



THE MIRROR

News Media of the International Dzogchen Community

No. 173 - September 2026

**MACO
CELEBRATES
10 YEARS**

**MAGICAL
DISPLAY
OF APPARENT
PHENOMENA**

**HOW JIM VALBY
MET CHNN**

**THE BUDDHA'S
TEACHING
IN BUSINESS**

**CHÖGYAL
NAMKHAI
NORBU
INTEGRATING
IN THE STATE
OF DZOGCHEN**



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Front cover: The Padmasambhava statue recently constructed at Garphu, in Upper Mustang, Nepal dedicated to the memory of our beloved Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Back cover: A painting by Lauri Denyer, "All in the Same Boat", offered on the passing of Jim Valby.



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ON THE 8TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASSING OF OUR BELOVED MASTER CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

Dear Vajra Family, on Sunday, September 27, 2026, we will mark the eighth anniversary of our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's departure from our earthly dimension.

We remember with deep devotion, love and great appreciation all the invaluable moments we spent in Rinpoche's presence - his wise words, his smile, the games of Bagchen, the joyful dances - and above all that we are blessed to have received the precious Teachings - the living knowledge our Master so generously transmitted to all his students with selfless dedication and compassion throughout his life.



Photo by Paolo Fassoli

We continue to be inspired by Rinpoche's life and teachings, and we are committed to preserving their essence and integrating them into our daily lives. We thank all of you who, with devotion and unwavering commitment have kept our community flourishing - and the invaluable guidance of our Spiritual Leader - his son and student - Namkhai Yeshe - whose presence helps keep our Dzogchen Community united and active.

With gratitude and infinite love, we pay homage to our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

He is always with us.

*The International Gakyil Team,
Miranda, Fabrizio, Gabriella, Fabio, Oni,
Richard, Piotr, Iliya, Lyubov, and Luigi,
Sebastien, Marija and Nikol*

INTEGRATING IN THE STATE OF DZOGCHEN



Photo by Lidiya Dzhebisashvili

An excerpt transcribed from the Song of the Vajra Retreat, Hong Kong, 2012. May 19, day 4, part 3. Continued from issue 172 of The Mirror

<https://melong.online/chogyal-namkhai-norbu-when-we-discover-one-we-discover-all/>

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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

དབང་དང་དམ་ཚིག་བདེ་བ་སྟེར།

When we receive initiations, we take commitments to work with the development stage and accomplishment stage and apply those methods so that we can finally realize the state of Mahāmudrā. Our commitment is that after we have received an initiation we should do the related practice until we have total realization in the state of the sambhogakāya. But we should not become dependent on this. We should be totally in our real primordial state and even if we are in our dualistic vision relatively, everything is a manifestation of wisdom, of bliss.

ཁམ་རིག་པ་དག་བཅས་ལ་གནས།

Marigpa refers to our ignorance because due to many secondary causes we do not notice, we are distracted, and so on. Through the potentiality of the Song of the Vajra we can be totally free from these kinds of distractions.

ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་ལ་གསོའི་ས།

There are many different kinds of vehicles: the Hīnayāna vehicle, the Mahāyāna vehicle, the three lower tantras and

the higher ones. Each vehicle has its concept, its different kinds of realizations and its different levels. However, the final goal in which we relax in the state of the dharmakāya is through the Song of the Vajra.

The *Dra Thalgyur* tantra contains very clear explanations about the essence of the Hīnayāna, the essence of the Mahāyāna, the different kinds of Vajrayāna methods and how we can finally integrate in the state of Dzogchen. In that way the tantra makes us understand that the Dzogchen teaching is the final goal of all teachings.

ངལ་གསོའི་མ།

This means the dimension in which we can definitely relax. Even if we are doing a long practice such as Vajrayāna transformation, when we definitely get into that state, we can relax. It means that we are in the state of Mahāmudrā and there is no difference between the state of Mahāmudrā and that of Dzogchen. Even in Sūtra, which explains the precious Prajñāpāramitā, we do not remain in the concept of Prajñāpāramitā in an intellectual way. When we really arrive at the final goal of Prajñāpāramitā then we can definitely relax.

ལྷ་དང་སྒྲོམ་པའི་འབྲེལ་པའི་མཆོམས།

སྒྲིང་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གདུལ་བའི་ཞིང་།

Each of the different kinds of vehicles explains the base, the path and the fruit. The path explains the point of view, its application and the attitude. We learn this and apply it. What connects all of these vehicles is the state of Dzogchen. When we have knowledge of the Dzogchen teaching we are in its essence.

People have asked me: “I am a Sūtra practitioner and dedicated many years to Zen practice,” or, “I have followed Vajrayāna in the Gelugpa and Kagyupa traditions for many years, now I am interested in the Dzogchen teaching. Will I have some problem or not and what

should I do about the practices I did?” We have these kinds of ideas because our mind judges and thinks that way when there is no problem. If a person still needs to follow teaching that means they did not succeed to get to the essence of the final goal, otherwise they wouldn’t need it anymore.

So if you are learning Dzogchen teaching it is very useful that you try to be in the essence. If you have time you can still do transformation practice and so on. If you like, of course you should continue. The Dzogchen teaching never asks you to change anything. Changing something is the Sūtra system. Even the Vajrayāna teaching does not ask you to change anything. There is nothing to change if you understand the real meaning, but when you have something to change that means you are very far from the essence of the teaching.

I often give an example to illustrate this. In 1956 - many of you young people were still in the bardo - I had finished college and had come to India to visit all the sacred places. While I was in Kalimpong I met a French lady who told me that she had followed Buddhist teaching for many years. Before that she had been a Catholic but then she became interested in Hinduism and so she had come to India and followed the Hindu tradition for some years. Then she heard there was a teacher in Tromo, near Sikkim, called Domo Geshe Rinpoche, a Gelugpa who was secretly doing Dzogchen practice. He was a very good teacher and had many Western students. Then she went to Domo Geshe and she became a Gelugpa nun and followed this Domo Geshe Rinpoche for some years.

When Domo Geshe died she went to Sikkim to follow a reincarnation called Kachöd Rinpoche and she became Nyingmapa and followed Nyingmapa for some years. Then she met a Kagyüpa teacher and decided that she wanted to learn and apply Mahāmudrā so she became Kagyüpa. When I met her she was Kagyüpa and she said to me: “I am very

interested in talking with you. I heard you are Sakyapa and studied many years in the Sakyapa tradition. I want to know some teachings of the Sakyapa.” Then I told her that although I had studied Sakyapa teachings I was not a teacher and couldn’t give her this kind of teaching. I suggested that she try to follow some Sakyapa teachers of which there are many good ones because it was clear to me that she now wanted to be Sakyapa.

So you see this is very far from the real sense of the teaching and people change in this way as if there were something to change. When we follow Dzogchen teaching there is nothing to change. When we discover our real nature, we can integrate everything and if

we want to follow any kind of tradition, even if it is not a Buddhist tradition, there is no problem, we can use it but we must have a base, otherwise

we become like this French lady. When we have a base, the final goal is to be in our real nature. So we do our best that way and then we can learn everything without any problems.

མི་བརྒྱུད་སྣང་བ་རང་སྒྱུད་གནས།

This means that in Dzogchen teaching you can integrate all kinds of visions and any kind of situation and is a really special principle of the Dzogchen teaching. You never need to change anything. For instance, if you are working in a shop you might want to change your job to do something more connected with Dharma teaching. But it depends on your practice. You might have a job such as fishing, work that involves killing animals, so if there are possibilities you can change your job but mostly there is nothing to change. The important point is that you become a practitioner.

For example, working in a shop you try to be present. Before you go to work and when you sleep at night you try to do Guruyoga. In that way you develop

The Dzogchen teaching never asks you to change anything



Courtesy of Jing from China

your capacity of the state of contemplation. When you have some time you can also dedicate one or two weeks for personal retreat to learn how you can integrate in daily life. There are many practices such as Rushen, Semdzin and so on. You don't need particular instructions for this. If you don't understand then you can read some explanations or you can ask some old students who already know. It isn't necessary that the teacher has to explain. You should not limit yourself that way and you can learn and develop and have more capacity to integrate in daily life.

རྗེ་མཁས་དཔལ་ལྷན་ཡང་འཛིན།

That means that for the real condition of the sambhogakāya it is not necessary to do the development stage and accomplishment stage to have that kind of manifestation. When we are in total realization everything manifests its qualification. The same is true for the maturation of dharmakāya qualifications. This is how the benefits are explained in the *Nyida Khajor*.

རྗེ་གསང་བའི་སྒྲ་ཡིས་ནི།
[དགོས་པས་ངན་སོང་སྒྲོ་དགག་ཕྱིར།]
ལས་ངས་རྒྱས་ཉིད་ཀྱི་མཛད་སྤྱད་ཡིན།

When we are singing and integrating with those sounds, we are in the state of Samantabhadra, so we can understand how important this practice is.

When we consider the three statements of Garab Dorje and three series of Dzogchen teaching, we can learn how certain sounds of the Song of the Vajra have a correspondence with specific parts of the Dance of the Vajra. In our physical body we have many chakras and channels. The maṇḍala is a symbol of these chakras when we are dancing the Dance of the Vajra on it. On that level, when we dance on certain parts of the maṇḍala they represent the energy related with the sound of the Song of the Vajra.

In general there are many kinds of sounds. One of the seventeen tantras related with *Dra Thalgyur* is an import-

ant tantra called *Rigpa Rangshar*. *Rigpa Rangshar* explains how all sounds connect with our potentialities and so we can understand that all the chakras in our vajra body are dominated by different kinds of sounds. Among all these sounds, the most important are related with the Song of the Vajra. With the Song of the Vajra the parts more connected with our chakras are also the most important points concentrating energy.

Among all these sounds, the most important are related with the Song of the Vajra

This also explains why external sacred places are so important. There is a direct connection between these places and our physical body, our vajra body. There are more detailed explanations on the subject. I have been studying this topic and am preparing a book to illustrate how our globe is connected to the maṇḍala, and how that maṇḍala is connected to our inner chakras and further connected with sounds, with seed syllables. It is not so easy to explain because there are many aspects but I am preparing this maṇḍala to show the different points. When you discover these points you can also discover sounds. This is something that will be very important.

Edited by Liz Granger
Final editing by Susan Schwarz
Tibetan script by Prof. Fabian Sanders

NAMKHAH YESHI IS BACK AT DZAMLING GAR!

Dzogchen Teachings - The Four Chogshag - October 15th to the 18th, 2026

The Teachings will take place both onsite and online, and will be given in English, with translation into Spanish and several other languages.

What the four Chogshag are: Dzogchen means the great perfection. Its starting point is that our real nature is already complete: nothing needs to be added to it, and nothing needs to be built. It needs to be recognized.

Tregchöd is the practice of that recognition – total relaxation, in which the state is discovered concretely rather than reasoned about. “The practice of Tregchöd means that we discover our real nature concretely, without remain-



ing in doubt... Then we try to be in that state forever.”

The four Chogshag are how that state is sustained – the way of applying Tregchöd. They are not four techniques to master, but four ways of leaving things exactly as they are.

Times are shown in GMT/UTC+1 (Tenerife time). The first session begins on Thursday at 16:00 and the retreat ends around noon on Sunday. The pro-

gram may be subject to change – more details will soon be announced.

More Info & Registration link: <https://dzamlinggar.org/events/lp-the-four-chogshags/>

NAMKHAH YESHI AND ALESSANDRO DI MAIO AT KEROXEN FESTIVAL

October 10, 2026

We are very excited to announce that Namkhah Yeshi and Alessandro Di Maio have been invited to perform at the Keroxen Festival on the 10th of October - one of Tenerife's most unique festivals of experimental music, sound and contemporary art.

They will present a site specific sound installation through acousmatic* compositions created especially for the space.

Venue: Espacio Cultural El Tanque, Santa Cruz de Tenerife

Date & Time: 10 October, 2026 at 19:00

Tickets: <https://keroxen.com/es/2026/quinta-jornada-del-festival-10102026>

***Acousmatic** means hearing a sound without seeing its originating cause



MACO CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

On 27 September, the MACO will commemorate the passing of our beloved Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 2016, the Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale will also mark its tenth anniversary this year with a wider program of commemorative and celebratory events, culminating in ARTé, a site-specific multimedia installation by Namkhai Yeshi. In the ten years since, the museum has become something unique in Tuscany's cultural landscape, a distinction that goes beyond the collection itself.



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu,
MACO inauguration 2016

The museum grew from more than forty years of collaboration between the Comune di Arcidosso and the Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen di Merigar.

The Namkhai Collection, assembled over a lifetime, comprises more than 5,000 objects of exceptional spiritual, artistic and ethnographic value, including works collected by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, personal and consecrated objects, as well as generous donations. It was Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's intention that the collection should be shared with the people of Arcidosso, in recognition

of the home the town had provided for our Community. That intention was reciprocated by the Comune di Arcidosso, which provided the collection with a prestigious showcase in the Palazzo della Cancelleria, part of the Rocca Aldobrandesca.

The tower of the Rocca Aldobrandesca rises above Arcidosso against the slopes of Monte Amiata. The castle

complex records more than a thousand years of continual change and adaptation. The earliest structures on the site may reach back to the late tenth century. The Aldobrandeschi subsequently transformed it into the fortified complex that still dominates the town. Siena took Arcidosso in 1331. Under the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, Arcidosso developed into the principal administrative center of Monte Amiata.

ARTé

di
Namkhai Yeshi

fotografie di
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

27_09_2026



Museo di Arte e Cultura Orientale

macomuseum.org



The MACO JOWO Buddha. Photo by Oleksandr Zhytko, 2016

The Palazzo della Cancelleria, which today houses the MACO, was built around 1700 on the site of a defensive tower linking the castle walls to the town gate. Today it is part of the Polo Museale del Castello Aldobrandesco, an architectural as well as cultural complex in which the successive functions of the site remain visible.

A structure once built to defend territory evolved into one serving civil administration. Today the Polo Museale del Castello Aldobrandesco, with its four museums and spaces for cultural events, reflects another change: the increasingly multicultural character of Tuscany itself.

From the beginning, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's aim was to create a "living mu-



MACO

seum": one in which objects from different parts of Asia are not presented as isolated remains of distant cultures, but as points of entry into evolving sys-

tems of knowledge, belief and research, relevant to the lives of our visitors today.

As photography, film and audio documentation were an important part of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's own research methodology, we integrated material from his extensive archives into the fabric of our storytelling, creating encounters that engage sight and sound.

This approach creates a bridge between our tradition and the local community, while offering visitors a chance to discover how every culture can enrich our understanding of our own.

To understand how the MACO is organized, it helps to begin with the conceptual framework Chögyal Namkhai Norbu placed at its center. Drawn from the traditional Buddhist Five Sciences, with Inner Science at the centre, this structure was given visual form in the museum's logo and became a kind of conceptual floor plan for the collection.

For more than fifteen centuries, the Five Sciences formed part of the intellectual and practical curriculum of Buddhist learning. Their purpose was not



Atrium MACO

simply the accumulation of knowledge, but the cultivation of the understanding and skills needed to benefit others. The same framework helps restore something less visible but essential to many of the most important objects in the collection: the intention behind their creation.

This is what makes the MACO unique. Its purpose is not only to preserve and display the material traces of a culture, but to create an opportunity to encounter the intangible intention that was present at their creation.



GreenTara thangka, MACO inauguration, 2016

The second floor, made available to us by the Comune di Arcidosso in 2017, houses our Project Space galleries for temporary exhibitions, as well as the museum's offices and archive. Over the past ten years, the Project Space has allowed us to explore different aspects of the

collection through a continuing program of temporary exhibitions.

2017 LHASA AND BEYOND

Photographs by Pierfrancesco Mele from the 1948 expedition to Central Tibet led by Giuseppe Tucci, paired with views of the same sites rephotographed by the MACO in 2016. Original

photographs were generously lent by the Völkerkunde Museum of Zurich and the Annadora Anfuso Archive.



2018 SKY WRITING: The Calligraphy of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Twenty-three original calligraphic works created by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu specifically for the MACO explored an art in which writing, painting and contemplative practice meet. His study of calligraphy began in childhood and continued with the celebrated master Dhi Södpa, from whom he learned the ancient script known as lha babs kyi yi ge, "Writing Descended from the Gods", a form sometimes associated with the writing traditions of ancient Zhang Zhung.

The exhibition invited visitors to follow the movement of the brush itself, where rhythm, line and gesture give visible form to body, voice and mind. Each work became an encounter with the spontaneity and presence of the act that created it.

2019 MEDITATION IN MOTION: The World of Sacred Dance

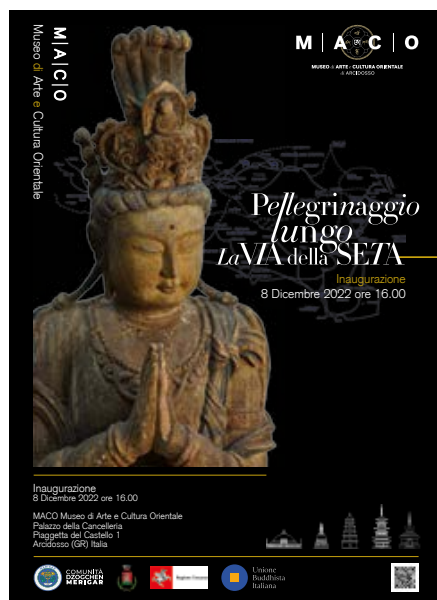
A survey of sound and movement as contemplative practice in the Tibetan and Himalayan traditions, the exhibition explored the origins, development and social functions of sacred dance. The journey began with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's revelation of the Vajra Dance

and moved towards the joyful Khaita dances, through which he brought renewed attention to Tibetan popular dance as a practice of awareness. Immersive 360 degree video allowed visitors to enter into the rhythm and movement of the dance.

