



THE MIRROR

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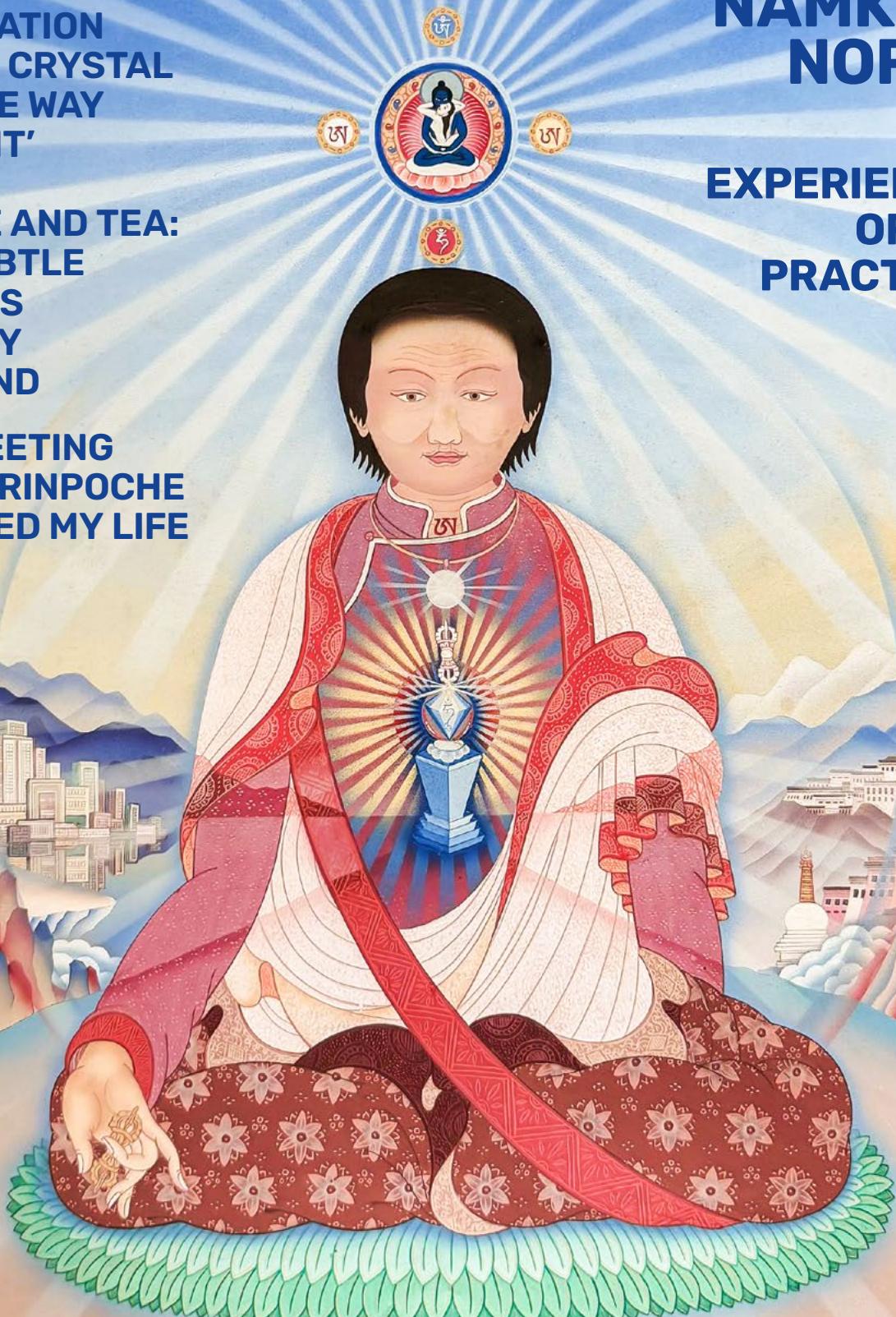
**CELEBRATING
40 YEARS OF THE
PUBLICATION
OF 'THE CRYSTAL
AND THE WAY
OF LIGHT'**

**COFFEE AND TEA:
THE SUBTLE
EFFECTS
ON BODY
AND MIND**

**HOW MEETING
NORBU RINPOCHE
CHANGED MY LIFE**

**CHÖGYAL
NAMKHA
NORBU**

**EXPERIENCES
OF THE
PRACTICES**



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Front cover: Artist Robert Beer's painting for the cover of the first edition of The Crystal and the Way of Light, courtesy of John Shane.

Back cover: Children at the Manasarovar School for refugee children in Boudhanath, Kathmandu, Nepal.

WELCOME TO THE NEW MIRROR WEBSITE

Dear readers, Vajra family and friends of The Mirror,

We are happy to announce the launch of our new website – <https://melong.online/>.

This project has been financed by the Italian Buddhist Union with the intention of helping an ever-growing audience connect with the Dzogchen teaching and the vision of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Namkhai Yeshe, while also nurturing a sense of community, shared values, and belonging.

The new website arises from our wish to modernize and enhance both the technical and visual experience of the current melong.com. Key improvements include: a new and more powerful search engine, a revamped graphic design as well as improved usability, clearer content organization, and easier



navigation. The Mirror has been active since 1991, and publishing online since 2014, and this upgrade marks an important step forward.

The website is available in [English](#), [Italian](#), and [Russian](#), with a Spanish version planned for the future.

Readers will continue to have full access to our complete archive of 170 issues of The Mirror—magazines and newspapers dating back to March 1990. Please note that the old website - [mel-](#)

[ong.com](#) - will be discontinued once the new website has been launched.

We hope that both long-time readers and newcomers will enjoy the new website!

We'd love to hear your thoughts. Please take a moment to complete our [survey](#) about our new website and help us enhance your experience.

With love,
The Mirror team

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Season's greetings from all of us at The Mirror.

As the festive season unfolds, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued support throughout the year. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with hope and new opportunities. May your holidays be rich with warmth, joy, and cherished moments shared with family, friends, and loved ones. As we look ahead, may the coming year bring you continued good health, lasting happiness, prosperity, and success in all that you do.



Picture by Paolo Fassoli

EXPERIENCES OF THE PRACTICES

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

An excerpt transcribed from the Song of the Vajra Retreat, Hong Kong, 2012. May 18, day 3, part 2.

**Continued from issue 169
of The Mirror.**

Rinpoche quotes from "The Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle" composed by Longchenpa.

We are not conditioned by ordinary dualistic vision and there is nothing to be liberated from. Everything is the relative condition in our mental concepts. These verses are related to the principle of Dzoachen Longade.

।**ଭ୍ରମା**ଶଦ୍ଧ୍ୟାମଦ୍ସବ୍ଦ୍ସାପ୍ତି**ପ୍ରଦ୍ରିତି** ।**ଭ୍ରମା**ଶଦ୍ଧ୍ୟାମଦ୍ସାପ୍ତି
ଶନ୍ତିକୁମାରଦ୍ସାପ୍ତା ।**ଯଦ୍ସାର୍ଷକ୍ରେତ୍ରଦ୍ସାପ୍ତାର୍ଥି**
ଦ୍ୱିଦ୍ସା ।**କ୍ଷେତ୍ରଦ୍ସାପ୍ତାର୍ଥି**କ୍ଷେତ୍ରଦ୍ସାପ୍ତାର୍ଥି

These verses explain specific methods. In the Dzogchen teaching we have Dzogchen Yangti, Dzogchen Thögal, and so on, which have to do in particular with how experiences of the practice manifest, and when we understand how it is and have the capacity to integrate, we can also realize the rainbow body.



Photo copyright Ralf Plüscké

The Dzogchen teaching develops with four kinds of visions called *nanawa zhi*

(សង្គម-សត្វិ: *snang ba bzhi*). The first vision is *chönyi ngönsum* (កែវិជ្ជីមនេស្សុមា: *chos nyid mngon sum*). For instance, in the Dzogchen teaching when we have a vision of thigles it is considered to be a manifestation of our real potentiality. We have that knowledge and we see something concrete that represents our dhar-matā, our real nature of mind, and this is the starting point of practices like Thögal and Yanqtī.

Then there are a series of practice methods called *nyam nang gong phel*. *Nyam* means experiences of the practices. In general we have different experiences. For instance, if we eat chocolate we can

understand what "sweet" is. This is an ordinary experience and with it we discover all sweets.

When we do practice we can have the *nyam*, or experience, of the practice, and this is very important. If we are doing practice, of course we need to have experiences. If there is fire then for indicating fire there is also smoke. Smoke is not fire but indirectly we can understand that where there is smoke, there is fire. So a *nyam* of the practice is a manifestation of signs of the practice, which means that the practice is alive.

We can have different kinds of *nyams*. In an ordinary way there is *nang nyam* and *sal nyam*. *Nang nyam* means we can see something like an object with our eyes. If we experience manifestations related with the nature of elements when

we are coordinating our energy or strengthening our elements, that means we have done the practice sufficiently and we have succeeded in realizing it. Of course we can also have visions of an aspect of the color of the element.

The *nyam* of vision not only means something we see with our eyes, it can also be something we hear or smell. Objects can manifest through all kinds of contact with our senses. Sometimes when we are very relaxed and doing practice in a dark retreat we might hear someone outside, or someone might be playing music such as the Song of the Vajra. In the real sense there is no one but we can hear something. That is an example of experience. If we are in the dark, we might smell a very pleasant perfume, like that of a nice flower with a strong smell. We can sense it concretely, not just in our imagination. These experiences are called *nang nyam* and are related to the contact our senses have with an object.

Another experience, called *she nyam*, is related to our mind. Sometimes when we are doing Shine practice, we may succeed in being in the state of Shine for a longer time. And even though we remain in that state for hours and hours we don't feel uncomfortable. That is something like realizing the practice of Shine. And we may feel

very happy or feel some sensation related to our clarity. Even if we are not thinking or judging something mysterious may manifest in our mind, for example something you wanted to understand. *She nyam* can manifest in different ways.

Then there is *nyam nang*. *Nang* means developing visions. For instance when we are doing practice like Thögal, with secondary causes we are gazing at sunrays and doing thigle visualization. Then many thigles may appear, and inside of these thigles Sambogakaya manifestations may also appear. Many different kinds develop one by one, increasing different kinds of visions like pure vi-

sions. This is called the state of *nyam nang gong phel*, a period of our practice in which visions appear everywhere without any effort. This is the second stage.

The third stage is called *rigpa tsepheb*. *Rigpa* is the state which we have discovered, not only the state of Guruyoga, or the state of contemplation. *Tsepheb* means maturing in the dimension of the state of *rigpa*. We are in this matured state of *rigpa*, *kadag* and *lhundrub* in which all self-perfected qualities are perfected, no longer needing to develop vision, seeing or hearing something. We are totally matured in the state of integration in which there is no subject or object. This is called the state of *rigpa tsepheb*.

Until this point we may have had many visions and think that our practice is developing. However, instead of developing it is now disappearing because it is integrated. In the Dzogchen teaching the most important thing is that we are able to integrate. Many people consider that it is very difficult to integrate everything in a perfect way because we are living in our dualistic vision. We know that everything is unreal, just as Buddha

said: everything is like a dream. In a dream we can see, we can touch, we can do everything but we know

that when we wake up, nothing concrete from that dream exists. When we have this knowledge even though we may not succeed in considering everything to be nondual, we are moving in the direction of integration so we should go ahead in that way and develop gradually. When we have developed and realized [our practice] then we can integrate everything.

For instance when we practice Namkha Arted - where *namkha* means space, our inner space and outer space - we gaze into outer space, into emptiness. At that moment we are not doing any visualization but are trying to be in instant presence. When we are in instant presence

we have no consideration of outer and inner and it is easy to integrate with inner and outer space because space is a dimension, there is nothing concrete. In our dimension everything is concrete on a relative level, so it is not easy to integrate successfully. However, when we know our real nature and we are in our real nature, what we see is already governed by that knowledge. So we should integrate and develop that way. This stage is called *rigpa tsepheb*, the third stage.

When we succeed in that, it is called *chösed*: *chö* means dharma, *sed* means to consume, so it means all phenomena related with our mind [have been consumed]. We are no longer in mind. We are totally integrated in the state of the nature of the mind. When we are in that fourth stage, learning and studying methods of Dzogchen Thögal and Yangti, then we are in the last stage. Even if we do not succeed to do practice, we do not finish, we only just arrived to this fourth level, when we die we can manifest the rainbow body.

When beyond just arriving at this fourth level we also succeed in completing it in terms of explanation, method, everything, there is no death, just like in the history of Guru Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, because our existence, our physical level, is already dissolved in our vision of the Thögal. It is totally integrated and gradually our physical body disappears for ordinary people. This is called *jalü phowa chenpo*, the great transference. This is the final realization, particularly in methods like Dzogchen Yangti and Dzogchen Thögal.

When I am explaining, for example, the four *Nangwa*, you shouldn't think that I am giving Thögal teaching. Some people might think that they received Thögal instruction. When I say you should integrate and you go and do something your own way and pretend to be doing Thögal practice, this is not Thögal, this is not Yangti. When you are seriously following then there are very precise instructions related to body, speech, mind, and how you develop step by step. These kinds of practices are very much related with experiences of vision and so on. Here it

*Another experience, called *she nyam*, is related to our mind.*

explains more or less this meaning.

ਖਾਬ ਗਦਲ ਖਾੰਗ ਬੜਾਂ ਯੋਦ ਨਿਈਂ
khyab gdal khang bzangs ye yod nyidl

It means the perfected condition of all the qualities that we have.

ਅੰਘੰਤੀਨੀ
ye yod nyidl

This Tibetan term means that we have had this [perfected condition] since the beginning, not that we do practice to develop it.

ਖਾਬ ਮਨਿਆਮ ਪਾ ਲਾਸ ਦਾਸ ਪਾ
khyab nyam pa las rnam 'das pal

Khyab nyam means just being in that state is perfect, without changing or modifying anything. We just [need to] know how to continue in that state.

ਧੰਨ ਸੋ ਕੋਈ ਸਾਮਾਨੀ ਦ੍ਰਿੰਦਾ
yangs so che'o nam mkha'i dbyings

This perfected condition is everywhere and total, *namkhai ying*, just like the dimension of space.

ਕੋਈ ਕੋਈ ਨਾ ਜਾਣੀ ਰ੍ਹੀਤੀ
chos chen 'bar ba nyi zla'i dkyill

This means that the nature of all phenomena is wisdom, luminosity, just like the light of the sun and moon. When we are singing SŪRYABHATARAIPASHANAPA this is the meaning.

Then we have the next verses.

ਕੁਲ ਸ੍ਰੀਸ਼ੁਸਤ ਦਰ ਸੁਸਾ
ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਸੀਦੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ
ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਸੀਦੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ

ਲਹੁਣ
lhun gyis grub dang mngon sum pal rdo rje ri bo padma che| nyi ma seng ge ye shes glu| sgra chen rol mo mtshungs pa med|

These are examples in order to understand the condition of the state of Dzogchen, although there is no example that corresponds totally. But there are many examples that describe it partially.

ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਦ੍ਰੀਵ ਪ੍ਰਾਂਕੀ
rdo rje ri bo padma che| nyi ma seng ge ye shes glu|

ਤ੍ਰੀਵ: *dorje*, vajra: its real nature, its condition, is just like a (ਰੀਵ: *riwo*) mountain, like a (ਪ੍ਰਾਂਕੀ *padma che*) lotus flower, meaning there is no defect, it is pure since the beginning. ਤ੍ਰੀਵ: *nyima* means like sunshine, ਸੰਗੇ: *senge* means lion, an example of the most powerful of all animals.

ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ
ye shes glu|

ਪੇਸ਼ੀ

yeshe means the quality and quantity of wisdom. ਸ਼੍ਰੀ: *lu* means sound, different kinds of sounds that are melodic and that we consider to be important. Dance and sounds are always related to our different emotions, for instance, we are very happy when we are singing or dancing. We can also integrate in that state.

ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਕੋਈ ਸਾਮਾਨੀ ਦ੍ਰਿੰਦਾ
sgra chen rol mo mtshungs pa med|

Sound is the nature of all manifestations. *Rolmo* means that there is nothing perfectly similar to any kind of music or musical instrument. The tantras give examples of the primordial state explaining that it is like this or that.

ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਸੀਦੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ
ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਸੀਦੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ
ਤ੍ਰੀਵ ਸੀਦੇ ਪੇਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ

ਨਾਮ ਮਥਾ ਲੋਂਗ ਸਪੋਡ ਪਾ
sangs rgyas sangs rgyas kun mnyam zhing| kun bzang yangs pa chos kyi rtsel|
ਮਕਾ ਦਬੀਂਡ ਬੱਂਗ ਮੋਈਂਡ ਰੁਮ ਦੁਲ
mkha'i dbyings bzang mo'i dbyings rum dul

They explain how we can find everything in the state of Dzogchen. If we are in the state of Dzogchen, we can integrate in any circumstance, in any condition, because they are [all] connected with the condition [of Dzogchen].

ਨਾਮ ਮਥਾ ਲੋਂਗ ਸਪੋਡ ਪਾ
nam mkha'i mtha' la longs spyod pal

In the dimension of space there are infinite manifestations, yet even though there are infinite manifestations we can also infinitely integrate in that state.

ਸਾਂਗ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸਾਂਗ ਸ੍ਰੀ
sangs rgyas sangs rgyas kun mnyam zhing|

Although we may consider that now we are enlightened, or now we are in samsara, we are also beyond that.

ਕੁਨ ਬੱਂਗ ਯਾਂਗ ਪਾ ਚੋਸ ਕੀ ਰਤਸੇ
kun bzang yangs pa chos kyi rtsel

Being totally present in the infinite dimension of Samantabhadra is the highest state of existence we can attain.

ਮਕਾ ਦਬੀਂਡ ਬੱਂਗ ਮੋਈਂਡ ਰੁਮ ਦੁਲ
mkha'i dbyings bzang mo'i dbyings rum dul

The dimension of Samantabhadri means the dimension of emptiness. For example, the *yum* is manifesting as the dimension of emptiness. Samantabhadri is what manifests in that dimension. Then we have infinite considerations of all dharmas, of all phenomena, as well as of pure visions in a pure dimension. All are in this dimension [of Samantabhadri].

ਕੁਲ ਗਸਲ ਲਹੁਣ ਗੁਬ ਰੇ ਰਤ੍ਝਾ ਕੀ
klong gsal lhun grub ye rdzogs che

In this dimension of the natural condition, the self-perfected condition, everything is perfected. This is the meaning of the Song of the Vajra.

But we should learn the Song of the Vajra in a different way, not only the words. We know that the Song of the Vajra is like a key to all the Dzogchen teachings. Then why do we have the

three series in Dzogchen? First there is the Dzogchen Semde, where *sem* means mind. When we enter its real nature then we say *semnyid*, that is dharma, how the real nature of our mind is. When we say *sem* it corresponds to both [meanings].

From mind to nature of mind we are entering that state. This Dzogchen Semde series of teachings is related to the first statement of Garab Dorje: direct introduction. In order to have direct introduction we use many kinds of methods and experiences. Sometimes we do not receive that knowledge, particularly if we live very much with our mental concepts. When we listen to what the teacher says, we think "firstly he said this, secondly that," and so on, constructing something in our mind. That may not work in a practical way and for that reason sometimes it is not easy for us to enter our real nature.

The Dzogchen Semde practices work very well for discovering our real nature.

In Tibet, we have a lot of important teachers but they give teachings such as the *Longchen Nyingthig* series of Mingling Trichen. They always say that this is the very essence of the Dzogchen teaching. It is true that this is the essence but there are not many details for working with direct introduction, for example, connected with Dzogchen Upadesha. The Upadesha series is more connected with the last statement of Garab Dorje, once we have already discovered our real nature.

What is important? It is important that we integrate in the state we are in at any moment. This is an Upadesha method. Some people remain with their intellectual ideas. For instance, when I started to give Dzogchen teaching in Italy I started with an Upadesha teaching, a terma teaching of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo called *Chetsün Nyingthig*. People who followed this teaching thought how nice it was and that they had understood it.

It is important that we integrate in the state we are in at any moment. This is an Upadesha method.

I gave this teaching for two years, not only in Italy but also in other places. Later I discovered that most people just had an idea, a kind of fantasy about it, and I wondered what I should do.

Then I thought that I should teach Dzogchen Semde because I knew that the three statements of Garab Dorje are related to the three series of Dzogchen teaching. However, it was complicated for me as I had received transmission, initiation and instructions in a more traditional way. Traditional doesn't mean that we were given instructions, doing practices and gradually developing [our understanding]. So I studied instructions

on Dzogchen Semde for a long time because I wanted to teach it to my students. I learned sufficiently and then later we started. We did two or three retreats and I became a bit of an expert of the Dzogchen Semde

method and also discovered that my students were starting to have concrete knowledge of the Dzogchen teaching. This is an example of how important the Dzogchen Semde is.

After that we have the Dzogchen Longde, which is connected with the second statement of Garab Dorje, not remaining in doubt, using specific methods. You may recall that when we did the direct introduction we only used the experience of emptiness to discover our instant presence. However, we can also do that with the experiences of clarity and of sensation. In the Dzogchen Longde method, once we have received transmission there is a method in which we use all three of these experiences at the same moment. This state is called the state of *yermed*, which means that in that moment we no longer remain in doubt, we discover what really is the primordial state of rigpa and what is just an experience. The experience of emptiness and the experience of clarity are different. But when we are in instant presence, it is the same instant pres-

ence, we cannot say "this instant presence is related to emptiness" or "this instant presence is related to sensation." When we have all these experiences together and discover that, this is called the Dzogchen Longde series.

Then we have the Dzogchen Upadesha, gradually integrating what we have learned. At the beginning when we are in the state of contemplation, when any kind of thought arises we do not go after it, we are not conditioned by it, and even though we notice that there is thought, we observe this thought, relax in that state and the thought disappears. Thought is self-liberated and we go ahead in this way. This is how we start. For example, there is what is called *shardrol*, which means that when thought arises we notice it, observe it, relax and it disappears. If we are not self-liberated immediately when we notice [a thought], we may need a little effort to observe it strongly, like fixation, in order to fully notice the arising of thought. When we relax then it disappears. This is called *cherdrol* [self-liberation through bare attention]. In *rangdrol*, when a thought arises we simply do not go after it and we are self-liberated.

When we start to practice Dzogchen day after day we do practice trying to continue in the state of Guruyoga in order to become more familiar with it. In the end we don't need very much effort to be in that state.

*Edited by L.Granger
Final editing Susan Schwarz
Tibetan & Wylie
by Prof. Fabian Sanders*

THE WRITTEN WORKS OF CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

From Ka-ter's Life of Knowledge Series

A talk by Adriano Clemente offering deep insights into the vast literary legacy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, exploring how his written works continue to illuminate the path of knowledge and realization for students around the world.

From the beginning I have been the main translator for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Before that Enrico Dell'Angelo and Giacomella Orofino were translating for the first two or three years but then Giacomella became more involved with academic research and teaching at the university and Enrico, for other reasons, gradually left this commitment.

When I started translating, I really committed myself and was continuously translating. Rinpoche saw that and maybe he was happy with the way that I asked questions and translated so he more or less chose me. Many years later he called me his Lotsawa, his translator, and that's how I began.

I have to mention Elio Guarisco [another translator who worked with Adriano] who was not only a good translator but also a very good practitioner and a very collaborative person. Elio arrived later in



the Community, not in the beginning, but we never had any competition or tension. We always collaborated very well and this is not something that always happens. Elio also had a lot of knowledge of the Vajrayana tradition, such as the Sarmata tradition and the Kagyupa because he had worked for years on Jamgön Kongtrül's encyclopedic work, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, just like I have worked on the Bonpo tradition for the book *Drung, Deu and Bon*.

Now, since he passed away, there is no replacement for him because he had 40 years of experience and we don't have these kinds of translators in our Community. So I have taken on all of his translation work that was unfinished.

Now I will tell you briefly

what is more or less left of Rinpoche's books to translate. At the moment I'm working on **Chanchub Dorje's biography**. This is an extraordinary work of which Elio translated 70%. When he died he had arrived at the point when Chanchub Dorje's wife, who was a very great realized dakini, died so I thought that maybe this is a good sign. I asked some Tibetan friends to complete the remaining part and now I am reviewing it from the beginning to the end. It is very difficult and I'm retranslating many parts with the help of Tibetan consultants be-

cause some parts are in local dialect.

This is a very important text for us because Chanchub Dorje was the root master of our master so there is this living transmission. For instance, if you visit these places - like Chanchub Dorje's residence, or the place of Nyagla Ranrig who was Chanchub Dorje's teacher, or Nyagla Pema Düddul's place, the teacher of Ayu Khandro - you can really feel that the transmission is alive.

Chanchub Dorje was an extraordinary human being as was our teacher although each has different aspects because Chanchub Dorje was on that level where he was first of all a tertön who discovered material objects and he also had supernatural experiences. I think you will be amazed when you read his biography. It's really beautiful.

And I think it is important to understand that the Dzogchen teaching is Vajrayana teaching. It is the essence of Vajrayana. All these great realized teachers that we have in the lineage always practiced Anuyoga and Dzogchen combined. This is a very important point because otherwise if Dzogchen is separate from Vajrayana it becomes something more on the mental level. This is not very easy to explain. But in general, in order to know the Dzogchen teaching well, we should understand that Dzogchen and, for example, Prajnaparamita or Chan or Zen teaching, are not the



Translators Adriano Clemente, Jim Valby and Elio Guarisco working with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Tashigar Norte, Venezuela

same. Dzogchen teaching is based on the principle of primordial potentialities.

So what is left to translate? First of all, we have Rinpoche's **Longsal teachings**, the terma teachings that he received for many years. There are still two or three commentaries that we need to publish. Unfortunately, Rinpoche didn't write commentaries to all his 30 or so Longsal upadesas that we have translated.

Then we have an important book which is the section of the **views from the Santi Maha Sangha first and the second level**. Many parts are from Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *Samten Migdrön*, *The Lamp for the Eye of Contemplation*. Rinpoche had prepared these only for students of Santi Maha Sangha, but then he arranged a volume for the public. Another important text is the commentary with quotations from the *Dratalgyur*.

There were three stages in Rinpoche's life as a teacher in which he relied more on a particular text. At the beginning he relied very much on the *Kunjyed Gyalo*. Then, in a second stage, he worked with Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's book - he told me that it was his Bible - which he read and studied for years. Thirdly Rin-

poche discovered the **Dratalgyur**, this commentary by Vimalamitra that he worked with for many years. This is the last and will be an important book.

We have Rinpoche's Longsal teachings, the terma teachings that he received for many years.

many years ago and is the most famous of his books in Tibetan. It has also been included in the last edition of the *Kama*, a collection of Tibetan Nyingmapa commentaries and texts.

Then we have other books such as **instructions of the Dorje Sempa Namka Che** of which I have collected all the existing commentaries. So if I have time and a long life, this is the last book that I will do. There will be the root verse and then the various commentaries so you can study them all. It's a very difficult text and Rinpoche was very much interested in it.

At the moment I'm working like the father of "as famous as the moon" who won a large amount of money, hung it over his head and then spent his time thinking about what he was going to do with this money the following year and

the year after. Then unfortunately the rope broke, the bag of money fell on his head and he died. What can I do in that case? But it's fine. I have already done so much work.

We have other books that Rinpoche wrote like the *Three Paths of Liberation* and *Shiné* and *Lhagthong*, but these are mostly from other texts. Then we have a **detailed explanation of Thögal** that Rinpoche wrote in the 70s. Jim Valby has done a rough translation of this text. Then we have some Santi Maha Sangha texts to review.

Then we have other biographies, not by Rinpoche, such as **Adzom Drugpa's biography**. We already have a rough translation. And then there is a text on **Yantra Yoga and the channels and pranas** that Rinpoche taught in Tenerife in 2013 or 2014 that Elio translated. There is a **commentary on the Namkha Che** written by Shri Simha that Elio translated. So I should review all these translations that Elio did.

And then there is the other text by Chanchub Dorje that Rinpoche taught. So we are trying to translate all the teachings that Rinpoche gave from other masters. In the future I want to do a presentation of the lineage of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, a kind of history, how Rinpoche received all these teachings from different teachers, which ones he has taught, when he taught them, where, and whether they have been translated or not, so that we know what we have received.

Finally there are two of the most important works. One is **Rinpoche's autobiography**. There are actually two autobiographies. One is called *The Tibetan teacher, the master acharya, who goes around the world*. This was not Rinpoche's title. He received it in a dream perhaps in 1955. Can you imagine? He had no idea at that time that he would go to the West. It's called **Bod kyi a tsara rgyal khams nyul ba'i gtam, The Story of How the Tibetan Acharya Went Travelling Abroad**. He wrote this book after he recovered from a grave illness in '95. Each chapter is a question from himself, it's called *Kuntog Wangpo*, the

power of his thought or his mind. For instance, he asks himself questions such as, "Oh, Namkhai Norbu, what did you do in that year when you started in the monastery? How much did you suffer because of this?" And he replies with many stories. This is one book and it is in verse.

Then there is another book which goes year by year. It is called **Tutrin** in Tibetan, activities in time. I'm considering possibly combining these two texts which have so much material, especially in all the parts in Tibet in 1958-59 there are many very interesting stories. Then there is the part when he came to Rome in the roaring sixties and learned how to dance the twist and met his first girlfriend, started to teach, everything is written there. And it is very interesting. Of course, we also have a lot of material from stories that Rinpoche told throughout his lifetime both during formal teachings and in conversation. We could even do a book with this material because not everything is in written form. If you can imagine how Rinpoche came from the middle ages of Tibet in the 1960s, it makes a very fascinating story.

There is another book which is called **The Book of Dreams** in English. One day I received this book in a CD and there was a note saying, "Dear Adriano, I'm giving you this book because you are my translator," so I thought it implied that I had to translate it. Some parts of this book are already included in the Longsal series: there is a dream and then the teaching. This book of dreams is about 3000 computer pages. I hope I can also do this job because it is really incredible. It's a kind of inner secret biography because the outer biography is what he wrote. In *The Book of Dreams* he meets his teacher and asks for advice and his teacher advises him to do this or that, or perhaps to do a particular practice, or to take particular care with something.

