

THE MIRROR

No. 154
December 2021



Atiyoga Teaching
Preliminary Practice in Dzogchen
The Tibet of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

Contents

International Gakyil.....	3
Atiyoga Teaching	4
Preliminary Practice in Dzogchen	7
Shang Shung Foundation	10
The Birth of Norbunet.....	16
The Evolution of Kuan-yin, the Perceiver of Sounds.....	18
International Atiyoga Foundation.....	21
ASIA.....	23
The Month of Khaita	24
Dzamling Gar.....	25
Merigar West.....	26
Merigar East.....	28
Kunsangar North	30
Samtengar.....	35
Tashigar North.....	36
Book Review.....	37
The Tibet of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu	37
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Milan, Italy	43
Book Review.....	45
Artists in the Dzogchen Community.....	46
Reflections	50
How I Met	53

Dear International Dzogchen Community Members,
The International Gakyil (IG) is pleased to share with you the latest news related to the International Dzogchen Community (IDC):

- * the new IDC Statute valid since November 29, 2021
- * the new IG Team in office since November 29, 2021
- * the 2021 IDC membership trend on December 13, 2021
- * the 2022 IDC Global Membership Policy

Following please find a brief report for each of the above topics.

Warm regards,
The IG Team
Steven, Barbara, Anna, Marek, Vince,
Gabiella, Miranda

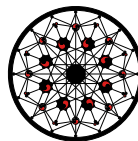
The New IDC Statute

During the IDC Extraordinary Assembly held at the Studio Notarile Gunnella – Valia in Florence (Italy) on November 29, 2021, the process of renewing the IDC Statute was completed in accordance with what was presented and approved at the IDC Ordinary Assembly held in Merigar West on July 30, 2021.

The main motivations to update the IDC Statute were the following:

- * to clarify how the IG could legally manage the IDC administration functions in the case of the Honorary President's absence, inability to perform His duties, or if His seat were empty;
- * to start the process of aligning the by-laws with the new rules set out in the Italian law on Non-Profit Organisations ("Codice del Terzo Settore"). A second step will follow in the next few months.

You can find the new text of the IDC Statute (in English and Italian) at the following web page <http://dzogchencommunity.org/documents/>



The New International Gakyil Team

Immediately following the IDC Extraordinary Assembly, an IDC Ordinary Assembly was held at the Studio Notarile Gunnella-Valia in Florence (Italy) on November 29, 2021 to confirm the election of the IG candidates for the roles already presented and approved by the IDC Ordinary Assembly on July 30, 2021.

During the Ordinary Assembly on November 29, 2021, Anton Rutkovskiy resigned as IG member. We thank him warmly for his commitment and great work over the last few years.

The IG now includes the following members:

Steven Landsberg, *President*
Barbara Giurlanda, *Vice President & Yellow*
Anna Apraksina, *Yellow*
Marek Riesz, *Yellow*
Vince Li Wen Tai, *Red*
Gabiella Schneider, *Blue*
Miranda Shannon, *Blue*

The IG Team includes Nikola Stanišová, IDC Secretary & International Membership Coordinator.

The 2021 IDC Membership Trend

As of December 13, 2021, there are 4,611 registered Global IDC members, an approximate decrease of 17% compared to the total number of Global IDC members in 2020.

In 2021, Ordinary IDC members represent 91% of all membership, Local plus Global Sustaining membership represent 8.5%, and Global Meritorious represents 0.5%.

Merigar West is the Gar with the greatest number of members (1,320), followed by Kunsangar North and South (1,206), Merigar East (740), Dzamling Gar (285), Samtengar (264), Tsegyalgar East (243), Tashigar Sur (172), Namgyalgar (125), Tsegyalgar West (87), Munselling (49), Gephelling (42), Jampal-ling (28), Jamyangling (27), and Tashigar North (23).

As membership is one of the most important ways to demonstrate our commitment to the Teachings and to support the International Dzogchen Community and its Gars and Lings, the IG would like to encourage those that have not yet renewed their 2021 membership to do so – You are still in time! And to rejoin in 2022.

The 2022 IDC Global Membership Policy.

The following is a summary of the 2022 Global Membership Policy sent by the IG to the Gakyils of each Gar.

The IDC Share of 15% on membership will remain unchanged for 2022.

Global Membership Policy 2022 – Levels and Fees

- * Local Ordinary Membership [fee set by local Gar Gakyil]
- * Local Sustaining Membership [optional level with fee set by local Gar Gakyil]
- * Local Sponsored Membership [optional level with the same Local Ordinary fee set by local Gar Gakyil]

Members with relevant financial issues or serious health problems can ask local Gakyils to financially support their membership fee, through a local fund (if established) or by looking for one or more donors (inside the local Community or by asking the IG for a global search). This membership would be considered as a Local Ordinary Membership.

- * Local Elderly Membership [optional level set by local Gar Gakyil, 12 EUR/14 USD fee]
Members 75 years and older with uninterrupted membership at least in the 6 last years can ask local Gakyils to apply for a symbolic membership of 12 EUR/14 USD per year. This level of membership is optional and set by the local Gar Gakyil. It would be considered as a Local Ordinary Membership.

The IG strongly recommends local Gars apply this level especially in case of relevant financial issues.

- * Global Sustaining Membership 500.00 EUR / 575.00 USD fee set by IG
- * Global Meritorious Membership 1,500.00 EUR / 1,725.00 USD fee set by IG

Global Membership Policy 2022 details

Global Benefits

Global Meritorious: 80 % discounts on all events and workshops in all Gars and Lings

Each Gar can provide more benefits to its direct members

Global Sustaining: 50 % discounts on all events and workshops in all Gars and Lings

Each Gar can provide more benefits to its direct members

The IG recommends that Gars apply the above Global Benefits to all events and workshops for Global Meritorious and Global Sustaining members.

However, if needed each Gar can set the Global Benefits depending on their financial circumstances. Any adjustments to the IDC Global Benefit must be properly communicated in writing in advance to the members.

IDC Share Currency

EUR is the applicable currency for: MGW&E, DZG, KGN&S, Namgyalgar, Samtengar, Jampalling, Jamyangling, Munselling, and Gephelling
USD is the applicable currency for: TGE&W, and TGN&S

Membership Fee Subsidies

The decision to subsidise regular Local Ordinary membership fees should be met by the establishment of a special fund or of a fundraising policy at the Gar/Ling level.

If needed the Yellow IG can announce a global search for available sponsors to support membership needs. ©



Atiyoga Teaching

An excerpt from the morning session of day 4, December 31, 2017, of the Atiyoga Teaching Retreat given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife.

Transcript Anna Rose

Editing Naomi Zeitz

Tibetan and final editing with the kind assistance of Fabian Sanders and Adriano Clemente

Chang Chub Sem – Bodhichitta

The Tibetan word *chang-chub sem* (*byang chub sems*) in Sanskrit is bodhichitta. Ancient translators constructed the word *chang-chub sem*, which is made up of three words. What does *chang* mean? *Chang* means purified. If there are obstacles, impediments for realization, they are purified. After we have purified them we can obtain the essence of knowledge. For example, if we are cleaning a vase, it is not sufficient that we only clean it, but we should put something inside it. In the same way, all qualifications that we study, we can have that obtainment. *Sem* means mind. Not relative mind but it's real nature, the nature of mind. You know that the nature of mind is the state of Dzogchen, the all perfected qualifications of *lhundrub*. So, these words are *chang-chub sem* in the Sutra teaching and are always considered bodhichitta.

We cultivate and develop bodhichitta. It is called *chang-chub sem*. If you are reading Dzogchen books sometimes, we say our real nature and sometimes we say the state of Dzogchen. Sometimes we say the state of Ati, primordial state. But most tantras refer to *chang-chub sem*.

So, when you are reading a book you must remember and be aware of the kind of book you are reading. If you are reading a Dzogchen book and thinking *chang-chub sem* is bodhichitta, it is wrong. It means "your real nature". Why does it correspond in that sense? So, you see when you have translated these kinds of words from Sanskrit, ancient translators like Vairocana, Kawa Paltsek (*ska ba dpal brtsegs*), etc., they have a high level of knowledge of Dzogchen. They are then constructing words that correspond in the real sense. Bodhichitta is very relative, like compassion, related to our mind and we cultivate that. But when we say *chang-chub sem*, *chang* means purified. In Tibetan there are two words: *chang* means purified already. If you want to purify, you do not say *chang*. *Chang* means purified since the beginning so there is nothing to purify, we have the perfected state.

Chub means obtained, already there. Then *sem* means relative mind and its real nature is *semnyid* (*sams nyid*). You see, for that

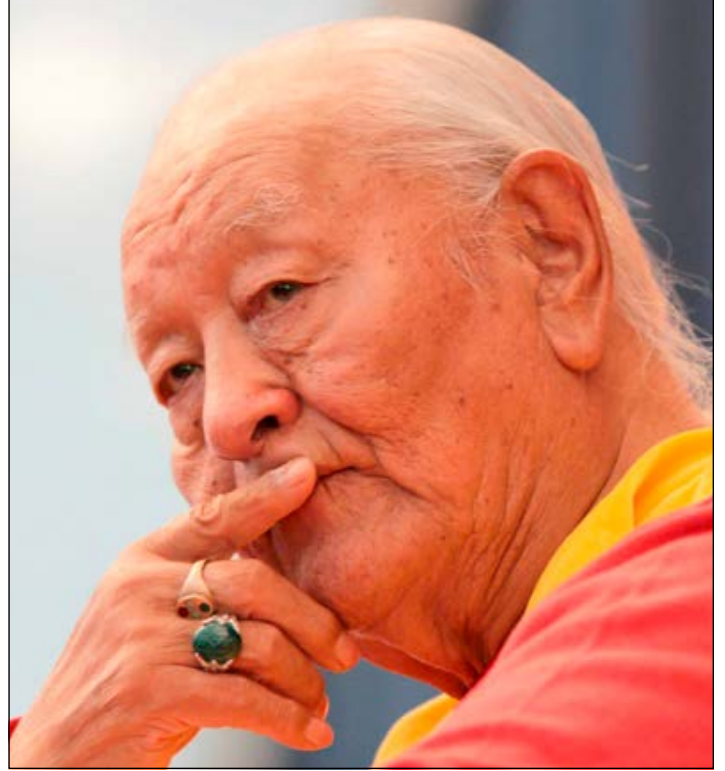


Photo by Vartan Mkhitarian

reason it corresponds to our real nature. All titles, most of the the important titles in Dzogchen Semde texts, say *chang-chub sem*, Dzogchen. Some people are only going after words; some important Dzogchen texts are saying, "This cannot be a Dzogchen text because there are no words of Dzogchen." In this case they use *chang-chub sem*, for example. This is very important because in Dzogchen we are going into the essence.

So, you can understand what capacity means. Participation is very important. Even if you don't understand anything that a teacher is explaining, you have received Dzogchen teaching and maybe it is a little complicated. But you are on this path connected with the path of the Dzogchen. This is not so easy for all sentient beings. So, participation is very, very important.

How we start is something more related with our capacity. When we have participation, "I want to follow the essence of the Dzogchen Teaching now, I want to be a Dzogchen practitioner." Ordinary people do not have that idea very precisely. Some people are curious, but they are not saying they are curious but they go to a teacher and listen and they want to discover what it is.

Curiosity is not bad, when you meet the Dzogchen Teaching, meet a Dzogchen teacher, life becomes very different. So, we know it is something very important. Then we decide and we follow that path and we can understand how Guru Garab Dorje explained, for example. Dzogchen Semde, Longde, Upadesha, we cannot study everything in an intellectual way. For example, when we go to the college to study Buddhist philosophy, there are kapod nga (*bka' pod lnga*), five important texts; we are going deeper and deeper into that knowledge, studying for many years. All these texts have explanations and there are many different commentaries. In most schools the traditions are the same.



Particularly the study that I followed and what they studied in the college in Derge, these texts had been prepared by Zhenga Rinpoche (*gzhan dga' rin po che*), a very famous teacher. Zhenga Rinpoche prepared, which are thirteen important texts that we should study. Also when we were in college we couldn't study anything else, we only concentrated on that. For example, sometimes a teacher was teaching Tibetan medicine, but in general we couldn't follow when we were in college. We couldn't even read history books.

Basically we needed to concentrate on these texts. When I was in college I was a very fortunate person because I had a very good teacher. My teacher always gave me permission to participate when there was some important teachings, saying, "Oh, it is necessary for you to receive that teaching." It was important because I have the name of a reincarnation. All my friends in college did not have these names. When someone is a reincarnation, later they must become a teacher. They must understand everything, not only these five or thirteen books. So, even if I was in college, I did not know how many things were important.

For example, I received Dzogchen Semde, Longde, Upadesha that belongs to the Nyingmapa school. At that period I was in the Sakyapa college. Until I was nine years old, I grew up in Sakyapa monastery. I was very expert in all things Sakyapa. But I didn't know anything else, any other schools. Once when I was in college, my younger brother died. In Tibet when someone dies, we need to do a puja or purification, etc., for 49 days. For that purpose my teacher gave me permission to go to my home to do this puja. When I went home we invited many teachers, different teachers, and they gave some Teachings. I received these Teachings also.

Nyingma Kama (*rnying ma bka' ma*)

Particularly, my second elder sister had a husband who was a very intellectual person and an expert of the knowledge of the Nyingmapa school. Once we invited a teacher for doing a puja for my brother's death and that teacher was a very famous Nyingmapa called Negyab Rinpoche. During the time he was in our home he also gave an initiation of *shiro*. That was the first time I received a *shiro* initiation. Then the husband of my sister said, "Oh, when this teacher is finished here, he will return to his monastery, his place of retreat, and he will give a teaching called Nyingma Kama." I had no idea what Nyingma Kama was. Of course I knew Nyingma, the Nyingmapa school, was connected with that. Then he said, "It is very important that you receive that teaching."

But I didn't know what it was and I was not very interested. But I did not remain indifferent. I sent a person and wrote letters to my teacher of the college. I said, "There is a teacher called Negyab Rinpoche and he will give this Teaching called Nyingma Kama. I don't know what this teaching is, but someone told me it is very important. What do you think, is it necessary for me to receive this teaching? If I try to get this teaching will you give me permission to receive that?" My teacher replied very positively. He said, "This is very important. It is the root of the Dzogchen Teaching and the Nyingmapa teaching. You should receive that, it is not so easy to receive from all teachers."

He also said that Negyab Rinpoche (*gnas rgyab rin po che*) is a very good teacher, and he gave me sufficient time with permission. But always when he gave me permission, then he would say, for example, two or three months: "For three months I am giving these teachings in college to study. You should also guarantee that you have studied that. And when you come back, you should do an examination." So, I always accepted that and I always succeeded to do that. So, my teacher was really very happy when I did these things, saying, "You are really very intelligent and you did well."

So, my teacher gave me that permission. And he said, "You should learn what I am giving in that period, all five or six texts of the Madhyamika. You should learn that root text, study well, and when you come back, you should do an examination. There is one of the these six texts called Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa, yuktiṣaṣṭikā*), you should learn that root text in memory." I promised to do that.

Then later after we finished these pujas I returned to the monastery. I went to my teacher and he had already started this teaching and I missed three or four days, I don't remember. And the teacher gave me these teachings also. Then I followed this teaching day after day. But there was one of his students, a *khenpo*, he was giving the transmission of the *lung* of the all these texts.

Namchö Mingyur Dorje

The *khenpo* was a studied one. I went him and said, "Please, can you teach me Tsawa Sherab (*rtsa ba shes rab*), the root text of the Madhyamika?" He promised to teach. Then when we had a little free time I always went to this *khenpo* and he gave me lessons and I studied very well. When I finished the study I had a dream, in the dream I met a very important *terton* called Namchö Mingyur Dorje (*gnam chos mi 'gyur rdo rje*). So, when I searched for Namchö Mingyur Dorje after he disappeared, I found an old person. I asked this old person, "Where is Namchö Mingyur Dorje?" He said, "I don't know." But I after a little while I said, "I saw Namchö Mingyur Dorje under this tree." Then he said, "If there is Namchö Mingyur Dorje under that tree then he must be there." He said that and then he is saying, "Ha ha ha", laughing, and when he was laughing he became that old teacher of these initiations. Then I felt very bad because I was not respectful. The next day I went to the teacher and told him I had this dream. He said that Namchö Mingyur Dorje's original residence is his monastery. Also the body of the Namchö Mingyur Dorje is in the stupa. That means if you had that dream that you have some connection of the transmissions of Namchö Mingyur Dorje. So, he gave me this advice. And later when I talked with the husband of my sister he said, "Oh, then it is very important you should ask to receive transmissions of all Namchö Mingyur Dorje's *terma* Teachings."

I said, "But how can we ask, it is not sufficient only to ask, we need to prepare everything, also spend time for preparing the mandala offering, etc." He said, "You don't worry, you remain here to receive the teaching and for a few days I am going around" and he prepared everything. Then I went to the teacher and said, "I had this dream that my friend said it's very important to receive this teaching, can you give me the this teaching?" Also it takes longer,

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

because there are 13 volumes for all the *terma* teaching. It is not necessary to receive all, for many of these only transmission of the lung. But then the teacher said, "Ok", when we finish the Nyingma Kama he will give. Then we were very happy.

But I am not worried for my college because my college teacher gave a teaching of six texts, and it takes long time. When I returned to college he did only five texts and one was still not finished. Then we received all Namchö Mingyur Dorje's teaching from the Negyab Rinpoche (*gnas rgyab rin po che*). Then I became relaxed and when it was finished there was one of my relations nearby a sacred place, a very nice place for doing personal retreat. First I went only to visit this place, to see what it was like. After I arrived there that day, I did not return.

Pema Karpo

I said I wanted to stay in the retreat place for one week. I did the practice of the Ngöndzong Gyalpo (*mngon rdzogs rgyal po*), the root practice of the Longde. Later I went back to college. Of course my teacher was very happy. He said, "Oh, you received Nyingma Kama, very very good." He was very happy. When he gave a teaching for all his students, he asked me three questions from this root text. I replied and he was very satisfied, "Oh, perfect. Now you learned this text Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa*)" in memory. I said, "Not only Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa*), I also learned in memory the root text of the main text of the Madhyamika Tsawa Sherab (*rtsa ba shes rab*) that has many pages. But before I went back I learned it in memory very quickly. So then he ask me Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa*) some places, "From here you read", then I read just a little from memory, and then again he asked Tsawa Sherab (*rtsa ba shes rab*) three or four times from different places. My teacher is very satisfied. He said, "Oh, you are really Pema Karpo." By Pema Karpo he meant I was the reincarnation of Pema Karpo, who was the *dharmaraja* of Bhutan. The Karmapa recognized me as that reincarnation. So, in the Kagyupa Drugpa Kagyu, Pema Karpo is the most learned scholar and also realized being in that Drugpa Kagyu tradition. That was the period of the 5th Dalai Lama.

The Fifth Dalai Lama is negating also Pema Karpo's philosophy, his commentaries, etc. But he said Drugpa Chanag Chugcigla Pema Karpo Purengtsam, those are the words of the 5th Dalai Lama. It means in all of Drugpa Kagyu there are no scholars, maybe there are many good practitioners, but no scholars. Drugpa Chanag Chugcig (*'brug pa bya nag khyug gcig*) means [the Drukpas are] just like a group of black birds. Then Pema Karpo Purengtsam, Pema Karpo is a little white, but not complete. So Pema Karpo is unique. So, you see, the 5th Dalai Lama considered Pema Karpo to be high level. So my teacher, among all the students present, at that time he said, "You are really Pema Karpo", he said. I was very satisfied.

So, I did the examination, my teacher was satisfied, and I received all these teachings. Sometimes when I finished my college, after many months my teacher gave me permission to go to Ayu Khandro. I received a very important series of five Dzogchen Teachings. And later my teacher of college he was very very satisfied. That was my last examination of college. So, this is an example, even I was in college, my teacher gave me permission to study.

Astrology

For example, one of the students who was the daughter of a very important teacher who was an expert of the Kalachakra. She came there to ask the teacher to give a commentary of the Kalachakra written by Mipham. She told me, "Oh, the teacher will give me this Kalachakra commentary sooner or later." Then I said, "I can ask my teacher also because I received that teaching." She said, "Oh, this will not be so easy for you. For following the teaching of the Kalachakra you should know the entire system of astrology." This lady was very expert in astrology. I asked, "Can you teach what is necessary in astrology? And I will study this secretly in college." I promised I would never study in the day time, only at night when all the other students were sleeping. In that moment I would close my window and in the nighttime I studied astrology. She gave me permission and then she started to teach me. And after few months I learned all the basic astrology I needed for the Kalachakra. Then in the summertime I went for almost three months with my uncle Khyentse Rinpoche and also my teacher, they needed a little more money for reconstructing temples, etc. So to make money I went to the North which is called *Dzachukha* (*rdza chu kha*). I went around and doing pujas with a group of monks.

In the end we received so many animals and objects and we put these offerings towards the college and monastery of my uncle, half and half. During the time I was traveling, I could choose to have six monks with me. There was one monk called Kalzang Tsering, who was an expert in astrology. Also traveling day after day with him, I studied astrology even though I already knew what was necessary for the Kalachakra, but there are also Yangchar (dbyangs 'char) and Tujor (dus sbyor). So I studied all. Then later when we returned, one day my teacher said he was going to give this Kalachakra. I went to my teacher saying, "Oh, please, give me also, can I participate?" He said, "It is not so easy for you, because you should learn astrology. In astrology what is necessary is every day to understand the characteristic junctions and also constellations and their relationships. There is a text called *Ngandu* (*lnga 'dus*) which means there are five arguments that if you know, you can do the calendar." I said, "I learned already *Ngandu* (*lnga 'dus*), but not only that, I know also *Zana* (*gza' lnga*) and *Tujor* (*dus sbyor*). The teacher was very surprised. He gave me permission and I received the Kalachakra. He gave four tantras of medicine also to a small group of the people who were studying medicine. I also received that, I asked and he told me, you can do if you promise that you don't do practice or use what he was giving lessons on.

So, I also learned these four tantras from him. That is example of how my teacher in college was fantastic; he was very good. He gave me many particular possibilities. And he was always explaining when he gave a teaching at the beginning, he would say, "Oh, you should learn everything in a very precise way, you should be in the real knowledge. Otherwise everybody can say, "Oh, you have the name of a reincarnation, so you are considered special", but you are not special if you are not a studied one." He explained by using many examples of how a title is not important if you are not studied. This is how I learned in my college. For that reason I had a very good occasion to learn everything. I was also reading history etc., and my mind became more and more open. ❀

Preliminary Practice in Dzogchen

Adriano Clemente,
Merigar 10 August 2021

I was requested to give an introduction to this book, *The Stairway to Liberation*, that Rinpoche wrote many years ago. There is another book that Rinpoche wrote on the *tregchöd* and finished in the early 70s. It is quite a large book with many topics and is more or less the essence of all the methods of the Dzogchen *upadesha*. In this book it says that there are preliminary practices and then main practices. When it mentions the preliminary practices it refers to another book which is *The Stairway to Liberation* which was written later than the main book on *tregchöd*, more or less at the time Rinpoche was teaching in Naples. Then it was translated by Cristiana De Falco. Some years ago we had to review some old books and booklets including this one and we now have the updated version.

What does preliminary practice mean? In general we say Dzogchen, *dzogpa chenpo*, which means our real nature. Our real nature means that this state is like the source of all phenomena. Usually we always say samsara and nirvana which are concepts of our mind. At least samsara is a concept that corresponds to something we experience. Even though we say nirvana we don't know what it means but we use these two terms because samsara is our ordinary life with its suffering. This samsara that is suffering we experience not only now but it also goes on continuously beyond time and we cannot say when it started or will end.

In the Invocation of Samantabhadra, at the end it says all beings of the Six Lokas are like me, Samantabhadra, but the difference is that they are dreaming. We are dreaming now, we are not aware, and even if we are aware, we cannot wake up. To awaken means Buddha. What do we need to awaken to our primordial state, to our Buddha? We need the teaching, the path. There are many different paths. The Dzogchen or Atiyoga path has three main points: view, meditation and action or conduct. The view means we are like somebody who is walking in the dark. Maybe we need to go somewhere but we have no idea which path we should take. The view means that there is



someone who is expert, who has already reached the place we want to go and he explains to us so we can reach that place. This is a general understanding of what we call the view.

In Buddhist teaching starting from Sutra there are different kinds of views but they are basically explained through our mind and reasoning and we have to try to understand them through our concepts. Even in Sutra we have to apply that which has become the object of our understanding and it must become something real. In the end we transcend that.

In the Sutra we have the concept of emptiness, *shunyata*. We can study and have some idea of what *shunyata* means and how we should reach that understanding but it doesn't mean that we remain stuck with that concept of emptiness. That *shunyata* must become a living experience for the practitioner so that he or she has real understanding of it. That is why we have *prajnaparamita*, for example. Even in the Sutra it is very important to understand that meaning and it must become a living experience.

