

THE MIRROR

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July 2015





Upcoming Events with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Photo: P. Fassoli

2015

USA
July 1–5, 2015
Tseg্যালgar East Retreat

Colorado
July 9, 2015
Public Talk
“Understanding the Three Vehicles:
Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen”

Naropa University
July 10–12, 2015
Colorado Retreat

Tara Mandala
July 17–19, 2015
Dzogchen Retreat

Russia
Kunsangar North
July 24–28, 2015
Kunsangar North & South Retreats
to be unified at Kunsangar North

Worldwide Transmission
July 25–26, 2015
Anniversary of Padmasambhava

Poland
July 31–August 2, 2015
Polish Retreat

Romania
Merigar East
August 5–9, 2015
Merigar East Retreat

Italy
August 13–17, 2015
Merigar West Retreat

India
August 28–30, 2015
This retreat has been cancelled

Bhutan
September 4–6, 2015
Bhutan Retreat

Singapore
September 11–13, 2015
Singapore Retreat

Malaysia
September 18–20, 2015
Malaysian Retreat

China
Samtengar
September 23–24, 2015 *new dates!*
Santi Maha Sangha Base Level
Exam

September 25–30, 2015 *new dates!*
Santi Maha Sangha First Level
Training

October 2–7, 2015 *change of dates!*
Teaching of Longsal Ati'i Gongpa
Ngotrod

Beijing
October 10–12, 2015 *new dates!*
Public Talk and
Dharma Art Exhibition

Japan
Kyoto
October 15–18, 2015
Japanese Retreat

Taiwan
October 23–27, 2015
Taiwan Retreat

Australia
November 3–8, 2015
Namgyalgar North Retreat

Worldwide Transmission
November 6, 2015
Anniversary of Adzom Drugpa

Namgyalgar South
November 13–15, 2015
This retreat has been cancelled

Argentina
November 20–24, 2015
Tashigar South Retreat

November 25, 2015
Rinpoche travels to Tenerife, Spain

Front cover: A detail from the tagdrol mandala that comes from the ‘Lama Gongdu’ (bla ma dgongs ‘dus), a cycle revealed by the great tertön Sangye Lingpa. The mandala is part of a project to decorate the interior of the first cinerary of the International Dzogchen Community at Merigar West. (page 21 ‘Liberation Through Seeing’) Photo by Roman Piro

Back cover: The tagdrol mandalas were painted with ‘traditional’ colors, mostly natural pigments mixed with powdered semi-precious stones as well as eight types of precious pills to increase potentiality. Photo by Liz Granger

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Editorial

This edition of the Mirror PDF arrives at the turning point of the year – midwinter in the south, midsummer in the north. It means we are half through the year during which we hope that all our members of the IDC, and of Gars and Lings still in process of aligning, will register their membership on dzogchen.net. This process is well underway and is surely achievable!

Also we are half way through the year when we hope that the majority of Gars and Lings would have aligned their statutes with that of the IDC. At the moment this goal feels a little further off, but there are still six months of this year in which substantial progress can be made if the will to do so is strong.

These are the two main points. At the same time, dzogchen.net is being developed as the internet focus for all our activities. Already the Mirror, Rinpoche's schedule, and the webcast service are firmly embedded in the new site. The new site for Yantra Yoga and one ready soon for Vajra Dance are also focused here and will be served by a built in event management system integrated with the Membership management system.

On the physical level, these things are very important – but they are not the main point! For example, we have so much to organise in relation to membership, what are the levels, how should the prices be set, how can we keep records, etc. But the main point about membership is not that at all, it is to do with being a student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, aligning one's life and energy in guruyoga for the purpose of realizing our true nature and condition.

Organization, book keeping, record keeping, procedures and processes, these all can appear to be sources of restriction and limitation; in fact they are a direct means to freedom, not only because smoothly running systems require far less time and energy to maintain, but also because they are an opportunity to function in a relaxed and present way!

It is very simple choice, taking one step at a time, to relax and do what is needed for each Gar and Ling to align, not being caught up in intellectual ideas of how this or that thing could be better expressed, how one's own idea can be better than to follow the common pattern, how some particular idea or concept has some real importance – when we know very well that it does not, it can only ever be provisional! What Rinpoche is asking of us is, as ever, so very simple – to do just enough to fit each legal jurisdiction, in a way which converges the disparate cultural realities of our globe within the mandala of the Dzogchen Community.

Julian King-Salter
Mirror IDC Advisor

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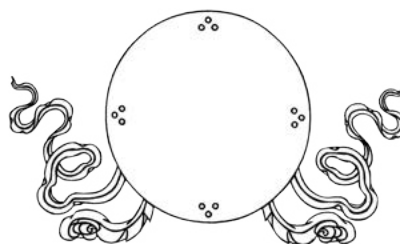




Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov

Dzogchen Is Our Real Nature

Dzogchen Longsal Essential Man-ngag “Khorva Yedal” Teaching
New York City, USA, July 4, 2014

Good day for everybody and everywhere. At this moment we are in New York City, where we have our seminar. We are starting now. I want to explain a little how we follow the teaching. For people who are interested in the teaching, I want to ask them to observe themselves a little, and ask themselves why they are interested in the teachings and why they are following. It is important. If we are following the teaching something like a fashion, then it is better to enjoy something else. There is not much benefit. When we follow a teaching there is a precise reason. You should discover that. Then when you follow a teaching, any kind of teaching, you can find something useful. Otherwise it seems only like passing time. Time is very precious, not only for making money. Time is important because we all have a very short life. Day after day, month after month, we are arriving at the end of life. Everybody knows that, so we must not lose precious time. In this case you observe yourself a little and understand why you are interested in the teaching.

Historically when you are starting to learn the Buddhist tradition, Sutra for example, Buddha first of all taught the Four Noble Truths. In the Four Noble Truths the first is the Noble Truth of Suffering.

This is the reason we are always interested in the teachings. Everybody has problems. Sometimes you are feeling, “Oh, today I am fine, there are no problems, I am enjoying”, but for how long can you go ahead that way? Because we are living in time, and time is related to circumstance, circumstance today is not circumstance tomorrow, tomorrow is not the next day. There is always change; everything is impermanent. Even if for one moment we are feeling happy, after that one moment is over, there is suffering and so many problems. If we observe ourselves, we can understand that easily.

When we follow the teachings from that discovery [of suffering ed.], then maybe we can go a little more into the essence of the teachings. We need to understand how the situation is, how our condition is. Every day we have so many things to do. We are all very busy, everybody, particularly in modern society. Even if we have learned some teaching, how to do visualization, or chanting mantras, it all seems interesting but many times everything remains a concept of the mind. So that doesn't help very much for our life. Even if you find something really interesting, this teaching, this method of practice, etc., what do you do? Maybe you write some words on a paper, what the teacher said. Why do you have to write that down to remember? Because you have the idea that one day you will do this practice. But when does this one day arrive? For most people this one day remains always a concept in the mind. I am not saying one hundred percent, everyone, is like that, but most people are. Then it doesn't help very much.

When we are receiving a teaching, any kind of teaching, we try and understand: what is this teaching for, how does it work, how it is related to me in my condition. If you observe all these things a little, then somehow that teaching becomes something useful for you and you can integrate and use that teaching in daily life. Of course when we have time and possibility, we can enjoy and apply any kind of complicated practices and teachings, but many times it remains as a mental concept and this is not good. First of all we must observe ourselves.

So when Buddha gave the Four Noble Truths, the first one Buddha gave was the Noble Truth of Suffering. The Buddha gave this first Noble Truth because suffering is universal for all sentient beings. Sentient beings with no suffering do not exist. Maybe it is a different kind of suffering, but it is always suffering. When Buddha explains suffering, no one argues with him saying, “Oh, I don't agree with you.” If Buddha is explaining something complicated like the nature of mind, of course people argue with Buddha instead of following his teaching. In this case it is difficult to communicate.

So when Buddha says, “Oh we have so many different kinds of sufferings, do you agree?” Everyone says yes. Buddha asks, “Do you like to have suffering?” Everyone says no and agrees with Buddha. Then Buddha asks, “What do you do when you suffer?” Most people say, “Oh we are arguing and struggling with this problem of suffering. We want to win.” Then Buddha explains the Second Noble Truth. It's very simple. People must understand the sense of the teaching, the essence, and not go too much after words, otherwise we can lose the sense of the teaching. So for example Buddha said, “You cannot win, even if you are struggling with that problem, suffering is an effect produced by something. You already have that



effect so it is useless to struggle with that." Buddha said, "Instead of struggling, you can learn what the cause is, and next time you are struggling with that you use your knowledge and do not commit this kind of cause." When you are not producing cause there is no effect. Then the next time we do not have this problem.

So Buddha explained that way and from that arises this famous karma. In Sanskrit, karma means action, in the real sense. We are acting, in a good or bad way, and producing fruit. This is called karma. Also most people, particularly Westerners, when they speak about karma, they say this is oriental philosophy. Maybe the word karma is oriental language, Sanskrit, that is true, but the knowledge of karma and how it is, is not oriental philosophy. Karma is for all sentient beings; we all have karma. Even in the cinema when you see a film where people are manifesting bad actions and then the fruit is something bad, this is karma.

Some people think karma means a reincarnation, something about death, rebirth, and death. This is related to karma, but karma does not mean only that. When we know that there is cause and effect, what should we do? Of course, then there is the Third Noble Truth of Cessation. Cessation means we are stopping. Because we know that this is the cause of something negative, if we apply and follow this, then next time there is negative fruit. This is what you should understand when you are learning the Four Noble Truths. This is the simple way, the essence. Of course if you go the philosophical way with many nice and complicated words, then it will become complicated. You wouldn't understand. You should go into the essence, otherwise it is useless.

When Buddha explained the Third Noble Truth, then the Fourth Noble Truth arose. Why? Because the Fourth is the Noble Truth of the Path - there exist different kinds of situations and different kinds of sentient beings who have more and less capacity and different conditions. The teaching must correspond to the person, how their real nature and condition are. One universal teaching does not exist. We should learn a little, for example, when we have an illness, illness is very similar to suffering. We notice we have an illness and we don't know how to cure it. Then we go to an expert doctor and when we go to the doctor the doctor asks, "What did you do yesterday, what did you eat, which kind of attitude did you have?" to discover your condition. Then the doctor does a physical and energetic examination for everything for that person. At the end that doctor discovers, "Oh, you have this kind of illness now you need this kind of medicine, this kind of diet, and this kind of attitude." Then the doctor gives that advice and also medicine. We know very well that universal medicine does not exist. Any kind of illness we have there are infinite kinds of medicine. In the same way, the teaching is like this; there are different kinds of paths and you know very well like in the Buddhist tradition we have Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen, different teachings and methods. Why do all these different teachings and methods exist? Because everyone's condition is different; inside Sutra and Tantra there are many different methods related to the condition of the sentient being.

If there are infinite teachings then why do we have only Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen? This is related to the individual. Who is following the teaching? We are following and we are human beings, not some other kind of being, with our own experience. What do

we have in common? We all have body, speech and mind, the three existences. This is our condition. Body is the physical level, it is easier to understand from this level; if we have a kind of illness related only to the physical level it is much easier to cure. If an illness is related to the energy level, that is called speech or voice, it means all kinds of energy, our condition, so this is another of our existences. Then there is mind, you know, this is the more essential aspect of our existence.

But all teachings, when we say three gates, that means body, speech and mind. Why is it called speech? There is a very precise reason. Speech means we are talking and communicating. We use a language and produce a sound and someone is hearing that sound, then they understand what that person has said. That is related to the individual condition, which is called vital energy or *prana*. Vital energy is related to all kinds of essences of the elements, the function of the elements. For example, when we do a practice of Yantra Yoga or any kind of yoga, what do these practices do? They do something on the physical level; we are dealing with breathing and then it is combined with the energy level. When we are combining the breath with the energy level, then we have the possibility to control our mind. Mind is dependent on energy, the physical level, and energy is dependent on the physical body and this is why when we do certain practices, we say that certain kinds of positions, sitting, the kind of position we take is very important. When we are sitting in a certain position it controls the circulation of *prana* and energy, vital energy, and also with that coordinates the energy of the five elements that we have. When there is no confusion or problems at the energy level, then it is easy to control mind. For that reason we are doing yoga, different kinds of yoga.

So in the real sense voice means related to breathing, also because when we are talking we need to use our breath or we couldn't talk. But when we are talking we are producing a sound, so for this reason it says voice or speech in the translation. There is an explanation in the Dzogchen teaching, it is explaining for example, when we are thinking how our real nature is, that it is emptiness and shunyata, in Sanskrit, but it has infinite potentiality, not only emptiness. Otherwise emptiness has no value. This is also explained in Sutra teachings. If shunyata, emptiness, is missing compassion, it has no value. Compassion means movement related with our mind. So this is the reason it says voice or speech, from the emptiness, how it manifests; all manifestations arise from sound. In Dzogchen it is called sound and light and rays. This is particular in the Dzogchen way, it does not exist in other explanations. That represents the primordial potentiality of the individual, which everybody has. So for knowing and discovering and being in that condition, we need the Teaching and the Teacher; the Teacher is transmitting, which means the Teacher makes us understand how to get in that condition. This is called Teaching. Teaching does not mean we are doing a kind of ceremony in a ritualistic way, but many people believe that.

You remember what Buddha said in Sutra, "I am giving you how you can get on the path for having realization, but realization depends on you." Buddha never said, "Your realization depends on me." Buddha gave teaching, which also means transmission, to

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make people understand. When we understand, then we should do our best to apply that understanding. Even if there is Buddha Shakyamuni alive in front of us, Buddha cannot do very much if we are not interested or willing to apply. Even if there is a very good and powerful doctor and you have some illness and you are in front of the doctor and he tells you to take this medicine and how you should do your diet and attitude, etc.; the doctor gives all this information but if we do not apply it, the doctor cannot do anything. In the same way, Buddha could not. So it is very important we try to understand the teaching. The teacher tries to explain; the interest of the teacher is to help people understand. Buddha did that, we are following and we do our best, in whichever way it is better to understand more clearly.

For example, in the Buddhist teaching the Four Noble Truths are very important, maybe the most important. There are many books about them; some people can understand the essence of what is communicated, but not everyone. It is not so easy. When I was studying in my college in Tibet, there was a teaching called *Prajna Paramita Alamkara*, which is something like the *Paramita of Sutra*, the most essential explanation of that teaching. The first time I studied this with my teacher it seemed not so difficult. I almost understood most of what was being explained. Then I started a second time with commentary, and then it became more difficult. I did not understand the conclusion of all the explanations. Then I studied the third time, still more difficult. I used more commentaries, etc. Then I was very surprised. Because in this book it explains the condition of the Buddha: someone totally enlightened, which kind of qualifications and capacities they have, the quantity and quality of the wisdoms, etc. Then it explains the many levels when someone is on the bodhisattva's path. It also explains their condition; there are all these explanations.

If someone is practicing Hinayana, Sutra, the Lower Vehicle, there are also *arhats*, their qualities, how they are realizing, etc. There are three arguments presented; not only history, but something to understand concretely and I could not understand this. Then one day I went to my teacher. I asked my teacher to please tell me what I should do, because when I studied the first time it seemed not so difficult, the second time more difficult, and the third time I could not find the real sense. Then my teacher gave me advice. He said, "Oh you should think a little dealing with *your* condition, not only thinking of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Then you can understand a little more." This was his advice. I understood his advice very well.

Then I returned to my room, I read that lesson he gave that day again, and I observed my condition a little. But there was nothing because all the explanations referred to Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, enlightened beings and *arhats*, their qualifications. I had nothing like this. It didn't help me, but I couldn't say anything to my teacher. And it went on that way.

After I finished my college, three colleges in five years, I went to China. I spent almost two years there and then later I returned to Tibet and met my teacher Changchub Dorje, a Dzogchen Master. I met him because when I was in Chengdu, China, teaching at the university, I had a dream of this teacher; the place and the teacher

and he gave me a kind of blessing. After that I always thought that this teacher was something very special. I must discover this him. In the dream my father was also with me. Then I wrote a letter to my father saying that I had this dream and there was this teacher who looks like this, in a country that looks like that; I explained everything and asked my father to try and find this teacher. And then still for almost one more year I went around in China and when I came back to my home. I asked my father if he had found this teacher and he said he had not found anyone.

Then after, for two or three weeks, I lived in my family home. One day a man came and was talking with my father saying he was working for a noble family and the daughter of this family had a very heavy illness and they were going to many Chinese doctors and Tibetan doctors, but in the end they were not successful for curing her. Then they heard of this good doctor but he was not near, quite far, and it would take one day and half by horse; there was no road or cars. So they went to this doctor and when they arrived the doctor said it was not necessary for them to return home with the medicine, that they were very tired after their journey, so they should rest, and he gave them a place for sleeping and said, "Tomorrow I will give some important things for dead people." He said, "You bring this and you go back." The father of the sick girl said, "No I must go back." Changchub Dorje said, "No your daughter is already dead. She died three hours after you left. You won't find her anymore." He did not give them any medicine, instead he gave *ngondrol* and *tagdrol* for dead people. When the father returned he discovered his daughter had died. So this man told this story to my father. I was listening and I asked the father, what does this place look like, and he said, "Oh this place is something like this, there are many stupas, and there is a big rock in front", he explained very precisely. Then I asked, "What does this doctor look like?" and he explained very precisely and then I said to my father, "This is the teacher I was asking you to find, now we go there."

So we immediately prepared to go. I told my father it was very important also for him because my father was also in my dream. For that reason I was very interested in my teacher. When I arrived at the place of Changchub Dorje I did not have much of an attitude to be with a teacher like Changchub Dorje. Before I had gone to many important teachers, but all my other teachers, at least in their dress, etc, were very precise like a 'teacher'. Also these teachers would give many teachings every day, and if I wanted to receive a specific teaching I could ask and the teacher would give that teaching. Changchub Dorje was only working like a physician officially, he gave medicine and advice, and some people were coming and asking for divinations. Like this; so he was not giving particular teaching.

Then he asked me what I did and what I studied and I said oh I studied at this or that in college, etc, and that also I had studied the four tantras of Tibetan Medicine twice. One was an ordinary tradition and one was Jamgon Kongtrul's lineage etc., from a very important teacher called Kongkar Rinpoche. Then Changchub Dorje said, "Yes this is very good, now you should do service here." So every day I only did service for medicine and there were two or three other good doctors. Also this was very useful for me because I had studied only books and theory, but not in a practical way. But now



I was doing in a practical way and in that way I passed more than one month. But Changchub Dorje was not giving teachings. I went there because I needed to receive a teaching. Then I thought, "Now I need to receive an initiation", because in Vajrayana initiation is very important, so I thought I should ask Changchub Dorje for an initiation. Then one day I went to him and said, "I came here not only for doing service of the medicine, but also for receiving teaching, so please give me an initiation, even if you cannot give all teachings and instructions in the initiation." He said, "You don't need an initiation." I was surprised and I wondered why he thought I did not need an initiation. I thought it was because I had received many initiations like Sakyapa, Nyingmapa, Kagyupa traditions, in my life. We met many different teachers giving many different kinds of teachings. I thought maybe he thought for that reason I did not need an initiation. But then I asked why I didn't need an initiation for making things clear. Changchub Dorje said he had given me an initiation already. I asked when did you give me an initiation? And he said that when I arrived, that day, here, he gave me an initiation. He said he had given me the initiation in his dream. He said, "You were here asking for an initiation and I had a crystal rock in my hand just like this I touched your three places, empowering with mantras the three vajras of body, speech and mind. I empowered you and you already received the initiation. You don't need."

Of course I was not satisfied with that and I said, "Well that is your dream, not mine, and so I really want an initiation from you." So I said, "Please I really need an initiation", and at the end he said ok. He said, "Ok, after a few days in the lunar calendar will be the day of Guru Padmasambhava, the 6th month, and this is most important. On that day I will give you and initiation. Now you should prepare." So he told me to ask one of his students who wrote down all his *terma* teachings, to help me prepare. I did not know which kind of initiation he would give me, he did not say, but then I went to this student and told him Changchub Dorje had told me he should help me prepare for an initiation so he said he would go to the Teacher and find out what sort of initiation we should prepare for. And then he told me he would give the initiation of his *terma* teaching of *shitro*. *Shitro* means wrathful and peaceful manifestations just like the Tibetan Book of the Dead in the West; that teaching is very diffused in the West and is coming from the *shitro*.

Then I was very happy and the day of Guru Padmasambhava arrived, and then at almost 10 o'clock in the morning, Changchub Dorje started to give the initiation until the evening when it was almost dark. It was a very simple initiation and if you do it in a normal way you can do it in almost two hours, at the longest. But Changchub Dorje did something very complicated and he was not doing something with writing and reading, everything spontaneously came because it was a *terma* teaching. So then we received all the initiations and after we did a very quick Ganapuja together with his students. He was present. So when the Ganapuja was finished I thought that now I will go home because I received the initiation. So I got up and said, "Now I am going home." When I was getting up he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I am going home now, it is dark and evening." I said, "I am very happy today that you gave me an initiation but now I should go home." He said, "No, sit down! We didn't do anything", he said. I was very surprised.

I thought, "We didn't do anything?" He had spent the entire day giving an initiation. Also he couldn't read everything precisely and he had asked his student, the one who is writing down his *terma* teachings, to help him read sometimes. So for that reason the initiation took a long time.

Then he said to a young monk who was doing service for him, "Now you don't need to stay, you can go home, and close the door." Then the monk closed the door and went away. Only my father and I were inside. Then my teacher started to talk, explaining the principle of Dzogchen, which is the base, path and fruit, tawa, gonpa, chodpa, also the point of view, application and the fruit, how we consider that in the Dzogchen teachings; he spoke of everything in a very normal way, in normal language. He spoke for a long time. After a while he explained how we should do this in the Dzogchen teachings, through direct introduction, which is very important, and means introducing our real nature. "We introduce our real nature with experiences, not with explanations", he said. Then we after we listened to all, at the end of the explanation, Changchub Dorje introduced our real nature through experience and we did that together. This is transmission.

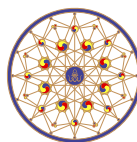
I had received Dzogchen teachings many times from my other teachers. For example, from my uncle Togden Urgyen Tenzin who manifested the rainbow body during the Cultural Revolution. I received all the Longchen Nyinthig series of the teaching from him, for example. Also other teachers; I received many Dzogchen teachings. But there is also a kind of introduction that is done in a little more ritualistic way. So in my mind I thought Changchub Dorje was giving this teaching I received, and I was satisfied, but we were not really applying something with my teacher. So my teacher went in a very precise way with our experience and when he introduced, then I finally understood what Dzogchen Teaching means and what Dzogchen really is. Before I did not have this knowledge.

That became like a key for me. After many years when I arrived in Italy, I worked with Professor Tucci because he invited me. He was doing a lot of research and for his research I should read and search many books in his library. One day when I was checking all his books, there was this Prajna Paramita Alamkara, the text I had studied in college three times. I thought now I should read this again. I brought this book to my home for a few days and I read it. Finally I understood what this teacher from college said, "You should deal with *your* condition." Now I understood what he meant, it is not difficult at all because in the Dzogchen teachings we should discover how our real nature is, how our potentiality is.

And when we are saying dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya, the three dimensions of the enlightened being, everything is not only the qualification of the Buddha, for example. But this is also on the path when we are doing practice; in our base, how our real nature is, in our real nature, in our three dimensions. In the practice there are also the three dimensions, etc. So then I understood and it became very easy in that moment. This is how we go into the essence of the teaching, when we have this knowledge.

I am explaining this story because it is very important in any kind of teaching that we learn to go into the essence. In the teach-

» continued on the following page



Membership and IDC Portal

International Dzogchen Community

Over the last 6 months, Dzamling Gar has increasingly fulfilled its role of being a place where students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from all over the world gather together in a relaxed way to receive teaching, to sing and dance and swim and simply be together. A fundamental symbol of what it means, International Dzogchen Community!

Membership registration

Another very important symbol of a global Dzogchen Community is to have a single list of members, which confirms membership of a Ling, a Gar, and of the International Dzogchen Community.

