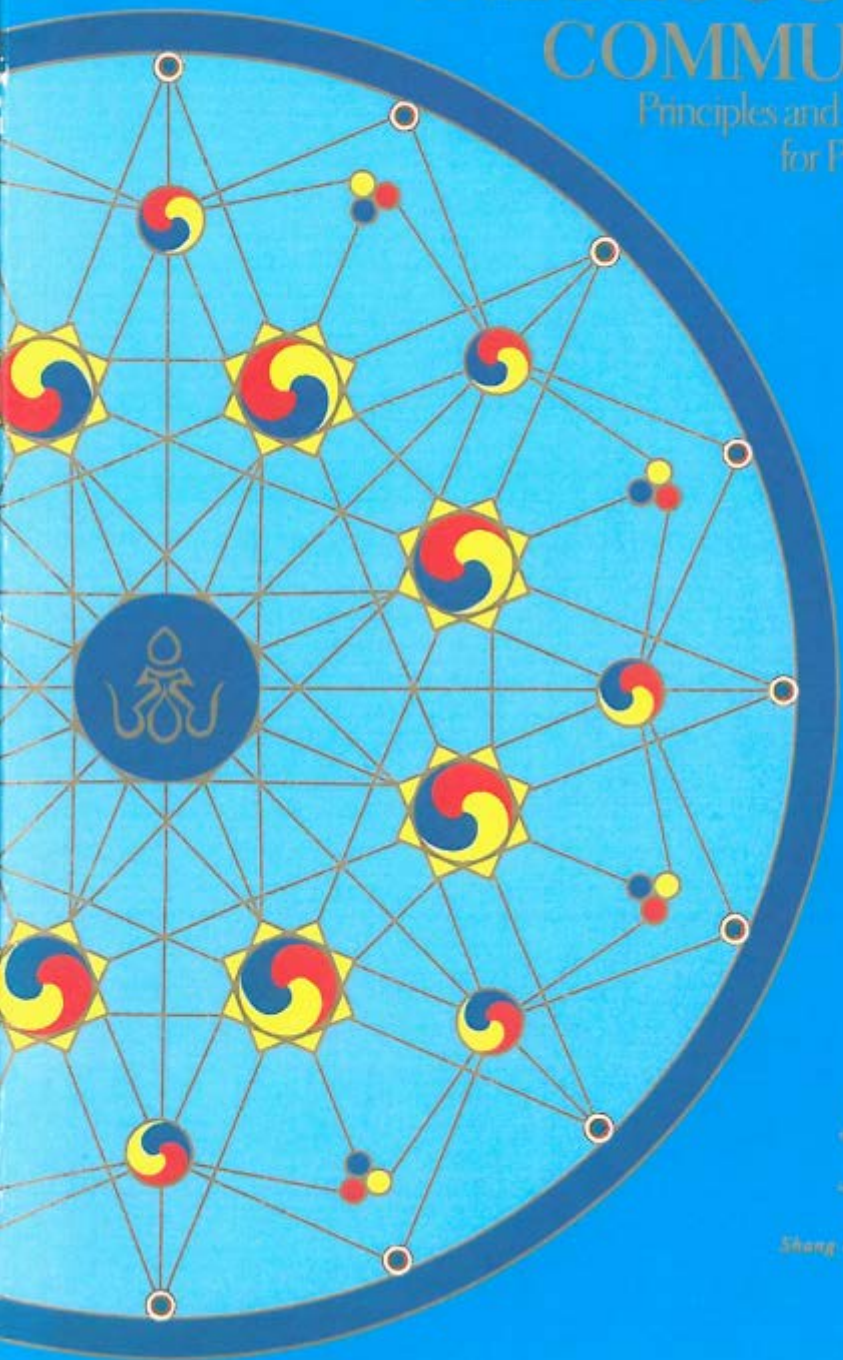


THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

Principles and Guidelines
for Practitioners
and Gakyil
Members



Shang Shung Editions

666

**Edited by Saadet Arslan with the collaboration of Julia Lawless and
Karin Eisenegger**

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Norbu**

CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES
FOR PRACTITIONERS AND GAKYIL MEMBERS



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Shang Shung Edizioni

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book was first published on behalf of the International Gakyil in 2001. Many details and guidelines on the organization and management of the Dzogchen Community are now in transition. Please refer to the on-line documentation.

Therefore, this abridged version contains only the main teachings on the Dzogchen Community given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

September 2006

FOREWORD

In the early 1980's our Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, tried to organize the Dzogchen Community and he wrote some documents for all practitioners explaining the guidelines. Finally, in 1990, he addressed a little book to all Community members called *The Principles and Guidelines of The Dzogchen Community* and promoted the idea of the Community becoming international. Rinpoche's intent was noble and sacred but it did not succeed; he was criticized and not taken seriously.

Personally I don't remember the situation very well because I was a child, but today I can say without any doubt that my personal success in business and strategic consulting comes a lot from Rinpoche's vision, and certainly his teaching.

For the Dzogchen Community we focus on two business models: the *balanced scorecard* and the *problem solving* approach.

A few years ago with my friends at KPMG and Arthur Andersen C./Deloitte, I started to apply the *balanced scorecard* (from Kaplan and Norton - Harvard Business School), and I found this really easy. I was successful simply because I used the same principles extending from the three colors of the Gakyil to *four perspectives*. Somehow in the early 1990's, the Harvard Business School promoted the idea that we need to care about all aspects, not only money, and we need to create a direct link between ideas (strategy) and action. This is done through cause-effect relationships going through

emotions! Therefore the most important part is knowledge. Learning is the driving power of life.

A few years ago all companies started to use *problem solving*; this approach simplifies your access to service. At least we need to imagine a solution before trying to solve problems, and business people call this *brainstorming*. Often my son asks me *why* about everything, over and over. Children don't really understand when we explain *how* things work, they want to know *why*. Their imagination is very important; they can learn and grow overcoming all difficulties with it. When they ask, "Why is there light and dark?" they don't care about the sun or even electricity, they want to know who created light and dark and for what purpose. Children expect a story with strong emotions, if you say, "God created light", then they will ask, "Is God pretty?" Instead, if you invent a beautiful story about dragons and fire, they will remember it for years. Probably this story will also be a source of courage and the confirmation that you will always take care of them. When we deal with unknown things we are all children!

Our Master started to explain the nature of the Dzogchen Community, that it is beautiful and perfect since the beginning, twenty years ago. It was interpreted in the wrong way, probably because the world did not offer any concrete examples (for in those years it was science fiction). Today all corporations are looking for knowledge and adaptability with a similar approach, so it wouldn't be strange to have our Master as the President of Harvard Business School!

Money comes and goes, knowledge lasts forever.

Yeshi Silvano Namkhai

PART ONE

THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

THE AUTHENTIC PRINCIPLE OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY¹

(Translated from Tibetan by A. Clemente)

All those who trust in me, Namkhai Norbu (Longchen Rolpai Dorje) and who seek to realise the primordial state of Dzogchen, I request to act in this way.

Dzogchenpa Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

1. THE NATURE OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

The Dzogchen Community is a broad association of people brought together by a common interest in the teaching of Dzogchen Ati; who follow it under the guidance of a master possessing authentic knowledge of the state of

¹ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu sent this document to all members of the Dzogchen Community in 1990 so that everyone could discuss it. It contains an outline of the general principles of the Dzogchen Community as well as a proposal for an international organisation based on two kinds of members: ordinary members and active members (see § 15). One year later, in 1991, following this consultation, Rinpoche decided to withdraw his proposal for an international organisation, saying (*The Mirror* # 12, November 1991):

“Last year I wrote a letter informing people of my ideas on how the Community could continue, to ask people what they think about them. I’ve received a few replies to my request for people’s opinions. About twenty percent of the people who replied said they thought these ideas were very interesting, but about thirty percent replied with criticism. Most people kept quiet and I don’t know whether or not they are in agreement with my ideas or if they are just too shy to say anything. Anyway my original idea was to form a kind of commission to examine all these ideas but when I saw this kind of criticism I thought better of

Dzogchen; who study and practice, each according to his (or her) own capacity, the Tantras, the Lungs and the Upadeshas; and who further the circumstances necessary for these activities.

As clarified in the statutes of the Community, one can only become an effective member (of the Community) after following the teaching for three years, but obviously, all who are interested in the teaching and who wish to or actually collaborate with those who maintain them, automatically belong to the Dzogchen Community. On the other hand, those who are in the Community only in a spirit of friendship; or to

it because I became convinced that the time was not yet ripe for it. Our Community is not yet mature so it's useless to carry out my ideas for the International Community."

Therefore a few points, especially the criteria for becoming a member of the Dzogchen Community as described in § 15, have not been implemented as presented in the document itself. In particular the requisite according to which one should have attended at least three retreats held by Rinpoche in order to become an effective member has not been applied, also because the legal status adopted by the Community in Merigar (non-profit making cultural association) does not allow temporary (preliminary) membership. According to Italian law all members of the Merigar Community Association have to be full members. Recently, in April 2001, we asked Rinpoche about membership and he said that it is not very important to have attended three retreats in order to become a member of the Community, so we can leave that out. Therefore the difference between preliminary and full membership no longer exists anywhere. But Rinpoche insisted on the importance of having attended at least three retreats and having frequented the Community for three years (of course paying regular membership fees) to have the right to elect and to be elected to take part in the Gakyil or to hold other positions of responsibility (that of Gekö, for instance).

