



THE MIRROR

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The Meaning of Longsal
The Uniqueness of the Dzogchen Teachings
of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
Discovering the Potentiality of the Mirror
A Gift for Our Children, Our Future

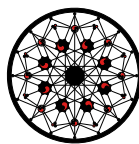


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Contents

Editorial.....	3
The Meaning of Longsal.....	4
The Uniqueness of the Dzogchen Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu	7
Discovering the Potentiality of the Mirror.....	9
Shang Shung Institute.....	12
ASIA.....	15
A Gift for Our Children, Our Future.....	16
Dzamling Gar.....	18
Merigar West.....	19
Merigar East.....	26
Kunsangar South	27
Kunsangar North	29
Namgyalgar	30
Tsegyalgar East.....	31
Tsegyalgar West	32
Book reviews	33
Artists in the Dzogchen Community.....	35
Passages	38
Pictures from the Past.....	41
Reflections	45
How I Met	46

Front cover: Starting the elaborate process of painting the ceiling of the Gönpa at Merigar East in Romania.
Back cover: A visitor to Namgyalgar in the Glass House Mountains, Queensland, Australia.



Dear Vajra Family,

Tuesday, September 27, 2022, marks the fourth anniversary of the passing of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

In the last four years, the International Dzogchen Community (IDC) has continued in all its aspects – the View, Meditation, and Behavior – through a range of collaborations and offerings. These have included the activities organized by its Gars and Lings; courses and practices led by authorized instructors of Khaita, Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance, and Yantra Yoga; the organizations that Rinpoche created or that evolved thanks to him:

- * International Dzogchen Community (IDC)
- * Atiyoga Foundation (ATIF)
- * Shang Shung Publications (SSP)
- * Association for International Solidarity in Asia (ASIA)
- * Museum of Asian Art and Culture (MACO)
- * Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine (STM)
- * Dynamic Space of the Elements;

And most importantly through the involvement of all our members – Rinpoche's devoted students who make up our global community.

Throughout these challenging times, we have carried our Master in our hearts, and have continued to practice the precious teachings he so generously and compassionately transmitted to us as we move forward together. During COVID, we remained connected by practicing together and attending courses thanks to the collaborative efforts of our worldwide Gars/Lings and authorized IDC instructors who organized them globally via Zoom and webcast. This teamwork advanced our collective practice and created and strengthened friendships among practitioners globally.

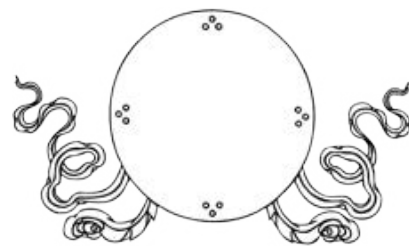
As Rinpoche said in *Starting the Evolution*:

“In this way, if you are really practicing seriously, you can maintain communication with the teacher no matter what the situation is; because when you enter the practice and become a good practitioner, the teacher is found within you. The teacher is not only an external phenomenon. He or she can manifest through your own clarity. We must have a clear understanding of this. The reality of our actual situation is not that everything is just external to us.”

Now we have thankfully entered a time where hybrid programming is a reality, thus allowing us to practice together in person more regularly. We continue to do our best by deepening and developing this precious knowledge together, so that the spirit of collaboration may be naturally maintained in each of us for the benefit of all.

With best wishes,
The International Gakyil

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The Meaning of Longsal

Tashigar South March 5, 2010
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In 2010 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu kindly gave an interview to *The Mirror* at Tashigar South about various aspects of the 'Longsal Cycle of Teachings' or 'The Innermost Essence of the Dakinis of the Luminous Clarity of the Universe', the collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's rediscovered teachings. Most of them were received through his dreams of clarity and daytime visions over a period of many years. His fortunate students have been able to receive these teachings and benefit from his great wisdom and clarity.

These Longsal Teachings have been translated from the Tibetan and edited by Adriano Clemente and, to date, gathered and published in ten volumes by Shang Shung Edizioni.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu kindly gave an interview to *The Mirror* at Tashigar South about various aspects of these precious teachings that we are very happy to publish here.

The Mirror: Rinpoche, your series of Longsal Teachings is called "Longchen Osel Khandro Nyingthig", which means the "Longsal Cycle" or "The Innermost Essence of the Dakinis of Luminous Clarity of the Universe". What does 'Longsal' literally mean and why have you chosen this title for your Longsal series of Terma Teachings?

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: 'Long' means *longchen*, universe, and refers not only to our consideration of the universe, but also the total universe in all its dimensions. In the teaching we have the dimensions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya, pure and impure dimensions, so the universe includes all these kinds of dimensions. That is called *long*. Then *longchen*: *chen* means total. *Ösel* stands for light, which means that all sentient beings have that original potentiality represented by light, and so the light represents all the dimensions of the universe.

'Khandro Nyingthig' means knowledge is related to energy and energy is the principle of functioning. The teaching needs to function for one to have realization, to get into one's real nature, and that kind of functioning is connected to the *dakini*. The *dakini* are the sign of the energy of the entire universe. For example, 'Nang-wa yabla tongpa yum' means that visions are like *yab*, while the *yum* represents their potentiality or real function. We can then understand what *dakini* really means, not just some beings flying and walking in space. Many people consider *dakini* to be like that, but you should go into the real sense. Then *nyingthig* means the essence of knowledge: *nying* means center, the center of all knowledge, *thig* means something like *thigle*, potentiality, and is really the potentiality of all the existence of the teachings. So when we



Photo by Paolo Fassoli

make this title shorter, we say *longsal*. This is the short version of the title.

M: Many *terma* cycles are rediscovered teachings, in the sense that the master who first taught them, for example Guru Padmasambhava, felt the time for them to be taught and practiced had not come yet, so he intentionally concealed them for the future *tertön* to discover. Is this Longsal Cycle like this or not? What in general are the different kinds of *termas* and which of these types are *longsa*?
ChNN: Most *terma* traditions come from Guru Padmasambhava, and then later also from his disciples who discovered different kinds of terma teachings. But we cannot say this tradition is only related to Guru Padmasambhava and did not exist before. Of course, a physical teacher did not give all teachings, particularly Dzogchen teachings and Sambhogakaya to Nirmanakaya teachings, to physical students. Many of these teachings are discovered and received in a different way and this is called *terma* – *terma* through mind, through visions, etc.

Guru Padmasambhava hid many teachings knowing how the *kaliyuga* would be, how the condition of human beings would get worse and worse and how there would be more problems and less time. He knew how the teachings would be able to help beings and which kind of teachings would be needed, so connected with time, many of his disciples would be reborn in certain periods and would discover and spread those teachings. This is called *tertön* and *terma*.

Sometimes a *terma* is discovered that has been put in someone's mind, and also a *terma* on the material level that has been put in a statue, in a rock, or in different objects. Some teachings come from different kinds of *drönbu*: materials inside something, the seeds of the teaching, some seed syllables or signs of this teaching, and when the *tertön* has a connection with this *drönbu*, all these teachings can appear through this *drönbu* in a particular



place, at a particular time and are written down and spread. It can also be like this.

In the Longsal Series there are all these aspects. Most of my *longsal* teachings, however, have come through dreams of clarity, sometimes meeting teachers and the teachings appear or are received. Sometimes I receive the teaching, but I am not able to write it down. If it is a mind *terma* there is no problem to write it down; I have also had this kind of experience. Most of these teachings are received in dreams and I write down just a little. If the dream is not finished, later I may see some sacred places with writings on rocks and have the opportunity to read them, or sometimes there are some books connected with this teaching and I am able to read the books. Other times when the *terma* is not finished, my teacher Changchub Dorje or my uncle Khyentse Rinpoche help me to finish it. There are also specific guardians related to the *termas* called *mentsün*, which is a class of *dakini* who protect and work around this teaching and also help to finish it. There are different aspects of these *termas* and we cannot say they manifest in only one way.

M: Rinpoche, has your series of Longsal Terma been transmitted by one particular *dakini* through dreams?

ChNN: Most of these *longsal* teachings are connected with that *dakini* from whom I later also received the Vajra Dance. I discovered that her name is Sukha Siddhi and she is something like an emanation of Goma Devi. There is also a *yogini* called Sukha Siddhi from the Shangpa Kagyu tradition, who lived in India. The Sukha Siddhis share the name but not the principle. They are different. The source of the Dzogchen teaching is Goma Devi who was originally a student of Garab Dorje – only two generations from Garab Dorje.

M: Are all Longsal teachings primarily related to Dzogchen and Anuyoga, or have you chosen to focus on those teachings in the Longsal cycle that are related to these more than other aspects?

ChNN: Yes. This teaching of Goma Devi that we have is related mainly to Dzogchen and Anuyoga. In general, we find Goma Devi in the teaching lineage of the Nyingmapa tradition, in all the three series of Tantras, Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga, called *nang gyu de sum*. Goma Devi is very important.

M: Do these *longsal* teachings need to be kept secret and in what way are they more secret than other teachings, for example?

ChNN: The nature of Dzogchen knowledge is secret. Ordinary people who have no capacity or fortunate circumstances cannot meet or receive this teaching and even if they receive it they cannot understand it or sometimes they understand it in the wrong way. For that reason in this teaching it is very important that teachers know if their students have that kind of fortune or condition, if it exists or not. We cannot diffuse this teaching everywhere to people who do not have at least a connection with this teaching.

M: Can *longsal* be called *gongter* (mind treasure) or *tag nang* (pure vision), or is it both?

ChNN: It is both. There is also a way through the mind. I am able to write things because the *dakini* and teachers sometimes empower something in my dreams and I can later write it down. I am

not saying I am like a *tertön* in the Nyingmapa tradition, who has the capacity to write everything down. All the *longsal* writing has been a bit of a sacrifice. Many writings have to be continued as sometimes there is an aspect of *tag nang*, there are many visions through dreams, and also some things that are not a dream. Sometimes there is a vision in the daytime during my practice showing a precise connection so in that way it can also be a kind of *tag nang*.

M: So is there a difference between mind and dream *terma*?

ChNN: There is not very much difference between mind *terma* and dream because mind *terma* always has its origin through our mind. A dream is also connected with that so there is not much difference.

M: What is the origin of this Longsal Series and the lineage?

ChNN: In the Longsal Series lineage there are teachings related more to Anuyoga and sometimes more to Dzogchen. The origin of the teachings of *longsal* is always at the level of the Dharmakaya. Then, of course, the teachings of the Sambhogakaya manifest in a different way. For example, our most important Nirmanakaya teacher, Garab Dorje, received many transmissions of the Sambhogakaya aspect from Vajrasattva, and sometimes many of these transmissions were also received from an aspect of Vajrapani. They can also be received from five different Dhyani Buddhas, so we cannot not say there is only one way. It depends on which kind of practice is related to Sambhogakaya and which to Dharmakaya.

M: How many of your cycles of Longsal Teachings have been revealed already and how do you receive permission to reveal them to your students?

ChNN: I have already communicated and taught many of these Longsal Teachings to my students. But this does not mean I have taught everything, because there are some teachings that must be given in a different way to people who really have capacity and show their capacity, otherwise the teachings create problems for people who have no capacity.

M: Who are the main guardians of these Longsal Teachings?

ChNN: The main guardian of these teachings is, of course, Ekajati. The second most important guardian related to this teaching is Dorje Yudrönma who is also related in some sense to the manifestation of Ekajati. So then Dorje Yudrönma and Tseringma are called *mentsün*, which means something like a *dakini* but also refers to something dominating more the Nirmanakaya dimension. For example, there is a very famous mountain that is sacred to Dorje Yudrönma in Bhutan and the mountain sacred to Tseringma is also in the region of the Himalayas. They are sacred places and that means there is some connection at the level of Nirmanakaya. But of course this is relative, and in the real sense they always protect the teachings and have their dimension not only on this earth but also in different dimensions.

M: Can you tell us a little about the first time you received indications of this Longsal Terma?

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ChNN: The first time I received the Longsal Terma I was seven years old and I received a kind of *drönbu* in my hand. At that time I had no knowledge of these things. I discovered the right side of the Longsal teaching sign later when I was thirteen years old, and these signs appeared very often in my dreams. I had some interesting dreams, but I still did not have much idea or knowledge about them. I had these kinds of dreams at the time I was traveling from East to Central Tibet and also a dream of the Dorje Yudrönma guardian, and in that period the *longsal* sign became something concrete. I also received some information about a practice called *tra*, which means doing a rite in a mirror where letters, forms or colors that indicate something appear in the mirror.

I did that practice later when I arrived in Sikkim in 1959 and in that period some indications appeared in the mirror of this kind of teaching. Since that time the *longsal* sign has developed. But the total *longsal* sign, this main one, appeared later and I received it at almost the same time as I received the teaching of the Dance of Vajra.

M: Does the appearance of one part of the *longsal* sign and then another have anything to do with how the *terma* develops?

ChNN: I have received many signs and teachings, and one of them that appeared is related to the sign of the *longsal*. The right side looks like the number three and the left side looks like number three reversed. I saw this central sign and later in my dream it developed totally and I understood and discovered that these partial signs are related to the complete one. Once I had experienced the total sign, then many Longsal teachings developed completely.

M: Often in *terma* teachings there is a person called a *chödag* or *terdag* – the owner or one responsible, for example, for the Vajrapani *terma*, you, Rinpoche, are the *terdag*. Do we know who is the *terdag* for this cycle of Longsal Terma Teachings?

ChNN: *Chödag* and *terdag* mean that there is a student closely related to the person who has received the *terma* and the teaching, and that student becomes the *terdag* or *chödag*, which means they spread or become the upholder of that teaching and transmission. This is related to lineage.

You know, for example, that in the teachings, not only in Dzogchen, but also in any kind of Vajrayana teaching, first of all there is a teacher and then the teacher teaches the students. Sometimes there are very good students who have some knowledge of the teachings, like an imprint – all the teaching is very precise and they do not invent, add, change or modify anything. These kinds of students are like *chödag* or *terdag* and the teachings continue. Many of these are *terma* teachings from famous *tertöns*, famous teachers. For example, the Chöd practice is the family lineage of Machig Lapdron. The Drukpa Kagyu and the Sakyapa traditions are also continued through their children. In these lineages they received complete transmission and the lineage from their fathers. Then they became good practitioners and became *chödag* and *terdag* and teachers.

In Tibet we have many lineages through reincarnations. The Karmapa was the first official reincarnation lineage. There was the

first Karmapa then there was his reincarnation, who received the first Karmapa's teaching and transmission and continued it. That is just like a family lineage, the same thing. For example, some good students become *chödag* or teachers and later their sons or reincarnations receive the teachings and then they become the holders of that lineage and give that teaching. Reincarnations of serious teachers are reborn in order to benefit and continue transmitting to their students.

For that reason sometimes the reincarnations alternate. You can understand this through the situation of the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama. One Panchen Lama dies and then later a reincarnation comes; that reincarnation receives the transmission from the Dalai Lama. When that Dalai Lama dies, his reincarnation receives that transmission from the Panchen Lama and they continue by alternating the reincarnation of this transmission. That is the reason why teachers reincarnate – to maintain the transmission seriously and perfectly. It is important to understand how the teaching is continued for the lineage.

M: Can there be different *terdag* for different phases of the *longsal* cycles?

ChNN: We do not name a *longsal terdag* publicly like in some kind of bureaucracy. Sometimes there are indications in a *terma*. For example, when I was three years old Peyu Karma Yangtse recognized me as the reincarnation of Adzom Drukpa and gave me the name Jamyang Rolbe Dorje. Then I saw the *chödag* and *terdag* in a series of *trag nag* teachings of Changchub Dorje and received the transmission of the series of *trag nag* mainly from the son of Changchub Dorje. In this teaching there are also indications of *chödag* and *terdag* and my name, Jamyang Rolbe Dorje, also appears. This means there is some connection and firstly it means the connection is to my knowledge because my knowledge of Dzogchen teachings woke up through my connection with my teacher Changchub Dorje. Before I met Changchub Dorje I had received many important teachings from many important teachers, also of Dzogchen, but I did not have that precise knowledge. After I had this knowledge I spread it. For example, when I started to teach Dzogchen teachings there were not many students, and now in this world, in this globe, there are a great number of my students of Dzogchen and many have knowledge of Dzogchen teaching.

M: What exactly is a cycle of *longsal* teachings and how does one know when the cycle is complete, for example?

ChNN: A cycle of *longsal* means there is a relationship between all these different teachings – they are of the same family, the same transmission, most are related to the transmission of Goma Devi and they are connected. This is a cycle. ❀

M: Thank you very much Rinpoche for this beautiful interview and for your precious time.

Many thanks to Jacob Braverman and Enrico Dell'Angelo for their collaboration in this interview.

Transcribed by Naomi Zeitz, Edited by Liz Granger and Naomi Zeitz
Tibetan consultant: Adriano Clemente

The Uniqueness of the Dzogchen Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

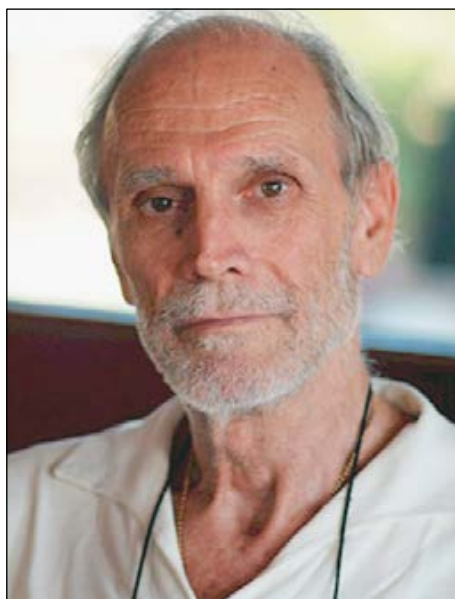
A Talk by Igor Legati,
SMS Instructor
Last day of the Zernga Retreat
at Merigar West, August 8, 2022

Now I would like to say something regarding my personal considerations regarding the Master and the Community that maybe can be useful to everybody; to explain the situation of the Dzogchen Community and the Master, how it is presented and how it is developing.

You know that all the schools in Tibet, all traditional schools in Tibet, are Tantric schools, Vajrayana schools. In all these schools, the Tantric teaching is developed. As you know, the teaching of Tantra is made of the two stages, Kyerim and Dzogrim, the stage of generation and the stage of completion, and in all the schools they develop this practice for years and years. Therefore all practitioners are accustomed to this method of Tantra, and even in the Nyigmapa school when there is a classification of the teaching which is contemplating Anuyoga and Atiyoga, they are practicing Kyerim and Dzogrim. This is the normal way of developing the practice in Tibet, in all the schools.

In this case, what is Dzogchen? It's considered only the last stage of the practice. They do Kyerim, Dzogrim, and Dzogchen as the final stage of the practice. When they apply some teaching of Dzogchen, they apply it only after years and years of Tantric practice, of the Vajrayana practice, until some kind of stabilization of presence is reached. In this case, when Dzogchen is applied, they apply Upadesha, they don't apply Semde and Longde. They apply Upadesha because Upadesha is the highest stage of the practice, when you already have an experience of presence.

Our Master grew up in Tibet, he grew up in the Sakyapa Monastery learning this method and he followed this way. We know that then he had the direct Introduction from Chang Chub Dorje, he learned something very deep and very clear; he learned Dzogchen.



When he came to the West, in this case to Italy, he started to live a normal life. He found work to make a living and started a family, had children, and then after a while he decided, as we know, to start teaching Dzogchen. When he started to teach Dzogchen, he started as he learned, so he started with Upadesha, because this is the way of Tibet, and after a short time he understood that it was not working. It was not working because in the West nobody practiced Kyerim and Dzogrim, so starting from Upadesha was not easy for Westerners. So he had to rediscover the teaching of Garab Dorje, because in the teaching of Garab Dorje there is no Kyerim and Dzogrim, there is Semde, Longde and Upadesha. These are, as the Master explained, three ways that can be independent one from the other, but anyway we can understand there is a difference, there is a development, a maturation in the practice, and in the teachings that were transmitted by Garab Dorje and systematized by Manjushrimitra in these three series, there are Semde, Longde and Upadesha.

