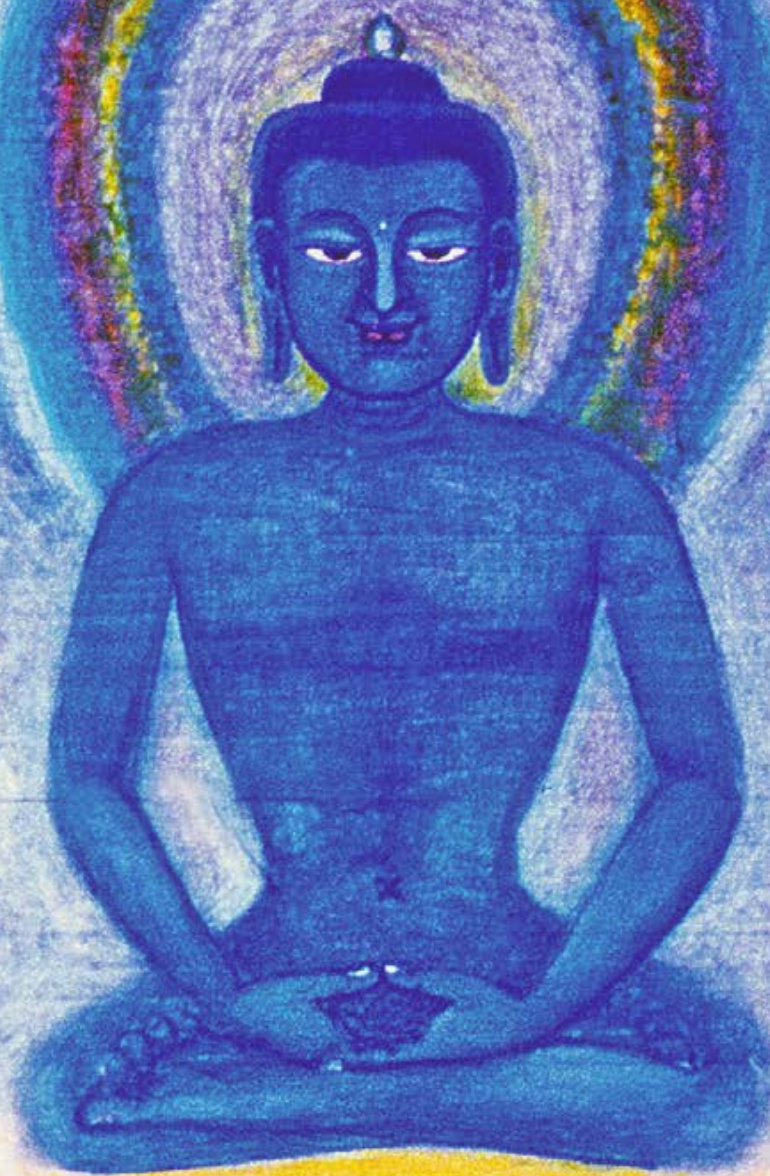


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The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje
Meditation and Integration
The Song of the Vajra
MACO Museum of Asian Art and Culture



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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Front cover: Samantabhadra by Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche.
Preparatory painting for Temple of the Great Contemplation, the Merigar Gönpa, Arcidosso.
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Back cover: Bridge to Khyung Lung dNgul mKhar. © 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO



Editorial

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's advice to the Dzogchen Community when bringing to a close the 30th Anniversary Celebrations at Merigar West in Tuscany, Italy on July 19, 2011.

Originally published in The Mirror issue 111, July/August 2011.

The aim of the Dzogchen Community is that everybody in this world becomes a little more aware and responsible. We know how our human condition is. We have many kinds of limitations: the limitations of the individual that we call ego, those that develop in our country, in our family, in politics, economics, even in the spiritual path. In the real sense that is the source of all problems.

When we say the "Dzogchen Community", in general it doesn't mean a group of people. "Community" means people who have awareness and collaborate together with knowledge of what the main point is. Dzogchen means our real nature. Everybody has their real nature and we are trying to understand that and do our best. This is what is called Dzogchen Teaching and is what I have tried to teach for thirty years. Many people already have that kind of knowledge and when we have this knowledge it means that we go a little beyond our limitations.


Everybody always says we need peace and if there is no peace we cannot find happiness. But how can we have peace? There will only be peace when there is the evolution of the individual. What does evolution mean? Evolution means that we know how our condition is and how many different kinds of relative limitations we

have. If we are not conditioned by them, it means we are finally getting into our real nature. This is the principle of the Dzogchen teaching.

Dzogchen means our real nature and the teaching is for discovering and being in that real nature. Anyone who has this knowledge is in evolution. It is not like revolution, which means we are thinking and judging and making a program. We may think that there is something wrong, something negative that we have to change and we consider revolution to be the solution. However, in the real sense, it is not the solution because 2500 years ago Buddha explained the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. The root of the Noble Truths is cause and effect. When we have a problem it is an effect, not a cause. If we fight against it, we will never win. But if we are aware, we can learn that its cause exists and that there is a possibility to modify and change that. This knowledge is already the base of evolution. Even if only one person has that knowledge, gradually it will develop.

For example, when I arrived in Italy for the first time, there was not a single person, not even a university professor, who knew what Dzogchen was. But if we observe today we can see how many people know about Dzogchen teaching in the Western world. This means that evolution has started and is going ahead.

When I arrived I was alone, but today I am not.

We are in time and time is going ahead. After 100 years probably not one of us will still be in this world. But if there is evolution it will go ahead until the end of our globe. This is something very important for future generations. We cannot only think of ourselves. We must also think about our families and about future generations. For this reason it is very important that we know and have this knowledge. 

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The Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje

Atiyoga Teaching Retreat, Afternoon Day 3
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, December 30, 2017

Transcription by Anna Rose
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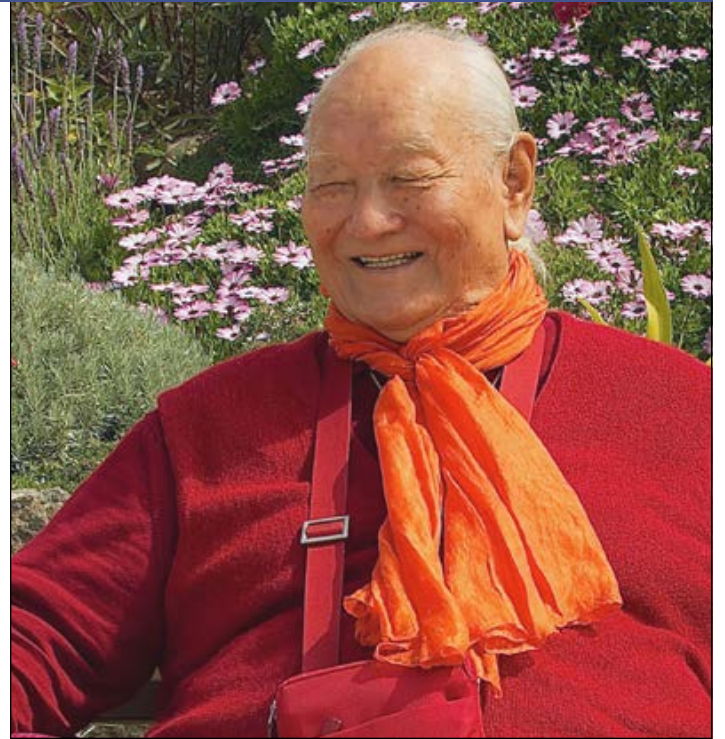


Photo by Ralf Plüschke

Patrul Rinpoche's *Khapa Śrī Gyalpoi Khyechō*

There was a very famous Tibetan master called Patrul Rinpoche who wrote a book called *Khapa Śrī Gyalpoi Khyechō* (*mkhas pa shrl rgyal po'i khyad chos*). When I was in college my teacher gave this teaching to all the students at the college. Later I discovered that this is a very important text because it is the commentary of the Three Statements of Garab Dorje.

How are these Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje explained? First of all it explains in what way we should receive direct introduction: the Teacher gives the introduction to the students, they apply that method, and then somehow, sooner or later, they discover their real nature. If someone has good karma or good fortune, when they receive direct introduction they can discover their real nature, but this is not so easy for everybody. At least we can remember what the Teacher did and repeat that.

Patrul Rinpoche explains very clearly how we should do this. The text says we should relax which means that if we have any kinds of thoughts or emotions, we should recognize that they are related to our mind. Particularly when some strong thoughts arise, we are easily distracted by them. When we are relaxed and observe these kinds of thoughts arising, at that moment we shout a very strong PHAT.

PHAT is a kind of mantra that has the potentiality to eliminate negativities. There is an explanation of the non-dual nature of this sound consisting of the two letters PHA and T. PHA is a Tibetan letter that is a consonant. T is not a consonant because it is only combined with the PHA. If T was also a complete consonant we would say PHATA, but PHAT is only a single sound.

Of these two letters, PHA represents concrete essence, which, in Vajrayana, is symbolized by the vajra. T is not complete and represents energy. When we consider Samantabhadra/Samantabhadrī

in *yab* and *yum* union, Samantabhadra sits in a precise meditation position and represents method. Samantabhadrī is on top of Samantabhadra, not because she manifests her position but because she represents the energy of Samantabhadra. In the real sense, Samantabhadra/Samantabhadrī are non-dual in that state, just like the non-dual nature of *kadag* and *lhundrub*. The sound of PHAT represents that.

When we use PHAT in practice it has the potentiality to communicate to all sentient beings, particularly to powerful beings like the Eight Classes, and so we can eliminate negativities through the use of PHAT. When we relax, thoughts arise and we pronounce PHAT strongly, how do we feel? There is no concept; we are totally in emptiness. This is the function of PHAT.

When they first learn about this, some practitioners think that since PHAT is good for eliminating thoughts during practice, they should shout "PHAT!" each time thoughts arise when they are walking in the street or doing other activities. That is wrong. We should pay respect to the transmission. We only use PHAT in our practice. For instance, when we do Chöd practice, with PHAT we invite, we offer, we transform; we do many things with PHAT. So there is a very precise principle, and we use it in that way. Otherwise, if we shout PHAT everywhere according to how we feel, we can create many problems.

In Tibetan we have a saying, "Drenyal phatgi lang" (*'dre nyal phat gyis lang*), which means a bad spirit is sleeping. When this spirit is sleeping it doesn't create problems, but when we shout PHAT it wakes up because the sound of PHAT has the potentiality of the mantra. Then this bad spirit comes to ask if we called it and what we want. It talks to us but we don't even see it and it becomes more and more angry and creates problems for us. This is a Tibetan



saying, not particularly related to the teaching, but this aspect of the teaching corresponds to that.

We cannot use PHAT at any moment, but when we try to get in our real nature, then it can be necessary to use it. When we shout PHAT strongly, there are no thoughts, and before thoughts arise again, we are in our naked presence. When we repeat it once, twice, three times somehow we gradually discover that.

In this way Patrul Rinpoche explained that when we have strong thoughts, we should pronounce PHAT. When we sound PHAT, the real condition of the dharmakaya, the state of emptiness, arises within us. Dharmakaya or dharmadhatu refers to the state of emptiness. Once we understand that we have been present in the dharmakaya we are very happy and consider it to be fantastic. Patrul Rinpoche used EMAHO, which means “fantastic”.

In the traditional Tibetan way, when we pray to Guru Padmasambhava, for example, at the beginning we have EMAHO meaning “wonderful.” Here we repeat EMAHO to say that “it is fantastic”, and then we chant these syllables.

Patrul Rinpoche's words have been translated in that way but this is not the correct translation. We relax and when a thought arises and we shout “PHAT” there is the experience of the dharmakaya and then we repeat EMAHO. But Patrul Rinpoche did not say that EMAHO should be repeated like a prayer, over and over. After the PHAT we are in the dharmakaya, it is fantastic and we can understand that. This is Patrul Rinpoche's method of the *Khapa Śrī Gyalpoi Khyechö*.

Second statement of Guru Garab Dorje

The second statement of Guru Garab Dorje is not remaining in doubt. Most people understand or decide that their real nature is the state of Dzogchen. However when we “decide” something it means that our minds are deciding and this is wrong understanding. Many translations are like that, but in the real sense it does not mean that. In Tibetan, there are different words such as *thagchö* (*thog gcod*), which refers to when we do the practice of Chöd. Machig Labdron called this practice Chöd but what does it mean? We know that everything is unreal. Whatever we see with our dualistic vision, whether good or bad, *everything* is illusion. The practice of cutting through the root of this illusion is called Chöd, which means we are doing something with our mind.

There are two Tibetan words: *chö* (*gcod*) and *chö* (*chod*). *Chö* (*chod*) does not mean *thagchö*. *Thagchö* and *chö* (*gcod*) have two different meanings. *Chö* (*gcod*) means breaking itself. With *chö* (*chod*) no one is cutting or doing any action. In the Dzogchen Teaching when we apply that method, then experiences arise and we do not remain in doubt. So, when we are studying we should study in a perfect way. In any case, the Three Statements of Guru Garab Dorje are very important.

Relatively, when we do practice, we should at least apply Ati Guruyoga and with that experience we know in which direction we should go. Otherwise, we may become like some Vajrayana practitioners who only realize the development stage – the visualization doesn't need a lot of effort for our dimension to manifest as a mandala while we manifest like deities. If we do not develop the accomplishment stage, we have not integrated our energy level in

that manifestation and only have a kind of realization of the development stage.

The story of Khenpo Samten Lodrö

There is a very nice story from East Tibet, my country, about this. There is an area called Drayab (*brag skyabs*) and one year the crops were very bad and people had no food. On the top of the mountain a practitioner from the Sakyapa tradition had been doing a retreat of the development stage for a long time. He had a very strong ability to transform into the whole mandala of Hevajra but he still had not arrived at the accomplishment stage.

Some people knew that this practitioner had accumulated a lot of barley for many years because the weather is cold in the mountains and you can keep barley for a long time without it going bad. The local people went to him and asked him to lend them some of his barley saying that they would give it back when they had some crops. This practitioner refused to lend the barley saying that they could walk around and find barley elsewhere while he could not because he was committed to doing a retreat in that place.

One night a group of people, who were not very good people, went and killed this practitioner very quickly. They were afraid that if they did not kill him quickly, he could still do some magic. Then they took all his barley. However, even though this practitioner had done the development stage for a very long time, at the moment they killed him he was very angry and when a person is angry as they are dying, they can receive the influence of the class of *gyalpo*. They become like servants of the *gyalpo* for many centuries and so this practitioner became a very powerful bad spirit. He created a great many problems in our area and brought many important teachers and prominent people into his group when they died.

Then Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamgon Kongtrul, two very famous lamas of that period, affirmed that the bad spirit Trayab Drenyen (*brag skyabs 'dre gnyan*) was very dangerous and should be conquered and his energy controlled. In a place called Chusumdo (*chu gsum mdo*), where there is a confluence of three rivers, they built a very big stupa under which they tried to place all the energy of that bad spirit. However, after they finished the consecration, they discovered that the bad spirit was not under the stupa and was still creating many problems.

In the area where I lived there was a big monastery, where the King of the Derge lived, that was considered to be one of the most important Sakyapa monasteries. I lived in this monastery from when I was three years old until I was almost nine. In the monastery there was a *khenpo*, a Sakyapa and a practitioner of Yamantaka, who was very powerful.

One day some people invited him to come down from Derge Göchen. On his way down he saw Trayab Drenyen surrounded by many important lamas and other people who had died and they were coming up. This Khenpo, who was called Samten Lodrö, thought, “Oh, this is good opportunity. I have the potentiality of Yamantaka at a very high level. Today I need to conquer this bad spirit.”

When Khenpo Samten Lodrö arrived quite near this place, he manifested a gigantic Yamantaka because he wanted to conquer

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this bad spirit. The bad spirit noticed this Yamantaka and manifested an even bigger Hevajra. In the Sakyapa tradition Yamantaka is a secondary practice, but Hevajra is a main practice. Then Samten Lodrö was upset, "How is it possible that one who has the capacity of the development stage can manifest like this and become a bad spirit?" and he could only feel compassion for him. But he understood that he would not have been able to conquer him. In that moment all these manifestations disappeared.

I read this biography of Khenpo Samten Lodrö written by Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, I am not inventing it. So, you see, even though someone may have a very high level of the development stage in Vajrayana if they still have not integrated their energy they have not arrived at that non-dual state of the development and accomplishment stage.

When we are doing practice it is very important to understand that the final goal of all Teachings is to go beyond limitations. When we get in that non-dual state of *kadag* and *lhundrub*, the non-duality of mind and the nature of mind, we are in the state of contemplation. In the term *sal tong yerme* (*gsal stong dbyer med*), *sal* (*gsal*) means clarity, what manifests, and *tong* (*stong*) means emptiness, also non-dual. When we are in the non-dual state, then we have that realization because our real condition is non-dual. When we study intellectually we cannot discover that.

View, meditation, behavior – *tawa*, *gompa*, *chöpa*

In the Dzogchen Teaching we have our *tawa*, *gompa*, *chöpa*. *Tawa* means point of view, not looking outside or analyzing. If we remain in the dualistic condition, only analyzing things, we will never get in our real nature. We need to understand how our real nature is by observing ourselves. In the Dzogchen Teaching the correct *tawa* for understanding is to discover our real nature.

On the other hand in all the Buddhist monasteries of the Sutra teaching, they want to make their *tawa* stable and try to establish that by discussing how things can be understood in an intellectual way.

Gompa means meditation. In Gampopa's Four Naljor (*rnal 'byor*) or Four Yogas, at the end he used the term *gomme* (*sgom med*), which means that when we understand how our real nature is there is no meditation. In the Dzogchen Teaching, in the same way we say *lhundrub*, which means we discover that our quality is self-perfected and that its nature is emptiness.

Then there is *chöpa* or attitude. Whether we follow Sutra teaching or Vajrayana teaching, we should learn what our *chöpa* is, what we can and cannot do. For example, in the Dzogchen Teaching there is no *chöpa* that we should learn because rules and reasoning are all related with mind and do not correspond. And even if they correspond in that moment to the circumstances, or in time and space, they do not correspond completely.

In the Kangyur there are many volumes called *Dulwa* (*vinaya*, *'dul ba*), meaning that at the time of the Buddha different rules of behavior were established one by one, day by day. People who are following Buddhist teaching think that they should do things in a certain way, with the correct attitude, but how can we understand if they [those rules of behavior ed.] really correspond to our time?

That was 2000 years ago. Now even if only two or three years have passed, things do not necessarily correspond to the situation today, which is related to time. For instance, in the East we may consider something positive that is not positive in the Western world. And something that is considered negative in the West may not be considered negative in the East. Everything is related to the attitude of the country, the way of seeing, and so on, therefore no kind of rule really corresponds.

In the Dzogchen Teaching, which kind of behavior corresponds to the attitude or *chöpa*? We should try to be present and work with circumstances. The Dzogchen attitude is that we should work with circumstances in the best way possible. These things are very important.

In the relative condition, when we study, we follow the three logics and if they correspond, then we believe something is real. The three logics are what we see, hear, and touch when our senses have contact with an object. They are something concrete. For example, if I show you this [crystal, ed.], you know that it is a crystal. Or this vajra. You know what the objects are because you can see them. Or if you hear something, you can discover what it is. This is direct logic. If there is direct logic, we believe.

Then there is also indirect logic. We can understand that there is a body of water in a place when we see water birds flying there. This is indirect logic. We cannot see the water, but we can understand there is water nearby.

Then people talk about the logic of belief. What do you believe? If those who are discussing are Buddhists, they believe the words of Buddha. If we ask why, the Buddhist will say because Buddha said it in this book and he accepts it. This is the logic of belief. If I speak with Muslim people and say, "Buddha said that", it has no value for them. For Muslims, the Koran is logic. Even if I don't believe that, the Muslim does.

So, when we establish things through these three types of logic we believe them to be true. In Dzogchen, this approach does not have much value. ❀



Meditation and Integration

An excerpt from *Starting the Evolution, An Introduction to the Ancient Teaching of Dzogchen* compiled and edited by Alfredo Colitto, Shang Shung Publications, 2018.

You are not always aware of that inner light that you experienced during or after receiving direct transmission from the teacher. But if you discovered your real condition, you have what is called the Base. This is the first step. Of course, just that first experience is not enough; we should try to have it more often, becoming familiar with it, until one day we will be in that state all the time. How do we do that? First of all, we can practice meditation.

When we say, "I do meditation," it is always a concept. There is something on which to meditate. But in the Dzogchen teaching, we do not apply meditation in a conceptual way. We just train ourselves to be in our real nature: we sit comfortably in a quiet place, do Guruyoga and rest in that state. When you try to be in that state day after day, you become more familiar with it. In this way, you become more and more free. When you are in that state always, day and night, you are completely free from transmigration in samsara. This is called enlightenment, or realization. We are no longer slaves to our emotions and dualistic condition. This is how we should apply the teaching.

Although meditation is helpful, if we want to continuously be in our real nature, meditation alone is not sufficient. Normally we can meditate half an hour, or maybe one hour. Some people can sit for two or three hours a day, but that is it. During the other twenty-two or twenty-three hours we live in complete distraction, especially in this modern world, where we have to work, raise our children, and pay our bills. And we also need time to cook, to eat, to sleep. So how can we possibly remain in the state of our real nature twenty-four hours a day, week after week, year after year?

The answer is that we need to integrate everything we do in that state. Integration is a key Dzogchen practice, and it is integration that makes this teaching particularly useful in these modern times, when people do not have much time to sit and meditate, or to go to some cave and stay in retreat for years and years.

Integration means that while we go about our daily life, we are not remaining in a dualistic vision. Remember the example of the mirror. If we look in the mirror, see our reflection, and say, "Oh, this is my reflection," this is dualistic vision. Nondualistic vision means to be in the nature of the mirror. We don't see reflections,



Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov

we reflect everything. This is just our potentiality, we do not need to separate ourselves from the reflections and judge them.

When we have this capacity, it means there is no difference between meditation and nonmeditation, because everything and every moment of our life is integrated into our real nature.

Presence and Awareness

Some people say, "I like Dzogchen because it has no rules and I am free to do whatever I like." That is absolutely not the principle. Thinking in this way clearly shows that one has not understood the meaning of awareness.

First of all, we have to make a clear distinction between rules and awareness. Rules are established according to circumstances of time and place and they condition the individual from the outside; awareness arises from a knowledge possessed by the individual. So, if we are aware, we can obey rules without feeling constrained by them. Being free from limitations is something internal, there is no need to show it by doing some strange actions, like stripping naked in the street, for example. If we do that to show how free we are, instead of ending up enlightened we will probably end up in jail. On the contrary, if we are aware and present we will be able to live without problems under any kind of law, without being conditioned by it.