Then in the Tantras, the view is a little different because the principle of the Tantras is not based on just emptiness as the point of arrival. In the outer Tantras and especially in the inner Tantras emptiness is the real nature of all phenomena, but the way we reach that understanding is that we work with the dimension of our energy, through empowerment and application of the practice of transformation of deities and mandala and so on. We are dealing with our inner energy which is what we call the natural quality of the primordial state.

When we consider the point of view of Dzogchen Atiyoga, a Dzogchen teacher can explain about the view to make us understand what it means so we have some idea of what the primordial state is, but that is not what we call the Dzogchen view. The Dzogchen view is when the teacher has introduced the student and the student has recognized and acquired knowledge of the primordial state. Then he or she has to apply that view, to become familiar with that state. This is the meaning of *gompa* in Tibetan. Usually we say meditation but the real meaning is not just meditation. *Gompa* means that we have become familiar with or have mastered some object or knowledge through reflection or application of a method.

Then the third aspect, *chöpa* or conduct, means to act, to apply, to use, it has many meanings, but in Dzogchen it means that we bring the knowledge of the primordial state that we have into our daily life. Then it becomes the conduct or *chöpa* of Dzogchen, otherwise it has no meaning. If one is a Dzogchen practitioner and does a half hour of practice a day but the rest of the time is distracted, then *chöpa* does not exist. We must remember these three points: view, cultivation of that view, and bringing that view into our daily lives.

When we talk about meditation or practice in Dzogchen we have preliminary practices and main practices. Firstly, what is the main practice in Dzogchen? It is *tregchöd*. *Tregchöd* means that once we have that recognition of our primordial state, our three gates of body, voice and mind are relaxed and integrated in that knowledge. There is no specific practice. We just have to continue that state that we have discov-

» continued on the following page

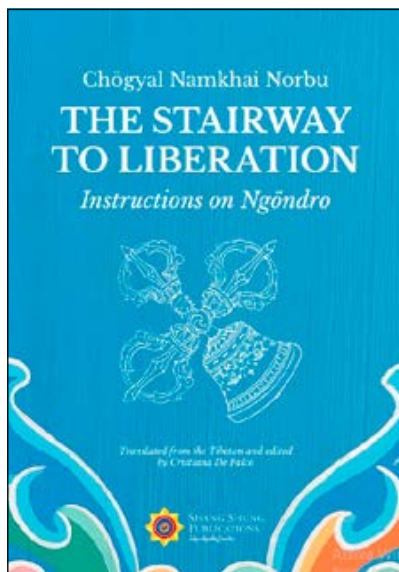
» continued from previous page

ered. So *tregchöd* is the main practice and then there is *thögal*. Once we have become familiar with *tregchöd* and have become a *tregchöd* practitioner, then *thögal* implies specific methods through which we can very quickly have complete integration of our outer energy with our inner energy of the elements.

Usually in the Dzogchen tantras, they say that *tregchöd* is for the lazy ones while for the diligent there is *thögal* because with *tregchöd* we don't have to do much effort once we have that knowledge. With *thögal* we have to apply many methods and positions and to practice for a long time so it involves a lot of effort.

So as main practices we have *tregchöd* and *thögal*. Then in Dzogchen we have two kinds of preliminary practices. The first one is not specific to Dzogchen and we call it outer common preliminary practice. It comes from the understanding of the Four Awarenesses. In all Tibetan schools we have Refuge, Bodhichitta, the Mandala Offering, Vajrasattva Purification and Guru-yoga and each of these has a specific reason why we need to apply it. When we talk about the Four Awarenesses, precious human birth, impermanence, suffering and samsara, in Tibetan they are called *lodog nampa zhi* (*blo ldog nam pa bzhi*); *lo* means the mind, *dogpa* means to turn back. For instance, we may have many plans to become rich, but in order to do that we have to do some negative actions. *Lo dog* means we have this awareness that everything is impermanent, that negative actions are the cause of suffering, so we turn back our mind and we change.

The Four Awarenesses just means that we become aware of our real situation in samsara. It is something we can discover ourselves without reading a book or even reading about the Four Awarenesses. If we start to follow a teaching, the basis of that means we are not satisfied. This dissatisfaction can have different causes; sometimes we have passed through a serious tragedy in our life and that becomes a secondary cause for awakening us to recognize the nature of suffering. Other times our natural character means that we are not satisfied, something inside us is looking for something more. Some people are satisfied all their lives just eating and drinking, having a family and watching football on tv and are fine with that until their death. The majority of human beings are like that. There are very few who ques-



tion themselves: who am I, where do I come from, where am I going.

Some people have this spiritual inclination which comes from former lives. Then maybe in former lives we were already practitioners, we had already met Rinpoche, but we were not very good practitioners at that time. Maybe we were animals and ate some food that Rinpoche authenticated with mantras and that became a cause for us. For certain many of us are like that because that is how the relationship with the master develops in general. Then in life we need a secondary cause to awaken these traces that we have inside. In Tibetan we say *le ntro* (*las 'phro*) which means the continuation of former karma wakes up through that secondary cause. The secondary cause can be different things like suffering, like problems, but even if it is very painful for us it becomes the cause for our awakening to that connection to the teacher and the teaching. In any case when we say the Four Awarenesses it means that we become aware of our situation and how important it is to follow teaching in order to become free from the confusion of samsara.

After we have that knowledge or understanding then the natural outcome of that awareness is what we call Refuge and Bodhichitta. When we say refuge what does it mean? It means we are aware of our weak situation in samsara because we are slaves to karma and emotions. We recognize that the only way to have some rest from this suffering is to follow the teaching and the teacher. When we meet the teacher in the beginning, for many of us, we have a feeling of very strong devotion. This is good because it means that there is

a connection with that teacher and at that point naturally we take refuge in the master because we think that whatever problems we have there is finally somebody who can lead us out of that suffering. This is the meaning of refuge. It means that the teacher, his teaching and his community are all part of the refuge. The teacher because we have trust that he can bring us out of confusion and suffering. The teaching because it is the way we can overcome that suffering. And the community because those following the same teacher are all trying to help each other. Even in a worldly situation, a friend is someone we can trust so if we are sad we immediately call our friend who tries to console us. So even more than that, our spiritual friends, the sangha, should have this feeling of union and collaboration. That is why we say to take refuge in the teacher, teaching and community.

Bodhichitta is connected to that understanding. In general it can have different meanings but in Dzogchen Atiyoga Bodhichitta is just another name for the primordial state. In the Sutra teaching it can also have that kind of meaning when we talk about absolute bodhichitta. But when we talk about relative bodhichitta it means that when we understand the primordial state, Buddha nature, whatever it is, that is the only source of happiness and freedom. When we have that certainty in ourselves, we also know that all other beings who are suffering have that same possibility because everybody has that potentiality. Then we try to help all other beings to have that knowledge or recognition. This is what is called bodhichitta.

Then in a traditional way we have Mandala Offerings and Vajrasattva Purification. The Mandala Offering is in order to accumulate merits meaning we can have some good circumstances in our human life in order to be able practice the dharma without obstacles. If a person has no merits, life is very difficult. He may not have a job, he may be ill, have problems, then it is difficult to join the teaching and apply the path. In general accumulation of merits means we are doing good actions with altruistic intentions and apply that without thinking that it is for one's own interest.

The Vajrasattva Purification is also very important. In general we have mainly two kinds of obstacles to our condition, *digpa* (*sdig pa*) and *dribpa* (*sgrib pa*). *Digpa* means the result of a negative action. Intentionally we may have some anger, some hatred

and want to destroy an enemy, finally get rid of that enemy and are satisfied with that action. Then we have accumulated this *digpa* or negative cause. Some practitioners consider that Dzogchen means self-liberation but do not understand the real meaning of this. It seems that we decide with our mind, we free our mind of all concepts and think that there is no good action or bad action because our nature is beyond karma. Then, who cares, we can do whatever we want. In the beginning we have the idea that since we are Dzogchen practitioners we can do anything one time with no problems. Then gradually we become accustomed to that wrong behaviour. We can have many experiences of practitioners who are alcoholic or drug addicts, but they are just harming themselves. So good intention is important.

Dribpa is another type of obstacle which means obscurity or something that prevents us from having clarity. For instance some practitioners have received *shiné* teachings, one-pointed meditation. When they try to fixate on an object with concentration they may fall asleep after some time. In general we can have many obstacles to our clarity. *Dribpa* is one aspect. If we want to go more into the finer details then there are two kinds of obscurations, one is emotions and the other is conceptual obscurations. When we go deeper into Dzogchen practice we have these explanations. That is why we need preliminary practices.

The last of the traditional practices is Guruyoga although in the sense of preliminary practice and in Atiyoga Dzogchen it is slightly different. When we do Guruyoga as a preliminary practice the purpose is to receive blessings, empowering energy as if we are receiving an empowerment or important transmission from the teacher. We can feel that empowering energy within ourselves physically. It is a kind of blessing that we receive in that moment and helps to remove our obstacles and purify our condition. Even if the teacher is not present in front of us, we pray to the teacher with heartfelt devotion and ask to receive that blessing in order to remove our confusion and suffering, in that way if we have real participation we can feel that we are receiving something. Then in the end the teacher dissolves into us and we are in the unified state. In a general way this is what we call Guruyoga.

In the Dzogchen teaching when we say Guruyoga it is not only that but also the finality of receiving the blessing is to recognize

our own primordial state. In that sense the unification state means the state of the master has transferred into our condition and now we are abiding in that same condition. That is why in Dzogchen when we do Guruyoga we don't need to receive the four empowerments like in the Vajrayana way. Sometimes even if we do it in a dualistic way just with the letter A we can receive blessings and integrate them within ourselves. We sound A and visualize a white A in a five-colored *thigle*. This A is our primordial state which is the same state in which the Master abides forever. And the five-colored *thigle* is just like the natural quality of our primordial state, what we call primordial potentiality. Primordial potentiality is the same root or source of samsaric vision and pure vision. Then when we apply that Ati Guruyoga we find ourselves at the centre of all manifestations. So these are what we call preliminary practices in a common way.

Then we have the special preliminary practices of Dzogchen – the Dzogchen *upadesha* series. In all the important tantras such as the *drathalgyur* (*sgra thal 'gyur*) we have the explanation of *rushen*. We also have inner, outer and secret *rushen*. The full title is *khorde rushen*; *khorde* means samsara and nirvana, *rushen* means separation. Of course it is not possible to physically separate samsara and nirvana so it means going to the source of what is called samsara and nirvana, going to the root of our mind. When we say the mind it means the cause of samsara because even the word samsara is a concept of our mind. It does not exist outside our mind. All the objects of our sense perceptions are connected to our mind so we say the root of samsara is our mind. But then our mind is not the supreme source because it is like a reflection of our primordial state. Our primordial state is like a mirror. All reflections that appear in this mirror are like functions of our mind and senses. But the capacity, the openness of the mirror to have that possibility of reflecting any manifestation is what we must understand, through our concepts, to be the primordial state.

The master tells us that our mind, our individuality, our situation is not real. They are like reflections in the mirror. Then we have to discover what the pure nature of the mirror is. The teacher gives many examples and the student tries to think and have some idea about that. "Ah, now I understand. My thoughts are just like reflections in the mirror but the real nature of

the mirror is like the real nature of my mind." So then the real nature of the primordial state becomes like a concept. We have a concept of samsara and nirvana and we have the concept of the mind and the nature of the mind. That is why we need to discover the state beyond concepts through experience.

The first recognition that we need to have is through secondary causes, which can be different. When the teacher gives transmission or direct introduction that is a secondary cause because we already have the primary cause within ourselves – the primordial state. We only have to discover it. Then the teacher gives different methods to introduce that state and once we discover it, or even have a flash of it, that is recognition. When we have that recognition of what samsara and nirvana mean, mind and the nature of mind, it becomes a real experience for us. All the *rushen* practices have the purpose of making that knowledge more stable.

We have the *rushen* of body, voice and mind because we consist of body, voice and mind. With the body we can do the vajra position and some visualization connected to that. With the voice we apply different ways such as practices with the sound of HUM. With the mind the *rushen* practices go to the root of our thoughts, searching for mind. There are also other *rushen* practices of the mind like those in the base of Santi Maha Sangha. All these methods work to bring us to complete relaxation of body, voice and mind.

But that relaxation doesn't mean that we just let go without any presence. At the end of any *rushen* practice there is always *nalma* (*rnal ma*) which in Tibetan means remaining as it was in the beginning, without us needing to change or correct anything. In Dzogchen meditation or contemplation, we often hear the term *machö* (*ma bcos*) or uncorrected. What do we not have to correct? Once we have recognition of the primordial state then we are in the state in which there is no need to add or subtract anything. But of course if we are doing meditation and let our mind free to jump here and there in a distracted way, that is not correct. In that case it is better to correct it. If we are sleepy we can look up. If we are agitated we look down. That is the way to correct and this is the meaning.

Nalma means trying to find ourselves in our original nature. Why do we have to find ourselves in our original nature? Be-

» continued on the following page



The Ka-Ter Translation Project

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

From the end of November until the beginning of December 2021, the Dzogchen Community Merigar West offered a "replay-retreat" of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that he gave on *Mengag Tagdrol* in August, 2013. I have roughly edited Rinpoche's words and feel very happy to forward you his words about the importance of Tibetan culture and the necessity of preserving this unique culture. On August 21st, 2013, Rinpoche explained:

“After one hundred years not one of us will still be on this earth. Our life is very relative in this moment, but when we die, the world and the population of human beings will not disappear.

All teaching is very much related with Tibetan people and Tibetan culture but many people do not know that. For example, when I'm singing Tibetan songs, when I'm asking people to dance Tibetan dances many of them don't show a real interest. They think that the reason for this singing and dancing is because I am Tibetan and therefore I like that.

But singing and dancing is not the main point. I am singing and dancing because Tibet is a unique population that has saved this precious teaching that we have and that we can follow today. If there were no Tibetans, no Tibetan culture and no Tibet, today the Dzogchen teaching would not exist in this world and neither would the Vajrayana teaching. We know that the areas where the Vajrayana teaching and Dzogchen teaching developed and were applied is today in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but we cannot find any of these teachings there today. Although most of the teaching came from India, the Buddhist teachings don't exist in India anymore, they are just developing now a bit. But all tantras, such as the collection of *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*, everything, not only in the form of books but also the transmission and the practices, have been alive in Tibet until today.

You know very well how the situation is today in Tibet. Tibet is the part of China. China is very big nation and there are many minorities. The Tibetan people are considered to be one of these minorities. Tibet as a country is now divided into five parts: the so-called

» continued from previous page

cause if we are in that state of relaxation in which the mind does not work, for example, we have held the vajra position for a long time and are exhausted, then at that moment our mind cannot function and we find a kind of blank state in which we don't have the possibility to judge. In that moment we are in that kind of neutral state which is very useful for recognizing our pure presence.

This principle is the same with the *sem-dzin* with the syllable PHAT in which we try in a forceful way by ourselves to stop this judging function of the mind. We find a kind of neutral state. In Tibetan we say *lungmatenpa* (*lung ma bstan pa*) or *hede-wa* (*had de ba*), which means startled. For example if we are doing something and suddenly something falls, we turn and in that moment our mind is empty. This kind of empty condition of the mind or this condition without thoughts is not the state of contemplation or *rigpa*, but it can allow the possibility of the recognition of the state of *rigpa*. That is why we have this series of *rushen* practices.

In *rushen* we also have the Purification of the Six Lokas, a very important practice more connected to our inner condition of energy and the obstacles and impediments

connected with the condition of the energy of our body. When we talk about our inner body we say chakras and channels and *thigles* which are all connected to our different emotions and the karmic pranas that flow through our body. That is something we carry in our consciousness from one lifetime to another and why we need to purify the Six Lokas in order to purify the inner seeds of the five emotions that are the causes of the Six Lokas. It is also a very useful practice.

So these in general are the preliminary practices in Dzogchen. Once we have that recognition of our state and it becomes stable then we try to apply that in the essence of the practice that is called *tregchöd*. When they hear *tregchöd* some practitioners consider it to be very special and something that Rinpoche only taught at a few retreats, like *longde*, *thögal* and *yang-thig* that are all practices that Rinpoche taught only in specific circumstances. But when Rinpoche started to teach, he always taught *tregchöd* at all of his retreats. Every time he introduced the primordial state through oral teaching, through symbols, through direct introduction that was always introducing the state of *rigpa* which is the basis of the practice of *tregchöd*.

In Tibetan we have two terms – *nyam* (*nyams*) and *togpa* (*rtogs pa*). *Nyam* means experience. We can have some experience of our primordial state. We do a session of practice and during that session we have some special perception, or after meditation we are walking and we can have some experience of a state beyond dualism. Then we go home, we speak to our wife or husband and immediately he/she asks why we didn't do this or that and we start going to concepts, emotions arise and we forget about that *nyam* or perception. That is a very common experience for all of us. That is why we shouldn't mistake experience and *togpa* which means real understanding or full-time integration in that knowledge. When we meet such a rare person who has this understanding then we can have that feeling. We can feel that wisdom alive even in different traditions. For example, I have met several masters, also in other traditions, and I had the same feeling of that natural wisdom, an expression of that wisdom in that person. It means that that knowledge has been completely integrated and they are able to express that in daily life. Then I think we know what we should do to develop our capacity and our knowledge and we are going in that direction so we should remember that. ©

Tibetan Autonomous Region and then other different and separate provinces. None of these regions uses the Tibetan language and writing as the official language. In all these regions the official language and writing is Chinese.

Of course, I'm definitely not saying that the Tibetans need to separate from China. Regarding that aspect I agree very much with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He says that we Tibetans are underdeveloped people and that we need the Chinese, that we need to be part of the Chinese family. I really agree on that. But we must maintain Tibetan culture and writing, it really must not disappear.

A few years ago, when I went to Tibet the last time, I saw Tibetan school children walking in the street. I stopped a little and I gave them some pens. Then I asked them which class they were attending, what they were studying and so on. I spoke in an East Tibetan dialect and they still could understand, but they replied to me in Chinese. Then I said to them, *'It is very good that you study the Chinese system, because it is very useful. But you must understand that the Tibetan language and the Chinese language are two different languages. When I'm talking to you in Tibetan, you should reply in Tibetan and not in Chinese.'* Then they replied, *'TWELO, TWELO'*, which means "It is correct, it is true" in Chinese. So they actually agreed with my words, but they answered in Chinese. This is the situation of this generation. If we go on in that way, the new generations properly will know only Chinese.

What about Tibetan history, Tibetan culture, Tibetan knowledge? Will everything just go in a museum? We should think a little about that. You are not Tibetans, but knowledge of Tibetan culture has an immense value for all people on this globe. For that reason, I'm making sacrifices and doing my best to achieve something concrete. Many of my students are also working for that. You know, we already we have the organization ASIA Onlus and the Shang Shung Institute. These organizations are doing an important job for maintaining Tibetan culture.

We should understand that everybody needs to support these activities. Sometimes people say that they don't understand or that they are a little indifferent. Then I feel very sad. Actually, I cannot do very much by myself but I hope that people understand that."

In 2002 Rinpoche launched the Ka-Ter Translation Project. Its main intention and activity is to translate the words of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and other great Tibetan masters to English. Many fantastic and unique books have been published in these last 19 years. The most recent book is *The Necklace of Jewels*. In 2022, several new books are planned to be published.

All these books are the fruit of the extraordinary work of our translators, mainly Adriano Clemente, and the editors. Based on the donations that we have received for the Ka-Ter Translation Project, we also contributed to the printing of several books.

You can all order books from **Shang Shung Publications**.

We did all this work just because of your collaboration and your generous support.

Please keep on supporting our fruitful work!

Here are the bank details for your donations:

Account holder: Shang Shung Institute
Austria

IBAN: AT19 3815 1000 0003 0387

BIC: RZSTAT2G151

Address of the bank: Hauptstr. 39, 8262 Ilz,
Austria

or send your donation via PayPal: just use
this link: [PAYPAL](#)

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

On behalf of the team of the Ka-Ter Translation Project I thank you for your understanding of the importance of our work and for all your donations.

I send you my warmest seasonal wishes and especially for a healthy new year,

Yours,
Oliver

©

Oliver Leick

Director of the Shang Shung Institute
Austria

phone: +43 664 88662660

Mail: office@ssi-austria.at

Web: www.ssi-austria.at

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

Shang Shung Foundation, Italy
Località Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso (GR, Italy)
Giovanni Totino g.totino@shangshunginstitute.org
www.shangshungfoundation.org
www.shangshungstore.org

Shang Shung Institute Austria
Gersdorfberg 19, 8212 Pischelsdorf, Austria
Office: 0043 664 88 66 26 60
office@ssi-austria.at
www.ssi-austria.at

Shang Shung Institute UK
Lekdanling, Tibetan Cultural Centre
14 Collent Street, Hackney, London, E9 6SG. UK
www.shangshunguk.org

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

Shang Shung Institute Russia
2v Mayakovskogo str.
Bolshiye Dvory, Pavlovsky Posad district
Russia 142541
info@shangshunginstitute.ru
www.shangshunginstitute.ru
www.tibetanmedicineschool.ru
<https://www.facebook.com/shangshungrussia>

Shang Shung UK & Lekdanling: Tibetan Cultural Centre

I am writing this article on the anniversary of Rinpoche's birthday whilst remembering the richness of his legacy and teachings, which is of great value both to his students and to society in general. In London at Lekdanling, we are finding that more and more people have a desire to learn about meditation and are searching for some kind of spiritual guidance due to the impact of the covid pandemic on their mental health. This is especially apparent in urban situations all around the world.

We are very fortunate to have a spiritual teaching which helps us deal with the problems which we face in our daily lives and also to be in a position to offer help to others at this time. One of the initiatives of SSIUK this past year – in collaboration with Dzamling Gar and the ATIF – has been to launch the 'Presence and Awareness in Daily Life' series aimed at newcomers to the community and to the public in general. This programme which continued from January through to November 2021, comprised of six weekend modules with weekly follow up practice sessions in between. This was well received by the many people who attended the programme and who developed a real warmth both within the group and with the several SMS teachers who led the sessions. Many thanks to everyone who helped to make this programme a success.

Other highlights from the past year include workshops on Ayurvedic Nutrition, Astrology, Yoga and Breathing plus a zoom conference on the theme of Guru Rinpoche with some imminent speakers, entitled: ABOUT PADMASAMBHAVA: A day of Talks with Prof. Charles Ramble, Jeff Watts (Dir. Himalayan Art Resources), Acharya Malcolm Smith and Prof. Fabian Sanders.

Our popular SSIUK lecture series is ongoing and most of our lectures and workshops are recorded and can be downloaded via our website or can be viewed on YouTube. Please join our SSIUK Youtube chan-



nel and help us to reach 1000 followers – we just need 100 more subscribers to reach our goal!

We would also like to encourage you to join our mailing list and connect to our Instagram & Facebook pages ... this is one of the best ways of keeping up to date with all our activities which we are expanding all the time.

Instagram: @shangshunginstituteuk
Facebook: @shangshunguk
YouTube: Shang Shung Institute UK

Future Events for 2022 include:

Thursday January 20th, at 6 pm (UK time)

SSIUK Lecture Series: "Unifier of the Nation, Regional Statesman, Artist-Monk"

An overview of the life of Gyalse Rinpoche Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696), the 4th Desi (civil ruler) of Bhutan with John A. Ardussi, PhD.

Saturday & Sunday 22–23rd January.

Yantra Yoga Beginners Weekend

John Renshaw our local yoga instructor, will be doing a weekend of yoga focusing on breathing, which is open to all at Lekdanling (also via zoom).

be judged by the world famous photographer Clive Arrowsmith. Runners up will receive prizes of precious incense plus other gifts.

Year of the Water Tiger Promotion

the year of the water tiger is coming up and if you join our SSIUK newsletter between 1st January and Losar, you are eligible to have a one month free pass to all our SSIUK events up until, and including our Losar activities!

Prayer Flags

we will be hanging your authenticated prayer flags in Nepal as usual at Losar 2022

3rd March

More Losar Events

please watch this space for our Mo-mo-making workshop, Tibetan musical events and other activities to celebrate Losar at Lekdanling!

Further details of all our events can be viewed on our website: Shangshunguk.org

Warm wishes for the New Year,

Julia Lawless & all the SSIUK Team ☺



Online Concert in Honor of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for His Birthday December 8, 2021

Hosted by Menpa Phuntsog
Wangmo and the School of
Tibetan Medicine

On October 23rd, Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo and the School of Tibetan Medicine hosted an online concert in honor of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to celebrate his inestimable contribution to Tibetan Medicine and Culture. The date of the celebration was chosen to due its nearness to the anniversary of Master Namkhai Norbu's parinirvana, and also coincided with the birthday of his precious wife, the dakini Rosa Namkhai.

