



NĀLANDĀ TRANSLATION COMMITTEE • 2009-2010

# Shambhala Termas and the Four Dignities

AS SAKYONG MIPHAM RINPOCHE turns our community's focus toward the Shambhala termas revealed by his father, Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (also known in the Shambhala context as the Dorje Dradül of Mukpo), we thought it might be helpful to amplify a little of this history and explore in more depth some of the key terms used in the Shambhala teachings.

John Rockwell compiled a wonderful historical summary entitled, "Shambhala Terma and Transmissions," published in our *Werma Sadhana Manual*. Here are a few key excerpts from that.

In a period of five years, from 1976 to 1981, while residing in various places in North America, the Dorje Dradül received seven terma texts, which he bestowed on his students who were predominantly Westerners.

We students of the Dorje Dradül must realize that we are also holders of this body of teachings. The Dorje Dradül received these teachings for our benefit at this particular time in history. This is the nature of terma teachings. "Terma" is a Tibetan word meaning "treasure" and refers to a special way in which a teaching is revealed and communicated. At times, a teaching may be concealed, like a treasure, until the proper audience is ready to receive it at the right time. Some teachings are physically hidden as texts or a coded message in the earth, rocks, lakes, trees, even space. Other teachings are buried, so to speak, within the wisdom mind of the teacher, and are revealed to that teacher when the situation is ripe. This type of terma teachings is called "mind terma." (Tib: gong ter)

The Dorje Dradül always said that he was not the author of the Shambhala teachings, but that he received them as mind terma from the Rigden Kings of Shambhala or from Gesar of Ling. At one point, he said: "This is not regarded as something I composed; I couldn't compose such a text. I have received, we have received, this particular material out of the genuine mind of sadness and thinking about the setting sun problems."

When the Dorje Dradül said that he received these texts from the Rigdens, from Shiwa Ökar, or from Gesar, we should be clear that he is not talking about someone "out there." He continually emphasized the nontheistic basis of our tradition, at the same time pointing to the reality of contacting the energies of our world directly beyond our conceptual mind.

The Vidyadhara began discovering termas at a very young age, around six to eight years old. He also wrote voluminously, and in mid-1959, at age 19, he "began to work on an allegory about the kingdom of Shambhala and its ruler who will liberate mankind at the end of the Dark Age" (*Born in Tibet*, pp. 179-180). John elaborates on this, beginning with a story from Lady Könchok Paldrön, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's mother:

During their escape, the Dorje Dradül went on retreat for about a month. During that retreat, he talked over and over again to Lady Könchok about this white youth with a turquoise topknot who had appeared to him and given him a command prophecy. Based on that connection with this white youth, he had written two thick volumes on Shambhala, its history and teachings. ... *The Golden Dot* had the same basic imagery and approach as the text that he wrote in Tibet. The original text in Tibet had a lot of songs in it, like the songs in the Gesar epic, and she and the Dorje Dradül sang them together while they were on retreat....

In his "Farewell Address" at the first Kalapa Assembly in 1978, the Dorje Dradül described his own thoughts at that time: "The minute the Communist troops began to march through our property in the Surmang Monastery, I thought that a greater society of buddhadharma could be created, that a greater vision could be executed properly. Since then, and continuously, my Shambhala vision has never diminished."



Above: Dorje Dradül performing the stroke of Ashe at the 1978 Seminary. Photo by Liza Matthews. Calligraphies of the four dignities: from left to right: tiger [tak], lion [seng], garuda [khyung], dragon [druk], by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Used with permission of Diana J. Mukpo.

The 1976 Seminary was a landmark event in many ways: the Vidyadhara received the transmission of the stroke of Ashe and he discovered the root terma text of *The Golden Sun of the Great East*, giving birth to the Shambhala teachings in the West.

The Nalanda Translation Committee's role has been to translate the Shambhala texts, as well as to provide some commentary based on what we learned in the process. The Committee was there in force at the 1976 Seminary, primarily to translate the Vajrayogini sadhana in preparation for the first Vajrayogini abhisheka a few months later. Lama Ugyen Shenpen, Robin Kornman, and Larry Mermelstein, en route from Karme Chöling to Rocky Mountain Dharma Center (now Shambhala Mountain Center), were the first group of translators to arrive at the Seminary. They got there just after the first part of the Shambhala terma had been translated by Rinpoche, working with David Rome, his personal secretary. As this trio emerged from Larry's car in the parking lot of the King's Gate Hotel in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, a tapping was heard from a window upstairs. It was Rinpoche beckoning them up to his suite. Excited, they hurried to find his rooms, at which point they were treated to a reading of "Tung Shi," a poem and commentary on Ashe, written a few days earlier, as well as the first section of the "root text," as Rinpoche often called it. He demonstrated the stroke of Ashe, and the translators looked at each other as if they had just landed in a new world, exciting yet very mysterious and marvelous.