Many important masters have said, "Drive the horse of awareness with the whip of presence!" This knowledge is crucial, because if awareness is not accompanied by presence, it does not work. Here is an example of awareness: Let's imagine a woman has a cup full of poison in front of her and is aware of it. Since she knows the danger of the poison, she does not need a lot of explanations about it. She will also warn those who do not know about

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the danger, saying, "There is poison in that cup. If you drink it you will die!" In this way, awareness has a chance of arising in others too, and people can avoid the danger.

Now suppose we are dealing with people who know about the danger of the poison but do not consider it important, or still have doubts about it, or who actually do not have this awareness. In that case, it is not enough to say, "This is poison!" It will be necessary to add, "Drinking this is forbidden, and anyone who disobeys will be punished by law!" This is the sense in which life is protected through the threat of the law. Law is in fact based on this principle, and although it is very different from the principle of awareness, it is indispensable as a means to help save the lives of irresponsible people who lack awareness.

Extending the example, we can also understand the meaning of "presence." Let's say that the woman, who as we said is aware of the poison in the cup it and knows the consequences of drinking it, lacks continuous presence. Then, in a moment of distraction, she might accidentally drink the poison. The point is that if awareness is not accompanied by presence it is difficult for it to produce the right results.

The Principle of Nondistraction

When we are in the state of our real nature, there are no limits, but when we are in a dualistic vision we have limitations. We are always distracted. There is always something that we are seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting. We perceive all those things as external ("I am here, something else is there"), and we judge them. What we like, we accept. What we do not like, we reject. In this way we accumulate the potentiality of karma, day after day. This is what we call dualistic vision.

So what should we do to not be distracted? Although the Dzogchen teaching also includes many formal practices, the most important is trying to remain in our real nature. After that, the next best is trying to be aware and present in every circumstance. To relax is vital as well, but if you are not present, you cannot relax. On the other hand, when you are present, you notice when you are not relaxed and then you can relax. So the main point is being present: every moment, every day, from the minute we wake up until we go to bed – and ideally even while we are asleep, as we will see later. Maybe you think it is impossible to be present at all times. But everything seems difficult in the beginning. Remember when you were learning to drive a car, how difficult it was?

At first, you just concentrated on driving, without being able to do much else. You looked at the road, you were a little tense, you watched out for other vehicles, and you did your best to arrive where you were going without having accidents. But after some months, it was not difficult any longer. And now that you are familiar with it, while you are driving, you are present. You relax, you see the landscape outside, you talk to the person sitting next to you, but you are not distracted; you are always aware of what is happening on the road, you know when to change gears, and so on.

In the same way we can learn to not be distracted when we are eating, walking, sitting, or lying down, and also when we are working or talking with people. You may find it difficult at the be-

ginning, just like when you started to learn how to drive. But after a while it gets easier. Not distracted means that we observe what is happening. There is a kind of presence that is always observing. But normally we do not notice it, because our mind is busy following thoughts, emotions, and judgments.

So you can start to train, little by little. For example, when you have some free time, you can decide, "Today I want to learn how to be present." If you do not have the whole day, you can dedicate just two or three hours to this training, or less, depending how much time you have.

You could make a kind of commitment to yourself, saying, "I will try to be present for the next two hours." And then observe your thoughts, without being distracted. You just notice, "Oh, I am thinking that." That's it, there is not much else to do. Then at some point you might want to go to the kitchen for a glass of water. To do that, it is not necessary that you abandon your presence. So you notice "I'm thinking of going to the kitchen. Now I am getting up. Now I am walking." Maybe you meet somebody who asks, "What are you doing?" and for a moment you are distracted. But then you remember "I am talking with this person now." And you reply, without losing your presence, "I am going to the kitchen for a glass of water." That person says, "Please, sit down, I will bring you water." You reply, "Thank you very much," then you go back and sit down, always noticing everything you are doing.

You can go on like this and you learn. It is always possible to apply presence. Of course, this is not the state of Dzogchen, it is not our real nature. The Dzogchen state is totally beyond time, effort, and limitations. Here, we are thinking; there is an effort to pay attention. This is called ordinary presence. It is an extremely useful practice, because when you know how to be in the state of Dzogchen, you can integrate that presence easily. Moreover, ordinary presence is also a great help in your life. If you are not distracted you can work better, enjoy more, avoid saying and doing things that you know you will regret. You can notice all your tensions and relax them. That is why you should learn to be present.

Four Moments

Traditionally, we say that our lifetime is divided into four moments: eating, walking, sitting, and sleeping. If we, as Dzogchen practitioners, succeed to be present in these four moments, we can have total realization. Otherwise, if we dedicate only a limited amount of time to practice, however extended might it be, we are never going to be able to integrate our whole life with the practice.

Also, very often we are not alone. Some people get disturbed or annoyed by noises made by others walking or talking; or they are distracted by external things and get involved in endless ordinary illusions. This defect is called "the difficult passage when vision appears as an enemy." It shows that even though we know how to continue recognizing the calm state and the movement of thoughts, we have not succeeded in applying presence. Knowing how to be present in these four moments can help us.



Eating

Eating and drinking are just like putting fuel into our car to make it work. We should not be governed by our attachment to food and drink. If we are present in these moments, we can also understand how much to eat, how much to drink, and so on. But most important, if we are able to remain in our real nature while eating and drinking, we can enjoy any kind of food and drink without judging.

Walking

When we are in a state of contemplation, there is no need to change our position or do anything special. For example, while I am walking in the street, I can also be present in my real condition. I walk and I am in a state of contemplation. It does not matter what we are doing with our physical body, we can be present without modifying anything.

Sitting

Sometimes we are working or doing something while sitting. At other times we are not doing anything in particular, but we are seated. In these moments, too, it is truly important to apply the practice of being present. Sitting does not refer only to sitting in meditation, in a special position. I can be sitting or lying down on my bed, and as soon as I think, "Oh, I want to be in the state of contemplation," then I am already in that state. I do not assume a specific position. If I do that, I am conditioned by the position and am just following my mental concepts.

Sleeping

The time we dedicate to sleep is almost half of our life, so if we break our presence in the nighttime we cannot have total realization. But how can we maintain presence while we are asleep? Just as for the practice of daytime, we need to train little by little.

The Night Practice

To have a continuous state of presence, we should practice day and night. In the day, as we said, we try to be present. And, if we have received the introduction to the state of Dzogchen from a qualified master, we work with the transmission through the practice of Guruyoga. But what should we do in the night? Basically, the same thing.

In general night practice is known as "dream yoga." When our mind, which is associated with consciousness and all the functions of the senses, awakens while the body remains asleep, we say that we are dreaming. If we train to be aware that we are dreaming, we can use this time to practice. However, we should not even lose our presence when we are asleep but not dreaming. Nobody knows how long we sleep before the first dream arises. Sometimes we have a dream as soon as we fall asleep, at other times we may sleep a long time before a dream begins. In the Dzogchen teaching, the period from the moment we fall asleep until the awakening of the mind and its functions is called the state of natural light, when our real potentiality reveals itself nakedly. It is possible to learn how to not lose presence even during deep sleep, when we are not dreaming, because the flow of pure awareness always continues, uninterrupted. It does not depend on the activity of our mind.

The final goal of Dzogchen practice is to never lose presence. Many different methods of dream yoga exist that are related to the Tantra teachings, and sometimes they are a little complicated. But if you are a Dzogchen practitioner, the method is very easy. When you go to bed, you do Guruyoga and try to fall asleep in that state. That is all.

Of course, in the beginning it can be difficult. Maybe you have the idea to practice, then you go to bed and the next morning you wake up and think, "Oh, I forgot." But the next night, and the night after that, you do not forget. Then you may forget again, but do not worry, because you have many, many nights to try again. The main thing is to keep trying. Otherwise, maybe you try two or three times, and if you do not immediately succeed you think, "I can't do this." Then you become indifferent and do not try anymore. That is bad, because the night practice is very, very important. When you acquire a little familiarity with it, in your dreams you can do all kinds of practices. You can progress more than in your daytime practice. Daytime is quite limited and difficult for us, but in dreams time has a different value.

During one period in my life I was working at the university in Naples, but I lived in Rome. I worked all day, giving lectures, participating in meetings, and so on. When I returned home by train, I always felt tired and often fell asleep. Once, while falling asleep, slowly my head started to nod until it dropped forward and I woke up. The whole process took just a moment, maybe three or five seconds, no more than that. But between the time I fell asleep and woke up, I had quite a long dream. I was very surprised. How was it possible to have such a long dream in just a few seconds? This is just an example to show how in dreams time is different. ❀

The Song of the Vajra

A webcast talk given by
Adriano Clemente
at Merigar West, June 4, 2021

The Song of the Vajra belongs to the series of *semdzin* but originally it is not a *semdzin*. When we say '*semdzin*', what does that mean? It means a kind of a practice, a method to discover our real state. But how does it work? Mostly it works through some mental concentration or visualization. It's working with the mind first of all. The word *semdzin*, *sem* means 'mind', *dzin* means 'to hold', 'to keep stable or firm'. Why? Because in general our mind is very agitated and always jumps from one thought to another. So the first thing we should learn at the beginning is how to hold this mind and make it stable.

In this sense *semdzin* is also a preliminary practice in Dzogchen. In general, when we say 'Dzogchen meditation', 'Dzogchen contemplation', it does not imply any effort by the mind. So if we say, "I want to do a Dzogchen meditation", it means at that moment we shouldn't have any particular idea where we want to be or what we want to reach, otherwise that already becomes an obstacle. Also, if we say 'Dzogchen meditation', 'Dzogchen contemplation', it's already very clear. It says in the tantras and texts, "If you don't meditate, ok, don't meditate. But if you meditate, don't close your eyes." Already from this very short line we can understand what the essence of Dzogchen meditation is. It means we are in that natural state and we are completely open to sense perceptions.

This already is explained in the Semde. And in the Longde, of course, particularly, we have the four *da*, and from the beginning we start with the senses open. Then, of course, there is the Upadesha series with the four *chogzhag*, and the main point of the four *chogzhag* is integrating, that is *nangwa chogzhag*, the *chogzhag* of the visions. Why do we need to do that? Because every sentient being has bodhicitta, or their primordial state. How do we explain the nature of this bodhicitta? We say it's like a mirror. This mirror has no particular essence; we cannot say it is one way or another way because we can have different shapes, different colors, there is no substance. The essence of the mirror is

its capacity to reflect. In the same way the nature of mind, or bodhicitta, has capacity of reflecting infinite potentiality because the primordial state is not just emptiness but at the same time it's empty and clear and possesses infinite energy.

From our point of view, in a limited way, we say that is emptiness side because we cannot find any substance, that is clarity side because there is thought arising and we have sense perception. But this mirror, even if it's pure and has infinite capacity to reflect, now it has become dirty and dark, obscured. Now we don't have this infinite perception of what we call the three kayas, five wisdoms, infinite pure dimensions, we don't have that capacity. Now we perceive a very small personality, which we call 'the self' with its surroundings, five skandhas, or five aggregates, and all the functions of subject and object. It's what we are living. It's our dimension.

How can we go back – 'back' is not the right word, – but how can we allow this primordial manifestation of wisdom? Then we have to go back to the source, the source of samsara, that means our dimension with confusion, dualism on one side and what we call the manifestation of wisdom; their source is the same. This is what we call bodhicitta, this is the meaning of bodhicitta. But then this bodhicitta becomes obscured or completely forgotten by all sentient beings.

Then through many *kल्पas* of transmigration finally we meet the teacher who says, "I introduce you, you are in samsara, now you have to do something." Then the teacher shows what the source is and how you have to recognize that source. Once you recognize it, we call that the state of

rigpa; that is the meaning of *rigpa*. Practicing Dzogchen means now we have to try to continue in that state as long as possible, as often as possible. Then the way this knowledge can develop more quickly is through integration with our senses because the senses are the door of wisdom. All the functions that we have now – we are talking, we are hearing, we are seeing forms and colors – everything is based on the five elements. Now all these five elements are in a distorted or impure form, but the same nature of these five elements manifests as infinite wisdoms and kayas, for example. Then this same energy that manifests through sense perceptions, if we allow this manifestation of the senses to display without the workings of our mind, that means we are allowing that wisdom to come forth. That's why they say, "If you want to meditate, don't close your eyes", for that reason.

That's what we call real Dzogchen meditation, Dzogchen contemplation. But the base of Dzogchen contemplation or meditation is that we have recognition of our primordial state. This recognition in the Dzogchen way is that the teacher usually gives us direct introduction. But direct introduction does not mean that the teacher says, "Now you concentrate, you visualize this" or "I will do something and you will try to be in that state", and you don't experience anything and it's finished. That is not direct introduction. If I ask somebody if they received direct introduction from Rinpoche they may say that they received it 10 or 15 times. But if this person tells me that they still don't understand if they are in the state of *rigpa* or not, it means this person did not receive direct introduction.



They received the blessing of the transmission, but that is not the same.

I already explained last year that people are confused about transmission and direct introduction. It's not the same thing at all. Also there are many ways of direct introduction. In direct introduction mainly it is the student who has to work by him or herself. Therefore we have many methods like *rushen*, *semdzin*, and so on, with which we can have an experience and at one point have that flash, that understanding, and we think, "Oh, I think this is it, finally". Then maybe the following year, Rinpoche gives direct introduction again and we think, "Yes, it's the same experience I had at that time, so it must be it." Until every time we receive direct introduction we find ourselves in the same state, and every time we apply our practice and it works we find ourselves in the same state, then we can be certain of that.

This is to show that it's very important that we work on our side experiencing methods. Many times Rinpoche taught the Yeshe Santal method, or the method with the five A. So it's very important to be sure that we can be in the right state. But in general, *rushen* and other methods have this purpose. And *semdzin* can also be applied for that purpose.

The origin of the *semdzin* is mainly from the *Dratalygur* tantra but it just says there are 7, 7 and 7 of them and it does not even mention their names. In the *Nyida Khajor*, Union of the Sun and Moon tantra, there is a very brief explanation – this *semdzin* is for that purpose and so on – and 21 of them are listed. Of these 21 *semdzin* we have explanations of 7 *semdzin* in other texts. At the time of Longchenpa there was already an explanation of the 7 *semdzin*. The Song of the Vajra is considered as a *semdzin* in the Union of the Sun and Moon tantra but in Longchenpa's explanation it is not included as a *semdzin*. In Longchenpa's texts there is an explanation and translation of the Song of the Vajra but it's in another section which explains how to apply the secret conduct.

The Song of the Vajra, in Tibetan we say *dorje lu*, but we can also say 'vajra song', like we say Vajra Dance and Dance of the Vajra. There are many kinds of vajra songs in the tantric tradition which have been expressed by mahasiddhas. Even in the Dzogchen Semde we have 21 teachers and their spiritual songs. Sometimes they are called *dohas*, sometimes *charya giti*, which means "songs of conduct". Sometimes they

are called "vajra songs", or *vajra giti*. For example, some mahasiddhas, usually in the context of a ganachakra, expressed their feeling at that moment and improvised these vajra songs. A song means when you want to express your feelings: joy or suffering, some strong emotion. If you have some talent in that direction, usually you can write a song or sing; you have that feeling and usually it's connected to that kind of energy. Art in general, painting, any kind of art is related to that energy.

In that sense with vajra songs they express their feelings of that moment, their knowledge of that state, how they perceive pure vision, etc. For example, we have this Ganachakra Song of the Vajra. Some of you may have received it from Rinpoche during Jnanadakini teachings. It is also a kind of vajra song. It explains how the situation is there. "We are in this situation, we are happy, we are showing compassion, we don't want to have any quarrels, we are being here, enjoying these substances," this is what the Vajra Song of Ganachakra says, for example.

When we talk about the Song of the Vajra in the Dzogchen Community, it's not a song that somebody composed. It's the natural sound of the *dharmata*. When we say *dharmata*, which is just another name for the nature of the primordial state. When we say *dharmata*, the first way of manifesting is the *dang* energy and that is related to the sound. The *dang* energy means that through the sound, there is an explanation about how the letter A [manifests] from the state of Samatabhadra. Then from the letter A the manifestation expands a little more and we have the sound of OM A HUM. It's all explained in different Dzogchen tantras. The Song of the Vajra is just a development of that original *dang* energy. That's why it's explained that each syllable is related to different energy points of our body. For that reason, when we sing the Song of the Vajra, there is a possibility of deep relaxation of our energy. And this is the way we usually apply it as a *semdzin*.

In general, when we sing the Song of the Vajra, the instructions that we have is that we don't have to do anything with our mind; we are just being present in that sound. Being present in that sound means at the same moment we have contact with our senses and the sound of the Song of the Vajra pervades our outer dimension. The best way to sing the Song of the Vajra is just to remain in that instant presence or presence with this kind of openness in

our mind. I use the word "openness" because it's Longchenpa's explanation which says, "This song should be sung in *semnyid yangpai ngang* – the completely vast or immense state of the nature of the mind." This is the only thing Longchenpa says about that.

It means when we sing the Song of Vajra, we try to be in that state, instant presence or presence – in any case not distracted. Then the way it works – we have this kind of inner relaxation but this will allow our thoughts to show up even more. The initial stage of meditation is generally explained like a waterfall from a high mountain. They always say that in the beginning when we do *shine* meditation we will arrive at the point when we think, "Oh, my meditation is going very badly. I'd better stop this, it's not my destiny in this life." But teachers usually explain that at that time we shouldn't worry, we should be glad because it means that it's the first stage of meditation when we discover that many thoughts exist. With the Song of the Vajra it's the same and we can have that experience. We don't recognize that we have many thoughts but then we do recognize that we have many thoughts. To recognize that we have many thoughts and to have many thoughts is a very different condition. So we are already at a very good point if we recognize that we have many thoughts.

What do we do when we recognize we have many thoughts? We just relax, saying, "Ok, there are many thoughts, but I don't care about that". We continue again; we are in presence now, we are not distracted. Then again some other thoughts arise. The Song of the Vajra can last 5–8 minutes, and during all this time we can experience this process. We are present, then some thoughts arise, we get distracted, "Oh, I was thinking," we regain presence again, like that. We can have that experience throughout the song. Of course, it also depends on the condition of the person, the time, and so on. We can also have an experience when we sing the Song of the Vajra and all the time we are not distracted, we gaze into space, we have clarity, of course, we can also have this experience.

In general the Song of the Vajra has the function of relaxing our energy and allowing us to be more present and integrated with our sense perceptions. Therefore, the Song of the Vajra is not particularly employed as a *semdzin* traditionally.

» continued on the following page

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I did some research about this *semdzin* last year because I was working on the *tregcho* book, which is a very important book. Rinpoche wrote it many years ago, and finally I finished it. It's fundamental for understanding and practicing Dzogchen. I discovered this *semdzin* of the Song of the Vajra is included in the *Nyida Khajor* tantra but when in the classification of the seven *semdzin*, we only find it in the Longsal teachings. The seven *semdzin* usually don't use the Song of the Vajra, they use other kinds, like emptiness, direct emptiness or gradual emptiness, like we have in the third series.

But this is not very important. It is important that we know that the Song of the Vajra is extremely important for our Dzogchen Community and ourselves as students of Rinpoche because the Song of the Vajra has been awakened, newly introduced for practitioners in this age by our teacher. Nobody else uses the Song of the Vajra. First of all, nobody sings the Song of the Vajra the way that we sing it and also nobody uses it as the basic practice related to Ati Guruyoga. It's important for us to know that. The Song of the Vajra is also the essence of the Longsal cycle of teachings because every Longsal teaching starts with some lines from the Song of the Vajra. And there is always a precise correspondence how these verses are connected to that meaning. But these explanations don't exist within Tibetan instructions, or tantras. At least in this human world for now we don't have them. How they are connected is very clear from the root tantra of the Dance of the Vajra. It explains how every four lines of the Song of the Vajra are related to Dzogchen Semde, Longde and Upadesha.

For our Dzogchen Community it's very important to apply the Song of the Vajra. It has a connection to the transmission of our teacher and it also has a connection to the dimensions where there are other Dzogchen practitioners, yogis and yoginis, who apply the Song of the Vajra. You remember, in many dreams that Rinpoche wrote he says he went into one dimension and was walking on the hill and heard the sound of somebody singing the Song of the Vajra. Also this is the way he learned the Song of the Vajra - by participating in the Song of the Vajra with practitioners of other dimensions.

It's all part of Rinpoche's transmission which is called *kabab*. *Ka* means "the orig-

inal word" and *bab* means "falling on that person". In this life Rinpoche was the recipient of this transmission of the Longsal cycle of teachings, and we don't know historically and very clearly - at least I don't know - what the source of these Longsal teachings is but for sure it must be connected with Garab Dorje, mahasiddhas of Uddiyana, that lineage, like Gomadevi, of course, and many other mahasiddhas. We have this immense fortune in our life if we received this transmission or received Longsal root initiation. Even if we didn't receive an initiation, just receiving transmission of the Song of Vajra is already the essence of Rinpoche's Longsal teachings.

We have received this great treasure. Some of us are becoming older, others feel they are not very old, others are quite old. Anybody, regardless of their age, let's keep this treasure very dearly inside ourselves. We shouldn't worry too much about outer circumstances. Of course, the world may become worse, and worse, and worse, but the world does not exist without us, "because we are the eyes of the world", as one famous singer sang. We shouldn't care too much about circumstances but concentrate more on what is inside. Of course, one day we will die. When we die, if we keep this treasure inside then it will be like a lamp illuminating the path for us and then we will continue in the next life. We shouldn't think, "Now there is one life, Dzogchen is the supreme teaching, I am a Dzogchen practitioner, I will immediately become a mahasiddha and will manifest all wisdoms and kayas." If we have that it's just a fantasy.

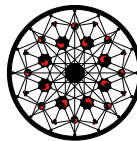
Some instructors may say, "I received Santi Maha Sangha of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level. Rinpoche is not here anymore so now I can explain everything because I know everything that Rinpoche explained". We must be very careful. These people may have this capacity but if they don't they are just blocking their own path and that is a very pitiful situation. So we must be very aware of our condition, our real condition. Real condition does not mean some abstract essence of mind or nature of mind. The real condition is that we are in samsara, suffering because of dualism and karma. We become aware of that real condition and try to do something to overcome that condition. We should never forget this point.

When we introduce [the teaching] to new people, what is the best way to do this?

