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Biography of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
MACO Museum of Oriental Art and Culture
ASIA
Yantra Yoga



INTERNATIONAL
DZOGCHEN
COMMUNITY

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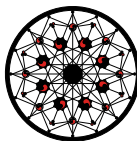


**Realizzato con il contributo
dell'Unione Buddhista Italiana**

Front cover: Palzom Films filming for a new app called Evolve: Body, Breath, Mind.

Back cover: Some of the children's catalogues of "Merigar's Magic Herbarium" during the summer camp.

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



Remembering Rinpoche

Dear Vajra Family of the International Dzogchen Community,

On September 27, 2024, we will observe the sixth anniversary of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's departure from our earthly dimension.

We remember Rinpoche with love and gratitude for his selfless dedication, his compassion, and the invaluable living knowledge he gave to us all.

As our sangha navigates the inevitable challenges of life, we continue to feel the power and recognize the gift of Rinpoche's presence six years after his passing. We are thankful for the joyful moments spent in his company whether he was leading our group practices, inspiring us with his endless energy for collaboration, or offering us individual words of advice in a quiet moment. Most of all, we value the priceless knowledge our Master transmitted to all of us throughout his life, setting an example for us with his focus, dedication, and compassion.

Despite the passage of time, Rinpoche's life and teachings continue to inspire us as our Community moves forward. We, his students, remain committed to integrating View, Meditation, and Behavior in our daily life, and to the activities of Gars and Lings, as well as the various organizations Rinpoche founded including ASIA, ATIF, IDC, MACO, and Shang Shung Publications.

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



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu 1938–2018.

On this anniversary, we thank Rinpoche for the treasure of the Teachings, but also all of you who, with devotion and unwavering commitment, are keeping Rinpoche's legacy alive and the Dzogchen Community united and active.

With infinite love and appreciation, we pay homage to our beloved Master, his presence is always with us, alive, strong, and inspiring.

With gratitude,
The International Gakyil Team,
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Oni, Rosa,
Richard, Piotr, and Aleksander, Heike,
Svetlana, Marija and Nikol

On the occasion of the anniversary of the passing of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche wishes to share his homage.

དཔལ་བོ་ཆེན་པོ་ཚེ་རི་སེམས་

Oh Great Brave One, Heart of Vajra,
True jewel, illuminating the entire space.

ཐུགས་བསྐྱེད་མཐའ་བལ་ལོད་འཕྲོ་བ།
Your boundless compassion flows as a radiant stream,

གང་གི་བཀའ་བྱིན་དེང་འདིར་བྱན།
Here today I recall your profound kindness,

ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཇི་ལྟར་བཞེད་པའི་དོན།
Just as you always desired,

འགྲོ་ཁམས་གཞུག་མར་གྲོལ་བ་དང་།
May all beings be liberated in their natural state,

གནས་སྐབས་གངས་ལྗོངས་ཡོན་ཏན་ཀྱན།
Meanwhile may all the knowledge of the Land of Snows,

ནམ་ཡང་མི་ཉམས་གནས་པར་ཤོག །
forever thrive and never decline again.

Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche
27th Sept 2024



1990, discussing the plans for decorating the Temple of Great Contemplation in Merigar West, Italy.

Photo by Alex Siedlecki

Biography of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

This biography, compiled by Adriano Clemente, was recently published online on The Treasury of Lives site, a biographical encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalayan region. We are happy to publish it with the kind permission of the author and the Director and Chief Editor of The Treasury of Lives.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was born in a small village called Geug (dge 'ug) near Changra (lcang ra) in Derge, Kham, in 1938, on the thirteenth day of the tenth lunar month of the earth-tiger year. Later in life he chose to mark his birthday on December 8. His father, Tsewang Namgyal (tshe dbang rnam rgyal, 1889–1962) of the Trokhe (gro khe) clan from Kamthok (skam thog), was a government official of the Derge kingdom; his mother, Yeshe Chödrön (ye shes chos sgron, 1904–1965), belonged to the Ngonatsang (sngo rna tshang), one of the most ancient families in Derge. She was the niece of **Jamyang Chökyi Wangpo** ('jam dbyangs chos kyi dbang po, 1893–1908) and the sister of his reincarnation, **Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk** (mkhyen brtse'i chos kyi dbang phyug, 1909–1960), the first and second generation reincarnations of **Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo** ('jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1820–1892), respectively.

He had three elder sisters: Jamyang Chödrön ('jam dbyangs chos sgron, 1921–1985); Sönam Palmo (bsod nams dpal mo, 1924–1988); Trashī Yangdzom (bkra shis dbyangs 'dzoms, 1929–2006); and one younger sister, Tsering Yangdzom (tshe ring dbyangs 'dzoms, b. 1946). His two younger brothers were Pema Kungtsen (padma gung



Photo by Liane Gräf

btsan, 1940–1960) and Jamyang Phuntsog ('jam dbyangs phun tshogs, 1943–1948).

His father, paternal grandmother Lhundrub Tso (lhun grub mtsho), and paternal uncle **Togden Ogyen Tendzin** (rtogs ldan o rgyan bstan 'dzin, 1888–1962) were all disciples of the Nyingma master **Adzom Drugpa** (a 'dzom 'brug pa, 1842–1924). After the birth of their third child, a girl, like her two elder sisters, Adzom Drugpa presented them with a statue of Green Tārā and told Namkhai Norbu's parents that if one prayed fervently to the deity anything wished would be fulfilled. Hoping for a male child, Tsewang Namgyal employed a lama called Töndrub Chödar (don grub chos dar), also known as Drolma Lama (sgrol ma bla ma), to chant the Praise to the Twenty-One Tārās for one year. At the end of his retreat, the lama had a dream announcing the birth of three male children, the first of whom was Namkhai Norbu.

Recognition and Early Training

Namkhai Norbu's paternal uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin first recognized him as a reincarnation of his teacher Adzom Drugpa. In 1940, when Namkhai Norbu was two years old, Palyul Karma Yangsi, Pema Gyurme (dpal yul karma yang srid padma 'gyur med, 1908–1959), and the Sixth Shechen Rabjam, Nangdze Drubpai Dorje (zhe chen rab 'byams o6 snang mdzad grub pa'i rdo rje, 1910–1960), endorsed the reincarnation. However, another tulku of the master

had already been installed at Adzom Gar (a 'dzom sgar), and so Namkhai Norbu was never officially enthroned.

The following year, the **Sixteenth Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpai Dorje** (karma pa 16 rang byung rig pa'i rdo rje, 1924–1981) and the **Eleventh Tai Situ, Pema Wangchok Gyalpo** (ta'i si tu 11 padma dbang mchog rgyal po, 1886–1952), recognized him as the mind-emanation of **Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal** (zhabs drung ngag dbang rnam rgyal 1594–1651), the Drukpa Kagyu lama who first united Bhutan in the seventeenth century. Circumstances prevented his going to Bhutan to assume the position.

Instead, the three-year old child took up residency in the Rongpo Khang Palace (rong po khang pho brang) in Derge Göchen with his tutor Töndrub Chödar, who was the lama of his family. During the summer he went to Pawog (dpa' 'og) with the king and received the initiation of White Tārā from Situ Rinpoche.

In 1945 he was recognized as a reincarnation of the Sakya master **Jamyang Loter Wangpo** ('jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po, 1847–1914) by the **Fortieth Sakya Trichen Ngawang Tutob Wangchuk** (sa skya khri chen 40 ngag dbang mthu stobs dbang phyug, 1900–1950). This was likely done to secure his continued presence at **Lhundrubteng** (lhun grub steng), the royal Sakya monastery of Derge.

Religious Training, 1943–1953

Namkhai Norbu began his religious training in 1943, at the age of six, memorizing scriptures at Lhundrubteng, where he was based until 1947. He then transferred to the monastic colleges at **Wöntö Monastery** (dbon stod dgon), with periodic visits to **Galenteng Monastery** (sga glen steng), to see his uncle Khyentse, who resided there.

His primary teachers during this period were his maternal uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchug, his paternal uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin, (grub dbang kun dga' dpal ldan, 1878–1950), and **Khyenrab Chökyi Wözer** (mkhyen rab chos kyi 'od zer, 1889–1958), the second abbot of Khamje (kham sbyed), the monastic college at **Dzongsar Monastery** (rdzong gsar dgon).

In the summer of 1943, he went to **Tsarashab** (rtsa ra zhab), a hermitage near Geug, where his uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin was in retreat. Here he saw for the first time his uncle practicing Yantra Yoga ('phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor), an ancient tradition stemming from that he would be instrumental in promoting in the West. At the end of the year his younger brother Jamyang Phuntsog, who was recognized as a tulku of the famous Kagyu Kālacakra master **Dru Jamyang Tragpa** ('bru 'jam dbyangs grags pa, 1884–1942) was born.

Back at Göchen, from 1944 to 1945, Namkhai Norbu trained in Sakya rituals, including the construction of maṇḍalas. In the autumn of 1945, he went back home where he received from his maternal uncle, together with his family, his first Dzogchen teachings, the empowerments and instructions of the Longchen Nyingthig (klong chen snying thig).

In the autumn of 1946, his paternal grandmother Lhundrub Tso died at Wöntö. Many important lamas were invited to perform the forty-nine-day rituals, including Khyenrab Chökyi Wözer, his future teacher, who had recently started his own monastic college at Wöntö. His maternal uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk was also invited, and soon after Namkhai Norbu went together with him to Galenteng. There he received empowerments and teachings from his uncle's teacher Drubwang Kunga Palden, in particular **Lhatsun Namkha Jigme**'s (lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med, 1597–1650) revelation, or terma (gter ma), *Accomplishing the Life Force of the Vidyā-dharas* (rig 'dzin srog sgrub); **Longchenpa**'s (klong chen pa, 1308–1364) *Seven Treasures* (mdzod bdun) and *Resting in Ease Trilogy* (ngal gso skor gsum); **Pema Lingpa**'s

(padma gling pa, 1450–1521) *Embodiment of the State of Samantabhadra* (kun bzang dgongs 'dus); and **Tennyi Lingpa**'s (bstan gnyis gling pa, 1480–1535) *Primordial Wisdom that Liberates on Seeing* (yang tig ye shes mthong grol). His uncle also gave him the reading transmission of the *Collected Nyingma Tantras* (rnying ma rgyud 'bum).

In 1947, in a hermitage named Gyawo (rgya bo), Kunga Palden gave Namkhai Norbu the empowerment and instructions for the Dzogchen teaching of *Black Quintessence* (yang ti nag po), after which he made his first dark retreat. He also received **Paltrul Rinpoche**'s (dpal sprul rin po che, 1808–1887) collected works, Longchenpa's *Quintessence of the Guru* (bla ma yang tig), the Dzogchen teaching known as *The Three Words that Strike the Vital Point* (tshig gsum gnad brdeg), the Mindrolling tradition of Vajrasattva (smin gling rdor sems), and the Sakya teachings known as the *Trilogy of Red* (dmar po skor gsum) and the *Three Deities of Long Life* (tshe lha rnam gsum).

In the same year he enrolled at the Wöntö monastic college where he studied philosophy under Khyenrab Chökyi Wözer for five years, following the curriculum established by **Khenpo Zhenga Rinpoche** (mkhan po gzhan dga', 1871–1927).

In 1948 Namkhai Norbu's younger brother Jamyang Phuntsog died at home and among the lamas invited to perform the rituals, Namkhai Norbu met the Kagyu Lama Trungram Gyaltrul (drung ram rgyal sprul, 1894–1959), from whom he received the empowerment of **Jatsön Nyingpo**'s ('ja' tshon snying po, 1585–1656) *Peaceful and Wrathful Padmavajra* (zhi khro padma vajra). Also there was **Negyab Rinpoche Lodrö Gyatso** (gnas rgyab blo gros rgya mtsho, 1902–1952), from whom he received Karma Lingpa's *Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* (kar gling zhi khrol). Following the ceremonies he went to Negyab (gnas rgyab) where from the same teacher he received the *Canonical Teachings of the Nyingma* (rnying ma bka' ma) and the *Sky Teachings* (gnam chos) cycle of **Mingyur Dorje** (mi 'gyur rdo rje, 1645–1667). He then went to a place called Hedrak Kar for a retreat on the deity Ngöndzog Gyalpo (mngon rdzogs rgyal po).

He continued his education under Khyenrab Chökyi Wözer, receiving from him instructions on the *Words of My Perfect Teacher* (kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung), Paltrul Rinpoche's commentary on the preliminary practices of the Longchen Nyingthig, which he also complet-

ed. He then went to Dzogchen Monastery to receive from **Dzogchen Khenpo Yönten Gönpo** (rdzogs chen mkhan po yon tan mgon po, 1899–1959) the Guhyagarbha Tantra with one of its commentaries. He also received the Chöd cycle *Self-Liberation of Grasping* ('dzin pa rang grol), a revelation of **Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje** (rdo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje, 1800–1866). On his return to Wöntö, he received from Khyenrab Chökyi Wözer the “three roots” empowerment (rtsa gsum bka' dbang) for the Longchen Nyingthig, Khenpo Zhenga's Guhyagarbha commentary, and Trengpo Tertön's revelation *Sphere of Liberation: The Self-Liberation of the Mind* (grol tig dgongs pa rang grol).

At the end of the summer of 1950 Namkhai Norbu fell ill, reputedly due to a provocation by Gyalpo Shugden in the temple of Wöntö, and he became lame in his left leg. He went home to recover, and while there the daughter of his elder sister Jamyang Chödrön died of smallpox. To officiate the rituals the family invited Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk, who took the opportunity to give Namkhai Norbu an initiation for *Wrathful Guru: Blazing Wisdom* (gu ru drag po ye shes rab 'bar), a revelation of **Longsal Nyingpo** (klong gsal snying po, 1625–1692). Namkhai Norbu credited that practice for healing his leg. While he was home, he received the complete *Compendium of Tantras* (rgyud sde kun btus), Loter Wangpo's collection of Sakya tantric literature, from Khenpo Palden Tsultrim (mkhan po dpal ldan tshul khri ms, b. 1906), a student of Loter Wangpo.

In the second month of spring, 1951, together with his uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk he went to **Kyegu Monastery** (skye dgu dgon) where he received the Kālacakra empowerment and Wangdud Nyingpo's (dbang bdud snying po)'s Wrathful Guru cycle (gu ru drag po) from the Sakya lama **Khenpo Khangsar Ngawang Yönten Gyatso** (mkhan po khangsar ngag dbang yon tan rgya mtsho, 1902–1963). This lama, popularly known as the Bhutanese, or Drug Khenpo ('brug mkhan po), had earlier served as the sixty-ninth abbot of **Ngor Monastery** (ngor dgon) and was well known for his efforts to eradicate the worship of Shugden from Sakya communities. When they returned to Galenteng, he also received from his uncle the transmission of the Mahāmāyā Tantra. After that, he and Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk went together to visit the

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Mahasiddha of Nalung, the Siddha of Chamten and other masters.

That summer he returned to Wöntö where Khenpo Chökyi Wözer taught the *Collected Writing of the Sakya Masters* (sa skya bka' 'bum) and the *Three Visions* (snang gsum). At the end of the summer, he went **Lhadrang Monastery** (lha 'brang dgon) where his uncle Khyentse gave him the transmission of **Guru Chöwang's** (gu ru chos dbang, 1212–1270) *Embodiment of the Guru's Secrets* (la ma gsang 'dus) and **Vimalamitra's** commentary on the Mañjūsīnāmasaṃgīti. At the Gyawo Hermitage Khyentse Chökyi Wözer also gave his nephew the transmission of his own terma cycle *Wrathful Guru Kīla* (gu ru drag phur). He also started to study the Four Medical Tantras (rgyud bzhi) under Khardo Lama Ngawang (mkhar mdo bla ma ngag dbang) and Khenpo Chökyi Wözer. That autumn Khenpo Chökyi Wözer transmitted Loter Wangpo's *Compendium of Sādhana*s (sgrub thabs kun btus). At the end of the year Namkhai Norbu accompanied his uncle to perform the funerary rituals for Drubwang Kunga Palden, who had passed away at Galenteng.

Khenpo Chökyi Wözer continued transmitting major collections of scripture to Namkhai Norbu with Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's *Combined Sādhana of the Three Roots* (rtsa gsum sgril sgrub), the Nāropa tradition of Vajrayoginī (na ro mkha' spyod ma), and Mingyur Dorje's *Sky Teaching* revelation *Buddhahood in the Palm of One's Hand* (gnam chos sangs rgyas lag 'chang), after which he completed the preliminary practices of the *Sky Teaching* cycle. In order to receive **Mipham Gyatso's** (mi pham rgya mtsho, 1846–1912) commentary on the Kālacakra Tantra (dus 'khor gel chen) that autumn, he also studied zodiacal astrology (dkar rtsis), the Tibetan tradition of which is largely based on that tantra. Dru Jamyang Trappa's daughter, Yudrön (gyu sgron) received the Kālacakra teachings with him. Khenpo Chökyi Wözer also transmitted the Second Karmapa's *Profound Inner Topics* (zab mo nang don) together with Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary and **Rongzompa's** (rong zom pa, eleventh–twelfth century) *Entering the Way of the Great Vehicle* (theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug pa), and **Ngari**

Pañchen's (nga' ris pan chen, 1487–1582) *Ascertaining the Three Vows* (sdom gsum nram nges).

In the summer he went on a tour in the nomad areas in order to collect funds for

both Wöntö and Galenteng and took detailed notes on the nomad traditions and way of life. These notes later served as the basis of a book, published as *Journey Among the Tibetan Nomads* (byang 'brog gi lam yig).

At the end of 1951, on the advice of Khenpo Chökyi Wözer, he went to meet **Ayu Khandro Dorje Paldrön** (a yu mkha' 'gro rdo rje dpal sgron, 1839–1953). She had been a student of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and **Nyagla Pema Duddul** (nyag bla padma bdud 'dul, 1816–1872) and had been living in dark retreat for many decades. She gave Namkhai Norbu multiple transmissions, including Khyentse Wangpo's revelations *Gathering of All Dākinī's Secrets* (mkha' 'gro gsang ba kun 'dus) and *Heart Essence of the Deathless Noble Lady* ('chi med 'phags ma'i snying thig), her own mind-treasure revelation on Simhamukhā, **Longsal Dorje's** (klong gsal rdo rje, 1625–1692) *Vajra Essence of the Great Expanse* (klong gsal rdo rje snying po), Longchenpa's *Heart Essence of the Dākinīs* (mkha' 'gro'i snying thig), the *Black Quintessence* (yang ti nag po) of **Tungtso Repa** (dung mtsho ras pa, fifteenth century), and two cycles he had previously received: Do Khyentse's Chöd cycle and Nāropa's Vajrayoginī.

In the summer of 1952, he attended **Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö's** ('jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros, 1893–1959) transmission of the *Instructions on the Path and Result* (lam 'bras slob bshad) at Dzongsar. During the month-long event a doctor poisoned him with pills that were ostensibly to prevent a flu that had spread in the monastery. Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö's personal doctor was able to counteract the poison and cure him.

At the end of the summer Chökyi Lodrö also transmitted the Dzogchen Trilogy (rdzogs chen sde gsum) that was a joint revelation of Khyentse Wangpo and **Chogyur Lingpa** (mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870).

Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö then advised him to undertake a six-month retreat at **Sengchen Namdrag** (seng chen gnam brag). While in retreat, in early 1953, he met Adzom Drugpa's son **Gyalse Gyurme Dorje** (a 'dzom rgyal sras 'gyur med rdo rje, 1895–1959), who was returning from central Tibet. Gyurme Dorje gave him the transmission of all the treasures and works of Adzom Drugpa, as well as **Rigdzin Godemchen's** (rig 'dzin rgod ldem chan, 1337–1409) *Unobstructed State of Samantabhadra* (kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal).

On ending his retreat, in the spring of 1953, he received Longchenpa's *Four Heart Essences* (snying thig ya bzhi) from his uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk and his uncle's own revelation called the *Aural Chöd Instructions of Thangtong Gyalpo* (thang rgyal snyan gcod).

Teaching Tibetan Language in Minyak, Dartsedo, and Chengdu, 1953–1955

At the end of 1953 the new Communist Chinese government in the region invited Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk and Namkhai Norbu to serve as delegates at a conference in Dartsedo (mdar rtse mdo), which would become the capital of the new Ganze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Following the conference, he toured parts of China, and his uncle returned home.

