

The Fundamental Principles of the Dzogchen Community

1. The Nature of the Dzogchen Community

The Dzogchen Community is a broad based association of people brought together by a common interest in the teaching of Dzogchen Ati, who follow it under the guidance of a master possessing practice, each according to his own capacity - the Tantras, the Lungs and the Upadeshas; and further the circumstances necessary for these activities.

As clarified in the statutes of the Community, one can become an effective member after following the teaching for 3 years, but obviously, all who are interested in the teaching and who wish to collaborate with those who maintain them, or who in fact are doing so, automatically belong to the Dzogchen Community. On the other hand, those who are in the Community only in a spirit of friendship, or to pass time in distraction, and who in reality have no interest at all in the teachings or in those who maintain them, cannot be considered to be practitioners of Dzogchen, even if they have completed the established length of time for belonging to the community, or have already done so long ago.

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

2. The Foundation of the Dzogchen Community

The basic foundation of the Dzogchen Community is made up of a master who possesses knowledge of the Dzogchen Ati and true practitioners in relationship with him. If there is no Master and no practitioners obviously there can be no teaching. Therefore the teaching of Dzogchen Ati should absolutely not be identified with great stretches of land, with building and constructions like temples, with libraries, nor with associations of large numbers of people, nor with any kind of community based on vast capital, nor with work or craft co-ops, or a least not only with these kinds of things. If the Community were to be identified only as an association of people brought together in the interests of work activities, even if it were called the Dzogchen Community, it would have no correspondence with the real meaning, just as the name Buddha can be used by anyone as their personal name. However, if a work or craft co-op has the vital spirit of Dzogchen Ati it could become a branch of the community with an important relationship to it.

3. The Master of the Dzogchen Community

The main inspiration of the Dzogchen Community is the Master who possesses knowledge of Dzogchen Ati and the true practitioners of Dzogchen, from the first level of knowledge up to

realization of the state of possessor of non-dual knowledge (rig-'dzin). They, maintaining, continuing and developing the precious teaching of the mind of Samantabhadra in the appropriate way, should favor the circumstances for the continuation of the spread of the teaching until the end of the world. To realize this goal they have to complete the various stages to realization of knowledge, both ordinary and special as fully described in the text Santi Maha Sangha and its commentary.

4. The Organization of Dzogchen Community

The unique base or root of the Dzogchen Community is the understanding of the primordial state (ati'i go rtogs) in its own real condition and the application of this knowledge in life as the path. It is absolutely not to be identified with any kinds of offices, structures of work or authoritarian organizations. On the contrary, if you possess knowledge of the primordial state you should use whatever elements are necessary according to the concrete circumstances and the time. For example, if someone has to sleep the night on a mountain, he will arrange stones and little branches and anything he happens to find so as not to catch cold from the dampness of the ground, and he will build a fence of stones and branches to shelter him from the wind. In short, he will try to pass the night as best he can in the place and time. Knowing how to act in this way is a sign of behaviour with the presence of awareness. In the same way, since the Community owns land and has programs of work connected with it, organization related to the different activities is necessary, but it is clear that these forms of organization are different from authoritarian ones.

5. The Principle of Organization

With regards to the foundation of the organization of the Dzogchen Community, since all of the conditions of human beings are related to the three doors (body, voice and mind), the main basis of the organization of the Community also has to come into their sphere. If we have a real understanding of our authentic condition, and if this knowledge is really integrated into the activities of our three doors, we will certainly have the complete ability to bring to perfect fulfilment any action whatever that we undertake, whether it is important or not. This is because our life itself goes ahead thanks only to the combined actions and energies of our three doors, and it is only on the basis of these that we succeed in providing for all for the necessities of life. We all have concrete experience of this. Therefore, also in regards to the organization that is effectively necessary, it is easy to see that we need a principle of totality which integrally includes the energies of body, voice and mind. Thus, if three different activities related to economy, to cultures and to work, all of the energies of the different possible types of activities could certainly enter into the sphere of the three main sections (body, voice and mind), and consequently this can be a favourable cause for their success.

6. The Organization of the Gakyil (dga'.'khyil)

The sections and the colours of the Gakyil symbolize the three types of person linked to the three types of activities of the community. The Gakyil turns in an anticlockwise direction from the outside to the inside; and in a clockwise direction from the inside to the outside. This represents, on one hand, the influx of the combined energies of all of the Dzogchen practitioners, and on the other hand, all of the benefits that derive from such energies,

spreading in all directions, bringing happiness to all infinite beings. The first of the three sections, yellow in colour, represents the economic and administrative activities of the Community linked to the body. The red section represents the different kinds of work activities organized by the community, or work co-ops, linked to voice or energy. The blue section represents cultural and educational activities (of the teachings) linked to mind.

