

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 Oct. 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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"THE ELEMENTS AND OUR WELL-BEING" – an excerpt from "Healing With Form, Energy, and Light" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Study of and practice with the elements is meant to positively affect our well-being by giving us the tools to bring the elements into the balance that underlies health and wholeness in any dimension of experience. It does not take great intuition to know when we are in or out of balance. We all know these experiences. They fall along a continuum from the most disturbed imbalance – psychosis or serious illness – to perfect balance, which occurs only when we can abide in the nature of mind, the buddha-nature. In our daily lives we are somewhere in between, moving from being more in balance to being more out of balance, and back again.

The idea of balancing elemental energies can be usefully applied to any human function, quality, or activity: health, relationship, spiritual practice, psychological make-up, emotional state, physical environment, and so on. Using imbalance of the elements as a primary metaphor, we can understand illness and unhappiness as well as obstructions on all

levels of spiritual practice. Balancing the elements then becomes a metaphor for healing, for the development of positive qualities and capacities, and for the elimination of negative qualities. If one element dominates, we need to cultivate its opposite. If we are dominated by fire, for example, then we try to activate water or earth, or vice versa. If earth is dominant – we are dull, sleepy, heavy – then we activate air or fire. And if air dominates us – we are flighty, nervous, with a short attention span – then we activate earth or water. There are many obvious examples of balancing in everyday life: If a fever becomes life-threatening, we may be told to soak in cold water; if we become too cold, we apply warmth; and if we're dehydrated, we drink water.

By nature, all conceptualizations are symbolic and the five elements are symbols of great depth and long tradition. Beyond metaphor, however, the five elements are energies that can be worked with directly by the practitioner through physical actions, energetic movement, and the flow of awareness.

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):

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

“ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES” – excerpts from the teachings of Bon and Buddhist masters

From the edited transcript of oral teachings given by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche during the November 2003 ngondro retreat:

Dzogchen teachings emphasize how to discover one’s own natural state of mind, which is the absolute truth of existence. It is the reality of this existence, and it is the reality of what we are. Once we discover this state, we have to practice and become familiar with it. In this way, we can purify our negative emotions, our defilements, and all the causes and conditions that bring us suffering and misery. The main teaching of dzogchen is to discover this state.

The reality of what we are is always with us, but it is so close that it is not easy to understand and recognize. Once we realize it, it is very special. In order to discover and realize this state, we have to prepare. It needs a lot of preparation. The ngondro teachings are the preliminary practices as preparation to reveal our own natural state of mind.

From “Wonders of the Natural Mind” by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

When we start to follow a teaching, there are essential qualities we must have as practitioners. It is important to have a good master and to receive clear instructions, to have great respect for the master and the teachings, to develop the capacity to practice, and not to be like the wind but stable in our practice and in ourselves.

Doing the ngondro is important because these practices of confession, purification, generosity, meditation on death and impermanence, guru yoga, etc., also serve to prepare the practitioner. They correct the practitioner’s being by removing the strong ego formed by the five passions. It is necessary to do this because only then are we ready to receive the teachings in a pure way, like a clean vessel ready to receive the “lion’s milk,” the precious liquid of the teachings.

Otherwise we are like a cracked or dirty cup that can turn the precious liquid into poison.

From “This Precious Life” by Khandro Rinpoche:

Having control over your body, speech, and mind is like being a skillful rider. You can go where you want to go; the horse goes in the direction that you want to go in. An unskilled rider trying to ride a wild horse eventually ends up wherever the horse wants to go. In the same way, you may find your body going in one direction, your speech in another – and the rest of your sensibilities not waking up until quite a bit later, if then. The whole framework of the Buddhist path – the various levels and practices and forms for sitting, standing, thinking, and behaving – is a support for learning to work with our mental concepts and developing the ability to maintain awareness. And from a

Buddhist point of view, training the mind through meditation is essential.

From “Luminous Mind” by Kalu Rinpoche:

Through reflection and meditation, the common preliminary practices aim to make us aware of four realities that stimulate our motivation and urge us to practice. These meditations rest on four ideas: the precious human rebirth, impermanence and death, the faults of samsara, and karmic causality. They are known as the common preliminaries insofar as they are not specific to Vajrayana but are part of the progression in all the yantras.