On his return to Dartsedo, the influential political figure **Chagö Tobden** (bya rgod stobs ldan, 1898–1960) recommended him to assist the Ninth **Bo Gangkar Rinpoche, Karma Shedrub Chökyi Senge** ('bo gangs dkar o9 karma bshad sgrub chos kyi seng ge, 1892–1957), in teaching Tibetan language to Chinese students. Thus he went to **Bo Gangkar Monastery** ('bo gangs dkar dgon), also known as Khamsumdrag Monastery (khamsum drag dgon) in Minyak, and in the late evenings received from Gangkar Rinpoche multiple teachings such as the *Six Dharmas of Niguma* (ni gu chos drug), and revelations of Jatsön Nyingpo such as the *Embodiment of Supreme Jewels* (dkon mchog spyi 'dus) and others, the *Mother and Son Heart Essence of the Dākinī* (mkha' 'gro snying thig ma bu) of **Pema Ledreltsal** (padma las 'brel tsel, 1291–1315), and the *Four Medical Tantras*. He continued to teach in Dartsedo and Chengdu until 1955, periodically visiting Derge.

During this time, he began to collect Tibetan folk songs, a project that led to the publication of his *Musical Tradition of the Tibetan People: Songs in Dance Measure* (Rome, 1967).

Final Teachings Received in Tibet, 1955–1958

In the summer of 1954 Namkhai Norbu went to Dzogchen Monastery with his sister Jamyang Chödrön, where they received from Tulku Trime (sprul sku dri med) **Ratna Lingpa's** (ratna gling pa, 1403–1479) *Dzogchen Essence of Luminous Space* (rdzogs chen klong gsal snying thig) and Duddul Dorje's *Rainbow Body of Samantabhadra* (kun bzang 'ja' sku), and from **Khenpo Ngawang Norbu** (mkhan po ngag dbang

nor bu, 1866–1958) the Anuyoga empowerment of the *Gathered Assembly* (tshogs chen 'dus pa). He also visited his uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin who was staying at the Yilhung residence of Chagō Tobden and received the complete instructions on the Yantra Yoga teaching known as *Union of the Sun and the Moon* ('phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor).

Together with his uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchug, he also received the empowerment of Adzom Drugpa's revelation of Dorje Trolö – a wrathful form of Padmasambhava. This was the last occasion he had to be with his paternal uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin, who passed away several years later.

Namkhai Norbu stopped teaching Tibetan in Chengdu in 1955 and, urged by a dream, went back to his own homeland. There he met the master whom he considered his root teacher, **Nyagla Changchub Dorje** (nyag bla byang chub rdo rje, 1863–1963), who was a terton (gter ston) and a medical doctor. Namkhai Norbu stayed several months at his residence Khamdogar (khams mdo gar), during which time Nyagla Changchub Dorje gave him the ultimate introduction to the state of Dzogchen together with the empowerment of the *Peaceful and Wrathful: Self Liberation from Samsara and Nirvana* (zhi khro 'khor das rang grol), while his son Gyurme Gyaltsen ('gyur med rgyal mtshan, 1914–1972) bestowed on him the initiations and reading transmission of all of his father's revelations.

In early 1956 he went to Galenteng where he received his final teachings from his uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk, among them *The Lord of Secrets of Lhalung* (lha lung gsang bdag), a cycle focusing on Vajrapāṇi. He also went to visit Gala Khenpo Lodrö Gyatso ('ga la mkhan po blo gros rgya mtsho, 1901–1961), a student of **Tsangpa Drubchen** (gtsang pa grub chen, 1830–1945), from whom he received **Sangye Lingpa's** (sangs rgyas gling pa, 1340–1396) *Embodiment of the State of the Guru* (bla ma dgongs 'dus) and the mind treasure (dgongs gter) *Mañjūsri's Total Perfection* ('jam dpal rdzogs chen).

Leaving Tibet

Namkhai Norbu next traveled to Lhasa with his father. By the mid-1950s many lamas and opponents of the new Communist regime were fleeing Kham for central Tibet. Despite the tragic circumstances Lhasa was then a remarkable meeting of lamas, many of whom took the opportunity to exchange teachings. Namkhai Norbu met the Sixteenth Karmapa from whom he received the empowerment of the *Indivisibility of Lama and Protector* (bla mgon dbyer med), a central Mahākāla practice of the Shangpa Kagyu tradition, and the Ocean of Victors (rgyal ba rgya mtsho) empowerment. Dzogchen Khenpo Yönten Gönpö, from whom he had received teachings several years earlier at Dzogchen, gave him the empowerment for **Dorje Lingpa's** (rdo rje gling pa, 1346–1405) *Cycle of Hūmkara: Heart Essence of Dzogchen* (rdzogs chen snying po hūm skor). The **Sixth Dzogchen Rinpoche, Jigdröl Changchub Dorje** (rdzogs chen o6 'jigs 'bral byang chub rdo rje, 1935–1959), transmitted to him the **Fifth Dalai Lama's** (ta la'i bla ma 05, 1617–1682) *Expanding Arrow of Long Life* (tshe sgrub mda' 'phel ma).

On learning of the huge celebration in India marking the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's birth, the Buddha Jayanti, and the extensive facilities the Indian government was making available for Tibetan pilgrims, he decided to participate in the events there. He and his father took the opportunity to go on pilgrimage in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, visiting the holy sites there.

After six months in India Namkhai Norbu returned to his homeland and found chaos and turmoil spreading in all regions of Kham. Consequently, he and his entire family escaped fighting in Derge and went to the high pastures to the south, and in spring 1957 they left for Lhasa. Namkhai Norbu tried in vain to convince his uncle Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk to join them. His sister Jamyang Chödrön remained with their uncle.

They traveled for many months, passing through Nangchen, where he received teachings on the Chöd of the Surmang tradition from an elderly teacher whose name is recorded as Kyabche Chögenma (skyabs lce gcod rgan ma). In autumn they arrived in Lhasa, where scores of prominent lamas were gathering on the eve of their departure from Chinese-occupied Tibet.

At **Tsurphu Monastery** (mtshur phu dgon) Namkhai Norbu met again with the Sixteenth Karmapa from whom he received the empowerment for the *Ocean of Victors* (rgyal ba rgya mtsho). The **Sixth Dzogchen Pön-**

lob, Jigdröl Tsewang Dorje (rdzogs chen dpon slob 'jigs 'bral tshe dbang rdo rje, 1925–1962) transmitted **Karma Chagme's** (karma chags med, 1613–1678) instructions on the famous *Seven Chapter Invocation to Padmasabhava* (le'u bdun ma). He also received Vimalamitra's commentary on the Mañjūsrināmasaṃgīti from **Polu Khenpo Tubten Kunga Gyaltsen** (spo lu mkhan po thub bstan kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1896–1970), and a long-life empowerment from the **Fourteenth Dalai Lama** (ta la'i bla ma 14, b. 1935).

In 1958 Namkhai Norbu, his brother, and younger sister Yangdzom left Tibet for Sikkim. The rest of the family remained in Lhasa with the intention of joining them later. The animals they brought from Tibet suffered in the climate of Sikkim, and Namkhai Norbu's brother decided to return to Tibet with them. On reaching Lhasa he was arrested together with his father. Namkhai Norbu and his sister, meanwhile, continued to Kalimpong, where he briefly helped **Tharchin Babu** (mthar phyin ba bu, 1890–1986) on his Tibetan-language newspaper *The Mirror* and other publications. In Kalimpong he also met **Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdröl Yeshe Dorje** (bdud 'joms rin po che 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1904–1987) and received from him a Vajrakīlāya empowerment. He then went into retreat at **Pemayangtse Monastery** (padma yang rtse dgon).

In 1959 he learned that his father and brother had been arrested by the Chinese, and that soldiers were searching for him. He initially considered returning to Tibet, but when he reached the border, he was discouraged by the masses of Tibetans then escaping. He remained in Sikkim without possibilities of receiving further news about his family. Only many years later did he learn that his father and brother had been tortured and killed. His elder sister had also been imprisoned for three years. His maternal uncle, Khyentse Chökyi Wangchuk had been captured and imprisoned at Derge Göchen together with Shechen Rabjam and **Drugpa Kuchen Tubten Shedrub Trinle Gyatso** ('brug pa sku chen thub bstan shes sgrub phrin las rgya mtsho, 1906–1960). The three lamas were put in different cells and could not communicate with each other, but one morning the guards found them dead, all three sitting in the meditation posture. It is believed they intentionally ejected their consciousnesses to avoid torture.

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L to r: Prof. Lanciotti, Geshe Jampel Senge, Lobsang Samten (the Dalai Lama's brother), Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Prof. Petech.

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Rome and Naples

In 1959 the king of Sikkim, Trashigyal Namgyal (bkra shis rnam rgyal, 1893–1963) offered Namkhai Norbu a position in the Development Office of the Government of Sikkim ('bras ljongs yar rgyas las khung), for preparing textbooks for the school. By this point he had been studying Sanskrit and Mongolian, and he received various academic offers from different countries. In the autumn of that year, he accepted the invitation to Italy by Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984), to collaborate at Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (ISMEO) in Rome, which Tucci had established in 1933 with Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944). Part of the appeal of the position was access to the impressive library of Tibetan texts Tucci had collected.

Before leaving India for Italy, he went to Dharamsala for an audience with the Dalai Lama and to meet Geshe Jampel Senge (dge bshes 'jams dpal seng ge), a Gelug scholar who also had been invited to Italy by Tucci.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu arrived in Italy for the New Year celebrations of 1960, and began his position at ISMEO, Rome, that January. One of his first projects with Tucci was the catalog of his Tibetan collection, published by Elena De Rossi Filibeck in 1994 and 2003.

In 1962, while continuing to assist Tucci in Rome, Namkhai Norbu took a post as teacher of Tibetan language and literature at the University of Naples L'Orientale, a public university founded in 1732 dedicated to Asian studies. He would retire from the university in 1992. He received Italian citizenship 1968 and that same year married Rosa Tolli. They had a son in 1970, Yeshe Silvano Namkhai, and a daughter in 1971, Yuchen Namkhai.

Research on Bon

In Italy, Namkhai Norbu focused his research mainly on the ancient history of Tibet, investigating the autochthonous Bon tradition. His books, which include works on history, medicine, astrology, Bon, and folk traditions, are evidence of his profound knowledge of Tibetan culture and his commitment to preserve this ancient cultural heritage. Among his many ground-breaking publications on Bon and Tibetan history are *Necklace of Zi: A Cultural History of Tibet* (gzi yi phreng ba) published in English in 1981 and in Tibetan in 1982, and the three-volume *Light of Kailash* (zhang bod lo rgyus ti se'i 'i 'od) published in Tibetan in 1996 and in English between 2009 and 2015. His history of pre-Buddhist Tibet based on Bon sources, *Drung, Deu, and Bön: Narrations, Symbolic Language, and the Bön*, was published in Tibetan (sgrung lde'u bon gsum gyi gtam e ma ho) in 1989, and in English in 1995.

Yantra Yoga and Dzogchen

In 1971 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu began to teach Yantra Yoga, an ancient form of Tibetan Yoga that combines movement, breathing, and visualization. He had received teachings on this tradition back in 1954 from his uncle Togden Ogyen Tendzin. The teachings are said to have originated with the eighth-century translator Vairocana and were kept alive in places such as Adzom Gar in Tibet. His 2008 book on the topic is *Yantra Yoga: Tibetan Yoga of Movement* (Snow Lion).

In the meantime, he was giving informal talks on Buddhism and Dzogchen to a small group of students who used to meet once a week at his house. The teachings he gave were published in English in 2020 as *Dzogchen: Our Real Condition: An Introduction in Questions and Answers*.

In 1976, he gave his first cycle of Dzogchen Upadeśa teachings to a small group of Italian students in Naples – possibly the first time a lama taught Dzogchen in the West – this event was the birthplace of the Dzogchen Community (rdzogs chen 'dus sde), which Namkhai Norbu would grow into an international organization. Soon after he accepted an invitation from Laura Albini, a Karma Kagyu student of the Sixteenth Karmapa, to hold a Dzogchen teaching retreat in Subiaco, an ancient Catholic center outside of Rome.

In 1977 a second retreat was held in Prata, Avellino, and in this way the original group from Naples and the participants of the Subiaco retreat joined to establish the Dzogchen Community all over Italy, first, and gradually, in Europe and other continents.

In his long career as a Dzogchen teacher, he gave transmission of all the three series of Dzogchen with practical instructions of their specific methods of practice, especially reviving the practice of the Four Yogas of Semde, and the Vajra Bridge of Longde.

He also gave many terma teachings such as those of Adzom Drugpa, Nyagla Pema Duddul, Nyagla Changchub Dorje, Namchö Migyur Dorje, and so forth.

He also wrote the biographies of many of his teachers and many books on Dzogchen, in particular editing and commenting two important early Dzogchen manuscripts from Dunhuang, Vairocana's *Cuckoo of Awareness* (rig pa'i khu byug) and *Budhagupta's Birdseed* (sba pa'i rgum chung), the latter of which is included in the most recent edition of the expanded edition of the Canonical Teachings of the Nyingma.

His *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen* (1989) was one of the first books in English to present Dzogchen for a wide audience.

In 2015 the complete works of Namkhai Norbu were published in Qinghai in Tibetan in five volumes, and in 2016 Sharro: Festschrift for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a compilation of essays by multiple scholars, was published in honor of his contribution to the Western academic study of Tibet.

Shang Shung Publications and Shang Shung Institute

In 1983 Namkhai Norbu founded Shang Shung Publications to publish his teachings and related books on Buddhism, Yantra Yoga, Dzogchen, and Tibetan Medicine, among other topics. The first was *The Mirror: Advice on Presence and Awareness* (dran pa dang shes bzhin gyi gdams pa me long ma), written on purpose for a Dzogchen retreat he gave in Sardinia at the end of 1977. As of 2024 over two hundred books have been published in Italian and another two hundred in English.

In 1989 he established the Shang Shung Institute in Italy, to support scholarly research on Tibetan religion and history, with a strong focus on language and medicine. Namkhai Norbu attended the first international conference on Tibetan language in Dharamsala in 1987 and was a co-host of the second conference in 1992 in Siena. Columbia University hosted the third conference, in 2011, co-sponsored by Shang Shung Institute, the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, and Trace Foundation.

Namkhai Norbu also promoted the study of Tibetan medicine, organizing the first international convention of Tibetan Medicine in 1983 in Venice, and, under the auspices of the Shang Shung Institute, the second convention in New York in 2014. Shang Shung Institute continues to run annual seminars on specific themes and a four-year training program in Tibetan Medicine. The first class graduated in 2013.

Merigar

In the first half of 1981 the Museum of Folklore in Rome hosted weekly teachings on meditation, Dzogchen, Yantra Yoga, and Tibetan medicine. At this point the need to find land to establish a permanent center to support Namkhai Norbu's teaching was felt, and in October 1981 a property of several acres in Tuscany was purchased. This would become known as **Merigar West**. Over the next decade multiple buildings were constructed, including a Temple of Great Contemplation and library that was consecrated by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in May 1990. A Great Stupa of Enlightenment was consecrated in 1998 by the **Forty-First Sakya Trizin** (sa skya khri 'dzin 41, b. 1945), and other masters.

In 1977 Namkhai Norbu had traveled to Austria to teach Dzogchen outside of Italy for the first time, initiating a schedule that would see him travel internationally almost every year for the next three decades.

As interest in his teachings grew among communities in countries other than Italy, Namkhai Norbu established gars—seats of the Dzogchen Community—throughout the world. **Tsegvalgar East**, the first Dzogchen Community center in the United States, was founded in 1982 in Conway, Massachusetts. He established additional gars in Argentina (1990), Australia (1995), Russia (1999), Venezuela (2001), Mexico (2003), Romania (2006), and Ukraine (2010). In 2013 he established **Dzamling Gar** in Tenerife, the Canary Islands, Spain, as the global center of the International Dzogchen Community.

Treasure Revelations

Namkhai Norbu expanded his Dzogchen teachings in the mid-1980s with a cycle of revelations he had begun to receive in the 1960s via dreams and visions, known as the *Luminous Clarity of the Universe, Heart Essence of the Dakinis* (klong chen 'od gsal mkha' 'gro'i snying thig). Known as Longsal, the teachings focus on Anuyoga and Atiyoga and are related to the verses of the Song of the Vajra (rdo rje'i glu), an ancient mantra found in the Union of Sun and Moon (nyi zla kha sbyor), one of the earliest Dzogchen tantras, and in many “liberating diagram” (btags grol) tantras. The meaning and purpose of this song is also illustrated by Longchenpa in his *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* (theg mchog mdzod), one of his seven treasures.

The Longsal cycle also includes a series of instructions on the practice of Jñānadākinī, or wisdom dakini, such as

the Mandāravā Long Life (tshe sgrub rdo rje srog thig) which he received during a pilgrimage to **Māratika** in 1984, a site associated with Padmasambhava and his Indian wife **Mandāravā**. Another important rediscovery was the revelation of the Vajra Dance through a sequence of dreams in which he would learn and write down all the steps of three ancient sacred dances practiced in the pure land of Oddiyāna. He also brought back to life the practice of the Namkha (nam mkha'), an ancient pre-Buddhist method of harmonizing the elements by constructing a colored thread structure symbolizing the astrological elements of an individual.

Return to Tibet and ASIA

In December 1981 Namkhai Norbu returned to central Tibet for the first time since leaving in 1959, and then again in 1987. In 1988 he also visited Khamdo Gar, the residence of his teacher Nyagla Changchub Dorje, and Galengteng. In August, with a group of students, he visited **Mount Kailash**. The group also went to Khyunglung in western Tibet to document traces of the Shang Shung kingdom.

Also in 1988 Namkhai Norbu founded the Association for International Solidarity in Asia, or ASIA. The non-profit organization works in Tibet, India, Nepal, Myanmar, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka on issues of cultural heritage, education, economic and social justice, and the environment. Through ASIA Namkhai Norbu has aided in the reconstruction of monasteries and the building of schools in Tibet.

Last years

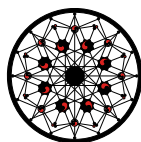
In recognition of his many decades of service in Italy, on June 2, 2018, Namkhai Norbu was awarded the Commander Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy to recognize “merit contributed to the nation in the fields of literature, the arts, economy, public service, and social, philanthropic, and humanitarian activities and for long and conspicuous service in civilian careers.”

Namkhai Norbu passed away peacefully at his home at Merigar, on September 27, 2018, merging his consciousness with the expanse of the dharmakāya. His son Yeshe Silvano Namkhai is currently the spiritual guide of Merigar, Italy.

©

Adriano Clemente worked closely with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for forty years, translating several of his most important works into English. He lives in Italy.

Published July 2024



Regarding Norbunet

Dear Gar and Ling Gakyils of the International Dzogchen Community,
Greetings from the International Gakyil!

We wish to share some important information and requests for your review.

The International Dzogchen Community (IDC) is an international non-profit, non-political, and non-sectarian organization, and does not promote, approve, or support political or sectarian discussions and controversies within official IDC channels. The International Gakyil (IG) has no jurisdiction over private communications that occur outside community platforms, but we kindly ask that Gar/Ling Gakyils remind their members that each individual is responsible for their actions and to be respectful and aware of the circumstances of others.

The IG recommends an excellent resource for newcomers, presented in collaboration with Shang Shung Publications (SSP) – the newly updated booklet about Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the IDC. The booklet can be downloaded from the landing page at <https://welcome.dzogchencommunity.org/>. We encourage sharing this link on your websites and with your local sangha.

Regarding restricted course and retreat participation requirements, the IG suggests that Gars and Lings update the wording in their program announcements to reflect

that those wishing to participate in restricted courses and retreats need to have received transmission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu or Yeshe Namkhai. Prospective participants without transmission should be directed to contact the authorized teacher leading the program in question who will then make a decision. Rinpoche's advice on working with newcomers in *The Dzogchen Community: Principles and Guidelines*, printed by SSP and often called the Blue Book, is a useful reference for this topic and others.

Due to recent requests, the IG kindly asks Gar and Ling Gakyils to please consider regularly adding wording such as "for all those in need" to their Shitro practice announcements to clarify that this practice is dedicated not only to locally known practitioners but also to all those who are suffering or have died.

The IG and the Practicing Together team are organizing several Practicing Together Global Practice Chains in the months to come for peace and evolution. The first one, a 24-hour Guru Tragphur practice, took place on August 17, 2024. In recent days we sent a message to Gar/Ling Gakyils and under separate cover to all IDC members announcing the schedule and how to register.

Best wishes,

The International Gakyil



Dear International Dzogchen Community Members,

This is to inform you that a tireless collaborative effort is underway to reactivate Norbunet, the Dzogchen Community's invaluable source of information and communication. The goal is to find a quick resolution to the current unfortunate lack of this resource.

