

# **Dzamling Gar Song and Dance: A Khaita Manifesto**

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**Abstract:** *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* holds a distinctive place within Khaita – Joyful Dances (Khaita), a translocal and transcultural practice of singing and dancing initiated by the Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938 – 2018) in 2011. Developed within his International Dzogchen Community, Khaita serves dual purposes: promoting and preserving Tibetan culture and fostering presence, awareness, and harmony. Unlike the 400 Tibetan songs in the Khaita archive, *Dzamling Gar Song* is unique in being personally written and composed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, reflecting his profound experience as a Dzogchen teacher.

In this article, I introduce the Khaita project and explore the concept of joy as a meaningful and productive framework for understanding it. I then examine the role of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* within the collection, connecting it to Khaita's two main objectives: the preservation of Tibetan culture and language and the promotion of overall harmony through singing and dancing. By closely analyzing the song's lyrics and the dance's movements, I demonstrate how they represent these principles. I thereby draw on both literary and dance analysis, as well as my own experience as a Khaita practitioner. I further provide insights into the approach to the Tibetan language in Khaita and examine how the song's three sections relate to the themes of presence, awareness, and harmony that align with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Dzogchen teachings. By focusing on *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*, I aim to offer

an understanding of Khaita as both a cultural expression and a spiritual teaching.

**Keywords:** Khaita, Tibetan dance, Namkhai Norbu, Dzogchen, Dzamling Gar Song

## **Introduction**

*Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* can be regarded as the ‘manifesto’ of the Khaita – Joyful Dance project. Its lyrics and choreography incorporate essential principles that are illustrative of all songs and dances in the Khaita collection. *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* holds a unique position, being composed, written and choreographed by the Dzogchen master Namkhai Norbu, representing an extraordinary Dzogchen teaching.

In this article, I explore the role of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* within the Khaita collection of songs and dances, which was developed by Namkhai Norbu between 2011 and 2018, with *Dzamling Gar Song* being added in 2013. I ask how this particular song and dance is representative of the overall Khaita project with its two main purposes, namely the preservation of Tibetan culture and the promotion of presence and awareness. I thereby investigate which aspects of the song’s lyrics and movements, as well as general attitudes within the Khaita practice, can serve as evidence to support this claim.

I begin by introducing the practice of Khaita, highlighting its origins, the extent of its collection of songs and dances, its connection to Namkhai Norbu’s Dzogchen teachings, and its emphasis on joy. I then

conduct a close reading of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*, analyzing how its lyrics and movements<sup>1</sup> align with the designated purposes of Khaita. In addition to literary analysis, I also apply dance analysis, focusing on movement sequences and their interpretations.

This research builds on my previous work, conducted using ethnographic methodology, in which I explored in detail how Khaita serves the two main purposes outlined by Namkhai Norbu. I take these purposes as foundational assumptions for this article: (1) the preservation of Tibetan culture and (2) the promotion of presence, awareness and harmony (Leick). In my earlier work, I critically examined the concept of ‘Tibetanness’<sup>2</sup>, presenting it as a fluid, context-dependent construct. While aware of its constructed meaning and acknowledging that there is no fixed or essential definition of what it means to be Tibetan, I use the term analytically to explore associations with Tibetan identity such as geography, language, religion, shared history, artifacts, and traditional clothing, and similar elements. I further investigated the notions of presence and awareness, framing them as outcomes of mindfulness practices supported by qualitative research data.

As a Khaita teacher and dedicated dancer myself, my insights are informed by my close involvement in the Khaita community. I have studied the dances and songs in depth, performed them publicly on numerous occasions, and engaged in exchanges with fellow dancers about the shared experiences and interpretations that emerge from the practice.

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1 I follow a structuralist perspective in which ‘text’ is understood as an entity of meaning that extends beyond the written word and may include other media such as dance (Blanariu).

2 Throughout this article, I use single quotation marks when referring to ‘Tibetanness’ to emphasize it as a constructed concept.

*Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*, as a unique example within the Khaita collection, has not yet been discussed in academic discourse. In this article, I aim to demonstrate how it can be read as a ‘microcosm’ of the entire Khaita project, encapsulating its key elements in words and movement, foregrounding Namkhai Norbu’s intention behind it.

## **Khaita - Joyful Dances**

Khaita – Joyful Dances (short: Khaita, mkha’i rta), translated from Tibetan as Harmony in Space, is a project initiated in 2011 by the Tibetan Buddhist scholar and Dzogchen<sup>3</sup> (rdzogs chen) master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938 – 2018). It is a translocal and transcultural singing and dancing practice mainly performed at locations of the International Dzogchen Community around the world. Khaita represents the last large project that Namkhai Norbu developed in the years towards the end of his life. It defines itself with two primary purposes, namely the contribution and preservation of Tibetan culture and the promotion of presence, awareness and harmony that aligns with the teachings of Dzogchen. As such, Khaita subsumes both Namkhai Norbu’s commitment to the safeguarding of the Tibetan culture and his lifelong endeavour as a spiritual teacher of Dzogchen, providing his students with methods to help them be more present and aware, observe themselves, overcome

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<sup>3</sup> Adriano Clemente explains: “Dzogchen, a Tibetan word that means ‘total perfection’ or ‘absolute completeness’ is the name of a spiritual teaching found in both the Bön and the Ancient Buddhist traditions of Tibet, where it is considered the highest path of realization, due to its direct and clear presentation of the nature of mind as the source of all phenomena of existence and to its special methods for accomplishing its potentiality. The meaning of Dzogchen refers to this real, self-perfected nature of each individual, [...] and the scope of this teaching is to reveal directly and experientially the state of ‘Dzogchen’ so that this knowledge becomes wholly integrated into one’s life and behavior” (Visionary Encounters, 1).

limitations, and ultimately become free from suffering.<sup>4</sup>

The essence of the Dzogchen teachings is the state of *Ati Dzopa Chenpo*, meaning a profound knowledge of one's nature. According to the Dzogchen view, it is present in all beings and can be discovered and experienced by the introduction to one's natural state through a knowledgeable Dzogchen master. Once discovered, familiarity with this state can be developed by practice until one is no longer conditioned by any form of dualism. Adriano Clemente describes it in the following way:

The knowledge transmitted by the master of the Dzogchen (*rdzog chen*) teachings is neither of an intellectual nature nor conditioned by the principles of a religious or philosophical ideology. It concerns the reality of human experience in its immediacy. 'Dzgochen' means 'total' (*chen*) 'perfection' or 'completeness' (*rdzogs*): the primordial state of each individual, an absolute potentiality [...]. (Norbu, *The Mirror* 7)

Namkhai Norbu further elaborates and highlights the aspect of relaxation:

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4 From an early age, Namkhai Norbu was recognized as the reincarnation of several important spiritual teachers, including Adzom Drukpa. He received extensive religious training in Tibet, mastering Buddhist sciences such as astrology and medicine. In the 1960s, Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci invited him to Italy, where Namkhai Norbu became a scholar of Tibetan language and literature at the University of Naples L'Orientale, a position he held from 1962 to 1992. Beyond his spiritual leadership, Namkhai Norbu is widely respected for his contributions to the study of Tibet's ancient history, particularly the Bön tradition. His notable publications include *Necklace of Zi: A Cultural History of Tibet* (1981), the three-volume *Light of Kailash* (published in English between 2009 and 2015), and *Drung, Deu, and Bön: Narrations, Symbolic Language, and the Bön* (1995). His most influential works on Dzogchen include *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen* (1989) and *The Mirror: Advice on Presence and Awareness* (1977) (Clemente, Namkhai Norbu).

