

7th Lojong Practice Retreat at Merigar East

Date : January 23, 2019

4-9 January, 2019



It's warm, even if it is January, the 4th. No sign of snow, as we were hoping for this 7th Lojong retreat so we can more easily have dreams of melting it. Most participants have arrived. Many have come from Bulgaria. Sofia and Varna. We feel lucky the Varnéans live so close to the Gar – they can jump in the car and be here in 1-2 hours! Closer than Bucharest. We feel grateful for those driving from Sofia – around 7 hours. Adrian came all the way from Moldova with a night bus. Others from Budapest, Hungary. Two devoted globetrotters magically manifested from France, after asking if there is anything happening in the [Gar](#) between 4-9 January, just like that. Zoli, the instructor for this course, has just arrived this morning, after a long drive. He has his coffee and we start. I am a bit lazier than usual – last night we ate together, meaning we shared the delicious homecooked dish brought by Mihai and Ioan, tasted the fig alcohol manifested by Stoyan and

played the Duduk gifted by Dancho. The multifun house is warm, cozy and feels like a family beehive now that it is full of practitioners.

Every day we have morning Yantra Yoga, then we train for the kumbhaka and the 7th Lojong and finish the evening with Chöd and Vajra Dance. Or we finish the evening with a comedy projected on the Multifun improvized cinema screen, people sitting on benches and tables, sipping wine, surrounded by the warm heaters. Or, like that night, we finish the day with a spontaneous party – our bodies are happy to move after all the sitting and sleeping and we can still experience joy, even if we haven't quite mastered the minor kumbhaka. Zoli's red bluetooth speaker is giving us the vibes.

We enjoy very much the combination of practices with explanations and we do our best, even if for some us it means having to do less, to stop forcing ourselves and to be more relaxed and present from head to toes. Even while in the middle of such important practices.

We are now past the middle of the retreat. It has snowed and the Gar is a huge white thigle. Some of us grow more attached to spending time in the house and some of them go for a swim in the Black Sea or test their inner heat by wearing only a T-shirt on the way to the Gonpa. We are eating well – every lunch is cooked lovingly by volunteer practitioners and we find it challenging to respect the limitations of our bellies – especially when it comes to pumpkin cake. Dancho celebrates his name day discretely by frying fish and sausages for all of us, which get watered down with the wine brought by Adrian from Moldova and by the cheerful ladies from Varna.

It is the last day. The participants disappear from the Gar like bees going out for pollen. Magda and I have lunch with the only lingering participant. He is not in a hurry, as he is about to drive for almost 10 hours. We try to catch up and exchange a few last impressions before it happens. And now it happens. The car goes through the open gate. The dogs are also sad, they don't even bark or try to chew the spinning tyres. The feeling of emptiness is very concrete, at least for a few days before our minds get filled up with other things.

Thanks to everybody for making this possible.

Alexandru Anton