

Martin's Story - How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

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My name is Martin Fernandez Cufre. I've now orbited around the Sun 39 times in this strange blue cosmic carriage we all ride on. I was born on one of its southern dry slopes, in the city we call Buenos Aires, in the country we call Argentina. In that city I was born and grew up, went to school, then started studying Philosophy in college, but half way through I switched university and career to Psychology. The abstraction of Philosophy is rich and interesting, but at that point in my life, my young mind which already had the tendency to intellectualization, had too much. I needed to work with something closer to the concreteness of human life and its experiences of joy and suffering, without neglecting the processes of learning, evolving and healing, or the opening to the great mystery of life which I sensed intuitively as the key of our experience.

I studied Psychology, and particularly I went into the therapeutic schools of Jungian Analytic Psychology and then Gestalt. My mind has this basic poetic insight and inclination, so although Psychology is fascinating in a sense, as the study of mind, I found it a bit too locked into the confines of ordinary mind, so I had to explore other inspirations.

At the same time, I was following other interests. I felt strongly drawn to art, and I started studying music mainly through two instruments, guitar and piano. I also started learning and practising painting, and exploring poetry in a very free but personal way, meaning that I wasn't doing poetry readings or publishing. It was mostly an individual and quite introverted process. I also felt more and more interested since adolescence in the transmissions of essential knowledge, which in the West have been called "esoteric". I did all my primary and high school in a catholic school, St. Augustine, in Buenos Aires, but paradoxically, maybe drawing from the inspiration of Augustine's rebellious drive, I wasn't satisfied with the religious instruction. I could sense that there was some truth at a deep level, but clearly that was not what I was being taught. It was some sort of "dumbed down" version of something fundamental which I actually felt burning in my blood and mind. It was quite frustrating, to be honest. I had this feeling of being somehow tricked, "sold a post box" as we say in Argentina. Also through some of my readings of that time, mainly Hermann Hesse and Nietzsche, I had glimpses of references of transmissions of a type of knowledge that was

“primordial” so to speak. Not the knowledge of information or even processing, but rather a sort of primordial quality of everything. Which actually seemed rather obvious to me, but of course, not quite manifest.



Translating Jim Valby Baja Mexico 2015

My main initial connections in that sense were three: through Zen Buddhism, the “shamanic link” of Carlos Castaneda, and through the Western Esoteric Tradition. The latter refers to lineages of essential knowledge that were living in Europe mainly coming from Egyptian, Babylonian, Judeo-Christian and Neoplatonic sources (and some claim even much further in time before that, through the mythic continents of Atlantis and Mu), which around the time of the Renaissance grew strongly but still had to remain “unofficial” due to political and religious pressure. I studied in some schools at a distance, mainly Servants of the Light and also Dragon Rouge, which connects these Western sources with some Runic knowledge from the North of Europe. But my main influence in that aspect was the Order of the Golden Dawn. It was an esoteric school established in England in the 19th century, integrating transmissions and knowledge from different sources: Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Kabbalah, Tarot, Astrology, Alchemy, Gnosticism in an integrated framework. I studied there for 12 years and it was a very powerful influence. It has an initiatory system based on the structure of the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah and it is grounded on all of the sources mentioned before. It is beautiful, powerful, and has real initiatory power, working with symbols energized through visualizations, invocations and uses deity forms mainly from Egyptian sources. Also experiences of lucid dreaming and integrating everything in a symbolic-magical system based on

the Tree of Life but integrating also Tarot, Astrology and Alchemy. It was a very fascinating time of exploration and learning, but anyway, at some point, something started to feel “stuck” or suspended. Time was passing and something seemed to be frozen.

As for Castaneda, I was quite thrilled and shaken by his books. I felt as if they were expressing some sleeping knowledge, but of course a good teacher is necessary. I had my first Teacher, who was strongly influenced by Castaneda but his lineage was South American. Also for a while I participated in a group of Tensegrity, which are physico-energetic movements and practices supposedly coming from the lineage of Castaneda.

In relation to Buddhism, my first connection was through Sutra sources and again, although I sensed a treasure trove, I felt that something important was missing. I couldn't tune in to that frequency completely. It was through Alan Watts in his book about Zen and Ch'an Buddhism that the spark really grew and eventually I found a local sangha around one of the students of Taisen Deshimaru and practiced there for a couple of years. It was a great experience and inspiration also, drawing closer and closer to the Source I felt but which seemed to evade me. Zen is essential in the sense of being very “clean” and not loaded with symbolic complexities. Probably, that is what my mind needed at the time.



Voluntary for relics Buenos Aires 2nd tour 2010

But at a certain moment, the feeling of being suspended or “between worlds” was growing.

Everything seemed stuck, stopped, in some kind of suspended animation. I couldn't find great motivation anymore in Psychology or any of the things I was doing. At a certain point of that process, something happened which I feel as the initial spark that drew me to the Ati transmission. There is a set of Buddhist relics that had been on tour for several years through different parts of the world. I didn't have a very strong attraction to Tibetan Buddhism at that moment; I perceived it as too religious, with too many saints and gods. Zen Buddhism in that sense was more aligned with my perception: clean and simple, with no "unnecessary stuff". Then the Relic Tour came to Buenos Aires. I went there with no particular expectations, as far as I could consciously tell, just to see what was there. To make it short, I came out with tears pouring down my cheeks. I had never experienced anything similar. All the relics seemed to be shining from within. One of the guardians of the relics seemed to me that day to be a holy person; she also seemed to have some sort of inherent light coming from her eyes. I don't know what happened then, but something happened.

