

THE MIRROR

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Direct Introduction in Dzogchen Teaching
108 Stupas of Changchub Dorje
Pilgrimage to Nepal and Maratika



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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Front cover: An inscription on rock at Nyaglagar, Changchub Dorje's residence, of one of the 108 Stupas mentioned in his terma.

Back cover: An illustration by Dynamic Space of the Elements from the recent publication "Twenty-One Traditional Buddhist Tales Cited in the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu".



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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.

Dzogchen Teachings with Yeshe Namkhai, June 20–27, 2024

During the last week of June, a remarkable event took place at Merigar, on the green slopes of Mt. Amiata, in Tuscany, Italy. It was an occasion that people from the Dzogchen Community and many others around the globe had been eagerly waiting for and that the Community of Merigar had been meticulously planning for throughout the long winter and spring months.

The retreat of Dzogchen Teachings given by Yeshe Namkhai was a milestone in the more than 40 year history of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's International Dzogchen Community. A milestone in the fresh and innovative presentation that Yeshe Namkhai gave so clearly of the Dzogchen teachings. A milestone in the sense that once again the Teacher and the Teachings brought together a wide range of more than 1000 people, young and old, experienced practitioners and newcomers, local people and those who had travelled for days from far flung places on our globe to attend this special event. More than 5000 people who could not attend in person were able to follow the entire program in webcast in Italian, Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Czech, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Polish.

The event was a moment to refresh our sense of Community by following Yeshe Namkhai's teaching as a single entity, beyond the limitations of language and culture. It was an opportunity for collaboration at many levels. But most of all it offered us a possibility to renew our connection with and understanding of these precious Teachings.

The detailed organization for the retreat, which began many months earlier and brought together more than 150 volunteers for the actual event, was impeccable down to the finest details and contributed to making the retreat a smooth and enjoyable moment for all those participating. Teams were organized for every need: Welcoming, Info Merigar, registration, breakfast, lunch – which was offered for free, cleaning, webcast, Mandala Room, parking, communication and sign making to indicate how to get to different buildings. A private babysitting service entertained the children throughout the teaching sessions.



Photo by Lesya Cherenkova

The Arcidosso City Hall was also involved in preparations to make the retreat more accessible to all, repairing and adjusting the country road leading to the Gar as well as lending a minibus during the retreat to shuttle participants to and from Merigar. WhatsApp groups were set up to help participants with announcements about retreat activities, car sharing, lost and found as well as accommodation. There was also an innovative system of in loco translation using smart phones that was put into action with this retreat.

In order for everyone to enjoy a teaching session in the Gönpa, each retreatant had either a blue, a yellow or a red bracelet and rotated each session – in the Gönpa, outside the Gönpa or in a large tent nearby.

In addition to the morning sessions of Teachings, in the afternoon the retreat program offered several talks to introduce the Dzogchen Community and its sister organisations such as the Atiyoga Foundation, Shang Shung Publications, ASIA and Dynamic Space of the Elements. Most afternoons the Gönpa was the venue for well attended sessions of Khaita Joyful Dances while at the same time sessions of Yantra Yoga, 'Respira' and Vajra Dance took place in the Zikhang or Mandala Hall. In Arcidosso, the MACO Museum inaugurated a fascinating new exhibition "Luminous Reflections: the Secret Murals of the Lhukhang Temple" while Dynamic Space held an exhibition of paintings in the Mandala Hall. On Saturday June 22 a Ganapuja was held in the Gönpa on the full moon day.

Those attending the retreat in person may have been a little amazed to find the Temple of the Great Contemplation, the venue for the Teachings, adorned both above and below with some large soft objects, giving the place the air of a spacecraft, but designed and placed especially to enhance the sounds within the building so that those present could enjoy a pristine audio experience.

In typical Merigar style, during the eight days of the retreat the elements were at times challenging and the weather revealed its many varied colours, ranging from glorious sunny days, to wintry spells of showers and gusts of biting wind. But then it wouldn't have been a 'proper' retreat at Merigar without this magnificent display of the elements.

On the final day of the retreat, the weather finally relented and a splendid sun warmed the whole mountain and helped to bring to a close in the best possible way a very unique retreat experience.

Our greatest thanks to Yeshe Namkhai for dedicating his time and energy to this retreat and for sharing his profound knowledge. And to all the many people who were dedicated to making this retreat run smoothly and joyfully. ©



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu teaching in Hong Kong in 2012.

Courtesy of Jing from China

Direct Introduction in Dzogchen Teaching

An excerpt from the second day of the Song of the Vajra Retreat, Hong Kong, May 17, 2012

Continued from issue 163 of The Mirror

When we follow any kind of teaching it has its principles. For instance, if we follow and apply Sutra practice we need to receive a vow because this is the Sutra system. When we follow Vajrayana teaching we need to receive initiation; there is a more elevated initiation and also a simple one. Most lower Tantras have an initiation called *jenang*, which means a kind of initiation but also receiving permission to do this practice. Then in the Vajrayana higher Tantras there is full initiation.

With Vajrayana teaching, most people think that the most important thing is to receive initiation; this is the attitude of the Vajrayana tradition. However, the principle of the Dzogchen teaching is self-liberation and the path is different. In Dzogchen teaching the main point is not initiation and it is not indispensable to receive one. In Dzogchen teaching what is most important is direct introduction which is not a particular initiation but a Dzogchen method. Dzogchen teaching can be transmitted in different ways.



Some people may have good karma or a good connection with the transmission of the teaching, just like Manjushrimitra. When he went to Garab Dorje to discuss the teachings, Garab Dorje explained [the real sense] in just a few words and Manjushrimitra awakened. This means that he received direct transmission. However, it is not necessary to do this in a ritual or a particular way. Sometimes people who have these kinds of opportunities and good karma can receive transmission simply by hearing an explanation. But it is not easy for most people, only for those who have a good connection. This is also related more to the aspect of Sutra.

In the Vajrayana system when we receive initiation we can also receive direct introduction to Dzogchen. In Vajrayana there are four kinds of initiations. The first three are related to empowering our Body, Speech and Mind. When the teacher places the vase on our head, this is the initiation of the Body because the vase represents our dimension which contains our primordial potentiality and primordial state. When the teacher prepares for the initiation, he or she visualizes the mandala and empowers the vase with it so that when it is placed on our head it empowers us and we receive the potentiality of the mandala. When we receive that, we can work with the practice of transformation and also have that kind of realization. This is the initiation of the Body.

After that the teacher touches our neck with a *kapala* containing nectar and gives us this nectar to taste, this is the initiation of the Voice. When we visualize the three vajras, the white *OM*, the red *A* and the blue *HUM* in our three places, these three places represent our three vajra potentialities. This is the reason the *kapala* touches that place. When we receive the empowered nectar and we taste it, we are receiving the initiation of the Voice and in that moment the teacher empowers us with the most important mantra of that practice.

Then there is the principal symbol of the manifestation. For instance, if we are receiving the initiation of Vajrapani, the symbol of Vajrapani is the vajra. When we do the visualization of the vajra at the center of our body, inside the vajra we visualize the seed syllable *HUM*. For that reason the teacher empowers the vajra with mantra and touches it to our heart. If we are receiving the initiation of Simhamukha or Vajrayogini, the *trigug* [ritual curved knife] that is held in the right hand of the visualization is the symbol of the state of the mind in the initiation. When we are empowered through the symbols this is the initiation of the Mind.

Following that is what is called the fourth initiation. Sometimes in Vajrayana higher Tantras it is called *tsigwang*, which means initiation of the Word because the teacher reads some verses with a very deep meaning, but does not explain them, and we are empowered. This reading empowerment is more traditional. This is called the fourth initiation. If we combine it with Dzogchen, at this point we can receive direct introduction to Dzogchen and so in the Dzogchen teaching, this is the most important point of the initiation.

When we approach Dzogchen in a more formal way, we use initiations particularly in the Anuyoga style. Some of you may have received *Nyingthig Yazhi* teachings. The *Nyingthig Yazhi* are all Dzogchen teachings rather than Anuyoga but there are many kinds of initiations.

In Vajrayana teaching there are always four different kinds of initiations and since most people have a Vajrayana point of view in the *Nyingthig Yazhi* teaching we find four initiations. But even though they are called four initiations they are not the four Vajrayana initiations of Body, Speech, Mind and then the fourth initiation. In Dzogchen teaching there are four ways to give initiations: *tröche*, *trömed*, *shintu trömed* and *rabtu trömed*. *Tröche* means working more with the conceptual mind and preparing relative circumstances. If we are doing *tröche* then there is also the symbol of the mandala. But we do not transform and do this kind of visualization of the mandala as it is done in Vajrayana style. It is only a symbol of the real condition of the vajra body of the individual, because everybody has a vajra body and three primordial wisdoms. These symbols are sometimes presented like a mandala.

There are also other materials to prepare. For example, in order to introduce the state of knowledge of *Kadag* and *Lhundrub*, emptiness and its self-perfected qualification, there is a crystal rock and a peacock feather. The teacher shows us the crystal rock which is like our real nature of three primordial wisdoms. Our real nature is clear, pure and limpid and for that symbol essence, clarity and energy are presented using a crystal rock. Our primordial potentiality is explained as being without interruption.

Our three different kinds of energy are represented by the peacock feather. We use a peacock feather because that primordial potentiality in our real nature that we have since the beginning is not created or developed through practices or methods. When we look closely at a peacock feather we can see that there is something just like the *thigle* that we use in the Guruyoga visualization. Nobody has painted the peacock feather, it is natural, and that is why we use it. When the teacher introduces these objects one at a time in a more ritual way this is called *tröche*. *Trömed* means that we don't need these elaborations. The teacher explains what transmission means.

In Vajrayana and particularly in Dzogchen teaching transmission is indispensable. We cannot practice using methods of Dzogchen teaching or Vajrayana without receiving transmission. In Vajrayana transmission is connected with initiation while in Dzogchen teaching it is mainly through direct introduction. However, there is no possibility to receive direct transmission unless we work with all three kinds of transmission (oral, symbolic, direct). Some people think that direct transmission means something secret and that they should ask the teacher to give them this direct transmission. This idea is wrong. When a teacher gives Dzogchen teaching he or she is always transmitting [knowledge].

For instance, I told you that the most important practice in Dzogchen teaching is Guruyoga, the essence of the method that I explained yesterday, with the visualization of the white *A* representing our primordial state. After we have done that visualization we relax and then we are in the state of Guruyoga. I transmitted that teaching to you orally and so it is called oral transmission. Likewise if we do direct introduction, the teacher has to explain to the student how to receive the direct transmission. He or she explains that firstly we should do this, secondly we should do that, and so on in order to receive direct transmission. In that way we

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learn what we should do. This is oral transmission. It doesn't mean we discover our real nature, but only that we discover what we should do. But it is indispensable. This is called oral transmission.

Then we have many symbolic transmissions. I always give the important example of the mirror in order to understand the difference between the condition of mind and the nature of mind. We can discover the difference by comparing the mind and its nature to reflections in a mirror and the potentiality of the mirror because they are very similar. Also when we consider self-liberation, we don't need an antidote to liberate us like in Sutra, we don't need any kind of method of transformation. Self-liberation means that when thoughts arise we do not follow them. When thoughts arise in our mind we usually start to judge or to follow them and think how things will be. Those are mental concepts and even though we always go ahead in that way, it is dualistic vision. Self-liberation means that when thoughts arise or when we see, we hear, we have contact with objects through our senses, this contact and the thoughts that arise from it are not a problem. The problem is that we become distracted by them, we do not have presence and due to this we cannot be in our real nature because we are immediately conditioned by mind, by thought.

We can also use the example of the mirror to understand self-liberation. For instance, whether good or bad reflections appear in the mirror, the nature of the mirror is not conditioned or influenced by the reflection. The reflections are only a manifestation of the potentiality of the mirror. It is the same with self-liberation. If we are in our real nature we are not conditioned. So you see the symbols that we use, such as the peacock feather and the crystal rock, are very important to help us understand and discover. At times we cannot explain in words but when we use symbols we can understand because a symbol has that kind of potentiality. In the relative condition, for example, we cannot put a big dimension in a small one, it is something of a contradiction, but if we use a mirror, even though the dimension of the mirror is very small we can see the reflection of an enormous mountain in it. This is an example of many kinds of functions for going beyond our limitations even though at times we don't understand them.

For instance, once when I was doing *thögal* practice a *thigle* appeared. Outside it was a single *thigle* just like a *thigle* of five colors, while inside it there were also five *thigles*, four of them were in the four corners just like a mandala. But between these *thigles* there was no empty space. When I have some visions, in order to remember them later on when I finish practice I try to draw them, however, when I tried to draw this *thigle* with five *thigles* inside, I discovered it was impossible because some empty space always remained. I thought that perhaps it was my idea, that perhaps I was not seeing something concretely that way. The next time I did this practice I observed very well and it existed perfectly. I couldn't draw it but I could see it. This is an example of something symbolic becoming important.

The final goal of Vajrayana is Mahamudra, mudra meaning 'symbol', so mahamudra means "total" in the symbol. This means entering the non-duality of the development stage and accomplishment stage through that symbol. Why do we get in that state? Because by visualizing the pure dimension of the manifestation of deities and so on, we develop the pure dimension and as the final goal we enter this symbol. The mandala is a symbol, the deities are symbols, all forms and colors are symbols, nothing exists concretely. The symbolic transmission is something connected with these things.

So in general there is oral transmission, symbolic transmission and direct transmission. In the Dzogchen teaching direct introduction is indispensable. Why is it called direct introduction? In Vajrayana teaching we work in a symbolic way, while in Anuyoga, which is non-gradual, when we do Guruyoga we use a visualization such as Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Garab Dorje or another form. When we visualize a figure in front of us, even though it is the pure dimension, it is always a dualistic concept because we are here and the manifestation is in front of us. In addition we are doing this visualization with our mind, judging and thinking. This is not direct. Direct introduction means directly from mind to nature of mind. When we do Guruyoga, what should we do with our mind? When we have already done the visualization of the white A in a *thigle*, now we are in that clarity and we are no longer thinking, this becomes the state of Guruyoga, directly from mind to nature of mind. This is the characteristic of how we should approach the Dzogchen teaching.

Although direct introduction is indispensable, it doesn't mean that we always need to receive it in a formal way. In the *Nyingthig Yazhi* it talks about *tröche* and *trömed*. *Trömed* means not using any kind of method, only making the student understand simply through oral transmission or symbolic transmission. The teacher explains and then the student can get in that state.

Shintu trömed means that it is not even necessary for the teacher to explain very much in an intellectual way what Dzogchen is. Dzogchen means our real nature and we should be in that state. The teacher gives advice about how we can get in that state in different ways. There are many different ways. For instance, *shintu trömed* is only a very symbolic way. For example, the teacher may ask the student: "Go over there and get that chair". The student has the idea that now he is going to take this chair. The moment that he goes ahead the teacher may instantly stop him and he may have a little *hedewa*. If he has a good connection with the teaching, in that moment his instant presence may arise. This is already a kind of initiation or direct introduction called *shintu trömed*. *Rabtu trömed* means not even that is needed. But it is not easy for ordinary people to receive these kinds of introduction.

Even though it is not *tröche*, which involves many preparations, we can still do the introduction using the *trömed* system, which is what I use when I give direct introduction. We don't need any kind of preparation but I simply explain what you should do. When you receive this kind of direct introduction you may not be a hundred percent sure you have discovered your real nature, but it doesn't matter because you have received that transmission. You will remember how you did that direct transmission with the teacher



and when you have time, when you have the possibility, in a place where no people are disturbing you, you can repeat it many times until you discover. It becomes your practice because in Dzogchen teaching in order to do practice you should discover your real nature. If you don't discover it, you have no base of Dzogchen, just like a field in which there is no seed. Even though you water it and care for it every day nothing will grow. In the same way it is very important that we discover our real nature.

Even if we do not discover it ourselves we should try to follow teachings when there is a teacher, when there is transmission, when there is a retreat. When a teacher gives Dzogchen teaching, he or she always gives an introduction. Particularly when we are with a teacher, the teacher always makes us understand how to discover our real nature.

For example, when I met my teacher Changchub Dorje until the time that he gave me initiation and later direct introduction I thought that he was not giving any teachings. I spent more than one month with him, always thinking how strange he was to never give teaching. But later, after I received that direct transmission, even when I was talking to him, sometimes he would say something that would make me understand and discover my real nature. So many things can be teachings and transmissions and it is very important that we know the value of the teaching. ❀

Understanding One's Own Mind Through Presence and Awareness

Monica Gentile

As a Santi Maha Sangha instructor, I have always been interested in the work of communication and dialogue between those who, like me, have had experience with our master and those who have not had the opportunity or have had different experiences.

Because of this I have often joined forces with some of the many instructors of the Dzogchen Community committed to communicating those valuable teachings that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu indicated as essential for human development and that can be shared with anyone, regardless of religious identification, regardless even of whether or not one is committed to a spiritual path.

In fact, in his public engagements the master always emphasized how teaching can become the basis for an individual's evolution that of itself can bring peace. He made it clear that a path to peace cannot be based only on historical, social or political analysis or universal statements, which may be right but remain largely ineffective, but on directly understanding the workings of one's own mind.

Understanding one's own mind through the development of presence and awareness is thus the most central of these teachings. This is a particularly relevant issue today for those who realize how many self-limitations the mind produces, how much conflict and suffering arise because of judgments and prejudices. The mind divides, always: me, my ideas and beliefs, my interest on one side – the right side – and everyone else on the other side, the wrong side or the side that is indifferent to me.

The methods taught by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for developing presence and awareness have great depth and richness due to the uniqueness of their holistic approach to the individual. In fact, the individual is understood as a complex organism that is the result of interaction between the material body, the voice or energy that inhabits and moves it, and the mind that directs it. The various disciplines developed in the Dzogchen Community – meditation, yantra yoga,



Vajra Dance and Khaita – each work more through one of these three aspects, and this integrated approach allows one to work on oneself in a comprehensive way, not only observing and working with the mind but also with the body and life energy.

For this reason, in my opinion, courses that combine these different disciplines are very effective: a student can experience different approaches that enrich him or her and always find 'his or her' gateway to understanding in a way that best suits their abilities and needs. This flexibility and openness are essential to allow each individual to find their own path for growth and development.

With other teachers in the Community, I have participated in and also helped organize several such public courses. The latest of these initiatives was a valuable collaboration between teachers from the "Ling of the Ocean" in Venice, myself and Adriana Dal Borgo, an international Khaita and Vajra Dance teacher, the Atiyoga Foundation and Shang Shung Publications. Together we decided to organize firstly a public presentation of the book "Opening the Mind," followed by a workshop on Presence and Awareness cultivated through 'sitting' and 'moving' meditation.