If we want to explain the Dzogchen teachings in a simple way, we could say, ‘The Dzogchen teachings are about learning how to relax.’ This is because we don’t know how to relax; we are always busy following after our thoughts and judgments. [...] So even if we are able to relax our body a little, our mind and energy are generally still charged up. It is not so easy at all to be totally relaxed. Without help, we just do not know how to do it, and this is why we need the teachings: to help us reacquaint with the state of relaxation. (*A Guide to the Practice of Guru Arya Tara and Her Twenty-One Praises* 46)

Khaita is primarily danced by students of Namkhai Norbu in centers of the International Dzogchen Community. The application of the Dzogchen teachings in the singing and dance practice thereby seems to be the ultimate purpose of the practice. Yet, at the same time, Khaita is open to everyone and is not exclusive to students of Namkhai Norbu or other Buddhist practitioners. In fact, it is increasingly practiced as a method to raise intercultural awareness, collaboration, mindfulness, physical coordination and wellbeing in institutions without Buddhist contexts (“Khaita Joyful Dances”). For this reason, Khaita as a Dzogchen method can be considered an inner approach.

The Khaita collection with its songs and dances was established between 2011 and 2018. The collection consists of around 400 Tibetan modern pop songs, some rooted in folk traditions and others more contemporary, all selected by Namkhai Norbu based on their meanings, melodies, and the artists who performed them. He favoured musicians who express in their songs what it means to be Tibetan in contemporary times, including ways of maintaining cultural identity, language and

knowledges. At the same time, the songs' lyrics refer to more universal values such as caring for the environment, respecting one's ancestors, the wish for peace in the world or the joy of being surrounded by loved ones (Norbu, *Message from Tibet through Songs and Dances 10*).

There are around 240 Khaita dances to these selected songs. Some are based on Tibetan folk dances; some have been choreographed by international students of Namkhai Norbu. Until Namkhai Norbu's death in 2018, all Khaita dances underwent a process requiring his feedback and approval. Certain guidelines for Khaita dances resulted from this, including, for example, suggestions for mudras to translate the song's meaning into movements, as well as ideas to make choreographies balanced by including, for example, turns in two directions rather than only one (Leick, *Creating Khaita – Joyful Dances*).

All Khaita songs and dances are categorized and archived in a digital archive available online via [khaita.com](http://khaita.com). Dance demonstration videos by the Khaita community are therein placed next to the original YouTube videos by the Tibetan artists. Besides the artists' names, the song text in Tibetan, a phonetic transliteration, English translation and dance tutorials, the archive further exhibits commentaries to specific songs by Namkhai Norbu that are rich in linguistic, historic, religious and cultural insights.

Khaita cannot be claimed exclusively as 'Tibetan dance' due to its unique creation history and global application by diverse dancers. Unlike traditional Tibetan dance forms, Khaita did not emerge from the Tibetan regions but was developed under the guidance of Namkhai Norbu in a translocal community. This distinct origin and its close association

with his teachings set Khaita apart from other existing Tibetan dance traditions, positioning it as a contemporary, cross-cultural phenomenon rather than a traditional dance form. For this reason, it does not belong to the tradition of the sacred / Tantric *Cham* dances (‘*cham*’), nor to the folk opera *Ache lhamo* (*A-che IHamo*), nor to the broad spectrum of Tibetan folk dances. While some Khaita choreographies re-enact well-known dances,<sup>5</sup> many other Khaita choreographies were created by students of Namkhai Norbu between 2011 and 2018. This represent a clear and intentional break from existing dance traditions, with the dances following their own guidelines and choreographic principles that have been established in the feedback processes by Namkhai Norbu (ibid.). As such, it cannot be said that Khaita corresponds to any other Tibetan dance tradition<sup>6</sup> but rather follows its own lineage; it has ‘grown’ and developed with Namkhai Norbu’s students over the last fourteen years.

## The Aspect of Joy

Joy is a central aspect of the Khaita practice, as reflected in its full name, Khaita – Joyful Dances. Namkhai Norbu introduced this epithet

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<sup>5</sup> See list of circle dances on khaita.com (<https://khaita.com>).

<sup>6</sup> The Tibetan performing art practice that probably shares most similarities with Khaita in its framing is the movement surrounding Lingdro Dechen Rolmo (Lingdro). It is music and dance practice performed by laypeople and devised by Khenpo Jigmed Puntsok (1933-2004) (Terrone). It is described as a meditational and devotional practice that traces its origins to Miphan Jamyang Namgyal Gyatso (1846-1914) and connects back to the life of King Gesar. In an early article from 1983, Lin Lerner emphasizes that Lingdro’s “sublime poetry contains the teaching of Dzogchen, Atiyoga” (Lerner 55), rather than focusing solely on the epic stories of King Gesar. This connection to Dzogchen makes it an appealing practice for comparison with Khaita. Following Khenpo Jigmed Puntsok’s death, Lingdro has undergone significant changes, with efforts to preserve it outside the Tibetan regions and opening it up to new audiences. This evolution makes Lingdro an interesting parallel to Khaita, particularly in how both practices adapt translocally and spread beyond traditional contexts. To the best of my knowledge, there is no literature documenting these developments. While a detailed comparison of these two practices is worth pursuing, it is beyond the scope of this article, which focuses on *Dzamling Gar Song* and Dance in detail.



in the early 2010s, when developing and refining Khaita (Dal Borgo 2). He emphasized the focus on joy as a guiding principle for the practice's purpose: "[W]hen we enjoy and we are moving, we concentrate [on the] positive. That [creates a] kind of [...] melody, [...] harmony. That is the meaning, 'Khaita'" ("Khaita Joyful Dances" 0:22).