Now we have a functioning database (the MMS, membership management system) which can do exactly that – as long as we all go online, register and upload our personal details. Each person's membership records should already have been uploaded by Membership Coordinators for each Gar, and your own membership history will be visible to you as soon as you register.

Many people are already registered and can access closed webcasts and webcast replays using their dzogchen.net username and password. By the end of this year, everyone will need to have registered – old webcast usernames and passwords will no longer work from Jan 1st 2016.

If you know someone who is not internet savvy, please let them know that their local membership coordinator can complete their registration on their behalf.

Rinpoche is asking us to make the International Dzogchen Community into something more concrete – in a relaxed way, but as soon as possible, let's all go online to dzogchen.net to register and make it so!

Dzogchen Community Portal

dzogchen.net was recently launched, to become the main portal not only for the membership database, but also for all the information, activities and services of the International Dzogchen Community, its affiliated Gars and Lings and all its affiliated organisations – something like a facebook for everything we do.

As a public interface, it will make us more visible in google searches, and so make it easier for people who have that connection to find their way to the teachings and to all the variety of activities of the Dzogchen Community.

For members, it has https/ secure log in for membership registration and services. Local Membership Coordinators can see detailed data only of their own managed members, but basic data of all members can be accessed by authorised operators and Gakyils to check membership status for courses, retreats etc.

The main features of the secure site are as follows:

- Registration/Sign in
- Enter and update personal data



- Make payments for membership (including scheduled monthly payments) and for courses by paypal or debit/credit card.
- Offline payments can be recorded online by Gars membership coordinators
- Access simple written tutorials
- Admin and report functions for membership coordinators and Gakyils
- Ability to update Gakyil members and membership coordinator names and contact details

It is intended that the whole site will have built in multi language content management system.

Gar/Ling location coordinates can be entered into Gar/Ling infos and the location will be recorded on the Community Map. The associated info page can be used by the Gars and Lings for events, announcements and local information.

The site design is by Paolo Fassoli and it is built using cutting edge open source technology:

- AngularJS from Google
- C# from Microsoft
- Material design and Bootstrap
- Mobile apps (search for Dzogchen in Google Play).
- Online code collaboration

The site will have a global event registration and management system. A built in global and local news and blog management system and provision of online shops are also under consideration.

In the meantime, the main point for now is that we all register on the MMS!

The International Gakyil



» *Teaching continued from previous page*

ing there are many things related to many aspects of our condition. When we are going after all this, we may not find the essence of the teaching. So you see in general I am teaching Dzogchen, not because I am Nyingmapa, the school of the old tradition. That is not the reason, that I am Nyingmapa and I am teaching Dzogchen teachings. The Dzogchen teachings do not belong to anyone, they are inside us. Dzogchen teaching is for discovering our real nature. So Dzogchen is our real nature. That we should discover. So *this* is the teaching of Dzogchen. ❁

The Drathalgyur, All-Penetrating Sound Tantra

In his Treasure of the Supreme Vehicle, Longchenpa says that in Saha, our billion-fold universe, there appeared twelve primordial teachers at different times and in different dimensions. These twelve primordial teachers are considered nirmanakaya forms of Vajradhara who manifested the nature of the five perfect conditions twelve times.

The first time, the teacher Child of Supreme Unconceivable Vision appeared in a realm called Joyful Pagoda, surrounded by one thousand luminous Buddhas and two Bodhisattvas as a symbol that one thousand Buddhas and two Bodhisattvas would uplift this eon spiritually. It was this teacher who taught the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra, the root of all teachings, at the time when the lifespan of sentient beings was incalculable.

The All-Penetrating Sound Tantra is considered to be the source of all the 17 Tantras representing the teachings of the Upadesha series of Dzogchen. It is believed that Garab Dorje, born 166 years after the passing of the Buddha, re-transmitted all the Dzogchen Tantras, including the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra.

After Garab Dorje we know that all the Dzogchen tantras were handed down to Manjusrimitra and through a series of teachers they arrived in Tibet. The other day Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explained the particular lineage from which he received transmission of the Drathalgyur.

Although it is called the Drathalgyur, the name is not very easy to translate. 'Dra' means sound. Generally speaking 'thalgyur' means consequence. In fact some scholars who did studies on this tantra literally translated the title as the Consequence of Sound Tantra and, of course, we find other translations such as the Reverberating Sound Tantra. But for the time being we call it the All-Penetrating Sound



Elio Guarisco.



Adriano Clemente.



Jim Valby.

Tantra. The reason we call it like that will eventually be explained when we are doing the translation, but basically speaking I think that it means that the whole spiritual teaching is the manifestation of the natural sound of reality. That is what the name seems to indicate because it also says that the Drathalgyur is the source of all teaching. So maybe we can generally understand the sound of reality as being the origin of all teaching.

The All-Penetrating Sound Tantra has 6 chapters and a total of 200 Tibetan folios. In the first chapter, which is the longest, various secret instructions that affect the liberation of the individual are presented. In the second chapter the essential points of these secret instructions are stated. The third chapter explains the direct manifestation of wisdom. The fourth chapter presents the true nature of reality. In the fifth chapter the view and meditation are taught. In the sixth chapter the final goal of the three or four kayas is taught. In the Drathalgyur, we also find various topics presented ranging from astrology, to tantric practices, and to the theory and application of Dzogchen.

The Drathalgyur is quite difficult and short or terse considering the amount of material it covers and we will do our best to translate it although I don't know how much the translation of the root tantra will be intelligible. The difficulty of this text may be the reason why there have been so few studies of it. Therefore, we will be relying on the commentary to unfold the meaning of the root tantra.

Fortunately we have a commentary to the meaning of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra, called Illuminating Lamp Rin po che snang byed sgron ma written by Vimalamitra. This commentary remained fairly unknown to the general public until it was recently found in two editions. One was in the private library of Kathog Situ, the nephew of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, at Kathog monastery in Derge. The other, a handwritten manuscript, in the library of the Fifth Dalai Lama in Drepung monastery consisting of 335 large folios of nine lines on each side. In this very extensive commentary, the above six chapters of the root text of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra are unraveled in detail.

The Translation Project

Generally the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra is rarely mentioned in Dharma studies, which shows that, perhaps due to difficulty in both its language and concepts, there is little understanding of this Tantra. The Vimalamitra commentary to the root tantra has also not been the object of specific studies.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu alone has dedicated several years of effort to editing Vimalamitra's commentary, comparing the two editions mentioned above, (his work consists of 859 computer pages). On the basis of his research on that teaching he has given several retreats during which he has taught parts or specific explanations and practices, such as Khorde Rushen, practice

» continued on the following page

Light of Kailash Volume III Book Launch

During his stay in London, UK, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu presented the third and final version, *The Later Period*, of his acclaimed work on the study of the cultural and spiritual heritage of Tibet, *Light of Kailash – A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet*. The event was held at the Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS University of London on May 22, 2015, as were the presentations of the first and second volume in past years, to an enthusiastic audience.

The third volume, "The History of the Later Period: Tibet," is concerned with an assessment of the genealogies, Bonpo lineages, royal dynasties (from the first monarch gNya'-khri bTsan-po until the forty-fifth monarch Khri-dar-ma 'U-dum-btsan), language, and civilization of Tibet.

Towards the end of his presentation, Rinpoche spoke about his worry for the



Photo by Simone Citeroni

continuation of Tibetan language and culture and his hope for the future.

"When you read the first volume of the Light of Kailash, you can understand about the history of Zhang Zhung. The second volume talks about the situation of Zhang Zhung and Tibet when there were two kingdoms. In the third volume you can understand how Tibet dominated Zhang Zhung when the last Zhang Zhung king was killed. I only did research up to the period of the last Tibetan king and didn't write anything about the history of Tibet



Photo by Raf Portas

after that because it is complicated. I wanted to know about the source, the history of the Tibetans and how Tibetan culture developed. This is very useful to study and learn and there are many things to read and understand.

During my research, I compared many texts such as, for example, the Dunhuang documents, which are very important and accepted by scholars from China, Tibet, the West, by all, then texts of the Tang dynasty. When you read the last volume [of my work] it is a little different from the way history is

» *Dra thalgyur* continued from previous page with sound and so forth that are clearly explained in that commentary.

We would like Rinpoche's years of dedicated work not to remain just in a language that only a few scholars can understand nowadays. To unearth that treasure we have set out a project of translation of both the root text of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra and its commentary written by Vimalamitra.

The Translation Project will be under the Ka-ter translation project of the Shang Shung Institute Austria. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has indicated Adriano Clemente as the coordinator of the translation. Artur Skura has been suggested as the project coordinator, and Oliver Leick as the person in charge of funds.

At the suggestion of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu the translation of the root text and the commentary will be done in two different phases: first the root text and then the commentary.

The Root Text

To make the work of translation smooth and fast we thought that the root text should be translated by only three people: Adriano Clemente, Jim Valby and Elio Guarisco.

The Vimalamitra Commentary

Once the translation of the root tantra is complete we will start the translation of the commentary. The commentary is extensive and it would be very difficult for two or three people to complete the work in a reasonable amount of time. For this reason it will involve team work with more qualified translators such as Donatella Rossi, Giacomella Orofino, Enrico Dell'Angelo, Fabian Sanders, and Tetsu Nagasawa.

The qualified translators will be assigned sections of the commentary to translate according to their individual capacities and time. Those in charge of the revision and editing of the translation at its completion are Adriano Clemente and Elio Guarisco.

Elio Guarisco

The work of translation of the Tantra has already begun!

Up to now Jim Valby has been collecting the different versions of the text printed in various locations in Tibet and the Himalayas. He is in the final phase of placing these versions side by side in Tibetan and in the Wylie transliteration system (a Romanized form) in order to compare them during the process of translation.

The actual translation will start in the coming weeks with Jim Valby producing the basic draft step by step supplemented with clarifying notes from the Commentary edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Each part of the basic draft will be revised first by Elio Guarisco, and then by Adriano Clemente.

The work on the translation of the root-text will last for approximately one year.

The extensive work of translation of the Commentary edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will begin officially once the Root Tantra has been translated.

Become part of this exceptional new initiative of the Ka-ter Translation Project, become a sponsor of the Dra Thalgyur Translation Project!

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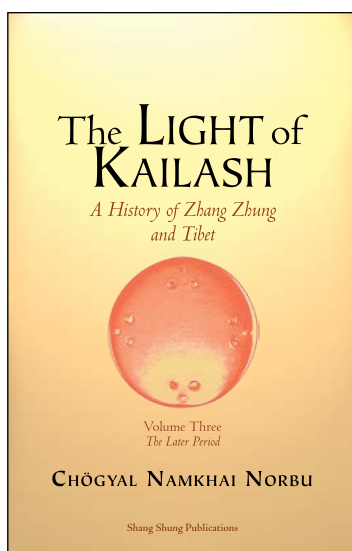


presented in the Buddhist tradition. When I did research it didn't correspond with what Buddhists have presented in the past. For example, they state that Songtsen Gampo is a manifestation of Avalokitesvara. I, too, can believe that because Songtsen Gampo's teachings and writings are really wonderful. But when we talk about history we must have something concrete, not just believing something. They say that Songtsen Gampo emanated two lights, one going to Nepal, the other to China and two princesses appeared who were emanations of White Tara and Green Tara. He married both of them when he was very young. When I did research, I discovered that Songtsen Gampo was in his fifties when he took his Chinese wife. He was not a young man. That is an example. There are many things to learn.

In any case, this is an important translation of my book if you don't read Tibetan. Prof. Donatella Rossi knows Tibetan history and culture very well and I have great confidence in her translation. For that reason it is very important for saving Tibetan culture and history. This is important particularly for today.

Now I am getting old but I still worry a lot for Tibetan people, more and more every day. Today most Tibetan young people study a little and have just a little knowledge of Tibetan culture because they are growing up in China. Particularly in central Tibet, there are only primary schools and as soon as children finish, they are immediately sent to middle schools all of which are in China. They grow up in China and most of the young generation [of Tibetans] know Chinese culture, language, and history very well. But their knowledge of Tibetan and Tibetan culture is very weak. When I was in China, I went to visit some schools where they are also trying to teach just a little Tibetan. There are a few teachers who say that they give Tibetan lessons two or three times a week. But this is not sufficient for maintaining Tibetan culture.

A few years ago when I went to China and then to Tibet when I arrived in east Tibet some students were leaving school at the end of the school day. We stopped our car along the road. I had some pens that I wanted to give to the students and when I gave them they were very happy. I asked them what they were studying, which class they were in, etc. I asked them not just in Tibetan but using the local dialect, because I know how they speak in east Tibet and they could understand me.



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But they always replied in Chinese. At the beginning I didn't say anything when we were talking, but later I said to them that I was asking in Tibetan but they were replying in Chinese and that they should understand that Tibetan language is not Chinese and Chinese language is not Tibetan. They should understand that they are two different kinds of languages. When I speak Tibetan, I told them that they should reply in Tibetan. When I explained that clearly, some of them replied, "Yes, yes", but in Chinese. I was very surprised. This is how this generation is in this moment.

Last year I started to listen to and sing Tibetan songs. Before I never listened to them because I didn't have much time. One day I was listening to a Tibetan song and they were saying that they were communicating their sorrow and happiness and everything through melody. Then I thought that this was interesting and I wanted to listen to a few more songs. I listened more

and more and found that there are many Tibetan songs in particular in which they say "We are Tibetans and we need to speak Tibetan language", because today in Tibet, the official language is Chinese. And even if you learn Tibetan, where can you use it? You cannot use it anywhere. That way we are losing Tibetan language. When I was listening to one of these songs a very nice lady was singing a lovely melody, "I am very happy to be a Tibetan but at the same time I feel very sad because I don't know how to speak Tibetan perfectly." This is the situation today.

People of the older generation like me will be gone in a little while. The new generation is growing up but do you think they speak Tibetan? No. Where is Tibetan culture? So it is very important that we know Tibetan culture and history because it has real value. If you read these books you can understand. It has great value not only for Tibetans, but for human beings. If we lose it, that is not good. Just like in Europe, for example, when we talk about the history of the Vikings, the Tibetans will become like the Vikings and all the books and everything will only be in a museum. It is very sad. There are still Tibetan people alive. We need to really save [Tibetan culture] somehow.

I am not saying that Chinese people are destroying this, are doing something bad. But that is the nature of things now. You know how many Chinese there are and how many Tibetans we have on this earth. We have this kind of situation. So this is very important also that Western people understand that. If there is something we can do, we try to do it. This is the moment. It is still not too late. This is really my hope." ©

SSI Branches

Shang Shung Institute Italy
Località Merigar, 58031 Arcidosso (GR, Italy)
Phone : +39-0564-966940
info@shangshunginstitute.org
www.shangshunginstitute.org
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Shang Shung Institute Austria
Gschmaier 139, 8265 Gr. Steinbach, Austria
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Arrival in Nepal

From Andrea Dell'Angelo's diary

Oddly there is no traffic in Katmandu. The environment seems still, immobile, and we don't hear the horns of the cars. Our colleague Ratna comes to pick us up and with our faces tired from the trip, we smile at him. He smiles back but he is not tired, he is scared.

Along the sides of the road we can see collapsed walls, in the parks and in every open space there are makeshift tents, tents from Indian, Chinese, American, Korean aid groups. Sometimes we pass in front of a crooked house, a disintegrated house, a slanting one, a bent one, but the thing that strikes us the most is the silence. The dogs don't bark, the cars don't whizz by, the monkeys don't scream.

The day after our arrival we visit the Manasarovar school that ASIA has been



Tsultrim, Bijaya (the two principals) and some elders of the Tibetan community come to meet us. We hug each other and in their eyes we read the fear, a kind of fear that remains with you for a long time, that changes you, and moves something inside you. They are all scared and with the slightest vibration their eyes open wide and they become immobilized, like waiting



supporting for many years. The structure seems to be fine, with some small cracks on the surface but nothing serious, fortunately. When we first heard the news of the earthquake we all immediately panicked and wanted to know straight away if something had happened to the many children and teachers there. A 5-storey building in Kathmandu; a 5-storey building in Boudha, one of the highest!

for the worst. Many families of the school children have lost their homes, or worse, have lost someone dear to them. The community, often made up of Tibetan refugees, once again is sleeping outside, homeless and at the mercy of the weather, the lucky ones have a tent, often too small for the whole family. There are no toilets, there is no rubbish collection, the water is already too polluted to drink. Chaos.

After several days of meetings, we decide to go Baluwa, in the district of Kavre, where ASIA has been working for many years with water and sanitation projects: water supply, water purification plants, toilets, biogas and others. Although the UN considers this area to be priority 3, we decide to go and see how our old beneficiaries are, the people with whom ASIA has worked for six years. On the road up to Dhulikhel there is nothing. Some walls have fallen, a few houses with cracks. Leaving the paved road we notice a few houses that had been destroyed ... a few, to tell the truth. Amazed at the "miracle" we continue up to the Baluwa East aqueduct. It has a few cracks, the tubes are disjointed but nothing serious and irreparable. Thank goodness!

The representative of the WSC (Water System Committee) comes to meet us with tears in his eyes and tells us that all this is a disaster. What? We don't understand, thinking that maybe he is exaggerating. He

Monk Living in Conway Recounts Experiencing Deadly Nepalese Earthquake

Richie Davis

Recorder Staff

Friday, May 22, 2015

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Nuptul Tenpei Nyima.

Conway — After spending three years as a visiting scholar at Hampshire College and then beginning his study of Tibetan medicine here, Buddhist monk Nuptul Tenpei Nyima returned to Nepal's Sangchen Rabten Norbuling Monastery, where he is an abbot, in Nepal's Himalayas.

He arrived at the monastery after 5 or 6 days of trekking in the Katmandu Valley on April 24, one day before the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that has cost thousands of lives.

"It was really a scary and frightening experience," says Nuptul, a bespectacled 30-year-old monk who wears the veneration title "Rinpoche," or "precious one" as modestly as the crimson robe, covered with a rose-colored sweatshirt, at Conway's Tseg-yalgar Dzogchen center. He returned there this month to continue studying at the Shangshung Institute of Tibetan medicine.

His monastery of about 130 monks and nuns, to which he had returned for the

nine-day Drubchen observance of continuous prayer, had begun to gather for lunch on April 25 when "suddenly I could hear the sound, 'tsi, tsi, tsi,'" recalled Nuptul, who had experienced earthquakes before in his native Nepal. "I realized it is an earthquake. I want all my friends to be calm. It was getting more violent, getting worse. I could hear so many terrible sounds, then the buildings started shaking, and it was really, really bad, so then I asked everybody to move out from the buildings. Then some people started in like a panic."

As he ran out, he says, he saw rocks falling from the surrounding steep mountains — the monastery is at an altitude of over 12,000 feet on Mount Manaslu, the world's eighth highest peak, near the Tibetan border.

"It is a very steep, rocky mountain, and everything is falling down," he said. "It's really frightening. I just remember once looking at the mountains, thinking this is prob-

ably the last day on this earth. It looks like we're all going to be buried here."

Nuptul began looking after the monastery's 40 children, as young as 6 years old, who were seeking shelter in the buildings "because the mountains are just shaking, like this. I just want everyone to be safe. I wasn't really sure whether we will escape or die in that moment, because once the mountains collapse, everyone's going to be buried. ... We're standing in the middle of a (mountainous) cup. The mountains are very close to the temple."

After rounding up the children and getting them back outdoors, under a tent, he entered the monastery's small retreat center, where 10 monks and eight nuns were in two separate groups taking part in ritual prayers for the continuous nine-day Drubchen observance.

"They are not allowed to go outside," he said. "They are not allowed to have visitors in. I ran into the monks' retreat; they were fine, they were very calm, holding their malas (beads) ... with long hair and long beards, in very, very good shape."

But when he looked in on the eight young nuns, he said, "They were like puppies, all stuck to each other, scared, crying. I told them not to worry. We are all safe. One of the nuns is telling me she is really afraid, and I told her not to worry, I guarantee it won't happen again. I just want them to be calm, but I am not sure. Everyone remained in the retreat center."

» continued on the following page

» continued from previous page

takes us to ward no. 5 of the VDC (Village Development Committee). We approach on foot and every step brings into view an apocalyptic scenario. It's an image of every type of misfortune, every war and every

natural disaster, something which, unfortunately, we are all getting used to. The distant picture gets closer and closer and begins to become real. Houses ripped apart, and rubble, rubble, rubble. Naked dirty children come out of makeshift tents. Flashes of daily life emerge from the rubble and the open shells of brick and mud houses - bags of rice, shoes, pots, radios and much more.

We walk through this world that has been destroyed, a rural post-atomic scene. Our guide points out the destroyed houses, he tells us stories, talks about the dead and the living. Often the smell of decomposing animals is unbearable, some of us cough and others start to retch. Shivers, sadness mixed with hope. Many families are already busy working to build a shelter for the monsoon season. We ask if they need food, water or medicine or anything else. We are in a circle and many villagers who joined us on the tour of the fear, talk

and try to tell us, to explain how things are, how they live, and how they will live. In reply they tell us that they need something that will help them get by until September when the rains will end and they will be able to move forward, to rebuild.

As we leave in the car all of us have our eyes on the countryside. Every so often someone says something of little importance or anyway of little importance in that moment. We are all thinking that in two days we will be going to Rasuwa. Priority 1

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Association for International Solidarity

in Asia, Inc. ASIA

Post Office Box 124, Conway, MA 01341-0124 USA
Phone: 413.369.4153, Fax: 413.369.4473
andreamnasca@yahoo.com
www.asia-ngo.org/en/

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c/o Gisela Auspurg

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The Two Masters at Merigar

9th Khamtrul Rinpoche
and Tsoknyi Rinpoche

It was Merigar West's great honor to host the Masters Khamtrul Rinpoche and Tsoknyi Rinpoche who taught Tilopa's famous Mahamudra Upadesha the 'Gangama' from April 22 to 26, 2015. On the final day, Khamtrul Rinpoche kindly gave the Tara Initiation to those present. They were accompanied by two highly accomplished yogins of the Drukpa Kagyu yogic tradition, Tokden Achoe and Tokden Tutop Nyima who led the practice sessions.

Both Masters kindly agreed to be interviewed for The Mirror and we are happy to publish both interviews in this section of the magazine.

Firstly we would like to present Khamtrul Rinpoche's opening words on the first day of the retreat and an interview he very kindly gave to The Mirror.

Gyalwa Dokhampa Shedrub Nyima, the 9th Khamtrul Rinpoche, continues the tradition of his predecessors in the Drukpa Kagyu tradition and currently maintains his seat as the head of Khampagar monastery in Tashi Jong, the monastery founded by his predecessor in Himachal Pradesh, India, where the tradition of Tokdens, or realized yogins, continues to this day. He is also the spiritual head of Dongyu Gatsal Ling nunnery, founded by Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo.

» **Earthquake** continued from previous page

Incredibly, he said, the monastery's 40-year-old wood-and-stone temple was not damaged, and no one was injured. Even the mandala inside remained intact.

There was some damage to some of the smaller buildings, like the monks' retreat center. Nuptul says he and two other monks repaired the retreat building on the first day of the earthquake.

"I was scared, but I knew they were so faithful, they wanted to continue prayer, day and night. I always put someone outside, if anything happened, to ask them to come out. I told the chanting masters, if anything begins to shake, please don't wait for it to collapse, just come out."



"Tashi delek to everyone. This is my first visit to Europe, a tour for Dharma teachings, so this is also the first time that I have come here to Merigar, the place of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. I am happy that we are able to share, on the basis of the Dharma, some Dharmic relationship, and I'm also grateful that I've been invited here. I'm very happy to be here with you.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is not only an extraordinary lama but also extraordinary in terms of his practice and realization and he has been all over the world transmitting the teachings of the Dharma and benefitting beings. Because of that I rejoice very much in his activity. Not only that but Chögyal Namkhai Norbu had a very good relationship with my predecessor, the 8th

Khamtrul Rinpoche, and he came to Tashi Jong a few times.

At the time Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was ill with leukemia, then I know that his disciples did a lot of prayers for his long life so that he could be cured from that illness. He also received treatment, but I heard that it was mainly due to his practice that he was cured.

