

THE VOICE OF CLEAR LIGHT

News and Inspiration from Ligmincha Institute

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For easy reading, we recommend that you print out "The Voice of Clear Light."

A printable PDF version of this month's edition of VOCL, in readerfriendly newsletter format complete with color photographs, will be available online after August 20. Please check the link for VOCL on Ligmincha Institute's home page at www.ligmincha.org. You can also access an archive of previous issues at:

<http://ligmincha.org/study/vocl.html>

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"LEAVING THINGS IN THE MOMENT" – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

How do you normally respond to difficult situations in your life? For example, when someone challenges one of your ideas, are you able to accept the other person's viewpoint even if you disagree with it? If your ego is not so strongly identified with your idea then you will be fine with a difference of opinion - naturally there will always be those who disagree. If none of your ego is involved that's even better; you can respond, "You can do it your way," with no need to discuss things further.

How much of your ego is involved will determine how peacefully you can handle a difficult situation. Definitely, the more peaceful you are, the better. The more you tend to struggle, the worse things are. If you feel a need to fight about it, that is the worst of all. This sense of struggle and conflict creates a significant amount of stress in people's daily lives.

Some people may claim, "I live a very stressful life because of all the things I do." But your level of stress really has nothing to do with how much you do or don't do. There are a lot of people who have very little to do and yet they have more stress in their lives than anybody. You see, it's really more about your relationship with the things you

do, your attitude toward them, and the way you carry things within yourself.

The best advice from a dzogchen perspective would be something like, "Leave the problem here in this moment." When a difficult issue arises, do you need to be aware of the problem and its potential consequences? Yes. But do you need to worry about it so much? No. We all know clearly that worry contributes very little to resolving problems. Even though you don't have to worry about it, you do worry a little bit anyway, don't you? The next question is: How long does it make sense to worry about something? Is it okay to worry about it for two hours? How about for one day? Can you carry on worrying about it for one week, or how about a whole month? That's what some people do. They worry continuously, all the while knowing that worry does not help. The worry can occupy them so much, there's no time left to reflect clearly on the problem and find a solution.

It is through applying skill and awareness that one can resolve an issue. There is one type of worry associated with a bit more heightened awareness. For instance, after you've been in a bad situation, and it now seems as if a similar situation is arising, then you might worry about that. This kind of worry is generally not heavy and negative. It's helpful to be a little bit cautious and alert about things - we all have to be careful out in the world, don't we?

The kind of worry we most often engage in, though, has nothing to do with wisdom, nothing to do with method, and nothing to do with being cautious. It has its source in a seed that exists deep within us, a karmic seed that gives rise to a certain pattern of thought and behavior. We all have many karmic seeds within us, and we cannot blame anyone for them for their being there, not our parents nor any of our other relatives. These seeds are just there, and sometimes because of a lack of knowledge or skill in working with them, they become activated more than is necessary. Even if our pattern of worry is not activated by the particular issue at hand, we will invariably find another situation to activate that seed. It is important to reflect on how often this form of needless worry arises within us.

Perhaps you've heard of the famous "self-liberation" of the dzogchen tradition. One way to look at self-liberation is, the very moment an issue arises in day-to-day experience you are able to attend to it, and the next moment you forget about it. You just leave it - you simply cut it free right then and there, and just live. Be playful!

So rather than carrying a worry with you into your next moment, what about carrying goodness into it, and wisdom, and skillful means, and awareness? These are what should be carried into the next moment, not your problems and worries. Besides, why carry a problem into the next moment when a brand new problem is probably waiting for you there? If you do that you will have two problems to deal with. Most people are skilled at activating three problems simultaneously - the one that is

present right now, the one from the previous moment, and the next one that we are worried about for the future. People live very stressful lives in exactly this way!

So, it's good to reflect on the opportunity we have to leave things in the moment. When the next moment is entirely the next moment, we can live more fully.

SEVERAL UPCOMING FALL RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

**To register for any of the following retreats please call (434) 977-6161 or e-mail: Ligmincha@aol.com

Sept. 13-17, 2006

INTRODUCTION TO THE NATURE OF MIND – The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung: Part 2

with Ponlop Trinley Nyima

The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung is the centerpiece of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's dzogchen teachings and is presented solely at Serenity Ridge. The practice manual of the Experiential Transmission, the "Chag Tri," provides pith instructions for those who aspire to practice dzogchen, the path of self-liberation. We are pleased to announce that Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche of Menri Monastery will again teach Part Two of the Experiential Transmission at Serenity Ridge this year.

