

# THE MIRROR

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The Three Statements  
of Garab Dorje

The Cuckoo of Rigpa

Dealing with Difficult External  
Circumstances

Passages Nina Robinson  
True Value



INTERNATIONAL  
DZOGCHEN  
COMMUNITY

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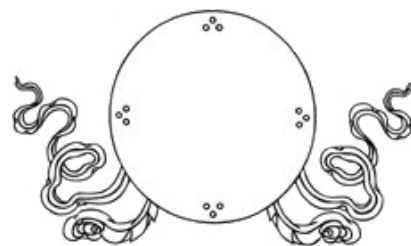
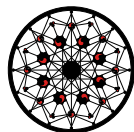
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Front cover: A little rose bush was blooming in the snow in front of the Yellow House at Merigar on December 8 this year. It brought to mind the flowering of a rosehip bush in front of the house where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was born on a cold December day in Gheug, East Tibet. This was mentioned in the memoirs of Rinpoche's material uncle, Togden Urgyen, the yogi who realized the rainbow body, and the bush is still considered a reliquary by the inhabitants of Gheug. Photo by Lilly Kollnberger.

Back cover: a series of sogshin or tree of life that will be placed inside the 108 stupas of the Changchub Dorje Stupa Project. They represent the life energy of the stupa. The circular objects representing the lotus, a symbol of purity, will be placed at the base of the sogshin.



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

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

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We would like to thank those of you who have already renewed their **membership for 2024**, and encourage you to renew it, if you have not done so yet. We would also like to invite you to retroactively make payments for any **previous membership years** you may have missed – specifically 2021, 2022, and 2023 – as needed.

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

Best wishes,  
The International Gakyil

## RINPOCHE RETREAT REPLAY December 2024 Selection

### Longsal Tregchöd - Margarita, Tashigar North 2005

Dear Members of the Dzogchen Community,

We are pleased to announce the December 2024 retreat selection for the Rinpoche Retreat replay. For the upcoming months, we will be streaming Rinpoche's Tregchöd teaching which took place in Margarita, Tashigar North 2005 and is currently presented during the Tregchöd retreat in Tsegylgar West, from the 9th to the 22nd of December 2024.

*"We are something like a bound object with our three existences of body, speech and mind, bound up with our tensions and filled with confusion. With this however, we relax into our nature and this is what we call Tregchöd. But to relax does not mean to let go without any presence. Relax means the inner state of presence."*



*Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, An Oral Commentary on Longchenpa's Precious Ship, page 110.*

Link: <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=rinpoche-retreat-replay>

The following practice materials are related to the Tregchöd retreat replay and can be found at the various SSP Bookstores.

**The Luminous Clarity of the Universe -A Clear Exposition of the**

**Primordially Pure Tregchöd**

[EBOOK] **The Luminous Clarity of the Universe -A Clear Exposition of the Primordially Pure Tregchöd**

[The Upadesha on the Primordially Pure Tregchöd](#)

[\[E-Book\] The Upadesha on the Primordially Pure Tregchöd](#)

[The four Chogchag. The practise of Tregchöd](#)

Previously streamed retreats can be found via the 'Previous Retreats' link at the top of the Rinpoche Retreat Replay page on the Webcast site.

Thank you for your kind support,

The International Gakyil and Webcast teams





# Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

## The Three Statements of Garab Dorje

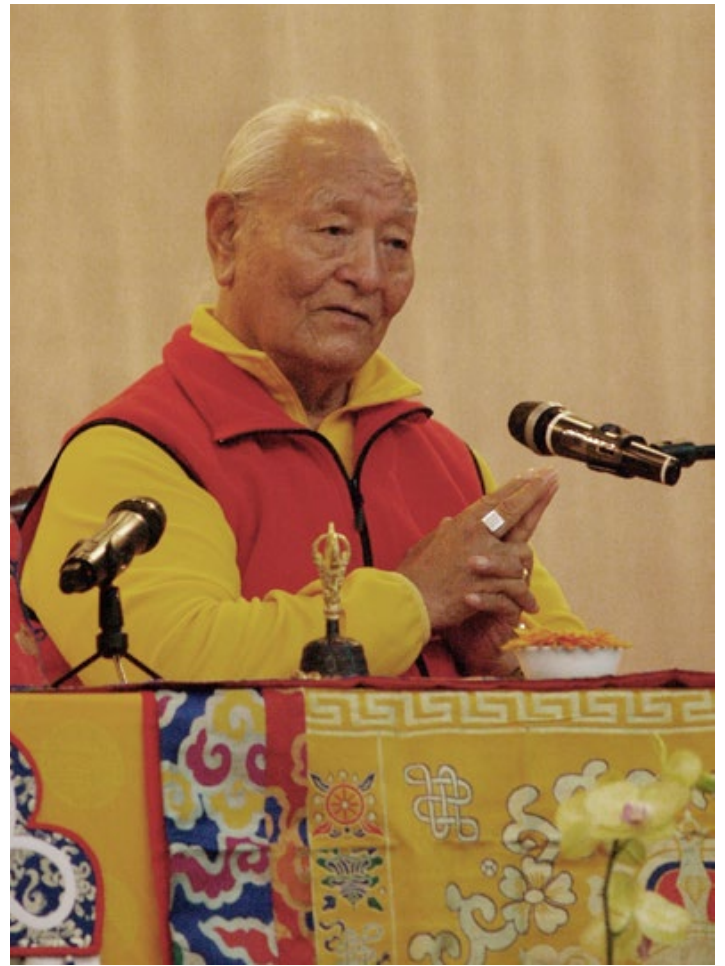
Hong Kong, 2012-05-17, day 2, part 2.  
Continued from The Mirror issue 164, June 2024.

One of the most important teachings that Garab Dorje gave is his Three Statements. For many years he transmitted Dzogchen teaching to his many students, including Manjushrimitra and, today, we have all these different kinds of Dzogchen Tantras that were taught by teachers from ancient times because they were repeated by Garab Dorje. He also gave teachings and explanations on Dzogchen that are not tantras but part of the Upadesha series, and so we have many precious original texts of Dzogchen teaching related with this kind of transmission. However, the conclusion of all his teachings are his Three Statements, which are like a key to the Dzogchen teaching.

The way in which teachers transmit [the teaching] to students and the way in which students learn and develop in order to be in the state of Dzogchen are connected to the Three Statements. This is something that we should understand from the beginning because a lot of people have the idea that the Dzogchen teaching consists of some special methods to be learned only after years of teachings and practices. Many Vajrayana teachers give this kind of advice to their students and tell them that they cannot learn Dzogchen directly, that they should learn Vajrayana, receive instructions, do practice and finally receive the Dzogchen teaching secretly from their teacher. They consider that Dzogchen is something special, something secret, but it is not like that.

Anuyoga and Dzogchen explain that we have nine vehicles. In the Nyingmapa tradition they say nine vehicles because originally they came from Anuyoga and Dzogchen. All these nine vehicles are independent; they do not depend on each other. For instance, in Hinayana one can have the realization of the Hinayana, of an arhat, although it is not easy to realize in a single lifetime. In Mahayana there is the realization of a bodhisattva for which one needs to do practice for many kalpas, many lives.

The vehicles are independent and their methods are different.



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu teaching in Hong Kong in 2012. Courtesy of Jing from China.

Sometimes we consider Dzogchen to be a supreme or very high level of Vajrayana. When we compare it with the Sutra teaching we say that we can have realization in one lifetime with the Dzogchen teaching. A lot of people consider that this is a form of advertisement because in our dualistic condition there is a lot of that. For instance, one day they say that a particular soap is very good but tomorrow when they can't sell it any more they change the box and give it another name saying that it is much better than others. However, the substance hasn't changed. This is called publicity. But the teaching is not like that.

For instance, in the Sutra teaching practitioners have no knowledge of the energy level because there is no explanation of energy in Sutra. Vajrayana has always transmitted transformation and manifestation. Everything is related to the energy level so of course [Vajrayana practitioners] are very skilled at that.

We can understand this through the history of Tibet. In ancient times the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen was a famous Dharma king and during his reign Dharma teachings were brought from India. He wanted this high level of teaching called Mahayana to come to Tibet and invited a very famous Mahayana teacher from India, Shantarakshita, who was also an expert in Madhyamika philosophy, to spread Buddhism there. However, Shantarakshita didn't succeed because of the pre-Buddhist tradition, ancient Bön, which was concentrated on



the five elements, the energy level, and the relationship between the elements. Most Tibetans were greatly influenced by the Bön tradition and when they tried to study the Buddhist Prajanaparamita they were not satisfied because there was no explanation of the energy level. When Shantarakshita discovered that, he decided to go back to India and suggested that they invite Guru Padmasambhava instead.

Guru Padmasambhava was an important Vajrayana teacher and very powerful in terms of everything related to energy and in the end the Bönpos followed him. He was also a great Dzogchen practitioner and for this reason he never tried to eliminate the Bön tradition but maintained its rituals although its substance changed within the Buddhist tradition.

That is one of the reasons why in the Western world when they refer to the Buddhist tradition of Tibet sometimes they call it "Lamaism" in a rather derogatory way. Why do they call it "Lamaism" when we are Buddhists? Because the Tibetan Buddhist tradition integrated many of the pre-existing Bön traditions in Tibet. For instance, when there are special days or an important lama is visiting, we burn *sang* incense powder to purify the dimension. This kind of *sang* ritual does not exist in the Buddhist tradition - there is not a single Sutra about Sang - but is an original tradition of the Bönpos.

We have a very famous Sang ritual that all traditions use today, originally called *sang nge* composed by Guru Padmasambhava. Even the Gelugpas use it when they do the Sang offering. At the beginning of the ritual there are some verses that are characteristic of the Bönpo.

*kyi/\_bsang gi rgyu byung gang nas byung/*  
Hey, the cause originating Sang, where did it come from?  
*bsang gi rgyu byung gnam nas byung/*  
The cause originating Sang, it came from the sky.  
*pha gnam la 'brug chen lda ma ldir/*  
In the sky, the father, great thunder roars forth,  
*ma sa la glog chen gya ma gyu/*  
on the earth, the mother, great lightning flashes forth.

In the Buddhist tradition there are no words that refer to "father sky" and "mother earth." But in Dzogchen we can integrate everything. The most important thing is the real sense, not its aspect. The Vajrayana gives the example of gold that can be transformed into a wonderful statue but also into an ashtray although in the real sense the gold has not changed. The most important thing is that we discover the real sense, then we can integrate all the aspects. This is the reason why Guru Padmasambhava paid respect to and integrated Bön into the characteristic Buddhist tradition in Tibet.

The three kinds of transmission are very important. The most important one expressed in Garab Dorje's first statement is direct introduction. Dzogchen teaching starts with direct introduction. It is not that as part of a Vajrayana teaching only the essence of Dzogchen is presented. It's not like that. Dzogchen teaching is one of the nine vehicles; it is independent and does not depend on Tantra or on Sutra. Dzogchen has no limitations. If we need to use Vajrayana methods, Sutra methods, even other methods that are not Buddhist, we can apply them. But we must understand that Dzogchen is a complete

path: we can start with Dzogchen, we can finish with Dzogchen. Some people may say that Dzogchen is too advanced for us, that we have no capacity, that we should follow Hinayana teaching. Each of the nine vehicles is independent, each vehicle has its own starting point and goal. Garab Dorje said that Dzogchen teaching starts with direct introduction. He never said we should start with Vajrayana transformation or that we should do *Ngöndro*, preliminary practices.

When I started to give Dzogchen teaching after a year or two I received a lot of criticism from many Tibetan lamas. They said that I was giving Dzogchen teaching without people doing preliminary practices. However, I didn't feel guilty or that I had done something wrong because if it is really necessary to do preliminary practices Garab Dorje would have given four statements: the first statement would have been to do preliminary practices before direct introduction. We cannot say that Garab Dorje forgot that because he is a totally enlightened omniscient being who knows very well how we should apply the Dzogchen path. However, some teachers still follow the old traditional ways just as they did in Tibet and don't understand the condition of sentient beings, particularly in the Western world. In the Western world most people have studied at elementary school and in many countries middle school is obligatory, so everybody interested in the teaching knows how to read and write. If they know how to read and write they also know how to think. For that reason when a teacher transmits a teaching he or she should transmit in different ways.

Today Tibet is becoming more modern and many people go to school and study. When I lived in Tibet in my youth, when I visited a village perhaps only one or two people at most could read and write. Yet even if they didn't know how to read and write, people were faithful to the Dharma and had very great devotion. But devotion can become blind if people don't understand that we need to follow teaching to try to understand the path. They go behind the names of the lamas and reincarnations and think that it is sufficient to simply see this reincarnation and receive a blessing in order to become realized. Some Tibetan lamas also have that kind of attitude and are ready to give blessings and protection cords and so on. Once these kinds of people have received a blessing - the lama puts something on their head, chants a mantra - and a protection cord, they are satisfied and go away. However, they cannot become realized that way.

I was born in Tibet and when I was young I studied in a monastery and later in college so I didn't have time to be a reincarnation. When I finally started to be a reincarnation I went to a conference in China and then they asked me to teach in school. Later I returned to Tibet and met my teacher Changchub Dorje to receive teaching. After that I went to central Tibet then returned to Kham where there was a lot of confusion so I went back to central Tibet. When I finally arrived in India, I didn't have time to be a reincarnation, sitting elegantly and giving blessings and protection cords. But years later when I went back to Tibet many Tibetans, particularly in my area, knew that I had the name of a reincarnation so they came to ask me for blessings and so on. People really wanted to receive protection cords but, at the time, I had nothing for making them. I finally managed to make the cords using strips of five or six of my shirts so when I left I only had one shirt.

» continued on the following page



However, I was quite unhappy about this kind of situation. In particular when some older people came I asked them to sit down for a while so that I could explain a little Dharma to them. They sat down and I explained in a very simple way about having good intentions in order to accumulate good actions, not about the state of Dzogchen, which they couldn't understand. But they didn't listen and just sat together talking to each other.

That is an example of not having the capacity to follow this kind of teaching so even though the teacher has compassion and wants to do something, he or she cannot do very much. This is why we say that Dzogchen teaching is for people who have high capacity. A lot of people think that high capacity means something like the realization of a mahasiddha who can have contact with the Sambhogakaya pure dimension. But in Dzogchen, high capacity doesn't mean that.

In Buddha Shakyamuni's Sutra teaching there is an explanation of the five capacities: *tepa*, *tsöndrö*, *trenpa*, *tingedzin*, *sherab*. First is your participation, your devotion, your interest. Most people are not interested in the teaching! For instance we can announce that there will be Dzogchen teaching, that the Dzogchen transmission is alive and is very important for everybody. We could even send out this information on television so that most people would hear about it. But when we do a retreat, how many people come compared to how many people there are in this city, for example? Why don't they participate? Because they are not interested, this capacity of participation is missing.

The other capacities are related to participation so when someone has the capacity of participation or interest it should be combined with presence. If we are not present, even though we may be interested, we forget and the teaching never becomes something concrete. This is the second capacity.

We also need diligence because if we are not diligent the teaching does not become something concrete. In addition we need to understand the value of the state of contemplation. A lot of people do not have this understanding and think they are following teaching because they have learned a position or how to do some breathing, or they know how to visualize a deity and they are satisfied with that. But none of this has the value of the state of contemplation. Even if we are doing visualization of a deity, we may have some benefit but it never becomes the path to realization. We have to go beyond that. We should remember that at the end of transformation practice we dissolve the manifestation in ourselves and then remain in the state of emptiness or contemplation. That is something like the conclusion of the practice and we need to have this knowledge, the knowledge of the value of contemplation. This is the fourth capacity.

The fifth capacity is *prajna*, intelligence, because if we do not use our intelligence then even though the teacher explains time after time, we may not understand. Sometimes the teacher may use some words that we don't know the meaning of, but using our intelligence we try to understand them or at least we listen once, twice, three times or more to try to understand their meaning.

These are the five capacities. When we have these kinds of capacities we can follow the Dzogchen teaching, apply it and understand how to receive the direct transmission, which is the first statement of Guru Garab Dorje.

The second statement of Garab Dorje is not remaining in doubt. This means that even though we may feel we have discovered our real nature it's very difficult to feel one hundred percent sure of it. We can have this kind of problem not only for discovering our real nature but for any kind of practice we have learned and applied. However, we must not remain in doubt otherwise we cannot produce the function of that practice. In particular, when we discover our real nature we must be absolutely sure. In order to be sure there is the second statement of Garab Dorje. In Garab Dorje's teaching there are many tantras, *lung*s, and upadeshas connected with that specific method.

The third statement means that when we have discovered our real nature and are absolutely sure, then we need to integrate and simply remain in that state forever, if possible. When we are learning and practicing, when we do Guruyoga just for a few seconds we are in that state. But when we practice day after day we become more and more familiar with it.