The book "Opening the Mind," which came out over a year ago, is a collection of some of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's public lectures intended as a presentation of Dzogchen teachings for the public. It introduces many of the central topics of the teachings in a simple and essential way. It also contains an introduction to the figure of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, university professor, scholar and spiritual master, and also to the International Dzogchen Community with its vast worldwide network.

On the day of Vesak 2024, the full moon of May, when the most important events in the Buddha's life are celebrated, we presented the book in the hall of one of the many 'scuolette' of Venice, associations that gathered artisans of different trades in the ancient Republic. We decided to set up the presentation as a dialogue between myself, the editor of the book, and the presenter, Maria Grazia Florido, a Dzogchen community practitioner and communications expert, to create a more lively and interactive presentation. In fact, the dialogue then also involved the audience, with questions and answers and even remarks from some of those present.

We were pleasantly surprised by the turnout: in this historical period when there are many activities about meditation, it is not so easy to get noticed. A great many people also purchased the book.

The teachings in the book may stimulate an interest, but it is only the practical application of the methods related to them that can lead to real evolution of the individual. Thus, together with Adriana Dal Borgo, we led the participants to an understanding of what presence is, *smriti* in Sanskrit and *drenpa* in Tibetan, a term that is also often translated as mindfulness or fullness of mind, and which our teacher sometimes called 'ordinary presence,' to distinguish it from the instantaneous presence that is beyond the workings of the mind.

We reflected on what the benefits are of being present and together with the participants we experienced how this presence is in fact weakened by the continuous and automatic slipping into distraction.

Then we turned to the Shine or Shamatha practice for 'quieting the mind' through the method of 'fixation with an object' as taught specifically in the Dzogchen teaching, in which it is applied as a first stage or approach to the practice of contemplation. In Buddhism and also in other traditions there are many practices in which attention is placed on an 'object' so as to maintain a steady presence and develop a calm state. Breath-centered meditation is perhaps the best known of these. In Dzogchen, on the other hand, we learn to calm the mind and govern it through the method of fixation with an object. In fact, when one becomes able to focus on an object with a certain focused attention through this practice – alert and at the same time relaxed – without exerting any voluntary effort, thoughts automatical-

ly stop or at least slow down. Then, in the calm state that has come about, there is the possibility of noticing when thoughts immediately resume.

Noticing one's thoughts in this way is a first step toward loosening the tyranny of the mind in our lives. When we notice them it means that we are no longer unconsciously immersed in the flow of mental events, but rather witness them. When we learn to constantly observe these real-time mental workings, the ability to not react passively and unconsciously to all these elements naturally arises. A classic example to illustrate this concept is the difference between being immersed in a rushing torrent and instead observing it once you get out of it. Presence is like a neutral observer, not overwhelmed by the current: through it we learn not to react automatically to the contents of the mind, including emotions, as we tend to do. In this way we begin to free ourselves from the incessant flow of thoughts that dominate our mind.

Through this direct understanding, we can gradually develop the ability to be constantly present to the condition of the mind, the body and the energy of the breath even in daily life. This mindful presence can in fact be maintained in all circumstances; it is not necessary to be seated in formal meditation. We train ourselves to carry out all our daily activities in a state of full mindful presence that prevents us from automatically slipping into distraction, or at least helps us immediately recognize when we are distracted. When we practice presence in a fluid and relaxed way there are many benefits and because of these benefits even the West took an interest in the scientific study of meditation.

During the course, in order to make it easier to apply presence in daily life, during which we are mostly on the move, we paired sitting practice with the mindful movement practice of the Vajra Dance. That is, we alternated the method of fixation on an object, in which we practice while sitting in the 'controlled' position of the seven qualifications of Vairochana, with presence applied to movement through the Vajra Dance.

After briefly introducing the characteristics and purpose of this method, Adriana Dal Borgo invited students to chant the Six Spaces mantra together, paying attention to the rhythm and melody. She then taught the "tshom," a key step in the Vajra Dance, guiding the group to discover movements



Monica Gentile and Adriana Dal Borgo with participants at the Experiential Workshop in Venice in May.

that were in harmony with the notes of the music. This way of applying presence to movement helps extend presence to every movement we perform in daily life, allowing us to live with more fullness and awareness.

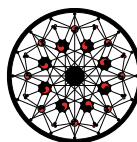
We also discussed how the constant maintenance of presence nurtures awareness in behavior, so that it becomes the basis for understanding from time to time what is appropriate to apply in the circumstances in which we live. This is another fundamental pillar of the Dzogchen teaching. In this historical era, we are witnessing profound conflicts between people and peoples due to the encounter and clash of different cultures and ways of seeing, which often result in violence. The clear light of presence allows us to develop an awareness of the nature of reality as it is: to truly understand, not just on an intellectual level, that everything is relative, impermanent and our judgments are often misleading and distorted. We can understand this in our lives, through what happens to us, simply by observation. When this awareness is alive, the continuous effort to accept or reject loses its basis and dissolves spontaneously, like clouds dispersing in a windy spring sky, and we behave in a more spontaneous and natural, yet responsible way.

The experience shared during these events showed once again how Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings on presence and mindfulness can be made accessible and relevant to all. Through a combination of seated practice and movement, we were able to convey the importance of presence

and mindfulness in a practical and applicable way to daily life. Our wish is that this integrated and flexible approach will continue to prove its effectiveness in promoting real evolution of the individual.

At the same time we must remember that the development of ordinary presence is a very important basis for those who want to access an even deeper understanding, that of our most essential nature, completely beyond mental processes, as explained in the Dzogchen teaching. In it there are many methods, more or less direct, for arriving at the condition in which this essential nature of ours – total perfection – manifests itself completely and irreversibly. But the development of ordinary presence, and in particular the method that begins precisely with fixation on an object and proceeds through the four contemplations, is one of the very important ways in which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave us the 'mind series,' the Semde, for accessing the state of contemplation in which instantaneous presence or *rigpa* fully arises. ©

Monica Gentile, a long-standing student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, became a Santi Maha Sangha Instructor in 2016. Recently she has also worked with the Atiyoga Foundation's Meditation department, Shang Shung Publications and the International Gakyil. She conducts both public and community courses.



Miranda Shannon.



Gabriella Schneider.



Fabrizio Calistri.



Oni Mckinstry.



Rosa Altamirano.



Richard Clarke.



Piotr Marcik.

Dear Members of the International Dzogchen Community,

On May 31, 2024, a new International Gakyil (IG) team was elected. The new IG hails from across the globe and is composed of seven long-time IDC members who currently live in geographically diverse areas of the world: Australia, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, and the United States.

We look forward to working together and with you for the benefit of our International Dzogchen Community.

Miranda Shannon

President; 3 years

A student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from the time she attended Rinpoche's first retreat in Subiaco, Italy in 1976, Miranda has since remained actively engaged in the Dzogchen Community. She passed her SMS Base exam in 2017, and served on the Tsegylgar East Blue Gakyil from 2017-2020. She has served on the International Gakyil since 2021 first as Blue and then as President since October 2022.

Miranda earned her Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Music from Bennington College in Vermont. She is an educational consultant, and her professional experience includes event and program planning and management, communications, fundraising, and social media programs for educational and performing arts organizations.

Gabriella Schneider

Blue; 3 years

Rinpoche's student since 1998, Gabriella served on the Blue and Red Gakyil in Merigar East from 2007 to 2010, and on the Blue Gakyil in Dargyaling, Cologne from 2012 to 2015. She has served on the International Blue Gakyil since 2021.

In 2016, Rinpoche authorized Gabriella to be an SMS Base Instructor. She passed her SMS Base Exam in 2007 and the SMS Level I Exam in 2010.

She is a member of the International Publishing Committee for Romania.

She graduated as a Doctor of Internal Medicine and Angiology.

Fabrizio Calistri

Vice-President & Yellow; New

Interested in Dharma since adolescence, Fabrizio became a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 2014 after various experiences in other Buddhist schools, particularly Nyingma. This is Fabrizio's first experience with Karma Yoga within the community, and he is eager to make a positive contribution.

From a professional standpoint, Fabrizio has forty years of experience in corporate accounting and related stakeholders (tax authorities, banks, etc.). Currently, he is an account manager at a medium-sized company in Italy and the C.E.O. of a small company in Madrid (Spain).

Oni Mckinstry

Yellow; New

A student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since December 1999, she passed the SMS Base exam in 2001. A continuous member of IDC since she was authorised as a Level 3 Yantra Yoga Instructor by Rinpoche in 2016.

Oni was Secretary for Tsegylgar East in 2007, and recently an Administrative Officer

for Namgyalgar for almost 5 years as well as fill-in Gekō for Rinpoche's retreat in 2015.

Her professional work experience includes 2 years as an Executive Secretary in the commissioner's office of an Alaska state department and 2 1/2 years as an Administrative Specialist for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

Oni has also been a Hatha Yoga instructor since 1993.

Rosa Altamirano

Yellow; New

Rosa has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 1998 and passed her SMS Base exam in 2005. She was authorized by Rinpoche as a Vajra Dance Level 1 Instructor in 2010 and a Level 2 Instructor in 2011.

Rosa served on the Tashigar Sur Red Gakyil in 2002 and as its secretary from 2003 to 2005. She then served as the secretary for Tashigar Norte from 2006 to 2009. She also served on the Yellow Gakyil at Yangdakling in 2018.

Rosa holds a Commerce Degree in Accounting and Taxation, a Graduate Diploma in Chartered Accounting, and an Executive Master's Degree in Business Administration.

Richard Clarke

Red; New

Richard became a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 2003. He passed his SMS Base Exam in 2009. Living in New Zealand, he has served on the Gakyil in Yangdakling for a number of years. He holds a Master of Osteopathy and is currently running a software business he developed for New Zealand health professionals.

Piotr Marcik

Red; New

Piotr has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu since 2011, and a member of the Merigar East Gakyil from 2012 to 2015, and again from 2018 to 2021.

Piotr is happily married to Monika, and they joyfully live with her son Szymon in Warsaw, Poland. He enjoys working with clients as a business development consultant, and occasionally also works as a film translator.

Our team is also supported by Svetlana Zoricheva – Red IG Assistant, Nikol Staniso-va – IG secretary, and Marija Desal Bajic-Jovanovic – International Membership Coordinator. We are grateful for their indispensable assistance!

Svetlana Zoricheva

Red Gakyil Assistant

Svetlana has been Rinpoche's student since 2016. She started becoming involved in the Russian Dzogchen Community activities in



Svetlana Zoricheva.

2019. She became an IG Assistant in 2023.

Svetlana graduated from Moscow's State Technical University with an Engineering Degree in Special Mechanical Engineering in 2006. Her working experience includes managing contemporary art and international photo and film visual media.

Svetlana is a practitioner of Japanese martial arts.

Nikol Staniso-va

Secretary of the International Gakyil

Nikol has been a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche since 2006. She passed her SMS Base Exam in 2009.

Nikol was on the Yellow Gakyil in Prague, Czech Republic from 2010 to 2012. She then was the Geko in Merigar West, Italy from 2013 to 2016, and secretary of Meriling in Dzamling Gar, Tenerife Spain from 2017 to 2019. Nikol graduated from the University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague, Czech Republic in 1996.

Marija Desal Bajic-Jovanovic

International Membership Coordinator

Marija was born in the former Yugoslavia and emigrated to France when she was young. She was surrounded by Dzogchen Community practitioners since childhood and took a serious interest in the teachings around the age of 18. Marija studied mathematics at a French university and became a high school math teacher for several years, and concurrently organized Vajra Dance study groups for interested practitioners in central and western France. Marija became the Membership Coordinator for Palriling (Paris) in 2020, served as Gekō of Merigar West for one year starting in September

2021, and has been on the Palriling Yellow Gakyil since 2022. Marija has been the International Membership Coordinator since October 2022 and became a First Level Yantra Yoga Instructor in April 2024.



Nikol Staniso-va.



Marija Desal Bajic-Jovanovic.

Please join us in thanking the IG's two recently retired members for their many years of service – Barbara Giurlanda our indefatigable and dedicated former Yellow and Vice-President of the IG, and Vince Li Wen Tai for his devoted service as Red Gakyil. We wish them both all the best in the years to come.

Best wishes,
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Oni, Rosa,
Piotr, Richard, and Svetlana, Nikol and
Marija

Your International Gakyil Team





Dear Readers,
Shang Shung Publications is glad to announce that we are working to launch the **New Web Shop** in June with new functions and a new layout.

Latest news about Shang Shung Publications

Audiobooks Project

We have started a new project to create audiobooks of some of our Master's public texts. The entire SSP AUDIOBOOK PROJECT was suggested to SSP by Keith Hirsch. He is a Vajra Brother, now also a friend, visually impaired. He thought of urging us to try to do this project and SSP immediately accepted. The first audiobook (Starting the Evolution) was created in 2023 and we would

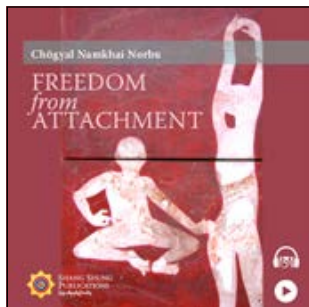
retreat Manjushri manifested himself to Sachen Kunga Nyingpo in a vision...

Starting the Evolution (in English) Audiobook – Voice Michael Velasco

The ancient teachings of Total Perfection or Atiyoga, practiced for centuries in the snowy land of Tibet and recently introduced to the West, help us to discover the answer to these questions. They present the core of our being as being both completely pure and spontaneously perfect.

Aprire la mente (in italiano)

Audiobook – Voce Jacopo Surricchio
Primo audiobook della Shang Shung Edizioni in italiano
L'infaticabile attività di insegnamento dell'autore Namkhai Norbu (1938-2018) non



like to continue with even others, both in English and Italian. Perhaps in the future also in other languages. The voices of the speakers are truly beautiful voices. Michael Velasco for the English and Jacopo Surricchio for the Italian. Thank you both.

Freedom from attachment (in English) Audiobook – Voice Michael Velasco

Attachment is the root of all emotions and samsara. This was understood by mahasiddhas like Saraha and Tilopa, who spent years doing practices to transform impure vision into pure vision. Then they realized that the problem was not vision, but attachment. When the founder of the Sakya-pa, Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, was twelve years old, he did a six-month retreat on the practice of Manjushri, and during that

era basata su un intento missionario, ossia su uno sforzo per cercare di promuovere una filosofia o una religione, un tentativo di convincere, istruire, indottrinare e fare proseliti. Piuttosto era il contrario: com'egli stesso spiegava con grande chiarezza, insegnare una certa filosofia o predicare un sistema religioso, cercando di convincere gli altri con asserzioni fideistiche, assiomi e logica, è un condizionamento che si aggiunge ai tanti che già abbiamo. Ringraziamo il nostro caro amico Jacopo Surricchio per l'impegno e la dedizione con cui ha svolto questo incarico.

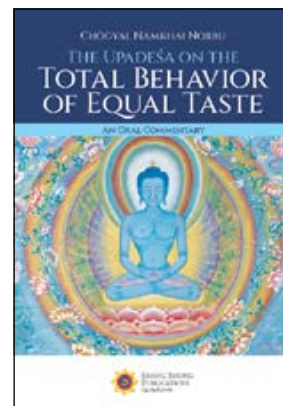
New Releases

In English

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

The present volume contains the oral commentary to The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste belonging to the Longsal cycle of teachings rediscovered and taught by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. It is based on the transcript of the retreat in Tokyo, Japan, 1–5 June, 2012, with additional notes from the retreat in Tashigar North, Venezuela, 15–16 May, 2004.

"In general, when we learn any kind of teaching, such as Sutra, Vajrayana or Dzogchen, there are three aspects. In particular, when we are following a path, these are called tawa, gompā and chöpa in Tibetan,



which means point of view, application and attitude. These three aspects are of fundamental importance for those who follow the teaching and practice it. Why are they important? Because as human beings following the teaching, we have three levels of existence: our physical body, our energy level (also called voice), and mind. Therefore, whatever teaching we follow we should deal with these three levels of existence. For that reason, the teaching has three aspects."

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

The Cuckoo of Rigpa

An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript
Rig pa'i khu byug

The Cuckoo of Rigpa (Rig pa'i khu byug), or Six Vajra Verses, is known to be one of the first five translations through which the great Tibetan translator Vairocana (eighth century) introduced the Dzogchen scriptures from Oddiyāna.

Although its essence is contained in only six lines, it unmistakably expresses the principles of the base, path, and fruit of Dzogchen in their entirety.

In the Dunhuang manuscript the six verses are followed by a commentary, possibly the work of Vairocana himself, that explains the meaning of each verse with utmost clarity, including in relation to specific points of the view and practice of the Vajrayāna path of transformation.

In this book, the Dunhuang commentary is followed by the Author's annotation-commentary elucidating the most im-

KHAITA Joyful Dances 'Tibetanness' and Wellbeing Through Tibetan Modern Songs and Dances

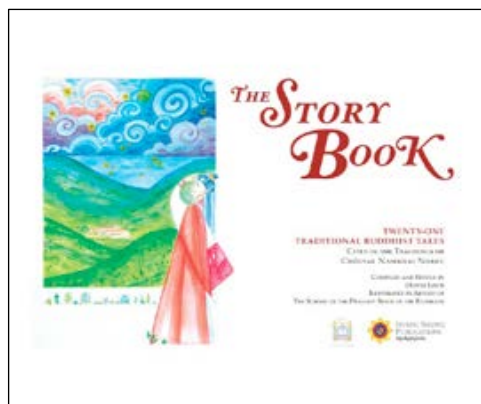
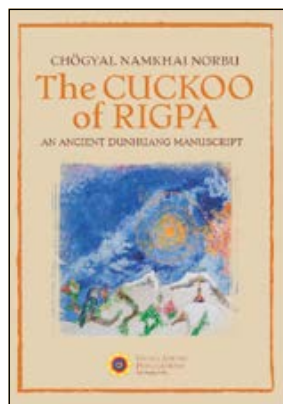
From 2011 until his death in 2018, Namkhai Norbu collected around 400 modern Tibetan songs and approved 240 dances to them as part of the Khaita archive. While some of the dances are based on the original choreographies of the music videos by the Tibetan artists, some have been purposefully created for Khaita under the consideration of the meaning of the Tibetan song texts. Khaita is primarily practiced by students of Namkhai Norbu within the International Dzogchen Community, yet is open to anyone interested, with or without affiliation to the community and is danced all around the world. In this regard, Khaita can be considered a translocal, even cosmopolitan practice. While being shared by people from all around the world and thus transcultural, Khaita at the same time refers to and establishes aspects of Tibetan

In Italian

L'Upadesha sul comportamento totale dello stesso sapore

Il presente volume contiene il commento orale a L'upadesha sul comportamento totale dello stesso sapore, appartenente al ciclo di insegnamenti del Longsal, riscoperti e insegnati da Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Il libro si basa sulla trascrizione del ritiro tenuto a Tokyo, Giappone, dall'1 al 5 giugno 2012, con note aggiuntive tratte dal ritiro tenuto a Tashigar Nord, Venezuela, dal 15 al 16 maggio 2004.