Cham masks, costumes and ritual objects expanded the context, together with photographs from Bhutan by Herbert Migdoll, photographer of the Joffrey Ballet, and an interview with His Holiness Sakya Trizin on Tantric Cham.

2022 The Potential of the Elements: Paintings by Migmar Tsering

A series of paintings inspired by the Jung wa'i dkyil 'khor, the mandala of the elements, and by Tibetan astrological traditions concerned with harmonizing the forces that shape life, vitality, fortune and protection. Through color, mantra and symbolic form, the exhibition explored the relationship between inner and outer elements and the possibility of bringing them into greater balance.



2022 SILK ROAD PILGRIMAGE From Xuanzang to Marco Polo, from Aurel Stein to Zhang Zhung and Back Again

Bringing together works from the Namkhai Collection, many shown publicly for the first time, Silk Road Pilgrim-

age traces the movement of people, ideas, technologies and beliefs across Asia and between East and West. Spanning centuries and cultures, the exhibition explores the Buddhist principle of interdependence, *tendrel* (rten 'brel) in Tibetan. *Tendrel* also carries with it the sense of an auspicious encounter, for example the way objects in the Collection come together to reveal rich stories and unexpected correspondences.

Ati Sphere created a 360 degree theatrical film for the MACO's virtual theater in the central atrium, with acrobatic actors reenacting scenes from Journey to the West, the sixteenth century Chinese novel recounting Xuanzang's pilgrimage and the adventures of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King. The production was, in part, inspired by Echoes of the Past: The Buddhist Cave Temples of Xiangtangshan. Katherine R. Tsiang of the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago and Taiyuan University of Technology contributed 360 degree footage from the installation presented at the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

The project also includes twelve curator podcasts, a bilingual guide and a multimedia kiosk for visitors with limited mobility. Funded by the Unione Buddhista Italiana and the Italian Ministry of Culture, Silk Road Pilgrimage is now part of the MACO's permanent ground floor display.

2024 The Secret Murals of the Lukhang Temple Photographs by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

In 1981, returning to Lhasa after more than twenty years, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu made the first photographs of what were then among Tibet's most secret images: the eighteenth century murals of the Lukhang, the small temple behind the Potala Palace sometimes described as the "Sistine Chapel of Tibetan Buddhism". The exhibition brings together a selection from more than one hundred photographs, creating a rare visual record of the murals and the Dzogchen teachings they embody.

For some sections of the murals, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's photographs



Virtual Theater, MACO

are now the only surviving visual record. They preserve not only an extraordinary cycle of paintings, but one of the most important expressions of Dzogchen within Tibetan material culture.



2026 WHERE THE SKY TOUCHES THE EARTH Photographs of Tibet by Fosco Maraini, 1937 and 1948

Fosco Maraini's photographs record a journey that was geographical, human and inner. His encounter with Tibet became an encounter with a living system of relationships, visible in ritual, devotion and everyday life, and rooted in the landscapes and communities he photographed. As Maraini later recalled, the songs of people at work "dissolved into the wind and the vast open spaces," leaving an impression of "serene happiness" and "fundamental lightness."

The exhibition presents a selection

from the 108 photographs gifted by Maraini to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1990, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Great Contemplation Temple at Merigar. Almost ninety years later,



The Monkey King, by Ati Sphere

these images still preserve the presence of a world suspended between sky and earth.

Over the past ten years, each exhibition has drawn on Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's research and sought to carry it forward in new directions. Sky Writing explored the art of calligraphy; Meditation in Motion sacred dance as a living contemporary tradition; the Lukhang exhibition grew from the historic photographs he made in Lhasa in 1981, recording murals that in some cases are now lost; and Silk Road Pilgrimage brought research from the expedition he led to Zhang Zhung in 1988 before the public for the first time.



MACO

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of the Namkhai family, to whom we offer our deepest gratitude for allowing a collection formed over a lifetime to become part of the lives of so many others.

On 27 September, the MACO will commemorate the passing of our beloved Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and mark its tenth anniversary with ARTé, a site-specific multimedia installation by Namkhai Yeshe.

The best is yet to come!



MIGRATION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONNECTION TO THE LAND

**Reflections by a Woman from
Gatlang, Rasuwa District,**

The village of Gatlang, located within the Aamachodingmo Rural Municipality, lies at an elevation of 2,300 meters in one of the most remote areas of Nepal.

Its population consists mainly of families belonging to the Tamang ethnic group, a community living in marginalized and highly precarious conditions. Most of Gatlang's residents live below the poverty line and rely on subsistence farming and livestock raising for their livelihood.

The area is economically very vulnerable, partly due to its geographical isolation. Gatlang is situated on a remote mountain slope, in one of the most isolated branches of the Rasuwa district. Road access to this area from the nearest towns is impassable and in poor condition, and subject to a constant risk of landslides.

The Devastating Impact of the Climate Crisis in Mountainous Areas

This entire mountainous region is experiencing the growing pressures of climate change, which—through a series of chain reactions—has drastically altered the rhythms of the seasons, the rainfall pattern, and the balance of life between wildlife and humans. Periods of extreme drought, with no snowfall to protect crops, alternate with excessively prolonged monsoons, leading to alarming consequences such as severe soil erosion, drought, landslides, heat stress, and widespread wildfires. The entire forest above Gatlang has been plagued by continuous wildfires that have persisted for years, occurring during winters that grow warmer year after year. Climate uncertainties and



the changes it is imposing on nature have significant repercussions on life in Gatlang: crop yields are damaged, as is the health of livestock, and so too are the meager incomes derived from the sale of agricultural products.

Causes and Effects of Youth Emigration

It is no coincidence that a large portion of the area's young people choose to move elsewhere as soon as conditions allow. Many head to the capital, Kathmandu, while others travel as far as the Gulf countries in search of better-paying jobs and a more modern lifestyle. It is

primarily young men who leave Gatlang, although this trend is increasingly affecting young women as well.

As a result, the area's resident population consists mainly of women, the elderly, and children. Consequently, the burden of farm work falls on the women, as does everything necessary to sustain village life—responsibilities that come on top of caring for the young and the elderly.

Supina Tamang: Migration as a Necessity

In this context, we met Supina Tamang, a 32-year-old woman who lives



Supina Tamang

in Gatlang, balancing work on her farm with running a small shop in the village. A few years ago, Supina had moved to Kathmandu with her two children, but later chose to return to Gatlang once she realized she was struggling with the loneliness of urban life and wanted to provide her children with clean air, good water, and a peaceful environment in which to grow up.

"I came back first and foremost because this is where I was born. I know everything and everyone here. And then there's the fresh air, and the best water—even in summer, it's as cold as water from the fridge."

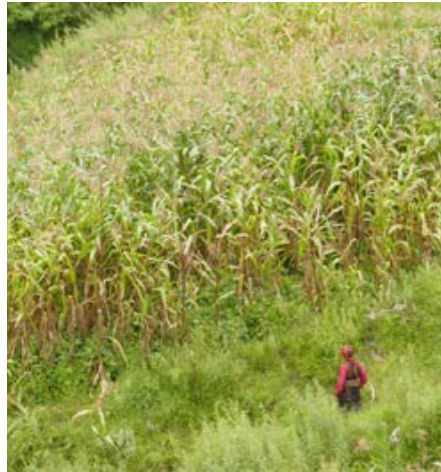
Supina says that in her apartment in the capital, she felt bored and alienated, confused by the absence of the connections she was used to. In the village where she was born, however, she never feels alone: every emotion—whether pain or happiness—is shared and experienced as part of the community. She believes that what matters most is the emotional connection—to the land and among people.

Bonds That Are Unraveling

Unfortunately, she can't help but notice that this sense of emotional connection is disappearing even in Gatlang: this is evident in the fact that many people decide to leave, drawn by new values and the opportunities of the modern world. But above all, because

"no one wants to stay down here and die in poverty."

Supina expresses great concern about the younger generations leaving



Woman in a cornfield in Gatlang

Gatlang, a phenomenon that results in elderly parents and grandparents being abandoned, left with no one to care for them.

"In our society, from generation to generation, and in our culture, it's customary for the younger generations to take care of the elderly, right? Because we aren't independent. We're like an extended family, aren't we?"

Despite these thoughts, Supina herself cannot help but plan to spend some time abroad as well, in the Gulf countries. Her idea is to make some money and secure the financial stability that will allow her to return to Gatlang. Migration seems more like a necessity than a free choice.

Comparing Perspectives: Nature That's Stopping Itself from Functioning

When we ask her about the changes she's noticed in the climate, Supina replies that in recent years, rainfall patterns and intensity have visibly shifted, and young people are well aware of the ongoing climate crisis. Unfortunately, the people of Gatlang aren't managing to adapt to the changes:

"We've always relied on the rains, following the seasonal rhythm. But now, when we need rain, it doesn't rain; when we don't need rain, it rains. And besides, people don't know how to use irrigation systems, divert waterways, and irrigate the land that way."

The problem, according to Supina, is that a coordinated, collective strategy is needed. No one alone can build an

irrigation system large enough to make a real difference for the entire village's crops. And the elders, she adds, don't support this idea:

"We've always depended on nature! How can it be that we now need an irrigation system?"

Cultivating Prospects, Uniting, and Coordinating

With great clarity, Supina nevertheless manages to envision possible scenarios for her village's future. She has seen many young people in Gatlang who still show an interest in farming and believes that collective planning of agricultural work would be necessary. Crops should be organized according to a seasonal calendar, using crop rotation methods and focusing on cash crops such as garlic, cabbage, and onions. Perhaps in this way, agriculture could become a realistic source of income and convince some people to stay.

Conclusions

Supina Tamang's story is that of someone who, despite living in a highly challenging environment, chooses to try to stay and cultivate a vision for places like Gatlang, nestled in the high hills of the Himalayas. A choice that, however, proves extremely difficult for most young people in these areas. For Supina, what made it worthwhile was her emotional connection to her land, the sense of well-being that comes from community life, and the clear desire for a life in touch with pure, healthy nature. All these elements are part of a reality in crisis, where the devastating consequences of climate change compound the harshness of daily life, casting a heavy shadow over the future of mountain regions.

This article was published on ASIA's blog last May and is the result of research conducted by four young women who completed their Universal Civil Service in Nepal with ASIA, precisely in the area affected by the flood on 26 August.

matrice. Essere eccezionale dotato di poteri, conoscenza e saggezza, Yangönpa condusse una vita esemplare, dove i suoi ottenimenti spirituali gli valsero un gran numero di seguaci. Questo libro propone per la prima volta la traduzione di due testi, la biografia di Yangönpa. Il Grande Specchio, e il suo breve ma illuminante trattato la Descrizione segreta del Corpo del Vajra.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/e-book-la-mappa-del-corpo>

L'unione di Mahamudra e Dzogchen Di Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Libro + Video

Questo libro contiene insegnamenti impartiti dal maestro Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, un commentario su un testo scritto dal maestro Karma Chagmed Raga Asya intitolato Istruzioni dirette di Avalokiteshvara sull'essenza concisa della pratica dell'unione di Mahamudra e Dzogchen e 11 brevi video (in inglese e italiano) in cui il Maestro spiega i punti chiave del testo.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/esplora/novita/product/e-book-la-unione-di-mahamudra-e-dzogchen>

Di prossima pubblicazione

Namkha Armonizzare l'energia degli elementi Di Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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El Canto del Vajra De Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Esta enseñanza sobre el Canto del Vajra fue transmitida por el Maestro Chögyal Namkhai Norbu en Tashigar Sur, Córdoba, Argentina, entre la Navidad de 1990 y la primera semana de enero

de 1991. Se impartió durante el primer retiro que se realizó en los terrenos recién adquiridos por el Gar del hemisferio Sur y contó con la participación de hermanos y hermanas del Vajra de todas partes del mundo. Aunque en ocasiones anteriores Chögyal Namkhai Norbu ya había explicado parcialmente el Canto del Vajra, esta fue la primera vez que ofreció un comentario completo.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/esplora/libros-en-espanol/product/e-book-el-canto-del-vajra>

La Escalera Hacia la Liberación De Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

La palabra tibetana ngöndro significa literalmente "lo que va antes". En el budismo, es un término general que indica cualquier tipo de prácticas preliminares; es decir, las prácticas que deben realizarse antes de la práctica esencial. Lo que comúnmente se entiende por ngöndro es un ciclo de prácticas que generalmente incluye postraciones, ofrendas al mandala y la purificación través del mantra de Vajrasattva, entre otras.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/esplora/libros-en-espanol/product/e-book-la-escalera-hacia-la-liberacion>

El ciclo del día y de la noche De Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

El ciclo del día y de la noche es un upadesha extraordinario que explica cómo hacer realidad la capacidad de contemplación total en la propia vida. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu lo escribió de manera espontánea en 1983, descubriendo más tarde que el texto se basaba en una en-

señanza del Vairo rgyud 'bum titulada El upadesha de Vajrasattva que él mismo había recibido previamente en un sueño. La historia de este descubrimiento y ambos textos se presentan aquí conjuntamente por primera vez con fines comparativos.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/prodotti/product/e-book-el-ciclo-del-dia-y-de-la-noche-pdf>

El Reino donde Imperaba la Locura y otros cuentos tradicionales

Recontado por Oliver Leick.

*Ilustrados por artistas de la escuela
Dynamic Space of Elements*

Los relatos de este libro se basan en antiguas historias contadas por Chögyal Namkhai Norbu durante muchos años de enseñanzas espirituales. Nacido en el Tíbet en 1938, recibió la educación



tradicional de un lama reencarnado de alto rango. Al haber demostrado una extraordinaria capacidad de aprendizaje, se le consideró un erudito desde una edad temprana.

<https://www.shangshungpublications.com/it/esplora/libros-en-espanol/product/e-book-el-reino-donde-imperaba-la-locura>

Próximas publicaciones

EL UPADESHA RAÍZ DEL PUENTE VAJRA DEL LONGDE Comentarios del Longsal Vol. 1 De Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

El ciclo del día y de la noche Un comentario oral de Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Sanación con Yantra Yoga
De Phuntsog Wangmo
and Elio Guarisco

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WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAINTAIN CONSTANT PRACTICE?



September means coming back from the holiday time, back to our regular routine and rhythm.

After the abundance of in-person retreats in August, after our holiday relaxation, summer vibes, or just trying to stay cool during the heatwave, we are now facing the same challenge, as every year.

We risk falling back into being overwhelmed by worries and things to do, whether it's the shopping list obsession, problems at work, back-to-school, or big life-changing plans ready to manifest. It's a month of passage, autumn slowly settling in, sunny days still bringing light-heartedness and joy.

It's the right moment to establish a

routine, starting with what we need to maintain our practice perfectly and with stability in everyday life. Rinpoche says in the root text of Santi Maha Sangha:

"The base of the teaching consists in studying, meditating and experiencing perfectly The Buddha's perfect teaching" (Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Precious Vase*, p. 22).



One of the goals of Sangha App is to focus and facilitate our learning by offering tools such as Events and Channels.

Every practitioner can create a practice or study event and thus commit to practice with others. Or create a channel to share resources and experiences.

Gakyils and Teachers can create courses (or recurrent events) and manage all the communication with Sangha App, avoiding too many emails. We created a [Guide for Teachers](#) and Ga-

kyils for using Sangha App as a course management tool. If you are a course organizer, check it out and/or [ask for a one-to-one meeting](#) so we can help you!

mailto:
Love,
Sangha App Team

Let us know!

Let us know what helps you maintain practice rhythm in your everyday life.

Reply to hello@mahasangha.net, and we will share the anonymous responses in our channel "Daily, weekly & secondary practices".

They will surely help other practitioners, teachers and course organizers.

A HEARTFELT OFFERING

An update about our statue in Mustang

Completing the Guru Padmasambhava Statue at Garphu

Last year we were very happy to share the news that the nine metre statue of Guru Padmasambhava at Garphu, in Upper Mustang, Nepal, had finally been completed. The statue was dedicated to the memory of our beloved Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

The whole project was only possible thanks to the generosity of many people. Friends and practitioners from all over the world contributed, and a number of artists and friends very generously donated works of art which were sold to help fund the construction. We are enormously grateful to everyone who helped us.

I recently had the opportunity to travel through Upper Mustang and visit Garphu to see the statue now that it is finished. The main artist responsible for the statue and the lama of the village came to meet us and very kindly spent time showing us around the site, explaining how the work had been carried out and also what still remains to be done.

It was quite moving to finally see it there.

Mustang is really an extraordinary place. The immense landscape, the colors of the mountains, the old villages and monasteries are incredibly beautiful. And the art is quite exceptional. Some of the temples preserve extraordinary paintings and sculptures, and travelling through the region you are constantly reminded that this is not simply an artistic heritage from the past. Buddhist practice is still very much alive and part of people's everyday lives.

This is particularly true of the devotion to Guru Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche. Throughout the Himalayan world he is revered as the Second Buddha, and his presence can be felt everywhere, in monasteries, caves, paintings, prayers and stories that have been passed down for generations.



For this reason, it was especially nice to see that the statue at Garphu is not simply a monument. People from the village are already coming there to circumambulate, pray and recite the Guru Rinpoche mantra. It is gradually becoming a place of practice in its own right.

The statue itself is really impressive. It stands above Garphu looking out across the valley, and when you see it in that immense landscape it is difficult to imagine a more appropriate setting. The craftsmanship is wonderful, and everyone we met seemed very happy and proud of what has been achieved.

You can get a much better idea of the statue and its setting in this short video:

Watch the video of the Guru Padmasambhava statue at Garphu

https://youtu.be/wOErV-Qq0bM?si=-JkmHqJXyDX_iFNp8

There are, however, a few things that still need to be finished.

More than half of the slate paving around the statue still needs to be laid. We need to complete the electrical system so that lights can be installed around the perimeter, and we would also very much like to plant trees around the



Lama Lhakpa Gurung welcoming the SOAS University Tibetan Art PhD students to the statue

complex and on the surrounding hillside. In a place as remote as Garphu, even relatively straightforward work becomes more complicated and expensive because everything has to be purchased, transported and brought up to the site.

