



Ligmincha Europe Magazine

6 – Autumn 2012



'Ligmincha International' meeting

Meet the Danish sangha

Online course with Rinpoche

Magical movements of *Trul Khor*



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THE LIGMINCHA EUROPE MAGAZINE

is a joint venture of the community of European students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Ideas and contributions are welcome at magazine@ligmincha.eu.

You can find this and the previous issues at www.ligmincha.eu,
and you can find us on the Facebook page of [Ligmincha Europe](https://www.facebook.com/LigminchaEurope).

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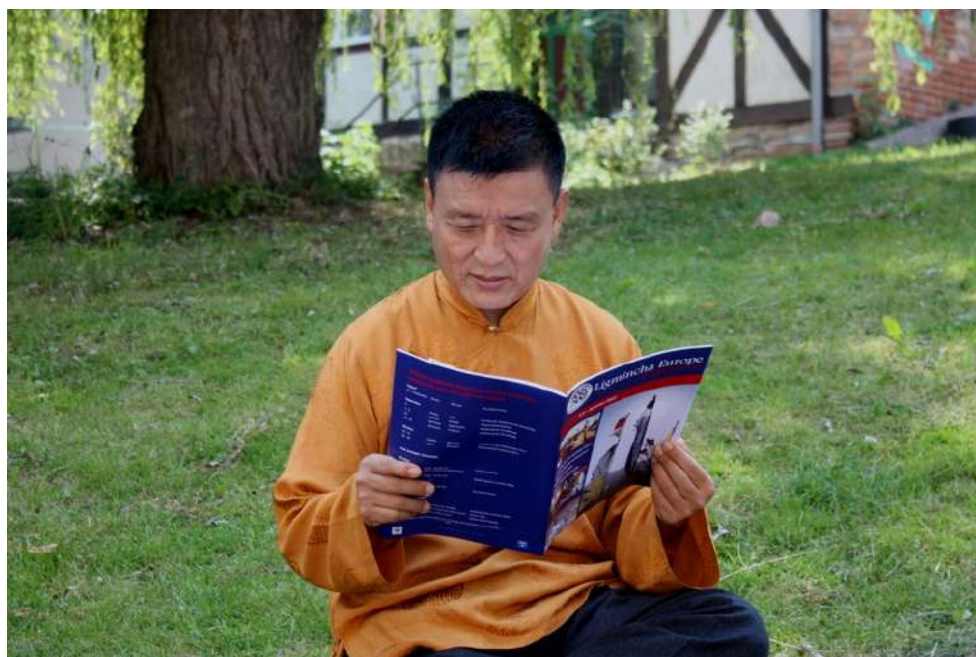
GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers, Dear Practitioners of Bon,

We had been surprised and also happy to see an announcement for the release of the fifth Ligmincha Europe Magazine on the homepage of Ligmincha.org. Maybe, it is not so surprising, as now, with the release of the sixth Ligmincha Europe magazine, we are glad to report on the *First 'Ligmincha International' meeting* at Serenity Ridge. Representatives from all over the world discussed the future of 'Ligmincha International' with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

reading his books. The translators are doing a great job of supporting Rinpoche's work and in helping the growth of the worldwide sangha.

Although for many people, reading one of Rinpoche's books was their first acquaintance with Rinpoche, some people met him in another way. Nathalie Duchanois told us last time how she met him, and this time Johan Smith has an interesting story. If you want to share your story, please let us know.



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Buchenau (Germany), July 2012.

World wide we are growing more and more to one organisation. In this Magazine, we give sangha members the opportunity to interact with each other and to share their experiences. The internet makes it accessible to everyone at any time and place.

The internet also proves to be a good medium for teachings. Many of you have probably seen Rinpoche's internet teachings, but there are also online courses, held over a period of weeks. In this issue, you can read about the experiences of one of the participants in a recent online course.

At the seminar in Amsterdam, in May, people were asked about their first encounter with Rinpoche. Many answered that it was through

Some readers asked us about our publishing dates. Our ambition is to publish a Magazine every season, and the exact date depends on when we can meet Rinpoche at a seminar. In spring Rinpoche comes to the Netherlands, in summer is a retreat in Germany and in autumn in Austria. The Winter edition will be published in January, although Rinpoche does not visit Europe during that time.