"Coloro che applicano tali istruzioni, anche se all'inizio potrebbero non avere la capacità di integrare totalmente, pian piano la svilupperanno ed entreranno nella via dei Rigdzin: seguiranno la via e faranno tutto in modo corretto. Queste istruzioni spiegano come si trasformano o si liberano le cinque emozioni, e i metodi usati sono completamente diversi da quelli del Sutra.



portant points. In the detailed introduction, which makes up the largest part of the book, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first undertakes to identify the location of the ancient kingdom of Oddiyāna, the birthplace of the Dzogchen teachings, by relying on historical sources such as the travelogue of Ugyenpa Rinchen Pal (1230–1309), a Tibetan siddha who visited Oddiyāna in the thirteenth century. He then proceeds to show the connection between Oddiyāna and the ancient kingdom of Shang Shung by means of six reasons, on the basis of several Bönpo historical accounts such as from the Dzogchen Oral Transmission of Shang Shung, and concludes with short biographies of the first human master of Dzogchen, Garab Dorje of Oddiyāna, of the great Guru Padmasambhava (eighth century), also from Oddiyāna, and of the Tibetan translator Vairocana.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

culture. Namkhai Norbu thereby explicitly promoted Khaita as a practice to support Tibetan culture while opening it to non-Tibetan practitioners.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

Twenty-One Traditional Buddhist Tales Cited in the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Compiled and retold by Oliver Leick,
illustrated by artists of the School of the
Dynamic Space of the Elements

The nectar-like stories told by the Master like a blazing torch in pitch darkness, reveal the light of the illusory mind and lead us on the path of bliss and clarity.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

È possibile che ricordate delle spiegazioni generali del Mahayana e del Sutra contenute nella Base del Santi Maha Sangha. Quello è il modo generale di lavorare con le emozioni. Le istruzioni qui contenute, invece, sono per lo più collegate alla nostra capacità di rimanere nella presenza istantanea. Se si ha tale capacità, come ci si lavora? E come ci si collega alle emozioni specifiche? Se si comincia ad allenarsi secondo tali istruzioni non è necessario sforzarsi a praticare per lunghi periodi di tempo, come nel Tantrismo, perché si può sviluppare la capacità di integrare." Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

» continued on the following page

Raccolta di insegnamenti Upadesha sul Rushen del corpo, della voce e della mente

Il testo comprende alcuni insegnamenti Dzogchen upadesha, trasmessi da Chögyal Namkhai Norbu ai suoi discepoli durante la sua vasta e intensa attività di Maestro. Questo libro raccoglie la maggior parte degli insegnamenti relativi al Rushen del corpo, della voce e della mente

Libro curato da Enzo Terzano e realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

Scoprire uno per scoprire tutto. La pratica dello stato primordiale

Tra i testi tibetani appartenenti alla serie dello Dzogchen Semde, si considera che quelli più antichi siano le prime cinque traduzioni di Vairocana, ovvero Rigpai Khjug, Tsalchen Trugpa, Khyungchen Dingwa, Dola Serzhün, Minubpai Gyaltsen (chiamato anche Dorje Sempa Namkha Che)

Libro curato da Cristiana De Falco e realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

Recently published books

Dzogchen Upadesha Teachings of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje

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

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/products/9788878344495_ebook-dzogchen-upadesa-teachings-of-rigdzin-changchub-dorje-epub.html

This book contains, in order, the translation of the original Tibetan text of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje's terma called *Quintessential Instructions on the Main Practice* (*dnegos gzhi'i don khri yangsnying bcud dril bzhus*) and the edited transcripts of three oral commentaries on the ter-

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

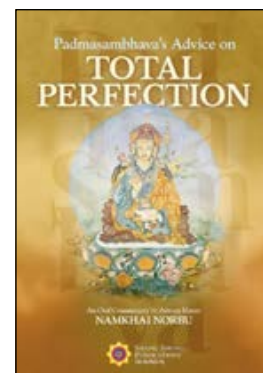
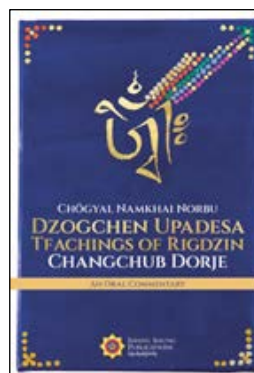
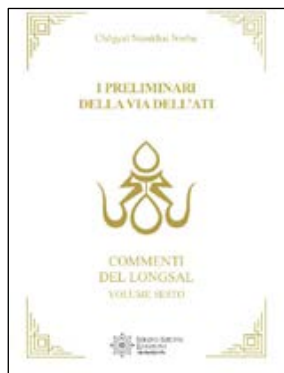
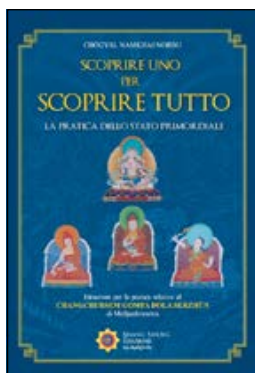
Dorje Lingpa lived in fourteenth-century Tibet. He was universally recognized by his contemporaries as a tertön: a person who discovers hidden treasures, or termas, which are teachings that were first taught and then concealed at the time of Guru Padmasambhava. Therefore we consider most of the teachings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

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

The Preliminaries of the Path of Ati

Longsal Commentary Series Volume Six

https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/products/9788878342934_ebook-the-preliminaries-of-the-path-of-ati-pdf.html



più il Mejung; quindi in totale sei volumi. In tempi relativamente recenti, nel 1971, è stato scoperto un altro libro che contiene le istruzioni essenziali sul modo di applicare la pratica nel puro stile Dzogchen in accordo con i sei testi citati. L'autore di questo volume non è noto, ma può essere attribuito a Nubchen Sangye Yeshe.

Libro curato da Gino Vitiello e realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

I preliminari della via dell'Ati Commenti del Longsal volume sesto

I preliminari della via dell'Ati (*A ti lam gyi sngon 'gro*) è una speciale pratica di purificazione di Vajrasattva ricevuta attraverso vari sogni tra il 2003 e il 2004 e legata alla trasmissione che l'Autore ricevette dal suo Guru radice, Changchub Dorje (Byang chub rdo rje, 1863–1963).

ma that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave: at Namgyalgar in Australia during a retreat that took place from the seventeenth to the twenty-second of April 2009; in Taiwan from the twenty-third to the twenty-seventh of October 2015; and in Barcelona from the twenty-eighth of December 2016 to the third of January 2017.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

Padmasambhava's advice on Total Perfection

A Hidden Treasure Discovered by Dorje Lingpa. An Oral Commentary by Namkhai Norbu. https://shangshungpublications.com/it/products/9788878344471_ebook-padmasambhavas-advice-on-total-perfection-epubmobi.html

The teachings contained in this volume consist of a rich collection of advice and

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

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

Tibetan Calendar 2024–25.

Wood Dragon Year 2151

https://shangshungpublications.com/it/products/9788878346918_ebook-tibetan-calendar-calendario-tibetano-2024-25-pdf.html

Updated annually, this pocket agenda contains concise indications of the practices recommended by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for special days, astrological aspects from the Tibetan lunar calendar, individual influences affecting those born between 1924 and 2024, and positive and negative days for Naga practice. It is indispensable for identifying favorable and unfavorable days for daily activities and remembering special practice days. The calendar also includes a table indicating the days of the month to avoid surgery in specific areas of the body according to three Tibetan astrological systems as well as a table with the first days of the Tibetan new year according to the Phugpa system.

To better understand the information contained in our Tibetan calendar, refer to “[Key for Consulting the Tibetan Calendar](#)”, also published by Shang Shung Publications and available in our webstore.

Upcoming books

In English

Introduction to The Vajra Dance.

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

The Vajra Dance of the Space

Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen

The Lamp Illuminating the Way to Enter the Teaching

In Italian

La chiarezza luminosa dell'universo. Una chiara esposizione del Tregchöd primordialmente puro

La luminosa chiarezza dell'universo: una chiara esposizione del principio del tregchöd primordialmente puro (*Ka dag khregs chod kyi dgongs pa gsal bshad klong chen 'od gsal*) è uno dei primi libri sullo Dzogchen scritti da Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938–2018). Secondo le sue note biografiche egli completò la prima versione il 28 aprile 1965, mentre viveva ancora a Roma, e originariamente lo concepì come un compendio di istruzioni tratte dai principali tantra della serie dello Dzogchen Upadeśa e dagli scritti di Longchenpa (1308–1364) e Jigmed Lingpa (1730–1798) sulla base di conoscenze ed esperienze personali.

Libro realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

Namkha – Armonizzare l'energia degli elementi

Consigli di Padmasambawa sulla Perfezione Totale

In Spanish

Como Publicaciones Shang Shung estamos colaborando con la Comunidad Dzogchen de habla hispana para recrear el grupo de traducción al español.

El programa editorial es el siguiente:

Libros publicados recientemente

Evolucionar

(Public – On sale from July)

Abrir nuestra mente

(Public – On sale from July; ya publicado por Editorial del Fondo)

En proceso de publicación

La Lampara que ilumina las mentes estrechas

(Public – On sale from July, ya publicado por Editorial del Fondo)

El Yoga de Tara Verde

(Restricted – On sale from July)

Libros que se publicarán en 2024

Gurú Yoga

Yantra Yoga

Descubre uno para descubrir todos

In Chinese

Upcoming books

Chöd

Opening our mind

About SSP E-books

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

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

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Reason: Donation for the SSP institutional activities.

Contacts

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

Shang Shung Publications Team



Twenty-One Traditional Buddhist Tales Cited in the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

An interview with Oliver Leick, director of the Ka-ter Translation Project and compiler of the recently published “Twenty-one Traditional Buddhist Tales”.

The Mirror: I understand that the book that you’ve been working on for some time, “Twenty-One Traditional Buddhist Tales cited in the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu”, has just been published. How did the idea to put this book together come from?

Oliver Leick: First of all, thank you for inviting me for this interview to give a little insight and understanding of how this book has manifested. In reply to your question, I have to go back many, many years. I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1977. I was 22 years old and had no idea about Buddhism and had never heard the word ‘Dzogchen’ before. But even though Rinpoche was teaching in such an inspiring way, I understood practically nothing, I must confess. However, he told some stories to make the content of the teaching a little bit more understandable and I really enjoyed those stories very much. They were actually the only thing I could remember from the teaching.

Later on when I was walking with some friends in the mountains, I started to recount some of those stories, such as the story of the two sisters, one is beautiful, one is ugly, or the story of the man with small eyes who was bitten by a dog and so on.

In 1980, I already had the idea to write down the stories that were so inspiring for me and it has taken me almost 45 years to do it. Five years ago, in 2019, I really thought that now was time to write them down.

Mirror: Is the book intended for children or is it meant for a general readership?

Oliver: Well, that is a very good question. It is for both. When parents read the book to their children, the children can understand what is going on especially because it is so well illustrated and children enjoy

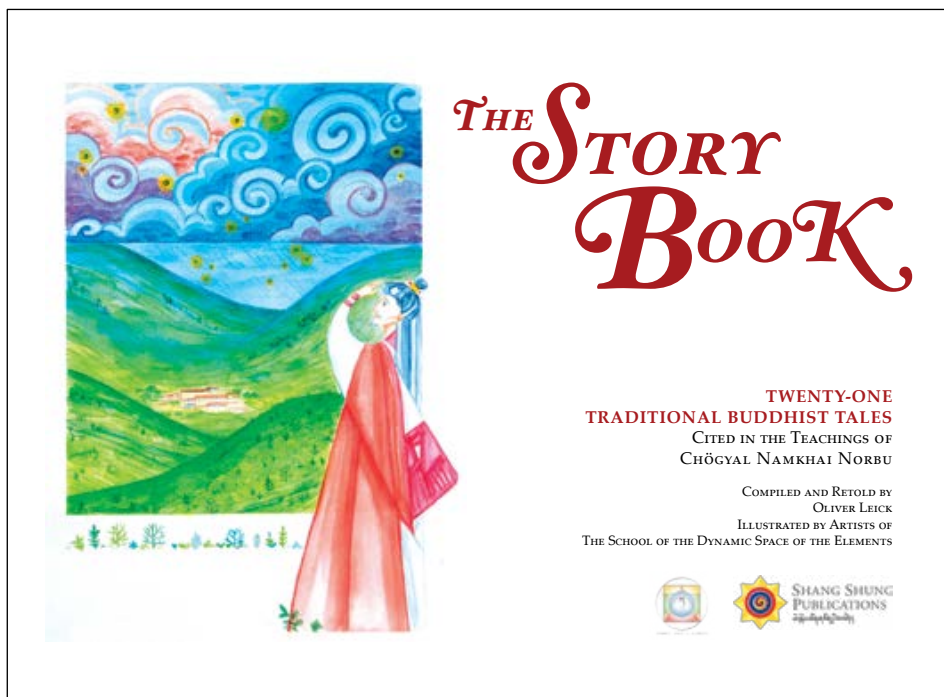


seeing the pictures so it is definitely a children’s book. But it is also a book for adults.

The book consists of twenty-one stories told by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that I collected and also some illustrations. Some of the stories are traditional Buddhist stories that were recounted by ancient masters a long time ago in order to make the teachings more understandable. This is one part. The second part is stories, some of which are quite ancient stories related to animals from which we can take examples. For instance there is the story of the hare, the sheep and the wolf. This story narrates how

the rabbit manages to escape from the wolf and rescue the sheep. Then there is the story of the men who rescued all the fish.

For the last part I had the help of Dr. Fabian Sanders who found some stories that Rinpoche wrote in his book on Tibetan grammar. This book has not been published yet, but Rinpoche used it for teaching Tibetan while he was in China. It consists mainly of stories related to language – some words may have two different meanings and when a word is misun-



derstood then something happens and so on. So these are the three main topics.

Mirror: I understand there's some beautiful hand-drawn artwork in the book. Can you tell us a little about that?

Oliver: Yes. When I started to collect these recordings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche telling these stories in the early 80s and late 70s I understood that if I only published text in the book, nobody would like it. It needed to be illustrated. Since I'm not artistic at all of course I could not do it. So I went to Migmar Tsering, director of the Dynamic Space of the Elements, who was collaborating with some artists.

The first artist I met was Cecilia Damiani who started to make some rough drawings. However, she didn't have much idea about the stories and so I had to talk about them and explain how I would like the illustrations to be.

After that other artists became involved and finally, after several talks with Migmar to make him understand the content of the stories and which illustrations would be nice, he asked some of his Chinese students, who are studying at the Fine Arts University in Rome, to work with him on the illustrations.

In the book, there are more than 50 extraordinary illustrations which were repainted several times until we were satisfied with them. It took two years until all these illustrations were ready.

The next question was how to put these big images into the book and for this we needed to have a good photographer. However, there was an excellent collaboration with Migmar and the team of Dynamic Space of the Elements to get the book into its final form.

Mirror: Is the book going to be published just in English or also in other languages?

Oliver: At the moment it will be published in English. There is already a Spanish translation, we just need to do the layout and printing. But first we are publishing the English version. If we are satisfied with that version and do not change anything, we will be publishing the book in several languages: Chinese, possibly German and French.

Mirror: Is this publication a collaboration between the Ka-ter translation project and Shang Shung Publications?

Oliver: Yes, absolutely. The publication of this book is part of the Ka-ter translation project because it is related to the teachings and explanations of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. And of course because it is related to Namkhai Norbu, then it is published by Shang Shung Publications, so that is a good collaboration. We are happy to present the book in June.

Mirror: So we all look forward to seeing it very much. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Oliver: I would really like to mention the extraordinary collaboration with our great editor, Nancy Simmons, who dedicated many months to this special book. She always discovers tiny little points to correct and I'm very grateful for her excellent work and her language skills. I'm not a native English speaker but Nancy's excellent editing skills and language actually turned the book into a blossoming flower.

And secondly, I want to thank Francesco Festa, who did the layout and who also worked several months on the book because there were so many changes. I would also like to thank him very much.

Mirror: Thank you Oliver for giving us a little more insight into this book and wishing you all success for this publication. ©

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School Brings You Back into the World

In the Nepalese district of Rasuwa, an area in the Himalayas that covers 60 percent of its territory at an altitude of more than 3,000 meters (10,000 feet), school represents a real chance for rebirth.

Particularly in the villages of Yarsa and Saramthali, the very poor education system reflects the dramatic socio-economic situation of these areas. Frequent weather disasters, insufficient job opportunities, and the aftermath of the devastating 2015 earthquake make life for the population very difficult.

The greatest challenge is to ensure a safe childhood. High rates of child illiteracy and school dropout rates, especially among girls, have created a very high risk of child trafficking.

With the SCHOOL BRINGS YOU BACK INTO THE WORLD campaign, we want to ensure that children living in these two villages can go to school and be safe in a protected place where they can receive a meal a day and be cared for, as well as learn to read and write and receive a basic education.

The schools are in Thangdoor, Aarukhar-ka, Namuna and Dupcheshwori. Established immediately after the earthquake as temporary education centers, as of December 2018 they are solid, welcoming and safe buildings, built by ASIA in compliance with earthquake-resistant and energy-efficient techniques.

About 400 children are enrolled, but the severe economic hardship of the communities in these villages affects living conditions inside the school and causes a high dropout rate.

With long-distance sponsorship, we can BRING BACK INTO THE WORLD the children of Rasuwa and contribute to their educational needs by ensuring their dignity, safety and quality education. ©

BRING BACK TO THE WORLD a boy or girl from Rasuwa.

START YOUR LONG DISTANCE SPONSORSHIP

<https://www.adoptibet.org/wp/en/>



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Kumar Kumari Yantra for Children

“The Garland of Lotus Flowers”

Laura Evangelisti, Constance Soehnlen
and Letizia Pizzetti
May 2024

Today, on a visit to a public school in Rome or to one of the small schools in Toscana's Monte Amiata area, you may be pleasantly surprised to find a lesson of Kumar Kumari (Sanskrit words for 'boys and girls') Yoga being offered to children during their school day.

At the home of the international Dzogchen Community in Tenerife, there are weekly classes for children and a creative summer camp with daily children's yoga. At Merigar, the main place of the Dzogchen Community in Italy, the spring months have seen children and teachers on school field trips visiting the Gönpa – the Temple of the Great Contemplation – and taking part in Kumar Kumari yoga sessions.