We estimate that around US\$10,000 would allow us to finish all of this work.

Since so many people helped us to build the statue in the first place, we thought we would make one last appeal to see whether we can now finish the surroundings as well. It does not need to be a large donation. If many people contribute something, we should be able

to reach the amount quite quickly.

It would be wonderful to complete the site properly and leave Garphu with a beautiful and cared for place where people can circumambulate, practice and recite the mantra of Guru Rinpoche, where pilgrims and travellers can stop and sit for a while, and where this extraordinary statue can remain for generations to come.

Most importantly for us, it will continue to be an offering in memory of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, in a part of the Himalayan world whose culture, teachings and traditions he dedicated so much of

his life to preserving and making known.

If you would like to help us finish the project, you can make a donation through the Shang Shung Institute UK website. There are also still artworks generously offered by internationally renowned artists which can be purchased to support the project.

Donate or see the artworks offered in support of the statue.

<https://buy.stripe.com/dRmaEXeD-30qif9uc0Yco000>

And finally, thank you again to everybody who has already helped through donations, artworks, practical support and encouragement. Seeing the statue standing there in Garphu made me realize just how much has been achieved through the generosity of so many people. We are almost there, and hopefully with one last effort we can now finish it completely.

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/completing-the-guru-rinpoche-statue-at-garphu/>

108 DAYS TO MARATIKA

Following Mandarava to Maratika: 108 Days of Practice and Pilgrimage

Beginning on December 8, 2026, Shang Shung Institute UK & MACO Museum would like to invite practitioners from around the world to join us for something a little different.

For 108 days we will create an online practice group dedicated to Mandarava and the Long Life practice, which will eventually lead us from our homes to the sacred caves of Maratika in Nepal.

Some of us will make that journey physically. Others will participate from



Practicing in the sacred caves of Maratika during the pilgrimage of 2025

wherever they happen to be. But during these months we would like to practice together and, at the same time, explore

some of the extraordinary history and teachings that lie behind this practice.

Maratika occupies a very particular



The Stupa of Boudanath in Kathmandu.

place in the life and teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

It was here, during his pilgrimage to Nepal in 1984, that Rinpoche received the Long Life Practice of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava. Maratika was already one of the great places associated with long life. According to tradition, Padmasambhava and Mandarava practiced here in the eighth century and attained the Vidyadhara of Longevity. For Rinpoche and his students, however, Maratika acquired another very direct connection through the revelation of the Mandarava practice there.

Over the years I have been fortunate enough to return to Maratika a number of times, and each visit has made me feel more strongly that it is not really a place one should simply visit. It is a place in which one should spend some time.

This is partly the reason for creating the 108 Days to Maratika.

Rather than meeting in Nepal as a group of people arriving from different countries and immediately beginning a pilgrimage, we would like the pilgrimage to begin several months before we get on the aeroplane.

From December 8 onwards, participants will be invited to maintain a daily connection with the practice of Mandarava according to their own circumstances and capacity. Alongside this individual practice, we will meet regularly online to practice together.

During the 108 days we will invite Santi Maha Sangha teachers, Yantra Yoga instructors and experienced practitioners to guide thuns and breathing practices

and to offer explanations.

We would particularly like these meetings to explore some of the questions surrounding the practice rather than simply repeating it together.

Who was Mandarava? What does long life ac-

tually mean from the point of view of the teaching? What is the relationship between breathing, prana and our vital energy? What is Sogtig? What do we mean when we speak about terma and revelation? And what actually happened when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu travelled to Maratika in 1984?

As part of the programme, Jacobella Gaetani, who accompanied Rinpoche on his journey to Maratika in 1984, will speak about the history of Maratika and share something of its connection with Rinpoche and the circumstances surrounding that remarkable journey.

Whenever possible we also hope to hear memories from other people who knew Rinpoche and who can help us understand the circumstances in which the teaching arose.

In this way the 108 days will gradually become a preparation for pilgrimage.

As March approaches, our attention will turn increasingly towards Maratika itself: its history, its caves, Mandarava and Padmasambhava, and the meaning of pilgrimage and sacred place.

Then, from 11–24 March 2027, we will make the journey together in Nepal.

Our pilgrimage will begin in the Kathmandu Valley before continuing eastwards to Maratika, where we will have the precious possibility of spending several days practicing together in and around the caves.

Those who have travelled with us before will know that we try not to organize these journeys as conventional tours. Of course we visit extraordinary places, monasteries, temples and works of art, and Nepal is endlessly fascinating in this

respect. But we also make sure to leave sufficient days simply to be in Maratika with our full presence and to deeply integrate our practice and merge it into the sacred space of Maratika.

During our stay we will establish a daily rhythm of practice. Each day there will be time for Mandarava practice, as well as Yantra Yoga and breathing exercises. We will also have a mandala available on which to practice Vajra Dance together.

The intention is not to rush from one activity to another, but to have enough time to practice, to explore the caves and sacred places, and also simply to experience Maratika and the particular atmosphere of this extraordinary place.

There is something rather wonderful in the idea that a practice received there by Rinpoche in 1984 has travelled across countries and generations, and that we can now spend these months practicing it together before following it, in a sense, back to the place from which it came.

For those who cannot come to Nepal, it is equally possible to participate in the 108-day cycle online. The journey to Maratika is not a requirement for joining the practice group.

We hope that people from different parts of the world will participate, sometimes practicing together online, sometimes practicing alone, but knowing that others are doing the same.

And eventually some of us will meet in Nepal, climb the steps to the caves of Maratika, unroll the mandala, and continue the practice there together.

108 Days to Maratika begins:

8 December 2026

Maratika Pilgrimage, Nepal:

11–24 March 2027

Further details about the online program, teachers, practice sessions and participation will be announced shortly.

For information about the pilgrimage: <https://www.shangshunguk.org/maratika-2027/>

<https://youtu.be/9-PgTuoNS38>

Shang Shung Institute UK

A BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE THROUGH JAPAN

Winter temples, hot springs and the living Buddhist traditions of Japan

20 February – 6 March 2027

Japan is a country I have returned to many times, and there are certain things I never tire of: entering an ancient wooden temple on a cold morning, soaking in an outdoor hot spring with steam rising into the winter air, travelling by train through changing landscapes or, hungry, finding an exceptional tiny restaurant hidden behind a curtain in a doorway.

And then there is Kōyasan, high in the mountains of the Kii Peninsula, surrounded by great cedar forests, where Kūkai established his centre of esoteric Buddhist practice more than twelve centuries ago. Next February, after travelling through Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Kyoto and Nara, this is where our journey will lead us.

We have deliberately chosen the end of February. Because of Japan's extraordinary popularity, we would rather discover these places during the quieter final weeks of winter. It is a beautiful season: crisp air, gardens reduced to their essential forms, bare branches against temple roofs, vivid pink plum blossom, steaming onsen and perhaps snow beneath the cedars of Kōyasan. As March begins, the first signs of spring appear.

Travelling through Japan

Over fifteen days we travel from Tokyo through Kamakura, Hakone and Mount Fuji to Kyoto and Nara, before leaving the historical cities behind and ascending to Kōyasan. We finish in Osaka.

Throughout the journey we will be accompanied by Tomy-san, our experienced Japanese guide. After many years guiding Japanese travellers in the Unit-



The red gate in Hakone, located on the shores of Lake Ashi, is part of the Hakone Shrine

ed States, he now accompanies foreign visitors through Japan and understands both perspectives.

We also hope members of the Japanese Vajra community will join us for parts of the journey, sharing their knowledge of Buddhism and sacred places.

Before Japan: Kūkai and the syllable A

In a sense, our journey begins several months before we leave. In November, Professor David Gardiner will join us online for a special talk about Kūkai, Shingon Buddhism and Mount Kōya, introducing the religious world we will later encounter ourselves.

Kūkai, later known as Kōbō Daishi, travelled to China at the beginning of the ninth century and returned to Japan with transmissions of esoteric Buddhism. The Shingon tradition he established preserved a world of mantra, mudra, mandala, ritual and contemplative practice that will be particularly fascinating for those familiar with Tibetan Vajrayāna.

One practice we hope to experience at Kōyasan is Ajikan, contemplation of the Sanskrit syllable A, which in Shingon has profound significance connected with the originally unborn nature of phenomena. Those familiar with Dzogchen may find it intriguing that A also has such importance there, although the traditions and methods are distinct.

Tokyo, Kamakura and Hakone

We begin with the extraordinary energy of Tokyo, visiting Sensō-ji and the Buddhist collections of the Tokyo National Museum, while leaving time simply to experience the metropolis. Tokyo is full of contrasts: neon and incense, skyscrapers and tiny izakaya, enormous crossings and quiet temple courtyards.

From there we travel to Kamakura, one of my favourite places near Tokyo. Wooded hills surround the old city and temples appear among gardens and small roads. We visit the great bronze Amitābha at Kōtoku-in, the Kannon of Hase-dera and Engaku-ji, where we will have an opportunity to experience zazen.

We then continue to Hakone and Mount Fuji. Here we slow down, staying in a traditional ryokan, enjoying a multi-course kaiseki dinner and, after a cold February day, soaking in the hot waters of an onsen.

Kyoto in winter

Then we take the Shinkansen to Kyoto. There are few cities where religion and aesthetics have become so completely intertwined. I am always struck by small things here: moss against an old stone, the grain of a wooden pillar, a painted screen, the reflection of a temple in water or a garden designed to frame a

particular view. Winter strips away the superfluous and somehow makes these qualities still more visible.

At Tō-ji, closely associated with Kūkai, we encounter the extraordinary sculptural mandala of Shingon Buddhism. Rather than looking at a mandala on a page, we find ourselves physically standing among its deities.

At Sanjūsangen-dō, the great central Kannon is surrounded by one thousand standing images of the Thousand-Armed Bodhisattva of Compassion. We also visit Kiyomizu-dera and travel up Mount Hiei to Enryaku-ji, the great centre of Tendai Buddhism.

At the Zen temples of Ryōan-ji, Daitoku-ji and Tenryū-ji, stone, moss, water and empty space seem to ask us to pay attention differently. There will also be time for the Philosopher's Path and wandering through Gion.

Nara

From Kyoto we travel to Nara, the ancient capital. It feels older and more spacious, with deer wandering through the park between some of the greatest surviving monuments of early Japanese Buddhism.

At Tōdai-ji we stand before the enormous bronze Vairocana Buddha. The scale is monumental, yet strangely peaceful, and Vairocana leads us naturally towards Dainichi Nyorai, so central to Shingon.

Up the mountain

Eventually we leave the cities behind. The journey into the mountains towards Kōyasan feels like entering another world. Kūkai established his centre here more than twelve centuries ago, and the mountain remains one of the principal centres of Shingon Buddhism.

We stay for three nights in a Buddhist

temple lodging, waking for morning prayers, eating shōjin ryōri, witnessing the Goma fire ritual and receiving an introduction to Ajikan. We visit the Danjō Garan, Kongōbu-ji and the Reihōkan Mu-



Chureito Pagoda with Mt. Fuji in the background

seum with its collection of Buddhist art.

But perhaps the place I most look forward to sharing is Okunoin. The path runs for kilometres beneath enormous Japanese cedars. On either side, thousands of tombs and memorial stones disappear into the forest, some centuries old and almost completely covered in moss. At the end lies the mausoleum of Kūkai.

According to Shingon tradition, Kūkai is not dead but remains there in meditation awaiting Maitreya, the future Buddha, and food continues to be ritually offered to him each day.

Whatever one's beliefs, walking through Okunoin is a powerful experience. The forest, the age of the stones, the silence and the devotion of generations of pilgrims create an atmosphere difficult to describe until one has been there.

Back to ordinary life

Eventually we descend from Kōyasan and rather suddenly return to contemporary Japan, finishing in Osaka among lights, restaurants, noise and life. After the refinement of kaiseki and the simplicity of Buddhist temple cuisine, Osaka gives us yet another Japan: lively, informal and famously enthusiastic about eating.

We can read about Kūkai, study mandalas and hear Professor Gardiner explain Shingon philosophy. But there is another kind of understanding that comes from being there: sitting in a Zen garden on a cold February morning; seeing a thousand images of Kannon together in a dark wooden hall; waking to chanting in a temple on Mount Kōya; walking beneath ancient cedars towards Kūkai's mausoleum along a path travelled by pilgrims for more than a thousand years.

Our Insight Tours have always tried to bring these two things together: learning and experiencing. We

are not trying to see all of Japan in fifteen days. We are trying to experience something of its essence.

The Road to Kōyasan 20 February – 6 March 2027

Shang Shung Institute UK
Insight Tours

A fifteen-day journey through Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Kyoto, Nara, Mount Kōya and Osaka, accompanied throughout by our experienced Japanese guide Tomy-san and including three nights in a Buddhist temple lodging at Kōyasan.

- €3,900 per person sharing
- a double/twin room
- €4,800 single room

A €100 reduction is available for those paying the full cost by 31 October 2026.

Full itinerary, practical information and registration:

The Road to Kōyasan – Japan 2027

<https://www.shangshunguk.org/japan-2027/>

MERIGAR WEST - ITALY

LOBSANG DELEK LIVE AT THE GÖNPA AT MERIGAR ON JULY 25, 2026

In the early evening of Saturday, July 25, 2026, roughly 250 adults and children gathered for the Merigar Dzogchen Community concert *Lobsang Delek Live: Live Concert with Vajra Dance, Khaita Joyful Dance, Tibetan Dance, and Alessandro Di Maio on Live Electronics*, at the [Temple of the Great Contemplation, or Gönpa](#), of Merigar West, in Arcidosso, Tuscany, Italy.

The Gönpa is a hand-painted octagonal temple made of wood, glass, and copper, located on a prominent rise that looks out over Merigar and its green surroundings. It was conceived, designed, and developed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and so a fitting location for a tribute to His work on dance and music.

Professor Cristina Leonardo introduced the evening, noting that, "We will open tonight's concert with a very special performance: a new version of the Dance of the Six Spaces, composed [and performed] by Alessandro Di Maio on the original basis created by Mikhail Malt, and developed under the supervision of Yeshe Namkhai. It will be released soon and will be available for purchase at the Shang Shung store."

This accelerating version of the Dance of the Vajra that Benefits Beings (otherwise known as the Dance of the Six Spaces) was also performed at the June 20th Espíritu Festival World Spiritual Music in Arcidosso, and it has proven challenging and illuminating for both the dancers who practice and perform it, as



photo by Sébastien Remy

well as for observers habituated to the original tempo.

Here the intention is described by Cristina, "This new interpretation introduces an original element: rhythm. Through a gradual acceleration of tempo, the music accompanies the dance on a journey of increasing intensity, offering a fresh perspective on this practice while remaining fully respectful of its meaning and essence. In just a few moments, this new creation will come to life through the performance of dancers from the Dzogchen Community, led by Adriana Dal Borgo, whom we warmly thank for her invaluable dedication and work. We invite you to experience this dance with the same openness and attention with which it was created, allowing yourselves to be carried by the meeting of movement, rhythm, and sound."

As the twelve dancers finished the dance with an A, and the audience showed its appreciation, several dancers removed the Vajra Dance mandala from the space. Then additional dancers joined them for the Khaita song Bhoe La Dro, sung live by the Tibetan and Himalayan singer, composer, and entrepreneur [Lobsang Delek](#). According to the event page, "Born in Ganzi County,

Tibet, Lobsang discovered his passion for music at the age of nine. After fleeing to India as a teenager, he studied at the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) in Dharamsala and later at Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies. During his college years, he released three acclaimed albums—Cuckoo, Tenzin Dolma Returns (2009), and Bhoe La Dro (2012)—which became beloved among Tibetan and Himalayan communities worldwide."

Earlier Cristina had introduced Lobsang, saying, "Born in Tibet and now living in France, Lobsang Delek has devoted his life to music, transforming it into a bridge between cultures and a means of preserving a precious musical tradition. His songs speak of love for his homeland, longing, hope, and the beauty of Himalayan culture, touching audiences in more than eighteen countries. Tonight, his concert will be further enriched by the participation of the Khaita dancers, with whom he shares a special connection."

At the end of the live concert, which included many Khaita songs, dances, and moments of interaction between Lobsang, the dancers, and the audience, Lobsang expressed his gratitude, saying: "I'm very happy and fortunate that many



Photo by John Shane

of my songs were selected as part of the 108 [songs in [Message from Tibet](#)] selected by the Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu-La. I'm very, very honored, especially to perform in front of you guys. I'm very, very honored. Thank you so much. Thank you so much to your team."

New album coming soon

Towards the end of the evening composer, sound designer, and performer

Alessandro di Maio, whose work has received several international awards, such as Best Soundtrack, Best Sound Design, and Best Newcomer Director, let the audience know that, "The main circumstance and reason why Lobsang is here is because, together with our Master Yeshe Namkhai, we are working on the development of a new music album, on the bardo. It is strictly related to... Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's book *On Birth, Life, and Death*." He went on to

explain that, "Yeshe's advice was that a very nice Tibetan singer was needed for one section of the album, therefore we connected with Lobsang, and we started talking, and we started the process of collaboration. Now he [Lobsang] finally came here. It's actually his first time in Merigar. So it's a very auspicious thing that he came here to collaborate with us. You will hear him in a completely different musical context, so it's going to be interesting...The album will be announced relatively soon. Thank you very much. I hope you enjoy." Alessandro later noted that this work is based in part on his own work of many years on the bardo, including a [film](#) of the same name.

At the end of the evening Alessandro invited everyone out onto the patio next to the Gönpa, where attendees enjoyed Tibetan momos, wine, and the sunset.

A. Caroline Hotaling
Arcidosso, Tuscany, Italy

YANTRA YOGA LEVEL 2 SUPERVISION AT MERIGAR WEST

Between the 17th and the 26th of July, the [Yantra Yoga](#) second level supervision took place at Merigar West. It was a long-awaited opportunity for us candidates to check our knowledge and receive advice.