In conclusion, this document is still perfectly valid for the most part. The points that do not correspond to the present situation are marked with a note referring one back to this note.

pass their time in distraction; or who in reality have no interest at all in the teachings or in those who maintain them, cannot be considered to be practitioners of Dzogchen, even if they have completed the established length of time for belonging to the Community, or have already done so long ago.

It has happened that some people have said to me, “I don’t like being part of the Community, so I want to leave, but I’ll try to practise the Dzogchen you have taught me and in future I hope to be able to take teachings from you again.” Evidently this way of speaking shows a way of identifying the Dzogchen Community with a group of people, because the basis for this kind of argument is none other than the problem of experiencing conflict with several people of the Community. But how can one think that a few people one has had conflict with can represent the Dzogchen Community? Conflicts arise from every single individual, and as we are individuals, if we improve our relationships with others and try to diminish our tensions, certainly all the conflicts and tensions thereafter will be spontaneously pacified.

With regard to this the master Shantideva said, “He who has a mind full of hatred receives more disturbances, but instead of trying to conquer all of those who cause disturbances, which is very difficult, it is better to conquer one’s own mind. It is like a person who, having shoes with good leather soles, can walk comfortably anywhere”.

If someone considers the Dzogchen Community to be like a normal association and leaves it because of some conflicts he has had, and goes off to join another association, there is no guarantee that until he has relaxed his own tensions, he will not sooner or later want to leave this other association. It is very likely that these kinds of situations arise.

In reality the Dzogchen Community is represented firstly by the teachings of an authentic Master who maintains them and secondly by the people who are interested in them; who according to their different individual capabilities, study the Tantras, the Lungs and the Upadeshas of Dzogchen and secondarily all the branches of knowledge linked with the teachings; who try to practise their understanding as much as they can; who collaborate in resolving the most important necessities related to the aims and do their best to help in any kind of work, motivated by the fact, not of having been given the job by someone else, but by their own spontaneous willingness. This should be the real nature of the Dzogchen Community.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

The basic foundation of the Dzogchen Community is made up of a master who possesses knowledge of the Dzogchen Ati and true practitioners in relationship with him. If there is no master and no practitioners, there can obviously be no teaching. Therefore, the teaching of Dzogchen Ati should definitely not be identified with great stretches of land; nor with buildings or constructions like temples; nor with libraries or with associations of large numbers of people; nor with any kind of community based on vast capital; nor with work or craft co-operatives, or at least not only with these kinds of things. If the Community were to be identified exclusively as an association of people brought together in the interest of work activities, even if it were called the Dzogchen Community, then it would have no correspondence with the real meaning (of this term), just as the name 'Buddha' can be used by anyone as their personal name.

However, if a work or craft co-operative has the vital spirit of Dzogchen Ati it could become a branch of the Community with an important relationship to it. For example, if a person who is strong and elegant and covered with ornaments loses his life and dies, his body becomes nothing more than a corpse to be carried to the cemetery. In the same way, if any branch which is in close relationship with the Community develops on the basis of the vital principles of Dzogchen Ati, the benefits and the qualities of the Dzogchen Community will also develop; but if such a branch lacks a true master and his teaching, which is the heart of the Community, no matter how well developed it might be, it is certain that even if it is called 'Dzogchen Community' it will have nothing to do with the fundamental meaning.

3. THE MASTER OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

The main inspiration of the Dzogchen Community is the Master who possesses knowledge of Dzogchen Ati and the true practitioners of Dzogchen from the first level of knowledge up to realisation of the state of Rigdzin. They, maintaining, continuing and developing the precious teaching of the 'mind of Samantabhadra' in the appropriate way, should favour the circumstances for the continuation of the spread of the teachings until the end of the world. To realise this goal they have to complete the various stages to realisation of knowledge, both ordinary and special as fully described in the text *Santi Maha Sangha*² and its commentaries.

² Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Santi Maha Sangha - The rDzogs chen Community*, Shang Shung Edizioni, 1988.

4. THE ORGANISATION OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

The unique base or root of the Dzogchen Community is the understanding of the primordial state (Ati) in its own real condition and the application of this knowledge in life as the path. It is absolutely not to be identified with any kinds of office, structures of work or authoritarian organisation. Yet applying in life the knowledge of the primordial state of Dzogchen doesn't entail at all that one has to disregard every kind of organisation. On the contrary, if one possesses knowledge of the primordial state, one should use whatever elements are necessary according to each particular circumstance and time. For example, if someone has to sleep the night on a mountain, they will try to arrange some stones and branches or anything they can find so as not to catch cold from the dampness of the ground, and build a fence of branches to shelter themselves from the wind: in short they will try to pass the night as best they can according to their means. Knowing how to act in this way is a sign of behaving with the presence of awareness. In the same way, since the Community owns land and has programs of work connected with it, some type of organisation related to the different activities is necessary, but it is clear that these forms of organisation are different from authoritarian ones.

5. THE PRINCIPLE OF ORGANISATION

With regards to the principle of the organisation of the Dzogchen Community, since all human conditions are related to the three 'doors' (of body, voice and mind), the main basis for the organisation of the Community also has to fall within their field.

If we have a real understanding of our authentic condition, and if this knowledge is really integrated into the activities of our three 'doors', we will certainly have the complete ability to bring to perfect fulfilment any action whatever that we undertake, whether it is important or not. This is because life itself only goes ahead due to the combined actions and energies of our three doors, and it is only on the basis of these that we succeed in providing for all of the necessities of life. We all have a real experience of this.

Therefore, with regard to the organisation that is effectively necessary, it is easy to see that we need a principle of totality which integrally includes the energies of body, voice and mind. Thus, if three types of people who represent the three functions of body, voice and mind take on respectively the responsibility for the three different activities related to economy, to culture and to work, all of the energies of the different possible types of activities can certainly fall within the field of the three 'doors', and consequently this can become a favourable cause for their success.

6. THE STRUCTURE OF THE GAKYIL

The sections and the colours of the Gakyil symbolise the three types of people linked to the three types of activities of the Community. The Gakyil turns in an anticlockwise direction from the outside to the inside and in a clockwise direction from the inside to the outside. This represents on one hand, the inflow of the combined energies of all of the Dzogchen practitioners, and on the other hand, all of the benefits that derive from such energies, spreading in all directions, bringing happiness to all infinite beings.

- The first of the three sections, yellow in colour, represents the economic and administrative activities of the Community which are linked to the body.
- The red section represents the different kinds of work activities organised by the Community, or work co-operatives, which are linked to the voice or energy.
- The blue section represents the cultural and educational activities (of the teachings) which are linked to the mind.

7. THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE GAKYIL

As a principle, if possible, there should be three members in each section of the Gakyil as representatives of the three existences (of body, voice and mind). This makes nine people altogether.

Alternatively, depending on the conditions, one can have a Medium Gakyil made up of six members or a Minor Gakyil made up of three members.

These people, for the duration of one year, must take on the total responsibility of the Community, and as representatives of the Community members should take it upon themselves to make a success of the different planned activities.

For specific jobs within each sphere of activity, small groups of people can be organised subsidiary to the Gakyil, or taking into account the different desires and bents of the people of the Community, the Gakyil members can choose assistants to further the necessary work.

8. THE DURATION OF THE GAKYIL

In general the nine members of the Gakyil should stay in office for a year, and there are three specific reasons for this rule:

- So that no type of authoritarian organisation develops within the Community.
- So that all members of the Community who wish to contribute to the Community can have the opportunity to take on some responsibility.
- So that those who commit themselves to working for the Community have the time off to carry on with their personal affairs.

9. THE WAY OF ELECTING A GAKYIL

The way the Gakyil members are elected from the people belonging to the Community is as follows: firstly, the older members of the Community prepare a list of effective members⁹ who wish to be elected. Secondly, the Master of the Community, the older members and the members of the Gakyil still in office discuss the choices and take decisions. The final decision in any case rests on the Master.

At the time when a new Gakyil is elected, members can be chosen from those people who already have experience of being on the Gakyil in previous years, or from members of the present Gakyil who have shown themselves to be particularly capable. This is admissible up to a total of three years.

At the same time, when a Gakyil represented by nine people is elected, the director, the vice-director and the secre-

tary have to be established, as well as any other necessary posts. The secretary does not need to be chosen from members of the Gakyil.

10. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GAKYIL

There are five primary responsibilities of the members of the elected Gakyil of the Community:

1. That the activities that are followed are in accordance with the statutes of the Community, and are not activities against the law.

2. That the activities of the different sections should proceed efficiently.

3. That the relationships with or between members of the Community in all the different countries make progress and become stronger.

4. To guarantee that the planned activities of the Gakyil are brought to a conclusion within the time established.

5. That whatever type of activity is undertaken, it does not lose the vital spirit of the understanding of Dzogchen.

After the director and vice-director have verified that all the programs of activity are in accordance with the particular rules of the statutes, the assembly of the Gakyil must take the different activities in hand, and with presence and awareness ensure that all of the programs with established completion dates are brought to a conclusion in the right way. This is an extremely important principle.

The different activities of the Gakyil, whether they are of greater or lesser importance, should be decided upon in Gakyil meetings. Even if it is difficult for all nine Gakyil members to always be present at these meetings, decisions taken in com-

mon agreement between the different members of the Gakyil should always be made by at least six people or at minimum three. If a member of the Gakyil fails to come to three general meetings, after a consultation, the other members of the Gakyil can expel that member and choose another to replace him (or her).

For more important decisions, since the Master of the Dzogchen Community is the life itself of the fundamental principle of Gakyil, he has to be applied to for the final decision.