The concert was attended by a small international audience. Oliver Leick, our guest speaker, eloquently articulated the virtuous context of the concert, honoring Professor Namkhai Norbu and sharing a little of the infinite richness of his extraordinary life. He then prepared our minds and set the mood to relinquish distraction and enjoy the performances with presence and awareness by speaking on the spiritual dimension of music.

Techung, a Tibetan folk and freedom singer and composer was the show opener. He is best known for his performances of traditional Tibetan music and opera. His majestic and commanding presence provided an auspicious opening to the event. Listening to his music, you could sense the continuum of centuries of the form articulating itself through his masterful and stately performance.

Alexander Arkincheev, an Irkutsk-based multi-instrumentalist and renowned diaphonic throat singer, performed next, providing his listeners with something most of us had never experienced before. His unique style, performed with rare traditional instruments and techniques yield-



ing incredible soundscapes, was like a cinematic evocation of his legendary homeland. A great thank you to the School of Tibetan Medicine in Russia for enlisting his participation.

Roberto Cacciapaglia, Italian composer and pianist, and leading innovator on the international music scene, performed next. A consummate performer, and exceedingly gracious collaborator, he began his set with a song he performed for Namkhai Norbu himself on occasion. The performance was breathtaking; the juxtaposition of his style beautifully augmenting the preceding performances, reshaping them into something new and complete in the mind of the listener.

The second half of the concert was presided over by the Tibetan musicians Lobsang Delek, and his companions, wonderful performers in their own right, Tshering Wangdu and Dhundup Kalsang. Tibetan artists in diaspora currently living in France, their music is deeply rooted in Tibetan culture. Lobsang Delek was a huge help in organizing this event, and the group's enthusiasm and dedication to

the concert was inspiring. They delighted and charmed the audience with a series of traditional Tibetan songs that transported Phuntsog la to the days of her youth, and had the rest of us smiling if not dancing in our seats. These young musicians' earnest

devotion to their art and culture, as well as their appreciation and decorum in respect to the other musicians in the concert, was a joy to behold.

The final performance of the concert – by accident at the time, but in hindsight meant to be – was Tibetan artist Tenzin Choegyal. While continuing the lineage central to his music, Tenzin is an innovator of contemporary forms. His contribution was a set of two pieces of music: a powerful variation on his Grammy-nominated Songs from the Bardo, and a deeply moving spoken word poem. By the end, we had been transported to healing fields of open awareness and real delight. As Menpa Phuntsog la explained in one of her epiphanic capping remarks after each performance, music is indeed medicine.

Our heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful musicians and all of you who joined us for this special event, helping us to remember and pay homage to our Precious Teacher, that "Master of life" as Costantino Albini says, "who taught us to become complete human beings".

©



This year, a new stage of the project of the Tibetan medicine clinic was launched at Kunsangar North. Within the framework of the "All-Good Health Days" project, our graduates conduct consultations and perform procedures for everyone who needs

Update from the School of Tibetan Medicine Russia

The outside world continues to throw up new challenges to all of us and at the same time Tibetan medicine demonstrates new facets of relevance and effectiveness in modern conditions. And at the School of Tibetan Medicine, offline and online training programs are successfully continuing, preparing wonderful specialists who strive to help all beings and reduce their suffering.

In September 2021, the latest program on Kunye external therapy was completed. Initially, the program consisted of four mandatory modules, now it has been slightly modified and the diploma after the final exam in theory and practice is issued at the end of the 3rd module. Twelve diligent graduates of the program have been working towards this goal for a year and a half and, despite all external obstacles, came to Kunsangar North for practical training, each time demonstrating their progress in the application of Kunye methods. We are proud of each of them and sincerely wish them great success on the joyful path of caring for the health of living beings! This is the second graduation of certified Kunye therapists at our school, graduates of the third stream are waiting for the completion of the program.

One of our newest programs – Diet in Tibetan medicine – consists of three main modules and lasts a year and a half. The first two modules are completely online, while the third one is practical, and with a successful combination of circumstances, it may be offline. At the moment two groups are approaching the end of this program and in the spring of 2022 we will start enrolling a new group. Upon successful completion of all tests, graduates of the program become specialists in diet (nutrition) in Tibetan medicine.

In 2018, we completed our first major program in Tibetan medicine, which lasted five years and gave the world 35 unique specialists in Tibetan medicine – Menpa



(Doctor of Tibetan medicine). Some graduates selected by Professor Phuntsog Wangmo have completed additional training and become her assistants and now, thanks to their help and knowledge, the programs are successfully continuing even without the full-time presence of the main teacher.

So, Alexander Popov, Artem Verny and Nima Budazhapov conduct all the practical classes of the Kunye external therapy program, while the course is based on theory and practice recordings with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and also live online sessions with her. And our irreplaceable Irina Pankevich and Madegma Budaeva assist Dr. Phuntsog in all courses on diet in Tibetan medicine, as well as help in other courses and seminars while working as doctors of Tibetan medicine at the Tibetan medicine clinic at Dzamling Gar. For a long time they have been the main representatives of our school in Tenerife.

them. We have already gathered a lot of grateful and inspiring feedback about the work of our specialists. The clinic project will continue and expand and you can contact us for face-to-face and online consultations.

For any questions related to the activities of the School of Tibetan Medicine of the Shang Shung Institute, please contact the director of its Russian branch – Vladimir Belyaev. stm@shangshung.ru, +7(926)5899148

If you are interested in the mission of the school of Tibetan Medicine and have interesting wishes and suggestions for its development in general or on individual projects, or have a desire to cooperate, write to us – we will be very happy to hear from you!

The School of Tibetan Medicine sends each of you the warmest wishes for good health and well-being! ©

<https://tibetanmedicineschool.ru/>
<https://www.facebook.com/stmrussia>



Editorial Program and the New Compilation: *The Longsal Rushen, an Oral Commentary*

Dear members of the International Dzogchen Community, Gars and Lings,

These days we are completing the publication of the text *The Longsal Rushen, An Oral Commentary* based on *The Instructions on Outer, Inner and Secret Rushen* and *The Upadesha on the Four Voice Trainings*.

In addition to the Tibetan texts left by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu which are translated with the support of the Ka-Ter Project, Shang Shung Publications is also committed to transcribing and publishing the so-called "compiled" texts, that is, those based on transcriptions of the retreats of the Master and concerning practices reserved for members of the Dzogchen Community.

These books are made with the meticulous and careful work of many people. As they are not intended for the general public, but only for members of the Community, they are limited editions and therefore Shang Shung Publications, in order to continue its transcription, editing and publication activities, can only count on your generosity.

This situation has become even more evident following the passing of the Master and the existing restrictions for Covid which have greatly reduced the possibility of organizing retreats at Gars and Lings.

To contribute to the continuation of Shang Shung Publications' activities please donate to <https://shangshungpublications.com/donate>

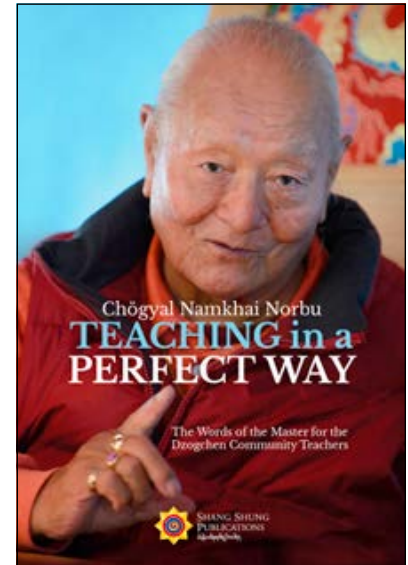
Reason: Donation for the SSP editorial program.

For more information and further details of the editorial program, you can write to info@shangshungpublications.com



Upcoming books:

- * *The Longsal Rushen, An Oral Commentary*
- * *Luminous Clarity of the Universe: A Large Explanation of the Principle of Primordially Pure Tregchöd*
- * *Nyingthig Yangti of Changchub Dorje, A Complete Oral Commentary*
- * *The Vajra Dance of Space*
- * *Padmasambhava's Advice on Total Perfection*
- * *Collected Upadesha Teachings on the Rushen of Body, Voice and Mind*
- * *The Invocation of the Base, Path and Fruit of Jigmed Lingpa, An Oral Commentary*
- * *The Origin of Samsara and Nirvana According to the Dra Thalgyur*
- * *The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste, An Oral Commentary*
- * *The Upadesha of Introduction to the State of Ati, An Oral Commentary*
- * *The Rainbow Body of Samantabhadra*
- * *The Biography of Ayu Khandro*
- * *The Vajra Dance* (a public book)
- * The series of experiential instructions (*nyamtri*) related to the first five translations of Vairochana, Rinpoche's oral commentary
- * Public teachings and public events Series: A General Presentation of Dzogchen



A few years ago, I remember we were in the Mandala Room, before this Covid story changed things and made everything more difficult and, chatting at the end of the practice with Laura Evangelisti and Igor Legati, we thought how great and useful it would be to be able to re-read and study the Teachings that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had given over the years in the context of the trainings of the Santi Maha Sangha, the Teacher's Training, and so on.

Igor told us that some material had already been gathered that needed to be reviewed and organized, but that there was already an excellent base. This material covered all the teachings the Master had given for the Training for the various levels of the Santi Maha Sangha, for the Training for teachers of the Santi Maha Sangha, Yantra Yoga and Dance of the Vajra, of the two Dagther, and on all the occasions during which Rinpoche had said significant things for practitioners who were striving to become teachers.

There were articles already published in the Mirror, and transcripts edited by several generous practitioners, all in English, and a large number of documents.

I was very enthusiastic about this opportunity and offered to try to look at all this material, remove any duplicates, sort

» continued on the following page

[NORBUNET]

The Birth of Norbunet
Founded on October 9, 1996
25 Year Anniversary

Loek Jehee

the founder and moderator of Norbunet.



I am the founder and moderator of Norbunet. It all began with a computer generously donated by a member of the Dutch Sangha, Guido Blondelle, who now lives near Dzamling Gar in Tenerife.

Guido donated his computer to the Gönpa of Amsterdam which was then in Françoise Van den Berg's house. He donated a Microsoft computer with a modem and that was in 1995. On that computer I had my first experiences with email. That year marked the beginning of the public internet. It was not really possible to have personal internet connections at that time, there were some bulletin boards hosted on computers by individuals. And there was military and university internet, but not personal. Also there were no graphics

as there are now, only text; black screens with green letters on it, etc.

At that time in the Community there were only paper communications, Il Bollettino, the local newsletters, The Mirror, which was only on paper at that time, so I thought that there was a need to improve communication with the new medium of email; email was already starting to get very important. Together Françoise and I started this email communication, and that was the birth of Norbunet.

We initiated Norbunet with an inspired poem based on the Seven Line Prayer of Padmasambhava. I wrote it and we distributed it and Norbunet became popular immediately.

THE BIRTH OF NORBUNET

In the middle of an ocean of
electrons
upon a lotus of good intentions
arises a new dimension
with magnetic power
radiating messages of wisdom
resplendent with virtual reality
the wisdom body
the electronic speech
the collective mind beyond borders

It's name is NORBUNET
It never arose
It never existed
You cannot find it in any direction
It's on the Internet
of our mind
It is nothing else but a name
in a computer program.
It benefits all beings.

It was completely open in those days and people started to send all kinds of strange messages, lots of good luck totems, virus warnings, and all kinds of things that had nothing to do with the Dzogchen Community. Many personal oriented and ego expressions; it was kind of an unfocused

... continued from previous page

it in chronological order, and evaluate with Igor how to proceed.

Thus began the adventure, always very interesting and useful for me, when I work on the writings of the Master or in any case concerning the Teachings of the Master. Working in this way is equivalent to reading and rereading dozens of times, reflecting, reasoning and going back over some passages again and again, discussing with the editor-in-chief, Igor, sometimes asking for advice from expert practitioners, in short, for me there is no better way to study, which otherwise would not be particularly easy for me.

In this way I develop a truly intimate relationship with the text. In particular in this case I had participated in several of the Teachings I was working on, including the two Daghter, meetings during which the Master wanted precisely to check and verify that the teachers were correctly oriented in exercising their function of transmitting the Teachings of the Master.

I believe this collection is truly extraordinary. What the Master says is not in gen-

eral very different from what he communicated in his formal teachings, but the accents and nuances due to the fact that he was addressing a different audience, that of his aspiring teacher students, puts everything in a slightly different light.

It is obvious that the focus is more on teaching methods, on advice on how a teacher should approach his/her students, on the dangers that the ego, in the form of the demon of complacency, manifests as obstacles to transmission.

I have heard of long discussions about what and how to convey what the Master has given us. I must say that the Master has clearly stated this in so many circumstances, and reading this collection it appears very clearly.

Rinpoche told us everything an infinite number of times, it is just that we were often not able to truly listen and understand.

Now that the Master is no longer here physically, I think it is important to re-read his Teachings, to meditate on them calmly, without getting frantic, and this book offers us an incredible opportunity to do this.

It is wonderful and comforting to see how many practitioners have offered their karma yoga in the transcription, revision, translation and compilation of the teachings of the Master, and how many have then worked to produce the text that we can now take in hand and consult.

It is a book that can be read in many ways; from the beginning, reading some of its sections based on a particular interest, but also opening it at random every day and seeing what it offers us, a kind of oracle. And it is not only useful and interesting for teachers but for all practitioners, to understand what transmission is, what its value is, and how the teacher took care to preserve it.

It is truly valuable.

We are very fortunate!

©

open forum. Also people protested against the name Norbunet, they said it was not respectful to call it Norbunet, it should be called ChögyalNamkhaiNorbuRinpocheNet.

So I decided to ask Rinpoche himself and I wrote him a polite email and I asked, "Please advise Rinpoche, do you think the name is disrespectful?" and Rinpoche replied, *"Dear Loek, It is very good you call it Norbunet, you don't worry, it is only human nature that they should say something always. I feel honored rather than not respected."* From that moment on I knew that the name Norbunet was totally fine.

I wanted to safeguard the quality and the focus of Norbunet, there was a kind of degeneration going on. To uphold the standard of information, we started to make it a moderated list. Also at that time Rinpoche advised me to avoid discussions or gossip or debate. He did not like that. So I made a golden rule, no discussion or anything of that nature. Also it became clear to me that teachings or related topics were the exclusive right of The Mirror. So it was very nice to have this framework for the moderation.

I was, and continue to be, the only moderator. People didn't like me because they wanted to have their fantastic question, image or discussion to be posted and I said no. Frequently people said I was a censor, I was terrible and so forth. Sometimes it was kind of funny. In some regions censorship is considered to be the worst possible action, but Norbunet would not have survived if we did not moderate it.

So there was a lot of negative reaction and I decided to make a policy so that you receive these General Conditions as soon as you subscribe. The Conditions say that I am the only one who decides what is posted and I do not have to say why or if and if you don't like it, it will not be possible for you to continue to be on the mailing list. Unfortunately, I had to refer to these conditions quite a few times, but in general people understand.

The policies gradually developed based on my experience. I had advice from different people and Rinpoche, but sometimes you just have to rely on your own clarity and sometimes my alarm bells would just start ringing. There has never been a moderating team or board and I think in this way it has become more stable and people now know what the policy is and I don't have so many problems anymore.

I have to post things everyday, but it does not take so much time. I look at the sender and the subject line, and usually I can tell right away that this is ok or not. I look at the message and I either click to send or discard. The only time it takes more time is if there is a debate about posting. Nine of the ten messages these days are announcements, events from the Community or institutions, sometimes personal requests and requests for prayers if someone died, but it is not time consuming, it's about checking your email.

The first seven years we had a free server because I was a volunteer at that service provider so they knew me. Also it was the pioneering stage of the internet. But then there were increasing viruses so Norbunet was being spammed and automatically sending viruses all over, so we had to look elsewhere. Thanks to Grisha Mokhin and Vadim Sinolitz, we set up servers in Russia and Latvia. Viola, from Latvia, hosted and sponsored the Latvian server for about three years. So we had the two servers but the maintenance was very difficult and there were large amounts of spam, occasional hard disk failures, the cleaning lady sometimes unplugged things and Norbunet went down, and people would send very large attachments that choked the server. So I am very grateful to Grisha for all his help cleaning things up and he was also my backup when I went on holidays.

In July of 2011 we could not longer manage in this way so we decided to go to Google Groups. Grisha had recommended that. From that time onwards we are on Google Groups. There were also several protests against Google as a platform. Yet I am very glad we made this decision and until now I have not heard of anyone experiencing problems. Google is very stable, reliable and is free. Up until Google, the Russian and Latvian servers cost money and we had very generous sponsors from individuals such as Dick Drury and also from the Russian Community, and I want to thank them all very much.

I feel honored to be able to participate and collaborate for all these years. I am happy that my participation creates something beneficial and practical. Also the announcements for events etc. are very useful because email is an immediate medium. I don't think the value of email is degenerating even with Facebook, Instagram, new social media, Sangha App, which are all very useful but lack the immediacy of the email of Norbunet.

So as long as I live and I am healthy I will continue this job and if I die I am sure some competent and reliable person will be appointed to take it over. I think Norbunet will exist for a couple of more years and maybe the new media will take over, but in the short run it will survive. It is all due to the blessings of the Master that I was able to do this. ©



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International

Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

US Office: mirror@tsegyalgar.org • European Office: lizgranger.mirror@gmail.com • Russian Office: beawaketoday@gmail.com • Editorial Staff: Naomi Zeitz, USA • Liz Granger, Italy • Anastasia Eremenko, Russia
Advisor: Adriano Clemente • International Publications Committee English Language Advisor: Liz Granger •
Design & Layout: Thomas Eifler • Webmasters: Yuchen Namkhai and Luigi Ottaviani •
Available at melong.com • Online Mirror: www.melong.com • All material © 2022 by The Mirror •
Reprint by permission only • We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

The Evolution of Kuan-yin, the Perceiver of Sounds

Among the over 250 works of art from across Asia, recently donated to the Namkhai Collection by Costantino Albini, is the extraordinary and literally divine statue of Kuan-Yin, an exquisite example of early Chinese Buddhist sculpture. In order to introduce Kuan-Yin to those in the Community who may not have met her before, and to learn more about her evolution as she traveled through history along the Silk Roads, for those of us who have, we contacted Prof. Chun-fang Yu, who has kindly permitted us to excerpt material from her classic work: "Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara".¹ This icon, standing over 150 cm high, will become the centerpiece of a new MACO exhibition dedicated to the diffusion of Buddhism along the Silk Roads.

Prof. Chun-fang Yu's intriguing book provides new insights into gender, reflected in the dynamics of religious change and the evolution of Buddhist thought and practice within the context of Asia's cultural and social histories.

For those unfamiliar with Kuan-Yin, the Chinese manifestation of Avalokitesvara, his/her² journey began in India, first appearing in China, in the third century as but one of Avalokitesvara's myriad faces of compassion, manifesting from the Buddha realms of the ten directions which offer refuge from the terrors which surround us and empties the hells that may await us.

"If they need a monk, a nun, a layman believer, or a laywoman believer to be saved, immediately he becomes a monk, a nun, a layman believer, or a laywoman believer and preaches the Law for them. If they need the wife of a rich man, of a householder, a chief minister, or a Brahman to be saved, immediately he becomes the wife and preaches the Law for them. If they need a young boy or a young girl to



cnna 00012022
Kuan Yin, detail 3266.

be saved, immediately he becomes a young boy or a young girl and preaches the Law for them. If they need a heavenly being, a dragon, a yaksha, a gandharva, an asura, a garuda, a kimnara, a mahoraga, a human or nonhuman being to be saved, immediately he becomes all of these and preaches the Law for them. ... This bodhisattva mahasattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds can bestow fearlessness on those who are in fearful, pressing, or difficult circumstances. That is why in this Sahā world everyone calls him Bestower of Fearlessness." [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 3]

Avalokitesvara has never been worshiped as a goddess in India, Tibet, Sri Lanka or Southeast Asia. Nor indeed was Kuan-yin perceived to be feminine by the Chinese at first ... the sexual transformation from the

masculine Avalokitesvara to the feminine Kuan-yin seems to be a unique Chinese phenomenon (in Japan, Korea and Vietnam they identify Kuan-yin as the exemplar of wisdom for meditators and the "Goddess of Mercy"). [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 3]

Kuan-Yin was "a new deity who not only could bring spiritual enlightenment, but also save one from worldly difficulties and grant one material satisfactions as well as a 'good death' and postmortem salvation ... The Chinese transformation of Kuan-yin can be regarded as a case study for the Chinese transformation of Buddhism...". [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 4]

"This bodhisattva underwent many transformations by taking on different identities, assuming different appearances in art, and giving rise to different practices and rituals

in a number of Asian countries aside from China. In the process, the bodhisattva became domesticated to serve the interests and needs of the host countries that adopted him/her. ...

Kuan-yin was perceived as masculine and was so depicted in art prior to and during the Tang (618–907). However, by the early Sung (960–1279), around the eleventh century, some devotees saw Kuan-yin as a female deity and new forms of feminine Kuan-yin images began to be created by Chinese artists. The feminine transformation of the bodhisattva probably reached its completion during the Yüan (1206–1368). Since the Ming, or the fifteenth century, Kuan-yin has generally been perceived and represented as completely feminine.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 4]

“The different stages in the evolution of Avalokitesvara’s iconography in India also occurred in China, but with innovations. Starting with the creation of new iconography such as the Water-moon Kuan-yin (who is androgynous) in the tenth century, Chinese artists increasingly depicted the bodhisattva in a clearly feminine fashion after the Sung (960–1279). Beginning with the Ming (1368–1644), if not earlier, there appeared sets of paintings depicting Kuan-yin in five, thirty-two, or fifty-three forms...

These multiple forms of bodhisattva are supposed to be illustrations of the thirty-three manifestations of Kuan-yin in the Lotus Sutra, or the thirty-two in the Surangama Sutra.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 14]

The Lotus Sutra³

Kuan-yin as savior from perils as eulogized in the Lotus Sutra was also a favorite subject among the frescoes in Tun-huang, the terminus of the Silk Route.

“One of the central scriptures glorifying the bodhisattva is the 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra⁴, (known as the ‘Universal Gateway’) which was translated into Chinese six times, of which three versions have survived: the version by Dharmarakṣa, a native of Scythia, in 286, Kumarajiva (Kucha), 406 and Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta in 601.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 37–8]

“Prior to the translation of the Lotus Sutra in the third century, there was no Chinese deity to compare with Kuan-yin, who was not only a universal and compassionate saviour, but also easily accessible. The gos-

pel of the ‘Universal Gateway’ preached a new and democratic way of salvation.

There was no specific thing a person had to do to be saved. One did not need to become a scholar learned in scripture, or a paragon of virtue, or a master proficient in meditation. One did not have to follow a special way of life, take up a strange diet, or practice any ritual. The only requirement was to call his/her name. [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 489]

There was no discrimination on the basis of status or gender. And the benefits of worshiping him/her were both spiritual and worldly. It is no wonder that such a message received an immediate and eager response.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 491]

The Surangama Sutra

“In the Surangama Sutra, a sutra particularly popular since the Sung, Kuan-yin appears in thirty-two forms, of which six are feminine: nun, laywoman, queen, princess, noble lady, and virgin maiden. But in China Kuan-yin did not simply appear as such an undefined woman. In fact, a key factor in the successful indigenization and femini-

and locations on the soil of China. Only in this way could Kuan-yin conform to the model of Chinese deities. For in China, not only were popular gods such as Kuan-ti and Crazy Chi or the goddess Ma-tsu real people who once lived in specific times and places, ... (they) were turned into historical cultural heroes who were venerated as the founding fathers of Chinese civilization. [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 295]

“In the Surangama Sutra, the bodhisattva ... begins by describing how he obtained samadhi by meditating on the organ of hearing ... at first by directing the organ of hearing into the stream of meditation, this organ was detached from its object, and by wiping out (the concept of) both sound and stream-entry, both disturbance and stillness became clearly non-existent. Thus advancing step by step both hearing and its object ceased completely, but I did not stop where they ended. When the awareness of this state and this state itself were realized as non-existent, both subject and object merged into the void, the awareness of which became all embracing



Chapter 25th Lotus Sutra credit: “Universal Gateway,” Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, Kamakura period (1185–1333), Handscroll, ink, color, and gold on paper, from the Met’s Buddhist painting collection.

zation of this Buddhist deity in China is that through various myths and legends the Chinese managed to transform Avalokitesvara, the ahistorical bodhisattva who transcended temporal and spatial limitations as depicted in the Mahayana scriptures, into Kuanyin, who, known by different Chinese names, led lives in clearly definable times

The sound mentioned here is not that made by the faithful who cry out his name, but any sound that, when examined (kuan) with penetrating insight, leads to the realization of sunyata. Although the bodhisattva saves beings from various dangers and grants fourteen kinds of fearlessness

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

in this sutra, the reason he can do so is different from that given in the Lotus.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 40-1]

Conclusion

The author argues that, “the choice of a woman instead of a monk reflected not only the gender change in art, but also the rise of a new type of organized lay Buddhism in the Sung that claimed equal validity for lay practice and probably provided more opportunities for women to participate in the religion.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 24]

“I see the sexual transformation of the bodhisattva within the framework of his/her domestication ... viewed within the larger picture of how Buddhism became Chinese. The feminization of Kuan-yin and new developments in religious Taoism could be seen as responses to the patriarchal stance of institutional Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 21]

The feminine transformation of Kuan-yin is, of course, not entirely a Chinese innovation, but has a firm scriptural basis. According to the ‘Universal Gateway’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Kuan-yin can appear in as many as thirty-three different forms in order to save different types of people. Among these forms, seven are feminine: nun, lay woman, wife of an elder, householder, official, Brahmin, and girl. [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 294]

In several places, I pointed out that the White-robed Kuan-yin should be seen as an indigenous creation, just as with the Water-moon and Child-giving Kuan-yin. However, instead of treating

them as separate and discrete cultic icons for Ch’an monks, literati, and common folks respectively, I suggested that it would be more fruitful as well as more accurate to regard them as different, yet interconnected, aspects of the same deity. The iconography of the White-robed Kuan-yin was derived from that of the Water-moon and it in turn evolved into that of the Child-giving Kuan-yin. I could not have arrived at this conclusion on the basis of artistic style, for each manifestation is very different. Rather, I did so on the basis of evidence drawn from miracle tales, indigenous scriptures, and descriptions of ritual practices.

