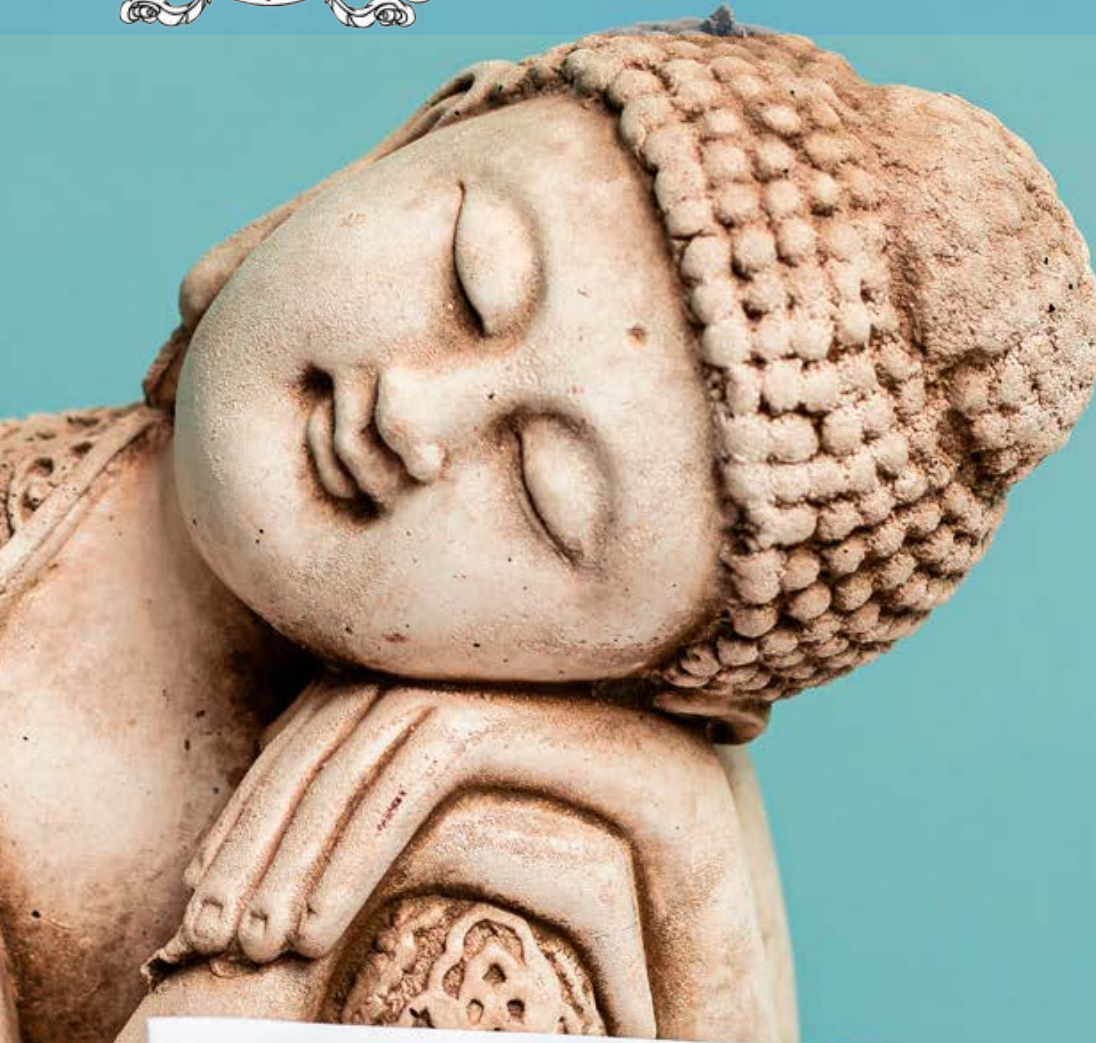


THE MIRROR

No. 162
December 2023



LDzGar
Asociación Cultural Dzamling Gar

Song of the Vajra Retreat
Shang Shung Publications – The First 40 years
10th Anniversary of Dzamling Gar



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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Dzogchen Teachings with Yeshe Namkhai

Dear members of the Dzogchen Community,
It is with great joy that we inform you that Yeshe Namkhai will hold a retreat of Dzogchen Teachings in Merigar from the afternoon of June 20th to the morning of June 27th, 2024.

On behalf of everyone, we thank Yeshe Namkhai for his generosity and compassion.

We will send out further updates and information on how to enroll at a later date.

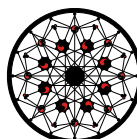
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Back cover: Dancers from Asociación Cultural
Tajaraste de Santa Cruz de Tenerife.
Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov



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This issue of The Mirror is part of the project "Lo Specchio digitale" made possible with the contribution of UBI, the Italian Buddhist Union. The project aims to foster the dissemination of Dzogchen, enabling a growing national and international audience to come into contact with this precious Teaching. To this end, the communication and circulation of the Mirror will be enhanced, its technical and multimedia aspects renewed, its usability improved, its content collected and systematized, and the professional skills of its human resources strengthened.



The Importance of Membership – Join your nearest IDC Gar or Ling Today!

Dear Global Vajra Family,
Membership in the Dzogchen Community is the way we demonstrate our individual commitment to the Teachings, the Master, and our Sangha.

Membership is a fundamental way to support the worldwide network of Gars and Lings that Rinpoche created with infinite generosity and for the benefit of all.

Our Gars and Lings rely on our memberships to cover their operating costs, while providing us with retreats, programs, and webcasts, among other benefits in collaboration with the International Dzogchen Community.

Please join our collective community effort and renew your IDC membership. Through this annual commitment, each of us ensures the continued health of the Dzogchen Community, supports the Teach-

ings, and makes the development of our practice a continued reality.

Renewing this year's membership, as well as past years' if necessary, is easy. Visit dzogchen.net to view and choose the payment methods for the Gar or Ling closest to your geographical area of residence. Many of them offer the opportunity to renew membership directly online through your personal profile at <https://dzogchen.net/profile/membership/>.

Alternatively, you can contact the Gakyil and/or the Membership Coordinator of your local Gar or Ling directly for assistance.

Best wishes,

Your International Gakyil Team,
Miranda, Barbara, Gabriella, Vince,
and Evgenia, Monica, Svetlana,
and Marija and Nikol



Teacher Training Program 2024

Yantra Yoga – Vajra Dance – Khaita

Dear Dzogchen Community Members,
We are delighted to inform you that, in collaboration with the International Atiyoga Foundation and the International Dzogchen Community, we have now restarted the training of new instructors for Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance. The program will consist of Teacher Training and Supervision for the different levels, as it did in the past.

Starting in 2024, Dzamling Gar will host First Level Yantra Yoga Teacher Training from January 19th through the 28th, and First Level Vajra Dance Teacher Training from April 4th through the 10th. The Yantra Yoga Supervision will follow in Merigar from July 1 through the 10th.

In addition, in spring 2024, again at Dzamling Gar, there will be the final supervision of the first new Khaita instructors from April 14th through the 21st, an event in which you are all welcome to participate!

This is an important moment for our Community and, with your collaboration, for the continuation of these wonderful Teachings that Rinpoche has offered us!!!

With joy,
Adriana, Fabio, Laura and Prima



Dzamling Gar



January 19 to 28
First Level Yantra Yoga Teacher Training



April 4 to 10
First Level Vajra Dance Teacher Training



April 14 to 21
Final Supervision of the First New Khaita Instructors

Merigar West



July 1 to 10
First Level Yantra Yoga Supervision Course



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu teaching in Hong Kong in 2012.

Courtesy of Jing from China

The Six Liberations

Hong Kong, 2012, May 16th, day 1

Continued from The Mirror, issue 161, September 2023

We need to have a teacher, but not one who has only studied in college or just knows how to explain from a book. A teacher should have perfect knowledge of Dzogchen and that knowledge should be alive. A teacher has no need for books and is able to introduce [the student] to knowledge of Dzogchen in a perfect way. This is the kind of teacher we need for teaching Dzogchen.

But we should not think that Dzogchen books are not necessary or important. They are very important because teachers, too, are

always learning, reading and measuring their knowledge against what they read. Students should also learn in that way. When you receive direct introduction from the teacher, you may think that you have received some knowledge and that this knowledge is perfect. However, you cannot be a hundred percent sure, so it is essential that later on you study, learn and read some original texts in order to make comparisons and develop. So all these tantras and *lung* and *men-ngag* texts are indispensable in Dzogchen teaching.

Why is this *men-ngag* series secret? There are two reasons: one is because of the experiences of teachers. In general teachers give teachings according to the way they are explained in tantras, *lungs* and Dzogchen books because they are official teachings and should continue in that way. However, when we apply practices, since the teacher has already had many experiences of applying and realizing these methods for years and years, he or she knows many ways to proceed a little more quickly and easily. This may not be directly explained in the tantras and *lungs*, so teachers secretly give these kinds of teachings to their precious students. Students learn and keep them secretly in their hearts. They do not impart them or talk to anybody about them because the teacher has given them secretly to these students.



Another reason that the *men-ngag* series remains secret is that there are many kinds of methods. When we use these methods we can have different kinds of experiences and visions. However, if we have no precise base, when we use these methods we can fall into dualistic vision and block all our possibilities in this life. For that reason, many Upadesha teachings are kept secret. In Dzogchen teaching we have the Dzogchen series including teachings such as *yangthig* and *thögal* that we should keep secret. When a person has a very precise base and the teacher knows how the condition of this person is, then the teacher can give this kind of teaching.

Six Liberations – *trolwa trugden*

These are called the Upadesha series and are the origin of the Dzogchen teaching. For example, the seventeen tantras I mentioned previously, related to the *Dra Thalgyur*, are all Upadesha tantras. In this case it doesn't mean that they are secret but that they are condensed and essential, something like the root of all teachings. For instance, the Song of the Vajra comes from one of these tantras, which is the root from which many secondary tantras developed. Among them we have the *trolwa trugden*, or Six Liberations. Six Liberations refers to the contact our senses have with objects: we see, we hear and so on. We have five senses plus our mind. Mind is thinking and judging and the object of the mind is all phenomena. We include mind with our five senses so that they become six. In the Dzogchen teaching they are called the six aggregates. How can we be liberated from them? With the Song of the Vajra, for example, we sing, we hear, we see, and all of this creates a cause for liberation.

In particular, there are many teachings on Shitro, a practice that has become well known in the Western world through what is known as the Tibetan Book of the Dead. What does Shitro mean? *Shi* means peaceful, *tro* means wrathful, so when we do visualization in our inner mandala, we visualize the peaceful mandala at the center of our body and all the wrathful manifestations in our head. These are the two aspects of the manifestations – peaceful and wrathful. How are these aspects of peaceful and wrathful represented? Peaceful is something like emptiness: when we observe our thoughts, they disappear and what remains is emptiness, which is peaceful. Wrathful is when another thought immediately arises, which represents movement. Movement is related to everything connected to our energy aspect, so Shitro means peaceful and wrathful, the calm state and movement.

Why are these two aspects present in two different places? The center of our body is like the seat of our primordial state, and its function is related to mind. We distinguish between mind and nature of mind. When our mind is in a calm state, that is similar to emptiness. When there is movement how does it arise? When we see, we hear, and so on, our senses have contact with objects and we think and judge and our thoughts arise. How do we see, how do we hear? We see when we open our eyes. Where are our eyes? In our head. Where are our ears? On our head. Where is our nose? On our head. All the organs of the senses are on the head and for that reason all contact [with objects] that we have and receive is in our head. It is as if the office of the mind is in the head.

The Sutra teaching talks about the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness and the consciousnesses of the other senses. But this doesn't refer to the consciousness that is judging and thinking, like the mind. Eyes and ears cannot judge and think but they have their functions. What they see or receive is immediately communicated to the mind. The mind receives this and then thinks and judges. But what is thinking and judging is mind, not the consciousness of the eyes, the ears or the other organs of the senses. For that reason we say that mind is in the center of our body, not in the head.

Since we receive information from the "office of the mind," we believe mind to be in the head. But mind cannot be in the head because mind is connected with our consciousness, and that is connected with our primordial state, which is connected with our primordial potentiality. Any kind of potentiality that exists has its dimension and we have our dimension of the physical body.

The head is not the center; the center is here [in the area of the heart]. When we talk about doing visualization at our heart, it means the center of our body, not the organ of the heart, which is not really at the center. We call it "heart" for doing visualization. Why is this the seat of the mind and primordial state? We have these two kinds or aspects of manifestations, but although they are two different aspects, they are not two different conditions. Their condition is always the same, only here [at the heart] their way of manifesting and working is peaceful, while here [in the head] it is wrathful, but the essence is connected with our three primordial potentialities. This is our practice of Shitro.

The Song of the Vajra is closely related. In Shitro, all tantras on liberation, or *thardrol*, include *trolwa trugden*, the Six Liberations. Some traditions negate Dzogchen teaching, saying that it claims we can have liberation through the functions of our six senses. They say this implies that liberation from samsara is possible without any need to do practice or follow teaching.

When we say Six Liberations, it means liberation from samsara. Many sentient beings that are in samsara have no guarantee of being liberated from it. The Song of the Vajra and the Six Syllables and so on can create a cause of liberation for these kinds of sentient beings. When they receive that cause of liberation then at some point they can join the path and sooner or later have realization. This is called liberation.

For liberation through seeing, which we call *thongdrol*, we prepare mantras of the Song of the Vajra, then there is a mandala chakra with many mantras and with this potentiality when we see them, they create a good cause for liberation. Then we have the famous *thödro*, or liberation through hearing. People talk about the *Bardo Thödro* [Tibetan Book of the Dead], which is read or chanted to people who are dying. The principle of the *Bardo Thödro* is the same as that of the Song of the Vajra. If we sing the Song of the Vajra and other sentient beings hear it, it can create a cause of liberation for these sentient beings because it has that potentiality.

For instance, one of the seventeen tantras of the Upadesha explains the quality and value of the Song of the Vajra, saying that when we sing the Song of the Vajra, even if we believe we are singing on our own, we are never alone. With the potentiality of the sound of the

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Song of the Vajra, millions of Dakas and Dakinis assemble and sing together with us. The tantra goes on to explain that anywhere the Song of the Vajra is sung becomes a sacred place forever, meaning that when people go there, they can receive that kind of benefit. There are many of these kinds of explanations.

In a Sutra teaching it says that even the potentiality of the name of a buddha can cause beings to be reborn in the realm of the Devas. There is a sutra about a pond with many fish in it where the water was drying up since the weather had been very hot and the fish were starting to die. A prince saw this situation and with his friends tried to add water to the pond to help these fish, but it was already too late. The prince, who followed the teachings of Ratnasikhin, a buddha of that aeon, prayed, reciting the name of this buddha to create some benefit for the fish. After their death, the fish were all reborn in the dimension of the Devas because they had heard the name of that buddha. That was the potentiality of the name of that buddha. Buddha Shakyamuni explained this in a sutra saying that in very ancient times this prince was one of the incarnations of Buddha Shakyamuni and in a dream these Devas paid homage to him and thanked him. This is not the Six Liberations, but it is a good example, and there are many other similar examples in the Sutra teachings.

Just like the *thödro*l mantras that create a cause for liberation through hearing, there is also *tridrol*, meaning that the potentiality of a scent can create a cause of liberation, such as incense empowered with mantras. Then we have *nyongdro*l, which means tasting can create a cause of liberation. *Nyongdro*l originally came from the Dzogchen teaching and became very diffused in the Nyingma-pa tradition and later in all traditions. There are one hundred and eight ingredients in *nyongdro*l, some of which are very rare and not easy to find. In addition to preparing that medicine, we do practice for one or two weeks until some signs of practice manifest and the *nyongdro*l becomes powerful. Tasting this kind of *nyongdro*l can make a good cause.

Then we have *tagdro*l, which are mantras prepared in a way that they have contact with our physical body. Touch is also one of our six senses. For instance, we try to place *tagdro*l in contact with the physical body of those who are dying, especially those who are not practitioners. In order to give some benefit to all sentient beings in general, if we have a little *nyongdro*l, we can dissolve it and put it in a river or stream so that it can create a good cause. This is an example of some of the many ways we can create benefit for others.

How can we practitioners use the Six Liberations? Although practitioners don't need to create a cause of liberation, because we already have a cause since we are already following teaching and doing practice, if we use any kind of these Six Liberations, it greatly helps to increase our clarity. For that reason practitioners also make use of them.

The Song of the Vajra is really very famous in this field. When we do it in a short way we concentrate on six syllables. For instance, when we are doing practice at the end we dedicate with six syllables, 'A A HA SHA SA MA, which we call the six syllables of Samantabhadra, representing the state of the Dharmakaya.

In transmigration, we have six *lokas*, or dimensions. Why are there six? Because we have five emotions. Day after day we accumulate a great deal of attachment which eventually produces our rebirth or transmigration in samsara into the dimension of the Devas, for example, or if it is something very heavy, into the dimension of the Pretas. We have three higher states and three lower states. All three are basically related with three emotions but their way of manifesting is sometimes a little different. For example, jealousy is related to attachment as well as to pride and anger. The characteristics of these emotions is to manifest jealousy, but the root is always connected with three emotions. In that way then we can have transmigration in the six lokas. Once we have purified the six lokas, what remains? We return to our real nature. In general we are going in the direction of infinite samsara, dualistic vision, but when we become aware of this, we stop, we don't go that way, but instead we go in the reverse direction, *ru*log, and concentrate on our origin, Dharmakaya. In that way we can have realization. When we are in state of *ru*log we are in the state of 'A A HA SHA SA MA. When we are going in the direction of infinite samsara, we are in the state of the sounds that are the cause of the six lokas: A SU NRI TRI PRE DU. While it is not transformation practice, when we are in our real nature we can reverse samsara and be in our real nature, which is the state of the Dharmakaya, the essence of the Song of the Vajra.

For instance, when we want to benefit different kinds of sentient beings we can pronounce 'A A HA SHA SA MA, for example. When they hear this, it can make a good cause. If we have the possibility, it is fantastic if we can pronounce the complete Song of the Vajra, but these six syllables are also good. These six syllables are not found in the Vajrayana teaching, not even in important Tantras such as the Kalachakra. They exist only in Dzogchen teaching and in Anuyoga. ❀

Edited by Liz Granger

Final editing by Susan Schwarz

Glimpses On the Path

An excerpt from a talk during a retreat held in October, 2023, in Santa Fe, USA

Steven Landsberg

Our Motivation

We're going to continue with what we started discussing yesterday about these three continuities. Yesterday we spoke briefly about the causal continuity and we're going to continue talking about that, but also introduce what is referred to as the path continuity, referencing all aspects of the path which help one to progress.

So where does the path begin from? It begins from the Mahayana. The essence of the Mahayana is the consideration that everything the practitioner does is ultimately for the benefit of all beings. Its focus is upon our motivation and it indicates to us that our ultimate realization is going to depend upon our consideration of all beings.

At first it may seem like we're doing this work to help ourselves. We want to feel peaceful, we want to feel satisfied and have virtuous feelings. We motivate ourselves with primarily three different examples of how compassion can be applied. One is acting or behaving like a king, I will understand what's going on and get enlightened first and then after that, I will lead other beings to enlightenment. We have the feeling that unless I understand first, how can I possibly benefit others

The next is more like having motivation like a boat driver, where everybody gets into the boat together and you say, "I'm good, let's navigate this river together". We have a broader sense of collaboration and compatibility. In our practice we try to work together with other sentient beings. The third motivation is something like a shepherd who first pushes everybody forward towards that ultimate goal and when finally everyone is established in the ultimate condition you go in last. Although all three of these applications of bodhicitta are important, the third seems the most selfless.

When we first start, we can feel that our motivation is mostly generated by this wish to understand what is going on. It's like me first and then I'll take everybody



else. Then gradually as our understanding expands, we're able to move together with others and we recognize the importance of other beings and that really there is no way into this ultimate dimension unless we are accompanied by all beings. So this becomes very important. We can't just seek enlightenment for overcoming the five poisons that we discover within our own dimension. Somehow that sense of accommodating and accompanying all beings on this path becomes a huge motivation. It becomes a necessity. Even though we may practice alone or in retreat, our motivation is fulfilled with the feeling that I and all beings are intimately connected.

As we go along, we understand what total integration is and that samsara or all possibilities for suffering are not just mine, but they're everywhere in the dimensions of the six lokas, and bodhicitta becomes so refined that we see that ultimately enlightenment is going to depend upon other beings realization. So naturally one works as much as possible in that direction.

I know from myself that when I first started studying, I didn't have any idea about that. I just felt that I could get my own understanding about it and that somehow these other things would fall into place. But then we're doing practice, we're doing meditation, we're doing contemplation, we begin to understand that our contemplation can't become all inclusive unless every aspect of all beings' sufferings, that every samsaric possibility is accommodated in our contemplation. The meaning is that our contemplation is without any border or limit and in that way the enlightened possibility of all beings must be integrated in our practice.