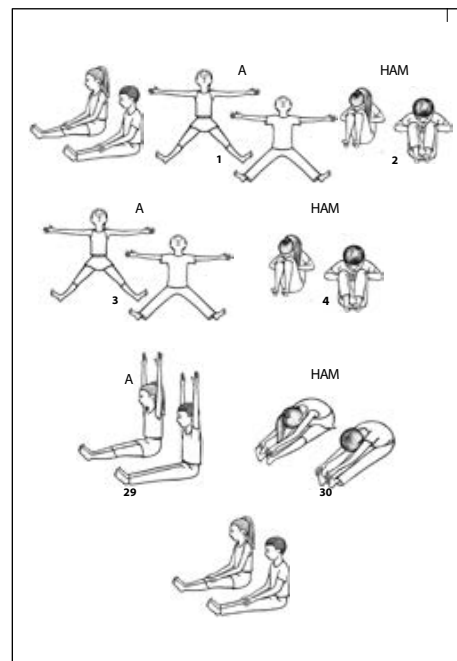
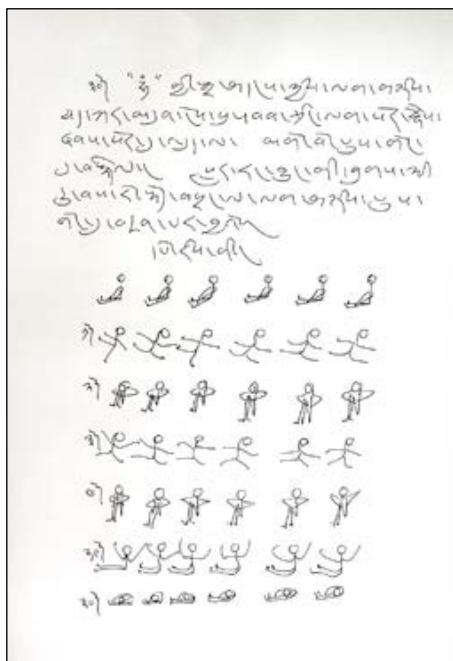
The practice of this precious form of children's yoga has come a long way since it was first taught by Luara Evangelisti in a small primary school close to Merigar in the early 1990s.

Over the years Kumar Kumari Yoga has expanded, with lessons in schools in Tuscan towns, in Naples and Rome, and teachers from all over the world being trained.

But more of these developments later. Now it's time to go back to the very origin of Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga for Children.

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

This verse by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who is the source of Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga, expresses his wish to dedicate it to children considering that this method could be of great benefit for their growth and development.



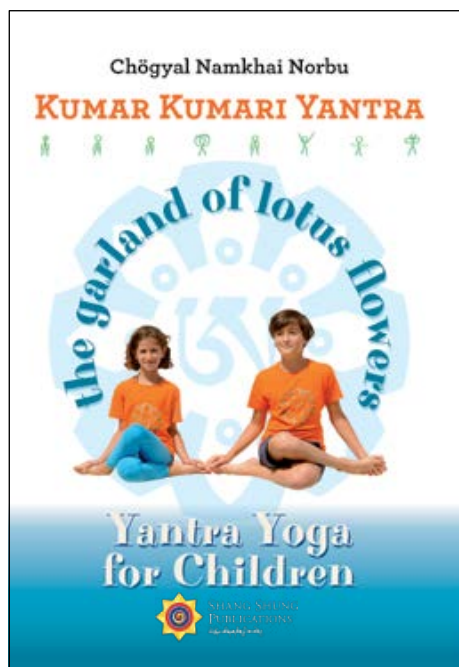
He conceived and wrote down the Kumar Kumari text in Tibetan during a personal retreat at Merigar in the Tibetan year of the Female Metal Sheep, February 21st, 1992. As soon as he finished his retreat, he gathered some of his students at Merigar and orally translated the text into Italian after which it was refined by Cristiana De Falco, revised by Adriano Clemente and finally published.

These particular movements for children arose from the profound teachings of Yantra Yoga, an ancient Tibetan spiritual discipline from the original eighth century text *The Union of the Sun and Moon* by the great scholar and yogin Vairochana. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu started teaching Yantra Yoga in the West in the 1970s and

composed a comprehensive and detailed commentary on this practice. Since that time this form of yoga has become well-known throughout the world and numerous books and manuals about it have been published. Moreover, there are a number of fully qualified teachers who give courses on this form of Yantra Yoga for adults worldwide. Yantra Yoga is based on coordination of movement, breathing and concentration particularly focusing on special retention of the breath. This yoga for adults consists of 108 movements and pranayama.

In Kumar Kumari, 16 vital exercises are presented to children, (ages 5 years to 12 years). As stated by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, “Children's bodies are small, the na-

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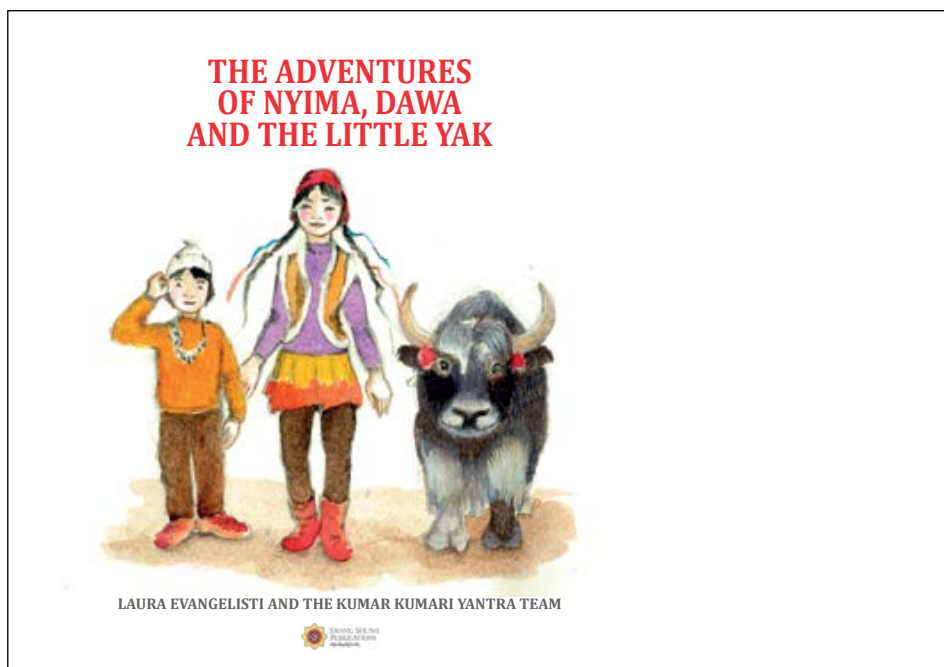
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ture of their breathing is light and quick" so this yoga is particularly based on these qualities. The different sequences of movements are combined with quick and slow inhalation and exhalation guided by 10 particular sounds that define the quality and type of breathing. This is what makes this yoga unique. Breathing while making these sounds helps to rebalance the energy, as well as fostering well being and optimum physical and emotional growth.

The 16 movements of Kumar Kumari include, first of all, a breathing exercise called the elimination of the stale air, then five exercises for loosening the joints (*tsig-jongs*). This is followed by five exercises which are called *lungsangs* to purify the *prana* or breathing. There is one exercise for controlling the channels (*tsandul*) and finally three main *yantras*: the snake, the bow and the plough. There is a concluding exercise to purify the breathing again.

This yoga is taught to children little by little. At the beginning, children are introduced to the warmups in a playful way and gradually they are taught one specific Kumar Kumari exercise at a time. In order to facilitate their learning how to use the sounds, in 2022 a booklet called

"The Adventures of Nyima, Dawa, and the Little Yak" was published. This lovely book, created by an enthusiastic group of Kumar Kumari teachers at Merigar and beautifully illustrated by Cristina Conticelli, features the 10 sounds through a fantastic adventure set in Tibet.



In 2016 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu strongly suggested that the time had come to develop Kumar Kumari yantra yoga more actively, in particular in primary schools and as part of the summer Yoga Vacation.

Kumar Kumari weekly lessons in school help children's concentration; body awareness and coordination increases and a sense of the importance of breathing in a more natural manner begins to take place. The sessions are fun, with creative and joyful moments, and emphasis on being part of a group.

The development and impact of this form of yoga for children in local communities continues to increase. The following are only a few examples and places where this precious gift from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has touched children, parents, teachers and colleagues.

In Rome, Italy, starting in 2019, ASIA, a non-profit social organization founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, created several projects, some in collaboration with Merigar, that introduced Kumar Kumari Yoga – along with other activities such as mindfulness, creative workshops of socioemotional education, environmental education – in nine public schools in Rome involving numerous classes. Each year, around 130 children and six classroom teachers have been involved with Kumar Kumari activities. The yoga classes were led by Kumar Kumari teachers Constance Soehnlén and Laura Graci. In 2023, two new schools were added to the project. Teachers and parents have been very supportive while the children have been sharing designs and com-

ments describing their experience such as Kumar Kumari Yoga is "different, fun" and also "calming" but "not so easy".

During those years, some schools in Naples were also involved in an ASIA project teaching Kumar Kumari, led by yantra yoga instructor Fabiana Esca. The children and parents were so positive and enthusiastic about the lessons that they personally made donations to extend them months after the project ended.

It is thanks to the donors from AICS (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo) and UBI (Unione Buddhista Italiana) that these dynamic, important school projects were able to take place.

In tandem the Tuscan schools in the Amiata area (Seggiano, Castel del Piano, Arcidosso to name a few) were included in the same projects involving Kumar Kumari lessons over 2–3 months as part of the school day. This year, Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga was also introduced in some schools in the Siena area of Monte Amiata, with a PEZ project (Zonal Educational Plans), managed by the Union of Municipalities Amiata Val d'Orcia and financed by the Tuscany region to promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

At Merigar regular events for children are held not only teaching Kumar Kumari yantra yoga but also creative workshops with art activities and story telling. This has amplified the possibility for children to express their creativity in new and stimulating ways.

Yantra Yoga lessons and mindfulness for teachers in surrounding schools has been

included in the recent projects. These regular workshops have been stimulating for all those who work with children thanks to the collaboration of Letizia Pizzetti, Dina Priymak, Laura Evangelisti, Michele Corrado, Constance Soehnen, Natasha Priymak, Cristina Conticelli, and others, for these regularly happening events!

Moving on to Dzamling Gar, the Dzogchen Community center in Tenerife, this special yoga for children has been taught from the Gar's early beginnings by Kumar Kumari teachers. Towards the end of the Covid pandemic children's yoga played a major role in a public program with the local city hall of Adeje, organized by the Atiyoga Foundation and coordinated by Ilaria Faccioli. The two classes, one for younger children aged 6 to 9, the other for older, were so well received by parents that they asked for them to continue the following year.

In addition to regular weekly classes, in the summer a children's camp, organized by Yantra Yoga and Kumar Kumari instructor Nataly Nitsche, is held each year. The camp is also open to children from the local community, where they can learn not only Kumar Kumari but also experience creative activities in a healthy space, in the beautiful tropical gardens of the Gar. The camp has presented an opportunity for Dzamling Gar to connect with the local community, where working parents wanted alternatives for their children in summer months free from school.

In other centers of the Dzogchen Community, such as Phendeling in the Czech Republic, summer camps for children have been successfully held for several years in which Kumar Kumari is one of the many activities.

Due to the popularity and diffusion of yoga for children there is an increasing need for new teachers. The training and supervision for Kumar Kumari teachers is under the guidance of Laura Evangelisti, Yantra Yoga senior instructor. The teacher training courses focus on the correct use of the 10 sounds combined with the breathing and learning the 16 exercises while also taking into account how to teach children considering their physical and emotional condition.

In November 2016, at the Teachers' Training in Dzamling Gar, 20 Kumar Kumari candidates demonstrated and explained all the Kumar Kumari movements in front of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and received di-

plomas, becoming the first Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga Teachers.

For many years, Laura Evangelisti has organized various training courses for teachers of this form of children's yoga, at Namgyalgar, Australia, at Merigar West, Italy on many different occasions, at Dzamling Gar in Tenerife, Tsegyalgar East



in Massachusetts, USA, as well as at Kunsangar North near Moscow, Russia. The most recent teacher training took place at Dzamling Gar in January, 2023 with 14 participants. The next teacher training will be given at Merigar West August 7-10, 2024.

May more and more children benefit from this precious teaching, a yoga created specifically for them. Working with children, who give us joy, can teach us about ourselves as part of our adult experience. The 'Garland of Lotus Flowers' is expanding, hopefully encircling the whole world. Once again, we are immensely grateful to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, for creating this precious gift for our children. ©



The Secret Murals of the Lukhang Temple

Photographs by
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Inauguration Sunday, June 23

In 1981 Professor Namkhai Norbu, returning to Lhasa after more than 20 years, made the first photographs of what were then considered the most secret images of Tibet, the 18th-century murals of the Lukhang, a small temple located behind the Potala Palace which contains what has become known as the Sistine Chapel of Tibetan Buddhism. An esoteric Wunderkammer, the images of the Lukhang present a panorama of Tibetan culture in the 1700s and an authentic visual guide to enlightenment.

This exhibition has been made possible by the support of the 8th of December Fund and the Ati Evolution Foundation.



The MACO would like to thank the international team of guest curators who have collaborated with the MACO staff, each sharing their personal perspectives, research, and experiences to enrich the exhibition:

- * Jakob Winkler, scholar, and author of many articles related to the Lukhang and its murals, of special note, his chapter, dedicated to the Lukhang in the *Murals of Tibet* (Taschen, 2018);
- * Michael Farmer, architect, cartographer, and author of *An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau* (Brill, 2022);
- * Jamyang Oliphant, scholar, author and the director of the Shang Shung Institute, UK;
- * Luigi Vitiello, medical doctor, scholar and author;
- * Jan Dolensky, scholar and advanced Yantra Yoga instructor;

Our special thanks to Enrica Rispoli, scholar and author, who was so fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time, and accompanied Rinpoche and his family to Lhasa in 1981.

For more information and updates regarding events, scheduled gallery talks, guided tours, publications and travel related to the Lukhang exhibition, please consult the Mirror and visit the websites of the MACO, SSUK and Merigar. ©



Share Sangha App with New Practitioners!

Dear Vajra sibling,
Sangha app is based on sharing. Only existing users can invite other users, so your support is essential!

We have noticed that sometimes new people with Transmission do not know how to access Sangha App 2. They cannot install it without a code from an existing practitioner. You can help them! How?

Recommend the app, so they can stay connected with the community!

Give them the exact name to search in Google Play or App store: "Sangha App 2."

Tell them to install the app on their phone.

After they fill in their data and verify their own mail address on the app, give them the invitation code.

This is how you can generate the invitation code: in your own Sangha app, go to the section "People," then scroll down the

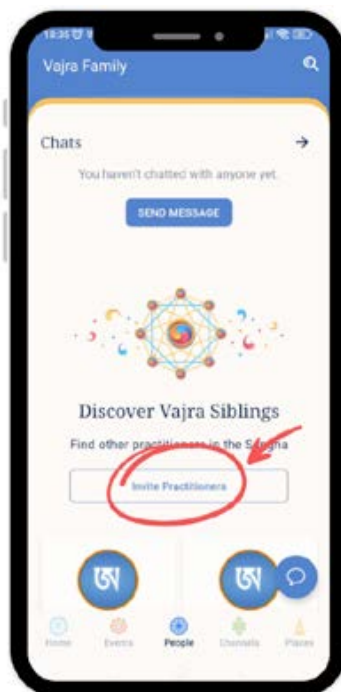
page to select "Invite Practitioners". Click on the button for "Invite Practitioners" and a new page will arise, with a row of stars. Click on "Show the code" to get the code.

Send the new practitioner the code.

Let them know they can always reach out for help at hello@mahasangha.net and in the dedicated help channel.

They can also find the [step-by-step explanation here](#).

Thank you! Nikol and Oana for the Sangha App Team ©





Yantra Yoga Teacher Training with Laura Evangelisti and Fabio Andrico at Dzamling Gar January 19–28, 2024.



Mandarava Dzamling Gar 2024

The traditional Mandarava retreat at Dzamling Gar spanned two weeks time, starting from Losar, with all the celebratory events connected to it from divination soup, star water baths, breakfast of khapse and tea, lunches, games, and practice and ending with a Mandarava Ganapuja and auction. The retreat went very smoothly thanks to the heroic efforts of the Gakyil, assistants, the ever present and dedicated karma yogis, the tireless Project Manager Elerin Uibu, the webcast team, the instructors Fabio Andrico, Dr Phuntsog Wangmo and Fabian Sanders, the Gekö, as well as the participation of our Umdzes, Sebastien Remy (who also coordinated the much appreciated videos of Rinpoche and together

with Anton Rutkovsky, the new schedule app) and Naomi Zeitz, and the auctioneers Lena Dumcheva and Tim Cabot.

Approximately 1000 people registered on line, 200 people attended live and around 300 on line daily.

We received many thanks and compliments on the content and organization of the retreat. We are very grateful for all who participated from near and far and we hope that each year the retreat can provide what seems to be a very beneficial and joyful experience for everyone. ©





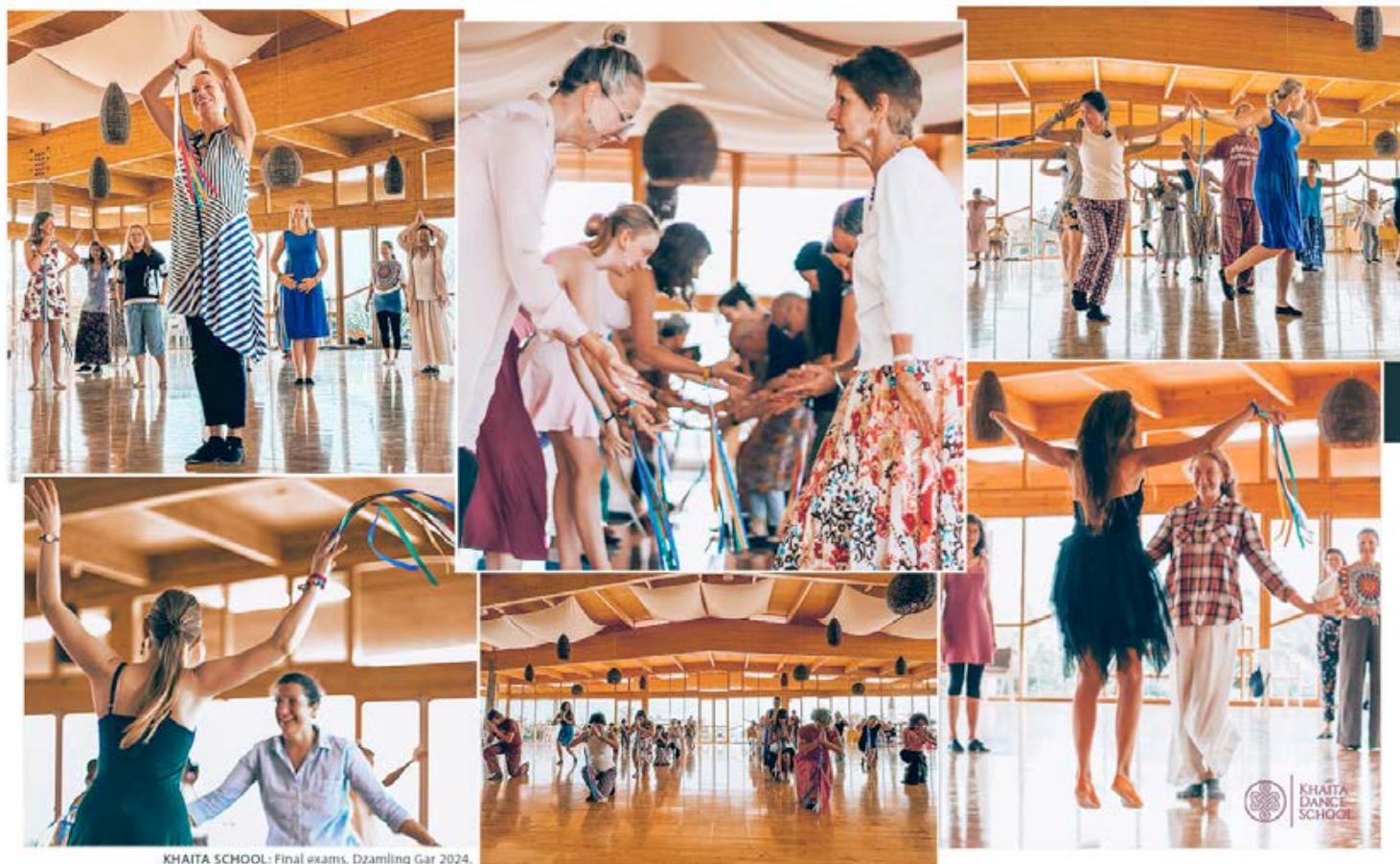
The Pranayamas of Yantra Yoga, a soft approach to Pranayamas, with Laura Evangelisti from March 1–4, 2024 at Dzamling Gar.