In the next issue we hope we can tell you more about the European Center and the developments of the new website of 'Ligmincha International.'

In Bon,
Ton Bisscheroux, chief editor



FIRST 'LIGMINCHA INTERNATIONAL' MEETING

Representatives from Rinpoche's sanghas from around the world gathered and shared ideas during the first week of the Summer Retreat at Serenity Ridge. A report by Lidia Castellano, from the Italian sangha.

Rinpoche had invited all worldwide representatives to come Serenity Ridge to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Ligmincha Institute and also to get to know each other. Representatives from Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Mexico and the U.S. were present.



As Rinpoche pointed out, he knows each one of us very well, but often we don't know each other, and especially for us Europeans, we don't know our American counterparts. During the first week a series of meetings and occasions to get together had been scheduled, both formal and informal, with Rinpoche, Ligmincha Institute's chairman Gabriel Rocco, the international representatives, Ligmincha Council's members and Lishu Institute's and Chamma Ling Retreat Center's coordinators.



First of all Gabriel Rocco gave us an account of Rinpoche's view about Ligmincha's past, present and future. He showed how the institution is the result of so much hard work by himself and many dedicated persons, and how this should be maintained and become a truly international and self-sustaining organization, based on openness, warmth and mutual understanding. A "Ligmincha International" has been envisaged, a worldwide organization that, though based in the U.S., should not be considered as only American. Everyone who participates in it has a place, with each one's specific qualities and creativity. Moreover, Rinpoche has expressed the wish that Ligmincha Institute should continue its activities in connection with other events and teachings besides his own (as it has started doing), with everyone's contribution.

We have been asked to briefly introduce ourselves for everyone's benefit and to share our experiences with our working on organizing Rinpoche's teachings, the practice in our countries and our hopes and expectations for the





future. The same questions are being asked by email to all those who were not able to be present, and in the near future regular Skype meetings will be scheduled to keep in touch with each other and to continue our sharing and exchanging of our skills and competences.

Meeting personally with our American and world-wide counterparts has been fundamental, and there is nothing like personal contacts to develop and strengthen the bond that is already present in our worldwide Dharma family. To this end, the



progress of the Ligmincha International website project is fundamental.

Rinpoche has also announced that there will be a Ligmincha Europe International Retreat Center in the near future, about which more information will be available in the next magazines.

From my personal side, it has been a beautiful experience. It was my first time at Serenity Ridge, and I had the feeling of being in a sacred place, such as I felt when visiting our Bonpo Monasteries in India and Nepal. At my arrival I was welcomed and hosted with warmth and kindness, made to feel at home.



The natural setting at Serenity Ridge is wonderful, and spending some time there with Rinpoche, the Geshes, and so many brothers and sisters from all over the world has been a great experience. Living side by side for some days, sharing experiences and establishing personal contacts, taking all part in the teachings and daily practices, has been a rich and warm present!

Text by Lidia Castellano

Photos courtesy of Ligmincha Institute



TRUL KHOR: CONNECTING WITH THE MISSING LINK

For many years Alejandro Chaoul has been visiting Europe to teach Tibetan Yoga. Last June he led retreats in Poland and Finland and held a public talk in Berlin. What is this kind of yoga, called *Tsa Lung Trul Khor*, and how can we benefit from it? Here you find edited excerpts from the transcript of Alejandro Chaoul's public talk, where he explained about these magical movements.

The missing link

"What we call Tibetan Yoga is called *Tsa Lung Trul Khor* in Tibetan. One way of translating this could be: the magical movements that incorporate or use the channels and vital breath.

Most of you are more familiar with Indian yogas, where we have *asanas* in the realm of the body, and we have *pranayam* for the breath, and we have a kind of meditation for the mind. *Pranayam* being breath (control) exercises, and *asana* being postures of the body. Many times in the West we see that a lot of the yoga is focused on the *asanas*, on the body, and much less on the mind.

In the practices that comes from Tibet we see more mind practices. There seems to be – at least at a certain level – not much of a connection to the body in the Tibetan practices, and to a certain extent even a dismissal of the body. In fact, I know many people in the U.S. who study Tibetan meditation or another tradition for the mind aspect, and to connect to the body they do Indian-based yoga practices or *Tai Chi* and *Qi Gong*.

At the hospital where I work we have a category called 'mind-body practices'. These are practices where mind-body are coordinated in some way. When they talk about mind they mean the brain. The mind affects the body, and when things happen in the body it affects the mind.