So considering all of this, now I am here in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Dharma center I'm going to share whatever I know of the Dharma, which is not vast – I don't have a great knowledge of the Dharma – and make an aspiration that this interdependent connection that we are creating may serve for the long stable life and health of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. This is my aspiration."

Tremors continued nearly every day, he said, with everyone's confidence gradually increasing.

Yet the surrounding villages — the closest of which are normally at least six hours away by foot — were badly damaged, with more than 8,500 deaths, many injuries, and nearly 90 percent of houses destroyed.

"Most (people) are crying, 'What can we do?' There is nothing we can do. ... Just don't go into the house," he said, turning to his phone to show photos of the injured. "The people suffered a lot: the animals, the people squeezed into one tent. Some have no tent, nothing."

Then, incredibly, began a snowfall, which the monk said "was really a shocking thing for me" in May. It reminded him

of the prophecy of a dark period of degeneration he had heard when he was about 14 years old, from an old woman:

"There will be a day when everything is changing, when there will be snowfall during the summertime."

After one of his California friends, who had traveled with him to the monastery, telephoned the U.S. embassy, Naptul was airlifted out to Katmandu by helicopter on May 1, returning to Massachusetts a couple of days later on his prearranged flight, just before a second major earthquake would strike.

"It was very difficult for me to leave, but there was nothing I can do there, but better for me to go out so at least I can help them, I can spread messages, talk to people, tell them what is there," said Naptul, who has

A Good Heart and a Compassionate Mind

An Interview with Khamtrul Rinpoche at Gadeling,
April 24, 2015

The Mirror: We would like to thank you for this precious opportunity to interview you and the time that you are giving to us.

The 8th Khamtrul Rinpoche was a very accomplished artist and we understand that you are also an artist. Is it possible that this capacity for art passes from one lifetime to another and can art in itself be linked with Dharma?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: The previous Khamtrul Rinpoche was a great painter. He was also a compassionate person and had a very good heart. Then he also helped other monasteries and temples. He would just go there and give paintings and thankas to help others. So there was, I think, also a lot of benefit from his paintings. I heard that he painted many thankas in Tibet and he brought some of these precious thankas to India.

The Mirror: We have heard that you have a close artistic connection with Dugu Chögyal Rinpoche who painted the panel of the images of the Primordial Masters in the Gonpa here at Merigar.

Khamtrul Rinpoche: The previous Khamtrul Rinpoche was an artist but I have never learned about how to paint thankas so I don't have this knowledge about thanka painting. So I think from the painting side there is not much connection because I'm not a painter. However, Chögyal Rinpoche and myself have a strong connection.

The Mirror: You are spiritual head of Dongyu Gatsal Ling nunnery near Tashi Jong, founded by Ani Tenzin Palmo, who is



very well-known in the West. How did this idea come into being?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: The previous Khamtrul Rinpoche asked Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo to build a Drukpa Kagyu nunnery so that is why she built it. I also very much appreciate her building the nunnery; she really takes care of the nuns because they had some difficulties to get education and the opportunity to practice. So I think this is very good for these young nuns from the Himalayan area.

The Mirror: Do you consider it important to learn Tibetan in order to really understand teachings because although there are many translations, it is not always easy to express the real meaning in another language?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: I think that it is not so necessary to learn Tibetan because these days there are many teachings that have been translated into English and other languages. It is quite difficult for everybody if they have to learn Tibetan even though a few people may be able to understand Tibetan easily. So if the meaning of the translations is the same, it is not so necessary.

The Mirror: Our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is trying very much to preserve Tibetan culture and for the last couple of years he has been promoting Tibetan traditional and popular dances, which we are learning, in addition to Vajra Dances. At Tashi Jong you have a very interesting tradition of Garcham or Lama dances. Do you participate in the Lama dances and what is the importance of them?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: I also think it is important to keep Tibetan culture, not only Tibet but any country, it is very important to keep its own culture, language, dancing or whatever.

So about Lama dances, this is not just ordinary dancing or singing but it is more related to tantric practice. The previous Khamtrul Rinpoche was very expert in this Vajra dancing and I have also learned all these Vajra dances. So at our monastery we keep these sacred dances, we keep this tradition.

Actually in tantric practice there are many different types of practices and these Vajra dances are more related to deity yoga practice and ritual, but it is not necessary for everyone to do them.

The Mirror: Does the public benefit from watching the Lama dances and in what way?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: Actually there are instructions by the previous Khamtrul Rinpoche about the benefit of Lama dancing that say that whoever sees it will have their obstacles removed and will receive a blessing and the seed of liberation. It says this in the previous Khamtrul Rinpoche's introduction and this explanation is related with some great Vajrayana text.

The Mirror: People in the West sometimes have the idea that in order to practice Dharma they should become monks and nuns, or renounce everything. This is not very easy to do. Do you have any advice for lay practitioners in the West?

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» *Earthquake* continued from previous page
not heard from his sister or father in their small village of Lho since his return because their phone service was knocked out in an aftershock. "I knew winter is coming soon and the biggest challenge will be shelter."

The monk has set up a website for his monastery to accept donations, which he plans to use in rebuilding that housing in early October.

"The very amazing thing is that during this disaster, the monks are always on the front line, before the army, before the police, because they give up everything, they just go," said Naptul, speaking mostly about their efforts in the cities, cooking, providing tents and digging out the rubble, eventually making their way to hard-to-reach villages. "Just out of empathy and compassion. They just run. It's a very dangerous place.

"Our first priority," he added, "is to help the villages." ©

On the Web:

www.kyimolung.org/earthquake-relief.html
You can reach Richie Davis at rdavis@recorder.com or 413-772-0261, Ext. 269

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Dharma Comes to the West

An Interview with Tsoknyi Rinpoche at Gadeling, April 26, 2015

Tsoknyi Rinpoche, a tulku in the Drukpa Kagyu and Nyingma traditions, is a Tibetan Buddhist teacher and author of several books including "Open Heart – Open Mind". An extraordinary aspect of his life and work is the spiritual and material support he provides for a large number of nuns in hermitages in the Nangchen region of East Tibet and in Nepal.

The Mirror: Rinpoche, thank you for kindly giving this interview to The Mirror. The last time we had the opportunity to interview you for The Mirror was in January 1998 when you gave teachings at Merigar for the first time.

Since your last visit here, the ethics and principles of Buddha Dharma are appearing in the West in different ways, such as mindfulness courses and meditation in different walks of life, conferences between Buddhist masters and scientists regarding neuroscience. H.H. the Dalai Lama now speaks about secular ethics. How do you feel about this departure from a traditional approach?

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: I feel this is like a beginning to opening some bigger things. For example, the way Dharma came to Tibet was not like this but in a different way. There were a lot of demons in Tibet, a lot of *maras* so Dharma came to Tibet firstly



to take care of the demonic forces in the Land of Snow using a lot of rituals and things like that. Then gradually the authentic Buddha dharma which is based on love and compassion and wisdom was also established there.

But now dharma comes to the West. We do not have demonic forces from spirits, but we do have internal conflicts of too much greed, too many things that are never fulfilled, basic hollowness, speed, anxiety, restlessness, depression, so many things in the West. So bringing dharma is taking shape in a little bit of a new way – in the beginning to tame, to calm, to make aware, to find the essence of love and well-being, to become a more healthy human being. And once that is established, then, of course not everybody, but a few people will come out of that to establish the fullness of Buddha dharma in the West. So right now there is a little bit of juggling between one part which is too much tra-

ditional dharma and another part which is a too much polished dharma to help human beings but does not change the whole problem. Both have to happen right now, but eventually it will become clearer out of the connection, contact, experience. I think both are ok.

The Mirror: When you give dharma teachings, is your approach the same for Westerners and Orientals or do you adapt it for the Western mind, or, as you called it during your teachings, the "sophisticated" mind?

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: The basic message is the same but the way I express the teaching is a little bit different. The emphasis is a little bit different. And understanding about culture is different because they are different cultures so then the approach, the method, is slightly different although the core teaching of the dharma is the same. In the West I emphasize how to slow down a little bit at the beginning. In the East I emphasize a bit more speed; it cannot be too slow. Then based on that we approach dharma. Dharma is dharma but how we approach it is slightly different.

The Mirror: Today you spoke about your preoccupation for mother earth and the continuation of human existence. How do you view the many environmental problems we are facing today?

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: I'm very sad about it and I can see that if nothing changes and if we continue our lifestyle like this I think that eventually mother earth will be exhausted. That I can see quite clearly because I have some friends in the world of science and from what I learned from them I know there is some danger. But I'm hoping for a

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Khamtrul Rinpoche: I think that it is very difficult for everyone to become a monk or nun and it is also not necessary. Most practice should come from our heart, not our mind, so whether you are a monk or not, it doesn't make any difference. If we have a good heart and a compassionate mind I think this is most important for everyone. In the West, I think that compassionate mind is most important.

The Mirror: Could we ask you about your education with the Tokdens?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: Actually myself I never went to school. First I learned how to

read Tibetan. At that time mostly I spent my time with the Tokdens who took care of me and also taught me about practicing the Dharma. Then I also had some Tibetan Khenpos, scholars, who gave me some teaching about Buddhist philosophy. So I think that by staying with the Tokdens I also received some blessings from them.

The Mirror: Do you have some advice to give in general to us?

Khamtrul Rinpoche: I am very happy to have been able to come here and I feel very good energy because Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is a great master and his great blessing is here. I feel very good in this place. It really

looks like a place that is good for practice because it is very quiet and peaceful.

Then because of Rinpoche's blessings and kindness, the most important thing is that all his students and disciples do good Dharma practice continually. That is most important. It is also very important that his students are very friendly to one another. That is good for the long life of Rinpoche.

The Mirror: Thank you very much, Rinpoche. We hope you will be able to come to Merigar in the future to give more teachings if circumstances permit. ©

solution and I think the solution can come from two sources. One is from common ground, what I call the grass roots level, from an individual responsible public. And the other is from technical advancements such as cleaner, cheaper ways of using our energy, which will have a strong impact on mother earth.

I feel very sad when I think about this because the world is so beautiful, so green. I love the trees, the green, the air, the sun and the moon moving, thoughts, emotions. I like emotions, thoughts. It's very hard to have thoughts, emotions, thinking. People don't like emotions but I like emotions if you know how to handle them. So beautiful. But all that can go from this earth so it's very sad.

And if we think about evolution, the mutations, the adaptations, billions and millions of years during which one species developed into another. Wow, it's so much. And now finally we have this sophisticated brain and if this dies maybe we can never ever make this in the future. I have to think about this.

The Mirror: We have read about your projects for creating opportunities for girls and young women to receive secular and religious education in Tibet and Nepal. Could you tell us about this and is there any reason why you are encouraging the growth of nunneries rather than monasteries?

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: There are two reasons: one is my own this life reason and the other is the wish of one of my previous lives. The first and second Tsoknyi Rinpoches also did similar kind of work in the 18th century in Nangchen in East Tibet. The first Tsoknyi Rinpoche really empowered women practitioners in Tibet and built a lot of nunneries, gave education opportunities, and there are high realized yoginis who are very famous in Nangchen. So that is happening in Tibet.

Then in my lifetime a few nuns came from Tibet to Nepal to stay with me. I was really inspired by them and wanted to have the same kind of education for the younger generation in women's form, so I started a small nunnery that has become bigger and bigger. I see the potential in the enthusiasm and capacity of women. They are so pure and easy to train. Then I understood that training women is the best way to change the world. I can also see myself that in some places when women change, they change their husbands, their sons and daughters, so many things. It's called the

ripple effect. I can see this in the form of women.

But my main motivation is that I want to train the young nuns to slowly become like mini Dalai Lamas in a woman's form. They understand the feeling, they understand the emotions, they understand the love, they have this feminine wisdom, this 'feeling' wisdom, and with modern education, ancient wisdom and implementing



Khamtrul Rinpoche giving the Tara initiation, assisted by Tokden Tutop Nyima, Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Tokden Achoe.

Photos pg.14 and pg.17 by Yeshe Chogyal

practice, they can teach and it can be very powerful. So this is my dream and I am establishing modern education, plus a nine years course of *shedra* [study of Buddhist scriptures], then three year retreats, then after that the nuns can teach, or they can go back to village life or some can come to the West. Many people would like to receive teachings from a female form. People always listen to teaching from male Rinpoches. It is a different voice, a different understanding.

The Mirror: Could you give some advice to Westerners about how to educate their children in order for them to become happy responsible people.

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: I think it is very important how to nurture children, but to nurture silently, not by big noisy cognitive education. It's like a 'well-being silence transmission' from parents to children. So I see that holding is very important, keeping a child in your lap, but facing outwardly. They can play but at the same time they have a kind of chair, which is their parents. They can depend on them even though they don't know cognitively, but somehow they feel they are not falling down, that someone is protecting them. This message of protection needs to grow in the young child psychologically and in their feelings so somehow they are ok, they are safe but

at the same time they are free to go and free to come.

When we instill fear and hope in a child's mind in order to achieve cognitive based education, when there is too much of that and we give them early responsibility, with responsibility we give them some type of hope and fear and the hope and fear drives them to get something in an external way. If we instill a very subtle fear in the sub-

tle body, in the nervous system, when they grow up that imprint is shaken, moved, triggered by so many things. So that is not really a healthy way. Of course we need to teach cognitive based education, thinking, but also being, feeling safe, unconsciously. Otherwise if you worry in your head and you feel fear in the system, these two put together is a disaster. So connecting with the essence of love, understanding of feelings, emotions, kind but strong. Not always thinking about trying to figure something out cognitively, in the absence of feeling.

The Mirror: Do you have any special message for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Dzogchen Community?

Tsoknyi Rinpoche: Not really. I'm really happy because the centre of your mandala is still alive so there is nothing I can say because he is the centre of the mandala and he is doing his job very well. I heard from so many people that he is working very hard for the benefit of you all – writing, talking, teaching in different ways, trying to bring Dharma into life in different directions. I heard that he wakes up very early in the morning trying to figure out how to do it. That is amazing. Please continue and roll together with his activity.

The Mirror: Rinpoche, thank you very much for your time.

©

Melamchi-ghyang – Jewel of the Hidden Land

Sharnon Mentor-King

Nepal is renowned for its stunning mountains, hardy sherpas, and ancient Buddhist tradition. But the earthquake that shook northeastern Nepal on April 25 has dramatically changed the landscape of many of the mountain regions. This article was written for The Mirror before the earthquake irrevocably changed the village of Milamchi-ghyang in Yolmo, a meditation place of Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal.

For any devotee of Guru Rinpoche, arriving in Melamchi-gyang is a kind of homecoming. Whether one feels an affinity with the physical landscape – a small mountainside plateau scattered with stone buildings and barley fields, fringed by an ancient and brooding forest, set against the rocky peaks and vivid sky of the Himalayas – or not, the energy infused in this place by the presence and practice of Padmasambava is hard to deny.

Situated in the Yolmo Snow Enclosure, a 'hidden land' of the Guru and his chief Tibetan disciple, Yeshe Tsogyal, Melamchi-ghyang is truly a place set apart from the modern world. Only accessible by road these last three years, a road which is even now only motorable four months of the year, this sacred site of Guru Rinpoche is visited more by trekkers than by pilgrims, it being on the Helambu Circuit track. Many who do make it here fail to recognise the great importance and fortune of their having reached this auspicious place.

Yolmo (also known as Helambu), in northern Nepal, is known for its numerous *drub-phug*, or meditation caves, two of which are famous for being the practice places of Guru Rinpoche. The lower, and more accessible of these is the cave at Melamchi-ghyang. It is known as the *Nyin-da Rang-jung Drug-phug*, or Meditation Cave of the Self-arisen Sun and Moon, due to the naturally formed shape of a crescent embracing a circle in the stone roof of the cave, symbolizing the union of wisdom and skilful means. Not in the true sense a cave, the structure seems to have been created by a rockfall. A great flat boulder perched upon three smaller boulders in the shape



Self Arisen Sun and Moon Cave.

of a triangle, local lamas say it is in keeping with the Guru's preference to dwell in triangular structures representing the Three Jewels of Buddha, dharma, and sangha. The sides of the cave have been walled up, and the roof has been chiseled out at the rear

a temple to Amitaba be built here at a later time.

The cave itself is a warm and inviting space. Home to five 300-year-old statues made of the black clay of Nepal, a family of happy, well fed mice, a couple of cats, and



Melamchi-ghyang Village.

to create a spacious dwelling place. Some attribute this stonework to the Guru, saying he carved away the rock with his trident, while other sources intimate that the cave was lived in by stone-age people of the Himalayas, long before Padmasambava's time, who made these renovations to channel dripping water away from their sleeping place.

There is very little known about the exact details of Guru Rinpoche's tenure in Melamchi-gyang. It is agreed that he was here 1,200 years ago, but it seems that the duration of his stay was never recorded. Although it is speculated that he spent his time here perfecting the practice of the Buddha Amitaba, this is a presumption based only upon his having ordained that

the occasional curious red panda, this sacred place is also open everyday to human visitors and pilgrims. Thanks to the efforts of a local lama and sponsorship from Taiwan, the cave now has a wooden floor and facilities nearby, as well as a more antiquated kitchen attached. One will often find a resident monastic or lay person in open retreat living here, which gives the cave a homely feel and, despite the light flow of pilgrim traffic, a sense that this really is a holy place of Guru Rinpoche.

From the mouth of the main cave a great deal of the Yolmo Valley can be seen, including the great natural pyramid of Ama Yangri (the fourth guardian of the valley) to the east, the mountain retreat centre of Chatral Rinpoche at Neding, and the "snow enclosure" of the Himalayas to the north.

So what's the value of practicing in such a place? Although it doesn't bear the same lofty qualifications as the much higher and less accessible *Yang-dak Chok* meditation cave (having reached which, one will never again be born in the three lower realms), it has been proclaimed by the Guru himself that a day of practice anywhere in the Yolmo Valley is of equal value to a year of practice in mundane locations. And if one is prepared to make the effort to get to Yolmo, Melamchi-ghyang is the ideal place to embark on a practice or meditation retreat.

Only six to nine hours by bus from Kathmandu, or four hours by jeep, Melamchi-ghyang can usually be reached by road from February to May, or by foot any other time, depending on conditions. Pilgrims might want to consider the considerable merit gained by approaching a holy site on foot and take the bus only as far as Kachung, where the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa meditated for three years in the Lion Fort Tiger Cave at the direction of his



Chorten Yolmo.

they are delighted when Buddhist pilgrims and practitioners come to stay. These people are mountain folk in the truest sense – stocky, solid people of the land, they carry the *kukuri* or ghorka knife as a matter of practicality, hoick and spit as a custom, and

possess the eight qualities of 'pure water': It has crystal clarity, coolness, sweetness, lightness, and softness, and is soothing to the stomach, free of impurities, and clears the throat. The very soil in this hidden land sparkles, and the rich copper color of its clay puts one in mind of the Copper Colored Mountain upon which Guru Rinpoche is said to reside.

It is said that Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal have left hidden treasures and traces of themselves throughout Yolmo, and nowhere is this more evident than in Melamchi-ghyang. Within an hour's walk of the Guru's cave one can find a large number of self-arisen phenomena or pilgrimage sites which are testament to the presence of Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal. Many of these objects and images have arisen in or of a type of stone compounded of tiny quartz crystals (which is beyond this writer's ability to name) and appear to have been eroded by water or rain, leaving fascinating shapes and pat-



Khenpo Nyima Dondup – Standing outside the damaged Nyin-da Rang-jung Drug-phug, or Meditation Cave of the Self-arisen Sun and Moon.



courtesy Jon Kwan

master, Marpa, and attained realizations. In Kachung one can stay in a local homestay/guesthouse, and, if necessary, hire a porter to help with the trek to Melamchi-ghyang. The last leg of this journey is a three-hour hike from the river valley up to the village above, a picturesque climb on the mountain trail that until only three years ago served as the only way in and out of Melamchi-ghyang. The locals call it a 'road', but it is anything but. Sturdy, light shoes or boots and a supply of water are recommended.

Once in Melamchi-ghyang, there are a number of guesthouses to stay in. The local people are Buddhist and speak a dialect of Tibetan, and though most seem to make their living lodging trekkers overnight,

drink a heated home-brew of distilled millet called *rakshi*, with a dollop of pungent butter melted into it, as an analgesic. Their days are spent cutting wood in the forest, weaving baskets, distilling *rakshi*, tending crops, herding goats, and preparing food. While it is possible to order meals from the 'restaurant menus' provided by these lodges, it is far more sociable and cosy, if one is not on silent retreat, to eat meals with the family, seated on the floor around the woodstove. Meals are most often traditional *dhal bhat*, with homegrown vegetable, beans, and the famous Yolmo Valley rice.

Another thing Yolmo is famous for is its pristine water quality. Visitors need never be afraid for their health when drinking the water in Melamchi-ghyang – in fact they can rather think of it as a tonic as it

terns, and are mentioned by Chatral Rinpoche in his composition *Evocation of the Hidden Valley*.

Khandro Sang-phug, The Dakini's Secret Cave

Only 20 minutes walk from the main cave, on the far side of the school, is evidence that Yeshe Tsogyal herself once stayed in Melamchi-ghyang. This tiny, damp cave situated on the sheer mountainside is said by the locals to be this enlightened princess's 'shower'. A trickle of metallic water running from the mouth of the cave is testament to what will be found inside. A metre from the entrance, water drips from the low roof, issuing from what looks remarkably like the genitals of a woman. This

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dutsi, or nectar, is considered to be a miraculous gift of the dakini herself and held in high regard by Tibetan and Nepali Buddhists.

Jewel Millstone

This artefact of the Guru is a pair of stones, now brightly painted, which was thought to turn spontaneously. It considered to be one of the “great blessings of Yolmo”. The millstone appears to have been originally located in the Amitaba Cave below Melamchi-ghyang, but has been removed to the Amitaba temple in the village to better preserve it. Unfortunately this temple is kept locked and one can only see the millstone when the local lama goes in around 5am in the morning to light the offering lamps.

Guru Rinpoche's shoe.



structure is said to represent the *Kun-zang Dor-sem* supplication of Longchenpa and embodies the essence of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, Garab Dorje, Shri Singha, and so forth.

road, however, is not so easy to find, so it's best to ask the locals. A geographical marvel almost beyond the workings of nature, this great stone dais rides out of the surrounding rocks like the prow of a ship. Sur-



Guru Rinpoche's tab (oven).



courtesy Jon Kwan

Old Stupa

The old stupa in the middle of Melamchi-ghyang is built of what remains of one of the early temples built here, which sadly burned down.

Loom

This interesting rock formation located behind the old stupa is said to be the loom of Yeshe Tsogyal. According to local legend, Guru Padmasambava arrived in Milamchi-ghyang wearing nothing but a tiger skin tied around his waist, so Yeshe Tsogyal set about making him an outfit, which she wove using this rock as a loom.

Tsog-shing, Self-Arisen Merit Field

On the eastern edge of Milamchi-ghyang, with a little bit of direction from the locals, one can easily find the self-arisen *tsog-shing*, or merit field. This large rock

Tab, The Guru's Kitchen

Down the mountainside to the south of the village, the adventurous pilgrim can find a collection of three large boulders which are said to be the ovens and water fount of Guru Rinpoche. Perhaps it seems a bit of a stretch of the imagination that, A: these rocks are in fact at all representative of a kitchen, and B: that the Guru would need a kitchen a kilometer down the hillside from his cave, but this site has apparently been recognized and verified by Chatrul Rinpoche himself. Like all of these sites and artifacts, these boulders do seem to possess a sort of power.

Shug-tri, The Seat of Guru Rinpoche

Roughly an hour's walk from the village is the *shug-tri*, or throne, or Guru Rinpoche. Easily spotted to the north-east, this site is well marked out by prayer flags. The

mounted by a throne-like structure, local legend holds that it was here that Padma-sambava taught the dharma to dakinis and beings of other realms.

Khang-gyur and Ten-gyur

Directly up the cliff-face from the throne are a series of stones said to be self-arisen representations of the Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan *pecha* form. This is a bit of a tough climb, and good walking shoes are recommended.

The Nine Yanas

Before arriving at the *shug-tri* one can find the self-arisen phenomenon of the Nine Yanas, or the nine principle vehicles of Buddhism according to the Nyingma tradition. Like a series of nine Tibetan *pecha* sitting in a bookshelf, it is obvious why this site is considered holy by locals and learned masters alike.