The Transmission of Semde and Longde exists in Tibet, but nobody is practicing Semde and Longde, nobody as far as we know. So the Master had to rediscover these teachings. In those years he received these teachings of Semde, Longde and also Upadesha from his dreams. In the Longsal cycle there are these teachings, Semde, and Longde.

Rinpoche received these teachings anew from different dimensions, he received these original teachings that come from Garab Dorje, and from Padmasambhava. He practiced these teachings himself and

after having realized these teachings he transmitted them to his students. For practicing these teachings he was not doing years and years of retreat in some secluded cave or mountain. As he explained many times, he practiced these teachings during his dreams. He explained many times that when you are aware in dreams, clarity is seven times higher and also time is different. Maybe practicing one hour in a dream corresponds to six months in a waking state. So he rediscovered Semde, Longde and Upadesha, practiced himself while leading a normal life, and transmitted them to us.

The teaching that Rinpoche transmitted to us is really something completely new in this epoch, in our time. It's not new in the sense that of course it was transmitted by Garab Dorje a long time ago, but he rediscovered and revived these teachings himself and then transmitted this in the West, in the West that is completely different from Tibet, where people are usually very busy in everyday life. Little by little, he adapted these teachings, these revived teachings, for the West. He understood that this teaching, this Dzogchen teaching, as is pure Dzogchen teaching, can be good in the West where people are not able to do years and years of retreat. This is something that is not existing amongst any Tibetan Master, there is no one, according to me, that has developed the Teaching of Dzogchen in this way.

This is not to say that he's the best, this is not the issue at all. It's just in order to understand that it's a particular teaching that is different from that of any other Master that is existing or has existed in this last period. It's something completely new because this was developed in the West by a Master who never retired for years and years in some cave to practice. He demonstrated that the teaching of Dzogchen in the highest level is possible for a normal person. He developed this Dzogchen teaching doing normal life, working every day in the University, having a family. He was the living example that Dzogchen can be practiced in the West, in the standard condition of the West.

So he developed this and he was, of course, quite aware that this was a very original teaching. This is the reason why at a certain point he started this famous Santi Maha Sangha training. That was his way (of giving) his teaching that he revived in this way, he rediscovered in this way and prac-

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ticed and realized in this way, to his students. He knew very well that this teaching was not similar to any other teaching existing in Tibet or outside Tibet. He never said this teaching is the best. He said that his teaching is this teaching. It is different from other teachings. There are fantastic teachings, Tantric teachings, very high level teachings, very deep teachings, but nobody, as far as I know, no Master in Tibet or outside Tibet, had this formation, has this experience, direct experience. We have to understand this point because it's quite an important point.

So there is no problem in, for instance, following other Masters, inviting other Masters. Rinpoche himself explained many times that if your Master is saying that you have to follow only him or her and nobody else, it's better you change Master. So it's not a problem of exclusivity, or something like this, just to understand that Rinpoche's teaching is not similar to any other teaching in this moment of the history of the Earth. He really developed this teaching always being in a normal life, only living a normal life. He worked in the University for many years, until maturing a pension which was for living after leaving the work. Also this is not something common. As far as we know all his Masters were completely living a life in monasteries or in retreat places. Even his uncles who were great Masters, they lived a usual Tibetan life, always being in monasteries, always being in some retreat places for years and years doing practice, so his experience is completely unique.

Also Masters from this tradition coming to the West, to Western countries, very often live in this way, doing practice continuously in retreats, something like this. There is no one who developed the same capacity, the same experience of our Master. He very much developed in the course of years that his teachings became less and less complicated with complicated Tantric practices, and he always insisted more and more on doing Ati Guruyoga, in developing ordinary presence in everyday life and in working with circumstances as a way to behave, as a behavior. He really developed a teaching that was simpler and simpler, very affordable for Westerners, and as a consequence of this situation, he developed the Dzogchen Community.

His teaching, as I said, is different from other Masters', first because the teaching is different. The Atiyoga taught by the Master

is a separate way with respect to Tantra. No other Masters are teaching this. Then the application is different, because we apply Semde, Longde and Upadesha. No other Masters are explaining Semde and Longde. Then the application of behavior is different because the way he lived was completely different from the way of living of all the other Tibetan Masters.

As a consequence of this new teaching, he developed the Dzogchen Community that is different from any other Dharma center in the world. All the other Dharma centers in the world are managed by a group of people that are not changing, never changing. Usually there is a Master and some two or three administrators, and this is the direction of the center. When you go there to learn the teaching, you will never ever have the possibility to be the administrator of the center. You are just a student, you learn and then you go away or you stay for a while, but you are never asked to be the manager, a manager in the sense of responsibility, of the center. This is completely impossible.

This is the same way in which in our society things are usually organized. For instance, in our society we have schools. When you go to school there is a group of people managing the school, but you as a student will never have the possibility to have anything to say to the management. So in a private company and everywhere you know very well that there is a Board of Directors that do as they like and the people who are following some services cannot say anything regarding the management. When Rinpoche started the Dzogchen Community he wrote this document explaining what is the Gakyil. The Gakyil is the owner of the Community. It's not just a manner of speaking, it is the owner of the Community. And you can be part of the Gakyil of the Gar or the Ling where you live, there was just a rule, after three years of membership you can be a member of the Gakyil. So after a very short time of following and having interest in the Dzogchen Community and Dzogchen teaching, you can apply, you can offer yourself for being a manager of the Community, and you are solicited, you are asked to do this, because when you are being responsible for the Community and taking this responsibility, you learn something that you cannot learn in any kind of formal practice because the Dzogchen Community is based on presence and awareness. The Dzogchen Community is not based on power and money, and as

a consequence if you behave in a strange way nobody follows you, even if you are the director of the Gakyil or vice-director or any position that you have. Nobody is following you.

So it's very easy to say we are Dzogchen practitioners, we are Vajra brother and sister, we have to respect each other, etc etc, but when you are in the Gakyil and you have to decide every day what you have to do or what you don't have to do, it's not easy because immediately you fight with somebody else, because we are not the Master, we are students. So you have to learn, if you do a period in the Gakyil or any other position with responsibility in the Community, there are many, not only the Gakyil, you have to learn to respect others, not pretending that you are right. This is a training, a very special training.

This is my personal opinion, that if you don't do the Gakyil sometimes taking responsibility for the Community, you don't take advantage of the best practice that we can have in the community, that is really taking responsibility, offering your work for the teaching, for developing the teaching, for supporting the Master. And this doesn't exist in any Dharma center in the world. You just have to receive teaching, do practice, and you don't have any responsibility.

Rinpoche said that the Dzogchen Community is like a family. It means that when you have a family, whatever you do inside the family is not that you are paid. If you do something in the family like repairing something or cooking something, or cleaning something, you are not paid for this. You do it for the family. This is collaboration. It's not a question of making money. You work, you offer yourself for doing this because you are interested directly in this teaching. So all the work and responsibility that is done in the Community usually is not paid, the Gakyil is not paid. This is good for practitioners because they have the chance to offer their own time, their own intelligence, their own commitment to the teaching and to the Master, accumulating merits that you cannot accumulate in any other way at this level. So I think that we have to be aware of this condition.

We really have to appreciate the condition in which we are and we have to appreciate first of all the figure of our Master. He really did something that is completely new, and we have to be aware that a Master of this kind is not easy to find anywhere. It's not easy to expect that we find another

Discovering the Potentiality of the Mirror

An excerpt from a talk given by Steven Landsberg at Lekdanling, UK, on July 2, 2022

We have three gates – body, speech and mind – and to have deep relaxation we need to notice the interdependence of those three doors. Sometimes it may be that by relaxing mind through various kinds of focus, body just responds and so does our energy. Sometimes we can concentrate more on the energetic aspect such as our breathing. We do some yantra, for example, and discover that through stretching in certain ways, focusing upon breathing, that mind is also naturally controlled. If mind is heavily burdened with a lot of tension and suddenly we feel that our energy is not too smooth, then the body can be susceptible to various problems.

No matter how we go about whatever method we use for relaxation, we notice that whatever we apply, we need to have a very precise presence. Oftentimes Rinpoche would tell us about certain types of exercises to do like spending some time just observing oneself. When we take a tea, we remind ourselves that we are preparing a tea, or when we answer the phone, we are aware and remind ourselves of what we are doing. This is just a method to train us to be more precisely aware of what we are doing because sometimes body does one thing while mind travels in a completely different direction. Then it's very easy to get distracted and many things can happen.

Yesterday we already talked about how Rinpoche applied the meaning of presence and awareness. We see that those two points are like two pillars upon which the door of the mind can be opened up as a kind of enlightened possibility, even if



we are talking from a very secular point of view. If we don't have presence and awareness it's very difficult to get satisfaction and find meaningful purpose from whatever we are doing. In any case, we're practising on a spiritual path. There is no method that doesn't require presence and awareness.

Just for a moment let's review what we were doing this morning. Instead of just making an abstract conclusion about the passage of time, we try to be in time. We're not looking at the watch and seeing the second hand move. In order to do this, we notice that thought is always occurring in time so if we relax our presence upon the first thought that arises and we are present in that thought, it's the same thing as being present in time. Then we sense this continual flow but we don't get distracted or torn away by the content of the thought. If we really do this well then we begin to feel that nothing is very concrete, nothing is really solid, and yet at the same time everything is moving forward.

[Short meditation]

Master like this in ten minutes or in ten months. So we have to try to go on by ourselves now, as we can, because Rinpoche gave us the responsibility of the Dzogchen Community. There is not any group of managers that is managing everything and we just have to wait for their decision.

Of course there are Gakyils, and the International Gakyil, but they change continuously and anybody of us can be a member of the International Gakyil. So we have to understand that this is our responsibility now to go on with what this kind of great Master transmitted to us. ©

I think you can see through practicing in this way that this is something that is a particular reference point in our practice, having a particular place to concentrate upon and place our attention, a kind of context. This is what it means to have a reference point when we get confused or we don't know exactly what we're doing. We remember the instructions and try to apply them. This is not precisely contemplation but there is the possibility that any time we apply a focused practice that it can spread and open up as contemplation. That means we relax our focus on the particular indications of the instructions, and we open ourselves up to all possibilities, which refers to all of the space. We don't necessarily need to maintain our focus upon the initial thought that is arising, that manifests as a beginning point. We're not distracted even by extraneous thoughts that may come up. We look at the space in front and then at the space behind and then we relax between those two spaces. We cannot separate the two. And then we look back at the mind that is focusing. This is a way of indicating to us that the one that we cannot discover, the slightest separation or difference between the one who is focusing and the space in front, or the one who is focusing and the thought that is arising.

From time to time we ask ourselves what is the interval or the space or gap between the mind that is looking and the thought that is arising, all the appearances that are manifesting and the one who is looking at them. And when we can do this more or less well, the thoughts no longer disturb. And when thoughts begin to arise again, as for sure they will, what we continue to recognize is that there is space, and then all that is required at that point is to relax in that space. It means that thoughts are now arising as enlightened possibilities. But we need to go through those steps. They need to be precise so when we feel we are getting distracted again by our thoughts then look again at the space in front and the one who is looking from behind. Don't let your mind wander even a hair.

It's the same thing when we look in a mirror. When we look in the mirror we see our face but we forget we are looking in a mirror. So when we are distracted by a thought, we forget the original space from which that thought is arising, or forget about the potentiality from which that thought arose.

» continued on the following page

Distraction requires some kind of discipline. We determine that we are not going to get distracted and when we do we return to that initial thought that is there. We look sharply there and make up our mind that we are not going to let ourselves be pulled off this point. And then at a certain point we will see that thought is no longer conditioning us and we have the possibility to integrate with the movement of the thoughts without getting distracted by the particular characteristic of any thought.

Remember this example of the mirror. Now we're trying to discover what the potentiality of that mirror is. It's something like the potentiality of the ocean, like the potentiality of our primordial base. It's really important not only as some kind of philosophical conclusion but in terms of our own experience as practitioners of Dzogchen. We need to become aware of the primordial condition of the individual, although it's a condition that is completely empty and doesn't have a hint of any particular phenomenon. It is something that is unborn, unproduced, unfabricated. That means that we don't create that base by pointing a thought at it. We can't just imagine it or create some concept about it. It's not the result of making some kind of philosophical conclusion or directing our attention in some particular way.

There is no particular reference point in regard to what is referred to as the ultimate dimension, this primordial base. We can call it the primordial cemetery because it's where everything disappears and dies. We could also call it the primordial birthplace. I'm tempted to use primordial cervix which is a more appropriate description. It doesn't have any bias. And wisdom arises in that space, that ultimate dimension, and how it is characterized is like the wetness of water. Or the heat in fire. Or the solidity in earth. It is not separate from that very primordial space. We cannot separate wisdom from that ultimate dimension. Wisdom is just self-effulgence.

In Mahayana sutra when they address the subject of absolute truth they say it is something unelaborate or beyond any extreme. It means that there is no guarantee that absolute truth is anything at all. So there is no way to focus our attention or point our mind at something and call it absolute truth. There is no way to objectify absolute truth. How are we going to know that? In this case wisdom as the very quality of this primordial space is more like a

kind of spontaneous radiance of that space. In other words, it's not just something empty. So this is a way to discuss or give us some idea of what is referred to in Dzogchen as the base.

As far as the path is concerned it is more related to how various appearances arise and how they are liberated. Appearances are generally something that we accept or reject, those things that generally distract us. They are conditioned by our emotions. But here appearances are liberated or self-liberated when we recognize them as a display of energy that is inseparable from this base. In that case it doesn't matter what the appearance is, good or bad. There is nothing to accept or reject. There is nothing to overcome or make some particular assessment about. All of that turns into limitations where what we are doing is just recognizing the common source of this infinite variety of possibilities.

So we're talking about that here as a kind of description for us, but now we try to apply that understanding to ourselves. If we don't do that this is just.... interesting stuff. But if we are really going to follow Dzogchen then it is necessary to understand what is meant by the base, and what is meant by the path. What is meant by appearances arising from the base and how they will be self-liberated. If we don't recognize the simultaneity of appearances and their source, then there is no technique to make it possible for appearances to be self-liberated.

This is not some kind of intellectual game. This is based upon a genuine understanding. And when we recognize this common source, or this unborn space, unfabricated space, then when dualistic vision arises, we don't consider dualistic vision to be a problem any longer because now we have a much broader sense of duality and all of our dualistic vision arises as an enlightened possibility. This doesn't mean that everything is the same, that everything is one. We understand that everything is still distinct and separate: black is not white, tea is not coffee. We can distinguish between the various phenomenon that arise, but they have this common source, this undefinable, unborn, ultimate dimension and wisdom arises as the play of illusion. That means, when we speak about illusion, that everything maintains a form. Everything has its own particular size, shape, color, and at the same time it has its own radiant non-solidified lucidity. That means it is clear, it is transparent form, but

it still has a shape, still has a size. We know that Guru Dragphur is not Simhamukha. Each one has its own shape, color, and particular characteristics, but there is nothing solid about their appearance.

Sometimes appearances can arise in many different ways. Sometimes they arise clearly, sometimes they are confusing, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. There is no limit to the possibilities of what can arise. And we're not sitting there adjudicating – this counts and that doesn't count – with our idea of acceptance and rejection. That is a disqualification and we will immediately feel ourselves distracted. If we get caught in acceptance and rejection, it means that we don't recognize the illusory quality of this appearance. We don't recognize the singularity of the base. Don't get confused. If we say singularity it doesn't mean that everything is one. And if we recognize that singleness of this variety of all possibilities and appearances, then we cannot be beguiled by appearances and caught in the web of acceptance and rejection. But you know how we are actually: very much conditioned by our karmic vision, very much conditioned by appearances. It is important to study this and understand it well, but even though we understand it well, our karmic vision is very intense and it is unlikely we are going to succeed just by having this understanding of the base.

What is the symptom of being attached to our karmic vision? We prioritize, we prejudice one thing over another, we divide things, we consider this is important, that is not. Then when we sit down to meditate maybe something really mundane arises in our mind and we say, oh no, that is not the point. Don't look there, look over here. But this is saying quite the contrary. It says that we don't need to do that. Our karmic vision has this potentiality as well. We don't need to look over, above, on the side, or below our ordinary vision. It is telling us that our ordinary vision has this self-perfected quality.

This awareness is very expansive and embraces everything. In fact the point is more that if we can penetrate our relative vision more thoroughly and actually become more intimate with our own relative vision, then we will automatically understand what its absolute source is. So it's not a question of objectifying some kind of absolute condition somewhere. It's more about getting more intimate with our own relative vision, which generally means

coming to know what our resistance is about because our resistance is very much connected to our relative vision.

If we need some examples of the relationships between the infinite variety of appearance and its ultimate source, we can say the ocean and its waves, the wind and all-embracing space. The wind can blow in many directions and can be really disturbing, but it never separates from space. Basically this is saying that we can never be lost. Even in our most desperate moments there is possibility for salvation, not that someone is going to reach down and save us, but it's just built in to the nature of who we are. We can use another example: appearances are like the clouds and this primordial source is something like the sky. There can be so many kinds of clouds but they never separate themselves from the sky.

All of this is just something to give us an idea about the real condition, just to provide some clarity to us on an intellectual level. Even though we understand this, it doesn't really touch the point. It can be helpful, it can guide us, but it cannot be an experiential conclusion for us. It's like a pretty picture, intellectual speculation. So it's important to distinguish that because sometimes people are confused. They get a very clear idea of how things are on an intellectual level and can explain this relationship very well, but it is not the same thing as having experiential clarity about this condition. That means we need to apply practice. It means we need to do the practices that are indicated, really understanding in a concrete way that makes it very evident to us, profoundly and deeply, so that it pervades our whole being and we can actually feel that thing.

Sometimes we listen to something that is explained really well, very clearly, and we say, Wow, that is so fantastic. I really get it. But what do we get? Nothing, just some kind of intellectual picture of the thing that was explained very nicely and now we have some understanding about that on a certain level. But when we do practice and try to embody that understanding, bring it to an experiential level, it becomes clear to us through our three doors, body, speech

and mind, not just some mental configuration that we're calculating. As long as we're calculating something and trying to paste words together, we are trapped by verbal designation, we're trapped by concepts, and that is far from the genuine meaning.

There are three aspects: there is the base, the path, and the fruit. As far as the fruit is concerned from this perspective there is really nothing to do. Often-times we consider that we have to engage in something in order to proceed. But in this path of self-liberation it is more about learning how to do nothing in a proper way. When we started this course we spoke about the difference between meditation or actively doing something, and contemplation which is more of a reflexive thing. We don't actively point or focus our mind in any direction.

But sometimes when we say not to do anything, we can fall into a kind of hazy nihilism, thinking that there is nothing to do. And at the same time we do not try to direct our attention at a particular reference point. Pointing mind in a certain direction is a method of developing one thing over another thing. That's no longer contemplation. At this level of practice, trying to accomplish something is more of an obstacle.

At the beginning we said that this ultimate dimension doesn't prefer enlightenment over samsara. There is nothing superior or inferior about samsara or nirvana. But this ultimate dimension is not something we reach by some particular effort or striving. It's also not increased through meditation, no matter what situation we find ourselves in, maybe happy, maybe sad, maybe up, maybe down. There is this single flavor of it all and it's that single flavor that we are talking about but we need to discover it. It's not enough to simply say that it's all one taste. That is a big topic in Dzogchen and also Mahamudra but we can't just jump on that. We have to go through precise steps for some experience of that to come.

