossible to leave the house. Arrivals of some practitioners were delayed because many flights were cancelled – Dzamling Gar had to call off all celebrations of the day before Losar and Losar itself.

The damage in the Gar seemed considerable. Everything covered with sand, in all corners heaps of dirt, leaves, small branches everywhere, fallen trees, the normally clear turquoise swimming pool now a boggy brownish pond full of leaves



and other litter, – and more dramatically: the former Gönpa-tent was seriously torn and damaged. It was just as amazing to see how quickly the Dzamling Gar team and many helpers managed to clean up the most urgent clutter and continued during the whole retreat to bring everything back into a perfect state.

But what I found most striking: during a presentation of the yellow Gakyil half-way of the retreat we were told that all the more serious damages only concerned things that were on their way to go anyway. The temporary concession of the big tent having already expired, was to be dismantled in the near future. And the two trees that came down were trees about which Alix, our unremitting expert gar-



dener, had her doubts since a while. It seems very much the action style of Pro-tectors: to turn seemingly unfavorable circumstances into favorable ones.

The second “obstacle”, which proved more persistent, was the worldwide spread of the corona virus. Much less people than usual had arrived, many Italians chose or were obliged to stay home. The Gakyil reacted in a highly responsible way to reduce the risk of contagion to a minimum. At the entrance of the Gönpa temperature was taken daily of every participant, disinfectant liquid generously distributed, repeatedly advices given, and in addition Dr. Phuntsog provided a liquid special anti-viral medicine for everyone every day. Since people with any kind of symptoms of sickness, cold or flu were strongly advised to stay at home, much less coughs and sneezes were heard in the Gönpa than at any former retreat. Since the space of new Gönpa is huge and much less people attended than usual, there was no need to sit too close, everybody could have ample space around. In fact, as Nina remarked at the end, this retreat seemed the healthiest of all retreats we ever had, regretting that in the past we did not take such good care not to spread our germs and suggesting that we should continue this precaution in all future events.

As so many times before, Nina Robinson was heading the practices in her inimitable personal wisdom way. Her short daily instructions, perfect in all practice details, inexhaustible in additional advice and anecdotes from personal experiences with Rinpoche, and ever fresh and witty in her spontaneous comments on the given situation were an enriching bonus moment every day. She was assisted in leading the

practices in turn by Naomi and Sebastian, it was a pleasure to hear them sing with their canorous voices.

In the afternoon we had the luxury of Sogthig and Tsalung instructions and practice by both Elio and Fabio, taking turns and sometimes teaching both together.

We had a successful international auction, a lottery and other fundraising activities. In spite of all obstacles, I experienced a particularly joyful, well organized, relaxed retreat; infinite thanks to the Gakyil, also to Dr. Phuntsog, Ilaria and other translators, and the many other devoted helpers. I felt the Dzogchen Community Sangha manifested beautifully in collaboration, intelligence and joy.

The weather soon turned nice and warm, the DzamlingBar at the center of the Gar was ever a cozy and relaxing place to be, providing delicious meals and drinks, hosting daily breakfast and lunch time as well as birthday parties and a wonderful hangout space for all.

On the last day, a beautiful new Khaita dance that had been prepared for Losar got a second chance. All is well that ends well. But in fact this retreat was a gift from the beginning to the very end. ©



Distant and United

The Merigar Gakyil

Merigar is beautiful in the spring, but this year only very few people will be able to enjoy it. The days are getting longer and warmer, the flowers blooming everywhere filling the air with their perfume, and the dormant greenery awakens but there are no visitors or schoolchildren at the Gar, there are no practices, no echoing of voices, bells, drums, there are no courses, games, or lunches for people of the Community. At Merigar just the roe deer wander and the only sounds to be heard are the chirping of birds and the flapping of the new *lungta* along the paths.

Here, in the area of Merigar, Tuscany, Italy, there are just a few cases of Coronavirus; the main effect of this situation on our lives is that we are forced not to leave home, unless for conditions of real need, and we must remain within the limits of our municipalities. All activities that aren't indispensable are currently suspended.

We have organized ourselves to work as much as possible from home and electron-



ically: we are holding our gakyil meetings and other meetings in this way. We are also trying to keep a telephone network alive among the people who live in the area, as we imagine is happening in other places as well. Obviously at Merigar there are no visits, courses, or meetings of any kind, but we are offering the possibility to practice together through the webcast collaborating with Dzamling Gar with a weekly program of practices.

In northern Italy, particularly in Lombardy, as well as in other areas of the world, the situation is still really serious: so many people are dying in isolation, without the comfort and care of their loved ones. The

hospitals are full and can barely manage the number of sick people who need help.

So, first of all we want to offer our support to our vajra brothers and sisters who in this situation have lost friends and relatives; we want to practice for all the dead that during these months, days, and hours are facing this difficult transition in such complex circumstances; our wish is to convey strength and courage to those who are struggling.

We want to thank all those people, whether they are part of the Dzogchen Community or not, who work as doctors and nurses, or who are involved in other activities that are useful to everyone. May their determination and self-denial be an everlasting example for us.

In this moment of fear it is easy to forget about others and only think about ourselves and our self-protection, trying to accumulate things that are more or less necessary and forgetting about others. Let us try, as our Master has always advised, to remain present and work with our circumstances.

Without getting caught up in fear and despair, let's take refuge in practice and let's donate to others our help and compassion.

And always remember the best way to help others is to stay home at this time. ☺

Updates on the Extraordinary Maintenance of the Gönpa at Merigar West

On February 21 the painting of the wooden railing of the deck that goes around the Gönpa was completed with the help of volunteers.

The railing now also flanks the left side of the main entrance, given the greater difference in height created by the new deck, now at the level of the internal floor.

To complete the area with the external beams of the Gönpa, it will be necessary to wait for the temperature to rise and become stable, without the risk of sudden drops in temperature at night. The first intervention will involve the grouting and complete sealing of the external truss by the Rubner/Holzer company. Merigar will be in charge of the part concerning treating the base and painting it red.

The indispensable sanding of the internal floor that was already damaged and



further damaged by rain and humidity during the last structural works has already been taken care of (also financially). The internal floor, in particular the renovation of the external paintings and decorations, and the restoration of the internal decorations will be the subject of a new

project in collaboration with the architect Donatella Cavezzali (director of the Higher School of Restoration in Rome and our consultant from the beginning of the project) and our experts in Tibetan iconography, culture, and traditions. ☺

Passages

Anna Simonelli Fiori

On Tuesday March 24, 2020, Anna passed away at the hospital in Cittiglio, near her home in Gavirate in the north of Italy. Anna and Giorgio Fiori's home is a beautiful place surrounded by trees and shrubs that Anna had planted around the house. I mention it because it is a place that several practitioners have visited, and also the venue for one of the first retreats that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu organized in 1979.

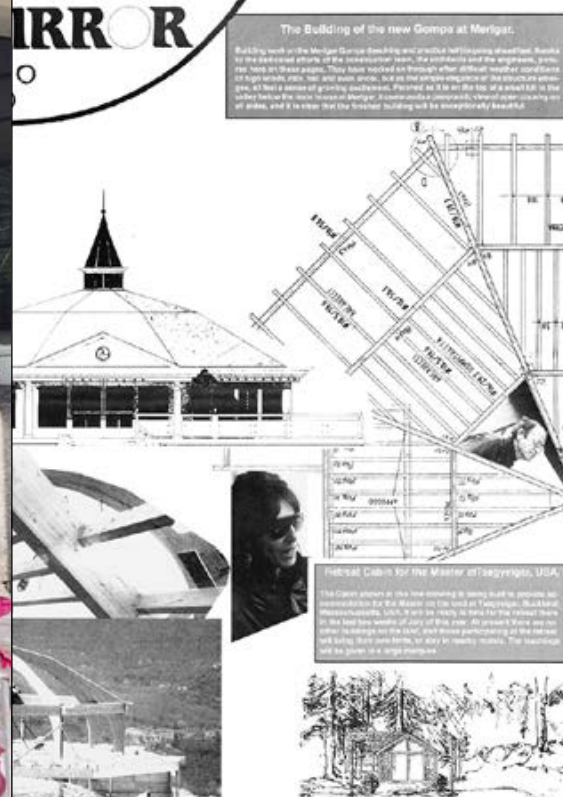
Anna had attended courses in biodynamic anthroposophy and she knew a great deal about flowers and plants. I learned from her the "language of nature", the behavior of plants, animals and even insects.

Architecture was her profession as well as her great passion, and for her designing a home meant knowing the people who would go to live there and working to creating a harmonious, as well as beautiful and functional environment for them, in which they could feel good. Harmony and balance in form and color was what she aimed for, considering them to be the real meaning of a house according to expectations.

She had studied these harmonies for a long time and her eye immediately caught what was out of place or missing in an environment, but above all she knew how to make things "simple" and "precise" but also welcoming and warm.

I remember when we were traveling with the Maestro to Tolu Gönpa on the way to Maratika. She was riding a horse (a privilege that only a few people had in addition to the Maestro) and she always arrived last, but she set up a lovely little area with some flowers and fabric that made those simple and cold beds at least a little more comfortable.

When Rinpoche asked her to design the Merigar gönpa according to his instructions, she threw herself body and soul into the enterprise. She moved practically all winter and for the following months



to Merigar with her faithful dog Ross. She really worked like a madwoman following the work step by step, with the scrupulousness and demands that were part of her nature. I remember how happy and pleased she was when she found a South Tyrolean company to build the roof of the gönpa, for which she herself had collaborated closely with their technicians to design, because she considered them great experts and "fantastic craftsmen".

