



# THE MIRROR

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Refuge, Bodhichitta, and Integration  
Individual Potentiality  
Introduction to Khaita Joyful Dances  
Pictures from the Past



INTERNATIONAL  
DZOGCHEN  
COMMUNITY



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Front cover: "In Loving Memory", calligraphy by Giorgio Dallorto.  
Back cover: Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's last retreat at Merigar West,  
summer 2017. Photo by Edith Casadei

# Editorial

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Adriano Clemente, one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's earliest students, is the main translator for the "Complete Works of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu" and responsible for the translation of the Longsal cycle of Rinpoche's teachings. After leading the Ganapuja held at Merigar, Tuscany, on August 11, 2020, he gave a short informal talk to those present and in webcast.

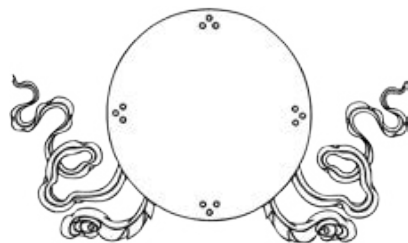
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When we say that we are Dzogchen practitioners, as Rinpoche said, it is very important that we apply everything we have learned in our condition. So that means not only Dzogchen teaching, the path of self-liberation. But mostly when Rinpoche started to teach he always spoke about observing one's own condition. This is the gate for entering the Dzogchen teaching and it means that we have to recognize how limited we are in our condition of body, speech, and mind; that everything we try to do is always conditioned by our habits and karmic traces. This is the root of all problems and also the root of why sometimes we do not progress in our practice.

You may remember that very often Rinpoche used to say, especially to those students like myself who had been following him for twenty or thirty years, that we had now become like *shravakas*. In the Hinayana '*shravakas*' means 'listeners' but of course it doesn't mean that they just listen and don't practice. This cannot be. The root of that word comes from the fact that they [Buddha's disciples] were always around him, listening the whole time to what Buddha was teaching, and receiving his teachings. And this is what we have been doing, some of us for forty, thirty, twenty, ten, five, or just one year; it depends on each individual. We are all different. But now the *shravaka* period is history. It is gone.

We are now in a different situation and have to take full responsibility for ourselves. After Rinpoche passed away some people were upset or shocked and asked who would be his successor now. This idea is not good from the beginning. If we have a worldly business or organization, then we need a successor, someone to take care, otherwise this business fails. In Tibet it



In general, in Dzogchen we say self-liberation. For example, the invocation to Samantabhadra explains the base, the path, and the fruit for each of the six *Lokas*, and the path is always explained at the level of self-liberation. But this means that we should have already trained a lot with our mind. Maybe if we are lower capacity we should start with fixation, with *shine (zhi gnas)*, then go slowly and acquire sufficient capacity for that. If, for example, anger arises – somebody provokes me, perhaps I am a husband and my wife provokes me – I become angry, then I reply and fight with her. When anger is already present, it is not possible to self-liberate at that time. Self-liberation is before the arising of anger as emotion. We have to work on the root of that energy which can manifest as anger, and this is not easy at all. That is why liberation is explained in different stages called *Cherdrol*, *Shardrol*, *Rangdrol*, but they are not very easy. Therefore, if we are not at that level of self-liberation, it is extremely important that we work on a level that is easier for us. So, for example, if my wife is provoking me, I am present in that situation in that moment, and even if my anger arises a little, I control it by thinking that if I get angry now, I will reply, I will say some bad words, we will fight, and the result will be negative. It will be useless.

Sometimes even practitioners such as husband and wife seriously fight between themselves, but that way they destroy themselves. This is not only important for husband and wife, but also for sons, daughters, any kind of relationship that we have in general, but particularly in the context of Vajra brothers and sisters. It is very important to keep this presence and awareness continuously. Of course it doesn't mean that if we get angry and fight one time we should feel guilty for the rest of our lives. We can clarify things with the other person and, of course, we will need to put our big ego, our pride, to one side. But that is possible because pride brings no benefits and only creates problems. We should consider that anger and all the oth-

er emotions are something that we identify with ourselves, and this 'self' is just this bundle of five emotions together. But we are not this bundle of emotions.

When we do the Ganapuja we say, "Om A Hum, A La La Ho" and before that we say "Samaya Shudde A". What does "Samaya Shudde A" mean? It is not that now we are purified and in that moment the *samaya* is purified because I repented and I regret and now that's it. This is not the Dzogchen way. This confession that we do, this purification, we do in the recognition of our original state, our real nature. It's like saying that we were dreaming and now we have woken up; we are in this condition; we are awake. That is why it is purified because everything is pure in that condition.

I'm not a person who can give advice to others, but if somebody asks me to say something, I say what I have been feeling since Rinpoche passed away, how I have tried to work on myself, and what is the most important thing. Instructors, who have the Santi Maha Sangha Base commitment, and even just practitioners, should be like an example for others. The real sense is not that these people know more, that they have read many books, and that people think that they know so much and want to be learned like them. This has no value at all. Or [people try to emulate] someone who can pronounce [the practices] well, or who can sing well. These are very relative things. But when we see how a person deals with others, how he/she behaves, if he is patient, if he doesn't get angry, how he speaks to people, then we can say that we would like to become like him or her. How did they manage to become such a good human being? I would like to become like you. This is a good motivation.

So this is it. If you have some questions, we have a few minutes. Otherwise this is it. ©

was like that and the monasteries needed successors otherwise the economy of the monasteries would go down. It is the same here for the Community and some people say that the membership is half of what it was last year and that many problems are arising. But we should think well about this. Is it the reason, the main point, why we have been following Dzogchen teaching? It is not. Dzogchen teaching means that each of us can be Rinpoche's successor if we apply and realize his teaching, like sowing many seeds in a field as Rinpoche did for thousands of people in this world. Then it depends how the secondary causes are, the weather, the water and these kinds of things. Each of us is following his own path in his own way, but we are all traveling in the same direction.

So I think it is very important now that all the Community remains together and that we always try to be present and aware of our situation. In Vajrayana, it is said that after we receive empowerment, it becomes like a snake that enters into a tube (who can only exit at one end or the other, e.g. liberation or lowest states). Why? Because in general after we receive Vajrayana initiation we have to follow all our *samayas*, our commitments, at the cost of our life. It is the same for us – we have one very important *samaya* to be present and aware. In general, in Dzogchen, if we go in a more intellectual way we have four *samayas*. These four *samayas* mean to continue in the state of instant presence. This is the main *samaya*. But if we are not aware, then at least we can be present. That is very possible for everyone. If we are present because we are aware of our situation, then it is not possible that we cannot know if we are doing something wrong.



# Refuge, Bodhichitta, and Integration

An excerpt from the Atiyoga Retreat, Dzamling Gar, December 2017–January 2018.

Day 3, December 30,  
continued from The Mirror issue 148

Photo courtesy of Kunsangar South.

**W**hen we start any kind of practice in the Buddhist tradition at the beginning there is the Refuge and Bodhichitta. In Mahayana there are three sacred things that must not be missing. At the beginning we need to have knowledge of Refuge and Bodhichitta when we do any kind of practice, or chant mantras, or do visualization.

We know that everything is unreal, as Buddha said, and while we may not have the capacity to empower everything with the state of contemplation at least we can consider everything to be unreal and govern them with the potentiality of *shunyata*. Even if we have done something important we should not consider it to be concrete, it is just like a dream. Relatively it is present, but in the real sense everything is unreal. This is the second important thing.

Lastly we need to dedicate our practice to all sentient beings. If we do not do this dedication even if we have accumulated merits we can destroy them and they will have no benefit. In the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* it says:

*Whatever good deeds  
Such as venerating the Buddhas, and generosity  
That have been accumulated over a thousand aeons  
Will be destroyed in a moment of anger.*

We may have accumulated a great many good actions to offer to enlightened beings and so on, but if we do not dedicate all our good actions to sentient beings, when we feel very strong anger we can destroy it all. For that reason dedicating and empowering with mantra is very important. It is not only a good action because we are still accumulating merits, but it becomes something real, concrete, and in particular we ourselves and those sentient beings who have a strong relationship [with us] can receive those benefits.

So these are the three main things that any kind of practice should not be lacking.

## Taking Refuge

However, Refuge and Bodhichitta does not only mean receiving a vow or learning how to chant some words. Many people concentrate on these things. For instance in different schools of the Tibetan tradition they consider their Refuge to be more elegant, nicer than others.

There is a very short form of the Refuge practice with very few words:

Lama la kyabsu chio	take refuge in the Lama!
Sangye la kyabsu chio	take refuge in the Buddha!
Chö la kyabsu chio	take refuge in the Dharma!
Gendun la kyabsu chio.	take refuge in the Sangha!

This is the Vajrayana principle with the Three Jewels and the Guru and most people chant it that way. However in Thangtong Gyalpo's Refuge one first takes refuge in the Guru:

མ་ནུམ་མཁའ་དང་མཉམ་པའི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྱོད་མ་སངས་རྒྱས་དེན་  
པོ་ཆེ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

I and all sentient beings infinite as the sky take refuge in the Lama who is Buddha.

Then one takes refuge in the Three Jewels:

སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོས་དང་དགོ་འདུན་ནམས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

I take refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha.





In Vajrayana style one takes refuge in the Guru, Deva, Dakini, the three principles of the roots. At the end it says:

རང་སེམས་སྟོང་གསལ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྐུ་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆིའོ།

I take refuge in the Dharmakaya, the emptiness and clarity of one's mind.

This is a more elevated way of doing the Refuge.

Some traditions use these kinds of Refuges and consider the form they use to be more elegant. But the principle of Refuge is not singing or chanting words. Singing and chanting words is to help us remember and make us understand the real sense of the Refuge.

Some people like to follow Buddhist teaching but they don't want to be Buddhists. To them being a Buddhist means that they have to take a vow such as the Refuge. Other people take Refuge in order to feel that now they are Buddhist. Traditionally the Refuge is like a kind of passport and having taken Refuge people feel that they have become Buddhists. But this is not really Refuge, it is just like a reflection of it. Refuge means that we know that samsara is suffering, firstly for ourselves, then for our parents and all sentient beings. We need to be free from the suffering of samsara and in order to do this our final goal is to be in our real nature. This is more the Dzogchen way.

In the Vajrayana tradition there is the development stage and accomplishment stage to arrive at the non-dual state of Mahamudra that is our real nature. For that purpose we follow teaching and a teacher because we do not have this knowledge. We follow a teacher who gives us this teaching and tells us which kind of practice to do. This is really Refuge and it means we are following a path. If we are following Dzogchen Teaching this is Refuge. Why are we following Dzogchen Teaching? Not for making money, or for becoming famous but for having realization.

How can we have that realization? Only by getting in our real nature can we discover it. We apply and follow what our teacher teaches, and if we have that intention this is Refuge, real Refuge. When we do any kind of practice we need to have present the intention that we are following a path. Recalling that [intention] is called real Refuge. Even if we don't use any kind of words, when we have this presence we have perfect Refuge. We may have received vows, we may know how to chant the Refuge but it is 1000 times better if we have this presence that we are really following a path. This is why yesterday I gave you the example of my students who didn't receive initiation because they said they hadn't received a Refuge vow. I hadn't explained it to them because I thought that they had understood a little the real sense.

### Cultivating Bodhichitta

Secondly there is cultivating Bodhichitta, which means we change a little the way our mind thinks. When we do practice such as Ati Guruyoga, we consider it to be the Dzogchen path and we take Refuge in it. How does Bodhichitta correspond to that? When we explain in a more intellectual way we talk about cultivating the Bodhichitta of intention and the Bodhichitta of application. Inten-

tion means that we do not remain egoistical because everybody has a very strong ego. If we want to attain realization only for our own benefit that is not cultivating Bodhichitta.

We know how important it is that we understand that our real nature is the state of Dzogchen, but how many sentient beings are ignorant of that and suffer day and night, life after life. Wanting to understand this ourselves and helping others to understand it, this is a good intention. Of course we should not be egoistic but first of all we need to realize ourselves because, if we do not, we cannot create benefits for others. For instance, if a person falls down in the street and cannot get up, we have some compassion and go there to help a little. That is a good action and relatively we should always do our best to be present in circumstances. However it will not help if person has an illness and in this case, instead of only helping if we call a doctor or bring that person to the hospital there may be a possibility to cure that person's illness. This is applying good intention.

Starting with ourselves we do benefits for others. But it is not sufficient only to have a good idea. Intention means our ideas and we can have different kinds of ideas, both good and bad, but in a practical way applying them is important. In this moment we cannot apply total realization but we can do something related to circumstances. For that purpose in this moment we are doing Ati Guruyoga. This is application. We do the visualization and we get in that state. So, we can understand and also remember that any kind of practice we do is related to our good intention and also its application. For that reason in any kind of practice in Vajrayana, even in the lower tantras, Refuge and Bodhichitta are not lacking.

In Dzogchen teaching too, in general cultivating Bodhichitta is essential. For instance there are the words of the Anuyoga tantra that say that even though we know the nature of all sentient beings is just like Buddha, the perfected state, sentient beings do not have this knowledge, they are ignorant of it, and are always transmigrating in samsara. Now we are cultivating Bodhichitta in order to benefit others, to make them understand, and to wake them up. This is cultivating Bodhichitta in Dzogchen.

While we are learning about *thun-mong* in more general way, learning about Ati Guruyoga we can have an idea about what the nature of mind or our real nature means. Although we may not discover it, we know in which direction we should go. What should we do to apply it? We cultivate Bodhichitta and develop it more and more, day after day, and since we are Dzogchen practitioners, compassion develops automatically.

Once I went to England and did a retreat for many days explaining about Dzogchen. One day one of the students asked me, "Many lamas, many teachers always explain how important bodhichitta is, how we need to develop compassion, but you never talk about this, so how do you consider this in the Dzogchen Teaching?". I replied saying that even when I am talking what people understand and what they cultivate is artificial bodhichitta. I don't want people to create this artificial bodhichitta but instead to discover what bodhichitta really means, that we know and understand our real nature. Then we can understand the sufferings of all sentient beings and why they are suffering in samsara. The most important

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thing is to cultivate bodhichitta that way so that, when you have knowledge of Dzogchen, even though I do not talk about bodhichitta even once, your bodhichitta manifests and develops, not this artificial bodhichitta. That is how I explained it to that person.

In the same way it is also indispensable that we know what bodhichitta means relatively. In Mahayana they say,

*If the intention is good  
also the levels and paths will be good.  
If the intention is bad  
also the levels and stages will be bad.*

If we cultivate and apply good thoughts then everything will manifest positively, while if our intentions are negative then the results will be negative. Thus in Mahayana it is essential to cultivate bodhichitta or good intention, which means we try to benefit others, not only ourselves. This method is also important in the relative condition. Some people such as Christian practitioners are really dedicated to benefitting others, which is very good. Relatively we have many possibilities to do this in a positive way, however that is also related to our knowledge, understanding, so it is very important that we apply it that way.

### Integration

In a concrete way *thun-mong* signifies what we can do to have more understanding and get into the sense of the teaching directly. We should really develop this. It is the reason why many good practitioners of Dzogchen, teachers and students, develop more and more day after day, and integrate their existence in the path. Those who are ignorant of that only follow rules and do not understand the importance of being present.

We can also learn to be present with movement. For example, if we go deeper into the Vajra Dance, we integrate with movements. When we are learning the Vajra Dance we are not in the state of contemplation because we are working with our minds thinking about where we should put our feet and which kind of gesture we should do. This is the relative condition. But when we become more familiar with the Dance, by simply being present all our movements are integrated in the state of contemplation in that moment.

When we go to the inner essence of Dzogchen practice it means that we succeed in integrating the relative condition in contemplation. This is not at all easy when we are living in our dualistic vision in which good is good and bad is bad. In the same way we cannot have both contemplation and dualistic vision. We cannot just be in the state of contemplation. Integration does not happen in an intellectual way, by judging, thinking and doing analysis. So, you see it is very difficult at the relative level. But if we learn the method of the teaching then it is always possible, particularly when we are learning Dzogchen Teaching. So, doing Dzogchen practice means we are integrating totally.

It is not easy to integrate with our material level and visible things connected with it. It is much easier to integrate thoughts and concepts related with mind in the state of contemplation. On the material level we see an object in front of us as something

concrete. We consider that although it appears to be concrete, its real nature is emptiness. But it never becomes empty. It remains something concrete because we are looking with our eyes on the material level. On the material level we can only see the material level and for that reason it is not easy to integrate. However when we are practitioners we know that there is an easier way in which we can integrate, so we learn and develop this. We become more present and this presence is with our mind. It is not something related with our senses and their contact with objects. When we apply that presence then there is a possibility to integrate.

To put it simply we can say that being present in the Dzogchen way is learning how to be in the state of integration. Even though we may not be completely in the state of contemplation, being present is very close and a very easy introduction to the state of contemplation. This is one of the reasons that being present is such an essential practice. After being in the state of contemplation most important is being present, so we should concentrate more on this. I am not saying you shouldn't do other practices such as visualization of deities, chanting mantras and so on. Relatively there are also many problems for which we need to do these kinds of practices, but all these practices are after being present, so try to remember that.

