

THE MIRROR

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Ati Yoga Teaching Retreat
On Bodhicitta

Community in the Time of Quarantine
The Dzamling Gar Moon Garden
Memories of the Subiaco Retreat



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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Front cover: The Dzamling Gar gönpa seen through the beeblossoms at the Moon Garden. Photo by Gisela Martinez.

Inside front cover: A drawing by Nishi from Nepal, sponsored at distance by Kunsangar South through ASIA Onlus.

Back cover: Hibiscus in bloom in the Moon Garden.

Serenity in the Storm Crossing the Portal

Elio Guarisco

Present world circumstances are painful, a huge amount of suffering is being experienced by those who have lost their relatives, their friends, and by all of us who are witnessing this.

It is not what we expected from life. The ground is shaking, creating a deep fear, uncertainty, as to what the future will bring us. Now we have been exposed in daylight to the inescapable reality of change; nothing can ever guarantee our psychological, our material security.

It would be naïve to think that one can stop the epidemic with meditation or any other spiritual method; But we can learn how to deal with the circumstances.

Of course we should follow the indication of not interacting socially on a concrete level to protect ourselves and be responsible also for the welfare of others.

But many of us, out of paranoia, isolate ourselves psychologically, closing ourselves in a narrow personal space devoid of joy.

This is a time in which we can encounter the 'other' in a way that has never happened before in a way that is more authentic, passionate, not absent-mindedly, not on autopilot as we usually do.

It is a time to feel participation in the suffering of others as well as to feel love for whatever surrounds us,

and to reconnect with other beings
and re-establish our sacred
relationship with nature.

It is a time to make our being with
others more authentic.
Now we are vulnerable, we can feel
compassion and love.

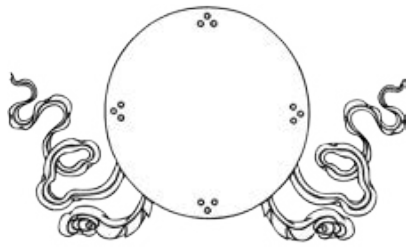
Of all things we can do at this time,
when adversity unrelentingly pounds
our lives,
compassion and love are *by far* the
most meaningful.

Of course our self-cherishing attitude
always tries to block our way,
yet we don't want to come out of
isolation with the same thoughts
with the same superficial level of
experiencing life
with the same identification with our
ego-consciousness.
We want to come out of isolation as
better human beings,
human beings with heart.

Maybe in the deepest recesses of the
minds of many of us
there is no wish to go back to
normality.

Like an old Hopi Indian said, this
moment we and all humanity either
enter a portal
or plunge into a pit, it is really up to
us.

If we spend our time with the
paranoia of contracting the virus,
listening to the news and reading
reports about the virus twenty-four
hours a day, nervous and with a
pessimistic attitude, feeling that we
have lost our freedom, we have lost
our flight, we have lost our chances
we fall into a pit.
But if we take this opportunity to
rediscover what we have forgotten,
to look inside ourselves,
to see life and death in a different
light,
to take care of ourselves and others,
we will cross the portal.



We got used to being outside
our home, at coffee shops and
bars, socializing with friends
thinking it to be a meaningful and
entertaining way of life,
and while doing so we have forgotten
to take care of ourselves,
we have forgotten to listen to
ourselves in silence,
to listen to the melodious song of the
blackcap,
to be enchanted by the wonderful
colors that nature has graced
flowers with;
we have forgotten to read the
messages written in the sky
by the ever changing patterns of the
clouds,
we have forgotten to let ourselves be
absorbed in looking at the endless
ocean,
the peaks of mountains,
without remembering time,
we have forgotten to lose ourselves in
the horizon.
It is a time for cleansing our being and
our planet,
and it is happening, even dolphins
swim happily in the canals of
Venice,
whose water is crystal clear now.
It is a time to clean our homes
carefully
and to connect with our spiritual
house.

Fear, difficulties, alienation
are good things, don't get rid of them;
they are a passage for seeking our
authenticity.

While being responsible,
we do not need to feel guilty
if we feel happy in rediscovering the
beauty in ourselves, in others and
in the sacred ground of nature.

In this difficult time it is helpful if
good things emanate from us and
the universe
because when the storm passes we
will need, not just to go back to
'normality',
but to reconstruct a new world.

Let's allow ourselves to take
advantage of this time
to seek our vision.
It is happening, naturally we have
established a routine
and practice the word of the Master,
meeting the sacred every day: it is
wonderful.
Serenity in the storm is what we can
do now.

Learning, yoga, meditation,
knowledge are all wonderful,
yet
they are all in the realm of thought, in
the realm of the known,
in the realm of what we can learn;
but what about being in the space
reality that pervades all,
which is pure love without
boundaries.
Has it occurred to you?





Ati Yoga Teaching Retreat

Day 3 morning
December 30, 2017,
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife

Presence

We can understand and get in the state [of Dzogchen] only with experience. The experience we need to have is an experience related to the teaching. In an ordinary way, we can learn Ati Guruyoga and then more or less we can understand something about what it means to go beyond time and space. You remember that when I explained Ati Guruyoga, I told you that when we think, "I want to do Ati Guruyoga", that is our mind. We are still in time and space. We apply Ati Guruyoga that we learned from the teacher, then we do visualizations, etc. – this activity is also the mind. At this point, we study everything in an intellectual way and we can get in that knowledge. Doing the visualization is a secondary cause. When we say, "now we relax", what does it mean to relax? To relax doesn't mean you don't think. We are not asking you to change your idea and do something; you don't do anything. You relax into just how it is, the real nature. Even if you have no knowledge of concretely being in the state of contemplation, but you have received a good example of the being in state of contemplation. Then the teacher says, "This is the state of Ati Guruyoga, and you try to be in that state as much as possible."

This is the main point of the practice. For that reason I say not to forget Ati Guruyoga; try to do Ati Guruyoga as much as possible. You are in the state of the Ati Guruyoga for only a few seconds, and then thoughts arise because that is our nature. Our nature is not only emptiness, there is also movement. When movement arises what should we do? If you have a little more knowledge, you just relax your thoughts, emotions, let everything arise, and then relax just like you did when you relaxed with the white A and *thigle*. In that way you are relaxed in the state and then you continue.

But you cannot continue for hours and hours in that way, it is not so easy for everybody. For example, you are doing this practice and you need to go to the toilet. You think, "I should do something like this or that." This is called *jethob* in Tibetan. When you are in the state of Ati Guruyoga it is called *nyamzhag*. *Nyam* means everything is in that state, relaxed. *Zhag* means we are remaining in that state. So, it is just like the Ati Guruyoga state and when we introduce it, it is very simple for people. When we are not in that state there is *jethob*; *jethob* means how our condition is after that experience. Immediately after we are already in time and space, then we are judging, thinking, accepting and rejecting.



Rinpoche teaching at Kunsangar South.

In the famous relative condition we are accumulating good and bad karmas. So, in this case in the Dzogchen Teaching it is most important that you are present. When I give Ati Guruyoga instructions, I explain how we should be present. I am explaining that now, so you listen well. What does distraction mean? Our consideration of distraction and the consideration of distraction in the Dzogchen Teaching are a little different. For example, if I am writing a letter to convey some concepts, I concentrate. I concentrate on the letter and I am writing things down. In this case, in the relative condition you say this is presence. When you are distracted and you are thinking of something else, then you make a mistake. You recognize that you are distracted and you made a mistake. In the Dzogchen Teaching distraction doesn't mean the same thing. I am explaining that very often, and I have repeated that many times.

When you are learning to be present, what does presence mean in the Dzogchen Teaching? Driving a car is a very good example. When you are driving a car you are not thinking, "I am driving car and I must not be distracted." When you are becoming a little familiar with driving, you can talk with people. When you are driving and there are some people in the car, and people are asking, "What did you do today?" and you need to reply. To reply you need to think and your mind is occupied with thinking for that moment. But your presence is not distracted.

If you are not present you can have an accident. So, you see, you can talk, you can think, you can do everything. A Dzogchen practitioner who has that continuous presence, even if they are speaking of very complicated things for one hour, they are not distracted, they are present. This is just like driving a car.

So, this is what you should learn, and it does not come automatically because we do not have that attitude. After being in the state of contemplation, it is most important that we learn to be present. In other teachings and traditions, no one is explaining the importance of that kind of presence. Instead they consider that thinking of visions is more important; if you are a practitioner of tantra, visions are the visualizations of deities. All the sounds you are hearing, good, bad, everything, are just like the sounds of the



mantra. They use this kind of method in dealing with your nature of the three existences. This is the mind level. The mind is judging; the mind is thinking that. You are not relaxed in that state. So, being present is another thing you should slowly learn. People ask what kind of practice they can do if they only have one hour or two hours free, I always say the best way is that you start with Ati Guruyoga and you learn how to be in present.

You can do that for one hour, for example, then for two hours, and then the next time it is already much easier than before. To realize presence continuously for a good practitioner does not take many years. For example, if you want to do that kind of practice when you have one hour of free time, you look at your watch and start for one hour from that time. You decide the time and then this time is arriving. What should you do? There is not a particular technique; most practitioners are asking, "What is the technique?" The technique is that you relax, that is all. When you are relaxing then thoughts arise. That is normal, you have not changed or modified anything, you are not dealing with the mind in a particular way. You can also pay respect to your mind and judge and think. You think, "I want to go in toilet, it is necessary." So you get up and you go to the toilet, but you know, "I am getting up to go to the toilet, now I am walking to get to the toilet, now I am doing what is necessary to do in the toilet, and I am returning in my place." So, you are present just like driving the car. We learned only by driving a car. Most people who do not drive a car, they don't know. For example, I remember when I was trying to drive car at the beginning, I even did an examination and everything, but when I had a new car and in the beginning when I was driving, the car was always jumping.

After a few weeks the car is not jumping anymore. I already learned and it became easier. In the same way we can learn to be present but it is not sufficient that we only know how to drive a car; that is only an example. You see in our time and space how many infinite different moments and different things there are. Presence must govern all. For that reason, it is necessary to learn. Then when you returned from the toilet you are sitting and you remember you are sitting. That's a way of thinking, but you are not saying that otherwise people think you are not normal.

So you do everything in that way for one hour. You pay respect and do everything, but not in a distracted way. Tomorrow when you are repeat this kind of practice, it is much easier. After some weeks it becomes even easier. Some people say, "Oh, you told me to be present is very important, so I tried to do that but it is not so easy, it is very difficult." But it is not difficult compared to how you do the practice of the Vajrayana development and accomplishing stage. You remember how many years Milarepa sacrificed on the mountain. These are difficult things. So, we are not asking that you need to go to a mountain or somewhere to be present. You don't need any moment in time in different periods. You can deal with your time and space in an ordinary way with dualistic vision. So, you see then, it is not difficult.

For having realization like in the development and accomplishing stages, you need many years. In Tibet, we have a college of the practices – most colleges are seven years, not three years. People who completed seven years of college practice like *tummo*, when they do the examination, more than half the people cannot suc-

ceed to pass the examination, for example. They have spent seven years. I am not saying you need to be present for seven years, I couldn't even say you need one year. It depends on your practice, your way of doing, your understanding, etc. If you understand and you do in a perfect way, it takes a short time. So, if you have presence, this is key of everything.

For example, in the relative condition you think, "Oh, I have an illness, the doctor said I have a cancer, what I should do?" Of course you should cure that illness with medicine but only curing with medicine is not so easy. You should cure also with practice. All these kinds of illnesses like cancer, tumors, paralysis, all are related to negative provocations. You need to have potentiality and then control that negativity. For that reason, you need to do certain kinds of practice. When you are doing practice and then you use any kind of medicine, the medicine becomes very active. Some people say, "Oh, which kind of medicine is better, Tibetan medicine or Western or Chinese medicine?"

Of course if you have some experience, you can go with that. But a person who has an illness, together with the function of the medicine and therapy, can have the capacity to cure that illness. It doesn't matter if the doctor is a Tibetan doctor, Chinese doctor or Western doctor. It does not matter which tradition it is. Maybe not curing with that, but it's important the medicine can have its effect and if you do practice then the practice also creates some effect. If you are present, these things you can understand.

Interdependence

In general, every day we are very much charged. We go after mind too much. We create so many fantasies and believe them. So, all these things, if you are present, you can understand, "Oh, I am charged, I need to relax." Even if you have some problems with someone for example, "I don't want these problems with that person." But when you have this presence then you can understand that. How do you understand that? In general everybody has a very strong ego. We are always thinking, "Oh, I am innocent. I have a problem with him, for example, but he created the problem, and then I have a problem with him." In this case if you are present, you remember what Buddha explained. Buddha said everything is interdependent. We have dualistic vision; with dualistic vision everything is interdependent. If I am totally innocent then why do I have problems with someone?

Interdependent means there is something we have done related to that person; we did something. In this case if you are present you know how to liberate that. You cannot do a revolution. You cannot change that person, because that person also has the same ego. Even if you are trying to convince that person, "I am innocent", but that person never accepts that. More importantly, you observe the interdependence in you and you can free your tensions, but not that person's. It is interdependent when you have freed your tensions, those tensions diminish and then slowly this problem disappears. That is example of how presence is the key to everything.

All the problems we have, we can understand which is the better way. For example, in the teaching for example, in the practice, etc., we know very well in the Vajrayana system, the Sutra system,

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there are infinite methods. Some people say, "Oh, which method is necessary for me to apply?" You don't go to ask the teacher, but you ask yourself. You observe yourself and you can understand which kind of problem you have if you are present. So then everything is much easier. So, it is very very important you learn well to be present. Some people say, "Oh, I want to follow the dharma, I want to know which is my *yidam*."

Initiations

You know what *yidam* means, in Tibetan *yi* it means mind. *Dam* means sacred mind. That is something related with the different kinds of manifestations of the five dhyana buddhas. When we receive initiations, we try to understand that. So, you see, for example, if you have received an initiation, a formal initiation, when you are receiving it you receive a kind of flower. Then you keep this flower in your fingers. Also there is a piece of red cotton and in general people put that on the head. This is not for putting on the head, but it is called *mig re*, (*mig ras*), [*mig* mean eyes, *re* means cotton ed.] if the eyes are covered by cotton then you cannot see. That is a symbol of ignoring our real nature, we are in the dark.

When they construct the mandala, that is also a symbol, but then with the rite, the practice empowers the mandala and the teacher asks, "Now you look on the top of the mandala and you try to see the direction of the mandala." But of course you cannot see the mandala because there is cotton. Then after the teacher immediately asks you one by one, when the initiation is done in a very precise way, the teacher comes to you and asks, "When you look above the mandala, which kind of color did you see?" There are basically five colors. The five colors are related with the five families. If you saw white, then you should reply, "I saw white" or you say whatever color you saw.

Formally nowadays the teacher is rarely going one by one and asking. Nowadays the teacher says, "Look above the mandala, what do you see above this mandala?" Then you reply and the teacher informs you of what you should say. So, these are formal initiations, not serious initiations. Then there is also another initiation with the flower. This is used in lower tantric initiations. Again the teacher is coming and bringing a mandala, a small mandala and you repeat a mantra and throw the flower on the mandala. Then you see in which direction of the mandala the flower falls. And later the teacher gives you a name of the family belonging to that place on the mandala. In the center it is something like Buddha, and then to the east Vajra, etc. This is another way of discovering which family you are connected to.

In the very high level initiations like the Kalachakra, Chakrasambhava, etc., there is also *tsulshing*. *Tsulshing* is a small piece of wood. Originally *tsulshing* is in the Sutra teaching in Vinaya. It is a specific length. Also it is not any kind of wood, it is a specific kind of wood. In the monasteries they give this wood to all the monks, and the monks must bite the wood and to clean the mouth.

Sometimes when you go to visit monasteries, at the entrance to the temple, the *tsulshing* is tied together and put there. This is how they store the wood. This is the origin of the *tsulshing*; in Vajrayana it has been transformed a little. On the top of the *tsulshing* there are flowers of the five different colors of the cottons. Then in

the initiation the teacher tells people a mantra one by one. Then when you have received the mantra, the teacher is coming again with mandala. In this moment you throw the wood, you chant the mantra and you throw the wood on the mandala. On the top there is a small kind of flower. Where the wood is directed, in which direction of the mandala – east, west, etc., based on this they inform you which family you belong to.

Why are they considering this? They consider this because if you know that you belong to the Vajra family, then when you do the practice of Vajrasattva and you can have more of a relationship with that practice. It means you did something in your past life and now you can develop that more.

So, in our life how we manifest is also related with that. For example, one day there is some important teacher giving an initiation. We don't know what kind of the initiation is being given. But the day arrives and you participate to receive that initiation. The teacher gives an initiation of Vajrasattva. That already is an indication that you have such kind of relationship with Vajrasattva or Amitabha, in the West. Practitioners think, "Oh, it is very important; I can have easier realization, etc." For having realization in the Vajrayana style of the practices it is very important to have this kind of relationship.

I give you a very easy example. One day, for example, when Manjushri or Green Tara or someone like that was on the path just like we are now, still they did not manifest realization in the Sutra style. So then, for example, they are walking in a garden, and in the road there are small ants, they do not see the ants and they put their feet on them and kill them. They had no intention to kill the ants. Even they didn't know the ants were there. So for that reason this does not become really an impediment for realization, which is called *gribpa*. But it becomes an obstacle.

When you accumulate many obstacles, like *gribpa*, they become heavier, and can produce something negative. You are a practitioner of Manjushri or Green Tara, so one day you can realize. When you are realized it depends on which kind of relationship those sentient beings have had with you as to who can receive benefit. Manjushri, for example, when he was on path he had many things to do with intelligence for people. For that reason when he manifested they could receive his wisdom. So, we are also receiving initiations in that way, it's related to this kind of relationship.

If we have very small relationship then it does not manifest very much, but at least we received an initiation, for example. Even if you received an initiation and you are not interested in the practice or following that teaching, but slowly some secondary causes are maturing more and more and then you start to be a little more interested. And in this case you are creating more secondary cause. This is not only Buddhists, but all kinds of religions believe in that way. Many Christians say, "Oh, that person is going where the Madonna is, then the Madonna also received some benefits", etc. So, for example, someone is walking for hours and hours on their knees to see the Madonna. This is sacrifice and sacrifice is producing more possibility to receive. ❀

Transcribed by Anna Rose

Edited by Naomi Zeitz with the kind assistance of Elio Guarisco



On Bodhicitta

Easter retreat at Merigar, 1991

No one will be realized or enlightened just by studying the concepts of the mind. One has to find oneself in the state of knowledge, and really make this knowledge concrete. Buddha said, "I have found a knowledge that is very profound and very enlightened, a very peaceful state, beyond all concepts. And when I communicate this to others they do not understand". This is knowledge, not something that is analyzed on the level of logic. I am not saying that logical terms have no use but it depends.

From the beginning, Dzogchen teachings have been explained in many ways by the masters. There are intellectual ways and then the symbolic way, which is connected with the tantric style. There is also the direct method: from knowledge directly to knowledge. This is what is called the transmission of the knowledge of realized beings.

It is essential to understand that even if the teachings are being explained intellectually, that which is being communicated is not intellectual. And if you do not succeed in transmitting this knowledge, everything just becomes dry words. Many people have a kind of conviction that they have some kind of knowledge. When I met my Master Changchub Dorje, I was really convinced that I had a lot of knowledge, especially of the Buddhist teachings. I did not think of myself as someone who was very stupid. When I met my Master for the first time, I had a lot of pride, because when my Master was teaching he was speaking to people who were not very educated. I was a bit blown up and thought, well, I know the sutras, the tantras and Buddhist philosophy. I really believed this was the meaning of the teachings.

Many people have this kind of attitude and think that they really do know something. But you have to understand what knowledge means. A good example of this was when Manjushrimitra met Garab Dorje. Manjushrimitra was one of the greatest scholars of that period in India and the principal guide of the Yogācāra school. He was considered the supreme Pandit.

When they heard that Garab Dorje was giving a teaching that went beyond the law of cause and effect, the Buddhists became very worried. The Buddhist teachings, especially the sutras, are based on the principle of cause and effect so, of course, it is strange when somebody talks about going beyond cause and effect. Many scholars and pandits felt that they had to go and see Garab Dorje and find out what was going on. As a famous proverb says, "If there is a small fire, it is best to put it out right away. Otherwise it will develop and you will not be able to put it out anymore."

There was this young Garab Dorje explaining this teaching that was a little different and Manjushrimitra and other scholars went



Photo by Liane Gräf

from India to Oddiyana to see him. It was a very long journey in those days, and they made a great sacrifice to undertake it. When they arrived in Oddiyana they began a discussion with Garab Dorje. Manjushrimitra went first, convinced that he had the most knowledge of a certain kind. After they had exchanged a few words, Manjushrimitra immediately understood what Garab Dorje was communicating. And he understood that what Garab Dorje was teaching was the finality, the point of arrival of all the sutra teachings. Manjushrimitra became upset and asked to be excused because he realized that Garab Dorje was not some ordinary intellectual, but that he was an emanation. So Manjushrimitra became the first and also the most important of Garab Dorje's disciples. He did not need to study or spend many years with Garab Dorje, but all the years of philosophy and study he had done until this time had been a preparation for the moment of meeting Garab Dorje and the communication of the realized state. So, right away, he became a great master of Dzogchen. Thus you can see, there exists this method of communicating intellectually. Manjushrimitra said, "You are an emanation of Nirmanakaya and I had this very bad intention when I came here. How can I purify this?". Garab Dorje said, "Do not worry about this at all. You are a scholar and a Buddhist philosopher, you can communicate this knowledge in the way that you have learned until now."