She often stayed at the Capenti Hotel near Arcidosso where they kept a room just for her and where the elderly proprietor, Aladdin, prepared healthy soups and salads with local herbs. She was also often hosted by Martina Bignu and Patrice Bricaire who were close friends and she was a great admirer of Patrice's skill in wood carving. And she spent every day working at the gönpa and the Master's house with the other people from the community.

At the end she placed a star on the lighting rod above the lantern of the gönpa, as a sign of all the things she had built. Her work was a gift to the Community and to the Maestro. ©

Annalisa Motelli

It was many years ago that Anna and I worked together to make the dream of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu come true. We had just a few months to build our Temple at Merigar, because H.H. the Dalai Lama, who had been invited by our Master to inaugurate it, would come.

You worked heart and soul in that endeavor that was such a success for the whole Community. For this I want give thanks to you on behalf of all of us who worked like a real family in those days. ©

Giovanni Boni



THE MIRROR

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10th Anniversary of Dargyaling

Cologne, Germany (2009–2019)

Saadet Arslan

Note: Chögyal Namkhai Norbu intentionally chose the German Umlaut 'Ä' (vowel mutation) in spelling "Dar gye ling" as – to quote Rinpoche – "Germans use a lot of these in their language!"

February 15, 2009

Dear German Gakyil,

I am very happy you finally found a place.

It is always good to have a base for the community and all the different activities.

With many Tashi Delegs!!!! N.N.

On June 2nd, 2019, Dargyaling, the German Ling in the center of Cologne, celebrated its 10th anniversary.



At the beginning in 2009 we were not sure if we would manage to maintain the Ling, but despite all structural and financial problems during the last ten years, we succeeded in not only meeting all the challenges, but moreover Dargyaling – according to its Tibetan name – fulfils its literal meaning of developing and flourishing! This is related to the spreading of the teachings but also to the development of the teachings within the practitioners.

When Rinpoche inaugurated the Ling on the June 5th, 2009, just before the weekend retreat in Hotel Marriott in Cologne, he spoke the following words to the local Dzogchen Community:



It is very important to go ahead more and more. There are courses like Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga. All these are very important related to the teaching of Dzogchen. Maybe you know that the teaching of Dzogchen is one of the most important teachings we have and it needs to continue for the future, for our future generations. So for continuing the teaching, we must learn, we must do practice, and then there will be people also qualified to teach, but the aim is not only to become teachers, but also to become good practitioners.

A good practitioner does not always need to teach, but the capacity for teaching develops and manifests its potentiality when there are good practitioners. For example, Milarepa, Milarepa did not give seminars. He never did seminars; he never went around like me giving teachings. He lived on a mountain, alone, he even had no food to eat. But, you see, Milarepa is very famous, his teachings spread almost everywhere; that is an example of becoming a good practitioner; a good practitioner doesn't mean only learning words or intellectually. A good practitioner means integrating. That is very important.

For example, in general many people are writing me saying, "Oh, I have this problem, problem number one, second problem, third one" ... sending a list of their problems; when we have these kind of problems it means we have not integrated teachings in our real condition. If we have integrated, our problems become less and less and even if there are some problems – of course, we are living in samsara, there are always problems – but there is then the possibility to integrate and also to liberate; that is the potentiality of the teachings.

So, it is very important that we do practice; sometimes doing practice in collective way for developing the capacity of each prac-

itioner, also for learning any kind of collective practices. When we repeat one time, two times, three times, then we discover how to do. It becomes easier to develop.

Then, of course, we can also do personal retreats when there are possibilities in some places, that is also very good and important.

You do your best. When you have nice Ling, a nice place, then you have the possibility to do practice. You also have more possibility to receive teachings. Each of the different kinds of retreats I am giving, all the different teachings, are almost always connected by webcast, so people who cannot go and travel to do retreats can participate here in the Ling; that is a function of Ling also.

So it is very good and I'm really saying, "Congratulations!" to you. You prepared very well. That is what I want to say and I'm very happy." ©

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – The Inauguration of Dargyaling, Friday June 5, 2009
(transcript of a video-file by Saadet Arslan)



Surviving Australia's 2020 Summer Bushfire Crisis

Vicki Forscutt of Namgyalgar

It's not unusual to have summer bushfires in Australia but this time, after months of drought and a lack of water element, they started early in spring 2019 and in an unprecedented way began to ignite all over the country, often caused by dry lightning storms.

Watching this scenario unfold on t.v., the Vajra Family residing in the well forested region of southern New South Wales, (where Namgyalgar South was once situated), were well aware that their beautiful coastal paradise was ready and ripe to catch alight as summer approached.

And so it was that just two days after Christmas an inland fire broke out, which by New Year's Eve became monstrous, and like a giant, multi-headed fire serpent hurtled at full speed towards the coast where several Dzogchen practitioners live. Amidst an apocalyptic atmosphere thousands of panic-stricken people fled their homes and holiday cottages evacuating to nearby towns and beaches along the coast. Some lives were lost and many homes and properties and a lot of wildlife and forests were burnt to the ground.

On this occasion the fire didn't reach the coast but what followed was five more weeks of disturbing fire threat, with four very serious days resulting in more human lives and many more animals, forests and



Wallaga Lake at 9am on December 31, 2019.

Photo by Lisa Kempster

properties being lost. Many people were displaced and for periods of time were without electricity, internet and mobile reception, with limited access to medicines, food, etcetera. It was a very stressful and

exhausting time requiring one to stay alert and be prepared to evacuate or run for one's life at any time. During this time Vajra kin dispersed in different directions, some left the area while others stayed



Namgyalgar South reunion with Rabgyi.



at evacuation centers or with friends or stayed to defend their homes. When possible we kept in touch via Facebook, phone and email maintaining a sense of connection and checking each others situation.

Thankfully all Vajra kin survived the harrowing ordeal and none lost property though several friends and acquaintances known to us did, including a Vajra brother in Mallacoota, Victoria who lost everything.

The fire was a big wake up moment, like a 'hedewa', when our every day reality suddenly shifted challenging each of us to stay calm and present. At such a time of great uncertainty and impermanence, without one's usual material comforts and sense of

» continued on the following page

Part of the town of Cobargo main street destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve morning.



Lunch at Namgyalgar, Glasshouse Mountains Qld. during Losar February 23–24, 2020.



Losar Vajra Dance practice at 'Kamashila' (previously Namgyalgar South) on NSW South Coast.



Guru Yoga & Long Life Retreat on Waiheke Island, New Zealand

with SMS teacher
Arnaud Coquillard
January 27–February 2, 2020

Pamela Oldmeadow

Waiheke, this gentle island with all the slow pace, warmth and enjoyment of life's pleasures found in the Shire, it's no wonder Peter Jackson filmed the Hobbit village in Coromandel, just across the water.

Three Aussies (Lynne, Jenny, Pamela) and seven Kiwi's (Alastair, Paora, Kathy, Lin, Katy, Kattia, Wendy) gathered at Alastair Gager's place for a week of retreat. The haka welcome and farewells were moving, strong and kindly. Led by French-Aussie Arnaud Coquillard, and our ever-present

Rinpoche, there were sessions of light, flowing Guruyoga, sessions of study to understand the View, sessions of Semzins to develop Clarity, sessions of dancing Khalongdorjekar, coordinating energy and love, and learning to sing more precisely... We did personal and group study, and saw the vital link between study and practice, developing our understanding with our experiences of Presence and Awareness and Clarity. One must reflect. One must connect. One must let go. Gratitude.

With the marvellous hospitality of the local Dzogchenpas, we Aussies felt welcome, accepted, safe and cared for. We loved the fine food – honey, olives, herbs from Alastair's land, fish, scallops and mussels from the local waters, great produce all round. We revelled in the clean air, pleasant outings and fine beaches. We swam with Paora's kids and horses. We had time to visit the 'man-cave' of Paora Toiterangiaia, one of NZ's most well known sculptors.

The week was full of gentleness, laughter, stories, beauty, comfort and generosity. We'll go again. You should come. ☺

» continued from previous page

security, and facing the possibility of death, applying the practices our dear Master kindly imparted to us provided much protection and were a vital refuge!

It was also comforting to know that some Vajra brothers and sisters in Australia and worldwide were doing practice to help dispel negativities and invoke protection. Personally myself I did a lot of Green Tara practice, pleading for rain to help expel the fires, which eventually came.

Interestingly the night before the New Year's Eve fire arrived I had a strong dream

in which together with Rosemary Friend, our Vajra Dance teacher, and I were viewing a very large Tagdrol printed on a maroon colored sweater. Then suddenly Fabio appeared with his hands outstretched in an offering gesture with various miniature objects and symbols on his fingertips. In a half awake state I wondered what this was telling me and the next day I realized it was a warning that there was great danger and possible death approaching and that one should make offerings to the Guardians (doing Ganapuja and Naggong etcetera).

It was also interesting to observe in the Tibetan calendar ('Alendar App' on my ip-hone) that there were very negative indications on the serious high fire danger days ie "...brings the destruction of life"; "Day of Discord....favorable for separating people and for evil actions."

Now we as a global community and people all over the world are being greatly challenged by the spread of the Corona Virus. May we support each other and activate the transmission putting into practice what our precious Master taught us to bring protection and benefit for all beings! ☺

Greetings from Tsegyalgar East!

We hope you will join us in practice this summer at beautiful Khandroling, the Land of the Dakinis.

The Tsegyalgar East spring and summer program lineup is currently as follows, details to be confirmed. All activities will be confirmed based on circumstances.