With that kind of knowledge because people don't have that awareness. But if we try to introduce this knowledge, it's not easy at all because it's not a kind of intellectual understanding that we can have. That knowledge only arises after a long time of purifying our obscurations etc., then we reach that state in which we become aware of the samsaric condition. That is already a very important level. That's why we shouldn't think of only one life. Of course, we are not only practicing in one life. We are all different people, we have different conditions but most of us already practiced before and met Rinpoche before, otherwise it's not so easy to meet the teaching, meet the teacher, a Dzogchen teacher like this, by chance. It doesn't happen like that.

Therefore our wish and effort should be to keep that knowledge that we have, that experience that we have, even if we don't progress quickly in this life, we keep that knowledge that we have, we keep our pure samaya, and then we continue in the next life.

This is it about the Song of the Vajra, I don't have other things to say. ©



Notice of Convocation

Ordinary International Dzogchen Community (IDC) Members' General Assembly

Notice posted at the headquarters of the IDC in Località Merigar 1, 58031 Arcidosso (Grosseto), Italy
Arcidosso, May 31 2021

The Board of Directors

To the IDC Members
To the Board of Directors (International Gakyil, IG)
To the IG's Assistants
To the Auditor
To the College of Gekös (College of Guarantors)

Objective

convocation of the Ordinary IDC Members' General Assembly, according to article 8 of IDC Statute and to D.L. April 1 2021 n. 44.

We wish to inform all IDC Members that an Ordinary General Assembly has been called on:

first convocation on June 30 2021

at 7:00 am CET;

second convocation on July 30 2021

at 5:30 pm CET.

The Ordinary IDC Members' International General Assembly will be held in audio-video mode and streamed from Merigar West.

Agenda

- Approval of the financial statement for the year 2020.
- Approval of both the budget and the proposal for a program of IDC activities for the year 2021.
- Presentation of membership trends.
- Presentation of the proposals for the updating of the IDC Statute and – if needed – of other regulations annexed with an illustration of the next legal steps.
- Updates on the composition of the International Gakyil and presentation of the current Assistants as candidates for the role of members of the IG.
- Renewal of the members of the Gekö College (Board of Guarantors).
- Any other business.

All Members who have the right to participate in the International General Assembly and who are unable to attend in person may appoint another member to represent him/her by a written proxy.

Every Member may represent the votes of a maximum of three other IDC Members. ☉

Dear All,
Greetings from the International Gakyil!

It is with great joy that we announce that for those who pay taxes in Italy, the possibility has been introduced **to donate 2x1000 income tax** in this year's income tax return **to the International Dzogchen Community (IDC)**, registered in a special list of non-profit associations recently published by the Italian Ministry of Culture.

We would like to point out that **this is a further possibility to make a contribution to the Community, different from the 5x1000 and the 8x1000 ones**, which you can continue to donate for the benefit of other non-profit organizations in the Dzogchen Community.

Many thanks in advance for your support!
International Gakyil Team

Donate 2x1000 income tax to the International Dzogchen Community (IDC)!
How?

It's simple!

1. Fill out Form 730 or the Modello Unico or the Certificazione Unica (CU) provided by your employer or pension provider
2. Sign the box "Scelta per la destinazione del 2x1000 dell'IRPEF (Choice for the des-

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE	
FIRMA _____	
Indicare il codice fiscale del beneficiario	9 2 0 7 7 8 8 0 5 3 9

Sostieni International Dzogchen Community donando il tuo 2X1000!

tinuation of 2x1000 IRPEF) – Associazione Culturale"

3. Indicate the IDC codice fiscale (social security number): 92077880539

Are you exempt from submitting your tax return?

No problem.

At these links for the Agenzia delle Entrate you will find the forms and instructions for donating the 2x1000 to the IDC

<https://www.agenziaentrate.gov.it/portale/web/guest/come-presentare-la-scheda-2021>

<https://www.agenziaentrate.gov.it/portale/web/guest/tabelle-modelli-e-istruzioni1>

Why donate the 2x1000 to the IDC?

It is an act of generosity that allows you to support the development of the global projects of the **Dzogchen Community**

- The Mirror

- the Webcast

- the Membership Management System dzogchen.net

- the activities carried out by the International Instructors of Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga, Khaita Dances
- and much more

Please remember!

Donating the 2x1000 to the IDC is an additional opportunity and not an alternative to the destination of the 5x1000 and 8x1000 intended for other associations/non-profit organizations of the Dzogchen Community

Doubts?

Write to yellow@dzogchen.net

Thanks so much for your support!
International Gakyil Team

☉

Rinpoche Retreat Replay Webcast Project

June 2021 Selection
The Song of Vajra Retreat
Hong Kong 2012

Dear Members of the Dzogchen Community,

We are pleased to announce the June 2021 selection for the Rinpoche Retreat Replay Webcast Project. For the next two months we will be streaming Rinpoche's Song of Vajra retreat which took place in Hong Kong in 2012. The June selection also has a Spanish translation link.

All previously streamed retreats can be found at the Previous Retreats link at the top of the webcast homepage. Please note that every two months a new Rinpoche retreat replay will be selected and the current retreat will then be found at the Previous Retreats page.

The following practice materials are related to The Song of Vajra retreat replay, and can be found at the various SSP Bookstores:



The Song of the Vajra (E-Book)

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/2370000055866_the-song-of-the-vajra.html

This ebook contains the first full-scale commentary on the meaning of each verse of the Song of the Vajra, given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in a teaching at Tashigar South at the end of 1990.

The Song of the Vajra (Audio Download)

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/2000000001968_audio-download-the-song-of-the-vajra.html

This Audio Download MP3 contains the entire teaching of the Song of the Vajra

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave during the Tashigar Christmas retreat in 1990 which was the first time he explained in precise detail the full meaning of the practice.

A – Song of Vajra – Dedication (Audio Download)

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/2000000000763_a-song-of-the-vajra-dedication-practice-only.html

The Song of the Vajra is a form of Guruyoga. For a simple practice, sounding a long and melodious A, all phenomena related to form, sound, and consciousness are totally integrated in the instant dimension of rigpa. Remaining in this state of total equality and inseparability, relax in the contemplation of the sound of the Song of the Vajra. Then dedicate the merits.

The book *Guruyoga* explains the most important aspects of *Guruyoga practice*. It is also available as an ebook.

To support the Rinpoche Retreat Replay Project please use PayPal and click on donation in USD or donation in EUR. A request can also be sent to yellow@dzogchen.net for bank transfer details.

Thank you for your kind support,
The IG and Webcast Teams

©



School for Tibetan Language and
Translation

XVIIIth Training for Translators from Tibetan

with Fabian Sanders
August 20–September 15

Come and enjoy Tibetan with us!

Join us and learn to translate ancient texts from the Tibetan tradition!

If you are already skilled you can deepen your knowledge, discuss techniques, compare with others, and train your ability in a collaborative environment inspired by the ancient practice of translating in groups.

Everyone who knows how to read and the basic grammar of Literary Dharma Tibetan is welcome to join us. We will have two levels – Beginners/intermediate and advanced – working on different texts alone or in groups with full grammatical explanations and comments.

We will hold the course locally at Merigar, as well as online, as it has been our custom for many years now. Given the situation, we will be able to welcome locally only few people but the course will be both onsite and online.

For Beginners/intermediate students, the course will work in the following way: we all meet at beginning of the class, both onsite and online. Students get a text and work on it individually for some time (usually 10 to 12), being able to ask questions and advice all the time, both online and onsite. Around noon, we all connect together and all will be able to see the shared instructor's screen; in turn each one will read a few lines, analyze the grammar and propose a translation. When it is clear and understood by all we move on to the next student. We do the same in the afternoon,

doing the revision in the last hour (usually 16:30–17:30). We will start with extracts from a biographical text and maybe change during the course.

For advanced students, if we will have enough of them, we will work on their text every working day from 14:30 to 16:30. You are invited to prepare the text in advance and if you wish you can join the intermediate text revision to give comments and suggestions.

Recordings of the classes

We do not record all our sessions, but we will produce a short video with the full explanation of the part of the text translated each day, so that students are able to keep the pace with ease.

The course will be confirmed upon reaching a minimum number of participants before July 30

For information and registration contact: m.pansa@atiyogafoundation.org
<https://atiyogafoundation.org/tibetan-language-school/>

©

Oliver Leick

The Atiyoga Foundation is a cultural foundation and was created according to the wish of Prof. Namkhai Norbu in 2018.

The aim of the foundation is the preservation of the cultural heritage of Prof. Namkhai Norbu. The various cultural forms or areas of the mind, like yoga, dance, meditation, medicine, astrology, language, and well-being, which were all developed by Prof. Namkhai Norbu during his life, are autonomous and self-sustainable departments under the umbrella of the Atiyoga Foundation. Public events, lectures, conferences, seminars and exhibitions organized

by these departments offer favorable conditions for bringing out the potentiality of each human being.

In order to inform members of the worldwide Dzogchen Community, we started to present the Atiyoga Foundation to Gars, Lings and Gakyils. The first presentation was given to the Dzogchen Community of Milan, Italy, on March 3, 2021 by Marco Baseggio, the president of Atiyoga Foundation, and in March and April Marco gave a presentation to all Italian Lings.

From April to the present day, Oliver Leick, the vice-president of the Atiyoga Foundation, has given 15 presentations: to all German speaking Lings, to the DC UK, to Merigar East, to Tsegylgar East, to Tashigar Sur, to the DC Hungary, the DC Russia at Kunsangar North, the DC Czechia, DC Estonia, and DC Namgyalgar. Up to now more than 300 people have followed these presentations.

Oliver Leick will continue to give these presentations, so that all Gars and Lings of the international Dzogchen Community, as well as all departments of the international Shang Shung Institute will get this information.

As many of these presentations were recorded, you can ask your local Gakyil or the department of 'Research and Documentation' for the link, so that you can watch the presentation whenever it suits you.

For more information about the Atiyoga Foundation please visit our website: <https://atiyogafoundation.org> ©

Vajra Dance Public Book Project

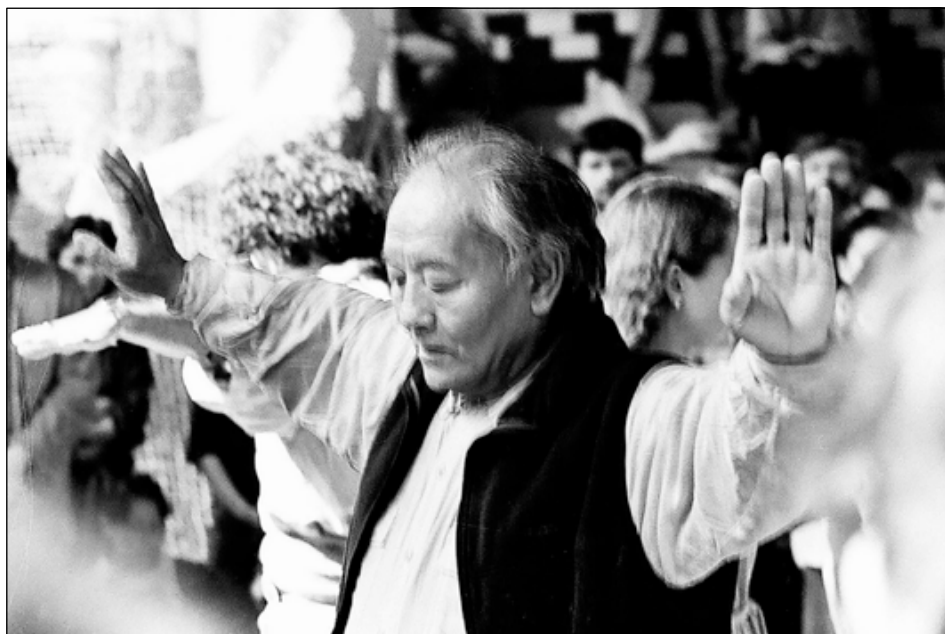
The Vajra Dance team is pleased to present a new project we are working on: texts about Vajra Dance open to the general public.

Until now, those who are interested in reading to learn a little more about Vajra Dance do not have much material available. With this project we would like to respond to this need, which has become more and more evident since the Teaching of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu started to spread outside the Dzogchen Community and especially since we started to hold open classes.

The project aims to initially produce a book dedicated to our Master's teachings on the Vajra Dance. This will mainly contain Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's original writings and in particular explanations of those Dances declared 'open' (The Dance of the Six Spaces and the Dance of the Three Vajras), complemented by verified transcriptions of selected oral teachings.

This volume will partially draw on the existing 'internal' book on the Vajra Dance, translated from Tibetan by Adriano Clemente and published in 2015. It will be completed by clear descriptions of the steps, to facilitate their understanding.

This project has a cost: the editor's part, which we will finance as the VD team, is about 5000 euro.



If you think it is a useful and beneficial project, please support us according to your possibilities: drops make an ocean!

For a donation, it is important to specify 'Vajra Dance' in the reason for the donation: <http://vajradance.net/donate-as-an-individual/>

Heartfelt thanks from all of us
Adriana Dal Borgo
on behalf of the Vajra Dance team ©



SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS

ཤང་ཤུང་པུ་བསྟན་པ་སྒྲིག་ཁང་།

Shang Shung Publications (SSP)

A limited liability non-profit social enterprise

The Shang Shung publishing house, founded in 1983 at the request of the Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, has been recently reorganized.

Shang Shung Publications (SSP) is now a nonprofit organization, that can operate as a social enterprise with limited liability.

The founding members are the Atiyoga Foundation, the International Dzogchen Community and Merigar West.

SSP continues to pursue its original mission: translation, compilation and publication of texts related to the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu with topics ranging from Dzogchen to Buddhism, Yantra Yoga, spiritual and traditional dances, Tibetan culture and traditional medicine, in the form of translations, commentaries, practice texts, teaching transcriptions, as well as study materials in audio and video format. The publications are enriched with books and multimedia products on similar subjects also by other authors.

Shang Shung Publications is an essential asset and heritage of the Dzogchen Community that is carrying out an indispensable service for all those who are seriously interested in the teaching transmitted by our master Namkhai Norbu.

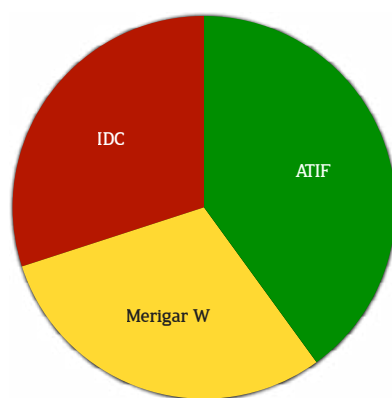
Today we have the important task to make his wisdom more known to the general public by increasing open publications through modern media such as ebooks, audio/video tutorials, social network presentations and so on.

Of course this great achievement has been possible only through the permanent encouragement of Rinpoche and the generous support of the readers who have bought our products and offered precious donations.

A publishing house that is based mainly on restricted products for practitioners cannot survive only on sales. The huge

Board composition

Role	Name	Residence
Legal representative	Gianni Totino	Italy
Vice President	Artur Skura	Poland
ATIF representative	Oliver Leick	Austria
IDC representative	Michela Martello	USA
Merigar W. representative	Massimo Orsi	Italy



SSP Founding Members.

work backing our books can be guaranteed only through the active participation and collaboration of all Dzogchen Community members.

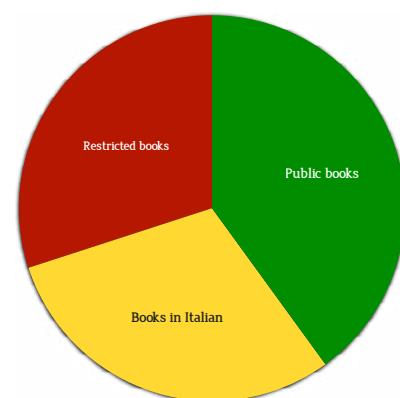
We are very grateful to all readers who are aware of the demanding purpose of our activity and sustain it with their trust and appreciation.

From 1983 until today the Shang Shung publishing house has developed the capacity to produce faithful translations of the writings of our Master, including his Longsal Cycle, and original Dzogchen texts, thanks above all to the tireless work of Adriano Clemente and Elio Guarisco, strongly supported by the Ka-Ter project managed by Oliver Leick, but also thanks to the activity of the many transcribers, editors, graphic designers, layout people, staff, managers and collaborators who, in the course of time, have offered their work, very often for free.

Visit our web shop with all products in English: <https://shop.shangshungpublications.com/en/>

Please donate if you believe that our activity is worth supporting at <http://www.shangshungpublications.org/donate>

SSP will continue to guarantee as always our commitment in the translation, publication and distribution of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's important texts restricted to members of the Dzogchen Community but, at the same time, we will try to



Main activities.

launch projects for an appropriate divulgation of non-restricted Dzogchen and open texts to the public outside the Community.

In particular we are developing a working scheme on social networks in order to be able to correctly give information about the heritage of the existing texts of Namkhai Norbu, Dzogchen Master and Professor.

We hope this will be possible in collaboration with all the departments of the Atiyoga Foundation so as to put into operation all the existing but still unexpressed synergies between the editorial function of Shang Shung and all the multiple disciplines and activities of the Dzogchen Community: Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Khaita Dances, Medicine, Astrology, Art, Teachings, the Archive, the Museum, and ASIA.

All the formal acts for the transition from Shang Shung Foundation to the new corporate form as a Social Enterprise have been completed.

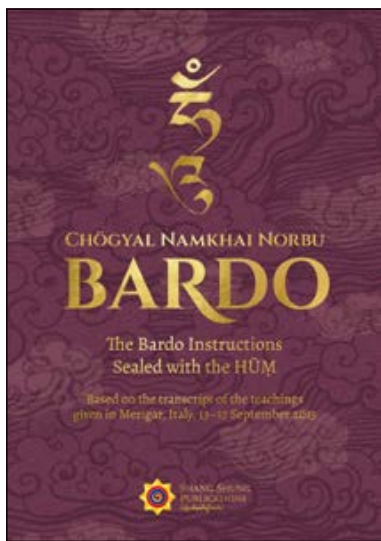
A two-year program of activities for both reserved and public books sectors has been prepared.

The reference markets will continue to be English, Italian and Spanish. To operate in these markets, the help and collabora-

Updates from Shang Shung Publications

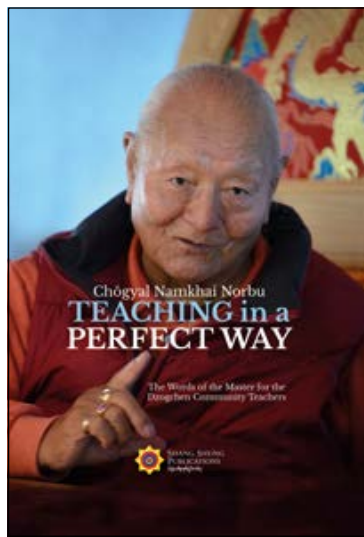
We'd like to send you some updates about the current and upcoming projects by Shang Shung Publications.

✳ Recently we published **The Bardo Instructions Sealed with the Hum**: Rinpoche's oral commentary to the Longsal teaching

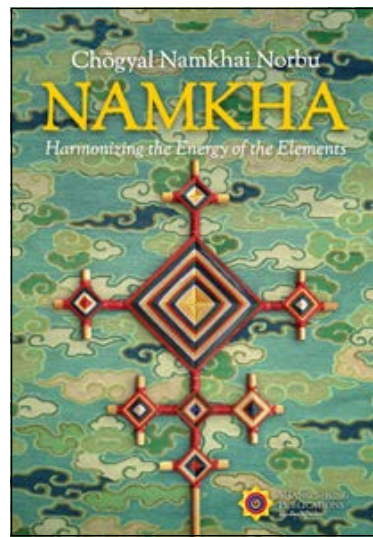


that increases the chances of liberation in the bardo.

✳ **Teaching in a Perfect Way** is a huge 500-page volume containing Rinpoche's words, especially to Dzogchen Community instructors, on how the teachings should be transmitted and continued in the future. The book, edited by Igor Legati, is the fruit of collaboration of many people who transcribed these teachings. This book is not just for instructors but for all of Rinpoche's students.



As for **upcoming books** we're soon sending to print the fifth volume in the *Longsal Commentaries* series, that of *Longsal Tregchod* which contains both the dreams through which this teaching was received and an essential commentary with deep explanations regarding the very core of the practice of Dzogchen as presented in the Upadesha series. There are several passages with clarifications of difficult points, including the way to practice different kinds of liberation, such as self-liberation, and overcoming obstacles. The specific way to



of the same name, based on the retreat given in Merigar in 2015, with some fragments from the Kyoto retreat on the same topic, edited by Nancy Simmons.

Rinpoche gave this teaching a number of times in the past, sometimes without mentioning that He had discovered it. As opposed to similar texts presented within the context of Vajrayana, the root text explains the process of dying and the opportunities for realization specifically for Dzogchen practitioners. Rinpoche gives additional explanations and clarifications, including advice on the attitude in daily life

✳ **Namkha: Harmonizing the Energy of the Elements** is the translation of Rinpoche's original text on the construction and practice of Namkha. We already published a book on Namkha several years ago, but it was based on oral teachings that Rinpoche gave during some retreats, not the actual text. Therefore in the new book you can find very precise instructions and explanations, including color diagrams and tables, as well as some indications not found in the previous book. It was translated by Adriano Clemente while Dina Priymak worked on the diagrams.

achieve realization thanks to the practice of Tregchod itself is also described. The book was translated by Adriano Clemente and the English revised by Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie. We sincerely hope this publication will help us all to make our practice more concrete and stable.

At the beginning the commentary to *Longsal Tregchod* says, "The preliminary practices as preparation, including the series of mind trainings and especially the Rushen of body, voice, and mind, which is absolutely necessary as a prerequisite for

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tion of local Gars and Lings will be requested. For other languages (Russian, Chinese, German, French, etc.) the agreements that have existed for years with local publishing houses connected to the Dzogchen Community will continue to apply.

Particular attention will be paid to the dissemination of the Master's public texts through agreements with external publishing houses (Lighting Source, Kairos, etc.) and distributors/sellers (Amazon, Om Edizioni, etc.).

Obviously the organization of SSP has been dimensioned to the actual economic situation. The possibility of achieving economic stability is related to the impending development of the activities of the entire Dzogchen Community.

We thank all the SSF/SSP staff for their efforts in allowing the closure of the Shang Shung Foundation and the birth of the new Shang Shung Publications.

In particular, we thank Pia Bramezza and Igor Legati for the support given in setting up the new social enterprise. ☺

Shang Shung Publications
<https://shangshungpublications.com/en>

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practicing the path of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, should be applied as explained elsewhere.” Practically speaking, all these practices are contained in *The Stairway to Liberation* translated by Cristiana De Falco and published at Tsegylgar in 1990. This translation has been recently revised and we will be publishing a new edition shortly.