Particularly in Dzogchen, being in the state of Guruyoga is very easy because we don't need to do anything particular. With Guruyoga there is no particular position or breathing or visualization. In a very simple way we instantly recall the presence of the white A and then we relax in that state. Just that is Guruyoga. We can do it many times during the daytime but for practitioners it is very important to do it at least when we wake up in the morning because being a Dzogchen practitioner means integrating that knowledge in our condition.

So the essence is Guruyoga. In daily life we have twenty-four hours in a day, so we do Guruyoga and go ahead trying to be present. When we feel like doing Guruyoga we can do it at any moment. Even if we do it many times, it is never too much. If we are forever in the state of Guruyoga we are realized. So this is what we should do.

I am not asking you to read a certain book, chant a particular mantra or sit in a special position. Doing Guruyoga means that you are in your real nature, it is not for supporting your teacher. Sometimes people think that since "Guru" means teacher, being in the state of Guruyoga means you are supporting your teacher, but it is not like that.

Guruyoga is for you, for your realization. Our day consists of twenty-four hours and we need to have an idea of integrating twenty-four hours in practice. How can we do that? It doesn't mean only doing Guruyoga but also remaining present, not distracted, which, in Dzogchen, is a very important practice. If we are not distracted but always present, it is very easy to integrate in our state of Guruyoga. Being present is easy to do and we can practice it even when we are walking, working, speaking, and so on. It is much better if we are present and not distracted.

Edited by Liz Granger

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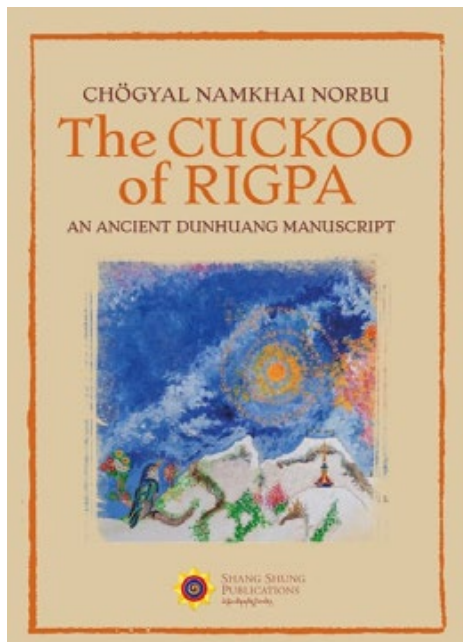


SHANG SHUNG  
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## Adriano Clemente on The Cuckoo of Rigpa: An Ancient Dunhuang Manuscript by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

A presentation given on 28 September 2024 in the Merigar Gönpa

When Chögyal Namkhai Norbu first visited London in 1979 he found two important



manuscripts on Dzogchen from Dunhuang in the British Museum. A short time later, he started to write a commentary on them. One of these manuscripts was *The Little Hidden Harvest*, *Sbas pa'i rgum chung*, a short text by Buddhagupta. Rinpoche wrote a detailed word-by-word commentary on it, citing many quotations from other ancient Dzogchen texts. Rinpoche's commentary was published in Tibetan by Shang Shung Publications in 1984 and was quite successful among Tibetan readers. It is often quoted by Tibetologists. In addition, in the latest edition of the *Nyingma Kama*, the collection of writ-

ten scriptures of the Nyingmapa tradition where we find texts by Indian and Tibetan masters, they have now included this text by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and this is a very important recognition for his scholarly work. I translated this text many years ago but then it remained as it was so revising it is one of my future projects. It's a very beautiful book.

The other manuscript, the *Rigpai Khujug*, or *Six Vajra Verses*, has no identified author. Rinpoche started to write a commentary, but it seems he never completed it. He wrote the commentary to the root text at the time, but not the introduction we have now and for that reason it was not published at the same time as the *Buddhagupta* book. We had to wait many years to have a final manuscript, which he completed about fifteen years ago. However, for several years in the early eighties Rinpoche was always speaking about these *Six Vajra Verses*. He even embroidered them on pieces of material in different colors, and we hung one of these in the Yantra Yoga studio that we had in Arcidosso.

Why are these *Six Vajra Verses* called *The Cuckoo of Rigpa*? *The Cuckoo of Rigpa* is not the original name but was probably given by Vairocana because they were auspicious for being the first teaching of Dzogchen introduced from Oddiyana into Tibet. In Tibet when we hear the cuckoo, we understand that spring is coming, so in the same way when this teaching arrived in Tibet, knowledge of the primordial state reawakened there.

These *Six Vajra Verses* in general are called a *lung*, which is a specific category of texts related to the Dzogchen teaching, especially for the Dzogchen Semde teaching, because all main Vajrayana scriptures are called tantras. When we have a tantra there is a kind of introduction, a setting that explains its origin. Similarly, each sutra explains that at that time Buddha was in a particular place when he gave that teaching and certain students were there and so on. This is related to what we call the Nirmanakaya dimension.

When we have a tantra we usually refer to the Samboghakaya dimension, which is not related to a time or a physical place. But to pay respect to the Sutra tradition, also in the tantras, we read that in this place, like a kind of heaven or pure dimension, there is this manifestation of a Buddha and his students and then there is the manifestation of this tantra. In general when we have a tantra we have that kind of introduction and then questions and answers.

In a *lung*, we find no such setting or in-

troduction, and there are no questions and answers. Rinpoche explained that a *lung* consists of the main points of a tantra that have been extracted and collected, which means that it contains the most important points of that tantra. For instance, in the case of *Dorje Sempa Namkha Che*, the famous *Total Space of Vajrasattva*, there are about ten tantras including this name, but only one tantra contains the whole *lung* with questions and answers as well as the setting. In all the others it is scattered, a sentence here and a sentence there.

In any case, the *Rigpai Khujug*, or *Six Vajra Verses*, is also contained in the famous *Kunjed Gyalpo*, *The Supreme Source* tantra, one chapter of which contains these six verses. The *Kunjed Gyalpo* is also a tantra, although we don't know exactly which part is tantra and which part is not because it contains different elements.

*The Six Vajra Verses* was one of the first five translations made by Vairocana in Oddiyana which he introduced and taught in Tibet and they are therefore always considered highly important for the Dzogchen Semde teaching. In fact at one retreat that Rinpoche gave at Christmas in 1985, he taught and explained just these Six Verses for the whole retreat.

This commentary that we have in the Dunhuang manuscript clearly explains what the difference is between the Dzogchen teaching and Mahayoga or general Vajrayana teaching. It was written for practitioners of Mahayoga because it uses that kind of terminology. Tradition has it that when Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet, he mostly taught Mahayoga and not Dzogchen, and in some cases, when he taught Dzogchen, he used the terminology of Mahayoga. This is why when we study in the famous *Garland of Views* in the Santi Maha Sangha base we may wonder how this can be Dzogchen when it doesn't even mention the primordial state and essence, nature, and energy and other terminology that we find in Dzogchen in general. But if we understand correctly, we will recognize that there are many explanations about Dzogchen because it is related to the famous Guhyagarbha tantra, which has also been commented on according to the Dzogchen principle. But of course Padmasambhava also gave many Dzogchen teachings that were rediscovered as termas, and so on.

The *Six Vajra Verses* is one of those texts that Vairocana brought back from Oddiyana together with other original texts at the time of King Trisong Detsen. Vairocana in-



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Khyung lung dngul mkhar with an ancient silver amulet of a khyung (garuda) he discovered (in rock face, upper left).  
Courtesy of Alex Siedlecki.

troduced these original scriptures into Tibet and then Vimalamitra continued this work and brought many Dzogchen teachings there. So we have these three series: Semde and Longde, mainly related to this Vairocana transmission, and Upadesa, related more to Vimalamitra in the Kama tradition and Padmasambhava in the terma tradition.

Why are these Six Verses so important? Because they explain the principle of the view, meditation, and result in Dzogchen. First of all, they introduce the view: *sna tshogs rang bzhin myi gnyis, cha shas nyid du*. *Sna tshogs rang bzhin* means that the nature or variety or multiplicity is nondual. In general, many teachings give this explanation. When we say that the “base,” the condition of the phenomena of existence, is nondual, it means it is impossible to distinguish between one phenomena and another in their essence. This is not only in the Dzogchen teachings, but also in Hindu traditions such as the Vedanta and so on. They explain the same principle such as maya, or illusion: there are no realities as they are all one nature and their

real nature is this principle of the absolute.

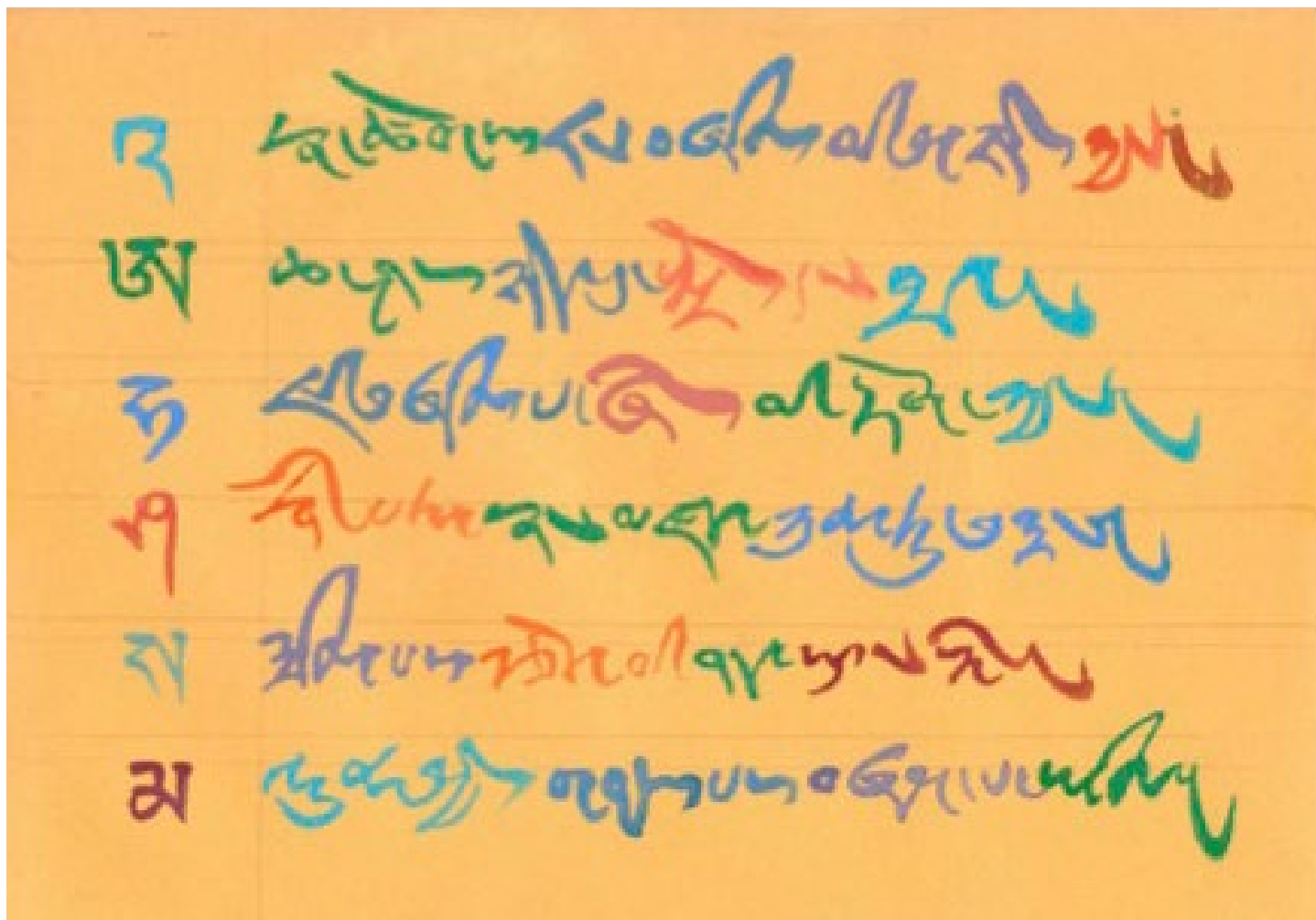
*Cha shas* means single part and *nyid du* means in the state or in the real condition of that single part. In *spros dang bral, spros pa* means that we have created some concepts, constructed something with our mind. Concepts constructed with our mind also refers to the concept of real nature, the concept of the absolute, which is also this *spros pa*, because it is a result of some reasoning. *Cha shas nyid du* means that nature, which is nondual, must be recognized or experienced in the state of the individual. It is not some kind of abstract or absolute, but it is the real nature of each individual. Then through that individuality, we can discover our real nature or nondual nature. This is the view and is an introduction, in general, to the Dzogchen teaching because the view in Dzogchen is not an intellectual view, but is based on experience.

The second two verses explain meditation or how we apply that recognition or knowledge that we had. The text says *ji bzhin ba myi rtog*, which means that even

if we don't have any concept about that nature - because *ji bzhin ba* means “as it is” something we cannot modify with our concepts, with our ideas - while *myi rtog* means we are not thinking about and judging that. If we are doing meditation we do not keep that concept. For instance, Dzogchen practitioners have received what we call direct introduction to the state of Dzogchen. How do they apply that? Through meditation. How do they do that? They do not think about being in their real nature, in their primordial state. They do not think, “Oh, now I am in the primordial state, now I am not” because that would be judging something as if it is an object of the mind.

What, then, should we do? The text explains: *rnam par snang mdzad kun tu bzang*. *Rnam par snang mdzad* means whatever form we perceive with our senses. *Rnam* is form, *snang* means to appear and *mdzad* means to make this manifestation appear. So whatever we perceive, *kun tu bzang* means everything is fine. It means that when we are doing Dzogchen meditation we do not judge but





Calligraphy by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu of The Six Vajra Verses. Courtesy of Adriano Clemente

our senses are open to all perceptions and we remain in that clarity.

Regarding the fruit or the result, how can we achieve it? In the Sutra tradition, we have five paths and ten levels of realization. Through each path or level we gradually remove or abandon some obstacles, emotions, and concepts until finally we have purified everything and we are finally a Buddha. In the Vajrayana, first we have the Kyerim stage in which we create a mandala and then integrate that mandala with our energy. In the end we transcend all concepts in the state of nonduality. This is also a gradual way of progressing.

In the Six Vajra verses it says *zin pas stsol ba'i nad*. *Zin pas* means finished, completed, or accomplished. It means whatever idea we have going from one place to another, from Samsara to Nirvana, or from impurity to pure dimension, we are already in that Nirvana, or in that pure dimension. We have the capacity to be in that state - like the title *Cuckoo of Rigpa* - that by abiding in that state, the rays of the sun naturally eliminate all the clouds.

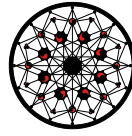
We don't need anything external to ourselves to remove the clouds, such as methods in sutras or tantras. The Dzogchen method is the sun shining by itself, and that is the way. If we have that capacity, then we can say *zin pas*, everything is already accomplished, already completed and in that case, *stsol ba'i nad*, the illness of effort is abandoned. We always have the idea that we should put some effort if we wish to progress, to purify because that is related to our condition. If we need to put in a lot of effort it means we are still not on the real Dzogchen Atiyoga path, however, we are preparing to reach it, which is good, of course, because one day we will reach that level, that stage.

Then the last line is *lhun gyis gnas bzhag pa*. *Lhun gyis* in general means spontaneously or naturally, but Rinpoche interpreted this to mean *lhun gyis grub pa* which means already present or, as we say in the Dzogchen Community, self-perfected. In general, in the Dzogchen teaching, we have these two aspects, *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* is this nondual nature while *lhundrub* means the

primordial state or nondual nature that already contains all these self-perfected qualities that only need to be manifested. Sometimes *lhundrub* is compared to the oil from sesame seeds. If the seeds are not pressed we do not have the oil even though the oil is there. In any case, here it says that remaining in that self-perfected condition is the state of contemplation, the final result. We don't need anything else.

This is a very concise explanation of these Six Verses. This book is a beautiful commentary, both the original and what Rinpoche wrote. It's very important and explains how Atiyoga should be. The Six Verses are explained very clearly, as well as how we should practice and how we should achieve the final result.

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



## Call For International Blue IG Assistant

Join our Team and help us strengthen our collaboration in the spirit of our beloved Master!

The International Gakyil (IG) is looking for a Blue IG Assistant to join our team for a trial period of several months, and with the serious intention of becoming a Blue IG member for the next three-year term (approx. 2025-2027). The exact start and end dates depend on the scheduling of the Annual General Assembly which occurs yearly by May 31, 2025.

