

Dharma Art

The Art
of
Sange Wangchug

By Michael Erlewine

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THE UNDERSTANDING

I have kept these images mostly private for the last thirty years, lest they be misused. However, I am getting older and I would really like to share these, but I have to trust you not to misuse these sacred images; so here are the stipulations.

These images are for your personal use. They are offered in two sizes, to fit 5 x 7 and 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper. You can take this PDF to Staples (or some copy place) and print the whole thing out, page by page, or have them print just the pages you want onto stiff white paper stock. Or, you can try to print them on your own printers, etc.

NOTE: In respect for the artist (Sange Wangchug) and for the dharma, I ask you not to use them to advertise anything or for any other use than they were intended, which is as sacred objects of respect and veneration. This is what they were designed for and nothing else. To do anything else is to break the agreement upon which my sharing these images with you is based. If you wish to share these images with others, please explain to them the above stipulations and have them agree to honor them. You must decide if you share these sacred images whether the person you are sharing them with has respect and can receive them or just out of curiosity. The responsibility will be yours.

If you are on a PC, in Windows 7 Accessories, there is the “Snipping Tool,” which allows you to capture anything displayed on the screen. Some of this series have flaws or were part of a larger piece, so you may have to do a little image editing. And, of course, since these are B&W, you could turn them into vector images very easily in Adobe Illustrator.

These and other sets of dharma artwork can be found here (scroll down):

<http://dharmagrooves.com/>

The artist, Sange Wangchug, recently passed on (November 21, 2015), so here is something I wrote about Sange that may help you to better understand him.

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SANGE WANGCHUG

I was very sorry to learn today from one of the senior lamas at Karmé Ling Retreat Center in New York that my dear friend Sange Wangchug had passed away yesterday. Wangchug was one of perhaps two people I have met in my life who were not only benign, but guileless. Sange's presence graced any group where he appeared. He was always fun to be with.

In 1985 I invited Sange Wangchug and his wife Tseten to come live and work at our center here in Big Rapids, Michigan. Wangchug, a former monk, was a skilled calligrapher, an expert graphic artist, and was fluent in seven languages, including Tibetan, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Hindi, Pali, and Sanskrit. He lived at KTD Tibetan Monastery for some years before coming to our center, and while there he built a scale model of the forthcoming monastery, taught Tibetan language classes, and did all kinds of lettering, including the huge Sanskrit mantras in the main shrine room. He actually created the large Sanskrit mantras while with us.

Sange and his wife lived with us for 2-1/2 years, during which time we translated Tibetan astrology together from the original manuscripts into English, mostly the astrological works of the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. During that time Sange did so many things. I have over 400 original pen-and-ink drawings of Buddhist deities, and all kinds of other dharma graphics. We taught him how to use a Mac computer and Adobe Illustrator, and he soon produced wonderful dharma graphics electronically. Sange Wangchug also designed and help build the stupa that we have here at our center, overseeing it all, and measuring everything to scale.

When we decided to run a mail-order dharma item business for KTD Monastery from here in Michigan, Sange Wangchug help to design the whole thing, including traveling to Nepal and India, securing the best statues, incense, and all manner of stuff.

Earlier in his life, as a monk, Wangchug had been Omze (chant master) for one of the four regents for the Karma Kagyu lineage. Sange was also renowned for his singing of the Dohas (songs of spiritual experience) of the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa, which reminds me of this story.

When it came time for Sange and his wife Tseten to leave us and return to Bhutan, we had a goodbye party with Sange, his wife, Margaret, our friend David McCarthy, and myself. We asked Sange to sing for us one of the songs of Milarepa. He said he would, but wanted the rest of us to sing a song too. We agreed, and so we did. Sange, of course, sang beautifully, David too, while Margaret and I did the best we could. Then Sange's wife Tseten's turn came, and she also sang. We had not considered her much as a singer, because, well, that was Sange's forte.

To our amazement she sang a Tibetan mountain song that struck to the heart and had all of us crying. We had no idea that Tseten could sing like that!

Sange Wangchug went on to become the Minister of Culture for Bhutan (or some title like that). I had dinner with Sange a few years ago and have been in touch with him by email over the last year. We had a true and genuine friendship. I will very much miss him being here on the planet with us. The world was better for me just knowing he was around.

Here is a little poem I wrote, which I offer to the memory of Sange Wangchug, along with my sincere prayers for his transition.

CLOSE FRIEND

We can't replace,
What there is,
Only one of.

[Photo of Sange Wangchug back in the 1980s, working on his drafting table doing calligraphy or dharma art. Wangchug did the calligraphy for many, many Tibetan practice sadhanas, which we then published. His handwriting was lovely and much in demand. I have many dozens of hand-lettered sheets of the main Tibetan sadhanas which I may make available to those interested. You could frame a single sheet of his calligraphy. It's lovely. Also shown is one of his hand-drawn pen & ink Buddhist deities, in this case Chenresik, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.]



































































































































































































