So Manjushrimitra wrote a text called *Dola Sershung*. *Dola* means like a stone. Usually we have a vision that is pure or impure. When one understands the meaning of the teachings one discovers that the stone is actually gold and this pure gold represents the dimension of every individual. In the Dzogchen teachings we say that our state is self-perfected from the very beginning. What is self-perfected is our infinite potentiality but we do not have this understanding, this knowledge. If we do not have this knowledge, then we see the stone as a stone, and not pure gold. Manjushrimitra explained Dzogchen perfectly in the terms of Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy. Many scholars say these Dzogchen teachings seem to be in Yogācāra style. This is because Manjushrimitra used

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the Yogācāra terms to transmit the teachings. He became one of the fundamental teachers of Dzogchen and put together all the collection of Garab Dorje's teachings. When we speak of Dzogchen semde, *sem* (*sems*) means mind. This is an abbreviation for what we call *Changchub Sem*. *Changchub Sem* means *bodhicitta* in Sanskrit but not the same *bodhicitta* meant in the sutras.

In the sutric *bodhicitta* there are two aspects: absolute and relative. Absolute *bodhicitta* means the knowledge or understanding of real emptiness. Relative *bodhicitta* is explained in two ways: the first is our intention and the second its application. When we do a practice, we say that we cultivate *bodhicitta*. This is the *bodhicitta* that is the intention. In the Mahayana sutras, *bodhicitta* is considered to be fundamental. Through this intention we can govern our attitude, our behavior. At the base of the Hinayana teachings there is the Vinaya, which is based on laws. If we receive a vow, behind this vow is law, which has to be applied. We use these vows if our capacity, our character, is not strong, and we want to control our behavior and not commit any negativities.

In Dzogchen, we try to become responsible for ourselves but for the majority of people it does not happen like this. Understanding the basic weakness of the human condition, Buddha clearly explained the Hinayana style, so if we cannot govern ourselves, we have a law that limits our behavior. Therefore, we can understand why a vow exists in the sutra teaching and should not consider a vow as something that is not valid. It is something to adopt and use. We have all kinds of teachings with different characteristics. If we are Dzogchen practitioners, then we have to have awareness, awareness of ourselves and also of circumstances and the relationship between the two. If we have an awareness of this, then we have an awareness of all the aspects of the teachings. So, practicing Dzogchen means to practice Hinayana and Mahayana. It means to look for the essence of all teachings and to live in this essence.

Certainly, we cannot go following all different kinds of specific rules. For example, the fundamental thing in Mahayana is intention, which is much more important than a rule. If there is a good intention and something negative happens, this can have a good result. Intention is considered very important. When we speak of *bodhicitta*, the first thing mentioned is intention. In life, in every circumstance, we can observe what kind of intention we have. If we are present in our intention, then we do not have to follow rules and everything works out.

We have the intention not to create any negativities. To commit a negative action, first we must have the intention. Also, the conditions for producing negative karma mean that first we have to have a bad intention, then enter into the action, conclude the action, and that becomes a negative force.

Even if we have this evil intention and enter into the action, if we do not conclude the action, then there is something missing for a negative karma. Not only on the level of philosophy, but in law, one says that a crime is premeditated. Someone who has done something intentionally is guilty. Karma is also made in this way.

If we are walking outside and we crush an insect under our feet, it dies. When it dies, it suffers. Whether the person deliberately crushes the insect or not, it suffers just the same. Certainly,

it is not positive. A negative action means we produce suffering for other beings.

If we go there with the intention to kill that being, that is different. We are not just talking about a negative action, we are talking about producing a negative karma; a potentiality of karma. The force and potentiality of this negative karma can produce a result. This is what we call cause and effect. When there is a negative cause and then a secondary cause is present for that cause, then it produces an effect.

When we produce this potentiality of negative karma, we certainly do not see anything concrete. This is connected with our condition. When the secondary cause is present this karma manifests itself. I will give an example. Karma is like a shadow. We have a physical body and when there is the secondary cause of the sun, the shadow arises. Why? Because we have a body. But when there is no secondary cause, the shadow does not manifest, as if it never existed.

It is the same with all those negative karmas that are associated with us. Until the secondary causes manifest, they do not appear. It means that when we have all these different kinds of causes, the consequences of them manifest as samsara. First of all, this potentiality can only be manifested if we have the intention. Intention is related to action, whether it is direct or indirect, and at the end when one is satisfied with what one has done and these three qualifications are present, a perfect karma is produced which will have some kind of result.

That is why in the Mahayana intention is very important. We must observe our intention well. Above all, the first thing we do when we do a practice is refuge and *bodhicitta*. We observe our motive and see why we are doing this practice. If we do not have a good intention, we can change it right away and it becomes a good intention. At least, in the moment of practice, we do this. It is also a good example for life. We do not need to restrict our good intentions to periods of practice.

When we are practitioners of Dzogchen, we try not to be distracted, but to be present. When we are present, we can observe our intention. If we have an evil intention, we immediately become aware of it and can change it.

We can cultivate a good intention instead. At least, we can realize that this bad intention may produce a very negative result. If we are present like that, how can negativity arise? This is a good way of regulating our attitude or behavior in life. That is why in Mahayana, intention is more important than applying any kind of rule.

Then we might think, "Oh, I will practice Mahayana because I do not believe in rules". People are very narrow-minded. They think it has to be one thing or the other. We have to live with more space and give our mind more space.

So, try and apply this principle of Mahayana and Hinayana. If a rule has some sense and it is useful, certainly, we can apply it. The finality of Hinayana is to renounce disturbing other beings. This is the principle aim of that vow. Even if we have no vow, we should keep this vow present. I know that by insulting a person I create suffering for them, because when it happens to me, I suffer. So, in the sutra, we say that we can take an example from ourselves.



Buddha taught this in the sutras and it is something very practical and concrete.

In addition, we can teach our children by explaining that they should not kill an insect because they cause terrible suffering for the insect and that the insect could be a mother or father and the children will wonder where their mother or father is. When the child becomes sensitive to that, they will not want to kill insects anymore.

We have many experiences in life like that. If someone does something that is pleasing to me, and I do something pleasing for that person, then they are very happy. If we do not care about others, we are considered very much of an egoist. Above all, it is important to put ourselves in the position of others. In the Mahayana, there are many kinds of trainings in which we mentally change our position with another. If we see a person who is suffering terribly and we try to imagine ourselves in his or her position, then we can understand how he suffers. With this practice, a person becomes more sensitive. It often seems that many practitioners' sensitivity diminishes and we become like stones. This is very negative. Why does this happen? Because we do not observe ourselves and do not see it happening. In Dzogchen we have to understand the essence of all teachings and integrate them. So remember the principle of Hinayana and do not create problems for others. We should control our own existence, our body, our voice and our mind. This is a vow created by oneself and to apply this is very useful.

The principle of Mahayana is bodhicitta. The first principle of bodhicitta is intention, and then applying it. That is why we speak of application and intention in the Mahayana sutras.

We say, "I want to realize myself for the sake of others." When one creates this intention this is called cultivating bodhicitta. Basically it is [having] a good thought through which one can accumulate merit. But, if it is only this and nothing very concrete happens, it is because after having the intention we have to apply it, it has to go into action. With negative karma, we enter into action and then it produces a cause. It is the same with good actions – if we cultivate bodhicitta, we have to apply it in order to produce a good action.

Bodhicitta is also something we recite. "I want to realize myself for the benefit of all beings, I have this intention." This is something concrete. In Mahayana, they speak of "the Gift". The greatest gift we can give is that of the teaching. There is also the material gift. If someone does not have anything to eat, we can give them a little food or a little money, and they become very happy. We create a lot of virtue by doing this good action but we have to have the intention of giving this good gift. Sometimes we give with our own interests at heart, and that does not create a good action. If we have a good intention, we do not expect anything in return. Our only intention is for the benefit of someone who has some kind of need.

A practitioner should be very present every day of his or her life. In general, we have many evil intentions and this automatically produces a lot of negative power. In the teachings of Jigmed Lingpa he says, "If the intention is good, all of life and the fruit of life will be good, but if the intention is bad just the opposite happens." So, try to cultivate good intentions. Good intention makes a lot of people happy and if people are very happy, you can produce a lot of very positive power in them.

I give many practices. In Tibetan Astrology there is something called a Black Year. In this Black Year all the elements and the influences are very bad. If a person is not careful, all these bad conditions and all the secondary causes will produce trouble for that person. During this time the weakness in the circumstances of the person, such as sickness, may manifest and if that person does not have much protection, they can be hit pretty badly. If they are very passive, they receive all this negativity. The aim of astrology is to understand the condition of the individual and their circumstances.

What can we do for a remedy? In astrology there are many methods to overcome these problems. If one does nothing the condition will get worse. To reinforce the energy of the individual, we can make prayer flags. We can do Long-life practices. There are many simple ways of overcoming negativities. There is a practice called *Chi Thun*. *Chi* means child and *Thun* to celebrate. We invite a lot of children, make some gifts and do a lot of things to keep them amused all day for many hours – these children will be full of joy – and the power of the joy of these children has a great potentiality to overcome all kinds of negativities.

You see how powerful the mind is when it is happy or the opposite. Also, giving gifts to poor people has the same motive. So, in life, one has to understand this. When many kinds of circumstances arise in our life like this, try not to make people unhappy, try to make them as happy as possible, and if we have the minimum of good intention and understanding, it is not very difficult to make people happy.

If we dissolve our tensions and become friendly to people, we are certainly happier for a few hours. Basically the fundamental thing to reach in practice is relaxation, so we can see how important relaxation is. Many teachings talk about bodhicitta as a kind of propaganda, to demonstrate something very sweet in society. Society does not function like that, with something false.

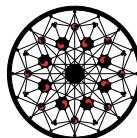
Many Dzogchen practitioners feel they do not need to practice bodhicitta however one has to arrive at applying bodhicitta, even if one wishes to be a Dzogchen practitioner. I think our practitioners have to work hard on developing bodhicitta. With bodhicitta we have to understand our own essence, the condition of every individual.

People say many Dzogchen practitioners do not seem to have much love. If we are lacking love, it means we have become like a stone. It is not that we have to think about love, it is that we have to become a little more sensitive. Sensitivity means to be aware of time, of circumstances, and the human condition. It is very important to have respect for each other. Without respect, nothing works. Respect arises from observing and becoming sensitive to oneself. It is much better to become sensitive to oneself than to go out and try to make others sensitive.

Many people are used to criticizing others. We have a dualistic way of seeing that is characteristic of our general way of being. We have two eyes and as soon as we open them, they identify another object. We never observe ourselves, we are always looking outside, so we have developed our technology of criticizing others. We are always looking outside, looking for the guilty one.

If we are always looking outside, making other people feel guilty, our existence never changes and we never become sensitive. It is

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Message from the International Gakyil

Dear Members of the International Dzogchen Community all around the world,

We as International Gakyil would like to share with you some updates from our recent activities.

As you all know after Chögyal Namkhai Norbu passed away there was a year mourning period that ended in the autumn of 2019. After the period finished, in December 2019 there was a meeting of Santi Maha Sangha instructors at Dzamling Gar to discuss topics related to the future of the International Dzogchen Community. We continue this communication and work with the situation we have. During the same period, we received information from Merigar West that Yeshe Namkhai had decided to give Transmission to newcomers in April 2020 at Merigar West. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus crisis, the Transmission planned for April 2020 was postponed to an undefined period.

To address the increased number of inquiries about Transmissions and Lungs in the Dzogchen Community, we recently sent out Rinpoche's Letter from 2016 to all Community members – it answers all these questions in a perfect way.

Also, we have updated our FAQ section on the International Gakyil website, answering the most common questions we

have received until now – <http://dzogchencommunity.org/faqs/>

Webcast and Online Activities

As you all noticed due to the COVID-19 lockdown many activities moved online, so now we have the possibility to follow different practices online from all over the world every day via our Webcast platform or Zoom.

Since the end of the March, the International Gakyil has been collaborating with local Gakyils and the Webcast Team to start a program of webcasting the recordings of Rinpoche's retreats. We started with Ödzer Chenma, then it was Kunsang Monlam, and the latest one is Dorje Sempa Namkha Che. Since we received a lot of emails with positive feedback from our members, we will continue this program and will webcast more retreats of our beloved Master. The current retreat recording is available on the special section of our webcast platform – <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=rinpochers-retreat-teachings>

It is very encouraging to see that Gars and Lings have become so active during this intensive period of isolation. It shows that the International Dzogchen Community is very resilient and can adapt to ongoing changes and circumstances. It is obvious that zoom and other internet platforms will become a method to reach out to people who cannot come to their local Lings and Gars at these times.

With the help of the Webcast Team, the International Gakyil is studying the possibilities to improve our webcast service,

providing more stability and functionality to our members. Our plan is to update our webcast platform to ensure streaming and fundraising interface to Gars and Lings for open and closed activities.

Membership Trends and Collaboration with Local Gakyils

Currently, we see a slight drop in membership but it is not very significant compared to the trend of the last second year quarter. We are going to close membership statistics on the second-quarter 2020 and can communicate an overview next July. The Gars and Lings are doing well and nobody reported any serious problems except Tashigar Norte where they have financial problems due to the country's political situation.

The International Gakyil collaborated with Tashigar Norte to present their fundraising platform and we kindly ask everybody to read the article in the Mirror (<http://melong.com/tashigar-north-fund-raising-platform-presentation/>) and support Tashigar Norte according to their situation and capacities.

We also sent an email to local Gakyils with an invitation to join the International Gakyil Sunday meetings if they have agenda points to discuss or some information to share with us. If you are a Gakyil member and you want to join one of these meetings, please send us a message to blue@dzogchen.net

We have offered Gakyils the possibility to access Google Meet – this is a free alternative to ZOOM that allows one to host a meeting with up to 100 users, and during the lockdown period until September 30, this number is extended up to 250 users. This is a free and useful platform to organize local online meetings or courses. To apply for G Suite please send a message to red@dzogchen.net

The Mirror

The Mirror (<http://melong.com/>) is the voice of the International Dzogchen Community and it is sent for free to IDC members. We are collaborating with the Mirror team to start sending emails with a detailed announcement of each new Mirror issue. You can read the current Mirror issue in your personal account on dzogchen.net by following this link – <https://dzogchen.net/profile/mirror/>

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better to observe and analyze ourselves. If we are more aware and sensitive, other people, who may be very arrogant, will come around. A person will become harder if we try to educate them. If we do not have a feeling of guilt and remain calm, there is nothing to defend. We need to try and dissolve these tensions in ourselves.

This is a very important aspect between, for example, husband and wife, or people who are together and participate in the teachings. A spiritual relationship is hundreds of times more important than any normal relationship. If we ruin this and create problems between one practitioner and another, this is very negative and sad and becomes a heavy obstacle for realization. ❀



Teachings on Loving Kindness for Challenging Times

His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche

Webinar with His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche and Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo – Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine, USA
May 22, 2020

Dr. Adam Okerblom: Good morning, everybody. Welcome! Thank you so much for joining us today. This is the Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan medicine's webinar. We hope you are all having a wonderful day this morning. Today we have a fabulous honor and privilege to welcome our very special guest, His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche, to our webcast.

Rinpoche, tashi delek! Thank you so much! *Tukjeche-nan.*

Garchen Rinpoche: Tashi delek!

DAO: Garchen Rinpoche is one of the foremost Buddhist masters and Tibetan lamas alive in the world today. His compassion, love, wisdom, and spiritual accomplishments are legendary. He is one of the highest lamas of the Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and Rinpoche is revered and respected by all other lineages of Bud-

dhist teachings and beloved by many communities and many countries all around the world. Garchen Rinpoche was born in Eastern Tibet in 1936. He is an eminent master of the Buddhist practices, including Mahamudra, Dzogchen, Tummo, Six Yogas of Naropa, Thirty-seven Bodhisattva's practices and many more. He has taught and connected to tens of thousands of people all around the world, and we are so grateful and so blessed to have him here today.

Over the last several months Garchen Rinpoche, in addition to celebrating his 84th birthday, has been continuously offering teachings and blessings. Today on our webinar he will share with us some inspiring teaching on the cultivation of loving kindness and a Tibetan Buddhist concept of bodhicitta. These are the valuable tools and insights from the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism for rising above the challenges of the current COVID-19 crisis and beyond. So we are very very happy and blessed to have His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche here with us today.

Garchen Rinpoche, thank you so much for joining us today!

GR: I am very honored to be here with the sangha of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. I know him very well, also he knows me, he loves me, and I trust him. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche is such a great master and such a great bodhisattva. He does a lot of great work for all sentient beings, for all humanity, so I take this great opportunity to be with Rinpoche's sangha, as well as other listeners.

When we talk about conduct, there are two aspects: daily, or common, conduct and holy conduct. If someone does not know what the holy conduct means, soon they will have something like negative feelings, or problems will arise that they cannot stand and they won't have good tolerance for. The reason for that is that this person has a strong attachment to their own body or their self and they do not understand the reality of life. Even you have very small problems, you feel very bad. And if you have some positive, good things, you can hardly enjoy. The reason for this is that you don't really know the reality. For this kind of reason it's very important to understand what the holy conduct or life style is.

For that reason in Buddhism we speak about refuge. Why do we want refuge? [We want refuge] from the suffering. Also Buddha said that we need to acknowledge and understand that there is suffering. Once you acknowledge and understand the suffering, then you determine to search for the cause of sufferings. For that reason first we talk about refuge.

It's important to understand what is the cause of suffering. The cause of the suffering is self-centeredness and self-importance. Because of that we have a lot of suffering. Also in Tibetan we have a proverb saying 'All suffering comes through self-centeredness, or self-importance'. All suffering originates from self-importance so for that reason, once we know the cause, everybody wants to have happiness, peace and enjoyment, but they don't find how to pursue that. Therefore we don't know what is the origin of the suffering. And origin of the suffering is self-centredness.

At the moment we have a suffering of this virus, a lot of people are dying, a lot of people are getting sick, a lot of people

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Collaboration with ATIF

We are actively collaborating with the Atiyoga Foundation (ATIF) to support and promote the heritage of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the world.

Recently in collaboration with ATIF board members, we created a new website for the Atiyoga Foundation <https://atiyoga.foundation.org/> and a timeline of events leading to the creation of ATIF according to Rinpoche's wishes – <https://atiyoga.foundation.org/atif-timeline/>

AGM and a Call for the Red Gakyil

As you know due to the Coronavirus pandemic we had to postpone the AGM and ICC of the IDC from April 2020 to Autumn 2020.

We are still looking for a new candidate for Red Gakyil, so if somebody is interested please don't hesitate to contact us – red@dzogchen.net. The requirements for this position can be found here.

For now, the International Gakyil continues to work with online meetings once a week, performing their daily duties to support and develop the International Dzogchen Community.

Thank you!

We would like to thank you everybody for supporting the International Dzogchen Community's activities and projects in different ways: donations, karma yoga, proposals, questions, emails, day by day commitment, and all forms of joyful collaboration.

Our warmest wishes that everybody stays safe and in good health!

With love,

The International Gakyil





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are suffering, because once we are born as sentient beings we always have this full suffering – of birth, of death, of sickness, and of aging. These sufferings continuously rotate one after the other. We normally ignore these sufferings, we think that we will always be healthy and happy, and as soon as this kind of suffering comes, we cannot handle it. Other than that, this kind of suffering is not something very new, we always have them.

When we see that such a big number of people are sick and dying at the moment, but if we look at it we will see that there is continuation of birth and death. This is what happens if we look at this world-wide disease at that moment. The reason also is that in ourselves we have a lot hatred, arrogance, jealousy, we have developed these negative effects a lot. Meanwhile, deluded, we are missing all good qualities, like kindness, love and compassion. For these reasons all negative energies developed and positive energies declined. Due to this imbalance in our nature it's causing a lot of suffering.

Today there are a great number of people affected by this disease and we are all suffering. At this moment you should not lose trust in yourself, and you should develop your own trust and inner strength. If you look at it, there are many countries and many people affected. There are some countries and people that are not affected. The reason is that it's [different] people

and [different] countries. It could be also collective karma, because we are a global community and we have developed a lot of hatred, jealousy and so forth. As a result of that some countries and some people we are suffering. On the other hand, some people and countries are not suffering, [because] maybe they have slightly different karma or, based on that karma, slightly different body and immune system. We need to understand this.