In my previous quantitative and qualitative research with Khaita practitioners (Leick, *Khaita – Joyful Dances*), I found that 'joy' was frequently referenced as a major effect of the practice. While the name itself may suggest a priming effect, the consistent mention of joy by various dancers indicates that it genuinely resonates with Khaita practitioners. For example, in a quantitative study I conducted, 100% of participants agreed with the statement "[Khaita] makes me joyful." Additionally, in open-response questions, participants frequently described their experience using the word 'joy,' with comments such as, "Khaita is definitely a joyful experience!"; "[it] awakens the joy inside me"; and "[Khaita has] an uplifting effect on mood [that] fully correspond[s] to the name 'Joyful Dances.'" In qualitative interviews, several Khaita practitioners further elaborated on the joyful effects they experience as a result of their practice. Many provided detailed insights into how the joy of Khaita differs from other emotional states, such as temporary happiness or entertainment (*ibid.*).

Joy can be understood in several ways. It might be a synonym for happiness, pleasure, gaiety or bliss to be experienced in various contexts, for example, after having achieved something, feeling physical pleasure or rejoicing in someone else's success.<sup>7</sup> From a spiritual perspective

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<sup>7</sup> Amongst others, see Paul Ekman et al. for more insights into the psychological perspective of joy.

– a view also embraced by Namkhai Norbu – joy is often defined more narrowly and distinguished from happiness and pleasure; while happiness and pleasure are temporary enjoyable emotions that often depend on outer circumstances, joy goes deeper and refers to an inner approach to life. For example, in the *Book of Joy*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the 14th Dalai Lama discuss the quality and nature of joy. Tutu defines joy as “much bigger than happiness”: “While happiness is often seen as being dependent on external circumstances, joy is not” (3). As such, Tutu claims that joy does not mean the absence of suffering but rather the ability to find joy and peace within oneself regardless of the circumstances. It may be cultivated through daily thoughts, feelings and actions and can be regarded as a permanent, inner state that outlasts temporary enjoyable emotions. In addition to this, the Dalai Lama highlights that joy cannot be found from the outside and hence refers to the quality of joy as self-generating: “The ultimate source of happiness is within us” (ibid.).

From these results the perception that joy, once experienced, can be cultivated and purposefully trained. This suggests that Khaita may function as a method to connect to and cultivate joy in oneself and spread it to the group. In this way, the name of Khaita – Joyful Dances can be understood as reminder of the experience of joy. In addition, several Khaita songs speak about joy and lasting happiness – for example, the *Dzamling Gar Song*: “happiness is present, self-perfected all is manifesting” and “happiness is present, joy is developing” (“International Atiyoga Foundation”, *Dzamling Gar*). This encourages practitioners to connect to the source of joyfulness that comes from within and stay present with this sensation.

## Dzamling Gar Song and Dance

Within the structure of the Khaita collection, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* (འཛམ་གླིང་སྒར་གླུ་བློ་ 'dzam gling sgar glu bro) holds a unique position. Created in 2013, it is the only song within the Khaita corpus that was composed and written by Namkhai Norbu himself.<sup>8</sup> The original music consists of him singing and playing harmonica; later versions include other musicians and various instruments. The dance was suggested mostly by Namkhai Norbu, making him its choreographer. Due to circumstances connected to his health, he was supported by two students<sup>9</sup> in finalizing and presenting the dance.

The song / dance is structured in three parts, with a repeated musical interlude. Each section corresponds to a specific principle of meaning. Within the Dzogchen Community, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is usually practiced at the end of each Khaita session that typically lasts one hour, representing a moment of connection to the spiritual master and contemplation of its meaning.

Dzamling Gar Song and Dance Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB1vICJ0I1k&t=215s>

*Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* aligns with other songs in the Khaita collection through its expression of 'Tibetanness'. Namkhai Norbu, as a Tibetan, composed the song with lyrics in the Tibetan

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8 In *Dzamling Gar Song*, it is specified that "the words and melody spontaneously and joyfully arose in His [Namkhai Norbu's] mind" (Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song* 5).

9 The two collaborators in the dance's choreography were Phuntsog Wangmo and Adriana Dal Borgo.

language. This is consistent with the rest of the Khaita collection, which exclusively features Tibetan artists singing in Tibetan, mostly about life in and the land of Tibet (Norbu, *Message from Tibet through Songs and Dances* 10). However, the structure and melody of *Dzamling Gar Song*'s music do not conform to traditional Tibetan folk music. The themes conveyed in *Dzamling Gar Song*'s lyrics reflect the Dzogchen teachings, which are considered to have Tibetan origins,<sup>10</sup> further reinforcing its connection to 'Tibetanness'. At the same time, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* transcends its cultural framework through its interpretation as a spiritual teaching, extending beyond cultural boundaries ("Khaita Joyful Dances").

Due to being created by a Dzogchen master, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is viewed as a spiritual teaching. For example, in the introduction to the booklet *Dzamling Gar Song*, Adriana Dal Borgo writes: "May this Song, which is not an ordinary song but a complete teaching, bring joy and benefit to all sentient beings" (in Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song* 5). Namkhai Norbu himself refers to the profundity of the lyrics: "[I]f I were to write a commentary on this *Dzamling Gar Song* I would be able to write a very fine description, even three volumes. I have a precise

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10 Clemente expands on the origins of Dzogchen: "In the Buddhist tradition, the origin of Dzogchen is attributed to Garab Dorje, a master from Oddiyana who lived some centuries after the pari-nirvana of Buddha Shakyamuni. His transmission passed on to various siddhas from Oddiyana and India, until it reached Tibet in the eight century thanks to the masters Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava, and to the Tibetan translator Vairochana. The teachings of these masters then converged into the Nyingma or Ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, whose transmission has been kept alive up to the present day by many realized teachers." (Clemente, *Visionary Encounters* 1) In reality, however, the Dzogchen teachings are said older than humans and cannot rightfully claimed to be Tibetan. Namkhai Norbu states: "[...] we can't even truly say that the Dzogchen teaching belongs to this planet Earth, much less to any particular national culture. Although it is true that the tradition of Dzogchen [...] has been transmitted through the culture of Tibet that has harbored it ever since the beginning of recorded history in Tibet, we nevertheless cannot finally say that Dzogchen is Tibetan, because the primordial state itself has no nationality and is omnipresent" (Crystal and the Way of Light 33).

idea of everything” (ibid. 24). On multiple occasions, he encouraged his students to study the song and dance and try to understand its meaning.<sup>11</sup>

A variety of approaches to understanding *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance* can be taken, the most straightforward being perhaps the approximation from a spiritual viewpoint. It might serve as a gateway to Namkhai Norbu’s extensive Dzogchen teachings. From this perspective, *Dzamlung Gar Song*’s three parts can be viewed as representative of base, path and fruit – key concepts in the presentation of the Dzogchen teachings (Norbu, *Crystal and the Way of Light*; Dalai Lama). The point of this article is not to explain the meaning of Namkhai Norbu’s teaching on *Dzamlung Gar Song* in depth – something that I feel neither qualified to do as I am not a Dzogchen teacher, nor seems necessary given the availability of original sources<sup>12</sup> – but to connect it to the overall goals of the Khaita project. I aim to demonstrate how the *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance* connects to the two main goals of Khaita, namely the promotion of Tibetan culture and the fostering of states of awareness and presence and overall harmony. I do this not only through a close reading of the lyrics and movements of the *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance*, but also by illustrating how Namkhai Norbu introduced it to his students as a method to achieve these objectives.

