



THE MIRROR

No. 158
December 2022



The 27 Commitments
On Working With Newcomers
International Gakyil
Silk Road Pilgrimage

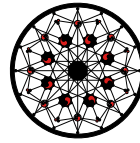
Contents

Editorial	3
The 27 Commitments	4
On Working With Newcomers	8
International Gakyil	11
Shang Shung Institute	14
ASIA	17
Silk Road Pilgrimage	18
You Are Not Alone With Sangha App	20
Dzamling Gar	21
Merigar West	25
Merigar East	29
Kunsangar South	31
Kunsangar North	33
Tsegyalgar West	34
Tashigar North	35
Tashigar South	37
Healers in the Dzogchen Community	39
Book review	40
Pictures from the Past	42
Reflections	45
How I Met	54

Front cover: The “Stupa of Space” from the “Potentiality of the Elements” exhibition, presented by the Dynamic Space of the Elements group at the MACO Museum in Arcidosso. It is one of five models of Stupa that were on display (the first of a series of 108) linked to the five elements and part of the precious terma of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje. Their purpose is to balance the interactions between the elements and bring luck, wealth and health to the place where they are located.

Space is considered to be the mother element of all elements, which is why this Stupa has blue as its main color. It is also called the “Wishful Stupa” that makes all our wishes come true. It is adorned with a jewel on the top, and many jewels painted in five colors on the sides which are able to manifest anything we desire.

Back cover: Enjoying the “Collection of Fairy Tales from the Eastern World” exhibition put together by the Ka-ter Translation Project, Austria, in collaboration with Dynamic Space of the Elements, at the MACO Museum in Arcidosso. The illustrations were created by various artists from different parts of the world and visitors were also able to read some of the tales linked to the various illustrations on display. Work on this project is nearing its final stages and the publication entitled “The Kingdom Where Madness Reigned and other Traditional Tales cited in the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu” will soon be published in various languages by Shang Shung Publications.



Dear Global Vajra Family,
Greetings from the International Gakyil!

As 2022 comes to a close, we kindly ask that you renew your 2022 membership if you have not already done so, and reaffirm your commitment to the Community by renewing your membership in 2023. Membership is one of the most important ways we demonstrate our commitment to the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and to supporting the programs and infrastructure of the International Dzogchen Community, its Gars and Lings, and Sangha. It is how we support Rinpoche's vision for the Community and ensure his legacy.

It is easier than ever to check and renew your membership. You can do so online through your personal profile at dzogchen.net/profile/membership, or contact your local Gakyil for assistance.

Furthermore, the International Gakyil is aware that many members are encountering financial difficulties that affect their ability to renew their membership. Therefore we would like to inform you that:

Members with financial issues or serious health problems can ask their local Gakyil to financially support their membership fee directly (through a local fund if established) or by looking for one or more donors (inside the local Community) or by asking the IG for global sponsorship assis-

tance. This membership will be considered a Local Ordinary Membership;

The International Gakyil along with the Merigar East and Kunsangar South Gakyils agreed to provide special conditions to the Ukrainians members by allowing them to maintain their 2022 full membership status even if they are unable to pay or are only able to pay a nominal fee. This special condition will be extended through 2023.

Please consider the deep significance of membership. We thank you for being an active IDC member and for demonstrating your continued interest, support, and commitment by renewing your 2023 membership and also by paying for previous membership years – specifically 2020, 2021 and 2022 – as needed.

Do not hesitate to contact us or your local Gakyil for clarification and support!

Wishing you happy and safe holidays,
The International Gakyil



Help to Support The Mirror

The Mirror is the voice of the International Dzogchen Community. Please help us to continue and improve this invaluable service by supporting it with a donation! Thank you.

Use the DONATION button on melong.com

Paypal:
yellow@dzogchencommunity.org

Bank – account in Euros:
Bank: Monte dei Paschi di Siena
Branch: Arcidosso

Account holder: Comunità Dzogchen Internazionale
IBAN: IT 22 S 01030 72160 000000 798242
BIC/SWIFT: PASCITM1G99



The 27 Commitments

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu speaks about the commitments he took when he first started to give Dzogchen teachings. Namgyalgar, Australia, SMS Third Level Training, March 31, 2000.

I would like to say something about my personal commitments. It is very important that my students, particularly the Santi Maha Sangha students, understand these principles. They are not just something that I wrote down and called “my commitments”. I apply them.

I wrote these commitments when I started to teach Dzogchen. In the beginning I taught Buddhist teaching in general as well as Tantrism and other information at the University. From time to time ISMEO (Istituto Studi Medio Estremo Oriente) also organized some kinds of public lectures for me. Those subjects were not a problem.

Then, later on, many people asked me to give Dzogchen teaching. In this case, giving teaching means that I show them the path, students apply and follow it, and try to have realization. That is not only for my students, but also for myself. I am still in the human dimension. I am in samsara just like you and there is not much difference. I may have a little more experience of Dzogchen teaching and knowledge – that is true – but we are all in samsara and we need realization. To have realization we need the path. We need to apply the path, follow the path, in the correct way, otherwise we cannot have realization.

When I teach someone, “teach” means that I am working with transmission, working with the path that I am following. It is not something that is easy. People talk about “sharing everything” and it is easy to say, however, the teaching is something concrete for having realization. Until we really have total realization, we must respect the path and everything related to it. So I feel some responsibility.

That is the reason why, at the beginning, when the Gyalwa Karmapa sent me two or three letters asking me to teach his students and visit his centers in different places to give teaching, each time I replied to him, “Please, I have no time. I don’t want to teach. I have a job. I am living an ordinary life, working and earning money, so I cannot go here and there”. And although I received letters again and again, I never accepted.

In the end I decided to accept because there were some conditions in which there was some confusion and danger. For example, there was one of Karmapa’s centers in Rome and another in Milan and they invited me [to teach]. They asked me through the Karmapa’s letters, which I always refused. Then later Lama Geshe Rabten



Photo by Ralf Pluschke

from Switzerland came there. I knew very well that he was a very expert lama, he had studied a great deal and was not an ordinary lama. So I thought that if I didn’t do as the Karmapa had asked me, then of course everybody would follow Geshe Rabten. That would not be bad and perhaps they would learn a little more the Gelugpa tradition and style of Sutra and Tantra and so on. But it is quite far from Dzogchen and Mahamudra.

Then I thought that if I refuse everything, it would not be good. I should do something, otherwise all the students will become students of Geshe Rabten. It didn’t mean that I was jealous of Geshe Rabten, or that I was comparing myself with him. I was thinking a little of the future, of how people could follow the essence of the teaching like Mahamudra and Dzogchen. So then I started [to teach].

I accepted to teach in Rome when Geshe Rabten was there doing a retreat. I told them that we could do a retreat and so the Karmapa’s people in Rome organized it. There were not many people, there was only a group of ten people in all. But then they organized in Subiaco where we did our first retreat. We did a long retreat, which continued for two or three weeks. We had a break after about half of this retreat, and then started again.

But at that time I thought again and again, “Now I am teaching, I am responsible for transmission. I am really giving transmission. They are following transmission. How should I do it?” Also until that point, I had never felt that I was a teacher. I had always considered myself a student, a practitioner. That is all. I had never wanted to become a teacher. But when people asked me [to teach] and I taught, then automatically I became a teacher. So if I am a teacher, what kind of teacher do I want to be? Then I thought again and again and I made these commitments.

There are nine commitments. I give teaching that way, I follow teaching that way and I deal with people that way. This is my *tamcha* (*dam bca*’).



There are actually twenty-seven commitments: nine are related to me, nine of the same principles are related to my students, and nine are related to ordinary people, ordinary dharma people, friends, people who want to work with me. If I collaborate seriously with these people and give them my trust, they must be these kinds of people. If someone is not in that condition, I never collaborate with them or give them concrete trust. So nine, nine, and nine becomes twenty-seven. These are my commitments.

It is very important that students in general understand them, particularly the Santi Maha Sangha students. They must really know how I am working, that what I take as my responsibility is also their responsibility, and how we should work. So it is something important. I want to give you this information and also explain just a little.

I wrote these commitments when I started the retreat in Subiaco in 1976. At the beginning there is an invocation to Amitabha in the Dharmakaya dimension – that means Amitabha Samantabhadra, not Amitabha in the Sutra style – to the dimension of Sambhogakaya like Vajrasattva, to the dimension of Nirmanakaya like Garab Dorje, to Guru Padmasambhava as the union of these three kayas, and then to the real live Guru Padmasambhava who is my unique and most important teacher Changchub Dorje. I pray to you. I am your son, please help me. These people are pulling my hand, my leg, my everything. We will do something and I will do my best. If I don't do that and I renounce this [situation], it is not good. Somehow I should do it. This is my responsibility even though I do not consider myself to be realized or to have total capacity. In front of you, with my good intention, I take these commitments in three groups of nine, which makes twenty-seven. I offer these commitments like an offering. Please take them.

The first commitment is that I will never teach or do meditation or apply anything only for my own self-interest. This is very important because in general whatever we do we show that it's for the interest of someone. In the real sense we have a very strong ego, and we always go in this direction, so I will never do that. Also I will try to make my students understand not to go in this direction. And if one of my friends goes that way, and they have this intention, when I know that, I won't work with them.

The second is that when I give Dzogchen teaching, my intention is never to teach only to receive money or for some interest at the material level. Also if my students go in this direction, I will not teach them; I will not work with them. And my friends who want to work or be friends with me, if their aim or their intention is that, I will never give them my trust. This is the second.

Kurti (bkur sti) means to receive honors, such as people saying, "You are becoming an important person, a high level teacher, and so on". In order to receive something like this [honors] I will never teach even a single word of Dzogchen teaching. In the same way it is also valid for my students and my friends.

Nyendrag (snyan grags) means fame. Many, many people aspire to fame. Even if they build a monastery, say, in India or Nepal, they may say they are building it because they need a base for the teaching, a base for the Sangha to live, and so on, however, if you observe well, they are doing this to become an important person, to become famous. Many people do that. When they build a mon-

astery, what do they do? First they build a nice temple, and in the temple there is a very elegant seat for the head lama. Many monks may belong to this monastery and even if they do not have ordinary toilets or bathrooms, for example, the room for the head lama is very elegant. And then someone receives Rinpoche, and the place where Rinpoche is sitting is honorable, and then one becomes famous. This is an example. So my commitment means that I will never go in this direction.

Also I do not teach or do any kind of actions with Dzogchen teaching to create a kind of power or position. Many people have this idea. A few years ago when we had a little problem with people of the Dzogchen Community in England, I didn't go there for many years. Some people were saying, "Namkhai Norbu is building an imperial position in Merigar", for example. I know people can have this kind of idea, but that is not my principle. So this is also important to know so that we don't go in this direction. It is very easy when there are some possibilities that people easily fall in this direction and that is why I have this commitment.

Then I will never increase the Dzogchen teaching and spread it everywhere with the principle of *drensem (gran sems)*, which means jealousy and competitiveness with other teachers and traditions. For example, it seemed that I was jealous of Geshe Rabten when I decided to do this first retreat. But in the real sense, that was not the principle. The real principle was that I would have felt sorry later on if I hadn't done anything, particularly towards the Karmapa because he had insisted many times. I felt that nobody would have the opportunity to go into the real knowledge of Dzogchen and Mahamudra, and then later I would feel really sorry. That is an example. So that is not my principle. This is the sixth commitment.

The seventh, *ngagyal (nga rgyal)*, means pride. We think that we are important because Dzogchen teaching is a superior teaching, better than others. That is not the principle. If we have this kind of intention, that is the wrong direction.

Tradog (phrag dog) is concrete real jealousy. In general it is very easy [to develop] between centers and centers, groups and groups. Even in Buddhism, although everybody is Buddhist, within there are many jealousies and we apply many things with this intention. So I am always aware and I don't work with this principle.

Then there is the last commitment which means I will not act with my attachment saying, "Oh, I like Dzogchen teaching because this is what I practice. For that reason I also want to make people understand that this is a special teaching," and so on. That attachment is not the principle.

These are nine principles mainly related to worldly actions in general. For worldly action we say *jigten chöchöd (jig rten chos spyod)* and we don't follow *jigten chöchöd*. Buddhist practitioners always use this phrase, although in the real sense some practitioners may apply it in a contrary way. It means how it must be for myself, for dealing with my students, and also with my friends. I don't work with people who are interested in these kinds of things. This is also important. Many people may say that they are doing very important work for the dharma and want to collaborate. But then I check to see if they have really pure intention or not.

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

I spent almost thirty years working at the university and I know very well the rules of the university, the official rules, and in particular how professors must collaborate. If we don't collaborate, there are not many possibilities and everything becomes blocked. In Italian we say "mafia", the mafia of the university. So the mafia also exists even in the dharma although they do not call it mafia. However, their way of collaborating and the way of applying intention is just the same and for that reason I don't want to collaborate with people like this. That means that if someone does not correspond to my commitments, even if they want to be one of my good students, I will not trust them. If someone wants to be a very good friend and work with me, but their intention is contrary to my commitments, I will never give them my trust.

I will not keep these commitments only for a few days, but until I have total realization. Relationships with people, relationships with students, will always exist, so I will keep them. This means I know I have these commitments. And sometimes we may be distracted, but after a few seconds, a few minutes, a few hours, we notice that we are distracted and we are doing wrong, that this does not correspond with my commitments. When I know I have done something wrong, then I am sorry and I purify because I have that commitment. If I know this and I do not pay respect, then my Masters, Dakinis, and Guardians, can break my heart.

So this is my request. After I started to teach, the dangers from this demon of *gadröd* (*dga' brod*) – one of the demons in the Chöd practice – arose. To remember these commitments of mine, I wrote them down in 1978, in the year of the Fire Snake. So these are my commitments and it is important that you know this. If you know this, then you also know how to collaborate with me in a correct way and also how you yourself should be in the Dzogchen teaching, and in my transmission. This is very important. ❀

Editing by L. Granger

The Twenty-Seven Commitments of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Translated from the Tibetan by Adriano Clemente
with the kind help of the Author
© 2016 Shang Shung Foundation

NAMO GURUBHYA

Samantabhadra Infinite Light in the Dharmakaya dimension,
Glorious Vajrasattva in the Sambhogakaya dimension,
Supreme teacher Garab Dorje in the Nirmanakaya dimension,
Guru Padmasambhava unification of the three Kayas,
To you my only father, unequaled Changchub Dorje,
I pray single-mindedly from my heart:
For a moment think of me, who am like an only child
orphan left alone in a desert,
And be the witness of my commitments!
Alas! Though I am aware that a samsaric being such as me
Cannot lead other sentient beings,
If I uncaringly forsake all the blind who pull me without
guiding them
It is something right?
Therefore in front of you, witness for the truth,
With a mind of utterly pure intention
I offer twenty-seven commitments
As a cloud of offerings, kindly accept them!



(1)

I take the commitment to never explain, learn, meditate
or practice Dzogchen
On the basis of self-interest,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(2)

I take the commitment to never explain, discuss, write
about, meditate or practice Dzogchen
For the sake of profit,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(3)

I take the commitment to never teach a single word of
the profound meaning
For the sake of honor,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(4)

I take the commitment to never uphold, preserve and
develop the Dzogchen teaching
For the sake of fame,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(5)

I take the commitment to never do any activity for the
Dzogchen teaching, not even the size of a sesame seed
For the sake of self-importance,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(6)

I take the commitment to never do any activity for
developing the Dzogchen teaching
For the sake of competitiveness,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(7)

I take the commitment to never do any activity for the
Dzogchen teaching
For the sake of pride,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(8)

I take the commitment to never do any activity for the
Dzogchen teaching
For the sake of jealousy,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

(9)

I take the commitment to never do any activity for the
Dzogchen teaching
For the sake of attachment,
Nor shall my students and my friends ever do that,
Otherwise I will not trust them.

So I take these twenty-seven commitments in three groups of nine:
Nine commitments concerning what I shall not do,
Nine commitments concerning what my students shall not do,
Nine commitments concerning what my friends shall not do.

Whoever violates the basis of these commitments,
However much claiming to be my student, will not be trusted by me.
Whoever violates the basis of these commitments,
However much claiming to be my friend, will not be trusted by me.

These twenty-seven commitments of mine
I promise to keep in the center of my heart
Until the realization of the unsurpassable perfection:
Gurus and Dakinis, be you my witnesses of truth!

Whenever I do anything that violates the commitments
And, acknowledging that it is a violation,
With great remorse I do not keep the vajra samayas in my heart,
Gurus and Dakinis, split my heart apart!

VAJRA SAMAYA NARAKAN

I, Namkhai Norbu, one who bears the rebirth name of Chögyal (Dharmaraja), at the time when I had already started to teach the unsurpassable Dzogpa Chenpo, once I was about to be caught by the demon of complacency because of the great quantity of students. So, in the morning of the tenth day of the twelfth month of the Fire-Female-Snake year (January 1978), I wrote this down as a memorandum of the commitments that I took concerning the responsibility of preserving the Dzogpa Chenpo teaching in an authentic and correct way.

Virtue!

SARVA MANGALAM





Photo by Igor Ustyuzhanin

On Working With Newcomers

Some advice on how those who have been following the teachings for a longer time should relate to people who are newly interested

This teaching was first published in issue 22 of *The Mirror*, July–August 1993.

When those who have been following the teachings for a number of years practice together collectively and new people who have not received transmission participate, many of the old practitioners often get worried. I have received letters from several different places on this topic. When something like this happens, how should the practitioners who have been following for a longer period of time behave? What should they do?

There are two ways of responding to this situation because there are two different types of new people involved.

Interested people

Firstly, there are those who are seriously interested in the teaching but who may not yet have had the possibility of receiving transmission from the Master. In the case of this type of person, it is not particularly important that they have not yet received transmission, because their participation and interest are deep. A person with a profound interest of this kind, even though they have not received transmission today, will receive it tomorrow; they will

always find a possibility of meeting the Master and receiving the transmission. Those who seek will find.

So one should certainly not reject this type of person who wants to participate and is genuinely interested, and whenever it is possible, when one practices together with them, one should help them to participate in such a way that they can learn something, giving them whatever advice may be necessary so that they can understand what is happening.

How to collaborate

I'm not suggesting that any type of person can suddenly become a Master and start to transmit the teaching. To transmit teaching one must have precise knowledge and certain qualities. For example, in order to be able to transmit a mantra it is not enough to have simply received the transmission of the mantra from someone, but one must have applied it, and the person who intends to transmit it must have a certain realization of it. If a person does not have this, and only repeats the mantra, considering this to be adequate for the transmission, the transmission cannot work properly.

If it does not work properly, it is useless to do it, because this means one is just fooling people. So it is not that one has to present oneself as a Master, or someone who is giving a transmission, but there is nevertheless a way to collaborate with other people in order to help them. So that is how things should be done in the case of this first type of person who is genuinely interested: there is nothing that needs to be limited.

Curious people

Then there is another type of person who is not sincerely interested in following the teaching, in doing practice, or in having realization through this path. Rather what this type of person has is a kind of curiosity, perhaps just wanting to find out what is going on, and what this teaching consists of. If we conclude that a person only has this kind of curiosity, we are justified in asking that per-



son not to participate. Why? For a very simple reason. If the person in question is a friend of a practitioner, the practitioner deserves his or her friend's respect. The practitioner can explain that the path, the teaching, and the practice are things that he or she considers important and serious, asking his or her friend in a nice way not to demean this seriousness by their curiosity, because to interfere in such a manner with something important is not appropriate.

A real friend, receiving a request made in this way, will certainly respect it. If the person does not respect one's request, but insists, then he or she does not have any real regard for the practitioner and cannot be a true friend. It is very simple, and there is no need for one to get offended when confronted with such a situation.

Getting information

Someone might, however, say, for example: "If you never let me know what it is that you are doing, how can I get interested?" Many people say things like this. But it would be better for such a person to read a book about the teaching or something like that in order to get a general understanding of the teachings, instead of entering into participating in the path and the practice. Information and practice are two different things.

So if someone is genuinely interested, even if they have not received transmission, perhaps they can participate, and they can learn. In this way when they meet the Master one day, they will be ready to apply what they have learnt because they know how to do it.

Body, Voice, Mind

There are three aspects in the practice, related with our three existences: the Body, the Voice and the Mind. There are many aspects of the Body such as particular bodily positions and ways of sitting when we do the practice. Then as far as the Voice is concerned, there are considerations as to how we should breathe, how we should chant, how words should be pronounced, how to combine invocations with visualizations, how visualizations should be done mentally, how rituals should be carried out, and so on. There are many things related to the Body which must be learnt and done including mudras and their meaning, the function of mudras to communicate in order to make samaya function etc. All these things can be gradually learnt and one can help others to understand them.

Fundamentally, all these things are secondary in relationship to the teaching, to the method. They are not the principal thing but they are ways of applying the path. So if one has learnt all these things, it may be easy to apply them.

Encouraging newcomers

It sometimes happens that when a new person arrives and there are many other people who already know how to do mudra, and how to chant, etc., the new person feels at a disadvantage. They may be discouraged by others even if this is not the principle of the teaching. When one has just started (to follow the teaching), even such secondary things can seem to be very important and when a new person feels that he or she does not know how to do anything, they may become discouraged. If such a person is

given even a minimal preparation, this is not bad, and may in fact be very useful.

Secret teaching

It is a very different matter with regard to reading books containing instructions for practices which should be regarded as secret. They should not be approached with curiosity or just with the intention of seeing what it is that others do. Before reading such material, it's much better that people wait to receive transmission from a Master, and then apply it, because sometimes when one reads a book of instruction one may feel one wants to do something right away, and if one does not know how to do what one reads about perfectly, one may make a mistake which can create problems. Moreover, in the teaching there is a saying that, "One should not take Secret Teaching by oneself which means that one must receive it from a Master, because the Teaching is related to a transmission. Transmission can only be received from a Master, because a Master has in turn received it from his Master in a lineage going right back to the origin, which continues unbroken up to the present day. This connection is what is meant by transmission, and this is the reason it is necessary to receive it.

Transmission

There are various types of transmission, such as initiation, empowerment and oral instruction, as well as the necessity to receive at least a 'lung' of the transmission in the case of mantra. Such a 'lung' involves the power of the mantra which is found in its sound, and this sound must be heard from the Master, who is a person who has him or herself received the transmission and has applied it and produced its function. One must receive the transmission of the sound of the mantra in a perfect way from the Master, and then finally if one applies this mantra, it can have a function because it is related to transmission. The function of the path, of the transmission, of method, is related to transmission not only to an intellectual understanding.