And once we discover that single flavor then we can also understand that this state is beyond any particular action. So the imperative here is that in order to understand the simultaneity of the unborn absolute condition and its natural wisdom quality, there is no particular action aimed at uncovering it that needs to be applied. ☺



THE MIRROR

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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 •
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* Opening Our Minds – Atiyoga Public talks series

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Public Events

On the 16th and 17th of September
Opening Our minds – Atiyoga Public Talks series

Presentation of the Book and meditation workshop with Monica Gentile

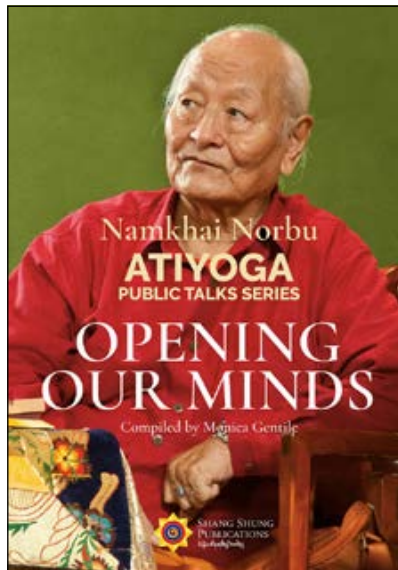
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- * Luminous Clarity of the Universe: A Large Explanation of the Principle of Primordially Pure Tregchöd
- * Nyingthig Yangti of Changchub Dorje, A Complete Oral Commentary
- * The Vajra Dance of Space
- * The series of experiential instructions (nyamtri) related to the first five translations of Vairochana, Rinpoche's oral commentary

Upcoming public books

- * Padmasambhava's Advice on Total Perfection – A Hidden Treasure Discovered by Dorje Lingpa
- * The Vajra Dance (a public book)
- * New edition of the book "Namkha Harmonizing the Energy of the Elements"

We are very happy to share the news that the new and final edition of the Namkha book is ready. In this new edition, we have added a lot of clarifications, concerning specific aspects that had not been expand-



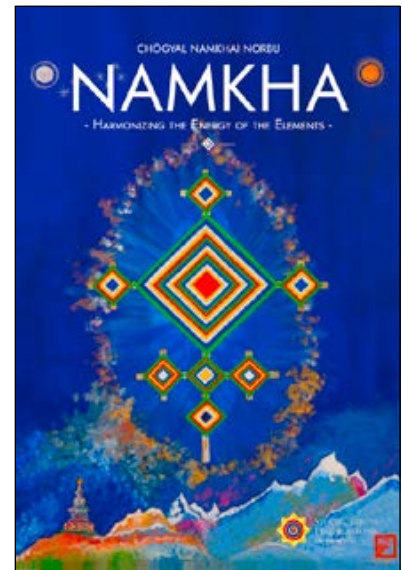
ed upon in the first edition, including tables and drawings that will help the reader.

We have done our best to find solutions to the most difficult points, considering the several questions that we received from various readers since the first publication.

For example, we have changed and expanded some notes and have also added others such as an explanation on the harmonization between the Life elements of a couple; how to calculate the Mewa of the month (taken from the main texts of Tibetan Astrology the Vaidurya dkar po, to which Rinpoche referred a lot); how to calculate the Mewa of the Time (according to Rinpoche's book on Elemental Astrology and also according to other traditions); and other clarifications, taken from the Namkha book based on oral teachings and published by Shang Shung Edizioni in 1999.

We have also added an Appendix 2 concerning information on the Practical Construction of the Namkha, taken from the Namkha book based on oral teachings and published by Shang Shung Edizioni in 1999, and Appendix 3 with very useful table taken from the book on The Four Methods of Development, Shang Shung Publications, 2011.

This last edition has a bigger format and now it is also easy to read the tables and the ritual text in Tibetan. Moreover, we have changed all the endnotes to footnotes so they are easier to consult.



We would like to thank Francesco Festa for the layout of this edition and also Giorgio Dallorto for such a beautiful painting of the cover of the new edition of this book.

We would like to point out that many of our texts are available in ebook versions. Shang Shung is trying to publish as many ebook versions as possible in order to give their readers the possibility to save on shipping costs and to reduce in general production costs due to significant increases in the cost of paper, services, and couriers.

Please explore our webshop: <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/>

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Shang Shung Publications team ©

Shang Shung UK: Tibetan Cultural Centre, Lekdanling & Kunselling

We have had another eventful year in London at Lekdanling. Perhaps the most significant change over the past few months has been our ever increasing connection with the local community in Hackney, East London. Our Cultural Centre has become a hub for a range of open group events including a men and women's support circle, plus other cultural activities such as voice, dance and healing workshops. These activities take place on the basis of a rental arrangement with carefully chosen individuals which at the same time provides additional financial support to Lekdanling. This has proved to be immensely successful largely due to our gifted on-site manager Ewa Michalec plus our dedicated team.

Continuing on from the SSIUK 'Presence and Awareness in Daily Life' series in 2021, this year we have been running another public series of modules on 'The Gateway to the Teachings' based on the open parts of the Precious Vase, in collaboration with the IG and the ATIF. This has been well attended and we are just about to start our 5th module based on Prajnaparamita over the weekend of 16–18th September. The whole programme is made up of six weekend modules with related practice sessions each Sunday and I would like to thank the many SMS teachers who have taken part and led individual sessions in this innovative collaboration which has been running for almost 2 years now. Many thanks also to everyone who helped to make this programme a success including the translators, moderators and the team at SSIUK who work tirelessly behind the scenes. It has to be said that Stoffelina's sudden death has left a massive gap in all our hearts as well as in our collaborative activities as she was always such an enthusiast for promoting communication, innovation and cooperation. She is much missed!



SSIUK Photo Competition Himalayan World, winner: Rajesh Dhar, *Gossip*, from the Darjeeling and Sikkim series.



SSIUK Photo Competition Himalayan World, SSIUK choice: Upasana Dahal, *Himalayan Culture*, from the series from Bhutan.

Other highlights from the past year include a diverse range of lectures with high profile academics & speakers from across the globe. Please note that our popular SSIUK lecture series is ongoing and most of our talks and workshops are recorded and can be downloaded via our website or can be viewed on Youtube. 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. The full programme of our past activities can be viewed on our website within our latest brochure, posted on the home page. Find us at: shangshunguk.org

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Another initiative this past year was our first Himalayan Photographic competition where the People's first Prize was awarded at Losar 2022 having been chosen by the world famous photographer Clive Arrowsmith. We received literally hundreds of entries, many of which were of a very high quality, making the judging very difficult! Many of these exceptional images can be viewed on our website.

Lekdanling hosted Steve Landsberg in early July who taught a well attended short session on Chöd as well as a longer weekend on the obstacles that we can encounter during meditation and ways to deal with them. On the theme of meditation, I enjoyed visiting Dzamling Gar in July this summer and attending the Vajrasattva purification practice retreat which was led in an accomplished manner by Sebastien Remy. This inspired me to realize that it will be good to carry out more purely practice orientated retreats in London for the open public in the near future, together with offering time for discussion and questions. There are many new people in the UK who are showing an interest in learning about meditation, both the theory and in practice, and their needs should be met.

Kunselling, our retreat centre in Wales, has also been busy over the summer. We have enjoyed Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance retreats with our UK teachers John Renshaw and Cindy Faulkner. Steven Landsberg visited us in July to lead sessions on the Seventh Lojong, Jnanadakini and Chöd. And in August, Igor Berkhin taught sessions on Dzogchen, contemplation and Prajnaparamita, including a day-off in which course participants went hiking in the local hills. ©

Upcoming SSIUK events for this autumn include the following:
(see our website shangshunguk.org for further details and booking)

September 16–18th
Gateway to the Teachings Module 5: 'Prajnaparamita: The Perfection of Wisdom'
with Gabriella Schneider, Lukas Chmelik, Cheh Goh, Enzo Terzano & Julia Lawless

September 22nd
The Khyentse Vision Project: The World of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Translating His Works
with Casey Kemp, Master of Philosophy in Tibetan Studies from Oxford University, now completing her PhD with the University of Vienna on the subject of luminosity in the Mahāmudrā tradition.

October 19th
The Writings of Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro
with Dr Adam Pearcy

November 17th
Gesar, King of the Vajra Life
with Dr. Gregory Forgues, Director of Research at Tsadra Foundation

November 26th
An onsite evening with refreshments & momo at Lekdanling
Talk and Book launch by Khentrul Lodro Thaye Rinpoche on 'Power of the Mind' published by Shambhala based on the Mind Training teachings.

December 15th
The Early History and Publications of the Derge Printing House
with Dr. Ben Nourse

We hope to see you online or onsite soon!
All good wishes,
Julia Lawless
Shang Shung UK Director

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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
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It Takes a Village to Make a Vegetable Garden

A new ASIA project launched in Myanmar

Despite the difficulties due to the political situation in the country, which has been in the hands of a military junta since the coup in February 2022, at the beginning of this year ASIA started a new project in Myanmar, *You need a village to make a vegetable garden*, funded by the Autonomous Province of Bolzano. The project has been activated in ten villages in the district of Mindat (a township in Southern Chin State) which have the highest rates of poverty and malnutrition in the country. The inhabitants of the villages are from the Cho minority, which occupies the marginal lands and lives in conditions of great poverty.

The aim of the project is to improve nutrition conditions and decrease the poverty rate in Chin State by 3% by promoting organic and sustainable agricultural practices and diversifying agricultural production, with particular attention to businesses run by women.

In order to do this, a network of vegetable gardens will be created, managed by families of farmers assisted by the project agronomists and good quality seeds and cuttings will be distributed. The goal is to integrate the "knowledge and flavors" of the farming tradition with agronomic techniques, rather than introducing foreign eating habits (therefore new dependencies). The project aims to enhance the environment and the resources it offers, to ensure environmental sustainability and the production of healthy food for personal, family and community consumption.

The project is currently being implemented in seven out of ten villages: Makyauk Arr, SanEiNu, Samathar, Ngong Lawng, YeLawangPang, KantarYone, Saw-Lawng.



Soil Preparing the seedbed for the vegetable seeds. Below: The long beans are growing well.

A farmer's leader was selected from each village and then the seven leaders participated in a training on the "Fundamentals of preparing and managing an ecological garden" in order to train 226 selected farmers in turn. During the training they set up family gardens where five different crops were planted: two types of okra (or combo), chilli peppers, eggplant, and beans.

ASIA's goal is to strengthen the social fabric of the Cho community, to ensure that this most vulnerable segment of the population has a constant source of fresh food with the best nutritional qualities and to launch a "pilot" model that can also be duplicated in other communities in the area. ©

Follow ASIA on social networks to find out all the updates on the project!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ASIAOnlus>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/asiaoanlus/?hl=it>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoa6ZLokFkFxrE5TDz-UNA>



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

A Gift for Our Children, Our Future.

About Kumar Kumari Projects –
Yantra Yoga for children

Laura Evangelisti and Nataly Nitsche
(Director/Project manager of the Yantra Yoga
department of Atiyoga Foundation)

Dear Practitioners,
With this letter, we would like to present to you our Kumar Kumari projects, dedicated to the future generations; our children. We kindly ask you to take some time and read this message thoroughly and support us.

We know how much Rinpoche cared about children's growth and education, and for this reason He adapted Yantra Yoga to their condition, using ten powerful sounds – the seed syllables 'A, A, HA, SHA, SA, MA, OM, Ā, HUM, HAM – to guide the different aspects of the breathing that are synchronized with the movements. That makes this yoga for children particularly unique because the sounds of the ten syllables guide and define the quality of the inhalation and exhalation that is used. For example, how to inhale and exhale quickly or slowly, deeply or shallowly.

In this practice children learn sixteen movements (purification breathing, 5 tsig-jong, 5 lungsang, 1 tsadul, 3 main yantras, and a concluding exercise), coordinating sound and rhythm. This practice brings a harmonious development of body, energy (breathing) and mind to children.

Rinpoche wrote the Kumar Kumari text called "The Garland of Lotus Flowers" in 1992 and in the final dedication he wrote:

Kumar-kumari yantra



BREATH · RHYTHM · MOVEMENT

From the great island of the
profound and vast Union of the
Sun and Moon,
I have gathered the splendid lotus
flowers of some important
yantras
And offer them as a beautiful
garland
To adorn the neck of boys and girls.

May the physical energy of boys
and girls, who are like budding
plants,
Grow perfectly, and may the leaves
of their full force expand
In the ten directions.
May the flowers of the attributes of
youth shine
And may they all enjoy an
abundance of good fruit!

By the power of the good deed of
having shown
A few rays of potentiated energy
that shine like a thousand lights,
May the darkness of ignorance in
the minds of beings dissolve
And may the light of the wisdom of
Samantabhadra shine forever!

"Kumar Kumari Yantra, The Garland of Lotus Flowers,
Yantra Yoga for Children" Chögyal Namkhai Norbu,
2016.

We wish that many of you, even those not interested in teaching to children, read this precious book and learn about Kumar Kumari. The Spanish version will be ready soon!

Our projects

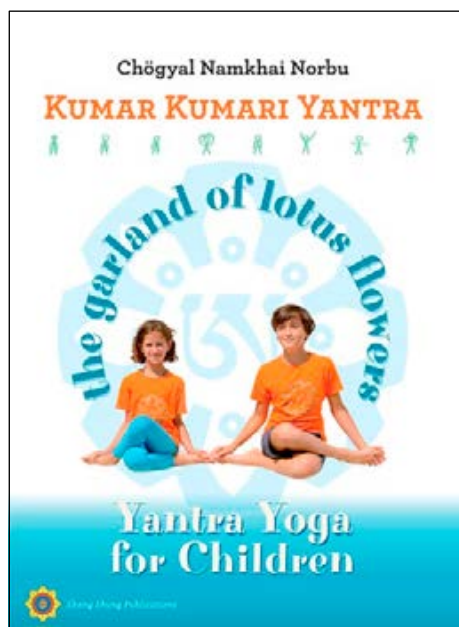
We believe it is very important to make this teaching more known and available, and that is why we present our current and future Kumar Kumari projects to you.



Kumar Kumari classes in schools

Rinpoche greatly emphasized the importance of teaching Kumar Kumari in public and private schools and that is why we need to train more Kumar Kumari teachers who could carry on these projects.

Numerous experiences have recently demonstrated the usefulness and benefits derived from the practice of Yoga, in particular Kumar Kumari, in the school context. Thanks to Yoga, students feel more energetic, but also relaxed, favoring a positive atmosphere for children and teachers in classes. Many schools, both in Italy and abroad, offer this kind of extracurricular activity as part of their programs.



Find out more about these kinds of projects <https://melong.com/kumar-kumari-at-the-schools-of-the-amiata-area/>

Kumar Kumari Camps/Family retreats

We have experienced the great benefits of the Kumar Kumari classes in different contexts. Children's camps or family retreats are great occasions where everyone in the family gets involved and can enjoy learning healthy habits, and methods to apply for their wellbeing. Materials for teaching and organizing activities with children are needed.

Kumar Kumari Teacher Training for adults

The objective of these trainings is to spread and develop the knowledge of Kumar Kumari and train to become a Kumari Kumari teacher.

New logo & branding | New website in progress

The Yantra Yoga department of Atiyoga Foundation is currently working on www.yantrayoga.net including a Kumar Kumari section, also we now have Yantra Yoga and Kumar Kumari new logos.

The Adventure of Nyima, Dawa and the little Yak, Audiobook (Om Editions/Shang Shung Publications)

A children's tale that has been created to support the teaching/learning process of Kumar Kumari Yantra and particularly to train in a playful way and with the help of images; the ten powerful sounds that are connected with the breathing and the movement in Kumar Kumari. The idea is



Some hand-drawn illustrations from *The Adventure of Nyima, Dawa and the Little Yak*.



also have an audiobook that will accompany the story so that the correct sounds can be learned. There are many beautiful drawings that we would like to use to create materials for children, like puppets and dolls or panels, to use in our classes and storytelling and for kids to play.

We plan to have this book translated into different languages.

Kumar Kumari learning cards for children

This would be a great resource for Kumar Kumari teachers and for parents and children to practice at home. Learning through play is for sure the best way to learn!

Kumar Kumari T-shirts

We are creating nice t-shirts for children and adults.

Kumar Kumari video tutorials

We would like to have a video tutorial for teachers, parents, and children to use as support for the practice.

Thank you for taking the time to read us and please consider **supporting our projects** by donating, no matter big or small, every little counts. We really need financial support!

If you feel to actively participate in these important projects, you can make your donation here:

<https://atiyogafoundation.org/donation/>

Please make sure to write "Kumar Kumari Projects" in the 'Activity or project the donation is for:' field.

Please don't hesitate to write us back if you have questions, you need clarification on a particular project, you have suggestions or you wish to offer your collaboration.

Yours sincerely,
Stay well,
Yantra Yoga team



Dzamling Gar Projects

Gönpa Wood Treatment

Przemek Sumelka, Maintenance Manager

In order to sustain and spread the Dzogchen Teachings, Rinpoche left us a wonderful tool – our Dzamling Gar Gönpa. In fact, he dedicated to this project all the final years of his life. That is why it is so important and so precious to all of us.

The Gönpa gives us a lot of joy, but it is also a big responsibility to maintain it properly. This year we undertook a huge but necessary task of wood treatment, the first since the end of the construction. We did it in accordance to a very specific instruction-set that was left to us by the original team of carpenters and constructors.



Photo by Eva Leick and Carlos Garcia

At first we hoped to perform this enormous task with the help of a professional company, but they estimated the project for roughly 50,000 euro (!), so we decided to save money and do it by ourselves. Our maintenance team (Przemek and Jorrit) took this responsibility upon their shoulders. They were further reinforced by two courageous and energetic work-exchange volunteers (Carlos and Beñat) – and so the work began!

It took us a full three months to complete the task. Our team worked continuously almost every day, including weekends. We encountered many challenges but in the end we managed to successfully treat and protect more than 1500 square meters of wood. And we saved almost 30,000 euro for the Community. Amazing!

For the benefit of the Dzogchen Teachings and all beings! ©

Dzamling Gar

Program of upcoming events

We would like to see you in Dzamling Gar! We hope this schedule can be useful for you to save your dates and join us. Please consider that this program can be subject to modification. More info about each event will be released in advance. If you would like details about some events please check our website or send an email to blue.gakyil@dzamlinggar.net

September

24–25

Respira course

with Alessandra Policreti

25

Dzamling Gar Yoga Open Day

27–30

Beginners' Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, part I. Session II

with Ludmila Kislichenko

October

2

Yantra Yoga Introductory Workshop

08–14

Khalong for Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced

from Merigar, by zoom with Prima Mai

15

Yoga for Life, public event

with Adeje City Council

17–23

Vajra Dance Practice Retreat with Instruction for instructors and people familiar with Vajra Dance

with Adriana Dal Borgo

21–26

'Differently One' Course. An approximation to different capacities and sensibilities in communication and relationships while teaching

with Carmen Rivas & Nataly Nitsche

22–23

Yantra Yoga Open Course

with Alina Kramina & Nataly Nitsche

25–02/11

Khaita Educational Program, Part 5

with Adriana Dal Borgo

This program includes the following two courses open to those interested

27–01/11 'Discovering Tibetan culture with Khaita songs and dances'

with Lena Dumcheva

28–30 'Mindfulness & theatre for you, boys and girls' with Lourdes Velaochaga

November

06

Yantra Yoga Introductory Workshop

19–23

Meditation and Contemplation practice retreat

with Steven Landsberg

December

01–07

Khalong Annual Event

with Prima Mai

04

Yantra Yoga Introductory Workshop

with Alina Kramina & Nataly Nitsche

09–13

21 Semdzin of the Upadesha, Practice Retreat

with Adriano Clemente

26–13/01

Retreat in collaboration with Merigar

January 2023

06–13

Yantra Yoga Deepening Course and Yantra Yoga Instructors Meeting

with Laura Evangelisti

18–22

Kumar Kumari Teacher Training

with Laura Evangelisti

25–31

Beginners' Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, part II

February

01–10

The source of danger is fear: Paradoxes of the realm of delusion and instructions for the practice of the Dzogchen Upadeshavarga

with Elias Capriles

Merigar West

A Week of Practices and Events

September 2022

The proposal that is presented here has the main purpose of offering practitioners of the Dzogchen Community from all over the world the opportunity to get in touch with each other and to learn about the activities, initiatives, and programs that the different Gars and Lings have organized, four years from the passing of the Master.