11. THE GARS OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

The centres (Gars) of the Dzogchen Community, whether large or small, should not be considered as places where members of the Community can make money, rather it is the members of the Community who should sustain the economy of the different centres of the Dzogchen Community. This is because these centres are places belonging to all members of the Community and are indispensable to realize the needs of those who possess an understanding of Dzogchen. However, that does not mean that all members of the Community, attributing extreme importance to the centres of the Community, should sacrifice or offer all their own time and goods, nor that a person should spend all their time working for the Community and then live in conditions of poverty. Finally, nor does it mean that a few members of the Community should form an organisation using the name and image of the Dzogchen Community, to exploit in any way people interested in the Community principally and other people in some way connected to it. It would be wrong to

augment the capital of one of these centres in such a way that a few people of the organisation become like bureaucrats in a nice comfortable situation, rather these centres must bring real and individual benefits to all those belonging to the Dzogchen Community.

The centres of the Dzogchen Community can have the specific name of a 'Gar', as for example, Merigar or Tsegyalgar etc. From the moment a Gar of the Dzogchen Community exists there must be a qualified Gakyil which takes responsibility for it, and from the moment a Gakyil exists it must be based on the same principles as all the other Gakyils in the world. However, the necessity that all Gakyils should be based on the same principles should not be interpreted as authoritarianism. Nor does it mean that the Gakyil of any specific centre of the Community should be considered as the central Gakyil, and that the other Gakyils should submit to them or that they should be governed by them. This is because such a system would be false and authoritarian, and as soon as an authoritarian system exists, the inevitable consequence is that others are subjugated and exploited. With regard to the ways of exploitation, one needs to keep in mind that more serious than the exploitation of someone's goods, linked to the aspect of body, is the exploitation of the voice and of the freedom of thought of a person, linked to the aspect of mind. If one falls into an authoritarian system in which one person is dominating or exploiting another, even if words and expressions like 'uncorrected', 'authentic', 'as it is' are used in regard to the natural state of Dzogchen, one is becoming the exact opposite.

The Dzogchen Community should be based on a precise understanding of the authentic condition of the primordial state of Dzogchen. This so-called understanding of the pri-

mordial state of Dzogchen means that each individual should recognise what their own base is, or the central unlimited potentiality of their energy, such that they will understand all of the external energies related to it and the way in which such energies are related to the individual. This cannot arise through intellectual discussion or beliefs decided upon in one's own mind, but only thanks to a stable knowledge, which is the fruit of experience. When a person has obtained this knowledge they must integrate it continually with the presence of awareness: this is what is meant by 'understanding the primordial state of Dzogchen'. When a person has direct experience as a basis they will without doubt succeed in obtaining a stable understanding, and not one that is falsified by the different conditions of others, other than their own. When such a stable authentic understanding arises, one is automatically liberated from the net of attachment and egoistic interests, and as far as oneself is concerned, one becomes able to govern oneself and to collaborate with oneself. With regard to others, a genuine compassion without limits spontaneously arises, and also, there is no doubt, a love and a particular respect for one's (spiritual) brothers and sisters arises.

12. THE GAKYILS OF THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

In countries or cities where there are many Dzogchen Community members, it is necessary that there should also be a centre of the Community, and from the time a country establishes a centre of the Community, regardless of whether or not such a centre can have land or a stable location, it is indispensable to have a Gakyil.

Even though the Gakyils are not in a relationship of subordination to each other as in authoritarian types of organi-

sation, since they are all based on the same principle of the understanding of the primordial state of Dzogchen, all of the Gakyils of the Dzogchen Community should try to have a deep and genuine relationship with each other. Without falling into limitations or sectarianism, they should really be based on the fundamental principle, and this is truly the characteristic sign indicating how far practitioners of Dzogchen have integrated their own knowledge into themselves.

13. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GAKYILS AND THE COMMUNITY

The name 'Dzogchen Community' refers principally to the Gars of the Community and to the Gakyils in the different countries. However, since 'Community' implies a group of people made up of single individuals, if the Gakyils of the Dzogchen Community, large or small, neglect the conditions of single members of the Community, that is absolutely no good.

The members of the Dzogchen Community, based on a relationship of mutual love, should organise different kinds of co-operative activities, and collaborate in their private work, so as to try and improve and raise their standard of living. This is very important. The Community centres and the Gakyils, based on the principle of the activities of the three sections, should sustain and help these work organisations as much as possible.

From the time a person becomes a member of the Community they should get in contact with a Gakyil, and be enrolled as a participating member with an identification number. This is because it is necessary that practitioners belonging to

the Dzogchen Community should collaborate together in such a way that each of them can guarantee their own evolution. From the moment there is a need for collaborative work among practitioners, it is necessary for them to be in relationship with a Gar or a Gakyil of the Community. If the members do not have relationships between themselves and stay in isolated places without communicating, it will be very difficult to succeed in realising these very important objectives.

14. THE WAY TO ORGANISE WORK CO-OPERATIVES

To give an example of the actual way in which people of the Dzogchen Community should live: all members who live in one country, even in separate places, should communicate among themselves with regard to their different situations, work and condition of life so that everyone in the Community can have a precise knowledge of them. Thus, apart from those who have a job and good living conditions, those who do not have a job, can collaborate and make arrangements amongst themselves to organise different types of work activities, asking financial help from the capital of a centre of the Community, if it is really necessary.

Developing activities in this way, every member belonging to the Community should try to improve his (or her) own condition of life. A work co-operative of members of the Community should be formed of at least three families, and such a co-operative should be in relationship with a Gar or a Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community. This is because, if it is not linked to a Gar or a Gakyil of the Community it will be impossible for it to realise the goal or the essential meaning

of the Dzogchen Community, and there will be no possibility of a relationship with other members of the Community, and so it will be difficult to receive collaboration and necessary help on the part of the Community.

Among the different kinds of co-operatives managed by groups of people belonging to the Community there could be, for example: agricultural co-operatives, publishing houses, crafts, carpentry, translators and writers, artists, etc.

15. THE MEMBERS OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

Any person, male or female, who is interested in the Dzogchen teaching and wishes to give birth in him or herself to the understanding of this profound path, and wants to take part in the Community, can ask for a 'general membership' card, after having participated in three retreats of the Community, guided by a qualified Dzogchen master. Any person who is interested in Dzogchen and who recognises the Dzogchen methods as a path, can obtain the membership card of the Dzogchen Community with the sign of the Gakyil and the letter A and with an identification number.

The membership card with the sign of the Gakyil and the A has no date of expiry. But if the person to whom it has been issued turns against the Master, or against the teaching, or against their spiritual brothers and sisters, showing thereby to have a behaviour of body, voice and mind that absolutely does not correspond to the principle of presence and awareness characteristic of the nature of Dzogchen; and if, continuing to act in this mistaken way, they cause any kind of problems, the Gakyil that issued their membership card, finding itself constrained to withdraw it, has full authority to do

so, and the members of the Community should break off relations with such a person who has broken their samaya and try to make that person understand their errors by themselves and put an end to them. The withdrawal of a membership card should absolutely never be motivated by partiality or personal egoistic factors.

From the time a person possess a general membership card, they should be considered a general member of the Dzogchen Community, and for this reason they should be helped by the Gars and the Gakyils of the different countries as much as possible. When they visit the different Gars and participate in the retreats of the Community they can obtain a discount of ten percent³ of the sum of money established in general, and can obtain many advantages. But even though a person who possesses a membership card can be considered as belonging to the Dzogchen Community as a general member, if they behave in a way that is contrary to the laws of the country, provoking public or private damage, since their behaviour does not correspond to the Dzogchen principle of the presence of awareness, such a person will cease to take advantage of the benefits of a general member on the part of the Gakyil or Gar of the country where they live, and they will lose the possibility of being entrusted with any responsibilities or of being included (in the future) in the list of candidates for election.

Members of the Community who have participated in at least three retreats under the guidance of a qualified master and frequented the Community for three years and acquired some knowledge of it, and in whom has arisen a true Dzogchen view and behaviour, if they want to become 'active'

³ This percentage changed in time, for the current values a Gar Office should be contacted.

members of the Community and they make a request to a Gar or Gakyil of a country, they can obtain the membership card of an 'active member' of the Dzogchen Community with an identity number and the sign of a Gakyil inside a triangle, inside of which there is a 'unique golden syllable' which symbolises the absolute condition.

In general this 'active member' card will last at least ten years but each year it will have to be renewed by the Gar or Gakyil which issued it. Without this mark of renewal, the card has effectively the same value as a 'general member' card. Those who possess an 'active member' card can obtain discounts of twenty-five percent of the established fee⁴ when they go to retreats at the Gars of different countries. Besides this, such members can be entrusted with general responsibilities of the Community and are qualified to elect and be elected.

With respect to the sum of the money that a member whether 'general' or 'active' should contribute to the Community, this should be established by the central Gar or a Gakyil on the basis of the different local conditions.

One should not think, however, that the matter of distinguishing between belonging or not belonging to the Community means entering into limitations or falling into sectarianism. If we remain indifferent and do not commit ourselves to obtaining knowledge of the primordial state of Dzogchen; to studying and learning; to evolving our knowledge and to practising and we call all this 'the authentic condition'; or else, with the pretext of not entering into limitations or not falling into sectarianism we ruin all that has been gathered until now, we will certainly derive no benefit whatever from

⁴ This percentage changed in time, for the current values a Gar Office should be contacted.

it. Besides, such behaviour clearly shows a total lack of presence and awareness. 'Not entering into limitations and not falling into sectarianism' does not mean that we are allowed to do anything we like, but that having the profound principle of Ati as a basis or key, we act in such a way that the condition of our three 'doors' manifests in its authentic dimension and that with the pure presence of awareness based on this authentic condition, all the activities of our three 'doors', without being conditioned by false behaviour, find themselves in the state of the authentic condition as it is. This is the way to apply in ourselves the correct view and behaviour of Dzogchen, and is of fundamental importance.



