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Rinpoche teaching in Tashigar South Gonpa at January retreat

N.ZEITZ

Teachings Longsal Gyulü Kyi Men Ngag (Illusory Body) with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

December 26, 2003 – January 2, 2004
Tashigar South, Argentina

by Alar Kukk

In December 2003, 9 days before the arrival of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, there were just a few people in Tashigar South and many opportunities for Karma Yoga.

Tashigar Sud is situated in the mountains between two ranges - Los Gigantes and Sierras Grandes - around 1,000 meters high. Tashigar South is like a natural reserve full of all kinds of wild birds and virgin nature; beautiful rock formations glittering with mica and creeks hidden in the surrounding area leading to natural pools. The last leg of the journey, six kilometers from Tanti, the local village, is a serpent like road with no asphalt and deep erosions. This makes the trip up to Tashigar quite bumpy. El Durazno (The Peach), as this region is called, is a place where "caballeros" on horseback, a common sight, alternate with taxis taking people up and down from Tashigar to Tanti. Hiking down to Tanti is really nice especially if one knows the shortcuts, however, the climb back up requires some strenuous effort since it is all uphill.

On the day of my arrival, early on a Sunday morning, there seemed to be no one at Tashigar. Then suddenly, the acting Geköes, Daniel Lange, appeared and later some others, along with a lot of work. People from all over the world: Peru, Argentina, the United States, Estonia, etc. - some had come to meet Rinpoche for the first time, others had been following for many years; we were all working together doing our best to cooperate. This participation in Karma Yoga brought us close to Rinpoche in a very direct way, close to presence and sometimes enabled a very vivid, clear experience of self-liberation and the feeling that all was good. Kuntusangpo!

For me, it was the first Christmas without snow. December is summer in Argentina, and Christmas is a "fiesta" quite different from the quiet family celebration at home in Estonia. There were many different ways to celebrate this time. The game of Migmang (Many Eyes) with Rinpoche and Vajra brothers and sisters was most interesting for me.

Unlike the retreats in Kunsangar and Merigar where there are

usually from eight hundred to one thousand people from all over the world, Tashigar Sud had less than two hundred people in the beautiful Gonpa. The Gonpa's roof is the traditional Quincho style of Argentina - thatched with no pillars. The Gonpa also has a special heating system to keep everyone comfortable on the cooler and more humid days. The campground is full of tents, like at the teachings in Tibet, and vanish at the end of the retreat leaving the tunnels for rain protection. This time there was little rain. There had been a very long period of drought in the region, so any rain was a welcome relief. The weather here in the mountains changes quickly and dramatically. There can be two or three days of extreme heat, then some chilly days (warm at night, cold at night), then heat again and afterward a day of rain like cats and dogs, with strong thunder, lightening and winds. All the elements are powerful in Tashigar Sud, a good place for Zernga practice.

In the Southern Hemisphere it is very easy to sunburn and the skin quickly turns red. For a fair skinned Estonian, it meant that one of the first purchases in Carlos Paz after

arrival was a hat. It seems the ozone layer is much thinner in Argentina than in most places of the world, even Australia.

There was a wonderful New Year's Party with Rinpoche. It was full of music - Argentinian, Venezuelan, Brazilian, etc., with rhythms significantly different from Europe - salsa, merenge; there were also French "chansons" sung by the acting Geköes, and classical opera performed by one of the best known sopranos from Buenos Aires. As always, there was a lot of Latin dancing and, of course, the typical Argentinian "parrilla" or barbecue.

The teachings covered the entire Buddhist path in the first two days in a very clear and deep way. Rinpoche then continued with the teachings about the nature of mind. Rinpoche gave explanations of the illusory appearance of all phenomena, the teachings of *Longsal Gyulü Kyi Men Ngag* (Illusory Body), and said with a smile, "This teaching is not really so important, but it could be very important to you. I had a dream related to this teaching here in Tashigar, so I thought to teach it here."

The retreat was wonderful!

One day while going to have lunch in Colonia, a Catholic retreat center where some Community people were staying a few hundreds meters from Tashigar, a friend from Costa Rica asked, "Since you have been to the teachings of Rinpoche before, why did you come again this time?" It was a good question, and looking for the answer, among others, one answer was that this experience is in many ways similar to the sense of the story of Milarepa. When Milarepa was offered a bottle of wine he said that one bottle of wine had developed his practice as much as the previous six months of retreat... through experience we can discover.

All kinds of manifestations happen when we are together: good and bad, tensions and concepts, etc. By working and communicating with our Vajra brothers and sisters many things manifest, and according to the different capacities, these manifestations afford many excellent opportunities to work on ourselves and understand better our condition.

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SPECIAL PRACTICE
CALENDAR
WOOD MONKEY
2004
PAGES 12 & 13



Good morning, good afternoon, good evening and happy holidays to everybody. Here we are at the retreat in Namgyalgar, Australia. Since we have this good occasion to communicate to all practitioners and non-practitioners who are interested in the Teachings, I will speak in a more open way. I want to communicate to you what Buddhadharmā means.

Many people who are interested in Buddhadharmā are learning different ways. Sutra is one aspect. For example, in Sutra, we speak of the three yanas and Tripitaka. We also say the three yanas when we go a little more into the aspect of Tantra. In this case we consider Vajrayana, which is included in the three yanas. I don't want to explain these things now because everyone knows this well.

I do want to explain the way of seeing in the Dzogchen Teaching; how we consider Buddhadharmā, how we understand and what kind of possibilities we have to have that knowledge. There is a specific way of explaining Dzogchen Teaching related to Anuyoga. I am going to explain a little more in relation to the Tantric system and self-liberation path called Atiyoga. If you are interested in Buddhadharmā then you will have an idea of how to follow and understand. Otherwise, if people are interested in Buddhadharmā and follow Sutra, Tantra or Dzogchen teachings, they find the teachings different and create much confusion. In the end, instead of having total realization, they realize great confusion. That is a pity and is not good. Therefore we need to know how to present the characteristic of the teaching.

There are many different teachings because there are many different kinds of beings with different capacities. The enlightened being Buddha, with his quality of omniscience, knew the situation of beings and entered into the condition of each individual. Buddha is an enlightened being and only Buddha has pure vision. For Buddha impure vision does not exist. That is called Tagpa Rabjam in Tibetan. That is the real condition of Buddha.

Pure vision does not mean that Buddha does not see the suffering of sentient beings in samsara. If Buddha does not see suffering it means that he lacks the quality of omniscience. Buddha does not see how we generally see. We see everything with our karmic potentiality and are dependent on karma. Buddha is beyond that. Buddha teaches a kind of teaching according to the condition of different people and different sentient beings. There are thousands of teachings. For example with one kind of teaching like Kriya Tantra; Kriya Tantra means a series of Tantras, not only one. There are many different kinds of Kriya Tantras and teachings. When we go into the essence of all these teachings there are essentially only three kinds of teachings; Buddha taught for human beings and all human beings have three existences of body, speech, and mind. We know how the condition of body is. The body is something concrete on the material level that we can see and touch.



Rinpoche at Margarita after teaching, Autumn 2003

NZEITZ

THE BUDDHADHARMA TWO NOBLE TRUTHS - PART I (WEB CAST TEACHING) NAMGYALGAR, APRIL 20, 2003

Everybody can easily understand the material level.

If we consider our voice, the voice indicates the energy level, which is more difficult to recognize than the physical body. For example, if someone is coming I say, "Oh, Mr. George is coming." I say that because I can see Mr. George; he has body, form, color, and dress. I can recognize him. And when I say, "Mr. George is coming", you look and recognize him because we are all human beings. If Mr. George is dead and his energy comes and I say, "Mr. George is here", it is possible I can see Mr. George's energy and you cannot. I can see Mr. George's energy because I have a more developed clarity. That's an example. I am not saying I am so developed, but I am giving an example. You look but you cannot find Mr. George and you say, "Where is Mr. George? I can't see him." So the energy level is more difficult and complicated.

Still more complicated is the mind level. For example, we can feel the energy level through vibration. We cannot feel the mental level through vibration. This is our real condition; there is not only one of these three aspects existing for a being. We are composed of body, speech and mind altogether as long as we live. When we are dead our body goes to a cemetery, but until then we have all three aspects of body speech and mind. In general in our lifetime, if we have body, speech and mind related with the teachings, with methods and more capacity, the manifestation of mind is much more than body and energy. The more capacity we have the more energy manifests. It is not always the same level.

For that reason a teacher like Buddha gives teachings in different ways. For people who have no knowledge, the teachings are difficult to understand, difficult to really go into the essence. The teaching is more related to the level of the mind and the teacher is more related to the physical level because the physical level is easier to understand.

Here is a very easy example. For example, there is a group of people who have very great devotion to the teaching but no capacity to follow a deep teaching like

Dzogchen or Mahamudra. These kinds of teachings should go directly to our mind, mind to nature of mind, and if these people have no capacity that also means they are not interested. If they are not really interested in the teaching then the teacher can't really do anything but teach with infinite compassion and help all sentient beings.

In this case what we can we do? We can perform some kinds of teachings and methods more related to the physical level. For example you say, "Oh, you go around the chörten!" You tell them to go around the stupa, like in Nepal. You have seen a very big stupa in Nepal and all the Tibetans going around it. It seems they are very busy. Why are they going around the stupa? They consider they are following the teaching and trying to attain realization.

You think, how can they have realization only by going around a chörten? We understand very well that that is not really the path, but something related with the path. All these people believe this is Dharma practice. They think, "I am applying Dharma." They have a very good intention. In Mahayana Sutra the most important thing is intention. That means they have a good intention, but they don't really know how to produce realization. This does not only refer to people going around the stupa. Maybe you can ask some studied people or scholars, but it is not so easy to understand or explain because it is something mainly related with our intention. With our intention we are doing something which must have a source, an origin. Why then are we going around a stupa instead of somewhere else?

For example, when we are going to the beach in the summertime nobody considers that we go there to apply the Dharma and that going to the beach has benefit. Why is going around a stupa considered Dharma practice? What is the difference? The movement of the legs is the same, but the intention is a little different. Why was this method originally introduced? There is always a reason. From the beginning if some teachers introduced circling a stupa, then at least this action can produce a kind of good effect. When

you accumulate good actions your obstacles diminish. So this is not so difficult to understand.

When we go around a chörten we think, "How did this begin?" Buddha is not saying it is necessary to go around a stupa. This kind of Sutra does not exist. When Buddha and all his students were receiving the Dharma, the real sense of teaching, they were very satisfied and happy. When the teaching finished and they thanked Buddha they said, "We received a very precious teaching. Thank you very much, we are very happy." What did they do? They did prostrations. Prostrations are a gesture of respect. Prostrations were also used in the feudal system. Today, like in Bhutan, ordinary people who go to see the king do prostrations. They are not doing prostrations thinking; "Our king is Bodhisattva." They are thinking, "If I don't prostrate to our king he will think I am not paying respect." In that way, one doesn't accumulate very much merit. When we think, "Buddha gave me a teaching, a precious teaching. I am very happy, thank you very much.", we pay respect and accumulate merit.

That is the reason we started to do prostrations. Later teachers added more explanations, more complications, and the students gave more attention to prostrations and accumulated more and more merit. They not only do prostrations, but they go around Buddha seven times and then go away. That is another way of paying respect to the Buddha. Where did that system come from? In ancient India when you put your right side towards someone, it meant you were paying respect. If you attend a teaching called Lama Ngachupa or "Fifty Lamas" – a teaching to learn Samayas and how to pay respect – one of the arguments is that you must not walk on the right side of your teacher! To walk on the right side is contrary to paying respect and now you can understand why. In the same way in a later system, we put the stupa on the right side and walked around it and accumulated merit.

In Tibet we say that in the Bönpo tradition everything is done in a contrary way. If the Buddhists go this way, the Bönpos go the other way. That is true, but there is also a reason. Buddhist tradition comes from ancient India where putting the right side toward the object of honor originated and developed. The Bönpo tradition comes from West Tibet, from Shang Shung. The ancient Shang Shung system and Chinese system are very similar; the left side is used to pay respect. Therefore the Bönpos and Buddhists go around in a contrary way from each other. It seems strange, but if you understand why, it is not.

There are many things related with the physical level that are easy to understand and apply. If someone very, very faithful to the Dharma comes to see you and you are a teacher, for example, then you know the correct way you can give a teaching to that person. You know how to make that person understand and how to apply the teachings to have realization. That person is not interested to receive a teaching from you. Maybe that person is coming to see you think-

ing, "Oh, you are good teacher, a realized being. Maybe I will receive a kind of a blessing." For that reason many ordinary people go to see important Lamas, especially in Tibet, and don't ask to receive teachings but always ask to receive a blessing. They ask to receive a protection cord and the Lamas are prepared and ready to give the cord and that person is very happy.

Many Lamas who come to the West use protection cords for Westerners. That is a new education, but not a teaching. Westerners do not have that attitude, but then they think, "Oh, the Lama gave me protection. I will put it on and then it protects me." Some people collect cords from Lama number one, two, three and four, and wear all the cords on their neck. The cords become dirty because people don't wash the cords thinking that by washing the cords they lose the blessing.

I always say to my students, "You try to understand that if you really need protection, you should do practice because you are on the path. This is real protection, not a cord. You don't need to become dependent on a cord. That is good maybe for goats, sheep, dog or cats, because they don't know how to practice." Sometimes we can also use the cord for a small child because they cannot practice and can also have some negativity. If the cord is empowered with mantras it can help a little.

Many people do not know which is the path and what to do. They go on a more physical level. In this case the Dharma also works, but that is not at all essential. For example, when we speak of the Sutra teaching, who taught the Sutra teaching? Buddha Sakyamuni. How did Buddha Sakyamuni manifest? First Buddha Sakyamuni manifested like the son of a king; he was a prince. Then later he renounced everything and went to meditate. At the end he manifested illumination. Then he taught the teaching. How did Buddha teach? He taught like an Indian person and spoke the Indian language. The students listened to the Indian language with their ears. Everything was on the material level. Buddha has a mouth, teeth, and a tongue; using these he explained and the others listened and understood. This is called the material level.

What did Buddha teach? First of all Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. What is the principle of The Noble Truths? You already know that the first Noble Truth is Noble Truth of Suffering. Why is it "noble"? It doesn't mean suffering is noble. It means the knowledge and understanding of the nature of suffering is noble. This method is very universal for all sentient beings, not only human beings, because everybody knows suffering. Animals also know suffering. All sentient beings have the experience of suffering. For example, if you see a dog and you make a gesture like you are taking a stone from the earth, that dog will immediately escape. Why? The dog feels afraid that you will throw the stone at him because he has had the experience many times already and doesn't want to have suffering

continued on next page

again. So you see, suffering is very universal for all sentient beings.

Buddha explained by starting with suffering. Buddha said, "How is suffering?" Everybody said, "Oh, suffering is terrible." Buddha said, "Do you like to suffer?" Everybody said, "No, I don't like. Even though I don't like it, I continually suffer." No one is going to discuss or argue with Buddha about suffering. Everybody agrees that suffering exists and is not good and no one likes to have it. This is the essence of the First Noble Truth.

Then Buddha explained, "If you don't like to suffer, the solution is not to fight or struggle with suffering." In general, people struggle with problems. In a poor country or a country with problems, the people say, "Oh, the solution is a revolution." Then

Everybody agrees that suffering exists and is not good and no one likes to have it. This is the essence of the First Noble Truth.

they have a revolution and kill half the city. That is the realization of revolution. In the end, there is always suffering. Nothing changes very much. Sometimes things change a little for a few years. Buddha says, "That is not a solution. Suffering is an effect. You have already accumulated or produced the cause and that is why you have this effect. If you don't want to have suffering you must discover the cause and must stop that cause by not creating it any more. This is a function of suffering." So there are very, very famous words of Buddha which say that what you did in a past life is present in your body and situation in this life because your present body and situation are a production of past actions; what you did in a past life. In the future, how it will be next time, depends on your actions and which kind of actions you are applying in this moment. If you are applying bad actions of course then you can have still more effects. If you know what Buddha said, you should work with that awareness. If you have some heavy karma it is possible to purify, change and modify it.

When there are problems people say, "Oh, what can I do? This is my karma." They are satisfied to wait for that karma to finish. That is wrong. A kind of registered list somewhere which says, "This is your karma. You must pay!" does not exist. It is not that way. The cause of karma it is something like a seed. A seed has the potentiality of producing fruit. That seed is mature and manifests when there are secondary causes. For example, when you put the seed of a flower in the earth, add water, air, and it has all positive circumstances, the seed grows. Later the seed manifests flowers and fruit. When you know some heavy karma is maturing, then you know there is the possibility to purify, modify, change and stop it. For example, if you put a seed of poison in a vase and it grows and you don't want it, what do you do? You stop giving it water and if there is no water, after some weeks it is finished. You can stop or you can change karma. Everything depends our circumstances. Karma matures with circumstances. For that reason, in the

teaching, we have many methods of purification. If there is nothing to do then why we are using purification practices? So you must understand karma that way. Buddha is saying not to struggle with suffering, but to try to discover the cause of suffering. Buddha explained in more detail about the second Noble Truth of the cause; how cause and effect are related. This is the famous karma. In Sutra there are very rich explanations and it is not so difficult to understand.

Sometimes when we speak of karma, Westerners, particularly people who are not following teachings, think, "Oh, karma is a consideration of Buddhism, Hinduism, Eastern traditions; not our tradition. We do not understand karma." Most people believe that because when we speak of karma we talk about reincarnation,

dying, rebirth, etc. That is not the principle of karma. That is relative. Of course, that is relative to how karma is explained in Buddhist logic. If you exhale what you do after that? Logically, you inhale. If you don't inhale you can't live. What do you do after inhaling? You exhale. That is the continuation that is called life. If you don't continue to inhale and exhale there is no life. So we know after inhaling there logically exists exhaling. In the same way, even when we are dying, it doesn't mean that continuation disappears. There is some continuation. In this way rebirth, etc., is explained.

Karma is also understood by Westerners. I am sure Westerners know very well what karma is. Particularly when we go to the cinema we can understand karma very well through the film. Some people are very bad, powerful people and they are doing many, many bad things and at the end they finish badly. This is karma. We know very well. You also know very well that if you take poison the consequence is that you can die. You believe that. You know that. That is called cause and effect. That is karma. It is not necessary to jump into a complicated argument, but only to know that cause and effect exist. Everybody understands that. Only in Dharma, in the Dharma teaching, and in Sanskrit, in Hinduism, cause and effect are called "karma". That is a name.

When we translate "karma", we translate it into action. If we act it produces a cause, potentiality. When there is potentiality, it has consequence. This is karma. If you want to know how Buddha explained karma in more detail in Sutra, then you can read and study many Sutra teachings and find very large explanations with many fantastic examples. Then you can understand.

So these are the Two Noble Truths. You must not only go into details and elegant words, but also go into the essence.

Part II Noble Truths 3 & 4
Next issue 68

Transcribed by Marie Krupp
Edited by Naomi Zeitz

SCHEDULE CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU 2004 - 2005

2004 TASHIGAR NORTH Margarita Island, Venezuela

April 16-20	Easter retreat
May 13 - 18	Longsal program
June 12 -20	Santi Maha Sangha Teachers' Training
July 17 -August 1	Mandarava Chüdlen retreat
September 10 -19	Longsal Program
October 18 -29	Kalachakra teaching & practice Anuyoga system primarily according to the Terma of Jangchub Dorje.
November 9 -21	Complete teachings & practices of Lhalung Sangdag, the Terma of Heka Lingpa.
December 5 -8	Birthday teaching and Practice of Long Life

TASHIGAR SOUTH, ARGENTINA December 20 Leave for Tashigar South

2005
December 26 - January 2 Tashigar retreat: Teaching and Practice of Gomadevi

AN INTERVIEW

WITH YUCHEN NAMKHAÏ

At Easter 2004, a Green Tara practice retreat was held at Merigar and led by Yuchen Namkhai and Costantino Albini. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Yuchen published before the retreat in the February 2004 issue of The Merigar Letter.

Merigar Letter: What do you think is the specific effect of the Green Tara practice?

Yuchen: This practice produces joy and harmony for those who practice it because it puts into action certain energies that are linked to the compassion that inspires a positive attitude and well-being. Besides this, it is a practice that has an effective result as many of us have experienced.

Tara is a practice that is useful in moments of difficulty and confusion because it helps to change our vision of life, making it more harmonious and positive. I think that there is really a great need for Tara practice today since the society in which we live tends to produce a negative and hypocritical view. By means of the Tara practice, we can overcome many obstacles linked to secondary circumstances. We should also remember that the visualization of Green Tara is linked to the air element and so, if we understand that, we know that when we are in contact with that element we can call the presence of Tara more easily.

Merigar Letter: What is the connection between Tara and your family?

Yuchen: My family has a strong link with this practice because before the birth of my father, my

grandparents asked some monks to do this practice in order to have a male child, which then took place. Tara practice is practiced a lot in my family and very frequently; we turned to Tara for the birth of Diego and Maya as well.

Merigar Letter: Do you feel that the events of the last years of your life – your marriage, the birth of Maya – are linked to the practice of Tara in particular?

Yuchen: Yes. For some years now since I have done this practice more frequently, I have enjoyed the fruits of it. One develops a more positive vision about life, a greater capacity to accept everything because everything is constantly in a state of transformation and positive.

Merigar Letter: How has the birth of your daughter influenced your life?

Yuchen: I think that motherhood is a fundamental experience because it is total. It teaches us to accept the good moments with those that are not so good, to feel compassion towards these tiny beings who depend on us and in exchange love us without reservation, reminding us how strong the attachment that we human beings feel is. It is an experience that really helps us to grow and maintain our presence in our lives day by day.

Merigar Letter: Last Easter you led a retreat of Green Tara at Tashigar in Argentina. Could you tell us about your experience?

Yuchen: On Rinpoche's suggestion, my mother, Luigi and I went to Tashigar, Argentina, in order to visit this wonderful Gar and to

practice with a group of about forty people from the Dzogchen Community who live in the cities nearby or who came to the Gar from Buenos Aires. It was a wonderful experience both for the discovery of such a distant and indescribably beautiful Gar and for the infinite kindness and affection that all the practitioners showed us. We shared some intense moments linked to the Green Tara practice but also moments of fun when we tried the famous 'hasado'* together.

I am very happy that I was able to have this experience because I was touched to meet such marvelous people who participated so wholeheartedly in the retreat even though they were very expert in the Green Tara practice.

Merigar Letter: Was that the first time that you have led a retreat with so many people?

Yuchen: Yes.

Merigar Letter: Will this be the beginning of a series of retreats?

Yuchen: Let's say that this doesn't depend on me but on the clarity of our Master ...

We would like to thank Yuchen for her patience in answering our questions and close with a wish that this retreat will be only a beginning.

*Hasado is a popular meat barbecue in Argentina

Lucia Antonelli for The Merigar Letter

TASHIGAR SOUTH'S
14TH ANNIVERSARY
FEB 7, 2004

FINDING NEW WAYS TO
COLLABORATE

by Laura Yoffe

On a cool Saturday evening on the 7th of February, we celebrated Tashigar's 14th Anniversary in the presence of Rinpoche, the Mayor of Tanti (the nearest city to our Gar), the Secretary of the Minister of Justice of the Province of Cordoba, the Chief Policeman of the Punilla Valley (where Tashigar is located) many policemen of Carlos Paz and Tanti, some neighbors of Tashigar, Dzogchen practitioners from Córdoba, Buenos Aires, Rosario, the owners of the houses of Tashigar Mandala's land and some practitioners from outside the country who were staying at our Gar.

If we would not have had two unfortunate situations, one when Ingrid Lücke (the owner of a house built at the western part of Tashigar Mandala, see page 19) was robbed and the robbery of a house near our land, we might not have had so many policemen as our guests at Tashigar's party.

The area of El Durazno, a beautiful mountain area where Tashigar is located, used to be a very calm and safe place very suitable for doing practice at any time of the day. Just a short time ago, Tanti (the nearest city to our Gar), began to have the same type of problems of robbery and theft that happen nowadays in so many places of Argentina and other Latin American countries.

When Ingrid was robbed in her home, thanks to all our protectors and Buddhas, nothing bad happened to her. According to our Master's teaching of working with the circumstances, subsequently we did more practice and karma yoga together with him, cutting tress and branches, fixing Tashigar's gardens and looking for ways of collaborating between us that would make us feel more safe and protected in our Gar.

After another robbery - of a more serious nature since one of the thieves was killed by the owner of the house - took place in a beautiful house near Tashigar, four of us - Ingrid Lücke, Alicia Caballero, Mariquita Garcia Robira and I - went early one morning to the City Hall of Carlos Paz to attend a very important meeting between the Chief Police of the Punilla Valley, the Minister of Security of Cordoba and around sixty policemen of the area. The local press was there too, so while the security meeting between authorities was going on inside the hall, outside we answered questions of the local press and TV journalists expressing our ideas and feelings about the need of having some protection and security in the area of El Durazno. In the end, Alicia Caballero approached the Minister of Security and invited him and other chief policemen to a meeting that same evening in a house near our Gar where we would discuss the neighbors's problems and needs.