So if you want to read about all these things, firstly you will have to do long life practice and live longer. The second thing is that the Ka-ter funding must

continue because if it dries up then the translator becomes dry and cannot write on a computer. Well, this is just joking because I don't care much about that and as long as I'm alive, I will always continue to serve Rinpoche in whatever way I can. There is no doubt about that.

*"Oh, Namkhai Norbu,
what did you do in that
year when you started
in the monastery?
How much did you suffer
because of this?"*

Merigar West, Italy,
October 19, 2025.

The ongoing translation and sharing of these precious teachings are made possible through the kindness and generosity of our readers.

If you wish to support the continuation of this work—helping us bring more of these extraordinary teachings to life—please keep on reading.

As Chögyal Namkhai Norbu wrote about the virtues of generosity, your offerings not only sustain the Dharma but also enrich your own path. You can read his inspiring words on generosity here:

[READ ABOUT THE VIRTUES
OF GENEROSITY](#)

[DONATE NOW](#)

[SEE ALL DONATION OPTIONS](#)

Get in Touch

You can write to us at info@ka-ter.com and we will happily assist you with any questions you may have. With gratitude for walking this path together,

Oliver Leick and Jamyang Oliphant for the KA-TER Project and the Life of Knowledge series.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMBERSHIP - JOIN YOUR NEAREST GAR OR LING

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 and 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.

Our Gars and Lings rely on our memberships to cover their operating costs, while providing us with retreats, programs, and webcasts, among other



benefits in collaboration with the International Dzogchen Community.

Please join our collective community effort and renew your **2026 IDC membership**. Through this annual commitment, each of us ensures the continued health of the Dzogchen Community, supports the Teachings, and makes the development of our practice a continued reality.

We would like to thank those of you who have already renewed their **membership for 2025**, 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 2022, 2023, and 2024 – as needed.

Renewing your membership is easy. Visit dzogchen.net to view and choose the payment methods for the Gar or Ling closest to your geographical area of residence. Many of them offer the opportunity to renew membership directly online through your personal profile at <https://dzogchen.net/profile/membership>.

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

Best wishes,
Your International Gakyil Team,
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Oni, Piotr,
Richard, Fabio and Marija.

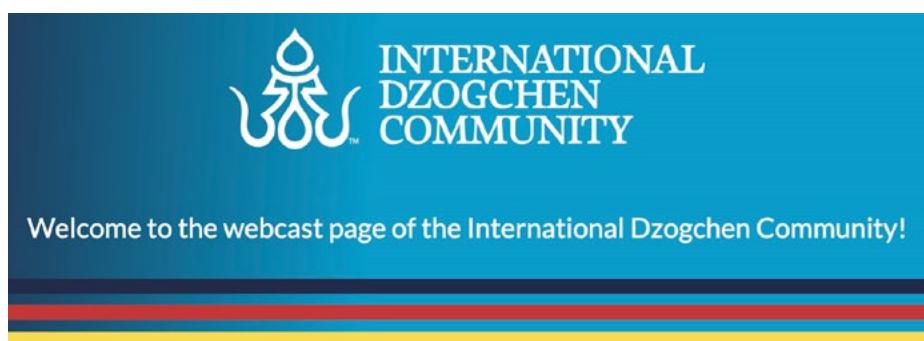
NEW WEBCAST WEBSITE

The International Dzogchen Community, with the generous help of Luigi Ottaviani, has created a new webcast website. This new site can be found at webcastportal.dzogchen.net.

The main goal of the new website is to improve the layout, and it has the added bonus of a search function. Content is grouped into either Open content or Restricted content. Restricted content is reserved for current members of the Dzogchen Community and can be viewed using your dzogchen.net membership database login.

The three main sections of the restricted content are:

- Rinpoche Retreat Replay: selected recordings of teaching retreats given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.
- Replay: explanations and retreats given by Santi Maha Sangha teachers.



• Retreat Resources: texts, video, and audio recordings of different Dzogchen Teachings.

The live webcasts and replayed content on this new site will be the same as on the existing webcast site, and both will operate in parallel until we are fully satisfied with the running of the new site.

We hope you make use of the abundance of teachings and resources found at webcastportal.dzogchen.net.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE FUTURE

Manasarovar, a school that honors the past to make the future flourish

In this dark moment in human history, rediscovering the human values of empathy, altruism, and compassion that we have absorbed from the Himalayan peoples during many years of fieldwork gives us a glimmer of hope.

That is why we have decided to focus on the new generations of Tibetans in exile, who embody these values in their daily lives, and to take care of their growth.

The Manasarovar school in Boudhanath, the Tibetan refugee district of Kathmandu, Nepal, is a model of care and kindness. Founded in 1999 by two women—one Tibetan and one Nepalese—driven by the desire to give Tibetan refugee children in Nepal the opportunity to receive an education based on their own cultural traditions, the preschool and elementary school has become a point of reference for the entire Boudhanath community.

The name, Manasarovar, is inspired by the sacred lake located near Mount Kailash in Tibet, a female symbol in Tibetan tradition.

Feminine is indeed the spirit that permeates the activities of this school, where the psychological and physical well-being of each individual child really matters. Here, the teaching staff carries out its mission of educating children with extreme care and attention, cultivating their potential and keeping their cultural roots alive.

The motto “culture is freedom” is the basis of the school curriculum. The subjects taught are Tibetan, English, Nepali, mathematics, natural sciences, and social and environmental sciences. Ample space is given to imagination and creativity, with play considered an important teaching method for children. Small shows, dances, and Tibetan songs are periodically organized with the aim of preserving and passing on ancient traditions, which are also kept alive through the use of ancient teaching techniques



such as memorization, debates, and dialectical exercises.

Long-distance sponsorship

The children who are welcomed into the school are those from the poorest families in the Tibetan refugee community in Boudhanath, who live in particularly difficult conditions: Nepal has not ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and therefore

does not formally recognize Tibetan refugees, who have no legal refugee status or identity documents. This means that they are not protected in any way, do not enjoy any rights, and live in precarious conditions that are often subject to restrictions.

Added to this is the difficult economic and social situation in the country, one of the poorest in Asia, where about a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line.

The school receives no public funding and survives on small donations from families and, above all, through long-distance sponsorship.

ASIA has been supporting this school since its inception in 1999, backing the extraordinary work carried out by all the school staff with its long-distance sponsorship project.

With a donation of €25 per month—or €300 per year—supporters contribute to covering all school expenses: from teaching materials to stationery, food, uniforms, heating, and everything else that is needed.

Above all, they enter into a genuine re-



lationship with the young students they support from afar, a relationship built on letter exchanges, sending photographs and, when possible, even meetings. In fact, many supporters have visited the school during a trip to Nepal and met the child they support in person.

Long-distance sponsorship is therefore not merely financial support but an

exchange and encounter between two different worlds and cultures, enriching both parties.

How to start long-distance sponsorship: follow this link to proceed online

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

By writing to adozioni@asia-ngo.org and donating by bank transfer to:

ASIA ETS – IBAN:
IT29X0623003225000015108051
SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE FUTURE, support Tibetan children in Nepal.

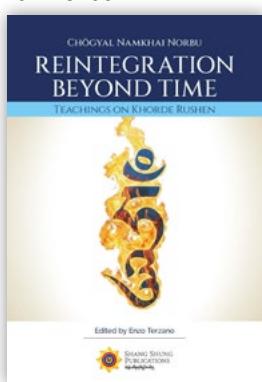
LATEST RELEASES FROM SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS

Dear Readers,

Books in English

Reintegration Beyond Time Teachings On Khorde Rushen Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

This text is composed solely of Dzogchen Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's words compiled from edited publications and the transcripts of oral teachings

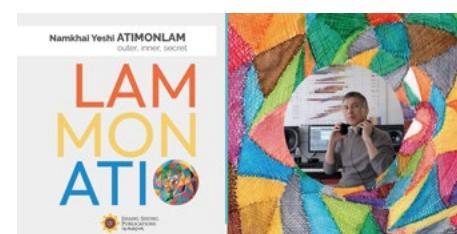


given at retreats. Practitioners who have attended the Master's retreats over the course of years have benefited from the repetition of themes and examples—teachings that touch on and explore similar yet, in reality, never identical points. The repetition of themes presented from slightly different perspectives is part of the learning process. Thus, this text leaves these themes in their original form; the reader is led through a process that resembles more of an ascending spiral than the finite square typical of the printed page, deepening and developing awareness of true understanding.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/reintegration-beyond-time>



ATIMONLAM OUTER, INNER, SECRET Namkhai Yeshi



ATIMONLAM is an acousmatic composition that aims to evoke an inner world that arises from the common experience of the present time, it is composed of three distinct parts. The first part describes the external world, of people and things, varied and full of con-

trasts, full of unanswered questions. The second part describes the inner world that pulsates and breathes, listens and answers. The third part is hidden, in apparent movement, abstract, accessible but impossible to describe in words. The composition makes use of sounds from the real world, all of which come from the same place, and are found objects that belonged to the same person, dear to the composer.

Audio Downloadable:

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/atimonlam-english>

Per l'Italiano: [clicca qui per andare al prodotto in lingua italiana](#)

Para Español: [clic aquí para ir al producto en su idioma](#)

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对于中文: [单击此处以查看您语言的产品。](#)

New products

Shang Shung Desk Calendar 2026 "Creativity and Presence"

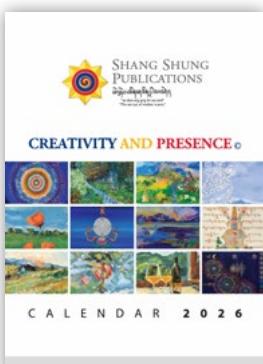
[Watch the video of the Calendar](#)

In English language. With paintings by **Mary Ternovsky** and **Giorgio Dallorto** - who have kindly donated their images.

The initiative was born following the exhibition promoted by the Municipality of Arcidosso and Dynamic Space of the Elements in August 2025. The exhibition, held in the town's castle, was dedicated to local artists to bring visibility to their works.

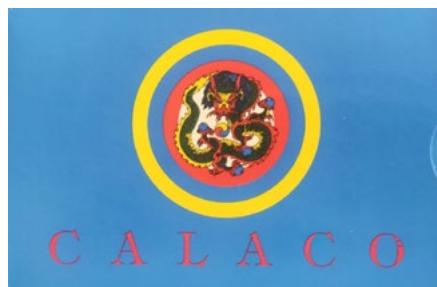
Some of the works were selected and used for the 2026 Shang Shung calendar "Creativity and Presence." The funds raised will be used for the translation and publication of the texts from English into other languages.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/creativ->



[ity-and-presence-shang-shung-calendard-2026](#)

CALACÒ Card Game Namkhai Norbu



The CALACÒ card game was created by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during his holidays in Cala Corallina, Sardegna, in 1995. The functions of this interesting game and its 42 colorful cards and symbols are explained in the instructions of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that are contained inside the game and translated into English, Italian, German, Spanish and French. Chinese translation of the instructions are available in a PDF. With the game you will receive a PDF with the history on how Chögyal Namkhai Norbu developed this game.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/calacocards-game>

The Game of Liberation Namkhai Norbu

"The text of the Game of Liberation was composed in Tibetan by me in 1995 while I was on holiday at Hua Hin in Thailand. After I returned to Merigar, I transferred it to my computer, rendering the Tibetan calligraphy in printable form. Later I gave a copy to my student and translator Jim Valby who made an initial English version of this text. In 1998, while in Russia for an Ati Dzogchen retreat, I understood that an addition to the text of the thirteen thalwas and the dimensions of the eight classes was necessary. Thus a total of 108 different dimensions are cited and utilized in the game. Later I gave the text to my student Lauri Denyer with indications for



how the mandala in this game should be constructed, asking her to make the corresponding drawings. Lauri dedicated great effort to this project with excellent result. Her work has been essential in its realization, and I thank her very much".

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

This game, created by Master Namkhai Norbu, was recently reproduced by the Czech Ling "Kunkyabling." Proceeds from sales go to the Ling to support their activities. We thank Kunkyabling for making it available again.

The text with the game instructions can be downloaded by scanning the QR code on the packaging.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/new/product/liberation-game>

Libros en Español

Spanish Books: <https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/books-in-other-languages>

Atimonlam

Yantra Yoga

El Yantra Yoga, equivalente en el Budismo tibetano al Hatha Yoga de la tradición Hindú, es un sistema de práctica que comprende movimientos físicos, ejercicios de respiración y visualizaciones.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-yantra-yoga-espanol-pdf>

Los seis versos del Vajra

El Rigpai Khujug o Los seis versos del Vajra es una síntesis de la totalidad de la enseñanza Dzogchen. Estos versos contienen pocas palabras, las cuales se acompañan de instrucciones para la práctica.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/books-in-other-languages/product/e-book-los-seis-versos-del-vajra-epub>

Shine y Lhagthong en la Enseñanza Dzogchen

La serie del Dzogchen Semde contiene las instrucciones para comprender y aplicar la no dualidad de Shine y Lhag-

thong. La realización no es otra cosa que la integración de ese estado en la vida cotidiana.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-shine-y-lhagthong-en-la-ensenanza-dzogchen-epub>

Books in Chinese

Chinese Books: <https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/explore/books-in-other-languages>

Atimonlam - 阿底愿文 外

系列教法 The Song of the Vajra

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book->

[the-song-of-the-vajra-chinese-epub-shi-shen-fa-jiao-fa-yu-xiu-chi](https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-the-song-of-the-vajra-chinese-epub-shi-shen-fa-jiao-fa-yu-xiu-chi)

坐修法与荟供仪轨 The Book of the Tun and the Ganapuja

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-the-book-of-the-tun-and-the-ganapuja-chinese-pdf>

施身法 Chöd Teachings and Practice

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/products/product/e-book-shi-shen-fa-choedteachings-and-practice-chinese-pdf>

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<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/en/>

HOW TO SUPPORT US

To contribute to the continuation of Shang Shung Publications' activities please donate to https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=44UNB8ZE9ZJAS

Reason: Donation for the SSP institutional activities.

CONTACTS

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

Best wishes

SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS TEAM

MARATIKA RETREAT AND PILGRIMAGE & BHUTAN PILGRIMAGE

A Rare Journey Into the Heart of Himalayan Spiritual Heritage

In an era when authentic pilgrimage experiences are becoming increasingly scarce, Shang Shung UK—together with the MACO Museum of Oriental Art and Culture—presents one of the most significant sacred journeys of the coming year: the Maratika Retreat and Pilgrimage, taking place 21 March to 5 April 2026.

Travellers will begin their journey in Kathmandu, walking among ancient temples and vibrant streets before continuing eastward into the tranquil landscapes of rural Nepal. The destination is Maratika, the revered cave complex where Guru Padmasambhava and Princess Mandarava are traditionally believed to have attained the realisation of long life. For practitioners of the Mandarava teachings as transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Maratika holds a particularly profound importance.