Loek Jehee, some volunteers, and the IG have identified and are currently evaluating several options. We thank all IDC members for their patience and understanding while we complete this analyzing, organizing, and implementing phase to ensure a working solution.

In the meantime, you can stay informed about local programming at IDC Centers by visiting The Mirror, and clicking on the links to the various Gars in the homepage section titled *International Dzogchen Community*.

Don't hesitate to visit all Gar and Ling websites as well as dzogchen.net for up-to-date information.

Should you have further questions or need other assistance, please reach out to the International Gakyil at blue@dzogchen.net, red@dzogchen.net, and yellow@dzogchen.net.

Thank you again and best wishes,

The International Gakyil



New Administrative Secretary of International Atiyoga Foundation

Marco Baseggio on behalf of the ATIF Board

The new administrative secretary of the International Atiyoga Foundation is Dragana Lukic, who was selected through an open call in which seventeen candidates participated.

Dragana replaces Nikole Stanisova who has worked for the Foundation for 3 years and who is now doing a commendable job of transferring skills and tasks to Dragana.

Best wishes from the ATIF Board to Dragana and a deep thank you to Nikole for the excellent work she has done in these years.©



MACO Museum of Oriental Art and Culture

The Museum of Oriental Art and Culture (MACO) is the fruit of over 35 years of collaboration between the Municipality of Arcidosso in Grosseto Province, Italy, and the Merigar Dzogchen Community Cultural Association, a non-profit cultural association, founded by Prof. Namkhai Norbu, professor of Tibetan and Mongolian language and literature at the Oriental University of Naples from 1962 to 1992. The project was born from the wish of both institutions to find a home for the rich collection of over 5000 objects of fine Asian arts, crafts, and ethnographic artifacts from the Namkhai Collection.



The medieval building housing the MACO.

All photos by Oleksandr Zhytko



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at the MACO inauguration, 2016.



The collection includes works of art of inestimable value and profound cultural significance, crafts and costumes, votive objects of considerable historical importance, as well as a significant collection of manuscripts and publications directly related to Namkhai Norbu's research, along with a media archive, which documents many facets of Tibetan and Central Asian culture.

The architectural and conceptual plan of the MACO was inspired by the form of the mandala. This is also reflected in the logo of the Museum which was designed by

Prof. Namkhai. The logo arranges the five principal sciences of traditional Buddhist studies: the arts, medicine, language and literature, and logic around the interior science of spiritual practice, represented by the Tibetan letter "A" at its center, to express the interdependent nature of these five sciences.

The Museum is based in the former chancery building situated in the castle complex in Arcidosso which was made available by the Municipality of Arcidosso and was officially inaugurated on December 10, 2016.

The central atrium of the main gallery of the MACO was inspired by traditional Buddhist monastic architecture. It currently features an immersive 180-degree video documentary filmed in Western Sichuan in 2016, by two Italian filmmakers, featuring pastoral landscapes, mountainscapes, and Tibetan Buddhist monastic interiors and exteriors. This project furthers our mission of presenting Asian culture as both a vital part of our shared cultural patrimony and as a living contemporary reality.

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Exhibitions

Since its inauguration, the MACO has presented several exhibitions bringing many facets of Tibet Buddhism, history, and culture not only to the general public in situ and online but particularly to local primary and high school students.

One of the first was **Lhasa and Beyond**, a photographic exhibition documenting the 1948 expedition to Central Tibet, led by the great Italian Orientalist and explorer Giuseppe Tucci, and documented in Tucci's "To Lhasa and Beyond: Diary of the Expedition to Tibet in the year 1948" published almost 70 years ago. The exhibit displayed historical photographs from the 1948 expedition by Neapolitan photographer P. F. Mele as well as new images of the same sites revisited in 2016, creating a temporal bridge between the past and present, between a world that has vanished and one that is vanishing. The exhibition included a multimedia narrative recounting key moments of the Tucci expedition projected onto a 3D relief map of Tibet.

In 2018 the MACO inaugurated an exhibition entitled **Sky Writing: The Calligraphic Art of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu**, a sublime series of calligraphic works by brush in golden ink on a deep blue lapis lazuli paper. At the same time, some historical documents and manuscripts of great historical value were exhibited.

The Meditation in Motion exhibition 2019–20 explored the world of Tibetan dance, through costumes, photographs, and video installations. The exhibition featured the revealed Vajra dances of Namkhai Norbu as well as the fuller Buddhist and Dzogchen context of visionary dances. Among the many splendid and

extraordinary accomplishments of the late Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was the revelation of several sets of visionary dances for both men and women lay practitioners.

Due to the widespread disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic at the time, few people could travel to the exhibition at the MACO so the museum decided to reach out and share online some video content relevant to the exhibition themes, including rare accounts by Sakya Trizin, and archival documentation of Pema Lingpa dances from the Kingdom of Bhutan as well as videos of the transcendent Vajra dances of the Dzogchen Community.

Inaugurated in 2023 the **Silk Road Pilgrimage** surveys the cultural and commercial relationships between the East and West which have helped to shape our world. The movement of ideas, peoples and technologies, are told through the treasures in the Namkhai

Collection, on display to the public for the first time. Spanning millennia, linking worlds and perspectives from across Asia, the exhibition explores the Buddhist principle of Interdependence.

Visitors are guided through the exhibition with descriptive panels, some refer-



ring to books and treasures found in the Dunhuang cave library, to demonstrate how Buddhism evolved through the Silk Road, shaping and influencing the civilizations of Asia.

The Silk Road Pilgrimage also presents a new 360-degree video production for the virtual theater installation in the central atrium of the museum, with videos from the Xiantangshan caves, depicting Buddhist statues from the Qi Dynasty (550–577), which were first shown at the SMART Museum in Chicago and at the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery, kindly provided by the Taiyuan University of Technology in Taiyuan, Shanxi, China.

More recently **The Secret Murals of the Lukhang Temple** photographic exhibition was presented at the MACO in the summer of 2024. In 1981 Professor Namkhai Norbu, returning to Lhasa after more than 20 years, made the first photographs of what were then considered the most secret images of Tibet, the 18th-century murals of the Lukhang, a small temple located behind the Potala Palace which contains what has become known as the Sistine Chapel of Tibetan Buddhism. The images of the Lukhang present a panorama of Tibetan culture in the 1700s and an authentic visual guide to enlightenment.

Building Bridges and Creating Connections: MACO and the British Museum

The MACO's collaboration with the British Museum and their ResearchSpace team has helped the museum to share the Namkhai Collection with Dzogchen Community members around the world.

ResearchSpace (RS) is software for detecting and mapping the intricate interdependencies of the world's cultural heritage. It includes the first search engine specifically built to find and manage resources in a museum environment. It employs the linked open data standard developed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM – UNESCO), CIDOC-CRM. Rather than simply cataloguing an artifact, ResearchSpace permits the possibility of describing the relationships between artifacts, ideas, and resources within their broader cultural context. In this way, RS improves access to digital artifacts by providing more relevant ways of revealing the relationships between them.

MACO's contribution

To manage its collection of over 5 million artifacts, the British Museum uses RS together with a commercial collection management system (CMS). Since their collection management system is beyond the needs and financial means of a small museum like the MACO, the MACO proposed and funded a customization of RS, substituting their CMS with an open-source in-



stitutional digital repository called FEDORA (Flexible Extensible Digital Object Repository Architecture). FEDORA is used by the Smithsonian, the British Library, and many universities around the world.

During the course of MACO's collaboration with the British Museum, they decided to adopt our customization as part of their next major software release of RS.

As a consequence, the BM has invested a considerable amount of its own resources in the realization of this upgrade. Thanks to the MACO's contribution, RS is now poised to become an open-source platform for connecting the collections of cultural heritage institutions, large and small, everywhere.

The advantage of ResearchSpace in the planning of an international project is that it has also been designed as a virtual collaborative environment. MACO's institutional partners and curators will be able to use RS to share their resources and research and collaboratively build the exhibition.

ResearchSpace helps the MACO enrich these physical exhibits with relevant links to digital resources, and also permits the creation and sharing of links to resources in the collections in other museums. QR codes are inserted within the exhibits, permitting visitors to query RS for media resources and more detailed information.



Working with Local Schools

The MACO works in synergy with local institutions in particular with schools of all levels, organizing courses and workshops. Guided tours offer teachers and their students educational itineraries which help to raise awareness of various aspects of Asian art and culture. MACO adopts an experien-

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tial and multiform approach to its educational programs, employing modern pedagogical techniques and methods such as guided explorations, storytelling and dramatizations, including music and dance. The MACO prides itself on introducing new technology to visitors as part of its contemporary communications strategy.

The MACO strongly believes that new technologies are an important means for museum education, and the involvement of young people, and has included multimedia paths using the latest generation of virtual reality. Visitors can virtually visit Tibetan monasteries, caves, and archaeological sites.

The virtual theater in the center of the museum was designed to immerse the viewer inside the landscapes filmed specifically with three cameras in Tibet and China. Contemporary Tibetan dances are also projected within the virtual theater and visitors can try to follow them.

The multimedia map inside the museum was created during a workshop with a numerically controlled milling machine to involve young people and the local community in the realization of the museum. On the map of Central Asia, educational itineraries are projected such as the various journeys undertaken in Asia by the Italian explorer Giuseppe Tucci.

School Projects

The MACO's educational proposal consists of a flexible work plan, which makes available to teachers resources and activities that can be chosen and articulated according to the times and paths that they consider most appropriate according to the age of the students, the type of classes, and their specific objectives.

Recently with the Silk Roads Exhibition, in a sort of adventurous virtual journey, students were able to acquire fundamental information on the subject and receive appropriate stimuli to arouse and satisfy their natural curiosity about particular issues thanks to the QR codes. The visit included proposals for games and quizzes designed to encourage discussion and collaboration between students and their teachers, allowing the latter to identify and orient the interests of their students with a view to reworking and eventual in-depth studies, for which they could make use of the additional resources made available by MACO.

There were also targeted interventions by experts in the different subject areas,



Local children listening to a story about Tibet, "The Adventures of Nyima, Dawa and the Little Yak", at the Museum.

specific theoretical-practical workshops, led by experts, to foster learning by doing (for example: ritual masks, alphabets, and scripts of the East, etc.) as well as a play inspired by Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West*.

For three-year high school students, there is the possibility of developing school projects that will directly involve them in museum activities and promote contacts and collaboration with their colleagues in Asia.

One of the underlying missions of the MACO is to give the possibility for young people to mature their awareness that the histories of others are equally important and worthy of being told, not only because they contribute to a better understanding of our own history but because they induce reflection on the relationship between individual stories and general human history

and improve knowledge of the physical and geographical space of the non-European portion of the Eurasian continent. ©



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» continued from previous page

follow the teaching and practice it. Why are they important? Because as human beings following the teaching, we have three levels of existence: our physical body, our energy level (also called voice), and mind. Therefore, whatever teaching we follow we should deal with these three levels of existence. For that reason, the teaching has three aspects.”

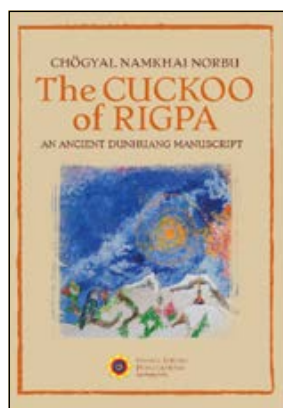
Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

The Cuckoo of Rigpa

An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript

Rig pa'i khu byug

<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/e-book-the-cuckoo-of-rigpa-epub-mobi>



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

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

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

In this book, the Dunhuang commentary is followed by the Author's annotational commentary elucidating the most important points. In the detailed introduction, which makes up the largest part of the book, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first undertakes to identify the location of the ancient kingdom of Oddiyāna, the birthplace of the Dzogchen teachings, by relying on historical sources such as the trav-

elogue of Ugyenpa Rinchen Pal (1230–1309), a Tibetan siddha who visited Oddiyāna in the thirteenth century. He then proceeds to show the connection between Oddiyāna and the ancient kingdom of Shang Shung by means of six reasons, on the basis of several Bönpo historical accounts such as from the Dzogchen Oral Transmission of Shang Shung, and concludes with short biographies of the first human master of Dzogchen, Garab Dorje of Oddiyāna, of the great Guru Padmasambhava (eighth century), also from Oddiyāna, and of the Tibetan translator Vairocana.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project



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

<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/khaita-joyful2>

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

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

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

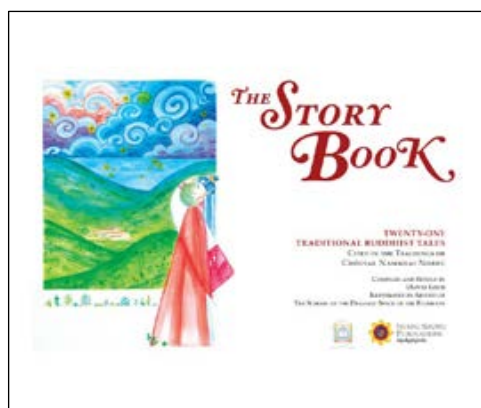
The Story Book.

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

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

<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-the-story-book-pdf>

The nectar-like stories told by the Master like a blazing torch in pitch darkness, reveal the light of the illusory mind and lead



us on the path of bliss and clarity.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

In Italian

L'Upadesha sul comportamento totale dello stesso sapore

<https://shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/upadesha-sul-comportamento>

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

“Coloro che applicano tali istruzioni, anche se all'inizio potrebbero non avere la capacità di integrare totalmente, pian piano la svilupperanno ed entreranno nella via dei Rigdzin: seguiranno la via e faranno tutto in modo corretto. Queste istruzioni

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

(chiamato anche Dorje Sempa Namkha Che) più il Mejung: quindi in totale sei volumi.

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

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

I preliminari della via dell'Ati

Commenti del Longsal volume sesto

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/p9788878347007>

I preliminari della via dell'Ati (A ti lam gyi sngon 'gro) è una speciale pratica di purificazione di Vajrasattva ricevuta attraverso

Upcoming books

In English

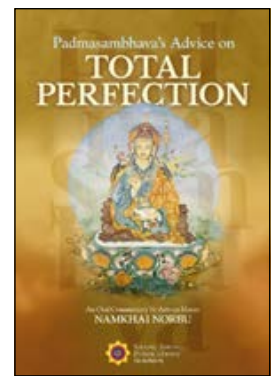
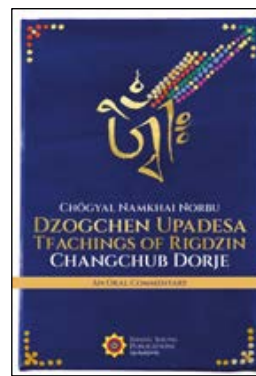
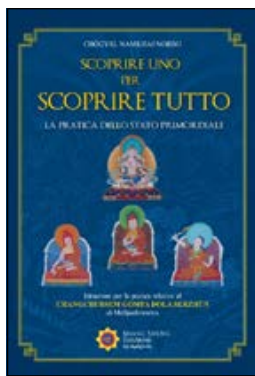
The Vajra Dance of the Space
(Khalongdorjeikar)

Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen
The Lamp Illuminating the Way to Enter the Teaching

Introduction to the Vajra Dance

The first public book about Vajra Dances

This volume is divided into two parts. Part One is dedicated to a selection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's written and oral teach-



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

<https://shangshungpublications.com/it/component/hikashop/product/p9788878346437>

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

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

Scoprire uno per scoprire tutto. La pratica dello stato primordiale

<https://shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/scoprire-tutto>

Tra i testi tibetani appartenenti alla serie dello Dzogchen Semde, si considera che quelli più antichi siano le prime cinque traduzioni di Vairochana, ovvero Rigpai Khujug, Tsalchen Trugpa, Khyungchen Dingwa, Dola Serzhün, Minubpai Gyaltsen

vari sogni tra il 2003 e il 2004 e legata alla trasmissione che l'Autore ricevette dal suo Guru radice, Changchub Dorje (Byang chub rdo rje, 1863–1963).

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

ings on the principles of Dzogchen, the Vajra Dance and related topics. Part Two, which is dedicated to the actual practice, reproduces two chapters of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's main work on the Dance of the Vajra, titled The Precious Lamp. These chapters are taken from Adriano Clemente's English translation of the Tibetan text and describe two Vajra dances: the Vajra Dance of the Six Spaces and the Dance of the Three Vajras.

In Italian

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

La luminosa chiarezza dell'universo: una chiara esposizione del principio del tregchöd primordialmente puro (Ka dag khregs chod kyi dgongs pa gsal bshad klong chen 'od gsal) è uno dei primi libri sullo Dzogchen scritti da Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938–2018). Secondo le sue note biografiche egli completò la prima versione il 28 aprile

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1965, mentre viveva ancora a Roma, e originariamente lo concepì come un compendio di istruzioni tratte dai principali tantra della serie dello Dzogchen Upadeśa e dagli scritti di Longchenpa (1308–1364) e Jigmed Lingpa (1730–1798) sulla base di conoscenze ed esperienze personali.

Libro realizzato con il sostegno di Merigar West

Namkha – Armonizzare l'energia degli elementi

Consigli di Padmasambhava sulla Perfezione Totale

Il libro delle storie Ventuno racconti buddhisti tradizionali citati negli Insegnamenti di Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Il cuculo della presenza istantanea (coedizione con Om Edizioni)

Insegnamenti Dzogchen Upadesa di Rigdzin Changchub Dorje

Longsal Rushen. Un commento orale

L'Upadesha sul Tregchod primordialmente puro. Commenti del Longsal volume quinto

In Spanish

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

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(Public)

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(Public – ya publicado por Editorial del Fondo)

La Lampara que ilumina las mentes estrechas
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El Yoga de Tara Verde
(Restricted)

Libros que se publicarán en 2024

Gurú Yoga

Yantra Yoga

Descubre uno para descubrir todos

In Chinese

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Chöd

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Shang Shung Publications Team



[NORBUNET]

Important Information

Loek Jehee

On May 1, on July 24th and on August 6, 2024, we received a notification by Google that the Norbunet group was removed "because of policy violations" ("unwanted content"). Unfortunately, it seemed totally impossible to get any further information from Google on the exact nature of this "unwanted content". Also, there is no way of communicating with Google. We have in each case directly appealed for a manual review, in the first two cases this was successful after about a week.

So Norbunet now again is suspended for the third time for an indefinite period of time. After 13 years of generously providing

Google groups service to our Community for free, unfortunately Google now seems no longer to be a reliable platform for us anymore.

We are now busy finding an alternative solution. However, it is uncertain if or when Norbunet service as a mailing list will return and on what platform. I have written to the International Gakyil and asked them to develop a communication strategy for the Community and to decide upon a follow-up for Norbunet. So the future of Norbunet unfortunately is rather uncertain at this moment.

Best regards, Loek



Shang Shung UK and Khaita at Oxford University

Jamyang Oliphant

Last April I was visiting Oxford in the hope of setting up a collaboration/partnership between the University of Oxford and Shang Shung UK institute. I met with Ulrike Roesler, the professor of Tibetan and Himalayan studies, and Dr Lama Jabb, a very jovial Tibetan from Amdo who is considered one of the world's foremost experts on Tibetan literature. They were very cordial and told me about the upcoming International Seminar of Young Tibetologists which would be held at the University of Oxford. This is the largest gathering of scholars and enthusiasts of Tibetan culture, which happens every four years, in different venues around the world. The event attracts a diverse audience of scholars and practitioners from prestigious institutions worldwide, including monasteries from India, Tibet, and China, as well as universities with strong academic ties to Himalayan studies. It is comparable to the Olympics of Tibetan studies, where everyone comes

to present their research and to listen to other scholars' work.

I spoke about this to Mark Farrington, who is responsible for having set up the Ati Evolution Foundation (<https://www.atievolution.org>), and we managed to secure funding for this event. We discussed that it would be a good occasion to present Khaita to all the international enthusiasts of Tibetan culture, and so a grant was arranged for Ati Yoga Foundation, Khaita Division. Then I contacted Adriana Dal Borgo and Lena Dumcheva, and we discussed how best to proceed. Lena took on the task of coordinating a team of international

dancers and preparing the show and the presentation of Khaita.

In a remarkable collaboration, Shang Shung UK, Khaita, and the ATIF came together, and this culminated at the beginning of September, with Khaita dance performances and explanatory talks about Khaita, as well as hosting an art exhibition on a series of paintings about the Bardo made by Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche.

The Khaita dance performances were very engaging, many from the audiences joined in the dances and many professors and scholars were very curious of Khaita – yet another remarkable facet of

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Jamyang Oliphant (center)
with the Khaita dancers.

