

Study Group for Developing the Khalongdorjeikar of the Song of the Vajra

Date : March 26, 2018

The Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra

Led by Prima Mai at Dzamling Gar 12-18 March 2018

by Carisa O'Kelly

For more details about this Dance and its origins please see [this article](#) in The Mirror.



Photo by Alexander Popov

Brief Introduction & Background

In a sense, it is early days, still, for us with the Khalongdorjeikar of the Song of the Vajra. We are not at the point of having courses in this Dance. As Prima Mai has reiterated many, many times, these meetings are study groups where we learn and study together. There is no one authorized to teach this Dance. In fact, Rinpoche has not yet seen what we are doing with it* (see Update below). So, it is important for us to remember we are in a sort of development and discovery stage. Accordingly, what we are doing with the text, on the Khalong, could change, considerably, greatly or only a little. This we do not know yet.

What we do have is permission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the source, for us, of this Teaching; permission to study together, and to work on our understanding of this practice. As mentioned above, Rinpoche has not yet* (see Update below) had the opportunity to review and comment on what we are doing with it, and so we move along with all due haste and care, applying our collective understanding and practice to hopefully arrive at some semblance of what was shown to Rinpoche in his dreams of clarity concerning this Dance. These dreams started around 1991 while Rinpoche was on a personal retreat of Mandarava at Merigar West.

From the earlier Mirror interview:

Prima Mai speaking: *“In 1997 or 98, Rinpoche gave a photocopy of the text of the root tantra of this Dance of Space to Adriano Clemente and me. It was written in his handwriting, which Adriano is able to decipher, so for many years it was in our hands but there was no translation. Then in 2013 Adriano and I met in Tashigar North and he decided that he would directly translate the text. So I helped with the diagrams and the digital formatting to help him understand the text, and we went ahead like this. So by 2013, Adriano had more or less translated the root text.”*

So far these study groups have ranged from a few days to over a week and the locations have been Dzamling Gar, Merigar West and Tsegyalgar East. All of these have been led by Prima Mai, one of the two main international teachers of the Vajra Dance.

In order for it to be possible for us to engage in this study, Prima has spent who-knows-how-many hours, based on the root text, preparing diagrams, concise working notes and an elegant and moving Forward; all presented for us in the Shang Shung Publications booklet: [Working Notes and Essential Diagrams for the study of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra](#), available from Shang Shung bookshop**.

This was the 5th meeting of the Study Group. Previous meetings were held at Dzamling Gar, Merigar West and Tsegyalgar East. For some this was their first, others had attended one or more. We began on Monday, March 12th 2018, the second of two days numbered the 25th of the first month of the Tibetan year. (In the Tibetan way of calculating the lunar calendar, sometimes a day (the number of a day) is omitted, and sometimes a day (number) is repeated). As most of The Mirror readers will be aware, the first Dakini Day of the Lunar year is the Anniversary of Ayu Khandro, and a Worldwide Vajra Dance Day. While the “official” Ayu Khandro Day was observed

this year on the Sunday the 11th, we can perhaps consider that we began our study group on the second Ayu Khandro Day of the year! In any case, the minor combination, double water, indicated: “Combination of nectar: it is favorable for growth and life, and so forth. It is excellent for doing long-life practice and developing capacity (wang).”

Preparing the Space

In the weeks prior to the study group a search was on. Finding tyvek (the material being currently used to make the *Khalong* Mandala) on the Island of Tenerife is not an easy proposition. Inquiries were made, and over what seemed like a considerable amount of time and resulted in a what was to become a long chain of phone calls; each one ending in “No, lo siento, pero ¿por que no preguntas en...?”; a roll of Tyvek Housewrap (2.8m x 50m 9kg Material Number:D14496924) was located and shipped from Gran Canaria. Auspiciously, arriving faster than projected. This afforded the space and time; (in the breaks between the Mandarava Tsa-lung course with Fabio Andrico in the gönpa between sessions, and thanks to everyone cooperating with clearing the gönpa floor between sessions); for the preparation of the material for drawing the *Khalong*. Then on Sunday, Ayu Khandro Day, Prima painted the outline of the *Khalong* with blue paint, while some practitioners sang the Song of the Vajra.



Measuring and cutting the tyvek

In 2014, a *Khalong* Mandala, which was later discovered to be too small, was made on the back of a Vajra Dance Earth Mandala. With so many people eager to participate, study and learn (the numbers stayed well above 60 the entire time) this small *Khalong* Mandala proved very helpful, especially for studying the pathway. By the end of the second day, the idea was to make another of these (on the back of an Earth Mandala (here at Dzamling Gar we have at least five Vajra Dance mandalas. In fact, generally the evening Vajra Dance tun takes place on five (very often) full mandalas.) But wait! In the meantime a better suggestion came up, that we could perhaps make another larger *Khalong*, like the one we had just made. The secretary took on the (now familiar) task of procuring another roll of tyvek. And Lo! One was located quickly and was even located on the north of the island. It soon arrived and by the 16th, we had another *Khalong* Mandala available. This time the lines were painted in gold.

