

Khaita Workshop - Fifty Dances at Namgyalgar

Date : February 5, 2016



by Rosemary Friend and Joanna Tyshing

At the end of January, friends from as far as Melbourne and Cairns covered a combined distance of 3000 kilometres to join us for six days of a Khaita workshop with Tsering and Topgyal at Namgyalgar. There was a naïve wish amongst some of us to cover the 50 dances set for the Khaita supervision in Dzamling Gar coming soon in March. At the same time, however, the number of dances was completely irrelevant, as we knew we were destined for an unforgettable, privileged and intimate experience of fun, harmony, lightness and playfulness with each other.

In fact our time together included all these elements and more. While it was playful it was also, at times, a frustrating and challenging time. A challenge to our unruly limbs, challenge to our tongues to get some semblance of the dance titles pronounced, challenging to see our sense of timing and spatial awareness imperfect to say the least. By the end of the afternoon sessions we were in kind of a daze where all the steps and dances merged into one in our heads.

We were grateful for Topgyal's translation of verses that helped us appreciate the meanings of the songs and assisted us in memorizing the extensive mudras in the dances. Tsering's dedication to our precise learning combined with her deeply confident and graceful movements were a continuing delight for us all.

The blokes (Australian slang for male of the species) were particularly grateful for the presence of Topgyal for demonstrating the more athletic, male versions of the dances. In fact, one afternoon was virtually an all male review with Rod, Adam, Sam, Julian, James and Damien leaping about like nomads on the Tibetan plateau.



(Missing participants from the photos: Oni Mckinstry, Jonathan Schaeffer and James Bailey)