This book contains the explanations of preliminary practices as presented in Dzogchen Upadesha, with excerpts from some of the most important and essential meditation manuals that exist, such as Jigmed Lingpa's *Yeshe Lama* and Jamyang Khyentse Wango's oral commentary to his *Chetsun Nyingthig* as written down by Terton Sogyal, with additional advice from Changchub Dorje and other masters. These preparatory teachings, often practiced during a retreat, allow practitioners – as Rinpoche used to say – “to learn how to swim in samsara”.

Another re-edition – but with substantial additions – is the *Chod* booklet. We have updated it with the teachings from the last Chod retreat given by Rinpoche in 2012.

We're also working on another large volume containing Rinpoche's teaching on Changchub Dorje's terma *Nyingthig Yangti*. It contains Rinpoche's oral explanations from three different retreats as well as the translation of the root text of Changchub Dorje's teaching. It's a complete Upadesha teaching enabling one to achieve realization in a single lifetime, starting from preliminary practices and ending with the explanation of realization depending on the level of one's capacity. The root text, translated by Elio Guarisco, is quite condensed, so Rinpoche is explaining it in great detail. Rinpoche's commentaries are edited by David Leskovitz.

Another book soon to be published is Rinpoche's oral explanation of Longsal Rushen, based on the retreat He gave in 2017. The root text of this teaching together with additional explanations regarding the way to practice the practices of the voice is contained in *Longsal Teachings, Volume 10*, however Rinpoche's oral teaching contains additional instructions. The book has been edited by Will Shea and Nancy Simmons. The book will have a digital appendix in the form of the recording of the practice of the voice from the same retreat so that it's easier to make the required sounds in a correct way.

At the same time we're working on an important teaching Rinpoche gave in 2009 in Barcelona, *The Nectar of the Tree of Life*, with the root text kindly translated by Jean-Luc Achard and the English editing by Nancy Simmons. It is a series of practices focused on the Guruyoga in its outer, inner, secret and most secret aspect, from *Lama Yangthig* by Longchenpa. In his retreat manual, Jamgon Kongtrul advises Thogal practitioners to perform these Guruyoga practices. Rinpoche Himself said, “If you are not satisfied by only doing Guruyoga with A and you want to do something concrete, you can do what you learned yesterday or what you learned today (i.e. the external and internal Guruyoga). These are perfect, complete teachings.”

In the same way, we plan to publish at some point another Upadesha teaching given by Rinpoche, *The Rainbow Body of Samantabhadra* discovered by terton Duddul Dorje, translated by Oriol Aguilar. Rinpoche gave this teaching in Barcelona in 2008.

As for public books, we're finalizing the long-awaited advice of Guru Padmasambhava from the terma of Dorje Lingpa that Rinpoche selected and taught at Tashigar Norte in 2008. This text is in the form of questions by Vairochana and other students of Padmasambhava with elaborate answers by Guru Padma. The questions selected by Rinpoche are the ones most relevant to our present situation and stress the importance of practicing the essence of Dharma and not wasting one's existence. This book is the result of the efforts of many people: the first translation of the root text was prepared by Fabian Sanders during the Translators' Trainings in Merigar, it was then revised by Elio Guarisco and subsequently revised by Adriano Clemente. Rinpoche's commentary was edited by Ed Matheny and David Leskovitz.

There are many, many other books with Rinpoche's teachings waiting for publication, both translations and oral commentaries. One of the main bottlenecks in the publication process is the identification of Tibetan words and phrases often used by Rinpoche. If you know some Tibetan and are willing to help, please let us know.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all people who have collaborated with us in direct and indirect ways, transcribing the audio of the retreats, proof-reading, OCR-ing, doing layout, offering photos and illustrations, and doing all kinds of precious work. A big thank you to all of you! ☺

The Multimedia Archive of the Dzogchen Community

Current situation and future development

Mirella D'Angelo and Gianni Totino

The multimedia archive of the Dzogchen Community, housed at Merigar West, consists of two separate sections: the private archive of the formal teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the historical archive of the International Dzogchen Community.

The Archive of the formal Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is totally in digital format and contains about 550 Teachings, of which the list is available, held in every part of the world from the early 70's to 2018. Part of these are only audio, a part are also video recordings.

They will be made available “for use, study, research and not for profit”.

The literal transcription of many of these Teachings has been carried out (in some cases revised and approved but in many other cases still to be reviewed and approved), thanks to a project already started several years ago.

The Historical Archive of the International Dzogchen Community on the other hand consists partly of physical material (audio, video and photographic), partly of digital material (audio, video, photographic, textual) and partly of paper and documentary material, to which numerous texts from Merigar's Library will be added.

The Archive has been recognized by the Archival Superintendence of the Tuscany Region for its particularly important historical interest as “it constitutes a large collection of sources of primary importance for knowledge in the field of Tibetan Buddhist Dzogchen in Italy and in the world, whose events have been documented”.

The historical archive is a collection of informal teachings, lectures and interviews with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on many aspects of Tibetan culture, his biography and those of other great Masters, the testimonies of important journeys to places of great spiritual and historical value, documentaries and copies of old films on Tibet.



The premises of the multimedia archive in the Capannone at Merigar West.

There are also the recordings of numerous Teachings of Masters from the Buddhist tradition invited to different places of the International Dzogchen Community.

Then there are conferences, cultural, intercultural and interreligious events, playful moments, celebrations, organized by the International Dzogchen Community, SSI and ASIA, both in the places of the Community and in external locations.

There are also courses held by the instructors on the different practices transmitted by the Master and documentation of relevant moments that testify to the development of the life of the International Dzogchen Community and its entities.

From January 2021, with the financial support of Merigar, partly from the UBI (Italian Buddhist Union) funds, a new 108 TB server was acquired, in which the digital materials of the two archives were copied and made safe.

Evodoc, a new database with which files have begun to be indexed, has been set up which will make the use of the archive materials much easier, in line with current technological standards.

Since there are about 350,000 files, indexing will take some time to complete. However, the project has already started and will continue in 2022.

At the same time, the digitization of analogical video material (which risks being lost due to a natural demagnetization process) still not converted into digital files is continuing.

The complete indexing project, the methods and timing of the subsequent consultation phase of the Archival materials by members of the Dzogchen Community and a wider audience of scholars, will gradually be made known by Merigar.

Currently, the distribution of archive materials is limited to Gars, Lings and Community organizations for specific projects mainly for the benefit of the Commu-



nity itself. In the future, the possibility of consultation may be extended to individual persons.

The great work that the project still requires, and which will produce a reference system for the identity of the entire International Dzogchen Community, needs the support and collaboration of all its members and entities.

In these two years of provisional management of the multimedia archive, as those in charge (Mirella D'Angelo and Gianni Totino) we have collaborated with:

✱ **Merigar West**: to who the Archive will be definitively donated in the coming weeks from both a financial and legal point of view; as soon as possible Merigar will provide information on the progress of the reorganization and strengthening project of the Archive that it has promptly set up and started;

✱ **the International Dzogchen Community**: to coordinate the requests of the various Gars and Lings and to support some initial costs;

✱ **the Atiyoga Foundation**: with whom we examined the various legal and organizational aspects concerning the management of the archives;

✱ **other people who have collaborated in karmayoga**: Kamil for the IT aspects, Giorgio Dallorto and Carla Gniecchi for the drafting of an initial report of the properties of the Archive.

We hope that this transversal collaboration created in these two years, between the various organizations of the Dzogchen Community, will continue in the coming years so as to ensure the best possible management of this immense heritage left to us by the Master.

Requests for materials from the Archive in 2020–21 from Gars, Lings, and organizations in the Dzogchen Community

- The Master's retreats for webcast – 5
- The Master's retreats for sharing in zoom with local communities – 6
- The Master's retreats for transcriptions projects – 54
- Films for making videos for Merigar, Dzamling Gar, the Vajra Dance Committee and Khaita – 4
- Edited video masters, for review and reuse – 2
- Photos and videos for SSP publications and promotional films – 7
- The Master's retreats for revision of practice booklets or SSP texts – 7
- Photos and videos for the Mirror – 4



New Covid Emergency in Nepal

In Nepal, the Indian variant of Covid-19 is unfortunately causing a real catastrophe, the growth of infections is exponential and is affecting the most fragile sections of the population.

The government has announced that the health system is overloaded and reached a critical point: just think that with 30 million inhabitants, Nepal has only 1,600 beds for intensive care, fewer than 600 ventilators and 0.7 doctors for every 100,000 people, a lower rate than India.

Hospitals are no longer accepting new patients, due to lack of beds, supplies, and above all due to lack of oxygen. Consequently, infected people remain in isolation in their homes, and, without timely and sufficient treatment, are at high risk.

This is the story of the doctors of the Balkot Primary Health Center, in the rural district of Arghakhachi:

"Due to the lack of oxygen we sent 9 people to the state hospital which is 5 hours from here. Unfortunately, three of them did not make it and died on the way to the hospital. If we had had a system supplying oxygen we could have saved their lives."

Added to this is the difficult economic and social situation of a country that is already among the poorest in the world, and that with the new closures and the blocking of tourist activities is literally on its knees.

ASIA has been working in the different Himalayan districts of Nepal such as Rasuwa, Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Sindhuli and Dolpa since 2010 and is deeply rooted in these territories, where it collaborates with local health organizations, governments and institutions and with community hospitals.



© Thibault Gregoire

We launched a fundraising campaign, and thanks to the prompt response of many generous donors, we organized the first important intervention: the purchase in Germany of 40 oxygen concentrators, equipped with fans and all the accessories necessary for their use, which are being sent to Nepal and distributed to 7 community hospitals in the rural districts of Sindhupalchowk, Rasuwa and Arghakhanchi.

This is the first step but there is still a lot to do: hospitals do not have safety devices – pulse oximeters, coveralls, headgear, masks, gloves, sanitizers, etc. – which we are committed to distributing as soon as possible.

And we are also preparing to face the socio-economic emergency triggered by the pandemic.

This is the appeal of the ASIA Program Director in Nepal, Nabaraj Acharya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNhBnyhLmoE>

Our Nepalese friends need us!

To participate in the fundraising campaign click here

www.asia-ngo.org/en/emergenzasia/
For info write to l.fidanzia@asia-ngo.org

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MACO Museum of Asian Art and Culture

In Arcidosso, Tuscany, Italy

Building Bridges and Creating Connections: MACO and the British Museum

The Mirror recently asked us to describe our recent collaboration with the British Museum and their ResearchSpace team and a few of the ways that it will be used to help us to share the Namkhai Collection with our Community members around the world.

Introduction

ResearchSpace (RS) is arguably the best software in the world for detecting and mapping the intricate interdependencies of our world's cultural heritage. It includes the first search engine specifically built to find and manage resources in the museum environment that employs the linked open data standard developed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM – UNESCO), CIDOC-CRM. A short video presentation of RS is available on our home page: <https://www.macomuseo.org/en-home>

Rather than simply cataloguing an artifact, ResearchSpace permits us to describe the relationships between artifacts, ideas and resources within their broader cultural context. In this way, RS improves access to digital artifacts by providing more relevant ways of revealing the relationships between them.

Our contribution

To manage their collection of over 5 million artifacts, the British Museum uses RS together with a robust commercial collection management system (CMS). Since their collection management system is beyond the needs and financial means of a small museum, like the MACO, we proposed and funded a customization of RS, which substitutes their CMS with an open source institutional digital repository, called FEDORA (Flexible Extensible Digital Object Repository Architecture). FEDORA is used by the Smithsonian, the British Library, and many universities around the world. (<https://duraspace.org/fedora/about/>)

During the course of our collaboration with the British Museum, they decided to



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu crossing the bridge to Khyung Lung dNgul mKhar.

© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

adopt our customization as part of their next major software release of RS. As a consequence, the BM has invested a considerable amount of their own resources in the realization of this upgrade. Thanks to the MACO's contribution, RS is now poised to become an open source platform for connecting the collections of cultural heritage institutions, large and small, everywhere.



White Tara. Gift to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu by Kyabje Chatral Rinpoche, Sangye Dorje (CNN01082015).

© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

Although the MACO has hosted two international conferences with workshops on digital cultural preservation (in 2013 and 2016), the project would not have been possible without the patient mentoring of Tom Garnett, a longtime Dzogchen Community member, retired digital librarian of the Smithsonian Institute and the director of the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL).

Thornton Staples, another retired digital librarian from the Smithsonian and of course, Dominic Oldman, the director of ResearchSpace are all responsible for helping us to realize this project.

1. Building bridges. Building a collaborative research environment with RS

In 1988 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu led an intrepid group of travelers on a 7000 km expedition over the Tibetan Plateau and along the Silk Road, crossing two deserts and descended into the second lowest place on earth, the Turfan Depression, to rediscover Kyunglung Ngüka, the "Silver Palace of the Garuda Valley", southwest of Mount Kailash, which Rinpoche identified as the last capital of the ancient kingdom of Zhangzhung.

In 2016 a group of Bon-po monks from the Gurugyam monastery, the seat of the contemporary Bon-po master and traditional doctor, Jigmed Namkhai Dorje, near Kyunglung, discovered an ancient tomb and contacted Chinese archeologists, coordinated by a team from Sichuan University, led by Prof. Huo Wei, the Dean of History and Culture of Sichuan University.

The tomb revealed silk shards and the second oldest sample of tea ever discovered, dated to the second century. Their discovery provided the first concrete proof that a branch of the Silk Road crossed the Tibetan Plateau by the second century and a vindication of Rinpoche's assertion that Zhangzhung was once an important center of culture and commerce.

For those interested in knowing more about the discoveries in Gurugyam, see:

>> continued on the following page



Stupa near Gurugyam Monastery, Ngari Province, Tibet. 1988.

© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/the-salt/2016/01/26/464437173/worlds-oldest-tea-discovered-in-an-ancient-chinese-emperors-tomb?t=1621519359331>

Inspired by Rinpoche's historic expedition and the recent discoveries by Chinese archeologists at the Gurugyam site, we began planning an exhibition about the hitherto unexplored relationship between Tibetan cultural origins in Zhangzhung and the movement of peoples, ideas and commerce across the Silk Road.

Project milestones

In 2016 we met with Prof. Huo Wei in Chengdu and began discussions about the planning of the exhibition, which explores the history of Italian and Chinese archaeological discoveries in Zhangzhung, in collaboration with the Museum of Sichuan University.

In 2017 Rinpoche invited Prof. Huo Wei to Tenerife and on this occasion signed a memorandum of understanding formalizing MACO's collaboration with the Museum of Sichuan University.

An interview with Prof. Huo Wei is available here: <https://youtu.be/5XdgVIGif5Q>

In 2018 the project was extended to include the Archaeological Museum of Naples (MANN), with another MoU signed with Dr. Paolo Giulierini, MANN director, in Chengdu.

Primarily because of the high esteem in which Rinpoche's Zhangzhung research is held around the world, a growing international team of archeologists, anthropologists, Tibetologists and media experts from universities in China, Italy, Holland, Australia

and the US have been willing to collaborate with us on this project.

A series of short interviews with leading scholars about the importance of Rinpoche's Zhangzhung research can be seen on our YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/hXDJvNuHrVs>

The advantages of ResearchSpace in the planning of an international project of this kind is that it has also been designed as a virtual collaborative environment. Our institutional partners and curators will be able to use RS to share their resources and research and collaboratively build the exhibition, transforming our RS archive from an "excavation site" into a "construction site" [*An Archival Impulse*. Foster 2004: 22].

2. Making connections: A Silk Road Pilgrimage

Beginning in 2018, we began planning a major update to our permanent exhibitions on the ground floor of the MACO, which was also inspired by Rinpoche's 1988 pilgrimage to Mount Kailash.

The project, entitled Silk Road Pilgrimage, aims to broaden the context in which we present the Namkhai Collection to the public by reaching beyond the Himalayas to include the Collection within the broader cultural dialogue between East and West.

A preview of a short introductory video about the project can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/UxogzQBY5EE>

Silk Road Pilgrimage explores the history of the three principle trade routes: the Northern Silk Road, the Tea – Horse Road across Tibet, and the maritime spice route,

following the impressions of pilgrims, travelers, and explorers, as recounted in their travel diaries.

Beginning with the diary of Tang Dynasty pilgrim, Xuanzang (602–664), on his 17 year pilgrimage to India in search for original Buddhist texts to bring back to China, we discover the splendor of what was once Bamiyan, Gandhara, Kizil, Khotan and Oddiyana and the remnants of the treasures they once held discovered by the explorers of the "Great Game", such as Aurel Stein and Giuseppe Tucci, who followed Xuanzang's diary to guide their expeditions.

The Silk Road theme provides us with a rich narrative vehicle through which to explore the exchange of commerce, technology and ideas of our world cultural heritage and the important role Buddhism played in shaping Asian culture.

Even though we plan to dedicate the 45 exhibition displays and media installations of the museum to this project, ResearchSpace will help us enrich these physical exhibits with relevant links to digital resources, and also permit us to create and share links to resources in the collections in other museums. QR codes will be inserted within the exhibits, which will permit the



A Buddhist nun performing her circumambulation of Mount Kailash. 1988. © 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

visitors to query RS for media resources and more detailed information. We have already created a number of lesson plans for the local school system which employ QR codes in a treasure hunt, within the museum.



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Dunhuang. 1988.

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3. Mapping Meditation in Motion

Our exhibition "Meditation in Motion: The World of Tibetan Sacred Dance", was first staged in Athens in 2017, with the assistance of the Dzogchen Community of Athens, to coincide with the International Dance Preservation Congress (UNESCO) at which our Khaita Joyful Dances Project participated. This was the third traveling exhibition that we curated after the Lukhang Mural exhibitions, which featured the images by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu created in Lhasa in 1981, that were staged in Shanghai (2013) and Beijing (2014) with the help of Dr. Jakob Winkler, Arch. Lorenzo Trucato, of the Miralles Tagliabue EMBT, and the Dzogchen Community of China.

An expanded version of Meditation in Motion was planned as part of the inaugural events in 2018 for Dzamling Gar. Sadly, this has yet to take place. Our planning for Tenerife, though, was very useful when Merigar asked us to present a commemorative exhibition for Rinpoche in 2019, which we installed in the Project Space galleries, located on our second floor.

Although each staging of an exhibition is unique, each presenting its own set of opportunities and problems to resolve, the need to document an exhibition is essen-



Installation of the Zhangzhung exhibition in the Sala della Meridian of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN).

© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

tial for the realization of each future iteration. Strangely, though, there are no tools or standards to document all the aspects of an exhibition, with each cultural institution, curator and exhibition designer using a wide range of tools from Excel to SketchUp.

One of the first requirements for our collaboration with the British Museum was our request that RS would provide us with a tool to document exhibitions in a three-dimensional space. They have provided us with a solution which we will use to document our exhibits for both preservation purposes and for our future installations of traveling exhibits.

4. Reconnecting the Sacred

Artifacts are frequently described within a museum environment without adequately appreciating the cultural context in which and for which they were created. This is particularly true when we encounter objects within the exhibition space, which are considered sacred.

When tasked with bringing to the public a unique collection, rich in consecrated ritual objects, assembled by an eminent Buddhist Master, shared in its entirety for the first time, in any western cultural institute, an attempt to explain what constitutes "sacred art" becomes of paramount importance.

Although the MACO presents the treasures of the Namkhai Collection within immersive architectonic narratives and with

multi-sensory media installations, until today, we have not really found an adequate way to reconstitute the sacred.

The first artifact that we will begin using ResearchSpace to describe, will be the magnificent 2 by 3 meter thanangka depict-

» continued on the following page



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu overlooking the valley below Gurugyam Monastery, Ngari Province, Tibet. 1988.
© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

» continued from previous page

ing our Semde transmission lineage, displayed in Gallery 9. This comprehensive, unified and inspirational representation of our spiritual heritage is the last exhibit in the museum.

With the help of ResearchSpace and applying the principles of interdependence expressed in our logo as a guide, we will try to reintegrate the sacred within the artifact by reestablishing the relationship between text and image, bringing together poems, songs, biographies and citations from the original Tantras, to, in a sense, let the thangka itself unravel the complex visual language of its own iconography.

This project has benefited from contributions from Robert Beer, author, art historian and thangka painter, Terese Bartholomew, retired curator of the Avery Brundage Collection of Himalayan Art of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, and Adriano Clemente, translator and author with Rinpoche of "The Supreme Source: The Fundamental Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde Kunjyed Gyalpo" (Snow Lion, 1999). To Adriano, together with Jim Valby, who have dedicated their lives to making the Semde texts and commentaries available to us, goes our special thanks and appreciation. To Rinpoche, who has transmitted the unique opportunity of putting the Semde into practice, there are no words which can contain our gratitude.



The Semde Assembly Field of Merit Accumulation thangka. (cnno3022016)

© 2021 Namkhai Collection/MACO

Help has also been offered by Élie Roux of the BDRC (TBRC).

Note: The MACO logo, which Rinpoche created, represents a mandala expressing the interdependence of the five traditional sciences of Buddhist studies blossoming from the primordial science of spiritual practice.



Conclusion – Building our future

“and the future is long”

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J35jJPzo-pM>

Born from the inspiration, generosity and very concrete efforts by Rinpoche and the entire Namkhai family, the MACO is the fruit of 40 years of ongoing collaboration between the Dzogchen Community of Merigar and the Comune di Arcidosso, which we celebrated this year.

The MACO is yet another miraculous manifestation of Rinpoche's untiring efforts and infinite compassion. Home of the Namkhai Collection containing over 5000 artifacts from around Asia, the conceptual design of the Museum also strives to reflect Professor Namkhai's multifaceted research interests, found in over 250 publications.

Giving back

The international network which Rinpoche's teaching and travels knit together into our Sangha has contributed significantly in many ways to the town of Arcidosso, not least of which is the MACO. From the planning to the construction of the MACO, we have mercilessly tapped the goodwill of our members around the world by calling upon volunteers and our numerous architects, engineers, scholars and creative professionals from many fields, to contribute their talents to the realization of the project – all of which they have offered, at no cost.

With their contribution and their dedication to Rinpoche and his vision, what would have been simply a small rural museum on a Tuscan hillside became something marvelous, comparable only to what one might expect to find in a major metropolitan area.

Most certainly we can and, with everyone's help, will do more, but this labor of love is also an expression of our Community's gratitude to the town of Arcidosso, who have most certainly shown us their mutual appreciation through their continued support.