Liberation Through Seeing

The Tagdrol Mandalas for the Cinerary at Merigar West

For the last few months a team of experts, under the guidance of Migmar Tsering, has been working at Merigar West on a project to create a set of beautifully decorated *mandalas* for the newly built cinerary situated just below the Gonpa. The team is made up of artists, calligraphers and Tibetologists who have put their skills together to create a set of twelve large panels that will decorate the ceiling of the cinerary.

The four main panels depict three different *tagdrols*, one of which is repeated, and are *tagdrols* that give liberation through different types of contact, including seeing. One of them is a *tagdrol* from



L-R Giorgio, Migmar, Magda, Anna and Natalia.

Photo by Liz Granger

the 'Longchen Nyingthig' (*klong chen snying thig*), a *terma* from Jigme Lingpa. The second *tagdrol*, which is repeated on two separate panels is from the 'Lama Gongdu' (*bla ma dgongs 'dus*), a cycle revealed by

the great *terton* Sangye Lingpa. The third *tagdrol* comes from the 'Nyingthig Yashi' (*snying thig ya bzhi*) of Longchenpa.

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Head Print

Directly above the main cave is an interesting indentation in the bottom of a rocky overhang considered to be an imprint of the Guru's head. Strangely unique in this part of the landscape, and perfectly shaped like the top of a head, this really does seem to be a simulacrum. The site is little known and seldom visited. There is no path, and the way is straight uphill through the forest.

Hat Print

Far better known than the head print, the Guru's hat print is found below the village, not far from the road. It is marked out by prayer flags, but a local guide could be a good idea.

Shoe

This recently discovered image of a giant shoe in the style worn by the Guru has not yet been verified, but certainly seems to be what it claims. Uncovered by the recent excavations for the road, this large stone image lay unnoticed beside the foot trail for generations. Located above the hat print, a walk down from the village could include seeing both sites. Trident Mark: A matter of meters above the image of the shoe is a strange phenomenon – three holes seem to have been melted into boulder in a for-

mation that immediately puts one in mind of a giant trident.

Footprint

Not in Melamchi-ghyang, but visible from the road near Kachung, is a self-arisen phenomenon of another kind – a clearing in the forest high on the western mountain-side clearly resembling a giant footprint. According to local people, this clearing has never been forested and will never grow trees.

In sum, Yolmo is an incredible and practically undiscovered practitioner's paradise of awe-inspiring mountains, faith-inspiring self-arisen phenomena, and health-in-

spiring waters. Its close proximity to Kathmandu begs that any pilgrim who comes to Nepal make the journey into the mountains to witness for themselves the majesty of the Yolmo Snow Enclosure and receive the blessings imparted by the great Guru of Odiyana and his disciple, Yeshe Tsogyal.

For more information about the area and the history of Yolmo, one can purchase the *Guide to the Hidden Land of Yolmo Snow Enclosure and its History* by Khenpo Nyima Dondrup – ISBN No. 978-9937-506-46-5

Less than a month after the writing of this article a series of earthquakes devastated Kathmandu and the mountain regions of north-eastern Nepal. Melamchi-ghyang was not spared. Formerly a village of 45 homes, only two were left standing after the initial quake struck at 11:56 am on April 26. While only one life was lost in the impact, many were injured, and the 300-year-old statues in the rang-jung nyi-da cave are said to have fallen. The temple in the village centre, as well as the renowned village school have collapsed, and with monsoon rains fast approaching, life for the people of Melamchi-ghyang is only going to get harder.

But not all is bleakness and misery. Aid agencies and relief teams, who have been working with the villagers since the early days of the disaster, have already begun to plan how best to rebuild the village, and one U.K.-based charity has even pledged 10 computers to the school.

Now, more than ever, the villagers of Melamchi-ghyang need our support. In the short term they need our donations; in the longer term they need trekkers and Buddhist pilgrims to renew tourism in the region, stay in their new lodges, and visit in their ancient meditation cave.

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Before the artistic work could begin, Migmar Tsering, the project leader, Margherita Pansa, Merigar's resident librarian, and Giorgio Dallorto, calligrapher researched each of the *tagdrols*, consulting two separate editions of each text, published by different printing houses. Margherita kindly provided copies of the texts from the Merigar West library. Although the *mantras* are generally the same in both editions, there are slight differences in the texts, the design, and the background colors. Their research was not limited simply to studying and comparing the different versions of the texts but also enlarging and consulting copies of the small *tagdrol* that is already available at Merigar.

After checking the original texts, Migmar enriched the different *tagdrol* with the use of color. In general color is not used with these *mantras* so he had to work out which colors to use in different sections according to the Buddha families. In addition he made use of the five colors that represent the five elements – Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water – using them in the mother-son order, according to Tibetan astrology, with the mother-color giving protection to the son-color.

The *mantras* in the four *tagdrol mandalas* were first of all written in pencil in elegant *uchen* letters by Giorgio Dallorto and then painted in gold by Migmar. The syllables of the five Dhyani Buddhas were painted in pure gold while the rest of the *mantras* were painted using gold mixed with other powdered metals including silver, copper, iron, and bronze.

There are many different *mantras* in all four *tagdrol mandalas*, the main one being the Song of the Vajra and the *mantras* of the Five Buddha Families, then the 25 *Thigles* of the Universe, the *mantras* of the 42 Peaceful and 58 Wrathful Deities, as well as many other *mantras* listed in the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. Each *mandala* also includes the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet plus the *mantra* of interdependence.

The other eight panels are decorated with the six-syllable *mantra* that liberates the six classes of sentient beings, empowering through the essence of the Six Dimensions of Samantabhadra: HA A HA SHA SA MA. In each panel, the *mantra* is written in a different type of calligraphy in golden letters. The scripts used were:



Migmar.

Photo by Maurizio Mingotti

- *uchen* (*dbu can*);
- *umed* (*dbu med*);
- *phagpa* (*'phags pa*) or square script or *hor yig*;
- *mar chen* (*smar chen*), ancient writing from Shang Shung;
- two forms of *spungs yig* originally from Tagzig (*rtag gzigs kyi yi ge spungs so chung, rtag gzigs kyi yi ge spungs so che ba*);
- *srin yig*;
- *mar* (*smar*) or *lha babs yi ge*, the language descended from the gods.

The colors used for the *mandalas* were put together in a traditional way and included mostly natural pigments mixed with powdered semi-precious stones, including turquoise, pearl, coral, lapis lazuli, amber and malachite, as well as eight types of precious pills to increase potentiality. Usually these types of pills are used together with *mantras* and precious stones inside a statue when it is authenticated.

Some of these precious pills are made up of sacred substances linked to Body, Voice and Mind and to developing their potentiality and prosperity in general. Others on the other hand are composed of medicinal substances. For example, some precious pills contain *sangpo drug*: *lsmanl bzang po drug*, "The six excellent medicines", which are used as the base of medicine: nutmeg, saffron, bamboo pith, cloves, cardamom and kakola (*Amomum medium*) as well as *pachung nga* (*ba byung lnga*), five products from the cow: urine, dung, milk, butter, and curd. Still others contain substances such as red sandalwood (*tsan dan dmar po*), white sandalwood (*tsan dan dkar po*) and camphor (*ga bur*).

When all the panels have been completed, the four main *tagdrol mandalas* will

be placed in the centre of the ceiling of the cinerary in the four directions, corresponding to the four doors in the buildings. The eight panels with the *tigles* of the six *Lokas* will cover the rest of the ceiling. The internal part of the building will be ready for Rinpoche's arrival at Merigar in mid June. The external decoration should be completed in time for the August retreat at Merigar West with the Master when the building will be formally inaugurated.

In addition, professional photos will be made of the four *tagdrol mandalas* that will be reproduced in a much smaller version and made available at Merigar in the near future for those who need them.

The international team for this project who came from different areas of the Dzogchen Community headed by Migmar Tsering consisted of painters Anna Pucci, Magda Zych, Yu Shang, Natalia Kushnariova and Lenka Chanova, Migmar and Giorgio Dallorto for the Tibetan calligraphy and Margherita Pansa for research and advice on the texts and Tibetan scripts. The work, which went over several months, was done



Giorgio Dallorto.

Photo by Nikol Stanisova

entirely in karma yoga. The whole team would like to thank the Merigar Gakyil and the Gekos, Nikol Stanisova for their kind assistance. Their hope is that their hard work will create a good cause for others in the future.

Once the internal part of the cinerary has been completed, work will start on the outer part of the building and the area surrounding it. There are plans to put all the *mantras* of Simhamukha around the outer part of the building and also to create a pleasant garden. Funds are still needed for this work and we warmly invite readers to donate to the project using the following link: www.dzogchen.it/il-cinerario/ ©



Feeling Like We Are in the Same Family

Dzamling Gar Annual General Meeting
April 17, 2015 am.

After the Dzamling Gar gakyil had presented their work over the last year, 2014, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave some advice to them about how to approach their work for the future and also spoke about the Community being like a family

I want to say thank you very much for everybody's efforts. That is very useful. Everyone is trying to do their best for Dzamling Gar. Another thing is that we want to create a fund here – at Merigar we have already had one for some years – for people who do not have good health, who have no possibility to live, particularly people who have dedicated themselves to working for the Dzogchen Community. We are [living] in time and gradually we are getting old. For these people we need to have a base, a fund, to help them. So we have decided to create this fund [here at Dzamling Gar] and Rosa and I would like to make an offering for it. We need someone who is living here to take care of this. Of course it is related to the work of the Gakyil but we need a specific person for registering and taking care of everything. My idea is that if it is possible it would be very good if Yolanda Ferrandiz could do this. If the Gakyil is in agreement, we could ask her.

Then we also want to offer something for the museum that we are preparing. You already know that this is something that is very important. I also proposed that if possible the Merigar and the Dzamling Gar gakyils add, for example, 10,000 because at this moment it is very important to act on behalf of the museum.

So this is what I wanted to inform you about, and if people have offered something I want to say thank you very much. We can always do our best in order for these projects to go ahead.

We still have some time. We have 20 minutes so I will try to tell you something. In general it is very important that we try to learn how to follow time, because we are living in time, so time is important.

I want to say thank you very much to people who have dedicated themselves to Dzamling Gar and to different Gars in the Dzogchen Community in general, also to people who are working voluntarily and offering their work at the Gars. It is very welcome and I want to say thank you very much.

In general, when we are in the Dzogchen Community, we must feel that the Community is a kind of family, not only a kind of organization. We are also related to a spiritual path and that relationship lasts until we have total realization. For that reason, we need to collaborate and pay respect to each other. This is something very important – feeling we are like members of a family. For example,

I dedicate myself and do my best not only for Dzamling Gar but everywhere I go, in particular for different Gars and Lings, and even if they are only practitioners and gakyils of our Community, I am always trying to help and collaborate with them. This is what everybody should learn because we are learning Dzogchen teaching. I am doing this because I am a Dzogchen practitioner. We need to integrate Dzogchen practice within ourselves – it shouldn't be only a nice idea. So this is what I want to ask everyone in the Dzogchen Community around the globe.

For example, particularly here at Dzamling Gar, we have many things to do. This Gar is very big and there are many buildings that we need to repair and finish. All these things are related to the red gakyil. However, the red gakyil must understand that there are two kinds of activities: one kind of activity regards bigger things such as building houses and these kinds of projects. These are taken care of by Giovanni Boni who is completely dedicated to this. Of course Giovanni also collaborates with the Gakyil – he is not doing everything alone. So the gakyil should understand that Giovanni Boni is the main person dealing with this job. But not only building houses, there are many different kinds of activities at this Gar that are related to the red gakyil.

Then the red gakyil and the whole gakyil, when you apply something, first of all try to do what is indispensable, try to do things that if they are lacking there are some problems. Don't go into fantasy. Sometimes people come here and say that we should do this and do that. We can do those things if we have money, and if people bring money and want to give that advice and do a project, they are welcome. But if we need to do something in the Dzogchen Community, the work of the gakyil is to understand what the circumstances are. If they are indispensable things then we try to apply them. Even regarding the big buildings etc., I always ask Giovanni Boni to plan them in an indispensable way. When we have more money and more possibilities then of course we can make things bigger, better and more beautiful.

In Tibetan we have a saying: you measure your height from your feet. You shouldn't think that you are tall and can do everything. You should know what your position is. We must do everything like that.

Then there is also something very important that we should remember, particularly here and in general: in the Dzogchen Community we have many possibilities and a lot of capacities. For example, just at Dzamling Gar, how many people do we have who can teach yantra yoga, or dance, or even Kumari Kumari to young children in school. There are so many things that we can apply and do. Tenerife is a place for tourists and if you move around you can see how many hotels there are here and how many people from all over the world. When I went to Burma, for example, which is considered to be an underdeveloped country, when we arrived, there were only two or three hotels, but in each of the hotels there was a program of local dances every evening. The people from the hotel didn't dance so they would invite people who did these kinds of activities. Of course, we should organise and inform people and all the hotels that we have this kind of capacity. If you are interested, then there is this possibility and you can send out this type of information. This is an example. There is a lot of knowledge and



many types of capacities in our Dzogchen Community and it is very important that we should know about this and work with it.

As I said, one of the best, most important things is that we feel like we are in the same family. The Dzogchen Community everywhere should collaborate and they should feel that this is their home. For example, if there is a person who has dedicated themselves to the Dzogchen Community for many years, one day they will become old. They have no job, no family, for example. What should we do for that kind of person? For example, in your family, if one of your brothers or sisters or your aunt has become old, what do you do? You couldn't remain indifferent. This is called the feeling of family. For this reason it is very important that everyone in the Dzogchen Community should work and go ahead in this way. I feel that this is very important.

For example, when I went to Switzerland, there were some old people who were only waiting to die. All the young people and the rest of the family had gone away and they didn't have much of a relationship with their children and other relatives. I also had contact with the children of some of these old people who told me that at the time they had some problems and that they were just waiting for their parents to pass away so that they would have some more money. This kind of thing is not good. Even though we are in the same family, there are those kinds of situations. We must not be that way. We must feel like family, collaborating with each other and paying respect.

For generations and generations we have had a very good attitude in Tibet and young people pay respect to older people. I remember that in our home, if my mother or father got up to do something in the house, we children would be offended, because sometimes they wouldn't ask us to bring things or do things. However, in the western world there is not this type of attitude. I remember years ago when I was staying in a boarding house in Rome where there were boys and girls, they didn't do anything and their mothers did all the work, cleaning and everything. In Tibet we don't have this kind of attitude, even today things are continuing like they were – paying a lot of respect to older people. This is not only true in Tibet but also in China where they have this type of attitude.

In Tibet we have these words, this advice from the teachers: we try to pay respect and do our best for anyone who is older than ourselves. If there is someone who is less able than us then our compassion should be alive and we shouldn't remain indifferent. This is really part of being present and working with circumstances. When there is this type of situation, we are present and do our best.

I am very happy if people keep alive and apply something in this way. So our Dzogchen practitioners should try to do their best. This is what I want to tell people, not only at Dzamling Gar but everywhere.

Thank you very much and try to do your best. ❁

Real Sense of the Dzogchen Teaching is Evolution

Dzamling Gar Annual General Meeting
April 17, 2015 pm

After each of the Gars in the International Dzogchen Community had given a short presentation of their current situation, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spoke about international collaboration between the Gars, evolution and conflicts within the Community.

This meeting is not only for talking and asking for support for Dzamling Gar, but it is a meeting for all the Gars. For that reason at this meeting we need to hear a little about the situation of the different Gars. We have heard just a little from each Gar because when this program was made, from 3 to 5 pm – that means two hours – the representative of each Gar only had ten minutes to talk. What was the idea for the rest of the time? When you make a program, you have to think and coordinate the time.

In any case, when we listened [to the Gar presentations], it was very clear that some Gars have difficulties while other Gars have fewer problems. This is normal in the human condition in *samsara*. In *samsara* nothing ever exists in a perfect situation in the same way. We know very well that there are many problems in some places, such as Tashigar North. It is not so easy even to maintain the Gar and sometimes I send them money to maintain it. This is very important to understand, and we shouldn't think that all Gars are the same.

We should work with circumstances – this is part of our practice. Remember, the first thing is to be in the state of contemplation, second is being present, then working with circumstances. The circumstances of the Gars are that: some Gars have problems, and some Gars don't. So we shouldn't think that all the Gars need to send money to support the Gar here. We must understand how the situation is. If some Gars don't have these types of problems but they do not support or participate very much, this is another question. We must also understand that. Of course, where there is a problem, instead of them supporting us, we must think how we can support them, [so they can] continue and develop. This is called collaboration.

Collaboration doesn't mean that we only wait passively to receive. Collaboration can also be active. Buddha said that everything is interdependent, so sometimes things are perfect here but not perfect there. Nagajuna said that where there is *trashima* (*bkra shis ma*) there is also *nanagma* (*sna nag ma*). This is the situation of *samsara* so we should be present and try to do our best.

When we hear about these situations, we should think a little about what we can do for them, if it is really necessary for them



to have something to maintain [the Gar] even though they are not able to develop very much. For me, I am waiting until one day the situation becomes normal in Venezuela. Once the situation is normal, I hope to go there and continue doing activities. This is an example. I also haven't been able to go to Tashigar North for two years or to Kunsangar South for one year.

When I don't go somewhere, there are two reasons: one reason is that there is a problem in that place and the circumstances don't permit me to do anything. It is more to do with the situation in the country and the people. Another reason [that I don't go to a particular place] is that they are not doing well and instead of collaborating and developing, they have divided into two or three groups and are fighting. When I discover this kind of thing, I don't feel like going to that place. In the history of my teaching many times I have made programs in different places with retreats and retreat dates, but before the time arrives I received information about problems between different groups in a particular place. Then I cancelled these retreats. The first time I remember doing this was in England. I did this twice in Austria and twice in Singapore. I also did it in Australia. Why? When there is no real collaboration between people, when they are applying things and progressing in an egoistic way, even though I had already prepared a program and it had been published, I cancelled [the retreat] because there are no benefits. This is an example. So it is very important that we should know how to collaborate with each other.

In the Dzogchen Teaching we say that one of the most important things is that those people who follow the teachings feel free. Feeling free means that we should observe ourselves so that we can discover our limitations. If there are limitations, then there is no progress between person and person, between groups and groups, or between nations and nations. This is the root of all problems of human beings on this globe. For that reason I have said that Dzogchen teachings are very important because they give an idea about how to develop what is called evolution.

We can observe evolution by ourselves when we notice our limitations, free ourselves and apply something. This is called evolution. Evolution doesn't mean what happens naturally. In the summertime, for example, if it rains and it is hot when we go outside in the morning, we find plenty of mushrooms. But we couldn't say that this is evolution. Evolution means that we as individuals observe ourselves and discover what our limitations are. When we discover them, we don't go after them because we know very well that they do not bring us anything good. When I am not limited and am free from limitations, I can never have problems with someone else because I do not take action. Even if someone else takes action, I don't care and I don't enter into that. This is the base of evolution and how we develop it.

I've told you several times that I have been to a lot of different kinds of Peace conferences. It is very nice when we go there because they prepare a nice hotel, nice meals every day, and when we meet there are a lot of interesting people. There are no personal problems and it is very nice and when we meet to talk everybody says that we need peace. Peace is good. We all know that. Then we speak for a few days about how good peace is, but when we leave what remains? Only [the fact that] I enjoyed it for a few days

because they prepared everything so nicely. But this is not peace in the world.

If we need peace in the world, it is what I explained in the Dzamling Gar Song. If we really develop our evolution, and integrate it in our condition, it will not only benefit us but there will really be peace in the world. Peace in the world will not come about only by talking about it. Sometimes we can do invocations and there may be some benefits but we cannot believe that there will be peace. We know very well that all beings, particularly human beings, are full of egoistic ideas. Nobody is trying to relax his or her ego so how can we have peace in the world? Evolution means gradually developing that knowledge and spreading it. We cannot do advertising and change things – this is called revolution. Evolution develops slowly.

I remember when I came to Italy, I only had a small piece of luggage. I had no house, I had nothing, only that small piece of luggage. When I was working with Prof. Tucci doing research, some people asked me about teachings in Tibet called Dzogchen. Nobody knew what Dzogchen was. Only Prof. Tucci said twice that there is Dzogchen in the Tibetan teaching traditions, particularly in the Nyingma teaching there is a current of Dzogchen, and [he asked me] what kind [of teaching] it was. Then I showed him some books in which the base, the path, and the fruit of Dzogchen was explained. He read them but he still didn't understand what Dzogchen was.

When I arrived in Europe, then gradually things developed, not only because of what I did but there were teachers like Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche etc., who gave Dzogchen teachings and gradually people started to understand that there is a teaching called Dzogchen that is the essence of many different kinds of teachings. In the Nyingmapa tradition there are also different kinds of teachings but their essence is Dzogchen teaching. So then people started to know and to develop their interest.

For years and years I have tried to give Dzogchen teachings and have given different Dzogchen retreats. Only counting retreats, not conferences, from the first retreat up to now I have given 535 retreats, so you can see how many retreats of Dzogchen teaching I have given. Of course not only me but many teachers are teaching now and many people know and have developed Dzogchen teaching everywhere on this globe. This is called evolution. I only had a small bag. There was nothing.

Today we are in 2015. I arrived in Italy in 1960. From that time up to today knowledge of the Dzogchen teaching has developed. If people understand what the real sense of the Dzogchen teaching is, it is evolution. That is the reason that I am talking about evolution. Then we must understand that it is very important to maintain and develop it that way. This is the most important point. There are many Dzogchen Community Gars and Lings everywhere connected with my teaching. After listening [to the reports from the Gars] if there are some difficulties at some of the Gars or Lings due to the social/political situation, somehow we must collaborate and try to do our best for overcoming these kinds of problems if there is something we can do.

Other places there are conflicts between practitioners and people in the Gakyils and at the Gars, instead of development. Where

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Merigar is an Example of How All the Gars Can Develop

Dzamling Gar Annual General Meeting

On April 19, 2015, in the morning, workshops were held in three key areas: how to develop the medicine program at Dzamling Gar, communications and tools to make us a more effective community in terms of our organization that can be shared with all Gars and Lings, and how we present the fruits of our Community in the local area. After the workshops were concluded, the three groups presented their work to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu who made the following comments.

I want to say something basic. We are the Dzogchen Community. The Dzogchen Community is an organization related with the teaching. We should check everything that we are going to do, not only at Dzamling Gar but everywhere, and it must correspond with the sense of the teaching. We never go ahead only like a normal social organization otherwise it would be useless because there are infinite social organizations in our condition. It is not necessary we construct [something like] that and make sacrifices. So we know that principle and we apply everything.

I very often repeat the words of Santideva, who was a very important teacher of the Mayahana sutra. He said,

དམ་པ་ཁམས་ཅེ་མང་པོ་མི་བྱེད་ཅིང་། གཤམ་ཏེ་དཀའ་བའི་ཁམས་ནི་སྒྲངས་གྱུར་ན།
རྫོ་ལ་རི་མོ་བྲིས་པ་མི་བཞིན་དུ། ཤི་ཡང་གཞན་དུ་འདོར་བར་མི་འགྱུར་རོ།

dam pa khas 'che mang po mi byed cing / gal te dka'
ba'i khas ni blangs gyur na / rdo la ri mo bris pa ji
bzhin du / shi yang gzhan du 'dor bar mi 'gyur ro /

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there is this kind of problem, please observe your ego a little if you are really interested in following Dzogchen teaching. If you don't do this then try to forget about Dzogchen and then there is no problem. If you have the name of the gakyil and the Dzogchen Community and are developing your ego, it is much better you cancel. It is not only better but I am asking, please cancel. I only want people who are seriously interested in and dedicated to the teaching. Our lives are very short and we can't play with our egos for a long time. In particular, I don't want to play. For this reason I want to ask this of everyone everywhere on this globe who is connected. Thank you very much. ❀

དམ་པ་ dam pa – means one who has knowledge, understanding, of the principle of the teaching.

ཁམས་ཅེ་མང་པོ་མི་བྱེད་ khas 'che mang po mi byed – means we are only talking and talking about this problem and that problem, but we are not saying that we are going to do this or that.

