



THE MIRROR

No. 131
March 2016



Purification Through
Breath and Mantra

Shangpa Master Denys
Focus on Merigar East
Khaita



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY



Upcoming Events with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Photo: P. Fassoli

2016

Spain
Barcelona
April 15–17, 2016 *New Dates*
Third Integrative Medicine
Conference

Tenerife
Dzamling Gar
End of April/May 2016
Tibetan Cultural Week
This event has been cancelled

June 3–7, 2016
Tsalung Retreat –
The Pranayamas of Yantra Yoga

Italy
Merigar West
July 9–15, 2016
Merigar West Retreat *New event*

Czech Republic
August 12–14, 2016
Czech Retreat *New event*

Slovakia
August 19–21, 2016
Slovakia Retreat *New event*

Italy
Merigar West
August 26–September 1, 2016
Merigar West Retreat *New event*

December 9, 2016
Intensive practice of Naggon
New event

December 10–11, 2016
Inauguration of the Asian Art
Museum in Arcidosso and
Celebration of the 35th Anniversary
of Merigar West *New event*

Contents

Schedule	2
Editorial	3
Purification Through Breath and Mantra	4
Open Mindfulness Training	6
Shangpa Master Denys	7
International Gakyil	8
Shang Shung Institute	9
ASIA	12
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on the Dzamling Gar Project	13
Update on the Dzamling Gar Project	13
The Joy of Generosity	16
Dzamling Gar Song Project	17
Losar and the Mandarava Retreat	18
Working with Communication	19
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu about Khaita	22
The Khaita Exams	23
Yantra Yoga for Pregnancy	27
Tso Pema, The Burning Lake	28
Focus on Merigar East	31

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FILMS



Editorial

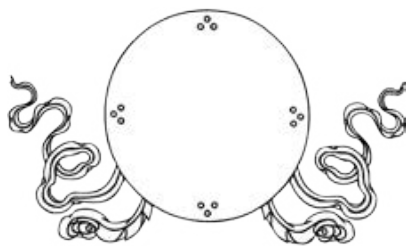
This March 2016 issue brings our readers a number of articles, interviews, and wide photo coverage of events and developments at Dzamling Gar, in Tenerife, over the winter and spring months. Due to the ongoing presence of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the Global Gar has been and continues to be the focus of attention and the heart of activities for the entire Dzogchen Community. The Gar has drawn practitioners from the far corners of the earth, from Mongolia to Peru, from India to South Africa, to truly make this Gar live up to its international nature.

A first time visitor to Dzamling Gar would be struck by the abundance of colors and scents of flowers, bushes, and trees that are turning the Gar into an earthly paradise for the senses, all under the watchful eyes and constant care of Alix de Fermor (see issue 127) and the gardeners.

Wandering along the paths of the Gar one can see the 13 different houses gradually being renovated, painted, decorated by workers and karma yogis from around the globe, with a variety of special skills and speaking a number of different languages.

Contents

Grande Fortuna In Bhutan	47
Dance of Infinity: The Quest for Perfection	48
Everybody Is an Artist – Everybody Has Buddha Nature	49
The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness	51
Jargon and Ingroup- Outgroup Barriers	54



The Gar is a hive of activity – gardening, building, earth-moving, but also organizing, holding meetings, practicing, dancing – from breathtaking sunrise to magnificent sunset.

This is a young Gar, a developing Gar, with many things to do, to construct and develop. At the heart of all this activity, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is focusing on the project for creating a Gönpa, which will be on the highest part of the land overlooking the houses, the gardens, and the Atlantic Ocean. Rather than a traditional Tibetan Gönpa, Rinpoche has chosen a design that brings to mind a bird in flight with outstretched wings. Over the last year, Rinpoche has personally raised an enormous amount to cover the construction costs of the building, and continues, without pause, to raise even more. In this way, the architects at Dzamling Gar expect construction on the Gönpa to start later this year and possibly conclude at the end of 2017.

Over this winter/spring period the Global Gar has also been the venue for giant steps to be taken in the practice and development of Khaita Joyful Dances. From March 18th to 26th, 2016, the first Khaita exams in the history of the international Dzogchen Community were held with 60 students from 16 countries participating. Many dancers of different levels of preparation came to take this exam, but thanks to the training before the examination everybody had a chance to learn and train together.

Dzamling Gar hosted important first time courses and workshops on the development and mastery of communication skills. Communication and our relationships to each other in such a culturally diverse international Community are topics that are asking to be addressed, as we grow and present a more public face, our skills need to be perfected. And what better place to address them than at the Global Gar? One very successful course was held for 42 instructors of Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Santi Maha Sangha led by actor and practitioner Gianfranco Brero (see

pages 19–21) and another workshop for the International Gakyil, local Gakyil members and interested Community members with Ashe Singh, a highly skilled and experienced facilitator, to help develop communication and leadership skills. (see page 19)

Another first was the course on Yantra Yoga and Pregnancy with Laura Evangelisti and Nataly Nitsche. (see page 27) This course had been gestating for several years and was finally given life at Dzamling Gar in a 2-day introductory course in March. On March 31st in the Gönpa of Dzamling Gar, in the presence of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Shangpa Master Denys, Alkis Raftis, the president of CID, (International Dance Council, a non-governmental organization founded in 1973 and based in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris) and the Adeje town counselor of creativity development, sport and knowledge, the Khaita diplomas and the CID certifications were presented to all the students who had done the exam. As Rinpoche mentioned during the presentation of the diplomas, there are representatives of the IDC from all over the world and after a long training, 60 people can be considered qualified experts and possible Khaita instructors in the future.

We hope you enjoy this issue where you can find a rich display of activities from all over the world, with a fascinating focus on Merigar East. Mirror 131 also offers reports and information on teachings, activities and programs worldwide, as well as book and film reviews, a feature and interview with a Community film-maker, a travelogue, updates from ASIA and the Shang Shung Foundation and more.

Please don't forget that in 2016, all Dzogchen Community members registered at dzogchen.net can go to the site, log in, and look under your name below Personal Profile to download The Mirror pdfs for free.

Happy Fire Monkey Year!
The Mirror Staff

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Purification Through Breath and Mantra

Mandarava Retreat, February 13, 2016
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, Spain

Good day to everybody and everywhere. Today before we start the practice, I would like to explain a little. When we are doing this practice of Mandarava, at the beginning we are doing the nine breathings. When we are doing the nine breathings we should also be doing the visualization, not only the breathing. When we exhale, we imagine that all negativities, obstacles, negative karma and everything is drawn away. So we are exhaling and with that exhalation, we also integrate into its real nature of the elements. When we inhale, we imagine that all the substances and essence of the elements are combined with that breathing, and that is what we are inhaling. And when we finish inhaling, everything is integrated in our dimension. So with the nine breathings we should do that. After that, we are doing Ati Guruyoga, and I explained yesterday how we do that. So with Ati Guruyoga, when we are being in the state of Ati Guruyoga, we are relaxed. But when we are doing some practices, then we should think and do some visualization. After being in the state of contemplation, we enter again with thoughts. And then we do this practice with the purification of mantra.

We are not using this purification mantra at the beginning in a very traditional way. You remember that in any practice we do, we must not be missing three sacred things. This system was originated in Mahayana. The three sacred things are that firstly we do refuge, we cultivate *bodhicitta* at the beginning, that means how we begin that practice; then secondly in any practice that we are doing, even if we have no capacity to be in the state of contemplation, we do not remain in a dualistic condition. So at the end any kind of practice we govern with the knowledge of emptiness. This is our real nature, and then we deal with that. This is the second sacred thing. When we finish any kind of practice, we do not forget to dedicate merits; dedicating sometimes has benefit for others. If we have some kind of relationship, good or bad, beings can receive some benefit. Of course we have good intention for all sentient beings and we dedicate, but if we have no connection it is not so easy for them to receive benefit.

So it is very important we have some connection to sentient beings so that they can receive benefit. We are also doing a dedication to give benefit for others and we are doing that with a very good intention so that we can accumulate merits. Also in Mahayana it explains, if you are not dedicating merits, etc, you can also destroy benefit easily. In Santideva's *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* it is explained



Photo by Miguel Ferrada Gutierrez

that for thousands of *kalpas* we have accumulated good actions, it says for example you give generously applying benefit for others, you are offering to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and enlightened beings, and when you are doing that you have good intention and you can accumulate merits. It says that any of good actions we have accumulated, we can destroy all if we are angry for one moment. So that means if we dedicate merits there is nothing that remains to destroy. In our life, we are distracted most of the time. We cannot say we will never be angry, we can be angry very often, so then you see it is also important to dedicate.

So these are the three sacred things, not only in Mahayana but also in Vajrayana practice. Even if we are practitioners of Dzogchen, we apply refuge and *bodhicitta* just like in the system of Mahayana. You remember when we finish practice we are always dedicating merit. This is not a particular Dzogchen way, it is even a Mahayana system, but we are living in time and space and it is indispensable we should do that. So this is the more traditional way and in all schools, any traditions, they do in this way. They use this mantra for purification only in some rites of Yogatantra, but I have very much confidence with this mantra. I once had many problems with the class of the guardian of the *gyalpo* when I was in college for one year and I could not live there. My teacher gave me permission to go to another place to receive initiations, etc. But of course I was in college and even if I needed to go somewhere else for the initiations, etc., my teacher gave me very precise instructions; what I should study and prepare for an examination upon my return.

Once then there was an important Sakyapa teacher who gave all initiations of a collection of tantras. In the Sakyapa tradition there is a very important collection of the tantras called Gyudde Kuntu (*rgyud sde kun btus*). I went there and received initiations for nine months, every day, continually. Sometimes there were higher tantra initiations and only one initiation can take two or three days. Some of the lower tantras were easier and we could receive three



or four different kinds of initiations. So in that period I also needed to study for when I had to return to college. During the same time I was receiving these initiations, I was receiving teachings of Madhyamika. There was a root text called Tsawa Sherab that I should study well and do an examination when I returned. Connected with that is another small text of Nagarjuna called Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa*). One should memorize this root text and all the students had to learn that in memory. I then received all initiations and had to prepare to go back to my college.

I studied this root text called Tsawa Sherab (*rtsa ba shes rab*); there were many studied people among the students of my teacher and I didn't have any problems for studying that text. But then at the end I had to memorize this root text. In general people say I have a very good memory, I could learn one page in memory in one day. Other children were only able to learn one or two lines in the same period of time. Then everyone said, "Oh you are very clever." But then when I received all the initiations of Kriya and Ubaya tantra, and I started to learn that in memory, I discovered I could learn twelve pages a day. I was very surprised, how was I able to do that? But then later I understood that in the initiation of Kriya and Ubaya tantra there were a lot of purification initiations every day. In this purification they used this mantra of *e ho shuddhe shuddhe, yam ho shuddhe shuddhe*, etc., and after, in the Rigpa Trugchupa (*rigs pa drug cu pa*) there are not many pages, and I learned it completely in a few days. Then it was very easy to memorize the complete root text of Tawa Sherab (*rtsa ba shes rab*).

So when I went back to college I had to take an examination, not only explaining, but also reciting both texts from memory. That is when I discovered the potentiality of this mantra. For that reason I use this mantra every day; it is very good for memory and increasing that clarity. Later when I arrived in Italy and we started the Dzogchen Community, I prepared our practice of the *thun*, but I did not put this mantra in the *thun* because it was not done in a traditional way. Then one year there was the problem of Chernobyl. There was so much paranoia, we had no milk or vegetables for months and months. In that moment we felt afraid that everything was contaminated. We needed a kind of protection. I thought that I should teach this mantra to people and I started to teach my students. Then we were not only doing this practice for Chernobyl, but I put it in the *thun* and we started to use it for the beginning of all practices. So it is a very, very powerful mantra for purifying and strengthening our energy.

I told you already it is very important that we are coordinating and strengthening our energy in our condition. Even if you do not know the precise visualization and you are only chanting this mantra, it helps very much for purifying. Of course if you know how to do the visualization, it is much more powerful. Particularly when we are dealing with Ati Guruyoga, it is really becoming very powerful. For example, when we first do a practice and pronounce A, it means we are being in a state of Ati Guruyoga. Then we are sounding *om e ho shuddhe shuddhe*, this is a mantra of purification. When you are pronouncing *om* you do not need any particular visualization, nothing. Because at the beginning there is *om* and at the end of the mantra there is *svaha*, and there are three words for empowering the potentiality of the function of these words. Not only this mantra, but we have many mantras like this.

For example the Tara mantra, *om tara tuttare svaha, om tare tam svaha*, etc. So *om* is how we start and the explanation says it has ten qualifications, and if you want to know in a more intellectual way you can study all these things. But when we are doing practice we do not need to any visualization.

Then we are starting with *e ho shuddhe* and *e* means the element of space. *Ho* means to multiply. You remember that when we are doing a Ganapuja, *ha ho hri, om ah hum, ha ho hri. Ha ho hri* are the three seed syllables. *Ha* means purifying. If we need to offer something we need to purify. *Ho* means multiplying. Also if there are many guests then we need to multiply offerings. *Hri* means transforming. You see purifying, multiplying and transforming. For example, if we are offering ice cream we are thinking we are making a very nice offering, but there are some guests who do not need ice cream. Maybe they need a beefsteak, for example. Someone else says, I do not need to eat something, but I need money. So instantly you transform into what they need. This is a Ganapuja and all the offerings, *om a hum, ho ha ho hri. Ho* means multiplying more and more.

Here it also says *om e ho*, *e* is the element of space. You remember when we have the visualization of the Ati Guruyoga, there is a *thigle* and in the center of the *thigle* it is blue. Blue is the element of space, the root and base of all the elements, just like sky. *Ho* means infinite manifestation, larger, so this is the meaning, *e ho*, we are spreading more and more. But we are purifying what is related to this element. If we have the element of space in the perfect way, there is no problem. If there are some problems and there is no element of space, there is no possibility of manifesting all prosperity. So for that reason we are saying *shuddhe* and purifying.

Why are we always saying *shuddhe* two times? Not only this mantra, but many for example, *dhare dhare, hane hane*, etc., we repeat always. You should understand that when a mantra repeats it is connected with time. What we should apply is related to past and future time. Past, for example, if we have accumulated negative karma we purify all this. Then for the future, there will be all possibilities and secondary causes for manifesting in the time. Also we are purifying that. So this is how this mantra is related to the element of space and then we are purifying and we say *e ho shuddhe shuddhe*.

Yam ho shuddhe shuddhe is the element of air. This is very important because the element of the air is movement. For example, we have many agitations, we are nervous; all of this is related to the element of air. When we need to have this kind of activity we remember with the five colored *thigle*, we already did this kind of visualization, we spread from this green *thigle* green light that spreads and purifies all in our dimension; purifying, strengthening and coordinating everything with that element. Now we have a perfect element of air.

Then there is also the red color of the fire element. Then there is *bam*, the water element. Don't worry if there is coordination a little different, some people wonder why this order of elements is a little different than the ordinary order. It doesn't matter, this is a Yogatantra system, so we apply and it works, that is more important. And when we say *bam ho shuddhe shuddhe*, also the element of water is coordinated. *Ram* is the fire element, also red color, and

» continued on the following page

Open Mindfulness Training

at Dzamling Gar with
Shangpa Master Denys

January 29–31, 2016
Tenerife Island, Spain

Carl M Stepath, PhD



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
and Shangpa Master
Denys at Losar in the
Dzamling Gar Gönpa.
Credit: Jose Andres

During the weekend of January 29, 2016, a three day presentation about Open Mindfulness Training (OMT) was presented in Tenerife by Shangpa Master Denys. Denys Rinpoche is the head lama of the Rimay Congregation; spiritual heir of Tibetan master Vajradhara Kalu Rinpoche and one of the key successors of his lineage. Denys was born in Paris where he studied medicine and philosophy. At the age of 19, he went to India where he met Kalu Rinpoche. There he studied under his guidance, and was his translator for many years. Kalu Rinpoche conveyed to him the teachings of Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions that he practiced in long time retreats for many years. Denys Rinpoche is a friend of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and they have established a sacred alliance called *Damdrog* where mutual cooperation and success are paramount.

My favorite quote from Denys Rinpoche is: "Ecological problems are first of all economic problems. Both ecological and economic problems find their roots in our relationship to our world, which is precisely the field of Mindfulness. Challenging the way we live and function comes back to examining our own emotional responses and cognitive behaviors, and even our conscious mind." ("Humanism and Mindfulness: rethinking 21st century education,"

Denys Rinpoche, September 2015, Avalon, Savoie, France)

The notion of fundamental humanism and how it relates to mindfulness and being present, was developed at length in this 3-day Tenerife presentation. We were reminded in this presentation of Gandhi's famous adage: "Be the change that you wish to see in the world" and the Dalai Lama



Shangpa Master Denys at the Open Mindfulness Training
presentation in the Adeje Cultural Center Credit: M Mingotti

saying: "Transform your mind, transform your world". We can bring about this transformation of the world all learning how to be present and mindful. To my mind, this is the fundamental essence of what we learned in the presentation. Mindfulness

is a practical method that can help us to bring about these changes in ourselves.

The first evening of the Open Mindfulness Training was a 3-hour presentation in the Adeje Cultural Center, and this was followed by two days of presentations in the Gönpa at Dzamling Gar in Playa Paraiso, S.C. Tenerife. During these teachings we learned many things about Open Mindfulness (www.openmindfulness.net). One of the things that was stressed by Denys Rinpoche was that mindfulness is the very important basis of a successful Buddhist practice, and all Dzogchen practitioners can stand to re-visit their knowledge of it, especially we old-timers. This can help us expand our ability to be present, and therefore improve our personal practice.

Over the course of this 3-day program we covered the definition of Mindfulness, as an experience of openness, moment to moment – being attentive to presently occurring experience with empathetic openness and curiosity. It is a natural state inherent to human nature, and its practice transcends the bounds of any particular tradition. This type of personal experience helps us learn to be mindful and present – something especially revealed in a vivid experience through this training and practice. The entire Open Mindfulness Training

» continued on the following page

» Teaching continued from previous page

we also spread and purify that. *Lam* is the earth element, we also purify all. This, in general, we do as a complete purification.

If you have knowledge and you have some kind of problem and that problem is related to a certain element, for example if you have problems of the blood pressure, etc., that is more fire element. If you have something like rheumatism and skin diseases, then it is water element. If you are very nervous and agitated, you cannot remain in a calm state, this is the air element. Then when you know this, you can apply this mantra in a specific way. If you want to use it in a specific way, how should you do that? You remember in the beginning there is *om*, and when it is finished it is *shuddhe*

shodhanaye, so you do the same way, *om e ho shuddhe shodhanaye svaha*, *om yam ho shuddhe shodhanaye svaha*, *om bam shuddhe shodhanaye svaha*, etc, only chanting this mantra and doing visualization and you can overcome this problem. So these are all the elements we have and it is very good we use this mantra in a complete way and we can have much more benefit. So now you see why we use this mantra at the beginning and why it is important. It is very important in the relative condition. I am not saying that this is the path of realization; the path of the realization is Ati Guruyoga. You remember that.

Transcribed and edited by Naomi Zeitz

Shangpa Master Denys

Julian King-Salter

As Rinpoche explained, April 8 was a very auspicious day on the Tibetan calendar – with the not so common particular combination Drubjor, giving attainment of every activity, and also the fortunate combination of earth (element of the day of the week) and water (element of the constellation), bringing growth and prosperity. So Rinpoche said it was a good day, he chose in advance, to give the name Shangpa Master to Lama Denys, in recognition of his being lineage holder of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, and also recognizing the importance of this lineage, its seat of Karmaling, and its connection with the International Dzogchen Community. Shangpa Master Denys expressed his



pleasure and gratitude, both in words and also with the gift of a large gilded statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, and expressed a wish for the long continuation of the relationship established between the two organizations – in particular he looked forward to receiving more of Rinpoche's precious Longsal Teachings at Karmaling. The ceremony continued with the practice of Marme Monlam for cementing the vajra

relationship between us all, and of course concluded with sealing the dedication of merits. Chai tea and Kyabse prepared by Rabgyi and many helpers were then enjoyed by all, before joyous participation in khaita dancing! ©

» *Open Mindfulness* continued from previous page aims at getting familiar with this state of openness, understanding its qualities, and training to integrate it into our daily life.

When learning this Open Mindfulness the favored method is to have it transmitted over a two-month training program using modern methodology adapted to conditions of life in our contemporary world. This learning is facilitated by intergenerational, teacher to student affiliation in group sessions, with explanations, demonstrations, and practical application. It is designed to be taught in eight sessions, over a short or long term program length. The eight lesson OMT Seminars can be learned in:

- a) **The residential eight-day retreat** (6 hours a day) followed by two months of regular practice at home (45 minutes a day).
- b) **The eight-week Course.** An eight week course with three-hour training session per week, and an additional 45 minutes of daily practice at home.

- c) **The four-week-end Course** (6 hours a day) followed by two months of regular practice at home (45 minutes a day)

The experience of Open Mindfulness is thought to be ageless. The term "mindfulness" is similar to the terms: *sati* in Pali, *smṛti* in Sanskrit, and *drenpa* in Tibetan. The essence of mindfulness can be found in all the teachings of the Buddha, and validated from generation to generation by contemplative traditions from around the world.

The introductory training protocol "Open Mindfulness Training" was presented by Denys Rinpoche in Tenerife in January 2016, and will continue to be presented as outlined by schedules on their website. Mindfulness develops a direct sensory contact with the world, and brings practitioners back in touch with their sensations. Therefore mindfulness invites us to temporarily suspend our judgment or conceptualization.

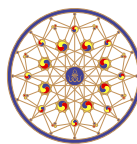
We learn to be fully present in the experience of the present moment, to welcome it and accept it, whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Being Mindful amounts to experience reality directly as it is. The practice of mindfulness develops three essential qualities: attention, openness and empathy, and it is about sensing rather than thinking. Open Mindfulness training helps in improving our own personal practice as we integrate it into our own life, and is important to all serious practitioners. ©



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Three Years On

Julian King-Salter, The International Gakyil

At the Annual General Meeting of the International Dzogchen Community on April 1st, the present International Gakyil will reach the end of its first three year term – under the Statute, two consecutive terms are allowed before it is necessary to stand down, and at the time of writing all six current members have indicated their willingness, or at least availability, to continue for that second term.

The reason is quite simply that we have not completed enough of our original mandate – not for lack of hard work and application, but according to the famous circumstances of life in the relative condition! So Rinpoche has indicated he prefers us to continue without change for now.

In fact, although only four of the eleven Gars are aligned, and a similar percentage of Lings, the total number of Dzogchen Com-

munity members who are now full members of the International Dzogchen Community is already nearly half of our total membership – so in effect, we are half way there.

Substantial progress has been made, and several Gars and Lings are on the verge of registering their Statutes – the remainder are committed to alignment and already contributing their share to IDC services.

Even most members of not-yet-aligned Gars and Lings are already registered on the IDC Membership Management System on dzogchen.net, and we are now able to email directly to every member, not only for Webcast and Practicing Together notices, but also for important Community news and information.

At the moment, not all Gakyil members are registering as such in their profile in the MMS system – please, it is essential that you do so, to make sure that you all receive IDC communications, and are then able to give the important feedback which we need to make things work most effectively!