Part Two presents the third chapter of the Chag Tri, now available in English translation for those who attend the retreat. It includes the practice of zhine as the skillful means to establish a calm abiding mind; the methods for stabilizing the resulting mindfulness through practices of dark retreat and sun and sky gazing; and guidance for recognizing experiences of rigpa – innate awareness. These meditation practices, including physical postures and eye gazes, introduce the practitioner to the nature of mind.

Practitioners who have already received Part Two also are invited to attend this retreat led by one of the foremost teachers of Bon.

Students attending this retreat are eligible to attend Part Three of the Experiential Transmission with Tenzin Rinpoche during the winter retreat this year.

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$400 if received by Aug. 9; \$450 if received by Aug. 30; \$500 if received after Aug. 30

Sept. 20-24, 2006

ADVANCED TRUL KHOR

with Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and Alejandro Chaoul-Reich

This retreat is offered to those trul khor students who have attended all four training retreats and received a diploma of completion.

Students who have completed the first three training retreats may attend this retreat with permission from Alejandro. (Please write to

him at Ligmincha@aol.com to request consideration.”

During this retreat, students will practice and study under the supervision of both Ponlop Rinpoche and Alejandro all that has been learned in the training retreats. With Ponlop Rinpoche's additional guidance, it will be an opportunity to refine one's understanding of the body's energetic dimension – the subtle channels, the vital breath that circulates through them, and the subtlest aspects of mind. In addition, there will be the great benefit of strengthening this community of Tibetan yoga practitioners.

For more information about trul khor retreats sponsored by Ligmincha Institute and its affiliated centers, visit these two Web pages:

Ligmincha.org/program/description/trul_khor.html

Ligmincha.org/program/description/TrulKhor_MS.htm

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$400 if received by Aug. 16; \$450 if received by Sept. 6; \$500 if received after Sept. 6

Oct. 18-22, 2006

Ligmincha's Annual Fall Retreat:

SACRED ECOLOGY – Outer, Inner and Secret Teachings on the Five Elements
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Space, air, fire, water and earth are the sacred underlying forces of existence. Because the five elements are sacred all that arises from them – and that is everything – is also sacred. For many years, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has emphasized the importance of developing an intimate understanding of how the elements influence our lives on an external, inner and secret level. In his book “Healing With Form, Energy and Light,” he explains that “the space in which the universe arises, the space our living room couch occupies, and the space in which our thoughts arise is the same space and is sacred.”

The Bon Buddhist teachings on the five elements are vast. At this year's annual fall retreat, Tenzin Rinpoche will present teachings on the “Personality of Elements,” a system of influences similar to the Tibetan science of astrology. His commentary will focus on our human relationship to the sacred nature of the environment and how elemental qualities can manifest as destructive physical and emotional forces or as vitality and personal power.

During the course of the retreat, Rinpoche will introduce and guide breathing and movement practices that incorporate the beauty and life forces of nature, the practice of Sang Chod to raise one's vital energy, and the healing practices of the five elemental goddesses. Tenzin Rinpoche welcomes everyone who cares about sacred ecologies of body, emotions, mind and environment to attend this retreat.

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$400 if received by Sept. 13; \$450 if received by Oct. 4; \$500 if received after Oct. 4

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEJANDRO CHAOUL-REICH ABOUT THE \$2.4 MILLION GRANT AWARDED TO STUDY EFFECTS OF TIBETAN YOGA ON CANCER PATIENTS

Editor's Note: At Ligmincha's 2006 summer retreat, Tenzin Rinpoche announced the great news that a grant of \$2.4 million has been awarded to the MD Anderson Cancer Center for a clinical study on the effects of tsa lung/trul khor on women with breast cancer. Alejandro Chaoul-Reich, Ph.D., a senior student of Rinpoche, will be designing and conducting the study with Lorenzo Cohen, PhD, director of the cancer center's Integrative Medicine Program. We sat down with Ale one afternoon during the summer retreat to learn more about the study and what he hopes to see from it. His responses are below, preceded by highlights from a recently published article.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JUNE 2006 ISSUE OF "CANCERWISE" - an online publication of the MD Anderson Cancer Center:

The National Cancer Institute recently awarded a \$2.4 million grant for a large MD Anderson clinical study in which women with breast cancer who are scheduled to undergo chemotherapy will be randomly assigned to a Tibetan yoga group, a control group that does simple stretching exercises or to a group that receives standard care. The participants will practice their assigned techniques for a period of seven weeks while they are receiving chemotherapy and then will have five booster sessions in the following six months.