In the Tibetan tradition and in other traditions of yoga they have a category that unites the mind-body. Sometimes I call it 'the missing link' between mind and body. In Tibetan it is called *tsel*, and sometimes we translate it as 'energy'. But it is not really this kind of esoteric way of thinking about energy. What they mean is, in a



Alejandro Chaoul

is a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Under the auspices of Ligmincha Institute, since 1995 he has been teaching Tibetan meditation and Tibetan Yoga throughout the United States, Latin America and Europe. He also serves as the director of research for Ligmincha Institute and is on the Board of the *Ligmincha Texas Institute for Tibetan Meditative and Healing Arts*.

He is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center's Integrative Medicine Program and is the author of *Chöd Practice in the Bon Religion* (Snow Lion Publications, 2009) as well as author or co-author of various articles focusing on the role of mind-body practices in integrative cancer care and research, and on Tibetan meditation and ritual practices within religious studies, humanities, and the intersection of humanities, spirituality and medicine.





Alejandro Chaoul teaching *Thrul Khor* in Poland in 2012.

way, both the field of interaction of mind-body and how it expresses itself, particularly in it's ways as speech and breath. Thus, for these yogas we can say mind-breath-body.

Mind-breath-body practices in Tibetan Buddhism and Bon

In the year 2000 the Yoga Journal wrote an article about Tibetan Yogas and called it 'Into the Mystic'. These yogas are not taught very openly, and if you look into the curriculums of Tibetan mind-body practices, both in monasteries or even with yogis, these practices come later in the studies. They are always at the end of many of the instruction manuals of meditation.

When I started studying Tibetan Buddhism, there was not much talk about Tibetan yoga until I met Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Until then, most of the practices that were spoken about and taught were in terms of meditation and mantras, or basically mind and speech.

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche taught Tibetan Yoga and called it *Yantra Yoga*, as a kind of re-translation into Sanskrit from *Trul Khor* (Tib.), and using the word 'yoga' in the West, because everyone had some idea of what that means. Many other Tibetan teachers criticised Namkai Norbu Rinpoche for bringing forth so openly these yogas. Yet, many people benefitted from them,

and I was lucky to be one of them. When I met *Yantra Yoga*, after having studied *Hatha Yoga* and *Qi Gong* and *Tai Chi*, I said: "Oh wow, these go really hand in hand with the same kind of teachings for the mind that were taught, so I don't have to practice mind and body, I can actually start practicing mind-body." And then, I was very fortunate that, during a retreat in Nepal with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, I went to visit one of my other teachers, H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, who was also teacher of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. When I went to his monastery, Triten Norbutse in Nepal, he asked: "Why are you not living here? Come here." So I moved to the monastery for some time. There I met a monk coming from Amdo in Tibet, who knew about this *Trul Khor*, this Tibetan yoga. The abbot of the monastery, Khenpo Nyima Wangyal, asked him: "There are some foreigners who want to learn Tibetan yoga. Maybe you want to teach *Trul Khor* to them?" There were four of us and luckily one was a French woman who took notes and made drawings, and we copied them.

One of the wonderful things of these yogas was they were close with the Tibetan teachings that I was receiving. I was very fortunate to stay for another month with the meditation group that was practicing in the monastery and receiving teachings from H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche. The main teaching was *Trek Chö* –





Students doing *Trul Khor* exercises in the early morning during the Summer Retreat in Buchenau, July 2012, guided by Karolina Seltenheim.

cutting through the conceptual mind – and trying to stay in that meditative state, one of the main practices from the Dzogchen tradition. The way they practiced was particularly useful to me. Usually in Tibetan practice they start with some prayers, and then they would stay in that meditative state. But acknowledging that after a while the mind wanders, or falls asleep, there are tools to re-energize you when that happens. So, after about twenty minutes of *Trek Chö* practice, Khenpo Nyima Wangyal would stand up and do a set of the *Trul Khor* that we had just learned, and then again sit and continue the *Trek Chö* meditation.