The Dzogchen Community is alive as the Master and his teaching are alive in us. Here and now.

Knowing what is happening at the Gars and the Lings is really a powerful and proactive way to recognize in each one of us and among ourselves this vitality in the present, even more so now that there are far more opportunities to meet in person after three years of the pandemic.

From 24 September to 1 October the days will be managed by different Gars who, in addition to essential practices, will present Dance and Yantra Yoga sessions, in a space managed by each Gar, and where they will alternate videos of the Master relating to the history of the specific Gar, particular initiatives, and so on.

On the afternoon of the 27th there will be a round-table meeting during which the different entities of the Community will discuss their initiatives and projects.

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18–19
Chair Yoga – Tsijong and Tsadul
with Laura Evangelisti

21–07/03
Mandarava Retreat

March
09–15
Meeting for Vajra Dance instructors
with Prima Mai & Adriana Dal Borgo

16–18
Vajra Dance Practice Retreat
with Prima Mai & Adriana Dal Borgo

24–26
Yantra Yoga for pregnancy
with Laura Evangelisti

Saturday 24th September
Morning, 9.30–11 am
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra
11.15am–12.45
Guru Yoga of the white A practice

Afternoon, 3.30–4.45 pm
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra
5–6.15 pm
Guru Yoga of the white A practice

Sunday 25th September
Morning, 9.30–11 am
Guru Yoga of the white A practice
11.15 am–12.45
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra

Afternoon, 5.15 pm
Ganapuja
6.30 pm
Practice of Dance for the Benefit of Beings
and Dance of Om A Hum

Monday 26th September
Morning, 9.30–11 am
Guru Yoga of the white A practice
11.15–12.45
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra

All the above practices from Merigar, in
open webcast

Afternoon, 4 pm
opening of the week with presentation
and brief greeting by the Vice President of
Merigar
4.30 pm
presentations from Tsegyalgar East and
West

All the above events in open webcast and
zoom with translation channels

Tuesday 27th September
Morning, 8.30 am
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra
10 am
Guru Yoga of the white A practice
11.30 am
Vajrasattva practice combined with the
25 spaces of Samantabhadra

All the above practices from Merigar, in
open webcast

Afternoon, 4.00 pm
opening with a video of the Master in
which he speaks in general about the
Community and the need to continue and
disseminate the Teaching and aspects of
Tibetan Culture.

A brief introductory speech by the Vice
President of Merigar in which he pres-
ents the following interventions of the
different entities within the Dzogchen
Community to let people know how they
are moving forward in their institutional
activities, how they collaborate with oth-
er entities, and what programs they are
planning to carry out.

Short Guruyoga with A and Song of the
Vajra
10-minute speeches each by ATIF, IDC,
ASIA, MACO, SSP, Dynamic Space
Conclusions by the Vice President of Merigar
and an announcement of an upcoming
series of events with an international flavor.
The Fire Mountain, a short presentation
of Merigar as it is today.

6.30 pm
Ganapuja with Invocation of the Lamp

Wednesday 28th September
Morning, 10 am
presentation from Namgyalgar

Afternoon, 4 pm
presentation from Tashigar Norte

Thursday 29th September
Morning, 10 am
presentation from Dzamling Gar

Afternoon, 4 pm
presentations from Kunsangar North and
South

Friday 30th September
Morning, 10 am
presentation from Merigar East

Afternoon, 4 pm
presentation from Tashigar Sur

Saturday 1st October
Morning, 10 am
presentations by the Asian Gar and Lings,
Guru Yoga of the white A (or other prac-
tice), led by one of the Asian Lings
Final greetings from the Vice President of
Merigar
Khaite Joyful Dances

All events in open and zoomed webcast
with translation channels



Retreat on the Zer-nga

From 4 to 8 August 2022 Merigar repeated the retreat on the practice of Zer-nga that the Master had held from 29 February to 5 March 2008 in Peru. The format involved viewing one of the Master's teaching sessions in the morning and then a session of related practices in the afternoon. The practice sessions were led by Santi Maha Sangha teachers.

In 2021 Merigar had already proposed holding a retreat structured in this way, and it is our intention to continue in this direction in the coming years. There are two main considerations for this choice. The first is that the word of the Master is alive and active now: listening to him is like having him here. In this sense, there is not much to worry about the future of the Community, as long as we have his transmission alive in us every moment.

If we can feel this in ourselves, we can live in the present, integrating his teaching without thinking about the past and the future. The experience of listening to the words of the Master in the Merigar Gönpa, as in any other place, is the contact with the unchanged freshness of his presence. These are not abstract or mystical statements but a living and concrete experience for all of us.

The second consideration concerns the choice of proposing specific retreats of Dzogchen Teaching.

The Master always emphasized that the essential practice is Guruyoga and that it is of fundamental importance to devote oneself to the practices of Dzogchen to dis-

cover the understanding of our *rigpa* first of all, and then stabilize it. There are the Semdzin, the Rushen, the Zer-nga, and the instructions on the Dzogchen Semde contemplation practices, which are intended to allow us to discover and stabilize the non-dual state of Shinè and Lhagthong.

These are direct essential practices that are based on the principle of Guruyoga, the purpose of which is to allow us to recognize our state not once but many times, in order to then be able to build a thread between experiences, until we have the certainty of the state and are able to call it back in any moment.

The practice of Zer-nga, in particular, offers us the concrete possibility of having a direct experience of our primordial state by working with the principle of the reintegration of the elements. In the extraordinary retreat held in Peru, the Master not only explained but practiced the five main points

with us. Furthermore, and this is even more valuable, he gave direct transmission by introducing the state through all three main experiences (pleasure, clarity and emptiness). With great love and willingness he also spent time answering the questions of the students at the retreat in Peru and clarifying many doubts. The approximately one thousand webcast connections a day lead us to think that the Dzogchen Community greatly appreciated our proposal.

On the other hand, the practice retreat held at Merigar at the end of July (26–31) was also focused on specific Dzogchen practices (in particular Semdzin and secret Rushen, the version in chapter VI of the Precious Vase). These retreats were the opportunity to practice in person offered to those who had participated in the two courses on the Precious Vase held online in 2022 by teachers from the Santi Maha Sangha Base, both in Italian and English. ©



Kunye on a Chair, Merigar August 26–28, 2022.

Meditation Retreat, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaïta

From 12 to 16 August a retreat was held in the Merigar Gönpa mainly aimed at people who are new to the Community, and who wished to have a first experiential contact with the various types of practices presented, which included both sitting and moving sessions.

The retreat, which was attended by about twenty members including a couple of our members interested in reviewing some practices, was structured in such a way as to allow a “taste” of all the activities

In the Skies of Merigar, Between Symbolism and Nature



Library Talks is an initiative consisting of various cultural promotional events organized by Merigar both at its own facilities, in particular the Library, and in the Arcidosso Town Council Chamber or at the Castle. With very different themes, from the mind in Buddhism to Indian dance, passing through Tibetan poetry, the biographies of the masters, sacred places and many more topics, over recent years we have introduced Merigar, the library and some basic themes of the teaching to an increasing number of people, thus expanding and diversifying our cultural contribution in the area.

May all beings unceasingly hear
the sound of Dharma
from all the birds, from every tree,
from the rays of light
and from the sky.

(Shantideva)

Just as a crow that flies from a sail
Returns to it after circling and
soaring,
So a passionate mind that pursues
the trail of thought
Returns to the primordial purity of
mind.

(Saraha)

that take place regularly in our community. Meditation, Yantra Yoga, Dance of the Three Vajra and Khaita sessions were proposed with various instructors who took turns in leading the activities.

This type of approach has certainly opened new horizons to those who were already following other spiritual paths and has allowed others, if they wished, to start on their journey in this direction.

The experience was certainly positive and from the final verbal and written feedback on the questionnaire distributed at the end of the course, it became clear that there was the need to be able to follow longer sessions in order to deepen and assimilate what was practiced, and to reflect on how to connect the various practices in the best sequence.

On Sunday, September 4, as part of the Library Talks series at Merigar, Fabian Sanders gave an explanation of the symbolism of birds in the Buddhist world and in the Tibetan imagination. Birds were the main theme of the 2022 edition of Library Talks. The idea was inspired above all by the interest that Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had always shown for birds and their songs. Particularly when he was at his home in Gadeling near Merigar, the Master loved to listen to the birdsong that filled the valley early in the morning.

In their varied forms, birds play a very important role in Buddhist literature and symbolism. In general, in addition to their symbolic value, that varies according to the species, their movement in the sky without leaving a trace gives rise to many parallels and is a source of powerful metaphors. In addition, an unintentionally divinatory significance is traditionally given to their behavior.

There is very strong symbolism attached to some birds due to their appearance and comportment. During the talk Fabian spoke extensively about the crow, whose black color gives the idea of a predominantly inauspicious symbolism, but which also has a link with the protector Mahakala, of which there is a form with

Above all, there was a request to deepen and practice the various activities in short specific retreats, to ensure continuity in practice. This was widely expected, and indeed, the purpose of this 'tasting' was precisely to stimulate in-depth study for those who were interested and inclined to one or another of the practices.

Taking into account the requests that have emerged, it was definitely an experience to be repeated and was also very useful for improving the structuring of the courses and meeting the needs of those approaching the community for the first time.



Red-backed shrike.

Photo by Giacomo Gentiluomo

the face of a raven, and with Rahula, also considered a demon of the eclipse, with a crow's head on top of its stack of heads. The vulture, on the other hand, which is disliked in the West, is highly appreciated in Buddhism both for its characteristic of not taking lives to feed itself, since it only feeds on dead beings, and because it is said that it does not differentiate what it eats, which makes it a symbol of *ro snyoms*, the single flavor that a practitioner should recognize in the face of any "meal" that samsara presents. Furthermore, the vulture is considered to fly higher than all birds. Its feathers are widely used; for example, they adorn the headdress of Padmasambhava, and it is said that they spontaneously grew on the head of Rigdzin Godemcen (1337-1409), teacher and tertön whose name means "he who has vulture feathers".

In India and in Tibet, the cuckoo is closely connected to the arrival of spring and the awakening of nature, and thus represents awakening. However, its characteristic as a parasitic bird give rise to metaphors on the deceptiveness of the material world, since the "adoptive" mother who feeds its young, believing it to be her own, becomes like those who seek happiness in what is outside.

Regarding the peacock, the electric blue color of its neck is considered to derive from its ability to transform the venom of snakes, insects, and plants that it feeds on; thus, the practice of the great Peafowl (Mahamayuri) protects against both material and spiritual poisoning. The feathers of

» continued on the following page

>> continued from previous page

its tail, with the splendid colored, complete and luminous *thigle*, become the symbol of what is already perfect, without any alteration.

The swan is able to separate milk that has been mixed with water, and thus symbolizes discriminating wisdom and appears in several episodes and texts related to the Buddha.

During the talk, some artistic works by Giorgio Dallorto relating to the theme of birds were exhibited.

The song of the cuckoo, acrylic on canvas

The painting shows the Six Verses of the Vajra, in Tibetan *Rigpai Khujug* (The Cuckoo of Instant Presence) in Tibetan *uchen* calligraphy. The verses are arranged in two concentric circles in the sky of Merigar; in the lower part of the picture is Monte Labbro, the Stupa of Merigar and, in the foreground, the Himalayan cuckoo.

The nature of phenomena is
nondual,
But each one, in its own state, is
beyond the limits of the mind.

There is no concept that can
define the condition of "what is"
But vision nevertheless manifests:
all is good.

Everything has already been
accomplished, and so, having
overcome the sickness of effort,
One finds oneself in the self-
perfected state: this is
contemplation.

(The Six Vajra Verses, from: Dzog-Chen,
Namkhai Norbu, Snow Lion)



The white crane, acrylic on canvas

A Tibetan landscape with poetry attributed to the Sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (1683–1706?) in Tibetan *uchen* calligraphy. A unique figure in Tibetan history, the Sixth Dalai Lama composed two collections of poetry. The famous quatrain in the work has traditionally been interpreted as a prediction of the place where the Sixth Dalai Lama would be reborn. The Seventh Dalai Lama was in fact identified in Lithang, in eastern Tibet.

White crane!
Lend me your wings
I shall not fly far
From Lithang, I shall return.



The Crystal and the feather, acrylic on Nepalese paper

Verses taken from works by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu transcribed in Tibetan *uchen* calligraphy concerning the three Wisdoms (essence, nature and potential) according to the Ati or Dzogchen teaching, accompanied by the crystal, symbol of primordial purity, and the peacock feather, symbol of self-perfection, which are also cornerstones of the Dzogchen teaching.



The essence of all phenomena is
pure from the beginning.
The nature of all that appears is
self-perfected.
The all-pervading potentiality is
without interruption.
The wisdom of Ati is the total
perfection.

A A A

All that appears and exists
manifests in the condition of
wisdom.
Marvellous! Wonderful!

This season's previous Library Talks relating to the theme of birds and winged animals in general had a naturalistic character and were organized with the valuable help of experts from the GOM – Maremma Ornithological Group – "A. Ademollo" Naturalistic studies, a voluntary organization that carries out studies and research on fauna, flora and natural environments, especially the avifauna of the Province of Grosseto, also for conservation purposes.

The first Talk, on 8 July, had as its theme **The birds of the area of Monte Labbro and the upper Albegna valley** with Luca Pas-salacqua of the GOM – Maremma Ornithological Group. On the occasion, the photographic exhibition **In the skies of Merigar** was also set up in the Mandala Room. The exhibition documented some of the varieties present in the area thanks to photos, all taken at Merigar, by photographers Giacomo Gentiluomo and Riccardo Sirna. Together with the photos, we prepared descriptive captions provided by the GOM which we combined with the songs of the birds that could be heard using the QR code.

We discovered that from the observations carried out by the ornithologists there are probably about 160 bird species present in the Merigar area and in the surrounding areas, such as Mount Labbro and the nearby hills. In particular, the Merigar area is important from an ornithological point of view, especially due to the presence of species such as the harrier, which nests here, and passerines such as the red-backed shrike, which are decreasing in number in Italy. An interesting curiosity is also linked to the fact that, among the species present in the area, there are some that can be attributed to the main characters of the Buddhist text *The teaching of birds*, a work in which the cuckoo, a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, transmits the teaching of Buddha to a winged people.

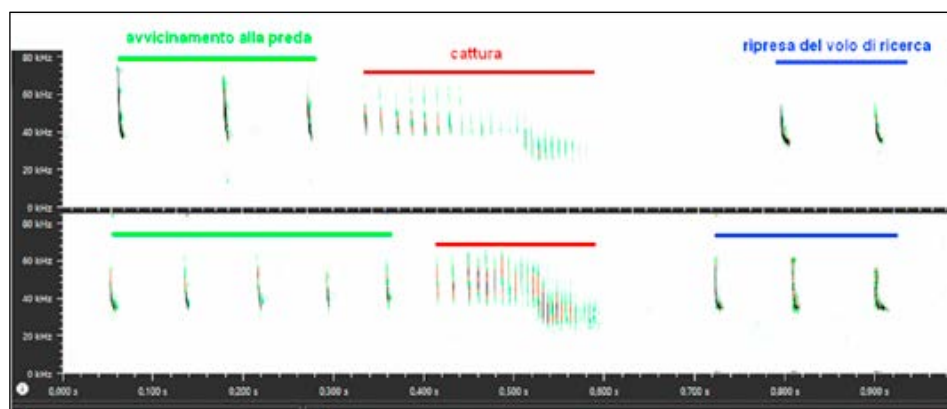


Fabian Sanders.



Harrier or diurnal hawk.

Photo by Giacomo Gentiluomo



Two typical feeding sequences of bats at Merigar.

Luca introduced us to the different species present in the area and then led a walk along the footpath towards Arcidosso, identifying some of the species described together with the participants.

The second meeting with the GOM experts took us into the night skies, in search of the bats, the only flying mammals. It was extremely interesting to find out more about these very special beings and then walk in the dark with the expert Marco Dragonetti who, with his bat-detector, made the ultrasounds of bats in flight audible.

A short time later we received the analysis of the recordings, of which we present some excerpts:

"The species detected with the bat-detector are *Pipistrellus kuhlii* and *Pipistrellus Pipistrellus*, with a tendency towards the prevalence of the latter species. It is interesting to note that in many other areas of the province of Grosseto the opposite phenomenon is observed, with a clear prevalence of *Pipistrellus kuhlii* and, in some cases, a complete absence of the other species [...] Given that the first records of both species were obtained at about 20.30, that

is about 15 minutes after sunset, it is practically certain that those individuals came out of shelters present on site, probably in the crevices of some building at Merigar. [...] Therefore, even if there is a relatively low number of individuals, the presence of

some reproductive site of the two species mentioned above in the Merigar area can be considered reliable. In this regard, the possibility of conservation action should be considered, by arranging some artificial shelters (bat-boxes) in strategic positions, given that both *Pipistrellus kuhlii* and *Pipistrellus Pipistrellus* are habitual frequenters of this type of shelter, both for reproduction and for their autumn/winter rest."

The topic of birds will also be the main theme of the upcoming Library Talk entitled **Where the birds sing. Haiku poetry encounter**, an introduction to the poetic genre of haiku with reading of works in the original language and in translation with Paola Peruzzi and Jun Nakazawa. The guiding thread for the choice of the haiku presented will be that of the birds and, to follow, an experiment in writing and reading the compositions of the participants. ©



Participants waiting to detect the ultrasonic calls of bats.

Children's Day at Merigar West

Liz Granger as recounted by Laura Evangelisti

On Sunday August 21, at Merigar West, the entire day was dedicated to children, from 5 to 12 years of age. This was the second year that a Children's Day was offered in the beautiful surroundings of the Tuscan Gar, a day in which children of different ages and backgrounds, from the Community and the local area, could enjoy a day of fantastic activities at the Gar.

This year the event was organized by a group of instructors of Kumar Kumari Yantra yoga for children. Kumar Kumari is a method of Yantra Yoga designed specifically for children between 5 and 12 years of age, conceived by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, taking into account their physical size, energy, and unique qualities of breathing. Last year during a teachers' training course for Kumar Kumari, a small group of instructors was formed with many ideas that included writing a children's story in which the characters use the ten particular sounds related to the breathing that are used in Kumar Kumari Yantra. In that way by following the story the children can relate those sounds to particular characters.

Throughout the year the group worked together to create the story line for the book while the illustrations were prepared by another member of the group, Cristina Conticelli, an illustrator of children's books and a storyteller. The book is almost in its final form and will be published by OM Edizioni who collaborate with Shang Shung Publications and who are very enthusiastic about it.

Preparations for this year's Children's Day began in the springtime with several meetings and ideas based on the story that had been put together over the winter. Part of the preparation was to create a large curtain of material that would show all the illustrations from the book printed in color on material.

The Children's Day was a beautiful day, clear, warm and sunny, with around 30 children participating in the older group from 5 to 12 years old, and about 10 younger children. While the younger children took part in different activities at the Yellow House with Constance Soehlen, the older group spent the morning at the Gönpa with Cristina who narrated the story using





the panel to illustrate it. The main characters, Nyima and Dawa, a Tibetan boy and girl, are looking for their little yak who is lost and meet a number of mythical creatures during their travels, each of whom makes one of the sounds from Kumar Kumari Yantra. They finally manage to find their way home and so at the end of the storytelling, the children and Kumar Kumari instructors all linked hands and circled around singing the melody of the the six syllables a' a ha aha sa ma.

After the story the older children practiced the warmup movements for Kumar Kumari Yantra guided by their instructors, and then some of the exercises such as the 9 breathings, the only Tsadul that there is on the Kumar Kumari practice, and the 3 yantra, the snake, the bow, and the plough. Then at the end they all lay down in circle relaxing under the wonderfully colorful roof of the Gönpa.