Participants will visit the renowned Heruka Cave, the Secret Cave of Man-



darava, the Naga Cave, the Garuda Cave, and several other rarely accessible sacred sites. Alongside these explorations, the 16-day retreat will integrate traditional practices, including dance on the mandala, Yantra Yoga, and explanations led by qualified Santi Maha Sangha instructors. A notable highlight

will be the placement of a special stupa designed by Rigzin Changchub Dorje, to be installed in Maratika during the journey.

You can view the recording of the webinar we had about the trip here:

<https://youtu.be/D4KjQgJ6QC8>

LOTTERY LAUNCHED WIN A FULLY-FUNDED PILGRIMAGE TO MARATIKA

To support ongoing cultural and educational projects—and to offer one fortunate supporter the chance of a lifetime—Shang Shung UK has launched a special fundraiser lottery.

For a €50 donation, entrants will have the chance to win:

- €1,000 toward airfare to Kathmandu
- A fully funded place on the 21 March - 5 April 2026 Maratika pilgrimage
- Accommodation, local travel, and guided visits to the sacred cave sites

Further prizes include one-week stays near Merigar and at Dzamling Gar, traditional Tibetan astrology readings, merit-making offerings, and prayer flags raised at Maratika on the winner's behalf.

Tickets are limited. Readers are encouraged to enter early.

Lottery entry: <https://www.shangshunguk.org/fundraiser-for-nepal/?external=1>

PLAN YOUR JOURNEY

To learn more about the full itinerary and registration details, visit:

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/maratika2026?external=1>

Information on the upcoming **Bhutan pilgrimage** (7-18 March 2026) can be found here:

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/bhutan-7-18-march-2026/>

SANGHA APP - OUR YEAR 2025

We are not just aiming to offer you a technological tool, but to contribute with our capacities to the Dzogchen transmission, through active mutual support.

We started the year with 4106 registered users and reached December with 4645. Thank you all for inviting new users!

The most common nationalities among our frequent users are Italian and Russian. In fact, information in Russian and other languages is multiplying in the app! Thanks to ambassadors such as Anna Olefir who are building bridges between nations and to our translators Alessandra Policreti, Alejandra Krasnagoor, Anastasia Eremenko, Katka Drajsajtlova, David Formanek and Caroline Hotaling.

Our communication is supported visually by Tanita Ferrari's graphics, who cheered up our communication.

Thirty percent of our current users use the app daily or weekly, with the most favourite functions being the Ganapuja and the Tibetan calendar.



If you are searching for an online Ganapuja to attend to, you can [find it in our app](#). We are grateful to Gakyils and practice organizers who are filling all the dates with practice sessions and keeping you posted in the **Ganapuja calendar**.

While curating the **Tibetan calendar**, we also offered insight into some aspects of this astrological system, in our Newsletter and in The Mirror magazine. Stay tuned for the next article that will arrive to you in February, for Losar. Many thanks to our team member Nikol, who is studying this topic with precision and passion.

Newcomers

With over 500 newcomers in one year, Santi Maha Sangha teachers, Merigar East and Sangha App created a course and a discussion channel called First Steps on the Path. 160 participants could learn the main Dzogchen practices, receive book recommendations, and ask questions to teachers. The course and the channel are also translated to Russian.

SANGHA APP

We especially thank Oxana, our team member and Blue Gakyil in Merigar East, for her relentless work in this program and to one of the participants, Olli Hartikainen, for his collaboration.

We collaborate with...

We are happy to share our words through The Mirror, the Dzogchen community journal. We promote it through a special section in the Home page, that leads you to the latest news.

We collaborate with community organizations to make their announcements reach you. We host channels for Practicing Together Global Chain, Dynamic Space of the Elements, Shang Shung Institute, Shang Shung Institute UK, Tibetan School of Medicine, along with those of gars and local communities.

[Join the channels](#) and turn your [Notifications on](#), if you want to know when someone posts in the groups you are part of.

Promoting community events

This year Nikol and Oana were present at Namkhai Yeshi's retreat in Merigar West, where we offered free WiFi and app support.

About 20 Gars and Lings around the world publish their events with Sangha App. We promote an average of 27 retreats, 10 events lasting one day and 526 practice sessions per month. 20% of our events are spontaneous practice groups, initiatives of individual practitioners or teachers. Since November 2025, we started offering a reader's digest email with events selection, that you can receive in your inbox and on Norbunet.

To help you find information more easily, in December we will post a selection

of teaching schedules of each teacher in 4 channels: Vajra Dance, Yantra Yoga, Santi Maha Sangha and Khaita.

Technological improvements

In its 7 years of existence, Sangha App has released 52 versions of the app on each platform (iOS and Android), plus the web-based interface (Sangha Web). Each brought improvements and solved bugs that, like in any application, appear. This year, out of a total of 164 tickets of

bugs, 89 were closed/resolved.

You helped us improve the app by reporting your observations, bugs and suggestions. We have received 285 mails at hello@mahasangha.net in the last 16 months and solved 151 of them. We thank our technical team and the programmers for their work.

As we end this year, we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to our supporters, donors, collaborators and all our users.

NEW VAJRA DANCE TEACHERS 2025

New authorized teachers of 1st and 2nd levels of the Dance of the Vajra for 2025, supervised by Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo.

First Level

Larysa Radchenko
Liudmyla Vasylenko
Kristina Abramian
Kristina Bokova
Joelle Schneider
Claude Cereize
Yakov Grinblat
Paul Sablich
Sara Magnelli
Ausra Lapinskiene
Tatiana Gambetta

Second Level

Lorraine Gaultier
Sachiko Fullita
Milan Polasek



Left to right: Lorraine Gaultier, Sachiko Fullita, Prima Mai and Milan Polasek.



Left to right: Ausra Lapinskiene, Sara Magnelli and Tatiana Gambetta.



Group photo at Dzamling Gar with Vajra Dance instructor Adriana Dal Borgo.

KHAITA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM WITH ADRIANA DAL BORGO AND PETRA ZEZULKOVÁ

We are pleased to inform you that the Khaita Educational Program will resume with a new edition.

The program is aimed at anyone who wants to discover and deepen their knowledge of Khaita, those who want to qualify as teachers, and those who simply want to discover the harmony of dancing together.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu devoted much of his later years to developing a method that encompassed many aspects in a very simple yet profound word: Khaita - Harmony in Space. The purpose of Khaita is to discover harmony and joy through sound and movement. Joy is linked to the revelation of our true nature: a deep and stable state that does not depend on ephemeral circumstances.

The first course will be held in Phendeling (Czech Republic) from March 24 to 30, 2026.

Registration link: <https://forms.gle/GN1ZBvHaovYHwVSa9>

For more information: <https://www.khaita.org/educational-program/harmonyinthespace@atiyogafoundation.org>
yellow@dzogchen.cz
phendeling@dzogchen.cz

What's new in this third edition!

At the end of the first year, after successfully passing a supervision exam, you can obtain the qualification of Khaita teachers for children.

Join us on this journey!

Khaita Dance School team




Khaita Educational Program
to train new Khaita experts and teachers
first course
with Adriana Dal Borgo and Petra Zezulková
Phendeling, Czech Republic
March 24-30 2026

A message from Adriana Dal Borgo:

The main aspect of Khaita, integrating movement into presence by coordinating movement and sound, is an important key to understanding the meaning of the Teaching for practitioners of the Dzogchen Community. Harmonizing body, voice, and mind and training presence can also bring countless benefits even in contexts outside the Community itself. However, in order to share the benefits of this method, teachers with adequate training are needed. This gave rise to the idea of putting my thirty years of experience as a Vajra Dance teacher trainer at the service of the development of Khaita.

The formula for the Educational Program derives from an initial Teacher Training address to the teachers authorized by Rinpoche in 2016, led by the so-called Khaita committee. At that time, the Master asked five people—I had the image that we represented his hands—to collaborate with the new teachers to develop their knowledge of the dances, deepen their understanding of the lyrics of the songs, and identify the tools for teaching effectively. On that occasion, Rinpoche also told me, "You are Khaita's secretary," entrusting me with this responsibility, which I still feel very keenly.

For me today, being Khaita's secretary means coordinating and carrying on this method by following certain principles, among which the fundamental one is collaboration with all those who wish to contribute, keeping in our hearts the words of the Master and the time he dedicated to this.

The Khaita project has evolved from the early days when a small group of pioneers sang with Rinpoche, dancing all day in the living room of the Meriling apartment (Dzamling Gar did not yet exist), to the subsequent collections of 400 songs selected by the Master, the 250 dances created in collaboration with students under his watchful eye, and the various social media platforms that were then created.

If you would like to learn more about this project, you are welcome to participate in the first training course, where the foundations will be laid for deepening the value of Khaita by singing and dancing together, as Rinpoche himself did with us until the end of his life.

DZAMLING GAR - TENERIFE

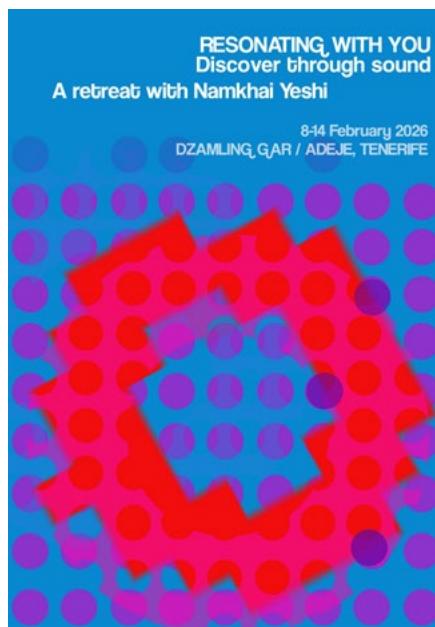
RESONATING WITH YOU, DISCOVER THROUGH SOUND, A RETREAT WITH NAMKHAI YESHI IN DZAMLING GAR, TENERIFE

FEBRUARY 8-14, 2026
FEBRUARY 11-13: ONSITE ONLY

A journey back to presence, clarity, and re-connection.

In these 7-days retreat the Dzogchen Master Namkhai Yeshi will offer deep insights and interconnections to introduce participants into their real nature (called Dzogchen), that is, to experience directly oneself without any kind of intellectual analysis. His teachings, also transmitted through artistic works, does not change the individual from the outside, but awakens her/him internally.

Alongside his teaching activity, Namkhai Yeshi has cultivated other fields of expression and transmission of these experiences. Trained in electronic music at the Luigi Cherubini Conservatory in Florence, today he composes music on the computer; he uses the sound and



language of electroacoustic music to make the ancient knowledge and meditative experiences accessible.

“Resonating with you” will be held in **English** with Spanish, Russian, Czech, Italian and Chinese translations, both onsite and online. Ukrainian, French, Polish, Hungarian, Japanese, German and Portuguese translations will be offered online.

We are doing our best to offer you an exceptional event, so any donations are always welcome!

February 8-10: Online and Onsite
FEBRUARY 11-13: ONSITE ONLY
February 14: Online and Onsite

Register: <https://tally.so/r/nrXNQ2>
 Donate: https://www.dzamlinggar.net/en/component/jse_donation?view=donate&task=donate.donation&c_id=496

For more info:
info.teachings@dzamlinggar.org

A WEEK OF COLLABORATION: IT AND SOUND TEAMS UNITE AT DZAMLING GAR

This article is a collaboration by participants in the project.

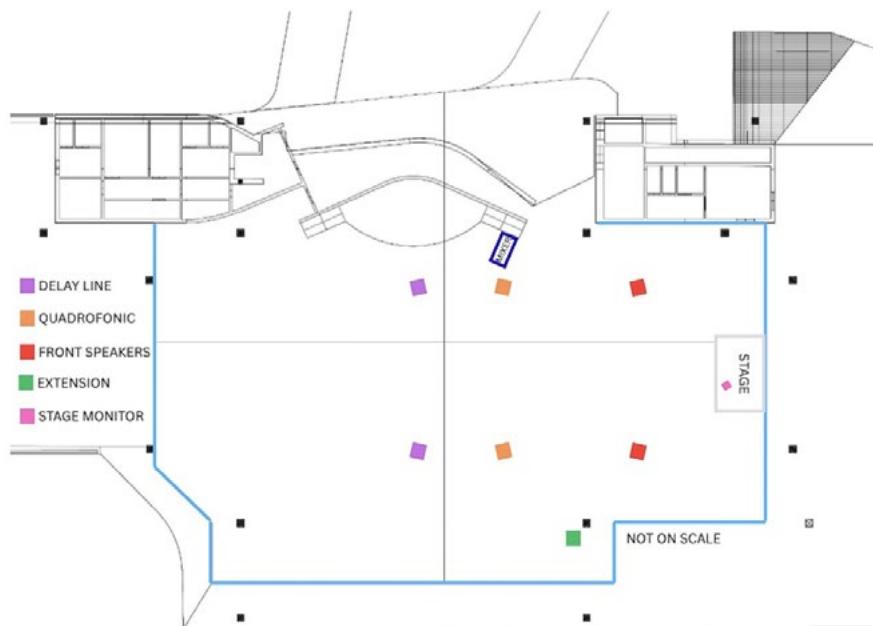
From October 13th to 19th, 2025, the IT teams of Merigar West and Dzamling Gar gathered at Dzamling Gar for a week of collaboration

and technical work, joined by our Austrian sound engineer, Philip.

Originally planned as a training session on sound equipment, the week evolved into a hands-on preparation for the up-



Acoustic collaborators left to right: Sebastien Remy, Gabriele Marazzi (Red Gakyil Dzamling Gar) Philip Zauner, Cvetko Jovanovic, Danny Van Der Weide, Igor Tarnavsky and Thinley Koblensky (Yellow Gakyil and Director) on the stairs.



coming 2026 retreat. Together we focused on refining the Gönpa's sound system to ensure clear and balanced audio for future events and in particular the upcoming retreat of Namkhai Yeshi in February.

To improve the experience from last year, we also set up a stage monitor for Yeshi (and for all our instructors, Umdzes, etc), giving a direct sound on the stage and making the experience smoother.

A mobile wall is under construction right now, and will be used to cut the reflection from the back of the Gönpa to the stage.

With Philip's precious guidance, we set up a quadriphonic sound space to experience the soundscapes created by

Yeshi and adjusted the system so that the voice could be heard clearly throughout the Gönpa - even before the acoustic treatment is completed.

The team worked step by step: defining the working area, positioning speakers, running cables, testing microphones, and applying equalization according to Yeshi's sound study. We also designed the setup for translators and shared all progress with Yeshi for his feedback.

Beyond the technical tasks, the week was a true experience of collaboration and friendship. Gloriana Bremes (former Gakyil president) took wonderful care of everyone by cooking delicious meals each day, and we all shared moments of learning, laughter, and teamwork between our two Gars.

It was an inspiring week - an example of how shared effort and mutual support continues to strengthen our Community.

We've made great progress with our IT and Sound Teams at Dzamling Gar. This project is not just about better technology; it's about making our Community experience richer. These improvements show our shared goal of doing things well.