I also suggested that it would be more useful to uncover the rich complexity of associations represented by any one image, story or text to diverse audiences, in-

stead of assigning either one monolithic meaning to it or confining it to one single constituency. It is of course true that Kuan-yin was seen and understood differently by different people. It is also the case that different people sought different things from the deity.” [Chun-fang Yu, 2000: 488]

Endnote

One of the most touching stories of Kuan-yin’s radiant compassion is recounted by the author in her preface, when, as a child, fleeing mainland China with her family, her grandmother’s vision of Kuan-yin saved her entire family from a disastrous ferry accident. This very personal memory of the author adds an aura of the miraculous to the entire text which follows – and for which we deeply thank her grandmother (and of course, above all, Kuan-Yin).

The Museum of Asian Art and Culture was founded by Rinpoche with the express intention of sharing his Collection with the public. This has found resonance within the local administration of Arcidosso, the Region of Tuscany and the Union of Italian Buddhists (UBI), as well as others, like Costantino, who have made generous and substantial donations to the Museum. This of course includes the time and energy of the many, many volunteers who have made this museum possible.

As all donations to the museum become a part of and contribute to the enrichment of the Namkhai Collection, in a small but concrete way these donations represent a token of our appreciation and gratitude to Rinpoche and the infinite light of his compassion and endless generosity, which we all share and which has never dimmed.

We have done our best to continue to build his Collection and again we thank everyone who has shared with us this objective and are helping us to realize it. It is my personal belief that donors interested in making a contribution to the museum will accrue infinitely more merit by making their donations directly to Rinpoche and his Collection, rather than to a small cultural institution on a Tuscan hillside.

With each donation the Museum grows and evolves, helping us to present to the public the vibrancy of Asian art and culture and how they continue to illuminate the world. ©

Museum of Asian Art and Culture
Any errors in transcription or misquotation of Prof. Chun-fang Yu, is entirely the fault of the MACO.

Two scrolls illustrating Chapter 25th of the Lotus Sutra can be found on the websites of the The Metropolitan Museum of Art: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/44849#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20masterworks%20of,is%20interspersed%20with%20thirty%2Dfour> and Harvard Art Museum: <https://harvardartmuseums.org/art/211277>

Other works by Prof. Chun-fang Yu:

Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 2020

The renewal of Buddhism in China: Zhuhong and the late Ming synthesis, Columbia University Press, New York, 2020

In Search of the Dharma: Memoirs of a Modern Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim, State University of New York Press, 1992

- 1 Chun-fang Yu, “Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara”, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000.
- 2 Prof. Chun-fang Yu mentions that “the inclusive she/he seems to be the best way of referring to Kuan-yin” *ibid.* p.7.
- 3 David Lopez provides a contemporary key to reading the Lotus Sutra and appreciating its historical position in the evolution of Buddhism as it moved across the Silk Roads, in an interview about his book: *The Lotus Sutra: A Biography*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2017 in *Tricycle* (<https://tricycle.org/magazine/lotus-sutra-history/>)
- 4 The “Universal Gateway”, Chapter 25th of the Lotus Sutra: <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/Isoc/Content/25>

Breathe to Wellness Online Course

With Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo
and Fabio Andrico

Leticia Recepter and Nataly Nitsche

This course was the first course organized in collaboration between Yantra Yoga and the Tibetan Medicine department of ATIF.

Did you know that in the first ever retreat of Yantra Yoga Dr. Phuntsog was also teaching Tibetan Medicine? After many years, this is the first course where the 8 movements of Yantra Yoga and Tibetan Medicine are taught in such great detail, side by side, and yet, both teachers, physically, were really far apart. The global pandemic has pushed all our limits and technology has made it possible to continue to share the teachings, adapting to new circumstances. That's how the idea of this 100% online, pre-recorded course, came to be.

The profound knowledge of Yantra Yoga can't be separated from Tibetan Medicine, it has its roots in it. For this reason, this kind of course is a unique opportunity to really grow and deepen the practice of Yantra Yoga. We believe that this content is important either for long time practitioners, as well as for newcomers to Yantra Yoga. RESPIRA -the breathing method created by Fabio Andrico- was also taught in the beginning of the course, to help students understand the qualities of a fluid breathing. Fabio also gave precise explanations for the adaptation of the 8 movements on the chair, a very useful form of practice that can benefit many people.

Fabio Andrico and Menpa Phuntsog Wango have incredible knowledge and experience in their fields. Although through their distinctive touch and personality, each of them offered a detailed and conscious development of the topics, answered all the concerns and helped the students to evolve in the method. To be able to have both of them together was really a blessing and we feel very grateful for that.



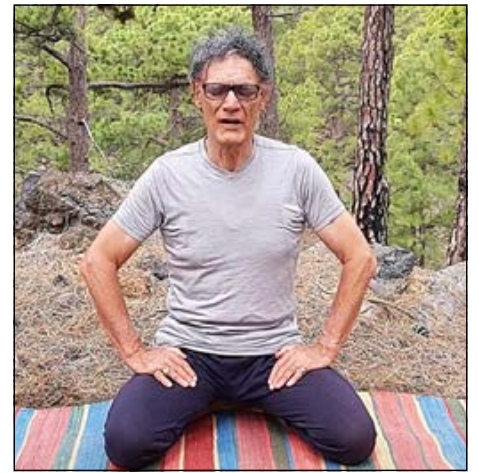
This course was the first course organized in collaboration between Yantra Yoga and the Tibetan Medicine department of ATIF. The course had a large audience; 125 participants from all over the world – members and non members of the DC– joined the course. This encourages both, Yantra Yoga and Tibetan Medicine departments, to organize more courses of this type in the near future.

"Breathe to Wellness" was held by an interactive platform where the students can follow week by week all the content of the course. Each week there was a live class that was also recorded, alternating a Q&A session with Fabio and Menpa Phuntsog and a practice session, led by Nataly Nitsche, and one of them, together with Maxim Leshchenko.

During the Q&A sessions interesting questions were finely answered by both teachers. Participants showed great interest in knowing the details of the practice but they also had lots of questions regarding their health. Menpa Phuntsog gave great advices, healing tea recipes and self treatments but mainly persistently advising to follow Yantra Yoga precisely, insisting on what a real and profound medicine it is. All the live sessions were skillfully moderated by Ilaria Faccioli.

Offline, students also could make comments under each video lesson and get replies from our Yantra Yoga instructor Leticia Recepter and our Tibetan doctors Irina Pankevich and Medegma Budaeva.

The interactive part of the course finished on November 22nd, but all video lessons and recordings of the live sessions are available until November 22nd, 2022! This format allows a long time to review the material again and again. And all those who studied Yantra Yoga know how important



this is! Can you remember how many Yantra Yoga courses have you attended?

Our heartfelt thanks to Fabio Andrico and Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo for their tireless dedication in sharing their precious knowledge, to everyone in the team of the Tibetan Medicine and Yantra Yoga departments of ATIF who worked and collaborated to make this course possible, and to all participants who gave life to it.

Since the experience was very enriching we have two more courses for 2022 in the same format. This time Laura Evangelisti together with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo are going to explore in detail the first preliminary series of Yantra Yoga: "Tsigjong". For the second course Fabio Andrico and Menpa Phuntsog Wango will be together again and the content of the course will be the third and last preliminary series of Yantra Yoga: "Tsadul". Soon the dates will be released, you can subscribe to our mailing list so as not to miss any opportunity!

A participant comments.

"A new and very alive and present sensation in the abdomen and pelvis appeared, after doing just a few repetitions of the warm-up session for 3° Lungsang. A new sensation also in the lower ribs. Energy circulates in the spine. This method is a treasure.

The organization over several weeks with time to try, to recuperate and try again is very good for me. It also helps to put a routine into place which is one of my great difficulties, especially with postures which seemed arduous and impossible at my age (70).

The association of Tibetan medicine with Menpa Phuntsog and the great experience with Yantra teachers and the clarity of Fabio proves very fruitful. Menpa Phuntsog gives us the motivation and all

» continued on the following page

Yantra Yoga from A to Z

Carolina Mingolla

Between March and November 2021 we met once a month for a special, innovative, complete and super professional course. Yantra Yoga from A to Z, devised, managed and organized by Leticia Receptor, a Yantra Yoga instructor living in Argentina.

In times of pandemic, a special capacity for adaptation emerged in each one of us, we learned to use new tools, to communicate and practice ONLINE.

But this annual course of the open part of Yantra, had several characteristics that made it unique: instructors from all over the world, a special module on Tibetan Medicine with Matthew Schmookler, weekly classes to practice what was learned in the monthly modules, the record of all classes and their availability recorded, and financial contributions carefully thought out for the instructor, the organization and the Gar (in this case Tashigar Sur).

All these details made this course a model to be replicated in all languages. The first version in Spanish had the majority of students from the southern cone, but success is guaranteed anywhere in the world!

For my part, I was in charge of teaching the 2nd series of yantra in August, but I made myself available to collaborate with the other instructors, learn about other ways of transmitting, and provide comments and corrections whenever possible.

Working as a team is so enriching!

So, surely this new way of offering the precious knowledge that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu generously gave us, will spread throughout the world and the magic of the Yantra Yoga will be made accessible to more and more people. ©

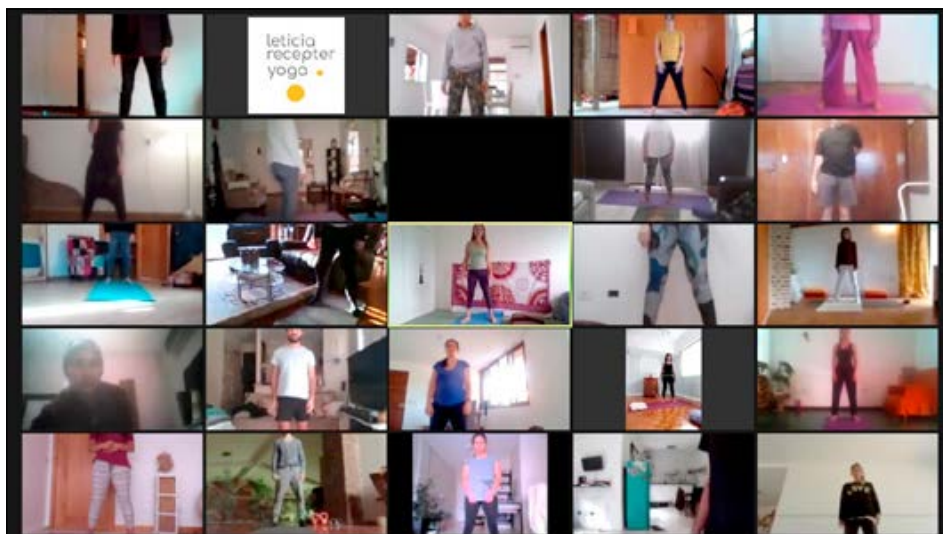
» continued from previous page

the good reasons for persisting even if in the beginning the going is hard. Excellent pedagogy.

Margaret ©

More information:

<https://tenerife.tibetanmedicineschool.org/es/inicio>
<https://yantrayoga.net>
<https://atiyogafoundation.org>



Yantra Yoga with Marisa Alonso.



Yantra Yoga with Alejandra Krasnogor.



Yantra Yoga and Tibetan Medicine with Matthew Schmookler.

#NOTONLYINTIBET Support Tibetan Refugees

Every day the Tibetan population risks losing their own identity, language and culture more and more. Now more than ever it is important to support the Tibetan communities who live in exile, in remote areas and in very difficult conditions in order to safeguard their ancient traditions and spirituality.

TIBETAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA ARE EXPERIENCING INCREASING HARDSHIP AS A RESULT OF THE CONTINUING WAVES OF COVID19 AND THE RESULTING CLOSURES.

Hospitals cannot take in all patients who need treatment. Schools, which do not receive any government support, are unable to cover all the costs necessary to guarantee the right to education of refugee children. Just now, the principal of the school in Petoen (Himachal Pradesh) has written to us in despair that he risks closing the school if he does not receive immediate support.

TIBETAN REFUGEES IN NEPAL ALSO LIVE IN THE HARSHTEST CONDITIONS.

They are more than 20,000 who live in the most precarious conditions because they have never received an identity document from the government. Like the parents of Pema and Tenzin, who live in Boudhanath (the Tibetan district of Kathmandu): before the pandemic they ran a very small tea shop, with two tables and four benches. Because of the repeated closures and the consequent lack of tourism they could not reopen their business and now live only with very little means.

The mission entrusted to us by our founder, Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is to protect the cultural identity of the Tibetan people and to guarantee a dignified life for the most fragile people. We really need help to keep on achieving this.



HELP US TO SUPPORT FAMILIES, MONKS AND TIBETAN SCHOOLS NOT ONLY IN TIBET.

The Tibetan population has an inestimable wealth to share: compassion, non-violence, tolerance, a heritage of values and knowledge fundamental for a healthy and harmonious life at the individual, social and environmental level. The Tibetan refugees have been abandoned by the international community and need our help.

JOIN OUR NOT ONLY IN TIBET CAMPAIGN!

These are some example of what we can do with your help:

€30 to donate a food package to a family of Tibetan refugees in Boudhanath, Kathmandu

€45 to provide study materials for a Tibetan monk in a Nepalese monastery

€80 to contribute to the maintenance costs of a school in the Tibetan settlements in India

DONATE NOW – <https://donaora-asia.iraizer.eu/nonsolointibet/~my-donation>

If you wish to make a continuous donation, you can start a long distance sponsorship With 25 € per month (300 € per year) you can support:

a child from the Himalayan communities
a monk in a Buddhist or Bönpo monastery
an elderly person in a halfway house ☺

START YOUR LONG DISTANCE SPONSORSHIP NOW – <https://www.adopttibet.org/wp/en/>

ASIA Branches

ASIA Onlus
Via San Martino della Battaglia 31, 00185 Rome, Italy
Tel +39.06.44340034, Fax +39.06.44702620
comunicazione@asia-onlus.org www.asia-ngo.org

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

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



November 2021 – The Month of Khaita in Dzamling Gar

This November we celebrated 10 years of Khaita – exactly 10 years ago, in November 2011, an eminent Tibetan scholar and Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu started selecting modern Tibetan songs for the first Khaita collection “Message from Tibet”. In the coming years he personally transcribed in Tibetan and Drayor transliteration over 360 Tibetan songs to give the amazing opportunity to the Western world to appreciate the wonderful and ancient Tibetan culture and knowledge. Khaita dances, over 250 by now, are partially inspired by modern Tibetan circle dances, and partially are created by Rinpoche’s students in a more “free” style, keeping in mind the lyrics and the meaning. Today the Dzogchen Community around the world sing and dance Khaita to discover joy and harmony through movement, and to support Tibetan culture.

In November, Dzamling Gar became the host for two marvelous Khaita events and since Khaita was born in Tenerife, it was only fitting. The first event was the second part of the Khaita Educational Program from November 7th to 14th, the first part having taken place in Merigar West from July to August 2021. The Khaita School was created and implemented by Adriana Dal Borgo in her inimitable joyful and dedicated style. Adriana was assisted by Panchcho Company, one of Dzamling Gar’s well

known resident Khaiteros who also provided a special training in music and rhythm for the candidates. Khaita dancers participated live and by Zoom from all over the world.

The second event was a dazzling celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Khaita with performances by our local Khaita troupe and the children’s Khaita dance group, who were lovingly trained by our

own Elena Kalistova. Our Khaiteros outshine themselves with each passing year and we are fortunate to be able to enjoy their skill and beauty, whether live or by webcast. Kudos to them! ©

Enjoy Khaita songs and dances at www.khaita.com
Learn more about Khaita at www.khaita.org



Enjoying before the performances.



Khaita Educational Program Part II
with Adriana Dal Borgo

Birthday Celebration of Rinpoche

December 8, 2021
Dzamling Gar

The evening began with a Tara Ganapuja led by Adriano Clemente, followed by the usual dazzling Khaita performance, the tried and true Auction led skillfully by auctioneers Lena Dumcheva and Tim Cabot, moving down from the Gönpa to the cafeteria to enjoy a super momo feast prepared by Thupten Rabgyi, our Gekö and his team, with performances by Steven Landsberg on sitar, the wonderfully dynamic African Dance group with Gisela Martinez and Company, traditional songs by Urara Takao and Dina Priymak, elegant jazz with Adriano Clemente's band of consummate musicians Pancho Company on drums, Richard Stevens on bass, Jan Blumenroth on keyboard etc and Adriano on horn, ending the evening with Khaita dancing that went on into the night. A joyful event in the classic Dzamling Gar style! ©



Photos courtesy of Dina Priymak

Working Together for December 8

In one of the meetings the Merigar Gakyil has fairly regularly with the Mayor of Arcidosso, we talked about the day of December 8. For us practitioners it is a particularly significant date, but it is also an important day for the local community because the Immaculate Conception is celebrated in the religious calendar. From this reflection the idea arose of somehow uniting our two communities on a day in which they could meet.

Initially the most evident outwardly event should have been the change of the name of the street currently known as 'Via Tibet' in Arcidosso to 'Via Namkhai Norbu'. However, it became clear that this would not be possible due to the time element because the bureaucratic procedures for the name change are long and complex.

However, another possibility was raised, namely that the Cardinal Archbishop of Siena could visit Amiata and also meet the Community at Merigar. This seemed like an excellent opportunity and we started working on a joint program.

The Gakyil of Merigar and Dynamic Space of the Elements together with the Mayor of Arcidosso, the municipal administration and its assistants began to work on a program for the day. To the part that was to take place in Arcidosso we gave the name 'Sky Festival, the Jewel of the Sky', with a clear reference for us to the name of our Master. At Merigar, in addition to the Tara practice, one of our practitioners, Annamaria Moscatelli, proposed creating a more intimate event to remember Rinpoche.

The organization of the events in Arcidosso was conducted with great skill and enthusiasm by Migmar and all the staff of Dynamic Space, while the part that took place at Merigar was organized by the Gakyil and the Merigar staff. However, on this occasion beyond the limits of names it was clear that some people are often part of both these entities, and in any case we work together, with the same purpose, collaborating.

Several adjustments were needed to define the program, not always easy, but in the end we reached a balance. Several days earlier, groups of our practitioners set out to prepare thousands of momo, in fact more than 4,000 were produced, frozen



and stored at Merigar to be cooked on the spot and taken to Arcidosso. Migmar invited and organized travel and accommodation for the artists who would give life to the concerts and evening shows.

Dozens of traditional costumes were sent to Merigar from our Communities around the world, and our practitioners, both local and specially arrived from abroad, wore them cheerfully at the costume parade.

The Arcidosso Street Band gave one of their typical performances and made everyone present move to their rhythm. The MACO Museum was spruced up to accommodate the inauguration of the recently completed restoration work on the front facade. At the castle, in addition to the food stands, there were also tables from ASIA, the Dzam Shop and Dynamic Space.

At Merigar the two most complex events to organize were 'A small tribute to our Master' and the welcome for Cardinal Paolo Augusto Lojudice.

The homage to the Maestro required a great deal of research, choice of contributions, organization of the events and a complex technical platform. Annamaria worked together with Mirella and Anna in

the preparations and also involved practitioners, professional actors and musicians who presented the event and recited the lyrics, accompanied by music.

Our technicians from Merigar, Cvetko, Mirella, Margherita and Danny coordinated with Sebastien at Dzamling Gar and with Alessandra Policreti to webcast the event, with the English translation.

The emotions among those present was palpable, but it also passed to those who followed online and we received many messages as witness to this.

In the afternoon Nina Robinson led a short practice of Tara, which would be followed by another led by Adriano Clemente from Dzamling Gar. In the meantime, the Gönpa was prepared for the arrival of the Cardinal, his companion who deals in particular with interreligious relations, and the current Mayor with his parents.



A table was set, decorated with flowers and placed in the center of the Gönpa, where His Eminence and his assistant, Rosa Namkhai, the Mayor of Arcidosso, the Vice President of Merigar, Fabio Risolo, and

Migmar took their places. Fabio showed the visitors the Gönpa, explaining the meaning of its function, its origin and the paintings found there. A simple and informal conversation took place at the table. As the Mayor had advised us, the Cardinal proved to be a simple person, easy-going, open and interested in our Community and our Master.

At the end of the short visit, during which tea and sweets were served to the guests and also to the numerous practitioners present at the visit, Merigar offered His Eminence a beautiful tangkha of White Tara, and the illustrated book describing our Gönpa as a gift. The gifts were greatly appreciated. Some of our practitioners then attended Mass celebrated by the Cardinal in the beautiful Incoronata church, just outside Arcidosso.

In the evening, dinner and the show began, respectively at the Castle and the Teatro degli Unanimi in Arcidosso. Up to this point, we did not mention that the program in Arcidosso, which had been planned to take place almost entirely outdoors had to be carried out mainly inside. Previous to the event each day we checked the weather forecast, which predicted rain for Wednesday 8, hoping for a change. Although the days up to Wednesday were splendid sunny days, with starry nights that seemed to contradict the forecasts, in the end we decided not to risk it and we moved everything to the Castle and Theatre, kindly made available by the Municipality. The rain arrived punctually on Wednesday morning and lasted incessantly throughout the day.

It was obviously not the same in terms of participation, but we adapted to the circumstances. Everything went very well, people were happy, joyful and there was some of the atmosphere of past years, despite the restrictions due to the pandemic and the unfavorable weather conditions!

The show at the theater was very enjoyable, excellent, in particular the performance of the Khaita dancers was truly remarkable as well as that of Medved with his juggling skills, the music of Jaka, the singers Zeng Zhuo and Qu Shi Mei Mei and the Tibetan artist Gonpo Tsering. Congratulations to everyone!

The experience of this day and of all its elaborate preparation and realization has shown us how our potential can be best expressed if we abandon personal visions and move in the same direction, for a purpose that goes beyond individual egos.



Next year we will prepare on time and with this lesson in mind.

Homage to our Master, who is always present with us, even if we sometimes forget. ©

Acknowledgments.

The Mayor of Arcidosso Jacopo Marini
Cardinal Augusto Paolo Lojudice who visited Merigar
The Gar and the Lings of all the world who sent us beautiful and colorful costumes.

Cirque Garuda, Jaka, Khaita Joyful Dances, Zeng Zhuo, Qu Shi Mei Mei, Gonpo Tsering, with amazing performances that gave all of us heartwarming emotions.

Team momo with Tenzin Kunga, Salima Celeri, Viola Maglietti, Veronica, Gabriele, Constance, Anna, Francesco, Maria, Tomy and Davide who managed to cook 4000 meat momo and 1000 veggie momo for us to enjoy a super delicious lunch and dinner! Thanks to MACO museum and Alex Siedlecki who helped us with all the organization.

Petra who managed to keep our powerful Snowlion and majestic Yak calm in front of the people
And of course thanks to our wonderful photographer and video maker Michele Salvatore!
Thank you again for this beautiful day. Thanks to the whole Community around the globe that once again showed how united and strong we are.