So this practice and this path continuity begins with this kind of motivation of

a Mahayana practitioner, whatever level it may be, the king, the boat driver, or the shepherd.

Mantra Visualization

And in the Vajrayana context, one can't really proceed on the path unless one has the empowerment. So first it's necessary to get the empowerment of the particular deity that one is going to work on. In our case, we know that Rinpoche rarely gave big empowerments. He did, from time to time, like Mandarava, Shitro and a few others. Primarily, he always gave the *lungs* of the short, medium, long *tuns* along with their respective mantras. He also gave us the *lung* of the mantras of many other secondary practices. He taught us the Anuyoga method of instant transformation. At this point, we begin to learn the various phases of the path of transformation: first the generation phase, that means all the aspects of our relative vision, which are mainly encompassed by the consciousness of the senses, the senses themselves, and their objects, all of that has to be transformed into the realm of the deity. In this application of instant transformation we must recognize the simultaneity of unborn space and self-existing wisdom.

Then there is the proper recitation of the mantra with its visualization. For every deity, the visualization of the mantra can be different. There are different kinds of visualization but if we're just searching to draw a picture of a circle or a figure eight, like Mandarava, and just following that with our mind, it doesn't work that way. We may try a lot in that sense, and people do, and then they come up with strange questions about how it does this and how can I do such a complicated visualization. Well, you can't, not that way.

We've got to understand that this mantra wheel is a wheel of energy and not just an object of our directional focus. The mantra chain has a way of becoming self apparent. It is not the consequence of intense objectification but rather the unification of what we call inner and what we call outer. There is a kind of unification in which energy is released and mantra visualization becomes evident and relevant. Its movement, the letters, colors, and light become self-evident

Mostly we have something simple, just turning to the left, turning to the right, letters facing inwards or outwards. That already is not so easy, but we'll never be able

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to visualize it if we're just trying to focus in a particular way. Remember that mind is very limited – it can only do one thing at a time – so if we're focusing on one thing, then we're not focusing on the other. That's why Rinpoche always talked about this idea of a global idea of visualization, which means a situation in which mind doesn't direct itself at a particular reference point. There is still a reference point in this case, how the mantra turns etc., but even in order to understand that, we have to relinquish our attention to very small details. We get a kind of global idea, but if we turn the global idea into just an ordinary concept, then it also doesn't work. Ultimately, what we're working with is something beyond physical ideas, verbal expression and a materialistic approach conditioned by dualistic focus of a subject and object. It's completely energetic at this level. We have to learn how to work with our energy.

When we're talking about the continuum related to the result, it is referring to the final state of accomplishment or the three kayas. It's not a state that ever gets lost or deteriorates or decreases in some way. Here Mahayana motivation is completely fulfilled and ultimately this continuity of the fruit manifests as the three kayas, which only serve to benefit other beings.

When we read about the examples of the great masters in their autobiographies and observe those that are still with their feet on the earth today, we can get an idea of their realization and how it manifests as activity. All they are doing is working for the benefit of the realization of sentient beings. Sometimes students get hung up on the various behaviors of teachers. We have our own limitations and frequently make judgements about how masters should behave. It is a complicated subject but from our side, we should not only observe the behavior of a master, but also recognize our own limitations and biases in regard to what we consider good and bad.

Karmic Vision

All of our karmic vision and the appearances and conditioning that results from that vision, our thoughts, are deceptive but at the same time appear real, solid, independent – something separate in a very dualistic way, related to subject and object. We need to recognize that. If we don't get that point, we need to study more and observe ourselves more and get a very clear understanding of what Rinpoche called being

aware of one's limitations. This can be a mental configuration, an energetic vibration, a physical manifestation.

When we're really conditioned by our karmic vision, we're subject to all kinds of problems. We can get upset, we can get impatient, we can get annoyed, we can get angry, we can get attracted, we can get attached, we can fall in love and get even more attached. Don't misunderstand. I don't mean that love is not something genuine. Love is always good, right? But falling in love is another thing because that means we have been distracted by a certain appearance, and the results manifest very systematically and can be very painful.

Even when our karmic vision is very overwhelming, and everything seems very real, independent, solid, permanent, the ground of that manifestation, or the mind of luminous clarity, is never absent. Even when we're totally distracted and overwhelmed by our karmic vision, that mind of total awareness and luminosity is not absent. It may be hidden or disguised. This itself is the causal continuity that we said was impossible to escape from. There's no way out. So once we've received instructions from a guru, one becomes familiar with this idea that whatever it is that appears in our experience is nothing other than this essence of luminous clarity.

We may not recognize that, but whether we recognize it or not, it doesn't make this untrue. What we should recognize as practitioners, though, is that we don't need to add something to our condition. In other words, if we feel upset or angry or attached or confused, it's not that we need to add something to that or edit that in some way because ultimately we cannot remove the way the causal continuity is manifesting to us, the disguise and its ultimate nature. So we don't need to add something, nor do we need to take something away.

But if we cannot recognize this inherent indestructible connection then it's recommended that we try to apply the method in which all appearances are recognized as various gods and goddesses. If we can't recognize that ultimate condition, like Mahamudra or Dzogchen, then maybe it is useful to practice something like the Vajrayana generation phase. But even if you practice the Vajrayana generation phase, and just mechanically go through the steps that are recommended there, we discover very quickly that just saying billions of mantras doesn't change anything.

So there's no doubt that if you apply all these practices in a perfect way, then you can get a good result. But in many schools, and particularly today, I've noticed that teachers are beginning with the end, trying to point out to their students the ultimate meaning from the beginning and then telling their students, "Now go back with that kind of understanding, and apply your practice". Then we can get some real understanding that way and those practices can definitely have more concrete meaning to us. Even if we practice Sutra or Kriyatantra with that ultimate understanding, everything becomes more useful, more practical and the possibility for its result to manifest becomes more evident. Rinpoche was doing this in the 1970s and it seems many teachers today are following that approach.

From time to time it may happen that all appearances, sights, sounds, mental phenomena, and so on manifest as brilliant luminosity, stable, just like the flow of a river. It means that stability is not something that gets broken up – in the morning, it's like this, at night it's like that and every day it's different. That's unstable. But now we're talking about this level of stability, like the even flow of a river. There's a kind of realization here. I don't think we have that, but this is the point that we're trying to understand through that practice. When this experience of equality becomes evident, immediately the pristine awareness – or that awareness which is totally unconditioned and only knows itself – may arise spontaneously not as a consequence but as one's ultimate condition. This is the great junction or intersection of the one who is aware and the awareness that we are in. ©

Steven Landsberg studied with traditional Tibetan Buddhist Teachers for several decades and has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since the early 1980s. Over the last years he has travelled extensively in the Americas and Europe giving training on mindful presence and other practices.



The First 40 years: 1983-2023

Antonio Morgione recounts how he received the poem “Advice to Antonio Morgione, an Ornament of Vowels and Consonants” as a gift from Master Namkhai Norbu.

Antonio Morgione

We were with the Maestro in Camprodon, a famous holiday resort in Catalonia, on holiday at the invitation of the family of Ramon and Nuria Prats. It was August 1974. I was beginning to take an interest in Tibetan language and was practicing writing the alphabet, so one day the Master gave me a piece of writing with some valuable tips for practice. The text, written by the Master in poetic form, is a precious piece of advice encapsulating the essence of the teaching of the great masters of the Dzogchen lineage. The entire poem consists of a succession of verses that begin with a letter in the sequence of the Tibetan alphabet. At the time he wrote it, the Master gave me an oral commentary explaining the meaning of the various stanzas, and so I received this precious teaching and sealed it in my heart, feeling fortunate, as all of us students are, to have been taken under the care of the Dzogchenpa Namkhai Norbu.

The years passed. After his lectures at the University of Naples “L’Orientale,” the Master used to stop by the house on the Riviera di Chiaia to rest and have a meal with us. Many friends, students, and disciples were invited with him. We would chat, cook, and listen to the Maestro’s words. Very often Laura Albini, Nancy Simmons, Costantino, Enrico, Andrea, Giacomella, Fabio, Adriano, Francesco, Paolo, Sergio, Gennaro, Eugenio, Alberto, Antonio (Festa), Enzo, and many others would come.

On one of those occasions, in Naples, at the home of Ramon and Nuria Prats

at number 88 on the Riviera di Chiaia, he spoke about that same poem written in Camprodon. On that occasion, the Maestro translated it extemporaneously, and Adriano Clemente meticulously annotated the Italian translation the Maestro provided.

The first four verses, starting, respectively, with the first four letters of the Tibetan alphabet (Ka, Kha, Ga, and Nga), are salutations to the three bodies of the enlightened ones, the dharmakaya, the sambhogakaya, and the nirmanakaya, and to the first master who introduced Dzogchen in our era, the supreme Garab Dorje.

The next four verses start, respectively, with the next letters in the Tibetan alphabet in sequential order (Ca, Cha, Ja, and Nya) and remind us that although our actions appear to be satisfying, they actually cause suffering.

The next four verses start with the next letters in the Tibetan alphabet in sequential order (Ta, Tha, Da, and Na) and speak about impermanence and the fact that everything created exists in time and is not lasting.

The next four verses start with the next letters in the Tibetan alphabet in sequential order (Pa, Pha, Ba, and Ma) and warn that passions, jealousy, pride, and avarice are in fact nothing but a vortex of suffering.

The next four verses, again following the sequential order of the Tibetan alphabet (Tsa, Tsha, Dza, and Wa), warn that it is not enough to run away from everything or to make sacrifices, or to take the path of renunciation, but that we must truly attain a clear understanding of ourselves.

The next four verses, following the sequential order of the Tibetan alphabet (Zha, Za, ‘A, and Ya), urge practitioners not to pretend to be something they are not since this only results in negative actions that lead to lower states of existence.

The next verses, in five lines starting with the next letters of the Tibetan alphabet (Ra, La, Sha, Sa, and Ha), mention in the first line one of the holiest places in Tibet,

Ralung Monastery, the site of “an ocean of Siddhas,” whose biographies have nothing to do with the eight worldly dharmas. Indeed, in the practice of daily life, we should neither be pleased nor displeased with any worldly achievements or any suffering or loss or gain and so on. If we follow the path we must remember that bodhisattvas are capable of offering even their own bodies for the benefit of beings and do not aspire to power and dominion.

The Maestro then warns that devoting ourselves exclusively to study and neglecting practice breeds doubt and does not make us mature, so much so that later, at the time of death, it will not be so easy for us and we will not know what to do even if we make an effort.

The following verses, starting with the last letter, A (considered a consonant in the Tibetan alphabet), and the four vowels (I, U, E, and O), offer direct advice and exhortations to enter into practice.

Specifically, the Maestro says, “Now that you have encountered the supreme path of Atiyoga, the union of method and wisdom represented by E and WAM, beyond eternity, nothingness, mental analysis, and opinion, enter into the essential practice of OM ĀḤ HŪM. A I U E O A TI OM ĀḤ HŪM.”

In the next verses, each starting with a letter with a wasur subscript, the Maestro continues his advice for daily practice, saying it is as indispensable for practitioners as sinews are for walking. Practice should be clear, pure space, beyond attachments and a limited direction. The energy of thoughts, he says, is as uninterrupted as the waves of the ocean, but if we do not stay as present as if walking on nettles, we can fall into three impediments: being too relaxed, too soft, and lacking attention; being too tense and rigid like a horn, having too much tension; and being too sleepy, like having a black hat pulled down over our eyes. This section concludes with a warning not to pursue the state of emptiness like the followers of nihilism do, seeking a meditative state by blocking thoughts, resulting in a state that is only empty and that becomes an impediment to development in practice.

Four verses follow whose first syllables spell the word A-TI-YO-GA.

The last four lines all begin with DZOG (Dzogchen), the perfect and supreme goal of every path or way of realization, the very essence of Tantra and of the transmissions and secret instructions of the masters.

Thank you ☺

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We are grateful to:

- * all our authors and readers,
- * all the donors of Shang Shung Publications and Ka-Ter,
- * our main translators from the Tibetan (Adriano Clemente, Elio Guarisco, and Jim Valby),
- * all our support teams: translation, transcription, editing, correction, layout, graphic design, web design, social me-

dia, office, and administration, the entire Dzogchen Community, including all Gars, Lings, and organizations,

- * current founding members: International Atiyoga Foundation, International Dzogchen Community, and Merigar West.

We thank all the hundreds of collaborators of the past, present, and future for contributing to this wonderful story of commitment, dedication, and culture. ☺

The First Twelve Years of Shang Shung Publications

Giovanni Arca

In 1982 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu expressed his intention to form a publishing house to produce works of interest to the Community. He wished to avoid the formal involvement of the Dzogchen Community and also intended to create a source of income for Community members producing the publications. The 'Cooperativa Shang-Shung Edizioni' was formed on February 24th, 1983 in Naples. The legal status of the company allowed it to pay wages but not distribute profit, which had to be reinvested into publishing activities. Alberto Galli, an attorney, was going to be the first President of the Cooperativa but had soon to renounce because the position was not legally compatible with his profession. Andrea Sertoli, too, had to renounce after a very short time due to work commitments. I was then nominated and kept the position for about twelve years.

Before Shang Shung Edizioni started its activities, material for the practices was mainly handwritten by Rinpoche himself, who would painstakingly sit for hours, discarding any sheet of paper with even the slightest imperfection, even if it was on the very last line. The manuscripts were then photocopied and distributed to practitioners, although at that time, in the seventies, we were only a small number.

At the very beginning, besides Tun practices and so on, we limited our activities mainly to producing a 'Newsletter' and then the 'Merigar Letter', the humble predecessor of *The Mirror*, initially edited by Bruno Irmici.

Our first publications were Rinpoche's *Yantra Yoga* and *Tibetan Nomads*, in Tibetan, both in 1983, followed by *L'oro raffinato (...) secondo la Mahāmudrā*, by Kun dga' bstan 'dzin, in Italian and English editions, and *Lo specchio – Un consiglio sulla presenza e la consapevolezza*, which was the first book in a western language by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to be widely available to the general public. In 1984 we published another Rinpoche's book in Tibetan, *The Small Collection of Hidden Precepts*, based on a text by Buddhagupta, the *sBa pai rgum chung*.



Gennaro Palladino and Anna Eid at work in the Capannone office.

In 1985 we published *Il Rosario d'oro di Tara (The Golden Rosary of Tara)* by Taranatha. I have a vivid and fond memory of that, because at that time I had no publishing experience and Rinpoche helped me choose the illustrations at the Yellow House, still dilapidated at the time. The book on Tara worked a bit as an icebreaker, also because it was produced for the first time by a professional printer, the 2A, which had us as clients for a few years, before we replaced it with the Tipografia Vieri, much bigger and able to print at market level quality (at the beginning we still hand wrote the diacritics). After that book we increased our production, which began to require more time and commitment because there was much to prepare for retreats, as well as for general information and public relations. We had our first computer, a small Macintosh 128Kb., on a raised timber platform I shared with my friend Enrico Dell'Angelo, in a room on the 1st floor of the Yellow House. In the summer that space was an extremely effective sauna, impossible to forget...

As time passed things began to be progressively less amatorial, and I was struggling to cope with my Gakyil commitments, the recently founded *The Mirror* (initially co-managed by the publishing house) and the publications, so Rinpoche asked Karin Koppensteiner to assist me. With her help our production started to take off. Karin and I worked in the 'Capannone', where we established our first real office, which soon included the editorial staff of *The Mirror*.

In an interview with *The Mirror* (December 1990, Issue 6) Rinpoche stressed the aims of Shang Shung Publications: "Basically we should concentrate on providing a service for people of the Dzogchen Community who are interested in the teaching. That is the main aim. But if we only publish books of the teachings and practices there will be no possibility to continue because there will be no income. So without forgetting our main aim we should also prepare something for making money, so that there will be some income. We don't need to make lots of money like a big publishing house but we do need enough to continue our main aim of publishing translations and teachings".

Following Rinpoche's original idea, Shang Shung Publications tried to enter into a wider market. Although we were a micro-publisher, we constantly strived to improve the quality and presentation of our books, as well as diversifying in order to sell also outside the Community. Our design started to be more consistent and recognizable, thanks in particular to Bruno Irmici, who designed many covers of our early series. Several years after Fulvio Ferrari and Paolo Fassoli took care of many new graphic designs. In 1991 we reached an agreement for an Imprint with Station Hill Press, an American publishing house owned by George Quasha, a Community member. We could therefore distribute and sell in the U.S. through their national catalog.

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Around 1991, a business lunch near Conway, Mass., with various people of the Community discussing how to organise an effective way of distributing all publications (internal and public) within the American Community in the US.

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At the same time we started our video production and distribution with four films, *Timeless Present*, *A Lama around the World*, *Yantra Yoga*, and *Tun Medio e Posizioni del Londé*. We also distributed the film *Kailash*. People involved were Paolo Brunatto, Gualtiero Cocco, Fulvio Rossi, Gaetano Ruvoilo, Alex Siedlecki and Manuel Tòdaro. We also started to collaborate with several audio-visual archives: Tibet House-New York, Meridian Trust-London, Station Hill Press-N.Y., Mystic Fire-U.S., Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italia-Tibet, ISMEO and others. More information on this early video section can be read on p. 4 of Issue 9 of *The Mirror*. An 'International Video Committee' was formed, with Fabio Andrico, Giovanni Arca, Enrico Dell'Angelo and Rosa Tolli Namkhai.

Around 1990 Rinpoche assigned Tiziana Gottardi as the first full-time staff member of Shang Shung, after me. Up to that moment no one working for the publications had received any money and Tiziana was the first to be minimally (almost symbolically) paid and immediately started studying desktop publishing, which at that time we greatly needed, and collaborating at several other levels. For many years she provided a fundamental contribution to our publications. Gaetano Ruvoilo, then a professional editor, also started to collaborate on production and editing, while I continued to be the legal representative, editing and coordinating all the activities. At that stage there were already a number of people who helped in various ways, and



Tiziana Gottardi using a vertical monitor with a protective screen.

it would be hard to mention each name. Among them Gennaro Palladino (who organized and produced almost full time the transcripts of the teachings), and then several translators and copywriters who also supervised the quality of English and Italian language. More information about this can be found in Issue 11 of *The Mirror*.

During the initial seven or eight years the number of publications increased dramatically, in line with the equally dramatic increase of the number of Community practitioners worldwide, thanks to the tireless efforts of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. For many years the publishing house had very relevant sales during the crowded retreats held by Rinpoche at Merigar, and was one of the main financial resources of the Community.

Due to this great development, in 1993 it became clear that we needed to coordinate the efforts of the various Gars and Gakyils, creating a world-wide net of practitioners, with the aim of establishing a coherent and shared program related to publications of the Teaching: "During the course of a meeting at Merigar, presided by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the responsibility of drawing up a basic project for all the various aspects related to the management of the material regarding the teachings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was given to John Shane, of the Blue Gakyil, Giovanni Arca of Shang Shung Edizioni and Adriano Clemente, Tibetologist" (*The Mirror*, Issue 21).

One or two years earlier the expanding activities of the publishing house had meant finding a larger space to have all those working under the same roof in order to coordinate the different activities and stages of production more effectively. I asked Igor Legati (translation and editing), Anna Pucci and Clara Iuliano (graphics) to join Tiziana, Gennaro and me, with the intent of expanding our production to the national market. Silvana Pisani managed our public relations. From then we also started to retribute those working on the publications.

The publishing house was finally starting to work according to Rinpoche's original idea, and also according to how the structure of a Cooperative is ideally meant to work, but it had taken roughly eight years. A space on the ground floor of the Residence Lo Scoiattolo, in Arcidosso, became our office, a professional printing machine was purchased (operated by Gennaro, who was in constant struggle with the mechanical 'monster'), and an agreement was signed with a national distributor, Albolibro.

We signed the agreement together with many other Italian mini-publishers, in a common effort to overcome the challenges of national distribution for small publishing companies. Albolibro offered the presence of eleven regional promoters in exchange for 9% of the cover price, which brought our costs for the bookstores, promotion and distribution to 37%, rather in line with the market. We had to guarantee a minimum of one new title per month in 1500/2000 copies, which was quite a challenge for us since it had to be on top of our already very busy activity of publications for Community members. To promote our publications we also went to the 1993 Frankfurt International Book Fair, together with Station Hill Press, which distributed



Giovanni Arca and George Quasha in their shared stand at the Frankfurt International Book Fair in November 1993.

our books in English. At the same time we started buying rights for the Italian market from mainly American publishers specialized in Buddhism.

We were all working hard, and on multiple fronts, until one day we unexpectedly received the news that Albolibro had gone bankrupt. It was a relatively big deal that made headlines in the media, because it dragged many small publishers, including us, into a nightmare of problems. When we received the news that Albolibro was winding up, we discovered that our books had not been distributed or sold for several months, and we found ourselves owing money to printers, accountant, bills and so on.