## (1) The Preservation of Tibetan Culture and Language

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11 The documentary “The Sun of Samantabhadra” (2024) gives a detailed insight into the various teaching contexts in which Namkhai Norbu explained the meaning of *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Zc1hiuR2UA&t=2s>)

12 Consider the booklet *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance*, the *Dzamlung Gar Song and Dance* entry in the public Khaita archive (<https://khaita.com/songs/dzamlung-gar>), the dedicated webpage on the Khaita site (<https://khaita.org/song-and-dances/dzamlung-gar-song/>), and the documentary “The Sun of Samantabhadra” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Zc1hiuR2UA&t=2s>).

There are two main reasons behind the Khaita project, namely the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan culture and the promotion of presence, awareness and harmony that is connected to the Dzogchen teachings. The first reason, the support of the Tibetan culture, was a strong motivation for Namkhai Norbu, grounded in his own ethnicity and extensive studies of Tibetan and Buddhist knowledges:

I was born and grew up in Tibet where my opportunity to study Tibetan culture was good, although my life has been spent in Western countries because of previous karma. Since knowledge of Tibetan culture is firmly rooted in me, [...] I feel the need to take special care of that culture, both worldly and spiritual, a need that has been continuously present in my life. [...] Thus I came to understand that Tibetan songs and the dances connected to them are indispensable factors in the long-lasting preservation and diffusion of Tibetan culture (*Message from Tibet through Songs and Dances* 9–10).

Yet Khaita's focus on Tibetan culture is not so much connected to Namkhai Norbu's ethnicity and personal feelings for his homeland, but to the relationship between Tibetan culture, language and Buddhist knowledge considered to be inseparably interwoven. The Buddhist knowledges of overcoming suffering, taking the main paths of Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen, have been transmitted by knowledge holders, spiritual masters and teachers for centuries within the Tibetan regions (Namkhai, *Dzogchen*; Patrul Rinpoche). They are said to be core values of Buddhist teachings as they explain the conditions of existence that cause suffering (*samsara*) and show the possibilities of overcoming them.

Spiritual Buddhist texts have been codified mostly in the Tibetan language.<sup>13</sup> The ongoing threat of language extinction<sup>14</sup> would lead to a loss of access to these texts. Namkhai Norbu explains:

Tibet is a unique population who [sic] saved this precious teaching that we have and that we can follow today. If there were no Tibetans, no Tibetan culture and no Tibetan today, there would not exist the Dzogchen teaching in this world, and even the Vajrayana teaching would not exist. (*Evolution and Our Responsibility Towards All Sentient Being*)

Sociolinguists have long agreed that language is a fundamental component of a people's identity. Its endangerment and eventual loss can have profound cultural, personal and ecological consequences, potentially leading to the extinction of vital cultural knowledge (Low et al.; Schieffelin et al.; Kroskrity). The prevention of the loss of the Tibetan language and a resulting disappearance of Tibetan / Buddhist knowledge was one of the main activities to which Namkhai Norbu's dedicated his life. For example, besides being an eminent scholar in the fields of Tibetan Language and Literature, he also founded the umbrella organization *The International Atiyoga Foundation* that, amongst others,

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13 Nicolas Tournarde suggests that 'Tibetic' is a more accurate way of speaking of 'Tibetan' due to its multiple dialects. No single Tibetan language exists, but rather various languages that are not mutually intelligible: "With the recent descriptions of many new 'dialects' or 'languages', scholars of Tibetan linguistics have come to realize the incredible diversity of this linguistic area. The representation of a single language is no longer viable and we have to speak of a language family. In fact, the Tibetic linguistic family is comparable in size and diversity to the Romance or Germanic families. The term 'Tibetic' is thus very convenient to denote a well-defined family of languages derived from Old Tibetan" (106-107).

14 The majority of Tibetic languages have under 10.000 speakers, yet the precise number of fluent speakers cannot be identified ("Endangered Language Alliance").

includes the departments of *The School of Tibetan Language and Translation* and *The Shang Shung Institute* (“International Atiyoga Foundation”, *International Atiyoga Foundation*). Khaita, with its selected songs in Tibetan language by Tibetan artists, is a continuation of this life endeavour as a method to expose practitioners to Tibetan language and culture.

It is worth highlighting in this regard is that Namkhai Norbu encouraged his students, Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike, to engage with Tibetan language / culture as a gateway to Buddhist knowledge. In the introduction to *Message from Tibet*, he writes:

Regardless of whether one is Tibetan or not, if all of those who have a love for Tibetan culture can take an interest in these new Tibetan songs, this attitude will certainly be of help to the Tibetan culture; therefore I earnestly request all such people to keep this in mind. (10)

To him, Khaita represented a joyful and easily accessible way to learn about, disseminate and preserve Tibetan culture and language, regardless of national or ethnic belonging, through songs and dances.

*Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* exemplifies how Namkhai Norbu used Khaita as a method to preserve Tibetan language and expose Khaita enthusiasts to it. He transcribed the original song texts in Tibetan language and *Drajyor* and then, with help from experts, translated them into to English. *Drajyor* (སྐ་སྐྱེར་, sgra sbyor) is a phonetic transcription system that represents Tibetan sounds with Latin letters. It was devised



by Namkhai Norbu and perfected for use in spiritual practice texts.<sup>15</sup> Singing along to the artist's voice, following the *Drajyor* transcription, enables non-Tibetan speakers to become familiar with Tibetan lexis and syntax.

In addition to that, *Dzamlng Gar Song* includes an extensive linguistic and explanatory commentary. This is representative of other Khaita songs; Namkhai Norbu gave numerous oral explanations on such songs. *Dzamlng Gar Song*'s commentary is thereby special in its extent and precision, which led to its publication in the booklet *Dzamlng Gar Song* in 2018. Besides its deeper meaning as a Dzogchen text, the commentary is valuable as a linguistic resource, explaining lexical nuances and grammatical specificities. The booklet further includes a musical notation of the song that might facilitate the singing process. Namkhai Norbu also commented on other songs from the Khaita collection, and many of these commentaries are published in *Collected Commentaries on the Songs in Message from Tibet through Songs and Dances*. They are, however, significantly shorter than the one on *Dzamlng Gar Song* and do not include musical notations.