Winter Gatherings and New Year Aspirations from Merigar East

Retreat replays

Collaborating with the Archive of the Teachings of Rinpoche, between the 29th of November and the 6th of December we organized the first of four replays of Rinpoche's retreats given at Merigar East.

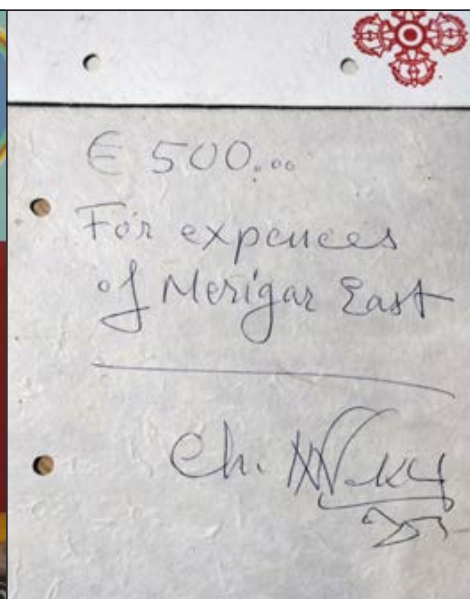
Every year from 2007 to 2015 Rinpoche taught retreats and SMS courses here. There was an immense participation of the Eastern European Sangha, of his son Yeshe Namkhai and of other long-time practitioners from Europe and around the world.

Today, 219 practitioners gathered in our virtual space. Among them, the most numerous were from Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic and Hungary. Oliver Leick accompanied practitioners by answering questions, clearing some doubts and by guiding the practice of the 25 Spaces of Samantabhadra carried out during the weekends. Thanks to the translators' voluntary work, it was possible to surmount all the language barriers.

It is touching to gather the Sangha while watching these precious teachings of Rinpoche. We are grateful for the work of the Archive and for making this material available and we had the chance to contribute to it with the full amount of the donations coming from this retreat.

Moreover, we had the opportunity to listen and feel encouraged by Rinpoche's words at the end of the sixth day of the retreat, announcing the 2013 lottery to support the development of our Gar:

"In general I prepare a lottery not only here but at all the different gars I go to because we need a little money for different projects. At this gar there are also many projects but there is not much money, not sufficient for all the projects. For that reason when I arrive here, I immediately start to work and prepare for this lottery. [...] I told you already yesterday how important the continuation of the Dzogchen Teachings is. After a few years Namkhai Norbu will disappear but the Dzogchen Community



and Dzogchen teaching must not disappear on this globe. It should continue. So in this case we must collaborate with the Dzogchen Community in our short lives. Everybody has a very short life. When we finish our lives, none of us will be living here. But if the precious teachings remain, that is very important. [...] Remember, it is important that the Dzogchen Community should go ahead in this way. We have no base or Dzogchen community bank anywhere. We make sacrifices and we try to stay on our feet. Knowing that, then everybody, please, collaborate because it is something that is very important."

Remembering his huge support for building this place we are grateful and rejoice! We take this opportunity to share a brief update on the last season of the year and our plans and aspirations for 2022.

Merigar East Gönpa Renovation

This year we started the Gönpa Renovation project with the conviction that this place, unique in Romania, must continue to serve many generations of practitioners to come.

Twelve years after the Gönpa was built, it needs repainting, but also repairing of the walls affected by humidity. Due to its particular geographical position, located close to the Black Sea, it is exposed to humidity and sometimes also strong winds. These conditions have affected it and it needs to be renovated. We have the support of Yeselling in Austria and of Dynamic Space of the Elements, who will accompany us through the campaign and restoration activities.



The project will take place in June-July 2022 and covers two main parts – the structural repair and renovation of the decorations. There is a short introduction to the building and more details on the first part of the renovation, put into words and images by our Geko in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltrhKizSjw>

We are happy to say that since launching the campaign a month ago we have received almost a thousand Euros in donations – thank you so much for your support! Unfortunately, a public fundraiser and going through various options to get public funding – EU or national – has brought no success up to now, but we are continuing to work on it.

Read more on our website.

<https://dzogchen.ro/donate-for-our-projects/goenpa-renovation>

Merigar East Oasis

The Oasis is an ecological dream to regenerate the land and create a green garden on our land which has been drained by decades of intensive agriculture. We are happy to inform you that the project is in good health and with a positive outlook for the next year. The donations for this project raised 1383 Euro in 2021. Here is what we did with it.

For the general maintenance of the landscape, 5 karma yogis, the geko and 2 employed workers from the village cut 3 out of the 4.5 hectares covered with hard grass that developed this year after a spring of heavy rains. We also repaired two of our 4 grass cutting machines.

During our last collective event, the November tree-planting, some 70 young trees and shrubs from both our native nursery and from a commercial nursery were planted by 13 volunteers, around the MultiFun House. Among these were noble

apple and pear varieties, peaches, almonds, apple and plum wildlings and a number of deciduous and coniferous windbreakers. The original nursery, started in 2020 by Alex, has been moved directly into the ground next to the linden tree line bordering the entrance parking lot. Around 30 oak seedlings, which germinated from seeds contained in mulching mass used around certain trees in the Gar have been also re-planted into the new nursery, next to some new thuja and lilacs.

Volunteers completed the map of the plants and marked and identified each and every tree to avoid damage when cutting the grass. The poles next to each tree bear the Latin, English and Romanian name so our Oasis is slowly turning into a botanical garden. During the event our volunteers, old and new practitioners, also learned Yantra Yoga to recover their bones and muscles from digging.

The plans for next year are quite simple. During February and March, we will do our

best to prune all the trees at the Gar and graft some of the fruit and decorative varieties. In addition we will set up an effective irrigation system in the spring, take good care of the existing plant stock, expand the native seed bank and our nursery, continuously import more biomass into the Gar while keeping the premises well-maintained and enjoyable remain clear priorities.

The Oasis has also benefited from the collaboration of artists, permaculture students, practitioners and local village people, under the common goal of enriching the ecosystem and connecting. We welcome volunteers and have a paid work exchange program for practitioners who want to spend some time here, at the wild seaside of Merigar East.

Read more on our project page. <https://dzogchen.ro/donate-for-our-projects/merigar-east-oasis> ©



Experience of Making a Colored Khalong Mandala

Rinchenling, Moscow, 2021

Yulian Klenov

We thank the magical Prima Mai for the continuous development of the Teachings of our incomparable Master Chögyal Namkai Norbu, for accurate guidance and endless patience in resolving our doubts!

Beginning

The idea to print a colored Khalong mandala on a construction membrane Tyvek base came to our mind after several unsuccessful color tests with solvent ink with a resolution of 360 dots per inch on a regular canvas base.

Prima Mai answered my and Tatiana Zolotareva's questions in detail based on the image of the Khalong mandala sent in August, shared ideas on choosing the material for the canvas base and sent notes on the creation process and photos of the Earth mandalas printed on Tyvek synthetic paper in Switzerland in 2020. The recommended size of the base was 12 x 14 m.

For the large hall of the Classical Ballet Theater on Skakovaya in Moscow, where practices of the Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra (Khalongdorjeikar) usually take place, the Khalong on the canvas



base is not suitable: you can't roll it up because there is nowhere to store a 12-meter long roll; if you fold it, it weighs about 90 kg, so you can't roll it together, and Tyvek paper material of the required width is simply not imported into Russia.

A search among printing houses showed that the absolute majority of typographers are completely unenthusiastic about doing what no one else has done in the world: print the Khalong on a thin, slippery, non-printable construction membrane base. And if someone suddenly agreed to try it, they quoted an exorbitant price or simply disappeared.

But we were lucky. There was a printing house where they calmly accepted the unusual words 'Tyvek Housewrap' and 'texture lamination of a 15 x 14 m membrane base'.

In total, only in this printing house, we made about 20 color and lamination samples on different materials, chose the appropriate type of ink and printer, checked color rendering, selected the print head settings, and in general, chose optimal technology for printing the Khalong mandala.

At the same time, we carried out samples of printing and lamination of the Khalong mandala canvas for Dzamling Gar, according to their wishes. These samples were then transported to Tenerife thanks to Yulia Petrova.

We constantly discussed and tested materials, the quality of the canvas, the stability of the paint coating, lamination and sliding on the canvas with the dancers. As a result, for our hall we chose a Tyvek membrane base without lamination.

On September 14, Prima Mai sent the last correction of the image of the Khalong mandala for printing. It was possible to start preparing the layout according to the requirements of the printing house.

By the end of October, all preparatory work had been completed: we printed all the rolls, made a fibre hardboard substrate in order to cut through 2 strips at once and not spoil the floor, purchased 100 meters of special Tyvek acrylic connecting tape, a lot of paint tape and blades.

Combining and gluing

A detailed discussion with Oksana Kulibina about the plan for gluing the mandala determined further roles: Oksana became the ideal manager of the work on combining and gluing parts of the mandala into a single whole. It takes exceptional precision,





accuracy, a good eye and simply perseverance to combine, cut and glue eight 14-meter strips into a single mandala. Oksana, you did just fine!

We decided to glue the strips in pairs in the gönpa at Rinchenling. The length of the gönpa was almost not enough, but in width (with four rows of removed mats) it was possible to connect two one-and-a-half meter strips on a hard floor.

The beginning of the work on gluing the mandala fell during lockdown and Covid "vacations": everyone was self-isolating and there were not enough people. Therefore, I had to invite young people – my grandchildren Yan and Lev, who were lucky enough to do the rarest thing on this planet during their school holidays – making the Khalong mandala. They had received Rinpoche's blessing and Dzogchen transmission be-

length of the canvas, otherwise it would not be possible to observe the main proportion of 18:16=1.125, which is the basis of the Khalong mandala. The length of the image should be 12.24 m and the width 10.88 m. There could be several millimeters at each docking, and the lines along which the strips could be joined are located unevenly along the strips, and no marks can be left on the mandala.

Obstacles arose daily: starting from an unexpected pool of water under the removed floor mats, continuing with a slight defect in the color coating made by typographers and ending with malicious traffic police traps on the way to the gönpa. But no one said that everything would be easy and simple.

On the first day, Thursday, November 4, we glued only 1 strip. We selected the tech-

ter-hall soundproof mat made of fiberglass and glass wool as a cover for their equipment. They removed it from its fastenings, pulled off its protective cover and dragged it across the hall, sprinkling the floor with the thinnest glass hairs. And one of our Vajra Dance mandalas was moved to another corner of the hall, while for some reason it was unfolded by a third and folded back incorrectly.

Nevertheless, on this very day, along with the materials for the new mandala, a double bag for storing and carrying the Earth mandalas arrived in a very timely way. We put in it both Earth mandalas, new and old, and closed it with a zipper.

Only a week later, on November 15, it was possible to continue working on the Khalong mandala in the hall on Skakovaya. Of course, with the next adventures: our landlords assured us that from 15:00 the big hall would definitely be free but the hall was occupied, as it turned out later, until 17:00. Therefore, everything had to be unfolded in the small hall (which was also claimed by the cheerleaders who came to their training at the wrong time), and then transferred back to the big hall. By that time I was already sitting at home in self-isolation and could only cough hoarsely into the phone at theatrical employees, trying to resolve the situation.



fore, and there were no obstacles.

By the way, at the same time the new dispenser with blue disinfectant gel in the gönpa was relocated to where it certainly won't be demolished (I threw it down myself, bringing a sheet of hardboard for the base into the gönpa).

In the following days, Sveta Gaiduk, Yura Komissarov and other people joined in.

In total, we printed eight 14-meter strips with a width of 1.5m. The main difficulty was that the strips were very long, and they needed to be joined with an accuracy of up to a millimeter along the entire

nology and worked out the steps of the procedure. And in the evening there was a ganapuja and it was necessary to finish early in order to put the mats back. The next day, Friday, November 5, was all ours – 2 strips were glued together. On the third day, Saturday, the fourth strip was ready.

On Sunday, November 7, we prepared materials for transportation, but only on Monday, November 8, was it possible to transport all the materials to the hall on Skakovaya.

There, too, an unexpected thing happened: local dancers decided to use an in-

Yulia Ustinova

A lot of people gathered for the final gluing of the mandala strips, even those who rarely or do not dance at all came, and this was very valuable.

Due to overlaps in the hall's schedule, work began in the afternoon at 16:00. Since the technology of gluing strips together had already been worked out, and Oksana skilfully led a new team of gluers, it took us 4 hours.

Everyone had a small role: someone pulled, someone pushed, someone glued.

» continued on the following page

10 Years of the Longsal Stupa in Izhevsk, Udmurtia

Artyom Taranenko

At one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's first retreats in Moscow, Andrei Kochurov from Izhevsk (capital of Udmurtia region in Central Russia) approached Rinpoche and presented him with a range of local problems, explaining that he lived in the most depressed region of Russia. Indeed, Udmurtia at that time occupied one of the first places in the number of suicides. It was the end of the 1990s and life in that period was hard. Rinpoche said that this phenomenon is well known in Tibet and the reason for this may be a provocation that affects more than one generation. He advised Andrei to build a stupa to subdue harmful influences and, if it was impossible, to do the collective practice of Guru Dragphur more often. The Izhevsk community at that time was just being formed and did not have either the financial or organizational resources for such a project. The conditions for this became ripe only ten years later.

By that time, the community in Izhevsk had grown and strengthened and in 2009 Rinpoche named it Kungaling ("a place of all-encompassing bliss"). Community member Azat Galeyev did a lot for the new ling: he bought the premises, fully equipped it and supported many initiatives. It was Azat who sponsored the construction of the stupa.



In the realities of our country, it was difficult to approve such a project. At first, the Izhevsk community tried to obtain permission to build a stupa as a Buddhist religious building, but the documents were not signed. In the end, Azat in his Izhevsk circles proposed to erect the stupa not as a stupa, but as a memorial to health, prosperity and harmony – a kind of monument dedicated to the common good. At the same time, he promised the local authorities to improve the city boulevard, and the permission to build the stupa was finally obtained.

At the end of 2010, Natasha Sinyaeva from Kungaling told me that they were going to build a stupa and, since they wanted to coordinate everything with Rinpoche,

asked me to help with the translation. So, I entered into correspondence with Rinpoche, the architect, Giovanni Boni, and the Shang Shung Institute.

Along the way many interesting stories happened. When it became clear that everything was going well, Azat asked me to go and get a tree for the *sogshin* or life force of the stupa. The *sogshin* is cut down according to certain rules: you need to check that it is done by people who did not kill, did not steal, do not have terrible diseases and do not abuse alcohol. I went to a wonderful village in the Krasnoyarsk Krai in Siberia called Cheremshanka, which, as it turned out, is famous for the neopagan Vissarion sect located there.

» continued from previous page

The work was in a full swing! In addition, Tanya Bolbakova finished making zippers on the new bags for storing the mandalas.

Of course, it is a responsibility and very exciting when you glue the mandala together completely, from two huge halves. But we did it.

People arrived after work, and at the end of the day we managed to dance on a new colored mandala. The impressions were wonderful, the sliding was excellent and the delicate colors very pleasant.

We didn't want to go away, and everyone who took part in the gluing stayed until the end of the practice. We were inspired by the cooperation and were glad to have an occasion for communication.

When working out the technology of printing and assembling the mandala, a large number of specific features were revealed that will be described in detail in the third edition of the working materials for making the Khalong mandala.

In the first editions, drawings, coordinate tables and detailed instructions were given on how to manually build and draw an exact copy of the blue Khalong mandala from Dzamling Gar on Tyvek Housewrap canvas. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Yulian Klenov klens7@gmail.com.

We express our gratitude to all who participated in the making of the new colored Khalong mandala: Oksana Kulibabina, Svetlana Gaiduk, Yan and Lev Panin, Yulia Ustinova, Svetlana Zoricheva, Denis Maksyakov,

Tatiana Melikhova, Max Maksimov, Vadim Gudkov, Ekaterina Citrus, Yura Komissarov, Tatiana Bolbakova, Andrey Yemelyanov, Tatiana Pronicheva, Ulyana Sokolova, Tatiana Zolotareva, Yulian Klenov, Katya Serebryanaya, Yulia Petrova and everyone who supported this idea and helped to implement this work. Your participation has been PRICELESS! May it serve for the benefit of all sentient beings! ☺

Yulian Klenov, Rinchenling, Moscow
Yulia Ustinova, Wodsalling, Yakroma

Photos: Svetlana Gaiduk, Yulia Ustinova, Tatiana Bolbakova, Tatiana Zolotareva.

At first I doubted whether it was worth taking a tree from there, but from my experience with Rinpoche, I knew that if something is developing, although it seems strange, there is no need to ask a lot of questions, you need to relax and do it. And it happened that for a pine tree I had to go neither to the Crimea, nor to Buryatia, nor to Kalmykia, but to the Krasnoyarsk Krai. The sectarians turned out to be nice people who have a normal attitude towards Buddhism.

To process a tree, you first need to soak it for three months in running water, and then dry it for three months. It was -35C outside and I asked Azat what to do. Azat said that when you cut the tree down, you will need to get a trawl or semitrailer for transporting oversized cargo and drive 30 km through the taiga [boreal forest], where there are no people living, but there is a lake. Then you will need to cut a hole in the ice and drop the tree in there. However, it was not clear how we could pick it up in the spring, because there was a swamp, and the all-terrain vehicle might not be able to get there.

When I arrived at the place, people told me: "We have never seen this, but yesterday before your arrival, a thawed patch opened up in the ice." They had a sawmill on a hill with a river flowing below. It was so cold that everything froze. When I was doing practice there, the bell burned my fingers



Putting the Buddha inside.

offered myself as a volunteer. So, in mid-February 2012, my wife Nadya and I got into the car and drove from Moscow to Izhevsk.

Then work days began. The stupa arose in an absolutely miraculous way. We calculated that it took nine months from the moment the city council signed the documents to the moment when we closed the *bumpa* (upper crown) and the stupa was ready. If we consider that the stupa is the Buddha's body, then it went through the entire period before a person's birth.

lightning flashed. Lama Rangrig Rinpoche told us that according to Tibetans it was a good sign. After that, we put into the pit what needs to be suppressed: weapons, knives, ammunition, ancient arrows. We also collected syringes, since drug addiction in Izhevsk is a big problem. Then the next layer was laid – what we want to obtain, the so-called symbols of prosperity: a well-fed life represented by five grains, wealth represented by precious stones that we bought especially, a real diamond from Azat, as well as money, Tibetan medicines and offerings sent by people from Dzogchen communities all over the world.

According to Rinpoche's essential instructions, we laid *tsatsa* (clay Buddha statues), practice books, and Longsal teachings. The texts of the teachings were collected from all the Gars so that they were in different languages. Books were mainly given by Kunsangar North and Merigar West. It was very nice to receive texts from Argentina. Tsegylgar East, where the Dance of



Filling the stupa with relics and objects of wealth and prosperity. Right side. Migmar painting the sogshin of the stupa.

through two pairs of gloves, the milk when being poured froze just as it was filling the serkyem holder. And then a thaw-hole opened below, just to throw the logs there. There were many events that aroused my enthusiasm.

I stayed there and got a cedar for the *sogshin*, explained what should be done and how, and practiced very well. After that I phoned Azat and, since Giovanni Boni and Migmar Tsering were going to visit Kungaling soon, I



According to tradition, the first stupa to be built is the Stupa of Perfect Victory, a symbol that Buddha defeated Mara and attained enlightenment. The same form has been built at Kunsangar North and Kunsangar South. First, we prepared the place. Rinpoche told us how to consecrate it. We made *serkyem*, an offering to the local guardians.

When they opened the earth to dig the pit for the foundations, a dry rain fell: there was no rain itself, but thunder roared and

the Song of the Vajra was discovered, sent a piece of wood from the first mandala that Rinpoche danced on. Tashigar North sent some earth from Margarita Island. On Rinpoche's advice, the mantra scrolls were replaced with CDs: we collected the entire corpus of Buddhist teachings, Santi Maha Sangha teachings, Longsal teachings transmitted up to that time by Rinpoche, and recorded them on durable laser (or CD-)

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

disks made using special technology and brought from America.

It was very interesting to work with Rinpoche. We coordinated every step with him, without deviating from his instructions. If he said that the architect is Giovanni, then for the architecture we worked with him. Giovanni is known for having worked on the ASIA projects at Rinpoche's request, has traveled to Tibet, built bridges, schools, and made calculations for many projects in the Dzogchen Community. During the construction of our stupa, Giovanni came to Izhevsk, worked with architects who drew up the project, corrected mistakes, and discussed work with the builders.

It was great working with Migmar. Migmar had lived in Tibet and came to Italy on Rinpoche's invitation. He knows all the finer points: what kind of wood is needed, what technology is used, in what order everything should be done, etc. Migmar explained and showed how to process the *sogshin* and wrote the mantras on it. He also organized a cultural program: he spoke about Tibetan cuisine and nutrition at the local university and taught a course on Tibetan *thangka* painting at a local dharma center.

In general, this stupa, in a sense, went beyond all limitations. People from the Vissarion sect cut the cedar for us. When these logs were brought to Izhevsk, they had to be cut to shape, and the owner of the sawmill, a Tatar, personally sawed the logs on the machine. When we made two thousand *tsatsas*, they had to be fired somewhere. We talked with some ceramic artists, but they said that such a form could not be cooked otherwise it would burst. Azat had an acquaintance at the Izhstal metallurgical plant, where steel is smelted for weapons, and he suggested trying to fire them there. As a result, an acquaintance, an Orthodox man, fired the *tsatsas* in the hardening furnaces of Izhstal, having studied the day before on the Internet the right temperature, the technology and time of firing. There were almost no defects during firing.

Each person who participated in this process treated it very responsibly. It was similar to how people used to carry out party assignments in Soviet times. It turned out that the stupa was made not only by Buddhists, but by a wide variety of people who were lucky to receive such an opportunity.

Apart from the vase with relics sent by Rinpoche, Lama Yonten Gyatso from



the Jonang school and Lama Rangrig Rinpoche sent two additional vases. We really wanted Rinpoche to come, but then it was already difficult for him to move and he travelled only where he was most needed. Therefore, we decided to fill the stupa at the same time as Kunsangar South. When the vase was laid in the Crimea, we did everything together via webcast. We actively interacted with the Ukrainian community, and the Dnepropetrovsk people made the Longsal symbol for us, exactly the same as the one used at Kunsangar South.

When the stupa was completed, we were very afraid that Orthodox radicals would try to demolish it, stain it with paint, as in the case with the stupa erected in Murmansk in the north of Russia. I don't remember anything like this ever happening. On the contrary, elderly ladies come and read that if you go around this place three times and make a wish, it will come true, after which they go around the stupa and cross themselves in front of the Buddha. Newlyweds come there after their wedding to make a wish.

I also have a personal example. The doctors told my boss's wife that she could not have children. Once, while walking, they saw the stupa and decided to walk around it and make a wish. The boss thought: "I have a company, I have an apartment, I have money, I have a beloved woman with whom I live. Let's have some kids." A month later, he returned home and found out that he would be a dad. Exactly one year after

the construction of the stupa, on its first birthday, three wonderful, healthy girls were born to him and his wife.

Once, while I was working on the stupa hanging *lungta*, a woman came up and told me that her son and daughter-in-law, both doctors, got good jobs in Kazan after circumambulating the stupa. Children are also very fond of stupa. Once on Vityaz day, a teacher led schoolchildren to the eternal flame located nearby, and they hurried up to the stupa to run around it clockwise and make a wish.

Thus the stupa has become an interfaith monument where everyone comes. For everyone it's their own personal practice. It is very touching and joyful. Nobody thinks, "This is Buddhism, so we won't go there, because only Buddhists should be there." There are always flowers on the stupa, even in the most frosty weather. For the new year, children put cards with wishes and bring sweets. When there was a broadcast of the Olympics in Sochi, after watching the broadcast a crowd of people went around the stupa so that our team won.

The project team was like a Gakyil: Azat Galeev, the yellow sector, provided money, Natasha Sinyaeva, the red sector, largely thanks to her energy the stupa was built, my wife Nadezhda Vasilenko and I, the blue sector, remained in touch with Rinpoche and made sure everything was done correctly. Boris Busorgin was there at all stages of the construction, took photographs, participated in practices, and was engaged in the improvement of the stupa. Olga Tretyakova, Ira Mukhametshina, Lev Gordon, Ira Korobeinikova, Lena and Dima Dolgovs and other members of the community also came and helped.