To keep this collaborative effort going and to use these new improvements fully, we need your help. We need about **42,000 €** to finish and keep this important project running. This money will help us make sure the sound is always clear for all future events, especially for Namkhai Yeshi's retreat in February 2026. It will also help us finish making the Gönpa sound even better.

Your gift, big or small, shows that we all want to create a dynamic as well as serene place for learning and practice. Please help us secure the future of this important project. Together we can continue to make our Community stronger through our shared effort and support.

Donate here: <https://dzamlinggar.org/en/acoustic-project/>

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/hYMMoLyWwd8v>

MERIGAR EAST - ROMANIA

NEWS FROM
MERIGAR EAST

As we prepare for a new year at Merigar East, many things are quietly taking shape — new courses, new responsibilities, new ways to support the Gar, and new chances for all of us to grow together.

Here are the updates we are happy to share.

**"First Steps on the Path" Begins
January 12**

We are pleased to announce that a new edition of **First Steps on the Path**, created together with Sangha App, will start on **January 12, 2026**.

This course is **dedicated to everyone who is new on this path**, or who wishes to deepen their practice, and it also serves as a solid foundation for **SMS**.

This year's program keeps the practical, accessible approach that many appreciated last winter, while introducing **new teachings, new practices, and a clearer structure** to help you:

- strengthen your understanding of the base
- build confidence in your daily practice.

You will be guided by an experienced and dedicated group of instructors authorized by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu:

Gabriella Schneider, Alexander Pubants, Monica Gentile, Alexander Skwara, Anna Apraksina, Mira Mironova, Zoli Cser and Arnaud Coquillard.

Full details and Registration will be shared soon through our newsletter and Sangha App.

2026 – Celebrating 20 Years of Merigar East

Next year, Merigar East celebrates **20 years**. Two decades shaped by teachers, practitioners, volunteers, and friends from all over the world. As we prepare for **this anniversary and the important**



news that may unfold, we warmly invite everyone who feels connected to the Gar to take part in supporting its next steps

Here's how you can help:

Become the Geko

We are looking for a new **Geko** — someone who enjoys responsibility, practical coordination, and daily life at the Gar. If you have experience in organization or feel inspired to contribute your skills, we encourage you to apply.

Join the Gakyil – Red, Yellow, or Blue (2 positions per color, 6 positions in total)

All three colors are open. Whether your strengths are communication, administration, community care, or practical organization, your contribution can make a real difference.

Become a Gakyil Assistant

If you prefer to support gradually, the role of **Gakyil Assistant** is equally meaningful. It is a chance to learn, help, and grow into the work of the Gakyil at your own pace.

Find out more:

Merigar East Roles Overview : <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HfZ-raUXVZiGYd9GVpFPVVKwhUw9hrMPBeLIQJaR8J0/edit?usp=sharing>

Launching Our New Lungta Project

A beautiful tradition of Lungta project is starting at Merigar East: the creation of **handmade Lungta flags**, prepared

by volunteers directly at the Gar. The flags are made from **high-quality cotton**, cut, printed, and sewn with care. At Losar, we will empower them through practice and then raise them in the Gar, where they can carry mantras and blessings through the wind.

You are welcome to participate in two ways:

- **Join as a volunteer** (helping with sewing, preparation, or setting up Lungta during Losar) or
- **Order Lungta for the Year of the Fire Horse**, supporting both your own auspicious energy for the year and the life of the Gar.

Your contribution helps maintain Merigar East and allows the activity of Lungta to continue benefiting all beings.

Questions or Proposals?

You can write directly to the Gakyil:

Red: red.me@dzogchen.ro

Yellow: yellow.me@dzogchen.ro

Blue: blue.me@dzogchen.ro

Stay connected:

Subscribe to our newsletter: <https://dzogchen.ro/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/>

Sangha App Channel: https://events.mahasangha.net/web_admin/together/channels/47a0ff74-66a8-4b2e-aad2-1ad74b0fd24b

WHEN PRACTICE BECOMES SPACE: A YEAR OF YANTRA YOGA IN CZECHIA

There is genuine and growing interest in Yantra Yoga in the Czech Republic. In November, we organized our second beginners' course for the public this year, and the capacity of the Prague Gonpa was completely filled.

We even had to regretfully turn down several applicants. Two participants came from Poland, where, unfortunately, there is currently no Yantra Yoga instructor. Over five sessions spanning the whole weekend, Fijalka Sable taught all the preparatory exercises. The atmosphere was, once again, very friendly, relaxed, and at the same time focused.

That a favourable wind is filling our sails was confirmed by what happened. On Saturday, we discussed with Fijalka the possibility of holding the next beginners course at the Prague cultural center Tibet Open House, which can accommodate far more practitioners. Then on Sunday, by pure coincidence, we met the founder and donor of the center and were able to agree on the plan with him on the spot.

This year, a total of 24 days of Yantra Yoga retreats took place in the Czech Republic, attended by more than 80 participants. Thanks to Yantra Yoga, our community grew by four new members. All Movements and Pranajamas of the Teaching were offered here except the Seven Lotuses, and we welcomed two third-level instructors—Honza Dolenský and Oni McKinstry. The number of regular practitioners grew significantly: once a month we hold a weekend group practice in Phendeling, we maintain a regular online Pranayama practice group, and together with Merigar East we organize regular online sessions in English. In the autumn, Jeff Sable also began teaching regularly nearby Prague.



Next year, we will welcome Oana Marcu from Romania, and in the autumn Fabio Andrico has accepted our invitation. Honza Dolenský will teach the 4th and 5th series of Yantras and Pranayamas in May, Fialka will lead several retreats throughout the whole year. And very interesting surprises are also in the pipe. We offer collaboration to all sanghas in neighbouring countries and remain open to broad cooperation in the community spirit. Just contact us at blue@dzogchen.cz.

*Homage to Togden Orgyen Tenzin – the rainbow light of our lineage.
Homage to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu – the Great teacher who offered the Yantra of the union of Sun and Moon to beings of the West.
Homage to the teachers of Yantra, through whose realization the lineage continues.*



TASHIGAR NORTH - VENEZUELA

NEW GAKYIL OF TASHIGAR NORTE FOR 2026.

We are excited to introduce to you the 2026 Gakyil for Tashigar Norte on beautiful Margarita Island, Venezuela.

We know that times are quite difficult in Venezuela in this moment, anyhow our intention is to continue with positive energy and to preserve this precious Gar. We have great hopes that one day it will once again be open to all members of the Community in safety and harmony.

We would like to thank Rolo for serving on the past Gakyil, and for his agreeing to continue the very complex work of managing finances in current circumstances. His dedication over so many years is amazing and greatly appreciated. Many many thanks to Marina Kashkurova, who has now retired from her role in the Gakyil. We hope that under her management and dedication, TashiRefuge will continue to provide a safe haven for homeless animals, continuing to give the gift of freedom from fear.

Introducing the Gakyil of Tashigar Norte for 2026

Rolo Carrasco - Yellow Gakyil (essential link TN / advisor & facilitator on finances and infrastructure)

I have been a student of Rinpoche since 2004. I arrived in Tashigar North in December 2005. I served a year as a Geko in early 2006, and again in 2008. In 2009 I served as Secretary, and in 2010, I was entrusted with administration. In 2011, I passed the SMS Base level exam and received first Level training in Tashigar South. Throughout these years, I have led and collaborated on various projects implemented in the Gar. I co-own a house in the village of Tashigar North with Marina. I also support TashiRefuge, a project that helps abandoned dogs and cats in the area. Between 2020 and 2024, I formally served

as a Yellow Gakyil. Currently I continue to collaborate with the Gakyil, especially the Yellow Gakyil, in the work of preserving Tashigar North.

Massimo Catalfo – Yellow Gakyil

Massimo attended his first retreat in 1997 and has been a member of the community since year 2000. He visited Margarita Island and TN several times. In 2023 he visited again the Gar and upon the purchase of a home in the TN Village, he became a member of PCTN (Projecto Communitario Tashigar Norte). His intention is to spend more time on Margarita island and to collaborate actively to the life of the Gar. Background in engineering/multimedia/administration/hospitality.

Rosemary Friend – Red Gakyil

Rosemary met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1988 and is a Level 1 Vajra Dance instructor. Her professional life was spent as a medical doctor and psychotherapist. A founding member of the PCTN Tashigar Gar Village project, Rosemary resides in her home there when she can.

Douglas Uzcategui – Red Gakyil

My personal and professional background is linked to the cultural and educational field. I have been visiting Tashigar Norte since early 2008. From then on, a relationship developed that grew increasingly close until 2012. Since that year, I have supported the Dzogchen Community in any activity that requires my assistance. Over time and due to changing circumstances, I have assumed various responsibilities requested of me to support and maintain this sacred place. I live on the Gar full-time. Currently, and until the Community decides otherwise, I am part of the Gakyil of Tashigar Norte.

Dina Priymak – Blue Gakyil

Dina met Rinpoche in 2002. The time



spent in Tashigar Norte following his teachings since 2004 has been profoundly meaningful and since then she has happily contributed to various projects within the DC. In 2010 she was qualified as a Yantra Yoga instructor, later also for Kumar Kumari, Respira and Chair Yantra Yoga. Since 2019 Dina has been teaching Kumar Kumari in Italian schools and she currently continues this work within programs funded by the Tuscany Region in Italy. She holds a degree in Linguistic Pedagogy, graduating this year in Osteopathy in Milan and continues her studies of Tibetan Medicine in Tenerife.

(New Member) Diane Campbell – Blue Gakyil

First met Rinpoche in the late 1980's; joined the DC in the mid 1990's. Originally from the US, but living in Belize since 1992. One of the original founders and Directors of Projecto Communitario Tashigar Norte (PCTN) which was the original landowning company, and is the Homeowner's Association for the residential project. She been continuously active in that aspect of TN. Has a small home in the Gar and sincerely hopes to return to it again when conditions allow. Professional background is in real estate development and construction. Retired in 2023. Active in local volunteer initiatives related to conservation and quality of life.

We are grateful and happy to contribute and serve our community with dedication, harmony, and a spirit of collaboration.

TSEGYALGAR WEST - BAJA CALIFORNIA

BAJA LONGDE RETREAT 2025 WITH FABIO ANDRICO

by Vicki Sidley

A hurricane had wreaked havoc on the long dirt road to this remote Tsegayalgar West in Baja California, Mexico.

Jan Böhm, the assistant Gecko, drove slowly, not only to avoid the gaping ruts and crevices but also to try to avoid the thousands of white, yellow and orange butterflies flitting about everywhere.

In early October, twenty-two practitioners born in twelve different countries gathered at the Gar for Fabio's Longde retreat. We seemed to be a mere sprin-

king of human life in this vast 3,000-acre land, lush with greenery and vibrant with insect and animal inhabitants. Lazuli, the Gekö, called it a luxury place in nature. It was indeed luxurious to have hot water in the public showers, and solar-provided electricity in the casitas, (which was not the case when I visited the Gar in 2021.)

Our first practice session took place a short walk from the wonderfully colorful gonpa, where we arranged ourselves on the stones around the river for a session of Rushen of the Voice.

Back inside the gonpa we were treated to a video of Fabio up on a stage. Re-



corded in 2012 at Dzamling Gar, it showed him explaining the body positions of the Longde practice. The current-day Fabio ridiculed his former self, mimicking the toss of his erstwhile long braid over to the other shoulder. From Fabio also came stories of an even earlier time in his life when he and three others shared a hut in the country and practiced Longde all day for many weeks. "It was like being in love" he said.

The middle of the day was quite hot and the sun still quite strong. On the third and fourth day the group gathered at what is referred to as the "outside Gönpa" a shady area next to the pallid muscular trunk of an enormous fig tree and with a view of an even older, exquisite fig tree. Here Fabio continued to clarify the practice of Longde.

After that we were asked to practice on our own. We would wake well before sunrise and in this quiet we could practice, either in a casita or anywhere outside. One early morning, in the darkness, I was sitting outside the Gönpa and heard the distinct sound of the purr of a cat, several times. I was confused because I knew that there were unlikely to be cats wandering about. It was only many days later while practicing on the balcony of our casita that I was alerted to the sound again. This time there was a little more light, and now I could perceive that it was a hummingbird, hovering around my head, darting away, and returning with the beat of its wings making a purring sound.

Talking of sound, while ambling around the gar one was aware of the sound of bells that hang around the necks of many cows, mostly unseen, that wander freely in the area. The dull clinking was





lovely and reminded me of the sound of water. Other notable sounds were the nightly bellowing groan of a lone cow, calling out for its mate, and the occasional yip-yip howl of distant coyotes.

In the later afternoons many of the group walked down to another part of the river, about twenty minutes away. This very special place is marked by an enormous stone on which one can find the red handprints of small hands high up on the rock. The rock formations are beautiful - large, rounded, and smooth

and mostly white flecked with dark spots. The river flows rapidly and forming waterfalls here and there, and pools beneath them. The area is large and afforded a spaciousness for the practice, and a bounty of all the elements with which to integrate.

At Fabio's suggestion, most every morning between 7:00 and 8:00 those who wanted to, could join in a Yantra Yoga session offered by Yantra Yoga teachers Christina of Spain, Danna of Mexico, and myself (of California). The Yantra Yoga practice was supportive of the Longde practice, and also, I discovered, that the Longde is supportive of the Yantra Yoga practice.

In the latter part of the retreat Fabio offered Yantra classes the mid to late afternoon, reminding us with great gusto of the salient points of the Nine Breathings, Lungsang, and the Tsandul practices of Yantra Yoga. This still left enough time for a Longde session in the late afternoon/evening before dinner.

Mealtimes were always a delight. It was a chance to socialize and get to know one another. We enjoyed delicious dishes prepared by Ulises who lives in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, famous for

its rich mole sauces, a complex of chili and spice, nuts and sometimes chocolate. We were treated to several variations of these sauces. Every meal was accompanied by a deep pink Mexican version of sauerkraut. Once, at a meal, I was offered fried crickets, and despite my being told they were delicious, I refused. Later, when I found them on my Ganapuja plate, I ate them, and discovered that they were, in fact, quite tasty.

I believe we all felt extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to learn this special, subtle practice from Fabio in this unique and beautiful place, and to have shared the experience of practicing together with other vajra brothers and sisters.

COFFEE AND TEA: THE SUBTLE EFFECTS ON BODY AND MIND ACCORDING TO TIBETAN MEDICINE

The culture and habit of regularly drinking coffee and tea have permeated our societies.

Indeed, when we want to enjoy a pleasant time with friends and loved ones, need a little boost, or perhaps gather our thoughts and spend some time alone in peace while enjoying a familiar taste – in all these and many other situations, tea or coffee inevitably become our companions. They are literally associated in our minds with feelings of comfort, joy, and respite from our problems.

In a certain sense, we are simply trained to think and act this way; it has become our habit, thanks to family traditions and the influence of society, the film industry, and active marketing. Effectively, the substances contained in coffee and tea actively stimulate the nervous system and the production of certain hormones that create a feeling of carelessness and pleasant excitement.

But is it really safe to drink several cups of these beverages daily? Let's try to figure this out together, using the approach and recommendations of Tibetan medicine.