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Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's vast repertory of a lifetime of projects and studies. The talks about Khaita were also translated into Tibetan, making them accessible to all those attending, including the many participants from numerous Tibetan monasteries and institutions. These talks and dances highlighted the cultural richness of Khaita, which combines Tibetan folk traditions with messages of harmony and unity. Dr Eva Leick spoke in depth about the Dzamling Gar song. Lena Dumcheva introduced the whole Khaita mission initiated by our late beloved master.

In addition, Shang Shung UK showcased a unique exhibition of paintings by the renowned Tibetan artist Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche. Many of you may be familiar with his panel in the Gönpa in Merigar, just above where Rinpoche used to sit. His works, which reflect the profound spiritual and artistic traditions of Tibet, captivated the audience, adding a visual layer to the cultural presentation. The paintings are centred around the themes of death, birth and the bardo, and are based on Buddhist and native Bon beliefs. The exhibition was well attended and I provided some brief explanations about the underlying philosophy of some of the paintings, as well as a background introduction of the artist. We had a second exhibition in London a few days later and a Khenpo from Nepal, Sangay Dorje, gave a more thorough explanation of some sutra texts on which two of the paintings are based. We are working on a catalogue on this Bardo Series and if any organization or ling is interested to host an exhibition, please do contact me.

It was an exceptional opportunity for Shang Shung UK and Khaita to introduce their activities to a global audience with a shared passion for Himalayan culture and spirituality. The seminar provided an invaluable platform for our organizations to engage with young Tibetologists and cultural enthusiasts, demonstrating the vibrancy of Tibetan art and dance.

My heartfelt thanks go out to all the dancers, to Lena Dumcheva and Eva Leick, to Mandarava and Trinley from the Shang Shung UK team, to AEF that made this possible and to all involved.

I felt very satisfied by this collaboration between our organizations, as hundreds of attendees left with a deeper appreciation for the efforts of Shang Shung UK, Khaita, and the ATIF Foundation in preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and wisdom.



left to right Eva Leick, Jamyang Oliphant and Lena Dumcheva.

Eva Leick

From 2nd– 6th September 2024, the *International Seminar of Young Tibetologists* took place at Wolfson College, Oxford University. I was honored to present my academic work on Khaita there. On Tuesday evening, at the Leonard Wolfson auditorium, I gave a 20-minute talk on “Dzamling Gar Song and Dance: A Khaita – Joyful Dances Manifesto” followed by Q&A. It was exciting on many levels!

Coming from an academic background in Dance Studies, it was a unique experience for me to speak at a conference of Tibetologists, with predominantly Tibetan researchers present. It was the perfect setting to present *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*. The song and dance are remarkable Dzogchen teachings by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – written, composed and choreographed by him on the occasion of Dzamling Gar's birth in 2013. As such, it was important to present *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* appropriately at the conference, respecting its spiritual value while highlighting its representative qualities for the whole Khaita project. Having an audience of Tibetologists familiar with Buddhist paths and concepts allowed me to build this bridge, highlighting the song's academic and spiritual importance.

Due to last minute changes from the organizers' side, my talk ended up as the only one not scheduled in a parallel session (usually two talks happened at the same time) and stood alone as its own panel. This

meant that no one spoke directly before or after me and the audience was significantly larger than during other talks. I found the opportunity auspicious and decided to integrate the complete dance as the introduction to my lecture. On the beautiful auditorium stage, Elia, Nicola and I then danced the *Dzamling Gar Song* to provide a first-hand visual and auditive impression of the explanation to come. I was the only conference speaker to include a performative contribution. I thought it fulfilled its purpose perfectly. The audience, amongst them several Buddhist monks, were visibly impressed and touched by hearing Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's voice singing the song, watching us dance and finding out about the Khaita project in this way.

It was wonderful to have the support of the Khaita team for my talk and the conference itself. I was happy on a personal level – imagine how much nicer it was to dance together with my friends than going through this experience alone – and I was also excited for the Khaita project to be represented in such a ‘serious’ setting. After my talk in the auditorium, we went outside to the college's lawn to perform as part of the conference's evening program. It brought everything to life and the organizers thanked us several times for being there. Many conference participants complemented our dancing skills and costumes. We finished the long conference day dancing *Gorshey* until 10pm led by local Tibetans along with the other conference participants.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu always highlighted two main reasons for Khaita: the preservation of Tibetan culture and the promotion of presence, awareness and harmony in life. With our participation at the *International Seminar for Young Tibetologists*, I hope to have contributed to both, presenting Khaita as method for cultural preservation as well as a profound Dzogchen practice, simple in its appearance and deep in meaning.

I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the *International Seminar of Young Tibetologists* for inviting us as a performance team and me as a speaker, to the other dancers, to Lena for coordinating the Khaita activities and to Jamyang for making everything possible. Without his incentive I would never have thought to be considered a “young Tibetologist”. Our trip to Oxford was joyful, surprising and promising for future activities in this direction!

✱

Lena Dumcheva

It's been an amazing opportunity for Khaita to explore its full potential. As the dances are the most visible and immediate aspect that people connect with, Khaita is often reduced to circle dancing. However, there is so much more to Khaita than that. In particular, Rinpoche's extensive work on the lyrics of the songs – which seem to be the largest existing comprehensive collection of Tibetan songs – as well as the related commentaries that cover various aspects of Tibetan language, culture, and history, bring together in a very accessible way the diverse fields of knowledge Rinpoche was working on. I noticed that, while many seminar participants were well-acquainted with and held Rinpoche's work on Tibetan culture in high esteem, very few were aware of the Khaita project. Therefore, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to present Rinpoche's Khaita work to both the international academic and Tibetan communities at the seminar. I hope this lays the foundation for future collaborations in this direction.

Our dance performances received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with many attendees filming us and sharing the dances on social media. A few short video clips of our dance performance went viral on social media, including the Chinese ones. As someone from the University said, “Apparently your dance in Wolfson is a social media hit in Tibet!” We reached over 1,600

shares and 240 comments on WeChat, and almost 8,500 shares and 600 comments on Douyin (Chinese TikTok) – definitely the biggest visibility we ever had. As someone from the University said, “Apparently your dance at Wolfson is a social media hit in Tibet!” – the clip currently has over 1,500 shares and 230 comments. One person commented, “This is called art without borders,” which couldn't express it any better!

The performance at Wolfson was followed by circle dances led by the Oxford Tibetan community. These were recent Gorshey dances, some of which we knew quite well as we have studied these with Salima and Yangcen. Thanks to that we could follow the dances quite easily and I felt it really made a difference in connecting to people – after two hours of dancing together, everyone became friends!

I am deeply grateful to our international dance team, who did an outstanding job preparing the performance in just three days of rehearsing together. I'm especially proud of our male dancers, who I believe have made great progress and delivered their best performance yet. We were also fortunate to have Tenzon Phakdon, the leading UK dancer, performing with us. I hope we were able to pick up some of her

elegant dance style, as well as learn the art of wearing a chupa. Without Tenzin's help, putting on our costumes would have been nearly impossible!

While only six of us dancers were visibly present at the event, I am well aware of the many people who contributed to this success. I hope our international Khaita family can rejoice in this event – from the song translators, commentary editors, music editors, and choreographers to all the Khaiteros who keep it going. From Elena Kalistova, who helped me choose and manage the costumes; Edith Casadei, who made a great Khaita business card design at a last-minute request; Tatiana Magdieva, who suggested and designed the new “search by topic” feature for the Khaita app; and Tatiana Arzhakova, who implemented the design and worked on improvements until the night before the presentation; to my mom who is now helping to deliver the rest of our costumes from the UK, as they were too heavy to transport all at once – just to name a few!

Lastly, my endless gratitude goes to the entire Shang Shung UK team, especially Jamyang, and to the Ati Evolution Foundation, without whose financial support this event would not have been possible. ☺



Tenzon Phakdon helping Eva Leick prepare for the Khaita performance.

Shang Shung Foundation · International Institute for Tibetan Culture

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Re-School. The Resilient School

Ethical education and well-being in Italian schools

Since 1999, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized it as an eligible nongovernmental organization carrying out development and public awareness projects, ASIA has been involved in carrying out projects abroad and information and education activities in Italy.

Initially, the idea was to inform Italian and European citizens about the activities being carried out in Tibet and other countries and the different cultures and traditions that we came into contact with while carrying out our projects. During those years, our activities aimed to make people aware of Tibet's rich cultural heritage and the serious risks it faces after the Chinese occupation in 1959.

We organized seminars, lectures and exhibitions so that civil society could learn about traditional Tibetan medicine; the world of nomadic herders; contemporary artistic expressions; the delicate ecosystem of the Himalayas and other aspects of this immense culture.

This constant presence in Tibet, Nepal and India with the holders of Tibetan spirituality and in particular the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – who often urged us to make known the values of Tibetan culture and to interact more and more openly with the people we came into contact with – gradually led us to carry out projects aimed at Italian schools in order to spread the values of Buddhist culture and spirituality among students and teachers, aware of how much this knowledge could help to counter the phenomena of hatred, intolerance and discrimination that were spreading extremely quickly.

Empathy, interdependence, and nonviolence could become the pillars of a task to raise awareness and educate the youngest and affect and make a difference in what is



one of the most important institutions in society, the school.

We were convinced that only an increased awareness of the individual could generate change and evolution in society, so we decided to accompany the youngest in their inner growth, proposing methods, to primary and secondary schools, that would complement the classical school approach totally focused on instruction rather than education.

In this way our first ethical education and wellness project in schools was created in 2019, *"Distinct but not Distant – The*

values enshrined in Buddhist culture as a means of breaking down inner boundaries and making diversity a great wealth". It was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and opened the doors of schools and allowed us to verify the strong need for emotional literacy, awareness of one's inner world and listening among children and adolescents.

The fact that the Italian government had supported a project based on Buddhist values to address the strong individual and collective distress was a great encouragement to take the vision and activities re-



lated to the Teaching of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to the outside world. In particular, with Distinct but Not Distant, the teaching of Kumar Kumari entered public schools for the benefit of primary students for the first time.

The arrival of COVID-19 did the rest. The pandemic experience was a kind of detonator for so many issues that were present but often latent and which exploded in a strong way with the sudden upheaval in the rhythms of life, uncertainty and fear that we all found ourselves experiencing. For children and young people anxiety increased exponentially. As the National Council of the Order of Psychologists (Cnop) noted, it is precisely young people who have developed the long effect of psychological problems.

According to a periodic survey conducted by the Piepoli Research Institute just for the Cnop in January 2021, almost 8 out of 10 people were feeling stress at a medium to high level, and among the most affected were young people and children, who saw their life habits, socio-affective ties within school, contacts with their friends suddenly come to an end, and who often absorbed their parents' worries and sufferings.

Tension, irritability, sleep disturbances, difficulty in attention and concentration, and aggressive behavior are increasingly found in childhood. The alarm has also been sounded by the WHO: today, worldwide, suicide is considered one of the three leading causes of death among individuals aged 15–44, and is estimated to be the leading cause in the future.

Becoming aware of this problem, our intention to make available to young people and schools knowledge, practices and values rooted in Himalayan contemplative traditions and in particular in the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was strengthened.

Thus, in 2020, our partnership with Merigar was established, with whom over the past four years we have implemented five projects co-funded by the UBI, Italian Buddhist Union. The cultural mission of the projects aimed to promote in educational institutions knowledge that embraces themes consistent with the Buddhist view such as mindfulness, compassion, peace, respect for the environment and all living beings, and the interdependence of all phenomena.

With the first of these projects – *“Seeds of Awareness: starting from self-knowledge*

to rediscover the deep connections that exist between human beings and cultivate relationships of empathy” – carried out in Rome, Naples and the Amiata municipalities we followed up on the Kumar Kumari experience in elementary school that had already begun with the previous project. Given its great success and positive feedback from teachers and parents, we have continued to present it in all subsequent projects. The young students were able to develop a greater awareness of the breath and the body, and the link between it and the mind. In particular, the welcoming and listening atmosphere created by the teachers and the invitation to share brief reflections on their own feelings helped the children cultivate calmness, attentiveness and a cooperative attitude, very valuable in this early age when they are encouraged to be competitive.

As part of the same project, workshops on fairy tales from around the world and drawing, as well as experiences of mindfulness and empathy, enabled children to creatively get in touch with their own emotional world and stimulated them to put themselves in the shoes of others. The

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concluding activity – the photographic exhibition “Portraits of India and Tibet” by Enrico Dell’Angelo – introduced civil society to a distant world that is unfortunately disappearing.

This was followed by four other projects, all carried out in the area of Rome and its province and the Amiata municipalities, each project with its own characteristics.

With “*Breathing the Earth. Resilient children consciously live with themselves and the environment*”, we presented the children with ways to become aware of and care simultaneously for their inner world and the plants and fruits of the Earth. In fact, the overall goal of the project was to spread the values of mindfulness, respect for the environment and the interdependence of all living beings inherent in the Buddhist view to first grade educational institutions and increase the resolve and environmental awareness of students and teachers. More specifically, it aimed to foster the socio-emotional development of elementary school children through increased awareness of their inner space (with “Yantra Yoga – Kumar Kumari” activities and “Mindfulness Experiences”) and the outer environment (with “School Gardens” environmental education activities and the “Earth Viewed from Space” workshop).

The project “*Educating to Defend Animal Rights and Protect the Environment for a Sustainable Future of Planet Earth*”, in which LAV (the Anti-Vivisection League) also participated, focused on respect for all living things and the environment.

In particular, primary and secondary school students, teachers, and civil society were made aware of animal rights, forms of protection and care – both on the level of the individual and society – and the risks associated with climate change and links to intensive meat consumption.

To promote empathy and respect for all living things, we organized a visit to the LAV Rescued Animals Recovery Center in Semproniano. This meeting was conducted via Google Meet call, with the online presence of the ASIA educator, and led by the LAV educator present in Semproniano who, together with the animal keepers, told students and teachers stories and characteristics of some of the animals at the Center.

Out of this experience came the picture book “ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENT – Respect for animals through the eyes of children” made from the children’s drawings

and inclusive of the ASIA and LAV educational kits used in the classroom.

Finally, civil society was offered an in-depth look at these issues from an interdisciplinary perspective through the “Animal Landscapes” webinar series.

DO WE MAKE PEACE? Taking Care of Inner Enemies to Make Peace with the Out-



side World, conceived and initiated during the period when the Russian-Ukrainian war re-entered our daily lives, aimed to contribute to a nonviolent and peaceful society by experientially reviving a series of human values such as empathy, kindness, compassion, and altruism. Activities directed at elementary school students (Kumar Kumari and the Emotions in Color workshops) were complemented by those aimed at teachers with theoretical-experiential courses structured in 3 modules: yantra yoga, emotion management and empathic communication. The goal of these courses was to create a space and time in which teachers could stop and take care of themselves and their inner world, and at the same time acquire knowledge and tools to be able to manage emotions and communication in a healthy and empathic way. This seemed to us to be the fundamental starting point to be able to help teachers be effective and play their educational roles successfully. Schools are becoming increasingly bureaucratic and the only kind of training they receive is technological or procedural. The human aspect is completely neglected and teachers find it difficult to relate to students’ psychological and emotional problems and their own burden of stress and tension.



In fact, all the groups we worked with expressed great appreciation for the work done and the need to deepen it, and when it was possible we lengthened the course with additional meetings.



Another novelty included in this project was the guided tours of the MACO Museum in Arcidosso for primary students aged 8–11 and their accompanying adults, with a focus on the theme of compassion and how this can be the basis for a non-violent, peaceful approach to life.

To conclude the project, the conference “Inner Disarmament. Contemplative Ways in Dialogue on Peace,” offered civil society an opportunity to reflect on Peace, understood as a living, dynamic process that stems from self-knowledge and inner peacefulness, a path to be cultivated with care and perseverance rather than a goal to be reached. Distinguished representatives of different religions and contemplative paths had the opportunity to dialogue and discuss different approaches to inner disarmament: Diana Petech, a teacher of Zen Buddhism from the School of Thich Nhat Hanh; Luigino Bruni, economist and exponent of the Focolare Movement; Geshe Jampa Gelek, resident Tibetan master of the Lama Tzong Khapa Buddhist Institute;

Imam Mikail AbdAllah Mocci, a member of the Council of Religious Guides of CO. RE.IS (Islamic Religious Community) Italy; Khenpo Gelek Jinpa, from the Bön Shenten Dargye Ling spiritual center in France; Adalberto Mainardi, a monk from Celiole and representative of the Hesychast tradition in Slavic Orthodoxy; Svamini Shuddhananda Giri, a Hindu nun from the Matha Gitananda Ashram in Altare (Savona); Miriam Camerini, a theater recorder and scholar of Judaism; and Giorgio Bonaccorso, a Benedictine monk.

The latest project carried out in partnership with Merigar and with funding from the UBI was *"WE ARE ONE: from the illusion of a separate self to the awareness of an interconnected self"*, concluded at the end of August. We wanted to work with young people on their sense of identity, stimulating different and inclusive ways of perceiving others and mitigating the sense of separation and isolation. In addition to Kumar Kumari, Mindfulness, Kindness and Empathy Workshops and others on recycling and environmental sustainability, with this project for the first time Khaita

again implemented Yantra Yoga and Mindfulness trainings for teachers.

The culmination of all the activities was the concert "We Are One," featuring Rashmi Batt and Fakhraddin Gafarov, which was open to both the classes and families who participated in the project and to civil society, and was intended to be a celebration of interconnectedness through the coming together of different and little-known musical traditions.

In addition to these projects, since 2022 ASIA has been a partner, together with Città Metropolitana Roma Capitale, in the "GREEN SCHOOL Italia Program: a network of schools and territories for sustainable development," funded by AICS, which supports member schools that commit to adopting good practices to reduce their carbon footprint and stimulate the adoption of active and virtuous behaviors toward sustainability among students, families and communities. To date there are 35 schools in which we are present and, as of this fall, the Metropolitan City of Rome has fully entrusted us with the management of the project.

ing and then involve classrooms in the development of key competencies: personal competencies (awareness and emotions) social competencies (relationships and community) and the ability to learn how to learn (critical and reflective thinking). The program will run for five years so as to have a measurable impact on students' social-emotional development and the well-being of the school system. The goal is to implement a method – like the Green School – to be disseminated nationwide and to earn schools that apply it the certification of Re-School, the Resilient School.

We hope that circumstances will allow us to find the funds and continue to develop these activities.

To date we have reached more than 7,400 students in Italian public schools. These are small seeds that if watered can generate change in their own area and create a contagious wave of awareness, empathy and kindness in society. ©



Dances classes were activated in Italian schools and it was a real success. The boys and girls immediately understood the message that the dances bring: no one is first and no one is last, as one seven-year-old noted, "in the circle everyone is equal." The manner in which the dances are performed and the fact that they are performed to Tibetan folk songs proved to be very effective in increasing the spirit of cooperation, allowing the children to relax and relieve tension, and to get in touch with a different culture.

Given the experience with the previous project and the need encountered, we

In these years of working inside schools we have learned to understand their complex dynamics, encountering numerous difficulties that from time to time we have addressed by adapting our proposals to emerging needs. We have understood how important it is to work more and more on prevention and the health of children and adolescents, and for this reason we are developing, together with other agencies and associations, a program to promote the development of safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective educational environments for all in educational institutions at all levels. The intention is to start with teacher train-

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Community Calling!

Communication Practices in the Dzogchen Community

Sangha App team

Communication is at the core of every community, and it can be challenging when it should reach a worldwide community! This is why Sangha App has explored how people communicate in the Dzogchen Community through 15 interviews to key persons and practitioners. We gathered inspiring stories about how practitioners relate to practice and connect to others, and we will share some of these with you, starting with this article.

Among the media in our community, let's first mention The Mirror, now hosting this article, that reaches everyone, through its fantastically well-curated editorial project. The contents featured in The Mirror are reflective and broad, arriving both online and printed. While truly offering a mirror of community life, it might not be the most suitable context for quick announcements and interaction between users.

Many of us worried when Norbunet emails stopped arriving. Although people said they couldn't always keep up with large numbers of emails, it was a precious tool for many years. When it stopped, it felt like losing a connection.

I remember that, for me, registering for Norbunet was the first step toward entering the community, after having received transmission. When Gars and Lings reached out through Norbunet, many practitioners answered through action: donating or registering for events. What are we going to do now?