One might, for example, find a book in the library, and reading it one can understand well what is written in it. It might say, "This is a mantra, recite it a few hundred times and you can cure certain types of illnesses." One understands what is written there and recites the mantra. But even if one has intellectually understood in this way, and starts to apply this mantra reciting it as indicated in the book, it is very difficult to attain the realization of it because this practice is without life. What is the life of the practice? It is transmission. That's what is missing in such a case. It is not a matter of quantity or of intellectual knowledge being lacking, what is lacking is the life, and life is transmission. So it's very important to understand and respect this.

Uninterrupted

If we want to turn on a lamp, what must we do? We must connect it to the electric current and there is a plug to connect the lamp to the electrical current. When the lamp is finally connected to the current it can be turned on. In the same way transmission is like an electrical wire that is connected with the origin uninter-

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

edly up to the present day. It is for this reason we consider transmission to be so important.

The principle, the power and the knowledge of the transmission is beyond our intellectual judgment, beyond our concepts, anything. We cannot invent any type of transmission of this kind. And even if one invented a transmission, some type of practice or some aspect of spiritual practice, perhaps, who knows, it might have some minimal kind of function. Some people say that they do this type of practice because it brings them benefit. Some such things may indeed have a minimal benefit but this doesn't mean that they bring you to total realization.

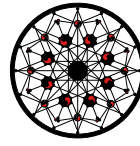
Lineage of transmission

One can never reach total realization without knowing how to arrive beyond one's limits, beyond one's dualistic condition. Transmission is something for realization in this way.

All teachings that are related to a precise transmission have their origin. This origin comes from one who has given this teaching and who became totally realized through it, after which this method is handed down and transmitted. Thus if we seriously follow a method such as this, we know that a teaching has its principle, its lineage and its transmission without interruption. This is what real teaching means. It is something really serious. When we speak of a teaching that we follow sincerely and seriously, it is this type of teaching, not just any path or type of philosophy that someone has invented.

Certainly one can have fun, experimenting with anything in life. But if we are going to dedicate our lives, our precious time, to a teaching, it is much better to understand well what the origins of that teaching are, what its value is and in what way can one have realization through it, and so on. The basis of the teaching is transmission and if one understands this well, one protects the transmission, maintains the transmission, and those who are interested in receiving the transmission can prepare to do so. So one can work in this way.

We all know that it is very useful and important to collaborate, and that this is true for everyone. So I think that the practitioners of the Community who have been involved for a longer time should not get worried when confronted with new people, but they should help and collaborate with the new people in the way I have described above. ❀



International Gakyil Team Members Update

October 2022

During the fall of 2022, the International Gakyil (IG) was contacted by a few Gar Gakyils who shared their concerns regarding some courses and retreats that were being planned and/or led by some SMS instructors. The IG subsequently sent the following message to all Gar and Ling Gakyils worldwide, in an effort to provide information and support. It is now printed in *The Mirror* for the understanding and benefit of all IDC members.

Thank you,
The International Gakyil

Dear Gakyils of the Gars and Lings,

The IG was recently informed of doubts expressed by Gakyils regarding teachings given by some SMS instructors.

We cannot control what SMS instructors choose to teach outside the International Dzogchen Community (IDC), but within the IDC what Rinpoche stated should be honored.

There is no way to judge someone's level of realization, and exactly because we cannot judge realization levels in others we need to follow Rinpoche's words. Only by doing so (which requires everyone's collaboration) can we keep the teachings pure, which better enables us to mature our practice.

Therefore, we ask that when you organize a retreat or course with SMS instructors please take the following into consideration:

* When teaching at Gars and Lings, SMS instructors should only teach what they were authorized to teach by Rinpoche. SMS Base instructors should only teach the contents of *The Precious Vase*, whereas Level I and Level II SMS instructors can teach the Base of SMS as well as the contents of their corresponding levels.

* Please have retreat and course titles reflect the programs that are being offered, and avoid exaggerated wording.

* The IDC does not support courses/retreats and books based on the personal experiences of SMS instructors as they are **not** the teachings and publications of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. These courses/

retreats/books based on the personal experiences of SMS instructors should therefore be considered as the teachings given by an external teacher, and not confused with the instructions of an SMS instructor.

* When Gar and Ling Gakyils invite SMS instructors to hold courses/retreats at their centers, they must cover their travel, food, and lodging costs. Remuneration is not required because SMS teaching activity is a service to the Community. However, Gakyils can choose to make an offering or gift to the SMS instructor which is commensurate with the circumstances of the Gar/Ling. It is also inappropriate for SMS instructors to personally request compensation from participants at these events. This information, based on indications received from Rinpoche, has previously been shared several times with past Gakyils.

* The IDC encourages Gar and Ling Gakyils to organize retreats that center around Rinpoche's retreat recordings with the collaboration of SMS instructors who can then explain and lead the practices from the chosen retreat.

* When in doubt, please contact your Gar and Ling SMS Coordinators to help you with identifying the topic of your retreats and courses.

In the spirit of continued collaboration let us apply *The Twenty-Seven Commitments of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*, and read Rinpoche's inspirational words about them in *The Melong*.

Please contact blue@dzogchen.net with your questions and concerns. Thank you for your commitment and your work!

Best wishes,
The International Gakyil

Dear Members of the International Dzogchen Community,
The International Gakyil (IG) announces the retirement of Steven Landsberg. We wish to thank Steven for his many years of dedicated and invaluable service as President of the IG, and we wish him all the best in the years to come.

The IG also thanks outgoing Yellow Gakyil member, Anna Apraksina. We are grateful for her years of service on the IG, and for her willingness to continue performing the duties of IDC/Asia House legal representative at Dzamling Gar.

The IG thanks Blue Gakyil member, Miranda Shannon, for taking on the role and responsibilities of President of the IG. We wish her well.

The IG Team is currently comprised of the following members:

- Miranda Shannon – *President*
- Barbara Giurlanda – *Vice President/Yellow Gakyil*
- Gabriella Schneider – *Blue Gakyil*
- Vince Li – *Red Gakyil*

Best wishes,
The International Gakyil

Santi Maha Sangha Coordinators

Merigar West/East
Igor Legati edizss@tiscali.it

Tsegyalgar East/West
Steve Landsberg slandsberg@ragascape.com

Tashigar South/North
Ricardo Sued rickysued@gmail.com

Namgyalgar
Arnaud Coquillard arnaudmc17@gmail.com

Kunsangar North/South
Igor Berkhin igor.berkhin@gmail.com

International Dzogchen Community 2023 Global Membership Announcement

December 2022

Dear Gars'/Independent Lings' Gakyil Members and Membership Coordinators,

Greetings from the International Gakyil (IG)!

The IG is grateful for your collaboration and commitment toward the International Dzogchen Community (IDC).

As 2022 comes to a close, it is time to look at the 2022 membership trend and start the 2023 membership campaign.

As of December 17, 2022:

- * 4,266 people are registered as 2022 IDC members in dzogchen.net, which is a decrease of 563 (-11.7%) members in comparison to last year (total of 4,829 members in 2021);
- * the 2023 membership campaign has already started and 175 members have already renewed their membership.

Following you have a brief picture of the 2022 membership data by Gar/Independent Ling and Type compared with the most recent data from 2021.

The statistics show that the decreasing trend in the number of members that started a few years ago is continuing, particularly with reference to the largest Gars (Merigar West, Kunsangars and Merigar East) and Ordinary members.

The question is: What can we as Gakyils/ Membership Coordinators do to reduce and hopefully reverse this trend?

Assuming that every Gakyil knows the concrete circumstances at the local level, we at the IG are providing you with some advice based both on our direct experiences and what we have gained by conversing with many of you.

First, be active as a Gakyil in managing membership!

The IG recommends that you all actively take care of your local members.

Unfortunately, we have noticed that Gakyils are often focused on many different

Gar/Independent Ling	Number of Members as registered on dzogchen.net on Dec 17, 2022		Difference between 2022 and 2021	
	2021	2022	Number	%
Merigar West	1413	1281	-132	-9,3%
Kunsangar South & North	1237	1059	-178	-14,4%
Merigar East	59	53	-6	-10,2%
Dzamling Gar	297	282	-15	-5,1%
Samtengar	274	201	-73	-26,6%
Tsegyalgar East	248	217	-31	-12,5%
Tashigar Sur	185	179	-6	-3,2%
Namgyalgar	129	125	-4	-3,1%
Tsegyalgar West	90	75	-15	-16,7%
Munselling	49	40	-9	-18,4%
Gephelling	49	54	5	10,2%
Jampalling	29	36	7	24,1%
Tashigar North	29	29	0	0,0%
Jamyangling	28	34	6	21,4%
Total	4829	4266	-563	-11,7%

Membership by Gar/Independent Ling.

Membership Type	Members as registered on dzogchen.net on Dec 17, 2022				Difference between 2022 and 2021	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Ordinary	4407	91,3%	3880	91,0%	-527	-12,0%
Global Sustaining	208	4,3%	187	4,4%	-21	-10,1%
Sustaining	188	3,9%	172	4,0%	-16	-8,5%
Global Meritorious	26	0,5%	27	0,6%	1	3,8%
Total	4829	100,0%	4266	100,0%	-563	-11,7%

Membership trend by Type.

matters, and are not actively dealing with membership issues. Currently, no appeals are being sent to members (or just a few) and no or few reminders are being sent to people who skipped one or more years of their memberships.

The IG recommends that you all to actively take care of your local members.

Second, be a Gakyil that communicates, communicates, and communicates with members!

The IG invites you to communicate with members about the inner meaning of membership.

Renewal of the IDC membership is deeply meaningful. Renewing membership from year to year should flow naturally in order to concretely manifest that we follow, apply, and integrate Rinpoche's Teachings into our daily life.

Being a member is also a concrete gesture that shows interest in the International Dzogchen Community, and the desire to participate in and support its Gars, Lings, and projects.

By communicating with local members you can collect input and feedback to understand membership trends and plan how to deal with them.

Third, as a Gakyil be aware of your local members' circumstances in terms of needs and opportunities!

The IG advises you to try to understand the circumstances of local members, including financial ones.

For those people who have financial difficulties, communicate with them that they can pay in installments, or offer them a special reduced membership fee. To do this the IG encourages you to set up a special fund to support the enrollment of people in need. There are many ways to create these funds, and one of them is to ask your members to generously donate what they can to establish it.

At the same time, the IG recommends you try to encourage all those members who have the opportunity to register as Global Sustaining or Global Meritorious.

In addition, remember that each Gar (and the Lings that belong to it) has the opportunity to establish the Local Sustaining membership type (with an economic value between that of the Local Ordinary and the Global Sustaining). This option is an attractive way to increase the total value of the membership if the value of the fee is defined in such a way as to be within the reach of those who usually join as Ordinary members but do not have the resources to apply as Global Sustaining.

Fourth, set up an effective collaboration among Gakyil members (especially Yellows), Membership Coordinators and the IG!

A very concrete thing that the IG asks you to do is to check that all registrations made on dzogchen.net from January to December 2022 have been successfully completed. We have recently been informed that some memberships of people who paid in 2022 have not been properly recorded in the system (whichever year of membership they paid in 2022). Please remember, IDC members must pay their yearly dues, so even if a member has paid their dues, they may not appear as a member because the relative payment has not been registered in dzogchen.net.

In summary:

- * the IG strongly recommends that you continue to actively manage membership issues by encouraging local people to renew their membership for 2023, and if needed, to also pay for the previous years (especially for 2020, 2021 & 2022, in order to retain the status of full and voting member), while simultaneously taking into account each person's circumstances;
- * let us know if there are membership concerns or matters that you would like to discuss with Yellow International Gakyil, or that we can help you with;
- * do not hesitate to write for any clarification.

Let us unite our strength and energy, and continue as best we can in our collaboration.

The International Gakyil and the International Membership Coordinator wish all members the very best for 2023, and we look forward to continuing to support you in any way we can.

Miranda, Barbara, Gabriella, Vince and Desal Marija



International Dzogchen Community 2023 Global Membership Policy

The IG advises Gars and Independent Lings to continue the two optional Membership Levels established in 2021:

"Elderly Membership".

Members 75 years and older with uninterrupted membership for at least the last six years can apply to the local Gakyils for a symbolic membership set by the Gar/Independent Ling Gakyil. The IG strongly recommends applying this policy especially in cases of relevant financial or health issues. This membership would be considered as a full Local Ordinary Membership. The Yellow IG and the International Membership Coordinator are available for assistance to properly record this option in dzogchen.net.

"Sponsored Membership"

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

"Special Membership Conditions for Tobgyalling, Karmaling, Phuntsokling, Palphelling, Lviv DC, Odessa DC, Lugansk DC, Zaporozhye DC".

The IG is aware of the challenges that the Vajra brothers and sisters belonging to Tobgyalling, Karmaling, Phuntsokling, Palphelling, Lviv DC, Odessa DC, Lugansk DC, Zaporozhye DC are experiencing, and in agreement with both the Gakyils of Merigar East (ME) and Kunsangar South (KS), would like to offer them the opportunity to maintain their IDC membership status even in the event of non-payment or nominal payment of their 2023 membership fee. Also the 15% IDC Share will be not applied for the 2023.

Global Membership Policy 2023 – Type and Fee

- * Local Ordinary Membership
if fee set by local Gar Gakyill

- * Local Sustaining Membership
optional type with fee set by local Gar Gakyil, e.g. 300 or 350 € / e.g. 320 or 370 \$
- * Local Elderly Membership
optional level set by local Gar Gakyil, e.g. 12 € / e.g. 14 \$
- * Local Sponsored Membership
optional type with the same Local Ordinary Fee set by local Gar Gakyill
- * Global Sustaining Membership
500 € / 575 \$ fee set by the IG
- * Global Meritorious Membership
1,500 € / 1,725 \$ fee set by the IG

Global Membership Policy 2023 details
The IDC allocation of 15% on membership will remain unchanged for 2023.

Benefits

- Global Meritorious**
- * 80% discounts on all events and workshops at all Gars and Lings
- * Each Gar/Independent Ling can provide more benefits to its own members

Global Sustaining

- * 50% discounts on all events and workshops at all Gars and Lings
- * Each Gar/Independent Ling can provide more benefits to its own members

Currency

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

Subsidies

Decisions to subsidize regular Local Ordinary Fees should be supported by the establishment of a special fund or of a fundraising policy at the Gar/Independent Ling/Ling level.

If needed, the Yellow IG and the International Membership Coordinator could announce a global search for "donors" available to support membership needs.

Please let us know if there are any questions or something we can assist with.

All the best,
Yellow International Gakyil & International Membership Coordinator





SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS

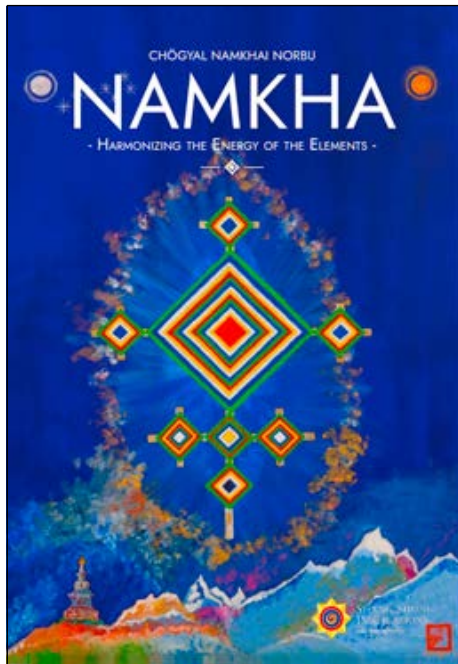
ཤང་ཤུང་འཕེལ་བའི་འཕྲིན་ལུགས་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་འབྲེལ་འདྲིལ་ལྟུང་།

Dear readers,
Here you can find the latest news about Shang Shung Publications.

Recently published books

NAMKHA.

Harmonizing the Energy of the Elements
New and Enlarged Edition of the Tibetan text written by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu



https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788878342125_ebook-namkha-epubmobi.html

“However, the knowledge of how to harmonize an individual’s energies relating to the five elements through the Namkha appears to have been lost in the course of time. Although no traditional text that explains the principle and practical application of this harmonization exists, in this book the Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu describes in detail this extremely important method for harmonizing the conflicts between the elements that may occur during one’s lifetime and for increasing and expanding all positive and favorable circumstances.”

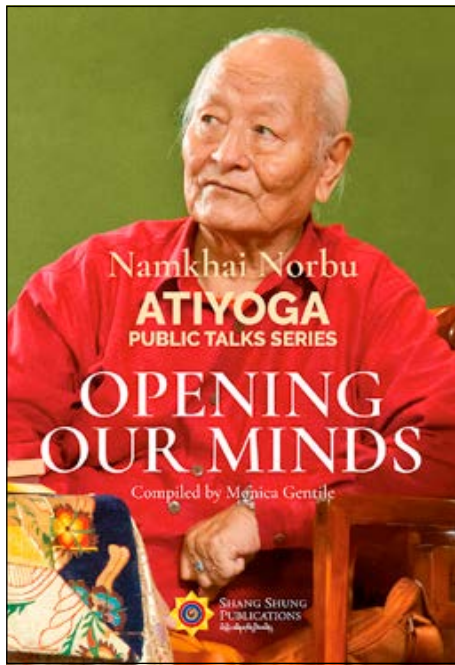
OPENING OUR MINDS.

Atiyoga Public Talks Series

Compiled by Monica Gentile on the base of three public talks given by Rinpoche in New Caledonia, (Noumea), Spain, (Barcelona) and in Russia, (Moscow).

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788878342088_ebook-opening-our-minds-epub-mobi.html

“What is the main point of the Dzogchen teaching? The main point is being beyond all limitations: this is the real state of Dzogchen. Dzogchen means our real condi-



tion, a condition which everybody has. The Dzogchen teaching is for discovering that real condition. Dzogchen is not a book nor a tradition. How do we discover this condition? Firstly we must find out how limited we are and what kind of problems we have in our daily life. If we observe well, all problems arise and develop from our tensions. We develop tensions because, rather than observing ourselves, we are always looking outside and thinking “this is good” or “this is bad.” We give too much importance to our judgments”

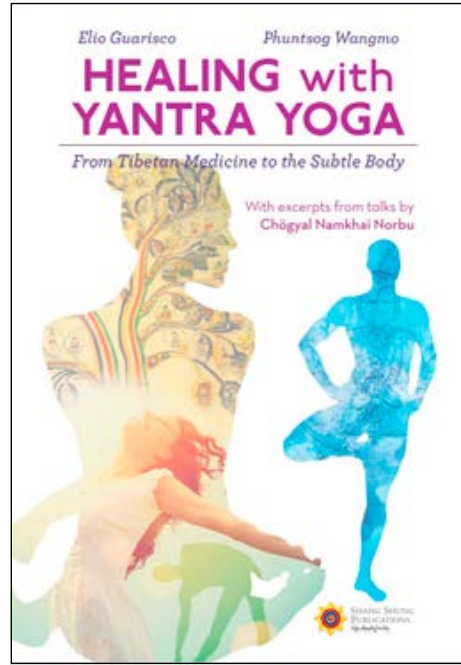
For more information and further details on the editorial program, please write to info@shangshungpublications.com

HEALING WITH YANTRA YOGA.

From Tibetan Medicine to the Subtle Body

Reprint of the book on the occasion of its presentation and workshop on Tibetan Medicine and Yantra Yoga with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and Paula Barry on December 9 and 10 of this book written by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo together with our late dear Vajra brother Elio Guarisco.

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788878341531_healing-with-yantra-yoga.html



Upcoming restricted books

THE LUMINOUS CLARITY OF THE UNIVERSE.

A Large Explanation of the Primordially Pure Tregchöd

The “definitive” text on the Tregchöd written by the Master. COMING SOON.

“This extensive explanation of the crucial path of the Primordially Pure Tregchöd from The Luminous Clarity of the Universe, Heart Essence of the Ḍākinīs, supreme essence of the principle of the three series of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, is comprised of three parts: preparation, main part, and conclusion. The preliminary practices as preparation, including the series of mind trainings and especially the Rushens of body, voice, and mind, are an absolutely necessary prerequisite for practicing the path of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo and should be applied as explained elsewhere. The way to apply the crucial path of the Primordially Pure Tregchöd as experiential instructions on the main part includes two aspects: the essential points of the fundamental principle revealed through symbols, and an extensive explanation of the distinctive aspects of this profound path.”

THE CUCKOO OF RIGPA.

An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript Rig pa'i khu byug – COMING SOON

WHEN YOU DISCOVER ONE, YOU DISCOVER ALL.

Practice Instructions Related to CHANG-CHUBSEM GOMPA DOLA SERSHUN by Mañ-jushrimitra.

“In the Tibetan texts belonging to the Dzogchen Semde series, the most ancient texts are considered the first five translations of Vairochana, namely Rigpai Khujug, Tsalchen Trugpa, Khyungchen Dingwa, Dola Sershun, Minubpai Gyaltzen (also called Dorje Sempa Namkha Che), and the Mejung, amounting at six. ...These practice instructions, attributed to Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, are given in a pure Dzogchen style, therefore they are extremely precious for Atiyoga practitioners, and most probably it is the very first time that they were transmitted in the West. For this reason the Shang Shung Publications Editorial Team decided to publish the transcription of this oral commentary even if a translation from the Tibetan is still not available.”

Upcoming public books



LE AVVENTURE DI NYIMA, DAWA E DEL PICCOLO YAK.

A beautiful children's picture book on Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga. For now the Italian version will be released, the English translation very soon.

PADMASAMBHAVA'S ADVICE ON TOTAL PERFECTION.

A Hidden Treasure Discovered by Dorje Lingpa

The teachings contained in this volume consist of a rich collection of advice and methods of practice which have the sole aim of helping the practitioner to actually discover their real condition of Total Perfection or Dzogchen, and remain in this presence. The book is a commentary to an ancient Tibetan text discovered by a 14th century master known as Dorje Lingpa.

The Biography of Ayu Khandro.

Introduction to The Vajra Dance.

The first public book about Vajra Dances

“This volume is divided into two parts. Part One is dedicated to a selection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's written and oral teachings on the principles of Dzogchen, the Vajra Dance and related topics. Part Two, which is dedicated to the actual practice, reproduces two chapters of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's main work on the Dance of the Vajra, titled The Precious Lamp. These chapters are taken from Adriano Clemente's English translation of the Tibetan text and describe two Vajra dances: the Vajra Dance of the Six Spaces and the Dance of the Three Vajras.”

