

## Tibetan Thangka Art Courses at Kunsangar North

**Date :** February 26, 2021

“Whoever depicts the form of the Victorious One,  
All of them will achieve... an attractive and noble form,  
Control over the senses, erudition, sun-like radiance...  
They will be free from disease, pain, suffering, and fear...  
They will not become anyone’s slaves and will not be at anyone’s disposal...  
Their senses won’t be harmed.”

(Benefit that comes from producing Buddhist images. Kangyur, Sutra section)



Larisa Rozhnova and her thangka of Manjushri.

At times we needed to rest and then I watched how the base is cooked from skin, glue, and clay, which is traditionally used in the art of thangka, how the canvas is stretched on a frame made according to the old technique here, in Kunsangar, by Vladimir Shemet, for whom we are very grateful! I hope that over time I will be able to do the same...

Traditionally, the artist sits on the ground with his legs tucked in. In front of him is a frame with a stretched canvas, tied with a rope to something above his head. On top of the frame, there is a wooden plank for the hand to move the brush and work on the image on the canvas. It is customary to spit into the paint, instead of the palette – the place between the index finger and the thumb of the left hand. So now thangkas are made in the Himalayas – India, Nepal, and Tibet, – and one can study this art there.



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We all felt the difference between the two formats over the past year. For example, Svetlana, one of the project participants, recounted:

“When we can meet in person, everything is much more productive than online. The result exceeded our expectations. Larisa is an excellent motivator in working thanks to her faith in her opportunities and desire to work further.”

For me the indisputable advantage of being offline is the ability to look at how the canvas is grounded and dried, how a previously drawn image is transferred to it, how mineral paints are applied, diluted with the same glue from the skins. The light, spacious hall has a special, “retreat” atmosphere. I was not the only one who liked it, judging by the comments:

“We became very absorbed in the classes, it was a warm, relaxed, friendly atmosphere, which allowed even the most unsure (person) to believe in himself, contributed to the development of abilities of everyone.” (Yulia)

“I would like to express my gratitude to Larisa for her attention and willingness to help everyone. It was very, very pleasing and created an open, friendly, relaxed atmosphere.”

“Larisa is a wonderful teacher and deep practitioner. Thanks to her, lessons do not turn into a circle of decorative and applied arts.” (Olesya)

Next to my table there was also a “newcomer”, a hatha yoga instructor, and, as it turned out, a vajra sister. A more experienced draftsman – an aspirant in experimental physics, and the lady next to her – a professional artist bent over her Tara by the window... We were brought together not just by the desire to escape from the city, breathe frosty air, enjoy the silence and good company (and in Kunsangar it is really wonderful, especially in such a sunny, snowy winter!), we were attracted here by the ancient, sacred art.

Outside the windows, snow sparkles like a rainbow in the sun, Without breathing, I repeat the smooth lines, “Calves (lower legs) like those of the black antelope Aeneas”. Happiness.



“I am very grateful to Larisa and the organizers for the rare opportunity to get in touch with the Tibetan art of thangka not only externally – with a pencil in hand – but also from the inside – studying the enlightened qualities of the Tathagatas. Unexpectedly for me, this course allowed new qualities of my personal practice to emerge. Thank you! (Maria)

Two retreats later. I have drawn three heads of Buddha of different formats, copied the proportions of the feet and palms, as well as many “wise” mudras. My first Buddha was drawn by me. So far without clothes and a throne, but (on the advice of Larisa) toned with what turned out to be at hand, that is, with strong tea and an aqueous solution of paint from a felt-tip pen.

The retreat is over. For the last time, we dedicate our merits.

“People who joyfully and with devotion  
Working on making  
Stupa and images,  
Will have extremely numerous treasures in all lives.  
Such is, in accordance with tradition, a perfect master artist.”  
(from *the Kangyur*)

Our treasure is the joy from creativity, from knowledge, from communication, from being at the Gar, in the “Wheel of joy”, from the opportunity that has opened up to make our own, small contribution to the preservation of the traditions and culture of Tibet, which the Teacher recommended. Because we are all united by the desire to continue.



“It will be great if it becomes possible to attend courses regularly every month and to be more and more in this development process.” (Natalia)

“I would like to continue to have an opportunity to continue learning this wonderful art.” (Svetlana)

“I have been attending these courses for the second year and I am very grateful for this opportunity.” (Olesya)

“The fact that this course provides an opportunity to study ancient Tibetan art while being right here, within our home country, adopting the knowledge and skills of an experienced master, is unique and most valuable.” (Yulia)

We part, but we do not say goodbye, because we know that we will soon meet again in this special place, founded by a unique person. We believe that there will be more of us in spring, when the snow melts, the buds burst, and flowers start to bloom.

“The skin is tender and thin. The hair on the body is directed upwards.”

Valentina Tarasenko

Feedback from participants sent to Kunsangar North in November-December 2020 included.