All the candidates of the supervision have some experience in teaching Yantra Yoga, in person and online in different countries and languages. Those present here have been teaching in Italy, Romania, Switzerland, Spain and Lithuania.

Although the tension was high when we started, we soon realized that this



The candidates for the Yantra Yoga level 2 supervision in the Merigar Gönpa

was not an "examination", but an invitation to share our experience, to open and to go beyond the standard formulas that we had learned by heart. It felt, in

this sense, more like a retreat than an exam. This increased our motivation rather than our anxiety.

The strength of the group dimension

felt like a tangible application of the principle of collaboration and it gradually evolved into an understanding that together we are perfect. We complete each other's knowledge, confident of our common goal: the continuation of the transmission.

We are deeply grateful to Laura Evangelisti and Honza Dolensky, who guided this supervision, supported by second level teachers Marco Baseggio and Fulvio Grosso. Also present were other teachers and practitioners. This multitude of voices and perspectives enriched the learning process and led us to deepen our practice even further.

We express deep gratitude to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Namkhai Yeshe for the precious Teachings. Besides those present, we also thank Fabio Andrico, who trained us for many years and third level teachers Oni McKinsty and Maxim Leshchenko.

The day of the graduation, as often happens at Merigar West, there were magical atmospheric manifestations. A dramatic thunderstorm set the stage and sounded the starting gong of our demonstration with a thunder that shook the gönpa floor. As we demonstrated the III, IV and V series, a light rain fell against the sunlight and looked



Laura Evangelisti and Honza Dolensky

like sparkles were being poured from the sky. With the final dedication of merits, the thunderstorm settled and the July sun warmed our collective embraces.

We deeply understand that the second level is not an achievement nor a higher status. The second level of Yantra Yoga means an engagement to pursue with dedication the real meaning of this practice and to discover and dwell in its essence, the state of contemplation.

We congratulate the new second level teachers:

Piero Abbondati
Martina Bigazzi
Gina Bryne
Chiara Carraro
Ioan Ciobanu
Michele Corrado
Raquel Diaz
Oana Marcu
Alberto Pellizzoni
Letizia Pizzetti
Alessandra Policreti
Dina Pryimak
Denis Smaniotto
Riccardo Vrech

DANCES FROM AROUND THE WORLD AT MERIGAR ON JULY 13, 2026

In the late afternoon on Monday, July 13, 2026, dancers and audience members began to arrive to the gracious tent over the outdoor mandala beyond the Zikhang.

The Zikhang, or house of Zi, contains the library, Shang Shung Foundation archive, and the Mandala Hall, and the location also looks out over the nearby valley and the Great Stupa of Enlightenment, the resting place of the Body of our Teacher, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

This significant setting held the jewel of the dances performed by dozens of dancers, who held the rapt attention of the 150–200 people and a few pet dogs gathered around the performance space, on chairs, benches, in the grass, and perched on the green hillside above the tent.

The event was created at the initiative of dancers associated with Merigar, and included Modern Tibetan Gorshey dances, Indian classical dance Bharata Natyam, Middle Eastern belly dance, modern dance, and Khaita Joyful Dances.

The [Tibetan Gorshey](#) dancers opened the show with a performance of Dzongchen Tramo, meaning The Dance of the Great Fortress; Rawag Kordro, The Circle Dance of Raba, a song of praise to one's



hometown celebrating its natural beauty, culture, traditions, and way of life; and finally Tashi Kartshog, an auspicious dance performed to convey blessings and good fortune. Gorshey are popular group dances typical of Tibet and the Himalayan region, performed in a circle with simple, repeated movements



The Tibetan Gorshay dancers

accompanied by singing. They are community dances accessible to everyone, often practiced during festivals and celebrations.

The evening continued with belly dance performed by Natasha Priymak and others, including: Ya Tab Tab, with music by Nancy Ajram and choreography by Natasha Priymak; Baladi Ruh, with music by Orquesta Oriental Al Kamar and choreography by Arun Bhardwaj created especially for Natasha Priymak; and Tabla, with music by Artem Uzunov from *Live & Dance*, and choreography by Natasha Priymak. The program noted that "belly dance has very ancient origins and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Middle East and North Africa. It did not originate as a performance, but as a ritual and social dance, connected to fertility, femininity, and the everyday moments of women's lives. Over the centuries it evolved through the influences of various cultures, including Egyptian, Ottoman, and Arab. During the 19th century, with the arrival of Europeans in the Orient and the World Exhibitions, this dance was 'discovered' by the West and transformed into a form of entertainment. Today belly dance is widespread throughout the world, both as an artistic expression and as an activity for physical wellbeing, while still maintaining a strong connection to its cultural origins."

Classical Indian and modern dance teacher Maresa Moglia then brought on her troupe of dedicated dancers from Siena to perform the Classical Indian Dances Bharatanatyam Alarippu, with traditional music and choreography by Maresa Moglia; and Kaveri and Durga

Thillana, both with traditional music and choreography by Krishnaveni Lakshmanan. Passed down from master to student over millennia, the rigorous Classical Indian Dance in the Bharatanatyam style originated in Tamil Nadu, India. The dances performed included a symbolic dance in which the dancer offered her body as a flower of a thousand petals, accompanied by sollukuttu, a form of



Classical Indian dancer Maresa Moglia

vocalization typical of Indian dance, as well as a dance performed as the Kaveri River, one of the seven sacred rivers of India. In the third, percussive, and technically demanding dance, a moment of pause appears in which a short poem dedicated to Krishna is sung:

My Krishna, sweet lotus eyes, my song turns praises to You, who from the flute of gleaming jewels draw a wave that steals its way inside me. Bright Moon of Vraja, wrap with Your rays of limpid freshness this humble devotee.

Maresa Moglia and her company also performed her original modern dance choreography in *Speaking in Tongues IV*, with music by Sheila Chandra, which connected Classical Indian Dance with modern dance through "collage of sound and movement that renders the choreography as a chain of movements with techniques that echo one another, intersecting within each other" (quote from the event program); and *Tutto l'universo obbedisce all'amore (All the Universe Obeys Love)* with music by Franco Battiato.

To complete the evening's performance, the Khaita dancers took the stage. Khaita means "Harmony in Space," and Khaita Joyful Dance was developed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu together with his students to foster harmony within the individual and between people and their environment. They performed *Sondang Lekmo*, *Bod La Dro*, and *Tala Shipa*.

After this performance, the 'Khaiteros' asked the audience to join them, and the mandala platform was filled with both new and experienced dancers, including some children. After the dancing, as the sun moved lower in the sky, the dancers and the attendees went deep in conversations at the *aperitif* in front of the library.

2026 is turning into a bit of a summer of dance at Merigar, as two more Khaita and Gorshey performances are already scheduled, one at Merigar on July 25th at 7:30 pm with the popular singer Lobsang Delek, and one on August 8th during the open-air festival [Incontrando-si sotto le stelle, or Meeting Under the Stars](#), to take place in Bagnoli, a borough of Arcidosso, organized by the Vettorai Cultural Association. The live event with [Lobsang Delek](#) at Merigar will also include Vajra Dance and electronic music performed by Alessandro Di Maio, and Tibetan momos will be served. For that event a live stream is available on the Merigar YouTube livestream [channel](#).

by A. Caroline Hotaling
at Merigar, Arcidosso, Italy

A CELEBRATION OF COLIN ELLAR'S LIFE

Colin Ellar passed away on Friday, July 17, 2026. He was one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's earliest students, as well as a historic Gekö of Merigar and a member of the Red Gakyil.

His friends and family share their memories of Colin

I met Colin during Merigar's early years. In the Zhikang—which we simply called “the capannone” (the shed) back then because that's what it actually was—there was a professional wood-working machine. The “capannone” had in fact been originally designed to house a carpentry shop where our young practitioners with those skills could work—for Merigar, and also to create sources of livelihood. Rinpoche strongly emphasized the importance of practitioners coming together in work cooperatives, for their own benefit and for that of the community as a whole.

Colin was an accomplished carpenter and one of the practitioners who worked there. Many of the wooden structures still in use today at Merigar were built by him; in particular—something Colin cared deeply about and of which he was justly proud—he had built the interior furnishings of the Master's retreat cabin himself.

Years later, Colin returned to England, pursuing a political career that led him to serve as a councilor for one of London's boroughs. In that role, he was the driving force behind many projects whose underlying purpose was to help people and respect nature, and to speak about this, we invited him to Merigar for the 30th-anniversary celebrations. The festivities included, among other events, a series of lectures called “Friendship Meetings,” in which our practitioners and representatives of the Amiata community addressed various topics with a



view to sharing concrete experiences. On that occasion, Colin presented the topic “Support for Minors in the British Public System—Youth and Children: How the British Social and Health Care System Supports Education and Social Relationships,” as part of the series of lectures compiled in the section “The Path of Kindness.”

The richness and spirit of community that characterized that experience deserve further exploration; Colin certainly made a valuable contribution.

Upon retirement, like other practitioners, Colin moved with his wife Yvonne to La Serra, in the Amiata area. Colin and Yvonne had purchased a home; nevertheless, when asked if they would like to serve as Gekos at Merigar, they accepted and moved—kitten included—into the Yellow House, returning to their private home only on their days off.

We were truly grateful for this decision, which certainly wasn't easy for them. As Gakyil, we enjoyed an excellent relationship with Colin and Yvonne, and Merigar benefited from their care and kindness.

Unfortunately, at one point Colin became quite seriously ill and had to focus on his health. He overcame his illness, and although this had required a great deal of energy, Colin ran for the position of Red Gakyil, which had become available in the meantime.

Over the past two years, we've met every week for our meetings. Colin didn't speak much; he listened and participated with great presence. Often, when positions on certain topics were quite controversial, we would ask for his opinion, and his responses were always balanced, respectful of everyone's views, but above all, mindful of the consequences our decisions might have on

the Community and on the practitioners directly affected.

Almost always, his perspective opened our eyes and helped us make wiser decisions.

We closely followed the final months of his new illness; we saw how he always faced the trials he encountered with great dignity and acceptance—I would dare say with the grace of an English gentleman, which is exactly what he was. We would have liked him to have stayed with us a little longer...

Sergio and the Gakyil of Merigar (Fabio, Giuseppe, Kirian, Simone, Michela)

My father Colin Ellar by Jason

75 years feels very short and I'm very proud that my dad fit so much into that short time. But I'll miss the small things:

I'll miss driving in the car and listening to music.

I'll miss the way he'd used his shirt to scratch his back at the end of the day.

I'll miss the way he could talk to anyone at great length about his cat, or the tomatoes in his garden, or the new bike someone was thinking about buying, even if it didn't seem like the right time to do it.

I'll miss the way that he was always simply himself and never seemed uncomfortable anywhere or with anyone.

And I'll miss the feeling I have knowing he's on the end of the phone if something goes wrong and I don't know what to do...

I've been reading about grief this week, and I read somewhere about the difference between grief and sadness.

Sadness is an emotion, you feel it and it passes in waves.

Grief is what you feel when you lose a part of yourself. A part of your identity, and part of how you see yourself in the world is missing, and it will always hurt.

And I think as a boy, losing your dad is hard because you lose the foundations that you built yourself on.

Some things I knew about already, music, politics, your stubbornness. You're gone, but those will always be there in me.

But something has changed now



An early photo of Colin, his wife Yvonne and their son Jason

you're gone and I don't know how to describe it. Just that things somehow feel shakey, less safe, more exposed.

Last Sunday, your body spent the last

hours in the house that you loved so much, and we carried you out through the garden, which I think was your favourite place in the world. We drove down

that road from Arcidosso to Grosseto for the last time.

By the time I got home it was dark, and as I walked down the path *pang* *pang* *pang* the lights came on.

Your lights, that you set up, guided me home.

This is the dad you were. Lighting up the path. Letting me go ahead, but always in the knowledge that you were there.

Now your light is out. It feels dark without you, but you taught me enough that I can keep going on my own. And will do my best to keep the lights on for whoever comes next.

Read the complete article at <https://melong.online/a-celebration-of-colin-ellars-life/>

MERIGAR EAST - ROMANIA

SUMMER AT MERIGAR EAST

Summer has a way of filling the Gonpa with voices from everywhere — and this year was no exception.

The Song of the Vajra, together in the Gonpa

From August 19–23, we had a beautiful retreat with **Zoli Cser** on the Semdzin of the Song of the Vajra. Practitioners came from Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, Czechia, and of course locally from Romania.

We sang and danced the Song of the Vajra forty times together in only 4 days. Online practice is always an option, and a good one — but practicing all together in the Gonpa is simply a different experience. If you ever have the occasion to join in person, don't hesitate. It's worth it.

Thank you, Zoli, and thank you to everyone who joined and made these days so rich.



Transforming suffering and happiness into the path

Just before that, we had a wonderful weekend of online teachings with **Elias Capriles** on transforming suffering and happiness into the path of awakening. It was a genuinely useful weekend — if you missed it, the recordings are still available. You'll find the link in the Elias Capriles Activities channel on Sangha App.

Autumn is calling too

We'd love to remind everyone: Merigar East isn't only for summer holidays and sunny days. The quiet, bright days of autumn are ideal too — especially for practicing alone. If you're thinking of a personal retreat, we can support you. Just write to us at red.me@dzogchen.ro

There's also plenty happening around the gar this autumn, if you'd like to com-

bine practice with a bit of karma yoga:

- **Lavender project** — we're continuing to plant lavender, starting end of October/November. Join us if you'd like to get your hands in the soil.
- **Lungta printing and cutting/sewing** — starting mid-October.

Gakyil is calling — Blue and Yellow sectors need you

We urgently need to bring new energy and inspiration into our **Blue** and **Yellow** sectors — as assistants, helping our small Gakyil team keep things running (and maybe, in time, joining it yourself).

You can get in touch by filling out this form: <https://forms.gle/gvio8dNfmrH7jNA9>

What we're looking for:

- At least 1 year as a member of the Dzogchen Community
- Some karma yoga experience is a plus — but no experience is not a problem, we'll show you the ropes
- A serious intention and willingness to commit at least 1 year as an assistant, with an eye toward eventually stepping into a Gakyil role

For Blue sector, useful skills include:

- Communication and organizational skills
- Comfort with social media, Zoom, Google products (Drive, Forms, etc.), and Canva
- WordPress experience is a nice bonus
- Photo/video or other promotional skills

For Yellow sector, we're looking for:

- Administrative and financial skills — bookkeeping/accounting experience welcome

No superpowers required — just a willing heart and a bit of time.

If any of this sounds like you, reach out — we'd love to hear from you. (blue.me@dzogchen.ro)

Merigar East suggests everyone keep an eye on us — very soon we'll bring news!

LONGDE RETREAT LED BY OLIVER LEICK AT PHENDELING AUGUST 2026

A 10 day Longde retreat in the Czech Republic. Amazing! That was my first impression when I saw the announcement on Norbunet.

I think all Longde enthusiasts saw this as being a great opportunity to deepen our practice and dedicate a nice amount of time for it.

Indeed, since there was an abundance of time, Oliver chose a mild pace for the studying that allowed for simultaneous development of both theoretical and practical knowledge. In the beginning, only the most basic explanations were given, sufficient for us to commence our practice, and as the days progressed and we had more concrete experiences of the practice, the explanations deepened as well. The generous time span that we had for the practice really allowed us to relax the mind deeply and encounter our real state in a more profound way.



The local Gekö, who took care of our accommodations and meals, remarked that our state changed noticeably during the retreat.

The participants displayed a nice and open attitude towards each other which allowed for the profound sharing of experiences on a deep level that helped to overcome different kinds of conceptual limitations and expectations about the practice, formation of authentic trust and bonds that made the retreat feel homey, caring collaboration in all our daily tasks and for the implementation of our dear masters' constant reminder, to have fun & enjoy!

The venue for the retreat was Phendeling which is located in southern Bohemia in the Czech Republic, a pastoral place surrounded by forests, open fields and lakes (one participant remarked that it looks like Czech Tuscany, while we were observing an eclipse from a hill). The place was very comfortable for both those who were staying in the dormitory rooms and for those that were camping outside, since August seems to be a hospitable time of year for that region, not too hot during the day, and not too cold during the night. The Gekö made sure to feed us with healthy fresh food, and together with all other conditions of the place, gave us a very stable support



for our practice and the possibility to profoundly relax

We, as a group, wish to deeply thank Oliver Leick for his dedicated and generous approach in transmitting to us the knowledge about the practice, and for the meticulous work he did in collecting different transcripts of the teachings and clarifying and expanding on their more complicated points. Also we wish



to thank him for the kind and light way in which he addressed all the different questions and issues that arose during the retreat.

We wish to deeply thank Phendeling, Gekö & Gakyil, for hosting us and giving us stable and comfortable conditions so that this retreat could happen. Their work and attitude was received as being very generous, caring and tireless.

In short, thank you for the games, thank you for the laughs, thank you for the dances, the walks in the forest, the parties, and thank you for being present :)

Sincerely,
A very grateful participant

DZAMLING GAR - TENERIFE

THROUGH THE SENSES, ELEMENTS, AND PLAY: YOGA KIDS CAMP AT DZAMLING GAR

The third edition of the Yoga Kids Summer Camp at Dzamling Gar has come to a close, leaving behind a deep sense of gratitude and growth.

From July 6th until August 31st, 17 children - 6 from our local Dzamling Gar Community and 11 from the broader island community - came together in a space where yoga, art, nature, play, and imagination naturally intertwined.



Training

More than just a seasonal program, this camp served as a living space for mutual discovery. Day after day, we watched the children explore their bodies through movement and breath, navigate relationships, collaborate, resolve conflicts, and embrace their unique individuality. In guiding them, we too

were transformed; held in a continuous dialogue of shared enthusiasm, fatigue, wonder, and deep listening. Educating is never a one-way path - it means allowing ourselves to be changed by the children, learning from every quiet moment and every dynamic interaction along the way.