APRIRE LA MENTE

Italian translation of Opening our Minds

About ebooks

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/>;

To see all ebooks, click on “ebooks” at the top of the webshop window on the left: https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/explore/?support_type=e-book

To contribute to the continuation of Shang Shung Publications' activities please donate to https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=44UNB8ZE9ZJAS

Reason: Donation for the SSP editorial program. ©

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, PO. Box 278
Conway, MA 01341, USA
Phone (main-Anna) 413 369 4928
Fax/Bookstore 413 369 4473
www.shangshung.org

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

December 2022 Report

We have had an active year in London at Lekdanling! For our final on-site event for 2022, SSIUK hosted a book launch with the Tibetan Nyingma Lama, Khentru Lodro Rinpoche on his text 'Power of the Mind' published by Shambhala based on the Mind Training teachings. Khentru Rinpoche studied at the renowned Larung Gar academy in Tibet with one of the most influential Dzogchen masters of modern times, Jigme Phuntsog Rinpoche. He is now based in the US and this was his first visit to the UK. Drinks and momo were served during the evening and there were beautiful musical performances by London based artists from Tibet and Bhutan.

Earlier in November, we also concluded our series of 6 modules on 'The Gateway to the Teachings' with a weekend on Tantra & Dzogchen based on the open parts of the Precious Vase, in collaboration with the IG and the ATIF. The whole series was well attended and participants were keen to know what will happen next, in terms of open programming. From January 2023 we are therefore planning a series of open days at Lekdanling as on-site events aimed at newcomers, as well as regular practice sessions on Saturdays starting on the 14th January. Many thanks to the SMS teachers from all over the world who have taken part in this venture over the past year as well as leading regular practice sessions every Sunday morning. Thanks also to everyone who helped to make the 'Gateway to the Teachings' series a success including the translators, moderators and those at SSIUK who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

Other highlights from the past year include our regular and extremely popular lecture series with high profile academics & speakers from across the globe, together with a number of workshops led by experts in their field. These include 'Gesar, King of the Vajra Life' with Dr. Gregory Forgues who revealed new insights into



Khentru Rinpoche.

Photo by Ibbi Caputo

this famous Tibetan epic; 'The Writings of Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö (1893–1959)' with Dr. Adam Pearcy; 'The Khyentse Vision Project: The World of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Translating His Works' with Casey Kemp; and 'The Early History and Publications of the Derge Printing House' with Dr. Ben Nourse.

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

Please note that our popular SSIUK lecture series is ongoing and future talks for 2023 include:

January: Professor Larson speaking on **"The Life and Songs of Tsangnyön Heruka"**

February: Charles Manson speaking on **"The Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi"**

March: Ruth Gamble speaking on **"The Third Karmapa, Ranjung Dorje"**

Later in the Spring, John Bellezza and Mark Aldenderfer will also give a presentation about their archeological survey in the ancient kingdom of Shang Shung.

Following the amazing response to our first Himalayan Photographic competition for which we literally received hundreds of entries, many of which were of a very high quality, we are now launching a new online artistic competition: the winners will be announced at Losar 2023. For our second online art competition we are inviting paintings and drawings representing the Tibetan astrological sign of the WATER HARE, where any technique or medium can be used. For details of entry please visit our website: shangshunguk.org

Our Tibetan Cultural Centre still continues to be a hub for a range of local group events in East London which take place on the basis of a rental arrangement with carefully chosen individuals. We have also recently secured a rental agreement with the photographic studio next door who pay a regular monthly fee, thanks to our dedicated Lekdanling management team.

Finally, I will be standing down as the Principal Director SSIUK at the end of December 2022, after a busy ten years in this role. Jamyang Oliphant, who has already been actively involved in SSIUK for many years, will be taking over my position. Richard Steven who has acted as Company Secretary and who has been involved in Shang Shung UK since its inception in 2010, is also standing down at the end of this year. He will be replaced by Trinley Walker who has been looking after the Lekdanling shop in recent months and has been an active Dzogchen Community member in London for many years.

I would like to thank everyone on the Shang Shung team for being such a pleasure to work with: Dr Fabian Sanders, Academic Director; Anne Bancroft, Arts Director; Richard Steven, Company Secretary; Jamyang Oliphant PhD, Fundraising & Events Co-ordinator; Premila Van Ommen, Media Liaison; Mandarava Bricaire, Creative Director; Mike Gilmore, Bookshop Manager; Trinley Walker, Jowita Niedzielska and Ewa Michalec of the Lekdanling Management Group, as well as the many volunteers.

We hope to see you online or onsite soon!

All good wishes,
Julia Lawless
Shang Shung UK

©

Hidden Treasures

It has already been a year since the Chinese government forced us to leave Tibet, after having worked for over thirty years for children and monks with long distance sponsorships and with projects supporting schools and monasteries, for nomadic shepherds and for the people of the villages with many other projects on-site. Despite our great disappointment and concern, we have continued to support the exiled Tibetan refugee communities in India and Nepal as best we could.

We firmly believe that now more than ever it is vitally important to safeguard the cultural and spiritual heritage of Tibet, which has always been at the heart of ASIA's mission. It is like a hidden treasure: it safeguards precious visions, values and principles, which can be an inspiration for humanity in order to get through the geopolitical situation, the climate and environmental crisis, as well as the deep inner distress we are experiencing.

This is why we have launched the **Hidden Treasures** campaign this year to support the custodians of Tibet's spiritual heritage, the nuns of Guru Padmasambhava's hermitage in India, who protect an invisible heritage of highly evolved knowledge, recently confirmed by Western science, about the nature of the mind and the universe. These are evolved systems for training the mind and emotions, spiritual practices for the benefit of all sentient beings, in a non-dualistic vision that is based on the assumption of the uniqueness and interdependence of all living beings.

Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet, many monks and nuns were forced to flee to India and Nepal in order to continue their spiritual journey. The nuns of the Padmasambhava hermitage arrived in Tso Pema, in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, following a long and dangerous journey on foot through the Himalayas to reach this sacred place and their teacher, Lama Wangdor. They are Dolma, Tsewang, Bumchung and 35 other nuns who have settled in a hermitage made up of



small shacks built around the mountain, in which they dedicate themselves to the study of the Dharma, meditation and the recitation of mantras.

Lama Wangdor, originally from Kham (Eastern Tibet), was one of the few survivors of the destruction of Dzigar Monastery, during the period of the cultural revolution, located in the county of Dege. After fleeing to India, in 1985 he re-founded the Monastery, from the Drukpa Kagyud tradition, near the Padmasambhava Cave.

Since 2019, the year in which Lama Wangdor died, the living conditions of the nuns have become much harsher. Their only source of livelihood is the offerings they receive from pilgrims visiting the Sacred Cave and the proceeds from the sale of butter lamps. They have no running water, only electricity, and they collect rainwater for washing and cooking, while for drinking water they have to bring it up from the villages at the foot of the hill.

If you would like to protect this hidden treasure and offer concrete support to Dolma, Tsewang, Bumchung and the nuns and monks of the monasteries we support in the Himalayan countries, you can participate in the Hidden Treasures campaign by choosing the method that best suits you:

* with a contribution of €25 a month, you can distance support a nun from the

Padmasambhava hermitage and establish a relationship with her by exchanging letters, messages and photographs – <http://www.adopttibtet.org/wp/en/>

* with a one-time donation you can help improve the living conditions inside the hermitage and other monasteries we support in India and Nepal – <https://www.asia-ngo.org/en/campaigns/hidden-treasures/>

In order for Tibet's treasure of knowledge and spirituality to survive and continue to develop, it is urgent to support its silent guardians, who practice day after day for the good and awakening of all sentient beings. ©

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



Cham, the sacred dance of Tibet, part of the Silk Road Pilgrimage exhibition, dedicated to the intangible cultural heritage of Tibet.



MUSEO di ARTE e CULTURA ORIENTALE
di ARCIDOSO

Silk Road Pilgrimage

A Journey to the West in Search of Enlightenment

The Museum of Oriental Art and Culture, MACO, based in Arcidosso, Italy, has just opened a fascinating new exhibition entitled "Silk Road Pilgrimage". It was inaugurated on a wet and windy yet auspicious date, December 8, the anniversary of the birth of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and was well attended by a large number of Dzogchen Community people, various local authorities, and an enthusiastic public.

The exhibition explores the centuries-old cultural and commercial connection that has existed between the West and the East using the Buddhist principle of In-

terdependence as a key to interpretation. The narrative touches on a variety of different objects from Asia that describe the movement of ideas, inventions and goods that connected these two distant worlds.

The guide for this narrative is Xuanzang (602–664), the famous Chinese Buddhist monk who, led by the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin (Avalokitesvara), undertook a long and perilous pilgrimage along the Silk Road from China to India in search of Buddhist texts, later describing them in his account, *Great Tang's Journey to the West*.

Visitors are guided through the new exhibition with descriptive panels, some referring to books and treasures found by Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot in the Dunhuang cave library, to demonstrate how Buddhism evolved through the Silk Road, shaping and influencing the civilizations of Asia.

The Silk Road Pilgrimage exhibition also presents a new 360 degree video produc-



A map of the route taken by the monk Xuanzang during his fourteen year pilgrimage searching for Buddhist texts.

tion for the virtual theater installation in the central atrium of the museum, with videos from the Xiantangshan caves, depicting Buddhists statues from the Qi Dynasties (550–577), which were first shown



The Library Cave of Dunhuang installation, from the Silk Road Pilgrimage exhibition.



(on the right) Kuan Yin, polychrome wood, China. Probably dating to the Song Dynasty (960–1279).



Art and culture of Gandhara installation, from the Silk Road Pilgrimage exhibition.

at the SMART Museum in Chicago and at the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery, kindly provided to us by the Taiyuan University of Technology in Taiyuan, Shanxi, China. Our guides to this 360 degree video are Xuanzang and Sun Wukong (Monkey) in a theatrical presentation of the Journey to the West, created for the MACO by artist Ati Sphere and theater director Jan Yanchi, both based in Prague. Another episode of Journey to the West, will premiere on the 15th of January, at the MACO.

Thanks to financing from the UBI (Unione Buddhista Italiana), several other permanent exhibits on the ground floor have been renewed and added to and currently include several splendid bronze statues of divinities from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's personal collection as well as a small replica of the Great Stupa of Illumination at Merigar with panels and models explaining about the construction, contents and consecration of stupas.

The Potentiality of the Elements

At the same time the Dynamic Space of the Elements presented the Potentiality of the Elements exhibition, financed by the Shang Shung Institute Austria, in the Project Space area of the museum on the upper floor.

One part of the exhibition contains a collection of ten paintings. Five of them represent the creation of the primordial elements, the creation of our emotions, the creation of the manifestations of the external world and the function of the energy of the five elements. According to ancient oriental traditions, especially Tibetan tradition, the matter that surrounds us was created by and is made up of the five elements.

The other five paintings represent the relationship and the combination of the

five elements. In particular, they show how the interaction of external elements with internal elements can influence the conditions of our lives.

For the first time, models of five Stupas (the first of a series of 108) linked to the five elements and part of the precious *terma* of Changchub Dorje were also exhibited.

Collection of Fairy Tales from the Eastern World

In the second room in the Project Space area, the illustrations created with the project "Collection of Fairy Tales from the Eastern World" by the Ka-ter Translation Project, Austria, in collaboration with Dynamic Space of the Elements are exhibited. The illustrations were created by various

» continued on the following page



Part of the Potentiality of the Elements exhibition showing five of the Stupas.

You Are Not Alone With Sangha App

We are connected. We can give and receive from each other more than we expect. Good opportunities definitely help with that. There's a new feature in the Sangha App – to experience and gently express a loving feeling.

Many practitioners also wish to find a partner from the Dzogchen Community. They have asked for the dating feature in the app. Expressing an interest is often not easy. With this function – it works very smoothly.

How it works

1. Find a practitioner you like

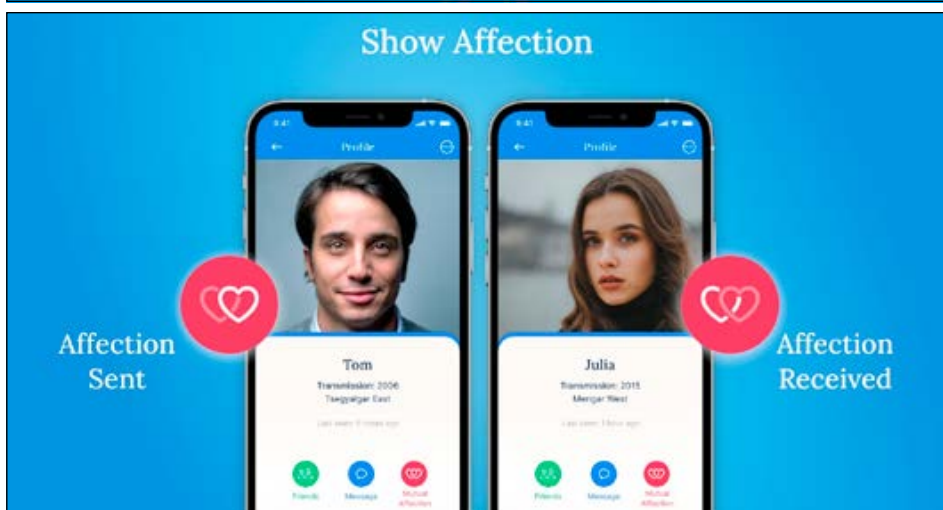
In the People section: find them among your Connections or scroll down into Discover Vajra Siblings, or type the name into the search bar

2. Express what you feel

In the profile of the selected person, click on "Show Affection" and confirm

3. Notice you've received it

If someone also expresses affection towards you, the icon in the profile will change to "Affection received" or "Mutual affection" You will also both receive an alert in the Notification Centre.



You can send warm feeling to those you like, to those who have your support and to friends as well, with no limits. You don't have to wait; time passes very quickly. Once you express your affection, following the steps to getting closer is up to you.

Other useful features of the new version

- * Faster loading of the images
- * User blocking function
- * "Read more" function for longer posts

Please note!

The old version of Sangha App 1 won't be available in the AppStore and PlayStore from the 1st of January 2023 and it will be completely turned off by Losar 2023. Therefore, we recommend that those who are still using the old version to switch to the new version of Sangha App 2 as soon as possible!

DOWNLOAD THE LATEST VERSION OF SANGHA APP NOW



» continued from previous page

artists from different parts of the world and visitors were also able to read – in both English and Italian – some of the tales linked to the various illustrations on display.

The illustrations are a part of more than 50 hand drawn images that will accompany 21 traditional stories from Tibet, as recounted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu over many years and retold by Oliver Leick. Although the stories are typically meant for children, the wisdom they convey is universal. Work on this project is nearing its final stages and the publication entitled "The Kingdom Where Madness Reigned and other Traditional Tales cited in the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu" will soon be published in various languages by Shang Shung Publications. ©

Illustrations for "The Kingdom Where Madness Reigned".



The exhibition, Silk Road Pilgrimage, was sponsored by the Union of Italian Buddhists (UBI) and the Dzogchen Community of Merigar with a generous contribution from a Community donor. The exhibition would not have been possible without the concerted effort of a tireless team of volunteers – all of whom we deeply thank.

Highlights from Dzamling Gar



Khaita Educational Program Part 5 with Adriana Dal Borgo, including A cultural section "Discovering Tibetan Culture with Khaita Songs and Dances" with Lena Dumcheva and "Mindfulness and Theater for you, boys and girls" presented by Lourdes Velaochaga.

November 18th, 2022

Ninth Anniversary of the founding of Dzamling Gar and ten years since the land was purchased.

Thubten Rabgyi, Gekö. "Many of you don't know that today is the birthday of Dzamling Gar. Today is 10 years from 2012. Here is the protection cord that Rinpoche made for Dzamling Gar and today we will put the cord up there led. in the Gönpal under the A.

Rinpoche made a protection cord for each Gar from the jewels of the Evolution

Creations. Rinpoche made this one and he gave to me and I gave it to the Gakyil. Then since the Gakyil is always changing, we lost this protection cord. I discussed with some of the Gakyil members and they said they gave it back to me and I said I did not receive it and I told them they lost it.

Then a couple of weeks ago Lena Dumcheva had this and she showed me and she said that the Gakyil gave to her and maybe we could auction it. I said no, that is the protection cord we lost for Dzamling Gar and finally we found it. So thank you to Lena!

So we have some champagne and Marina made us some cake, so we celebrate a little the birthday of Dzamling Gar.

Thank you!"



21 Semdzins of Upadesha and Vajrasattva practice with Adriano Clemente December 9–13, 2022 at Dzamling Gar with approximately 300 people on Zoom. Afternoon practice of Vajrasattva practice was led by Sebastien Remy.



Khaita Dancers on December 8, 2022 – Birthday celebration for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.



Khalongdorjeikar Advanced Course with Prima Mai December 1–7, 2022.

The Councilor of Diversity Visits Dzamling Gar

On Friday, November 4, 2022, Dzamling Gar received the visit of Mr. José Antonio López Delgado, Councilor for Diversity of the Adeje City Council. Along with Adriana Dal Borgo, Casilda Gonzalez, Gloriana Brenes, Nataly Nitsche, and Carmen Rivas, everyone enjoyed a pleasant and harmonious time with very positive results.

The councilman was very comfortable, toured our facilities, was amazed by the gardens and was very positively surprised by the activities we carry out here. He visited the Gönpa during the Vajra Dance practice and then sat down at the Moon Garden to share some snacks while having an excellent and beautiful conversation about the possibility of developing, in the near future, activities related to the Vajra Dance for people with functional divergence who attend the center and are assisted by the members of the Cabildo de Adeje.

José Antonio López Delgado expressed interest in supporting us, recognizing that



it could be of great benefit to people with functional divergence, having the opportunity to evolve and integrate into modern life and also connect with this Teaching, which is simply wonderful.

We are very grateful and fortunate that through this activity we make positive

contact with the legal representatives of the Island. We deeply thank our dear Carmen, Adriana, Casilda, Titi and Nataly for their time and dedication to sharing the benefits of the practices that we have so generously received from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ©

Differently One

Adriana Dal Borgo, Carmen Rivas and Gloriana Brenes

Between October and November 2022, interesting activities took place in Dzamling Gar in collaboration with the International Atiyoga foundation with

the central theme of openness, integration and overcoming barriers.

In October a pilot project was carried out for all instructors of the International Dzogchen Community and in particular those of Vajra Dance, which approximate the Vajra Dance to people with functional disabilities.

We titled it "Differently one": each of us is unique and different from others, but at the

same time we all share the same Potential, the same Primordial Nature. A course was taught by Carmen Rivas, based on her experience on this topic, and Nataly Nitsche.

On November, Dzamling Gar received the visit of the Councilor for Disability of Adeje City Hall, who invited us to participate in the Meeting of Families of the Center for Attention to Functional Diversity "Los Olivos" (CAD Los Olivos) to celebrate

the International Day of the Rights of the Child, highlighting the Right to Integration and Special Care

This was somehow a continuation of a relationship established a long way back: the first time we were invited by the Department of Disability to the CAD "Los Olivos" was in December 2014 during the celebration of the International Day of Disability, where we presented and interacted with Khaita Joyful Dances.

Accepting the new invitation, on Saturday, November 12th, together with the children of the center and their parents we were able to share a marvelous experience. We guided them on simple movements of the Vajra Dance and easy circle Khaita Dances, manifesting wonderful moments of love, openness, inclusion and integration, and above all unifying the hearts in the same mandala.



We sincerely thank the Dzogchen International Community, the International Atiyoga Foundation, the Gakyil and all the members of Dzamling Gar, who have made the

event possible, as well as the Department of Disability of the Adeje City Council, the management of CAD Los Olivos and all its users and families for the shared moments. ©

Working Together for Rinpoche's Legacy

Public Programs

An interview with Ilaria Faccioli
November 9, 2022, Tenerife, Spain

The Mirror: Ilaria, you are the executive director of Tibetan Medical program in Tenerife and very active in the Atiyoga Foundation. You have also been instrumental in creating a public program that Dzamling Gar has been doing with the Ayuntamiento (City Hall) of Adeje. Can you tell us how the program started?

Ilaria: The program started almost at the end of Covid-19 pandemic. It was a common decision taken by the Gakyil and many people who felt that it was a good time to recontact the staff of the City Hall and the Mayor, who always showed a good attitude towards Dzamling Gar and also had a good relationship with Rinpoche. Giovanni Boni and I went to this meeting and the Mayor told us he realized how strong the consequences of pandemic were. Later on he and Maria Rosario Clavijo Maza the councilwoman of the department of culture came to visit Dzamling Gar. and after this meeting we started working together to implement a program.



The first proposal we negotiated was much bigger because we tried to include many areas. We sat down and decided how to structure the proposal and how to make the economic plan. I was the bridge negotiating with the council. Our proposal was officially presented by Atiyoga Foundation and the Association of Dzamling Gar. We decided that the official and financial partner was Atiyoga Foundation because it has the status of a non-profit organization which makes it easier for the Ayuntamiento to accept the proposal.

The proposal was directed to four areas: two courses for the adults – Yantra Yoga and Khaita – and two proposals for children, both Kumar Kumari – one for

ages 6 to 9, the other from ages 9 to 12–13. We chose four instructors, one of them, sad to say, was Stoffelina Verdonk (who recently passed away) and who was in charge of the Khaita course. For Yantra Yoga for adults, it was Alessandra Policreti. I did Kumar Kumari for teenagers and Lena Kalistova did Kumar Kumari for the younger children.

In the proposal that the Ayuntamiento accepted the instructors are paid and in a reasonable way, and that's important to mention. It's true that we have done some nice things, but always as karma yoga. After many years it's also nice to recognize people's dedication and commitment. This was the first time that we did something for the Ayuntamiento and received payment.

For me the most important aspect of this proposal was also that it was free for the population. Our institution was paid but the offer was made free for the local population of Adeje.

M: Was there a number limit on how many people could participate?

I: We have to remember that it was still Covid time so there was a limit of 12 people. And especially at the very beginning we had to follow the rules that the Ayuntamiento gave to us. At the beginning there were a lot of people who decided to register for Yantra Yoga for adults and Khaita for adults although during the sessions this number gradually decreased.

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

In the end we had Lena Kalistova teaching Khaita and Alessandra Policreti teaching Yantra Yoga. At the very end of one of the big Yoga events that we held in Dzamling Gar this past summer, in the closing session there was a Yantra Yoga session with Alessandra and her students from Adeje who received a certificate of participation.

Then it turned out that the 'Mentalizate' project sponsored by the Mayor, which was the program we were funded through, came to the end of its year long funding. For the following year we discovered that we could not put yoga and dance in a new program because they are considered sports and would no longer fit the criteria of 'Mentalizate'. We had to figure out another way to continue.