Teaching *Trul Khor* and *Tsa Lung* in the West

I realized that these were very powerful exercises to reconnect to that state of mind. And it was interesting that they worked both when I was tired and when my mind was all over the place. So, coming back to the U.S., I went to my teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, and I told him that I had learnt these Tibetan yogas in Triten Norbutse and was practicing and finding them very useful. We met every morning at five, and we would go over what I had learnt, what he had learnt, and we discussed doubts and continued practicing. At that time, during our Second Summer Retreat, 1994, Rinpoche asked me to start teaching this *Trul Khor* to the group of people that were in the Summer Retreat. They were very receptive and could really connect and feel a sense of grounding in the body, not just in the mind.

The *Tsa Lung* practice, that Tenzin Wangyal

Rinpoche teaches, comes from a text called the *Ma Gyu* – the Mother Tantra – and is simpler than the *Trul Khor*, and yet very profound. It is a subtle way of connecting with the body, the breath and the mind in a very deep way.

When I was doing my PHD in Tibetan studies, I could see in the text how the *Tsa Lung* was the basis

for the *Trul Khor*. So it was that basis that everyone needed who wanted to go into the Tibetan yogas.

Another thing that I learnt later is that each of those *Tsa Lung* movements are named and work with one of the five kinds of breath that are mentioned in the Tibetan medical texts as well as the Indian and Ayurvedic texts.

The *lung* – subtle breath – is the subtle circulation of the body, which is guided by the mind. So by balancing the five kinds of breath you are balancing the circulation of your whole body and therefore affecting your state of mind. *Lung* becomes the crucial link between mind and body.

It is interesting to note that when Tibetans talk about the mind they don't point to the head but to the heart. In Sanskrit the word is *citta*, in Tibetan *sem*, so it is a kind of heart-mind that is also connected to the body. And the breath helps us more in that sense of connectedness. In the *Tsa Lung*, using the body in this simple way, and using the breath with the mind, it is really a beautiful harmonious way of having mind-breath-body.

Transformative practices

Rinpoche noticed that as he started teaching *Tsa Lung* all over the world, it impacted across cultures, including the Tibetans. It is interesting to see how he has been teaching the *Tsa Lung*, within the Bon Mother Tantra tradition. But he also realized that they could be useful for anyone without the religious context of the tradition. So



many people benefit from it!

In one of Rinpoche's books, *Awakening the Sacred Body*, he brings it in a very secular way. It is basically activating or awakening the body component of this mind-body practices that the mind is there and its important, and it is also crucial to acknowledge how through the body we can affect the mind with the breath. Whether we

are practitioners of a particular tradition or just human beings, we want to transform certain aspects of ourselves. Whether it is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, these practices can be really helpful in that transformation.

There are two Tibetan words that can shed some light here: one is *Gegsel*, which is clearing away obstacles. The other is *Bogdon*, enhancing the meditative practice. And these two go very much together in all these Tibetan yoga practices.

Clearing away obstacles and bringing the enhancement to your meditation practice

The methodology of Tibetan Yoga is a little different to the ways in Indian yogas. Even though there are practices of the body, practices of the breath and practices of the mind; they work in a little different way. For example in the *Tsa Lung*, after calming the body and being able to guide and connect to the breath you actually hold the breath in a particular chakra or energetic point. And with a particular body movement of that area, you are opening that chakra thanks to the breath. So the breath that is there is supported by the mind, the body now is supporting a movement that opens up or clears away the obstacle, and once you exhale, it allows one to release that obstacle and let the mind be in a more relaxed and aware state of mind.

So in this method, holding the mind and the breath and being able to work with the body in that particular active way, then, as you exhale, you come back to that stillness of the sitting body, and still allow the mind to now sit but in a little more open way. And for those who feel that they need more body activity, the *Trul Khor* actually provide a much more energetic aspect of the activity, and you are still holding the breath while



Instruction book for the *Trul Khor*

you are doing what they call 'magical movements'. And in these, the exhalation is much more active. On the one hand you still exhale through the nose, but then you also have this strong exhalation and make the sound of *Ha* and *Phet*. And as you do that you stay in that more clear state of mind. So, it is a very lively practice and yet very meditative. Partly it is because you still maintain the mind and breath component as part of the body. In Tibetan there is a saying that goes something like this 'if you are just doing the body part it is like children playing'; it can be a lot of fun, but the meaning is not really there. So, the mind is crucial and the link of the movement and the mind is the breath.

There was recently a study in the U.S. that said that 48% of the time we are not where we are. Maybe in Europe it is different. In any case, the mind is not where our body is. And, during the majority of that time we are engaged in negative thoughts and emotions.