The Translation Committee had taken birth over the previous year or more, but it was not until this Seminary that a sizable group of us came together to work with both Lama Ugyen and the Vidyadhara. A second group of us from Boulder arrived a week or two later, and thus began an intensive translation effort, working long hours each day on the Vajrayogini texts with Lama Ugyen and then reviewing our draft with the Vidyadhara in meetings that typically went for three to eight hours at a stretch. From then on, Seminary became our annual translation intensive, with at least three or four of us always in attendance, working most days with Lama Ugyen and at least a few days a week with the Vidyadhara.

During the 1978 Seminary, we revised the Dorje Dradül's original translation of the root Shambhala terma text, as well as completed our work on *The Letter of the Black Ashe*, which had been received just before Seminary. David Rome had been the scribe for the Dorje Dradül's initial translations of these works. David also worked with us closely, serving as the overall editor of our translations of the main Shambhala termas.

In his "Farewell Address" at the first Kalapa Assembly, the Dorje Dradül looked back to this time and said:

It has been a long time since the first root text, the text of *The Golden Sun of the Great East*, was written. That was the first starting point of my revelation in some sense.... I have tried to restrain myself because I felt that if I spoke too early it might not be understood; and if I spoke too late it might have become out of date and not have any effect. So I waited for the right occasion to break this particular ice and tell you the truth of Shambhala, which is my heart blood, the very essence of myself.

## The Four Dignities of Shambhala

From the beginning of the proclamation of the Shambhala teachings, the Dorje Dradül taught us the four dignities—four aspects of an enlightened warrior. In 1976, about two years before we saw these terms in a Tibetan text (*The Letter of the Black Ashe*), the Dorje Dradül used the words "meek, perky, outrageous, and inscrutable," as well as "Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon dignity" to describe the warrior's manifestation. Meek, perky, outrageous, and inscrutable became very important terms, and the Dorje Dradül gave many teachings about them, all in

English. And so the first time we encountered them in Tibetan, working with the Dorje Dradül to revise his initial spontaneous translation of the *Black Ashe* text, we were especially intrigued finally to see them in "the original," or so we thought. But when we

started to look closely at the Tibetan, our literal understanding of the Tibetan terms did not seem to correlate well with his English commentary.

Larry remembers asking him, "Do these terms really originate in Tibetan, or are they really from English?" He smiled, knowing full well what we were thinking: that these terms were originally in English, and that the Dorje Dradül was translating them into Tibetan. However, as the text included these terms in Tibetan, we naturally used the already well-known English translations of these that the Dorje Dradül had taught extensively.

Which language is the original for the four dignities has remained an intriguing puzzle for us as translators. As in the case of *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, is the translation process itself (especially when done with the tertön) a continuation of revealing the terma? We think so. And within the context of the Shambhala teachings, the English words "meek, perky, outrageous, and inscrutable" have special meanings that are not inherent in their usual meanings.

Is it possible that these mean more in Tibetan than we think? Recently, we explored this with Changling Rinpoche, to find out whether our key Shambhala terms might also have special meaning in Tibetan. Could they be interpreted in the way the Dorje Dradül did in his English presentations? As we suspected, the Dorje Dradül's translation and teachings of these are unique and bring forth a spiritual side not usually present in the ordinary usage of these words in Tibetan.

When we presented the four dignities in Tibetan to Changling Rinpoche, he answered, "Oh yes, these are four of the qualities of the *pawo*, the warrior." He told us how these were not used much within Buddhist practice, but are used more as a means to educate children in how to administrate and rule in the future, especially if they belong to a noble family of wealth and power.