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15 In *Drajyor: Tibetan Phonetics for the Dzogchen Community* it says: "The Drajyor phonetic transcription system was created by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu to facilitate the correct pronunciation of Tibetan without knowledge of the Tibetan alphabet and as a support to learn to properly pronounce Tibetan. This booklet introduces all of the possible letter and sound combinations occurring in Tibetan texts along with their Drajyor equivalents. Drajyor distinguishes subtle differences in pronunciation using technical devices such as accentuation in addition to a conventional (nonstandard) use of the letters of the Latin alphabet and hence can represent a wider range of sounds and tones than more common phonetic systems. Drajyor is particularly useful for practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism and Dzogchen and is commonly used in the Dzogchen Community." (Shang Shung Publications, 2021) The difference between the Wylie system and Drajyor is that Wylie represents a standardized way to represent Tibetan syllables and orthography whereas Drajyor exclusively focusses on the sound and pronunciation of Tibetan. For more information on the Wylie transcription system see (Wylie).

From my year-long field research within the centers of the International Dzogchen Community, I can confirm that many Khaita practitioners – most of whom come from Western language backgrounds – report increased exposure to Tibetan language and knowledge through the songs in the Khaita collection. For example, several practitioners shared that the repeated singing and engagement with the meaning of the songs motivated them to study Tibetan or improve their language skills. However, only a few practitioners have expressed a sufficient level of proficiency in Tibetan to fully understand songs from the Khaita collection without English translation. Additionally, the pronunciation of Tibetan sounds remains unfamiliar to most, and many still find the written characters difficult to read, even after years of training (Leick, *Khaita – Joyful Dances*).

Video: “The Sun of Samantabhadra” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Zc1hiuR2UA&t=2s>

## **(2) Presence, Awareness and Harmony**

Besides supporting Tibetan culture and language, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is also representative of Khaita’s second main designated purpose, namely the promotion of presence, awareness and harmony. This connects to Khaita’s translation from Tibetan to Harmony in Space, which is often used as a descriptive epithet in English. This epithet is intertwined with Namkhai Norbu’s Dzogchen teachings and his continuous efforts to make his students aware of their circumstances and provide them with tools to enable them to become more present.

Like many Khaita dances, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is

danced in a circle. Dancing it in a harmonious way means that one's attention is not only on one's own movements, focusing on physical coordination and bodily presence, but also on the correspondence to the general choreography, on the group, on the music, on the spacing and, ideally, on remembering the lyrics and their meaning.

In the following, I analyse the three parts of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*'s song text in a close reading and highlight general principles that correlate with the Khaita project per se. I do this by first focusing on the lyrics of each section. Using techniques of dance analysis, I then follow an embodied approach and concentrate on the choreography of the dance.

## First Part: Dzamling Gar

*Dzamling Gar Song* begins with the following words:<sup>16</sup>

འཛམ་གླིང་ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཐོག་ཆེན་ འདུག་ཟེཿ འཛམ་གླིང་ཁྱོད་ལ་མི་མཆོག་ལ་ གང་འདྲ་མཆོག་ལ་	zám ~ lín kyon-gyĩ-, zóg qen- dús dé-, zám~ lín~ gár~ la~ ji~ gyòg~ gǎñ~ ãñ~gyòg	Dzogchen Communities of the whole world, To Dzamling Gar, as soon as possible,
བདེ་ལྡན་དུ་ལེགས་ཤོག་~ དགའ་~མྱེད་འཛམ་གླིང་ལགས་འཇམ་ ལྷན་ལྷན་ཐོག་ཆེན་ལགས། དགའ་~མྱེད་རྩལ་ལ་ལེགས་ཤོག་དང་། བདེ་ལྡན་མཉམ་དུ་རྩལ་ཤོག་ བགས་ལ་ཤིས་པར་ཤོག་ བསམ་པ་དོན་འཁུན་པར་ཤོག་ བག་ཤིས་ལྷན་ཁྱོད་ལྷན་ལ་ཕྱུག་ ཁྱོད་ལ་ལྷན་ཁྱོད་ལ་ལྷན་ཤོག་	dé~ lhod~du peb~ xog~. gá~ gyid zòm~ jyũñ~ lag~ a~. pun~ sum~ cog~jyũñ lag, gá~ gyid~ rol~ la~ peb~ ཅ་དྭན་, dé~ gyid ñám~ du~ rol~ lo. dra ~la~ xis~bar xog, sám~ dôn drüb~ bar xog, dra ~xis lhun~ gyis~ drüb~ ūnas, qyog ~gun~las nám~ bar~ gyál~ lo.	In a relaxed manner, please come! Happiness is present, All is perfected, nothing is missing. Please come to enjoy happiness, Let's enjoy happiness together! May all manifest auspiciously! May our desires be fulfilled! With self-perfected fortune arising, May victory manifest in all directions!

(International Atiyoga Foundation, Dzamling Gar)

The lyrics represent an invitation to the “Dzogchen Communities

16 For efficiency, repetitions of lines have been removed. Besides Tibetan script and English translation, the table includes Drajyor translation as published.

of the whole world” to come to Dzamling Gar “in a relaxed manner”, where “happiness is present” and “nothing is missing” (ibid.). These words can be understood in two senses. Firstly, “Dzogchen Community of the whole world” refers to all those interested in the Dzogchen teachings, regardless of their nationality, cultural background, gender, social class, age or physical abilities.

Until his death in 2018, Namkhai Norbu travelled all around the world to teach and spread his knowledge of Dzogchen. As part of his global activities, he founded several centers of the International Dzogchen Community. ‘Merigar’, located in Tuscany, Italy and inaugurated in 1980, was the first. The creation of other ‘Gars’, meaning major centers, and ‘Lings’, minor centers, followed all around the world. The International Dzogchen Community now consists of thousands of members in over forty countries (“International Dzogchen Community”).



Figure 1: Map of the International Dzogchen Community with its centers.  
©Fulvio Ferrari

Dzamling Gar, established in 2013, which coincided with the creation of *Dzamling Gar Song*, is located on the Canarian Island of

Tenerife. It serves as the ‘global Gar’, representative of all other centers. Dzamling Gar has been crucial for the development of Khaita; practice sessions happen every day and performances take place regularly.

The first part of *Dzamling Gar Song* is an invitation to the “Dzogchen Communities of the whole world” to come to the physical site of Dzamling Gar, “in a relaxed way”, and enjoy dancing and being together (International Atiyoga Foundation, *Dzamling Gar*). This shows Khaita’s transculturality and -locality, its openness to all people and the diversity of its practitioners.