For the moment what we need to focus as individual countries, communities or individuals, to develop bodhicitta, loving kindness. Because we should understand why we have a lot of suffering. It's because we are missing loving kindness and bodhicitta-mind. And when someone is happy and enjoy, why they do they have that? [Because] they already developed loving kindness and bodhicitta in their body and self. For that reason we should understand that we need to develop bodhicitta.

When we are looking at the people who are sick, [we can see] the number one result are those who are not sick, the number two result are those who even though they are sick but they easily recover. Why does this happen? Because they have compassion, they have developed well compassion, loving kindness and especially they have taken refuge.

People who have refuge and who committed to keep [their promise] and practice well, they may not [become] sick, but people

who got sick, maybe they have refuge but there was something wrong and they couldn't keep it in the promised way, but then they re-agreed, apologized and restored having taken the refuge again and continue trying to keep their promise.

This kind of promise is to be kind, loving towards the humanity, or sentient beings. Maybe for that reason someone is sick but is able to get help though government, organizations or doctors and able to recover. But someone, even though the government and others support them, they may not be able to recover. The reason that lies behind this may be their own karma.

Some people die, and once you die, maybe you also think 'Why I am dying?' and suffer. You also don't need to be that way, because if you are losing this life, it may be also connected to your karma. Dying means you change your body, but your consciousness is still the same, it remains. For that reason it's important you try to accumulate bodhicitta.

Because we say there are four moments, or four conditions, when we need bodhicitta. The first time is when we are happy, then we need bodhicitta. Because it's the result of [having] a kind bodhicitta-mind in previous lives. When we have sufferings, in that case we also need to remember bodhicitta and try to cultivate it. We should understand why we are suffering particularly. Because I did negative actions in my past life or earlier in this life, so now I under-

stand that the experience of suffering is not good. Now I try to understand this suffering and cultivate bodhicitta and try to be kind and nice with other sentient beings. This is another important [moment].

Another moment is when we are sick. When we are sick we also need bodhicitta. We need to understand why we are sick, what is the cause of this sickness. The cause of the sickness is that you must have done some certain negative actions. So now you [should] sincerely apologize for that, you should think 'I am sick now, that's good, because I have an opportunity to purify my negative karma and meantime also I am sick on behalf of all sentient beings so that no one would need to go through what I suffer now.' In this case it's also important that you develop bodhicitta.

Once you die you also need to think 'Ok, I change this life, I want to keep pursuing bodhicitta-mind and loving kindness. Because I am changing my life like clothes, I'm losing this life, but my consciousness is always with me. Once I have this good, compassionate, loving, bodhicitta-mind, when I get to the next life, then I will have a better life, better health, better life circumstances and conditions. For that reason on behalf of all sentient beings in order to benefit all sentient beings, I want to pursue bodhicitta.'

So you need to have bodhicitta when you have a happy time, and when we are unhappy, in the time of suffering, when we are sick, and even when we die. In all these conditions we need to develop bodhicitta.

Jang chub sem in Tibetan means bodhicitta-mind. *Jang* means dispel or reject. What we need to reject is all our attachment, hatred, jealousy, anger and so forth. Because our life is samsara. Samsara presents [itself] as frozen wood, something that is bound and frozen. Loving kindness is like sunshine. [When] the sunshine of loving kindness [is directed] on this frozen attachment, hatred, all these samsaric things, it melts all that is frozen, and everything inside of that is liberated. *Jang chub sem* is like this. It is important to understand. For example, when you have suffering, if you look inside and think 'Only I am suffering' and focus only on yourself, you feel you suffer the most in this world, but if you look outside, at other people, other places in the world, how they suffer, how long they suffer, which way they suffer, when you observe other sentient beings' sufferings, you will realize that your suffering cannot compare to the suffering of



others, because it's not so big. You will understand that your suffering in comparison to others is not the same. It also helps to diminish your own suffering, you will realize that your suffering is not so bad. So it's also good in order to understand in which condition you are.

Once upon a time [there was] Jigten Sumgon, one of the Drikung Kagyu lineage masters. At his time there was a big disease around, and he prayed to [become] sick and stop this disease, not transferring [it] to other sentient beings. Through his kind and sincere compassion the disease stopped. In the same way, when we are sick we should think 'Ok, I am sick. It's good because I am able to purify my previous karma and at the same time I want to be sick on behalf of all sentient beings, for that reason I am also gaining merit.' This is also what *jang chub* means – to expel all the negative things and obtain all the good things.

It is bad that in entire world we have now this disease and suffering but on the other hand, when we look at it, it's not bad. Because if we lived all the time happily, enjoying, not suffering, we would all forget what is suffering and what is cause and effect. So when we think like this it is a good reminder for us about the importance of cause and effect. When we look at this, we can use that suffering in a positive way.

For example, if you are a wealthy person and live economically well, it's a great moment to help other people, other sentient beings who are in need. So this is also a great moment, because the entire world is locked down and many people need your help. So it's also a great moment, if you have material wealth, to be generous.

On the other hand, since we are locked down and stay home, it's a great moment

to take vows, do practice, do pujas, so it's also good, because normally we don't have much time. Another thing, it's a good opportunity to cultivate patience, tolerance. It is very important. Once we have suffering, we need to bring practice in our daily life, so this is good, when we suffer we imagine 'Ok, it's good, now I am suffering, but it must be that I have done something [wrong] in my past lives. So now I want to take this opportunity to purify my past karma and I also want to function on behalf of all sick, suffering people.' Based on that you can understand the importance of cause and effect and bodhicitta.

In this suffering time we have opportunity to practice patience, tolerance, keep our vows, be generous, and meditate. We can use all these things when we suffer at such times. You should not think that these are bad things, we can and should use them in a positive way.

So what do we need to do at this moment? At that time we are all busy like bees, but it's a great opportunity and we should do meditation, same as Milarepa and all enlightened masters did. Even if we are not able to be the same as them, without food, but we still should do meditation, *samten* in Tibetan. During meditation we should think and focus on compassion. Once we have infinite compassion or developed impartial compassion, through that we can arise impartial loving kindness. For that reason first we need to meditate on infinitive or impartial loving, and through that we will arise impartial kindness and compassion. It seems that Rinpoche refers to four immeasurables: equanimity, love, compassion, joy! This is important, because once we developed well the com-

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passion, through that we can purify all our negative karmas. Once we do *gom*, or *samten*, meditation, well, we will have less thoughts. Once we have less thoughts, or even we have thoughts, we are able to realize what are the thoughts, their origin, you will feel freed from all bondage. Then you will feel like you have no sickness, you will feel healthy.

All our disease are connected to our thoughts. For example, if you think 'I have some pain here and focus on that, you will have a physical pain too. If you don't think this way, if you think there's emptiness, there is nobody, etc., if you reach to see, obtain your natural state, at that time you won't feel any sickness. So this is also a great moment to do this kind of practice.

When we have great suffering, this is a great moment to practice all six paramitas. For example, in my own experience I spent about twenty years in prison. But when I think about it, it's good, I am honored to have had this possibility. If I didn't have obtained this kind of understanding, compassion and love inside of me and understanding that it is a good opportunity to purify my negative karma and develop kindness and compassion, for example, some people committed suicide in prison. If they don't know how to use negative things in a positive way, many people take their own lives. That's why we should also understand that it's a great moment.

Also one great master Patrul Rinpoche said 'Enjoyment is not good, suffering is good.' The reason is that when we have enjoyment, if we don't have any suffering, then we create a lot of suffering within us, and all negative emotions arise. Once we have sufferings, that is also good, because the sufferings help us to purify all our negative karma and at the same time our understanding of suffering and compassion develop. In the thirty-seven practices of Bodhisattva it is mentioned very well.

So what do we need to do? You should understand what you learn from your great teachers, masters, gurus and use teachings in your daily life. We need to face reality and it's important to have loving kindness and compassion.

It is important not to feel 'I am unique suffering in this world.' It's a great opportunity to think 'All sentient beings suffer and I wish to benefit all them.' Or 'I am sick I want to be sick on behalf of all of them.' Such attitude is very important. It's not a

good moment to think 'I am the unique one suffering.'

If we look at the teaching of the great master Shantideva, there are a lot of his teachings, it's very important now to read, study and recite his teachings on loving kindness and compassion. What we need now is compassion. We have this pandemic disease now, this virus, because in ourselves we lack kindness, compassion and have a lot of hatred, attachment, ignorance, jealousy. We have a lot of what we don't need and lack what we need. For that reason a lot of infinite suffering arise from time to time. It happens because it is also related with our intention, [because] our actions do not come without any reason. It's important to understand and we [should] try to avoid [negative intentions]. For that reason, as I said before, it's good to recite Shantideva's teaching, because Nalanda was such a great land and Shantideva was such a great master who gave such a great teaching, The Way of Bodhisattva. It's important to read and chant it.

Sorry, I missed the first part. When we look what is bodhisattva. It means someone who has loving kindness within [themselves]. These days we have such great experts, doctors and scholars who work hard for sentient beings, trying to save their lives. All these people are bodhisattvas, there are no other bodhisattvas. This is nothing to do with religion - Islam, Buddhism, Christianity. People who have bodhicitta, or compassion, in their body and mind, are bodhisattvas. So bodhisattvas are not only Buddhists. Those doctors and people in the first line now are such great bodhisattvas too.

Another important thing that we need to remember is to pray to all the gurus who you trust, who you believe in, from whom you received most teachings. Your teacher, no matter who it is, is the root of all enlightened beings and the root of all the teachings, so your teacher's body, mind and speech represent all Dharma phenomena, so we should pray to our guru and you should believe, you should think that your mind is integrating into your teacher's heart, and your teacher's body, mind and speech and your own body, mind and speech are inseparable, integrated. So you need to think like this and pray for that. It's one of the most important things. Through that you can develop compassion.

Then you need to pray for your lama, your guru. Buddha Shakyamuni said [that even if] he taught many teachings but

there's one single essence, true nature. Once you developed the true nature, what is untrue will decline. Once you developed loving kindness, or compassion, it leads you to [become] bodhisattvas. This is the reason why it's very important to pray to your teacher. Also Rinpoche said one of Shantideva's prayers [reads in Tibetan]:

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their illness,
And may every disease in the world
Never occur again.

li took the translation from the Way of Bodhisattva

It's very important to read this prayer, it helps generate compassion.

Whether the teacher's body of your teacher is with you or not, the important thing is you think that your teacher's teaching and his mind is there, it's important.

MPW: Thank you, Rinpoche.

GR: Teachers are always with us. Our body and mind come and go, but our teacher's mind always remain. Also like Milarepa, even after his teacher's body was not with him, he could find him everywhere in the five elements, he could see and find him. The same way when we look at the teacher's body, energy and mind, the energy, or speech, is more important than the body, and if we [compare] speech and mind, the mind is more important. So the mind and the speech of the teacher never leave us, you need to understand that. Many tashi deleks to all Community people, all the listeners and all sentient beings!

MPW: Thank you, Rinpoche!

GR: [Rinpoche recites the verses from The Way of Bodhisattva in Tibetan]:

May Bodhicitta arise in those
in whom it has not yet arisen
and continue to increase
in those in whom it already has.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their illness,
And may every disease in the world
Never occur again. ©

Transcribed by Anastasia Eremenko
Edited by Naomi Zeitz



Update on SSI Austria's Ka-ter Project

Dear friends and supporters of the Ka-ter Translation Project of the Shang Shung Institute Austria,

I hope that you are all safe and healthy.

During the difficult times of the Corona pandemic, our main translators have continued their extraordinary work uninterrupted. Adriano Clemente has been locked down in his house near Merigar in Tuscany, and Elio Guarisco has been in Dzamling Gar since February, as he could not leave Spain anymore.

Here is some brief information about the texts they are working on, as two important books are being intensively worked on to prepare them for publication as soon as possible.

Adriano Clemente is working on finalizing the translation of a large and comprehensive book on Tregchod, *The Upadesha on the Tregchod of Primordial Purity*. This text is contained in *From the Luminous Clarity of the Universe, Heart Essence of the Dakinis* which is a commentary to the

Longsal Tregchod, composed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Elio Guarisco is working on finalizing the translation of the Tsalung of Yantra Yoga, named *The Excellent Path to Temporary and Ultimate Wellbeing*.

This is a compilation of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's works from the collected tantras of Vairochana, of the commentary of Vimalamitra to the Drathalgyur, and of Longchenpa's *Treasury of Supreme Vehicle*. The text contains experiential instructions on channels and prana related to the *Yantra Yoga Union of Sun and Moon*.

Both texts are very difficult to translate and both translators collaborate with some great experts: Adriano had the good fortune to clarify many of his doubts relying on the help of the great Tibetan luminary Alak Zenkar Rinpoche (Thubten Nyima), and Elio collaborates with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo.

Elio has also started to translate the **biography of Ridzin Changchub Dorje** written by his grandson.

Although we are in difficult times right now please let's not forget the wonderful work the translators do for our Dzogchen Community and for future generations.

Up to now in 2020 we have been able to cover just about 30% of the expenses that we have, so please continue to support our so important activities. We really need your support more than ever!

Please send your donation to our bank account:

Account holder: Shang Shung Institute Austria

IBAN: AT19 3815 1000 0003 0387

BIC: RZSTAT2G151

Address of the bank:

Hauptstr. 39, 8262 Ilz, Austria

or

send your donation via Paypal: just use this link: <https://atiyogafoundation.net/en/branches/austria/kater-project/>

You can also contribute and send your donation on a monthly basis.

Thank you so much for everything and your donations,

Very best wishes,

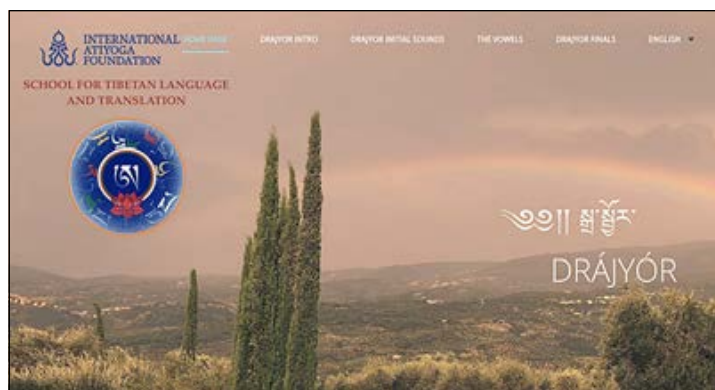
Oliver Leick

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New Drájyór Reference Site!

The system for accurately representing the sound of Tibetan language invented by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, known as Drájyór, is one of His works

that has received the least attention by the practitioners of the Dzogchen Community.

In general, since it uses Roman letters, it has been thought that a 'natural' approach to it might in some way be reasonable.

Unfortunately though, the system is highly technical and any attempt to read its sounds without previously studying it

in detail will produce very poor results and the sounds produced will mostly not have any relation to Tibetan Language, whatever the mother tongue of the person trying.

The sounds of Tibetan are rather foreign for non Tibetans, particularly for Western people, and they all seem very similar to each other making it very difficult to identify what is what, let alone pronounce practices and songs with reasonable accuracy. To remedy this problem is actually the very reason for the Drájyór to exist.

The Atiyoga Foundation School for Tibetan Language and Translation has been offering courses on Drájyór for a long time and continues to do so for all students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

To backup these courses and provide a reference for the use of Drájyór, the School for Tibetan Language and Translation is

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now pleased to offer to all of you the site drajyor.atiyogafoundation.org in which the system is explained in its main features and in which you may listen to a Tibetan (Mr. Lobsang Zatul) pronouncing the various sounds. Since the Drágyór is the same regardless of the mother tongue of its users, the site is multilingual and currently available in English, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Czech and Polish.

We would really like to add more languages such as Russian, French, German, Portuguese and in fact any other language and are looking for volunteers to translate them. Please write to f.sanders@atiyogafoundation.org if you would like to contribute a translation. ©



School for Tibetan Language and Translation

Later this summer, from August 28th to September 20th, 2020, our intensive Translation course from Tibetan Dharma texts will take place. We really hope that we will be able to hold it locally at Merigar West, Tuscany, as well as online, as has been our custom for many years now. Given the virus situation, we are still not sure how many people we will be able to welcome locally, but we will inform you as soon as more information is available. If the situation continues to improve and it will be possible to travel to beautiful Merigar in that pleasant season from all over the world, the course will be onsite and online, otherwise online only.

We will have two levels – Beginners/intermediate and advanced – working on different texts alone or in groups with full grammatical explanations and comments.

Everyone who knows how to read and the basic grammar of Literary Dharma Tibetan is welcome to join us. Registration will be soon possible. If you are interested, write to m.pansa@shangshunginstitute.org ©



Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of Shang Shung Institute UK

Julia Lawless
(Principal Director, SSIUK)

In May 2010, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visited the UK and gave a few days of essential Dzogchen teachings at the Camden Centre in London. The event attracted a huge number of people from the International Dzogchen Community as well as students from many of the other Buddhist Centres in London. In early June, Rinpoche also gave a lecture to launch the first volume of his book on early Tibetan culture 'The Light of Kailash' at the School of Oriental and African Studies, part of the University of London (SOAS). The event was combined with a reception and photographic exhibition about the region of Shang Shung in Eastern Tibet, thanks to collaboration with the Meridian Trust. This event officially launched the 'Shang Shung Institute UK: London School of Tibetan Studies' in June 2010.

Just under a year earlier in August 2009, Oliver Leick from Shang Shung Institute Austria had come to London with the ambitious proposal to set up an Institute for Tibetan Studies in London. Rinpoche had made it clear that he wanted the Shang Shung Institute to have a presence in London because of the cultural importance of the city internationally. His inspiration for the Institute in London was based on a traditional Tibetan *Shedra* or college: ie a Centre framed around the five great fields of knowledge or five sciences of Tibetan culture: that is art, medicine, language, logic / philosophy and Buddhist studies. Rinpoche also stressed that London was not only an important cultural centre but also had a renowned academic history and tradition. Within a few months, on the basis of Rinpoche's guidance, a 'not-for-profit company with charitable aims' was legally established in the UK.

Prof. Dominic Kennedy, a lecturer at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies – University College London), was elect-

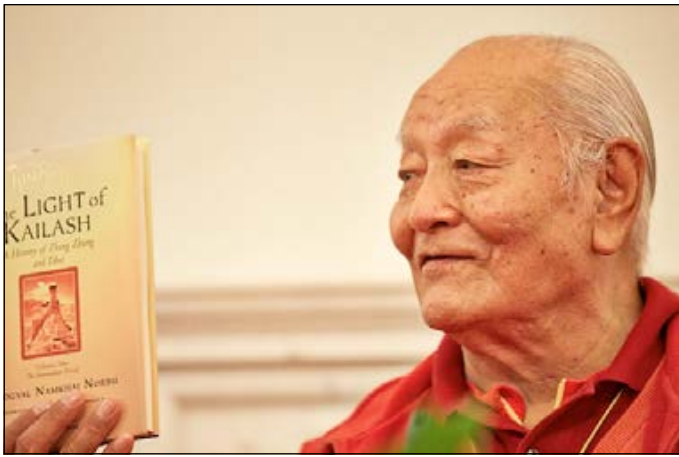
ed as the Principal Director of SSIUK. It was largely through his connections that a very fruitful relationship was established between SSIUK and SOAS in the early years. This included an on-going collaboration between Dominic and Dr Nathan Hill, Senior Lecturer of Tibetan Studies at SOAS, who kindly offered Shang Shung Institute UK the use of the SOAS University facilities for public talks and lectures. In his own



words, Dominic describes how in May 2010, Yeshe Namkhai also made an important contribution to the early development of Shang Shung Institute in the UK:

"Yeshe Namkhai strolled into SOAS and delivered his first ever talk in the UK. This apparently casual but ground breaking introduction promises to be a big and significant start to a series of new events for the whole Dzogchen Community in the UK."

Indeed, Yeshe Namkhai initiated what was to become a very successful programme of activities, the so-called 'SOAS Lecture Series' – later the 'SSIUK Lecture Series', by giving two engaging talks in the lecture halls of London University: the first in May 2010 and another in October the same year. At the same time, Yeshe



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu presenting the first volume of his trilogy 'The Light of Kailash' at SOAS in 2010.

advised that it was important to develop a programme of activities in London which had a progressive theme based on the observation of the secondary causes which were already present in the place i.e. the people, the connections, the environmental & cultural factors and that it should not be based on a theoretical idea.

Following the success of his 'Light of Kailash' lecture at SOAS in June 2010, Rinpoche was welcomed back to London to take part in another SOAS / SSIUK collaboration as the key speaker in a major Conference entitled 'Bon, Shang Shung & Early Tibet'. Other key speakers at this conference included H.E. Lopen Tenzin Namdak and Prof. Samten Karmay together with many other well-known academics and international Tibetologists. Rinpoche went on to launch all three volumes of his 'Light of Kailash' series in London over the following years, culminating in his 'Light of Kailash Vol. 3' lecture at Asia House in October 2013. Sadly Dominic passed away in June 2013.