7. The Number of People in the Gakyil

As a principle, if possible, to make it so that the representatives of the three existences (body, voice and mind) correspond to each section of the Gakyil, there should be three people in each section, therefore nine altogether. However, according to the conditions, one can have a "medium Gakyil" made up of six people, or a "minor Gakyil" made up of three people.

These people, for the duration of one year, must take on the total responsibility of the Community, and as representatives of its members should take it upon themselves to succeed in going ahead with all of the different planned activities. For specific jobs within each activity, small groups of people can be organized subsidiary to the Gakyil, or taking into account the different desires or different attitudes of the people of the Community- they can choose assistants to further the necessary work.

8. The Duration of the Gakyil

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

- a) First, so that no type of authoritarian organization develops within the Community;
- b) Second, so that all members of the Community who wish to contribute to the Community can have the opportunity to take on some responsibility;
- c) And third, so that those who commit themselves to working for the Community do not have difficulty in their personal activities and time.

9. The Way of Electing a Gakyil

With regard to the way the Gakyil members are elected from the people belonging to the Community, the older members of the Community prepare a list of effective members who wish to be elected, and the Master of the Community, the older members and the members of the Gakyil still in office discuss the choices and take decisions. The final decision in any case rests on the Master. At the time when a new Gakyil is elected members can be chosen who have already taken part in the Gakyils of previous years and who have experience of them, or members of the present Gakyil who have shown themselves to be particularly capable. This is admissible up to a total of three years. At the same time as the Gakyil represented by nine people is elected, the director, the vice-director, and the secretary have to be established, as well as any other necessary posts, though these do not need to be chosen from members of the Gakyil.

10. The Responsibilities of the Gakyil

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

- a) That the activities that are followed are in accordance with the statutes of the Community, and are not activities that are against the law;
- b) That the activities of the different sections should proceed efficiently;
- c) That the relationships with or between members of the Community in all countries make progress and become stronger;
- d) To guarantee that the planned activities of the Gakyil are brought to a conclusion within the time established;
- e) That whatever type of activity is undertaken does not lose the vital spirit of the understanding of Dzogchen.

11. The Gars of the Dzogchen Community

The centres (Gars) of their Dzogchen Community, whether large or small, should not be considered places where members of the community can make earnings, rather it is the members of the community who should sustain the economy of the different centres of the Dzogchen Community. This is because these centres are places belonging to all members of the Community and are indispensable to the needs of those who possess an understanding of Dzogchen. However, that does not mean that all members of the Community should sacrifice for them, offering all of their own time and goods, nor that a person should spend all his time working for the Community and then live in conditions of poverty. Finally, nor does it mean that a few members of the Community should form an organization using the name and image of the Dzogchen Community, to exploit in any way people interested in the Community principally, and other people in some way connected to it, to augment the capital of one of these centres in such a way that a few people of the organization become like bureaucrats in a nice comfortable situation. Rather they must bring concrete and individual benefits to all those belonging to the Dzogchen Community.

The centres of the Dzogchen Community can have the specific name of a “gar”, such as for example Merigar or Tsegylgar etc. From the moment a gar of the Dzogchen Community exists, it must be based on the same principles as all other gakyils in the world. However, the necessity that all gakyils should be based on the same principles should not be interpreted as authoritarianism, and nor does it mean that the gakyil of any specific centre of the Community should be considered as the central Gakyil, and that other gakyils should submit to them or that they should be commanded by them. This is because such a system would be false and authoritarian, and as soon as an authoritarian system exists it is an inevitable consequence that others are subjected and exploited. With regard to the ways of exploitation of someone’s goods, linked to the aspect of the body, is the exploitation of the voice and the freedom of thought of a person, linked to the aspect of mind. If one falls into an authoritarian system on which one person is dominating or exploiting another, even if words and expressions like “uncorrected”, “authentic”, “as it is” are used in regard to the natural state of Dzogchen, is becoming the exact opposite.

The Dzogchen Community should be based on a precise understanding of the authentic condition of the primordial state of Dzogchen. And this so-called understanding of the authentic condition of the primordial state of Dzogchen means that each individual should

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

12. The Gakyils of the Different Countries

In countries or cities where there are many Dzogchen community members, it is necessary that there should be also a centre of the Community, and from the time a country establishes a centre of the community, regardless of whether or not such a centre can have land or a stable location, it is indispensable to have a gakyil. Even though the gakyils are not in relationship of subordination to each other as in authoritarian types of organizations, since they are all based on the same principle of understanding of the primordial state of Dzogchen, all of the gakyils of the Dzogchen Community, without falling into limitations or sectarianism, should try to have a deep and genuine relationship with each other, really based on the fundamental principle, and this is truly the characteristic sign indicating how far practitioners of Dzogchen have integrated their own knowledge into themselves.