Dzamling Gar development is not a function of the IG, but its speedy develop-

ment needs to be mentioned here because it is fundamental in providing the physical platform for making the International Dzogchen Community a concrete reality. A place where members of all Gars and Lings will very soon have their own space to come in a relaxed way and participate together in the continuation of Dzogchen teaching and practice far into the future, as Rinpoche reminded us again after Ganapuja today during the Khaita instructors exams (March 18th).

dzogchen.net is the virtual focus for our global interaction, public and internal communication, and basic administrative systems. Much has been achieved, and there is a great deal to be done. One major achievement will be to bring together the energies of our web developers into a single endeavour, rather than having too many independent projects, which can then prove hard to bring into functioning together. In any case we all remain enormously indebted to all the Karma yogis and yoginis who achieve so much with limited time and resources.

The real centre is the Teacher, and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu continues to work, it seems with increasing energy, for all our benefit, in every sphere of activity! Thank you Rinpoche! ☺

Gakyil Workshop with Asha Singh

March 30, 2016
Dzamling Gar

A report by Naomi Zeitz



logues. The six groups were facilitated by IG members, as well as by people from the local Gakyil of Dzamling Gar. The groups were classified into topics based on the previous work of all the participants and then reported on to the entire group by the main facilitator. The six groups were:

The International Gakyil held two events, one on March 30 and the other on April 1, 2016 at the Global Gar, Dzamling Gar in Tenerife, Spain. One was a one-day workshop with facilitator Asha Singh to improve communication skills for the work of the International Gakyil (IG), the Gakyils and the interface between the International Community and the IG and to develop leadership. The other event was the General Assembly to which all Gars, Gakyils and Lings were invited. This is a report on the first event.

The day-long workshop was attended by approximately thirty-five people from all over the world, some on Gakyils, some in-

structors, some involved with Shang Shung Institute internationally, five IG members, and other interested Community members.

The workshop focused on our work together as a Community and how we can better our skills in i.e.: collaborating, organizing, communicating and manifesting activity for the Community and the public. Much of the time was spent in small work groups where we were given particular topics and we would brainstorm and discuss various challenges to the work of the Community.

At the end of the two sessions, morning and afternoon, the six groups presented the results of the discussions and dia-

Communication
Manifestation
Time Management
Collaboration
Understanding each other
Continuity

The workshop, run very adeptly by Asha Singh, a coach for helping individuals and organizations develop creativity and leadership, was extremely beneficial for the participants and hopefully will have some impact on the functioning and development of the International Dzogchen Community. ☺



Ka-Ter Tibetan Language Courses 2016 Program

Online Weekends

Weekends for Beginners

Since last year the Ka-ter project started weekend courses for people of the Dzogchen Community who have taken a Tibetan Language course for beginners, or have a basic knowledge of reading and grammar of classical Tibetan language. These online weekends focus on the most common Tibetan practice texts we use in the Dzogchen Community. We provide the participant with the Tibetan text and share our screen to allow people to follow the Tibetan text. Everyone in turn reads a sentence, recognises grammatical particles and tries to translate. After that the grammar is explained and the translation given.

Next dates: **April 30–May 1, June 11–12**

Costs: One weekend-course for members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria: 49€

One weekend-course for non-members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria: 95€

The Shang Shung Institute Austria membership in 2016 costs 75€.

Weekend Courses for Intermediate and Advanced

In this group students just read and try to translate with the help of various dictionaries. During these weekends we will be translating two texts:

1 - *hum skor zhus len*: Selected passages from a *gter ma* text discovered by Dorje Lingpa, in question and answer form. Padmasambhava replies to various questions posed by different persons. The passages have been selected and edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

2 - *Taranatha bka' babs bdun ldan*: A historical/biographical work of the seven transmission lineages of the teaching from India to Tibet, with biographies of masters.

Next dates: **April 16–17, May 28–29**



Summer Courses

14th Tibetan Translator Training

Merigar West, Arcidosso (GR), Tuscany, Italy
July 18–July 31, 2016

Join us and learn to translate ancient texts from the Tibetan tradition. If you are already skilled you can deepen your knowledge, discuss techniques, compare with others, and train your ability in a collaborative environment inspired by the ancient practice of translating in groups. The training for translators from Tibetan is an initiative of the Shang Shung Institute Austria and first started in 2003. In 2016 we will hold the 14th training.

The training will be divided into two levels: Students will be assigned to them according to their ability and experience. Both levels will be held at the same time.

1. Intermediate Level

Intermediate students Level will be given a relatively simple text and work on the translation individually or in small groups. Their work will then be reviewed and corrected in group-sessions. The instructor will be available for clarifications. The objective is for students to become familiar with vocabulary, grammatical structures, and syntax in context.

2. Advanced Level

Advanced students will translate in groups with the instructor and focus on all aspects of the language as well as on theories and techniques of translating. They will read and translate without any advance preparation. The text will be more complex both gram-

One weekend-course for members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria: 49€

The Shang Shung Institute Austria membership in 2016 costs 75€.

matically and in terms of content. The goal is to produce publication-ready translations. Note: *A maximum of 5 people can participate in this course via skype conference with shared screen and shared docs. The price and the conditions for participation are the same as participating in the course in Merigar.*

Fee for the 2 weeks summer-training:

160€, 144 if you pay before May 15

Special fee for people who also follow the 3 weekend-courses for advanced or intermediate students: 120 Euro, 108 if you pay before May 15. The 10 % Early-Bird discount until May 15th 2015 will be applied at the time of payment.

In order to be able to participate in this course all participants need to be members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria in 2016. The membership in 2016 costs 75€.

3rd Classical Tibetan Language Course for Beginners

Merigar West, Arcidosso (GR), Tuscany, Italy
August 16–23, 2016

with Prof. Fabian Sanders

A week to set the base for learning the Classical Tibetan Language and to exert yourself in reading, writing, and understanding the texts of the Tibetan tradition. We will have a general introduction to the sacredness, importance, and structure of the language, the lettering system and so forth. Then we will examine the morphology of syllables, word formation and all the main features of the grammar.

Four hour lectures daily: 10–12am and 2–4pm

Fee: 85€ with 10 % Early-Bird discount (76.50) until July 15th 2015

In order to be able to participate in that course all participants need to be members of the Shang Shung Institute Austria in 2016. The membership of 2016 costs 75€.

Contact: The instructor: fsanders@unive.it

How to join: ghita.pansa@gmail.com

Membership and payment: office@ssi-austria.at

New Date! Introduction to Classical Tibetan Language in Dzamling Gar

May 12–17

Suggested Donation: 108€

Contact: blue.gakyil@dzamlinggar.net ☺

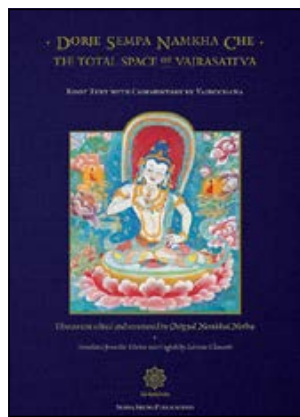


Spring 2016 Report of Activities

Shang Shung Institute UK

Julia Lawless
SSIUK Director

Within the last few months, Shang Shung UK has moved into its new home at Lekdanling in Hackney,



Dorje Sempa Namkha Che

The Total Space of Vajrasattva

The *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che*, or *The Total Space of Vajrasattva*, is said to have been recited spontaneously by Garab Dorje when he was just seven years old. One of the main *lungs*, or essential texts, of Dzogchen Semde, it is an extraordinarily profound teaching. Replete with cryptic language and references, direct and indirect, to the other vehicles of realization according to the ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che* is extremely difficult to understand without a commentary. In this book the root text appears together with the *Chagdre*, or *Iron Commentary*, edited and annotated in the Tibetan version by Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Adriano Clemente translated the Tibetan to English. ©

London. It is a very beautifully designed, modern space with large studio room, which is ideal for lectures, workshops and practical courses. We have already held a number of very successful talks in the established SSIUK Lecture Series, which included a very interesting explanation by James Low on "Why Emptiness is Liberating" as well as a lecture by Ian Baker, on the "Hidden Land of Pemako."

By public request, Ian then gave a fascinating private tour of the *Tibet's Secret Temple* exhibition at the Wellcome Collection in central London for the Dzogchen Community and Shang Shung UK, since he was the co-curator for the show. Inspired by the exquisite series of 17th century murals from the private meditation chamber of the Dalai Lamas Lukhang Temple in Lhasa, I was intrigued to learn that this exhibition, which explores Tibetan Buddhist yogic and meditational practice and their connections to physical and mental well-being, was the most popular event that the Wellcome Collection has held to date! This illustrates the high level of public interest in the esoteric Tibetan cultural tradition.

The emphasis for the weekend workshops in London during the past few months has been on the study of Tibetan Language, as this is an area which we would specifically like to develop within the UK branch of Shang Shung. Language

could be said to be the basis of culture, so the preservation of the Tibetan Language is intrinsic to the continuation of Tibetan culture as whole. The unique Tibetan material housed in the British Library and the connection which SSIUK has established with other institutions such as SOAS, the V&A and the Wellcome Collection, provides a good academic basis for this area of study. Tashi Manno gave a wonderful workshop on calligraphy based on the Tibetan alphabet, which was well attended. We have also been fortunate to have Fabian Sanders, professor for Tibetan Language and Literature at the Università Ca' Foscari, Venice teach a series of weekend courses on classical Tibetan Language for beginners. We plan to follow this up next year on a series of weekend courses for advanced beginners, and at the same time develop an online platform for learning Tibetan and furthering the study of the language on an individual basis.

We have a very enthusiastic management team which oversees the activities of Shang Shung program in the UK, a program which is continually expanding... I would therefore like to thank all those who help to make the UK courses a success and contribute their time and energy to the preservation of the precious Tibetan tradition in all of its diverse forms. ©

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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News from Shang Shung Institute, USA

The Wood Sheep Year was a big year for the Shang Shung Institute of America. We were so pleased to start the year-long celebration of the 10th anniversary of the licensure of the School of Tibetan Medicine with a bash at the Schoolhouse in Conway. The celebration brought together members of the Institute, local officials and media contacts, professors, Dzogchen Community members, and several classes of Tibetan Medical students. In addition, Shang Shung was able to receive approval from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and lay the foundation for

an advanced program in Tibetan Medicine. Like the four-year program, this three-year advanced program for graduates of the School of Tibetan Medicine is the first of its kind outside the Himalayan region, and will be the equivalent of the advanced program found in Tibet.

The Shang Shung Institute of America also began working more closely with the Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine in Australia to develop a new program there. This is a great collaboration going forward, in that Australia has a similar framework and rules regarding education, allowing for greater standardization of Tibetan Medicine globally and the co-development of English language materials.

These advances were on top of an already busy schedule for the year 2015 for Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo. In addition to con-

tinuing her online teaching and hosting two intensive programs for each class of Tibetan Medical students, International Director and resident professor of Tibetan Medicine, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo was invited to present on the Tibetan Medical approach to psychology and dementia at the Integrative Medicine Conference in Barcelona, Spain. Dr. Wangmo also presented at a Tibetan Medicine conference in Tenerife, Spain, as well as continuing her rigorous teaching schedule in Russia.

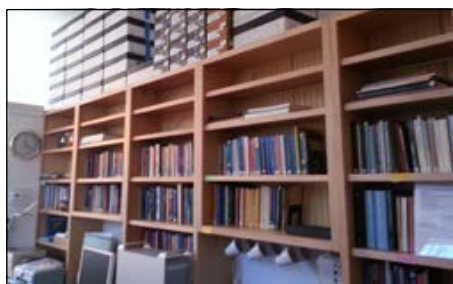
The transcription project continued this year with the diligent team of Dr. Wangmo, Leela Whitcomb-Hewitt and Bret Bourman transcribing the Tibetan Medicine commentaries given by Dr. Wangmo. This is an ongoing project initiated by Dr. Phuntsog for the purpose of creating textbooks that began to be translated into Russian and Spanish in 2015.

Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine was honored to host Dean Lusham Gyal during a visit to the U.S. in January and February of 2016. He gave public talks at the Pittsfield Sangha in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on January 28th and at Tsegylgar East in Conway, Massachusetts on January 29th. Dr. Gyal's specialty is mental health and both talks were about mental health

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10th Anniversary Celebration of the Tibetan Medical School on September 21, 2015. Credit: N Zeitz



Library in the Schoolhouse November 2015.



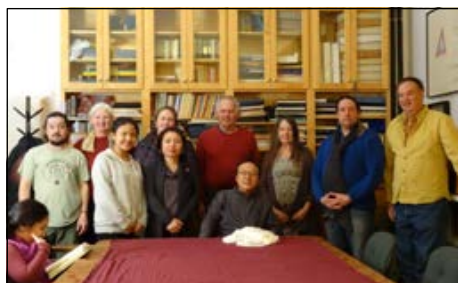
Introduction to Yantra Yoga with Naomi Zeitz on June 28, 2015.



Students of Tibetan Medicine Fall 2015.



Beginning Dharma with Jim Valby on June 21, 2015.



Dinner with Dr. Gyal in February 2016.



Public Talk with Dr. Gyal in Pittsfield, MA on January 28, 2016.



Tibetan Language Course with Prof. Tenzin Norbu Nangsal August 19, 2015.

A Great Opportunity for Young Tibetans

For young Tibetans the bachelor's degree is a difficult goal to reach. Only a few manage to finish the complete cycle of studies and obtain a level of education that can open the door to positions of responsibility in society and make a difference to the Tibetan population.

The main hurdle to overcome is the financial one: high schools and universities are located in the cities, and if you add the costs of room and board to those of the university, it becomes totally inaccessible to Tibetan students coming from nomadic and farming families.

For this reason ASIA set up a Scholarship program 12 years ago which works side by side with the distance adoptions project to give deserving students who finish their studies the opportunity to continue their studies at high school and then at university.

Over all these years more than 200 students have fulfilled their dreams, completing their higher studies thanks to scholarships, and helped to increase awareness in the communities they come from.

Dechen Tso, for example, is proud to have become a teacher and have created a family. She wrote to those who have supported her:

"I am writing to thank you for all the help you have given me. It has been four years since I graduated from college and I was fully confident of having accepted the challenge which I had to face. After school I got

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from a Tibetan Medicine perspective. In each talk he described the anatomy of the body and the view, diagnosis and treatment of mental health in Tibetan Medicine. Dr. Gyal also answered questions from the audience about specific psychological conditions from a Tibetan Medicine perspective.

Back in Conway, the Institute looks forward to a series of public workshops on Ti-



Dechen Tso.



Daiji Tsomo.



Roberta Marranca, in charge of the distance adoption and scholarships projects, with Dadrin Tso, her Tibetan counterpart, and the staff who manage scholarships in the Hainan high school.

a job which is under the sun the most glory occupation the engineer of human soul, the teacher. I love this career, I realized that a teacher not only teaches but is also a guide of life mentor and moral for student. I got

married and had a baby, now he is one year old. This makes me happy. I am satisfied with what I have and appreciate life without complain.

All these benefits come from your kindness help".

Daiji Tsomo, too, grateful for the opportunity that she has had, wants to give back to society that which she has received:

"...I am from an economically ordinary family. At my young age, I set a goal that I would change our livelihood by my efforts. And my successful entrance to the university, holding my dream, my vision and also my parents expectation, made it possible to realize.

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betan language, arts, cuisine, games, Yantra Yoga, public Vajra Dance, and Khaita as per Rinpoche's request last summer, as well as a new summer public program in July focused on an introduction to the Dzogchen Community and practices, additional Khaita and cultural activities in California, and a Khaita dance contingent at the 10th Annual Dance Parade and Festival in NYC on May 21, 2016!

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on the Dzamling Gar Project

Update on the Dzamling Gar Project

Benedetta Tagliabue

After architect Benedetta Tagliabue and construction engineer Giovanni Boni had presented the final project for the Dzamling Gar Gonpa of the International Dzogchen Community at Dzamling Gar at the end of the Mandarava retreat in February 2016, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu thanked them and spoke briefly about the Project.

I want to say thank you very much to our architects and engineers, particularly Giovanni Boni and Benedetta Tagliabue and other architects. People may not know but they have been working on this program for a long time. Now we have arrived at the end and decided to do it in this way.

However, Dzamling Gar is not only the Gonpa – there are many things to do, to construct and develop here. I am personally more concentrated on the area around the Gonpa, as you know. I am always talking about the Gonpa. I am not very much concentrated on other things because the Dzogchen Community is not so small. It is big and Dzamling Gar is in the interest of the whole Dzogchen Community, not only Namkhai Norbu. This is very important for everybody to understand.

And we need to continue teaching. Even though in 100 years none of us will be living here, the Dzogchen Community and teaching must continue. For that reason we are trying to do our best and I am always working and interested particularly in the Gonpa because it is very important.

Some people may think that if we are building a Gonpa that we should do like other dharma centers that are building Tibetan temples. But you should understand that I am teaching Dzogchen teaching. In Dzogchen teaching we need to integrate in time, in circumstances, not remaining underdeveloped like people in the countryside in ancient times.

This is not the land of Tibet. These people are not Tibetans. Teaching is for all sentient beings, not only for Tibetans. So you must understand that. That is why I have asked my architects and engineers to do something comfortable and integrated with the circumstances. We are modern society and we must integrate in this situation.

So they created this project. I am very happy and I want to say thank you very much. They have done a very good job but still need to continue to the end. When it is ready I hope very much that we will still do a Mandarava retreat there. ❀

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In the years at university, I worked hard with help from my teachers and schoolmates and I had good academic performance.

After graduation, I passed the exam for public servant recruitment in Sichuan, a province in Southwest China. Now I have been working as a public servant at a grass-roots agency for three years. I continue to work hard and always be ready to return my gains to the society."

For these young people a high level of education is the only opportunity to create a dignified future and actively contribute to changing the society in which they live, while remaining aware of their origins and their own cultural identity.

The annual fee to support a Tibetan student with a scholarship is 500 €. For those who are unable to contribute this amount, ASIA gives the possibility to participate in this program by contributing a regular donation of any amount to a fund dedicated to scholarships.

Supporting a young Tibetan's higher studies is a great gift for Tibet. It is also a gift for the person giving support who has the possibility of establishing a personal connection with a student through exchanging letters, photographs and updates on the studies and life of the student.

Learn more about the Scholarships program: write to Roberta Marranca adozioni@asia-onlus.org or go to the webpage www.adoptibet.org ❀

The Gonpa

The Gonpa is the most exciting part of the Dzamling Gar project because Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is very keen to have it and it is also at the top part of the property so it will really be the end of the construction process and the possibility to use all of the land of the Gar which is not totally accessible now.

We now have a design for the Gonpa that the Master has accepted and which is mainly about reusing the concrete structure that already exists. We want to use it in an intelligent way as much as we can imagine because we also have to obtain the permissions for it, which are very complicated. One part of this structure will be underneath the earth so that it will be very protected and will have special light from the top. There will also be a big slope in front of this big construction that will bring us to the upper level where we will have the Gonpa.

The Gonpa will be on a big terrace on the existing building and the central part will hold the actual Gonpa which will be more or less the size of the tent that we have now at Dzamling Gar. Then on the right and left sides there will be large stretches of terrace with a big roof covering the whole terrace so that if we need more space, say for big retreats, for dancing, etc, we will be

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able to open the central Gonpa and have an extension on the right side which will nearly double the space.

Meanwhile the space on the left side could become a cafeteria, or simply a terrace because it is a wonderful space from which you can see the sea and all the property and is, I think, one of the best spaces to stay.

The roof will be the most visible part of the Gonpa and has been designed to look like a bird in flight. It will be a very big extension on top of the whole terrace so that the Gonpa itself can be extended. We wanted it to be made of natural material, something that could be recycled and we decided to make a wooden construction with as few pillars as possible because people will need space to move, will want to see the Master and to dance so we need to have a structure most of which will be self-sustaining.

At the moment we are using a very big tent as a Gonpa. Although it is not so com-

the city. On the lower level there will be another very big space that could be used in different ways, for different activities.

The building is a very big one and the work will be very complex because we will

that will make it easy to access even for wheelchair users.

There will be differences between the right and left parts of the building as far as permissions are concerned. On the right side, we have to bring the earth up to the top level of the building and on this side we



be using the top floor before inhabiting the middle or lower floors so this will create a complexity in construction. And also the

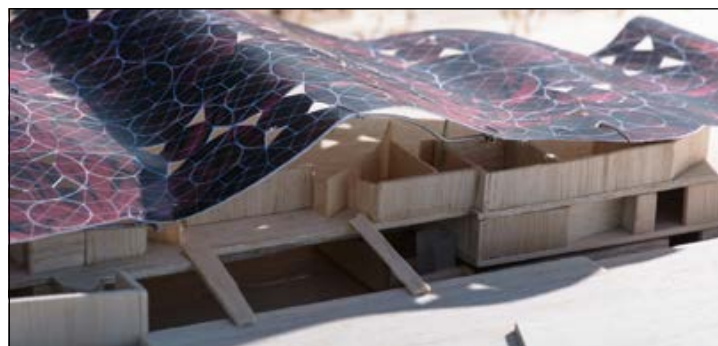
will have the health center. On the left side there will be one floor emerging from the earth so on that floor we will have rooms – later on it will be decided how these rooms will be used.

There is also a new request for space for children which will be in the lower part of the building on the right side of the Gonpa and it will have a big separated space in front.

This is a very big project and it will take time to discover all of it. There will be an internal swimming pool on the intermediate level, the health center and all the baths for therapy. On the top on the terrace of the children's space there will be another garden.

I also like very much the idea that while now there is no natural beauty around the existing structure, with the big movement of earth around it we will be able to arrive at the Gonpa through a very big garden that will be the main protagonist of the place.

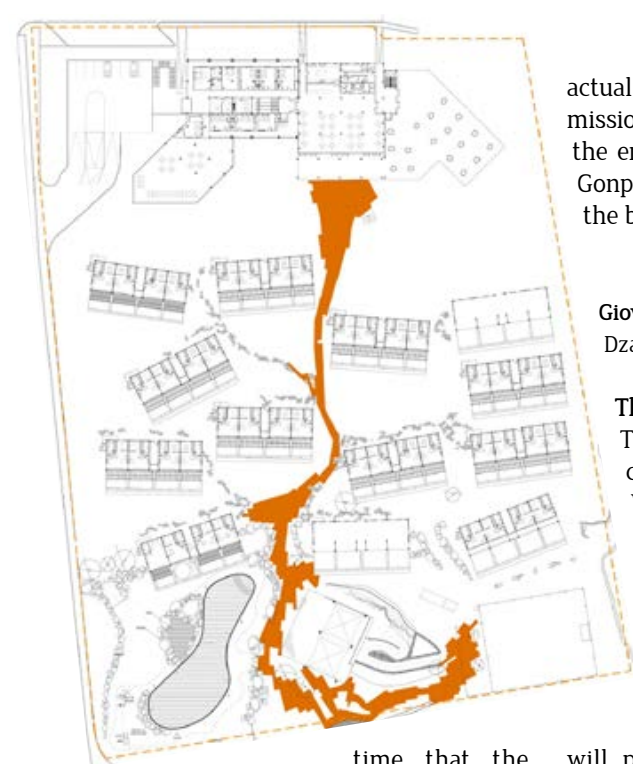
The main entrance will be from the front of the building because most of the people will approach from inside the Gar but there will also be a possibility to enter the building from the back. This will also be the first



fortable it has a kind of transparency so the light comes through and makes it very bright. Since the roof of the new Gonpa will be made of wood and will not be transparent we will have small skylights and at the moment we are working on the geometry of it.

The rest of the building is already an existing structure in cement but which we will have to reinforce and build the central part. The central part will have the Gonpa on the top level, which will be visible from

thing that is difficult to visualize is the fact that we have to bring a lot of earth there. Now if you go to the area you see a skeleton of a big three-floor building. We will be using the top level but at the moment it is very inaccessible. We will have a great movement of earth in front of the building that will create a very big change in the topography so that access to the top floor will be very slow and natural with ramps



actual construction until we have the permissions. If the permissions arrive before the end of this year we plan to have the Gonpa ready possibly at the end of 2017 or the beginning of 2018.

