No Activity & Nonmeditation

THIS SPRING, the Vidyadhara’s nephew, Karma Senge Rinpoche, returned to Canada for the fourth time to teach and translate with us. The focus this time was on a very important transmission: The Sadhana of Nonmeditation: A Practice of No Activity. Drawn from “The Heart Treasure of Samantabhadra”—an ati terma discovered by the Vidyadhara in Kyere, Tibet. From the start, we shifted into a higher gear all around. We had translated and compiled all the liturgies and commentarial texts we thought necessary before the visit began, working for nearly two months last winter with Khenpo Tierney Gyumer. However, soon after Rinpoche’s arrival we discovered that there was much more to translate, and we completed new drafts of all the most essential pieces in a matter of days, completing two publications (sadhana and practice commentary) just in time for the program. (For more on our work with Karseng Rinpoche, please see page 3.)

We thought you might appreciate a different voice in reporting on this empowerment, and so we asked a good friend and writer, Denny Blouin, to put his mind and heart and hand to this.

Deep Red Heart

The Avalokiteshvara Abhisheka, Halifax, May 2007

RECEIVING THIS ABHISHEKA and listening to the stories that Karma Senge Rinpoche told us of the Vidyadhara’s youth in Tibet transformed for me what we have known about the history of the Vidyadhara’s entire life and the significance—the urgency of his teachings. Speaking as a student of Trungpa Rinpoche, until Karma Senge came to North America in 2003, I was not accustomed to thinking of Chogyam Trungpa’s “miraculous” aspects. Yes, there were the occasional stories like an over-the-speed-limit OM AH HUN under the radar of a Colorado state trooper, or “an ati terma for Vajrayogini at Mill Village, but in general Rinpoche never talked much about miraculous powers or wondrous events. In fact, he pooh-poohed them as relative siddhi; the point being to realize the supreme siddhi of wisdom in this lifetime, and he kept encouraging us, “You can do it, sweetheart.”

Over the course of the abhisheka, Karma Senge Rinpoche told us well-kept stories of Trungpa Rinpoche as a young tertön. For six days, Surmang monks excavated solid rock to an arm’s-length depth at a site Rinpoche had specified to uncover termas caskets. Another time, during an event that adds a whole new dimension to the request, “Please approach,” accompanied by other lamas doing a feast in the Crystal Cave of Vajrasattva on Kyere Shelkar, Rinpoche recited the “Seven-Line Supplication” at dawn, then waved an arrow, and as the attached scarf touched the cave roof, treasure caskets “poured down.”

At still another time when Rinpoche was at Kyere monastery, during a group ganachakra practice, again at dawn, he encountered Ekajati “face to face.” She with her big spike topknot, single breast, fire and wind, red and black, placed in his hand a treasure casket, which on the following day opened by itself. That treasure contained a practice of Ekajati; siddhas of the guru, yidam, dakini, and dharma protector; prophecies about the future, and this very profound Avalokiteshvarah sadhana, which includes a method of practicing effortless nonmeditation.

In the Sadhana of Nonmeditation: A Practice of No Activity, we have what Robin Kornman (who made a very special effort to attend) called, “a culminating piece of Trungpa Rinpoche: as if he built a pyramid and there was a square at the top that we have been missing and this is the crystal square at the top, an ati (dröchen) practice of Avalokiteshvara.” The power of this short, pith practice is that it binds emptiness to compassion and demonstrates it—in fact, it is the experience of both arising together, spontaneously, effortlessly. That it appears now, twenty years after the Vidyadhara’s parinirvāna is certainly not random coincidence, and I can imagine a sly smile now haunting the Vidyadhara’s lips as he alone knew what he’d left behind. And what was coming.

In the final difficult five hundred years, there will be no time to do a practice involving effort. Even practicing will be a great risk for one’s life. Therefore, you should practice ati, effortless.

By the time Trungpa Rinpoche received this terma in 1958, simply to be seen reciting mantras or using a mala, let alone practicing meditation, had become crimes in regions of Tibet the Chinese had conquered. Thus only the effortlessness of ati would be an undetectably safe practice, which may explain why his teacher Khenpo Gangchog broke the traditional mold for dröchen transmission by giving it publicly to large gatherings:

“At great risk for one’s life,” he sighed, “only those who have practiced effortlessness would be able to grasp this teaching...”