གཤམ་ཏེ་དཀའ་བའི་ཁམས་ནི་སྒྲངས་གྱུར་ན། gal te dka' ba'i khas ni blangs gyur na – means that if you say that you have decided to do something, then this should be just as if you have carved these words in stone (རྫོ་ལ་རི་མོ་བྲིས་པ་མི་བཞིན་དུ། rdo la ri mo bris pa ji bzhin du). If we carve something in stone today, it will remain for years and years. It won't disappear.

ཤི་ཡང་གཞན་དུ་འདོར་བར་མི་འགྱུར་རོ། shi yang gzhan du 'dor bar mi 'gyur ro – means that even if it costs us our life, we will never abandon it.

This is the way Bodhisattvas do things. This corresponds with the principle of the teaching. I, myself, try to apply everything remembering these words. If somebody asks me to do something, I think about whether I can do it or not. If I can, I say okay. When I say okay, even if it costs me my life, I will do it. I never abandon and change. I have applied this [principle] up to now and many of my students know this. So this is what we should do.

Sometimes people don't think and say too many things. When you talk without knowing the base, this is called fantasy. Fantasy cannot help us. We need something concrete. In Tibetan, they say that if we are making a project or something similar, "we should measure our height starting from the soles of our feet". This is the reason I always say that we need to work with circumstances, with the type of possibilities that we have. In that moment, of course, we must be present and also ready to put into practice. This is called circumstances. When there are no circumstances and we are only thinking and talking, this is fantasy. So this is very important.

[Earlier] Matt Schmookler explained and talked about Tibetan medicine. Of course, we have been thinking for many years about how important it is. Even though there was no study of Tibetan medicine, we started at Merigar and later we transferred to the United States. At the beginning we had many problems and difficulties and I almost thought it would be better to stop. Then Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo was there, gradually working and going ahead. Later we developed a Tibetan medicine program in Moscow. But it hasn't been easy at all and we are doing everything with a lot of sacrifice.

In particular, I am also working very hard for Tibetan medicine to be recognized in the Western world, not only for studying it. You can ask Paolo Roberti di Sarsina from Bologna, who knows very well how hard I am working. Of course, I very much want to develop something with Tibetan medicine at Dzamling Gar. But it is not enough to only think about that. We need to apply it. We need a concrete base. I also told Dr. Phuntsog when she was here – and she liked Tenerife very much – that we would gradually try to create a study of Tibetan medicine here at Dzamling Gar. And for that reason I spoke to Giovanni Boni [and told him that] we need

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to have one of the houses to create a base for that. But we already had all these kinds of ideas. They are not something new. So it is important that we work and keep our program and our intention.

Then Ana Sanchez talked about what we are doing here regarding our relationships with local groups etc. The international Gars don't have much responsibility for what is on our program here at Dzamling Gar. If they want to know what Dzamling Gar is doing, of course, they receive all the information. If Dzamling Gar is doing something wrong and they don't agree, if there are some problems and they have some good ideas, they can communicate with Dzamling Gar. But we are not asking all the international Gars to make the program at Dzamling Gar.

When we talk about relationships with local organizations, about how we are developing Yantra Yoga etc., this is not only for Dzamling Gar, but for all the Gars – and not only the Gars but also the Lings: you are [based] in a country and there are local people. What we are doing at Dzamling Gar and what we have been doing at Merigar for many years are good examples for you. If you work like that it becomes very useful instead of projecting what we should do at Dzamling Gar.

It is very important to understand how to work in a concrete way otherwise everything becomes only words. I don't like only listening to words very much. I like it very much when someone is really putting effort and applying something concrete, then I am very happy. So I am asking people at all the Gars and Lings to try and do things that way.

Remember Merigar West. Yesterday we did not manage to communicate with them but today we did. Merigar is the first Gar that we started and in the past I lived much of the time there when I was in Italy. For that reason Merigar has developed in many aspects. It is not only due to the merit of the Merigar people that Merigar developed. Many people made a lot of sacrifices – my old students know very well – we were digging earth and working, and that is how Merigar developed. So Merigar has become a good example of how all the Gars can develop. There are still many things that you can learn today from Merigar, including Dzamling Gar. Many things that we organized and developed at Merigar we still don't have at Dzamling Gar. That is an example. Merigar has become important.

And it is very important that at any Gar or Ling of the International Dzogchen Community we should really feel to be part of the same family. People at a Ling shouldn't think that a Gar is a kind of society with money, and that they need to take some money from the Gar for a project. I never try to take money from the Gars. Day after day I try to put money into the Gars to develop their capacities. Until I die the Dzogchen Community feels like my home, my family, that is why I am doing that. So it is also important that you try to do that and then Dzamling Gar and the Dzogchen Community everywhere can gradually develop.

You can see how many things we have to do here. It is also not necessary for you to feel afraid that the situation is heavy. We are living in time. Time is related to circumstances. We know very well that we can't do things in a day or two. But if we have that desire, we can succeed with everything.

We started that way at the beginning with Merigar. At the beginning when we were searching for a place for the Dzogchen Community, we only had 30 million lire. I asked people to go and search for a place and I also spent weeks and weeks going around looking for a place. I told people that if there was a place costing at the most 30 million, we would try to buy it, but we couldn't find anything that corresponded. At the end we found this Merigar place before I left for China and Tibet.

xWhen I saw this place it corresponded to what I was looking for, but it was not 30 million but 120 or 130 million. Then at that moment I decided that we should buy it. How can you have this kind of desire and decide? This is what I am telling you – if we really have confidence and a desire to do something, there is always a possibility. Why not? We gave them only 10 million lire and then I left for Tibet. When I returned we did a retreat in Sardegna and I announced that we had land. Then everybody needed to make an effort to collect the money. Of course, we couldn't do magic and have all the money in a day, but year after year we succeeded not only in buying the land but in rebuilding everything. This is an example.

Two years ago when we were searching for the land here, someone showed me a photograph of this place of Dzamling Gar. I thought that this place would be perfect for us. Then I concentrated on this place because I liked it and it seemed to be good for all our Dzogchen Community. But even though I said this place is very good, and asked people to do research to see who the owners are, most people didn't do that because their idea was that the place was too big, too heavy. They were looking for some smaller places. They showed me six or seven photographs of different places but I said no to all of them. In the end I told them that if they wanted to do something, there was only this place, otherwise they could forget about it and we wouldn't do anything. Then finally they did some research and we got this place. This is an example.

We must know how we apply according to our circumstances in our condition. And you do your best to collaborate. That is the most important thing. ❀

Tibetan script and transliteration by Magherita Pansa

Transcription and editing by Liz Granger

The Development of Dzamling Gar

The Current Situation

Giovanni Boni May 26, 2015

Earlier in May 2015, we presented the preliminary program for Dzamling Gar to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the International Dzogchen Community because Rinpoche had expressed his wish to start the project for the Gonpa as soon as possible. In order to build the Gonpa we will have to create a structure that unites the two parts that are already built. In this presentation for The Mirror, I would like to go over the main points of that presentation.

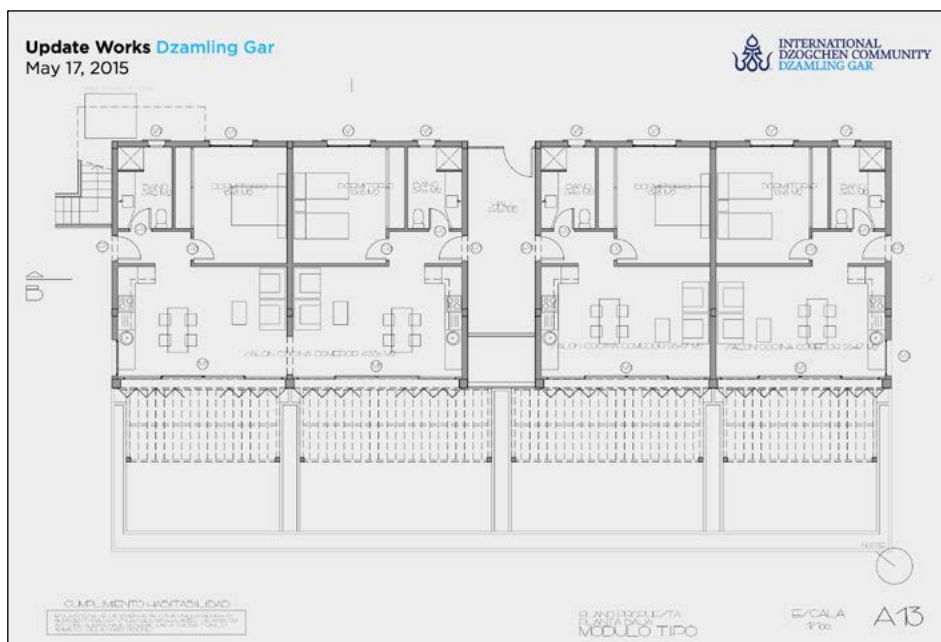
Overview of the entire project

The houses

First of all we listed the various works to be carried out and the expected time frame for their completion. The work on the houses at the Gar will progress as follows: houses 5 (Tsegylgar), 6 (Samtengar), 10 (Merigar) and 11 (Kunsangar) should be completed by the end of 2015; houses 12 (Tashigar) and 13 (Namgyalgar) will be completed by the end of 2016. This means that the last houses for the Gars will be finished at the end of 2016 although this isn't necessarily the chronological order.

Houses 8 and 9 should be finished by the end of 2015 but before the others. House number 8 will be for the doctors so that the medical program for the International Shang Shung Medical Institute can start up as soon as possible with courses and conferences. House number 9 will be for those people who have dedicated their lives to the Community and who find themselves in difficulty for reasons of health or finances. The upper part of this house will host carers who take turns in caring for the occupants of the house 24 hours a day.

Houses 7 and 3 are part of the 4th phase of the project together with the Gonpa and the health centre and will be the last houses to be completed. House number 7 will be destined for all the organizations of the Community such as ASIA, the Shang Shung Institute etc. House number 3 may become a restaurant or a cafeteria since it is the building closest to the tent and the swimming pool. In the future these two houses may be interchangeable.



House plan ground floor.

The Gonpa and Center

Then we have the detailed project for the Gonpa and the Centre that we will try to complete by the end of this year. A detailed project means that we have a project on which we can calculate the costs in a concrete way because at the moment we don't have a detailed project and so it is difficult to calculate them. An amount has been mentioned but it still has to be verified when the detailed project has been finalized.

Our plan is to have the Gonpa ready for use by the end of 2017. The project plans for the structure of the Gonpa to be completed by the end of 2016. Then the works such as connections to water, electricity, etc., and the finishing so that the building can be used is scheduled for mid-2017, while the permissions to make use of the building are planned for the end of 2017. When I refer to the Gonpa this is the central part of the building.

Then all the works that are required for the rest of the Center, including the medical center, the balneotherapy facilities, the administration offices, the rooms for yoga, the cafeteria, the terraces, and the children's room, all of this will be done later from 2018 to 2020.

Some people have asked Rinpoche when the project will be finished to which he always replies 'when there is enough money'. The important thing now is to understand how things are going and to collect money because we are going to need a lot of money. We still don't know how much exactly. For some time now Rinpoche has been

working day and night to create his Evolution Creations jewellery and has collected almost half a million euro. If you visit the Dzamling Gar website, on the Development page you can see the amounts that have been donated. However, the amount currently on this page for the cost of the Gonpa is not correct. The costs for the Gonpa are approximately 15 million euro. The amount listed on the website is more for the cost of both the Gonpa and the Center.

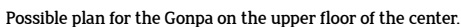
More detailed information

The houses

Then we have prepared a more detailed chart that shows how the work plan proceeds week for week for each of the houses and the estimated costs. If the work goes ahead as planned, we expect to start working on the interior of the Merigar house (10) by the middle of July, the Kunsangar House (11) towards the end of August, the Tashigar (12) and Samtengar houses (6) at the beginning of September, the Tsegylgar house (5) at the beginning of October, and the Namgyalgar house (13) at the beginning of December 2015.

However, even though some of the houses will be completed before others, they will all become habitable at the same time because they are all part of a phase that has a single permit for use and occupancy. This permission can only be requested once all the houses have been completed, not one at a time. So most probably the houses cannot be used until after the end of February 2016 according to the current

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work plan. In order to stick to this plan, we will need to receive sufficient funding, otherwise, the houses will not be usable until a later date, so fund-raising has become really essential. On the other hand, if we can find sufficient donations, the work might be finished earlier and the houses ready for occupancy at the end of 2015.

Some of the Gars such as Namgyalgar are having problems collecting funds for their houses for different reasons, in which case, the other Gars will try to help them, as the Master has suggested during his talk on at the Dzamling Gar AGM [on April 17, 2015 published in this issue of *The Mirror*].

Below the detailed chart on the house, there is a time/cost plan related to more general works, such as the lift for the Master's house, the gardens, the pathways, the aluminium windows, the wooden trellises, area for rubbish, electric generator, small permanent swimming pool on Rinpoche's terrace, the maintenance of the swimming pool, lighting around the tent, waterproofing some of the terraces, etc. This shows us a very general plan of how much we will need approximately month by month for work on these things. Then there are the general expenses that include not only the costs of staff, of permits, services, taxes, but also the mortgage that we took out on the land in order to start the works.

The houses

This is a plan of the four apartments on the ground floor of one of the houses. We have enlarged the bedroom, slightly reduced the size of the living room with the kitchenette, then there is the bathroom and the terrace with doors and windows fitted with external blinds which can be closed to protect the apartment from the sun.

The plan for the upper floor has a single apartment with two bedrooms which is intended to be more communal and may be used by the person who is in charge of the house. The kitchen may be communal, and one of the bedrooms, possibly the biggest, could become an office. There may also be the possibility, in the future, of converting this apartment into two by closing the porch area.

The Gonpa and Center

The first plan is for the lowest floor which will house the administration area, on the right there will be a storage area, on the left a garage and the water tank.

The second plan shows the floor above. In the central part below the Gonpa there will be four rooms with three beds each, another four with one bed each with facilities for people who are less able or in a wheelchair. Each of these rooms will have a terrace or balcony facing the sea.

On the left is the area for the doctors, with massage beds, facilities for balneotherapy, consultations. There are two large spaces to the south that are for shops.

There is a terrace that will be over the water tank that could become a cafeteria.

On the right there are three rooms with large circles that are the dimension of the Vajra Dance Mandala just so that we can understand how big they are. They will be spaces for yoga and other activities.

The Gonpa is on the top floor in the centre of the plan, the area with the chairs indicated. This is the intermediate level that is a little bit lower than the road that passes behind the building and there will be access to this area from that road. It will also be a little bit higher than the pathways from the houses. In the future we will have to bring more earth here to build up the area.

The Gonpa will be accessed by two stairways, one at the front and one at the back, and a lift. At the same level as the Gonpa there will be two large terraces with pergolas on each side where, if the Gonpa is full, people will be able to listen to the teachings. They will be open but shady.

At the moment, we have a plan and a cost estimate for a roof made of wooden rafters by Holzbau who did the roof of the Merigar West Gonpa, however Rinpoche has asked people to also submit other possible plans before making a final decision on the construction of the roof. Hence this is not the final plan but simply a possible solution.

The Master was happy with the presentation of the current situation that we made at Dzamling Gar on Sunday May 16, 2015, and asked me to give more details on the project for the construction of the Gonpa and the roof of the Gonpa. So in the coming months Benedetta Tagliabue and I will be working on this in order to present a detailed project with various alternatives to Rinpoche for his approval.

Giovanni Boni bonig1950@gmail.com

See the Dzamling Gar website Development page to see how the project is proceeding and to give a donation to bring it to fruition as soon as possible

[http://www.projects.dzamlinggar.net/
component/jse_donation/?view=category
&id=55:development](http://www.projects.dzamlinggar.net/component/jse_donation/?view=category&id=55:development) ©

John Vincent Bellezza

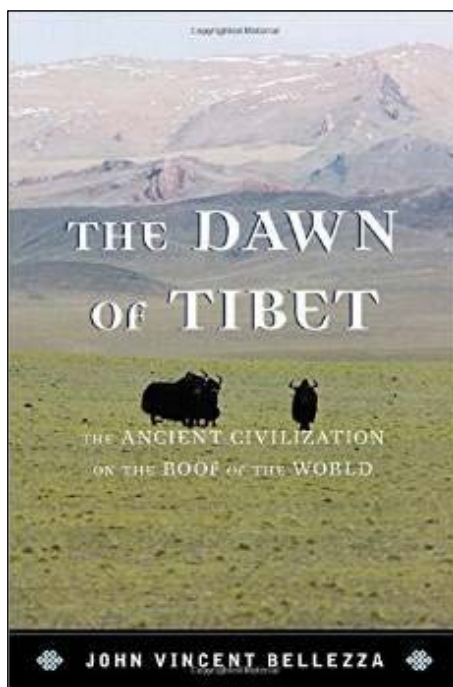
The Dawn of Tibet: The Ancient Civilization on the Roof of the World

Rowman & Littlefield, 2014,
360 pages

Andy Lukianowicz

This remarkable book is, as the author asserts, the fruit of “legwork.... a journey of twenty-five years and one hundred thousand miles.” A labour of love, hardly a year has passed when “Jungly John” has not carried out an expedition in Zhang Zhung, as he describes in the opening chapter ‘Discovering the First Civilization of Tibet’. Guided largely by Yungdrung Bon texts and oral information gleaned from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the senior-most scholar of Bon, and other scholar monks, mainly Bonpos. Tracing the history of Zhang Zhung back three thousand years, his study is a meticulous collation of literary and archaeological material – much of which is also to be found in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s three-volume *Light of Kailash*, praised in chapter four for its “impressive traditional historical perspective”.

Chapter one gives an overview of research done in Zhang Zhung (and Tibet at large) in the past by western and Chinese scholars, as well as a detailed account of Bellezza’s own explorations, while chapter two concentrates on the Chanthang of Upper Tibet (at 300,000 square miles the size of France, Austria and Switzerland combined), its lakes and wildlife. Chapter three is devoted to examining the way life of the Drokpas, “wanderers of the Tibetan uplands.” The encroaching cash economy, land enclosure and enforced settlement is likely to lead to the demise of their nomad way of life, lovingly recounted in detail with its many traditional customs (also referenced in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s *Journey Among the Tibetan Nomads*). Chapter four examines the traditional scriptural accounts of Zhang Zhung, drawn from Eternal (Yungdrung) Bon literature in a chronology dating from 1200 BCE to the present.



There is a lengthy discussion of the origins of the Zhang Zhung language (an issue also addressed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in his scholarly historical works) and also investigation of Chinese and native Drokpa sources. There is a lengthy account on the descent from paradise of the royal line of the kings of Zhang Zhung, including discussions of their royal castles. An alternative interpretation of the demise of Zhang Zhung, proposed by Lopon Tenzin Namdak from Eternal Bon sources, is also discussed.

Chapter five largely deals with epigraphic and archaeological evidence, the “stones of time,” also examining the historical, geological and economic forces playing on the development of Zhang Zhung civilization. Illustrated with photographs and citing rituals and the oral tradition, Bellezza goes on to describe the “hermitages and temples of the gods” inhabited also by ritualists who were frequently married and involved in day-to-day life in the community (there are some fine photographs of temples and gonpas).

Chapter six discusses in detail the burial customs of Zhang Zhung, and comments on the deplorable looting of tombs in the last half century also due to lack of effective countermeasures by the PRC. Chapter seven gives a rich and detailed description of the artistic treasures of Zhang Zhung, its rock paintings and carvings, symbolism, and anthropomorphic and animal depictions, proceeding to a discussion of links between prehistory and history as recorded in shrines and carvings. Chapter eight treats the religion of Zhang Zhung,

epitomised as Father Sky Eagle and Mother Earth Serpent; here the historic and mythical accounts of the origins of Eternal Bon are examined in some detail, with excursions into the secret teachings of Eternal Bon, the spread of the religion of Zhang Zhung to central Tibet, the gods of Zhang Zhung – with lengthy accounts of the important Zhang Zhung deity Gekhod and of Tonpa Shenrab and the passage of the dead. Chapter nine resumes the description of the cultural life of Zhang Zhung, with a report on the gradual curtailment of relations between humans and the spirits of the earth and of the “awesome feats of Zhang Zhung’s greatest personalities” and of its ancient warriors and priests. Chapter ten discusses contemporary Tibet, concluding with the ongoing search for well-being through the ages, also as administered by “today’s shaman successors to the adepts of Zhang Zhung.”

Remarkably, this book, rigorously precise and scholarly, is nevertheless engagingly written for its lyrical descriptions of (disappearing) ways of life and religious legends, structures and artefacts. Highly recommended to all those interested in the history and present of Zhang Zhung – and in consequence in Tibet, Bon and Buddhism, and social and cultural anthropology and the history of central Asia in general. ©



Focus on Tsegyalgar



Khandroling Pond.

Photo by Sean Quinn

Tsegyalgar East – The Victorious Peak of Pure and Total Presence

Naomi Zeitz

Tsegyalgar, the Gar of North America and the second international Gar after Merigar, was established and named in 1983 at Conway, Massachusetts, USA by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. The Gar became legally incorporated on August 29, 1983. Since that time, the East Coast Gar has come to be known as Tsegyalgar East. At the request of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Tsegyalgar West, after interrupted beginnings in 1987 in Northern California, was moved to a warmer climate in sunny Baja, California, Mexico in 2003. (see article: The Beginnings of the California Dzogchen Community and Kyungding Gar)

Tsegyalgar East has gone through numerous incarnations and is still in the process of developing and evolving. The Gar has faced many challenges regarding its physical location and local presence, as well growing pains from the natural evo-

lution as a Community common to the worldwide Dzogchen Community: change, resistance and with time, acceptance and growth.

they were able to construct the first Dark Retreat Cabin in the international Community. The Dark Cabin was completed in 1985. (see article: The Very Beginnings of Tsegyalgar East)

The Dzogchen Community of North America began to grow and outgrow the "Group House", as it came to be known, in Conway. One hundred and sixty-two acres of land in near by Buckland was purchased in

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Group House, circa 1982.

Photo courtesy of Efrem Marder

The Dzogchen Community began at the Group House of the Gurudjieff community in Conway Massachusetts in 1982. There were approximately forty active students of Mr. Anderson, some of who continued on with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as their Teacher. The group was very inspired and dedicated; because many of the early practitioners were builders,





Rinpoche's Cabin.

Photo by Paula Barry



Rinpoche's Cabin.

Photo by Paula Barry



Guardian Cabin.

Photo by Paula Barry

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1987, which became Khandroling, the Sacred Land of the Dakinis. (see article: The Acquisition of Khandroling) Khandroling is the sacred land where Rinpoche first began receiving the dream *termas* of the Vajra Dance, where the first Vajra Dance

and ongoing activities. The Old Conway Grammar School, over 100 years old – old for a building in the US – was purchased in 1993 (see <http://melong.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The-Mirror-22-July-August-1993.pdf>). To this day the Schoolhouse houses a Gonpa with two mandalas

sition of Lower Khandroling) That land enabled the Gar to have direct access to Upper Khandroling and therefore relaxed greatly the situation with the neighbors and allowed for more free access to Upper Khandroling. In 2009–2010 the Community renovated the old Pike Farmhouse and



Schoolhouse.



Mandala Hall and Stupa.

Photo by Hans Hansen

Mandala was painted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu himself, and now houses the only Universal Mandala in the international Dzogchen Community in the Mandala Hall atop Khandroling. (see interview: The Mandala Hall of Tsegvalgar East)

There is also a retreat cabin for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a Guardian Cabin, a Stupa, a Mandarava retreat cabin, a *tögyal* retreat cabin, a small cabin and kitchen near the pond, and a bathhouse, with toilets, showers and, believe it or not, an actual bathtub!