Bardo Teachings Practice Retreat

with Michael Katz

Title and Description TBA

Saturday May 16 & Sunday May 17, 2020

Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings

with Ed Hayes

Saturday June 6 and Sunday June 7, 2020

Tsegyalgar East 5th Annual

Summer Sangha Retreat

Saturday July 18 to Sunday July 26, 2020

Practices led by authorized SMS, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga instructors

Tsegyalgar East 3rd Annual

Dance, Dance, Dance

at Khandroling, the Land of the Dakinis

Celebrating 30 years of Vajra Dance

Saturday August 8 to Sunday August 30, 2020

Courses led by Adriana Del Borgo, Prima Mai and other authorized Vajra Dance instructors

Please check back regularly for course updates. Visit [Tsegyalgar.org](https://tsegyalgar.org) or contact: bluegakyil@tsegyalgar.org

We hope to see you soon!

Tsegyalgar East Community and Gakyil ©



The 30th Anniversary of Tashigar South

Homage to the Master and Celebration

Griselda Galmez

On November 1989, Namkhai Norbu arrived for the first time in Argentina, and soon after he visited this beautiful land of El Durazno, in Tanti, which he named "Tashigar", Auspicious Land. The land was bought in February 1990, and today, February 7th 2020, we celebrate 30 years of that successful beginning. This is one reason to celebrate, but the main one for this meeting is to pay homage to our Master Prof. Namkhai Norbu.

Sergio Oliva, the current President of the Dzogchen Community of Tashigar South, began his speech by recalling this event on such a fortunate day. Many practitioners that arrived before the event stayed at the Gar and assumed a role or a task in the preparation of the celebration under the leadership of Adriana Battisti, the Project Manager of the event. She had already made institutional contacts with the local Town Hall, press communications, and sent invitations to the neighbors.

As the weather forecast announced rain, a beautiful gazebo was set up next to the stairs that lead to the Gönpa. And indeed it rained. In spite of this, early in the morning of February 7th, three Gakyil members together with some other practitioners decorated the place with multi-colored balloons and flowers, set up some tables in the gazebo, others in the side galleries of the Gönpa and reorganized the benches. Meanwhile, in the kitchen other practitioners prepared trays with the food and turned cakes into works of art, decorating them with the last flowers left by the rain.

By noon, the weather had calmed down, so everyone started to go to the Gönpa. Although the bad weather in the exaggerated climate of the mountains does not favor elegance, we tried to dress up to the celebration. We were celebrating 30 years of our Gar, one of the many and memorable works of our beloved Master, the place where we had learned so much, worked with others, where we enjoyed his enlightened Teach-



ings, and his tireless activity in his joyful company.

The formal ceremony took place inside the Gönpa with the local authorities of Tanti seated beside a table that held a microphone and a screen that displayed the images of the institutional video of Tashigar South with its activities and local Instructors, an institutional video of Merigar, and a touristic video of Tanti. A group of practitioners each identified by a card with their name on it received the newcomers, mainly those who came to the Gar for the first time, who walked in with curiosity and were a little bit disoriented in the new environment. We all waited for the ceremony to start while Adriana multiplied herself here and there, fixing the last arrangements. Finally, she received the authorities and led them to their seats while they commented the beauty of our Gar and Gönpa. Someone told them to take off their shoes and leave them outside. They did so diligently while observing astonished the two mandalas painted on the floor.

Once the two councilors, the Secretary, the President of the Deliberative Council of Tanti and the Secretary of Culture and Tourism sat on their places, everybody listened in silence to Sergio Oliva's speech (quoted at the beginning of this article). He explained the meaning of our meeting recalling the beginnings of Tashigar, its creation and extension in the wonderful trajectory of our Master. "He taught that peace is not an ideal or an external construction, but a state of the mind, an inner state that we must cultivate. When the mind is in peace, peace becomes something concrete in each one of us". Sergio

closed by saying: "His life and his work constitute a legacy of peace. Our commitment is to hold his legacy".

With eyes wet with tears and the memory and love of our Master, many faces reflected careful attention and applauded those words. Afterwards, we listened to the words of the President of the Deliberative Council who gave an award from the Town Hall of Tanti signed by its Mayor, Dr. Luis H. Azar, as an homage and acknowledgement to Prof. Namkhai Norbu and to the International Dzogchen Community on the 30th Anniversary of Tashigar South. Together with this, we were given a document in which the Deliberative Council sanctioned by decree the change of name of the street that leads to the main entrance of Tashigar South, from now on called **Prof. Namkhai Norbu**.



When the ceremonial part ended, a numerous group of girls and boys of the *Misty Soul* choir surprised us with a magnificent interpretation that preceded the

toast. The glasses with champagne were waiting for us on the tables, and it was the right moment to exchange good wishes for Tashigar South, for our Community, and for each one of us; it was the moment to hug, and, heart against heart, let the tears run because we were not yet accustomed to the physical absence of the Master. We miss him so much! We hugged each other recalling the path that we have travelled together during all these years, the accomplishments, and even the discussions that united us.

Meanwhile, the authorities were led to a table specially prepared for them in the gazebo, where they were served by two practitioners in charge of the task. Food and drinks were placed on the white tablecloths of the other tables and, both guests and those who come to Tashigar frequently, began to swirl around them. The proposal was tempting: big trays with meat carefully sliced, small bread loaves to make sandwiches, dishes with bright lettuce leaves and tempting pieces of tomatoes, and many different sauces of various tastes and colors. The drinks were red wine from Mendoza and lemonade.

We ate while talking with each other and taking many pictures. Finally, we had the cakes and the main one with a *tigle* and an A decorated with flowers that were made by a team led by Yellow Gakyil member Noe Riner. A new toast posing for a group photo was followed by an afternoon full of music. It is nice to say that all the groups had been brought by some practitioner that formed part of them, and were of great artistic level.

The *Misty Soul Choir* led the show, and after the *Summer Time* performance we listened to a beautiful poem dedicated to Tashigar that Charo Verástegui sent us from Peru. Then, we were moved by *Los Revisionistas*, a group of Brazilian music.

Afterwards, a group of practitioners led by our secretary Soledad Mariani, presented Khaita Joyful Dances that had been already rehearsed. Many others joined them, even the newly arrived, whose faces reflected joy and happiness.

Finally, we were invaded by drums and traditional African music coming from Guinea that was played freely by a group of practitioners with instruments such as djembes, balafons, hangs, shekeres, dun grave drum and sagban medium drum.

Yes, Tashigar South has, like our **Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu**, a vocation that goes beyond frontiers.

The sun was setting when Argentinian traditional music was played: *zambas*, *chacareras*, *milongas* and the dancers did not wait. Those who knew the dances led, while the ones who did not know, tried. But everyone looked happy and enthusiastic. And they went on and on, while the rest of the guests were leaving and some practitioners in charge of cleaning began the arduous task of leaving everything clean and tidy because, on the following day, an intensive practice schedule would start with activities such as *Santi Maha Sangha*, *Vajra Dance* and *Yantra Yoga* that would go on until February 16.

What else to say? This celebration and homage came from the heart and took place as our Teacher taught us, in an atmosphere of participation, presence and harmony. ©



Chülen – Taking in the Essence of the Elements

At the beginning of the Mandarava retreat held at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife in February–March 2020, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, head of the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine, explained about the *chülen* that is frequently used during this retreat.

I would like to share with you what *chülen* is according to Tibetan medicine. *Chu* means essence. Essence has two meanings: one meaning refers to the essence of the five elements that our body is composed of. Our body is made up of bones, blood, muscles, skin, and also the lymph system that are tangible. But we also have many elements that are not, and each of them has an essence. In Tibetan medicine we consider that there are seven body constituents that make up our life. The loss of one of these body constituents may eventually cause us to lose our life and for that reason we need to resupply what has been lost. A doctor may tell a patient suffering from anemia to take iron. That means that healthy red blood cells or hemoglobin are missing and that the patient needs a new supply. So the *chü* of the body refers to the essence of our bodily constituents.

Len means to take, to get. When we lose our body essence then we take certain supplements to try to resupply that which has been lost. For instance, if we have problems with our teeth that are not caused by age or external reasons, it means that our calcium level is low. We can understand that because the impure substance coming from the bones is teeth and nails. Although we cannot see what is happening to our bones on a daily basis because they are covered by muscle and skin, we can observe our hair and nails. If our hair or nails change color or form, that lets us know that our calcium level is insufficient and that we need to take some supplements. This is the *len*, getting the essence externally to resupply what we are missing internally because the inner nature and the outer nature are the same element. For that reason the outer nature is very important for the inner condition and vice versa as we are living in an interdependent way. When we are lacking an element in our body we



try to resupply it from external material sources. This is the meaning of *chülen*.

There are a huge number of different types of *chülen*, from medicine, from certain teachings, and from different *terma* teachings. The *chülen* that we use in the Dzogchen Community is one of the greatest *terma* teachings from our dear Master. Back in the 1980s Chögyal Namkhai Norbu received the treasure teachings and from that time it has been available.

Chülen comes from many sources and there are two main reasons for using it. One of these is in the field of medicine to resupply constituents that are lacking in the body. For example, if we have difficulty sleeping it indicates an absence or lack of the earth or wind element. What we experience physically is similar to what happened with the weather yesterday when the strong Calima wind was blowing. Sometimes wind is good and we feel refreshed, but when it is excessive we don't like it. At times the wind can also be out of control. The same thing can happen in our body and there are many levels to the rising wind or *lung* element: in a minor case we will not sleep well; with a medium case we may find those around us annoying. However a major case can be a problem for which we need professional help. The problem is the imbalance of an element for which there may be many reasons. In this particular case we take the essence of garlic to try to calm down the *lung* element. This is a simple type of *chülen* that shows how it is used in the field of medicine.

Then there is another type of *chülen* that a high level practitioner living on a mountain would use: a subtle type of *chülen*. A practitioner of lower capacity uses empowered *chülen* to resupply his/her missing elements, while a person of higher capacity does not need to take any food. This is not a fairy tale. Great practitioners such as Longchenpa and Milarepa actually did this, but it is not easy.

