



The Wisdom of the Feminine

YESHE TSOGYAL was perhaps the first Tibetan to achieve enlightenment. She lived during the crucial time when teachings from India were becoming established in Tibet under royal patronage in the eighth century. She was a chief disciple, consort, and assistant to Padmakara, Guru Rinpoche. As a guru herself, she instructed the king and many others, guiding the development of the dharma throughout the country. One of her greatest legacies was encoding, writing down, and concealing a vast number of termas, or “treasure teachings,” given by her master for the benefit of future generations to this very day.

The feminine principle in the vajrayana tradition signifies knowledge or wisdom, as well as the experience of emptiness. As the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche explained:

Shunyata, which is emptiness or openness, is also described in terms of the feminine principle—as the consort of all the buddhas. Prajna, or discriminating awareness, is described in terms of the feminine principle too—as the mother of all the buddhas, she who gives birth to the very idea of enlightenment. This very notion of enlightenment was started by her, by prajna. But she who made the buddhas speak, communicate,



Sakyong Wangmo Khandro Tseyang and Druk Sakyong Wangmo Lady Diana Mukpo with the Nalanda Translation Committee, just after the Sakyong Wangmo Empowerment. Photo by Marvin Moore.

is shunyata. This is because with shunyata there is a lot of room, openness, groundlessness. Therefore there is no fear of communicating with students, just as Buddha communicated with his disciples. In the situation of groundlessness, no one is standing on any ground, so communication can take place quite freely.

With the recent investiture of Khandro Tseyang as Sakyong Wangmo and Lady Diana Mukpo as Druk Sakyong Wangmo of the Kingdom of Shambhala, we join in celebrating the feminine aspect of wakefulness. As translators, we were likened by the Vidyadhara to “ladies to the court” in a Shambhalian context, connecting him to his mother tongue, even though our committee was largely made up of men in those days. We are delighted to note that our youngest members—not apprentices anymore—are both women. And so we offer the following song to Yeshe Tsogyal (referred to with the epithet Ama, or mother), composed by the Vidyadhara during his escape from Tibet. We are presently setting this to music, based on the melody sung by Karma Senge Rinpoche and his nuns, and you can hear more about that on our website: www.shambhala.org/ntc/offering.

SUNSHINE FOR A PAUPER *A Spontaneous Song of Supplication to the Mother-Lineage Guru of the Great Secret*

A heavenly rain that clears pain falls gently, and a thick, heavy fog rolls in.
When moved by these companions in my loneliness,
One and only mother, Ama Tsogyal, protector of us Tibetans,
With none kind as you, there is definitely no other hope but you.

Refrain:

Mother of all the victorious ones, so very kind Ama Tsogyal,
Refuge for this life and on, very kind mother, I miss you.
This little child, thinking of Ama, simply can't bear it at all—
Ama, a la la, please truly show me a clear sign of your blessings.

Outwardly, this current age of darkness is more and more running rampant,
Everyone delights in wrongdoing, engaging in evil.
All religious and secular order has broken down from within,
So here we are forced to cry out to you now, guardian of Tibetans!
-Refrain

Inwardly, driven by the busyness of our circle of family and friends,
After all of that practice, we end up in the lower realms by siding with evil.
When I see this tight lasso of hope & fear, of passion & aggression,
Sharp sword of prajna, my kind Ama, I think of you. *-Refrain*

Secretly, tricked by confused appearances due to habit and grasping,
Lost in false appearances, thinking there are gods and demons,
When we end up feeling let down by the deity of self-arising wisdom,
I think of you, all-pervasive awareness, mother of the victorious ones.
-Refrain

The innate mind of coemergence, inherently without confusion or liberation,
Is beautiful Samantabhadri, beyond having face and arms.
Through merely hearing of you, let alone seeing you directly in person,
Thoughts, the duality of mind and body, naturally subside and dissolve.
-Refrain