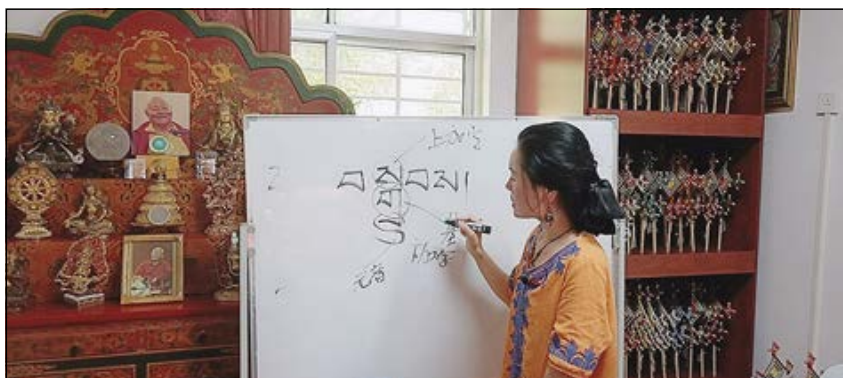
When everything was finished, it was such a joy, as if after a hot day, sweat and mud, a heavy rain showered down and cleared everything. Azat threw a party for everyone. According to Tibetan tradition, all workers should be satisfied, so a huge table was laid in the *gönpa*, local celebrities were invited, and everything went well. In upcoming 2022 it will be the stupa's 10 year anniversary.

For me, building a stupa was a service. We coordinated every step with Rinpoche. Later, on behalf of the Kungaling Gakyil, I wrote a letter to Rinpoche, saying that we had done everything, and Rinpoche replied, "You did everything right." For me it was the highest gratitude, to hear from my teacher that we had done everything well. ©

Samtengar China

We have had the following courses since September.

September–October weekend Basic Tibetan Language with Nyima Ose.



September 15–21 Yantra Yoga Base Course with Tracy Ni.



September 22–28 Inedia with Yuangang.



October 1–7 Dzogchen Teaching with Wes Guo.



October 2–3 Dance of the Three Vajras with Jing Xia.



October 23–27 Online Yantra Yoga Course Series I & II with Tracy Ni.



November 6–12 Deepening Course of the Dance of the Song of Vajra with Tracy Ni.

Tashigar North... A Great Family!

Glorys Strauss, Gakyil Azul

Dear Vajra Family,
We want to share this writing, as recognition and gratitude, to these wonderful beings, who are also part of this Great Family, and many of you have known throughout these years.

Those who with their work and dedication day by day, contribute to the maintenance and beauty of the Gar, those who, on many occasions, shared with the Master, listening to his voice on the outskirts of Gönpa, as they themselves remember and tell their anecdotes of relationship of love and respect towards Rinpoche and Rosa.



From left: Jose Luis, Juvencio, Rafael.

In all these years, several workers have passed through Tashigar (Nortel), but we want to mention in particular, some of them who have been with us for several years.

Rafael In the gardens, who has been in Tashigar since its early years, contributing with his work, the maintenance and beauty of all the garden areas, sometimes we sit down to have a coffee and tell of the Master, Rosa or an anecdote with a practitioner.

José Luis, brother of Rafael, working for several years in the gardens of the Gar and urban areas, on one occasion we sat down talking about plants, since he is a good connoisseur of medicinal plants and he told me what he had heard, the translation of what the Master said in a retreat, when

he did his work outside the Gönpa and remembered it clearly.

Juvencio, Security Worker, with his dedication day and night guarding the place, attentive and friendly.

Douglas Security Worker, very strong and always ready to help, knowledgeable about local plant, caretaker and loving of our guard dog Rex.

Armando and Maritza, a wonderful couple! Many years with us, Armando, a student of plants, a connoisseur of botany, and gardening work in urban areas, always ready to help in other areas. Maritza, the tireless working, a mom every day, and organizing and maintaining public areas of the Gar.

Likewise, gratitude to other tireless workers: Home care: the loving Maura, Julia, Ramona, Luisa, General Maintenance: the super man Zacarias, Security: always attentive, Juvencio Son, Humberto, Darwin.

Gratitude, to all of them, for their dedication and love, towards Tashigar North and, consequently, towards the Master, The Teachings and, the entire International Dzogchen Community.

We take this opportunity to wish you all, a happy and auspicious Christmas celebrations and a New Year for a better world, together in this Great Family, from this wonderful space, Rinpoche's Legacy... Tashigar Norte... Tashi Delek ©

The Dalai Lama and the Nechung Oracle

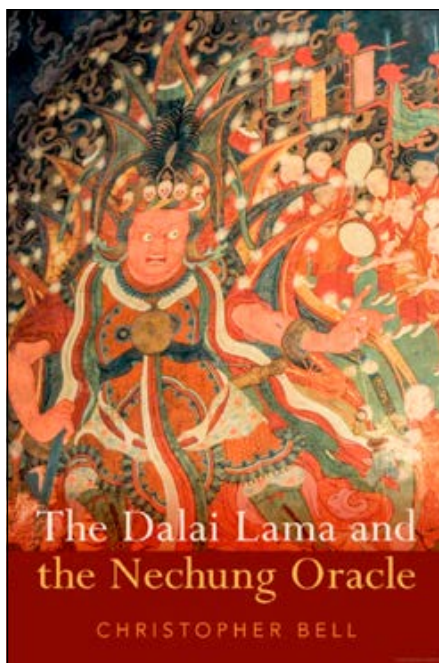
Christopher Bell
Oxford University Press 2021
pp. 328
ISBN 9780197533352

Alexander Studholme

Though quite at home in the modern, scientific, geopolitical world, the 14th Dalai Lama has never made any secret of the fact that one of his most trusted advisors is a wrathful spirit of the *gyalpo* class, who communicates to him via a medium, a monk known as the Nechung oracle. Famously, in his autobiography, His Holiness describes how he sought the counsel of the oracle on whether to escape from Tibet in the spring of 1959. “To my astonishment,” he writes, “he shouted, ‘Go! Go! Tonight!’ The medium, still in a trance, then... wrote down, quite clearly and explicitly, the route that I should take out of [Lhasa], down to the last Tibetan town on the Indian border.”

In his landmark study of this strange relationship, Christopher Bell demonstrates that the oracle is not only a vital support to the Dalai Lama's life, but an integral part of Tibetan statecraft. In India, the Nechung monastery lies close at hand to the Dalai Lama's residence, just down the hill next to the offices of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The red rays emanating from the sun on the Tibetan flag, introduced by the 13th Dalai Lama, are a reference to the oracle. As Bell shows, the 2nd Dalai Lama first developed contact with the oracle in the early 16th century, before its role was formalized as part of the lamaist government that united Tibet under the Great 5th in 1642.

In conversation with the 3rd Dalai Lama, the oracle is reported as saying: “I eat the flesh and drink the blood of the enemies and Obstructing Spirits.” The present Dalai Lama describes their respective responsibilities thus: “My task, that of leadership, is peaceful. His, in his capacity as protector and defender, is wrathful.” The Tibetan nation has other important protector deities, such as the female Penden Lhamo. But, Bell suggests, the Nechung deity – a spirit called Pehar, latterly more commonly identified as Dorje Drakden – achieved its pre-eminence, at least in part, by the way it connects the institution of the Dalai Lama



with several important strands of Tibetan political and religious history.

Most notably, Pehar was one of the spirits subdued by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century and so is part of Tibet's foundation myth: Pehar is an abbreviation of Pehar Kordzoling, the treasury of Tibet's first monastery Samye, the protector deity's earliest Tibetan home. Pehar also has the esteemed pedigree of coming originally from India, the country of the Buddha. Pehar's initial resting place in Central Asia, before being brought to Tibet, was in Mongolia, the land of the Dalai Lamas' main patrons the Mongolian khans. Finally, Pehar previously had strong bonds with the Kagyu hierarchy: the oracle's absorption into the ritual life of the Dalai Lamas' government is evidence of the Gelukpa victory in Tibet's 17th century civil war.

Bell looks at Nyingma sources describing the birth and activity of Pehar: he was born, it is said, from one of thirteen eggs of the union of a male *mara* and female *naga* spirit. He examines a compendium of texts, the *Nechung Record* of the 5th Dalai Lama, which includes accounts of the spirit's arrival at Nechung monastery: as a bird who alights on what subsequently becomes a sacred birch tree. He surveys the rituals and liturgical calendar associated with Pehar. He investigates the history and architecture of the Nechung monastery, including a thorough survey of its wall paintings. And he delineates the way in which Nechung becomes the hub of a network of shrines and rituals in other surrounding monasteries.

A lot of this, it must be said, is very detailed and dense: heavy going for the non-specialist reader. The final chapter, though, on the oracle itself – the monks who served as the successive mediums – is more accessible. We learn, for instance, that it was the oracle, in opposition to prevailing political opinion, that urged the 3rd Dalai Lama to travel to Mongolia to create those vital links with the khans. Identifying a new medium (*sku rten*) is not always easy, nor has the oracle been infallible. Notoriously, the medium at the time of the 13th Dalai Lama predicted success against the British invasion of Tibet in 1904. Thousands of Tibetans were massacred, their primitive weaponry and Buddhist amulets being no match for the British machine guns.

Bell leavens his pages with observations from his fieldwork in India and Tibet. The present Nechung oracle describes the disturbing feelings he experiences in the build up to possession. Reciting Hayagriva mantras, his sense awareness dissolves, until he has no recollection of anything that takes place once the deity takes over. Bell witnesses the oracle in action: shaking and hissing, moving and dancing as if on coiled springs of energy, speaking cryptically in a weird, high-pitched voice. In the immediate vicinity, a handful of Tibetan laymen and women enter spontaneous trance states: shouting, flailing around and eventually fainting.

This is an accomplished, if sometimes rather laborious work of scholarship, that takes us deep into the complexities of an arcane aspect of Tibetan Buddhism, which yet retains a significant role in Tibetan national identity. There are some dissenting voices. In 2016 during a meeting of the parliament-in-exile, a Tibetan politician openly criticized the government's reliance on the oracle, only to be met with a storm of pro-Nechung protest from Tibetan communities all over the world. For the time being at least, the influence of Pehar lives on. ©

Pictures from the Past

The Tibet of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Raimondo Bultrini continues his account, based on his diary and his impressions, of his travels with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu through China and Tibet in the early months of 1988

Honor to the masters of the past
To my father and mentor
To the sisters and brothers of the Vajra

As the only Western witness of all the eight months of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's journey between China and Tibet in 1988, I have always felt the duty to recount at least the passages that I believe to be more significant of that unique and unrepeatably experience. A duty to all of Rinpoche's students, not only the youngest, who have little knowledge of this important period in the life of the Master. I could write a long article about each day on its own and you will forgive me if accumulated personal causes have prevented me from dedicating myself completely to a more detailed summary. But here I would like to condense as much as possible the meaning of that journey that had been prepared in detail months earlier.

Rinpoche had just completed a tour of seminars and retreats in various parts of the eastern hemisphere and had interrupted the rhythms imposed by the constant requests from practitioners from all over the world inviting him to teach Dzogchen in order to spend that period between China and Tibet. In China, where there was still no gakyil for the Community, his books on Bon and ancient Tibet were already milestones of Tibetan historiography. In the months that I had the good fortune to share in close contact with him, I was able to observe the transition of the Master from the dimension of the Western culture of Italy in those years – with an almost equal population of conservative Catholics and Communists – to a world of traditions in which everyone follows Vajrayana Buddhism and largely saw Rinpoche as a source of blessing rather than wis-



Rinpoche at Galenteng giving an initiation.

dom. Rinpoche will overturn that point of view on several occasions by speaking to nomads, shepherds and farmers, but also to professionals and politicians, about the methods of self-liberation that through the Guruyoga of union with one's masters makes the practitioner indivisible from the source of the greatest possible blessing, the state of contemplation.

In any case, Rinpoche was aware that he could not disappoint those who approached with their heads bowed to receive the hands of the guru who was identified as the intermediary of the divinity itself. "It's different here. What else can I do if someone goes after the forms? At least I can recite a mantra for them," he said one day smiling when I asked him why he had never adopted that gesture in the West. He had just finished touching hundreds of heads, reciting as many mantras and was donating countless objects of protection to those who had requested them by blowing sacred syllables on them. The master noticed my curious attention and could read my thoughts like an open book. Then he talked about when he was in Turin many years earlier, during a retreat he had met a Westerner who wanted to be a Tibetan

in all respects. "I had just finished talking about guruyoga" – he says – "and we sounded an A before dedicating the merits. Eventually a man approached my seat and respectfully asked me if he could have a blessing. I told him that he had already received it with the practice of union, but he insisted and then I asked what kind of blessing he wanted. 'I don't know, do something, touch me' ..." We laughed for a long time and the scene often comes to mind given the ancient intensity of the master/disciple relationship far beyond physical and mystical contact.

Most of the time Rinpoche wore the same red windbreaker and only dressed in elegant religious garments when asked to lead ceremonies and ritual initiations. There is also a photo with an elegant heavy velvet dress that came down to his feet subtly embroidered with Tibetan motifs. Rinpoche said it was the robe of some aristocratic ancestors who were advisers to the king.

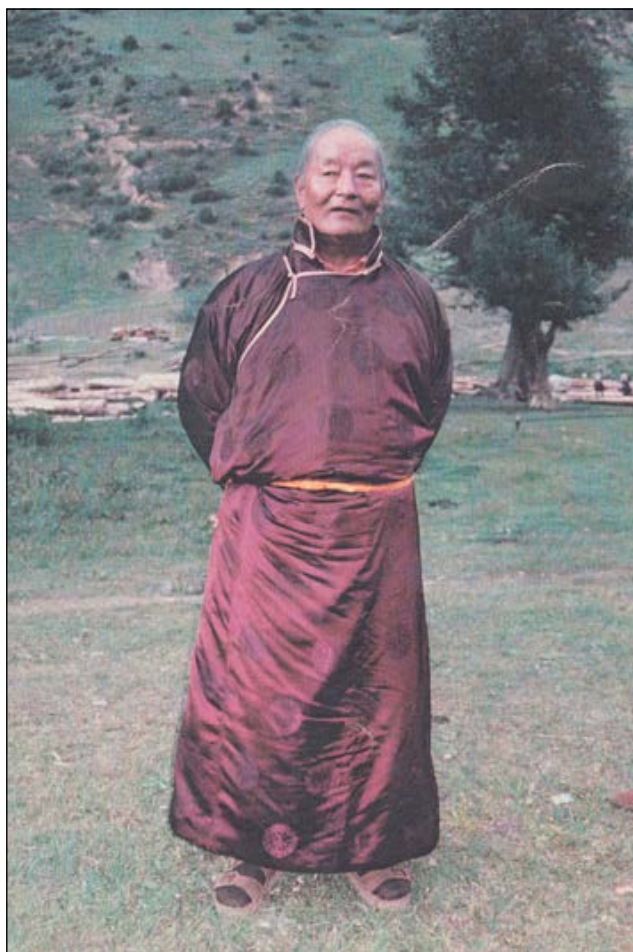
Personally I had never seen the master wear religious robes in the West, and I don't think he ever did, but in those months – in addition to the photo with the reddish purple *chuba* – I took pictures of

him in ritual clothes on at least two special occasions. The first time he gave an initiation to more than a thousand nomads from the area around the monastery of Galenteng wearing a red embroidered cloak with gold patterns and a yellow shirt that belonged to his uncle Khyentse Wanchug. We were under a huge white awning open at the sides and used as a gōnpa with hundreds of men, women with turquoise in their hair and children on the lawn that was also crowded with horses and riders and monks in charge of the sang incense whose cypress-smelling smoke enveloped everything.

The second occasion was the ritual to consecrate the stupas in the village of his master, Changchub Dorje, during which he wore a red-colored cloak with blue bands on which the wise men of the lineage were printed. On all these occasions the ceremony took very different forms outwardly from those that I had practiced at Merigar and the Western gars. It is difficult to describe the intensity of the emotions that were released, even it seemed in the Master, by the magic of those moments, between the attentive gazes of faces with ethnic features unchanged since time immemorial, the music of the long horns and the dark rumble of the great drums, the odorous cloud with its pleasant smell used for purification even among American Indians. As Rinpoche, who had witnessed rituals among the Navaho similar to the Tibetan sang, told me, "Many of them mistook me for one of them and asked which tribe I came from".

His expedition, which he began in China as an academic, switched between three levels when he arrived in the eastern and western highlands: that already mentioned of being venerated, that of the yogi-pilgrim in the places of his mentors and masters (including the sacred Mount Kailash in the company of a seventy students like me who came from all over the world) and finally, on a more political level, that of negotiating delicate relations with the Chinese authorities. It was in the first and second part of the trip (described briefly in a small book by Shang Shung published shortly after our return to Italy) that the core of ASIA's projects was born and entrusted to Andrea Dell'Angelo, who returned with the Master and Giovanni Boni to the same places to start work on them.

In his approach to the officials who would support future projects, Rinpoche was facilitated by the causes he had al-



ready sown in his youth. In fact, scholars and professors from the main universities of Tibetological studies who had been his students or had known him in the 1950s as a representative of the Tibetan monasteries introduced him to local governors and Tibetan and Chinese party leaders. In 1953 he had been invited by the Chinese Communist Youth to visit Chengdu – which will be one of our stops – and Chongqin. Then they had asked him to teach the Tibetan language in Menyag and for three years, until 1957, he was a teacher at the South-Western University for Minorities in Chengdu where he in turn studied classical Chinese and Mongolian. It was in this period that Rinpoche met Gangkar Rinpoche, a very important figure for his growth both intellectual and human, so much so that passing near his monastery Rinpoche made us all buy blankets manufactured there in order to finance the yogis who continue his lineage.

The meeting that marked the turning point for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu took place in 1955 when he was still 17 and living in Chengdu. A dream took him to his master Rigdzin Changchub Dorje in Khadogar or Nyaglagar beyond the bor-

ders of central Tibet, where we will go in early summer.

The Chinese openings

One of those regular students who had attended his lessons in Chengdu and other centers in the province and who became an important official of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Beijing, took care of the issuing of all authorizations and visas for us, including mine as Rinpoche's assistant. We will meet many of the ex-alumni in Chengdu and in Kangding, an important city with a Tibetan majority and a famous technologically advanced university center. Here the welcome in the most technologically advanced university in Sichuan was such that our group had to pass between two lines of students with traditional white *khatags* and the red bow of the Communist "pioneers" as well as teachers and locals waving Buddhist flags (the traditional snow lion is forbidden) and the red ones of China.

Political leaders and administrators, in line with the Party's new, more open and tolerant approach, no longer saw the idea of preserving – as Rinpoche proposed – the ancient culture of the Tibetans as a danger.

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

Even the tulku, the so-called “living buddhas” according to the Chinese definition, had been in a certain way “rehabilitated” after the excesses of the army and the persecutions of the Cultural Revolution (in the 90s a law would entrust their selection to the Party that had a claim on the very choice of the main reincarnations such as the Dalai and the Panchen Lama).

Rinpoche often spoke of this ancient institution, started by a Kagyupa master in the 13th century (and “copied by all other schools”, he said), of which he was rather critical for the overly distorted use of the title and the excessive material power of institutions that count on the fame of the *tulku*. He anticipated what the Dalai Lama himself would say many years later, “As the degenerate age progresses, and as more and more reincarnations of high lamas are recognized, some for political reasons, an increasing number of people have been recognized in inappropriate and questionable ways, as a result of which enormous harm has been done to the Dharma”. The proof – he writes – is that China has created a special political commission for religious affairs with the power to “certify living Buddhas”, as the Party calls the alleged “reincarnations”. In 2017 in the New York Times His Holiness used even clearer and unequivocal words about how to prevent the Chinese from any possible stratagem to replace him, “All religious institutions, including the Dalai Lama, developed under feudal circumstances” – he said – “corrupted by hierarchical systems, and have begun to discriminate between men and women; they have (even) reached cultural compromises with laws similar to Sharia law and the caste system”. “Therefore (with me), the institution of the Dalai Lama, with pride, voluntarily, has ended”.

Rinpoche had repeatedly explained to me and to other traveling companions that the fame and prestige of the title among the Tibetan populations did not always correspond to the qualities of lamas and abbots in pompous clothes, title-holders of *labrang* – the estates of monasteries – whose administrators or Gekos were often at war with others for influence over villages and a source of wider revenue. His uncle Khyentse himself and his predecessor had to endure campaigns of discredit by the great monasteries and their own Gekos for their opposition to the circuit of dharma business and for their long periods spent in hermitages to practice.

Rinpoche returned to his country 34 years ago with the intention, achieved, of laying the foundations for ASIA’s activities in that year, but he understood that the conditions existed for the birth of the Chinese Dzogchen Community, today an integral part of the international one. At different levels of public administration from Beijing to Chengdu, from Qamdo to Derghe, many wanted to support his ideas for an integration between two apparently so separate worlds as Tibet and China. Rinpoche made it clear to everyone that the two neighbors, albeit divided by politics,



had long had intense cultural and religious exchanges, ever since Buddhism spread from India to China through the first pilgrims. He recalled that many emperors had converted to the Vajrayana and – as the powerful Mongol khans had done – received numerous spiritual teachings from different Dalai Lamas.

Since his arrival in Beijing the Master said that he intended to open schools and create community services especially for nomads, but also to start seminars for monks of traditionally neglected traditions. He knew it would not be easy but that historical period was perhaps the only open window within the great wall of Chinese ideology. In fact, after Tien an Mien, China closed again and radically transformed the landscape and lifestyle of a large part of the population. It was thanks to ASIA that he was able to conclude his projects avoiding the fate of other independent interna-

tional non-profit organizations forced to leave the country. He did this without ever abandoning the original idea of supporting communities that are “collateral” victims of a progress that was drastically changing not only the environment on the roof of the world but also the ancient and efficient systems of the livelihood of the tribes, especially the nomads.

During the journey Rinpoche often spoke of the importance of these wandering shepherds in Tibetan culture (he wrote a book entirely dedicated to them) and of their relationship with the primordial nature. We will meet hundreds of nomads under their fabric tents used during short trips, or made of yak wool for winter residences. The Master would entertain them for hours by telling them stories of the exotic West, enchanting adults and children around the fire of the stoves, and listen to their stories asking them to explain what had happened to their lives after the arrival of the Chinese. He knew that the experiments of the nomadic cooperatives had failed but that everyone feared some other initiative to limit the freedom that families had always enjoyed to choose pasture for animals. (Today, unfortunately, the nomads mostly live in Chinese-style compounds and have been forced to lead a more sedentary and controlled life).

The Nature of Tibet

It was on two occasions, which remained etched in my memory, that Rinpoche explained the relationship between Tibetan mystics and nature, in the years when environmental concerns were not yet the topic of the day. One morning as we were walking through a forest in eastern Tibet, much greener than a western one, he said that every tree was an object of contemplation for him. In my notes I saw that I had had a flash: I imagined a world where everyone lived in symbiosis with their own tree as could happen in one of the many dimensions that the Master told me about. I also thought of the fact that it was under a banyan tree that the Buddha would be enlightened, and under the same branches he emerged from the womb of his mother.

In mid-May the snow still had not melted on the high altitude meadows that were filled with yellow and red flowers under skies of a blue that I had never seen before. We stopped a few kilometers before the monastery of Rinpoche’s uncle, Abbot Khyentse Wanchug, and got out of the car to follow a dirt side road on foot and here

an enchanting lake surrounded by fir and juniper trees appeared. Rinpoche gazed intently at the colors and magical appearance of that stretch of water that seemed like a transparent turquoise set between the snow and the intense green of the trees. He said he had come here with his abbot uncle when he was 11 and he was so enchanted that he wanted to build a monastery here. "Since then" – he told me – "every time my mind is disturbed by external elements and apparently unsolvable problems, I always come back here, to this lake".

He explained that when he was little he had a very different idea of priorities having been educated to become a teacher and potential head of some monastery. But the importance of religious institutions became relatively secondary for Rinpoche when at Khamdogar he met his master of Dzogchen, Changchub Dorje, whom I hope to be able to talk about in another part of this story.

That morning on the shores of the lake of his childhood, the Master explained his new idea about how to make use of that enchanting place. "If possible I would like to build a place of practice here that can also be used by our people in the international Community," he said. I don't know if that idea was put into practice later on, but I fear that the political tightening and politicization of the religious authorities may have made this part of Rinpoche's program difficult.

To give an idea of the changes that had taken place at the time of his arrival, the Master arrived in Beijing from Hong Kong at the time when there were still 9 years until the island returned to China, an event that according to him could change the power structures in Beijing as well. There had been *perestroika* with the first Russian liberal reforms and Deng Xiao Ping in Beijing had opened China to the world, even hosting the first envoys of the "enemy" Dalai Lama in Lhasa. A year after the Master's journey, the Tien an Mien revolt was, in fact, an attempt to reduce the power of the northern Mandarin-speaking ruling class. From the world of traditionally more open southern businessmen and politicians came a powerful sympathizer with the rioting students, the Party general secretary Zhao Zhiyang himself, who was later dismissed.

It was easy to understand how by applying the basis of Dzogchen the Master acted according to the circumstances that required respect for the laws but also for the customs of the countries we encountered. Outwardly it was easy for him, even if on

an emotional level he was accompanied by a feeling of enormous sadness ever since he had to obtain permission from foreign people to see his Tibet again. Over time the Master self-liberated the obstacles of deep and painful passions, even the sense of guilt that he told me he felt for having endangered his family as a "living buddha" and therefore an enemy of the people.