Giovanni Boni

Dzamling Gar, February 2016

The Houses

The houses for the Gars should be completed by the summer of 2016. Work on three of the houses is almost finished and we have already ordered the kitchen fittings and furniture for them. We still need to install the equipment for hot water, and two of the houses still need painting externally.

After this we

time that the Dzogchen Community will have a Gonpa that is so close to a town and directly accessible from the street. So Dzamling Gar will really be a place where you can integrate with the outside world.

Regarding the timing, once we have finished all the houses, possibly around June/July 2016, then we will be able to start work on the construction of the Gonpa, which will, however, also depend on how quickly the permissions arrive. For the time being we can start to clean the area and bring in some earth but we cannot start on the

will put into place the rules for using and managing them. We will try to have them ready for living in as soon as possible which means that we will try to complete houses 2 and 3 and ask for permission to occupy them and separate the area with these houses from the rest of the building area and make it livable for the members of the different Gars.

We are preparing the rules and looking for a person who would be ready to manage the houses. We are not ready yet because there is still quite a lot of work to do to get organized but I think everything should be ready by the summertime.

The houses should be finished and ready to occupy with the financial assistance of the international Gars and Dzamling Gar that, together with donors, will finance that part that the Gars are not able to complete. However, we should try to do it in such a way that the Gars with the greatest number of members and more possibilities, such as Merigar, Kunsangar and Samgengar, make a greater effort to finance themselves in order to finish their houses. Those Gars with fewer members and possibilities can ask for financing from Dzamling Gar or the other Gars which, through donors can lend the amounts needed to finish the houses.

Regarding the amount of money needed to finish the houses of the Gars, as of the beginning of March 2016, we have not collected all the money necessary to complete the houses. There are three Gars that have only managed to contribute a third of the amount they need to give. The other three Gars have given around half of the amount needed. Dzamling Gar is already financing those Gars that have less possibility to cover the costs of their houses. Dzamling Gar has already contributed more than they needed to give because this Gar has received many more substantial donations than the other Gars so the cost of their house has been covered and they have been using it for more than two years.

The Dzamling Gar house will also be managed along with the other six houses of the international Gars as the seventh



house that will make up the residence and be part of the condominium that will include the communal area with the swimming pool, the cafeteria, etc. So there will be a whole complex to be managed that should be run by a professional person with well defined rules in order that there can be no misunderstandings.

Then regarding the entire building of the Center which includes the Gonpa, the health centre and the 14 rooms for those using the health centre, the centre will be run separately, according to conventions with different groups, not only those linked to the Dzogchen Community but also external ones who wish to use the structure. The difference here will be that the Center will be open to the public while the houses will only be used by members of the International Dzogchen Community. ©



The Joy of Generosity

A Fundraising Proposal to Furnish the Houses of the Gars at Dzamling Gar from an idea of Monica Patiño and Giorgio Minuzzo

We came to Dzamling Gar for the Mandarava retreat in February 2016. It was a very harmonious and intense retreat and we had the great opportunity to experience the Gar for 15 long beautiful days of practicing together with our dear Master and a great Sangha.

In all of this, we participated in the meetings with representatives of all the Gars of the Dzogchen Community, invited by Meriling and the Dzamling Gar gakyil to understand the financial situation, the progress done on the restoration of the houses and to discuss a proposal for the future management of the houses of Dzamling Gar assigned by Rinpoche to the different Gars of the Dzogchen Community.

The engineer of the project, Giovanni Boni, said that the 6 houses would be finished in a couple of months and that once the Gars have defined and agreed on the management system and furnished the houses, they can start to use them from September of this year.

Each Gar house has 4 small apartments, or 2 small apartments and one double size dormitory on the ground floor, and a bigger apartment on the upper floor. All apartments will have their own kitchen, one or two bedrooms, a bathroom, a living/dining room that can be used as a dormitory for the night, and a big open terrace with a nice view to the beautiful sunsets of Tenerife. Each apartment is designed to accommodate 3–4 people up to a maximum of 20 people for a whole house.

The general idea of all the Gars is to rent the apartments to members of the Dzogchen Community participating in the activities of the Global Gar, in order to offer a service to members, and generate income needed to pay back the money used for the renovation of the houses, loaned to the Gars by Meriling.

All Gars are also working on a management protocol unique for all the 6 houses. Diane Campbell, a practitioner in Belize, expert in the field of real estate and management of condominium and shared

properties, participated in some meetings by Skype. Diane suggested managing the houses more like a hotel and furnishing them all in the same way, bed linen, furniture, etc., as they would be easier to maintain and manage.



After listening to this we asked Giovanni Boni about the furniture for the houses and whether he would be installing kitchens etc. He said that the budget for the houses did not include the kitchen or the furniture. Reflecting on this we realized that if the houses are not furnished and finished, they cannot be rented, and if they are not rented, they are stuck.

So we had the idea and offered to donate the furniture for one of the apartments of the Tsegylgar house in order to have an example and understand more or less the costs needed to furnish one apartment. We started to work on preparing a budget by internet, checking the webpage of IKEA. The day after, we went to the IKEA store in the north of Tenerife with a plan of the apartment and the list of items we had prepared the previous evening. We checked the articles available and understood that it would cost around 5,000 euro to furnish one apartment fully: one bedroom with two single beds, a living room with two beds, a dining area and all the linen, towels and the kitchen with all the equipment.

We ordered a long list of things, prepared apartment n.3 of house 11 and presented it to people from different Gars during an "open house" evening. But there was still the problem of how to find the

money to furnish the 5 apartments of each house. The following day, after talking with Giovanni, we had an idea for a fundraising campaign that Giovanni presented to Rinpoche.

Rinpoche agreed, as a fundraising campaign, that 2 apartments (of the 5 in the house) could each be offered for one year to a single donor, or a group of donors, who donate 10,000 euro per apartment in advance. The total offering of 20,000 euro for the 2 apartments is the amount needed to furnish almost the entire house in order for it to be ready for use starting from September of this year.

As we calculated the costs of furnishing and fitting kitchens for all 5 apartments to be around 25,000 euro, to find the remaining 5,000 euro we thought of setting up something similar to a "wedding list" for the small items so that everyone interesting in collaborating can participate and make a donation by buying small items of furnishing, whatever they can afford.

It is important to understand that even when people make an offering of 10,000 euro for an apartment, that the apartment does not become private. It is just a way of fundraising and the benefit will last only for the first year.

This is a proposal we are going to present to the Dzogchen Community of Mexico and North America, hoping it can serve for the Tsegylgar house and that we would like to share with any Gar or person that may be interested.

It was an incredible experience to do this task, and we had the opportunity to experience the joy of generosity!

For more information please contact:
Giorgio Minuzzo & Monica Patiño
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Dzamling Gar Song Project

Let's unite our strength and capacity
Let's unite our strength and capacity
Dzogchen Communities unite all
your strength and capacity,
Dzogchen Communities unite all
your strength and capacity.

Happiness is present,
Unite your strength and capacity!
Happiness is present,
All is manifesting self-perfected.
Live in the knowledge of the
primordial state,
And happiness will arise in the world.

The Dzamling Gar Song Team
dzamlinggarsong@gmail.com

Last year the Dzamling Gar Song Team sent a letter to Gars, Lings and some individuals asking them to participate in a project suggested by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Rinpoche wrote the Dzamling Gar Song (which is itself a complete and deep teaching) and after recording it, Rinpoche said that this version was just a base for all the talented Dzogchen Community musicians and singers who could realize more elaborate and richer versions with different instruments or voices.

In order to do this the team invited all the musical talents of our Vajra Family to collaborate in the hopes that altogether we can create the "global" version of the Dzamling Gar Song! You can share this information and invitation with the musicians and singers you know to create your own version and/or to participate in the "global" version of Dzamling Gar.

If you are interested in joining us please confirm your interest in participating by sending an email to dzamlinggarsong@gmail.com. You will receive an answer from that email address with the link to download mp3 files and scores and further instructions on how to upload your mav files.

Tashi Deleg
The Dzamling Gar Song Team

A History and Update on the Dzamling Gar Song Project

Interview with Ilaria Faccioli,
Project Manager

The Mirror: Can you give us a little history about the Dzamling Gar Song Project and an update of where the project is now?

Ilaria: The song project started because Rinpoche had said that the original song we had been using until now was put together very quickly, but other people could try to make something better and more sophisticated. So we started to think of a version that is not done at the last minute, because the version we are using now was done around two years ago and it was arranged very quickly. That version was done for the inauguration of Dzamling Gar and has remained as the one we use, but it was not meant to be the final one. A few of us gathered together and we developed the idea to ask if anyone wants to do their own version, especially to musicians of the Community, so that makes the kind of participation quite free and people can use their creativity. Some Community musicians worked on a structure with timing and the melody that the participants should use, more or less. This version is a little faster than the original version. People can do as they want on this track, like with instruments; they can use as many instruments as they want.

The Dzamling Gar Song Project Team sent an email letter last year explaining the project that it was an idea of Rinpoche's asking for people to contribute, and they sent a structure for the music. I have to say that when we sent the letter we sent it to the Gars and also to list of individuals, like musicians and people we knew were interested, very few people responded. At the beginning a lot of people said it was a fantastic idea, but then of course people are busy, and we tried to give more space and time, but we didn't have so many answers. So the original idea came out of the sense of the Dzamling Gar Song, like "Let's unite our strength and capacity, Dzogchen Communities unite all your strength and capacity", so that is exactly what inspired the project. There are many people with musical capacity, musicians in the Com-



munity, so Rinpoche has a view and somehow gave us the guidelines, but then the idea is that we can manifest something. That was the idea.

If people are still interested and would like, they can still send back their version and they will be informed of the format; there is a specific one that is needed. The Team thought maybe it would be nice to mix a version that would be one version with people from different Gars, so the version we use now is a compilation of what we have already received. We could use more versions! We recorded many versions here in Dzamling Gar and you can hear that and if you listen well you can hear different instruments coming in and so we decided to use parts of the different versions. To hear this music you can go to: <https://soundcloud.com/dzamling-gar-song-project/sets/dzamling-gar-song-versions/s-5IKHG>

We finally presented this CD version to Rinpoche this past Losar and it is a disc that is a collection of different versions, one version was done by Roberto Cacciapaglia, one version by a German musician, and then there was this one we are talking about that was done with pieces of different ones sent by people from the Community. And then there was an instrumental version we thought would be good to have for people to sing on top of.

M: Are you still inviting people to continue to collaborate?

IF: Yes we need more material. There are many talented people in our Community and yes we are still calling for people to collaborate. It is important that people understand that the Dzamling Gar Song is something to sing. Rinpoche does not want to use the instrumental version when we dance. The song is something to learn by heart – it carries a very big teaching and it is the essence of Dzamling Gar and the international Dzogchen Community. ©



Mandarava Retreat.

Credit: M Mingotti

Losar and the Mandarava Retreat At Dzamling Gar with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

February 2016

Naomi Zeitz for The Mirror

On the first day of Losar, Tibetan New Year, at a little before 5am, a few hardy souls jumped in the swimming pool at Dzamling Gar on the chilly February morning, inaugurating the pool's first Losar dip and traditionally purifying themselves for the entry into the year of the Fire Monkey 2143. Others made the shivery star water bath at home.

Promptly at 5am all returned to the Gönpa for the long life practice of Mandarava with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as the first collective practice of the New Year. After the practice, at around 8:30am, the traditional delicious breakfast of sweet rice, steaming Tibetan tea and kapse, made by the loving and skilled hands of Tsering and Rabgyi, the gekö, was served up for all to enjoy. A new highlight of holidays with Rinpoche and Rosa is that they beautifully wrap hundreds of objects of all types and people select the one meant for them; many people end up reflecting on the meaning of their particular item for the year to come. We then enjoyed dramatic performance by well-trained Khaita dancers. For the rest of the day, people relaxed and played games, had some lunch together and then later in the day, all the Community practiced Khaita. Thus began the 15-day Mandarava

Drubchen Retreat, webcast to thousands of practitioners around the world.

For 15 days approximately 700 fortunate participants practiced in the white tent twice a day with Rinpoche, and 2058 webcast participants in their respective Gars, Lings and homes around the world, while a 24 hour Drubchen mantra recitation took place in Jyagcip, the space below the cafeteria.

Each morning there were sessions of Yantra Yoga led by various instructors. Of course, each day, we would meet Rinpoche after the last session of Mandarava for a few hours of Khaita and following Khaita, the truly dedicated would remain for a Vajra Dance practice.

On Rinpoche's walk to the Gönpa, he would stop at what is now fondly called Station 2, where various story telling, singing, and other performance activities transpired, much to the glee and pleasure of everyone.

There was a presentation by Giovanni Boni, Benedetta Tagliabue and Salvador Gilaberti Gracias, of the exciting finalized plans for the new Gönpa of Dzamling Gar. Each day Rinpoche would read off the names of the generous practitioners who gave according to their capacity towards the realization of this very modern and beautifully designed structure.

One more now annual Mandarava Losar Retreat came to a close after 15 days and participants from all over the world headed home, able to share the joy and beauty of Dzamling Gar with their respective local Communities and encourage them to, as the song says, "as soon as possible, and relaxed, come to" the new seat of the international Dzogchen Community, Dzamling Gar. ©



Playing games at Losar.

Credit: J Andres



Bagchen with Rinpoche.

Credit: J Andres



Gifts!

Credit: J Andres

Working with Communication

An interview with Gianfranco Brero, long time student of Rinpoche from Peru and well-known actor, writer, and coach in Communications Skills, who led the recent Communication Course for the Instructors of the Dzogchen Community, March 1–10, 2016, at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, Spain.

The Mirror: Where did the idea for the Communication Course come from?

Gianfranco: I think it was Rinpoche's proposal. When we had the Trentennale in Italy (the 30 year celebration of Merigar West), I did a short speech about communication at one of the public presentations in a small town near Arcidosso. I did this because Rinpoche and Rosa asked me to come to the Trentennale.

After that Rinpoche made a picnic with all the Latin Americans and he asked me what I had talked about and I said communication, and he said that would be very good for instructors. I said, "I am at your service, whenever you want." Six months ago Adriana Dal Borgo wrote me to ask if I was able to do this course for the Dzogchen Community. This was something strange for me because my work is in Lima, Peru. So I arranged to take the time off to come here. I was very frightened, you know, to teach instructors.

M: Can you talk a little about your experience of the course.

GB: It was a great experience. The very first day I was a little anxious, and the days before that I was very, very anxious because I did not know who these people were that I was going to talk with. Even if I have had a very big experience with this training – there were some problems with people asking why they had to take this communication course and why it was obligatory. I thought that maybe the instructors inside the Community had too much ego to work.

Then I began to work and I discovered something very simple. All of us are human beings and we all have the same need to communicate. Then it became easier for me to work and actually working with the Community, which is something very related to me. I have a strong relationship with the teachings, so it was a not a normal



Gianfranco and his wife, Charo.
Credit: N Zeitz

group for me, working with people who were communicating and working with Rinpoche's teachings. So this responsibility was very, very big. But I found a very strong human group, people with a good disposition to learn, and when they were less afraid than at the beginning and they discovered that it was something very helpful for them, then it became easy like a waterfall. They did not have any resistance, even for people who had a certain feeling like taking off their clothes and being exposed in front of others, people of the same capacity as them. When they discovered that nothing happens when they are open and able to change some small instruments to communicate, it becomes great.

One of the most common problems is that most of the teachers, the instructors, are looking inside into themselves, into their knowledge, and they are not trying to put this knowledge into others' minds. They know the material very well, but the relationship to the people is not established in a good way yet. The results were fantastic and I am really very happy, because people discovered that they changed a lot, in a good way, and I am very happy for that. If you ask me what the result was for me, it is that it was the happiest time in a communication course for me.

Communication is one of the principle functions of human beings. So working with it is something natural but not always recognized because we all communicate and we communicate well, but not in front of the public. The public is a big challenge for most people. It is one of the greatest fears for people, because it is not a natural position to talk in front of people. People can talk one to one, if you have more than one, if you have ten, twelve or twenty people, you feel judged. But you are not the person being judged, you are the master, you have to know in your position as an instructor that you are the person who is leading.

If people judge, it is their problem, not yours. It is very interesting we are always aware about our condition and so we don't

want to be judged. I want to be always myself in the way I present myself and if we are a teacher we want to be a good teacher and maybe we are not as good as we think, or maybe we have a capacity in another way to teach. In this course I was saying something that for me was a discovery. You are not here to teach the teachings but to teach about your experience with the teachings. That is very important. Repeating what you have learned is not teaching, you are the intermediate person between the teachings and the public, and what is the difference. The difference is the experience. When you are a teacher of Yantra Yoga, for example, you are doing Yantra Yoga and you have some experiences, not only in the inner form but when you learned it, and maybe you had a problem, and maybe you can lead the students in this form.

M: Can you tell us a little about yourself, how you came to the teachings, when and how you met Rinpoche?

GB: I met Rinpoche in 1993 when Rinpoche came to Peru for the first time. I was just beginning with Buddhism and I was forty years old, before that I was not interested in spiritual things. When my wife Charo came to live with me she brought many books, and one of those books was called *The Practice of Zen*. And I thought they are not asking me to believe in something, they are asking me to explore myself, to go inside myself and my mind. That is not the work of a "believer", that is something related to an exploration.

And after that Rinpoche came to Peru and I was a little interested. At this time Rinpoche was teaching in Italian and they asked me to translate the first time he came to Peru! I didn't know anything about Dzogchen. That was my first encounter with this kind of teaching. I translated but I did not understand anything. You know how Rinpoche speaks, you have to be very fast. After I needed to transcribe the translation and it was about the short *thun*.

» continued on the following page



Group 1.



Group 2.

All photos by Eduardo Gromaches

» continued from previous page

When I was making the transcription I started to understand and got some information I did not get when I was translating. That was the first time meeting Rinpoche. At this time I was working in the theatre in a play and before going to the theatre I was making Guruyoga sounding A; I think I did not understand anything but little by little I understood more. So I am here twenty-three years later and I don't know but I think I am more clear and I know this was a big change for me.

M: So how do you see the future of this Communication Course in the Community? Some people who are not instructors have also expressed interest to participate. We know you have been invited to other places around the world to train instructors so maybe you can tell us about that program?

GB: Yes the program is that I will go to Merigar West end of July and beginning of August, then maybe I will go to Tsegylgar East in September, and in October I will be in Tashigar South, and then in January 2017 I will go to Australia, and then in July–August 2017 I will go to Samtengar in China and Kunsangar North, and I also have a request from Merigar East. It does not take a lot of time, but people need to practice what I am teaching because if they do not practice it does not work and people need to make many changes.

You were also asking me about other people who are not instructors. Now there are more or less two hundred instructors. We did 20% of the instructors this time here in Dzamling Gar so I still have a big job ahead of me for the next two years. I think instructors must work on this when they help prepare other instructors. This is a skill, not a secret and not magic.

It is easy to communicate and if you know how to see, one of the things my students learn is how to see, how communication is going with other people. You can see if they are using the tools we learned. It is

very difficult to change habits if you have been working in one way for many years. We do it with Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance, and with the Teachings. Habits are hard to change, but what is the teaching for? It is to train your mind and if you don't do that,

and there, but now people are saying, "Oh, you are Gianfranco, the Communication teacher,"

M: Now you are famous both places, in acting and now in the Community.

GB: Yes fame is very strange, for example



Group 3.

your mind follows its habit, and that is as always, so that is why this short course gets immediate results in understanding, but to get continuous results and satisfaction, you must work until you get some skills.

As a teacher I do not expect my students change their personality, they must be themselves. You cannot change people but you can change some techniques of communication. It is very easy, in one way.

I am very happy to have come into the Community and to have come in contact with everybody and to have this personal relationship. It has been wonderful to bring together my profession and the most important thing in my life, the Teachings. It is a privilege that Rinpoche gave me by asking me to come here. I feel I am helpful for the Teachings by helping the instructors to get better. Also the instructors became closer to each other. That was an unexpected goal. It is great. That is the Community!

Also now I became a little famous in the Community. I have been in the Community for many years but no one really knew me; I knew the people from my ling or Gar, here

when people see you in TV and even if you are in advertising or publicity, you are like a flower vase in the house...oh there is the guy I saw in the TV. But working this way in the Community and giving a hand to do something, I don't care, I even prefer some kind of anonymity. But this is a strange condition in our Community, we almost do not say hello or acknowledge each other. We pass by each other and we are all in the same boat.

M: Yes also I have noticed in Khaita, even when Rinpoche has indicated that we should look at each other, people have difficulty with this. I think also your course will have some impact on this.

GB: Yes this is part of the function of Khaita and also the communication course. For instructors when you develop a relationship with your students and through the relationship of the instructors with each other, maybe things will change.

M: Thank you so much Gianfranco for your time, for the course and for all.

Dzamling Gar, March 12, 2016



Experiences of Instructors at the Communication Course

Fabio Risolo Santi Maha Sangha, Italy

The communication course was very interesting, because usually instructors do not exchange their experiences related to the teaching and particularly related to communication. Also Gianfranco had a very open attitude towards us and he had this capacity to say very precise things about our attitude of communication, but also to enjoy different moments with us, so it was really relaxing for us even though our egos were a little stressed. According to me he mostly worked with our bodies, not particularly what we have to explain or introduce, intellectually for example with Santi Maha Sangha, but more the position of our body, and there were many suggestions of how to look at the others, gazing with our eyes, and also the body posture, different aspects related to the body; that was the main point. What I found most challenging was that we were forced in some way to be open to each other, but we are all Dzogchen Community instructors, Yantra Yoga, Vajra Dance and Santi Maha Sangha, and generally when we are in front of the public we explain freely, but in this case there was no public external to the Community, we were all teachers, so in this case we were presenting only to other instructors. That was very strong even though we knew in advance we had to do this job, but still it was very strong for me, and I think for everybody. I think this training is very beneficial for everyone because we were given very concrete devices and very concrete feedback from Gianfranco and also from the other instructors. Also perhaps we have to increase our skill to be open to other Vajra Brothers and Sisters who are instructors. That is very important for us. Also accepting to be naked in front of the others, and if we can accept that, then everything can go ok. But very often we do not accept. Of course, I recommend this course to other instructors.

Bodhi Krause, Vajra Dance, USA

It was so wonderful to see my friends change right before my very eyes and also the teachers gave each other gifts of very concise, beautiful teachings; really some gems!

Uliana Sokolova, Vajra Dance, Russia

For me it was a very wonderful experience because number one, I like to study in general, so it was a very nice opportunity of how to improve my knowledge about working with an audience and open classes outside the Community. It was very useful. The second point is that Gianfranco Brero is a very, very nice person, so it was a very nice opportunity to communicate with this person, a good professional and our Vajra Brother. And the third very important point for me was that we really cooperated with each other, people from other countries and different disciplines. It was my first experience of this nature and it was really great! I really feel now what it means to collaborate in the Community. Of course I recommend it to other instructors and certainly I will use the techniques when I teach. Right now we will be able to use these techniques in our communications, for example now we have the Khaita exam coming up and I can use these techniques!