After the lunchtime picnic break in the meadow by the Gönpa, there were a few games, and finally the exciting Treasure Hunt! This had been organized in great detail with six places in the area around Merigar, the Gönpa, the Sangkhang, and the Stupa, and at each place one of the characters from the story could be found, in disguise, complete with costumes and makeup! The little yak, the yeti, the dragon, the snake, the garuda, the two Tibetan children, Nyima and Dawa, and the fairy. The children were divided into six teams, each with different instructions on how to find their characters. When they found each character they had to overcome some obstacles in order to receive different coloured ribbons. Once they obtained their ribbons they could receive fragments of

their maps for the treasure hunt and gradually gathering all the pieces of the map, they could finally start on the hunt for the Treasure. The characters in costumes were so convincing that some of the smaller children actually thought they were real!

The children were accompanied in the Hunt by a flautist playing some Tibetan songs and when they arrived at the big Stupa they were met by the Fairy who gave a khatag (prayer scarf) to each child, and after passing around the Stupa a few times, the khatags were attached to the door of the stupa.

Finally the children discovered the hiding place of the Treasure, a large box containing many small bags with semi-precious stones, bracelets and necklaces that had been donated. A real Treasure trove! The children then walked up to the small Stupa for a few Khaita dances with the Fairy and finished at the Yellow House with an abundance of ice-cream, fruit, and biscuits.

There was the most wonderful weather for the day with a special light and some really impressive clouds while the rain held off until the evening.

Many of the children participating were from the Dzogchen Community but there were also some who had done Kumar Kumari at the local schools, while others had seen the announcement about the event and had just come for the day. It was a very joyful way to introduce many people to Merigar.

The organizers were very happy with how the day went as many different people collaborated to make the event a success and hope that this type of activity can be repeated at Merigar in the future and in other places. They are looking for-

ward to continue their collaboration with some of the local schools to continue to bring Kumar Kumari Yantra sessions into the classroom and possibly even establish regular sessions of KKY at Merigar open to all children.

Laura Evangelisti would also like to take the opportunity to say that many more Kumar Kumari instructors are needed and invite especially younger people in the Dzogchen Community to attend the Kumar Kumari teachers training that take place at Dzamling Gar and Merigar.

And finally special thanks for the wonderful collaboration to Laura E, Cristina Conticelli, Letizia Pizzetti, Dina Priymak, Natasha Priymak, Michele Corrado, Constance Soehlen, Fiorella Minetti (Merigar gekö) and Colin Ellar (the Yeti), Emmanuel Jouan (the yak), Susan Schwarz (the snake), Mandarava Bricaire (the Garuda), Svetlana Vajnine (the fairy). ©



Gönpa Renovation at Merigar East

Greetings from Merigar East! Now that the summer season is over let us share some good news regarding our Gönpa renovation campaign. The very project was born last year during a gakyil meeting with Migmar Tsering. Migmar encouraged us to try to do something about the state of the meditation hall and offered concrete help.

First, following his advice, we set up a fundraising campaign and started collecting money. We are a small Gar in a relatively poor part of the world so there was a sense of scepticism as to whether we would be able to collect sufficient funds for the necessary construction repairs at least. But looking back – we couldn't have had more generous support – big thanks for all of you for the precious help!

Fast forward several months and the relatively easy phase of gathering information and planning the various works was over and the time for action was almost here. At the last moment, we were very lucky to find a flexible local crew to start the repairs in May. The progress on isolating the foundation and putting up new plaster was remarkable and once finished, we couldn't wait to welcome our painting volunteers!

At this point, it was clear that we would have enough resources to renew the decoration of the outer walls, but we didn't know whether or not we would have the capacity to start with painting inside the Gönpa, nor how it would look like.

The date of Migmar's arrival was approaching and the various missing elements slowly began to come together: the Austrian paint, the Romanian scaffolding and last not least, an international group of enthusiastic helpers to support both the painting works and the general flow of the workshop.

Then came D-day and Migmar and the Dynamic Space of the Elements team of six arrived. Chinese and Tibetan students from Italy together with Romanian, Czech, Slovak and Moldovan volunteers proved that with commitment and dedication nothing is impossible. For three weeks these fantastic people withstood harsh weather and fatigue and bravely overcame whatever obstacles appeared. Thank you so much Gönpa renovation team! Not only did they



Photos by Lubomir Michna

manage to restore the outer decorations (with some improvements), but, following Migmar's vision, they also started the elaborate process of painting the ceiling of the hall. Some of the volunteers even re-painted the central outside mandala, so there's a neat place to practice the Vajra Dance, too.

Over the next couple of months we will share more visual content from the Renovation workshop, including interviews with some of our volunteers. Naturally, we want to start working on next year's workshop as soon as possible. Apart from the continuation of the ceiling painting, there are further auspicious, beautifying and informative elements that we would like to see manifest in the temple. Our wish

is to continue creating a unique space for practitioners, but also casual visitors, who mainly come to Merigar East to find out more about Buddhism, Dzogchen or the Teachings and the legacy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We will also share with you this year's budget breakdown.

To find out more and participate in this amazing project please check out our web and FB page, or get in touch with us in any way you prefer.

With gratitude
ME team

©

Link to the latest video <https://youtu.be/gdBxKVDDuBo>



10 Years Since the Inauguration of the Kunsangar South Gönpa

Dear Vajra family,
10 years ago, on August 1, 2012, during a retreat with Rinpoche, the Kunsangar South Gönpa was inaugurated.

In his dreams of clarity, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu saw a crystal temple and envisioned this project for the Dzogchen Community. His idea was embodied in the construction of the Merigar Gönpa and then other Gönpas. The Kunsangar South Gönpa is similar in architectural design.

Our "Temple of Light" was designed by Giovanni Boni and decorated by Migmar Tsering and numerous assistants. We send them rays of light, kindness and gratitude. We hope to see them again here, in the space of the pure land of the Southern Gar.

In honor of the inauguration of the Gönpa, a commemorative juniper tree was planted near the sangkhag. This year we want to plant another tree to continue this tradition.

Throughout all these years the Gar has continued to develop and during this time many retreats and courses have been held in this place that is sacred for all of us. The construction of the Gar is continuing, retreats are still taking place, and this site of practice is active and always full! No matter the circumstances of time, the infrastructure of the Gar is also developing – the Gönpa, the Longsal stupa, the summer kitchen, as well as houses for living and for retreats. More than 400 trees have been planted on the land of Kunsangar South and the children's playground is being improved. All this would have been absolutely impossible to do without the participation of a huge number of practitioners of the Dzogchen Community that have supported and continue to support Kunsangar South!

On this occasion we especially remember the care of all the Gekös, groundskeepers and Gakyils! From the moment the Gar was founded, many people have offered their work as the guardians of virtue (Gekö): Vita Adamenko, Sergey Kozhukharov, Yura Fomichev, Sergey Grzhimolovsky, Natalia Palkina, Natalia Gerasimova, Lena Sycheva, and Lesha Shadrov. We thank all of them for their selfless work for the benefit of the Gar and the Community.



We would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who took an active part in the creation of our common space, in particular: Andrey Besedin, Alexander Baliura, Ivan Kuzmenkov, Eduard Avzalov, Alena Evsyukova, Vitaly Goncharov, Victoria Adamenko, Andrey and Svetlana Molodtsov, Andrey Khudoley (Dak), Natalia Gerasimova, Sergey Sedler, Agvan Zhelezov, Ruslan Rozhkov, Alexey Shadrov, Sergey Kozhukharov, Anton Nefedov, Igor Safonov, and Rinat Gabiyudin, as well as many others.

As the 14th Dalai Lama said: "It occurred to me that virtually every aspect of my life came about as the result of the efforts of others. My precious self-reliance was a complete illusion, a fantasy. As this realiza-

tion dawned on me, I was overcome with a profound sense of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings. I felt a softening. Something. I don't know. It made me want to cry."

Everyone who comes to Kunsangar South brings a piece of themselves, their awareness, energy, and service for the benefit of all living beings.

Wherever you are, in whatever circumstances you are, we love you all, we send you hugs, and look forward to meeting you in our Gönpa.

Happy Gönpa Inauguration Day everyone. See you at Kunsangar South!

With love, the Gekö and Gakyil of Kunsangar South

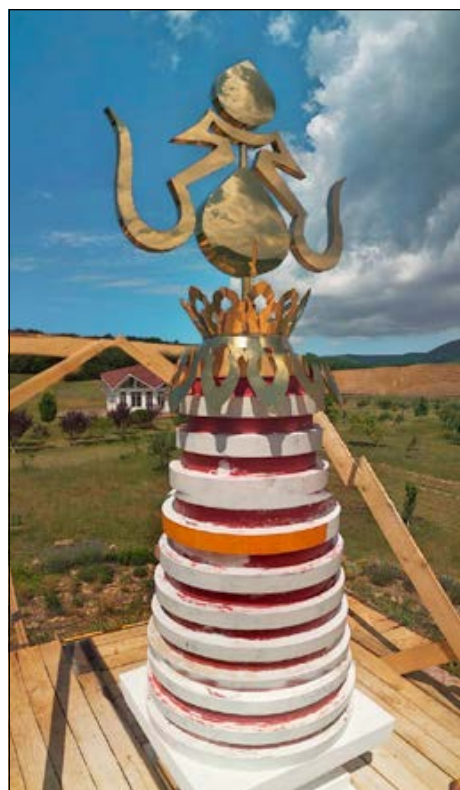


Restoration of the Longsal Stupa at Kunsangar South

Anton Nefiodov, Curator and main implementer of the restoration project

There was a need to restore the upper part of the Kunsangar South stupa, which consists of 13 rings representing the 13 *bhumis*. Due to weather conditions, the varnish was washed out and had become dull and the gold had lost its former glitter.

It was also decided to refresh the “body” of the stupa. We removed the old paint from the concrete, restored the areas that were chipped, and primed and repainted the surface.



Photos by
Elena Razumova

The reconstruction of the upper part included the restoration of missing fragments in the concrete and the gilding of the rings.

In the course of the work, we cleaned the rings from the old varnish and primer until we got to the metal, degreased them, and applied an anti-corrosion primer. The primer needed to be leveled and polished which helped to improve the brilliance of the gold. Also, the primer was in a shade of gold. Then a special varnish called mordant was applied, on which the thinnest gold sheets were glued.

Before the gilding itself, we had to protect the working space from the wind, because the sheets of gold are so thin that they scatter even from breathing on them, not to mention the wind. We built a makeshift tent out of polyethylene and started working with the gold, although it was very hot to work as the tent created a greenhouse effect.

However, on the positive side, everyone was able to take part in the gilding process after some brief instructions on

how to stick gold sheets onto mordant varnish.

The last stage of the restoration was the application of shellac varnish to protect the gold from contact with oxygen, and the project was completed.

You can see a short film by Alexander Popov on the process of the stupa restoration here: <https://youtu.be/G-OhZs2Pm6s>.

We wish Kunsangar South prosperity and are always happy to offer our work for the benefit of all!

Events and Activities at Kunsangar North

Summer at Kunsangar North was hot – the temperature sometimes reached 34°C, a sultry wind blew. It was like a gift from heaven after a long cold winter. The Gar was protected from the heat by the crowns of tall pines. We happily swam in the famous Klyazma river or in a picturesque lake. There were many different berries in the forests, and beautiful flowers and fragrant herbs in the fields. So we enjoyed the heat and the sun a lot. And, of course, we practiced together.

Vajra Dance practice and retreats are especially popular. This summer there were two big retreats with international instructors Adriana Dal Borgo and Prima Mai. And now mandalas are constantly spread in the Gar and Vajra Dances are practiced almost every day. Many people began to come from Moscow and other cities to dance, conduct a personal retreat, or relax and enjoy the beauty of the place. It is very mesmerizing when the harmonious sounds of the Vajra Dance or the melody of the Song of the Vajra of Space (Kalong-dorjeikar) are heard throughout the forest.

Yantra Yoga instructors also delight us with in-depth instructions at the retreats where people from all over the country gather. Recently, we held a retreat with Viktor Krachkovsky on the practice of kumbhaka and its application in pranayamas of 3–4 groups and the 7th lojong.

In addition, we started holding practice retreats led by practitioners without an instructor. Recently we finished a wonderful retreat on the practice of purification of the six lokas with Vajrasattva. We practiced 4 thuns a day at Rinpoche's house. It was a very successful experience. Now the members of the Community ask to hold similar retreats as often as possible, so that there is an opportunity for deeper collective practice.

In September, we plan to hold an interesting retreat on the basics of thangka painting with the world famous thangka painter and our Vajra brother Nikolai Dudko. Many people are looking forward to this unique event.

We also continue to actively conduct online retreats. Changchub Dorje's phowa retreat with Zoltan Czer was very successful. People from different countries joined. And at the weekend retreat with Igor Berkhin there were about 200 connections!



Kunsangar North lake.



Retreat on Khalong dance with Prima Mai.

With the help of karma yogis, a very complex and painstaking work is underway to restore our beautiful Stupa of Perfect Victory. Already now it is very popular not only among Buddhists and very soon it will be included in the number of sights of the city and tourists from different cities will come to us. Emaho!

In order to make everyone who comes to the Gar feel comfortable, we continue to repair the dormitories: we completely ren-

ovated 4 shower rooms, restored the stairs in one dormitory, updated the ventilation in the dining room, and repaired the boiler room. So we try to develop the place in all directions and develop ourselves.

Looking forward to seeing you all at Kunsangar North. Let's practice and enjoy together!

With love,
Gakyil of Kunsangar North, Russia



News from Namgyalgar

Ian Drummond and Sarita Thomasson
(Namgyalgar Gekös)

After long periods of lockdowns and internal travel restrictions in Australia, in April Namgyalgar Gekö Sarita made final preparations to launch the Namgyalgar Airbnb, listed as “Escape to a Mountain Retreat.” Guests have access to a private two bedroom apartment (formerly the teacher’s residence) with kitchen, living and dining rooms, outdoor terrace and pool. Photos and more details of the listing can be found here: <https://www.airbnb.com.au/rooms/586266867864260038>

We have had many bookings since launching in April. Only an hour’s drive from the Queensland state capital city Brisbane, Namgyalgar is situated in the heart of the Glass House Mountains, not far from a popular mountain lookout and other tourist locations such as Australia Zoo. From the property itself the mountains Beerwah, Coonowrin and Tibrogargan are all a visible and strong presence.

Other refurbishments and additions at Namgyalgar in the last couple of years have included the Gekö’s quarters, the completion of a new retreat cabin, and a new outdoor kitchen and dining area. While Airbnb accommodation itself is only available outside retreat programs, these new additions to Namgyalgar allow for Vajra Dance and other regular practices to continue comfortably and unobtrusively when the main house has guests. The shared dorm rooms have freshly painted walls and ceilings and four comfortable single ensemble beds, two in each of the rooms – with the retreat cabin these remain open to members year round.

It’s been great to be able to share the special qualities of Namgyalgar with guests while contributing to the sustainability of this remarkable place. ©



New Namgyalgar Retreat Cabin Does the Trick!

Jan Cornall, Namgyalgar, 28/2/22

First, I have to tell you how I got here. Back in Sydney, suffering from a bout of pandemic era ennui, I asked my dreams for guidance. They gave me one of the Mandarava mantras and I woke up singing it! A day or so later driving to Byron Bay to run a writer's retreat (first in two years), I sang it most of the way and the time passed quickly and joyously. Near the end of the Byron event, with no pressing engagements on the calendar at home, I Google Mapped 'how far to Namgyalgar?' Only a couple of hours! Rang the charming Gekös Ian and Sarita and asked if the new retreat cabin was free. Indeed yes! Book it Dano! And here I am doing a personal Mandarava retreat.

And now I have to tell you it is very comfy, very conducive to personal practice, and I am very happy here. It's got everything a practitioner would want. Good bed, quality couch, calming blue green décor, great kitchen, fantastic shower, enough space to meditate, do yoga, sit in the sun and read a book and most importantly no wifi (although you can probably wrangle some phone reception if desperate).

Thanks to all those who worked so hard make it happen. Who towed it, fitted it out, interior decorated it, saw to every little detail. It's not a rustic cabin in the woods, and from the outside it may look like a mobile home has somehow landed in a paddock, but for me it is perfect. Come on up, or down as the case maybe and give it a whirl. ©



2022 Dance Dance Dance Retreat

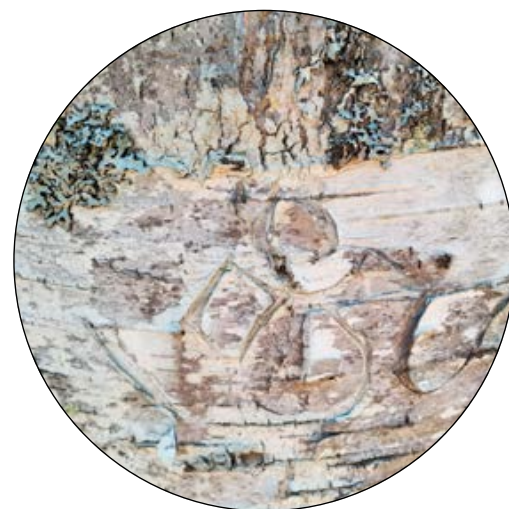
At the Universal Mandala,
Khandroling,
Tsegyalgar East USA

Kyu Kyuno

Having been away for three years, my longing to dance on the Universal Mandala once again was growing day by day.

Khandroling (where Dakinis live) has a magical powerful energy. Rinpoche used to say "You can realize in 6 days at Khandroling what might take six months in other places." He continued to say, "Everyone should come here as a pilgrimage since this is the starting point of Vajra Dance and a special place that is deeply connected to the Longsal teaching. We should build a Community house here where pilgrims can stay."

When Rinpoche came to Khandroling, he carved the Longsal symbol on the white birch (Rinpoche said white birch is the sign of Dakini) next to a distinct large



Longsal symbol in the white birch tree inscribed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

rock with visible seam lines, as if something is sealed inside.

As I arrived this year, the pond was clear and the summer breezes were ca-

ressing the gentle waves. The trees have grown taller, and the stupa appeared to be renewed, surrounded by a new garden with blossoming flowers. Looking up at the Vajra Hall, the majestic Longsal symbol was soaring high in the sky. There is no place like Khandroling on this planet!

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Walking into the Universal Mandala, sometimes colors start swirling as if one is entering another dimension. Rinpoche said the Universal Mandala is very powerful, you can have many experiences.

It is time to Dance Dance Dance.

The event led by three Vajra Dance instructors, Carisa O'Kelly, Bodhi Krause and Kyu Kyuno, assisted by visiting Vajra Dance instructor Lorraine Gaultier, started with the Full Moon Ganapuja. Participants were mostly from the USA and a few from overseas.

We included sitting practices like Guruyoga of the White A, Goma Devi, and Mandarava. Chöd practice happened every evening. We dedicated Shitro to Stofelina, her sister, Jannie, and others. The fire puja that was taught by Rinpoche in 1984 in Conway MA, was performed at the Guardian cabin, thus purifying, increasing, and strengthening our energy, while pacifying negative influence. I have not heard of Rinpoche teaching this practice anywhere else.

All the Vajra Dances were reviewed.

All Vajra Dance Wheels, – Small, Medium, and Large – were turned completely!!!

Dance Dance Dance 2022 ended with a beautiful Mandarava Ganapuja with the Dance of Song of Vajra.



Dance, Dance, Dance group photo.

The event was smooth and blissful. Everyone helped harmoniously, with lots of laughter and lightness.