Gakyils & teachers spreading the word

Gakyils, on the one hand, work with communication, both public and behind the "scenes". Organizing a course requires many emails, conversations, calls, and reminders. Sometimes even chasing other people. One Blue Gakyil, for example, mentioned being in about 20 collective chats between Telegram and WhatsApp. Many are for collaborating with other Gakyils, at a national and international level.

For promoting courses, Gakyils and teachers need almost professional skills in social networking, mass emailing, pro-

cessing pictures, and customer care. The energy and effort they put into this work is impressive. They need help, so do not hesitate to offer your karma yoga! Given how broad and diverse the educational offer is in our community, we can see how it benefits us all.

Practitioners connecting family

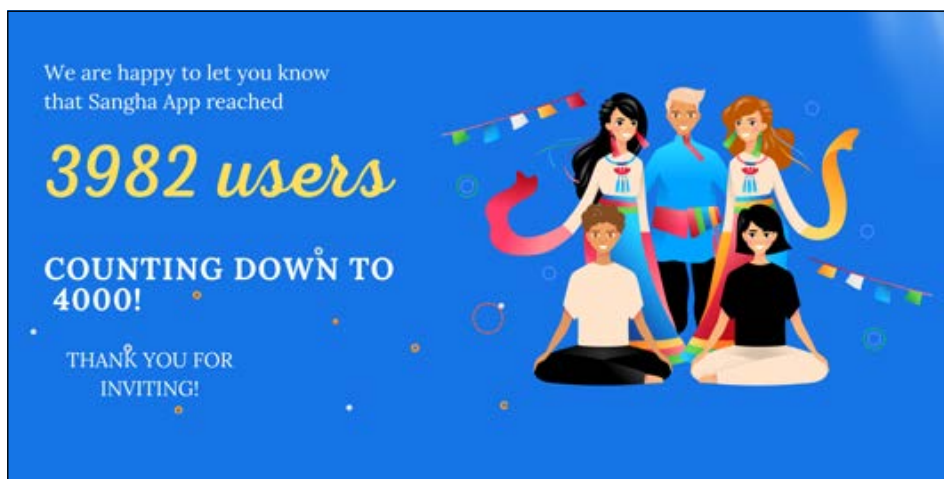
Practitioners, on the other hand, communicate to learn, to practice together, to ask for help, to get inspired, and to feel connected to their Vajra family.

Our participation in courses and events has reached incredible potential since 2020, with online retreats going global. Mailing lists like Norbunet and the Russian Voice remained large pools of educational opportunities. In parallel, the Sangha App translated the complex online global schedule to an immediate, one-click accessible daily practice schedule.

Many lings continue to organize face-to-face events in local languages, where people can spend time together. But for practitioners who are geographically far from others, online courses and practices became gold, in the form of optic fibre signals.

Practitioners also reach out when they have doubts or need advice. Many mentioned the generous support they received from teachers and expert practitioners. Having someone and somewhere to ask for advice is a source of motivation for continuing to train.

Many ask for advice from teachers through direct emails or during events. In the Sangha App, there are discussion channels where exchange and advice are frequent. People ask questions like "Which yantras help the eyesight?" or "Should we eat from the Three Roots plate after the Ganapuja, or not?", and they receive well documented answers!



Although a few WhatsApp and Telegram groups exist where teachers are present and practitioners exchange experiences, most of these groups have more of a logistical function. They also tend to be tiring for many, with too many messages and notifications.

Large social networks like Facebook or Instagram are also used. It is not unusual to receive a friend request from someone we don't know, but with whom we have...hundreds of friends in common. Then we know they are from the Dzogchen community!

Some people share pictures, events and quotes related to the teachings on social networks, trying to reach wider audiences. Often, though, the reactions are weak, for example just a "thumbs up" or a "heart". Event organisers commented that people don't seem to take action, such as registering for a retreat or donating after reading a post on Facebook or Instagram.

Lastly, word of mouth quickly circulates information, increases trust, and strengthens bonds.

With Sangha App, we have created a space that works as a hub for communication. You can directly exchange with people you know, **publish your events**, be reminded of the Global practice chains, access The Mirror with one click, or ask for advice from expert practitioners and teachers. We aim for this tool to be successful in keeping people connected and intensifying our practice!

Connected through practice

Having a glimpse of another's life events on social networks might feel like being a bit closer. Nonetheless, what we deeply know is that we are connected through practice.

As one practitioner explained:

"I feel more connected to the Dzogchen community than to other Sanghas. Practic-

Yantra Yoga

Tibetan Yoga of Movement Origin, Development and Future

Laura Evangelisti

The general benefits of Yantra Yoga are many, but maybe the most important ones are specific health benefits. There are health benefits described for each exercise, but that aspect is more specific, and they are indicated in the book *Yantra Yoga, The Tibetan Yoga of Movement* [https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/product_177].

The general principle of Yantra Yoga, which is open to the public, is based on the structure of Yantra Yoga. In Yantra Yoga, like yoga in general, we have movements and positions; physical movements. That is one of the important aspects in yoga.

We use our body to assume different forms, different positions; in general in yoga we start mainly from this very physical aspect. What is particular and interesting in Yantra Yoga is that from the beginning of the practice, we focus not only on the movements, but on movement that is guided by breathing.

So the main focus of the practice is on the breathing and the movements are helping us with that focus. So the focus is to become aware of how we breathe. First of all, we breathe throughout our life and, for example, through practices like mindfulness, we learn to pay attention and observe our breathing, in and out.

Through the movement, we slowly become aware of our breathing. The movement and the breathing are totally interconnected. As we become familiar with Yantra Yoga practice, automatically we attain this awareness. We are aware at the same time of our body and of our breathing.

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ing together is a very good base for feelings of belonging to develop. Nowadays it is very easy to meet people from all over the world online, particularly people who are interested in some particular practice.

We also meet with others, just ordinary people, and we talk about things and drink some tea. This is also very important for communication." ©



Laura Evangelisti
and Fabio Andrico.

This is very interesting because it's not a mind focused exercise. Through the body movement, which we are guiding with the breathing, we gain this awareness. And that is very interesting. Also the movement becomes easier because we do movement while we breathe.

Just by being in the movement while we breathe we can notice how our breathing happens in one way or another way. This can be one particular aspect of the practice that is very beneficial because we learn and practice and become more confident.

An awareness develops and we become more aware of how we move and breathe in our daily lives, in our normal lives, not only when we practice. Even though we are not thinking, now I know I'm moving and now I know I'm breathing, the awareness of breath and movement becomes spontaneous.

This can be very useful and interesting. Most of the movements in Yantra Yoga are sequences; designed in a sequence. Each phase of these sequences follow a rhythm. That is also a very peculiar aspect, a very important element that helps us to be very focused and present in what we are doing. All of this is described very precisely in the original text.

The original text is another topic, but in the ancient original text, and then in Chö-

yal Namkhai Norbu's commentary to it, all the sequences are very well structured, following a rhythm. That rhythm we learn in the beginning, we should inhale in two counts and exhale in two counts, or inhale in four counts and exhale in four counts, etc.

Once we realize the practice it becomes natural, and that is when the practice becomes interesting. We can, while we follow the movement, the breathing, and the precise rhythm, relax. We are not thinking so much. We are not thinking and we are relaxed; not by following different meditation techniques.

We don't follow thoughts, the usual distraction of our mind, but we simply follow the rhythm of the movement and the breathing, and through this activity we reach a relaxed condition of our mind. I think that can also be very useful.

For people with limitations.

The practice of Yantra Yoga has some preliminary parts, the main part, and the conclusive part. The original body of Yantra Yoga is not easy; you need to learn, practice and train. And, of course, for some people, some of the positions and movements are not easy for people with physical limitations or as we get older or, for example, pregnant women.

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Yantra Yoga for Pregnancy

We have an adapted version of Yantra Yoga for pregnancy which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu helped us with – to build up a sequence that is suitable for pregnant women. We prepared the sequence and we showed it to him and he gave us some advice.

For example, in the usual practice of Yantra Yoga, one aspect that we develop is a holding of the breath; we not only become familiar with the inhalation and exhalation, but also particular holdings.

Especially for some conditions this is not easy and maybe not advisable. For example, for pregnant women, it's not advisable to hold the breath, but to just inhale and exhale deeply. So we adopted and we created a sequence based in this knowledge. We have a very wonderful video of this called Yantra Yoga for Pregnancy. [https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/product_617/limit-4?start=12&srsId=AfmBOorHQ-eQVPYdwloyggqzCT82YjzKIA3i-cxx-buuQtthtVk-3vjEK#gallery]

These movements and breathing can be very helpful during pregnancy because you need to do some exercise, to move, and the flow of the breath and the movement is very helpful for pregnant women to get a relaxed.

A relaxed condition during pregnancy may sometimes, for some women, not be easy to achieve. Some women are worried or have some fear so the practice of Yantra Yoga can be very helpful to relax and be more confident.

Chair Yantra Yoga

So we have an adapted version for pregnancy and then we have more recently worked on the adaptation of Yantra Yoga on the chair. We have found some interesting adaptations so that people who cannot sit on the floor or cannot do more demanding positions, can nevertheless practice and have a lot of benefits.

We have we tried to adapt the positions so that people can feel the effects of the position, the movement, the breathing in the chair, and that people can experience that well and become more aware of their breathing and also how to guide their breathing.

Children's Yantra Yoga - Kumar Kumari

[see <https://melong.com/kumar-kumari-yantra-yoga-children/>]

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu conceived and wrote down the **Kumar Kumari text** in Tibetan during a personal retreat at Merigar West, the first seat of the Dzogchen Community in Tuscany, Italy, in the 1992. It was then translated into multiple languages.

In **Kumar Kumari**, 16 vital exercises are presented to children, (ages 5 years to 12 years). The different sequences of movements are combined with quick and slow inhalation and exhalation guided by 10 particular sounds that define the quality and type of breathing. Breathing while making these sounds helps to rebalance the energy, as well as fostering wellbeing and optimum physical and emotional growth.

In 2016 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu strongly suggested that the time had come to develop Kumar Kumari yantra yoga more actively, in particular in primary schools and as part of the summer Yoga Vacation. The development and impact of this form of yoga for children in local communities continues to increase.

The Origins and Development of Yantra Yoga

In the beginning in the 1970's and 80's in Naples and Rome, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu taught Yantra Yoga himself. In 1983 Rinpoche went through the root text of this system of Yantra Yoga with his commentary. A group of around 30 or 40 people were there and people were showing the movements and Rinpoche was correcting people.

For many years we only had our notes to help us practice and then some booklets were published. I think around 1984, 85 the translation of the text started, but it took quite a long time to complete. Meanwhile Fabio and I tried to clarify the doubts we had. The text took around ten years to complete.

Formation of New Teachers

In 1994, Rinpoche wrote a letter saying that Fabio Andrico and I would be the two main teachers responsible for the practice of Yantra Yoga and that our primary aim would be to form new teachers and check the old practitioners.

I was very surprised to receive this letter as Rinpoche had never asked or informed us, but in 1995 we decided to do this work. We started to do the teacher trainings; the first teacher training was in America in 1995 for two weeks. Many of our Yantra

Yoga practitioners participated and so we started that process of forming new teachers of Yantra yoga.

Then Rinpoche asked us to do the teacher training ourselves, and after the teacher training the process was to go, one by one, to the place of the various candidates to check how they were leading a class, how they were presenting Yantra Yoga, how they were able to teach, and communicate.

So we started to go around the world to do that. And we did that for many, many years. We were alternating the teacher's training and supervision courses.

Then in 2002 there were the first authorizations of new Yantra Yoga teachers. We presented the candidates to Rinpoche one by one; he asked them questions and they had to present the movements in front of him and the Dzogchen Community and then they received diplomas signed by Rinpoche.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu did this, more or less, every two years. So Fabio and I were doing supervisions and teacher trainings during these two years. After some time, we were unable to present the candidates one by one, there were too many, so we were presenting the candidates as a group and they performed a kind of choreography. 2016 was the last time Rinpoche gave the diplomas himself.

Of course, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave advice to the new teachers that considered many aspects, not only the performative aspect, but also what it means to be a teacher, especially focusing on the attitude of being a teacher, and always pointing out that we should teach in order to improve. We should teach for the benefit of the students, not for our own interest and not for building up our personal ego. Rinpoche stressed that teachers should be humble and listen to the students' needs, etc.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu authorized around 114 teachers from all over the world. The process was very long and time consuming. That's why now we do it in a different way. From 2018, after Chögyal Namkhai Norbu passed away, to 2023, we didn't do any teacher training. We had this five year hiatus and then the circumstances matured and we were able to start again to do teacher trainings. We had the first teacher training last year in where 45 people participated. Out of this 45 people, 25 people then presented for supervision. Then we started to do group supervision. Working with the group has been a very nice experience.

rience for Fabio and me and I think, also for the people.

Going Forward

After Chögyal Namkhai Norbu passed away in 2018 it was not clear how to continue. We need new people, especially young people, to take over the responsibility. We were sure we wanted to continue but we were not sure how. I took this responsibility of training new teachers very seriously and tried to do my best. The first couple of years after Rinpoche passed away were really tough for me, but at a certain point I gained energy and confidence. I found the strength and I strongly felt we needed to continue.

Then about two years ago Yeshe Namkhai (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's son and successor) agreed that we could continue training new teachers. Yeshe told us that Rinpoche authorized us, so it is our responsibility and we could do what we think is best. And that was wonderful.

Then Fabio and I developed the new program and started to work together training new teachers. It is important we work together because people appreciate our different styles and energy; somehow we are complimentary and people appreciate that very much. That was one very important aspect and the other aspect was the group. I think the group of people who participated was fantastic. They are really special and very committed. They are very nice and supportive with each other. It was really a very nice experience.

This sense of the group collaboration in both the teacher training and the supervision course is very important. We appreciated very much the support of some of the teachers of Yantra, like Maxim Leschenko, Jan Dolensky and Marco Baseggio.

The Future

That is important also because we are looking forward to start to train or supervise teachers that will take our place. We hope at some point they will be able to also guide the teachers' trainings, maybe in the beginning with our supervision, but we are also impermanent, and we need younger people to take over. And so we, I think we will start this next year with a second level teacher training. We will try to start this process.

I think we cannot have only two people. It will probably be better to have two people for one continent doing teacher training, maybe there will be six people in total

Yantra Yoga

Tibetan Yoga of Movement Origin, Development and Future

Fabio Andrico

I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in Prata, Italy, in 1977. I arrived in Prata and Rinpoche gave many teachings, and at the end of the retreat I decided that I really wanted to follow Rinpoche's Dzogchen Teachings. So, instead of going to study medicine, I followed the teachings. In the end, I decided to go to Naples to the Oriental University and study with Rinpoche. So I studied Tibetan, Eastern religions and these kind of things.

I started learning Yantra Yoga from Rinpoche at a retreat in Austria in 1977 and then he authorized me to teach. I was already practicing and teaching yoga, so maybe for this reason he gave me permis-

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- two main teachers for each continent and some assistants. It would also be good to have regular meetings of the teachers every one or two years to share experiences and correct tendencies of modifying and changing things.

So future generations will be able to study and practice Yantra Yoga. It's important that Yantra Yoga teachers are connected with the lineage, but also Yantra Yoga can be taught to the general public and be very beneficial.

I think it is fundamental for teachers to have a connection to the transmission and the Dzogchen Community. That is my point of view, not because of a rule, but because I think it's fundamental to be able to convey the knowledge that is somehow intrinsic in the Yantra Yoga practice.

I'm very happy to have new teachers who are young and dedicated and very enthusiastic. I'm very, very happy about that. ©

Laura Evangelisti è stata introdotta allo Yantra Yoga per la prima volta negli anni '80 attraverso gli insegnamenti del suo Maestro Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, è stata autorizzata a insegnare a livello internazionale nel 1994, ha tenuto corsi in vari Paesi per introdurre lo Yantra Yoga a nuovi studenti e ha condotto molti corsi di formazione per insegnanti, insegna Kumar Kumari, una forma di Yantra Yoga pensata specificamente per i bambini, e ha collaborato al libro Yantra Yoga: lo Yoga tibetano del movimento.

Trascritto e modificato da un'intervista realizzata da Mikyö Logan Clark per The Mirror

sion to teach, so I started to teach Yantra Yoga at the place of the Dzogchen Community called Parco Margarita in Naples.

The characteristic of Yantra Yoga which is quite particular is, as far as I know, and I don't really know all the systems of yoga in the world, is that Yantra Yoga is basically designed around the breathing. The aspect of the breathing is very central in the practice of Yantra Yoga, together with the movement and the rhythm.

Once when I was teaching in Berkeley, California, at a very big yoga center, many of the yoga teachers present were so amazed about how the central core of Yantra Yoga is centered around the breath. These yoga teachers were very interested, and I thought if some of them might become practitioners of Yantra Yoga, and might be interested in teaching Yantra Yoga, and that it might put Yantra Yoga 'on the map'.

The benefit of Yantra Yoga derives from the control of the breathing. There are three aspects of Yantra Yoga: body, breath, and mind. The breathing is the theme that connects the body and the mind. There is a specific aspect of the quality of the breath and a specific characteristic of the way of holding. In Yantra Yoga there are five different kinds of holdings.

The entire system of Yantra Yoga is designed around the breathing and holdings. In order to have the space happen in a specific way, there is movement and the movement shapes the body. The shape of body determines, influences, and shapes the breath that leads to the hold that is shaped also by the form of the body.

In Yantra Yoga, the body is used as an assistant to the breath and is not the main aspect, but because the body is shaping the breathing, if the body doesn't have that particular shape, it doesn't move in the particular way, what is supposed to happen won't happen. So that is so important in Yantra Yoga, to understand this aspect of the breathing, the quality of the breathing and how the internal function of the *prana* (energy) is shaped by breath and especially by holding the breath in specific ways. All of this movement is integrated in a sequence of seven phases based on rhythm, which is another very important aspect.

The benefit of Yantra Yoga is for the body, the breathing, and the mind. Because these three aspects are totally interconnected, you cannot separate one from the other. So for the body there will be benefit for muscles, ligaments, and joints. For

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Teacher candidates performing Yantra Yoga.

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the breath, the function of the brain that is related to different aspects of the state of the mind. It's all interconnected, so if you practice Yantra Yoga, it should bring benefit to all of these three aspects, the body, the breath, that is considered the level of the energy (*prana*), and the mind.

Yantra Yoga has a function to harmonize the body and mind because one fundamental principle is to be present and aware of your capacity and circumstances. So if we are present and aware during the practice of Yantra Yoga, by its own nature, it should help us coordinate our energy and then loosens and shapes the breath.

When this happens, the body has a shower of benefits created by the fact that in Yantra Yoga you can get to the point where you are moving the body with your breathing. The breathing and the movement are integrated. And when you stop and you apply one of the five different holdings, that actually is the most important aspect of the practice because it's where the deepest influences are exerted.

When you get to that level of the practice, and you can really apply presence and awareness in the movement, then the practice can be an example of how we try to apply it in our daily life. Through the prac-

tice, coordinating the function of the *prana*, we relax the mind, the mind remains more relaxed, and present and clear. And so it becomes a way to be able to translate this state of the practice into normal movement, the situation of life. So that is the real effect, apart from the fact that you can become healthier in several different areas. I always say, Yantra Yoga is beautiful, fantastic practice, but if you don't practice it, it doesn't work.

Chair Yantra Yoga

After asking the permission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, I adapted the Eight Movements of Yantra Yoga to the chair. The Eight Movements are the third of the three preliminary series of Yantra Yoga. There is a precise way to do the movements to be sure that when we breathe, we breathe in a way that is fluid. We want to move the air inside in a way that, together with the position of the body, is really the closest possible reproduction of how it is supposed to be on the floor, and so that the Yantra Yoga in the chair functions in the closest way possible regarding the aspect of the breathing and the holding. It is important that we shape the body, even on the chair, in a way that mimics what is supposed to happen on the floor in the correct way. So it's not

that we jump on the chair to do whatever is easier to do, because if it was only the body, maybe it would work, but doesn't work in Yantra Yoga, because the body is a servant of the breath. So the main focus should be, when we do these movements, what is happening to the breathing and therefore also a strong focus on alignment.

So adapting Yantra Yoga is not necessarily easy, because most of the people consider adapting by just making the physical movement easier for their limitation. It can be the shape of the body, the joints, whatever, it is important to be able to apply the movement as close to how it is explained in the text. It is very important to consider how the breath is formed when the positions are modified or adapted. That understanding of adaptation should be the work of the teacher until people have their own capacity of learning through experience.