So we went back both with Maria del Rosario Clavijo Maza and Maciel Delgado and we started thinking how we could go on and then the decision was made to work mainly with children and families. First of all, the courses for children were more successful in terms that they were really consistent participants.

Mothers of the children in both groups played a very active part personally demanding through the ayuntamiento's public pages that both kumar kumari courses could continue. And this is a good sign, since these courses were meant to be a service for the population and the population interacted with the service and gave a feedback. So mothers start posting on the social media of the Ayuntamiento their feedback and their request and that made an impact.

M: Do you think that they saw some kind of benefit in the courses for their children?
I: Yes, I do. As my 'real' profession is a family therapy counselor, I offered to hold a couple of open talks for the parents. Also Lena and Nataly did a couple of things including doing family Kumar Kumari and they invited parents. The parents were pretty much involved in the whole thing and the feedback was amazing. They got really involved when we held these events for both children and parents.

We ended up repeating the course and I had all the children I had last year and five or six more. Lena has an even bigger group so I think the kids were happy, because you can force your kid for a month, maybe for a year, but you cannot force your kid for the second year.

At the end of the last year we both did a demonstration because we wanted parents to come and see the whole thun of Kumar Kumari. At the end of the demonstration I asked the parents to join the circle and listen to what the kids were saying about the class. The majority of them said, 'I feel much more relaxed.' The parents joked about the children's physical reaction because a lot of them were yawning and I told them that is because that diaphragm is loosening up and relaxing. The children said, 'Every time I come to this class, mommy, I just want to yawn and go to sleep.' They spoke about this in their own way but everyone saw the effect very clearly.

I think the combination of things made the parents start interacting with the social media of the Ayuntamiento. I received a call from the Ayuntamiento and they said that they didn't want to stop the program, but were trying to find a way to manage to continue. We had to find a formula because the Ayuntamiento clearly said that they could not promote it simply as yoga, because yoga is considered a sport. They said they could put the program in the frame of citizen participation in activities for families because they have this very nice place that is called Escuela de Convivencia y participación ciudadana.

Eventually we talked with Ester and came up with this idea to keep on doing Kumar Kumari, but with a framework where family is more involved. The final result of this was a project that is still for kids, 6 to 9 and 10 to 14, but the model is that every month we do three meetings with the kids and once a month there is something done with the families. Lena does three Kumar Kumari and one Khaita with kids and family and I do three Kumar Kumari plus mindfulness and the fourth is a talk just for parents of pre-adolescents which has really become a kind of group support session.

M: Can you give some words of advice to other people in the Dzogchen Community who want to establish more public programming?

I: I think it's very important to thank Rinpoche, especially at Dzamling Gar, because the first real connection with the mayor was his connection. Whenever we start a meeting, the mayor always asks about Rinpoche. So I think we gathered the fruit thanks to Rinpoche.

Merigar is also doing very nice things with the schools through ASIA's projects

so maybe it's true that it is easier in the places where the Community has been established and somehow where there was this relationship with Rinpoche.

Consistency is important and you have to be sure that you are in a place and you can dedicate a certain amount of time because there is a year in which you plant the seed, the second year when you water the seed, and then finally the third year when you gather the fruit of the seed.

Then go local because if you're really rooted in a place, it's much easier to go through the school you know, through the village or the place you know. I think there is a human aspect of that which is important. Of course, if you know someone that knows it is even better. Sometimes you can use some connection. We used Rinpoche's connection.

However, in terms of accessing funds or grants, this is where the Community has to grow. And this is where ASIA can teach us how to do that because it's the only association in the Community that has been able to do that and it is where we lack experience.

Then there is the part in which you write the project, and there are some specific rules how to do it. It has to be simple and very concrete: what you want to do, what kind of benefits you think it will have, what is going to happen, when it is going to happen, and then a basic budget.

But also what I would like to say is that it never happens the first time. How long did it take at Dzamling Gar? It took 10 years so you shouldn't get deluded or discouraged the first time it doesn't succeed.

The good thing is that if you have to start from scratch, it's always good to use the principle of generosity. That's what Rinpoche did. He offered such a lot to the local community here: the Cultural Tibetan weeks, many performances of Khaita and so on. If you go with this open heart, somehow it will be given back. But patience is the greatest virtue of all, and consistency. Fabio Andrico has said many times that when you start giving yoga classes, you are there, you give classes of yoga. You cannot pretend to give classes of yoga for one month and that's it, because it will never bring fruits.

M: So consistency and dedication and being there..

I: Yes. If you want to commit to that, please check yourself first. Sometimes it's just a matter of condition. If you have the condi-

Letter to the Sangha of Merigar

Dearest friends,
We are delighted to inform you that Yeshe Silvano Namkhai has accepted our request to be the Spiritual Guide of the Dzogchen Community of Merigar, founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

We certainly interpret everyone's thoughts in expressing our feeling of great gratitude for His generosity and compassion.

This is what we all wanted and that opens a new phase, in which our commitment, authentic collaboration with Him and with each other, will be of fundamental importance.

We, the Sangha of the Dzogchen Community of Merigar, will certainly find the correct way to coordinate our forces in order to best address the needs relating to the management and the organization of our Gar, in such a way as to apply the Teaching and the suggestions He will provide, with total availability.

With joy and gratitude
The Gakyil of Merigar



.....
tions, that's good. It's a very important quality. The secret is cooperation and that was the other big gift that Rinpoche left to all of us, especially at Dzamling Gar. These things can happen more easily if there is a group and we all learn to work together. The experience in this case was that we worked together for a benefit that was not ours, and that kept the group together. It was cooperation in the small group, which is honestly easier, but was also cooperation between two big institutions of the Community.

That for me is the secret for the future. If we want to go out and really commit ourselves to the legacy that Rinpoche left - something that can benefit all beings no matter if they're interested or not in the teaching - cooperation is the key. I have no doubt about that.

M: Thank you very much Ilaria.



Membership Renewal 2023

International Dzogchen
Community Merigar West

The Gakyil of Merigar

Dear friends,
All of us members of Merigar have the privilege and the duty to support our Gar so that it can continue the practice of the Dzogchen Teaching as transmitted by our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In this way the benefits of the Teaching can be enjoyed by all members of the International Dzogchen Community and contribute to the evolution of every sentient being.

Membership fees are an important part of the funds that allow us to achieve this goal, making it possible to maintain Merigar's facilities and allowing all members and those interested to participate in the many activities of the Community.

This is a short list of the activities we organize at Merigar, and which you can all follow in our facilities - the Gönpa, the Mandala Hall, and the Cinerarium - and online:

- * watching videos of the Master's retreats and related guided practices
- * practice retreats throughout the year
- * Yantra Yoga courses
- * Vajra Dance classes
- * Khaita courses
- * Meditation courses and seminars
- * study and practice of Santi Maha Sangha

At Merigar we also organize social dinners and lunches during the year and Karma Yoga groups to maintain our gardens, the Gönpa, and the Stupa, all activities that strengthen our friendship and create an atmosphere of collaboration and enjoyment.

Membership is a tangible sign of being part of the Dzogchen Community, and of sharing its mission to support the Precious Teachings of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

With this message we would therefore like to remind you of the importance of renewing your 2023 membership, a fundamental element for the life of the Gar. In fact, it is the contribution of each member that makes the ordinary life of Merigar possible.

In addition, if you have forgotten to pay your membership for 2022, there's still time to do it.

You can find further explanations at this link: <https://www.merigar.it/it/comunita-dzogchen/tesseramento/>

If you want to renew your membership card but are experiencing serious financial difficulties, please contact the Gakyil by sending an email to office@dzogchen.it and we will find a solution together.

You can register by going in person to your ling or to Merigar, or by sending the fee by bank transfer or Paypal.

These are the types of membership for 2023:

- * Ordinary member €129
- * Supporting Member €500
- * Meritorious Member €1,500

Please specify the reason for bank transfers or paypal: membership 2023 (specify the name of the member, type of membership, whether balance or down payment)

Name of the account:

Merigar Dzogchen Community - Loc. Merigar 58031 Arcidosso Grosseto Italy
Bank MONTE DEI PASCHI DI SIENA Arcidosso GR Branch

current account no. 3120.29 ABI 01030 CAB 72160

IBAN IT64 N010 30721600 0000 0312 029

BIC/SWIFT PASCITM1G99

By paypal or credit card:

paypal@dzogchencommunity.net

Loc. Merigar 58031 Arcidosso GR (Grosseto)

Thank you, now and for the future.

Wishing all of you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous 2023 and, if possible, come to Merigar to celebrate with us!



Latest News from Merigar West

Events for the fourth year since the Master's passing

From September 24th to October 1st, 2022, on the occasion of the fourth year since the Master's passing to another dimension, Merigar coordinated a series of practices and events that involved all the Gars of the Community, the main organizations headed by Merigar, and the Community as a whole, with the support of the International Gakyil and the Atiyoga Foundation.

It was an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration throughout the Community; all the Gars and organizations became active protagonists and had the opportunity to communicate their respective situations, activities, problems and future prospects, sharing them with the practitioners present in the Gönpa and with those who were connected in webcast. We practised together, we saw images of the present and the past of the various Gars, we exchanged messages, invitations and greetings. We proposed to stay in touch and continue together the path that the Master has shown to all of us, his disciples.

Recordings of the events can be seen on the webcast website: <http://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=practices-and-events-merigar-september-2022>

You need to log in to the reserved area with the username and password used on www.dzogchen.net

The Cinerarium

At the end of September the ashes of Stoffelina Verdunk arrived at Merigar. Stoffelina died on July 21st together with her sister Janna in a tragic car accident.

The urn with the ashes was deposited in the Cinerarium on September 27. A Guru-yoga practice and a *thun* of the Vajra Dance of the Dimension of Space (12A) were held in her memory.



The Ganapuja held on September 27, the 4th anniversary of Rinpoche's passing.

Dances and tales from India

On November 19th in the Gönpa at Merigar we hosted an evening of Indian dance, Bharatanatyam style, offered by the Natavedica East/West Performing Arts under the artistic direction of Maresa Moglia.

The evening was a success and concluded with an exquisite South Indian style dinner.

Soon on our Facebook page we will publish videos and photos of this event, follow us <https://www.facebook.com/MerigarWest/>

Anniversary of the Birth of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

A day of celebrations for the anniversary of the Maestro's birth, on December 8th.

In addition to the practices webcast from Dzamling Gar, which we followed in the Gönpa, there was the extraction of the winners of the first edition of the '8 December fundraiser', who each received one of the objects belonging to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu donated by the Namkhai family. The funds raised will go towards the maintenance of the Great Stupa of Merigar.

The list of winners of the 2022 edition can be found at the link <https://www.merigar.it/it/8-december-fund/>





Celebrating the anniversary of the Master's birth on December 8.

In the evening there was a Tibetan dinner in the Gönpa followed by a musical show with Alessandro Golini on the violin and Paolo Batistini on the guitar.

Land maintenance of Merigar

We are continuing maintenance work, which includes water monitoring and securing some areas of the land. Further-



27 September, roundtable with representatives from various groups in the Dzogchen Community.



Developing water maintenance below the Yellow House.

more, our structures are mostly made of wood, and this requires continuous and careful care. We are preparing a list of the necessary works with the relative estimates of costs to be submitted to the attention of our members. Together we will evaluate the priorities and the possibility that part of the work can be entrusted to specialized companies, and part to our Karma yoga practitioners.

We are also carefully studying the maintenance of the green areas, closely linked to the availability of water and its increasing cost. The study also foresees the possibility that at least a part of Merigar's more than 60 hectares could be used to generate income.

Participation in projects

An interim report of the Evolve app project was presented in mid-May and is about to be completed and submitted for the testing phase. Evolve is an application for the study and practice of methods related to Yantra Yoga and meditation taught by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. The app, in English and Italian, will give visibility to all the centers of the Dzogchen Community and to Merigar in particular, helping to give many people the opportunity to get in touch with the centers themselves, the courses, events, both on site and online.

In mid-June, UBI (the Unione Buddhista Italiana) approved the "Making Peace" project, in partnership with ASIA, and the organizational phase of the "The Silk Road" tender, organized by MACO, also presented to the UBI, began. The "Making Peace" project aims to contribute, through various activities aimed at children, teachers and civil society in general, to the creation of a culture of peace and dialogue. In particular, it aims to make children and adults aware of the importance of human values such as empathy, love, compassion, altruism, respect for others, in order to create a peaceful society that puts an end to conflicts and the resulting suffering. By making peace with yourself, you learn not to project the enemy outside of yourself and relationships based on respect, listening and empathy are established.

At the end of July, ASIA and Merigar also presented a project to the Assimoco Cooperative, which proposes interventions to support the fragility of adolescents in the Amiata area. ©

Spring and Summer at Merigar West 2023

Calendar of courses and events for next spring and summer at Merigar open to all. Details for each course and event will be provided in the related pages.

This Calendar includes courses open to all and courses reserved to those who have received Direct Transmission.

March

March 11–12

Seminar on Rhythmic Breathing

(open to all)

March 18–19

Course on the Base of Yantra Yoga

(weekend 5)

March 31–April 2

Meditation and Yoga

(open to all)

April

April 7–10

Retreat with videos of the Master's Teachings and practices

guided by Santi Maha Sangha instructors

April 14–16

Ku Nye Tibetan Massage Seminar

(open to all)

April 15

Explanation and practice of the Vajra Dance of Space of the Unborn (12A)

April 22–25,

Practices of the Santi Maha Sangha Base

April 28–May 1

Open Seminar of Meditation, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaita Joyful Dances

(open to all)

May

20–21 May

Khaita explanation and practice retreat

with Adriana Dal Borgo (open to all)

June

June 2–4

Explanation and practice retreat of the Dance of the Vajra

(open to all)



June 10–11

Meditation and Yoga

June 23–25

Breathe Seminar

July

June 30–July 2

Tibetan Ku Nye massage on a chair

(open to all)

July 7–12

Contemplation practices retreat

July 16–22

Khaita Training Week

with Adriana Dal Borgo

(open to all those who have a basic

knowledge of Khaita Joyful Dances)

July 24–30

Meeting and supervision of Yantra Yoga

with Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti

August

August 11–15

Meditation Retreat, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Khaita Joyful Dances

(open to all)

August 16–20

Retreat with videos of the Master's Teachings and practices

led by Santi Maha Sangha teachers

August 18–20

Dance for the Benefit of Beings Retreat

(open to all)

August 26–27

Khaita Joyful Dance Retreat

(open to all)

August 28–September 3

Teachers' Training of the preliminaries and the First Series of Yantra Yoga

with Laura Evangelisti

(open to all those who already have a basic

knowledge of Yantra Yoga)

September

September 15–17

Meeting with the instructors of the Dance of the Vajra

with Adriana Dal Borgo and Prima Mai

September 16–17

Meditation and Yoga

September 23–30

Practices and events for the fifth anniversary of the Passing of the Master ©

News from Merigar East

Wrapping up this year's projects and expanding our reach

The end of the year is a moment of reflection, and the long autumn allowed us to take a more distanced perspective over what we have achieved and which spaces are left open. While throwing one piece of wood after another into the fireplace, it is the time to plan new adventures in this wild Gar's wonderland.

The Gönpa Renovation project overview

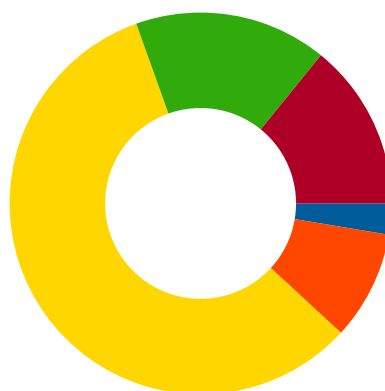
The summer seems long gone and the Gönpa Renovation project was definitely the best moment for receiving the gift of our Community's presence. Now we are counting its result.

Below you'll find a brief financial summary of this year's Gönpa Renovation project. For those of you who somehow missed it, it is the Gar's main endeavor for 2022 and 2023, focusing on repairing and decorating the temple, making it a truly special place both for practice and as a unique point of interest for casual visitors from all around. The first phase of the project, in May, was dealing with structural repairs and changes – cutting off the buildings walls, replacing the northern entrance door with two windows, a new tile plinth around the building, new silicate plaster and more. The second phase, in July and August, evolved around exterior and interior decorative paintings on the Gönpa and the renewal of the central Vajra Dance mandala.

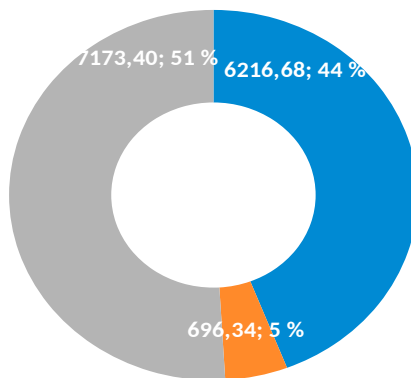
Donations

The first donation we received for the renovation was from Migmar and Cecilia from Dynamic Space of the Elements back in 2021. They kindly offered the entirety of the proceedings of their course on Drawing the Mandala of your Elements, and below it constitutes the cash donations.

Once we started the online fundraising we were happy to receive a continuous flow of donations. Among many generous contributions we wish to thank particularly our main sponsors – Libor Maly and Oliver Leick/Yeselling, for their lavish gifts. To fill up the pot even more, our gakyil decided to also dedicate the proceedings of our annual Lungta Laboratory to the project,

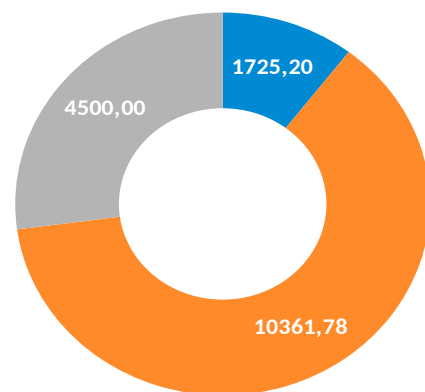


- Cash donations
- Lungta laboratory
- Donation Libor Maly
- Donation Oliver Leick
- On-line donations other



Cost of wall repair.

Phase 1 cost = 14086.42 €, Phase 2 cost: 16,587 €, Total cost: 30,673.40 €.



Cost of wall painting.

- material cost
- operational cost
- direct labour cost

as our own contribution to the financing of the project.

Expenses

Looking at the expenses we can see that the overall cost of both phases was pretty much the same. In the first phase of the project, most of the tasks were outsourced,

whereas the second phase was a volunteering workshop. In the first phase, of reconstruction and repair of the walls, the material expenses were the KEIM plaster and paints and the two new windows, while the cost of the company that did the work was €7,173.40. For the decorating part, there's

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

clearly a big chunk of operational costs. Among the biggest of them were travel, food and accommodation expenses for the approx. 30 volunteers and the scaffolding rentals.

The good news here is clearly that, with your precious help, so far we have managed to accomplish what we set out to do. Overall, the actual costs were what we projected in the beginning of the fundraising. Just as importantly, there were no accidents or major incidents and our impression was that all participants left tired but happy, joyful and rich in experience!

On the downside, the Gönpa Renovation was indeed made possible largely by the generosity of two individuals, which indicates that there's room for future improvement of our fundraising. Also, despite our strong wish to do so, we did not manage to acquire any 'non-community' funds, be it at a national or European level. Reflecting on the reason why, we're coming back to the common pain points within the IDC centers these days. We are lacking personnel, lacking relevant commercial or financial skills and have difficulty in meaningfully connecting our activities and goals to the world outside the Community.

Gonpa Renovation 2023: Painting the Ceiling

As you probably know, this extraordinary project continues in 2023, where we will focus on finalizing the interior ceiling decoration. We agreed on a provisional cost estimate of €20,000, and should therefore be covered by this year's surplus. However, due to the economic reality and overall steep price growth, it is not easy to establish a reliable budget and your generosity in the form of donations is always welcome.

Furthermore, we'd like to do our best to draw in more young art students, particularly from Romania, Bulgaria and central Europe. Since, unfortunately, our team is not growing any bigger, we'll need ad hoc help with promoting the workshop well and also, if successful, for trying to tap into whatever public funding is available. Please join us in this unique project! Support it by giving us your time and precious skills, as karma yoga or work exchange, throughout the year!



Living with Awareness: growing our capacity to reach the public

Between October and December 2022, we hosted a unique course, representing a comprehensive and Dzogchen-specific introduction to the teachings, for the general public.

Meditation is an important tool for anyone to cultivate mindfulness, for self-discovery, for understanding what is happening to us and for learning how to live a harmonious, responsible and joyful life. This process of self-discovery through meditation begins by developing our natural faculties to be present and aware of all aspects of our existence: body, breath (voice) and mind.

Over the course of 8 modules (16 hours), starting on the 16th of October 2022, we had the chance to explore these topics in depth, under the guidance of experienced and well-known teachers in the Dzogchen community: Monica Gentile, Gabriella Schneider, Adriana Dal Borgo and Fabio Andrico.

Starting with the material body, we experienced some valuable exercises to develop this capacity to be present in the present under Monica's guidance. Breath dynamics with Fabio worked with posture and perception as tools for more coordinated breathing and a less distracted and clearer mind.

Gabriella introduced us to mindfulness practice, training us to recognize patterns of thought, with exercises based on turning inward and observing our minds without being conditioned by impulses and following them instinctively, but acting with awareness of circumstances.

Since our whole life is in motion, we have learned how to be present and relaxed not only when we sit in meditation, but also when we move and come into contact with everything around us through Adriana, who introduced us to the magic of Vajra Dance through which body, breath and mind become more harmonized.

This course was a valuable opportunity to deepen the topics while receiving guidance from our teachers through practical exercises, discussion and direct interaction and to connect all this richness to our daily lives, living more relaxed, yet more present and aware.

It also represents a model of a comprehensive and introductory course for the public, in a way that people who are interested in Dzogchen but have not received transmission can really have a taste of the practices which form Rinpoche's heritage. This model can be reproduced in other contexts, with translations and be transformed in a standard educational package that our instructors can offer to introduce people to the basics of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings.

We need you!

Our activities are striving because of over-the-top effort from less than a handful of people. We easily get exhausted because of the amount of work that is needed to keep a big Gar running. We need human help. If it is difficult for you to travel here, you can do things at a distance: you can be project manager to our Lungta Factory, help us decide, project and install solar panels, do manual work for the preparation of the flags (cutting, sewing), prepare promotional material (video editing, website programming), organize online retreats. Please apply for supporting the Gakyil in Merigar East, by writing to our contact address office.me@dzogchen.ro. ©

Update from Kunsangar South

Greetings to all from Kunsangar South, where we are trying to further contribute to freely spreading the Great Dzogchen Teaching, in spite of obstacles.