In the luminous realm of Dhumaṭhala, the source of all dharmas,
Is the ravishing woman free from habitual craving and grasping.
In a gathering of fair, fair ladies, at the undefiled ganachakra,
I'd take even the lowest seat there to enjoy the equality of the fourth moment.
-Refrain

The slip knot of craving and grasping, on the black lasso of mundane existence,
Drags us down further and further into the muck of samsara.
Seeing this makes me imagine limitless, undefiled pleasures,
And then I get to see my mother's true face of formless awareness.
-Refrain

The kindest thing that I can do for myself is to practice the genuine dharma.
Being mindful of myself, I meet my own face.
This brings confidence in my own mind—these are my mother's final instructions.
Except for just that, there is nothing at all for us to rely on.
-Refrain

Inwardly, this little bird in the trees keeps getting fooled by his friends,
Outwardly, keeps being fooled by foes, like having only brittle leather for clothing.
In between, the dark age keeps fooling us—what mental and physical pain!
In any case, now we have nothing at all for us to rely on. *-Refrain*

The vow of the Mahaguru was to bring the sun of the vajrayana
To Tibet, a land of darkness, as is well known.

Mother Tsogyal, I feel it was through the chariot of your kindness
That the lotus garden of the supreme yana has bloomed—I admire you! *-Refrain*

In the east, from behind high mountain peaks, the master of the seven horses,
Coming with its hundred warm rays that shine and dispel pain,
Opens a hundred-petaled lotus of faith in our hearts.
Grant your blessings that will make the buzzing, soaring bees happy. *-Refrain*

In the south, amidst the groves of bamboo where live the Mönpas who color their mouths,
Wandering aimlessly in the great wide open free space,
With a walking stick in my hand, I sing out clearly this song,
This spontaneous sweet song that can be heard from miles and miles away:

Mother of all the victorious ones, so very kind Ama Tsogyal,
Refuge for this life and on, very kind mother, I miss you.
This little child, thinking of Ama, simply can't bear it at all,
Ama, a la la! Bestow the blessings that I may be an unnoticed, poor wanderer.

Among those who hold the secret and please the Uddiyana lord, knower of the three times,
You are the chief of the celestial-realm dakinis, in the form of the sow-faced one.
Our beloved, swiftly bringing all the siddhis, the only refuge for Tibetans,
Joyful lady, source of bliss, let your compassion be quick:

Mother of all the victorious ones, so very kind Ama Tsogyal,
Refuge for this life and on, very kind mother, I miss you.
This little child, thinking of Ama, simply can't bear it at all—
Ama, a la la, please truly show me a clear sign of your blessings.

*Thus, this ornament for the ears of fortunate ones,
Adorned with garlands of beautiful and wondrous words,
Was spontaneously spoken by Jigdröl She-me Dorje [Fearless Foolish Vajra]—*

*This lineage child of the omniscient ones, youthful and resting carefree,
Sustained by the blessings of the guru of the mother lineage of the three roots.*

Overtaken by the rampant changing of the times, I nearly lost my life. But finally, after narrowly escaping this horrific dukkha, I stepped into the hidden land of Pema Kö. In a natural rock cave near the sacred place of Pema Shelri, this wanderer from the upper north, Chökyi Gyatso, sang this.



Yeshe Tsogyal
by Cynthia Moku
www.cmoku.com

Your form is empty, a goddess beyond language to describe you.
Seeing your innate face of coemergence, inexpressible in words,
Effortless great bliss blazes, and the great joy of the four joys,
On the path of freedom, awakens out from the core of my heart. *-Refrain*

Seeing everyone in the six realms as your parents, you care for us with such great love,
And with the beckoning glance of your compassionate, loving eyes,
You summon the many beings of the three worlds as honored guests to the great yana.
When I think of your life, Mother Tsogyal, I aspire to be like you! *-Refrain*