16. THE MANDALA OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

This is the diagram which represents all of the Dzogchen Communities in the world. At the centre of the *mandala*, inside a *thigle* of five colours there is the letter 'the unique golden syllable', which symbolizes the absolute condition. It radiates light and represents the Rigdzin master of Dzogchen of all of the communities of the world, wherever he lives.

The eight Gakyils in the eight (compass) directions, each decorated with eight points, represent all of the Gars in all of the countries and zones of the world. The fact that there are eight Gakyils decorated with eight points does not mean that the number of Gars should necessarily be eight; there could be more or less than eight Gars of the Community, depending on the different times and circumstances in the countries.

Here eight Gars have been drawn to symbolize all of the infinite directions, starting with the four main directions (N, S, E, W) and the four intermediate directions (NE, NW, SE, SW).

The eight precious points that have been added to the Gakyil to make a symbol of a Gar, symbolize that a Gar, being a centre of the precious Dzogchen teaching, is precious, and that the basis of the teaching found in a Gar spreads into all of the Gakyils of the surrounding places and countries, and that all possible benefits to the Gakyils of the countries and the single individuals belonging to them derive from the different Gars.

Around these, in the different directions, there are Gakyils of three colours, representing all of the Gakyils of the countries, regions and cities, found in all directions around the Gars of the Community. These Gakyils are indispensable to members of the Community who live scattered in the countryside or in regions or cities far away from a Gar, so that they can collaborate together to develop their knowledge and experience of Dzogchen, or to give birth to such knowledge, and to integrate it with their own three doors (body, voice and mind) in a relaxed way, so that each person really embodies Dzogchen, and to cultivate the enthusiasm and capacity to practise.

Around these, in the different directions there are eight triads of yellow, red and blue *thigles*, representing the organisations of private work co-operatives of the Community, and this means that the energy of these co-operatives should be indissolubly linked to one of the Gars or Gakyils of the country.

Around these in the different directions there are sixteen little five-coloured *thigles*, representing the self-perfected state of Dzogchen of each single member of the Community, conducting their particular kind of life according to their place and time.

The way the single practitioners are linked to the Gakyils of the different countries, and the way the work co-operatives of the people of the Community are linked to the Gakyils of the different countries or of the Gars, and the way the Gakyils of different countries are linked to the Gars of the Community are represented by lines joining them together.

17. THE SYMBOL OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

In the centre there is a sky-blue basis, representing the primordial base of the condition of original purity. Inside this dimension there is the 'unique golden syllable', symbolizing the absolute condition. It represents the Rigdzins of the Longchen Ödse Nyingthig, the Rigdzins of the direct, oral and symbolic transmissions, the master of the whole Dzogchen Community, whoever he may be, the vital spirit of the Ati teaching.

In the four main directions (N, S, E, W) and the four intermediate directions there are eight Gakyils decorated with eight points. These represent the Gars, which have the following five qualifications. They are places:

- Where Dzogchen Rigdzins and Masters give teachings and instructions.
- Where members of the Community can obtain a concrete and particular knowledge of Dzogchen.
- Where all members of the Community can study the Dzogchen teachings.
- Where they can meet to study subjects related to the teachings.
- Where Vajra brothers and sisters practitioners living in all directions can meet together from time to time.

The three colours, yellow, red and blue, of the Gakyils symbolize the three doors (body, voice and mind) of those on the path; or the three Vajras of body, voice and mind of the realized beings; or the three dimensions of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

As these three colours are the basis of all colours, they signify also that all of the infinite manifestations of existence are spontaneously self-perfected.

Around these in the eight directions there are eight Gakyils representing all the different possible types of Gakyil of the countries, large medium or small, which have the function of allowing all those living in a country, region or city far from a Gar that has the five qualifications, to carry on particular activities such as collective practices, the organization of co-operative work and mutual collaboration.

Again, around these in the different directions there are small five-coloured *thigles*, representing all of the single members of the Dzogchen Community who exist in world. The fact that the Gakyils decorated with eight points, the simple Gakyils and the five-coloured *thigles* are all directly joined to each other, represents:

- The relationship between the single members of the Dzogchen Community and the Gakyils of the different countries or of the central places (Gars).
- The relationship between the Gakyils of the different countries and the Gakyils of the Gars of the Community.
- The relationship between the different Gars, which, without being in a relationship of subordination to one another, based on the Dzogchen principle of the presence of awareness, are all united with the ‘unique golden symbol’, representing the absolute condition, or that all are integrated in the authentic state of knowledge of Dzogchen.

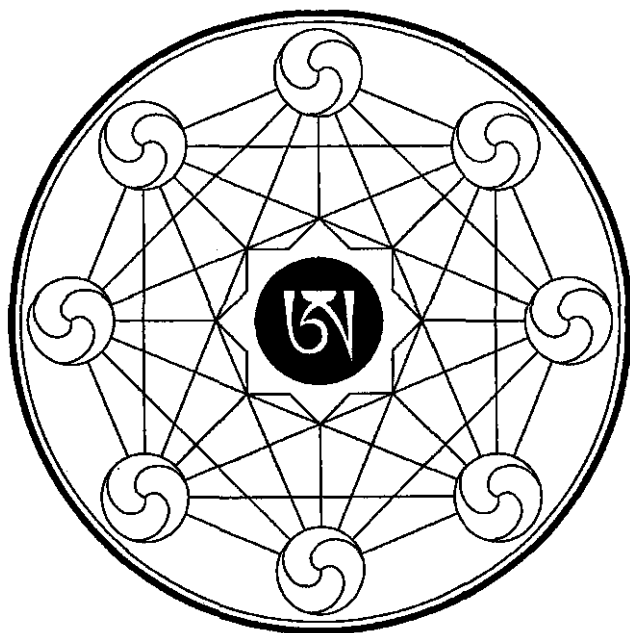
The circle of blue light at the border represents the dimension of our universe in the infinite space of Dharmadhatu.

All those who trust in me, Namkhai Norbu (Longchen Rolpai Dorje), and who seek to realise the primordial state of Dzogchen, I request to act in this way.

Dzogchenpa Chögyal Namkhai Norbu
 December 5th, 1985
 (Revised in 1990)

PART TWO

DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES



THE GAKYIL

Tashigar, December 1998

(The Mirror #48, February/March 1999)

The Community is not functioning as a bureaucratic system. You know very well that how we work in the Dzogchen Community is through the Gakyil. Gakyil means there are three groups and within these three groups either three, six or nine persons represent the Gakyil. That is not only at the Gars, but in the entire Dzogchen Community all over the world. There are many Gakyils which are chosen by the practitioners, the members of the Community.

These people are taking responsibility for the Dzogchen Community.

There are three colors like in the Gakyil symbol: yellow, blue and red. That is just the same as OM, Ā, HŪM, our body, speech and mind.

When there are three existences there is a human being, the function of an individual. Where there is a Gakyil there is also the function of the Dzogchen Community, so when we collaborate with each other in that way, we continue the Dzogchen Community. It is very important you know that principle, otherwise people think the Dzogchen Community is just like any Dharma center.

In Dharma centers someone says, "This is my center, this is his center". Someone considers that you come and visit the Dharma center, you pay and go away and that person maintains the center. A group of people create a Dharma center and live with this income.

The Dzogchen Community is not like that, so that is important to know...

GUIDELINES FOR GAKYIL MEMBERS

Tashigar, December 1990

(The Mirror # 7, March 1991)

The members of the Gakyil must be interested. If for example, someone say, “Oh, I am in the Gakyil”, but never comes to a meeting, then they must resign. Or, if someone misses three meetings of the Gakyil, without communicating a very serious reason for their absence, then they can no longer be a part of the Gakyil. No discussion is necessary: they are automatically out. The members of the Gakyil must know this from the beginning, because to be in the Gakyil means you are making an offering and presenting yourself.

We do not insist that anyone be in the Gakyil, we ask who wants to be, and among those who volunteer we consider what responsibilities a person already has. Sometimes a person may have a problem about coming to a meeting, and they may not have a telephone or other means of communication, but it is impossible that this should happen three times consecutively. It means that the person is no longer interested in the Gakyil. And if people show this lack of respect, the Gakyil will not work. It is very, very important that you are aware of this from the beginning. The people who are in the Gakyil must be active. You must also know that the principle of the Gakyil is linked with the Teachings not just working or making money.

Sometimes when we form a Gakyil, the members argue about the program, about money. They argue with each other and create many problems. We have these problems because the character of our society is like this. But we are not interested in developing like society and forming just another

group. The Gakyil exists for the Teachings, for maintaining the Teachings and developing our knowledge. So you must understand that the Teachings and our practice come first.

When you have a Gakyil meeting, you must not be like politicians, where everyone takes a position. First of all, you do a practice, not only with the Gakyil members, but with any practitioners in the Dzogchen Community. And when you finish the practice, first you exchange your knowledge of the Teachings, then you discuss the specific things that you have to do. In this way you also have a (real) sense of the Gakyil, otherwise it gradually becomes just another kind of organisation, with people concentrating on secondary things. And that is not good at all.