Now we are doing a retreat. I am explaining, you are learning, and we are also doing some practice like Ati Guruyoga. In that moment you are trying to be present. This is all very nice, but when we finish the retreat we leave and it all becomes only the history of retreat. "A few days ago I went to Dzamling Gar and we did a nice retreat. When I was doing practice at Dzamling Gar during the retreat I found that I felt much better. Now I've returned home, I can't do practice." Many people say, "What should I do, I can't practice!". If you know how to integrate a little there is not much difference in being at Dzamling Gar and being in your home. That is why before you leave you should try to check whether you have learned, or not, how to do Ati Guruyoga. Whether you have learned, or not, how to relax with Ati Guruyoga. Some people say that they cannot relax because they have a lot of problems and thoughts that do not let them relax. Of course if you go after thoughts they never agree with you. But when you can relax with thoughts, then it is self-liberation. So try to do your best to learn these things that we have been doing. ❀

Transcription by Anna Rose

Editing by Liz Granger with assistance from Elio Guarisco



# Individual Potentiality

## To Learn Dzogchen Means to Discover Our Dzogchen

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche speaks about Dzogchen teaching and its goal

September 21st, 1990, Merigar West

Reprinted from The Mirror issue 9, June 1991

A practitioner interested in realization must not become passive but be aware and active. Buddha Sakyamuni had infinite wisdom and omniscience or total realization and he said, "I give you the way, but realization depends on you." Practitioners who are interested must follow the path. In this world there has been no Master better than Buddha Sakyamuni, and he could not make other individuals realized. This means that we have to be active and firstly understand what the teaching is and know how to follow it. In the Dzogchen teaching knowledge is more important than meditation. Meditation is only a means to reach realization. It can have different meanings but it is always only a means. We have to understand well what meditation really is and how it functions otherwise we become passive. There are many ways, just as there are many different individuals and conditions. We have our condition and our capacity, and we are all different.

Once we understand what the Master is, we understand what the teaching is. The teaching is knowledge beyond color and form, knowledge that people who are interested must discover. The principle is not that we go to a Master, and he tells us what to do. We are human beings and humans can reason and speak. When we receive a teaching, it is not necessarily something that we must follow blindly.

### What is Dzogchen teaching?

First of all it says, "Open your eyes and look at what is around you, what the concrete conditions are". In this way we can understand the teaching, the teacher and everything. We must see if the sense of the teaching corresponds to our condition or not, whether it is useful for our existence or not. If someone does not examine it clearly and says, "Ah, this is the fantastic teaching of such and such a Master with this title and name", it means he is passive. We must not be passive because if we are passive we cannot become realized. If we do not become realized we lose a lot of time and we do not have a lot of that. It is not necessary to



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Merigar April 1992.

Photo by Hans Vogel

be old to die. Everyday there are accidents in airplanes, cars, ships and trains and people die. Even if there is not a precise cause, nobody knows what will happen. We live in these circumstances so we do not have any guarantee that we will live another week or a month or a year. We only believe it, saying, "Next year we'll do this and that", and sometimes we go further and say, "We'll do this and that in two or three years". This is also useful because if I do not live other people will live and things must progress. But deep down we do not have any guarantee. Therefore time is precious and we cannot waste it.

### Preparing for life

In the Tibetan temples there are silken flags called "victorious flags" and colorful ornaments all along the columns. All these ornaments move a little continually and eventually one day they tear away, and then no longer have a purpose. In the same way we pass our lives speaking and then our lives are spent. This is a real pity because we have indeed many possibilities. Maybe we have met real teachings and masters. We have all these possibilities, but we only collect them, put them in a sack and fill it up. Then, while we are preparing, the end of life comes.

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There is a saying of a precious Sakyapa master that life is consumed only in preparing. This is true also for spiritual things. If someone is minimally interested in the teaching, it seems he must write a thesis on the teaching. At the most he thinks, "One day I want to do this practice". Tomorrow he repeats this, and the day after tomorrow he continues making a collection believing that he is preparing. In this way his whole life is spent preparing. In the end the next future life begins before the end of the preparations. And then when he dies, he still has not finished preparing.

We must understand this very well, especially in the teaching we do not only have to prepare, but also to apply our own knowledge. The Dzogchen teaching asks us to observe ourselves, our existence, our limitations, and conditions. This is in our interest. If someone discovers his own existence, his own condition and limits, it is better for him. We live in a lot of confusion and we have many problems. Finally, this way, we can discover where these problems come from. This is why we have to work on ourselves, not only looking at others, and reasoning or believing in someone. Therefore during our retreat, first of all we must understand very well what the teaching is.

I have spoken of this many, many times, and probably many people who follow me think, "I always hear this", but even if they have heard it, if it does not work it means that they have to listen some more. Even if we do not like to listen, this is exactly what we need to do. Everyone needs to work a little on him or herself, otherwise even if we talk about many teachings, it does not mean anything. Many people get interested when they read a mysterious and very elegant title [of a teaching] and they say, "We have a fantastic teaching!" But where is its substance? The substance is that it changes. If someone is so interested in titles, why doesn't he buy catalogues? Teaching does not work that way; it must be integrated in the individual him or herself, and be alive. When the teaching is alive in this way a title is not necessary any more.

### What is integration

The master gives a direct introduction to the state. What does 'direct introduction' mean? It does not mean reading a book or making a commentary on a book by Garab Dorje or a text like a Tantra. It means touching something as if you were being burnt. This must be understood. Especially people who already know and have followed the teaching may feel, "I am an old practitioner". You really must observe a little what 'old' means in this case. Each of you should observe your own practice. How do you feel when you meet someone who may be unpleasant or disturbing? Do you really have the capacity to integrate this feeling? Do you feel the same when you meet a person you love very much, such as friends, and when you meet someone unpleasant? If, through distraction, you hate or get angry, but with presence are immediately able to liberate this feeling, it means that you are practitioners and that practice is something living in yourselves. It is not so difficult to understand that the function of the teaching is something concrete.

Many people have frequently asked me, "How can I discover if I am realized?" I have replied, "You must not worry. If you become realized, you will understand it very well." Before obtaining reali-

zation you must develop clarity and you will understand very well that you are getting there even before you become realized. For example, if we have the capacity to integrate a little or to find ourselves in the state of presence, then it also becomes manifest in our daily life, as an aspect of our body, voice and mind. First of all, all our tensions and attachments diminish. There are many practitioners, who instead of reducing or integrating their tensions do not even discover them. Day after day they accumulate tension and in the end they are ready to explode. It is true that many practitioners do practices and then they end up with a psychoanalyst, because they cannot explode. It means they do not understand the manifestation of tension, and if they do not discover this in the practice, it means they have to work hard, and understand the teaching well.

Many "old" practitioners say, "It is so difficult, I cannot integrate". Of course it is difficult to integrate if we never do it. Integration is not only an idea, or the creation of an idea. First of all we must find ourselves in a very precise state of awareness.

Many people may lack a basis from the beginning and, believing they can jump very high, think, "I have understood everything. This is contemplation". And then they jump and arrive at *thögal* (*thod rgal*) and practices like *Yangthig* (*yang thig*) and other elevated methods without substance. What is there to develop? To grow some flowers in a field we need seeds. First we must sow the field and then water it so that something will grow. If we only believe that we have sown seeds even if we pour water on the field every day, nothing grows.

Nowadays there are many fertilizers that make plants become enormous in two days. Some people get these kinds of fertilizers and use so much of them that nothing grows. A method like the *thögal* practice is like a fertilizer to develop contemplation, to obtain realization. But if there is no knowledge of contemplation, what can we develop?

So, first of all, we need to understand the basis and work with it very well. We must not be confused between an idea and real knowledge. I have explained many times and also given examples, but it seems many people are not able to understand very well. I do not mean everybody, because there are also many people who certainly understand. If everyone could understand, what a marvellous thing it would be. Also you must not always think that everything is so easy.

Milarepa, after having killed many people, felt very guilty and thought, "Oh, now I must go, and do purification to obtain realization, it is impossible to live like this. I have to find a way to become realized". Then it is said that he went to a Master, and the first Master he met taught Dzogchen. This Master told him, "If you meditate in the morning, you will become realized in the morning; if you meditate in the afternoon, you will become realized in the afternoon." Milarepa thought, "Ah, even if I did so many evil actions, the path is that simple, so there is nothing to worry about". So he stayed for two days with this Master but concluded nothing. Finally this Master also understood and told him, "You had better go to another Master who will give you something harder." And finally Milarepa met Marpa who always tortured him. Then he felt better and finally managed to purify himself. But you see how many sac-





rifices he did for so many years. It may be that Milarepa did many evil actions, but I do not think that Milarepa was stupid, and we too must not think that it is so easy. Especially when we speak of a teaching like Dzogchen, with which there is a possibility to reach certain knowledge and to develop it. However this does not mean that we reach this knowledge without doing anything. We must firstly understand what the Master is communicating to the student, listen to it and understand it well, and then bring it into our existence. That way it becomes real.

### Methods and Dzogchen

Knowledge of the Dzogchen teaching must become a part of our daily life. What do we do in our daily life? We breathe, we move and we think. These are three actions in our three existences and these three actions must become integrated into the practice. The practice is not only to sit down and say two or three prayers.

So what do we need to learn when we use a method? For instance if we are going to learn a method of practice and according to this method we must sit in this way and think about this, it means we are working with an experience, trying to have an experience. What is the purpose of this experience? First of all it is to discover knowledge, and secondly when a certain knowledge is obtained, to realize this knowledge. Methods are for nothing else. Thus methods are not the fundamental thing, they are relative.

Many people follow the teaching and think it is like a method. That is why people become slaves of method. "A Master gave this method, I follow it, I am a slave of it". It becomes ridiculous because a method exists to help one develop or to give a certain benefit. A method is like a fork to eat, if you have one it is much easier to eat. If we have a steak to eat, we need a fork and a knife, when we have these two it is much easier to eat. But this does not mean it is a principle, this is only to make it easier. Therefore all methods are like forks and knives, or like clothes. When it is hot we wear light clothes, when it is cold we wear something warmer, when it is raining we put on a raincoat.

All things are secondary and can change according to the circumstances, and the same is true of the methods. There are many, many methods, but the most important thing is that a practitioner understands what a method is used for and in which way it must be used. A method always has its own principle, like a way of working with an experience. Many methods do not make it clear. But in the Dzogchen Teaching we can understand the principle, because knowledge is the principle. Therefore in this way a practitioner does not become a slave to the method, he can use the method. We have learned many, many methods and we have also learnt how to apply them. We must understand their value.

Many people come to me to follow the Dzogchen Teaching. First of all they ask me, "I have followed other Teachings and I have learned other techniques, methods and ways of doing things, but when I follow the Dzogchen Teaching can I use them or not?" This kind of person has the idea, "Now that I follow this Master, I must follow only the Dzogchen methods." There really does not exist a label such as the 'Dzogchen method'. Everything can be a Dzogchen method. We must understand what Dzogchen is: we are Dzogchen. We are not methods, we are beings. We have our state

and infinite potentiality and we are trying to discover this potentiality. What do we need to discover this? We have many means, and these are methods. There is no problem about which method we use, however we must not forget the principle. If we do, we only follow this method and that, jumping here and there and nothing is concluded.

In the Dzogchen Teaching, first of all we must understand that we have to open our eyes and discover our state. Everything else is relative to discovering and realizing this. It is not necessary to limit anyone. This is one of the biggest problems of all beings. Most people, especially intellectuals, usually think, "This is so and that is so, it must be that way." In this way they limit everything. It means they never go beyond these limits and always look outside themselves, never at themselves. Thus limited visions develop and we never discover our real identity, our potentiality. To learn Dzogchen means to discover our Dzogchen, that of each individual. Dzogchen is really this. It is very simple, but also very difficult.

If someone knows how to follow a Master, understanding what he is communicating, maybe it is not so difficult to find this state, this knowledge. But it is very difficult if someone believes that he has got the knowledge or feels that he knows a lot about this or that, blocking himself and getting further and further away, instead of discovering it. This means one has to follow the Dzogchen Teaching very well, very carefully, understanding what we are speaking about and where we want to arrive.

### Collaborate!

An extremely important thing I want to say to all the people who have come to this retreat, new ones, old ones, half-old ones, everybody: collaborate! You shouldn't always think, "I only want to listen to the Master". Usually people do not often want to ask other people about the Teaching. Why? Because they think, "He is not the Master. I only listen to the Master." Do you know where this attitude comes from? From that famous Ego. We think, "I am clever, I am the one who possesses the knowledge". It's very rare to find someone saying, "I am stupid, I am so limited". This we do not discover. In the Dzogchen Teaching we have to understand how to observe ourselves. Therefore even if someone does not understand something like a method, he can still speak to the people who understand it. Also the "old" people should not think, "Ah, this is a new person. I cannot talk about this, because it is a secret". It is a secret when it is not the moment to speak. But if a person has come here to do a retreat, we should reason a little. What did he come here to do? He did not come here on holiday, but to follow the Teaching, to understand and apply it. Then it is clear he is interested and wants to participate. If he is interested and participating, why must things be secret?

In the Teaching there are some kinds of methods like the Dzogchen *thögal* or practices of Yantra Yoga, which must be communicated only to the people who have a very precise and deep base in the Teaching, because if a person does not have a concrete base and only reads and does things from a book instead of receiving benefit from these methods, that person only plays around and blocks his or her possibilities to realize and develop. Therefore

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sometimes for these reasons there are some methods that are kept secret until it is the right moment.

But to communicate knowledge is not secret. Communicating knowledge is the principle of the Teaching. If it cannot be communicated, why should it be taught? Something needs to be communicated by the Master and also by the students to the students, and so collaboration is very, very important. There are, for instance, many methods like the practice of Yantra Yoga or the *semdzin* (*sems 'dzin*), which are specific methods to work with experience, that do not necessarily need to be given by the Master. If someone possesses knowledge of these methods, that person can always collaborate with others.

### Master and student

We need to have a precise idea about our consideration of the relationship between the Master and the student. We must not think that a Master is always someone very exalted, like a commander, or think that whatever the Master says, must be so, closing our eyes and remaining passive. The Master is a person who collaborates.

Remember when we take Refuge in Sutra Buddhism, we say Nammo Buddha Bhya, Nammo Dharma Bhya, Nammo Sangha Bhya. We take refuge in the Buddha, who is the one who gave this path, and refuge in the Dharma because it is the path and through the Dharma we can obtain realization. Then there is the third refuge, the Sangha. What is the Sangha in reality? Generally Sangha means those who are practicing the path, those who are in the same boat to arrive beyond the ocean of Samsara. Then if we are all travelling in the same boat, we must collaborate well. If people create problems because of their egoism and spoil the boat, making a hole in it, we will never arrive. This is the principle of Sangha. It means everyone, and the Sangha also includes the Master. It does not mean that the Master is left outside.

So what is a Master? He is someone who collaborates and helps people and his followers should understand this. Deep down we all have infinite potentialities that we may not understand but perhaps one day we will understand them and obtain realization. In both Tantrism and Dzogchen Teaching if we really understand well, we can see all beings as realized beings. This is the real condition. We find ourselves in the relative condition, because we do not understand, because we are always distracted. For example, when we open our eyes and see an object, we immediately think, "Ah, what a beautiful thing" or "I like this, I do not like that". We do this because we are distracted and this is always a manifestation of distraction. When our senses are in contact with objects and we are distracted, we accumulate infinite negative karma. So even if we have infinite potential, we remain ignorant of the real condition. If all of us really understand what our real condition is, it is not necessary to classify things saying, "This is more important than that." Everything is important. ❀

Edited by Tuula Saarikoski

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## Reflecting on the Legacy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Marco Baseggio

International Atiyoga Foundation Chairman

In these days, thinking about the second anniversary of the passing of our beloved Master, I have asked myself what the legacy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is for me. I'm also trying to understand how to interpret this feeling in my personal work in a team with many others building the International Atiyoga Foundation (which should communicate the legacy of its very precious founder to the world).

To be honest, the only thing that comes to my mind is guru yoga, Ati guru yoga, a

bright white A in the center of my body. Not much else. This relaxes me a lot and my narrow vision broadens, just for a while. Then to prolong this condition I also sing the Song of the Vajra, so I feel more myself.

And all the rest? All the various ATIF departments and the various activities that we should communicate to the world, the questions about what is open to the outside public and what is not, about the problems connected to the different entities of the Dzogchen Community, the problems of membership, who can give the transmission, who cannot, the guidelines for the public courses, and so on .... are they all only relative aspects? I really think so, in the end. Then I considered that if many of us have been fortunate enough to understand the real meaning of guru yoga, if we can practice it daily, maybe several times a day, then it is already a lot. And what we will be able to communicate to those around us, without any presumption of giving a direct introduction to the state of rigpa, but simply by living, will already be a great deal. If, by staying just for a few seconds every

day in our authentic condition, we will be able to live coherently and authentically, working with the circumstances that arise before us, with total internal and external honesty, we will undoubtedly be able to communicate the legacy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to those we meet in our life path, simply by behaving with deep coherence with ourselves, without being too distracted and having, perhaps, a little courage, always trying to respect the dimension of others and collaborating at least with those close to us.

