

THE MIRROR

No. 161
September 2023



Song of the Vajra Retreat
The Luminous Clarity of the Universe
Khaita Joyful Dances
A Garland of Letters



INTERNATIONAL
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Front and back covers: Artists from the Dynamic Space of the Elements team together with an international group of painters working on the decoration of the outside of the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar West in Tuscany, Italy.
Courtesy of Dynamic Space

Reflecting on Five Years

On the fifth anniversary of our beloved Rinpoche's passing, we reflect on the passage of time and remember him with immense gratitude – his words, his smile, the Ganapujas, the games of Bagchen, the joyful dances – and above all the invaluable living knowledge our Master transmitted to all his students with selfless dedication and compassion throughout his life.

Our Community faces inevitable challenges, but Rinpoche's legacy – the knowledge of our true nature – remains alive within our sangha. We his students remain committed to integrating View, Meditation and Behavior in our daily life, and to the activities of Gars and Lings, as well as the various organizations Rinpoche founded including ASIA, ATIF, IDC, MACO, and Shang Shung Publications.

Our sangha continues to do its best by studying, by deepening and by preserving Rinpoche's precious teaching. Multiple possibilities to practice together and share this living knowledge and understanding with each other locally and worldwide have been created, nurturing the spirit of collaboration so that it may be naturally maintained in each of us for the benefit of all.



With infinite love and appreciation we pay homage to our beloved Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on the fifth anniversary of his leaving this dimension. His presence is always with us.



The International Gakyil Team,
Miranda, Barbara, Vince, Gabriella,
and Monica, Evgenya, Svetlana,
Mikyö, Marija, and Nikol



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Song of the Vajra Retreat

Hong Kong, 2012
An excerpt from Day 1, May 16th.

Good day to everybody everywhere. We are in Hong Kong and our retreat is starting. We have a program to mainly learn about the Song of the Vajra, which is the essence of the Dzogchen teaching. This is our topic for these days and what we will be learning so I want to explain a little about it.

There are three sources of the Dzogchen teaching: we have tantras, *lung*, and upadesha, or *mennag*. Just as in Vajrayana teaching there are different kinds of tantras, there are in Dzogchen teaching as well, and the original root texts are Dzogchen tantras. But even though there are many different kinds of tantras, the most important and original Dzogchen tantras are seventeen in number. These

are considered the most ancient and the first Dzogchen teaching to have appeared in our human dimension. The root of these tantras is called the *Dra Thagyur* and it was taught by one of the most ancient teachers of Dzogchen.

The Dzogchen teaching explains that there were twelve particular teachers of Dzogchen in very ancient times. Among these twelve teachers the most important and most ancient one was called Nangwa Tampa, who taught and transmitted the *Dra Thalgyur* tantra. In addition, there were sixteen other tantras explaining in more detail all the different aspects and topics. In general we consider these to be the most important and original tantras of Dzogchen.

These tantras were transmitted in very ancient times, but with the passing of time many different circumstances arose and these teachings didn't remain. There are periods of time that are considered illuminated but also periods that are dark. It was in these dark eras that all kinds of teachings disappeared and only a few remained called *nyengyüd*. These *nyengyüd* teachings were not written in books and only consisted of a few words. Even at the time of Tönpa Nangwa Tampa, in very ancient times, there still existed some of these kinds of *nyengyüd*. In the Dzogchen teaching, for example, when we are doing more elaborate transmissions of



the *rigpai tsal wang* in formal transmissions, we use this kind of transmission of the oral teachings.

However, at the time of Guru Garab Dorje, who was the first and most important teacher in our era, no more Dzogchen tantras existed; they had all disappeared from this globe. But as Garab Dorje was an emanation of Buddha, a totally enlightened being, he was able to repeat all of the most important tantras. This 'omniscience' is the quality of an enlightened being as they are in a state beyond time and space. For instance, we are in time and space; if there is a wall in front of us, we cannot go beyond that wall, or see what is beyond it because we have that kind of condition. Enlightened beings do not have this problem. When we learn scientifically how much time it takes to receive light from the stars in our dimension, we understand how distant they are. This means that we are limited in space. But enlightened beings are beyond being in that state and do not have this problem. This is the reason that many enlightened beings have been able to introduce and transmit teachings from different dimensions into our dimension.

When we learn about Vajrayana teaching we find that there are different kinds of manifestations of deities, with different forms, different colors, and so on. They are called sambhogakaya manifestations, but what does sambhogakaya mean? It means manifestations from the potentiality of our real nature. For instance, we are all composed of five elements. However, these five elements are the material aspect; the real nature of these five elements is five colors. Sambhogakaya means the manifestation of the pure dimension, just like the five colors, not the material aspect. How is this possible? In the Dzogchen teaching there is a precise explanation.

Everybody has primordial potentiality. This primordial potentiality consists of sound and light and rays, which are called the three primordial potentialities. First of all sound manifests from emptiness. When we speak about dharmakaya, the dimension of the dharmakaya is emptiness. In Sutra teaching it is *dharmadhatu* in Sanskrit, *dharma* meaning all phenomenas, all existence, *dhatu* its real condition, that is, emptiness. *Dharmadhatu* or *shunyata* is the same principle. This is our real condition.

Our condition is the state of Dzogchen because Dzogchen means our real condition. Dzogchen is not a book or a tradition. Dzogchen books contain Dzogchen teaching; we read and study them to discover what Dzogchen is. Dzogchen is our real nature, our real condition, which is emptiness. But even though this condition is emptiness, it has infinite potentiality, otherwise only being emptiness, it has no value.

Intellectually when we talk about Dzogchen we say that it is the non-duality of *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* means pure since the beginning, that is, emptiness. *Lhundrub* means infinite qualities, the self-perfected state. Our real condition is the non-duality of those two. To discover that we have Dzogchen teaching and many Dzogchen books. In this case the original teaching taught by important teachers is called Dzogchen tantras.

It is important to know what tantra really means. You may have studied and learned about the Hindu tradition which uses Hindu tantras. In the Buddhist Vajrayana tradition there are also tantras as well as in Dzogchen teaching. But in the Vajrayana tradition and particularly in Dzogchen teaching tantra also means our condition, our

real nature. The real sense of the word, tantra, means continuation, without interruption. How can we discover this in our real nature?

We can understand it simply by observing our condition in an ordinary way: we try to observe our thoughts. Buddhist teaching tells us to observe and discover where thoughts come from, where they are and where they disappear to. This is called '*byung gnas grol gsum*'. It means that we observe our thoughts one by one to discover their source. Thoughts continually arise and everybody can understand what thought is. But when thought arises and we observe this thought, it disappears. Observing thought we can discover this by ourselves. In the teaching, in order to learn something we should apply [a method] and have an experience so that we can understand it concretely.

When we observe a thought, it disappears, but immediately another thought arises. We think that we cannot find anything because that thought has disappeared, but this itself is also a thought. We observe this thought, but it, too, disappears and another thought immediately arises.

Between one thought and another there is also empty space. Sometimes we can discover this empty space, sometimes we cannot because thought arises very quickly. However, if we do a practice like *shine*, calm state with fixation, when we become a little familiar with this practice we can discover the calm state without thought a little more. Sometimes we can remain for a few seconds without having any thoughts and then we know that we are developing our practice of *shine*.

But what is this emptiness? Emptiness and thought are both part of our real nature. When we say that our real nature is *kadag* and *lhundrub*, *kadag* is emptiness in which there is no thought. We can discover this in a dualistic way through our experience of emptiness. We can have many different kinds of experience of emptiness. When we do *shine* and there is no thought, we can continue for a longer time in that condition. It means that we are experiencing and being in emptiness. But we should be careful and not consider that this is dharmakaya. There are some teachers who explain that this state is dharmakaya. Emptiness is a kind of experience, and the movement of thought is also a kind of experience. With experiences we can discover our real nature, and go beyond that. But if we consider that this is dharmakaya we will not have that realization. We must distinguish between our state of dharmakaya and experience.

When we learn Dzogchen teaching there are some important practices at the beginning called *rushen*. *Rushen* means first of all separating mind from the nature of mind. Most people live in their minds. We think about everything with our minds and even the nature of mind is a concept of the mind. After *rushen* there are practices called *semdzin*. *Sem* means mental concept, so going beyond that. Mental concepts are related to different kinds of experiences: the experience of sensation, experience of vision, experience of emptiness, and so on. They are not the condition of our real nature but they are indispensable for discovering our real nature. That is the value of mental concepts.

If we want to be in the state of Dzogchen we have to go beyond mind. If we remain in our mental concepts we can never be in the

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state of Dzogchen. Some people consider that all mental concepts are negative, but in Dzogchen teaching we make use of mental concepts. To give an example, when the teacher gives a direct introduction, there is no way to do it if we do not use experiences, and experiences are related to mental concepts.

When we learn Dzogchen teaching, it is essential to remember the example of the mirror. It doesn't mean the *melong* that we wear around our neck or that we use in a ritual way. It means any kind of mirror. In modern houses there are a lot of different kinds of mirrors, even in the bathroom. We need to understand how a mirror works: it has infinite potentiality to manifest any kind of reflection. Whether it is a very big or small object, with different colors or shapes everything can manifest precisely. The mirror doesn't need any program because it has this kind of potentiality. In the same way we all have this primordial potentiality, just like the potentiality of the mirror. How can we discover that the mirror has infinite potentiality? When we stand in front of it our figure immediately appears, without any type of program. We can see hundreds of things in a mirror and even if there is a giant mountain, we can still see it even in a small mirror because the mirror has that kind of potentiality. We can discover this potentiality through the reflections. If there are no reflections in the mirror, there is no way we can discover its potentiality.

In the same way we need the aspects of our mind. The mind thinks and judges, depending on the various kinds of contact taking place between our sense organs and objects of the senses. The functions of the mind, this thinking and judging, are mental concepts. When we know how to put them to use they become very important. Just as we would never be able to discover or see the potentiality of a mirror without the objects that manifest in it, without the functions of our mind [arising from sense objects] we would not be able to discover how our real potentiality is: sound and light and rays. When we know how to put them to use, they become perfect and very useful.

The teaching explains how we use our minds. In general we don't know how our minds work and we give a lot of importance to what we are thinking in our minds. This means that mind dominates us. We are not using our minds at all; mind is dominating us and for that reason we have a lot of problems.

In the teaching we learn that we must not be a follower of the mind. Instead, we need to discover how the mind functions. Knowing how it functions is useful for having realization and also for discovering our real nature. When we know how to use the mind, then we become practitioners of Dzogchen. When we are dependent on mind, even though we are doing some kind of practice, we will not become realized. For that reason, in Dzogchen teaching, it is essential that we go beyond mind and also that we understand how the mind functions.

For instance, in the Dzogchen teaching there are teachings that are mainly tantras. This means tantras in which emptiness and movement alternate. In our existence as human beings, we have our physical body and we live in that condition. When we understand that these are different kinds of experience, then we are in our real nature. For that reason, in Dzogchen teaching

tantra means something that is very close and connected to our real nature.

In addition to tantras we also have many important texts in Dzogchen teaching which are called *lung*. In Tibetan there are many meanings of the word *lung*. If, for example, I am explaining something and quote some words of Buddha from a Tantra or Sutra, this is called *lung* and means a quotation. Another meaning of *lung* is when we give a kind of permission, particularly regarding mantras. If we want to practice any kind of mantra we need to receive the *lung*. This means that whoever has received that *lung*, practiced it and produced the result can give the *lung* to others. Giving a *lung* means chanting or reading that text or mantra while others listen. They receive that sound in their ears. This is called receiving *lung*, and later, if one practices that mantra, he or she can produce that function. Otherwise even if a person knows the meaning of the mantra, the function of the mantra, the way to do practice, and even practices that mantra for a long time, if one hasn't received the sound transmission, he or she can never produce its function because the function of mantras is in the sound.

Some important root mantras have manifested from the dharmakaya to the sambhogakaya through natural sound, just like this Song of the Vajra which we are learning. There are many of these root mantras in Vajrayana teaching that we can receive through initiations. When we receive initiation the teacher empowers us with mantra, and when he pronounces that mantra, we receive the *lung* of the mantra, and we also know how to do the visualization. When we do this visualization and practice, and chant this mantra many times, we succeed in integrating our visualization in our real existence. At the end, in Vajrayana this is called the non-dual state of the development stage and accomplishment stage, and now we have the realization of the state of the famous Mahamudra, which means being totally beyond mental concepts and limitations.

There is no difference between the state of Mahamudra and the state of Dzogchen, but it doesn't mean there are no different methods to get there. Dzogchen applies the method of self-liberation, while Mahamudra uses transformation. Mahamudra is really the final goal of the Vajrayana tradition in the Gelugpa, Sakyapa and other schools.

The way that Mahamudra is presented in the Kagyupa tradition and others is a little different. In the Kagyupa school, Mahamudra is mainly presented as the Four Yogas of Gampopa and is very similar to the Four Contemplations in Dzogchen. Even for following that kind of Mahamudra we need to receive the initiation of Chakrasambhava or similar because in Vajrayana that is always used in the development stage and accomplishment stage. Then a practitioner progresses from the development stage to the accomplishment stage just like in the Mahamudra system of Gampopa.

Many people believe that Gampopa's Four Yogas, the method of Mahamudra in the Kagyupa tradition, came from an Indian tradition of Mahamudra. It is not the case. It is true, there is a Mahamudra that came from teachings of mahasiddhas like Saraha and many others, which is called *chagchen gyagarma*, the Mahamudra of India. But these are always related to the final goal of the Vajrayana in transformation.



The mahasiddha Virupa is very important in the Sakyapa tradition because instructions on the origins of the Hevajra tantra come from him. When we study his biography we learn that at the beginning Virupa was a very famous pandit of the Yogachara. Then he became a Vajrayana practitioner and practiced the development and accomplishment stages of the Hevajra Tantra for a long time. In the end he reached the final non-dual goal of the two stages, which means total integration, and manifested as a mahasiddha. What did he do when he manifested as a mahasiddha? Up to that moment he had been chanting this mantra of Hevajra for years and years. There are two versions of the Hevajra mantra, the longer one is called Ashtananaya, the other shorter mantra is called Deva Pitsug. He used these mantras for a long time and considered them important for integrating the development and accomplishment stages. When he realized the state of Mahamudra he threw his mala in the toilet and went away from his retreat place. He was the manifestation of a mahasiddha who is realized.

There is no history of how the Four Yogas developed, however, Gampopa's method is very special and similar to the Dzogchen method. Gampopa's accomplishment stage explains about the first yoga which is called *tsechig*, meaning one pointed. We do practice like *shine*, the calm state, in a one pointed way and realize the calm state.

After that there is the second level called *trödral* which means beyond concepts, a term that is also used in Sutra Madhyamika teaching. Nagarjuna always explained Madhyamika with the principle of *trödral*. This is considered going or being beyond any kind of limitations. Intellectually this is a very high level.

The third level is called *rochig*, which means the same flavor. Why is it called the same flavor? When we acquire knowledge it is always through methods of experiences, such as the experience of clarity, the experience of sensation, and also the experience of emptiness. These experiences are different: clarity is not emptiness, sensation is not emptiness. But when we discover being in the state of contemplation through these kinds of experiences, there do not exist different experiences. The state of contemplation is one, and even though we arrive through the experience of emptiness or sensation, it is always the same flavor. That means having real knowledge of the state of Mahamudra.

The fourth level that Gampopa presented is *gomme*, which means beyond meditation. Up to that point it has been necessary to use a position, work with mental concepts and meditation and so on until one is in that state of contemplation. *Gomme* means that life has now become meditation. One is forever in the state of Mahamudra, and realized.

The way that Gampopa presented Mahamudra is fantastic and diffused in all branches of the Kagyupa tradition. However, we should distinguish between how Gampopa presented it and how we ordinarily talk about Mahamudra. If you want to learn more concrete details about the state of Mahamudra in the Vajrayana tradition, there is a text written by Sakyapandita.

When Sakyapandita was in Beijing, in that period there was a yogi who asked him what and how the state of Mahamudra is. He explained that they follow the Vajrayana tradition, the path of transformation, and apply two stages: the development stage and

then the accomplishment stage, integrating them with their existence to get to that final state which is called the state of Mahamudra. The word 'Mahamudra' is also used in the Gelugpa tradition, but is not as diffused as in the Sakyapa. They know about it but they do not use it very much.

In Sakyapa they use this expression, *khorde yerme*, which means the non-duality of samsara and nirvana. When one has this knowledge, this is the state of Mahamudra. This is how it is explained in the Lamdre teaching in the Sakyapa tradition.

In the Dzogchen teaching we also have the *lung* of original texts, not only the *lung* of the mantras. It means that when there is no possibility to explain or introduce a complete tantra, we take and introduce the most important point, which may be one or two chapters. In Dzogchen teaching this is called *lung*.

Then there is the third [source of the Dzogchen teachings] which is called *men-ngag*. What does this Tibetan word, *men-ngag*, mean? *Men* is a negation, *ngag* means voice, so the meaning is that we do not talk, it is secret. It is *men-ngag* in Tibetan, upadesha in Sankrit and it is the third group of the source of the Dzogchen teaching, *tantra*, *lung* and *men-ngag*. However, the most important point in the Dzogchen teaching is not books, but knowledge, understanding. ✿

Editing by L. Granger

Final editing by S. Schwarz

The Luminous Clarity of the Universe

A Clear Exposition of the Primordially Pure Trechöd

A Book Presentation

by Adriano Clemente

Given on July 15, 2023 at Merigar West

Good day to everybody present here and also online. I'm very happy that you are participating in this short introduction. First of all I want to thank those who organized this event, mainly Giovanni Totino from Shang Shung Publications and the Merigar Gakyil.

Today we are presenting this very important book that Rinpoche wrote many years ago. Firstly, I just want to say briefly how, since the beginning of the Dzogchen Community, Rinpoche always stated the importance of translating Tibetan texts. In 1975–76 when we started the Community, many of us were young and some of us started to follow Rinpoche's Tibetan lessons at the University of Naples. At that time, Rinpoche had an idea and created this *drajyor* or phonetic system in order to make it easier to translate Tibetan texts. Why? Because the purpose of *drajyor* is not only just to help us pronounce in a correct way. When you read the *drajyor* system, there are phrases or sentences with particles, and so on, which are not evident in the Tibetan script, because the Tibetan script is just syllables one after the other, with no division. In the beginning, Rinpoche prepared three, four, five texts in this way, using this *drajyor* system and then he asked students to take out the words from the text and then Rinpoche would put the meaning, making a kind of dictionary. We still have some of these texts in the library. However, it didn't really work well.

In the first years of the Dzogchen community the main translators were Giacomella Orofino and Enrico Del'Angelo because they were the best students at the university. I was not a very good student because at that time I wanted to play music and do these kinds of things.

The first translations that we had appeared during the first International Conference on Tibetan medicine in 1983. They were also the first books published by Shang Shung Edizioni at that time. Since



then, we have continued to put a lot of effort into this work. I remember one time when Rinpoche came from Formia, where he was living at the time, and he brought a million lire with him. He divided it between four people: Iacobella, Enrico, Shakya Dorje who is a Canadian Tibetan doctor and translator, and myself. He said to us, "Now, you will work here every day for one week, and when I come back, we will review the translation and publish it".

That first book that Rinpoche asked us to translate was published in 2022, almost 40 years later, as "The Necklace of Jewels". After that, we translated many important books. Rinpoche always took a lot of care collecting money to pay the translators until 2001–2002. This is to show you how important Rinpoche considered this work of translation.

Then, some years later, Oliver Leick took responsibility for this project and founded the Ka-ter project for working for me, with Elio Guarisco and Jim Valby, and Fabian Sanders sometimes. Since that time, we have continued in this way. So, I really want to thank Oliver Leick because I think without him it would not have been easy for us to continue this job so we should be grateful to him.

This Trechöd book is one of the first books that Rinpoche wrote. How do we know this? First of all, I remember we had this *poti*, or the Tibetan version of this book, in the Merigar library from the beginning of Merigar. But even before that, this was one of the books that Rinpoche transcribed in the *drajyor* system. Unfortunately now it seems to have disappeared because nobody has it anywhere. However, I and also other people have one page of it for the Song of the Vajra, Emakirikiri, because at the retreat in Prata in 1977, when Rinpoche taught the Song of the Vajra for the first time, he gave us this one sheet in

the *drajyor* system with some Longchenpa quotations and the Emakirikiri for us to learn how to sing.

Also if we read Rinpoche's biographical notes, it says that he finished this book more or less at the end of the 60s. Regarding the Dzogchen teaching, this *tregchöd* book and the *thögal* book were the first two main works that Rinpoche wrote. The *thögal* book was also a large book in *poti* or Tibetan style. We still have this book although it has not been translated so far and it is not the same as that which was published in this *longsal* commentary series. It's a different text.

Then the way that Rinpoche wrote this *tregchöd* book at the beginning was a kind of Tibetan style of writing. Tibetan style means that in a traditional way, if you quote some passages or paraphrase, you don't say exactly which book, which page number and line number it comes from. There was not this custom in Tibet. Maybe one of the reasons was that copy machines didn't exist in Tibet; they had to copy manuscripts. Very often, each lama would write his own text or commentary on the basis of other existing, more ancient texts. Because of this, we have two versions of the *tregchöd* book, and the original version corresponds to this Tibetan book. Then the original version was put into a computer file around 1999. Some years later, since Rinpoche had received this *longsal terma* on this *tregchöd upadesha*, he decided to combine these original texts that he had written with the *longsal* texts. This is the version that we have published now, the second one.

There are also some differences comparing it to the first version. There are different explanations and so on. The book was translated first of all by Jim Valby, who was sponsored by a private member of the Dzogchen community to do this work. After that Elio Guarisco worked on it for some years and we worked together for many hours. But in the end, I was still not very satisfied with the output. While Elio was still alive I started to work on it again from the beginning and I worked for some years. Usually when I translate, I don't only translate the words, what is written there, but I try to trace the sources of the different explanations. In this case, there were many passages I couldn't understand which came from the source of this explanation. So then I had to find all the sources in, for example, Longchenpa's works and Jigme Lingpa's works and so on.

Then, unfortunately, Rinpoche passed away and I still had not finished this work. However, fortunately, I had the help of an important Tibetan lama, Alak Zenkar Rinpoche and other Tibetan lamas who know about the teaching. So I tried to do my best as much as possible. But of course this book is very vast, like an encyclopedia for Dzogchen *upadesha* teaching.

So there are two ways to understand *tregchöd*. When we say *tregchöd* in the sense of practice, it means that when the teacher introduces this real state of the individual, the nature of mind or the real nature of consciousness, when you first have that kind of experience like a flash, then you try to continue that kind of experience of knowledge. Continuing in that state is called *tregchöd*. Rinpoche always gave the example that *tregchöd* means relaxing by itself or loosening any tension. It means that when we remain in that state, all our tensions, all our thoughts, problems, and confusion dissolve by themselves. This is due to what we call the principle of self-liberation. In this sense, these three series of Dzogchen – *semde*, *longde*, *upadesha* – all introduce and teach us how to continue in that state. However, the word *tregchöd* only exists in the Dzogchen *upadesha* series. This is one meaning of this word.

Then in the context of the Dzogchen *upadesha*, there are two main teachings or methods: one is called *tregchöd*, the other is *thögal*. How are these two principles presented in the Dzogchen *upadesha* teaching? In Dzogchen, when we introduce the base, meaning the real original condition, we introduce these two principles called *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* means pure from the beginning. It is not something that we can limit in time. It is not something that we can judge in terms of something that was born in the beginning, continued and then disappeared in the end. In general, in Buddhist teaching we have the principle of *shunyata*, or emptiness. In the Mahayana sutras, *shunyata* does not mean the absence of something. If we consider it like absence then we fall into the extreme view that nothing exists. But if we consider it like the nature of primordial substance, then we fall into the other extreme, that it is something existing permanently, as opposed to something that does not exist. This explanation is like the Madhyamika system.