The newly funded study will assess the physical and psychological effects of the yoga program, and will specifically examine such lifestyle factors as fatigue and sleep, mental health and distress. Additionally, the study will examine cognitive and emotional processing, social networking and interactions, coping and other psychosocial factors.

Cohen adds that although the study is designed primarily to look at improvements in the quality of life, it could also find that Tibetan yoga offers health benefits as well. He said, "Theoretically if the Tibetan yoga intervention is found to decrease patients' stress levels, it could have an effect on their immune system."

[Says Tenzin Rinpoche, one of the principal advisors on Tibetan yoga:]

"These practices have long been considered beneficial for health, wellbeing and spiritual development, and we have always been interested in bringing this ancient knowledge into the area of modern scientific proof."

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEJANDRO CHAOUL-REICH - Alejandro spoke with us about his exciting work and how it has evolved.

VOCL: Would you describe for us the principle benefits of trul khor and tsa lung practice?

ALEJANDRO: These practices are a way of bringing your mind, your energy

and your body into harmony. The teachings refer to these three aspects of body, energy and mind as the three doors to enlightenment, because it is through them that you can come back home to your natural, meditative state of mind. The advantage of these practices is that they engage us in more tangible ways than just sitting in meditation, and they can bring us immediate results. When Rinpoche taught the tsa lung practices years ago, he said that they are like reading a bestselling novel, because you are almost guaranteed to immediately connect with the desired experience. Trul khor particularly engages the body. Even though it is physical, it helps you to release obstacles to meditation and enter a calm state of mind. One of its main advantages is that it helps to balance your energy.

When I first learned trul khor I was at Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal. After the initial prayers, we would all be doing seated meditation practice, and after a while the umdze would get up and lead us in a set of trul khor exercises. This would help alleviate any of our drowsiness or agitation, and then we would go back to our meditation. It is only natural that at some point you will be distracted during meditation practice. Trul khor is a way of revitalizing and re-energizing you, and giving you this chance to return to that state and continue.

When I told Tenzin Rinpoche about my own experiences with trul khor in Nepal, he set aside some time in his schedule to meet with me in the early mornings, and for three weeks he would go over the texts in more depth with me.

I cannot say enough about how very useful trul khor was for me. It got me back to that natural state of mind. It got me back to being more clear in my meditative state, back to having more “ding” - more confidence in where I was and in my ability. My experience with the practices has developed steadily since that time, through my sharing them with others at nearly every summer retreat. And now it is expanding into the medical field!

Lorenzo and I have been studying the beneficial effects of these practices in cancer patients, and we have won a substantial \$2.4 million grant for further research. I will be working to design the study and train people to conduct it at the hospital. We will be focusing mainly on the tsa lung, because some have said that trul khor might be too difficult physically for patients.

VOCL: How did you first become involved with this research?

ALEJANDRO: For a long time we have been looking with Rinpoche at the benefits of trul khor described in the ancient texts - benefits such as overcoming anger, releasing emotions, connecting with the elements, and the healing of specific organs of the body. Rinpoche has had a longtime interest in exploring the science underlying these benefits.

When I moved to Houston, I saw the MD Anderson Cancer Center, and often thought it would be a wonderful place to offer meditation instruction

to help relieve patients' suffering. And then one day Alma Rodriguez, a doctor there and a member of our Houston sangha, suggested that I might be interested in working with a brand new clinic at MD Anderson called the Place of Wellness. So I interviewed there, and they were very happy to add a new program. It was an all-volunteer program called "Tibetan Meditation – Connecting With the Heart," and it ran for over a year. As I was finishing my Ph.D, I suggested new ideas for research and they pointed me to a psychologist there, Dr. Lorenzo Cohen. The timing could not have been better because Yoga Journal had just published the positive article on Tibetan yoga, featuring the Bon trul khor as well as Namkhai Norbu's yantra yoga.

Lorenzo Cohen suggested designing a clinical study to look at the effects of tsa lung practice on lymphoma cancer patients. Rinpoche and Lopon were both very supportive of this idea.