2022 has become another test for everyone, including Kunsangar South. After a long lockdown, when the Gar was mostly visited for personal practice, it finally became possible to hold retreats. However, other obstacles manifested – limited transport accessibility. The airport was closed, and the journey to reach the Gar now takes considerable time. But, despite the logistical difficulties, retreats have been constantly held and planned at the Gar, people come to the Gar and practices are constantly held in the Gönpa. So life at the Gar continues. As long as there are practitioners, there will be practice.

The summer of 2022 was filled with warm-heartedness and spirituality thanks to our invaluable instructors, as well as everyone who came and brought a piece of themselves, offering creative activities. Over the summer, our Stone Garden grew, and protective syllables appeared on the stones. Let this place be a refuge for everyone who walks there.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYocG3bbhIo>

Presentation of the Stone Garden. Video by Alexander Popov.



Many people who are far away in big cities were interested to know whether it is frightening to stay in Crimea in the face of such a difficult situation. Yes, the situation is not easy, but the tension is not felt at the Gar. The Gar helped and continues

to help the refugees, and those who came in summer, forced to seek refuge, sincerely said that they feel safe and at home here. This is the task of the Gar so that the Vajra family, when they arrive, feel as if they are

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

among their relatives. It is important that there is a place where one can take a break from the hustle of the world and practice for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Over the summer, under the strict guidance of the red sector, the Stupa was renovated. Now it shines in the night with its snow-white coating, and in the light of the day, the gilded symbol of Longsal reflects the sun's glare.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOhukLrtAWc>

Reconstruction of the Stupa. Video by Alexander Popov.

Thanks to the sponsorship and carpentry skills of Ruslan Rozhkov, a model of a ship called "Ati" has manifested at the Gar in the children's playground. The ship has become a symbol of the ark, raised its sails and is waiting for everyone to set sail!

There are many plans ahead, especially since almost the entire Gakyil and also the Gekō have changed, which means that the new year begins with new energy. It is difficult to plan for a long time, but the Gar is waiting for guests and retreats are being planned.

In autumn, at the beginning of the season, a retreat on the long life practice of Mandarava was held with Sasha Pubants via teleconference. We also organized a long course on the SMS base, which is also available online. We really want to see the Gar filled with guests, events and practice. But we work with circumstances, as Rinpoche taught, and try to follow his advice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJNredUZEck>

Tea drinking ceremony at the Gar in autumn. Video by Igor Pireyev.

New Year is coming soon! During the New Year holidays, a Yantra Yoga retreat with Mira Mironova and an online SMS retreat with Grigory Mokhin are planned at the Gar.

On January 13, we traditionally celebrate the Old New Year (that is, the date of the New Year according to the Gregorian calendar), and on this day a lecture on Sa-che, which Migmar Tsering kindly agreed to conduct, will be a gift for everyone. (You can find more details here.) The lecture will be online, but we really hope that soon there will be a possibility to move freely that will allow many to reach Kunsangar South.

Here are some haiku from the practitioners who visited Kunsangar South:



*The life, the death,
White Stupa above all,
And endless space.
And a stone garden grew nearby.
Just rocks: big, middle, small
Turned into a stone garden
(That) forever blooms.*

*Different cities, new faces. We stopped in
Hamburg. But just like then, two months
ago, every morning the practice of Odzer
Chenma resounds in my memory. Thank
you for being there.*

Every day at 8:30 am, there is an Odzer Chenma practice at the Gar to pacify the situation in the world. Join us in Zoom (Meeting number: 570 577 6865 Password: KSTara).

We wish everyone happy holidays! May this year bring joy and warmth to every heart.

With love,
Gakyil and Gekō of Kunsangar South

News from Kunsangar North

Warm greetings to all from Kunsangar North. It is frosty in Russia now, there is a lot of snow and it is very beautiful at the Gar. We are well prepared for winter. Thanks to generous sponsorship, we were able to buy enough coal. We have to heat the Gar until the end of May, and this is a very big expense. Now we are confident that the Gar will be able to work smoothly.

In order for Community members to come to the Gar more and more often, we have created a special program: we have offered everyone who works remotely and is ready to come to the Gar for a month or more accommodation at very affordable prices. This is a great opportunity to combine work and practice, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Karma Yoga.

In November, the Gakyil held a meeting to report on their activities. This year all sectors worked together very well. In the yellow Gakyil, we had professional people who work in finance as well as accountants and they developed and implemented a modern and transparent system of accounting and work with hired employees, which is very important for the Gar.

The red Gakyil organized many repairs, cleared the forest, and planted many new trees and flowers. The Gar has become much more attractive and beautiful.

Winter in Kunsangar North. Video by Igor Pireyev.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prA3bBJQTbw>

The renovation of the Stupa of Perfect Victory was also completed at Kunsangar North.

Due to the aggressive external environment, the surface of the Stupa had deteriorated, pieces had fallen off in some places, mold had begun to appear, and the paint on the horizontal surfaces was severely damaged. The old paint was thoroughly sanded, all deep cracks were cleaned out, plastered and reconstructed, the entire stupa was washed, treated with a special compound against mold, primed and painted in three layers, and finally treated with a water-repellent coating. Also, on all horizontal surfaces, the old weather-beaten paint was scraped down to concrete, and tiles were laid in its place.



Renovated shrine of the Stupa with Ushnishavijaya statue.

As for practices at the Gar, the blue Gakyil did an excellent job of organizing many in-person and online retreats; every month there were 2–3 retreats in the Gar with local and international instructors.

A big festival of the Dzogchen Community is planned at the Gar for the beginning or middle of summer together with other Buddhist communities and all those who seek a spiritual path. Now the old and active members of the Community have created an initiative group and made a presentation to the Gakyil which has happily approved the initiative. We think that this will help the development of the Gar as a place of practice.

Among the recent events at the Gar is the recent Santi Maha Sangha retreat led by Sasha Gomonov, which took place in person at the Gar, and the ongoing regular practice of the Guardians on Zoom. There was also a retreat with Prima Mai on the Khalongdorjeikar dance and a celebration of Rinpoche's birthday.

The Gar continues to be alive and invites everyone to personal and collective retreats and practices.

With love,
Kunsangar North

©



Yantra Yoga and the Tsalungs and Sogtigs of Mandarava with Fabio Andrico

Nov 14–Dec 15, 2022
Tsegyalgar West, Baja, Mexico

Jigme Dawa

Baja California, Mexico: A group of members of the International Dzogchen Community gathered to receive teaching from Fabio Andrico in the multi-colored Gönpa of Tsegyalgar West – practitioners from Australia, Germany, China, Costa Rica, Italy, Mexico and Russia. There occurred there a month-long retreat, with a combination of Yantra Yoga practices, tsa lungs and sogtigs of Mandarava practice with the presence of four instructors, Fabio Andrico, Nataly Nitsche, Sean Read and Marco Baseggio, practicing from 7:30 am to dinner time at 7 pm. The month passed with a thousand and one adventures, including the rescue of a tarantula and a bull trapped in the Gar, as well as many delicious dishes prepared by the chef Ulyses.

On December 8th we had a day off and the day was dedicated to various activities, games of liberation and bagchen, and lots of laughter. We felt that the legacy of the master is among us, and on this day I had the opportunity to ask our dear Fabio some questions:

Jigme Dawa: Hello Fabio. Welcome to Mexico and Tsegyalgar West.

Fabio Andrico: Well, thank you.

JD: Can you tell us about the relationship between Yantra Yoga and the Tsa lungs of Mandarava practice?

FA: Yantra Yoga is a Trulkorr. It is generally used as a support to prepare and maintain precisely the practice of the tsa lungs. This would be its goal. For example, with the tsa lungs we need to do kumbhaka and you can learn this by doing Yantra Yoga, developing with rhythmic breathing and all this. For

.....
the retreat. Overall this was an unforgettable experience that has given a strong, fresh impetus to my spiritual practice. ©

Yantra Yoga Preliminaries Course

with Fabio Andrico
at Tsegyalgar West
November 15–21, 2022

Paula Hopp

In the opening session, Fabio explained that in this retreat he wanted to teach us to deeply understand the fundamental principles of the practice so that we could competently advance our own practice, in a sense become our own teachers. This was music to my ears because I had been practicing from the book and videos for some time but was not confident I was doing it right. And it turned out that, indeed, I had not been doing it right.

One of the things we heard most often from Fabio was something like “It’s fine to do that if you want, but it’s not Yantra!” The meaning was that you will be practicing some kind of yoga which will be good for you, but you are not actually practicing Yantra Yoga. Fabio meticulously taught us in many different ways how the position of the body shapes the breath so we could understand how and why each position and movement creates the conditions to experience the breathing and the holdings, which are the actual purpose of the movements. We were constantly remind-

ed to practice with energy and intent and to cultivate a sense of relaxed calm in the midst of vigorous tension.

Fabio has an encyclopedic knowledge of all the traditions of yoga and often explained the distinction and uniqueness of yantra and his commitment to the teaching he received from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. He often read to us from the original text and from the Master’s commentary. He also regaled us with humorous stories from his own experience and inspiring memories of his time with Rinpoche.

There was a lot a sweat and strain in the Gönpa but also a lot of laughter. Seeing him teach two teachers in training, Sean Read (Australia) and Nataly Nitsche (Dzamling Gar), was instructive in another way: witnessing the corrections and advice he gave to practitioners far more advanced than myself. These seven days of teaching was a rare gift and it seems to me the only way to honor it will be to diligently practice what I’ve learned.

All this happened amidst the stillness and natural beauty of the Montaña San Miguel that is Tsegyalgar West. It’s hard to imagine a more perfect space for practice than this magical landscape. The accommodations there are surprisingly elegant and the cuisine was amazing. I was welcomed and supported by a warm and wonderful community of practitioners there, each with their own natural gifts and experiences. I feel grateful to each of them. Special thanks are due to Lazuli and Jan for their care of the Gar and management of



News from Tashigar North

Rolo Carraso

Dear Vajra Family,
We send a warm greeting from Tashigar North. We are in the final stretch of the year, a year of challenges and difficulties, but one that we close with great optimism looking to the future. The financial situation at the beginning of 2022 was quite delicate since the Gakyil did not have the necessary funds to cover its operations until the end of the year.

This situation forced us to speed up our support projects related to the tourist operation with Russian citizens. The unfortunate events of the war in Ukraine affected our initial expectations, forcing us to focus the initiative on the local market. At that time, we discarded the aspect related to accommodation and focused on the promotion of Delek, a project in which we offered culinary tastings, excursions both in the Gönpa and through the green areas, yoga workshops, dance exhibitions, musical programs and talks with special guests.

Unfortunately, the response was not as expected and in the last quarter of the year we decided to suspend its activities in order not to exhaust our scarce resources in an operation with an insufficient return. At this point the initiative arose to promote the sale of some available properties inside and outside the Gar in order to solve our distressing economic situation; but above all with the aim of attracting more practitioners to the mandala of North Tashigar.

Our thanks to all the members who offered their properties and/or part of the income from future sales to support the Gar. In the middle of the year we received a visit from Ralf Strehle, a member of Dzaming Gar who immediately fell in love with the energy of the Gar and decided to take the opportunity. He acquired one of the available properties within the Gar and for about a month has already been residing among us. This operation has allowed us to alleviate our financial worries and has brought us the joy of sharing fresh energy in our daily practices.

We reiterate our invitation to all IDC members to do as Ralf has done. The prices of the properties are really accessible and the general conditions of life in Margarita

» continued on the following page

tsa lung practices in the practice of Vairochana, it is important to do kumbhaka well.

JD: You are a founder and one of the main instructors of the Dzogchen Community. What is the importance of Mandarava practice in the Dzogchen Community?

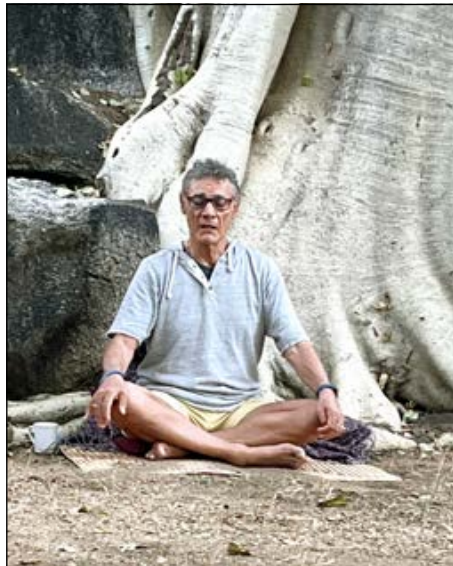
FA: First of all, it is one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's mind thermas and he himself said that the Mandarava practice saved his life, so that he had much more time to continue teaching, and in fact every year he did his personal retreat and then it became a tradition to do a Losar retreat, so he also practiced with us.

JD: Can you give us some tips for doing a personal Mandarava retreat?

FA: Generally we do four thuns a day, and the practice of the sogtig is recommended in the early morning. Kumbhaka practices should not be done around midnight or at noon or just after noon, in general we shouldn't eat too much and we should let the digestion work, and then we shouldn't have many doubts. In my experience this is the most important thing, when we do a retreat or a course.

JD: Thank you very much for all this wonderful knowledge Fabio and for the good humor and anecdotes.

Finally Fabio's wonderful retreat comes to an end and we hope to meet again somewhere in the world. ©





» continued from previous page

are improving more and more. Please keep an eye on the Tashigar North and Mirror Online publications as we intend to publish an interview with Ralf soon where he can share his experience to inspire others. Please visit: <https://tashigarnorteseecreta.wixsite.com/tashishop>

At the level of Practice, we maintain a fairly basic program. Dance Tun, Ganapujas and special practices of the calendar in the Gõnpa, and each one individually tries to follow the many online programs available. Some SMS instructors have expressed their interest in coming to the Gar for a while, but so far we have not been able to make any formal visit. Elias Capriles has on site courses scheduled in Tashigar Norte for December and January, but due to recent circumstances, they will probably be canceled or rescheduled to be broadcast via Zoom from Merida.

At the maintenance level, we continue to be forced to attend exclusively to the tasks that demand urgent attention, since there are a series of necessary jobs in line but that we cannot afford financially, including the re-waterproofing of the Gonpa's roof and the repair of a little part of its floor; and the replacement of a load-bearing beam of the dining room structure.

As Gakyil we are making every possible effort to keep alive this legacy that Rinpoche has left us, without adulterating its main purpose, but it is undoubtedly that we require the participation of more members of our Community at a global level. We pray

that our instructors take the step and put aside certain fears about Margarita's situation in general, as we have already reiterated in several communications throughout this last year, the circumstances are better. Please contact us to make it happen.

When we started our service as Gakyil in late 2018, we had no funds to continue. With the support of our International Community we did a fundraising that allowed us to move forward, and later with a lot of inventiveness we formulated the property sales project. At the end of the year we will have a favorable balance of US\$15,000 that allows us to cover operations for approximately 10 months. It is quite probable that between January and December we will complete one or two property sales, both outside and inside the Gar, which will allow us to shore up our finances.

We continue in permanent conversations with local tour operators to relaunch our accommodation project. We have a more sophisticated idea that required the support of the Atiyoga Foundation, to create a more attractive offer for international operators, in which we can offer a service similar to that offered by Dzamling Gar, oriented to the integral well-being of people, based on our experience in all the disciplines that Rinpoche transmitted to us. But once again, without the active participation of the holders of that knowledge it is not possible.

Our service in the Gakyil has already exceeded the 3-year barrier, so we extend our invitation to active members of Tashigar Norte (with a minimum of 3 years paying their membership consecutively) and who have received the direct transmission, to send their CV to tashigarnorteseecretary@gmail.com stating their intention to apply to the Gakyil, and if they consider it pertinent to help consolidate the work teams necessary to execute our ideas or to develop their own. A special invitation to all home or land owners within the Gar to join in this task of service.

Always Grateful for the support:

Tashigar Norte Gakyil
Gloris Strauss, Blue
Douglas Uzcatogui, Red
Rolando Carrasco, Yellow

©



After the Ashes

Sergio Oliva &
Paula De Raedemaeker

Only just a month ago, on October 12th, a fire started at Tashigar South, Argentina, in the upper part of Tashigar Mandala, without knowing until now how it all originated. The fire ran fast, surrounding a few houses and burning over 20,000 square meters. The immediate response of the team of volunteer firemen from Tanti Town, Tashigar members, and supportive neighbors avoided more extensive damages. But this was only the beginning.

On October 25th, the second fire began and it was quickly controlled. The cause was also unknown.

There was a third fire on October 31st. This was smaller, but without any doubt, deliberate, as local firemen informed us.

Next day, November 1st, on land neighboring Tashigar, the fourth fire started. The wind quickly spread it, it crossed over to our land and went on to neighboring land. It also surrounded some houses, burning



the roof of one of them, part of the electric network, both underground and aerial, and also the water distribution network. A large part of the border fences and half of the surface of Tashigar South were also destroyed. If we were to add our neighbors' land, they lost almost 1,900,000 square meters. It was devastating.

When everything seemed to have come to an end, on November 8th, a fifth and sixth fire started almost simultaneously inside the Gar, confirming the certainty about the intentional origin of all of them.

After each fire, in order to prevent a re-start, we had to have ash guards night and day for a minimum of 48 hours. At night, the landscape of the burnt and scorched ground seemed to transport us to another dimension.

At that moment, stupor, sadness and tiredness had already accumulated, like the mattress of ashes that darkened the ground, our skin, our nails, our faces...

Nevertheless, people went on standing on their feet, controlling the fire.

» continued on the following page



» continued from previous page

Next February 7th it will be 33 years since the Master founded this center which he called the auspicious gar. Since then, we have lived together in harmony with local neighbors and many of them worked in the past and are still working with us in a friendly and cordial relationship.

During the fires, besides the moving attitude of the practitioners who were in the area and who, without exception, got together to face the fire, our neighbors also joined in solidarity with every means they had at hand.

These shared experiences have awakened in us a feeling of deep gratitude towards our neighbors, the policemen, and town forces that were present at every fire and, especially, to Tanti's team of volunteer firemen, who showed great professionalism and amazing courage in facing the fires.

After having filed a criminal charge so that justice investigates, mobilizing the police and spreading the news to the press, a survey is being made of the numerous damages suffered: the estimated cost could be some 10,000 USD.

The past weekend, after a long drought and when the fire had already calmed down, the rain arrived. With the rain, the earth started to change from black to green. Plants are starting to grow again and we feel that life continues, after the ashes.

Dear Members and Friends of the Dzogchen Community of Tashigar Sur,

From October 12th to November 8th, 2022, six fires – three of them huge – hit Tashigar Sur in Argentina at the very core of its lands and living nature. Fortunately, no human life was injured. Nevertheless, the lands, vegetation, water pipes, electricity systems, internet tower and roads were damaged by the fires. Not to mention the astonishment, stress, and sadness they caused in our hearts and lives.

The estimated cost of the damages is around US\$ 10,000.

We are making every possible effort to repair those damages, and we are kindly asking your help in this endeavor.

Please, if you can collaborate with us, we are giving the account information to which you could make your donation. Any amount is very important to us.

CURRENCY: US\$ OR EUROS

PAYPAL

Account: dzogchenmaldonado@gmail.com

Account Name: Tashigarsur Membresias

CURRENCY: \$AR

Banco Santander Río, Sucursal 374

COMUNIDAD DZOGCHEN

Cuenta Corriente en \$: N° 351/1

CUIT: 30-68101628-3

CBU: 072037472000000035118

Alias: BARCO.MADRE.TEMPLO

Please let us know of any contribution you make, by writing to secretaria@tashigarsur.com.

With love and gratitude,
The Gakyil of Tashigar Sur

©

Healers in the Dzogchen Community

Rancor or Forgiveness? A Difficult Choice ...

Gino Vitiello

Our Community embraces members from a variety of backgrounds, professions and interests. Among them are those who are dedicated to the field of healing in its many diverse aspects, whether mental, physical, or spiritual. We invite the healers in our Sangha to send us their experiences, observations and advice to share with our readers. The first article in this series is from medical doctor and psychotherapist Gino Vitiello from Naples, Italy.

The theme of forgiveness has long been ignored by psychology because it is considered to be a 'religious' topic; it is only since the 1980s that its importance in the psychotherapeutic as well as the spiritual field has been recognized. In order to understand its different aspects it is useful to compare it to its opposite – rancor.

If we think we have been treated wrongly or unfairly, it is normal to feel angry, and if we do not move past this feeling, it becomes rancor. Rancor is the building up of anger that can become a real poison for the mind and the body. There is evidence that chronic anger produces not only emotional damage but also damage at the somatic level. But if rancor makes us feel bad, why is it at times so difficult to free ourselves from it? Most probably the answer lies in our ego, although here we should make a distinction.

Ego is a Latin term that means 'I'. Freud defined the 'I' as the identification with one's person, the awareness of one's self, and this obviously has a positive value. What in psychology is defined as "valid *Ego*" is essential for the quality of our lives.

Here, however, I will use the term 'ego' to indicate that exaggerated form of the 'I' that brings us to be totally centered on ourselves, on our expectations, and on our own fantasies and fears. In fact, the more exaggerated the ego is, the more it is vul-



nerable and susceptible to being hurt. The more it is centered on itself, the more it loses contact with reality and becomes the main cause of suffering for oneself and often, if it involves people with a lot of power, for a lot of humanity.

Rancor continually brings us back to what hurts us and prevents it from healing. The main path to healing is forgiveness although it is really our wounded ego that does not want to heal. Our ego finds it unfair to go beyond the hurt and wants satisfaction: "Why should I forgive those who did or said this or that to me! It is better to stay painfully yet righteously resentful."

If we wish to understand what forgiving means we have to clear away many prejudices.

Forgiving is above all an intentional choice that goes beyond the spontaneous emotional response to something that has hurt us.

Not forgiving blocks us from overcoming a trauma and makes our suffering more deep-rooted.

Forgiving is therefore a volitive act that may also arise from the awareness of the suffering that is produced by rancor.

Forgiving does not mean condoning the action because it is addressed to the person, not to what he or she has done. Clearly we may wish that amends be made, that apologies be given, but this may not happen and should not stop us from choosing to forgive.