Due to those unfortunate circumstances, we received some financial help from the Community, but after a few months it became clear that the wish to sustain the publishing house as a Cooperative was not present anymore. It was then decided

to continue publications with the Shang Shung brand, but as a publishing section of the Dzogchen Community. I accepted to be the liquidator of the company and proceeded to its dissolution. Tiziana and Igor continued to work for the publications for many years after that. The remaining debt was completely repaid after about two years by selling part of the books in stock during retreats. That completed the first chapter of Shang Shung Publications, but not its whole story.

In those early years we had learned everything from scratch, and managed to publish dozens of books and hundreds of booklets on the Teaching with very limited resources. The first twelve years represented much more than the start of an ordinary publishing house. Many things were beginning at the same time: Merigar, the Community, publications, Coabit, A.S.I.A., the Shang Shung Institute, and this explosion of activities was deeply perceived and

shared by all these different, but intimately connected, organizations. Many of the founding principles, policies, agreements, statutes and regulations that we now take for granted were established for the first time. From the beginning activities were based on the principle of volunteer collaboration, and at the start Shang Shung Publications consisted of mainly complete amateurs, whose pioneer work laid the ground for future development of our publishing activities, which are still continuing and evolving thanks to the commitment of many. It is undeniable that the beginnings were hard in many ways, but we learned much more than just making books. Many more people than what has been possible to mention here have collaborated, and I am sure that all those involved at that time would agree that it has been a great privilege that we owe to the vision, tireless dedication and sacrifice of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ©



The Shang Shung stand in the big tent at Merigar during a retreat.

Shang Shung Publishing Continues

Gaetano Ruvolo,
Managing director 2014–2018

Early in 2013 I received a phone call from Enrico Dell'Angelo asking me if I wanted to collaborate with him to give a firmer structure to Shang Shung Publishing. I immediately said yes, since my history with SSP dated back to the 80's, when I volunteered to lend my editorial skills. At the time I helped Giovanni Arca with proofs, editing, organizing the layout, getting the book covers from the graphic designers, selling the books through personal visits to the few bookstores in Rome and doing some foreign rights international agreements at the Frankfurt Book Fair, where I went due to my regular job.

By the end of 2013 I agreed to commit to a more stable presence and responsibility in leading the change of the organization to become a full fledged publishing house, both for Dzogchen practitioners around

the world and for everybody interested in the Teachings. Our main mission was, and still is, to make the original Tibetan texts written by Rinpoche available in English and Italian. This mission involved many different processes and we tackled them one by one, doing our best with the limited resources available.

The first one was to make the editorial process, from the choice of the books to publish every year to the number of copies to print, including marketing and sales, more transparent.

The second task was to modernize our website, simplifying the choice of the books and separating general publications from those reserved for practitioners. We decided to start from scratch and build a new website using an open source e-commerce platform used by many businesses around the world. This task proved to be quite complex, but thanks to the efforts and strong commitment of our IT manager, Kamil Selwa, we managed to create our new website in less than a year, opening up the possibility to sell our books internationally online.

A third very important task was to find a proper location for the storage of

our books, at the time spread in different places in Merigar 2, in a very humid unsuitable environment which was damaging our stock. Again a radical decision was made and we found a local office in Castel Del Piano. We moved all our books to the new location, which became the new seat of the administrative, logistical and distribution center of Shang Shung Publications. This move gave our distribution and logistics manager, Mateusz Kocylowski, the possibility to centralize stock receipt from printers, order preparation and shipment to our customers in one single place. Furthermore, due to our new e-commerce website creation, we had to assign a barcode to all our books in order to manage them properly. We also started doing the annual stock taking required legally and for accounting purposes.

We formalized the interaction of all the members of the Editorial Board, including translators (Adriano Clemente and Elio Guarisco) and editors (Tiziana Gottardi, Igor Legati, Artur Skura, Nancy Simmons, Susan Schwarz), through regular monthly meetings in order to plan and adjust the release of the titles in the pipeline according

to their editorial status and the needs of the SSP, which took special care to insure that the related titles corresponded with the Teachings scheduled by Rinpoche at Merigar and Dzamling Gar.

Another important task that we had to tackle was to formalize, through the drawing up of foreign language rights contracts, the administrative and legal processes related to the translation of our Master's books, mainly under the supervision and responsibility of local Gars and Lings everywhere in the world, in various European and Far East languages.

During the five years of my time at SPP some very important books were published. In 2014 *The Temple of the Great Contemplation*, which vividly illustrates with pictures and graphics the origin of the Merigar Gönpa, designed by our Master and decorated with paintings of the main Masters from all the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism was finally published. This book was one of the most important, both in content and graphics, books ever published by SSP. Other important books released that year were *Shine and Lhagthong in the Dzogchen Teaching*, *The Light of the Sun*, and *Message from Tibet Through Songs and Dances*, which contained all the initial set of songs and dances of the Khaita Joyful Dances series.

In 2015 many different books were published including *Secret Map of the Body. Visions of the Human Energy Structure* by Gyalwa Yangönpa, translated and edited by Elio Guarisco. The long awaited *The Dance Of The Vajra* was also published, together with *The Dance Of The Vajra – Mandala Diagrams*. Another important historical book by Rinpoche found the light that year, completing the three volumes series, *The Light of Kailash Volume Three*. Among some restricted books published in 2015, there was *The Long-Life Practice of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava*, to guide the actual practice of the Mandarava Thun.

In 2016 twenty-three books were released. Many of them were the Italian translations of books already published in English. Among the English language books there was the *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che – The Total Space of Vajrasattva, Healing with Yantra Yoga*, and *Kumar Kumari Yantra – The Garland of Lotus Flowers Yantra Yoga for Children and Mount Kailash and the Lost Kingdom of Shang Shung*; the latter one being the actual story of the journey to Mount Kailash in the 80's of the Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu with some

Update on the 'Shang Shung Publications' Spanish Publications

Spanish Language ChNN's Books Project

Shang Shung Publications Team

Following the passing of the Master, Shang Shung Publications has continued to work on the translation and publication of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's texts, both public and reserved for members, with the mission of ensuring their translation from Tibetan into English.

Thanks to the support of Ka-Ter (the project created by the Master to raise funds for the Tibetan translation work) we are able to cover the costs of his Tibetan texts to English translations, layout and printing of the first edition, as well as the costs of the web store, storage, administration and coordination.

Unfortunately, however, we cannot cover the costs of translations and publications in other languages, such as Italian, Spanish or Chinese, but we want to collaborate with the various Gars and Lings. From 2021 we are committed to rebuild the teams of translators and to provide support for layout and printing.

For the publication of the books in Italian we organized a team of translators and asked Merigar West for financial support to cover the costs of translation, editing and printing of the Maestro's books. Since 2022, Merigar West has accepted to support us for the books in Italian, because Merigar West gakyil has become aware that ensuring the translation and publication of the Master's books in the most widespread languages is a service to the members of the Community and also a contribution to the diffusion of the teaching of Atiyoga Dzogchen. With the help of Merigar West we

of his students. SSP also published the DVD of the teachings which Rinpoche had given in Bhutan the year before: *Bhutan Teachings – Paro 2015*.

In 2017 a few very important books for Dzogchen practitioners were released, such as *Teachings on Thun and Ganapuja*, *Outer Rushen*, *Going Beyond Limitations* and *Yangti Experiential Instructions*. On

have published some new books in Italian on the following topics: Namkha, Bardo, Yangti, Longsal and we are working on the Tregchod, and other texts.

At what point are we at with the project of translating Master Namkhai Norbu's texts into Spanish?

For the Spanish language, we have finally managed to create a well-structured working group willing to work under the principle of karma yoga, consisting of Mayda Hocevar, Clara Bordeu, Adriana Battisti, Marisa Alonso, Yolanda Bravo, Martin Fernandez, Pedro Molina, Giovanni Boni, as well as some of the SSP staff. In Spanish we have recently published some books such as *Evolucionar* and *Abriendo nuestra mente*. We are very grateful to the whole group for the work they are doing and for their availability.

However, there are some activities that cannot be done on the basis of karma yoga and that we must remunerate, such as graphics, editing, book layout, printing, coordination and shipping. So just as Merigar West supports the Italian publications, we would like to ask all Spanish speaking Gars and Lings, and all people interested in the Spanish language, to support us in our work.

For any clarification please send an email to: mayda.hocevar@gmail.com and to director@shangshungpublications.com

For donation: <https://shangshungpublications.com/en/donate>

Reason for donation: Spanish language ChNN's books project

Editorial plan for 2024 in Spanish Language

- * El yoga de Tara verde (incluye la melodías)
- * SMS nivel 1
- * Guru Yoya
- * El cucú de la presencia instantánea
- * El Upadesha sobre el Tregchöd primordialmente puro.
- * Comentarios Longsal Volumen cinco
- * El Upadesha del Ati primordialmente puro
- * Sanación con Yantra Yoga

the public books side we released *Breathe As You Are*, by the long time student and Yantra Yoga teacher Fabio Andrico. This book typifies SSP's intention to reach a larger audience by bringing some of the treasures of Rinpoche's teachings to all.

In 2018 this trend of spreading the teachings to a wider audience continued

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We are deeply thankful to our Master Namkhai Norbu for his vision and generosity, and grateful to the Namkhai Family for their guidance and for authorizing us to publish the words of Professor Namkhai Norbu.

We are grateful to

- * all our authors and readers,
- * all the donors of Shang Shung Publications and Ka-Ter,
- * our main translators from the Tibetan (Adriano Clemente, Elio Guarisco, and Jim Valby),
- * all our support teams: translation, transcription, editing, correction, layout, graphic design, web design, social media, office, and administration,
- * the entire Dzogchen Community, including all Gars, Lings, and organizations,
- * current founding members: International Atiyoga Foundation, International Dzogchen Community, and Merigar West.

We thank all the hundreds of collaborators of the past, present, and future for contributing to this wonderful story of commitment, dedication, and culture. ©

Dedicated to

Mario Maglietti (September 26, 1938–February 02, 1999)

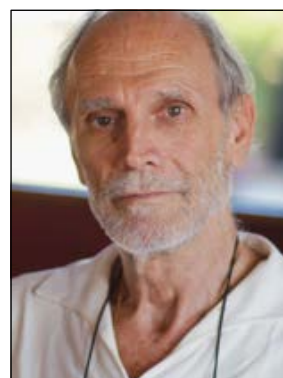
Igor Legati (January 17, 1943–July 16, 2023)

Enrico Dell'Angelo (September 11, 1954– December 26, 2016)

Elio Guarisco (August 05, 1954–November 27, 2020)



Mario Maglietti.



Igor Legati.



Enrico Dell'Angelo.



Elio Guarisco.

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with three books. One was *The Spiritual Odyssey of Freda Bedi*, the biography of one of the first Western women to receive teachings from highly renowned Tibetan Masters. Another was a collection of Rinpoche's teachings to provide a basic introduction to Dzogchen teachings: *Starting the Evolution. An Introduction to the Ancient Teaching of Dzogchen*. The third one, by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, was *Freedom*

from Attachment – Integrating a Classic Buddhist Teaching into Daily Life. Within the restricted section of books reserved for practitioners there were some important releases: *The Upadesha on the Self-Perfected Thögal*, *The Crucial Preliminaries of the Path of Ati* and *The Long-Life Practice of Amitayus and the Chülen of the Three Kayas*.

I wish to thank our precious Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from the bottom of my heart, for having so generously

shared with us the vastness of his knowledge with so many precious gems of his teachings. I regard myself as a very lucky individual for having had the possibility to be part of this editorial project, born out of his vision, and for having worked together with so many dedicated practitioners who have made history and will be the future of this Publishing House. ©



The new bookstore in Arcidosso.

Photos by Paolo Fassoli

Shang Shung Publications

Social Enterprise, Limited Liability Company and NON-PROFIT Organization: 2018–2023

Giovanni Totino
for the Shang Shung Publications Team

In the previous two articles Giovanni Arca and Gaetano Ruvolo described the birth of Shang Shung Publishing House (1983–1995) and also the development of the period 2014–2018.

In the next issue of *The Mirror* we will also publish the part of the story from 1996 to 2013, which is the central period of the Publishing House that coincided with the greatest development of the Dzogchen Community and the birth of many other Shang Shung brand publishing houses. Autonomous, independent publishing houses, linked to local Lings or Gars, entrusted with translating the Master's teachings into other languages and publishing his books in various European countries and on different continents of the world.

Just to mention, Shang Shung Russia, Shang Shung Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, Poland, France, Spain, Japan, Romania, China, Taiwan, all publishing houses with which Shang Shung Publications promotes the translation and publication of "public" and "reserved" texts by Master Namkhair Norbu, originally on the basis of contracts with the Master and currently with the Namkhair Family.

In the period 2019–2020, just to give an idea, about 29,000 books were sold in various languages in different countries around the world. So it would not have been possible to recount all 40 years in a single article in *The Mirror*.

So we are reserving, as of now, a space in the next issue of *The Mirror*, to explain how the Publishing House was managed, in the years from 1995 to 2013, by people who worked hard to ensure the continuation of this important activity: Luigi Ottaviani, Igor Legati, Salima Celeri, Tiziana Gottardi and others.

We thank not only the main translators from Tibetan (Adriano Clemente, Jim Valby and Elio Guarisco) but also the translators from English and Italian and those from other languages, equally important to ensure the correct translation of the meaning of the teaching transmitted by the Master.

In addition, let us not forget all the people who ensured, and still ensure, the operational, less obvious, quieter but fundamental activities such as administration and accounting, logistics and shipping, graphics, text editing and proofreading and, since the 2000s, information technology.

Finally, a thought to the donors and readers, of the past of the present and the future, hundreds of people, without whom this wonderful story of continuous commitment, deep dedication and culture would not have been possible.

So now as the Group that runs the Shang Shung Publications Non-profit Social Enterprise today, we would like to tell you what we have done in the past years (2018–2023) and what we will do in the next three years (2024–2026).

This is our office and bookshop in Arcidosso, which is also a warehouse and shipping hub:

Shang Shung Publications is now a small organization, incorporated as a Limited Liability Company to operate more easily in the market and is, at the same time, also a non-profit organization, with all the benefits that come with it.

Its founding members are the Atiyoga Foundation, International Dzogchen Community and the Dzogchen Community of

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Merigar West. Their representatives sit on the Board and ensure the full cooperation of the Publishing House with the entire Dzogchen Community.

The chosen formula is working, and with the help of Ka-Ter (<https://ka-ter.org>), an organization of the Dzogchen Community coordinated by Oliver Leick, engaged in fundraising to ensure the sustainability of translations from Tibetan and the publication of the Master's texts, the management of the small Publishing House is able to meet its economic and operational goals.

Obviously, the passing of the Master in 2018 and then the Covid pandemic in 2019, and, I would add, also the recent wars and new world situations, have not facilitated our activities.

In line with the new organization of the Community desired by the Master, i.e. the establishment of the International Atiyoga Foundation, and the historic activities of the International Dzogchen Community, in 2020 the publishing house made an addition to the existing webshop, which, up to then, had been reserved for practice texts and thus for Dzogchen Community practitioners. This innovation was a public webshop to enable people outside the Community to be able to learn about and buy the public texts written by the Master; about 60 titles in English and about 40 in Italian.

These public texts, pertaining to the various disciplines related to Dzogchen Atiyoga, medicine, dance, and yantra yoga, were promoted by organizing free in-person and online events featuring book presentations and short workshops.

Promotional activities will continue in 2024 and 2025 in cooperation with the founding members (ATIF-IDC and Merigar West).

To promote dissemination to external audiences, co-publishing contracts have been signed with publishing houses for the Italian and Spanish languages:

Italian language: co-publishing with Om Edizioni Publishing House in Italy began in 2020, and we have already published 20 public texts by the Master; in 2022, about 1,500 books were sold to an audience outside the Dzogchen Community.

Spanish language (South America): in 2022, contacts were initiated with Casa Editrice Editorial Del Fondo, based in Argentina, and in the first half of 2023 we started publishing; public books will be sold in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and also in Mexico. The same Spanish texts will then be promoted in Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries.

From the perspective of innovation, we will be creating a new webshop in 2024. The existing one, created by our Kamil as recounted by Gaetano, was a very important insight and performed an outstanding

service, allowing Shang Shung Publications to be visible and present everywhere thanks to the Internet. Unfortunately, the functions to be added, new fiscal rules, and the need to have a more flexible tool make it necessary to replace it.

Regarding the translation of new texts written in Tibetan by the Master, just a few days ago Adriano presented us with a proposed publishing plan. The work to translate and publish them is enormous and will take about 15–20 years.

As a group of people in charge of Shang Shung Publications, either as part-time workers or volunteers, we guarantee the utmost commitment and dedication in continuing the many ongoing activities and initiating those that have been planned.

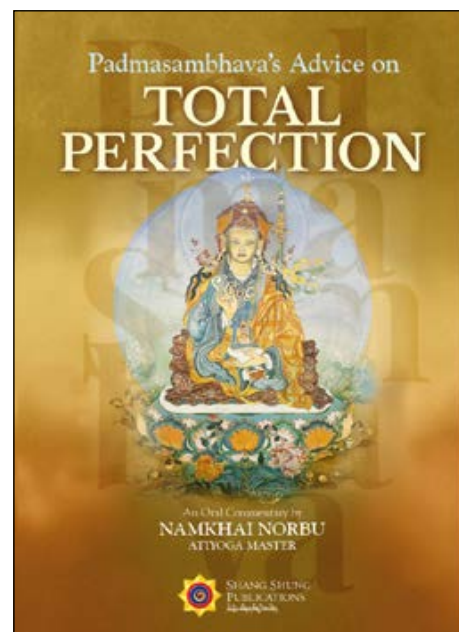
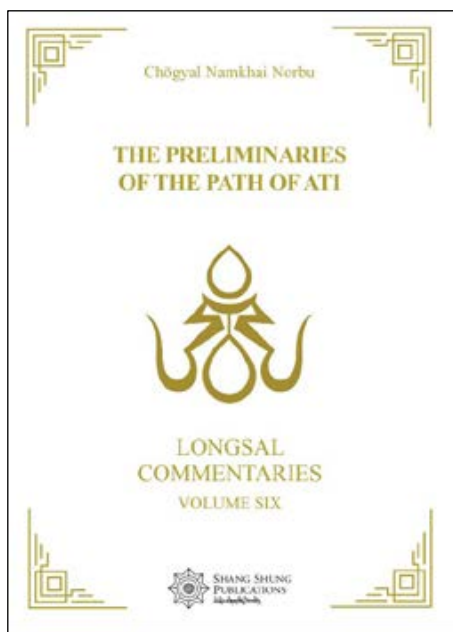
We are also confident that you, our readers, and all the hundreds of people who have supported us for the first forty years, from 1983 to 2023, will continue to do so for the coming decades.

Thank you all for your continued support.

If you would like, you can download a free e-booklet, created especially for the first forty years of the Publishing House initiated by Master Professor Namkhai Norbu, from this link:

https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/9788878343122_ebook-the-40th-anniversary-of-shang-shung-publications-epub.html

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Activities of the Ka-Ter Translation Project in 2023

Based on an excellent and dedicated collaboration with the translators, the editors, the people working on the layout and the graphic designers, and the entire team of Shang Shung Publications, we were able to publish some outstanding and unique books of wisdom by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu within the KA-TER SERIES.

The demanding work of publishing these books in the best possible quality was only possible due to the generous donations of you all.

Thank you everyone so much for your tireless contribution and collaboration!

You are a wonderful example for uniting strengths and capacities!

EMAHO!

Publications of Shang Shung Publication within the Ka-Ter series in 2023

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Luminous Clarity of the Universe

A Clear Exposition of the Primordially Pure Tregchöd is one of the earliest books on Dzogchen authored by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Originally conceived as a compendium of instructions drawn from Dzogchen Upadeśa tantras and the writings of Longchenpa and Jigmed Lingpa 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.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati Longsal Commentaries Six

The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati (A ti lam gyi sngon 'gro) is a special Vajrasattva purification belonging to the same genre of

preliminary Longsal teachings as The Crucial Preliminaries of the Path of Ati, and 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. The detailed commentary is followed by a dream in which Nyagse Gyurmed Gyaltzen, son of Changchub Dorje and an important teacher of the Author, reveals a particular way to apply the Purification of the Six Lokas combined with the visualization of Vajrasattva.

This book continues the Longsal Commentaries series, which aside from the histories and root texts includes the auto-commentaries written by the Author himself, occasionally supplemented with additional material to gather all information concerning a specific teaching in a single volume.