He suggested that we might study Mipham Rinpoche's *The Ornament of the Sakyong: The Treatise on the Way of the King* to learn more about the traditional qualities these words evoke. He also noted that the Vidyadhara linking these four qualities of a warrior to the four animals—tiger, lion, garuda, and

dragon—was unique, as these are usually connected to the elements. Kate Abato recounts that after the Dorje Dradul received the stroke of Ashe and the root text of Shambhala, the master thangka painter, Sherapalden Beru, came to the 1976 Seminary. In consultation with the Dorje Dradul he spent three weeks creating the original line drawings of the tiger, lion, garuda, and dragon. All this was before any of us had ever heard the Tibetan or English words for the four dignities.

The literal and traditional meanings of the “four dignities” in Tibetan are pretty basic. Meek (Tib. chok-

she; chog shes) in Tibetan literally means “to know enough, to know what is enough,” and so usually means “contentment.” Changling Rinpoche added, “The king has to have a *chok-she* quality. If not, he’ll burn himself. If he does not have *chok-she*, there will be revolution. It means that the king should not tax people excessively.” For perky, the Tibetan, *raptu nowa* (rab tu rno ba), simply means “very sharp” or “smart.” The Tibetan for outrageous is *po-tšö* (pho tshod), which literally means, “the measure of the male.” The Dorje Dradul noted that it can mean “macho.” Changling Rinpoche added that it can also mean the ability to recognize the personality of other people accurately. As

for inscrutable, in the Tibetan word *chang-drung* (spyang grung), *chang* means “cunning” and is also used for “wolf,” *drung* is “clever, intelligent, bright.” So this is someone who is cunning and clever, very smart.

As we can see, the Dorje Dradul’s discovery, translation, and presentation of the four dignities—the four qualities of the awakened warrior—is unique and timely for the current state of our world. By bringing the qualities of a worldly leader onto the spiritual path, he has brought the temporal into the spiritual, and the spiritual into the temporal.



Conference of Translators in Boulder. Photo by Marv Ross.



“Translating the Words of the Buddha,” in Bir. Photo by David Kittelstrom.

## Conference of Translators

LAST FALL, **Light of Berotsana** hosted the “**Conference of Translators**.” For the first time formally, and decades overdue, 150 translators of Tibetan Buddhism from all over the world, representing Kagyü, Geluk, Sakya, and Nyingma traditions, came together at the Boulder Shambhala Center to discuss issues concerning Tibetan-to-English translation. Among them were NTC members from Halifax—Larry, Mark, and Jessie—as well as NTC members Ann Helm, Derek Kolleeny, Jules Levinson, Phil Stanley, Clarke Warren, and Gerry Wiener.

For many, it was an extraordinary chance to reconnect both socially and productively with dear friends from the past. For some it was a swift welcome into the bigger picture of translation, especially since most Tibetan translators work individually without the support of a larger network. We had the very auspicious opportunity to meet special guests such as **Zenkar Rinpoche, Tulku Thondup, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Ringu Tulku, Khenpo Tsering, and Lama Chönam**, as well as pioneers **Jeffery Hopkins** and **Alexander Berzin**, who either gave prepared talks or simply shared their insights in the context of roundtable discussions and informal lunches. Aspiring translators, mostly from Naropa University, were also invited to listen in. Though it was designed around specific topics—ranging from balancing precision with literary values to deliberations on key Tibetan terms to the latest tech developments in Tibetan digital libraries—overall the conference served as

an opportunity to network about the future vision of translation and the formation of a translators’ guild. More information and videos can be found at [www.berotsana.org/conference](http://www.berotsana.org/conference).

## Translating the Words of the Buddha

A HISTORIC CONFERENCE, organized and hosted by Dzong-sar Khyentse Rinpoche and the Khyentse Foundation, and chaired by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, was convened at Deer Park Institute in Bir, India, this March. The conference featured many of the rinpoches and lamas who have been spearheading the efforts—as translators themselves and as sources of knowledge for translators—to transplant the dharma into English and Western culture. There were teachers and translators representing all four of the major Tibetan lineages, including **Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche, Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche, Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, Doboomb Tulku Rinpoche, and Khenpo Kalsang Gyaltzen**. The Nalanda Translation Committee was well represented at the Bir conference, with Derek Kolleeny, Jules Levinson, and Phil Stanley joining Halifax members Larry Mermelstein and Scott Wellenbach. The Vidyadhara’s emphasis on group work and use of Sanskrit were interesting counterpoints to what has become the usual way most translators work these days. The vision of the conference could not have been larger: to translate and make accessible the entire Buddhist literary heritage. More practically, the twenty-five year goal is to translate into English the Kanjur (words of the Buddha) and its associated commentaries from both India and Tibet. The five-year goal is to set in place the structures that will allow us to accomplish the longer-range goals and to make significant progress in translating representative texts in all areas.