Since you are all already meditators, hopefully your mind is here in your body. If you notice how you feel after even a short practice, you can feel that we can transform the state of mind from the way that we usually are. The transformation is magical in the terms of inner transformation. Part of these practices of the magical movement is that we feel the magic. Again, the magic is not this esoteric thing but it is actually opening your heart. Of being seated emotionally, mentally and spiritually, not just physically."

Transcription by Sarah Edgehill

Edited by Floor van Orsouw

Photos by Joop van Spronsen, Sarah Edgehill and courtesy of Polish sangha



ONLINE COURSE EXPERIENCE

Following transformative teachings without having to travel? Many of you are already familiar with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's online broadcasts. But did you know it's also possible to participate in online courses which can last a number of weeks? Geertje Bloemers signed up for an online class in the summer and reports.

This summer I participated in the online course *The Five Elements – Healing with Form, Energy and Light*. I got so inspired that I would like to share my experience.

In spring it became clear I wouldn't be able to attend the Summer Retreat in Germany, Poland or any other. Visiting the Ligmincha website there was an announcement for the online course of *The Five Elements* in July and August and I immediately recognized: this is it, what a wonderful opportunity to learn and to practice! And it was! And I could afford it in this financially difficult time in my life.

It was the first time that I participated in an online course, and I was a little scared about all the computer challenges, but I trusted there would be support in the difficulties to come. I experienced all the support in the world. For instance, at the beginning we had two weeks time for tuning into the course.

About thirty-five people from various European countries, the U.S., Canada, Mexico and South America participated: a wonderful international sangha. Some of us were Rinpoche's students, some for whom this was a first encounter with Rinpoche. People from different backgrounds shared in this seven week learning process.

In the course, first of all, there was a written explanation and instruction. Every week we worked with a new element and received new teaching and instruction videos of Tenzin Rinpoche. And we continued to have access to the part we had studied and practiced before.

John Jackson was the mentor, giving us access to the different *Khandros*, giving instructions and



About fourteen years ago I was completing a course in terminal care with Jan Dinkelaar and Claar Dirksmeier as instructors. Jan invited Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to the Netherlands. And I was at this first seminar. Being with Rinpoche, I felt a deep connection and from that time on I have attended many retreats and seminars both in the U.S. and Europe.

inspiration, answering questions, sharing his own experience.

The course was clear and complete. Everything was there for me to understand intellectually how everything, the whole world, is composed of the elements by Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space. Their qualities and interaction. To learn to see and experience the play and dance of the elements. To recognize deficiencies and imbalances within myself, in other people, in the situations that I engage and how to balance these.

We worked with the forces of nature, with the elements within *Tantra* and within Dzogchen. At the level of body, speech and mind. Studying Rinpoche's book *Healing with Form, Energy and Light*. Doing formal practice and informal practice every day and practicing in nature several times a week.

Rinpoche and John gave us various instructions for



reflection and keeping a daily journal. There was audio of the guided practices and the element mantras available as a help for the practices.

We were invited to communicate on three levels. First with oneself by writing in the journal, second with a buddy (sharing experiences and supporting each other), and third with the other participants in the Forum – a place where everyone could start discussions, react and pose questions. There was a lively interaction in this Forum. People shared with words, poems and pictures. For me one of the wonderful things of the course was the space there was for every person to be him/herself. There were lots of opportunities and invitations, always in an open and free way. I never felt pushed to do something that wasn't comfortable for me. So much space and so many methods for practice. So complete. So very Rinpoche!

One discovery was that in the Space I need to balance the Water Element the most.

Something I wrote in my journal:

“How does the water element manifest within me?”

Unbalanced:

- *as a restlessness, always going on and on, not rounding up, not enjoying the fruit*
- *as pressure, stress, perfectionism, rigidity*
- *being overwhelmed, unclear, drifting, uneasy*
- *being shaky, sadness, lethargy, delaying, pleasing*
- *feeling a victim, seeing things as black and white*



If I got stuck with formal practice there was informal practice to do or be in nature or start communicating, so the flow always found a way to go on, which was a very joyful experience!

A big advantage of this online course was that I was doing it within my daily life, so integration was hard to avoid... I recognized how I can apply the different methods in my life more clearly than ever before.