We presented the results of this first study at the International Conference on Tibetan Medicine, held in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2003. The results were also published in The Cancer Journal in 2004. It was great to be published in a medical journal. One of the most rewarding things for me was of course that Rinpoche served as a main collaborator, and then that the study's bibliography included our own Tibetan Bon texts from the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud.

It has been wonderful to be able to merge my spiritual interest with my academic interests and now with my medical interests. My Ph.D. is on trul khor and its applications for cancer patients, and my thesis is entitled, "Magical Movement and Yogic Practices in the Bon Religion and Contemporary Medical Perspectives." I have been so fortunate to be able to study the trul khor with all of our Bon teachers, Nyima Wangyal, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima and Ponlop Trinley Nyima. Being able to bring this wisdom and the practices to people who are not dharma students has also been very rewarding.

VOCL: What findings came to light in your first study?

ALEJANDRO: Many people use it in very practical ways. For example, people getting ready for a CAT scan have said how much it has improved their experience – with a greater sense of well-being, less worry. They have been able to transform their experiences to a nicer, purer realm.

A lot of people speak about the effects on their pain. They have said, "Wow, while I was in this practice, the knee pain I have had for years disappeared."

We also found improved sleep quality and sleep quantity, less need of sleep medicine, and fewer intrusive thoughts. And people have spoken of generally feeling better. Some don't know how to articulate the benefits. Usually people are very happy just to have a connection like this in their lives.

VOCL: When will you be teaching tsa lung/trul khor again?

ALEJANDRO: We are likely to be offering it next spring in Crestone, Colorado. In September 2006 Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche from Menri Monastery will be teaching a retreat with me on advanced trul khor. We will, of course, continue teaching it here at Serenity Ridge as we've done during every summer retreat, and we'll continue teaching it in Mexico and Poland, as well.

VOCL: What additional studies on these practices do you see for the future?

ALEJANDRO: Designing an intervention that is replicable is key for our moving forward within the medical field, so that these practices can be applied to patients worldwide. Originally, one of our concerns for creating an effective intervention was that there were so few people trained in the practices of trul khor, and even fewer qualified to teach those practices. Now, we are working to develop a model of practice that could be used for almost any population with only minor adjustments, so that not only dharma practitioners would be able to do these practices. The basic form of each practice would stay the same, always respecting the tradition. To be able to apply interventions to various populations while bringing other sangha members into the process would be a dream come true for me. It would be very powerful if we can all work together to share these practices that our teachers have brought for the benefit of sentient beings.

SANGHA SHARING

Waiting to Exhale

A yoga teacher relates her first experience with Trul Khor

by Michele Schulz

An instructor and seasoned practitioner of yoga, I journeyed from New Mexico to the Tsa Lung Trul Khor retreat in Crestone, Colo., filled with both curiosity and excitement: curiosity of discovering a new form of yogic breathing and postures, and excitement that these teachings were coming to the Southwest - a first!

It was my intention to attend the teachings without expectation in order to avoid any disappointment. However, along with my excitement came hopes that the Tsa Lung Trul Khor teachings would be an opportunity to cultivate a more cohesive daily practice regimen — one that would pair ritual and meditation practice with breathing and yoga postures, all within the same tradition and lineage. E ma ho – how marvelous!

Nearly 30 of us gathered for the three-and-a-half-day retreat where Alejandro Chaoul-Reich would guide and instruct us through the Tsa Lung practices as well as the first two of the four Trul Khor cycles. The teaching sessions with Alejandro—four each day—were filled with his insights, personal experiences, and humor, including many "ha-ha's" (or rather "ha-phet's") as he demonstrated each practice and then invited us to join in.

Alejandro certainly made the practices look like a piece of cake! Then the challenge came - retaining the breath while we ourselves moved through the forms. Initially, my body felt like a pressure cooker - ready to burst before exhaling at the end of some particularly challenging movements. Without forcing, I gave them my best. It quickly became apparent that the ease with which Alejandro shared the forms came from his enthusiasm, dedication, and love for Tsa Lung Trul Khor. I've carried this inspiring example home with me and bring it to my mat again and again as I practice embodying the movements and freeing up the breath.

I was thankful that the teachings were paced to enable a true experience of each movement, while also giving ample space to receive Alejandro's wisdom about the history of the tradition. He read passages from the original texts and commentaries that describe the practices, and related stories about how this form of yoga has traveled from the East to the West.