Listening In: Translation Meetings with Tibetan Teachers



THIS SPRING WE WERE very fortunate to have Changling Rinpoche come to Nova Scotia to visit, teach, and translate. Changling Rinpoche is in charge of teaching the ritual and ceremonial traditions to the monks at Shechen Monastery, the monastic seat Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche founded in Nepal, and he is a close associate of Rabjam Rinpoche, the head of the monastery. Rinpoche came to Dorje Denma Ling to teach one of Trungpa Rinpoche's root teacher's texts: Khenpo Gangshar's *Naturally Liberating Whatever You Meet*. While Rinpoche was teaching at DDL, we met with him on the "Confession Liturgy That Brings Reconciliation with the Jnanadevas," from *The Undeified Supreme Wisdom Tantra*.

We had translated this long ago, at the request of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, for our sangha to practice as a means to repair our samaya (vajrayana commitment) with Trungpa Rinpoche. Since then, we have come to understand this to be a very profound text with a variety of commentaries, including one by Jigme Lingpa. And so we amassed quite a number of further questions on its meaning and expression.

It was a unique opportunity to work with Changling Rinpoche. Not only does he have a deep understanding of the tradition and its meaning, but he also truly enjoys delving into its expression in English. He is a consummate educator, so it was a delight to work with him. We look forward to his return to complete the teaching of Khenpo Gangshar's text next year.

We would like to offer you the following brief "fly-on-the-wall" perspective of what it is like to be in a translation meeting with a learned, bilingual Tibetan lama. In the transcribed discussion below, in addition to Changling Rinpoche (CR), Scott Wellenbach (SW), Mark Nowakowski (MN), Patricia Kirigin (PK), and Walker Blaine (WB) are present. This portion of the meeting focuses on the first verse and primarily on the meaning of the words rangshin (rang bzhin, "self-existing") and tröpa (spros pa, "elaboration").

HUM The supreme wisdom body, the self-existing mandala,
Is like the full moon and has no elaboration.
Its compassion appears equally for all, like the light of the luminous sun.
Please approach here, consider us, and take your seat.

SW: We are on the first line, "The supreme wisdom body, the self-existing mandala."

CR: I have one question. Are you translating rangshin as "self-existing"?

SW: Yes, that's the way we've translated it.

CR: For me, rangshin means something more like "naturally" or "natural." "Self-existing" sounds like someone is there doing something.

SW: Is it that "the supreme wisdom body" is "the natural mandala"?

CR: Yes. The reason I don't like "self-existing" is because "existing" is used a lot in madhyamaka. In many traditions, that is the main point to be refuted. So "self-existing" sounds like that.

SW: So perhaps we could say, "The supreme wisdom body, the natural mandala"?

CR: When I see rangshin, I immediately understand "naturally," without any causes or conditions, unobstructedly appearing from beginningless time.

MN: Is this the same as in rangjung ("self-born") or rang-nang ("self-appearance")?

CR: No. Actually, rangshin can be understood in many ways. Sometimes, it can be understood as "self-existing." But in this case, I understand it as naturally, unobstructedly appearing, without any cause or condition.

PK: How about "appearing" instead of "existing"?

CR: From one point of view, "existing" and "appearing" are not so different. The reason I oppose "existing" is because it is used in madhyamaka as something to refute. But "appearing" is also used in madhyamaka. For example, they say, "It does not exist, but it does appear."

MN: Recently, we have been saying "naturally appearing" for rang-nang. For a long time, we said "self-existing" or "self-arising" for rangjung. Personally, I think "naturally" works well. But there is now a problem in English, where "natural" is like saying "organic."

CR: Yeah [laughs]. Since some people do not have a lot of training and knowledge, we have to be careful when translating a word, so that it does not cause misunderstanding.

MN: So did we decide on "naturally"?

SW: I think Rinpoche was suggesting something like "The supreme wisdom body, the naturally appearing mandala."

