

**CHRISTOPHER ROSE**  
**2014 Tsadra Contemplative Scholarship Activity Report**

*To: Anthony Chapman, Director of Contemplative Scholarships*

**Daily Retreat Schedule**

• 4:30-6:00AM Session 1	•6AM Confession of Downfalls, Chaptor, and Riwo Sangcho
•8-11AM Session 2	•2-3:30PM Session 3
•4:15PM group Mahakala practice with Sur Cho	•3:30PM Vajrakilaya
	•7-8:30PM Session 4
	•8:30PM Chod Lujin.

**Monthly Retreat Schedule**

Each month we rotate through four shrine jobs (this year the Choyok-shrine assistant- job was removed and replaced with the Dorje Loppon position): Umze (Chant Master, whose main responsibility is leading the Mahakala puja with its appropriate tunes and music), Chopon (Shrine Master), Dorje Loppon (Vajra Master), and Ngapon (Lead Drummer). The Chopon is responsible for making the Mahakala Tormas, carrying out the ritual procedures during the actual Mahakala practice session, and for performing the Riwo Sangcho in the shrine room in the morning and Sur Cho in the evening. Each retreatant holds one job for the month and then changes the day after the full moon. One retreatant opted out of taking the Umze postion, so the other 3 of us rotate to fill her spot.

**Retreat Practice Schedule for the year of 2014**

• Konchog Chidu: Four Activities- Dec. 31, 2013-Jan. 4, 2014	• Konchog Chidu: Long Life- Jan. 4-12, 2014
• Seven Points of Mind Training- Jan. 12-28	• Mahamudra Shamatha - Jan. 28-Feb.13
• Mahamudra Vipashyana- Feb.13-Mar.1	
• Vajrayogini: outer, inner , secret, drupcho, fire offering- Mar. 1-Sept.12	
• Chakrasamvara: outer, inner , secret, drupcho, fire offering- Sept.12- Feb. 10, 2015	

**Statement of use of Grant Funds**

I certify that I used the grant funds received from Tsadra for their allotted purpose. I certify that I devoted all of my time uninterrupted since the start of retreat to date to contemplative practice as defined in my contract with Tsadra Foundation, though this year there were four instances where I left the cloister (with the permission of the Drupon) to receive local medical treatments for a couple of health issues. These occurred on January 20, October 12, October 31, and December 1. In each case, I was gone from the retreat center for no more than two hours and saw only the person treating me, save in one instance where I also saw a cleaning lady.

**Activity Report**

This year the Vajrayogini practice period felt like a very important turning point in retreat, a further removal of distractions and learning how to give all of myself, everyday, to the practice. The yogic discipline of silence, together with finally feeling like there was some clarity and stability with the boundaries, allowed me to go deeper into the practice. In addition, it was illuminating to see the enthusiasm I had generated for the practice lift me out of a malaise I had fallen into at the end of a long bout of illness.

During the six months of Vajrayogini, I felt an increase in my practice abilities and self-discipline, similar in magnitude to the one I had experienced on entering retreat. The longer sadhana, large mantra requirements and many different aspects of the practice all thrilled me with their challenge, honing my focus and drawing me more strongly inward.

In terms of the mantra requirements, I completed 413,000 of the outer mantra (requirement= 400,000) and 1,833,100 of the inner mantra (requirement=1,600,000). I also did close to 30 of the vajra recitations specific to

the Vajrayogini practice. In addition I completed the 111,111 Ngondro Refuge and prostrations which I had carried over from the previous year, thereby completing the retreat Ngondro set.

While Vajrayogini felt like a font of meditation experiences just beginning to open (making me reluctant to move on, I must admit), the sense I get from doing the Chakrasamvara practice is one of deep changes, not easily identified, and a boundlessness that is totally confident. It is only now, nearing the end of the outer phase, that the practice is starting to feel familiar. This serves to reinforce how much there is to the practice and how these four months are barely scratching the surface. Having gone through the Vajrayogini practice, many of the elements and structure common to unexcelled tantra sadhanas are familiar. This practical knowledge, which comes simply from paying attention and doing the practice over and over again, is one that I value. I'm finding it serves as a conducive condition for an ease with the practice that allows insights and subtle connections to surface. I have completed 418,000 of the 22-syllable essence mantra (requirement=400,000) and am currently at 608,300 of the 7-syllable quintessence mantra (requirement=700,000).

While the practices themselves and the time spent day in, day out cultivating them exceed the expectations I held for them, I am surprised at how many aspects of this retreat still dismay me, nearly two years in. Yet I am encouraged to note that this disappointment does not ensnare me as deeply as it used to. This feels to me to be part of retreat's function- providing one with the opportunity to come face to face with the disadvantages that come with the normal, samsaric habit of looking outward for fulfillment, for fairness, for happiness, even in a dharma setting. Evidently, these are lessons I have to learn over and over again.

In this regard, I am finding some of the simple (but not easy) practices of looking deeply, of disconnecting from the storylines of the emotions and remaining with the rawness of the energy a vital mainstay. I had assumed I was well-grounded in this, but I find that I was missing the mark. I am only just beginning to discover how to work deeply in this way—a fact that is humbling. It is a practice that is both exhilarating and terrifying, getting at some very deep-seated beliefs and fears.

So this inner journey of retreat continues, making me ever more in awe of the skill, precision, and kindness of all the authentic masters who have kept this ocean of wisdom alive throughout the millennia. I aspire to follow in their example, doing my best to let the ups and downs of this time lead me further inwards, train me in how to be more fully present. In the meantime, cultivating the presence of Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara is a pretty nice way to spend my days!