From the point of view of this ancient healing system, coffee is considered to have a bitter taste. According to Tibetan medical theory, the bitter taste is formed by the elements of wind and water. The bitter taste has a cold and rough nature. These qualities actively increase the vital principle of Lung (Wind), which, as we know, is closely connected to the nervous system and all movements, including thought.



Short-term effects of taking coffee include an excited state of increased tone, an accelerated heart rate, a feeling of chilliness, possible tremors, and bloating. All of this is caused by an increase in Lung. If we haven't yet developed a habit of overuse and the body as a whole is in a stable state of balance, we may experience a pleasant state of alertness without pronounced side effects. In the short term, stress hormones will decrease, and we will feel temporary relief and inspiration.

But what will we observe in the long term with excessive use? Constant restlessness, anxiety, increased excitability, mental confusion, poor sleep, irritability, and decreased performance – as well as internal organ problems such as impaired digestion and weakened kidneys. And, of course, if these problems continue to accumulate, this will inevitably lead to serious chronic disorders.

What constitutes too frequent use is certainly an individual matter. Age, constitution, season, and other factors must be taken into account. If a person has a high Wind element in their constitution – short stature, thin body, often feeling cold, etc. – it's quite possible that even one cup a day will quickly cause problems with regular consumption, especially if they are approaching old age and the season is summer. A large, calm, middle-aged person will likely not notice any side effects from regularly drinking one cup of coffee a day, but whether they can tolerate more without consequences is, again, a personal question.

And what about tea?

Tea, both black and green, has a bitter and slightly astringent taste – both flavors contain the Wind element and have a cold and rough nature. Consequently, drinking tea inevitably increases Lung function, and the descriptions of its effects and side effects are not very different. Coffee is generally slightly coarser, and caffeine's effect is more pronounced than that of tea. Therefore, with regular weak black tea, both the energizing effect and the development of negative effects will be slightly less pronounced. However, if you regularly and heavily drink amino acid-rich Chinese teas or brew regular tea too strongly, there won't be much difference.

Besides controlling the amount of coffee and tea you drink, you can certainly compensate for the coolness and coarseness of coffee and tea in various

ways – but that's a topic for another article!

There's also a legend in modern urban society that some types of Chinese tea aren't energizing but rather calming, or that they have a warming nature rather than a cooling one. But let's take a closer look – their taste is still more bitter and astringent; the stimulating effect may be less noticeable and slightly refined, but it remains a stimulating effect, so all the previous conclusions are still relevant. Of course, a delicate oolong with a floral aroma will invigorate very gently and pleasantly; pu-erh, due to its special fermentation and aging, is not as cold in its properties and therefore is less disruptive to digestion; and Dian Hong is believed to add warmth to the kidneys, but their nature remains cool. Even teas processed using GABA technology and containing gamma-aminobutyric acid, which in itself has a calming effect, still contain caffeine and tannins, so there

will be a combined effect. However, in any case, the Wind (Lung) will inevitably be activated and increased.

The final advice of Tibetan medicine is always to observe your ever-changing individual condition and be mindful of your diet and lifestyle, always striving for balance.

If you're interested in learning more about how food, drinks, and lifestyle influence health and balance, you can explore our Educational Program on Diet According to Tibetan Medicine, where we study these principles in depth and apply them to daily life.

Stay healthy!

If you find these principles interesting, we invite you to join our [Educational Program on Diet According to Tibetan Medicine](#), a comprehensive three-level online course exploring how food supports physical and mental health.

Level 1

Live Sessions: Every Thursday at 7 PM CET

Dates: January 15 to March 5, 2026

Format: 100% Online

Languages: English & Spanish

Learn more about the diet program:

<https://tibetanmedicineschooleu.org/diet/>

Further information at tibetanmedicine@atiyogafoundation.org

TIBETAN MEDICINE DIET & LIFESTYLE PROGRAM

Dear Vajra family, studying Tibetan Medicine teaches you to understand health through the wisdom of the elements—how food, lifestyle, and environment affect the body, energy, and mind.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, you learn how specific foods and habits can heal or harm, depending on each person's unique elemental balance.

This path is for healing professionals, caregivers, Buddhists, nutritionists, or anyone drawn to an authentic, time-tested healing system.

We invite you to study with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo in our 1.5-year Diet & Lifestyle Counselor Program, beginning January 2026. The application deadline has been extended to December 31, 2025.

You'll study directly from the Tibetan Medicine Tantra in a small cohort, learning assessment, diet, lifestyle guidance, and foundational Tibetan language—becoming part of a 4,000-year-old living tradition rooted in compassion.

To apply, email katya@shangshung.org or follow the instructions on our website.

May all beings find healing,

SSI School of Tibetan Medicine, USA

HOW MEETING NORBU RINPOCHE CHANGED MY LIFE

Andy Lukianowicz

I first became interested in Zen Buddhism in my teens, and attended the Buddhist Society meditation group led by the strong meditator Basil Sladen [his exhortation to us on starting our meditation: 'Buddha Mind!'].

I then went to India to experience the presence of the Dalai Lama [ironically I met him and presented a kata shortly after returning to England, when he visited Snellgrove's students at SOAS!], then in 1974 followed a summer teaching course given by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche at his recently founded Naropa Institute in USA.

He was formidable, always drunk, always crystal clear, always unpredictable.

A couple of years later I went to live at Sogyal Rinpoche's Dharma Centre Orgyen Cho Ling [now Rigpa] in London, where having previously received teachings, instructions and initiations from the great Nyingmapa master Dudjom Rinpoche on the Dudjom Tersar nondro I completed the practices and proceeded to receive initiations on inner tantric deity practices. It was he who first pointed out to me and enabled me to glimpse, experience and know my natural mind.

Then I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, at Easter 1979; I was especially also intrigued to hear Dharma teachings in Italian, my mother tongue. It was my great good fortune that when Rinpoche returned to London a second time to impart further teachings at Christmas that his translator, the mighty Barrie Simmons, was busy working in the USA so I was asked by Judy Allan if I felt able to translate; when I went to Jill Purce's home for Rinpoche's approval, somehow he did not hesitate to agree and throughout the retreat was very en-



Andy listens attentively to translate as Rinpoche makes an important point, Merigar 1985.

couraging, so I spent the next 10 days translating for him - which I continued to do for over thirty years, both written and oral/aural teachings. However it was the latter, due to the awakened alertness and flexibility needed to translate Rinpoche in 'real time', in the situation, that helped me more in my practice of present moment awareness.

That Christmas retreat my work entailed also translating interviews, at meals and so on, so I was by his side up to ten hours most days. One thing that struck me straight away was the way he interacted differently and individually with each person; in the interviews, one person he might tell to do more sitting practice, the next, not to push herself so hard. Also at meals he recounted to me many important incidents in his life, perhaps the most memorable being the attempt to poison him in his teens when he attended a teaching by Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro at Dzongsar Monastery in Derge.

Meeting Rinpoche turned my whole life around. The next year I moved to Italy, to follow his Dzogchen teachings closely, more assiduously, than he imparted so freely, clearly and extensively. I remember that, on visiting Rinpoche, after his retreat at Monte Belluna in north-east Italy, at his family home in Formia, he took me and my vajra brother

the great poet John Shane to the top of the nearby Monte Redentore [Mount Redeemer], where he left us, with tents, food and practices to do, with a laconic appointment to come and collect us after three weeks. A fruitful retreat, a sort of freeform rushen, looking back.

By the end of that year I was living in Naples, at a flat occupied by some of his closest students, Andrea Dell'Angelo and Fabio Andrico among others, with Lotsawa Adriano Clemente usually there as well as other Neapolitan students, and where Rinpoche too slept when he came down to Naples for his job at the Orientale University. I even actually got a job working in the English department at the same University.

[If I may tell a personal story, in my second year I was held up at gunpoint by some youths, and it was a mature student of mine who, driving past saw me, probably immediately grokked what was going on, pulled over, opened wide the passenger door and shouted out: "Professo, le serve un passaggio?" - "Prof, do you need a lift?" I slipped between them, they were as surprised as I was at the turn in events, and off we sped! As well as riding a lion Dorje Legpa also drives a car through the crazy streets of Naples! To my mind, Naples, that one wag humorously defined as the only world city without a European quarter,



Greeting Lopon Tenzin Namdak, France 2015.

is the only city in the west [in the world?] that could accommodate Rinpoche's originality, spontaneity and big-heartedness.]

Rather than try to recount Rinpoche's teachings, which other better prepared students can do much better and more clearly, I would like to share some of my memories of those years, some amusing, some striking, that showed me time and again how he was at once the most remarkable, most ordinary, person I have ever met.

A few easy-going reminiscences of Rinpoche. One morning in Naples, walking together to work we stopped at a bar, I presumed for a coffee, instead Rinpoche offered me an ice cold beer, his own chosen remedy for the flu that I was just starting! Three times, he told me things about myself that I had never told to anyone, with words of advice on how to deal with certain problems. Another time, in England, he conjured the spirit of a recently deceased British disciple, her presence palpably felt by myself and many of the others there. Once he showed me a necklace of relics he wore around his neck, proudly rubbing his most prized amulet: a bone from one of a pair of brothers who had killed each other in a feud, muttering how its energy was very powerful.

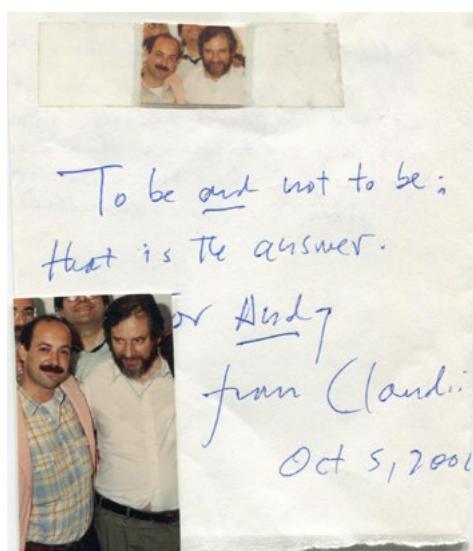
Once in Moscow in a museum full of marvellous artistic and religious artefacts, he led me to the room that impressed him most: a smaller collection, full of crystals. Once I brought him a table beer mat from Germany depicting a blonde Teutonic Valkyrie goddess holding up a foaming glass of beer, seated in front of the rising sun, saying for me she was the German local version of Ozer Chenma, he could not stop laughing; looking back as I walked away, he was still looking at it laughing.

By the way, this reminds me when young Rinpoche's children, Yeshi and Yuchen, had two pet goldfish, he told me their names: 'Leg' and 'Pa', bursting out laughing. I also remember that I had the opportunity to translate, at his first teaching, at Merigar, Yeshi Namkhai, at a retreat Christmas 1990 [Chögyal Rinpoche Was abroad at the time]; also teaching were Alak Zenkar

Rinpoche and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

This is a good place to mention that it was also in Naples [through Antonio Ferrara, a Dzogchenpa vajra-brother] that I met my most important 'non-Dharma non-Tibetan' guru, Claudio Naranjo, a shaman disguised as a [Perls-taught] gestalt therapist, a student of Tarthang Tulku, of Oscar Ichazo [the founder of protoanalysis and Arica], and of Sufi teacher, story-teller and trickster Idries Shah, a close friend of Carlos Castaneda and Alan Watts and of Chogyam Trungpa. In his shock-point gestalt group workshops in late-80s Naples I learned not to trust but instead work with my conceptual mind, to break down the false self-image it constructed by its insecurities and repressions [a good friend but a lousy master, to quote Baba Ram Dass] and how to trust instead our basic emotions, which he praised as our true inner self, our inner animal, and how to treat instead the beguiling wiles of the discursive mind as a travel companion on the path to freedom, to learn how to use natural energy rather than condemn or repress it. This I learned to do faster

and more skilfully by combining the insights garnered from his group-work with insights from my more 'traditional' practice [if any practice once understood continues to be tradition-bound]. In fact he taught and conducted as an essential part of the group work in his Seekers after Truth program, integrating this path to self-knowledge



Claudio Naranjo: words of wisdom in a book dedication, Rome 2000.

edge with his Self-Analysis for the Seeker shattari methods, a series of interpersonal meditations, progressive Theravada, Zen Mahayana and tantric meditations culminating in Guru Rinpoche practice, which he later systematised as Dionysian Buddhism. What did he identify as our greatest trap?

To want not to know, to fear and resist change, to abide in spiritual indolence, social compliance, and interpersonal indifference, in a word, striving to remain in samsara, 'the devil you know...' His teaching summed up as a Zen koan/one-liner? "To be AND not to be, that is the answer."

It was at Merigar - where I had the honour to translate for the Dalai Lama when he came to inaugurate the gön-pa - that I also met my two main Bonpo masters, first Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in 1987, and two years later, the great Bonpo master, the recently deceased Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak, whose teachings too I have followed assiduously, having had the good fortune to serve as his Italian translator for twenty years, and to have been treated by him like a close student and close friend during that time.

Fortunately I had no difficulty following these two great teachers, or rather two Buddhas, Chögyal and Lopon, attending their teachings and talking with them in private and in public, although some of their 'students' wanted me to choose one between them, like some kind of loyalty test! On the contrary, they always asked, sometimes with concern but always with great affection, news of each other's health and general conditions. I remember, when the building of the Merigar gön-pa was being finalised, Chögyal Rinpoche took me and Giorgio Dallorto to the centre of the gön-pa and when we looked upwards he told me he saw there an image of Guru Padmasambhava, whether a material statue or a visible presence he did not specify; in parallel, whenever Lopon Rinpoche greeted me on arrival he used to welcome me as a devotee of Guru Rinpoche. [Once, in a period when I was spending much time reciting the Japanese Amida nembutsu, the mantra of Amitabha Buddha, Lopon smiled at me and recited Namo Amitofo, the Chinese 6-syllable invocation of Amitabha].

In line with Dorje Legpa's invocation where he affords equal protection to Buddhists and Bonpos [Ban Bon], I love the account, which I heard from Louise Lands-Levi, of Chögyal Rinpoche's response when confronted at a meeting

of Tibetan teachers convened in Switzerland by the office of the Dalai Lama, at the time when he was doing much research and publishing his writing about Bon, then not yet deemed respectable, and being abruptly asked: 'Are you a Bud-



Tenzin Wangyal: brothers in Dzogchen, Merigar 1991

dhist or a Bonpo?' he simply pointed at his lapel name badge and said: 'I am Namkhai Norbu'. Priceless!

In the 90s, I participated in Chögyal Rinpoche's Santi Maha Sangha courses, aimed to firmly establish knowledge of the view alongside rigorous but joyful practice, translating his voice during the teachings and the course books from Adriano Clemente's Italian translation. [I also translated Rinpoche's seminal book on Bon and Tibetan culture, Drung, Deu, Bon, published by LTWA in Dharamsala, India]. Thankfully, it was also through my activity as translator that I was called to translate for Dakini Tsering Paldron,



Sharing a joke with Khandro Rinpoche, Bordo [before it became Bodhi Path Kagyu centre] Italia 1996

Khandro Rinpoche, at her teachings in north Italy, forming a guru-disciple relationship now in its thirtieth year. From her, I have learned the value of combining precision in scholarship with soaring mystical vision, and through her reality as a reincarnation of Yeshe Tsogyal while at her side at a Padmasambhava initiation was granted a vision of Guru Rinpoche himself, for which I am ever grateful to her.