And this is essential, because the museum lives (or dies) based on its relevance to its local community, with the services that it provides. We strive to address this for example through the programs and tours that we have developed for the local school system. ResearchSpace will help us to reinforce our relationships with local schools and cultural institutions, with new and innovative services, which include op-



portunities for smart working in the heritage sector and the promotion of cultural tourism, online.

With over 766,000 Euro of both private and public contributions since 2013, until now the MACO has been able to support its activities and remain open to the public autonomously, without weighing on the budget of Merigar. 97% of these funds were allocated to specific projects with 3% going towards MACO operations and salaries. This does not include the rental of the ex-chancellery which hosts the MACO, or the cost of heating it or our electricity, all of which are offered by the Comune di Arcidosso, in exchange for the proceeds from ticket sales.

As a consequence of the COVID epidemic in London, the delivery of the RS software, expected in November 2020 was delayed until the end of May 2021. We have done our best to stretch our available funding to address this delay, photographing the Namkhai Collection and digitizing its re-

sources, but as of June 2021 our funding will be finished.

Although we had been assured of continued funding in 2022 by the Union of Italian Buddhists earlier this year, recent changes, primarily of a bureaucratic nature, have now rendered this potential support, sadly, improbable.

As a concluding example of how we intend to use ResearchSpace, we hope in part to offset this loss of funding by offering our Community members, Gars and Lings an opportunity to virtually adopt an artifact in the Namkhai Collection. Donations can also be extended to single displays or entire exhibitions. In return for your contributions, we will provide you with access

to RS, where you will be able to follow our progress as it evolves, accessing resources as they come online, such as exhibits, videos, images and over 25,000 digital books and articles, related to the Collection. As always, all financial contributions to the MACO are received and managed by our very competent administration in Merigar. Information about this project will be published on – www.macomuseum.org – and, as always, communicated through the voice of our Community – The Mirror.

Start-up funding for this project has been provided by the Union of Italian Buddhists (UBI) and the local municipality of Arcidosso. ResearchSpace is funded by the Mellon Foundation. If you would like to know more or contribute to any of our projects please visit:

<https://www.macomuseum.org/supportus>
<http://researchspace.org/projects-and-collaborations/>



KHAITA
DANCE
SCHOOL

The Khaita Educational Program

An interview with Adriana Dal Borgo about the Educational Program of the Khaita Dance School with Tamara Kozhukharova, May 10, 2021.



Photo by Paolo Fassoli

Tamara Kozhukharova: Please tell us more about the objective or purpose of the Educational Program of the Khaita School.

Adriana Dal Borgo: Khaita is one of the last gifts that Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave us and shows us how to apply the Dzogchen teaching in a concrete way. If you think about how much time and energy Rinpoche dedicated to developing it in the last part of his life, it is clear that Khaita is a teaching.

The aims of the Educational Program are to honor Rinpoche's work and to communicate its content. Khaita is not just about singing and dancing; there is much more behind it.

with the Master when he started working on Khaita, from the very first moment, and thanks to this, I realize how important all this was. For me, three years is a good period of time because the program is quite complex.

Another objective of the program is to prepare new instructors and this requires deeper preparation and a method and we need to develop skills. If you consider, for example, the Vajra Dance – to become an instructor, first of all you have to learn all the dances, this is the basis, then participate in what we called Teacher Training, and then there are the supervisions. It is a process that requires the time necessary

During the Educational Program, a space will be dedicated to learning basic notions of developmental psychology and some techniques for teaching children. This does not mean that after three years we will be experts in this. The idea is to touch on some aspects and open up in this direction, then if someone is interested, they can deepen their knowledge. The idea is to create a base from which it is possible to develop. Khaita can be applied, for instance, in the training of managers and coaches as is happening now in Poland. There are many possibilities.

TK: Yes. I think we can say that Khaita is a method for training soft skills in the corporate environment. It could be one of the methods.

Who will be able to participate in this Khaita educational program?

ADB: I ask that people have attended at least one basic course and also anyone who wants to deepen and understand a little better the various aspects of Khaita. It would also be useful for instructors. As instructors I believe we should have a common knowledge and language. For example, Rinpoche gave precise indications on how to indicate movements and steps. For instance, what we call the "basic step", we don't call the "Tibetan step". A very simple example is that we should all go in the same direction. Or, the way of counting, we work with movement, with music and it is very important when we explain, to count clearly in order to understand the rhythm. At the moment we are improvising a bit and we all do things in a different way, but there are systems, keys that have been created over the centuries by musicians. We



TK: Why does the training take three years and not several months?

ADB: Khaita is like a diamond: it is a precious jewel with many facets. In order to appreciate and understand the different aspects, I think it is important to dedicate some time. In three years, we can create motivation and understand that it is not just about learning steps which can be easily done by following a course or watching a video. It is important to understand what is behind that, what Rinpoche's intention was. I was very fortunate to be traveling

for a person to mature their practice, motivation and the ability to teach. At times it takes even longer than three years.

It would be very useful to bring the Joyful Khaita Dances to the schools as part of the education programs. Movement, dance, sound, and rhythm, are very important and favor the harmonious psycho-physical development of the child. Working with rhythm teaches us to understand how to work with circumstances. Then there is the coordination of the body which helps with socialization and working in a group.



The Tibetan calendar in the Sangha App is now available also in Russian, Italian, Spanish and Czech language.

Anniversaries, practices and daily combinations are already aligned with the Tibetan calendar published by Shang Shung Publications.

Progress

As it has been some time since it was launched, we'd like to summarize the benefits that are now available in the Sangha App:

- Overview of all events worldwide with onsite & online filters
- Automatic conversion to your timezone for online events
- Ability to add events directly to your phone's calendar
- Reminders of Ganapuja days
- Contacts & direct chats with other practitioners
- Forum for Teaching & Community topics

Trustworthiness

Sangha App has signed a Memorandum of understanding with the International Ga-



kyil that can be used and promoted in the International Dzogchen Community.

Sangha has supported Shang Shung Publications releases and is based on the vision of being connected with all official platforms of the Community.

It has become an important trusted platform for sharing online event passwords & other restricted info.

It's used more and more by local gakyils and communities in the various countries of the Dzogchen Community.

Uniqueness

Over 14,000 events have been published in the App.

More than 2,200 IDC practitioners use Sangha as their special phone app to be connected directly with all their Vajra family.

Sangha App still keeps the exclusivity of secure & private space out of commercial social networks, dedicated to all students of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

To have all the features available to you make sure you've downloaded the latest version: <https://www.mahasangha.net/download/>

May it support our practice, presence & awareness in various circumstances, benefiting all beings!

Sangha App Team

www.mahasangha.net

For any questions:

hello@mahasangha.net



will study this too, to create a foundation of music education and then it will be much easier for all of us to teach.

TK: Yes we should have a common professional terminology.

ADB: All instructors are welcome to participate to build this together. The other aspect is that the Educational Project is also a direction for the future. If some instructors are interested, we can work together to carry it forward. I would be happy to collaborate in this.

TK: But other people can participate as well, as you said, if they have basic knowledge from a Khaita course or they have trained a little. Is that correct?

ADB: Yes, of course. It is possible to participate simply to deepen one's knowledge of Khaita and, if there is interest, to become an instructor. At the end of the third year an exam will be held.

TK: Is it possible to participate in only part of the program?

ADB: Yes, people can take only some of the courses. There are also workshops where we will work with some specific aspects. For example, this summer there will be a workshop with a professional to train our voice while we move.

TK: Will it be possible to participate remotely, not only in this current course but throughout the Educational Program?

ADB: Yes it will be possible due to the circumstances since with the pandemic it is still not easy to travel and meet. Khaita online, however, is a different thing. The joy comes from dancing together but in this moment circumstances are not easy so I think it is important to start anyway.

TK: Is there any financial help available for participants to participate in this program?

ADB: Yes, we have created a scholarship program to make participation possible even for those with financial difficulties. When there is good motivation and the desire to dedicate time and energy, the economic aspect should not be a problem. There will also be some help for instructors.

TK: How do people contact the school? Is there a website?

ADB: You can find information on the web page, khaita.org. To register for the first course that will take place in Merigar, West you can register directly through the Merigar web page, under courses and events. Or you can write to harmonyinthespace@atiyoga.org.

TK: Thank you Adriana, it's very inspiring just to hear all this information.

ADB: Thank you.



Dzamling Gar Update

Naomi Zeitz

Despite the many challenges facing the world and Dzamling Gar the year of 2020, Dzamling Gar continues to provide a rich program of courses and activities, including daily and weekly practices. Some have been webcast in conjunction with Merigar West through Practicing Together, some by Zoom, some both, and some only live.

We are fortunate to have this big and beautiful Gönpa where we can practice together with enough social distance using masks. We are always applying the directives of COVID protocol from the Spanish authorities and doing our best to maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

We discovered through this big challenge the great value and benefit of webcasts, zoom and online activity. Participants were able to join from all over the world: China, Russia, US, S America, Japan, Europe, Australia, etc., and many people would not have the possibility to have access to such a wide variety of courses and programs until all this online activity began. So sometimes there is a silver lining.

For the possibility of these webcasts and on line courses we are indebted to webmaster Sebastien Remy, from the Blue Gakyil, who worked hour after hour, together with Vince Li, Justin Hudgins, and Carles Brucet to bring these programs to the internet and people around the world.

At the same time, we have a group of tireless and dedicated translators, without whom we cannot share these programs around the world, and they are: Vince Li, Carlos Garcia, Edith Casadei, Mayda Hocesvar, Pablo Guerra, Ester Escuerdo, and Anna Olefir who manages the Russian team.

The Practicing Together webcasts done together with Merigar West were mainly Ganapujas and collective practices.

In 2020 we ran approximately 58 courses and events, including Mandarava, Losar and Fundraising events, so for 2020, minus the Vajra Dance courses, in effect there were 3430 participants on Zoom, plus 634 Chinese participants. Total would be 4064.

We held courses by webcast and zoom in Yantra Yoga, Respiration, Pranayamas, Mandarava Sogitg and Tsalungs, Tara Practice and Santi Maha Sangha, as well as some special events for Vajra Dance and Khaita,



and Khaita continues to webcast one day a week from the Dzamling Gar Gönpa.

Our dedicated instructors include: Elio Guarisco, Fabio Andrico, Nina Robinson, Prima Mai, Adriana Dal Borgo, Steve Landsberg, Elias Capriles, Julia Lawless, Stoffelina Verdonk, for Yantra Yoga: Alessandra Policreti, Valeria Spasskaia, Naomi Zeitz, for Vajra Dance: Luda Kislichenko, Masha Stepinak, Anna Apraksina, and Urara Taoka, and for Khaita Elena Kalistova and Yulia Petrova. We are also working together with SSI UK hosting a 6 Module weekend series of Open Meditation with various SMS instructors by Zoom only.

We are also grateful for the various umdzes who led the practices throughout 2020 and are still leading as we continue our webcasting activity of Practicing Together with Merigar West.

We should also mention our daily and weekly activities in the Gar:

Daily: Mandarava, Yantra Yoga, Khaita and Vajra Dance

Weekly: Meditation with Rabgyi, Dorje Sempa Namkha Che Study Group, twice weekly Sang and Serkyem and Short Thuns with Simhamukha, Guru Dragphur and Dogpa, Children's Sports and Exercise and we also have webcast Ganapujas with Merigar West.

Other offerings we have had:

Voice workshops with Katya Farrington
Umdze training with Sebastien and Vince

And recently we have added a weekly or sometimes bi weekly movie night.

The physical aspect of the Gar which includes our spectacular gardens (see article on page 29) has had some changes and upgrades. We have replaced and upgraded the large gate behind the White Tent space, an emergency reconstruction of the cafeteria floor, we have repaired internal roads, and we are looking towards making a new front gate, we have moved the Gar Office to the old Meriling office, we are upgrading the apartment where the offices were to a nice apartment for long term rental, getting the acoustics in the Gönpa installed by late au-

turn, we are preparing to make a small Gönpina under the Gönpa to use while the acoustics are being worked on, as well as the continuous and ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the houses and everything related to physical nature of the Gar.

Our economic situation is more stable thanks to the constant vigilance of our Yellow Gakyil. We are very grateful for the continuous generosity of the international Dzogchen Community which helps us survive. Thanks to the implementation of Webcast and Zoom courses we were able to maintain a certain level of income that has seriously helped the Gar to survive.

We have a couple of new Gakyil members, both for Yellow, Justin Hudgins (the new President) and Luna Latarulo. We are very happy to have them join our Dzamling Gar family.



The new gakyil.

As long as the Gar is closed due to ongoing Covid restrictions, we continue to run programs, practices, and activities both on site (thanks to our amazing Gönpa), Zoom and Webcast. We also continue to host Community members in the houses and people seem to be very happy to be able to stay here and participate in the many things we have to offer, including swimming in the sea!

We look forward to opening the Gar and the possibility to offer open programs to our local Community of Adeje and beyond. We also look forward to going out into the



Photo by Lesya Cherenkova

The New Look of the Moon Garden

Alix De Fermor

The glowing blue-pebbled river of Time has changed its course. Time does that sometimes, doesn't it? Barely brushing the heart of the Moon Garden, it now flows down directly to the lower level, the circle of rocks.

Adios, pink islands of evening primrose! You were so charming and innocent looking, with your silky pale pink petals ... but your real nature was deceptively invasive. I tried to tame you but you ran wild over the whole garden, suffocating everything in your path, creating with your dense foliage an ideal hiding spot for pests. So we

had to uproot you. Sorry, little honeybees, you will have to fall back on the nectar of the bee blossoms that spread their succulent flowers here and there.

We replaced you, evening primrose, with a gentle area of grass on which are spiking, unchallenged now, a frangipane (*plumeria alba*) tree and a bird of paradise (*caesalpinia gilliesii*) tree.

And, because Time is suspended, there is now only Space, green Space. The beauty of the roses is enhanced by the fresh uniformity of the tender greenness of the grass, the flowering plants appear more striking, and, of course it's nice to walk barefoot!

We've also extended the pergola around the Washingtonia palm, creating an iron trellis structure reminiscent in its form of a spiral seashell. This structure will provide shade in the sitting area, and is cov-

ered by a cascade of roses in shades of pink and white, by white *dipladenia*, pink *podranea ricasoliana* (pink trumpet vine), *trachelospermum jasminoides* (star jasmine), *convolvulus* blue morning and, of course, the nightly famous moon flower!

In the winter, when the climbing plants partially shed their leaves, the morning sunrays from the East will slightly penetrate the pergola, making a gentle play of light and shade in the wind.

On the South-east side of the Moon Garden many trees such as olive, orchid, a bodhi tree, a silk tree, umbrella trees, a laurel, and a flamboyant are growing quite fast, producing not only a deep shade but also a good wind barrier for the future.

So in the Moon Garden, there is now Space beyond Time, a little green eternity and an explosion of scents!

Enjoy!



local Community to share the great many gifts Rinpoche endowed us with.

Some highlights of upcoming programs

June 27
International Yoga Day
Offered by the Region of Adeje at the Dzamling Gar Gönpa

August 3–29
Collective Practice Retreat with Vajra Dance.

- August 3–8 Purification of Six Lokas Practice and The Dance Which Benefits Beings
- August 13–17 Guruyoga of the White A Practice and the SOV Dance
- August 20–28 Gomadevi Practice and the SOV Dance
- August 28–29 Dance of the 12 A's

September 2–6
The Imperative of No Escape
live and Zoom with Steven Landsberg

September 30–October 9
Dorje Sempa Namkha Che
live and Zoom with Elias Capriles

November 6–7
Celebration of 10 Years of Khaita

November 7–14
Khaita
Educational Program for New Instructors and Khaita Experts





Merigar's Forty Years

Activities and Events for Summer 2021

In 1981, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, together with the first group of his students, chose a farm in the Amiata area of Tuscany, Italy as the first Gar of the Dzogchen Community. As a result Merigar, the Residence of the Mountain of Fire, was established, a place where people interested in the study and practice of Dzogchen according to the teachings of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu could meet. This year marks forty years from the founding.

It is an important milestone to remember and to celebrate, despite, and perhaps even more reason to do so, this difficult situation that we are all going through, and with the mourning for the passing of our Teacher, now almost three years ago, still alive within us.

The best way to express our gratitude towards him for what he transmitted and taught us by his example all these years seemed to be to concretely demonstrate how much we treasure his teachings. We are deeply convinced of the immense value and importance they have for our evolution as individuals and as a human community that is more aware, open, generous and loving towards ourselves and life around us.

At Merigar we are therefore organizing a series of events that are free and open to all, some in collaboration with the Municipality of Arcidosso, to concretely share our mutual experiences. The events will take place throughout the summer and will have different themes. On one hand we will share the experiences and activities that have always defined us, such as meditation, Yantra Yoga, the Dance of the Vajra and Khaita Joyful Dances. On the other, aspiring to mutual enrichment, we will open ourselves to the experiences of others and discover the various ways in which grati-

tude, love and solidarity can be expressed in the current situation.

In this historical phase, in which we have perhaps understood more than in the past of our condition of uncertainty, often the cause of anxiety and frustration and, at times, anguish, we will share the experience of awareness of the breath, of its relationship with our mental state and how, through the breath, we can bring our mind towards a calmer and more relaxed state. We will share experiences of sitting meditation and meditation in movement with the Dance of the Vajra to overcome our mental constraints and preconceptions, the real cages in which we imprison ourselves, and make our life and the lives of those around us more meaningful.

We will dance together Khaita Joyful Dances, which inspire a sense of harmony in the dancers and among the people who take part with their melodious music and graceful movements that help to overcome the moments of sadness and discouragement that have often been with us over the past year. For some events, we will welcome guests from other organizations involved in helping and supporting people in various conditions of need.

On August 6, Father Alberto Bormolini will speak to us about the fire of passions, a divine fire: from passionate love to love as service and compassion. Father Alberto Bormolini is president of a non-profit organization, which for years has been committed to accompanying the dying and supporting those who remain and suffer in mourning. On August 27, a meeting is scheduled with the deputy minister of the secular Franciscan order of the Campania



A tarchog flag raised at Merigar in 1982.

region, the lay Franciscan Antonio Aiello, who will share with us the meaning and practice of love and compassion in the Christian world.

For the theme of solidarity, the experience of ASIA will not be lacking, the ONLUS founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu which, in addition to Italy, for years has been bringing help and support to Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Mongolia, India and Bhutan to preserve their unique cultural



and environmental heritages, promote sustainable development processes, and build schools, study colleges and hospitals.

We will also try to set up meetings to share the experiences of those in our community and in the Amiata community who are engaged as social volunteers.

The gakyil and the Lings of Merigar, in Italy and in Europe, will give their contribution from a distance, organizing in turn initiatives in order to feel part of this symbolically important moment.

In addition to the events relating to Merigar's forty years, there will also be several courses and retreats for practitioners starting in early June. The main events will be the August retreat (10–14) focused on the text *The Stairway to Liberation* by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and the collective practices scheduled from 22 to 27 September, but you will find many other courses and events that we are adding to the program.

As always, we invite you to consult the Merigar website (www.merigar.it) on the

Courses and Events page to stay up to date on the activities that Merigar offers both face-to-face and online and we invite you to participate as much as possible this summer at Merigar! Work on the Yellow House is being completed and the Path of Awareness will also be completed soon, while the Great Stupa of Enlightenment was repainted on May 20, in the auspicious month of Saga Dawa. Merigar is ready to welcome you!

Provisional Calendar of Events

July to September

Please visit <https://www.merigar.it/en/courses-and-events/> for updates

Every Sunday in July and August, in the park of via Tibet in Arcidosso, Merigar will offer sessions of Yantra Yoga and awareness of breath as well as Khaita Joyful Dances 40

July 2–8

Training course to teach Kumar Kumari, Yantra Yoga for boys and girls (restricted)

July 9–14

The Semdzin (restricted)

July 16–18

Course on Sa-che (Tibetan geomancy)

July 16–22

Deepening Course of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra

in connection with Gars and Lings from all over the world (restricted)

July 24–25

Meditation in Movement, the Dance of the Vajra 40

July 26–August 2

Training program for new Khaita instructors and experts

July 30–August 1

Course on the potentiality of the elements

August

Every Sunday in July and August, in the park of via Tibet in Arcidosso, Merigar will offer sessions of Yantra Yoga and awareness of breath as well as Khaita Joyful Dances 40



Losar at Merigar 1984

Update on the prayer flags at Merigar

In an article published in the previous issue of *The Mirror* we explained how the prayer flags are made at Merigar and we asked readers to share their contributions and memories that could help us to reconstruct the history of this tradition. Thanks to your messages, photos and further research, we were able to gather more information that we can share with you.

A large *tarchog* with different mantra inscriptions was raised at Merigar as early as 1982 and *lungta* were also hanging around the yellow house in the same year. A particular year was 1984, when the *lungta* were prepared and hung in March on the occasion of Losar. In fact, that year marked the beginning of the year of the Wood Mouse, the first of the sixty-year cycle (*rabjung*). For more details and updates visit <https://www.merigar.it/en/our-facilities/prayer-flags/>

» continued on the following page

Filling the Second Stupa at Merigar East

Karma Yoga and Practice

Kveta Svedova and Oana Marcu

At Merigar East, Romania, we are approaching, this summer, the long awaited moment of filling up the second stupa. It is the result of many years' work.

The importance of this work can be well understood from Migmar Tsering's words:

"Stupa is a Sanskrit word that translates into Tibetan as "chorten": "offering for the dimension of realized beings" or "offering to the dimension of the three kayas". By analyzing the syllable "ten" we can thoroughly comprehend the meaning of the word chorten: "ten" has multiple meanings including "support" – a basis for communication between different dimensions. The syllable "ten" can also be translated as interdependence: just as a mirror is the basis and support for viewing one's face, the stupa is the basis and support for communicating one's desires to other beings. The syllable "cho" means "offer", material, vocal (because

we offer with the voice what we would like to receive), mental (because we imagine an infinite number of offerings with our good intentions) and physical (by circumambulating it, restoring it, whitening it and keeping it clean). All of this serves to purify our obstacles and our karma, to connect deeply to the teaching, to gain well-being and see our wishes fulfilled." (from the online conference with the Dynamic Space of the Elements held on the 10th of January 2021)

According to the Merigar East project inspired by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Khyentse Yeshe Namkhai, two stupas were built inside the Longsal path.

The base of both stupas was laid in 2012 and the first stupa was completed in July 2015.