Then we will always make mistakes – it will be enough to notice them, hoping that others will forgive us, just as we forgive others, in short, staying a little relaxed.

So, speaking of taking a little courage, I decided to communicate these thoughts of mine, as one of Rinpoche's students, to his other students with whom I have found myself sailing in the same boat.

Good practice everyone! ©

[m.baseggio@atiyogafoundation.org](mailto:m.baseggio@atiyogafoundation.org)  
<https://atiyogafoundation.net/>



## Events

New Autumn Events from SSIUK all available via zoom. Please visit the website for registration: [Shangshunguk.org](http://Shangshunguk.org)

SSIUK Lecture Series (ONLINE):

**Displaying & Hanging Thangkas**  
with Anne Bancroft

Friday, Oct. 2, 2020 from 6:30 pm to 8 pm

**Tibetan Yoga Beginners Weekend**

with John Renshaw via Zoom

Sat, Oct. 10 to Sun, Oct. 11, 2020 – all day

SSIUK Lecture Series (ONLINE):

**The Murals in the 'Temple of the Great Liberation', Merigar, Italy**

with Prof. Fabian Sanders

Thur, Oct. 22, 2020 from 6:30 pm to 8 pm ©



### Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

**Shang Shung Foundation, Italy**  
Località Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso (GR, Italy)  
Giovanni Totino [g.totino@shangshunginstitute.org](mailto:g.totino@shangshunginstitute.org)  
[www.shangshungfoundation.org](http://www.shangshungfoundation.org)  
[www.shangshungstore.org](http://www.shangshungstore.org)

**Shang Shung Institute Austria**  
Gersdorfberg 19, 8212 Pischelsdorf, Austria  
Office: 0043 664 88 66 26 60  
[office@ssi-austria.at](mailto:office@ssi-austria.at)  
[www.ssi-austria.at](http://www.ssi-austria.at)

**Shang Shung Institute UK**  
Lekdanling, Tibetan Cultural Centre  
14 Collent Street, Hackney, London, E9 6SG. UK  
[www.shangshunguk.org](http://www.shangshunguk.org)

**Shang Shung Institute of America**  
18 Schoolhouse Rd, P.O. Box 278  
Conway, MA 01341, USA  
Phone (main-Anna) 413 369 4928  
Fax/Bookstore 413 369 4473  
[www.shangshung.org](http://www.shangshung.org)

**Shang Shung Institute Russia**  
2v Mayakovskogo str.  
Bolshiye Dvory, Pavlovsky Posad district  
Russia 142541  
[info@shangshunginstitute.ru](mailto:info@shangshunginstitute.ru)  
[www.shangshunginstitute.ru](http://www.shangshunginstitute.ru)  
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## Write Your Story

**L**ong Distance Sponsorship is a project that can change people's lives not only for those who benefit from it, but also for those who decide to support a child, a monk, a student, or an elderly person at distance.

In over 30 years of activity, thanks to the long-distance sponsorship project, ASIA has helped over 4,300 Tibetan children attend schools where their cultural identity was protected, and more than 350 students attend high school and university. More than 750 monks were able to continue their cycle of Buddhist study and practice, and 170 elderly refugees were given the opportunity to live in care homes and be adequately cared for.

One aspect of this project that always continues to inspire us is the human one, the relationship that is established between two people who learn to know each other and to go beyond distance and cultural barriers.

Over the years we have received many emails, letters, and phone calls from supporters that have told us the story of two lives that reach out and change. Sometimes they are fortunate enough to be able to meet in person, other times through exchanging letters, photos, or video messages.

This is the experience of Enric and Dragana, who went to visit Tashi in Darjeeling, India.

**O**ur journey towards Darjeeling began in 2017 when we decided to distance support. We wanted to offer a girl not only a comprehensive and quality education, but also a good environment for her growth. It was important that it was a girl because females are generally more disadvantaged than males.

That same year, at Dzamling Gar in Tenerife, doing karma yoga for ASIA, we read the information brochures about their distance sponsorship program and we felt it was what we were looking for. We were very fortunate to have the help of María Herrera, who explained everything to us



in detail, advised us and helped us start the long distance adoption. In no time we had the information about our god-daughter, Tashi.

After visiting Nepal, we went to Darjeeling. We were received by the Rector of the College, who offered us a guided tour during which we could see the entire complex. It is located in the upper part of the city, just 10 minutes walk from the famous Chowrasta Square and consists of several buildings, play areas, studios and sports.

And then we finally got to meet Tashi. It was a wonderful and emotional moment. Having the chance to help another being is something very special, especially when you do it through a serious and dedicated NGO like ASIA, which makes sure it is done with the highest possible guarantee. Our idea was to get to know her, spend some time with her, but without interfering with her studies or her study routine.

With the Rector and the Director of the school we agreed upon a program of visits and some outings, and since when we arrived we discovered that her little brother was also at the school, we asked for permission to take him out, too. Thus, despite the rain that accompanied us tirelessly every day, we were able to visit various places in the city such as the Himalayan Mountaineering Museum, Padmaja Naidu Park, The Tibetan Museum, and enjoy some

pleasant walks. In this way we were able to meet two adorable children, who were very polite and humble.

We are very grateful for all this and we encourage everyone to contribute their own grain of sand, so that ASIA's projects can have continuity and prosperity over time, as they are beneficial to all beings, and, as Rinpoche said, one of our goals should be to cultivate bodhichitta".

You too can write history.  
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Via San Martino della Battaglia 31, 00185 Rome, Italy  
Tel +39.06.44340034, Fax +39.06.44702620  
[comunicazione@asia-onlus.org](mailto:comunicazione@asia-onlus.org) [www.asia-ngo.org](http://www.asia-ngo.org)

Association for International Solidarity  
in Asia, Inc. ASIA  
Post Office Box 124, Conway, MA 01341-0124 USA  
Phone: 413.369.4153, Fax: 413.369.4473  
[andreamnasca@gmail.com](mailto:andreamnasca@gmail.com)  
[www.asia-ngo.org/en/](http://www.asia-ngo.org/en/)

Förderverein ASIA Deutschland e.V.  
c/o Gisela Auspurg  
Königswieser Str. 2, 82131 Gauting  
Tel.: 089 / 127 630 32





## Introduction to Khaita Joyful Dances and their Deep Meaning

Transcription of a webcast talk on 29 July 2020 at Merigar West, Italy

Adriana Dal Borgo

Tonight I will talk a little bit about the Khaita project that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu started in the north of Tenerife at the end of 2011 and to which he dedicated most of his time until 2018 when he left this dimension.

What does Khaita mean? *Kha* means 'sky' or 'space', and *khai* is genitive, so 'of the sky' or 'of the space'. *Ta* means 'harmony' or 'melody'. So this short word beautifully expresses the sense and the goal of Khaita that is discovering harmony through melody. 'Space' gives an idea of openness, something without limitation, without beginning or end. We usually translate Khaita as "Harmony in the Space". This harmony, we discover through songs and dances.

The logo that Rinpoche chose for Khaita is an infinite knot, golden and shining, on the planet Earth. This symbol is also one of the eight auspicious symbols and represents the continuation of love, compassion and energy. Continuation in this case means "without corners", because we say that everything is round, so without obstacles, without limitations. And it's on the planet Earth, which is the dimension where we live at this moment.

And, particularly, we call these dances joyful. Rinpoche chose this word, so it's 'joyful dances'. In this case 'joyful' means something stable, a state that we discover inside of us that is not connected with positive or negative circumstances. Once we discover it, it doesn't change.



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Khaita dancers in Adeje, Tenerife, on April 8, 2014.

What does the Khaita project consist of? Chögyal Namkhai Norbu dedicated most of his time to it from the end of 2011 till 2018. First, he searched for songs and discovered some interesting songs by young Tibetan artists on Internet. He chose around 400 songs according to the melody and the lyrics out of the thousands that he watched and listened to. The lyrics of the songs that he chose talk about values that are important not only for Tibetan culture but for all cultures,

who dedicated themselves to supporting their country.

This was the first step. Then Rinpoche transcribed the Tibetan texts of all the songs from the videos one by one. And he not only transcribed, he also corrected some points and slightly changed some words. And the way he wrote was very elegant. Now we have more than 400 texts that are very beautiful to see. He put ornaments like flowers at the beginning or to separate the parts of the songs. He also



Khaita at Merigar West, 2012.

and for each of us as human beings. For example, love for our own fatherland, the importance of respecting the environment and maintaining our own culture and language, respect for our ancestors and parents, the importance of spreading peace in the world, and also overcoming limitations and borders between groups and countries as well as the limitations of our own judgment. The third criteria according to which Rinpoche chose the songs were the singers. He chose singers

created a system of small ornaments, like a small wave, to help us to understand the melody of each song. For instance, if there was a phrase ending with *O-o-oh*, he counted precisely how many *o*'s to put. You can imagine how much time he dedicated to this.

And then not only in Tibetan – because only a few of us can read and sing in Tibetan – but he transliterated all these songs into the Drajon phonetic system. He did ex-

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Khaita at Dzamling Gar 2013.

Photo by Paolo Fassoli

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actly the same thing with a small wave and ornaments but in Drajon. So from that moment we could also start to sing with him.

In general Rinpoche would wake up every morning very early at 4 o'clock. Then he would put on the music, write down the songs and, at breakfast, he would come with 2 or 3 new songs that he would translate for us orally, and we would record the translation and transcribe everything.

At that time, after presenting these few songs, we would continue singing together for the rest of the day, from the afternoon till late in the evening singing and dancing together. So these days, weeks, and months were filled with melody and sound.

Rinpoche always liked to sing very much. Especially at the beginning, we used to sing the same song 10, 20, and even more times, especially when the melody was not easy to understand. We would repeat it again and again, but Rinpoche always sang with the same freshness as if he was singing for the first time, never bored but as if it was really a new experience, learning something more.

At the very beginning we would sing the whole day and later we started to have an appointment at 5 o'clock. Rinpoche would say, "At 5 o'clock in every place we sing and dance together." If there was a retreat a 5 o'clock session was part of the program. If it was between retreats we would sing and dance in the Gönpa at Merigar, Dzamling Gar or other Gars. Or, when Rinpoche was travelling, if there was no common place where we could come together, he would invite everybody interested in singing and dancing to his private house. He would open the door and whoever wanted to come could come.

We have three collections of songs now. The first one that was published is called *Message from Tibet* and has 108 songs. This book has texts in Tibetan, Drajon, and their translation in English.

Then there is *Comments on Message from Tibet*, a collection of Rinpoche's commentaries on these songs. This is very interesting because there you can see different levels of understanding of each song. Many of the songs have a hidden or more profound meaning and often Rinpoche gave a profound explanation connected to Dzogchen Teaching.

The second collection is called *Barsam*, which means 'Bridge in Between', and now contains 70 songs. The third one, *Mekhor*, has 180 songs. The name *Mekhor* and the subdivision of these 180 songs follow the principles of Tibetan astrology of the elements.

Rinpoche really liked music, singing, and playing the flute and harmonica and, in fact, he had a big collection of flutes. Until the last months of his life he used to enjoy singing those Khaita songs that he chose. So, the music, the melody, and the dances of the Khaita songs really permeated these last years of Rinpoche's life and also our lives.

Today we have 230 dances with a big variety: some simple, others more complex, different types of choreography, and so on. Each dance has been approved by Rinpoche. He would carefully watch us dancing the first time, often correcting or changing some movement, and then the dance would be ready to be presented to the public.

At the beginning Rinpoche also liked to participate in the creation of the dance and all the first dances we did collaborat-

ing with him, finding together some movements, some steps. The principle of the choreography was to translate the lyrics into movement.

For example, in some songs they speak about the ten virtuous actions and we were wondering how we could represent them. One day, someone presented Rinpoche with a book with sign language for deaf people and he looked there for something interesting. 'Ten' in this sign language is like this [a gesture with two hands up], and virtue, like something positive, is this [a gesture with two hands up joining the thumb and index fingers]. Now when we have this phrase 'ten virtuous actions', we do it like this [the two gestures combined]. It's an example that we can find inspiration in everything.

The Khaita project united two aspects that mostly characterized Rinpoche's life. One is that Rinpoche was a great erudite in the knowledge of different fields of Tibetan culture. The other is that he had infinite wisdom and knowledge as a Dzogchen master. The songs and the artists are Tibetan, the language is Tibetan, so there is this aspect of supporting Tibetan culture.

Rinpoche said many times, "I am doing this not because I am Tibetan, not because I want to support my own culture, but because the Tibetan language is the key to access the most ancient Buddhist or Dzogchen texts. If we lose the language, then we lose this direct access." And the other aspect, as Rinpoche was a Dzogchen master, the use of worldly music and worldly dance as a contemplative method, is really original, innovative. It's a way to relax through presence and awareness.

In this way Rinpoche surpassed all our expectations, our ideas of what spiritual practice, a spiritual master or spiritual path should be because instead of sacred sound and dance we were using worldly sound and dance. As a great Dzogchen master he showed us first how to become aware of our limitations and then to find a way to overcome them, because there were many questions such as, "Why do we have to do this?", "Why is Rinpoche dedicating so much time to this instead of writing sacred texts?" or "I'm not able to move" or "I don't like the music."

Khaita is the last or one of the last great gifts that Rinpoche left us. For me it was really the last teaching that I received. It brings an important message to us that we can apply in daily life: how to really relax with joy and also how to collaborate. When



# Kidnapped and Liberated in the Space, with the Crystal Ball in Your Pocket

Yanchi Kompiš

## The use of the Sangha Application

Shannon Haight from Oklahoma (US) had a crucial life experience years ago. Mobile phones were not so common like nowadays. She was not some kind of hi-tech freak but she had her phone always with her. She was an ordinary user who checked what options the device offers and she took her energy to set one function – the most important to her – a speed dial to her boyfriend.

One early morning Shannon drove to her work. She stopped to grab some coffee. When she was coming back to her car in the parking place a strange man came to her asking something. At the moment she turned back he jumped on her: "He grabbed me... I think he had one hand around my neck, and my hands were flopping... the coffee went everywhere, but I was able to keep my purse", remembers Shannon.



He locked her in the trunk of his car and drove away. The aggressor was recidivist F. Collins and she was about to be his next sexual victim.

Although she was squeezed in a dark space scared to death, she remembered she had a phone in her purse. Not seeing, with accidental moves, she tried to call the help. After great effort she managed to press the number of some general emergency line. But unfortunately it

didn't work. She was desperate to accept this can be the end of her life. At that moment, she remembered her boyfriend. And the speed dial she has set to him. With the last strength she managed to find it and press the right button. And he picked it up. She started to explain what's happening. Suddenly, the car stopped. The driver discovered her phone. Although she protected it as much as she could, he tore it out of her hand. He locked her back and continued his ride.

But the police, alarmed by her boyfriend, were already on the way. They caught the car and liberated Shannon, who immediately ran to her beloved one. And him to her. She remembers the strong hug they had. Since then, they have been in touch with each other much more often, using their direct speed dial link. Finally, they decided to marry.

## What does Sangha application have in common with this story?

Similar to how Shannon drives daily to her work – we move on our path every moment of our precious lifetime. Mobile phone has almost everyone, using the apps is something we are getting used to. It needs *little patience to discover how each application works*. Like for Shannon when she tried to

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Singing Khaita songs with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Hotel Callao in Tenerife in 2013.

we dance we work with our three existences: we move with our body, and when we try to make harmonious movements it means we also work with our energy and our mind. And we train in presence and awareness. These three aspects are very connected.

Rinpoche also gave an important message for the future of the Community because he showed us how to collaborate in a relaxed way. When we dance we need to be aware and respect each other's space.

There are three principles that Rinpoche repeated when we danced. First, the movements should be harmonious. The dance should be correct so we have to learn how to do the movements. And the third – we should be aware of space and others. If we are doing a circle dance we should keep the circle, respecting each other's space and collaborating. I am aware of the person before and after me and of the whole space, but each dancer should be aware, otherwise the circle shape is not

maintained. So for me it's also a key point for the future.

In my understanding, Khaita is a mandala of the Dzogchen Community. At my last Mandarava retreat with Rinpoche in 2017 in Dzamling Gar a hundred of us were dancing in many concentric circles. Even though there were people dancing for the first time, there was a really big harmony in all of us and in moving together. I felt that this was the mandala of the Dzogchen Community and Rinpoche is our center.

## Where to find material regarding Khaita Joyful Dances

- Facebook: Harmony in the Space
- Youtube Channel with Rinpoche's talks about Khaita, all original videos, videos of dances and performances
- mobile app – khaita.com with all texts, Tibetan, Drajor transcription, translations, and music ©

Transcription by Anastasia Eremenko

Editing by Liz Granger

# Dzamling Gar Updates August 2020

Edited by Lena Dumcheva, Urara Taoka,

Anca Rusu & Justin Hudgins

Photos by Lesya Cherenkova &

Gisela Martinez

Published online August 23, 2020

## Activities

In the last several months we have had an intense program of online activities, including courses and practice sessions. We had a total of 2458 attendees for online courses held during May, June, and July! We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the instructors who led these sessions, as well as participants for making donations; the income from these online activities has been a vital support for the Gar during this challenging period. In the Gar itself we are now continuing courses, practice retreats, and daily sessions of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Khaita, etc.