Forgiveness cannot be imposed and is not 'do-goodism' or justifying unjustifiable behavior. If a person is an enemy we have the complete right to defend ourselves, to

keep our distance, but without hate. The Buddha taught that we will not be punished for our anger but by our anger.

Finally, forgiveness does not necessarily lead to reconciliation. This will be possible only if the other person accepts their responsibility, although this does not always happen or may not be possible.

Another important aspect is forgiving ourselves as our ego may not only be hurt by what is outside ourselves but very often by the frustration of not being who we wish to be, of who we would like to be. How many times have we been troubled by moments when we have embarrassed ourselves, when we have not shown ourselves as we would have liked to appear.

Our ego does not like our limitations and makes us want to be other than what we are. This is related to what the Buddha – when explaining the nature of suffering – called "the craving for existence", or wanting to be more. This does not mean impeding the path of evolution but it is not really possible if we start with a false self.

In fact another subtle aspect of an exaggerated ego is shyness, or not exposing oneself for fear of being judged by others. Then there are people who like to say that they are severe with others because firstly they are severe with themselves. This is also a typical egoistic position, believing oneself to be right and without faults.

When we recognize that we have carried out some actions that we are sorry about, we often develop a sense of guilt. However, according to a concept arising from Gestalt psychotherapy, a sense of guilt is not a significant emotion. If we analyze it, it almost always contains an unconscious dose of anger towards the person to whom it is intended which is different from the suffering arising from their actions, it rarely involves a desire for forgiveness, and doesn't help to alleviate the suffering. In fact it often creates mechanisms of self-punishment and makes things worse.

The work of forgiving should begin by observing ourselves and recognizing and accepting our human imperfections in order to discover the many ways in which the ego works to create suffering for us, whether it arises from rancor or remorse.

>> continued on the following page

Karma Pakshi (1204–1283) His Life and Legacy

Charles Manson
Lives of the Masters series
Shambhala 2022

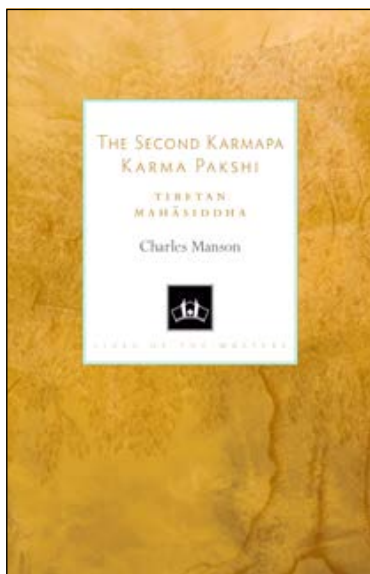
Naomi Levine

Tibetan spiritual biographies traditionally tend towards hagiography, focusing exclusively on spiritual achievements, keeping ordinary human life at a distance, as if the human side would degrade the saintly. Often lists of empowerments and attainments make them like reference books. There are exceptions like Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche's *Blazing Splendour*, in which stories are shared from a living master directly to students.

The main sources for Manson's book derive from Karma Pakshi's autobiographical memoirs, which makes the weave of narration and spiritual accomplishments smoother. Although Pakshi's memoirs are sparse on the details of his birth and parentage, Manson's meticulous research succeeds in structuring a reader-friendly approach to the existing complexities of the historical, political, superhuman and human events of Karma Pakshi's life.

The 13th century was a tumultuous time in central Asia with the Muslim invasion of Northern India, and the massacres by Genghis Khan's troops thundering across northern Inner Asia. Genghis' grandsons, Mongke and Kubilai, were also marauding warriors, with Kubilai being the most volatile. To be aligned as a guru to the Mongol Emperors, as Karma Pakshi's story reveals, was exceptionally dangerous. As a mahasiddha, he was up for the job; and that makes it a truly dramatic life-story.

Karma Pakshi was born into a Buddhist family whose ancestry during Padmasambhava's era included a mantra master who



was said to ride on light rays in the sky. A child prodigy, at the age of six Karma Pakshi could read without being taught and assimilated Buddhist teaching immediately. As a teenager, his meditation was so advanced he described his mind to be like "an unruffled, deep ocean." His teacher Pomdrakpa had signs indicating his young student was a reincarnation of a renowned saint, Dusum Khyenpa. Although Dusum Khyenpa is now referred to retrospectively as the first Karmapa, it was Karma Pakshi who first was called Karmapa. Eventually recognition of a reincarnate child became the norm for finding tulkus, adopted by most schools of Tibetan Buddhism including that of the Dalai Lama some 400 years later.

The initial transmissions Karma Pakshi received were the songs or Dohas of the Indian siddha, Saraha, and the Mahamudra instructions of Gampopa. Instantly he realized, "the infinite wisdom that is self-cognizant of one's ignorance about all phenomena within samsara and nirvana."

The teaching he became best known for was "introduction to the four kayas", which he would later transmit to the Mongol Emperors Mongke Khan and his brother Kubilai Khan. In the late 17th century the first Mingyur Dorje Rinpoche received a mind

Luigi Vitiello

A student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 1977, Luigi Vitiello has a degree in medicine and trained as a psychotherapist at the European School of Functional Psychotherapy and then followed Gestalt training. He is enrolled in the Register of Psychotherapists of the Order of Doctors of Naples. He is a Yantra Yoga instructor and a meditation teacher, lives and works in Naples and Arcidosso, and holds conferences and courses on these topics in various Italian and European cities.

treasure of Karma Pakshi while practising the protector Bernakchen. He saw, "not in a dream, but in reality with my own eyes, a flashing red light that filled the entire room...When I awoke, I saw in the sky before me the mandala of the guru, illusory yet real."

This live experience became a sadhana practice which passed through the lineage of Karmapas to the 16th and onto his Western students. Trungpa Rinpoche's terma *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* (revealed in 1968) was partially inspired by a Karma Pakshi empowerment he received from the 16th Karmapa.

Pakshi also studied within the monastic tradition and ordained many monks. His yogic practice was tummo (inner heat), a practice which can enable yogins to stay outdoors in the coldest winter covered only in a single cotton cloth. Vajra Yogini, the deity who bestows accomplishment in this practice, prophesied in his visions that the realization of the lineage would come to him.

Blessings came abundantly from his touch so that he became celebrated as a mahasiddha, an adept with spiritual powers. His dreams and visions were too numerous to describe, some lasting as long as a week. According to Manson: "He tributes the manifold appearances of peaceful and wrathful deities to having set in motion his teaching on the "introduction to the four kayas."

During a period of retreat a wisdom dakini appeared in a dream and sang the mani mantra of Chenresig in a special tune, claiming that all who heard it would be greatly blessed. The tune was sung to Manson by Lama Norlha in 2006 and transcribed into music notes in the book (page 37), which may be useful for those who like to sing the mani mantra.

Most importantly, Karma Pakshi used retreat periods to perfect lungsem or retention of breath which later, together with his teaching on the four kayas, enabled him to bestow an effective practice to all and sundry in China and Mongolia – emperors and ordinary people alike. So great was his ability that, just with breathing and retention of breath, he was able to 'uplift' derelict monasteries.

As the glory of Karma Pakshi's feats extended, he became celebrated as a lord of miracles. A living legend. He also became known as a peacemaker with powers to subdue any obstacle.

After more than a decade in retreat he began the greatest spiritual adventure of

>> continued from previous page

The way to dissolve these problems is particularly important when we are moving towards the later part of our lives in order not to carry such a heavy burden as our consciousness prepares to leave the physical body. ©



Frontispiece photo of Karma Pakshi from a 13th century painting. With permission from the copyright owner.

his life. He received a “golden letter” from Kubilai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, who had heard of Karma Pakshi’s special powers and ‘invited’ him to his court. It was probably more like a command than an invitation, Manson adds. Karma Pakshi was in two minds about whether to go as he had no interest in political activity, but a vision of a serpentine combination of Vajrapani and Nanda proclaimed: “all your teaching and activity will be completed.” With the additional encouragement of the protector Palden Lhamo, it seemed the time was right. The Khans had chosen to align with a Tibetan Buddhist guru.

The meeting with Kubilai went so well that his family received blessings and teachings on bodhicitta, considered the prerequisite to enlightenment. Kubilai invited Karma Pakshi to remain longer but Pakshi often made decisions according to his visions and when the deity Chenresig advised him strongly to leave, he obeyed. It turned out to be a fateful decision, one that would bring serious consequences a few years later – imprisonment, torture and exile on the orders of the vengeful Kubilai.

Eventually, Karma Pakshi made the journey across the Gobi Desert to Mongolia and into the court of Mongke Khan, the current Mongol Emperor. There too, Mongke Khan followed Karma Pakshi’s teaching, quickly attaining freedom from “subject-object perception of duality.” Together they implemented several social benefit schemes including the re-distribution of royal treasury funds to the people, the release of many prisoners, and sponsorship of temples. Karma Pakshi was inclined towards vegetarianism and this probably influenced the Emperor to add an edict not to

kill animals, which lasted for about a year. He proclaimed Mongke Khan as a great dharma king, although Mongke was still an active warrior. While at the court, Karma Pakshi gave tantric empowerments during which he claimed to drink dry the palace stores of alcohol while not becoming inebriated himself: there was no concept, thus it was like “water merging into an ocean.”

To quote Manson: “He claims his edifying discourses and instructions were understood in as many as 360 languages so the hearers were able to gain liberation into heavenly realms.” Mongke Khan and Karma Pakshi became patron and priest with the exchange of wealth for precious teachings, and this enabled the construction of a monumental 60-foot statue of the Buddha already envisioned by Pakshi, to be called the Ornament of the World, at Tsurphu Monastery.

Meanwhile Kubilai felt slighted by Pakshi’s early departure, and combined with rumours that the great adept was an evil spirit, plotted his revenge.

Here the life-story runs parallel to that of Padmasambhava. He could not be killed either by drowning, burning, poisoning or throwing off a cliff. In fact, the executioner committed suicide, while Pakshi’s death penalty was commuted to exile on a desert island, where he remained for two years extending his Limitless Ocean series of writings. At his next encounter with Kubilai, he was incarcerated in a temple with the doors nailed shut but the walls became transparent. At this, Kubilai finally ‘saw the light’ and became his devotee.

To summarize Karma Pakshi’s influence and life work is like trying to count grains of sand: his travels, visions, teachings, writ-

ings, conversions, construction of temples, statues, miracles. At Karma Monastery he commissioned a statue of the future Buddha, Maitreya; at Nenang, a statue of the past Buddha, Dipamkara; and at Tsurphu the Sakyamuni Buddha, ‘Ornament of the World.’ When assembled, the 60-foot Sakyamuni statue was leaning. Karma Pakshi straightened it by sitting upright in front in meditation.

His deeds never died; they became immortalised in song. Seven centuries later when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu passed through the region of Kham in 1951, he heard the nomads singing devotional songs and noted the words. Manson quotes almost the entire song and here are a few extracts:

For each great person, for everyone,
He turned the dharma wheel in
China
The man who encouraged Chinese
people to dharma
Is the yogin Karma Pakshi –
To the Lord Karmapa I pray!

When he was hurled from a white
rock,
Spontaneously he became the king
of birds, the vulture –
To the Lord Karmapa I pray!

When thrown into red fire
Spontaneously he became red Agni
the god of fire –
To the Lord Karmapa I pray!

When put inside a small cell,
Spontaneously it became a multi-
door stupa –
To the Lord Karmapa I pray!

Karma Pakshi died at the age of 79 in 1283. At his death two suns appeared and a rain of flowers fell. In the cremation ashes were his tongue, heart and eyes, as well as ‘ring-sel’ or relics.

The book includes translations of thirteen of Karma Pakshi’s songs, and of several passages of Karma Pakshi’s writings on reincarnation, meditation, philosophy, tantra, and consecration.

Manson has created a rare spiritual biography blending academic research skilfully with a free-flowing narrative. He rides the waves never sinking into the swirling depths of hagiography. A truly remarkable achievement and a must-read for anyone who aspires to and derives inspiration from spiritual heroism. ©

Pictures from the Past

The Master's Master – Part 6

Raimondo Bultrini continues the account of his travels with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Tibet in 1988. They have just arrived at Nyaglagar village, residence of Rinpoche's root teacher.

Changchub Dorje said he was 72 when he first arrived in the Gonjo region. He lived here in a monastery for three years before meeting his first wife and, with her, perhaps around 1920 (Tibetans often have a very approximate concept of time), he moved to this valley.

He had four children and then took another wife. His oldest child, Jurmed Gyaltzen, died before the Cultural Revolution, while the second, Atalamo, to whom great spiritual achievements were attributed, lived until a few years ago. The third, a monk and scholar, died at a young age after returning from a long trip to western Tibet. His last child, Mikyod, born from his second marriage, met a cruel fate and was killed by revolutionaries.

His three grandchildren, who are now [at the time of writing] between 30 and 40 years old, were born to his second child, a daughter, and to Mykyod. But the mystery of Changchub Dorje's age is only one aspect of the complex figure of this village chief who is credited with the ability of far more famous realized beings, such as Milarepa. In particular, Changchub Dorje was considered to be a great doctor who understood the healing properties of every herb and mineral in these areas. It was most likely due to the special characteristics of Nyaglagar that the lama decided to interrupt his pilgrimage and build a house at the foot of these mountains where there are natural caves everywhere, water is in abundance, the vegetation rich, and the soil fertile.

He immediately discovered a "terma", a treasure of great value, in one of the caves that are wedged right into the heart of the mountain overlooking the village. It was a claylike red earth that quickly solidified in contact with the sun. He began to learn how



Raimondo in Tibet in 1988.

to use it to make protective objects such as the *tsa tsa* that Namkhai Norbu gave me at Galen and, combining it with the infinite variety of plants that grow spontaneously there, for his famous medicines.

Changchub Dorje had neither studied medicine nor Buddhist philosophy but he dictated to his disciples – including Namkhai Norbu, who was his assistant for many months – hundreds of pages, taken from dozens of volumes. "When he visited the sick – Rinpoche recalls – he was able to interrupt himself for hours and, on his return, carry on dictating from the same point. When I reread my notes I was surprised to find that there was no repetition, no gaps in logic."

Accustomed in college to analyzing and debating, storing information and transforming it into philosophical concepts, Namkhai Norbu also had a certain idea about religious practice. Like all Tibetans he had received formal initiations, and as a young scholar he also knew by heart the ritual texts, the mudras, the symbolic gestures, and every detail of the ceremonies used to transmit the secrets of the Teaching from master to disciple.

Changchub Dorje came from a completely different background. His root teacher was considered to be a kind of madman. He had lived most of his life as a hermit and his disciples – including a woman disciple,

Ayu Khandro, who lived more than forty years in the dark – received the transmissions in a very simple way, in a cave, using few words, according to ancient custom.

The "mad" teacher was called Nyagla Pema Dündul, and he was not strictly linked just to Buddhist teachings. Much of his training was in fact Bon. He had learned through very ancient practices how to be in touch with the elements of nature and to integrate his existence in the state that the masters call "contemplation".

Nyagla Pema represented some of the synthesis of those traditions of both Bon and Buddhism labeled under the name Dzogchen, which means Great Perfection, and which indicates the condition of the individual, existence as it is, without concepts or limitations.

If Nyagla Pema was wild and unaffected, Shakya Shri, another of Changchub Dorje's principal teachers, was very open and amenable. He became famous in much of Tibet for these qualities. Changchub Dorje came to him following a dream and stayed with him for a few years. As soon as he had received the essential teachings on the nature of the mind from Sakya Shri, Changchub Dorje became a disciple of Nyala Rangrik, the future head of the Nyingmapa school, known as the school of the ancients, the one most linked to the tradition of the exorcist Padmasambhava.

Nyala Rangrik was chosen after a long discussions within the sect, as the lineage had been interrupted in the troubled era of the 13th Dalai Lama.

The Rainbow Body

In the meantime Nyagla Pema Dündul – his biographers recount – had realized the “rainbow body”, dissolving his physical dimension into the nature of the elements after years of practice. His disciples had assisted him until the day he retired to a small tent and ask not to be disturbed.

Two weeks passed, during which some strange atmospheric phenomena took place at the top of the mountain where the master was. After waiting for a reasonably long period of time, they all went to see what had happened inside the tent. Changchub Dorje and the other disciples found only his clothes, hair, toenails and fingernails, which are considered to be the only impurities of the body and as such impossible to dissolve.

This phenomenon has many precedents in the Tibetan mystical tradition. According to the masters, the breakdown of the elements takes place through the daily practice of the body, voice and mind. They consider the physical body itself and external objects the fruit of mental illusion, without form and substance, manifestations of a karma – accumulated in past lives – which produces human vision in the case of a person, for the deities, animals and other beings their respective dimensions of existence.

When the mind comes to full awareness, it breaks down the elements into their natural state, atom by atom, and any type of dualism, any difference between us and everything else dissolves.

Another master of the Nyaglagar lama called Shardza Rinpoche, who lived between 1859 and 1935 and practiced Bon Dzogchen, succeeded in having the same realization. According to other Lamas I met on my return to the West, Atalamo, the daughter of Changchub Dorje, also obtained the rainbow body, however, during my stay in the village, neither her relatives, nor Namkhal Norbu, told me anything about it.

The same realization was attributed to one of Rinpoche's uncles, the brother of his father. His name was Togden and he had lived much of his life in mountain caves. The story I recount here was told to the lamas by a Tibetan officer who had been Togden's guard during the Cultural Revolution, around the mid-1950s.



Rigdzin Changchub Dorje from the Gönpa of Merigar.

The yogi had been brought down from his caves to keep him under house arrest in a small hut near Derghe. One day the officer came into the room to check on the prisoner and found his body shrivelled up as small as the body of a child. Surprised by his discovery, and above all frightened by the imminent reaction of his superiors – who could accuse him of complicity in an escape – he ran to call the authorities from the provincial capital. But a few days later, after arriving at the hut which was closed from the outside, the soldiers discovered that nothing remained of his body but the impurities.

The officer managed to escape and did not want to know more about politics. He took refuge in Nepal to receive teachings from some exiled Tibetan teacher and here in 1984 he met Namkhal Norbu, who came to know about all the story.

A Game of Mirrors

Changchub Dorje began to practice the teachings of his masters in many of the caves that are part of the village today. He came here following a particular intuition that distinguishes a person who is capable of seeing beyond the physical dimension. He felt that Nyaglagar was a “place of power” and that in this particular place in Tibet he would be able to continue to practice and bring to fruition the teachings he had received. His choice brought about great changes, not just for himself but for the disciples who followed him.

I started to wonder if there wasn't some sort of game of mirrors in the personal

history of these masters. In different historical circumstances each of them repeats a common achievement, that is, the transformation of the realities with which they come into contact. But it's not a visible change. The places remain the same, with their stones, trees, rivers, and people do not change their faces or characters.

It is not even a question of the laborious cultural feats of learned pandits who import new ideas or literary forms into foreign countries. In Tibet this game of mirrors seems to start from the person everyone considers to be the forefather of the new Teaching that came from India, namely Padmasambhava. It was a pandit called Shantarakshita, a great scholar of Nalendra, the most famous university in the Buddhist East of the time, who advised King Trisong (8th century AD) to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet.

And, as usual, it was half history and half legend that have brought us those events that took place so long ago. In short, Shantarakshita – who was first invited by the Tibetan king to spread the principle of Buddhist compassion in the Land of the Snows – was rejected by the brutal reception that the Bonpo of Lhasa gave him. Among other things continuous storms were unleashed on the royal palace, and, according to the Bon shamans, the fury of the elements clearly manifested the anger of the gods against the new false doctrine.

In any event, Shantarakshita packed up and returned to India. “Only a great exorcist – he said to the king – can fight these demons” and he mentioned the name of Padmasambhava, who demonstrated his powers even before arriving at the appointment with the anxious sovereign.

The spirits of the waters, of the sky, and of the earth, who tried to create a thousand obstacles as soon as he crossed the Himalayan border, were subjugated – as hundreds of tales handed down by oral and written tradition tell. For this feat Padmasambhava used the strength of his own mind and a series of magic spells comparable to alchemical formulas for the transformation of matter.

At the invitation of the king he created monasteries, schools, and brought together a group of trusted disciples who spread his teachings to every corner of Tibet. The spirits and deities that had been defeated in the magical duels became his allies and served the Dharma, so that it was not necessary to replace all the previous figures

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

created by Bon. On the spiritual level everything remained perfectly and apparently as before, even if on the worldly level the transition brought persecution and violence perpetrated in the name of religion.

Lama Changchub Dorje was the twentieth century Padmasambhava of this valley, just as many of his disciples (including without doubt Namkhai Norbu) transformed other realities in their turn.

At first, the Nyaglagar lama had no intention of becoming some sort of village chief and in fact spent much of his time in the caves. But the old and the new disciples soon became a large community and many wished to limit themselves to meditating quietly, imitating the master, with complete disregard of how to survive. It was this circumstance that prompted Lama Changchub Dorje to integrate the spirit of the teachings into practice.

Padmasambhava did not limit himself to using learned theological discourses to transform the religious attitudes of Bon, but mirrored the mentality of his time, fighting with the weapon of the exorcists of that level, the magic of the higher tantras. Similarly, the Lama of Nyaglagar found himself having to defeat the mentality and way of life of his disciples.

Since everyone followed him irregardless of he did, the master then went down to the small valley and began to cultivate the fertile land along the river. Soon the others did the same and thus a kind of agricultural community was born where the tasks were distributed equally as were the profits. And this was when Communism had not yet appeared in Tibet.

The First Teachings

In general, at the beginning the community of Nyaglagar was made up of poor simple people to whom lamas dressed in rich ceremonial clothes limited themselves to imparting blessings by reciting a few mantras at most.

Changchub Dorje had grown up in the school of great masters, but he, too, came from a humble family and knew what his role was so that everyone could understand his way of transmitting certain knowledge. The Nyaglagar lama explained that religion and practice are not just devotion and prayer but life itself, experience accumulated without distraction day after day.

He then began to explain the simplest relaxation techniques, the basis for obtaining a mind undisturbed by the constant



Painting of Changchub Dorje by Drugu Choegyul.

movement of thoughts. In order to put the instructions into practice more easily, some people continued to isolate themselves in the thousands of caves in the area. But many of those who had understood the principle of integration remained in the village, built houses for newcomers, worked hard, and developed their practice through habitual activities.

By controlling the regularity of their breath, keeping it stable and deep, they trained in concentrating their minds.

Walking and sitting with straight backs allowed the subtle energy to flow freely in all the channels of their bodies. With suitable food and drink they strengthened their bodies and favored the natural purification of the elements. By dissolving tensions, they avoided charging their existence with negativity.