Nataly (left) and Fabiana

Our journey unfolded week by week, beginning with a focus on awakening the senses. We invited the children to refine their perception by observing colors, sharpening their hearing, sculpting with raw clay, exploring natural scents, and practicing mindful tasting. In the second week, we shifted inward to navigate our emotional landscape. Guided by original stories written by Fabiana, we explored how feelings move through the body and

breath. The children created an "Emotion Wind Wheel" - a gentle, tangible reminder that emotions, like the wind, are constantly shifting, arriving, and clearing space for what comes next.

During the third week, we followed the story of Totó the Little Dragon and the Fire Butterfly to explore the five elements: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Space. Through yoga, breath work, and creative play, each element revealed symbolic treasures for the children to collect in personal pouches, showing them how these universal forces exist both in nature and within themselves.

To anchor the entire experience, each child crafted a personalized book gathering fragments of their journey - body awareness, emotions, elemental stories, colors, and memories into a creative bridge between their inner world and external reality. We concluded with the element of Space - not as a vacuum to

fill, but as a sanctuary to protect. We wished to leave the children with the understanding that within each of us lies a vast, quiet space filled with awareness and potential that they can continue to cultivate for the rest of their lives.

We hope the seeds planted this summer continue to bloom in how these children view themselves, others, and the world. We are deeply grateful for this journey at Dzamling Gar and hope to bring this initiative to other Gars and Lings across our global community. If you would like to collaborate or organize a similar program in your location, please feel free to reach out to share experiences at <natalynitsche@gmail.com>.

With deep gratitude,
Fabiana Esca and Nataly Nitsche

PASSING THROUGH SPACE

Dance of the Song of the Vajra course at Dzamling Gar

This summer a course on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra was held at Dzamling Gar under the guidance of Ludmila Kislichenko.

It was given in two parts, the first in July and the second in August, and it brought together practitioners from many different parts of the world: some stepping onto the mandala for the first time, others returning to deepen what they already knew, one of them arriving all the way from Tashigar South.

We compiled this material using the words participants shared afterwards, as we believe they beautifully capture the many wonderful experiences of the course and reflect their deep gratitude to Luda for her immeasurable patience



and kindness, as well as for her clear guidance and instructions.

Carlotta

Having attended the first part in July

and now completing the second part, learning the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra has been a truly beautiful journey. Immersing myself in this profound practice over these months has been deeply moving, made all the

more special by our teacher, Luda. Her extraordinary patience, grace, and guiding presence made the entire experience unforgettable. I loved every moment of it and feel immensely grateful for the opportunity to deepen my practice.

Eva

The Vajra Dances, as transmitted by our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, are an extraordinary teaching whose value is beyond words. From my very first encounter with them, they have given me the opportunity to gain direct experience through body, sound, and collective practice, and to enter into a state of presence.

During this one-week course, I had the good fortune to learn the pawo steps and to deepen my overall understanding of the dance. I did my best to follow Luda's advice to "pass through space" as much as possible, while at the same time trying not to confuse the colors, foot points, and arm movements – or accidentally crash into a pamo or pawo along the way!

I would like to thank Luda from the bottom of my heart for her knowledgeable guidance and angelic patience. She made this precious teaching accessible to all of us, answering our questions again and again, and created an atmosphere of kindness and harmony. Thank you also to the other pamos and pawos for sharing the experience!

Tanya

The Vajra Dance course guided by Luda was intense, profound and highly effective. The ability of the teacher to remain calm, transparent, and deeply aligned with the knowledge and practice of the dance created a strong and inspiring environment.

I was especially impressed by Luda's individual approach to each student, regardless of the challenges or obstacles

everyone encountered throughout the course. She was consistently supportive, understanding and attentive, creating a clear and purifying space in which everyone could work through their difficulties and complete the course.

What touched me most was Luda's ability to bring the knowledge to life – not simply as something to understand intellectually, but as something to experience and embody through the dance. This made the course a truly unique opportunity and a meaningful journey for me.

Thank you, Luda, for your dedication, wisdom, patience, and for sharing this knowledge with us in such an authentic way. I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of this wonderful experience.

Olya

What incredible gratitude at the end of the Vajra Dance course! My sincere admiration goes to our instructor Ludmila – the sensitivity with which she guided us and brought us together, the respect and patience with which she showed the movements again and again and corrected us. I have come away with an enormous inspiration to keep practicing, and now to practice by dancing!

Jordi

I feel deeply grateful to Luda for this wonderful course she has offered us, sharing her teachings with such depth and giving such wonderful attention and care to each and every student, adapting to our individual needs.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the warm welcome I have felt from this beautiful group, made up of people from so many different parts of

the world, and for the great interest and dedication everyone has shown in the practice.

Malena

I came from Tashigar South and had the good fortune to continue learning about this beautiful practice. Although I already had some prior experience with the Vajra Dance, experiencing it at Dzamling Gar under Luda's guidance was an unexpected gift. The combination of dedication, patience, clear explanations, and the transmission of the teaching left a deep impression on me. Her ability to balance the group's needs and provide each person with exactly what they require to keep evolving in the dance reflects not only her vast experience but also her love for the teachings. It inspires me to keep deepening my practice and learning more. Thank you so much, Luda, for everything!

Violetta

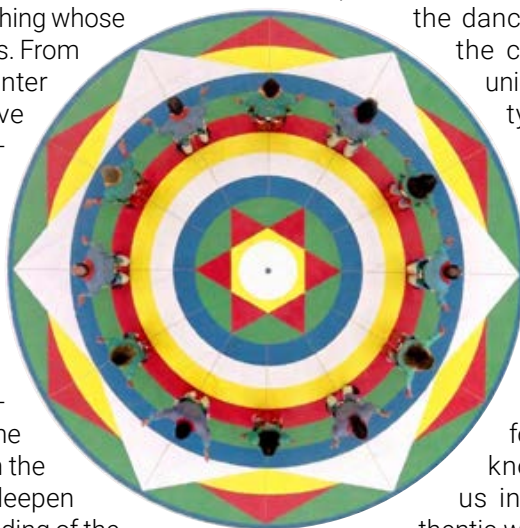
The course was simply extraordinary. Several things made a deep impression on me.

The first is Luda's softness, lightness and fluidity – she literally floats across the mandala, whatever part she happens to be dancing. My enormous thanks to her for her patience, her responsiveness and her genuine wish to teach us.

The second is the way the mandala and the lines we dance find their reflection in reality. Of course I was not able to see all of it, but at times what Luda explained and what we danced, I would then notice in my own life. It really is a very deep practice.

The third is that I would like to thank all the participants. Over these two weeks I had the feeling that while we were learning the dance, we somehow became closer to one another.

And finally I thank each and every person – I know that many were involved – who took part in organizing and running the retreat.



KUNSANGAR NORTH - RUSSIA

SUMMERTIME AT KUNSANGAR NORTH: YANTRA YOGA PROGRAM WITH ONI MCKINSTRY

The extensive Yantra Yoga program in Russia with third-level teacher Oni McKinstry from Australia started on July 13 at Kunsangar North, Moscow Region, with the Teachers' Training Level 1.

For 10 days, about 25 people, mostly from Russia, engaged in a deep and thorough study during interactive sessions of six hours per day.

Oni successfully applied a new approach to preparing Yantra Yoga teachers, giving everyone the opportunity to teach the foundations of this profound method of Yantra Yoga in mini-groups of 4–5 people under the gentle supervision of authorized local teachers of the first and second levels, as well as in front of the whole audience.

We went deeply into the practice of the nine purification breathings, all of the Yantra Yoga preliminaries, the first and second pranayamas together with the basic yantras of both groups, and the Vajra Wave. We also had two interesting and profound online lectures specially prepared for our course:

- with Yantra Yoga teacher and doctor Stella Rungen, on the anatomy of breathing in relation to pranayama practice;
- and with doctor Phuntsog Wangmo, on Yantra Yoga from the perspective of Tibetan medicine.

After one day of rest, we continued with the Teachers' Training Level 2. Each of the three days was devoted to studying one of the higher pranayamas and the basic yantras of the corresponding



group. During these nine days, we no longer did workshops in mini-groups. Instead, we dedicated a lot of time to breathing exercises from the Respira method under Oni's attentive guidance. This was really helpful for clarifying our experiences with all types of Yantra Yoga holdings!

During one of the last sessions, an experiment was spontaneously organized: we invited a special guest from Shang Shung Institute Russia, who was asked to sit in the center of a circle formed by more experienced practitioners, together with some participants who were not confident in their practice of the fifth pranayama. We then practiced this pranayama for some time, with several people inside the circle. It was a really interesting experience, not only for those who were practicing in the center, but also for those forming the circle.

After both parts of the teachers' training, a few candidates were recommended for Level 1 supervision, which is planned for 2027. Hopefully, we will all be fortunate enough to continue our path of teaching Yantra Yoga in an egoless way, as Oni has been emphasizing all along, while studying the text precisely and diligently and maintaining our personal practice in a fruitful way.

Straight after this, the next event followed: the four-day-long Supervision for

the 2nd Level of Yantra Yoga. Those who were fortunate enough to attend the sessions noted that it was truly something special to practice under the guidance of three experienced teachers at once. It gave us a unique opportunity to highlight different aspects of each practice that had been taught.

Summarizing the event, all three candidates were authorized as second-level Yantra Yoga teachers. We are all happy for Eugenia Lenkevich, Larisa Lisichkina, and Irina Novikova, wishing them fruitful further practice and many, many happy and grateful students!

The last event with Oni McKinstry started after a refreshing weekend in Moscow: a one-week retreat for people with transmission.

Originally, this event was scheduled to be held at Kunsangar South, but the location had to be changed urgently due to the current situation, which seemed far from favorable. Unexpectedly, however, this change created rather unique circumstances: from August 10 to 17, there were several Vajra Dance events taking place at the Gar in parallel. As a result, many Vajra dancers, including long-term teachers, had the opportunity to attend the morning pranayama classes of our retreat, which they greatly appreciated.

We, the participants of the Yantra Yoga retreat, were absolutely happy to have

the opportunity to dance on the Mandala together with experienced Vajra dancers as well. It gave many of us a clear feeling of how the different methods transmitted by our precious master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, are interconnected and somehow support each other. An aspiration to combine Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance in one collective retreat in the near future arose from this collaboration.

The topic of the retreat was taken from a quotation by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in the Yantra Yoga book: "Controlling the Vajra Body So That Our Prana Recovers Its Natural Balance." It was later adapted to the level of the practitioners taking part: we spent two days each on the first, second, and third groups, exploring the pranayamas, yantra basics and variations, and, of course, clarifying the preliminaries as well.

The retreat was held both onsite and

online, with informational support from Kunsangar South. Onsite, there were between 16 and more than 30 people, depending on the time of the session, and about 50 participants joined each session online.



The youngest yogi was a 14-year-old boy who suddenly joined his parents for the retreat—to everybody's great surprise. And, frankly speaking, he was the most curious student among all of us, and one of the most diligent as well. He inspired all the adults to

practice honestly and without hesitation, and was never afraid to ask for clarification whenever something was not quite clear.

On behalf of all the participants of all the events mentioned above, from Russia and abroad, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Oni

McKinstry for finding the time to visit Russia again, for her patience with us, for creating such a friendly atmosphere in our classes, and for communicating the profound and liberating method of Yantra Yoga with precision and clarity, thus continuing the precious lineage of Urgyen Tenzin, Namkhai Norbu, Fabio Andrico, and Laura Evangelisti.

Thank you, dear Oni, for your generosity, immeasurable kindness, and the necessary strictness at the same time! We are looking forward to meeting online in Zoomlingar soon and to getting together onsite next year—wherever that may be.

Elena Shadrova (extremely lucky to have participated in all 4 events with Oni at Kunsangar North in July–August 2026)

KHAITA JOYFUL DANCES AT THE "LOTUS OF PEACE" MONLAM IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Dear friends, we are very pleased to share with you the highlights of our performance at the First All-Russian Guru Padmasambhava Monlam, "Lotus of Peace".

Here is the [link](#) to the folder with video recordings of the performance.

The Monlam, led by the Ripa lineage holder Dungse Gyetrul Jigme Norbu Rinpoche, took place in Moscow from August 21 to 23, 2026.



The event was organized by the Ripa Community, which invited Russian Buddhist sanghas to collaborate. The Dzogchen Community was also among the partners and helped spread the word about the event. Of course, we were happy to make a dance offering, as is customary during large-scale Buddhist prayer gatherings.

Monlam (literally meaning "the path of prayers" or "prayer and aspiration") is a way to care not only for oneself but also for all sentient beings. The practice of Monlam helps dispel external obstacles, such as illness, danger, and adverse circumstances, as well as internal ones, such as mental obscurations and barriers on the spiritual path.



We, in turn, extend our heartfelt thanks to the Teachers and mentors of the Ripa lineage, our friends at the “Ripa” Bud-

Nastya's dance was so mesmerizing that, at the end, the audience couldn't help but shout "Bravo!" Our dance "Gesar La," like all Khaita Joyful Dances, created a light atmosphere of happiness, freedom, and harmony in the hall. Everyone—both the dancers and the audience—was smiling, laughing, and sharing their impressions.

Jigme Rinpoche thanked us and said that there is life in these dances. He then joked (or perhaps not!) that at the next Monlam there would be more songs and dances and fewer prayers.

We invite you to join us in studying and practicing the Khaita Joyful Dances.

We meet at the gompa of the Moscow Dzogchen Community, Rinchenling, every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

These sessions are our practice: we develop the ability to feel space, learn to understand one another, interact, and remain in a state of joy and harmony. Perhaps this friendly atmosphere of mutual respect and love is what matters most.

In October, we'll be performing
at the Circle Dance Festival!
See you at the Rinchenling Gompa!

Contact number (WhatsApp, Max):
89168446895

With love,
The Khaity Joyful Dance Practice Group
and the Gakyil of Rinchenling

Video footage provided
by the "Ripa" Buddhist Center

TSEGYALGAR EAST - USA

SUMMER SANGHA RETREAT 2026 IN THE LAND OF THE DAKINIS KHANDROLING & TSEGYALGAR EAST

By Katya Kuzmitskaya

From July 23rd to August 2nd, the Tsegyalgar East Community held the annual Summer Sangha Retreat, with a

rich program of many wonderful activities to help participants experience different flavors of the teachings transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Namkhai Yeshe.

About 40 people were present in-person, and 50 people joined online, among which were many Russian-speaking practitioners, who were able to participate thanks to Stas Davydov and Anna Olefir who generously offered Russian translation.

This retreat was dedicated to the practice of Green Tara, so we connected with Rinpoche by watching the Green Tara

teachings he gave over 8 days in North Kunsangar in 2013, on Green Tara terma of Adzom Drugpa containing methods of Yogatantra, Mahayoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.

Dr. Phuntsog was leading Green Tara practice almost every day, supported by Naomi Zeitz and Paula Barry on the days when she had to urgently travel to fulfill her commitment as a Tibetan doctor.

Every afternoon, Carisa O'Kelly and Bodhi Krause taught the first part of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra Course, with patience, joy, and relaxed presence giving people the opportunity to learn or refresh the steps of this profound Dzogchen practice.



At the end of the days, Naomi Zeitz and Paula Barry guided practitioners in 2-hour beginners' sessions of Yantra Yoga, teaching with precision and humor, the 9 Breathings, Tsijong, Lungsang, and Rhythmic Breathing, both on the mat and on a chair.

During the retreat, we also had three special events.

In the morning of July 31st, we held

a memorial event for Jim Valby, an extraordinary practitioner, SMS teacher, translator, and dear friend. Close people shared stories and poems, and when we played a short excerpt of Jim's teachings, his voice was met with sudden and strong rain. The rain and sun continued to dance with each other as Dr. Phuntsog started a ceremony of spreading Jim's ashes on the land of Khandroling

in four directions, with the mantra of the purification of the elements recited by all for at least 30 minutes. The procession then went to the thögyal cabin, where the ceremony ended, leaving us with Jim's presence.

On August 1st, we had a special morning dedicated to sound in Dzogchen, creating opportunities to connect with what Namkhai Yeshe has been teaching. Oleg Troyanovsky, SMS teacher, musician, and composer, came from New York with his family to offer a lecture 'Hearing Disappearance: Dzogchen, Sound, Silence, and Attention' refreshing the knowledge of instant presence through unique explanations and sound practice.

After that, we listened to Namkhai Yeshe's acousmatic composition ATI MON-LAM in surround sound organized in the Tsegylgar Gönpa by Bodhi Krause.

During the retreat, we also held a BBQ and Auction where many precious items were offered for bidding, and thanks to generous donors we were able to collect the funds that are essential to continue maintaining the Gar and the land, and offer more opportunities for practice.

The retreat ended with Short Ganapuja with Marme Monlam and Dance of the Song of the Vajra on Universal mandala, a closing gratitude speech, and Khaita Joyful Dances with Katya Kuzmitskaya.

The retreat was possible because of the continued collaboration of dedicated local people and members coming from afar, generously giving their energy and taking care of each other in a continuous flow.

We are grateful to Rinpoche for the sound of his teachings alive in us beyond time and space and for the colorful mandala of the community with all our unique gifts and capacities that made this retreat possible for the benefit of all beings.

We hope you come and visit Tsegylgar East and Khandroling or join our activities online!

DANCE, DANCE, DANCE AT KHANDROLING, TSEGYALGAR EAST

August 28–September 13, 2026

Teachers: Sarale Lidzas, Justin Hudgins, Bodhi Krause, Carisa O'Kelly, and Kyu Kyuno

At the annual Vajra Dance retreat, Dance, Dance, Dance that takes place each year at the Mandala Hall on the special land of Khandroling in Western Massachusetts, USA, participants arrived from all over the world - Japan, France, Russia, Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, Michigan, Maryland, New York, New Hampshire and California.