## Financial updates

Recently, we received several inquiries expressing concern about the Gar's financial situation. We would like to assure everyone



that, even with the impact of closures and restrictions in response to COVID, the Gar is still financially stable at the moment.

As previously announced in January, we have fully covered all debts related to the construction of the Gönpa. This has only been possible thanks to the truly international collaboration of individual practitioners and Community organizations. We are deeply grateful for everyone's contribution, however big or small – your help has been essential!

We estimate that we will be able to cover our 2020 annual budget, comprising running costs and monthly repayment of a long-term mortgage that was taken years

ago for purchasing the Gar. Our annual budget is covered through different sources, including membership, accommodation, donations for on-site and online courses, and various fundraising activities. While some types of income have decreased due to COVID, e.g. on-site courses donations, others have increased, e.g. online courses donations.

A more detailed financial report will be presented at our upcoming annual meeting on September 23. A copy of the report will be available upon request. During our annual meeting there will also be an opportunity to ask questions to clarify any doubts and concerns.

» continued from previous page

set up for the first time the speed dial to her loved one.

We can have doubts when trying some new thing. Somebody can project rumors how the Sangha app has started, how official it is and so on. But then one can discover *this app is respected by IG, can be promoted and used in the Community*. One can discover how it works and benefits us.

Hopefully, we are not kidnapped daily by aggressors. But *what is the biggest danger, "the attack of recidivist" for us as practitioners? The lack of presence*. For example, we are going to check a simple message or information online and suddenly we notice we have been following loads of non-important info from different channels for the last hour. We are distracted a lot of our precious time. Sometimes we have got a specific support to be less distracted.

## Sangha app and its service in the Community

We can see in the real life stories, public general platforms don't respond always

on our specific requests. Instead of many channels overflowing us with never-ending tricky info, we can use *safe space – not to be "kidnapped" in the virtual world. Space with direct access to the most important info, and that's about the Teaching*. It's helpful to have a "speed dial" to access that info, if everything else would fall apart. That's why we have developed the Sangha app.

It has potential to be a practitioner's "map" in the general map of the online world. Collecting important aspects about the Teaching to dedicated space. It can be like a crystal ball always with you in your pocket. *Anything that appears in it – can connect you with the Master; His unique teaching and the Community*. Rinpoche reminded us many times the importance of being part of the Community, why it is good to evolve together. If we stay always on our own, we can lose our spiritual feeling.

*Almost 1400 practitioners support of each other during pandemic and isolation*

With easy access via the app – we could share our practices online, join them directly, seeing and feeling each other. There

are still many *online practices organized by gakyils and practitioners published in the Sangha app every day. Onsite events start to grow again, we can also check the details about different places there. We can find direct contacts or share anything in forum Together. And still not to forget our personal presence – with the Guruyoga reminder*. On our phone, we have everything always with us. Something simple and accessible to use to stick together.

## Living application

The application has possibilities to react to circumstances. The content of the app is alive with updated info. Our team implements the solutions from feedback. There are new releases with updated functions at least every three months.

We feel how important it is to develop the practice and support each other. For example, like in that dramatic story, to be liberated from danger. Using some useful tool can help to bring us back together. Beyond any distance, to the everlasting hug, between the Teaching and practitioners. ©





### Old Gõnpa

These days we have been taking down the white tent that came to its natural end after sustaining partial damage from strong winds during Calima in February. Some parts are being re-used for the downstairs hall in the new Gõnpa, e.g. the main doors and the flooring, while the main structure of the tent is being sold, a welcome contribution to the Gar's budget.

### Gõnpa and Gar works

We are now finishing a big project of treating the external wooden parts of the Gõnpa that are more exposed to the elements. It has taken us 4 months and 4 people to complete this task. We are also setting up the downstairs hall so that at least part of it can be used for activities.

Ongoing projects in the Gar include installation of wooden railings around the Gõnpa and finishing the main fence and construction of the two main entrances to the Gar.

### Dzamling Art

Recently we have launched a new project dedicated to our Dzogchen Community artists, aimed at introducing their art and providing an opportunity to acquire their artwork while supporting the Gar and the artist at the same time. Half of the income will be a donation to Dzamling Gar, while the other half will go directly to the artists to support their creativity.

We are very excited to inaugurate this project with the calligraphy series "Quarantine Prayers" by Giorgio Dallorto, consisting of several exquisite pieces created here in Dzamling Gar during the recent quarantine. Discover more at <https://dzamlinggar.net/art>.

After our newsletter was published presenting the first series, all the works were sold in 3 days!

### Garden

With the new "Moon Garden" recently completed (if you haven't read about it yet, have a look at the dedicated article in "The Mirror"), we have now started the landscaping and gardening works around the new Gõnpa. The garden team has already begun working on the groundworks and stone walls, while the maintenance team is focusing on the new irrigation systems. Moreover, soon we will be launching a dedicated Dzamling Gardens webpage where you can learn more about the variety of plants, as well as adopt one and help our Gardens to thrive.

ties at the Gar and island life in beautiful Tenerife.

If you want to know more about our suggested donations for accommodation during the summer, please send an email to: [accommodation.manager@dzamling-gar.net](mailto:accommodation.manager@dzamling-gar.net).

Of course, if you would like to pay more than the lowered summer suggested amount, we always welcome it and your contribution goes directly support each Gar's House and the IDC House.

We hope to see you soon!



The old tent/Gõnpa being taken down.



### Visit and Stay in Dzamling Gar

We are very happy that we were able to open again the gates of Dzamling Gar on the 1st of July after half a year of lockdown. As you might have found out from our last accommodation newsletter, this summer we are lowering our suggested donation amounts to stay in accommodation on the Gar. We hope all community members can have an opportunity to come enjoy activi-

# Summer 2020 at Merigar West

Published online on [melong.com](http://melong.com) September 17, 2020

After the reopening and resumption of "face to face" activities at the beginning of June, the summer season at Merigar West was full of courses and events, despite the rules against the spread of Coronavirus limiting the number of participants. For this reason, and to involve those who could not move in this delicate situation, there was an opportunity to participate online in the courses and numerous webcast practices.

In July there were many events related to the Dance of the Vajra, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary this year. There were weekend courses for beginners and for in-depth studies, and days dedicated to retreats of collective practices and Vajra Dance. In addition an intensive course on the Khalong Dorjei Kar Dance was held in which practitioners at Kunsangar North in Russia were able to participate together with those present in the Gönpa at Merigar. The course which was webcast allowed dance instructors and practitioners to study and dance simultaneously, despite the great distance.



There were many other initiatives, courses and retreats, including the intense training on the Semde practices of the First Level of the Santi Maha Sangha, with significant online participation and the collaboration of Kunsangar South for the Russian translation.

In recent years it has been customary to organize retreats inspired by texts

Osservate nei vostri Melong  
con la consapevolezza!  
Che cosa vi manca?  
È vero che manca l'insegnante?  
Vi manca l'insegnamento o trasmissione?  
O vi manca la pratica per realizzarvi?  
Osservate!  
Quanti insegnamenti avete avuti?  
Quante trasmissioni avete ricevuto?  
Quante pratiche avete imparato?  
Osservate!  
Quale è la cosa più importante  
per guarire un malato, conoscere la  
medicina, le cure o applicare le cure?

Rinpoche's handwritten instructions for the retreat (in Italian).

written by our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In particular this year, for the practice retreat that began on August 6, we used the indications that the Master left at Merigar for the Easter 1990 retreat in his absence.

As explained in an issue of the Merigar Letter published that year, "... the Master has stressed that most of the practitioners in the Dzogchen Community have received many teachings, not only from him but also from other teachers. He said that what we are missing are not teachings, but practice, in order to make the teachings we have received concrete. So the Master has prepared a detailed program of practices for each day of the retreat."

The daily program also included many moments of contemplative pauses and reflections, which we found inspiring and appropriate to the present situation.

The first morning *thun* opened with this reflection:

Observe, look in your Melong with awareness!

What are you lacking?

Is it true that you lack the teacher?

Do you lack the teaching or transmission?

Or are you lacking the practice to realize oneself?

Observe!

How many teachings have you received?

How many transmissions have you received?

How many practices have you learned?  
Observe!

What is most important in curing an illness, to know the medicine, know the cure or applying the cure?

The second day:

Reflect on the 4 kinds of awareness!

What are the 4 kinds of awareness?

Why are they important?

What is the relationship between oneself and the 4 kinds of awareness? How can one apply these in practice?

The third day:

Observe one's relationships of the Vajra, between teacher and students, between student and student, with whom we are traveling in the same boat.

Is this rapport important?

If so, why?

Then how is it maintained and collaborative?

What kind of problems manifest in this regard?

And how does one overcome this?

The program is still available here: [https://www.merigar.it/site/assets/files/2629/programma\\_ritiro\\_6-11\\_agosto\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://www.merigar.it/site/assets/files/2629/programma_ritiro_6-11_agosto_2020_en.pdf)

During the middle of August, some days were dedicated to new people, to introduce them to experiences of meditation, yantra yoga and Vajra Dance guided by various community experts.





The Training for Translators from Tibetan 2020 edition.

Merigar receives many visitors including those interested in following the various meditative paths that we offer, and tourists who come for a walk in the lush nature. In order for visitors to immerse themselves in the particular atmosphere of Merigar there are special days during which volunteers present the main aspects of the Community, the teachings and the buildings. The tours include a visit to the library, where visitors can see the Tibetan texts and listen to explanations on Tibetan writing and culture.

In the second half of August the training course of the eight movements of yantra yoga for instructors began, followed by the training course for Breathe instructors, led by Fabio Andrico. Participation on site was limited to twenty people, but many others were able to take advantage of the online course, with the possibility to also have the translation into Chinese, thanks to the invaluable help of the tireless Vince Li.

The Training for Translators from Tibetan (now in its 18th edition), organized by the School for Tibetan Language and Translation and hosted in the Merigar library, started on August 28 and will continue until September 20. This year the participation is largely online and from all over the globe, despite the difficulties due to different time zones. Students from Argentina, the USA, Australia, Finland, Italy, Germany, Spain, the UK, Russia, Australia, and Hungary are connected in deepening and sharing interest in the Tibetan language as a tool for understanding more fully the teaching, mutually enriching each other thanks to different experiences.

The evolution of the Coronavirus situation does not allow us to organize major events at the moment. The week of the second year since our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu left this earthly life will be dedicated to collective practices,

both on site and via webcast. The program has been published on the [www.merigar.it](http://www.merigar.it) website, on the page dedicated to courses and events reserved for those who have received teachings from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. These will be important days to unite the whole community once again in practice.

### Our projects

On our website you can also see some of the many projects we are following. <https://www.merigar.it/en/members/donation-for-a-specific-project/>

You can find a detailed account of the restoration of our wonderful Gönpa, of which the first part has been concluded. We are developing the project of the second part, which involves the renovation and restoration of the internal and external paintings, with the involvement of experts and consultants.

The Longsal symbol at the entrance to Merigar that welcomes practitioners and visitors has been embellished with a layer of pure gold leaf!

In these days work has begun on the path of awareness, a project started a few years ago and which involves the creation of a meditative/naturalistic path. The work has been delayed due to the emergence of environmental and hydro-geological problems which require in-depth analysis by experts.

Last year some instructors gave weekly experiential Yantra Yoga lessons for children in some of the local schools, and some adult classes for Yantra Yoga and meditation sessions were held at Merigar. This experience, which was very positively received by children and young people, will continue next year, and our offer, in collaboration with ASIA, will also extend to other cities.

Merigar's accounts are updated on a daily basis and from the control carried out up to June 30, compared with the data relating to 2019, we can say that the economic and financial situation is under control and able to cope with ordinary management and various projects in progress for the current year and, barring serious unforeseen events, also for the year 2021.

The pandemic, with the cancellation of all scheduled events, has resulted in a significant drop in revenue, but also a reduction in direct costs. Thanks also to the 8x1000 contributions received through the Italian Buddhist Union and the constant generous support of members, we are facing the situation in a positive way.

The 2019 budget will be presented as soon as possible to all members of Merigar during the annual meeting which this year has been postponed and which will probably be held in October. ©



Work on water drainage related to the path project in the area below the Yellow House.

# Transition and Continuation at Merigar East

Alexandru Anton

Time flies and so, after three years, I am finishing my gekō role here at Merigar East in Romania. It has been a very important experience for me – especially because it challenged me to become a more disciplined, organized and responsible person. On some level I feel as if I'm just starting this and now I'm finally getting to know my rhythm in these circumstances, what my fantasies are in general about accomplishing things and what the best way is to keep myself and the "wheel" going in a harmonious way. On the other hand, all this practical learning process, my occasionally childlike enthusiasm and the emotional storms "shipping" with the obstacles I've encountered during this time has left me looking for a lungful of fresh air. So overall I am experiencing this kind of edge where it is ok if I continue and it is also ok if I stop.

However, aside from my personal inner process, this year has been quite good for Merigar East, relatively. We had an intensive online course with Elias Capriles that covered the whole *Precious Vase* book – with around 150 people more or less actively participating. Then we did our planned Green Tara with 21 Praises retreat – online – with Oliver Leick and this was an intense week of strong and beautiful practice and explanations. So, even if none of the retreats took place physically, apart from a few notable exceptions from the Czech *sangha*, our online schedule kept us connected and the summer season went by quite quickly.

We are grateful to the Hungarian community and to Zoli Cser for organizing an online Vajra Dance practice retreat – which also brought us closer together to a few of the Bulgarian practitioners who chose to spend some days at the Gar.

We were lucky enough to receive the visits of several practitioners who helped us a lot at the Gar and contributed to keeping our morale high. Kveta and Akos drove their green wonder-van across Europe to fill it with *tsa-tsa* (small clay icons of deities, stupas, etc.) and other materials for filling the Stupa. Lubo came here for a two-week holiday by the beach but ended up



Selecting and cutting tree trunks for the *srogshin*.



doing more work than I would do in three months. I was very happy, because some things – especially where I have no experience, like putting in place the rainwater guttering for the gekō's house roof – are quite hard to do by oneself.

Jaromir Fatina from the Czech Republic appeared here with the intention to spend a few months to practice and help around the Gar. He ended up taking care of many

things that we've been postponing and he also started taking the *lungta* (Tibetan prayer flags) project to the next level – our wish is to have *lungta* all around the Gar – one kilometer of colorful flags spreading their positive functions in the wind. Around this time, together with the gakyil, we were discussing about finding the next gekō and administrator – we announced it and activated our *sangha*-brainstorming process, and we were waiting and waiting.







Then suddenly it struck us: "Let's ask Jaromir!" So we did and he accepted taking on the responsibility for one year, for the time being. So from October he will take on his geko position and we are very happy that the Gar can now benefit from his experience in working with projects and enthusiasm to contribute.

Oana Marcu, Yantra Yoga instructor, also came here with her dog to spend a few weeks in the tent in the camping area. Enjoying life in the camping hammock-lounge, working on her laptop every now and then and also helping us with all sorts of activities here, from being the pet caretaker, cleaning around the Gar, printing *lungta*, projects brainstorming... Some of these might seem simple tasks, but as a pet caretaker, Oana also had to ensure optimum conditions for our newly arrived guests – a pair of young goats. They are still in their teenage period, but if we don't watch them they can quickly eradicate many small fruit trees. Slowly, blending in with the nice camping and the beach, Oana quickly found herself at home. Suddenly we found out she was also interested in contributing onsite to Merigar East and in occupying the administrator position from spring. She is the perfect candidate for this: she is Romanian, has good experience in dealing with people and coordinating projects and also loves the Gar.

So, you see, the transition and continuation at Merigar East is happening quite neatly. Moreover, our capacities are uniting and the Gar can benefit more. Magda and I, after we finish our duties, would like to remain at the Gar to continue contributing towards the development of the gardening and landscaping aspects of the Gar. Also, just in case our support will be needed, we will be here to lend a hand. This means, more or less, that the Gar will have four long-term residents. We are very excited

and can already appreciate the increased feeling of the concrete presence of the community at the Gar. Who knows? Maybe more practitioners will be inspired to come and reside in this beautiful place and concretely contribute to the community. Especially since the new situation naturally encourages us to provide some more accommodation facilities at the Gar – aiming for having at least a few retreat houses that can be converted to dark retreat cabins whenever the case requires.

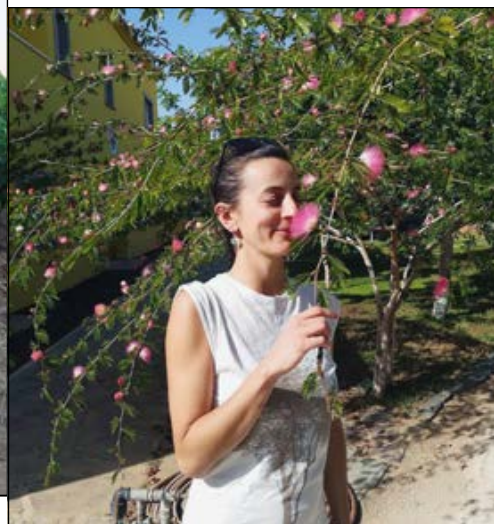
As you may know, the stupa-filling project has been postponed until 2021. Incidentally, we also discovered that the *srogshin* – the "tree of life" which was supposed to go in the stupa – was quite severely damaged by wood-eating insects – so we needed a new one! All the previous *srogshin* were brought from Bulgaria with immense help and dedication of the Bulgarian community, but now we felt we should at least try to get one locally and take responsibility for the process ourselves. Gradually, with

the generous help of our good friends, it happened that around 7:30 in the morning, during the waxing moon, on the full moon day of 2nd September 2020, Lubo and Jaromir, two practitioners of noble lineage whose parents are still alive, cut two beautiful pine trunks (ages 49 and 53) in a Romanian sub-Carpathian forest near Buzau. These two trunks will be residing and maturing in a big lake for around three months, then six months out to dry. After these nine months, just about time for our stupa-filling project to continue with the help of Migmar and all other brave yogis, we will have at least one good *srogshin* and hopefully a few more to gift to other stupa projects.