The desired candidate must have IDC membership for the last three consecutive years

plus the current year, experience working on a Gar or Ling Gakyil, a strong knowledge of the teachings, knowledge of IDC community processes, ability to use this knowledge to communicate and collaborate with IDC teachers, Gakyils, members and institutions founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, good communication skills, good written and spoken English, basic computer skills and enjoy teamwork.

A strong interest and desire to learn will also be seriously considered. This is a volunteer position, following the practice of Karma Yoga, which brings great benefits and the opportunity to accumulate merit.

If you are interested, please send us a letter of intent along with your curriculum vitae to [blue@dzogchen.net](mailto:blue@dzogchen.net), [red@dzogchen.net](mailto:red@dzogchen.net), and [yellow@dzogchen.net](mailto:yellow@dzogchen.net). Alternatively, if you know someone who may be a good fit, feel

free to share this message.

Thank you so much for your consideration and your support, and for your willingness to give a hand to the International Dzogchen Community.

The International Gakyil,  
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Oni, Rosa, Richard, and Piotr

## Join our Team and help us bring to life the projects of our beloved Master!

The International Gakyil (IG) is looking for a legal expert in Italian law to join our team as a Red IG Assistant for a trial period of several months, and with the serious intention of becoming a Red IG member for the next three-year term (approx. 2025-2027). The exact start and end dates depend on the

scheduling of the Annual General Assembly which occurs yearly by May 31, 2025. The desired candidate will ideally have expertise in statutory matters, privacy, and digital platforms, and can act as a liaison with any needed external legal consultants. A strong interest and desire to learn will also be seriously considered. This is a volunteer position, following the practice of Karma Yoga, which brings great benefits and the opportunity to accumulate merit.

If you are interested, please send us a letter of intent along with your curriculum vitae to [blue@dzogchen.net](mailto:blue@dzogchen.net), [red@dzogchen.net](mailto:red@dzogchen.net), and

[yellow@dzogchen.net](mailto:yellow@dzogchen.net). Alternatively, if you know someone who may be a good fit, feel free to share this message.

Thank you so much for your consideration and your support, and for your willingness to give a hand to the International Dzogchen Community.

The International Gakyil,  
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Oni, Rosa, Richard, and Piotr



### THE MIRROR

Newspaper of the  
International  
Dzogchen Community of  
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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## Nepal. Water Emergency

Once again, we are witnessing a tragedy. Another catastrophe has struck the fragile Nepalese territory.



On September 27 and 28, terrible flooding affected thousands of families, leaving them without homes, food or access to essential services.

As we unfortunately see every day, climate emergency has no borders and indiscriminately devastates people's lives.

There are **246 dead**, over **200 injured** and **10,887 displaced** families temporarily camped in overcrowded refugee camps. Access to clean water, sanitation and food is limited, and health risks are very high.

The ASIA team in Nepal immediately went to the area and saw with their own eyes the devastation suffered by the rural community of Roshi, in the Kavrepalanchok district, one of the most affected by the floods.

150 families told us of their need for **temporary shelters, toilets and blankets** to get through the winter and **basic water purification supplies**.

**Participate in the campaign and help us provide temporary shelters to families and improve hygiene and sanitation conditions for the community of Roshi**

You can donate on our page

<https://dona.asia-ngo.org/wateremergency/>

Follow us on social channels (FB and IG ASIA ETS) and on our website [www.asia-ngo.org](http://www.asia-ngo.org) to be updated about our humanitarian intervention.

## What makes Nepal vulnerable to extreme weather?

by the ASIA Project Desk in Nepal,  
Emanuele Assini

Nepal, characterized by its mountainous topography and diverse climatic zones, is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Its geographic and environmental features, including the Himalayan range to the north and complex river systems navigating steep gradients, contribute to a heightened vulnerability to climate-induced disasters. Over recent decades, Nepal has experienced an increased frequency and severity of natural hazards, particularly floods and landslides, trends that are closely associated with changing climate dynamics.

This analysis explores how climate change intensifies these hazards, with an emphasis on hydrological shifts, accelerated glacial melting, extreme rainfall events, and landslide risks.

## Hydrological shifts and altered riverflow patterns

Climate-induced changes are significant-

ly impacting Nepal's river systems through modifications in precipitation patterns and seasonal water cycles. Rising global temperatures and shifts in weather patterns have introduced unpredictability into rainfall cycles. The monsoon season, typically spanning from June to September, now exhibits variability in its onset, duration, and rainfall intensity. Such variability often results in extended dry periods punctuated by intense precipitation, overwhelming soil absorption capacity and leading to flash floods and river inundation. Intense rainfall events further exacerbate the conditions within Nepal's river basins. Many rivers in Nepal rely on both monsoon rainfall and runoff from melting snow and glaciers. As temperatures rise, snow cover and glacial masses are diminishing, altering the seasonal flow regime of these rivers. Instead of a gradual release, the snow and glacial melt now occurs more abruptly, often aligning with peak monsoon periods, thus exacerbating flood risks.

## Intensified monsoon patterns and flash floods risk

Nepal is witnessing more frequent and severe rainfall events linked to climate change. Research indicates that higher atmospheric temperatures enhance the moisture-holding capacity of air, resulting in intensified rainfall episodes. These heavy rainfall events lead to flash floods, particularly in the hilly and mountainous regions, where rapid water flow in narrow river valleys can cause sudden inundations. Flash flooding is exacerbated by the steep terrain in these regions, as water rapidly converges in rivers and streams rather than being absorbed into the soil. The Terai plains, where rivers from the hills converge, are especially susceptible to such rapid flooding due to upstream runoff. Additionally, extreme rainfall destabilizes riverbanks and associated infrastructure, increasing erosion and heightening flood risks.

## Landslides

Landslides are a prevalent hazard in Nepal, attributed to its steep slopes and fragile geological structure. Climate change intensifies



landslide risks by increasing soil saturation and destabilization. Intense rainfall events cause the soil to become oversaturated, which reduces its cohesion and structural stability. This effect is particularly pronounced on steep



slopes or areas where human activities, such as deforestation and road construction, have further compromised the landscape. During heavy rains, water infiltrates soil particles, increasing the weight and reducing the soil's adherence to slopes, ultimately triggering landslides. Additionally, shifting vegetation patterns due to climate change have led to reduced natural slope stabilization, as vegetation that would normally help anchor the soil is diminished.

### Soil erosion and sedimentation processes

Climate change also accelerates soil erosion and sediment deposition, both of which

exacerbate flood risks and disrupt river dynamics in Nepal. Intense rainfall combined with reduced vegetation cover increases soil erosion on slopes. The eroded material is transported by runoff into rivers, where it accumulates as sediment. Sedimentation reduces river channel capacity, heightening the likelihood of overflows during intense rainfall events. Furthermore, sedimentation alters river flow patterns, potentially causing the formation of new channels and redirecting water flow. These disruptions impact agricultural areas, settlements, and natural ecosystems and necessitate costly interventions to manage river channels and mitigate flood risks.

### Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)

A pressing concern in the Himalayan region, exacerbated by climate change, is the rising incidence of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). With warming temperatures accelerating glacial melt, there is a consequential expansion of glacial lakes, many of which are held in place by unstable natural moraine dams. As glacial lakes expand, the likelihood of sudden breaches increases, particularly under conditions of heavy rainfall or seismic activity. A breach in these moraine dams can release large volumes of water, sediment, and

ice downstream, causing catastrophic flooding. Nepal currently hosts over 3,000 glacial lakes, with a significant proportion classified as potentially hazardous. GLOFs have become more frequent in recent decades, posing ongoing risks to downstream communities, infrastructure, and agricultural areas.

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THE LONDON INSTITUTE OF TIBETAN STUDIES

## Losar 2025 Mandarava Practice in Maratika

According to the

**Melodious Tambura  
of Delight: Guide to  
the Maratika Cave,  
the Ultimate place of  
Immortality**

by Kyabje Chatral Rinpoche.

...

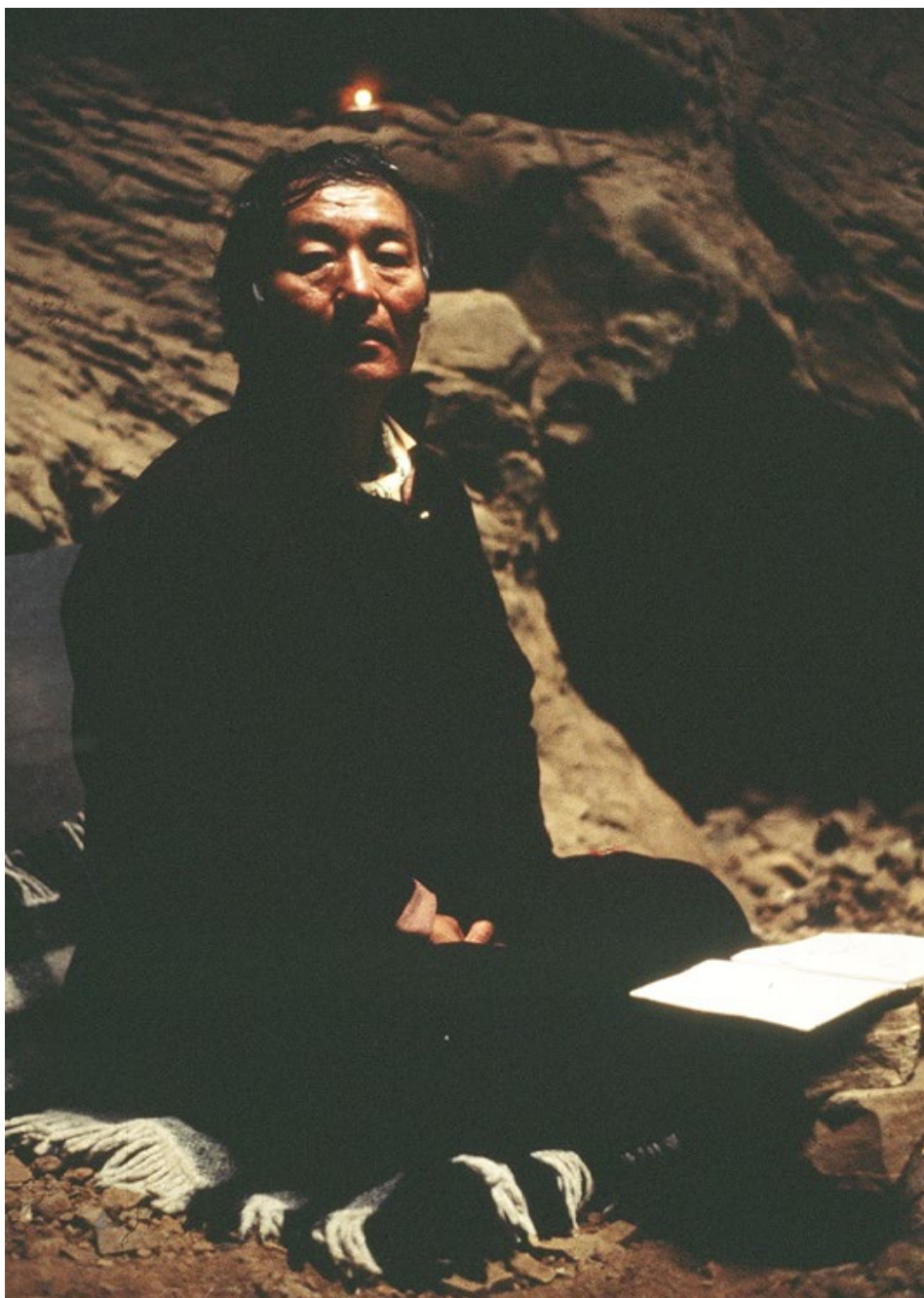
When you see this great place,  
you can't help but be amazed  
The mere hearing of its name  
spreads the seed of liberation.  
The mere remembrance of it  
removes the danger of an early death  
And by bowing, circumambulating  
and offering,  
An ocean of merit is perfected and  
accumulated.

...

According to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Maratika is one of the six most sacred places in the world, along with Bodhgaya in India, the Five Peaks of Manjushri and the Potala in Tibet. The two remaining places have not yet been "opened": Uddiyana and Shambhala.

Beyond this, for us in the Dzogchen community, Maratika is a supreme pilgrimage site because it was here that in April 1984 our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu revealed *The Long Life Practice of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava, the Sphere of the Vital Essence of the Vajra*.

Precisely last April, was the 40th anniversary of this revelatory event. To mark this auspicious anniversary, two institutions founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the Shang Shung Institute UK and the Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale (MACO), organised what was a successful and harmonious tour



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Maratika. Photo by Carlo D'Angelo.

in Nepal, including several days practicing in the caves of Maratika, attended by forty-three people from all over the world.

According to Will Shea who participated in the April 2024 Tour:

"When we finally entered the Maratika Eight Heruka cavern, all the previous sites visited were forgotten... the powerful energy of the place is incomparable".

You can read the article his article about the trip in issue 164 of *The Mirror*.

Following up on the requests of several people who either hadn't heard about the last trip or who couldn't attend it or some of those who, given their liking, wanted to go again, we decided to offer the trip again. We made several changes to improve the schedule of

activities and we extended the duration of the practice in the Maratika caves.

The tour will take place from February 25th to March 12th 2025, thus allowing people to participate in the joyful celebrations of the Tibetan New Year, which this year will take place on 28 February.

From the 1st of March (departure from Kathmandu) until the 9th of March, it will be possible to join in an intensive long life practice retreat in the sacred Maratika Caves.

There will be Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance sessions.

Vajra Dance teacher Kyu will kindly bring a Vajra Dance mandala from Japan, giving us the unique opportunity to dance the V.D. for





The April 2024 Maratika group participants in Heruka Cave.

the first time in such an auspicious place.

Last year we were only able to dance the 12 A's in the cave on the full moon day, and it was still a wonderful experience.

Besides practising mainly at the Heruka Cave, where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu led the Amitayus Long Life Retreat in 1984, we will be visiting other auspicious caves, each with a specific function, some on the nearby Vajrapani and Manjushri Hills, others further away such as the powerful Naga Cave and the Secret Mandarava Cave.

We will also hoist lungta flags for the New Year at the Mandarava Cave.

For those who wish to learn more about aspects of the practices, two qualified SMS teachers, Oliver Leick and Che Goh, are willing to give some explanations. Oliver Leick will also tell us more about the Changchub

Dorje stupas project, as he has offered to co-ordinate fundraising efforts for bringing a Changchub Dorje stupa to Maratika in 2026.

Personally, this will be my fifth visit to Maratika, and each time it's a new, wonderful, unpredictable experience. From the ad-

venturous, myth like first time in 1980, when its whereabouts were unknown even to the Tibetans, we reached the sacred caves, inhabited by colonies of bats, after more than a week's trek led by a Sherpa, with recurrent sightings of wild peacocks. The main Long Life

cave, was guarded by a giant white and brown snake, who once eyed us from a rock while Giacomella, Maria Simmons and I were practising inside. That time, we managed to pass through all four gates, which purify negative karma, squeezing through narrow stalactites and stalagmites. Before leaving, I was told that when leaving Maratika it was customary to

make two wishes, the first being to return there, the second being optional. I wished to return with my Master. Finally, after four years, in 1984, Rinpoche decided that it was the right time for him to come to Nepal.

That second time in Maratika with my

Master was an ineffable experience, witnessing the unfathomable unfolding process of the revelation of his mind terma.

Then in 2014, after thirty years I was back in Maratika, noting the transformation the place had gone through, from a tiny lost, remote Nepali village to a renown holy place connected to the capital by a newly build road that was still in construction, forcing travelers to change jeep and cross the bridge on foot over the fast flowing Himalayan rivers, the Dudkoshi and the Sunkoshi, catching each time another jeep on the other side. Now the road runs all the way from Khatmandu to Haleshi, the Nepali name for Maratika.

Every new time Maratika has surprised me with unexpected experiences, adventures, encounters. I hope that you will be able to join us for what promises to be a fantastic tour.

Those interested in the tour should sign up by the end of December.

For detailed information on the tour you can click below:

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/maratika2025/?external=1>

Jacobella Gaetani



Happy international participants from France, Italy, Japan, Germany and Turkey outside the cave where we will practice every day.