In general, people of the Gakyil tend to feel they are a part of an official organ, and other people often feel totally separate from them, and if they have a good idea they do not communicate it to the Gakyil. This is very bad because if someone is really on the path and is interested in the Teachings, they must also have an interest in the Gakyil and in the Dzogchen Community. It is not necessary to be in a Gakyil to speak out, or to do something. The only thing to remember is that where there is a Gakyil, there are people representing the Dzogchen Community. You cannot say, “Oh, I am a member of the Dzogchen Community”, and form some organisation without informing the Gakyil. That is incorrect. Also, it is very, very important for people who are interested to really prepare, and be in the Gakyil next time.

Then sometimes when a new Gakyil is elected, the old Gakyil people do not care at all any more. That is also not good. They must continue to collaborate for at least a year, because they already know the situation of the Gakyil and how it works. And then it is very, very important for the Gakyil

ils to communicate with each other... All Gakyils are responsible for themselves, but they must collaborate because they all have the principle of the Dzogchen Teaching.

- Thus, it is worth noting that Gakyil work requires patience, time and the ability (and willingness) to communicate, i.e. it should be seen as a form of practice in itself - as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu mentioned once during a Gakyil meeting in Merigar (see Merigar Letter, Nov. 1995).

THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLABORATION

Conway Community Meeting, January 1983

From the beginning when we have said the Community, we mean the community of those who are linked together spiritually and... where there is a spiritual relationship, a community of people who have a common spiritual work, the situation is like that of finding yourselves all in one boat. And this can also entail, and does entail, the relative aspect of organisation, of social situation, which depends on how you find yourselves, where you find yourselves, the prevailing circumstances. But we have a common principle, all of us. And this principle that we have in common is the teaching - the Dzogchen teaching. As we have said, the Dzogchen teaching is not to create a group or to have some organisation to which people belong. I think rather that it is very important that everybody understands the principle involved. When we say the Dzogchen Community, and that we have an interest in common, we are not just talking about there being interested parties or having some money to deal with - these are secondary aspects. Rather, we can understand (something) from the metaphor of the boat.

Let's say ten people together build a boat. And there is a principle of the boat: the principle, or point of the boat is to get to the other side of the body of water. You do not just construct a boat for the sake of constructing a boat. So in any organising work... you must never forget where you are departing from and where you are trying to get to. Many many times when we deal with an organisation, people completely forget what principle is involved, just as children sometimes do... yet when we speak of doing something with and for the Community, we must not forget that we are talking about our common interest.

So when we talk about the Community, I am not just thinking of those of you who are here, but I am imagining that all of those who are part of the Community who share our interest and concern are present ... So here, when I am talking with you, we are also mindful of all the people with whom we as a group have contact, all the other members of the Community... If there is a genuine spirit of collaboration, you can do everything, and everybody can participate. With a real spirit of mutual aid and collaboration, even something that seems extremely difficult to accomplish can be done.

But everything becomes very difficult when one puts the personal element or the personal problem in the foreground... I am not saying that one should not have one's individual self-interest. That is perfectly okay. But you should not forget that there is also a shared common interest, just as we have said, using the example of the boat... If there is not that, then there is no basis, no way to collaborate...

Tashiigar, December 1998
(The Mirror #48, February/March 1999)

People go to retreats, receive transmission and think, “Now I can do the practices. I am interested in the teachings and the teacher but I do not care about the practitioners”. That is not the correct idea, because we must remember that the path is just like a boat. In a boat someone is coordinating and taking responsibility, and the others in the boat need to collaborate until they arrive. Similarly, everyone is in the boat of the Dzogchen teaching. We are traveling in order to have total realisation. Therefore it is important to collaborate and not create problems in the Community between practitioners. That is also one of our main practices; to be aware and know how to work with the circumstances.... So, it is very important to communicate with each other and collaborate.

This is the principle of the Dzogchen Community. The principle is not only creating a kind of Dharma centre and a group of people who live there. Collaboration, that is the main point..

...Many people say, “You Dzogchen Community people” or “You Gakyil people”. That is very wrong vision. If you are a practitioner and are interested in the Dzogchen teachings then you must be interested in the Community. The Community does not belong to a group of people in charge in that moment. These people in charge can change after one, or two, or at most three years and then there are new people. You must feel if you are a practitioner that you are also responsible for it. In that way we should go ahead and collaborate...

...In our Community very often people use the words, “Brothers and Sisters of the Vajra”. These words become

like when they say “Ladies and Gentlemen” in an aeroplane. But it does not just mean something formal or polite, it is something concrete - brothers and sisters of the Vajra, because until we have total realisation we have that relationship. ‘Vajra’ means something that cannot be changed or modified. So this relationship cannot be changed or thrown away until we have total realisation.

Of course when we do something wrong it becomes a serious problem, so that means we must act in a perfect way according to what brothers and sisters of the Vajra means. Some people think if there is a Gakyil and if the Gakyil people agree, everything is perfect and there is no problem... then if there are some problems with other people, they do not care ... but brothers and sisters does not just mean a group of Gakyil people. Of course, it is good if the Gakyil agrees and there are no problems, that is fine, but that is not the main point of brothers and sisters of the Vajra... We are not a small boat, but a big boat. One of the main people responsible for this boat is me. If someone is following my teaching then they must understand that people from all over the world must respect each other and collaborate...

SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

*An Organisational Model for the Dzogchen Community
(The Mirror # 17, 1992)*

The principle of the Dzogchen Community is based on the Gakyil... The Gakyil in this form of organisation has been envisaged in order to prevent the creation of bureaucratic structures and positions of power, so that the

life of the Dzogchen Community will revolve around the Master and the principle of the Teachings. It is necessary (here) ... to examine the weak points that act as an obstacle to the smooth running of the Gakyil.

In the first place, regarding the way in which the members of the Gakyil are selected: in order to avoid people unsuited to their tasks upon entering the Gakyil, and so as to allow sufficient time for applicants to be accurately assessed, it seems to me that it is necessary to request... that those who intend to take part in the new Gakyil communicate their intention at least five months before its formation. Although the roles within the Gakyil are assumed on a voluntary basis, they carry precise responsibilities without conferring any power or special prestige. Rather, they are an essential service, without which the Dzogchen Community could not function. So it is important for everyone to become aware of this, making themselves available to offer in a responsible way a little of their time and work.

The second point to be considered is that it is of fundamental importance that at the start of each working year a plan, which should be as detailed as possible, is drawn up regarding the activities to be performed, and that at the same time the budget and estimated costs are presented. Likewise, at the end of the working year a report must be presented on the activities carried out, together with the final balance and accounts. The various tasks and responsibilities should be divided upon the basis of the initial programme.

This brings us to the third consideration, which has to do with the organisation and distribution of the tasks within the Gakyil. Up until now, apart from the three overall fields of activity corresponding to the three colours, individual responsibilities have practically never been defined. This has allowed

many people to play only a nominal role in the Gakyil, which is one of the causes behind the malfunctioning of the organisation. Therefore it is important that at the start of each working year, on the basis of the initial programme, individual tasks and responsibilities be allotted, which are to be reported on at the end of the year. In addition, the position of 'director' needs to be assigned within the Gakyil, whose job it is to co-ordinate the various activities and make sure that they are carried out in the appropriate manner.

THE GARS OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY

We are not buying land to grow potatoes. We are buying land to make rainbow bodies possible.
Tsegylgar Summer Retreat, 1992

Tashigar, December 1998
(The Mirror #48, February/March 1999)

Each Gakyil cannot have a house and land for retreats, and a library and meeting hall, etc., that is why there is a 'Gar'. 'Gar' does not mean the main point or a governing centre. It is a place to which all Gakyils contribute and, in the future, it will become a nucleus for continuing the Teaching and the Transmission...

...All the Dzogchen Communities of the world, they must collaborate and participate together. In general we have the Gars; Merigar in Italy is for all of Europe. The Russians are connected with Europe and participate with Merigar, but Russia is very big and has the largest number of people in the Community, so it is not so easy and therefore we created another Gar there. We also have a Gar in Australia. We have no particular Gar in Asia, but we hope the situation will change and one day we can have a Gar in East Tibet. We have many places that function as a Gar. Gars are very similar to our *chakras*. We have five or six *chakras* in our body and all of our body is related to each of these *chakras*...

Community Meeting, Conway, January 1983

For example, one of you might go to Merigar, and if you go there, you will find that you have come to your own house. It is not as if some foreigner has arrived in an unknown foreign place. For as soon as you get there, you are a participant and you have got a responsibility to the place with ... both participation and obligation as if you were arriving in your own house. It is not that you are some kind of guest in a foreign place. And the same is true in whatever place a Dzogchen Community arises. The principle has to be little bit along those lines...

THE FIVE POINTS OF MERIGAR

APPLICABLE INFORMATION TO ALL GARS

(Translated from Tibetan by A. Clemente)

I wish to provide the following information about Merigar to everyone belonging to the Dzogchen Community:

1. Merigar is a very important meeting place for members of the Dzogchen Community from all over the world. Therefore, if the standards of behaviour here cannot provide a perfect model for the other Gars, that is **ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD**.

2. Merigar is the result of many years of commitment, effort and sacrifice on the part of myself, Namkhai Norbu, the Master of the Dzogchen Community who is responsible for it, and on the part of many of my disciples, male and female, young and old. Merigar is not only a place where people of the Community who are truly interested in the Dzogchen teachings can meet, get to know each other, make cultural exchanges and develop different types of activities in collaboration with each other; nor it is only a place to hold teaching retreats planned by the Community at specified times; nor only a place to pursue different kinds of studies; all of which it has been until now and will continue in the future. Merigar is also a base where those who maintain, continue and develop the Dzogchen teachings can give birth to the real knowledge of Dzogchen in future generations, and where these future generations can really be of enormous help to all beings as long as the world exists. Merigar is therefore a place of supreme value, which gives an opportunity to all

infinite beings to achieve happiness. This principle being clear to everyone, there is no doubt that we practitioners of Dzogchen, without exception, must spontaneously assume responsibility to guarantee the survival and development of this base for the teaching. So if a member of the Community is aware of this but remains indifferent, that is **ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD**.

