

Words of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on Tibetan Culture

Date : December 14, 2021

Dear friends and supporters of the [Ka-Ter Translation Project of the Shang Shung Institute Austria](#),

December 2021

From end of November until beginning of December 2021, the Dzogchen Community Merigar West offered a “replay-retreat” of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that He gave on *Mengag Tagdrol* in August, 2013. I have roughly edited Rinpoche’s words and feel very happy to forward you His words about the importance of Tibetan culture and the necessity of preserving this unique culture. On August 21st, 2013, Rinpoche explained:

“After one hundred years no one of us will be still on this earth. Our life is very relative in this moment, but when we die, the world and the population of human beings will not disappear.

All teaching is very much related with Tibetan people and Tibetan culture. We should understand that many people do not have that understanding. For example, when I’m singing Tibetan songs, when I’m asking to dance Tibetan dances etc. then many people don’t show a real interest. They think, that the reason for this singing and dancing is I am Tibetan and therefore I like that.

But singing and dancing is not the main point. I am singing and dancing, because Tibet is a unique population who saved this precious teaching that we have and that we can follow today. If there were no Tibetans, no Tibetan culture and no Tibet today, there would not exist the Dzogchen teaching in this world and even the Vajrayana teaching would not exist. We know, that the aeras where the Vajrayana teaching and Dzogchen teaching developed and were applied is today in Pakistan and Afghanistan. But we cannot find any of these teachings there today. Although most of the teaching come from India, there don’t exist the Buddhist teachings in India anymore, they are just developing now a bit.

But all tantras, just like the collection of *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*, everything, not only in form of books but also the transmission and the practices, have been alive in Tibet until today. You know very well, how is situation of today in Tibet. Tibet is the part of China. China is very big nation and there are many minorities. The Tibetan people is considered to be one of these minorities. Tibet as a country is now divided in five parts: in the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region and then other different and separated provinces. In none of these regions the Tibetan language and writing is used as the official language, in all these regions the official language and writing is Chinese.

Of course, I'm definitely not saying that the Tibetans need to separate from China. Regarding that aspect I agree very much with His Holiness Dalai Lama. He says, that we Tibetans are underdeveloped people and that we need the Chinese, that we need to be part of the Chinese family. I really agree on that.

But we must maintain the Tibetan culture and writing, it really must not disappear. A few years ago, when I went in Tibet last time, I saw Tibetan school children walking on the street. I stopped a little and I gave them some pens. Then I talked with them about which class they were attending, what they were studying, etc. I spoke in an East Tibetan dialect and they still could understand, but they replied me in Chinese. Then I said to them: *"It is very good that you study the Chinese system, because it is very useful. But you must understand the Tibetan language and the Chinese language are two different languages. When I'm talking to you in Tibetan, you should replay in Tibetan and not in Chinese."* Then they replied, "TWELO, TWELO", which means "It is correct, it is true" in Chinese. So they actually agreed to my words, but they answered in Chinese. This in the situation of this generation. If we go on in that way, the new generations properly will know only Chinese.

What about Tibetan history, Tibetan culture, Tibetan knowledge? Will everything just go in a museum? We should think a little about that. You are not Tibetans, but the knowledge Tibetan culture has an immense value for all people in this globe. For that reason, I'm sacrificing and do my best to achieve something concrete. Many of my students are also working for that. You know, we already we have the organization A.S.I.A. and the Shang Shung Institute. These organizations are doing an important work for maintaining the Tibetan culture.

We should understand that everybody needs to support these activities. Sometimes people say that they don't understanding or that they are a little indifferent. Then I feel very sad. Actually, I cannot do very much by myself but I hope that people understand that."

In 2002 Rinpoche launched the Ka-Ter Translation Project. Its main intention and activity is to translate the words of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and other great Tibetan masters to English. Many fantastic and unique books have been published in these last 19 years. The most recent book is *The Necklace of Jewels*. In 2022, several new books are planned to be published.

All these books are the fruit of the extraordinary work of our translators, mainly Adriano Clemente, and the editors. Based on the donations that we have received for the Ka-Ter Translation Project, we also contributed to the printing of several books.

You can all book order from [Shang Shung Publications](#).

We did all this work just because of your collaboration and your generous support.

Please keep on supporting our fruitful work!

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On behalf of the team of the Ka-Ter Translation Project I thank you for your understanding of the importance of our work and for all your donations.

I send you my warmest season-wishes and especially a healthy new year,

Yours,

Oliver Leick

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