The common *chülen* that we use in the Dzogchen Community to protect our health and clarify our mental capacities has as its final goal extending our life. What is the purpose of extending our life? We will be able to accomplish our goals and for this reason this kind of *chülen* is very useful.

This type of *chülen* can be explained in a simple way: if we have any problems with our sense organs there is a special *chülen* extracted from flowers. If we have bone problems, there is *chülen* that comes from calcite. If we have something lacking in our blood system, *chülen* comes from shilajit, which is abstracted from minerals. These different substances have different functions. The common ingredients for all these kinds of *chülen* as well as the precious *chülen* that we use are called the four essences and five pure ingredients or བརྒྱུད་ལོ་ཤིན་པོ་འཕྲུལ་པ་ *dwangs ma'i bcud len*.

The pure essence from earth minerals is shilajit, བྱ་ལྷན་པ་ *brag zhun*. Its function is to strengthen our muscles and blood. When we have problems with our organs such as liver and gall bladder, shilajit is very good, on the one hand to resupply elements, on the other to cure.

The pure ingredient from minerals is calcite, which is very good for bones, nerves, cartilage etc. The essence from the trees is molasses or བྱ་རམ་ *bu ram*. Molasses restores our general strength, physical and particularly mental strength and is beneficial if we have memory loss, nerve problems, or are not able to calm down. It is like the strong wind we had yesterday: when it calms down we can see everything very clearly and logically.

The pure ingredient from flowers is honey སྤྱང་རྩི་ *sbrang rtsi*. It is good to restore our complexion. This could be our external complexion, our skin, but it also refers to all our མདངས་ *mdangs*, the shine or glow of our capacities, both mental and physical, everything coming from our bodily constituents ལུས་རྩུངས་ *lus zungs*. If our energy is very weak, if it's difficult to get up, we always feel tired, and everything becomes very heavy and dull, honey is very good for

giving energy and strength. It is particularly good for cleaning and removing impurities from the lungs.

Then we have མར། *mar*, butter, the pure essence from plants and herbs རྩ་ཡི་དྭངས་མ།. Everything on this planet is medicine. There is not a single thing that is not medicine if you know how to use it. Purified cow butter is very important in medicine. That is the essence or *chülen* to generally strengthen your body. If you are young it is good for growing, if you are elderly it is good to restore your declining energy while in middle age it is good for keeping your energy level. So butter is good for all ages.

So these five: butter, the essence of plants རྩ་ཡི་དྭངས་མ་མར། *rtsi yi dwangs ma mar*; molasses or the essence of trees, ཤིང་གི་དྭངས་མ་བྱ་རམ། *shing gi dwangs ma bu*

མཁན་པ། *mkhan pa*. Those four are considered to be in the category of evergreen plants, although the rhododendron and artemisia are not actually evergreens but have an excellent smell. All four are under the category of evergreens or non-suffering plants that do not go through the cycle of birth, life, and death. These nine are the main ingredients in most forms of *chülen*.

Chülen is wonderful and easy to apply. It is not difficult to make but the ingredients need to be detoxified so it is not something that you can prepare in your kitchen. To get the real function of *chülen* there are many aspects including the materials, and the function of the *chülen*: the practice and the main or mother pills. In addition the *chülen* should be empowered well and when we take it we should try to change our diet and behavior in order to have re-

In conclusion, *chülen* is a huge topic. Today's talk is just to give an idea of what *chülen* is. In this Mandarava *chülen* that is Rinpoche's *terma* teaching there are seven different types of *chülen* for seven different conditions. The sixth and seventh are more common so that is the *chülen* that we take. It is one of the best.

Some time next year I will try to give a *chülen* class, a whole day talk. I've been working with *chülen* for the last 15 years and I'm very interested in it.

Thank you.



Dzamling Gar, Tuesday February 25, 2020
Transcribed and edited by Liz Granger
Tibetan terms courtesy of Elio Guarisco



ram; shilajit, the essence of earth ར་ཡི་དྭངས་མ་བྱ་ལྷུན། *sa yi dwangs ma brag zhun*; calcite, the essence of minerals རྫོ་ཡི་དྭངས་མ་ཙོང་ཞི། *rdo yi dwangs ma cong zhi* are called the five pure essences. However even though they are very beneficial, they should be taken in moderation. We do not need to measure these substances every day but simply use them in a proper way.

Then there are the four essences. They could be considered the essence of smell, in Tibetan medicine we call it རྩ་བཞི། *rtsi bzhi* which means that the plant has a smell but also functions through its smell. Smell also has healing properties. There are four plants that have very good smells and that are also medicinal. The first is juniper of which we use just the berries, ལྷུག་པ། *shug pa*. The second is the white flower of the rhododendron བལུ། *ba lu*. The next is ephedra མཚེ། *mtshe*, and the last is artemisia

sults. *Chülen* can be taken during a retreat or at home. At the moment we are doing a retreat so it is more beneficial.

Dietary requirements are that you eat light food, not too much meat, or heavy food. If you are young and strong, you can diet for one or two weeks on rice, ghee, and honey. However, if you have difficulty sleeping, or are short tempered, or have a tendency towards trembling, or if you are older, or just recovering from heavy medications, when you take *chülen* you should eat good food. Another important thing is to combine it with practice.

About Chülen

Oliver Leick interviews Dr. Tenzin Sherab, a doctor of Tibetan medicine, about making chülen for the Dzogchen Community and about his medical practice in Nepal. The interview took place at the Shang Shung Institute in Austria, August 2019.

Shang Shung Institute: Dear Dr. Sherab, welcome here to Yeselling, Shang Shung Institute Austria. I am very happy that you accepted my invitation. Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

Dr. Sherab: Tashi delegs, Oliver. I am very happy to be with you. My name is Sherab Tenzin and I am from Bhutan. I studied in Darjeeling with Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche at the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute. Currently I am living and practicing mainly in Nepal and sometimes in Bhutan, too.

SSI: The International Dzogchen Community has always applied the practice of Mandarava and in this practice we also use the Mandarava chülen pills, but not many people in the Dzogchen Community know that you made all these chülen pills.

Dr. S.: The fact that I met Rinpoche is actually just the blessing of Rinpoche or of Mandarava. It is really so incredible that I can hardly explain it.

In 2000 my teacher Trogawa Rinpoche asked me to research some medical herbs in the nearby mountain areas. At that time, I met one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's students holding a book of the Mandarava practice written by Rinpoche. In this book there were seven different kinds of formula for the chülen pills. Rinpoche's student told me about Rinpoche, and finally he asked me if I could make these chülen pills for Rinpoche. That request was like something coming from the sky (laughs). As this person was going trekking, he gave me the book in the meantime, so that I could read it. I read all the instructions for making the chülen pills, but although I read it several times, it was not 100% clear to me and I had many doubts.

I have some knowledge and intellectual background about how to make medicines and also chülen so I chose number six as I understood that while some people may practice and take the chülen pills, others might only take the chülen. Then I sent all



my doubts and questions to Rinpoche. For example, in his formula Rinpoche mentions *kenda*, *lishi* and so on. He also says that one uses *shanbil* – but there are three different kinds of *shanbil*.

After some time I received an answer in which he clarified my doubts and suggested what I should do. Based on that I started to make the chülen pills. First I made only one kilo and sent it to Rinpoche. After that I received more information from Rinpoche about how to make the chülen pills. So at the beginning I did not meet Rinpoche personally, but I received his blessing. This was our first connection starting in 2000. From that time on every year I have made these chülen pills, sometimes one kilo, two kilos, three kilos, and finally it was almost 45 kilos. I finally met Rinpoche in Bhutan in 2014. At that time I was in Nepal and heard that Rinpoche was going to Bhutan so I immediately bought my ticket and flew there.

SSI: Did you have a good time in Bhutan?

Dr. Sherab: Oh yes, it was really a miraculous time. I knew that Rinpoche was coming to Bhutan, but not exactly when. However when I arrived at the airport, Rinpoche and many of his students arrived from Delhi just 10 minutes later so I did not leave the airport, but waited there. When Rinpoche arrived, nobody was inside to welcome him, as that is not allowed, one can only welcome him outside. As I knew some of the staff there, with the help of my friend Sonam I immediately arranged to meet him. Rinpoche was not wearing fancy clothes; he was dressed very normally and simply. I was able to offer my *khatag* to him and I introduced myself. Rinpoche was very happy, too. I helped him to go outside where about 20 or 30 Bhutanese people were waiting with *khatag* to welcome him.

This was the first time I met Rinpoche in person, in Bhutan 2014.

I can say that now, especially after having met Rinpoche, I am much more confident. For three weeks I was Rinpoche's assistant doctor or *menpa* in Bhutan. Every morning we had breakfast together and I always had so many questions. After the first day Rinpoche gave me the transmission of the entire Mandarava text reading very slowly. Other Bhutanese people were also listening because Rinpoche was giving the *lung*. On that day, a very special day, Rinpoche also gave me the empowerment in his special way.

As I had many questions related to my doubts, I asked Rinpoche and he replied to my questions. Then next day we went to Tiger's Nest, Paro Taktsang. I always carried some tea with me and when Rinpoche rested, I offered tea to him. Our trip was really successful. Rinpoche was singing, dancing, teaching – it was really incredible, and during all that time I was able to clarify all my doubts with Rinpoche.

SSI: Can you explain a bit about chülen pills in general?

Dr. S.: Well, my chülen pills are different sizes, especially after the earthquake in Nepal. Some people are very focused on having them the same size and color, but in our traditional way that is not so important because the plants grow differently and in different places therefore the color can change. And we do not add anything to affect the color.

During the earthquake in Nepal my pharmacy was completely destroyed and I had to go to another place to make the chülen pills, and therefore the size of the pills was not always the same. But I think that these aspects are not so important.

What is important is the correct use of the ingredients.

SSI: Where do you get your herbs from?