This state of presence, of attention, could continue even at night. For Tibetans, sleep is similar to the state of the *bardo*, when all the senses – after death – are gathered in the subconscious level, and the ordinary mind, the one that judges and analyzes, no longer functions.

The ancient *Tibetan Book of the Dead* explains that those who have practiced through dreams in the presence of lights and sounds during their lifetimes, can also recognize the lights and sounds of the *bardo*, the state that follows death, an intermediate stage between death and subsequent rebirth, and will not be troubled by the frightening forms and the sensations that arise.

Changchub Dorje was considered capable of traveling in the state of *bardo*. He appeared in dreams to give teachings, just as he was able to manifest and reassure his disciples during those difficult moments, extremely conscious, which follow the blocking of the vital functions of the physical body.

It is a phenomenon that can also be explained intellectually, especially with dreams. Everyone experiences visions when falling asleep. Freed from physical hindrances, the stimuli of everyday life are transformed into more or less symbolic dreams that also involve other people.

A student who is particularly interested in his teacher's lectures could, for example, revise them in the subtle state of dream consciousness and understand a meaning that may have escaped during school time. The teacher himself could perhaps appear as a father figure who takes the student by the hand and accompanies him or her to unknown places.

A spiritual master, such as Changchub Dorje, cultivated an even more powerful charisma over his disciples, and became, in ordinary life as in that of dreams, an irreplaceable guide. When the teacher is not physically there, it is the strength of his Teaching and of his example that guides the actions of his disciples. In the East they talk of the Guru's mind in this regard, and it is a principle that has no equivalent with us in the West. But even when the disciples of a great philosopher or man of letters refer to the teachings of their master, they somehow follow his logical methods, through intellectual paths.

Contact between teacher and disciple in the East does not take place only through lessons, study or books. The three levels of existence according to Buddhism are those of the body, voice and mind. Thus, between master and disciple, knowledge is transmitted from body to body, from voice to voice, from mind to mind. It is an uninterrupted flow of lights, words and sensations.

To get in touch with his or her spiritual master, the disciple uses one of the methods he or she has learned: movements of the body, sounds (mantras) for the voice, visualizations for the mind. This is what is called Guruyoga. Guru means "master" and yoga means "union". The "union with the master" is in fact the indispensable condition for having access to the spiritual knowledge already acquired by the Guru, and which no book alone can transform into direct, concrete experience. ©

Reflections

My New Year's Resolution for 2023...?

John Shane

As we begin a new year, a year in which the future of the world is truly a cause for concern, I try to remember what Norbu Rinpoche often used to say when I was translating for him, *'Bodhicitta means...we do our best...'*, which amounted to a radical re-focussing for his students of the understanding of a Sanskrit term that, in one of its meanings, expresses the intention to serve all beings for their awakening, making sure it could be applied to every action in every lived moment.

And, perhaps, if we can manage to *'do our best'* – even if we individually don't have much power to change things at a global or even a national level – we can all of us at least take care of the small details of every day things in our lives in such a way that the sum of all our individual mindful activities will make some sort of difference to the bigger picture of what the future will look like.

Though we may ourselves not be able to see the results of our actions in the vast and ever-changing flow of events, we shouldn't doubt that there is value even in just resolving to maintain a good intention.

We live moment by moment...yet, somehow, each moment contains both the seeds and the results of a whole lifetime...both the seeds and the results of the whole past history and the whole future of the evolution of this mysterious universe...

Beginning and ending are present in each moment, and the one contains the other. *'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well,'* the medieval mystic Dame Julian of Norwich, the earliest known woman author of an extant text in the English language, recorded – in her *'Revelations Of Divine Love'* – as being the essence of what Christ said to her in her vision at a time when Europe was engulfed by The Black Plague that killed around half of the population of the continent.



'Somewhere under the rainbow'...or...At the rainbow's end'..?

I had the great privilege of translating for Norbu Rinpoche at public talks and retreats in many parts of the world for many years...here I'm translating for him at a retreat held in a circus tent in Norfolk, England, c. 1980.



I was reminded of these words of Dame Julian of Norwich over the Christmas holidays because I was re-reading one of the books of the 20th Century Catholic monk and author of many classic works on various spiritual traditions, Father Thomas Merton, and I remembered that Dame Julian was one of Merton's favourite theologians.

Dame Julian wrote of her vision:

"He said, Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be distressed; but He said: Thou shalt not be overcome." And "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.."

Through the visions of Christ that came to her that caused her take up the life of a hermit and continued while she lived for decades walled up in a cell attached to a small parish church, Dame Julian came to feel that a universal truth had been revealed to her, and it seems to me that the truth that she intuited is the same truth as is expressed in the language of the

Dzogchen teachings with the words *'all is Kuntuzangpo'* – or *'all is perfect just as it is.'*

Facing, as we do, at the beginning of this year, the threats of recurrent economic crises, worsening climate change, seemingly endless wars, famine, propaganda, and pestilence, we may find it a challenge to maintain the Dzogchen View of the self-perfection of all things – just as they are.

But...hey...*'we do our best...!'*

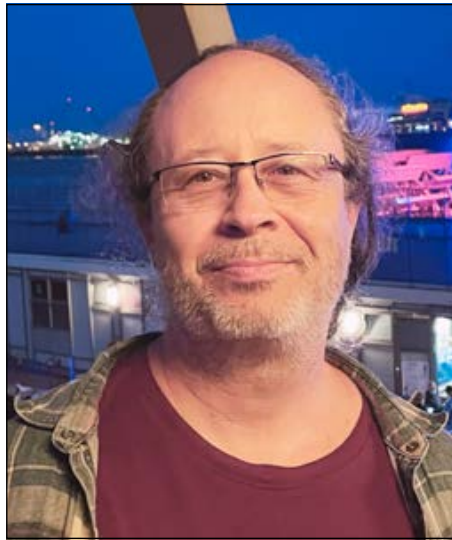
Maintaining *'pure vision'* is not a Pollyanna-ish attempt to deny the dark side of reality, saying *'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds'*, as the phony philosopher Pangloss did in Voltaire's biting satirical novel *'Candide'*: instead it's a way of living moment by moment in presence with the knowledge of the underlying non-dual nature of reality beyond the seeming opposites of dark and light, good and bad, and arriving at a radical acceptance of reality-as-it-is rather than living in a fantasy of projected dualistic thinking superim-

» continued on the following page

The Value of Membership in the Dzogchen Community

An Interview with Igor Berkhin

Maria Grazia Testa spoke to Santi Maha Sangha instructor and fellow practitioner, Igor, about his thoughts and reflections on recent Global Membership trends. The interview was published in the first issue of the newsletter, A Garland of News, of Rangdrolling, the Dzogchen Ling in the Netherlands.



Q : Welcome Igor, thank you for joining us in the informal setting of a newsletter. During your courses, you speak every day to many Community members and Dzogchen students from all over the world and from different generations. What is your view on the current tendency for existing members to discontinue their membership to the Community?

I: Hello everyone. This is not something unexpected. When we ask why people discontinue their membership, we should start by asking why people became members in the first place, and if that reason is still valid or not. In the Santi Maha Sangha Base, we have this explanation of the four types of faith. One of these is the figure of the Teacher, and a very strong human affection towards him/her. Many people became Community members, and attended all these practices and retreats, mainly because of the personality of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. He attracted thousands of people because he was an enormous, very special figure. With

him not being here physically any longer, for many people there is no more reason to continue.

The second type of faith – this is actually the first, the admiration for the Teacher being the second – is based on fear. People feel in trouble, and they feel that the Teacher, the Teaching and the Community can give them a kind of refuge, protecting them from existential trouble, the essence of which is that we are all going to die. This is why people come to religions in the first place, and although we repeat that Dzogchen is not a religion, and in spite of what our statutes say, it may look like a de facto religious organization, or behave and speak like one, so many will still see it as such.

Then there is a third type of faith which is based on logic; people think “this is an important teaching and, if we follow it, something good will happen to us”. But, as Rinpoche used to say, “When we have logic, know that the day after tomorrow we can find better logic”. Logic is based on mind,

and mind changes. One day we may find a connection with something else, and therefore start believing in something else and when the mind changes, there is no more reason to continue something.

And then we come to the most essential point, the essence, faith based on knowledge. What is this knowledge? It is the knowledge of the state of liberation. Then we have no more questions, because we have experienced the state of liberation directly. We know that when we are in this knowledge we don't have problems with samsara; we understand that we might have problems because we can be distracted, and also because we have physical limitations but, basically, we have no problems with samsara when we are familiar with the state of liberation. When faith is based on knowledge, there is no reason to discontinue, unless we break our Samaya, meaning that we can no longer have this experience. Damaging Samaya means exactly to no longer be able to be in the state of contemplation, in the state of liberation. And it can happen. Then of course we have no reason to continue.

But unless this happens, we just continue, there isn't ever an issue, nor any question. We are not searching for anything else, and are totally satisfied with what we have. The problem is that it's a very small percentage of people in the Dzogchen Community who have this reason to be members.

Q: One of the common reported obstacles to continue paying regular membership is the lack of finances. Although it's a modest fee, with many discounts, and services, we still hear this.

» continued from previous page

posed onto whatever arises in one's field of experience as a result of allowing oneself to become hypnotized by the fascination of superficial appearances into a miasma of constant distraction.

'Nothing's good or bad, but thinking makes it so,' as Shakespeare wrote.

Resting in equanimity, maintaining 'balance of mind', letting go of attachment to conditioned preferences, remaining in 'choiceless awareness', experiencing all as 'one taste, one flavour'...

– A la la ho!! – and on we go...!!

You may feel that it is presumptuous of someone like me to write about such profound matters.

And you'd be right.

There is a story that a great Rabbi was once asked by his students, 'In the old days, people used to see the face of God directly, how come that doesn't happen any more?'

And the Rabbi replied, 'Well, these days no one can bow low enough any more.'

So, if you ask me what my New Year's resolution is this year, I'd have to reply to you that it's to learn – in my heart – how to bow lower.

Wishing you – with many bows – all the best for 2023...!! ☺

John Shane is a poet, author, musician, and teacher of Creative Writing who was a founding editor of 'The Mirror' newspaper and, before that, worked closely for four years with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu writing 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen' for him, as well as translating from Italian into English a number of his books, including 'Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State'. He currently divides his time between working at his studio in London and doing personal retreats at his old farmhouse in Tuscany near Merigar.

I: Most people in Europe can easily spend 129€ (or 11€ a month) and most European countries have good welfare systems. This sort of justification is normally an excuse rather than the true cause. There are people who have real financial trouble, but they are a minority that can be helped.

What needs to be addressed here is how we can help people to first of all realize that they don't understand Dzogchen, and this could be a starting point for them to do something different and try to understand. In fact, the worst situation is when people are certain they understand the principle of Dzogchen and its essence, while they do not. They may think, "I understand everything, I have nothing more to receive, now I need to practice!" but this practice never happens. The reality is that we don't need to receive everything, we need to receive one thing only, one simple thing, but if this is lacking then everything is lacking. Conversely, if we have this one thing, then there is no problem with membership. At the very least, we feel gratitude for someone who helped us to get this knowledge, and this someone can be primarily the Teacher, but also the people in the Community who've helped us wake up.

When people can finally understand something, even after 20 years, then they are happy and they are generous because they feel the value, and then they don't need some external motivation to continue, nor are they limited about the possibilities.

Q: When we contribute financially, with a donation or with our membership, even if we cannot always participate, what is it we are contributing to?

I: Some people have the idea of paying for something they receive, such as retreats, books, information, courses. This also means that when the transactional "supply" stops, these people also stop paying. Another idea that can be strong in Christian countries, and in the West in general, is that you have to pay, it's your duty, or your tax. Nowadays you don't donate to the Church so you pay to the Dzogchen Community, basically with the same pattern.

Other people pay something because they feel it's good to offer. Offering is the reason they are sponsoring, they're sharing, and applying generosity, and this is common for all countries. We have very generous people all around the world, regardless of their cultural background. Of course, even when people are so generous,

some of them may still have some kind of transactional back thought, maybe not to receive a service, but salvation. This also means that when they feel that the chances for salvation are better in some other place, they invest their merits and offerings in another entity.

Finally for some people paying membership means supporting a common cause because we feel it is important. What is this cause, basically? We say that maintaining the Dzogchen Teaching is the cause, but how do we maintain that and what are we maintaining? Is this cause serving some immaterial future generation, or is it serving very real people here and now? Is what we maintain a physical place? Can we say that this place by itself preserves the transmission of the Teaching? Of course not. If this were the case, people would be coming to this place and passively receiving the transmission from the place itself. But it doesn't work like that. Even if people go to Merigar, to the Stupa of Rinpoche, and touch it, and do something and even feel something, still it is not working like that.

Q: This takes us very neatly to the second element: participation. What is it we are trying to participate in? Why do we join others?

I: In the very basic sense a community is people working together towards something, knowing that individually we cannot make it. We need to unite because there are things we can do individually but also things we cannot. If we look at the Dzogchen Community, the biggest feeling of community can be found with the practitioners of the Dances of the Vajra. Why? Because it's hardly possible to dance by yourself, or it would be possible but very difficult. You need twelve people, or at least a few, even to just roll out the Mandala carpet, or to make one, paint it, find a place for it, put it away, load it on a van and take it out of the van. These people have the strongest feeling of community and develop it even in individualistic cultures because it is really a collective practice that shows that you cannot do it alone.

An important function of the Community is related to our individual limitations and even though we may have knowledge, we can be distracted as well. When we meet with people who have this knowledge, and at this moment aren't distracted, right then we regain our presence just through communication and being together with them. We regain our pres-

ence through their presence and we share this, so when they get distracted and we are present, they regain their presence through ours. It's like an engine with two parts which goes both ways with feedback loops. We influence each other and when we realize that there is an environment which is conducive for us not to be distracted, we certainly value it!

If we don't have this experience, then it becomes like a common religious activity, such as Mass, which makes some relative sense, as people may feel nice about it, but it has nothing to do with our practice. This is the benefit of the Community, and it doesn't matter if we meet online or physically, we are meeting, mindful that this interaction is based on interdependence.

Q: There is often a question surrounding newcomers. Last year many had the chance for direct introduction to Dzogchen with Yeshe Namkhai, but this is not possible always and everywhere.

I: Rinpoche always said that we don't know if a person is a true beginner or not. If a person is coming to the teachings, for example, they might have had the transmission in a previous life. Are they more or less connected than someone who was dozing off during an introduction? More or less than a cat in the Gönpa? There is no way we can really judge this, so it's important we do not hold back new people for this reason.

People are often afraid to break some mysterious Samaya, if they do this or that. But what is the direct introduction? What is transmission? It means that a person did not have this knowledge and now this person does. And not having this knowledge is something that can be true also for people who have followed Rinpoche for many years, as we have discussed today. But if it is true that at least a few people really get it, then members will die, members will leave, but in the end this solid nucleus will remain, be members, participate and be happy, and it does not matter if they are new or old, it will be people who have this knowledge, and the confidence that derives from it. ©

Experiencing Joyfulness Through Vajra Dance

The Story of a Vajra Dance Teacher

Cindy Faulkner

I initially started to learn the Vajra Dance at Merigar on my first visit there in 1996. It was also my first contact with the Dzogchen Community. I had been living at Karma Ling in France for four years, since 1992.

Before that I was a dancer in London, working with improvisation, and had got to a place where I was looking for pure spontaneous movement, something that was not conditioned by habits. I was getting more and more jaded by the whole dance scene there and seeing people repeating their habits and operating out of ego. My true inclination in my dance improvisation was to sit still, which was not really going to work as a dancer, so I thought I had some kind of dancer's block.

At this point my good dancer friend passed me a leaflet about a course entitled 'Dance and Meditation' and I thought that perhaps meditation would help to unblock my dance. I immediately said that I would go and left with my friend for Karmaling in France where the course was taking place. It was a ten day course where we learnt very simple shiné and lhatong, sitting and walking and just moving in space. It had a very strong effect on me. The first few days I just lay on the ground crying because I was determined not to move until it was real, until it was coming spontaneously. I don't really know how to explain it. It was as if my energy body woke up.

While we were there one of the residents told me that you could actually live at Karmaling as they had a small residential community of about a dozen people that ran the whole place. Since at that moment there was nothing really left for me in London, I thought that I needed to stay at Karmaling and study this path further. I'd never intended to be a Buddhist or anything like that and in fact was quite anti organized religion, but the experience of the meditation and open movement, "open space" we called it, made me feel that I had to go deeper.



Cleaning the chalets at Karmaling, 1993/94.

So I asked Lama Denys if I could come and be a resident and at first he looked at me with that "I don't know you" look, and then he said okay. So I went home, finished off a bit of work, packed a couple of bags, and turned up at Karmaling on a windy autumn night in October in 1992.

As far as movement was concerned, at that point I dropped everything and did a lot of sitting meditation. Meanwhile I was working at the center, cleaning, doing housework, making beds for people staying there, and keeping quite a low profile.

I began to experiment and develop a very simple way of moving connected to breath and awareness. I realized that there were people coming to the center who couldn't really simply sit down from moving around so fast and expect to experience any stability in their meditation, so I developed this movement linked with breath. It was very easy and anyone could do it. Lama Denys encouraged me to continue to do it so I wrote a little book and we did these exercises with people who came to do meditation there and I gradually got back into movement and teaching it.

Lama Denys is always interested in different things and is very outward looking as well as inward. Around 1994/5 he found out about the Osho Rajneesh ashram in Pune, India and their Dynamic Meditation and felt that the sangha at Karmaling needed to move around and get shaken up a bit because there was a lot of sitting. He wanted to find out more and asked me if

I would like to go there and learn more. I was already going out to Java where there was this movement meditation master called Suprpto Suryodarmo who had inspired the original course at Karmaling that I went to and whose teaching and meditation were about free movement with no steps to learn. So I went to Java and did some work with this teacher, then came back to Bombay, (now Mumbai) and on to Osho's ashram with Mingyur, one of the teachers at Karmaling. We learned the Dynamic Meditations and then we came back and got people doing them, although I have to say that there was some resistance.

And then we get to Merigar. Lama Denys was travelling around to give teaching and visited Russia where he encountered some of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's students who showed him the Vajra Dance. Apparently he had had some dreams about dance and when he saw the Vajra Dance he thought that it corresponded to his dreams. So he went to Merigar to meet Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and explained that the Vajra Dance corresponded to something he had dreamt about and asked if he could have permission to have the Dance taught to his sangha. Rinpoche replied that he could and gave him the text for the Vajra Dance, indicating that he could give the lung to his sangha.

Lama Denys came back and called me in to see him. He told me that he had seen this dance and wanted to introduce it as a practice at Karmaling. He wanted me and his wife, Maryse, to go and learn it



Cindy on the Vajra Dance Mandala at Kunselling in the UK.

and had booked us both a place on a Vajra Dance course. He told me that he had also reserved accommodation for us and suggested that I go and receive teachings from Chögyal Namkai Norbu. He wanted us to go and learn the Vajra Dance with the aim of one day bringing it back to Karmaling. Then I remember what I said because sometimes you say such stupid things in front of Lamas, I said, "Oh, that sounds like fun!" And off we went to Merigar!

Maryse and I drove down from Karmaling through the Mont Blanc tunnel – it took a lot longer than we thought – and we were driving up the main road from Grosseto to Mt. Amiata when we saw this enormous pink egg rising over the horizon and wondered what it was. It was actually the full moon rising early in the evening in August, tinged with this pinkness, and it was distorted into this egg shape. I had never seen anything like that! When we arrived at the accommodation in the village of Bagnore, close to Merigar, it was around midnight and we couldn't find the key so we went to Merigar and threw stones up at the geköes window to wake him up. He finally came down, quite grumpy, and gave us the spare key and we went to our accommodation.

At that time at Merigar there were two courses of Vajra Dance: an advanced course with Prima Mai and a beginners course with Adriana Dal Borgo. At the beginning when the course started everyone came into the Gönpa and made a great big circle

and we sang the Song of the Vajra. It was all new to me and I felt like I was in heaven. I felt very small and privileged to be there. It was all so different to Karmaling which seemed to be rectangular while this was more circular. That was when I first met Rowan Wylie who was on the advanced course and Peter White who was on the beginners course.

I think that Lama Denys probably thought that we were going to come back and be Vajra Dance teachers but that was really not the case. We had just learned the first half of the Dance and so we weren't ready to teach at all. When we returned to France, we painted a Mandala on the floor of the old temple at Karmaling and we would get together with the Swiss Dzogchen sangha, who we had met on the course, and we would try and dance together. And gradually we invited teachers to come and teach Vajra Dance courses there. That was in 1996.

Soon after I actually left Karmaling. I had already decided that I wanted to move out of Karmaling and when I came back from Merigar, that whole phase ended. I think that was because I had literally moved onto another mandala. I still hung around for about a year going backwards and forwards wondering what to do, because that is quite a long time to be away, and then I thought that I would go back to England. My mother offered to pay for me to do another training because I had no money left and I thought that I would go where there

is a Vajra Dance Mandala in England. There was one in London and one in Devon and I didn't want to go to London because I had already left there, so I went down to Devon initially. At the time Rowan, Cheh, Tim and Lol were living there and Peter also traveled down regularly. We danced there and invited teachers as well.

It was also around this time, 1997, that I finally met and received teachings from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu when he came to the UK and gave teachings at a retreat in Wales. This was about a year after I had already done quite a bit of dancing and it had become my pathway through life.

Being close to the Mandala was wonderful but Devon didn't suit me because it was so wet so I moved to Cambridge and I would travel to London every weekend by train, cycle to the Vajra Dance Mandala in Camden, spend my time dancing, and then travel back.

I always felt very indebted to Lama Denys for opening up all these opportunities for me and I remember that he said at the beginning that he wanted me to learn the Vajra Dance and teach it to the Sangha so I kept this as a sort of loose aim and felt a commitment to carry this through, although it was in a way effortless because it was exactly what I wanted to do. As soon as I was dancing the Vajra Dance I felt that this is it. This is everything that I love, so it wasn't an onerous task to continue.

It was in 2007 that I finally went back to teach the Vajra Dance at Karmaling. I had already qualified as a first level Vajra Dance instructor, and while I was at Tashigar Norte on Isla di Margarita, I picked up *The Mirror* and read that Karmaling had entered into a Samaya Fellowship, a heart link with a common source of inspiration, with the Dzogchen Community. Since I was now an Instructor I thought I should let Lama Denys know. I did and offered to come and teach Vajra Dance and he replied that he would be delighted and so I have, over the years, been teaching there and it's been very nice to be able to continue that connection and see it grow. It naturally came about without effort.