To be truly honest, I felt

rather strange around so many policemen in the City Hall of Carlos Paz. Sometimes I still discovered myself having some sort of "paranoia" when being near policemen, for sure, due to the fact of having lived in Argentina during a dictatorship (1976-1983) when so many people that we loved were killed, tortured and disappeared. Time has passed, but still some of the old feelings arose together with this new circumstance which seemed to be presenting us a challenge. Would we be able to change our old and fixed points of view about the police as being all personally involved in acts of corruption, torture and murder? Would we be able to see them also as normal human beings who suffer as they live in samsara like all of us? This doubt I had was shared by many Vajra Brothers and Sisters of Tashigar who during the dictatorship had similar experiences with the police that acted together with the military forces in repressive actions against the population.

So what to do then? Would we dialogue with these policemen and ask them for help? Would we be able to trust them? Would they provide us with the sort of protection that we need and collaborate with us according to the commitment they made when they decided to undertake that task?

Many of these questions were in our minds but Rinpoche's words about the need of collaboration inside and outside our Dzogchen Community were stronger. That evening, in the meeting held at the beautiful mansion of El Durazno where the second robbery had occurred, twenty neighbors and fifteen practitioners of Tashigar gathered together for the first time with the Staff of the Police forces of the area and the Minister of Security of the Province of Cordoba to discuss very important matters about the protection of the area. As a result of such a heated encounter, a Police Post would start functioning on the next morning near our Gar and a patrol of three well-trained policemen from the CAP (Centre for Preventive Actions) of Carlos Paz with a four wheel drive vehicle would be patrolling the area day and night.

In that meeting we got in touch with many neighbors whom we had not met before and with whom our contact grew stronger after future visits and talks. I must confess that after so many years of going to Tashigar for Rinpoche's teachings, for Gakyil meetings and to my house in Tashigar Mandala, this was the first time I met many of the neighbors of our Gar. In Tashigar Mandala only Marisa Alonso (our Yantra Yoga teacher) and Ricky Sued and his family (Noe and their child Zoe) live permanently. The other owners of houses, like myself, go to them in different periods of the year according to each one's possibilities and the places where we have our permanent homes and jobs: in Cordoba (Alicia, Adriana and Pepe), in Buenos Aires (Nelida and myself), in Venezuela (Ingrid

MUNICIPAL DECREE 023/2004

GIVEN:

The visit on 6th February 2004 of the Master Namkhai Norbu, and Municipal Law no.8102/91, Art.49 - 23

AND CONSIDERING:

That the purpose of his visit to our locality is to celebrate the 14th anniversary of the Tashigar Dzogchen Community, of which he is the highest authority, the presence in Tanti of such an important personage being a cause for pride;

For these reasons and according to the attributes of his office

THE MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF TANTI

Decrees:

Art.1: Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is declared to be a GUEST OF HONOR of our locality for as long as he remains here.

Art. 2: This decree will be countersigned by the Secretary for Government and Community Development.

Art.3: A copy of this decree will be presented to the distinguished Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and it will be given law, published, and made known, made to the Municipal Archives and filed.

Tanti, 6th February 2004

Two signatures:

Engineer Alejandro Pérez Baroni, Mayor;
Dr. María Paula Gabrieloni,
Government Secretary.

and in the States (Naomi).

This new interaction with the neighbors of El Durazno and with some of the local people of Tanti (where we usually go shopping) gave us the chance to listen to stories about some of the traditional aristocratic families that built their houses in El Durazno to come only on summer and winter holidays. Others stories were about hard working people with less economic resources who live permanently in the area doing the cleaning of houses and gardens, chopping the wood and taking care of the places whose owners live far away during most of the year. Meanwhile, we also heard some gossip that referred to certain neighbors and citizens of Tanti and El Durazno who form part of the gangs of thieves who get information from them about places and families to steal from. Talking about this matter with Rinpoche, Rinpoche said that we should understand that all is impermanent and some of these people might change as they have their own families and might be interested in keeping their homes safe too.

Together with all these stories, I also had the chance to hear about the first families who came to live in El Durazno and planted so many different types of trees in a land that was naked of vegetation. Alicia Caballero told stories about the previous owners of the house that belongs to our Gar - a family that came to this land and planted many species of trees which they brought from outside of the country. Now these trees are tall and give us great shade and much fruit.

After that, we had the ne Police Post of El Durazno install a police patrol provisionally near

Tashigar. In the next Gakyil meeting at Rinpoche's house we had a feeling of more security in the area that allowed us to talk about the celebration of Tashigar's 14th Anniversary. We decided to give a party and invite our neighbours and new "friends": the policemen and the authorities of the province and of the city of Tanti. Alicia, Naomi (the Editor of The Mirror) and myself went for the first time to meet the Mayor of Tanti to invite him to the party. Then we went to see the Director of the most important local magazine of Tanti and asked her to put this news about Tashigar's Anniversary in the next issue of her paper. And last, but not least, I encouraged myself and went together with Marta Trillo to the Police office of Tanti to meet the new Chief of Police, whom we invited to Tashigar's celebration.

In this way, Tashigar was coming out of its borders to dialogue with the local Community, the local authorities and many of our neighbors. Alicia made a big step when she called the Minister of Security of the province of Cordoba and the Chief Policemen of the area to invite them to our celebration. Our secretary Rosa and Susana Sobre called and even went personally to invite many of Tashigar's neighbors to this special event. Noe and a team gathered at her house cooked 130 "empanadas" (one of our typical foods) and a enormous cake for 60 people. Many Dzogchen practitioners cleaned and set up the small Gonpa for the Special Celebration of Tashigar's 14th Anniversary.

The rain we had during the whole week finally stopped and a cool evening allowed us to gather outside the small Gonpa on the veranda of the Main House. Pepe (dressed very elegantly for the occasion) took our guests for a walk and showed them Rinpoche's house, the big Gonpa, the camping site, the bathrooms and some houses of Tashigar Mandala.

After we went inside the small Gonpa, Rinpoche entered the room and sat right in front of us in the middle of a table. Nelida (as translator) sat beside the Teacher; the Mayor of Tanti at Rinpoche's right and the Secretary of the Minister of Security of Cordoba to his left. The seats of the first row were occupied by the Chief Policeman of Punilla Valley and many important policemen of Carlos Paz dressed in dark suits. Behind them, many of our neighbors with their children and babies and at the back of the room our new "friends" - the three young policemen of the CAP patrol in their blue uniforms.

Sergio Oliva (Tashigar's President) introduced our Master and all the important guests and said some words about the history of Tashigar. Then the Mayor of Tanti read the decree law n° 023/2004 (see inset) that stated that Rinpoche was pronounced as "Honored Guest" by Tanti's City Hall. I can recall some of the Mayor's words:

"In the name of the Community of Tanti and my own, I want

to express that I feel very proud to be here with all of you in the presence of your Teacher, especially in this event of Tashigar's celebration of its fourteen years of life in this area, and to have a special opportunity of integration with all of you."

Then Rinpoche expressed his gratitude saying, "I am sorry I cannot speak in your language but I have a translator. I want to greet you all. I have been coming to Tanti for many years, trying to do things with people who are interested in following Dzogchen teachings and who do not want to be isolated as a group in a place. I want to tell you that I feel happy to be in a country where many of its citizens are willing to know these practices. We try to collaborate and create new consciousness in the people, so we cannot stay isolated. Some may think that the people here are foreigners who want to be on their own; but in reality we need and have to be together. We are all in the same globe and all citizens that collaborate between themselves, respect each other; if we all collaborate we shall all have prosperity. That is our goal. For that same reason I want to express my gratitude for this nice gesture."

In response to Rinpoche's kind words, the Chief Policeman of the Punilla Valley expressed how grateful he and his men were for having been invited to such a nice and friendly meeting at our Gar in such special occasion where they were able to meet our Teacher and many members of Tashigar. He hoped that this new way of collaboration between us - the people of the area - and the police will go on in order to maintain a safe and protected area of El Durazno.

After that we toasted, blew the 14 candles of Tashigar's enormous birthday cake and expressed a mutual wish of prosperity and safety for all of human beings and living creatures of the area and of the world. As practitioners, we felt very happy of having our new "friends" of the police patrol, our neighbors and such important guests coming to Tashigar's party where we could talk and share while eating sandwiches and "empanadas", drinking wine and other beverages and having a delicious and enormous birthday cake.

Working all together according to the circumstances we were able to overcome most of our fears, our fixed points of views and doubts and enjoy the celebration; Tashigar's 14th Anniversary in the presence of Rinpoche. We could say that Tashigar inaugurated a new type of relationship with neighbors, citizens, policemen and other political functionaries of Tanti, Carlos Paz and of the province of Cordoba where they were able to see us not as strange looking people but as similar to them; individuals interested in working for the benefit of our families, friends and others not related directly and for the development of the area that we all share. In this way, we may say that we began to develop new ways of dialogue and collaboration in our Dzogchen Community and with the outside Community as a whole.

Advice from the Great Kongtrul Lodrö Taye to his disciple

On a cold winter night I found four old folios of advice from the Great Kongtrul that I had never seen or heard before among a couple of books I borrowed from a fine teacher. I thought it was some kind of blessing, an advice for me.

Kongtrul Lodrö Taye was the most eminent figure in the so called Rime or non sectarian movement in the 19th century in Eastern Tibet. Kongtrul was a master as well as a student of Khyentse Wangpo. Kongtrul embodied the kindness through which numberless precious teachings have been preserved and transmitted to our generation.

Elio Guarisco

My Advice to Lhawang Tashi

I take refuge in the Lotus Master
And seek the grace of the Kagyu teachers.
May those who have faith turn to the teaching
And step on the path of freedom, with no return.
Atisha, the savior of the Land of Snow,
Taught two concise principles:
“In the midst of many watch your speech,
When alone, observe your thoughts.”
The mind serves as the root of all faults,
Speech, as the doorway of their arising,
Thus, in every circumstance guard these two!
Conditioned life and freedom are one’s mind,
Apart from that, they don’t exist at all.
Pleasure and frustration, good and bad, high and low,
Are nothing but mind’s concepts.
When mind is cleansed, it is Buddha,
The place you live is a pure land,
Your actions reflects the real condition,
What you perceive is the beauty of wisdom’s display.
If the mind’s itself is not cleansed,
Even though it is Buddha, is viewed as imperfect,
One feels anger event towards one’s beloved,
Most situations becomes inimical,
Hope and fear, desire and aversion, arise without stop,
Useless years pass, and one’s human life ends.
We clash with anyone we befriend,
No matter where we live, we never feel happy,
No matter how much we have, we never feel content,
For each thing we get, we feel we need another one.
Continually distracted with daily experiences
Even if we have the idea of applying the teaching
Our life ends while thinking: “Now I shall do it”.
In the moments we experience genuine disengagement
We feel as if we could give up everything entirely,
Having become spoiled we feel unable even to give a needle.
At the outset of our faith and devotion
We have no thoughts other then for the master,
After quite sometime has passed, we begin to disbelieve him.
At the springtime of our faith
On top of one practice, we add a second one,
When we become seasoned, all practices fade away in nothing.
Upon meeting a new amiable friend we cherish him more then oneself
After the excitement is gone, we turn him into an enemy.
All these kinds of involvements
Are the result of the non governing of one’s mind,
If we can make our mind serviceable
We don’t need to seek a solitary place;
To be without preconceived ideas, is the solitude.
You don’t need to seek a teacher anywhere
The mind’s nature is the teacher who is Buddha.
Don’t be apprehensive that a practice is still to be done
Not to be distracted is the essence of the practice.
There is no need to shun the distractions intentionally
Sustaining the presence of awareness they self-liberate.
Don’t panic at the up-burst of emotionality
If you recognize their nature, emotions are your wisdom.
Conditioned life and freedom do not exist
Other then in the present instant of mind
Thus, please, keep watch of the mind in all circumstances!
If you don’t govern your mind from within
There will be no end to external enemies.
By conquering anger from within
All enemies on earth will be quelled.
If you don’t have inner contentment
Even if you have everything, you will be like a beggar.
The one who is graced with detachment and contentment
Is always rich even if he does not have any material possession.
By the seed of the joy one feel inside
In doing deeds good by worldly standard or in
Practicing the Teaching and what is wholesome,
One is reborn in the higher forms of life;
That too, is an impermanent state of existence.
Looking at the nature of that joy and realizing it
To be unreal is the seed of the path to freedom.
All self-involved activities, either of dharma or worldly
Are unworthy and the source of frustration.
If you follow after anger, aversion, desire,

And other disturbing mental dispositions
You create the cause for an inferior rebirth,
When that becomes a reality, the suffering will be unthinkable.
Any emotion or frustration comes to you
If you look into nature, it disappears:
There is no wisdom other then this.
Since we are never separated from the mind
Always observe your thoughts, cherish this!
Guarding one’s mind is inclusive of all teachings.
As to the way of doing that, the bodhisattva Shantideva said:
“As I use to say: “Those who wish to watch their mind
Should do so by applying
Presence and awareness.”
I pray that you may follow this way.”
Give importance, to this practice!
That being said, all perceptions of the six consciousness
Are only the miraculous manifestations of the mind’s nature,
Rejecting or endorsing them would amount to a distortion.
To apply the path of equalizing all in a single taste is the best,
However, the beginners
Have high view but meager conduct.
To find the perfect human life is difficult,
Always remember that you will die and,
Gain conviction of the inevitable consequence of actions,
When hearing or seeing the death of others
Understand that as a warning of what you will face.
When witnessing the change from season to season
Remember, everything is passing!
When seeing bees and honey (later taken by others)
Understand the futility of wealth.
When seeing a house in ruin or an deserted village,
Understand that nature of the home you live in.
When seeing others loosing their beloved ones
Remember your own close ones.
When seeing misfortunes suddenly befalling others
Remember that these will also befall you.
View everything, yourself and others as a dream,
There is not the mere trace of something real.
When you remain in your own natural condition
Without adulterating your mind with attempts to modify
You will realize the emptiness of all, outer and inner,
The space like simultaneity of clarity and emptiness.
That is the ultimate bodhicitta.
Spontaneous and genuine boundless compassion
Felt towards those who not having such understanding
Suffer, stuck in habitual life because of the duality’s split
Is the relative bodhicitta.
Compassion that does not hold anything real realizes emptiness
And through emptiness’s own energy there arises compassion:
This is the core of the unification of Sutra and Tantra’s teachings,
Apply this profound practice!
As a method to bring about these realizations
You should accumulate merit at any occasion,
Invoke the Three Jewels,
Give importance to the devotion to the master,
Turn yourself and other away from wrong doings
Urge yourself as much as you can in what is wholesome.
Don’t part from the altruistic spirit of the Universal Way
And always make pure dedication.
May the glorious new moon of the good mind of you, the monk
Wax and may you become like the Lords of gods.

This was written by the practitioner Lodro Taye, who only eats, shits and sleeps.

Translated into English by Yonten Rangjung (Elio Guarisco)

A Tibetan Tale, The Way of Seeing

From a text of Kumar Kumari, Santi Maha Sangha for Children, as told by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and published by Shang Shung Editions, Italy. Translated from the Tibetan by Adriano Clemente

“This is a little story whose aim is to make us understand how a right view can open our eyes, a wrong view can have the opposite effect, and where each kind of view can lead us. There are many other stories similar to this one in Tibet, and by examining them we can learn to distinguish clearly between a right and a wrong view, becoming aware of the effects and consequences that the two ways of seeing things, the right way and the wrong way, can produce.”

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a village not far from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, there lived a man who had to make a great effort in order to earn enough to provide food and clothing for himself. His view, which he was firmly convinced was right, was that what was most important in life was money, provisions of grain, and other material things. So he continually thought to himself: “What on earth would be the easiest job that I could do that would enable me to quickly earn a lot of money with as little effort as possible?”

It was not the custom for Tibetan families to kill the animals such as goats, sheep and yaks that they would eat. Instead, every Autumn, they would traditionally send someone to call a person whose specific task was to kill the number of head of cattle that were considered necessary to supply enough meat for the coming year. This person, known as a ‘shenpa’, the equivalent of a Western butcher, and he received what was called a ‘price to compensate for committing a bad action’ in cash, grains, pieces of meat from the animals slaughtered and other gifts from the families he served.

Then, at the end of the autumn, the families that had commissioned the work of slaughtering the animals invited some Lamas who for many days would carry out rites of purification of negative actions for the benefit of the animals that had been killed. (*The aim of these rites is not only to purify the negative actions of the animals themselves, but also to purify the negative action of killing them.*)

Now the man in our story who had to work so hard to earn a living decided that the job of being a ‘shenpa’ was easy and that it would permit him to earn a large quantity of money and provisions without much effort. Since, in fact, in Tibet killing animals is a considered to be a very negative action as it destroys the lives of others, there were not very many people who would take on such a job.

But this man decided, “Killing cattle will be easy, so I will easily earn a lot of money and provisions and will finally be able to live without so many worries!”

Once this wrong and selfish view had arisen in him, he soon became a famous ‘shenpa’, who was called by everyone far and wide to slaughter their cattle. One day he was in his slaughterhouse,

and, after tying up all in a row thirty sheep that he had to kill, he began to kill them one after another, so that those still waiting their turn were forced to actually watch as he killed those ahead of them! At a certain point he needed to pee, so he put down his knife next to the sheep whose turn it was and went away for a few minutes. When he got back, he looked everywhere for his knife, but he couldn’t find it anywhere. Then he finally saw the point of the knife sticking out of the ground beside the sheep that was next in line waiting its turn to be killed. He realized that that sheep had managed to bury the knife, and he looked very hard at it. He saw that, overcome with the fear of dying, the sheep was trembling and letting a flood of tears fall. When he then turned to look at all the other sheep, he could see clearly that all of them were weeping in desperation, too. He then thought to himself, “Because of my cruel view based on my selfish interests alone that has arisen in my mind so that I could get ahead in my miserable life, I have killed many, many animals, causing them terrible suffering and myself accumulating many negative actions. Even though I live in a human body, my level of sensitivity and behavior is much lower than that of these sheep who seemed to me to be so stupid. If I continue to live in this body, all I will do is just accumulate more negative actions, so I would rather die!”

Sincerely repenting and feeling a new view based on a strong feeling of compassion, the ‘shenpa’ immediately went off to the edge of a very high precipice and, without an instant’s hesitation and threw himself into the abyss. Thanks to the view that had arisen in him, instead of falling down he began to fly straight through the air until he landed on the side of a mountain that was the other side of the abyss. From that day on, he became a good practitioner. He never again harmed anyone and his mind was always filled with a right view aimed at benefiting others.

Near the precipice over which the butcher threw himself was a hermitage where a hermit lived who had been in retreat for many, many years. Seeing the butcher throw himself off the rock and fly over to the opposite mountain, this hermit thought to himself: “That butcher didn’t do anything but slaughter animals and commit negative actions all his life, without even passing one day in retreat practicing. Yet he is capable of flying through the sky. How strange! I have never killed a living being and have been practicing for so many years in this hermitage: so I should surely be better than him and I should surely be able to fly too!” In this way there arose in the hermit a wrong view based on a strong feeling of jealousy which drove him to immediately act on the basis of his assumption that he too would be able to fly. So he went up to the same spot from which the butcher had jumped, and convinced that he would just soar away, threw himself into the abyss. But since he had generated a wrong view, he instead fell down and died.

Shang - Shung Institute

CALENDAR OF TEACHING ACTIVITIES 2004 DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE - ITALY

MERIGAR: April 24-May 3
New intensive course of KU NYE first level
Cost: 550 Euro including teaching material (text, video and oils)

MERIGAR: May 9-16
First part of the first year of the FOUR YEAR COURSE OF TRADITIONAL TIBETAN MEDICINE
Cost for the entire first year: 1500 Euro

ROME: May 29-30
Fifth part of KU NYE first level

MERIGAR: June 5-6
Final exam for students completing the entire cycle of three levels of KU NYE
Cost: 50 Euro

MILAN: June 11-14
Mantra Healing - a residential course of first and second levels
In a bed & breakfast in Val Staffora (Pavia) with meals included
(7 meals & 3 nights in double or triple rooms)
Cost: 350 Euro

MERIGAR: June 18-19
Final part of the course of KU NYE second level
Cost: 100 Euro

MERIGAR: June 20-29
Intensive course of KU NYE third level
Cost: 550 Euro including teaching material

MERIGAR: June 30-July 6
First intensive training course for instructors of KU NYE first level focussed on developing theory in the morning and gaining some clinical practice in the afternoon under the supervision of Dr. Nida. Only students chosen by the teacher and the directors of the Institute will be admitted to the course. The training program will be presented during the course
Cost: 500 Euro

RUSSIA - KUNSANGAR (July)
Intensive course of KU NYE & Mantra Healing. Dates to be announced.

ROME: September 11-12
Sixth and final part of the course of KU NYE first level

MERIGAR: September 18-24
Second part of the intensive FOUR YEAR COURSE OF TRADITIONAL TIBETAN MEDICINE

MERIGAR: September 24-28
Five day intensive course of DREAMS & MEDICINE
Cost: 250 Euro
October

GERMANY: October 1-10
Intensive course of KU NYE FIRST LEVEL

FLORENCE: October 23-24
Birth and pregnancy according to traditional Tibetan medicine
Cost: 120 Euro
Venue: Lycopodium Studi medici

Tel. 055483463

ENGLAND: October 27-31
Intensive course of MANTRA HEALING

ENGLAND: November 2-11
Intensive course of KU NYE FIRST LEVEL

ROME: November 13-14
First part of KU NYE second level
The course will start with a theoretical/practical exam of admission.
Cost: 750 Euro for the entire course of six weekends including all teaching material

NAPLES: November 26-28
First part of KU NYE first level
Cost: 720 Euro for the entire course including teaching material

DECEMBER 2004 & JANUARY 2005:
TOUR IN AUSTRALIA

MERIGAR: August 13-27
Course of WRITTEN & SPOKEN TIBETAN taught by Elio Guarisco

The Shang Shung Institute, within the sphere of its activities of diffusing knowledge and preserving various aspects of the Tibetan culture, is organizing a course of spoken and literary Tibetan. The course is open to all those who wish to learn the Tibetan language, both scholars and non-scholars. The course will provide the basis for being able to express oneself in Tibetan or read ancient and modern texts in the language. Tibet possesses a treasury of knowledge that is traditionally articulated in five main disciplines and five lesser, among which are: art, medicine, spirituality, astrology, crafts, music, poetry, etc. Many of these disciplines are known in the West but others, such as medicine, spirituality and art have features that are unique to Tibetan culture and are able, without doubt, to enrich our knowledge and our way of life. Each aspect of Tibetan culture is founded on the principles that govern the forces of nature and on a profound knowledge of the real condition of the individual, beyond culture and time. These aspects were discovered and transmitted in the isolation and peace of the "roof of the world" by ancient sages.

Due to centuries of isolation, the greater part of this treasure has remained unexplored and hidden within a language that is complex but at the same time fascinating. It is language that we can learn in order to rediscover the treasures that it holds.
The course will take place in the new reading room of the library at Merigar and will be given by Elio Guarisco who will be flanked by other Tibetan assistants.

FIRST WEEK: SPOKEN TIBETAN

Studying the alphabet
Practicing reading
Practicing writing
Conjugating verbs
Syntax
Elementary vocabulary
Formulating simple phrases
Practicing conversation

Timetable: 10am-1pm. 3pm-6pm

SECOND WEEK: SPOKEN AND LITERARY TIBETAN

Studying the rules of grammar
Reading and interpretation of short original Tibetan texts
Reading and interpretation of short Tibetan texts translated from Sanskrit
Elementary vocabulary of the classical language
Overview of Tibetan literature

Timetable: 10am-1pm. 3pm-6pm

This initiative by the Shang Shung Institute is the first step in an ambitious program of study of the Tibetan language which will continue for several years and which aims to create specialists in the language as well as Tibetologists.

Cost: € 750

Note: the course will not take place if there are less than 12 participants. Therefore we urge you to inform the Institute if you wish to participate BEFORE JUNE 15, 2004.

Information and reservations:

Milan: Elisa Copello
Tel:0233607505,
Email:ecop@ats.it,
Mob Phone.: 3387027207

Rome:Anna Marie Clos:
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Naples:
Fabio Risolo
Email:fabio.risolo@libero.it

TWO WEEK COURSE IN TIBETAN ASTROLOGY

The Shang Shung Institute, Italy, is pleased to announce
TIBETAN ASTROLOGY
AT SHANG-SHUNG INSTITUTE
MERIGAR, ITALY

THE SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE A COURSE OF ASTROLOGY WITH DR. PHUNTSOG WANGMO IN MERIGAR, JULY, 2004:

From July 18th-August 1st, 2004, an intensive course of Tibetan astrology with the lady Doctor Phuntsog Wangmo will be held. Dr. Wangmo is the resident doctor at the Shang-Shung Institute in the USA.

The course will deal primarily with the two main systems diffused in this very ancient discipline: zodiac astrology and the astrology of the five elements. At the end of the seminar the student will be able to calculate an astrological chart and understand the fundamental principles of Tibetan astrology
Participation Fee: 750 Euros
Timetable: h. 10-13, h. 15-18
Please register by June 15th. If we do not have at least 12 participants, the course will be cancelled.