Padmasambhava's Advice on Total Perfection – A Hidden Treasure Discovered by Dorje Lingpa An Oral Commentary by NAMKHAI NORBU

This volume offers a commentary on an ancient Tibetan text, unearthed by the revered fourteenth-century master Dorje

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

Lingpa. With insights that are as relevant today as they were centuries ago, these teachings provide a direct route for practitioners to directly experience the nature of their minds. Incisive commentary by a contemporary Dzogchen master Namkhai Norbu, seamlessly integrated with meticulous translations of the root text, underscores the quintessence of spiritual practice, emphasizing its core over its aspects relative to the conditions of any given epoch or place. This book serves as a bridge, merging ancient wisdom with the reality of modern living.

Publications of Shang Shung Publication sponsored by Ka-Ter in 2023

Shang Shung Publications: The First 40 Years: 1983–2023

For the 40th Anniversary Antonio Morgione donated some personal advice for daily practice written by Rinpoche for him in 1974.

Adriano Clemente translated it from Tibetan and it was translated into five languages.

The Adventures of Nyima, Dawa and the Little Yak

A journey to discover magical Tibet & the powerful sounds of Kumar Kumari, Yantra Yoga for children.

by Laura Evangelisti & The Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga Team

You can order all the above mentioned books from the website of Shang Shung Publications: <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/>

Planned activities of the Ka-Ter Translation Project in collaboration with Shang Shung Publications in 2024

Based on some generous donations we will be able to enlarge our team from January 2024 on, and we will be able to publish even more books next year. The first one will be already available in the first months of 2024.

Here is the list of planned publications within the Ka-ter series:

- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Dzogchen Upadesa Teachings of Rigdzin Changchung Dorje
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Lamp that Illuminates the Way to Enter the Teaching
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Atiyoga the essence of all teachings
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Origin of Samsara and Nirvana from the Dra Thalgyur
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Explanations of the 25 Spaces of Samantabhadra
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Ati Gongpa Ngotrod
- * Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: Changchub Dorje's Khorwa Tongtrug

Besides these publications Ka-Ter will also sponsor the following books:

- * The Story Book: 21 traditional tales cited in the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Compiled and edited by Oliver Leick
- * The Book on Khaita – an extract from the thesis of Dr. Eva Leick with a foreword by Adriana Dal Borgo

Everything that we have already done and everything that we are planning to do is exclusively 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 by our Master in the best possible quality!

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 send your donation to our bank account:

Account holder: Shang Shung Institute Austria

IBAN: AT19 3815 1000 0003 0387

BIC: RZSTAT2G151

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

or

send your donation via Paypal: just use this link: [PAYPAL](#). You can also contribute and send your donation on a monthly basis.

You can also send donations via REVOLUT, use 0043 664 88662660 or use IBAN: LT48 3250 0488 1616 3042, BIC: REVOLT21

Merry Christmas and a prosperous and healthy New Year to all of you,

Oliver Leick

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The Shang Shung Institute UK (SSI UK) is pleased to showcase its (ongoing) yearly activities report for the year 2023.

Throughout 2023 we continued to host our Shang Shung Lecture Series, which at the beginning of the year we renamed The Light of Kailash lecture series, in honour of our founder Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. The themes of our talks continue to be wide ranging and every month we have the pleasure of listening to renowned scholars and experts in their fields, including professors and Phd students from numerous universities around the globe. The lectures are offered for free, to make them accessible to students and to best disseminate this precious knowledge.

The lectures of the first part of the year focused on the lives of great masters such as Adzom Drukpa, the first two Karmapas and Tsangnyön Heruka. In the second half of the year we hosted talks on Zhang Zhung history and about the art depicted in the Merigar cinerarium.

Please note that you can access past lectures on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@shangshunginstituteuk>

A fun, open activity coinciding with the lunar new year was an online drawing and painting competition: *The Year of the Water Hare*. We received over fifty submissions from talented artists across the globe. The idea of our yearly art competitions is to give artists a platform to showcase their talent and to introduce the work of our institute to younger generations. Artists from a variety of backgrounds used their diverse artistic skills and created beautiful images depicting hares, the astrological animal of this current year. Coinciding with the beginning of the Tibetan New Year, a lecture introducing Tibetan astrology was given by renowned astrologer Ngawang Dorjee from the Mentseekhang.

In that same period, on the occasion of the Tibetan New Year, Losar, Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche also helped empower prayer flags which then were hung in sacred places all over Nepal. We thank him profusely

for his continuous active support of Shang Shung UK's activities.

In March, we hosted two Meditation Weekend Workshops with Santi Maha Sangha instructor Julia Lawless. Tibetan language classes were given by Professor Fabian Sanders.

As is our yearly tradition, we organised an important fish release event in May 2023, thanks to the generous and kind collaboration of Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche.

Following on with the art theme, we hosted a Tibetan calligraphy workshop with Tashi Manno in London in April.

In May a group of Khaita dancers from the Czech Republic came to Lekdanling, our center in London, and we had a Tibetan themed party and Khaita dances were performed. They were also invited by Ringu Tulku to showcase a set of Tibetan Khaita dances to him, which he thoroughly enjoyed, inspiring all those attending his retreat.

The next scheduled talks for this year will focus on the Bardo, the intermediate state after death. One will be about a painting from the *Bardo Series* by Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche, then a talk about the Bardo&Luminosity according to Naropa's Six Yogas. December's talk will be about Bardo and the Dream State.

In late October there was a Dzogchen Workshop by Julia Lawless, at our London venue.

In the coming year, in late February 2024, we are planning a day dedicated to Tibetan literature and poetry at our cultural center Lekdanling in London. We will also celebrate the new year of the Wooden Dragon with Tibetan food and dancing.

In the first week of September 2024, at the University of Oxford, on the occasion of the International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, we are organising an exhibition of the Bardo Series paintings of Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche and a Khaita performance, as well as an academic introduction to Khaita.

On September 7th and 8th we will have a panel discussion about the Bardo at Lekdanling and a Khaita show.

We hope that many of you will attend our upcoming events, both online and on-site.



Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche empowering prayer flags.

As always our heartfelt thanks go to our founder, the late Professor Namkhai Norbu for his vision, kindness and tireless dedication to the preservation of Tibetan culture, which continues to inspire our Shang Shung UK team, whose work is invaluable and I wish to particularly thank Mandarava Bricaire, Trinley Walker and Julia Lawless.

We also express our deep gratitude to our supporters and donors who help the Shang Shung Institute UK carry on its mission to preserve, diffuse and promote Tibetan and Himalayan culture throughout the world.

The SSIUK is a non-profit organisation that relies on your support to continue existing and to increasingly develop. We hope that this report may inspire you, and if you want to actively help our work through donations, sponsorship or legacies, you can see details on how to do this on our webpage www.shangshunguk.org and clicking 'Support us'

Any contribution, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated.

With All Good Wishes,
Jamyang Oliphant (Director)
& the Shang Shung UK Team



SOS

HIMALAYAN CHILDREN

Let's secure their future



SOS Himalayan Children

Let's Secure Their Future

In the Himalayan countries where ASIA is working, the conditions of extreme poverty in which most of society lives make the lives of the youngest children very difficult.

Right now, children in Jajarkot and Rukum West, remote northwestern areas of Nepal, are experiencing a real emergency.

A 6.4 magnitude earthquake on November 3 struck these regions, killing 157 people, injuring 349 and destroying 17,792 homes and 300 schools. Tens of thousands of people have lost their homes and are in need of safe shelter from the weather and frost of the Himalayan winter.

ASIA Nepal's team reached out to some of the most remote villages in the earthquake-affected areas – Shirpachaur, Bayalatole and Balachaur, located at an altitude between 1,800 and 2,200 meters – to assess the damage sustained by the people and determine their most urgent needs, and immediately realized that in this situation children are, unfortunately, doubly victimized. Not only have they lost their homes, schools and all forms of security,

but they are exposed to serious dangers, such as child trafficking and prostitution, amplified by the confusion and emergency.

Therefore, in addition to the distribution of temporary shelters for families in the most remote and inaccessible villages, we are organizing the setting up of temporary schools where children can start classes again and be safe and secure.

With the SOS HIMALAYAN CHILDREN campaign, we want to offer education and protection to as many Himalayan children as possible, who are totally ignored by the international spotlight, in order to ensure their safety and dignity.

YOU TOO, CAN JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

- * offer education to children in Jajarkot and Rukum West and help build a temporary school
- * donate a roof to an entire family and help them get through the freezing Himalayan winter, participate in the construction of a temporary shelter.

You can find all the information by clicking on this link <https://www.ASIA-ngo.org/en/sos-earthquake-in-nepal/>

HELP US PROTECT HIMALAYAN CHILDREN, LET'S SECURE THEIR FUTURE, TOGETHER.

There is another way to support Himalayan children and accompany them on their educational journey, long-distance sponsorship. All information at <https://www.adoptibet.org/wp/en/> ©

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Hirton as MC with the audience on December 2.

Photos by Daniyal Ibragimov

10th Anniversary of Dzamling Gar

2013–2023
December 2 & 3, 2023

Naomi Zeitz



How does the youngest Gar in the International Dzogchen Community celebrate its 10 year anniversary?

It starts with a Sang practice on the morning of the Friday of the weekend of events to establish a sacred ground for the last minute preparations for the activities and for the activities themselves. The rest of the day of Friday was spent organizing spaces, bringing in grand pianos, hanging the last pieces in the art exhibit, rehearsals, preparing food for the Saturday evening festivities and much more.

On Friday afternoon a very important meeting occurred between the Mayor of Arcidosso, Italy, Mayor Jacopo Marini, where the first seat of the International Dzogchen Community was established and the Mayor of Adeje, José Miguel Rodríguez Fraga. This was the first visit by the Arcidosso Mayor to Dzamling Gar and the second time the two Mayors met, since the Mayor of Adeje, José Miguel Rodríguez

Fraga, had visited Merigar West in 2016 as a guest of Merigar West for the inauguration of the MACO, Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale in Arcidosso. The two cities are working towards establishing Sister City relationship, which would be a landmark event.

On the Saturday morning everything was geared to preparing for the arrival of many guests with food, logistics, and seating. The Gönpa looked very glamorous.

The evening itself was composed of introductions and presentations, skillfully managed by our Master of Ceremonies Hirton Fernando's Junior, including speeches by Adeje Concejal de Cultura y Deporte Alfonso Alonso Ferrera, Arcidosso Mayor Jacopo Marini and Gloriana Brenes González, President of Dzamling Gar* [see speeches]. Mayor Jacopo Marini eloquently and generously presented Dzamling Gar with a wonderful replica of the Stupa of Merigar [West] indicating the deep impact



Khaita performance on Rinpoche's birthday December 8.

that the prolific life of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had on the Amiata region.

After these welcoming speeches, there was a world class concert in the beautiful Gönpa featuring Roberto Cacciapaglia from Italy, our wonderful Khaita dancers, and the fabulous Canarian Dance Troupe: Asociación Cultural Tajaraste de Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Also the attendees were looking elegant in their best anniversary attire. At the end of the evening performances, the Asociación Cultural Tajaraste de Santa Cruz de Tenerife had everyone up and dancing

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Canarian Dance Troupe. Asociación Cultural Tajaraste de Santa Cruz de Tenerife on the evening of December 2.

Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov

» continued from previous page

together in a joyous expression of unity and friendship. What a glorious grand finale!

After all the performances there was a wickedly delicious offering of food and drink on the terrace prepared and served by the skillful chef Monica Patino and her team, as well as music DJ'd by our now renowned Timo Moss.

The next day, Sunday, was an offering for the public of participatory presentations of Yantra Yoga, Kumar Kumari, Vajra Dance and Khaita, as well as the opening of the houses of Gar; each house presenting food of their related country or other activities of interest related to Tibetan culture and the Dzogchen Community. There were hotdogs with Mexican sauce serenaded by mariachi music as a collaboration of Tseg-yalgar East and West, delicious pancakes from the Kunsangar House, Merigar House offered videos of the history of Merigar West and Merigar East had dadar and tsa tsa workshops, empanadas, arepas and historical videos at the Tashigar House, lungta making at the Dzamling Gar House and an immensely popular calligraphy workshop with Kunga at the IDC/ASIA House that could be the base for more calligra-



Sangye (left) and Yangchen as auctioneers on the birthday of Rinpoche on December 8. Photo by Anastasia Domanova

phy courses in the future in the Dzogchen Community. This entire event was beneficial on many levels, for intercultural experiences and presenting the richness of our international Dzogchen Community to the Community itself and to our many visitors and for just plain fun!

For the weekend approximately 500 people attended the celebrations and approximately 200 people were from the Dzogchen Community, so the public turn out was impressive.

We have to thank the 10 year anniversary committee primarily composed of a team of three dedicated organizers, Urara Taoka, Lourdes Velaachaga and Timo Moss [see interview] and, as well, all the efforts of the tireless team of karma yogis including Gisela Martinez, Monica Patino and Giorgio Minuzzo, the fabulous Webcast and Multi Media Team: Anastasia Domanova, Igor Tarnavsky and Raul Barratini and many others too numerous to mention.

Happy Ten Years to Dzamling Gar! ©



Viewers at Dynamic Space of the Elements exhibition.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova



Calligraphy with Kunga at the IDC/ASIA House.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova



Presentation of Shang Shung Publications by Mayda Hocesvar (right) and a brief introduction to Ati Yoga by Elias Capriles (left).

Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov



Roberto Cacciapaglia performing on December 2.

Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov



Tsegyalgar House.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova



Kunsangar Garden.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova



Tibetan Medicine House demonstration of moxa.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova



Yantra Yoga in Espacio.

Photo by Anastasia Domanova

Opening Remarks: Welcome to Dzamling Gar

Gloriana Brenes González

Respected Mayor of Arcidosso, Councilor of Culture of Adeje, Councilor of Health, Quality of Life and Animal Welfare of Adeje, President of ATI Yoga Foundation, welcome to all who are present here and to those connected in various parts of the world. Thank you very much for being here on this very special occasion of Dzamling Gar's 10th anniversary celebrations.

First of all, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Professor Namkhai Norbu for dedicating his life to the development of the evolution of the Human Being and being the visionary behind the creation of Dzamling Gar.

The word Dzamling means world and the word Gar refers to a place where people can gather.

These centers, called Gares, have been established in various parts of the world. The first one was founded in Italy in 1981 and since then centers have been created in different parts of the world, such as Romania, United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Argentina, Russia, Ukraine, Australia, China, and the most recent one here, in Playa Paraiso de Adeje.

Dzamling Gar was created to be the Global Gar where people from all over the world could come to study, practice, and collaborate. Where representatives from all the Gars of the world would have a physical space here to meet and continue to collaborate. Each of the houses here at Dzamling Gar represents each of these centers around the world.

At the inauguration of Dzamling Gar in 2014, in his speech, Professor Namkhai Norbu explained the reasons why he chose the island of Tenerife to build Global Gar and it turns out, he discovered not only that it is a wonderful land, with rich culture and traditions, but also an open and receptive community. It is that openness that he found here that inspired him to found Gar Global and that is what we want to celebrate today.

We come from different parts of the world, with different cultures, but we are united by the intention to be better every day. We try to increase our capacity to lis-

ten, to collaborate and to open our minds for a better understanding, in order to reach peace in a more concrete way.

When, as individuals, we assume responsibility for our evolutionary process, we contribute to the evolution of countries and peace in the world.

For evolution starts from the individual, and this is crucial for our future and for future generations.

Yesterday was an important day. We had a meeting between the Mayor of Adeje and the Mayor of Arcidosso with the intention of starting a collaboration between both cities. A cultural exchange where both parties nourish and enrich each other. This achievement embodies in a concrete way the vision of Evolution, thus contributing a grain of sand and collaborating for Peace in the world.

We would like to thank all those who in the past worked and dedicated their time and energy to build Dzamling Gar.



The Mayors (center) with Community members.

Photo by Yangchen Tsering

We would also like to thank those who today continue to lovingly care for this place so rich in culture and unique in the world. More and more children around the world are laughing and running through our beautiful gardens. They represent the future, as the Professor repeatedly mentioned: Dzamling Gar, the Gar of future generations.

Welcome everyone, this is your home, and now to enjoy this great party!

Thank you very much

Welcome Speech

Adeje Concejal de Cultura y Deporte,
Alfonso Alonso Ferrera

Good afternoon to each and everyone. For the Adeje City Council, which I represent together with my colleague María Esther Rivero, the councilor for quality well-being and health and quality of life. It is a pleasure and an honor for the Adeje City Council for municipal cooperation that we have been invited to be here today.

It is a very important day, a tenth anniversary does not happen every day. I would like initially, in order not to go on too long, to excuse the absence of our mayor, José Miguel Rodríguez Fraga, but a health problem prevents him from being here today. The health problem is not serious, but ob-

viously he has not been able to be here as he would have liked.

He has asked me, in his name and in the name of the municipal cooperation, to send you a warm and affectionate greeting on such an important day for you. I was listening to the words of the person who introduced these speeches and I corroborate everything he says. The Adeje City Council is a town hall of openness, openness and welcome, I told him before starting the event that in Adeje there are 120 nationalities that coexist harmoniously and

Adeje – Tenerife

Saturday, December 2, 2023
Celebrating the 10-year
anniversary of the
Dzamling Gar Foundation

Jacopo Marini, Mayor of Arcidosso, Italy

Good evening and thank you all!
Let me first thank the Merigar Community and the Dynamic Space of Elements who organized this trip and gave me the opportunity to be here among you today at such an important time.

It is a great joy for me to celebrate with you today the 10th anniversary of the birth of Dzamling Gar, a reality that was strongly desired by Master Norbu. Today I am here as the mayor of Arcidosso where it all began; but I am also here as one of you.

I congratulate you, it is a very beautiful reality, this Gönpa is a wonderful structure and it certainly corresponds to the idea

peacefully. In a cordial way, we, the Adejeros who lived here before and the new Adejeros who have now come to live in our Adeje community, have exchanged experiences in such a way that we have enriched each other.

Adeje is a rich municipality due to its multiculturalism and also the people who come also somehow integrate into our municipality with our customs. Therefore, I also told him that from the beginning this space (Dzamling Gar Conference Hall) has been open to the municipality. I remember recently celebrating Yoga for Life and International Yoga Day.

And we have also celebrated the closing ceremony of our Sports campaign. Yoga and Pilates have also been based in this space, therefore. We congratulate you and wish you the best now at the beginning of Christmas, which for us here means a lot of activities.

This year the motto of our Christmas is Christmas for Peace. It is important to reflect on that. And simply that, have a good day, and once again, thank you very much for having allowed us to participate in such an important day for the Dzamling Gar community. ©



Mayor of Arcidosso giving the replica of the Stupa in Merigar West to Gloriana Brenes González. Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov

that the Master had and that he worked so hard on.

I thank Gloriana Brenes (Titi!) and the whole Gakyil for their hospitality and friendship.

A fond greeting goes to Rosa Namkhai who could not be here among us today and to whom my best wishes for a speedy recovery go.

I also want to thank the mayor of Adeje Jose Miguel Rodriguez Fraga (and I address a greeting to the representatives of the Adeje municipal council present here) for the meeting yesterday and for his willingness to start a path that may lead in the future to a twinning between our municipalities. A twinning that is intended to be based on concrete things and not to be exclusively a bureaucratic act. Of course, we are bound by the fact that we host the most important communities founded by Master Norbu: the first in Arcidosso and the last in Adeje. And it is no coincidence that they are communities that both begin with the letter A, so important in Dzogchen symbology.

But there may also be additional issues on which it will be possible to collaborate. I really liked Mayor Rodriguez Fraga's proposal to promote an association of European municipalities in order to strengthen the idea of a Europe that is based not only on the economy and bureaucracy, but on the citizens and values of the many communities that make it up and are an example of how it is possible to live in Peace.

These are generally very difficult and ugly times in many parts of the world where bloody wars are being fought that result in deaths especially among the

most defenseless, the elderly, women and children.

When instead the most beautiful thing is to live in friendship by collaborating because through collaboration we can do great things, both for ourselves and for others. That, I think, is one of the Master's most important lessons. And you are here to demonstrate it.

And that's what we've always tried to do in Arcidosso with the Merigar Community, and I'm sure that's what the Dzamling Gar Community is doing here with the Adeje administration. And that's what we would like to do between the municipalities of Arcidosso and Adeje. And I hope with all my heart that this project can succeed.

We all want a better world, but we have to start with ourselves. And so we also want to make our small contribution. Have more awareness and try to evolve. We have to engage ourselves by following the Master's teaching. And I think this is the best way to keep his memory alive.

Thank you.

I would like to offer a small thought to the Dzamling Gar Community. If you can come here to the stage Titi. Thank you Migmar. This as you all know is the Stupa in Arcidosso where the body of our beloved Master now rests and so it seemed to me the best way to remember him. ©

Ten Years of Dzamling Gar

An interview with the three main organizers Urara Taoka, Timo Moss, Lourdes Velaochaga

The Mirror: Can you tell us how the idea of this wonderful celebration of the 10 years of Dzamling Gar came to be?