Balanced:

- *being at ease, allowing things to happen, people to say things without me*
- *grasping*
- *it opens me, makes me flexible*
- *I have more understanding, feel the needs of others*
- *feel happy being me,*
- *connection with myself, with others and my work*
- *if I have enough water I don't lose earth...”*



A last part from my journal:

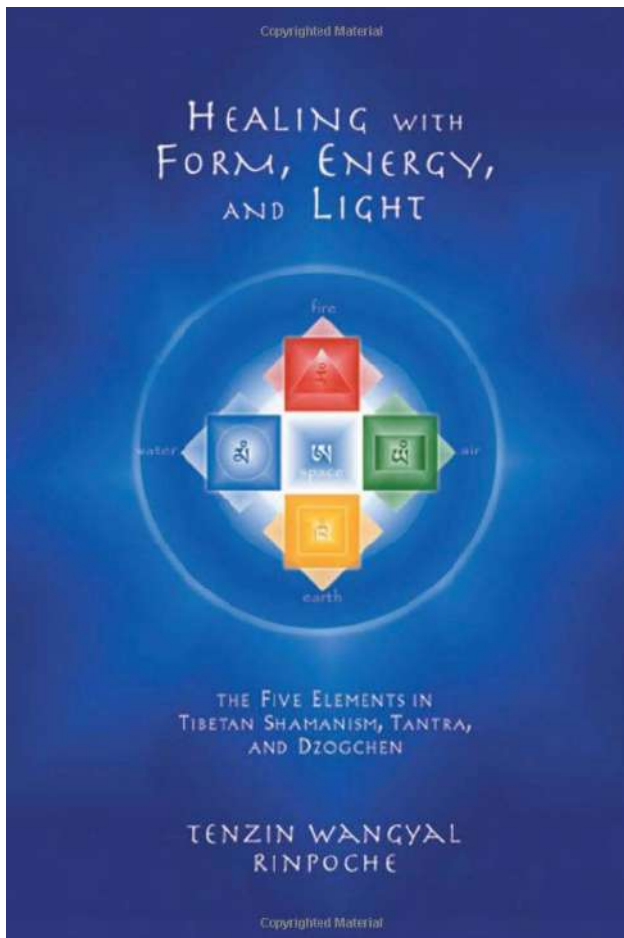
"This course is the beginning of something new. Like what Rinpoche once said: round up and move on! And what you (John) told me: Life is good! I will go on practicing as I have done for the last seven weeks. Exploring more and more how the elements work in me, in other people, in the world. I feel excited about it.

The new connection I made with this practice feels very natural. There is not much effort, I like doing the different ways of formal, informal and nature practice. I will study the book along with the practice. And learn to keep a more accurate journal."

Thank you Rinpoche for this wonderful opportunity to learn and practice, thank you John for your open and kind support.

If you are interested in an online course look at:
www.ligmincha.org or www.glidewing.com.

Text and photos by Geertje Bloemers



The following poem was written by Birrell Walsh, a participant from the U.S.

That Wind Talks

I look across your prairie valley

and I ask again:

“What could someone do who loves you ?”

and thirst says, “Just a little rain.”

“Not mountain, and not rivers

and not wide skies, bright as glass:

I have those all. Now what I need

is rain, for my grass.

For the fibered stalks

that when the wind walks

through them, that wind talks

of thirst within the clod

of roots down-reaching for the breath of God,
moistering the sod:

Let it come again,

You who love me

just a little rain.”

Birrell Walsh



RINPOCHE FELL ON MY HEAD

Introducing a sangha is always a story full of surprises. This time we interviewed Johan Smith from *Ligmincha Danmark*, an organisation of one person and with more than one hundred seminar participants.

When did you meet Rinpoche the first time?

I met Rinpoche in 1995 in Denmark. In the beginning of the nineties Rinpoche gave summertime teachings in Denmark. That year he was teaching on the *Twenty-one Nails*. When I went there, I didn't know anything about Bon. The reason I was there was because, during my Easter vacation in London, in a bookstore I tried to get a book about astrology from the bookshelf, and then a book fell from high above and hit my head. The book was called *Wonders of the Natural Mind*, written by somebody called Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. I bought the book because I was a bit superstitious, and read it in the evenings in London. And when I came home there was an invitation in my mail, asking if I wanted to go to a retreat from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. I thought "That is no coincidence, I have to go." At that time there was a group of students of Namkai Norbu

Rinpoche who invited Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to Denmark. They had met him in Italy.