Five teachers spent a dedicated 17 days, with one day off, teaching and



practicing all the various forms of the Vajra Dance: The Vajra Dance of the Unborn [12 A's], The Vajra Dance for the Liberation of Sentient Beings, The Vajra Dance of the Three Vajras, and the The Vajra Dance of Space, Khalong Dorje Kar. The section on Khalong Dorje Kar included special Zoom instruction from Prima Mai. A special feature was a Simultaneous Dance on the two types of Mandalas of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra on the Earth Mandala and Khalong mandalas to Khalongdorjekar music. For the most part the weather

was friendly and as always the dedication and attention to detail and the needs of the participants shown by the teachers made the overall experience of the dancers joyful, warm and satisfying.

Please consider joining the annual event at the only Universal Mandala to date in the entire international Dzogchen Community!

For more information contact:
secretary@tsegyalgar.org

REFLECTIONS FROM THE VAJRA DANCE RETREAT AT KHANDROLING

This year's Dance Dance Dance took place, as it does every year these years, from late August to mid-September at the Mandala Hall at Khandroling.

It was an intensive two-week course covering all the Vajra Dances—including 3 Vajra, Dance for All Sentient Beings, 12 A, and Khalong Dorjekha—and, true to its name, it was two weeks of non-stop dancing; well, actually, we also enjoyed BBQ, etc.,.

Being able to enjoy this gathering is thanks first and foremost to Rinpoche for bestowing the teachings; to the instructors (Justin, Sarale, Bodhi, Carisa

and Kyu) who carried on that vision and taught us with deep focus despite their fatigue; to the Gakyil for organizing and running the event; to my best friends, who personally invited me to this course and supported me in every way; and to everyone who cooperated with a smile.

Autumn at Khandroling brings some cold days, and while a few people fell ill along the way, it was auspicious that we were able to bring the retreat to a safe and successful close.

This was my second time visiting Khandroling. Having the precious opportunity in this place to reconnect with old friends, as well as meet people who I discovered for the first time this year or met through visiting Khandroling, was truly special.

For me, Dzogchen is life itself. Yet, much to my embarrassment, amidst busy and stressful daily lives, I often find myself nearly forgetting how to practice its essence. Dance Dance Dance at Khandroling is one of the best opportunities for me to recall the teachings given by our maestros and to remember

teachings such as the example of the mirror and relaxing.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have visited this place and to have shared this time with everyone who participated.

Within samsara, everyone suffers. Precisely because everyone carries strong feelings and deep experiences, it was so inspiring to witness how everyone strives to put Rinpoche's words into practice: "work with circumstances."

I am so grateful to have had such an opportunity.

I hope there will be other opportunities like this, and if the chances arise, I would love to meet even more people beyond everyone who participated this time.

Stay safe and see you soon,
Niji from Japan

HOW JIM VALBY MET CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU AND OTHER MEMORIES

Our much beloved Vajra Brother Jim Valby died very peacefully around 8 pm ET/US on June 22, 2026 in Greenfield Massachusetts, surrounded by family, friends and Vajra brothers and sisters.

Jim was one of the most avid and enthusiastic readers and supporters of The Mirror. He offered to write the first “How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu” when we decided to start publishing those stories, in the [December 2002/January 2003 issue, #63](#), and he also kindly and selflessly edited, in collaboration with Adriano Clemente, our book Dzogchen Teachings — a compilation of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s teachings published in The Mirror. Dzogchen Teachings was first published by Snow Lion Publications in 2006 and is now carried by Shang Shung Publications.

HOW JIM VALBY MET CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

by Jim Valby
**Mirror 63,
December 2002/January 2003**

The Sisters of Mercy taught at my Roman Catholic elementary school in Rochester, New York. As an altar boy, I served at the daily 6:30AM mass, held candlesticks for frequent funerals, and earned a few dollars at occasional weddings. The Jesuits in high school emphasized literature, religion, history and math. I earned a physics degree at Middlebury College in Vermont. After working as a research engineer for Eastman Kodak for about two years while enjoying various recreational drugs, I drove around the United States in my Chevy pickup truck with a Harley-Davidson motorcycle in the back. I looked everywhere

unsuccessfully for a Gurdjieff teacher.

In the Spring of 1970 a motorcycle gang in Oregon severely beat me up because I made too many stupid mistakes in a row. After getting out of the hospital, I went on a month-long retreat in the mountains of British Columbia with my college friend Bob Flaws who had recently returned from India. I didn’t know how to practice, so I read books, ate well, smoked dope, and went for long walks while Bob practiced. After a mountain top conversation, Bob and I decided to travel together to India to get enlightened. I sold or gave away almost everything I owned. We met a month later in New York City. Bob purchased dharma books and encouraged me to buy a book for our long journey. I liked Vajrabhairava on the cover of a book named “Tibetan Buddhism Without Mystification” which was later republished as “Treasures on the Tibetan Middle Way”. The book contained translations into English from Tibetan by Herbert V. Guenther.

So I bought my first dharma book, read the first two pages, did not understand anything, and returned the book to my backpack. We traveled on Icelandic Airways to Amsterdam and then took the Orient Express train to Istanbul. On our overland bus trip toward India, I drank, smoked & swallowed all the bad stuff I could find along the way because I knew we would not be allowed to enjoy these vices once we began our enlightenment training in India. I became wickedly sick with amoebic dysentery in Tehran, and returned to the United States.

Some months earlier the United



This beautiful black and white photo was taken by Marilynn Valby around 1975 at the home of Herbert and Ilse Guenther in Saskatchewan, Canada. Clockwise from Dr Guenther who sits at the end of the dining room table under the Wheel of Life thangka are: Joan Goodman, Michael Faber, Kennard Lipman, Steven Goodman, Michael Azzato and Jim Valby. We were all participating in our weekly non-university study of the *Grub mtha' mdzod* (the treasury of philosophical tenets) by the great Dzogchen Master Longchenpa in the 14th century.

States Government had ordered me to join the army to kill Vietnamese people. I ignored the order, but while I was traveling, the FBI had come looking for me at my parents’ home. My mother was disappointed that I refused to serve God & Country, but my father kindly gave me a car ride to the Canadian border. I walked across the Niagara Falls bridge and took a bus to Toronto where I found that Buddhist book down in the bottom of my backpack. With nothing to do, I went to the public library to look up all the multi-syllabic philosophical words in various dictionaries. I understood something, so with almost the last of my money I bought a small bar of gold and a one-way airplane ticket to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan where Dr. Guenther was chairman of the Far Eastern Studies Department.

Dr. Guenther did not accept the gold bar I offered but asked if I would be interested in taking some university classes.

He said that he would teach me the intellectual side of things but I have to go somewhere else to learn practice. So I studied with him for about 15 years earning Master's and PhD degrees in Tibetan studies. In particular, he encouraged me to study the Dzogchen texts of Shrisingha, Vimalamitra and Longchenpa. Occasionally I went away for a few months to check out a Tibetan dharma scene here and there, mostly in the United States. I received my first Tibetan Buddhist initiation from HH Dudjom Rinpoche about 1971 or 72 in New York City. But I never noticed any Dzogchen teachings in any of the dharma scenes. All masters seemed to teach only Sutra & Tantra even if they sometimes used the word "Dzogchen".

By 1975 I had completed two personal ngöndros and one group ngöndro with the exception of all the prostrations. By 1979 I had given up the idea that it was possible to receive Dzogchen teachings from Tibetan masters. So I just read Dz-

ogchen texts in Tibetan and created a bigger & better & bitter dharma ego. In June 1982 my friend Steven Goodman offered to buy me a beer at Place Riel in Saskatoon. I accepted his offer, and while we were drinking our beers Steven said: "In July Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche will teach Dzogchen Upadesha in California." I arrogantly replied: "Tibetan masters do not teach Dzogchen even if they know something." Steven said: "Jim, Norbu really knows & teaches Dzogchen. You owe it to yourself to check him out." I replied: "Really, I don't believe it."

In early July a disc in my lower back slipped out of place while I was digging in the vegetable garden, so I had to cancel my July Venice-to-Dubrovnik holiday on a chartered sailboat. The pain was so bad I considered committing suicide. After a few visits to the doctor and the chiropractor, my lower back improved. I had some time & money for a holiday, and my wife Marilyn said: "Maybe you would like to go meet that master Steven

recommended?" So I thought: "Why not? I will go to California for a holiday. I can also check out that Tibetan master."

I arrived near Point Arena at Redwood's OZ retreat site a day after the retreat had begun. In the upstairs kitchen I asked beautiful See-Joy: "Where is the Tibetan master?" She replied: "He is sitting down there at the picnic table." I looked but couldn't see a master because everybody was wearing ordinary clothes. About an hour later, Rinpoche sat down under a large tree surrounded by interested students. I had no expectations. He smiled & spoke. My experience: Primordial Buddha transmits primordial Dzogchen to us fortunate practitioners in this particular time & place.

OTHER MEMORIES

Adriano Clemente

I first met Jim Valby in 1995 during the examination for the first level of Santi Maha Sangha (SMS), right after Rinpoche had returned from New York City following his illness.

Before then, I had only heard of Jim Valby - that there was this American translator working on some texts Rinpoche had given him - but I don't think we had ever corresponded by letter.

I clearly remember sitting with Rinpoche on the veranda of the Yellow House at Merigar, just as the exams were about to begin, when Jim arrived at the door. The moment I saw him, it felt as though we had known each other for a very long time. Right from that first instant, it was exactly as it would always be: we didn't need to get to know each



other; we were already familiar. That was my strong feeling.

Shortly after, we began collaborating on the Santi Maha Sangha. He was truly instrumental in helping with the SMS, showing immense skill in organizing everything, and providing incredible support to both Rinpoche and me in those early days. In the beginning, it was just Rinpoche, Jim, and me. He used to travel extensively, visiting most of the local communities, and he was always deeply kind.

He later invited me to Conway in 1997, and again in 1999, to assist him with some Semde texts. I will always remember his extraordinary kindness toward me. We were very close, but he was remarkably kind to everyone, always showing immense compassion, including generosity to those who were struggling financially. He was a truly compassionate man.

Then, he began to teach. During that period, only he and I were teaching, and I remember Rinpoche saying at retreats:

'Don't think just anyone can teach and explain the Dzogchen Teachings the way I explain them. There are only two people I can trust, and those are Jim Valby and Adriano Clemente.'

Jim worked on numerous translations, collaborating with Elio and me on the Ka -Ter project for about ten years. Together, we produced *The Marvelous Primordial State*, as well as the Trekchö book, *Luminous Clarity of the Universe*.

Jim would write the first draft translation, Elio would work on it, and I would do the final revision. However, his most important work was undoubtedly the multi-volume commentary on the *Kunjed Gyalpo*, entitled *The Ornamental State of Samantabhadra*.

Ultimately, what I can say is that Jim was a great being. He was someone I could fully trust as a practitioner. Jim was a highly intuitive person and it

was clear that his understanding of the teachings came directly from his own experience. He was a monumental help to the Community, and he will forever remain a part of its history.

ODE TO JIM VALBY

Julia Lawless

Jim was a close friend and a remarkable character who will be missed by people all over the world.

He had an incredibly warm and loving nature combined with a supremely sharp intellect - and it is testimony to his unwavering devotion and dedication that he single-handedly translated all the Dzogchen tantras systematically over a period of many years.

Jim was a talented violinist alongside and whenever he came to the UK he liked to big-up his Scottish and Celtic roots ...

he even considered buying a kilt when was in Wales once!

He had his wild side too ... he liked to tell stories of his motorbike adventures, cross-border smuggling expeditions and other slightly dubious exploits, so was always good company. He also traveled extensively as a Santi Maha Sangha teacher and was highly respected for his knowledge of the Dzogchen tradition, especially due to his insight as a Tibetan translator. He was a very committed practitioner too and in later years spent long periods on his 'personal island' in retreat, which he loved, located on Whitehead Island in the Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia, Canada.

I will miss him greatly for his warm heart, bear hugs, blunt honesty and wick-ed humor. I truly hope he finds himself in a pure land paradise, at least for a while...

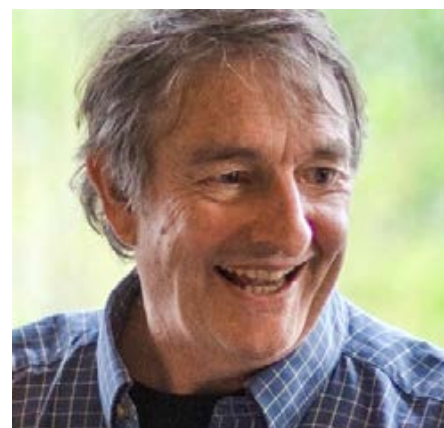


Photo by Mike Farmer

For the complete previously published story here is the link: <https://melong.online/how-jim-valby-met-chogyal-nam-khai-norbu-and-other-memories/>

Ricardo Sued

To Jim

This story was born
long before
it was ever born.

On the day it came into being,
this story
was already old...

It was simply waiting
for the moment to bloom,

just as any love blooms
long before
it comes into the world.

A love that is in the air,
playing, dancing,
waiting to reveal itself.

How fortunate, dear Jim,
that people like you
can be born again and again,

to adorn life
with laughter and knowledge,
with tears and love,
with that wild and fascinating wisdom.

We love you.

A LITTLE GEM: INTENSIVE STUDY PROGRAM ON DZAMLING GAR'S SONG AND DANCE

"It's not just an ordinary song, but a profound teaching..."

"I didn't write a nice song just for singing and for its melody. I wrote the Dzamling Gar Song for our future, to show the direction we are taking, what we are doing, what our responsibility is, and how we can contribute to sentient beings, to human beings, particularly on this globe."

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 2013

I would like to share a new program, A Little Gem, dedicated to the study of *The Song and Dance of Dzamling Gar*, composed, set to music, and choreographed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

This program is the result of a collaboration between teachers of Khaita, Vajra Dance, and Santi Maha Sangha, who will guide participants in discovering this short yet profound teaching.

The Program

The program consists of three parts which can also be attended independently of one another.

Part 1 – Introduction to the Dzamling Gar Song and Dance

Beginning at the end of September, this part is open to everyone and consists of one session online per week over three weeks. It is designed to provide a basic understanding of the Dzamling Gar Song and Dance. I'll guide you step by step through its essential elements

Part 2 – Deepening the Song and Dance

This part, taking place online during a



weekend in December, will be dedicated to deepening both our understanding of the song and our experience of the movements of the dance. It will be led by Adriana Dal Borgo and Arnaud Coquillard - Santi Maha Sangha teacher.

Part 3 – Training in the Dzamling Gar Song and Dance

The third part consists of a one-week session, offered both in person and online, during the first week of April.

During this intensive week, participants will deepen their knowledge and practice of the Dzamling Gar Dance, while also exploring other Khaita dances. As the Dzamling Gar Dance embodies the essential principles of Khaita, we will also study specific terminology and references, as well as the history and principles of Khaita.

This part will be led by Adriana Dal Borgo and Petra Zezulkova, both Khaita teachers and trainers.

This final part is open to anyone with a basic knowledge of Khaita. However, the main focus will be on training in the

Dzamling Gar Song and Dance, with an emphasis on singing and dancing together as a group.

For those who wish to pursue the path of becoming teachers of the Dzamling Gar dance, the program will provide the necessary foundations. Teacher certification will be possible following a final supervision, to be arranged in consultation with the teacher trainers.

You can find all the program details here: <http://khaita.org/little-gem>

For any questions, please contact us at harmonyinthespace@atiyogafoundation.org

Adriana Dal Borgo

THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS IN BUSINESS

With Lopen Karma Phuntsho

A talk from the [Shang Shung UK](#)'s the 'Light of Kailash' lecture series, a public platform for rigorous, accessible Tibetan studies. Inspired by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's lifetime of research and teaching, it brings scholars and practitioners together to explore Tibet's languages, histories, arts, medicine, and contemplative traditions.

I want to firstly say, Tashi Delek, Kuzuzangpo, greetings to all. It's not going to be a very academic presentation tonight. I often jocularly say that I'm a 'pracademic', a practical academic trying to take the findings and the knowledge from my academic research and apply them in practice as far as possible. And I've been trying to do so in the realm of education, entrepreneurship and cultural documentation. So what I would like to share today would be something that I've been doing for a couple of decades now in taking the Buddha's teachings, the Buddhist wisdom, into our ordinary way of life.

Normally, in our part of the world, as native Buddhists, we are sometimes into this unfortunate situation of outsourcing Buddhist practice to experts, or even having monks to do Buddhist practice for oneself. And sometimes also taking a specific time or a specific amount of one's income and savings and then dedicate that towards religious work. That is a very habitual practice that happens in Buddhist countries. Sometimes we overlook the fact that Dharma should be part and parcel of our life and that we should bring the Buddha's wisdom into all aspects of our living.



In most Buddhist societies, people think of the Buddha as a spiritual figure, the founder of a religion. But he was also a kind of a reactionary going against the norms and givens of his time. He was a revolutionary thinker in changing the culture and spiritual thinking. He was a regenerative thinker in reappropriating and reinterpreting the spiritual topics of his time and also an innovator who found new solutions to problems in the world. But above all, he was a pragmatist, somebody who didn't indulge in theoretical discussions and intellectual exercises, but rather sought practical applications that can bring about a positive impact.

The Four Noble Truths – a problem solving strategy

We sometimes forget that the Buddha was a very practical teacher. For instance, when we look at his first sermon in Deer Park, where he declared the Four Noble Truths, that life is full of suffering in birth, in aging, illness, death, and so on. Then there is the origin of suffering, that suffering comes from causes. And then the cessation of suffering, the cessation of craving and of attachment and so forth, and the path leading to the Eightfold Path.