Dr. S.: We collect them mainly in Tibet, but also in Nepal and in Bhutan. *Shanbil*, for example, is easier to get in Bhutan, while it is much more difficult to get it in Tibet or in Nepal.

SSI: You mentioned that your pharmacy was completely destroyed during the earthquake. Have you rebuilt it?

Dr. S.: I had a really beautiful, traditional Nepali mud house that was more than 100 years old. I really liked it as it was very natural and that is important because we always connect our inner and our outer dimensions with the five elements. Now we have built a completely new house, again in a natural way, but with bricks. The house has three floors, and now we can work even better than before.

SSI: Could you tell us about your clinic in Parphing, Nepal?

Dr. S.: We have a healing center in Parphing and a kind of spa in Boudhanath near the stupa. I started the healing center based on the feedback of many people coming to my clinic. They told me that either they found good doctors but no nice place to stay, or a good place to stay but with no doctors or medicine.

Then I thought that I could do something for people – not big, but small and comfortable. I met the parents of one of my students who supported us and in that way my wife and I started the healing center in Parphing in 2007. In our healing center people can come and totally relax. It is small, about 15 people can stay there, there is a Tibetan doctor and we offer traditional Tibetan *Ku Nye* massage and Tibetan and hot baths with five nectars, *dutsi nga*. Next to our center we have a beautiful vegetable garden and we cook pure vegetarian food for our patients. Many people from the Dzogchen Community, especially Rinpoche's students from Russia, come and relax in this quiet place.

We also have a company called "Pure Vision Sorig" registered in Nepal with a small branch in Bhutan. In Bhutan we focus more on the planting of medical herbs, as it is easier to get land there and the nature is fresher and cleaner. But also in Parphing, next to our healing center we have a plantation. Our main goal is not only to make medicine for our patients, but also to

preserve the herbs and nature for the future. This has always been my main goal and for that reason I am always thinking about plantation work.

Gradually our work has expanded. Based on the feedback of patients, mostly foreigners, we understood that not everybody likes the taste of our natural herbal pills, as they are not sweet. I reflected on that and remembered what His Holiness said in 1996 when I graduated. "*Now you have graduated in Tibetan Medicine – I am so happy for you. Have you already passed all the exams?*" Of course, everyone had passed and everyone was waiting to receive some blessing and the certificate from His Holiness. But His Holiness continued: "*No, your exam is starting from tomorrow. You will work with patients. It will be the patients who examine you. Up to now you have just finished reading and studying books. But from tomorrow on, the patients will give you the real exam.*" I have always kept that advice in my mind.

Also my medical teacher, Dr. Trogawa told me to develop *tang*, a medicinal tea for detoxification. So we developed Daknang or extracts, which are based on Tibetan medicine. That actually is not new, as in traditional Tibetan medicine we have eight categories for making medicines: *tang, che, rilbu, degu, menmar, telmin, kenda, and menchang*. Extracts are included in *tang* or *menchang* or decoction.

Sasha and Alar from Riga supported us in our four-year research on how we could use these extracts in the Western medical system and in 2018 we registered our company in Riga, Latvia. We are happy that now we can offer Daknang mainly in our clinic in Nepal and in Riga, and slowly we are growing all over the world.

SSI: On behalf of the Atiyoga Foundation I think that it would be very beneficial for everyone if we could collaborate in some way with you.

Dr. S.: Yes, this is really a very good idea. Our main interest is not doing business, but to help people and collaboration with the Dzogchen Community and Atiyoga Foundation, really important as we really had a good connection with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Our planned collaboration is a great help for Tibetan medicine and at the same time people can have many benefits.

We cannot make all Tibetan medicines in as an extract, only a few. Up to now we have medicines like Chülen, *mentshang*, and another for the digestive system, all with good benefits and results.

SSI: The Atiyoga Foundation is really looking forward for our collaboration and I am very sure that it will be very beneficial and fruitful. Thank you Dr. Sherab for coming to the Shang Shung Institute Austria and for giving all this information. I wish you and Daknang all the very best. ©

Transcribed by Oliver Leick
Edited by Liz Granger

Some Remarks on the Chülen Tradition in Tibetan Literature

Jamyang Oliphant

When I was eighteen I participated in a two week long Mandarava *chülen* (in Wylie transliteration *bcud len*) retreat in Tashigar Norte. I had never felt so well and was astonished by the power of the practice. Years later, in talking to me about *chülen* and its practitioners, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu inspired me to do my doctorate on the practice and its literature. This I completed under Charles Ramble at the University of Oxford. Rinpoche pointed me towards the first *chülen* texts I translated. Over a period of five years I travelled to various parts of the Himalayas and met many doctors and practitioners. In that time I translated over seventy *chülen* texts. This article is based on some conclusions derived from my thesis and includes excerpts from translations of those texts. If interested, you can access my thesis here: shorturl.at/cvFLP

I will describe the possible origins and the diverse forms of the practice of *chülen*, and indicate the various typologies of practices. After briefly describing Padmasambhava's role in the tradition I reproduce a particularly captivating and profound passage from a *chülen* text by Pema Lingpa.

Defining *chülen*

At times we may think of *chülen* simply as a medicinal pill, but there is much more to it, as it works on the levels of body, speech and mind. *Chülen* practice, literally 'essence extraction', employs different methods to extract nutrition or 'essence' through alchemical processes, ritual and contemplation. The extraction can occur from plants, flowers, barks and roots, water, rock, semen and blood as well as other less tangible substances, such as *prāṇa* or the 'essence of space' or even of stars.

Chülen texts indicate how the practitioner's meditative experiences and subtle energies can be reinvigorated by this extraction that can either be from actual solid, tangible objects or imagined in the meditator's mind, working on the inner body's subtle energies through visualizations and breathing. Mantra recitation and visualizations of particular deities, very often Vajrayoginī and Amitāyus, empower the sub-



stances to make them 'divine'. *Chülen* exercises and techniques can involve preparations of alchemical compounds and medicinal concoctions, recitation of mantra, adherence to specific dietary regimens and a variety of exercises, mental, respiratory and physical. Sometimes the practitioner's experience is enhanced through sexual practice, both actual and imagined.

Unlike many other meditative practices, which focus mostly on mental exercises and visualizations, in the practice of *chülen* the physical body is given great importance and concoctions are prepared according to the practitioner's physical typology, according to the three humours. The medicinal goal of certain texts is to nourish the body's strength and organs and to increase longevity, while the focus of texts with a more spiritual emphasis is on increasing wisdom and sharpening mental faculties.

Origins and evolution

One can find instances of *chülen* texts and practices in the four Tibetan Buddhist schools as well as in the Bon tradition. However, associating a specific person or place with the origination of *chülen* techniques is problematic.

The earliest recorded mention of *chülen* in Tibetan literature of which I am aware dates from the eleventh century. It is found in writings by Bari Lotsawa Rinchen Drak (1103–1111) and consists of a sole sentence on transforming food into *chülen* by reciting an Avalokiteśvara mantra. The most recent *chülen* practice made public is a Mandarava *chülen* revealed in 1984 by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Chülen never was an institutionalized practice. There is no record suggesting that traditionally it was undertaken as a group practice and the wording of the texts im-

plies it was suited for individual meditators. It was not a mainstream practice. Adepts usually engaged in these secret teachings in solitude and there are very few accounts of their lives and achievements. Because of the personal nature of the practice and the secrecy of transmission it is hard to pinpoint distinct and continuous *chülen* lineages of transmission in Tibetan history. Many *chülen* texts come from treasure revelations and were transmitted to a select few high level practitioners.

However, many practices share something in common in the figure of Padmasambhava, who has played an important role since the early phases of the *chülen* tradition.

Padmasambhava's role in the *chülen* tradition

Many *chülen* teachings are said to originate from Padmasambhava and were rediscovered and set on paper by Tibetan treasure revealers in the Tibetan language. Some of the more well-known treasure revealers who discovered *chülen* texts attributed to Padmasambhava are: Padma Lingpa (1450–1521), Ratna Lingpa (1403–1479), Drimed Ozer (1308–1364), Dujom Lingpa (1835–1904), Jigmed Lingpa (1730–1798).

In the twenty-third chapter of a biography of Padmasambhava produced by Tak Sham Nuden Dorje (Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje), *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar dri med pa rgyan* there is a section titled *Dka' spyad mdzad pa'i skor te* (The performance of austerities).¹ The writer, thought to have lived in the late 17th century, outlines Padmasambhava's practicing of different *chülen* practices in several locations.

In a forthcoming book on Padmasambhava, that I have co-edited with Professor Geoffrey Samuel and that will be published by our vajra siblings Peter and Karin Koppensteiner's Garuda Verlag, there is an article by Martin Boord. He has translated the section entitled *dur khrod brgyad du sman dug sna tshogs bcud du blangs shing dka' ba spyad pa* (Undergoing austerities in eight charnel grounds, Padma extracts the essence of various herbs and poisons).² This text describes

¹ Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje. *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar dri med pa rgyan*. Jeerango, Orissa: Thubten Mondoling monastery. 1985.

² See Boord, M. 2020. "An introduction to the stainless ornament biography of Guru Padmasambhava revealed as a Dharma Treasure by bSam-



Guru Rinpoche and his two consorts. Painting by Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche.

how Padmasambhava subsisted on the essences of air, water and stone. He concocted elixirs of various medicinal herbs and poisons, human flesh and urine, and sometimes bones and beer. From this forthcoming collection of essays one can learn in more detail about the different types of *chülen* that Guru Rinpoche is described as having practiced. There is also my own more detailed article about Padmasambhava's role in the *chülen* tradition.