Breath, Fluid Breathing and Respiration

In Yantra Yoga, all of this wouldn't work if it's not correlated to how it's influencing the breath, because in Yantra Yoga the core is the breath. And there is such an interdependence between the position and the breath, how the position influences the breath, but also how the

breath influences the position. The way you breathe, this now is absolutely clear, that the base of Yantra Yoga is called the fluid breathing.

The fluid breathing has precise characteristics. And that should be the base of everything. Then to enhance the function of that, there are the holdings. They should apply, in a specific way, focusing on the internal function of the *prana*, in different parts of the body. So the focus on one kind of holding should be in one part of the body, and the focus and the action of another holding might be different.

These days everyone has understood how important it is to breathe so there is a lot of breath work of every kind. We have a free app that's called Evolve: Body, Breath and Mind, where there are many interesting things about Yantra Yoga.

If you really want to have the benefit of breathing, it should be applied in the correct way. You need to start breathing from below, from the abdomen and you should know how to exhale well. The quality of the breathing, the structure of the breathing, is the building block of what will happen after you have inhaled or exhaled, and inhaled again, what is happening with the holdings, and how you hold. There are different ways of holding, very forceful, very relaxed, so it's different. Every one of these characteristics influences the breath, and therefore influences the mind, the nervous system, and so on. So in Yantra Yoga, all of this is explored, applied, taught, and you can have experience.

I developed **Respira** (breath training) when I saw that sometimes, just as people are not really prepared with the body and need physical warm ups, they also need warm ups for the breath. The breath should start from below, move upward with the inhalation, and should start from the top and move downward with the exhalation.

From lower, where you feel the expansion of the breath, you move to the navel – just a little below the navel, not all the way down. Also the breath moves upward and to the side. So that's the way it should be. It should be fluid, not contracted, not blocked, not be rasping or blocking in the throat. The breath should be totally free. That is the fluid breathing. There is also sometimes peaceful breathing, smooth breathing, calm breathing.

The breathing doesn't work magically. We have to train and to understand; understanding is important. explaining how

it should be done, and then through the exercises of **Respira**, it's easier to have an experience, a concrete experience.

When you have that concrete experience you cannot make up ideas of how it could be or should be – now you know. If you experience it then you know how the structure of the fluid breathing might be. And then it's all a matter of deepening this knowledge, create a more stable memory of that, and that is called training.

And then slowly it will become more natural to breathe in this more natural way, because in reality, that is more natural way of breathing. Then we integrate that in the movement. So understanding and applying are also important and that is why I tell people to firstly observe the movement of the breath.

This kind of breath is actually considered by many different cultures and systems to be fundamental for a good quality of our life. Through this coordination of the breath, we can really be more relaxed, and the mind is also more relaxed and focused because breath is a direct path to the brain and to everything that controls our existence. Some studies define the breath as the remote control of the mind.

So breath is important. The breath and the fluid breathing are important for everyone and are the base of the practice of Yantra Yoga because the core of Yantra Yoga is the breathing leading to the holdings.

Formation of New Teachers and The Future

Laura and I were trying to understand what was the best way to go forward with Yantra Yoga after Rinpoche's passing. Then at a certain point, we understood that it was possible to go on. And so we started to do what were doing before, training people, and if they demonstrated that they understood the basic aspect of Yantra Yoga, we could authorize them to teach.

We had to devise a new structure that would allow us to teach the first level, and that would leave time for people to practice in between. If they really want to be supervised they must be prepared. That's what they have to do. Everybody should know about her or his own condition of their life.

People have to decide if they have the time and if they have the intention – that is up to them, it cannot be up to us. Also if people want to practice with other people to prepare and train, maybe they know some Yantra Yoga teacher who can help them clarify something, that is always possible.

The point is if they want to put in the work or not, it depends on the individual. So we try to give this information, this possibility, and then after a few months, they can supervised for the second level. They come to be supervised, and have to show that they have not necessarily mastered at the highest level, but that there is a solid base and also the capacity to teach and train other people in a way that corresponds to the desire also of Rinpoche, which was that Yantra Yoga would be taught maintaining the purity of the origin of the transmission.

The candidate can have some limitation, but then we should understand if that person, not necessarily perfect, has understood how to adapt this limitation without changing the purpose, the final goal and the characteristic of what they are doing.

So it should be understood, it is not simply to copy something because it doesn't work, to copy something. Photocopies don't work. You have to assimilate the experience. And through their experience, and eventually without going out from are the parameters established in the book and how they were taught, hopefully the candidates understand how they can help other people in the best way.

So, if we understand how Yantra Yoga works and the dynamic between the body, breath, mind, then we can teach well, and then if there are people who need it, we would be able to adapt without changing the core aspect of the Yantra Yoga.

For me what is important is the quality of a teacher. Then if you want to use your own words and your own example, it's normal. But the core should be there, the core should not be changed; not be transformed with ignorance, with easiness or changed because it looks better like this, or in this moment I feel to do it like this. No, there should be a basic knowledge of what it is, and so you can inform people and guide people to do it correctly. ©

Fabio Andrico is an internationally recognized expert on Yantra Yoga. He is one of the closest students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who introduced Yantra Yoga to the West in the early 1970s, and was authorized to teach internationally in 1994. Andrico, who initially studied Hatha Yoga in India and graduated in Oriental studies at University of Naples "L'Orientale," has been learning, practicing, teaching, and writing about Yantra Yoga since the late 1970s.

Transcribed and edited from an interview done by Mikyö Logan Clark for The Mirror

New App – Evolve: Body, Breath, Mind

The Evolve app team

The idea of the Evolve app first arose in 2016 in Tenerife when senior Yantra Yoga instructor Fabio Andrico asked Palzom Films to create a Yantra Yoga promotional video and some additional videos on breathing techniques. In that period, Fabio started to talk about the idea of making an application with exercises for fluid breathing, relaxation, presence and awareness.

Fabio had already tried to develop a simpler app called Breathym based on the Rhythmic breathing of Yantra Yoga as a start for a wider ecosystem of well-being for body, energy and mind.

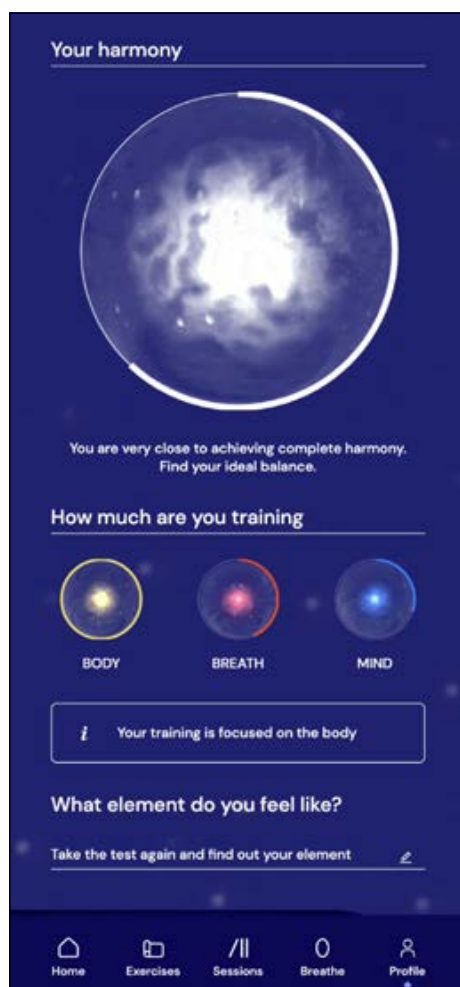
Then the first meetings were held during which the possibility of creating a new app was discussed. However, at the time the project didn't materialize because it needed fundraising and preparation.

In 2020 Fabio had the renewed idea to develop a more organic app, originally for the Atiyoga Foundation. For different reasons the project was presented to the Gakyil of Merigar West, it was accepted and Merigar applied for a grant from the Italian Buddhist Union to fund the app. Fabio mentioned to the Gakyil that he had done some videos with Palzom Films and so the Gakyil asked Palzom Films to be a kind of umbrella for the project, not only doing the videos and taking care of the artistic side, but also finding developers and taking on the role of project managers. Palzom Films was able to find some developers from Italy, Vergani e Gasco, with whom they already worked in the past.

Palzom Films discussed the project with the developers and decided to apply for the grant. They wrote the project together with Merigar and then sent it to the Italian Buddhist Union which finally accepted it. Between 70% to 80% of the funds for the project were from the Italian Buddhist Union and the rest was provided by Merigar.

The app is free and its main purpose is to help people to relax the tensions they accumulate in daily life and help them breathe in a more natural and efficient way. Breathing well is the very foundation of a healthy life, physically and mentally.

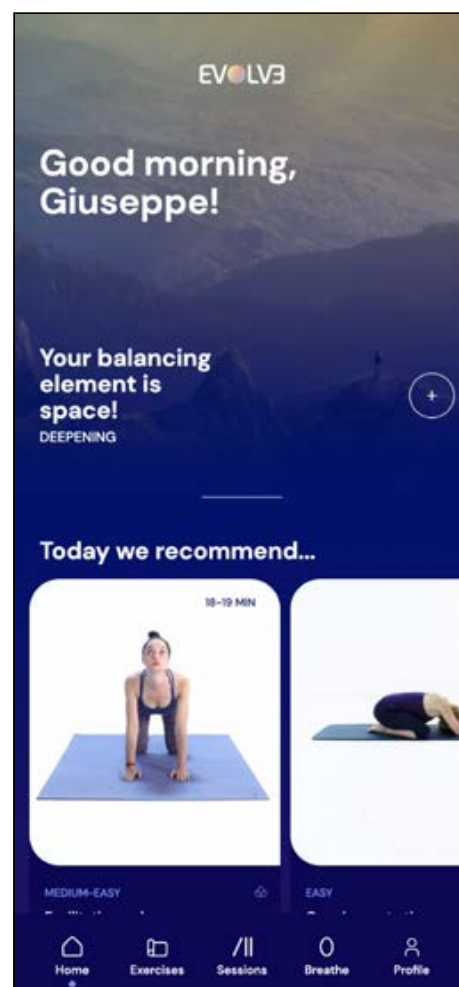
In the app there are exercises to train the complete, fluid breathing as it is ex-



plained in Yantra Yoga. While many apps can guide you to breathe in and out and hold your breath with different rhythms, they don't really explain how to do it in a smooth, harmonious and efficient way. For Fabio it was important to help explain and train people to breathe correctly and eventually hold their breath in a proper way.

The idea of the app was not based on religion but as something useful for everyone and that also has backing from several scientific studies. In the app there are references to some of these articles and you can find those sources in a special section of the app.

The Evolve team consisted of Fabio Andrico, Palzom Films and the developers. There were also six instructors – Fabio, Natasha and Dina Priymak, Fulvio Grosso, Maria Jovanovic and Alessandro Di Maio – who came to Rome to shoot the videos with exercises. Actually, Maria and Alessandro were not instructors at that time but now they have been authorized. Natalie Nitsche was also part of the team. For example, she had to check all the videos to establish the right timing to breathe in and to breathe out, etc. Someone else, not



from the Dzogchen Community, did the voice recordings.

The structure of the app is based on the interdependence of body, energy or breath, and mind. There are very few other apps that have this concept. Evolve is not only about yoga; it is not just a yoga app. It is divided into three main parts.

The body section has simple warm-ups exercises to strengthen, stretch and help make the body more flexible. Then there is the breath part that is Yantra Yoga up to the eight movements to purify the prana, the rhythmic breathing, as well as the Respira method created by Fabio to open up and make breathing more relaxed and efficient. The mind part consists of guided meditations and guided relaxations.

The team also collaborated with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and other Tibetan doctors who suggested some mind exercises to balance the elements. For example, in the beginning, when you start using the app, if you wish to balance your element,



This is the first basic version of the app. If people like it and would like the project to be continued, improved and expanded, with collaboration it could be done. Elements of Vajra Dance, Khaita, more elements of Tibetan medicine, Respira, and some new contributions could be added.

Let us know if and in what way you might be willing to collaborate – office@dzogchen.it.

You can download the free app – Evolve: Body, Breath, Mind – at Google Play and the App Store. ©

you have to answer some questions. In this way you can understand what is, at that time, your dominant element, so that you can do some exercises to balance it.

The whole project was a big group effort because in the app there are about 200 exercises. For each exercise Palzom Films filmed from three points of view so they had to shoot about 600 videos. Then for each of these videos Fabio and the team had to create a description and all the relative instructions. They had to write all the texts for the recordings of guided meditations and all the other different elements of the app.

There is a section specifically dedicated to the practice of rhythmic breathing. There you can set all the different rhythms you want to practice, for example from 4-4-4 to 8-8-8 and so on.

The app works in this way: there are separate, single exercises you can choose and you can structure your own routine. Or there are also already coordinated routines and quick hacks you can choose to practice. They can be only for the body, the breath or the mind. The team has also created many routines combining together exercises from all different sessions.

For example, a routine could be to learn fluid breathing – to train specific movements – with all the elements together.

There are seven or eight kinds of sessions and routines. In some of them there is a beginner's level, in others a medium or a more advanced level.



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Vajra Dance – Being Present in Every Movement

Adriana Dal Borgo

One of the characteristics of the Dzogchen Teaching transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is dynamic meditation methods that simultaneously involve the physical body, voice or energy and mind. In particular, the Vajra Dance and Joyful Khaita Dances coordinate body movement with sound and music through dance. Yantra Yoga has the characteristic of synchronizing postures and movements with breathing.

Achieving a balance between the body, energy and mind is very important for that mental and physical well-being that allows us to live peacefully, fully and satisfactorily. Good balance also leads to a state of deep relaxation, a necessary condition for embarking on a path of awareness and self-knowledge, such as the Dzogchen path.

These are valuable methods precisely because they teach us to bring presence and awareness into our every gesture or activity, into every experience, into the constant flow of thoughts, emotions and sensations.

Today, life is often a race between a thousand and one commitments, with more and more duties and tasks to be completed, and it seems as if there is never enough time. For those who wish to devote themselves to a spiritual path, it is not easy to devote many hours a day to sitting sessions nor to find the conditions for long retreats in solitary places.

"Integrate with dances", Chögyal Namkhai Norbu replied to me when one day I expressed my difficulty in combining formal personal practice with travel for work and daily needs.

Dance as a tool for integration

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: *The Mirror* 149, 2020: *We can also learn to be present with movement. For example, if we go deeper into the Vajra Dance, we integrate with movements. When we are learning the Vajra Dance we are not in the state of contemplation because we are working with our minds thinking about where we should put our feet and which kind of gesture we should do. This is the relative condition. But when we become more familiar with the Dance, by simply being present all our*

movements are integrated in the state of contemplation in that moment

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's way of teaching was always adapted to the time and place in which he lived, showing us how the Teaching can and should be adapted to the time and conditions of a given society.

For example, Rinpoche introduced many teachings without limitation to all interested students and in all parts of the world, even webcasting, in recent years, without any prerequisites or preparation, the so-called preliminary practices.

While respecting all traditions, he never taught in a traditional way. Aware that an entire lifetime would not be enough to learn all aspects of a teaching, he urged his students to understand its essence directly.



Adriana dancing on the Mandala.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was also a great *terton* or discoverer of *terma* (hidden spiritual treasures to be revealed at the appropriate time).

We know that the moment a *terma* is rediscovered has a definite meaning: it means that all the favorable conditions are present for that teaching to be of benefit to beings at that particular time.

The Vajra Dance is a *terma*, arising in the early 1990s from the clarity of the Master and belonging to the broader cycle of Longsal Teachings.

But what does integration with movement mean? What are the benefits of this practice and what makes it particularly valuable in our day and age? To clarify these points, it may be useful to delve into some of the aspects that characterize it: the *mandala*, the use of sound and movement, and the collective practice.

The Mandala

The Vajra Dance takes place on a mandala formed by concentric triangles and circles of five colors: it is a diagram that represents the correlation of two dimensions that we usually perceive as separate: the space inside and outside of us, the individual dimension (microcosm) and the dimension of the universe (macrocosm).

The colors of the mandala in fact represent the essence of the five elements that make up everything that exists. Red represents fire, the internal heat and vitality; green represents air, the wind, and is connected to breathing; yellow represents earth and is the solid dimension and what sustains us, such as our skeleton; white represents water, the sea,

in the body it corresponds to blood and lymph; blue represents space which contains everything and corresponds to the mind, capable of manifesting any thought or image.

In the Dance we talk about the outer mandala, corresponding to planet Earth, and the inner mandala, our body. The steps of the dance touch precise points in the circles or triangles that form the structure of the mandala: these are points that correspond to sacred places on earth and the life force centers (*chakras*) of the body. It is also possible to draw a precise map of the earth's sacred places as well as our *chakras*.

By sacred places we mean places where energy is particularly concentrated: they are also defined as places of power from which energy radiates into the surrounding areas and can have specific qualities or functions, e.g., promote fertility, long life,



Vajra dancers on the Universal Mandala in the Vajra Hall at Khandroling, Buckland, Massachusetts, USA.

can help cure certain diseases or facilitate spiritual progress by enhancing the outcome of a practice.

This is the case at Khandroling, home of the Dzogchen Community in Massachusetts, USA, where the Vajra Dance arose and where practicing it leads to its realization much faster.

The energy or power of a place such as this can have positive as well as negative value. For instance, some parts of the world are repeatedly the scene of conflicts that cause suffering for beings. On the other hand we have all experienced pleasant places that relax us and make us feel good, while others disturb us and we do not want to stay there for long.

While the potential of a place remains constant over time, its quality may change as it is related to circumstances. For example, Uḍḍiyāna, considered a sacred place for Tibetan Buddhism and the birthplace of Padmasambhava, is located in the Swat Valley, present-day Pakistan. Shambala, described as a harmonious place where Buddha's teachings are preserved, is considered to be located in the Himalayan region and, according to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, corresponds to present-day Afghanistan. Today, however, those countries are hardly places of peace and harmony.

Knowledge of sacred places opens up further understanding: knowing the qualities and characteristics of a certain place, to which element it is connected, in which area of the mandala it is located, allows us to interact with it through practice, harmonizing it and receiving empowerment from it at the same time.

When the energy is purified and harmonized, there will be more peace, prosperity and benefit not only for the individual practitioner but also for all sentient beings and countries around the world.

Sound and movement

The dancers move on the mandala following the melody of certain sacred sounds, or mantras, according to codified sequences of steps that weave clockwise (for men) or counterclockwise (for women). Their movements are sometimes symmetrical, sometimes mirrorlike or complementary, representing the interplay of male and female energy.

Mantras are syllables in an ancient language, Sanskrit, and their sound represents precisely the essence of the object. Therefore, mantras resonate in the body and, connecting to primordial sounds, activate and harmonize deep energies.

With practice, the slow, sweeping movements of the Dance become increasingly harmonious and natural, bringing serenity to the mind and joy to the heart.

Rhythm is a central aspect of this training. Staying in time, recognizing and learning to move according to the rhythm of the music and following the melody anchors the mind and helps us to stay focused without chasing thoughts, to be less distracted. It is the basis of training in presence, staying in the here and now instead of following thoughts, memories or anticipating the future.

By dancing and singing in this way, we release the tensions and blockages we have accumulated over time which are consequences of our history, the karmic traces of our past, whether from this life or the previous one. This is why the practice is said to be a great purification.

Moreover, when movement and sound are combined with the principle of time, duration, and rhythm, a harmonious proportion is naturally created that connects the harmony of the universe to that of the individual.

In this way we reconnect with the essence of the mandala and an understanding of ourselves not so much as separate

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individuals but in relation to our environment and the universe.

Collective practice

The aspect of collective practice is another characteristic element that makes the Vajra Dance valuable and effective.

When we sing in unison and move in synchrony on the mandala, it is as if we are no longer separate individuals but form a unity. By tuning in to the same frequency of singing and movement, the potential of the group is amplified and the clarity and presence in each dancer increases due to the effect of resonance.

It also expands our perceptual boundaries, changes the way we perceive space and sound: we no longer distinguish individual voices, while the movements of one dancer become mirrors of the other, in a game of infinite reflections.

We observe in an open and relaxed way all that we perceive and what arises such as emotions, thoughts, images, without following or rejecting or judging anything, without being conditioned by it. This is what is also referred to as contemplation.

In this way there is no longer a separation between inside and outside, between outer and inner mandala, there is no longer even the idea of the mandala: it remains a pure and clear presence that, once the dance is over, we take with us, continuing to dance in our daily lives.

I'd like to share the image of going through life dancing: when we have become

familiar with harmony, through the experience of being present in every movement by dancing on the mandala, we can recall it at any time. It will help us to face daily challenges with greater serenity and help us free ourselves even in difficult moments. It will be easier to release tensions, we will be more relaxed, and life will become lighter and more joyful, just like a dance.