Secondly, the lyrics can be interpreted beyond the understanding of Dzamling Gar as a physical site. Instead, ‘Dzamling Gar’ refers to the state of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* that may arise in each individual in a self-perfected way. As such, the song’s lyrics are an invitation to one’s true nature from where everything manifests perfectly. In the commentary to the song, Namkhai Norbu explains:

Everything goes well because we are not doing something in a dualistic way, not fighting or struggling to obtain something. We are dealing with how our real nature is, our nature as it manifests, we are working with that. Of course, everything that manifests is then positive. (*Dzamling Gar Song* 21)

The state of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* is associated with presence and awareness of experiencing one’s condition and circumstances, one’s real nature. A ‘supreme harmony’, where there is nothing to do, force or worry about, is the result. This is expressed through “as soon as possible, in a relaxed way” (International Atiyoga Foundation, *Dzamling Gar*):

*Ji gyòg gǎŋ gyòg* means as soon as possible, not slowly, or maybe next year. But when we say to come as soon possible, it does not mean that you should get nervous and stressfully force yourself to come soon. That is not the point. The point is to come as soon as possible in a relaxed way. (Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song* 20)

In this sense, the words can be understood as an invitation to relax in one's own natural state (*Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*) that is to be discovered without making special effort or having to change anything. Residing in this state is compared to a “victory” from which everything manifests in positive ways (International Atiyoga Foundation, *Dzamling Gar*).

It is worth highlighting that this invitation is conveyed in the format of a song and is danced to. This is decisive for all Khaita dances; instead of limiting the physical senses, a common method in other Buddhist traditions, the contemplation takes place while moving and singing. This is a key characteristic of Namkhai Norbu's Dzogchen teachings. He explains:

If you train in sitting meditation, without moving, without even shifting your eyes, it is easier to discover a calm state, free of thoughts [and be present]. But this is only half the path, because movement is part of our real nature as well. If we develop only the calm state, we can definitely feel relaxed and not confused while we meditate, but sooner or later we will have to move. And what will happen then to our meditation? It is as if you go to a nice hotel to relax and spend some quiet time away from your worries. As nice as it is, it does not last. You stay one day, two

days, one week, then you have to go. And all your stress and worries are waiting for you outside. For this reason, in the Dzogchen teachings the emphasis is on knowing how to integrate with movement. (*Starting the Evolution* 87)

Therefore, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* and all Khaita dances are a method of practicing to relax, being present and, if possible, residing in the state of Dzogchen, while moving (harmoniously) in space.

### **Movements: First Part**

The movements of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* begin with a musical part without singing that is repeated several times. It consists of a simple sequence of basic steps<sup>17</sup>, each in counts of four, with both arms expanding slowly. The right arm rises slightly higher to the center of the circle while the left arm stretches to the outside, approximately at shoulder height.

With the words, the movements change and a combination of rhythmical steps, which repeats three times, follows. The body orientation thereby alternates from facing the inside of the circle to following the direction of the circle. The movements do not have a designated meaning and follow the style of Tibetan folk dances.

With *gá gyid zòm jyũŋ lag* and so forth, the movements turn into the chorus of the dance, which gets repeated three and a half times in total

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<sup>17</sup> The basic step is a combination of weight shift from right to left leg, with the right leg performing a slight kick away from the ground on the fourth count of the movement.

before the end of the dance. Two movements are particularly striking: the raising of the arms, with turning hand movements on four levels, and the turning in two different directions. The first combination is accompanied by the words *gá gyid zòm jyŷŷ lag*, “happiness is present” (International Atiyoga Foundation, *Dzamling Gar*). The raising of the arms thereby exemplifies something manifesting, and the turning hands can be viewed as playful ornaments, representing happiness. The turning in two directions is connected with the principle of balancing choreography and enhancing dancers’ presence and awareness. As a result of Namkhai Norbu’s feedback process, the change of turns in opposite directions can often be found in Khaita dances.



Picture 1: Raising of the arms (start)<sup>18</sup>



Picture 2: Raising of the arms (final)

To sum up, the first part of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is an invitation to come to Dzamling Gar, both in the literal sense of visiting its geographic site as the global center of the Dzogchen Community, where Khaita is practiced daily, and in the understanding of Dzamling Gar as one’s real nature. Residing in the state of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* of full presence relates to happiness and positive manifestations everywhere.

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<sup>18</sup> The pictures from 1-6 are screenshots from International Atiyoga Foundation’s Dzamling Gar Dance demonstration video. (2024). Dzamling Gar. <https://khaita.com/songs/dzamling-gar>



## Second Part: Collaboration

The second part of *Dzamling Gar Song* contains the following words:

དང་ཅག་གི་སྒོ་བས་ཤུགས་། མཉམ་ཅིག་ཏུ་གྱུ་ འདྲེན་། ཐོག་མ་མཉམ་ཅིག་འདྲེན་ཡང་མཉམ་ཏུ་སྒོ་བས་འདྲེ གས་། མཉམ་ཅིག་ཏུ་གྱུ་ལ་ཤོག་། དགའ་འཕྲིད་འཛིན་ལུང་ལགས་ལ་འཕྲི སྒོ་བས་འདྲེན་མཉམ་ཅིག་ཏུ་གྱུ་ལ་ཤོག དགའ་འཕྲིད་འཛིན་ལུང་ལགས་། ཏུ་མཉམ་ཏུ་གྱུ་ལུང་ལགས་། མ་འོ་ཏི་ཏི་ཏུ་དགོངས་ཏུ་ཐོངས་འདྲེན་།  འཛིན་ལུང་ལ་བདེ་གྱུ་འདྲེན་པོ་དོ་དོ་ བྱུ་ལ་འཕྲིད་ཤིས་པར་ཤོག བསམ་པོ་དོན་འབྱུང་པར་ཤོག རང་ལ་ཐུག་ཏུ་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ལྟུང་ལས་ནས་།  འཛིན་ལུང་ལ་ཤི་བདེ་ལ་ཤི་བདེ་ལ་	ned ~ jag~gĩ dob~ xug~, lhan ~jig~du dril~ dāñ~. zóg~ qen~ dùs~ dé~ yon~ gyi dob~ ò ~xug lhan~ jig~du dril ~xog~. gá~ gyid zòm~jyũñ~ lag~ a~. dob~ ò~xug lhan ~jig~du dril ~xog. gá ~gyid zòm~jyũñ lag, lhun~ gyĩs~ grub~jyũñ lag, a~ tii da~ góñ~ gyon~ añ~dāñ,  zám ~lĩñ~la~ dé~ gyid~ hõñ~ ño. dra ~la~ xis~bar xog sám ~dón drùb~par xog, rañ ~gyúd~gyi nál~ lug~ gyás~ as~nas , zám~ lĩñ~gun xĩ~ dé~la rol~ lo.	Let's unite our strength and capacity, Dzogchen Communities, all your strength and capacity Let's unite! Happiness is present, Let's unite your strength and capacity! Happiness is present, All is manifesting self-perfected. Live in the knowledge of the primordial state, And happiness will arise in the world. May all manifest auspiciously! May our desires be fulfilled! Developing the knowledge of our authentic condition The entire world peace will enjoy.
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(ibid.)