Naomi Zeitz, Yantra Yoga, USA

My experience of the course was that it was extremely challenging but also very beneficial. It was challenging to be exposed in front of the other instructors, the feeling of being naked – observed and judged – and that it was quite a different experience to teaching classes inside the Community or to the public. One very helpful thing was that it was good to be woken up out of my comfort zone. I discovered I had become a little complacent and lazy in my teaching method. Another thing I found kind of surprising was that the one day I prepared for hours and hours, repeating my presentation over and over, even in the middle of the night, was not the most successful. One factor was that it was the first one, but, and I forgot to share this with the group, but for me was something important, that the day that I practiced Yantra Yoga and rhythmic breathing before the class, the presentation was the best of all! It was wonderful to connect with other instructors within the



Group 4.

Tania Gerasimova, Vajra Dance, Russia

My experience was that the first time I saw Gianfranco he was really a friend of mine, because he is very open and friendly. On the first day we were a big group collaborating together, and I could see his intention was really to help us. It was a very strong feeling. I had some fear about how I look, how I should say something, but he helped me to relax and he said everyone feels fear about how they appear and it is normal, and for me it was really important to communicate with people from different countries and from different activities, and I think this is very useful for all the Community, and not only for instructors but for all people. Communication is a very key point in the Community. I also recommend this course!

same discipline and also outside; to support, share fears and success, give advice and laugh. Last but not least, Gianfranco is a wonderful person and teacher and he led us on the this journey with immense kindness, warmth and skill and gave us many tools we will be able to apply as instructors and also in general when communicating. Many thanks to him! ©



On the Three Principles That Are Indispensable In the Khaita Dances

Dzamling Gar March 1, 2016. An excerpt from an informal talk during a practice session.

Firstly when we are dancing Khaita, we are not doing western dances and you are not only jumping. Some people only like to jump, but this is not the principle of dancing. There are three principles that you should remember about the Khaita dances that we do. The first is what we call in Tibetan *Idem* རྩེས་, which means harmonious, so all movements should be harmonious. This is number one and should not be lacking.

The second point is called 'gyu རྟུ, which means movement, so when you turn to the left or the right or bend forwards, all movements should be harmonious, not only jumping. When they dance

some people jump too much. Maybe it is nice but it doesn't correspond with the dance.

The last point is 'grig རྒྱིག་, which means that you coordinate all your movements with the music. When, for example, you are dancing in a circle, most people are not in a circle – sometimes people in the circle are very far apart, other times they are very near. For that reason when we dance Gangs-chen-pa [M3-6-10], for example, we always find some difficulties because there is no 'grig. You do not follow or look to see where the other people are, how much space there is between the person in front and the person behind you. Dance should be coordinated.

So you should always remember these three: *Idem*, 'gyu, 'grig. These are indispensable for dancing. You shouldn't just be jumping. You should remember that, coordinate your body and dance. ❀



About One of the Khaita Songs, Tashi Monlam

Dzamling Gar February 19, 2016. An excerpt from an informal talk during a practice session.

With the invocation, the intention is very important. When we finish practice not only do we dedicate with the invocation, but if we have any kind of good intention, our movements, everything, can also be practice. When we are dancing ordinary dances, for example, we are dealing with the practice of presence [so] it becomes a very important practice. We are not sitting and chanting mantras or mudras, and for that reason most people do not think that it is practice, and [consider that] it is only worldly dance. But we dance a little differently from someone dancing in an ordinary way and that is why I always ask for Tashi Monlam when we finish dancing. You should learn its meaning. It says that with this merit we dedicate so that relatively we will have

no earthquakes, disasters, or conflicts of elements etc. We have all these kinds of problems and we dedicate so that everything will become harmonious and also [that] everybody will be happy and feel good. This is a dedication and that is why we dance it at the end of a session of Khaita.

When we sit and say: "Now we do the dedication", and chant with these words saying: OM DHARE DHARE..., we consider that we are dedicating". [But] when I say: "We will dance Tashi Monlam", no one seriously thinks that it is a dedication. You should learn a little. There are different ways of practicing, not only in a formal way like they do in a monastery. ❀





Tashi Monlam – Invocation of Fortune

Today, in this fortunate day
In this fortunate and glorious enclosure
The sun of joyous reunion has risen
We offer this white scarf of aspiration as a support for
meeting again and again
Fortune! May fortune and happiness come about!
May fortune come about!
With no illness afflicting the body,
With no suffering arising in the mind,
May relatives and friends joined together live happily
And the fortune of realizing one's desires come about!
May fortune come about!
Today, in this fortunate day
In this fortunate and glorious enclosure
The sun of joyous reunion has risen
We offer this toast of nectar-chang of aspiration as a
support for meeting again and again
Fortune! May fortune and happiness come about!
May fortune come about!
With a capacity shining forth like the sun and moon,

With an ocean of merit twirling abundantly,
With a length of human life flowing continuously like
a river,
May the fortune of the occurrence of all wishes come
about!
May fortune come about!
Today, in this fortunate day
In this fortunate and glorious enclosure
The sun of joyous reunion has risen.
We offer this melodious song of aspiration as a
support for meeting again and again
Fortune! May fortune and happiness come about!
May fortune come about!
While the elements do not stand as enemies
While the environment does not become impoverished
May beings and nature live in peace and harmony,
And the fortune of increasing happiness come about!
May fortune come about!
May fortune and happiness come about! May fortune
come about!
May fortune and happiness perfectly come about!

The Khaita Exams

Tamara Khamdamova

On 18–26 March 2016 in the presence of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the first exams in the history of the international Dzogchen Community of Khaita Joyful Dances were held at Dzamling Gar in which 60 students from 16 countries participated.

In order to pass the exam the candidates for Khaita instructors had to learn 50 Khaita dances based on 50 modern Tibetan songs, specially chosen by Rinpoche. Most of these songs talk about Tibet as a country where the Dharma teachings and spirit are maintained. That is why Tibetans encourage the preservation of Tibetan culture and Tibetan language through the poetry of their songs. The main topics of these songs are love of their homeland, family, friends, nature, native language, Dharma, and spiritual teachers.

The candidates had to know the singer's name, the meaning of the song, the region from which each dance comes, the dance steps and movements, choreography, as well as how to apply the three principles of Khaita dances – *Idem*, *gyu* and *'grig* (harmony, movement and coordination of the movement with music) – and how to clearly explain to others.

During the examination each candidate came up to Rinpoche and randomly took from a vase his or her ticket with the number of one of the 50 dances. Then they had to explain and teach the dance to a group of people from the audience.

Many dancers of different levels of preparation gathered together to take this exam, but thanks to the training that had preceded the examination everybody had a chance to learn and train together.

The preparation itself was reminiscent of a *drubchen*: people danced everywhere – in the Gönpa, cafeteria, the dancers' apartments – and almost all the time, with short breaks for sleeping and meals.

Right after each of the examinations I was able to talk with most of the participants and ask about their impressions during the exam. Many of them said that at the beginning they had an experience of emptiness, after which they had some clarity about what and how they should do. Others commented that in this clarity they felt participation and support from the whole audience and especially from Rinpoche. Many participants said that they experienced something beyond words, joy, openness and space. Somebody was nervous, and somebody felt very relaxed and happy. Someone recounted that this examination was a kind of healing experience and an unforgettable event in their life, a bright example of collaboration.

From my side I can add that during all the examinations there reigned an atmosphere of ethereal joy and happiness despite all the emotional stress of the participants. Everybody was immensely grateful to Rinpoche for this opportunity. In conclusion, Rin-

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Conferring the Khaita Certificates

Elisa Copello

There are no words to describe the joyful wonderful atmosphere you could almost “breathe” in the Gõnpa of Dzamling Gar on March 31st in the presence of Chõgyal Namkhai Norbu, Shangpa Master Denys, Alkis Raftis, the president of CID, (International Dance Council) and the Adeje town counselor of creativity development, sport and knowledge. Other town counselors from Guia de Isora and a teacher from the Adeje College of Art and Music joined in later.

At the beginning there were the usual introductory and welcoming talks which included presenting professor Raftis to our Community. He is the president of CID, a non-governmental organization founded in 1973 and based in the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris. The CID, official partner



Photo by Miguel Ferrada Gutiérrez

of UNESCO, brings together the most important international, national and local dancing organizations as well as individual dancers. Chõgyal Namkhai Norbu met Prof.

Raftis in Moscow in 2011 at the Dzogchen Forum organized by Silvano Yeshe Namkhai and soon after a mutual collaboration started with Vajra Dance becoming part of the global dance directory of CID and, lately, also Khaita Joyful Dances.

After this very short presentation it was the turn of Rinpoche to speak and he was visibly happy and satisfied, emphasizing the importance of this Khaita event and of the official recognition by CID of what we are doing. He added that dancing is an art, because art can involve body, speech

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poche thanked everybody who participated and who understood the importance of this event, and gave every new instructor a hand-made present – a necklace or a bracelet of Evolution Creations consecrated during the Mandarava *drubchen* in February 2016.

Several days later, on 31 March, at Dzamling Gar, there was the official delivery of diplomas to the new Khaita instructors and a gala-dinner with the participation of Chõgyal Namkhai Norbu, the CID president, local authorities, and Shangpa Master Denys during which everybody could celebrate. ©



Photo by Ans Swart



Photo by Miguel Ferrada Gutiérrez

and mind, it is not only painting. Then he went on to say that the principle is not that we sing and dance because he is Tibetan. Tibet is an isolated country, which has, however, kept alive authentic knowledge for centuries and centuries. The Buddhist spiritual path, Sutra and Tantra have spread everywhere, but the origin, the source, are the collections of the 108 volumes of the Kangyur and of the 200 of the Tangyur translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan and not existing in any other part of the world. Now Tibet has become part

of China, the official language is Chinese and in the course of two generations the Tibetan language might disappear. So Khaita is a way, continued Rinpoche, to support Tibetan language and culture. But there is also another reason for Khaita: our citizens are always agitated and restless and Khaita is a very useful practice to help people to become more joyful and relaxed. For this the presence of the local authorities is very important here – said Rinpoche concluding his short but very meaningful speech – there are representatives of the IDC from

all over the world and after a long training we have qualified 60 people who can be considered qualified experts and possible instructors in the future.

Then before delivering the CID certificates to Vajra Dance instructors and dedicated Khaita students, Professor Raftis made some very important remarks, some of them “official” as president of CID and some at more personal level. In fact, he said he was more than happy to deliver CID certificates because Khaita dances totally embody the spirit and ideas of UNESCO and the UN by bringing together people from all over the world who, through dancing, promote peace, harmony, and understanding. UNESCO gives priority to small and poor countries and even if “you” – he said – “come from countries which are neither small nor poor, you promote the ideas of UNESCO considering yourselves citizens of the world”. He added that now more than ever the whole of mankind is threatened by discrimination, lack of respect, the effects of the financial crisis, terrorist attacks and that is why Khaita is so important because it emphasizes respect for humanity and its real values. Then he shared his personal feelings with us, saying that Khaita is not only a practice, like ballet, tango or flamenco and so forth. There is a “theory” behind Khaita dances because they are strictly linked to a vast culture and history from which they are inseparable. That is why –

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Photo by Miguel Ferrara Gutierrez

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he concluded – “I have a profound respect for what you are doing”.

Then Vajra Dance instructors and Khaita students were called one by one to receive their certificates, with a lot of clapping and laughing. But it was also an intensely moving moment for everyone which increased even more when Rinpoche started giving diplomas to the newly qualified experts, 60 altogether, from the youngest one, Elia, as Rinpoche underlined, to the oldest one, Elisa. Then there was a demonstration of Vajra Dance and soon after the experts performed 10 dances which were visibly appreciated by all the guests. Then there was the delivery of the Gonpa book as precious presents to all the guests and to follow lunch for the authorities sitting with Rinpoche at a long table, and for all the others food provided by the Dzamling Gar coffee shop. Really a great day, a milestone in the history of Khaita, the first visible concrete manifestation after almost five years of untiring work on the part of Rinpoche and his closest collaborators.

Then on the following day in Playa San Juan there was a public performance of Khaita in the church square in collaboration with the local authorities of Guia de Isora, very successful indeed thanks to the competence of our dancers and the involvement of the public invited to join in at the end of the show. We had planned a couple of dances to practice together but the enthusiasm of the public was so great that they asked for more and in the end we danced five dances with them.

On Saturday and Sunday morning some of the qualified experts had the opportunity to teach simple dances and basic steps to total beginners who joined the two workshops which had been organized to conclude the Khaita festival program.

At the end of this brief report I would like to share some of my personal feelings and experiences as the oldest of the group. In spite of my age and some evident problems with my legs, I have been really dancing a lot these last four years and realized that, once I have really learnt a dance and fully integrated its movements into my body, speech and mind, I feel that it is pure energy carrying me around, not my legs. In fact it is as if I had no more weight, a really wonderful sensation shared, I am sure,

Then I noticed that since Khaita started and more and more practitioners have been dancing and dedicating themselves to it, we are all more open, friendly, smiling and supportive of one another. There is the feeling of being together, of sameness, of no duality, of no judging. It does not really matter if you are a skillful dancer, a less skillful one, a beginner, there is no judgment, only the joy of dancing together in presence and harmony applying the three principles Rinpoche has explained several



Photo by Miguel Ferrara Gutierrez

by many other dancers. More presence and the marvelous harmonious power of energy driving us along – precious gift of our Master!

times: *Idem*, harmony, *gyu*, movement and *grig*, coordination, aware of respecting each others space. And happy to be part of our Khaita 'boat' fully integrated and connected with our Dzogchen Community boat, a unique body with several arms and legs moving together in harmony and space according to the meaning of Khaita. ©



Important Updates on Khaita Joyful Dances

Adriana Dal Borgo,
secretary of the Khaita organization
The Gakyil of Dzamling Gar in collaboration
with Shang Shung Foundation

We hope everybody enjoyed the wonderful opportunity of attending the first-ever Khaita Joyful Dances exams, graced by the presence of Rinpoche!

The exam has been an excellent example of how we can collaborate and progress together. The exam has also made clear the aspects that we, as Khaita instructors, need to continue working on body move-

ments, meaning of the songs, way of presenting and teaching to mention just some.

Rinpoche has recently clarified and formulated a method for ensuring that Khaita Joyful Dances are adequately taught and can develop in a correct way. Our Master indicated that:

- 1) All activities related to Khaita Joyful Dances are coordinated by Shang Shung Foundation in constant cooperation with Rinpoche and the committee.
- 2) A committee of 5 dancers (Adriana Dal Borgo, Lyudmila Kislichenko, Salima Celeri, Lena Dumcheva and Andrea Bucaioni) will coordinate the process of training and supervision.
- 3) Every Khaita instructor who wishes or is invited to teach any course, or Gakyil who would like to organize a course,

should first contact the committee through the Shang Shung Foundation at: khaita@shangshungfoundation.org or a.dalborge@shangshunginstitute.org

- 4) Everyone who has received the diploma and shows interest to teach Khaita Joyful Dances, should attend a further instructor training course and supervision.
- 5) Instructor training and supervision will be held in the Gars, organized in collaboration with the local Gakyil and the Shang Shung Foundation.

We will soon send more information about training and supervision dates and locations. We anticipate the 1st course in Dzamling Gar in June and the 2nd course in Merigar West in summer/ autumn.

With many Tashi Delegs and thank you for the collaboration!!! ©

Yantra Yoga for Pregnancy

A Training for Yantra Yoga
Instructors and Practitioners

A weekend course with
Laura Evangelisti and Nataly Nitsche
March 25-26, 2016
Dzamling Gar, Tenerife

Naomi Zeitz

The weekend of March 26-27, 2016 was the first time Yantra Yoga for Pregnancy has been presented. The course itself is intended for pregnant women, practitioners and the public, but this weekend was an unveiling of the newly developed system and training for Yantra Yoga instructors and people familiar with Yantra Yoga. It was also a way to test the methods and therefore feedback from participants was encouraged.

Laura started to work on pregnancy yoga a long time ago, then in Berlin in September, 2014, she worked in-depth with a midwife who helped deliver over 2000 babies. When in Tenerife in 2015, Nataly was pregnant and so Laura showed her the rou-



tine. Together they prepared and showed the system to Rinpoche in March, 2015. The shooting of the video was in April 2015 over one week, more or less.*

The fruit of the work and collaboration was evident. The careful, gentle and precise teaching and instruction of the 26 movements started with the 9 purification breathings, all 5 tsjong, 6 of the 8 movements, tsadul including the pranayama and 5 movements, 10 yantras, rhythmic breathing and ended with the final chang-

ing of the air into a very comfortable relaxation in *nalwab* using cushions under knees, lower back and head, to make a soft nest for the mothers.

Much care was taken in the structure of the movements themselves, how to best modify them for pregnancy and also with the aid of cushions or blocks, and great attention was given to the lower back, the large belly and the possibility of less stamina and more tiredness in the moth-

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Tso Pema, The Burning Lake

Cvetco Jovanovic

When I was asked to write an article for the Mirror, it was supposed to be about my pilgrimage in India, Nepal and Bhutan. As nothing really important happened during these months, I thought it might be more useful if I wrote a short history of Tso Pema and enumerated its most important holy places. I was also very fortunate to be in Tso Pema during the Guru Rinpoche *Tsechu*, a very important religious festival that is organized once every twelve years, for the Tibetan New Year of the Monkey. I suppose that most readers are already familiar with Guru Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, as most Tibetans call him, so I will focus on his enlightened activities in Tso Pema and the encounter with his predestined consort, Dakini Mandarava.

It is said that Guru Padmasambhava magically appeared in a lotus in the middle of a lake in the Buddhist Kingdom of Uddiyana. Even though some sceptics prefer to believe he had an actual mother and father, knowing how fantastic the rest of his life story is, I prefer to believe in the former because my self-conditioned mind likes miracles and magic. According to some sources he was born four years after the *parinirvana* of Buddha Shakyamuni, other sources state that he was born much later, sometime during the 8th century. In any case what most Buddhists agree on is that he was born on the tenth day of the sixth month of the Fire Monkey year, and that is why the Guru Rinpoche *Tsechu* festival is celebrat-



Big statue of Guru Rinpoche.

ed on the tenth day of the first month of every new Monkey Year.

The kingdom to which the village of Rawalsar belonged was called The Kingdom of Zahor and its king's name was Tsuk Lak Dzin. He was in need of a son, but when the queen gave birth to a daughter, even though there were many miraculous signs, like showers of flowers and celestial music heard by all the people in the kingdom, he wasn't satisfied, as he needed a male heir.

The princess grew up very quickly and by the age of thirteen she was a fully-grown, beautiful woman. Many kings and princes from the surrounding countries made marriage proposals, but the king thought, that as she was his only daughter, it would be dangerous to have her marry one prince and have all the others as enemies because of that. Following the advice of his ministers, he asked the princess herself which prince she wanted to marry. She was terrified and begged her father for mercy, as the only thing she desired was to be a Dharma practitioner as a



Tilopas cave.

» *Yantra Yoga* continued from previous page

ers to be. Laura stressed time and again the need to be aware that the application of the movements, and also sometimes the breathing, should be done in a much slower and softer way than Yantra Yoga is traditionally practiced.

Both Laura and Nataly encouraged instructors and helpers to make a very harmonious, non-threatening and caring environment for the pregnant women. This energy was conveyed to the group in the teaching, so the course itself was a wonderful experience of gentle harmony and

movement. Of course the breathing was a focus, and also the correspondence of the breath and movement, as is always stressed in the teaching and practice of Yantra Yoga.

There were ten people present, two of whom were men. Many of the participants had also had the experience of childbirth, so their input was valuable. On the last day, much to the joy of the women, the men got to use a balloon so they could have the experience of the large belly that becomes the baby! That was fun for everyone!

Everyone enjoyed this course very much and we were all able to see the tremen-

dous and unique benefit Yantra Yoga has for pregnant women and the unborn babies, from the movements that help open the hip and pelvis for childbirth, to the strengthening of the lower back and spine, to the breathing that can be so beneficial for both mother and child. Once again the precious and special value of Yantra Yoga was revealed. We hope that this system becomes widely diffused for the benefit of all mamas and babies everywhere!!! Thank you to Laura and Nataly! ©

* The video and book should be ready next year.



The Burning lake as seen from above.

nun. Her father refused saying that there was no possibility for a female practitioner to have realization in one lifetime and that she should find a suitable spouse. The princess decided to flee from the palace out of desperation and scratched her face bloody, cut her hair and put dirty clothes on. Her parents sent out a search party and, once they had found her, decided to grant her wish to be a nun. They had her and her five hundred maids ordained as nuns.

Meanwhile, the great master of Uddiyana, Guru Padmasambhava, had seen that there was a suitable host for his teachings and decided to meet the nun-princess. Upon seeing him, the princess and the five hundred nuns offered their respects and gifts to him and the princess requested teachings, realizing that he was her root guru. Unfortunately a cow herder saw the whole scene and assumed that he was a lover of hers. As soon as the king and the queen were informed they went to see their daughter. When they arrived in front of the locked door of her chambers, they heard a male voice speak and this confirmed their doubts. They arrested their daughter and threw her into a pit-jail. As for her teacher, they decided to burn him alive.

The king had his servants prepare a huge quantity of wood and oil, and putting Guru Padmasambhava in the middle, they set it afire. The fire blazed for one full week and it is said the black smoke covered the sky. After seeing the smoke had not faded, they realized that something was wrong, so they went there to see what had happened. They saw Guru Rinpoche, sitting in a relaxed manner on a giant lotus floating in the middle of a lake, surrounded by rainbow lights and hundreds of *dakinis* singing praises to



Padmasambhavas footprint.

him. Because he had integrated with the nature of the elements the fire couldn't burn him and manifested as a beautiful lake, with a ring of fire still burning around it.

The king and all those present suddenly had very strong faith and repented for their negative actions towards such an enlightened being. The king offered his royal robes and ornaments and prostrated to the guru. He then brought him to the palace and seated him on the royal throne, attired as a king, and sent for his daughter, the princess Mandarava, who was to be liberated from the pit in which she had been held for a week. The princess refused to leave,

saying that she had no desire to leave her jail. After, when the king, the queen and their ministers asked for her forgiveness and requested her to return to the palace, she finally accepted.

The king offered his entire kingdom and all riches to Guru Padmasambhava asking him to remain in Zahor and teach, benefiting all beings of that realm. It is said that the great Guru of Ugyen accepted to stay and remained there for a long time.

In the 1300 years that followed these events many masters, practitioners and lay people have visited Tso Pema and practiced there. There are, as a result, monasteries, temples, holy caves and special places there and in the city of Mandi, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Zahor.

I personally prefer quiet and solitary places so I will only describe caves and places I found suitable for personal practice.

The lake itself is holy and is considered to be an object of worship, just like a Stupa, which is why you can see hundreds of people walking clockwise around the lake, doing prostrations around it or doing practice on its shores.

A bit after the entrance to the lake, going clockwise, on the right side, there is a self-manifested Tara growing from a rock in a little shrine. I couldn't see the precise shape of the deity, but there is definitely a *Tam* syllable in the middle of it.

At a certain point of the *korwa*, or the walk around the lake, on the west side of the lake there is one of the caves of Mandarava. It is necessary to obtain a permission from the old nun who takes care of that holy place if you wish to do practice inside. In general she is always very happy to oblige.

Around the lake there are monasteries of two important teachers. On the east side is the monastery of Ontrul Rinpoche, a very important Drukpa Kagyu master. On the west side is the Nyingma monastery of Wangdor Rinpoche, who has also recently built the gigantic statue of Guru Padmasambhava, just above the lake, from which you can see all of Tso Pema.

There are stairs that go up from the lake, past the statue of Guru Rinpoche and take you directly to the entrance to the cave-town, or retreat centre built around the three holy caves of Guru Padmasambhava and Dakini Mandarava. It is a 45-minute walk straight uphill.