Where the vision is vast, earth must meet heaven. One important focus of this conference was the translation of the Kanjur.

The issues involved in this work are daunting: multiple editions of the Tibetan texts need to be taken into account, often with significantly different readings due to over-eager or politically and religiously motivated editors. Work on tracing the historical lines of these various editions and creating critical editions has just begun. As well, within the Kanjur, the translation of the sutras entails profound issues of interpretation. Unlike the Chinese and Theravadin traditions, the Tibetan custom was to treat the sutras as objects of veneration and worship, but not to study them. They were ritually chanted, but were not to be found, other than certain famously quoted passages, in the Tibetan study curriculums. Consequently, as was frankly acknowledged by the learned Tibetan masters at Bir, it is the rare Tibetan who would feel confident in their understanding of these texts and could serve as resources for translators.

In translating the Kanjur into English, the Western world is endeavoring to do more than translate and transmit the dharma; it will be redressing a shortcoming in the Tibetan tradition. These sutras are vast in scope and involve imagery, ritualistic repetition, and literary strategies that confound understanding. To comprehend not just the words but the sense, it would seem that a different understanding of imagination and dharma will be called for on the part of the teachers of these texts, the translators, and the students. An ambitious task? Certainly. As daunting as it is exciting, this project will demand the resources, in every way, of all of us who care for our Buddhist heritage. For further information on the conference and the forming Buddhist Literary Heritage Project go to [www.khyentsefoundation.org](http://www.khyentsefoundation.org), and follow the links in their news archive.

## The All-Clear Jewel Mirror: The Cleansing Offering of the Luminous Werma

THE TIBETAN LHASANG CEREMONY is a means to dispel obstacles and increase good qualities in ourselves and the environment. Introduced to it by the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, we continue this tradition throughout Shambhala. This year we published *The Lhasang Ceremony* in an elegant format, as well as a handy pocket-sized edition, for the first time. This new edition includes all six lhasang chants that we’ve translated:



three familiar ones, all by Ju Mipham, as well as two additional chants by Mipham never published before, plus a very special lhasang text written by the Vidyadhara for the Investiture of the Sawang in 1979. We translated all these with the Vidyadhara in 1979. An explanatory introduction and complete practice instructions are included. These texts can be found and ordered at [www.shambhala.org/ntc/publications](http://www.shambhala.org/ntc/publications).

We include one of these never-before-published lhasangs, a terma text from Mipham Rinpoche, for your enjoyment.

HUM HRIH

From space, the wisdom body of self-born insight,  
In the castle of werma, illuminating all phenomena,  
Is the Lord King Döndrup Norbu,  
The werma White Light A, along with his retinue.  
Just like a mother longing for her only child,  
Quickly approach this place with a loving mind  
And show me the wondrous signs and real marks.

The samaya substances of the outer, inner, and secret offerings,  
Which are real or imagined by mind, fill the entire space.  
The clouds of jnana-amrita and mahasukha are of equal taste.  
Joyfully accept these and rouse miraculous power.  
Kindle the bliss-warmth in the realm of nadi, prana, and insight.  
Show me the essential vision of unerring auspicious coincidence.  
Open the miraculous gate, illuminating all phenomena.  
Open the single eye of wisdom  
And remove the veils that obscure the spotless penetrating space.  
The power, ability, and strength of accomplishing great benefit  
for the teachings and beings—  
Please promote this unobstructedly, fulfilling mind’s desire.

You are the warrior Manjushri, the wisdom-illusion dance,  
The great warrior who conquers the enemy troops of Mara.  
With the mudras of bow, arrow, and sword of prajna,  
You quell the warfare of klesha-ignorance.  
King of the luminous werma with your retinue,  
From within equanimity, your self-existing power  
of kindness  
Approaches in a web of miracles of blazing light,  
sharp and brilliant.  
Please enter into my longing heart.  
Please accomplish the two benefits, fulfilling mind’s  
desire.  
The time has come to fulfill your vow: SAMAYA

*Thus, with this offering, expand beyond the limits of direction your power of higher perception, which sees the nature of all apparent phenomena without confusion. On the tenth day of the sixth month of the Wood Monkey year, Werma Seru Öden Karpo [Mipham] wrote this down at the good tent Tashi Rangnang Chi-me Ö-kyi Ding Gur [Auspicious Self-Appearance Deathless Light Tent]. May it be auspicious. SARVA-MANGALAM*

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee under the direction of Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in June 1979.