After that, things seemed to take place by themselves through some inherent link, as if a chain of sequential events had been triggered by that initial contact. I met a Tibetan khenpo that was in Buenos Aires coming originally from Tashi Jong and belonging to the Drukpa Kagyu lineage. I always remember him with great love. He was a great inspiration. After him, I met the great translator and teacher living in Argentina, his name is Gerardo Abboud. He is actually quite well known in the Dharma world. He is the main translator into Spanish of the Dalai Lama and other Kagyu or Nyingma teachers such as Tsoknyi Rinpoche. He was just the catalyst I needed at that time. An extremely clear instructor, his mind and words are razor-sharp, at the same time remaining humble and faithful to the lineage. It was a balance of qualities which I didn't really expect to find, and took me over completely. I started to go to his every teaching and practice and also to the retreats of the teachers he invited. His center in Buenos Aires, called Dongyuling, is directly linked to a great group of lamas from Tashi Jong and I had the fortune to receive teachings from some of them.

It was not long after meeting Gerardo that I wanted to go deeper in this path, with greater commitment, and people told me that "taking refuge" was the next step. Also, apparently I couldn't receive the transmission for Vajrayana practices without taking refuge, so that is what I did, and since Gerardo was the key figure in this process, I asked him and he agreed.

There I was on a cold autumn morning, ringing the bell of his door. He received me and we did this very simple and short ceremony, together with Gerardo's lovely wife, Juani, who was also a devoted student and practitioner and a very valuable link for many practitioners (sadly, she passed away last year while Gerardo was translating a retreat led by Tsoknyi Rinpoche in Tashigar Sur). Actually, when I was reading the lines of the commitments of the refuge in Tibetan, Gerardo advised me something which I also followed later on and continues to this day. He suggested that since I had a good pronunciation and I seemed to understand Tibetan easily, I should study the language.



Tashigar Sur 2012 Dorje Drollo

After the small ceremony, while we were talking in a relaxed way, Juani mentioned something that intrigued me. She asked me if I had met this Tibetan teacher called Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who was teaching Dzogchen very directly, and that he had a center in the province of Cordoba, in Argentina! She told me that given my interests, I would probably find his teaching useful. But she warned me that the sangha was ... “peculiar”. Of course, this just made me more curious and interested. I did a little research online and just around that time, Rinpoche had finished the Mandarava Drubchen in [Tashigar Sur](#) but since his computer had been stolen in Venezuela, he didn't want to go back there and decided to extend his stay in Tashigar Sur and added another retreat, unexpectedly, based on the Vajrapani peaceful and wrathful practice called Lhalung Sangdag. This was May of the year 2010. A friend from the sangha of Gerardo at that time started insisting that we should both go to the retreat with Rinpoche. This was curious, because he was a hardened Vipassana practitioner, fanatic of the Hinayana approach, and didn't trust very much anything beyond Mahayana, but in any case he was also a devoted student of Gerardo.

Around that time, I don't remember exactly when, I had a very lucid and intense dream. It was very long, but I will summarize it. I was in a strange country looking for something. Then inside one house, someone told me very clearly: “You are about to meet your real father”. I felt a shock of electricity. Several things happened then, but eventually, flying, I arrived at a strange large building made of wood, looking like a pagoda. On top of it, a large golden symbol was shining and next to it was a great figure which I identified as a teacher. Years later, when I arrived at the Vajra Hall in

Tsegyalgar East, United States, I felt a shiver come down my body when I saw the roof of the hall from below and noticed that it was the same pattern of woodwork as my dream. Also, on top of the Vajra Hall, the huge golden Longsal symbol shines. Since then I had all sorts of strange dreams involving Rinpoche, including a series of very curious but detailed dreams about China, which are still a mystery to me.

And so it was that finally, early in May of 2010, other three practitioners and me loaded my car more than it had ever been loaded and departed from Buenos Aires to Tashigar Sur on a mythic trip. The trip was an adventure in itself, but finally when we arrived, the connection was clear from the beginning. And when finally I met Rinpoche in person, any remnant of doubt vanished. Every word he uttered was almost as a reflection of a voice that had been dormant in me and just waiting the circumstance for its emergence. I had had a lot of practical and theoretical experience in esoteric things, so the teachings regarding energy, colors, sounds and the elements were quite clear. It was as if they were finding their right location in a living transmission. I have had strong connections with some other teachers, but always Rinpoche, his transmission and the living vibration of A are the gateway of the primordial magic of all mandalas.



Learning Vajra Dance Tepoztlan Mexico 2014

I have been more and more connected with body-related trainings, for example martial arts and dance, and interestingly, a great breakthrough came when finally I learned the Vajra Dances starting in 2014. Then the daily experience of the mandala really took another dimension. I had already departed my home country in 2013 by invitation of Keith Dowman to Mexico to render into

Spanish his English translation of Longchenpa's Treasury of the Dharmadhatu (now published in Spanish as "Espaciosidad") and this was the start of a global journey which still continues. After 2014 the journey really became global and I ended up visiting and living in several countries, including of course Mexico, but also Costa Rica, United States, Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Turkey, Russia, Thailand, in most places finding great connections with the Community and dear Vajra Brothers and Sisters.

Now I work in translation, in different places of the world, as long as I have an Internet connection. I collaborate with translations, study and practice Tibetan language and calligraphy (thanks to the great guidance of Fabian Sanders, Margherita Pansa and Giorgio Dallorto). The path has become a variegated and sometimes chaotic dream, but always, always, Rinpoche and the transmission are the center of the mandala. I feel infinitely thankful to Him and to all Vajra Brothers and Sisters and allies, whether aware or unaware, that have participated in this strange path and continue to do so.