After some time and a few unpleasant encounters with neighbors because of the size of the retreats at and traffic to Khandroling, the Community was forced to look for a more suitable location for big retreats

painted on the floor, a dormitory, the Shang Shung Institute, which was inaugurated on October 12, 1994 (see <http://melong.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The-Mirror-29-January-February-1995.pdf> page 12), ASIA, The Mirror, a library, the DCA office, the Shang Shung Institute bookstore, and has come to be the home of the Tibetan Medical program, a branch of Shang Shung Institute USA, directed by Dr Phuntsog Wangmo. This year is the 10th anniversary of the Medical School. (See article: The Birth of SSI USA)

In 2004 Tsegvalgar was able to purchase a piece of land in Buckland that abutted Upper Khandroling, from Larry Pike, owner and farmer, which has come to be known as Lower Khandroling. (see article: Acqui-

made a beautiful home for Rinpoche and family, thanks once again to the generosity, dedication and skill of the local Community members and builders. In the last couple of years some people have begun farming the land with vegetables, hops, fruit trees, strawberries and herbs. Last summer many blueberries and raspberries were planted as a low maintenance crop in hopes of creating a pick-your-own business that could potentially bring in revenue for the Community.

Tsegvalgar East has developed and grown over the years, from the group house in Conway to Khandroling, Upper and Lower, in Buckland, and then back to Conway to the old Conway Grammar School. Re-

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Mandarava Cabin.

Photo by Paula Barry



Tögyal Cabin.

Photo by Paula Barry



Tara Retreat with Yuchen Namkhai at the Gar.

The Very Beginnings of Tsegylgar East, Conway MA 1982

Original by Barbara Paparazzo,
Mirror #2, April 1990
Excerpted and edited by Naomi Zeitz

There were twelve of us on a hot day in July 1970, when we first knocked on Paul and Naomi Anderson's door in Brooklyn, New York, asking for a Teacher. Mr Paul Anderson and his wife had been direct students of the Russian spiritual teacher, Mr. Gurdjieff. When we walked through Mr. Anderson's door, we began a long journey that eventually brought us to the Conway [MA] house in 1974 and, later, to meetings with many different lamas, one of who was Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We spent twelve years following Mr. "A" and our

group eventually numbered about forty. Every weekend we worked at the Conway house, shoveling, digging, painting, scraping, baby-sitting, planting, doing the Gurdjieff movements, cooking and so on.

Many years passed following this kind of pattern; we had children, went to college, got jobs, went broke or broke even and, very gradually, grew up. Then, in 1981, Mr. A had a stroke, and in 1982 a second one. The group was thrown into chaos. Most fortunately, before his second stroke, Mr. A had come into contact with a transcript of one of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's retreats and he invited Rinpoche to come to Conway. By the time Rinpoche arrived in July 1982, we were a group in crisis. We had come from a background of very strict rules and discipline and had existed in a kind of isolation. Then along came Rinpoche, accompanied by many of his disciples, giving Dzogchen teachings, eating his meals with us, talking with us, doing the Chöd at night with damarus and bells, playing baseball with the children and just generally in all

ways going beyond limitations. For many, but not all of us, this was what we had been waiting for but had not known existed. Mr. Anderson died in 1983, surrounded by his pupils.



Dark Retreat Cabin.

Photo by Neil Murray

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flecting the true American spirit, Tsegylgar East has been the Gar of 'firsts', the first Gar of North America, the first Dark Retreat cabin, the first Guardian cabin, the first painted mandala for Vajra Dance and the first and only Universal Mandala. The Conway Schoolhouse also houses the first and only four-year Tibetan Medical School in North America.

Many Teachings have been received and a wide variety of retreats, practices and activities go on at Tsegylgar East: Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, Santi Maha Sangha, Khaita, as well as Ganapujas, momo feasts, Losar festivities, "Bad Movie Night", etc., etc. Winter is a little less active, but the inten-

tion is always there even if the roads are not willing.

There is so much potential for the Gar of North America in the east through its ongoing process of self-reflection and actualization. The land and buildings of the Tsegylgar East Community are a support for the precious Dzogchen Teachings. The vital ingredient for the Gar's growth is people who can bring devotion, dedication, energy and joy. It was a fortunate day in 1982 when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visited the old group house in Conway, and as they say, the rest is history and history to be. Please come and visit and maybe even stay around for a time. We welcome you to Tsegylgar East!!!

We formed our first Gakyil in 1983 and slowly learned to collaborate and work together in a new way, without someone directing our every move. It was very difficult at first and we had many Gakyil meetings that were really more melees than meetings. It was important that we learn to work on our own in a collaborative way because in July 1984 we had the groundbreaking ceremony for the Dark Retreat Cabin with Rinpoche. We worked all through the next year trying to build something that had never been done before in the West, and which involved such difficult questions such as: how does one provide enough ventilation in a building that doesn't allow any light in, and how can one create an indoor toilet without windows, that still doesn't smell. Everyone in the Community knows by now what happened: in July 1985 we had our first Dark Retreat experiences, and the cabin worked as intended!



Retreatants on the land.

Photo courtesy of John Foster



Mandala Hall.

The Acquisition of Khandroling

Lauri Marder

By around the fifth year of being Rinpoche's students, we realized that we had to find a new place for the Gar; we did not want to disturb our neighbors any more with our big summer retreats, and anyway we needed more space.

And then one spring day we heard of the land that was to become Khandroling. A couple of us went to see it, while others discovered another parcel for sale that was less expensive and more practical. However when Rinpoche came at the end of the summer, and he saw this land, he immediately loved it and said we needed to bring everyone there, show them the land, and have a picnic and do some fundraising because we really needed it. Rinpoche clearly saw what could happen here and he conveyed as much as he could of that to us.

Everyone was really enthusiastic about it that day, and about half the money we needed was pledged and then afterwards it was left largely to the local community and the gakyil to obtain the rest and negotiate the purchase.

We had to sell the Group House to buy the land, but we had outgrown that house

anyway. Although the real estate agents got together when we put the house on the market and said no one would ever buy it, that it was a "white elephant," the first people who looked at it bought it because they liked the wonderful energy it had.

Our people with a lot of practical experience knew that the land would not be easy to develop and the other land was discussed again as an option, but in fact we really were only interested in this piece.



Dancing on the platform on the site of the original Mandala. Photo courtesy of John Foster

Everyone forged ahead through all difficulties, such as additional acreage being added on to the deal and the price raised and other things like that, but in the end, happily, it became our land, a part of the Dzogchen Community heritage "forever." ©

The Mandala Hall of Tsegyalgar East

The First and Only Universal Mandala in the International Dzogchen Community

Interview with Efre Marder
May 2015

The Mirror: Can you talk a little about the inspiration for the Mandala Hall and its uniqueness?

Efre Marder: The inspiration for the Mandala Hall came directly from Rinpoche. I will describe how I first heard about the idea for the structure, but before doing that, perhaps a little background history would be useful. The Khandroling land was purchased in 1989 with Rinpoche's strong encouragement. He said the place was quite special, and that "if you get this land, I will give you what you want." He said that the land would always be Dzogchen Community land- never to be sold.

The very first thing that the Community did was to build a retreat cabin for Rinpoche at a site he proposed. Fortunately, there were local Community people expert in construction, (and along with many other helpers) who volunteered their labor every weekend over a period of months to complete this project. In 1990, Rinpoche did a personal retreat there for most of the summer. It was during that time that he began receiving the Longsal Terma of Gomadevi and the Vajra Dance. He later described that he would set up a tent on a particular high spot near his favorite rock (even "collaborating with mosquitos"), as this helped for what he was receiving in dreams. He asked for paint, and began



Photo by Paula Barry



Khaita and Derghe Dances at the inauguration in 2014.

painting a life-size design of the Earth Mandala on an existing platform near the pond.

Then he interrupted his personal retreat one day and invited local people to the platform, where he began to show us the beginning positions and movements for the Dance of the Song of the Vajra on the Mandala. Joe Zurylo, who assisted Rinpoche with practical matters during his retreat, remembers as follows:



Rinpoche inspecting first Mandala on Khandroling.

"The first hint of a Vajra Hall took place the time we went up to the land when Rinpoche finished his retreat. We were walking down the hill after he showed us where he slept. He was describing the crystal temple of Gomadevi, to which he said – paraphrasing – because of memory – "some day we will have something like this up there". So it's been a long time in the making."

After Rinpoche left Tsegylgar, over a period of months, the Dance was introduced more completely to those nearby him at Merigar. At Khandroling, a wooden plywood painted Earth Mandala was con-

structed at the hilltop spot of Rinpoche's transmission, and when he returned in the next years he danced with us on that spot, and Prima also gave the first courses of instruction for the Dance. Over the years, the wood, being close to the ground, would begin to rot and need repair and repainting, as there was no good way to protect it.

In time, Rinpoche revealed more information about the Longsal dreams connected to Gomadevi and the Vajra Dance, and all understood better about the three Mandalas and how these were introduced in his dreams. In the summer of 2005, the Tsegylgar East Community, inspired by our local Dance instructor Kyu Kyuno, worked tirelessly to construct and paint the very first Universal Mandala at that place. It was quite large in size (approx 25 meters in diameter) and was made out of composite plywood that was supposed to last a very long time. We had our first dance on Dakini day in the fall, and it was like swimming in a sea of the five colors, as the Mandala was so large and we were in the center. Someone also climbed a tree and photographed the Mandala from above.

Now, back to the original question.

Later in 2005, Marit Cranmer, Gerry Steinberg and I traveled to Margarita for a retreat there, and upon arriving went to Rinpoche's house to greet him and offer some gifts. Marit brought a beautiful framed image of the newly painted Universal Mandala. Rinpoche looked at the large photo and without hesitation emphatically said: "NOW WE BUILD A VAJRA HALL." He said we needed a structure to protect the Mandala. When I heard this idea, I was in a kind of shock, as I understood quickly the huge challenge of making such a large structure, especially given the remoteness of the site, the bad road, the lack of utilities, the mountaintop location, etc. Furthermore, Marit pointed out

to Rinpoche that the Community had little money and was struggling financially. Rinpoche, simply said: "Now, we build a Vajra Hall – slowly." Honestly, I really couldn't seriously contemplate this idea for quite some time. However, Rinpoche's wish was passed along upon our return, and began to percolate in various ways. As many of us contemplated his wish, it became increasingly clear that creating the Vajra Hall was a unique opportunity related to honoring the *terma* site at Khandroling, and that in addition to protecting the physical Mandala, the Vajra Hall would also preserve and commemorate the place where this transmission was received, and be a kind of Temple for Gomadevi, something like what Rinpoche described in his dreams. Rinpoche had explained that Khandroling is the seat of Gomadevi, and would become a place of pilgrimage in the future. This was a big source of inspiration.

M: How did the initial building design emerge?

EM: Over the next couple of years, there was no clear plan, but various Community people worked formally and informally to move the project ahead. The Gakyil at that time formed a Committee to work on a design and project plan. It was clear that a project of this size and scope could not be done on weekends with volunteer labor. However, given the motivation/purpose of the Project, it seemed desirable that as much as possible, it be accomplished and overseen by Community members. As Joe Z and Vern Harrington had their own construction company (TSA), this possibility existed, and they were eager to help. Along with Jim Smith (also a builder), they met together informally at the end of work days and began to develop a design and a rough plan. They worked closely with their

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in house engineer. Their idea of the design was that it flow directly from the design of the Mandala, mirroring those components. Joe recollects: "... Both the necessity of building it (and what to build) happened spontaneously with no mind involved, that all came later."

In the design, there are twelve main beams that ride over the twelve gold lines of the Mandala, and are supported by twelve steel columns that are aligned accordingly with the Mandala design. The engineering challenge related to the objective/need to support this massive roof without any support beam in the center- as that would interfere with the Mandala itself. So the space should remain open. The massive beams rise from the columns and lock into a circular steel compression ring, customized for this purpose. An outer ring, called the promenade, with a shallower roof, was designed to allow space for observers outside of the Mandala. Zoning issues required that the structure not be enclosed. So, the promenade would also serve as a buffer from the elements, shielding and distancing both the Mandala and practitioners from weather conditions. A ring of skylights near the roof peak were envisioned- both to provide light, as well as to create a sense of the transparency – the crystal temple.

So, without any concept of where the funds might come from, an initial design was established, and sent to Rinpoche. When Rinpoche came next to Tsegylgar in 2008, he approved this design (and direction) in a meeting to review and discuss the various possibilities. At the end of the Retreat, the funds were raised to start the extensive foundation work that summer. Furthermore, during his stay in Conway that year, Rinpoche spent a good deal of time preparing a vase, which he filled with jewels and mantras written in gold. The vase was to be placed at (the right moment) in the earth at the center of the building, which is also the center of the Mandala. After checking with Rinpoche, the vase was buried as part of a Guardian practice and Ganapuja, at the conclusion of a retreat/course of Gomadevi with Enzo Terzanao at Khandroling in 2009. This was a strong and special moment, with the vase activating, prior to the construction of the structure.

Around this time a Vajra Hall design and construction team was formally established, always with at least one Gakyil representative. Later, a fundraising team was established as well. Within these

groups, over a multi-year time frame, decisions, large and small, were generally made via respectful dialogue and consensus. Although outside workers and subcontractors needed at times to be hired and utilized, during all phases, the project was overseen and largely executed by Community members. The few who worked full-time, did so at a substantial discount to standard rates, and also volunteered a significant amount of time in addition. TSA

- 2010: the central steel frame, roof beams, rafters, and subroof were installed
- 2011: the promenade steel structure and beams, skylight framing, and sub-roof
- 2012: the custom skylights were installed, main roof finish, and the Mandala slab base was poured
- 2013: Longsal installed at roof peak, promenade walls and floor, and the Mandala layout and coloring



Vajra Dance at the Inauguration in 2014.

provided the needed contractor status for permitting, and obtaining subcontractors, but took no profit for themselves. Given the significant amount of additional volunteer labor from other Community members, the project was accomplished at a cost that would otherwise have been inconceivable given what was achieved. Furthermore, it would otherwise have been out of reach. Rinpoche, himself personally donated to the project three times – once in the beginning, and also in 2012 and 2013.

M: Can you give a time frame...dates from inception to finishing?

EM: Given the difficult winter climate, the building season for work at Khandroling lasts about 6 months – from late April to late Oct.

2008: foundation work was mostly completed – and finished in 2009

2009: the activating Vase prepared in 2008 by Rinpoche was placed/buried at the center

- 2014: completion of the Mandala for the July 11 Inauguration with Rinpoche
- The processes and materials used for:
- a, the hall itself
 - b, the mandala, the colors and process
 - c, the longsal symbol

a, The foundation and main structure

In order to carry the excessive load of a large roof, unsupported at the center from below, and because, the Khandroling land is laced with bedrock, the initial challenge was to create a suitable foundation. In this case, the earth was excavated (approx 2 meters, to varying depths) down to bedrock, under the column locations- the 12 large inner ones, and the 24 outer ones to support the secondary promenade roof. Large concrete, steel reinforced footings were customized to the topography, forming a base for the steel columns. A circular foundation wall of concrete, connecting the column footings was built below the ground level to support the outer wall. Then the earth was refilled. The column bolts needed to be positioned with great

exactness. The galvanized steel columns were fabricated by a local firm to precise specifications. They were tied together at the top with steel beams placed horizontally, forming a ring. Massive wooden gluelam beams were utilized to carry the main roof load, and were designed to tie into the customized fabricated steel compression ring at the roof peak. The main beams were so large/long that the delivery truck could not carry them up the Khandroling road, giv-

ing – for future use if/when the structure cab be enclosed. The promenade floor is made out of paving stones with subtle color variations. The outer wall is masonry, which has been plastered and painted with a long lasting waterproofing paint. The entry steps are made of a local stone, beautifully constructed by Jim Smith.

b, The Mandala layout and coloring process Jim Smith took primary responsibility for



Khaita and Derghe Dancers at the Inauguration in 2014.

en the slope with twists and turns. So the beams needed to be snaked up the hill one at a time, using two logging rigs – one leading at the front, and one carrying the tail. Additional wooden beams were used for the secondary rafters between the main twelve roof beams. The main beams were raised by a crane, and bolted into the center steel ring.

As much as possible, the structure was engineered, and materials were chosen, with two objectives - to withstand extreme winds and climate conditions, and to provide for minimal maintenance over time. For example, the finish roof over the Mandala is a composite slate, with a lifespan 50–100 years. The lower roof, not seen from the ground, is metal. These go over an extra thick plywood subroof – exposed from below. The custom skylights form a large *thigle* of light that moves over the Mandala through the day and changes with the seasons. The glass is double insulated, designed to withstand impact, and creates maximal UV protection. The Mandala base is a 5in thick continuously poured concrete slab, embedded with rebar and radiant tub-

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the Mandala. For the layout, he designed and constructed a steel compass arm on rollers that could swing from a secure pin located at the Mandala center. Holes were drilled in the compass to reference the radial location of each *thigle*. In this way the design could be drawn and referenced as needed – always getting back to the correct location. This worked well, and was ingenious.

The process utilized for applying the colors (stained/polished concrete) was time consuming, and required extensive taping and re-taping, as we were working with stains that were designed to penetrate the surface, and so, color by color, everything had to be perfectly masked that wasn't being stained. This took over three months from Aug–Nov of 2013. It was almost complete before winter. The idea was to create a surface that would be very long lasting – and not need re-coloring in the future – and would be a smooth danceable surface. We were having some disappointments with a couple of the colors, and planned to fix all in the Spring before the July Inauguration.

In the Spring that work began, and then we received a communication from Prima, that upon reviewing and clarifying the root text, it became clear that the design for the outer white and black triangles needed to be changed. This was impossible with the existing Mandala, as the black needed to be removed – but it was “in” the concrete. So, we made a radical decision, with only six weeks remaining till the Inauguration, to start completely over – by first regrinding the entire surface, eliminating all the prior work. Given the limited time frame, and some additional research, we opted for a quicker process/product, utilizing a special kind of epoxy floor covering, that is both extremely strong/resilient, and could also be obtained in the desired colors. Jim felt that given all the prior experience, the design could be laid out and taped more quickly. A crew of workers and volunteers worked everyday up until the event to get it done. This included applying two separate coats of epoxy for each color, and a final coat of protective clear urethane which went down the day before the inauguration – drying just in time. What made this all the more challenging was the need to apply epoxy to a three layered stencil for the ring of “flames” that surrounds the Mandala on the outside. Bodhi Krause was very helpful with the stencils.

c, The Longsal ornament

Jim Smith took primary responsibility for the design and execution of the Longsal ornament. He felt that it was important that the central areas, that are like drops or *thigles*, be sculptural, and not flat, whereas the outer “wings” could be flat. We asked Rinpoche’s approval and input, particularly on the size – the ornament is approx 2.5 meters tall and wide. A steel armature was fabricated to provide the core strength and stability. Then Jim created an actual sculpture (out of foam) for the three-dimensional sections, and wooden cutouts for the “wings.” These forms, along with the inner armature, were delivered to a specialty fiberglass fabricator, who then made molds from these, so that the ornament could be fabricated by them in fiberglass (around the armature). Fiberglass was chosen because it would be less heavy than metal, and could also be gilded, with a process that is quite stable for outdoor applications. The Longsal was hoisted by crane on a day in 2013 when Rinpoche was present. It was immediately bolted to the building peak by

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Community builders. This was a spectacle to behold, and the golden Longsal appears to float in space above the building, usually set off in a sea of Dharmakaya blue sky.

M: Can you talk about challenges and joys?
EM: I have already spoken about challenges relating to the actual construction, etc. So, I will focus on the joys.

Firstly, what comes to mind, particularly during the main phase of construction, in spite of the inevitable difference of opinions and views expressed, was how the Team would come together and move beyond those, in a spirit that put the project and Rinpoche's vision first. Many evening meetings, at the end of a long day's work, allowed for much laughter and consumption of wine, as part of a productive dialogue that could have left blood on the floor. Everyone's expertise added something to the outcome.

The actual construction of the building seemed always to have the feeling of being protected and blessed. I remember Joe describing – that although the challenges and logistics relative to building this structure were unusual, he never experienced a building project go so smoothly at crucial moments. Like the raising of the main beams – everything fit together with the needed precision. Outside subcontractors and vendors seemed to feel and sense this when visiting the site. Something special was manifesting. For example, the concrete company that was to pour the Mandala slab, was run by a woman – she was the expert. She explained that she couldn't solve the logistical puzzle relating to how to sequentially get 9 large concrete trucks loaded at the right moment and up to the site, given that the road could only allow for going in one direction. She couldn't figure out how to make this work, even as of the night before. She described that in the night she had a dream, and woke up "knowing" how it should be. Everything worked perfectly.

About half way through the construction phase, it was clear that we needed to raise additional funds. The project was never funded by incurring debt, or utilizing any of the Community general funds, which were needed for many other things. So, the Gakyil and the Team asked Rinpoche if we could do an international fundraising campaign, and he agreed. A lot of work was put into developing a website and a fundraising strategy, and although it initially got off to a slow start, with the help of



Longsal Symbol.

Photo by Paula Barry

Kyu and Prima, and the dance instructors around the world, in a short period of time there was a massive outpouring of support for the project – which raised the needed funds to complete the construction. It was such a joy to feel the joy with which people gave – from every corner of the globe – manifesting their love for the transmission of the Vajra dance, and the global significance of its origin at the site of the Hall.

Probably the most joyful moment was when Rinpoche visited the Hall for the first time in 2012, and we had our first Ganapuja together with him there. It was clear that this was his place, and he was happy there, and he expressed afterwards that he was pleased with it all. Obviously, the Inauguration itself in 2014 was quite special, with Community members present from around the globe. The first Vajra Dance course (in the Hall) with Prima last summer was also quite special. And Rinpoche also seemed happy coming in the late afternoons to have the Khaita practice there. The large round format (in the open air) seemed ideal – particularly for the circle dances. There is simply a strong presence in that space.

M: The future activities related to the Mandala Hall and a projected completion date?

EM: The building and the Mandala are largely complete. But there are many things that can and should be done over time to preserve the structure and enhance the experience of practitioners there. However, we are mostly out of funds, and new fundraising will have to happen at the right moment. For example, the wooden beams will need to be treated or painted at some point, and this is a big job. The entire inner structure has the possibility to be decoratively painted. We have discussed solar powered energy, as there is no electricity there. There are many other things.

M: How you see the Mandala Hall's benefit and use for the Dzogchen Community? The international value and more...

EM: Rinpoche has described that the Mandala Hall is located on a power spot, and the Universal Mandala and the Longsal also have their own power. So, practitioners from all over the globe can access this for the benefit of their practice by being there both collectively and individually. He has also said that this place would be the starting point of a pilgrimage for anyone seriously interested in the Vajra dance. It is also an ideal place for Dance and yoga courses and any kind of collective practice. It is also the first/only Universal Mandala on the globe – so we hope that more information will be transmitted about Vajra Dance opportunities on a Universal Mandala – which as of yet have not been introduced. Finally, this structure, like the Merigar Gumpa, will attract people to come and see it, and hopefully create a cause of connection for them. Even if they come only as tourists – they may be surprised.

M: A plan to make it more user friendly for more months of the year? Any possibilities?

EM: There are many things that can be done. First of all we are focusing on the road situation, which need a lot of improvement, and is quite expensive. There is also the need for improving the landscape after the clearing of many trees. There are paths to create, and better access to water and toilets.

The building itself may at some point in the future be able to be rezoned, so that it could be enclosed, but this will depend (at a minimum) on much better road access. If this were to be possible, the heating system could be hooked up, and this would allow for extending the season considerably. Even without the building enclosed there may be some advantage to have the radiant heat available to extend the season. Everything is a question of priority and wish.

Design and Construction Team

Vern Harrington – project management, Joe Zurylo – onsite construction manager, Jim Smith – design and construction, John La France – communications, Paula Barry, Marit Cranmer, Efrem Marder – design and research, Nary Mitchell – construction

Fundraising Team

Marit Cranmer, John La France, Efrem Marder, Jacqueline Gens, Nancy Paris, Kyu Kyuno

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J35jJPz0-pM> ©

The Purchase of the Old Conway Grammar School for the Dzogchen Community in America and The Shang Shung Institute in America in 1993

"If people understand the value of a culture and use it and have knowledge of it, then it will not be easy for the people to disappear because they belong to the culture. This is the fundamental aim."

