



Shang Shung Institute

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Dear Vajra Brothers and Sisters,

Here is the document containing the new guidelines for Santi Maha Sangha examinations. Every Gakyil is requested to keep a copy of it in their archive and to make it available to their own members and practitioners.

This document is also available on the webpage:

<http://www.dzogchen.it/pages/santi-maha-sangha.php> for permanent consultation.

It is plain that this new procedure can only work well if every candidate for a Santi Maha Sangha examination is very active, starting the procedure at least three months before the examination. The decision to take the exam at the last minute will no longer be possible.

For any clarification please contact the Santi Maha Sangha coordinator of your Gar or the Santi Maha Sangha coordinating center of the Shang Shung Institute at Merigar.

Best wishes,

Shang Shung Institute

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NEW GUIDELINES FOR SANTI MAHA SANGHA EXAMINATIONS

Here follow two quotations taken from **CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU'S EXPLANATIONS** on Santi Maha Sangha Training.

SANTI MAHA SANGHA AND KARMA YOGA

(The Mirror # 56, March/April 2001, quoted in *The Dzogchen Community*, Shang Shung Edizioni, Santi Maha Sangha Training Section)

We can find many different situations in the Gars and Gakyils of different countries but, in any part of the world, if someone contributes voluntarily some good and useful things for the Dzogchen Community, the Gakyil of that place shouldn't view that participation with indifference. The Gakyil should register all the good things contributed by that person and when they go to do the examination of Santi Maha Sangha the Gakyil can present his or her situation of conduct with the list of all the good things that person has contributed to the Dzogchen Community. When we have this kind of presentation from the local Gakyils, we can finally understand how the conduct of that person is, and his or her first of the Three Main Subjects for the examination can be seriously applied.

SPEECH ON SANTI MAHA SANGHA

Merigar, August 29th, 2006

Everybody knows very well what Santi Maha Sangha is and how important it is. For the future people will continue to follow Santi Maha Sangha: for example, the practitioners that participated in this Second Level Training will go on to do the examination of the Third Level. For the people who did the examination in these days we have only a little clarity about how they practiced because we simply have to believe what they say about their practice, that is all. But it is very difficult for us to understand how their attitude is.

You remember that in our teaching there are the three principles of *tawa*, *gompa*, and *chöpa*. The Santi Maha Sangha examination not only consists of some questions to which you reply, like in a school. It is not that way. Particularly in Santi Maha Sangha the most important point is how you integrate your knowledge in your existence. But when we did the examination this point was not clear at all because we considered, "Oh, yes, it is okay."

So in the future when you come to do a Santi Maha Sangha examination, please bring some kind of information from your Gakyil because at least they should know how your attitude is, because if your attitude is not perfect but we consider that it is, then how will the Dzogchen teaching continue in the future? This is really very important.

In the case of practitioners who are very much in contact with Merigar or with Tashigar Norte, we know them a bit because we can see what they are doing and what their attitude is like. But in the case of some practitioners who came for this Santi Maha Sangha examination and training, for example, it seems to me I have never seen them before. For me it is not so easy because there are many people in the Dzogchen Community, and even if I have seen them before at a retreat, it is often not so easy to recognize everybody. So this is a responsibility that should be taken not only by me but by everybody because this is a principle for the continuation of the Dzogchen teaching, therefore it is something important. You can inform people living in different countries that if they want to come for the Santi Maha Sangha First Level or Second Level examination etc., we really need to have a kind of presentation of their attitude.

Also regarding Karma Yoga, many people think, "Karma Yoga is useful because we can do something for the Dzogchen Community without paying anybody and without looking for people to do many of the things that need doing." But that is not the reason. Karma Yoga shows whether a practitioner is seriously interested in the Dzogchen Community or not. If people are interested in the Dzogchen

Community, that means they are also interested in the continuation of the Dzogchen teaching. This is something very important, and for that reason we also ask about Karma Yoga.

Karma Yoga is a symbol that shows people's attitudes. For example in many places when we do a retreat, there are a hundred or two hundred people or more. But later if I ask, "How many people are participating and doing Ganapujas or meetings in the Dzogchen Community?" sometimes they say, "Oh, ten or twelve people," sometimes they even say, "We are six people." Why are there one or two hundred people at a retreat, but only six or twelve people interested in doing something? This shows that people are not seriously interested in the continuation of the teaching, and that is a little sad; it's not so nice. In some countries, for example, which I have visited many times, they have not even formed a Gakyil. They say, "Yes, but if there is a Gakyil then we have to take some responsibility." That means they don't want to do anything, and when I go there they just enjoy listening to the teaching. Then they move around a bit like nomads and if a small group wants to do a Ganapuja etc., they say, "Today we go to Giorgio's house, tomorrow we go to Maria's." You can do that at the beginning but if you continue like this for one or two years, it would be much better to think a bit about how we can continue the Dzogchen Community.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Requested Documents

On the basis of Rinpoche's indications quoted above, the Gakyil of the Gar to which any candidate who wishes to take the Santi Maha Sangha examination belongs should present a documentation to the examiners containing the following three requirements:

1. A membership certificate showing that the candidate is up to date with the membership payment. For the Base Level examination, the membership fee should have been paid for at least one year before the date of the examination. From the First Level on, the membership fee should have been paid for all the intervening years between the previous examination and the next one.
2. A form listing the Karma Yoga done by the candidate. Any work offered for the benefit of the Dzogchen Community is valid as Karma Yoga, provided that it is done upon request of the Dzogchen Community Gakyils and related associations (Shang Shung Institute or Edizioni, A.S.I.A.). Therefore Karma Yoga should always be arranged through Gakyils, Shang Shung Institute or Edizioni and A.S.I.A. At least three months before the examination the practitioners are requested to communicate the number of hours they have done as Karma Yoga to the association they have offered their work to. In this way the Gakyils, Shang Shung Institute or Edizioni and A.S.I.A. can validate this information by signing the form and passing it on to the office of candidate's Gar. Please note that a Gakyil member cannot validate his/her Karma Yoga form him/herself; the other Gakyil members should validate it. For the Base Level the Karma Yoga performed during the year before the Base examination will be taken into account. For the exams of the next levels the Karma Yoga performed after the previous exam until the next will be taken into account. Financial donations are not valid as Karma Yoga. Practitioners living in remote places should contact their own Gars to discuss the possibility of offering Karma Yoga according to their circumstances.
3. A note on the candidate's behaviour briefly stating whether the candidate is collaborating consistently with the local Community; whether any problems have arisen with the Community or other practitioners because of the candidate's attitude; any remarks that may be relevant for a practitioner attending the Santi Maha Sangha Training. This note is to be drawn up by candidate's local Gakyil and can be amplified by the Gar's Gakyil with further remarks if necessary.

Admission Request

In order to avoid a long and fruitless journey for a candidate lacking the minimum requirements for admission to the examination, it is indispensable that at least three months before the exam, each candidate send an application via e-mail to the coordinating center for SMS Training <s.celeri@istitutoshangshung.org> clarifying in brief the following points:

1. Personal motivation for participating in *Santi Maha Sangha* Training.
2. The level of preparation regarding the study of the text (*tawa* or view).
3. The level of preparation regarding the practices. The candidate must state clearly whether the prescribed practices have been completed and, if not, precisely which practices are lacking (*gompa* or meditation).
4. The amount of Karma Yoga offered to the Community (even if not yet validated by the appropriate authority); any serious problem between the candidate and other practitioners or the Community. It is advisable that the candidate relate any circumstances that would help the examiner to better understand his or her condition before taking the exam (*chöpa* or behavior).
5. A digital picture of the candidate must be attached to the admission request to make recognition easier. A candidate for the 1st Level examination or for the subsequent SMS Levels should indicate the location and date of the last exam taken, and in which Gar the membership fees were paid for the years between the last exam and the one for which admission is requested.

The candidate's application containing this information will be submitted to the examiners who will answer as soon as possible stating whether admission has been granted. The candidate may present an application for the exam to the Gakyil of his or her own Gar only after admission has been confirmed by the examiners.

How to Register for the Exam of SMS

In conclusion here is a summary of the procedure to be followed by candidates and Gakyils regarding the Santi Maha Sangha Training examinations:

THE CANDIDATE him/herself should be responsible for:

1. Being up to date with the payment of the membership fee.
2. Sending his/her Karma Yoga form correctly filled in to the association (Gakyil, Shang Shung Institute or Edizioni and A.S.I.A.) to which he/she offered the Karma Yoga at least three months before the examination. If the associations are more than one, a form for each association should be sent by the candidate. The Karma Yoga form, approved and validated by these associations, will be forwarded by these same associations, not by the candidate, to the office of the Gar to which the candidate belongs.
3. Writing a message to the examiners as specified above and sending it to the coordinating center for SMS Training at least three months before the examination. After receiving the confirmation from the examiners the candidate must do the following:
 - A. Ask his/her local Gakyil to send a note on his/her behaviour to the office of the candidate's Gar.
 - B. Send an application for the exam to the Gakyil of his/her own Gar at least one month before the examination. Any application received from the Gar after this deadline will be rejected. It is the Gakyil of the candidate's Gar who will register the candidate for the exam. If the exam is taking place at a different Gar, the Gakyil of the candidate's Gar will send the candidate's application – consisting of the above mentioned documents stating the records of his/her membership, Karma Yoga and behaviour – to the Gar where the examination will take place.

THE CANDIDATE'S LOCAL GAKYIL:

1. If the candidate offered his/her free work to the local Gakyil, the latter should send the Karma Yoga form received from the candidate to the office of the candidate's Gar validating it by an official approval.
2. Should send a note on the candidate's behaviour to the office of the candidate's Gar on receiving the request from the candidate.

THE GAKYIL OF THE GAR TO WHICH THE CANDIDATE BELONGS should be responsible for:

1. Recording the candidate's Karma Yoga in a central archive on receiving the Karma Yoga form of the candidate from the associations that validated it. A practitioner can ask that his/her Karma Yoga is recorded into the Gar central archive even apart from SMS examinations.
2. Preparing a document to be submitted to the examiners – containing the records of membership, Karma Yoga and behaviour of the candidate – on receiving the candidate's application for the exam. The note on the candidate's behaviour that was received from the candidate's local Gakyil can be amplified by the Gar's Gakyil with further remarks if necessary.
3. Sending this document to the Gar where the examination will take place if the examination is taking place at a different Gar, thus automatically registering the candidate for the exam.

THE GAKYIL OF THE GAR WHERE THE EXAMINATION WILL TAKE PLACE should be responsible for:

1. Registering for the exam the candidates belonging to the Gar itself on receiving their applications, and registering the candidates belonging to the other Gars on receiving their individual records sent by the Gakyils of the other Gars. Applications received directly from candidates of other Gars should be rejected.
2. Presenting the full records of all the candidates to the examiners.
3. Sending the following documents to the SMS central archive kept by Shang Shung Institute at Merigar <s.celeri@istitutoshangshung.org> after the examination and the following training:
 - A. The list of the practitioners that passed the exam specifying whether they attended the training or not.
 - B. The Karma Yoga records (possibly as electronic files) of all the candidates even if they didn't pass the exam.

*This document was prepared by SMS examiners Adriano Clemente and Jim Valby
and it has been approved by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.
Merigar, March 2007
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