CR: By reading Jigme Lingpa's commentary I understand rangshin as naturally, unobstructedly appearing, without cause or condition, from beginningless time. "Natural mandala" means that we have two mandalas: a conditioned mandala and an unconditioned mandala. "Natural mandala" refers to the unconditioned mandala. So "self-existing" does not fit very well. "Unconditioned mandala" means that it arises without causes and conditions. It is not necessarily self-existing.

SW: That is a great commentary, but we're a little shy about putting too much commentary into the translation. We could say "natural" or "naturally appearing" and add the rest in a commentary.

CR: Jigme Lingpa also refers to it as the "unfabricated, great natural mandala." Here, "unfabricated" means the same as "unconditioned," not made by causes and conditions.

SW: The second line is "Is like the full moon and has no elaboration."

CR: Here, tröpa is not "elaboration." It means trötral (Tib: spros bral). How do you translate trötral?

SW: Trungpa Rinpoche used to like to say "simplicity." We often say that, but sometimes we feel it doesn't work. We also say "free from elaborations" or "free from complexities." But when "simplicity" fits and it sounds nice, we use it.

CR: Generally, tröpa means some kind of extreme, either right or left. Here, the Tibetan means "free from extremes," both the extreme of nirvana and the extreme of samsara. For example, Jigme Lingpa's commentary says it is "free from all the extremes of conceptual thoughts."

SW: When we say "no elaboration" or "no complexity," I think we basically mean "no thoughts" or "no conceptuality."

CR: It does not only mean "no thoughts." It can also mean not to fall into some particular stage or level. In this case, it can be understood as free from all dualities: conceptual thoughts, falling into samsara or nirvana, existence or nonexistence, and so on.

SW: So from that point of view, it means "extremes" more than "elaborations."

CR: I'm not too familiar with the word "elaboration."

MN: Elaborate is the opposite of simple. You can say something in either a simple way or an elaborate way, with lots and lots of things. For example, a big feast is an elaborate feast.

CR: The translation says, "It is like the full moon and has no elaboration." This means that it is just like a full moon, clarity, but it is free from tröpa, which means free from effort, which is simplicity.

MN: I think "free from elaboration" works with the image of the moon. "Free of extremes" does not really work.

CR: Now let's pretend we are total beginners and don't know what this means. If we say, "It is like the full moon and has no elaboration," how would you understand that?

MN: It sounds simple, with nothing extra around it. But it still doesn't quite work. It sounds like the moon is free of anything extra—no clouds, no junk.

SW: If I heard that phrase, I would think, "The full moon, shining clearly, brightly, directly—nothing else."

PK: I would think simple, simplicity.

WB: As a beginner, I just thought it meant the moon: this bright clear moon and nothing extra.

MN: Our translation says "no elaboration," singular, which technically means that there is no talking about it. But "free from elaborations" means there is no stuff around it. If I "elaborate" on something, I talk a lot about it.

SW: Well, that's one meaning.

MN: I'm thinking from a beginner's point of view.

PK: It sounds a little bit like "no commentary."

MN: Maybe we should say "simple" for the full moon, and then we could add commentary.

CR: Let's see what Khedrup Yeshe Gyaltzen says. His commentary says:

For example, at the full moon, the moon is free from sides. It does not have a bright side or a dark side. Similarly, it is free from the extremes of apprehending subject and apprehended object.

For me, "elaboration" sounds more like the Tibetan word gye-trö (rgyas spros) than the word tröpa. Gye means "to elaborate," so "elaboration" sounds more like gye-trö.

PK: So the image of the full moon means that nothing is hidden, that you can see the whole moon.

CR: No. Like a full moon, it is complete clarity. Khedrup Yeshe Gyaltzen says that, like a full moon, it does not have any parts, like corners or sides. So "elaboration" sounds more like gye-trö, but our text says tröpa. In Tibetan, there is a big difference between gye-trö and tröpa. In Tibetan, we have two different kinds of words: general and specific. Gye-trö mepa is a specific term, while tröpa mepa is a general term. In this case, tröpa mepa sounds to me like "free from extremes."