Here I would like to anticipate another important aspect – it certainly was for me – of that journey in 1988. As we rode up the plateaus beyond Ya'an to Tibet, Rinpoche asked me what I thought of His Ho-



Boy on a horse in the Lhalun Valley.

liness. I realized I did not have a precise answer, knowing little of the methods of his Gelugpa school. I replied that I knew him more as a political leader than a religious one. Then the Master told me a story that would become an obsession for me in the years to come, even if at that moment I did not realize its importance for the very future of Tibetan culture and its most famous representative, the current XIV holder of the title of Ocean of Wisdom. He explained that the anti-sectarian movement Rimed with which he identified himself had had a strong reserve until the 1970s towards a form of "Guardian" or protector cult with which the Tibetan leader was associated. In fact, the cult called for "taking refuge" in a being considered the defender of the pure Gelugpa doctrine against any other type of "contamination". When the yellow hats were in power and "they also minted

coins", Rinpoche explained to me one day in front of a large monastery in Derghe, "and they did not intend to hand over the power of their clergy to other schools".

Only later did I learn that at the time of his "initiation" into the controversial "spirit" the Dalai Lama was surrounded by tutors and advisers who practiced the worship of a gyalpo being called Shugden, even though the official protector of all Dalai Lamas was Palden Lhamo. Consequently, "No religious person from the other three schools" – the Master told me – "or other Dzogchen practitioners like me would have ever taken initiations from the Dalai Lama". The cause was precisely that link between him and a "harmful spirit", as the Dalai Lama himself will define it years later. "But now" – added the Master – "everything has been solved. His Holiness understood the divisive spirit of that practice and invited all Tibetans to stop it. Now I am ready to receive an initiation from him" (which will happen in Gratz, Austria years later, ed).

The reason for that old conflict became increasingly clear to me when, with the support of the Master and the exiled Tibetan leader himself, I worked on a book about the consequences of that affair for historical events that are still taking place. In the lamas of the cult China will find loyal allies for their strategy of replacing the Dalai Lama with a "tulku" educated by his internal enemies and Party advisers when he dies. They also went on to finance the noisy international anti-Dalai Lama campaign on the part of a pro-Shugden "coalition" accusing him of "religious persecution", with public actions that had wide international repercussions but little practical effect.

But now I would like to come back to the stages of the journey since we left the Chinese capital Beijing, where the Master was staying at Donatella Rossi's house in a compound for Westerners and I in the rented rooms for students at the University of Beida, from where, shortly after, the first outbreak of the Tien An Mien riots that will end Deng's more liberal era will ignite.

The evening of May 2 we landed in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan and still today the tourist gateway to Tibet, welcomed by a small crowd of relatives and Tibetans who had been informed of Rinpoche's arrival. Among them was the sister of the Master, Sonam Palmo, slightly older and extraordinarily similar to him except for the long braids with turquoises and colored ribbons like an American Indian. She had

» continued on the following page



The group photo and video are from 23 October 2016 at the Community center of Milan "Dribselling".

History of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Milan, Italy

Milan, Italy 3 August 1983

Giuliano Angelo Casiraghi

This account has been put together thanks to Elisabeth Crouzet and her mother Paola, on the occasion of a private visit of our Master and his family to Milan. Rinpoche and the family were hosted at Elisabeth's house for about three days, and during that time the Master made a drawing, repaired a damaru and did several other things. Elisabeth, her mother Paola and the Community of Milan, past and present, donated these things to Dzamling Gar for future auctions. It seems fitting to me to also describe other public visits that the Master made to Milan, during which he gave teachings.

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Milan 1977 to 2016

This is a testimony of the teachings given by the Master in Milan. He came to Milan for the first time in 1977 and for the last time in 2016, a total of eight times.

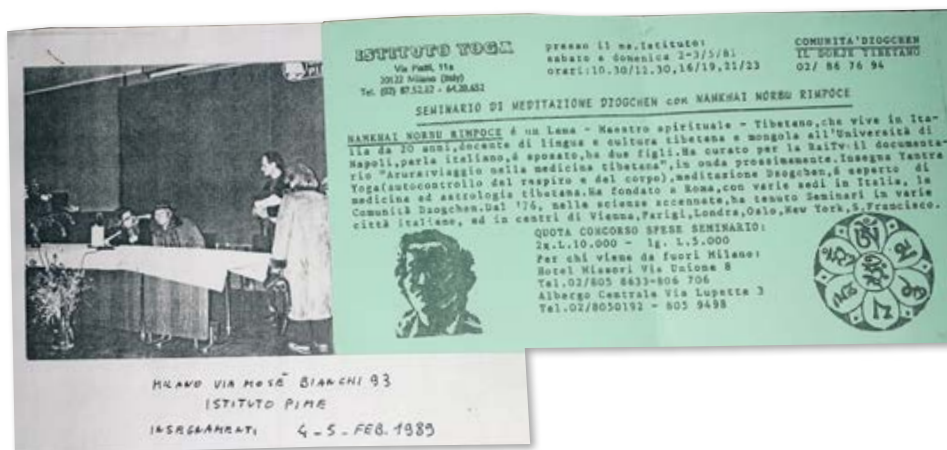
After the retreat that took place in Prata in July 1977, he gave a series of teachings in Milan at the Dorje Tibetano, a restaurant with macrobiotic cuisine in via Garibaldi n.55 (now no longer existing) run by Cristina von Geispitzheim and Aldo Oneto. The

retreat began on September 1st and ended on September 6th 1977.

Every afternoon he taught how to practice Yantra Yoga; in the evening he explained the "Tawa" or the point of view of the Dzogchen teaching and some practices such as the rite of the guardians of the teaching. On Sunday September 4th 1977, we went to Maccagno, a town on Lake Maggiore, to a villa belonging to the parents of one of our practitioners, Massimo, who passed away many years ago. The Master explained and we practiced the rite of the guardians.

on the ganapuja. Other teachings were fixation with and without an object, *shiné*, fixation with and without material things, the importance of the practice of the *semzin* and many other teachings. The Master taught in the morning and in the afternoon on the 16th the retreat ended and the next day, March 17th, we returned to Milan and he taught for another two days in Via Morigi n.3 where there was a gym for Yantra Yoga. Rinpoche remained in Milan until the morning of the 19th.

In 1981 he was in Milan on May 2nd and 3rd. He gave teachings at the Yoga Institute



In 1979 we organized a retreat in Gaviate near Varese from March 13 to 16 in the house of Anna and Giorgio Fiore. The Master arrived in Milan by train on March 13 in the morning, we went to welcome him at the central station and then we left for Gaviate with my car. It was a full moon day and in the afternoon he gave teachings

of Carlo Patrian in via Piatti n.2 (Carlo Patrian was one of the first people to bring Hatha Yoga to Italy).

The Master taught the *Tawa*, the point of view of Dzogchen, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

Then he attended a conference organized by Baba Bedi's Aquarian Age Center and the theme was reincarnation. The Master spoke of the Tibetan tradition of the four main schools and the great Lamas that are reincarnated in order to continue the message of "Bodhicitta" with compassion.

By 1983 the Dzogchen Community of Milan had become more numerous and was always connected with Merigar and the Master. After the famous three week retreat in Campomolino (Cn) in August 1978,

if it was possible to go and pick them up and bring them to Milan. Aldo Oneto and Giuliano Casiraghi left by car for Merano and brought Rosa and Yuchen to Milan.

In Milan the whole family were guests at Elisabeth Crouzet's house. The first day we went to the top of the Milan Cathedral. The next day, we went to the Montagnetta di San Siro with Yeshi and brought a kite to fly. It was a beautiful day but there was no wind.

Elisabeth said, "I was very happy to have the Master and his family in my home. I

In 1989 the Master came to Milan on 4, 5 and 6 February and gave a series of teachings at the PIME Institute in via Mosè Bianchi n.93, both in the morning and in the afternoon, with the final Ganapuja at the Terra Delle Dakini Center.

In 1990 Rinpoche returned to Milan on March 31 and held a press conference on Tibet in the early afternoon in the hall of the Leone XIII Institute, via Leone XIII n.12. After the press conference he gave teachings.

In 2016 the Master came to Milan on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's visit on 21 and 22 October and on 23 October he was invited and came to "Dribselling", the center of the Dzogchen community in Milan. The photos and the video in this account are from 23 October 2016 on that occasion. The Ling in Milan is very active, organizes courses on Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance and practices in accordance with the phases of the moon and so on. Dribselling is located in via Sibari 15/A, Milan.

Returning to the year 1983, it was very important for the birth of Adzamgar, the second gar in Italy, (now no longer existing), located at 1600m., a lovely place in the high mountains, near a village called Narbonne. Adzamgar was very important for many practitioners and some did long retreats there, including solitary ones. I think it will be useful, in a future article, to tell the story by involving other practitioners who knew this place.

Thank you to Elisabeth Crouzet, who inspired the writing of this chronology, and for her gifts to Dzamling Gar. ©



the Master told us that the area was interesting and to buy a house there in the future. After several contacts with homeowners in the area, thanks to some practitioners from Turin, we managed to buy a beautiful little house in the village of Batuir (Cn) in Piemonte. Rinpoche left his home in Formia with his son Yeshi for a private visit to Milan on August 3rd 1983 and then went on to Piedmonte and the village of Batuir at 1600 m. We went there in different cars and some practitioners from the Turin community also came with us. Once in Batuir the Master gave the property the name of Adzamgar.

Returning to Rinpoche's visit to Milan, he only stayed for about three days. His wife Rosa and their daughter Yuchen were in Venice with Anna Humeres and Carlos Ramos, practitioners from Venice and were traveling in the vicinity of Merano when they had a minor car accident and were hospitalized in the local hospital. Even before leaving Rinpoche telephoned us to see

had never been so close to the Master so it was a great opportunity. In all the retreats that he has given, I have never had such intense contact with Rinpoche. During his time here he was always active; he wrote and drew, adjusted a damaru, and was always present in every gesture."

In 1987 Elio Guarisco and Giulio Santi founded a center called "Terra Delle Dakini" (Land of the Dakinis) in via Alzaia Naviglio Grande n.12, and invited the Master to give teachings. Rinpoche came and taught on March 6, 7 and 8. He gave teachings in the evening of March 6th at the center, and on the last day in the late afternoon he explained the Ganapuja and we also practiced it. Then he gave a series of teachings at the Palazzo delle Stelline in Corso Magenta 61, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

Elio Guarisco and Giulio Santi offered the Terra Delle Dakini Center to the Master for the Dzogchen Community, a good program of practices was drawn up, including Yantra Yoga and invitations to masters.

In Love With the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche
with Helen Tworkev
Spiegel and Grau Press

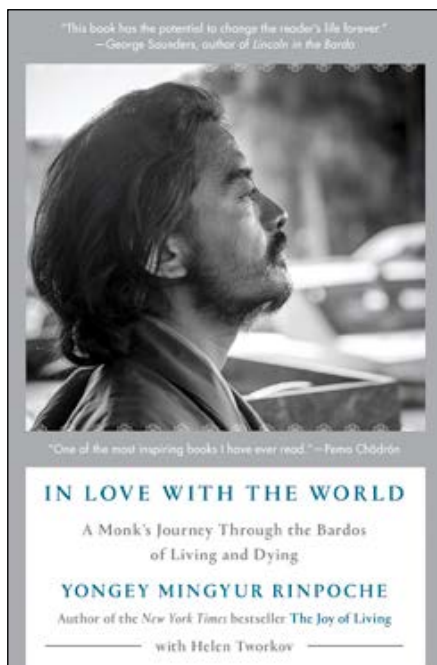
Margaret Jasinski

What Will You Do When You Are in the Bardos?

Have you ever felt like chucking your usual job and trying something entirely new? Have you ever had the urge for a grand adventure where you could switch identities? Have you ever had the thought of stealing away without telling anyone in the middle of the night? If these questions sound compelling, read this account of a life changing experience!

Not the usual adventure story, this book lands the reader in a unique tour of the bardo. It begins with the thirty-something Mingyur Rinpoche poised to leave his position as abbot of a monastery in India. Rinpoche is not simply seeking escape from a mundane job (in fact he is abbot of three monasteries,) he wants to take a three year retreat of a very specific kind, to live in the world and as a lay person. He takes along no safety net, in his knapsack are mere basics, one set of civilian clothes (he changes his monk's robe, the garment he wore daily from the age of five years), two books and just enough money to live modestly for a short time with a few comforts before transitioning to living solely from alms. His is a path of no return. Other than leaving a note explaining his very unconventional actions, he left no trace of his plans at the monastery. He is free to experience the world. Or is he?

We are familiar with the traditional story of the Buddha, leaving behind his life as a prince to discover the nature of the mind. Here is a 21st century version of Buddha Shakyamuni's journey. Mingyur Rinpoche departs from his own circumstance of comfort; he steps out of the life of a highly regarded lama in order to apply what he has learned from great teachers



throughout his entire life. This is a book of discovery.

In an interview about his adventure, Mingyur Rinpoche mentioned that of the two books he brought along in his backpack, one was a Dzogchen text. Yes, Mingyur Rinpoche is a Dzogchen master, though he does not mention the word in the book. Knowing this background, the book may be read as an intimate look at Dzogchen practice; however, there are no elaborate rituals, no ornaments, no shrine room – this book is all about direct experience. Direct experience of the stomach, direct experience of putrid smells, the body sleeping on hard surfaces (the floor of a rail station) the eye seeing poverty of India and its effects.

As Mingyur Rinpoche navigates the world of the senses and the harsh realities of India, he thinks of his renowned father, (Kyabe Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche) giving him instruction, “The Bardo – what will you do in the bardos?” This is not a question to ponder about future times, this is live action where Mingyur Rinpoche lives the bardo experience. As practitioners we may wonder – what will the experience of the bardo be like? How prepared am I for the bardo? This book is a reminder that through awareness, we have the chance to know at any moment. We are in the bardo.

This rare account gives a poignant moment to moment account of situations faced with the heightened awareness of an advanced practitioner. Mingyur Rinpoche meets the bardo experience with the training of a practitioner and the body of a hu-

man being. The story is a precise account of how a master meets and integrates the experience of the body, voice and mind. We also have in these pages the auspicious flavour of life and the connections of one human being to another. The book reminds us that at face value, we never know who we are meeting and what impact they may have on our lives. Karma has many facets and many expressions. The quiet qualities of love are related to karma and we have the opportunity to realize this in a personal way. The title of the book, “In Love with the World,” speaks through the pages. As the title implies, Rinpoche's unusual retreat may be viewed as a story of love. What is there not to love? We have the opportunity to discover this reality for ourselves at any time.

Why not get a copy of this inspiring book and read it – the story engages and it echoes what Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche taught with great dedication to his fortunate students. ©

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Larisa Rozhnova

I was born in Leningrad, finished high school there and then graduated from the Faculty of Art and Graphics of the Pedagogical University. So my first education qualified me as a drawing teacher.

I dreamed of becoming an artist, was interested in Buddhism, and from school I read everything that could be found in Soviet times on the topic of spiritual practices. In the seventh grade, I found a *samizdat* book (an underground publication in Soviet times – *ed*), began to practice hatha yoga and immediately fell in love with it. A little later I read that the remnants of Buddhism in our country are preserved in Buryatia so, in 1985, I travelled to the Ivolginsky datsan near Ulan-Ude, where I came into contact with a Buddhist spiritual tradition.

Meeting with the Dharma. Buryatia.

My first teacher was the oldest monk of the datsan, who out of respect was called “grandfather Dharma Dodi”. He was one of the few lamas who had survived the October Revolution and gone through all the persecution and repression. He had been educated before the Revolution and, by coincidence, had spent many years in the Stalin concentration camps in Kolyma and therefore knew the Russian language and culture very well. I received the oral transmission of teachings from him and immediately began to practice.

When I saw Buryat thangkas for the first time, I was shocked because when faced with thangka, you lose interest in other art. While I had been studying at the art institute, I wanted to paint everything, portraits, still life, and many other things, but once I saw the thangka, I no longer wanted to do anything else. It is the supreme art, the art of Dharma, which surpasses everything.

At first I tried to copy thangkas. I drew from books that could be obtained at that time, old Buryat editions with black and white images. It seemed to me that it was simple: I am an artist so it is enough for me to make a tracing paper copy. But I was faced with the fact that it was impossible to do this without understanding the tech-



nology. You can make some kind of design based on Green Tara, but it still won't be a thangka. I found that thangkas have a special charm, a special energy, but to catch that quality is very difficult. When people see a real thangka they are fascinated by it and have a strong desire to do the same piece for their personal practice.

I understood that to master the art of thangka you need to study seriously but in Buryatia in the late 1980s there was nowhere to study and no one to learn from, although now, many years later, I know that there was an exceptional artist called Danzan Dondokov and his daughter Lyuba Dondokova, who adopted his style.

Dharma in the Soviet Union

The first lama to come to the USSR was Bakula Rinpoche from Ladakh in North India. He came to Moscow in 1989 because he was the Indian ambassador to Mongolia and at the time the Soviet Union had the warmest relationship with Mongolia. His lectures were somewhat secret and information about them was transmitted among those interested in Buddhism by word of mouth. The teachings took place at the library and it was a breath of real Dharma.

Then, in 1990–1991, the *karma kagyü* tradition came to Russia with the monk Rinchen from Poland, who taught *ngondro*, and then Ole Nydahl with his wife Hannah, their first teacher Tsechu Rinpoche, the “transparent lama”, and the monk Kalsang.

Meeting Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche

Later in 1992, Namkhai Norbu came to my native St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad). I took the subway, drove to the datsan, where the first two lectures were held, and saw Rinpoche for the first time. It was wonderful. Rinpoche drove up in a very modest, by today's standards, rare car, Moskvich-411. He was dressed European style, a little sporty, but not like a lama. He was giving a difficult lecture on the nine vehicles in the *nyingma* tradition and I sat and listened as if spellbound. At the same time, I realized that I did not know even a third of the words that he uttered, but I decided to learn them later.

That year Rinpoche's retreats were held in Vilnius, Leningrad, Moscow and Ulan-Ude. Rinpoche came to Russia with about fifteen of his disciples. It was June, the datsan had thick stone walls, and it was cold inside. Apparently, Rinpoche's closest disciples knew the nine vehicles of *nyingma*, and, wrapped in blankets, they fell asleep. At some point, a funny event happened: Rinpoche shouted deafeningly „Padmasambhava! and everyone, startled, got out of their wrappings. For some reason, I remember this moment very well. For me, the lecture was not boring, it was a little stressful, as I did not understand some of the words, but I tried very hard.

There was another funny moment at the end. After the lecture, people began to approach Rinpoche and each said something of their own. Among them there was one man who asked endlessly: „Still, I didn't understand how Milarepa managed to hide in the yak's horn?” He repeated: “Please explain to me, how could it happen? Surely Milarepa cannot fit in the horn!” Rinpoche laughed as if he were being tickled and his laughter echoed through the datsan. The more Rinpoche laughed, the more this man asked.

The next day the lecture continued and on the third day the retreat was moved to a school building in a remote area of St. Petersburg. Further teaching took place in the school gym and everything was just magical. There was enough room to spread the mandala and there I saw the Vajra Dance for the first time. Only a few of Rinpoche's students knew the dance but many



Kurukulla.



Vajrasattva yab yum.

people tried to repeat something, standing around the mandala.

Then circumstances developed in such a way that I easily and without hindrance traveled further to Buryatia and in a couple of weeks I went to a retreat not far from Ulan-Ude on Lake Kotokel. At the second retreat, Rinpoche's teachings were perceived more strongly, precisely and, on my part, consciously.

After the retreat, I lived for some time in Vladivostok in the Russian Far East, where we formed a local Dzogchen Community. There were several people who had received the transmission, and we formed a small group, studied the practices and did one retreat after another. I can say that I did not notice the "bold" 90s (difficult times after the collapse of the USSR with a lot of instability, criminality, poverty, etc. – *ed*). I was busy all the time with practice, retreats and related plans. In June 1993, we did a retreat on the chöd practice in the Sayan Mountains in Buryatia, and in general, for a year we studied and performed retreats on all the practices transmitted by Rinpoche.

Thangka. Education.

In 1994, at the invitation of the *karma kagyu* center, a thangka-painting artist, Mariana van der Horst, came to St. Petersburg. I was lucky to be able to study with her and at the same time translate that re-

treat. Classes lasted about ten days, after which I firmly decided that I wanted to go to study in India. Learning from Mariana was great and later I translated many of her retreats in 1994–2015, until she stopped

» continued on the following page



Larisa near Tabo monastery, northern India.



Larisa with her painting teacher Ngawang Dorje.

» continued from previous page

traveling due to covid. But at that moment I realized that it was necessary to study for a long time, seriously and thoroughly, and decided to find a teacher in India.

I was ready to set off for my journey, but in 1994 there was an outbreak of cholera in India, restrictions were imposed and in the end I did not go anywhere. In 1995 we heard that there would be Santi Maha Sangha exam and retreat and since this was a priority for me, the trip was again postponed.

In 1996, a retreat on the first level of Santi Maha Sangha was held in Zhukovka, near Moscow, at the residence of the former general secretary of Mongolia. It was an absolutely wonderful retreat with just over a hundred people participating. These were people who had just passed the exam and some of Rinpoche's closest students such as Fabio. During this retreat I managed to go to Moscow and took ticket to Delhi and back for a year.

In 1996 I flew to India. Thanks to the tremendous blessing of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, circumstances came together magically. But in addition to going there, it was necessary to find a teacher in India. I knew English and only that India was a third world country, as they used to say, that's all.

India. Eternal love.

A wave of blessings immediately took me to the Kalachakra initiation given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Tabo Monastery in the Spiti Valley in northern India.

From that moment on, somehow everything started to develop. Soon I met my teacher Ngawang Dorje, head of the School of Thangka Painting for the People of the Himalayan Region of India in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, called "Painting in Gompa Style".

He had received a traditional education for lamas at Kundeling Monastery in Lhasa, where he was sent at the age of 6. There he also became a thangka artist in the *ga-dri* style. In the early 1950s, he went on foot to India and became an Indian citizen. The teacher said that I could learn from him as much as I could so I studied with him for three years from 1996 to 2000, periodically leaving India to get a new visa. The easiest way was to travel to neighboring Nepal and thanks to this I met many wonderful masters and was able to do retreats in holy places permeated with Dharma blessings.

Kunsangar. Return to India.

In 2001 I finished a Mandarava thangka and went to a retreat at Kunsangar. The thangka was hanging behind Rinpoche for the entire teaching and at the end of the retreat I was chosen to join the Kunsangar Gakyil, so until 2003 I lived and worked at the Gar, dedicating all my free time to painting. During that period, I did the Green Tara thangka, which I offered to Rinpoche during the Green Tara retreat. Later Rinpoche presented it to Kunsangar South.

After 2003, I came to India to see Ngawang Dorje whenever I could. Besides, I began organizing pilgrimage tours to the holy places of India and Nepal and, as a result,



Rinpoche near the datsan in St. Petersburg in 1992.

I lived there most of the time until 2020. I was particularly interested in the geographical "places of power" associated with the practice, with our line of transmission. For almost 20 years, I have organized and conducted many creative trips and pilgrimages, always linking them to the teachings. Especially memorable were two Mandarava practice retreats with Dzogchen Community practitioners at the Maratika Cave in Nepal in 2017 and 2018. The second trip coincided with the period after Rinpoche's passing and we dedicated a retreat to his memory, consecrating the Mandarava thangka there with the whole group.

Creation of a thangka. Technology.

When creating a thangka, sometimes a sudden inspiration comes to me and I immediately sit down to work. When a thangka is ordered, then I plan my time and carry out orders, for example, in winter. Everything is done slowly and unhurriedly.

The thangka has a very strict technology developed over the centuries. Traditionally paints from ground minerals are used as they give a very beautiful velvet surface. These are the colors of the spectrum that convey the pure energy of the five primordial elements.

First, the canvas is stretched and then primed and polished. Then a drawing is



Mandarava.



White Tara.

applied, colors are superimposed, and where a transition from a saturated color to a lighter one is required, toning is done. The glue acts as a connecting link; on the glue base, coating is made with chalk or clay. Paints are also mixed on with the glue base and, when applied, become part of the canvas, a single whole with it. Then it's time for brush strokes. Every detail is stroked with a thin brush by making flexible soft lines with pressure. Lastly, finely ground unpolished gold is applied and then everything is polished with a precious stone tip. Sometimes a drawing is applied by polishing. The softness or hardness of a stone such as jade or amethyst makes a difference in the intensity of the shine.