Do you know when Rinpoche came the first time to Denmark?

I don't know exactly, but before 1995 he had visited Denmark two or three times. After 1995 Rinpoche didn't visit Denmark often. The next time was in 2010, when I organized it. And next year, September 2013, he will come again to

Copenhagen, to teach *Living in Joy, Dying in Peace*.

Can you tell us something about the sangha in Denmark?

I don't know how big the sangha is because we are not organized. But at the last seminar, there were more than one hundred people. Only a few people come to my place to practice and meditate once a month, for a whole day. As far as I know there are no other practice groups, but there are many people practicing on their own. We tried to start a practice group in Copenhagen after the last visit of Rinpoche. The first time there was only me and another person practicing at my place, so we gave up. It is difficult to get people to come together here. I live in the



countryside, more than an hour drive from Copenhagen. Most people feel that is a long, long drive.

When I lived in Copenhagen, more than ten years ago, we had a practice group there. That was more successful. I have tried several things, but I haven't found a way to reach more participants for these splendid teachings. People visiting the teachings are also interested in other directions of





Buddhism. Two years ago when Rinpoche was here, he was happy to see people from the old days and people he also knew from other groups.

When I invited Rinpoche for next year, I told him that I would understand if he would not come, because we could go and see him in Germany. He said that I should not think that way, because he wants to be in contact with all those Buddhist people in Denmark.

I also saw people from Denmark visiting the seminars in the Netherlands, but most people go to Germany?

Yes, for many years people went to the Summer retreat in Buchenau in August. But since they organize it in July many people can't go anymore for different reasons.

Can you tell about the Prison project in Denmark?

I have approached prisons, but it was difficult to get inside. The people who are in control of the prisons show little interest. And because I have so many things to do, we have not succeeded to

start with this project. Now I focus on the practice group.

Are Rinpoche's books translated into Danish?

The book *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep* is being translated now, and will be here for sale soon. We have plans to translate more books.

How is Ligmincha Denmark organized?

I am the 'organization', the chairman. We are an open organization, where we just practice together. Everybody can lead the practice, we don't have *Umzés*. We don't like generals here in Denmark, we like people to be equal in every aspect. But, if more people would come together we would need more structure.

Some people who are interested in Bon participate in *The Three Doors* program. And next year in the fall, we will organize a '*Taste of The Three Doors*', with teachers coming from the US.

Interview by Ton Bisscheroux

Photos: courtesy of Johan Smith



THE SOUND OF ENLIGHTENMENT IS STILLNESS

Thomm Möslér, a long term student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, has done several dark retreats in the last ten years. He is the first to share his experiences with us and we hope that more students will share their dark-retreat experiences.

I consider a dark retreat as an amazing opportunity for self-development, recognizing and transforming one's habits, perceptions, points of view and actions.

For me darkroom retreat is similar to what Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche said in the seminar in Berlin – 4-6 May 2012 – about the *Bardo* and impermanence:

“Regardless of whether you let go or not, whatever you are attached to will go at the moment of death. But as a practitioner, you are given the opportunity to learn to let go. The bardo prayer guides you to let go of attachment to family, possessions, and even your identity during the process of dying. When someone is going through the dying process, we pray that they may be able to let go of their attachment to family, possessions, and identity. As well as praying for others, try to feel this process of letting go in your own life. We all have a sense of self created by our ideas, status, wealth, and our nationality. These conditions will not stay forever. So what is beyond all that? What is beyond our sex, our status, our nationality? What does it feel like beyond all that? Our identification with our family is the same thing. This identification we will have to let go of as well. Looking nakedly at our own death gives us the opportunity to see who we truly are.”

Especially in dark retreats, I realised the truth of the saying: “The sound of enlightenment is stillness.” Nevertheless, I hope Dzogchen practitioners will share their dark retreat experiences so we all can learn from them. May it be useful and helpful to all beings!

The majority of our experiences are not conceptual and each of us has our own conceptual reality and linguistic interpretations. I recorded my thoughts concerning my experiences on paper.