In Dzogchen we cannot just limit it to this Madhyamika principle. When we say *kadag* or primordial purity then it corresponds to its meaning which is beyond



concepts. This is how the teacher introduces this principle. When we search for our thoughts, for our mind, it is impossible to discover its origin or source. We say that this essence is empty and corresponds to the principle of *kadag*.

Then we have the principle of *lhundrub*. In general *lhundrub* means natural quality, spontaneous. It means that this nature, this empty essence or *shunyata* or primordial purity manifests as clarity of our consciousness, of our mind, and our senses. When we search for the source of our thoughts and we can't find anything, then we discover that emptiness. Even when we think that, that thought itself is already clarity, it's manifesting something. We cannot separate this essence of emptiness from this nature of clarity. But not only, we can have the recognition of this clarity.

Clarity is also the source of what we call primordial potentiality or primordial energy. When we go to that level, we have to start from what we call the 'five lights' or the essence of the five elements. Then from the essence of the five elements, gradually there is a progression or regression into material form. Our consciousness is associated with that primordial energy and through the working of our minds and so on we produce what we call karma, that is cause and effect, and then karma produces what is called karmic vision. Karmic vision is always based on this primordial potentiality of five lights. These aspects are mainly related to this *lhundrub* aspect.

Therefore, in the Dzogchen *upadesha* first we have *tregchöd*, which firstly introduces that empty essence. The way of con-

tinuing the practice is mostly dealing with our mind. In general, in the *tregchöd upadesha*, at the beginning we have preliminary practices. Why? Because we need to distinguish between the mind and the nature of the mind. This is not a philosophical or theoretical distinction. Of course, in the beginning we also need intellectual understanding because we need to know what we should apply. But then through methods of practice, like important *upadeshas* of great teachers from the past, then we have the possibility, through transmission, to have the recognition of the real nature of our mind.

We consider that the nature of our mind is like the real source of our mind and of our thoughts and we try to find it. In the beginning, when we receive oral introduction, the teacher explains that this is the mind and that is the nature of the mind. Then when we are introduced to that nature of our mind, experientially, and we have that recognition of the nature of our mind, we call this the state of *rigpa*. *Rigpa* means to know or to see. Then *tregchöd* leads to continuation of this state of *rigpa*.

In general we say *kadag tregchöd*, and *lhundrub thögal*, we have this distinction because *tregchöd* works more with the aspect of *kadag*, while *thögal* works with the aspect of *lhundrub*. So *thögal* means the basis of this *tregchöd* state in which we have the possibility of integrating the subject or individual with outer vision, because inner subject and outer object have the same root or source that we call *thugje*, or primordial potentiality. This way of manifesting energy, that we call *dang*, *tsal*, *rolpa*, everything has the same source, the same nature and *thögal* has a specific method for achieving that integration. At the end, the realization of this rainbow body means that this material body remains in its subtle energy of the five elements. I think you already know all these things.

This book, "The Luminous Clarity of the Universe", is structured in a traditional way coming from the tantras of the Dzogchen *upadesha*, which is mostly concerned with the *gompa* aspect of application, or meditation. In general, when we define Dzogchen teaching, it is composed of what we call the base, the path, and the fruit, or result. We have already explained the base: the teacher introduces the real nature of the individual with its two aspects of *kadag* and *lhundrub*. Then there is the view or how we apply the path, and then conduct. When we

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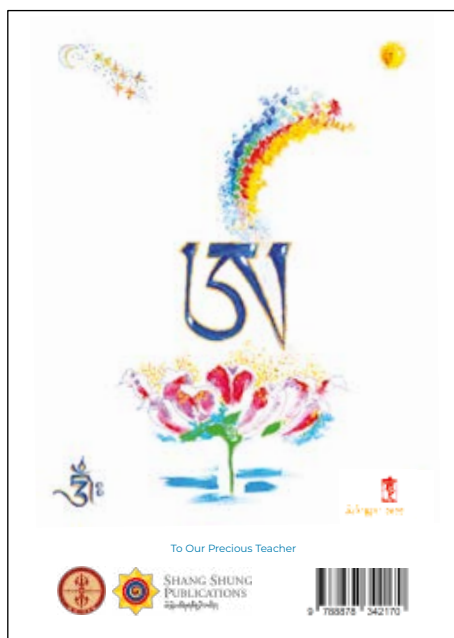
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talk about the view it means that, through our experience, we understand our real nature. Application refers to all the existing methods in order first to discover, then to continue and to progress in that state. Conduct deals with how to fill the gap between sitting sessions of contemplation and daily life. When we say fruit or result it means what we can achieve or realize through this path. So this book is divided into these three aspects of the view, meditation and conduct.

The way that the view is presented does not really come from the Dzogchen *upadesha* but mostly quotes from Longchenpa's Precious Ship, which is instructions on the practices in the Kunjed Gyalpo tantra and explains the real nature of phenomena and the real nature of mind. Then in the section on meditation or application, the book starts to introduce the Dzogchen *upadesha* tantras. In the main tantra of the *upadesha*, the Dra Thal-gyur tantra, which covers many subjects, there are many secondary tantras that deal with specific aspects, such as the famous Union of Sun and Moon, Nyida kha gyor, which mainly deals with the *bardo*.

In some of these Dzogchen *upadesha* tantras meditation is explained in three ways. Firstly it's explained that we have the *semdzin* for *devas* and human beings. The *semdzin* are quite popular in our Dzogchen community and we use them like a kind of preliminary practice. Usually we have *rushen* and *semdzin* and we apply the *semdzin* mostly for distinguishing between mind and nature of mind. But here it explains that it is a lower stage of practice, a basic practice for focusing our mind because *semdzin* means holding or focusing on something. We know that there are three series of *semdzin* and here they are explained mostly according to Longchenpa's explanation.

Then the second stage of meditation is called the *samten* of the Mahayana, or *samten* of Bodhisattvas. *Samten* is a term that is a little difficult to translate because in Tibetan literature it can have different meanings. In Mahayana, in general, when we say *samten* it corresponds to *dhyana* in Sanskrit, meaning meditation, state of meditation. In general, we consider *dhyana* to be a state in which even though you are not focused on something specifically, your mind is not disturbed by thoughts. That is the meaning of the word in the Mahayana tradition, and this word is the same



as Chan in Chinese and Zen in Japanese. In this case, *samten* is like meditation. But it is not meditation like when we are applying something specific with concentration, and so on. It has a general meaning, but does not always correspond because in this chapter, we have explanations of two kinds of *samten* according to these *upadesha* teachings.

First of all there is this natural or spontaneous *samten*. It is an interesting explanation because it says that there is a state of *samten* or meditation that arises spontaneously and can arise in all beings. How does it arise? The book gives some examples. If an archer wants to shoot an arrow, he concentrates one pointedly on a target. This means having a very strong focus and through that we can experience a natural state of *samten* which is beyond concepts. There is also the example of the state of a small child who has no concepts when looking at something. This is to explain how every being has the potentiality or possibility to have that experience. But, of course, if this has not been introduced or pointed out by the teacher, then it remains only a kind of experience.

Then we have the second type of *samten* according to this *upadesha* tantra. It is called the *samten* that relies on an object of visualization. Visualization, or this Tibetan term *migpa*, is also not very easy to translate. In general, in Buddhist philosophy, *migpa* is used for example in the Sautrantika tradition when they say, "When you perceive an object, do you see it as it really is or not?" This is a point of discussion between these two Hinayana schools,

Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika. The Vaibhashika say, "Yes, we perceive what really exists outside." But the Sautrantika say, "No, we don't perceive it as it really is. We perceive the mental image of that object." That mental image is what is called *migpa* and in this case it means this method of practice that involves concepts of the mind. It is not a supreme method, like *tregchöd*, but it leads to the state of *tregchöd*. In Dzogchen we call it a secondary practice and it is mostly dealing with removing or eliminating attachment.

Usually there are four kinds of attachment: attachment to food, to clothing, to dreams, and to karmic traces. This is how the Dzogchen *upadesha* explains it and says that practitioners should become free of these four, so we have these different methods. To eliminate attachment to food, we have *chülen*, which means absorbing the essence. This explanation comes mostly from the commentary to the Dra Thal-gyur tantra. Elio Guarisco did a great job identifying all the medicinal plants and other substances in a very long appendix.

Then we have attachment to dreams, although it is mostly dealing with what in the modern tradition of tantras is called the six yogas or six dharma. The first, most important one, *tummo*, is like a base. Then there is the practice of dreams, the illusory body, clear light, then transference of consciousness, and *bardo*. All these teachings come from the *dzogrim* or completion stage of the Anuttarat Tantra. This is because the *dzogrim* stage is mostly dealing with consciousness or nature of mind and how it is related to the vajra body of the channels, chakras and energies. All these practices have the purpose of integrating the aspect of the mandala and the deity, which we apply in the creation stage or *kyerim*, at a level not just of our mind, but also our energy and body. There are different tantras; one tantra may be more specific, or deal with one aspect such as *tummo*, while another tantra will deal with the *bardo*, and so on. This is how these six yogas originated.

There are some very interesting explanations about these six practices. For example, regarding dream practice, which Rinpoche only taught at the beginning of the Dzogchen community, you will find many clear explanations of all the different stages. Then there is a really very special explanation by Longchenpa of what we call the clear light or natural light. These are really very important teachings.

We said that the second *samten* has three classifications. The first involves visualization and includes these six practices, plus *chülen* and *tummo*. Then we have another kind of *samten* of those who are proceeding on the *bhumis* or levels of realization. In the sutra teaching, such as Mahayana sutra, we speak about the five paths and ten *bhumis*. This is the way a practitioner works with merit and wisdom from the beginning. First of all there is the path of accumulation, then the path of connection, and a third path called the path of vision, or seeing. It means that now a practitioner has real recognition of the essence of emptiness or *shunyata*. That corresponds to the first *bhumi*, or first level of realization.

There are ten different stages or *bhumis*. Why do we have these different levels of realization? Because we have two kinds of obstacles: one is called the obstacle of emotions, and the other the obstacle of knowledge. Emotions means that after a short time, a practitioner should be more or less free from all these negative or disturbing emotions. One may ask, If a practitioner becomes free from all emotions would not that be all, with nothing more to do? However, there is a lot more to do when we talk about reaching ultimate realization, because there are still all the obstacles related to our grasping mind which creates concepts. And they are all obstacles that arise during a session of contemplation.

In order to show how these five paths and ten *bhumis* correspond to the Dzogchen teaching, there is a chapter that explains the four yogas or four contemplations which are used in the Dzogchen *semde* teaching, although the names are a little different. The first we call the path of accumulation, but here it is called the yoga of the world. Then we have three levels: small, medium and great. The second one corresponds to this path of seeing that we explained, while the third yoga corresponds to the path of meditation or cultivation. The fourth one corresponds to the yoga or path of no more training, no more meditation, *gommed*, beyond meditation. In Mahamudra these titles are usually a little different from the Dzogchen *semde*.

To recapitulate, In the Dzogchen *upadesha*, we have three aspects of meditation: *semdzin* for devas and human beings, *samten* for bodhisattvas, and *samten* that is divided into three stages. These are natural *samten*, *samten* involving methods of visualization, channels and pranas, and so on,

and *samten* dealing with the four contemplations for progressing on the path and the *bhumis*. In the Dzogchen tantras the third meditation is called the Tezhin Shegpa Gongpa, where Tezhin means *tathagata*, or Buddha, finding oneself in one's real nature. Tezhin means real nature, abiding in that nature. Gongpa means the real state of consciousness, the ultimate nature of consciousness. In order to apply that, we have these instructions on *tregchöd*. In this book, *tregchöd* is presented according to the three statements of Garab Dorje.

The first statement or testament of Garab Dorje refers to introducing the real state of the individual. It means that the teacher uses some methods to try to find a way so that the student can have experience of that state. We should understand this first statement in two ways: the direct introduction from the teacher to the student, and the direct discovery on the part of the student. Then it is called direct introduction. Otherwise in the Dzogchen community we always have questions about direct introduction, direct transmission and people get confused. Direct introduction means that you receive the transmission and discover that state, your real nature, and this means that direct introduction has been fulfilled. It is not the same as transmission, which is a general name. You can receive oral transmission, symbolic transmission, direct transmission, but direct introduction has to do with direct transmission, mostly.

This chapter describes many ways of direct introduction that the teacher can use and you will be surprised how many methods are described in this original text, especially from Longchenpa's instructions. Rinpoche also taught many of them because he started to teach Dzogchen *upadesha* from the beginning in 1976, 1977, up to the beginning of 1978. After that he started to teach *semde*, around 1979, and then in 1981, he taught *longde* for the first time. This is not something uncommon in Dzogchen teaching because we say that it is very difficult to judge the capacity of the student. Hence, it is better to introduce the student at the top from the beginning. If he or she has that capacity, then it's good and they don't waste a lot of time with preliminary practices. If the student is not able, they go down to the *semde*, the four contemplations, and start with fixation and do *shine* practice.

In general, this is work that a student should do by him or herself. But at that

time, when we started the Dzogchen community, Rinpoche recognized that something was not going in the right way for practitioners. Usually there are two ways a teacher can understand the condition of the student. One is what kind of questions they ask, because from the questions you can understand their level of understanding. But most importantly, the teacher can understand by the conduct or behavior of that person. At one point, Rinpoche wrote that famous book, "The Mirror, Advice on Presence and Awareness". He said that many young practitioners – because we were mostly young – had understood that self-liberation meant getting rid of everything, getting free of everything because we are all tied with rules and limitations, and the Dzogchen teaching teaches self-liberation, to be completely free of everything. Then many practitioners understood that they could do anything, like enjoying many things which are not in the real sense of the teaching, like drugs, alcohol, or sexual misconduct, whatever. When we say freedom, liberation, in the Dzogchen teaching it means freedom from our dualistic mind, from our conceptual mind, then we can really be free. It is not freedom from something outside that is creating some limitations for us.

So, saying this, from the beginning we had all these methods of direct introduction that Rinpoche taught in the first years of the Dzogchen community. He taught *longde* for more or less one year in 1981. Then in 1982 he started to teach Dzogchen *upadesha* again, in Sardinia in December and January, 1981 and 82. There was also a Dzogchen *upadesha* retreat for the first time at Merigar in the summer of '82. You can find some explanations in transcriptions [from those retreats] and also in this text in Longchenpa's explanations. Rinpoche also used some of these methods in informal situations with practitioners. I discovered some of these by studying these texts. So you can read these different explanations and apply whatever is suitable.

The second statement of Garab Dorje means finding the real state of knowledge beyond doubt. Here we mostly have Longchenpa's explanation about how to distinguish between meditation and contemplation. In general, we say we are meditating with our mind and have an object of meditation. When we use that method, it is not the same as when we say "contemplation" in the Dzogchen teaching. Here, there is

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an explanation from a tantra from the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra that says sometimes we may have the idea that we are in the real state of contemplation, but actually it is not. You remember that we explained that there is a natural, *samten*, a natural meditation state that is related to the mind. It means that we have that kind of experience, like the calm state, and we can mistake it for the state of contemplation. In this tantra, it says that we should be careful not to mistake one with the other, otherwise there will be problems.

Then with the third testament of Garab Dorje, we have to find certainty or confidence in self-liberation. In general, self-liberation is one type of liberation, but there are explanations of three, four, or five kinds, as we have in this book. This is only because it may be taking the view from a different angle. Generally we mostly have three kinds: *cherdrol*, *rangdrol* and *shardrol*. *Cherdrol* means direct or stark liberation and is like a first stage in which there is a kind of subtle intention with our mind. We directly observe a thought or an object of the senses in a sharp way, and then all concepts dissolve. The other types of self-liberation arise simultaneously and develop and one becomes more familiar with that capacity. There are many examples of these five types that you can read about in the book.

Then finally we have the instructions on the four *chogzhags*. *Chogzhag* and *rangdrol* are a little different. *Rangdrol* or self-liberation is a kind of condition of our mind in which it is free from concepts and we are abiding in the state of *rigpa*. It is not something we can do or apply. When we say *chogzhag* it is something that comes from the subject and how we relate to our nature of mind, our thoughts, and outer phenomena. *Chogzhag* means to leave everything as it is, without modifying, without changing anything. At the ordinary level, if we try to apply the *chogzhags*, and leave everything as it is, what happens? We have so many thoughts and we are distracted, so that cannot be *chogzhag*. When we have the basis of instant presence, we are in that state and do not modify it but leave everything as it is, then we apply the *chogzhags* in that moment.

This explanation comes mostly from this *longsal* root terma teaching and is also integrated with Longchenpa's explanation. So this is the meditation part.

Then for conduct, there is the explanation from Longchenpa's Precious Ship which explains the principle of self-liberation of the emotions and other aspects. When we talk about the fruit or result, first of all, we should understand what the fruit or result means in the Dzogchen teaching, how we can apply it on the path, and what kind of realization we can have. According to one's capacity, we generally have three kinds of results. The lowest result means that at least we can have a good connection for the next life. We will be reborn in a place where we can continue to receive Dzogchen teachings and to practice. It means that when we are in the *bardo of existence*, we have not been able to recognize the natural light, or luminous clarity in this dharmakaya state of the moment of death. After that comes the stage when we are in the *bardo of the dharmata*, when our consciousness wakes up, without the workings of our mind. That is called the *dharmata* and is related to this primordial potentiality, this *lhundrub* aspect of sound, light and rays related to the possibility of this sambhogakaya realization. Then we continue in this third *bardo of existence*. That moment we can have this recollection.

Usually they say six recollections: we remember the teacher, we remember that we were practitioners, what teachings we received, how we tried to apply them and so on. Then through that, we connect with a good rebirth in the future. Also, with the help of teachers or practitioners who are trying to communicate with us, we can have that possibility. Then we are reborn in samsara again. Then when we are sixteen or seventeen years old, we have a connection with the teaching somehow, and then we start practicing again according to where we ended our previous life and we continue from that. This is why we have so many different kinds of practitioners, some higher capacities, some lower, some medium. This is, in general, our path, also for our Dzogchen Community.

So this is some information about this book, but we also have many other texts that Rinpoche wrote that have not been published. For example, we still have some important commentaries from the *longsal*. We have important public books that Rinpoche wrote, like this Dunhuang document of Buddhagupta's Small Collection. There are other instructions that Rinpoche wrote on this, such as *tsalung* explanations. We have many other texts that Rinpoche didn't write but he taught, such

as Chanchub Dorje's teachings or *termas*, which are very important.

Finally we have the two most precious works which are, first of all, the autobiography that Rinpoche wrote and of which we have two kinds. One is in verse and is called the Travels of the Tibetan Acharya Around the World. It is like a dialogue between the thought or consciousness addressing the real nature of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and year by year there are explanations of what he did. Up until 1975–6 it contains many interesting stories. Then it continues, but becomes more like a list of teachings that he gave and dharma activities because then he had become an important master.

Then there is another text which is called "Tütrin," which notes activities year by year. So somehow we should combine the two to make a complete biography. And also there are many stories that the Rinpoche told during the teachings, during private conversations that are not included in these Tibetan books. So it would also be nice to collect all these to publish in a book.

But at the top of the tops, in the highest of the heavens, there is a famous book of dreams, which is almost 2,000 pages in Tibetan. I don't know what to do, but one day I should translate it. When Rinpoche gave it to me the first time in 2000, he wrote, "I am giving this to you because you are my translator, which means not because you are something special, but because one day you will need to translate it". This book contains all his dreams related to the *longsal* teachings, not only with texts, but also dreams related to the *longsal*. Many of these are already included in the ten volumes of *longsal* that we have published but these are only about 10 or 20 percent, not all of them. There are many other dreams.

Therefore it is very important that all those who have the financial possibility contribute to these Ka-ter activities, because if we need to work, then we also need to live and to have that possibility. So if you can, please contribute to the Ka-ter project. I am committed as long as I have good health to complete all these works of translation. But of course, we are all in the middle of secondary courses, so there's no guarantee of anything. However, we try to do our best, as Rinpoche always used to say. So thank you. That is all. ☺

Transcription and editing by Liz Granger

Final editing Adriano Clemente

Members of the Board of Atiyoga Foundation and their Roles

The new ATIF board of directors, consisting of 5 members, would like to communicate the roles of its members:

- * Benedetta Tagliabue, President and Legal Representative
b.tagliabue@atiyogafoundation.org
- * Ioannis Athanasakopoulos, Finance and Accounting Manager
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- * Marco Baseggio, Responsible for Legal Affairs and Relations with Departments
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- * Maria Grazia Florido, Communications and Marketing Manager
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- * Giovanni Totino, Fundraising Manager and Project Designer
g.totino@atiyogafoundation.org

Furthermore,

- * Ester Escudero, secretary of the board of directors
e.escudero@atiyogafoundation.org
- * Nikol Stanisova, secretary of the Foundation
n.stanisova@atiyogafoundation.org

The December 8th Fundraising Lottery

With the pleasure to communicate again with our practitioners, we inform you that the December 8 Fundraising is still open to anyone who would like to participate.

The December 8th Fundraising is an annual occasion prepared by the Namkhai family, represented by unexpected precious gifts of great "sentimental value" for the history of the Dzogchen Community, personal items of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

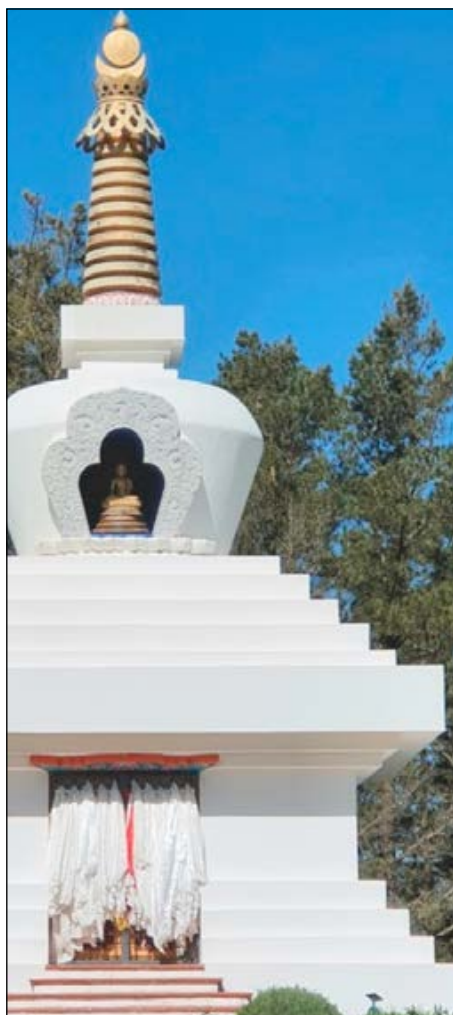
The proceeds from the fundraising will be used for the maintenance, now and for the future, of the Great Stupa of Merigar and this year also to finance the funding of the MACO Museum in Arcidosso.

Community members who are interested in participating will be able to obtain a ticket by making a donation of 300 euros. Each person can book only one ticket, but if someone wants to participate with more tickets, he or she can do so, indicating the personal data and contact of another practitioner to whom any winnings would eventually go. Groups of people can participate with a collective ticket.

How to participate

You can use Paypal:

paypal@dzogchencommunity.net



Or make a BANK TRANSFER to the Dzogchen Community of Merigar, Loc. Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso, GR, Italy Banca Intesa San Paolo, Corso Toscana, 46; 58031 Arcidosso, GR IBAN: IT03 A030 6972 1630 0000 0003 990 BIC/SWIFT: BCITITMM

Always indicate as reference '8 December Fund'

Once the offering has been made, please send an email to: fund8december@dzogchen.it communicating your donation and specifying your name, surname, email address, telephone and home address.

When the transfer with your purchase reaches Merigar, a progressive number, in order of arrival, will be assigned to the ticket and the donor will be notified.

You will find the list of 2022 awardees and all the information on how to participate in the 2023 edition at: <https://www.merigar.it/en/8-december-fund/>

The collection will end on December 2nd and the prizes will be drawn on December 8th, 2023. There are 200 tickets available and 70 winners will be drawn.