Khaita Training 4th level from March 26–April 1, 2024 at Dzamling Gar with Adriana Dal Borgo.



Vajra Dance Teacher Training, First Module at Dzamling Gar with Adriana Dal Borgo April 4–10, 2024.



KHAITA SCHOOL: Final exams, Dzamling Gar 2024.

Photos by Yulia Petrova. Collage created by Alena Velimirovic

Khaita Joyful Dances Exam: April 2024

Martina Krejčová and Eva Leick

For a long time, I had the note 'Khaita Exam' in my calendar for the week of 14th to 20th April. I knew that somewhere within that time frame there would be three days dedicated to the exam. And I knew I had to learn a lot of choreographies, a lot of Tibetan names of the dances, some theory about Khaita (for example "How did the name Khaita Joyful Dances evolve?"), meanings of the songs and, of course, how to explain a dance to students so that they can follow and enjoy. Does it seem like a lot? It certainly was for me.

During that preparation time and the days in Dzamling Gar, I experienced something that we usually don't experience every day. I felt great support from people around me. I had no free time to let my mind think too much and I was really concentrated on learning. I danced every single day! As a bonus, we developed practicing online with the girls from our Khaita study group which we enjoyed very

much. We had fun and we could hear other people's opinions, which is useful especially when teaching. Towards the days of the exam, we met almost every day to dance together virtually.

At the same time, we took part in the project of Exploring Khaita which is an online project where people can learn Khaita dances from their homes and or listen to workshops on different topics related to Khaita. It was a great preparation for explaining the dances to beginners! So for some months we were really busy and finally the week of the exams arrived.

We started the first day of the exam like we usually begin our Khaita Educational Program courses as well as any other Khaita activity that we do together: with Guruyoga and a few warm-up dances to connect in the group and activate the body and mind. The preparations days had been intense. We knew our own and the other's strengths and weak points very well. When the exam finally started, we were not only ready to show what we had prepared for in the last three years, but also ready to support each other as much as possible. Issa volunteered to go first and, with her friendly and open attitude, led the participants (the exam was open for everyone to attend)

joyfully and professionally through *Bodpa Tso*. What followed was session of explaining dances that we had all prepared beforehand: The task was to teach one's chosen dance to the group in no longer than 20 minutes, making sure the most important characteristics of its choreography, movement quality and meaning become clear. The short amount of time seemed to be the biggest challenge of this task. However, we were all prepared perfectly and managed to stick to the time frame. We finished the first day excited and exhausted. I felt like I went through 10 exams myself because I was not only focused on my own part but also feeling with all my colleagues and trying to support them with all my energy. There was little time to relax and celebrate that evening, as we continued at 10am on the next day.

On the second day, the thrilling part of picking up questions randomly from a pool of dances, theory questions and basic step combinations started. The moment of choosing 'the perfect' slip of paper was nerve-wracking, not only for the one picking but also for the other candidates! We all hoped for the person to choose something they feel comfortable with. We were all

» continued on the following page



Newest Khaita and First Level Yantra Yoga Instructors of IDC

Graduations at Dzamling Gar
April 20, 2024

Dear International Dzogchen Community Members,
Please join us in welcoming and congratulating the recent Khaita and Yantra Yoga Training Programs graduates on becoming the newest instructors of the International Dzogchen Community.

Yantra Yoga Graduates: Ekaterina Valeva, Marija Bajic-Jovanovic, Mariela Domín-

» continued from previous page

quite surprised by the outcome of the theory questions: from the ten possibilities, it seemed like we all got exactly the question that we needed, be it because it allowed the candidate to show her deep understanding in a particular area or because it was the one topic that was challenging to her and maybe needed to be developed more.

The picking of dances by chance was also exciting insightful. All of us had prepared 50 dances from a list, among them some complex ones and some more easy. Surprisingly, we almost all picked simple *Kordro* dances (circle dances). The dance I received, for example, was *Gawala* – a very popular *Kordro* dance with rather easy movements. Of all the dances that I had in mind, this was very far from what I thought I would pick up. I was prepared to explain complex mudras and formation changes and go into the meaning of the lyrics. With *Gawala*, the movements, the formation and the lyrics are easy to follow and express pure joy. I reflected a lot on the significance of me picking exactly this dance and found many answers related to the essence of Khaita: joy and group connection. Probably we were all in similar thought processes, wondering why we had picked that particular dance and looking for a deeper meaning.

On the third and last day, we continued with our program. A further task was to explain a combination of basic steps to an assumed beginner audience. This represents one of the major goals of the Khaita Educational Program: being able to explain

dance steps/choreographies in simple and clear ways, using only the necessary words and the body as a tool of communication. And then, as soon as it had begun, the exam was over! The adrenaline left our bodies and even though we were all very happy, we suddenly felt incredibly tired.

However, we didn't have a long time to rest. After a party in the evening, we met again on Saturday morning to make use of so many Khaita experts being together to practice *Jidkai Trinsang*, a beautiful yet complex dance in a star formation. In the afternoon, we then had our first instructors' meeting. Without having realized our new responsibilities as instructors yet, we came together with the 'senior instructors' on site to speak about new Khaita projects and ideas for the future. Many new exciting things lay ahead for Khaita!

In the evening, the official diploma ceremony took place. As a wonderful coincidence, we shared it with the new Yantra Yoga instructors. In this way, the ceremony was really a joyful and important moment for our Dzogchen Community. The ten new Khaita instructors are:

Alessandra Policreti
Anna Jiresch
Clotilde Hubert
Eva Leick
Issa Cox
Janina Parejo
Katerina Drajsajtlova
Martina Krejcova
Nadiia Gnatenko
Sharina Techer

On Sunday, we finally had time to relax. We went to a picnic in the forest around the Teide. Even though the weather was not as nice as expected for Tenerife, our hearts were full of warmth and we enjoyed being together in a relaxed way, without the stress of being in the spotlight. Some of us had the possibility to stay for a few more days after that, which mostly meant going to the beach, reflecting about the past days, thinking about new projects and, of course, dancing during the daily Khaita sessions!

The Khaita exam was an important moment in each of our personal Khaita journey. It inspired and challenged. The most beautiful part of it was probably to experience it as a collective. Going through these intense emotions together brought us even closer and created a sisterly bond that will stay with us forever. I really see and feel us as a team, always supporting and rooting for each other. In this way, we did not only pass the exam individually but collectively as a group, incorporating Khaita's principle of collaboration.

I want to thank all my fellow new instructors for the trust and support of the last years and many to come. And, of course, a big thank you to Adriana Dal Brogo, Petra Zezulková, Monika Marcik and Christiane Rhein for giving us the space and time to really become a group and experience true team spirit. They guided us skillfully, patiently and thoroughly through the Khaita Educational Program and the final exam. We know we can also count on their support for everything to come. ©

guez Leandro, Andrey Vasilev, Adrian Bivol, Artem Vernyi.

Khaita Graduates: Eva Leick, Nadiia Gnatenko, Martina Krejcova, Anna Jiresch, Katerina Drajsajtlova, Sharina Techer, Issa Cox, Clotilde Hubert, Alessandra Policreti, Janina Parejo.

A heartfelt thank you to them, and to the International Teachers Fabio Andrico, Laura Evangelisti and Adriana Dal Borgo who trained them, for their dedication and hard work to continue Rinpoche's precious legacy for the benefit of all.

With deep appreciation,
The International Gakyil



Santi Maha Sangha Base Retreat: Padmasambhava's Garland of Views from Yogatantra to Atiyoga and practice of Shitro with Adriano Clemente from April 24-28, 2024 at Dzamling Gar.



Umdze Training Part II with Adriano Clemente from May 2-4, 2024 at Dzamling Gar.



New Gakyil of Dzamling Gar from left to right:
 Red Gakyil, Vice Director, Olaf Kóster
 Yellow Gakyil and Director: Gloriana Brenes Gonzalez,
 Blue Gakyil and Secretary, Elerin Uibu,
 selected at the Annual General Meeting April 14, 2024.
 Photo courtesy of Lourdes Velaochaga



Song of the Vajra Dance Course Part I with Luda Kislichenko May 9–15, 2024 at Dzamling Gar.



Respira Teacher Training with Fabio Andrico from May 17–26, 2024 at Dzamling Gar.



Kumbhaka Course with Fabio Andrico June 1–3 at Dzamling Gar.

The Wellness Journey at Dzamling Gar

Join us, won't you?

Achieving financial sustainability, creating valuable connections with the teachings, and helping people embark on their WellBeing journey to enjoy their lives more by relaxing their minds and bodies—this encapsulates the mission of the WellBeing Program at Dzamling Gar, a program you can join either as a onsite guest or as a Karma Yogi member!

Our programs offer numerous health benefits for both the body and mind. The positive impact of our programs of Respira, Yantra Yoga, Khaita Joyful Dance, Vajra Dance, and Meditation extends well into daily life making our guests, friends, and society healthier and happier!

With each new summer guest, the WellBeing Project Team becomes even more inspired to improve and deliver an exceptionally relaxing wellbeing experience. This is all thanks to our dedicated team of professionals, including Nataly Nitche, Alessandra Policreti, Yulia Petrova, Thup-ten Rabgyi, Elerin Uibu, Maria Stepanik, Juraj Michna, Gisela Martinez, Lena Kalistova, Maria Jung, Urara Taoka, and Francesc Miralles, to whom we would like to extend our gratitude.

We are thankful to the School of Tibetan Medicine as well. We cannot overlook its significant role in our WellBeing Programs. Through counseling and therapeutic massages and its external therapies, it helps to relax and balance the body's elements, setting our guests on a holistic wellbeing path.

The WellBeing Programs 2024

This summer will be no different, as the WellBeing Retreat continues to deliver on its promises – to help you live a healthier and more balanced life in these hectic times.

From June to September, embark on your wellbeing journey in the beautiful Dzamling Gar in Tenerife. Join the WellBeing Retreat and improve your flexibility, reduce joint stiffness, manage chronic stress, enhance lung capacity, improve circulation, and achieve deeper, more restful sleep while enjoying your vacations on the stunning Tenerife!



Come together with or invite your friends and family and enjoy Dzamling Gar for a Discounted Price!

Do you know someone who could benefit from such a WellBeing retreat? Invite your friends and family for a relaxing 5, 7, or 10-day stay at Dzamling Gar! They will appreciate it immensely.

Hear from Our Recent Guests

We do not need to boast and praise ourselves. Read what our recent guests share about us:

"My girlfriend and I took the 5-day retreat with yantra yoga, respira, and meditation, and it was fantastic. This was our first time in Tenerife, and although we had activities every day we still had plenty of time to relax, go to the beach, do a bit of snorkeling, and try some local restaurants. Originally I wasn't sure whether doing Yantra Yoga and Respira would be a bit too much, but actually it gave us an interesting perspective. We had around 4 or 5 different instructors and each one of them brought their own personal style to the practice, and each noticed different points for us to improve upon, which really helped.

To top it off, the meditation sessions with Rabgyi were very relaxing as well – we mostly did some concentration practices with some analytical meditations mixed in. Rabgyi has a very nice sense of humor and is easy to talk to, so the meditations didn't feel too stiff; the whole hour went by extremely quickly. Dzamling Gar itself is extremely calm, and there's lots of birds and flowers, which is really unique. Unfor-

tunately the pool was out of commission while we were there, which would've been really nice to have, but we'll go back for sure so we'll be sure to go the next time we're there."

Ricardo and Bgusia from Poland

"Do you like a place, where in the morning birds are singing, the scent of flowers is going into your room, then, the best place is – Dzamling Gar. You can choose to have company or to have private lessons.

You can meditate, do yoga, or dance with the best khaita dancer. The walk around the garden gives you time to be yourself. Bonus is, you can have a great Tibetan massage. It is up to you, how you spend your time.

There are lots of possibilities to choose from. You always find the people who can go through your timetable and help you to have the best time.

My husband and I had a great time in Dzamling Gar. With the help from Urara and Nataly, our yoga teacher, Rabgyi, the meditation teacher, we just could not have had a better time.

Thank you!"

Zuzana and Colin from Ireland

» continued on the following page

SAMPLE

RETREAT PLANNER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
ARRIVAL	YANTRAYOGA INTRODUCTION PRIVATE	RESPIRA IN GROUP	YANTRAYOGA PRIVATE SESSION	YANTRAYOGA IN GROUP	THAI OSTEO THERAPY 1 HOUR	MEDITATION IN GROUP	DEPERTURE
INTRODUCTION	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK	LUNCH BREAK		
KUNYE MASSAGE 1 HOUR	YANTRAYOGA IN GROUP	KHAITA JOYFUL DANCE	KHAITA JOYFUL DANCE	RESPIRA AND GENTLE STRECH	MEDITATION PRIVATE SESSION	KHAITA JOYFUL DANCE	
					COMMUNITY DINNER		

What does the WellBeing Retreat look like?

Program Options

The 5, 7 or 10-day WellBeing Programs are designed for everyone and there are no special prerequisites regarding your age or physical fitness!

Program Selection

During your stay at Dzamling Gar you can choose to focus on the following programs: Respira, Yantra Yoga, Khaita Joyful Dance, Vajra Dance, or Meditation allowing you to build a solid foundation and understanding of it.

This is how you get started...

Your initial sessions are one-on-one with your private instructor, fast-tracking your learning process and preparing you to keep up with the group sessions that follow. This foundation will enable you to continue on your own once you are back home.

... and this is how to continue your WellBeing Journey

Regular online classes and in-person courses at your local Ling- might one be in your vicinity- will support your ongoing learning process until you feel confident to continue on your own, such as carrying out your complete Yantra Yoga session!

Arrival and Schedule, Meals and Free Time

Upon arrival in Tenerife, you will be picked up at the airport and introduced to your apartment and Dzamling Gar.

For the duration of your stay, Yoga or meditation sessions are usually scheduled in the morning.

Healthy and delicious breakfast and lunch are served in the cafeteria.

After lunch, you can enjoy your break as you like, whether it be walking by the beach, swimming, or resting.

In the afternoon, you can visit the Tibetan Medical School for a Kunye massage

or participate in Khaita dancing. Dinner is self-catered, either by cooking or dining out at nearby restaurants.

Community Integration

On Fridays, a cafeteria dinner is organized by the Karma Yogis, allowing you to integrate into community life and enjoy socializing.

2024's special

This summer, we are thrilled to expand our range of therapies. Thai Osteo Therapy, Shiatsu, Esalen bodywork, Cranio Sacral unwinding as well as warm sea water packs release myofascia, and will help you reduce stress and relax. ☺

wellbeing@dzamlinggar.org
<https://www.wellbeing-dzamlinggar.org>



THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the
International
Dzogchen Community of
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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Namgyalgar Report for The Mirror

June 2024

Pamela Oldmeadow

We held an April weekend Gakyil meeting at the Gar. It was a wonderful and harmonious meeting, a day and a half of discussions of immediate needs this year, of the next year or two and the longer term. After Zoom meetings, very much oriented to decision-making, it was a pleasure to take a wider and deeper perspective, and to hear from others, particularly SMS teacher Arnaud, Nicoli the caretaker, and Paora from New Zealand.

Following discussions with Arnaud and Nicoli, it was agreed to start a series of Introductions to Dzogchen using video recordings of Rinpoche teaching and looking at particular aspects of Dzogchen. These sessions will take place at the Gar on a series of Sunday mornings and be followed up by a short retreat for consolidation and practice at the Gar. With Nicoli running yoga sessions at the Gar and at a nearby FMT centre 'Chenrezig' every week, and regular Khaita sessions by Topgyal, we are hoping to welcome some newcomers.

The Gakyil meeting was preceded by a retreat with Arnaud focussed on the Six Vajra Verses, and videos of Rinpoche teaching this from Namgyalgar in 2014. A small gathering, wonderful experiences of the third series of Semsdzin, other practices, reflection and communicating with each other. It was followed by a Yantra Yoga retreat with the third series pranayama in focus with Emily and Arnaud. This included a dawn practice at the beach, a workshop of painting blue Hums for posting around the Gar, and regular Vajra Dance. A blessed fortnight at the Gar!

In addition to that, regular SMS, Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance are held. Several are planned for the next few months. We are encouraging people, particularly newcomers, to attend the Gar for Yeshe Namkhai's teachings. Mathew Long will be teaching Yantra Yoga on the weekends around this, enabling those at the Gar to learn Yantra alongside the retreat teachings.

As well as regular Vajra Dance practices, there was a joyful Song of Vajra Dance course with Cosimo in February. A retreat



of Khalong Dorjejar of the Song of Vajra is planned for November. We have, with the help of Jorrit, embedded a wonderful Khalong on a grassy area of the land, enabling regular practice without the expense of hiring local halls.

After a few years dedicated to repairing and improving facilities, we now have a beautiful Gönpa, a Dance Mandala shed and a kitchen for retreatants, or campers. There is an excellent cabin for private retreat. The house has also been renovated to include a caretaker's flat and upgraded dormitories. Now we need to replenish our capital.