For example, in Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, the initial homage to the Buddha says [also found in the exorcism chant used with the *Heart Sutra*]:

To the one who teaches dependent arising,
Peace, the pacification of complexity . . .

Can you explain the word "complexity"?

SW: It is the opposite of simple.

MN: For example, the human body is very complex. It would sound better to say, "It is like the full moon, simplicity."

SW: Are you suggesting that in Nagarjuna's homage, tröpa means "extremes" rather than "complexity"?

CR: Yes, it sounds much better to me than "complexity."

SW: In Nagarjuna, I think "free of extremes" works well. But when I hear "the moon free from extremes," I think it is neither bright nor not bright, and I don't know if that's the right idea.

CR: No, no.

SW: So maybe we could say, "It is like the full moon, simplicity."

CR: I was thinking "free from complexity," something like that.

SW: Here, "free from complexity" might work?

MN: But the image of the full moon is simple. That's the nice thing about saying "simplicity"—it's simple. But "the full moon, free from complexity" makes your mind spin.

CR: It seems difficult to say "simplicity" in this case, because the text says "free from tröpa."

SW: It's a negative statement.

MN: Well, that's the beauty of translation.

WB: It seems important to retain the negative in the translation, because you're contrasting the negative in this line with the positive in the next line.

MN: But if we add "yet" or "but" at the beginning of the second line, the negative is included.

WB: But the tantra uses a negative rather than a positive.

SW: Rinpoche, in this line about the full moon, is it just saying that its quality is no complexity? Or is it like the full moon in other ways as well? Our present translation says, "It is like the full moon *and* has no elaboration." "And" implies that there are other qualities.

CR: The Tibetan means, "Like the full moon, there are no complexities." If there were an "and," the Tibetan would need to have the word "tang" (dang).

SW: So a better translation would be: "It is like the full moon; it has no complexity."

CR: Anything you say [laughs].

WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON

LAST WINTER, we enjoyed almost a month with **Khenpo Tsering Gyurme** from Surmang, now one of our main advisers. We reviewed many short texts, mostly by the Vidyadhara, including supplementary texts used in the Avalokiteshvara feast practice compiled and transmitted by Karma Senge Rinpoche last year. We are still compiling a commentary on these liturgies and finalizing our translations. In working with **Karma Senge Rinpoche** last year, we learned how some of these supplementary liturgies could be used as a **ngöndro practice for the Vidyadhara's terma** teachings, and we will make that available to the sangha in the coming year.

We continued our review of texts needed for the **Krodhikali (Tröma Nagmo) Sadhana** of black Vajrayogini and the **Profound Heart Essence** cycle of terma, both from among the Vidyadhara's writings from Tibet. We don't have any news of the hoped-for return of Karma Senge Rinpoche to the West, but we are working toward making this possible. Khenpo Tsering returned to Boulder this summer, and he plans to remain there until next year so he can complete his residency requirements for U.S. citizenship.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche returned to Halifax during Khenpo Tsering's visit with us, and we had an excellent meeting together (at which Khandro Tseyang served some delicious Tibetan delicacies, as an early Losar for Khenpo Tsering). We were able to continue our discussions on several texts included in the Daily Chant Book. We also reviewed with Khenpo Tsering a few texts composed by Ju Mipham that will eventually be added to the Daily Chant Book: "Nyingma Lineage Supplications," an aspiration for



Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Khandro Tseyang host Khenpo Tsering and the Translation Committee at the Kalapa Court. Photo by Marvin Moore.

the Nyingma teachings to flourish, and "The Verses of the Eight Auspicious Noble Ones." While editions of the first and last of those texts have been published, some research remains before they are complete.