The concept for the 10 year celebration of Dzamling Gar originated from a shared vision within our international community to honor a decade of meaningful experiences. This vision is deeply rooted in the teachings and wishes of our precious Master about this Gar, and also expresses gratitude and respect for the Canary Islands; their culture, and traditions. The celebration seeks to embrace multiculturalism through dance, music, and various expressions that we consider crucial for the well-being and evolution of humanity. The idea underwent collaborative discussions, creative brainstorming, and a heartfelt commitment to create an event that reflects the essence and spirit of our community. Beyond commemorating a significant anniversary, the celebration aspires to cultivate collaboration, joy, and a profound sense of gratitude among all participants, the Canary Islands, and, of course, our Precious Master.

M: What were the main points you came up with at the beginning of the planning?

Two key points emerged early in the planning process.

December 2 – Integration and Cultural Respect: The emphasis of this day was on fostering integration and showing respect for the local community and Canary culture. The planning aimed to ensure that the celebration not only recognized the beauty of the environment but also actively engaged with and honored the cultural richness of the Canary Islands. This took into account the incorporation of local traditions and customs, along with collaborative efforts with the community.

December 3 – Collaboration as Global Gar: The events scheduled for December 3 focused primarily on promoting collaboration within the international community



Urara, Timo and Lourdes (left to right).

Photo by Y Petrova

and the Gakyil members of each Gar globally. The intention was to create a sense of integration and shared purpose among the diverse cultures around the world, encouraging collaboration, support, and openness. This core of collaboration sought to strengthen connections between different Gars, enhancing the global network and collective efforts toward a common vision.

M: How did you come up with the team(s) that you used and what was the breakdown of the teams?

We formed several small teams to handle different aspects of the project. The programming team was responsible for planning the event schedule, the graphic design and communications team handled visuals and messaging, and the guest relations and invitations team managed interactions and invitations. We also had a dedicated appetizer team that focused on the culinary experience, a team for the webcast, visual media team and design and art direction team for the event.

Then, the team initiated collaboration with various individuals and institutions for the Day of Experience on December 3. The preparatory phase involved numerous email exchange and Zoom calls to kickstart remote activities.

As a result, the initiative ends in the formation of 12 different teams. Impressively, over 80 Karmayoga actively participated and contributed to the overall success of the event.

M: Can you say a little about the concrete process that you used and the way you went about the organization to maximize effort?

We started the project seven months ago, recognizing the significant workload required to complete it with an initially limited team. In July, we largely established the direction of the project, but it took a few months to connect with the Gakyil members from each Gar. This delay was not due to a lack of willingness to collaborate, but rather because they were busy with other local issues, and many did not use official email, making communication difficult. The same was the case when contacting dance, art, and media groups related to the town. Thankfully, in all cases, we found ways to make communication more effective and agile, and everything fell into place.

M: Did you enjoy the process? What were the joys and the challenges?

Absolutely. We are really delighted with the whole process and happy to share our experiences, challenges and joys.

Let's start with the challenges, which we could talk about endlessly, always with a smile on our face. For us it was a unique experience to use the entire venue for an event like a House Gar, and it took a lot of effort to explain the broad outlines of the project and make sure everyone understood them.

We made every effort we could imagine, from using microphones to explain the event after the Ganapuja several times, creating and sharing videos on WhatsApp, posting announcements on the Dzamling Gar mailing list and Norbunet, seeking cooperation from the IDC, and sending announcements to all IDC members. Despite our best efforts, communication proved to be a considerable challenge, and we understand that this is a manifestation of information overload and the proliferation of communication channels today.

On the other hand, finding solutions rather than engaging in discussions throughout the process, at different levels and on different issues, has been a valuable experience and learning experience. Listening and learning to make a compromise in order to find the best solution, taking into account the final outcome of the event, have been essential. We realized that the quality of the event lies in the details and learning to make decisions as a team, which makes it a truly unique experience.

Getting back to communication by e-media, it wasn't until three days before the event that the Dzamling Gar members really understood the full program.

However, once that understanding was reached, our small team magically transformed into a powerful force. Rinpoche often stresses the importance of communication, recognizing its difficulty, especially in a community as international as the Dzamling Gar, where the language barrier adds an extra layer of complexity. And, of course, facing the challenge of working with our own individual egos. When we are feeling tired, our tolerance for others' mistakes may diminish, leading us to become defensive. This, in turn, can increase conflicts, especially when there are differences of opinion.

Several years ago, valuable advice was received from a well-respected former practitioner: "Especially in difficult times, strive to be kind to others. Even when mistakes happen, it's important to treat them with kindness and compassion."

And now, the great joy! Witnessing the happy faces of all our guests and members in attendance brought us immense joy.

They were authentically immersed in the music, the performances, our hospitality, the exquisite food and the unique atmosphere of the Dzamling Gar. With sincere hope, we trust that we have made meaningful connections that will last through time, like delicate threads of memory that

weave themselves into the fabric of our shared memories as a community of vajra brothers and sisters.

M: How did you manage expenses? Did people help out financially? How did you do fundraising?

Financial support from our members played a crucial role in making this event possible. Interestingly, we started with a zero budget, and it's amusing to note that we not only needed to raise funds but also managed to succeed in doing so.

We organized four Friday dinners featuring Ukrainian/Georgian cuisine, Japanese food, a music concert, and more, raising a total of 7000 euros. Additionally, we were fortunate to receive generous donations totaling 1500 euros. Adeje City Hall played a vital role by providing a bus for 50 dancers and musicians.

The funds we raised successfully covered all expenses. Everything from the starting point until the end was very special and all circumstances magically manifest. It's worth mentioning that the entire process was based on the concept of Karmayoga. We simply covered the transportation costs for collaborators and goods, along with the expenses for food. This successful outcome was truly a collaborative effort fueled by shared dedication and positive energy.

M: The celebration went very well and came off as very professional. Do you have any words of advice for other community centers about how they could run celebrations like this?

If you are fortunate enough to find a professional willing to engage in karma yoga, it would be highly beneficial to trust and empower them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Additionally, having a budget in place, eliminating the need to be responsible for fundraising in addition to organizing, would make the experience a bit easier. On another note, having a communication manager, a versatile individual to fulfill the role, or ideally, a team that includes someone capable of managing social media platforms, and creating a visual archive can greatly enhance overall coordination and outreach efforts.

M: Please just say freely what the experience was like for each of you to manage such a big undertaking.

We gained valuable insights from professionals event organizers. Despite its apparent size, this undertaking is essentially an accumulation of small pieces. Breaking down the tasks into manageable pieces and completing them one by one is key; there's no "magic" involved. This approach allows people to easily take charge of smaller tasks. However, successful collaboration requires preparation and a solid platform; it's not conducive to relying solely on spontaneous collaboration. Often, people wish to help but may not know how. The Karma-yoga group proved to be effective in this regard.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it was a remarkable experience to collaboratively work with all the Gars and entities, manifesting the Global Gar function. Thanks to collaboration, commitment, and doing our best, we were able to make this first significant event a success with many happy faces. The collaboration and inspiring energy of Maestro, guardians, and his teachings were the driving force that allowed us to overcome challenges and create memorable moments full of experience. These moments will become valuable lessons for future projects and public events. We appreciate the trust and support from each of you, both in the back and front line. Each of you has been a key piece in this machinery. We look forward to continuing to collaborate for future projects and events at Dzamling Gar. ©

Interview with Migmar Tsering

Art show presented by the
Dynamic Space of the Elements
for the 10th Anniversary of
Dzamling Gar
Dec.18, 2023

The Mirror: Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Can you give us a short introduction of how Dynamic Space of the Elements began, how Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was involved and how you manifested Rinpoche's wish.

Migmar: In 2015, 2016 Rinpoche wanted to do something to work with young people. In that way he said we need to do something to create work for young people. If we create these kinds of jobs, then the young people can live near the Community and in that way we have continuation.

Then Rinpoche sent me to China to make this association called Ati Yoga Association. So we made this association there and we tried to do some business with wine, then we created this art exchange with Oriental artists and European artists; a cultural exchange.

Then when I came back from China Rinpoche gave me some money to continue this work. With this Chinese association we did some exchange with wine and culture. Then I gave back this money immediately and Rinpoche said that I should keep the money to use to develop this project, so then we had enough money to go ahead.

From this point we did this work with young people and founded this art project called The Dynamic Space of the Elements. <https://dynamicelements.org>. At that time we worked with many artists doing ceramics, painting, and many different artistic modalities.

I asked Rinpoche to choose one name for the group and he said he would give this responsibility to Rosa Namkhai and Rosa chose this name. So we continue to use this name for this cultural association and this we developed slowly, slowly and more and more.

First we give the young people some possibility to come to Merigar, then we found some place where they could work together and we tried to find some work for them. We worked on illustrating books, restoring the Gonpa, working on astrology



Migmar Tsering.

Photo by Naomi Zeitz

painting, so these kinds of jobs and they joined with us and slowly this Dynamic Space of the Elements developed.

TM: Where did these young people come from? From Amiatra, or Italy, or China?

MT: Some came from the young generation near Merigar, some came from art schools and universities, Some from the art university in Rome called Belle Arte. They understood we are doing this kind of organization and then they gradually joined with us. Then they learned our Community practices and followed the Community, and the social aspect of the Community. So when they did not have examinations they came to Merigar to help.

TM: Did they also get interested in the Teachings?

MT: Yes now they know how to do Ganapuja, they do everything, they are listening to lots of Rinpoche's videos, audios and now they are studying.

TM: Do the paintings in this show come from this group of students?

MT: Yes these paintings come from this group of students. Also there are lots of artists not only coming from China, they come from Russia, America, Holland; many artists joined with us to work with us. So you see these individual art works do not have a single name because we try to work

together, as a team. That is our idea is to learn how to work together and collaborate.

Some of the pieces we have a precise idea of what we need, like for example for illustrations for books, etc and some we have no idea and then the artists can do as they like.

TM: How did the idea for this show in Dzamling Gar come about?

MT: Last year when we were restoring the Gonpa, at that time Titi was there and she talked about the 10 year anniversary of Dzamling Gar and I said if she wanted I could make an exhibition for this event. She said ok and thank you and we did.

TM: You already explained somewhat, but some people were wondering why the paintings do not have the name of the artist.

MT: Yes we all work together for the Dynamic Space and we do not use the individual's name and everyone is working for the Dynamic Space and also for the Dzogchen Community. This is our aim.

TM: Some of this artwork has been made for a book that should be coming out soon. Can you tell us about that?

MT: This is a book that is based on the many stories Rinpoche would tell us over the years. These were stories to help us understand the teachings more easily. These stories were collected by Oliver Leick and he asked if we could do some illustrations and designs, so we did all these designs for the book; different artists and different stories. This book should be ready next year.

TM: Have you done other shows in different places?

MT: Yes we have done exhibitions in Arcidosso and Rome, different themes with different artwork. If we have the possibility we want to bring these shows everywhere to give the message that we work together, and how we learn to work together.

We have very unique art using the elements that you cannot find anywhere. Many young artists have lots of ideas, we do so many artworks, we have destroyed many art pieces because we not satisfied and finally we know how we should do then this art is arising.

We have art based on how the elements move and if you just look at the art, traditional art, you look at the explanation about the art piece and then you know about the elements and how the elements work.



Art exhibition.

Photo by Naomi Zeitz

Then we are doing this new theme, how people are dying and how they are growing in the womb, this is a new way to communicate about life and death. We have 10 paintings already on this topic and we still have more to do and then we need to communicate about the colors and how it should be, this is something like new art.

TM: Are you using some actual substances or minerals that are related to elements?

MT: Sometimes we use minerals; green represents energy of the wind, white the energy of water, blue, space, yellow, earth, red for fire, so when we use these kinds of minerals it makes the elements more alive and even though using minerals is a little difficult and expensive, slowly we can do.

TM: What are some of your upcoming programs or books etc?

MT: Next is coming the second part of the astrology book, and Sa Che, has 2 books, the first one is more general and how things should be and the second book is more detailed and how you should do practice, etc. Another book is the Potentiality of the Elements and there are 4 books. The first book is general, the next one is the different chakras with the elements, then how the elements evolve, etc.

TM: Do you have any upcoming exhibits?

MT: Next year we have quite a full program, but since we have been here in Dzamling Gar the Mayor of Arcidosso asked us to do an exhibition like this in Arcidosso and other towns in Amiata. So we are thinking what to do and to see if we have time or not. We have many works to finish for next year. Also we will have more cultural exchange with China.

TM: Is there anything else to share?

MT: Yes I would like to talk about the 108 stupas of Changchub Dorje, Rinpoche asked me to make these based on the indications left by Changchub Dorje. At that time Rinpoche gave me the drawings of 56 stupas. These stupas are not very tall, like 54 centimeters, and the form of each stupa is different. Some are so, so complicated. Also each stupa is so expensive to make. You cannot find any stupa like this in this world. They are a little different and quite difficult and expensive. So now I made 8 stupas and we will send them all over the world, Community places and not only Gars and Lings, but also where there are practitioners. This was Rinpoche's idea. You can even have them at home since there are not so big and each one is consecrated with different mantras and different objects. When we finish them we will send them everywhere where Rinpoche traveled. Stupas have a lot of benefit because they harmonize the el-

ements. So we are doing this project and if some people want to help us by donating, we are very thankful for this help. This is my commitment to Rinpoche. Before I die I will finish at least these 56 stupas. The indications for these stupas are in Changchub Dorje's terms texts. Rinpoche said these are the stupas we need to focus on now. Once we start producing the stupas we will post the photos on our website, we are working on a new website, and there will be a place where people can donate.

TM: Thank you so much Migmar for your time and your dedication to the Dzogchen Community. ©

<https://108-stupa.dynamicelements.org>

Vajra Dance 1st Level Teachers Training

with Adriana Dal Borgo
April 4–10, 2024
Onsite in Dzamling Gar

1st Level Vajra Dance includes

- * Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings (6 Spaces),
- * Dance of the Three Vajras,
- * Vajra Dance of the Dimension of Space (12 A).

This seven day course will be the first part (A) of the program to prepare candidates who will be supervised in order to become 1st level Vajra Dance instructors.

The second part (B) will take place at Merigar West, September 5–8, 2024.

Online participation in the second part (B) will be allowed for those who have participated in the first part (A) in April 2024 or have already attended the teacher training in August 2023 (at Tsegylgar East).

A supervision course will conclude the program for those who participated in the Teachers Training (on-site part A + B) and will take place at the beginning of 2025.

Teacher Training first part (A) contents

- * Introduction to the Vajra Dance, principles, benefits on different levels.
- * Deepening knowledge of the steps and movements of the Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings and the Dance of the Three Vajras.
- * Training to properly sing the melodies of the mantras while dancing.
- * Didactic aspects and elements of communication while teaching.
- * How to present the Vajra Dance in different contexts: language and contents.

Teacher Training second part (B) contents (Sept. 2024)

- * The Vajra Dance of the Dimension of Space (12 A)
- * Study and reflection on the meaning of the three characteristics and integration

Requirements & Conditions

Teachers Training is EXCLUSIVELY RESERVED TO:

- * Those who have received the transmission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu or Yeshe Namkhai.
- * Existing, up-to-date members of the International Dzogchen Community, that is, those who have been members from 2020 or prior until 2023 and whose membership is up to date. Applications from aspirants whose membership is after 2020 will be reviewed by the Teacher leading the Teacher Training.
- * Those who have attended 1st level Vajra Dance courses with qualified Instructors and have a good knowledge of both female and male parts of the Dances.

Register

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdZwsrzN_XLAGoGgHS9l76REQDlhObS7AKSkN3wEvCl5JVn_w/viewform

Suggested Donation

Candidates to become YY Instructors:
Per day: 40 € | Full Retreat: 300 €
Authorized VD teachers are offered a 50 % discount.

Second level VD instructors:
Free donation.

Accommodation

Dzamling Gar has a limited number of places to offer for an accessible price to candidates to the TT, and instructors. Priority will be given to those who are applying to become YY instructors.

The deadline to apply for such accessible accommodation is 20/2/2024.

A waiting list has been created by our Accommodation Manager for this purpose. Applications will be analysed and vacancies given according to the priority previously mentioned.

If you decide to apply for accommodation in Dzamling Gar, please mention your modality of participation in the Vajra Dance Teacher Training.

Apply for Accommodation

<https://accommodation.dzamlinggar.org/>



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International
Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Renewing the Floor of the Gönpa at Merigar West

This autumn, after the meticulous work of renewing the ornamental painting of the exterior of the Temple of the Great Contemplation at Merigar West which took place last summer, efforts were concentrated on restoring the wood floor inside the building. The original floor had been laid almost 30 years ago and had suffered a lot of wear and tear.

Rather than ripping up the old floor, the decision was made to renew the old one.

The work began by moving all the furniture, cupboards, speakers and so on out of

Dissertation on Khaita Joyful Dances

Eva Leick

On 11th October 2023 I celebrated my university graduation with my family and friends. I now officially hold a doctorate degree in Dance Studies and finished my dissertation on Khaita with the title *Khaita – Joyful Dances. The Evocation of 'Tibetanness' and Wellbeing Effects through Tibetan Modern Songs and Dances*. I want to thank everyone who supported me in my research, in particular Adriana Dal Borgo who proves to be a source of wisdom and inspiration for Khaita and all other Khaita experts who I had the fortune to interview and observe. Thank you to all Khaita dancers for the joyful hours of practicing together. Most of all, thank you

the main building, with the help of several karma yogis. It took a couple of weeks for the company in charge of the work to sand and clean the old floor. There were different levels of sanding to remove all the levels of varnish until they finally got back to the original wood.

The next phase was to treat the whole floor with a water based floor product which gave a clear finish and will main-



to our wonderful master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the gift of Khaita in our times. May His teachings bring joy to all beings! ©

tain the natural colour of the wood and highlight the grain. Two coats of this product were applied to protect and enhance the wood.

The new floor is not only more practical, but a real asset to the Temple. It also marks another stage in the project for the restoration of this unique building designed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. ©

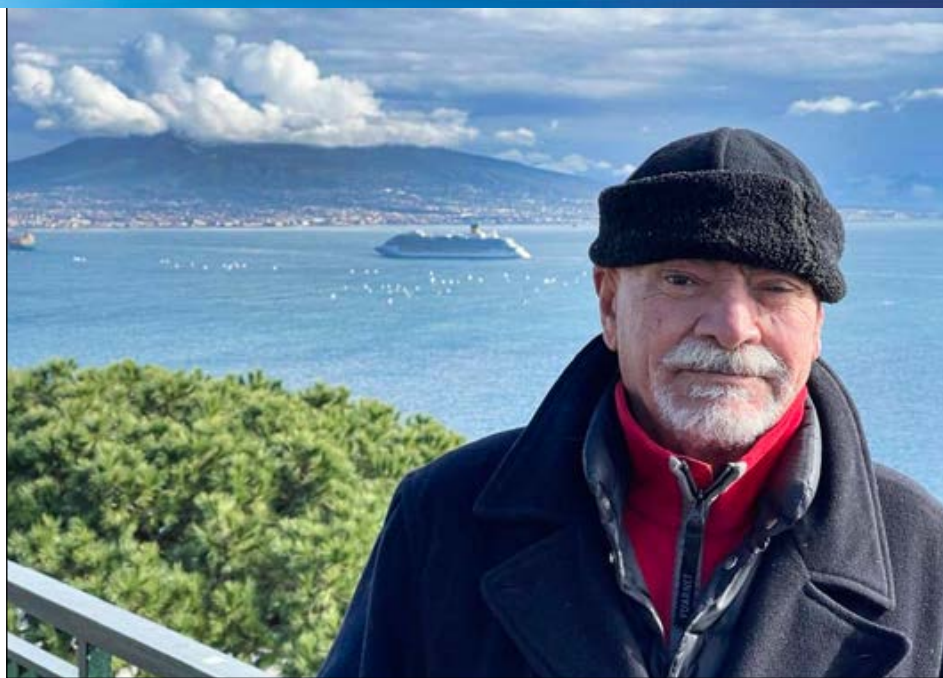
Remembering Sergio Campodonico

Naples, Italy

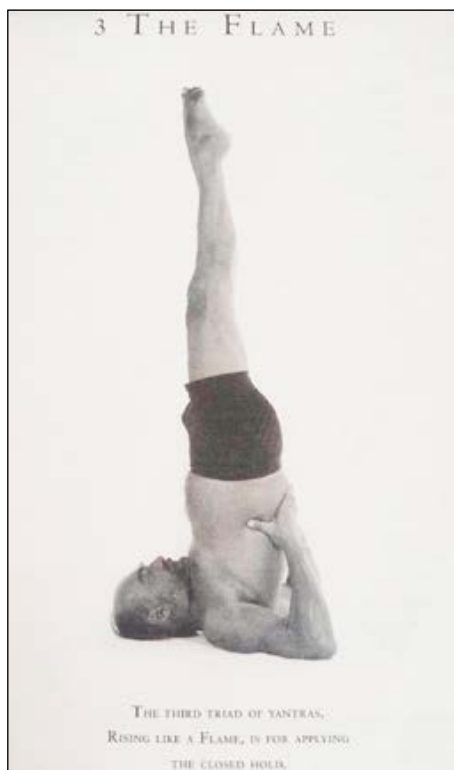
Antonio Morgione and Alberto Carpasio

Perhaps even those of us who are Neapolitans are not familiar with Via Ferdinando Palasciano, a narrow street that slopes down to the Villa Comunale and then to the Mergellina waterfront. But we in the Neapolitan Community remember it well, at least the first disciples of the Master. It was there, in a small gymnasium, that our Master gave the first Teachings and it was there that we first met Sergio, one of the first authorized instructors of Yantra Yoga. And he was the benchmark for us since then. And Sergio was able to demonstrate his administrative and organizational ability at the new center that the small Neapolitan Community had found itself in Via del Parco Margherita. There our Master systematically gave Teachings, including those concerning medicine and astrology. There Sergio's leadership was recognized by all. And we began to know him well. And he would tell us about his boat crossings. Sergio was a passionate lover of the sea and would fascinate us with his tales of the stormy seas he had had to face. Fascination and terror that were reminiscent of the tales and novels of Conrad, Melville and London, starring sea-wolf heroes facing the stormy pitfalls of the sea. And his face and wrinkles showed the marks from the sun and the saltiness.