The first cave is when you take the white stairs and then turn right after 50 meters

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Tania and Cvetco.



Main cave of Guru Rinpoche.

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or so. It is the first door before the shrines and practitioners' rooms, but in general there is always someone to show you the way. There is a main cave with a big statue of Guru Rinpoche and a smaller one behind it, with a statue of Dakini Mandarava.

Above these two is a hut built above the secret cave of Padmasambhava. It is a fabulous place for practice. When we say "holy cave", it means these enlightened beings

From there you can go uphill and pass through the *lungta* hill, where pilgrims hang their prayer flags and burn incense. If you go through (or around it) to the other side of the hill top, there are white marble stairs leading to a little hut where you can see a footprint of Padmasambhava in the rock, about two meters above the floor. It may seem strange for sceptics, but if you examine it yourself, you can see there is something strange about it. It seemed real

Under the first bridge, an old bridge between Mandarava's prison and the road by which busses come to Mandi from the west, is a cave of Tilopa. Tilopa was an Indian Mahasiddha and is famous for being the master of Naropa, who in his turn was the master of Marpa the Translator. Marpa is famous for being the root guru of the great saint Milarepa. Anyhow, Tilopa was an incredible master and practitioner and one of the caves where he practiced is in Mandi, under this old bridge, on the bank of a large river. Truly an uncontaminated place for practice where very few tourists go. A few meters away is the cave of Naropa, where he stayed in order to be close to his master and to be able to receive teachings from him.

The third place to visit in Mandi is called *Tarna Mandir*, and it is the place where Guru Rinpoche gave teachings after the events at Tso Pema. It is a very pleasant hilltop park above Mandi town.



Kuwa Rani, Mandarava's prison.



Statue at Kuwa Rani, Mandarava's prison.

practiced in them and empowered them. Over the years, some important *Tertons* have discovered treasures, hidden teachings, in these caves. It is said that there are still some to be discovered there, and particularly the one in the secret cave of Padmasambhava, where you can see a strange circular rock formation in the wall on the left side, as soon as you enter the actual cave.

to me, even though it was quite large. It is an excellent place for practice. Some people explain that there is a face print in a rock a bit further on, but frankly, I am not really convinced about the authenticity of this. Still, if you wish to see it, it is enough to ask someone and they will explain how to find it.

In Mandi, the first big town and ancient capital of the kingdom of Zahor, there are three important pilgrimage places. One is the actual prison-pit where Mandarava was held for a week. It is called *Kuwa Rani* in the local language. It doesn't look like it used to, as it has been restored by local people for whom this place is an important temple, but it is truly a special place, even today.

This sums up the important places of Tso Pema and Mandi, but there are other places, and to be honest, if a supreme practitioner could potentiate caves, transform fire into a lake and convert a whole country to Buddhism, I believe the whole zone where he spent some time is an excellent place for practice, for retreats and for simply relaxing in the natural beauty of the amazing sub-Himalayan landscape and nature.

E Ma Ho!





Focus on Merigar East



The stupa at Merigar East.

Merigar East

How it started

Greg Ladra

former Gekos at Merigar East

In 2006 the land was bought on the coast of the Romanian Black Sea to fulfill Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's wish to create a place that could more serve for the activities of Eastern European countries. From the very beginning it was said that it would be one Gar in two places – Merigar West in Italy and Merigar East in Romania – and that the collaboration between those two places should be very close. The oldest and the first Gar of the Dzogchen Community would give the experience and know-how to the youngest brother. And so it began.

The land is situated in the south-east part of Romania, close to a village called 23 August, 600m from the beautiful cliffs of the Black Sea, close to the Bulgarian border. There was absolutely nothing around – just 4 hectares of agricultural land in the middle of the slightly hilly agricultural landscape and a dirt road connecting the village and the sea. With the help of a few

friends from Romania and dozens from abroad (there was no local Sangha), in the hot summer of 2007, the first retreat was held with Rinpoche. 500 people from all over the world came to listen to the teachings. For a few days the piece of land transformed into a nomads' village: there was a huge tent, another smaller one and the first building on the land, a little barn as a storage place. It was very hot and there was almost no shadow. To be honest, I didn't like it very much. It was far away from everything, there was nothing around and it was hot!

Rinpoche said that this Gar would be important for the future. He also said that it is the only place of the Dzogchen Community where there is more sky than earth – it is more like a Mandala (compared for example to Kunsungar South, which is more like a chakra). And indeed, everybody could touch this in those days!

When I was there I could see and feel the place and when I came home there was this strange feeling the entire time that I was still connected! And then I saw the announcement on Norbunet, something like: "Gakyil members for the new Gar in Romania WANTED". Good that it was not written "dead or alive". Anyway, I decided to get on board, if possible, and sent my CV.

At the end of the 2007, there was the first meeting of the Gakyil of Merigar East with a coordinator from International Gakyil and Khyentse Yeshe. The aim was how to go on with the present situation that wasn't easy, because there were no people from Romania that could help. The other problem the Gakyil faced was the transformation of the land from an agricultural structure into construction land in order to build the Gonpa, which should be the first and most important building on the land. The supervisor of this process and the "know how" of construction was Giovanni Boni, without whom we would have been lost!

After the first Gakyil meeting, the first Gekos, Tibor, was elected. He was from Hungary and decided to stay and to live on the spot and took care of the process, while the Gakyil was working from abroad and every month or two came to Merigar East to have meetings there. In this way a system was created that has been working up to today and the following Gakyils adopted: there is a gekos on the spot and the Gakyil with members from the different countries of Eastern Europe work from abroad, meeting once every 2 or 3 months at the Gar and weekly using Skype for Gakyil meetings.

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The longsal symbol seen from above.



The three outdoor Vajra Dance Mandalas.

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It wasn't an easy time. The first gekos' shelter was Rinpoche's house in the village where there was also the office. Actually, there was everything there. It is enough to say that Rinpoche's house was in the process of reconstruction in that period. But Tibor was a hero, a real Hungarian warrior! During the Gakyil meetings, we not only discussed relevant topics concerning the Gar, construction, development, teachings and so on, but also worked in Rinpoche's garden to make a nice place for the Master during the summer retreat. Slowly we got in touch with the village people, with the circumstances there, with the conditions of the place. Soon, according to the decision of the Gakyil, Tibor bought the car for the Gar – it was a second hand, white Renault Kangoo, that, because of the license plate CT21TAM, we simply started to call "the white TAM".

In the spring of 2008 two other friends – Terka who was a member of the Gakyil at that time and Vitek – both from the Czech Republic – joined the Gekos and created an on site team. Doing a lot of administrative work and sharing the responsibilities, slowly the situation moved forward, so that in summer 2008 the next retreat with Rinpoche was held. During the retreat, the new election of the Gakyil took place and also the new gekos – this time a couple – was elected. It was me (Greg Ladra) and Mira. And the dog Fiu – the little guardian of the place and the best companion and security system ever.

And this was for me the moment when in the thriller movie the action usually starts! The 2008 summer retreat was connected with the Santi Maha Sangha Base exam and the Level 1 training. During the retreat the Gakyil received indications of what the Gar should look like, where the Gonpa should be, etc. The design was made according to the vision of Khyentse Yeshe – the whole Gar was an image based on

the Longsal symbol – all the stone paths that we have today, seen from above are arranged like the Longsal symbol, with the 3 Vajra Dance Mandalas integrated into this pattern and the Gonpa is the drop above. All should be illuminated and bright. Today, when you look at Google maps, you will see this picture!

When we started to live there, we didn't speak Romanian, so we first tried

the autumn and winter we arranged a little room, kitchen and toilet inside the barn. We laid pipes and cables to the water well and connected the system to the barn. Although we had no electricity yet, we could at least run the fuel generator for few minutes and pump the water to the 200 liter barrel that we placed upstairs. From there we had the water supply for the toilet and the kitchen. The new gekos' house also got



Khyentse Yeshe with the Merigar East gakyil in 2008.

to learn the language a bit. We found an English teacher at the school and asked her to teach us Romanian. Slowly, with a help of some Romanian friends, we moved the administrative works forward as far as we could. There were many complicated things in the battle for the permission to construct the new Gonpa, but we somehow went through, trying also to build a good connection between the Community and the local people and authorities. It was quite successful but many times also stressful.

We asked Rinpoche if we could transform the small barn – our storage place at the Gar – into the gekos' house. Now we could also start to rebuild the barn. During

a wood heated stove and chimney – the source of heat in the winter. As there was no electricity on the land, the office still remained in Rinpoche's house, where we worked every day, spending evenings and nights at the Gar. This was also a very useful place for all the Gakyil meetings that took place every month or two at the Gar.

Through all the autumn and winter of 2008 and the spring of 2009 there was endless work and waiting time for the various documentation from many institutions concerning the building process of the Gonpa. As we still couldn't start to build, there was a decision to try to do everything else, whatever was possible, to prepare the land for the construction process.



Together with Giovanni, we measured the land and then we put many wooden sticks that we eventually connected with the line of gypsum powder to make it more visible – this was the first design of the Longsal symbol! We also tried our best to make this place visible for people, to let them know that Rinpoche and the Teachings are available here.

In the beginning of May 2009 the Longsal design excavation works started. Directly after that, big trucks brought tons of gravel that were put into the excavated paths and patterns of the Longsal and Mandala platforms and I could drive the road-roller all day long to flatten the material!

The 2009 summer retreat was again connected with Santi Maha Sangha exams and teachings. One day Rinpoche decided to take a day off and organize a „Tibetan games day” and so we all played different games in the tents in the middle of the endless fields while Khyentse Yeshe and the family flew above our heads inside a helicopter. There are many beautiful pictures of the Longsal stone paths that Khyentse shot at that time!

When Rinpoche saw the works on the land and in the barn, he immediately said that we should build the fence around the whole Gar. He said that in China, there is a custom that when someone starts to build something, the first thing he does is the fence. After 2 months we had a fence! The whole land was now not just an open space, but visible property of the Community. At that time the first trees and bushes were planted at the Gar, among them many apricot, peach and quince trees.

The winter of 2009/2010 was quite severe. The oldest people in the village couldn't remember such snowfalls. One night the snow covered all the coast cutting off our only link to civilisation – the dirt road. The Black Sea coast 600m away was white! The water was frozen inside the pipelines and during the next 3 days, also

because of the very strong wind, we were stuck at the Gar with no running water, but with some food! We discovered how long it takes to melt enough snow to wash our-

while (till the next snowfall and wind) we were free to drive to the village to take care of Rinpoche's house and to buy some food and water.



Relaxing at the Meribarn.

selves! After a few days and a few phone calls to the mayor of the village, a huge excavator came to clear the road and for a



Greg and Fiu.

During the hard winter, we all almost lost hope for obtaining the necessary building permits. The process stuck somehow and the Gakyil didn't know how to go on. We wrote to Khyentse Yeshe asking him for help and he suggested preparing a short essential report of our whole activity: what had been already done, which documents we have, what is missing, what the chances are of getting it and how the situation is. We prepared this and sent it to Rinpoche by Losar for a decision on how to proceed. Rinpoche replied "We go on like this". Shortly after that there was an international Naggon day with the invocation to Rahula. We also took part in this and a few weeks after, we received information that the most important documentation for the changing the destination of the land into construction land was ready! We immediately informed Khyentse Yeshe and Rinpoche about it. Everybody was very happy.

Spring 2010 was a breakthrough – we finally got the permission to build the Gonpa. As the construction company had already been chosen and was ready to work (we selected a local company from the village that we found the most reliable), we

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Camping at the Gar.



Winter scene.

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hoped to have a summer retreat inside the new Gonpa, but the works started a bit too late (the first days of May) and during the retreat we still had tents while 100m away the new Gonpa walls were ready and the works continued during the retreat. At the beginning of June 2010, parallel to the

Eve we already had the heating system and we could put the Vajra Dance Mandala inside and dance! That was a beautiful feeling! This was a great moment, also one of the most crucial moments in the history of Merigar East. For me that was just the beginning, the point where the place was really ready to host the Master.

and most of all Rinpoche teaching in such circumstances! Although there was absolutely nothing except for the 2 big tents, suddenly this piece of field became totally alive. I remember one moment, when after the teachings Rinpoche was waiting for the usual queue of people who wanted to greet him and ask some questions. When after a while nobody came, he looked around and said "Now you can come". And nobody came! People were just sitting and smiling in a relaxed way and looking at Rinpoche. And he was just enjoying his yogurt. Everything was just perfect!

For me Merigar East means a lot more. My heart is still there and I will always be there even if I am thousands of kilometers away. But this is a quite normal reaction of every Karmayogi who offers some work for the Dzogchen Community all around the world! Isn't it? ©



New multi-fun house.

Gonpa construction, the work on the 3 big, external Mandala platforms were done. We had new space to dance the Vajra dances! Rinpoche decided to paint a Solar Mandala on one of the platforms and the inauguration took place during the summer retreat. During the last days of the retreat we finally got the permission for a power supply! And this was a big step ahead – to come inside the gekos' house and turn on the light – it was just like a miracle! Immediately we moved completely to the Gar, with the office and all our equipment.

The autumn and winter of 2010 was a fruitful time – finishing the construction and some other works at the Gar, like planting the first bushes and trees and also framing the Longsal paths. On New Year's

In February 2011 our time as gekos in Merigar East finished. I was very happy, after two and a half years living onsite, to see this place in such condition, and knowing what it looked like at the beginning. The next gekos – Anatol – took perfect care of all the things introduced to him and to the next Gakyil. But this is already another story.

Merigar East is not just a place. It is much more. I will always remember all the people gathering together during retreat time, coming from all over the world to be there for listening to the Dzogchen Teachings, in the middle of the fields surrounded by countless sunflowers. There was a kind of bond, beyond words. There were the spectacular sunsets, the night swims in the sea, the open fire at the Gar

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Dargaeling

Bulgaria

Practitioners from Bulgaria met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu individually in different times and places since 2006–2007, but in that period we didn't know each other. Then around 2010 a little group of us started to do regular collective practices at a practitioners' office and to follow the Teacher and the Teaching on retreats and through webcasts. Slowly we came to know each other and from year to year we became more and more.

At the beginning of 2013 we rented a place in the center of Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria, with a very good location and that is easily accessible. Absolutely naturally arose the wish to become a Ling and we started asking Rinpoche to give us a name. Then he explained that we should wait, because he had to choose an auspicious day for this to happen. So on the 3rd of November 2013 we received an e-mail from Rinpoche with the name of our Ling – Dargaeling, meaning “increasing virtues”. We were so happy and we could feel our community growing even more and becoming like a living organism. In 2015 we also registered as an Association and now our community is legally acknowledged.

Now we try to work together, to study and learn different practices and Teachings and to help all the people that are interested in the Path. Over these years we have organized three Vajra Dance courses (with Zoltan Cser and Monika Lakatos), Yantra Yoga Courses (with Marina Sukhanova), one Yantra Yoga Supervision course (with Laura Evangelisti supervising Orlin Karaivanov), a short Kumbhaka Course (with Fabio Andrico) and Santi Maha Sangha Courses (with Jim Valby and Igor Berghin, who came several times). After the Vajra Dance courses most of us were very inspired and we managed to buy a Mandala. Now we also do these practices regularly in a hall that we have rented additionally, since the Mandala doesn't fit in our place.

In addition a group of our practitioners have started translating Dzogchen books from English into Bulgarian and the process is going very well. We have already published four books (Guruyoga, Introduction to the Practice of Contemplation, Ganapuja and The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava), of course in



Yantra Yoga supervision of O. Karaivanov.



Preparing 'The Trees of Life' for the Stupa.

small numbers (mostly for the members of the Dzogchen Community).

People from our Community live in different places, however most of us live in Sofia. We already have one person (Orlin Karaivanov) who is going through the procedure for becoming a certified Yantra Yoga Instructor. He leads regular sessions of Yantra Yoga. Together we practice regularly Ganapuja, Mandarava and also try to take part in most of the collective 24-hour chain practices.

One of our first group activities was in May 2012, when we prepared the *srogshin*, the Trees of Life, that were used for the building of the Stupas in Merigar East. We also have very nice memories helping each other making our Namkhas at a practitioners' place in the countryside. A similar experience was also the creation of Tsa-Tsas for the Stupas in Merigar East and many others.

Every time we do something together we realize how important it is to collaborate with each other. We understand that

the Teachings are not something separate from the daily life and that this is something very important for our relationships!

May all beings be blessed and sooner or later meet such a great Master as our Rinpoche! ©

Dargaeling

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The Czech Dzogchen Community

In the Beginning

On behalf of the Czech Community
Tereza Starkova, Fijalka Sable Turzikova,
Jiri Kucmas



SMS Base retreat
with Jim Valby
at Phendeling,
27th March – 6th
April 2014.

The first important milestone was the translation of the book “The Crystal and the Way of Light” prepared by Margit Martinu, a Czech emigrant who later settled in Italy just to be closer to Rinpoche and the original Community. After drawing inspiration from reading the book, a considerable number of Czech and Slovak people took part in Rinpoche’s teachings in Krakow in May 1998. After that, a small group of people started to meet on important days. The following year another wave of newcomers went to Merigar and the number of our practitioners continued to grow.

In 2000 quite a bigger group of about 50 people mostly from Prague, but also other cities, came to Merigar. We lived in the Merigar Camping in our tents and were mostly young people around the age of 20. Officially there was no place in the camping for us, so we hid in the wood because we had nowhere else to go, and we didn’t have money for other kind of accommodation. Of course after few days the Geko (at that time Martha Heinen) found out and we had a big meeting with her behind the Yellow house and she asked us to leave if we had some other possibility. A few older people had but almost all of us had to stay and we began to do karmayoga 5 hours a day. We were very happy and enjoyed Merigar, Italian food and drinks and just the whole atmosphere very much.

After coming back from Italy we were very excited to practice together and we also organized many retreats at the weekends in cabins of different practitioners in the woods. In Prague we already had a possibility to practice twice a week in the Lotus Buddhist center. There were always a lot of people present. These were just practices retreats, we didn’t have any local instructor in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. But we dedicated a lot of time to learn the practices and train together. Everybody was very enthusiastic.

Some older practitioners from the Community like Oliver Leick and Gerd Manusch also helped to explain a few things. People who could translate from English into Czech formed the CZPC (Czech Publishing Committee) group and with help of Margit Martinu who was a member of the IPC (International Publishing Committee), we translated books and booklets of Rinpoche’s Teachings. We also established the first Gakyil members.

A year or two later in the summer time we painted our first Mandala.

After some time and especially after the first visit of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to Prague in 2002 our Community grew quite a bit, and from 50 members we became a group of about 150 people.

Nowadays the Czech Community has more than 270 members. We gather for collective practices not only in Prague but we have strong local centers in Brno, Tabor, Pilsen, Olomouc, and Trinec (which belongs under Kunkyabbling). These centers also have Vajra Dance mandalas and people dance regularly. We have our instructors of Yantra Yoga (Fijalka Turzikova and Medved), Vajra Dance (Milan Polasek) and we hope to have a Khaita instructor very soon.

We also started to organize Losar events to support the activities of ASIA Onlus. The first one back in 2005 was quite a small evening, mainly for other Buddhist groups. But slowly year by year Losar in Prague organized by the Dzogchen Community has become quite a popular and well-known event. In few last years we have always had about 500 visitors from the general public.

Since 2008 we have also had a place in the countryside called Phendeling, which we had spent many years looking for. When Khyentse Yeshe pointed out the red zone on the Mandala globe, Phendeling manifested almost instantly.

In our Community centres we organize all kinds of retreats, with local instructors and also often with main international in-

structors. Now we are focussing all our efforts on organizing the retreat with Rinpoche in Prague, which will take place August 12th–14th this year and we invite all Mirror readers to come to Prague and enjoy the retreat with us.

Kunkyabbling

Kunkyabbling is located in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where the spread of the Dzogchen teaching in both the Czech and Slovak Republics began. In the beginning a small group of people started to meet on important days and later we got a place in the Lotus Buddhist centre which had opened in Prague at that time. We became one of the participating meditation groups and met for our practices there. Most of the other practice groups were Hinayana or Mahayana Sutra, which soon created trouble with our using meat and alcohol at Ganapujas.

We established a common-interest association and organized many retreats with teachers. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu visited Prague in 2002. It was strong moment and it attracted really a lot of people. Then we started to search for our own gonpa and found a place in a former tea house, just above a popular pub with quite a tantric name “At the Shoot Out Eye” referring to the Hussite military leader Jan Zizka because of the victorious battle on the mountain rising above this location.

At the same time more people became interested in Vajra Dance and we ordered a new mandala that was painted on a thick truck cover and rolled in three heavy tubes. The Dance took place in a rented school gym or outside Prague in a cultural centre. Yantra Yoga could be practised inside the new gonpa. After some time the decision to move was taken. Our new place was in a socialist villa quarter behind our biggest housing estate next to a large for-



The retreat with Fabio Andrico at Phendeling 2015.



Phendeling 2015.

est (with another tantric name indicating something like "boil your guest") including a big water dam. There were some rooms to live in, the rental of which helped us to cover part of the price. However, it was quite distant from the town centre, so after some years we decided to return to the central area.

We were lucky to find an offer to rent a large flat really downtown, opposite Prague's main railway station. We joined two rooms to have a bigger space for meditation and there are still some small rooms for an office, library, shop, and rooms to rent to practitioners for living. Later the flat one floor below vacated too, and some practitioners rented it. An external hall not far away is regularly rented for the practice of the Vajra Dance.

Phendeling

Phendeling is situated in a green-belt of unspoiled, hilly countryside filled with forests near the southern borders of the Czech Republic. The name Phendeling was given by Rinpoche and the meaning of the Tibetan word Phende is described in the explanation of the practice of Ödzar Chenma: "*Phen* means provisional benefit and *de* means final, ultimate benefit or realization. When both these benefits are present it means that it is a real teaching."

Phendeling was bought as old remote farmhouse in autumn 2008 and according to Rinpoche's indication officially opened on December 15th 2008. During 2009 the old building was demolished mostly by karmayogis coming to work every 2 weeks. 20 tons of rubble, odds and ends was shipped away. Besides a good atmosphere, a good feeling from good hard work, the motivation to come was also supported by evening barbeques, "strong-water" (famous Slivovice) and delicious cuisine prepared



The base for the dark cabin.



The dark cabin.

by smiling vajrasisters cooking for brave muscled *karmayogis*.

Then the construction period started. A new house was constructed by a construction company under the supervision of Pepa Vintr in 2011. The new building contains a spacious gonpa in the raised attic with a Vajra Dance mandala, a big kitchen, a dining room and also a flat for the Gekos. Later a dormitory with 5 separate rooms for accommodation and social areas was also finished. Countless retreats with international, local instructors have been organized there and we have received very nice feedback from participants.

Phendeling can be used also for personal practices. In 2015 we started to build a Stupa and Dark retreat cabin. For both

projects donations are very welcome. The aim is to finish them before Rinpoche's visit in August 2016. ©

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Thadralling “Beyond Limits”

Estonia

The story of our Ling began in 1991 when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu sent Fabio Andrico to the Baltic States and Russia to teach Yantra Yoga. At that time we had here a small Rime based Buddhist center called Buddhist Union, but we felt that we were missing more authentic teachings than they could offer. Fabio taught us the 8 lungsans and some basic Dzogchen teachings over four lovely days.

In 1992 four people from Estonia, full of hope and enthusiasm, went to Jurmala, Latvia where Rinpoche's Latvian retreat took place. After that two of them followed Rinpoche to the St.Petersburg retreat.