The Sakyong has asked us to prepare a number of additional **King Gesar of Ling** liturgies that will eventually be incorporated into the vajrayana practice regimen of our community. Some of these are written by Ju Mipham Rinpoche, who composed the Gesar protector chant and the long lhasang we've done for many years, and some are termas discovered by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. This will be a multiyear project, and we have begun to produce



Jigme Rinpoche meets with the Committee. Photo by Alan Goldstein

draft translations. We've already completed some of this work with the help of **Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche** when he came to teach in Halifax this summer. We had several very productive meetings with him on a Gesar guru yoga and two Gesar offering chants.



Namkha Drimed and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoches at a translation meeting.

In March, **Changling Rinpoche** came to North America and began his teaching tour at DDL and in Halifax. We met with him on the "Confession Liturgy" (see page 2) and several other texts, including the Gesar guru yoga mentioned above.

This summer, we met briefly with **Namkha Drimed Rinpoche**, during the Sakyong Wangmo events, in order to clarify a few lingering questions on the "Supplication for the Longevity of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche" he wrote, and this has now been reissued with a few minor revisions. (See our website for the changes.) The Sakyong paid a surprise visit midway in our meeting, and it was very helpful to have his viewpoint on the phrasing. A few months earlier he asked us to translate a **general longevity supplication**, meant to be used for a variety of teachers, without performing specific liturgies for each, as the number of lineage masters with whom we study grows.

We produced several new publications over the last year. An edited transcript of talks by Changling Rinpoche from his seminar for tantrikas at Dorje Denma Ling on **Khenpo Gangshar's "Naturally Liberating Whatever You Meet"** was just published this fall, and we look forward to Rinpoche's return to continue this teaching. We are especially pleased to be able to offer committee-member Ann Helm's fine translation of **Miracle Stories of Mipham Rinpoche**, composed by Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok. We released new editions of the **Profound Guru Yoga**, which now includes a long devotional poem that is to be inserted into the liturgy, along with a full commentary on this; and the **Gesar offering** ("Ocean of the Play of Enlightened Activity"), which includes an extensive commentary and practice instructions—both texts written in Tibet by the Vidyadhara; a new edition of **The Life of Tilopa** by the great Drukpa Kagyü master Pema Karpo, and very slightly revised editions of our **Vajrayogini Sadhana Practice Manual**, printed for the recent abhisheka this summer, and the Committee's more literal translation of **The Sadhana of Mahamudra**, first published in 1990 as a study aid (changes available on our website).

Teaching and Other Activities

Jessie completed a first draft translation of a **biography of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's mother, Lady Könchok Paldrön**, compiled by Lady Könchok's husband, Lama Pejal. This will be edited by Emily Sell and published by Vajradhatu Publications. Jessie spent some time with Lady Könchok in Boulder before heading off to Tibet, visiting Surmang, Wenchen nunnery, and Kyere monastery—home to Karma Senge Rinpoche. Jessie lived at the nunnery for several weeks, learning their dialect and enjoying their company.

They were very appreciative of the Tibetan liturgical texts we published with Karseng Rinpoche last year, thanks also to Tony Duff's TibetDoc word processor. The nuns often sang the chorus of the **Vidyadhara's Yeshe Tsogyal song** Jessie had translated (see front page), and this inspired her to set the English to that melody. Jessie then traveled to India, attended the Kagyu Mönlam in Bodhgaya led by **H.H. Karmapa**. After that, she attended **Mingyur Rinpoche's Tergar Institute** and became his "prepositional adviser." When he was unsure of himself, he would look at her and she would say "angry with him, devotion to her, jealous of them." She translated for his khenpo, Khenpo Kunga, for the daily meditation class.



Jessie Litven with Karma Senge Rinpoche and his son in Kyere, Tibet.

Larry was one of several faculty for a translation workshop in Bhutan, which ended up offering opportunities for a number of helpful and auspicious encounters, including a surprising request to lead the chanting of the **Heart Sutra** as we do in our centers, which was met with great enthusiasm. (For a full report, see our website.) He taught a vajrayana weekthun at the Seattle Shambhala Center in the spring, a program for sadhakas in Halifax, and the Chakrasamvara training at Denma Ling this fall, along with Dorje Loppön Lodrö Dorje, Scott, Mark, and Walker.