3. Merigar is a Gar which has the characteristic of being a meeting place for people of the Dzogchen Community from all over the world, and a base for the development of communal activities. Therefore, as a principle, no one can live in this Gar permanently. Only the Gekö and members with particular responsibilities can stay here according to the necessities at the time. A person belonging to the Community, having shown his membership card to the Gekö and having come to an agreement, can obtain permission to stay in the house at Merigar or to camp on the land, depending on the circumstances, and observing the current regulations. Even those who aspire to take part in the Dzogchen Community, if they present the ‘preliminary’ membership card⁵ and behave with awareness, can obtain permission to stay for one night. If they then wish to stay for more days, they must make an agreement with the Gekö and observe the basic rules. From the time they arrive in Merigar both full members and preliminary members⁶ of the Community should behave as if they were in their own home, and after being informed by the Gekö about the various activities they should take on some work. With behaviour based on presence and awareness, without distraction, which corresponds to the true meaning

⁵ See note 1.

⁶ See note 1.

of the name ‘Dzogchen Community’, they should really put into practice, according to the circumstances, respect for the elderly, collaboration between equals, and love and protection for the young and the weak. If passers-by or casual travellers stay at Merigar, or people who behave as guests or visitors, that is ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD.

4. Apart from special guests of the Dzogchen Community, worthy of the maximum respect, anyone who arrives at Merigar without a membership card or a preliminary membership card⁷, or at least a letter of introduction issued by another Gar or Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community, and who is therefore an unknown traveller, should not stay here. If a person has a special introduction from the Master of the Community or from older members he or she can get permission, with the agreement of the Gekö, to stay here for a day or so if there is a particular necessity. This privilege is possible. But if someone considers Merigar to be a refuge for vagabonds or exploits it in this way, becoming like “he who fell asleep where he only sat down to rest”, as in the famous Tibetan proverb, that is ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD.

5. If a visitor is very interested in work activities, and only in these, and thinks he or she can stay here with the pretext of doing some little job, that absolutely does not correspond to the meaning of the basic principles, because Merigar should be a Gar of the Dzogchen Community of the whole world and not a Gar of an international work co-operative. Earning your living by committing yourself to work is certainly a correct way to live with presence and aware-

⁷ See note 1.

ness, but if you do not understand what the fundamental principle of presence and awareness is, you will never be able to discover and realize the authentic condition of your body, voice and mind. So if you consider Merigar just as a place to stay and work and enjoy the natural surroundings, that is ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD.

All members of the Dzogchen Community, young and old, male and female, are the owners of Merigar and so they are responsible for it and for the Community itself.

Therefore it is extremely important that everyone assumes the responsibility to realise the fundamental objective of Merigar. Without distraction one should concretely apply the basic principle of the Dzogchen teaching: the presence of awareness. In this case this is represented by THE FIVE POINTS THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD presented above.

Therefore I ask everyone, young and old, to keep them in mind.

Dzogchenpa Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (Longchen Rolpai Dorje), the Master responsible for the International Dzogchen Community

Merigar, August 28th, 1986

THE TASK OF THE GEKÖ

Merigar Letter, May 1993

It is easier to say what a Gekö should not do. According to me the main task of a Gekö is to be very patient since he represents the Community. Many people come to Merigar from different places and a lot of them do not know how to behave, and from this a lot of problems can develop.

The Gekö has the responsibility to make the Gar function in a regular way, but he (or she) should do this without being 'cruel', in a gentle way, because he (or she) represents the Community and so the reputation of the Community depends on him or her.

This is also true for the Gakyil members, they are also responsible: the difference is that the Gakyil members are not in direct contact with people coming to Merigar. It is the Gekö who comes into direct contact with people and so he or she has to be very gentle and patient, but at the same time he or she has to do what is necessary. To be gentle does not mean to let everything happen just how it happens, otherwise there would be no sense to have a Gekö.

The Gekö should not create a circle of friends, this is very dangerous. Many times that happens, but the Gekö must remember that his or her work is a service for the whole of the Community and should not become a personal thing for creating his or her circle of friends. This does not mean that the Gekö cannot do anything personal. There always exists a possibility for a personal life.

The same hold true for the members of the Gakyil. Usually I see many manifestations of egoism, and many practi-

tioners remain fixed in their convictions defending them at length in arid discussions. That is very negative, one has to see what is better for the Community and on the base of this principle one can understand which opinion is good and useful and which is not, but there is no need to insist in wanting to be right at all costs, otherwise all is finished. This is also a great practice.

Egoism is considered very negative and not only in the context of Dzogchen teaching. Also the Sutra teachings are always talking about the ego. The ego is the base from which problems always arise. Being aware of this, one can diminish the ego a bit, also during meetings where there is something to discuss. Sometimes I have heard you having discussions which never end, but that is the general trend.

Very often I saw you giving importance to trifling matters and continuing an endless discussion not because the argument was important but just to establish your own opinion and not changing your viewpoint. This should not happen because otherwise it is impossible to do serious work.

If you want to go ahead with something, do not do this kind of thing, especially if I am not present. If you want to change something, change your opinion and collaborate, do not take an immovable position. This is also important for the Gekö.

ON WORKING WITH NEWCOMERS

Some advice on how those who have been following the teachings for a longer time should relate to people who are newly interested.

The Mirror # 22

NEWCOMERS

When those who have been following the teachings for a number of years practice together collectively and new people who haven't received transmission participate, many of the old practitioners often get worried.

I have received letters from several different places on this topic. When something like this happens, how should the practitioners who have been following for a longer period of time behave? What should they do?

There are two ways of responding to this situation because there are two different types of new people involved.

Firstly, there are those who are seriously interested in the teaching but who may not yet have had the possibility of receiving transmission from the Master. In the case of this type of person, it is not particularly important that they haven't yet received transmission, because their participation and interest are deep. A person with a profound interest of this kind, even though they haven't received transmission today, will receive it tomorrow. They will always find a possibility of meeting the Master and receiving the transmission. Those who seek will find.

So one should certainly not reject this type of person who wants to participate and is genuinely interested, and when-

ever it is possible, when one practices together with them, one should help them to participate in such a way that they can learn something, giving them whatever advice may be necessary so that they can understand what is happening.

I'm not suggesting that any type of person can suddenly become a Master and start to transmit the teaching. To transmit teaching one must have a precise knowledge and certain qualities. For example in order to be able to transmit a mantra it is not enough to have simply received the transmission of the mantra from someone, but one must have applied it, and the person who intends to transmit it must have a certain realization of it. If a person does not have this, and only repeats the mantra, considering this to be adequate for the transmission, the transmission cannot work properly. If it doesn't work properly, it is useless to do it, because this means one is just fooling people.

So it's not that one has to present oneself as a Master or someone who is giving a transmission, but there is nevertheless a way to collaborate with other people in order to help them. So that is how things should be done in the case of this first type of person who is genuinely interested. There is nothing that needs to be limited.

Then there's another type of person who is not sincerely interested in following the teaching, in doing practice, or in having realization through this path. Rather what this type of person has is a kind of curiosity, perhaps just wanting to find out what is going on, and what this teaching consists of. If we conclude that a person only has this kind of curiosity, we are justified in asking that person not to participate.

Why? For a very simple reason. If the person in question is a friend of a practitioner, the practitioner deserves his or her friend's respect. The practitioner can explain that the path,

the teaching, and the practice are things that he or she considers important and serious, asking their friend in a nice way not to demean this seriousness by their curiosity, because to interfere in such a manner with something important is not very nice.

Making a request in this way, if this person is a real friend, they will certainly respect it. If the person does not respect one's request, but insists, then he or she does not have any real regard for the practitioner and cannot be a true friend. It's very simple, and there is no need for one to get offended when confronted with such a situation.

Someone might, however, say, for example, "If you never let me know what it is that you are doing, how can I get interested?" Many people say things like this. But it would be better for such a person to read a book about the teaching or something like that in order to get a general understanding of the teachings, instead of entering into participating in the path and the practice. Information and practice are two different things.

So if someone is genuinely interested, even if they haven't received transmission, perhaps they can participate, and they can learn. In this way when they meet the Master one day, they will be ready to apply what they have learnt because they know how to do it.

There are three aspects in the practice, related with our three existences: the body, the voice and the mind. There are many aspects of the body such as particular bodily positions and ways of sitting when we do the practice.

Then as far as the voice is concerned, there are considerations of to how we should breathe, how we should chant, how words should be pronounced, how to combine invocations with visualizations, how visualizations should be done

mentally, how rituals should be carried out, and so on.

There are many things related to the body which must be learnt and done including *mudras* and their meaning, the function of *mudras* to communicate in order to make *samaya* function, etc. All these things can be gradually learnt and one can help others to understand them. Fundamentally, all these things are secondary in relationship to the teaching, to the method.

They are not the principal thing but they are ways of applying the path. So if one has learned all these things, it may be easy to apply them. It sometimes happens that when a new person arrives and there are many other people who already know how to do *mudras*, and how to chant, etc., the new person feels at a disadvantage. They may be discouraged by others even if this is not the principle of the teaching. When one has just started to follow the teaching, even such secondary things can seem to be very important and when a new person feels that he or she doesn't know how to do anything, they may become discouraged. If such a person is given even a minimal preparation, this is not bad, and may in fact be very useful.