We have made a beautiful Airbnb based in Rinpoche's area of the house <https://www.airbnb.com.au/rooms/1087327163871820385>. Two ensuite double bedrooms, a lounge with a single bed (another possible), full kitchen and dining, with patio and a swimming pool in the lovely grounds. You are welcome to come for a

holiday! There are special rates for members – contact caretaker@dzogchen.org.au.

For managing the budget, we have agreed on fund-raising for specific projects twice a year on auspicious days, the first being to build better shelter at the retreat cabin with awnings and a veranda for outdoor practice and sitting. We also plan a series of meditation platforms around the Gar, along a perimeter path (currently in development). The first of these will be at what we've named Evolution Point, overlooking a small lake. Sun, rain and mosquito protection will be provided there.

Seeking additional income, we have also made the Gar available for hire for various purposes <https://www.dzogchen.org.au/venue-hire.html>. The Gar is regularly used for hatha yoga classes, and occasional workshops or dance classes. We hope through these not only to raise income but to raise new interest in the community and the inestimable Dzogchen Teachings. ☺

The 9th Annual Summer Sangha Retreat (SSR)

Vajra Hall, Khandroling,
Buckland, Massachusetts, USA
Wed, July 17 thru Wed, July
24th, 2024

Accommodation info

Directions and Travel info

Retreat schedule and lunch reservations forthcoming.

With community health in mind, we kindly ask that if you are experiencing any signs of illness, Covid or flu, that you self isolate.

Some sessions will require transmission to attend. To receive transmission prior to the SSR consider registering for Dzogchen Teachings with Yeshe Namkhai webcast from Merigar West, June 20th to June 27th, 2024 – [More info & to sign up for the web-cast](#)

The SSR will include

- * Yantra Yoga with Yantra Yoga instructors Paula Barry, Naomi Zeitz and Vicki Sidley
- * A course of the Vajra Dance That Benefits Beings (VDBB)¹
- * Teachings and practice sessions with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and Santi Maha Sangha instructor Michael Katz
- * A replay of one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's retreats (topic to be announced)

¹VDBB is a 6 day course of 1 hour sessions taught by authorized Vajra Dance instructors, Carisa and Bodhi. Plan to attend the entire 6 days to learn the dance. VDBB is ideal for newcomers and is open to all who feel drawn to practice Vajra Dance.

For planning purposes please indicate that you are interested and expecting to attend some part of the retreat even if you are not prepared to donate at this time. We plan on broadcasting the replay of one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's retreats via Zoom, along with practice sessions (excluding the Long Goma Devi practice and the VDBB). If you are interested in attending via Zoom please indicate when registering.

[Register for the SSR](#)



Suggested Donation for the retreat

- \$500 Sponsor the entire retreat
- \$300 for the entire retreat
- \$150 for newcomers for the entire retreat
- \$50 per day – No daily rate for the first and last day
- \$25 per session
- \$120 to attend via Zoom
- \$20 per session via Zoom

Reduced suggested donations for hardship are available. Please contact the Gakyil at gakyil@tsegvalgar.org
[Donate Here](#) ©

The 7th Annual Dance Dance Dance

Vajra Hall, Khandroling,
Buckland, Massachusetts, USA
Sat, August 3rd thru Sun, August
18th, 2024

Accommodation info

Directions and Travel info

With community health in mind,
we kindly ask that if you are ex-
periencing any signs of illness,
Covid or flu, that you self isolate.

Requires Transmission to attend, except
for Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings
(VDBB) and The Vajra Dance of the Three
Vajras (3 Vajras). To receive transmission
prior to DDD consider registering for Dzo-
gchen Teachings with Yeshe Namkha web-
cast from Merigar West, June 20th to June
27th, 2024 – [More info & to sign up for the
webcast](#)

This retreat is designed for those who have
previously taken a Vajra Dance course. These
days will be dedicated to refreshing and
deepening our experience of the Vajra Dance.

Dance Dance Dance Retreat Schedule (subject to change)

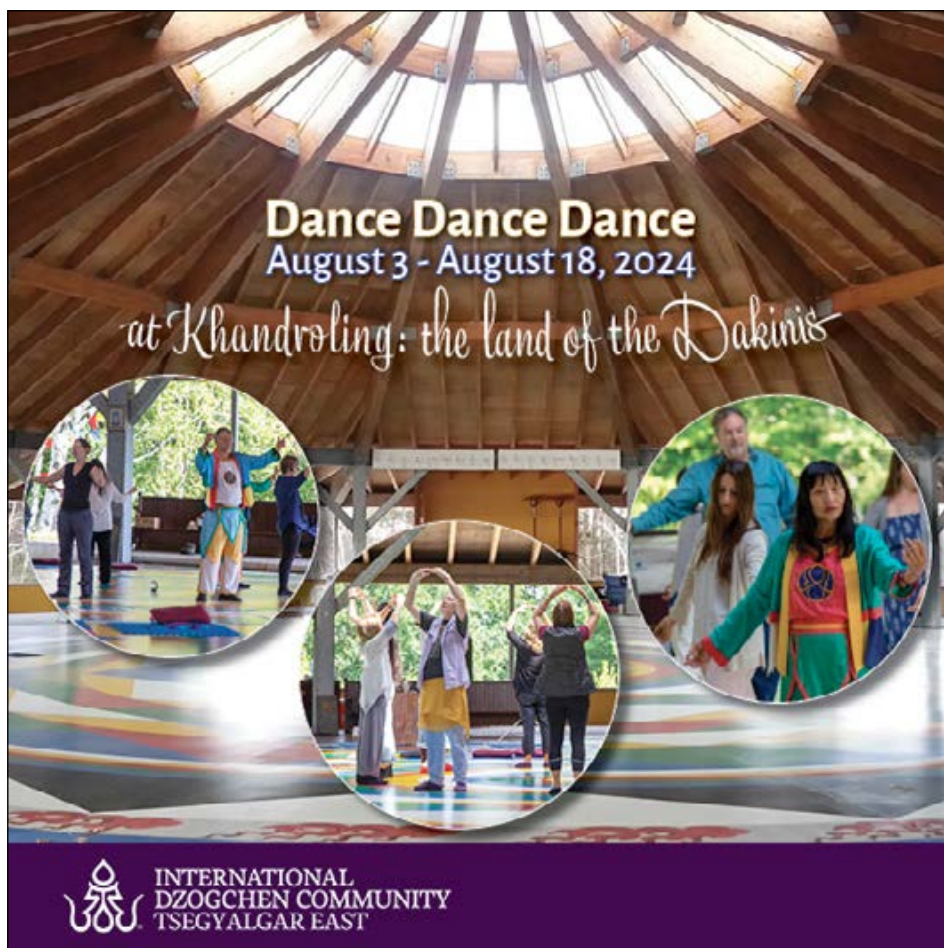
Lead by authorized Vajra Dance instructors:
Kyu Kyuno, Carisa O'Kelly & Bodhi Krause

8/3 (Saturday):
**Cleaning and Dance Opening Day with
Short Thun and some dance,**
Noon–5 pm

8/4 (Sunday/New Moon):
Song of the Vajra (Review)
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm
5:30 pm Ganapuja

8/5 (Monday):
Song of the Vajra (Review)
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/6 (Tuesday):
Song of the Vajra (Review)
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm



8/7 (Wednesday): Day Off

8/8 (Thursday):
**Khalong Dorje Kar of the Song of Vajra
(KDKSOV)**
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/9 (Friday):
KDKSOV
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/10 (Saturday):
KDKSOV
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/11 (Sunday):
Turning the Wheel of Vajra Song and Dance
10 am–12:30 pm

8/12 (Monday): Day Off

8/13 (Tuesday):
VDBB
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/14 (Wednesday/Guru Rinpoche Day):
VDBB
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm
5:30 pm Ganapuja

8/15 (Thursday):
3 Vajras
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/16 (Friday): Day Off

8/17 (Saturday):
Turning the Wheel of Vajra Song and Dance
10 am–12:30 pm & 2:30 pm–5 pm

8/18 (Sunday):
Turning the Wheel of Vajra Song and Dance
10 am–12:30 pm; 12:30 pm Closing Ganapuja

For planning purposes please indicate that
you are interested and expecting to attend
some part of the retreat: [Register Here](#)

Suggested Donation for the retreat
\$500 Sponsor for entire retreat
\$350 for the entire retreat
\$40 per day; \$25 per session
Reduced suggested donations for hardship
are available. Please contact the Gakyil at
gakyil@tsegyalgar.org
[Donate Here](#)

©

Update from Tashigar North

Rollo Carrasco

Dear Vajra Family,
Hoping that this message finds you in good health and in good circumstances, I attach a brief report of the recent events that occurred in Tashigar North after the wonderful relaunch season we had from December 2023 to March 2024.

Obviously the exhibition of the Gar with new activities, both in person and online, has given us a boost that translated into some concrete contributions that have allowed us to stabilize our finances. We could have been in an even better scenario, however, due to the country's financial restrictions, we were unable to receive two donations for a total of US\$25,000, which required the funds to arrive directly into the association's accounts, an operation impossible due to sanctions that still remain against Venezuela. However, with the "sale" of Casa Diego in Playa Zaragoza – a group of anonymous practitioners bought the house and returned it to the association through a fractional payment of US\$8,000 per year for five years and with the magnificent welcome of our Vajra family worldwide at our auction of Rinpoche's handmade "Evolution Creations" necklaces, we were able to raise US\$23,000, which has allowed us to stabilize the situation and have the next few months covered.

The Gakyil decided to use US\$10,000 of these funds on repairs that could no longer be postponed, with the confidence that the Community will respond with the same enthusiasm to our new program from December 2024 to March 2025, which we will talk about later. So far we have spent a total of US\$9,300 on restoration projects that include the total restoration of the Gönpa roof, including waterproofing work, restoration of the ceilings of the bedrooms, public bathrooms and some spaces in Rinpoche's house, replacement of some load-bearing beams in the dining room, as well as the restoration of the Gar's water tank, which was already leaking at its base. With the remaining balance we will try to improve the access road to the Gar and place ceramics on the floor of the space behind the Gönpa facing the Sang Khang.



As you know, a little over a year ago we began searching for new residents in the Village of Tashigar North. So far we have two new members who we have already talked about in previous articles, Ralf Srehle and Massimo Catalfo, who acquired houses, who were joined by Anjani Santos with the purchase of an empty lot. We continue to offer properties within the Gar; there are bargain prices on some of the properties.

Visit tashigarnorte.org for more information.

Although it is true that we still do not have a specific program, we have confirmation of the participation of Adriano Clemente, Dina Priymak, Anna Apraksina and Rosemary Friend from December until March. In February, depending on how certain circumstances arise, Prima Mai will be visiting us to lead a Khalong course and with the idea of working on a Vajra Dance program with musicians playing live music. We invite, especially our musicians brothers and sisters, interested in participating, to write to us at tahsigarnorteseecretary@gmail.com to see how we can assist you in having your presence in Tashigar Norte. It is also contemplated, since we have a home recording studio, to try some new versions of music for Dance. Steven Landsberg has also the strong intention and desire to come, but all will depend on his visa approval.

Stay tuned with us on our social network, Norbunet, The Melong about concrete schedules, definitely all the instructors mentioned before will offer Teachings and programs during their staying in the Gar; all the disciplines will be covered (SMS, YY, VD and Khaita) To all instructors of all IDC disciplines, who would like to spend time at the Gar, please write to us at the same email address; and obviously to our entire Vajra family we extend the invitation to visit Tashigar North. Here we are! Big A for all of you. ©



Tashigar North

Douglas Uzcategui

A long time passed in a long wait for the joy of the reunion in Tashigar North to renew the confidence and the impulse to move forward. Meeting instructors who supported the program that was presented between the end of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024, contributed enormously to bringing together practitioners who visited and paid with their willingness and dedication, to have fruitful days.



The success of the program, as well as the comradely, spontaneous conversations and daily experiences of those who were present throughout this journey, have given Tashigar North a refreshing bath. The Master's smile is outlined on this occasion as an intimate fragrance that dissipates any obstacle.

Today, thanks to the support and collaboration of so many people, we have contributed to the renovation and restoration of spaces that presented problems due to the passage of time. Although there is still work to be done in the recovery of some infrastructure, such as the restoration of the Gonpa floor, the most pressing problems have been resolved. All this work is the result of this rewarding impulse that produced the presence and supportive participation of so many practitioners.

Now there are new circumstances and new challenges. Maintaining the rhythm and reaping what was sown appears as the closest horizon. Financial difficulties do not cease, however, experience tells us that motivation, shared inner strength and perseverance strengthen life together despite adversity.

For all of the above, it is very important to continue with this enthusiasm that generated last season. We trust that Tashigar North will become increasingly stronger and can continue to offer the joy, spaciousness and warmth that this corner of the Himalayas in the Caribbean offers.



Tashigar North

More Reflections

Rosemary Friend

Ever since 2002, my first visit to Isla Margarita and Tashigar Norte, I have experienced the land as a doorway – portal to the dimension of Jnanadakini. It still is. And while any place and moment can be realized as sacred, certain energy points in the world appear to facilitate awakening and stabilizing more profoundly than others. The resonance of so many retreats with Maestro is palpable in this precious realm. My last visit to TDN in 2016 was tempered with a slightly unsettled feeling that I may not be able to return for some time. Eight years later, in February this year, I was delighted to still be alive and have the fortunate circumstances to re-acquaint with this special place and its worldly and other-worldly visitors. We were all warmly welcomed by our beautiful and resilient caretakers and old friends – Marina, Rolo, Duglas, Ralf, Massimo, Tata, Berta, Marta, Gilberto and all the locals who work and support the continued presence of the gar in this world. We were around 20 visitors enjoying the love and playfulness that naturally flows when brothers and sisters meet with harmony in their heart-minds. It is such a joy to relax with fellow travelers who have the time and possibility to so-journ together. I so enjoyed being with you all, for the Khalong Dorje Kar of Song of Vajra training, the Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings and 3 Vajras supervision courses and generally hanging out, eating, drinking, swimming, dancing. Thank you all for the special moments... also Rita, Fanny, Janina, Michel, Carmencita, Alix, Valter, Anna, Eglee, Manuela, Maria Octavia, Francesco, Valentina, Francisca, Carlina, Adriana, Juan Carlos, Marta, Flavia, Martina, Masha.... every one a treasure. ©



DYNAMIC SPACE of the ELEMENTS

108 Stupas of Changchub Dorje

For some time now Migmar Tsering and the Dynamic Space of the Elements have been working on an important project based on a *terma* of Changchub Dorje that gives details on building 108 different Stupas to harmonize and pacify the planets and the elements.

Rigdzin Changchub Dorje had rediscovered this *terma* before the Chinese Revolution and considered that building the Stupas would harmonize the conflict between the elements and avoid the rising problem of war. War means that there is conflict between the five inner and five outer elements, externally manifesting as natural disasters, while internally as conflicts between people.

At the time Changchub Dorje advised the Tibetan government to undertake this project of building the 108 Stupas along all the borders of Greater Tibet (Central Tibet, Kham, Amdo) but it seems there was little response to his advice. So at his place of residence, Nyaglagar, he began sculpting the form of some of the Stupas on rocks and constructing others using a particular type of lime, although he did not manage to finish construction of all 108.

In 2013 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu envisioned and created a world map related to the Dance of the Vajra and the energetic points on our planet. In 2014, following the idea of Changchub Dorje to place the 108 Stupas around the borders of Tibet, Rinpoche suggested creating these Stupas and placing them around the globe at particular energetic points and at the places of the Dzogchen Community Gars and Lings.

From 2013–15 Migmar Tsering and the Dynamic Space of the Elements tried to develop this idea and created 3D designs of some of the Stupas. However, at the time, they were unable to go ahead with the



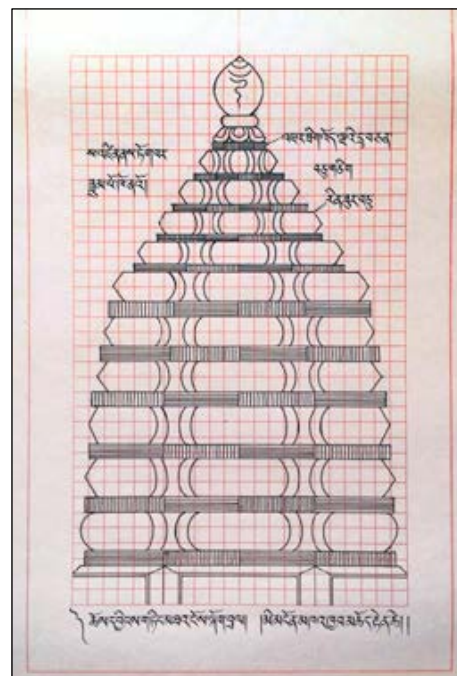
One of the Stupas inscribed on rock in Changchub Dorje's place of residence, Nyaglagar, in East Tibet.

project due to other commitments and financial difficulties.

From 2018 Migmar took up this work again and, the previous year, even managed to show Rinpoche the first seven designs of the Stupas in 3D that had been created by Franco V.

In 2018 Migmar and Dynamic Space started fundraising with the aim of buying a 3D printer, but were not satisfied with the quality of the results. After the first eight 3D drawings were ready they travelled around Italy asking craftsmen about the possibility of constructing these Stupas in various materials such as wood, metal, marble and so on. They discovered that the manufacture would not be easy because the various craftsmen were unacquainted with the structure of a Stupa and it meant that Migmar would have to work with them the whole time and advise them on exactly what was required.

Migmar finally presented wooden models of the first five Stupas from the *terma* and displayed them at the Museum of Asian Art and Culture in Arcidosso in December 2022 as part of the Potentiality of the Elements exhibition. Migmar had worked with a carpenter to create them although constructing them in wood had not been easy because it required special equipment and a very skillful carpenter.



A recent design of one of the 108 Stupas.

Attempts to create them in ceramics at the time were not very successful.

Based on the written *terma* and the Stupas at Nyaglagar inscribed on rocks, Migmar and Dynamic Space now have designs for 56 of the Stupas. Most of the designs come from the descriptions in the *terma*, while others are based on the rock inscriptions which were partially destroyed during the cultural revolution.

Fortunately, more recently they have found a supplier in China, in Chengdu, a Tibetan who has a lot of experience and skill in the traditional way of making metal statues and has started to produce the Stupas. At his workshop he makes the prototype in metal starting from the 3D design and prepares a wax model. The molten copper alloy is then cast inside the wax model. Finally the model is chiselled, polished and finished. The entire process is similar to that of making hollow statues.

Up to now Migmar and Dynamic Space have six finished Stupas in wood and eight in copper. Of the eight copper models, five are copies of the Stupas in wood and three are new models. They have sent eight new designs to Chengdu to be made in copper alloy which will be gold plated afterwards. All the Stupas are around 60 cm in height.