Mark continues to lead fire offerings at Dorje Denma Ling—both the full four karmas and shorter weekend ones, focusing on one karma. He will teach a Vajrayogini practice course in the fall in Halifax.

Scott led a mahamudra retreat in the Pacific Northwest last winter and taught at Nitartha Institute in July. He also taught in the fall at a program by the Sakyong on meditation, as well as continuing his Tibetan class in Halifax.



H.H. Karmapa with Jessie Litven and other sangha members in Dharamsala.

Meeting the Seventeenth Karmapa

While in Dharamsala, I ran into my best friend from Halifax, Zoe Nudell. She informed me that a small group of Dzongsar and Trungpa Rinpoches' students would be having an audience with H.H. Karmapa that weekend. Of course, I found a way to attend.

On the day, we waited excitedly, discussing what we might want to ask. Then we were in. Bonnie Rabin asked His Holiness quite straightforwardly if he might give us the *lung* for the "Mahamudra Aspiration" by the third Karmapa. He looked at us for a moment and then said, "Okay, well, it might take my monk a few moments to go find it, so sit down, get comfortable, and you can ask any other questions while we wait."

In the next minutes, each savoured preciously, we asked our various requests while soaking in the Karmapa's close-range sunshine. One of the requests was for the refuge vow, which he gave without any ceremony, as a kind of blessing. When the monk returned with the text, the Karmapa gave us the *lung*. (The Mahamudra Aspiration is available in English on our website.) KARMAPA KHYEN-NO!

We are delighted to announce that **Walker Blaine** has now joined the Translation Committee in Halifax on a volunteer basis. A student at Naropa University (1984-86), he became hooked by the Vidyadhara at a fund-raising auction. He paid \$50 for the Vidyadhara's spontaneous definition of Naropa: "sick corpse person." Years later Walker came to understand this as a Tibetan pun on the Sanskrit name. In Tibetan, *na* means "sick," *ro* means "corpse," and *pa* makes it a person. After spending most of the next fifteen years at Karmê Chöling and Shambhala Mountain Center, Walker has divided his time between retreat, studying Tibetan, and pilgrimage to sacred places under the instruction of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche.

We are also very happy to point you toward **Andrew Speraw** at nalandatranslation@gmail.com, a second-generation Shambhalian who has begun to handle our distribution correspondence and fulfillment. Andrew has returned to Halifax and is enrolled in a college program and helping with our publishing activities.



Choosing the Right Word: Right or *Rang*?

IN THE HISTORY of the translation of Tibetan into English, translators have spent much time puzzling over how to translate the term *rang* (the vowel sound is pronounced the same as in the seed syllable AH). No sooner has one translation been settled upon than another context presents itself where the same translation choice seems misleading. *Rang* is a perfect example of the flexibility of the Tibetan language and of the need, when translating the dharma, to investigate the intended meaning of a text and not just translate the words alone.



At first glance, *rang* seems like no big deal—more of a prefix than an actual word, appearing in conjunction with a verb or noun and often translated as “self.” The term *rang-jung* (rang byung) is a good example: *jung* means “to arise” or “to occur.” What sounds more commonplace and simple—to those of us used to reading Tibetan Buddhist materials—than the words “self-arising”?

But when you take a closer look, often something that is “self-occurring” is merely something that occurs by itself—amounting to nothing more exotic than a different way of saying the word “natural.” Yet in other contexts, *rang-jung* describes an entity that arises by its own power—an entity occurring magically without dependence on causes or conditions. For this interpretation translations like “self-born,” “self-existing,” or “self-arising” have been used. When you think about it, there is a big difference between a “natural rock formation” and a “self-arising rock formation.” For a related discussion, see page 2 of the newsletter.