REGISTRATION WITH THE INSTITUTE SECRETARY:
Email: ssinst@tiscali.it
Tel. 00390564966941

New Contact Information for Shang-Shung Institute, Austria

New Postal Address:

Shang-Shung Institute Austria
Gschmaier 104
8265 Gr.Steinbach
Austria

New email: office@ssi-austria.at
Web site: www.ssi-austria.at
New telephone-number: 0043 3386 83218

New fax-number: 0043 3386 83219

Mobile number is still the same: 0043 676 3221365

SHANG SHUNG INSTITUTE OFFERS SPANISH COURSE

For those who have already visited Margarita Island or who intend to go, the Shang-Shung Institute in Italy is offering a week's intensive course of Spanish. Vera Svanferla who lived in Mexico for twenty years and uses the most up to date teaching methods will give lessons. The course will be held from the 28th August till the 3rd of September and how to continue will depend on the needs and possibilities of the participants. The aim of the course will be to enable students to move in the area of Margarita Island with some ease of communication. The course will be held after the Tibetan language course at the Institute at Merigar and will consist of 6 hours of lessons a day. Participation fees: 250 Euro
Those interested should enrol with the Shang Shung Institute before July 15.

Shang Shung Institute, Podere Nuovissimo, 58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy
Tel. 0039 0564 966940 E-mail: ssinst@tiscalinet.it

SHANG-SHUNG DIGITAL ARCHIVES WEB SITE

Many users have registered so far at the SSI Digital Archives site. All practitioners who follow the Dzogchen teachings and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu are sincerely welcome to register on the site and browse its contents. There are however a few simple rules that apply, for example:

- Users must register with their true and complete names - to register with nicknames or fake names is not suitable. If you have by chance registered with a nickname, after some time you may find that your account has been disabled. In this case you should simply register again with your real name.

- Users are supposed to have attended at least one retreat with or received the transmission from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

- To be members of the Dzogchen Community or SSI is definitely a plus at the Archives site, and entering a valid membership card number will open access to more contents (like audio and video streaming) as soon as they are available; membership is not a must (transmission is).

If one is not a member, he/she can still register and visit the site. Simply write "N/A" or "non-member" in the Membership Card No. field of the registration form.

These are the basic rules. We are currently checking registrations and cleaning up any improper or wrong entries. We'll run this check periodically. So please, if you register, do it according to the simple rules above.

For general instructions on how to access and use the SSI Archives site please see past Norbunet postings, the last Mirror #66 or write to: dzogchen.sys@tiscali.it

Thanking you for your attention and collaboration,

The SSI Digital Archives Staff

TWO NEW PRODUCTS from
SHANG-SHUNG INSTITUTE,
ITALY

The Video Department of the Shang Shung Institute is happy to announce the release of two new products:

SHITRO - EXPLANATION AND PRACTICE

This is a brand new recording made using professional quality video and audio equipment, done last August in Merigar especially for this purpose (i.e. not during a collective practice or retreat).

Rinpoche explains and then performs the practice of Shitro according to the terma teaching of Mingyur Dorje. Graphics covering all details of the complex visualizations used in this practice are inserted in the appropriate places in the video.

The video of Shitro is in English. It is available on different media: DVD, VHS and video-CD. The video standard is PAL. An audio-only CD version is also available.

TARA - EXPLANATION AND PRACTICE

This not simply a video or audio CD, but an interactive multimedia CD-ROM.

What is an interactive multimedia CD-ROM?

Interactive CD-ROMs are wide-

ly used for learning. One inserts the CD in a computer and then follows menus and navigation tools to explore (in an interactive and organized way) contents that can include various media such as video, audio, text, images, etc. The interactive CD-ROM of Tara allows a practitioner to listen to/view Rinpoche's explanations (from beginning to end or selecting parts from a menu of topics), or to follow the Master as he performs the practice. Drawings of the mudras, images for visualizations and the complete text of the practice are all included.

From any part of the practice one can jump precisely to the corresponding part of the explanation, and vice-versa. From menus one can choose to listen to Rinpoche chanting the various melodies or to view a video showing the mudras, or listen to special advice regarding retreats and action mantras, etc.

The multimedia CD of the practice of Tara is based on Peru's retreat of 2002 and is in English (the explanation part includes the translation in Spanish).

At the moment it is available only for Windows-based computers. A version for the Apple Mac will be released soon.

For more information and orders please contact the SSI secretary at:

ssinst@tiscali.it

For technical information contact:

dzogchen.sys@tiscali.it

Shang-Shung Institute in America
Tibetan Medicine with Dr Phuntsog Wangmo
April - May, 2004

The Shang-Shung Institute in America, in collaboration with the Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at Amherst College, is happy to announce an ongoing series of seven workshops in Traditional Tibetan Medicine, taught by Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo.

The workshops are scheduled as follows:

April 23-April 25 Women's Health [WH]

May 7-9, Mental Illness and Neurological Disorders [MIND, Pre-requisites ITM, ITD].

The classes will provide an excellent opportunity to learn the principles of Tibetan Medicine directly from one of the few Tibetan-trained doctors teaching in the west. They are essential for those interested in studying Tibetan Medicine, and recommended for all holistic health practitioners as well as anyone who would like to improve their health.

For those who would like more in-depth study:

June 11-25 Foundation Course in Tibetan Medicine Year 1, Part One \$800.

National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine continuing education credits available. Held at The Shang-Shung Institute in Conway.

Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo received her advanced degree from the Lhasa University School of Traditional Medicine in 1988 where she also served a two-year residency after completing her five year training program (1983-1990).

During that time she studied with the Khenpos Troru Tsenam and Gyaltzen, two of Tibet's foremost doctors who are credited with the revival of Tibetan Medicine within Tibet under the Chinese. Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo had the exceptional opportunity of extensive clinical training under Khenpo Troru Tsenam for four years. Thereafter, she dedicated many years of work as a doctor in Eastern Tibet where she collaborated and directed the implementation of A.S.I.A., the non-profit organization founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

For registration and more information contact:

Shang Shung Institute in America
(413) 369-4928

Email: will@shangshung.org

Web site: www.shangshung.org

A HIVE OF
ACTIVITY AT
SHANG-SHUNG
INSTITUTE, ITALY

by Elisa Copello

I frequently have the impression that the Shang-Shung Institute is more like the wrapping of a closed box in which many things happen, definitely useful things but things that people never really know about or investigate. Yet the Institute has existed for many years within the Merigar and international Dzogchen Community. Many people have participated in the growth of Institute, which at times has been slow and at other times more decisive.

Many years ago the Institute was created by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to contribute to the survival of the endangered Tibetan a culture and civilization. The real safeguarding of a people, as Rinpoche has often said, is through the preservation of its traditions, language and customs. This is a role that the Institute has always tried to fulfil. There are other activities the Institute has assumed over the years, including the preservation, for future generations, of the entire teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for which the Institute holds the copyright according to the recently reconfirmed wishes of Rinpoche. This means full-time work for several people working in the archives to digitalize thousands of hours of teaching in both video and audio form. Without this work, the teachings would no longer be accessible to future generations since with passage of time, recordings on magnetic support inevitably disappear.

Over the years, the library has collected thousands of volumes, some of which are really precious and must be scanned in order to preserve them from the risk of permanent damage from mould and worms. Thanks to a generous donation, the Institute has created a modern reading room that will shortly be open to scholars, students and the general public. The enormous job of cataloguing the Tibetan books is going ahead thanks to the work of our expert Tibetologist assisted by several volunteers. Financed by the Institute, our Tibetologist has followed specialized training courses so that she will be officially able to take over the role of librarian in the future.

The Department of Medicine continues with its activities of organizing courses and talks in Italy and abroad and has an ambitious project to train instructors to flank the Institute's official teacher, Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, particularly for the Ku Nye courses. Texts in Italian and English have been prepared for the courses and the second corrected edition of the First Level of Ku Nye is now available.

The experimentation on Tibetan Ku Nye massage, which was authorized by the Regional Authority of Tuscany, is continuing and a new intensive four-year course of traditional Tibetan Medicine will start soon.

The Institute is about to embark on a big project for setting up an archeological site in the Kyunglung Valley, home of the ancient kingdom of Shang Shung. This project will happen thanks to the generosity of the Austrian Institute; the Austrian Institute will be a partner in the initiative during the initial phase. I would also like to remind readers that in the past the Institute has organized several successful exhibitions and will work together with other groups in the construction of a museum at Merigar.

For several years the Institute has been producing various videos, CDs, DVDs, audio tapes, MP3s and MP4s, for practitioners of the Dzogchen Community so they can learn the practices and listen to the teachings of our precious Master. Through this, the Shang Shung Institute is lending support to the wealth of publications produced by Shang Shung Editions. Recently the Institute has created a new project for a video journal and is setting up a database that all practitioners will be able to access in order to find the teachings related to a particular practice. These teachings can then be ordered and paid for on-line by means of a system which makes payment absolutely secure and protected. The information about the video journal and the database has already appeared through all channels of communication within the Community and there is further information available from our office.

From these few words it is easy to see how the Institute is like a beehive where a lot of silent bees are busy at work. I only hope that the bees' gentle buzzing will raise a vast echo and that all practitioners throughout the world will understand the importance of the work and support it by subscribing to the video journal, visiting the database, becoming a member of the Institute and, if possible, giving donations according to their possibilities. The Shang Shung Institute wants to be a living reality, able to give continuous service to the entire Community through its activities, some more silent, others more notable, but all important in order to continue to pursue the aim for which Rinpoche founded it.

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Tel. ++39 0564 966941
Email: ssinst@tiscali.it

AUDIO VIDEO ARCHIVES
SSI ITALY

The audio archive of the Shang-Shung Institute - Italy, is pleased to announce the release of: Tsok Gye - The Long Ganapuja, in audio CD format. This contains the invocations to Ekajati and Dorje Legpa that, because they contain so many words, are somewhat difficult to learn.

Rinpoche was recorded during a collective practice, led by Adriano Clemente, in the Gonpa of Merigar on October 15th, 1998. We have created separate tracks for each of the phases of the Thun that makes this an excellent aid for memorizing the practice and for learning to pronounce the Tibetan words properly.

We are also happy to present the 2004 audio and video catalog that contains all the material produced by the SSI archives of Merigar for sale. It is in PDF format and requires Adobe Acrobat Reader to open

(which is available for download from the Adobe site, free of charge).

If there are any questions, please contact the secretary of the SSI.

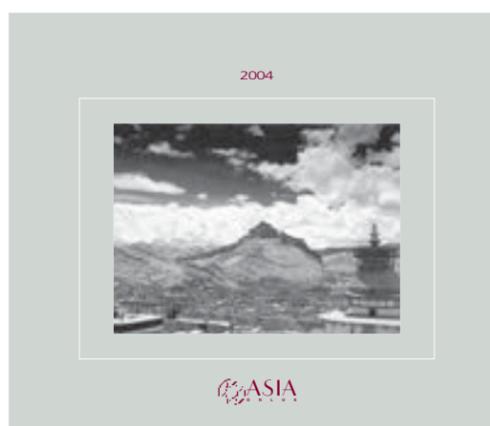
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asia calendar 2004 now available



asia contact
information:

ASIA Onlus
Via S. Martino della
Battaglia, 31
00185 Roma, Italy
Email: info@asia-onlus.org
Web: www.asia-onlus.org

Calendar-agenda for the Wood Monkey Year (2004-2005)

Euro 9.00 US\$ 12.00

Pocket agenda containing concise indications of the practices recommended by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu for special days, positive and negative days for the Naga Practice, astrological data of the Tibetan Calendar and the individual aspects for those born between 1912 and 2004. Indispensable for finding out favorable and unfavorable days for daily activities and to remember special practice days. (see review bottom of this page)

DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS IN GUTENSTEIN - AUSTRIA

12-14 June 1998

Including teachings on the Daki Mantri text belonging to the Longsal Cycle

Euro 13.00 US dollars 17.00

This book contains the transcription of the whole retreat held in Gutenstein in 1998, including the oral teachings on the Daki Mantri text of Thangtong Gyalpo belonging to the Longsal Cycle which is the collection of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's rediscovered teachings (see *Longsal Teachings*, Vol. 1, Shang Shung Edizioni 2001). It contains the Tibetan text and a useful glossary of Tibetan names and words.

The Necklace of Zi

Euro 13.00 US dollars 17.00

The Necklace of Zi (gzi yi phreng ba) is the revised and extended text of a lecture given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1975 at the annual meeting of young Tibetans in Switzerland. Some years later, *The Necklace of Zi* was published in Dharamsala in both Tibetan and English, and immediately provoked great interest for its completely new approach to the history and culture of Tibet. With remarkable authority, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu emphasized the originality and specificity of his people's culture. Citing ancient texts but also using illuminating examples from his education in Tibet, he refuted the almost universally accepted theory that reduced Tibetan civilization to a Himalayan appendage of Indian culture. According to the old theory, pre-Buddhist Tibet did not even possess its own form of writing. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu traces the emergence of his country's culture back nearly 4,000 years, and identifies the original Tibetan system of writing in the ancient *mar (smar)* alphabet, from



which the present cursive characters (*dbu med*) have evolved. Besides an analysis of Tibetan history and language and a short chronicle of pre-Buddhist Bön, this text deals in a simple but very meaningful way with the crucial topic of the harmonious union of Dharma and politics.

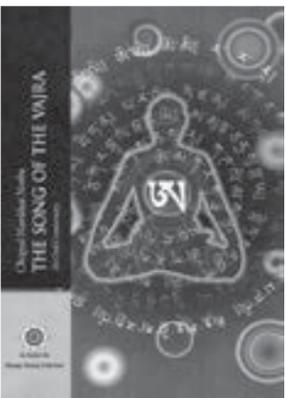
The Song of the Vajra

Euro 13.00 US dollars 17.00

"We can find the principle of the Song of the Vajra in the Upadesha Tantra called *Nyida Khajor*, meaning *Union of Sun and Moon*."

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

The Song of the Vajra is very important for the Dzogchen teaching because it is like a key for all the methods that we can learn. All the important methods of Dzogchen Semde, Longde and Upadesha are related to the Song of the Vajra. We can learn the Song of the Vajra in three different ways.



The first way is through the sound; the sound represents the different functions of our chakras. The second way is through the meaning of the words of the Song of the Vajra. Although there might exist a translation of the words of the Song of the Vajra, it is not so easy to understand because every word is something like a key, a symbol. The third way is what we call *gongpa*. In Tibetan the word *gongpa* means the real condition or state. This three-fold aspect of the Song of the Vajra is related to the three aspects of our

existence, namely body, speech and mind. This is similar to what we previously learned about transmission which is three-fold because it relates to the three aspects of our existence. If we communicate or transmit through direct transmission, what we transmit is *gongpa*. So, we



New publications in English

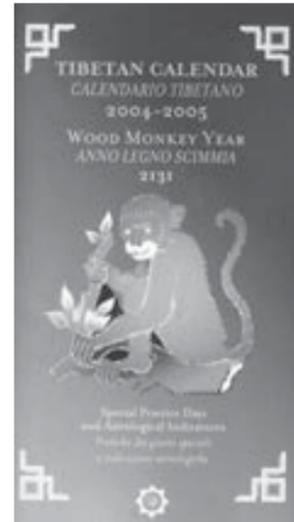
must learn a little through the *gongpa* state, then we can discover how the Song of the Vajra is really a key for all methods and teachings."

Postage and packaging: in Europe add 5 Euro per order every 3 books. To order please send the list of books you require by letter or email (specifying where and when you have received the transmission directly from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu).

Send an International Money Order, Eurocheque or check in Euro (from Europe) to:
Comunita Dzogchen
Shang Shung Edizioni
58031 Arcidosso GR
Italy
Tel: 0564 966039
Email: shangshunged@tiscali.it

Tibetan Calendar of Special Practice Days & Astrological Indications

This attractive pocket size calendar produced by Shang Shung Edizioni is an extremely useful point of reference for practitioners of the Dzogchen Community. Starting with Losar of the Wood Monkey Year (February 21, 2004) the calendar gives the correspondences with the Western dates up to the end of the second Tibetan month of the Wood Bird Year (April 8, 2005). In



one slim booklet, you can find all the practice days for the Dzogchen Community listed as well as the "Buddha" days and the anniversaries of important Masters. The calendar also contains the global timetable for the anniversaries of Garab Dorje, Guru Padmasambhava and Adzom Drugpa when Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gives the transmission of Guruyoga everywhere at the same time. This means that you can find your local time for starting the practice wherever you are. At a glance, one consulting the calendar can note the symbols for the days that are particular to the Buddha, Padmasambhava, the Dakini and Ekajati. The full moons and new moons for each month are indicated as well as lunar and solar eclipses with their times. For those who wish to consult the astrological aspects of the day in order to decide whether a particular day may be auspicious for an activity, the calendar indicates both the Western and Tibetan date, the day of the week and its astrological element, the constellation of the day and its element, the mewa, the major combination of the day and other indications such as positive and negative days for Naga practice, particular combinations and

negative days in general. This may sound a little complicated for one who is not well versed in Tibetan astrology however, with a little attention it is simple to check the most important combination of the two elements that represent the day of the week and the constellation of the day in order to obtain an astrological evaluation of a particular day. The interpretation of this 'minor combination' or 'Trödchung' is given at the front of the calendar so that when it is possible, a fortuitous day may be chosen for a particular activity or a negative one avoided. When the calendar is used together with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's "Key for Consulting the Tibetan Calendar" (Shang Shung Edizioni 1991) a full and detailed interpretation of each day can be made.

The last pages of the calendar give the individual astrological aspects for the year referring to the life element, the body element (health), the capacity element, the fortune element and the element of protection. These aspects are indicated by combinations of one, two or three black and white dots together with some brief notes on interpreting the aspects.

This Tibetan Calendar is presented in both Italian and English with a clear explanation of the symbols and indications for each day. There is also ample space for each day so that it can be used as a diary at the same time. An essential reference work for every practitioner, the "Tibetan Calendar 2004-2005 Wood Monkey Year" can be obtained from: Shang Shung Edizioni

by Liz Granger

Tashigar North Looks for Books

New Library for the Gar Needs Dharma Books

Tashigar North, Margarita Island, Venezuela, is a new and quickly developing Gar where Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has chosen to spend considerable time and therefore many students have chosen to reside or at least spend extended stays in retreats with the Master in Margarita. In the next year, for example, there will be almost monthly retreats in Tashigar North.

Carmen Rivas of the Blue Gakyil of Tashigar has asked The Mirror to place an announcement about the need for Dharma books of all kinds for the Tashigar North Library. It is possible to ship them or for people to bring them when they come. There is no tax in Venezuela on books shipped here, so that should not be a concern. Tashigar North would also like to say a big thank you to KC Ong for his very generous gift of a large quantity of Dharma books shipped here from Singapore.

For shipping and hand deliveries contact:

Carmen Rivas

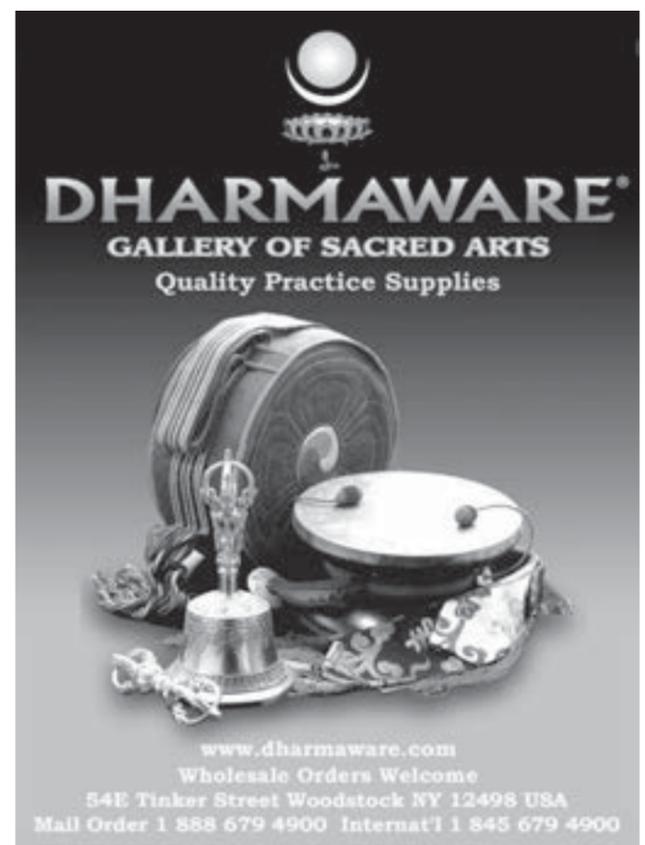
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BOOK REVIEWS

2 X 17 Lives

THE POLITICS OF REINCARNATION
written by **Lea Terhune**
published by
Wisdom Publications

THE DANCE OF 17 LIVES – THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF TIBET’S 17TH KARMAPA

written by **Mike Brown**
published by
Bloomsbury Publications

Suppose no one with any degree of interest in Tibetan Buddhism should be surprised at the publication this year of two books about the Karmapa – and the history, mystery and intrigue that surrounds his present incarnation. Most people with an average interest in current affairs would probably not be surprised either – assuming that their memories extend back to January 1, 2000 – when the world woke up to the new millennium – and the news that a 15 year old Tibetan boy living under close Chinese guard had

managed to escape to India. The boy who made worldwide headlines is Orgyen Trinley Dorje – recognized by mainstream Tibetan Buddhism as the 17th Karmapa – the latest in a lineage of incarnate lamas that pre-dates the Dalai Lamas and kicked off the *tulku* tradition. Publishers of fiction would probably reject the story behind his epic escape as too far-fetched. But publishers of fact were eager to jump onto the Karmapa bandwagon – because the truth of what happened (and is still happening) encompasses so many factors that stimulate curiosity and imagination.

Two authors (both of them journalists) were commissioned by two publishers (Wisdom Publications and Bloomsbury) to write portrayals of the background and circumstances surrounding the sudden and allegedly unexpected appearance in Dharamsala, India of Orgyen Trinley Dorje. Lea Terhune is

American. She wrote *Karmapa – The Politics of Reincarnation* for Wisdom Publications that came out in January. Mick Brown is British. He wrote *The Dance of 17 Lives – The Incredible True Story of Tibet’s 17th Karmapa* for Bloomsbury which came out in March.

There are clues to the character of each book in the titles and after reading both I have to say that if you only want to buy one, it’s a tough decision. Both authors are rigorous researchers. Both write in engaging, easy-read style. Both admit to personal connections with Tibetan Buddhism. But there are differences in content and emphasis.

Lea Terhune flashes into a comprehensive overview of the religion and politics of pre-Communist Tibet as a precursor to the story of the Karmapas, which she recounts in painstaking historical detail. She is thorough, efficient

and respectful. She acknowledges awkward controversies – but dodges the deeper levels of thought and motivation from the “other side”. Lea’s book is as close as you’ll get to an authorized Karma Kagyu version of events. For a “lay” reader unfamiliar with the machinations of Tibetan Buddhist hierarchies she lays it all out, so that by the end of the book you would know a lot more about a previously opaque area of human experience. Of the two, hers is the more scholarly approach. Mick Brown, on the other hand, is a master of the human interest interview – as anyone who has followed his contributions over many years to the UK’s *Telegraph Magazine* would testify. Mick has an open mind. He sets out to explore facts and ends up much more interested in people than events – and not afraid to expose his own feelings as the process unfolds.