I mentioned the mirror, a symbol often used by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to invite us to look inside ourselves and discover our potential. The other in whom we reflect ourselves during the dance thus becomes an opportunity to look inside, to discover something about ourselves and to evolve.

The idea of evolution, according to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, implies the ability to observe ourselves honestly and without fear, to discover our limitations and to be able to gradually overcome them, to recognize and release tensions and find a relaxed state. We do not have to wait for others to change but for ourselves to change: this will become an example for others and gradually bring about profound change in our society.

When we dance, we do not necessarily have to remember these aspects, such as memorizing sacred places or *chakras* or whatever. The movements and sounds, accompanied by a fresh and relaxed presence, fully fulfill their function. For a Dzogchen practitioner, understanding is truly such when it arises from experience; only then will it be something that is really ours and that we will not forget.

No theoretical explanation can match the learning that comes directly from experience.

I invite you to attend one of the demonstrations given by the practitioners of the Dzogchen Community and learn it during a class led by a qualified teacher. ©

Links to our web page and videos on Youtube:

<https://vajradance.net/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=var4yRBiFnc&t=98s>
<https://youtu.be/vetbM7bTsmk?si=ewXyJVz9BuCDVhvp>

For thirty years Adriana Dal Borgo has been teaching contemplative dance and methods of movement awareness, energy harmonization and mindfulness practice through sound and dance, with classes designed for both experienced dancers and beginners. In 1986 she encountered the Dzogchen (Atiyoga) teaching of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, from whom she learned the Vajra Dance and later the Joyful Khaita Dances. In 1992 she was entrusted by the Master with the task of teaching Vajra Dance, coordinating activities related to this discipline and taking care of the training of new teachers, becoming one of the two main teachers.

A dancer and choreographer, she has also been in charge of coordination and training for Khaita Joyful Dances since 2011. To date, Adriana has conducted many courses and trained teachers all over the world, leading students to discover the joy and depth of dance.

The Final Garden

Alix De Fermor

The Final Garden is going from the northeastern wall of the Gar where the mulching machine is, to the gate, and then going to the Gönpa along the middle road, the garden which is circling the big water tank. I made this garden in three parts.

I wanted a low maintenance garden in this place with not too much pruning and not too many falling leaves. The maintenance of the other gardens is a lot of work because we have a lot of trees to prune all the time since I was asked for immediate shade. There were two challenging factors to make this garden; first because most of the garden is encircling an underground water tank I had to be careful not to choose plants with an invasive root system and second because the garden is mainly a narrow strip of land sloping down, delineated by an upper and lower stone wall, it was difficult to make it interesting.

So that is why I thought about using huge volcanic rocks which would break the slope, and would create terraces producing the effect of a wider space. These volcanic rocks have an interesting shape and texture, and we had to place most of them with a grua (crane).

The middle part of the garden facing the Meriling gate is a desert garden with cactus and many plants from the Canary Islands like the Drago, euphorbia canariensis and agava attenuata, which give a little impression of Teide. This is the lowest maintenance part of the garden, using less water as well.

As you open the Meriling gate to enter the Gar, there is a powerful impact. It is a strong and already beautiful garden. There is also a Traveler palm (ravenala madagascariensis) which will become quite majestic. Then for part going to the Gönpa along the middle road, cactus progressively yield to leafier plants, and some palms. We have a few palms: an Areca, a dwarf date, a Strelitzia Nicolai, a Pandanus and another traveler palm. There are a few small trees with nice blooms that will give some shade. Then there is the Neem tree planted for Leo (Ilaria's son).

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"I am very happy the final garden is completed, because when you complete something you are always happy!"





Dzamling Gar. We have two cordia sebestena with bright orange reddish flowers that Rinpoche called them "Tara trees". We have a tree which was down from Rinpoche's garden in Margarita (erythrina variegata) and Rinpoche loved its' curious red orange flowers. Then we have the guayacan (tree of life) that was everywhere in Pedro Gonzalez. We have also a very interesting bush with beautifully shaped and lustrous leaves and coral flowers (jatropa multifida) – there are five of them.

Apart from this garden is another new garden that is on the right side of the gate when you enter. The area was very ugly and was full of these manholes which contained wires, cables, and water pipes, which is now transformed into a lush garden with shade and a bench.

Then there is a garden near the office door full of the scent of roses and the powerful perfume of a nice creeping plant called (quiscalis indica).

In all these new gardens I introduced a Mexican plant (leucophyllum frutescens) which is called the barometer plant because it blooms with nice pink or lavender flowers when it is going to rain. Of course, since we have the irrigation system, they are practically always blooming.

I am very proud of these final gardens. They are very different from all the rest and very beautiful. And I am so happy that Dzamling Gar gardens are completed.

To donate to the beautiful Dzamling Gar Gardens: https://www.dzamlinggar.net/en/component/jse_donation?view=donate&task=donate.donation&c_id=219 ©

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I am thinking it would be nice to have some benches there to sit near the Gönpa.

The other part going to the northeastern wall, where the mulching machine is also gentler and shadier. It is more spacious with wide terraces. I also introduced some plants here which were in Margarita, in Tashigar North, which survived for fifteen years without much care. I brought some small plants in my hand luggage to plant in



Jatropa multifida.



Cordia Sebestena.

La Casita Amarilla

Since 2022, we have been creating something truly special at Dzamling Gar, a space where children and teens can dive into fun and creative activities, learn by doing, make friends, explore the joy of reading, and embrace presence, awareness, peace, and so much more.

With huge effort and generous support, we have built the structure, painted it with love, and even put up shelves. Thanks to kind donations from parents and members from the community, we now have a small collection of books and games.

Our goal is to open in mid-September with a workshop. Afterward, we will continue promoting activities for the children and teenagers of the Gar and the local community, creating an inclusive space where everyone can grow, share, and experience the richness of a life full of creativity, mindfulness and love.

Through storytelling sessions, theater, mindfulness, arts and crafts workshops, book club and reading challenges, movie



nights, collaborative community projects and parent-child workshops. We aim to offer diverse learning experiences while fostering community, collaboration and connection between the children, teens, nature, and families of Dzamling Gar and the local community.

We're almost there, but we need your help to bring this dream to life! Let's create a meaningful space for future generations together. Join us! ©

Donate now: <http://bit.ly/3J5njWo>
Have questions? Reach out to us at lourdes.velaachaga@dzamlinggar.org

Summer Camps at Merigar West

From July 15 to 17, Merigar was home to a special event attended by more than 100 children, ages 5 to 12, from the local villages of Arcidosso, Santa Fiora, Castel del Piano, Seggiano and Semproniano. During these three days, the young guests had the opportunity to enjoy engaging and stimulating experiences, rich in meaning and significance, which combined fun, creativity and personal growth. The days were included within the activities planned during the "Campi solari," (summer camps) of the municipalities of the Grossetan Amiata managed by the Quadrifoglio Cooperative.

Divided into two groups, the children participated in some inter-mixed activities.

Each group was accompanied by 3 or 4 educators, as well as a specific educator to follow disabled children. In the morning, while one group participated in the environmental education workshop on plants at Merigar, led by Cristina Conticelli and Salvatore Azzolini, the other group did Kumar Kumari Yoga with Letizia Pizzetti and Dina Priymak in the Gönpa, and then switched activities. After the lunch break, again alternating between the two groups, activities resumed with the "Magic Herbarium" workshop at the Yellow House, with Cristina Conticelli and Fiorella Minetti, and the Joyful Khaita Dances in the Gönpa, with Christiane Rhein, Adriana Dal Borgo and the support of other teachers and experts.

The workshops on plants offered children the opportunity to connect with nature in a direct and hands-on way. The children explored the natural environment of Merigar, learning to recognize



Merigar West Elects New Gakyil 2024

The new Gakyil of Merigar West was elected during the general meeting held in Merigar on July 27, 2024.

The current members are:

Fabio Maria Risolo – Blue Gakyil and vice president

Sergio Quaranta – Blue Gakyil

Giuseppe Cammarota – Yellow Gakyil

Maria Luisa Delogu – Red Gakyil

Colin Ellar – Red Gakyil

Anna De Sole and Gabriele Siedlecki, who held the position of Red Gakyil, are leaving after a three-year mandate and are being replaced by Maria Luisa Delogu and Colin Ellar.

Our heartfelt thanks and gratitude go to the two outgoing members for what they have done in these three years, and we wish the new members the best of luck in their work.



many varieties of plants and herbs. During these hikes, they also got to hear legends and stories related to the various plants, learning about Hawthorn, Elderberry, Dog Rose, Aspen, Hazel and many others, thus enriching their experience with a touch of magic and tradition. The creation of a herbarium, "Merigar's Magic Herbarium," allowed the children to catalog the plants they collected, giving them a tangible way to remember this educational and fun experience.

Kumar Kumari Yoga teachers guided the children with enthusiasm and cre-

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Yantra Yoga Supervisions at Merigar West 2024

Vicki Sidley

We had been practicing for months. Many had attended online courses in preparation.

Twenty-one candidates congregated in the Gõnpa on July 1st, 2024, to undergo Yantra Yoga first level supervision for the first time since Rinpoche's passing. We were to be supervised by Fabio and Laura.

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activity, making learning this discipline an enjoyable and engaging experience. The young guests participated with pleasure, expressing their enjoyment of the physical warm-ups, interacting with Kumar Kumari songs, postures and movements, combined with the breathing and showing curiosity and interest in this new practice.

In the afternoon, the children had a great time experiencing Khaita Joyful Dances. Lively music and dances were chosen, simplifying the steps and choreography. The goal was not only for them to enjoy the dances, which was not taken for granted especially for the boys, but also for them to try to follow the rhythm, coordinate their hands and feet, and consider

Many had come for Yeshe Namkhai's teaching that had ended on June 27th. Following this and in the days preceding the supervision an informal Yantra practice group formed among those already in the area, practicing together in the Sala Mandala under the guidance of Marija Bajic Jov, who had recently passed her supervision in Dzamling Gar, and on certain days, Oana Marcu from Romania, and Marco Bassegio from Venice.

Sitting in a circle around the Mandala, the candidates took turns introducing and presenting the various 'modules' of Yantra Yoga. After each presentation applause was given and then the feedback started. The candidate was being assessed by his or

themselves all together as a circle. Some practitioners also participated in the dances, overcoming initial uncertainties. At the end of the sessions, many kept the bracelets with colored ribbons that had been prepared days before for each child, a small trophy of a special day, along with the herbarium and the joy of having had so many new experiences.

With initiatives like this, Merigar continues to promote values of respect, harmony and awareness, contributing to the education of a new generation that is more aware of and connected to the world around them. ©

her peers. We shared our information fully, openly, and freely. It struck me how supportive we were to each other. We were all trying out our skills as teachers, and those who were less prepared gained knowledge, and those more prepared gained experience in teaching. The authorized teachers lending a hand listened patiently and clarified questions and offered valuable advice.

On the first day of the supervision Laura was present and so was Jan Dolensky (Honza), the third level Yantra Teacher from Prague, who had come to be of help. Then the news dropped. Fabio, we learned, was under the weather. How could Laura carry the burden of supervising all the students in ten days? But Laura assured us that Fabio would return as soon as he could.

I looked around the room. We had all been in together in Dzamling Gar in January for the Yantra Level 1 Teacher Training. These familiar faces had come from as far afield as Belarus and California, with the others from England, Spain, France, Switzerland, Croatia, Italy, Romania, and Lithuania. Then, after giving us some general pointers Laura started the supervision with Ante Samodol from Croatia, who was to return home early, and asking for two more volunteers.

The individual circumstances of each candidate came to life as they described so authentically their intention for wanting to teach. As each performed, Laura scrutinized their movements and their breathing, correcting where necessary, and conferring on individual matters with Jan.



On the third day, to our delight, Fabio arrived, looking none the worse for wear. He proceeded to teach with gusto and humor. We continued for that day but on the fourth day the group was split into two groups; the Italian speaking group went with Laura to the Sala Mandala, while the non-Italian speaking group stayed with Fabio in the Gõnpa. Even though only four of the ten in this group are native English speakers, now everyone would have to present in English, except for Tatiana Rusetskaya from Belarus, who fortunately had Inna Ossinkina, a Russian speaker, there to translate. Explaining Yantra Yoga is not easy (especially while doing it) and I applaud those who had to overcome the additional hurdle of a language not their own.

On the fifth day two more candidates, Angelica Siedlecki and Martina Bigazzi, previously supervised, joined the Italian group - now bringing the candidate total to twenty-three. We were also joined in the Gõnpa by Fulvio Grosso from Rome who came to observe and share his knowledge.

Every day we were treated to a fine, colorful, mostly vegetarian-and-gluten-free

luncheon up at the Yellow House by Chef Gianni, who greeted his daily applause with broad smiles and open arms exclaiming "Grazie Ragazzi!"

On the seventh day, during the long lunch break until three-o'clock, I learned that a group of candidates were meeting on the outside Mandala to dance The Song of the Vajra. On the walk down to the mandala, Zoe Lüthi from Switzerland gathered yellow flowers on the hillside to make an infusion for Fabio. Gina Bryne from Lithuania put her phone in the middle of the Mandala, and we danced, enjoying the beauty and softness of the movements in those spectacular surroundings. Walking back, someone commented that you would be unlikely to find a group of Vajra dancers who would practice Yantra Yoga during their lunch break.

One evening, Alberto Pellezzoni, a candidate, and a physicist, gave a talk on the fluctuations in the magnetic field of the sun, and its effects on our planet earth.

We were here to learn as much as we could about Yantra, treasuring every little detail of the teaching, advice, corrections

and even the admonishments from our beloved teachers. On the last three days the two groups were reunited in the Gõnpa, and the supervision continued. Everyone was seen and properly assessed. The support and warmth that I had first experienced in the practice group had infected the larger group and was present throughout the whole supervision. I have attended many yoga retreats, and I can say that none quite had this group feeling of sweetness, smiles, and sharing.

At the end of the tenth day, the diplomas were awarded one by one. The happiness was palpable. To top it off, candidate Alessandro Di Maio treated us to a performance in the Gõnpa of what might be described as a soundscape, the interweaving of various abstract, experimental, transcendent sounds - a delicious auditory experience.

Twenty-three candidates are now newly authorized as Yantra 1st Level Yoga teachers. ©

First Level Vajra Dance Teacher Training at Merigar

The second part of the First Level Vajra Dance Teacher Training, led by Adriana Dal Borgo, was held at Merigar from September 5 to 8, 2024, with support from other Vajra Dance teachers, Christiane, Anya, Luda, Yana, Tania and Anya. This part of the course was a continuation of the first part which was held at Dzamling Gar in Tenerife in April this year. ©



Refreshing the Decorations of the Merigar Gönpa

Migmar Tsering

This summer we worked on renewing the decorations of the outer ring ceiling inside the Gönpa. This extension to the building was done 15 years ago but at the time this outer ring only had a coat of color and there wasn't the possibility to finish the decorations. Then over the years there were also problems because rainwater seeped in from the roof. Since that time the roof has been repaired and this summer we were finally able to go ahead with this work of decoration.



Our first work of restoration was painting the six syllables – A' A HA SHA SA MA – outside the main entrance to the Gönpa, complete with delicate flower designs. Then we went ahead with this outer ring of the ceiling inside the building. Being inside the Gönpa, which is full of images, letters and script, we needed to make the outer ring lighter and more airy.

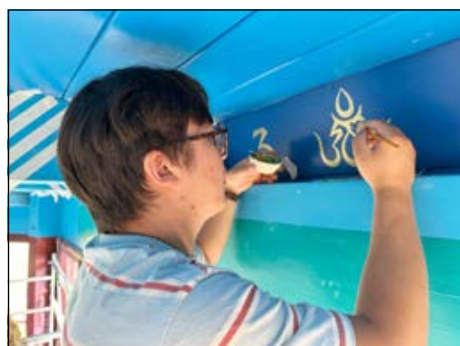
First of all we treated all the wood and gave it a fresh coat of paint and then added the designs. The original decoration of the ceiling of this outer ring simply consisted of golden Longsal letters on a sky blue background. The base color indicated by Rinpoche is sky blue to give the idea of the openness of space. In the new decoration we again depicted the golden Longsal letters on a sky blue background

but in two different ways: separated into three parts and as a complete symbol. In the vertical recesses we decided to use the Tibetan letters OM A HUM in three colors and the golden Longsal symbol in alternation. In the roof area we placed the Longsal symbol, divided into three parts, namely the central part and the two lateral parts, in a whitish color, on a sky blue background. Then the external mantra – the Ushnishavijaya Dharani mantra – was refreshed and the flower designs were improved in respect to the former ones. The base color on the transversal beams was painted a beautiful blue with geometric designs interspaced with graceful white flowers.

In the new decorations there is a great harmony of color and an abundance of floral designs that bring tranquility and beauty to the Gönpa.

Some people have asked me if the symbol of the Longsal can be considered as a letter. The symbol of the Longsal is like a key, and to open a *terma* treasure, one needs a key. In Tibetan this key is called *da yig* (*brda yig*), which means a written symbol or grapheme so it is not an actual letter. There are a lot of *da yig* and they say that some masters can read and pronounce them.

Last year we used some colors on the exterior decorations that were very strong acrylic enamel, and this year we found that the colors we used last year were still as bright as when they were newly painted. Because of their durability we decided to



use this type of paint for the internal decorations and expect that the designs should last 20 or 30 years. This year we managed to finish five sides of this octagonal ceiling; there are three left to do.

This year we had 15 or 16 young people to help with the painting, all of them working in karma yoga. Five of them were here from the beginning to the end of the work while others came to work for a week or two, whenever they had time. Many of them were children or grandchildren of practitioners and most were studying the arts at either high school or university. It was also an international team representing the Dzogchen Community from around the world from countries such as Romania, Russia, Costa Rica and different European countries. We were very fortunate because they really worked from the heart. And this is a good hope for the future, for the continuity and the legacy of the Community.

There were also several Chinese and Tibetan students from the academy of artistic studies in Rome and part of the team of the Dynamic Space of the Elements who

also came to work. During the holidays, they often spend their time here working on artistic projects for Merigar and the Dzogchen Community.

During the work we noticed that some of the gold decorations that were done last year on the exterior of the Gönpa have become discoloured. The air around Mer-



igar contains a lot of sulphur and this has darkened some of the gold leaf decorations. Fortunately we have found a golden yellow paint that is used in China for the roofs of the temples which does not darken over time. We used this paint on the upper part of the Great Stupa when we redecorated it

this year and will be using it to retouch the decorations in gold outside the Gönpa.

I feel that it is our duty to maintain and care for this Gönpa because in order to maintain the teaching, it is important to maintain the place of the teaching. This year we have worked on these five sections of the ceiling of the outer ring of the Gönpa. Next year we will finish the remaining three and start to restore some of the paintings of the masters within the Gönpa which were done 30 years ago.

As a practitioner and as a student of Rinpoche's I consider us all responsible for the Community and I ask you all to help us to maintain this Gönpa at Merigar in any way that you can including by donation. We are not asking people to come and actually do the work at the Gönpa because it takes time and knowledge of painting techniques. At the moment, the situation is good as we have people with the time and the skills to go ahead with this work. However, if people can donate to this project it will help us to conclude this work more quickly. Even though their work is in karma yoga, our karma yogis have to have accommodation, transport and three meals a day to survive. Please help us to cover these costs. This is my heartfelt wish. ©

<https://www.merigar.it/en/members/our-projects/restoration-and-maintenance-of-gonpa-paintings/>

Merigar East

Dear All, Near and Far,
Ever wondered what it feels like when Merigar East comes alive?

Let us take you on a little journey through our recent adventures.

We gathered at Merigar East to follow online The Dzogchen Teachings with Yeshe Namkhai from June 20–27, with participants from Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova. At the very same time, we prepped the Gönpa for the Thangka Exhibition. And on June 30, Elias Capriles took the stage, both online and onsite, unraveling the meanings behind this sacred art. Missed it? Don't worry, here's your chance to catch up [link: <https://studio.youtube.com/video/MhVDfmmAws/edit>].

Not to be outdone, "Zernga: The Five Principal Points" retreat with Elias Capriles followed. This retreat, available both online and onsite, allowed participants from all over to connect and deepen their practice, sharing insights and experiences.

Our journey continued with Zoli Cser, who led the retreat on the Guruyoga of the White A and Vajra Dance. We danced on the mandala inside the Gönpa and let the evening sunsets cradle our movements on the outdoor mandala. Ever felt the sun's last rays enhance your state of contemplation? It's something you have to feel to believe!