Reflection in the mirror

A thangka represents the ideal dimension, the pure land of the Buddha. The surface of the thangka is called 'mirror', or *melong* in Tibetan. The elements of the landscape are arranged according to the art of organizing surrounding space – Tibetan geomancy, or *sache*.

There are special techniques when a thangka is written in gold on a red background – *martan*, on a black background – *nagtan*, and on a gold background with a red outline – *sertan*. They are associated with visions at the time of death and such a thangka is a cause for postmortal liberation.

The thangka non-verbally transmits the meditation *sadhana*. It fully describes the deity, its state, its qualities and transfers its energy by means of painting. A thangka serves as a support for practice and helps to collect two accumulations – merit and wisdom. A good thangka leaves a very strong imprint on the mind, so it also serves as a cause for liberation. In addition, a thangka can be used as a magic ritual. If you need to perform an action, to achieve what you want, then one of the methods is to order a thangka. For example, to help the patient recover faster, they traditionally order a thangka of the deities of long life, for example, White Tara. I know that one monastery ordered a thangka from my teacher Ngawang Dorje to find the rebirth of their tutor.

Ritual of consecration of a thangka (*ramne*)

If possible, it is better to empower and sign the thangka with a lama. When I empower the thangka myself, I do a *ganapuja*, and then in front of the corresponding chakras I put down the seed syllables behind with red *simdhura* or gold.

Practical lessons in thangka painting

For several years I have been doing Buddhist thangka art retreats at Kunsangar North. Usually it is on Friday and at the weekend, after which the participants do their homework for four days, and the next weekend we meet again. Hopefully in the future we will continue our studies! ☺

Larisa's contacts:

Whatsapp: +7 911 725 95 30

Email: lararoj24@gmail.com

Discovering Awareness

Margaret Jasinski

When we are with our nature, we have no doubt because our nature naturally reflects every shade of reality. Reality includes everything, every experience, every experience of the mind. Every day, using our very own personalities, we exercise the ego. If we are realistic, we know the ego is our prevalent experience of the mind. When we exercise the ego, we arrange experiences according to our ideas of "I, me, mine." And in life we are in contact with the flavours of pleasure and pain. This is a snapshot of the experience of the familiar mind; using the terminology of dharma, we may say these words express a glimpse of human ignorance in action. Ignorance, applied without judgment or qualification, is a circumstance of the human condition and we have the opportunity to work with it. By using awareness, we have the capacity to see our personal experience with complete objectivity, without evaluation. We use awareness to recognize "what is." When we have awareness of our familiar experience, our patterns of mind and resultant actions, we have the chance to use our egoic view to go beyond our egoic view.

When we wake up, we wake up. When we become aware, we recognize something, we "get it" immediately so we do not have to analyze or get caught in the push and pull of egoic thinking. (If we see a tree, we see a tree. We know it is a tree without doubt.) In moments of awareness, we have the chance to move beyond the mental experience of the ego. We can use awareness to support our experience; we have the (non-egoic) stability to intimately understand that everything is in its own place with its own characteristics, our existence as well.

Everything is integrated, and we go beyond the experience of the ego so there is neither rejection or acceptance – things are as they are in their own condition. Nothing is separate, all expressions of life are interconnected and interdependent.

We know. This profound knowledge is reflected with the mind, yet it is not intellectual, it is not egoic, it is the experience of self-existing wisdom that we discover through awareness. We use our intellectual knowledge and apply awareness to get a "feel" for non-intellectual understanding. Here is a simple example.

Consider a coin: it is one thing – a coin, and it has two faces. This is not a riddle for the egoic mind, it is reality, how things are. We know it. We relax. When we have a grasp of the reality of a coin we do not feel compelled to see both sides at once to know they are there, naturally we use one side as a reference to the other. We have confidence. There is no doubt. We know what each side looks like. We understand the experience of a coin, we are not confused. This understanding is a form of awareness. Notice that it is not based on the intellect – it uses the intellect and at the same time we have a "feel" for this awareness, much the same way we have a "feel" for walking and other natural movements.

When we use simple awareness as a foundation for experience, we gain natural confidence that it will support all of our experience, the two familiar sides of life-pleasure and pain. We can participate and

take action in the world with awareness. We go to work, form relations, take action and function within human made systems with the understanding of what they are, along with their limitations. We do not have to use our vital energy to suffer from their limitations. Through awareness, we are in contact with experience and simultaneously we "know" the characteristics of human systems (and the characteristics of human beings- especially our own) as they are, without mental attachment. When we use awareness, we have contact with experience and along with it, an understanding of the workings of the world and our own actions. When we use objective awareness we do not have to fight or defend or prove anything to anyone, ourselves included; we naturally move beyond our familiar mental positions. We simply know, we experience natural cognizance of how things are – this is the state of having no doubt.

There are many strands of life expressing themselves in any given moment – this is the natural movement of life, it is how things are. When we experience awareness we are in greater contact with what is happening. We do not have to find awareness outside of ourselves, it is here, and it has always been here, it is a natural facet of life's movement. When we use awareness, we relax our familiar egoic view and we see "into the life of things." We are more steady and relaxed in our experience, not grasping or trying to create effect. Awareness is being with what is happening. What is happening is natural happiness.

Awareness is like a flame that cannot be blown out.

Ego is like a set of winds blowing this way and that.

The flame is here. Winds blow.

The sky is blue. Birds fly.

Day cycles to night, night cycles to day. ©

December 8 Rinpoche's Gift of the Tara Practice

"You always bring me so many gifts on my birthday; today I want to offer you a gift!"

Ana Maria Humeres

It was December 8 many years ago when our Master said these words to us. Our venerable Merigar was still very young, our Vajra family was not as large as today and we older practitioners were a little younger.

That day the Master told us how his parents had wanted a child who did not arrive and how they had asked their guru, the great Adzom Drugpa, for advice, who suggested they turn to Tara. Rinpoche also told us that after some time his mother came to know of his arrival through a dream and how, finally, thanks to Tara he arrived in this dimension to shine, Jewel of Heaven, illuminating all beings.

And so, after explaining to us how his coming into this world, an act of infinite generosity, had been mediated by Tara's boundless compassion, that day he offered us his Gift, precious as were all his gifts: the practice of Green Tara.

Since that day, every year on his birthday we have done the practice of Tara, knowing that our Mother had thought of us and that, in addition to benefiting all the beings of this globe, she had sent us the luminous Jewel so that we could continue a path that began many lifetimes ago.

A few days was December 8th once again. Today, after so many years and so many happenings, we need more than ever the compassion of our mother Tara. Today more than ever let us turn to her with total trust and devotion and may her omnipotent intervention help us to continue the path we have started and never lose our presence of the Guru at the center of our hearts.

We will find ourselves again in the presence of the Jewel of Heaven, and one day we, his Sangha, all together like a pile of rice will be able to experience the end of the path!



A thangka of Green Tara painted by Glen Eddy and property of IDC Kundrolling Yellow Gakyil member Stephen Korn.

The Power of Practice Online

IDC Kundrolling, New York, moved online at the very beginning of the pandemic by starting a Green Tara practice, twice a day. As the U.S. 'locked down' for the first time and enormous wildfires moved across the globe, we wanted to practice Rinpoche's *Terma* Teaching of Guru Arya Tara, and to recite the 20th action mantra related to contagious diseases. We started out with several members of Dondrubling in California, Tashigar South, Pelzomling in Mexico City, and Kunsangar North, particularly St. Petersburg. Many of us had done the required week of retreat to use action mantras, but many had not. At the suggestion of Johanna Bennett, starting March 16, 2020, we structured a week-long Tara retreat opportunity where practitioners could do one session alone from home in the morning and then join for 2–3 practices together online. At the end of their week of Tara retreat they could therefore join in the action mantra practice which was part of the daily practice.

The group has been practicing through Zoom twice a day for almost two years, and much like an in-person practice at a local center, the practice is led by people who show up. As a result, any people who did not think of themselves as practice leaders started leading regularly. A core group keeps the fire burning, including Melissa

Johnston, Laurel Bellon, Alicia Zuzunaga, Roxana Garcia, Johanna Bennett, Diana and Michael Sullivan, Chris Dye, Foma, and many, many others.

Twice a day the group completes a full practice, reciting the two main mantras, the 20th action mantra for infectious diseases, and 2 other action mantras of their choice, plus the White Tara mantra. We sing the Song of the Vajra, and dedicate the merit to all sentient beings. If there is a Green Tara retreat being webcast from somewhere in the world the group tries to align with and follow it. At points during the two years we have hosted practice chains and multi-day practices of the 21 Praises of Tara.

Our group is global with regular practitioners not only from IDC Tsegyalgar East, IDC Tsegyalgar West, and IDC Tashigar South, but also IDC Kunsangar and IDC Merigar West. We asked them to comment on their participation in the online group.

Melissa Johnston

IDC Tsegyalgar West, California, USA

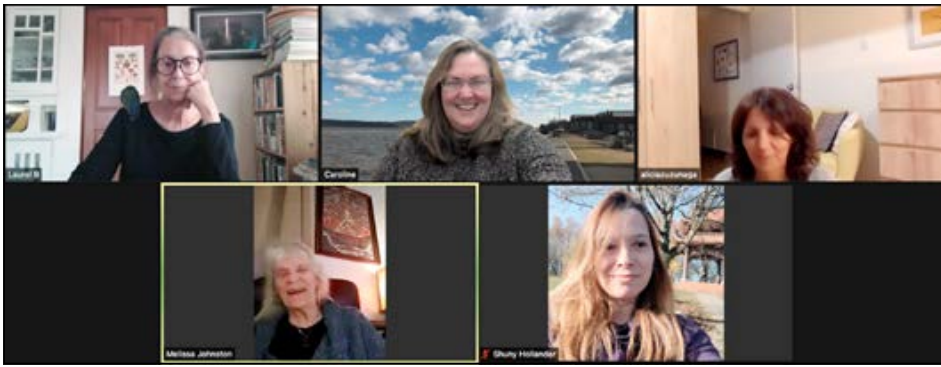
My first retreat was with Rinpoche in California, and in 40 years in the Community, I had never led a practice. Now I lead almost every day. We practice also with Foma and with Pan from Greece. What I have found from practicing Tara almost 10 times a week (twice a day) since March 2020 is that it is a true path to enlightenment. I have never grown so much before doing this, and with this celestial choir, I found my voice.

Nanay Valdivia Seibt

**IDC Tashigar Sur,
IDC Norbuling, Lima, Peru**

Since March 2020, the beginning of the confinement, every day confirmed the immense fortune of having us and having received teachings from Rinpoche ... I stayed connected daily with the Chöd Group with Steven Landsberg and with Tara at the beginning of the night, from New York, practitioners that I had known and those I met online. Tara's mantra is the first that I heard in this life when I was very young, and it is one of the first practices that I learned while being part of the community, and knowing the direct connection and history with the Master, she became my great Mother. Tara always gives us the exact thing, what we need. Just like Padmasambava, she is when we call her with

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

certainly, without a doubt. She is within us, she is the energy that manifests Everything ... from the Source itself.

Laurel Bellon
IDC Tsegylgar West,
Dondrubling, California, USA

I joined the Tara practice group for several reasons. I had already felt an attraction to the Tara practice, having attended the Praises to Arya Tara retreat with Rinpoche in Merigar, in 2007. I do believe that accumulation of mantras has power, so I thought reciting the mantra of the 20th Tara which protects against epidemics would be the most beneficial thing I could do at this time. It grounds me in the practice, and I have also had a chance to meet so many practitioners worldwide that I ordinarily would not have a chance to meet – it gives me a feeling of connection during a time of intense isolation.

Roxana Garcia
IDC Tashigar Sur

Tara practice helps me in my daily life, as does praying for all sentient beings. The team I feel is very important, like a close family.

Monica Hernandez
IDC Tsegylgar West,
Dondrubling, California, USA

The daily Arya Tara practice which began in 2020 helped me to break the isolation, the fears and the helplessness. It's great to practice collectively. Very grateful for the 21 Invocations which I discovered in this practice group. Special thanks to Kundrolling and to Melissa Johnston for keeping the fire of the practice going daily for all of us.

Caroline Hotaling
IDC Tsegylgar East,
IDC Kundrolling, New York, USA

Personally this group helped me stay less afraid during all of the pandemic and also

political issues of 2020. I also met and got to know so many practitioners from Dondrubling, from South America, Russia, and elsewhere. I feel much closer to Dondrubling and Tashigar communities as a result. In 2021 I cannot join at the same times, so I switched to a solo daily Tara practice.

Diana and Michael Sullivan
IDC Tsegylgar East, Wisconsin, USA

Tara and Odser Chenma practice have provided an umbrella while we have been weathering the stormy waves of these times. Meeting and practicing with our vajra brothers and sisters from all over the world has strengthened our sense of sangha. Living outside of larger centers, it's been wonderful to have access to these shared practices and to be supported by Tara, Odser Chenma and our community.

Irina Romo
IDC Tsegylgar West, New Mexico, USA

Practicing Tara in a group helped me tremendously to overcome my personal fears and anxiety and to keep me grounded during the challenging time in 2020. I met so many wonderful practitioners all over the world. It helped me feel close to our Dzogchen family. It opened possibilities to other online practices in our community. In 2021 I continued to do Tara practice on my own, but I will gladly join the group again if my schedule permits.

Laura Casinelli
IDC Tsegylgar East,
IDC Kundrolling, New York, USA

Through the regular appointment, the Tara practice not only helped me deepen my knowledge and experience of the practice itself, it also helped me keep a sense of the strength and support of the community in a difficult time. I am very grateful for it.

Laura Welder
IDC Tsegylgar East, Georgia, USA

The regular Tara practice that started during the pandemic helped me to feel more connected to both the practice and to vajra kin. This was not a practice that I previously felt very connected to, however, it saw (and continues to see) met through both the pandemic and several challenging life transitions. Kudos to those at Kundrolling who have kept this going – it is much appreciated!

Luke Karamol
IDC Tsegylgar West,
Dondrubling, California, USA

The Green Tara practice group facilitated by Kundrolling is/was a gift. I deeply appreciated the opportunity to practice together and connect with others, often daily (in 2020). While we have all received many lungs/transmissions, etc from our Teacher, it was wonderful to practice with others who feel drawn to this practice and attend regularly. For me, the motivation and energy from the practice evokes a heartfelt aspiration for the benefit of all beings. And the opportunity to sing the 21 Praises collectively was particularly important for me. Very grateful to Kundrolling!

Jacopo Surricchio
IDC Tsegylgar East,
IDC Kundrolling, New York, USA

As the Blue Gakyil of Kundrolling for the last 3 years, I feel the Tara practices have become the fire of our local Sangha and the collective umbrella that has protected us in times of Kaliyuga. The group started the input with different devoted practitioners of Arya Tara, like Caroline, Johanna, Michela, Alix, Gleitia, Steve and Fanny, Anjani, Luke, Laura, Liz, Matt, Tara K and Tara F, Danae, Anna, and many more. During the retreat, the pandemic arrived here in earnest in New York and the US, and we were practicing already online with two Tun daily. Since then, the group has never stopped. For the first six months, we were ensuring to host the practice and to have a leader daily, until we understood that this group was organically becoming a strong and independent daily appointment internationally and nationally of Arya Tara.

I am personally very grateful to have been able to practice the 21 Manifestations of Tara for a very long time, especially with so many devoted vajra brothers and sisters in times of isolation, and to have collaborated to have this group practice. A very

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

John Renshaw

Yantra Yoga Instructor in the UK

My story begins with my first involvement in Buddhism near Mansfield at a small centre where I met with a strange Japanese Zen monk. Later when I moved to London we met again and he wanted to make a record in my small basic studio where he did slow chanting of Om (peace). It was short-lived as later on I understood that his name Ma-treya and behavior were strange.

Gradually I was attracted more to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. In London, at the time, there wasn't a lot of choice so, like some of the early people in our Community, we met Chögyam Trungpa and, in particular, quite a few of the early Community members were students of the late Sogyal Rinpoche whose abusive behaviour became very controversial.



For some time I had been approaching the Vajrayana, practicing the *ngondro* and the gradual approach so I suppose the positive side, if anything, was that Sogyal presented many teachers to us like HH Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and many others. Before a lot of us "jumped ship" and made the transition to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, we were at least introduced to quite a spectrum of



John practising 1 of the 7 lotus in Gran Canaria.

great teachers from the Nyingmapa tradition.

After being involved at Orgyen Choling, Sogyal's early center, I went to India for about a year and some months. He had given me a letter to meet the HH Dalai Lama and Dzogchen Rinpoche, principally we traveled to attend a huge gathering in Clement Town at the Mindroling gönpa. It was the Rinchen Terdzö Chenmo or the great treasury of rediscovered teachings, a collection of Termas assembled by Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. Spending time there was quite a high point because I was exposed to many hundreds of monks nuns, and lamas for a period of about five months or so. We had the *wangs* and *lungs* every day in this very elaborate, artistically rich decorated Mindroling tradition gönpa and Dilgo Khyentse was giving the *wangs* every day so it felt like I had been dropped into the deep end, if you like, surrounded by all these monks, nuns and teachers in this kind of environment, which was quite amazing.

It was within this environment that I first heard much more about Dzogchen and in particular about Namkhai Norbu. There were about 15 Westerners attending these *wangs* every day and in the middle of this there was an English yogi, Stayce Bancroft, who came along. I was familiar with him because many months before that I had seen a lorry in Princess road where Orgyen Choling was located, and it sort of caught my eye. When I enquired I discovered that Stayce had driven the lorry over

» continued on the following page



Kamtrul Rinpoche and Togdens.

special thank you to the many devoted practitioners like Alicia, Melissa, Laurel, Harvey and Rita, Roxana, Nanay, Chris, Johanna, Irina, Wayne, Paula, Foma, Mariano, and many, many others.

Foma Murzin

Kazan Dzogchen Community, Russia

The Kundrolling Zoom Channel was the only channel where Tara's practice has

been conducted every day since the pandemic began. My practice deepened greatly and I felt great protection during this difficult time. My immense gratitude to Caroline and other organizers, as well as all practitioners from different countries, with whom I managed to share the joy of joint practice. ©

» continued from previous page

from a Scandinavian country full of wood burning stoves and later he drove it to India, to Tashi Jong.

In our spare time between the *wangs* and initiations, Stayce would tell me about some students of Namkhai Norbu that he had met. He'd learned some practices, some Yantra Yoga and Song of the Vajra and various things, so I was basically getting second or third-hand this increasingly interesting information about Rinpoche and Dzogchen from him. I was in the middle of doing the *ngondro* after many months of practising, mostly getting distracted from doing it, and so when I heard about this approach, it was different to Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, I became increasingly interested in the characteristics and quality of the teachings coming from Namkhai Norbu. Stayce himself was a charismatic sort of character and later became an important Western yogi living under the radar in Nepal for many many, many years. But anyway, in this period I was learning some Yantra Yoga even before I met Namkhai Norbu, and hearing little bits occasionally from other teachers as well about Dzogchen so I became increasingly fascinated by Dzogchen and in particular Namkhai Norbu.

A few weeks after the completion of the Rinchen Terdzö, we travelled around to various Buddhist pilgrimage sites and eventually found ourselves in Nepal. There I met up with Stayce Bancroft and his lorry. He was taking Khamtrul Rinpoche and about five or six Togdens with their families on pilgrimage. In those days I didn't fully understand who Khamtrul Rinpoche was or indeed who or what the Togdens were; it was the first time that I had met any Tibetan yogis. Fortunately being a friend of Stayce, I shared the pilgrimage and visited various sites with Khamtrul Rinpoche and the group of Togdens. In the back of the lorry sometimes during breaks they would (what I understand now) practice Kumbhaka and Ts lung.

During my stay in Nepal I went to different monasteries and met a few lamas and had the fortune to meet Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche and receive teachings from him. I went with him to Tattapani when he was invited to do some practices for a dying person. Tattapani is on the Nepalese-Tibetan border, next to a river with hot springs and with my partner Yolanda, we stayed there a few days and he showed us some Padmasambhava caves and we had some strong experiences. When you receive blessings and initiations you receive these coloured

cords – I received hundreds of them at the Rinchen Terdzö – and tie them round your neck, in my case, it was around my wrist. It's like some big "mine's bigger than yours, I've got more than you", some egoistic, accumulative thing although I didn't quite realize that at the time. But at Tattapani, Chagdud Tulku teased me and picked at them and asked me, "What are you doing with all these?", and then he just cut them off. What a relief that was!

Gradually I became more interested in Dzogchen but, in fact, the actual physical meeting with Rinpoche was after India when we went to Greece to do a retreat in a cave on the island of Crete.

As soon as I got back to London, through the grapevine, I heard that Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche had been there and he was shortly to come back so, of course, by then I felt completely ready! I think that was in April or May of 1979. The retreat was held in what used to be the Cambodian Embassy. At that time Cambodia was at war and the building was empty and, back in those days, many young folks were squatting. If a building was boarded up and unoccupied it was quickly squatted. This one was on "millionaires' row", one of the highest-priced property areas in London and had been transformed into the London



Group photo of Rinpoche's first retreat in London in 1979 at the former Cambodian Embassy.

Guild of Transcultural Studies. The first retreat in London with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was organized by Jill Purce and possibly the second one as well. Jill was quite instrumental in getting Rinpoche to the UK and organizing teachings and retreats. So I was at the second retreat in 1979.

I had had a good taste and experience of Tibetan Buddhist Tantra but, of course, when I finally met Rinpoche with his succinct and direct, easy-to-understand transmission in words and knowledge just flowing through, it was like a breath of fresh air, it was completely a “wow” moment. I think I was ready for it. Sometimes we say there’s a kind of time and place for everything, so I’m pleased I went “around the block” a bit and had some basic experience. Maybe it was useful so I could appreciate this more direct approach, Rinpoche’s behavior, his attitude, compared to the more traditional, institutional setting of Buddhism and Tantra. Everything about it was such a profound, coming home, relaxed presence. Beyond words.

I was blown away at the first retreat and it was difficult to soak in the real knowledge and meaning of what he was teaching. That came in following retreats, reading and studying and in particular practicing to gain real experience.

One of the things that drew me right before meeting Rinpoche, via Stayce Bancroft, were some of the body, breath, and yogic approaches. I was obviously keen to learn at the first opportunity Yantra Yoga, which I did and, of course, now I’ve been teaching for many years. I started just after a retreat at the Rigpa centre in London, in 1987, where Rinpoche had been invited to teach, and typically during a teaching session he would talk about body, speech and mind and the benefits of breathing and coordinating your prana. Then he pointed at me and said, “You can learn Yantra Yoga from John”. Later a few people came to talk to me and within a week or so we had set up weekly Yantra sessions, and since then I’ve been teaching Yantra Yoga continuously. Of course in those days, there wasn’t any structure or book like we have now. We were learning, practicing and trying to understand but it encouraged me to try my best and make sense of it and teach these keen people, the ones who were at the retreat and wanted to learn this physical movement, breathing system. So I was fortunate that I had these circumstances and motivation.



Rinpoche and students during another UK retreat at a holiday park in Ilfracombe.

A few retreats later, in England, when Namkhai Norbu came back, there was a retreat in Devon, possibly around 1984. We basically took over a large holiday center and had the teachings in what was the pub or the bar section. There were lots of horns and trumpets and things on the walls. In the middle of the teaching Rinpoche mentioned this huge collection of termas and the Rinchen Terdzö. Afterwards talking with Rinpoche Mike Farmer and myself mentioned that we had received them in India a few years earlier and Rinpoche said something like, “How fortunate you are. I didn’t receive them, maybe you can give them to me” or words to that effect.

In some of the early days, at the end of a retreat Rinpoche would create a situation in which people could open up and do strange things and it would create a situation where we could play and explore beyond normal constraints. We used to have a lot of shenanigans, fun and games, song and dance and so forth during the early retreats. So at the end of this retreat I came dressed up as a “Lama Jigajig” and Mike was my assistant. I had some kind of robes and a skeleton mask with balloon eyes, and water pistols, bells etc and...yeah, horrendous. Mike ushered the people in for blessings and fortunately, Rinpoche was egging us on, playing the Tibetan cymbals, laugh-

ing his head off, and it became a whole cathartic process. The horns came off the wall of the pub folks trying to play them, Rinpoche was playing the cymbals, I was squirting people with water, and my eyes were popping out of my skull head, bonking people with a crystal and I went into a kind of trance. For a moment I was lost in time. Then I fell off (I was on a table) and I kind of woke up. It was quite a profound experience for me and very funny for everyone else. Everybody was in hysterics, somehow it seemed sacrilegious as well, but we were constantly reassured by Rinpoche laughing his head off. So that was quite a strong experience for me and, of course, entertaining. The anchored presence of Rinpoche supporting the open play of pantomime. ©



Every
reads **1** The
Mirror



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community

News from the International
Dzogchen Community
of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Read online at
www.melong.com