13. The Relationship between Gakyils and the Community

The name "Dzogchen Community" refers principally to the gars of the Community and to the gakyils in the different countries. Anyway since "Community" implies a group of people and the group has to be formed starting with single individuals, if the gakyils of the Dzogchen Community, large or small, neglect the conditions of single members of the Community that is absolutely no good.

The members of the Dzogchen Community, based on a relationship of mutual love, organizing different kinds of co-operative activities, and private work collaboration, should try to better and raise their standard of living, this is very important. The community centres and the gakyils, based on the principle of the activities of the three sections, should sustain and help work organizations as much as possible. From the time a person becomes a member of the Community he should get in contact with a member of the gakyil, and should be enrolled as a secondary branch of the gakyil through an identification number. This is because it is really necessary for a Dzogchen Community that the practitioners belonging to it should collaborate together in such a way that each of them can guarantee their own evolution. From the moment there is a need for collaborative work among practitioners it is necessary for them to be in relationship with a gar or a gakyil of the community. If the members do not have relationships amongst themselves, and stay in isolated places without

communicating, it will be very difficult to succeed in realizing these very important objectives.

14. The Way to Organize Work Co-Operatives

To make an example of the concrete way in which people of the Dzogchen Community should live, all of the members who live in a country, even in separate places, should communicate among themselves with regard to their different situations, to their different work and conditions of life, so that everyone in the community can have a precise idea of them. Thus apart from those who have work and good living conditions, those who do not have work, collaborating and making agreements among themselves can organize different types of work co-operatives, asking for financial help from the capital of a centre of the Community if it is really necessary. Developing activities in this way every member belonging to the Community should try to better his own conditions of life. A work co-operative of members of the community should be formed of at least three families, and such a co-operative should be in relationship with a gar or a gakyil of the Dzogchen Community. This is because, if it is not linked to a gar or a gakyil of the community it will be impossible for it to realize its objectives, or the essential meaning of the Dzogchen Community, and there will be no possibility of a relationship with other members of the community, and so it will be difficult to receive collaboration and necessary help on the part of the community. Among the different kinds of co-operatives of groups of people belonging to the community there could be: agricultural co-operatives, publishing houses, crafts, carpentry, translators and writers, artists, etc.

15. The Members of the Dzogchen Community

A person, male or female, who is interested in the Dzogchen teaching and wishes to give birth in oneself to this profound path, after having participated in three retreats of the Community, guided by a qualified Dzogchen master, wishing to enter and take part in the Community, can ask the Gakyil of a Gar or a country for the “general membership” card of the Dzogchen Community, distinguished by a membership number.

Any person who is interested in Dzogchen and who recognizes the Dzogchen methods as a path can obtain the membership card of the Dzogchen Community, with the sign of the Gakyil and the letter A and with an identification number. The membership card with the sign of the Gakyil and the A has no date of expiration, but if the person to whom it has been issued, the state of Dzogchen not having arisen in him or her, turns against the Master, or against the teaching or against his or her spiritual brothers and sisters, showing thereby to have a behaviour of body, voice and mind that absolutely does not correspond to the principle of presence and awareness characteristic of the nature of Dzogchen, and if, continuing to act in this mistaken way, he or she causes any kind of problem, then the Gakyil of the Gar or country that issued this membership card, finding themselves constrained to withdraw it, have full authority to do so, and members of the Community should break off relations with such a person who has broken their samaya and try to make that person understand their errors by him or her self and put an end to them. The withdrawal of a membership card, should absolutely never be motivated by partialities and private egotistical factors.

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

Members of the Community who have participated in at least three retreats under the guidance of a qualified master and who have frequented the Community for three years and have acquired some knowledge of it, and in whom has arisen a true Dzogchen view and behaviour, if they want to become an “active member” of the Community and they make a request to a Gar or Gakyil of a country, they can obtain the membership card of the “active members” of the Dzogchen Community, with an identity number and a sign of a Gakyil inside a triangle, inside of which there is a “unique golden syllable”, the letter which symbolizes the absolute condition. In general, this “active members” card will last at least ten years, but each year it will have to be renewed by the Gar or Gakyil which issued it, marking it appropriately. Without this mark of renewal, the card has effectively the same value as a “general members” card. Those who possess an “active members” card can obtain discounts of twenty-five percent of the established fee when they go to retreats at the Gars of different countries. Besides this, such members can be entrusted with general responsibilities of the Community and are qualified to elect and be elected.