Thank you, Rinpoche for discovering this special land and uniting us as a family!!! ☺

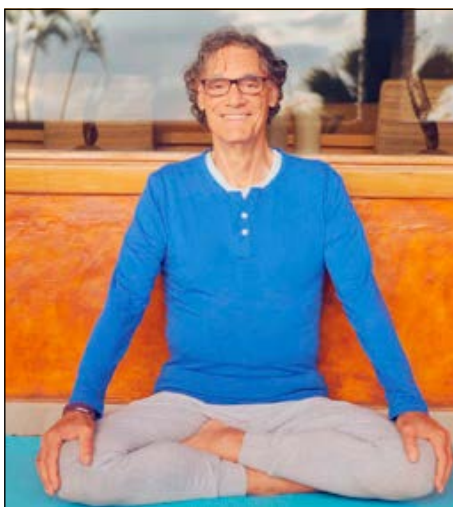


Rock with visible seal lines.

Tsegyalgar West and Pelzomling

Upcoming retreats organized by Tsegyalgar West (Baja California Sur) and Pelzomling (Mexico City)

November 14–December 15
Yantra Yoga and Mandarava Tsalung
with Fabio Andrico
Practice Retreat at Tsegyalgar West
Contact: tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com



December 23–31
Dzogchen Retreat
with Igor Berkhin at Tsegyalgar West
Contact: tsegyalgarwestsecretary@gmail.com

January 6 & 8
Dzogchen Weekend Retreat
with Igor Berkhin at Tepotzlán
Contact: pelzomling@gmail.com



An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau

Michael Farmer
Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2022
Hardbound, 393 pages

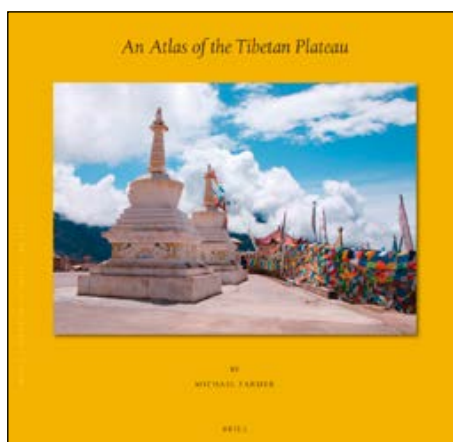
Giorgio Dallorto

After the publication of *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* by Ryavec, I thought that the final word on the historical cartography of Tibet had definitely been written: I was wrong! The commitment to write another work dedicated to the current state of the Tibetan plateau with more research and database construction has been fulfilled by architect and cartographer Michael Farmer, who has been involved with Tibetan culture for many years. With this *magnum opus*, which took decades to complete, he has compiled an essential reference work warmly welcomed by scholars and students interested in learning about contemporary Tibet as well as spiritual practitioners who wish to follow the footsteps of the great masters of the past along the many places of pilgrimage that still exist in Tibet today.

Michael has always been fascinated by maps and areas in the Himalayas, northern India, and Asia in general, possibly due to the fact that many of his relatives were born in the shadow of the Himalayas. In his twenties he undertook a long trip through India and Nepal and became fascinated by these areas and the people who inhabit them.

His maps have appeared in many famous publications including Dudjom Rinpoche's well-known *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (Wisdom, 1991) and the *Tibet Handbook* (Footprint, 1996). He has also recently created a unique computer-generated three dimensional *Map of Tibet* for the MACO (Museum of Asian Art and Culture in Arcidosso, Italy).

An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau features 120 color maps and numerous satellite images depicting everything, from more recent settlements to what remains of older historical monuments and buildings, and bearing witness to the remarkable effort that Tibetans have brought to the reconstruction of their religious heritage. Using extensive satellite imagery the author has identified and positioned more than 2000 religious locations plus nearly 2000 settle-



ments named both in Tibetan and Chinese where possible.

This beautiful contemporary atlas of Tibet contains an introduction describing in detail all the technical characteristics used by the author for mapping the entire plateau starting from the extreme western territories up to the north-eastern territories bordering Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. The geographical information system (QGIS) has enabled the author to add an enormous amount of different types of data through digitalization and computation. Every location has been positioned using satellite imagery. Google Earth and other sources have been used to provide the illustrations as well as locational geo-refreshing.

Regarding the language used for the place names, the author has put great effort into making Tibetan toponyms and their Chinese equivalent accessible to non-Tibetan speakers. He uses a simple romanized transcription for the pronunciation of the Tibetan place names, together with the pinyin names, on the maps.

After a brief description of urban growth and development in the most recent years, the book describes all the aspects of this transformation with exceptional photos of rural housing and religious development. Finally there is a description of the development of the railway system, including the Lhasa-Chengdu rail link through the Tsanpo Valley to Nang County and the rail project from Zhigatse to Kathmandu.

In several maps the reader can also discover the great number of airports that have been built in the Plateau; at the moment there are some 20 new high altitude airports, the highest being Daocheng Yading airport at 4,411 m. in Dabpa County (see map 51).

The book's written section, which is of the greatest interest to Tibetologists and those generally interested in the culture

and history of Tibet, describes the Gonpa Classification and Development. It starts with a glossary that explains the etymology and meaning of the Tibetan words (i.e. gonpa, "solitary place" – a monastery of any size), and then goes on to list the monasteries, identified by symbols and colors representing their lineages when they are known (see also maps 111–114).

Gonpas have also been symbolized in charts according to their size, from large teaching monasteries to small monastic communities. The many gonpas are shown here in different time lapse photos that reveal their growth in recent years. The populations of these very large gonpas has grown at an extraordinary rate, for example, Larung Gar's population has reached as many as 40,000 inhabitants.

The introduction contains 51 aerial photos in different scales, mainly referenced by the date and reference number of the corresponding map. Not only Gonpas but also Chortens and Mani Khorlos are shown and where possible in different years.

The core of the book is composed of the proper atlas containing 108 maps in many different scales. To this auspicious number of maps, the author has added:

- * two different maps showing the density of population (2010) in West and East Tibet in scale 1:6,000,000 (maps 109–110);
- * two maps representing the Gonpa count per County in West and East Tibet in scale 1:6,000,000 (maps 111–112);
- * two maps representing the distribution of different lineages: Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa and so on in scale 1:6,000,000 (maps 113–114);
- * two maps representing the climate according to the Köppen classification of the Plateau with the major rivers and lakes in scale 1:6,000,000 (maps 115–116);
- * four satellite view maps in beautiful colors showing the major physical features of the Plateau, north-west, north-east, south-west, and south-east of Tibet, also indicating politically disputed territory with diagonal stripes 1:4,800,000 (maps 117–120).

After the maps in the central part of the book, the second part contains the Indices:

- * a page of Index feature codes;
- * an eight page index of administrative areas in Tibetan transliterated characters and Tibetan *uchen* characters;

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The Deep Connection Between Art And Spiritual Practice

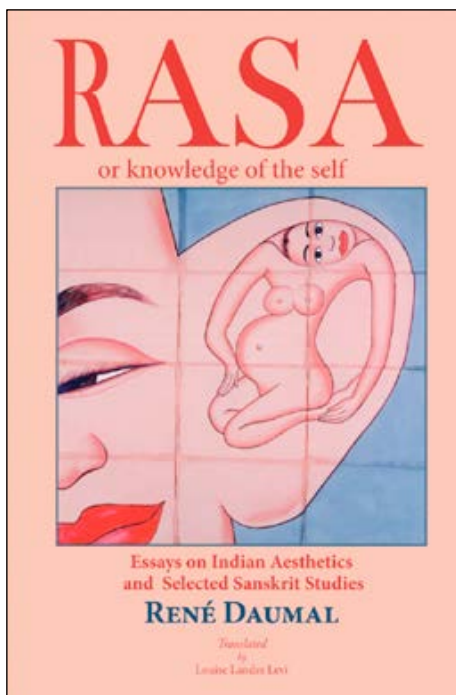
RASA: Or Knowledge of the Self,
by René Daumal
reedited and translated by Louise
Landes Levi
Third edition,
© 2021 Louise Landes Levi
Coolgrove Press, New York,
ISBN: 978-1-887276-41-2
Front cover art is *Five Senses* by
Francesco Clemente

Poet and Vajra-sister Louise Landes-Levi made an important and influential contribution to the understanding of the spiritual roots of art and the spreading of this knowledge.

Dorothea Franck

René Daumal, (1908–1944) was a French poet, writer and critic with a deep interest in the spiritual traditions of the East. In the seventies his unfinished novel *Mount Analogue*, published posthumously (1952), became a cult book in the New York art and poetry scene. The novel is playing in an imaginative and somewhat surrealist way with the analogy between mountain climbing and the spiritual journey to truth. Patty Smith called it her favourite book.

The book *RASA* is of a different nature. Daumal translated into French and commented a selection of Sanskrit texts, presenting the spiritual poetics and aesthetic philosophy that lies at the base of all Indian



Arts, – a brilliant analysis of the differences between Western and Eastern views on art practice and theory. The book includes summaries and reviews of some crucial Tibetan texts, among others *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *The Life of Marpa* and *The Conversion of the Birds*. Louise, as a poet, writer and musician, with expertise in classical Indian music, has the perfect qualification for this task. It is of great merit to make this book accessible again.

In another context Louise, shunning no effort to give the English-speaking world access to his work, writes about this author: “Daumal sought a pervasive awareness that would affect each of his activities. (...) His life’s work and his daily life became a single thread through which he would develop a state of presence – a non-dual awareness – that was the inner subject of

his other only apparently fictional works (...)”, making a deep connection between authentic artistic and contemplative practice obvious.

I want to add a more general note on the merit of translating.

Translation, in my opinion, is one of the most compassionate forms of art, especially when it concerns texts of eminent spiritual value like the written works of our Teachers, but also of other works of crucial cultural importance. To quote our Teacher: “Culture is Evolution”. I call translation an art because it is an impossible – yet feasible task. Impossible because of the fundamental incongruence between languages, as each one is expressing unique features, nuances and implicit cultural references that do not exist in other languages. Feasible, because with ingenuity, creativity and courage, devoted individuals nevertheless dedicate their time to this challenging task, that delivers neither fame nor big income – if any. A world without translations would be inconceivably impoverished, a world of unrelated islands. None of the greatest texts of Dharma Teachings and literature would have reached us. Let us be aware of how much we owe not only to Teachers and great writers but also, in a different way, to their translators. ©

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- * another eight pages with the same index of administrative areas in Pinyin with their corresponding characters in Chinese script;
- * the final and richest part of the book, consisting of around 220 pages, is a complete index of place names. The first 100 page index alphabetically lists the names in Tibetan transliteration, followed by the equivalent Tibetan *uchen* characters, then Pinyin, Hanzhi, Feature Code, County, Prefecture, Province, with the map number and geographical location of each place, and, when it is known, the

respective spiritual lineage. The index of the second half of the pages contains the same information but listed alphabetically according to the Pinyin name.

This publication is the fruit of a lifetime of study and research. I would like to thank Michael for his commitment to this work for which the publishing house has produced a volume that is elegant, modern, and, above all, useful for all those who will be travelling to the sacred land of Tibet in the present and in the future. An important and essential reference work for scholars, travellers and pilgrims. ©

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Speaking to the Universal

Marsha Klein

I had the amazing good fortune to attend the first introductory retreat of the Dzogchen Community, in America in November 1979. It was held at the California Institute of Integral Studies, located in an old mansion, in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco. Norbu Rinpoche arrived that first night, with an entourage of Italians that immediately brought to mind, “La Dolce Vita.” Rinpoche himself, stunningly Tibetan, but dressed casually, teaching in Italian, translated by Barry Simmons, a brilliant scholar and a huge presence himself.

They began with the sangha singing the Song of the Vajra, and then Norbu Rinpoche giving an introduction to Dzogchen. The power and clarity of his teaching was so strong that I was transfixed. Although at the time I didn’t know Italian, I could somehow understand almost everything Rinpoche said, and then I got to hear it again, translated into English. He concluded with teaching us the practice of the night, *la pratica della notte*. As in many of his teachings over the years, this rang so deeply true to me, something I knew without having the words to ask for it. I had been an avid dreamer all of my life, and being in Jungian analysis, recorded many of my dreams, so working with dream life was completely familiar. I knew without question that I had met my root Guru.

This fortuitous meeting came about indirectly, through our first son, Turu. He was six at the time and he had become friends with a boy in his first grade class, Russell Weinberger, (a friendship that has lasted through their lives.) When I eventually met Russell’s mother, Lynn, for the first time, she and I began a long conversation, which also continued over forty-three years. We realized that we had a lot in common, being visual artists, spiritual practitioners and having mutual friends in Chogyam Trungpa’s community.

The Weinberger family had just moved to Sonoma that year, following twelve years



Marsha Klein with her Painting Dreamers #9.

living in India. Their time in India began with the Peace Corps and culminated at Tashi Jong, working with the monastery community and their cherished teacher, Khamtrul Rinpoche. Lynn and Jon had a deeply connected network of spiritual practitioners. Among them was the wonderfully vital Mario Maglietti, an early student of Norbu Rinpoche in Italy. When he heard that Rinpoche was planning a trip to our area, he let Lynn know, convinced that she should go meet him, and she extended the invitation to me and my husband, Charles. I feel that this connection came in good part because of the practice we had done up to that time, paving the way for this next step.

A few weeks after this first introduction, Kennard Lipman, an accomplished Tibetologist, as Norbu Rinpoche would call them, living in Berkeley and his then wife, Huisan, began reaching out to interested people. We gradually came together as a small community, with our first country retreat the following summer in Potter Valley. For every year following, well into the 1990s, we held annual summer retreats with Rinpoche, in various pastoral locations in Northern California.

Hearing and following his teachings, I felt like the dry earth drinking up every

drop of water, a thirst quenched with the freshness and depth of it. At the retreats, he was always available, eating meals together with the sangha, giving three teachings each day, followed by the Rite and the Chöd into the night. There are so many memories from retreats here and globally: playing by the ocean, at the Oz retreat, watching him walking in the early morning, encountering a peacock who gave him the full rainbow of his feathered tail, soaking in the old baths at Harbin Hot Springs, swimming in the sea in Baja, where hot springs came up into the seawater. Seeing and helping paint the Merigar Gönpa with the master painter, Choegyal Rinpoche from Tashi Jong. Waiting in Kathmandu, for almost the whole three weeks that we were scheduled to have retreat, waiting for Norbu Rinpoche and the students to arrive. They were delayed and rerouted multiple times, but finally made it, coming back to share stories from their amazing journey in Tibet. Jim Raschick showed his slides and told the story of their finding the lost, ancient city of Zhang Zhung.

Since I was a child, my earliest memories are of my grandfather, and our strong connection. Meaning and understanding were always very important to me. Ancient

» continued on the following page



Dreamers #6.

» continued from previous page

traditions attracted me. Mystery, worlds we could only imagine, filled my mind. My Russian Jewish grandfather's storytelling captivated and sustained me in 1950s dreary Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He instilled in me a belief in myself and my will to do anything I set my mind to.

My passion for art began in my teens, when I discovered the art museums of my native New York City. Collections of Ancient Greek Sculpture and European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum drew me in and Francis Bacon's intensely expressive work at the Guggenheim jarred my vision into the present. I began studying art at Brooklyn College, but did the major part of my undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1960s, at the peak of the Bay Area



Ektoskeletal Torso.



Dreamers #1.



Dreamers #7.

Figurative movement. My own artmaking was generated within this figurative tradition during a very exciting time, psychologically, spiritually and artistically, in the San Francisco Bay Area. In my early sculpture I responded literally to the Figurative emphasis on bodies in connection with nature. Surrealistically, my torsos, heads, arms, and feet, sprouted wings, flowers, cacti and roots. Ceramic sculpture was my main medium from 1969-1989. That year my father passed away and the Berlin Wall came down. The times signaled a switch in focus for me, from sculpture to painting.

Teaching art to children was my other calling, as a way to give them what I missed in my own childhood and for me to work directly with the raw creativity that is a child's natural state. As I was discovering my own artist self in Berkeley, I attended a lecture at the San Francisco Art Institute by Rhoda Kellogg, a Jungian psychologist and early childhood educa-

tor. This presentation of her international research on the universal quality of children's creative development, confirmed my commitment to work with children through art. Which I did following graduation and on into forty years of my life. My teaching expanded to reach students of all ages, at first in clay and later drawing, then designing and directing large community mural projects.

In 1971, I moved from the city to the country. I fell in love with Charles Illgen and the land with which he had such a strong connection. I moved from Berkeley to join him at a three hundred acre ranch in the hills of Napa and then a few years later, to Sonoma Valley. In an agrarian setting, surrounded by nature, growing gardens, grapes, and then children, I developed a strong relationship with Charles and with nature. This appears in my artwork and in his surreal, photographic portraits, which reflect a propensity for the spiritual and a dialogue between us

My art as it has developed over these five decades is: Raw Vision, Dream, Symbol, Mystery and Soul Food. Art contains me as a sanctuary and a vehicle, providing me with the opportunity to develop a unique, visual language of my life's experience. I create bold, expressive oil paintings and organic ceramic sculpture. Using the body as metaphor to address the human psyche, my work is rich in content with strong archetypal and biomorphic images.

Usually working in series, each piece captures a still moment in an unfolding progression. Recording a waking dream, I proceed intuitively. My raw approach often presents an unexpected, sometimes visionary result. As I explore seeming dualities: containment/expansion, hidden/visible, rooted/transcendent, an internal plan reveals itself. Although my initiating impetus is often rooted in the personal, the completed works speak to the universal, reflecting larger concerns with the soul of humanity and our severely impacted natural environment.

During our retreats, Norbu Rinpoche gave us specific practices of integrating with the elements, water in the summer, fire in the autumn into winter, then air in the spring. These practices fit our country life with its creeks, fireplaces and hills. The elements are prevalent in my artwork as well. In fact, even the span of my art making practice visually and literally, follows the elements, moving from clay/earth and fire/heat, to water, then culminating with air/wind and my most recent, space/sky.

My art is a spiritual pursuit, transformative, in the making and in the viewing. It is a portal into a more connected, sensually and spiritually empowered self, offering viewers healing from the loss of connection to soul and to deeper meaning in our lives. These artworks definitely come



Marsha Klein with her painting Re-Membering.

through me. My art practice and my spiritual practice are interrelated. Dzogchen practice sustains, influences, enriches and informs my art work and my life.

To see more of my work, I invite you to visit my website:

www.marshakleinstudio.com

©

Memories of Stoffelina Verdonk

Santi Maha Sangha, Vajra Dance and Khaita instructor Stoffelina Verdonk and her sister, Janna, both died suddenly on July 21, 2022 in a car accident in France. Stoffelina is lovingly remembered by those who knew and worked with her.

Christina Svane

I met Stoffelina in Amsterdam, when I came from the US to teach at the School for New Dance Development in 1986, where she was completing four years of study in performing and teaching contemporary dance. I could see right away that she viewed life as a never-ending adventure. She had an artist's spirit, never conforming to rules and expectations, but following her own curiosity, creativity, and experimentation with total courage and passion. She didn't have a traditional dancer's body or make dances like anyone else. Her energy was always as if she were on a quest for penetrating the secrets of life using the wisdom of dreams. We instantly felt a connection, and I told her about Rinpoche and the Dzogchen teachings, which she was immediately interested in.

I was exploring dancing in nature, especially in relationship to trees, and began improvising with the energies and symbols of the five elements, which I would sometimes talk to Rinpoche about, and he was encouraging. I asked Stoffelina if she would like to explore this with me on a retreat in the forest I had organized with some students in Holland. I also invited a potter, so we could work with the earth element as clay, and Stoffelina did an incredible dance with clay on half her face, down her shoulder and breast, like the hide of an animal, or the bark of a tree. What was unforgettable about it, was that her presence was totally transformed. She was not performing, she was experiencing another state of being.

She was integrating with the earth element so deeply, we all felt a profound peace just watching her. Whatever she did, she fully embodied it.



Janna on the left and Stoffelina.