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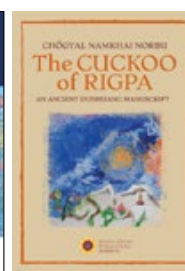
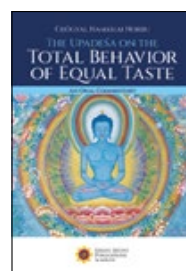
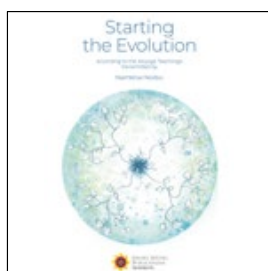
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## Latest Releases



Namkhai Norbu. It is based on the transcript of the retreat in Tokyo, Japan, 1–5 June, 2012, with additional notes from the retreat in Tashigar North, Venezuela, 15–16 May, 2004. 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 Oḍḍiyāna.

veal the light of the illusory mind and lead us on the path of bliss and clarity. Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

Books in Italian  
(I libri in italiano sono realizzati con il sostegno di Merigar West)

**Il cuculo della presenza istantanea** (in coedizione con Om Edizioni)  
<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/esplora/novita/product/ebook-il-cuculo-della-presenza-istantanea>

L'insegnamento Dzogchen è una conoscenza viva trasmessa da un maestro, che la incarna, ai suoi studenti, che la devono mettere in pratica: non è un insegnamento

## Audiobooks:

**Freedom from Attachment**  
(in English) Audiobook.

<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/freedom-from-attachment>

**Starting the Evolution** (in English)  
Audiobook.

[https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/product\\_837](https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/product_837)

**Aprire la mente** (in italiano) Audiobook.  
<https://shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/audiobook-aprire-la-mente>

## Books in English

**The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste**  
An Oral Commentary

<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/the-upadesha>

The present volume contains the oral commentary to The Upadesha on the Total Behavior of Equal Taste belonging to the Longsal cycle of teachings rediscovered and taught by Chögyal

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.

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. Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

**The Story Book. Twenty-One Traditional Buddhist Tales Cited in the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu**  
<https://shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-the-story-book-pdf>

Compiled and retold by Oliver Leick, illustrated by artists of the School of the Dynamic Space of the Elements. The nectar-like stories told by the Master like a blazing torch in pitch darkness, re-

servato agli asceti spirituali, ma una via che può essere di giovamento a tutti coloro che vogliono vivere meglio. Può essere molto utile a persone di profonda fede, ma anche a coloro che dichiarano di non credere a niente e sono convinti che non esista nulla dopo la morte; anche per loro la vita può essere più serena grazie a questo insegnamento.

**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.

**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 Vairocana, ovvero Rigpai Khujug,

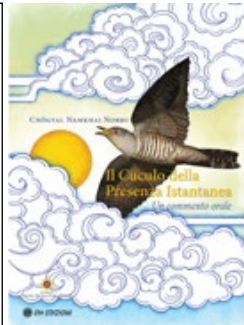
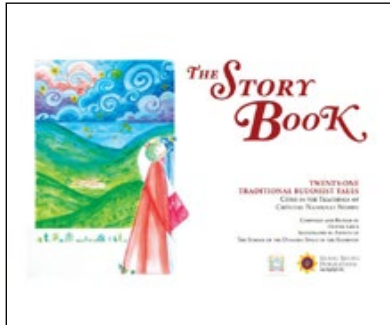
Tsalchen Trugpa, Khyungchen Dingwa, Dola Serzhün, Minubpai Gyaltsen (chiamato anche Dorje Sempa Namkha Che) più il Mejung. In tempi relativamente recenti, nel 1971, è stato scoperto un altro libro che contiene le istruzioni essenziali sul modo di applicare la pratica nel puro stile Dzogchen in accordo con i sei testi citati. L'autore di questo

Largely extracted from The Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Sangha, the textbook of the foundation level of the Santi Maha Sangha training devised for his students of the Dzogchen Community, this book expounds the fundamental aspects of the Sūtrayāna and Vajrayāna that practitioners are meant to approach and in-

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In Chinese  
Upcoming books:

- Chod
- Opening our mind



scritto non è noto, ma può essere attribuito a Nubchen Sangye Yeshe. In questo ritiro, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu spiega le istruzioni su come integrare e applicare la conoscenza del Changchubsen Gompa Dola Serzhün scritto da Mañjushrimitra.

**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 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).

Upcoming books In English

- The Vajra Dance of the Space (Khalongdorjeikar)
  - Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen
  - Illuminating the Gateway to the Teaching
- From Sūtra and Tantra to Dzogchen

The Lamp Illuminating the Gateway to the Teaching (Bstan pa la 'jug pa'i sgo snang gal sgron me zhes bya ba) was conceived by the Author, the late Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938-2018), as a book that can provide in-depth insight into the nature and characteristics of the Buddhist teachings in their totality, introducing and displaying the various steps of the path much in the way as presented in the Lamrim, or "stages of the path," literary genre.

tegrate in themselves in the course of their journey toward Buddhahood.

Supported by Ka-Ter Translation Project

In Italian

- Consigli di Padmasambhava sulla Perfezione Totale
- Il libro delle storie - Ventuno racconti buddhisti tradizionali citati negli Insegnamenti di Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
- Insegnamenti Dzogchen Upadesa di Rigdzing Changchub Dorje Longsal Rushen. Commento orale

In Spanish

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

El programa editorial es el siguiente:

Libros publicados recientemente:

- Gurú Yoga (Restricted)
- Evolucionar (Public)
- Abrir nuestra mente (Public - ya publicado por Editorial del Fondo)
- La Lampara que ilumina las mentes estrechas (Public - ya publicado por Editorial del Fondo)
- El Yoga de Tara Verde (Restricted)

Libros que se publicarán en 2025:

- Yantra Yoga
- SSP – Editorial del Fondo (Public)
- Descubre uno para descubrir todos

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CONTACTS

For more information and further details on the editorial program, please write to [info@shangshungpublications.com](mailto:info@shangshungpublications.com)

Shang Shung Publications Team



## Building a Guru Padmasambhava Statue

In the spring of 2024 we started fundraising for the construction of a 9.5 meter tall Guru Rinpoche statue, in upper Mustang, Nepal. The villagers of Garphu very much wanted to build a statue of Guru Padmasambhava but their finances were limited. For the Himalayan people, building a stupa or a statue creates great religious merit. It also brings the community together, supports the local economy both during the construction and after, when the place becomes a pilgrimage site, it ensures that the artistic legacy thrives

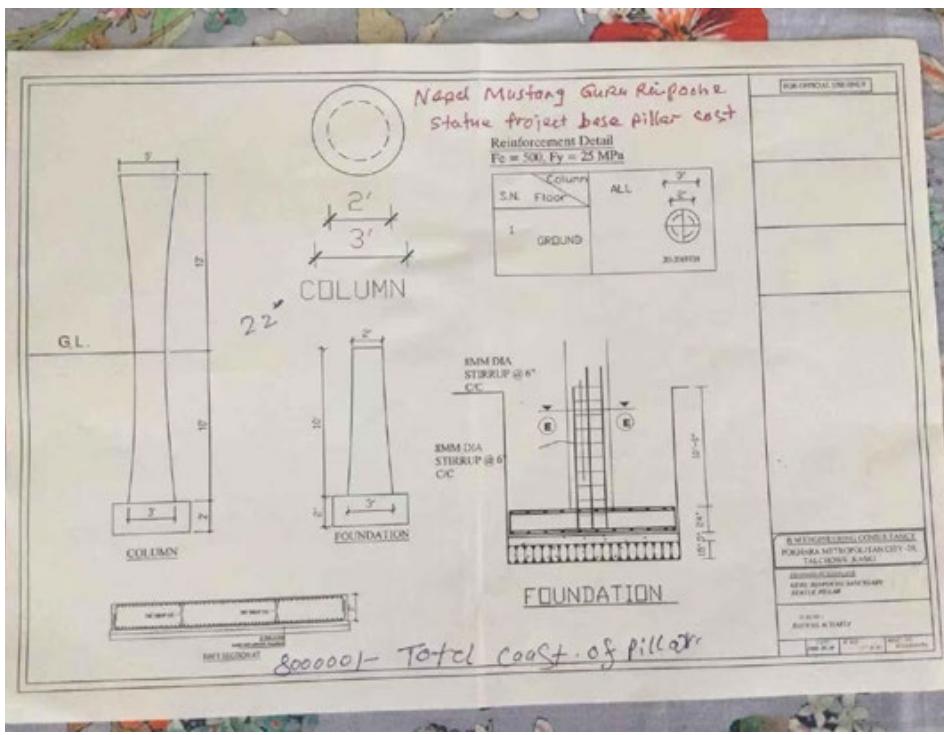


Consecration of the site at the beginning of the construction. June 2024

and continues, and lots of religious practice is carried out at the site. There is also the belief that building statues helps for harmony and world peace. So we were happy to engage to help make this project possible. Traditionally many great spiritual masters have built statues and stupas and we intend to dedicate this statue to the memory of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the founder of Shang Shung Institute.







We wanted this to be a global project, creating international unity for a common goal among all the followers and admirers of Guru Rinpoche. People from all over the world and from different Sanghas have contributed, some with financial donations, and others by organising fundraising events (we had a wine tasting event with Alexandra Adamek in June 2024) and various artists from the Dzogchen Community have generously donated art pieces which are for sale - you can view them and read more about the statue here:

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/building-a-guru-padmasambhava-statue/?external=1>

We are happy to bring together devotees of Guru Padmasambhava worldwide, who are united by their interest in cultural preservation, spirituality, and Buddhism.







## Dealing with Difficult External Circumstances

Dear friends and supporters of the Ka-Ter Translation Project,

Dear members of the Tara family,

LET'S IMAGINE

that all sentient beings live a harmonious, peaceful and enjoyable life,

that there are no conflicts, wars or disharmonies among us,

and that everybody is happy and free of suffering.

That sounds like a nice fantasy, doesn't it?

Living in 'reality', we are confronted with natural disasters, numerous frictions between countries, and tremendous disagreement between people.

Consequently, many beings suffer.

How can we deal with these difficult conditions?

Can we do something to keep our minds calm and relaxed although the external circumstances often appear wild, ferocious and chaotic?

The answer is YES, WE CAN.

The first thing that we can do is related to the material dimension: to translate texts and teachings of the Masters and to publish them. In that way we have the possibility to access the wisdom of the Masters. For more than 22 years, the Ka-Ter Translation Project team, consisting of translators, editors, graphic designers and layout artists, has done admirable efforts to translate numerous teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and other great teachers. Because of the tireless work of the entire team and all your generous donations in all these years, we are able to read and study the unique wisdom of our Masters in our language. These wonderful books, published by **Shang Shung Publications**, are valuable for future generations.

The second thing that we can do is related to the dimension of voice or energy: to focus on our practice.

For activating and integrating the wisdom of our Masters in our life and for harmonizing our conditions we need to focus on our own practice. As you all know, since February 2020 - for almost five years - we have been practicing together as the Tara Family three times a week. By practicing collectively, practitioners from all over the world unify in the transmission of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the same moment.

How wonderful!

The third aspect that we can do is related to the dimension of the mind: to get a stupa which is the symbol of the enlightened mind of all Buddhas, and therefore also a symbol of the nature of our mind.

We can get one of the newly available stupas and, in this way, follow a suggestion of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In 2014, our Master initiated the project called THE 108 STUPAS OF CHANGCHUB DORJE, which is based on a terma of Changchub Dorje. Changchub Dorje's main intention for this project was to harmonize the conflict between the elements and to avoid the rising problem of wars. War means that there is a conflict between the five inner and five outer elements. Externally this manifests as natural disasters, internally as conflict between people. When the external and internal elements are harmonized we can live in peace and happiness.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu suggested building these stupas and placing them around the globe at particular energy points and at the places of the Dzogchen Community Gars and Lings.

Rinpoche asked Migmar Tsering and the team of Dynamic Space of the Elements to take over this project. It is very demanding and challenging to realize this project and it has taken several years to manifest. By now, sixteen stupas have been manufactured. Each

stupa is filled with unique and extraordinary special relics and include not only relics of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu but also unique personal objects like hair, clothing and other precious items from many famous and important Masters such as Adzom Drukpa, Chökyi Wangchuk, the Dalai Lama, Changchub Dorje, Nyala Pema Dündul, Karmapa, Togden Ugyen Tendzin and many others.

YOU CAN NOW BECOME PART OF THIS SUPERB INITIATIVE!



One can get one of these stupas either as an individual or as an institution.

The INTERNATIONAL SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE with branches in Australia, Austria, Russia, the UK and USA, is a very well-established institution, and its board of directors has decided to get one of these stupas for the benefit of all sentient beings and to place it in one of the institutes. As the

Shang Shung Institute Austria is part of the International Shang Shung Institute, we are very happy and pleased that we can be part of this project and will, of course, provide our financial support.

As you know, the **Ka-Ter Translation Project** is the main task and activity of the Shang Shung Institute Austria, with its mission to translate texts and teachings by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the ancient wisdom, knowledge and experience of Tibetan culture into western languages.

On behalf of the Ka-Ter Translation Project, I invite you all to participate in buying this stupa by donating whatever you can afford to this initiative. This is a special opportunity to accumulate infinite merits for oneself and to bring enormous benefits to all sentient beings.

A list of donors' names will be placed underneath the stupa in a separate box. In this way, each donor will be connected to the stupa and receive all its blessings and benefits.



This list will include all the names of the donors to the Ka-Ter Translation Project as well as the donors' names for this project to the other Institutes, who donated funds in 2024.

As the Shang Shung Institute Austria is responsible for this initiative, please send your donations to our bank account:

Account holder: Shang Shung Institute Austria

IBAN: AT19 3815 1000 0003 0387, BIC: RZ-STAT2G151

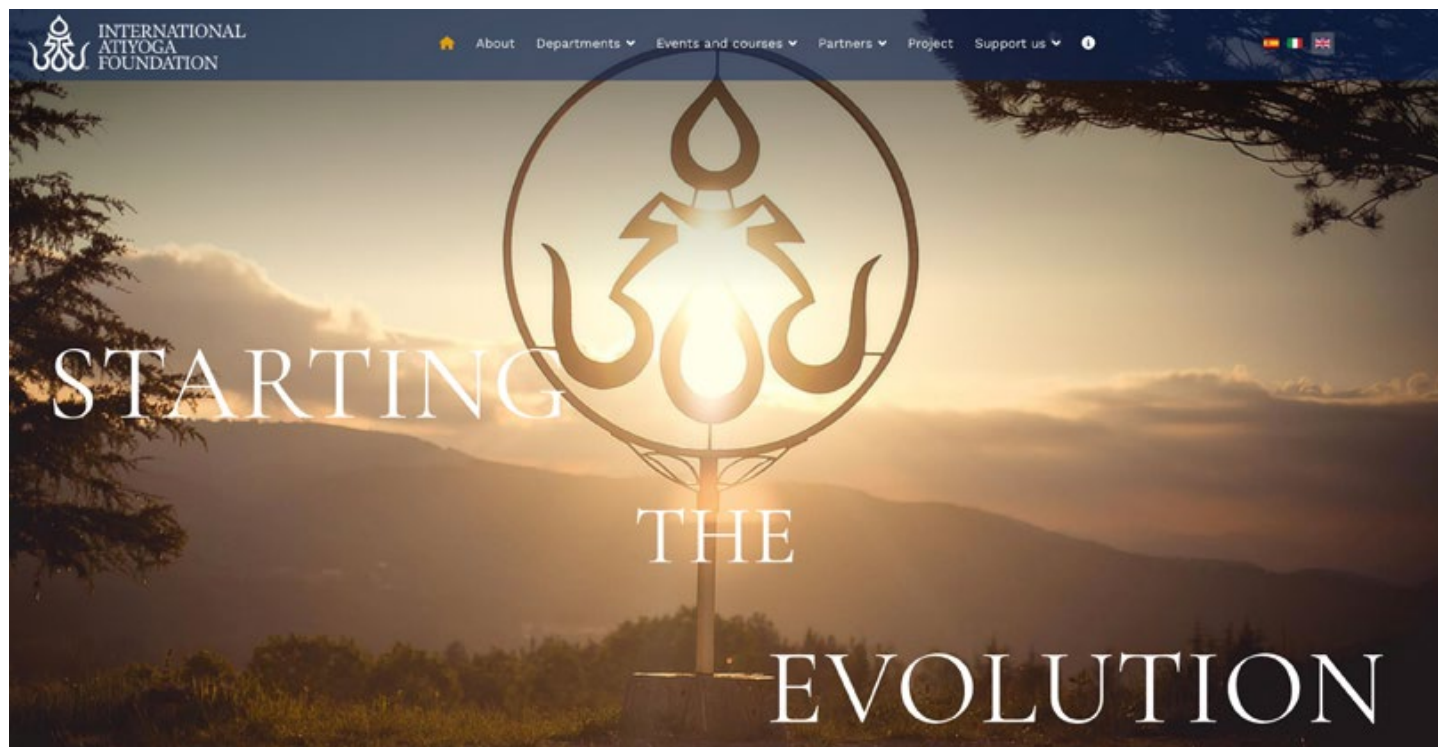
Bank address: Hauptstr. 39, 8262 Ilz, Austria  
You can also send your donation via **PAY-PAL** or **REVOLUT**, use 0043 664 88662660 or IBAN: LT48 3250 0488 1616 3042, BIC: REVOLT21

Thank you very much for your understanding and your support!