The second part of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* is dedicated to the aspect of harmonious collaboration. “Let’s unite our strength and capacity” can be understood both in the literal sense of working together harmoniously as well as a deeper meaning of being together in the state of Dzogchen in an undistracted way (ibid.):

So *ned jag gĩ dob xug* means our energy, our effort, everything. *Lhan jig du dril dāñ* means we are bringing it all together. [...] Being together is just like when we do Guruyoga.<sup>19</sup> [I]n that moment, thinking this or that does not distract us. We try to be in a state, the primordial state. That is our real nature. [...] In a relative sense *ned jag gĩ dob xug lhan jig du dril dāñ* means to

<sup>19</sup> Guruyoga is one of the main meditation methods in several Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

unite, to work together. In an absolute sense, it means to integrate and really find ourselves in our state. (*Dzamling Gar Song* 23) Khaita is a practice that builds on collaboration between different people.

This is best illustrated through the example of a circle, the formation in which most Khaita dances are performed. Three aspects are thereby essential: First, a circle cannot physically be formed alone and requires more than one person. Second, provided there is adequate space, it is open to an infinite number of people. Third, there is no hierarchy in a circle. As soon as one enters the circle of dancers, one is part of the group. The ‘successes’ of the Khaita choreographies are therefore not so much dependent on individual dancers’ capacities as on the overall harmony of the group. Collaboration with the other dancers, presence and awareness with the movements, and harmony with the music as well as the space become more important.

In addition to this, collaboration is a common theme of the Khaita songs. Many songs, for example, emphasize the unity of the Tibetan people. Several songs highlight the importance of unity among the three Tibetan regions of Amdo, Kham and Ü-Tsang, and within the diaspora by remembering their common points of interest such as a shared history, language and religion and cultural identity. Similarly, the main point of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*’s second part is the reminder of everyone’s potentiality to be in the state of Dzogchen, which is a shared quality: “Everyone, the group and the individuals within it, has the primordial potentialities” (Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song* 23). In other words, it recalls the essence of human nature that can be shared joyfully and in a relaxed way.

After the invitation in the first part, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*’s second part encourages people to work together in a harmonious way and to connect in the essence of the teachings.

## Movements: Second Part

The movements of the second part start after the musical interlude, as described above. With the starting of the words, dancers move forward in the direction of the circle for four counts before coming back with the same movement in the same timing. The legs perform a ‘limping step’, with the right leg giving the accent and the left slightly dragging behind. The arms move along the body and rise to the center of the circle on the fourth count of the movement, together with the right leg executing a slight kick. The importance of this combination lies in moving in space, forward and backward.

After this, with the words of *zóg qen dūs dé yon gyi dob xug*, dancers change their body orientation from facing the direction of the circle to the center of the circle. With four simple steps they walk inside the circle and come back to their original position again. They perform a  $\frac{3}{4}$  turn on the spot before repeating the whole sequence starting from the opposite leg, including the turn, to the outside of the circle. The arms rise during the turn and stay at the level of the navel with the walking steps. Again, the turns are performed in different directions. The same is true for the steps: While the steps inside the circle start with the left leg, the steps to the outside direction begin with the right. This corresponds to the previously mentioned principle of choreographic balance. After this, the chorus as described in the first part repeats.



Picture 3: Going inside the circle



Picture 4: Going outside the circle

The characteristic of the second part's movements is the use of space in all directions; forward, backward, inside, outside and all around as proposed by the turns. This relates to movement in life that is never still and, on a larger scale, also refers to the movement of the earth in the solar system. On a choreographic level, the dancers' collaboration is crucial as they need to be aware of how they move in space with respect to the people in front of and behind them. Keeping a unified circle can be challenging, particularly when moving to the outside of the circle and not seeing the group. In brief, *Dzamling Gar Song's* second part is dedicated to the principle of harmonious collaboration.

### Third Part: Application and Peace

Dzamling Gar Song's third and last part has the following words:

མ་ ~ ཉི་འི་དགོངས་པོ་རྟོན་། རང་ ~ རྒྱུད་ལ་ རྩལ་ དང་ །	a ~ tii gón~ dón~, ran~ gyúd~la dril~ dān~, ran~ gyúd~ nál~ lug~ dog~ jyod-gyis zām~ ām-līn	Integrate the principle of Ati in your state! Through the knowledge and application of one's authentic condition, the world
རང་ རྒྱུད་ རྩལ་ འཕགས་ རྟོན་ རྒྱུད་ རྩམ་ འཛམ་ འམ་ རྒྱུད་	xī~ dé~la kòd ~ yon~.	Will be established in peace!
ཞི་ བདེ་ལ་ འཛིན་ ~ ཡོང་ །	ran~ gyúd nál~ lug~ dog~ jyod-gyis zām~ ām-līn	Through the knowledge and application of one's authentic condition, the world
རང་ ~ རྒྱུད་ རྩལ་ འཕགས་ རྟོན་ རྒྱུད་ རྩམ་ འཛམ་ འམ་ རྒྱུད་	xī~ dé~la kòd ~ yon~o~.	Will be established in peace!
ཞི་ བདེ་ལ་ འཛིན་ ~ ཡོང་ ~ འོ་ །	gá~gyid zòm~jyūn lag~ a~.	Happiness is present,
དགའ་ འོ་ རྒྱུད་ འཛམ་ རྒྱུད་ འཕགས་ ~ འོ་ །	zām~ am-līn xī~ dé~la kòd ~ yon.	The world will be established in peace.
འཛམ་ འམ་ རྒྱུད་ ཞི་ བདེ་ལ་ འཛིན་ ~ ཡོང་ །	gá~gyid zòm~jyūn lag,	Happiness is present,
དགའ་ རྒྱུད་ འཛམ་ རྒྱུད་ འཕགས་།	dé~ gá~ gyás~jyūn lag,	Joy is developing,
དགའ་ དགའ་ རྒྱུད་ རྒྱུད་ འཕགས་།	ran~gyúd nál~ lug~la~ jyór~ ò~dān,	Integrate the authentic condition in your state,
རང་ ~ རྒྱུད་ རྩལ་ འཕགས་ལ་ རྒྱུད་ འོ་ དང་ །	gun~sán~gī ŋi~ ma~ xar~ro~.	And the sun of Samantabhadra will arise.
ཀུན་ ~འབངས་ འགྱི་ ཉི་ མ་ ཤར་ རོ་ །	dra~la~ xis~bar xog	May all manifest auspiciously!
བཟུ་ ~ ལ་ ཤེས་པར་ ཤོག	sām~ dōn drüb~par xog,	May our desires be fulfilled!
བསམ་ ~ རྟོན་ འཕགས་པར་ ཤོག	drò~gun dé~ xīn~ gyid~ ī~nas,	May all beings have joy!
འོ་ ~ ཀུན་ བདེ་ ཞི་ རྒྱུད་ ~ རི་ རྟམ་	dan~dé~yi bal~la~ rol~lo.	And enjoy the splendor of ultimate happiness.
གཏན་ འབདེ་མི་ དཔལ་ ལ་ རྩལ་ རྟོ		