It was right at that time. It was 1974 and you would see a nice crowd of young women and men following an equally young man with a dark complexion wandering around the Vomero, Piazza Vanvitelli (a hilly district of Naples) and always heading to the usual trattoria and there the young man with a darker face would order *penne all'arrabbiata* (spicy pasta) and *friarielli soffritti* (sautéed broccoli rabe). Of course, all at maximum spiciness. And there, too, our Master would give his teachings. Yes, teachings, but they were about care and various ways of storing hot peppers and preparing seasonings. And then in those cases Sergio



would show his knowledge of wines and their pairings with food. This was because Sergio was also an accomplished sommelier and a good cook. He loved the good and pleasant things our earthly life gave in full knowledge.



The Master was an intimate and friend of Sergio, with some moments even of complicity. They were almost contemporaries. Well, for the Master who loved to eat mozzarella, Sergio used every tactic to supply him with buffalo mozzarella from Campania when there was a group of assistants attentive to his dietary regimen. For this alone he must have had some blessings and winking smiles.

Our Master always smiled at him, sometimes looking at him a little puzzled. And, perhaps, this will have been the last images of Sergio's life. Those who heard or visited Sergio in the last days of his illness were always told that the Master was always present in his heart and mind and, surely, he would not suffer.

Sergio Campodonico left his human vision on October 11, 2023 at 11 pm.

May our Vajra brothers, by the power of direct transmission, when they die in the Bardo state of the Dharmata, recognize how the son instantly recognizes the mother and have total realization for the benefit of all sentient beings! ©

Merigar East

Autumn–Winter 2023

Despite the fact that the Merigar East Gar remains in “hibernation” during the cold autumn-winter months, the practice is keeping active by continuing both online and onsite programmes.

Thus, during October 13–15 we had the opportunity to be guided online with dedication and patience by Oliver Leick through the open course on The Six Perfections. Perhaps this topic no longer appeals to you, but we invite you to consider a simple exercise: what does “perfect” mean to you?

Through these profound teachings we explored and understood the challenges many of us face along the way as well as applying them to our lives in a way that makes them practical and accessible.

From 24–26 November we continued the project started in the past, to transform the land at ME, intensively exploited years ago, into a real oasis using permaculture plans developed since 2009. People from inside and outside the community enthusiastically joined the project and planted around 30 trees, despite the bad weather, planting seeds for those who will come to enjoy their shade and benefits.

Even though for a short time the doors of ME remain closed, we are happy to announce that we are preparing to welcome the Western New Year from December 29th to January 1st with an unique retreat under the guidance of Aleksander Skwara, renowned Santi Maha Sangha instructor. If you feel that “Healing the Heart and Bringing Peace to the World – Living as the Total State of Being” resonates with your heart, we invite you to ME to join us or connect online to fully benefit from the splendor of an open heart and spontaneous manifestation of our Real State. Details [here](https://dzogchen.ro/wp/events/healing-the-heart/) (<https://dzogchen.ro/wp/events/healing-the-heart/>).

Regarding the Tibetan New Year, we prepare manually together with generous volunteers some of the prayer flags. We invite you to participate in this **Lungtas** production campaign or order your Lungta sets directly from our website and choose whether you want them hung in our beautiful Gar or shipped to your home : <https://dzogchen.ro/wp/tibetan-prayer-flags-lungta/>



Autumn covers the earth with an amber cloak dreaming of childhood stories heard in the warmth of the home, and the Black Sea sings its tumultuous symphony caressing the sand of the shore.

We invite and prepare for you to discover with us the magic of winter at the Sea, at Merigar East, about which our Master after seeing this place said : “Look around, you see, there’s more sky than earth. It’s like a big sky mandala. It is rare to find such a perfect sky mandala.” ©





News from Kunkyabbling, Prague

Besides regular collective practices – Monday's Khaita Joyful Dances devotedly led by Petra Zezulková, regular Yantra Yoga practice on Tuesdays and Vajra Dance with Milan Polášek on Thursdays – at Kunkyabbling in Prague we also had a small workshop on making Namkhas in May, under the guidance of Pavel Rusinko, and in October we had a weekend of listening to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's webcast recording from the Prague retreat in 2016.

Fijalka Sable Turziková led a course of Yantra Yoga for beginners 21–22 October and next year in January we will host her for a course of Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga for parents and children, with the intention to involve parents in the class so that they will be able to regularly do the exercises with their children at home.

With joyful expectations of Yeshe Namkhai's Dzogchen teaching retreat in June, we have been thinking about how to support people interested in receiving the transmission of the Dzogchen teachings and who are also interested in our community activities and the teaching of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In March together with Santi Maha Sangha instructor Lukáš Chmelík we opened a course called the "Art of Meditation" with the intention to provide support and some answers to newcomers and also to create an open space where we, community members, can meet together with them based on the principles of Santi Mahā Sangha. Learn, practice and together deepen and develop the base on which our practice should stand firmly.

These meetings are taking place over 6 weekends during 2023-2024 and are intended for the education and training in



Art of Meditation with Lukáš Chmelík in Kunkyabbling, 29th September–1st October 2023.

the Buddha's teachings, the practice of meditation and are based on *Five points for open courses* by Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. This year we have already had 3 courses – in March *Essence of the view, meditation and conduct on the path of dharma – Naturally relaxed mind* (also with a short talk by Enzo Terzano, who connected to one of our sessions through ZOOM), in June – *Calm abiding meditation – shamatha/shine* and at the end of September *Friendship to ourselves and good heart for others – Practice of the Four Immeasurables in Buddhism and Dzogchen*. In January we will follow up with the 4th part on the theme *Profound and liberating principle of transcendent wisdom – emptiness and The Heart Sutra*.

At last our Ling welcomed Igor Berkhin, who led a weekend retreat on *The Function of Sound in Dzogchen* teaching, 10th–12th November.

In the Czech Republic there are small local sanghas in the towns of Tábor, Plzeň, Brno, Olomouc and Trinec. People meet together for ganapujas, Vajra Dance and other practices. They also do some very nice "mini-retreats" together and under the guidance of SMS instructor Lukáš Chmelík (onsite or zoom). This is a very nice support for those who cannot travel to our lings and who wish to stay connected.



The Function of Sound with Igor Berkhin.

There was regular Tsetar practice – the summer pheasant and autumn fish release.

Also, we would like to inform the Community that this year we did not have enough people willing to join the gakyil. To maintain harmony, we had to decrease the number of gakyil members from 9 to 6. We would like to thank very much the members of our gakyil who are leaving for their long work and support of the Czech Dzogchen Community: Martin Erhardt (blue), Nikolett Illieva (red), Jana Tvrzová (yellow). We wish them all the best.

From January 1st 2024, the gakyil members of Kunkyabbling will be:

Blue: Kateřina Drajsajtllová, Michal Sodoma

Red: Matěj Bošina, Monika Vrtišková

Yellow: Marcela Boučková, Jiřina Vlčková

Gekö of Kunkyabbling: Martin Erhardt
Gekö of Phendeling: Květoslava Švédová ©

Phendeling Retreat Center 2023 Activities

Our retreat place Phendeling is located in the beautiful nature of southern Bohemia in the Czech Republic. We can enjoy the luxury of a gönpa with a painted Vajra Dance mandala and a dark retreat cabin. It is perfect for retreats organized by the community and for practicing together or personal retreats. The Czech community organized various activities there this year:

In February we enjoyed a deepening retreat of pranayamas of the 3rd and 4th group with Honza Dolenský. And as every year we also followed the webcast of the Mandarava retreat from Dzamling Gar and few people attended a very nice workshop of making Namkhas organised by Pavel Rusinko.

In March we had a deepening course of the Vajra Dance of the Three Vajras with Adriana Dal Borgo, which was followed by a Khaita Educational Program. So, we had the honor to host a group of Khaita school dancers aspiring to become instructors under the guidance of Adriana.

The beginning of May was devoted to deepening and practicing together the Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings with Milan Polášek. At the end of May we invited Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga instructor Mónika Lakatos from Hungary and enjoyed a week-end connected with dance, yoga and practicing together the Avalokitesvara Khorwa Kongthrug. It was also a very nice meeting of members of the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak sangha.

In May we were also very thankful that we could follow the webcast teaching of Yeshe Namkhai for those who couldn't travel to Merigar.

In June we enjoyed the explanation and practice retreat of Chöd with Steven Landsberg, who also arrived with his sitar and one evening we had a beautiful live concert when Steven also shared his story of how he met his sitar teacher and learned to play this interesting instrument.

Every year the beginning of summer is open for Yantra Yoga holidays with Fijalka and Jeff Sable. It has already been several years since this activity started and a very nice group of mostly families with children can enjoy various activities. Thanks to our vajra sister Bára Brosková and her



Practice retreat with Mónika Lakatos, 26th–29th May 2023.



Khaita Joyful Dances with Petra Zezulková, 18th–20th August 2023.



Yantra Yoga with Honza Dolenský, 14th–17th September.



Chöd retreat with Steven Landsberg, 21st–25th June 2023.



"The Silent retreat" with Lukáš Chmelík, 25th August–3rd September 2023.



Annual assembly meeting of members, 4th November.

helpers, who take care of children, parents can practice Yantra Yoga and Harmonious Breathing. Children also practice Kumar Kumari yoga every day. The program is enriched with various outdoor activities in the forest and nearby lake etc.

At the end of July Zoli Cser visited our place and he held a retreat devoted mostly to explanation and practice of Phowa, and of course the retreat also included morning practice of Yantra Yoga, in the evening Vajra Dance and Chöd at the end of the day.

In August there was a very joyful Khaita weekend with Petra Zezulková and also the experiential "Silent retreat" with Lukáš Chmelík – 9 days of intensive sitting practice on the absence of self-nature in the person and in phenomena with explanations, all combined with movement practices (walking, Yantra Yoga, Dance of the Vajra and Khaita).

In September again there was a Yantra Yoga weekend with Honza Dolenský, this

time focused on variations of the 1st series and the 4th group of yantras.

In November, besides the very joyful Annual community assembly, we did the Mandarava practice together and also had the opportunity to enjoy and deepen our practice of almost all of the Vajra Dances with Milan Polášek.

The end of the calendar year will be connected with the practice on Green Tara. The retreat will be led by Lukáš Chmelík. It was a very good year, and we are slowly preparing for the next one. Some activities will be repeated and deepened, some will be new. In between the courses and during the courses we also enjoy Karma Yoga practice as we need to be responsible for keeping the retreat place in good shape.

Many thanks to all instructors, organizers, helpers, practitioners... and most of all to our precious Masters. May the teaching flourish. ☺



Namgyalgar forest.

Photos courtesy of Ian Drummond

Update from Namgyalgar, Australia

Namgyalgar Blue Gakyil

Namgyalgar is situated in the beautiful hinterland of the Sunshine Coast, in Queensland, Australia. Rinpoche loved the climate and the aspect of our Gar, and now whilst we are a small community we are committed to providing a place for practitioners to come and participate in retreats and make use of our Retreat cabin.

We have had several Khalongdorjeikar retreats held on site and online with Prima Mai and one of our practitioners, Jorrit, has made a makeshift Mandala on a flat grassy area which can be used as well as our cloth one. There have also been a couple of Yantra Yoga retreats and we are planning more for next year with local instructors. We are planning a Song of the Vajra course in February 2024 with Cosimo di Maggio and in April a combined Santi Maha Sangha and Yantra Yoga retreat with our local instructors. As well we have regular online practices which are open to all. Khaita is also alive with workshops and regular sessions.

Our numbers are not huge but we are very grateful to have a place where we can come together to be inspired and to share



Karma Yoga – Bush Regeneration.

the teachings our precious Master has offered.

We had our AGM recently and elected new office bearers for the Gakyil. We are short on Red Gakyil members and our very dedicated Administrative Officer is looking to resign so we are looking for a new one and also a Communications Officer to update our Website and to send emails to members. Our current and invaluable caretakers are finishing up and are being replaced by a lovely and enthusiastic couple who are excited to join the Community.

We invite and welcome international visitors to come and stay in our Air B&B accommodation or camping if preferred.

May we continue in our Masters light.



Namgyalgar Airbnb.

Namgyalgar New Gakyil

President	Pamela Oldmeadow
Treasurer	Eleanor Ludon
Secretary	Ian Drummond (for Gakyil)
Red Gakyil	Ben Ringer
Yellow Gakyil	Pamela Oldmeadow, Eleanor Ludon
Blue Gakyil	Ian Drummond, Alima Kirchner

IDCA Building Fund Committee: Pamela Oldmeadow, Lisa O'Connor, Barbara 'Lydia' Nelson.

Our new Caretakers will be Nicoli and Henrique Lanhoso

Caretaker email bookings.namgyalgar@gmail.com ©

Dzogchen: Who's Who & What's What in the Great Perfection

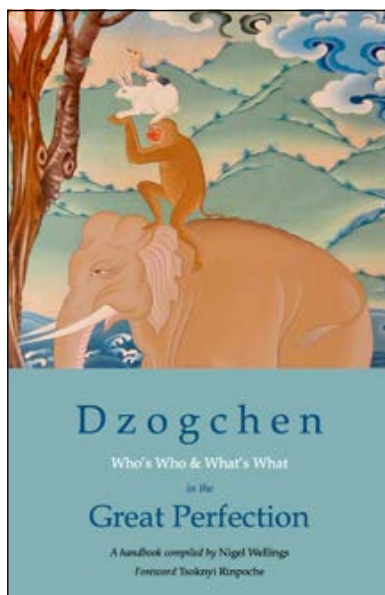
by Nigel Wellings
Paperback
Mud Pie Books, 2022

Julia Lawless

Aimed at those new to the Dzogchen teachings and those that want to go a little deeper, this book provides a helpful historical framework and context for understanding the main principles of the tradition. It is more than a simple directory covering the main themes, masters and deities of the Dzogchen tradition, as it is a large volume containing over 400 pages. A brief overview of the lives of the most important Dzogchen Masters including their dates, lineage connections, activities and influences are presented in an easily accessible manner and placed within the larger picture of Tibetan Buddhism and to a lesser extent, Buddhism as a whole. The book also includes a general explanation of the principal guardians and deities connected with Dzogchen as well as helping to elucidate some of the specific terminology commonly used when transmitting the Dzogchen teachings. This can often be a tricky area to navigate since many terms, such as bodhicitta or emptiness, can have different meanings according to their specific context within Sutra, Tantra or Dzogchen. As Tsoknyi Rinpoche writes in his Foreword:

'At present, Dharma literature in Western languages has become quite vast with its array of technical terms. Those who wish to deepen their knowledge of Buddhism through books, might find difficulty in understanding certain terms, which quite often appear to specific profound teachings. Although many of these texts include a glossary, where clarifications can be found, sometimes these fall short of providing comprehensive explanations. Focussing on this issue, Nigel Wellings has laid out, in the form of a handbook, accurate explanations of terms, including historical information about the origin of certain teachings and biographies of major teachers.'

I have known Nigel as a friend for many years as he was one of the initial students



of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and attended many of Rinpoche's early retreats in the UK during the 1980's and 90's. He first met Rinpoche in India in 1976/7 while he was there studying thangka painting, and subsequently many of his drawings have been used to illustrate Rinpoche's books. Some years later, Nigel also became involved with the sangha of Tsoknyi Rinpoche, one of the sons of the renowned Dzogchen Master, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche. Nigel is also a founding member of 'The Forum for Contemplative Studies', acted as a teacher for the Bath & Bristol Mindfulness Courses programme, as well as being Director of Training at the 'London Centre for Transpersonal Psychology' for many years. Today he works as a practising psychoanalytic psychotherapist who works within a contemplative perspective. Nigel's familiarity with all these different viewpoints comes across throughout the book, and in this sense, he covers various perspectives when presenting the subject matter and topics which are covered here. Some of the more archaic and complex topics and themes are therefore elucidated using a more contemporary Western-style language and approach.

'However, what you will find here is not quite a straight replication or reinstatement of the teachings. Drawing on the scholarly material available, I have in some entries added a little background for additional clarification. Nor does this book assume that the reader is a fully committed student of Dzogchen: many of us may be engaged with the teachings while retaining some hesitations. Acknowledging this,

I have in some instances sympathetically described the tradition from slightly outside, not assuming agreement, but inviting thought. I do this from my dual perspective of one who is an aspiring Dzogchen student, but also someone who values knowing the history of the Dharma as a whole and how it has unfolded over time.'

From a historical perspective, the Dzogchen teachings have scarcely found their feet in the West. The first Tibetan teachers only first started transmitting these profound teachings in Europe and the USA the 1970's. And although over fifty years later there are now many Dzogchen Centres all over the globe, certain aspects of terminology to do with the translation of Tibetan and Sanskrit terms have yet to be agreed upon, and this is an important factor since textual sources are a vital component of how knowledge is passed on from one generation to another. This is apparent in the book where variations in the translation of certain important terms might be interpreted in different ways.

Another hurdle to be surmounted in approaching the continuity of the Dzogchen tradition, is the variation in the cultural outlook between East and West, because although in a real sense the essence of Dzogchen, the state of rigpa, is beyond culture, nevertheless it yet to really find its own local language of expression. In the West, technology and science are dominant factors in our society, as well as those elements of Western philosophy and psychology which underpin our cultural values, and all portrayed upon a Christian background canvas. Gradually, the Dzogchen teachings need to take root in the West and find their own form of expression in an authentic way which does not dismiss or destroy any of the intrinsic and vital principles of the tradition.

Nigel pushes the boundaries of this field of research a little by exploring ways to bridge the gap, yet still leaves space for further interpretation as he suggests in his Postscript on Definitions:

'... I recommend a light touch when reading this handbook, regarding its contents as 'mere' definitions, to borrow a phrase used by Tsoknyi Rinpoche, to counter making things too concrete. Viewed in this way a multiplicity of meanings and contradictions need not be the cause for confusion but may be seen as evidence of the many

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The Life of a Great Bonpo Master

The Biography of
Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak
Rinpoche
Serindia Publications, 2021

Andy Lukianowicz

*There are Buddhas all around you, millions
of Buddhas all around you...*

(From oral teachings by Lopon Tenzin Namdak)

This wonderful, timely book recounts the life, full of great achievements for the good of Bonpos, the Bon religion and humanity in general, of the Master Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche [henceforth Yongdzin Rinpoche], widely acknowledged as the greatest Bonpo master of this generation, and maybe more than that.

Widely known and revered in the Dzogchen Community – he visited Merigar and other Dzogchen Community venues several times in the 80's and 90's, and moreover was a close friend and confidante of our beloved teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – the volume is graced with two photographs, one [thank you whoever had the presence of mind to snap the picture! immortalising the historic visit of Chögyal Rinpoche with his students to Yongdzin Rinpoche at the Bon settlement in Dolanji, India in 1978, a later one from a private meeting in Paris ca. 2014, attesting to a long, warm and mutually respectful friendship.

It is because Yongdzin Rinpoche has been such a frequent, respected and beloved guest teacher at Merigar and elsewhere, well known and fondly remembered by so many Community members,

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people who have contributed to the continuous unfolding of meaning that this book contains. Definitions are invaluable and require careful thought but, as the Dharma demonstrates, finally they are empty of inherent existence, entirely transitory and contingent, and most fundamentally they are simply the ephemeral expression of intrinsic awareness.