The term *rang-nang* (rang snang), often translated as “self-appearing,” allows for similar interpretations. *Rang-nang* is often used in the section of a text describing the visualization of deities. Here, *rang-nang* is sometimes taken to mean “appearing to oneself”—a way of saying that the image of the visualized deity is generated by one’s own mind, as opposed to being an externally perceptible visual form. In that way, it “appears to oneself.” For this reason, we’ve sometimes translated *rang-nang* as “one’s own perception,” or even “projections.” Alternatively, the same term in the same context is sometimes explained as referring to the quality of the visualization manifesting spontaneously in the space in front of the practitioner, implying almost the opposite meaning for the source of the image. In this case, “self-appearing” may be a better word choice.

In two other cases, the translation choice for *rang* has played a large role in our understanding of dharma: *rang-rik* (rang rig), often translated as “self-awareness,” and *rang-dröl* (rang grol), often translated as “self-liberated.” In these cases, “self” could be misunderstood. With both of these terms, *rang* indicates that there is not a separate agent performing the action in question: *rang-rik* is a description of mind having an inherent quality of awareness, without there being a need for a second-hand observer for consciousness to take place. In this case, the translation of *rang* as “self” is sometimes misconstrued as a dualistic description of one’s being conventionally aware of oneself and one’s behavior, more like the term “mindfulness.” For this reason, many prefer translations like “innate awareness,” “reflexive awareness,” or “natural awareness,” instead of “self-awareness.”

It is important to work to “choose the right word” when translating. When studying, it is tempting to become quite critical and attempt to categorize each translation of *rang* we encounter as right or wrong. However, just having an awareness that multiple possibilities exist is much more important than settling on one particular translation.

Upcoming Translation Conferences

This fall, Light of Berotsana is hosting a weekend “Conference of Translators” in Boulder, Colorado. Many of our friends and colleagues will be in attendance, and we look forward to a very full schedule. Next spring, we will participate in the Khyentse Foundation translation conference entitled “Translating the Words of the Buddha,” taking place for a week in Bir, India. Larry and NTC-member Derek Kolleeny have been involved in the planning of this latter event.



We need your help. Please consider our appeal and donate what you can. All contributions are tax deductible. Please also send us your ideas and suggestions for what Buddhist and Shambhala dharma you would like to see in English—we invite both suggestions and critique. Please send us your contributions, inspirations, and inquiries using the enclosed envelope and donation card. And please keep the translation as a gift from us.

TO ACCOMPLISH our core tasks, the Committee currently employs Larry Mermelstein, Mark Nowakowski, Tingdzin Ötro, Scott Wellenbach, and Patricia Kirigin 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 \$79,000 from the many sangha members who make an annual translation contribution (“tantra dues”). 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. Our endowment plays a key role in providing a stable financial base for the translation committee. 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 2008-2009

Income from:		Expense from:	
DONATIONS	\$90,000	SALARIES	\$256,000
PUBLICATIONS	110,000	ADMINISTRATION	32,000
ENDOWMENT	40,000		\$288,000
RENT	16,000		
	\$256,000		

WHO WE ARE

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

- creating fresh and authentic translations of Tibetan practice texts & 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
- helping with the presentation of Buddhist and Shambhala ceremonies and practices

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 vajrayana or Shambhala practice, we use the name Vajravairochana Translation Committee.

OUR TRANSLATIONS ARE AVAILABLE from 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@gmx.de

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Legacy for the future

The Translation Committee is at a critical juncture in its history. All of our senior translators are in their fifties, or beyond. Since it takes the better part of a decade to train a translator, we must accelerate the process of replacing ourselves and educating a new generation of translators. This work has indeed begun with both Patricia Kirigin and Jessie Litven making significant contributions. But the addition of two new translators does not replace the entire committee. We are eager to work with more aspiring Tibetan-language students so we can pass on what we have understood from the Vidyadhara Trungpa Rinpoche’s instructions on 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 are 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 to be an expression of your continuing generosity.

NALANDA TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

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