Lea Terhune is a long-time

student of Tai Situ Rinpoche, one of the principle players in the Karmapa drama. Mick Brown is sympathetic to Tibetan Buddhism, but not a card carrying member. So his view is simultaneously non-attached and emotionally engaged. He is willing to be awestruck, confused and delighted by the people he meets – from both sides of the Karmapa divide. Mick is even-handed, but also clearly critical in his responses to some of the *dramatis personae*. There’s some history in his book, but it is sparingly applied and secondary to the motivation of the principal players in a fascinating esoteric controversy that remains tantalizingly incomplete. If you want warmth, humor and depth of character field – the choice is Mick.

by *Mary Finnegan*

BEYOND WORDS
BY **JULIA LAWLESS AND JUDITH ALLAN**
Published by Element Press
192 pages

Beyond Words presents, in a thoroughly cogent way, the breadth of the teachings in their entirety. This lucid volume doesn’t miss a beat. By painting the picture with broad strokes, *Beyond Words* offers a refreshing overview of the principles and characteristics of the Dzogchen teaching. This book bridges a gap created by more esoteric scholarship to offer an abbreviated explanation of the teachings in clear language, making them accessible to a wide audience. The authors have wisely drawn upon the experience of a pool of practitioners and translators and have also had access to the advice of living masters. The work is well researched and balanced in tone and, through generous use of quotation and biography, maintains authenticity. At the outset, *Beyond Words* establishes an historical context for the Dzogchen teaching and cites its universal appeal, especially for Westerners, for its flexibility and independence of external form. Beginning with a simple explanation of the Four Noble Truths as the Sakyamuni Buddha presented them, the authors discuss the three distinct approaches within Buddhism: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen. Using a minimum of Tibetan and Sanskrit terminology, the text continues with a brief yet thoughtful explanation of the points of view of each path. The Sutric path consists of Hinayana – governed by vows of discipline and developed through the meditative experience of emptiness, and Mahayana – governed by the intention of supreme compassion, and gradually developed through the accumulation of merit

BEYOND
WORDS



DZOGCHEN
MADE SIMPLE

JULIA LAWLESS AND JUDITH ALLAN
FOREWORD BY CHÖGCHEN NAMKHAÏ NORBU

and wisdom. The non-gradual schools of Japanese Zen and Chinese Chan, which relate more closely to Dzogchen teaching, are

are evaluated for what they’re worth. Therapy can be useful in as much as the way in which our habitual way of seeing and our attachment to our experience divides our consciousness is that which obstructs experience as it is. Ultimately, however, ego and its emotional compulsions need to be transcended. As we integrate the teaching in our everyday activity, practice flows from moment to moment. One’s daily life becomes immersed in this living knowledge. Spiritual and secular are not discrete entities; integration is fundamental. Dzogchen also encourages the pragmatic use of the wealth of methods of all Buddhist traditions. It is essential that the student remains free to determine his own needs in terms of practice. A distinction is made between primary and secondary practices. The primary practice is, of course, non-dual contemplation developed through Guruyoga. Secondary practices such as Yantra Yoga, Chöd or Tara serve to clarify our condition and provide support on the path. Without giving too much away as to the substance of the practices, the authors clarify the specific function of each of these methods in the spiritual development of the practitioner. With real aplomb, the authors examine the nature of the student-teacher relationship, so frequently misunderstood in the West. All its potency and pitfalls are given a thorough airing. On the teacher’s side, a living master gives intellectual knowledge immediacy, since reliance on his self-perfected nature is the gateway to realization. On the student’s side, pure devotion plays a significant role in one’s spiritual development. Recognizing one’s master as the embodiment of the Buddha, without reservation, and revering him as such deepens one’s understanding. The critical role of Guruyoga cannot be overstated. It is what brings the teaching alive – the beating heart. Repeated merging with realized mind is what unlocks primordial knowledge in

also shown to be included in the Sutra based Mahayana tradition. The Tantric path works with the ceaseless flow of energy within each individual. The dynamic energy of Tantra is shown to be its capacity for penetrating raw emotion to its essence through transformation. Dzogchen, on the other hand, functions without rules or promises, without need of transformation. In this path, that which presents itself to our experience is what self-liberates into its own energy.

That is the teaching at its core, manifestation as it is. After establishing a foundation in understanding all vehicles of Buddhism, the text delves into a detailed explanation of the base, path and fruit of Dzogchen.

Beyond Words also offers us an even-handed comparison of Buddhist thought and Western psychology. In reviewing psychotherapy, that which holds sway as something of a religion in the Western mind, self-reflection is distinguished here from self-observation. The benefits and limits of therapy

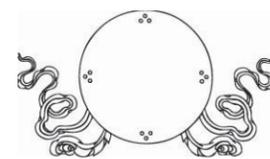
each of us. Lineages of the Terma and Kama traditions are illustrated with biographies of their exponents. *Beyond Words* continues with a discussion of dream interpretation from both Eastern and Western sources. In Dzogchen, dreams are used as a powerful method of practice – both the principal practice of “natural light” in the pre-dreaming state and the secondary practice of dream yoga.

Most modern-day masters assume that the future of the Dharma lies in the West. Buddhism’s insistence on freedom of thought strikes a corresponding note in Western democratic cultures. Its adaptability is inherent in the flexibility of its several approaches. Buddhism has successfully transmuted itself from culture to culture throughout its history. Recently, it has been finding a base in the West, but the preservation of its integrity depends on the sincerity of those who engage in its practices. Whether the teaching will remain intact for the future, free of distortion or misinterpretation, remains to be seen.

Beyond Words is a welcome addition to the growing library of literature on Dzogchen for the clarity it brings to the material. The authors’ own understanding of the material has its basis in experience, not in teaching as object, so the tradition is treated with tender feeling and deep respect.

Without the consent of the authors, the publisher presumed to append the unfortunate subtitle, *Dzogchen Made Simple* to this volume, as though that were possible. Dzogchen is already quite simple, as one master suggests, but not easy. The publisher has given assurance that the subtitle will be removed from future editions.

by *Kathy McGrane*



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IS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION ACCURATE?

The Mirror asks if there is any outdated or incorrect information in the international contacts list, please contact:
mirrnk@cs.com with the correct information.

Thank you!

THE MIRROR

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06.00 Chicago, Mexico City
07.00 New York, Conway, Montreal, Atlanta, Detroit, Havana, Kingston, Indianapolis, Ottawa, Lima, Quito
08.00 Caracas
09.00 Buenos Aires, Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago
12.00 GMT, London, Dublin, Lisbon
13.00 Rome, Berlin, Oslo, Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Brussels, Geneva, Prague, Salzburg, Stockholm, Budapest, Vienna, Warsaw
14.00 Helsinki, Athens, Ankara, Beirut, Jerusalem, Vilnius, Johannesburg
15.00 Moscow, Murmansk, Baghdad, Kuwait City, Riyadh, Tashkent
16.00 Kabul
17.00 ODDIYANA, Islamabad
17.30 Delhi, Bombay
17.45 Kathmandu
18.00 Dacca
19.00 Bangkok, Jakarta, Saigon
20.00 Singapore, Beijing, Lhasa, Manila, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Perth
21.00 Tokyo, Seoul
22.00 Brisbane, Vladivostok
22.30 Adelaide
23.00 Kamchatka, Melbourne, Sydney

INTERNATIONAL VAJRA DANCE PRACTICE DAY
July 7th 2004

Dear All,
We are happy to announce that our precious Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, has indicated July 7th, 2004 as a good day to do an international practice day of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra. On that day, we can activate all the Mandalas in the world, doing one or more Thuns of the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, according to our circumstances, generating the light of this precious Teaching for the benefit of all sentient beings.
May our Master have long life and may all of his Teaching be immensely beneficial for all.

Instructors of the Dance of the Vajra

CLASSIFIED AD

Margarita Rental:

Comfortable rooms to rent in newly renovated house - center Pedro Gonzalez, near Gar and beach.

Beata Debarge,
b.debarge@relocm.ru,
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New Web site of the International Gakyil

A new IG web site will be reopened under a new address in Spring, 2004. The new web site will especially serve the needs of the new Gakyil members in the Dzogchen Community. Further information available from:

*Karin Koppensteiner-Eisenegger (bIG) garuda@bluewin.ch
Fabio Andrico (rIG) fabio.andrico@tiscali.it*

Travel Tips for Margarita

Welcome to all whom are coming to Margarita Island, Venezuela, and the Tashigar Norte Dzogchen Community. Laurie Denyer wrote some info in February 2002 and posted it on Norbunet. I found it very useful at the time of my first visit to Margarita. I actually moved to live in Margarita 4 months ago, would like to share some of my experience and update the practical info, re-working Lauri's paper.

There are 2 airlines flying directly to Porlamar (the airport and main town in Margarita) from Europe:
Condor – the branch of Lufthansa
Martinair – a Dutch company

If you need to change planes in Caracas in order to get a better rate, do so – it's easy and safe.

Maiquetia International Airport (Caracas)

Expect long cues most of the time for the passport control (very slow check, same cue for foreign and Venezuelan citizens). Therefore, when buying your ticket for the internal flight from Caracas to Porlamar, allow at least 2 hours between the flights in order to avoid stress or missing your connecting flight.

After you arrive at the Maiquetia International Airport (Caracas) and before you go through the passport control, you should change some money. There is an exchange bureau called "ITALCAMBIO" in the arrival hall. They will give you an official exchange rate, better rate for US dollars, than for Euros. Generally speaking, it's easier to change US dollars cash, than travelers' checks or Euros. The difference between the official exchange rate and the free market one is about 45% at the moment. It's therefore better to change just a small amount at the airport and change more when you arrive to Pedro Gonzalez at a much better rate. Just as an indication, at the end of January 2004, the official rate is 1600 Bolivares (Bs.) for 1 USD. The free market rate is 3100 Bs. For 1 USD – subject to fluctuation.

Making a connection to Porlamar at the domestic terminal

After collecting your luggage and clearing customs (don't tear away the luggage tag from your bag, as it will be checked against the luggage tag on your ticket / boarding pass when leaving the terminal), come out of the International terminal and turn immediately left. Ignore the touts, porters and taxi drivers who will offer to help you. The domestic terminal is only 200 m from the international one. Unless you carry an extraordinary quantity of luggage or have a particular mobility problem, you can perfectly manage to get to the domestic terminal by yourself. A bag or suitcase on wheels is a good idea. Watch your belongings – same as at any airport in the world, some people might be interested in them more than you are if you get distracted...

It's quite easy to find the check in counter for any of the very many domestic airlines that fly to Porlamar, as they are clearly marked. After checking in, go to your departure gate and follow closely which flights are leaving, as the gate number might be changed without much notice. It's useful to buy a CANTV phone card (in any kiosk in the departure hall) - it will cost you 5000-10000 Bs. You may need to call any of the retreat organizers, your hotel, etc. If you wait until you get to Porlamar the phone call will be cheaper, but the calls within Venezuela are not expensive. Expect to pay more when calling a mobile telephone.

If your flight arrives to Caracas after 8 in the evening, there are no more connecting flights to Porlamar and you need to stay overnight in Caracas, one of our Vajra brothers recommended a hotel near the airport:

Hostal Tanasu
Catia La Mar
Municipio Vargas
Final Avenida Atlantida, al lado de la Villa del Encuentro (directions to give the taxi driver)
Tel. 0212 35 21 704, 0212 35 27 694
Last year's rate: Bs. 40000

And

La Parada
Ave Atlantida
Calle 10-Quinta Rebeca, Calle La Mar, Edo, Vargas
Tel: (0058-0212) 3351 21 48,
Email: hotel_la_parada@hotmail.com

At the airport in Porlamar

Once you have claimed your luggage, you can go outside and find taxis and, across the street, the office with car rentals. Most destinations on the island by taxi should cost you anywhere from 12 000 to 20 000 Bs., depending on your language and negotiation skills. Always agree firmly on the price before leaving in order to avoid possible aggravation. Don't accept to pay in dollars.

If you didn't change any money in Caracas or you arrive directly to Porlamar, there is an exchange office in the international terminal.

Tashigar Norte location

Tashigar Norte is located near Pedro Gonzalez, on the northwest coast of Margarita. Pedro Gonzalez is a small town (population of 3000) with two distinct parts. The beach of Pedro Gonzalez is called Playa Zaragoza. The center of town is inland, about a half-hour's walk from the beach. To get to the land, one goes through the town, turning down the center street at the stores and church, and goes past the prefectura (police station) and on out of town bearing always to the right. After one has passed the sports arena (stadium, estadio) a concrete structure on the

continued on page 14

“... It is best to do these practices collectively with your Vajra Brothers and Sisters (at the recommended times), but if this is not possible you can do them personally whenever you have free time. The important thing is to try to communicate with all practitioners linked with the same transmission. In this way you develop the potentiality of your transmission and your understanding and capacity to integrate your daily life into practice...” Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

and, in particular, for the practice of the “Union of Primordial Essences”. It is best to do it early in the morning between 7 and 8am if you can but if this isn’t possible you can do it in the afternoon or even in the evening when you are not busy. Today is also the anniversary of the Kalachakra, the day when Buddha Sakyamuni first gave the teaching of Kalachakra so it is good to do a Ganapuja or Long Thun in the evening either collectively or alone.

am) and a collective Ganapuja in the afternoon or evening according to your possibilities.

4th Month, 25th day Sat. 12th

June 2004

Dakini day. This is the anniversary of Ngor Chen (a great master of the Shakyapa tradition and initiator of the Ngor lineage); therefore it is a good day to do the Guruyoga of the White A, Akar Lamai Naljor, collectively or alone.

important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Ganapuja or a Long Thun collectively with your Vajra brothers and sisters, or a Medium Thun alone. In either case recite the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

5th Month, 30th day Sat. 17th

July 2004

DARK MOON. This is a day for purification practices. It is best to do the Purification of the Six Lokas either collectively or alone, prefer-

verse by doing a Ganapuja with our Vajra sisters and brothers. If there are no other practitioners nearby you can do a Medium Thun on your own. In either case, when you transform into the Dakini Simhamuka, recite her heart mantra as many times as possible.

6th Month, 30th day Sun. 15th
August 2004

DARK MOON. This is a very important day to do purification practices, especially the “Purifica-

PRACTICE CALENDAR FOR THE

TRANSMISSION DAYS

*ANNIVERSARY
OF PADMASAMBHAVA
6th Tibetan month - 10th day
Monday 27th July 2004

*ANNIVERSARY
OF ADZOM DRUGPA
9th Tibetan month - 25th day
Sunday 7th November 2004

2nd Month, 30th day Mon. 19th
April 2004

DARK MOON. On this day, which is the anniversary of the great Terton Loter Wangpo, try to do the Akar Lamai Naljor, Guruyoga of the White A with the Master Garab Dorje either collectively or alone, with a Ganapuja if possible.

3rd Month, 4th day Fri. 23rd
April 2004

This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Long or Medium Thun in the usual way, reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

*3rd Month, 10th day Fri. 30th
April 2004

This is a special day of Guru Padmasambhava. Those who have received transmission should do a Guruyoga with Padmasambhava with the Long life mantra and a Ganapuja as we usually do; otherwise you can do the Long life practice “Universal Wisdom Union”. If it is possible, the best time to do the Guruyoga and Long life practice is in the morning between 7 and 8. You can do the Ganapuja later in the afternoon.

Usually the best way to do the Ganapuja and the Guruyoga is collectively, with your Vajra brothers and sisters, but if this is not possible you can always do this practice alone when you have time. The important thing is to try to communicate with all practitioners linked to the same transmission so that you can develop the potentiality of the transmission that you have received and through it your understanding and capacity to integrate your daily life in the state of contemplation.

Those who have not received the transmission of the Thun practice can learn it from other practitioners and then receive the transmission when there is the opportunity. Otherwise on this day those who have not received transmission of the Thun practice can do a purification practice with breathing and Yantra Yoga exercises and movements or practices linked to controlling the prana.

3rd month, 15th day Tue. 4th
May 2004

FULL MOON. This is one of the best days for Long life practices

3rd Month, 24th day Thu. 13th
May 2004

There is no 25th day this month so today is a Dakini day. It is also the anniversary of the Fifth Dalai Lama, a great terton and practitioner of Dzogchen, so it is a very beneficial day to reinforce the function of our energy and create a more vital contact with the energy of the universe. If you have the possibility, it is good to do a Guruyoga of the White A in the morning and in the evening a Ganapuja with an intensive practice of Ekajati, repeating the heart mantra as many times as possible. Otherwise you can do the Medium Thun with the practice of Ekajati, repeating the heart mantra as much as possible. The best time for this practice is around 8 in the evening.

3rd Month, 30th day Wed. 19th
May 2004

DARK MOON. Today is the anniversary of Sangyas Lingpa (1340-1396) a great terton and Dzogchen master. You can do a Guruyoga of the White A from the cycle of teachings Universal Clarity with a Ganapuja. It is also a good day to do the Purification of the Six Lokas.

4th Month, 6th and 8th days
25th & 27th May 2004

These are important days for the practice of Ekajati so try to do a Long or Medium Thun with your Vajra brothers and sisters. If that is not possible you can do the Medium Thun alone, reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

4th month, 7th day Wed. 26th
May 2004

This is the anniversary of the birth of Buddha Sakyamuni, an important day for all Buddhists, so try to do a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters.

4th Month, 10th day Sat. 29th
May 2004

Today is the day of Guru Padmasambhava. In general you can do the practice of the Guruyoga of Padmasambhava on this day. If you have the possibility and enough time, you can do a collective Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters, otherwise you can do the Long life practice “Union of Primordial Essences”.

4th Month, 15th day Thu. 3rd
June 2004

FULL MOON. This is the anniversary of the Paranirvana of Buddha Sakyamuni as well as an important day for the Long life practice “Cycle of Life’s Vajra”. Therefore if you can, do the practice of the Dakini Mandarava in the morning (the best time is between 7 and 8

4th Month, 30th day Thu. 17th
June 2004

DARK MOON. Today is the anniversary of Nyagla Padma Dundul (1816-1872), one of the Masters of Changchub Dorje and the main Master of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. He discovered the Terma “Tsedrub Gongdu” which two of his disciples, Ayu Khandro and Changchub Dorje, transmitted to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche practiced this method as much as possible and started to transmit it to his students after visiting the sacred cave at Maratika. Therefore try to do the Long life practice “Union of Primordial Essences” in the morning. In the afternoon or evening you can do the Guruyoga of the White A, Akar Lamai Naljor, collectively or alone, with a Ganapuja if possible.

5th Month, 1st day Fri. 18th
June 2004

This is the anniversary of Chogyur Lingpa (1829-1870) a Nyingmapa Master of Dzogchen, one of the three most important Rimed masters of the 19th century. Try to do a practice of the Guruyoga of the White A, Akar Lamai Naljor.

5th Month, 9th day Sun. 27th
June 2004

There is no 10th day this month so today is a special day of Guru Padmasambhava. In general you can do the Guruyoga of Padmasambhava practice on this day. If you can, try to do a Ganapuja collectively with your Vajra brothers and sisters, otherwise you can do the Long life practice “Union of Primordial Essences”.

5th Month, 14th day Thu. 1st
July 2004

This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Long or Medium Thun collectively or alone, reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

5th Month, 15th day Fri. 2nd
July 2004

FULL MOON. This is a special day for the Long life practice of Amitayus, so you can do the Long life practice “Union of Primordial Essences”. The best moment to do it is between 7 and 8 in the morning, if possible, either collectively or alone. If you can, try to do a Ganapuja as well.

It is also the Dzamling Chisang (Lit. smoke puja of the world in general) so if you know how to do it, you can do the Sanqod (Sangchod) in the morning.

5th Month, 25th day Mon. 12th
July 2004

This is a Dakini day as well as an

ably in the early morning. Otherwise you can do a Medium or Short Thun or a Ganapuja.

6th Month, 4th day Wed. 21st
July 2004

This is the anniversary of the Dharmachakra (the first turning of the Wheel of the Dharma): the first time that Buddha Sakyamuni gave the teaching of the Four Noble Truths to his disciples at Sarnath, after his illumination. To honor the Lord Buddha on this special day you can do a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters.

*6th Month, 10th day Tue. 27th
July 2004

Today is the anniversary of the birth of Padmasambhava. On this day when it is 8 am in Oddiyana Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will give the transmission of Guruyoga with the specific practice linked to the anniversary of Padmasambhava. In this way the transmission will be alive because the transmission has no distance. Rinpoche will transmit and throughout the world people who do the practice at the same moment will be in the transmission and will thus receive the transmission. (In Italy, this practice will be done at 5 am.)

It is also the anniversary of Yeshe Tsogyal, the main consort and disciple of Padmasambhava so it will be beneficial to do a Guruyoga of Padmasambhava with the Long life mantra and a Ganapuja as we usually do, otherwise you can do the Long life practice “Union of Universal Wisdom”.

SEE THE GLOBAL TIMETABLE

6th Month, 14th day Fri. 30th
July 2004

This is the anniversary of the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), a disciple of Rigdzin Chenpo Kumaradza and a famous master of Dzogchen Upadesa. On this day it is good to do Akar Lamai Naljor, Guruyoga with the White A, collectively or alone.

6th Month, 15th day Sat. 31st
July 2004

FULL MOON. This is the anniversary of Gampopa, the main disciple of Milarepa, founder of the Kagyupa School and author of “The Precious Ornament of Liberation”. It is, therefore, an excellent day to do Akar Lamai Naljor, the Guruyoga with the White A. It is also good to do the Long life practice “Union of Primordial Essences” of Guru Amitayus and, if possible, a Ganapuja.

6th Month, 25th day Tue. 10th
August 2004

This is a Dakini day, so it is a positive day for reinforcing the function of our energy and creating a vital contact with the energy of the uni-

tion of the Six Lokas”. If you have the chance, you can also do a Short or Medium Thun or a Ganapuja, collectively or alone.

7 t h

Month,
10th day
Wed. 25th
A u g u s t
2004

It is a special day of Guru Padmasambhava as well as the anniversary of Jomo Menmo (1248-1283), a famous yogini, terton and reincarnation of Yeshe Tsogyal and consort of the terton Guru Chowang. Therefore it is an ideal day to do Akar Lamai Naljor, the Guruyoga of the White A, and a Ganapuja, if you have the possibility.

7th Month, 15th day Mon. 30th
August 2004

FULL MOON. This is the anniversary of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso and Padma Karpo, a famous 17th century Drugpa Kargyupa Master. Therefore it is an excellent day to do the Long life practice of the Dakini Mandarava, “Cycle of Life’s Vajra”, with a Ganapuja if possible as well as Akar Lamai Naljor, the Guruyoga of the White A collectively with your Vajra brothers and sisters or alone.

7th Month 19th day Thu. 2nd
September 2004

This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Long or Medium Thun in the usual way, reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

7th Month, 25th day Thu. 9th
September 2004

This is a Dakini day and also the anniversary of Phagmo Drupa (1110-1170), the chief disciple of Gampopa. Try to do a Ganapuja together with your Vajra sisters and brothers. If there are no other practitioners nearby, you can do a Medium Thun on your own. In either case, when you transform yourself into the Dakini Simhamuka, recite her heart mantra as much as possible and then do an intensive practice of Ekajati.



7th Month, 30th day Tue. 14th September 2004
DARK MOON. This day is ideal for purification practices. Try to do either the "Purification of the Six Lokas" or the "Namcho Shitroi Naljor", the Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations, either collectively or on your own. Try to do a Ganapuja as well, if possible.

8th Month, 10th day Thu. 23rd September 2004
 This is a special day of Guru Pad-

sible, you can do a Medium Thun alone reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

8th Month, 30th day Thu. 14th October 2004
DARK MOON. This day is excellent for practicing the "Purification of the Six Lokas" if you know how to do it. Otherwise you can do the Medium or Long Thun or a Ganapuja.

9th Month, 3rd day Sat. 16th

sion. This practice should be done at the appointed time together with your Vajra brothers and sisters or, if that is not possible, alone. (In Italy, this practice will be done at 1 PM.)

SEE THE GLOBAL TIMETABLE

9th Month, 30th day Fri. 12th November 2004
DARK MOON. This is a good day to do "Namcho Shitroi Naljor", the Yoga of the Peaceful and Wrathful Manifestations, in the morning. It is

Long Thun, collectively or alone, reciting the heart mantra as many times as possible.

11th Month, 10th day Tue. 21st December 2004
 This is a day special to Guru Padmasambhava. If you have the possibility it is good to do a collective Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters; otherwise you can do the Short or Medium Thun on your own. This is considered to be a special

This is a day of the Dakinis in general, so if you have the opportunity practice a collective Ganapuja, with the transformation of the Dakini Simhamuka, and recite her heart mantra as many times as possible. Otherwise you can do a Medium Thun either collectively or personally.

12th Month, 30th day Tue. 8th February 2005
DARK MOON. The last day of the Wood Monkey Year. This is a spe-

WOOD MONKEY YEAR 2004-2005



masambhava; therefore you can do the Guruyoga of Padmasambhava. If you have time and the possibility you can do a Ganapuja with the Guruyoga and the Long life

practice of Guru Padmasambhava together with your Vajra brothers and sisters. Otherwise you can do the Long life practice "Universal Wisdom Union".

8th Month, 15th day Tue. 28th September 2004
FULL MOON. This is an important day to do the Long life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences". It is best to do it early in the morning and a Ganapuja in the evening.

8th Month, 19th day Sat. 2nd October 2004
 This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Long Thun with your Vajra brothers and sisters, or if that is not possible, you can do a Medium Thun alone reciting the heart mantra of Ekajati as many times as possible.

8th Month, 25th day Fri. 8th October 2004
 This is a Dakini day and also the anniversary of two great Dzogchen masters, Rigdzin Kumaraja, who transmitted the Dzogchen teachings to Longchenpa and to the third Karmapa, and of Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu (1698-1755), a great Dzogchen master of the Nyingmapa School. It is therefore an excellent day to do Akar Lamai Naljor, the Guruyoga with the White A. If you can do it in the morning, that is best. Then, if you have the time, you can do a Medium or Long Thun later in the day, with an intense practice of Simhamuka, or a Ganapuja, if you have the possibility.

8th Month, 27th day Mon. 11th October 2004
 This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati, so try to do a Long Thun with your Vajra brothers and sisters, or if that is not pos-

October 2004
 This is the anniversary of Rigdzin Jigmed Lingpa (1729-1798); a great Dzogchen master who was the author of many books, among which is the Longchen Nyingthig, which he wrote after having contact with Longchenpa through visions. Therefore, on this important day, you should try to do Akar Lamai Naljor, the Guruyoga with the White A.

9th Month, 10th day Sat. 23rd October 2004
 This is a special day of Guru Padmasambhava. It is also the anniversary of the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa and of Tertön Sogyal, a previous reincarnation of Sogyal Rinpoche and discoverer of many terms. It is therefore a good day to do the Long life practice of Guru Padmasambhava "Universal Wisdom Union", which is included in the Medium or Long Thun. You can do this in the usual way or, if you have the possibility, you can do it with a Ganapuja.

