

TSADRA REPORT FOR GRANT FOR DEEP CONTEMPLATION TRAINING FROM JANUARY TO AUGUST, 2013 AND SEPTEMBER 2014 TO AUGUST 2015

CECILIA AMADOR

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- RETREAT SCHEDULE AND PROGRAM

We practiced four sessions of the main practice per day and did Yoga of Awakening in the morning and Mahakala Sadhana in the evening. During the first year I was practice coordinator and in the second year I was dekyong and kitchen liaison.

From January to March, 2013, the main practice was Konchok Chidu, and from April to June Mahamudra practicing in a group setting during sessions 2 and 3. We finished the Konchok Chidu cycle of outer, inner and secret practice, and used the text "Pointing out the Dharmakaya" for Mahamudra. During July and August, I practiced Vajrayogini in solitary retreat.

The second year of retreat started in September 4th 2014 with a Vajrayogini amending the mantra fire puja that lasted 9 days and was a prerequisite for some of us. Then, after an orientation period of two weeks, we practiced inner, secret and very secret Vajrayogini for five months and a half which included a two week druppa and a fire puja of seven days. We then practiced Chakrasamvara according to Karma Chagme's instructions for the following five months ending with a fire puja of five days (please refer to attached detailed schedule.) During the month of August, I kept practicing Chakrasamvara for three weeks and then combined it with Mahamudra (following the instructions of Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche) on the last two weeks of semi-solitary retreat (another person was practicing in the same cottage separately.)

- PROGRESS MADE

With Konchok Chidu I gained familiarity with different styles of vajrayana practice, devotion and confidence increased. With Mahamudra I had several insights on the nature of mind.

Practicing Vajrayogini, the visualizations combined with vase breath during recitation were a breakthrough in my practice, the visualization became clearer and more stable and I had some experiences and insights. Chakrasamvara combined with Mahamudra have made my mind more flexible and balanced.

- DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

I have had periods of chronic fatigue in the past and at the end of the Mahamudra period I had to stay in my room for one or two sessions a day for about a week, trying to practice laying down.

During the second year, I found being dekyong and kitchen liaison challenging as I had to consider issues not related to formal practice constantly.

In 2013 I had to leave the retreat once and in 2015 three times, each time for approximately six hours, for going to the doctor due to recurrent health conditions, following the rules and procedures stated in this retreat setting.

Due to visa restrictions my two years of retreat have been one week shorter than a calendar year.

HONEST APPRISAL

The retreat has been a wonderful opportunity to go deeper into the practices of Tibetan Buddhism and taste their efficacy. I have learnt about the human condition, my personal obstacles on the path, and the practices themselves. Although I have some understanding of the purpose of the group process in retreat, it has been challenging and distracting for me; during the times of solitary retreat I have been able to go deeper into the practices. Perseverance and determination have been present as strengths, health conditions have been the main weaknesses although I try to work with them as part of my path.

HOW YOU FEEL RETREAT HAS PREPARED YOU TO BENEFIT OTHERS

Gaining some stability and clarity of mind I feel more able to deal with situations in life. Understanding and learning some more about the dharma I feel more prepared to pass it on to others in formal and informal settings.

CONFIRMING USE OF FUNDS

The funds I have received from Tsadra have been used to pay tuition, room and board for part of the first and for the second year of Three-year retreat at Söpa Chöling and for three months of solitary retreat to complete a calendar year each time. In 2013 and 2014 the funds did not cover all these expenses but in 2015 due to a favorable exchange rate I had 587 CAD extra which I plan to use for texts and practice materials for the third year and probably for some personal expenses, if they are not needed to cover tuition, room and board.

I would like to express again my deep gratitude to Tsadra Foundation for giving me this opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cecilia Amador', with a stylized, flowing script.

Cecilia Amador