Judy Allan became the Principal Director of SSIUK with Richard Steven as the Company Secretary. Judy already had excellent contacts within the UK Tibetan Community and within UK academic circles in general. She invited Rinpoche to be the keynote speaker at the 'Padma-sambhava Conference: Different Aspects', which was again organized as a SOAS / SSIUK collaboration in September 2013. A book covering the full procedure of this unique conference is due to be published later by Garuda Verlag, edited by Dr Jamyang Oliphant. Under Judy's guidance, Shang Shung UK developed a wide ranging programme of activities which included open Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses in collaboration with local Dzogchen Community instructors; Tibetan Language classes run by Prof. Fabian Sanders; art and calligraphy courses, led by world class experts includ-

ing Tashi Manno, Timea Tallian and Teresa Heady as well as open talks and short courses on Buddhism, philosophy and Tibetan medicine.

For several years, the Shang Shung Institute UK was fortunate to be able to use the facilities at SOAS as well as the Buddhist Arts Centre in East London to hold many of their courses and activities. The Dzogchen Community was also kindly given permission to use the Drukpa Centre in Primrose Hill in North-West London to hold open meditation courses and related study groups. In these early stages, SSIUK was experimenting with a diverse range of programming including traditional Tibetan medical courses with Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, Elio Guarisco and Aldo Oneto as well as open meditation & Buddhist philosophy courses with teachers including Dr Jim Valby and Prof. Paula Zamperini. Rinpoche's initial inspiration of a 'Shedra style' institution was at the heart of Judy's enthusiastic work in developing SSIUK over this period and we are indebted to her endless energy and dedication which she brought to this endeavour. Judy also worked closely with Richard Steven during this period, who was largely responsible for designing the SSIUK programme & website based around the theme of the traditional five sciences. Judy Allan passed away unexpectedly and suddenly on 26th March 2014 ... it was a shock to everyone who knew her.

In 2015, the Shang Shung Institute UK arrived in its new home: 'Lekdanling: Tibetan Cultural Centre', in Hackney, East London. After a dynamic fundraising campaign, the Dzogchen Community UK was able to buy a large studio space that was large enough to house the Vajra dance mandala and could also act as a base for the activities of Shang Shung in the UK. Rinpoche visited the new Centre in May 2015 following his two day

'Ati Evolution' Dzogchen retreat in London, and named it 'Lekdanling' meaning 'Place of Good Fortune'. He also specified it was to be a new kind of Ling, because here there was to be an emphasis on running events which were open to the general public alongside running Dzogchen Community activities and transmission based practices.

Over the past five years, there have been several Festivals held at Lekdanling which have welcomed the general public, including 'The Sacred Space Festival' in 2016; the 'Himalayan Health & Vitality Festival' with Lelung Rinpoche as a keynote speaker in March 2017; followed by a 'Himalayan Music & Dance Festival' in October 2017. The 'Festival of Mind' was another initiative launched in 2018: the first to discuss the theme of 'Mindfulness: Past, Present & Future' which was held in May 2018 and another in May 2019 to explore the 'Nature of Emotions'. Khaita also became a strong new trend over these years culminating in two Khaita performances being held in the prestigious Great Hall of the British Museum, the first in March 2018 and a second in collaboration with members of the London Tibetan Community in March 2019. This



Khaita Dances at the British Museum.

has led to an on-going relationship between SSIUK and the British Museum and involvement in their upcoming 'Tantric Art' exhibition, originally scheduled for 2020.

Close bonds with members of the Tibetan Community in London have natu-

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Judy Allen with Chogyal Namkhai Norbu.



Rinpoche with Prof. Dominic Kennedy.

» continued from previous page

rally been growing over the past ten years, largely through our collaborative musical & dance ventures but also through academic talks and lectures with Tibetan scholars, with subjects as diverse as Tibetan cookery, folklore and bow making. SSIUK also established a good connection with the Wellcome Collection Trust in 2017 and was gifted the centre-piece mandala of their popular exhibition entitled 'Tibet's Secret Temple', many thanks to the curator Ian Baker, now housed at Lekdanling together with many of the accompanying photographs from the exhibition. We are also extremely grateful to Anne Bancroft, the Arts Director for Shang Shung Institute UK, for providing an important link between the V&A (Victoria and Albert Museum) and SSIUK over the years, especially in relation to the Buddhist art traditions.

Another important and popular development for the SSIUK more recently is live streaming many of its events online via Facebook. The Khaita performance at the British Museum was viewed by over 17,400 people globally and especially by members of the Tibetan community around the world. Likewise, some of our talks from our Shang Shung Lectures Series, such as Darig Thokmay's talk on traditional 'Bon and Buddhist Folk Customs' reached over 2,300 views from individuals as far afield as India, Switzerland and Canada. The ability to provide online streaming immediately opens up our programme to a much wider audience. We are now also filming or recording most of our London events so it is possible view them at home either via Facebook or as a download from the Shang Shung Institute UK website or as a Vimeo presentation. Because of our rich history, the SSIUK website: shangshunguk.org now contains a wide range of talks, lectures and conference proceedings that have been recorded over the past ten years, many of which contain unique material which is not available elsewhere. It is possible to see an overview of our last 10 year history of events and ac-

tivities in our new brochure at the archive section of our website.

The emphasis for SSIUK events and activities has imperceptibly moved in the direction of focussing on Tibetan arts and language since its inception in 2010. Buddhist studies and philosophy, and the exploration of 'inner knowledge' in a non-sectarian context, have also been emphasized through the series of lectures, conferences and festivals held over the past ten years. In addition, a series of 'Insight Tours' to centres of Buddhist culture, including two trips to Eastern Tibet led by Dr Jamyang Oliphant, have focussed on providing a 'living' knowledge of Tibetan culture.

It is our aim to gradually build up an online documentary & video library covering all different aspects of Tibetan culture, as an easy-to-access global facility. This is particularly relevant during this period of lockdown when zoom and other online facilities have become more valuable and visible as a means of communicating internationally. In the near future we also plan to start using u-tube for broadcasting our open talks and events. We regularly update our Shang Shung Institute programme in London so we recommend visiting our website regularly to see what is happening. There is also a designated Lekdanling website: lekdanling.org which covers all the

Dzogchen community events happening in London as well as regular weekly practise sessions. Alternatively, it is possible to be added to our SSIUK mailing list and directly informed of all our activities, by emailing www.shangshunguk.org/contact/

Finally, none of these activities can take place without the support and energy of our dedicated SSIUK team as well as the numerous teachers, speakers, organisers and volunteers who have made an invaluable contribution to the life of SSIUK. Many thanks to all those people who have helped to actualize Rinpoche's vision, including: Prof. Fabian Sanders (Academic Director); Anne Bancroft (Arts Director); Richard Steven (Company Secretary); Dr Jamyang Oliphant (intrepid Fundraiser & Tour Guide); Premila Van Ommen (News & Social Media); Mike Gilmour (Bookshop Manager); Russell Pond (Bookkeeper / Accounts); Maciek Sikora (Khaita Coordinator); Jon Kuan (Film Coordinator) plus the Dzogchen Community UK and all those who have generously donated to SSIUK enabling it's activities to continue and progress.

Thank you!



Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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The Hidden Victims of the Covid-19 Emergency

In just a few months the pandemic has changed everyone's lives, in some cases lightly, in others, unfortunately, in a very painful and upsetting way. For the first time in history, an emergency has struck the entire planet and humanity has been forced to face its vulnerability, brought to its knees by a virus.

The work of ASIA has also been affected by the coronavirus. Not only because we all found ourselves working from home, in Rome, in Kathmandu, from Xining to Ulaanbaatar, but above all because we found ourselves facing a totally new emergency situation, which hit us Italians first and foremost.

And so, after the first days of reflection during which we asked ourselves how we could help in these complicated circumstances, we planned our intervention in two directions: that of the Asian continent where we have been engaged for over 30 years, and that of the country where ASIA was born and where it has its headquarters, Italy. Here we distributed oximeters, headgear, and protective glasses to the Santa Corona of Pietra Ligure hospital, and we are continuing to raise funds in collaboration with the Bonomo Gallery, which launched the May Italian Art initiative, a charity sale of works by 15 Italian artists, extended until the end of June (asia-ngo.org/italianart). With the proceeds of the sale we are contributing to the research on rare forms of the neurological effects of the Covid-19 being carried out at the Santa Corona Hospital and, together with the Maestri di Strada association, we are helping the most disadvantaged young people in the suburbs of Naples with the distribution of "Parcels of provisions for the mind", which contain teaching materials, stationery, and tablets.

In Myanmar and Nepal the situation is very different. In both these countries, the health system is extremely fragile and their

governments are not prepared to face the dramatic consequences.

In Myanmar we started a campaign of activity against the spread of the virus among the population of the rural areas. We distributed 10,000 masks

of gloves, and we are continuing to provide other safety materials to hospitals and health centers.

In Nepal we are intervening on several fronts: prevention and social emergency. Here, unfortunately, if on one hand the cases of Covid are increasing every day and the count of victims begins to assume alarming proportions, on the other there is a serious social emergency going on. The population, very poor, already exhausted by 11 years of civil war and by the 2015 earthquake, has been in lockdown since March 19 and has no means of livelihood.

In these days we have launched a fundraising campaign to respond to the request for help that we received from the Manasarovar School, which since 1999 has offered primary education to Tibetan children living in the Boudhanath district of Kathmandu and is an important reference point for families in this area.

The two people in charge of the school, Tsultrim Sangmo and Bhijaya Khanal, are very concerned about the serious consequences of Covid-19 that will go well beyond the end of the pandemic and turned to ASIA, which supports the school with the distance support project (adoptibet.org/wp/en/).

"We know that, in any crisis, children and the most vulnerable suffer disproportionately" – they told us – "and this pandemic is no different. It is our responsibility to prevent suffering, save human lives and protect the health of every child. We must also ensure that all safety measures are guaranteed within the school."

In addition to the investments that will be needed to reopen the school – which has 550 students and 34 school staff members – what worries Tsultrim and Bhijaya is the serious food crisis that has affected the families of the students. To date, 106 families have no means of purchasing the food necessary to feed their children and have turned to the school for help.



For this reason we ask you to contribute and help us spread the fundraising campaign to support the school and the families of Manasarovar. You can find all the information on

asia-ngo.org/en/project/covid-19-manasarovar-school/

CHOOSE YOUR DONATION

· Bank Transfer

Beneficiary: ASIA onlus

IBAN: IT31 L05216032250 0000 0013 0004

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<https://asia-ngo.org/en/what-you-can-do/donate/>

Reason of payment: Covid 19 Manasarovar School ©

*Tax deduction is possible for donors paying through ASIA's offices in their countries according to national tax laws (USA, France, Germany).

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New Khaitha Translations for Mekhor Collection Songs and Khaitha.com Updates

Lena Dumcheva

khaitha.com project coordinator

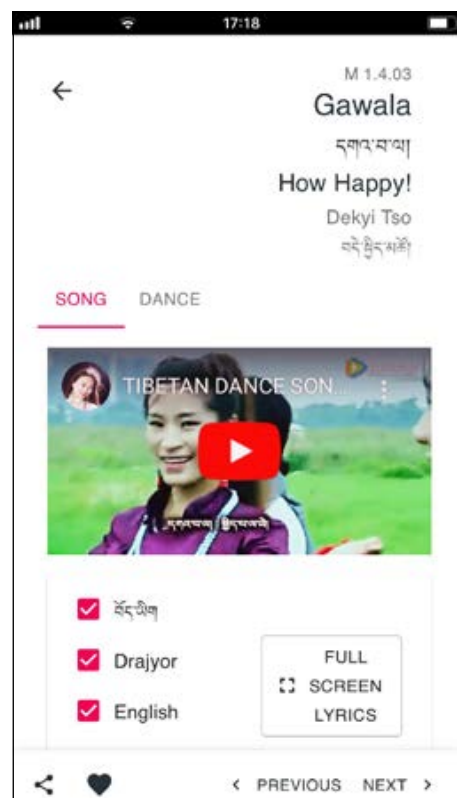
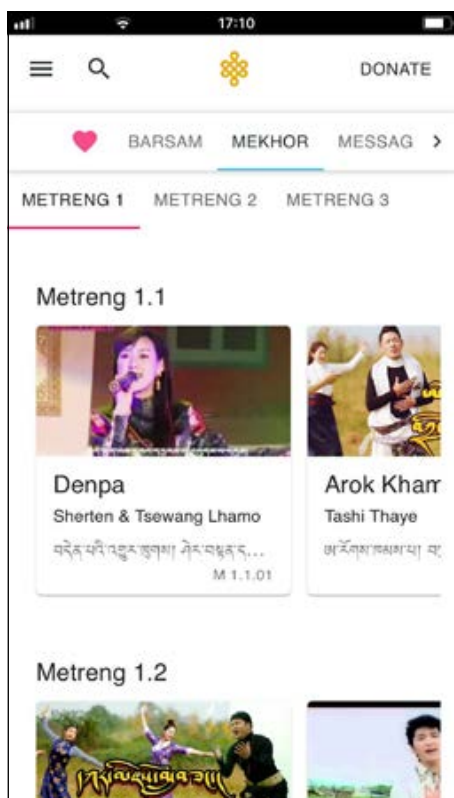
As some of you may know, we have recently published new translations for Khaitha songs from the Metreng 1 collection on khaitha.com; in addition, the translations for the Metreng 2 songs will be published shortly.

Metreng 1 and 2 are each made up of 60 modern Tibetan songs and dances, and are part of the Mekhor 180 songs collection completed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 2017. The titles and structure of the collection refer to the principles of Tibetan astrology that Rinpoche used in his research on Tibetan culture and history. Rinpoche selected the songs according to their meaning, and now this meaning is available to us thanks to the tireless work of a group of translators and editors.

Our infinite gratitude goes to our translators from Tibetan, with a very special thank you to Lobsang and Kelsang Zatul, as well as to Fabian Sanders, Margherita Pansa, Monica Gentile, Olga Gomilevskaia and Susan Schwarz; to Adriano Clemente for revising the songs; to Joanna Fagg for editing the English; to Luna Lattarulo for coordinating the translation project and for on-line editing together with Lena Dumcheva; and to Adriana Dal Borgo for contributing to the project in so many ways.

These 120 translations (with the exception of a few songs that are still being reviewed) are being published for the very first time, conveniently combined with corresponding songs and dances, easily accessible from your mobile phone or computer and totally free of charge.

The publication of these translations is a part the khaitha.com project that we inaugurated on the 8th December 2019 – a web



application that will unite all Khaitha songs, dances, lyrics, translations and commentaries. Having started with a simple structure, we have been gradually improving it by adding more functionality and uploading more content.

At the moment, we have published all songs and dances for three Khaitha collections: Message from Tibet 108 songs, Mekhor 108 songs, and the most recent Barsam collection with 70 songs; as well as Kham, Golok, Amdo and Markham circle dances. The majority of the lyrics and translations have been published as well. We now only need to complete the lyrics for Metreng 3 and Message from Tibet.

Once all the lyrics are published, we plan to start adding Rinpoche's commentaries, both in video and text formats. While over 100 commentaries for the Message from Tibet songs have been previously published in a book, a great many other commentaries are still unpublished. Rinpoche's Khaitha commentaries are a real treasure of Tibetan culture so we really look forward to start working on that.

In addition to publishing lyrics and translations, we have made various improvements on the technical side as well: you can now search songs by the song title or the name of the singer, share the link to a song and add your favorite songs to your personal playlist. Soon we will publish detailed information about these updates. We

will continue improving the app in these coming months.

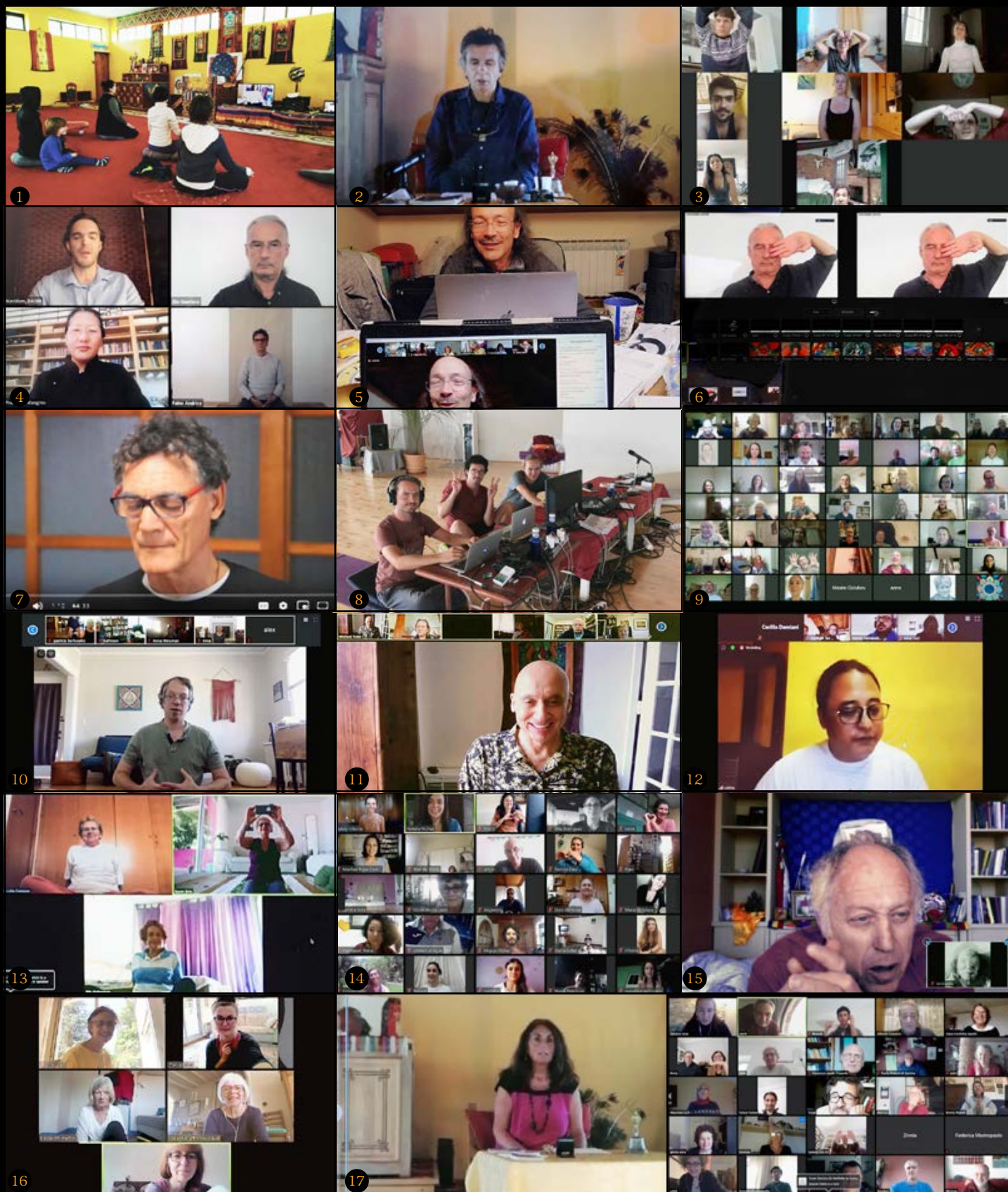
Right now khaitha.com is in trial mode as we are still working on it, so we are not advertising it much outside the Dzogchen Community. However, once the technical and the content aspects have been sufficiently improved, we would like to present khaitha.com to the wider public.

All this has only been possible thanks to the invaluable help of Alexander Zhelezov, St. Petersburg, and his team of app developers whom you might know from their recent work Norbu Stress Control app my.norbu.com. I'm most grateful to Alexander who gave his advice and helped to shape the project in its early stages, as well as involving his team: Alexey Shadrov for programming, Mila Zakhirina for user experience, Tanitiana Magdieva for design and Tatiana Arzhakova our main programmer who built up khaitha.com.

Finally, our sincere thanks goes to all the donors who support the project financially. Although most of the work is run on a karma yoga basis, we do have considerable expenses related to technical implementation that we can only cover through donations.

Donations can be made through khaitha.com/donate. ©

Community Webcasts in the Time of Quarantine



1 Yantra Yoga Kunsangar North with Fazilya Nigmatullina 2 Ganapuja with Adriano Clemente 3 Yantra Yoga with Alessandra Policreti 4 Shang Shung Institute USA Webinar called, Coping With Stressful Times Through Our Body, Energy and Mind with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo, Elio Guarisco, Fabio Andrico moderated by Dr. Adam Okerblom 5 Santi Maha Sangha with Elias Capriles 6 Santi Maha Sangha with Elio Guarisco 7 Breathe with Fabio Andrico 8 The webcasters: Sebastien Remy, Justin Hudgins and Elia Bernardoni 9 Santi Maha Sangha with Igor Berkhin 10 Breathe with Luke Karamol 11 Dream Yoga with Michael Katz 12 Dynamic Space of the Elements with Migmar Tsering 13 Soft Yantra Yoga with Naomi Zeitz 14 Yantra Yoga with Nataly Nitsche 15 Chöd explanation with Steven Landsberg 16 Yantra Yoga with Elerin Uibu 17 Ganapuja with Cristiana De Falco 18 Santi Maha Sangha with Fabio Risolo.