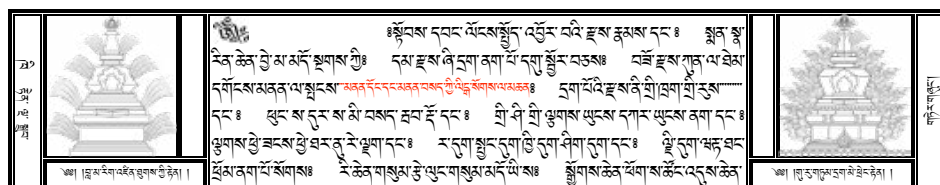
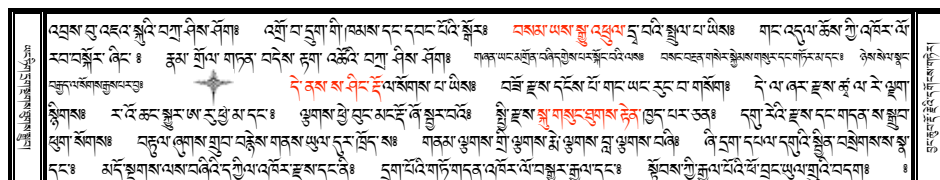
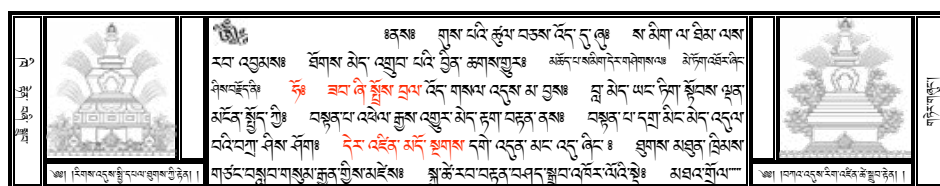
To fill the hollow Stupas once they are finished, they will be preparing tiny *tsa tsa* [votive offerings] made from different types of earth mixed with 25 precious ingredients. Each Stupa will contain 25 tiny *tsa tsa* and different printed mantras as well as earth from the highest holy mountain,

wood from the deepest forest and water and sand from the biggest river. Each Stupa has a different main Mantra, followed by “normal” mantras that are contained in all the other Stupas. Other objects to be placed inside the Stupas include objects that have been touched by or belonged to powerful people, *khatags* [ceremonial scarves] from His Holiness, His Holiness Sakya Gongma Rinpoche and Penor Rinpoche, relics of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and many famous Masters as well as some earth from around St. Peter’s cathedral.

Each of the eight Stupas that have already been prepared will go to one of the Gars. These small Stupas can be placed inside the house or Gönpa or in the garden. The next Stupas will go to the Lings, and the others will gradually be sent to distant places.

For the authentication all the components to fill the Stupas will be prepared and the practice of the five elements should be done. Then possibly a qualified Master may carry out the authentication.

When the Stupas are being placed, practitioners should do the *sa lang* ས་ལྗང་ practice, which means asking permission to take the earth. It’s a short practice, or otherwise they can do the sang and serkyem offering. Then they should do the རྒྱུད་ *byong* or purification of the place with the sang



Some pages from Changchub Dorje’s *terma*.

and serkyem offering. Finally *བརྟག་ tag* means analysis: how to position the Stupas according to *sa chad* or geomancy.

This important project, initiated by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, needs the collaboration and support of all of us in order to reach completion. Up to now the creation of each of the Stupas – precise hand drawing, 3D design, manufacture, transport –

has cost around 3500 euro and with all the materials to fill them from 6000 to 10,000 euro. Some of the Stupas still to be created are more intricate in their design and will be more expensive.

To see more details about this project, its costs and how to donate to individual Stupas, please visit the website <https://i08-Stupa.dynamicelements.org/en>



The first Stupas in the project, cast in Chengdu.

Pilgrimage to Nepal and Maratika

Will Shea

In 1984 the Longsal Mandarava practice was revealed to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu while he was practicing in the Eight Heruka Cave in Maratika, Nepal. To mark the fortieth anniversary of this auspicious event, a collaboration between Shang Shung Institute UK and the Museo di Arte e Culturale Orientale (MACO), in Arcidosso, Italy provided in April 2024 a tour to Nepal, including several days at the caves of Maratika. The caves are the site where in the eighth century Padmasambhava and his consort Mandarava realized the spiritual immortality of the Vajra body.

With all this in mind, forty-three of us pilgrims descended on Kathmandu from around the world for an eleven day tour.

Our guiding team was headed by the Tibetologists Jacobella Gaetani, who was among those accompanying Rinpoche to Maratika forty years ago, Jamyang Oliphant, scholar and connoisseur of all things Nepali, and Pemba Lama, Director of Bodhisattva Trips. Kyu Kyuno helped facilitate for the sizeable Japanese contingent. The capable and responsive team provided for all our needs from the esoteric to the mundane.

Before heading for Maratika, we spent a number of days exploring the considerable spiritual and cultural riches of the Kathmandu Valley, while also getting over jetlag and preparing to go to our remote destination. Kathmandu is a chaotic yet in some ways relaxed city, with the sizeable Tibetan Buddhist presence coexisting harmoniously with the Hindu majority. Every taxi ride through the crowded streets seems to pass several temples of both religions, some of which are shared by the two.

Our festive introduction dinner at a traditional Nepali banquet hall, complete with a lively dance performance, set the tone for discovering the area. To fully chronicle all the wonders we enjoyed over the next several days, visiting many places of lore that we had read about for years, could fill a book. Mention of a few highlights will hopefully convey something of the overall impact.

For our first day out our guides arranged for an intimate tour of nearby Sechen monastery's temples and former personal quarters of the late revered master Dilgo Khy-



Kathmandu Valley, Triten Norbutse Monastery – Group photo with the abbot Kenchen Yungdrun Rinpoche.

entse Rinpoche, which also contain a reliquary of his remains. On Guru Rinpoche Day we would return to the Monastery to celebrate our Ganapuja in a small temple under the watchful gaze of enormous statues of Guru Rinpoche, Mandarava, and Yeshe Tsogyal.

In the afternoon we visited a thangka painting studio where scores of artisans work diligently to continue the creation of beautiful images using the traditional method of creating pigments from various colored minerals.

The same evening we visited the river bank ghats of Pashupatinath, an ancient Hindu shrine dedicated to Shiva, and watched from the opposite bank of the Bagmati River as families burned the remains of their recently deceased relatives on open fires, then dispersed the ashes into the river. Being downwind of the charnel smoke, our experience was quite direct. Any lingering doubts we may have had about the reality of impermanence were charred as well!

We then visited the nearby small riverside caves of the eleventh-century mahasiddhas Tilopa and Naropa. We had the very auspicious opportunity to sit inside briefly – without the inconvenience of being slapped with a sandal – the legendary means of awakening administered to Naropa by Tilopa.

Afterward we remained on the Pashupatinath grounds to see and hear the festive evening Arti prayers to Shiva and other gods. The sensual, and eventually boisterous ritual of gratitude, with the cremation fires still burning within sight, provided for interesting reflection.

A day trip to Pharping enabled a visit to the auspicious caves of that area, sometimes referred to as the Bodh Gaya of Vajrayana, where Guru Rinpoche's 'Re-Enlightenment' (as is written above one of the cave entrances) occurred. When possible we sang together the seven-line invocation to Padmasambhava or the Song of the Vajra inside the small caves, integrating with the powerful energy there.

We also visited the late Chatral Rinpoche's temple, residence, and reliquary stupa, which resonate with the eminent Dzogchen master's enduring presence.

Another highlight was the visit to Triten Norbutse Bonpo Monastery, residence of the highly respected master Lopon Tenzin Namdak. We were treated to a talk by the abbot and master Kenchen Tenpa Yungdrun Rinpoche. His perceptive comments on the rewards and challenges of pilgrimage were well-attuned to our conditions, and included the advice to collaborate harmoniously on the tour. Jamyang joked afterward that he had paid him to give this advice. We also paid a visit to the Tibetan medicine clinic within the monastery and some of us had brief health consultations,



Getting ready to start Mandarava Long Life Practice under the sky door in the Lower Maratika Eight Heruka Cave.

with herbal medicines dispensed corresponding to diagnosis.

We had the unlikely experience in central Kathmandu of having a glimpse of the Royal Kumari, a young 'living goddess' who lives in seclusion and only appears in her window on rare days for people to see her. I won't attempt to explain this unusual tradition! I asked Oliver (Leick) if we have a living goddess in the Dzogchen Community. "Yes," he said. "All of us".

An interesting tangential event of the tour was the teaching of Vajra Dance at Tsoknyi Rinpoche's monastery, Tsoknyi Gechak Ling. Ten or so young nuns joined the two-day class with other locals and a few from our tour group. Instructors Anna Apraksina and Lorraine Gaultier, (supported by Carisa O'Kelly and Kyu), were delighted to see the receptivity and enthusiasm with which the girls embraced learning the Dance.



Vajra Dance at Tsognyi Gechak Ling Nun Monastery, Kathmandu.

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KDK 12 A Dance in the Maratika Eight Heruka Cave.

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As the immense and magnificent Boudhanath Stupa was within walking distance of our hotels, we had the opportunity between outings to join the kora circumambulation. The flow of pilgrims around the Stupa conveys a force of Buddhist devotion not readily found in the West.

And of course we enjoyed the ordinary pleasures (another good reason for pilgrimage) of dining and shopping in colorful Kathmandu and the world heritage site artisan towns of Bhaktapur and Patan.

Eventually we embarked in a convoy of nine jeeps and a pickup truck full of luggage for the daylong journey to our primary destination, Maratika. Beautiful scenery and the good humor of fellow passengers provided some relief from the hot, bumpy ride. Of course, a pilgrimage would not be complete without some challenges to body, voice, and mind. Along with the delights of our voyage were experiences of inner and outer limitations in various forms. However, in light of the reward, they seemed minimal; the devoted group coped and seemed to collaborate reasonably well. (Perhaps this should be confirmed by the guides).

When we finally entered the Maratika Eight Heruka cavern, all the previous sites visited were forgotten, at least for the moment. The powerful energy of the place is incomparable. Visiting lama Kochog Gyaltsen would later point out, with his industrial flashlight, the many amazing signs of Guru Rinpoche and Dakinis in the rock

walls. He also gave a tour of the other sacred caves of Avalokiteshvara Hill.

Jacobella recalled for us many details of Rinpoche's visit and his reception of the gongter. Jakob Winkler explained the Mandarava practice for those unfamiliar with it, and Oliver gave basic advice on yogic breathing. Over three days we did the practice together inside the cave.

Though in the Dzogchen view all is perfect from the beginning, for those of us with less than stellar capacity it is easier to practice awareness while surrounded by the energy of realization!

We also had the opportunity to practice integrating with commotion as waves of Hindu pilgrims came in and out of the cave and took pictures of us and with us. It is not an isolated spot! At one point a group of drumming mountain shamans entered and drowned out our singing. They were quite interesting though and we enjoyed their visit. On the day of the full moon a group of monks chanted their Tsok offering ritual nearby to us. We practiced a Mandarava Ganapuja later that day.

We visited other auspicious caves on nearby Vajrapani and Manjushri Hills, and some took a short ride to a powerful Naga cave that had been discovered by Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche. Others took a longer ride and hike to a small secret cave of Mandarava. In many cases people squeezed through tight spaces in the caves; there were some close calls but no one was permanently stuck.

At one last Ganapuja in the hotel's Gönpa (nice feature), we expressed our appreciation, as we would begin to separate with the return to Kathmandu.

We then dispersed to our various destinations to resume our endeavors to recognize all locations as primordially pure. In my own case, living near Khandroling, in Massachusetts, it was also a reminder to fully appreciate that special place of the Dzogchen Community. In conclusion, I express my gratitude for the incredible gifts given to us by Rinpoche and his lineage, and for the kindness of the guides and fellow travelers on this wondrous trip. ©



Nepali Shaman Lady at the upper Maratika Long Life Cave.

How I Became a Vajra Dance Instructor – Anna Apraksina

The Mirror: Anna, how did you decide to become a Vajra Dance instructor?

Anna: The story itself began with how I started dancing. I was introduced to the Vajra Dance in Margarita Island, Venezuela in 2010. I watched people dance the Song of the Vajra, and it was incredibly beautiful. I sat completely spellbound, and I had a clear idea that they were some kind of superhumans, that I would never be able to do this, it was simply unrealistic. I always wanted to dance, but I had never worked with my body, and I was already over 40 at that time. So for me, not only the Vajra Dance, but the ordinary dance was something otherworldly, something I could only dream of. And then somehow this dance began to call to me.

Later I went to Sao Paulo, Brazil, to attend a retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. I was working a lot at the time so I took just a week off and flew across the Atlantic for a retreat. There were some problems: one of our people was attacked with a handgun, someone was robbed, so I didn't want to leave the hotel where Rinpoche was staying and where the retreat was taking place.

In between Rinpoche's teachings, a retreat on the Dance of the Three Vajras was being held, and I went to it because I simply had nowhere to escape to. I made my way to the nearest shop in small dashes, bought clean socks to dance in, and then ran back. This was my first Vajra Dance retreat.

And so it went on: circumstances were such that I had nowhere to get away from the dance. For example, when Adriana Dal Borgo came to St. Petersburg to conduct supervision, she stayed at my place, I drove her by car to and from the retreat and I simply had no choice but to participate in it, too. Everything led me there, and, to be honest, I never had any active choice in this.

In 2015, I found myself in Dzamling Gar at the time of the Vajra Dance supervision and exam. Adriana approached me and asked if I would like to participate. I confidently answered "no", but then felt all day that it was the wrong answer.

Zhenya Rud, who has now, unfortunately, passed away, helped me in this matter. That day, when I said "no" in the morning, I invit-



agree. That was the story – nothing particularly romantic, just a lucky coincidence.

The Mirror: How did you start teaching courses?

Anna: All local instructors, unlike international teachers, are tied to one place. Therefore, as a person who is assigned to two places – to Sangyeling, the Dzogchen Community of St. Petersburg, Russia, and to Dzamling Gar, the Gar on Tenerife island, – I have conducted my courses mainly in these two places. In Russia, I have often done joint courses at Kunsangar with instructors from Moscow.

Since I have traveled quite a lot and continue to travel, I periodically give courses in the places I go to. For example, I was at a retreat in China and was asked to teach a course on Vajra Dance, and Vicky, a Yantra Yoga instructor from the USA, gave a short general retreat on Yantra Yoga. It was an interesting experience.



Anna at the authorization of Vajra Dance instructors with Rinpoche in Dzamling Gar in 2015.

ed friends to dinner, including Zhenya. At that time, I was settling into my home. I had bought a dining table, and in order to have lunch, it had to be assembled. Zhenya Rud had absolutely amazing energy and assembled this table in an hour, and during that hour he told me how important it is to become an instructor, what problems he had when he taught without having become an instructor, and that when you are offered something like this, you cannot refuse. I already had an uncomfortable feeling caused by the refusal and understood that I had to

When you conduct retreats in different countries, you are faced with completely different cultures and you need to use different methods of explanation. For example, the Chinese are very methodical, they asked a lot of theoretical questions that had to be answered very clearly, accurately and quickly. But, for example, at my last retreats in Venezuela, at Tashigar North and in Merida, I used a completely different approach. People there tend to connect to the dance not through mind, but

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through heart, through feeling, through sensation. So there were much fewer theoretical questions there. We just practiced more and entered into this dimension on a different level.

In addition, I was lucky enough to teach a course at Wangdeling, Slovakia - a beautiful quiet place, with picturesque landscapes and hills, when there was a retreat with Rinpoche and the inauguration of their new gōnpa. Recently I also taught a course in Kathmandu, Nepal. This also coincided with my personal program.

My friend Lorraine Gaultier, a Vajra Dance instructor, suggested teaching a course there, and said that she would bring a mandala, because there were no manda-



Vajra Dance course in Kathmandu, Nepal, in April 2024.



Dancing in Tashigar North, Venezuela, in February 2024.

las in Kathmandu. We decided to try and started looking for a place to do it and a person to organize it. Ultimately, a wonderful variant self-manifested - to conduct this course at Tsoknyi Rinpoche's nunnery, which kindly gave us such an opportunity.

Initially, representatives of the nunnery wanted this course to be only for the nuns, because they did not have any precedent for a course with people from outside. At that moment there was a group of people from the Dzogchen Community in Kathmandu

who were making a pilgrimage to Maratika. Many of them wanted to take part in this course, and we asked permission to have a mixed course. We were kindly allowed to do this, which ultimately led to a very interesting effect, when beautiful young nuns, who had been in the nunnery since the age of 9, danced on the mandala with members of the Dzogchen Community, some of whom had some experience of the dance, and others not. The way the nuns listened and trained was different

from the way the other half, mostly Europeans, learnt the dance. In their method there were no noticeable complex concepts, reasoning, doubts. They simply repeated the movements in order to memorize them.

Many of the participants still write to me, asking for the music, for example, for the Dance of 12 A, and I feel that everything is not in vain. A course itself is very good, but you cannot learn everything in a single course. In one course you can only enter this mandala, and then you need to practice.

To practice Vajra Dance, you need a mandala. Many people live where there is no mandala, so it is very important to have in your tools of the trade the Dance of 12 A, which does not require any additional conditions, which can be danced anywhere, anytime, even to any music. We dance it to the music of the six spaces, but this is completely optional.

The course in Kathmandu was an amazing experience. Firstly, simply bringing the Vajra Dance to Nepal, where Buddhism is the basis of life, connecting traditional practice with the teachings that Rinpoche received in his dreams, and realizing that it is all connected - this mission itself was very important to us. On the course there were nuns who apply traditional practices and at the same time they danced. So this openness, this non-sectarianism in relation to this method, which also works with the body and is not common in other traditions, was very important. We exist at the level of body, speech and mind, performing sitting practices is working with the mind, while Vajra Dance is, first of all, working with energy and with the body, too. In this

way, all three aspects of our existence can be harmonized.

Mirror: What do you think is needed for the Vajra Dance to develop and continue?

Anna: This is a rather complicated question; I am against any missionary work. I believe that if anyone has a connection with this dance, it manifests despite the obstacles. Regular training is absolutely necessary. Coming on a retreat, doing a course, and leaving is great, but there must remain a person or group of people who will organize the classes. Therefore, we need enthusiasts, course organizers, and certain advertising. In the past, people would bring piles of gold to ask for valuable teachings. The Vajra Dance is a valuable teaching and people should come themselves. Unfortunately, many people now have a consumer attitude and the emphasis is shifting from the importance of the product to the importance of consumption itself. Making some kind of commercial project out of the Vajra Dance is a thankless task, but if you want to organize a course, it makes sense to ensure that the practice is then continued, so that it is regular, because the method works when you use it regularly, you definitely can't learn the Vajra Dance in one go.