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# WHAT WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON

FOR MUCH OF this year we have been focused on preparing a number of Gesar liturgies and sadhanas for the upcoming **Wrathful Gesar abhisheka** and teachings in November with **Namkha Drimed Rinpoche** in Halifax. We reviewed our translations via Skype video conference with **Khenpo Tsering Gyurme**, who has been living in Boulder all year. As always, Khenpo was extremely helpful, and our video sessions were often lively and fun. More information on these texts will be included in our next newsletter.



Larry, Mark, and Scott (on Skype) meet with Khenpo Tsering in Boulder. Right: Khenpo Tsering via Skype.



During his visit to Halifax last November, we had the good fortune to meet with **Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche** on a peaceful Gesar **Dorje Tsegyal sadhana** by Mipham Rinpoche. For our remaining questions he pointed us in the direction of Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche in India. A slide show of the meeting by Marvin Moore, with a short audio morsel, can be seen and heard on the NTC page of The Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche website: [www.chronicleproject.com/ntc\\_2.html](http://www.chronicleproject.com/ntc_2.html).



Following the “**Translating the Words of the Buddha**” conference held in Bir in March, Larry and Scott traveled by bus with the rest of the conference group to see the Dalai Lama in Dharmasala. While there, they ran into Jessie Litven and she traveled back with them by bus to Bir. After arriv-



Tashi, Jessie, Larry, and Scott in Deer Park, Bir.

ing in Bir in the evening, they learned that **Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche** could meet with them that evening. They ran to his house—at the pace set by aging translators, it took twenty minutes—and ended up having a two-hour meeting with him on the Dorje Tsegyal sadhana, which is one of the Gesar texts the Sakyong requested us to translate. He knew the answers to every question and was very definitive.



Marvin Moore

In May, we were able to continue our review of the Gesar material with **Khenpo Gawang** during his teaching visit to Halifax. Every time we see him, Khenpo Gawang's English skills have improved, and we look forward to seeking out his knowledgeable advice, delivered with his signature gentle confidence and humor.

In Halifax, we were able to meet with Namkha Drimed Rinpoche to ask some of the more difficult questions on the Gesar material while he was here in August, as well as meet with his son **Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche** during his visit in September.



The Committee meets with Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. Photo by Marvin Moore.

In preparation for **Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's** first Vajrakilaya abhisheka in October, we have been preparing a translation of the empowerment text so that it can be given in both Tibetan and English. We were able to review this text with Khenpo Tsering and Changling Rinpoche. Patricia particularly enjoyed this as a section of it was the first selection she ever translated when she began to work with us seven years ago. We will also publish a new edition of the **Vajrakilaya Practice Manual** in time for the abhisheka.

In anticipation of this summer's visit with **Changling Rinpoche**, we published a revised edition of **Naturally Liberating Whatever You Meet**, his teachings from last spring on Khenpo Gangshar's text of that title, which includes an additional talk on vajrayana practice. In Halifax, we had great fun being quizzed by Changling Rinpoche on various dharma points—he asked us just about as many questions as we asked him—and newer members enjoyed hearing Scott, Larry, and Mark's explanations of the Vidyadhara's reasons for various translation terms, such as *rikpa* (the Vidyadhara preferred “insight” to “awareness”) and *dikpa* (the Vidyadhara thought “evil deeds” had a good level of weightiness, while “sin” was too religiously loaded, and he originally liked “neurotic crimes”). Changling Rinpoche solicited these excitedly, since his interest in the nuances of English is extraordinary. Most of the Committee continued with him on his tour to Dorje Denma Ling to have some extra translation and study time with him. We look forward to his return next year.

At the end of 2008, we completed our translation of the main **longevity supplication for Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche**, composed by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. This was published in an elegant two-color edition to match the *Daily Chant Book*, where it will eventually be included, and a simpler version is available for downloading from our website. We also finished our work on “The Melody That Accomplishes Deathlessness” by Mipham, which is a general longevity supplication for all teachers, now available in print and online.