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu - 1993

Edited excerpts from the article An Ocean of Possibilities, Mirror 22, July/August, 1993, page 1

During the August retreat of 1992 on Khandroling in Buckland MA, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu recommended to the practitioners of the North American Tsegyalgar Dzogchen Community to find another space, other than Upper Khandroling, in which to hold retreats that would accommodate large indoor gatherings and provide some accommodations for visitors. After this retreat, the Community established a long term planning committee to find the best way to achieve this goal. Following one of these planning meetings, Lauri Denyer mentioned that the old Conway Grammar School was on the market. Many people at the time knew the school was on the market but assumed the price was too high. Out of curiosity, a few people went to look at the building the following week. At the March 1993 retreat, we took Rinpoche to see the building. He was very enthusiastic when he recognized the enormous potential of the spaces. Many practitioners from the retreat went to visit the facility and enthusiasm ran high. At a fund raising meeting, money was pledged which would cover a down payment on the property."

The Schoolhouse was purchased in 1993

Tsegyalgar East

413 369 4153
secretary@tsegyalgar.org
www.tsegyalgar.org



Old Conway Grammar School.

Some quotes from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in an interview about the purchase of the Old Conway Grammar School, Mirror 22, July/August 1993, pages 8 and 9:

"The school has been bought not just by the Dzogchen Community at Tsegyalgar, but by a group of people of the Dzogchen Communities in both Europe and the US who have a common interest. We shouldn't think that only these people are responsible or committed to the school. All the people of the Community in any part of the world should be interested and committed because it is something that is of common interest."

"We already have a small retreat cabin on Upper Khandroling edl where I did a retreat for a few months and we have an idea to construct a few retreat cabins for personal retreats. And even if we have this marvelous place we cannot hope to build the base of the Tsegyalgar Community on that land because that is not something that can be easily accomplished. We can only use the land for things like personal retreats.

Some people have asked us why we do not sell the land [Khandroling edl] if we cannot use it and buy another tract of land that can become the base of the Dzogchen Community. But even if it is not possible to do much building on the land we already own, and even if we have problems with the neighbors and even if it might seem better to give up the land, we cannot do so because this land is related to the principle of the Dance of the Vajra, and is therefore sacred land. For this reason we must always maintain this land and use it as long as there is a Dzogchen Community on this earth."

"We have an urgent need of a base where we can work and meet and have an address for the of Tsegyalgar. From the time we inau-



gured the Shang Shung Institute in Italy at Merigar we have had the idea of a twin Institute in America because America is a large and important continent."

"So this large building at Conway will be the base for the Shang Shung Institute, ASIA and the Dzogchen Community all together. This is the reason we tried to find a big building. With a building of such size we will be able to organize all the activities of the SSI. Why have we created the Institute? In order to safe guard Tibetan Culture and bring the Tibetan Culture to the Western world. Through the Institute, Westerners who are interested in Tibetan Culture will have an opportunity to study and deepen their knowledge of it. This is the soundest base for the safe guarding of Tibetan culture because the best way to maintain and develop culture is to make people understand the value and usefulness of it. Of course if people do not understand this then the culture will only exist for a brief moment more, because if the people do not continue then neither does the culture. If people understand the value of a culture and use it and have knowledge of it, then it will not be easy for the people to disappear because they belong to the culture. This is the fundamental aim."

©

The Birth of Shang Shung Institute USA – Conway MA in 1994

In the Old Conway Grammar School

Lauri Marder

"Opening a branch of the Shang Shung Institute in America was both an honor and a responsibility, one which many of us took very joyfully and seriously. Our interest in ChNN's research into Tibetan history and sciences made this an exciting addition to our studies within the community, and we looked forward to increased understanding on many levels because of this opportunity. It had become clear from hearing Rinpoche's teachings that there was an infinite field of study and knowledge in Tibetan culture, with great benefit for all of humanity.

We were also motivated by a wish to give back something by becoming a repository, holding this knowledge in trust for future generations of both Tibetans and westerners. Though we did not know exactly how to go ahead, we began learning on our feet, or as one of our early board members said, "flying by the seat of our pants."

It was never easy. We had a few local experts, scholars, and teachers in Tibetan studies when we began, plus a very small library of Tibetan texts and no cohesive idea of what was needed to create an institute.

Glen Eddy (1941–2006), the well-known western thanka painter and student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, was a part of the Shang Shung Institute's faculty, establishing the Golden Vajra Art Guild in 1995. He was an accomplished artist, and produced a large body of work in this field during a career of over 30 years. Having been fully trained by master painters, he used natural mineral pigments, and knew every aspect of this art, which he not only loved but enjoyed teaching to others. He gave regular seminars in thanka painting and thig ste drawing, and completed several large commissioned works in his studio while in residence.

Dr James Valby, another student of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, studied with Dr Herbert Guenther at the University of Saskatchewan and received both an MA and Phd degrees in Far Eastern Studies. He has since been

Shang Shung Institute Inauguration

Conway, Massachusetts October 12, 1994

On October 12, 1994, the Shang Shung Institute was inaugurated with an official and vibrant gathering of about 100 of our community members in the town of Conway, Massachusetts. The event was held at the old Conway Grammar School, a historic building that has been the site of many educational endeavors in the area. The inauguration was a significant milestone in the history of the institute, marking the beginning of its journey to provide a comprehensive education in Tibetan culture, language, and sciences to a new generation of students.

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Tibetan Medicine at Shang Shung Institute USA is 10 years old

Caroline Hotaling and Bret Bourman

2015 is the 10th Anniversary of the founding of the Shang Shung Institute of America's School of Tibetan Medicine (SSI STM), the first Tibetan medicine school founded outside of the Himalayan Region in our era. The antecedents of the medicine school go back to 1998, when Dr. Thubten Phuntsog was invited to offer short courses towards a three-year program. In 2001, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo was invited to come from Lhasa to teach Tibetan medicine in the U.S. and the first four-year Tibetan medicine program of the Shang Shung Institute of America began in Conway, Massachusetts, in 2005. In 2009 that auspicious first class went on to graduate from the SSI School of Tibetan Medicine, and indeed many of them have come back to offer service to the development of the field in the U.S.

The Shang Shung Institute of America's School of Tibetan Medicine has enjoyed many firsts. SSI STM was licensed to operate a Private Occupational School in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2005. SSI STM has an important relationship with the Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) University Tibetan Medical College in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and the SSI STM students were able to participate in an internship at Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) Provincial Tibetan Medical Hospital, China, in 2009. SSI STM established the first KuNye Therapy Certification Program in 2011. Kunye Therapy is rooted in core principles and theory of traditional Tibetan Medicine, employing diagnostics, diet and lifestyle assessments, and the external therapies of the ancient lineage. In addition, as part of the ongoing effort to establish Tibetan Medicine in the West, Bret Bourman and Leela Whitcomb-Hewitt are transcribing the commentaries given by Dr. Wangmo on Tibetan Medicine.

Tibetan Medicine is traditionally taught in a sequence that roughly mirrors higher education in the U.S.: there is a four-year program akin to a Bachelor's program (dngos gzhi'i slob ma), and then a Master's program of study (shes ram zhib 'jug slob ma), a Doctoral program and even



The 2009 Graduating Class with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Dr Phuntsog Wangmo.



Dr Phuntsog Wangmo.

Post-Doctoral work. This entire sequence is no longer being offered in the many places it once was, even as schools such as the Shang Shung Institute of America's School of Tibetan Medicine work to develop a complete course of higher education that encompasses the latter three programs. Therefore the need to ensure the continuation of the full lineage of Tibetan Medicine is a particularly timely and crucial one.

In order to be considered an accomplished sMan pa (often written as Menpa) or doctor of Tibetan medicine, the student must master a wide range of competencies. In addition to the skills associated with medicine in the West, such as diagnostics, pathology and treatment methods, Tibetan Medical students also study the arts, such as poetry, in order to be able to speak with patients, and dance, in order to learn to ex-

ecute what they have learned with precision, for example.

Serious interest in learning Tibetan Medicine arose in Italy, Mexico, Australia, Russia and Spain, and Dr. Wangmo was appointed International Director of the Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine in 2012. The next year Shang Shung began an Online Program to serve its burgeoning community of domestic and international remote learners. Current student and SSI Board Member Drew McGlathery is a psychiatric nurse practitioner in Manhattan who noted recently that it is this online program that allows him to study Tibetan Medicine at all, since he can study before and after work.

The Shang Shung Institute of America's School of Tibetan Medicine team includes International Director Wangmo, other experts from the field, the Board of Directors (Matthew Hayat, Will Shea, Heidi Schor, Naomi Zeitz, Drew McGlathery, Anasuya Weil, and Matthew Schmookler), the staff (Bret Bourman, Martin Bobak, and Caroline Hotaling), alumni, and volunteers. Jacqueline Gens was instrumental in the founding of the school and has recently come back to serve on the Accreditation Committee. Alumni are also very important to the school, and alumni Matthew Schmookler, Mira Weil and Leela Whitcomb-Hewitt have recently come on as Teaching Assistants, and Yeshe Tsomo is also an accomplished KuNye therapist and an important team member.

In addition to the medical school, the Shang Shung Institute of America hosts several other important functions for Tsegyalgar East: the library at the Conway schoolhouse, for which Yuchen Namkhai and Marit Cranmer serve as archivists

and librarians of the many Dzogchen and Dharma materials there; the well-known Shang Shung Institute bookstore (www.shangshung.org/store), run until very recently by Anna Bartenstein; and teachings on topics such as Tibetan language, astrology and Yantra Yoga, that are available to a wider audience.

In addition, the Shang Shung Institute of America and alumni from its School of Tibetan Medicine were instrumental in the founding of ATMA, the American Tibetan Medical Association. ATMA is the national association of Tibetan Medical doctors founded to advance the field of Tibetan Medicine in the U.S. ATMA has been responsible for the creation of national standards for Tibetan Medicine in the U.S., and with the Shang Shung Institute and the Rubin Museum of Art in New York, cosponsored a groundbreaking national event: the Tibetan Medicine Conference: *Ancient Medicine for Modern Life: Tibetan Solutions for Stress Management, Chronic Illness and Mental Health*, held at the Rubin Museum from July 25th through 27th, 2014. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave the keynote address for the conference and the keynote address and conference were memorialized in *The Mirror* (<http://melong.com/?p=2445>) on August 27, 2014.

Looking ahead, Dr. Wangmo and the rest of the team at the Shang Shung Institute of America's School of Tibetan Medicine are working closely with ATMA and other partners to continue to expand the field of Tibetan Medicine in the U.S., including trying to understand the opportunities for accreditation and licensure that exist in the U.S. for both Western and immigrant sMan pa. They are also laying out plans to start the first advanced Tibetan Medical program outside of the Himalayan region. As always, the support of the Community is crucial to the preservation of Tibetan culture – of which Tibetan Medicine is at the heart – and to the success of the Shang Shung Institute of America. ©

SSI USA

18 Schoolhouse Road
P.O. Box 278
Conway, MA 01341, USA
Telephone: 413-369-4928
Fax: 413-369-4473
Secretary SSI secretary@shangshung.org
www.shangshung.org

Acquisition of Lower Khandroling

John Foster

After ten plus years in Land Court, in 2002, a decision was finally made by the judge as to our right to build retreat cabins on Upper Khandroling. The judge ruled that we had the right to build these cabins based on the fact that they were important and pertinent to the practice of our "religion". She made no decision as to the status of Mary Lyons Road being a town road or not. This meant that further construction on Upper Khandroling could, potentially, be challenged again on the basis of not having frontage on a town road.

Prior to this, Joe Zurylo had made some casual contact with Larry Pike, the owner of what is now Lower Khandroling and would stop and talk to him from time to time. We had already had some good relations with the Pike's as Larry's brother Ernie had testified on our behalf in Land court. Since the Pike property was the only abutting piece of land on a town road that would ever be available to us, we saw that by owning the Pike property we could eliminate the frontage issue by, if we chose, connecting the two properties. In the fall of 2002, we had an official appraisal done and a valuation of \$160,000 was established. The subsequent year, I began to have contact with Larry to establish a casual relationship, mainly by bringing over a six pack of beer and listening to his stories of old. Anyway, I told him that if he was ever of a mind to sell his land, we would be very interested in buying it. The whole situation was explained to Rinpoche and he said that if we could acquire this land it would be very good for the future. After a while, Larry began to entertain the idea of selling because he was getting older (he was in his late 70's) and maintaining his property was getting harder and harder for him. Also, he had this notion of building a cabin on some land somewhere and this would allow him to realize that dream.

So armed with honest value of the land, we made him an offer with several conditions. As I recall, the first offer had him moving out as soon as we owned it and he rejected it because he had no other place to go and his cabin idea was not looking good. He had not lived anywhere else in



Original Pike House.

Photo by John Foster

his entire life but on this property and the notion of renting an apartment or the like was totally foreign to him. We made him another offer wherein he could live there for a period of time and pay us rent until he found something else. He rejected that offer as well. I think we made him one other offer, which he rejected and he said he was beginning to rethink his notion of selling at all.



Khaita in Rinpoche's house.

Photo by Paula Barry

I believe it was in 2004, we had a meeting with Rinpoche sitting around the dining table at Efrem's, where we explained that Larry was getting cold feet about selling, had rejected our offers and could Rinpoche give us some advice as to how to proceed. Rinpoche related the story of how Merigar came to acquire Merigar Due. That after years of asking, the old farmer who owned Merigar Due finally came to him and that since none of his children were interested in farming and since Merigar had been a good neighbor, he would finally sell it to Rinpoche. Patience was the key here. So Rinpoche suggested that we make him an offer whereby Larry would have the money in the bank and be allowed to live

there as long he lived or wanted with no strings attached. We would pay the taxes, utilities, everything. I said that I would be willing to sell my house to the Community with that deal, and Rinpoche laughed.

It being an offer no one could refuse, he accepted. I believe Larry lived about a year longer and since he had no will the process of our taking full use of the house and barns was held up in Probate Court for about a year. He was estranged from his brother Ernie and so his closest relative was a nephew who helped him from time to time and who came to inherit most all of his possessions, the only ones of value being two tractors. In any event, the whole shebang was now ours and Sean was the first to live there. The house was in bad condition and since the basement had a dirt floor, mold and god knows what was always present. Finally, no one lived there. We made efforts to re-support the ageing and dilapidated barn, which has held up to now.

At a get together with Rinpoche in front of the farmhouse sometime after Mr. Pike had died, he mused how he saw Lower Khandroling being used. He said it would be good if we could build a Gonpa with space for people to live who, in the future, would come to Khandroling for visits and "pilgrimage", a road somehow connecting Lower and Upper Khandroling so we could bypass the neighbors on Mary Lyons road and also slowly to have people move to lower Khandroling (if possible) or nearby to develop more of a community atmosphere. ©

Kundrolling – Place of Total Liberation

Michael Katz and the New York City
Dzogchen Community

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has been visiting New York City since the early 1980's. The New York Community has organized many retreats at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Columbia University, the St. Varten's Armenian Cathedral, and many other important venues. In recent years, Rinpoche has also taken part in multiple NY symposia, conferences, and other events related to his work on the Tibetan Language, Tibetan Medicine, and the history of Shang Shung. Two important events that occurred in NYC at the world-renowned Rubin Museum were Rinpoche's presentation of the book, *The Light of Kailash*, and a very successful conference sponsored by ATMA (the American Medical Association), to which Rinpoche was invited to give the keynote address.

New York clearly has strong karma with our Master. In addition to teaching the highest practices of Ati Yoga here many times, Rinpoche also spent a year undergoing treatment and overcoming leukemia at Sloane Kettering Hospital. New York City is central to many of the stories he tells about overcoming this obstacle, which according to a prophecy he received early in his life from his Master Changchub Dorje, would have killed him were it not for his connection with Goma Devi and his Longsal Terma dreams, including the Mandarava practice.

For many years the Community of his New York students met at different practitioners' apartments and in rented shared-spaces to accommodate our Vajra Dance Mandala, which has been in continuous use since 1994. The thought of establishing a permanent center here in New York City was considered many times, but the extremely high rents in the city made the proposition very daunting.

After one of Rinpoche's retreats in 2005, we met for a party at Jennifer Fox's apartment in Lower Manhattan. The energy was high, and the idea of establishing a Ling was again proposed. It was clear immediately that Rinpoche was in favor of the idea.

Here are some memories from Johanna Bennett, who actually found the space at 151 West 30th St.:



Dancing at Kundrolling.

Photo by Tashi Kaiser

"I set out on a search for a 'small' commercial space in NYC that would have to be at least 800 square feet with 600 square feet pillar free in an elevator building so Rinpoche could come to it when he wanted to. Anyone who has ever lived in NYC knows that this is pretty much impossible, especially me who has spent most of her working life in real estate. So I call a friend in commercial real estate and asked for some help. It took six months to find a place that could accommodate the small version of the Mandala. In the same moment that a Mandala friendly place was located, Rinpoche arrived in NYC. During the six months of searching, I had continually enlisted the help of other NYC Community Practitioners.

Rinpoche was informed every step of the way and now that he was back in New York I asked for a special Community Meeting where the idea of this one particular affordable office space in a central location of NYC where the Mandala happened to fit, was presented. I had taken some pictures and passed out some papers with the pictures and pricing to the fifty or sixty people gathered at Jennifer Fox's loft. Some people were in favor and some not, but it was about 50/50 and that was a pleasant surprise.

The most valid argument was financial, saying that unless NYC Community Members were willing to come together and commit funds monthly we could not manage it. I really didn't think any one would be able to do that. So I asked, 'Can I see a show of hands of how many people would be willing to commit \$50.00 per month to a Ling in NYC?'

My jaw dropped to the floor when 90% of the room raised their hands. Then suddenly someone thought to ask Rinpoche how he felt about it all and he said, 'It can be good to have an address', with a shrug of his shoulders. Then there was a loud round of applause and everyone was joyful about it all!

In the busiest, most self-centered place in the world, a group of students of the Va-

gradhara Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, got over all of their individual problems and tensions with each other long enough to manifest a place where everyone can take a moment out of their lives and practice together. We all attempt to do as Rinpoche says and do our best." ...and Katya Pemberton, excerpted from an interview in Mirror 109, page 29, about the moment at this party that the decision to have a Ling was made.

"I remember that night that Rinpoche was here in NYC and after the retreat we had a meeting of the Community where Johanna Bennett presented the idea to Rinpoche that she had found a place where we could have our own space, a Ling. It was brought to everyone's attention that we would have to participate financially to secure the place. Rinpoche was there and he was just waiting for us to step forward and initiate whether it would happen or not. It was an open question. I remember him sitting in the chair and everyone else sitting on the floor and we didn't know if it was going to happen or not. It was a matter of voting how many could participate in that moment in order for it to happen. Enough people raised their hands and it looked like we could pull it together and he looked at us very slowly and said, 'Good!'

So, a space in midtown Manhattan was located, money was pledged, and the center, which Rinpoche named Kundrolling, "Place of Total Liberation", was born.

New York City programs and events have increased steadily over the years. Ongoing Ganapujas, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga classes have taken root. We have also had regular workshops and weekend retreats by Santi Maha Sangha teachers and other Dzogchen Community instructors and attendance has increased at our little oasis in midtown Manhattan.

High rent remains a problem but many members of the New York Community are generously pledging on a monthly basis. We also have many programs planned for the near future and although Rinpoche will not visit NYC this year we are excited to anticipate seeing him at Tsegylgar in July.

Anytime you are in New York City, we look forward to seeing you at Kundrolling! ©

Kundrolling

151 W 30th St, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10001

community@kundrolling.org

The Beginnings of the California Dzogchen Community and Kyungding Gar (khyung lding sgar) Cazadero California

"Khyungding Gar (khyung lding sgar): khyung means garuda, ding means soaring, gar means camp, the meaning is 'Camp of the Soaring Garuda.'"

Jim Valby

Nary Mitchell

Early History in California

Rinpoche first came to Northern California in 1979. One of the Community members, Jim Raschik, first saw Rinpoche at a talk on Buddhism at a San Francisco church. The first retreat Rinpoche gave was at Potter Valley in 1980. Rinpoche did two retreats at Potter Valley and I met him after the first one. The 3rd retreat was at a place called Oz, in Northern California, right on the coast. It was at a place that was developed by this hippie guy called Redwood, and a back to nature group. Redwood had provided us with this place. There was a large barn that was converted into a kind of Gonpa where we had the teachings, and we also had teachings in the old apple orchard. The Community developed primarily in the Bay Area, and we would have group meetings at different people's homes there. This continued, including our unsuccessful attempt at having our own land in 1986, until about the year 2000 when we established our Ling, Dondrubling, in Berkeley.

Finding and Buying Cazadero – Kyungding Gar

In 1983, we discovered that they had started a Dzogchen Community in New York City, and Conway, Massachusetts, so we decided, the people who were members of the West Coast Community, to consolidate and form a Community. We got in touch with Rinpoche and he said go ahead and do that. The majority of the practitioners were living in the Bay Area at that time. There were about thirty or forty of us. We maintained contact with Rinpoche and he came almost



Rinpoche teaching, Cazadero, 1987.

every year from 1981 at Potter Valley to 1998 to Lake Tahoe. In 1983 we had a retreat at Harbin Hot Springs in Northern California, I did not attend, but then we made contact with another person who was part of the Buddhist Community, not the Dzogchen



Rinpoche, Cazadero, 1987.

Community, who was living in the mountains around Nevada City and we arranged with him to have a retreat on his property. We had retreats there for about three or four years. Then we decided that instead of using someone else's property we would purchase some land and we would develop it according to some indications Rinpoche had given us. It was difficult to find anything rural for practice close to the city, some people wanted a more isolated place for practice and some wanted a city center. At that time the rural idea won out. We had

had problems with neighbors in the other places where we met, so Rinpoche recommended we try and find something that could be ours and we would have more control over.

So in 1986 a group of people from north of the Bay area sold us land, about 108 acres, for around \$150,000. Rinpoche gave us \$50,000, two people mortgaged their homes and then we got some donations. We put this together and we began clearing and building on the land. This land was located about five miles west and north of Cazadero, California, in the north on Austin Creek. It was very steep property, like almost fifty degrees, and almost the whole cliff was the whole stretch of land. The place is about two hours by car from San Francisco.

There were about seven of us who went up and looked at the land and made plans for what we actually needed to do; we cleared, created roads, created some terracing, we built a little cabin with a kitchen where we thought Rinpoche would stay, at the time though Rinpoche preferred to stay in a tent. So after we bought the land it took us about six months to get everything up and running. I was responsible for putting in the water system. There were about six or seven guys working on carpentry and building, and then people doing karma yoga clearing the land and making roads.

Rinpoche came in August in 1987 for the first retreat at Kyungding Gar, the Place of the Soaring Garuda (Kyung). [This land was a protected nesting site for Peregrine Falcons, ed] This was the first time that I re-

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History of Tsegyalgar West

Laurie Bauer and Liza Morrell
All photos by Laurie Bauer

Tsegyalgar West retreat land, historically called 'Ranchos de Los Naranjos' by the local community, is comprised of 3,000 acres of unique tropical desert in the mountains of Baja Sur, close to beaches on the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific. It has several springs, a huge arroyo with perpetual pools, giant white fig trees, many native palm trees, cacti and grand vistas. The land has its own feeling, soul and mystery.

Norbu Rinpoche, when first walking the natural areas of this property in 2004, looked intently at the land. He especially loved the granite ridges and rocks formations along the way to the valleys. He remarked several times at the similarity to Derghe in Eastern Tibet in some respects and of the 'Beyuls', historically known to be valleys that are hidden from people with ordinary vision. The recognition of a Beyul in this context is more of a call to participation than it is one of speculation.