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

One should not think, however, that the fact of distinguishing between belonging and not belonging to the Community means entering into limitations or falling into sectarianism because, if we remain indifferent and do not commit ourselves to obtaining knowledge of the primordial state of Dzogchen, to studying and learning, to evolving our knowledge and practising, and we call this “the authentic condition”, or else, with the pretext of not entering into limitations or not falling into sectarianism, we ruin all that has been gathered until now, we will certainly not derive any benefit whatever from it. Besides, such behaviour clearly shows a total lack of presence and awareness. “Not entering into limitation and not falling into sectarianism” does not mean that it is permissible to do anything you please, but having that profound principle of “Ati” as your basis, as a key, you need to act in such a way that the condition of your three doors manifests in its authentic dimension and that our pure presence of awareness based on this authentic condition, all the activities of our three doors, without being conditioned by false behaviour, should find themselves in the state of the authentic condition as it is. This is the way of fundamental importance to apply in ourselves, the correct view and behaviour of Dzogchen.

16. The Mandala of the Dzogchen Community

This is the diagram which represents all of the Dzogchen Community throughout the world. At the centre of the mandala, inside a thigle of the five colours, there is a letter AH, the “unique golden syllable” which symbolizes the absolute condition. It radiates light. It represents the Rigdzin master of Dzogchen of all the Communities in the world, wherever one lives.

The eight Gakyils in the eight compass directions, each decorated with eight points, represent all the Gars in all of the countries and zones of the world. The fact that there are eight Gakyils decorated with eight points does not mean that the number of Gars should necessarily be eight; there could be more or less than eight Gars of the Community, depending on the different times and circumstances in the countries. Here eight Gars have been drawn to symbolize all the infinite directions, starting with the four cardinal points (N, S, E, and W), and the four intermediate directions (NE, SE, SW, NW).

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

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

Around these, in the different directions there are eight triads of yellow, red and blue thigles. These represent the organizations of private work co-ops within the Community. This means that the energy of these co-ops should be insolubly linked to one of the Gars or Gakyils of the country. Around these in the different directions there are sixteen little five-coloured thigles. They represent the self-perfected state of the Community, conducting this particular kind of life according to this place and time. The way the single practitioners are linked to the Gakyils of the different countries and the way the work co-ops of the people of the Communities are linked to the Gakyils or to the Gars of the different countries are represented by the lines joining them together.

17. The Symbol of the Dzogchen Community

In the centre there is a sky-blue basis, representing the primordial condition of original purity. Inside this dimension is the “unique golden syllable”, symbolising the ultimate condition. It represents the “Rigdzin” - the Knowledge-holder - of the Long-chen O-sal Nying-thig: the Knowledge-holder of the direct, oral and symbolic transmissions; the master of the whole Community, whoever he may be, the vital spirit of the Ati teachings. In the four main and the four intermediate directions are eight Gakyils decorated with eight points.

These represent the Gars which have the following five qualifications. They are places where:

- a) Dzogchen Knowledge-holders are masters and give teachings and instructions;
- b) Members of the Community can obtain a concrete and particular knowledge of Dzogchen;
- c) All members of the Community can study Dzogchen teachings;
- d) They can meet to study subjects related to the teachings;
- e) Where practitioners, vajra brothers and sisters, living in all directions, can meet together from time to time.

The three colours: red, yellow and blue, of the Gakyils symbolize the three doors of body, speech and mind of those on the path; or, the three vajras of body, voice and mind of realized beings; or the three dimensions of Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya. As these three colours are the basis of all colours they signify also that all the infinite manifestations of existence are spontaneously self-perfected.

Around these, in the eight directions are the eight Gakyils. They represent all the different possible kinds of Gakyils of the countries, large, medium or small. They (have the function of allowing) all those living in a country, region, or city far from a Gar that has the five qualifications, to carry out particular activities such as collective practices, the organizations of co-op work and mutual collaboration.

Again, around these in the different directions are small, five-coloured thigles. They represent all of the single members of the Dzogchen Community who exist in the world. The fact that the Gakyils decorated with eight points, simple Gakyils and the five-coloured thigles are all directly linked to each other represents respectively: the relationship between the single Community members and Gakyils of the different countries or central places; the relationship between the Gakyils of the different countries and the Gakyils of the Gars of the Community; and the relationship between the different Gars which, without being a relationship of subordination to one another, based on the Dzogchen principle of the presence of awareness, are all united with the "unique golden symbol" which represents the ultimate condition. All are integrated in the authentic state of knowledge of Dzogchen. The circle of blue light around the border represents the dimension of our universe within the infinite space of the Dharmadhatu; the "expanse of existence"

All those who have faith in me, Namkhai Norbu (Long-chen Rol-pai Dor-je) and who seek to realize the primordial state of Dzogchen, I request to act in the this way.

Dzogchenpa Namkhai Norbu
5th December 1985 (revised 1990).

The Preface reads: The following is a draft version of the Dzogchen Community "Charter" for all communities throughout the world.

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