For the first time since the original 1976 typescript translation, we reprinted **The Sun of Wisdom**, the guru-yoga sadhana and feast offering, written by the Vidyadhara for his root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen. The booklet includes practice instructions, chöpon procedures, and new tormas drawings by Tom Crow. This fall, this will be featured on the NTC page of the Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, along with more of his teachings concerning his root guru at [www.chronicleproject.com](http://www.chronicleproject.com).

We made a few important revisions to the instructions for using the Vidyadhara's **Sadhana of Mahamudra** as a funeral liturgy, and these are published in a new edition of our literal translation of that text, with amendments found on our website. We published a revised edition of Mingyur Rinpoche's **Three Words That Strike the Vital Point**. For future Söpa Chöling retreats and occasional other requests, we revised our **Könchok Chidü Practice Manual**, which includes practice commentaries written by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. The revised manual includes tormas and music illustrations for the first time.

We made overall editorial suggestions and checked the Tibetan and Sanskrit for the forthcoming first volume (hinayana) of the “Root Texts Project,” a compilation of the **Vidyadhara's teachings** from 13 three-yana seminaries, edited by Judith Lief, entitled **Hinayana: The Path of Self-Reliance**. We are also translating the Vidyadhara's notecards for his talks at the Seminaries, which will be helpful to the editors and readers of the future mahayana and vajrayana volumes; and will also be included in a Seminary Transcripts DVD.

## Teaching and Other Activities

**Larry** participated in both translation conferences and led a ten-day Chakrasamvara retreat at Dojre Denma Ling last winter.

**Scott** led a mahamudra retreat over the Christmas holidays at the Shambhala Centre in Halifax (another is scheduled for this coming December). He guides the translation efforts of an ongoing Tibetan class in Halifax; this past year the class translated some pieces from the Vidyadhara's collected works and also worked

on sections from a “Werma Nyingtik” terma, with Gesar as the main yidam, which was discovered by **Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche** at Surmang when he was there with the Vidyadhara long ago. In the spring, he taught a class in Halifax on valid cognition from Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's Lorik text, and over the summer he taught *Lorik, Uttarantra*, and Tibetan at Nitartha Institute.

**Mark** taught a Vajrayogini course for new sadhakas here in Halifax, and continues to lead fire offerings at Dorje Denma Ling, particularly weekend ones focusing on enriching or magnetizing.

**Walker** led a one-week Shambhala ngöndro program at Dechen Chöling this August. He also released a second CD of dharma-inspired songs entitled *Body of Light* last fall (available at [www.highlandeyes.com](http://www.highlandeyes.com)).

## Rinchen Terdzö



Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche at the Rinchen Terdzö. Photo by Christoph Schoenherr

From early December 2008 through mid-March 2009, members **Walker** Blaine and **Patricia** Kirigin attended the three-month series of empowerment rituals known as the Rinchen Terdzö, or “Precious Treasury of Termas” held at Rigön Thubten Mindröling Monastery in Orissa, India. This series of roughly nine hundred separate empowerments was collected and compiled in the 19th century by **Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye** over thirty-three years, with the aim of preserving each terma's lineage for future generations. His student, the 15th Karmapa, Khakhyab Dorje, later spent eight years creating a comprehensive order and outline for the texts, which itself comprised 2,500 pages in four volumes. The empowerments were bestowed by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, who received the transmission directly from the Vidyadhara before he left Tibet. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche was the principle recipient and was empowered to hold and continue the transmission lineage at the conclusion of the event. At the request of the Sakyong, Walker maintained a daily blog chronicling the event, while Patricia provided the Sakyong and Western students with a daily English translation of the titles of the empowerments being given. Their work can be seen at [www.rincenterdzö.org](http://www.rincenterdzö.org).

## Report from India

In the fall of 2008, **Jessie** Litven left Halifax for Boulder to finish her work on Lady Könchok Paldrön's biography, also attending the “Conference of Translators.” Traveling east, she translated and taught beginner's Tibetan at Mingyur Rinpoche's Tergar Institute in Bodhgaya, India. Though she had briefly interpreted for Mingyur Rinpoche's Khenpo Kunga last year, this was her first time translating on a daily basis in front of a



larger audience. As **Mingyur Rinpoche** is very keen on bringing his own khenpos up to speed with the ways of West, he also requested that his own teachings given in English, both mahayana and vajrayana, be translated into Tibetan over short-wave radio. This led to many interesting discoveries in both languages as well as many humorous moments (How do you say, “You rock!” in Tibetan?). Jesse also made her formal teaching debut, leading a group of eager new students through the basics of the Tibetan language. There is a simple website created for the materials of this class for participants or anyone interested in Tibetan language at [www.beezwings.org/tibetanclass](http://www.beezwings.org/tibetanclass). She continues to work on Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's Gesar terma, and returned to Halifax in September.