On July 21, in Bucharest, Oliver Leick also presented "The Way to Understand Nature and Oneself: A Brief Insight into Eastern and Western Philosophy." If you missed it, you can watch the presentation here: [YouTube link: https://youtu.be/hi87tpH__rgl].

Then, from July 23 to August 4, Gabriella Schneider, Oliver Leick, and Martina Krejčová led us through a two-week retreat that was nothing short of magical. Together, we explored and refined key secondary practices: Guru Yoga of the White A, Ganapuja, Thun, Green Tara, and even more. And, of course, what's a retreat without joyful Khaita dances and the Dance of the 12 A? These retreat days were filled with insights, joy, community bonding, and meaningful reflection, whether around the fire pit, on the beach, or in the Multifun House. A big heartfelt thanks to Gabriella, Oliver, and Martina for filling Merigar East with so much Joy, Love, and Inspiration!

August brought even more excitement with Fabio Andrico's much-awaited retreat "The Secret Rushen practice and Yantra Yoga Tsalung." Yes, it was challenging.

But every moment was worth it! Those who attended can attest to the intensity of these sessions. Fabio's precise guidance had us pushing boundaries we didn't even know existed. We discovered the nuances of these profound practices and were inspired to push (and relax) our limits.

By now, you might be wondering, "How do they keep going with such an intense lineup?" Well, we ask ourselves the same thing sometimes! But truth be told, it's the spirit of everyone here – instructors, participants, and visitors – that keeps Merigar East vibrant and alive.

A special thanks to all our instructors – your efforts to bring greater understanding of Rinpoche's teachings to all of us make a meaningful impact!

This summer, we were delighted to welcome practitioners from Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Spain, Italy, Argentina, Czech Republic, USA, and.. did I miss anyone? It just goes to show that reaching the seemingly unreachable Merigar East is not so hard after all!

We rounded off our summer with a Lungta Workshop, and what a finale it was! We had some of the most incredible volunteers join us, making every effort possible. And we know you're curious, so go ahead and take a look at some of the photos we've shared from these events – they're just a glimpse into the fun we've had. For more, don't forget to visit our social media pages or subscribe to our newsletter!

Now, here's the part where we say – we'd love for you to be part of this journey too! Whether you're interested in joining us as a Gakyil member, assistant, project manager, or have any ideas, suggestions, or just want to chat, drop us a line at blue.me@dzogchen.ro.

We're always excited to hear from you!

With warm thoughts and love from Merigar East to each of you!



Elias Capriles.



Zoli Cser.



Oliver Leick.



Summer Season at Kunsangar South, Crimea

Elena Sycheva

Usually the summer season at Kunsangar South begins in May, when the warm weather comes, the first flowers start to bloom and the wonderful time of retreats begins. This May was no exception, and from the end of April to mid-May, three retreats on learning Vajra dances with instructor Ulyana Sokolova were held at the Gar – a retreat on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, an open retreat on the Dance for the Benefit of All Sentient Beings, and at the end of the “dance marathon” Kunsangar South joined a corrective retreat with Prima Mai on the dance of Khalongdorjeikar.

Between retreats, life at the Gar also flows quite actively – there are collective practices, joint clean-up days and evening gatherings around the fire!

June at Kunsangar South was spent preparing for the upcoming summer retreats: the Gar's staff and karma yogis mowed the grass, cleaned the area and set up a new set of showers and toilets at the campsite!

And of course, the most important event of June was the retreat with Yeshi Namkhai. Every day in the Gönpa there were webcasts of the Teachings from Merigar, Vajra Dance practices, and also a weekend retreat on Yantra Yoga with Alexey Shadrov.

In July the long-awaited 4th group pranayama retreat with Victor Krachkovsky took place at the Gar. During the retreat practitioners were able to deepen their knowledge related to the elements, prana control, breathing, contemplation and, of course, Yantra Yoga.

August was very vibrant at Kunsangar South. At the beginning of the month there were two retreats – a corrective retreat on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra and a retreat on the Dance of the Three Vajras with Ulyana Sokolova – and as always the mandala was full!

On 5th August we organized a lunch in memory of Santi Maha Sangha instructor and Ka-Ter translator Elio Guarisco, who visited Kunsangar South twice and did very important and essential retreats here. On the day of Elio's 70th birthday, on the initiative of practitioners, in particular Elena Shadrova, we prepared a lunch in Italian



style with pasta according to Elio's own recipe. And all those who were at the Gar gathered around one table to recall, share and honor the memory of dear Elio in a very heartfelt and warm atmosphere!

Also in August there was a sad event – everyone's favorite cat, Rysya, who had lived at the Gar for 13 years, passed away. Rysya was the first animal that came to the Gar, and as the legend goes, she appeared right after the inauguration of the Gönpa and lay down in the center of the hall, on the place where the original marker was made. Since then, Rysya has been a true guardian and favorite pet of Kunsangar South. We will miss you very much!

Already on the 10th of August the Gar hosted the next retreat on Santi Maha Sangha with instructor Alexander Gomonov and immediately after it there was another joint retreat of Alexander Gomonov and Yantra Yoga instructor Kirill Mironov. During the retreat there were sessions at the sea and in the mountains, where the participants could do the practices of Longde, integration with elements and contemplation.

After starting the month with an Italian-style lunch, it was impossible to stop and so all month long there were pizza parties at the Gar! We also managed to eat and have a joint dinner with ‘gifts’ from our own vegetable garden – this year we had a good harvest of vegetables and even had our own melons!

With the beginning of September ‘Indian summer’ came to the Gar, and with it a series of retreats on Vajra Dance. This year,

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under the guidance of Adriana Dal Borgo, very important supervisions, teacher trainings and in-depth retreats for future instructors and those wishing to study the dances in depth are taking place. At the Gönpa of Kunsangar South, all those interested in the practice of Vajra Dance, together with instructor Ulyana Sokolova, joined the webcasts and were able to further deepen their knowledge!

In between the dance retreats there was also a retreat with Alexander Gomonov on the practices of Rushen and Semdzin. And the end of the season will conclude with a course on making Namkha with Sergey Antonyan.

In general, despite all the circumstances, the summer season and the year itself was very active at the Gar – there were in-person and online retreats, joint practices of Vajra Dance, Santi Maha Sangha and Khaita Joyful Dances, Ganapujas, as well as the daily online practices of Ozer Chenma continuously conducted by Yuri Fomichev for more than two years.

For the second year Kunsangar South continues its co-operation with the School of Tibetan Medicine of the Shang Shung Institute. Vladimir Bakshi, the School's graduate, regularly conducts appointments for anyone who wishes to come, and masseurs offer sessions of ku-nye massage.

The Gar is constantly undergoing maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

Most importantly, Kunsangar South continues to be a place of practice and co-operation for all students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Yeshe Namkhai!

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the instructors, karma yogis and practitioners who have come during this challenging time to support the Gar with their energy! We are grateful to our precious Gurus for the opportunity to meet, practice and collaborate in the united space of Kunsangar South!

We always look forward to seeing you at Kunsangar South! ©



Dance for the Benefit of All Sentient Beings with Ulyana Sokolova.



Dance of the Song of the Vajra with Ulyana Sokolova.



Joint retreat with Alexander Gomonov and Kirill Mironov.



Yantra Yoga retreat with Viktor Krachkovskiy.

Summer Update from Kunsangar North

Dear and beloved friends, joyful greetings from Kunsangar North!

This autumn nature is just beginning to change its colors, and our majestic pine trees still stand proudly under the clear blue sky. Our summer has been dry and warm, which was perfect for practices and retreats.

The highlight of this year was the retreat with Yeshe in June, which attracted almost one hundred people! It was a truly inspiring time during which we were all able to deepen our understanding of the teachings and spend unforgettable days together in practice. This retreat was a powerful impetus for further spiritual development for all participants.

In July, we organized the 'Virtuous Days of Art', which combined creative energy and spiritual practices. This unique event inspired us all to touch deep teachings through art, filling our hearts with light and compassion.

One of the highlights of July was a meeting with Nikolai Dudko at the masterclass 'Drawing Avalokiteshvara – the universal symbol of compassion'. Participants were able to express their inner understanding of compassion and wisdom through creativity and designing unique images.

Also during the summer, a gathering of yantra yoga instructors took place where they shared their experiences and deepened their knowledge of the practice. This event allowed for a space to support and inspire each other.

The warm summer allowed the Vajra Dance to be held almost continuously, either in the gönpa or in the tent. Dance activity was at an all-time high, and we rejoiced every day. Even round-the-clock marathons were organized, allowing all participants to delve deeper into the practice, regardless of the time of day.

During the summer, a children's mandala for the Vajra Dance was printed, which was an important step in introducing the younger participants to the practice. Now children, too, will be able to actively participate in the Vajra Dance, learning the harmony and depth of this teaching.



In July we also held a Tsetar, a ritual of saving the lives of animals, in which we released fish into the Klyazma River.

And finally, we are happy to announce that we have drastically improved the internet and cellular connection at the Gar. Now you will be able to stay in touch with the world without losing focus on your practice.

Kunsangar North continues to bring harmony to our world, supporting all Rinpoche's students and guests in their spiritual quest.

With love and warmth,
Kunsangar North

©

Tsegyalgar East Update

Tsegyalgar East hosted three special and well attended events this summer and early autumn on the magnificent land of Khandroling, Land of the Dakinis. The events of the Summer Sangha Retreat and Dance, Dance Dance are annual events.

The Summer Sangha Retreat included a daily webcast of Teaching on Shitro with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, explanation and practice of Shitro with Dr Phuntsog Wangmo, Santi Maha Sangha teaching and practice with Dr. Michael Katz, Vajra Dance with Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause, Complete Breathing and Kumbhaka with Paula Barry and Yantra Yoga on the floor and in the chair with newly authorized Vicki Sidley and Naomi Zeitz.

Dance, Dance, Dance included instruction and practice of the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, the Vajra Dance that Liberates Beings, the Dance of the Three Vajras and the Khalong Dorjekhar. The three



Dance, Dance, Dance Retreat with Kyu Reiko, Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause at Khandroling from August 3-18, 2024.

Photo by Paula Barry

teachers were Kyu Reiko, Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause.

The third event was a special retreat for the Japanese Vajra Dance students unable to participate in August, but was also open

to everyone. This was taught by Kyu Reiko, Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause and included the Song of the Vajra Dance and the Khalong Dorjekhar. ©

The 9th Annual Summer Sangha Retreat (SSR)

Vajra Hall, Khandroling,
Buckland, Massachusetts, USA

July 17 thru July 24th, 2024

What a wonderful and inspiring retreat. The powerful energy for this retreat was clearly foreshadowed by two spectacular thunderstorms with wind and driving rain during the first two days of events. Loud thunder and lightening dramatically punctuated the kickoff Guru Rinpoche Ganapuja on Tuesday, followed by a similar spectacular backdrop for the first teaching session of the Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings. Wow! I thought that I had come for the Dharma but had not expected so much drama! The rest of the SSR did not disappoint.

The energy of all the events and practices was dynamic and extraordinary. It felt great to see so many long-time practitioners

with their wealth and depth of wisdom and practice experience. The same for meeting so many relatively new practitioners with sincere interest and a refreshing desire to learn. It felt almost impossible to attend all the events that were on the schedule each day because there were so many great opportunities.

It felt best to try to work with circumstances and select those things that one had enough time and energy to pursue. I felt very fortunate to be able to sample a wide variety of everything including the daily replays of Rinpoche's 2016 Shitro Retreat, Yantra Yoga and breathing sessions with Paula Barry, Vicki Sidley (newly authorized) and Naomi Zeitz, special teachings presented by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo and Michael Katz, Vajra Dance that Benefits Beings teachings by Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause.

Especially moving and energizing were the memorial service for Robert Derr, the Auction, the BBQ and of course the Ganapujas that included the Dance of the Song of Vajra! Altogether it was a fantastic and delightful retreat that deeply benefited not only all who attended but all sentient beings! A deep bow of gratitude to Rinpoche and to the vast team of practitioners at



Tsegyalgar East who did so much to plan and implement this wonderful retreat. May it be auspicious!

Best wishes – Doug Doerr, Dondrubling, Dzogchen Community West Coast ©

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Leaving Suffering Behind

Txomin Pascual

16/05/24

I met Rinpoche thanks to a therapist that provided me with therapy in Bajar. Spain. In that period, I was making and selling handicrafts, and I did not really have a stable home. My life plan in short term was thrilling. First, I was going to receive 16 therapies in two weeks. After that, the plan was to go from Tenerife to La Palma in a sailboat of a friend that I had just met in La Graciosa. My elder sister was spending the winter there and I wanted to stay a few days with her. And then, I intended to fly to India, buy a motorbike, and travel with another friend who I would meet there. Life was young, but after connecting with Rinpoche, I decided to change that plan for staying in Tenerife North, in Meriling, just studying and practicing.

My life had not been funny in the last years. With no exceptional external reason to suffer, I was in pain. When I was 17 years old I had my first anxiety attack. It was in my mother's hometown festivals. I was having dinner with friends, getting drunk, smoking joints... There was no rational reason to have an anxiety attack. I did not even know what an anxiety attack was, and it took me a few months to find it out, months during which I believed I was the only person in the world to suffer from it. I thought I was just going crazy. This single event changed my life forever, literally overnight. I became insecure, easily scared, I was always about to have another crisis, I lost my self-esteem. It was a cruel and unexpected step from childhood to adulthood.

After a few years of despair, I started to overcome myself, mainly with the help of a notebook, my first real therapy. I made some travels, I moved to Ireland for some months, I went to Argentina for a toxic relationship, I came back to Pamplona, and again I started to travel. From the outside, I looked more or less like a normal person, but inside I still was in pain.



It was in La Graciosa that I met this girl. We liked each other from the beginning, we talked about our lives. She had some hard experiences when she was a child, and there was this therapist in Tenerife that had made a difference and changed her life. She had developed her own therapy, she did not even touch her patients, I wanted to try it myself as well!

The therapies were just crazy. I felt like I was having a body, speech and mind surgery, like taken out from a chronic cloud of pain and confusion. It was like leaving behind a 20kgs backpack that I had always carried with myself. I understood, among many other things, that wellbeing, clarity and compassion, were different aspects of the same thing. I was a new person, brand new personality, more happy, more compassionate. There is when she told me that I needed to do some work for myself. I asked for recommendation and her answer was Rinpoche. She literally said, "If you are going to choose a Master, you just choose the best". I was lucky enough and that very weekend there was an online retreat. It was a first sight love, what I had always been looking for without even knowing.

But inside every big story there are always several small stories. You do not go from Christian to Buddhist from one day to another. There is a transition. First you deny your cultural heritage and become atheist to embrace science. Then, in your way to self-knowledge, in your search for truth, you realize that there are things that science can not explain. You meet

people, you read books. My first spiritual book was Krishnamurti's "The First and Last Freedom".

In Argentina I met a guy that recommended that I practice yoga. I studied Hatha Yoga for a few months to realize that it was kind of my way and that I wanted more. Far from what I would ever expected, I was a spiritual person. And, along with my personal transformation, some parts of me started to wake up, and not always for good. I found, for instance, that there are energies all around, dark energies that condition our lives, and make us sick. And I thought, as a matter of logic, "If there are dark energies, then there must be luminous energies. But, where are they?" I understood it when I was studying the Thun book, tears running over my cheeks. Here they are!

It was all that I had ever wanted. A way of light, a way of compassion, a way of love, real love.

I wish I could say that I connected with teaching for that reason though, that I met Rinpoche because I was looking for truth, because I was trying to find myself, because I wanted to be a better person. However, that view, somewhat opportunistic, is only partially true. The real reason why I met Rinpoche is because I wanted to leave suffering behind. ©

The Dzog Chen Community like all groups of people, counts among its members that rare & often strange breed, its artists. Some are lauded & some are marginalized, this is natural for all groups of people. In the case of the Master, NNR, all actions are revered as manifestations of his enlightened mind also all manifestations, small paper birds for children, protection necklaces, architectural designs, & rightfully so, of course.



Choegyal
Namkhai Norbu

is the titulary head of the Drukpa Kargyus, known for its artistic accomplishment & revered for the greatness of its artists in Tibet. A saying of the Drukpas is *half of the Kargyus are Drukpas, half of the Drukpas are mad men & half of the mad men are the greatest painters, poets & dancers in Tibet.*

Khamtrul Rinpoche, the 3rd.,
is the author of the first book ever published, at the request of master,
by the nascent Shang Shung editions '*The Refined Gold of the Teaching of
The Method of Seeing, Meditation & Comportant According to the Maha-Mudra.*

Khamtrul Rinpoche the 8th
was reknown for his great abilities as a painter
(the teacher of Western Thangka master Robert Beer)
indeed Drugu Choegyal Rinpoche, who painted the series of 12 primordial Buddhas
in the gönpa at Merigar, is a Drukpa. He lived in the community of Khamtrul
Rinpoche the 8th & is the only living Tibetan artist to
have thoroughly transformed the canon of tibetan painting,
at the same time perfectly mastering the mystery of the *tigse*,
the geometric principles whereby the representation of
the Buddha can transmit the state of the Buddha.

In
modern society, the situation is a little different.
We have divorced ourselves fr. specific aesthetic cannons which
link (at least formally) artistic mastery to enlightened mind, both for the
proponent of this art but also for its appreciator or, in the Sanskrit the *rasika*.
The system of *RASA*, dating fr. the 'revealed or *apurushya*' (unathored) Indian text, the
*Bharata Natya Shastra**, was introduced into Tibet via Dandins' *Karvadarsha* (7th century AD)
& represent a method whereby the artist uses his perceptual tools both for his or
her own spiritual development, ie. his or her non dual state & that of
the listener, in the case of music, or reader, in the case of poetry,
(tho at that time, composition without melodic accompaniment
was unheard of indeed until the invention
of the printing press was non existent).

Western Society in general encourages critical thinking
& analytic approach to its own art tradition. Personally, I see
no reason why, works of art, produced, within the community, can
not be viewed with critical apprehension & fr. a personal, not collective
perspective. I clearly remember Namkhai Norbu speaking to us, in the teachings
abt. the dangers of uniformity & his wish that his community (or sangha) encourage,
instead, diversity. Such diversity of course can apply to all aspects
of its creative development, ie. a critical approach to anothers
art work does not imply a criticism of the *sandana*
or spiritual milieu or training
which is the core of the activity.
& the reason for which each of us is
at all present in the mandala
of the great *terton* master.

For the practitioner, & this is especially true
of the *siddha* tradition to which Tsultrim Allione, recently
referred here in Merigar, the activity of daily life (for the artist, his
art) is seen as the foundation of practice, both its base & fruit so to speak.

I hope personally, that, the Dzog Chen community will
therefore not suppress its own critical elements, but encourage,
freedom of expression, within our (I hope) understanding that
such activity is also dream like, a production of mind &
in the sincere hope that all of our activity will
lead us to a state beyond concept,

As Ma Chig** says, suppression of emotion will
lead to its illness, in her explanation of the 2nd demon
(considering that internal phenomena are real), & thus w. our views,
am I less a practitioner because I don't want a parking lot at
Merigar, less a vajra sister if I think this or that
film, painting, photograph or musical composition
is not to my liking, is X or Y less a vajra brother
if he doesn't like my poetry,
I hope NOT.

As Enrico Dell'Angelo once insisted, as I hesitated
getting to a reading at all – *transmission develops according
to the potential of the individual*. I was traveling fr. a retreat
in So. e. France to Rome
by auto stop.

If one has a critical perspective shld.
it be suppressed, or can it be seen as ornament, as we, each
according, indeed, to his or her potential, progress
toward the realization of the teachings
We have, through miracle

A LA LA HO

received.

LLL Venerios, Castel del Piano, Gr.

* see RASA, by Rene Daumal transl. LLL, ed. Shivanstan. Woodstock, NY
or in its original French, Bharata, Les Pouvoirs de la Parole, & selected manuscripts,
Paris, Editions Gallimard.

** Ma Chig Labdron, the great founder of the Chod lineage, ca. 11th century AD

LLL – poet & translator, musician,
2x recipient of the Philip Whalen
Memorial Award (Poets in
Need) & the Acker award

in NYC, as well as Premio
Poesia, in the poetry festival, in
Salaola, near Merigar. W.

Greatful thanks to Moira Sanita
& John Shane for help in rescuing this fr. her
archive

& to Raymond Foye, Top photography &
Yuuka Hafuna
lower one.

In a tumultuous period – 1972,
in India Louise met Khamtrul Rin-
poche, the 8th, she met NNR
in London in 1978, his 1st
teaching outside of Italy.





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