Good luck!!!



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Website www.merigar.it

News from the Ka-Ter Translation Project, July 2023

Dear friends and supporters of the Ka-Ter Translation Project of the Shang Shung Institute Austria, With greatest joy we are happy to present the recently published book of the Ka-ter Translation series:

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

The Luminous Clarity of the Universe
A Clear Exposition of The Primordial Pure Tregchöd

The book was translated from Tibetan, edited and annotated by Adriano Clemente on the basis of earlier translations by Jim Valby and Elio Guarisco.

The translators and editors of this book have worked on this unique and essential text for more than 18 years, and all their work was sponsored by YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS to the Ka-Ter Translation Project.

This precious and voluminous book is marvelous guidance to the essence of our being through the knowledge of one of the most ancient teachings of timeless, primordial wisdom.

It is one of the earliest books on Dzogchen authored by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Originally conceived as a compendium of instructions drawn from Dzogchen Upadesha tantras and the writings on Longchenpa and Jigmed Lingpa on the basis of personal experience, the author enriched it in 2005 with several verses of The Upadesha of The Primordial Purity from his own rediscovered cycle of teachings known as Longsal.

Presentation of this book

In July, 2023, Adriano Clemente gave an excellent presentation of this book that you can watch on our website. (Ed. We have published his talk on pages 8–12 of this issue). Please see: <https://ka-ter.org/index.php/publications/video-archive/>



In his talk Adriano also pointed out the importance that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu always gave to the translation from Tibetan into English of texts of wisdom.

Further news

Already in the next few weeks you will be able to purchase the new book Longsal Commentary Volume Six: The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati.

It was also translated by Adriano Clemente and is right now in the process of being printed.

At the moment, Adriano Clemente is working on the translation of the commentary to the Longsal Introduction to the State of Ati (A ti'i dgongs pa ngo sprod), a crucial explanation of the four contemplations of Ati.

Other projects to be completed in 2013 include

- * a new, revised edition of The Mirror: Advice on Presence and Awareness,
- * Atiyoga: The Essence of All Teachings, containing the chapters on the view from Santi Maha Sangha first and second levels plus new sections mostly from the Drathalgyur commentary by Vimalamitra.

Other important books translated by Adriano Clemente will be published in the next months including *The Cuckoo of Rigpa: An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript*

You can get all these books and many others at Shang Shung Publications.

The translator(s), the editors, and the people who did the layout and graphic designs of these books did a great job!

Their wonderful and admirable work is based on YOUR GENEROSITY by supporting all the various works of the Ka-Ter Translation Project.

Please continue to support our attempt to translate and publish books of our Master in the best possible quality!

For more information, have a look at the text about 20 years Ka-Ter Translation Project.

On behalf of the Ka-Ter Translation team, I thank you, Donors and Supporters, for your whole-hearted participation and understanding of the importance of the work we are doing jointly.

Together we have succeeded in completing so much!

Please keep up your fruitful efforts to make these unique wisdom texts accessible to our and future generations!

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You can also send donations via REVOLUT, use 0043 664 88662660 or use IBAN: LT483250048816163042, BIC: REVOLT21

Thank you so much for your donations!
 Very best wishes,

Oliver Leick

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E-book: The Temple of the Great Contemplation. The Gönpa of Merigar
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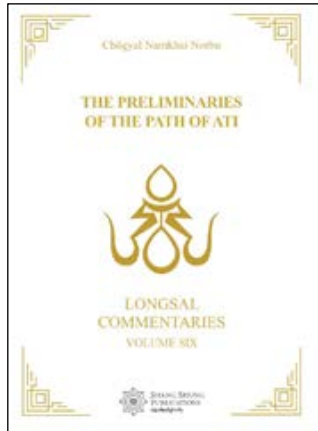
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New Books in printing

In English
The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati
 Longsal Commentary Series Volume Six

The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati (A ti lam gyi sngon 'gro) is a special Vajrasattva purification practice received through dreams in 2003 and 2004 and related to the transmission of the Author's Root Guru Changchub Dorje (Byang chub rdo rje, 1863–1963). It belongs to the same genre of preliminary Longsal teachings as The Crucial Preliminaries of the Path of Ati (Ati'i lam gnad sngon 'gro), translated and published in Longsal Commentaries, Volume Three, and although it does not deal as exhaustively with the Purification of the Six Lokas and other aspects of the preliminary practices of Dzogchen as the latter, it is of particular importance as in its central part it focuses on the principle of the three dimensions, or tal (dal), of Guru Vajrasattva and elucidates the way to access them.

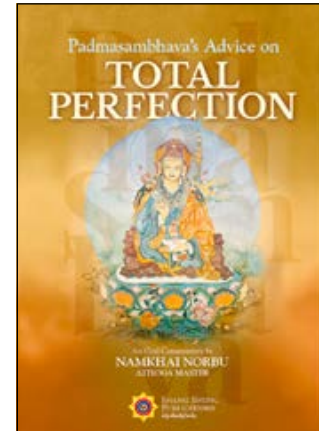
Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project
 Availability expected from beginning of October.

Padmasambhava's advice on Total Perfection.

A Hidden Treasure Discovered by Dorje Lingpa. An Oral Commentary by Namkhai Norbu.

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.

Dorje Lingpa lived in fourteenth-century Tibet. He was universally recognized by his contemporaries as a tertön: a person who discovers hidden treasures, or termas, which are teachings that were first taught and then concealed at the time of Guru Padmasambhava. Therefore we consider most of the teachings discovered by Dorje Lingpa to be taught by Padmasambhava and then concealed by one of Guru Padmasambhava's famous disciples, Vairocana.

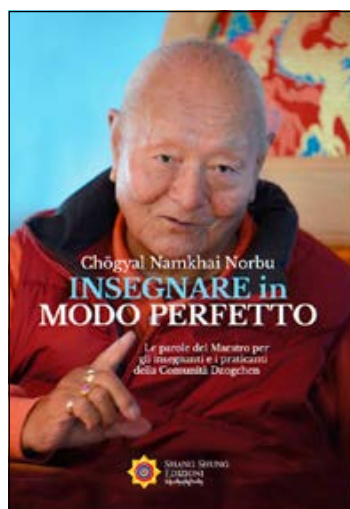
Availability expected from mid-October

In Italiano
Insegnare in modo perfetto

Le parole del Maestro per gli insegnanti e i praticanti della Comunità Dzogchen

“Siamo praticanti e seguiamo i principi dell'insegnamento Dzogchen. Per diversi anni io ho trasmesso l'insegnamento e molti di voi l'hanno seguito collaborando con me, ma il samsara continua all'infinito e non vi è alcuna certezza che abbia un termine o una conclusione. Quindi dobbiamo continuare a trasmettere la comprensione e la conoscenza dell'insegnamento. Questo deve essere l'impegno di tutti noi. Per prima cosa io ne ho la responsabilità in quanto sono io che vi trasmetto l'insegnamento. Ma anche voi avete una responsabilità che condividiamo, quella di mantenere la trasmissione in modo corretto, e a tal fine è fondamentale non mescolarla con nient'altro. Non dobbiamo modificarla o cambiarla e non dobbiamo creare problemi. Applicandola in modo corretto siamo in grado

» continued on the following page



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di preservare la trasmissione. Noi tutti dobbiamo farci carico di questa responsabilità.”

Realizzato con il sostegno dell'Associazione Comunità Dzogchen di Merigar West

Disponibilità prevista all'inizio del mese di ottobre

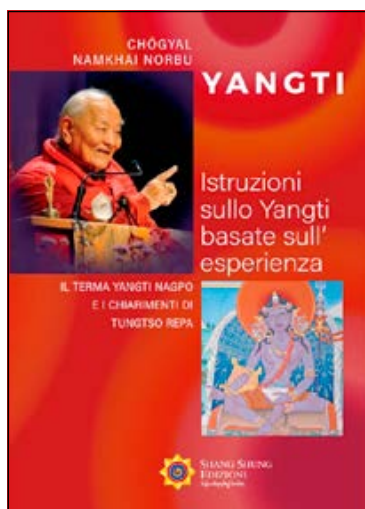
Istruzioni sullo Yangti basate sull'esperienza

Il *terma* Yangti Nagpo e i chiarimenti di Tungtso Repa Insegnamenti orali dati a Merigar West, Arcidosso, 19–23 agosto 2011

Questo libro contiene la trascrizione degli insegnamenti orali impartiti dal Maestro Chögyal Namkhai Norbu dal 19 al 23 agosto 2011 a Merigar West, Arcidosso. Il ritiro è incentrato sulle istruzioni esperienziali riguardanti il *terma* Yangti Nagpo e i relativi chiarimenti di Tungtso Repa. Le istruzioni specifiche sullo Yangti sono metodi speciali e assolutamente segreti per accelerare il proprio sviluppo spirituale al fine di raggiungere la completa realizzazione del corpo arcobaleno del grande trasferimento durante questa vita. Queste Istruzioni essenziali sono il nucleo dell'insegnamento Dzogchen. Pertanto questo libro è limitato ai praticanti che hanno ricevuto dal Maestro la trasmissione diretta del suo contenuto.

Realizzato con il sostegno dell'Associazione Comunità Dzogchen di Merigar West

Disponibilità prevista alla metà del mese di ottobre



Recently published books

When You Discover One, You Discover All.

Practice Instructions Related to Changchubsem Gomba Dola Sershun by Mañjushrimitra.

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 Gyaltsen (also called Dorje Sempa Namkha Che), and the Mejung. 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.

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342293_ebook-when-you-discover-one-you-discover-all-epub.html

The Luminous Clarity of the Universe

A Clear Exposition of the Principle of Primordially Pure Tregchöd (Ka dag khregs chod kyi dgongs pa gsal bshad klong chen 'od gsal).

This book is one of the earliest books on Dzogchen authored by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and it was originally conceived as a compendium of instructions drawn from the main tantras of the Dzogchen

Upadeśa series and from the writings of Longchenpa (1308–1364) and Jigmed Lingpa (1730–1798) on the basis of personal knowledge and experience. In 2005 the Author enriched it with the verses of The Upadeśa on the Primordially Pure Tregchöd from his own rediscovered cycle of teachings known as Longsal. This precious book is a marvelous guidance to the essence of our being through the knowledge of one of the most ancient teachings of timeless, primordial wisdom.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project
https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342187_ebook-the-luminous-clarity-of-the-universe-a-clear-exposition-of-the-primordially-pure-tregchod-epub.html

Opening Our Minds

plus free download Video (mp4) about Atiyoga Teachings of Master Namkhai Norbu's: Noumea, New Caledonia, May 2000 – Talk in Moscow, Russia, April 2011.

You will automatically receive an email with instructions for downloading the video (mp4)

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342088_ebook-opening-our-minds-epub-mobi-plus-free-download-video-mp4-about-atiyoga-teachings-public-talks.html

Tibetan Calendar 2023–2024 Water Hare Year

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342262_ebook-tibetan-calendar-calendario-tibetano-202324-pdf.html

Aprire la Mente

Il libro include un video (mp4) scaricabile gratuitamente sugli insegnamenti Atiyoga del Maestro Namkhai Norbu: Nuova Caledonia, Noumea, Maggio 2000, Russia, Mosca, Aprile 2011.

Realizzato con il sostegno dell'Associazione Comunità Dzogchen di Merigar West
https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788892722842_aprire-la-mente-con-video-mp4-scaricabile-gratuitamente-su-insegnamenti-pubblici-di-atiyoga.html

The Adventures of Nyima, Dawa and the Little Yak.

Laura Evangelisti & The Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga Team Watercolor illustrations by Cristina Conticelli

A beautiful children's picture book on Kumar Kumari. A journey to discover magical

Tibet and the powerful sounds of Kumar Kumari, Yantra Yoga for children.

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342231_ebook-the-adventures-of-nyima-dawa-the-little-yak-pdf.html

Le Avventure di Nyima, Dawa e del piccolo yak

Laura Evangelisti e il Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga Team Illustrazioni di Cristina Conticelli Un viaggio alla scoperta del magico Tibet e dei potenti suoni del Kumar Kumari, lo Yantra Yoga per i bambini e le bambine

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788878342217_ebook-le-avventure-di-nyima-dawa-e-del-piccolo-yak-pdf.html

Upcoming books

The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste An Oral Commentary

The present volume contains the oral commentary to The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste belonging to the Longsal cycle of teachings rediscovered and taught by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. It is based on the transcript of the retreat in Tokyo, Japan, 1–5 June, 2012, with additional notes from the retreat in Tashigar North, Venezuela, 15–16 May, 2004. “In general, when we learn any kind of teaching, such as Sutra, Vajrayana or Dzogchen, there are three aspects. In particular, when we are following a path, these are called tawa, gumpa and chöpa in Tibetan, which means point of view, application and attitude. These three aspects are of fundamental importance for those who follow the teaching and practice it. Why are they important? Because as human beings following the teaching, we have three levels of existence: our physical body, our energy level (also called voice), and mind. Therefore, whatever teaching we follow we should deal with these three levels of existence. For that reason, the teaching has three aspects.”

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

Dzogchen Upadesha Teachings of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje

An Oral Commentary on the Quintessential Instructions on the Main Practice, From The Black Quintessence of the Unexcelled Innermost Essence

This book contains, in order, the translation of the original Tibetan text of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje's terma called *Quintessential Instructions on the Main Practice* (*dngos gzh'i don khri yangsnying bcud dril bzhugs*) and the edited transcripts of three oral commentaries on the *terma* that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave: at Namgyalgar in Australia during a retreat that took place from the seventeenth to the twenty-second of April 2009; in Taiwan from the twentythird to the twenty-seventh of October 2015; and in Barcelona from the twenty-eighth of December 2016 to the third of January 2017.

The Cuckoo of Rigpa

An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript. *Rig pa'i khu byug*

The Six Vajra Verses are the essence of all the teachings of self-perfected Dzogpa Chenpo. When the great translator Vairocana introduced the precious Dzogpa Chenpo teaching in Tibet, as a sign of goodness and auspiciousness first of all he translated from the language of Oddiyāna into Tibetan these six verses known as “Auspicious Glory,” giving them the name “The Cuckoo of Rigpa”.

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.

New book about the
Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra

About SSP E-books

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

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Shang Shung Publications Team





Activities of the School of Tibetan Medicine in USA

Interview with Katya Schmookler,
SSI STM Administrative Assistant

The Mirror: Katya, can you tell us about the history of the American branch of the School of Tibetan Medicine?

Katya Schmookler: Shang Shung Institute of America was founded by our teacher, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, with the help of his students, in 1996.

In 2005, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo was invited by Rinpoche to teach Tibetan Medicine and became the director of the SSI School of Tibetan Medicine, with the first school located in Conway, Massachusetts.

Since that time, Dr. Phuntsog has been playing a key role in developing our school and its programs. She was the one who organized and instructed our four-year Tibetan Medicine program, the first full-length Traditional Tibetan Medicine training offered in the West. We are infinitely grateful to her for her wisdom, compassion, and dedication to the School and helping people all over the world to learn about and study traditional Tibetan Medicine.

M: Who are the people on the current team of the School?

K: Along with Dr. Phuntsog, there are currently three SSI School of Tibetan Medicine alumni and collaborators who comprise the Board of Directors – Matthew Schmookler, Adam Okerblom, and Yeshe Tsomo. They make strategic decisions and work together to ensure that the School is functioning well to fulfill its mission – sharing and preserving authentic knowledge of Tibetan healing arts for the benefit of all beings.

We also have an Administrative Manager (myself) who is working on day-to-day operations, administrative and marketing tasks, and Shang Shung Bookstore Manager in the US, Helena Bankovic.

Will Shea has been collaborating with the School for many years and is still kind-



Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo.

ly offering his time and support to help as a financial consultant.

Over the years, we have also worked with guest teachers from Tibet and the School of Tibetan Medicine alumni including Leela Parker, Yeshe Tsomo, Matthew Schmookler, Anasuya Weil, Adam Okerblom, and others.

M: Do you have a center or do you carry all your activities virtually?

K: Since 2020, we transitioned into carrying out most of our activities online, including our main 4-year Tibetan Medicine program. At that time, we also started offering free online webinars with special guests and short 1–2-day online workshops which was our way to stay connected during the lockdown period and offer support to people all over the world.

We still have a physical center of the Tibetan Medicine School in Conway, Massachusetts – the Schoolhouse where Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo lives when she is in the US and where current students of the 4-year Program come once a year for intensives.

M: What are the main activities of the School?

K: Right now, our main activities include a 4-year Tibetan Medicine Program (we have two colleagues who are in the middle and at the end of their studies) and online weekend workshops on various topics.

The 4-year program covers the entire body of the four classical texts of Tibetan Medicine, known as the Gyud Zhi (“Four Tantras”) and is directly modeled on the formal training curricula of traditional Tibetan Medicine schools in Tibet and India. Even though we paused new enrollment for this program in the US to implement new and exciting changes, we are still planning to offer the full training in the future.

As for the workshops, we often collaborate with our two sister branches in Russia and Tenerife and organize them together so we can offer Russian and Spanish translation and make the workshops available for more people.

We also try to offer free online webinars every few months so more people can learn about Tibetan Medicine and related health and wellness topics.

M: Can you tell us about recent events at the School?

K: Dr. Phuntsog has just offered the first online workshop on *Tibetan Self-Massage* in August which went extremely well. Over 110 people learned about various acupuncture points and Kunye methods to work with insomnia, pain, indigestion, and many other conditions.

The workshop *Balancing the Wind Element for Mental Health* took place on September 16 and it was held in English with Spanish and Russian translation. We were very happy to have Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Fabio Andrico, and Matthew Schmookler who led this program.

In general, we are really fortunate to welcome special guests who agree to collaborate with the School and are very happy that we can help more people learn about Tibetan Medicine, Tibetan Buddhism, and healing in general.

On November 18, we are planning an online program with Garchen Rinpoche and Dr. Phuntsog (topic to be announced).

A very important piece of news is that after a couple of years of pause on accepting new people for the 4-year Tibetan Medicine Program, we are finally opening our doors to new applicants and are excited to start a new program in January.

The new program is called *Tibetan Medicine Diet & Lifestyle Counselor* and will go for a year and a half rather than four years. This program will cover the first part of the complete Tibetan Medicine training as well as additional studies with Dr. Phuntsog and guest teachers. Upon completion, graduates of the program will be able to put their



The first graduates of the School of Tibetan Medicine (2009) during their journey to Tibet.

knowledge into practice as Tibetan Medicine Diet & Lifestyle Counselors and can also choose to continue their studies and complete the second part of the training to become a Tibetan Medicine Doctor.

The program will be held primarily online with one 2-week intensive required onsite in Conway, MA.

We are currently gathering all the information and are planning to open the application process in October. If any of your readers are interested, they can email me at katya@shangshung.org and I will add them to the list to be notified when the application process begins.

We want to thank The Mirror for this opportunity to share the latest news about Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine in the US. We are very happy to continue presenting the treasures of Tibetan Medicine and Tibetan culture for the benefit of all beings.

Here are some ways to get in touch with us and stay up to date with our programs:

Our website:

<https://mass.tibetanmedicineschool.org/>

Our online learning community:

<https://community.tibetanmedicineschool.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/ShangShungInstituteofAmerica/>

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The Story of Dolma Tamang and the Surgery for Life Fund

In July, our Kathmandu office received a request for help from Tsultrim Sangmo, principal of Manasarovar School, which we have been supporting through the long-distance sponsorship project since 1999.

The request was for Dolma Tamang, a 57-year-old Tibetan refugee and mother of two former students at the school. Dolma was the victim of a terrible domestic accident: due to a gas leak in her kitchen, she suffered second-degree burns on 26 per cent of her body.

The accident occurred on June 29, and Dolma immediately underwent a series of surgeries on her face, arms, and legs.

Health care in Nepal is fee-for-service and inaccessible for most people, who live from small daily activities.

To make a living Dolma sells bread on the streets of Boudhanath, near the great Stupa. Her husband is currently unemployed and in order to send their two children to college they had to take out a loan with the bank. Not knowing how to cope with the medical expenses, she turned to Manasarovar School, a focal point for the Tibetan refugee community in Kathmandu.

As soon as we received the request, we sent out an appeal to our supporters, who promptly and generously donated to the Surgery for Life Fund, which enables us to respond to the many requests for help we receive from sick people who urgently need treatment but cannot afford it.

The solidarity that was triggered made all the difference for Dolma, whose medical situation is very difficult. After a week in intensive care and a series of further complications, Dolma was discharged from the hospital at the end of August and is continuing treatment from home.



The support of so many sensitive and generous people has been crucial for Dolma and her family.

The Surgery for Life Fund allows us to intervene early to help those in need of medical care.

You, too, can contribute by making a donation on ASIA's website. Click on <https://donaora-asia.iraizer.eu/sostieni> ASIA/~my-donation and select "Surgery for Life" from the dropdown in the "My Donation" column on the left.

Health is one of the fundamental rights of a person, which recognizes their dignity. We want to protect it to ensure it for as many people as possible. ©

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Turning the Wheel of Khaita Joyful Dances

Adriana Dal Borgo

An endless thank you to the efforts of the many dancers who, instructors and non-instructors alike, colored the summer of 2023 with joy and harmony with Khaita Joyful Dances, which is also the result of the dedication and constant training by so many.

I would like to begin with a quick look at the events that are held regularly over the year, those that keep Khaita, this precious Teaching of our Master, alive and active.

Dzamlung Gar is the Gar that keeps up Rinpoche's request to practice Khaita regularly every day! Gratitude is due to Yulia for coordinating the activities for so long, taking care of the relationship with the gakyil, and thanks of course to the many local instructors who have worked together to maintain this commitment (Janina, Lena & Lena, Natasha, Margot, Lilya, Eva and others).

Next we see where the weekly or bi-weekly practice sessions are held. At Merigar, led by Salima, Yangchen and Elisa; in Prague with Petra; in Budapest with Nadiia; in Vienna with Elisha and Eva; in Venice with Adriana and Paola; in Australia with Tsering and Topgyal; in Peru with Issa; in a primary school of the Czech Republic with Martina, that ended with a joyful performance; in France at Dejamling, Saint Afrique and Montpellier with Sharina. Online, there are regular classes as well as in-person workshops for a group of Japanese enthusiasts led by Urara. Another online event is 'Khaita Forever', an appointment that has never been interrupted since the pandemic thanks to Natalia and Lilya's constant organization: every Saturday afternoon in turn, an instructor or an expert guides dancers from different countries online with a specially prepared set list of dances.

Whenever possible, Joyful Dances also arise spontaneously after collective practices such as ganapuja or on special occasions and also around the fire after a barbecue!

A beautiful project started in Poland, *Values Schools*, where Khaita is used as a method of relaxing tensions, bringing joy into daily activity and to connect people. The project involves teachers at first and



Khaita dancing in Japan with Urara.

on some days, also students. In this way hundreds of children between the ages of 7 and 13, led by Monika, were able to experience Khaita in short workshops, enjoying dancing together.

Now the summer events. As the Dzogchen Community is truly international, Khaita's colourful summer began in the Southern Hemisphere with a public presentation at Tashigar Sur, Argentina and with daily practice sessions during a series of retreats between January and February, led by Alejandra, Soledad and Issa.

Let's fly to the European summer: through Khaita two beautiful collaborations between the International Dzogchen Community and two other Sanghas began: Bodhicharya Kent in the U.K. where a group of dancers, coordinated by Petra, offered a short performance to Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, and the Ligmincha center of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Poland, which invited the instructor Wojtek to give a Khaita course before the usual annual retreat.

More detailed accounts of these events written by the instructors involved can be found on the following pages.

In two other articles you can read the account and experiences of our participation in the Buddhafest in Hungary and in France, on the occasion of H.H. Dalai Lama's birthday.