Dzamling Gar News!

Greetings from Dzamling Gar!

We have prepared some updates to keep you informed about DZG life and projects. We hope you enjoy!

The Gar will be gradually reopening starting June 1 with Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaita. Also the Cafeteria, Info Point, Bookstore, and Swimming Pool will be open. We will not yet have Ganapujas together in the Gönpa, but slowly and with care we can have everything again. Please check the published schedules for all activities!

A Yantra Yoga course with Fabio Andrico in the Gönpa will inaugurate the opening from June 6–14 that will also be web-cast.

With the very best wishes,
DZG Gakyil

Quarantine Life

Quarantine started shortly after the end of Mandarava retreat. Many practitioners stayed in DZG for the quarantine period. Moreover, DZG provided work exchange accommodation to all members who could not afford the rent. We did our best to make quarantine comfortable for the residents. We are also very grateful to the group of volunteers who helped our elderly residents with food and medicine shopping.

THANK YOU!

We would like to express our deep gratitude to International Cultural Atiyoga Association and Dynamic Space of the Elements Association, Eunice Cui and other Chinese practitioners for timely sending us the so needed protection gear – masks, gloves, face shields etc., which were distributed to DZG residents and Community members in the area.

Khaita

Besides personal practice and online activities, we DZG residents continued enjoying our Khaita collective sessions in quarantine style. It all started with just one person dancing on the terrace, then always more people joined in from their own terraces. Soon, almost everyone in DZG would come out to their apartment's terrace shortly before the sunset to enjoy a few simple dances, distant but united, truly magic moments.



Garden

Moon Garden

The Dzamling Gardens are in full bloom, tended and managed by the caring hands of Alix de Fermor who has just finished construction of the new Moon Garden situated below the Gönpa. True to its name this will be a garden to enjoy in the evenings or very early in the morning when the perfumes of a host of scented plants fill the night air. In the natural hollow in the heart of the garden there is a circular area that is free for barbecues and evening relaxation.

Plants Map

With the gardens of the Gar nearing completion it has become essential to list and map the numerous plants thriving at the Gar, in the same way that books are catalogued in a library. This will give us an idea of the plants that are currently growing here in case we wish to replace or display them. This detailed and meticulous project

was started a few weeks ago by Liz Granger and we hope to finish it shortly.

Gönpa

Przemek, maintenance team manager: "Meanwhile we began a huge project related with wood-treatment of our new Gönpa. The work is truly vast and will take around 3 months."

Also, the main entrance door structure from the "old" Gönpa (the white tent) has now been installed in the lower part of the new Gönpa. These are the doors through which Rinpoche passed infinite number of times, we are truly happy for this auspicious symbolic integration!

Library

DZG library has finally moved from Jyachip to the new Gönpa. While organizing the new space and reviewing the books, we have discovered that several books in our library are hand-signed by Chögyal Nam-



Merigar West and the Pandemic

The start of the metal-mouse year was, to say the least, complicated at Merigar.

Italy quickly became the center of a situation that until shortly before seemed far away. In a few weeks, even a few days, we found ourselves confined to the house and witnessing an exponential rise in the number of infected and dead due to COVID-19. In the blink of an eye, we went from sending words of support to China, to receiving them from all over the world. Just as quickly, we went back to sending them, because in a short time the problem was no longer so great only in Italy, but it had spread everywhere. The pandemic.

In northern Italy, especially in Lombardy, the situation was really serious and many people died alone in isolation and without the comfort and help of loved ones. The hospitals were full and barely managed the mass of patients who needed help. Fortunately, there were not many cases in the Merigar area and the main effect of the pandemic was being forced not to leave the house except for situations of real need and, for a period of time, even having to remain within one's own small



municipality. All nonessential activities were suspended and masks and gloves became indispensable.

The first thought at the beginning of this lockdown was to start a practice program as many of us felt the need to do formal protective practices and to practice for the dead. Thanks to the webcast, organized by Merigar and Dzamling Gar, the program was intensified week by week. In spite of a few difficulties we managed to guarantee a program with different daily practices. Initially at Merigar it was possible to stream the files from the Mandala Room but as the lockdown tightened, for a good number of

practices we had to organize the streaming from the homes of the various people who led the practices.

At the same time, those who usually work at Merigar, people in charge, employees and volunteers, have had to work mainly from home during the lockdown period. However, despite the difficulties, our ongoing projects have continued and we have been working to organize projects for the future.

For example, the administration has worked fulltime on ordinary accounting and to meet budget deadlines. The finan-

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khair Norbu! Library service was available to the Gar residents during all the quarantine, respecting all the required hygiene precautions.

Webcast

Our deepest gratitude goes to the webcast team and all the instructors and practitioners who tirelessly supported and led practices from DZG and from around the world during the quarantine period.

Practice webcasts & other online activities from DZG:

- SMS courses by Elio Guarisco
- Yantra Yoga by Fabio Andrico
- Collective practices of Yantra Yoga by Naomi Zeitz and Alessandra Policreti
- Khalong Vajra Dance by Kyu Kyuno & co
- Khaita: daily webcast sessions & Facebook live stream dance explanations by Yulia Petrova, Elia Bernardoni Francesco, Tomy Edgar & co
- Webcast team: Sebastian Remy, Justin Hudgins & Elia Bernardoni Francesco



Webcast connections:

- March 23–April 23 daily average 1357 viewers, with the peak of 2151 viewers on March 29

- April 24–May 22 daily average 815 viewers, with the peak of 1636 viewers on April 24

We would like to thank all those who are supporting DZG in these challenging times, both with donations and in a creative way: our Community painter Kai Konrad keeps donating us his beautiful prints, a parcel with Odzer Chenma cards arriving just 1 day before the lockdown (available in DZG bookshop); and Umberto Antonello who kindly offered to create a namkha in exchange for a donation to DZG, you can contact Umberto on ntnll.mbrt@gmail.com

Dzamling Gar Updates May 2020

Edited by Lena Dumcheva, Naomi Zeitz &

Liz Granger

Photos by Lesya Cherenkova & Lena Dumcheva

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Library Talks online on merigar.it, YouTube and Library's Facebook page.

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cial statements that should have been approved at the members' meeting by April, which obviously was not possible, are waiting for a solution. The Merigar Gakyil and collaborators have been working on ongoing projects, such as those carried out with the contribution of the UBI (Italian Buddhist Union) and not yet completed, such as:

- The extraordinary maintenance of the Gönpa: planned works were completed in May 2020. The redecoration of the external part and the restoration of the internal paintings will be the subject of a future project.
- the project of the Path of Awareness, which has encountered various problems relating to the hydro-geological structure of Merigar
- the project "Working with the words and texts of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Tibetan Buddhism" which on the one hand involves Shang Shung Editions for the training of new editors and the publication of works by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and on the other the library with the scanning and indexing of manuscripts, the cataloging of texts in Western languages and the creation of cultural events such as the Library Talks.
- The project Journey through self-knowledge which saw our experts go to schools in the neighboring municipalities of Merigar to guide children and teenagers in yoga and meditation, and is connected to the project of the MACO, Museum of Asian Art and Culture, which is planning to create an installation called the Silk Road.

You can find more information on some of these projects on the Merigar website, in the members area.

We have also been working to announce new projects and search for other types of funding for the future.

Obviously all the courses and activities planned for this time have had to be postponed, and now we are reworking and redesigning activities for the coming months on the basis of the current regulations of the Italian government.

In these months of quarantine, ordinary and essential maintenance works on the buildings at Merigar, the road, and the surrounding woods also continued. For example, some trees at the top of the landslide were dangerous and had to be cut. This area is geologically fragile and closely monitored. The green areas, flowers, and gardens also continued to be cared for.

At the end of March, the distribution of the masks donated by the International Cultural Atiyoga Association, an association based in China created in 2018 to support the vision of our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, started in the municipalities close to Merigar.

In May, at the beginning of "Phase 2", as required by state and regional provisions, the facilities at Merigar were still closed for courses, visits, practice activities and social moments, however, at the Gönpa, it was possible to resume work and so those jobs that we had planned for this restructuring phase have almost been completed. In particular, the external wooden railing surrounding the entire external walkway of the Gönpa was completed, and some masonry finishing work was done for the bathrooms.

Now that Italy is slowly starting to reopen, we are resuming activities, but with the rules and restrictions that we are already used to in all the places that we use. The first collective Ganapuja, led by Adri-

ano Clemente, was organized on the 1st June, the tenth day (day of Guru Padma-sambhava) of the month of Saga Dawa, a particularly important month from the Buddhist point of view. Between spacing and masks, everything went well as did the subsequent Ganapuja, combined with the Mandarava practice led by Nina Robinson, on the full moon day of June 5th, in which practitioners participated on site, both inside and outside the Gönpa. From June 8th it will be possible to participate live in the other practices organized at Merigar, which will continue to be broadcast in webcast, and dance on the external platform where the marquee has been set up.

On June 6, MACO, the Museum of Asian Art and Culture in Arcidosso, also reopened, together with the circuit of Amiatina museums and the Castle.

We are also starting again with our program of courses, retreats and guided tours,



obviously with a limited number of participants. In order to do this, we are following the regulations regarding places of worship, gyms, or sports activities, depending on the activities we are organizing. The rules we need to observe are many, but at the moment it is the only way we can practice together. The Merigar website will be gradually updated with upcoming activities.

A separate note on the Library Talks. In the past years this series of talks, made up of various cultural events organized by Merigar, has been held both at Merigar, in particular in the Library, and in the Arcidosso Town Hall or at the Castle. With very different themes, from the mind in Buddhism to Indian dance, passing through Ti-

Merigar East Lockdown and Beyond

Alexandru Anton

For those who haven't been to Merigar East on the Black Sea in Romania or who don't know much about it, it is pretty much in isolation here in the middle of the field and it relies quite a lot on the flow of practitioners and visitors brought by the enticing possibility of spending summer time on the Black Sea beach. Surprisingly, precisely because of the lockdown, Merigar East had a greater number of residents at this time of the year! A practitioner couple came to spend their quarantine here, all by themselves in the multifun house, so Magda Ourecka and I were very happy we were not completely alone – which we would have experienced as a sort of “double” isolation. Apart from that, for us personally it was not much different than usual, except of course for the times we had to go shopping into the city and for the recent states of mind flowing in the space.

In any case, in the early spring we were quite busy here at the Gar with the gardening activities. Growing some seedlings in the Gönpa to ensure a minimum vegetable garden and then preparing the gardening space itself can take up a lot of time – but it is very beneficial as one can spend time in a relaxed and grounded way, observing the movements and time cycles of the natural world. Apart from that, we have a sort of test learning project which involves growing trees from seed and so far it has taught

betan poetry, the biographies of the Masters, the sacred places and much more, the Talks of the past years have introduced Merigar, the Library, and some themes of teaching to an increasing number of people, expanding and diversifying our cultural contribution in the area.

The third edition of this series was scheduled for 2020, starting on March 21 with bi-weekly appointments, intensifying in early summer, and continuing until around October. Due to the pandemic, we have transformed this initiative and are offering an online version of it.

It is not a simple re-proposal of the Library Talks, since those events were designed as opportunities for live discussions and gatherings and to bring different



us many things – most of all patience and trust. Some tree seeds, for example, need to stay in a cold and humid atmosphere for around three months before they sprout – but when the time is right most seeds will synchronize and produce little roots. Others need to spend one year in certain con-

people to know and explore the library in person.

The online version has two sections: the Reading Aloud section is made up of short Tibetan and Oriental stories, parables, and tales read and interpreted by professional actors to whom our heartfelt thanks go.

The section on reflections and insights on issues related to Buddhism, Tibet and the East in general started on 29 May, thirty years after the official inauguration of the Gönpa and the Merigar Library. In this section the talks are in both Italian and English.

You can find them on the Merigar website, on the YouTube channel and on the Library's Facebook page.

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<https://www.merigar.it>

ditions, or more, but then they will sprout. If you interrupt these conditions for even one week you have to start all over again, because they fall asleep. So I think it is a wonderful lesson about secondary causes. In the long term, the trees will contribute to the landscape of the Gar, making it more alive with more plants and diversity, something like a park or a garden where you can find great delight walking through it – whether you are in your real nature or not.

We have started a little Mediterranean garden between the Multifun House and the South fence. It is sheltered from the wind – this is a key point at our windy Gar if you want any young plants to thrive at least until they become well established – and it already hosts a few fig trees, a strawberry bed, grapevine and other fruity shrubs such as cranberry, blackberry, etc. This space will be a very accessible garden where especially practitioners staying in the Multifun can relax and, when the time is right, savor some freshly picked fruits.

In parallel with gardening and other chores, our practices in the Gonpa con-

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Little bodhi trees.

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tinued daily and many practitioners were able to connect through the Zoom online platform. Long before the lockdown we were attracted to this possibility by which practitioners can simply “click and practice together”. Before that there was always the nuisance that somebody connecting later would interrupt or would need special attention to be able to join and also the connection quality was quite poor. Now we realized the importance of keeping and creating connections, especially in the context of Merigar East, which is mostly a summer Gar. In this way, we can keep in touch with practitioners, talk to them and get to know them even outside the “season”. For us residing in the Gar this also motivates us to keep going, to stay connected to the Sangha “dimension” even if it is just the two of us here for months. It also helps us with the discipline – in this way we are sure to practice every day – as we made this commitment to offer these online practices from the Gonpa at the established time.

Now that we had this online possibility, inspired by the sudden excess of time and isolation available to most people, we asked ourselves “what takes a long time and is normally quite hard for most people to attend?”. Thus, a long-term online SMS Base course with Elias Capriles was born – with the intention to clarify the contents of the *Precious Vase*, do some practice sessions and also offer the possibility to brush up on our understanding through Q&A sessions. We hope that in this way, at least for some people, the relatively difficult circumstances of the pandemic period produced some fortunate fruits – we all know how skillfully we can postpone dedicating more of our-

selves to the Teachings. We also hope that in this way more practitioners are tackling the precious Teachings of the SMS Base and not limiting themselves only to secondary practices.

Right now, as the lockdown has been slowly relaxing, we are hosting a number of volunteers currently helping us with the never-ending Gar maintenance works. Most of them don’t have transmission and although we would have liked them all to be Dzogchen practitioners, we are adapting to the circumstances and taking advantage of the possibilities. For them, the Gar is an oasis of nature and space – just like Rinpoche said: “Here there is only sky and earth”. Also, it happens that most of them are musicians, so they are also grateful that they can benefit from the beautiful acoustics of the Gönpa. Apart from that, they can relax, go to the beach, spend time far away from the turmoil of the city – especially the new type of agitation regarding restrictions and the challenges of a large group of people sharing the same space. Here we don’t have that challenge – there is enough space for everybody to feel safe and breathe clean fresh air.

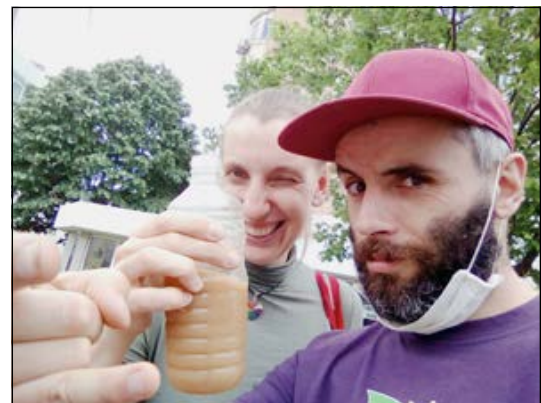
As a result, now the camping area grass is all shaved and ready for the future tents to land on it, the toilets and the camping kitchen there are clean, up and running. Overall, the Gar is prepared to receive the first retreat that will be possible when circumstances allow it. For now we have had to cancel a few retreats and also postpone the stupa filling project until next year, as this will take a considerable amount of collaboration and we need everybody to be relaxed, in good condition and especially able to travel to the Gar.

The first on the list of possibilities is the much awaited Green Tara and 21 Praises retreat with Oliver Leick, which – if everything turns out well – will happen during the period 31st July–6th August. Then it would be wonderful if we could continue with the two retreats with Elio Guarisco, on the Mandarava Tsalung (18th–21 August) and the Definitive Way to Contemplation (22nd–26th August).

In the meantime, the Merigar East silver gates are open, adorned laterally by newly hung lungta flags. There is a young patch of pine and birch forest, right as you go in, on the left. The grass is growing taller, the insects are multiplying and this in turn attracts a lot of birds. Already well-established here is a couple of colorful and vocal pheasants. Most of all, we are confident that Rinpoche’s vision manifested through this beautiful place with all these sense experiences will attract practitioner bees, deer and lions and we are ready to welcome them, now with a fresh asphalt road coming very close to the Gar – this year again surrounded by sunflowers. ©

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Magda and Alex.

News from Kunsangar South

At the moment the Gar is temporarily closed for attendance and no events are held, but we continue working on improving the Gar's environment with the efforts of the geko and practitioners who came to the Gar before the quarantine had started.

We have already renovated our container for Sang, which became very beautiful, but still did not withstand test of time and became covered with soot, so we are looking for a best solution to it.

We are continuing to repair our guest-house with our own forces. Half of the house has already been repaired and it looks very beautiful and high-quality.

In winter on the request of Kunsangar South some practitioners from the Polish community, professional landscape designers, developed a project to create some green spaces at Kunsangar South, for free. Before the quarantine had started our gardener Natalia had begun to prepare the area and plant the trees according to the project. The first plants are already there and are getting accustomed to her care.

We received greetings from Anu and Nishi, two children from Nepal, whose education we sponsor through ASIA's long distance sponsorship project. Anu and Nishi are continuing to study and are healthy and safe. They sent us wonderful drawings that we would like to share with you.

We send best wishes to everyone. Enjoy some photos from Kunsangar South!

We hope that the situation will resolve soon and we will meet at the summer retreats in Kunsangar South. ©

Kunsangar South Gakyil

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Kunsangar South Celebrates Its Tenth Anniversary

Dear Vajra Family!
Exactly 10 years ago, on May 29th, 2010, the first retreat of Chöd practice with Yeshe Namkhai took place at our Gar, which means that this year Kunsangar South is celebrating its tenth anniversary! Over these years the Gar has grown and developed, with seven retreats with Chögyal Namkai Norbu and forty-four retreats with different Dzogchen Community instructors taking place there, and has been visited by more than 5000 people.

The infrastructure of the Gar has also developed with the construction of a gönpa, a Longsal stupa, a summer kitchen, as well as houses for accommodation and retreats. More than 400 trees have been planted on the land of Kunsangar South, which would have been absolutely impossible to do without the participation of a huge number of Dzogchen Community practitioners who have supported and continue to support Kunsangar South!

At the moment circumstances do not allow us to celebrate the Birthday of the Gar together, but we will definitely do so when the situation changes and the Gar can again receive visitors. Now we can unite in practices for the benefit of Kunsangar South and the Dzogchen Community as a whole, wherever we are.

Happy Birthday to all and see you at Kunsangar South!

Love from the Gakyil and Gekö



Kunsangar North in Time of Quarantine

Marina Novitskaya
Kunsangar North Geko

Many people are probably wondering how we are doing at Kunsangar North during this uneasy period for all of us since our center is self-sufficient due to renting the premises to friendly Sanghas. It was actually the first time we have encountered such an experience and after thinking it out and consulting each other we decided to apply everyone's experiences and ideas and listen to all the proposals.

After summarizing, we took some measures: some of the staff were sent on vacation, the unoccupied dormitories were closed, and the electricity and the heating were shut down. We did not want to part with any of our friendly staff, but we had to reduce all the salaries. All the people involved reacted to these measures with understanding, and some of them took on the responsibilities of those who had to take vacation leave.

Our warm and cozy canteen which also served as a place for the celebration of different events and entertainment — where



Sewing masks during covid.

we watched movies, played music, sang karaoke and held workshops — was closed and we began to serve meals in containers as takeaways. We bought disinfecting lamps and disinfected all the surfaces from time to time. We also drained the pool to save on costs and we don't use the sauna any more.

I am sure that if all the people who stay in this area were not practitioners and



were not able to work with circumstances, they would have begun to panic with such drastic changes! But, having done our best, we relaxed and started to enjoy the situation. We saw some potential, the seed of new activities.

We quickly organized a sewing shop and began to sew masks for our Vajra kin who work with homeless people and collaborate with hospitals. Of course, we don't run such projects to make money. We make the masks out of fabrics that were intended for Lungta, which is the reason they are very bright and elegant. We also started to have some orders, which brings in some income.

Finally we set up a potter's studio and conducted charity auctions to support the Gar. We produce completely different and unique pieces. Now we have started to make numerous holders for Namkha and Dadars, sets for Sang, Serkyem, and Ganapuja (a plate and a glass), and the people sewing make beautiful packing bags for them. We also decided to create a vegetable garden in order to provide our canteen with fresh vegetables.

