

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 Sept. 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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"TAMING THE WILD HORSE OF THE MIND"

In the zhine (calm abiding) practice, the practitioner places unwavering focus on a visual support or a vocalized sound while trying not to follow the past, plan the future, or change the present. The practice strengthens the attention and powers of concentration, eventually calming the mind and allowing greater familiarization with and stabilization in the subtler aspects of mind and the deepest aspect of the self. In this edited excerpt from the 2002 winter retreat, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche gives us a clear reminder of the practitioner's first task in the zhine practice:

Your mind is very much like a wild horse. It's very hard to gain control of it, isn't it? It is always going its own way. Sometimes the mind starts running so fast that you have a hard time slowing it down. Other times when you want it to move swiftly, it walks too slowly. Or, it gallops in exactly the opposite direction from the way you want it to go. The practice of zhine, or calm abiding, tames this wild horse of the mind.

Importantly, taming your wild horse requires strength - in this case, strength of focus and intention. You'd need a strong personality to take on the task of taming an actual wild horse, right? You'd also need to be physically strong. In addition, you would need the skills required for properly taming that wild horse, and the knowledge of the horse's particular behaviors.

Once you have the strength, the skills and the knowledge, only then can you actually begin applying yourself to the task of taming this famous horse of the mind.

MORE WORDS OF ADVICE ON TAMING THE MIND

An excerpt from “Wonders of the Natural Mind” by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

Concentration practices such as zhine are found in many traditions, for example, sutric and tantric Buddhism and the many forms of Hinduism. In all these traditions, it is considered a necessary and fundamental practice. In dzogchen, zhine is considered a preparation for the essential practice of contemplation. In fact, it is very difficult to get very far in the practice of dzogchen contemplation without first having practiced zhine.

... In dzogchen, concentration is one of the fundamental preliminary practices. Through it we calm and gain control over the moving mind and, most importantly, through it we can be introduced by the master to “the natural state of the mind.” It is also an important practice that experienced practitioners use to help them stabilize that state. In the Bon tradition, after completing the preliminary practices and receiving the initiation of Zhang Zhung Meri, the practitioner engages in the practice of zhine under the guidance of an experienced master who introduces him to knowledge of the innate natural state of his mind.

... Engaging in concentration practice is very important because it is very difficult to reach understanding of the true state without it, and even if we do gain understanding, it is very difficult to sustain that understanding for any length of time unless we have developed sufficient power of concentration.

From “Opening to Our Primordial Nature” by Khenchen Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal:

The mind produces all our experiences and perceptions. When we tame the mind so that it rests calmly and clearly, then all our experiences are open and relaxed. When the mind is peaceful, then simultaneously the speech and body become peaceful. But if the mind is uncontrolled, then our words and actions are also out of control. Until we tame the mind, experiences of joy do not last more than a short time, no matter how many external supports we use. It is only by taming the mind that we can truly understand ourselves and others and find ultimate peace and joy.

From “Turning the Mind Into an Ally” by Sakjong Mipham Rinpoche:
Training our mind through peaceful abiding, we can create an alliance that allows us to actually use our mind, rather than be used by it.
This is a practice that anyone can do. Although it has its roots in

Buddhism, it is a complement to any spiritual tradition. If we want to undo our own bewilderment and suffering and be of benefit to others and the planet, we're going to have to be responsible for learning what our own mind is and how it works, no matter what beliefs we hold. Once we see how our mind works, we see how our life works, too. That changes us.

SOURCES

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. "Wonders of the Natural Mind." Edited by Andrew Lukianowicz. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2000.

Khenchen Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal. "Opening to Our Primordial Nature." Edited by Ann Helm and Michael White. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2006.

Sakyong Mipham. "Turning the Mind Into an Ally." New York: Riverhead Books, 2003.

The first and third books above are available from Ligmincha's Tibet Shop. Visit: www.ligminchastore.org

EDITORS' NOTE: These four upcoming retreats at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge retreat center offer opportunities to learn and practice methods for taming the mind (see the full descriptions below):

Sept. 13-17, 2006: "Introduction to the Nature of Mind – the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung: Part 2." (prerequisite: ngondro teachings and transmission)

Nov. 8-12, 2006: "The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 1 – Ngondro" (ngondro retreat)

Dec. 27, 2006, to Jan. 1, 2007: Ngondro practice retreat (prerequisite: ngondro teachings and transmission).

Early 2007: Our popular zhine practice retreat.

UPCOMING FALL AND WINTER RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

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

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

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): \$500

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):

\$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

“Early-bird” date for registration is Sept. 13

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

Nov. 8-12, 2006

The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung – PART ONE: NGONDRO with Khenpo Tenpa'i Yungdrung Rinpoche

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'i 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

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

Each year Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche devotes his winter retreat at Serenity Ridge to those students committed to following the teachings and practices of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung. These Experiential Transmission retreats allow Tenzin Rinpoche to continually guide and nurture a growing community of practitioners devoted to the authentic Bon dzogchen path handed down from the Masters of Zhang Zhung – a lineage unbroken from ancient times to this day. The wisdom and skillful means for these retreats come from the Bon experiential manual known as the Chag tri, which Rinpoche has often referred to as “the only manual one requires.” Rinpoche’s lucid, intimate, and often humorous commentaries on the pith instructions contained in this manual render them immediately within the reach of understanding and experience. The retreats are enhanced by the translation of the chapters of the Chag Tri into English (available only to students attending the retreat).

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:

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“HEART TO HEART” – Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche answers a student’s question

EDITOR’S NOTE: In the July 2006 issue of VOCL, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal

Rinpoche emphasized that no matter what method a person uses in meditation practice, in a way everyone approaches practice from the right place. “It cannot be the wrong place,” Rinpoche explains, “because it is the only place that exists at that moment for you, so to be there is the right place to be.” At the same time, he adds, one must recognize that other, higher experiences are possible. Below, a student responds to his statement. (Both question and answer have been edited for clarity.)

STUDENT: It’s a real relief to say to myself: “The best I can do in

my practice at this moment is naturally the perfect place for me to be.” Still, I experience frustration because I can see where I want to go in my practice and the work I need to do. This frustration can be an impetus for me to keep trying, so isn’t even my frustration actually the best place to be?

TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE: Well, that depends. You can look at that word frustration in many different ways. Certain types of frustration are completely unnecessary and unhealthy; for example, the kind of frustration that doesn’t understand the situation or the circumstances, that has no skill or means, no knowledge or experience. It’s the pure frustration of desiring something different than what exists. That kind of frustration is unhealthy.

Another kind of frustration is this desire to always do better. I don’t know that I would even call it frustration; it’s more based on enthusiasm, on openness, on our wanting to learn more skills. It’s full of joy. It’s not based on a sense of competition or a lack of self-esteem. It’s not colored by a lack of inspiration, rather the opposite - there’s some sense of feeling uplifted, feeling positive, there’s a feeling of fire there. So, let’s change our vocabulary and instead of frustration, call it aspiration. Aspiration is important to have in one’s practice.

We’ve been saying that where you are in your practice is the perfect place for you to be at the moment. That is not saying, “Just be happy wherever you are; it’s fine,” as if development is not helpful; I’m not suggesting that. But it’s clear that giving ourselves a hard time about where we are often just obscures the many possibilities available to us for further growth. We need to be careful not to develop that negative, judging type of frustration to the point where it becomes the most vivid part of our experience, more so than the practice itself.