With a dance step we arrive in Italy. The Khaita evening in Venice in Campo S. Trovaso was magical: a natural theatre under the sky that a group of Venetians are trying to revive according to ancient customs, with cultural events dedicated to citizens. Adriana, Monika, Petra and Marco guided an enthusiastic group of newcomers as

they took their first steps under the stars. A video of the evening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usQpnzIIVos&t=6s>

Three villages on the slopes of Monte Amiata, where Merigar is situated, opened their doors to the Joyful Dances as part of initiatives to promote a culture of territory and environment: Monticello, a small village where 42 different ethnic groups live together, extended an invitation to participate in the local ethnic festival; Salaiola, during the annual Moon Festival, where workshops and demonstrations of various arts and disciplines take place; Abbazia San Salvatore dedicated an entire day to children with Khaita, Kumar Kumari and other activities aimed at discovering nature during the Eco Festival.

And then participation at a friends' party in Sweden, more workshops and then.....

I have certainly forgotten something or someone because there have been so many initiatives, but I invite everyone to share photos and notes of the various activities on our social channels.

Every photo and every note makes us feel part of the same family, united in the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu!

Share and write your stories and experiences with us!!! ©

khaita@atiyogafoundation.org
<https://www.facebook.com/harmonyinthespace>
https://www.instagram.com/khaita_harmony.in.space/
<https://www.youtube.com/@HarmonyInTheSpace>



Khaita at school in Poland.



Khaita dances with instructor Wojciech Torczyński at Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's Ligmicha retreat center near Warsaw, Poland.



Abbadia San Salvatore All'Eco Festival presentate le cinque aree, ci sono le faggete

Amiata è la prima montagna europea il Forest Bathing



Amico Cecili Le Divo Balne

sentato il video di Cesare Mor-
rini sulla Montagna Madre,
candidata a Parco nazionale e
a seguire la geodestesca Mari-
na Calchi della università di
Milano-Brescia, ha intrattenuto
i presenti su "Culti e sacralità
della Montagna Madre", di
cui è docente. La gior-
nata di sabato, invece, è stata
dedicata ai bambini. La matti-
na si è svolta nel giardino di
Casa Biocchi una versione di
Kumar Kumari Yoga con la gui-
da di Letizia Pizzetti, Dina Pri-
vack, Siliya Niang e di Khaita
danza giovane con Adriana Dal
Borgo, e così ha preso parte un
gran gruppo di piccoli adepti, i
quali nel pomeriggio sono sta-
ti guidati da Irene Nazzari alla
scoperta delle piante del giardi-
no (enorme meraviglia per la
grande sequela, che intrattiene
la visita).

Khaita on Mount Amiata.



Khaita dances at Bodhicharya Kent in the U.K.



Khaita dances in Sweden.



Presenting a special edition of "Message from Tibet" – the first collection of 108 Tibetan songs by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – to Ringu Tulku Rinpoche.

Khaita at Bodhicharya Kent's 10 Year Anniversary Celebration

Lena Dumcheva

On the 5th of June, we had the honour of presenting Khaita Joyful Dances to Ringu Tulku Rinpoche and the Sangha at Bodhicharya Kent's 10 Year Anniversary Celebration in the UK.

Khaita was a part of the event's opening and a surprise for Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, prepared by his students who were aware of his keen interest in Tibetan songs and dances, particularly in Khaita.

In addition to the dance performance, we also watched a short documentary about the history of Khaita and presented a special edition of "Message from Tibet" – the first collection of 108 Tibetan songs by

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – to Ringu Tulku Rinpoche.

Petra Zezulkova, one of our dancers and coordinator of the event:

"I was deeply touched by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche's opening speech. He emphasized the importance of songs and dances in preserving culture, particularly in keeping the language alive. It reminded me of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's words that without the language, there won't be texts or teaching.

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche continued by recounting his childhood memories and how he fondly remembered the joy of gathering with family and friends, always singing and dancing.

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche was pleased and happy that we came to perform, mentioning that he always wanted to see a live performance ever since discovering Khaita online.

He conveyed his deep respect and gratitude for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's dedication to Tibetan songs and dances.

Personally, the entire speech deeply moved me.

I believe that because the event was filmed for the archive, it presents a beautiful opportunity for future generations to witness Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Khaita project as a bridge of communication and a step towards further collaboration between two sanghas."

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Bodhicharya team, Cesare Saguato and Vanessa Matthews, for inviting us and being such gracious hosts, as well as to Julieann Natwal for the wonderful photos. We would also like to thank The London Institute of Tibetan Studies: Shang Shung UK and Lekdanling – Tibetan Cultural Centre for their organizational support, especially Julia Lawless and Jamyang Oliphant.

The event was filmed by The Meridian Trust – A Tibetan Buddhist Film Resource. Ringu Tulku Rinpoche speaks about Tibetan songs early in the recording (min 3:10–13:00): https://meridian-trust.org/video/342-eight-verses-1of2_pm002561a/ ©



Khaita at the Ligmincha Sangha

Wojciech Torczyński

Khaita courses with instructor Wojciech Torczyński took place for the first time before and during the summer retreat at Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's Ligmincha retreat center near Warsaw, Poland.

"It is beautiful to experience joy and relax at the same time and this is what I felt

before leading this first 'external' course and practice for Ligmincha. When I arrived in Chiamma Ling it only got better with each session and each day. The Ligmincha community is very dedicated toward practice, aware and cooperative. The Khaita sessions were attended by a large number of participants, most of whom have danced Tibetan steps for the first time. This practice of presence in movement was widely appreciated and recognized as a beneficial supplement to the programme of the course.

Regardless of age or fitness people approached these dances with great enthusiasm and joy. Most importantly participants

observed and understood how this practice positively impacts their state of body, energy and mind. Many have literally expressed their experience of joy and harmony that arose with practicing Khaita. It is worth underlining that this is the very message and meaning of Khaita. I feel great satisfaction and gratitude for this opportunity."

During the last day of the retreat Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche underlined the importance of collaboration between Sanghas including the International Dzogchen Community. ©



Khaita Workshop at the Buddhafest in Hungary

Martina Krejčová and Nadiia Gnatenko

The Buddhafest took place from 11th till 13th August 2023 in Sikonda, Hungary. It was organized by the Dharma Gate Buddhist Church and College in Budapest which also provides space for the Hungarian Dzogchen Community for regular practices. Participants of the course could learn about the diverse traditions of

Buddhism within the framework of sitting and movement practices. Not only Khaita but also Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga offered the possibility to experience practices connected with movement.

The festival took place in the beautiful southern part of Hungary and all the programs took place outdoors in a summer camp under the trees. This spacious place offered the opportunity to create nine stages. Eight of them were connected with the eight precious Buddhist symbols and the ninth was wearing the symbol of mirror and became home for the Vajra Dance. The Khaita stage was placed under the Victorious Banner.

The Khaita workshop was a part of the festival and took place on Saturday (1.5 hour) and Sunday (2 hours) and was led by Khaita Educational Program students Nadiia Gnatenko and Martina Krejčová. The program of the workshop, preparation of materials and organization were done in a team with Khaita practitioners from

His Holiness the Dalai Lama Birthday Event

Vajra Yogini Institute
FPMT Center
9th of July 2023

Clotilde Hubert

As every year, the birthday of His Holiness is a great day of celebration amongst the Tibetans and Buddhist communities. For some years, at the Vajra Yogini Institute, the event was celebrated with a puja and lunch together with the few Tibetan families living in the area. But more recently we introduced Khaita in an improvised way, playing a song at the end of the meal. In the last couple of years, we were two people who would present a

dance and then invite people to dance some easy Khordros [circle dances], as few of the public were participating in the Khaitas sessions I was sharing. On those occasions, it was very nice to see the Tibetans joining and knowing some of the steps naturally!

This year's event took a turn as the resident teacher, Geshé Tenzin Loden, decided that the celebration would take place on the Sunday following the 6th (which is the real date of HHDL's birthday) so most of the Tibetans could join in. The Tibetan families organized and rented a whole bus so that they could come together.

Petra and Sharina joined the group and a Tibetan friend, Karma, contacted me to prepare something together. We practiced Tendrel Sangpo and Phuyana, which Karma chose for their meaning, but as we couldn't train very much, we didn't organize any specific choreography.

The Tibetans prepared a dance and a song with the children. The four of us presented the two dances, and a Tibetan lady

joined us spontaneously for Tendrel Sangpo. A young lady who had just arrived from TIPa (Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts) sang a beautiful song. Then many people joined in to dance khordros all together. As there was no real organization, Petra was our DJ, while Sharina made a great impression on the resident teacher who could see a Chinese lady dancing perfectly AND singing Tibetan songs!

We then repeated all together Yudrang Tsanga Shikshik, which the Tibetan group had presented earlier, some traditional dances and some easy dances from the Khaita collection. Meanwhile Kapse and refreshments were passing around. The hot weather didn't stop anybody from enjoying those moments.

I can't help but feel that along with different circumstances, the introduction of Khaita gave another dimension to this event and helped Tibetans to reclaim this aspect of their culture to make the event a real celebration. ©

Hungary and the Czech Republic, who also participated in the workshop to support us: Ákos Novotny, Květa Švédová, Eva Strouhalová and Laci Kléri. Photos and videos were taken by Pavel Petráněk.

We chose the dances with topics corresponding to the festival – addressing Buddhist values, involving Buddhist symbols and bringing benefit to all beings.

Both days we began dancing Khaita to catch people's attention because we were outdoors and many people were also just passing by. Then we followed this by a short explanation of what Khaita dances are, where they come from, etc. After that we invited everyone to join a short warm up and then we started to dance.

On the first day we taught the dances So Yarelo and Tashi Dangpo to around 20 participants. We also sang Tashi Dangpo and before singing Nadiia explained the meaning. People got a beautiful leaflet where they found the text and also other information about Khaita and some important links where they can find other information about Khaita, about upcoming courses and about a place in Hungary where they can dance Khaita.

The second day we started as we did the first day by a Khaita dance, warm up and short explanation and we repeated the dances from the first day with 10 participants. Because it was really hot and our spot was partly on the sunny side, it was

really challenging to dance. So after one hour, when we came to the break people felt very hot and after the break most of the people didn't come back. But two of the dancers who were enthusiastic, young and strong stayed and we continued by teaching Monzhey. We also explained and danced Tala Shipa and Ala Lamo Se.

We believe people really enjoyed dancing and singing. We were really surprised by how quickly they managed to learn the basic steps and some of the dances. We even challenged them to exchange the

khatags in the Tashi Dangpo dance and we all enjoyed the joyful and happy atmosphere.

We would like to thank to Adriana Dal Borgo who helps us on the way to becoming good instructors and who supports us in our activities, to the Dharma Gate Buddhist Church and College for the unique opportunity to participate in the Buddhafest, to everyone who participated in the workshop and to our fellow students who also support us by commenting on our activities and videos. ©



Yoga Kids Summer Camp in Dzamling Gar

A Month of Joy, Discovery, and Kumar Kumari

Nataly Nitsche

"Why are you grateful for today?" I asked the boy at the beginning of our Kumar Kumari class. "I am grateful for doing Yoga every day"

This past July (3rd–28th), the Dzamling Gar hosted a Yoga Kids Summer Camp for the first time: 1 month, 2 teachers, 18 kids, 150 meals served in Cafeteria, every day yoga and an abundance of happiness.

The birth of the idea

The Yoga camp's idea was a dream nurtured over several years. It finally became a reality as a step towards providing a safe, nurturing space for kids (and potentially teenagers). It was an answer to the needs of families, both from within and outside the Community, who faced the challenge of working while their children enjoyed their summer break. Moreover, it presented an opportunity for Dzamling Gar to connect with the local community and, if successful, become a regular annual event. A lot can be added on the reasons why such spaces are healthy and so necessary for the young minds these days, the answer to this question was my strongest motivation for creating this project. Here I will limit to share a little of the experience, hoping that it might inspire other people to do more of this kind of activities in our Gars, that are all wonderful places with huge potential!

An idea becomes reality

At some point it felt like all circumstances came together to give life to the program. I found Silvia, an experienced Waldorf School teacher with training in mindfulness, who I trust and appreciate very much, as she used to be my daughter's teacher in school. I knew it was a great possibility to be able to work together with her.

Also we could use ESPACIO Yoga Studio as a platform to organize the camp.

I coordinated the program and logistics while also teaching, not only for the Kumar



Kumari lessons, but throughout the whole program as I am formed as a special education teacher and early childhood educator.

Lena Kalistova offered classes of origami and Khaita.

So we had a small "dream team" and all the support from the Dzamling Gar Gakyil.



"Discovering myself"

The camp's central theme was "Discovering Myself." We explored this theme through yoga (Kumar Kumari or Yantra Yoga for children), mindfulness, collaborative games, arts and crafts, nature exploration, storytelling, and loads of fun! The camp was bilingual, with some activities in English and others in Spanish.

Participation

We had 18 kids aged 4 to 11, with 4 from our Community and the rest from the local



Silvia Gallego García (left) and Nataly Nitsche.

school attended by many community kids or referrals. Each week, we had 11 to 13 kids.

A Typical Day

Our days followed a familiar routine:

08:30 am

Educators' arrival and day preparation.

09:00–09:30 am

Welcoming families and children (Playground).

09:30–10:30 am

Kumar Kumari and Mindfulness for kids (ESPACIO or Jyogur).

10:30–11:30 am

Handwashing and snack time (Garden or Jyogur).

11:30 am–12:00 pm

Collaborative games/Khaita (Various locations).

12:00 pm–1:15 pm

Activity related to the theme of the day (Garden, Lower Gonpa, Jyogur, Cafeteria).

1:15 pm–2:00 pm

Handwashing and lunch (Cafeteria).

2:00 pm–2:15 pm

Farewell and closing (Playground).

Kids could order lunch from Dzamling Gar Cafeteria or bring it from home, and at the end of the month 150 lunches were ordered in the cafeteria.

Silvia's experience

"My experience at the Yoga Camp with these wonderful children has been truly remarkable and something I would unquestionably do again. 'Pleasant' seems an understatement to describe it. Every morning, I was greeted by the harmoni-

ous echoes of mantras as I welcomed the children. We explored different captivating places, immersed in a palette of colors and the fragrances of hibiscus, bougainvilleas, plumerias, papaya trees, and lemon trees. These enchanting surroundings made our journeys between activities a pure delight.

The site itself is undeniably perfect for hosting children, offering them the chance to nourish not only their bodies but also their souls in such an idyllic setting.

I also cherish the relationships formed with the people who collaborated in the activities. Carles was ever attentive, ensuring our well-being; the cafeteria staff greeted us with constant smiles. The friendly soul at the information point even joined in a treasure hunt and was so kind. The ladies who frequented the cafeteria each morning with their dogs became a lovely routine of playing "fetch" for the children (and the dogs). Every person we encountered treated us with kindness throughout our journey.

Our days followed a familiar rhythm, offering moments of tranquility, self-awareness, play, free movement, and artistic expression.

One highlight was Nataly's morning yoga classes. The impact they had on the children, especially the older ones, was clear. While a few occasionally resisted at the idea of going to the class, not a single one wanted to end the class when it was time. They relished the post-exercise relaxation, that blissful state of calm that we all cherish when it graces us.

I must also commend the older children for their remarkable exhibition on the final day. They had been diligently working with Nataly throughout the month on the tale of "Nyima, Dawa, and the little Yak". (a charming tale written by Laura Evangelisti & The Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga Team) Through this beautiful story, they engaged in exercises that synchronized breath with movement. From my perspective, it was a powerful display of their capabilities. Witnessing their animated storytelling, with so much skill and coordination, was a genuine gift.

This is an experience I wholeheartedly endorse and eagerly anticipate repeating. I encourage everyone to partake in such a journey."

Future plans

We're grateful for the openness and support from Gakyil and for the positive feedback from parents and community members, click here to see some video testimonials! <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/>



Dear Everyone!!!
Dzamling Gar celebrates its' 10th anniversary in December and we will be incredibly grateful if you could save your dates to join us.

Tentative programs

December 2nd
We invite you to the very first music festival in the Gönpa.
17:00 Open Gönpa
17:30 Welcoming with Khaita Joyful Dance
17:40 Official speech
17:55 Musical performance by Adeje Music School Group (to be confirmed)
18:15 Piano concert by Roberto Cacciapaglia (to be confirmed)

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[1j9VQJRY5dKoKEZwV26QsXLXRAtX9qZDjy?usp=drive_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1j9VQJRY5dKoKEZwV26QsXLXRAtX9qZDjy?usp=drive_link)

The camp exceeded our expectations. There are plans to repeat it next July, possibly combined with retreats for adults, making it a family-friendly event. It was a truly gratifying experience, and we look forward to even more exciting adventures next year!

And you, what are you grateful for today?

If you're interested in our July 2024 camp, please contact us at yogastudio@dzamlinggar.org

Feel free to reach out if you'd like to organize a similar activity and would like to share experiences: nitschenataly@gmail.com ©

15 min Break
19:15 Closing with Canarian folklore dance with live music by Tajaraste Cultural Association
20:00 Sunset Aperitivo at Gönpa terrace

December 3rd A day of Experience – Multiculture and Ancient knowledge

10:00–13:00 Introductory Workshops at Espacio
Yantra Yoga, Meditation, Respira, Kumar Kumari
13:00–16:00 International Food and Multicultural Experience*
16:00 Vajra Dance Presentation
16:20–17:30 Khaita Joyful Dance Workshop & Dancing Together!

* To showcase the beauty of each GAR, each GAR and institution uses HOUSES to introduce its activities. Participants will visit houses with a Dzamling Gar map in hand exploring the entire Dzamling Gar grounds.
More information is coming!

December 8th Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Birthday Anniversary

Practice, Khaita, Fundraising Auction & Party.
Details will be announced

With Love,
Dzamling Gar Gakyil & the 10 years Anniversary Festival Team
10years@dzamlinggar.org

We would very much appreciate your financial contribution for this festival:
https://dzamlinggar.net/en/component/jse_donation?view=donate&task=donate_donation&c_id=394

Can you offer Karma Yoga online or on-site?
Great! Click on the button and fill the form!
Karma Yoga Form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSejo_g_A_Y-uTVKSMwCC4S6_8Ru7adg5FF7CgPU4PK5FKsltQ/viewform ©

Summer 2023 at Merigar

As summer draws to a close, even though the intemperance of the weather in recent years makes us say “you never know,” we are still in mid-September and autumn is approaching.

This has been a very busy summer at Merigar, and numerous events have taken place there.

The staff of Merigar, and the many practitioners who occasionally or continuously help with various activities, have been wonderful. Everyone did their best, and with the classic characteristic of our Community to adapt to circumstances, we managed to do almost everything we set out to do, to the satisfaction of the organizers and the participants.

On June 21 we celebrated World Yoga Day, offering three different events open to everyone, beginners, advanced, and children, attended by many local residents, some of whom regularly take our Yantra classes throughout the year.

On July 23, we opened Merigar for the entire day, offering guided tours and experiences of Yantra Yoga, Kumar Kumari, Vajra Dance, Khaita Joyful Dances and Meditation to our visitors. Favorable weather and expanded communication meant that there was a consistent flow of visitors throughout the day. Merigar, the wonderful place that it is, captivates all who come here. The atmosphere was pleasant and welcoming, and culminated in an aperitif and a concert that followed, held on the outdoor platform by a group of musicians from “Clazz”, high-level professionals, who were in the area for a series of concerts and offered to play at Merigar, happy to integrate into its special dimension.

In August we had two somewhat special events: Yoga Holiday and a mixed seminar introducing all our open activities. Both events were geared primarily to new people, and again we tried to publicize them through channels other than the usual ones. We still have many steps to take in this direction, but some positive feedback gives us hope for the future.

Toward the end of August another very nice concert was held in the Gönpa, by cellist Bernardino Penazzi from the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome.

Over 100 people followed the concert in religious silence, caught up in the notes



of Bach and the maestro's improvisations, from which the deep emotion and joy of being in a place intense and full of the Maestro's energy shone through.

The dimension of sharing among us practitioners and extended to the territory was very evident in the various proposals for the “Library Talks.” This cultural event, which presents topics with various themes, is very welcome, because it allows us to offer glimpses into very different, enriching and stimulating worlds, which make the cultural life of Amiata and our Community interesting, and which always involves great collaboration. We hope that this formula will continue in the future and give space to new topics that are always welcome by all.

Of course, Merigar's program is not limited to cultural events and open events to introduce ourselves to new interested people. Our main purpose is to study, practice and deepen the Teachings.

In this sense, in the wake of what we have been doing during the previous months and year, we have continued to offer viewing of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Dzogchen Teaching retreats, supplemented by guided practice sessions related to them. This summer in particular, alongside the Song of the Vajra retreat, there were alternating practice sessions of the Song of the Vajra, the Dance of the Song of the Vajra and Guru Yoga, integrated with Contemplation practice. This formula was particularly successful and enjoyed by the participants.

In addition to a seminar on the First Level of the Santi Maha Sangha, which was held in presence and on zoom, we offered what seemed to us to be a format that follows the directions given by Yeshe Namkhai during the May retreat; that is, to listen to the Master's words, and to be helped to understand and practice them by teachers who have studied their meaning in depth and have had concrete experience of them.

In this case I am referring to the seminar on the Rushen of the Longsal, during which, for the first time, excerpts from the Master's videos were selected, interspersed with explanations by the teachers and practices together.

This formula can certainly be improved from a technical point of view, but it seems to us to be very good and was much appreciated by those who attended.

All this took place while the exterior frescoes of the Gönpa were being restored, intense, delicate and demanding work, which extended well beyond the month that had been planned. The result was very beautiful, and can be enjoyed by all who visit Merigar these days, and for, hopefully, many years to come. The termination of the work was celebrated with a party attended by the painters who were still at Merigar (many others had returned to their homes), the Mayor of Arcidosso, Rosa Namkhai, local practitioners and guests, during which certificates of participation in this fine and meaningful work were distributed.

We again thank all the painters, the various volunteers who helped in the organization: Migmar Tsering and Dynamic Space; the cooks; the gekos, with their heavy workload and difficult secondary causes; the entire staff of Merigar, employees and volunteers; and everyone who helped us with their moral support, even if only by forgiving our surely many mistakes.

This is how a family goes ahead, with joys and sorrows, misunderstandings and outpourings of affection, always, however, with the knowledge that in everything we do we try to apply what our Masters have taught us, for our individual and collective development, and to be of help to others, according to our abilities.

Unfortunately, this was also the summer that we had to say goodbye to our dear Igor Legati, a great loss for Merigar and for the whole Community. Igor set us an example throughout his life with his work, which was often not very visible but was constant, precise and punctual. Shang Shung Publications, which now finds itself without one of its key contributors, knows something of this. Igor worked until his last days, carrying out the tasks he was given, and for which he was always able to find help, collaboration, giving space and guiding others. This made it possible for him to translate and publish a great number of texts, which so many of us have today.

We accompanied him during the seven weeks according to Tibetan tradition, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he accompanied us....

So many have left us over the years and so many are arriving in the form of wonderful boys and girls and teenagers who open our hearts and make us understand the meaning of what the Master often told us: "Community and Teaching do not end now, but go on for centuries and centuries, for future generations!"

What a joy to be part of this plan! ©



Yoga Holidays Returns to Merigar West

The YY team of instructors

After a break due to Covid, this year's 'Yoga Holiday', an event that has characterized Merigar's summers for years, returned from 1 to 5 August. This year's theme was 'Possible Paths: Yoga and Meditation Paths at Merigar'. Alongside the yoga and meditation sessions, organized for beginners and more experienced practitioners, a series of extra activities were offered, linked by a common thread: 'the path', understood in a spatial, temporal, sensory and other senses.

On August 1, at the conclusion of the first meeting, Stefano Costagli led participants in a tasting of products from his farm with the theme 'Eating with awareness'. The characteristic aspect of this event was awareness of the production process. Each bite was accompanied by an understanding of how the food was grown, harvested and prepared. This added a surprising depth to the act of eating.