Oliver Leick, December 2024

For more information about the stupas please read the articles in THE MIRROR: the first in issue 164, page 36, the second in this issue pages 22 and 23.

Please also visit the **website of the 108 Stupa Project**.



Dear all,

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new Atiyoga Foundation website. The Atiyoga Foundation was created to support each individual's path of discovery and growth according to the legacy of our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

The official website of Ati Yoga Foundation, in three languages, English, Spanish and Italian, is designed as a reference point for practitioners, people seeking personal evolution and anyone wishing to explore paths of inner growth.

At <https://www.atiyogafoundation.org>, you will find an overview of events, initiatives and insights into the departments, links to our strategic partners and the Foundation's projects, accessible from all over the world.

Events and Activities: By browsing the site, you can discover courses, seminars and retreats, both online and live from anywhere in the world with links to go deeper.

In addition, each teacher, Gar or Ling, will be able to independently post, free of charge, the events and courses he or she wishes to make known to everyone. A link to access with instructions will be sent.

Departments: Each department has a dedicated page, with details of initiatives, available courses, links to the specific site and a presentation of the collaborative teams.

But this is only the beginning. We are

working to offer the entire community a high-performance and inclusive platform, full of services and opportunities designed to meet the needs of every practitioner.

In addition, to spread the Master's legacy globally, we will extend the visibility of events and courses open to all, through the website to our social networks, which have over 20,000 followers.

We invite you to explore our new website: [atiyogafoundation.org](https://www.atiyogafoundation.org) and support all our new initiatives with donations. Thank you all in advance!

Atiyoga Foundation Board

# Update on the Changchub Dorje Stupa Project

In the spring of this year, we published details about a very important project that is being developed by Migmar Tsering and the Dynamic Space of the Elements team. The project is based on a terma of Changchub Dorje to build 108 different Stupas to avoid the



rising problem of war and harmonize conflict between the inner and outer elements that manifests as natural disasters. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu suggested creating these Stupas and placing them around the globe at particular energetic points and at the places of the Dzogchen Community Gars and Lings.

After a lot of research and experimentation, Migmar finally found a supplier in Chengdu, a Tibetan, who has a lot of experience and skill in the traditional way of making bronze statues and has started to produce the Stupas. You can read more details about this in [an article](#) published in May of this year.

The Stupas are made of an alloy of copper and brass and are approximately 54 cm high and 32 cm wide. Once they are filled and authenticated, they weigh between 15 and 20 kg. They can be placed outside in a garden or inside a building. If they are not protected from the rain they become a little darker so if they are outside they could be placed in a box of plexiglass.

At the moment 16 Stupas have been manufactured. Eight of them have arrived in Italy



while another eight will soon be delivered from Chengdu. Two of the Stupas have already been filled with relics, tsa tsa, mantras and many other precious objects by the Dy-



namic Space team and arrived at their final destinations. One of the stupas was requested and paid for by Paldenling in Poland and the other by Oliver Leick and family in Austria. Next month a Stupa will go to Germany to the family of Alfred and Maike Stellbrink, and we are going to offer a Stupa to the practitioners of the island of Mallorca.

Migmar and the Dynamic Space team have had several requests for the Stupas from different parts of the Dzogchen Community but, up to now, there hasn't been much financial



commitment from those requesting them. Unfortunately, this means that without financial help to cover the costs of making and filling them, it is unsure how many they will be able to make and send.

In addition to covering the costs of casting the first 16 Stupas of the project, Dynamic Space has also paid for the printing of thousands of mantras that they are rolling, sealing and placing inside the stupas as well as 25 particular substances and medicinal substances to be placed inside.

Since they no longer have available funds to continue they would like to inform people who are interested that, if they can contribute to this important project, Dynamic Space will be able to place an order for another eight Stupas bringing the total to 24. If a Ling or Gar or individual would like to order a Stupa for their place, or simply donate, they can consult the website of Dynamic Space <https://108-stupa.dynamicelements.org/en> or contact Migmar Tsering directly at [dynamicelements@yahoo.com](mailto:dynamicelements@yahoo.com).

In the new year they are planning to send a Stupa to Tashigar Sur in Argentina, another





er to Tashigar Norte in Venezuela, the Ling in Mexico and to Tsegylgar East in Massachusetts, USA. The Gars are not able to cover the costs but the Stupas will be sent anyway. Then there will be one Stupa for Merigar, another for Dzamling Gar in Tenerife and that will be more or less the last ones.

### Authentication of the Stupas

Migmar has prepared a booklet with a list of the main objects that will be placed inside each Stupa. While they are generally filled with the same relics, tsa tsa, some mantras, medicinal substances and other objects, each one has different specific mantras and a different way of filling it. When each stupa is filled, a list is made of the objects inside it.

The relics that the Stupas are filled with include wonderful personal objects (hair, clothing and so on) from many famous masters such as Adzom Drukpa, Chökyi Wangchuk, the Dalai Lama, Changchub Dorje, Nyala Pema Dündul, Karmapa, Togden Ugyen Tendzin and many others.

Each Stupa has a life-tree (sogshin) made from olive wood with different mantras on it

written in gold with a lotus design at the base. Then the Stupas are filled with many types of printed mantras, all of which are hand rolled by the Dynamic Space team while reciting mantras. Other objects include the powder of six different medicinal substances, many types of tsa tsas, zung pills, 25 substances including 5 medicines, 5 grains, 5 valuable things, 5 aromatics and 5 essences, as well as other sacred objects and substances.

In Europe, the Stupas will be filled and sealed at the headquarters of Dynamic Space, while outside Europe, in order to avoid possible difficulties with customs control of the objects contained inside the Stupas, the Stupas and their contents will be sent separately along with detailed instructions on how to place the authenticated objects inside the Stupa.

### Manufacturing the Stupas

The cost of making each Stupa is quite high because no two Stupas are the same. Each one is individually cast in an alloy of copper and brass. Many of them have a more intricate design - parts of the body of the Stupa may

be octagonal, other parts are round - which makes the work of casting them more detailed and much longer. At the workshop in Chengdu, they are very skilled in this type of work as they make traditional statues, so the workmanship of the Stupas is excellent. They also understand very well the geometry of a Stupa in general so it is not necessary to check all the stages of construction like we would have had to do if we had tried to manufacture them in Italy.

### Fundraising

#### The Gau

In order to raise money for this Stupa Project, last year Dynamic Space prepared several precious Gau (amulet boxes) containing the Khorlo of Tagdrol (liberation by wearing), the Sonam Topkyed Khorlo (increasing merits and power) both authenticated by our precious Master, the Dorje Gotrab mantra (protection mantra), hair and clothing of Rinpoche, funerary salt of Rinpoche's body, different relics of ancient Masters as well as relics of tsa tsa of the Master. The Gau are made of pure silver and gold plated.

Then there are two other types of Gau, both made with silver, but one is gold plated while the other is just silver. Inside there are some very important relics of tsa tsa of our precious Master, hair and clothing of our Master, pills of different relics of precious Masters and the funerary salt of the body of our Master. These Gau are very special and there are only a few remaining.

#### Stones for Capacity and Fortune Elements

Dynamic Space has also prepared some stones for the Capacity and Fortune elements that follow the four methods of development. They are semi precious stones that have the mantra to develop Fortune or Capacity written on top. All of them have been authenticated according to the four methods of development. These stones are also part of the fundraising effort for the Stupa Project.

If you would like more details or are interested in acquiring one of these very special objects, contact Migmar at [dynamicelements@yahoo.com](mailto:dynamicelements@yahoo.com)





Dzamling Gar News

## Yoga for Life 2024

By Casilda González and Nataly Nitsche

For one more year Dzamling Gar has hosted a new edition of Yoga for Life. The Atiyoga International Foundation and Dzamling Gar have joined forces to col-

chair, the Respira Method and Mindfulness.

We also had the opportunity to hear advice about the benefits of practicing Yantra Yoga according to Tibetan Medicine and the message from the Race for Life Foundation about the importance of regular check-ups and mammography as a preventive diagnostic method.

The children had their own activities in the wonderful gardens and in the beautiful Casita Amarilla. Kumar Kumari, Khaita Kids, mindfulness and face painting, completed a

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the great work of the many karmayogis who worked on the event (technical team for sound and image, maintenance team, registration team, greeting team, Yantra Yoga teachers (Nataly, Lena, Stella), Khaita dancers (Yulia, Carles, Nicola, Lily, Jana, Sergey and Arnis), Tibetan medicine team (Ilaria and Medegma), Mindfulness teachers (Filip, Lourdes), Kumar Kumari teacher Nataly, Khaita teacher for children Lena and Miriam for the sound bath. We would also like to thank the Gakyl of



laborate with the Race for Life Foundation, the City Council of Adeje and the Government of the Canary Islands to create a great alliance and carry out a solidarity and awareness event in the fight against female and male breast cancer. In our beautiful Gar of Tenerife over 200 participants from all over the Canary Islands celebrated Life with Yantra Yoga.

The Khaita dances, recognized by the CID of UNESCO, were in charge of inaugurating the event and then thirteen Yantra Yoga instructors, authorized by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, taught Yantra Yoga, Yantra Yoga on the

day full of joy and awareness for future generations.

For lunch we enjoyed a delicious paella on the terraces of the Gönpa and in the sunset we enjoyed a relaxing sound bath with Gong thanks to "Armonizate Ahora", followed by a cocktail with a spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean and the magical island of La Gomera.

Yoga for Life 2024 was the successful manifestation of how to unite our capacities and strengths as indicated by Rinpoche in Dzamling Gar's song.

Dzamling Gar (Olaf, Titi, Elerin), Casilda (Institutional Relations of ATIF), Nataly (Executive Manager of Yantra Yoga Department, ATIF), Violeta (Assistant Coordinator), Carrera por la Vida Foundation, Adeje Town Hall, the Canarian Government and all participants.



## Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Birthday Commemoration with Namkhai Yeshe

December 8 has always been a special day for those following the teaching of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. It is the day when we celebrate the anniversary of his birth. This year Sunday December 8 was particularly special for all those who were able to visit or connect online with Merigar as the Master, Namkhai Yeshe, came to the Gar and kindly gave a teaching related to one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's first books, "The Mirror".

As almost per tradition, in recognition of the significance of this moment, the weather put on a marvellous Christmas card display and on Sunday morning, the day of the teaching, those arriving at Merigar found that it had been blanketed overnight in a soft white layer of snow. After the morning teaching, in the dining room at the Yellow House, there was a banquet of delicious and abundant Ti-



Photo by Lilly Kollnberger

betan momos that Migmar Tsering's Dynamic Space of the Elements team had spent several days preparing.

The day concluded with a concert in the Gönpa of some of Namkhai Yeshe's musical compositions in Octophonic sound that made use of the new audio system with eight

speakers in a circle around listeners. One of the compositions was a homage to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu entitled "Hidden Treasure".

Another milestone at Merigar made possible thanks to the hard work and commitment of many people, in many different fields.

## Switching to Solar Energy at Merigar West

Ongoing work at Merigar is focussed on the change of heating system from the historic hydrocarbon based heating, using diesel and LPG, to heat pumps powered by solar energy via solar panels. The panels have been mounted on the roof of the Mandala Hall and are currently being mounted on the roof of the Yellow House. Several large Tesla storage batteries will be mounted in these two locations and will power the heat pumps to heat these two buildings plus the Gönpa. The Gönpa will have additional radiators fitted to increase capacity. The benefits will be both to the ambient with less carbon produced and released as well as a substantial annual saving on cost.

At the same time as the work of mounting the solar panels is taking place, repair work and essential maintenance to the roofs is being carried out. Both roofs have several decades of service and need help to confi-



dently face the future, keeping the spaces warm and dry. This has included replacing old and broken roof tiles, repairing skylights and changing insulation where it is no longer fit for purpose.

With the uncertain weather over the next weeks it will probably be nearer Xmas when the work is completed and the new heating



system operational in all the buildings.

We are grateful for the system of support that the Italian State offers structures like Merigar via tax concessions that has helped to partially fund these works and eventual eco-friendly improvements. The funding is managed by UBI (The Italian Union of Buddhists) via bidding for financial assistance towards beneficial projects that help member organisations be more independent.



## ... Everything Continues at Merigar East!

*"So, I believe it's crucial for the whole Community to stay united and to always strive to be present and aware of our situation. In Vajrayana, it is said that after receiving empowerment, it is like a snake entering a tube, which can only exit from one end or the other—either liberation or the lowest states. Why? Because after receiving Vajrayana initiation, we are bound to follow our samayas, our commitments, even at the cost of our lives. It's the same for us—we have one very important samaya: to remain present and aware."*

(Adriano Clemente, 2020, Mirror)

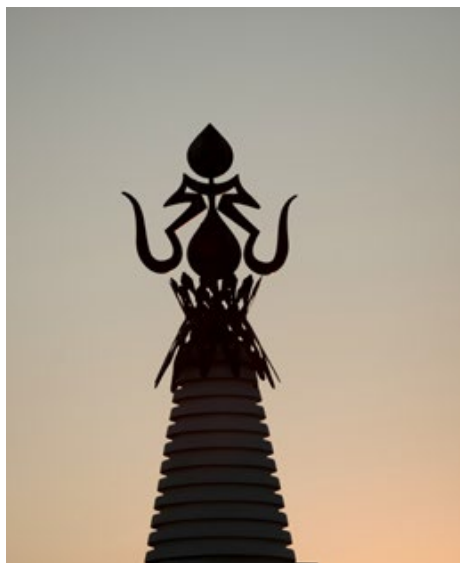
With these words, I would like to begin sharing about Merigar East, located at the far end of the Old Continent of Europe. Beyond our programs and activities, it is a reality filled with challenges. Merigar East is a vast space full of possibilities but with very few



questions have echoed throughout the space of Merigar East.

But beyond everything, the snake tends to rise, and that is the choice we make every day, moment by moment, from action to action—trying our best to be present and aware.

ney of study and practice. Together with Gabriela Schneider, the Romanian Sangha completed a one-year course on the profound text Dorje Sempa Namkha Che with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's commentary. Every Wednesday, we gathered online to delve into this import-



human resources. And those few resources, when they appear, often collide with their own limitations. It is not necessary to perform a social or "community" diagnosis, but for anyone who has served in the Gakyil, the taste of those challenges is surely familiar. How do we overcome them? What motivates us to keep going? What makes us want to give up? Do we still practice Dzogchen in the Dzogchen Community? These and many other



That is why everything continues at Merigar East. Because the sky is still more than the earth... and the teachings left by Rinpoche continue to manifest here, whether physically or virtually. The key is in our active participation! We're excited to share some of the wonderful activities that have taken place recently at Merigar East.

### A Year of Dorje Sempa Namkha Che

This past year has been a remarkable jour-

ant teaching, deepening our understanding and connection. We are incredibly grateful to Gabriela for guiding us through this experience and knowledge.

### Collective Practices. Online and Onsite

As the summer shifted into the calmness of autumn, we dedicated this season to collective practices. Sangha members gathered online via Zoom and onsite in our beautiful Gonpa at Merigar East for weekend sessions.



These practices offered moments of connection, contemplation, and mutual support, reminding us of the strength of practicing together.

### A Joyful Khaita Workshop in Bucharest

In Bucharest, we hosted a wonderful Khaita workshop led by Krisztina Balla introducing the joyful dances to 14 participants. For many, this was their first touch with Khaita, and it was heartwarming to witness their enthusiasm and joy. Some participants expressed interest in a longer weekend course, which would allow them to deepen their freshly acquired experience. And we will be happy to fulfill their wish. On top of all, Krisztina also led weekly practice Khaita Forever from ME, for the first time ever.

### Planting a Shelter for the Future

With gratitude to our amazing 16 volunteers and generous donors, we've planted 800 out of 1,000 Turkestan elms to create a natural windbreak. This project will enhance the Gar's environment, and we invite your support. Every contribution makes a difference. So far, we've raised 278 out of 500 Euros for this important initiative.

You can learn more and donate for the Oasis Project here.

### Lungta Project: A Blessing for Losar

We're excited to continue our Lungta project! This summer, volunteers printed and cut the Lungta, and now we're preparing to send them for you. You can already order Lungta from our website and choose to have them sent to your home or hung at Merigar East for Losar, which we'll celebrate on February 28th, 2025. Join us for any part of this journey: help sew or print the Lungta at Merigar East, enjoy the peaceful atmosphere here, celebrate Losar together, or order Lungta for yourself and loved ones!