We have around 20 people now on the Gar's premises — some Gakyil members, employees, volunteers, karma yogis and several people who have been "stuck" here since the pre-quarantine period. All together we have begun to refresh the area, clear the forest, do the space zoning. Everyone has found an occupation after his or her heart — some people take care of the vegetable garden, men saw away dry branches and trees, and one Gakyil member works in the boiler house. In general, there is a lot of work that we do by ourselves.



Of course, we try to use this time to make minor repairs. We would like to give our Gar a new look, wishing that other people find a clean and beautiful place. One of our precious employees has great experience in house painting and plastering and she joyfully took on this job.

Our Santi Maha Sangha instructors support us greatly. They conduct retreats online, many of them refuse to take offerings and all the money goes to support the activities of the Gar. We are immensely grateful to them for this.

There are a lot of practices going on at the Gar online, we constantly dance, everyone does his or her own personal practice, and now the Gar, at the time of great changes, is more than ever a place of practice.

This situation has brought us together even more and we understand that the most important thing for every member of our big Vajra family is to continue supporting our Community and the Teaching for the benefit of all beings. ©

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Namgyalgar Australia in the Covid 19 Lockdown

Cosimo Di Maggio and Maree Ploetz

Maree and I spent five beautiful weeks at Namgyalgar, on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, during the Covid 19 lockdown in Australia. It will always be held in our hearts as a special time together, deepening our practice and reconnecting in a unique way with the Namgyalgar Community.

Previous visits to the Gar were to attend retreats or teach courses but I have to say that this experience, being in a more relaxed state with more time to work, practice, and enjoy, was quite different. We were planning to travel to Italy but the Covid lockdown banned overseas travel so we applied to the Gakyil to caretake the Gar. We worked with the Gakyil to carry out maintenance and essential work. Our initial impression was that the Gar was run-down as it was without a gekö for a year even though some dedicated practitioners had tried to do their very best to maintain the place. Now we realize how much work there is to do at the Gar to keep it worthy of the name and how precious members are as a resource for the Gar.



Without knowing the duration of the lockdown or where we might be in the future, we decided to practice according to our personal calling, to integrate with karma yoga to make much needed essential repairs on the house including the Gönpa but also to work on the garden and ensure the infrastructure was functioning. We really appreciated the knowledge and kindness of Topgyal, the last gekö, who came several times to advise us and repair the water pumps to enable us to fill compli-



cated water systems essential for drinking and fire fighting. We kept to the Covid regulations but were able to do a ganapuja with James and dance the Song of Vajra, which felt so special to connect with another practitioner in this time of social restrictions.



Cosimo and Maree.

As the days went by we discovered the beauty of the Namgyalgar in all its forms: the external Vajra Dance mandala (which we renovated), the Gönpa for practice retreats and yantra yoga, the wonderful Dzogchen library which was made a more inviting space to read and study, the small pool for swimming and floating under a clear blue sky, and the lovely nature walks with sweeping views to the Glasshouse Mountains. There were also the contemplative walks down to the dam to see the birds, the pretty-face wallabies, and be in the tranquility of the water.

Close to the house there were a myriad of birds; King Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Rainbow Parrots, native doves, Honey eaters and Magpies. Kookaburras and Butcher birds took turns to feed from our hand, something that Rinpoche started and we have continued. We were reminded that Rinpoche said that once you start to feed the birds you have to continue to do so. So we did and delighted in their natural beauty and antics, particularly the birds having their bath.

When we felt overly housebound we were lucky to be able to walk and swim on the pristine white beaches of Caloundra and Moffat Beach and enjoy the spacious ocean. Later when the restrictions lifted were started to explore the surrounding National Parks of the Glasshouse Mountains. Glorious! During retreats there was never the time to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings in such a way.

Namgyalgar contains everything that practitioners need to develop their practice with a private suite of rooms that was used by Rinpoche when he came to stay and teach at Namgyalgar. It is absolutely perfect for personal retreat. We highly recommend practitioners who have the opportunity to spend some time at Namgyalgar for practice, relaxation, walking around and doing a little bit of karma yoga. In this way one can help can keep the Gar alive and beautiful and benefits from what it offers. ☺





Dear Global Sangha, Greetings from Tsegyalgar East!

Due to the Coronavirus-19 pandemic, all on-site programs at Khandroling and Tsegyalgar have been cancelled, and organized weekly practices, courses and practice retreats are currently happening online via Zoom videoconference.

Though we cannot gather to practice together this summer on our precious sacred land of Khandroling, we are deeply grateful to be part of the very active online practice schedule that we share with sister Gars and Lings.

Tsegyalgar East's most recent addition to the weekly online schedule is Steven Landsberg's open program: *Welcome to the Dzogchen Community – Opening the Door to Practice*. It joins our other regular offerings that currently include Yantra Yoga, Mandarava practice, Medium Tun with Guardian practice, and Dream Yoga.

Tsegyalgar East will also be hosting Mandarava Long Life Practice and Chudlen with Nina Robinson by Zoom videoconference on July 21 & 22, July 28 & 29, and August 2 & 3, 2020.

Please visit tsegyalgar.org for up to date program information, or contact bluegakyil@tsegyalgar.org to be placed on our mailing list.

Wishing you good health and hoping to see you in a pandemic free future. Stay safe!

©

Tashigar North

Dear Vajra Family World-Wide,

We are sending you warm greetings from Tashigar North. First of all, thank you very much for your contributions to our last annual fundraising! We completed our 2020 general budget and it also gave us the funds to restore the wooden doors of the Gonpa.

As you probably already know the circumstances in Venezuela and Tashigar North make every aspect of life and functioning really difficult (and some things even impossible). The small team of brothers and sisters that remain on Margarita are doing their best to preserve this Sacred Place where we received so many wonderful transmissions. **We wouldn't be able to do it without your support!**



Until new winds blow around us, we know that we can only continue with continued international generosity. We want Tashigar North to be self-sustaining. We continue to try to develop economic projects, but up till now nothing has come through concretely.

In the meantime, we have been brainstorming with the International Gakyil on some ideas that may help us to collect the necessary funds to keep running our basic operation to preserve Tashigar North for future generations. Here are some initiatives that we would like to introduce:

We are launching a series of postcards with images connected to Tashigar North. These precious images will inspire and keep alive the memory of so many wonder-



ful moments we shared together. **The postcards are available through our Tashi Shop website.** You can buy them at a price of US\$5 each. You will receive an email with the postcard of your choice in a JPG-format (in high resolution). We thank many of our



Vajra brothers and sisters world-wide who responded to our request in the search of images to implement this project.

» continued on the following page

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Online Concerts

We offer a program of several musical concerts that we intend to have on a regular basis. We would like to schedule ONLINE CONCERTS on a monthly basis. So far we have compromised on this project with Carlotta Jovino, Louise Levi, Alex Pollack, and Alexander Bakunin.

As a big opening show, we will have our Varja brother Steven Landsberg performing a Raga concert:

The Surbahar: A Feast of Evening Melodies
27th June at 15:00 EDT (UTC/GMT - 4 hours).

The information on how to access the concert streaming:

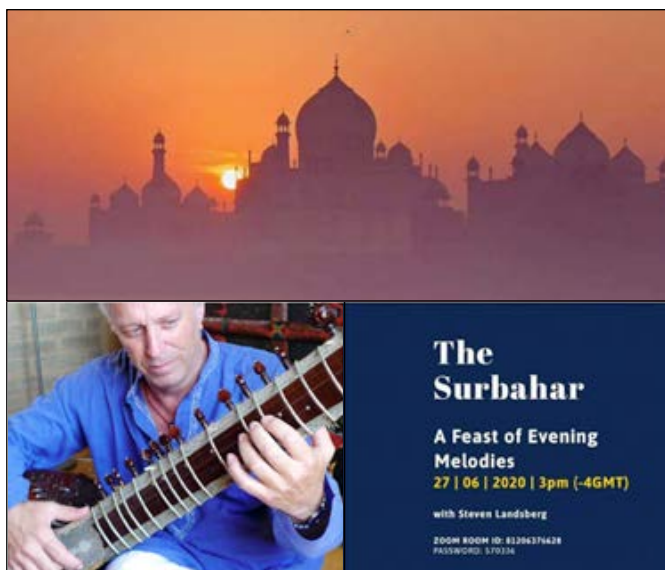
Zoom Room Id: 81206376628

Password: 570336

You could also use a link:

<https://zoom.us/j/81206376628>

Following the recommendations of the IG and in accordance with the teachings on generosity given by Rinpoche, access to online concerts will be free and subject to a vol-



untary donation that you can make on the "donate now" page: <https://tashigarnorteseecreta.wixsite.com/tashishop/fdr>.

We take this occasion to invite all our Dzogchen Community musicians who

of US\$15,000 which is the projected basic cost of our maintenance operation for 2021: <https://tashigarnorteseecreta.wixsite.com/tashishop/fdr>. ©

would like to participate in this project and offer their skills in a program to be scheduled according to their possibilities.

Donate Now

On the website there is also a possibility to donate whatever amount that your circumstances allow you at any time, independently on the postcards or the online concert project. This particular fundraising set it up to a goal

Nutra Brain

We are also looking for IDC members interested in becoming distributors of Nutra Brain Hydrolyzed Collagen in their own countries. **This operation will give a 5%-commission from the total amount being imported from any IDC member who establishes a business agreement with Nutra Brain.** More information can be found on the Tashi Trade page.

Due to the particular regulations in Venezuela, the **ONLY PAYMENT METHOD AVAILABLE on the website is a personal PAYPAL**. The funds will be collected on the personal Paypal account of our Yellow Gakyil Rolando Carrasco until the fundraising reaches US\$3,000 (the website is already set up) who will redirect them to Tashigar North through our regular channels. We are working to find a definitive solution on how to channel the collected funds to reach Tashigar North efficiently.

TASHI SHOP is not the official website of Tashigar North. We are using it as a platform to launch this fundraising project, basically because it is a low-cost website service provided by Wix. Our resources are very limited so we did not have a chance to improve our official site which is still www.tashigarnorte.org.

With love,
Tashigar Norte

Visit us – <https://tashigarnorteseecreta.wixsite.com/tashishop>

Follow us on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/tashigar.norte.9> ©

NutraBrain

Hydrolyzed Collagen is a product developed by our Vajra brother Gilberto Parrella, who has been in the health product business for more than 40 years and was very much involved in the planning, execution, and development of Tashigar North.

NutraBrain Hydrolyzed Collagen is obtained from pasture raised grass fed, it is lactose-FREE, sugar-FREE, non-GMO, soy-FREE, dairy-FREE.

You can buy a combo of 2 units in our Tashi Shop for \$84.99 (shipping cost included). For each combo x 2 of NutraBrain Hydrolyzed Collagen sold by Tashi Shop, Tashigar North will be credited with \$15. NutraBrain Hydrolyzed Collagen is a great nourishing and healthy product for you to take and at the same time allows you to help with our fundraising. This product will be available only for the USA and Venezuela.



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International
Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Working with Circumstances

Tashigar South

Marisa Alonso

In Argentina the lockdown for the COVID 19 began on March 20th.

All activities and programs at the Gar were cancelled, and everyone was compelled to stay at home.

As we were previously observing astonished and worried what was going on in other countries, we began to think about a new way to be together despite the compulsory isolation that we were guessing we would have to face too.

So we had this idea to create a Facebook group.

As maybe most of you know already, on the land of Tashigar there are a bunch of houses in which some instructors and practitioners live with their families, and also the secretary and the geko live permanently there. But nevertheless, when the quarantine was launched officially, we were advised to remain isolated in our homes and to absolutely avoid social contact until the wave slowed down.

On March 15th we did our first practice together online. We made a call to all our local instructors to lead different practices such as Yantra Yoga, Green Tara, Mandarava, Ganapujas, Shitro, Short and Medium



Tun, Dance of the 12 A, Khaita, Harmonious Breathing etc.

The Facebook group is closed and there is a requirement to have received transmission from Rinpoche to join it.

We also inform people about the ID for the zoom meetings we organize when we need to translate into Spanish, in case our brothers or sisters speak in English.

Week after week more instructors and practitioners from everywhere joined, and we began to add cooking sessions, talks, explanations, so our schedule became full of practices and activities, launched from Tashigar South, Córdoba, Buenos Aires, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Brazil, Venezuela, USA, Spain, Poland, Italy, Austria, Israel, France, Russia and Germany. Isn't it amazing?

The group now has up to 625 members from all over the world and it is very nice

to share and practice together with people that may be is alone in their homes or live in some very far place and now have this secondary cause that make it possible that this is manifesting.

We want to thank with all our hearts all senior and local instructors and advanced practitioners for sharing openly and generously all their knowledge and experience with all of us. And also our translators, technical team, designer, secretary, and all the people who are helping us to make this possible.

We are all really experiencing the strong feeling of being part of a huge and caring family, the Sangha, with the vivid presence of the Master and his Teachings. The three Jewels. ©

E MA HO

secretaria@tashigarsur.com

<http://tashigarsur.org>

Dear Community,

On May 19th the Municipality of Tanti (Córdoba, Argentina) fixed the street sign with the name of our Master, approved months ago.

We want to share some pictures and the joy of this beautiful news!

We'd like to express again our gratitude to Adriana Battisti for all the work she does for the benefit of Tashigar South. Gakyil of Tashigar South ©



The Dzamling Gar Moon Garden

Alix de Fermor, designer and creator of the new Moon Garden that was recently completed at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, talks about the inspiration for the garden and the many wonderful exotic plants that it contains. Dzamling Gar Tuesday May 26, 2020

Photos by Gisela Martinez, Alix De Fermor, and Liz Granger

Why a Moon Garden? Some time ago, Jamyang Oliphant suggested the idea and it immediately appealed to me. The idea was to create a space where people could enjoy wonderful moments in the evening, simply sitting, reading a book, or spending time with friends, immersed in the perfumes of a variety of night blooming flowers. I knew that this area of Dzamling Gar would be the right spot because the land is mostly untouched. With all the other gardens at the Gar we had to battle with builders' rubble and trash but here there is none of that even though the garden wasn't easy to create. We had to drill through the natural rock in order to ensure that the trees could develop deep sturdy roots.

The Moon Garden is our latest garden and extends on three levels. The upper level covers the area along the upper boundary fence of the Gar and then curves in a moon-shape along the walkway at the back of the IDC/ASIA house. On this level near the fence there are mostly trees to block the south-east wind and to provide shade around midday. Along the walkway of the IDC house there are mostly flowers, a few bushes and a couple of small trees.

Below this area there is a second level that is actually the heart of the Moon Garden because it is the place where you can sit surrounded by the scents of the plants and gaze into the sky. It's important to understand that this is not a garden to enjoy at midday. It is meant for the late afternoon, the evening and night, and even the early morning when it is very fresh. It is not a place for children to run wild or play football.

To complete the garden there is a third level, a little lower, that is a natural amphitheatre formed by a circle of rocks, in fact



I was quite surprised when I saw that the rocks formed this circle. This is an area for people to do activities together, collective practices, dance, have a barbecue and so on. It has a few mango and red pepper trees around it to define the area and to keep it a little private from the road inside the Gar that passes nearby.

Then in order not to have the Moon Garden surrounded by a wild uncared for area on the hillside along the fence of the Gar, we made a continuation of the garden. This area is a sort of intermediary between something that is more flowery and refined and the natural desert that surrounds the Gar. It is a transitional garden with a lot of cactus, palms, succulents, and an area at the back dedicated to fruit trees such as cherimoya, guava, mango, and sapote through which you can access the south-east side of the Gönpa. We planted trees here in such a way that they will never obstruct the view. The idea is to have privacy but also access to the whole sky. I wanted to hide the road within the Gar but not the Gönpa or the beautiful mountains in the background. In this way the Moon Garden is different and gives a sense of space.

I also wanted to introduce into this garden the notion of time and the passing of time. The pathways are made of bluish grey pebbles, at times associated with stone slabs, which give the impression of a flowing river, symbolizing the flow of time. If you enter the garden from the road sur-

rounding the Gönpa or from the path from the IDC house, you start at the sunset area with trees, bushes, and flowers blooming in different shades of yellow, orange, red, and pink and progressively – but quite quickly because the garden is not very big – you enter the night with its white and silver flowers that reflect the moon and its deep purple-blue and purple-red flowers that reflect the sky. In full moon periods the garden will be magical and silvery with a host of pale pink evening primroses dancing in the wind!

The essence of this new garden is its perfume and the sense of smell because I think that the fragrance of flowers is to the night what music is to a blind pianist. When the sense of vision is limited or absent, other senses take over more powerfully. When you walk in a garden in the nighttime although you cannot distinguish the plants very well, they still reach you with their fragrance that lingers in the air. So in this Moon Garden I have put a lot of plants whose fragrance is exalted in the evening and sometimes through the whole night.

We have the Lady of the Night (*cestrum nocturnum*) which is a bush with arched branches bearing groups of trumpet-like white flowers that are not very noticeable during the day but which open at night with a very sweet almost intoxicating perfume that permeates the night, lasting until sunrise.

Then there are frangipani trees (*plumeria alba*) named after a 16th century Italian



marquis who made a perfume that resembled the fragrance of these flowers. *Plumeria alba* (white flowered) and *plumeria rubra* (red flowered) from the *Apocynaceae* family have flowers that are most fragrant

is often yellow, making a striking contrast with the petals. In Buddhism, *plumeria* symbolizes immortality probably because the tree produces new blooms even after it has been uprooted. It is a sacred tree



Top: *Limonium* or Perez's sea lavender.
Below: *Oenothera speciosa* or evening primrose.



Evening primrose.

in Laos and they are planted outside every Buddhist temple. These trees live for hundreds of years. In the Mayan culture, the *plumeria* bloom represents birth and life. In the ancient Indian healing science of Ayurveda, the oil of the *plumeria* is considered to be a warming oil and effective in treating fear, anxiety and insomnia. It is also used to treat tremors.

We also have the *bauhinia* or orchid tree in this garden with orchid-like flowers and a fragrance that lasts through the

night. Climbing up the palm are the Moon Flowers (*calonyction aculeatum* or *ipomoea alba*), which open in large showy white corollas in the evening and have an incredible perfume throughout the night. They've been planted just behind the sitting area and I hope to make a pergola for them so that when people are seated, there will be a shower of perfume above them. I don't know if they will survive the winter because they don't like cool, harsh winds but in any case they will seed by themselves.

On the other side of the palm, a climber, *trachelospermum jasminoides* or false jasmine also from the *apocynaceae* family, is an evergreen woody creeper with white very fragrant flowers which are also used in high quality perfumes.

Another important factor in this garden is the evening primrose (*oenothera speciosa*), a herbaceous perennial sprawling wildflower originally native to the grasslands of southern North America extending to Mexico. It is a drought resistant plant, spread by seeds and runners. And though it is a very sturdy plant, it has a delicate aspect and features masses of fragrant cup-shaped satiny white or shell pink flowers with the texture of crumpled silk. The corollas are quite large, up to 8 cm, simple with four petals veined in darker pink. Their heart is deep yellow, nearly green, with yellow anthers and delicately evolves towards white, then pink. Their scent is a



Brugmansia or Angel's Trumpets.

bit musky and reminds me of the fragrance of tulips. When I saw the first flower, there were already two bees competing for nectar! The bees love them, which is quite a good thing for the pollination of our fruit tree flowers. We could also probably make some very tasty honey!

I think this plant is very interesting for the Gónpa gardens: the wind will bring

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Plumeria alba or frangipani tree.

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seeds everywhere and wherever there is a little water for another plant, like a cactus, a succulent, an agave, a little evening primrose will sprout and spread, adding some color to what could be otherwise only grey-green gardens. In northern climes the flowers open in the morning and last until next morning, in the south they open in the evening and last for a day, while here in Tenerife, they open in the morning and last two full days and nights!

Then there is alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*), which has a very nice honey-like smell not only in the day but also in the night. Next there is a wonderful selection of roses here that give perfume during the day and the night although in the evening their fragrances are usually exalted. They include the Monica Bellucci, with its pink with silver reflections, the Charles De Gaulle rose which makes lots of pink flowers, Andre Le Notre, with its pale pink and highly perfumed blooms, Pau Casals with white flowers, Alain Souchon, dark red, Jacques Prevert, bright red, and also a Bettina hybrid tea rose. Then we have *Hedychium gardenianum* or Ginger Lily, a plant from the Himalayas, which is quite spectacular with its very fragrant pale yellow flowers and red stamens, held in dense spikes above the bright green foliage. Then heliotrope with its violet flowers spread a wonderful vanilla scent and, of course, there are the lavenders with their unique fragrance evoking the heat of summer.

Over near the fence we have the *pitaya*, a kind of cactus growing on the upper part of the rocks, also called Dragon Fruit. It blooms in the evening lasting until mid-morning and then withers in the hot sun. It is another very beautiful perfumed flower, makes a lot of fruit and is quite common in Tenerife.

Then last but not least we have a very striking plant called Brugmansia or Angel's Trumpets with an intoxicating smell.