On August 2 the day began with Yantra Yoga sessions, during which the beginner group was introduced to this ancient practice and its benefits for body, breath and mind, while the more experienced practitioners continued to refine and deepen their understanding of this discipline by exploring more subtle and advanced aspects of movement and breathing.

The yoga sessions were conducted by Laura Evangelisti and Tiziana Gottardi for the group of more experienced practi-

tioners and by Dina Priymak and Letizia Pizzetti for the group of beginners. In the afternoon, the meditation session conducted by Gino Vitiello led participants to experience the effect of the full presence of mind in the movement of the body. Walking consciously allowed participants to find a harmonious rhythm that tuned movement and breath and led to a deeper contact between self and the surrounding nature. The day ended in the enveloping atmosphere of the Merigar Library where Francesca Sfondrini shared the fruits of her studies in a lecture entitled: 'Journey to the Roof of the World: the tent of nomadic shepherds between microcosm and macrocosm'. Francesca painted a vivid portrait of Tibetan shepherds and their tents, simple but rich in meaning and symbolism. She explained how these tents reflect the symbol of the mandala and man's connection with nature and the universe.

August 3 was also dedicated to Yantra Yoga and meditation sessions, after we visited the Museum of Asian Art and Culture which was reached via the path connecting Merigar to Arcidosso, to visit "On the Silk Roads". Through the guidance of Jacobella Gaetani, participants took a step back in time, only to return to the present with a greater understanding of the importance of the interconnection between cultures. Jacobella painted a vivid portrait of the silk trade routes that crossed expanses of unknown lands connecting distant cultures.

On August 4, the day began with a meditation session and continued with yoga sessions. In the afternoon, a second cycle of 'Library Talks' took place, with speaker Fabian Sanders. This time the focus was on the doctrinal foundations of yoga.

» continued on the following page

A Wonderful Day for All at Merigar

Children's Day August 6, 2023

Constance Soehnlén and Letizia Pizzetti

Merigar's nature, fields and small woods, grass and its buildings, the Gõnpa and the Yellow House welcomed around 35 children on a fresh, sunny Sunday. There were 22 older children (6 to 12 years) ready to explore the green surroundings, and 10 little ones from 2 to 5 years. But babies also rolled in, in their strollers, and a couple of one and two year old toddlers joined the day's activities with their parents.

The younger children stayed and played on the Yellow House terrace where low tables were full of materials to explore. Kapla and colored wood blocks with which to build, orange and blue pongo to roll and cut out, pasta to string, and a collage box with scraps of paper, pens, scissors and glue was delved into and used. A book corner drew the interest of a couple of the children, one small boy in particular, who entered the magic of looking at picture book after picture book.

A large white paper was taped on the glass windows for painting and coloring. It soon became a meadow – a line of grass was first painted, the sun above and flower after flower were added along with a stream of water. Meanwhile the youngest children in the group used large, soft crayons to make their mark with full circles and lines. The mural is now hanging up in Merigar's dining hall, mensa, if you want to have a look.

As the day rolled along, there was time for water play, yoga poses on the grass, and a bit of dancing, too.



The older children started their day at the Gõnpa with a Kumar Kumari yantra yoga session for children. The session was preceded by a short, joyful warm-up phase of singing and dancing. And there was no way to miss the narration of the story 'The Adventures of Niyma, Dawa and the Little Yak' to support learning the sounds used in kumar kumari.

The activities then moved outside where, thanks to Cristina Conticelli's creativity, the children managed to print the 10 syllables used in Kumar Kumari on paper, using simple tetrapak sheets as a matrix and a pasta machine as a press. The children put all their enthusiasm, skill and creativity into play. After lunch, the children took part in a fascinating nature walk led by Maria Erica Morganti (environmental guide) to discover animal tracks and the secrets they leave behind. The children were immersed in a hidden world of clues that tell the stories of the creatures that inhabit Merigar.

The younger and older children ended the day, enjoying cookies and big bowls of ice cream, along with their parents.



A wonderful day for all! For the Merigar team that guided and provided all the fun, it gave us joy to be with these children and also brought out new ideas for the next year.

Dina Priymak

Children's Day is an important event for Merigar and we are really happy to have made it special for children once again this year (including children speaking other languages and also with different abilities!)

I wish to thank my colleagues Michele Corrado, Letizia Pizzetti and Constance Soehnlén for a playful Kumar Kumari Yoga session, Cristina Conticelli for a beautiful children's manual lab, Erika Morganti for the amazing workshop-discovery of the forest inhabitants and their habitat, and all those who helped for the organization of this marvelous event! ☺

» continued from previous page

Through an analysis of the term 'yoga', participants embarked on a journey into the very heart of yoga philosophy and discovered the richness of its cultural and spiritual roots. The day ended with an aperitif creatively prepared by Monica Patino and Giorgio Minuzzo. Their skill is like magic, transforming simple ingredients into an

extraordinary sensory experience. Parsley, mint, lemon and other ingredients blended into a symphony of taste.

At the last meeting, after the yoga and meditation sessions, we gathered again to share some reflections on these intense days spent together: all participants emphasized their appreciation for the course. Moreover, this final moment of sharing,

thanks also to a questionnaire we proposed, allowed everyone to express their impressions of the experience and to contribute useful suggestions to further improve our offer. Many also asked for information on how they could continue, so we feel we have offered those who participated a valuable experience in their research and training journey. ☺

“Giving the Days to Life”

An important event in the ‘Library Talks’

Gino Vitiello

We often talk about impermanence, referring above all to the many things and relationships that pass through our lives, but we tend to suppress the idea that life itself is impermanent. Sometimes, the mourning of a loved one, a serious illness or even just discovering, looking in the mirror, that much of the time available to us has already passed, reminds us of it.

“To Bring Days to Life” was the title of an intense, important meeting held in the Merigar Library by Dr. Anna Paola Pecci, and the days whose value she led us to reflect on are the ones that will end our lives. Let us not forget that the teachings on the Bardo also tell us that the mental state at the time of the transition is one of the most important factors capable of influencing the subsequent phases.

Dr. Pecci is the Head of the Palliative Care Functional Unit of the USL Tuscany southeast in the Grosseto area. She has been to Merigar on other occasions, speaking together with Father Guidalberto Bormolini in the seminars held on the problems of the end of life and it was she who assisted our Master in the last days of his earthly existence.

We must all be aware that if the event that will lead to our death is a serious illness, our existence will be strongly conditioned by it and, in the current reality, we will almost certainly be involved in a medicalization system, precious in some respects, but potentially dramatic for others.

Palliative care, often considered as a minor medical specialty, has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “... an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are faced with problems associated with incurable illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering through early identification and optimal treatment of pain and other problems of a physical, psychological, social and spiritual nature.” Anyone who has had the experience of following a patient in the last stages of his life can



perfectly understand the importance of this. Everyone can and must ask himself if, having reached the end of his life, he prefers to prolong the suffering of this phase by remaining hooked up to a machine with half a dozen tubes entering and leaving his body or to be accompanied to a dignified end with respect for his emotional and spiritual needs in his home, with a sedation of pain and the possibility of consciously separating from loved ones.

It is not foolish to ask the question “whose life is it?” What happens when a disease deprives us of our autonomy, when the body begins to give way and we become addicted to treatments and healers? Unfortunately, medicine has increasingly focused on fighting disease rather than on the complex needs of the sick person. If then the disease is terminal and there is no longer any prospect of recovery, it may happen that the doctor forgets that his first task is not to snatch a few days in the duel with death but above all to alleviate the patient's suffering. Therapeutic obstinacy is one of the risks we are exposed to if we do not become aware of our rights and possible alternatives.

In this regard, the importance of drafting the Advance Treatment Provisions (DAT) envisaged by law no. 219/17 of the Italian Republic, which offers us the possibility of choosing how to die and underlines the right to detailed information on every possible medical intervention on our person, provisions that all doctors or family members will be obliged to comply with and respect. This is even more important for those who have followed a spiritual practice that teaches how to face the moment when consciousness will have to leave the body. Spirituality, a peculiar component of the human condition, becomes particularly precious in this last phase of life.

Anna Paola Pecci dealt with these very delicate issues with great clarity and lightness so as to make understandable and acceptable things which our mind often tends to reject. As confirmation of the interest with which the meeting was followed by the numerous participants, there were many questions and a heartfelt invitation to return to go into more depth about these topics. In particular, information was requested about how to formulate one's DAT correctly so that they are accurate and become binding for everyone, and this will be the topic of a future meeting. ©



On Thursday August 10, when the work was finished at the Gönpa, the mayor of Arcidosso and the public were invited to see the finished decorations. There was an informal ceremony in which the mayor presented individual certificates of participation to the members of the Dynamics team and then there was a social moment with wine and snacks, followed by dinner and celebration at the Yellow House.

Redecorating the Temple of the Great Contemplation At Merigar West

An Interview with Migmar Tsering at the Merigar Gönpa, August 6, 2023

On June 15th, 2023, the renovation works of the external paintings of the Merigar West Gönpa began. The original paintings had partly been ruined by time and the elements, and partly as a result of the expansion works of the Gönpa in 2001. The external paintings were finally removed during the extraordinary maintenance works in 2019–2020.

The Mirror: The artists from the Dynamic Space of the Elements team together with an international groups of painters have been doing an enormous and wonderful job throughout the summer on the decoration of the outside of the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar. Could you tell us about how this work started? How

did you create the base for the decorations and which kind of materials are you using? **Migmar:** First of all we spent six or seven months investigating the type of paint that would work best for this work, considering that the painting is external and subject to quite extreme elements all year round. We did a lot of analyses to see which type of colors would work well in this situation and finally found colors in a type of enamel that are perfect for external painting.

The work began by taking off all the old paint and cleaning all the surfaces of the pillars and beams in order to get to the original wood. This was essential to do because without removing all the old paint and plaster, the new decorations would not be able to adhere well to the wood. Preparing all the external surfaces around the Gönpa took three people about thirty days to do. The work involved removing all the old plaster and paint, a bit at a time, then filling in all the holes and gaps in the wood. For this we made use of a type of traditional plaster that is used in Tibet consisting of sawdust mixed with glue. Using this, we filled the holes and gaps in the wood as much as possible, then the surfaces were cleaned.

We asked some experts whether we should apply a primer coat of paint but they suggested not to because the paint

would not be able to penetrate the wood. And this is the way we went ahead with this work. The paint wasn't easy to work with because we needed to apply several different coats of each color but in this way the colors will not fade easily.

The Mirror: When the decorations are complete, will you add a final coat to protect them from the extreme weather conditions at Merigar?

Migmar: The colors that we are using don't need any kind of refinishing to protect them. They have been produced with that kind of protection themselves. However, this aspect of protection has meant we have had to work harder creating the decorations with many different coats of paint.

The Mirror: I understand that you have worked according to Rinpoche's instructions in the book about the Merigar Gönpa, following his designs of sacred letters and mantras. However, I noticed that you have added some new decorative letters and designs. Can you tell us something about them?

Migmar: Because the enlarged Gönpa has more surface space outside, we were able to enlarge or extend some of the decorations and also make them more detailed. The mantras are the same but the deco-

rative parts are more detailed and larger. Over one of the entrances we have embellished and enlarged some of the designs and added *tigles* containing the Tibetan letter A.

In Rinpoche's original design in the book 'The Temple of the Great Contemplation' among other things there is the Longsal symbol. What we have added is to put the complete Longsal symbol alternating with the Tibetan letter A (which includes the single Longsal symbol) along the rim of the crossbeams outside the Gönpa. If you look at the Tibetan letter A carefully, it also contains part of the single Longsal symbol. All the letters are inside *tigles*. Apart from that we followed all the indications that Rinpoche gave in his book.

I would like to add that over the main entrance to the Gönpa, behind one of the main crossbeams, there is a fairly large empty space under the area we are decorating. We are planning on filling it with books and videos of Rinpoche's Longsal teachings so that those who pass beneath it will receive the benefit of those teachings. It didn't make much sense to leave the space empty so it will be filled with books that practitioners have brought here to the Gar. It will be similar to filling the space inside a Stupa. There will also be part of the Tengyur and Kangyur as well as symbols of the five elements

The Mirror: I noticed that you have used a different and impressive technique to paint new protective symbols from Tibetan astrology and the Kalachakra tantra. They are raised and are really striking. How did you get this effect?

Migmar: If you simply paint a letter in gold, it will be flat. If you want the letters to have more effect, you need to raise them. It is a technique that we use in Tibet when we write mantras or when we are drawing using gold, using glue mixed with plaster. We used that raised technique in the drawing of the twelve astrological animals on the north side of the Gönpa in order to make the gold stand out more. In Tibetan that technique is called '*kyu bur*' (*dkyus 'bur*); '*bur*' means raised, '*kyu*' means design.

The Mirror: During your work here at the Gönpa, there has been an opportunity to check the conditions of the wooden beams and pillars of the building in order to identify any weak points that need to be cared for in the future. Just moving around the Gönpa outside, we have noticed a few

points where there is damage. What are future plans to care for some of the beams that are not in good condition?

Migmar: During our work here we noticed that some of the pillars inside have rot due to the rain coming in. We have completely repaired them. We had to cut out the parts that were rotten, clean the space and insert another piece of wood. The external parts of the Gönpa were also missing some glass panels which we inserted in order to keep out the rain. So up to now we have worked on repairing and renewing all the pillars outside the Gönpa.

The Merigar Gakyil has a project that is planned for this autumn to renew the wood flooring of the Gönpa. Once we start on that we will have the possibility to check the wooden beams inside the building and repair them if necessary. We have already found some of the inner beams to be in poor condition but we will not be able to see the extent of the damage until we remove the floor inside the building. In September we will start this project for the floor in which we will remove the outer circle of flooring, redo it and then refinish the surface of the entire floor.

I'd also like to mention that next summer Dynamic Space of the Elements will be helping the Merigar Gakyil with a project inside the Gönpa to renew the decoration on the outer ring of the ceiling, which is from the time of the enlargement of the Gönpa. Previously it was external to the original building of the Gönpa, but when the building was enlarged, it became an outer ring within the building. We plan to repair and redecorate the ceiling of this outer ring. The Merigar Gakyil also has a project to renew the illumination next year.

The Mirror: All the beautiful decorative work is thanks to your painting skills and experience and your team of trained painters. The core of the painting team comes from the Dynamic Space of the Elements. Can you tell us a little about your team and the international collaboration?

Migmar: When Dynamic Space of the Elements was created, it was not just our idea but also Rinpoche's as a way to involve the participation of young people particularly in cultural projects. Some of the projects of Dynamic Space concern art and in fact we have a lot of students from art schools who participate in activities to illustrate books and participate in art exhibitions and projects such as the paintings here at the Gön-

pa. These young people not only work here on projects but also follow Community life at Merigar, participating in practices and retreats and integrating with the Community.

All the work on decorating the Gönpa has been in karma yoga and we have been working for the last two months. The materials have been covered by Merigar but food and accommodation for the painters has been the responsibility of Dynamic Space which has its own premises close to Merigar.

A group of students from the Academies of Arts in Rome were the core of the painters; they were joined by an international group of painters and included Zhang Su, Gonpo, Xin Yi, Zhang Yue, Lu Yushan, Andy, Mei Mei, Zhenya, Sonam Ottaviani, Vitaly, Kriss, Mohan, Yangcen, Sangye, Anna Tomi, Sebastien, Rowan, Kamil, Magda, Emanuela, Kunga, Chen Ling, Anna, Tomi and Elena. This extraordinary team went to the Gönpa early every morning and devoted themselves to all aspects of this delicate work: drawing the outlines of the decorations; preparing the colors the colors; applying the paint and the gold.

The Mirror: On behalf of all those who come to visit the Gönpa at Merigar, I would like to thank you and your team for doing such a wonderful and precise job. The Gönpa is not only a beautiful place visually but is also the place where Rinpoche gave teachings for so many years and is an inspiration and blessing for everyone who visits here. ©

Migmar Tsering was born and raised in Lhasa, Tibet. From 1987 he studied with the master Chönyi Rinpoche at his monastery for more than six years, where he learned traditional Tibetan art, astrology and sa-che (Tibetan geomancy). Migmar has participated in decorating some of the main Tibetan temples such as Samye and Jokhang. He has been resident at Merigar for many years.

A Garland of Letters

Scripts and Symbols of the Merigär Gönpa

Giorgio Dallorto

English translation and editing by Liz Granger

Originally published in *The Mirror* issue 122, May/June 2013

To Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who is different from but identical to the divine architect Vishwakarma.

Outwardly it is called the Gönpa, *dgon pa*, a Tibetan word that means 'a silent place' or 'place where people meet to practice'.

Inwardly it is called the Temple of Great Liberation Through Seeing, '*du khang mthong grol chen mo*'.

Ultimately it is known as the Temple of the Great Contemplation, '*du khang ting nge 'dzin chen mo*'.

The purpose of this article is to make known and to deepen knowledge of the beauty and wisdom represented by the writing and symbols in different calligraphy within and without the Gönpa. This wonderful structure was designed and created in all its finest details – each with its own precise meaning – from the mind of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

The uniqueness of the Gönpa at Meri-



The Unique Golden Syllable more commonly known as the Longsal letter.

inlaid in the floor below, indicates the nadir. Altogether they make up the ten directions that indicate the entire universe in Buddhism.

derives from Guptan Brāhmī script, which evolved in Kashmir in the eighth century and was diffused among the Newars during the eleventh century. According

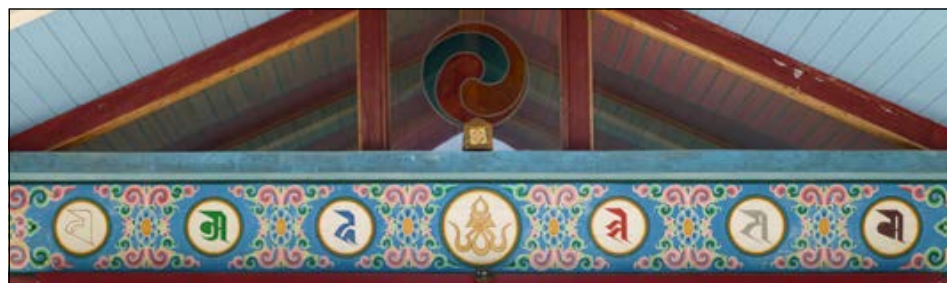


The east portico, the main entrance. Photos from the original article in 2013.

Our description of the Gönpa, which starts from the broad stone stairway in the east, follows a precise route and makes an outer *khora* (circumambulation) in clockwise direction around the outer Mandala, an inner *khora* within the inner Mandala, and finally enters the center of the Mandala, the main inner hall.

to Jamgon Kongtrul there are sixty-four types of traditional ancient scripts, among which the Rañjanā and the Vartula are supreme. Rañjanā is still utilized for the inscription of Sanskrit texts, particularly in Nepal and Tibet.

At this point it is important to point out that in describing the scripts and symbols in the Gönpa we will consider them from the view of the observer. Hence, the six letters of self-liberation start on the left of the observer: the first letter 'A' is white and represents the perfectly pure space of the divinities. The second letter A, turquoise green, symbolizes the perfectly pure space of the asuras. The third letter HA is sapphire blue and corresponds to the perfectly pure space of human beings. These three represent the higher realms of existence and are separated from the three lower by the symbolic letter of the luminous clarity of the universe. This symbol, called the 'unique golden syllable' and commonly known as the Longsal letter, is similar to a BAM joined on the right and left by letters similar to a CA and a reversed CA. It symbolizes the absolute condition and represents the essence of the heart of the dakinis, the Rigdzin of the direct, symbolic and



The six syllables with Longsal and Gakyil above.

gar lies in its octagonal form, which distinguishes it from the traditional rectangular form of Tibetan meditation halls. From the eight petalled lotus flower ornamenting the center of the ceiling, eight great beams or rays spread out delineating the points of the octagon and representing the four cardinal and four intermediate points. The glass pinnacle, rising above the lotus, represents the zenith, while the lotus flower

The Outer Mandala

Arriving at the Temple we climb up the 'Stairway to Liberation' leading to the main portico facing east, the direction in which Lord Buddha was gazing when he reached enlightenment. Adorning the crossbeam at the top of the stairs we can observe the letters of self-liberation of the six lokas in Lentsa script, an ancient Indian decorative writing called Rañjanā. This written form



Golden Dharani.



24 golden syllables in symbolic script from the *terma* of Namchös Mingyur Dorje.

oral transmission, the Master of the whole Dzogchen Community.

Then the letters of the three lower realms of existence start with a vermillion red SHA representing the perfectly pure space of animals, SA in a white transparent color like a crystal symbolizing the perfectly pure space of the pretas or hungry ghosts, and finally MA in brown, corresponding to the perfectly pure space of hell beings. Each of these letters, as well as the symbolic letter at the center, is portrayed inside a five-colored thigle.

Below the six letters in shining gold we find the Ushnishavijaya Dharani mantra, OM PADMOŚNĪṢA VIMA LE HUM PHAT (*tsug tor nampar gyalma*) written in Sanskrit Lentsa characters. This is the mantra that we can place above a doorway in order to receive a blessing and for protection, and by walking under it even a single time, we purify the negativity of the obstacles that have accumulated over a thousand eons. Above each and every entrance to this Temple we will see this mantra.

Directly ahead at the main entrance to the Gönpa, we find once again the six letters with the central symbolic letter. On each of the supporting pillars to the left and right, there is a stack of protective talismans made up of protective seals and diagrams, including symbols such as the phurba, parasols, jewels and treasure vases. These symbolic diagrams of the *sipaho* (*srid pa ho*) have the function of harmonizing aspects linked to the year, the month, the day and the hour and liberating from adverse conditions.

Turning in a clockwise direction around the Gönpa, we come to the south-east side of the building where, once again, we find

the same Dharani mantra in Lentsa script that is depicted on the beam over the top of the stairway. On the right of the mantra there is also the black and white letter RU in Lentsa script because this cardinal point – south-east – represents a class of beings called Rukṣi or Tsen (*btsan*) that are linked to the fire element and the fire divinity Agni (*me lha*). On the left is the complete Longsal symbol.

Continuing around the Temple in the same direction we come to the south side where we find the Dharani mantra repeated on the beam over the entrance, with the blue syllable YA in Lentsa, representing the class of Yama or Shin je (*gshin je*), on the right and the complete Longsal symbol on the left.

After this we come to the south-west entrance with the usual Dharani mantra, the letter SHA, in a dark red color, symbolizing the class of Raksasa (*srin po*) or Shaksha, on the right and the Longsal symbol on the left.

On the west side, the mantra on the main beam is no longer the Dharani but that of the vital essence of all the wisdom dakinis, the fourteen syllable mantra of Simhamukha, written in Sanskrit Lentsa script, in vermillion red. On the right of the main mantra there is a blue letter NA, in Lentsa script, representing the class of Naga (*klu*), the gods of the water element. The Longsal symbol is on the left.

On the north-west side we find the Dharani mantra once again, with a dark blue MA, corresponding to the class of Mamo, on the right. This side is the direction of the deity of the wind, Vāyu (*rlung lha*). The Longsal symbol is on the left.

On the north side, in the center of the panel, we find the astrological diagram of the Wheel of Temporal Existence containing the twelve animals in the outer circle,

the eight parkha in the middle circle and the nine mewa in

the center. On the right there is the monogram, OM Ā HŪM, painted in gold in Lentsa script while on the left there are the All-Powerful Ten syllables of the Kalachakra monogram.

Then on the north-east side we find the Dharani mantra with the red

letter TSA, in Lentsa, corre-

sponding to the class of the Tzati and the Jungpo (*'byung po*) on the right and the Longsal syllable on the left. As we have seen, six of the eight sides of the Gönpa have the Dharani mantra because they are main entrances through which people pass.

With this we conclude the description of the calligraphy and symbolic signs on the external Mandala of the Gönpa and return back to the main entrance in the east at the top of the stairway from where we began.