Your donation will help preserve, share, and promote Rinpoche's cultural heritage. It will also support various educational programs designed to deepen understanding of the nature of the individual and foster a more aware and harmonious state of being.

### Welcoming the New Year 2025 Together

We invite everyone to join us at Merigar East for a joyful New Year Celebration. This will be a time to practice together, share laughter, and welcome 2025 in the warmth of community.

Merigar East, this special place that sometimes feels like it's in another galaxy (at least to some!), is ready to welcome anyone who



wants to experience the beauty of this retreat in the time between the years.

**Dates: 27 December - 5 January**

What will we do? We will watch Rin-



Gabriela Schneider guided the course on Dorje Sempa Namkha Che

poche's retreat, practice together, cook, walk the long beach, and repeat!

**How to get here:** For more details on how to reach Merigar East, visit [Travelling Here](#), or simply write to us at [office.me@dzogchen.ro](mailto:office.me@dzogchen.ro).

Meditation Training and Secondary Practices of the Dzogchen Community

In addition, we are excited to announce the Meditation Training and Secondary Practices of the Dzogchen Community program, in

collaboration with the Sangha App Team. This unique online program, made possible through the generosity of our teachers, will offer teachings and practices that benefit both newcomers and experienced practitioners. The program will span three modules from January to June 2025.

Each module is designed to provide essential practices that build the foundation of your practice.

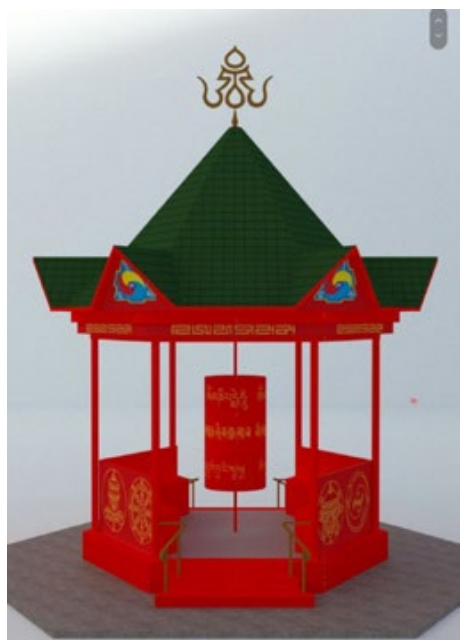
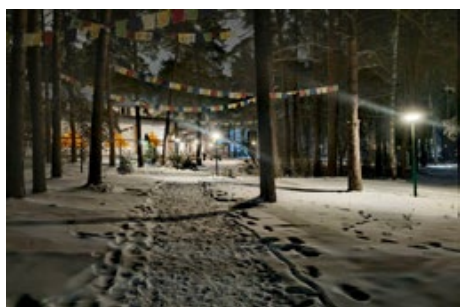
Module 1: First Steps on the Path begins in January. This course is a collaboration between Dina Priymak, Enzo Terzano, Lukas Chmelik, Lynn Newdome, Oliver Leick, and Steven Landsberg.

[Read the full program here.](#)

With love and gratitude,  
Merigar East Team

## Dear friends, we send you warm greetings from Kunsangar North!

This winter our gar is drowning in the snow, creating an atmosphere of peace and inspiration. Nature pleases us with its winter colors, filling our hearts with joy and harmony. The past months have been full of events that gave us joy, inspiration and the opportunity to deepen our knowledge and practices.



The main event at Kunsangar North was Rinpoche's birthday. About a hundred people came to the celebration, of which about 20 were new members of the Dzogchen Community. The atmosphere was filled with joy and inspiration. Over the course of two days, there were classes on Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance. For beginners we organized viewings of Rinpoche's lectures, and they were able to understand the Teaching more deeply. The celebration ended with a ganapuja and the invocation of the lamp, which united all the participants in a festive atmosphere.

### Since the end of summer, several retreats have taken place.

- a Yantra Yoga retreat with Viktor Krachkovsky.
- Vajra Dance retreats with Ulyana Sokolova and Tanya Pronicheva.
- Santi Maha Sangha retreats and separate classes with Alexander Gomonov, Grigory Mokhin and Vlad Bespalov.
- an ongoing course "Principles of Dzogchen" with Alexander Gomonov, organized at the request of new students.

### Mani Khorlo and new projects at the gar

Thanks to our joint practice, the general field of merit increases, creating favorable circumstances for the development and prosperity of the Dzogchen Community, our country and the whole world. At Kunsangar North, conditions have ripened for the construction of a large Mani Khorlo drum next to the Stupa of Perfect Victory. We have prepared a project for a pavilion for meditation and circumambulation around Mani Khorlo, which will contribute to the accumulation of merit and the spreading of the Teaching for the benefit of all.

The new object will fit harmoniously into the landscape next to the stupa. The Longsal teachings and mantras for various activi-

ties transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, which are practiced in the Dzogchen Community, will be placed in the Mani Khorlo. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, this project is already in the implementation stage.

### Sinhamukha Practice Retreat

A retreat on the Sinhamukha practice was held at the gar from September 18 to 26, 2024. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu transmitted this practice in different versions, and the retreat used practices from the short thun, five families, and the terma of Ayu Khandro. The success of the retreat was so great that at the end a rainbow halo appeared in the sky, which inspired all the participants.

### Activity of the School of Tibetan Medicine

Activities of the School of Tibetan Medicine continue at Kunsangar North under the guidance of Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo. Participants undergo treatment courses and also learn the basics of Tibetan medicine. Classes include theoretical lectures and practical classes aimed at improving health and understanding the traditional approach to medicine.

### Preparing for the New Year celebration

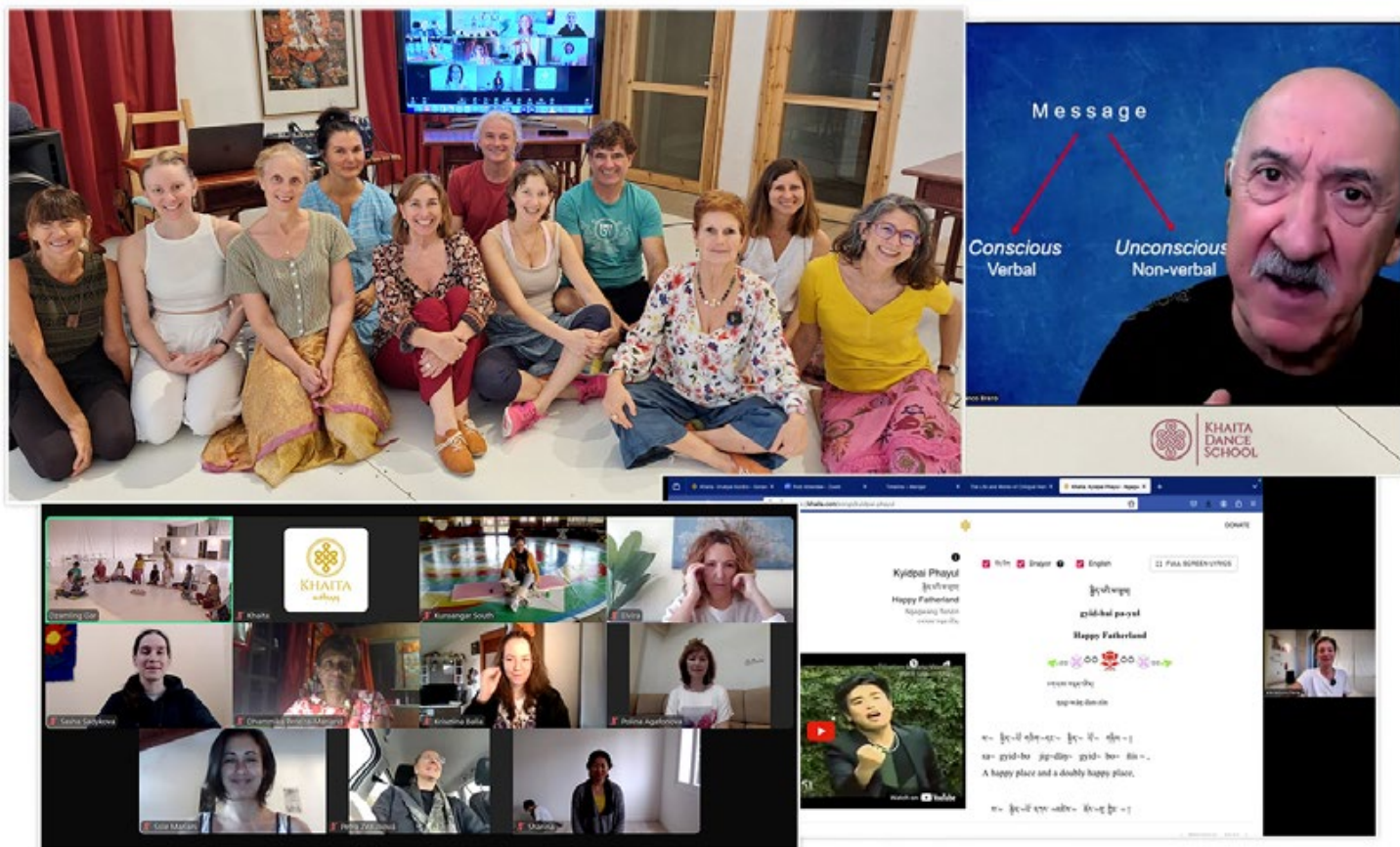
We are already starting to prepare for the New Year celebration, which promises to be a bright and memorable event. We invite everyone to join our celebrations and joint practices.

With love and inspiration,  
Kunsangar North









## Khaita Educational Program: Culmination of the Sixth Course at Dzamling Gar

The second cycle of the Khaita Educational Program spanned two years with six one week-long educational courses, at Dejamling, Merigar and Dzamling Gar. Led by Adriana Dal Borgo with the precious support of Petra Zezulkova and other Khaita Instructors. We have been educated by way of body, voice and mind in an incredibly wide range of transcultural values expressed by Khaita. The course has continually surprised, challenged and rewarded us. A true evolution.

Peter: My natural attraction to Khaita first manifested in the early days when we sang and danced relentlessly with Rinpoche at retreats, trying our best, following the early experts, having fun and really knowing very little, but receiving a taste and becoming fascinated. I fell easily under Khaita's spell of joy and harmony and the infectious enthusiasm of our Master. Unfortunately, I always found it difficult to keep up the momentum alone or in front of the computer, even after inspiring teachers such as Svetlana, Stoffelina and Lena came to lead and inspire us in the UK.

So, when my partner Cindy suggested that we could participate in a progressive training program aimed at becoming teachers or experts of Khaita, I knew this would be a fun and meaningful journey.

Dhammika: The first time I experienced the music and dances of Khaita in front of our Master at Namgyalgar, it ignited something indescribable and powerful in my heart. My movements were clumsy and uncoordinated. Under the gaze of our Master, we ALL participated and somewhat tried to keep a circle, following/copying Adriana in the small gompal!

At Dejamling, France, May 2023 we began our journey learning many aspects: steps and movements, codifying and examining. This was when dear Sebastian appeared in our midst. In July at Merigar we continued to expand our learnings with many workshops delivered by professionals: Elisha Koppensteiner on vocal training; Eva Leick with academic research on Khaita and well-being; Martina Krejcova, teaching Khaita in Primary School; Monika Marcik using Khaita in coaching.

At Dzamling Gar in November the highlight was the expert guidance of Pancho Company on reading musical components.

At the fourth in March 2024 Dzamling Gar, we deepened our understanding and studied academic dance research, and Dr Phuntsog's talk on Exploring Khaita. Additionally, we

examined how to present Khaita to different public audiences.

In Merigar on 8th July 2024 we joined together to remember our dear friend, accomplished dancer and fellow student, Sebastian Troncoso, who suddenly passed from this life on 3rd July. Sebastian had been a prime mover in all the workshops to that date and manifested great potential as a Khaita dancer. We were all devastated by this tragic news, but the dance must continue. We studied more complex dances such as Tashi Monlam and Tashi Mondun and Gangchenpa. Petra continued to torture us with her special dance guessing game – blind recognition of the dance solely through the music.

For the final meeting at Dzamling Gar in November 2024, we were privileged to participate in two excellent workshops. The first a presentation and training by Gianfranco Bre-ro, who patiently taught skills of communication in person and on zoom, training us how to introduce a dance and its steps. Under his expert observation and guidance, we learned to nurture the audience and communicate effectively. The second presentation was an incredible power point on Tibetan language, culture and history connected with Khaita. We were all absolutely captivated by Lena Dumcheva's clear delivery and her eclectic choice of subject matter.



Here in Dzamling Gar we found ourselves coalescing as a group both on site and online; coordinating the dances more successfully but still with a lot to improve, orienting ourselves towards a possible 'teacher certification'. This will probably happen at Merigar in May 2025.

It has been a wonderful journey. There is no doubt that our ability and appreciation of the Khaita project has increased infinitely. Under the wonderful tutelage of Adriana with the qualified assistance of Petra, Clotilde and this time in Dzamling Gar, Jana, we have developed and grown very close as a group, both on site and on Zoom.

Peter: *as a lover of in person workshops, I have been lucky to physically attend all 6 sessions. I am amazed by the richness and depth of Khaita, which although based in dance and movement, also covers singing, the meaning and the whole cultural and historical context of Tibet radiating out in ever increasing circles. All this time and commitment has been an utter joy regardless of the arrival point in my journey as a Khaita improver.*

Dhammika: *Having completed five courses online in Australia, and one onsite in Merigar, Khaita is teaching me many facets of its diamond: presence, awareness, harmony, co-ordination, collaboration, Tibetan culture,*

*the vehicle of Noble Teachings and human values. Heartfelt gratitude to our Master for this infinite treasure.*

Do consider this Khaita Educational Program in the future if you would like to improve and deepen your Khaita and appreciate the depth and richness of this precious gift from our Master, spreading throughout the whole Tibetan cultural landscape to illuminate our hearts across the globe.

Dhammika Pereira-Marland & Peter White



## What Makes a Community?

Sangha App Team

Trying to find the essence of what makes a community is quite difficult. In fact, everyone seems to understand "community" and "collaboration" in their own way.

Even in social sciences, there are 94 different definitions of the term "community." In

today's world, some people idealize the beauty of living close together with others, while other people are wary of belonging to groups and prefer looser and freer ties.

Let's hear about how Dzogchen practitioners feel in our community. The descriptions below were drawn from the **15 interviews** we conducted with practitioners in 2024.

**How does the Sangha help practice**  
Sangha in Sanskrit, or *gendun* in Tibetan,

refers to the community of practitioners who aspire to achieve virtue. As formulated in the Invocation of the Lamp we wish "to achieve enlightenment together in a single group" and "to never separate." These connections can reach multiple levels, on the level of the nature of our mind, but also in our mundane existence.