Robin (standing), Larry, and Jan Watson with the Avalokiteshvara Abhisheka, Halifax, May 2007

Remembering Robin

ON JULY 31, Robin Kornman, one of the founding members of the Nalanda Translation Committee, passed away at age 60, from complications due to cancer following a lengthy illness. Robin was a principal translator and editor of The Rain of Wisdom and a key contributor to the translations of the Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, Jambhala, and Werma Sadhanas as well as the Long Werma Lhasang of the Vidyadhara’s Shambhala texts. He was a principal translator and editor of The Rain of Wisdom and a key contributor to the translations of the Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, Jambhala, and Werma Sadhanas as well as the Long Werma Lhasang of the Vidyadhara’s Shambhala texts. Robin was a principal translator and editor of The Rain of Wisdom and a key contributor to the translations of the Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, Jambhala, and Werma Sadhanas as well as the Long Werma Lhasang of the Vidyadhara’s Shambhala texts.
Glimpses of Alaya: Choosing the Right Word

The character and style of translation meetings with the Vidyadharyas were often fairly straightforward and businesslike. There was a job at hand, translating a dharma text, usually from Tibetan into English. So we all followed our teacher’s lead and generally stayed on task, unless of course he leaned out into the wind a bit, which sometimes resulted in a gem of a conversation like the following. In the midst of digitizing and archiving our old types of translation meetings, Tingdzin rediscovered this jewel, and we are happy to present it to you here.

The following discussion took place during a translation meeting on The Rain of Wisdom at the 1979 VajraJada Seminary. Present at the meeting were the Vidyadharyas (VCTr), Robin Kornman (RK), Jud Levinson (JL), Larry Merlemein (LM), John Brill (JR), and Scott Wellenbach (SW). This edited transcript represents only a fraction of the entire discussion, which is posted on our website.

In the late 1980s, Robin moved to Princeton, where he completed his graduate work in comparative literature, and then to Milan, where he held teaching positions at St. John’s in Ann Arbor and a research position with the Library of Congress. He gathered a group of translators around him in Milan, and spent the last decade of his life working on a translation of the initial volumes of the Epic of Gesar. A natural in the role of Shartujpa, Robin never tired of asking questions of the Vidyadharyas, to the edification of us all (as witnessed below in “Glimpse of Alaya”). An engaging and prodigious teacher, he traveled our mandala widely, lecturing particularly on the ways of Shambhala and the importance of Gesar, and was a pioneer in developing dhama education for children.

In the story, the Vidyadhara is a wise and extraordinary, and the wisdoms of many of us are fullers from our meals with Robin, and our minds fuller from the stories he regaled us with. A renaissance man, he was struck down by a respiratory arrest just after playing the piano, a pursuit he had taken up only two years before. A transliterated pair, excellence.

There is no sense of complete peace, but there is a sense of being thoughtless by the mind. Is that the lower alaya?

VCTr: No, the split is at the level of dharma. When you reach the goals of dharma, you have a chance of either splitting down or not. That is where coemergent ignorance and coemergent wisdom arise. RK: If you wake up from the. . .

VCTr: No, the split is at the level of dharma. If you are aware of phenomena as they are, you instantaneously have both wisdom and ignorance.

JL: Is this the split of coemergent wisdom and latent karmic wisdom?

VCTr: No, it is the split of coemergent wisdom and the basic level of alaya.

LM: Is that the split of the mind at the split point? Please explain.

VCTr: Yes.

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VCTr: Yes.
A plan for future transmissions of the Vidyadhara’s termas also emerged, including instructions for a special ngindro to prepare students who wish to focus on this cycle of teachings. We hope that Rinpoche will be able to travel extensively in the U.S. on his visit to the West next year, conferring the ati practice of Avalokiteshvara there, unfortunately not possible this year due to visa problems. We are working now on the next major transmissions, the first of which will hopefully occur in Halifax next year: a Krodhikali (Trinmo Nagnmo) Sadhana of black Vajrayogini that incorporates a lengthy cho and short phowa practice; and the Profound Heart- Essence cycle for a later visit. Rinpoche was able to compile both of these in Tibetan during his time with us, as well as several other texts. He also conferred the Avalokiteshvara abhisheka on the Sakyong and gave him the transmission for a magnetizing practice of Chakrasambhava written by the Vidyadhara.

We were again very fortunate to be joined in our work by Lama Ngodup Dorji from Bhutan, who was very helpful with both oral and written translation. Lama Ngodup was unable to remain for the whole visit, which gave Jessie, our budding oral interpreter, a serious practice-time—a sole translator for his last three weeks in the province. Karseng Rinpoche spent a week at Gampo Abbey, his first visit there (enjoyed enormously by all), as well as conducting weekend abhisheka programs in Toronto and Vancouver, hastily assembled by many hard-working volunteers to great success. We are very thankful to all the many people who helped with this two-month visit.

In July, during Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche’s teaching visit to Halifax, we were able to meet with him one morning, and he was extremely helpful in clarifying a number of subtle points of translation and dharma.