Another beautiful story is how the *lungta* flags with the twelve primordial masters came to Merigar East. First we found one old *lungta* and sent it to Vitek and slowly the printing frame emerged – which Pavel brought from the Czech Republic. Quite a simple process, isn't it? So we thought! But then we found out it was actually more complex and involved many people. Jaromir also helped to bring this to fruition and we are also very grateful to Fabian Sanders and Sebastien Remy for double-checking the mantras from the *lungta* design, originally composed by our brother Rafael from Russia. Now when you come to Merigar East you can see the twelve masters on the left and right sides of the gate. You are welcome anytime! ☺



Incoming geko Jaromir Fatina (left) will take over from Alexandru Anton (right).



Oana Marcu.



# Kunsangar North Aligned to IDC

Anna Apraksina, International Gakyil

Photos by Yulia Mikheykina

Published online on melong.com on August 12, 2020

We are happy to announce that Kunsangar North is officially aligned to the International Dzogchen Community. It was a tedious work because it involved the modification or creation of legal documents, statutes and so on and we had to adapt these documents to the different legislations and regulations. It took several years and a lot of efforts of present and past Gakyils, special thanks to Vita Adamenko and Kirill Shilov. At the moment only members who belong to Lings and Gars that have completed their alignment with the IDC are formally considered members of the IDC and therefore have the right to vote. Congratulations!

## Dance of Space Retreat at Kunsangar & Merigar

Published online on melong.com on August 2, 2020

On July 22–29 The Vajra Dance of Space, Khalong Dorje Kar, retreat with Prima Mai was held at Kunsangar North via teleconference from Merigar.

This was the first experience of conducting the Vajra Dance teaching retreat via teleconference and it was great! In Kunsangar North, with the assistance of two experienced instructors – Natalia Makarova and Ulyana Sokolova – 38 participants learned the steps, the directions of the movements and the mudras of the Khalong Dorje Kar Dance.

We express our sincere gratitude to Prima Mai for transmitting the precious teaching, inspiration and love for this unique method, and also to the organizers of the retreat and the technical support team of both gars, who made this retreat possible.

With love,  
Gakyil of Kunsangar North





# Children's Program at Kunsangar North

Marina Novitskaya,

Gekö of Kunsangar North

Published online on melong.com on Sept.23, 2020

The long awaited summer full of bright hopes that everything will resume its natural course has passed. A lot of work has been done at Kunsangar



North during the quarantine: we have been preparing to receive guests and our staff has been looking forward to hearing the sounds of mantras and invocations, bells and drums. But life is full of surprises and sometimes events unfold in a different way.

The children's program, which was humbly initiated last winter during the holidays, has now spontaneously come back to life. In winter we had a few children of our practitioners and those who took care of them. In summer, as soon as the quarantine was over, a lot of children and teenagers arrived at the Gar. They were children of our practitioners, most of whom had received transmission, very little ones, who were not born yet when it was possible to receive it, and quite aware teenagers.

The Gar seemed to return to its original state as a pioneer camp! There was children's laughter everywhere, and games and spontaneous concerts were organized. All the children attended the Ganapujas and helped to distribute offerings and take away plates. In a situation of uncertainty

# News from Namgyalgar in Australia

Published online on melong.com on Sept. 15, 2020

In April this year the planned retreats and courses at Namgyalgar were suspended due to Government regulations pertaining to the Covid pandemic. Nonetheless ongoing online activities such as collective practices, open and restricted Yantra Yoga and Breathe sessions, and Santi Maha Sanga Base and Level One study online with Arnaud are happening. A Sangha retreat, which was scheduled for late September at the Gar, coinciding with the anniversary of Rinpoche, will now be held online due to ongoing Covid restrictions and border closures in Australia.

Whilst it's been very quiet at the Gar in terms of retreat activities it has however been busy in other regards as Namgyalgar enters a new phase of evolvement.

New private caretakers have been appointed, an Air bnb is being created, and the Gakyil's in the process of seeking Council approval to extend the Gar's original development application and to build a retreat cabin.

Also the Gakyil has used this year also to carry out lots of much needed repairs and maintenance to some roofs, gutters and down pipes, the water pump, swimming pool and the sewerage system, etcetera. As well a new kitchen has been added to the Gekö's flat, in what was a dressing-room, which will enable the house kitchen to be included in the Airbnb rental.

with the continuation of the transmission it's very important to awaken children's interest in the Teaching, to establish and strengthen Vajra connections and respect for the Gar, the place of the Teaching, and the wish to offer one's work. And it happened by itself.

Children who were already teenagers expressed their wish to follow a retreat on the Vajra Dance that Benefits All Sentient Beings. Instructors Manidari Dobdonova and Tanya Pronicheva had this experience for the first time. It turned out that children learn quickly and dance very enthusiastically.



## New Caretakers.....

It was hoped over the past year that someone suitable would manifest from within the Community to fulfil the Gekö position but this didn't happen so the Gakyil decided to seek private caretakers who could also operate Air bnb at the Gar. Hence in July a couple, Joe and Carol, who are of good character and very well-suited for the role, were appointed. They, along with their teenage daughter, are in the process of moving to the Gar, slightly delayed by border closures, to take up residence in part of the Gar's house. Remaining areas of the house will be used for Air bnb and by the Dzogchen Community during and in between retreats.

During their first phase of moving to the Gar, Joe did some extensive lawn mowing,

» continued on the following page

siastically. They did two retreats – on the Vajra Dance that Benefits All Sentient Beings and the Dance of the Song of the Vajra. I can't express in words our feelings when we saw the children dancing the first part of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra during the Ganapuja. It would be great if this interest doesn't fade away but transforms into a stable intention to deepen their knowledge. So now we are thinking how we can develop a Santi Maha Sangha program for children. It is the main news for now which outshines all others.



Outside the time of retreats, Dzogchen Community members can visit the Gar to use the Gönpa, Dance Mandala, library, bookshop, etcetera, and also to stay overnight or a little longer, by making arrangements in advance with Joe and Carol.



» continued from previous page

brush cutting and began a pine tree eradication program. He also attended to some equipment repairs, and commenced organising the tool shed and preparing a maintenance manual as well as a fire plan for the Gar. Past Gekö, Topgyal, is kindly assisting Joe with passing on some Gar maintenance knowledge and advice.

#### Air BnB.....

On the other hand Carol, who has been a trusted Air bnb host for over seven years, is helping to create an Air bnb at Namgyalgar and has prepared a report for the Gakyil to consider. She's confident that as the Gar is a perfect sanctuary for those wanting to escape to a reflective place nestled in nature, and it's located in the Glasshouse Mountains where people love sight seeing, the Air bnb will be successful.

In considering the formation of the Air bnb venture the Gakyil is very mindful of maintaining a balance with regard to the Dzogchen Community's use of the Gar. In so doing four specific times per year will be reserved for retreats and courses during which time Air bnb operations will cease. Any additional community activities will be negotiated outside these four times according to the Air bnb bookings schedule.



#### Gar Development.....

As the Gar's original Development Application, which allowed for some structures that haven't been built, will expire on 31 August, the Gakyil has been considering the options. These include either letting the DA lapse and not doing any more development, or applying for an extension and revision of the DA so an outdoor dance mandala or a retreat cabin can be constructed. These options, their implications and the financial aspects were communicated to Namgyalgar members, who were invited to vote on which ones they preferred. The outcome was that the majority of the Gakyil has agreed to apply to extend and revise the

DA and build a cabin for personal retreat and sometimes for Air bnb use. Money was kindly donated to lodge an application and special funds reserved in Namgyalgar's bank account, plus funds being raised from within the Community, will be used to build the cabin. That is, as long as the approval is granted by the Council to do this.

As for the operational costs of the Gar it's anticipated that the Air bnb, once it's up and running, will generate sufficient income to cover these.

And so in summary the Gakyil, in consultation with community members, is charting new territory with this brave new unfolding adventure, as a way to try and retain Namgyalgar for as long as is possible while enhancing it with the construction of a cabin so practitioners will be able to undertake personal retreats.

[www.dzogchen.org.au](http://www.dzogchen.org.au)



#### THE MIRROR

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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

US Office: [mirror@tsegyalgar.org](mailto:mirror@tsegyalgar.org) • European Office: [lizgranger.mirror@gmail.com](mailto:lizgranger.mirror@gmail.com) •  
Editorial Staff: Naomi Zeitz, Tsegyalgar, Conway, MA, USA • Liz Granger, Merigar West, Arcidosso, Italy •  
Advisor: Adriano Clemente • International Publications Committee English Language Advisor: Liz Granger •  
Design & Layout: Thomas Eifler • Webmasters: Yuchen Namkhai and Luigi Ottaviani •  
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# Tsegyalgar East Update

Dear Global Sangha,  
Greetings from Tsegyalgar East!  
It has been a very quiet summer at Khandroling and we miss our worldwide Vajra family immensely.

Thanks to your generosity, the Khandroling Stupa Restoration and Landscaping Project fundraiser received the necessary funds. Jim Smith, the local community and the Gakyil are deeply grateful for the support received. The refurbishing of the Stupa structure is now complete, and the landscaping aspect of the project is underway. Jim hopes to finish the walkway this fall.

Tsegyalgar East's programs remain online via Zoom videoconference at this time. Our offerings include highly attended weekly practices, and scheduled courses and practice retreats. Concurrently, while the weather remains temperate, a few small informal practices continue to occur at Khandroling with attending members adhering to face masks and social distancing as required by COVID-19 safety measures.

Tsegyalgar East current regular online offerings include, weekly Yantra Yoga classes with Paula Barry, Chair Yoga with Naomi Zeitz, Practice of the Precious Vase sessions with Steven Landsberg, Guru Yoga of the White A practice with Mariano Gil, Ganapujas, Mandarava practices, and monthly Dream Yoga practice with Michael Katz.

Upcoming this fall we are also hosting, via Zoom videoconference, The Practice of Green Tara and Her 21 Manifestations



Rinpoche's Tree.

Photo by John Shannon



Stupa under restoration summer 2020.

Photo by Sarale Lizardas

with authorized Santi Maha Sangha instructor Oliver Leick from Thursday, October 8 through Monday, October 12 2020; and Boundless Embrace – Explanation and Practice of Jnana Dakini Thugthig with authorized Santi Maha Sangha instructor Steven Landsberg from Wednesday, November 4 through Sunday, November 8, 2020.

To register for Tsegyalgar East's fall Tara and Jnana Dakini practice retreats, and to receive our regularly updated program an-

nouncements, please visit [tsegyalgar.org](http://tsegyalgar.org) or contact [bluegakyil@tsegyalgar.org](mailto:bluegakyil@tsegyalgar.org) to be placed on our mailing list.

We are grateful that we can remain connected and continue to practice together online, but we look forward to a pandemic free future when we can safely practice together in person again.

Hope you are well, and we wish you continued good health. Stay safe!

With gratitude, Tsegyalgar East



## Tashigar Norte Update

Published online on [melong.com](http://melong.com) on July 31, 2020

Dear Vajra Family,  
It has been a while since we sent out a communication announcing the launch of our Permanent Fundraising whose first goal is to collect US\$ 15,000 before December 31st 2020 to cover our 2021 general budget. We would like to thank you very much for your warm response either with concrete donations, practice, merits, offering your skills or any form of positive energy that is contributing to our purpose to keep Tashigar Norte running. So far we have collected US\$ 5,983,79 which is 40% of our estimated projection of expenses with 5 months to go.

Certainly we would love to be informing you about our current Teaching Schedule, but our circumstances force us to be more focused in our basic survival. One of the main limitations we have is the good fortune to have practitioners around to help us to carry out our daily routines, including the natural aspects of our function as an IDC entity. That is why in addition to our fundraising campaign we are launching a program to encourage people to come

and support us here. Since our early years Tashigar Norte has been supported mostly by the International Community. We are not well grounded locally and we do not have any Ling connected to us, so our base of members – either to support us financially or with their direct energy – serving here as Gakyil or even just being present to do Practice or Karma Yoga is not enough. We are looking for ways to assemble a Project to work on this aspect.

### Immigrant Project

Brainstorming with some advisors we think that the most suitable "immigrant" profile would be Russian or Chinese practitioners, as their governments are aligned with the local regime. However, this does not guarantee the success of the immigration project and does not limit practitioners from other countries applying for the program.

We basically offer:

- A comfortable place to stay.
- A warm place to practice.
- The opportunity to serve here in any voluntary position.
- As there is also plenty of space to work the land, if you have some project in mind

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that involves land this could be the answer. We are interested in any sort of organic production. Some parts of the land have already been set out under the principles of Permaculture.

- We have the infrastructure to operate a restaurant.
- We have an (unstable) internet connection that does not work if you have a particular schedule but it has moments of good connectivity. This point can be improved with the addition of another line.
- If you are a musician at the Gar we also have a very well equipped Home Studio (up to 16 channels) with some interesting equipment: 4 tube guitar amplifiers (2 twin reverb, 1 vibrolux and 1 Fender Blues d' Lux); 1 MM8 Yamaha synthesizer; 1 drum set; several dynamic and condenser microphones; 1 direct box 4 channels and some other instruments. Everything runs on Digital technology and we count with Protools, Cubase and Ableton Live DAWs.



- If you are an animal lover, the Gar is still running the ALFF Project (or Tashi Refuge) that hosts about 25 animals between cats and dogs at the Gar.

If you are interested in any of these topics, please write to us at [rolocb76@gmail.com](mailto:rolocb76@gmail.com) so that we can send you all the information you SHOULD KNOW in advance about local circumstances. Also if you would like to help us to coordinate this project (mostly if you are based in Russia or China) your contribution will be very welcome. Of course all of this project will be carried out in a post-pandemic situation. Dmitri Kalmikov, our Red Gakyil, will soon post an article with some tips and advice on how to migrate to Venezuela, as he himself did it recently from Russia.



### Fundraising Dynamics

Our fundraising is still going on, ending its first phase on December 31st. It has as an operation center the website <https://tashigarnortesecreta.wixsite.com/tashishop> where you can find the programs and products related to this activity. We still have our postcards and Nutrabrain products for sale. If you have some idea on how to improve them or if you have a "product" you would like to offer through the site please contact us at [tashigarnortesecretary@gmail.com](mailto:tashigarnortesecretary@gmail.com)

Since we have a Google Suite Meet Room, we will continue with our program of ONLINE CONCERTS aimed at reminding our Vajra Family about our activities and to use it as a pretext to share good moments together. It is highly recommended to perform a Ganapuja specially dedicated to the



preservation of Tashigar Norte before or after each broadcast to reinforce our real intention in doing such activities.

Having this room available also lets us extend our activities – besides ONLINE CONCERTS – to actually broadcast Teachings. The idea we have is to invite our IDC instructors to offer courses through it and to donate the collected revenue to our Fundraising activity. If you are an in-

structor and have the opportunity to do this, please contact Marina Kashkurova or Migdalia Valentina at [kashkurova@gmail.com](mailto:kashkurova@gmail.com) or [migdaliavalentina@gmail.com](mailto:migdaliavalentina@gmail.com)

### Tashirefuge

As you probably know, for almost 5 years Marina Kashkurova has been leading a project to take care of stray dogs and cats. She organizes spay campaigns and her help is often requested by local people when they have some problems with their pets or some particular cases. Also inside the Gar there is a shelter for over 20 dogs and cats. This project manages its own financial resources (meaning it does not take any funds from the Gakyil budget) so if you feel you can contribute please contact Marina at [kashkurova@gmail.com](mailto:kashkurova@gmail.com) and visit <https://www.instagram.com/tashirefuge/> or <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=tashi%20refuge>

As I mentioned before we do not have a solid program and due the instability of the internet connection it is hard to engage constantly in the many ONLINE programs from our IDC centers, but anyhow we would like to thank you very much for your efforts. We do manage to connect when circumstances help us (mostly late at night). We do all the Ganapujas and recently a group of practitioners have been very active practicing Yantra Yoga twice a day from Monday to Friday! Even our little ones are participating!