In 1994 four of us participated in his Moscow retreat. In December 1994 when Adriana Dal Borgo visited Russia we had a chance to invite her to Estonia to teach the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, a course in which Finnish people also participated. In spring 1995 we succeeded in inviting Fabio here for second time. That time we had many interested people participating.

Yantra Yoga

In 2001 Maaya Zelmin who already had previous Hatha Yoga experience and who had practiced Yantra Yoga since 1991 went to her first Yantra Yoga Teacher Training in Kunsangar North in 2001. In the autumn of 2005 Laura Evangelisti came to Estonia for the first time to supervise her, and at the end of 2005 Maaya passed her 1st level exam in Tashigar Norte. In January 2010 Laura came a second time to supervise her and in 2010 she passed her 2nd level exam in Merigar West.

Concerning Yantra Yoga activities at the moment, we have regular Yantra Yoga classes twice a week, for beginners and for advanced practitioners. About two or three times a year we organize Yantra Yoga, Breathing and Kumbhaka weekend courses. Maaya has given Yantra Yoga and Breathing classes in three Scandinavian countries, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Vajra Dance

In 1994 Adriana Dal Borgo kindly came to teach us the Dance of the Song of the Vajra. We had time to learn only part of this dance, so people travelled to Lithuania and St. Petersburg to complete the course



Celebrating New Year.

afterwards. One person had no money, so he walked and hitch-hiked to Lithuania in December, in full winter, to complete the course. The same year our first Vajra Dance Mandala was sewn and painted on cloth.



Yantra Yoga event in August 2011. In the background is the Tallinn old town.

Around 2004–2005 a Lithuanian Vajra Dance instructor, Algis Lukosevicius, had a chance to visit Estonia more regularly and he gave several Vajra Dance courses here.

In 2008 we had a wonderful 10 day course of the Song of Vajra with Ludmila and Pancho on two Mandalas. In 2011 Adriana came again to the Baltics to supervise Alar and Algis and to lead a deepening course here. Then Anya came to lead the courses, and Zoltan from Hungary suddenly just manifested.

In 2011 and 2015 due to the kindness of Adriana and Prima Mai and the Vajra Dance practitioners in the Baltics, Alar was authorised as a local instructor of the Vajra Dance by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We have continued with a weekly practice and several courses at weekends, as well as collaboration between the Baltics - every three-four months we have a practice weekend at Riga on two Mandalas.

After Laura's first visit we started to invite Santi Maha Sangha instructors. First came Costantino Albini, then Alexander Poubants, Oliver Leick, Elio Guarisco, Michael Katz, Jim Valby, and Igor Berkhin.

We have organized several Buddhist events like a demonstration of Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga for the public during the

“Orient” Music Festival when HH Dalai Lama visited Estonia. 2014 we organized a cultural event “Tibet in Estonia” where people could participate in lectures, workshops and concerts.



In 2012 we decided to ask Rinpoche permission to become a Ling and he gave us the name Thadralling “Beyond Limits”. We have at the moment more than twenty active members.

Facts about Estonia

Estonia is situated in the Northern Europe on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

The territory of Estonia is 45227 sqkm.

Total population: 1,3 million.

Capital: Tallinn.



Thadralling

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Garabbling

Greece

Sofia Daskaroli, Antonina Xenou

In March of 1983, Liakos Evangelopoulos, one of the oldest members of what was to become the Greek Dzogchen Community, Garabbling, travelled to Merigar West for a retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for the first time. Liakos and most of the first Greek community members heard about Rinpoche from the late Barry Simmons, one of Rinpoche's oldest students who often came to Greece to give seminars at the Wilhem Reich center.

Liakos met Rinpoche and was so deeply touched by the teachings that he took the opportunity and initiative to invite Rinpoche to come to Greece to give teachings. It is important to point out that up until that point the only active Buddhist communities in Greece were Karma Kagyu and Nyingma. The Master accepted the invitation and came for the first time to teach Dzogchen in March of 1984.

The retreat took place in Nea Makri which is located by the sea about half an hour away from Athens, in a quaint hotel, Nireas Hotel, that was solely booked for this retreat. The teachings lasted for a week and were an introduction to Dzogchen. Rinpoche also gave teachings about Yantra Yoga at the same time.

After only six months, in September of 1984, the Master returned to Greece for yet another retreat that took place in the same area and hotel. In December of the same year, Rinpoche decided to cancel the big retreat for the closing of the year that was scheduled to take place in Merigar West and instead came again to Greece. This time the retreat was on a much bigger scale since many people from different parts of the world came for the teaching. The next retreat took place on Mt Parnitha in 1988 and then again in 1993 in Nea Makri where Rinpoche also taught the Dance of the Song of Vajra.

Ever since the first retreats in Greece, a group of several people was formed who would meet in their living spaces for collective practices without any interruption in between whatsoever. Collective practices continued in this fashion up until 2005, when a member kindly offered a small space to gather and practice. In 2008 the community moved to a bigger space in the



center of Athens where it still resides to this day.

In 2005 the late Nikos Limberopoulos offered the Community a vast piece of land of 13 acres in the Peloponnese and more specifically in Arcadia, on the famous Mount



Lykaion. Rinpoche gave it the name Garabbling, literally meaning *"Place of Supreme Joy & Delight"*.

In October of 2012 Rinpoche visited Greece again. The retreat took place in Gli-fada, a suburb in the south of Athens by the sea. This was a much needed boost to a suffering country that was in shambles and the retreat was a great success with a high number of participants from around the world.

In May of 2015 Rinpoche came to Greece for the last time up until now, again for teachings.

Just before the 2012 retreat, the Greek community in collaboration with the International Shang Shung Institute, organised a three day Festival dedicated to Tibetan Culture. This included an exhibition of Tibetan statues, photos and artefacts. There were instructors, like Laura Evangelisti, Aldo Oneto, Elio Guarisco, Oliver Leick who demonstrated different areas of Tibetan culture like Yantra Yoga, Ku Nye Massage and Tibetan literature.

After the retreat in 2012, the Greek Gakyil decided to sponsor Tami Rori to become a Yantra Yoga instructor in order for the community to have an authorised instructor to teach, which she succeeded to

do in 2014. Lilian Pepa also became a Yantra Yoga instructor in 2015.

The Greek community has successfully organised many seminars. Some of the most recent ones are:

- Ku Nye Massage Course with Aldo Oneto
- Yantra Yoga level one supervision course with Laura Evangelisti
- 3rd Series of Yantra Yoga with Laura Evangelisti
- Teachings from the Precious Vase and Kumbhaka with Jim Valby
- Inner Rushens with Steven Landsberg
- Namkha theory and construction with Liane Graf
- Vajra Dance Seminar with Zoltan Cser and many more....

Finally, Garabbling has translated several practice booklets for internal use as well as the book 'The Precious Vase'. Furthermore, the community has translated and published the book 'Dzogchen, the Self-Perfected State', which is available in Greek bookstores. Moreover, the community wrote and published a Greek Dzogchen Community newspaper entitled "Triskelion" for many years.

The Greek Dzogchen Community of Garabbling may not be a huge community with many members, but it has a sustainable dynamic that has allowed it to steadily develop with a lifespan of more than 30 years... And as the saying goes.... The best is yet to come!!!

©

Garabbling

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Hungary

In March of 2000 the representatives of Tarab Institute invited Oliver Leick to teach Yantra Yoga in Budapest. More than 30 participants took part in the course. Oliver suggested if we were more interested in the subject, it would be best to have contact with the lineage holder, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Due to his suggestion 15 of the participants travelled to Merigar in Tuscany and took part in Rinpoche's retreat, in which Rinpoche supported the idea of organizing a community in Hungary thus giving the possibility to many of those who are interested to learn and practice his teachings.



Narag Tongdrug retreat with Khyentse Yeshe.



Oliver Leick leading a course.



Painting one of the mandalas.

After returning home this little group along with others started to practice weekly at the Dharmagate Buddhist College in Budapest. In autumn the Hungarian Dzogchen Community was founded. As a part of Dharmagate Buddhist Church we could do our practices in the halls of the College for free. We started to invite instructors and organize courses like Vajradance, Yantra Yoga, Santi Maha Sangha and practices like Chod, Mandarava or moxa courses and so on.

Rinpoche has visited Hungary two times, in 2003 and 2005, when the Community invited him just for resting in Budapest and visit one of his favorite thermal baths, the Széchenyi Bath. In response to this Rinpoche offered Longsal Ngondro teaching that attracted around 700 practitioners from all over the world. From 2004 our Community has been following the webcast teachings of Rinpoche. Yeshe Namkhai visited Budapest twice giving intensive Phowa and Narag Thongdrug teachings.

We have quite a rich practice program: on Mondays we do Yantra, then sitting practice and Vajra dance, on Tuesday Chod and after SMS or other practices, on Wednesday Harmonious Breathing and Semdzin, Rushen, on Thursday Vajra dance and Khaita dances, on Friday Vajra dance, Kumar Kumari Yantra for children and Yantra Yoga. Most of the weekends there are more intensive practices and also in summertime we have a Vajra Dance summer camp and one week retreats in the mountains.

In the Hungarian Dzogchen Community there are Yantra Yoga instructors, Vajra Dance instructors and also one SMS instructor who are responsible for regular practices and also for organizing local courses. Every year we do Namkha two times and our members have painted two Vajra Dance mandalas. ©

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Ati Israel

Inception and current activity

The Israeli Dzogchen Community started in April 2003, with three practitioners, two of which had met Rinpoche abroad and one that initiated the meeting but at that point still hadn't met Rinpoche.

Rinpoche visited and taught in Israel in 1992, however, from that time on there was no community activity here until April 2003.

Slowly the community grew and interested people that were in contact with Dharma organizations in Israel heard of Rinpoche and asked to join as his students. They were prepared for the transmission and joined the community. In 2005 the first Gakyil was elected and till 2012 the community maintained a Gakyil.

These days the community has about 12 paying members.

Dozens have received transmission and then not continued to be in contact. The community holds Worldwide Guru Yoga Transmissions on their appropriate dates, Ganapujas on their appropriate dates are hosted by different individuals in their homes, a Santi Maha Sangha Base study group is held on skype, and Vajra Dance practice is held every other month at an Arts high school at a rented venue. Yantra Yoga practice for community members led by local teacher is held weekly at the teacher's home. There is a Yantra Yoga weekend every other month and Yantra Yoga practice for non-community members who have participated in a Yantra Yoga course led by local teacher.

Activity History: Courses, workshops and teachers' visits to Israel

From 2006–2013, seven teachers were invited and came to teach. The number of participants ranged from 15–30 except for Yeshe Namkhai's public talk.

2007 – Santi Maha Sangha teaching and Mandarava – Sasha Poubants

2008, 2009 – Yantra Yoga – Naomi Zeitz

2008 – Michael Katz – Dream Yoga workshops: one for practitioners, one for the general public.

2009 – Maurizio Mingotti – Vajra Dance: Liberation of the Six Lokas, Dance of the Three Vajras



Khyentse Yeshe's public talk.

2010 – Khyentse Yeshe – a teaching for the community and a public talk.

Yantra Yoga supervision by Fabio Andrico for Orit Kenan

Maurizio Mingotti – Vajra Dance, Dance of the Song of Vajra part 1

2011 – Maurizio Mingotti – Vajra Dance,

Dance of the Song of Vajra part 2

2012 – Nina Robinson – Mandarava Teachings

2013 – Jim Valby – Santi Maha Sangha Base teachings for the community.

2015 – Igor Barkin – Santi Maha Sangha Base teachings

Yantra Yoga courses led by local instructors were held in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. ©

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Jim Valby's retreat in 2013.



Mandarava retreat with Nina Robinson.



Retreat with Igor Berkhin in 2015.

Dorjeling

Lithuania, Vilnius

During the Soviet occupation when we were not free to practise any spiritual path, some people went to Buryatia to find Buddhist masters there, and later they practised secretly. As soon as Lithuania regained its independence Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was invited to give Dzogchen teachings there and he visited Lithuania in 1992. The retreat took place in Vilnius, in a nice place by the lake, and about 100 people participated in it. After so many years of suppression it was a taste of freedom for us in all senses.

The same year we received the name of Dorjeling from Rinpoche, but the Dzogchen Community of Lithuania was only registered as an association in 2002. For a long time we used to meet at different homes of our practitioners, and at times we rented some random places. In 2003 with the approval of our Master and with the offerings from our community members we bought



Celebrating Rinpoche's birthday in December 2015 at the Ling in Vilnius.

to make some windows there. However, in the meantime we are happy to have a space for collective practices and local retreats. Additionally we rent places on a regular basis for Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance.

The community of our small country is not big, with only 35 members, mostly in

Khyentse Yeshe gave teachings in Lithuania in 2000, and we have also had courses with Jim Valby, Igor Berkhin, Fabio Andrico, Laura Evangelisti, Zhenya Rud, Viktor Krachkovsky, Adriana dal Borgo, Nina Robinson and some others.

Most of us speak Russian and English, but nevertheless we translated Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's book "The Crystal and the Way of Light" into Lithuanian and published it in 2000 in order to spread Dzogchen teachings in our country.

Our community is skillful at making Vajra Dance Mandalas. We made the very first Mandala from canvas in 1993. It was very heavy, but we were happy to have a possibility to dance. Later we developed the technique and started to make lighter Mandalas from roofing material. In 2002 with Rinpoche's approval we started to make Mandalas for selling. Currently practitioners in Italy, Brazil, Singapore and many other countries dance on Lithuanian hand painted Mandalas! ©



Presentation of the Vajra Dance at the Yoga Festival in Vilnius in October 2015.

a place at about 70 km. from Vilnius with an old house and a big rather wild apple tree garden in it. We used to go there on weekends, mostly in summer and stay all together working and practising, but eventually we agreed that a place in the city would be of greater use to our small community, therefore in 2007 we sold the land.

From the money from the sale we managed to buy a place in a basement not far from the center of Vilnius and to repair it. It is not the perfect place since it was constructed to serve as an air-raid shelter and there are no windows in it, so we are ready to change the place again or at least

Vilnius, but the atmosphere is warm and friendly. We have a local instructor of Yantra Yoga, Egle Indriunaite, who organizes courses for beginners approximately once a year and leads weekly practices. Zhenya Rud lives in Vilnius most of his time now and he also organized two courses in Kaunas, the second biggest city of Lithuania, and from this time on people gather for Yantra Yoga practise every week there. We also have two instructors of Vajra Dance. One of them, Algimantas Lukosevicius, for the time being lives in London, while the other, Jurgita Misiunaite, leads weekly practices in Vilnius.

Dorjeling

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The Polish Dzogchen Community

History and Now

Written by a Polish practitioner

At the beginning there was the world. Some publications written on a typewriter and photocopied started to appear in 1988. Then the translation of "The Crystal and the Way of Light" appeared. At the same time the first small groups of people started to do the Short Thun in Cracow, Łódź and Katowice. Just five people went to Kamalashila for the retreat with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and invited him to Poland.

In 1989 Oliver Leick came and taught Yantra Yoga and gave some talks about Dzogchen. In 1990 he came again with John Reynolds and they gave some lectures and taught the Guruyoga of Garab Dorje and Padmasambhava.

In 1992 Rinpoche accepted an invitation to Poland and the first retreat took place in Łódź.

After this visit, a group of practitioners decided to publish a little periodical magazine about Dzogchen teachings and news from the Community. (It still exists – with short breaks – but has changed its name and form from the newspaper "White A" into the internet edition "The Mirror" translated into Polish). At the same time, groups of practitioners in many towns started to collaborate, inviting foreign instructors like Fabio Andrico and doing practicing retreats as well as organizing transmissions through video for new people on special days.

In 1994 our Master made his second visit to Poland to Cracow and the Polish Dzogchen Community was established as a legal entity.

In 1997 saw the third visit of the Master and the Polish community was already able to buy a house in the mountains. Practitioners found land on the top of Łysa Góra (Bold Mountain) which was connected to the legend saying that a big snake lives in this mountain and when he is sleeping there is a peace in the area. In the past this area was very often connected to war activities and especially on this hill there were many big battles during the first and the second World Wars. When digging the earth, people very often found bones, jack-



Rinpoche's first visit to Poland 1992.

ets with soldiers buttons, and even unexploded bombs.

In 1997, during Rinpoche's third visit in Poland, he went to Paldenling – Place of Glory – and was asked about local guardians. He replied that the local guardian was sleeping.

In 2009 the Dark Retreat Cabin was built in the deep forest. The cabin can also be used as a normal retreat cabin because of its additional little room with window.

Simultaneously, from 1989 till now practitioners from the Community have been very active on the level of translations.



More than 1200 people attended the 2015 summer retreat in Warsaw with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

In 1999, after a retreat in Paldenling with Jim Valby, the Dzogchen Community of Germany decided to support a project for building the first house for Longde practices in the world on the top of Łysa Góra.

Paldenling is a typical retreat center. It's a house on 3 levels and many rooms ready to be used by practitioners looking for a peaceful place for meditation. It is situated at the end of the road on the top of Łysa Góra and surrounded by fields and forests.

For a long time this place did not give any profit to the community. Now Paldenling is a well-known meditation centre in Poland and is almost self-sufficient on the financial level.

First the "A Publishing House" (Wydawnictwo A) appeared in Cracow and then "Norbu Publishing House" (Wydawnictwo Norbu) which was then converted into "Vimala Publishing House" (Wydawnictwo Vimala) arose in Warsaw. Those two private publishing houses covered a big part of the Buddhist book market. Both of them are very well known among all Buddhists in Poland because of their translations related not only to Dzogchen but also to Tantra and Sutra teachings as well as the Bon tradition.

From 1998 the progress of our Community slowed down a little bit. There were

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Paldenling.

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some misunderstandings connected to Paldenling but actually if we look back it is difficult to say where exactly the problem was. Probably we wrongly understood the meaning of *samaya* between practitioners. During his third visit Rinpoche warned us that if we continued the misunderstandings between us he would stop coming to Poland. Unfortunately, almost nobody noticed this message and Rinpoche didn't come to Poland till 2015, that is 17 years!

The Community grew very slowly. Some people came, some left, and some came again. We concentrated mostly on activities around Paldenling – raising the roof in the main house and building a gönpa there, and building a Dark Retreat cabin. In 2010 the first practitioner entered the dark. In 2008 another retreat house was built with the help of a sponsor, but unfortunately in 2012 it burned down.

Shang Shung Editions, our internal publishing house brings out many restricted publications and practices for Polish practitioners. In 2003 the legal situation was sorted out and we started to pay copyrights etc. 45 titles have been published legally up to now. In 2005 our internet shop opened and books, CDs, T-shirts etc. are available there. Our website also provided working application DMA with transparent financial side of the Community for a few years. Every member could check how much money we had and how it was spent but because of lack of interest it was closed.

An interesting fact is that since 2011 there has been one full time employee dedicated only to Shang Shung publications – Polish and international.

Foreign instructors were invited like Adriana Dal Borgo, Prima Mai and Rita Renzi for Vajra Dance, Fabio Andrico and Oliver Leick for Yantra Yoga and Sasha Poubants and Igor Berkhin for Santi Maha Sangha. Also Enzo Terzano for a Gomadevi retreat, Michel Bricaire for bakchen... It is



Longde cabin.

difficult to count them all. After some time Polish instructors started to appear.

The Polish Community had only about 100 members for many years. The break came with the visit of Yeshe Namkhai. He said: "There is nothing bad if the Community grows". Up to this time we were considered to be the most hermetic Dharma group in Poland. From this time we started to be more open for new people and the other sanghas and started to collaborate, for example organizing Losar or giving



Dark retreat cabin at Paldenling.

public demonstrations of the Vajra Dance on the Mandala.

Our members started to be active at the international level: collaborating with publishing books for Shang Shung Publishing, making events for Asia, as well as doing some informatics work for The Mirror, Shang Shung and the International Gakyil. (eg. the melong.com application and data base was built and sustained for many years by people from the Polish Dzogchen Community). Some of our practitioners entered the Gakyil of Merigar East. In 2014 almost half of the crew during the retreat with Rinpoche there was Polish!

The need for responsible transmission of teachings and internal dynamic of some practitioners also appeared. Our Polish instructors started to be active, first for Yantra Yoga, then for Vajra Dance and then Santi Maha Sangha.

In 2010 the number of members in Warsaw reached the level that required us to

rent a place for group practices. Rinpoche was asked for permission to establish a ling and he gave the name Namdakling (Ever Pure). In 2015, the same happened in Cracow. The name of new ling was Yedrolling (Primordial Liberty).

Finally, after many requests, Rinpoche accepted our invitation and came to Poland in 2015. The Community rented a sports hall because we didn't know how many people would come to the retreat. We thought about 300 to 600 people would take part, ultimately, 1200 people came!

After this event we understood how well known our Master is in Poland, even if our Community only has about 170 members! There is the continuous dedication of our Master giving webcasts through internet, the efforts of publishers to print so many books and the openness of practitioners towards other Sanghas and newcomers.

As you noticed, this article seems to be more like a report and to add some "dramatization" I would have to give some names. Unfortunately, it would be not fair to name some and avoid others. All of our Polish Community has continuously given support through actions, from organizing to just taking part in practices, as well as on the financial level through generosity or just simply paying membership. This is one of the capacities of Dharma practitioners: participation.

The present situation is as follows:

- There are 3 lings in Poland – Paldenling as a retreat place, Namdakling and Yedrolling as city practice places.
- In Paldenling we have 3 spots – the places of Dharmakaya, Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya. There are 3 houses – the main house with 7 rooms and a big gönpa, dark retreat house and longde house.
- In Namdakling in Warsaw we have 3 mandalas for Vajra Dance and we dance in two places: every weekend at a school gym on

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Thayasling

Serbia, Belgrade

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu named our Dzogchen Community Center in Belgrade Thayasling – Ling of the Beyond – during the Merigar East retreat on 23 of August 2013. We are infinitely grateful to our Beloved Master, who is ever present in our hearts, for such a marvelous name.

The Dzogchen Community of Serbia was first registered as an association in 1990, re-registered in 2009, and we are currently working on alignment with the IDC statute. The Community has been active since Rinpoche first came to Belgrade to give the Teachings 25 years ago.

Zeljka Jovanovic was most meritorious for building the foundations of the Dzogchen Community in Serbia. Many of us were fortunate to know her and to receive valuable information from her. During the period from 1990 to 1997 we organized a Yantra Yoga course with Oliver Leick and a Vajra Dance course with Adriana Dal Borgo. In 1996 we invited Lama Ngawang, the founder and spiritual leader of the Hungarian Karma Kagyüpa Community, accompanied by his translator Lama Csöpel, to give Teachings in Belgrade, as recommended by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Zeljka had organized collective practices in her apartment until 1997, when she and her family moved to France.

Due to the situation in our country for the following 10 years we used to meet for



Belgrade retreat with Rinpoche, Nov 29–Dec 2, 1990.

the collective practices at homes of different practitioners. We are infinitely grateful to our world wide Vajra family of the International Dzogchen Community for a very generous donation in 2000 which helped us maintain our community.

In 2002 we actively took part in the Peace Vase project in collaboration with the coordinator of Siddhartha's Intent organization under the direction of Dzongsar Jamyang Kyentse Rinpoche. In 2014 we participated in the project: Sand Mandala of Avalokiteshvara for world peace which was made by Geshe Lobsang Tseten and two monks from the Tibetan Drepung Gomang Monastic College.

Thanks to the German Dzogchen Community's generous donation we had the Santi Maha Sangha base level retreat with Jacob Winkler in Belgrade in 2003.



Webcast in Thayasling.