In a monastery, this teaching is delivered in a serious manner as a very fundamental teaching in Buddhism. But if we look at it from a different angle, what the Buddha taught was really about problems and solutions. What the Buddha was saying is that life is full of

Lopen Karma Phuntsho

Lopen Karma Phuntsho is one of Bhutan's most distinguished intellectuals, renowned for bridging the worlds of traditional Buddhist scholarship and modern academic research. After earning the title of Lopen after nine years of advanced monastic studies at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute in India, he obtained a D.Phil in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford. He has held research positions at the University of Cambridge and the CNRS in Paris, and is widely known as the author of *The History of Bhutan*. Phuntsho is a leading social entrepreneur and the founder of the Loden Foundation, supporting education and entrepreneurship.

problems, like sickness, aging, birth and so forth. The first truth is really that there is a problem. And the second truth is the origin of the problem, the causes that bring about problems. The third truth is about solution and the fourth truth the path leading to the solution. So this is how you can see the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths as a problem solving strategy. In this respect, I think the Buddha was probably one of the earliest management gurus, if you take his teachings on the Four Noble Truths in a sort of management context.

The Eightfold Path

Then we have the Eightfold Path – right view, right intention, right speech, right

action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Often we look at this as a very spiritual Buddhist topic. But then what we have been doing in the business context in promoting social entrepreneurship is we've been taking this Eightfold Path as a way for an entrepreneur to think about the project.

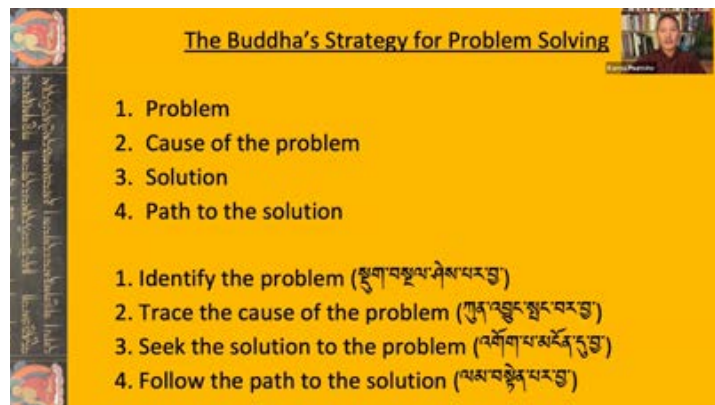
The first important point is to have a right view or vision, which basically is a full understanding of the situation of the ecosystem, the legal, financial, social, cultural, environmental, and whatever aspects that one needs to know. And with such understanding and view, one can then come up with an idea, which is right intention, the wish to do something. And that idea, which initially is a very weak thought, is gradually moulded into a proper intention. And then it gets strengthened as a determination and a commitment. When one has this idea or plan, one has to communicate it as right speech, like pitching a business proposal, either in written or in oral form, to share the intention and the thought with others.

And then such communication is followed by action, actual practice and implementation, sort of 'walking the talk'. And as one continues an action repeatedly as a source of one's living, that turns into livelihood. And as one adopts something as a livelihood, it becomes a habitual practice and one experiences fatigue; whatever is done repeatedly gets tiresome and boring and one may feel like giving up through fatigue. Especially in the case of entrepreneurs, it's a very lonely journey and people often give up through exhaustion. That's when bringing in effort or enthusiasm can boost morale and put more diligence into the project.

And then as one keeps putting in extra effort to make things work, the problem that arises is that it may turn into drudgery and one ends up doing things mindlessly which is where one has to do things with mindfulness or consciousness. And finally, as one pushes

through with any effort one puts in, one of the big challenges is distraction which can make one fail. So here finally, the eightfold path is about bringing concentration, bringing focus to the project.

So we take this Eightfold Path as a way for an initial idea of what one wants to do, then pitching and implementing the project, taking it as a source of living, putting in more effort, doing it mindfully,



and then focusing on it until one succeeds and reaps the results. So this is how we often talk about the Eightfold Path in the context of entrepreneurship.

Going back to the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha has often presented them using the metaphor of medicine, that suffering like illness is something that one must diagnose and only having diagnosed it can one then trace and avoid the cause and through that attain the solution or, in the case of illness, health. And in order to attain that health one must go through the specific treatment. The path is really like the treatment that one must follow, diligently, step by step, expediently.

The problem of the problem

So in terms of solving problems, even in the Buddha's first sermon we find a way of being very smart in problem solving. But we should remember that the Buddha's focus was not on solving a specific problem. There is the problem of the problem.

For instance, when we talk about problems, the question of identifying the problem comes up. One man's solution would be another man's problem.

We know for now, for instance, the US's solution is Iran's problem and Iran's solution is Israel's problem. Russia's solution is Ukraine's problem. In the same way in the business world, a business may have a heavy loan to pay back and therefore hike their prices. But that solution may create a problem for a single mother who is trying to make ends meet and can't afford the new prices.

One has to go beyond just being smart for oneself to address the problems. And that's why I think the Buddha, when talking about the path, uses the word "Samyak-drsti" (right view/vision) in Sanskrit. We have to know which problem, and the problem should not be a specific individual problem. It should really be aimed at solving the problem for a greater cause, greater community, or country, or the world, for sentient beings, and that the path leading to such problem-solving should also be a morally correct one.

So we have a new moral ethical addition. In addition to using the Buddha's Eightfold Path as a very strategic means to seek solutions to a problem, we now need to also bring in the moral ethical compass to have the right vision. And when we talk about the right vision, there are many things that we need to know in order to get a very objective, responsible, useful understanding of the situation. And among them, one of the most critical, the cardinal sort of view or outlook one has to have, that one can learn from the Buddha's teachings, is the understanding of dependent arising, of interdependence.

Dependent Arising

Ye dharma hetuprabhava hetum tesam tathagatah hyavadat / tesam ca yo nirodha evam vadi mahasramanah //
All things originate from causes.
The Tathagata have taught those causes,
And that which is the cessation of the causes
Is also proclaimed by the Great Sage.

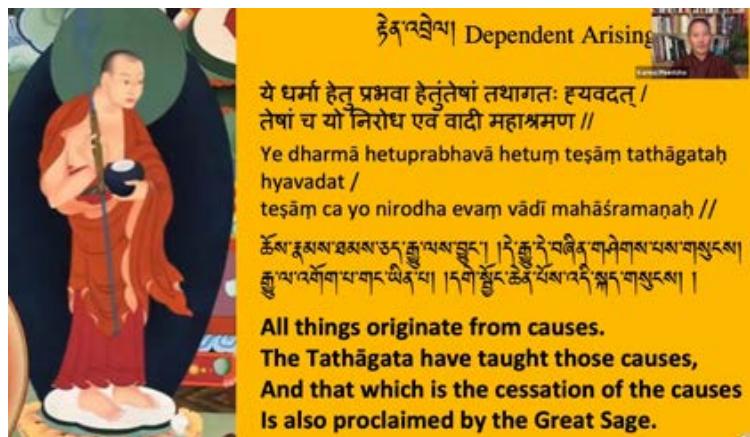
In the Buddhist world, this verse is chanted in so many rituals. Most people don't even know what it means, but it is used to consecrate temples and statues and also to create auspiciousness during ritual. It is one of the most common verses about how things come from cause and conditions. So I think that interdependence is the most important right view one has to have, particularly in today's world where we are intensely interconnected. We can appreciate the Buddha's theory of interdependence much more in today's highly globalized world.

The gist of the Buddha's theory of interdependence is that things don't come from nothing or from an eternal cause. And then he also argues that things do not come from a personal cause. The results correspond to the cause: if the cause is a rice seed, it will lead to a rice harvest. If it's a chilli seed, it will lead to a chilli harvest. So results and causes correspond to each other. And then as causes give rise to results, they can expand and multiply.

So these are the main things that one has to keep in mind, I think, to really appreciate how things work, and especially when you're getting into a project, it's important to know exactly what causes lead to what results and how they come about and this kind of view becomes critical for understanding.

Mind

Then the second most important view or outlook one needs to have is the Buddha's focus on the inner state of the mind or the inner spirit - it's tricky sometimes in translating *sem* in Tibetan or *vi-jnana, citta*, in Sanskrit, which covers the entire world of emotions, concepts and so on. In the Buddha's teachings such as the Dharmapada, the compendium of the teachings, the first verse makes the claim that mind is the forerunner of all things and all things are mindmade. Mind is the chief.



So this understanding that the inner state of the mind is the primary cause is also so important, especially for an entrepreneur because a lot of people believe that it is the external support that makes one very successful. But most of the successful social entrepreneurial journeys are results of the indomitable will and the courage of the entrepreneur. So we stress a lot the inner state of the mind being the most important, primary asset for any project.

Mind is the root of all phenomena

Then focusing on the mind, in the Himalayan Buddhist world, this phrase is bandied around a lot - "Mind is the root of all phenomena" - putting a lot of focus on the inner state of the mind. People often wonder what the Kangyur and the Tengyur, the vast canon of Buddhist works, talk about. I often say that around 30% of these books deal with the inner state of the mind and are really a deep psychology of understanding the different levels or states of the mind, what provokes attachment, what provokes hatred and so forth. A very thorough study of the ordinary state of the mind.

And then we have 60 to 70% of teaching talking about how to transform, train and improve this ordinary state of mind into a better one: a distracted mind into a focussed one, an aggressive mind into a calm peaceful one, an egoistic selfish mind into a compassionate altruistic one. So the vast amount of Buddhist literature, theories, philosophies, and even art, rituals, chanting, talk about how to transform the mind. Finally, some

portions of the teachings talk about what happens when the inner potential of the mind is fully harnessed, when that inner capacity is fully developed. When one becomes the Buddha, what kind of clairvoyance would the Buddha have, what kind of compassion, what kind of composure. And as a result of the inner transformation, what kind of external experience would the Buddha have?

So it's mainly these three things that the Buddhist corpus talks about really focusing on the inner state of the mind.

My favorite author, Shantideva, makes this proclamation:

*Those who do not know the secret of the mind,
The Supreme essence of Dharma,
They wander hopelessly in this world,
Though they wish to gain happiness and overcome suffering.*

So this is how important understanding the inner state of the mind and its role is to all the great Buddhist masters. And this is what we can learn from them to work on any project, to really know how things come about through interdependence, through many different causes and conditions. And among all those causes and conditions, it is the inner willpower, inner determination that plays the most important role.

You can listen to the rest of the conference on the SSUK youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eohmmKpubwY>

HOW I MET

HOW I MET CHÖGYAL
NAMKHAÏ NORBU

By Stephanie Mulholland

In 1979 I turned 18, graduated from high school and went to my first Tibetan Buddhist retreat in Dordogne, France.

I met up with my older sister Emma who had been living in Nepal with her boyfriend Elias Capriles and together we hitchhiked from Barcelona to Dordogne to attend the teachings of HH Dudjom Rinpoche. When we arrived we were shown the castle on the grounds where the teachings would take place, and the field below, where many of us camped. Sogyal Rinpoche was there as translator to HH Dudjom Rinpoche, but he was staying in the campground as well. I took refuge at that retreat, both in the Buddhist sense with HH Dudjom Rinpoche (he gave me the name Pema Lhadron) but also in the sense that I was following some sort of urge to be loved and accepted, especially by men. So at the end of the retreat I accepted an invitation by Sogyal Rinpoche to go to his center Orgyen Cho Ling. It was also a fantasy of mine to live in London as a young adult, looking for fun and freedom from parental restrictions.

I stayed at OCL on and off for the next year or so and in early 1981 Emma invited me to come to Nepal to visit her and Elias. In January of that year Mike Farmer and I made our way first to Delhi, and then to Kathmandu. I had a year's open plane fair and this was meant to be my gap year before starting college. The aim was ostensibly to meet lamas and hear their teachings, but always on my secret agenda was to meet guys and get hooked up with who I fancied or who I thought fancied me. In fact I did meet lots of lovely young Bhutanese and Nepali guys and made some good



connections. I turned 20 that summer and we celebrated my 20th birthday at the Bir Restaurant with many friends, both Western and Eastern.

When I returned to London at the end of summer I found that I was not well - I was feverish and turning yellow so I was admitted to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London with a diagnosis of Hepatitis A and put in isolation for the first week. Towards the end of my stay I had a visit from John Renshaw whom I knew from Dordogne. He told me that he'd heard of this new lama on the scene who he'd heard was an amazing Dzogchen teacher and said he was planning to go to his next retreat and recommended I do as well. I thought "Ah, this sounds promising". Sogyal Rinpoche had taught me the basics of sitting meditation and guru yoga as well as Vajrasattva practice, but I felt it was time to move on.

So in the summer of 1982 I found myself in a car traveling from London to the Norwich area where a campground complete with a big teaching tent, outdoor showers and a teepee for a dormitory, were set up for the first Namkhai Norbu retreat in the English countryside. I don't remember what Chögyal Namkhai Norbu taught at that retreat, except I do remember us all working hard trying to do the flaming vajra posture with our bodies. At the end of the day folks would line up to go and speak to Rinpoche and I had to pluck up all my courage to do so. He was kind of scary with a rough sounding serious manner and voice.

When I got up to speak to him all I could do was thank him for teaching and tell him that I was struggling a bit and finding it hard to be disciplined enough to practice but that I was really going to try now. He just looked at me and nodded as if to say, "OK, let's see what you can do – prove it".

The next time I got to meet Rinpoche was the very next summer, but this time in Conway, Massachusetts which was about an 8 hour drive from the DC area where I was living and beginning my studies for nursing. Tom Garnett and I drove up together and so it began, my many decades long relationship with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and the teachings he so authentically put across to us.

These days I'm not so hard on myself any more. I've realized the value of just being present in the moment, not living so much in the past or the future, although my mind wanders to those places I remember to bring it back, sometimes sooner, sometimes later. I love the Vajra Dance practice and am able to dance twice a month or so where I live just south of Washington DC. This summer was a dream come true to be able to return to Tsegylgar East after many years, and to dance on the Universal Mandala with many vajra kin. Truly wonderful!

I want to express my deep gratitude to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Yeshe Namkhai, and all of my Vajra kin, some of who are mentioned in this writing and others not, who have been my friends and helpers on this journey of life.

A la la ho!

MAGICAL DISPLAY OF APPARENT PHENOMENA

(Yogis, Yaks, and Yetis in the Italian town
of Formia, by the Sea)

John Shane

Continuing the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the publication of 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen'. (1986-2026)

'The past is never dead.
It's not even past.'

William Faulkner

While recovering, at my old farmhouse in Tuscany, 20 minutes drive down the mountain from Merigar, from the medical crisis that I went through earlier this year, I began to go through the many boxes of old photographs that I keep here, looking for photos to use to illustrate an article about the months during which - over 40 years ago - in order to be able to continue working with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on a book of his teachings - I rented a room in an old villa on the beach at Formia, not far from the Namkhai family's private apartment where I had previously lived for six months, sleeping on the sofa in the living room while beginning to work on the book that, when it was finally published, would become 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, And Dzogchen.'

As I went through the boxes of old photos at my house in Tuscany this summer, the memory returned of how, while I was still living at the Namkhai family's apartment, Rinpoche had one day decided that we would take a break from working on books, and would instead go down into the cantina in the basement of the apartment building to retrieve boxes of old photos that were stored there that Rinpoche had previously noticed had - due to the damp in the basement - begun to become covered with a light film of mold.

That afternoon, after we had brought the boxes of Rinpoche's old photos back up from the cellar into the living room of the family apartment and began to open them, I sat with him at the family dining table as we used pieces of soft, dry cloth to carefully clean each of the photos and sort them into piles of different categories, preparing them so that they could be put away again in a place that was not so damp.

While we sat at the table working on cleaning the photos, I was, of course, able to look at them, and, seeing my curiosity about the images of him as a young man in Tibet and wearing



When I returned to Italy after traveling around the United States with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on his summer tour of retreats there, I needed to find a place to live while I was working with him on the book that would become 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light: Sutra, Tantra, And Dzogchen', and, after looking everywhere in Formia for an apartment to rent for the short term, but not finding one, I met up with other students of Rinpoche who were living in apartments in a big old villa by the beach that you can see at the right of this postcard of Formia in summertime.



When I arrived at the villa, the summer was over, and both the villa itself and the beach looked quite different from the way they do in the postcard without all the beach umbrellas and deck chairs.



The beach below the villa was deserted at that time of year.

a suit and tie with neat, slicked back hair after he arrived in Europe, he began to tell me about his early life and how he came to Italy.

I couldn't help but be deeply moved by the story he told me of how he had arrived in Italy as a young Tibetan man with hardly any baggage, speaking no Italian and very little English, knowing hardly anyone in his new country, but carrying profound knowledge of the culture and spiritual traditions of his native land in his mind.

Entering fully in my imagination - while sitting in Rinpoche's family apartment in Italy, and later in the old villa by the beach in Formia - into the wonderful stories he told me of yogis, yaks, and yetis was more than a little surreal, as was the story of what happened when he had to leave Tibet.

And from everything he told me, I got a clearer idea of how traumatic his departure from his native land - and from his family there - had been for him.

During the months I had been staying at the apartment with him and his family, he had often asked me about my work in England as a poet and singer-songwriter, and, in turn, he had told me about the music he had listened to when he first arrived in Italy.

As we looked at and cleaned the old photos from his basement and he told me about what he went through when he first arrived in Italy, I remembered that, when he had sung for me lines from some of the popular songs he had listened to in those days, he had twice sung, with great pathos, these words 'C'era un re, senza regno...', which seemed to be from a song that was a favorite of his.

The song the line came from, he told me, was 'Il Re Dei Pagliacci' by Neil Sedaka, 'The King Of The Clowns', and the line that he emphasised when he sang some of the song for me, means, 'there was a king, without a kingdom'.

It wasn't until I was sitting with him at the table in the family living-room while he was telling me the stories behind the old photos that we had rescued from the basement that I realized why that particular line might have such meaning for him, as I learned from him about his having been recognized as a young child as the reincarnation of the Chögyal - or Dharma King - but then having had to leave the lands in which such a title had meaning, to travel to a far-off country where no one knew who he was or anything about his heritage.