9th Month, 15th day Wed. 27th October 2004
FULL MOON. This is a day of the Buddha and a good day to do the Long life practice of Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences", either collectively or individually according to your possibilities, in the morning and in the evening a Ganapuja.

9th Month, 22nd day Thu. 4th November 2004
 This day is the important celebration of Buddha Sakyamuni's descent to earth from the realm of the Divinities. It is called "Lhabab Tuchen", the Great Time of the Descent of the Divinities. It is an ideal day to do a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters. If there are none nearby, you can do a Short or Medium Thun on your own.

*9th Month, 25th day Sun. 7th November 2004
 The 25th is a Dakini day and also the anniversary of the great Dzogchen Master Adzom Drugpa (1842-1924), a previous incarnation of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. He was a disciple of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and a master of great masters such as Changchub Dorje and Ayu Khandro. Therefore, when it is 7 PM in East Tibet on this day, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will give the transmission of Guruyoga with the specific practice linked to the anniversary of Adzom Drugpa. In this way the transmission will be live because the transmission has no distance. Rinpoche will transmit and throughout the world people who do the practice at the same moment will be in the transmission and will thus receive the transmis-

sion. This practice should be done at the appointed time together with your Vajra brothers and sisters or, if that is not possible, alone. (In Italy, this practice will be done at 1 PM.)

10th Month, 10th day Sun. 21st November 2004

This is a special day of Guru Padmasambhava, the day on which he arrived in central Tibet. It is considered that on this day, at the end of the 8th century, King Songtsen Gampo, the ancient king of Dharma, vanished dissolving into a statue of Avalokiteshvara. Therefore it is good to do the Guruyoga of Padmasambhava with the Long life mantra and a Ganapuja. Otherwise you can do the Long life practice "Universal Wisdom Union". If it is possible, the best moment to do the Guruyoga is early in the morning between 7 and 8. You can do the Ganapuja later in the afternoon.

10th Month 11th day Mon. 22nd November 2004
 This is an important day for the practice of Ekajati.

10th Month, 15th day Fri. 26th November 2004
FULL MOON. This day is considered to be the day to honor the Lord Buddha in general, and it is one of the best days to do the Long life Practice with the Dakini Mandarava in particular. Generally the best moment to do this kind of practice is between 7 and 8 in the morning, but if you don't have this possibility, then do it in the afternoon or later in the evening when you are free. It is also a good day to do a Ganapuja.

10th Month, 25th day Tue. 7th December 2004
 Today is a Dakini day and the anniversary of Tsongkhapa (1357-1491), who made a synthesis of the previous schools and founded the Gelugpa School. It is a very beneficial day for reinforcing the energy of the universe so try to perform a Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters. If there are no other practitioners nearby you can do the Medium Thun on your own, transforming into the Dakini Simhamuka and reciting the heart mantra as many times as possible.

10th Month, 29th day Sat. 11th December 2004
DARK MOON. There is no 30th day this month so today is the **DARK MOON.** It is an excellent day to do purification practice so try to do the Purification of the Six Lokas and a Ganapuja in the evening.

11th Month, 8th day Sun. 19th December 2004
 This is a special day for doing the practice of Ekajati so try to do a

day of Guru Padmasambhava called Padma Gyalpo. It is the day in which he arrived in the capital of Oddiyana and became prince to the King Indrabhuti; therefore it is an excellent day to do the Guruyoga of Padmasambhava with a Ganapuja.

11th Month, 15th day Sun. 26th December 2004
FULL MOON. Today it is important to try to do the Long life practice of Guru Amitayus, Union of Primordial Essences, in the usual way, and, if possible, a Ganapuja.

11th Month, 25th day Wed. 5th January 2005
 This is a day of the Dakinis in general, so if you have the opportunity practice a collective Ganapuja, with the transformation of the Dakini Simhamuka, and recite her heart mantra as many times as possible. Otherwise you can do a Medium Thun either collectively or personally.

11th Month, 30th day Mon. 10th January 2005
DARK MOON. This is an excellent day to do purification practice so try to do the Purification of the Six Lokas and a Ganapuja in the evening.

12th Month, 10th day Wed. 19th January 2005
 This day is the anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava's coronation as Prince of Orgyen at the invitation of King Idrabhodi. We can perform a Ganapuja collectively or do the Long life practice, "Universal Wisdom Union" either collectively or personally, according to circumstances.

12th Month, 11th day Thu. 20th January 2005
 This is a good day to do a Medium or Long Thun with an intensive practice of the mantra of Ekajati.

12th Month, 15th day Tue. 25th January 2005
FULL MOON. This is in general a day for honoring the Lord Buddha, and in particular an ideal day for the Long life practice of Guru Amitayus, "Union of Primordial Essences". If possible try to do a collective Ganapuja with your Vajra brothers and sisters in the evening.

12th Month, 18th day Fri. 28th January 2005
 This is the anniversary of the great Dzogchen master Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363). On this very important day try to do the Guruyoga Akar Lamai Naljor, Guruyoga with the White A, either collectively or personally.
 12th Month, 25th day Fri. 4th February 2005

cial day for purification practices so try to do "Purification of the Six Lokas" and a Ganapuja if possible.

TIBETAN NEW YEAR WOOD BIRD

Starts on Wednesday 9th February 2005

GLOBAL TIMETABLE

ANNIVERSARY OF PADMASAMBHAVA
 6th Tibetan month - 10th day
 Celebration at 8 a.m. Oddiyana time.
 Monday 26th July 2004

17:00 Hawaii
 20:00 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver
 21:00 Denver, Salt Lake City, Pagosa Springs, Edmonton
 22:00 Lima, Quito, Chicago, Mexico City
 23:00 Caracas, San Juan, Santiago, New York, Conway, Montreal, Atlanta, Detroit, Havana, Kingston, Indianapolis, Ottawa

Tuesday 27th July 2004

00:00 Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bermuda
 03:00 GMT, Reykjavic,
 04:00 London, Dublin, Lisbon
 05:00 Johannesburg, Rome, Berlin, Oslo, Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Brussels, Geneva, Prague, Salzburg, Stockholm, Budapest, Vienna, Warsaw
 06:00 Kuwait City, Riyadh, Tashkent, Helsinki, Athens, Ankara, Beirut, Jerusalem, Tallinn, Vilnius, Istanbul
 07:00 Moscow, Murmansk, Baghdad
 08:00 ODDIYANA, Islamabad
 08:30 New Delhi, Bombay
 08:45 Kathmandu
 09:00 Dacca
 09:30 Rangoon
 10:00 Bangkok, Jakarta, Saigon
 11:00 Singapore, Beijing, Lhasa, Manila, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Perth
 12:00 Tokyo, Seoul,
 12:30 Darwin, Adelaide
 13:00 Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney
 14:00 Vladivostok
 15:00 Fiji, Wellington, Auckland, Kamchatka

ANNIVERSARY OF ADZOM DRUGPA
 9th Tibetan month - 25th day
 Sunday 7th November 2004

01.00 Wellington, Auckland
 02.00 Hawaii
 03.00 Fairbanks
 04.00 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver
 05.00 Denver, Salt Lake City,

continued on page 11

right, one turns in at the next road which is a bumpy dirt driveway, past some small houses on the right and the left, and continues through a gate, going on up the palm tree drive to the land. You will see Rinpoche's house and the Gonpa directly in front of you. You can always ask "Donde esta Tashigar"...(Where is Tashigar?) and everyone knows about it. (It is most advisable to have some basic Spanish before arriving)

Nearby towns to Pedro Gonzalez are: Playa El Agua*, 15 minutes' drive, Manzanillo*, 12 minutes, El Tirano*, 20 minutes, Alta Gracia, five minutes, Santa Ana, 10 minutes, Juan Griego, 15 minutes, La Asuncion, 20 minutes, Porlamar, 45 minutes. The houses and hotel at Bahia de Plata* 10 minutes.

* Near to a beach

Language

Even some basic knowledge of Spanish gives one a distinct advantage. Apart from airport/ good hotel staff, very few people speak English. Tashigar Norte is located near the very quiet village of Pedro Gonzalez, where there are almost no foreign tourists.

Time

The perception of time, such as in "being on time" is probably the most noticeable culture difference. Most people are joyful, relaxed and friendly. Don't expect them to rush or run though – they will take their time for everything they do. Things are not quick here, but after a while it's really nice to get into a different life rhythm...

Security

One just needs to bear in mind that we really are wealthy in comparison with any average person here, hence the need for presence and awareness: don't display any expensive clothing, equipment, jewelry, and money... also out of respect for local population and their way of life. When staying in a house or hotel, you need to hide or lock your cash and valuables, but than you would do the same when traveling anywhere else... I feel though that Pedro Gonzalez is certainly a lot safer and than any big city nowadays. People are very nice and friendly, curious about the Community and us. Pedro Gonzalez is a small village – most people are asleep by 9-10 p.m. One should be careful though when going to tourist places – Playa el Agua, Porlamar.

Cost of living

A truly relative but very frequently asked question. A family in the village would live happily on the equivalent of 150-200 US dollars a month. You may buy a whole carload of groceries in a good supermarket for Bs. 100 000. A beer costs Bs. 500-800. A bottle of very good rum, Bs. 12000-20000. A bottle of nice Chilean wine costs Bs. 7000-12000. An average meal with beer in a simple restaurant will set you back by Bs. 10000. A 1 liter bottle of water, Bs. 800. A liter of lead-free petrol, Bs. 80. A kilo of fish, Bs. 4000-8000. You should always ask the price of anything you buy beforehand - i.e., pina coladas on the beach, unmarked items in stores - it is sometimes not acceptable.

Exchanging currency

You will get the best exchange rate if you carry US dollars cash. Some places change Euros, but the rate is not usually very good. There are unofficial exchange places everywhere on the island. It is good to compare rates and talk to community people before exchanging currency. Beware of street touts offering fantastic rates in tourist places, like Playa El Agua or Porlamar, as there are lots of fake 20 000 and 50 000 Bs. notes in circulation. Any bank or official exchange office will only give you the official rate, much lower than the free market.

Same as changing travelers' checks, getting cash withdrawals from debit cards or credit cards is not convenient, as you will get the official rate for your currency, plus you will be charged a commission by the bank. The ATM Machines do not accept most cards from the US, for the protection of the customer. Usually one must go into the bank and do a transaction with the teller using the card and passport. The cards from Europe are more widely accepted.

Transportation: car rentals, bikes, busses and taxis

There are car rentals at the airport and other major tourist centers (near the Hilton Hotel in Porlamar, and in Playa el Agua) from about 10 USD a day up to 45. You should be able to negotiate a good rate for a long-term rental. Always ask for the price in bolivares – don't accept to pay in dollars, as the rate fluctuates. You will need to leave your credit card imprint. Be sure that you take it back when bringing your car in at the end of your stay. Pay in bolivares cash at the end, not in dollars. Shop around, allow plenty of time and negotiate the best rate. Check the car carefully before leaving the rental place – many of them are in quite a poor technical condition. Budget and Hyundai are two main agencies where Community people have been renting cars.

You will not need an international driving license; the one you have from your country is acceptable. Carry your documents on you, in an infrequent case you'd get stopped by the police. Most of the rules for driving are the same as other countries, but its very relaxed and chaotic by Western standards. A note of caution: watch out for unmarked one-way streets in Porlamar. The priorities are not really respected – just slow down and see if you can get through. Many cars don't have stoplights or direction indicators – they may stop or turn unexpectedly – keep your distance. When a driver sticks his arm out of the window, it means that he's about to stop or turn...

Taxis are widely available. In fact, any passing car is a potential taxi. Just stand by the road and put your arm out... Don't be put off by the age and the external aspect of most of them – they are perfectly OK to get you safely where you need to go. Community can share taxi rides, and cut the costs that way. Always agree on the price of your trip before you get in.

Por puesto (shared taxis) and local busses are cheap and frequent. Learning how to use them is a lot of fun, although you will need

plenty of time to find your way around.

It is too hot and hilly for biking as a means of transportation from other towns. But bikes are cheap - about fifty or sixty dollars - so if you are staying in Pedro Gonzalez it might make sense to buy or rent one to get to the land and beach. Then you could donate them to the Community or sell them.

Telephone and Internet services

In Pedro Gonzales, there are Cantv public telephones operating with phone cards available everywhere. At the pharmacy (more like a little drugstore – very useful and friendly) there are Telcel public telephones with very good rates for national and international calls. There is also one at the yellow-house bar at Zaragoza Beach. Calling mobile phones is quite expensive, as it is calling from one. Both mobile phones companies; Telcel and Movilnet have a pre-paid system. You need to buy a telephone and than the cards. People, who have a good tri-band mobile phone, can buy a SIM card here at the Venezuelan company Digicel, but the network coverage is not very good.

There are many Internet places in the larger towns, but none for the time being in Pedro Gonzalez.

Water and plumbing

There is water shortage on the island. The water comes into the houses from the mains on the mainland (!), sometimes as infrequently as once every 8 days. The pressure is very weak and most houses have electric, very noisy pumps to ensure the filling of individual water tanks. When renting a house or a room, always ask to have a water supply system clearly explained. When no sufficient water supply comes from the mainland, people buy trucks of water to be delivered to their tanks (Bs. 25000 for a 10000 liter cistern). No water on the island is really suitable for drinking. Bottled water is available everywhere in 10, 2,5 and 1 liter bottles. It's 10 times more expensive than petrol though...

Caution: you should never throw any toilet paper or any object in the toilet, no matter if in a simple village house, an expensive restaurant, hotel or in Tashigar. There are containers provided for it everywhere.

Electrical current

The current voltage and the plugs are the same as in the US – 110V. There are frequent power fluctuations and cuts. Therefore, a good surge protector is advised for electronic equipment, especially for computers. They are available from any electric shop here. Most laptop computers can use 110V or 220V current. Check before coming, as you may need to bring a voltage adapter with you. Plug adapters from European to US style plugs are not always available. Better bring one if you think you need it.

Temperature and clothing

It is hot, and mostly one will not need warm clothes or rain gear. Casual summer clothes are the best. The Gar may get very windy at times, so it might be good to have a shawl or windbreaker in the evening.

Inexpensive, casual clothing and swimsuits are widely available – don't bring too much "tropical

gear" – it'll cost you a lot more in your home country. Bring good walking sandals though.

Shopping for groceries

If you are happy with local produce and simple food, you will find everything you need in Pedro Gonzalez within walking distance. There is a fishmonger, a greengrocer, a small supermarket, a chicken shop, a bakery, and 3 liquor stores. There is also a great pharmacy – drugstore, open late, which sells even bike spare parts... All fish, fruit and vegetables are wonderful. Venezuelan rum and beer are good too. The main shops, American style shopping malls and supermarkets are in Porlamar. If you have any specific dietary requirements (tofu, miso, tamari, rice cakes, green tea, herbal teas...) better bring your own stuff. There are problems with imported goods due to the increase in US dollar rate.

Restaurants

There are a few fish restaurants on Zaragoza Beach near the village, open only for lunch. If you want an evening meal, you need to order it in advance. There is only one restaurant in the center of Pedro Gonzalez. Of course, there are many restaurants in Porlamar and other nearby places.

Nightlife

On weekends, there are nice places in and near Pedro Gonzalez, with karaoke and sometimes-live Latin music. If you didn't have time to take any salsa and merengue dancing classes, you'll surely be able to learn some while in Margarita – it's great fun and lovely energy. There are many nice places for drinks and dancing in Porlamar.

Mosquitoes and other little creatures

No tropical place would be complete without this little note on nasty creatures. Don't get paranoid tough – apart from the mosquitoes, you may not even see any of them while you are here. There is no malaria on Margarita. Mosquitoes and eye-flies are quite nasty and plentiful in the rainy season (December, January), less so the rest of the year. There are plenty of repellents available, my favorite being OSI. If you are used to any particular brand, bring your own. If the house or hotel where you are staying doesn't have mosquito screens (very few do), the best is to buy a cheap fan and put it on at night. You can also buy a mosquito net, or bring one, to hang over your bed, but it may get very hot underneath.

There are big, totally harmless cockroaches in most houses. Spiders too. From what the locals say, I gathered that the only dangerous creature is the centipede – they like dirty, dark, humid places.

There are small scorpions (black and red), but they sting just like a bee, nothing dramatic. If you have a bed platform made of cement, check under the mattress.

If camping in the Gar or elsewhere, be cautious – check for snakes, spiders and scorpions.

I personally never saw any of them in any of the houses though.

Sun

The sun is very strong, so use plenty of sunscreen. You can

bring some or buy it here - they sell it everywhere. You can buy nice sun hats everywhere too.

Medicines and medical care

Most basic medicines are available, but if you need anything specific, bring it with you. Dear ladies: please note that tampons are available, but very expensive. Bring some with you. There are clinics and doctors nearby, some of them totally free of charge!

Mail and sending things

The postal services are very unreliable; so don't count on people sending you mail or things while you are here.

If you need to send any documents, etc. you'll have to use DHL in Porlamar (65000 Bs. for an envelope to any European country).

You will find lots of valuable info, including the map of Margarita, in the Venezuelan Dzogchen Community web site: <http://www.dzogchen-venezuela.org/>

Looking forward to seeing you here in Margarita!

Beata Debarge

Flights to Porlamar, Isla Margarita

YOU CAN OFTEN FIND CHEAPER FLIGHTS AT THE CARACAS AIRPORT TO FLY TO PORLAMAR.

FROM EUROPE

There are direct flights to Porlamar, Isla Margarita from Germany, Holland, and the UK.

Germany

Round trip flight for around Euro 800 from Munich-Porlamar (via Caracas). The direct flights from Germany with Condor from Frankfurt to Polamar are generally more expensive in comparison to the flights via Caracas.

Holland

There is also a direct connection from Amsterdam with the Dutch airline, Martin Air.

(courtesy of Jakob Winkler)

UK

Gatwick Airport, London with Air 2000. The flights leave on Wednesday but will only allow a return in two weeks maximum. (courtesy Tim Walker)

US & CANADA

The US is more complicated as there are very few direct flights to Porlamar. Spending a night in Miami or Houston is preferable to spending the night in Caracas *but* Bodhi Krause from the Mid West says, "All flight connections from the Midwest arrive at night in Caracas after the last flight to Porlamar. I stay overnight at Hotel Tanausu in Catia del Mar (next to the airport) for 45,000 Bs. Taxi is 15,000 Bs. It's simple and clean and safe."

Also, Toronto, Canada may be an option for direct flights. James Fox went from NYC via Toronto, Canada:

"Air Transat flies charters out of Toronto (and Montreal) once a week on Sunday. There is a chance they are discontinuing that route."

Air Transat office
877-872-6728 or 877-277-3948



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEWS

merigar

MERIGAR PROGRAM 2004

APRIL 23-25
Yantra Yoga course on the preliminary movements, first and second series of Yantras

with Laura Evangelisti

Participants should have already completed beginners' course.

The course starts at 16 p.m. on Friday April 23.

Cost: € 105 with discounts for members.

APRIL 30-MAY 5
Course of explanation & practice of the Song of the Vajra Dance

(part 1), with Rita Renzi and the supervision of Prima Mai

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Friday April 30.

Cost: € 210 with discounts for members.

MAY 8-9
Practice retreat of Guru Yoga & Karma Yoga

The retreat starts at 9 a.m. on May 8.

MAY 14-16
Course of the Liberation of the Six Lokas Dance

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Friday May 14.

Cost: € 75 with discounts for members.

MAY 29-30
Practice retreat of Guru Yoga & Karma Yoga

The retreats starts at 9 a.m. on May 29.

MAY 30 - JUNE 3
Retreat of explanation & practice of the Guru Yoga of Garab Dorje & the Semdzin

with Costantino Albini

The course starts at 4 p.m. on Wednesday June 2.

Cost: € 125 with discounts for members.

JUNE 12-13
Introduction to the Practice of Contemplation

with Costantino Albini

The course starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday June 12.

Cost: € 50 with discounts for members.

JUNE 18-21
Intensive Yantra Yoga retreat on the third series of Yantra

with Laura Evangelisti

Participants should already have a good knowledge of the base of Yantra Yoga.

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Friday June 18.

Cost: € 140 with discounts for members.

JUNE 25-27
Course of explanation & construction of the Namkha

with Cristiana De Falco

The course starts at 6 p.m. on Friday June 25.

Cost: € 75 with discounts for members.

JULY 3-16
Retreat of explanation & practice of Korva Tongtrug

with Costantino Albini

Explanation & practice of the Three Vajra Dance & Karma Yoga practice

The retreat starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday July 3.

Cost: € 225 with discounts for members.

JULY 7
Worldwide practice of the Song of the Vajra Dance

This practice day is included in the retreat program.

JULY 17-AUGUST 15
Complete retreat of the Santi Maha Sangha Base Level, Yantra Yoga & Vajra Dance

with Jim Valby, Prima Mai, Laura Evangelisti & Rita Renzi.

The retreat is already fully booked.

JULY 27
World Transmission Day – Anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava

Guru Yoga of Padmasambhava practice

The practice starts at 5 a.m.

AUGUST 18-25
Retreat of explanation & practice of Mandarava Long Life combined with Chudlen

with Nina Robinson

Explanation of the Tibetan pronouncement by Cristiana De Falco

The retreat starts at 10 a.m. on Wednesday August 18.

Cost: € 200 with discounts for members.

AUGUST 28-29
Yantra Yoga Course for Beginners

with Laura Evangelisti

The retreat starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday August 28.

Cost: € 70 with discounts for members.

SEPTEMBER 1-7
Course of explanation & practice of the Song of the Vajra Dance

(part 2) with Prima Mai

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Wednesday September 1.

Cost: € 245 with discounts for members.

SEPTEMBER 18-19
Course of explanation & practice of the Liberation of the Six Lokas Dance

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Saturday September 18.

Cost: € 50 with discounts for members.

SEPTEMBER 25-26
Retreat of Shitro practice & Karma Yoga practice

The retreat starts at 5 p.m. on Saturday September 25.

OCTOBER 1-5
In-depth Course of Song of the Vajra Dance

with Prima Mai

The course starts at 5 p.m. on Friday October 1.

Cost: € 175 with discounts for members.

ENROLLMENT

If you wish to enrol for a course, seminar or retreat, please contact the office to book a place and send advance payment of 25 Euro to confirm your booking via postal order at least 10 days before the beginning of the course, indicating the course you are confirming your place on. The postal order should be addressed to: Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen – Merigar – 58031 Arcidosso GR.

You should make your booking with the office sufficiently ahead of time since courses that do not reach a minimum number of participants will be cancelled.

To take part in the activities of the Association you need to be a member. A first instalment of 15 Euro for the ordinary member's card will be required before taking part. A first instalment alone does not entitle you to the discounts for members.

Discounts for paid up members are: 20% for ordinary members, 40% for sustaining members and 50% for students and retired people on a low income.

For further information, contact:

Merigar Office
MERIGAR

Dzogchen Community in ITALY
58031 Arcidosso GR, Italy
Tel.: +39 0564 966837

Email:

merigaroffice@tiscalinet.it -
<http://web.tiscalinet.it/merigar>

Mandarava Chudlen and Purification Medicine Available at Merishop, Merigar

We would like to inform the Dzogchen Community members that the Mandarava Chudlen pills and Purification Medicine are still available at Merigar. You can buy them directly at Merigar or order them by email at merishop@dzogchen.it

Chudlen for Mandarava Practice

These chudlen herbal pills are associated with Mandarava Long life practice. Take one pill at the indicated place during the practice every morning before breakfast. Diet: avoid meat, eggs, fish, spicy and greasy food, garlic, onions, raw vegetables, vinegar, alcohol, cigarettes. Food advised: cereals, cooked vegetables and fruit, yogurt. Behavior: avoid strenuous body activities and sexual intercourse; short walks are advised. One box contains seven pills and costs 10 Euros. Cost of

shipping one box: 5 Euros for Italy and Europe. Payment COD or by credit card (Visa) in Italy and Europe, by credit card only for other countries.

Purification Medicine

This medicine has been produced according to the instructions of Guru Padmasambhava and contains additional ingredients adapted for our time. It contains eleven herbs including calendula, saffron, bamboo and nutmeg. It is used for purifying the body and removing toxins such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs. It is especially beneficial for stopping smoking and harmonizing the functions of the organs and the circulation of blood. Take one teaspoon of medicine with a glass of tepid water one hour before breakfast and dinner. Diet: avoid garlic, onions, meat, heavy and raw food, coffee and strong tea.

Purification Ointment

Contains eight herbs including cloves, aloewood and sandalwood. Apply to the skin once a day at the time of taking the Purification Medicine. One box, containing the medicine and the ointment, is sufficient for one week and costs 25 Euros. Cost of shipping one box of Chudlen or Purification Medicine: 5 Euros for Italy and Europe. Payment by COD or credit card (Visa) in Italy and Europe, by credit card only in the other countries.

For these pills and medicines you can pay by COD or by credit card. If you choose the credit card, you can send your number by fax (+39 0564 968110) or we will give you instructions for a safe web site on receiving your order.