One of my favorite memories of her was on the trip to Mt. Kailash with Rinpoche in 1988. We had to make a 3000 km detour because the road along the Brahmaputra River was washed out from floods. The detour took us through the Taklamakan Desert, where we ran out of drinking water, and everybody on the bus was suffering from the endless bumpy ride where there was no road, and the dust that got in your nose and eyes and mouth and lungs. But then Stoffelina started singing. Softly at first, then louder as people started listening, and everyone started feeling lighter, forgetting our discomfort and remembering we were on a great adventure, a pilgrimage with our

Master. Her singing – sweet and strong and full of colors – was her way of contributing to the situation, helping us all feel better.

A few years later, when I danced with her on the Mandala, I knew we both felt that our shared journey in dance was a pilgrimage that had always been leading us there, long before we knew it. Now that she has left us, I find myself remembering with amazement her freedom of expression, sometimes wild like the wind, sometimes quiet as a flower, being true to how she felt, no matter what. And I think what a great example, a great teacher of being free she always was.

To share memories of Stoffelina as a young dancer, I reached out to two dancers she remained close friends with from those early days, Liisa Pentti and Zjamal Xanitha.

Liisa Pentti:

Stoff and I were in the same year at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam, 1982–86. Besides dancing, she also loved to sing, and around 1984 we started rehearsing a singing performance. Though it never got performed, we had a few rehearsals which were fun. I remember she loved Bette Midler and we were rehearsing some songs sung by her.

Stoff was a wonderful, subtle dancer and a great improviser. She also was not afraid to ask the sharp questions when there were quandaries in a group process or a workshop. Her sense of humor was present in her dancing – I remember her participating in the Sidestep Festival here in Helsinki in 1998 some time after she had given birth to her son. She made this incredible, absurd and humorous solo using the milking machine since she was still breast-feeding and invited three guests to participate in the darkness. It was a totally hilarious and out-of-the box performance. I felt always she had this Great Imagination she was applying to everything she did – dancing, writing, singing – and being in this world.

She remained as a dear, warm-hearted friend I could always rely on when in trouble, and there were quite a few of those times. During our studies and after graduation we kept in touch through all these years. She was truly an important person in my life, and lives on in my heart.

Zjamal Xanitha:

It is almost impossible for me to realize that Stoffelina is gone, she was so full of zany crazy liveliness, so tender-hearted even via messenger and email. Her soft voice, in her gently determined way, invited you to persist as she led you into the nuances of her thoughts and experiences.

One of my favorite memories of Stoffelina is when we went to Northern Italy for a walking and dancing holiday. Somewhere in the forest, I fell in love with a branch that had fallen off the tree many years ago. It was a spiraling, twisting, lichen-covered creature. Only Stoffelina could understand that, to me, this being was a person, and that I wanted to develop my relationship



The White Car

Ange Vine

The white car arrived
Unexpectedly
To drive me to another dream
Where I walked hand and hand
With my teacher
Singing
Sisters and brothers, eyes shining
were with us
in unborn space

.....

with it. She believed it was well deserving of a seat on the train with us on the return journey. The branch was so long and unwieldy, it was insanity to attempt it, but we did it with much hilarity. Stoffelina enticed everyone to accept this odd, eccentric travel companion and everyone did, from the train conductors to our booth-sharers, because of her delight in it. That branch lived a long life in my house for years afterwards. She took it with her one time to Switzerland to perform together with it, carefully showing me how it would fit in the car by extending out both the front and back windows. I surrendered its vulnerable form into her care once more, knowing she knew and loved its essence.

Her gentle, determined commitment with so much light-heartedness and joy is an inspiration. Every conversation with her, every dance with her, is a treasure for me. Every magical encounter is made more when she is there. Beloved woman. Always in my heart. ©

To Stoffelina

Ricardo Sued

We wanted to grow old together,
for our hair to turn white,
to grow wrinkles,
and be surprised by 100 autumns.
But life sometimes is not so gentle,
and leaves us at any moment,
in any corner,
in any attempt.
Playing hopscotch
Writing a poem
Celebrating a birth
Or in the middle of a song, leaving
us....

We wanted to grow old together,
Watching the twilight,
playing in the snow,
Watching love movies.
But life,
the same life,
of beautiful sunsets,
and of your dances of wonder.
Of golden leaves of autumn,
of marvelous seas,
of paintings that move,
of wonderful kisses.
Of the sweetness of your voice,
of the mystery of your eyes,
of the warmth of your hugs,
of your humor that still laughs...
The same life
surprised us with its other face,
of sadness, of brutality,
of pain.

Life itself surprised us
so early with your death,
Incomprehensible, painful,
tremendous.
We wanted to grow old together,
holding hands.
But my hands have been left alone,
feeling the rain trembling...

Homage to Stoffelina Our Enchanted Dancer

For ever

Text in tribute to Stoffelina, which was read during the funeral ceremony in Rodez on July 28, 2022.

Dear Stoffelina you are our enchanted Community dancer and you will always be with us.

All the members of the Dzogchen Community thank you from the bottom of their hearts for what you have brought them through your joy, your humor, your strength, your energy, your commitment.

On this day of farewell, we also think of your sister Janna who followed you on the path of Dzogchen.

Lately, Prima Mai reminded us that you were with her one of the first to receive the Transmission of the Teachings of this Sacred Dance by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the Vajra Dance.

You have marked more than one and more than one by your presence on the different Mandalas, teaching us the steps then leading us beyond the gestures of the body in the colors of the Vajra Dances, in the energy of sound, towards instant presence.

Stoffelina you delighted us with your jokes, your words, your funny gestures, your facial expressions.

You have led us into your artistic furrow, into your letting go of invented songs or karaoke, paintings of all kinds: violets and roses of deities or rainbows of Mandala floors.

Your encouragement of all kinds still warms our hearts...

...

Your rants too!

(Ah! It has to be said because there were some (-;-) : your energy sometimes had to overflow to get certain messages across!!! And you made things happen thanks to your temperament)

The bursts of your voice when you played Bagchen...

You have used your talent to work and awaken so many bodies in multiple environments: hospitals and schools, retirement homes... Through relaxation, work on sound and movement.

For this, you created your Oasis association (Ouverture Arts, International Specialized Care) with the constant help of your friends from Millau. In the Community you



Stoffelina at Merigar 2016.

Photo from the video of the Khaïta Dance Migyur Damsik

remembered your beginnings in Modern Dance and dance-performances in Amsterdam and you invented a new activity on the discovery of the capacities of the body to move, an innovative workshop or improvisations during the Vajra Dance workshops.

For 36 years you have dedicated your life to the Dzogchen Community by collaborating with many instructors. You guided us for practices, you transmitted to us what your Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu taught, you were part of the motors of the Dzogchen Community in France and you participated in many ways in many places, Lings and Gars.

From the beginning of the Covid, you created regular meetings of practitioners on Zoom via the Internet relay: discovery seminars for newcomers, meditation, Dance of the 12A, practice of Tara and Mandarava, SMS study seminar (Santi Maha Sangha). This is how many in France knew your sister Janna who danced the Danse des 12A with them every morning via Zoom.

You have been inspiring in every way possible to make known the Tibetan Culture around you: by organizing discovery days, by making the famous Momos, these kinds of Tibetan ravioli, by organizing shows in St Affrique and Ganges, by inviting Tibetans, training us in Khaïta Dances, participating in various performances and workshops throughout the Community.

You worked in partnership with ASIA and Shang Shung for all this, associations for which you relayed conferences on Tibetan Medicine and various subjects. You have created various activities to participate in fundraising.

For Stoffelina

Oliver Leick

Dearest lady,

now you are a blessed Dancer in the Sky,
free of all wordly hindrances,
just enjoying the Harmony of Space,
dancing with all others all Dances
on the immaterial Mandala,
just continuously dancing in the State of Presence.

I thank you for all the moments
that we spent together,
traveling together to Mount Kailash in 1988,
practicing together in Dejamling,
receiving together the unique instructions of SMS IV in Dzamling Gar,
leading together one of the latest online SMS weekend-retreats this year.

I wish you farewell,
we will meet in some dimensions of clarity,
enjoy the unlimited bliss of the timeless moments,
we will always be connected by the most precious transmission of our Master.

Thank you for everything!

.....

You offered this marvelous Tibetan Dance to Rinpoche, Migyur Damsik which means "Immutable Words of Commitment". (Video to show Migyur Damsik: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYouHm5Fl-o>). Your commitment is fully accomplish...

You have created a group of Khaïta Joyful Dances in St Affrique which has grown and will go on with the help of its most advanced members to continue what you have transmitted: Dance, Dance, Dance.

This is what all the mandalas are doing right now to accompany you and what they will continue to do all over the world.

One last word:

Thank you for who you were.
Have a nice journey.

©

Pictures from the Past

Part 5 – On the Road to Nyaglagar

Raimondo Bultrini continues his travels with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1988 to reach the village of Rinpoche's root teacher, Rigzin Changchub Dorje.

The previous episodes published in The Mirror of my journey accompanying Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to Tibet in 1988 were a synthesis of the diaries and writings that I worked on in the months and years following our return to the West. However, this episode and those that follow are the more or less exact transcription of the long unpublished story transcribed at the end of one of the most significant stages of that pilgrimage to Khamdogar, or Nyaglagar, the village where the root master of Namkhai Norbu, the great yogi Changchub Dorje (1826–1961?), spent the last decades of his long life.

He was a disciple of Adzam Drugpa (considered a previous reincarnation of Norbu Rinpoche), Nyagla Pema Düddul, Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen, and Drubwang Shakya Shri. According to a text that Nina Robinson wrote on Namkhai Norbu, <https://melong.com/our-masters-masters-rigdzin-changchub-dorje/>, Changchub Dorje "was born in the village of Dhakhe in the Nyagrang (nyag rong) district in South-Eastern Kham. His mother, Bochung (bo chung), was originally from Dege and was a disciple of Gyalwa Changchub (rgyal ba byang chub), a highly realized yogi from Khrom. He founded his community of mostly lay practitioners in a remote valley in Konjo in eastern Dege. It was and is still to this day known as Nyaglagar and also as Khamdogar. It was in 1955 that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu met Rigdzin Changchub Dorje following a dream.

"The first time I met my Teacher Changchub Dorje – said Norbu Rinpoche – I was a little surprised because his appearance and his way of living was just like an ordinary village farmer. He wore very thick sheepskin clothes and big, thick sheepskin trousers because it was cold in that coun-



The monks at Nyaglagar with Changchub Dorje's grandson, Karwang, on the far left.

try. Until then I had only met very elegantly dressed teachers; I had never seen or met Teachers who looked like that. The only difference in his appearance from a normal village man was that he had long hair tied up on top of his head and conch shell earrings and a conch shell necklace."

My story of the days spent with Rinpoche 33 years after his extraordinary experience in Nyaglagar remained in a drawer for a long time due to my fear – still undiminished – of inaccuracies and superficiality in describing the intensity and depth of the relationship between Rinpoche and the master who introduced him to Dzogchen, and the extraordinary nature of a remote place in Tibet literally transformed by Rigzin Changchub Dorje into a community of believers that is unique in the world. My attempt was to describe facts and circumstances with the simplicity of a journalist, my profession for decades, and I attribute to myself every misinterpretation of the same explanations received by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in those days and months of this extraordinary journey backwards in time.

When we finally reach the main road, our young guide offers me his bicycle to get to the village of Kuantò on the other side of the river. We pass a checkpoint on the bridge that separates Sichuan from the autonomous region. A Tibetan soldier with an old machine gun on his shoulder looks at my passport and permit, while a small group of curious locals gathers around us. The bridge is quite long and there are military sentry boxes on both sides that seem empty.

We soon arrive in Kuantò where – as usual – the Chinese houses are isolated and surrounded by fences, while the Tibetan ones are lined up side by side along the banks of the river.

Passing through the usual inquisitive crowd, along muddy streets and parts of the village that look African, we arrive at the house that has hosted Rinpoche and Phuntsok the last two days. Namkhai Norbu is still ill and his cough almost prevents him from breathing. On the other hand I now feel good, strong, and finally a little calm. It is the very idea of being on a journey, waiting to reach a place which I can't even start to imagine that excites me, mind and body. Perhaps the continuous physical movement stops thoughts from gathering for too long on the same point, on the anxiety of living, thoughts

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that I haven't been able to dissolve in my tiring meditations.

I've been hoping to wash in the river, but I have to give it up again this time because there is little time. I haven't taken a proper bath for almost a month, even if the consequences are fortunately not so terrible at these altitudes. We leave the day after our arrival passing through landscapes of narrow valleys slashed into the sides of the mountains until almost suddenly boundless plains open up, ending in snowy mountain chains. We are now traveling above 5,000 meters on the No-là pass where the black tents of the nomads stand out in the snow. Namkhair Norbu talks of having crossed this pass many times, but in very different conditions, with days and days of riding on horseback.

Coming down the other side, winter seems to end all of a sudden, although patches of snow and ice still catch the eye among the colors of the spring grass. The figures of two men moving along doing prostrations are visible against the whiteness of the frozen countryside. They are going to Lhasa, and they will arrive exhausted, at the limit of their endurance, if they are able to hold out.

Why do they do it? The only sure thing is that faith is stronger than their own lives. They want to arrive in the holy city, and they kneel praying on every stone along the way. For them, every step on the way is an offering to the gods, to the masters, to the Teaching. No material comfort, a car to get there first, wealth, nothing is important for the purification of such a sacred and painful journey whose final goal is realization.

I ask the master if this sacrifice will really serve any purpose. "With such a strong intention – he replies – they will certainly get what they want." I remain silent for a long time while I see the two pilgrims who have now stopped to observe us disappear in the distance. I, too – despite the different stages of the journey – am going to Lhasa but there is a big difference between their gruelling path and my easy journey in jeeps and planes.

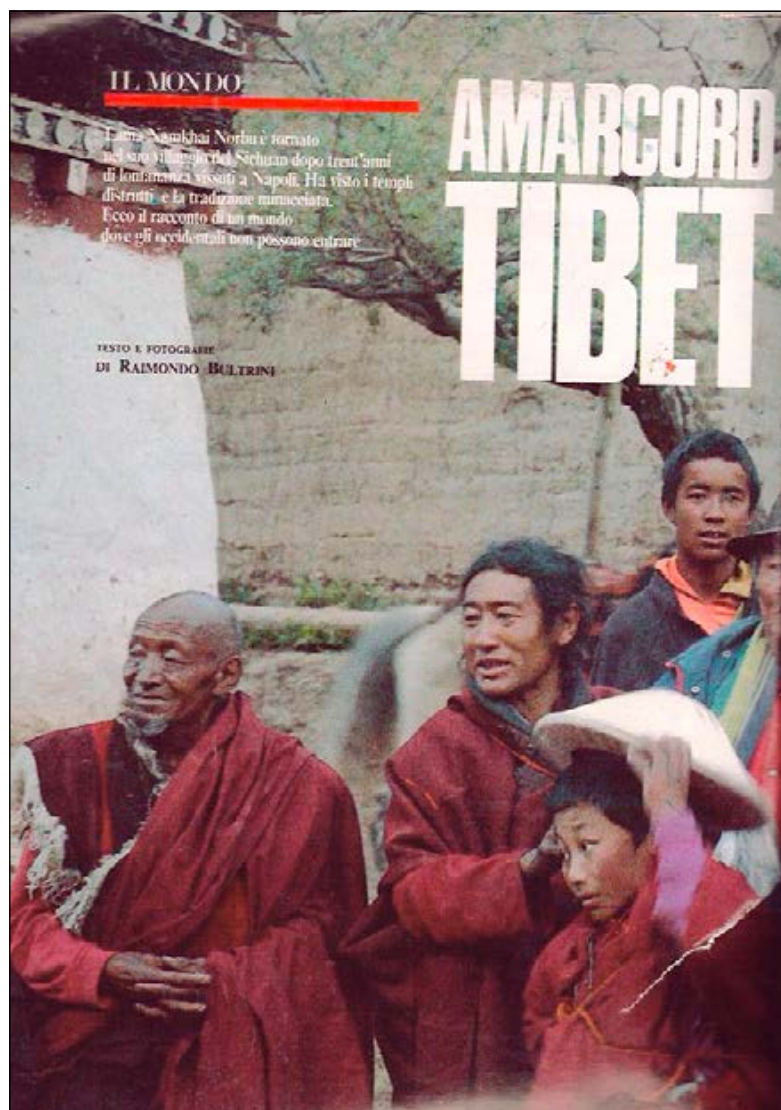
The animals of the highlands

We pass through the capital, Jonda, where many Chinese live and we come across others piled into trucks, heading for some quarry, or along the road under construction. A few kilometers from the capital are enough for us to not meet another living

soul. The grass turns moss green and the earth is red. They look like the colors of a savannah, only more intense, while any human population has been replaced by all sorts of wild animals.

A hundred meters from us a wolf runs and pauses when we stop the jeep to take photos. He watches us for a few seconds

The *avra* also have another characteristic – they are used by Tibetans for their symbolic moral anecdotes. In fact, this mouse accumulates a lot of straw in the summer to eat in the cold season, and it heaps up enormous quantities of it with great difficulty compared to its size. Often, however, other larger animals, having



Rinpoche on the far right next to Karwang. Photo from *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*, a weekly supplement which deals with news, culture, politics and current affairs.

then shies suddenly and runs away. Two huge vultures soar above us while everywhere, from one hole in the ground to another, run the small *avra*, a species of mice that often carry tiny birds, the *atakayu*, on their backs. When they run into the holes, the birds fall. I observe the scene with the feeling that it may hide a meaning. By remaining present, moment by moment, we can ride time, without chasing or anticipating it. Any distraction by hanging on to memories, to hopes or fears for the future, makes us follow the fate of this tiny bird.

discovered the burrows, devour all its reserves in just a few bites. This small rodent thus represents the futility of the effort to greedily accumulate wealth for oneself when chance can take everything away.

Finally, the *avra* – who live in perfect symbiosis with the *atakayu*, so much so that they can even be transported in flight if necessary – are also famous for the network of their tunnels similar to those of moles. There are areas so infested with *avra* that they remain completely barren.



Phuntsog Wangmo (on the left) and Rinpoche's older sister Sonam Palmo during the journey.

However, the real masters of these places are actually the crows. They are everywhere and they are enormous. For Tibetans, these birds also have another symbolic meaning beyond the apparent one: they are the manifestation of the protector Ekajati, a female entity surrounded by flames who protects the Teaching by flying from one point in the sky to another. She only has one eye which symbolizes non-dual vision, and to have an idea of its form the Tibetans adorn their altars with peacock feathers: the eye is the colored concentric circle.

The few nomads we meet have a wild look. The women and children have long straight hair sticking out in all directions, while their skin has the red color of the earth. After half a day of travel by jeep we reach a village of semi-nomads who live in red stone houses at the end of a dirt track.

A austere man with long hair neatly tied back comes to accompany us to a white tent with embroidered designs, where groups of monks, children, and onlookers are waiting for us. Our companion is called Karwang, and is one of the grandsons of Changchub Dorje, the founding lama of the village of Khamdogar. To reach the village that the master of Namkhai Norbu also

called Nyaglagar we have to travel three more hours on horseback across streams, down steep descents, and along very narrow paths, since there is no road and not even the jeep could make it. For this reason Karwang and the monks have come to the appointment a day early and with horses for everyone.

The horses that we will ride plus a couple of mules for the luggage are tied up around the travel tent, where we take a break and sit in a circle for the butter tea ritual. That is the way our caravan will move across another stretch of paradise that has never known cars, nor Westerners.

Riding a horse in places like this certainly offers a totally new feeling of harmony with nature, but also of unreality. What I am seeing and touching right now is not as fantastic as my thoughts about a world where there are industrial fumes, missiles, stress, traffic. The rare villages along the road are made up of stone houses that look like small castles set against the rocks. We follow the path of a river transparent like glass, where the water runs so smoothly that it looks like a motionless sheet of glass that lets light reflect on the stones at the bottom.

As always, the landscape changes at every turn and I can observe everything with ease because a young monk skillfully holds the reins of my horse, leaving me free to enjoy the landscape. Here too, the Khampa learn to ride at an early age, even before they know how to stand on their legs, and the young equerry monk smiles at my funny style of trotting.