There are no precise explanations as to how or from whom Padmasambhava is first thought to have received the various essence extraction techniques. There is an account of Padmasambhava receiving and practising *chülen* teachings in charnel grounds in a text by Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672). Regarding the origins of this flower and calcite *chülen*, the text '*Gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len* states

that the practice was first given by Buddha Shākyamuni to a dākinī in the sacred place called Dan ta:

Then, the wisdom dākinī hid it and Guru Rinpoche went to Dur khrod bde byed brtsegs (Enchanting Mound Cemetery) and retrieved it. He transmitted it to eight yogins who benefitted from this *chülen* and Padmasambhava himself accomplished the immortal Vidyādhara.³

(folio 447)

This account indicates that the first contact Guru Padmasambhava may have had with teachings on *chülen* occurred through a dākinī transmission in charnel grounds.

We can also find references to his practising *chülen* in the biography of Padmasambhava by the great scholar Tāranātha

(1575–1634), *The Life of Padmasambhava*. This work was his attempt to compare and evaluate existing accounts and present a more accurate one of Padmasambhava's birth and life drawn from a variety of texts. The book has been rendered into English by Cristiana de Falco and in her translation we read of Padmasambhava achieving the *siddhi* of 'taking the essence of immortality' in the cemetery of Palgyi Ne, where the ācharya Barabuzi (in Tibetan Chogse) lived.⁴ Further on, we read that Guru Padmasambhava: '... increased the life span and wealth of many people through the teachings of "The Essence that Transforms into Gold" and "The Medicine for Taking the Essence".'⁵

Chülen practice is not confined to the Nyingma school and instances of texts authored by masters affiliated with other schools include the second Dalai Lama Gyalwa Gedun Gyatso (1475–1542) whose flower *chülen* text has been translated into English by Glenn Mullin (2005). Also Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) wrote a *chülen* text and in the Kagyu school the third Karmapa, Ranjung Dorje (1284–1339) and Shakya Shri (1853–1919) wrote *chülen* texts. Bonpo authors include Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen (1859–1935) and Karu Drubwang Tenzin Rinchen (1801–1860).

In a long standing debate on its origins, many scholars have claimed that *chülen* is a derivative of the Indian tradition of *rasāyana*. In several texts an Indian imprint can be detected through the deities invoked or visualized and in the ingredients found in recipes. Figures such as Kalachakra, Vajrayogini, Amitayus often recur as the central deities. Saraha, a semi-legendary figure from Orissa on India's east coast, is identified in certain texts as the originator of specific water *chülen* practices. Many ingredients found in recipes, such as *utpala* and *arura*, also are thought to derive from India. The Indian *rasāyana* tradition was a probable influence in the development of *chülen*, while many of the exercises to master the subtle body probably had Indian counterparts: the Tibetan term *bum pa can* is a translation of the Sanskrit *kumbhāka*.

Several rituals described in *chülen* practices to empower nectars are remarkably similar to Indian Vajrayogini practices.

» continued on the following page

gtan gling-pa". Samuel, G. and Oliphant, C. J. (eds.) *About Padmasambhava: Historical Narratives and Later Transformations of Guru Rinpoche*. Switzerland: Garuda Verlag.

3 Bdud 'dul rdo rje pad ma rgyal mtshan. *Dam chos sprul sku'i thig las: gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'dul rdo rje. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997, II, 475–490.

4 De Falco, C. (trans.) 2011. *Kun ga nying po Tāranātha. The Life of Padmasambhava. A biography of the Great Master Padmasambhava*, 46.

5 Ibid., 50.

» continued from previous page

While India may have been the source of and provided the model for many texts, this does not mean that a distinct form of essence extraction has not evolved on the Tibetan plateau. Many *chülen* recipes have distinctly Tibetan ingredients and also concepts such as vital force (*la* in Tibetan) are present in the rituals.

Defining the roots of Tibetan medicine has profound implications for Tibetans and their historical identity. Yang Ga, a Tibetan scholar who completed his PhD on the history of Tibetan medical culture at Harvard University, has made interesting arguments to gain recognition of the indigenous roots of Tibet's medical culture. He has analysed documents from Dunhuang and argued that Tibetan medical culture is a complex tradition enriched by many medical cultures and not simply an Indian derivative.

Typologies

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

Some of the most common ingredients found in texts are *cong zhi* (calcite), *rtag tu ngu pa* (*drosera peltata*), *dbang lag* (*dactylorhiza hatagirea*), *ra mnye* (*Polygonatum cirrhifolium*). Some recipes include unconventional ingredients such as urine, excrement and sexual secretions as well as the bile or brain of different animals. Specific ingredients possess qualities that aid the practitioner's health and meditation. We find mentions of masters who relied on calcite during retreats; for example, it seems that in his late teens Jamgon Kongtrul subsisted for a week on extracted essences, obtaining all his nutrition from stalagmites. Kongtrul assembled several *chülen* texts, authored by many masters, in the Rinchen Terzod, Chapter 48 and in the Damnak zod, Chapter 17 (*tsa*). In murals and thangkas, Ma Rinchen-chog, one of Guru Padmasambhava's original twenty-five disciples, is often depicted holding a calcite stone rock. Such occurrences confirm that calcite has long been an integral part of Tibetan yogic practices. Similarly, there are stories of hermits surviving on flowers and herbs, foremost among them the great ascetic Milarepa whose body was said to have assumed a green hue from his nettle-based diet; indeed, it is not uncommon to find him portrayed with a greenish hue in Tibetan paintings. Another master said to have



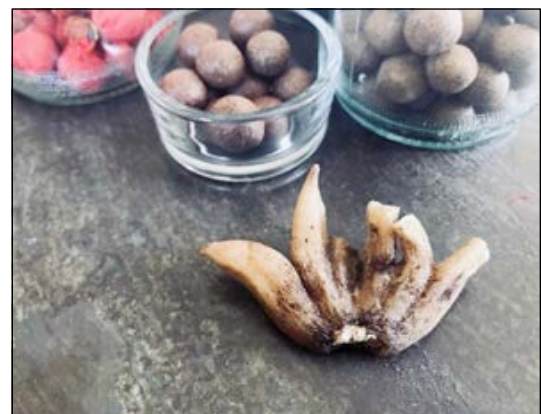
A statue of Pema Lingpa, found in Kunzangdrak Temple, in the Tang valley in Bhutan. Photo by Michael Aris.

mastered *chülen* and attained longevity is Thangtong Gyalpo, often depicted with a long life pill in his hand.

A central feature of the great majority of texts is the practice of *kumbhāka* (*bum pa can*) a special method of holding the breath. The Tibetan term *bum pa can* is a translation of the Sanskrit term and literally means 'vase-shaped' holding. The underlying idea is to guide the movement of energies and *prāṇa* in the subtle body by using the air retained below the navel, muscular contraction and mental concentration and visualization. By directing one's awareness and *prāṇa* into the central channel various meditative experiences can be generated. The regular practice of *kumbhāka* helps to coordinate breathing and since the workings of the inner body winds affect the overall health and mental states, proficiency in practices working with energies in the subtle body is crucial for the meditator.

Many *chülen* practices aim to increase wisdom and sharpen mental faculties as well as to gain various other *dnegos grub*, 'attainments'. Implicit in most texts is the purpose of allowing the practitioner to live on negligible amounts of food, thereby purifying the body and energy flow and sharpening mental focus while on the path to Buddhahood. Minimizing the need for food also means that meditators can spend prolonged periods of time in solitary retreat without having to worry about a livelihood.

I would like to end this short article by reproducing a short and inspiring passage from the last section of an instructional *chülen* practice of Padmasambhava's, written down by Yeshe Tosgyal and rediscovered by the great Bhutanese master Pema Lingpa. The text is called The Chülen of the



In the picture, the root of the *Dactylorhiza hatagirea* orchid, a common ingredient in many *chülen* recipes. *Dactylos* – finger, *rhiza* – root. The root nodules are finger like. The plant is credited with divine origins, legend goes that in previous times, the gods and the *asuras* (mystical semi-divine creatures) had a dispute and the chief of the *asuras* shot an arrow into the hand of a god. The spilt blood spread forth in a hand-like shape on the soil's surface from which the plant was born. Thus came about the name *dbang lag* (*dbang* means power and *lag* means hand in Tibetan). The (*Dactylorhiza hatagirea*) plant is said to increase strength and lifespan.

Wish-fulfilling Jewel (*bcud len yid bzhin nor bu*) and the section is *Ting 'dzin bcud len* (*Samādhi* essence extraction) (f. 740, line 6):

You should not seek your master or deities externally but instead see your own body as them, see their form appearance as male deities and their emptiness as female deities. Realize form and emptiness are inseparable. Your own body and mind are inseparable. Your masters are never external to you. If you search for *dākinī* nectar and substances outside your own mind it will produce mental and physical efforts and distractions. If you perform meditative concentration you do not need to search for food and drink externally. If you consume your own perceptions as food during meditation it will help to make your meditation free from obstacles and uninterrupted. If you perceive every single form as arising from Samathabhadra's nature of mind you will realize there is nothing to avoid or accept. These are the most meaningful things to practice. Be diligent. ©

Lives of the Great Masters

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo
1820–1892

Steven Goodman

The Dzogchen master Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820–1892) was a giant spiritual presence whose religious activity combined the deep sensitivity of a visionary with the vast erudition of an unbiased non-sectarian.

He was born in the Eastern Tibet—an province of Derge, on the fifth day, six month of the Iron Dragon year (July 15, 1820). His twin endowments of scholastic temperament and spiritual prowess soon became evident.

As a child he had visions of many past lives and seems to have formed a special relationship with the Dzogchen protectress, Ekajati. He received ordination at the age of twenty-one, from Rigdzin Zangpo of Orgyan Mindroling.