The Tibetan tradition of 'Beyul' hidden valleys is generally traced back to Guru Padmasambhava, but have a more pragmatic base than just legendary. Today, in central Khams-Derghe, called by some the 'Dzogchen Holy Land', you will find what is perhaps Tibet's cultural and Buddhist center. Near the mountainous region of this area are located about a thousand natural caves still populated by practitioners of various disciplines. It is said many secret yogis achieved realization at the Beyul Jong caves. Beyul places, at their core, have always been about the life of a Communi-

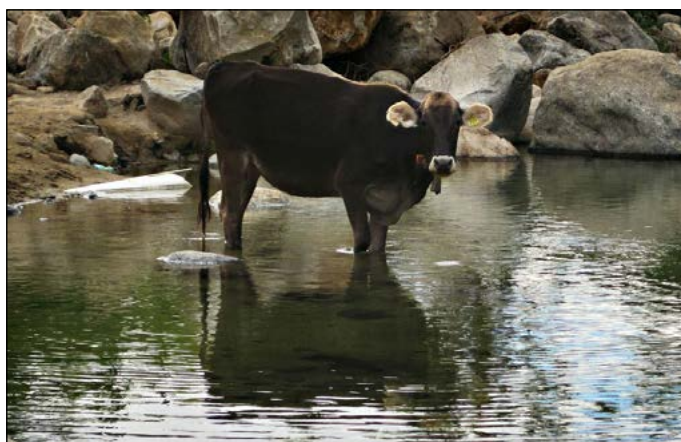
ty – whether it be Mahasiddhas or simple mountain people – where even the earth itself participates.

So while history and imagination regale us, we also must be aware that there is a development possible, not just in the individual, but also more importantly in

the Community as a whole, from the land of Los Naranjos. The worldwide Dzogchen Community ultimately shares in what we do with that. As the world progresses in many directions, we as practitioners have a responsibility for the continuation of the Dzogchen Teachings we have received. The Baja Sur retreat land's Beyul definitely holds a place for our future, ready for accomplishment.

Fast forward over a decade of dedicated efforts of a small group of members holding the torch for the magnificent possibility of this natural, verdant wilderness welcoming

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member that he taught Longde. The retreat was around eight days long. We talked with Rinpoche about the possibility of developing the land, and Gene Kim, an architect, drew up some plans and we presented it to the county. We went to the first of a series of hearings and there were about ten of us, about fifty people who been collected by the neighbor who had moved there just before we started the retreat and he had never indicated there were any problems until the hearing. So at the hearing people

tried to block us saying they did not want this kind of center in the area. Then we had three appeals and we presented the appeal to the county and each time we went for a hearing the numbers in opposition increased. Rinpoche said ok, we sell the property and we should find a place that is warm where he could give retreats in the winter. So we sold Cazadero in 1992.

Tsegyalgar West is Born

We spent time looking for land until around 2003 when Jey Clarke discovered the land

for Tsegyalgar West in Baja on the internet, and together with Carol Fields, Tom Clarke and Margaret Bradford went to visit it. We used the money from the sale of the land in Cazadero to complete the legal aspects and contracts we needed in order to receive the donation of the three thousand acres in Baja. We ended up paying about \$55,000 for a four million dollar piece of land. So here we are today. ©



Retreat with Jim Valby.

Photo by Laurel Bellon

Dondrubling, Berkeley California

In 1987, after several successful retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Nevada City, Cazadero, and other locations, students formed The Dzogchen Community West Coast, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, in order to continue to make his teachings available to all. We are designated as a church, which gives us the ability to invite teachers and hold courses. Other West Coast communities, such as Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Diego have been able to use our non-profit status as well to hold retreats in their areas. For many years, we met in members houses to practice, renting spaces for larger events such as Yantra Yoga and used a portable mandala for Vajra Dance.

After the very successful Oakland retreat with Rinpoche in May 2001, and due to increased interest in the practice due to that retreat, the Dzogchen Community West Coast found a location centrally located in Berkeley California, easily accessible by car and public transportation. It is approximately 1,000 square feet, and legally able to hold 50 practitioners. With much help from many talented carpenters, electricians, artists, and other Community members, the space was converted into a light filled center with a dance mandala. Dondrubling opened its doors in March 2002. ©

Dondrubling

2748 #D Adeline Street
Berkeley, CA 94703
510.644.2260 voice mail
aha@dzogchencommunitywest.org
<http://dzogchencommunitywest.org/>

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practitioners to live within its sanctuary and flourish.

2105 Update

There is now a large new Gonpa with sliding panels to the outdoors, a Vajra Dance Hall, efficient Kitchen and open-air Dining hall. 22 Casitas houses are available to rent for short or longer retreats for groups and for individuals. Campgrounds have been created and native tropical/desert gardens surround all common areas. The Community in nearby Baja area offers a wide variety of programs for all. Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance are ongoing at the Gar and in the local towns. Dzogchen teachers offer retreats every winter at the Gar. This coming winter season sees an Santi Maha Sangha

base level retreat in October, a Mandarava retreat with Nina Robinson over the Christmas/New years holiday and Dream Yoga retreat in February of 2016.

Tsegyalgar West is the largest Gar 'land-wise', but with the smallest population of people living here; it's amazing to have gotten this far. Usually the Community exists first *before* securing retreat land, but this land was given as an extraordinary donation to Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Community has followed his lead. We need everyone's help to grow this retreat center, to come to practice, to support and benefit from this refuge jewel in the natural wilderness at Baja California Sur.

We encourage you to make a gift, large or small, to support the new development phase about to begin. It is a place for on-

Pelzomling – The Place of Prosperity and Victory

Mexico City, Mexico

Giorgio Minuzzo

It was in 2005 after the Mexican retreats of Rinpoche in Valle de Bravo and Tsegyalgar West that some of his students started to meet to practice together in Mexico DF (Mexico City). In 2006 the Master suggested to the local practitioners to open Pelzomling, "Place of Prosperity and Victory", the Ling of Mexico City, which now houses 60 local members of the International Dzogchen Community.

At that time people were meeting at different places of the city. Then a practitioner offered a regular space in her private house. Finally in 2011 at the "Trentennale of Merigar West", a few practitioners from Mexico City present at the festivity, realized the importance of getting the Ling out from a private house to make the teaching easily accessible to more people. Once back home, we immediately started the constitution of a legal entity for the local Association Dzogchen Community as well to find a new place for the Ling.

To help find a convenient place we did "Green Tara" practice and after only a couple of weeks of regular practice, a new *Rental* sign appeared at the window of an

going ecological living, restoration and education; a place to be with other practitioners and live in health and well being in nature; a place where organic vegetables and fruits are abundant, a place enriched by the many talents of Community members.

Come and join us in person, so that this Gar's infrastructure develops – a place to relax and regenerate one's natural state, unfettered by the modern world. This unique resource for the international Community is a sanctuary to preserve and ensure the Dzogchen tradition flourishes in the experience of all those it touches.

For more information visit:
www.tsegyalgarwest.org and
<http://bajagar.blogspot.mx> ©



The Hall of Casa Drolma

Photo by Giorgio Minuzzo

old deteriorated building very close to the Ling. On the door a banner announced: *"Center for Advanced Studies in Science of Laws and Criminology"*. It was an old school of law, closed for almost 15 years, a complete first floor of 380 square meters in a classic building, European style, from the beginning of the 20th century (1914).

The house, very much deteriorated for the years of negligence, conserved behind the many division walls, the false ceilings and all other ruins left from the school time, were the original characteristics of the house: high ceilings, stucco decorations, big wooden windows and doors, wooden floors original of the beginning of the last century. An open terrace on the roof of the building and big enough for a Vajra Dance Mandala was the final condition that convinced it was the ideal place for the Ling.

It was clear that the repair costs would be quite high, but the dimension and characteristics of the building, was a unique opportunity to have a nice headquarters for the Dzogchen Community of Mexico as well a place of interest for rentals open to other group of people. Without hesitation a few practitioners took immediately charge of the project, defined the architectural details, created a logo and an image for the house, invented a management model that during a transition period would not have to overload on the local Gakyil. The small local sangha put its energy by enthusiastically participating in the cleaning and painting of the house, while the main work was done by a professional construction company.

The house was called **"Casa Drolma"**, an homage to Green Tara and in four months the Ling was inaugurated by a Santi Maha Sangha program with Steve Landsberg.



Making namkhas.

Photo by Giorgio Minuzzo

Since that time the house is used for the regular program of practices, conferences, courses and retreats the local Dzogchen Community is organizing in the city. We have had several instructors visiting the new Ling including Jim Valby, Costantino Albini, Nina Robinson, Grisha Mokin, Elio Guarisco, Anna Neyman, Patricia Pearl, Carolina Mingolla, Jimena Piedra, Elias Capriles, some of them more than one time. Malcom Smith and Osa Manell ran some programs on Tibetan Traditional Medicine, and Fabio Andrico a Yantra Yoga supervision for some new instructors from North America. Finally in 2013 Rinpoche visited the Ling where he guided a contemplation practice in the house and some Khaita dances on the deck at the roof of the building.

Casa Drolma has two big yoga rooms, a room/Gonpa used for the practices of meditation and Ganapujas, a bookstore, an office, an central open patio, a kitchen professionally equipped, bathrooms (male and female) with showers, two bedrooms to host



Yoga Class at Pelzomling.

Photo by Carl Stepath

instructors invited to the center and/or for rental, stores and a big deck built on the roof as platform for the mandala of Vajra Dance.

To give sustainability to the project, the house is managed by a part time administrator in charged to coordinate all the activities of the house, take care of the basic maintenance of the house and to the payments of the different bills. One of the two big yoga rooms is rented to an Asthanga



Dancing on the roof.

Photo by C Stepath

Yoga studio. The other spaces are regularly rented to different association or other Dharma groups for their events. There are regular classes of Danzon, a classic and elegant Mexican, on Sunday. The whole house is rented 4-6 times a year for marriages or to film agencies shooting commercial spots, or to business companies for training courses or parties for their employees. ©

Pelzomling

Address: Puebla 135, colonia Roma, delegacion Cuauhtemoc, Mexico DF.
Tel +52 (55) 55333278
pelzomling@gmail.com

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Interview with Mariano Gil
Feb 6, 2015

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu & An Artist in the Dzogchen Community

Mariano Gil was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 27th, 1961. He grew up in an artistic and musical family. He started formal music education at age 15 at the National Conservatory of Music. After High School he enrolled in Medical School graduating in 1986. He was planning to become a psychoanalyst, when after receiving a scholarship to Berklee College of Music move to Boston to study music. At that point he started practicing meditation in the Theravada tradition, studying with Larry Rosenberg and Narayan Liebenson at the Cambridge Insight Meditation Center and retreat centers. While studying music at Berklee he worked as music instructor, and got some assignments as an illustrator based on his musician's portraits. In 1993 he met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and has been a student since. He took his Santi Maha Sangha Base exam in 1995 and in 2015 became an Santi Maha Sangha Base instructor. Mariano continues to write and perform music in the NY area, shows his paintings and started his first weekly SMS courses in Kundrolling, NYC. He lives in Brooklyn, NY with his son Sebastian, who plays trumpet.

The Mirror: Can you tell us a little about how you met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, your life, your younger life, and what led you to the teachings, etc?

Mariano Gil: I first came into contact with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu through his books. I was practicing in the Theravada tradition at the Insight Meditation Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts and was attending those centers and going to retreats. I moved to Boston right after graduating as a medical doctor in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when I won a scholarship to study music at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. This was a huge shift in my life. I was planning to be a psychiatrist or a researcher and was interested in neuroscience and psychoanalysis. I was reading

philosophy and I was very much interested in the mind. When I arrived in Boston, I discovered the Buddhist teachings and felt at home right away, it was what I had been looking for.

I started going to silent meditation retreats. At one point in these long sitting retreats, I started having certain experiences particularly related to the mind, which was what I was drawn to the most. Particularly observing my thoughts: Are thoughts substance? What are they? Where are they? Where did they come from? I was kind of obsessed with that. It wasn't something my teachers were telling me about there but it was more of my personal inclination. As soon as I started doing that something opened up completely for me. I started having very strong experiences and my practice became very stable.

M: What methods were used?

MG: The instructions were mostly related to the Pali teachings of the Buddha, awareness of the breath and mindfulness practice. They were very simple and clear and initially I followed them to the letter. That helped particularly with posture and the physical aspect of sitting, and slowing my thought process, which made it easier to start observing the mind. I remember reading Krishnamurti and other different teachers who would say, "observe your mind" and I would think what is this and what are they talking about? Then after doing these retreats I noticed I could do that. At one point I had very strong experiences and then they became reliable and stable and was able to go into *shamata* much more deeply after doing that...it was like my mind was able to focus without distractions.

So I practiced that way for about six years, but as the years passed by I kept trying to understand that experience with thoughts, which was more related to movement and dropping the object of fixation.

M: Did you talk with your teachers about this?

MG: I did. Yet my teachers, although very helpful, weren't giving me too many clues to what was happening when observing



thoughts, and kept pointing back to this more conscious and effortful practice of observing my breath. I felt that something was opening for me in a way that I wanted to understand better, so I started searching for books...

I would skip all the breaks during retreat and would stay sitting for hours non-stop because once I would enter into a very stable *shamata* I felt no need to move. It was a blissful experience and I got very attached to it, but I felt I was missing some understanding that could help me move further, or even see my obstacles. So, I started reading and it was only when I discovered Tibetan Buddhism that I found some answers. Initially I had a bit of reservation towards Tibetan teachings because I couldn't connect to the whole idea of rituals and religion, but when I started reading, I think the first books might have been Trungpa books, Lama Yeshe, Tarthang Tulku, right away they would talk about observing the mind. That really gave me a lot of inspiration. I found out there was a Sakya teacher in Boston, so I went to see him. He was working with very scholarly studies of the sutras and I tried but I couldn't connect or find what I was looking for there. I was coming from a very experiential practice. In one of those environments I met Malcolm Smith and he had a book and I don't know why, but I felt like in that book was where I would find my information.

M: And what was that book?

MG: Well initially Malcolm was very protective and he said no you are not ready for this and you first have to learn this and that and I said, "I need to see what that book is." The book was *The Cycle of Day and Night* by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. I found



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Mariano playing flutes together at Khandroling.

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the book and I also discovered that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was alive, I didn't even know because he might have been a teacher from an historical period, not only was he alive, but he had some students in Boston. So I got the book and started reading right away. This was in 1991.

M: So you were enrolled at the Berklee College of Music at that time?

MG: Yes, I lived very close to the meditation center and would go to the morning and evening sittings and I was really involved, but I started to have a little bit of disconnection and the teacher was not too happy with the questions I was asking. So when I started reading *The Cycle of Day and Night* I would just have experiences that were very similar to what would happen after hours of sitting during ten day silent retreats, except they were spontaneous, they would just happen. It was like someone was grabbing me by the hand. The book has instructions on direct introduction and not only that, but how to stabilize, that book became 'my' book for many years. I have probably read it one hundred times; I would read it daily as a practice.

So I decided to find out more about Dzogchen, found a telephone number to call and Des Barry answered and he said yes there are people in Boston and so I started practicing there. I felt that this was my teacher and there was no going any further and I just felt like that was it, not only in terms of the trust in the teacher but also the teachings themselves. I felt like there was nowhere else to go, that was the end of the line, and it could go so much further, but it was the point of connection. So

I found out Rinpoche was coming to Massachusetts and I went to the retreat in 1992 at a high school during a big spring snowstorm. Everything was a confirmation, just being in his presence, but also a lot of things that were very obscure for me, like everything having to do with Vajrayana. I was very intrigued with many things, but

MG: Yes I went through six years of medical school, in Argentina where I am from, but by the fifth year I had a very big crisis, which, when I look back on it, it seems as if it was almost a break that allowed me to go in to the teachings. Before that I was much more into the mind and very drawn to science and psychoanalysis. I was also interested in music, art, philosophy and poetry.

M: So when you went to medical school you had an experience of what might be called the 'dark night of the soul'?

MG: Yes, I think it was a combination of things. My best friend had committed suicide when I was about 18 or 19; we studied sciences together and we were both trying to figure out the mysteries of life. We were both very young and idealistic and he was brilliant and I could connect to him very well, so when he committed suicide I was devastated. He had been diagnosed with schizophrenia so that also became an incentive to become a psychiatrist, for me to understand what schizophrenia is and help people. Then I also had a semi-fatal accident coming back from a gig, someone was



Mariano (far right) with Lynn and Michael at the Santi Maha Sangha Teacher Exams, Tenerife.

for me when I heard Chögyal Namkhai Norbu talk everything became crystal clear; for the first time I understood the difference between transformation and renunciation, and why we do all these things in tantra. What seemed a little exotic before now became very concrete and something that could be applied.

M: Earlier you had trained as a medical doctor and you renounced all that to go towards music, can you talk a little about that?

driving us back and I don't know why but I had a premonition that something would happen. I was very scared and everyone else fell asleep, and then at one point I see the guy going towards the car in front of us and I think what the heck is going on and I look and the hired driver had fallen asleep so he crashes into the car in front of us. Nothing happened to any of us but I had all the people on top of me, I couldn't breathe, I got really scared, I panicked. I was on the bottom of the pile of people and it took a

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Tiger by Mariano Gill.



Lion by Mariano Gill.



Mariano with his painting.

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long time for us to get up and I couldn't breathe and so I thought I was dying. I saw the whole thing happening, our car flipping over, and I was saying good-bye... even after the accident I thought I would die and I was waiting for the stars to turn off. It was almost like the accident was sent to me.

The very next course in medical school was neurosurgery. I was already pretty much a hypochondriac because you have to study so much about disease and causes of death; I was the kind of student who would take it all in, all the sicknesses. Some students were the kind that put on their white doctor's apron and take their distance. I wasn't able to do that, with the patients or with the studying. I got a little crazy with this. I was also reading very difficult stuff like Wittgenstein, Lacan, Gödel besides the medical literature... it was a mixture of things, I wasn't sleeping and I would have panic attacks where I would feel I would die. Meanwhile you study a lot take exams and I would have many sleepless nights so I had two months of something very hellish. I would go to a psychoanalyst three times a week, which is normal when you are studying to become one, and when I was feeling like this I went four times a week. Slowly things got better. At one point therapy stopped making any sense. The doctor kept interpreting and I said fine you can interpret to the end of your life, but I am stopping this. I stayed in medical school not knowing which direction I would take. Finally everything kind of calmed down and I graduated.

Two weeks after graduation from medical school, Berklee College of Music from Boston did a ten-day course in Argentina

and at the end they gave scholarships. I was already a musician and I was awarded a scholarship, so I decided to take a break and go for a semester or something. I had been playing music from a young age, and when I was fifteen I started going to a conservatory and studied with a great flute master, Alfredo Ianelli, a classical flute teacher. Then I started studying more jazz, jamming and playing out. I was so excited to go to Berklee Music School. I wanted to take a year off anyways, before going to residency, and what better thing than to go for a semester to Berklee. After a semester at Berklee the thought of medicine had not crossed my mind once, so I stayed, and that is when I encountered the meditation center, etc., which all led me to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

I also had always done drawings and paintings; art is very much in my family. I did not feel as talented as the people around me but I found a way to visually express myself and then in Boston I made a living out of that. I did t-shirt designs for the Berklee College, I did a lot of portraits of musicians in my style, I had some exhibitions, someone saw my work and hired me for a magazine; when I moved to NYC some musicians had seen my drawings and they hired me for an animation company.

M: How did you end up moving to NYC?

MG: All the best musicians I met in Boston were moving to NYC, and I wanted to go too. I graduated from the music school and had been playing out with bands and in clubs since I was in Buenos Aires. Many of the jazz musicians at the time when I was in Boston went on to become very famous and it was a very special time for jazz.

Initially I was not playing so much in NYC because I needed to make a living and the visual thing took over; I was doing illustration and computer graphics. Did lots of CD cover art, I also have some private music students and three years ago I started teaching chess in private schools for kids.

M: Can you talk a little about how the teachings have impacted your music and visual art or not?

MG: For me it goes both ways; probably it was the music and the art that opened me up to the possibility of something else which in the end was Buddhist teachings and meditation, and then finally to Dzogchen and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings. Definitely once I started practicing Dzogchen, I started to realize that a lot of the ideal frame of mind of a musician is that, ideally being completely integrated with sound. For example, jazz can have a reputation for being intellectual, and one can go the intellectual route and one can access it initially intellectually, although traditionally I don't think it was very much that way. It was coming from the Blues and was very much an oral tradition, which has been lost and maybe that is why many people don't like jazz, because it has become something else. But when you are performing the music and what is called improvisation, which is also misunderstood a lot, it does not mean do whatever you want whenever you want, it means being very present so you can connect both with your knowledge of the music, the tradition, and also the musicians around you; so that you can respond and something comes very organically, in the moment. So if you are in your head, you cut off from the musi-



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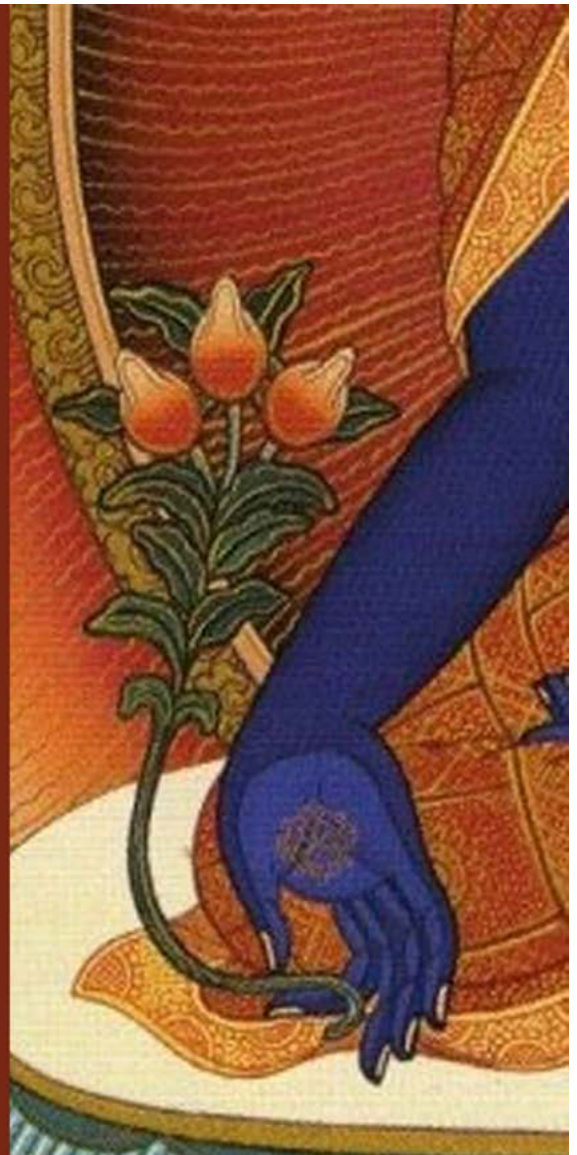
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cians around you and the audience. Many times I hear musicians who are not practitioners, when they describe their experience they say the state, or selfless, or something that has to do with the moment where they can drop their ideas and it is like they are being played. It is like their fingers are responding to this other thing. As far as visual art, it runs in the family. I have to say I am very much self-taught. I've had a lot of interest in "Buddhist" art, and really love the art I have seen in Tibetan Medical texts; I love the way the animals are depicted. I guess I have never had a realistic approach to drawing and I feel there is always something one brings to reality anyway, not as something mathematically perfect or something. There is always a lens. So I have done some of those animals in my own way.

M: You just became a Base Level Santi Maha Sangha instructor here in Dzamling Gar, Tenerife. Do you want to talk a little about that experience to close?

MG: It was a great experience and taught me a lot. I did the base exam and training twenty years ago. It had been in my mind forever but because of many involvements and becoming a father there were always some kinds of difficulties. I felt it was important to become authorized to help people honestly and correctly. Preparing was a real challenge and a lot of time had gone by, but I was very inspired by studying hard again and using my memory in this kind of way and the challenge of explaining in front of Rinpoche and the members of the Community, was a great learning experience.

At the exams I met fabulous people and we were all very supportive of each other, understanding both the challenge of

the exam and the responsibility we have by making this commitment. It was really wonderful. Now I will go back to NYC and Kundrolling. Kundrolling has some financial challenges, but I have enormous hopes for the Community; I have seen some great changes and I feel that the NY Community is in a wonderful place – the energy, there are no fights, everyone seems to be there to help, to learn more and beyond. Hopefully we will get some study groups going on a regular basis. It feels like NYC is an important place, there are a lot of things calling for your attention in NYC, so I think it is important for our center to have something to offer and I think there are a lot of great people there. There are a lot of very talented people in NYC and there is also a Tibetan Community in Queens, so I hope we can get our organization together and collaborate and make the center very alive. ©



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