Along this route there are no nomad tents, but scattered houses, from which men and women come out to greet us. Someone senses that there must be a great lama, and approaches with head bared to obtain a blessing. A short way from Nyaglagar, two auspicious signs announce the arrival of our party. An eagle spins in circles above our heads and a cuckoo sings non-stop somewhere in the valley. The cuckoo song in particular is considered one of the most auspicious signs.

At Nyaglagar

The low-pitched sounds of the long horns and drums and the high ones of conch shells and trumpets get louder and louder as we approach the village, while wisps of smoke from the rising clouds of *sang* appear here and there beyond the last gorge

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that hides the valley of Nyaglagar. Here, too, the offering of sacred aromatic herbs spreads a sweet and acrid smell throughout the area and all the senses can converge in one fantastic insightful sensation. The valley opens up behind the last curve revealing a triangle formed by a river, a forest of fir trees, and a mountain. The sky is crystalline blue faintly mottled with puffs of light clouds and also seems bounded by the same triangle of this valley.

The place immediately has a very different feeling to Galen. Nature seems to welcome us with its best mood, a good climate, intense colors. Crossing a wooden bridge we enter the village where there is a grand welcoming committee. Namkhai Norbu receives the homage of the *khatag* and is given another horse to ride. Now the music of the monks playing on the temple roof is thunderous. Along the dirt road that leads to the central part of the village there is a line of huge white *chorten*, survivors of the Cultural Revolution. Together with the *chorten*, two almost intact temples and the ruins of others destroyed by years of forced abandonment define the perimeter of Nyaglagar, with its fifty or so houses and dozens of natural caves where yogis and practicing Dzogchen hermits still live today. With the small video camera I try to capture the whole surprising spectacle as the village welcomes us, the crowd following Rinpoche's horse and opening the way to let us pass, curious and smiling.

Finally we are here, in this place, perhaps the most awaited of all destinations. I have heard so much about Nyaglagar and the legendary Changchub Dorje that I have the thrilling feeling of being able to touch a dream. And actually the stories of the masters and disciples linked to Nyaglagar seems to have arisen entirely from dreams. Namkhai Norbu was little more than a boy when he told his parents about his vision of a Tibetan village where a man lived in a Chinese-style house where there was the mantra of Padmasambhava. From the descriptions of a traveler friend of his father, who spoke of a great doctor well known beyond the Yangtse, he recognized the man and the village of the dream, and asked his father to accompany him there.

Today there are only a few more houses than in 1956. For the rest, nothing has changed, not even the house of the founding lama: the same objects, the same bare rooms, the same white walls. Even the old hermits have come down from the caves

above the village to see the lama who has come from the West, and someone recognizes the eighteen-year-old tulku who was a disciple of the great master, more than thirty years earlier. The steady stream of visitors begins as soon as we set foot in the temple hall where we will stay for a couple of weeks.

Sonam Palmo, Phuntsok, and I sit on the carpets that will be our beds while a large bed is reserved for Norbu Rinpoche at the back of the room, in front of a small altar surrounded by 108 niches with as many statues of Padmasambhava. The visitors offer white scarves and kneel before the lama in the usual slow ritual. They wait behind the door for their turn and someone prostrates along the way to the lama's throne bed, adorned with colored silks. I have to work hard to say "no" to all the people who continue to offer me butter tea, *tsampa*, dried meat, biscuits, sweets, and rice with meat. I've learned to say "Enough, thank you" and sometimes, but not always, it's the magic phrase to stop the flow of food.

Sonam Palmo is not very happy with me because I refuse the food offerings too often. I know it may seem offensive behavior, but I really can't manage to eat and drink everything that appears in front of me and Sonam Palmo's insistence irritates me for the first time, like a child forced to do something he doesn't want to. *Tsampa* is difficult to impose on those who are not used to it because, especially in the first days, it makes the stomach swell up and is not very digestible. Not to mention the roots of the *to-mà*, which are so rough that it is difficult to get them through the esophagus. The only way to get them to their destination quickly is to dress them with yogurt. But it is a good idea to eat at least half of them with dried *tsampa* and butter, a deadly mixture. It must be said that this dish is considered a real delicacy, and certainly after a long period of training it can be appreciated in its right flavor. Fortunately, at Nyaglagar, when it comes to food, there is no lack of choice, because the stream of people who come to pay homage to the disciple of Changchub Dorje consists of farmers and shepherds, and no one enters empty-handed.

Faces surprised or intimidated, men, women, and old people of an incalculable age, each with their "*mala*" in hand, recite mantras as they approach Namkhai Norbu's bed. The lama seems to have no expression, and before my eyes his figure has

now transformed into that of a king recovered by throngs of subjects.

At the end of the procession, the monks and the leaders of this community of three, four hundred souls remain in the large room lit by candles. They sit at the foot of the bed of the lama, who talks continuously. I catch the names of places: America, Australia, Japan, Europe, Italy. Also here Namkhai Norbu is obviously talking about the mysterious West and the countries he traveled to before arriving in this realm of the Dharma.

I try to relax waiting for the night, when we will be alone in the room again. They bring me a pile of blankets and I understand that the time has now come. The guests leave us, bowed and moving backwards so as not to disrespect the lama by turning their backs on him. After midnight the long deep-sounding trumpets sound twice and the slow, steady beating of the drum begins for the night ritual of the guardian deities, called to protect the sleep of the village and its new guests.

Before dawn, the low deep sound of the horns awakens us again to remind everyone of the presence of the lama who was a disciple of the great soul of Nyaglagar. Listening to the story of Changchub Dorje as Rinpoche has described it and as the inhabitants of Nyaglagar continuously talk about it, it is hard for me to find their portrayals exaggerated. ©

*To be continued in the next issue
of The Mirror*

Memories

Mario Cumbat

Memories. I don't even know how many years have passed ... one evening at the Olympic Theater in Rome, almost by chance, I found myself attending a performance by Tibetan monks. At the last moment there was still a seat. At the theater I met Laura Albini, a schoolfriend of my mother, who told me about the Karmapa and a great Dzogchen teacher who lives in Naples, but who doesn't want to teach.

Later I received the Buddhist Refuge at Laura's house from Lama Gendun who was passing through Rome. There was a rumor that perhaps Namkai Norbu, the master from Naples, had been convinced [to give teachings] and that Laura was organizing a retreat in Subiaco for the summer.

Subiaco – a long tree-lined avenue led to the villa. It was the weekend and I was very curious. A group of young people had already been there for a few days.

Norbu Rinpoche: I was strongly impressed by his simplicity and spontaneity. He spoke and always seemed to speak to you among the group and directly to your heart.

The days went by, nothing was organized, we lived together (we were 15–20 people), we ate, talked, walked and the Teaching sprung up spontaneously in the most unexpected moments. Norbu Rinpoche's way of life was itself a Teaching.

I decided to return the following week and then I stayed for all my summer holidays.

I was obsessed with taking notes and each time I returned I tried to get people to tell me about the practices and concepts that we received continuously so that I could copy them. My memory made me write down everything possible in order to review it and try to understand it rationally and more deeply. I hadn't understood yet the importance of deep understanding beyond the schemes of the mind and Direct Introduction.

Guru Yoga, Chod and Dorje Legpa were the first "sung" Teachings that even today I am not able to recite – I am very out of tune – but in the group I was able to do my part even if my shrill voice often stood out when it shouldn't have.



Memories of Prata

Mario Cumbat

The retreat at Subiaco had been over for many months now, the impact had been strong and the group that had followed it – those who knew Laura and met at her home – tried to practice and deepen the message they had received. We were all very overwhelmed. The message was so great and profound it had left me shaken: finally a path that I felt very deeply about and that gave us a key to understanding our existence, meaningful at all levels.

At that time there were not many possibilities to find information on Buddhism – it hadn't become trendy yet – and there

Every evening we practiced together and then Norbu Rinpoche would talk to us. It was often difficult to stay up until very late, but no one was willing to go to sleep until the Master bid us good night. Then in the morning we would appear for breakfast randomly while the Master was always there working and with new ideas for the day.

They were intense and pleasant days. Step by step Rinpoche opened up a new world in front of our eyes and in our hearts, always ready to use anything to stimulate us and make us understand. One day he carved a whistle from a reed he had collected during a walk and asked us to try to play it. Nobody succeeded because the whistle only made rough whistling noises. In the end he said he would unravel the mystery and play it himself. Putting it to the test, the whistle emitted the same puffs and noises as before: that was its sound ... ©

were only a few texts, and only for people in the know. We passed between practice meetings at Laura's (where a Karmapa center still officially existed) and meetings among ourselves to exchange opinions and explanations. It was very difficult to fully understand the iconography and symbols of the Teaching, but Costantino, who was perhaps the most knowledgeable in theory, was of great help even at that time. I had few notes and above all not in organic form given my partial participation in the Subiaco retreat, but I jealously kept them and organized them. My fixation for taking notes lasted for many years and my short memory forced me to write as much as possible. It seemed to be the only way that I could have a record to use as a basis for practice.

Summer was approaching and we didn't know where the next retreat would take place. Finally there was news that there was some land near Prata, in Campania, owned by Norbu Rinpoche, where we could meet without too many problems. Although there was water [on the land] unfortunately there was nothing else and we would have to organize ourselves with the tents and prepare everything that was needed for shared facilities.

The valley in the woods was very beautiful. I don't remember exactly how many we were, but the number had already increased considerably compared to the first retreat. The tents were scattered everywhere and it was an extremely mixed camp, both as tents and as inhabitants. Everyone had chosen the place that he or she considered the most beautiful and comfortable, but we set ourselves up as best we could.

This time, given the number of participants, we had to organize teaching and collective practice at well-defined times,

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How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Federico Ballarin

When for the first time I met my root Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, I had an experience that I'll never forget. It was 1980 and the Dalai Lama was in Rome to meet Pope John Paul II. On that occasion, His Holiness held an open lecture giving a teaching about compassion and equanimity. The same year I had started to know and practice Tibetan Buddhism. I had already received teachings from different Masters of the Gelugpa and Niyamapa traditions.

I had met a few students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and through listening to the recordings of his Dzogchen teachings I was quite moved by them, since they were very direct, practical but at the same time very deep. I thought: "This is what I have been looking for since ever." I wrote a letter to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, at the time there were no e-mails, asking him for permission to attend one of his teaching re-



treats. So far I was still waiting for his reply, but in the meantime I dreamed of him coming to me riding a horse.

I was overwhelmed by happiness when I saw him in Rome at the audience at the Dalai Lama conference. Of course, he looked different from the idealized figure I had seen in my dream, he didn't arrive on a horse surrounded by a retinue of knights,

but instead by car together with many of his students.

At the end of the lecture, everybody gathered around the Dalai Lama. Someone offered a *khatag*, others asked for a blessing or some spiritual advice. Instead, I was looking for Professor Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (at that time he was a teacher of Tibetan language and culture at Naples University), hoping eventually to talk with him.

So I approached him and introduced myself, saying that I was that Federico who had written to him to know how and when I could take part into one of his teaching retreats. He answered that later on there would be such a possibility, but he gave me no clues about it. The Dzogchen Community didn't exist yet as an organized association, there was neither a Gakyil nor other people officially in charge of organizing the retreats of the Master.

Thus, although I had introduced myself and despite his statement about a future meeting, I was still not satisfied. Inside me I nurtured the hope of asking him about

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although Rinpoche was always available, at any moment, always ready to give explanations or support to those who needed it.

In the meantime I had met Claudio and Maria. He was an excellent cook and both were nice and helpful. The decision to put the tents close together and share the experience, space, and organization was automatic. As a matter of fact, in our tents we ate much better than in the others and had many comforts – among other things we always had fresh water – so we were nicknamed "Club Med" led. the famous holiday resort! In the evening, the so-called *pretas*, that is, the people who were completely disorganized and were hungry, would roam around the camp looking for people willing to share a meal. Of course the Club Med was one of the favorite destinations where there was always something decent to eat. I still remember the very special soups that Claudio was able to prepare on a really ridiculous stove.

One day two new people arrived from northern Italy, Fabio Andrico and Tiziana Gottardi, and set up camp without a tent on the edge of the field in an area protect-

ed by trees and bushes. They immediately aroused the curiosity of many as they were dressed in white cotton, with a very Indian and ascetic look. They kept to themselves, but never missed the Teaching.

The rain was our greatest enemy and if it had rained hard, considering the conditions of the camp, there would have been serious problems for us all. Dorje Legpa helped us a lot, more than once the rain approached in a threatening way but changed its course due to an intense practice of this Guardian. Norbu Rinpoche led us in the practice sounding the *damaru* and the bell: he smiled and said not to worry.

The inhabitants of the nearby village considered us to be mad people who did strange practices in the woods. They were very curious but also afraid and only a few came to see and hear what was going on. However, they greatly appreciated the fact that everyone, more or less, went shopping in the village.

With my fixation on taking notes I was always one of the first at the Teaching and sat next to the Master so that I could record all the teachings with a small tape recorder. Unfortunately all the tapes, which I gave to a practitioner to keep and make available

to the Community when I left Rome, were lost. There is a complete transcript of the retreat which should be in the Merigar library. There were some major discussions on how to do transcriptions of the Master's teaching: should you transcribe the Master's somewhat difficult Italian word for word or should you put the text in fluent Italian? The choice fell on the middle way: just a few small adjustments to make reading easier and not to run the risk of changing the profound meaning that Rinpoche gave in his talks. We did not feel capable of interpreting the text and re-proposing it in perfect form.

The publication of the volume was a considerable effort, typed (at that time there were few people with computers) and photocopied in I don't remember how many copies. I shouldn't be but I'm still very proud and happy with the effort we made.

The Practice became deeper and consolidated and little by little it began to be part of our lives. Convinced that one of his tasks in this life was to transmit the Teaching, Norbu Rinpoche no longer held himself back [from giving Teaching], with a determination and a devoted enthusiasm that I still admire today. ©

what I had listened to in the recordings of his teachings, in which he talked about the nature of the mind.

I saw him going out to the garden and went after him. As I was coming closer to him, many questions were swirling in my mind and I was sorting out the one that I would begin with. But when I got quite close to him, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu turned abruptly and stared right into my eyes and at the very same moment, all my thoughts disappeared and I could only feel an indescribable emptiness.

I was astonished. As soon as I recovered from that amazement, he had turned again and went on walking calmly around the garden. So I devised to try again and, even if my mind was fumbling in the emptiness, I made an effort to think about a clever question and again I walked towards him.

As had happened before, he turned and looked at me and again I found myself in a state of naked awareness totally devoid of thoughts. There was no more quest of asking questions, the answers were already there. In the meantime, a car had come to the entrance, the Master got into it and left.

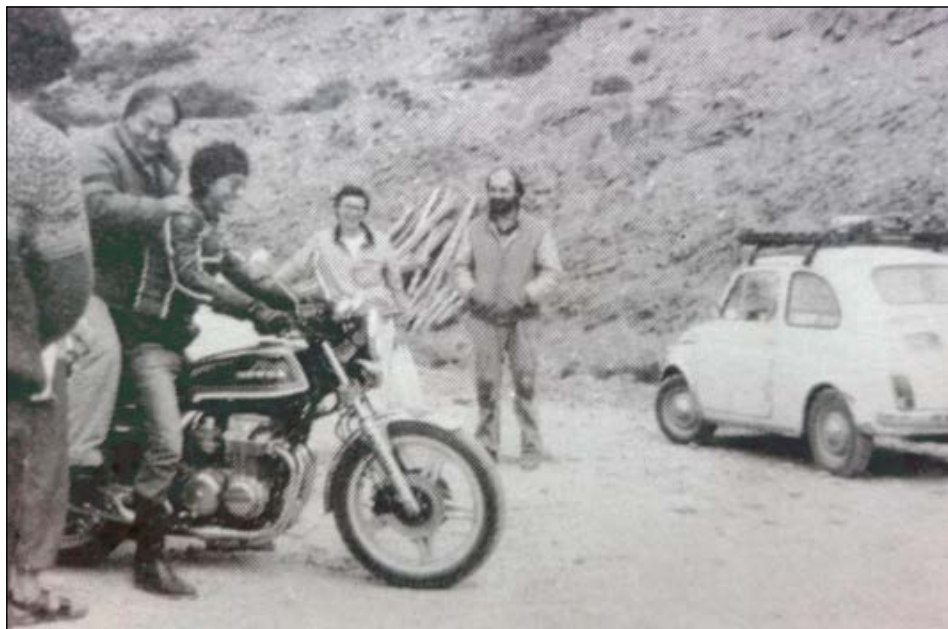
Later, when I took part in his retreats of teaching and practice, I understood that this day I had had the luck of receiving the direct introduction to the state of *rigpa*, the primordial awareness which is our real nature.

It is a priceless gift to receive direct introduction from the Master by means of an unconventional experience, not prearranged within a context where usually the teachings are bestowed, such as during a retreat or a formal initiation where different symbolic items are used. A Dzogchen Master is able to give direct introduction also during everyday life, in a seemingly fortuitous moment when the student doesn't expect it at all, by means of a phrase, a gesture or, such as in my case, a gaze.

It all depends on the karmic relationship between the Master and the student, and also from their mutual capacities. If the student is absent-minded and has no devotion, which basically means openness with no bias, then it is difficult he will receive anything.

A few weeks later, I managed to get the phone number of the Master and asked him if I could pay him a visit together with a girl from Rome, the same person who let me listen to the recordings of his teachings about Dzogchen Semde. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu agreed.

In those days he lived in Formia and so we arrived unhurriedly from Rome at his



Rinpoche getting on Federico's bike at Merigar. Photo by Karin Koppensteiner, for the cover of the booklet of poems "Amiata" by Louise Landes-Levi, 1984.

house in the middle of the morning. He greeted us and sat us in the living room. We started to talk with him. I asked him many questions about the meditation practice and Dzogchen. I never have had such a relationship with a Master.

My previous experiences concerned the Gelugpa lama of Pomaia, where I had spent a month listening to teachings about *lam rim*, the gradual path. I remember that once, at the end of a teaching session, I asked the Lama if there was a possibility of a direct path towards enlightenment. When I uttered that question, the Italian monks and the students who were there in the gōnpa burst into laughter. The Lama answered by stressing the necessity of the gradual path. He was a good Geshe and I am happy to have received his teachings, since I had the opportunity to understand better the difference between Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen. To tell the truth, meditating on impermanence for a person like me, who experienced the loss of my father when I was three years old, perhaps is not so mandatory, since direct experience greatly overcomes any conceptual elaboration.

One day a few practitioners from Como arrived there, at Pomaia. I became friends with them and they told me that they were going to France, to attend a Dzogchen retreat held by Dudjom Rinpoche. Something sounded inside me and so I asked if I could join them. They happily agreed and it was a wonderful experience. I received from Dudjom Rinpoche and Sogyal Rinpoche my first Dzogchen teachings, together with the

Vajrasattva and Amitayus initiations. I remember that Sogyal Rinpoche said to me: "Since you are living in Italy, go and attend the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu."

And there in Formia it was something different, extraordinary. I was sitting in front of a living Buddha who was talking to me sitting on a chair, not on a throne, that is, we were sitting at the same level. There were neither regulations nor frills, everything was flowing in a direct and natural way. At a certain moment, the Master stood up and came back after a few minutes bearing two dishes full of food for us. It was lunch time and he had brought us something from the meal prepared for the family. Our happiness about being there overcame our embarrassment, also because the situation was so relaxed that it didn't come at all to our mind that we might be a bother.

After lunch, we sat in the kitchen and went on receiving teachings in this way, talking until late afternoon, when Rinpoche's young son came home from school.

Then we took our leave and gave infinite thanks to the Master, apologizing for our intrusiveness. That day the Master was extraordinarily kind and gave us everything: teachings, food, and even Tibetan medicines.

When we left, it was sunset time. I looked up at the celestial sphere where the first stars were starting to blink. I felt so light that I seemed to be flying instead of walking.

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