(International Atiyoga Foundation, Dzamling Gar)

The third part is dedicated to the integration of knowledge, of “the principle of Ati”, which means “the primordial state” as “the state of Dzogchen

knowledge” (Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song* 26), and its consequences for the whole world. Namkhai Norbu therein stresses that the understanding of the knowledge of Dzogchen is not an intellectual matter:

*Raj gyúd nál lug* means our knowledge, our understanding, being in our real nature. First is *dog*. *Dog* means you understand, not in an intellectual way but concretely. You discover how your real nature is. *Jyod* means that you not only know it, but then you remain in this knowledge. (ibid. 27)

As such, the last part of the song highlights the aspect of the concrete application in daily life of knowledge experienced. The consequences of applying one’s authentic state might then lead to peace: “Through the knowledge and application of one’s authentic condition, the world will be established in peace!” (International Atiyoga Foundation, *Dzamling Gar*).

Peace is a key principle of the Khaita practice (Leick, *Khaita – Joyful Dances*). It is not solely understood as the absence of war or violence but rather refers to a relaxed, clear and peaceful state of mind. This concept, focusing on inner transformation, is called ‘evolution’ in Namkhai Norbu’s teachings: “If we need peace, we need evolution and evolution must develop in the condition of the individual, not revolution. We always have the idea that we want to change someone. This is called revolution, but it doesn’t work and it has no benefit” (*Evolution and Our Responsibility Towards All Sentient Beings* 2). It follows that the starting point for peace is the individual and not the external.<sup>20</sup>

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20 This is a common belief in Buddhism. The Dalai Lama, for example, states: “Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way. [...] Peace must first be developed within an individual. And I believe that love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental basis for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world” (in Hanh).

Just as in counting to a million one must begin counting at the number one, so to benefit society, one must begin by working on oneself. Each individual must truly take responsibility for him or herself, and this can only be done by working to increase one's awareness, to become more fully conscious, more the master of oneself. Change on a small scale can bring about change on a wider scale (Norbu, *Crystal and the Way of Light* 164–165).

In this sense, Khaita can be viewed as a peace project: It enjoins practitioners to observe themselves, to be present and aware of their movement, the music, the space, the group and the connection to the meaning of the songs' lyrics. Ideally, as encouraged by *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*, practitioners manage to reside in their relaxed, peaceful, natural state of Dzogchen. Consequently, the knowledge of Dzogchen may spread to other individuals and, on a larger scale, to the whole world and help create world peace.

### **Movements: Third Part**

The characteristics of the third parts' movements are the opening of the arms in various ways. With *Ati*, they open from the heart above the head in a rather fast movement followed by two limping steps to the words of *gón dñn*. With *raṅ gyúd la drīl dāṅ*, both arms again raise above the head and open to the sides. Directly after this, the left arm opens above the head, followed almost immediately by the right arm. The combination symbolizes the integration of one's state in the space.

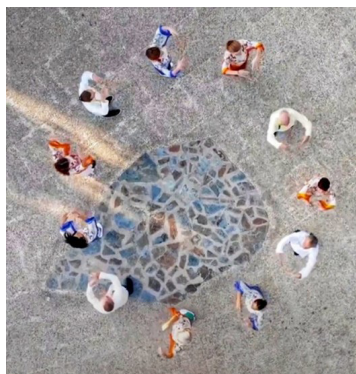
With the next line, the dancer moves slightly in the direction of the circle with *raṅ gyúd nál lug* and then returns to remain on the spot.

With *dog jyod gyis*, both arms are raised again above the head. In this moment, the heels lift off the floor: With the words *zàm ģm-lĩŋ xĩ dē*, the dancer moves backwards, in the opposite direction to the circle. First, the right leg and right arm open to the back before the left leg and arm do the same movement to the opposite side. The arms thereby open in a round way, as if showing the planet earth (*zàm ģm-lĩŋ*) and offering it peace (*xĩ dē*). This is a moment that requires musical and lyrical awareness, as the movement needs to be precisely timed with the lyrics. The line finishes with the dancer bringing the arms down to the slightly bent knees and opening them from there above the head in a slow-paced way with *kòd yon o*. The line is then repeated in the exact same way. After this, the chorus is performed one more time, with a fast additional repetition starting from the line *dra la xis bar xog* and the musical interlude.

The many openings of the arms of the third part are related to spreading in space, establishing oneself in it, while incorporating one's surroundings. The physical sensation of stretching in all directions aligns with the lyrics of the third part that encourage applied knowledge of one's state in the world / in the space.



Picture 5: Raising of the right arm



Picture 6: Raising of both arms



To sum up, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*'s third part is associated with the application of one's knowledge and experience and the spreading of peacefulness around the world. As such, it aligns with the purpose of Khaita to promote harmony within oneself and the extended group.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have shown how *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* exemplifies the underlying principles of Khaita – Joyful Dances. Khaita's connection to Tibetan culture has become clear by exploring the way Namkhai Norbu uses songs in Tibetan language, their transcriptions and translations, and their meaning connected to Tibetan life and knowledges as a method to promote his students' engagement with Tibetan culture. As such, Khaita contributes to the safeguarding of Tibetan language and culture.

In addition, the analysis of *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*'s three sections have illustrated several principles of the Khaita practice, namely the connection to the Dzogchen teachings with their focus on residing in the state of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, the aspect of collaboration amongst all dancers despite their diverse backgrounds and the application of one's experience in peaceful ways. I have clarified thereby how *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance* promotes presence, awareness and harmony for its practitioners, and is representative of all Khaita songs and dances.

Being written and choreographed by the Dzogchen Master Namkhai Norbu, *Dzamling Gar Song and Dance*'s meaning is manifold and aligns with several points in his profound Dzogchen teachings. It



is exemplary of the extensive Khaita project that represents Namkhai Norbu's last major teaching and can thus be viewed as a Khaita manifesto.

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