I also recall, when I get too full of myself, a personal and direct transmission from Chögyal Rinpoche that I received in Kathmandu, when I was translating for him at a teaching at the Vajra Hotel. At a group meal on ending the retreat, someone saw there was a free seat at Rinpoche's table and told me I should go and sit there; radiating over-weening vanity, I of course followed her advice. As I sat down Rinpoche looked over at me, then averted his gaze saying nothing, in fact he did not look at me or speak to me again throughout the whole meal. Mind transmission, symbolic transmission, word transmission? Rinpoche gave me the fourth, silent transmission, loud and clear. And I got that transmission too, loud and clear. As he used to sign his emails: ciao ciao!

To conclude in the present moment, a world foreboding a living nightmare for the next generation, who have nothing to thank us for [Susan Bauer Wu's [A Future We Can Love](#) is a beacon of hope in these dark times], now that Chögyal Rinpoche and Lopon Rinpoche as well as Dudjom Rinpoche are in Sukhavati [the name does not matter, you get my point] I know by experience that we all can count on both of them, as well as on Guru Rinpoche and on Drenpa Namkha, for guidance, help and protection as we travel our path. As Chögyal Rinpoche said, freed of the material body masters are nine times more powerful to continue their dharma activities for their students and for all sentient beings. We followers of these great masters are all very fortunate indeed, let us share this fortune with all, especially the younger generation, who need and deserve it the most.

POEMS

up on the mountain the leaves have already fallen,
 here though, the leaves seem brighter this year,
 and the sun behind the morning mist
 seems rounder.

"This morning"
 Amiata, 08/12/2025
 Anonymous

—————
 I am an ordinary sentient being conditioned by
 the five emotions
 Hope and fear, acceptance and rejection

I have not a grain of enlightened qualities or activities

I often feel myself a hypocrite, frivolous
 and bloated with useless words

Moreover, I am quick to temperamental fits
 a liar, consumed by concerns about an illusory
 body that will soon be nothing but ashes

I am a lazy person who is no longer motivated towards doing anything

When i consider my faults and lack of qualities,
 I feel as if I have descended to the bottom of
 the ocean

The words I use to teach are just the words of a babbling hypocrite who says something that
 may sound wise, but is nothing more than the loud babbling of a parrot

In fact it amazes me sometimes that I ever considered teaching as I feel so drenched in ordinary behavior

A few meditation experiences have led me to believe that I could be a wise person,
 But actually they only serve to intensify my pride and self satisfaction

They have not brought me to the door of compassion, patience or a single good quality

It seems as if I have wasted this precious opportunity and have been distracted endlessly
 by meaningless thoughts and actions.

Steven Landsberg

"Enlightened" Poems

As our teacher never tired to remind us: Dzogchen is the Real State of everybody. Not everyone is able to become conscious of it but everybody has the potential. In poetry I keep stumbling over examples of a wide awake awareness and presence. While expressed in words it seems to display a state beyond concept. Unfortunately I can present it only in

translation which inevitably diminishes the poetic impact but even the prose version transports enough. For me it resonates also with Yeshe Namkhai's recent teachings and the title of the book where the translation can also be found probably will also resonate with some of us: *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe*.

Here are two poems from Pessoa's (alias Alberto Caeiro) cycle **The Keeper Of Sheep**

II

My gaze is clear like a sunflower.
 It is my custom to walk the roads
 Looking right and left
 And sometimes looking behind me,
 And what I see at each moment
 Is what I never saw before,
 And I'm very good at noticing things.
 I'm capable of feeling the same wonder
 A newborn child would feel
 If he noticed that he'd really and truly been born.
 I feel at each moment that I've just been born
 Into a completely new world ...
 I believe in the world as in a daisy,
 Because I see it. But I don't think about it,
 Because to think is to not understand.
 The world wasn't made for us to think about it
 (To think is to have eyes that aren't well)
 But to look at it and to be in agreement.
 I have no philosophy, I have senses...
 If I speak of Nature it's not because I know what it is
 But because I love it, and for that very reason,
 Because those who love never know what they love
 Or why they love, or what love is.
 To love is eternal innocence,
 And the only innocence is not to think...

IX

I'm a keeper of sheep.
 The sheep are my thoughts
 And each thought a sensation.
 I think with my eyes and my ears
 And with my hands and feet
 And with my nose and mouth.
 To think a flower is to see and smell it,
 And to eat a fruit is to know its meaning.
 That is why on a hot day
 When I enjoy it so much I feel sad,
 And I lie down in the grass
 And close my warm eyes,
 Then I feel my whole body lying down in reality,
 I know the truth, and I'm happy.

Fernando Pessoa - Alberto Caeiro 1914.

See: <https://casafernandopessoa.pt/pt/cfp/visita/museu-poemas-e-textos-escolhidos/english/alberto-caeiro/my-gaze-clear-sunflower>

PESSOA, Fernando, *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe: Selected Poems*, Edited and Translated by Richard Zenith. New York /London, Penguin Books, 2006

(Doro Franck August 2025)

Natural Condition
By Dudjom Pema Düddul

Dzogchen is nothing more or less than your natural condition
Complete in itself
Perfect as it is
You don't need permission to rest in your natural condition
It is not restricted or secret
You don't need empowerment or preliminaries
You don't need purification or accumulation
You don't need to go anywhere special or do anything special
All you need is joy and contentment
Kindness and compassion
Love and devotion
So just open your eyes and relax
Just settle down and rest
In spacious silence and luminous stillness
See the world as it really is
See your heart as it really is
Then you are one with your natural condition
Then you are finally free

Colophon: This poem arose in my mind on the anniversary of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's birth, 8th December 2024, just after dawn, during a Guru Yoga session dedicated to Rinpoche. Therefore, I see any benefit the words bring as the result of Rinpoche's blessing.

Dr. Dudjom Pema Düddul (PhD) is a Buddhist Chaplain, author and Dharma teacher. His main gurus are Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, Kyabje Togden Amtrin (a student of Rigdzin Changchub Dorje), Ngakpa Karma Lhundup Rinpoche, and

Dungse Namgyal Dawa Rinpoche. Pema is the author of multiple books and articles on Buddhism, including [Luminous Awareness: A Guidebook to Natural Awakening in Life and in Death](#), which includes a foreword by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

The Visionary Landscape by Louise Landes Levi

The
Visionary landscape
what you described, attract-
ed my perimeter, (until) I discov-
ered I had my own garden to penetrate.

Water was the key element
Then fire, after that the AIR was
my dominion & I flew where I
wished to fly. This or that
heaven, the hell realms
were also interesting.

One
day I met my
Master, at that mo-
ment heaven & hell ceased
To exist, even the dragon fly
knew she cld. transcend
their opposition.

II

I
had no interest
in prizes or in the
configurations of the great
metropolis. My heart lay in yr. hand
from the day forward.

iii

When
you died, even
great beings like you
can not keep company w.
lesser ones, like me, for long

forever
or
is
forever

NOW?

Are
you
here

In my breath & in my
confusion, are you here on the
Pede
stal of the beautiful?

iv

The insects cured me
of my infidelity, the moss my
stepping
stone.

Kyoto, September 2025



A FEW WORDS FROM THE GHOST

Celebrating The 40th Anniversary of The First Publication of 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen'.

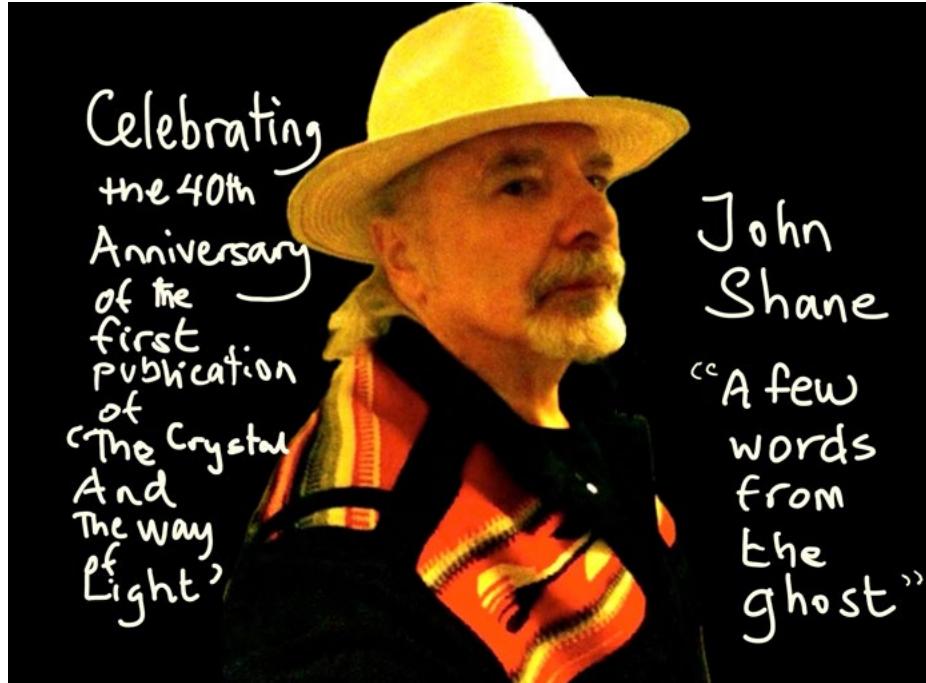
JOHN SHANE

Now that so many masters are teaching Dzogchen and so many books have been published on the subject, it might be difficult for many people to understand how radical Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was, not only in beginning to teach Dzogchen openly and widely to western students in the 1970s - which at that time, no other Tibetan lamas would do - but he was also very radical in agreeing to produce a book in English about the Dzogchen teachings intended for a wide general Western readership.

The fact that Rinpoche also decided to work on such a book with someone like me who is a poet rather than a specialist academic Tibetologist was also a very radical move, and the shape that the book took was very much affected by that decision.

In the process of producing the book that was to become 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light', my role - in classical terms - would be described as having been Norbu Rinpoche's 'amanuensis', which in the modern day terms of the publishing industry, means that I was his 'ghost writer'.

When I first began work on the book in Italy at Norbu Rinpoche's private family apartment in Formia, Italy, I had access to all the many tapes and transcripts of talks of teachings that Rinpoche had



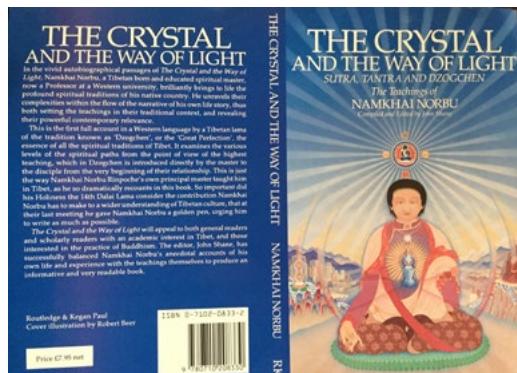
given around the world up to that date, and I began to read and listen to them, and all the stories and teachings that ended up in the book 'The Crystal' came either from those tapes and transcripts, or from what Rinpoche told me privately as we talked together while traveling around the world during the four years that, in the end, it took to produce the book. One of the reasons that it took so long to finish the book, is that there was so much material in all those tapes and transcripts of Rinpoche's talks that, as I began to work on the manuscript,

it began to grow bigger and bigger as I tried to include in it everything that Rinpoche had taught.

This went on for some time before it became clear to me that what was most important to in-

vast Rinpoche's knowledge was. Consequently, what had in the first phase developed into such a massive manuscript was gradually reduced more and more to reveal what was essential for the reader to gain a first understanding of Rinpoche's Dzogchen teachings, which could be presented in a relatively short book, the main text of which could comfortably be read in one long sitting, with the photos and other illustrations with their captions and the graphic analysis providing further ways for the reader to get a full picture of what Rinpoche taught.

As I evolved this process, I showed Rinpoche a graphic structural analysis that I had set out on a large sheet of drawing paper - using skills that I had learned while studying architecture and fine arts at Cambridge University - in order to be able to show him an outline of the way in which I thought the material to be included in a book of his teachings should be organized, and Rinpoche approved the idea. Given how often I had seen him hold up a crystal in his hand to give explanations of aspects of the Dzogchen teachings, I also told Rinpoche that I thought the book should be called 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen', and he accepted my suggestion as a working title, which later came to be the actual title of the book when it was finally published.



The cover of the first edition with Robert Beer's cover illustration based on my sketched ideas

clude in the book was what the reader needed to know of Rinpoche's teachings, rather than there being included in the book everything that Rinpoche had taught, as I had at first wanted to do because I wanted to show how



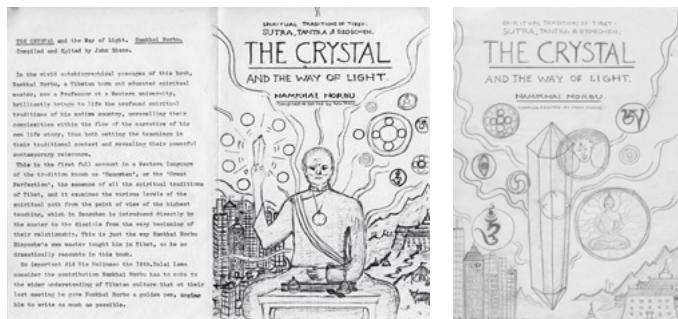
Norbu Rinpoche using a crystal rock to give an explanation of the Dzogchen teachings during a retreat in California, USA in the early 80s. (Photo by John Shane)

As I read through the dozens of transcripts in various languages of Rinpoche's talks and listened to the dozens of tapes of his teachings, I began to realize that, to create the text of the book, I would need to take pieces of what Rinpoche had said from one transcript and intercut that first piece with a piece from another transcript.

Of course, this was at a time when there was no internet or cellular phones, and, in fact, there were not yet even any personal computers with word-processing apps. Nor were there yet any centres of the Dzogchen Community at which I would be able to find people to help me with my work on the project.

Since there were no computers at that time, when I needed to cut and paste elements from one teaching transcript together with elements from another transcript, I had literally to slice up into pieces the pages of copies of the transcripts and then join them together in the new sequence using double-sided clear sellotape, and I then had to take the assembled pieces to the copy shop in the centre of the small town of Formia to be photocopied to make a new whole page for the manuscript.

As I began to do this work of cutting and pasting pieces from different teachings together, I could see that I would also need to create entirely new paragraphs to join up pieces from different transcripts, and, there was a huge, ancient, battered, and very noisy grey IBM electric typewriter in the Namkhai family



Left: A sketch I made to give an idea of the illustration I wanted for the front cover of 'The Crystal', with also a draft of the rear cover blurb.
Right: Another of the sketches I made to give an idea of the illustration I would like to see as the cover of the book

ly's apartment where I was working with Rinpoche that he said I should use to type out these newly written paragraphs that would join pieces from the various transcripts.

I also had a Sony Professional Walkman and a small microphone that Rinpoche and I had agreed I would use to record what he said whenever I interviewed him to ask him questions.