When we wish to do Dharma practice, we must first become conscious of the difficulty of attaining this precious human existence endowed with all the conditions favorable for reaching enlightenment. This gives us the resolve to enter the path. Meditating on the impermanence of all things, and especially of our own life, will help us to overcome any laziness and impel us to practice with energy. Then, if we recognize that suffering pervades cyclic existence, we will develop an aversion to it, and all our efforts will be directed toward attaining liberation. Finally, if we are convinced of the truth of karma, the relationship between causes and results, we will reject all harmful activities and instead practice what is positive, and thus proceed correctly.

From “Fearless Simplicity” by Tsoknyi Rinpoche:

The preliminary practices facilitate recognizing and training in the nonconceptual meditation of Dzogchen. If we feel it is difficult to simply let be, the preliminary practices are a method to make it easier for us. They are a conduit for purification, accumulation and blessings. Ultimately, we must rely on our basic intelligence. The preliminary practices strengthen and sharpen this intelligence. Accumulating merit or using conceptual methods is like making a candle, while Dzogchen pointing-out instruction is like lighting the candle. You must have both – the candle and a match – to illuminate the darkness. With inadequate merit, you can perhaps recognize mind essence, but the recognition quickly disappears. You cannot concentrate; you lack the candle. Like a match in the darkness, the recognition flickers and dies. You need a stable basis to carry and nourish the flame, and accumulating merit forms that basis.

Nov. 8-12, 2006

The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung – PART ONE: NGONDRO with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, the abbot of Triten Norbutse monastery in Nepal

Part 1, the Ngondro, from the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, is the entrance to a cycle of Bon dzogchen, or “Great Perfection,”

teachings, which until the past decade were part of a secret transmission passed one-to-one from master to student.

This year we are again very fortunate to have Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung, the abbot and head teacher at Triten Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal, teaching these beautiful and essential practices to us.

The ngondro teachings, a complete set of practices in themselves, offer instructions for “taming” oneself, for purifying, and for perfecting; and are the prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung. The transmission for the practices will be given by Khen Rinpoche at the conclusion of the retreat. We invite everyone to take this opportunity to be in the presence of this kind, joyful and knowledgeable teacher.

Retreat Cost (includes meals): \$400 if received by Oct. 4; \$450 if received by Oct. 25; \$500 if received after Oct. 25

AN UPDATE ON THE NEW WING OF THE GARUDA HOUSE

During Ligmincha's annual summer retreat, Tenzin Rinpoche with Geshe Nyima Kunchap and Geshe Tenzin Yeshe staked out the four corners of the new wing of the Garuda House and performed a blessing of the land.

After the groundbreaking, all present offered prayers for successful completion of the project. Construction of the second wing brings to fruition Tenzin Rinpoche's longtime vision for the Serenity Ridge Retreat Center. Tenzin Rinpoche was presented with a hard hat bearing the Tibetan syllable DZA, the symbol of fully activated enlightened manifestation. He was patient and joyful as we took many photos of him in his new hat!

**You can visit www.ligmincha.org to see many wonderful pictures and to find out more of the details on the new Garuda wing construction!

Here is an intimate view of Serenity Ridge and Garuda House through the eyes of Candace Byers, who recently moved to Charlottesville and is Ligmincha's director of fundraising:

Virginia, its mountains, its Charlottesville and I are at the very beginning of what I hope will be a lifelong love affair. In the late afternoon of fall when you drive to Serenity Ridge, the mountains and hollows enfold you. In the early morning when you leave Serenity Ridge for the city, if you are early enough, you can catch the sky still slumbering in those mossy, dark, green ridges. We study the lineage of the land above the clouds while we retreat in the land whose mountains are milky white with morning mist. By mid-morning, dzogchen-like the mists dissolve, the sky is turquoise, and wheeling, careering turkey vultures rule the sky with the presence of each moment's aerial navigation.

This is how I see Virginia now. So when the Garuda House arises into view from the fluttering driveway, it is just amazing. Today the framing on the second story of the new wing is all up. The men worked

through a thunderstorm last evening past 5:30. They say the roof should be framed by Saturday.

Thank you for your prayers of aspiration. Thank you for your financial gifts. Thank you for your creativity in helping in all the ways that you do. I prostrate to the sangha in gratitude.

Candace Byers

Dec. 27, 2006-Jan. 1, 2007

Ligmincha's Annual Winter Retreat

THE FRUITION OF DZOGCHEN - The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung

- Part Three, Chapter Seven of the Chag Tri

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

This winter, Rinpoche will present the teachings and methods contained in Chapter Seven: The Fruition of Dzogchen. This chapter reveals how the fruition of developing confidence in the three kayas and finding "one's own place" provides the accomplishment of the Great Perfection.