Yantra Yoga with Laura Evangelisti

Spring and Summer Europe. 2004

SWITZERLAND

April 30-May 2

Course for those who have already done a beginner's course
Contact: Monique Lequen, email: lequen@infomaniak.ch

ROME, ITALY

May 15-16

Course for those who have already done a beginner's course
Contact: Alessandra Policreti, email: apolicreti@hotmail.com

NAPOLI, ITALY

May 22-23

Course for those who have already done a beginner's course
Contact: Fabio Risoli, email: fabio.risolo@libero.it

DEJAMLING, FRANCE

May 29-June 1

Preliminaries, 1st and 2nd series of Yantras
Contact: Michel Touveron, email: michel.touve@tiscal.fr

MERIGAR, ITALY

June 17-21

Intensive Yantra Yoga Course 3rd series

July 17-August 14

Merigar SMS, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga Retreat

August 28-29

Beginners' course

Contact:

Merigar Secretary, email: merigaroffice@tiscalinet.it

Merigar Karma Yoga

An Invitation to Merigar

We all know Merigar has grown very much in the last years and so has the Community. We have recently published information to explain the necessity of a reorganization in order to keep up with the needs. The base of any development is the people, in particular in a Community like ours. Karma Yoga remains one of the key points around which Community life rotates. We know this is practice, connected with Guruyoga and devotion, is also collaboration. It is collaboration with our Teacher and Vajra brothers and sisters. Karma Yoga is one of the best ways to show our commitment concretely.

The Gakyil at Merigar decided at the last meeting to revive peoples' awareness of this point. A special issue of the Merigar Letter will be dedicated to this subject, including Rinpoche's words concerning Karma Yoga in general and in connection with the Santi Maha Sangha study and practice. We will invite all practitioners in Italy to join in and make themselves available for structured Karma Yoga.

One of the ideas is to also offer to some practitioners from abroad, someone who can spend some time away from their house and country, to stay in Merigar for one or two months to help with activities of Karma Yoga. This may correspond to the desire of some practitioners to live for some time in the special place of Merigar.

The work will be mainly physical work, like cleaning, keeping of the land and roads and helping with maintenance, but could also be work of other kind. We really need a lot!

Merigar can host a couple of practitioners at a time, for 1 or 2 months each. Although Karma Yoga is meant to be absolutely free, Merigar will offer to these volunteers' food and lodging in the dormitory.

Whoever is interested to answer this request should send an email, specifying name, surname, age, country, period of time and kind of work that he/she is ready to do, and any particular help that they may need in order to get a visa, if necessary.

We will respond and try to coordinate all this with the Gakyil and the Gekoes.

We hope this proposal may appeal to someone; it will be a very interesting experience for the person and for us as Merigar Community besides being a wonderful opportunity of practice.

Thanks to you all.

Merigar Gakyil.

**VAJRA DANCE COURSES, FRANCE
JUNE AND JULY, 2004
WITH STOFFELINA VERDONK**

JUNE 4-6

The course of the Vajra Dance of the Liberation of the Six Lokas

JULY 1-7

The course of the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra (2nd part)

Both courses will be held in Dejamling - our Community's center in South France (near Montpellier).

For information please contact:
Nadia Poureau
Email: cadette@club-internet.fr

New Gakyil Milano, Italy

Blue: Chiara Montani, Tel: 0373 259591, Email: studiolyra@tiscali.it
Yellow: Stefano Guidotti, Tel: 348 2680802, Email: s.guid888@tiscali.it
Red: Clara Loviseti Tel: 02 4981746, Email: redazione@edithabitat.it

New Czech Gakyil

Blue gakyil blue@dzogchen.cz
Arnost Korinek, tel. +420 603 529 784, email: ernestoa@centrum.cz
Martin Cerny, tel.+420 723 808 342, email: ksg@centrum.cz
Assistant: Daniela Virágová, tel.+ 420 736 246 579, email: kamila_dany@hotmail.com

Red gakyil red@dzogchen.cz
Tereza Stárková, tel. +420 736 120 922, email: Tereza_Starkova@seznam.cz
Magdalena Hamsíková, tel. +420 737 963 960, email: hamsikovam@seznam.cz
Assistant: Jan Hadraba, email: onoko@seznam.cz

Yellow gakyil yellow@dzogchen.cz
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Jiri Rys, tel. +420 777 070 910, email: jirirys@volny.cz
Katerina Olavicová, tel. +420 605 709 122, email: lacatalina@email.cz

NEW DUTCH GAKYIL

BLUE:

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Trompenburgstraat 41, 1 st floor ,1079 TM Amsterdam , Holland
Phone : 00.31 (0) 20-6424325
Email : <annalen_gall@hotmail.com>

Marja Buist
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9728 SH , Groningen, Holland
phone: 00.31 (0) 50-5261570
Email <marjabuist@hotmail.com>

RED:

Anneco Blanson Henkemans
Kanaalstraat 92 HS , 1054 XL Amsterdam , Holland
Phone 00.31. (0) 20-6187124
Email <blanson@xs4all.nl>

Meindert Gijzen
Phone 00.31. 06.52358581
"Meindert Gijzen" <reflekt@wanadoo.nl>

YELLOW:

Jaap Plugge
Nauernaschevaartdijk 32 , 1551 BA Westzaan , Holland
Phone : 00.31 (0) 75-6223530
Email : "Jaap Plugge" <j.plugge@wxs.nl>

visit
The Mirror
on line

@

www.melong.com

**YANTRA YOGA RESIDENTIAL
A TWO PART COURSE AT KUNSELLING,
THE UK RETREAT CENTER,
SOUTH WALES**

Led by John Renshaw - Qualified 1st level Yantra Yoga Instructor

www.dzogchencommunity.org

Part 1 Weekend Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th May

John will lead a beginner's course in Yantra Yoga, which is open to all new participants. More experienced Yantra Yoga practitioners are also welcome to attend this weekend as a warm up for the subsequent more advanced course during the following week.

Part 2 Monday 31st May to Saturday 5th June

John will lead a more in depth retreat of Yantra Yoga for those who have already had some Yantra instruction. The principle focus will be as follows:

1 After clarifying the 3 preliminary groups we will try to stabilize and deepen our experience of the Yantras of the first 2 groups and their associated pranayamas. The aim will be to establish a basis of kumbhaka and to develop it.

Secondary considerations:

2 Develop a basic knowledge of our 3 humors (Lung, Thrispa, Becken) and 5 element characteristics. In many of Rinpoche's practices, it is considered useful that we are aware of this and apply this knowledge

3 Have a basic awareness in relation to the medical benefits of Yantra Yoga, and the functions of Prana based on Rinpoche's teaching on Yantra Yoga

4 Applying, where possible, and practicing dietary considerations based on the individuals type. We will have a dedicated cook who will serve full board food in accordance with the dietary needs of those practicing Yantra Yoga.

5 Receiving massage that will be provided by other practitioners experienced in this, for balancing our individual condition, especially relevant and useful for several days practice of Yantra Yoga.

Information about costs, schedule and how to get there:
www.dzogchencommunity.org

The UK Domain Name Purchase

The UK Gakyil are pleased to inform you that we have purchased a domain name for our web pages.

The new address is:
<http://www.dzogchencommunity.org/>

Fellow web masters *please* take note, the very old and long out of date "demon.co.uk" address still crops up here and there. It is completely dead.

The content is the same and was last updated in November. Thank you to everyone who informs me of broken links etc.

Best wishes to all!

Barry Patterson.

FOR SALE

1890's Tuscan farmhouse 120 sq.m. with independent studio 45 sq.m. restored in typical tuscan style. Spectacular views of merigar and surrounding countryside. 10 mins from Merigar. South facing. sun all day. House stands alone with small amount of land. & very quiet surroundings.

Tel: Antonella or Robin
0039 0564 966273

Dugu Choegyial Rinpoche Web Site

Dugu Choegyial Rinpoche Web Site is online, still as a work in progress. Included there is a small gallery of his beautiful art that will hopefully be expanded at <http://www.choegyialrinpoche.org> soon.

Errata

In the last issue #66 of The Mirror, the Santi Maha Sangha photo called Level 3 training at Tsegylgar on page 18 was actually Level 2 training.

**WINNERS OF
the GLEN EDDY
THANKA RAFFLE**

Thank you to everyone for participating and collaborating in the Raffle!

Here are the winners!

Tim Walker with number 46 has won the Goma Devi painting!

Ben Marder with number 101 has won the Guru Padmasambhava painting!

Naomi Zeitz with number 02 has won the Dorje Yudronma painting!

Many congratulations and thanks again for all of the support!

Glen Eddy

THANKA FRAMES

Pure silk brocade thanka frames beautifully made in Nepal
Ready for a painting/picture to be installed inside
Income entirely devoted to the Dzogchen Community's Projects

Colors:

Olive Green with golden lotus flowers

Navy Blue with golden lotus flowers

The inner section has a yellow and red silk brocade border
Measures: 59x90 cmts, inner section for the painting 25x40 cmts
Price upon quantity, one frame 40US\$ plus shipping
If interested please contact

fedemastro@yahoo.com or

Federica Mastropaolo
Via Sangemini 96, 00135 Rome Italy

Thank You!

tsegyalgar east & west

24 Hour Non- Stop
Guru Tragphur,
Worldwide Collective
Practice

It is often true that the most difficult challenges turn out to be the greatest opportunities for growth. We are pleased to inform you that our recent conversation with the Attorney General's Office regarding their concerns about our finances has proved very fruitful. The resulting Community review helped us to identify areas for improvement in our data-collecting procedures. In the process we learned that it was more appropriate for DCA to identify itself a religious non-profit rather than an educational non-profit organization.

Current and former Gakyil members had a very challenging experience, ensuring that the issues at hand got resolved. Even though the ramifications seemed potentially profound, the final result is that we are more organized than ever thanks to Michael Hess. Michael appeared out of the blue to help with his insight to resolve the situation. It is true that when "the going gets tough, the tough get going." In other words: why would we be Dzogchen practitioners if we do not integrate the difficulties we encounter in our path?

The Tsegyalgar Gakyil felt that it was important to seek financial expertise, but that it was just as essential to find a way to seek guidance, strength, and clarity in our practice as well. And so, the 24-hour Guru Tragpur practices were initiated: not only to support Tsegyalgar, but all of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's students who are experiencing difficulties. Created was an opportunity to collectively transform our difficult moments and grow together as a Sangha.

Beginning with January 31st, on the tenth day of each month, for three months, Guru Tragphur's mantra was recited without interruption for 24 hours worldwide. We, as Blue Gakyil, were absolutely thrilled at the enthusiastic and immediate response from all over the world. So many

of you wrote us, first to sign up, and then again later to tell us all the wonderful experiences you felt during the practice. The emails are still coming in every day.

All of the Gars, and more than 30 Dzogchen communities, small groups, and individuals in Africa, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Chile, Ecuador, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Greece, India, Peru, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, Venezuela, UK and USA offered practice, for lengths ranging from a few moments to the full 24 hours. Shortly after our first collective practice, our Community received extraordinary assistance from unexpected corners, and our immediate problems were solved! There is much hard work to be done to implement immediate and long-lasting improvements, but things are looking up. Knowing that we can count on your help and support has given us a great deal of enthusiasm and encouragement.

For those of you who are feeling sad about the conclusion of this particular set of practices, don't worry! Given the huge success of the Guru Tragphur project, we have decided to continue with the initiative of worldwide practice; the next will be Shitro! To keep informed of the developments please visit our website at <www.tsegyalgar.org>.

We send our deepest thanks from Tsegyalgar, and we look forward to your visits. It is beautiful to practice together beyond limitations of time and space, but it is equally wonderful to be able to do so "live." We welcome you here for retreats, Ganapujas, and for the Karmayoga experience of a lifetime at Khandroling to be part of the building of the new Universal Mandala, which we hope will be ready in August with your help!

As always, deepest love and boundless gratitude to our precious teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who is always so generous with his guidance and teachings, and to Rosa for her supportive presence.

Tsegyalgar Gakyil

CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU'S
VISIT TO THE GUARDIAN CABIN
AT TSEGYALGAR
SEPTEMBER 17, 2003.

We don't have any female Guardians here. If there was a female Guardian here, I don't know what would happen, we could have lots of problems.

This is [the cabin of] the Guardian Yava Rukshi, a Tsen (btsan) Guardian. Yava Rukshi is a male form. There is also the female Tsen - this class includes both males and females. When we first started here, there was a Tsen guardian called Bar-va Pun-dun. We used the syllable "ti ti ti ti ti ti". We did a lot of "tis". [In the class of] called Bar-va Pun-dun there are all types of male knights, but in some parts of the called Bar-va Pun-dun there are also queens with great courts.]

When I was in Santa Fe I had a clear dream about the Guardians here, not only at Tsegyalgar but also in the rest of America and in this case the supreme Tsen Guardian was Yava Rukshi. These Guardians have three kinds of localities that they govern just like three brothers. Each one has their own court and their own queen. I had a very clear dream about it and from that time on we have done [the practice of] Yava Rukshi.

When I went to Arizona many, many years ago, I was traveling by car one evening and the sky was red. It was incredible. We stopped for a bit because I wanted to do a ritual. At that time I didn't know that North America was governed by the Tsen. I didn't have a very clear idea about this. Like usual I did the practice of the Guardian Chagpa Melen (Jag pa me len) because he is linked to my personal Guardian. I really wanted to do it because the sky was incredibly red; it was an interesting manifestation. Laura Albin was also with me. When I finished doing the ritual, in the middle of that red sky, a rainbow manifested. It was very beautiful. From that, I had the idea that the Tsen class governed the country. After that I had some clearer dreams again about the Rolpa Kyadun and, in the end, the Yava Rukshi. So we decided to construct this

cabin because we need [the presence of] this Guardian.

That is the whole story and now he is here. He is a ferocious Guardian, not very polite like Dorje Legpa. Sometimes, he threatens us, "If you are not careful". He rides a red horse with a great lance and red banner, everything red like an American Indian.

A mosquito has already bitten me here, on my finger. [Rinpoche laughs] The Tsen Guardians protect us, but the mosquitoes protect the Guardians. It's funny.

Tsenkhar Marpo. [Rinpoche quotes in Tibetan]

When we invite, there is a saying: Tsenkhar Marpo. "From red Tsenkhar invite Yava Rukshi."

There is an ancient book that says, "Hello, how are you?" [Asking the Guardian] "I'm fine." [Guardian replies].

Now we go up [to the Universal Mandala] and we come down and maybe we do Sang here. But we should go up because it is a very important place. The main place.

[They walk up to the mandala] That low hill is very beautiful and there is water there but to get there now is complicated. When I used to do a retreat there, I would make my own way there. I know how to get there and back, but in general there isn't a path to get there. That's very important. All the retreat houses will be on that hill, behind the Guardian cabin. On the other hand, here is the Mandala of the Dakini, the origin of this place. And the origin of my dream is this place. It is fantastic. When I did a retreat here, I used to come here in the evening and find a lot of animals. Once a bear came to the retreat cabin to eat the Ganapuja offerings. First the birds and squirrels used to eat the Ganapuja offering in tranquility, then a bear came and they were afraid.

This also needs cleaning a bit (indicating part of the wood).

Here is the Mandala that will become big; a big Mandala [Universal Mandala] is going to be created here. This is the place where I had my dream and in the middle of this place is the Mandala. Here is the center of the Mandala (indicating).

Transcribed from footage of Jennifer Fox by Liz Granger for The Mirror.

Tsegyalgar, USA Web Site

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche 2004 Dzogchen Retreats, monthly Tsegyalgar practice schedule updates, all Ganapujas, Naga favorable and other Special days on our Tsegyalgar web site.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's 2004 Dzogchen Retreats
<http://www.tsegyalgar.org/features/SouthAmerica23.html>

Tsegyalgar Practice schedule Spring-Summer 2004 (monthly updates):
<http://www.tsegyalgar.org/features/springSummer.html>

All 2004-2005 Ganapuja & Special days:
<http://www.tsegyalgar.org/features/PracticeDays.html>

Tsegyalgar
Spring Schedule

April-May, 2004

April 16-18
Monthly weekend practice: Tara Spring Retreat
Committee meeting topic: Building Rinpoche's house
Note: NEW: Join us via webcam. All USA-Gakyils are invited to join us on this meeting!

All Ganapujas: 7:30PM (Please note: if Ganapuja falls on Sunday, it will be held at 1PM)

Every Sunday: Longsal Practice 9:30AM, Vajra Dance 11AM
Every Monday: Yantra Yoga Practice with Paula Barry 7:30PM

Dzogchen Community in America-
April 2004 updates:

NEWS:

July-August: Mandarava Retreat - direct from Margarita, full web cast Transmission

We are happy to announce that Anastasia McGhee has been authorized and approved by Rinpoche to teach the first level Song of Vajra Dance in the US.

Spring-Summer 2004

May- August: Khandroling - Karma Yoga weekend practices (exact dates & schedules to be announced)

July 15th - August 5th NEW!!!
Full Web cast transmission of Mandarava Retreat - direct from Margarita Island- sponsored by Tsegyalgar

August-September practice schedule (exact dates & schedules to be confirmed)
Santi Maha Sangha / Introduction to Contemplation with Costantino Albin

Song of the Vajra Dance with Adriana Dal Borgo & Prima Mai

Yantra Yoga with local instructor

Tsegyalgar
PO Box 277
Conway MA 01341 USA
Tel: 413 369 4153
Fax: 413 369 4473
Email: secretary@tsegyalgar.org

VEHICLE
DONATION

The Dzogchen Community is in need of donations of vehicles for use as shuttles for the land in Baja.

VANS, SUV, 4X4 OR VEHICLES WITH GOOD CLEARANCE PREFERRED.

*FULL TAX DEDUCTION FOR VALUE OF CAR BEING DONATED *

If you ever wanted to donate this is the time!

We urgently need a donation of a running vehicle.

Please respond to baja@travel-light.com

Publicity Person
Needed

DONDRUP LING CENTER IN BERKELEY IS VERY MUCH IN NEED OF A VOLUNTEER WHO WILL PUBLICIZE OUR ACTIVITIES ON AN ONGOING BASIS - IN THE YELLOW PAGES, ADS, CALENDAR NOTICES, ETC.

PLEASE respond if you are a person who loves/likes/adores/tolerates/is motivated by/finds inspiring this kind of activity. WE ARE PREPARED TO BE VERY GRATEFUL.

Thank you, and please respond to:
aha@dzogchencommunity.com

\$1000 Grant
for the NYC
Dzogchen
Community

The Peace Fund of the Tides Foundation awarded a grant of \$1000 to the New York City Dzogchen Community, which gratefully acknowledges this gift. The grant is for general organizational support.

TSEGYALGAR PROJECTS UPDATE

KHANDROLING

1) UNIVERSAL MANDALA:

This past season a good deal of work was accomplished at Khandroling to develop the retreat area. Planning began last winter for a number of projects there. Through the spring and summer, many volunteers helped to remove the old Dance Mandala and to level the enlarged pad for the Universal Mandala. Next spring, we plan to finish grading this space and constructing the Dance Mandala of 2X4's and Advantec board.

NEED: A number of volunteers will be needed at that time for raking and shoveling, carrying materials, assembling the Mandala, and painting it. This should take two weeks total, and may be spread out so that the materials, volunteers, and good weather are there together.

2) NEW RETREAT CABINS:

Rinpoche provided details for the four new retreat cabins, and the two-story Thödgal cabin. We hope to construct at least one cabin and the Thödgal cabin while also completing the unfinished work from this past year. We may also upgrade the cabin near the pond to be a handicap accessible retreat cabin.

NEED: Volunteer help will be needed to pour concrete and construct buildings. This will go on throughout the spring and summer. Any people interested in helping design the cabins should contact Santo on the Red Gakyil: <redgakyil@tsegyalgar.org>. We hope to have plans finalized during the winter.

3) GARDEN Mandala:

NEED: Volunteers will be needed to de-limb felled trees and dispose of the branches. We may have a sawyer cut the numerous old pine trees into lumber with a portable band saw mill. Rinpoche also said that he would be pleased to have a Garden Mandala created at the site of the original Mandala. This might require some site preparation and grading, and then the planting of the garden. As cutting the old pines opens up the forest canopy, we may replant with oak, cherry, maple and walnut to provide a future economic base to help support the retreat center. We may begin a small nursery to start seedlings. These projects will also go on throughout the season.

4) BATH HOUSE:

The bathhouse went through a number of design changes to reflect evolving ideas of what functions it should serve. At the last minute we found out that the town expected it to be handicapped accessible, and changed the plan again. It has a bathroom with a shower stall and dressing area, a central room for meal preparation, and a unisex handicap bathroom with bath/shower. There will be hot water, but showers will have to be kept short because all the water will need to be carted to a tank on the hill to supply the bathhouse by gravity. There is also a front porch for protection in bad weather. It took a lot of effort to hand dig the holes for the concrete piers, but the construction went fairly quickly. The bathhouse is now closed-in for the winter. We are still looking for a reasonably priced plumber.

NEED:

In spring, we will need to put up the T-111 plywood siding, hang and finish drywall, put up trim and counter tops, and paint the building. Finally, fill will be sloped up to the structure, and topsoil spread over the whole area. The construction should take three weeks total, spread out over a longer period.

KARMA YOGA

All volunteers are welcome. Let us know of your intention.

PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF:

1. THE NEW UNIVERSAL MANDALA
2. RETREAT CABINS
3. BATH HOUSE
4. GARDEN MANDALA

For applying for Karma Yoga, please contact our Geköes, Cindy Thibeau: geko@tsegyalgar.org and redgakyil@tsegyalgar.org

All projects will be coordinated by RED GAKYIL. The main supervisor Santo Santoriello, experienced in the building trades, will be coordinating volunteers on weekdays, and there will be a bulletin board with instructions for projects.

Thank you for volunteering!

Warm Wishes,
Tsegyalgar Gakyil

Tsegyalgar, The Dzogchen Community in America
P.O. Box 277, Conway, MA 01341
Tel: 413-369-4153 | Fax: 413-369-4473
Email: secretary@tsegyalgar.org
bluegakyil@tsegyalgar.org

California Community Update Dondrub Ling

February 3, 2004

Dear Friends and Community members,

We appreciate your support and interest in the teachings of our precious master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and Dondrub Ling, the Dzogchen Community Center in Berkeley. We have been at this location for two years and it offers a wealth of opportunities for practice and study. The center and our Dharma activity there depend on financial support from you to keep it alive and vibrant.

As so many non-profits are, we face a contracting budget in this difficult fiscal climate. To keep the Center running our monthly expenses are \$2900, which is \$34,800 a year. The Dzogchen Community West Coast has received a very generous donation of 3000 acres of land in Baja, but big gifts like this require extensive legal work and other fees. As a result, we have paid out \$55,000 in closing costs. In response, the Gakyil has voted unanimously to sign a one-year lease, rather than make a longer financial commitment. We have concluded that, in order to keep the Center operational, we must raise a substantial percentage of the \$34,800 a year through monthly and yearly pledges from individuals who have an interest in our Community, in Rinpoche's teachings and the viability of our center.

Last year we hosted a 10 day Santi Maha Sangha retreat with Jim Valby, two Yantra Yoga weekends, two Vajra Dance courses and regularly scheduled practices including Ganapujas four times per month, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga practices each twice weekly, and a ZerNga series meeting weekly all during the fall. The transmission days were very well attended by current and long-time students and by many new to Rinpoche's teachings and had never met him.

We hope that people will make a commitment to pledge for at least one year. The payments can be on

a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis. Some Community members have already made pledges. We have calculated that if 50 friends and members pledge \$30/month we will have met half our monthly costs. We plan to raise the balance with other donations, fundraising events and activities.

Your pledge of \$15, 25, 50 or more per month starting in February 2004 would help so much. Clearly each person's financial situation is unique; and, as Rinpoche has told us, a dollar from one person can be like a thousand dollars from someone else! All pledge levels are received with gratitude. If your situation prevents you from pledging now, a one-time gift of any amount is also greatly appreciated. Please do contribute what you can, because the Center's survival depends on your generosity! And, remember a contribution to the Dzogchen Community West Coast entitles you to a tax deduction.

Tashi Deleg!

Gene Kim, Roseanne Welsh, Nary Mitchell, John Bidelman, Richard Vaughn, Heather Murphree, Jey Clark, Tana Lehr, and Annie Levy (secretary)
- The DCWC Gakyil

*Pledge forms can be mailed or picked up at the center. A red mailbox by the entrance of Dondrub Ling accepts donations at the center also. Checks made out to Dzogchen Community West Coast can be sent to: Dzogchen Community West Coast
2748 Adeline St., Suite D
Berkeley, CA 94703*

PS. Thank you for whatever level of support you can give. Your financial support is requested, but your presence at the Center is also the kind of support our Community needs to thrive. We look forward to seeing you at Dondrub Ling soon! Our web site has been updated and includes the latest information on the generous land donation that the Community has received as well as an online calendar with the practice and events schedule. <http://www.dzogchen-communitywest.org/>

ASIA USA

2003 has been a good year for ASIA It has been a year in which A.S.I.A. Onlus has co-ordinated and overseen the completion of many projects in Tibet, continued efforts on others, and has placed still more new projects into the development cycle.