There are several bushes of them on the upper level. Bushes were the solution because I didn't want to block the view from the lower levels of the garden by putting dense trees, yet at the same time I wanted to give some privacy to the garden. At the moment the Brugmansia are small plants as are the red frangipani trees but they will grow and fill their purpose. Brugmansia are highly ornamental with their huge pendulous, fragrant, trumpet-like flowers in shades of white, pink, yellow, orange, and red. Here we have a salmon pink variety coming from a cutting from my brother's garden in France, a yellow one from a cutting on a north Tenerife trip, while the color of the others will be a surprise as they came from seeds bought on internet.

In fact most of the plants and trees in this garden are grown from seeds and cuttings. For example, the *areca catechu* palms come from some seeds I brought with me from Costa Rica, *oenothera speciosa*, gaura, the moon flowers, baubinia, and *thespesia populnea* are from seeds, while the two bodhi trees, the frangipani and the *pandano* or screw pine trees are all from cuttings. The Moon Garden: showy but hardly cost a penny!

So whether you are sitting, gazing into the space of the evening sky with the reflections of the sunset coloring the faraway mountains, or walking through the flowing river of time, immersed in scents, with the wind swelling up the instant like a sail, just enjoy!

©



The Meaning of Sangha for Me

Or a trip to Chengdu and back

Evgenia Edoutova

Chengdu, the thriving capital of Sichuan Province in China, is a city with more than two thousand years of history. The city has always been famous for its prosperity and is home to mathematicians and poets, many temples, museums, and nature reserves and is actually well known for pandas.

This city is significant for me because my teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, worked in Chengdu for a year (in 1954) teaching Tibetan at the Southwestern University for Nationalities. Many people asked me to tell them about my trip so during the quarantine it was a perfect time to take up the pen.

In 2019 I decided to go to China to work, although this story actually began earlier when a job vacancy in China caught my eye. I was planning to go somewhere and then it became clear that the vacancy was in Chengdu. I had many doubts, but the precious brothers and sisters in the Dzogchen Community gave me some important parting words. In particular Svetlana Shavronskaya, from Sochi, who had worked in China for about three years, dispelled the last shadows of doubt.

On the flight to Chengdu I met Julia Aramonova, who was Geshe Rinchen Tenzin's translator and considered it to be an auspicious sign. My adventure had begun.

The office of the company I worked for was located right next to the University for Nationalities where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu worked. Many Tibetans study there and I was very proud that young Tibetans were studying the history of Shang Shung and Tibet through his books. Tibetans I would meet later on.

On my arrival the first thing I wanted to do was to find a sangha, or at least someone I could connect with. While I was preparing for the trip, even though I couldn't speak Chinese, I was able to find information about retreats on the Samten-gar website thanks to modern web-translation systems. I was really excited about our Community spread all over the world although Chengdu had no sangha or Vajra



dance group to practice with. Fortunately, in a small town called Deyang, about 60 km from Chengdu, I found both: a mandala and a dancing sangha.

On the way to Deyang I found the high-speed train amazing. I had just got comfortable and taken out a notebook to make some notes, when I saw everyone getting off. The trip took just 20 minutes! The main thing is to book a ticket in advance because people in China tend to move around a lot, especially on weekends. On my way back from the retreat I booked a ticket in business class, the last one.

Tracy Ni, an international Vajra Dance instructor, led the course. Those who wanted to learn this invaluable method came to Deyang from different cities. A cheerful woman called Moon (the Chinese use European names) coordinated the retreat and I really fell in love with her, even though we couldn't speak a word to each other without an interpreter.

I had a lot of help from Lucy, an architect by education who had studied in Europe, so her view was more European and her En-

glish was good. In general, I was lucky with Lucy and later on we even went together to Derge, the place our teacher was born. We did the trip in October. Those days it was just the beginning of my experience of living in China. Was I homesick? No, I wasn't.

I spent all my time in Chengdu and my new friends from the Community, Yushan, Wangyao, and Sherry, cared of me like a guest. Yushan worked in the city and she always tried to find time to go to the cafe and take a walk with me. One day we met two people from the Community at a tea-house – Niccolo, a yantra yoga instructor, and Justin, a gakyil member from the Beijing Community – both of whom had just returned from Eastern Tibet. The two of them spoke Chinese very well, which I didn't. We spoke mainly in English, because

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Moon, at Art of Elements event.



Evgenia in elegant Tibetan clothes.



Vajra Dance course with Tracy Ni, Deyang.

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except for “thank you” and “hello”, I couldn’t say anything in Chinese. For me that meeting was a turning point and it became clear for me that travelling to our Teacher’s birthplace would not be as difficult as I had feared and so the tempting idea to travel to Derge was born at that time.

I finally made some connections in the city. Wangyao kindly walked with me to the University for Nationalities and also helped me with advice. Four of us did a



Lucy serving tea.



Tibetan dances, Garze.

ganapuja together only once, on Rinpoche’s birthday. I was used to doing ganapujas in Rinchenling in Moscow with up to 100 people, but I was happy to have company.

Since I was used to practicing in a group practicing alone became a practice in itself. It wasn’t easy to connect to the web-cast practices. The only way to connect in China is to use VPN, which tended to crash most of the time. China has its own social networks and its own communication channels, which is terribly annoying. But the local messengers work very well in China. Now I have more distracting groups in WeChat, but also a lot of good contacts.

At the end of May Lorenzo Mitchell came to Chengdu. His hostel and “Liberaria” project based in Arcidosso, Tuscany is well-known in the Merigar community. Chengdu was a stopping point on Lorenzo’s travels to Kham. This was also another remarkable meeting for me and one more sign that I should go to Kham. Previously I had heard about Dzogchen monastery, but that seemed very difficult to get to.

In June when the semester ended, I immediately began my trip to Gardze. My goals were: Adzom Gar and Derge, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s birthplace. That gave me the strength to go alone although I can’t say that I was totally alone. Yushan’s friend Drolma accompanied me and became my guardian. Before the trip I consulted with Justin and Vince who gave me some good advice. I really appreciated the help that they all gave me.

In Garze we danced some Tibetan dances with Drolma, had a walk in a temple, and took some photos. Before going to the temple Drolma wanted me to buy something beautiful and traditional. In her view Eu-

ropean clothes were not suitable for visiting a temple. Everyone remembered how Rinpoche was always so nicely dressed and how he asked others to dress well and look good. Tibetans really wear very beautiful traditional dresses and even in jeans they could be elegant.

On my first visit I wasn’t able to stay at Adzom Gar because the police asked us to leave before nighttime. That’s why I decided to come another time, in October. No doubt the best time to go is summer and also autumn. In summertime it is very hot in Chengdu, very humid and stuffy. October is more neutral, although it starts to freeze

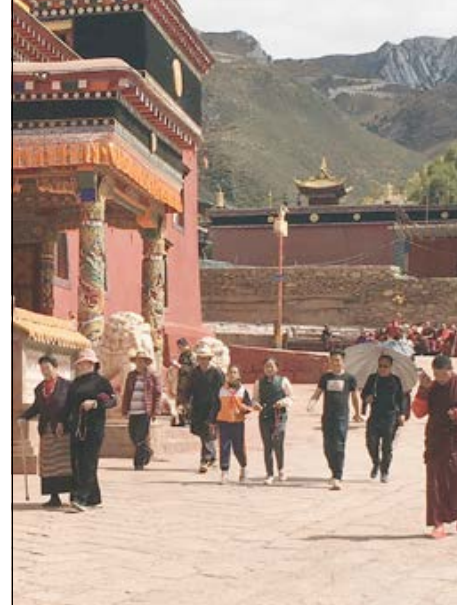
in the mountains – Garze and Derge are at about 4000 m.

On my second visit I was more fortunate. I traveled with Lucy and even managed to find the area close to Rinpoche's birth village although frankly speaking it was not the exact same place, but not far away. We felt absolutely happy to have arrived there and sung the Song of the Vajra.

My second semester in Chengdu was connected to Tibetans from the Himalayan Toastmasters Club, a very active group for modern youth. I named it "Migrated to the City". It is also a slogan of a Chengdu restaurant, Drolmala Music Space, which was founded by Tibetans. If you are in Chengdu find time to visit it in the evening to listen to folk music and have a good meal.

tion and ASIA. In the Dzogchen Community we dance Khaita dances, and sing Tibetan songs. And we should continue these traditions. Being among Tibetans I realized the necessity of knowing the Tibetan language. Dancing with Tibetans I was happy to at least know some of the movements. I made myself a promise to study some of the Tibetan songs that are so beautiful.

Rinpoche created a lot for us and during quarantine we have had many possibilities to study and practice together. With modern online conferencing and webinars we can meet virtually with people we have met before at retreats and others we are seeing for the first time. The main point is that we are united. That life is perfect. We are happy and fearless.



Printing house, Derge.



Himalayan Toastmasters.

The Himalayan Toastmasters is a well-known club around the globe. In Chengdu it has been organized by Tibetans to practice English mostly. Could you imagine, my Tibetan teacher, Mewan, learned English in just one year. With this company my life in Chengdu became much more fun. Communicating with these people it was really great to see how much they cared about their culture: maintaining their language, wearing traditional clothes, and keeping their traditions alive.

Unfortunately, not all Tibetans speak Tibetan. Those who have grown up in the city speak Chinese. To study their native language, Tibetan, they have to go to private schools and do special courses.

Rinpoche often spoke about the importance of maintaining the traditions of Tibetan culture. He founded the Shang Shung Institute Medical School and School of Tibetan Language and Translation, Shang Shung Publications, the Atiyoga Founda-

I will definitely come back to Chengdu and am already making plans. In the Dzogchen Community there has been a lot of focus on Chengdu in recent years, with Western teachers from the Dzogchen Commu-



Mewan Drogpa, my Tibetan teacher.

nity visiting and leading courses as well as trips for Western Dzogchen practitioners to visit and follow courses there organized by Shang Shung UK and the Ati Yoga Foundation. In October 2019 I was invited to participate in the Dynamic Space of the Elements event organized by Migmar and his team there – a remarkable experience.

So, let's meet and travel. We have many Gars, Lings, and a large Vajra Family.

I wish everyone fearless traveling and extend my endless thanks to everyone who helped and supported me. Our Sangha is our treasure.

Many thanks to Darren Littlejohn and Marina Shapiro for editing this text. ©



With Sherry's daughter.

The Great 14th

Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama In His Own Words

Award winning film by Director Rosemary Rawcliffe – Frame Of Mind Films®

Jacqueline Gens

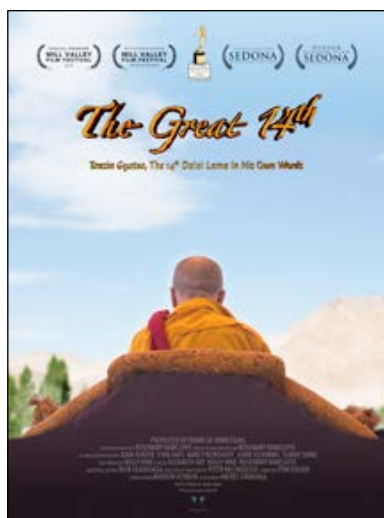
In an era of increasing nationalism with massive income inequality, a movie such as the "Great 14th Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama In His Own Words" offers an alternative to the deep uncertainties of our era. His simple message of compassion and empathy has been the milestone of his public face for decades. This is not a foolish sentiment but an authentic affection for all sentient life as a path of harmony and joy.

The Great 14th is unlike any other film about his life. Narrating his own story, he opens a window for us to peer into his deepest thoughts and feelings about the challenges and accomplishments he experienced personally and as the secular and religious leader of Tibet.

Considered among the oldest inhabited regions on earth and geographically isolated for centuries, Tibet's contribution to the modern world is only beginning to be fully understood. Although poor in material culture and essentially a feudal society until the 20th century, Tibet developed a sophisticated culture of mind. The vast treasury of writings on philosophy, medicine, law, grammar, and visual arts is but the tip of the iceberg to match any great civilization. There are now thousands of translated publications from Tibet's literary tome in numerous languages. At the pinnacle is Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama.

The film's appearance could not come at a more auspicious time than in the midst of a global pandemic when the world itself is facing unknown challenges. From seemingly apocalyptic climate disasters to wars, starvation, and disease with unprecedented sentient suffering, the Dalai Lama gives us an antidote to our fears through his message of uniting in a spirit of actualized global altruism.

The loss of his country is well known world-wide along with his role as an emissary of his Buddhist tradition and his



tireless message of peace and compassion. However, what the film uniquely provides is an intimacy as though we are in the room with him. There is that unforgettable laugh ranging from snicker to full belly laugh. We feel his sorrow for the suffering of others. We hear of his creative problem solving in his dream time. His meditative quietude stills our own anxieties. In fact, his entire life illuminates for us through example how to turn adversity into opportunity, how to manifest our full human potential. He is no deity but a beacon of light in the darkness of ignorance which shows us how we too can serve others through an awakened heart. In his mind no institution, religion, or ethnic culture alone can serve humanity unless individuals cultivate inner peace through awareness in a spirit of ethical secularism.

Central to the film's point of view is the gradual democratization of Tibetan society in exile and the ideas that shaped the Dalai Lama's early belief that no one person should hold absolute power. Originally much of the footage in The Great 14th came from conversations with the film maker starting more than eighteen years ago, morphing into conversations and research for a feature film No Time for Kings. Inspired by his abnegation as a political leader, the present documentary arose as a preliminary to the compelling feature film based on a true story.

The back story of The Great 14th and No Time for Kings is the Dalai Lama's 2011 separation from the deeply embedded theocracy ruling Tibet for the last four centuries by giving up his secular political role. Now retired at age 84, he has left the fate of Tibetan society in the hands of Tibetans themselves whom he prepared well during his life in exile.

Among the most remarkable, one might say mind blowing aspects of the film, is

when he recounts his lifelong exploration of governance in an effort to create reforms to bring Tibet into the modern world. With his characteristic investigative mind, he sees in Socialism, even Marxism, aspects of altruism. Archival footage in 1954 of him in China at the invitation of Mao seeing his open enthusiasm in a desire to reform the inequities of society caused me to want to protect his youthful naivete knowing what was to come for his country a few years later.

Accompanying his narrative, charming home movies of his boyhood and young adulthood reveal the playful person behind his formal status with an inclination to mingle with ordinary people. In one segment of archival footage taken at Norbulingka, the summer palace, the Dalai Lama, tells us how he liked to play with the sweepers who passed on gossip about state officials even showing him a peep hole to spy on the Regent of Tibet. Early on he observed the corruption inherent in the concentration of power in one person which became a catalyst for continuing the reforms begun earlier by the 13th Dalai Lama.

The Great 14th shows us the deep well of humanity one person can accomplish. What was a great tragedy for the loss of Tibet in 1959 became the Dalai Lama's liberation from an inauthentic life to a life of reality and opportunity to mingle in the world as Tenzin Gyatso, the monk sharing with us the notion of interdependence between all of us rather than isolation and strife. His vow to benefit all beings for as long as Space continues can be our vow too – so badly needed in these times.

Frame of Mind Films is known for a number of important documentaries about Tibet including the Emmy award winning Women of Tibet: A Quiet Revolution and Women of Tibet: The Great Mother, inspired by the Dalai Lama's mother. ©

Jacqueline Gens is a poet and writer for a variety of Buddhist publications, May 2020.

The film features the Dalai Lama as both subject and narrator, providing a uniquely intimate view of his life story and personal philosophy. It includes largely unseen private archives, such as rare footage of the Dalai Lama in Tibet in the 1950s and his early years in India in the 60s.

"The bond of trust [His Holiness and Rosemary] formed through these years is clearly evident in the comfort and ease with which the Dalai Lama fields questions."

- Co-Executive Producer John Schimmel
- Valley of the Docs Audience Favorite award at Mill Valley Film Festival 2019
- Director's Choice Best Humanitarian Doc Award at Sedona International Film Festival 2020
- 2020 Gold Telly Award

About Padmasambhava

Historical Narratives and
Later Transformations of
Guru Rinpoche

edited by Geoffrey Samuel and
Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie
Garuda Verlag 2020, pp.276
ISBN 978 3 906139 36 4

Alexander Studholme

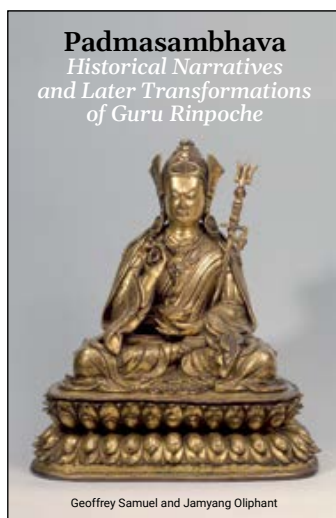
For Tibetan Buddhists, Padmasambhava is both the mahasiddha who converted Tibet to Buddhism in the late 8th century and a kind of timeless Second Buddha, a universal spiritual principle even. "There is no manifestation of the Buddha that is not inseparably one with Guru Rinpoche," Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche once wrote, "and so to pray to him is the same as praying to all the Buddhas." But what do we really know about his history? And how might a revised historical perspective affect our spiritual attitude? *About Padmasambhava*, is a collection of scholarly articles, edited by two members of the Dzogchen Community, that presents some of the latest academic research on this pivotal figure. For the devotee, its discoveries will be illuminating, but perhaps a little discomfiting too.

Devotion to Padmasambhava finds a contemporary setting here in an anthropological account of two lay tantrika communities, one in Mustang and one in Amdo, where the calendar of ritual practices is centred around the figure of Guru Rinpoche. The latter community, unusually, now includes more ngakmas, or female yogin practitioners, than male ngakpas, making up some five percent of the adult female population, or about 1,500 women. Nicolas Sahlé's

To reach a broader global audience, a portion of the proceeds from this premiere will go towards completing the translation of the film into 14+ languages. For additional information and to view the trailer, please visit www.thegreat14th.com. His Holiness celebrates his 85th birthday on July 6th.

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fieldwork stands apart here: the rest of this book is made up almost wholly of textual study, exploring the temporal origins and subsequent apotheosis of Padmasambhava within the Tibetan religious system.

The seminal version of the Guru Rinpoche story is, by common consent, the *Zangs gling ma*, or Copper Temple, of the 12th century hierarch Nyangral Nyima 'Odzer (and published in popular English translation as *The Lotus Born*). Most of the familiar elements appear in this work: the miraculous birth in the lotus, acceptance and banishment from the court of King Indrabhuti, the relationship with Princess Mandarava, the establishment of Samye monastery, and the gathering of a circle of 25 disciples, including the Tibetan king Trisong Deutsen. Like so much of the Tibetan literature about Padmasambhava, the *Zangs gling ma* is a terma, said to have been concealed by Padmasambhava's Tibetan consort Yeshe Tsogyal, before being discovered by Nyangral, a self-declared reincarnation of Trisong Deutsen himself.

Surveying other terma texts here, Jue Liang discusses a hitherto obscure and undated biography of Yeshe Tsogyal, including many conversations with Padmasambhava; Martin Boord translates a section of a 17th century biography, in which Padmasambhava's life is aligned with the traditional twelvefold deeds of Shakyamuni Buddha; and Cathy Cantwell examines a 13th century text called the *bLa ma gsang 'dus*, or Secret Embodiment of the Lama, of Guru Chöwang, the second after Nyangral of the so-called Five Terton Kings of the Nyingma school. This is an important repository of many well known practices connected to Padmasambhava, including the famous scheme of eight different manifestations and the ubiquitous seven-line

prayer. Meanwhile, Jamyang Oliphant concentrates primarily on terma texts to demonstrate the significance of Padmasambhava to the medicinal and spiritual practice of *bcud len*.

It is when the scholarly gaze turns to sources from before the time of Nyangral's *Zangs gling ma* that things become more problematic, essentially because there are very few of them and because the figure they describe is not necessarily the pre-eminent being of later tradition. In this volume, we see three experts on the historical Padmasambhava – Jacob P Dalton, Robert Mayer and Lewis Doney – grapple with the evidence of texts from Tun Huang, the vast library on the Silk Route that was sealed up at the end of the 11th century and not opened again until 1900. From all the many thousands of folios, only four of these texts have been found (so far) to refer to Padmasambhava, a striking enough statistic in itself, given his eventual supreme status.

This is a painstaking business, involving difficult translation work, nuanced interpretation and command of a mass of detail. Suffice it to say, here, that the results of this research are often hotly contested. Scholars range from those who insist we can assert virtually nothing about the historical Padmasambhava, to those who claim they can already discern in these early works an extraordinary and highly influential mahasiddha. The conclusion is inescapable, though, that the picture of Guru Rinpoche in the termas is, to some degree or other, a construct, leading to fraught concerns about those texts' historical reliability.

This issue is nothing new: the Tibetans have argued about it for centuries. James Gentry looks at how the 17th century lama Sog bzlog pa attempted to rationalise different terma accounts of Padmasambhava's life with the record found in the *dBa' bzhed*, or Testament of Ba, an historical chronicle that may go back to the 9th century. In a similar vein, Lama Jampa Thaye reveals that though the Sakya school boasts a Vajrakīlaya practice transmitted by Padmasambhava himself, this hallowed provenance was actually kept secret for many generations due to a climate of suspicion surrounding the Nyingma school.