From 2009 to 2012 we rented different premises for the courses and the collective practices. In 2012 Zeljka's children and our Vajra family, Cvetko, Ana and Maria, offered their apartment to the Community. The apartment was completely refurbished thanks to a very generous donation and it became our first Ling in 2013. We are very happy that we finally have our own space, especially in the apartment where we had gathered for the practices from the very beginning. Different times, yet the same taste.

Thayasling is located in the apartment in the center of Belgrade, easily reached by everyone. It is a 100 sqm space with a 40 sqm Gonpa, a guest room (with library), waiting room, bathroom, kitchen, dressing room, toilet and terrace.

The Webcasts are offered in the Ling according to the circumstances. The Gonpa

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» *Poland continued from previous page*

- 2 mandalas and during the week at a theatre hall.
- In Yedroling in Cracow there is mandala for Vajra Dance and we dance there once or twice a month. The regular weekly Yantra Yoga practice is also just about to begin there.
- There are regular dances in many towns like Warsaw, Cracow, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Katowice etc.
- There are 3 instructors for Vajra Dance (plus one aspiring), 2 for Yantra Yoga (plus one aspiring) and 3 for Santi Maha Sangha (plus one aspiring).
- There are regular SMS Base level study meetings in 3 cities: Warsaw, Cracow and Łódź.

- There are 2 instructors of YY (one living part of the time in Canada).
- There are courses of YY in many places in Poland.
- There is an ASIA section and some concerts and events taking place to support it.
- There is Shang Shung department as well as a digital archive of published books. Altogether there are about 80 titles in Polish – some published not really legally at the beginning, some published by private publishing houses and some by Shang Shung.
- There are regular Ganapujas in many cities, towns and private houses of lonely practitioners.

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Wangdenling

Slovakia

Wangdenling is nestled on the slope of a hill overlooking the Bošaca valley and the beautiful nature of the White Carpathian Mountains. The official birthday of Wangdenling is the 6th of January, which is the day chosen by our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, to found the Ling in 2009. At that time our Ling consisted of a rather untidy old house, with the neighbor's livestock occupying one of the rooms of the house.

Since then we have worked on making Wangdenling a place suitable for practice – having appropriate facilities for practi-

tioners to stay as well as suitable space for collective practice. In May 2012 we started a still ongoing project of Gonpa construction, the site of which was visited and blessed by the late head of the Nyingma school, Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, in the year 2013. That same year we also managed to build a stupa on our land, the very first stupa in Slovakia. Later on the stupa was blessed by Samdong Rinpoche, an important Gelugpa master. Last year the main works on the Gonpa were finalized. Now we only need to finish the electric installations, decorations and some other details.

Even though still in development, Wangdenling has already been the venue of many events of our community, such as courses on Yantra Yoga and the Dance of the Vajra, and even group retreat of

longde – a practice for which Wangdenling offers ideal conditions.

So please come and visit us and witness for yourself the "Place Possessing the Potential", which is the meaning behind the name Wangdenling. ©

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» *Thayasling* continued from previous page

is not big enough to house the Mandala but is suitable for collective practices, Yantra yoga, Khaita and there is a guest room available for personal retreats. In order to make the space more affordable for our small community (18 paid members in 2015) we are sharing the premises with the Hatha Yoga group organized and led by our yellow gakyil.

From 2009 until 2015 we were very fortunate to welcome again our dear Vajra brother and SMS instructor Oliver Leick who held four retreats: Introduction to Dzogchen Teachings and Yantra Yoga in 2009, two SMS base level retreats in 2012 and 2013 and the Green Tara retreat in 2015.

Each year from 2011–2014 we were fortunate to welcome our dear Vajra brother and Yantra Yoga instructor Zsolt Somogyvari for four YY courses and we are planning another course in May 2016.



YY course in Thayasling 2013.

Eternal thanks to our dear Oliver Leick and dear Zsolt Somogyvary for their precious time, commitment and perseverance, and for helping us to renew our Community.

We hope that auspicious circumstances will enable us to organize more retreats in the future and to provide possibilities to further develop our activities.

Long Live the Masters, the Teachings and the Community!

Looking forward to welcoming you to Thayasling! ©

Thayasling

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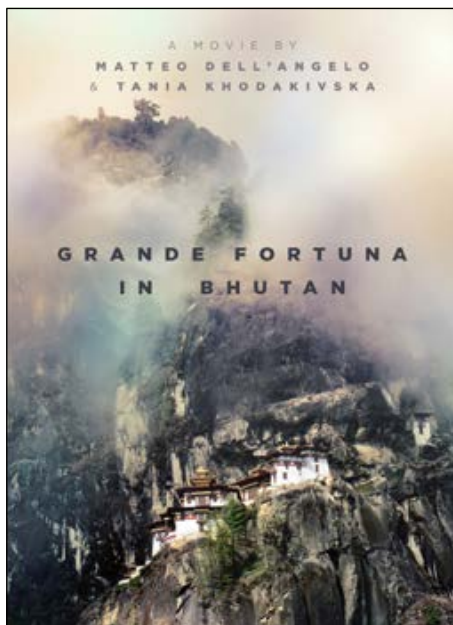
Grande Fortuna In Bhutan

A Movie by Matteo Dell'Angelo &
Tania Khodakivska

Alfredo Colitto

Did you know that Bhutan is the only country in the world where Vajrayana Buddhism is the official religion? Or that one third of its population is under the age of 14? And did you know that in Bhutan national happiness is measured by an index known as Gross National Happiness?

Watching the delightful movie Grande Fortuna in Bhutan, by Matteo dell'Angelo and Tania Khodakivska, we learn these and many more facts, delivered in a brief and concise way, while following the pilgrimage that our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu made in Bhutan in 2014. When he was three years old, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was recognized as the reincarnation of the Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651), Bhutan's first Dharmaraja, the unifier of Bhutan as a nation. So this visit takes on a very special significance, for the people of Bhutan as well as for the disciples following our Master through this adventurous journey. Even though, when asked if he is the Darmaraja, Rinpoche answers: "No, I am Namkhai Norbu. That's more important for me, more concrete."



The journey unfolds through cities, temples, valleys and sacred places, between mountains more than 5,500 meters high. The overall atmosphere, that the camera-work never fails to capture, is playful and enjoyable, highlighted by good photography and soundtrack. A particularly nice feature are the animations, meant to illustrate curiosities, historical facts or explanations by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, for example when he explains the significance of meeting three animals, falcon, eagle and wolf, or when he narrates a story told by the Buddha about collaboration.

Throughout the movie, we see breathtaking landscapes and ancient sacred places, but also the omnipresent phallus (sym-

bol of the "divine madman" Drukpa Kunley, master of Mahamudra and famous poet) painted on the walls of houses or made into wood sculptures. It's almost like being there. We meet archers dressed in traditional attire, shooting arrows with very modern, space-age looking bows. We cross Thimpu, the only capital in the world without traffic lights, then we visit the Place of 108 Stupas, immersed in the mist. Every now and then, the Master personally illustrates some of the sights, such as the iron bridge built by Thangthong Gyalpo, the "Iron chainmaker Mahasiddha". (By the way, did you know that this bridge was built in the 15th century, but the technology used to make it was discovered only in the 19th century?)

The pilgrimage culminates at the world famous Tiger Nest (Taktsang Palphug Monastery), on a sheer rock cliff, 3048 meters ASL. Besides Padmasambhava, who is said to have flown here on the back of a tigress, the caves on this rock face were occupied at one time or another also by Machik Labdron, Yeshe Tsogyel, Milarepa and other great masters.

A very well done mix between a road movie and a documentary, condensed in only forty minutes which flow so fast that you are left yearning for more, Grande Fortuna in Bhutan is very enjoyable for the general public. Much more so for Dzogchen Community practitioners, who can once more appreciate our Master's immeasurable kindness.

The film can be purchased from
www.palzomfilms.com



Dance of Infinity: The Quest for Perfection

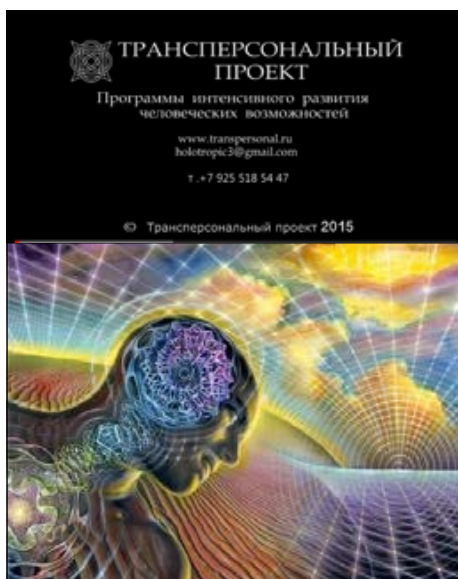
Alexander Studholme

Dance of Infinity: the Quest for Perfection is a new film directed by the Russian transpersonal psychologist and Dzogchen Community member Vladimir Maykov. Consisting of a series of interviews with luminaries from the religious, spiritual, therapeutic, artistic and scientific worlds – including brief appearances by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Khyentse Yeshe – the film presents a kaleidoscopic view of what might be described as a contemporary inter-disciplinary culture of awakening.

Transpersonal psychology is an approach to the individual that integrates the spiritual and transcendent dimensions of the person into the process of healing. It lays considerable store on the significance of altered states of consciousness – including religious experience – whether experienced spontaneously or brought about deliberately through such things as meditation, breathwork, or the use of psychoactive substances. Indeed, one of the school's principal founders is the Czech psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, famous for his exploration of the therapeutic value of LSD.

If the film has a core, then, it lies in bringing together interviews with many of the pioneers of transpersonal psychology, such as Charles Tart, Roger Walsh, James Fadiman, Frances Vaughan, Grof's own wife Christina and the integral philosopher Ken Wilber. Grof himself appears, sober and statesmanlike. "Who are we?" he asks, "Well, we are material objects, we are highly developed animals, we are thinking machines and so on. But, we are also an infinite field of consciousness that has no boundaries... The healing happens by discovering that you are not whole, that you are identifying with just a fragment of yourself."

The film, in fact, does without any very definite structure or argument. It presents us, instead, with an ever flowing stream of short spoken pieces – the same interviewees recur at irregular intervals – illustrated by a seamless patchwork of images, whether of the interviewees themselves, or of shots of the natural world, of locations mundane and exotic. We cut, for instance, from an audience with His Holiness the



Dalai Lama, to a headshot of the Russian cartoonist Pavel Muntyan, whose views on the spiritual life we are treated to over the sights, first, of a Hindu sadhu in his cave and, then, of a fire- and belly-dancing performance in what looks like a nightclub.

No doubt, this approach is consistent with modern life: the film is a kind of reflection of contemporary consciousness. We are all accustomed and attuned to the instantaneous reading of an image and to making connections between fragments of a multi-cultural, interconnected world. A number of themes do become apparent in the film: the definition of enlightenment ("A better term... is spiritual maturity" – Roger Walsh); the limitations of scientific materialism ("This addiction to materialism is probably the biggest drug addiction that we have to overcome" – quantum physicist Amit Goswami); the nature of consciousness ("Most people, in fact, have had at least a glimmer of this ultimate, unity consciousness" – Ken Wilber) and the process of evolution ("All aspects of human nature are going to be transformed" – Michael Murphy, founder of the Esalen Institute). But, like many people, the film never reaches any actual conclusions, but simply aligns itself with a loosely defined zeitgeist.

No one voice is given any more legitimacy than any other. On camera, Rinpoche himself remains very much within his own domain of the Dzogchen teaching and is not drawn into any more speculative territory. However, he does not appear out of place: his central concern with the discovery of and integration with one's "real nature" is, surely, broadly consistent with transpersonal psychology's emphasis on the healing power of the transcendent dimensions

of the self. "Our condition, human condition, everything is very much limited. Going after mind – so then, we have so many problems. All problems arise with our limitations," Rinpoche says. "In our real nature, we say we have also infinite potentiality."

Khyentse Yeshe, similarly, appears as one of the more down-to-earth figures in the film. He presents himself as free of dogma, concerned with the notion of happiness and promoting a workaday version of enlightenment. "We don't need to establish a specific path or a specific procedure that we enter into this nature. This nature just becomes our own awareness, how normally we are living. It just integrates into our ordinary life," he says, "If, for example, before enlightenment we are working in the office, after enlightenment we are still working in the office. The fact that we maybe work more happily with less tension – more people are satisfied and happy – is the benefit related with having a stable happiness."

At times, it must be said, the constant flow of opinions and images becomes too much: the juxtaposition, for instance, of an American Neo-Advaitan, a Viennese Benedictine monk and a Russian rock musician becomes not just stimulating, but enervating. One is reminded of the unhappy psychedelic drug subject, overwhelmed by phenomena and desperate for an authoritative guide to help make some sense of it all. Ironically, Khyentse Yeshe himself is seen talking of the need for discrimination. "Identifying with what is meaningful is a capacity that we need to raise, we need to grow," he says, "This is very much about teaching, understanding what is meaningful."

Nevertheless, *Dance of Infinity* is a valuable and often rather beautiful document. It captures a certain spirit of the age. It is generous in its eclecticism: the Christian church, perhaps unusually for a film of this kind, is given due respect. Its relentless optimism and positivity is uplifting. It is rare to find such a distinguished range of spiritual thinkers under the same roof: the viewer is almost bound to be grabbed and inspired by some of them. And for members of the Dzogchen Community, it prompts interesting questions about how we do or do not fit in to a wider, global culture of religious endeavor. ©

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

Everybody Is an Artist – Everybody Has Buddha Nature

Babeth M. VanLoo
Director/producer FILM ART
Amsterdam
Director BFFE @EYE Filmmuseum

My name is Babeth Mondini-VanLoo. I was born in Holland and as a young girl I moved to Germany to study art a.o. with the artist Joseph Beuys. He taught us that motivation is of primary importance when creating art. Some of his works he called Invisible Sculpture because it was a container for all kinds of art and part of his larger notion of the Social Sculpture, meaning that art could heal society.

He also initiated ecological art – he planted 7000 oak trees as art – or he cleaned a river, and he co-founded the Green party. He also coined this phrase “Everybody is an artist”, broadening the notion of art, and that art can be active at all levels of society.

When he was fired by the government for occupying the academy together with us students in 1972, in protest of denial of free choice of study during this period of political turmoil (Notstandsgesetze), I wanted to leave Germany.

I received a scholarship to study film in New York and in 1976 I got in touch with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche there. In Germany I had already met the Maharishi so I had done a bit of transcendental yoga meditation, however, there wasn't that heart connection with the Maharishi as a teacher. But when I met Dilgo Khyentse it right away felt like coming home. Something changed within me and I felt that I needed to study this.

I got my Masters in Film & Arts when I moved to San Francisco and around 1977–78 met Dudjom Rinpoche. There were many Rinpoches there so this connection was nurtured in California. When I moved back to Holland, I met Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in 1982 and I would call myself a practitioner from that time on, because that was when I started to have a daily



Babeth & Kazuaki Tanahashi, a Japanese Zen master, artist, calligrapher and renowned scholar, during the film she directed and produced in 2013 called Painting Peace.

practice and to not see Buddhism as an inspiration for my life, but as a basis because of studying with him.

Afterwards I understood what an amazing blessing it was for me as an artist to get in touch with Dzogchen and Vajrayana teachings, because they provide an artist with the broadest space. It's the Path of Self Liberation and that really fits very well with the practice of art. It is not that I decided to become a Vajrayana practitioner but somehow our destiny brings us to the practices that connect best to our own nature.

Then after many art and music films in 1989 I made my first Buddhist film on 16mm, during the cremation rituals of Dudjom Rinpoche in Kathmandu. I worked together with John Halpern who I had met thru Joseph Beuys and we received permission from Shenpen Dawa, Dudjom Rinpoche's son, to make the first 16mm film in their monastery in Kathmandu, where Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was presiding over the cremation rituals. I remember distinctly that when I went to get a blessing from him I was carrying my Bolex film camera and as he took his stick to bless me instead of blessing me on the head, he blessed the camera. When I kept on waiting to get a blessing on my head he started laughing. I will always remember that moment as a sort of empowerment to use filmmaking or video as skillful means to put the activity of the wisdom mind into forms of art.

Before 1989 I had created art installations with light and film. These were pre-

sented in public spaces, like museums or galleries. I was also doing these light sculptures with Buddhist content, so some are like modern prayer wheels. For example,

in the fall of 1991 I was invited to present my artworks during the Year of Tibet with HH the Dalai Lama in New York, in a gallery. I had made three lightsculptures with film, one on Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, one on the cremation rituals of Dudjom Rinpoche, and another was a prayer wheel with His Holiness. Imagine: the outside is plexiglass and copper in which I enclosed 35mm film images that I had filmed with the Dalai Lama, and inside neon lights and a mantra by His Holiness. When you turned the wheel, not only the mantra by His Holiness became active, but the filmimages looked as if he was giving you a blessing.

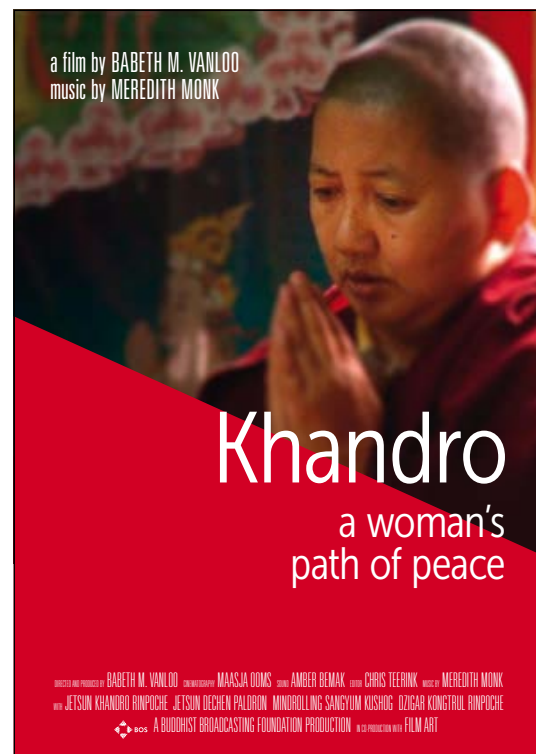
And then an amazing thing happened when Richard Gere opened that event. I had made an invitation card with Dilgo Khyentse's image on it and people had to bring it to get into the gallery. However, right before the night of the opening he passed away. In the morning I heard that he had died and I put a truckload of earth in the gallery with a neon halo on it, and some incense as part of the installation. When Richard Gere, who was also his student, came in, we really transformed the space into a shrine ritual to commemorate Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Sometimes that kind of synchronicity happens in Buddhism.

My connection to Dilgo Khyentse as a student also helped to receive permission to start making movies in Bhutan, at that time still a very restricted area. My first three one hour movies in Bhutan were

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HH Dalai Lama, Babeth & Laetitia Schoofs. The photo was taken while Babeth was directing the film called Dalai Lama. Well-being, Wisdom & Compassion, in 2014.



» *Artists continued from previous page*

about the women, working with a great Bhutanese collaborator, Karma Pem. At that time changes were taking place there with the first introduction of television and urbanization. The first film documented the women in the rural areas where there was a matrilineal system in which the land passes from mother to daughter, and women had a very equal relationship to men. It was fantastic to see this in Asia.

The second film was on urbanization.

The third film was about the daughter of Dilgo Khyentse, called Chime Wangmo and about his wife, Khandro Rinpoche, who was an incredible doctor and healer. She had been instrumental in starting up a Buddhist nunnery called Sissinang. There were many blessings from giving these women a voice in these movies.

Of course there had to be a good film on Namkhai Norbu. I had lived in Tribeca in New York at the beginning of the 90s and my neighbor one block down was Jennifer Fox. Our paths would always cross. I had made a well-known documentary in Haiti in 1991, a very political film, against the military coup. At that time Jennifer had made a film in Lebanon and both our engaged movies travelled the American circuit. I also would go to Jennifer's house to do practice. We both had Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche as a teacher, so she was a dharma sister, a friend and a colleague. That was so rare!

Later on when I became the head of the Buddhist television station, I knew that Jennifer would be the best filmmaker for that film because over all these years I had seen her collecting material about Namkhai Norbu, plus she is a great documentary filmmaker. It took me almost 5 to 7 years to convince her to do it, because there was some hesitation on her part. Also because I initially wanted the film to be about how it had changed her life, how Buddhism influenced her filmmaking, changed her view as an artist, but she didn't want to do that. Then she came up with the idea of making the father-son relationship as the main focus of the movie. I am so glad to have initiated that film and to have been her co-producer and commissioning editor for My Reincarnation because one of the major benefits of doing it was that in the process all of her material was catalogued. I felt that that was a big blessing, to have 25 years of audio visual material catalogued, and donating that to Rinpoche.

So in the year 2000 I became the programming director of the first Buddhist television station in the western world, in Holland. The first time we broadcasted I had a flashback of Dilgo Khyentse blessing my camera. It took 7 years to get the permission and finances from the government to start as a PBS – Public Broadcasting Station. I felt that it was important for Buddhism to enter into people's homes who did not already have a connection, so not

preaching to the converted, but to inspire through the medium of television.

Only one third of our programming was religiously oriented. The rest was Buddhism as a way of life, a philosophy, as an empowerment for people to lead their lives. Holland is a Christian country but people had a problematic relationship with the institution of the church. Particularly young people, who dismissed religion still had questions about life's mission, what can guide us, how can we lead our lives, ethics. We did not try to convert anybody. We offered guidance in ethics. We had started this within the Buddhist Union of the Netherlands so we were all inspired by those means that Buddhism offered us – non-violence, the view on interdependence.

I remember that the first program that I put on was the Dalai Lama teaching the Four Noble Truths. After that a lot of cultural programs. For example, about Philip Glass as a music composer. He had been a long time Buddhist practitioner but the word Buddhism only appeared once or twice in the film. He spoke beautifully about how meditation would influence his playing and compositions. We showed a similar film on John Cage. I had taught film making in academies for 24 years and while teaching at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, a music conservatory where I taught *Phaenomenology of Image and Sound*, I had the opportunity to invite John Cage to come and

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The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness

Article by Prima Mai, international teacher of the Dance of the Vajra, in collaboration with translator and editor Susan Schwarz
Italy 11.1.2016

In human experience, dance and song begin where the exigency of communication ends. Requiring no instruments other than our body and vocal cords, they are art, a luxury that brings richness, joy, and meaning. Like music itself, they are

universal, unifying, expressive, and profound.

On a contemporary, mundane level, collectively engaging in joyful singing and dancing activity has obvious social benefits, beginning with a more open and peaceful society. Studies have shown that individuals who participate in a choir, dance classes, or dance therapy experience personal benefits as well. Singing and dancing can help resolve mental, energetic, and physical disorders of all kinds, generating awareness, trust, and confidence individually and in relation to the outside world. They lead to a more mindful, harmonious, and happier life.

Beyond the relative benefits of joy and togetherness, the aspiration of sacred,

» *Artists continued from previous page*

teach with us. John had similar experiences. The way that he introduced silence into his compositions was definitely linked to his practice of Buddhism. So our programs were not merely on Buddhism itself, but on how it guides our lives.

And talking about interconnectedness, this was a time that Buddhism in the west was branching out. At the beginning we could only show documentaries but later on I got a permit to also co-produce fiction films.

Then we also zoomed in on what was going on in Buddhism in relation to science and medicine. In 2001 when I made programs with people such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the first people to introduce mindfulness to terminal cancer patients in the United States, nobody had even heard of him. Now those type of mindfulness treatments are all over. Or people like Goenka who had trained many of the early American Buddhists, or those who introduced the use of mindfulness meditation in jails, and also the people who started the Insight Meditation center in the US. This was a time when the kind of wisdom contained within the Buddhist community suddenly started to go out to the wider world.