'Dzogchen: Who's who & What's what in the Great Perfection', by Nigel Wellings, paperback pub. Mud Pie, 2022, available from Amazon £20.



that I will concentrate on some of the more 'mundane' aspects of this biography; the more spiritual aspects of the life of such a teacher, who lives surrounded by millions of Buddhas and knows it, such as portents and messages from dakinis, protectors and local deities throughout his life, I will leave readers to discover for themselves.

And what a life, what a tale. The book follows a quasi-sociological life-phases trajectory, in nine chapters. The first recounts his birth (presaged by his mother's dream and other wonderful signs), the hardships of his infancy, [his father was struck by leprosy and had to leave the family home] and other vicissitudes.

One feature of the book is that YR himself was interviewed, consequently many events are told first hand, in YR's own words. For example, he remembers how in infancy his impaired speech was healed by an old lama spitting into his mouth; 'I wasn't very happy about that ... but that how things were at that time...'; and 'at that time' how the local people in his native Kyungpo supported the Chinese against the [even worse and more rapacious] central Tibetan government administration. 'Those were dangerous times.'

Subsequently he entered the path of Bon taking up his studies, including the art of painting, in which he became so accomplished that at that time he was in great demand to paint murals. He was taken under the wing of Zopa Rinpoche, who would stay by his side as he painted, recounting stories of past masters as well as regaling him with tales from his own travels; the text appositely comments that this 'indi-

cated that he knew what a great master he would later become'.

At age seventeen [1942] YR took monastic vows at Menri, receiving the ordination name Tenzin Namdak, protecting his vows 'like his own eyes' and 'becoming the shining jewel of all the Bon monks'. Soon after he embarked on a pilgrimage in Nepal, including holy Mt. Kailash and Swayambhunath, a location blessed by Tonpa Shenrab himself. Once back at his monastery, he started his studies; being such an accomplished painter, he was invited to paint murals at a new temple, to which he agreed on condition that he be able to receive teachings, which he was able to do, including on Dzogchen and rituals, from the great teacher Gangru Ponlob, as advised by his own mentor Gyalchog; from him he received the main teachings of Dzogchen, as well as on poetics, 'that opened wide the door of writing for him'. When after four years YR told Gangru Ponlob he wanted to return to his native Kyungpo, the latter told him to go to Menri, continue his studies and take the geshe degree. At Menri he started his studies under the Lopon, Kyabje Meuton Sangye Tenzin, under whom YR continued to study Dzogchen, also at Dolanji in India [about which more below] until Sangye Tenzin's death aged 66 in 1978. Incidentally, the book here usefully gives potted biographies of Gangru Ponlob and also of Sangye Tenzin, who was also a teacher of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, one of YR's principal disciples and founder and main teacher of the Ligmincha Institute with branches in Europe and USA. At this time Gongru Ponlob told YR that he should become Lopon [head teacher] at Yungdrung Ling monastery, an honour YR declined, instead returning to Menri, continuing his studies and taking the geshe degree there. YR also recounts a harrowing tale of a visit to Trashilhunpo to welcome a visit by the Panchen Lama; one procession was held in the presence of some 5,000 armed Chinese soldiers, that was, understandably, deeply troubling; a harbinger of things to come.

At the age of 27, in 1952, YR was enthroned as Lopon of Menri. In 1955, following the abbot Nyima Wangyal's death, YR recounts how the selection procedure of his successor, through instructions and choice made by the monastery protectors, led to the abbacy of Sherab Lodro, formerly Yongdzin Rinpoche's personal assistant; consequently Menri was, in YR's own words 'now in the position of having a very limited monastic fund and a completely

inexperienced abbot.' Due to this Yongdzin Rinpoche himself had to go on a fund raising tour, and thus was not present at Menri when the Chinese occupation forces arrived and started their reform education campaign; many high ranking lamas escaping with the fleeing abbot were shot and killed.

Hearing about the flight of the 14th Dalai Lama and of the disastrous situation at Menri in 1960 YR himself too took flight with a group of people from all parts of Tibet, however early in their journey their camp was attacked and destroyed by Chinese soldiers and Yongdzin Rinpoche himself was shot in the left leg and seriously wounded, while friends he was fleeing with were killed on the spot; one friend only saved himself by burying himself in sand and covering his head with a rock! It was only when night fell that two of his friends were able to return to the battle site and carry YR away to safety; had they not returned to save him 'he would very probably have lost his life.'

After a rocambolesque sequence of events, including meeting up with the Menri abbot's fleeing group, and being saved by a nomad family and later a yak herder, who looked after him for sixteen days, YR managed to elude the Chinese army finally reaching Mustang and avoided lengthy imprisonment... read it to believe it! Much of this adventure is told in Yongdzin Rinpoche's own words.

It was during YR's early years in exile that he met the late Prof. Snellgrove, eminent scholar and Tibetologist, leading to his spending three years in England; in collaboration they produced the important work 'The Nine Ways of Bon', which helped Western scholars correct preconceived, ignorant, ill-founded and, regrettably, maliciously intended false notions [some, alas, still encountered today!] and instead form 'a new perspective and new insights' into the Bon religion. [Something furthered, I hasten to add, by Chögyal Rinpoche's monumental work 'Drung, Deu & Bon'.] There are some heart-rending comments by Yongdzin Rinpoche regarding the then state of the world, showing his keen interest in and discernment of world affairs at the time; in my view, he must find the world situation even worse now.

There follows a very busy period, with (among other activities) the establishment of a community in India for exiled Bonpos for the teaching and realization of Yungdrung Bon and teaching and empower-

ment of its inner, outer and esoteric traditions, and the rebuilding of Menri monastery in Dolanji, India; publication and dissemination of important Bon texts; many fruitful encounters with refugee Buddhist lamas in India and Nepal; and continuing to receive instructions and transmissions of precious Bon Dzogchen teachings; and an incursion in Tibet where he was reunited with his mother after 45 years separation. Also now we reach April, 1978, and the above-mentioned meeting with Chögyal Rinpoche that was to lead to a fruitful

Triten Norbutse; he also found time for further visits to Merigar West and other European and American dharma centres; a fourth visit to Tibet; and the publication in 1993 of his seminal work 'Heartdrops of Dharmakaya', a text by Sherab Tashi Gyatsen on Dzogchen Practice in the Bon tradition, with a commentary [adroitly annotated, using YR's own elucidatory words, by Richard Dixey]; this manual, containing previously highly guarded secret teachings, became, in YR's own words, 'not restricted and for the benefit of all beings',



Lopon and Andy.

and important friendship. It was in Dolanji that I first, all too briefly, met Yongdzin Rinpoche, in 1983. Subsequently, I had the good fortune to serve as Rinpoche's translator in Italy for some twenty years.

After establishing the new Menri Monastery in India, YR undertook the establishment of the Bon Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal; he twice visited Tibet; this was the period that also saw the start of Yongdzin Rinpoche's long activity of promulgating Bon spiritual teachings in the West, 'that would increasingly occupy him' in later years; after USA and UK he travelled to Italy in August 1989 to teach at Merigar West. He also attended the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra Initiation in New York in 1991; on a previous visit in 1988 to Menri Monastery in Dolanji the Dalai Lama had declared Yungdrung Bon to be 'the heart treasure of Tibetan religion and culture'.

The following years saw YR's extensive work for the consolidation of activities at

opening the door of Bon to all interested fortunate people.

The concluding chapter starts with the special event organized by Norbutse Monastery and the Bon Community in Nepal to celebrate Yongdzin Rinpoche's 80th birthday in February 2005, then reports on the establishment in the same year of Shenten Dargye Ling Monastery in the Loire valley in France, that would become the most important centre in the West for the preservation of Yongdzin Rinpoche's teaching and the Bon religion in general in the West. The book ends with a fine photograph and report on the Dutrisu ceremony held at Shenten in 2018, conducted under the guidance of Yondzin Rinpoche.

The text is enriched throughout with marvellous pictures, photos of significant people, depictions of deities and protectors, maps and line drawings; in its own way,

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Healers in the Dzogchen Community

The Importance of the Spiritual Dimension in Illness

Gino Vitiello

Spirituality and illness are closer themes than they may seem. When we are in a good state of health, it seems to be the "natural" condition of existence, and it is ... as long as it lasts. However, it cannot last uninterruptedly.

One of the fundamental aspects of the Buddhist view is impermanence: nothing lasts forever, everything is transformation. So even the physiological state of health, when it is there, cannot last forever, and we have to be prepared to accept that sooner or later we will suffer an illness, in a more or less severe form. The moment we discover that the body is ill, our whole being becomes ill, given the natural attachment we have to this body, that part of us with which we most easily identify.

How do we react when faced with a serious illness? Some people consider it as fate, some as divine punishment, still others as a form of injustice in life. All these reactions tend to shift attention away from the basic truth: an illness is the disruption of that balance of functions on which health depends, and which, for a variety of possible causes, has been broken, thus inducing the manifestation of some pathology.

A conscious presence of mind, which is the basis of many spiritual paths, can also help us to recognize it as a message,



a signal, telling us to change something in our way of life. Dr. Eduard Bach, the discoverer of the flower therapy that bears his name, said that illness is often the last means that our soul, our deepest self, resorts to in order to make us recognize our mistaken behaviors or the way we deceive ourselves in life.

There is also a close interaction between body and mind. While it is well known that a physical ailment inevitably reflects on mood, an emotional malaise, prolonged depression or dissatisfaction with one's life will also manifest with effects on the body, often through a behavioural and/or eating disorder, which in turn generates other health problems.

When an illness occurs, it is important to react, but it is particularly necessary to understand the cause, not just the superficial cause. There are many people who

emerge positively transformed from a serious illness if they have been able to accept its existence and understand its meaning.

Sometimes medical therapies or the body's ability to respond are not enough for healing. Then we need to find resources on a deeper level. To do this, however, we must have already developed a spiritual vision of existence. If, during life, we have only cultivated material things, it will be difficult to deal in the best way with the suffering that illness entails and even death, which, sooner or later, will come and find us unprepared. The relationship with our spiritual dimension, however, is not an easy thing to discover at the last moment, when it may be overcome by fear. If we do not start when we still have all our faculties, then it will be much more difficult. We should all train ourselves, at least when we get to a mature age, to regard our body as a home that we will inevitably have to abandon along with everything we have accumulated in life.

Belief in a compassionate deity can be of great help, and this is not only true of theistic religions. In Buddhism, too, there are manifestations of compassion, such as Tara, or others related to the potential for long life, and there are specific practices for receiving its benefits. Through meditative practices, Buddhist teaching, however, and particularly Dzogchen, guides us above all to train in awareness of impermanence and leads us to discover the true nature of our being, going beyond the limited aspect of that small 'self' with which we identify. Recognizing this original nature means coming out of the condition of ignorance

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and speaking 'non-canonically', a treasure text indeed.

In conclusion, great masters trained by YR to continue his work in the west need to be mentioned, chief among them Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung, Abbot and Lopon of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal, who teaches long summer retreats in person and online in Shenten Darye Ling, France, in Europe and USA, and Khenpo Geshe Gelek Jinpa, President of the Shenten centre, a much loved visiting teacher also in Italy; and Lotsawa Vajranatha John Reyn-

olds, who for half a century has been translating Tibetan wisdom texts and in recent years turned his attention to many crucial Bon texts from the important Zhangzhung Nyangyud cycle as well as editing a very useful collection of early teachings by YR in the west, 'Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings', all published by Vajra Books in Nepal.

If I may end with a personal note, as mentioned above I used to serve as his Italian translator and once a person came for a personal interview; he introduced himself, 'I am Marco', I replied 'I am Andy', and YR came simply saying 'And I am Tenzin'.

He then answered all Marco's questions at some length, openly explaining several arcane issues, as if he had known Marco all his life. That moment, like many other such 'ordinary' events, was also a great teaching for me. In fact YR's humility and modesty are mentioned several times in the book, signs of his dedication of his whole life, strength and activities to maintaining, spreading and transmitting the living teachings, practices and liberating energies of Yungdrung Bon. ©

from which conditioned existences arise and achieving ultimate liberation from the suffering of samsara.

As for the role of the physician, I think that his or her current training suffers from the modern dichotomous perception between science and spirituality. The practice of contemporary medicine is almost inconceivable without a specialized view. This has the undoubted advantage of training professionals who can constantly update themselves on the constant advances offered by scientific research. However, it has the limitation of examining increasingly limited aspects of the human person, and the aspect of spirituality has long since fallen outside the area of medical competence. Unfortunately, and less justifiably, the psychological aspect does not seem to fall within it either.

Fortunately, something seems to be changing: the field of medical ethics is increasingly sensitive to a view of the overall well-being of the person who is ill rather than focusing only on countering illness as an entity in itself. Legitimate questions have also arisen about the desirability of prolonging life at any cost without considering its quality. It should not be forgotten that there is a big difference between loving care and therapeutic overkill, which often covers up the physician's denial of defeat, and is sometimes accepted by the patient under the illusion of avoiding the inevitability of death.

At this point it is perhaps important to clarify what is meant by spirituality. The dimension of spirituality is related to the idea of something that transcends the material aspect of life, something beyond the physical body and consequently far removed from the scope of medicine. But if the subject that medicine addresses is the human being in its entirety and complexity, is it possible to completely ignore the relevance of this peculiar aspect of human nature in the training of the physician?

Spirituality should not be confused with religion, to which it has long been delegated. If the human condition were purely material, perhaps there would not even be something that we could define as a spiritual approach. This, however, has characterized our existence since the first emergence of what we have defined as consciousness.

In ancient traditional medicine the role of the healer was likened to that of the priest in the intuitive perception that illness of the body involves all aspects of the person, including his psychic and spiritual condition.

Today, it is impractical to think of this totality of roles in a single professional figure, so in the face of serious illnesses, in the most advanced medical centers, the figure of the psychologist is sought alongside the physician for the emotional support of the person who is ill in his or her course of treatment. A great deal of evidence has been gathered on how the emotional response can positively or negatively influence the prospects for healing, and in this response the role of spirituality is of great value.

While this is true for those who are suffering, it is also reasonable to consider that a spiritual formation, not necessarily denominational, can be supportive to those who are caring for and coping with the condition of others with a serious or terminal illness.

I would like to point out a few points about the some of the possible benefits:

- * Developing empathy and compassion in therapeutic work. These emotions on the part of the physician are always recognized by patients and promote their trust in the caregiver.
- * Increased communication skills. If the physician truly perceives the sick person as a person with a definite identity and not just a clinical case in which to intervene, he or she will be able to create a better relationship with them, offer more effective support, and get patient to accept treatment by patients more readily.
- * Preventing burnout. Working with critically ill patients can be emotionally very challenging for health care workers. Spiritual training can provide support in dealing with this stress and the risk of burnout.
- * Openness to a holistic approach. Integrating spirituality into medical practice can foster a more holistic approach, leading to consideration of not only the physical aspects of health, but also the psychological, social, and spiritual aspects and cultural differences of patients, which is not a minor issue in an increasingly multiethnic society.

In conclusion, if we recognize that spirituality is an essential component of human nature, we should ask ourselves whether it is possible to exclude it from a relationship such as that between us and illness. Serious or terminal illness makes us face the fragile limits of our condition and pushes us to confront those questions to which we often avoid finding answers.

As for the physician, it is true that his or her task is above all to deal with the problems of the body, but in his work he will encounter human beings in a particularly fragile condition that will inevitably confront him with his own, and every means is valuable to support this mutual burden. ©

A student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 1977, Gino Vitiello is a medical doctor and psychotherapist from Naples, Italy. He is a Yantra Yoga instructor and a meditation teacher as well as the author of various articles and lectures on Tibetan Medicine and the theme of death in the Buddhist tradition.

My Personal Journey with Gestalt Therapy

Amely Becker

My first introduction to Gestalt therapy took place when I was invited to work on a dream I had. A friend offered me a sample session and the experience deeply impacted; working in the Gestalt way on this dream left me elated, inspired and with many insights. The discovery that all the parts of the dream can come alive by animating them, making them interact with each other, giving them a voice and letting them talk for themselves and to each other inspired a new understanding of the power of creative imagination; it involved a kind of psychodrama like a play on the stage of my mind. A few years later I was eager to properly study this approach and made it my profession.

Gestalt is a form of psychotherapy developed by Fritz Perls, Laura Perls and Paul Goodman in the 1940s; it is a holistic approach to psychological healing. It views individuals as complex beings, considering their thoughts, emotions, behaviors and physical sensations as interconnected aspects of their experience. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the whole person rather than focusing solely on specific symptoms, honoring that body, feelings and mind are interconnected and working in accordance with each other, either in harmony or disharmony. The aim is to help the mind work in congruence with the emotions and the body, which would produce cognitive complete 'Gestalts'. The therapy places significant emphasis on the present moment, encouraging individuals to explore their immediate thoughts, feelings and sensations. By focusing on the "here and now" Gestalt therapy aims to enhance self-awareness and promote personal integration of these three fields of existence. It brings about connections with deeper strata of consciousness and refreshes experience of them spontaneously. This nurtures personal growth, producing greater satisfaction and meaning. Remaining in the present awareness is referred to as 'following one's process'. Learning to observe one's process in the present moment is the way to develop the capacity for awareness. In Gestalt therapy we call this approach phenomenological tracking. An experienced gestaltist can access the ex-



perience of his or her process in the awareness of it as being 'always right', as it is.

The term 'Gestalt' contains the essence of what its methodology represents. Gestalt literally translates from German as 'whole form' or 'complete figure'. Its verb 'gestalten' can be translated as 'to create' or 'creating'. Gestalt represents a complete form, it implies a fully outlined figure or configuration of an object or a lived experience; nothing is missing. In the context of therapy, it refers to the whole or the complete picture of an individual's experience. Through Gestalt therapy we hope to turn unaware interruptions to the stream of consciousness at the contact boundary of one's experience into an ongoing awareness process, which allows us to live more consciously present.

I was born in Germany during the post war period and was exposed to heavy handed emotional and mental conditioning. I grew up surrounded by a family which had strong concepts about how life should be lived and the guidelines were set in cement. I felt forced to live by a certain outlook or be considered as unfit for acceptance into the social clan I was part of. I had deadened myself to fit in and did not get the opportunity to connect with my fundamental aliveness; in many ways I killed myself off. I felt the burden of this conditioning to the point that I had to leave my home country behind during my early twenties in order to save myself from an impending mental breakdown. After spending a few years in London, I found Gestalt Therapy. I learnt how life could be released from the chains of preconceived regulations and self judgements and the ground of living could be left open ended,

not controlled by heavy pressures of societal and family expectations.

First of all I learnt that I was fundamentally 'good'. I was not condemned to isolation, even if I did not try to fit in with what was the norm. Already during my Gestalt therapy training I found my self esteem and discovered a creative and dynamic aliveness that was completely revolutionizing my own sense of self value. Away from the rigidity of almost cruel expectations and repression, I learnt to play, to find a voice inside me that served as a much more suitable guidance than some authoritarian stipulation imposed on me.

I was learning how to release the conditioning of the voice of an intense super ego, telling me how to live my life. There was no longer an internalized authority to have to live up to. Instead during therapy I was asked: What do you want? How do you want to live your life? An internal space was revealed to me that for the first time allowed an inner dialogue with myself, regarding and respecting and encouraging me to discover the freedom to find a response and reply to these questions. Looking back I am amazed at how imprisoned and oppressed my mind had been in Germany, not having been given the freedom to develop a relationship with myself, but mostly having to refer to whatever others in authority expected of me. This was a very subtle conditioning, almost imperceptible. When later, I was in London and I claimed the space to feel myself on my own terms, I awoke emotionally and felt mentally liberated.

Initially on this journey towards psychological liberation I found myself replying for a long time: I don't know. I don't know what I want, I cannot imagine or perceive of myself on my own terms. That was scary. I had to face an inner landscape that was barren, a desert, full of doubt and intimidation, almost crippled as that desert was crowded with other people's introjects. I did not know who I was and what I wanted.

Gestalt's strength was to help to bring me right close to myself by just staying with whatever came up in the process of inquiry. And what became foreground was this empty gaping gap in my psyche, a dark hole hidden for a long time out of sight. Slowly I learnt to hear whisperings telling me something about myself. I learnt to take the encouragement from the Gestalt formula of finding out by holding myself in an aware space that was present and in the moment. It was ok, not to know. It was ok

to feel a desolate emptiness that with some attentive nourishing would become a fertile ground for my own truth, needs, wishes and wants to sprout and evolve into an inner, colorful garden of creative potential and inspiration.

I learnt to let go of the notion of a fixed personality, a fixed 'self', a fixed gestalt that I had to live up to. I did not have to try to be someone for others, I could just be my own version and was encouraged to spend the time and space to help me grow into myself and learn how to follow my process. I discovered many wounds stemming from neglect, rejection and wholesale dismissal that made me feel that fundamentally that I did not exist. All these wounds needed healing. Facing them required courage and trust. Gestalt methodology was my holding ground and the frame that supported me in this process of learning how to be intimate with myself, instead of alienated.