In early May, Karma Senge Rinpoche settled into comfortable quarters at the home of Steve Brooks, who very generously allowed his house to become action-central for our work with Rinpoche. Jesse Litven moved in as resident translator and Tibetan secretary to Rinpoche; Mahme Sinclaire was the overall coordinator, supervising a fabulous crew of cooks and other volunteers over a two-month period.

Rinpoche quickly dove into the work at hand, preparing for the Avalokiteshvara abhi- sheka, which was certainly the highlight of his visit for the many participants, and for us too. But something else happened that was quite remarkable. We found our- selves in the midst of a translation and publishing factory, meeting together almost every day to review our translations and assist Karseng Rinpoche in his compiling and publish- ing in Tibetan some of the many liturgies composed or discovered by the Vidyadhara, properly assembling them for use both by us and by monastics and retreatants under his guidance in Tibet. Rinpoche was clearly excited to employ our computer technology, and he worked continuously (both in and out of translation meetings) to edit, assemble, and proofread these Tibetan compilations, with Jessie by his side to execute his instructions. As on his previous visits, he brought several “new” (to us) texts by the Vidyadhara and many older editions of works he had already given us.

In preparation for the summer, we worked on finishing the texts needed for the abhisheka of the Vidyadhara’s Avalokiteshvara terma. We began work on another cycle of the Vidyadhara’s termas known as the Profound Heart- Essence, which includes a root sadhana, various related liturgies and songs, and a guru yoga for Nyak Jnanakarma (one of Padmasambhava’s close disciples, who the Vidyadhara-as-terton was previously. We also worked on a Krodhikali (black Vajrayogini) sadhana, as well as a volume of supplications, spontaneous songs, and oral instructions. As always, Khenpo’s energy and humor made our work together a delightful feast of dharma and language.

In August, we published our initial translation of the Vidyadhara’s Gesar Offering, The Ocean of the Play of Enlightened Activity. A Daily Offering to Warrior Geas, Great Being Tsadrap, King of Werma, Turner of Enemies, in time for the Kalapa Festival here in Halifax. So soon after the passing of Robin Kornman, we feel honored to able to complete the work of this translation begun by him and dedicated to his memory. Just after the festival, we were able to meet with His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche to finish our translation of this practice that he had requested the Vidyadhara to write some fifty years ago in Tibet. Based on our meetings with him, we will compile and publish a practice commentary in the near future.

During this meeting, with the assistance of his daughters Senso Parle and Senso Palmo, and our good friend Dr. Peter Roberts, the Committee also completed a translation of a “Supplication for the Longevity of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche” written at the request of Khandro Teoyang by His Eminence while he was leading a large group retreat at the Maratika Cave in Nepal with the Sakyong and Khandro Teoyang. Other projects included completing a compilation of “Nyinyima Lineage Supplications” and a “Supplication to Mipham Rinpoche” used at the Sakyong’s summer Drogchen Retreat programs.

In the highlight of his visit for the people who helped with this two-month visit.

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Patricia will co-teach The Moon of Wisdom (chapter six of Chandrakirti’s Entering the Middle Way) with Tom Bell this fall.

Jessie is returning to Asia this fall and winter for more study, training, and translation work. Enroute to Asia via Boulder, Jessie is continuing her work on translating the autobiography of the Sakyong’s mother, Lady Könchok Paldron. She will journey to Surangm, Tibet, to visit and work with Karma Senge Rinpoche and Khenpo Thoeng. Later, in India, Jessie will be teaching introductory Tibetan classes at Mingyur Rinpoche’s new Tergar Institute in Bodhgaya, as she has been doing in Halifax.

This last winter, Patricia and Jessie attended the third year of the ten-week Ragda Dorje Institute at Pullhari Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, where they studied the sixth chapter of Chandrakirti’s Entering the Middle Way. While in Nepal, they visited Lama Yönten Gyatso, a former attendant of the third Karmapa. Lama Yönten served as the Vidyadhara’s attendant from an early age and accompanied him on his escape from Tibet, as recounted in Born in Tibet. He now lives in Dabang Rinpoche’s monastery near the Boudhanath stupa.

PULLHARI AND A VISIT WITH LAMA YÖNTEN

For your Translation Committee’s work to continue and flourish, we need your support. Please consider sharing the merit and financial responsibility of bringing the dharma into new places and cultures for this and future generations.

Your Generosity Will Result in More Translations

Please dedicate and donate whatever merit, financial or otherwise, you can today. All donations are tax deductible. Also, please send us your ideas and requests for more Buddhist and Shambhala dharma to made available—we invite your positive feedback and critical advice. Please send us your contributions, suggestions, and inquiries using the enclosed envelope and contribution card. And keep the translation for inspiration!