Over the past three years, Rinpoche has introduced students of the Experiential Transmission to the boundless view, the spontaneous meditation, and the flexible behavior of dzogchen in preparation for this retreat. During this time, the community of practitioners has grown as more students have committed themselves to the Experiential Transmission teachings, completed Parts One and Two, and entered into Part Three.

Students who have attended a previous Part Three retreat as well as students who have received the Part Two teachings are invited to attend this retreat.

Retreat Cost (includes meals): \$400 if received by Nov. 15; \$450 if received by Dec. 6; \$500 if received after Dec. 6

**To register for any of these retreats please e-mail:

Ligmincha@aol.com or call (434) 977-6161.

SANGHA SHARING – "REFLECTIONS ON THE SUMMER RETREAT"

This summer retreat I felt a big shift happening. (I was there for the first week.) It showed in Trul Khor practice. For me it felt that after all these years sitting on a cushion, I finally could get moving.

I loved it!

And now I'm at home, feeling bad because of an issue. But instead of staying in that state of mind, or going to somebody else with it, I notice that I work with it: on my cushion in the meditation, and in my "normal" life. I work with my issue all by myself. I have gained selfconfidence to do so. And I am really surprised how fast the shift comes. It's wonderful!

I feel that I can take my own life in my own hands again which I haven't been able to do for a long, long time. If someone would ask me now: "What are you?" I would answer: "I'm a practitioner!"

It was so wonderful to be at Serenity Ridge again and feel the heart connection with a lot of people. Even if I haven't seen you much (in

this time of my life), or didn't speak with you a lot, I really feel connected, home.

I thank Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for the wonders he makes happen for me and for so many people. Rinpoche, you make all the difference in the world for me. Much love and devotion.

I thank everybody who helped to build Ligmincha Institute and Serenity Ridge. You also make all the difference in the world. I am so happy to be part of this family.

Geertje Bloemers
Netherlands

After the first few days of the retreat it seemed to me that Rinpoche could have called it the "How to Be a Better Practitioner" retreat - but probably not as many people would have come, which would have been unfortunate for them. Rinpoche's increasingly penetrating insight into the workings of the Western mind were on display at this retreat. As he said, he is making his teachings more and more experiential, while sharing his personal practices and insights, some of which he developed and shared at the retreat. It is a most precious gift to do these guided practices with him. I can only look forward to more of these kinds of illuminating retreats. As Rinpoche says about these teachings in the new retreat brochure, "I must preserve them in people. That is why we call them experiential teachings. They are planted in the hearts of people." We could not pray for a better teacher.

Scott Clearwater
California

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&Submit=Search>

We are very pleased to announce this year's wall calendar: Ligmincha Institute's 2007 calendar of Tibetan Bon and Buddhist auspicious days: The Bon Dzogchen Masters of Zhang Zhung.

The pages feature hand-painted images of the renowned dzogchen yogis of Zhang Zhung, along with their meditation instructions from the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu (Oral Transmission of Zhang Zhung). As usual, we have included both Western and Tibetan dates, as well as major Bon and Buddhist auspicious days, and U.S. and Mexican holidays. The calendar is 9" x 11", 18" x 11" when opened. Price: \$14.95. Available mid-October.

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. This new edition includes a new introduction, appendix, with a biography of Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, and a sketch of the educational system at the Lopon's monastery, Triten 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. Available mid-October.

“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 more copies of it 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 is the ancient name of the province of Ngari in western Tibet. Shang Shung incense is based on the research from ancient texts and contains many kinds of plants and herbs, such as musk, Kashmir saffron, and other precious medicinal substances. This incense is especially good for people's health, long life, good luck and success. Approximately 30 sticks, 11" in length. Price: \$9.95

SOURCES:

(All of the following publications are available at Ligmincha's Bookstore and Tibet Shop: www.ligminchastore.org)

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. “Healing With Form, Energy and Light.” Edited by Mark Dahlby. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2002.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. “Wonders of the Natural Mind.” Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2000.

The edited transcript of “The First Experiential Transmission From the Chag Tri: The Ngondro” with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung, November 2003. Charlottesville, Va.: Ligmincha, 2004.

Khandro Rinpoche. “This Precious Life.” Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc., 2003.

Kalu Rinpoche. “Luminous Mind.” Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997.

Tsoknyi Rinpoche. “Fearless Simplicity.” Compiled and translated by Erik Pema Kunsang and Marcia Binder Schmidt. Edited with Kerry Moran. Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2003.