TRANSMISSION

It is a very different matter with regard to reading books containing instructions for practices which should be regarded as secret. They should not be approached with curiosity or just with the intention of seeing what it is that others do. Before reading such material, it's much better that people wait to receive transmission from a Master, and then apply it, because sometimes when one reads a book of in-

struction one may feel one wants to do something right away, and if one doesn't know how to do what one reads about perfectly, one may make a mistake which can create problems.

Moreover, in the teaching there is a saying that "one should not take a Secret Teaching by oneself" which means that one must receive it from a Master, because the teaching is related to a transmission. Transmission can only be received from a Master, because the Master has in turn received it from his Master in a lineage going right back to the origin, which continues unbroken up to the present day. This connection is what is meant by transmission, and this is the reason it is necessary to receive it.

There are various types of transmission, such as initiation, empowerment, and oral instruction, as well as the necessity to at least receive a *lung* of the transmission in the case of *mantra*. Such a *lung* involves the power of the *mantra* which is found in its sound, and this sound must be heard from the Master, who is a person who has himself received the transmission and has applied it and produced its function. One must receive the transmission of the sound of the *mantra* in a perfect way from the Master, and then finally if one applies this *mantra*, it can have a function because it is related to transmission. The function of the path, of the transmission, of method, is related to transmission not only to an intellectual understanding.

One might, for example, find a book in the library, and reading it one can understand well what is written in it. It might say, "This is a *mantra*, recite it a few hundred times and you can cure certain types of illnesses".

One understands what is written there and recites the *mantra*. But even if one has intellectually understood in this way,

and starts to apply this *mantra* reciting it as indicated in the book, it is very difficult to attain the realization of it because this practice is without life. What is the life of the practice? It is transmission. That's what is missing in such a case. It's not a matter of quantity or of intellectual knowledge being lacking. What is lacking is the life, and life is transmission. So it's very important to understand and respect this.

If we want to turn on a lamp, what must we do? We must connect it to the electric current, and there's a plug to connect the lamp to the electrical current. When the lamp is finally connected to the current it can be turned on. In the same way transmission is like an electrical wire that is connected with the origin uninterruptedly up to the present day. It is for this reason we consider that transmission to be so important.

The principle, the power, and the knowledge of the transmission is beyond our intellectual judgment, beyond our concepts, anything. We cannot invent any type of transmission of this kind. And even if one invented a transmission, some type of practice or some aspect of spiritual practice, perhaps, who knows, it might have some minimal kind of function. Some people say that they do this type of practice because it brings them benefit. Some such things may indeed have a minimal benefit, but this doesn't mean that they bring you to total realization.

One can never reach total realization without knowing how to arrive beyond one's limits, beyond one's dualistic condition. Transmission is something for realization in this way. All teachings that are related to a precise transmission have their origin. This origin comes from one who has given this teaching and who became totally realized through it, after which this method is handed down and transmitted. Thus

if we seriously follow a method such as this, we know that a teaching has its principle, its lineage and its transmission without interruption. This is what real teaching means. It is something really serious. When we speak of a teaching that we follow sincerely and seriously, it is this type of teaching, not just any path or type of his philosophy that someone has invented.

Certainly one can have fun, experimenting with anything in life. But if we are going to dedicate our lives, our precious time, to a teaching, it's much better to understand well what the origins of that teaching are, what its value is, and in what way one can have realization through it, and so on. The basis of the teaching is transmission and if one understands this well, one protects the transmission, maintains the transmission, and those who are interested in receiving the transmission can prepare to do so. So one can work in this way.

We all know that it's very useful and important to collaborate, and that this is true for everyone. So I think that the practitioners of the Community who have been involved for a longer time shouldn't get worried when confronted with new people, but they should help and collaborate with the new people in the way I have described above.

SANTI MAHA SANGHA (SMS) TRAINING

The Santi Maha Sangha Training was started in 1993 by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to help his students develop a more structured and deeper understanding and experience of Dzogchen Semde, Longde and Mennagde and to ease their way towards total liberation on the one hand, on the other hand to guarantee that the Transmission and Teachings remain pure and continue in the future.

‘Santi Maha’ means Dzogchen and ‘Sangha’ is the Community.

*From a talk given in Merigar, July 1996
(The Mirror # 37, September/October 1996)*

I would like to add something more related to our attitude, awareness, and responsibility. We are practitioners and follow the teachings, therefore we apply and follow the principle of the Dzogchen teaching. For many years I have transmitted this teaching, and for many years many of you have been following this teaching and we collaborate with each other. We are still developing and therefore there is no consideration of an end or limitation, because *samsara* continues infinitely. So we must continue to transmit the understanding and knowledge of this teaching. This is the responsibility of all of us.

First of all I have this responsibility because I transmit this teaching to you. You also have a responsibility, and then we share this responsibility. With this responsibility we must keep the transmission in the correct way, and to keep the transmission in the correct way we should not mix it with something else. We should not modify, change or create problems in the transmission. If we learn in the correct way then we

can continue the transmission. We all need to accept this responsibility.

So, after many years I decided to organise this Santi Maha Sangha training. There are two kinds of people: most are very happy to do this training but then there are some people who are worried and think Santi Maha Sangha is like studying at University in an academic style. I am not interested in this. Some people think I am giving essential teachings only to those doing Santi Maha Sangha. First of all, I want to make it clear that it is not obligatory to do Santi Maha Sangha. Also, I never said that I do not give important teachings outside of Santi Maha Sangha.

I have constructed this to help people have a very precise knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings. In the future there will be qualified people who can teach, help and continue the transmission which they have received in the correct way. This is a way of producing qualified people. If someone is not interested in doing it, it does not mean they cannot do practice. I always give big, open retreats and there I give all kinds of teachings. That is sufficient. It is not necessary to do Santi Maha Sangha. Even if you do not participate in Santi Maha Sangha, you need to understand its value.

I am really working hard for it. I am living for this...

To Gakyil Members Worldwide, Tsegyalgar, August 1992

I want to be especially careful that our precious teachings are preserved and transmitted in an accurate way. This means that I must know and control exactly who is teaching, so that I will be able to avoid any confusion or accidental transformation of the teachings. When I discover some mis-

takes in our students, I will be able to go directly to the teacher and clarify the mistake for the future. I think this is the only way that we can hope to preserve the lineage and the transmission in its original form...

Best Wishes,

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Santi Maha Sangha and Karma Yoga
(*The Mirror # 56, March/April 2001*)

According to the Santi Maha Sangha Base examination, for people who are interested and participate in Santi Maha Sangha, first of all they must be interested in the Dzogchen Community. The training of Santi Maha Sangha is not only something learned in an intellectual way, but this knowledge should be totally integrated into one's own condition. If someone is not interested in the Dzogchen Community, there is no way they can be totally integrated. The Dzogchen Community is like a boat; we are travelling by boat in order to arrive beyond a very big river and until we arrive beyond the very big river we should be interested in that boat. Therefore, we can understand how important the Dzogchen Community is for the trainee.

If people are interested in any kind of Karma Yoga activity related to the Dzogchen Community it means those people are interested in the Dzogchen Community. For example, if someone is a member of a family then that person is interested in everything related to that family. In the same way, if there is something to do for the Dzogchen Community, one who is interested in the Dzogchen Community is always ready to participate.

The main subject of the examination for the Santi Maha Sangha Base is not only the ten questions; they are only one of the Three Main Subjects. As we know very well, we have Three Gates and these Gates are body, voice and mind; so we also have Three Main Subjects of the examination related with these Three Gates.

Relative to the body, we should contribute physically to any kind of Karma Yoga activities for the Dzogchen Community. One who participates in Karma Yoga for the Dzogchen Community indicates or shows clearly one's interest in the Dzogchen Community in a concrete way. According to the voice, one should learn the book of Santi Maha Sangha Base, and during the examination one should reply correctly to the ten questions. According to the mind, one should apply all practices which are indicated in the book of Santi Maha Sangha Base.

Regarding the first Main Subject of Santi Maha Sangha Base training, since the beginning of Merigar we started developing Karma Yoga there. Merigar is the number one or primordial Gar of the Dzogchen Community, and recently we also started to register the names of people, how they contribute Karma Yoga activities in the Dzogchen Community, how many hours they have contributed, and so on.

Many people ask me how many hours of Karma Yoga they should contribute for the Santi Maha Sangha Base examination and for the second level and so on. Registering how many hours people dedicate for Karma Yoga is not to realize limited hours in order to take the examination of Santi Maha Sangha Base; the registration of how many times and how many hours someone dedicated to Karma Yoga is relative, it is not the main point. The registration of the number of hours dedicated to Karma Yoga is in order to know who

and how they have dedicated Karma Yoga to the Dzogchen Community and if we didn't register the Karma Yoga we couldn't know that. The registration of Karma Yoga is very useful in general for the Dzogchen Community to know who is seriously involved, and particularly it is very important to know how it is related to those people who participate in the Santi Maha Sangha Examinations.

Some people feel that it is enough that we ask people to do their best for dedicating Karma Yoga, that it is not necessary to do a registration of it. I think it is only enough for a few honest people, but not for most people. If you ask people during the examination no one will say, "I am not interested in the Dzogchen Community" or "I didn't dedicate Karma Yoga". They will say, "I am interested in the Dzogchen Community" and "I did my best for dedicating Karma Yoga". These are the common replies we could receive. In general, these words become a kind of ritual thing, not something serious. We don't really need any ritualized words; we need something concrete. Therefore we need a registration book of Karma Yoga in order to see who has seriously dedicated to Karma Yoga.