Shortly thereafter he began to receive teachings from a Sakya master, and was soon recognized as a Sakya tulku of the Ngor Thartse Khyen emanations. The fame of the Tulku soon spread, yet his yearning for true knowledge inspired him to forsake the usual life of a high incarnate lama. Instead, he went in search of teachers who could impart to him teachings as vast as his spiritual appetite. Thus, in the Eastern province of Kham, and throughout Central Tibet, he sought out the best and the brightest of his generation. Enduring great hardships, he studied with over one hundred and fifty masters from all the major schools, including specialists in the “worldly sciences” of linguistics, medicine, and art, as well as the Buddhist traditions of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. He was truly a “cognitive omnivore,” and his detailed knowledge of many traditions made him sensitive to their special qualities. Along with Jamyang Kongtrul Rinpoche and others, he became a strong advocate for a non-sectarian Rime approach to the Buddhadharmas.

For the next thirteen years, Khyentse Rinpoche spent considerable energies receiving and practising many rare spiritual traditions from all the major and minor sects. He transmitted his knowledge of



these traditions to many students, publishing some forty volumes of his own writings. In addition, he established over thirteen temples, which housed several thousand volumes he had printed, as well as numerous gold and copper images and stupas.

Troubled by the growing civil unrest in Eastern Tibet, enflamed by the machinations of the Khampa warrior, Nyarong Gonpo Namgyal, Khyentse Rinpoche served as council to officials in China and Tibet. In particular, he advised the Derge king and ministers to maintain their support of endangered educational projects throughout Eastern Tibet.

Khyentse Rinpoche's students numbered in the thousands. They came from all over Tibet and China and included laity and clerics, government officials and commoners, city folk and nomads. These are but quick brush strokes outlining the public activities of Khyentse Rinpoche.

His inner spiritual life was equally vast. He was recognized as a re-embodiment of Vimalamitra, and King Trisong Detsan. Known as the “Fifth King of Hidden Treasures,” he was destined to reveal many Dzogchen teachings. Under the esoteric name Pema Osel Donag Lingpa, he was recognized as the thirteenth emanation of the treasure finder Gyalsay Lhaje. He also was recognized as the “mind emanation” (*thugtrul*) of the great Dzogchen master Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798), whose own mind treasures were collectively known as the “Quintessence of Longchen” (*Longchen Nyingthig*).

In the fall of 1853, Chogyur Lingpa (1829–1871), himself a treasure finder, came to

meet with Khyentse Rinpoche. This historic meeting of “the sovereign and his son” re-established a close spiritual link previously revealed to Khyentse Rinpoche when, at the age of sixteen, he had a visionary encounter with Guru Rinpoche. This reconnection resulted in Chogyur Lingpa and Khyentse Rinpoche co-revealing the “Seven Successions of Transmitted Precepts.” These teachings include “earth treasures,” (*sater*) centering on Avalokitesvara, relics from a Guru Rinpoche tooth, and esoteric Dzogchen teachings of Vairocana, the *Bairo Thugthig*. They also include “reconcealed treasures,” (*yangter*) connected with the treasure finder, Sange Lingpa, land “mind treasures,” (*gongter*) centered on the Tsoki Dorje form of Padmasambhava, visions of White Tara, and the Siddha Nyingthig revelations inspired by the iron bridge builder and Dzogchen master, Thangton Gyalpo.

A complete inventory of the treasures revealed by Khyentse Rinpoche would be too numerous to recount here, but one must mention the famed “Quintessence of Jetsun Cycle,” or *Jetsun Nyingthig*, so named because it commemorates Khyentse Rinpoche's past life as the Dzogchen master Jetsun Senge Wangchug who, at the age of one hundred and twenty-five, attained the rainbow body.

The last years of Khyentse Rinpoche's life were devoted to tireless teaching whose inner core was sustained by a deep visionary brilliance. The tangible signs of this brilliance culminated on the twenty-first day of the second month of the Water Dragon year, April 18, 1892 when, at the age of seventy-three: “He withdrew from the display of physical embodiments, and returned to the rainbow expanse of the great teacher Vimalamitra.”

As had been foretold, five Khyentse emanations issued forth from this rainbow expanse, which is centered at the five-peaked mountain, *ribo tse-nga*, thus insuring the continuity of these accomplishments for the compassionate benefit of generations to come. ©

Steven Goodman specializes in the Nyingma and Dzogchen traditions of Tibet. He recently co-edited the book, *Tibetan Buddhism: Reason and Revelation*, SUNY Press, 1992, and is a frequent contributor to *Tricycle Magazine*. Illustration by Glen Eddy.

The series “Lives of the Great Masters” were originally published in the 1990s in several issues of *The Mirror*. The story of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was the second in the series, published in issue 30, March–April 1995.

Pictures from the Past

This article is the first in a series that we are planning to publish in *The Mirror* to recount memories of experiences, retreats, travels and other moments spent with Dzogchen Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during his travels and teachings across the globe.

Enrica Rispoli

In the 1970s Chögyal Namkhai Norbu taught Yantra Yoga at the gym of Vico Palasciano in Naples. Although very young, I was interested in receiving that teaching and that was how I met him. After a few years he would become my professor of Tibetan language and literature at the Oriental University of Naples.



In his lectures, besides the specific themes of the language, Rinpoche devoted much attention to the presentation of the origins of civilization, culture and history of his country. He began by revealing the history of Shang Shung and Bön, cosmogonic theories about the birth of worlds, myths about origins, and continued with the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. He entered into life stories, anecdotes about both Tibetan and Mongolian traditions, his studies and teachers, his specific experiences, even in spiritual practices. Thus he began to create in many of us that imagery that would accompany us for many years of our lives.

In 1982 Rinpoche organized his first trip to Tibet since he had left in the 1960s. He traveled with his Italian wife Rosa and his two young children Yeshe and Yuchen. From Beijing, the flight to Lhasa involved two stopovers in Xian, and Chengdu in Sichuan.

Having learned of that trip, being then a scholarship holder in Shanghai and having



obtained a specific permit, I went to meet them at Beijing airport. Rinpoche, even though he knew Chinese, asked me to facilitate relations with the local authorities, and to accompany him on the journey.

In Chengdu I went to the Air China agency to confirm tickets for Tibet, and he invited me to buy one for me. I set off accordingly with them. The next morning we landed in Lhasa. On the way to the city he told us of his memories and in particular of how the scenarios had changed. We were accommodated in the house where two of his sisters lived, together with his niece Phuntsog Wangmo, not far from the center, and from whose garden you could see an edge of the Potala.

He was immediately welcomed by masters and the faithful. He sat on a slightly raised platform and there he welcomed an endless line of people coming to pay homage to him and prostrating themselves in front of him. Rinpoche entertained and exchanged words with everyone. Sometimes he turned to me, sitting behind him, and he told me what they were talking about. They talked, but at the same time they laughed, and he explained to me how their attitude was due to the realization of how everything is unreal.

During my work in China, I happened to find a pair of very large, thick and heavy an-



tique *pecha*, traditional books on rice paper printed with wooden matrices with *bönpo* illustrations, at the Beijing flea market. The pages were black with ink, with white characters. Back in Italy I gave them to him as a gift. He asked me, astonished, where I had found them and he told me that the strong smell of ink they still emanated reminded



Rinpoche and his daughter, Yuchen, in Lhasa in 1981.

him of his youth at boarding school where he suffered from severe headaches due to the hours spent pouring over similar texts. He told me that he would put them in the Museum of Asian Art and Civilization in Arcidosso, then under construction.

As I was one of his students at the Oriental University, I then asked him to give me a title for the thesis of my degree. Being a student of a four-year course in two languages, Chinese in addition to Tibetan, I was interested in a theme that would concern both countries. Rinpoche proposed that I concentrate on the figure of the 6th Dalai Lama, who lived in the eighteenth century, (when the first Chinese protectorate was established in Tibet) and gave me part of the Tibetan text of his secret biography. So it was that I came to discover how Tsang Yang Gyatso (*tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho*), like his illustrious predecessor, the Great Fifth, was a celebrated Dzogchen practitioner. And indeed Rinpoche would

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Dorota Dylka

As a child I used to love staring at the mountains surrounding the valley of my home town which at the time was Špindlerův Mlýn in Southern Krkonoše (north of the Czech Republic). I spent my early childhood here until the age of seven. I was brought up by my mother, who gave me lots of freedom and I recall the time living with her in the Czech Republic as my happiest as a child. To follow the Polish education system, my mother asked me to go and live with my grandparents so I started primary school in Poland, not knowing the Polish language at all. Although it was in a different country, Szarocin, the village of my grandparents, was located about 15 miles away as the crow flies from my beloved Špindlerův Mlýn. Just a short distance to the north ridge of the same mountains.

This was a very different and varied life to the one I had led in the Czech Republic. Living there in the village I made my first strong wish to become an artist. I wasn't interested in any particular genre at the time. People are more likely to forgive artists their unusual behavior without question just because they are artists. I just wanted to be free and not to have to justify my actions. I used to send my mother letters with my drawings enclosed, as she had asked me to. She used to visit me almost every month, many times unannounced. It didn't matter very much, as I always somehow knew when she was coming.

I was busy there with my extended family members, school colleagues, farm animals, dogs and cats. And despite the loneliness I experienced from being away from my mother, I loved the country life and the beauty of the terrain. I had plenty of time to

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later include his image in the frieze at the Gönpa at Merigar (The Temple of the Great Contemplation), which pays tribute to all the great practitioners of that discipline. ©

Enrica is a student and disciple of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, currently retired, she collaborates as a translator for Shang Shung Publications and The Mirror.



gaze at the hills and appreciate their outstanding beauty and indulge myself in my favorite activity – imagining what might be behind this scenery and beyond. I would also wonder what was behind “the curtain” of the sky and moving clouds that made me dizzy when I stared at them for too long.

Three years after I had moved to Poland, my mother became ill and this changed everything in our lives. We moved together to Karpacz, a lovely tourist resort in the same mountain range. This move challenged my approach to life again but the beauty of the mountains has never changed.