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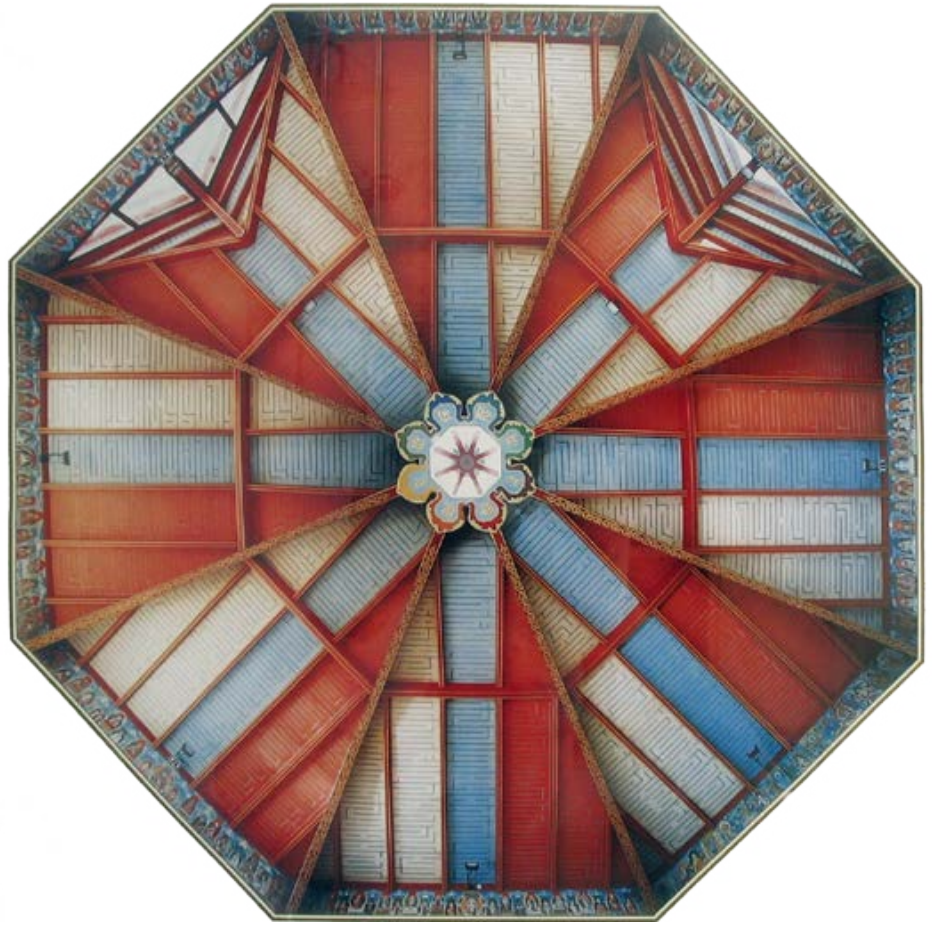


The Inner Mandala

Since the construction of the Temple in 1991, the building has been enlarged while maintaining its original octagonal form, and so we find that the same mantras and syllables that were painted on the external part of the original structure were repeated on the corresponding external sides when the building was enlarged.

Passing through the sliding glass doors of the main entrance in the east, on the beam directly in front of us we find the by now familiar Dharani mantra in golden letters, with the syllable A, the first syllable of the eight classes of the universe representing the vital essence of the devas, in shining silver in Lentsa script on the right, and the Longsal symbol in gold on the left. We are in the inner Mandala of the Gōnpa, in the east section, and facing left, on the cross beam, we can observe three symbols, each inside a fivecolored thigle: in the center the symbol of the Longsal, on the left a symbol resembling the Tibetan letter CA or the Latin number 3 in bright silver that represents the essence of all the aspects of method, the pawo or male principle, while on the right the same symbol as if in a reflection in vermilion red, symbolizing the intimate aspects of energy, the pamo or female principle.

Turning to the right, on the crossbeam there are three thigles with a larger one in the center containing the letter HŪM in Sanskrit Lentsa, bright blue like a sapphire, symbolizing the vajra of the Mind of all victorious Rigdzin (rig 'dzin). In the thigle on the left we see the syllable OM in Sanskrit Lentsa, bright silvery white in color, symbolizing the vajra of the Body of the victorious Rigdzin. In the thigle on the right is the syllable Ā, vermilion red in Lentsa script, symbolizing the vajra of the Voice of all the victorious Rigdzin.



Phagpa script on the octagonal ceiling of the Gōnpa.

Continuing in a clockwise direction around the inner Mandala of the Gōnpa, looking up at that part of the ceiling that was once the roof of the original Temple, we see the shining golden letters that resemble the Tibetan CA, the mirror image of the CA and a letter that is similar to the Tibetan BAM, resembling a drop of water, with a crescent moon ornament on top repeated many times and scattered on a blue background that is luminous like the sky.

The mantras, syllables and symbols that we find on the different beams around the inner Mandala correspond respectively to those in the same cardinal directions on the outer Mandala described above, that is, the multicolored RU in the south-east, the blue YA in the south, the red SHA in the south-west, the blue NA in the west and the dark blue MA in the north-west.

When we enter the vestibule in the north with the stairway that goes to the lower floor, we find four panels, one in each direction, decorated in different ways. On the cross panel in the north-west, there are three thigles, with the blue HŪM in the center, the white OM on the left and

the red Ā on the right in Lentsa. Opposite, on the cross panel in the north-east, within three thigles we find the complete Longsal symbol in gold in the center, the symbol resembling a CA in silvery white on the left and the reversed CA in red on the right.

On the panel in the south, over the stairs, on the left we see the Longsal symbol in bright gold within a thigle, and in the middle of the panel the mantra of the vital essence of millions of wisdom dakinis written in fourteen syllables in Sanskrit Lentsa characters in bright vermilion red on a blue background. On the right is the letter DU in black which represents the vital essence of the Rudra or dūd demons, support of the dominion of the Yaksha, in a thigle.

Opposite in the north direction, in the inner part of the panel, the mantra of 'total liberation through seeing' that the glorious Vajrasattva transmitted directly through a vision to the great tertön (treasure finder) Mingyur Dorje when he was twelve years old is depicted in symbolic script in twenty-four syllables painted in gold. The mantra is taken from the supplementary text of the Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations (*shitra*) of the Namchö teaching of Mingyur Dorje.

Symbolic script can be expressed in a variety of languages such as Sanskrit, Tibetan and Dakini symbolic language, and consists of a symbolic coded form which clearly awakens the mind of the tertön who will understand it suddenly and spontaneously while it remains incomprehensible to an ordinary person.

We conclude the circuit of the inner Mandala on the north-east side where on the east side of the cross beam enclosing the north vestibule we find the six letters of self-liberation of the six lokas in Lentsa script. On the main beam the Dharani mantra in golden letters is repeated just as on the external corresponding beam, with the Longsal symbol on the left and the letter TSA in vermilion red on the right in Lentsa. On the cross beam just before



Kalachakra monogram.

other four point in the intermediate directions. Each petal displays a syllable in gold in Lentsa script – the blue petal in the



The letter Tsa.

the east entrance we find the six letters of self-liberation repeated once again.

At this point we have returned to the east cardinal axis where we see the Longsal symbol and the six letters of self-liberation with a three colored Gakyil in blue, yellow and red, painted on the glass window high above the entrance. The three colors of the Gakyil symbolize the 'three doors' of body, voice and mind of those who are on the path, of the three Vajras of body, voice and mind of realized beings as well as those of the three dimensions of Dharma-kaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

The center of the Mandala

Entering the center of the Mandala, the main hall of the Temple, within the pinnacle or zenith, the central axis of the Gönpa, we find once again the eight syllables – 'A RU YA SHA NA MA DU TSA' – in Lentsa script, corresponding to the eight classes, inside eight perimetral panels. At the base of the pinnacle, there is a multi-colored eight petalled lotus, four petals of which point in the cardinal directions while the

east depicts the syllable E, the red petal in the west MA, the yellow petal in the south WAM, and the green petal in the north YA. The colors of these four petals correspond to the directions and colors of the four Buddha families while the syllables are associated with the perfection or completion stage of the practice of Ngöndzong Gyalpo.

The petals in the intermediate directions display the syllable 'A' in the south-east, HO in the southwest, HA in the north-west, and YE in the north-east, which represent the ultimate principle of the four Da of the Longde teaching.

The ceiling of the entire Gönpa is beautifully ornamented in Phagpa script, also known as Horyig, which takes its name from Chögyal Phagpa (1235–1280 AD), the nephew of the famous Sakya Pandita. After the death of the latter, Phagpa took his place at the court of the Emperor Khubilai Khan as his spiritual advisor. The Emperor wished to create a new script that could be utilized throughout his Empire and ordered Phagpa to create one, issuing an edict to this end in 1269. Phagpa set about

the task immediately. Since he was Tibetan, he turned to the script that he knew best and on the basis of the form of the Tibetan letters and the Yuguri script he devised what has been variously known as the 'square' script or Phagpa. He changed the form of the Tibetan graphemes to a square box-like shape and adjusted the script to be written from top to bottom and from left to right. Phagpa script was used officially for a hundred years during the Yuan dynasty.

The ceiling can be divided into three sections: the upper, the middle and the ceilings of the two main vestibules in the north and east. On a background of three colors, white, turquoise and red, symbolizing the three active elements of water, air and fire, the mantra of the Song of the Vajra winds around the upper section of the ceiling. The mantra, in the version used by the Venerable Adzom Drugpa, starts in the west at the panel of the twelve Primordial Masters and is written from top to bottom, left to right, in a counter clockwise direction to cover the entire upper section of the ceiling. After completing the round of the upper section, it continues from the same point in the middle section in the west to finish in the center of the middle section in the north-east. In other words, the mantra starts from the figure of Samantabhadra in the panel of the Primordial Masters and ends over the figure of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo in the Sakyapa panel.

Where the Song of the Vajra finishes, the Phagpa script continues with the first mantra of the Thos-grol terma of the twenty-five thigles that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu received from his root master Changchub Dorje. The other twenty-four mantras that liberate through seeing are depicted on the remaining part of the middle section in the main hall and continue on the ceilings of the two vestibules, concluding with the twenty-fifth mantra and the OM Ā HŪM in the outer vestibule of the east entrance.

In the outer vestibule in the north with the stairway going to the lower floor, we find the mantra of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra – 'A A HA SHA SA MA' – and the mantras for reversing the conditions of the beings of the Six Lokas – the divinities, the asuras, human beings, animals, the pretas and the hell beings. The Phagpa script ends with the mantra AŌM, the essence of the seed syllable that is linked to the master Ngöndzong Gyalpo, concluding with the symbolic syllable PHAT, known as

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the syllable of instantaneous liberation. At this point we conclude our description of the Phagpa script.

Up to here we have seen many mantras and syllables in Lentsa, the Namchös Mingyur Dorje terma in symbolic script, and the Phagpa square script covering the ceil-

umns supporting the roof. Observing the columns from the center of the Gönpa and starting from the west near the throne in a clockwise direction, on the left side of the first column we can see the famous white A that we use in Guruyoga, on the left side of the second the red BAM, on the right side of the third the blue HÜM, on the left side

Finally on the right side of the figure of Samantabhadra on the west panel of primordial masters, a careful eye may notice the tiny dedication in the words of Naga-juna for increasing merit and wisdom, written in beautiful Khyuyig, a cursive 'Umed' or 'quick writing' used for notes, letters and general use, painted by Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche, the master artist who painted the panel dedicated to the twelve primordial masters.

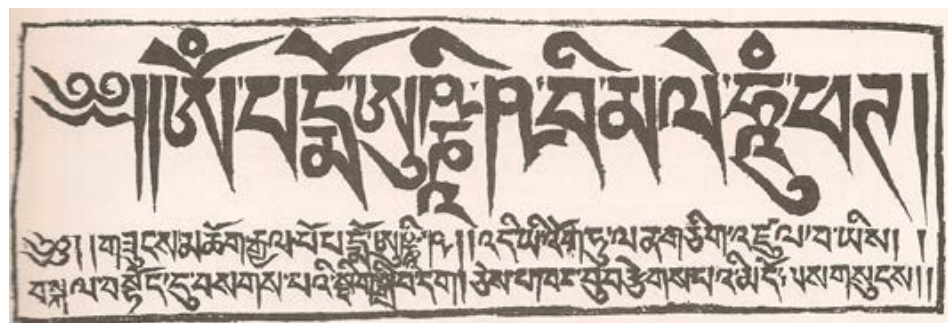
So to sum up, we can find several different scripts in the Gönpa, namely Lentsa used principally for the mantras, Uchen, used to identify and render homage to the Masters, and Phagpa square script over the ceiling for the Song of the Vajra, the Twenty-Five Thigles, the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra and the mantras for reversing the condition of the Six Lokas. In addition the mantra of 'total liberation through seeing' of Namchos Mingyur Dorje can be seen in symbolic terma script.

To bring this article to its conclusion, we would like to recall all the Masters who have come to this precious Temple to give teaching, starting from our precious master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, who inaugurated the Gönpa by giving the first teaching there, the Sangwai Gyachen (gSanga-ba rgya-chen) or 'Great Secret' from a collection of the 5th Dalai Lama. They were followed by many other masters from various lineages of the Tibetan tradition among whom we would like to remember in particular H.H. Sakya Trizin and the late H.H. Penor Rinpoche, heads of the Sakya and Nyingma schools respectively.

May this Temple continue to be blessed by the Lotus Feet of the Masters and enriched in the present and in the future by the practice of innumerable yogis and yoginis of the whole Dzogchen Community. ©

Editor's note: In the recent restoration of the decorations of the exterior of the Gönpa, Dynamic Space of the Elements has added a border of the Tibetan letter A alternating with the Longsal letter along the upper perimeter of the main crossbeams all around the building. They have also added the Tibetan letter A in a tige at the top of each of the external main pillars.

At the request of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, inside the Gönpa his throne has been substituted by a more simple one.



Dharani mantra from a woodblock in Uchen script.

ings. Finally we come to the most important and most used form of writing used in the Tibetan world: Uchen or Tibetan capital letters.

The Tibetan Uchen script is aesthetically one of the most pleasing of the Indic scripts. The graphs are called Uchen, 'with a head', referring to the horizontal line at the top of many of them. This system of writing was created at the time of Tsongtsen Gampo (617–699 AD) by his minister, Thonmi Sambhota, who went to Kashmir to study Sanskrit and Buddhist literature. Thonmi learned the Lentsa and Wartula Gupta scripts from the master Devavidyasimha and when he returned to his homeland, he devised a Tibetan alphabet consisting of 30 consonants, 4 vowels and 6 extra letters for writing the translated Buddhist texts. He also composed a grammar text based on Sanskrit grammar in order to make the vast and deep teaching of the Buddha accessible in Tibetan, since the pre-existing written form was difficult to employ and its grammar was inadequate. Uchen is mainly used for book script for Buddhist texts, often carved in wood for printing.

We can note this Uchen elegantly written below each and every figure depicted in the panels dedicated to the main masters of the various Indo-Tibetan traditions. Therefore, under each of the masters of the different lineages and the Guardians connected with them, we find their names in Uchen followed by the classical expression of homage, la namo, which means 'I pay homage to'.

There are also very large Uchen letters on the sides of most of the eight main col-

umns supporting the roof. Observing the columns from the center of the Gönpa and starting from the west near the throne in a clockwise direction, on the left side of the first column we can see the famous white A that we use in Guruyoga, on the left side of the second the red BAM, on the right side of the third the blue HÜM, on the left side

of the fourth the red HRI, on the right side of the fifth the green TÂM, and on the left side of the seventh the five-colored syllable AÔM. Each of the seed letters is depicted within a thigle of five colors.

On the same eight supporting columns, we can find the very diffused and famous Eight Auspicious Symbols:

- the Parasol representing power, royal status and general protection from the elements;
- the Golden Fishes that symbolise the two sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna, as well as happiness and abundance;
- the Wish-Fulfilling Vase, symbol of long life and prosperity;
- the Lotus which stands for purity especially spiritual;
- the Conch Shell spiralling to the right represents the Buddha's teachings spreading in all directions;
- the Endless Knot, a sign of the interconnectedness of all;
- the Banner of Victory standing for victory over obstacles and disharmony;
- the Wheel which represents the Buddha's teaching.

On the exquisitely carved gold painted throne from which the Master gives teaching, on the front panel are depicted the seven emblems of royalty: the precious golden wheel, the precious wish-fulfilling jewel, the precious queen, the precious minister, the precious elephant, the precious horse and the precious general as well as the eight auspicious symbols united in a single symbol.

News from Merigar East

Looking in the "Mirror" of past years, we can see that Merigar East in Romania pulsates with energy during events, hosting at least 150 practitioners. Some of them may not be anymore, and some may not be interested in the place, however, Merigar East exists as an entity that continues to breathe, grow and reinvent itself in the same space, full of possibilities, open to the world, where the five elements manifest with intensity and make you feel in charge of it.

What events took place at ME this summer?

Rushen. Recognizing Our State with Zoltan Cser

At the end of June and the beginning of July, a four day retreat guided by Zoli Cser was held at ME, both physically and online, with focus on Inner Rushen and Secret Rushen, according to the Santi Maha Sangha Base training.

Participants on site from Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria could enjoy an intense program starting with yantra yoga, continuing with two practice sessions and ending the day with Vajra Dance and Chod. In the remaining time, they could refresh themselves with a swim in the Black Sea and enjoy local fish dishes. For online participants, translation into Hungarian and Russian was possible with the involvement and effort of our friends Anna Olefir and Istvan Kiraly.

Zoli guided us with warmth and patience throughout the retreat, but also reminded us of what the Dzogchen Community and the teaching means, leading us to meditation and contemplation. We thank him for his presence and for the love and dedication we felt he has for this place.

Workshop. How to Make Tibetan Prayer Flags

For two days, August 26th–27th, the flags for the next Losar were cut, printed (by hand, using screen printing - serigraphy) and sewn. We conclude with a participant's comment: "A simple space, with good, warm people, a space like this, in the wind that sweeps your thoughts and carries them into the waves of the sea...A really special place!"



Tibetan sacred art exhibition

From August 7 to September 30, an exhibition of thangkas from the personal collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is being held at Merigar East, an event organized with the support of the Atiyoga Foundation.

Transform the solar energy for Merigar East project

Also this summer, photovoltaic panels were installed to power and stabilize the main pump of the fountain and the camping area, an investment of 5000 euros, of which 1000 euros were raised from donations. We convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to those who have been with us in this project and ask you to continue to contribute to help us transform "money into light, light into water, water into life..."

Volunteering

Volunteer work continued this summer with the completion of older projects in which people who came to the Gar for the first time participated with great openness and enthusiasm.

Respira: breathing method course

Although summer is over, the weather at ME continues to be sunny, the sea warm, and the gates are open for the Breathe course on September 15th–17th, with our dear friend Magdalena Ourecka, who will guide us on how to re-discover and enjoy harmonious breathing.

We also add that all these events could take place thanks to the dedication, generosity and, at times, stubbornness of the people of Merigar East who continue to make it a place of sharing for those who walk the same path to knowledge through collaboration in the perspective of a common spiritual enrichment.

©

News from Wangdenling, Slovakia

Gönpa reconstruction happily finished!

Dear Vajra Family,
With great pleasure we would like to inform you about the happy end of repairs of the gönpa at Wangdenling, the Slovak Community center.

Almost three years ago we started to prepare the project for the structural renovation. The major part of the reconstruction came to its end last year, just before the winter arrived. It consisted of removing the rotten parts of all the 48 wooden pillars in the gönpa's foundation and replacing them with concrete bases. Some of the pillars in the foundation had to be completely replaced with new wood pillars.

This year we are finishing the "last touches" to the restoration, such as repairing and conserving the entrance to the gönpa, and applying protective paints on the outer pillars. We will complete these works by the end of September.

Many of you supported our effort and this helped us considerably to finish the extremely challenging works literally in time. Your sincere help and good wishes also gave us a lot of needed energy and moral support to continue this project that, at times, seemed to be endless.

Now the building can serve safely for practitioners as a support for developing knowledge and studying the teachings of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as well as dharma in general now and in future years. During this year's retreat season the gönpa has already hosted some interesting events like courses on the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, the 7th Lojong and other community events.

So far the work and materials for the project have cost 40,700 Euro, 27,200 of which we received through your great generosity and an additional 13,500 we paid from Wangdenling's own funds, funds which we, however, need for the upkeep of Wangdenling. In the next few years, we want to concentrate more on community activity as well as on the further development of the ling (in future we plan to build a dormitory to take the place of the current unsuitable old earthen house).



Therefore we would like to ask you for further generosity, which would help us to pay off the very last invoice of this project. To cover the whole amount we still need to collect 1,790 Euros.

If you feel well disposed towards our effort, we will be grateful for even the smallest donation!

You can contribute either by buying your part of the virtual mandala on our fundraising website (see the link below) or by sending the donation directly to Wangdenling's bank account (you can also pay by Paypal or QR on our fundraising website).

For donations above 400 Euros, we still offer the donors a gift of the Sonam Thobje chakra personally blessed by our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during his teaching in Bratislava in 2016.

With best wishes,
Gakyil of Wangdenling

For more information about payments write to: yellow@dzogchen.sk
<https://www.dzogchen.sk/fundraising/en/gompa.php#mandala>
<https://www.facebook.com/Wangdenling-119835018042793>

The bank account details:

Payment in EUR

Account number: 2701904108/8330

IBAN: SK6783300000002701904108

SWIFT/BIC code: FIOZSKBAXXX

Account name: Gompa-repair

(Medzinárodná komunita Dzogčenu – Wangdenling)

Bank name: FIO banka a.s.

Bank address: Nam. SNP 21, 811 01 Bratislava, Slovakia

Summer Update from Kunsangar South

Summer 2023 at Kunsangar South in Crimea passed peacefully, in work and practice. Many retreats were cancelled, but August was especially busy with many courses and retreats.

Fearless yogis, for whom there are no obstacles, traveled to the mountains and the sea to unite with the elements, practiced semdzins and wove namkha. Karmayogis cleaned the gönpa, helped in the garden and on all three hectares of the Gar's land.

Autumn has borne fruit: apples and plums. This is the harvest brought by the fruit trees planted many years ago. Now the task is to preserve this harvest and enjoy delicious jam in the winter.

It's great that there is activity, there are practitioners and practice!

With love,
Kunsangar South Gakyil

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THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International

Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Design & Layout: Thomas Eifler • Webmasters: Yuchen Namkhai and Luigi Ottaviani •
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Myriad Worlds at Kunsangar North

Dear friends, all heartfelt greetings to you!

This year Kunsangar North near Moscow, Russia, turned 25 years old! We had been thinking about how to celebrate this wonderful event .. and came up with a great idea! Summer 2023 opened a new page in the life of Kunsangar North. For the first time in the history of the Gar, we held a grandiose festival "Myriad Worlds" with the participation of seven Buddhist sanghas, cultural figures, musicians, psychologists, coaches.

Everyone was provided with venues for their own programs and creative workshops. The festival was attended by about 450 people. The Dzogchen Community was introduced in person and online by our precious instructors. The festival was opened by Santi Maha Sangha instructor Grisha Mohin. Igor Berkhin gave a brilliant lecture "Presence and awareness – a new stage in human development." And the real sensation was made by Michael Katz at the practical session "Dream Yoga and Dreams." Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo's lecture was attended by many newcomers, and she taught the art of being mindful of health with sincere love. The threefold Community instructor from Hungary, Zoltan Cser, joined us online with a wonderful lecture for beginners. Santi Maha Sangha instructor Vlad Bepalov held full-time classes.

The program of the Dzogchen Community was very popular among the guests. So, for the first time more than 20 people stepped into each of the Vajra Dance mandalas! Thanks to our experienced instructors, Yana Sokolova, Tanya Pronicheva and Olya Nimachuk, the participants were able to learn one of the Vajra dances. And some became so interested that later began to attend dance retreats and actively visit the Gar.