After few years of preparations, the second stupa was planned to be completed in 2020, but the possibility to travel was limited last year, so the filling of the stupa will take place this July. We are organizing a ten day karma yoga camp which will take place between the 14th and the 24th of July, with the last day dedicated to the actual filling. During this camp we will start every day with a practice of Sang and Serkyem and with the Purification of the Six Lokas. We will also organize explanations on stupas and on the elements. With instructor Zoli Cser, who will join us between 14th and



» continued from previous page

August 3–5
Khalong

August 6
The fire of the passions, a divine fire
From passionate love to love as service and compassion 40

August 7–8
The other, my mirror
Selfless love, the heart of Buddhist ethics 40

August 10–14
Practice Retreat
based on *The Stairway to Liberation* by Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. (restricted)

August 16–19
Meditation and Yoga

August 20–22
Mandarava Practice Retreat (restricted)

August 20–22
The Path of the Heart
Art as a path to knowledge 40

August 20–September 15
19th Training for Tibetan Translators

August 23 and 24
Days with children at Merigar 40

August 26
Meetings and exchanges
on the world of Amiata volunteering and practitioners from the Dzogchen Community

August 27
Meeting with the coordinator of the lay Franciscans of Central-Southern Italy, Antonio Aiello, 40

August 28 and 29
The Nine Purification Breathings and the Rhythmic Breathing of Yantra Yoga and the benefits according to Tibetan medicine 40

September 1–5
Deepening of the 5 pranayamas and meeting with teachers and expert practitioners of Yantra Yoga (restricted)

September 10–17
Deepening of the Song of the Vajra and the related Dance (restricted)

September 11
On the occasion of the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, the Merigar Library is organizing:
Visions of hell
Dante's imagination and the Buddhist perspective

September 18–20
Vajra Dance and sitting practice retreat (restricted)

September 22–27
Collective Practices (restricted)





on the 24th, so we need a lot of people to help! We should work from early morning to transport all the material inside. After the filling we will close the stupa and put the Longsal symbol on the top to express the connection to the transmission of Rinpoche and the Longsal cycle of teachings. This filling day will be a great feast, and if the work is shared by many, so will the relaxation and dancing afterwards.

The last touch will be displaying statues on both stupas. For one stupa we already have a beautiful statue of Guru Rinpoche. For the other one we would like to have a statue of Mandarava, if possible. The koras (paths to circumambulate) of the stupas will be paved with stones and we will plant herbs, flowers and trees around them. We will create a small oasis in the Merigar East Oasis. <https://www.dzogchen.ro/our-projects/merigar-east-oasis>

To dive deeper into the knowledge about the elements, we will continue from the 25th to the 28th of July with a workshop based on Tibetan Astrology and preparation of the **Mandala of Elements** for harmonizing and better understanding the nature of elements with Migmar Tsering and his team. <https://www.dzogchen.ro/merigar-east/upcoming-events/dynamic-space-of-elements-paint-your-nature-increase-your-benefits>

We would like to thank very much mainly Pepa for his untiring work with building. He will come from the Czech Republic with his helpers earlier in June to prepare the construction around the stupa to make the filling possible. Many thanks also to other devoted practitioners from many countries and also to gakyils of the Merigar East countries for their cooperation and help with this project!

The project of both stupas was funded with donations up to 80% of the 39,000 € goal. We would like to thank all of the generous donors who supported the completion of this project. The last expenses are for supporting the work of the karma yogis coming to help, buying the remaining necessary materials to be put inside the stupa, building the wooden construction around it and buying big tents to keep the material in the shade during the process. Please support the completion of the stupa by coming to help or donating! <https://dzogchen.ro/merigar-east/donate-for-our-projects> ©

18th of July, we will also carry out practices of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Chöd. With the practice of the Vajra Dance we would like to symbolically connect with the worldwide Vajra Dance event organized by Merigar West in Tuscany, Italy, from the three solar mandalas in Merigar East that will be brought to life again.

On the 19th of July we will connect with the worldwide practice of Guruyoga on the day of Guru Padmasambhava.

In the meantime, we will dedicate ourselves to the practice of karma yoga as there is a lot to prepare for the stupa. We will share cooking, taking care of the Gar and of the event together.

The last preparations and the filling will be guided by Migmar Tsering and his team. The filling should be done in one day,



THE MIRROR

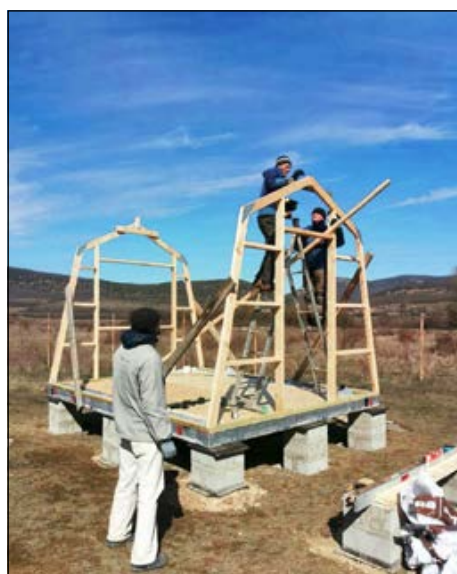
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Kunsangar South Update

Kunsangar South Gakyil

This spring at Kunsangar South we initiated the construction of two small houses, which we call 'wooden tents' – simple structures without amenities for 1–2 people. The first house of this type was built last year and turned out to be a convenient and sought-after type of housing, becoming a comfortable alternative to accommodation in a tent. The con-



struction lasted for several months and has now come to an end. We are very grateful to the builders and karma yogis, thanks to whom this project was completed successfully and on time!

Since the pandemic has not stopped in the world yet, we do not plan to host mass events at the Gar and try to limit ourselves to small retreats and invite practitioners to come for personal practice.

During the May holidays we held a small Yantra Yoga retreat with instructor Alexey Shadrov. Practitioners also book lodging and come for personal retreats in small groups or individually, as they did last year, doing dark retreats in our special house.

This summer we are planning several events, one of them is a teleconference on the Khalong practice with Prima Mai and instructor Tatyana Gerasimova assisting her at the Gar on June 14–18. Also in July Kunsangar South plans to connect to several retreats in webcast, so please follow the information on the Gar's Facebook

Yantra Yoga with Alexey Shadrov.



group. In the fall we plan to hold a SMS retreat, at the moment the dates are to be confirmed.

We will be glad to see everyone who wants to support and visit the Gar this summer and autumn! ©

Generous Summer at Kunsangar North, Russia

Elena Razumova in collaboration with the Gekō Marina Novitskaya and the Gakyil of Kunsangar North

Finally the long-awaited summer timidly comes into its own right. It generously showers us with flowers, we admire the stunning sunsets and listen to concerts of birds. Nature is generous, and everything reminds us of the principle of generosity.

If we consider the activity in the Dzogchen Community from this point of view, we can say that it's all based on this principle: all the activities of the Gakyil who offer their labor, energy and time – body, speech and mind; instructors, thanks to whose activities we have a precious opportunity to deepen our knowledge and strengthen our practice during collective retreats; volunteers, thanks to whose work the Gar lives and is renewed; translators who give access to classes with foreign instructors, retreat coordinators who play a less noticeable, but very important role, offering, like the Gakyil, their work for the benefit of the Community; the Gekō, a person who devotes a significant part of his or her life to serving the Gar and all its guests and inhabitants (from a human to a small fly) and just everyone who follows in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's footsteps, truly inspired by the precious Dzogchen teaching – all of them generously offer their presence in a wide variety of manifestations. And therefore we have a unique opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Dzogchen Community Mandala, which is constantly moving and changing in accordance with the circumstances.

In May we hosted four dance retreats at the Gar: an educational course on the Vajra Dance that Benefits All Beings with Yana Sokolova and Olya Nimachuk, an educational and practice retreat on Khaita Joyful Dances with Yulia Petrova, a Vajra Dance practice retreat for advanced students on the principle of self-organization, and a training retreat on the Dzamling Gar dance and song in a combined online and offline format.

As for the last mentioned retreat, we had an excellent opportunity to follow an explanation of the essence of this practice from Fabio Risolo and Adriana Dal Borgo,



and, importantly, we learned and practiced the steps under the remote guidance of Adriana with the help and support of the Khaita instructor Vladimir Belyaev at the Gar. The Dzamling Gar song, spontaneously received by Namkhai Norbu in Tenerife while he was enjoying swimming in

Prima Mai accompanied by other Vajra Dance instructors at Kunsangar North. In addition, it will be possible to organize a Khalong retreat from scratch on 3–8 August. If you are interested in this event, please complete the survey: <https://forms.gle/of9CowAzibrwmgX9>

Very soon we will be able to participate in Yantra Yoga and Santi Maha Sangha practice. From June 19 to June 24 we will host a wonderful online retreat 'Harmonious breathing and 8 minutes of Yantra Yoga every day' with instructor Fabio Andrico, accompanied by Mila Zakhirina (instructor of Fabio's method 'Harmonious breathing') and Kirill Mironov (Yantra Yoga instructor) offline at Kunsangar North.

From June 25 to June 30 we will have an onsite retreat with Santi Maha Sangha instructor Grigory Mokhin and Yantra Yoga instructor Kirill Mironov entitled 'Meditation, contemplation, integration in practice with the sound of HUM within the methods of the SMS Base', webcasted live for those who have no possibility to come to the Gar.

On July 25–30 we invite you to the Gar for a Yantra Yoga retreat with Mira Mironova 'Secret breathing for directing prana into the central channel'.

In addition to onsite events, Kunsangar North regularly organizes online retreats (in June it was Chöd with Steven Landsberg and Bodhicitta instructions with Gabriella Schneider).

We regularly hold Khaita Joyful Dances and Vajra Dance practices. The Gar is filled with creativity: there is a wonderful space – the 'Tea and Chan' tea room, coordinated by Dima Leontyev, where you can

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Vajra dance mandala painting with Galina Surmina.

a pool, is unique. In some way it contains Rinpoche's testament for us practitioners of the Dzogchen Community. It is essential and extremely useful for understanding the essence of Dzogchen practice and the role of the Dzogchen Community, which is joyful presence, enjoying collective activities and practices.

In early June everyone had the opportunity to learn the Khalongdorjeikar, the Vajra Dance of Space, on the Khalong Mandala. On 16–22 July we will host an online retreat with the international instructor

Samtengar, China



Rushen with Wes Guo, March 13–14, 2021 at the Yichun center and online.



Semdzin with Wes Guo, April 3–5, 2021 at the Yichun center and online.



The Dance of the Song of the Vajra with Wes Guo, April 10–16, 2021 in Beijing.



Dance of the Three Vajras and Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings with Tracy Ni, April 15–17, 2021 at the Yichun center.



Dzogchen Teaching I with Wes Guo, May 1–5, 2021 at the Yichun center and online.



Dance of the Three Vajras and Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings with Tracy Ni, May 6–8, 2021 at the Yichun center.



Yantra Yoga Open Course – Lungsang with Boyan Lu, May 14–16, 2021 at the Yichun center and online.



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not only enjoy good tea and heart-to-heart conversation, but make or purchase objects from a ceramic studio. Those who wish and

love to draw can also open up to this pursuit in the company of the Gekö, a talented artist, or learn how to paint a thangka or draw a mini-model of a mandala on which we dance vajra dances (the first experimental master color class with Galina Surmina has just taken place). The chefs in the dining room often spoil the guests with delicious cakes. There are joint screenings of interesting movies related to the Teaching... And, of course, there are spaces for the silence of contemplation, solitude and personal retreats.

The School of Tibetan Medicine periodically organizes all-good health days for the Gar's employees and friends. Soon they will host a wonderful online course on Diet and Nutrition with Dr. Phuntsog Wangpo.

We would also like to call for volunteers! They are very much needed this summer season! For those who wish to and have an opportunity to participate on a volunteer basis in the life of the Gar, see details here: <https://kunsangar.ru/>

community/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%BB%D1%8F%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B2.html

We are looking forward to seeing you at the Gar, enjoying the generous summer, collective practices, fun soulful gatherings and all that was created thanks to Rinpoche's generosity and is supported by the unceasing manifestation of creative energy, care and attention of all of us – practitioners of the Dzogchen Community.

I would like to finish with the slightly altered words of the Dzamling Gar song:

As soon as possible, in a relaxed manner,
Come to Kunsangar North!
Joy and happiness are present,
nothing is missing,
Come as soon as possible, in a relaxed manner!

©

Tashigar North, Venezuela Reports

Rolo Carrasco

Dear Tashigar Norte Family, I hope this message finds you happy and in good health. It has been some time since our last report but the situation has not changed much for us since then.

All residents remain healthy and with a good attitude despite difficulties. The rationing of electricity and gasoline has decreased, but sporadically they appear and delay the regular execution of our daily tasks and activities. We usually have a strict quarantine week and a free week. During strict quarantine, activities are paralyzed and it is difficult to maintain an organized work schedule. In special cases, such as the recent past three weeks, the regime radicalized three weeks in a row with suspension of fuel sales. There, yes, things get a little more complicated for us. Our internet access is limited to 12 hours per day, with an acceptable but unstable connection.

Recently, on the occasion of Losar, we had the opportunity to share the Divination Soup at Steve and Fanny's house, whom we deeply thank. The occasion served to say goodbye to Dmitri and family, who returned to Russia after several months waiting for the occasion. With mixed feelings for his departure amid the sadness of "a see you later" to the larger Gar family, and the fact that Dima had taken on various responsibilities within the Gar operation, but pleased that he was able to meet Gosha to be by his side during his final weeks. In the attached link you can find the article that Manuel Teruel wrote for Melong for the occasion of Losar: <http://melong.com/losar-at-tashigar-norte-2021/?fbclid=IwARiG4l27JG7YefnZldkHplppYfuSvvYI89ndXJ8AJeWqmuCgoPZzd3Wkwe8>

Our collective spiritual activity remains limited. We do all the Ganapujas of the calendar in the Gönpa, and from the departure of Gosha, Shitro every Saturday for 7 weeks. In the practice we also include especially all our brothers who rendered an invaluable service to Tashigar Norte like Antonio, Aloka, Angela, Jean Francois, Catherine and Beata among others I may forget now. There is often a Thun of Dance and Yantra Yoga. Individually we follow as



View of Rinpoche's house.

much as possible the practices and study groups programmed virtually from abroad.

In financial terms, ACNTN (Gakyil) has a balance of US\$ 22,500 with an average monthly expense of US\$ 900. For its part, PCTN has a balance of US\$ 19,670 with an average monthly expense of US\$ 1,300. ACNTN saw its situation strengthened through the fundraising that we organized internationally during 2020 where we raised almost US\$ 10,000, which allows us

trapped by the pandemic in the west of the country for over a year in the home of Elías and Mayda, resuming her service work as Gekö, Berta and Manuel at Mark's house; Rolo (administrator and manager of self-sustaining projects) and Marina (Tashi Refuge) in their house located in lot 36; Douglas Uzcátegui, who collaborates with us, assuming in addition to his role as head of security the role of Red Gakyil and the additional tasks that Dmitri had assumed,



Current view of the Village houses.

to work without so many immediacies this year in the search for self-sustainability projects. For its part, PCTN maintained significant reserves that have been decreasing over time as each year our income level progressively declines. As of today we have collected for 2021 only 35% of the maintenance fees.

Currently are residing in our Village. Delma, her daughter and her 2 granddaughters in the house in lot 2; Tatiana Contreras, recently returned after being

on both sides of PCTN village and the Gar; Valentina, a local girl who approached us for her interest in Teaching and helped us significantly on the 2020 fundraising campaign lives at Paola and Raúl's house; and finally Gloris who acts as Blue Gakyil and takes care of Rinpoche's house.

Our work team is complemented by 6 guards and 2 gardeners, payroll workers from both PCTN and ACNTN (4 in each association) and we also have the perma-

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nent collaboration of Maura, Gustavo, Ramona, Maritza and Armando in the care of the gardens and the cleaning of private properties within the urbanism. They are joined by Mr. Luis Zacarías who works with us part-time. He is an important support for Red Gakyil and Geko. Electrical and plumbing specialist, but with a number of additional practical knowledge. A multitask guy.

A few weeks ago we were victims of the theft of two water pumps, one of which

also invested in the purchase of three additional IP cameras that will help us monitor the still vulnerable areas. They are being imported from Peru since it has been impossible for us to find them here, and in the constant postponement of their purchase, waiting for them to appear in the local market, the theft happened. Obviously we are reinforcing the spaces where the theft happened with stronger protection, even extending the electric fence where it is possible. The fence works as intended, more as a deterrent, but continues to

for the cultivation of 4 hectares of vegetables for sale in local supermarkets was frozen due to the indecision of the investor. We presented to the PCTN Board of Directors and the International Councilors another smaller-scale project for the production of 1 hectare that required an investment of US\$ 20,000 but we dropped the idea due to our precarious financial situation. About a month ago a tourism operator visited us looking to relaunch the project of renting some VIP houses. We are working on the proposal to launch a specific offer on what complementary services, in addition to the rental of the houses, we can offer. Unlike previous attempts, this operator works with the international market and provides air tickets and transfers. Unfortunately, immediately after the meeting, the three weeks of strict quarantine was declared and we have not been able to hold the relevant working meetings to design the offer. Gilberto Parrella is supporting us as a liaison and in the design of the proposal. At the same time, we have not completely abandoned the agricultural project, the group of technicians is still interested, but in the absence of capital our counter proposal was to work on the swales that we already have laid out on the ground (a part in the area of fruit trees, in the surroundings of the churuata, and another where the aloe plantation was located at the height of Bodhi's house) This layout has partial irrigation installed, and requires a lower investment in irrigation hoses and organic fertilizers. We provide soil, water and a bedroom for the workers. We do not assume any labor responsibility with those who work the land. In the same way as in the previous case, the strict quarantine was interposed and we have not been able to advance on the proposal.

For some years now, some trusted workers and friends brought their horses and cattle to graze in certain areas of the farm. For a long period we were asking them to build a corral so as not to have the animals scattered. As many of you will know, Marina had an accident a few weeks ago with one of the horses. Fortunately after a few days she fully recovered from it. But the episode served to limit the matter. We have demanded the construction of a small corral, with certain aesthetic standards, in the neems forest (in front of the pool, very close to the pump house of well 2) Currently there are neither horses nor cows, but the construction work has already begun by the animal's owners. We



Da and Mona, our new residents in the "Posada".

used to irrigate the Master's garden and the other to the public baths, as well as the theft of an air conditioning compressor from Tania Fedorchenko's house. The thieves entered through one of the spaces without video surveillance on the side perimeter of the Gar near the pool. Although it is true we have not been able to recover the stolen objects, we are working on replacing the irrigation service by relocating other pumps that have been available since we changed the water distribution system from pumping to gravity. We have

maintain its vulnerability, even more so if the perpetrators of the theft know how it works. We are certain that the perpetrator of the robbery was a former security guard that we fired two years ago after his involvement in a robbery on Dick Drury's farm was proven. We continue to do the best we can, with the resources we have, but we will always have a level of vulnerability, even more so if we do not cover a longer period of time with two guards per shift, which would allow us to have one guard permanently at the gate and another making rounds. This would dramatically decrease the possibility of more future thefts but would increase our operational cost. The village itself is more secure due the presence of dogs, both from the Refuge and from private people.

At the level of sustainability projects, we have been working on many fronts, but so far we cannot achieve anything. The most ambitious project that required the investment of a third associate from outside the Community in the amount of US\$ 45,000



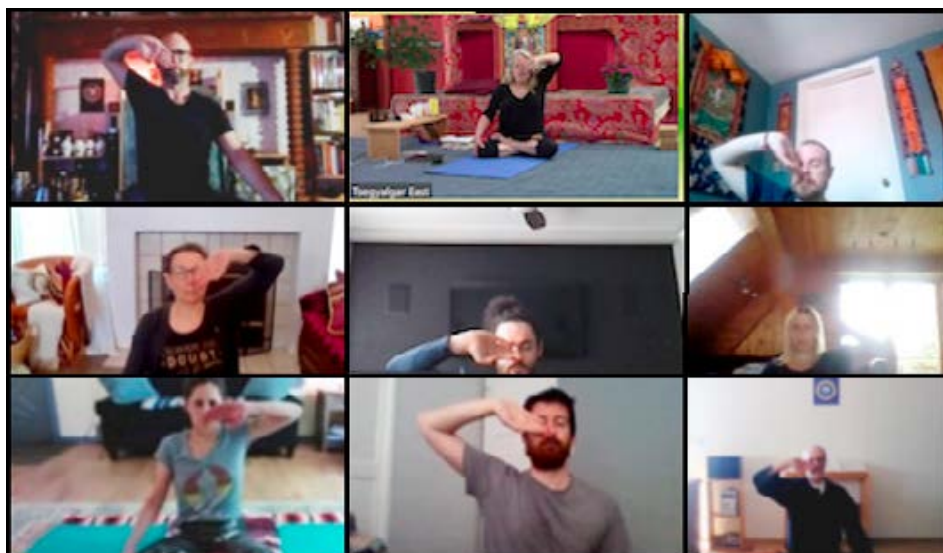
Stolen pump and new pump.

Tsegyalgar East, Massachusetts, USA

Emily Luhrs

There is much energy gathering around our Summer Sangha Retreat. Summer's at Tsegyalgar East have always been the time for friends traveling from across North America and beyond to receive Rinpoche's teachings. Since Rinpoche's passing, we have continued our Summer gatherings at our retreat land, Khandroling, where Rinpoche had many dreams of clarity, in which he received many Longsal teachings of Gomadevi, including Vajra Dance. We are looking forward to joining together (in-person and continuing to connect virtually) this July to practice for the enlightenment of all and enjoy being together as a Santi Maha Sangha. <https://www.tsegyalgar.org/tsegyalgar-east/events-calendar/summer-sangha-retreat-on-khandroling/>

Tsegyalgar East is happy to share we had a well attended and enthusiastic Beginner's Yantra Yoga Class over 3 Sundays in this Spring. Paula Barry, our beloved Level 2 Instructor, guided 40 yogis from around the world over Zoom, while teaching from our Gönpa for the first time in over a year. We learned Preliminaries, 9 Breathings for Exhaling the Stale Air, 5 Tsigjong (Loosening the Joints), and 8 Lungsang (Movements for purifying the Prana). On the last day, Menpa Phuntsog Wangmola offered some wisdom of how the movements pertain to our internal elements and energy. The students were eager to continue learning and Paula is now leading a weekly Fri-



Zoom Yantra Yoga Beginner's class with Paula Barry.

day class to continue into the 1st series. <https://www.tsegyalgar.org/tsegyalgar-east/events-calendar/yantra-yoga-for-beginners-with-paula-barry/> You are welcome to join us if you have taken beginner class or want to refresh your practice! It was great to connect with so many new people and others reconnecting with the Dzogchen Community after some years.