The academic treatment of Buddhist texts often raises difficult questions about the relationship between history and myth. As is sometimes apparent in these pages, scholars can be wary of airing their findings in front of practitioners, for fear

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Pictures from the Past

Memories of the Subiaco Retreat

Costantino Albini

It was towards the end of June 1976 as my mother Laura and myself drove through the scenic entry avenue of the Villa dei Carbonari near the hilly town of Subiaco in central Italy. We had been shopping extensively for preparing the house we had rented to accommodate all the participants of the first retreat with Namkhai Norbu, Rinpoche, that was due to begin in the second week of July.

The house, although old and a bit run-down, was sufficiently spacious for a number we reckoned would be of about 20–30 people.

The property must have belonged to a wealthy family back in the eighteen hundreds, and because of its name we assumed that at some point some members of the family must have participated, as members of the “Carboneria” secret society, to the upheavals that preceded the campaign for the unification of Italy.

The estate had a rather ample garden with tall trees, a large sunny terrace with a very nice view over the hills and valley (which later proved optimal for yoga) with some more secluded, shaded corners and a wooded glade to provide shelter from the summer sun.

My mother had asked Rinpoche indications about how he wished us to organize for the retreat, and since he had not indicated a span of time, when we found this place on a quite reasonable seasonal rent, after some consideration we ended up renting the place for the whole summer.

So here we were, with a lorry chock-full of sleeping gear, berths, brooms, refectory-style multi-hollowed trays, simple sil-



verware, pots and pans, and food supplies for some time.

With the help of some of the youngest participants and our formidable family housemaid Pasqualina, we proceeded with a thorough cleanup and the setup of the sleeping spots for everyone in the various bedrooms. Under my mother's direction we roughly established a system of shifts for the various chores during the retreat. After a few days of work, everything was ready and July had started.

Most of the group was already there the 7th/8th of July and Rinpoche arrived soon after, with little Yeshe accompanying him.

A good number of us – myself included – were quite young, in the mid-twenties, and barely aware of the extent of maturity needed for setting off on a travel of such depth as the one before us. We were used to be rebellious to good manners and imbued with a general disapproval of the “adult” world around us; and although somehow lacking in inner discipline, we all were in search of something that could prove valuable enough



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of being seen as unsympathetic towards cherished beliefs. But many of the contributors to this volume are both scholars and dedicated practitioners (one is a lama). And the questions they raise cannot simply be ignored or wished away. The answer for practitioners is surely not to retreat either into anti-intellectual fundamentalism, or

into hyper-rationalist humanism. A balanced view may, perhaps, begin in an appraisal of what is meant by the “religious imagination”, seeing it not as the fabricator of fantasy and falsehood, but as a vital creative faculty, which both expresses, and serves as a conduit to, spiritual truth.

About *Padmasambhava* is dedicated to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and also to the

memory of Judy Allan, who was one of the organisers of the 2013 Shang Shung Institute conference on Padmasambhava in London, where some of these papers were first presented. ©

Available from Garuda Books <https://shop.garuda-books.ch/padmasambhava-historical-narratives-and-later-tran.html>



to justify our commitment into a better way of life. We didn't yet know how much our deepest and wildest needs would be met.

That evening he gave us a speech over dinner, explaining a little about how we would do the retreat, while explaining the importance the Guardians of the Teaching for Dzogchen practitioners.

After dinner we practiced a simple ritual for establishing a relationship with the Lamas, Yidams, Dakinis, and the Guardians for beginning our retreat. He gave us the Lung transmission of a Serkyem rite that his Master, Rigzin Jangchub Dorje was in the habit of chanting every evening as he was retiring for the night.

The following morning over breakfast, Rinpoche started at once giving us teachings and he continued uninterruptedly ever since for the whole time the retreat went on (which ended up being well over two months), whether in formal sessions or at any moment, answering all of our questions with unwavering patience and without ever keeping anything back. Most of those who had had previous experience of receiving Dharma teachings in other ambiances were utterly overwhelmed by his open, informal style and by the extent to which he was showing trust in us.

Every time we asked him a question, his answer would reach far beyond our expectations (and often our ken!) and reveal wide, deep and subtle connections between various and seemingly unrelated aspects of the Dharma.

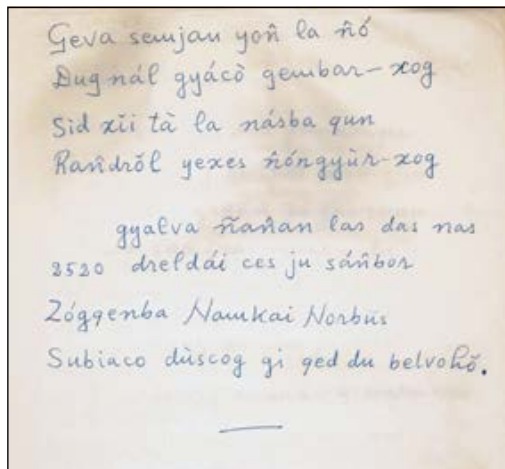
From the very start, simultaneously with – and in connection with – the “Purification of the Six Syllables” he taught us the

Yoga of Dream, with precise instructions on how to prepare during the day, how to fall asleep, how to deal with dreams in order to “recognize” them.

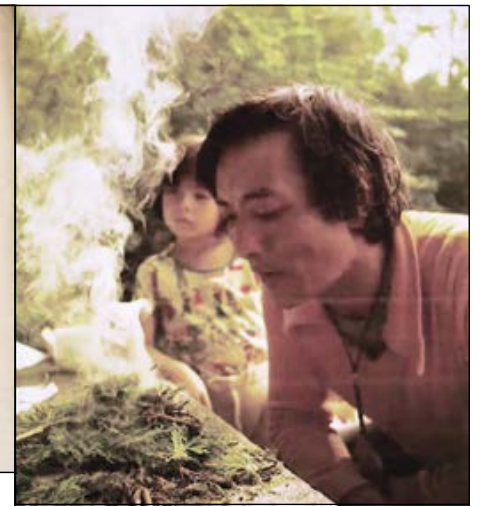
Throughout the time though, whatever practice he taught, he would gradually dispense some explanation on the deeper

pass, and then either say nothing and/or change completely the subject of conversation, or at times, just utter: “Interesting!” And that was all.

On an auspicious day Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave us the transmission of the Chetsun Nyingtig. There were 21 of us.



Guruyoga practice written by Rinpoche.



teachings of Dzogchen, taking all the time needed to make sure we had gotten some understanding.

At breakfast then, he would suddenly ask one of us: “Did you have any dreams last night?” And if we had, we would happily report our dream, expecting that he would tell us some meanings or interpretations, perhaps in an esoteric or psychological fashion. But soon it became evident this was not his intention.

After we finished telling, invariably we would keep silent for a while, waiting for an answer. Invariably he would let a long time

He formally bestowed on us the Four Empowerments, including the Rippai Tselwang.

In the first part of the retreat he gave teachings about various purification practices connected with the Introduction he had given, furthermore he deepened our understanding of the Serkyem offerings, transmitted the longer ritual for the Guardian Damchen Dorje Legba – with a beautiful melody and a system to play *rolmo* cymbals – and mainly the three types of Rushen, and the central verses of the Chod that we still practice today. He

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Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Will Beauty Save the World?

Crimean *chödma* and self-taught jeweller Lidiya Dzhebisashvili talks about her creative path on her spiritual voyage

My name is Lidiya Dzhebisashvili. I was born and grew up in Crimea with my kind parents who gifted me with two sisters, where my Mother taught us how to save animals and help elders, and our Dad taught us creativity and wisdom. Our house was always full of artistic people from Moscow and St. Petersburg who adored my father and mother and our bookshelves were filled with albums on art and literature and esoteric books.

Once, when I was at secondary school, my father asked me where I would like to go to study after finishing school. Without thinking too much I answered: "Nowhere. I can learn everything myself". I still remember his smile and approving gaze when he looked at me. This conviction in my capacities and myself came from him. Not only because I soaked it up watching him, seeing his confidence and ingenious

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also transmitted a special Guruyoga with Guru Samantabhadra. Every afternoon on the terrace, Rinpoche taught us the foundations of Yantra Yoga, demonstrating personally the various movements and breathing exercises.

When not illustrating a specific item of the Teaching, he was continuously narrating historical recounts of Tibet and Shang Shung, of his family, his Masters, stories about the different Masters of the three Transmissions, and the rising in the Tibetan world of heavy problems like sectarianism, thus unfolding before us an unforetold, amazing and variegated world of culture and spirituality of extraordinary richness and depth.

As days went on, we were each facing sudden moments of surprising "opening" in our minds; it was like we were discovering

new perspectives to everything. At times, casually meeting in the garden, we would see in each other's eyes a look of wonder...

We were slowly beginning to see the unfathomable value of what we were receiving. And the value of him who was giving all this to us. With what I know now, I think this was the spontaneous dawning of true, inner devotion for our Guru.

In the middle period of August Rinpoche went away for a few days with his family, leaving us with much work to do in retreat, especially purifications and Rushen practices.

For a little over a week we remained there, each practicing on our own, trying to overcome our many heavy habits of distraction... And reuniting in the evening for the Guardian practice.

On his return he taught us the Semzins, the Four Chog Zhags of Khregs chod

and while mentioning the Body of Light achieved by his Masters, he even intimated the existence of the practices that lead to this special realization, the supreme Four Lights of Thos rgal.

The majority of the participants to this retreat were from Rome, with a few from other towns. We received one day the visit of a group of students of Rinpoche from Naples, who had been following his teachings on Yantra Yoga.

As the ending of the retreat was approaching, Rinpoche summoned us all for a meeting, on the topic: how to continue. But of this I will tell another time. ©

This article is part of a series recounting memories of experiences, retreats, travels and other moments spent with Dzogchen Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during his travels and teachings across the globe.



approach to task-solving, but also because my parents filled my day in a way so that after school I would run to different sports and artistic groups, from karate to photography, from piano and flute classes to painting school. He saw more benefit in them than in the simple drill and kill of the school curriculum, although even these tasks sometimes seemed boring to me and then, with the permission of the teacher, I would pass an exam on a recorder playing a Khachaturian tune with my nostril, and always made my parents laugh with such acts.

In his youth my father served in the army in Baikonur [Kazakhstan], and as many people who served there were exposed to radiation he was ill a lot and left this life very early having given me the gift – my faith in myself and my capacities. And I keep this gift with gratitude in my heart and try to develop it and take on everything new with interest. Moreover, learning something new turned out to be a very useful training tool for thinking as well as for practice.

Meanwhile our mother taught us to help and save all that is alive – insects, animals, and people. Working on three jobs, she managed to take care of all of us and taught us to always strive to help those in need, so no grannies with heavy bags ever went home without us helping them. And now all merits that come from my sisters' charity projects go to her.

Years went by and after school I went to Moscow to start working to help my mother and sisters. I quickly learnt to extend nails and eyelashes from my boyfriend Maxim's aunt, Nadezhda, thanks to Maxim who helped me to buy all the materials. I started to work very successfully as a beauty consultant and was studying academic vocals. Four years passed in this way but I didn't see any kind of realisation of myself in society.

I returned to Crimea and together with my childhood friends we went to the ancient cave town of Mangup-Kale and stayed there, reading Buddhist books and coming back home to Simeiz from time to time. In 2002 I finally met my two masters, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and Bogdo Gegen Rinpoche, my Chod teacher, who I visited in January 2003 in India and Nepal where I learnt Chod practice. For two years I did personal retreats in sacred places near the caves of Padmasambhava, as well as receiving teachings from H.H. Dalai Lama and Lama Wangdu Rinpoche. Again the spon-

sorship of my ex-husband Maxim helped me to make this journey!

When I returned two years later, I met Fabio Andrico, and while we were living at Tashigar North in Venezuela, close to our master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a friend of



mine asked me to help her with a necklace that had broken. Sitting on the floor in our room I spread the beads on the floor and in the light of the sun let my fantasy run free. I wished the necklace could become even more beautiful and interesting than it was before it was broken. I was so involved in the process that I didn't notice that Fabio had been watching me with curiosity for a while. He told me that I had some talent and could make a living doing this.



On Fabio's next trip to New York he brought me back a bag with beads, wire and tools which I use till now. After receiving some lessons from Fabio – he had made bracelets for a living when younger – I took up this new pursuit and in a couple of weeks went with my Vajra sisters to the endless beaches of Margarita. While they were swimming and sunbathing I went to the brim of the ocean and offered my jewellery to holidaymakers to buy. I don't know why I was so brave because looking back I understand that it was quite a risky endeavor. Venezuela is not the safest place. I got acquainted with all the 'inhabitants' of the beach, other sellers, cooks, waiters from the cafes and even some local criminals. The artisans were kind and accepted me in their circle and told me about the local ethics – never to compete with a colleague, pass by if a colleague shows something to a group of tourists, even if the tourists are interested in your goods. I liked these rules very much and easily moved into their environment, learning about real life and the problems of the island hidden from the eyes of tourists.

"Pretty girl, if someone tries to offend you, tell them that Don Jose will kill for you" – a local gangster who liked my courage told me when he asked me what I was doing in Venezuela.

The jewellery trade on the beach was going very well. I creatively elaborated more and more new designs and without even noticing started to think in new categories. Although I had many more teach-

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ers who shared the secrets and nuances of jewellery making with me, the beginning was laid at that time on the floor of our house in Venezuela. Thus Fabio not only helped me to become close to Rinpoche, but also became my guide into the world of jewellery work.

I went on to travel around the world following Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and cooking for him, and came back to Bogdo Gegen Rinpoche and did retreats in the Himalayas from time to time. When I returned home to Crimea I had a dressmaker from whom I would order clothes for the Master and myself. I told her about my journeys, how I sometimes lived on Margarita Island, and that I wanted to make silver jewellery. And it happened that this dressmaker had an acquaintance, a jeweller in Sevastopol, called Elena. Elena had wanted to travel to Margarita since Soviet times and when she knew that I had lived for a long time on the island, she treated me very warmly. She still makes silver wire and plates for me for making rings. But the most important thing was that she taught me how to solder silver and over the years has always encouraged me in all possible ways to study soldering and hot enamels. There were also other excellent friends, like Yomaira from Caracas, Lalita, Morgan, and many others all of whom helped me with materials and information on materials and instruments,



for which I am very grateful. Last summer I went to the beautiful city, St. Petersburg, and took lessons on hot enamel from a wonderful teacher and now I am training in this mesmerizing skill.

I really enjoy receiving messages of gratitude from girls who have bought my earrings or rings, when they share their positive emotions from wearing the jewellery. I love to set my creative energy free and see how new designs are born under my fingers. For me it's real magic – before

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Mila Misek

I remember – yes, I still remember – it was 1977, the year I got ill. Then, I used to live in Baden, near Vienna, Austria. It was spring when I started to feel sick, and the doctors didn't know what it was. At the time, I used to go to a Buddhist center in Vienna, where I met Kalu Rinpoche and the 16th Karmapa. One day, my friends from the Center called me and encouraged me to come there. They told me that a very particular Tibetan lama was coming – no one knew who he was, perhaps a Nyingmapa or Bönpo – so it would be an important occasion.

I had just escaped from the hospital, where they wanted to treat me like a lab rat to see what I had, without even making a diagnosis. I had a fever, I felt pain all over my body, and I had trouble breathing. With a final effort, despite my pain, I went to the Center. When I got there, I saw a young Tibetan man wearing jeans, with



it was just in the mind and now you have it in front of you on the table.

But maybe if it was not for my mother and participation in a charity (we have little shelter with 20 cats and 4 dogs at home), I wouldn't be doing it so actively, and instead would spend more time in retreat in some Nepali cave, but the feeling of responsibility for those who are near me, for those I can help with beauty, inspires me to continue. Moreover the south of Crimea is one of the most beautiful places in the world and I have a possibility, living a simple life, to work, practice and infinitely study at my home. I have my own sense for beauty, and if it resonates with the sense of beauty in another person, it makes me very happy. I draw inspiration from masters of the past who lived many centuries before, which is why many people feel the breath of ancient times in my works.

Living in Crimea I am very lucky to have my Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's child, Kunsangar South, close to me.

As you may know, there is an artistic tradition that comes from Rinpoche himself. I often observed how he could playfully fold origami, cut the form of double dorje from paper, or make a bracelet or protec-

tion necklace. Some of them he immediately gave to auction with all funds going to support a Gar or a place where a retreat was taking place. But his most precious ornament, the Precious Garland, his most important gift is his Teaching, which lives on in his students. That is why any sincere searcher, not having money, but having transmission, could get in touch with it.

Together with the Gakyil of Kunsangar South we are producing Melongs, the funds from which, excluding the costs of material, will go towards organizing retreats at Kunsangar South. In this way we pay homage to Fabio, my first teacher of jewellery, with the funds from the first set of Melongs covering the costs for the organisation of his possible future retreat at Kunsangar South. Future sets of Melongs will go to the organisation of retreats with other instructors of the Dzogchen Community. This project has been very successful and I hope that in future we will continue earning money for Kunsangar South using creative activities.

As long as the teaching is alive, Rinpoche is alive too, and beauty, at least a little bit, will be saving the world. ©

his Italian wife, and two children sleeping next to him. I was surprised. My friends explained that he wasn't a monk and that this was his first journey outside Italy. He had come with a small group of his students, as he was invited by some Austrian scholars to teach them about his lineage of transmission. We all listened to his lecture with great interest – it was very different from what I was used to back then. What impressed me the most was his simple, clear and kind way of transmitting such a deep message. Finally, we could laugh and ask all the questions we wanted! It was completely different from what I was used to.

When he spoke about his education, he explained that among all the subjects that he needed to study there was also medicine, and in particular the diagnosis of the pulse. Then I thought to myself that if he was also a doctor, maybe I could ask him to do this analysis for me to find out why I was suffering so much.

I asked him: "Please, I'm ill and the doctors here can't figure out why. Could you give me a wrist diagnosis?"

To my surprise, he nodded with great kindness and, after putting his fingers on my wrists, after a few minutes he told me: "Now I know what you have. It's a cold illness in your lungs. You should go see a pulmonologist."

I was surprised not only by the clear diagnosis, but especially by the certainty I felt in that moment. How lucky! Who knows after how many incarnations, I had finally met my teacher! It was so simple: it was him.

Rinpoche left Vienna with his family and his group of students, and I booked a visit to a pulmonologist. But I didn't stay long in the doctor's office. After half a minute he had already examined my thorax and he told me that I had a neoplasm in my lung, and that I would need surgery. Back then, I didn't know anything about medicine: I was a lute maker and a musician. I went to the hospital but the doctors' ideas did not convince me. First, they wanted to remove my tonsils without even doing a blood test (I still have them today). Since I wasn't convinced, I decided to go back home.

"But if you don't have surgery, you could die!" They warned me.

"Sooner or later that will happen", I replied, "but not now. I still have a lot to do!" I signed to leave the hospital and called a taxi.

"Then at least take this medication," the doctors insisted.

I took those pills for an afternoon, but I couldn't stand them because they made me feel sick and changed my mood a lot. If I had continued to take them for weeks, I would have gone mad, so I stopped immediately.



The pain and suffering increased, and I was unable to breathe. One evening I started thinking that if I died, I would stop suffering. After falling asleep, I had a dream that was so clear that it felt real. Rinpoche was walking towards me and he looked kind, as usual. He started talking to me: "Hello, how are you?"

"I am very ill, but I followed your advice," I replied, "and the pulmonologist confirmed I had a neoplasm on my lung. They wanted me to have surgery, but I didn't agree with the way they wanted to cure me so I went home and took their medicine, but it made me feel even worse."

"It is true, that medicine is not good for you. Wait until I send you our Tibetan medicine."

When I woke up, I couldn't believe I had had that dream; I still remember it clearly.

Three days later, the doorbell rang: "Hello, I was in Naples and, since I was coming to Vienna, Rinpoche asked me to bring

this medicine to you, and he told me that it was very important." There were two bags of pills, one to be taken in the evening with hot water, and the other in the morning with cold water.

After a few weeks I started to feel better and after a month, the fever and the pain had almost disappeared. When I went to see the doctor I had a pleasant surprise: "I have to congratulate you, you are cured, the medicine worked!" The doctor told me.

"It didn't go exactly like that," I replied, "I couldn't bear to take that medicine. It was driving me mad. I took a Tibetan herbal medicine instead."

"But those few herbs couldn't heal anyone, let alone you. But whatever happened, now you are healthy. I will see you in six months for a checkup."

"I don't care what you think, I know what happened... let's say I was lucky. Thank you, but I don't think we will see each other again."

And that was it. I was healed without undergoing any surgery. It was Rinpoche who saved my life.

From that year on I started following Rinpoche around the world and I took part in many wonderful retreats. I was lucky to meet him and to also have the honor of hosting him twice and being his guest at his house in Formia. But what mattered the most was the unique teaching he provided us, just as unique as he was.

And this is my story "How I met Rinpoche", my teacher, the kindest person I ever met on Earth. ©

March 21, 2020



Mila painting Tibetan letters on a rock at Merigar in Tuscany.



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