For the people we interviewed, the Dzogchen Community is a reference point in their life. Having a partner, a close friend on the path or a group of practitioners around us supports our motivation:

*"If you are alone, isolated, then your motivation is dropping ... People lose internal motivation because of the circumstances of life, then someone else from the community can pull you back in."* (Slovak practitioner)

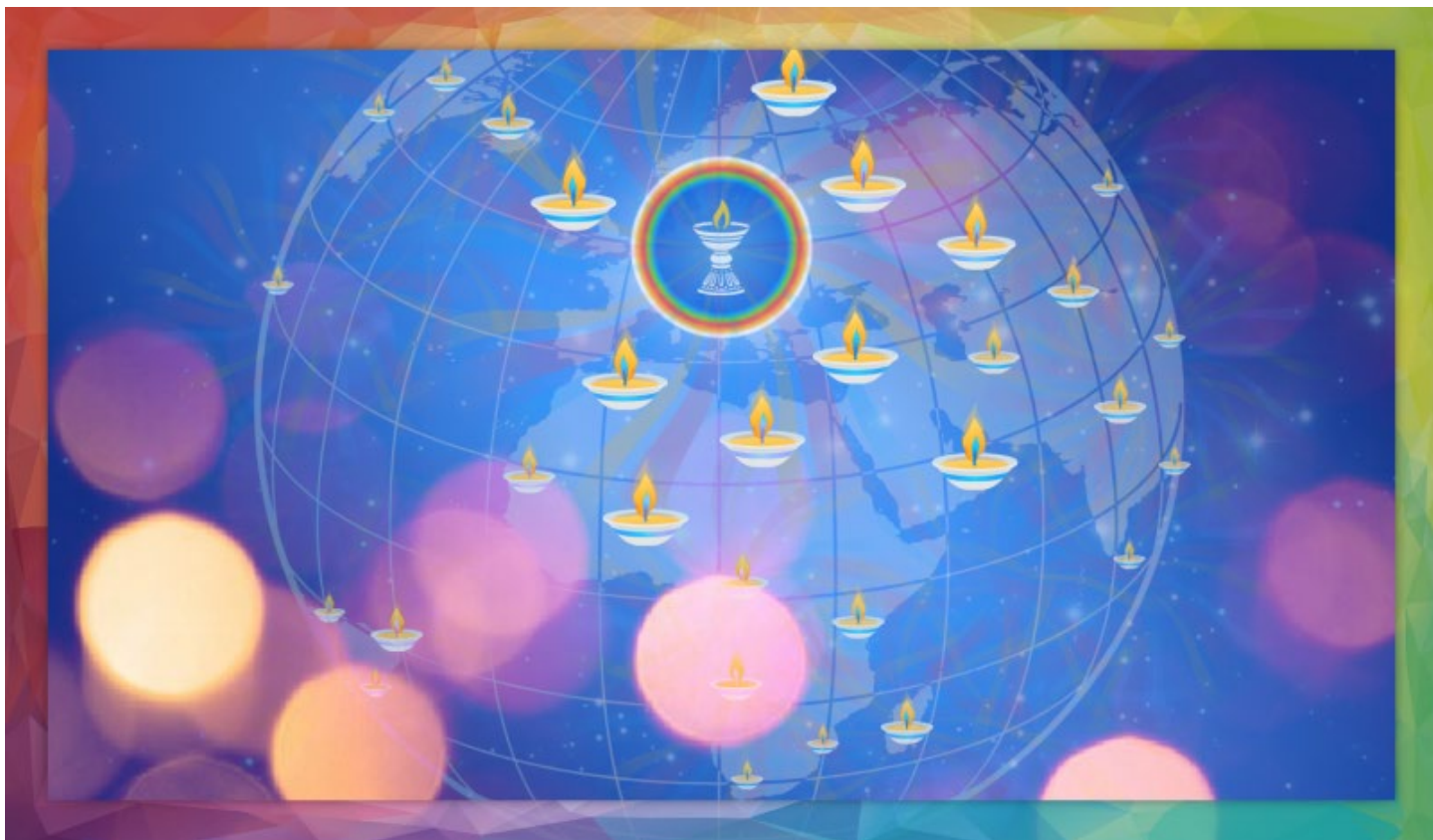
Practice is "a very good base for the feelings of belonging to develop," according to a Russian practitioner. Interviewees expressed a sense of belonging, of being accepted and welcome in the community, even when we are very different.

As Rinpoche said, "we are all in the same boat," but we did not embark because of common taste, political views or lifestyle, as happens in many groups today. If people feel they are being accepted, despite the differences, maybe as a group we will succeed, at least a little bit, to put our egos or identities aside.

### What is a Vajra family

We consider ourselves family even when we did not know each other beforehand, and we use expressions such as Vajra brothers and sisters. This is a metaphor pertaining to a "very deep connection," of a different layer of our existence than that of our current lives. Although, alas, all families have "sticky" karma, entangled and difficult to liberate, Vajra





families can offer concrete support in life's circumstances:

*"The community is a reference point, both for collective practice and for socializing. We are particular, so I couldn't be so open to people who are not from the community ... The community helps in situations of illness, or other problems." (Italian practitioner)*

This doesn't necessarily mean that the community is a safe haven. When conflict or even abuse happens, some people might say "how could a practitioner do that?" following the expectation to be better humans if we are practicing meditation. Interviewees noted that sometimes it gets difficult and frustrating, conflicts can be heartbreaking, and that the boat we are all on can feel "tight and uncomfortable" at times. Hard relational

times can help us shed light on our expectations and ideas we are clinging to; they are opportunities to relax our tensions:

*"Conflicts arise from every single individual, and as we are individuals, if we improve our relationships with others and try to diminish our tensions, certainly all the conflicts and tensions thereafter will be spontaneously pacified." (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, "The Dzogchen Community")*

#### Outsiders and insiders

In our community, there are also people who prefer not to enter a group mind, but to be independent thinkers (or non-thinkers). A tightly knit group can seem like a sect and develop closed-minded attitudes:

*"We also have to try for a moment to be a little bit autonomous, not to be totally immersed, we also have an external, outside life. Because otherwise we risk wearing blinders," says an Italian practitioner.*

A balance may allow us to maintain a fresh outlook on what we take for granted, especially of ideas and expectations of what people should or shouldn't do. In communities, many people also suffer from gossip and rumours that are used to reinforce the norms and to enhance conformity.

As in recent years, people with different experiences of the Teachings join our community. We can observe how we manage (as a group) to integrate those different experienc-

es. At the same time, the reach of the actual Sangha – people with transmission – is much larger than we can observe. A community is not a fixed group, but a process created through our actions. We have seen the different facets of our community, as expressed by the practitioners we have interviewed. Let's go back to the real nature of the Dzogchen Community, as expressed by Rinpoche:

*"In reality the Dzogchen Community is represented firstly by the teachings of an authentic Master who maintains them and secondly by the people who are interested in them; who according to their different individual capabilities, study the Tantras, the Lungs and the Upadeshas of Dzogchen and secondarily all the branches of knowledge linked with the teachings; who try to practice their understanding as much as they can; who collaborate in resolving the most important necessities related to the aims and do their best to help in any kind of work, motivated by the fact, not of having been given the job by someone else, but by their own spontaneous willingness."*

(Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, "The Dzogchen Community")



## Nina Robinson passed away peacefully at her home in Poggio Ferro in Italy in the early morning of Saturday September 28, 2024.

From the 1980s when she moved to Italy, Nina was a perfect example of a Dzogchen practitioner, always present, always ready to help, always committed to whatever work she was doing. She was one of the first people who decided to pull up roots in her home country and come to be an active part of the young Merigar Dzogchen Community in the early 1980s, ready to help with whatever work was needed. With her move to Italy in the 80s, she adopted Italy totally as her own country, learning the language and customs perfectly.

One of her first duties in the Community was to be part of the original team of editors of the Mirror, the newspaper of the Dzogchen Community at that time. Later on she became the secretary of Merigar and worked long hours in the office at the Yellow House.

Nina was also a skilful translator and editor and lent her translation skills to translations of many teachings and books for the Dzogchen Community.

Nina was such a dedicated practitioner that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu appointed her to teach and lead the Mandarava Longlife practice. This responsibility to teach took her around the world several times to explain and lead this practice for hundreds of people. For many people Nina Robinson became synonymous with the Mandarava practice.

In her later year she worked wholeheartedly making the land of Merigar more beautiful with her karma yoga around the Gönpa and the yellow house, caring for the gardens, the flowers, bushes and trees that she loved so much.

Whatever activity Nina undertook, she did it wholeheartedly, with love, dedication and sheer hard work, without counting the hours that she spent on it.

Nina was a special person to the many people who knew her. Her general knowledge was amazing and her particular knowledge



of the Mandarava practice and the teachings of Namkhai Norbu was exceptional. And she was always happy to share all of this with those around her. She had an exceptional memory and love of story telling and it was always an enormous pleasure to spend time with her and listen to her experiences and stories. Her love of plants and the natural world manifested in much of the greenery at Merigar around the Gonpa and, in her later life, in the little jewel of her garden at Poggio Ferro.

She could be outspoken at times, even bossy, but that was also part of her character and directness and we still loved her for it.

Nina is already missed not only on Amata and at Merigar but also by many friends from around the world but we are sure to meet her once again on the path that leads to liberation.

Ciao Nina  
Liz Granger for The Mirror

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### Nina Robinson Our Mum & Nonna

Our mum's rebellious nature, free thinking, and love of counterculture is clearly evident in her choice of mine and my brother's names. My brother was named after the famous jazz musician, Louis Armstrong. I was named after a character from James Baldwin's novel 'Another Country', a jazz singer who fought racism, called Ida Scott.

When Mum was a young girl she adored roller coasters. She loved the slow start that gets more and more intense, the excitement

that increases as you anticipate reaching the summit, the sudden drop, the twists and turns, the screams and laughter.

Mum's life was not dissimilar to a roller-coaster and she loved it all.

Her life would not have been this exceptionally fulfilling, if she hadn't met such incredible people along the way, for which I am truly grateful.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank a very special group of people from the Merigar Community, set up by Christiane Rhein, called 'Aiuto a Nina'. They made it possible for Mum to remain in her much loved home. The core of this group, Christiane, Fiorella, Christine, Kasia and Giorgio, showed such dedication, determination and love. It was plain to see that they are truly amazing people. I am very grateful - thank you for being Mum's friends.

If you ever feel like you are missing our mum you might find comfort reading, 'The Third Policeman' by Flann O'Brien, or by taking a walk in nature to see how beautiful the world is, or maybe add some beauty of your own by planting a tree or a plant.

Thank you Mum  
By Ida

Kenwood

Two tiny figures  
On a wide green landscape  
You thought of Hokusai  
I thought of Oshima  
Or Laurel and Hardy  
In Zen and the Art of Comedy

Yellow bright the sky  
Yellow glow your parasol  
Under the pearl grey clouds  
We ran  
Looking for a rainbow

A short poem by Des Barry recalling a vivid moment he shared with Nina back in 1981

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### Mi chiamo Fraser e sono il genero di Nina.

I became Nina's son-in-law on the 28 September 1996, when Ida and I married in Santa Fiora, and on that day one of the first things



Nina with her children Louis and Ida.

that Nina taught me was that I was now her genero.

The first time I met Nina was at the funeral of her mother, in March 1995. Ida and I had only been together since the previous summer but on that day Nina introduced me to her family as her son-in-law. This was a complete shock to me and I thought to myself, how dare she put such pressure on me - but over time I came to wonder that maybe she knew something I didn't and had decided to start to write my story for me.

And it is this idea of an individual's story that I would like to explore.

As Ida and I sat beside Nina's coffin at her home, waiting for the undertakers to arrive, the spine of a book caught my attention as it was called *The Story Book* and I am fascinated by the role that stories play in our lives.

This particular story book contained 21 traditional Buddhist tales and as I looked at their titles and read the morals of each of them, I realised there was a 22nd story that may not be from the Buddhist tradition but was worthy of inclusion.

The title of it is "The Woman With The Iron Will Who Found Her Home On The Iron Hill".

Now you may not immediately realise by only reading the title alone that you already know this story, its protagonist and many people who feature in it. But if I were to tell you that the name of the woman with the iron will is Nina, the home she found was in Italy, and that iron hill translates to Poggio Ferro in Italian, you surely now know the story I am referring to.

That being the case, I don't need to recount



it, but I would like to look at what I believe to be the most important part of the story - finding a home.

When Nina first visited Italy, in the early 60s, she immediately fell in love with it and thought, 'How can anyone leave this beautiful country?'. So when in the mid-80s it was suggested by Norbu that Nina come to Merigar, it was the perfect invitation because now she had an opportunity to be able to make Italy



her home and hopefully never have to leave 'this beautiful country'.

To begin with, life in Italy was challenging and she did not immediately find her home on the iron hill. It would take time, hard work, dedication and, most importantly, the assistance of her very dear friend, Mary Keynes.

But finally, at the end of the 90s, she found her home and it is important to remember that this was the first home she had ever owned. Which meant she could truly make it her own and pour all her love and energy into it, transforming it into a physical and emotional representation of who she truly was. This also took time, hard work and the assistance of the many friends she had made in the community here. But slowly and surely her home took shape and it now stands as a true testament to her and her love of Italy.

Finding and creating a home is never easy and, perhaps more importantly, understanding that your home is not always the same as your place of birth takes time. But slowly and surely Nina was able to realise both of those things and in doing so she also became Italian, which quite possibly was what she was always destined to be.

So she finally found her home and, by doing so, she found the answer to the question she had asked herself when she first came to Italy, all those years ago, and that is you don't leave this beautiful country and you certainly don't leave the beautiful home you have created here.

Fraser Bensted



# How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

August 17, 2024  
Khandroling

Interview with Paora Te Oti Takarangi Joseph from New Zealand

My name is Paora Takarangi however Rinpoche used to know me as Paul when I first met him. Then I became more Maori and that is my Maori name, and the Maori is transliterated into Paul. I am from New Zealand and the Maori name is Aotearoa.

In Maori custom in general we probably talk too much because we like to acknowledge everything, so first I would like acknowledge our Teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and the Sangha here at Khandroling, the Land of the Dakinis. I am the fortunate one to be here and experience this place.

For myself, I guess my first memory that has some kind of relationship with Rinpoche and my other teachers, is that when I was quite young, around 11 or 12 years old, and I remember looking at the world globe for the first time, and on the globe I noticed a country called Tibet. For some reason it just stood out to me and I grew up in a very small place called Ruawai and not many people resided there, maybe 500 people lived there. It was in the rural northern part of New Zealand. I was very sheltered, and I didn't know what the world was like, my world was a lot smaller. But I always had Tibet on my mind after seeing it on the globe. So I guess I carried that and as it is in life, one thing led to another and I traveled to many places around the world and then on the odd chance one time, my mother who was a school teacher had a good friend, Pamala, and Pamala had a friend who is a Gelugpa nun - Celia. I think Pamala was supporting her and anyhow one thing led to another and Pamala said, "I have a friend who is a Buddhist nun and maybe you can meet her." I was planning to travel to India and I said yes, please, can I meet her.

Pamala also brought around Khyentse Rinpoche from Amdo, a Gelugpa Rinpoche who lived in New Zealand. This was in 1986. This Rinpoche ended up settling in New Zealand and he set up and Gelugpa Gönpa there. He had many students and he was a very lovely man and I was fortunate to spend some time with him and he would stay at our place on Waiheke Island. Pamala also brought another



Chod Retreat at Tashigar South 2001

Lama with her called Lama Karma Samten, who was Karma Kagyu.

So, I was very happy that I got to meet two Tibetans and a western Tibetan Buddhist nun, and I told them I was going to India and I asked them where should I go and they said I should go to Kopan Monastery.

So, then I went to Kopan Monastery, like many Westerners, in November of 1987 and I spent around four months there. I also received teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharmasala. When I came back to New Zealand I got involved with the Karma Kagyu lineage and Lama Samten and I did my ngöndro with Lama Samten. This was also in 1987. With Lama Samten you had to do four ngöndros and he was a hard task master. I did some of my ngöndros at Kopan Monastery which is very close to Auckland, and some of the practices I did in Bodhgaya. When I was going through my second ngöndro and was doing Gururyoga, my friend Alistair Gager who lives in New Zealand, and was also a

student of Lama Samten in previous years, spoke to me of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. And he said to me, "Maybe you would like to meet this teacher." I was a little bit iffy because Lama Samten was quite strict and until you finished your ngöndro, you were not allowed to receive any other high teachings such as Mahamudra and Dzogchen, etc. Then I found out from Alistair that Rinpoche had been in a New Zealand quite a few times, the first time was in 1986 at Banks Peninsula. So in 1996 Alistair said to me that Rinpoche was giving teachings in Epson, a school in Auckland, and would I like to come. I agreed to come. I still had not completed my four ngöndros. I took my time, at that time I was doing the Gururyoga.

So I went to the teachings with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and I was lucky because when I went to Nepal I had received other teachings from other masters, like Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, but when it came to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu I listened to the teachings but I thought

maybe I didn't hear properly. So I went away from the teaching and really I didn't think much more about it.

I went back to my ngōndro and the teachings with Lama Samten and I had also moved from Auckland to Whanganui. Whanganui is my Maori tribal area. I was also discovering my Maori roots at this time which is quite important because what I had had difficulty with was that I did not grow up as Maori, as indigenous, in a traditional sense, so I had to rediscover that.

So I went back to my tribal area to discover that and I also kept up my ngōndro. I bought a house there along the Whanganui River, and one morning I had quite a significant dream. Chōgyal Namkhai Norbu appeared in the dream and we were both sitting on the other side of our traditional river, and we were sitting in a Nikau thatched hut, and Maori would build their traditional homes out of these Nikau trees. Nikau trees are very beautiful.

So, we were sitting in the hut overlooking the river and Rinpoche clearly went through the nine purification breathings with me, and then he went through Guruyoga with me, and it was very clear, and then he said to me in the dream, now we are going to fly the length of the Whanganui river. The river is about 100 kms long, and there are a lot of traditional pa sites along the river and it's all uncut brush, like here at Khandroling You can imagine that many of these old trees here were never cut down, so the river is very elemental and primal. So we flew down the Whanganui river and then we flew back again past where we were sitting, and then he said to me, "Ok now we are going to Mt Kailash and Tibet."

Then before that, in the dream, on our way to Kailash and Tibet, we stopped. And I gathered that where we stopped was Italy. I had never been to Italy until recently, to Yeshe's teachings, and that was quite recently, around six weeks ago. So, we went to Italy in the dream and I remember the cobble stone streets particularly in the dream, and then we went to Mt Kailash and Tibet. I don't remember much about that at all really.