During the pandemic life became more restricted in the UK and Lekdanling in London went online and there were no longer any onsite courses. I continued to lead courses at Kunselling but it was all a bit raggedy. And then somehow one of my shiatsu clients found out about my teaching Vajra Dance and other clients asked me if

» continued on the following page

A Journey to the Place of Clarity

Barry Patterson

In 1997, the Dzogchen Community U.K. bought 'Kunselling', an old stone farmhouse with a sunny courtyard and outbuildings in an idyllic Welsh valley, not far from Hay-on-Wye. Rinpoche first stayed at Kunselling in November 1998 and consecrated it as an authentic, sacred site for the practice and continuation of the Dzogchen teachings, naming it 'Kunsel Ling', meaning 'The Place of Total Clarity'.



When you enter the wintry valley over the border from the east, assuming that the road at Letton hasn't flooded, you've entered the final leg of your journey. You see The Black Mountains against the sky; Old Red Devonian rampart that they are and the distant, maybe snow capped Brecons in the distance; a portent of wild land.

Here Afon Gwy, our River Wye, often breaks her banks into the fields. Past the legendary Baskerville Hall and Book-Town Hay she gets wilder, rougher, cuts herself a gorge and can be heard from the road and from the houses in the village.

It's a big pull up the side of the valley at Erwood; small & steep for a village, where the bus stops by the shop & travelling yogins may sometimes be seen waiting for us to collect them. On up the hillside! Now the roads are small, steep, twisted and slippery with swathes of wet leaves, so you go carefully.

» continued from previous page

they could learn Vajra Dance. Since there were three people I thought that perhaps I should put myself out there and not be so shy. And so I booked the village hall and used our complementary health website to advertise and announce the course. There are about half a dozen of us, we've finished the first course and are about to start the second one. They are people who just come out of their own interest and connect to the Dance very well. They are very committed although some of them are quite challenged to learn the movements.

I began by introducing them to the sounds and some of the typical movements of the Dance that are done with the sounds,

You take care with the turnings. After years we recognise familiar houses, the lay-by where the farmer stores his bales of hay wrapped up like black, shiny barrels and the driveway it's probably best not to turn into. Then suddenly *our* lane comes along, fairly low-key but with a distinctive telegraph pole!

Now we climb even higher up; a narrow lane with high hedges that twists and turns, then through the Davies' farm; friendly, resourceful hill-farmers, our closest neighbours of twenty five years. Sheep dogs look up, sometimes bark or chase us as we pass through; David gives us a wave.

The final track is sometimes impassable with ice or a flood; steepest of the lot; muddy, stony and rutted by farm machines. This is Llwydallt, The Grey Hillside, we're a thousand feet up now, in the borderlands of that lonely upland which they call The Epynt: The Horses' Way; rolling, green, gorse

doing it very much on an experiential basis. Of course if they ask me questions I tell them a bit about the history of the Dances, and they do ask. I think it's helping them to relax and experience joyfulness and see their own blocks and how they limit themselves and how that can be released. In a way it's the Teaching in a nutshell, isn't it? From that place of opening and clarity comes joyfulness.

When you teach to practitioners you don't have to worry about hiding anything about yourself. You have a shared language, shared practices, and you can relax in the arms of the sangha and be yourself. With the people that I'm teaching locally I have to make sure that I don't use any language

dotted ridges, home to red kites, ravens & wild ponies.

So here is the gate and the familiar driveway and we have arrived at Kunselling! The Place of Total Clarity, sheltered against its hill, watched over by crazy-wild venerable trees, *lungta* rippling in the breeze and curious sheep are giving us the eye. The air here has a clarity and a strength that soon fills your body as you emerge and raise your arms to the wind.

There is the old grey stone of the family house, Rinpoche's cosy little nest; our gönpa barn, windows reflecting the sun, Robin's *sang khang* and the old farmyard, once a slippery grassy slope, now a circular, level platform for dancing. Sometimes the passing satellites can see our mandala from space.

When I get out of the car at Kunselling I always want to bow Zen-style; an old habit of respect; bow to the house and the hill, the trees, sheep and birds and most of all

that's alienating and have to find new ways to express those same principles so that people don't feel that I am trying to turn them into Buddhists. There's less emphasis on words and more on experience.

And the power of the Dance is what is such a privilege in teaching it. Just that somehow makes everything okay. When you teach it has this great kind of harmony and blessing that accompanies it. ☺

Cindy Faulkner has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 1998 and an authorized Vajra Dance teacher since 2005. She currently lives in Cambridge, UK, where she also works as a Shiatsu practitioner.

to the great mind who conceived of it all; that we should ever own such a marvelous place, as well as those whose courage and generosity over many years have kept it alive.

Once I picked up a long thin stone from the gravel on the drive, about as big as my little finger, and I took it with me to Nepal and Tibet; to Boudhanath and Lhasa, Samye and Zangri Kangmar and when I got a home from all those journeys I gently replaced it exactly where I had picked it up.

When Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was here, at the very end of a retreat, we were all in the sitting room of the house; I never saw it so crowded; and we sang Song of the Vajra together, with Rinpoche sitting by the fire, and as we walked out into the cold, dark air of the oncoming Winter the moon and three planets were lined up above the house.

A place of love, wisdom and the best kind of adventures. Emaho! ©



Chöd in Winter

History is erased by the dancing light
Of the heart's heat set free into the sky
Where waves of starlings ride the rainy wind;
Hill weight & stream voice the passionate cry!
We offer food, drink & healing wisdom's words
To the vast tempest of the universe!
To the red kite, the raven, the rabbit
To the spirits of the rain, wind & stars
To the pregnant ewe & the twisted, green oak,
To the beech, the thorn, the night shadows, dark
To Mother Machig & her noble sons!

Gone beyond the rage & longing of the dream
That told us we were doomed to always fail;
That all we could expect was duty & death;
Tormented by our selfish hopes & fears,
The master's mandala song is greater
Than this; the precious treasury of space, our heritage.
Beyond the wind, in our small stony nest
We can relax & set the whole world free;
Your eyes can tell me all I need to know
As I look around the gathered company,
& we go forth, damaru warriors!



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International

Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

US Office: mirror@tsegyalgar.org • European Office: lizgranger.mirror@gmail.com • Russian Office: beawaketoday@gmail.com • Editorial Staff: Naomi Zeitz, USA • Liz Granger, Italy • Anastasia Eremenko, Russia
Advisor: Adriano Clemente • International Publications Committee English Language Advisor: Liz Granger •
Design & Layout: Thomas Eifler • Webmasters: Yuchen Namkhai and Luigi Ottaviani •
Available at melong.com • Online Mirror: www.melong.com • All material © 2023 by The Mirror •
Reprint by permission only • We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

Dream Practice

Jane Weston

A key reason that I originally joined the Dzogchen Community was that I was inspired by Rinpoche's writings on Dream Yoga. I loved reading about his amazing dreams of clarity.

I joined workshops with Michael Katz, who is the only one of his students who Rinpoche authorized to teach his dream practice. I remember attending a teaching where Michael gave us an exercise: he asked us to leave Lekdanling and observe very closely what was going on around us. When we saw anything a bit weird or unusual we should seriously consider whether we were in fact inhabiting a dream at that very moment. Something peculiar in the dream environment can alert us to the fact that we are dreaming as we are dreaming, so it pays to train in close observation of everything going on around us in the everyday waking state. The idea is that this habit then carries over into REM dreaming sleep.

As soon as I got out into the street I saw a tall guy, dressed as a bunny rabbit, with long floppy ears, jogging past me as if this was the most normal thing on a Saturday afternoon in east London. I conducted a quick reality check (to establish whether I was dreaming or not). A reality check is where you try to do something that is impossible in the everyday waking state, like flying or stretching one finger of your hand out to two feet in length by pulling on it. If you are awake nothing happens, but if you are in a dream very strange things can and do happen. Nothing happened, so I concluded that although the manbunny was very odd, I was not dreaming him.

I have never forgotten this minor urban drama. Michael had taught us a valuable modern dream practice technique and the bunnyman had provided a great opportunity to try it out...

Having laid the foundations of a dream practice in the Dzogchen Community, some years ago I began studying with Charlie Morley. Charlie's root teacher is Lama Yeshe, a well-respected Lama in the Karma Kagyu tradition (and a cousin of Akong Rinpoche, former abbot of Samye Ling monastery).

What attracted me to Charlie is how he combines the philosophy of Buddhism



with modern psychological techniques and practices from other spiritual traditions, and applies them specifically to the area of sleep and dream. He also emphasizes scientific validation of 'sleep knowledge', which I consider important.

Since the 1970s sleep scientists have increased our objective understanding of how our brain sleeps a great deal. Neuroscience can also help us understand why modern students often struggle with both peaceful sleep and practising mindfulness meditation.

There are two opposing aspects of the human nervous system – the parasympathetic system and the sympathetic system. The popular names are "rest and digest" and "fight and flight". These systems evolved over millions of years of human prehistory to enable our ancestors to react effectively in both safe and unsafe situations in their environment. When stressed, our system responds by pouring noradrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream which makes us both highly alert and prepared to go into action. After the threat has gone, the parasympathetic mode – rest and digest – takes over and relaxation becomes dominant.

This evolution over millions of years was all very adaptive. The problem arises when too much stress for too long without any switch-off periods results in a nervous system which exists in a state of low level (or even high level in the case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) arousal all the time. The result is a human being with sleep disturbance and problems with anxiety. In the long term, this has a negative impact on the physical body.

So, we need to help ourselves sleep better and relax more deeply and here I am guided by Charlie Morley's methods. I teach simple breathing techniques, Yoga Nidra (from the Hindu tradition), mindfulness

meditation and progressive muscle relaxation to get people more familiar with the feeling of being deeply relaxed. This is the necessary prelude to becoming more aware in all the different brain states of the day/night cycle, as identified by neuroscience. There are probably a great number of these but I'm just going to identify a handful:

- * Everyday waking state (I don't call this "waking reality" for obvious Buddhist reasons!).
- * Hypnagogic – as we fall asleep we encounter this stage where there is often visual imagery, muscle jerks and a feeling of very relaxed wakefulness (Stage 1 sleep according to sleep science). This is the drowsy place between full wakefulness and full sleep.
- * Light sleep Stage 2.
- * Deep sleep Stage 3.
- * Rapid Eye Movement Stage 4, which we commonly call dreaming.
- * Hypnopompic – the transitional state between sleep (or dream) and full wakefulness, often characterized by a spacious dreamy thinking where profound insights are possible.

Tibetan Buddhist Dream Yoga has something to say about all the stages of sleep and dream that I listed above. The aim is to develop awareness seamlessly throughout all states of consciousness 24/7. Very highly realized Lamas have been able to attain this but it is far beyond the reach of most ordinary people. There is a reason why this practice is considered so important – the idea is that if you can develop this level of practice, you can maintain awareness not only throughout all stages of sleep but also in the *bardos* of death and dying. During the death process, by reliably recognizing the base luminosity when it manifests, the practitioner achieves full enlightenment.

Although awareness of the clear light in the *bardo* of deep dreamless sleep is considered a highly advanced practice, we can all make some progress towards the address to which we are going (as Rinpoche called it). The first step on this path as far as I am concerned is to expand our awareness of some unfamiliar stages of sleep. The key to this is mindfulness, or paying attention to what is happening, as it is happening, in the present moment, within our own minds.

I teach people in small groups using a variety of techniques to heighten awareness.

First, we learn to relax more deeply. This might sound easy but modern individuals in industrialized societies, as I said before, are usually quite highly stressed and may live in a state of permanent nervous system arousal. It is no good *telling* these people to relax because put simply, they don't really understand what this means, because their "normal" is to be permanently unrelaxed.

Next, we learn how to 'hang out' in the hypnagogic or Ensleepening state for much longer periods of time and become familiar with the subjective experience of this with much more awareness. Some people experience a lot of flashing visual imagery here, faces, landscapes and so on. Some hear noises. I myself have had an interesting vision or dreamlet which was pervaded by a smell. This state between waking and sleeping is readily accessible for many people as it has elements of waking consciousness and imagery surfacing from the unconscious mind *at the same time*. Some people need to engage with this state in order to dissolve the barriers to falling asleep, if they are struggling with disturbed sleep patterns. Others use it as a gateway into the dreamworld, or a space where they can engage their imagination to influence what happens later in full REM dreaming sleep. There are many possibilities.

Another brain state for beginners to start with is the hypnopompic or Upwakening state, as we come out of dream or light dreamless sleep and hover on the threshold of full everyday waking consciousness. Many people just rush through this and aren't really aware of it at all but it is another distinct sleep phase, characterized on an EEG by its own unique pattern of brainwaves. Subjectively, it is quite different from being fully awake and there are many possibilities to become more aware here.

And then of course, there is REM itself where we are experiencing the full narrative, emotional experience which we label 'dreaming'. The everyday waking state consciousness is largely suspended and we believe that what we are experiencing is 'real'. To become lucid is to realize that we are dreaming, while we are dreaming. This is a really amazing experience in anyone's book, as it opens a treasury of possibilities, from flying to walking through walls to performing enhanced spiritual practice.

Tibetan Buddhism in general does not pay much attention to the content of dreams – the content is considered to be very secondary to the ability to realize the empty nature of all the manifestations which we label 'dream'. Traditionally, the emphasis is on the ability to become lucid because it really is the royal road to an understanding that what we perceive is not as solid, permanent and 'real' as we previously believed.

However, just as the modern individual is different from a Tibetan receiving teachings in a traditional setting in respect of her nervous system, she is also different in respect of her cultural context. In the West, we have developed a culture which constantly emphasizes the individual over the collective, the personal over the communal. Modern people need an approach that recognizes them as individuals and can give them some insight into their own personal experience.

I still find the approach of Tibetan Buddhism to sleep and dream in the form of Dream Yoga the most profound and sophisticated available, but the addition of scientific knowledge and some of the approaches to human psychology that were developed in the West in the early 20th century are also useful. I'm talking here about the psychoanalytic tradition mainly following the work of Carl Gustav Jung.

The study of dream in the West, pioneered by Freud and Jung, derives the significance of the dream as coming from the contents, which contain meaningful symbols which surface from the unconscious mind in the dream space like nowhere else. This is why Freud called dreams the royal road to the Unconscious.

So, in terms of teaching in small groups, when everybody has established deeper relaxation, we explore the significance of the imagery that arises in all the sleep states except 2 and 3. At this point, the concept of the Shadow is introduced. This comes directly from the work of Carl Jung. I find this by far the most profound approach to 'meaning' in dreams and can deeply inform people's ability to integrate disturbing content surfacing from the unconscious in the form of nightmares or anxiety dreams.

The widely different approaches of traditionally Eastern and Western philosophies to the significance of dreams is hardly surprising when we consider that the cultures in which they evolved were themselves so different. In Asia, at the time that Buddhism began to spread and flower,

there was far less emphasis on the individual and meaning was more communal and collective. In the West, the philosophical approach has been to focus on the individual and their personal experience to a much greater degree. Of course, this is a huge simplification, but I think it is important, and it is the reason that I think the exciting developments for the future in dreamwork are likely to draw on both traditions. Buddhism offers profound practices to expand our understanding of the real nature of our mind and the development of the psychoanalytic tradition offers deep insights into the workings of the individual and collective unconscious. These strands can converge to inform our journey into the future of dreamwork.

My path into dreamwork began with all that I learnt from Rinpoche and his profound teachings on the subject and this remains the bedrock of my inspiration but I hope that we can widen the discussion to consider what our own culture has to offer. We need every resource of knowledge we can get, as we try to deal with the sheer level of suffering which we encounter as ordinary modern people, trying to navigate through an increasingly challenging and accelerating situation in our present world. ©

Jane Weston has been a Buddhist for over forty years and is a long term student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. She trained in Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep and Lucid Dreaming with Charlie Morley, a leading teacher of dreamwork worldwide. Based in the UK she regularly runs courses in Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep and Conscious Dreaming. More information on her website <https://mindfuldreamwork.wordpress.com/>

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Tamara Khamdamova

I was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, into a family of school teachers. During the war, I lived in the village of Dongkurgan near Tashkent, where I grew up absolutely alone, in nature, without tutors. At the age of seven, I attended the first grade in an Uzbek school, and from the second grade on I went to a Russian one, because we moved to the city. Later on I entered medical school and four years after, when I was 21, I left Tashkent for Moscow and entered the biology faculty of Moscow State University. After graduating from university, I went to graduate school and wrote a dissertation on radiobiology at the Department of Biophysics. My dissertation was based on the intersection of sciences: I studied plants that protect against radiation by radio beams. At the age of 42, I defended my dissertation and worked at the biology faculty until my retirement.

At the age of 51, I went to *wushu* classes with swords, and in our group there was a man named Garab from the Dzogchen Community. One day he came and said, "Tamara, Rinpoche is coming and there will be a retreat. You should be there." Since it was the first time I had heard the words "Rinpoche" and "retreat" and I didn't want to study, I didn't go. But in the group we had a girl called Svetlana, who studied Chinese. She came running to me and said, "Believe me or not, I do not know what it is. It is something I can't explain or talk about, but I just know you should be there," and gave me the address.

It was 1992, and Chögyal Namkai Norbu had come to Moscow for the first time. By the time I got there, it was the last day of the retreat. I went up to the fourth floor, to the gym; there was a pile of shoes at the entrance and there was silence. I walked in slowly and saw a white basketball circle in front of me. As soon as I sat in the circle, the hall made a sort of humming sound and it seemed to me that I flew into a space tube. And I'm still flying.

Since it was the last day of the retreat there was ganapuja. My friend Batagoz from Kazakhstan was at the retreat and she came up to me and asked, "Are you a Muslim or not?" I said, "Why?" "There are



Photo by Yulia Petrova



Tamara at age 18.

guests here, they need to be served, get up." They handed me a bag of nuts, told me not to let it out of my hands and to give them out a bit at a time.

When the Vajra Dance mandalas were laid out, I was completely stunned because this was what I had dreamed of all my life. And Rinpoche danced. There were Prima Mai, Annalen Gall, Anya from St. Petersburg who had already learned to dance. I followed Rinpoche around the mandala, repeating what he was doing.

The retreat was over and Rinpoche was leaving for Lake Kotokel in Buryatia. A magical story happened: in the entire history of Moscow University, I was the only one who took a vacation for a day and received money. Garab helped me buy a ticket.

I arrived in Buryatia. My friends had provided me with a tent and I travelled to Kotokel with some men who gave me a lift on a dump truck and showed me where to go next, to some military sanatorium. I was tired when I arrived there and I still had to put up my tent. I asked where Rinpoche lived and was told that he was on the 4th floor. I went up there, saw a sofa in the hall and decided to rest first and put up the tent later. I fell asleep and slept all night and ended up living there for the whole time as no one kicked me out.

During my first retreat on Kotokel in Buryatia, I received transmission. I quickly ran to Lake Baikal and took a dip. When Rinpoche left, I stayed in Buryatia for some time.

There I lived with my friend, an architect, who worked at a school for specially

gifted children, and I taught some classes to them. A few years before that, I worked on Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzia in a rose garden, and with our eyes closed, we would determine the color and shape of roses using our hands. I suggested to my friend buying flowers and holding a similar lesson in the third grade in Buryatia. The flowers were expensive, but there was colored paper. I came to class and told the children that we would work with our hands. I told them to sit up straight and applied everything I knew from *qigong* and had heard from Rinpoche. I asked them to move apart so as not to interfere with each other, straighten their backs, stretch their heads and sit straight all the time and move their palms until they could feel a ball between them. Then I asked them to put the ball on their tummies. They understood and found it interesting. Then they pinpointed the colors. They said "warm" for red, "cold" for blue, and they wanted to move their hands away for black. In general, the lesson went well, and other teachers began to come to me to study. So I spent a month there and then returned to Moscow.

When I returned, I immediately became involved in the Community. At Rinpoche's retreat in 1994, the cooks complained that they couldn't buy any parmesan cheese in time for Rinpoche's arrival. I helped them and somehow since 1996, I was always in the service team, preparing food for Rinpoche at his retreats in Russia. In 2003, I went to Italy, to Merigar, for the first time together with Slava Potapenko, who or-



Rinpoche teaching in Buryatia in 1992.
Photo by Igor Ustyuzhanin

ganized our trip. I did karma yoga in the kitchen and attended retreats. I lived there for three months and from that moment I began to follow Rinpoche in his travels. By that time I had already retired and had no problems travelling. For a couple of years I lived in the Gar on Margarita Island in Venezuela, I was in the service group in Romania many times and traveled a lot following Rinpoche. It was practically my life, I had no other life.

In addition, since 1996 we studied Santi Maha Sangha using transcripts because there wasn't any printed literature at that time. We copied everything Rinpoche said by hand. I was working as a watchman at country houses, and I had time to sing and practice all night. My loud singing guarded the suburban areas, especially in winter, when no one was there. I would do all the necessary practices, and then do the exam. Since I am very interested in science, as a researcher, I did not need to be convinced of anything. I immediately perceived it as something necessary, to investigate, to study.

I passed the exam for the base level, the first level, and completed all the practices for the second level. However, a few months before the exam I fell, injured myself and felt insecure. I came to the gakyil and said that I had done everything, but I had some internal trepidation, a kind of uncertainty related to the injury, and they told Adriano Clemente, who was giving the exam. When I entered for the exam, Adriano took his guitar and started singing, and I flew

into the cosmic tube again. I took my question; they would first read it out in English and then translate it into Russian. When the question was read in English, I already knew the answer. Adriano had already introduced me to that knowledge. This is one of my stories related to Santi Maha Sangha.

After the fourth level, many of the experiences that I received doing the practices became clearer.

I had no doubt about the Vajra Dance from the first day. When I first saw the mandala and Rinpoche dancing, I realized that this was mine, that this was what I had been looking for all my life. In Kotokel in

Buryatia, we danced on a mandala drawn in chalk on the dance floor. Of course, I didn't have any slippers with me and there was nowhere to buy them there. I went barefoot, studied, and my heels were covered in chalk. I haven't stopped dancing since. Here in Tenerife I dance every day. For me, this is one of the important practices. I dance the complete *thun* of Vajra Dance, the Khalong and I practice yantra yoga.

I don't divide life into ordinary, everyday life and practice. My whole life is practice, and this has been the case since the first meeting with Rinpoche. For me Rinpoche is always there. Maybe this is guru yoga. ©



Tamara with Rinpoche on the retreat in Vladivostok, Russia, in 1994.



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community

News from the International
Dzogchen Community
of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Read online at
www.melong.com