We've been continuing our monthly Tibetan Dream Yoga (public class) and Practice of Natural Light sessions led by SMS and Dream Yoga instructor Michael Katz, with around 100 people each time. Extra thanks to our interpreters of Russian, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese for further connecting us all. Michael has led us in semdzins and Inner Rushen practices specifically to assist our dream practice, before relaxing us into a guided nap.

Committed practitioners have continued to learn weekly from Santi Maha Sangha instructor Steve Landsberg, who has



Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo teaching about the relationship of Tibetan Medicine and Yantra Yoga with instructor Paula Barry in the Schoolhouse Gönpa in Conway, MA.

been carrying on our Wednesday Practices of the Precious Vase, a continuation of our Summer 2020 course, "Opening the Doors to Practice."

Thank you all our devoted students and generous instructors. ©

are particularly interested in their presence because they help us considerably with grass control. The authorized population for the corral is 8 cows and 2 horses)

We also have problems with the performance of water wells. Well 1 (which serves the village) is only sending 30% of its original capacity, which causes the urbanism water tank to be partially filled, causing restrictions in the use of water. We found a specialist to see the possibility of maintaining it, he will come in the following days. Well 2 that served the Master's gardens and house and the public baths reduced its level considerably, forcing us to move the pump to well 3 located about

100 meters away and which had been idle for several years. Fortunately, this well is yielding 100% and it is the one that would provide water, in addition to the public toilets and the teacher's house, to the tentative agricultural project.

In the residence that the Farr family donated to Tashigar Norte, we have had a number of guests over the past few years. From workers to friendly people whom we install there for security reasons. The property is outside our "safe" perimeter and a constant concern for our security team when uninhabited. A few days ago we installed a couple there who came recommended through some members of the

Community, a plastic artist and a percussionist who studied classical Indian music. (Tabla Player) While staying in the space they bear all the maintenance costs.

We continue our crusade to preserve Tashigar Norte as best we can. We encourage you to continue supporting us to maintain the work. It is not easy, especially for most of you who do not have the opportunity to enjoy this paradise that Rinpoche left us as a legacy. The circumstances are not the best, but we encourage you to visit us if it is within your means, to re-feel the energy of what we once were. A little fresh air is always welcome. We miss you. ©

My Visit to Tsegyalgar West

Ranchos Los Naranjos,
Baja Sur Mexico
March 2021

Marta Macbeth

I want to share my experience of my recent visit to the Gar – Tsegyalgar West, Baja Sur, Mexico. It was mid-March of this year that my partner Craig Fiels and I returned to the Gar. The last time we were there was to attend the Mandarava retreat with Nina Robinson, which began last December 2020.

Presently living in San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico, we initially tried to arrange air flights to Cabo International Airport in Baja Sur beginning last December. However we encountered many obstacles. Our air flights were canceled repeatedly and we had difficulties communicating with airline representatives. In the beginning of March of this year we felt that our only chance of getting to the Gar before summer was to find passage on a boat going across the Sea of Cortez. Within a week of setting our intention we found a sailboat skipper (Dale) who gladly agreed to take us on his sailboat across to Santa Rosalia, a small and cheerful seaside town in the middle of the Baja peninsula. In a few days, we left the harbor of Guaymas, at 3:00 am and immediately encountered choppy water. But as the sun began to rise over the horizon, the water calmed and a steady and gentle breeze carried us onward. A sunny sky accompanied us on what turned out to be a marvelous sail across the sea.

From the harbor of Santa Rosalia we said good bye to our skipper and new friend, and we continued our adventure going south on the highway through Baja Sur. Spectacular views of the sea coast and mountains accompanied us on the often narrow and winding roads. With several stops and layovers, a bus trip, a taxi and a rental car, our obstacles seemed to dissolve and we arrived at our final destination safely.

The drive up the long dirt road to the Gar was pleasantly smooth on a warm and sunny day. Upon our arrival we were lovingly greeted by Lazuli, the Geko, Jan, a Yantra Yoga teacher and Shankar, a gour-



Craig and Gabby creating the adobe outside Horno for fresh bread and pizza.

met chef, and the other karma yoga participants. How wonderful it was to find the Gar in springtime bloom and a new garden



Shankar the chef and gardener with fresh harvested Calendula.

with lots of fresh, healthy greens. Everything on the land seemed to be glowing, so abundant and thriving.

After taking our gear to a casita and washing up, we met everyone for a lite supper in the open kitchen. Shankar beautifully prepared a delicious meal for us and we had much fun catching up with old friends and meeting new ones. Que Bueno! It was delightful to be with sangha again. That evening the sky shone bright with countless stars and the quiet of the mountains surrounding us was constant through the nite.

After gathering for a pleasing breakfast the next morning, Lazuli proposed some karma yoga activities for us and we jumped at the opportunity to help with building the new stone and adobe horno oven next to the kitchen. This project was directed by Gabby Gonzalez Martinez, who is new to the Gar and experienced with adobe construction. Gabby brilliantly showed the team how to mix and apply the adobe mud

and lay the oven fire bricks. We all had a great time together and seeing our work at the end of the day was most satisfying.

During our visit it was the New Moon. We did a Ganapuja practice in the Gõnpa and were joined by Sangha members from Todos Santos, Jimena, Suzanna and Tracy, who brought a dance mandala. Later, Jan led us in pranayama rhythmic breathing practice and we danced the Om A Hum and Six Spaces dances several times. Indeed, our precious Master was with us the entire time, and everything was perfect as it was.

Being outdoors in Nature at the Gar with everyone is so satisfying and healing. Like a long embrace, we can feel all the love and intention poured into the land and surroundings over so many years. Although our visit was short, it seemed long because time seemed to stop. Every moment there was a joy. Our intention is to return again very soon, and I hope that other community members will visit the Gar. It is a wonderful place for families too. ©



Lazuli and Jan have created a wonderful welcoming Gar.

The Word and the Master

Fabio Risolo

Born in Italy in 1958, Fabio Maria Risolo holds a degree in Philosophy from the University of Naples. He has taught at high school and university and is currently a Head Teacher. Fabio has been actively practicing and following the Dzogchen Teachings of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and is a Santi Maha Sangha Base Level and First Level Instructor.



The word

In the following pages I will deepen the theme of the Master's relationship with the disciple, and the value of his word, also through references to Western culture.

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, when illustrating the myth of Theuth, the author brings attention to the written word, considering the oral one to be superior. The Athenian philosopher emphasizes that the written word is not alive because it is crystallized forever in writing and thus unfaithful to the unique event, which takes place when one person faces another.

The written word does not arise from the authentic and unrepeatable cognitive and communicative experience, which is established through listening and the maieutic dialogue [the Socratic method of eliciting knowledge by a series of questions and answers. *Edl* between master and disciple. Only in this case does a direct transmission from body to body, from heart to heart, and from mind to mind take place. It is interesting to note in this regard that Socrates, like Jesus and the Buddha himself, wrote nothing.

Spiritual masters of all paths, and in particular of Dzogchen, highlight how the intellectual knowledge that comes from the study of books has nothing to do with live and direct transmission.

Once written, the word fatally detaches itself from its author and becomes the object of interpretations that very often do not correspond to the intentions of its author. It can also be misrepresented and used in an instrumental way. The written

word becomes replicable and modifiable through quotations of parts of the text detached from the context in which they arose and can therefore be manipulated indefinitely, as is very often the case nowadays with social media.

But what is the specificity of the word of one who possesses knowledge?

In his dialogues, Plato explains that the word of the master, as well as authentic selfless love, derive from the *daemon* [something between mortal and immortal, since all that is daemonic is something between God and what is mortal. *Edl*, that is, from being inspired. The purpose of the "divine madnesses" (*theia mania*) is to connect the divine with the human, to act as a bridge between the higher truths and man, to put the invisible and visible dimensions in communication.

The word that comes from inspiration and is used by he who pronounces it, serves as a channel, a medium, or a "messenger". Its author is ready to experience a clear and invisible force that expresses itself through him. However, he would be mistaken in believing that his own abilities, the same inspired voice that passes through him, is himself or something from himself. If he thought in this way he would confuse the current with the generator, the sunray for the sun, or the reflection for the mirror. It is not a question of being proud of one's abilities or of one's role as an intermediary for one must really beware of self-satisfaction.

Potentially we are all messengers, although few of us are able to be pure and

transparent vehicles of the word as a manifestation of our being that possesses the clarity of vision. We must complete a preliminary path of presence and awareness. Through maieutic dialogue Buddha and Socrates tried first of all to lead their disciples to the understanding of the impermanence of everything (objects, things, people, emotions, thoughts). Only through authentic presence of our emptiness is it possible to recognize the voice of the *daemon*, which arises from that silent atopic space, and hence abide in our essential nature.¹

The authentic word as the ineffable voice of being is what Hölderlin called "the flower of the mouth". And Heidegger² recalled that, in Japanese, the character corresponding to "word" is pronounced KOTO BA. BA translates as "petals", KOTO means "the breath of quiet". So KOTO BA means petals that blossom from the breath of quiet, from silence. When silence is expressed in images it gives rise to petals (words). Rilke adds, "Oh spring-mouth, oh you giver, you mouth / Of the inexhaustible One, of the Pure, speak".

He who possesses knowledge, a spiritual master, even more than a poet, is an inspired person, someone who is spoken to by the sibylline and prophetic *daemon* of which Plato spoke, and who manifests his self-originated potential without interruption, making it possible for his disciples to recognize their own essential nature. This is the meaning of the transmission.

But a master is not such because he knows or understands everything, but because he is always in contact with his own essential nature, he is one with it, and for this very reason he is able, through teaching, through transmission, through the word (but certainly also in silence), to arouse in the disciple the push towards the path and recognition. He does not tell the disciple what is right or not right to do, but teaches him or her how to bring out the essential part of himself, (first of all by unmasking his ego and his judging rational mind) and then showing him how to "give birth to it".

The master is not a God; the *daemon* speaks to him and through him in every moment and in particular in the moment of the transmission, when he speaks to the

» continued on the following page

disciple, and simultaneously loves and lives in the dimension of *eros*.

He loves his disciples as he arouses in them the desire to know their essential nature so that they finally find themselves within themselves and in turn recognize their own demons and follow a path. Because the highest form of love, explains Diotima to Socrates in the *Symposium*, is love of knowledge.

But, for himself and in himself, the master maintains the simplicity of humility in his life. However, in addition to being present in every moment of life, he has an extraordinary quality: he is a conscious channel of being.³ This is the reason why, when questioned, the oracle of Delphi could say that Socrates was the wisest in Athens, certainly not because he had accumulated facts, knowledge, power, prestige or fame, but because he knew at least one thing: one who knew nothing, and was himself nothing, lived, to put it in Buddhist terminology, in the state of *prajnaparamita*, was atopic, did not dwell in any place or concept, and was eternally open. Not dwelling in any place means dwelling in all places, being invisible energy beyond time and space. And above all he was the only one in Athens who was aware of his "being nothing".

For this reason he explained to his disciples who asked him to flee so as not to be killed by the Athenian politicians (paradoxically he was accused of misleading young people from the truth) that he wanted to remain true to his own teaching, even at the risk of death. Socrates lived with his disciples and shared every moment of his daily life with them. They were his family and he was with them all the time because teaching also meant showing them how to live. Letting them see him die would give his disciples the last decisive teaching, that of complete integration of awareness in behavior.

In Socrates, like all teachers, history repeats itself. He had never judged his disciples, not even when they had tried to get him drunk in the *Symposium*, tired of having a perfect man before them. But with his silence he taught that he could drink with awareness, while they, who challenged him to the sound of Greek red wineskins, fell asleep in total absence of presence. In the Dzogchen teaching awareness of our behavior means knowing what we can and cannot do, working with our capacities and circumstances.

Building a conscious relationship with the master

The gift of the transmission of knowledge comes about through the word. After that the disciple, even if he has recognized the master as the source of all good, generally finds himself having to face his own ego, the desire to be recognized as the best, and to want everything for himself. This confrontation is inevitable and unavoidable. It is from overcoming it that the possibility of integrating⁴ within oneself, in an effective and concrete way, the empowerment of the teacher and of realizing oneself derives. To do this, we must firstly recognize how we project onto him our entire psychic world – our desires, emotions, fears, and aspirations – as in a mirror.

Socrates liked to point his disciples towards love for self-knowledge. To do this he set the disciple in motion and urged him to look into himself. But Agathon, Plato tells us in the *Symposium*, wanted to achieve maximum proximity to the master's body in order to absorb all his knowledge and deluded himself into thinking that he could possess his beloved master. But knowledge cannot be possessed, only transmitted, as suggested, through references, allusions, symbols, conveyed by the word of the transmission.

In reality, Socrates himself is empty of knowledge, since he is simply a pure lover of knowledge, who inspires in his disciples the same thirst for knowledge, thanks to his love and his maieutics. In fact, knowledge is possible only when we are empty, when "we know that we do not know". The master first of all teaches how to preserve this emptiness as a primary condition in order to make the transmission of knowledge possible.

The disciple therefore initially projects his own solar part onto the master, attributing every quality to him and seeing him as a divine being. The gift of existence and the recognition of one's value are expected from him. Once the transference has taken place, the disciple imitates the model and tries to perfect himself to please the master (as the lover does with his beloved ...), to have proof of being. Up to a certain point this process is very useful since it allows for purification. But the disciple must become aware, so that it is possible to withdraw the projection of his own solar and divine part on the master and recognize his own potential in himself. This is done through the practice of Guruyoga.

In Tibetan the Sanskrit word Guruyoga (union with the master) translates as *la-*

mai naljor, and indicates the recognition that one's own deep nature is the same as the master's and therefore one is non-dual with him. The disciple awakens his own *daemon* through this recognition, thanks to the reflective function of the master. The practice of Guruyoga is infinitely more important than the transference in psychotherapy, because what the teacher allows the disciple is not just to free himself from neuroses, but spiritual realization. More precisely through the word of the master the disciple receives the empowering flow that comes from the lineage and this allows him to work with it, absorbing its potential, until realization. This is a unique and extraordinary opportunity.

This is the inner process, which does not happen without falls, disillusionings, and suffering, which the disciple can go through if he meets an authentic teacher who knows how to direct the disciple's transference towards awareness and freedom and not egotistically increase his own personal power.⁵ Finding such a master is by no means easy.

Certainly the crucial moment takes place when the master shows the disciple, as in a mirror, his darker aspects and projections that are most difficult to accept, causing him a real shock. The master can do this right from the start by cutting through the disciple's ego (the classic example of Gampopa with Milarepa) or only in a more advanced stage. In each case the disciple must come face to face with the vision of his own condition of emptiness. At this point he may feel nothing in front of the master with the risk of becoming depressed or, conversely, have a proud reaction by detaching himself prematurely from him, believing that he himself is the Guru.

The teacher guides this process, remaining present and aware, without being captured by the projections. In this way the disciple can transfer the archetypal image of the master and his empowerment within himself.

By loving the disciple the master teaches him to love, making him progressively free, that is, allowing him (and this is the decisive point) to recognize his own solar part, the nature of the mind. It is about discovering that we ourselves are the master, the king who creates everything, the *Kunjed Gyalpo*.⁶

Thus a conscious and unshakable devotion to the master can arise in the disciple, which manifests itself in daily life and especially in the commitment to the sangha,

The Sound of Metal

A film by Darius Marder

Paula Barry

It gives me great pleasure to tell you about Sound of Metal, the Oscar nominated, Oscar winning film written by Darius and Abraham Marder and directed by Darius Marder. It makes me so happy because Darius and Abraham are the children of my friends, long time Dzogchen Community members Efrem Marder and Lauri Marder. I have known Abe and Dar as children growing up in and amongst first the Gurdjeiff Community and then the Dzogchen Community. What moves me most is really a testament to their parents Lauri and Efrem, and how they chose to live within or close to the center of Community activities and Community life. It was a conscious decision, not at all an easy one, but one that, I like to believe, imbued them with the tools necessary to shepherd each of their five children to have the freedom to find the paths that most suited them. Lauri and Efrem are both artists and practitioners and I have no doubt that the combination of the practice and what they already knew as artists (and a fair dose of genetics) allowed Darius and Abraham the freedom of creative expression to enter the visionary world that allowed this film to be born.

Sound of Metal opens to the pounding music of Ruben (played by Riz Ahmed and nominated for the Oscar for best actor) and his girlfriend Lou playing heavy metal music in a club. Ruben is the drummer, Lou the singer. The musical genre of heavy metal has often seemed violent to me and difficult to listen to. In this opening to the



film I experienced it as cathartic, ecstatic, a release of pain into the atmosphere of the club with its crashing sounds, strobes, sweat, tattoos (Ruben has a tattoo written across his chest: Please Kill Me), piercings, screaming, and surrender.

In the beautiful calm of their caravan, filled with a gentle light we see the love they have for each other. And we learn that they have overcome pain of addictions and self-harming behaviors with the help of their love and reliance on each other, and through their music. They are living life on the road, devoted to each other and the music, having overcome the suffering of earlier times.

But, something begins to change quickly and profoundly for Ruben. He is rapidly losing his hearing. A remarkable feature of the film (and why it won the Oscar for Best Sound) is that we go on this journey with Ruben. The sound of the film is altered so that the audience hears an approximation

of what Ruben hears. He cannot hear Lou. He cannot hear the doctors he sees. The look in his eyes is one of a frightened cornered animal. We feel his desperation. He just wants it fixed. He hears about cochlear implants and in his mind it is the obvious solution that will restore his hearing. He is panicked and in danger of using again. Lou contacts his sponsor who researches and finds a rehab facility specifically for deaf addicts. It is also a school for deaf kids. It is a nurturing community where deafness is part of life.

Ruben enters the program and commits to being part of the community. He learns to sign, to read lips, to work with the children and he makes friends. But the fear is still in his eyes. Lou has returned to Belgium to face her past and he is alone. The best part of his life had been with her making music and performing. His mentor in the rehab facility (played by Paul Raci, nominated for the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor) works with him to accept his condition and assigns him to sit alone in a room every day and wait for his thoughts to settle and write what he feels. He asks him: "Have you had any moments of stillness?" Saying: "That is the kingdom of God and will never abandon you."

We see that Ruben has not had these still moments. He wants his life back. He sells everything he has, his camper, instruments, recording equipment and has the surgery to place the cochlear implants. Having chosen this path he is asked to leave the deaf community where the goal is to accept deafness and work within that framework.

It is best not to reveal the conclusion of the film. But to leave you feeling curious about its resolution. Suffice it to say that Ruben does find a stillness within himself that transcends hearing and deafness. That moment is so poignant due to the superb acting of Riz Ahmed. We see the fear leave his eyes and a presence overtake him as if he was awakening to his life.

As the credits roll we hear the extremely beautiful song written and sung by Abraham Marder "Green".

Imagine the joy we all felt watching the Oscars and hearing the names of amazing adults you knew as children be called as Academy Award winners. Sound of Metal was nominated for six Oscars: Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, Best Original Screen Play, Best Sound* and Best Editing*. * winner.

in which he now recognizes the living body of the master.

The relationship with the master and his empowerment remains present regardless of whether he is still alive in the physical dimension; this relationship and its potential for realization is beyond time and space. ©

1 This is the non-duality of emptiness and manifestation in Tantrism. The word/energy that arises as a manifestation from the empty space of the sky, or from one's abiding in emptiness.

2 M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*.

3 Terton Masters, or treasure discoverers, are people who receive and rediscover teachings and have extraordinarily perfected the ability to be neutral recipients.

4 Completing the process of individuation means, according to Jung, purifying all unconscious contents and integrating them as aspects of the archetype of the Self.

5 See the detailed explanations Chögyal Namkhai Norbu provides on this in "The Precious Vase". The false teacher is not a neutral mirror of the disciple, because he is himself conditioned by worldly dharma.

6 The root tantra of the Dzogchen Semde.

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

The Monkey Is Busy

Frederica Henrieta Hegedus

My name is Frederica Henrieta Hegedus and I paint and design jewelry. I come from the city of Košice in Slovakia, which is where I was born, however, I feel like a citizen of the Earth. The whole Earth is my true home. I grew up under socialism, which condemned and suppressed religion and promoted atheism. It was not so bad because it saved me from uncompromising religious education without the possibility of choosing my own direction.

Ever since I can remember, I have had a worldview and opinions that were different to my surroundings. At kindergarten, I wondered whether other people saw grass as green and the sky as blue like me. I have never been able to accept that there is an infinitely great soul inside our bodies. As a child I was worried about how something so extensive and, in my view, endless is able to fit into such a small person as myself. I felt that my little body was in a soul that spreads all around, just concentrating its attention on me and thus creating a false feeling that this body was me. You can imagine how unsettled my family was when I tried to tell them. Over time, I gave up, but to this day I have had no reason to change my mind.

Art has always appealed to me the most, especially painting but also creating jewellery or clothes. I liked to read because I am very curious and also enjoyed learning everything new. As I grew older, my street became small and I was attracted to distant horizons. This is how the world around me, which I wanted to explore, grew with me. I drew feelings from my experiences because one picture says more than a thousand words.

In high school, I also started to enjoy physics, because my world crossed the borders of the Earth and reached far into space. I was fascinated by Eastern philosophy and discovered Hinduism and Buddhism, which better expressed my attitude to life. At that time, I began to meditate, gladly and often. During meditation I was



not bound by the past, nor was I worried about the future. I only perceived here and now and felt to be part of everything.

As a child drawing allowed me to capture my feelings but also visions and what others did not perceive. I participated in many children's and student exhibitions. It also allowed me to study design in the Art Department at the Technical University in Košice. This field attracted me mainly because it combined the study of art with technical and natural sciences such as physics and mathematics. At that time, I also worked on the creation of pictograms for graphic information systems. Designing clear and easy-to-understand picture messages completely engulfed me because they overcome language barriers and have a great narrative value.

On the day of my graduation, my first son Lukas was born and I became a full time mom, but in the evenings I continued to paint. Ten years later, my second son Marius was born with a new partner. Lukas has always enjoyed drawing and studying sculpture and painting. Marius was accompanied by an imaginary friend throughout his childhood. That friend was a snake. He once came to me and asked me why I was still meditating. I was surprised by his question. He told me, "Mom, do you know that the best meditation is life itself?" No, I did not know it at the time. My two children had a similar worldview to me and that's when I realized that the people around me were more like me. More than I thought before.

Marius was fascinated by science and physics, studied quantum physics and is currently doing his doctorate studies at the Royal Holloway University in London and at the National Physics Laboratory.



The luminous tigle, alcohol ink on yupo paper, 55 cm x 50 cm.