But the really interesting thing is that recently at the teachings with Yeshe, after the teachings we got invited to a barbecue at the house of Svetko, and the wonderful barbecue was in Castel del Piano. When we walked there and when we left, my experience was that this place felt like where we were in Italy in my dream of 1996. I had never seen this kind of street before. I was quite excited when I realized it was the street in my dream.

I mention this story about the dream be-

cause when I was doing my Guruyoga, it was only a piece of paper, until I met Rinpoche. When I was doing practice and reading the text it was only reading, and in the dream when I did Guruyoga with Rinpoche, I recognized the nature of mind. The other interesting part of the dream is that when I woke



up, I was very excited.

So, after I had this dream, I knew I needed to go online and look for this Master. I discovered there were some teachings happening in Australia, in Namgyalgar, I booked a ticket straight away. That was at the end of 1996.

I went to Namgyalgar and the interesting part about the dream is that when I got to the teachings with Rinpoche, for the first 20 minutes he was speaking word for word the same as in my dream and I could remember a lot more easily because it was back then. So it was very clear to me and I remember at the time I was listening to Rinpoche and it was exactly like we were sitting back on the Whanganui river bank.

So, I guess like some of our Vajra brothers and sisters who have had similar experiences with Rinpoche in the dreams, that's really what led me into the teachings. And it still continues, Rinpoche has led me here to this wonderful Gar, the Vajra Dance and Goma Devi and I really hope that the rest of our Community can come here as well to experience this place and be in Rinpoche's vision from his kindness and what he has offered to all of us.

In about the year 2000, I had another sig-

nificant dream in which this time Guru Rinpoche appeared as a golden statue coming out of the ocean at the top of the North Island of New Zealand. Guru Rinpoche said that he had been here along time ago but your people had forgotten. Later I discovered that our ancestor Te Rakaihautu had flew here from Mount Kailash in Tibet – probably on a garuda which we call the Paerangi or Korotangi bird. Our name for Tibet is called Patu-nui-a-rua.

I will end with this korero or talk with a waiata or song and it is sung quite often and it is really about the truth. It says that the truth leads you to be in the knowledge concerning the relationship with all things and out of that comes the compassion and from that the community or marae as we say in Maori.

#### Waiata

Ma wai ra e taurima  
Te marae i waho nei?  
Ma te tika, ma te pono  
Me te aroha e.  
Who will tend  
To the marae (out) here?  
Truth, honesty  
And love will.

This song is often sung at p whiri and tangi. It is sung by the hosts and begins with the grammatical structure we are learning – asking who will do something. (The 'ra' is poetic, for the meter of the song.)

Director/Writer/Producer: Paora Te Oti Takarangi Joseph Paora Te Oti Takarangi Joseph is of Atihau-a-Papaarangi and Ng Rauru descent, from Kaiwhaiki Pa, near Whanganui, which is affiliated to Parihaka through longstanding family and political connections. He was given his Maori name, Te Oti Takarangi, in memory of the ancestor who led his people to Parihaka to support the philosophy of peace practiced there. In 1986, his first job was as a youth worker on the streets of South Auckland, which led him to train in Psychology. In 1997, he wrote his Auckland University thesis on M ori youth suicide. He is a filmmaker and his most recent film M UI'S HOOK a hybrid narrative genre of contemporary drama and documenatry was made to change attitudes and provoke action to reduce the rate of youth suicide in Aotearoa. It first screened at the NZIFF, Imaginative and the HIFF where Joseph was nominated for the HIFF's inaugural Kau Ka H k Award (Emerging Filmmaker Award). M UI'S HOOK has since screened at "Heal The Spirit World Indigenous Conference" held in Sydney and "The World Indigenous Suicide Conference" in Perth and continues to play periodically on M ori TV. Another film T tarakihi: Children of Parihaka first screened at the NZIFF in 2012, at the Cinema des Anitpodes festival in Saint-Tropez, and won the Special Recognition Award in the Balinale film festival. He is currently looking at producing - Mahara dreams of Opo a dramatic feature which is a coming of age story about a girl and her profound relationship with a dolphin.



# “Shanespeare is here...!!”

‘Shanespeare’ is a humorous nickname that Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave me two years after he first met me that he used for many years to make fun of my attachment to my image of myself as a poet and teacher of Creative Writing. After learning my family name and having some of my work read to him by Maria Simmons at a retreat in Paris in 1980, he said, ‘Now I know two English poets, Shakespeare and Shanespeare...!!!’

An invitation to join me on ‘the way of the poet’ - my new publication online on Substack, where you will find poetry, prose articles, and songs, as well as audio and video of my work.

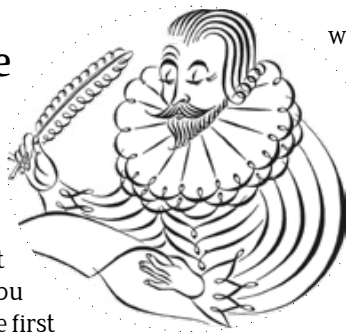
## The Way of The Poet’

- ‘the habit and discipline of the notation of consciousness’;

- ‘using the practice of creative writing as a parallel process to the practice of meditation to help one see through the hypnotic power of discursive thought and disturbing emotions so that one can let go of one’s compulsive psychological fixations and free one’s mind from them.’

I am very proud to have been able to serve as a Founding Editor of ‘The Mirror’, at a time long before the internet was created, when we had no other choice but to publish as an actual monthly physical newspaper that we had to take each month to the post office to mail out via snail mail to students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu around the world, to help link them together to build the International Dzogchen Community and I remain committed to publishing my writing in ‘The Mirror’ whenever the current Editors are kind enough to feel that they wish to include something I have written.

But I have a lot of unpublished material in my archive that I have written over the years, which I now want to publish, and since I have just celebrated my 78th birthday, I feel that, if I am to succeed in publishing most of that



work before I am too old to do so or my time on this Earth is over, I need to publish more than four pieces of writing a year, which is all I would be able to do if ‘The Mirror’ - which now publishes just four times a year - were to publish one of my pieces in each edition.

For this reason, after giving this much thought, about a month ago, I began to publish my work online on the newsletter website for writers, SUBSTACK, where many famous and not-so-famous writers publish, and I am very happy to invite readers of ‘The Mirror’ to visit my publication, ‘THE WAY OF THE POET’ on Substack.

If you follow the link to my Substack publication you will be able to read my writing for free, but I would be very grateful if you would support my work by subscribing to my publication, which you can also do for free. If you subscribe, you will receive a weekly email newsletter from me with new writing, and your subscription will help to move my publication’s numbers up in Substack’s algorithm which will then bring my writing to the attention of more people.

I very much look forward to you dropping by to visit my publication ‘THE WAY OF THE POET’ on Substack, where you will be able to leave comments on what I write, to which I will try to reply.

JS

## TRUE VALUE’ - ON THE LOSS OF A BELOVED CHILD

- standing side by side with two friends as they bury the ashes of their college-age daughter.

JOHN SHANE



The Old Conway Schoolhouse - Tsegylgar  
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The text of the poem itself can be found

below the following paragraphs of my comments on it.

## ‘TRUE VALUE’

John Shane

### No Rhyme or Meter Used In This Poem...

When you read the text of this poem that follows below, notice that it doesn’t make use of the sound-based pattern-making techniques of rhyme and rhythm that I have felt it appropriate to use in many of the other poems that I have published recently here in ‘The Mirror’, which I’ve also made recordings of, with myself reading them.

When poems in English are written with the intention that they will be read aloud in performance, rhyme and meter - among other technical devices - can be particularly effective in helping a poem to hold the listener’s attention.

### Using Visual Pattern-Making Techniques On the Page...

This poem, instead of the pattern-making techniques of rhyme and meter, uses visual pattern-making techniques to create an image on the page that echoes what the words of the poem describe: the downward falling of dead autumn leaves that flutter down to the ground from the branches of the trees, while, at the same time, a living butterfly flutters upward as it flies up to perch on a branch.

Notice, too, how, in the poem, the fact that the butterfly is still living is described as being almost miraculous, because the time of year the poem describes is the end of Autumn, a time when no butterflies are normally to be seen, since by that time they have all died. In a similar way, our conscious experience is also almost miraculous...

What consciousness is, and how consciousness works, continue to be debated among scientists and philosophers.

Yet, miraculously, we are conscious and we experience both an apparently real ‘internal world’ and an apparently real ‘external world’.

But what is really going on?

### A Butterfly Dreaming Of Being Zhuang Zou...?

According to the ancient Chinese philosophical classic, the Zhuangzi, the Daoist philosopher of that name fell asleep and dreamed that he was a butterfly. When he woke up, he famously said he no longer knew if he was a



Zhuang Zou dreaming of a butterfly

man who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or was a butterfly now dreaming he was a man.

Given what we experience in the continual round of waking, sleeping, dreaming, and waking again, as well as in living and dying, and so on, a perennially asked question has always been "What is 'real'?"

And, of course, because a butterfly emerges from a chrysalis, having previously been a caterpillar, the image of a butterfly is often thought of as a symbol or transformation, renewal, or even of rebirth.

### 'As It Is' - 'First Thought, Best Thought'

The poem uses its images in a matter of fact way, presenting 'small details of everyday things' without making any philosophical or mythological comment on them, leaving it to the reader or listener's mind to either associate the images with literary or philosophical archetypes or to take them at face value, accepting them as an attempt to reflect the world 'as it is' without the mental commentary of 'second thoughts'.

### Minutely Described Mind-Moments Laid Out One-By-One

And see, too, how all of the minutely described details laid out one by one across and down the page present a sequence of images that mirror the fluttering flow of passing mind-moments that arose as memories in the mind of the writer as he wrote the poem, recalling the mind moments that had taken place as those who were present at the time of the burial ceremony were contemplating not only the fluttering falling autumn leaves and the butterfly, but also the fluttering impermanence and frailty of human life itself.



CHOGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE at the time I first met him in London in 1968.

This photo was taken by my old friend, Peter Sanders, who, in the 60s and early 70s, took photos for the album covers of many of the world's most famous musicians

### 'Mind Is A One-Shot Deal', as Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, My First Tibetan Buddhist Teacher Used To Say

If you sit quietly by yourself, let your thoughts settle, and observe precisely with full attention what is going on in your mind, you will notice that, whether they come fast or slow, thoughts always come one at a time, one by one. They may come into mind slowly - in which case it is easier to notice the space in which the thoughts are arising - or they may come so fast that we don't even notice that there is space between one thought and the next one.

But thoughts always come one by one and they are always arising in the space of mind.

For this reason, my first Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who I first met in London and Scotland in 1968, used to say, 'Mind is a one-shot deal.'

### 'Form Is Function' - a common saying among architects that also applies to other creative activities, including the writing of poetry

The way in which this poem is laid out on the page is intended to reflect the way mind functions, each individual phrase coming up

one at a time in the spaciousness of the page, in the same way that each individual thought comes up one by one in the natural spaciousness of mind.

### The Spaciousness of the 'Natural State'

This natural spaciousness of the mind is known in Dzogchen as 'the essence of the mind', while this essential spaciousness' inherent capacity to continuously manifest an infinite number of thoughts is known as the mind's 'nature', and the infinite forms in which thought manifests - both 'internally' and 'externally' is called 'energy', and the Dzogchen teachings have a great deal to say about the ways in which this 'energy' manifests, the ways in which the individual's own energy manifests to the individual as an apparently 'external' world. When we fall asleep and dream a whole reality appears to us in the dream that seems to be a world external to our dreaming selves, but instead the dreamed world, with all its detail of people, places, and things, is really a manifestation of our own mind.

The Dzogchen teachings, among many other enquiries into the nature of reality, ask us to look closely at our own experience in the 'waking world' to see for ourselves if it is possible that what is true of our dream experience could also be true of our waking experience.

### Nothing Is Quite As It Seems, But Everything Is Just As It Is

This intimate contemplative enquiry into the real nature of the dreaming and waking states has a particular bearing on understanding the process not only of what is happening moment by moment while we are living but also on what happens in the process of dying, which, from the point of view of the Dzogchen teachings, is a process similar in many ways to what we experience in the process of falling asleep and entering into the dream state, and, potentially, becoming 'lucid'....becoming aware while dreaming that we are dreaming. The parallel practice of regarding our daily life as if it were a dream also can also help to reduce our attachment to whatever occurs during the day and thus helps to diminish the suffering we experience as a result of taking as 'absolutely real' things that are only 'relatively real' because they are completely impermanent like apparitions in a dream, yet we ascribe to them a permanence and a solidity that they do not really have.



## Serving Others By Bearing Silent Witness To Their Suffering & Grief.

In contemplative awareness, the sense of there being a strong separation between self and other relaxes, and a feeling of 'at-onement' with others - compassion or 'feeling with' - naturally arises.

## Beyond Words In The Moment At The Cemetery

Standing - along with others - together with my friends in silent witness in the graveyard to the heart-rending reality of the untimely death of their young and much-loved daughter - who had seemed to have her whole life before her - the simple witness of silent presence, was the best way I could offer what comfort I could - beyond words - to the parents of the girl who had died, as they faced a future in which they felt they would always have to live with the pain of the terrible blow of their loss.

## Recalling Later - With The Words Of My Poem - What Happened On Day Of The Burial Of Nina's Ashes

The poem I wrote later is my attempt to set down in words what I could not say to my friends on that sad day as a memorial both to Nina, the young woman who had died, to the grief of her parents, and to the day of the burial of Nina's ashes.

(A few further reflections on parenthood and how love makes us vulnerable to the possibility of loss follow below the text of the poem itself)

In the bright	the
autumn sunshine	moist
outside	soil
the old white	
wooden	with such loving
Conway	care
schoolhouse	and
three grown	attention
men	
sit	and put back
in the car	
in the parking lot	the neat little
in silence	rectangle
with nothing	of cut
to say	
—this	turf
after	
Woody	so that it seemed
put	that
Nina's	
ashes	no hole
into the ground	
carefully	had ever been
shoveling back	dug
the	in that cold
earth	clay
around	
the little marble	I saw
casket	the
	words
—a good man, Woody,	'TRUE VALUE'
and his wife,	
Barbara, too	on the long
a good woman -	
my friends	wooden
burying their	handle
daughter	
- and she, just out	of the
of college, barely	
grown -	shovel
it doesn't seem right	
'when bad things	- only a brand name, maybe -
happen	but nevertheless
to good people'	
as the saying goes...	I guess
But	that's
as	what we
Woody	touched
patted	
down	there

in that simple  
 unwall'd  
 New England  
 graveyard  
 surrounded by those  
 grey  
 tombstones  
  
 each with its own  
  
 inscription  
  
 each witness  
 to what is  
  
 unique  
  
 in one  
  
 human  
 individual  
  
 yet each  
 equally  
  
 testifying to the  
  
 brevity  
  
 of an  
 ended  
  
 life  
  
 But then,  
 barely glimpsed  
 in the  
 rear-view  
 mirror  
 as we drove away  
  
 the trees  
 along the road  
 told another story  
 answering  
 the  
 cold  
 wind  
  
 with a dance

of red and yellow  
 and gold  
  
 leaves  
  
 falling  
  
 with no sense  
 of there being  
 anything  
  
 to lose  
  
 or anyone  
  
 to lose it  
  
 and...as the car  
 scrunched  
 to a  
 standstill  
 on the gritty broken  
 tarmac  
 of the old school  
  
 parking lot  
  
 - there it was!  
  
 - we all  
 saw it -  
  
 as we sat  
 in the car  
 in silence  
  
 - a leaf  
 flying back  
 up  
 to the  
 branch  
  
 from where  
 it  
 had only just  
 fallen -  
  
 one last  
  
 lone  
  
 butterfly  
  
 fluttering

up and away  
 among  
 the falling  
 leaves  
 - improbable  
 survivor -  
 summer's  
 ghost  
 pointing past  
 winter's closure  
 to the return  
 of  
 Spring

Becoming a parent involves us  
 in taking responsibility for  
 another person  
 in a way we may  
 have never  
 experienced before

And to take on that  
 responsibility  
 we have to find  
 a new capacity  
 for love

But the inescapable fact  
 that our lives are so fragile  
 means that  
 to open ourselves

to love  
 is also to open ourselves  
 to the possibility  
 of loss

We have a primal dread  
 of losing what we most love

And yet, to love  
 is the only cure for  
 the sense of  
 hopelessness  
 and isolation  
 that we would feel  
 in a loveless world

So - even though we know  
 what loving may cost us  
 in terms of possible future grief  
 —we go on loving

And the open heart  
 knows that no matter  
 who we may lose

love itself  
 is never  
 lost...

JS





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