Besides coordinating the ONLINE activities of the fundraising, Marina and Valentina are taking care of our social media. So one way to support us is to friend us on Facebook or Instagram where we will be constantly posting our progress and general activities: <https://www.facebook.com/tashigar.norte.9> and <https://www.instagram.com/tashigarnorte/>

With Love,  
Rolo Carrasco  
TN Yellow Gakyil

©





# Buddhist Magic: Divination, Healing and Enchantment Through the Ages

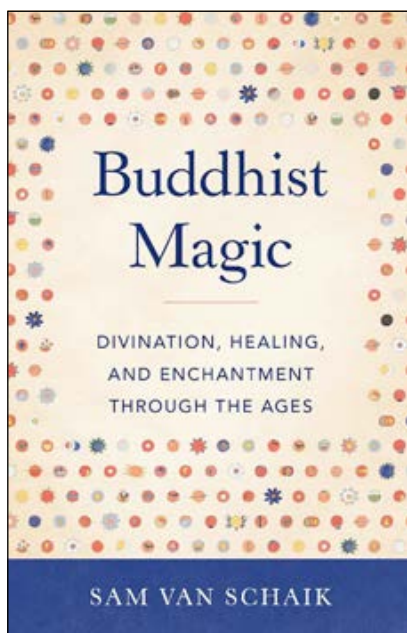
by Sam van Schaik  
Shambhala Publications 2020  
pp. 226  
ISBN 9781611808254

Alexander Studholme

Lying somewhere in the stacks of the British Library is a small book of magical spells, over a thousand years old, handwritten in Tibetan and taken in 1907 from the cave library of the Silk Route town of Dunhuang. Its evident signs of wear and tear, including a second binding, as well as numerous revisions and notes, indicate that it was much used by its owner, an otherwise unknown monk by the name of Bhikkru Pradya Praba. This strange and potent little artefact – like something from an Indiana Jones or Harry Potter film – forms the basis of a fascinating reappraisal of the place of magic in the history of Buddhism by Dr Sam van Schaik, a Tibetologist and Head of the Endangered Archives Programme at that same library in London.

Reading this book of spells in van Schaik's complete translation is a somewhat disconcerting experience. There is no introduction or commentary, just a breathless series of magical instructions – like concise occult recipes – each unerringly announcing its own efficacy. Involving rituals, mantras and diverse weird ingredients – animal excrement seems to feature a lot, even the tears of a human corpse – these spells lay claim to a wide range of effects, from the cure of mental and physical illness, to fortune-telling, love magic, conception and care of pregnancy, control of the weather and more.

The following is not atypical. “For one who is under the influence of a ghost, or under the influence of the tiger-headed ghou, burn the skull of a cat, then mix in clean earth and make the form of a cat. In the presence of an image of the Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Faced One, take a sword made from wrought iron and saying the mantra, chop up the figure of the cat into 108 pieces. By saying the heart mantra, *om hri ha hung phat svaha*, illness-caused by these malevolent beings will



be cured swiftly.” And elsewhere: “Defeather the head of a crow and fill it with seeds, then grow them in dark soil. Then standing in front of it, pour in the milk of a dun cow and rainwater. Once the fruits have ripened, cut the flowers and fruits and tie them carefully. Mash them with the milk of a dun cow and anoint your eyes. You will become invisible.”

Van Schaik's central purpose is to disabuse us of the notion that such arcane sorcery is not *really* Buddhist. On the contrary, he argues, magic has self-evidently been central to Buddhist culture throughout its history: the denial of this is a symptom of the modern view of Buddhism as a supremely rational religion. The offering of magical assistance by Buddhist professionals such as Bhikkru Pradya Praba, often mixed up with more empirical medical services, has always been an essential part of Buddhism's transmission into new lay communities and has played a key role in Buddhism's flourishing wherever it has gone. The most recited text in contemporary Thailand remains a 19th century magical treatise called *Buddha's Armour*, promising its users money and children.

Nor, van Schaik continues, is it correct to see magic as something bolted on to Buddhism from outside or simply part of the later tantric tradition. Magic has a long and respectable Buddhist pedigree, from *paritta* spells taught by the Buddha to protect his monks from snakebite, to the established genre of Mahayana literature propounding *dharani* incantations, the most famous example of which being the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The spell in-

volving the dead cat effigy above actually has its origin in a Sanskrit text called the *Dharani of the Blue-Necked One* (a form of Avalokiteshvara), while the rainmaking abilities of Buddhist adepts over the centuries are rooted in a text, still well known in Japan, called the *Great Cloud Sutra*.

Van Schaik's impressive erudition extends to the magical traditions of other world cultures. Variants of the Tibetan practice of looking into a mirror to perform divination, for instance, are to be found in Persian, Jewish, Roman, Greek and medieval English lore. There is much to learn and enjoy in the wealth of detail he provides. The use of “star water”, familiar to many from the Tibetan world, is traced back to the same *Dharani of the Blue-Necked One*. There is an interesting section on the subtle differences between the serpentine creatures known respectively as the Indian *naga*, the Tibetan *klu*, and the Chinese *long*, often translated as “dragon”. The Buddhist invocation of the Garuda deity as a means of healing, divination and rainmaking goes back to Vedic and Shaiva sources, where the mythic bird's control of snakes is primarily connected to remedies for poison.

This is a fairly short book with an enormous scope and, inevitably, the presentation sometimes feels a bit sketchy. But van Schaik is undoubtedly successful in provoking a reconsideration of the role of magic in Buddhism: with its extensive bibliography, this will serve as a valuable starting point for those wishing to explore this topic for years to come. He admits that it is not just a modern conviction that magic is not *really* Buddhist: the *Brahma Net Sutra* of the Pali canon lists many different forms of esoteric practice as “wrong livelihood” and the 10th century Indian scholar Abhinavagupta is cited as referring to the “delusion of sorcery”. But van Schaik proves that, for better or worse, Buddhism and magic are inextricably wedded. “Philosophy is important too,” he writes teasingly in his conclusion, “but it has had little impact on the lives of the vast majority of Buddhists over the last two and a half millennia.” ☺

# Tibetan Silver, Gold and Bronze Objects and the Aesthetics of Animals in the Era before Empire

Cross-cultural reverberations on the Tibetan Plateau and soundings from other parts of Eurasia

John Vincent Bellezza  
BAR International Series 2984  
BAR Publishing, Oxford 2020  
pp. 184, paperback

Giorgio Dallorto

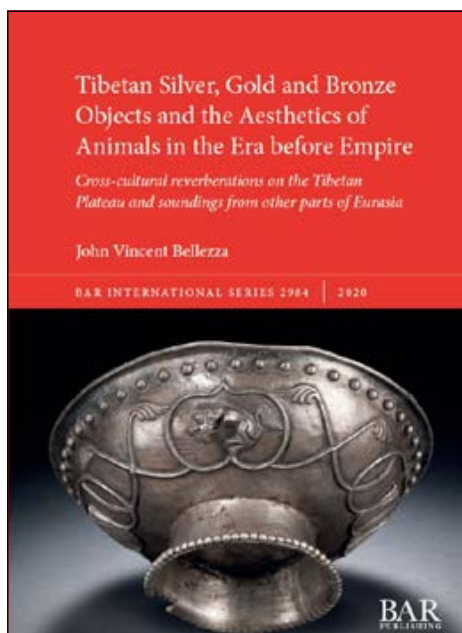
John Vincent Bellezza, scholar, explorer, pilgrim and writer is not a new author in the field of historical and archeological works regarding Tibet and central Asia in general. He is the foremost specialist in the archeology, ancient culture and history of Tibet and has lived in the Himalayas for over a quarter of a century.

Starting from his classical books such as the two volumes on *Antiquities of Northern Tibet* and *Antiquities of Upper Tibet* published in 2001 and 2002 through to his magnum opus *Zhang Zhung – Foundations of Civilization in Tibet* published in 2008 and finishing with *The Dawn of Tibet. The Ancient Civilization of the Roof of the World* in 2014, Bellezza is completing a huge and definitive work on the archeology of Tibet and its ancient history.

Thanks to his profound knowledge of spoken Tibetan and different dialects of the Tibetan plateau, his research is a living legacy of his innumerable journeys in loco made in over thirty years supported by a continuous observations given by his Tibetan sources both lamas as well as simple nomads.

I can still recall his masterly article on bronze talismans called *Thopchas. Talismans of Tibet* published by the famous magazine *Arts of Asia* in 1998. The graphic quality and depth of his research was complete and detailed even in such a short article as that one, and was a font of knowledge for all kinds of readers ranging from Tibetologists to art collectors.

Over the years John Vincent Bellezza has authored twelve books and innumerable articles. His last academic research on



ancient Tibet is his most recent work, *Tibetan Silver, Gold and Bronze Objects and the Aesthetics of Animals in the Era before Empire*, which follows the quality of his previous ones and is the natural continuation of his work. After a short introduction that clarifies the scope of the book and its contents, chronology and localization, he uses a comparative approach of metallic objects and rock art with complementary textual and ethnographic accounts.

A very interesting paragraph is dedicated to the provenance and questions concerning acquisition and ownership of antiquities in today's world, giving interesting suggestions about how to face this aspect.

The first chapter opens with a presentation of two Tibetan silver bowls of the Late Prehistoric era and goes on to cover many other aspects of Tibetan metallurgy, illustrating and explaining characteristics of *thokcha* and different copper alloy plaques. The chapter also describes the form, the decorations and the manufacturing technique of many different vessels belonging to various stages of the artistic and handicraft development of the Tibetan plateau. A detailed description is also given of the most famous silver vessel in Tibet, the flask preserved in the Songtsen Gampo chapel of the Jo-khang cathedral in Lhasa, that still today is filled daily with offerings of beer.

The second chapter is dedicated to the Tibetan gold finial (ornaments) of the Late Prehistoric era and other similar objects such as earrings and fibulae, narrating how, at the zenith of its political power, Tibetan expansion acted as a catalyst for intellectual, aesthetic, and commercial ex-

changes with surrounding peoples. This exposure led to an enrichment of Tibetan metalworking, which adopted cosmopolitan forms and styles, particularly evident in Tibetan vessels made of precious metals. This chapter also gives more ample descriptions of copper-alloy fibulae with beautiful color illustrations of the best pieces.

The third chapter talks about Tibetan copper-alloy jars and cauldrons in the Late Prehistoric era. Of interest is the decorative role adopted with animal figures such as ducks and geese.

In the fourth chapter we find the most interesting part of the book describing Tibetan copper-alloy trapezoidal plaques of the Late Prehistoric era with tigers and various geometric patterns. Full of charm is the bronze plaque of probably Tibetan origin, with its trapezoidal form crowned by six tigers. Another famous piece described in this book is a Tibetan copper alloy mirror engraved with concentric circles, diamonds, and volutes. This piece belonged to the late Tibetan collector Namgyal G. Rong, an authority on this matter. The chapter goes on to describe many other trapezoidal plaques decorated with rows of free-standing birds, some with pheasants, others with owl-like heads, and still others featuring antelopes, snakes and predatory animals.

Chapter five describes the cross-cultural and inter-regional comparison that links these Tibetan objects with the Eurasian Steppes, the Scythians, showing that even before the invention of writing, in the Imperial period, Tibet began to absorb the knowledge of other peoples of Iran and neighboring countries.

Chapter six shows the Eurasian animal style in northern Pakistan and North Inner Asia, the heritage of the Saka. The chapter goes on to describe *thokcha*, in particular round copper alloy buttons with circular petals called "flower disks", ornaments featuring frogs inside circles, and last but not least the beautiful copper alloy open work plaques which feature a popular design known as the endless knot.

In chapter seven a profound analysis of the features of rock art in the northern territories and the Tibetan plateau presents many pictures depicting petroglyphs in places such as Ru-thog, Ladakh, Zangskar and so on done in the Iron Age and proto historical periods.

The book ends with a profound analysis describing why a wide spectrum of people



# Pluralism and Religious Identity: The Path of Fraternal Dialogue

Gino Vitiello

*For a couple of years I have been participating in an interreligious meeting group called "The Spirit of Assisi", for Namdeling, the Ling of Naples, Italy. The meetings take place every month in one of the locations of the different groups (Namdeling also hosted one) and are held on a specific theme.*

*One of the last meetings was on "Pluralism and religious identity: the path of fraternal dialogue". Due to the number of speakers representing the various religious groups, the time for speeches was necessarily short.*

*This is the text of my talk.*

There is a question that disturbs many consciences: why, if all religions agree on the importance of universal love and respect for life, have they then made themselves, and sometimes still are, responsible for so much bloodshed?

.....

adopted inter-related forms of zoomorphic art in Eurasia and China and how different cultures over a vast territory fashioned artistic representations with certain aesthetic traits.

With this publication BAR Publishing house, based in Oxford, has added another little jewel to its already rich and high-quality catalog of books dedicated to the archeology and history of central and eastern Asia. Finally I would like to personally thank John Vincent Bellezza, our "Indiana Jones" in Tibet, for the time and energy he has profusely dedicated in writing and collecting historical data about ancient central Asian civilization. His writings have become a legacy of all mankind.

I'm always amazed by the quality and quantity of his literary production, his brilliant mind, and the vast quantity of his new works. In the meantime I have just come to know that his last work, *Drawn and Written in Stone*, also published by BAR, has appeared. Looking forward to the next chapter in his never-ending literary adventure. Thank you Vincent! ©



We cannot blame this on any god, because the massacres done in their name were thought, decided and carried out only by men.

We know that men need ideals to aggregate in large groups: a tribe, a political party, a country, a religion ... this multiplies their strength. But behind the identification in a mass mobilized by an idea, there is basically the strengthening of an Ego. Alone, in fact, my power is limited, but if I can declare that I represent not only myself but my tribe, my party, my homeland and even more the divine will, then I feel that my power and my right multiply until they become absolute.

So the real responsibility for everything that distances and betrays that ideal of brotherhood, which is also taught by the founders of the great religions, can be attributed only to our Ego. If it wasn't for that, who on earth doesn't tolerate any other truth besides his own, why should I despise and fight those who don't think like me? We could coexist each with his own creed, with his rites, with his way towards the pursuit of happiness to which every living being aspires. We may even meet, exchange ideas and with them enrich our life and understanding of the world.

In some moments in history this has already happened and fortunately it is still happening. Spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama, the current Pope Francis and various exponents of other faiths and currents, not without disagreements on the part of fundamentalist groups, are working in this direction.

As for Buddhism, it certainly cannot be considered a single doctrinal corpus because during the first thousand years of its history it was divided into three great Ways of Liberation, which address the three main aspects of the human being: the body, energy and the mind. The Sutra is based on virtuous behavior; therefore it addresses the actions of the body; the Tantra, or Vajrayana, acts mainly on the transfor-

mation of passions into wisdom through the mastery of the energy level, and Dzogchen leads directly to the recognition of the deep nature of the mind.

All these ways are recognized as valid, because they start from the principle of the "Four Noble Truths" taught by the Buddha and are vehicles that can lead to the awakening of the luminous nature of our mind, but each with different methods and times, so in history they have not produced great conflicts.

Another common factor of all these teachings is the understanding of the concept of "emptiness" (Sanskrit *Shunyata*) and of the interdependent bond that connects beings, because it is from this recognition, not just conceptual, that true compassion can arise.

People actually differ from each other in intellectual characteristics and abilities, so it is obvious and appropriate that there may be different ways to reach the common goal of overcoming suffering and discovering their own nature, so that everyone can freely choose the vehicle they feel more suitable for them, follow it or change it.

Dzogchen teaching in particular is focused on the development of awareness and mindfulness in every act of daily life, overcoming the limits of the Ego. This, in fact, represents the fixation of the infantile need to feel perfect and to possess the only truth; it prevents us from seeing the reasons of the other, from recognizing the common condition of all sentient beings and distances us from the path to knowledge.

If we confronted each other on the theoretical aspects, it would be impossible to find an agreement between us: only by meeting in the shared vision of compassion, *agape*, *caritas* or whatever we wish to call it, will we be able to know each other, understand each other and overcome the obstacles that a rigid doctrinal identity inevitably poses.

On this path of evolution we believe it is really important to find others with whom to walk. ©

# Pictures from the Past

## 1990 First Teaching on the Dance of Vajra First Mandala at Khandroling

Joe Zurlyo

The two articles that follow are 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.

It was my task during Rinpoche's retreat to bring up supplies on a daily basis, primarily food and ice. There were some unusual requests such as a shovel, machete and a large ball of colored yarn. The shovel was used to dig out a large white rock, which in the end was way too big to move, the machete for hacking his way through the bush looking for retreat cabin places, and the yarn to hang off the trees to mark the spots.

A day or two later Rinpoche asked for some paint, bright paint in primary colors along with green, so off I went to the hardware store again to bring back some small half pints of paint. The following day Rinpoche asked for more paint, lots more paint, he said he was painting a mandala. So off I went and this time I brought back larger quart cans, and I thought to myself this should do it. Well not really because Rinpoche said he needed more paint, much more paint. By this time I was really curious because he had and enough paint for a small house. What was he doing? So back to the store this time I came back with gallons of paint, and I thought this ought to do it, besides how big can a mandala be. Well once I saw what he was painting I realized a mandala can be really big.

We had constructed a large plywood platform by the pond for the retreat, and he was covering the whole thing with these bright geometric shapes. Of course I had not a clue what I was looking at. Rinpoche told me to tell all the locals to come up after he finished his retreat and he would



explain what he was doing and had some interesting information for us.