Yantra Yoga classes with Vitya Krachkovsky were incredibly popular. The Gönpa was overflowing with his practices and lectures. Our dear painter Nikolai Dudko was a guest of honor and an active participant in the festival. His master class on thangka painting was attended by 50 people!

Along with all the activities, Sang and Serkyem practices, lectures, and excursions were continuously going on near the Stupa of the Perfect Victory.



Masterclass with Nick Dudko.



New people learn vajra dance.



Online retreat with Adriana Dal Borgo.



Rinchenling birthday at Kunsangar North.

Vajra Dance of Space at Namgyalgar July 2023

The magical net of illusion drew 12 of us to Namgyalgar, Glasshouse Mountains, Queensland, Australia for a deep dive into the Vajra Dance of Space – Khalong Dorje Kar of the Song of the Vajra. Facilitated by Thuy and Rosemary, we all appreciated the co-leading support of Jorrit as 3 confident dancers enabled the group to tangibly internalise and integrate the experiences of clarity and emptiness via sound and movement.

Winter in the Glasshouse Mountains welcomed us with ever changing blue and grey skies, warming our hearts and minds with outdoor-grass khalong etched by Jorrit, comfy tatami-matted gönpa floor, visually stunning mandala walls, swarming bees creating honey pots in the witches kitchen and a hearty fire under a wick-



ed moonlight. Thuy and Gavin from Tassie, Jo from Melbourne, Alima and Dieter from Cairns joined locals Ruth, Tommy, Anna, Jorrit, Liz, Shanti and Rosemary in an un-

forgettable portal merging outer, inner and secret dimensions.

May the 2 omnisciences blaze.

Do join us next year if you can.

©

We also organized a very warm and joyful meeting with the first disciples of Rinpoche, those who originally found this place. Together we remembered how it all began. And then there was a celebratory banquet. Vadka baked seven huge and incredibly delicious cakes, Kunsangar South congratulated us and presented ten bottles of Crimean champagne and flowers. And immediately we all began to dance Khaita. It was incredible – more than 100 people danced! Even those who saw and heard music for the first time could not resist and stood in a circle. Happiness shone on all faces. The festival lasted three days and everyone made a lot of friends. The Gar gave everyone a cordial welcome.

And not long ago we celebrated another wonderful anniversary: 30 years of our wonderful Rinchenling, the ling of Mos-

cow! The Gar and the Ling united and held a grand celebration. We started very essentially: with the Song of the Vajra around the mandala. Many people came, among whom were very old practitioners. And the Gar again, as in the old days, was filled with laughter and joy.

The Gakyil tries very hard to maintain and develop this Community place and constantly invite the entire Community, especially newcomers, to collaborate. For example, one of the girls, Tanya, made a wonderful offering: she bought a lot of rose bushes and other plants, and we decorated the Gar very beautifully.

In the meantime the ongoing work continues. The online retreat with Adriana Dal Borgo on the dance of the Three Vajras just ended. The happy participants expressed their immense gratitude to Adriana from the bottom of their hearts.

Among the current legal work – we are now actively bringing all of our buildings into compliance with the law.

I would especially like to thank the workers of our canteen, Nikolai Gavrilyuk and Denis Ogorodnikov. They work selflessly in the kitchen and prepare very delicious food for everyone who comes to the Gar!

And recently we chose a new gekö – Natalia Kushnareva. We wish her good luck and inspiration in her new role.

The Gar has lived for a quarter of a century, and we will try very hard and hope that we will celebrate its 50th anniversary together!

Enjoy your practice and come to Kunsangar North!

Warm wishes to everyone,
Kunsangar North Gakyil

©



Vajra dance non-stop.



Tsegyalgar East 2023 Summer Sangha Retreat on Khandroling

John LaFrance

No matter how many times ones ascends to the top of Khandroling and enters the Vajra Hall with the Universal Mandala, there's always a moment of awe and appreciation for Rinpoche's vision and contributions to the Dzogchen Community. It was no different at the start of this year's annual Summer Sangha Retreat. Community members from North America gathered to renew our practice and enjoy the special energy that happens when we meet.

This year's retreat focused on deepening our practice with the help of SMS instructors Lynn Newdome who gave instructions for newcomers on Integrating the teachings and Integrating with Sound and Mariano Gill who led practices of Shine/Lhatong, Guru Yoga of the White Ah and the Semdzin of the Song of the Vajra. In addition our local dance instructor Bodhi led the 12 Ah and Goma Devi dances and Yantra Yoga instructors Paula Barry and Naomi Zeitz led Yantra Yoga on the mat and on a chair. It was a special blessing to also have Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo explain and lead the Medicine Buddha and Shitro practices. Michael Katz also led an online Dream Yoga event co-sponsored by the Russian Dzogchen Community with attendance online by members worldwide.

Each afternoon we were especially fortunate to be able to view Rinpoche's entire retreat on the Mejung Tantra through the auspices of the archive at Merigar. Having the video on a big screen was like experiencing a retreat with the Master, again!

The gathering concluded with a Community Meeting in which members shared many fruitful ideas for future gatherings followed by a Community BBQ and auction which raised needed funds for both Tsegyalgar East and the Shang Shung Institute's School of Tibetan Medicine.

Following shortly after the Summer Retreat, Tsegyalgar East will host Vajra dancers from around the globe for Dance, Dance at Khandroling, the Land of the Dakinis, led by International Vajra Dance Teacher Prima Mai and Vajra Dance Instructors Bodhi, Kyu Kyuno and Carisa O'Kelly.

Tsegyalgar's energy remains strong. ©

Annual Dance, Dance, Dance at Khandroling 2023

Ellen Halbert

The annual Dance Dance Dance retreats at Khandroling, in Massachusetts, USA, bring together practitioners from all over the globe. This year was no exception, drawing participants from Japan, France, Italy, Chile, and far flung parts of the US.

We were blessed to have Prima Mai with us again, along with our local instructors Kyu, Carisa, and Bodhi. Their patience, dedication, and deep knowledge of the practice inspired and guided us.

Our retreats began auspiciously on Worldwide Guruyoga Vajra Dance Day (July 28) in the amazing Vajra Hall. The first days covered the Dance of the Three Vajras and the Dance of the Liberation of the Six Spaces, in a teacher training course open to teacher candidates, advanced practitioners, and beginners. The teacher candidates took turns giving us instruction on the steps, with Prima's guidance. This process helped us to refine our understanding of the steps and gave us a taste of the intense study and practice our teachers undertake.

Next, we plunged for four days into the experience of the Kalong Dorjekar of the Song of the Vajra. Again we were a mix of beginners and more experienced practitioners. The more experienced practitioners were invaluable to our learning process. By following their tips and example, we were able to make more progress than many of us thought possible in the short time we had. Prima's precise instructions and embodiment of the dance inspired our learning and our commitment to continue on our own.

During our final week together we worked on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra. Some of us already knew the dance well but wanted to refine the steps and deepen our practice. Some knew either the Pamo or Pawo part well and wanted to learn the other part. Some were beginners. With space for four mandalas in the Vajra Hall, we all learned simultaneously, from our teachers and from each other. Beginners could follow more experienced dancers. More experienced dancers could clarify their own steps by dancing with beginners.



July 28–August 2, 2023 Teachers Training Level 1 / Advanced Course with Prima Mai.



Aug 3–Aug 6, 2023 Khalong Dorje Kar with Prima Mai.



Aug 7–August 13, 2023 Vajra Dance of Song of Vajra review course by Bodhi, Carisa and Kyu. Prima Mai joined for 2 sessions.

We all benefited tremendously from the energy of the sacred Land of the Dakinis, from the power of our shared intention, and from the evolution that our worldwide sangha encourages and supports in each other. The presence of our master, Chö-

yal Namkhai Norbu, and the power of his transmission, was evident throughout. Our time here reminded us that sangha means everything. The practice means everything. We have everything. We are everything. E Ma Ho!



News from Tashigar Norte

Tashigar Norte, Margarita Island, Venezuela, is preparing to receive the participants of our next program that runs from December 2023 to March 2024. It has been more than ten long years that we have waited to be able to host IDC-related activities again. This is because the Gakyil considers that the conditions for receiving practitioners from all over the world have improved to a level beyond what is acceptable.

We cannot say that everything is perfect, but we are convinced that it is possible to offer a program in which its participants will be able to enjoy their stay at Margarita without any setbacks. Safety in general has not been an issue of concern for some time here, this does not mean that we can be distracted without taking some precautions. We must always act with presence, but it is a fact that there are really no significant or alarmist reports in this regard.

The Gar itself, for several years, has not suffered any major incident related to insecurity. Another aspect that has changed compared to later years is the limitations of exchange control. Now neither the US dollar nor the euro are restricted currencies. All businesses have their prices marked in American dollars, and it is, in fact, the currency with the greatest supply

and demand. International debit and credit cards are accepted in the vast majority of establishments, and since there is no exchange control, there is no longer a significant gap between the value of the parallel market and the exchange rate you obtain when using your cards.

Services in general have improved, especially those related to telecommunications, including the internet. Fiber optics have reached the Gar directly, so we have a 300mbps line that all residents share and that in principle should be enough to satisfy demand. Sporadic power outages, normally associated with some failure that is generally resolved in a short period of time.

Air connectivity is still quite limited, but there are several options that were not available until not long ago. Especially flights from Europe through Plus Ultra and Iberia; and of course from Russia. Remember that Russians and European citizens do not need visas to enter Venezuela, as well most of the Latin American countries except Peruvian and Chilean citizens, for them the principle of diplomatic reciprocity applies, so it means they will be required the same documentations that Venezuelans need to enter Peru or Chile, so in this particular cases there is an application to go through. This is the general framework.

We are happy and excited knowing that we will finally have a significant group of our Vajra family visiting us. Feeling the collective energy of our Community again will give us more strength to continue perse-



vering in the conservation of the Gar and its future. But at the same time we call on you to participate, to come, and to share with us.

At the budgetary level we are still short. We have enough to go through to the end of the year, and we trust that this relaunch will help us connect with more practitioners inspired to lend their support to continue sustaining the Gar. It is important to us that you notify us of your participation in advance. We must prepare the infrastructure to offer you the greatest possible comfort. There are still very few of us who reside in the Gar, so we must fine-tune our resources and energy to what is essential to be ready for December.

At this moment we are doing repairs on the floor of the Gõnpa, due to the loosening of the terracottas. We will try to have more space recovered by December, especially since the bulk of our program is in retreats

and courses related to the Dance of the Vajra, which obviously requires more spaces. If you are sure that you will come, or think that there is a great possibility, please write to us at tashigarnortesecretary@gmail.com. Furthermore, there we can answer any questions you may have related to your possible trip. For more information you can visit our website tashigarnorte.org, which has been redesigned for the occasion and where more information can be found.

This season of courses and retreats can also serve to allow all those interested in acquiring property within the Gar to verify on site the general conditions of the country, the particular conditions of Tashigar North, and in general verify the state of the property that may be of your interest. The prices are truly bargain prices, and our main interest is to repopulate the Tashigar Norte Village with practitioners who are committed to contributing to its mission of supporting the general structure of the Gar. Owners of houses and land in Tashigar Norte contribute with an annual maintenance fee for condominium expenses, which in turn represent 50% of the Gar's general budget. The other half is the Gakyil's responsibility for IDC-related activities, courses, retreats, talks and general fundraising activities.

The possibilities of obtaining legal residency in Venezuela are not that complicated. Especially within the framework of the RENTISTA VISA, whose requirement is to certify a monthly income greater than US\$ 1,200. The cost of the procedure is only US\$ 30 and must be processed at the Venezuelan consulate in your country of origin, or one nearby (if you do not have an operational consular office in your country). Last week we already had a concrete experience since Ralf Strehle successfully obtained the aforementioned visa that he processed at the Venezuelan consulate in Frankfurt. This visa immediately gives Ralf RESIDENT status, that is, he will not be limited by dates or quantity of entries or exits from the country. This places Tashigar Norte as a permanent residence destination for retirees or anyone who has a guaranteed income. We also think that it can be very useful for our digital nomads, those who work ONLINE since, as has already been said previously, there is an improved internet offer on the island. While it is true that the cost of living in general has caught up with the global situation, services are still very affordable, and this can allow you to live in Margarita on a modest budget.

But evidently the most important thing of all is the joy of being able to offer our Community in general a program of practices and retreats and at the same time being able to share and feel their energy



around us. We are really grateful to all the instructors who are making this possible, thank you for accepting our invitation and helping to make this possible.

And so we will begin our activities right after the celebrations of our Master's birthday, with a Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings course guided by Anna Apraksina from December 10th to 14th. This course will have a particular emphasis on inviting residents on Margarita Island who have shown some interest in teaching, but it will definitely serve to reinforce our knowledge for all of us who already know it. It is followed by a course offered by Grisha Mokhin related to Guruyoga, this being a course aimed at practitioners in the Community who have already received the Chögyal Namkhai Norbu or Yeshe Silvano Namkhai transmission. The same conditions will apply to the second course offered by Grisha related to the Semdzin practices that runs from January 4th to 8th. From the 12th to the 14th Anna once again offers us another course on the Dance of the Three Vajras, open to all those interested in participating.

In February we received a visit from our main Dance instructor Prima Mai, who opens her collaboration with Tashigar Norte with a course on the Khalong Dorjeikar of Vajra Dance, which will be taught for the first time to us in Tashigar Norte. (We will work on the development of the

new mandala from the month of December) As most of you will know this course is restricted to all those who have received the Chögyal Namkhai Norbu or Yeshe Silvano Namkhai transmission, who know one or more Vajra dances, and who know by heart the Song of the Vajra.

From February 10th to 24th we will have a practice retreat related to the Losar celebrations, and we will commemorate 20 years since Rinpoche first taught the Inner Practice of Gomadevi; and thus time the 22 years since the Longsal cycle of teachings was formally transmitted, all of which took place here, in Tashigar Norte. For that reason, we add to the usual Mandarava practice, a Thun of practice that will combine the Inner Practice of Gomadevi with the Dance of the Song of Vajra. Practices for this portion of the program will be led by Grisha (to be confirmed), Prima Mai and Rita Renzi.

At some point during this period, we will organize a fundraising activity, with the aim of collecting what is necessary to complete our budget for the year 2024. Prima Mai will close its participation in this season with two courses, from March 1st to 3rd, a Supervision from Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings and from March 8th to 9th the Dance of the Three Vajras. Subsequently, subject to obtaining the required visa, Steven Landsberg would offer two practice retreats, probably one on Jñana Dhakini and another on Dhakini Simhamuka Practice.

As you can see, finally Tashigar Norte can offer you something more concrete, relative to our true reason for being. We trust that these events will be a relaunching platform for the re-flowering of the Gar. There are probably many questions to be resolved, if it is the case, do not hesitate to contact us at tashigarnortesecretary@gmail.com or through the chat on our Instagram [@tashigarnorte](https://www.instagram.com/tashigarnorte). Also we encourage you to visit tashigarnorte.org where most of the information is already posted.

Waiting for you.

Gakyil of Tashigar Norte



Consecration of the Chortens

Raimondo Bultrini continues recounting his travels and experiences with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Tibet in 1988. At Nyaglagar, residence of Rinpoche's root teacher, Changchub Dorje, the Master leads a puja to consecrate the chortens and Raimondo searches for a cave from one of Rinpoche's dreams.



Namkhai Norbu's visit to Nyaglagar is an exceptional event for many reasons. First and foremost is the role of a 'reincarnated' figure in the culture of the Tibetan people. The 'tulku' is somewhat related to the deity himself, and his presence alone blesses places and people. Furthermore, at Nyaglagar, Namkhai Norbu is one of the most important disciples of the founding lama. That is why they ask him to consecrate all the chortens and places of worship with long ceremonies.

Form and ritual have their importance because even if they are invisible, guests have been invited into the house. It is therefore a good rule to offer sweets, liquor and food in a proper way.

Thus the ceremony is preceded by a puja, a banquet that follows rather particular procedures, given the exceptional nature of the guests. The puja is another ritual that is characteristic of Eastern religions, during which offerings are first presented to the deities and higher beings, then to oneself, and finally to the lower beings and all others whom one intends to benefit.

Thirty years later, Namkhai Norbu is offered the clothes and objects of his master in order to lead the great puja that begins early in the morning. The visits to our room thus become more frequent and faster.

The preparations all take place over time. On an altar lit by hundreds of butter lamps, the *torma* offerings are ready, moulded forms of tsampa, butter and sugar in the shape of cones, to which small balls of butter alone are added, giving the *torma*

doll-like shapes. In this way they symbolically replace the human and then animal victims that were once offered to the deities in ancient times. There are also simple foodstuffs like rice, meat, sweets, and liquor.

Everything is authenticated by mantras at the beginning of the ceremony, but I do not take part. Namkhai Norbu is adamant: "There is no point in your presence, you cannot even read the texts". In this case rituals are fundamental, because through gestures and intentions the offerings are destined to beings who cannot enjoy them in their material form. A slightly risky comparison can be made with the food and the wine of the Christian liturgy, but only as a principle of transformation, of transubstantiation from the material offering. And this requires precise practices, formulas of communication between beings that speak different languages.

When I reach the temple, a wing of the crowd that has not found space inside opens up to let me sit in the great hall of frescoes. The interior has completely changed in appearance from previous days; on one side nuns and practitioners are sitting, on the other the women gather around the widow of Changchub Dorje's son, Sonam Palmo and Phuntsog.

They chant in low tones, interrupted by the high-pitched notes of trumpets and conch shells and the beat of the damarus and drums. Every so often Rinpoche, assisted by Karwang, sprinkles the offerings of

sweet wine, which is then distributed in the hall. Each person takes a sip and pours the rest over their heads, intending to nourish body and mind with the nectar of purification, previously offered to the deities.

Suddenly the ceremony stops and there is a commotion in the temple. Namkhai Norbu, Karwang and the other lamas are changing clothes and the focal moment of the day has arrived. The procession of officiants is coming out to consecrate chortens and temples. With my camera I film the crowd that has already poured out into the open and I also take a few photos. There are a lot of children, naturally curious, who want to see the video camera and the camera, but, respectfully, they don't touch anything. One of them, who has proudly offered to help me with my bag, turns around and follows me around silently.

In the meantime, monks and lamas come out of the temple door in a line, make a clockwise circle around the building and do the same with all the chortens scattered around the perimeter of the village. People crowd into the streets, climb up the earthen mounds, go down to the river, follow the procession and precede it. This ceremony has some vague outward resemblance to a Christian procession, but everything around it is Tibet and Buddhism: the sound of horns and drums, the furnace where they burn the food offerings of the ganapuja and those brought from people's homes. The procession stops in front of



each chorten and the lamas toss grains of rice and water while chanting mantras. I run along the narrow streets to get ahead of the others and film with my video camera, followed by the little boy with the camera bag over his shoulder. I'm exhausted by the time we reach the last stop in front of the largest chorten, where the relics of Changchub Dorje will probably be placed in the future.

A long chant begins, accompanied by the sound of instruments. Rinpoche is now in the center of the group of officiants. In his left hand he holds a bell, with his right hand he moves a dorje with slow, repeated, elliptical gestures. The low monotonous chanting is carried by the highland wind while the audience stands by, serious and absorbed, but also intrigued and amused by this out-of-the-ordinary day that the village is experiencing.

Back in the temple, the ganapuja resumes and everyone sits back down in their seats. It is time for the offering of food, which represents the experience of the senses. Sweet and salty, sour and spicy flavours are combined in a single bowl: the choice signifies that the different experiences of the senses have a single quality for those who maintain the presence of the state of contemplation.

One of the young monks in charge of distributing the bowls also offers one to four people leaning against the temple door who do not look at all like villagers. They have Tibetan faces but dress Western-style, and their presence is strange in these places where one only arrives on horseback. They are policemen sent from Qamdo, the capital,

a couple of days away, to check our permits. Evidently some reports have reached their command. They have rude and arrogant manners, and the eldest one in particular insists strongly that my permit is invalid.

Namkhai Norbu, while maintaining a cold, expressionless gaze, is visibly irate. When he hears them speaking in Mandarin, he asks: "But are you not Tibetans?" The policemen answer yes, then try to justify themselves with an apology: "We thought you didn't understand the Lhasa dialect". And he: "In any case, you can guess that I understand the Lhasa dialect better than Chinese".

The meeting, which takes place while the monks serve sweets and food to the unwanted visitors, ends without any problems for my stay and the puja resumes regularly. I am increasingly impressed by everyone's kindness, even towards the policemen, representative of a power that is practically invisible here, but which is linked above all to the memory of the senseless violence of the Revolution.

They say that Nyaglagar emerged almost unscathed from the events of the 20 years of terror, thanks to the prophetically 'socialist' imprint of its founder. Changchub Dorje himself contributed to the village's activities with his work as a doctor, which had made him famous throughout much of Tibet, and possessed a charisma that did not leave even the enemies of religion indifferent. The accusation of just one of the Tibetans in the area who had gone over to the new regime would have been enough to condemn him to death. But the lama lived a very long time, over 130 years, according

to the calculations of his senior disciples. And when the Chinese wanted to put him on trial, no one spoke out against him.

The Dream of Thögal

As I learn more and more about the details of the life of this long-lived, extraordinary man, I want to know everything about him, as well as cultivating the usual secret desire to see him appear before me at any moment.

When we first enter the house where Changchub Dorje had lived, we are followed by a large group of people. His grandson Karwang points out two large wooden boxes inside a dark room. Apparently, the body of the master, preserved in salt, is kept here. Everyone is in silent reflection, while I am a little disappointed. I was expecting wonders, but instead nothing happens.

However, I do not stop hoping that – after seeing me in his room – Changchub Dorje will appear in some dream of mine. Instead, I have a night of fever, cold and diarrhoea. One of the monks who studied medicine with the lama touches my forehead and checks my pulse. Then he returns with a dozen microscopic pills to chew and drink with hot water. I immediately fall asleep and in the morning the fever is gone.

The possibility of a master like Changchub Dorje appearing in a dream is not just my idea stimulated by the stories of his old disciples. Namkhai Norbu himself owes the historical turning points of his life to dreams. The first time was when he saw the master and his village in such detail that he recognized them in the description

» continued on the following page



Raimondo with Lama Karwang.

>> continued from previous page

of a traveller returning from Nyaglagar, convincing him to set out on his journey to come here. The same thing happened many years later, when Rinpoche had by then settled in the West.

He was already teaching Tibetan to students at the University of Naples and was about to marry Rosa, a young Italian girl he had met in Rome. Many students were fond of him and had long insisted that – in addition to the normal university courses – Namkhai Norbu should also pass on the teachings he had received in Tibet.

However, the young lama-professor did not dare take the risk of speaking about the Dharma to people among whom there was not even one who was really interested, and he never felt ready. In his dreams, which also corresponded to deep and natural desires, he often returned to Tibet, the land that politics physically prevented him from seeing again. Not infrequently, his mind travelled to Nyaglagar, one of the last places he visited before leaving the Land of the Snows.

Namkhai Norbu was one of those disciples who could practice even without sitting in meditation. He therefore normally applied *tregchöd*, a term meaning 'to cut what binds'. When tensions build up inside, the masters explain, they are like so many sticks that a rope binds together tightly. Cutting the rope loosens the bundle. With years of experience, Namkhai Norbu had managed to fully integrate this

practice into his daily life. But the time for the 'leap' to more advanced practices seemed still far off.

One night, returning to Nyaglagar in his dream, he met Changchub Dorje. His old master asked him a few questions about life in the West, then asked how his practice of *thögal*, which means "to surpass that which is above everything", i.e. beyond the ordinary control of the mind and senses, was progressing. An advanced and one of

the most secret teachings, it requires perfect control of one's body, voice and mind: hence a well-established *tregchöd*.