The Mirror: Any plans for the future?

Anna: It's quite difficult to make plans nowadays. Tanya Gerasimova and I are now planning to conduct a joint course in St. Petersburg. It's always interesting to do something together because new aspects manifest. I really love working with other instructors because we can complement each other, support each other, and correct each other's mistakes. Such teamwork is always inspiring.

I'm also planning to travel next year. This year I have enjoyed South America very much. I'm thinking of going to Baja California in Mexico, I've never been there, and to Tashigar South, where I met Rinpoche in 2008. I have absolutely fantastic memories of this place. On the other hand, when you come to Tibet, Nepal or, as now, we are in India, in Bir, these places are very inspiring – I have been to Asura Cave, Maratika Cave, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow I will visit Tso Pema. All this helps to replenish energy and connect with the original source, so that later there will be an opportunity to carry it further and share it with others.

The Mirror: Thank you and good luck! ©

Dragons In The Sky

Ilaria Faccioli

La Palma, 1st June 2024

There are always Dragons
in the sky.
Sometimes we are lucky enough
and we see them.
Sometimes we are not
and yet they are there.

Words don't come easily
"Thank you" though,
I might say
as you surprise me
with that astonishing
red gathering at the edge,
where the end of the sky
meets the end of the day.

What else shall I say?
When the world offers itself
in such victorious shapes

What else shall I say?
When our impalpable Love
does all the rest.

"Imagination" they say
as if it means nothing,
or certainly less.

"Imagination" we say
as if we hold the secret key
to the Sesame's magic cave.

"Thank you" I say!
and in this whole Beauty
may I finally rest.

All the Systems of Which We Are a Part

Can meditation also have a social effect?

Sicilia Francesca D'Arista

When I graduated in Psychology, the thesis I presented was based on sociological, experimental research on the condition of young people in an earthquake camp in Naples. It was a "systemic" reading of that environment, which earned me some interest from my professor and the graduate committee.

Having moved to Amiata, I devoted myself to Clubs for Alcoholics in Treatment and to the psychoeducational approach to communication in families of schizophrenic patients, rediscovering that "systemic" approach, that is, based on the General Systems Theory.

Synthesizing to the fullest, the General Systems Theory states that each being can be considered as a subsystem of a greater system – his family, his work environment, his community, the world and the universe – and a higher level system of the parts of which he is composed, for example of his circulatory, respiratory, down to the molecular and psychic level. The GTS thus says that we are interconnected at the macroscopic and microscopic levels.

To my delight, I found the same perspective when I approached the MBSR program of mindfulness for stress reduction. Here, too, the group of participants creates a self-help group, and below I will explain what I saw.

I started applying this program in 2008, after attending a training course with Prof. Jon Kabat Zinn and his colleague Saki Santorelli, collaborating with the University of Siena on a trial offering an MBSR course to a group of psychology students who were asked to undergo an MRI scan of their brains before and after the training. The results were interesting in line with what is known about this program, in terms of reducing emotional distress, as measured on tests of anxiety, depression and more.

But what interested me most was an analysis of the change in brain function in people who had undergone the research. According to this different analysis in the brains of each of the participants new



Sicilia, in the blue sweater, at the end of the last group retreat that she held.

functional connections had been created, the same for everyone. In a nutshell, the individuals had changed their size in the same way after participating together in only 9 meditation meetings. It was therefore possible to read the group as a "system" and analyze how the individual affected the group and vice versa.

Also at the same time, the Province of Siena asked me to design a training course for foreign caregivers of dependent elderly people. Generally these courses were not very effective mainly because of the language barrier, but also because these workers are engaged 24 hours a day 6 days a week and do not have the strength and desire to engage in study.

In the premise of this project I then framed the problem as arising from a condition of work-related stress and proposed to offer not only the specific and technical training on elderly care, but also to touch on the condition of stress and in some cases real burnout of the caregivers by offering ways to cope with it. We then integrated the classes with some psychological support sessions, music therapy and other types of help, and moments of recreation and socialization.

The classes were designed as if they were "clubs" that we called Circles of Care, with the teachers, the caregivers and one or two educators present.

At that time I had become interested in the work of Dr. MacBee who had introduced a mindfulness (MBSR) program in an elderly nursing home where she had seen the usefulness to the non-self-sufficient and often bedridden residents of having some of the family members or caregivers practice near them, near their beds. The elderly were calmer and more serene.

Building on this experience and framing the circles "systemically," I gave the caregivers the task of creating a welcoming atmosphere that could convey some self-awareness, necessary to deal with the stress that the caregivers were experiencing – far from home, with constant worries about their family members left to their own devices, now foreigners here and in their home country, struggling with a strenuous job. The suffering was clear and tangible, and it also spilled over into the quality of care.

So I proposed the MBSR course, but not to the caregivers – primarily because of the language barrier – but to the educators. What was the assumption? That the educators who coordinated the Circles of Care (6 in the province of Siena) would approach the meetings from their own calm state of mind, in a nonjudgmental mode and taking into account the carers' suffering, suffering that was neutrally defined as stress.

The underlying theme, for the training to be of higher quality, was to address the transition from learning mere technical notions to the emergence of knowledge and the development of self-awareness.

In fact, in the introductory and final documents I quoted two great teachers, St. Francis, the most beloved of Italians – to overcome the initial hesitancy that the world I was addressing would have at hearing about meditation – with a phrase from the saint that said, "No one could teach me what I should do" and our teacher "The principle on which behavior is based is awareness, and awareness arises from the knowledge that the individual possesses. Only if we have the presence of mindfulness in daily life can the principle of compassion and universal love become concrete."

The caregivers who initially came to the Circles were frightened of possible judgment on their work and very strongly rejected the suggestion that they were being stressed. It seemed to them that being stressed was a weakness. They would get very angry. Then as they attended the circles and encountered the attitude of the educators, they relaxed and the following year new caregivers enrolled in the program asking specifically about that place where they could learn about stress, where they could relax. A tentative awareness about their condition was born. They also began to become aware of the gaps they had; some decided to start studying.

The Province of Siena was invited to Brussels and the Circles project was presented at the European Social Platform meeting, that year dedicated to care work where it was received with much interest.

Around the same time I was invited by the Chief of Oncology of the Health Authority of Siena to give a course for operators, doctors and nurses and also by the chief of Ser.T, the drug addiction service. Later in collaboration with the head of Ser.T we held a course with drug users at the San Gimignano prison. The results were very interesting for me because we could see the transition from the inmates' complete unawareness of the crime they had committed (these were people in high-security prison for mafia crimes) to the first glow of recognition of their responsibility.

In 2018 the Department dealing with staff wellness at the Local Health Authority of Siena, Grosseto, and Arezzo asked me for an MBSR course but Covid stopped everything and when scheduling resumed in 2021 the number of nurses, doctors, and health care personnel of all kinds requiring a stress reduction program exploded so that from 2021 to 2024 I taught 12 MBSR courses.

The courses went well, but during the course the problem emerged that once they were over the participants would need additional support to continue in practice. So with the management of the health authority we explored the possibility of having premises where we could continue the training by creating a kind of community of practice. The answer finally came and we structured Circles that we called Posillipo. Why Posillipo?

"Because Pausilypon, the name the ancient Greeks gave to the Neapolitan promontory, means 'pause from pains' to indicate the relief they felt before so much beauty.

A state of wonder where judgment is suspended to give place to pleasure.

Similarly, it is possible to establish a pause in everyday life where one can find that relief and knowledge that comes from a calm, nonjudgmental mind, as we have explored in the MBSR courses."

Posillipo Circles, currently 7, one also on Amiata, are spaces where people gather a minimum of a couple of times a month and practice together one of the methods learned, a body scan or sitting meditation or yoga session. Following this they engage in an Insight Dialogue session, a way of dialoguing about whatever is on the person's mind at that moment, without initiating a debate, but only in awareness of one's own reaction to what is being said and heard.

The possible development of the Circles I have in mind now is to deepen one aspect of the MBSR program – that of meditation on loving kindness – to understand the difference between what one feels with *ordinary empathy*, which over time can become unsustainable and lead to burn out, and so-called *sustainable empathy or compassion*.

"The ability to share the feelings of others is called empathy. Empathy makes it possible to resonate with the positive and negative feelings of others: thus, we can feel happy when we indirectly share the joy of others, and we can share the experience of suffering when we empathize with someone who is suffering. It is important to emphasize that in empathy we feel together, but we are not confused with the other; that is, we still know that the emotion with which we resonate is the emotion of another. If this self/other distinction is not present, we speak of emotional distress.

Although shared happiness is certainly a very pleasant state, the sharing of distress can sometimes be difficult, especially when the self/other distinction becomes blurred. This form of shared distress can be particularly challenging for people working in the helping professions, such as doctors, therapists, and nurses.

To avoid excessive sharing of suffering that can turn into distress, one can respond to the suffering of others with compassion. Unlike empathy, compassion does not mean sharing the other's suffering: rather, it is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other's well-being."

"Compassion can be very helpful, especially if we understand that it is not always necessary to do or fix something. In my small group, I shared a quote from Pema Chödrön.

I had the opportunity to talk with her about burnout and asked her, "What can we do? How do we keep this heart open to compassion?"

And she said, "It will seem counter-intuitive, but we have to give up all hope of realization."

And she didn't mean give up, or stop worrying, but stop having expectations about how it will go.

Everyone wants to know that what they are doing is useful, but actually if they focused more on cultivating their intention, cultivating an attitude of compassion, they would always operate from a sustainable space.

It also needs to be said that we often immediately run to help the other person, which is nice, which is important, but sometimes we may need to make a stop along the way to recognize that it is difficult for us to absorb the distress and suffering of others."

Daniel Batson in his research has shown that the ability to feel positive emotions for another person is not only a specific quality of a person or situation, but can also be influenced by training.

Studies of human brain plasticity, conducted via MRI on people trained in ordinary empathy and others trained in compassion, indicate the existence of two non-overlapping neural networks thus showing the existence of two different circuits. With different outcomes in relation to what the subjects studied feel toward the suffering of others.

To train socially useful emotions such as compassion, recent psychological research has made increasing use of meditation-related techniques that promote feelings of benevolence and kindness. The most widely used technique is called "loving-kindness training"...a practice that aims to cultivate feelings of benevolence toward all beings."

It has been shown that several weeks of regular compassion training can have a beneficial impact on the practitioner of strengthening his or her positive emotions, personal resources and sense of well-being during daily life.

Interestingly, the beneficial effects of compassion training are not limited to the person being trained, but can also benefit the person receiving the feelings of benevolence."

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Cristian Cabral

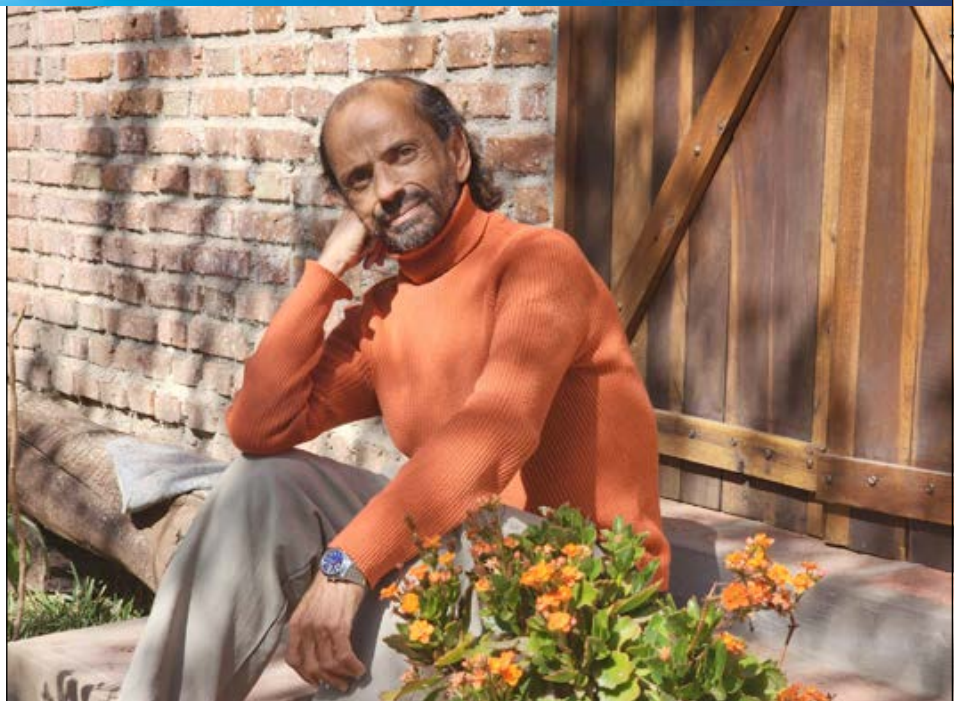
On Saturday, April 20, 2024, Cristian Cabral died.

There is no one in Tashigar South in Argentina who is not deeply moved, perhaps because, for many years, Cristian shared his life with us and his demeanor always impregnated us with a patina of joy and kindness. He awakened our gentleness.

Cristian was not old, but he had in his eyes the sparkle of one who has understood that in his life, harsh and hard, there was a meaning... and an opportunity.

He did not want to waste it.

We share with you the poem he wrote some time ago, almost as if it were his own obituary, and a poem as a brief resume of the author:



My Departure

Another dream will come from among the clouds,
it will travel through the transparent years,
it will show itself executioner and decadent
as it tears from me all that I had.

My hands that protect this immense emptiness
this immense emptiness that rumbles
on the black earth of a tomb
while white time unweaves.

The light of the ancient fire that enlivens me
will fade almost imperceptibly,
the saliva will dry in my mouth
and I will hide my face in the invisible.

From the portal that lights my departure
my eyes will run through what I have been;
I will go very slowly from life
entering unknowingly into oblivion.
I will shed an infinite tear
for what I wanted to be, maddened,
the world takes away what it gives,
perhaps I can find myself in what is lost.

I will turn my compass without north
in a soft shipwreck by the height,
and the spectral shadow of my figure
will move away from me, without my caring.
I'll lose myself in the gray mist
that precedes the definite silence,
this light silence shared
by all these souls that populate me.
My heartbeats will suddenly end,
I will feel ready for the journey
and I will carry only as luggage
what in my life had some meaning.
Another dream will come, as in a prayer,
I will go after what I am without referents,
a very precise and different dream,
a dream from which there will be no return.

Cristian Cabral
from the book "Logbook of time".

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Silvia Francesca D'Arista was born in the United States, but grew up in Naples from where she moved in the 1980s to live near Merigar. She has worked with the Social Policy sector of the Province of Siena and the Local Health Authority. In 2014, with other colleagues, she founded the Siena Center for Stress Reduction.

1 Empathy and Compassion by Tania Singer and Olga M. Klimecki in *Current Biology* · September 2014 DOI: 10.1016/j.cub.2014.06.054

2 Eve Ekman

3 The studies of Batson et al. thus confirm the existence of a corollary of behaviors that goes by the name of empathic discomfort when people are trained to feel empathy and another situation when

the person is trained in compassion, as illustrated above. In Singer and Klimecki ©

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

"Everything needs to be changed because nothing changes," Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Italian writer, nobleman, and Prince of Lampedusa

Nicola Rinaudo

Jan 16, 2024 in Dzamling Gar

I was born Trapani, Sicily, which for me was not a nice place to stay, but it's a very nice place to visit. "Everything needs to be changed because nothing changes," Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. It was not a good place for me. I was 18 years old my family moved there for Florence. We moved to Florence then because my father became the top official of infrastructure in Florence. I liked Florence much more.

When I was 19 years old I started studying Jungian psychology at the University in Florence, Italy, and I was an assistant to the professor. When I was around 24 or 25 I started to work as a psychotherapist. Also I started to study western esotericism, like the Free Masons, and parapsychology when I was around 26.

There was an old woman, astrologer, a very good friend of mine and we would speak often. One day she told me there was a Tibetan master developing a new community close to Siena in Arcidosso, you should come. As I was very disappointed in western esotericism, I told her I didn't want any more Masters, I stop with the Masters.

But her invitation stayed in my mind and the first retreat in Merigar was going to start a few days before my birthday in June, [I turned 29] and I went to Merigar. When I arrived I saw a group of 20 people full of mud because it had rained the night before. They did not make a good impression. I saw one man dressed similar to North American Indians. There was one man wearing glasses so I thought, oh if he wears glasses maybe he can read a book. This man was Mario Maglietti. (ed. old student of Rinpoche who passed away on February 02, 1999) So I asked Mario about the man who looked like a Native American, I asked if he was a student of this Master, and Mario said, "This man is the Master."

I stayed for the retreat, and there was a lot of heavy work and the teachings. There was also the practice of chöd. I did



not know the chöd so I read the small book about it. I saw that you had to put everything in the cabala and I said to myself, this is black magic so it's better I go. In 5 days I left 3 times. I would go 10 or 15 kilometers and then I thought there should be something more and I came back. So I stayed all summer until I went back to work in university in autumn. In Merigar I was safe.

This first retreat at Merigar was outside, only the Master slept inside in very simple conditions. At that time the idea of the community started to get fixed in our minds. I went back to Florence after the summer where I had a private practice, I worked in the university some times and also at a psychiatric hospital. I did this work for 7 or 8 years.

I also had a very big blessing in 1983 when there was a Tibetan Medicine conference in Venice, and Trogawa Rinpoche was staying at Merigar. I was lucky to be sick and was sleeping in the room with Rinpoche and Trogawa Rinpoche and they were treating me, giving me precious pills and medicine and massage. I could not eat for 10 days, only tea, then tea with butter and then tea with butter and salt. I also did service for them in the room, cleaning, etc. I remember there was one window in the room near where Rinpoche was sleeping and Rinpoche called me and said, "Nicola, come here" and I stood at the window and Rinpoche said, "Look how beautiful" and I had seen that view many times but this time it was very wonderful. That window is not there anymore.

In the evenings Rinpoche and Trogawa would play bagchen.

Another memory I have is when I was massaging Rinpoche at a retreat in Spain, I was reticent to massage his head, but the type of massage I was doing started at the head, but I did not want to massage his head so I started at his feet, and Rinpoche said to me, "Is the head more sacred than the feet?"

Now I am living around Dzamling Gar. In the beginning I thought it was not really a Gar as a Rinpoche envisioned, but now I see Dzamling Gar is like one deep sun, where Rinpoche put the vase under the Gönpa, that makes the whole Community warm. We can have a lot of ego problems, but everything is warmed by this deep sun and makes a community. This is the clear sensation now. This happened inside of me and does not depend on the behavior of the people.

So now I am more or less happy here, it is a strange happiness, like a small fire. Sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, but it includes everything. The idea of the Community depends on how open we are. It is important that we learn from each other. The Community is not a tree or a house, this is just an excuse to develop ourselves. In 10 years the house is still a house, but the people living in the house are evolving. ©

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