When we first discussed the project of producing the book, I had assumed that when Rinpoche proposed to me that we would be 'working together' he meant that I would be working very closely with him on all aspects of the text at all times.

But then, after I had first arrived to work with Rinpoche at his family apartment a short distance from the beach in the seaside town of Formia, half way between Rome and Naples, where I would sleep on the sofa in the living room for six months, I sat with Rinpoche at his family's dining table in the living room while Rinpoche was himself writing by hand in cursive Tibetan script with a black pen. I waited patiently in silence for Rinpoche to indicate to me that he was ready for me to speak to him so that we could begin to work together.

After a while, Rinpoche looked up at me from his work, and, seeing that I was not reading or writing but was instead watching him as he worked, he said sharply to me in Italian, 'What are you waiting for?!' I meekly told him that I was waiting for him to work with me, which is what I had assumed we would be doing when he had asked me to collaborate with him on the project.

He replied, again in Italian: 'You have mistaken the principle. When you come to work with me on a book like this, you do the work.'

So much for my expectations..!

I began to get on with the job of working on the book on my own while sitting across the table from Rinpoche.

But, in the next few days, I soon discovered that I had a problem, or, at least, I had what I thought was a problem.

When I came to try to join two pieces of teaching taking excerpts from two different transcripts in two different languages, I didn't mind translating the two pieces of what he had said in Italian into my written English. But when I had to join the two pieces from the two different transcripts there needed to be a new connecting paragraph, or sometimes even two or three connecting paragraphs, that had to be newly created, and very often these new paragraphs

had to be written in the first person, to link both of the existing transcript paragraphs in which Rinpoche was speaking in the first person.

My problem was that - out of my great respect for Rinpoche - I was extremely uncomfortable with the idea of having to write in the first person as if what was written was by Rinpoche himself, but would, in fact, have been written by me.

Sitting at the Namkhai family dining table that day, I explained all this to Rinpoche, and I asked him to listen to me read the paragraphs from the transcripts in which he spoke in the first person and then to dictate to me the linking paragraphs that needed to be created in the first person to match the pieces from the different transcripts.

Rinpoche looked at me with a severe frown and said, 'Do you know how to write?' And when I said, 'Yes, of course I do', he then said, 'Do you know what needs to be written?'

When I again said, 'Yes', this time he said quite wrathfully, 'Don't play the child with me...!! If you know how to write, and you know what needs to be written, what are you waiting for? Just get on with it and write it...!!'

From then on that's how work went ahead in the coming weeks and months, with me continually checking back with Rinpoche on how things were going, while at the same time I also frequently checked in with the publisher's editor in London, until - finally - years later, after many attempts at many different versions of the manuscript, a version of the book was finished that I was ready to submit to the publisher as the final version, and I brought the manuscript of that version to Rinpoche telling him that I would leave it with him so that he could read it. I was confident that Rinpoche would be relieved, after we had been working on the book for such a long time, to see a final version of the book and would be happy to read it. But Rinpoche looked at me as if I was mad, and told me he didn't need to read through the manuscript.

When I recovered from my surprise, I told him that I felt that I had taken on a



Norbu Rinpoche relaxes while teaching mudras to the thangka painter Robert Beer who made the cover illustration for the first edition of the book.

huge responsibility in accepting to work in the way that I had, and that, while I was deeply grateful for the level of trust he was showing in me, there was no way that I would send the manuscript of the book to the publisher without him reading it.

Now it was Rinpoche's turn to look surprised. He thought for a minute or two. And then he said, 'All right. You know that Walkman tape recorder that you've always used to record our conversations so that you could tape my answers to your questions about the teachings, about my life in Tibet, and about the book? Well, go away, read the whole manuscript into the tape machine, and then bring me the cassette tapes you've recorded, give me a copy of the manuscript, and as I'm traveling around the world to give talks and teach at retreats, with your headphones on, I'll read the manuscript while I listen to your voice reading the text on the tapes.'

I gave Rinpoche a red marker pen that I'd been using, and said, 'OK, but when you see something you want to have changed, or something you want to ask

me about, please mark the manuscript with this pen so that I will know about anything that you have a problem with.'

As I'm sure you will be able to imagine it was a very strange experience indeed for me to sit - in the following weeks - in a quiet room all by myself and read aloud into a microphone - in my BBC standard English voice - page after page of my Tibetan teacher's teachings, in the knowledge that he would in the coming months be listening closely to my voice reading back to him teachings that he had given to his students in his Tibetan language speaker's version of Italian over the previous years.



Robert Beer's painting for the cover of the first edition

Some months later, when I was called to see Rinpoche and he told me that he finished listening to the tapes, I saw the manuscript on the dining table of his private apartment with the red pen lying on top of the closed folder. While I was waiting for Rinpoche to come into the room to see me, I moved the pen, opened the folder, and flipped through the manuscript. The pages all looked thoroughly thumbed, but there was not a single red mark on any of them. I put the manuscript back in the folder and put the red pen back on top of it.

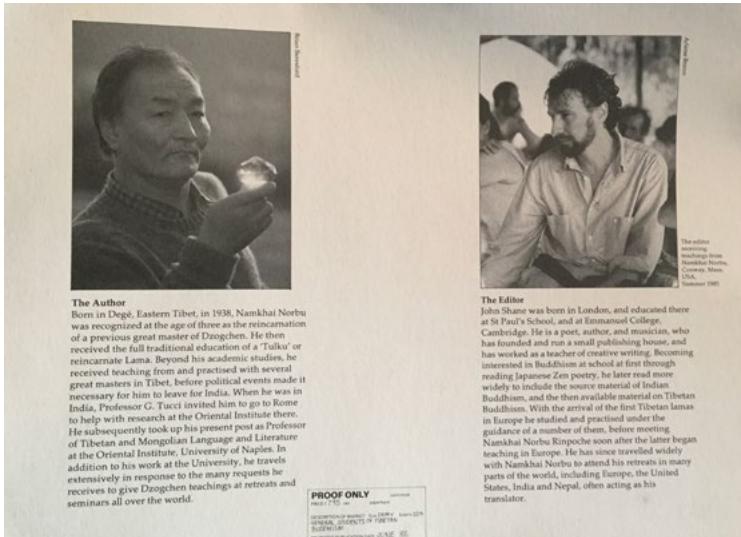
When Rinpoche finally came into the room, I didn't tell him I'd already looked at the manuscript. Instead, I simply asked him to tell me what changes he wanted me to make to it. He shook his head, and, with a smile, said he didn't see the need for any changes. Then he handed me the folder containing the manuscript and said I should send it to the publisher.

After that, over many, many years Rinpoche never said anything at all to me about the book. But not long after the book was published in its first English edition, when I went with Rinpoche to a Dzogchen retreat he gave at 'Meditatcentrum Der Cosmos', a large state sponsored meditation centre located on the banks of one of the famous canals in Amsterdam, I saw how pleased Rinpoche was when he noticed that - beside the sales counter of the Centre's bookshop - there was a metal rack showcasing the store's best-sellers - and 'The Crystal' was in the top place of the rack.

Seeing the book there in that top position in the rack, Rinpoche turned to me with a broad appreciative smile, and said, laughing: 'Guarda...!! Siamo numero uno...!!'. 'Look...!! We're number one...!!'

Even though Rinpoche never said anything further to me personally about my work on the book, many years later I did hear what he thought of my work from my friend the late Nina Robinson, who was for many years the main secretary at the Dzogchen Community's first centre, Merigar, that we had helped Rinpoche to found on the slopes of Monte Amiata in Tuscany, Italy. Nina told me that, when she was taking care of some paperwork together with Rinpoche in the library at Merigar, a much-read and rather battered old copy of the first edition of 'The Crystal' was lying on the table at which they were working.

Pointing to the book, Nina said innocently to Rinpoche, 'John Shane did a good job on that book, 'The Crystal', didn't he...?' - to which, Nina later told me,



Printers' proof of the inner front and rear cover pages of the first edition of the book.

Rinpoche replied emphatically, 'A good job...?! John didn't just do a good job on that book...!! He did a fantastic job...!!'

Over the following years, I also had to take care of all business matters with publishers relating to contracts, editions, etc., as Rinpoche did not want to have to deal with all that on top of all his other many responsibilities. In order that my word would carry weight when discussing issues with publishers - it was agreed that I should hold joint copyright of 'The Crystal' with Rinpoche, and that remains the case to this day. But I never asked for any payment, and all the royalties that have resulted from the book's sales have always gone to Rinpoche and his family, so my years of work on the book were my offering to Rinpoche.

When I was first asked to work on the book of Norbu Rinpoche's Dzogchen teachings, I was fully aware of the fact that the Dzogchen teachings cannot be received from a book alone: transmission of the teachings - and Direct Introduction - must be received from a fully qualified Master. So, in devising a form for the book, I decided to design it so that one aspect of its content would make readers of the book feel that they were getting to know Rinpoche in such an intimate way that they would want to actually meet him in person. This was the particular function of the many stories of Rinpoche's early life in Tibet that

I included in the book.

As well as wanting readers to feel that they had come to know Rinpoche, I also wanted the book to be able to serve as a study-guide when they came to listen to Rinpoche's teachings. So what I concentrated on in the other aspect of the book was to go through the principle terms and concepts of the teachings - many of which involve untranslatable Tibetan or Sanskrit names and terms - presenting them to the reader in such a

way that, when they did come to meet Rinpoche and received oral transmission of his teachings, they would already be familiar with those terms and concepts so that it would be easier for them to stay in the moment while listening to Rinpoche's oral explanations without having to keep looking up the meaning of the unfamiliar Tibetan and Sanskrit terms that he was using. Then - after they had listened to Rinpoche - I intended that newcomers would also be able to find, in the book, pages of graphic analysis of the teachings that would enable them to understand how the various component aspects of the crystalline structure of the teachings fit together.

A further component of the book was the photos and illustrations, which were intended to help establish in the readers' minds both the authenticity of Rinpoche himself as a teacher and the authenticity of the lineage of the teachings that Rinpoche embodied. Once the book was published, it became a bestseller, and many people all over the world read it. This caused many students from many different countries to arrive who wanted to put into practice Norbu Rinpoche's teachings, and, in that sense, the book's success became one of the key early building blocks from which the Dzogchen Community grew.

Over the years, the original book's continued availability and the many translations that were made of it into different languages helped the Community grow

from a small group of people in a couple of countries to its current world-wide presence.

The essence of one's own mind is said in Dzogchen to be 'inseparable from the mind of the guru'.

In the Guru Yoga of Dzogchen, one recalls this, and - if one has become distracted from the 'natural state', the state of Dzogchen - the state in which one's thoughts and emotions and one's physical manifestation spontaneously self-liberate - one links the essence of one's own mind with the guru's mind to return to the undistracted state.

The process of producing this book in English of my Tibetan teacher's teachings in a way that would make it seem that the teachings in the book had been born in perfect English spoken by him, required me to link my mind to the mind of my teacher and make myself completely transparent - ghostly, in fact - so that Rinpoche's character, not mine, and the particular character of his teachings would shine through my English prose.

I already had experience of making myself 'transparent' in this way when I was translating for Rinpoche at his talks, and, in writing the book, I developed that capacity further. If you haven't yet read 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light', it's still in print with Shambhala Publications, and I hope that you will find time to take a look at it. And if you have already read it many years ago, it might be time to re-read it in its 40th year.

In either case, the following two glowing comments from reviews by distinguished Tibetologists, Sam Van Schaik and Acharya Malcolm Smith, might perhaps encourage you to pick up the book:

Sam Van Schaik, a researcher at the British Library in London and author and editor of many books, including 'Tibet: A History'; 'Approaching the Great Perfection' and many others wrote about the 'The Crystal's' impact on him when it was first published:

'...It was not until the eighties that Dzogchen began to be widely known. This was largely through the teaching activities and writings of Namkhai Norbu, a

Tibetan lama who had been invited to Italy in the sixties. Working at first as a professor at Naples University, in the seventies Namkhai Norbu gradually began teaching dharma students, focusing on the presentation of Dzogchen.

Then, in 1986, came the publication of Namkhai Norbu's 'The Crystal and the Way of Light', which brought the teachings of Dzogchen to a far wider audience in the English-speaking world. The book was an engaging mix of autobiography, anecdote, and Dzogchen teachings. It was the first place I encountered Dzogchen, and I was fascinated..."

Acharya Malcolm Smith, translator and editor of several books from Tibetan, including 'Buddhahood in This Life: The Great Commentary by Vimalamitra' wrote about the first publication of 'The Crystal':

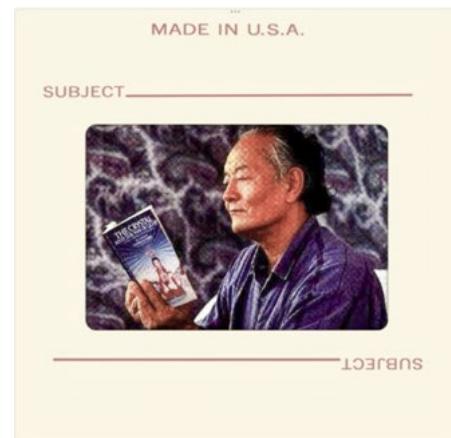
"The Crystal And The Way Of Light was the book that broke the ice of the Dzogchen teachings in the Western World.

Prior to the publication of this book, there were no accessible, easy to understand, writings about Dzogchen for the general reader. Even though this book is accessible, its contents are nonetheless profound and lay out the context of the Dzogchen teachings in a clear manner..."

When Norbu Rinpoche and I began work together, he said to me: 'You have mistaken the principle. When you come to work with me on a book like this, you do the work'.

And that is exactly what happened in the creation of 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light'. But, despite the fact that it was me that did the work of the writing of the book, it seems that I succeeded sufficiently in making myself invisible in the book to the extent that most readers have assumed that the book was entirely written by Rinpoche himself. And I have always been very happy about that.

But now that 'The Crystal' has successfully been in print in its English language form for 40 years, and has also been translated into many other languages, as we arrive at the eighth year after Rinpoche himself passed away, and as I am myself now in my 80th year, I felt it might be time for 'the



Following the 4 years of hard work that it took to complete the manuscript of the book, Norbu Rinpoche was finally able to hold a copy of the book in his hands.

ghost' who collaborated so successfully with Norbu Rinpoche to come out of the shadows for a brief moment to write a few words intended to shed light on his work on the book before 'the ghost' finally fully disappears, fading from this Earthly dimension. And, as I write these words to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the book that came into existence as a result of my having, in a very practical sense, offered 'body, voice, and mind' in Rinpoche's service, I also want to celebrate all the other wonderful things that have come to fruition in the Dzogchen Community in the same 40 years as a result of the individual and collective offerings of so many of my fellow students.

And, at the same time, I look forward in the hope and expectation of the further great things that will come into the world as result of what future generations of students of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teachings, and future readers of 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light', will have to offer.

Sarva Mangalam
May It Be Auspicious...!!

If you would like to write to me, please do so through my Substack publication, where you can also read and listen to more of my work:

<https://johnshanewayofthepoet.substack.com>.

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