In collaboration with ASIA Onlus in Italy, ASIA USA has undertaken the funding for a project of importance for the future of the vanishing nomadic population in the Golok area of Qinghai province. We are assisting in raising the funds for a school to provide an education for children of nomadic families, particularly girls. In that area there are some limited educational opportunities for boys but none whatsoever for girls of nomadic families. It is an area whose population is over 90% nomads. Approximately 75% of the women in the area have received no schooling and are illiterate. The per capita income of the area is about \$200 US.

The total cost of the project will be \$240K. The project will be realized by a combination of international governmental funding of \$164K, local participation of \$50K, and a contribution of \$25K raised by ASIA USA. Construction has already begun with the help of the Finnish government's funding contribution. The administrative expense ratio is only 4% of the funding for this project. If you would like to know more about the project please contact us and we will send you a copy of the proposal and the budget. If you are ready now, before this tax year ends, to make a donation to help Tibetan children from nomadic families receive an education then please send your tax deductible donation to:

ASIA USA
PO Box 277
Conway, MA

The Staff of ASIA USA
asia-usa@tsegyalgar.org

TASHIGAR

NORTE UPDATE

APRIL 2004

The windy season is still strongly with us at Tashigar Norte. It is the season par excellence for the practice of zernga of the wind element. In July, it is possible some of us will be remembering the freshness of the windy season with a kind of longing - as we enter the practice of zernga of the fire element.

It seems that there are about 100 practitioners living in the surrounds of the Gar in these early days of April 2004. The Gomadevi retreat enjoyed 350 people in the spacious, high ceilinged, open air Gonpa. The retreat was preceded by the Yantra Yoga teacher training course and followed by the Vajra Dance teacher training course that boasted 2 full Mandalas. Work has already commenced to further extend the Gonpa to an estimated capacity of 800. All money needed for the Gonpa extension was raised at a very successful auction during the Gomadevi Retreat. We hope to have the Gonpa ready for the Kalachakra retreat in October 2004.

For some of us, our daily routines may include any combination of morning practice of Gomadevi, morning, midday and afternoon practices of swimming at the beach, afternoon tuns of Yantra yoga and Vajra dance, sumptuous feasts of generous fish serenaded by Colombian musicians, feet in the sand, crystalline waters. For others who are settling in for the year or longer, relaxing into the pace of Margaritanian circumstances, 'manana' time, finding our way around, organizing communication, buying a car and cruising the shopping centers to find the bits and pieces that somehow make life easier - these practices fit in with all the other opportunities that present themselves in this extraordinary mandala of space and time that we find ourselves in.

The new Gakyil, secretary and Geköes are developing their relationships with each other, the construction companies on site and the aloe company staff as well as the local community with whatever awareness and compassion is present in the moment. Now we are organizing the April retreats - Beginners Vajra Dance courses and Easter retreat during which we will meet many of our Venezuelan community. Of course there are the difficult experiences that test our capacity for relaxation and integration as much as anywhere. And sometimes it seems that we are in a hot pot when we are so strongly mirrored by each other. Still it remains a great place to really develop our clarity while enjoying discovering this pearl with its green crystalline mountain and turquoise waters.

Rosemary Friend Yellow Gakyil



R. SUEB

AUSPICIOUS NEW YEAR, AUSPICIOUS NEW HOUSE AT TASHIGAR SUR

by Paula De Raedemaker

When Tashigar was purchased at the beginning of 1990, for different reasons some conjoint parcels of land were not acquired. One of the houses in the center of our land was a house that became known as "Mr. Michini's house". In that moment and in later years, the owner refused to sell it until 2003, when he consented to the purchase offer that Tashigar made him. During the last Christmas Retreat, Rinpoche donated precious objects to organize a raffle with

the purpose of getting enough funds to acquire the house. As always happens, people responded with supreme generosity and almost immediately all the offered numbers were sold. In the same way, we received important donations in money from Community members who wanted to collaborate quietly; as well as a beautiful thanka donated by Glen Eddy with which we organized a second raffle, equally successful. We want to thank to Rinpoche for his infinite compassion and patience, added to the generosity demonstrated by the whole Sangha. All made it possible to collect 50% of the amount necessary to concrete the operation. Finally, on February 5th of 2004, an auspicious day, Mr. Michini's house was purchased.

Robbery in Tashigar South, January 2004

Removal of Obstacles

by Ingrid Lücke

This year my experience in Tashigar was very difficult. This past summer of 2004 when Rinpoche was there with us, thieves came into my house, crashed through a window and jumped into the living room while I was sleeping in my bedroom. Their three faces were completely covered with masks, one with a big and ugly lion's face.

The thieves immediately took me with guns, tied my hands and feet to the bed and asked for money and objects. The half-hour they spent with me seemed like a very long time. We had some conversation. There was one man who appeared to be the "boss" and was behind me always making sure I kept my head down and repeating, "Don't worry, all this will pass."

The thieves were a little nervous because at first they couldn't find what they were looking for. When I gave them more money, they immediately left by jumping out of the window. Before leaving they also discussed taking my car but decided to leave it.

Considering what happened as a personal karmic debt of some kind, I observed my attitude, feelings and thoughts, and prepared myself for the next step depending on the thieves' behavior.

For me, this very strong experience had the power to unblock something so that I am able to continue with my development on the path. I still feel that Tashigar South is a wonderful and very special place. It is a kind of natural Shangri La – it depends only on oneself. There is so much space and natural beauty in Tashigar; it is a truly wonderful place to do retreat.

Summer of Thieves

by Naomi Zeitz

This past summer in Tashigar South, Argentina, there were a series of events of a not particularly pleasant nature. In fact, they were downright frightening for the retreat participants, the residents of Tashigar South Mandala, and our neighbors. This experience gave us all a lot of concrete material to work with.

One morning on my way to shop in Tanti with my neighbor Laura, I met Fabio. He said, "Have you heard the news?"

"No", I replied never imagining the reply. "Ingrid was robbed last night at gunpoint by three thieves with masks." Ingrid lives alone in a more isolated area of Tashigar Mandala. "Oh dear", was more or less my reply.

We all felt terribly sorry for Ingrid and amazed by her strength and resilience. The rest of us were living in terror, basically, not knowing when or if the next strike would happen. We who own homes there bought alarms, sensor lights, some installed bars on the windows and slept badly for the next few weeks. Some of us who lived alone spent the first nights after the robbery in each other's homes for safety. We had all become familiar with the petty robberies which had occurred there for years, but things had reached a new magnitude.

The next week, the morning after a Ganapuja where we had done a particularly strong Guardian practice with Rinpoche, we discovered that around the same time we were practicing the night before, the same three thieves with masks and guns had tried to rob Luis and Charles's (friends of Ingrid's) home near the Gar. Not only was the robbery thwarted, but Luis killed one of the thieves, another was seriously wounded and the other escaped. Some of our Community members living outside, near Tashigar South, witnessed one of the thief's escape. It seems one or two of them escaped in a local taxi.

The details of that night are a very unusual series of events. It seems when the thieves first arrived they held Charles outside hostage with a pistol to his head. Luis, from inside his home with his 82 year old mother said to the thieves, "If you enter my house I will kill you." A forceful struggle ensued as the three thieves attempted to push in the front door to enter. Luis said he felt a super human strength as three times they attempted to break the door in. At last, Luis was able to put an iron bar across his door which permitted him enough time to run in the bathroom and load and reload his manual shotgun - something Luis was not at all familiar with doing especially under that level of tension. The thieves who were still trying to push in the door were able to push and bend the iron bar, the same men who were unable to push in the door

when Luis was pushing against them, and entered the house firing their pistols. At that point Luis came out of the bathroom and after a shoot out that lasted 50 minutes, shot and killed one of the thieves. The other thief who kept coming at him shooting was seriously wounded.

Two other unusual incidents transpired that same night when the thieves tried to use their pistols; once to shoot Charles outside and the other to shoot through the window pointing the gun at Luis's heart. On both occasions the pistols totally jammed (did not function).

Needless to say, we were all in shock. Many security meetings followed and guards were hired to protect the land and Rinpoche's house. Police cars were driving around the land. Our new alarms were going off inappropriately here and there as we got used to using them. Laura Yoffe (see Tashigar Norte's Anniversary story on page 4), Alicia Cabelleros, Ingrid Lücke and others made valiant efforts to work with the local police authorities, make contact with the neighbors who had been living with fear and intimidation for years, and develop security systems for those of us living in Tashigar. Some people befriended the neighbors who were involved in the killing and they participated in a Ganapuja in the Gonpa one evening and were introduced to Rinpoche.

The summer and Rinpoche's stay culminated with a big meeting with the local officials at the Dzogchen Community at Tashigar's 14th anniversary celebration. (See page 4)

In the end, some benefit can be found. We got to know our neighbors, began to work together, the people living in Tashigar Mandala were brought closer together and neighbors and local officials had the auspicious occasion to meet Rinpoche.

Still in all, Tashigar South remains one of the most breathtakingly beautiful Gars. It is difficult to describe the spectacular beauty there and the special quality it provides for practice - the strong elements and the grand space - as well as the compelling warmth of the Tashigar South Community. The only way to know the sacred power of Tashigar South is to come there yourself and be prepared for a lot of warmth, joy and excitement!



Santi Maha Sangha Level 1 training, Tashigar South

N. ZEITZ



Santi Maha Sangha Level 2 training, Tashigar South

N. ZEITZ



Santi Maha Sangha Level 3 training, Tashigar South

N. ZEITZ



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Yantra Yoga Advanced and Teacher Training Isla Margarita, March 5th - 13th, 2004 with Laura Evangelisti and Fabio Andrico

by Monica Wittib

It was early morning some years ago, near placid Lake Chiemsee in Germany, when I attended an introductory session of Yantra Yoga. This was the morning of my first retreat and I hadn't met the Master before. A tall dark-blond man with wavy hair stood very upright and performed a series of exercises in a completely concentrated manner. I don't know by what I was more attracted - by the man or the yoga he showed us - probably both. I decided immediately that if Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and the Dzogchen Teachings have got to do with something as fascinating as Yantra Yoga and the teacher, I would try to learn and practice it. Since then I have made quite a few journeys to attend Yantra Yoga courses - from Innsbruck, Austria, where I live, to Prague or Graz. We have organized courses in Innsbruck also. Therefore it made sense to attend the advanced and teacher training Yantra Yoga course in the Gonpa of Tashigar North on Margarita Island. The Gar - the land with the Aloe Vera plantation, the house building sites, Rinpoche's house and the Gonpa - are located in a valley on a hillside with view to the lighthouse with the bay of Zaragosa beach and the blue sparkling sea beyond it. (When we play bagchen on Sundays with Rinpoche in the dining area below the Gonpa we can see the sun set in beautiful pink, orange, red and blue colors behind the palm trees.) The Gonpa is not yet finished and is going to be enlarged. At the moment it is open on two sides so that the strong Margarita winds blow through. The floor is concrete and I immediately regretted not having brought my gymnastic mat, as there were only straw mats available. When I saw the participants my heart sank and my body already began to ache; from the start some people were resting with ease in the full lotus position. It turned out that in the mornings in the teacher's training course the preliminary exercises of Tsjong, the Eight Movements, Tsalung, and the first and second series of the Yantras were practiced and explained in detail, so I decided to also book the teacher training

course.

Although every one of the about 30 participants was convinced that he or she knew the basic Yantras well, it was amazing how mistakes like a wrong turn of the neck or a too fast exhalation were practiced often without awareness.

In the morning, Laura and Fabio stressed two points: While we slowly repeated all the movements of the Yantras, they would observe everybody closely to discover any errors in movement and breathing and also they addressed the possible kinds of mistakes beginners (i.e. future pupils) might make for the teachers in training. They also showed how to perform the movements and breathings correctly and precisely and which possible variations of the positions could be taken by people who are still a bit stiff in their limbs or cannot, for some reason or another, get into the positions.

In the afternoons we proceeded steadily to the five Yantras of the 3rd and 4th groups, stressing the continuous flow of breathing and movement. Basically the movements of the Yantras are designed to make you aware of and enable you to do the five kinds of holdings: open hold (gangwa), directed hold (zhilwa), closed hold (khilwa), pulling back towards the spine (drenpa), and empty hold (tsatong khilwa).

After a few days I expected that my muscles and bones would start to ache, but it did not happen. What I could perform, I did without feeling any pain. It is interesting how the body and the mind communicate. Sometimes the mind seems to be quite clear about what the body has to do, but the body doesn't want or cannot cooperate. On the other hand, being capable of performing on a physical level does not necessarily get you to the essence of Yantra Yoga. It is the experience of where the breath goes and how well you understand the use the five different holdings.

I got rather tired in the mind, not solely in the body. In the course of the days I learned both to be patient with my body and yet to demand more of myself to work for new experiences.

We would like to thank Laura and Fabio for their precise and beautiful demonstrations and instruction and for the patience and energy they put into helping us.

namgyalgar & pacific rim



Ku Nye in Australia

by Julia Tilly

After waiting two years for Dr Nida to return, the dust is just settling here in Australia after his tour. We had fantastic couple of months study beginning with a new Level 1 course where 6 new students participated and 5 existing Level 1 students had the opportunity to revise their theory and practice and go on to sit the exam and learn Level 2 theory and techniques. Congratulations to all the new students who went through and I hope that you continue to enjoy your practice into the coming year. Congratulations also to all the Level 2 students who remained committed and dedicated to their practice over such a long period of time to passed their exam and continue on.

In the Ku Nye level 2 course, Dr Nida continued to captivate students with his wealth of knowledge and skill of practice. The uniqueness in application and diversity of these external therapies continues to profoundly inspire student interest as we move further into understanding the more subtle levels of the human condition. Thanks to Jenny McAuliffe and Cheryl Shields who helped set up the course material we could fully appreciate all the techniques. In addition to collecting the moxa, cups, stones, agates and shells, we managed to prepare the herbs and requirements to practice Lum. It was well worth the effort to feel the rejuvenating and balancing effects of such a wonderful therapy and thanks to Jean Mackintosh and Ron Goettinger for letting us use their baths.

We extended our effort to unearth the finer ingredients (including bones and kangaroo droppings) to complete the array of materials needed for the various compresses which added to and deepened our knowledge of how we are treating humoral imbalance. Many thanks also to Jan Darvill for having Yuk Cho sticks made, to Joanna Tyshing and Vicki for overall coordination of the course, Paddy for feeding us and Michel for looking after all us girls!

FIRST TIME 'BOTTLE-BREATHER'

Yantra Yoga Workshop, Auckland New Zealand Dec 2003

The word was out from coast to coast that two jet-setting yogis were about to arrive in the land of the long white cloud, Aotearoa. A beautiful venue appeared nestled along-side old native trees and an open field, a perfect place for harmonizing breath and body.



The rumble of the migration began making its way to the Friday evening intro class.

The lovely relaxed energy and smiles of Oni and Amare had every one immediately at ease and open for learning. We were all about to find out more about what Yantra Yoga really was. Having recently been introduced to Dzogchen and Yantra Yoga, I was very curious and excited about what we would be learning.

Saturday became a full day of learning for the other participants and myself. My favorite was our first breathing exercise the bottle breath, which is a new technique to me and allowed me to become more in touch with my body. We were taught the eight movements, which I found was a good all rounder- for both body and breath. What we learnt will be very valuable in daily life, and although changing any habit is difficult working with the breathing will be of great benefit.

We had completed the eight movements but there was not enough time to go further into the Yantras, which left me wanting more. I have to admit that by the end of the second day I was already physically tired, yet with a feeling of lightness.

I was very happy to have spent time with a lovely group of beings and two teachers who really gave us a lot of their patience and attention. Now having more knowledge about Yantra I have been applying what we learnt slowly, and I find it very efficient and energizing for every day life.

Looking forward to the next one.

Thanks everyone, Kia ora
Steve Roigard

Passages

Died:

Dominique Canavelli, from New Caledonia, was 43 years old, a nurse and student of Rinpoche since May, 2000. Dominique died under tragic circumstances suddenly on Christmas Day, 2003.

Namgyalgar Schedule 2004

Winter Santi Maha Sangha
Practice Retreat
Ewan Maddock Centre
Caloundra
July 3 - 8

Michael Katz Dream Yoga Tour
Aug 12 - 22

Sept 25 - Oct 2
Santi Maha Sangha Practice
Retreat at Namgyalgar

For more information:
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NSW 2546
Australia
Tel/Fax: 61 02 4473 7668
Email: namgyalg@acr.net.au
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New New Zealand Gakyil

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Paora Joseph: Blue,
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Gekoes Vacancy Namgyalgar, Australia

The position of Gekoes at Namgyalgar will become vacant at the end of April. If you are interested in applying for this position, please contact the secretary Viki at : <namgyalg@acr.net.au> for information about the Gekoe's role, responsibilities, conditions of service and an application form. Applications from couples are most welcome.

Namgyalgar Updates

Yangti Cabin

Exciting news is that the yangti retreat cabin plans are close to being finalized and building will start soon.

Land Management

Maggie Camfield is coordinating the formation of a Namgyalgar Land Care group. Land Care is a government sponsored group dedicated to restoring the environment, protecting endangered species, reducing fire risk etc.

Volunteers

Much work has been done by Jenny O'Donnell to produce a very comprehensive volunteer policy that will soon be posted for all to see

Sexuality & the Teachings

Sex is a very small word with a very big charge. On many levels sex is powerful - physically, emotionally and spiritually. Sexual contact is something that can be an experience of physical bliss, a strong emotional bond, a tool for procreation, an obsessive distraction, the lack of a big frustration, or an important energetic method for enlightenment.

Sex, at least in the West, has become a difficult and confusing area of human existence. Sex means intimacy, and sexual intimacy, at least in the United States, has become a kind of bardo realm of transition as human beings change their traditional lifestyles and hence the traditional sexual roles and identities. AIDS has also changed our sex lives quite dramatically.

It seems Westerners have become either obsessed by or terrified of sex. Sex has become a commodity to be used in the marketplace and over cultivated to sell products. Traditional sexual roles have become challenged as societal taboos wane. Sex has become an experience independent of marriage and family commitment and

therefore no longer functions in a traditional way; a profound human connection based in trust deepening over time.

Once sex was a part of marital life, but since marriages rarely last these days and people in modern societies suffer from loneliness and isolation, our once "normal" sexual lives have become strained and insecure. Pornography, sexual activity using children, date rape, incest, homosexuality, trans-sexuality, virtual sex on the internet and more have become the norm. We no longer live with sustained long-term relationships and are forced to resort to all kinds of non-traditional ways to find sexual companions at various stages of life. It seems that people in the past were in relatively stable long-term relationships of a satisfactory or unsatisfactory nature, and relationships were less stressful in terms of continually, throughout a lifetime, looking for sexual partners.

There is the additional hype of sexual pleasure and performance; the bigger and better orgasm, the

Some Thoughts about Sex

by Maggie Camfield

Sexuality can be about primal urges, intense emotion and the arousal and discharge of energy. Ideally it is about love and intimacy, of people and their tissues accepting, inviting and enjoying each other. Ultimately it is about losing the self - and that seems very Dzogchen. It takes us beyond ego and the personal to a spacious reality that is about existing - without sensation, emotion and thought. It is refreshing because it is a space of no issues, a place of engaging with naked reality (ah, these unavoidable puns!), a space of honesty in every aspect, because it is acutely shared with the beloved. Perhaps it's just another way to reach the State. Karma Yoga. And the work afterwards seems then to be the same - to bring the quality of spaciousness to all our interactions with the samsaric world.

Why do you let others call you a practitioner?

Why do you let others call you "practitioner"?
When the moods of a woman
Throw you from the joys of the sky
To the sufferings of hell?
Why do you let others call you "practitioner"?
When you only look for the lower parts of woman
And forget their wisdom nature?

by Elio Guarisco

bigger and better penis, the firmer and fuller breast and the physical transformation from one sex to the other or somewhere in between. The stress is on physical attributes and youth as opposed to deeper and more meaningful connections that lead to more profound sexual experiences. Sex has become something superficial and inspired by Hollywood and advertising; the American sexual mythology machine.

The bliss of sexual union, a method to achieve high level spiritual states, has been used since ancient times in many spiritual traditions to transform, circulate, move up or hold the sexual bliss so that it becomes all pervasive and less limited to physical sensation. Kundalini, Taoist sexual practices and our very own Kumbhaka holding and Tummo are examples of how sexual energy is used in the spiritual dimension. Rinpoche talks about the power of sexual experience and therefore its importance in spiritual practice; to work with and control sexual energy is not a simple

matter and can be very valuable to the practitioner. These practices have also been misunderstood in the West, exploited and misused for business in the spiritual marketplace. These practices when used incorrectly can indeed even be dangerous.

Since sex is such an important part of our human experience and related to the Dzogchen teachings, The Mirror decided to include it in our Daily Life section. Oddly enough, but also somewhat expected, it was not one of the topics to inspire of a flood of response which is another commentary on the power of the sexual experience. Fear of exposure. In any case, we present here what you have provided as well as the valuable words of Rinpoche. Thank you for your participation and please check the list for future topics.

Thank you.
Naomi Zeitz for The Mirror

Future Topics
May 15 Love & Relationships
July 15 Family & Parenting

words of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Tashigar Xmas

Retreat

2004

Transmission & Sensation

Transmission in the Dzogchen way is done with experience. The most important concrete experience is the physical body. The experience of the physical body is not so very easy because we are very much attached to it. For example, if you study the Tantric teaching in Santi Maha Sangha, there is an explanation of teng-go and wog-gu. Teng-go and wog-go are like the practices of tummo and detong. The first training is done with mind realization, and then something more concrete with the physical body. This is a very important experience.

It is very important because we can feel something real. I will give you an example: If there is sexual contact between men and women you have sensation; you are not pretending to have sensation. On television sometimes men and women

pretend to have sensation and they say, "Oh, this feels fantastic!" I don't believe it. In any case, if you are not pretending you can really feel something. It is not only your consideration. For that reason, it is a very powerful and concrete experience. We cannot succeed with this experience if we do not prepare beforehand. For example, with this experience you fall into attachment and you think, "How nice, I like it." That is not bliss. That is called attachment and is an ordinary sensation. Cats and dogs, all sentient beings, have that kind of sensation. Bliss means that with sexual contact and sensation you discover instant presence in that state. It doesn't mean you don't feel sensation, you feel much more sensation, but you are not conditioned or distracted by attachment. In that way, if you are in instant presence, it is a powerful experience. If you gradually prepare a little, you can have that experience. If you are not prepared and you only understand intellectually, it doesn't work. This experience is related to physical body. In Tantrism, the experience of the physical body is presented as the most important experience.

In Tantrism there are manifestations of wrathful, peaceful and joyful deities. A serious Tantric practitioner realizing through the method of transformation deals with practice in daily life through the transformation of the peaceful, joyful and wrathful manifes-

tations. They should use these experiences. These three transformations are for transforming ignorance, attachment and anger; the three root emotions called the three poisons in Sutra. In Tantrism we know we can transform the three poisons. To transform we use the method of these three manifestations.

In Annutaratantra, the manifestations of deities are yab and yum; peaceful yab and yum, joyful yab and yum, and wrathful yab and yum. This means that the experience of sensation is one of the most important. For that reason, in Tantra, we speak of how we train using teng-go and wog-go. In the Dzogchen teaching we do the transmission, the introduction, with the experience of emptiness and clarity. Then the teacher gives you instructions on how to work. For example, you observe your thoughts to get in the knowledge. If someone does not succeed, even after receiving many methods, that means that person has not much capacity and their capacity is almost not sufficient for following the Dzogchen teachings. Then there is an explanation of how you should go into that kind of training by going into detail and not directly. If someone has such preparation that is also good. This is how the experience of body, of sensation, is related to the Teaching.

Principle of Dewa Merigar Italy 1984 Longsal Teachings Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

The principle of the attachment to dewa is the sensation of pleasure. Instead of developing knowledge, this attachment can become a cause for the realm of desire or passion. This sensation can also happen through the ecstasy of contemplation; in the state of contemplation all elements can relax and many pleasurable sensations can arise. One can remain the whole day like that. This experience arises especially from kundalini. If one finds oneself in the state of rigpa then it means

it is an important path, but if one drowns in this foam of pleasure saying, "Oh, how marvelous, I want to stay like this forever", then this is attachment to dewa, even if not in a very gross or visible way.

So instead of realization, attachment to any experience like sensation causes rebirth in the three worlds. Whatever type of experience, one should not be distracted by it, but remain in this state of presence. Then there is no error.

Whatever error or interruption arises is linked to the three existences of the practitioner and through the methods linked to the three existences one works with these conditions. This is the explanation about experience.

Sex and the Teachings

by Paul Bail

I'm finding "Sex and the Teachings" a difficult topic to write clearly about. Even though I've spent forty years talking about sex, reading about it, fantasizing about it, and even doing it sometimes, I don't really understand it. That seems self-contradictory. After all, if I've been doing it throughout my life, I must understand something about it! Perhaps my inner wisdom understands, but my intellect hasn't yet caught up.

In the 1960's I was exposed to the school of thought, represented by Freud, Wilhelm Reich, and others, which believes that orgasmic release is the highest good, and absolutely essential to one's emotional health and well being. (To be fair to Reich, what he meant by orgasm wasn't just spasms of the genitals, but a feeling of universal energy flow throughout the whole body.)