I first became inspired to learn about Buddhism through books while investigating the origins of Kyokushinkai karate that I was training intensively in for a

while. I injured my knee very badly during a ‘Kyokushin kumite’ routine and realized that I wouldn’t be able to fulfill my wish of mastering this martial art. Reading books and stories of eccentric Zen masters and how they dealt in cool ways with difficult students, helped me to pull my depressing thoughts away from this adverse situation. I was lucky to have some drawing skills and in my teenage years drawing replaced my passion for karate. But only when I moved away from home to study at the faculty of The Fine Arts at The Teaching College in Wroclaw I did start to lead a more independent life and finally felt in my element.

In 1988, at the Gallery Entropia in Wroclaw, I had the first important exhibition of my drawings curated by Alicja Jotko. My last exhibition was in 1995 in Jelenia Góra and was curated by Maria Schubart. I took inspiration for my drawings mainly from music, poetry (especially by Samuel Becket’s), intellectual provocations and my own experiences. I had my drawings published in the local press, the journal ‘bruLion’ and magazines such as ‘Korek’ and ‘Antena Krzyku’, which were linked with the independent music scene in Poland. In the mid 90’s this led me to graphic design when I was offered a job in the award winning computer games studio, Longsoft Multimedia.

At the beginning of the 90’s, after reading ‘Magic And Mystery In Tibet’ by Alexandra David-Neel and ‘Wonders of the Nat-

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ural Mind' by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, I understood that practicing Buddhism could be put into action through different methods, not only by sitting in zazen which I found demotivating. Also in the 90's I became a Dharma follower in the Kagyu lineage and attended Diamond Way retreats, including initiations from Shamar Rinpoche and the XVII Karmapa, Thaye Dorje.

I remember this as a very proactive and intense time but I inadvertently distanced myself from art. For some bizarre reason I "diagnosed" my passion for art as a disturbing emotion and became confused regarding my need to create. What drove me to Buddhism was the hunger for getting answers. Of course, at first I didn't get these answers as I probably wasn't asking the right questions.

In 2004 I came to the UK for an adventure and met my future husband. I now think of London as my home town. Meanwhile, I bought myself my first digital camera and began taking photos as a pleasant way to kill time, which I also found helped me to relax. My strong need for getting answers came back to me again after my mother's death. I felt that I needed even more answers.

In 2010 I found out that a famous Dzogchen teacher was coming to London so I decided to give Buddhism and myself one

'last chance'. I had always wanted to meet this teacher but had been unlucky when living in Poland. I can divide my life before and after I met Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche whom I met for the first time in May 2010 in London. The 'Three Statements of Garab Dorje' are the most important teachings I have ever received in my life. I had never before experienced such a stream of energy going through my heart when staring for the first time at the thangka of Garab Dorje and his pointing finger. The Vajra Dance became the most attractive way of meditation for me as well. It felt so natural to become a member of the Dzogchen Community, dancing on the Mandala and singing the Song of the Vajra. There is nothing to gain, there is nothing to surrender. Thanks to Rinpoche's teachings and his methods, I had finally been given direction on how to get answers myself.

I find the decisive moments in photography to be related to the state of Guru Yoga. This is my private discovery. That moment when everything is united and integrated in oneness and suchness ... the moment of awareness. Snap - you take the photo. It's a meditation.

My favourite narrative theme of photography is landscape, which can also be an urban environment. I chose the infrared technique of photography as living organisms (plants, trees) mainly reflect infrared

light the best. Therefore a landscape becomes the most photogenic subject, especially when shot in intense bright natural light. The infrared (IR) term relates to the spectrum of light that is not visible to our eyes. This method allows the unseen to be photographed. The pursuit of mystery and how the light emerges from darkness is the favorite subject for my images. I don't reveal the mystery; I just want to show that the mystery is there!

In May 2018, I took a series of IR photos at Kunselling in Wales during the 'Mandarava & Vajra Dance' retreat and later sent them to our dear Rinpoche. I will never know whether Rinpoche ever saw them. In the autumn of that same year I became a Blue Gakyil member of the Dzogchen Community UK. I look after newsletters and social media and am also responsible for designing almost all of the printable items for our Community in the UK. ©



How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Alexey Evteev

Before coming to the Teaching I was very interested in astronomy. I always walked to the library to read magazines and books about astronomy. I was interested in how the universe was born from the beginning, the theory of everything, the theory of the elements like the particles of space, time and so forth. I wanted to travel to neutron stars and things like that.

But in 2002, I left those things because since I wanted to have a real experience of that, and it was impossible, I became upset. Also at that time, some misery occurred in family. I started to read some Dzogchen books and texts from my father and at that time I suddenly started to feel that I was looking for something. I tried to ask myself what exactly I was looking for; was it some job or other things, but my inside feeling always said NO!

After six months I had some mental problems after I read a text where the



Alexey with his dog Alma.

teachers said that we don't know when we will die and I started to think that I will die tomorrow. This caught me too deeply and for some time I felt panic and my heart was ready to blow up. I could not even sleep. I thought that I could do by myself what the

Dzogchen books said. My father said that I needed to get transmission first; I didn't know why but I agreed, with those mental problems I couldn't say anything but I agreed.

During my travel to Moscow in 2003 I thought that I would die from heart panic but I kept in my mind that meeting with a teacher could help somehow. When I saw Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the first time, I immediately started to feel that he was an unusual human being. When I received transmission I felt like I was on a wave after swimming, going up and down. When Rinpoche mentioned that we don't know when we will die, I suddenly started to think, "No! I only now started to calm down", but then Rinpoche suddenly said that if we think too much about death, we become too pessimistic! After that this problem disappeared from my life completely and that feeling that I am looking for something did as well. I felt that at last I found what I was looking for! And after my dreams changed in a better way. ©

Kirian Regan

This is a particular time in which I've been asked to share the story of how I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. I'm currently in the 9th day of a potentially indefinite quarantine in my home in Italy, about a 20 minute drive from Merigar. The government has put a nationwide lockdown into effect in an attempt to slow the spread of the Coronavirus/Covid-19, that has, as of today, killed 3,400+ people in Italy alone and brought the country's medical system to the brink of collapse. Despite this omnipresent dark cloud hanging over the country, I can say without hesitation that there is no place in the world where I would rather be during this difficult period. So, my story begins with how I've come to call Monte Amiata and Merigar my home, my refuge.

Four years ago, I arrived to Monte Amiata through what appeared to be random chance at the time. The host of the agriturismo for which I had applied, on a whim, to do work exchange, had accepted my application despite having filled the position a few days prior (they later explained



Painting for inside the Great Stupa of Merigar.

that they 'had gotten a good feeling' after reading my profile and decided to invite me anyway). When I arrived to the area, I had what I can only describe as an intense experience of landing; as if I had been up in space, spending my whole life floating around and now I was finally, and suddenly, setting my two feet on solid ground for the first time. It was jarring. A completely inexplicable sensation of 'coming home' overcame me, despite my having no sentimental or hereditary ties to the place.

After a few weeks of circumstances that seemed to come out of a movie script, I found myself working full time for a bio-dynamic winemaker in the valley between

Castel del Piano and Seggiano. I had separated amicably from my partner of 8 years and had all my belongings shipped to me from France. The transition couldn't have gone smoother. I was home.

Within months, my social circle had developed into an eclectic group of expats and Italians, many of whom identified themselves as students of a Tibetan Master who had come here some decades before to bring Dzogchen teachings to students in the Western World. I had no idea what any of this meant but I accepted the offering of some books; 'The Crystal and the Way of Light' and 'The Rainbow Body'; and as I read the words I found myself coming to an understanding of what in the world I was doing on this mountain. I began attending practices and teachings at Merigar and encountered a striking familiarity with songs and mantras that I had had no previous knowledge of in this lifetime. At the same time, I was suddenly surrounded by this beautiful group of people from all over the world, which I came to learn was called the Sangha or Vajra Family, that in reality felt as if I had always been a part of. It was as

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Rinpoche's birthday celebration, 2017.

though I was having some extraordinarily vivid and extended deja vu.

That following summer I was asked to work as a karmayogi in Rinpoche's home in Merigar, Gadeling. Here I met Rinpoche for the first time and was fortunate enough to share some beautiful moments with him swimming in the pool and enjoying a meal together. Unfortunately my Italian comprehension at this point was minimal so I was unable to understand much of the stories he shared with us over lunch, however, I completely understood his smile and his radiating presence that was like a beaming sun, despite his weakened health condition. I am now filled with gratitude for those simple, joyful moments shared with the extraordinary Being that would soon give me the greatest gift I've ever received in this life.

On the morning of August 2nd, I unexpectedly had the opportunity to receive transmission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the Gönpa of Merigar after circumstances had prevented him from traveling to China where he had initially intended to give Worldwide Transmission. After the practice was complete, I walked up the hill and looked out at Monte Amiata, the clear dawn sky outlining the dormant volcano's silhouette with its rose-gold glow. Everything was perfect. Thus began my understanding of my true nature and this precious relationship with my Master, my Vajra Family, and this place I call home.

As I write this, the world is bracing itself for the uncertainty of the coming months of Kali Yuga. As I write this, it is the first day of Spring and I am reminded of how fortunate I am to have had contact with Rinpoche in this lifetime, even if for only a short time in his earthly form. He equipped us with the essential tools needed to relax in the State and protect ourselves and others from all the negativities that arise in Samsara.

Grazie Maestro. La mia infinita gratitudine.

Losar 2147



Kunsangar South.



Dzamling Gar.



Merigar East.

Merigar West.



Namgyalgar (before social distancing was introduced).



Kunsangar North.

Tsegyalgar East.



News from the International Dzogchen Community of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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