"Change comes about when you become what you are, not when you try to become what you are not". (Arnold Beisser 1970) Paradoxical Theory of Change asserts that focusing on finding what one is by nature will correct anything artificial by itself. The more one attempts to be who one is not, the more one remains the same. Conversely, when people identify with their current experience, the conditions of wholeness and growth support change. Change comes about as a result of full acceptance of what is, rather than striving to be different. Perls was known to often say: 'Don't push the river!'

As a result of working with Gestalt therapy, I was able to become creative in my approach to life and over many years practiced Gestalt therapy as a profession, helping others to liberate themselves from their self alienation and the defences that they developed. I discovered spontaneity to be the stepping board for experimentation, to use life, certain

circumstances, in an experiential way to discover the potential of myself, dissolving stereotypes and becoming flexible in my approach to life. And how amazing it is that becoming my own agent, taking risks, developing, affirming my existence instead of feeling obliged to fit in with others' expectations affirmed that I am a unique individual, not a stereotype. My own version is just as valuable as anyone else's and the hierarchy of oppression is obsolete.

Gestalt as an orientation and a form of therapy has helped me develop and apply coping strategies. In reshaping my perceptions of life, it has given me vision, fertilized my imagination. It has woken me up to come alive and supported my becoming courageous and it has nourished trust in my process, affirming my ability to embrace my potential. It has accompanied me for 40 years as a way of life, an orientation, a discipline, and as a profession.

In the world of Samsara, they say what is required is to have a strong and functioning ego so that it is fit to be transcended in the spiritual field. A fractured ego is not a good base to embark on the spiritual path. My ego was certainly fractured, and it needed mending and healing and Gestalt therapy has done that for me. And that has helped me enormously on my journey with Dzogchen, Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Community.

Perls was fond of saying that you "must lose your mind to come to your senses". Gestalt has taught me how to lose myself without getting lost, as Winnicott would put it. ©

Amely Becker was born in Germany. She met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in London in 1979. She began her journey with Gestalt in 1984 and has recently retired from the profession of Gestalt Psychotherapist. Amely lives in Tenerife.



Pictures from the Past

The Tibet of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – Part 10

In this final episode of Raimondo Bultrini's visit to Changchub Dorje's village with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1988, at long last they meet the Master

The Elderly Disciples

In the morning we wake up early, as usual. Sonam Palmo and Phuntsog get up from their sleeping bags while I emerge from a pile of blankets that don't always manage to protect me from the cold. Instead of one of Changchub Dorje's elderly disciples, this morning it is a nun in her 40s who brings us tsampa with tea. By now I am used to it and without hesitation I swallow the mixture which I still do not know how to prepare by myself. Soon after, the same nun arrives with a bowl of water heated at a nearby house. In the bitter cold, washing with warm water is a real pleasure.

In the evening, walking with Rinpoche before bedtime, the sky is almost always free of clouds and a unique harmony reigns in the air. The usual star formation shows up punctually in the same spot, visible beyond the triangle of mountains that encloses the village. The diffuse light of a moon still low on the horizon outlines the contours of the bizarrely shaped rocks.

With the flashlight off, my senses alert, I breathe in at the top of my lungs a light, heady air, like a sparkling wine that makes me light-headed and gives me pleasant chills. Would I stay here forever, I wonder? Would I give up the chaos of my world for the long days of meditation and this nocturnal peace? Perhaps, but I can't right now. I am too excited by the idea of a changing city, of the hustle and bustle of frantic lives, of running after dreams of wealth, power or just tranquility, of loving a thousand women, of a thousand men in search of ideals that are always impossible and ready to vanish, of the creation of millions of objects as fascinating as they are useless.



The hermit monk who Raimondo meets on one of his walks, standing in front of his mountain cave.

Here there is no visible goal and dreams do not immediately materialize by simply wishing them to. In my world, if I want to run, I have a fast car, if I wish, I can fly a plane. Here I only have my legs and arms to work with.

Tonight before I go back up to my room a star falls while I am walking and I find myself longing for a deep inner peace, communicable to all. A few years earlier I would have asked for something different, something much more practical. As of today I observe and reflect on the effects of a life devoted exclusively to the spirit. I carefully observe the lamas and hermit yogis, many of whom were direct disciples of Changchub Dorje. I do not know their thoughts; I cannot speak with them without the translation of Master Namkhai Norbu. However, I can reflect on their personalities from the way they behave, and from many other signs.

One is tall and sturdy, with a Marlon Brando-like face. He gives an impression of inner strength and solidity. His imposing appearance and magnetic gaze make him a charismatic figure. I get the feeling that he has mixed opinions about me and some resentfulness due to my initial refusal of food. Indeed, he is one of our most diligent servants, and it is strange to see this imposing man, who was one of Changchub Dorje's leading disciples, bow his head

whenever he hands out food. My impression is that he has educated himself in humility, following the example of Karwang, who, however, seems to manifest it more spontaneously.

Small and agile is the elderly cleric with whom I attempted to sound the drum in the temple of the wrathful deities. He has a white beard gathered at the chin, a sign that commands respect among Tibetans. He must possess some musical talent, because in addition to teaching me the drum he plays the trumpet during all ritual ceremonies.

His eyes also possess something special, as if lit by a fire that seems to extend all over his dark red face. Perhaps he is a practitioner of "tummo," the energy of the inner heat that develops through years of training one's prana. But it is more likely that he spends most of his time sounding the drum where I met him, in the small temple at the end of the village.

He is the one who fills the air of the valley with sounds, and his association with the wrathful deities must have made him at once strong and intuitive. Indeed, he manifests a certain apparent detachment, while his eyes shine with unquenched passions inwardly transformed into mystical faith.

One day, together with him I meet a little man with a completely shiny head. He



Raimondo and the remains of a small temple abandoned during the Cultural Revolution near the caves of the yogis.



The Marlon Brando look alike monk.

had come down from his refuge for just one day for the great ceremony. He usually lives in one of the caves near the village, where Changchub Dorje practiced for many years. I find him on one of my hikes on the mountain in front of the wooden door that closes the entrance to his rock hewn shelter. It is his retreat place and he invites me to visit.

He is very friendly straight away, but his clear eyes have a depth of sadness and detachment. I am afraid to disturb him in this rock hermitage of his, poorer than a Franciscan monastic cell, but the old man insists. He has a hint of a smile and with clasped hands indicates the carpet to me.

The interior is completely dark, the furnishings non-existent. I make out a small altar, a chest, his food bowl, a sack of barley flour, and the thermos from which he pours me some butter tea. As my eyes adjust to the darkness I observe his old-child-like face, while he shyly keeps his gaze fixed on the floor of the cave, covered with rough wooden planks.

In the silent dialogue I think I feel the deep connection between the old man and the mountain, like a child in its mother's womb. This condition of his seems to reassure him, but who knows what his path was before he locked himself in here. I finish my tea and look around. Deep down, I get the impression that the hermit is also a custodian of the place, one of the many scattered in the thousands of caves of this mountain that is full of life.

Some Advice About the Practice

The time for our departure is getting closer and all the lamas, monks and yogis are multiplying their visits to Namkhai Norbu.

Each one of them asks for advice about his or her practice, as they did when Changchub Dorje was alive. I insist at length on knowing at least one of the texts that the lama has transcribed, and eventually I manage to get a translation of some verses dedicated to a lama by the name of Pema Loden, which I have reworked in Italian, unfortunately eliminating the original poetic meter.



Yogis from the caves who have come for the ceremony with Rinpoche.

In the Dzogchen teaching it is always said that with regard to the way of seeing, there is nothing to confirm; with regard to meditation, no object to meditate on; and with regard to behavior, no conduct to be observed.

But, even if there is nothing to confirm, the way of seeing must be beyond limitation; even if there is nothing to meditate on, meditation must be non-distraction; even if there is nothing to observe, conduct must

be free of affectation: this is the secret of the way of seeing, meditation and conduct. The three aspects of tawa, gompa, chöpa.

The different experiences are like flowers in a field in summer: they do not deceive, the beauty of their colors is true; thus in the dimension of pure presence, which is like heat and moisture, the play of one flavor is wonderful.

Similar to the state of rigpa, different shapes, different colors, single heat that governs everything.

For a practitioner living in this state, any action of body, voice or mind becomes part of the continuity of self-liberation.

If this is not the profound Ati teaching, what on earth can be?

Namkhai Norbu quotes here the text of some Dzogchen tantras of the so-called "mind cycle." The "way of seeing" is not the "point of view" and does not presuppose someone who is observing or judging. The origin of all problems lies precisely in the subject looking at the object and believing it to be something external. We all live in this continuous dualism and cannot help it. Our eyes look outside, our ears receive sounds from outside, our hands touch, our nose smells odours. An untrained mind is so conditioned by the senses that it automatically behaves in the same way even during meditation, which requires concentration on an external object, and hence the action, the effort of the meditator.

Yungton Dorjepal, a Dzogchen master, was asked what kind of meditation he practiced. "What should I ever meditate on?" he replied. "So you Dzogchen practitioners

» continued on the following page



l-r. One of the grandsons of Changchub Dorje in a bright yellow jacket, Phuntsog Wangmo, Rinpoche's sister, Sonam Palmo, Karwang and a younger grandson of Changchub Dorje.

>> continued from previous page

don't meditate?" he was asked. He responded, "When am I ever distracted from contemplation?" The significance of his answer lies entirely in the difference between gumpa, "meditation," and tingedzin, "contemplation." In the former, there is an assumption of an object to meditate on or a thought to create. In contemplation, on the other hand, there is no distinction between subject and object, there is nothing to be done or created; one is in the unique and unchanging condition of origination.

Meeting with Changchub Dorje

We are now close to departure, and the meeting occurs almost by surprise, during a walk with Namkhai Norbu, Karwang and the lama who looks like Marlon Brando. As we arrive in front of Changchub Dorje's house, his grandson opens the outer door, closes it behind us, and we are in the courtyard. The mountain is just above us, the village at our feet. Karwang enters the great lama's room first, and no one speaks. It almost seems like a clandestine meeting, and in some way it is, considering that most of the inhabitants of Nyaglagar still don't know the secret that has been concealed for so long to prevent the Chinese authorities from finding out.

Karwang lifts the lid of one of the two crates that are on the floor. It is very dark and I cannot quite make out the shape that



Phuntsog Wangmo.

we glimpse inside. I can hardly breathe now I know that that it is Changchub Dorje's body and I don't dare to get too close.

Karwang moves some of the salt that fills the crate with his hands. The head, on which some hair is still attached, is now quite visible, despite the darkness. I almost have a feeling of mental emptiness, and out of respect I bow as is the custom in Tibet, until my forehead touches the crate.

We all remain silent for what seems like an interminable time, then I see Karwang take some threads of fabric from the lining of an old leather cloak and hand them to Rinpoche, who in turn passes them to me, advising me to guard them. "Changchub Dorje," he tells me, "left instructions to pre-

serve his body for the benefit of all beings. Everything that has been in contact with him is charged with his energy." I raise the gift over my head in thanks and go back to observing that body in semi-darkness. I never imagined I would see such a thing. It is like an embalmed corpse.

The crate is not very high, but it is the custom of tantric practitioners to die in the so-called "lotus" position of meditation, and with the last practices their body shrinks. I am reminded of his master, Nyagla Pema Duddul, who realized the body of light, just like Togden, Namkhai Norbu's paternal uncle who had masters in common with Changchub Dorje.

My head begins to buzz, Namkhai Norbu and Karwang speak in low voices. We are alone in the silence of this shrine, and I finally have the real understanding of the great honor that has been bestowed upon me.

The Gifts of Departure

We are now on the eve of departure. In the evening, as is to be expected, a large crowd gathers in our room. It is time for farewells and gifts. Namkhai Norbu is offered a statue, a sacred text and a bell, symbols of the body, voice and mind respectively. It is the most important offering of a disciple to the master who introduces him to the "state," placing his three levels of existence in the service of the received teaching.

I do not expect gifts when - one by one - Changchub Dorje's grandchildren come toward me with medicine, relics and money. It is a wish for a good journey, an invitation to return. After them, more money, from monks, lay people, and nuns. I am moved and have nothing to donate in turn, travelling only with my clothes and the bare minimum.

I think the only way to give back something is to write about a world, this world, where my civilization can still find forgotten spiritual values and places of unspoiled nature. Unfortunately, it is not Eden, because here, too, the violence and ignorance of men has left its marks: the abandoned and crumbling monasteries, the victims of the Revolution, the children without schools, the people without hospitals or roads connecting with the rest of the world.

Perhaps isolation is for preservation, but those who want to remain outside the world, like the hermits of the thousand caves, should be able to decide that. Instead it is imposed by law.



One of the images of the paintings in the temple at Nyaglagar or Khamdogar.

It is now late at night. By the dim light of a single candle Namkhai Norbu writes the last pieces of advice for practice for those who have requested it. There is an exciting atmosphere in the air that keeps me awake observing the dark room, the altar by the lama's bed lit by butter lamps. The dogs are, as always, masters of the darkness until the loud, steady sound of the drum breaks their barking, sending it to die out in the echo of a distant valley.

A few hours of sleep, departure at dawn. The last group photo is under a chorten, before crossing the wooden bridge to the main road. We are already on the horses when more than 100 people appear in the small clearing along the river. They offer khatag and silently watch us leave. From a hilltop across the river a group of boys wave their arms, while columns of sang smoke rise here and there greeting the departing lama.

I would like to imprint in my mind every rock, every color. I watch our colorful caravan, led by very young Khampas with long hair tied up in red and black threads. They wear white shirts, or colorful ones, and every so often they gallop off to catch one of the mules running in the wrong direction with its load of baggage.

Return to Derghe – Dimensions Beyond Time

Summer is now at its peak and everywhere the meadows are full of flowers, especially along the riverbanks. "It's hard for the Chinese to spoil this land," we comment with Namkhal Norbu, finding ourselves thinking the same thing in front of the display of intensely colored nature.

Along the road it is now easy to encounter the tents of the nomads camped in the open valleys, no longer afraid of the icy winds of the winter just past, and many families, friends and acquaintances have formed communal encampments with hundreds of yaks grazing on the now verdant meadows. Twice, before we find the jeep that will take us back toward Sichuan, we stop to accept the nomads' invitations. We eat beef jerky and drink butter tea without talking.

We observe the smiling faces of the adults, the curious and shy ones of the children, their animals around the tents. To mark the rhythm of these lives, there is nothing but the light of dawn and the darkness of evening, nor is there any calendar beyond that of the seasons. "Is it not the concept of time," I ask Namkhai Norbu, "that separates East and West? Have we not



gone too far with the division into hours, minutes and seconds?"

Rinpoche, as often in such cases, does not answer. He points to an invisible point toward the valley, and in complete accord from who knows where a melodious and very slow Tibetan song arises. I remain listening in silence and this time I ask for nothing, not even the translation of the lyrics. ©

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Lilia Letti

I was born and raised in Moscow, Russia, in a Muslim family. I am a Tatar and my parents, as well as all my grandparents, are also Tatars and, accordingly, Muslims. It's not that my parents are very religious, they don't pray five times a day, but they do observe Eid al-Adha, the Muslim fast.

As a child, everything was as usual: kindergarten, school. I always liked talking to older people and asking them questions. I was a rather depressed child, but since childhood I loved music and practiced dancing: first ballroom, and then, at school, hip-hop dancing.

When I was 16 years old, I studied Islam for some time, tried to practice it, and prayed. I had a Muslim boyfriend, and his parents were also Muslim. We didn't eat pork, we weren't allowed to listen to music, dance, etc. But soon I felt that this was too limiting for me. I didn't like all these restrictions. I was used to living and growing very freely; I was allowed a lot. And then suddenly nothing was allowed – it seemed strange to me.

At that time, I had a friend whose father was one of the first kundalini yoga teachers in Moscow, and she invited me to a class where I was introduced to yoga. I liked it very much and soon got a job as an administrator at the Yoga Federation. There I did kundalini yoga and worked.

After some time, the practice of kundalini yoga gave me a lot of energy that I didn't know how to direct. My wind element got disturbed very strongly, I became very restless, I had strange thoughts, and my mood often changed. I realized that I couldn't cope and decided to switch to hatha yoga. I exercised two or three times a week for a year, and everything calmed down inside me.

I began to study Hinduism, but it didn't give answers to some questions, and I had a feeling that I was missing something. I had friends who were interested in yoga and Indian philosophy and talked about different movements and different teachers. At first I thought that I didn't need a teacher, but little by little I began to think and feel that I needed one, but I didn't know which one.



At that time, I learned about S. N. Goenka's vipassana, a method of purifying the mind, and went to a retreat, spending ten days in silence and peace. It was a very interesting experience, at that time I called it 'precious'. When my mind calmed down, some clarity began to arise. I liked it very much and came out of there with such a clear mind and such a speed of attention that I noticed everything around me. This was in April 2013.

I still continued to work at the Yoga Federation. Then, sometime in June, Artem Verny from the Dzogchen Community came to us and brought a poster with a photo of Rinpoche and an announcement about the upcoming Green Tara retreat at Kunsangar North, near Moscow, as well as flyers on the Vajra Dance. When I saw Rinpoche, I thought that he was probably an interesting and wise teacher, but then I rather liked Artyom, and decided to talk to him. I asked him to tell me about the retreat and activities mentioned in the post and he told me about Dance, meditation, and movement. Then I became interested and, thinking that this was what I needed, decided to go and have a look.

At that time, I was planning to move to St. Petersburg and wanted to quit my job. I was working for the last month, saving some money to move because I didn't want

to live in Moscow anymore. And so I went to the retreat. In the morning I first went to yoga. I thought how cool it was that they did yoga here in the morning, because I really liked yoga. Since it was yantra yoga, a new type of yoga for me, I compared what was similar to kundalini and what was like hatha. And everything was there together – hatha and kundalini – because it combined breathing, movement, asanas. I thought it was very interesting. My body was quite prepared and the eight movements were easy for me to understand.

Then in the afternoon there was teaching, and it was also very interesting. When we started singing the Song of the Vajra, I had a very strong experience. But the most wonderful thing happened in the evening. The teaching ended, we had dinner, and in the evening, when I went for a walk around Kunsangar, I heard music playing in the tent. I thought: "What nice music, I'll go and have a look." I walked up and saw about 50–60 people dancing Khaita. I was very happy. The puzzle was complete: there was yoga, teaching, philosophy, and dancing and so I decided to stay because I liked everything.

I immediately went to dance and learn the dances. That's how it all happened. Every day I went deeper and deeper. I walked around the gar and although I didn't know anyone, it was as if we had already met somewhere. Every day I met more and more people, and then they told me that everyone was going to Crimea. I realized that I didn't need to move to St. Petersburg – I had already found what I was looking for.

After Moscow we went to Crimea, where I stayed for a month, and we danced Khaita all this time. As far as I remember, there were no open teachings there – there was a teacher training on yantra yoga, where I went as a participant and studied yantra, and there was an exam and training on Santi Maha Sangha. And in the evenings we danced Khaita for two hours every day. It was a very happy and joyful time.

After that, I returned to Moscow, where I began going to ganapujas, collective practices, yantra yoga, and in the fall I went to a retreat with Jim Valby on the base level of Santi Maha Sangha.



Khaita exams in Dzamling Gar, 2016.

Photo by Enrico Dell'Angelo

In the spring of 2014, I learned that a festival of world dances would be held in Merigar in summer. Many people went there. I and several other girls from the Moscow Dzogchen Community prepared and performed Russian folk dances there. That's how I first visited Merigar, Italy, where I met Sebastian, the future father of my child.

In 2015, I went to Dzamling Gar for the first time, after which I decided to leave Russia. In 2016, I went to Dzamling Gar again to take part in the Khaita exam. This has been my main practice all these years and is how I became a Khaita instructor. We lived in tents in the Barranco, in nature, and did volunteer work at the Gar. And a little later I passed the Santi Maha Sang-

ha exam. In Tenerife, I met Sebastien again, and we began to live together. Then our daughter Chiara was born and we moved to Italy. Now she is already 6 years old and is in the first grade at school.

In the spring of last year, I began to speak Italian. I didn't speak it before because the Italian language was difficult for me and took me a long time to get used to it. Not long ago, after two courses of training, I became a dog handler. So now I work with dogs and also horses. Animals have always been a part of my life. I'm also interested in psychology.

All my interactions with Rinpoche took place during Khaita. He often said that in Khaita there are certain principles that

must be followed. We must move in the same rhythm, perform certain movements, and when we succeed, from an energetic point of view, we become one and the energy that is generated in this moment during the dance, harmonizes our body. When this happened, I would notice it and look at Rinpoche, and at that moment he would look at me. Thanks to this contact, I realized that during dance we harmonize our body and our dimension.

Meeting Rinpoche was the most important event in my life, thanks to him and his teachings I discovered my true nature and the potential that lies within us. ©



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