# Choosing the Right Word:

## A Phenomenal Conversation

In last year's newsletter, we offered a discussion we had with Changling Rinpoche that focused on the Tibetan terms "rangshin" and "tröpa." One year later,

here is our discussion with Rinpoche concerning the term "nang-si" (Tib. snang srid), which we usually translate as "phenomenal world." Rinpoche constantly challenges us to examine why we pick particular words in translation and to consider how the language of our translations will be understood by the general Western reader. Sometimes, this requires unpacking the philosophical implications (at times rather esoteric) of the terms we use. The following exchange took place at a meeting in Halifax, as we were beginning to look at the first stanza of "The Melody That Accomplishes Deathlessness," which is a general longevity supplication, soon to be introduced throughout the sangha as a daily chant for the longevity of all our teachers and lineage holders. In addition to Changling Rinpoche (CR), members at the meeting included Patricia Kirigin (PK), Scott Wellenbach (SW), Mark Nowakowski (MN), Dorje Loppön Lodrö Dorje (LD), Larry Mermelstein (LM), and Tingdzin Ötro (TO).

HRIH

*In the mandala of deities, the complete purity of the phenomenal world,*

*You ripen and free our three gates into vajra nature. Sovereigns of all the families, teachers of the tantras, Vajra monarchs, may you ever remain.*

CR: First, I have a question for you. In the first line, what word did you use for nang-si?

PK: "The phenomenal world."

CR: Why?

PK: Because nang means "appearing," we might say "appearing existence" or "apparent existence." Traditionally we have said "phenomenal world." In English, that means everything that is perceivable.

SW: Rinpoche, we have received two different interpretations. In one interpretation, nang-si altogether means "phenomenal world" or "apparent existence." In the other, nangwa (snang ba) and sipa (srid pa) are like nö (snod) and chü (bcud), the environment and its inhabitants. But we're not always sure which one to use, so we thought that "phenomenal world" might be a little more general here.

MN: Trungpa Rinpoche used "phenomenal world." For example, with him we sometimes translated nang-si silnön (snang srid zil gnon), one of Padmasambhava's manifestations, as "subjugator of the phenomenal world." Some translators use "all that appears and exists" for nang-si, but we usually don't.

LD: Now that you've raised the question, it is a strange phrase. It's very abstract.

LM: Rinpoche is very good at raising such questions.

CR: What does "phenomenal world" mean in English?

LM: It means anything in the world that can be perceived by the senses. In more ordinary English, we would just say "the world," which is more direct and simple.

PK: I think people usually use it in connection with having an experience of the five senses.

SW: The word "phenomenon" comes from the Greek verb "to appear" (phainesthai). It refers to how something appears, as opposed to what it actually is.

LD: It is a philosophical term.

CR: In Tibetan, nang-si is short for nang shing sipa (snang zhing srid pa).

LM: "Appearing and existing."

LD: In the Vajrakilaya sadhana, we translated sipa as "cosmic."

SW: Yes. That came from the Vidyadhara.

MN: In *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, in the line "Padma Thötrenge, the lama whose power extends over all apparent phenomena," the Vidyadhara translated nang-si as "all apparent phenomena and the whole of existence."

TO: Would a mirage, such as water that you see in the desert, be a nang-si? It appears, but it does not exist.

CR: From the perspective of the people who see the mirage, or of those who do not see it?

LM: The people who see the mirage are seeing something.

CR: There are two types of kündzop ("relative truth"): correct kündzop and mistaken kündzop. There are two different explanations of mistaken kündzop...

(This article is continued at [www.shambhala.org/ntc/offerings](http://www.shambhala.org/ntc/offerings).)



Photo by Indranila Nowakowski

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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 \$76,000 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 2009-2010

Income from:		Expense from:	
DONATIONS	\$90,000	SALARIES	\$256,000
PUBLICATIONS	110,000	ADMINISTRATION	26,000
ENDOWMENT	30,000		<b>\$282,000</b>
RENT	16,000		
	<b>\$246,000</b>		

### 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:

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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.

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