To accomplish our core tasks, which derive primarily from fulfilling the needs of the Shambhala community, the Committee currently employs Larry Memeklmen, Mark Nowakowski, Tingdün Ötrö, Scott Wellenbach, and Patricia Kirgin (formerly Yerbaghi) full time, and Jessie Litven part-time. Other members are supported on a project basis, as feasible. Members regularly engage in essential and related activities, often on a volunteer basis.

Last year, through your generosity, we received CAN$85,000 from the many sangha members who make an annual translation contribution (“Tenzin dün”), You form a core group that allows our work to continue. Your support is essential. We hope you continue to appreciate the value of our work and support it generously.

For those in a position to do so, please also consider making a contribution to our endowment fund. This past year our endowment grew appreciably, thanks to the generous gift of $50,000 from a sangha member. As the ranks of the committee grow, it is the annual distribution from our endowment and the ongoing support of the sangha that allow us to continue with the current level of our work—and expand it.

PROJECTED BUDGET FOR 2007-2008

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WHO WE ARE

The Nalanda Translation Committee—founded in 1975 by the Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche—supports the practice and study of the buddhadharma and Shambhala teachings by:

• creating fresh and authentic translations of Tibetan practice texts and commentaries in English and other Western languages
• translating from a variety of other genres of Tibetan Buddhist literature, including biographies, songs of realization, philosophy, and culture
• publishing those texts to ensure quality and consistency
• teaching and transmitting practices, to increase students’ understanding of their significance and cultural background

When we translate works for the public of the Buddhist and Shambhala teachings, we use the name Nalanda Translation Committee. For translations restricted to certain levels of vajrayāna or Shambhala practice, we use the name VajrayānaShambhala Translation Committee.

OUR TRANSLATIONS ARE AVAILABLE to us directly and through our main distributors, including by mail order, from:

Samadhi: www.samadhicushions.com,

e-mail: info@samadhicushions.com

Ziji in Boulder: www.ziji.com,
e-mail: info@ziji.com

Alaya in Marburg, Germany: e-mail: alaya@alaya.de

Drala in Halifax: www.drala.ca, e-mail: info@drala.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We would like to thank Lisa Matthews for elegantly designing this year’s newsletter. Many thanks to Marvin Moores, Robert Del Todisco, and Peter Roberts for providing their excellent photographs, and to Barry Boyce for his invaluable editorial advice.

LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

The Translation Committee is at a critical juncture in its history. Almost all of the current translators are in their 50’s. Since it takes the better part of a decade to train a translator, it is imperative that we accelerate the process of replacing ourselves and educating a new generation of translators.

This work has indeed begun with both Patricia Kirgin and Jessie Litven making significant contributions. But two apprentices cannot replace the entire committee. We are eager to work with more aspiring Tibetan-language students so that we can pass on what we have understood from the Vidyadhara Trungpa Rinpoche’s instructions in the art and craft of translation. Our endowment fund is already beginning to make this happen; it is crucial for providing for our financial well-being in the present and laying the groundwork for future growth.

The passing of this baton takes time. It takes vision, and it takes funding. As many of us near middle age and beyond, our thoughts turn to wills and providing for ourselves and our families. Keeping the propagation of dharma in mind and providing for its well-being is also important. It can be a significant part of our legacy and an expression of what has been important to us during our life. Gifts can be general or for specific projects and purposes. Members of the committee would be happy to discuss with you the use of your gift or bequest if you would like translation of the dharma or be an expression of your continuing generosity.

NALANDA TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Founder
Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche
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Lama Yönten Gyatso
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You can see a list of our available publications at:

www.shambhala.org/ntc/publications

This February, our good friend Molly Nuddell, dharma sister, dharma artist, and dharma designer of this newsletter for five years, passed away. She had been diagnosed with lung cancer some nine months before and so had the opportunity to bravely face her death and share that with family, friends, and practitioners. Working with Molly on the newsletter was like handing a beautiful cactus in full bloom. First, from a distance, you just saw this provocative, gorgeous, hot pink flower set against a solid pillar of green. As you approached, the razor sharp needles came into focus. But getting too close was something not to be taken lightly. And we had the great good fortune to work with Molly dully, her delicate scent and penetrating needles. She brought all of herself to her life, her practice, and her work, and challenged you to do the same; so that in the end a nourishing, delicious fruit always came forth. We are grateful for her generous contribution to our work and to have known her, practiced with her, and worked with her. We miss her greatly.

 thù y tuONGEN I K E THIEN

Note: Marvin Moore.