A few days went by and we all met up on Khandroling and Rinpoche began to tell us all about his dreams, how he had slept out in the open on top of the mountain and how he saw a large crystal temple with this mandala that the Dakinis were dancing on. He said Khandroling was the seat of a dakini queen by the name of Goma Devi and that she was releasing this teaching for us to practice. At which point we all went down to the pond where the mandala was and Rinpoche began to instruct us on

the dance. This was the first dance class in our realm and the rest of the story most of you know. ©



# Essential Account of the Origins of the Vajra Dance

1990–1992

Prima Mai

In 1989 Rinpoche had the first dream of the Vajra Dance at Tsegyalgar East/Khandroling, seeing the Vajra Dance performed in a large hall, but without any instructions. When he returned to Khandroling in 1990, Rinpoche had the first instructions and painted the first Mandala on an existing platform near the pond that summer. Rinpoche taught a little of the dance in Khandroling to the practitioners who were present, showing parts of the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra.

When Rinpoche came back to Merigar, he gave the first teachings on the Vajra



As soon as the Mandala was painted, Rinpoche started to come to this room. He asked to have a table and chair and he would sit and study the Vajra Dance book. Sometimes he got up and moved on the Mandala and then he would go back to the book and write something. Then we started following him on the Mandala and sometimes he would watch, and he would say, go here, and then there, also checking with his notes and maybe add more to them. Slowly more and more people were assembling learning until late at night. When the retreat was over Rinpoche continued coming early mornings until November with some interruptions and with only a few of us present, continuing to follow him and memorizing the steps of the Three Vajra Dance and until Kelanam of the Song of the Vajra.

Later in December that year the third Mandala on Earth was created, with Rinpoche working himself at Tashigar South, Argentina, and where extensive teachings were given on the Song of the Vajra with a book also being published for the first time in 1992. There is also some video documentation of this time with Rinpoche preparing the platform to paint the third Mandala. (note: video: The Teachings on the Vajra Dance from 1991–1999 by ChNN)

Rinpoche returned to Merigar West in early 1991 where in the meantime a retreat cabin had been built. He remained in personal retreat for one year and continued



having dreams of the Vajra Dances, including the Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra, of which he talked and showed me a bit about on various occasions. As well in that year we often met Rinpoche in the small forest surrounding his retreat cabin and worked together with him clearing the forest, including picnics, singing songs and sharing stories.



1991 was also the tenth anniversary of Merigar and during its festivity day we performed and offered to Rinpoche a Vajra

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Dance during the September retreat that included teachings on the Khandro Nyinthig. Rinpoche came down to the room that was for the Shang Shung Institute, studying some papers with diagrams and said we should paint a Mandala here, so we painted it on the sky blue carpet. Rinpoche had learned from a dream in Khandroling that the measurements of the first Mandala were not precise and at Merigar he corrected them from the indications he had received. The measurements were again slightly modified in later years.



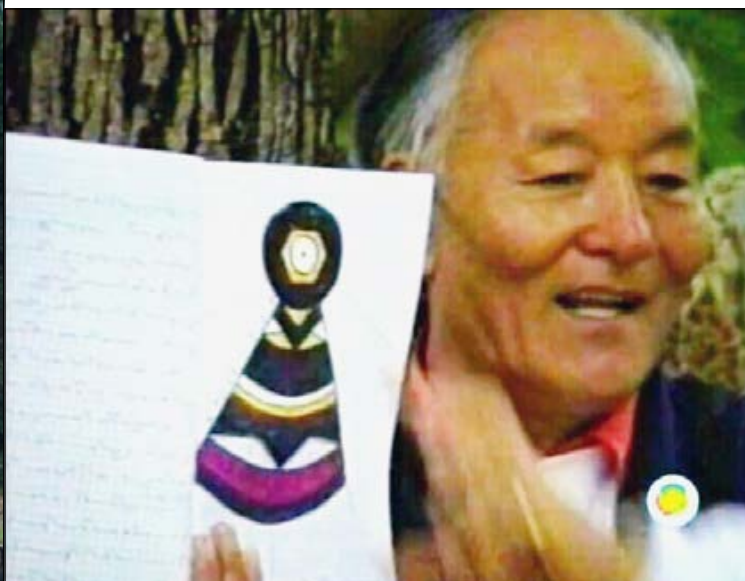
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Dance until Kelanam, as can be seen in the SSI video "Ten Years of Merigar".

At that time I had continued studying the next group of steps from the diagrams Rinpoche had made available and together with Laura Evangelisti we asked him when he might continue showing the second part of the Song of Vajra Dance. Soon after we now mostly met with Rinpoche in the afternoons to learn the second part, remaining for hours and hours and dancing again and again. The dance opened up many things and also something in our minds and maybe we saw our condition more clearly, working with Rinpoche so closely, learning also something completely new, which had not existed previously on earth.

Khyentse Yeshe Namkhai made the first music that we have used, at times, for many years, including until today. It was simple and basic pure sound. We were not always singing yet, even though this practice is about integrating with all three existences, Body, Mind and Voice in the Dance of the Song of the Vajra.

Rinpoche said at that time, that it was not easy to also sing, because sound is energy and that's not easy to integrate when we need to focus on learning with the mind or body. He said that for a support, when still learning, we could integrate a choir of male and female practitioners singing together in the music.



We also didn't know about the arms or mudras in the beginning and Rinpoche taught them all only in spring of 1992. He continued to have dreams of the Vajra Dance and also had the first dreams of Khalongdorjeikar, the Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra.

During his personal retreat at Merigar in 1991/1992, Rinpoche had translated his dreams and the instructions of the steps of all three Vajra Dances from Tibetan into Italian, simultaneously recorded on about fifteen audio tapes, each of ninety minutes, which were transcribed by many collaborators and under the care of Enzo Terzano, Rita Bizzotto and Adriana Dal Borgo. It was published under the name "The Precious Light". Later in 2012 Adriano Clemente translated the root text from Tibetan into "The Precious Lamp" and after verifying our understanding of Dance with the written text, it was published in 2015 as the "Vajra Dance Book".

By the end of spring in 1992 we had learned the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra until the end and it was also the year when he taught 'The Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings' for the first time to a few of us in the early summer mornings in Khandroling, Tsegvalgar East.

Some people who had come to Merigar and heard about the Vajra Dance, asked how they could learn the dance and Rinpoche, following indications in a dream, authorized and sent me to Greece, to teach the first course of the Vajra Dance and soon after also traveled to Tsegvalgar East/Khandroling right before his retreat giving the Lung and commentary on the Vajra Dance Book.

I had never taught anything in my life. I said to myself I have to try and do as Rinpoche did, the way he did with us, especially his attitude, he was our spiritual guide and friend, never pretending to be someone special and always doing his best at what he did. In later years it became more formal and secluded around him, but at that time we were all still close to him with the emphasis always on working and also enjoying together, being a family. ©



Photo by Liane Gräf



# Artists in the Dzogchen Community

## Letters of the Artist

Christian Correnti

**G**iorgio Dallorto is a friend for me, often a guide, so I don't think this will really be a typical "Dzogchen Artist" article/interview and hope that the editorial staff won't insist on it.

This morning I went to his home. The entrance was filled with August light that, here on Mt. Amiata, is the color of gold, the same gold that is echoed in a spiral around the Song of the Tantra of the Dance of the Vajra, majestic, on a blue background, leaning against the fireplace, in front of the desk. One of his latest works that really catches the eye and mind.

Books, *thangka*, paintings, calligraphy, statuary, I don't know where to start Giorgio's story. A vast and multifaceted culture, ranging from history to literature, from art to numismatics, from religions to philosophy and which embraces West and East in a clear and strong vision. I could start by saying this, but it would only be one way. Other, better ones can be found.

In many subjects he was mostly self-taught, but he was able to fully explore them, make them his own, as evidenced by his library and his rigorous character. Giorgio is ingenious but has the patience of the humble; he knows how long it takes to learn a technique, how much practice must be undertaken to reach a goal, be it material or higher.

His curiosity, his reading, his love of Himalayan culture and fascination for Tibetan Buddhism led him in the summer of 1978, in his early twenties, to meet Chögyal Namkhi Norbu, and this epiphany undoubtedly changed the course of his existence as man and scholar.

His wish to learn, his love of teaching and philosophy combined with that of art and its applications soon led him to study the Tibetan language with Professor Fabian Sanders and later calligraphy with the artist-calligrapher, Tashi Mannonx.

Calligraphy soon became a deep passion. "Many reasons pushed me to study and practice. First of all the difficulties: I have always liked challenges. And then this is an



Giorgio Dallorto.

Photos by Lesya Cherenkova



Arya Tara Practice.

area that is not very sought-after, I would say almost a niche, to which few, even among professionals, dedicate themselves."

Thus the circumstances were the best: the challenge, the study, the effort, the practice, the passion and the desire. I wondered what else is needed for an artist to be born? This question has as many answers as there are artworks which you feel drawn to and part of. I think I am not mistaken in saying that in Giorgio's case that this 'something' must be sought in the Teaching.

Writing a Song and writing it with skill, giving it movement on a canvas or solid wood, giving it the right color, adding stars and decorations to the words, symbols, being inspired by the Teaching, is not transcribing and decorating. It is praying, practicing and finally making art. And perhaps the most interesting thing is that in Giorgio's case, making art was not, is not, a priority, but, judging by his works, an indisputable goal.

But how does an Italian from Turin start writing Tibetan, and most of all why?

"I started by copying my Master's texts written in beautiful handwriting for us students. As a study method, copying Practice texts has always helped me to memorize words and to fix the graphemes as symbols, so learning spelling from the beginning was a necessity for Practicing, a means that over time has also transformed into something more."

Into so much more. I knew that Giorgio had this great passion. I knew that he had

been dedicating a long time to calligraphy for years and that his goals had undoubtedly become high, or, meticulous and demanding as he is, he would never have given Rinpoche some of his calligraphy, as happened on more than one occasion. But never, ever could I have imagined that calligraphy would have taken over so much of Giorgio's existence.

A world made up of colors, symbols, materials, words, Practice. Something that arises perhaps by chance as a challenge, but that grows and develops from the Teaching, becomes art, mixes with the West, with influences from Kandinsky to his passion for ancient Western miniatures, for iconography. It is possible that this Western encounter with the art of Tibetan calligraphy, while leaving the Eastern tradition intact may help a Western public increase their understanding and serve as a material support for the practice. Even by those who know nothing about it. In fact, the levels of reading that you can have of one of Giorgio's works are infinite. As many as the eyes that admire it and the moments in which they do.

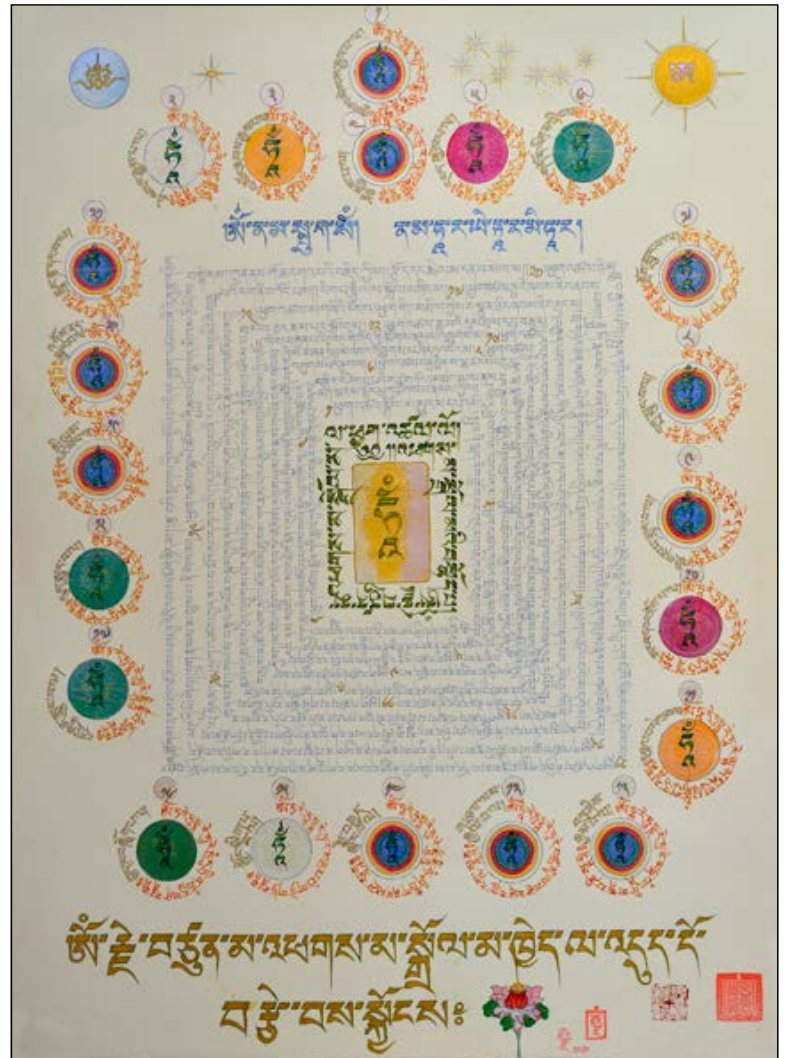
Philosophy is not my field and perhaps not even art. I certainly couldn't talk about Teaching. But anyone who has met the Master knows how many wonderful seeds he planted in each of us. I like to think that many of these are growing strong and prosperous in each one of us. It is clear, to

» continued on the following page



Song of the Vajra.

Photos by Antonio Ruffaldi



21 Invocations to Tara.

» continued from previous page

those who observe Giorgio's works chronologically, that after Rinpoche's passing these have multiplied, have grown, become precious, I would like to say like offerings, like a flourishing tree. The last months of quarantine then provided everyone with a time we were not used to, a time that Giorgio was able to magnify in a truly abundant and inspired artistic production.

After showing me works of considerable size (mostly made of wood) that occupied a large part of the intimate and joyful room where we had a long conversation, Giorgio went to get something from another room. I felt satisfied, partly overwhelmed, I would say. I had too much to talk about and my problem was indeed how to synthesize and convey my emotion because you certainly can't talk about art. Art must be enjoyed directly, which is why I recommend going to the Aldobrandescan Castle in Arcidosso and for this reason I would like Giorgio to set up an internet page to exhibit, at least virtually, all of his works. So, while I was lost to put together some thoughts, he arrived hugging some large yellow and orange folders that were obviously heavy.

Giorgio is resolute, attentive, determined. A no-nonsense man. He doesn't need to talk about it, it shows. And so, while I was still

wondering how long it would take to complete a 50 by 70cm work, five or six sheets of this size paraded in front of me, and they were only the first. Beautiful thick paper, handmade or smooth, natural colored or white on which, freehand, he draws colors and gives material thickness to songs, mantras, stars and decorative elements.

It is these smaller, more intimate works that I would like to mention. Perhaps because I see them as something that could be enjoyed in my home. Perhaps because I come from a simple culture where private devotion, a canvas to gaze at, a *thangka*, or a prayer to read give comfort and security.

And in particular I think about this wooden tablet recovered from the Merigar Gönpa after its restoration. A piece of wood that breathed the incense and prayers of Rinpoche and our own. Three vertical lines in *Uchen* characters that recite the Song of the Vajra. Characters made of gold in relief imprinted with a pen nib on the ultramarine blue that covers the grain of the wood. On each calligraphic work there are

small abstracts of the Teaching, I would say a synthesis. In fact, the spaces that Giorgio leaves empty are rare, as calligraphers have done traditionally and the way those who have something to say and know how to do it like to do. Thus on this small wooden tablet (76 x 14 x 4) we also find the letter A inside a *Thigle* made up of the colors of the five elements, the three letters OM A HUM of the three enlightened states of the Buddha (Body, Voice and Mind), and again the six letters of the Six Self-Liberated States, up to the dedication to Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

"I may have approached calligraphy as a lazy pupil, which over time has become a precious tool for studying and deepening the Practices. Ultimately it has become a belated but profound homage to the great calligrapher and Master who was "the king of the Dharma jewel of the sky".

Giorgio thus closes our conversation while I still, like you, have questions and a lot of curiosity. But to these works, in addition to the pleasure of the eyes and the joy





The Twenty-Five Spaces.

of the mind, I owe an even more important thing, the right harmony to practice.

I conclude with a quote from Kandinsky taken from *On the Spiritual in Art*. "This capacity of profound depth is found in blue ..., if we allow the blue (in any desired geometric form) to work on the mind. The inclination of blue to deepen is so strong that its inner appeal is stronger when its shade is deeper. The deeper the blue the more it beckons man into the infinite, arousing a longing for purity and the super-sensuous. It is the color of the heavens just as we imagine it, when we hear the word heaven." This quotation describes more than any other words what I felt while admiring the canvas with the six *Thigle* containing the Song of the Vajra and the 25 Spaces. A Song, but also a painting, illustrated to a large extent by that small star at the bottom left from which the powerful rays of a rainbow emerge iridescent.

It's late, it's almost time for lunch and Giorgio accidentally opens the folder with the pieces that he's working on, but unfortunately, to see these, we'll have to wait! ©

Translated by L. Granger

[The quotation by Kandinsky from *On the Spiritual in Art* was taken from the Internet Archive funded by Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Library and Archives of the first complete English translation of the book.]