Only a small percentage of our viewers watching our 'slow tv' were Buddhists. There were deeper discussions and documentaries integrating the experience of seeing Buddhism. In other words, feeling what comes across. For us as filmmakers

this is one of the big challenges: how to introduce that level of feeling not just on a cognitive level, and make an audience experience. People may have been poisoned by commercialized television where they are consumers rather than participants. Buddhist television really used this element of making viewers participate, waking people up to think for themselves.

Unfortunately, January 1, 2016 marked the moment when the Buddhist television station, as an autonomous Public Broadcasting Station, was closed down. It will no longer be a separate station but there will be some slots allocated to Buddhist films under the umbrella of a Christian station, where my successor will have less airtime, more rules, bureaucracy etc.

The budget for television was cut drastically, and all the religious stations were dismantled, not only the Buddhist station, and so this marks a point in history of a very different kind of political and cultural climate in the Netherlands.

Now I think one of the main things is how to guide the archive of all these films that have been produced over the last 15 years. One important thing to add is that because I went on a lot of the shootings as a producer, I always made sure that when there were any kinds of rituals involved that we documented the whole ritual. A normal TV crew would just film a small part because they knew that they would only use a few minutes. But for me as a



Perfect geometric patterns in nature – sunflower.

spiritual, and ritual dance, like all spiritual or religious methods, is to realize an altered altruistic state of the mind or higher consciousness, ultimately leading to a liberation from suffering.

When Buddha attained realization, he taught that the universal truth of exist-

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Buddhist practitioner and filmmaker in charge, I knew that it is important to safeguard that whole ritual for future generations, and especially in the Tibetan case because many of the Rinpoches of that generation were still born in Tibet, and not in exile, and have already passed away.

I really hope with the little capacities that I still might have to contribute to that because I feel that such archives should be disclosed to future generations, to Buddhist scholars, or people who might want to study Buddhist media, as now many Rinpoches also teach online. This is something new that has come about in the last 20 years. The teachings were always restricted to receiving them orally. And now they are available online. This is a whole new trend that needs guidance, of teachings being given as a service to the world.

I really feel that there is a strong connection between making art and Buddhism. Both require that inner introspection, and contemplation to unleash our full creative potential as human beings.

A Buddhist television station was for me what my art teacher called a Social Sculpture, an artwork that touches people and can have an influence and benefit society. It may plant some seeds. I believe that our Rinpoches are working like that as a service to the community, and I feel blessed that I can be of service in an artistic way as part of that transmission through modern media and creativity.

» *Dance of Vajra* continued from previous page
tence is found by recognizing suffering and its causes and following a path to overcome it. Responding to the needs of the manifold levels of capacity in sentient beings, he also taught many methods for following this path.

Regardless of the outward form of a religion or philosophy, it is up to practitioners, then, to diligently apply the methods best suited for them to evolve and realize on the basis of their own experience.

When the consciousness is obscured, it is like being in a dark room without knowing about the light switch. As soon as we are introduced to the knowledge of where the switch is and activate the switch, light enters, and where there is light, darkness cannot prevail.

Some seventy percent of the human body, as well as our planet, is made up of water, constantly shaped by natural forces and intentional choices, be it negative or positive.

The entire universe, all of nature, is in continuous movement like a dance, and the same sacred geometry pervades both the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Cymatics,¹ the study of sound made visible, has demonstrated in many experiments how sound creates and alters geometric patterns in material elements like for example sand or water. And sound, vibration, and frequency are also the essence of sacred geometry and color.

In semi-scientific studies, Emoto Masaru² developed a way to make visible the memory of water. Other recent scientific studies have demonstrated the potentials of frequency altering the behavior of water.³

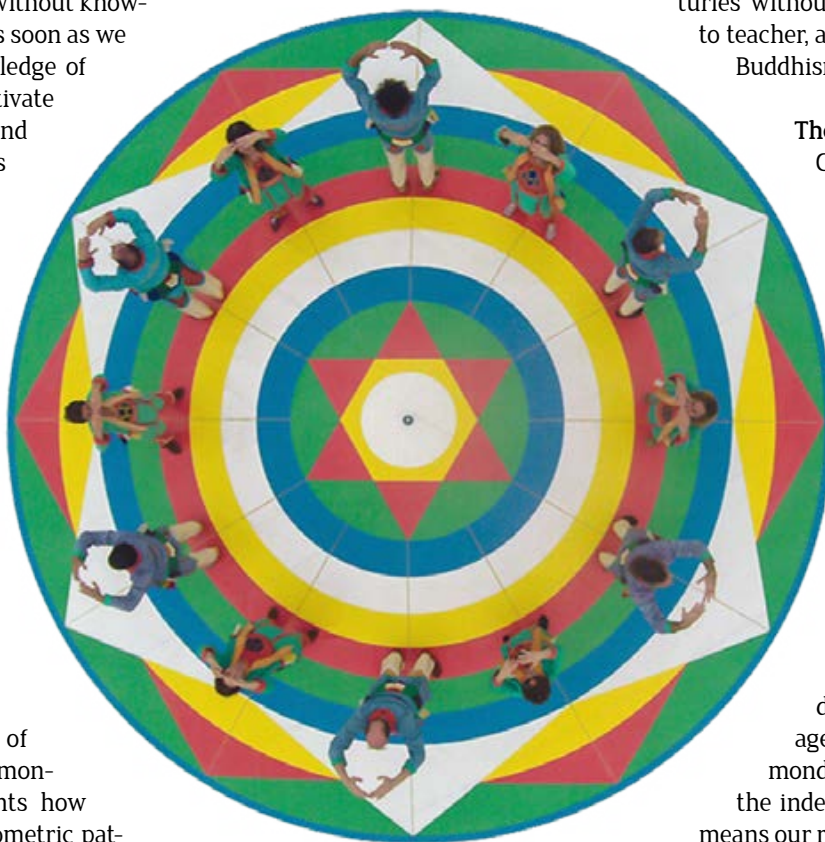
In the scientific field of genetics current research is exploring the potential of self-healing of the human genome, focusing on the notion that DNA is more significant than the brain for correcting malfunctions in our "bioenergy system." Research shows that the mind exists at the dimension of electromagnetic fields and not residing in an organ such as the brain. To access the source of electromagnetic malfunction in our bioenergy system, both

special sounds and intention are employed. It is believed that each individual's system follows its own electromagnetic rhythm, like a cellular symphony with emotions and thoughts having a significant impact on genes and well-being.⁴

Sound is information and can change the state of consciousness nearly instantaneously. Sound, like for example learning a new language, rewires neural nets and can change emotional and mental patterns. We all have experiences with the way vibrations

nels and chakras, and the experience of our energy or voice in combination with physical movements unfolds as knowledge and contemplation.

Sacred dances are often practiced in secret or performed only on special occasions, and in ancient times, like all sacred arts, were also a means to initiate or awaken the observer or listener into higher states of consciousness. Sacred visual art, poetry, music, dance are inseparably linked to profound knowledge introduced by a realized teacher, often transmitted over centuries without interruption from teacher to teacher, as still found today in Tibetan Buddhism.



The Dance of the Vajra

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a renowned scholar and widely acknowledged to be one of the greatest living masters of Dzogchen,⁵ the essence of Tibetan Buddhism, first introduced this Dance of the Vajra⁶ to his students in 1990. It is mainly practiced in various places and centers of the Dzogchen Community all around the world.

Vajra is a Sanskrit term that could be translated as "indestructible condition" with its symbolic images like a thunderbolt or diamond. In the Dzogchen Teachings the indestructible condition or Vajra means our real nature, the real condition of all phenomena, which is nondual and beyond judgment and intellectual conceptual thinking.

In the Dzogchen teaching, sound and movement⁷ are very important because they are the means to integrate the three aspects of body, energy, and mind into the knowledge of the state of contemplation. The Dance of the Vajra is principally a practice to harmonize the energy of the individual.

Three dances of the Vajra exist: the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, the Dance of the Vajra That Benefits Beings, and the Dance of the Three Vajras. All three Dances are practiced on a Mandala according to precise instructions for the steps and movements. These sacred dances are inseparably linked with the transmission of the Dzogchen teaching, and the Dance of

change our feelings or actions when we engage in activity with music or movement.

Sound is energy and energy is movement. Energy can be altered through our voice and movement, which mirrors our relative condition, becoming a practice of mindfulness. All experiences related to our body, voice, and mind are integrated without modifying anything in a state of contemplation.

In sacred dance the physical movements become a symbolic means of transforming into a divine figure or expressing the divine potential in us, making it possible for our obscured states of consciousness to discover our real condition.

Sacred sounds, chants, or mantras connect and resonate with our energy chan-

the Song of the Vajra is reserved for practitioners who have received the transmission. However, the Dance of the Vajra That Benefits Beings,⁸ and to a certain extent the Dance of the Three Vajras, can also be studied and practiced by people who are not particularly interested in the Dzogchen teaching. Aside from offering countless relative benefits for our body, energy, and mind, these dances also create a cause and connection to enter and be on a path leading to the end of suffering.⁹

Twelve practitioners, six females and six males, dance together on a large geometric diagram, the Mandala, representing the correspondence and interdependence between the microcosm and macrocosm, between the internal dimension of the individual and the outer dimension of the world.

The slow, coordinated movements are precisely connected to a sacred sound and timing, and as we softly sing and practice awareness together they produce an experience of deep relaxation and consequently a calm state of mind.

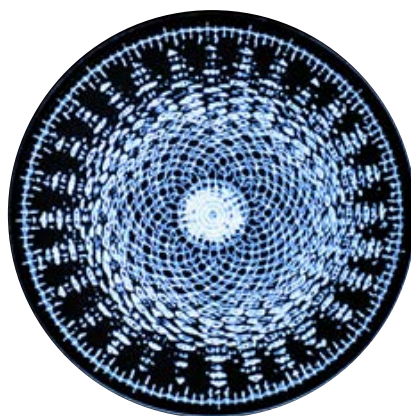
In the Dance of the Vajra, sound and not intellectual meaning is the main importance. Accompanied by music, we sing sacred syllables that are resonating, harmonizing, and purifying our chakras and energy points in our body or the microcosm, which is interdependently connected to energy fields in our outer world or globe, the macrocosm.

In the Dance of the Vajra the ultimate realization is to discover the nature of mind, which is beyond all limits.¹⁰ All our human activities are inspired by the mind, the human consciousness, and the experiences related to our activities, be they happy or sad, emptiness or sensations, confusion or clarity; when connected to the knowledge of the state of contemplation, the experiences can make us aware of the real nature or condition of our internal and external reality, which is impermanent and like a reflection of our conscious or unconscious state of fears and hopes. The experience of discovery releases our tensions, allowing us to let go or not give too much importance to our emotions and attachments and enter a state of profound relaxation often also described as ultimate bliss, where it is possible to discover the nature of mind.

In this Dance of the Vajra we apply three types of mindfulness. The breath or voice integrates in the Song, the body in the Dance and the mind in the state of contemplation.

The Mandala

The space is represented by the Mandala on which we dance. Considered a symbol of a pure dimension, it is divided into concentric rings and triangular shapes of five colors, representing the five elements of space, water, earth, fire, and air. It contains a number of symbolic sacred geometric forms: circles or spheres, triangles, a hexagon, and twelve lines, which in their composition function like a map. The Mandala further reflects the resonance between the inner energy points and chakras of the individual and the concentrated energy points on our globe, connecting to a deeper meaning and knowledge. The ancients believed that the experience of sacred geometry connects our consciousness to our inner dimension and awareness with healing benefits.



Water_sound.

The Sound or Mantra

In traditional mindfulness practice one of the main focuses is on the breath. In the Dance of the Vajra, the breath is vocalized with the application of natural sounds, called seed syllables. The vocalization of this "sacred sound" has been used by teachers from ancient times to the present as a means for spiritual realization. The function of the seed syllables applied in these dances is to purify and release obstacles, calm the chatter in the mind, and give us access to creative and healing energy, awakening the self to a higher consciousness.

The Movement

In the Dance of the Vajra, each seed syllable or sound is connected to a movement or mudra, a Sanskrit term literally meaning "closure" or "seal." The mudras are hand positions or gestures that influence the energy flow of the body and can change the spiritual and mental aspects of a person.

The slow dance movements alternating between the left and right side of the body balance the hemispheres of the brain and the female and male aspects of the individual.

The six male and six female dancers symbolize the nonduality and inseparability of male and female attributes on the external plane. The choreography of the dance creates an experience of awareness of the harmonic possible reality. The sounds and movements in the Dance of the Vajra symbolize enlightened activity, inseparable from the mostly still dormant but real potential present in every sentient being. When awakened and linked to a profound knowledge of our real condition, this potential evolves into self-liberation, mindfulness, loving kindness, and compassion for oneself and consequently all sentient beings.

Applied to all of our activities in ordinary life, this evolution is borne of the mastery of the art of mindfulness. It generates happiness and prosperity for oneself, the society, and the world.

The Dance of the Vajra is associated with the International Dance Council, CID UNESCO, the official umbrella organization for all forms of dance in all countries of the world. ©

1 Cymatics, from the Greek: κύμα, meaning "wave," is a subset of modal vibrational phenomena. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymatics and www.cymascope.com/cyma_research/history.html.

2 For Emoto Masaru, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masaru_Emoto.

3 For a related article, see www.livescience.com/42757-sound-waves-make-droplets-dance-in-midair.html.

4 See T. S. Sathyanarayana Rao, K. S. Jagannatha Rao and M. R. Asha, "Drooping genes vs. dancing genes," <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2772228/>.

5 "The Dzogchen teaching is not a philosophy, or a religious doctrine, or a cultural tradition. Understanding the message of the teachings means discovering one's own true condition, stripped of all self deceptions and falsifications which the mind creates. The very meaning of the Tibetan term Dzogchen (Great Perfection), refers to the true primordial state of every individual and not to any transcendent reality. Many spiritual paths have at their basis the principal of compassion, of benefiting others. Sometimes however, compassion can become something constructed and provisional, because we don't understand the real principal of it. A genuine, not artificial compassion, can only arise after we have discovered our own condition. Observing our own limits, our conditioning and our conflicts we can become truly conscious of the suffering of others, and then our own experience becomes a basis for being able to better understand and help those around us. The only source of every kind of benefit for others is awareness of

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Jargon and Ingroup-Outgroup Barriers

Elio Guarisco

"I went to the gas station and petrol manifested."
"We met and a lot of energy manifested."
"We had a nice dinner at the restaurant last night and everything manifested perfectly."
"This room is very dirty.' 'It is ok, integrate it'. "
"This fish is rotten.' 'It is ok, just integrate."
"I overslept so I haven't been able to buy what you asked. But it's ok – I work with circumstances."
"I do my best."
"Today he is charged."

These are some examples of the jargon we bring into our daily lives borrowing words from the context of the teaching.

The word 'jargon' seems to have derived from the Latin word *gaggire*, meaning "to chatter", which was used to describe speech that the listener did not understand. The word may have also derived from the old French *jargon*, meaning "the chatter of birds".

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our own condition. We need to observe our limits... the mental judgments, the passions, the pride, the jealousy, and the attachments with which we close ourselves up in the course of one single day: where do they arise from, what are they rooted in? Their source is our conditioning. To be able to help both ourselves and others we need to overcome all the limits in which we are enclosed. This is the real meaning of the teachings." (Quote from oral teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.)

6 "In the ancient texts of Dzogchen we find described various Vajra dances that seem to have been used in those times, although more recently only a scant number of Vajra dances have remained a living tradition in a few monasteries. A Vajra dance is generally considered to be a sacred dance and is presented as such. Effectively practiced in that way, a Vajra dance is in a real sense always connected with the Dance of the Vajra that we do. This Dance of the Vajra is related to the practice of Contemplation or what we call the state of Dzog-

Jargon is a type of language that is used in a particular context, but it may not be well understood outside of it. Outgroups would tend to take this special vocabulary, which is used in a narrower sense, in a broader sense.

Most technical terminology is jargon and it evolves due to the need for experts in the field to communicate with precision and brevity, but it often becomes a factor of social exclusion or social aspiration.

We also use jargon as a form of protectionism of what we consider secret or exclusive to our group. And moreover the differences in jargon also cause difficulties in communication and understanding where professionals in related fields use different terms for the same thing, or the same term but with a different meaning.

Having made this premise, we can easily see that jargon becomes a factor for exclusion in two different ways which are in fact two sides of the same coin: social exclusion of one's group, and exclusion of other groups.

Regarding the former, it is true that jargon that was once obscure outside a small ingroup can become generally known over time and recognized by many people outside. But since this is a remote possibility for the jargon of our Community, it is always advisable to keep in mind the effects of jargon on people who do not belong to our Community when communicating with them.

chen." (Excerpt from an interview with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, March 6, 1999.)

7 "Sound is the basis from which energy develops. Sound develops through light and color to a more physical level and then we have movement." (Quote from oral teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.)

8 Link to a video presentation of The Dance of the Vajra That Benefits Beings: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrvqASfSk4g.

9 A good example of the favorable effects of these dances on a relative level was an open course recently offered to mentally disabled youths in Caracas, Venezuela. It generated considerable public interest due to the significant benefits confirmed by the participants and observed by their caregivers. The course is documented in a poignant video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyBJVMvmBjl>.

10 "But beyond the mind, beyond our thoughts, there is something we call the 'nature of the mind'; the mind's true condition, which is beyond all limits. If it is beyond the mind, though, how can we approach an understanding of it? Let's take the

For example, to use jargon outside the Community for public events may result in what we communicate not being properly understood by others, or even being considered strange. And because the jargon we use does not give the impression of seriousness, even though our activities are valuable and useful for others, they have no possibility of being accepted at the institutional level.

In the past I have often noticed even very experienced students communicating with a jargon terminology that showed a total lack of awareness of the type of public addressed, and of the emotional reactions of the public, visible in facial expressions, body posture and so forth. This naturally creates a distance and reinforces ingroup-outgroup barriers.

Thus, jargon can serve as the means of communication within our Community, but however meaningful our Community may be, it is not the whole world, just a tiny part of it, so if we use jargon outside our specific group we create a condition for our own social exclusion.

The other side of the coin is that in that way, jargon whose meaning is obscure or strange to say the least, has the effect of making outsiders who are unfamiliar with the particular specialized language of our Community feel excluded, and of actually excluding them. This results in turning away potentially interested people.

This being said, there is, however, the necessity of striking a balance between the language used to communicate with outgroups and the terminology specific to the teaching we want to communicate. If we adopt excessively the terminology

example of a mirror. When we look into a mirror we see in it the reflected images of any objects that are in front of it; we don't see the nature of the mirror. But what do we mean by this 'nature of the mirror'? We mean its capacity to reflect, definable as its clarity, its purity, and its limpidity, which are indispensable conditions for the manifestation of reflections. This 'nature of the mirror' is not something visible, and the only way we can conceive of it is through the images reflected in the mirror. In the same way, we only know and have concrete experience of that which is relative to our condition of body, voice, and mind. But this itself is the way to understand their true nature." (Excerpted from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 32.)



Elio Guarisco,

borrowed from the media, managerial and business, tax-office like contexts, we risk appearing dry, uninteresting, and devoid of a warm feeling which people rightly expect from a spiritual Community. Not many will be inspired to join or to help through financial support or in any other way. For that one needs to touch the hearts of the people, not the brain. Thus, in the terminology we use in public we need to retain something just sufficient to convey the live flavor of one's message without disturbing the audience with unfamiliar vocabulary, so that one's message is distinguished from other messages.

Jargon as a factor of social aspiration is when it is intended as a way of showing off, as a way to snob others. Such use of jargon is not very compatible with the principles of our Community. Although we may consider our message as something very special, it is always advisable to remain normal in our behavior. Trying to distinguish ourselves from others by using jargon to snob others only increases our sense of self importance, and again creates a sense of exclusion in others.

Regarding the use of jargon as a form of protectionism, I must say that although things have changed considerably today, in the past, our Community was generally considered like a closed sect in which people did some kind of spiritual practice, jealously keeping it secret from others. Along with the inner attitude, jargon has been used as a kind of protectionism of what was considered exclusive to our group. And there are still individuals who convey that kind of unpleasant image. Today we need to be more modern in our attitude and language in order to convey the right message, which is that ours is not a sect but an open and freely accessible Community. For this, along with a change of attitude or, in other words, with more awareness, we also

need to limit the use of a specific jargon.

We said above that the differences in jargon also cause difficulties in communication and understanding. Although on one hand, technical terminology serves the purpose of a precise understanding within one's group, it also creates a barrier with outgroups. Outgroups have their own specific vocabulary

which they cling to, and although the concepts or facts expressed by their vocabulary corresponds to something we are familiar with and we know, the difference in jargon creates difficulty in understanding each other. This lack of understanding leads to suspicion, doubt and confrontation rather than mutual understanding. Or we may use the same jargon but what the ingroup and the outgroup refer to with that may be different. An example of this is the centuries long debate between Buddhists and Hindus that occurred in ancient India about the existence or non-existence of the self, for when Buddhists spoke of the self they meant something very different from the self intended by the Hindus. So these are some of the limitations that jargon or technical terminology poses that we must keep in mind when dealing with others. There are people in the Tibetan Buddhist schools who still nowadays perpetrate that misunderstanding.

Up to here, we have spoken about jargon used for outgroups, but we also need to consider the effect of jargon within our Community. First of all to use the technical terms of the teaching in one's daily life has two major risks: the technical vocabulary gets diluted in meaning and even misinterpreted to assume meanings that it does not have. An example of the first would be to use the term 'manifest' for every possible verb in the English language. In this way the meaning that 'manifest' has in the teaching becomes diluted, and, in addition, our speech becomes like a vague new-age language, or, to say the least, silly.

An example of misinterpretation would be, for example, the word 'integration' that is widely used in daily life by our practitioners and has assumed a mistaken connotation that does not accord with the meaning 'integration' has in teaching. People use this term to mean 'put up with the

situation', 'put up with things', 'bear', 'withstand', things that have almost nothing to do with the real meaning of integration in the teaching.

People also use a lot the expression 'to work with circumstances' as a kind of excuse when they are either too lazy or incapable of doing things in a proper way. An expression used in a similarly reductive way is, 'I do my best'. To work with circumstances means to do things in a perfect way as they should be done, or to do things properly as planned; only when this is not possible because some circumstances really prevent it, then we say 'work with the circumstances'. But even before starting a task people say, 'I work with the circumstances' in order to justify their sloppiness and to protect themselves from eventual criticism from the start.

Although using jargon or technical language within one's group seems to be more acceptable, this also needs to be examined well. On one hand in many aspects the teaching is also communicated through technical terminology that allows one to grasp the meaning precisely. However, people belonging to our Community are not all at the same level of familiarity with the topics being communicated and the technical terminology.

I have had the experience of seeing people do traditional chanting and various practices for years without understanding precisely the words of these practices. Imagine how it could be for a person approaching the Community for the first time faced with a river of Sanskrit and Tibetan words. Although such a rough encounter can be somewhat mitigated by the charisma and other extraordinary qualities of the teacher, this does not happen for any ordinary instructor. For this reason even within a specific group there is the need of striking a balance between the use of technical terminology and excessive removal of technical terminology, in this case really 'according to the circumstances', especially considering the inexperienced and the people who approach our Community for the first time.

In brief we should try to exercise a kind of awareness applied to the language we use ingroup and outgroup in order to overcome the barriers that at times we unknowingly build between others and ourselves.

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