Trul Khor literally means "magical movement of the vital breath and channels," and as we practiced together, a tangible sensation of magic truly seemed to fill the space around us. I equate the experience to the afterglow one feels after any practice in which prana is freed within the body, then merges with the freed-up prana of the group. When the practices became challenging and stirred up emotions, I remembered what Alejandro had said about their purpose — to bring us home and to help us reconnect with our true selves and ultimately with others. This gave a more altruistic meaning to the practice and encouragement to move through the obstacles.

Since the retreat, each time I come to my mat I'm reminded of the potency of the practices and their potential for transformation. Based on my understanding of the five elements, there is no transformation without fire, and the Trul Khor movements indeed spark an internal fire, an alchemy that burns away obstructions on the cognitive, physical, and emotional levels.

As I observe cause (the practices) and result (the afterglow of circulating prana), I can sense in myself a loosening of the stagnation in my tissues, increased space for the breath to move inside the body and into the central channel, and a more centered and stable mind. I'm certain others who know and practice these forms will agree - they cultivate a strong digestive fire, the ability to sleep like an infant, and an overall sense of joy and well-being. A purification process happens on many gross and subtle levels, and as a result, the potential arises for more profound levels of meditation.

I extend my gratitude to the lineage through which these teachings have been passed down, to Alejandro for his willingness to travel afar to learn and teach, to the sangha for its support, and to the preciousness of this human body as a vehicle for transformation.

DISHWATER SUTRA

Steel blades and skull cups,
Bathed in murky water,
Purified in scalding steam.
I am a beginner here.
I do not so much brandish the implements as fumble with them.
I scramble to keep up.
I do not know quite what I am doing.
The kitchen is a wrathful master.
Stacking plates in the hot afternoon sun,
I generate
Outer obstacles of sweat,
Inner obstacles of impatience,
Secret obstacles of clinging.
I am burning up from the outside.
Then Sherab Chamma appears.
But I do not recognize her,
Wearing an apron in the kitchen.
I try to walk by.
"Stop," she says. "Stand still."
She takes up a washcloth and runs it under cold water.
Then she lifts the cloth and drapes it over my face.
And my obscurations melt away in the cool flame of compassion.
- Alex Wright (written during the first week of the 2006 summer
retreat)

NEW ITEMS AT LIGMINCHA'S TIBET SHOP

To read descriptions and see photographs of the newest items at
Ligmincha Institute's Bookstore and Tibet Shop and for order
information, please go to www.ligminchastore.org and click on "search
by category or description" and then click on "New items." Or, go
directly to:
[http://www.ligminchastore.org/items.asp?CategoryID=16&SubCategory=0&Sub
mit=Search](http://www.ligminchastore.org/items.asp?CategoryID=16&SubCategory=0&Submit=Search)

BOOKS:

"Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings: Dzogchen Teachings From the Retreats in
Austria, England, Holland and America." According to Lopon Tenzin
Namdak; transcribed and edited, together with introduction and notes by
John Myrdhin Reynolds. This is a revised edition of the transcript by
the same name that we have carried in our store. It includes a new
introduction, an appendix, a biography of Lopon Tenzin Namdak, and a
sketch of the educational system at Lopon's monastery, Tritten Norbutse,
in Kathmandu, Nepal. Chapters include: Introduction to Bon; The
Attaining of Buddhahood according to Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen; Four
Essential Points for Understanding Dzogchen; The View of Shunyata found

in Madhamaka, Chittamatra and Dzogchen; The Views of Tantra, Mahamudra and Dzogchen; The View of Dzogchen; The Practice of Dzogchen; Rushans - The Preliminary Practices of Dzogchen; Introduction to Thekchod and Thodgal.

Paperback, 283 pages. Price: \$23.95

"The Little Luminous Boy." By Samten Karmay. Images of the dzogchen masters from Zhang Zhung, along with their biographies. Although this book is now out of print, we were able to obtain a few additional copies from the publisher in Bangkok, Thailand. Hardback, 120 pages.

Price: \$59

INCENSE:

Shang Shung Sacred Incense. New! Made in Lhasa according to traditional Shang Shung formula. Shang Shung (Zhang Zhung) is the ancient name of the province of Ngari in western Tibet. Shang Shung incense is based on the ancient texts and contains many plants and herbs, including musk, Kashmir saffron, and other precious medicinal substances. This incense is especially good for health, long life, luck and success. Approximately 30 sticks, 11" in length. Price: \$9.95