

An Update on Shang Shung Publications

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SHANG SHUNG PUBLICATIONS

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Did you know that Shang Shung Publications is the oldest organization founded by our Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu within the Dzogchen Community?

In 1983, a couple of years after the foundation of Merigar, the first Dzogchen Community Gar in the world, Rinpoche asked some of his students to create a cooperative publishing organization to start printing, for the benefit of Dzogchen practitioners and everybody interested in Dzogchen teachings, his own writings, teachings, his masters' biographies, and many other related subjects, such as Tibetan medicine, Yantra Yoga, Astrology, Divination and, more recently, Vajra Dance and Khaita

My personal collaboration with SSP started a few years after its foundation, around 1986, by helping Giovanni Arca, then in charge of the publications activities and organization, to expand SSP distribution, increase the volumes, refine the graphic layout, plus everything else which could help the publishing cooperative grow. I was never alone: beside Giovanni many other practitioners got involved, and some of them still are, in the development of the Publishing House, mostly in karma yoga. From 1992 to 2013, when I took the role of SSP general manager, I focused on different professional and personal commitments, but the production of books, CDs, DVDs, games and more recently digital downloadable products never stopped. There have been different legal set ups from that time, but the core activity of making CHNN's teachings available to all DC practitioners has always carried on without interruption, passing through changes and, at times, difficult circumstances.

The main characteristic of Shang Shung Publications is that it is the only publishing house in the world authorized to translate, edit and distribute teachings from our Master. This means that we have a particular responsibility of remaining as close as possible to the meaning of Rinpoche's writings and words.

All this careful work does not come free of charge. Our translators and editors spend many hours checking the true meaning of a single sentence, refine its translation and make it understandable in many different languages. At SSP we publish books in English, Italian and in Spanish. This is for

the national and international world, but in many different places in Europe and Asia, Rinpoche's books get translated into the local language and we lead a very precise process to make sure that these translations reflect the original intention of the Master and his teachings. There are almost 20 people working in our central organization plus many more around the world making our books available to the local Gars and Lings.

I often say, when I talk about the particular characteristics of SSP, that our Publishing house can be equated to a University Press Publishing House, at the level of Cambridge University Press, Oxford, Harvard, etc. Like them we publish books for a small readership, with the same careful high quality, but with two main differences: firstly we do not have a University backing us up by securing a substantial salary to our translators and editors; secondly we price our books at a level that does not cover the work behind their making. Our external fiscal consultant has recently calculated that the industrial value of our books amounts to at least 50% of our selling price. Consider that the industry standard is less than a third of that. In order to reach a wide distribution, which requires heavy discount along the chain, the cost of a book should be around 16% of its selling price. Many books published by University Presses, when very specialized, can be sold for as much as € 100 each, to cover costing. We do not do that because we mainly provide a service to Dzogchen Community practitioners and we want everybody to be able to buy the publications they need for their practice.

We maintain a catalogue of 375 books, 26 CDs, 41 DVDs, 59 e-books, 43 downloadable audio and 66 video products, dating from 1983 up to now. We are also trying to keep up a steady production to make all our books available in digital format to allow a quicker and less expensive distribution all over the world. We inaugurated our new online webshop in April 2015, serving so far over 3,000 customers, mostly DC practitioners around the world. This means that we need to upgrade and maintain our servers to keep up with these digital distribution loads.

A series of concurring events over the last 12 months have greatly reduced our income, creating a financial crisis which has heavily affected our organization.

More recently, our Community has been undergoing some major changes that have affected SSP and, as often happens in a period of transition, we are currently going through some financial challenges. We took the temporary action of reducing everybody's salaries to 50% in July, but we cannot dismiss or shrink at leisure our organization made up of expert practitioners who have specialized in translating and editing in order to offer you our best quality products. Our organization is made up of people, who can dedicate and devote their skills because they do not have to spend time hunting for jobs. Our salaries are really very low; they only provide for basic needs like lodging and food. We are driven by passion and big motivation, but still need to eat every day and have a roof over our heads.

In order to let the Shang Shung Publishing House survive and keep up its work, we need first of all your recognition and support. You are our main, and at times, only customers. Therefore, I invite

you to be active in one of the following ways:

- Visit our webshop at <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/> , browse through our catalogue offers and select the books, audio and video material that attract your attention and curiosity
- Give us your suggestions and feedback at publications@shangshungfoundation.org. Please tell us what you like about our work and production and what you would like to see improved
- If you think you can help us by collaborating in our activities, please write us at publications@shangshungfoundation.org
- Freely donate to us if you believe that our activity is worth supporting at <http://www.shangshungpublications.org/donate>. You can also make it a monthly donation by clicking on the “Imposta come donazione mensile” (“Set it as a monthly donation”) button.

Thanks a lot for your attention and generosity.

Gaetano Ruvolo and the staff of Shang Shung Publications