Changchub Dorje had already introduced the young tulku to *thögal* during his physical presence at Nyaglagar. But when he heard that Namkhai Norbu had made no progress in that direction, he told him to go immediately to a famous master, Jigme Lingpa. Namkhai Norbu was quite surprised, for Jigme Lingpa had lived more than two centuries earlier. But, knowing the severity of Changchub Dorje, who did not like to see his advice questioned, his disciple preferred not to contradict him. So he set off without delay towards the indicated place, just above the village of Nyaglagar, climbing up the smooth rocks on which were carved the very verses of the *thögal* tantra, the new practice he was seeking.

Avoiding the sacred inscriptions, he reached the top and entered a cave as instructed by the master. There, to his surprise, there was only a child with long hair who immediately began to read the text on a small papyrus scroll: the practice of the four lights of *thögal*. This and other dreams were decisive for the exiled practitioner in Italy. He finally felt certain of what he was doing and confident that he was not teaching his students things unrelated to his own direct experience.

This is what the transmission of knowledge is all about. "If we try to understand



One of the Tibetan ladders Raimondo used for climbing up to the cave.

what an object in the middle of a dark room looks like,” Namkhai Norbu explains to me, “we can listen to a lot of talk to describe it. They will tell us that it is round or square, high or low, opaque or transparent. But only with direct experience can we really know what it is. The master is the one who turns on the light in the room for an instant and allows us to see for ourselves, like a flash, what that object really is.”

In Search of the Cave

Chatting with the lamas of Nyaglagar, Namkhai Norbu also tells them the story of the dream. Hearing the description of the place, everyone is sure that the cave really exists, and that it is only a few hours away from the village.

Of course I immediately offer to go, but Rinpoche thinks it is too risky. To reach it one has to use a very long wooden ladder leaning against a rock on an overhang. Tibetan ladders do not have rungs where one can comfortably rest one's feet, but simple hollows carved into the trunk no wider than 20 or 30 centimetres. Only after two days of insisting am I allowed to search for the famous cave, on foot and accompanied by two boys.

Jedup and Tsema Nongro are good climbers and keep up a brisk pace. I cannot keep up with them, but they often stop to wait for me. For four hours we walk uphill before we reach a large rock summit where not one but two dangerous wooden ladders are leaning. Namkhal Norbu was able to reach this place in a dream, I on the other hand have to climb with my still sickly physical body.

Before I reach the cave, completely exhausted, my two young escorts point out another deep opening in the rock where there is a statuette of Dolma Tara that is believed to be self-originated. Her form is quite well modelled and covered in silk clothes, like a baby doll. I can't believe it was carved by mother nature, but the rock of the cave is so hard that it seems difficult to shape even with a chisel.

We continue to climb up to our destination, encountering other caves of various sizes, where there are often pools of pure water adorned with large floating water lilies. There is another 'staircase' to climb, this one practically suspended in the void, before reaching the top of the cave. The inside of the cave is protected by a wooden wall, because in recent years many yogis have been in retreat here. There is an initial cave from bare rock,

then a new wooden door and the meditation room with many unexpected objects: a small table, a few statuettes and ritual instruments.

The interior of the cave transmits a very strong energy that amplifies the sound of the mantras themselves. The two boys light cypress branches with an intense protume, and eagles fly over the valley, illuminated at times by the sun coming in and out of dark clouds that threaten rain.



One of the caves with floating water lilies.

We have to hurry down, but all three of us remain motionless and spellbound, watching the great precipice below us, which continues like a huge wound between the mountains, down to the valley, beyond the Nyaglagar River.

When I get back I describe every detail to Namkhai Norbu, but he does not seem very interested in the cave I visited. He is much more intrigued by a round opening I saw on the side of the nearby mountain, which is practically unreachable unless one turns into an eagle. That could also be the place of the dream, but fortunately he doesn't ask me if I feel like going back.

My mystical side is now definitely taking over and I am really looking forward to making direct contact with Changchub Dorje. Early in the morning we set off with Namkhai Norbu and the usual group of people for a hike into the heart of the mountain overlooking Nyaglagar. After reaching the cave of teachings, we pro-

ceeded to a natural vault that gives access to a dense network of tunnels where Changchub Dorje discovered the special clay he used for medicines and sacred objects.

Here Namkhai Norbu prevents me from going any further, with a sharp remark. “It is useless for you to follow me,” he says, “yours is only curiosity anyway.” I feel my pride boiling up again and I am charged with tension. What then is the difference between a sincere desire to know and cu-

riosity? It is no small question. It questions a lot of my past and my convictions.

We have been back for a few hours and it is now evening. I think back to the episode in the cave and admit that, yes, I was first of all curious. But I feel that I really want to understand what the key is that opens the door to the secrets of this place. With this wish, I fall asleep, again to the sound of the long horns which spreads somberly all around. ©

All photos in the article were screenshots taken from Raimondo's video film of his time at Nyaglagar with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

The Copper-Colored Mountain

Jigme Lingpa on
Padmasambhava's Pure Land

Georgios Halkias & Christina Partsalaki
Snow Lion 2022

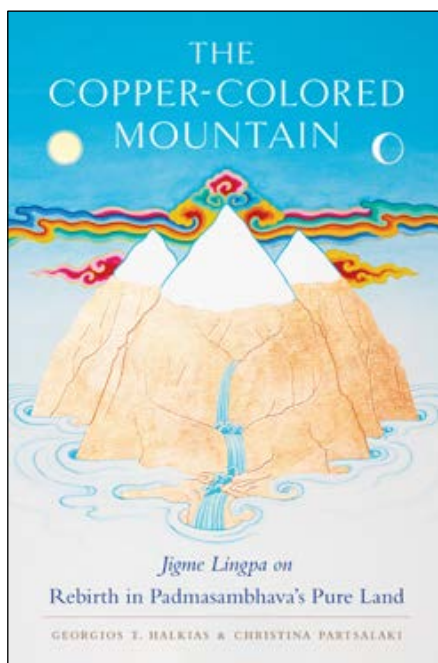
Andy Lukianowicz

There is a wonderful scene in a Peter Pan film, when the bad pirate threatens a shaman, asking him how he feels about his upcoming death, and the shaman replies with a grin, 'Ah, death, the last adventure!'. The pirate then blasts him with his blunderbuss, and you see the shaman smiling as he hurtles towards a future he is primed and ready for; shortly afterwards the pesky pirate gets blasted too, and the terrified look on his face....

Where to go, what to do? The Nondro recites: 'Death is real, comes without warning, this body will be a corpse.'

Prof. Halkias, who has also provided us with the marvellous 'Luminous Bliss', on the not so well known history of Amitabha Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet (in Japan Shin Buddhism it is the most widely practised Buddhist path, aptly known as the 'easy path', advocating surrender to and reliance on tariki, the Infinite Love, Power and Light of Amida Buddha guiding us to rebirth in Sukhavati) has, together with Christina Partsalaki written an equally illuminating book on rebirth in Zangdok Palri, Padmasambhava's Lotus Light Palace in the Copper-Colored Mountain, Guru Rinpoche's Pure Land.

The book expounds on Jigme Lingpa's 'Secret Path', an aspiration prayer composed by Jigme Lingpa while on retreat at Samye Chimpu during a mystical vision of Padmasambhava in union with his consort Kharchen Yeshe Tsogyal. In the Longchen Nyingthig inner nondro, guru yoga practitioners visualize themselves as Vajrayogini at the center of the Glorious Copper Colored Mountain and Guru Rinpoche inseparably dissolves into their body. It can also be recited and practised independently, by Vajrayana practitioners who are not yet sure of their mastery of their practice when their time of death approaches, as a means of attaining rebirth in Padmasambhava's Pure Land, a better place



to hear and practise teachings, through their faith and devotion.

Arranged in three parts, the book guides the practitioner inward and upward along Jigme Lingpa's Secret Path through Padmasambhava's Lotus Light Palace, 'laid out in mnemonic form as a pithy account of practical instructions and esoteric insights corresponding to the outer, inner and secret interpretations of the Nyingma teachings'. The outer perspective reads as a Mahayana aspiration for rebirth in a nirmanakaya pure land; the inner, describes the sambhogakaya luminosity of Vajrayana; and the secret, introduces the abiding dharmakaya inner nature of Dzogchen. The very structure of the Palace in three tiers allows an upward movement from the ground floor where nirmanakaya Padmasambhava presides to the middle floor of sambhogakaya Padmapani and the top floor of dharmakaya Kuntuzangpo-Amitabha. Also interesting is the subtle way Jigme Lingpa's Secret Path mirrors Zangpo Drakpa's Leu Denma Seven Chapter Prayer to Padmasambhava, perhaps the best known and best loved prayer to Padmasambhava among the Nyingmapas.

The first part comprises the first 6 stanzas and offers a description of the topography of the Copper Colored Mountain and a detailed description of the structure of Padmasambhava's surmounting Lotus Light Palace. The second part, comprising stanzas 7 to 14, focusses on the three levels of the Lotus Light Palace, examining the trikaya principle, the three kinds of transmission, three kinds of offerings and

tripartite register of the nine vehicles. The third, concluding part, comprising stanzas 15 to 19, pertains to esoteric meditations and instructions, treating the ten stages and five paths of bodhisattva Mahayana, the stages of Vajrayana deity practice, then the extraordinary wisdom lama level of Dzogchen. This leads to the aspiration to be ushered into Padmasambhava's Pure land by welcoming dakinis (in Amida's Sukhavati it is Amida himself, his accompanying bodhisattvas and monks who receive practitioners into Sukhavati).

A word of warning: aspire to the highest level, Padmasambhava's Pure Land is bordered by and thus inhabited by the land of the rakshasas, and you don't want to go to their areas!

Of course, ultimately the Pure Land is in us, in our heart; although some great Chinese and Japanese Pure Land masters have stated that this doesn't preclude the existence of a Pure Land also billions of miles to the west.

This book is a miracle of study and research, where almost every sentence is footnoted with many quotations from scholarly western language books and canonical text in translated form available to western readers. The authors/translators/editors give a general overview also with detailed explanations of the three series of Dzogchen teachings (mind, space and pith, semde, longde and menangde/upadesha; this last explained according to its four modes of liberation; also mentioned is Sri Simha's division into four cycles) and of Dzogchen practice, from the initial korde rushen pointing up the difference between mind (sem) and nature of the mind (sem-nyid), progressing to its two styles of practice, trekcho and togal (and yangthig) including summaries of the four lamps and of the four visions of togel; the explanations though concise are exhaustive and thorough. A well-deserved heart-felt thanks for such a wonderful work.

And very timely, especially for some at the stage of life when, in the words of Robert McCrum, 'every third thought' is about death; if the second thought is about sex, as Freud would have it, then let the first thought (the only thought?) of those of us who might not succeed to Jalu be one of aspiration for rebirth in Guru Rinpoche's Pure Land. ©

Dedicated to Igor Legati

January 17, 1943–July 16, 2023

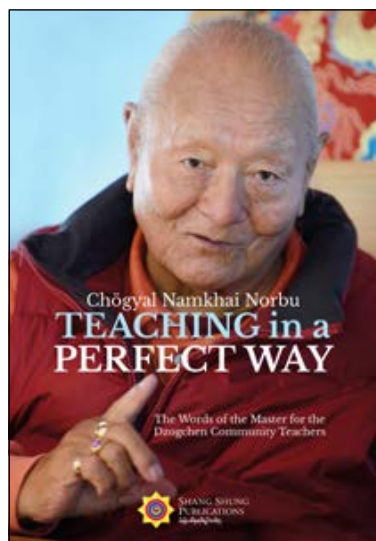
Hi Igor...how is everything?
We hope everything is well and went as it was supposed to.

We are here in the office-shop-ware-house of Shang Shung Publications. Or, to be more precise, your “Shang Shung Edizioni” as you always wanted to continue calling the Publishing House.

We are in the process of finalizing the preparation of the Italian version of two of the last books published in English, the ones that you really wanted us to publish and to which you devoted so much energy and time in the last two years:

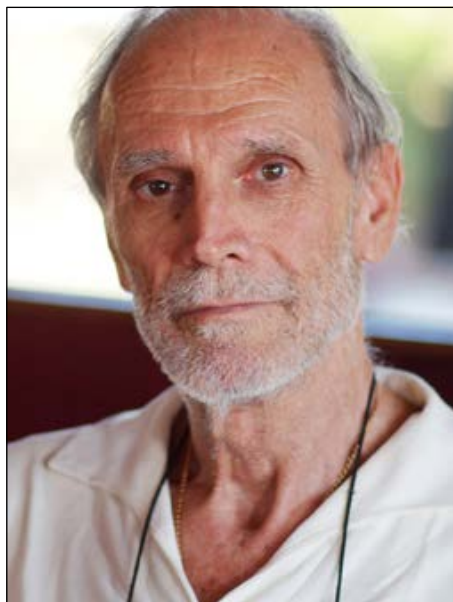
Teaching in a Perfect Way. Insegnare in modo perfetto. (English cover photo).

Scopri uno, scopri tutto. When You Discover One, You Discover All (Cover photo in English)

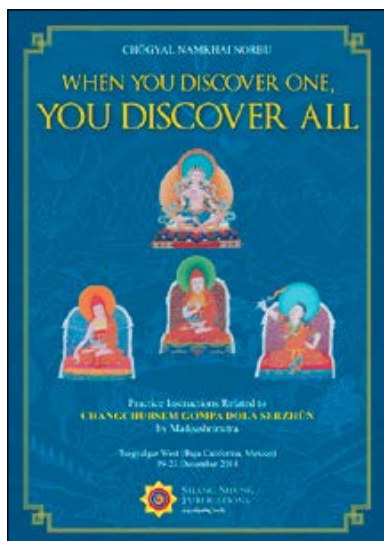


We will do as you said: recommend them to practitioners as two books to read carefully. Highlighting that the first one contains a lot of guidance and suggestions on how to relate to the Teaching in life and practice, while the second one has some rare comments and instructions from the Master on a text by Mañjushrimitra.

We really miss you, dear Igor.



We miss you as a Vajra brother, as a friend, as a colleague, as a point of reference for our publishing activity, both for the technical aspects that you knew how to take care of in an incredible way, and for the assurance you provided regarding the terms and meaning of the words contained in the Shang Shung books.



Some of us have known you professionally for only a few years, while others have known you since you began working at Shang Shung Edizioni, founded in 1983 at the request of Master Namkhai Norbu, contributing greatly to the wonderful history of commitment, dedication and culture of the Dzogchen Community Publishing House.

Your expertise was equal to your commitment and therefore difficult to list now in full.

However, many good things have been said about you in these days, and those who were not exactly familiar with your role and work were impressed to know the quality and level of your contribution and commitment, continuous and constant, that you ensured in our publishing activities.

You came to Merigar in the early 1990s from Turin, where you were already working for the Einaudi publishing house, translating important books, and, perhaps, because of this, you immediately began working with Shang Shung Edizioni.

A few years later, in 1994, as soon as the Santi Maha Sangha program began, you started editing the Italian texts, assisting Adriano Clemente who was translating them from Tibetan into Italian. You also collaborated, right away, on the SMS trainings to help Jim Valby and Adriano who at that time were Rinpoche's only assistants. You edited a great number of books.

In short, as someone who knew you very well said, yours was a life dedicated to the Dzogchen Community, to the Teachings and to the Master.

For this, dear Igor, we are infinitely grateful for all that you have done.

The Shang Shung Publications Team ©

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Rowan Wylie

One day in 1980, when I was heartbroken and lonely in Boudhanath near Kathmandu, a Spanish Tibetan nun waved in a friendly way from the stupa. This was a turning point in my life.

It was in a geography class at primary school in Cambridge, England, that I first heard of Buddhism. We learned about monks in saffron robes who had no possessions but a bowl which was filled with food by grateful citizens. I was immediately attracted to this way of life.

A few years later I saw a monk on television describing Buddhism. "It's very simple", he said, "Cease to do evil, learn to do good, purify the heart." This seemed to me the essence of Christianity without the confusions of faith and dogma.

After drama school in 1968 I joined an experimental theatre company. We chanted Om lying on the floor with our heads together. We searched for truth in expression and trained body, speech and mind.

But by the end of the 1970's, my career and love life in England had become stagnant. Would I ever love again, would I ever work in theatre again? My highest ambitions and heroes seemed somehow empty, which might have been sour grapes but I had no sweet goal.

I followed the Dice Man, then the I Ching, read Gurjeff and Alistair Crowley and practiced yoga. Once I had a vivid dream of clear light, the ecstatic reverse of a nightmare. A meditation retreat with Friends of the Western Buddhist order was informative but not attractive.

Then through a series of apparently unconnected events I decided to go to India. It was that or therapy, and I was proud and cynical.

Hashish was described as the first guru by the chillum babas, devotees of Shiva. I was a regular user, and had also experienced a few mind-opening acid trips in the wildernesses of Holland. In Rishikesh I was welcomed to stay with a small group of followers of Babaji and Babaji, one middle aged and bald, one younger with long hair, both small and wiry. We sat round the sacred fire and smoked chillum all day long in their little half-built temple, ate

rice and dahl and learned the etiquette of those activities.....I stayed with them several weeks and they never asked me for any money or reprimanded me for not getting up at dawn for morning puja.

The lasting lesson I learned from these kind men was to honor in some way each shrine I came across – which in India is often every hundred yards, every large tree or new vista – with an offering or cleaning or recognition.

From there I went to Madras for the music festival; I learned to salute the sun and attended teachings from Krishnamurti, considering him my teacher even though he rejected the idea of there being anything to teach.

In Goa I put my money and passport in a bank to experiment with living without possessions for a few weeks. I had some silk scarves to sell for cash and one could always sleep on the beach. The tarot came to life and everything was sharp bright and meaningful – then I went down with hepatitis.

While recovering near the Tibetan border at Tato Pani in Nepal I slept on a sort of covered veranda above a room where some Tibetan students were studying thanka painting. Their master was most impressive and in my memory he wore a brimmed hat like Garab Dorje and emanated energy. Sometimes a young man would come to wash under the hot springs and release his long braids from their red string. Such beauty.

On several occasions I'd heard about a Hindu swami who was teaching very prac-

tical ways of discovering one's nature, and I joined a group of about 20 Europeans and Israelis who lived in a few empty houses in the forest above Dalhousie. We chanted mantra, prostrated, walked, stayed awake, sang songs, fasted, remained silent, told the truth, meditated. Oh, and smoked chillum. It was very intense and interesting, people changed.

After nearly two years in India I'd learned to honor each sacred image and tree, to chant mantra while walking, to cherish stillness, to mistrust hierarchies, to accept chaos.

But falling helplessly in love with the favorite disciple of Swamiji threw me back into hope and despair. Somewhere I believed that, despite decades of women's emancipation, like a Jane Austin heroine my life would only be fulfilled when I had The Man.

When that didn't work out I found myself heartbroken and lonely in Boudhanath, Kathmandu. A Spanish Tibetan nun waved in a friendly way from the stupa. A few days later I met her again, she took me to Kopan monastery where Lama Thubten Yeshe was teaching a Lam Rim course. On the way we watched a rehearsal of the Lama dances, with full masks and 360 degree turns.

Lama Thubten Yeshe, a friendly gap-toothed presence, looked like the real thing. I'd already met the Dalai Lama a couple of times and was confident in the integrity of Tibetan masters. Lama Yeshe was talking about all the cold hell realms (I'd arrived in the middle of the course). We weren't al-



lowed to eat after midday or smoke. After three days I left.

Then I met the lovely nun Maria again in Bodh Gaya. I was following a Vipassana course and had (almost literally) bumped into the Dalai Lama again.

She told me about her monastery in the north of England and I started imaging myself on the Gelugpa path. Giving up attachments because they hurt! But strangely, when I told her I was apprehensive about my imminent return to the West, instead of inviting me to her monastery she suggested another interesting Tibetan Lama coming to England very soon. She guided me towards the Manjushri centre in London and they gave me the phone number of Judy Allen who gave me an address in Devon. Grimstone Manor, Horrabridge, Yelverton, Dartmoor....

It was Easter 1981 (?) and I'd spent a few days with relatives before joining the retreat at Grimstone Manor. The last leg of the journey was on foot up winding green Devon lanes with my well-travelled rucksack. Unexpectedly a car stopped beside me, and two smiling American women asked if I was on my way to the retreat. How did they know? Of course I was delighted to accept a lift from Nancy Simmons and Joyce Petchek.

Rinpoche was sitting talking to a few people during a break when I arrived, a large, relaxed, kindly man. I prostrated as was the custom in Gelugpa circles, and was gently told by someone that it wasn't the practice here. There was no immediate recognition, no flash of awakening, but the informality was refreshing and I loved the singing: in those days we practiced medium Tun and Chöd every evening. When Rinpoche was teaching I understood some things and didn't mind that much was obscure. I took notes and bought the blue books.

What would Krishnamurti make of Norbu? Dzogchen the essence was surely what he was talking about, but I didn't think he'd like the deities and guardians... We gazed into space leaning on a stick, dissolved the blue hung like a drop of water disappearing in the sun. When I heard about the nomadic chödpas who travelled with string bags I imagined myself in that role. When Rinpoche (we called him Norbu in those days) spoke of there being different ways of direct introduction, for instance a flower, he looked at me as he held up a flower from his vase, and I felt he was talking to me.

Returning to London to try to work out what to do with my life I thought of my experience with the Dzogchen Community as a pleasant episode. Then one day I met Colin Ellar on his bike, he lived almost opposite me. He told me about the regular Sunday Ganapujas at Nina Robinson's flat in Hampstead, and occasional yantra sessions.

A few weeks later Colin told me about a Dzogchen retreat in California. What an idea! On the move again! I had just enough money to go, registered somehow (how was it done in those days?) and booked a flight.

There were several adventures around this trip, my first visit to the States, but the important outcome was this: I recognized that I wanted to remain connected to this Master and the Dzogchen Community, but my path was not through intellectual understanding but by karma yoga. I'd been working in the kitchen and met all sorts of people from university professors to marijuana growers and loved the diversity and collaboration. And though drugs were discouraged people drank wine, so renunciation was averted!

After two more years in India, and back in England a woman asked me to accompany her to Merigar one winter to help with her luggage. This was my first visit. Maybe it was 1984. Everything was in the yellow house. We slept in the dormitory like sardines, the Gönpa was what is now the office, Rinpoche and family lived upstairs. There were two toilets for us all.

I must have liked it because I used to go most summers for Rinpoche's big retreats, often under canvas when numbers increased. I'd turn up early to do karma yoga for the preparation and work in the kitchen for my board. Attending at least one retreat with Rinpoche every year was a kind of balm in my otherwise overactive life.

When I heard that Rinpoche was teaching a dance I was immediately interested. Gurdjieff's description of himself as a dance master had always intrigued me.

Winter in Merigar again, the mandala was painted on the blue carpet in the capanone, now the Mandala Hall. I was given the job of sleeping there to ensure the wood burning stove, a ceramic pagoda, was stocked up at night. I followed Om A Hung each evening and learned from Cristiana de Falco the first moves that were taught of the Dance of the Vajra.

Then in Babia near Mojaca, Spain, Prima Mai drew the mandala in chalk on the carpark. I was already hooked and trying to make sense of the moves, still just the first



few phrases, but the lack of color was not helping. On a walk in the desert my friend Phil and I came across a seam of bright blue chalky clay amongst the rocks and scrub. Perfect for the mandala! We took a few handfuls in a hat. As we scrambled back to path we saw another area of bright green, unlike anything I'd seen before. The next day in another area I found red and then yellow clay, which we sprinkled round the thigles of the mandala. Quite extraordinary, this synchronicity cemented my relationship to the dance.

The next summer I was able to learn the now completed Dance of the Song of the Vajra from Stoffelina Verdonk and Adriana del Borgo, and have continued to study and practice regularly. I had the good fortune to live near Cindy Faulkner for few years and dance every week. When I had the opportunity to buy a house the first requirement was that it was near a mandala!

My nomadic impulses are now satisfied by retreat hopping. Vajrayana practice and contemplation have brought a degree of stability to my life but remain elusive – it's with the Vajra Dances that I remain beyond doubt. My gratitude to our Master, the teachings and the sangha is profound. ☉



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