He had, in many ways, due to social and political circumstances completely beyond his control, himself become a 'king without a kingdom', albeit, in his case, the role for which he had been recognized and trained, and which he had subsequently lost, was more as a spiritual monarch rather than a temporal one.

Over the following years of his life, of course, as those who are familiar with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and his teachings



Walking for the first time in through the dim doorway that led from the beach into the villa, I wondered what I would find there.



As I climbed the steps that led from the beach into the villas gardens, I seemed to be entering a parallel dimension of shadow and light. I had the feeling that I was entering a place full of wonder and mystery, and, in fact - in a manner that I didn't expect - it turned out that way.



I wandered along the pathways of the internal courtyard garden of the villa, looking for the two apartments that I knew were being rented by Rinpoche's students. I knew that Dr Kennard Lipman, who had studied for a PhD in Tibetan Studies in Canada under the renowned Tibetologist Dr Herbert Gunther, was living in one apartment with his wife Huisun. Kennard was also working on a book project with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, translating a text by Manjusrimitra that was later published with the title 'Primordial Experience'.

will know, step-by-step, a little at a time, as he began to teach and students gathered around him all over the world, and as he founded dharma centers and institutions for the preservation of Tibetan culture and spiritual teachings, overcoming innumerable obstacles of every kind, he established a realm of dharma worldwide that is in every way worthy of his heritage and the title 'Chögyal' he was given at birth.

If the old photos I cleaned up with Rinpoche at his family apartment that day showed me how he had lost everything when he had to leave his native country, following him in the ensuing years of his life showed me how he had not let that tragic setback define his life, but had taken the 'losing hand' he had been dealt by circumstances, and through compassion, courage, and determination had turned it into a 'winning hand', particularly for the many thousands of people whom he helped in so many ways through his activities.

It is worth remembering how Rinpoche, although he started with nothing, was nevertheless able to build up the Community of spiritual practitioners that thrives all over the world today, himself training Westerners to translate texts from Tibetan, yoga teachers to ensure that Tibetan Yantra Yoga remains a living force for good in the world, and establishing so many institutions for the benefit of beings.

Towards the end of his life, such was the impact of his activities, that he was awarded by the President of the Republic of Italy, Rinpoche's adopted country, the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a private Italian citizen.

This summer, while I was looking through the collections of photos from my own life here at my house near Merigar, searching for images of the old villa in Formia where I rented a room in order to be able to continue to work with Rinpoche on the book that became 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light', there has been a continual stream of discouraging news about the state of the world, with so many of the world's problems - whether societal, ecological, political, technological, or economic - seeming to go on getting worse and worse, and in the face of so many pressing threats it is easy to despair and to begin to feel helpless and hopeless.

Looking at the example of Rinpoche's life and remembering all the obstacles to his activities that he encountered over the years, one may wonder how he managed not to give in to despair.

Each of us - each of his students - has their own experience of interacting with him and their own memories of him. We are all different and we all have different backgrounds and different needs.

I can only speak for myself and from my own experience.

I remember that once I confessed to Rinpoche that I was going through a particularly hard time with a problem in my life that I just couldn't seem to handle.



I knew that a young Norwegian student of Rinpoche's, Wilvin Pedersen, was living in another apartment in the villa with her young school-age son Marius, and I wanted to see if I could also find an apartment there, but it turned out that there were no more apartments to rent, and I wondered what I was going to do.



Then, in the villa's garden, I met a man who said that his name was Sandy, or, if I preferred, Sandro, who told me that he had an apartment in the villa where he lived with his dog, J.R., and he said that he would rent me a room in his apartment, and, not having found any other options, I immediately took him up on his offer.



I moved in, and made the room as comfortable as I could, but I soon found that there were problems. Sandy, or Sandro, was an American citizen of Italian descent, and I discovered that he had been a US Marine, was a veteran of the Vietnam war, and was still associated with the nearby U.S. naval base at Gaeta, just around the bay from Formia. I gradually learned from Sandy that he had suffered from

I went into the problem in great detail, hoping that the amount of detail I was telling Rinpoche would enable him to see how difficult it was for me to solve the problem.

Ignoring all the detail, he cut to the core, and gave me advice that I consider to be what we call in English a 'skeleton key' - a key that will open any lock.

He said, 'Non dare tanto importanza alle cose, John, ti prego. E tutto irreal. Irreale...!!' 'Don't attach so much importance to things, John, I beg of you. It's all unreal. Unreal...!!'

The way he said so intensely, 'Ti prego', 'I beg of you', was quite a shock to me at the time, as it was clear that he seemed really moved by compassion at the suffering I was going through, that was due - beyond all the details I was so caught up in - to the fundamental error of the way I was misperceiving reality.

We are so conditioned to believe in the solidity of the world and our place in it that, even after receiving teachings and transmissions whose purpose is to reveal to us that 'nothing is quite as it seems, but everything is just as it is', we can still get caught up in our convoluted mental and emotional processes to such an extent that we lose our way completely and get lost in a maze of confused thinking and feeling.

Taking the example of Rinpoche's life and work to heart - in the face of the unrelenting flow of world-threatening bad news with which we are constantly being confronted by the vast array of media we are surrounded by - one can remember that, from the point of view of the Dzogchen teachings, what is appearing to us as the display of apparent phenomena is not fundamentally real.

While it is not an illusion in the sense that it doesn't exist at all, its existence is provisional and impermanent, relative rather than absolute.

This understanding of the fundamental unreality of phenomena does not make what is perceived as 'the problem' go away, but it does make dealing with the problem more workable.

If one understands that what one is perceiving is the empty display of one's own energy, one can be playful in working with whatever arises, and even difficult circumstances can become easier to deal with.

Beyond techniques of practice, beyond strategies, the essence of what Rinpoche taught me involves 'release upon inception', letting go of whatever thought, emotion, or situation arises, as soon as it arises, without effort or struggle, and resting in one's natural condition, whatever arises.

Dzogchen is also referred to as 'The Uncorrected State', and it is said that one should leave whatever arises 'as it is', since everything that arises is 'kuntuzanpo', 'perfect as it is'.

PTSD after his service in Vietnam and it soon became obvious that he was a chronic alcoholic. Sandy would go out drinking and come home at all hours, shouting at his dog, J.R., as he entered the apartment such things as 'J.R. Are you a man or a mouse..??!!'. I would wake up in the middle of the night to the noise of Sandy's return wondering what on Earth was going on.



Sandy would drive around in his sports car with the top down, leaving J.R. in the apartment all day, and when I came back to the apartment to sleep after working with Rinpoche at his family home nearby, I would often find that poor J.R. had done his business in the hallway. When Sandy came home later, I would again hear him shouting 'J.R.

Are you a man or a mouse..??!!', as he discovered he had once again stepped in the poop. In the photo above, you can see another of Rinpoche's long-time students, Michel Bricaire, who was visiting the villa, hanging out with Sandy beside him waving up at me from the beach below where I am standing the villa's courtyard garden to take the photo, while J.R. prowls the sands behind them.



Wilvin's son, Marius, attended a local school in Formia, and, one day, we opened the door of Wilvin's apartment to find a posse of outraged black-dressed nuns standing outside along with a very wet Marius. Apparently, while walking by himself to his nearby school that day, Marius had decided that he would take the beach route, and, as the excited nuns told us, he had decided to plunge into the sea fully-dressed with the backpack containing all his school books.

One may ask how one can leave it 'as it is' when one is faced with catastrophe at a planetary level, as is currently the case.

But you can only work with what is in front of you, one thing at a time.

One may think globally, but one can only act locally, as the saying goes.

And the example of Rinpoche's life is that it is possible - by remaining present and not allowing oneself to become distracted, by regarding whatever arises as the play of one's own primordial energy, and by working with circumstances one at a time in the moment - to achieve great things at all levels, even in the face of great obstacles.

This is what I observed while working with Rinpoche at his family apartment in Formia and at the old villa on the beach there, long before any books of Rinpoche's teachings were published and before any centers of the Dzogchen community were founded.

I hope that this incomplete and inadequate account of my experience in Formia all those years ago may be of interest to you today and perhaps even useful to you in your life now, as the memories of the time I spent with Rinpoche certainly still are to me.

As the great American novelist William Faulkner wrote, 'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'

Rinpoche is very much alive in my life as he is in the mind-stream of all his students who keep his teaching in mind.

Wishing you all the best...!!
Be well, and live long...!!

You can also find more of John's work at his Substack publication <https://johnshanewayofthepoet.substack.com> where you can add comments to articles or write to John.



When Rinpoche came to work on the book at the villa he would usually wear the rust-colored down jacket that he wore even in summer to keep him warm as he said that, according to Tibetan medicine, he lacked heat in his body. He liked to write and, in those days before everyone had computers, would sit at the table in the villa courtyard with his pens and write on any paper that was to hand. One morning, when he came to work at the villa at breakfast time, he wrote a poem on the napkin that we gave him, and then posed for a photograph, mysteriously making mudras with his cutlery. When Sandy woke up late that morning, he came out of his apartment and found Rinpoche sitting there on the terrace. He immediately disappeared back into his kitchen for a few minutes and then came back out onto the terrace carrying two large glasses brim-full of whiskey. He put one of the glasses down in front of Rinpoche, and then, saying 'Salute!!', or 'Cheers!!' in English, began to drink from the other glass. Rinpoche had met Sandy before, but he had never spoken to him, and, without saying anything, he stood up, took off his down jacket and his shirt, and, picking up the glass of whiskey, poured it onto his hands and began to use the amber fluid to massage the upper part of his body. When he had emptied the glass in this way, he put his shirt and jacket back on, sat down and resumed writing, as he had been doing before, still without saying a word to Sandy.



Surprised by what he had seen Rinpoche do, Sandy went off and sneaked a cigarette behind the plants the other side of the courtyard, trying to puzzle out what had just happened. There was no doubt that this surprising interaction with Rinpoche made Sandro think about the way he was living, and he began to want to change his self-destructive behaviour.

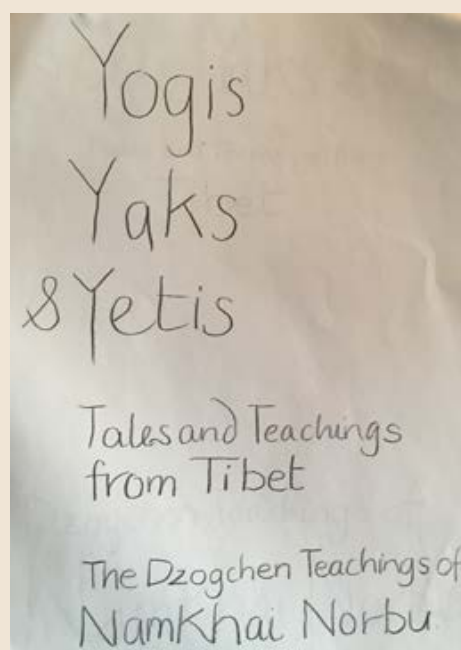


Just as Rinpoche did, I liked to write, and I would also sit in the courtyard of the villa with my pens and paper working on the book that became 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light'.

Learning more about the teachings as I worked with Rinpoche, and following his example of

regarding daily life as a dream, I came to see whatever happened at the villa as being a magical display of apparent phenomena, and everything - even the obstacles I faced in my living conditions and my work there - became easier to deal with.

All the time I was living at Formia, whether I was staying at the Namkhai family's apartment or at the villa by the beach, along with explaining Tibetan Buddhist teachings, Rinpoche would tell stories about his life in Tibet, and while I was living at the villa, I proposed another book project to him, a book of his stories, and he was enthusiastic about the idea, so I made a mock up of a cover page to show him.



A painting by Tibetan master and artist Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche of the countryside of Tibet in the region where he grew up.

(Collection: John Shane)



Detail of the painting by Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche showing yogis practicing on the mountainside while a snow-leopard roams the hillside.

(Collection: John Shane)

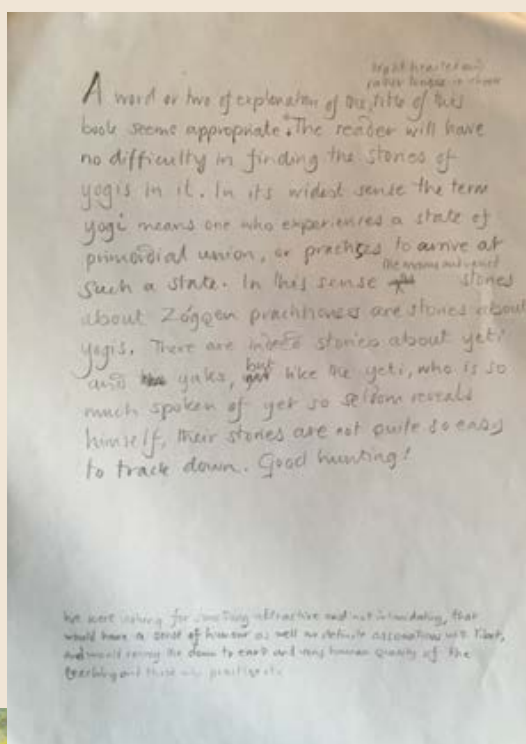


Detail of Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche's painting showing a nomad encampment in Tibet with their tents and yaks. Chogyal Namkhai Norbu was also born and raised in an area of Tibet famous for its nomads and many of the stories he told us while I was living at his family apartment or at the villa by the beach were about events that took place during his time living among nomads.

(Collection: John Shane)



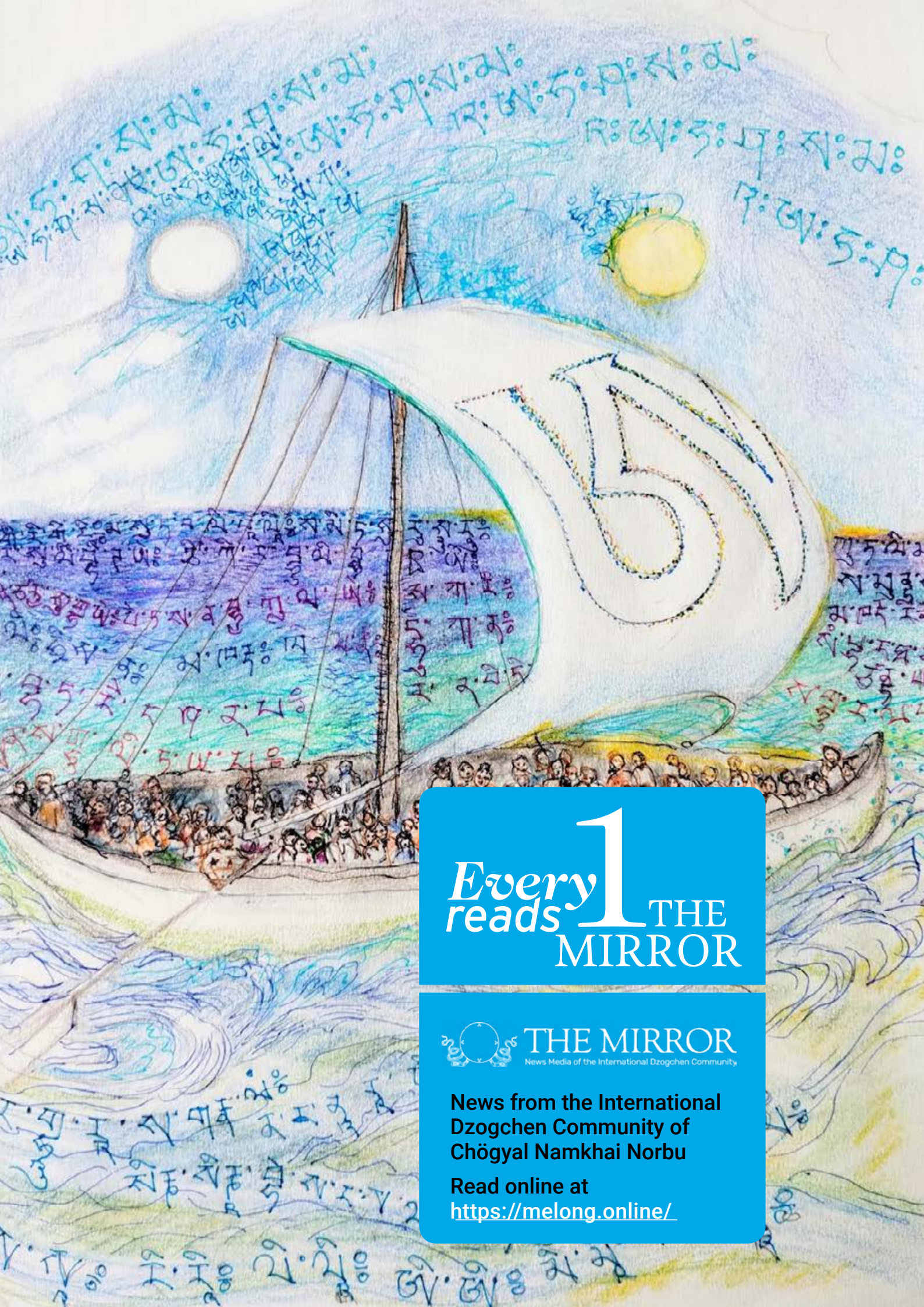
That particular book project has never yet come to fruition, but, when 'The Crystal And The Way Of Light' was finally published in 1986, the fact that it included many of the stories that Rinpoche told at the villa of 'Yogis, Yaks, and Yetis' and his life in Tibet helped to make it a great success, and it has now been translated into over 30 languages.



Detail of Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche's painting showing Tibetan nomads traveling on horseback, accompanying their yaks, with their dog following behind them. (Collection: John Shane)

Wishing you - wherever you may be - many Tashi Deleks and good luck on your journey...!!

[Photos of Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche's painting by Paolo Fassoli. All photos copyright John Shane.]



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