The other strain of thought, represented in my religious upbringing, was that sexuality was shameful and that a truly spiritual individual would be celibate. In the 1970's I also learned that in Chinese medicine, seminal emission was believed to weaken the

male's life energy (jing), and that in some Indian yogic traditions the loss of seminal fluid was believed to hamper one's progress to realization.

I could not reconcile these two strains of thought, and tended to think, or hope, that the views of Chinese medicine and Indian philosophy must be some kind of old-fashioned nonsense (though I couldn't be entirely sure). I knew that the kind of religious celibacy I grew up with felt closed and dry, whereas when I was in a good relationship, sexual expression felt juicy and good. And there was a kind "openness" and relatedness to being a sexual being.

But as I got older, when a relationship broke up, I found myself spending longer periods of time alone, recovering. It was then that I discovered temporary celibacy was not such a bad thing. Now that I am in late middle age, I still feel the pull toward sexual expression in a relationship, but I also am aware of feeling less energetic the next day. Sometimes the emotional and mental desire to be close is strong, but the physical energy and vitality is lacking.

Through the yogic practices of the Teachings, I've become more experientially aware that sexuality is connected with one's prana. I can see now that if a person could

master their prana perhaps he or she would not need to be sexual in the same way. As my physical body ages, but my heart stays young, I wish I could find ways to experience the intimacy and joy of sexual union simply on the level of energy between two people, without having to depend so much upon physical gestures.

When I see the images presented in movies or on television, it seems the culture is trapped in very conventional notions of what sexuality means, based on images of beautiful young people, who still have all their vital energies intact, and whose sexuality has a very physical form of expression. I don't see anything wrong with that form, but it seems to apply less and less to me. I would like to discover an alternative sexuality that works for those of us who have become older and who are on a spiritual path.

There is more that could be said—about the relationship between sexuality and love, about exclusivity in sexuality and love, passion and tenderness, and the difference between love and attachment, and so forth. But, I don't have final answers to any of these questions either. So, I'd better just end here, hoping that eventually more clarity will come.

REFLECTIONS

Communicating within the Sangha Part II

by Dorothea Franck

IV. Give space - find space & travel in space

Actually, giving space is the core of all methods for improving communication. All tension comes from dualistic vision. Even if we are not able to overcome the fundamental subject-object-dualism of karmic vision at once, we can try to understand a major consequence of our dualistic vision: it limits our space. Dualism manifests in many ways. One of them is our tendency to think in a two-valued logic system, as is evident in the first and in a subtler way also the second model given above. "Tertium non datur": there is no third possibility is the basic axiom in classical logics as well as in everyday action. Things are either right or wrong, good or bad, you are either friend or enemy, actions are right or wrong etc., it's always either or. This way of thinking leaves very little space, space for difference, space for change, space for relativity of perspective. It is literally what produces a narrow mind.

In the history of logic there is an age-old dispute about this issue: should a third possibility \bar{n} beyond yes or no, wrong or right - be admitted? In logic the reduction delivered elegant systems of calculation and digital technology. In human interaction this restriction delivers war and other disasters.

It is helpful to take the image of space literally. If we draw a line between two points, i.e. two opposite positions, we get just a line, in fact no space at all!

When we feel cornered between oppositions, we can look around in the realm of possibilities and search for a third, a fourth, and fifth point of view. Why limit ourselves so

much? Space is infinite! There is infinite space in every situation! Infinite space for different experiences and points of view, infinite personal spheres right next to each other! That is only on the dense material plane that one thing at a certain place excludes any other. It's either you or me in the driver's seat. In mental space these limits don't exist. Why corner and squeeze ourselves into the narrow space of two-dimensional dilemmas? We can be more inventive! We can open a window in our conceptual walls! We can get a spacious kind of stereovision of the given disagreement. Sometimes, the wind of space blows the conflict out of the window! But how and where can we find extra space in the heat of an argument?

1. Check the relevance of the matters at stake. Often huge arguments escalate about ridiculous details or questions that do not need to get decided. Does it really matter whether it was in 1992 or 1993 when this or that happened at our vacation? Eliminating irrelevant questions, i.e. accepting different opinions that can coexist without any serious practical consequences eliminates a large portion of all quarrels. If these arguments about 'nothing' happen more often it is worthwhile to check whether there are some deeper motives which get us entangled again and again. That brings us to the next point.

2. Suppose we are still trapped in a two-valued opposition like, I am totally right, the other person is totally wrong. For instance, when we give different reports of the same situation, I assume that one of us must be a liar or an idiot, and the

liar or idiot is not I.

One way to find some space is to remind yourself: There is no conflict without interdependence: I am part of the problem, otherwise there would be no problem. The only part of the problem I can solve is the part that I am responsible for. I observe myself: why did I get so upset by what the other person did? May-be the other person hurt me by accident or because they believe they have very urgent overruling reasons. Even if I don't agree with their reasons or their actions I can apologize for my angry response. The perhaps the wall of anger between us begins to crumble and the other person can apologize for their own part too.

3. If all this does not work or not apply, we have to work with our imagination. I take the image of space literally. I feel the walls are closing down on me. I can work with the physical situation: I get up and open a window or go to the bathroom to calm down and take a couple of deep breaths. Or I can visualize on the mental/emotional level: we seem to fight in a very narrow room, we don't fit in both, it is so narrow there only seems to be place for one of us. This comes from territorial thinking. The walls are your own illusion! What happens when I visualize us, the opponents in a huge wide-open space? Everyone can go wherever they want without hindering the other. Then observe, does the experience of the conflict change? Does your breathing rhythm, your body-posture, and your voice change once you find yourself in this wider space? Maybe the perception of time changes too. Are we really in such a hurry? Can't we relax a bit and then take a fresh look at the

issue?

If we have more inner space we can become more flexible. We can move around and try other points of view. We can get into the shoes of the other person without pushing him or her away or losing our own! This helps enormously to listen and take the experience of the other person seriously. We can try to get into their dimension instead of judging them from outside. This is real research-work! A kind of space-travelling, -inter-personal space!

We might still get it wrong \bar{n} after all our capacity of clairvoyance and empathy is limited. But at any rate, no matter how strange their actions and opinions seem to be: this space-travel makes it easier to accept that (in most cases) the other person is not intentionally lying or doing something terribly wrong but honestly and seriously perceives things in a different way. They are doing the best they can, just as we do. At least, with respect to Vajra-family, we always start from this assumption.

I am not saying that we have to go along with everything or never go against actions that we really consider harmful. But if we start from a spacious attitude where different perspectives coexist, the emotions developing from the controversy will be less poisoned. We can disagree and still respect the other person. We might feel puzzled and challenged but we do not need to feel attacked by the fact that the other person does not support our own view. We can continue to breathe normally and do our best. Giving space means giving time. Perhaps the most difficult kind of generosity is taking and giving - the time to hear the other person out. In analyzing verbal fights and arguments I found that the most fre-

quent complaints is that you don't listen to me! Lots of frustrations and misunderstandings could be avoided if we only could spend a bit more time on listening.

But then, time remains limited. We also need the awareness to notice when we start going in circles, when things are getting repeated over and over again without getting closer to an understanding. At that point real skill is needed to find an exit that does not make things worse. Sometimes we just have to accept that we cannot win. Not winning does not mean we loose! (Again the two-valued trap!). We have to leave the difference 'as it is'. Sometimes we can find a compromise. Sometimes we have to accept a non-preferred solution. And sometimes we have to stick to our own insight and line of behavior and live with the fact that the other person is not convinced and not happy about it. But nobody forces us to consider the difference as a problem. My favorite motto is the quote above:

There is no solution because there is no problem.

(To be continued)

Preview of Part 3

1. Extreme cases. Aliens incommunicado. Breathing with a snake.
2. "The Dharma has to be applied in the way of the Dharma". Extra traps for Dharma practitioners / Sangha members. (God/the Guru is on my side. Competing for daddy's love. Fighting for a Holy Cause.)
3. The circle. Each point of view needs completion. All the positions/opinions I once held

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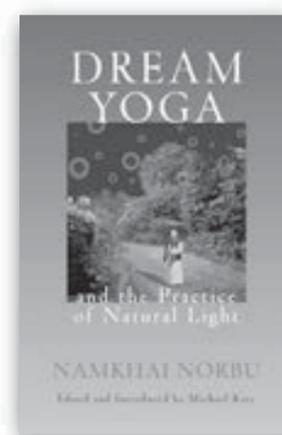
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ABOUT IMPERMANENCE

By Griselda Galmez

The Christmas retreat with Rinpoche finished more than one month ago. The last training for Santi Maha Sangha also finished one week ago. Yesterday, my beautiful man left for Buenos Aires. It's my last day in the small house near the creek, with its wild garden and vineyard full of grapes. I am cleaning the house almost with passion. The broom runs on the carpet and many images pass in my mind: my neighbors, Massimo and Johanna, scenes at the Gonpa altogether with our dear Master, the Yantra Yoga course and Fabio explaining the famous kumbhaka "Indirect breathing, first open hold..." Those weeks studying and practicing! What a day reviewing for the exam with Keigo! Then, the training and Adriano 's voice guiding our voices. The faces and the voices elapse like the water passing between my hands.

I open the fridge's door and discover two things: a bottle of wine and a silent sadness inside me. I put some wine into the vase. The wine passes down my throat and a question passes through my mind. Is sadness a poison too?

Maybe sadness is the answer to impermanence.

While I wash the vase I remember a conversation between practitioners during a First Level SMS study group. More or less these were the words:

"Impermanence! What a rare concept for Western culture!", one of them said. We are always very busy following something, doing something, going somewhere. In our world, nobody says to you that you must reflect about impermanence.

Another person disagrees, "I think that Western culture has also reflected very much on impermanence. We can find it in literature."

"Literature! I am speaking about daily life..."

"What is the difference?. Surely you read in the secondary school "Coplas for his father's death" by Jorge Manrique, the Spanish poet from the XV century."

"It's a very old text, boring... I don't remember it really, but the XV century was an epoch very different from present times..."

"So...what do you say about Jorge Luis Borges? He is a contemporary Argentinean poet and also wrote many texts with this topic."

"Perhaps, but nobody knows them because they are

very difficult to understand."

"The never ending story", I grumble meanwhile I put my hand inside the fridge. It is defrosting. Ice is becoming water, drops falls on my hand that cleans and cleans. I try to recall this poem of J.L. Borges, "Son los ríos." Sure, the words arrive in Spanish. First the verb, then the subject. Would this structure be possible in English? So... "Are the rivers."

Fortunately, some months ago, Ana García and Glenn Eddy, translated this poem for me but not the title.

Now, here it goes in two languages.

Somos el tiempo. Somos la famosa parábola de Heráclito, el oscuro. Somos el agua, no el diamante duro, la que se pierde, no la que reposa. Somos el río y somos aquel griego que se mira en el río. Su reflejo cambia en el agua del cambiante espejo, en el cristal que cambia como el fuego. Somos el vano río prefijado, rumbo a su mar. La sombra lo ha cercado. Todo nos dijo adiós, todo se aleja. La memoria no acuña su moneda. Y sin embargo hay algo que se queda y sin embargo hay algo que se queja.

We are the time. We are the famous parable of Heraclitus the Dark. We are the water, not the hard diamond, the one that gets lost, not the one that rests. We are the river and we are that Greek that looks at himself in the river. His reflection changes in the water of the changing mirror, in the crystal that changes like fire. We are the vain prefixed river bound for its sea. The shadow has encircled it. Everything said goodbye to us, everything distances. Memory does not stamp its coin. And nevertheless there is something that remains and nevertheless there is something that complains.

The small house in El Durazno, near the Gar, is already terribly clean. I go out with my baggage, I close the door. "There is something that complains"; I repeat to myself, like every time Rinpoche leaves Tashigar South, like every time we leave.

p o e t r y

Still waters run

We still do not know how mercy weaves how in fields of glass golden filament mercy in fields of grass (no moist emerald grazing now) sumptuous greening mercy weaves through ash through wanting mercy gathers nascent shards dormant, vibrant seeds spins them into burnished threads how mercy's loom knows bitter the warp of longing where it lies the edge of quenching sweetness.

by Julia Deisler
Santa Fe, New Mexico

1.
impronounceable haiku
outside the accompaniment
of the music academy walls

An invitation for a voyage
or simply a cup of tea
or two

Shall we make love
or play the piano
first?

Zeljka
(mont de marsan, january 2003)

Gomadevi Retreat

i

Silence was hidden
behind the surging, rough wind
We climbed between tossing palms
to refuge without walls.

Inside the teacher's words
the dhakini throbbed,
sparks converging to a star,
mountain mass crackling
into phosphorescent splinters,
glittering sea,

and the sky mirrored her
its dazzling tiers of rainbow
over the valley.

ii

Days of intense listening,
finding voices to practise new
invocations to her wisdom –

then pleasure in sun and sand,
cool sea and birds diving,
friends and master's laughter,

and machines broke down,
things were stolen and strayed,
bodies ached and burned.

Her eye's beam glancing
loosens times's laws.

iii

The evening is an open kiln
where vegetable greens are cooling
and profiles of branches
mark the fading sky.

In the house concerned questions
heap up around the sick body
white and heavy on the bed
but at a glass table

A pair of apprentice angels
work at perfection, weaving
sung syllables into
the clatter of a little drum.

iv

the hugely pregnant sphere
we all inhabited,
that bulged and strained
like a ripe fruit
or a bag of live fish,
reached a bursting point,
smoothed out and dissolved
into the light of day

which may be brighter
or a slightly different color
than before.

by Rowena Hill
Margarita Island
4/04

p a s s a g e s

BORN:

Atila Pedreira was born to Anna and Darlo Pedreira of Cordoba, Argentina, on October 17, 2003. In the photo (on the right) he is smiling with his mother and sister Loz.



Naomi Edith White was born to Cindy Faulkner and Peter White at home in Cambridge, England, at 18.34PM on March 11th, 2004. The birth was a very positive experience and the midwife turned up at the end just in time to deliver Naomi!

MARRIED

Jonathan Schaeffer and Oni McKinstry (right) were married on Dec 15, 2003 at Karekare, Auckland, New Zealand. Thanks to everyone for all your good wishes.



Round Trip

Return my heart to its rightful owner
if found out of context, say, in a dumpster
behind a Bar-B-Q restaurant in Albuquerque—
or, for example, on the moon.

Return our favorite fugue to the scent of winter,
that crystal terrace binding our horizons
in string sections and spectral whirls of blank slate—
an homage to readability, in the old style.

I am bound for a frolicsome void, suffused with lilac,
more human than lips, more divine than wine.
As the cabin pressure pits my guts against my spine
I recall, with a smile, your list of things I do not own.

by James Fox, NYC

"Vision, meditation, action." Garab Dorje

the cage of fictional concepts
formed in the habituated flow of conditioned impulses
is ruled by attachment to objects of desire
and aversion to objects of loathing
this dualism is reflexively dissolved
by sheer recognition
and concentrated absorption
in the visionary intuition
that gazes directly at the essence of the moment
where the incandescent insight of pure presence
blazes forth
radiating impartiality
like light from the sun
quiescent primal awareness
is the original face of the mind
free from discursive thought
free from presumption
free from preconceptions
free from pretense
free from contrivance
free from points of reference
free from subjectivity and objectivity
vision spontaneously releases appearances
as the flow of mindforms
express the creativity of natural nondifferentiated uncontrived innate awareness
without inhibiting or identifying with thought or emotion
in the liberation of sustained vision of intrinsic presence
no different from ordinary everyday experience

by Michael White

HOW I MET CHÖGYAL NAMKHAÏ NORBU

by *Mayda Hocevar*

In 1986 I was a pre-graduate student of Law living with my family in Mérida, Venezuela, and my idea of Buddhism, which I formed by reading Alan Watts's autobiography (which, by the way, I liked very much), was extremely diffuse. I remember the appealing title of a book in my mother's library, "Buddhism, a Religion Without God", however, I felt the book was strange and far removed from both my culture and the context of my own life. So I never read it.

In 1983, Elías Capriles, an older student of Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and other Dzogchen Masters, after living for many years in Nepal, went back to his country, Venezuela. He started publishing a series of articles on Buddhism and Dzogchen and preparing the 'arena' for Rinpoche's first visit to Venezuela.

One of my mother's friends had become interested in the articles by Elías Capriles being published in one of the leading Venezuelan newspapers and in one 'spiritual' Venezuelan magazine, and so he decided to invite him to visit Mérida and give some conferences on Buddhism, to which Elías

agreed. My mother's friend invited her to attend the talks, and she in turn asked me to come along with her. Although initially I was not interested in what I deemed to be just another of my mother's incursions into 'spiritual groups', I went to the conference to please her. I arrived late, when Elías was explaining the Four Noble Truths, the Three Paths (of Renunciation, Transformation and Self-liberation), and so on. I found Elías's discourse difficult to follow, especially because of the Sanskrit and Tibetan words, the references to the various Tibetan Buddhist schools, etc. However, something in his words went deep into my heart, maybe because since the moment I entered the conference he started to look at me very insistently. After his talk he came to me and said hello as though he already knew me since long ago, and gave me as a gift his book with poems—which, as I read them, became, and still are, really special for me. He also brought some Dharma books in prose along with him, which I started reading and found extremely interesting.

Elías told us that a great Tibetan Master had accepted to visit Venezuela later that year to give teachings on Tibetan Buddhism,



Mayda

and in particular on the special Path called Dzogchen. Before Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's arrival we started learning the Song of the Vajra and some other practices with Elías. I remember that I found them somehow to be very familiar. At the end of 1986, Rinpoche arrived in Caracas where he gave a series of public conferences in universities and hospitals that I could not attend as I was in Mérida. However, I read the interview of the Master that was published by a leading national newspaper and was quite impressed. Then Rinpoche led a long retreat in an idyllic setting in the mountains near Caracas, which was attended by many people including my mother, but which my

studies prevented me from attending. Later on my mother told me every morning Rinpoche expounded the view and the principles behind the practices, and every afternoon he would teach specific practices, explaining all details and showing the right way to sing the associated tunes. Rinpoche even found some time to go into the kitchen and help with the cooking.

After Rinpoche's retreat, Elías asked me to organize a Yantra Yoga course in Mérida to be taught by Enrico dell'Angelo, whom Rinpoche would send to teach. Since I had not met Rinpoche as yet, I did not know exactly what Yantra Yoga or Dzogchen were; however, I was young and full of energy, and therefore I organized Enrico's course enthusiastically, which quite a few people attended and which I considered a personal success. The first day Enrico gave an informal, short talk on dualism and how it was to live in it, etc. Enrico's words and manner were also quite inspiring for me. After so many activities related with the teachings I felt I already knew Rinpoche, even

though I had not met him yet.

In 1989 when Rinpoche came again to Venezuela, Elías introduced me to him. I felt that Rinpoche was not interested in me, he just said hello and turned away, which made me feel a little frustrated particularly since I was clinging to the idea that I was a very special person. Then, upon listening to his teachings, I thought, "This is exactly what I was looking for, it fits me perfectly", and Rinpoche's presence made me tell myself, "This is the first person I have met who is absolutely free from fear and laughs so deeply with his whole being". Once, during a Ganapuja, which I considered a very serious activity, a group of people started to talk and laugh at the ritual. I expected Rinpoche was going to get angry with them and ask them to leave or something like that, which is what I felt they deserved. But I was extremely surprised to see that Rinpoche started to laugh with them—which shocked but at the same time delighted me. In general, I felt a deep happiness during Rinpoche's retreat and quite a strong devotion toward him.

Well, this is the abridged story of how I met Rinpoche, which I hope will also shed some light on the beginnings of the Dzogchen Community in Venezuela.

Clarification for Vajra Dance Training Courses

by *Prima Mai - January 2004*

Practitioners who want to attend a Vajra Dance Teacher Training course should:

- Be a member of the Dzogchen Community.
- Know both parts (male/female) of the Vajra Dance(s) related to the Vajra Dance Teacher Training being offered.
- For the 1st Level Teacher Training, one should know the Dance of the Liberation of the 6 Lokas and the Dance of the Three Vajras.
- For the 2nd Level Teacher Training, one should know the Dance of the Song of the Vajra.
- Participate in either the 1st, 2nd or 3rd Level Teacher Training at least twice.
- If one is interested in becoming a local instructor and feels him or herself capable of instructing others, one should participate in either the 1st, 2nd or 3rd Level Teacher Training Courses at least twice.

Even if one has done so, one is not automatically an instructor of these practices. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu must always approve and authorize any new instructor in collaboration with the primary teachers (Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo). If one is authorized to instruct, one will receive a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Level diploma signed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Before presenting a local instructor to Rinpoche, one of the primary teachers will hold a "supervision" course in the Dance related to that level together with the candidate, where the candidate will mainly teach and hold the course and the primary teacher will clarify any doubts and offer suggestions to the candidate.

The 1st and 2nd Level Teacher Training Courses are also open to practitioners who have no interest

in becoming local instructors. These courses are also for deepening one's knowledge of these practices and making it more precise. Still, in order to attend these courses it is indispensable to know both parts (male or female) very well with only minor doubts remaining about the steps and basic arm movements. Advanced Vajra Dance Courses also offer the possibility of deepening of one's knowledge of these practices. The main difference between an Advanced Course and a Teacher Training is that the level of knowledge of the participants in an Advanced Course could vary much more but it is not necessary to know both parts (male and female).

Practical Suggestions for Organizing Vajra Dance Courses

Space

For a course in the Dance, it is necessary to find a space that will not only hold the Mandala the practitioners will be dancing on but will also have space (or corners) for practitioners to sit around the Mandala. For the small (Earth/Body) Mandala with a large center, you will need at least 8,80 x 8,80 meters.

Length of Courses

A suggestion of how many days to calculate for each course:

For a course of the Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra it is best to plan a minimum of 6 days for either the first part or the second part. Since it is a very long and complex practice it is best divided into two parts of courses.

If you wish to organize, in accordance with the instructor, a course to learn the complete Vajra Dance of the Song of the Vajra, it is advisable to have one or more days of rest, without instruction,

and 'only practice' on these days.

For a course on the Vajra Dance of the Liberation of the Six Lokas plan a minimum of 3 days (week-end). Also for a course on the Vajra Dance of the Three Vajras plan a minimum of 3 days.

Advanced Courses can be one day or more, depending on circumstance and interest.

Teacher Training Courses should be a minimum of 7 days.

It is very beneficial if you add at least one or more 'only practice days' to the courses, in which the group can deepen, integrate and practice intensively with a fresh memory. These practice days do not require the presence of an instructor.

It is beneficial to have organized follow-up practice days or week-ends prior to the actual course and communicate them to the course participants.

Number of Participants

For courses on the Vajra Dance the maximum number of participants could be 10 male and 10 female practitioners. This means 2 groups of each gender. The instructor can only teach 5 practitioners at a time well, and then she/he has to switch to the next group of 5 practitioners.

This is a general suggestion. It can also depend on whether there is more than one Mandala available. The main thing is to be aware that if a group is too large, particularly in a beginner's course, each participant's practice and learning time will be very limited.

All organization and scheduling for courses should be based on communication with the instructor.

What you will need for a course or

practice-retreat of any Vajra Dance

- A Mandala (tape for a transportable Mandala to keep it in place);
- A blue candle for the center or a round crystal (for outdoor Mandalas);
- A tape/CD player and the music for the Vajra Dance;
- Comfortable clothing and soft shoes or socks;
- Cushion/chair for the instructor (especially for traveling instructors);
- Water/tea/snack and glass etc. for the instructor (possibly also for other participants traveling there as well...);
- It's beneficial is to have a small 'altar' for incense and images supporting the practice.

At the end of a course there will be a Ganapuja, if circumstances allow, in the space where the course takes place. You will need to add some more time for this in conjunction with the last teaching session.

General information on taking care of an invited instructor

- If the invited instructor comes from another place, someone should meet him or her upon arrival in the airport or railway station.

- Beforehand, communicate, via email if possible, telephone numbers and addresses that may be useful or necessary to the instructor.

- Send the information regarding the location where he or she will stay during the visit and who will come and meet him or her at the airport and the whereabouts, etc.

- If possible, use envelopes for handing over the expenses on arrival of the instructor and also

for any other compensation.

General Suggestions or Observations

Since we have media like books and videos or DVDs for studying the Vajra Dance, and more experienced Vajra Dance practitioners, maybe the following suggestion will be appreciated.

If one is interested in learning the Vajra dance, the correct way to learn is to attend a course lead by an authorized instructor.

If one's circumstances are such that one is very determined and wants to learn this practice, but one is not able to participate in the near future in such a course and/or one has learned the Dance by following other practitioners or studying the Vajra Dance videos and books already, still, the correct attitude is to make the commitment to participate in a course to check oneself carefully and, if needed, correct oneself with an instructor. It is not advisable to rely solely on the videos, books etc. or skip the course to save some money.

From observation, it is not easy to change a mistake. Habits form very quickly and stay quite stubbornly sometimes.

For the future of the Vajra Dance it is most beneficial if every practitioner of this practice takes responsibility to do it in as correct and precise a manner as possible in accordance with one's capacity. Therefore, it is best to learn in the correct way from the beginning and to always check with an instructor, in accordance with the advice of our precious Master.

(English editing by Anastasia McGhee)