Of course, the intention is not that Karma Yoga is only work like cleaning the bush, etc. There are many forms of Karma Yoga. For example, when guests of Dzogchen Community arrive and someone voluntarily goes to take these guests and accompany them when and where it is necessary at the request of Dzogchen Community responsables, that is collaboration with the Dzogchen Community and is valid Karma Yoga.

I am using the example of the first Gar of Dzogchen Community [Merigar], but we know very well that the situation

of the Gars is not the same – we can find many different situations in the Gars and Gakyils of different countries – but even though, in any part of the world, if someone contributes voluntarily some good and useful things for the Dzogchen Community, the Gakyil of that place shouldn't view that participation with indifference. The Gakyil should register all the good things contributed by that person and when they go to do the examination of Santi Maha Sangha the Gakyil can present his or her situation of conduct with the list of all the good things they have contributed to the Dzogchen Community. When we have this kind of presentation from the local Gakyils, we can finally understand how the conduct of that person is, and his or her first of the Three Main Subjects for the examination can be seriously applied.

We also know there are many people living in isolated places and in those places there is no Gakyil. For whoever has this kind of situation, if they have some possibility, they should try to connect to a Gakyil which is close to their place. Otherwise, they try to make contact with a Gar to receive more information about the Santi Maha Sangha examination, training and so on. For people who are in this kind of situation, we will try to help somehow and directly check their possibilities.

Please do not come to the examination of Santi Maha Sangha without having the preparations of Three Main Subjects for the Santi Maha Sangha examinations. Santi Maha Sangha training is a very important thing in our Dzogchen Community and therefore it is very important that we participate seriously, not only running to get to the higher levels. If you don't participate seriously, even if you arrive at a higher level you won't have any benefit. If you are going calmly and

seriously ahead, even if you arrive at the first level, you can really get great benefit and at the same time you are getting qualified to be a Dzogchenpa.

With many greetings to all our Dzogchen practitioners,

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

QUALIFICATIONS OF YANTRA YOGA AND VAJRA DANCE INSTRUCTORS

The Mirror #37, September/October 1996

TO ALL DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY GAKYILS
OF THE WORLD

The following is an important message related to our Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance teaching transmission. I am requesting that everyone please pay close attention and try to apply the teachings of Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance in this way:

THE WAY TO PROCEED REGARDING YANTRA YOGA AND VAJRA DANCE INSTRUCTORS

Everyone possibly remembers that I have officially appointed four instructors for Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance: two of my students for the Yantra Yoga, Fabio Andrico and Laura Evangelisti, and two of my students for the Vajra Dance, Prima Mai and Adriana Dal Borgo. At the same time, I explained why we need these instructor-teachers for Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance, and why I chose these four people among all my students.

This does not mean that all courses of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance will always be led by these four instructor-teachers only, but rather that our instructor-teachers should be the source of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance teachings for all the other teachers of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance. In that way we can check that these teachings develop correctly. Their main responsibility is to instruct new teachers of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance, therefore we need a spe-

cific kind of system to enable them to hold open courses and special Training Courses in different countries.

The following are my personal ideas of a system for continuing the teaching of both Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance:

WHAT YANTRA YOGA AND THE VAJRA DANCE TEACHING CONTAINS

Yantra Yoga:

With regard to the teaching of Yantra Yoga, there are three levels:

1. Three Body Training's, the Pranayama of four Denyid with their Main Yantras and the Pranayama of Four Applications with their Main Yantras;
2. The Pranayama of Secret Prana with their Main Yantras and the Pranayama of Seven Applications with their Main Yantras;
3. The Pranayama of Six Applications with their Main Yantras, Seven Lotus Positions as well as all of the secondary. Naturally, the Wave of the Vajra related with all sections.

The Vajra Dance:

With regard to the teaching of the Vajra Dance there are three levels:

1. The Dance of the Six Spaces and the Dance of the Three Vajras;
 2. The Dance of the Vajra with the Song of the Vajra;
 3. The Dance of Space with the Song of the Vajra.
- Our instructors are still learning the last one.

HOW TO ORGANISE A COURSE OF YANTRA YOGA OR VAJRA DANCE WITH ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTORS

If people would like to organise a course to learn Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance, first of all, they should consult the local Gakyil of their own country and collaborate with the appropriate people in charge. In this case, if there is a qualified teacher nearby, the Gakyil can inform them and together they can organise a course. Otherwise, the local Gakyil and those who want to organise a course can ask a Gar to invite one of our four instructor-teachers or communicate directly with the instructor whom they wish to invite. The Gar should then consult the instructor personally about their availability to hold a course of Yantra Yoga or the Vajra dance courses, with regard to the specific time and place, and in turn the Gar informs the local Gakyil.

Since the end of 2005, Vajra Dance and Yantra Yoga courses are coordinated by the Shang Shung Institute at Merigar.

For informations: courses@istitutoshangshung.org or
info@istitutoshangshung.org

If a local Gakyil wants to invite one of our instructor-teachers in a specific way to teach a course, then the Gar and instructor should look into all possibilities and try to make the Gakyil as happy as possible. The intervention of the local Gakyil in taking care of the Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance courses is not based on a kind of bureaucracy, it is just a means of collaborating with the people who are going to organise the course. And, of course, this is how we make sure the teaching of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance is progressing correctly. The local Gakyils always have the responsibility for protecting the Teachings and its Transmission, not only

Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance, but all of our precious Dzogchen Teachings and its Transmission as well.

The Gars are always connected with our four instructor-teachers and particularly with the Teacher of the Dzogchen Community, therefore when the Gar indicates a teacher for a course whatever the Gar chooses must be considered correct.

THE CORRECT WAY OF ATTENDING A COURSE

First of all, one must receive the essence of the transmission of the Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance teachings and that is the transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching. This means that those who are interested in Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance must be interested in the Dzogchen Teaching and its

transmission. It is necessary for those who would like to follow the Yantra Yoga or Vajra Dance courses to receive some transmission of the essence of the Dzogchen Teaching, otherwise it can become like any other kind of physical gymnastics or dance.

In the case of someone who has not received any transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching, what should they do? It is very simple: firstly, new people who are interested in learning Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance should receive some information about Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance from our instructor-teachers or local teachers. The instructors should make it clear that these teachings belong to the Dzogchen Teaching and that the Dzogchen transmission is just like the heart of Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance. If someone is lacking a heart then it is not possible to have a normal life; in the same way, that without root transmission of these

teachings there cannot be any correct benefit for anyone. Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance are not at all like ordinary gymnastics or dance; instead they are about how we govern firstly our physical body, then our energy, and finally, and most importantly, our mind. The main mental-level practice is totally related to the Dzogchen transmission.

Therefore, to learn Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance correctly, we always need to receive the transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching before taking a course. If there is no possibility to receive a Dzogchen Transmission before attending a course, the person should themselves take a kind of commitment to receive the transmission when there is the possibility. If someone indicates that his or her interest is only Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance, then with regard to Yantra Yoga, these people can receive only the following teachings:

- Nine purification breaths.

- *Tsigjongs*.

- The eight movements.

- The rhythmic breathing up to the minor *kumbhaka*, and some Main Yantras (first and second group) with their related breathing, so as not to harm themselves by doing the breathing in the wrong way. But they should certainly not receive any kind of main Pranayamas and their Yantras, because they are all linked strictly to the root transmission.

With regard to the Vajra Dance, one can receive only the Dance of the Liberation of the Six Lokas. Of course, this is also strictly linked to the Dzogchen Transmission, but at the same time it is the method of Six Liberations and for that reason, even if someone is not interested in the Dzogchen Teaching and its Transmission, it can bring them benefit by creating a precise relationship with this precious teaching.

The Dance of the Three Vajras and the Song of the Vajra also have the same qualifications, but in the Dance of the Three Vajras the essence is much too concentrated and in the Song of the Vajra the principles of Dzogchen Teaching are too naked. Therefore the Dance of the Liberation of the Six Lokas is the only one which is suitable for this kind of person.

THE CORRECT WAY TO BECOME A YANTRA YOGA OR VAJRA DANCE TEACHER

First of all, a person interested to teach must understand that Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance are spiritual teachings which are connected totally to the Dzogchen Teaching. In other words, these teachings belong to the Dzogchen Teaching and therefore practitioners who are interested in teaching Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance must be interested in receiving the main transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching. When they have that base they can start the first level training. When they have learned the first level well and trained in it well, one of our instructor-teachers can present this new person to the Dzogchen Community's Teacher. This is the correct way of becoming a teacher for both Yantra Yoga and the Vajra Dance.

THE WAY OF QUALIFYING THROUGH TRAINING

There are three principles to follow:

1. One should learn the First Level well from courses in general and particularly from the Special Training Courses

of Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance held by one of our instructor-teachers.

2. One should lead a complete First Level course of Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance in the presence of one or more of our instructor-teachers.

3. After one or more of our instructor-teachers have completely checked the first level of Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance of the new candidate, they can present him or her to the Teacher of the Dzogchen Community. If the Teacher considers that person to have the qualifications to be a teacher, then that person can obtain the authorisation or permission to teach Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance and can go ahead to the second level and the third level by training in the same way. After receiving each of these authorisations, we can then recognise that the trained person is qualified to lead the local courses of Yantra Yoga or the Vajra Dance.

With Tashi Delegs

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