Day by Day

On the morning of the first day more than eighty practitioners showed up to hear Prima Mai give an introduction to the Vajra Dance in general, and the *Khalongdorjeikar* of the Song of the Vajra in particular, explaining many and various details.

The Vajra Dance, part of the Upadesha teaching, is connected to the Longsal Cycle of Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Prima Mai emphasized that for participating in the study group it is very important: to know well and be confident in both the Song of the Vajra and the Dance of the Vajra.

She spoke briefly about the 3 considerations, which we are familiar with from the *Khalongdorjeikar* of the 12As and No Doubt, the second and Continuing, the third statement of Garab Dorje. The Vajra Dance is a practice of continuing in the State of Contemplation.

She talked about how Rinpoche has expressed how the Vajra Dance is to develop, unmodified, unchanged for now and for future generations...and she pointed out how important it is for us, to dedicate ourselves to this end and to take the commitment to study, stay up-to-date and apply ourselves to help ensure that this is how it is and how it continues.

In 1991, in the Gönpa at Merigar, Rinpoche, while talking to Prima Mai about this Dance, said one must do the *tsom* movement very, very well. And so, especially in the beginning days of our study group, we trained in this movement – which is the main movement of this Dance. We spread ourselves all around the mandala, and danced, singing together the Song of the Vajra and dancing each syllable with the *tsom* movement.

Sound

In that same conversation mentioned above Rinpoche "...also emphasized that the Vajra Dance of Space is closely connected to our inner energy, our inner sound." (Working Notes and Essential Diagrams... p.7) And so when we dance together how is the sound? For now we sing to accompany our steps and use some external sound as a support. This week we used a variety of sounds, including: a simple beat which sounded like the "tock" without the "tick", a tabla sound with a drone (not the aerial kind) in the background, a bell and chimes sound, and a multi-layered

composition prepared by Adriano Clemente.

There is a precise pathway along which one dances on the *Khalong* and that is one of the first things to study and know well. The Pawo and Pamo dance along this specified pathway, the one mirroring the other. The first days were spent outlining where each step in each line of the Song of the Vajra is located, together with some key foot points. The above-mentioned booklet proved an invaluable tool for studying and learning. Later in day 3, one could see many people on and “off” the Khalong studying the steps and Prima and some others who had studied the Dance before, studying the mudras. By the end of the third day we had gone line by line and step by step through the complete Dance and all along the pathway of the *Khalong*, a symbol of the expanse of the universe, internal and external.



Practicing mudras

On the fourth Day, Prima began to show and explain how (to the best of her understanding at this point) the mudras are. We formed an arc across the expanse of the gönpa and went step by step, mudra by mudra for the length of it and then back to the top again, as a way to train in this aspect, later applying all or some according to where we were in the progress of our personal study as we danced together on the *Khalong*. In the above mentioned interview with the Mirror, how each couple enters the *Khalong* is discussed, so we won't go into it here.

So, we went along like that, spending a joyful week together at Dzamling Gar on the *Khalong* Mandala which is a symbol of the vast expanse of the Universe. We met twice a day and most people were able to attend both sessions.



After hours t-shirt factory

On the final afternoon we recorded a group of numbered-t-shirt wearing Pamos and Pamos dancing from beginning to end.* In this way it was possible to see something of how the moments of closer meetings and passings occur (the interval between when each couple of Pamo and Pawo start to dance is a crucial factor in there not being collisions). In addition, we saw how a smooth flow can manifest when we apply the *tsom* movement in various ways – sometimes wider, sometimes more shallow, sometimes with the body turning more to one side or the other. What a delight!

As we dance on the *Khalong* Mandala we are very much (and can see clearly how we are)

interconnected with one another; each step and movement revealing vividly our relationship to all others on the *Khalong*. When we move without doubt, there is an ineffable flow and harmony.

Not unlike the Universe, this week long study group was vast and profound, so it is not possible to encompass even a fraction of what transpired in these few days in a few words. Hopefully this has provided a taste of what it was like.

Next

For those Vajra Dancers who are interested to join, as there surely will be, in the next study group, it is important to note that the next Study Group will NOT start from the very beginning, that is, learning the pathway. This one can do with the aid of the SSP booklet mentioned already. And if one is close to Merigar West, Dzamling Gar or Tsegyalgar East, there one can find a *Khalong* to study on and some other students who are also doing so.

Here are some tips that hopefully will serve as an aid to those who wish to start to study with the aid of the Working Notes and Essential Diagrams.....

To participate in the next study group it is necessary to have studied and learned the basic pathway taken by the Pamo or Pawo (according to which you identify as). The next study group will NOT include this.

Study Tips

Know very well the Song of the Vajra and the Dance of the Song of the Vajra.

Pay attention to the way the syllables and the steps go together in this Dance and the differences from the Song of the Vajra Dance which we do on the Earth Mandala.

Train well in the timing.

Go beyond doubt.

***Update**

Rinpoche dedicated his time and attention to watching and observing attentively the whole dance which we presented to him in this video lasting around 20 minutes. And soon thereafter we heard that, yes, very good, it corresponds. ... and that he is very content with the outcome.

** to purchase this booklet or download it one needs to have received the transmission of Ati Yoga and transmission of the *lung* of the Song of the Vajra.



Photo by Alexander Popov