In 2012 I had an interesting meeting with the Master. He entered my meditation. We sat by a mountain lake and he told me to look for a path I had already begun under his guidance in the past. Now I must not wait for anything, I must look for Dzogchen.

It was late at night when I came out of this meditation. How do I find Dzogchen, I wondered. And then, try Google. So, I opened the computer and found a page of the Dzogchen Community, not somewhere far away in an unknown country, but here in my city. The next day, I called and met a man, Juraj Karlik, who told me about Dzogchen and his master Namkhai Norbu Rin-

poche, who was giving a worldwide transmission via webcast in a few days. On the wall was a picture of a man and a woman, exactly the ones I had once seen in one of my meditations – Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri in yab yum. And, yes, I knew right away that I was supposed to be here. This is the way I learned about Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

Then I met the Rinpoche in person several times. My first meeting was at Merigar, Italy in 2013 when he was giving teachings and transmissions. I felt as if his words were addressed to me personally – each of them directly touched my heart. It was as if he was a member of my family. Then in 2016 in Prague and Bratislava I had the opportunity to meet him again in person. I also met him in Wangdenling, which was the strongest but unfortunately also the last personal meeting. I brought one of my paintings to Rinpoche in Bratislava for a meeting. Then he encouraged me and said that it would be good to show them at the gallery.

Once my children grew up if I wasn't doing individual exhibitions, I would show my own art. In Prague, I exhibited jewelry and had a long-term exhibition as well as paintings in the K2 studios and the Nova Gallery. Marius was studying at Charles University at the time and I was lecturing on modern art techniques. In 2016 I had a joint exhibition in Košice with my son Lukas Polyak, called NEXT.

Meeting the Dzogchen teaching changed my life and the way I express myself through painting. In one of the last teachings I received from the Master, he said that over time, one must find one's inner master. Although Rinpoche has ended his journey, I still feel a strong connection and have many personal experiences that show me that his legacy is still alive with us, here.

After the transmission and the teachings, I painted a set of paintings using alcohol ink on Yupo paper technique. These are bubbles that intersect with each other to form different shapes and chains. In other paintings, vague bubbles turn into concrete images of flowers, nature, and people. I ended this period of my work with an exhibition named *Spirit in spiritus* in July 2017 in Košice.

Then I experimented with pictures using acrylic on canvas where the background is golden. The gilding metallic lustre of the background makes the essence of shapes, flowers, butterflies stand out.



Golden Buddha in thigle, acrylic on cardboard, gilding with 24 carat gold, 61 cm x 32 cm.

When the observer moves in front of such an image, he interacts with the observer as if this picture comes to life and it were breathing.

Now I am working on monotypes gelatine board prints. These are graphics each one of which is an original. I also like to combine them with gilding. My work varies quite a lot and I paint landscapes, flowers,



The meditation base, path and fruit. Acrylic on canvas, 43 cm x 31 cm.

sea animals, and abstract feelings using several techniques. Life has so many different forms that it would be a shame to limit oneself to one painting technique.

In 2018, I started looking for a gallery to collaborate with in London, where my son Marius is now studying. Although I managed to make successful contact, the Covid



Violet stargazer clematis, acrylic on canvas, gilding with gold, 35 cm x 65 cm.

pandemic has completely prevented the development of this cooperation as I haven't been able to travel to London. So far, everything is in the stars.

I am not special; I am just trying to do what makes me happy. Each of us has talent in him or herself, we just need to discover it, relax, and let it have space.

What attracts me the most to Dzogchen is the idea that we are all perfect beings, we are real Buddhas, only due to various aspects of our minds we are not able to perceive it. There is no need to chase after enlightenment like a dog behind his tail. It is our natural state.

And one final consideration. How did Darwin come to believe that we come from monkeys? He must have read somewhere that our mind is like a monkey, jumping from thought to thought and it was mainly the monkey that resonated with him. One who cannot calm their monkey, will be like a monkey. Mostly I am such a monkey, but when I paint, the monkey is busy and I can stay in the natural state.

Thank you Rinpoche for your teaching that allowed me to understand. ©

Pictures from the Past

Origins of Tsegylgar East, USA

The Victorious Peak of Pure and Total Presence

John Foster

How is it that Rinpoche found his way to a small sleepy little town in Western Massachusetts, you may ask? Here's the very short version.

In the 1970's a group of us were students of Paul and Naomi Anderson; study-



Rinpoche teaching at the Group House in Conway, Massachusetts, in the early 1980's.



A group of practitioners, many from the original Gurdjieff group, in the field behind the Group House in Conway, Massachusetts, in the early 80's.

ing and practicing the Gurdjieff teachings. The Andersons themselves were long time students of Gurdjieff, particularly Mr. Anderson. We had, over a number of years, a number of temporary locations where we practiced and eventually found a location in Conway, Massachusetts. We bought and renovated a large farm house for housing and practice and converted a milk house into a home for the Andersons. After a celebration gathering around 1977 or 1978, Mr. A (as we called him) dissolved the group as it was constituted and invited us to join

him (if we wanted) in a new direction. That new direction was Tibetan Buddhism. Most joined with him, others went their own way.

At the time, this was a shocking diversion from the Gurdjieff way and only later did it make sense. Gurdjieff himself had journeyed to Tibet a number of times and found teachings that he incorporated into a form that was more relatable to the Western mind. As well, at this time a number of Tibetan lamas had come to the West and were accessible. I think that most important was the fact that Mr. A was getting up

in age and wanted his students to be in good hands, if you will.

Eventually, along with Mr. A, we found ourselves students of Dodrupchen Rinpoche, Khenpo Thupten and Tulku Tundrup (who translated for Dodrupchen Rinpoche) and others. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche had come to California in 1980 or 1981 and Mr. A found out about this extraordinary teacher and invited him to Conway. Mr. A had had several strokes by this time and internal conflicts almost led us to call off Rinpoche's visit, but Mr. A insisted he come.

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche arrived in the summer of 1982 along with the masterful translator (from Italian) Barry Simmons and others. Mr. A was elated, as I think this was the man he was hoping he and his students would meet. Mr. A, due to his strokes, was somewhat feeble and required day and night care which we did ourselves. In a memorable moment, with Barry translating, Rinpoche and Mr. A sat together for one of the last times as Rinpoche helped him to eat. Rinpoche came again in the Winter of 1983 and by this time Mr. A had to be moved into a local nursing home due to the degree of care he needed. Mr. A passed away in the spring of 1983. Rinpoche thought so much of him that he dedicated "The Cycle of Day and Night" to Paul Anderson.

Rinpoche came back again in the summer of 1983 along with Fabio Andrico, who taught Yantra Yoga and of course with Barry Simmons for translating. The teachings that Rinpoche gave from 1982 to, I believe,



Dining with Rinpoche at the group house circa early 1980's.

1984 can be found in the green, yellow and blue books that came from the transcriptions done from tapes by Jim Valby and I believe they are still available from the Shang Shung Institute Bookstore. In 1983 Rinpoche gave us the name of Tsegylgar, the second Gar founded by him in course of the constellation of Gars he would found in his life. led. Tsegylgar means the Victorious Peak of Pure and Total Presence!

This was a very fortunate time with Rinpoche, he was readily accessible and engaging, singing, card playing, weddings, wine, protection cord making, more wine, astrology, stories, more wine and he was always teaching, not just formally, but always. It seemed that what he taught was just for you, if you could hear.

Around 1984 or so, Rinpoche was relating the history of Ayu Khandro and the dark retreat she did for many years and the benefit of doing retreats in general to gain experience and competence in any of the practices he was teaching. The Conway location was not at all suitable for retreats

as it was on a busy street and housing development was going on nearby. Joe Zurylo, who lived in Conway and owned some property close by, offered to lease some land to the Community for a retreat cabin and Rin-

poche said if you build a dark retreat cabin he would teach Yangtig, so of course we did. Six rooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, the works. After dedicating the cabin and people getting a chance to experience a dark retreat, Rinpoche did one by himself for a few days and Joe relates a humorous event that occurred when Rinpoche came out of the cabin. After spending the night at Joe's, the next morning, over breakfast, Rinpoche was excited to show the notes he had written down concerning dreams, etc, he had related to Yangtig. Opening his notebook, the pages were blank, the ball point pen he used had no ink, Joe said his expression was priceless. No worries, after rubbing the pages with a pencil, the depressions made by the pen revealed themselves.

At this point in time it was obvious that the Conway house was no longer suitable for our needs for what Rinpoche was teaching and the growth of the Com-



Children of practitioners with Rinpoche in Conway, Massachusetts, early 80's.



The first sang on the land of Khandroling, Buckland, Massachusetts, founded in 1988.

munity. We began to look for another property and after looking at a number of places we brought Rinpoche to land in the neighboring town of Buckland, it had an acre pond, two high hills and seclusion, but no electricity, winter access or passable roads, but he said we must acquire this land if we could, so of course we did, immediately raised money, sold the Conway property and acquired what would be Khandroling.

Rinpoche's retreat cabin, the revelation of the Vajra Dance Terma, the Guardian cabin, retreat cabins, the Stupa, the Vajra Hall and many summer retreats on the land are another chapter in the Tsegylgar story, but that's another chapter. Visit soon. ©

Kundrolling – Place of Total Liberation

Michael Katz and the New York City
Dzogchen Community

Reprinted from Mirror 128

Chogyal Namkhai Norbu has been visiting New York City since the early 1980's. The New York Community has organized many retreats at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Columbia University, the St. Varten's Armenian Cathedral, and many other important venues. Two important events that occurred in NYC at the world-renowned Rubin Museum were Rinpoche's presentation of the book, *The Light of Kailash*, and a very successful conference sponsored by ATMA (the American Tibetan Medical Association), to which Rinpoche was invited to give the keynote address.

New York clearly has strong karma with our Master. In addition to teaching the highest practices of Ati Yoga here many times, Rinpoche also spent a year undergoing treatment and overcoming leukemia at Memorial Sloane Kettering Hospital. New York City is central to many of the stories he tells about overcoming this obstacle, which according to a prophecy he received early in his life from his Master Changchub Dorje, would have killed him were it not for his connection



Rinpoche's first visit to Kundrolling circa 2006/2007.

with Goma Devi and his Longsal Terma dreams, including the Mandarava practice.

For many years the Community of his New York students met at different

practitioners' apartments and in rented shared-spaces to accommodate our Vajra Dance Mandala, which has been in continuous use since 1994. The thought of establishing a permanent center here in New York City was considered many times, but the extremely high rents in the city made the proposition very daunting.

After one of Rinpoche's retreats in 2005, we met for a party at Jennifer Fox's apartment in Lower Manhattan. The energy was high, and the idea of establishing a Ling was again proposed. It was clear immediately that Rinpoche was in favor of the idea.

A space in midtown Manhattan was located, money was pledged, and the center, which Rinpoche named Kundrolling, "Place of Total Liberation", was born.

New York City programs and events increased steadily over the years. Ongoing Ganapujas, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga classes took root. We also had regular workshops and weekend retreats by Santi Maha Sangha teachers and other International Dzogchen Community instructors, and attendance had increased at our little oasis in midtown Manhattan.



A group of practitioners in Kundrolling circa 2006/2007.

Update from Stephen Korns

High Rent has always been a challenge in New York City, and we have been fortunate that regular retreats by our Master and prominent Community teachers have sustained us for more than 15 years. Many local sangha members have also continued to contribute on a monthly or annual basis, in addition to their memberships in the IDC.

Despite our limited size and the open layout required for a mandala, we were able to rent space to practitioners of diverse traditions over the years, including other Dharma teachers who were approved by Rinpoche.

In April, 2019, when our third portable mandala was nearing the end of its useful life, our sangha painted a permanent mandala onto the floor of our space in the heart of New York City. We subsequently hosted retreats by Fabio Andrico, Max Leschenko and Nataly Nitsche, and a mandala dedication with Prima Mai and five international Vajra Dance instructors.

Due to New York's fortunate role as a destination and gateway to the USA, we have enjoyed practicing in person with students of Rinpoche from all over the world, including many on route or returning from Tsegylgar East and Khandroling. However, in March, 2020, the COVID virus hit hard in New York City, and Kundrolling was forced to suspend in-person activities indefinitely.

Kundrolling immediately moved on-line with daily Zoom practices and helped pioneer this format for the Dzogchen Community. Of course, no one knew when we might again be able to meet in person, and we continued to pay rent on our empty space for many months. In the autumn of 2020, our sangha began an open conversation about how to sustain our Ling in the future, and whether it was time to move out of this space that had been visited by Rinpoche several times, held countless practices and teachings, and was in a good location for people to reach by public transportation.

This was not an easy conversation, and our Gakyil was assisted by two professionals in the sangha to create a questionnaire for our members, friends, and interested parties to hear people's thoughts and help us all make a decision collaboratively.

Part of the argument for moving the Ling at this time was a feeling that in order to develop a self-sustaining practice space in New York City, we needed to share the space or earn a reliable income from rent-

als. Many of our sangha wanted to take this time to save rent and explore purchasing a building, especially while interest rates were low and commercial spaces were being vacated due to the pandemic.

Via Zoom, we sponsored meetings with both Mark Farrington and Julia Lawless about the London/UK Dzogchen Community's experience buying a building. We heard about Rinpoche's stated conditions that their new space should be self-sustaining, open to all traditions, and contribute to the well-being of its Gar.

Following a vote by our members, in February, 2021, Kundrolling moved its possessions to temporary storage and vacated our space on West 30th St. We had sanded our painted mandala from the floor and restored the space to the condition in which we found it in 2005.

As part of our move, our Gakyil made a commitment to reestablish a dance mandala in New York City and we are currently preparing to discuss several options with the Community, from renting space by the hour and week to week, to teaming with other organizations within and beyond the Dzogchen Community to buy a building in the City.

We see our success depends on the enthusiastic participation of our members, just as it did when the Ling was founded in 2005. We all recognize the challenge of working without the direct collaboration of our Master, and the power of the precious transmission he gave us on so many levels, including our common purpose to realize the Dzogchen Teachings, and to work together and help one another.

We are grateful to everyone for their interest and contributions, and we look forward to seeing you at Kundrolling! ©



Vajra Dance course with instructor Anastasia McGhee at Kundrolling circa 2006/2007.

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Tshering Choden

I was born in Bhutan, in the region of Bumthang, in a village called Tang Ogyen Choling. It was a place founded by Longchenpa led. the Nyingma philosopher. Later Dorje Lingpa led. a Nyingmapa master and *terton* [1346–1405] was there and made it his main seat so his descendents are still there and managing the place.

As a child I lived a very simple life in my village. Since we had only one school near the village that was a two-hour walk, my family decided to send me to boarding school when I was six. However, my grandmother didn't want me to be on my own so she put up a little hut close to my school and lived there and took care of me until I was eight.

At school we had an English curriculum, everything was taught in English and our native language, Dzongkha, was a second language, so I grew up bi-lingual. Dzongkha has the same grammar as Tibetan but the way we pronounce and write it is a bit different. Spoken Tibetan is different from the classical language and in Bhutan we study the classical form of Tibetan, not spoken.

Then, unfortunately my grandmother got pancreatic cancer and was taken to Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, and decided that I should go there with her. Thimpu was the first place that I encountered the modern world, travelled in a car, discovered electricity and electrical things. My grandmother was quite ill so I decided not to go to school but just to take care of her. I quit school for one year and looked after her until she passed away.

Before passing she had made my uncle promise that he would take care of me. I was her favorite grand-daughter and as I was the eldest daughter in a family with numerous children she was sure that if I went back to the village I would not be able to continue my education. So I remained in Thimpu and used to see my family once a year.

I was nine years old when I went to live with my uncle who was a monk living in his own home, but with monastic rules! I would have to get up early in the morning, at three o'clock, and do all the prayers like they do in a monastery. I also had to do



the *nöndro*, which I actually finished by the time I was twelve years old. I would go to school at eight in the morning but then in the afternoon, from three to eight o'clock I would do things like invocations, the *nöndro* with prostrations and so on. At that age I really didn't enjoy it because it was all forced on me. My uncle used to check to see if I was doing everything properly and not cheating. If I saw he was sleepy I used to make my *mala* go a bit faster so instead of one prostration I used to indicate three!

However, when I was twelve Bhutan started to open to the West and Western culture and we used to love everything that came from the West – speaking English, Western clothes and so on. Since I had been brought up in a monastic way, I used to be shy in front of my friends. When we had classic Buddhist teachings at school I already knew everything but would pretend I didn't because I was ashamed in front of my friends. Buddhist studies were not fashionable. My uncle had brought me up in a very traditional way and I lived a nun's life because he was very strict. He didn't like anything that was connected with Western culture so it was a struggle for me to hide from him the fact that I did.

I lived with my uncle until I was eighteen and graduated from high school but my life was very difficult with him and I was growing up and wanted to be a little bit different. So I decided to go for a train-

ing course at the First Institute of Technology and was accepted. It was there that I saw a computer for the first time and also decided that I wanted to travel and see the world.

Up to that time all my travels had been connected to spiritual paths, going on pilgrimage to India, Bodhgaya and places linked to Padmasambhava. But one weekend I was talking to my uncle and his best friend, another monk, telling them how much I wanted to travel. That was quite unusual for a Bhutanese person to want to travel and they considered me to be quite strange. My uncle's friend used to collect business cards from anyone from outside Bhutan, because in those days not many people visited our country. If he would see anyone visiting, he would stop and ask for their business cards and had a collection of at least 200 cards. When he heard my wish to travel he brought his collection of business cards and practically threw them at me saying that if I really wanted to travel perhaps one of these people would help.

Going through the cards I found one with "Professor Namkhai Norbu" on it and decided I would write to him. The address was in Naples which I thought must be somewhere in Nepal. The monk had re-



ceived the card from Andrea Sertoli who had been working in Bhutan and had taken some lessons in Tibetan from him. I thought that if it was my karma to go, Professor Namkhai Norbu would help me.

I sent the professor a letter and got a reply after about two months. He said that he received a lot of letters from Tibetans asking him to help them come to the West but he had never helped anyone up to now. However, he said he would help me. He asked me when I wanted to come and said

that he could help me come to Italy. I was very excited and replied that I would come right away.

I had absolutely no idea where Italy was but just packed my bag and headed for the border town in the south of Bhutan. I was very naïve and thought I could get a bus ticket to Italy once I got there. Of course I couldn't and discovered that I had to come back to the capital, make a passport, get a plane ticket and make other preparations.

By that time the Shang Shung Institute in Italy had sent me an invitation and I got a flight to Delhi. Fortunately on the flight I met my friend's father, the Portuguese ambassador to Bhutan, who explained that my invitation was not a visa. In Delhi he invited me to their home and the ambassador took me personally to the Italian ambassador who gave me the Italian visa on the spot. When I discovered that my one hundred dollars was not enough for a plane fare to Italy, the ambassador kindly bought my ticket. I was totally unaware of how the world worked but everything manifested spontaneously and perfectly without a struggle, what Rinpoche calls *lhundrub*.

When I arrived in Rome, however, I was totally shocked because everyone at the airport seemed to be shouting loudly. Bhutan is a very quiet place and people never shout and the noisy yelling at the airport made we want to return home. Laurie Marder picked me up and took me to Merigar 2 in Tuscany where I stayed for a couple of weeks before I finally got to meet Rinpoche.

I was a very devoted Buddhist and in Bhutan had been told that Rinpoche was a type of black Bonpo. I come from a traditional Vajrayana family, everyone is a practitioner, and for me Dzogchen meant something that is very far off and you have to do a great many steps to get to that stage. When I heard that he gave Dzogchen teachings I thought he might not be a genuine teacher. I had so many doubts.

He invited me to meet him in Rome but when I saw him I had this instant feeling that I knew him. He asked me to wait until he finished teaching and then we would talk. He was giving teachings in a theatre in Rome but I didn't listen to anything because I was so eager to talk to him. When he finished teaching I thanked him for inviting me but said that I didn't want to stay in Italy because I was very lonely at Merigar 2 and wanted to go home. He told me that when he came to Italy he had the idea to stay for only one or two years and then

go home. But while he was here he thought that he should learn something because Italy is a special country. He suggested that I try to do something like study language. So I decided I would stay for a year. Then I didn't see him until the following summer.

The year after he invited me to go to Sardinia and there our relationship changed. He is such a great Dzogchen teacher and gives so simply and easily to everybody.



Most teachers are greedy and make you sacrifice a lot of your time without understanding much. In Sardinia something clicked and I realized that here is the one. Up to then I had understood nothing. Everything I had done all my life, from age 9 to 19, I had never understood. Up to then I had done all my practices because of tradition. First I started because I was forced to, then I continued because of tradition – my mother, father, grandmother and grandfather did so I should do. After some time when I was older, if I didn't do my practice I would feel almost guilty, so there was a type of need. If I hadn't done all these practices for all those years perhaps I would not have understood Rinpoche's teachings.

For Western people what Rinpoche is teaching is easier. But I grew up boxed in, everything with its own stage, and if you do not do them, you cannot get to Dzogchen. But as I had done all those practices, when Rinpoche spoke about Dzogchen teachings, it was much easier. And then I felt this gratefulness and understood what I had done in the past.

I think that the connection I had with Rinpoche was really strong. For many years he had wanted to go to Bhutan but he had always had obstacles to travel there. When I came to Italy in 2004, he told me

he was going to Bhutan but then he was unable to go. But in 2013 one day we were at Gadeling, Rinpoche's residence in Italy, and he said to me, "Next year I'm going to Bhutan in September!" I asked him if I could come and he said, "Of course". When I asked him who was organizing the trip, he replied, "You are!". I was shocked. I had no idea how to do that. He just gave me the dates.

Although I was really worried, I didn't

tell Rinpoche. I went home and thought about it and starting contacting people and organizing everything. And everything went very smoothly. It was incredible. I was expecting obstacles, last minute cancellations, but everything worked out really well, Rinpoche was happy, and 150 people participated.

In 2015 I organized a second trip to Bhutan with fewer people during which we had a three-day retreat when Rinpoche gave an introduction to Dzogchen. Rinpoche was very happy and said that Bhutan was the real country of evolution. He had been there when he was very young and he loved all aspects of the country. I think it is true because when Rinpoche was there we did not advertise the retreat – I organized everything with a few helpers who were my friends – and at the teachings there were almost all young people from about 18 to 40 years of age, more than 2000 of them!

So although I was born in Bhutan and when I first came to Italy I spoke Tibetan with Rinpoche, as time passed, Italian got the better of us and we both became Italian! Rinpoche was born a Tibetan and I was Bhutanese and we both arrived in Italy when we were 18 but, with time, we both became real Italians. ©



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