# Passages

## Died – Steven Goodman

Thomas Marconi

Published online on melong.com on August 15, 2020

Our dear Vajra brother Steven Goodman passed on 3 August, 2020, after a prolonged illness. There has been an outpouring of great sadness suffused with immeasurable gratitude and reverence for this uniquely spirited man, reverberating through the Dzogchen Community of the US and other Dharma Sanghas, among Western Buddhist scholars, and for so many of the students Steven taught during his twenty plus years as professor of Asian and Comparative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Steven has been an advisor to the 84000 translation project of Buddhist texts since its inception, a founding board member of the International Buddhist film festival, and is well respected within the Vajrayana tradition as being a practitioner first before being a scholar, while excelling at both. Steven's passing is "a great loss for Buddhism in the West" lamented Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. His long-awaited book *The Buddhist Psychology of Awakening: An In-Depth Guide to Abhidharma* was recently released to critical acclaim.

Steven touched so many lives as a catalyst towards ripening our creativity, playfulness, and inherent kindness. Effortlessly moving from a critical edginess, bouncing among tightly refined arguments from disciplines far and wide, maybe singing the chorus of a song, to suddenly invoking the inescapable raw-heartedness of our human condition – holding court with Steven was always engaging, at times provocative, always overflowing.

Steven had a way of bringing people together that needed to know each other, as Jim Valby will concur. The door to the Dharma earnestly opened for me in his "Buddhism and Western Philosophy" course. Years later, I would sometimes address him as 'Lama Goodman,' and he would swiftly rebuke me every time.

Steven met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the Bay Area in 1979, where he helped to organize Rinpoche's first public talk there,



Photo courtesy of Scott Diamond

which was held at the former Jefferson Airplane house on Fulton St in San Francisco. I, like many others, came to know of Rinpoche from Steven's lectures at graduate school. I attended my first Dzogchen Community Ganapuja in his and Joan Marie's home, where he also led a study of *The Precious Vase* before Rinpoche's retreat in Oakland in 2001. Shortly after the retreat came the founding of Dondrubling in Berkeley, where Steven would periodically offer his unique style of workshop, always robustly attended by a cult-like following of Vajra sisters and brothers. I fondly recall a shared vignette – sitting with Steven in a retreat with Rinpoche several years ago in the school auditorium down the hill from Khandroling. Especially powerful is my memory of the gratitude we felt for Rinpoche as we were chanting the mantras to empower and dedicate the merit of the day's teachings.

Steven is survived by his wife Joan Marie, his son Matthew, and several siblings. He will be deeply missed by all whose lives he touched. ©

# Lives of the Great Masters

Patrul Rinpoche  
1808–1887

Patrul Rinpoche, though he lived as a vagabond, was one of the most renowned spiritual teachers of the last century. Born in 1808 in Dzachuka, a nomad area of Kham, he was recognized as the *tulku* of Palge Samten Phuntshok, a master previously living in that area. Later, several great Lamas recognized him as being an emanation of Shantideva and also the speech incarnation of Jigme Lingpa.

The young Palge Tulku met his principal teacher, Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu who was one of the main students of Jigme Lingpa, soon after being established as the head of Palge Samten's monastery. From him he received the Longchen Nyingthig which is a summary of Longchenpa's teaching written by Jigme Lingpa. He also met and studied with most of the great lamas of the time, including the first Dodrupchen, Jigme Trinle Oeser, Jigme Ngotsar, and the great Siddha Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje.

On one occasion Patrul Rinpoche met Do Khyentse in the marketplace. Do Khyentse shouted, "Hey Palge! Come over here if you dare!" When Patrul approached, Do Khyentse grabbed him by the hair, knocked him to the ground and dragged him around the market place. As Do Khyentse's breath smelt heavily of beer Patrul thought to himself, "Even a great master like him can get tipsy and rave in such a way!" Just at that moment, Do Khyentse suddenly let go of him and staring into his eyes said, "What one-sided, pretentious ideas you have, you old dog!" And he spat in Patrul's face and left. Realizing that he had been mistaken Patrul sat in meditation and spontaneously experienced natural awareness clear as an empty sky. Later Patrul Rinpoche would joke about it saying, "Old dog is the secret initiation name Do Khyentse gave me". He even signed some of his writings "Old dog".



After his predecessor's nephew died he started to live as a wandering mendicant without home or possessions. First he went to the area of Dzogchen Monastery where he received many teachings from Gyelse Shenpen Thaye and the Siddha Mingyur Dorje while living in the caves around the area. In one of them, the Yamantaka Meditation cave, he wrote his famous text, "The words of my perfect teacher". When he was teaching he emphasized love and compassion as the root of all spiritual practice.

The force of his presence was so strong that many hunters gave up killing and bandits their robbing after hearing him teach. He taught in a direct language using few simple words, but this apparent simplicity had a background of a deep realization and a vast knowledge of the Buddhist teachings.

During his youth he had studied with the greatest teachers of his time and due to his amazing memory, committed most of the teachings to heart, so that he could teach the most complex subjects of Buddhist philosophy for months at a time without a single page as reference point. He practically knew by heart the famed "Seven Treasures" and other works of the fourteen-century master Longchenpa, whom he considered the ultimate authority on the various levels of the Buddhist path.

Patrul Rinpoche instructed followers of all schools without bias and together with Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and others played a major role in the development of the Rimé movement. But for all his brilliance, there was nothing in his outward appearance or his behavior towards people who didn't know him that made him different from an ordinary person.

He was completely detached from the affairs of this world. When he stayed somewhere, he had no particular plans, and when he left, he had no particular destination. He would just leave with his walking stick, the clothes on his back, a small bag containing his teapot and a copy of the *Bodhicharyavatara*. He rarely spoke and if so only to teach the Dharma.

In 1885, Patrul Rinpoche, then 77 returned to his birthplace where he remained till his death two years later. He died sitting in the posture of Vairochana gazing into space. Among Patrul Rinpoche's many disciples were the third Dodrupchen Rinpoche, Adzom Drukpa Mipham Rinpoche, and Katok Situ Rinpoche to name but a few. ©

The series "Lives of the Great Masters" was originally published in the 1990s in several issues of *The Mirror*. The story of Patrul Rinpoche was the second in the series, published in issue 31, May–June 1995.



# How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

## The Youngest Khaita Instructor, Elia Bernadoni

“Every time that I dance Khaita I remember Rinpoche, and for every dance that we danced with him I have some memory. For each dance it is different.”

**M**y name is Elia Bernadoni, I am fifteen years old and I live in Dzamling Gar. I have been a very avid practitioner of Khaita for a long time. I first started to dance when we [my family and I] came here from Grosseto, Italy in March 2014. I was nine years old.

At that time the singing and dancing was not called Khaita, it was called Tibetan modern dances. I already knew what the situation in Tibet was and everything, and at that time I had already heard about the dances before I started to dance. I had also been looking on Youtube at some videos, and one of these videos is this song called (mthun sgril gyi rang sgra) This song speaks about all the three regions uniting. I was very impressed by this song.

I was living in Grosseto, Italy, when Rinpoche started the singing and dancing but still I did not start to dance. Rinpoche actually started Khaita in Tenerife in 2011. From when I was very small, I was already researching these songs and dances and the situation in Tibet, and I felt some strong connection with that situation. Also I already had a strong connection with Rinpoche because my parents were already involved in the Community for many years. My father had already been involved in the Community for 14 years, and my mother for maybe 8 or 9 years.

I remember we were going to the airport every time Rinpoche would arrive from a journey to salute him. We were living in Grosseto, which was an hour distance from Merigar, so we were only able to go for the retreats. Khaita was more in the nighttime so I had not the possibility to dance very much at that time.

Then my family decided to move to Dzamling Gar in March 2014. I was nine



years old. Dzamling Gar, like it is now, did not exist. There was only the house of the Dzamling Gar Gakyil. Also Rinpoche's house was not there, and it was like a ruined place. We lived in Guia di Isora in the mountains for five years.

When I first started to come to Dzamling Gar, Khaita was already in the White Tent. They were dancing every day until late at night. My parents brought me to Dzamling Gar, dropped me off and went to do errands. So I was staying here and then at the end of the session of Khaita my parents would come to pick me up.

My first experience when I first saw Khaita was that it was something new because I did not really like to dance before. I was very shy at that time and for me all these kinds of dances were terrible. So at the beginning I liked them, but not too much. I joined because I was here. My parents did not really encourage me, I encouraged them! And many times they would join us because Rinpoche was there.

In reality in the beginning the dancing was difficult for me, but as I said before I did not really like to dance, so many movements I would not do. They were all doing them and I was looking. And at that time I was also not moving so much, so I was stiff and awkward a bit.

To dance with Rinpoche every day in the White Tent was something special. I don't know how to explain it very well because only people who were there can explain

and can understand what it was like. But also for me the most powerful time was at the end, when he was not very well but he was coming to Khaita every day. At that time I was putting on the music. That was in 2018 and I was thirteen years old.

Rinpoche was not speaking too much at that time, but I had some special contact. I cannot explain how. He was wearing a mask, I was looking at him, he was looking at me, and I could feel that there was some connection. Also I remember once we were dancing the song called Yangkhor Dzongdruk; it was a slow dance. After this dance there was a dance where men and women alternated, so I needed to run to stop the music. There was this playlist of Golok dances at that time. I was going near to Rinpoche and I thought, “Maybe I should go to sit and stop the music.” I thought, “No. I will finish in front of Rinpoche and then I stop.” So I finished in front of Rinpoche and then he looked at me and did like this with the head [nodding at that direction] like saying “You need to go, run to stop the music” and he laughed, I could see that he was laughing behind the mask.

Also before when he was a little bit better I had the possibility to accompany him before and after Khaita and walk him back and forth from his house to the Tent and back. It was very special because the connection with Rinpoche became more vivid. And I remember also when I was smaller, I was seeing Rinpoche on the throne and I was feeling not separated, even though he was far away in some sense. And then accompanying him and also all this experience of through Khaita brought me more near to him. I felt more of a connection.

My relationship to Khaita has developed, at the beginning I was a small child so I did not give too much importance. Also at that time there were many children dancing and so at first what was more important for me was staying with other children and dancing. Children were dancing at that time. So I was going there because there were children, and then after one year they did not go anymore, so I also did not go anymore, I was following them. And then, I remember in 2015, I said, “No, I need to engage more in Khaita.” And also I decided to do my first retreat, the first retreat where I said “I want to do this retreat.” It was in 2015. My first retreat was the *lung* retreat of the Dra Thalgyur.

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Elia receiving his Khaita Diploma.

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Every day after the teachings there was dancing. And then after that, at the beginning of 2016, Adriana asked me to dance at Losar. I was a little bit more serious at that time, more than in 2014. So I danced at Losar and then, a month later, there was a Khaita exam. At that time I was not thinking to do the exam, but two weeks before the Khaita exam, I remember some people told me, "Adriana told us that we need to tell you that you need to do the Khaita exam." I had only two weeks to prepare all these fifty dances and I did not know all of them. I knew only the one that I explained. It's the only one that I studied – the meaning with the mudras and everything. I remember that I was very, very fortunate but also I was very nervous. I was thinking, "If I take one of these dances that I don't know, what I will do?" It was a Rinpoche miracle that he chose the only dance I knew for my exam.

After the exam I started to be more serious because I felt like I had a commitment with Rinpoche to explain the dances and bring ahead his work. And in 2018, when he was coming every day, he was not well, then I felt really I need to do more, I could not give up Khaita, also after he passed away I said, "I need to do Khaita every day like Rinpoche was doing." For this reason I was doing Khaita everyday because I felt like before when there was Rinpoche I was going every day, and now, when there is no more Rinpoche, if I don't go to dance every day, it's a little bit strange.

When I am dancing, I try to forget all the problems, and like Rinpoche was saying, when we dance, we cannot think about

our problems. This is helping me very much. Also for the school, if there are some problems, I do Khaita and then later all the problems disappear.

Until now I have helped create eight dances, but I did not create all these dances alone. I created with other people. The first two dances I created with Premek and they were the first dances I created. That was in the summer 2016 and 2017. And then in the summer of 2018 I created two other dances with Nicola, and we presented these dances to Rinpoche. And that was also a very nice experience.

Each time we created a dance, we presented the dance to Rinpoche. At the beginning Rinpoche was saying, "This dance is ok, this you need to do something more." When we created the dances with Nicola, and Rinpoche was not very well at that time, after we created the dances, we presented them to him when he came to the Gönpa. And then some people told me, "You should go to Rinpoche now and ask him if this dance is good or not." Nicola went to Rinpoche. Rinpoche was very angry, I remember, and he said, "Why are you asking me if this dance is good or not? Do you want me to say that this dance is good or not?" For me it was like Rinpoche was telling us how to go ahead, because now also there is this problem of if we can create new dances or not. If create other new dances, who can say if this dance is good or not? I think Rinpoche was saying to us, "What do you want me to tell you?" It seems that he wanted us to decide. He was preparing us.

Also this December we created two dances with Yangcen, these two new dances are from the Barsam collection, and

then in January I created a new dance, alone, but I copied it from a Tibetan video and in March my mother and I created another new dance.

I taught my first class together with Yulia Petrova before the Mandarava retreat this year. It helped me very much that Yulia was there because it was new experience for me and I was not very confident to explain. During Khaita time I have explained some dances but it was also the first time that I was explaining the Dzamling Gar song. That was a very nice experience for me because when you are explaining, and you need to explain to other people, you need to go deeper in your knowledge. And many things I was not thinking that are in this song, I discovered that they are. I realized that many movements have a very deep meaning, it's not superficial. Like Rinpoche was saying, the Dzamling Gar song is a very real teaching. You don't need to do many retreats, or anything, if you know the meaning of the Dzamling Gar Song, then you have everything.

I think Khaita has a very deep meaning. Rinpoche was a very great master and he was always doing the best so that people could recognize their real nature and get into the state of contemplation. The last years of his life he dedicated so much time for Khaita and I think there is a very deep meaning for this, because Rinpoche was saying many times, "I always do useful things, not useless things. I don't like to do useless things because we know that our life is very short and if we lose time on useless things then at the end of our life we say, "Oh the life is finished. What do we do now?" So I think when people are dancing





Elia walking with Rinpoche.

they should go into the deeper meaning of Khaita because all the practices have their function, and the structure of the practice is very clear. Also Khaita is like this. For example, people should think, why Rinpoche put Khaita singing at the beginning of a session and then the dances from the group that are a little bit more difficult, then easy dances, then Tashi and Dzamlingar Song? There is a meaning.

Every time that I dance Khaita I remember Rinpoche, and for every dance that we danced with him I have some memory – for each dance it is different.

What I discovered during these months of quarantine is that before I was also thinking “I am going to dance. We will sing and dance and at the end we do Dzamling Gar and finish.” Now I am thinking that maybe people, also me, should try to think how is their mind at the beginning of Khaita and at the end. How is your mind? And why is it like this? There is a meaning why it is like this. People should not only think, “Now we will dance and then we will sing.” And then people think, “Ah, I don’t like to sing. It’s very boring.” But why Rinpoche put singing? If it is boring why would he put singing at the beginning? Why would he would work so much for the singing part? There is a meaning.

Also I was helping with the new Khaita text this last month and I see that everything has a meaning in this text. There is a title and also the flowers Rinpoche put there, they also have a specific meaning. It’s not that you put some flower and that’s it, finish. Also Rinpoche dedicated so much time. Why would he dedicate so much time to this if it is useless? Also some people say

“Oh it is boring to sing.” But it is part of the practice.

There are so many songs. And it’s not so easy to know all the songs. But I think it’s not the most important point to know all the dances. Because if your mind after Khaita is more relaxed also if you don’t know all the dances, then it is very good. It’s perfect. But if you know the dances, you know the meaning, then there is much more benefit. The same is for all other practices. If you do one long practice and you don’t know the meaning, then you have some benefit, for sure. But if you know the meaning, all the meaning, there is double benefit.

Also I was thinking that for the people that are not from the Community, it is important for them to understand the value and the meaning of the songs of Khaita. And these are values that are not only for the Tibetan people, but for all people in this world. There is freedom, for example, unity, all these values, cultural relationship, preservation, respect. All these are in Khaita. So it has a very deep meaning, if you look at it. ©

Transcribed by Anastasia Eremenko  
Edited by Naomi Zeitz



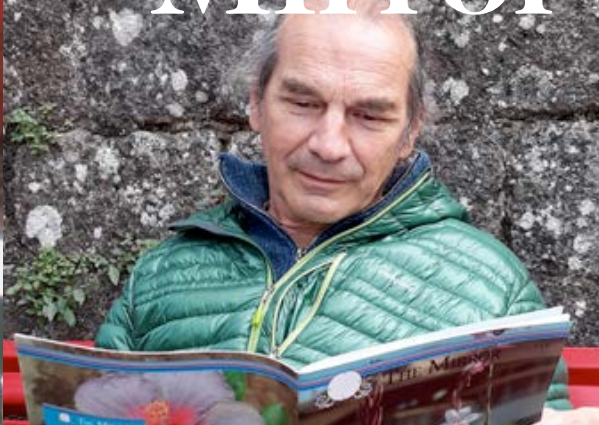


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