Thomm Möslér

is a German neurologist and teacher of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at the University of Erlangen-Nuernberg. He has attended many retreats with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and with his teacher H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche during the last ten years. Under their guidance, he did several dark retreats. He tries to go every year for at least three weeks to a dark retreat. His last stay was in Shenten Dargyé Ling, France. For more than thirty years he has been practicing Clinical Thanatology, which is psycho-therapeutic assistance of severely ill people, dying people and bereaved persons. Thomm is integrating the Bon teachings daily in his work with patients and as a teacher.

My relation to dark retreat is constantly developing and unfolding. The aftereffects are continuously increasing, at least as far as my morning and evening sky gazing is concerned, which I try to do every day.

I want to divide my experiences roughly into two categories: self-awareness and spiritual awareness. Further, I want to mention that the follow-



ing records of my experiences are just a selection of a few of my experiences in dark retreats within the last ten years. Each dark retreat was totally different from all the others, depending on what I identified with, what my energetic constitution was, and whatever karma arose. The development appeared to be unpredictable.

Self-awareness: everything was and is self-awareness

I realized the absurdity and haphazardness of my own thoughts and feelings, especially the negative emotions connected to inner uneasiness.

Often darkness was filled with countless tiny luminous spots, which in some parts of the room combined to form blurs of light. Initially there was a reoccurring uneasiness followed by a bombardment of thoughts and feelings, through which my own, everyday, underlying behavioural patterns of experience and conduct became evermore apparent.

For example I would like to share my experiences of anger towards different people who, seemingly for no reason at all, appeared in the darkness in front of me. Once I was angry at the person, what seemed like hours, I experienced all the physical symptoms of inner turmoil, like heat and the movement of negative energy in my senses. After some time the feeling changed, (following the law of the fickleness of all appearances and experiences) in the same way it came, namely without reason, into something like love. Again energy ran through my body, but this time it felt like positive energy. In the process the negative emotions seemed to lead to exhaustion whereas the positive emotions seemed to have a nurturing aspect. The light was not judgemental but lead to clarity inasmuch as what still needed to be cleansed or redeemed. This had nothing in common with conceptual moralising, this experience seemed to pervade my entire mind and my whole body was thoroughly shaken. I saw the guidance I had given to someone going through the process of dying many years ago, and the light made it absolutely clear that I had gone too far. Regardless of what is the yardstick for the light (be it the 'All-Good' as with Kuntu Zangpo or Life itself, Unity) it became unmistakably clear, what kind of acts should not be repeated again, and it actually resulted in the disappearance of the corresponding intent to

repeat such actions in my everyday life.

In earlier dark retreats, I became aware of many negative actions that I had done towards animals (insects etc.) when I was a child, and which I was then able to cleanse by buying such insects in larger quantities in pet and angler's shops and then setting them free. Thus the highly regarded experiences did not reoccur in the dark retreats that followed. It obviously has nothing to do with conceptual belief (in Christianity, if I have understood it correctly, the killing of insects is not such a big deal) but is more connected to one's own bodily experience, which leads to inner solidification or tightness due to negatively experienced actions, which in a dark retreat lead to a shaking in my body that I was unable to influence. After having cleansed such negative experiences a few weeks after the dark retreats, I could clearly feel a corresponding lightness in my body.

These experiences with the light, which were very closely connected to my body I did not experience as dual, but it went deeper. I had the feeling that they could lead towards unity even though it became clear that the phenomena that still had to be cleansed were keeping me away from the experience of unity that sometimes seemed to break through (see "Obstacles" further down). I became more and more certain, that many experiences emerged from the body sense, which normally I did not perceive or permit to the same extent in everyday experience. Usually I can't feel the distraction, that goes along with negative actions.

I noticed a big difference between the order in which my experiences took place in the dark retreat and the usual everyday appearances. In everyday life the chronological order for me seems to be, that a stimulus from outside causes a concept which is in turn followed by a feeling (i.e. aversion or attraction). In a dark retreat the order of events seems to be the other way around. Here, I was in a deep state of inner peace and contemplating on light, when suddenly and apparently autonomously appeared an inner agitation (which I now understand to be 'karmic winds' or the sequence of just ripening habitual patterns) and then the negative surge (as described above) started to appear. Then a carousel of thoughts emerged, made of old negative





Dark retreat in Shenten Dargyé Ling.

experiences and fears of the future. It seemed as if I was searching for an appropriate victim on the outside onto whom I could project these experiences. And I did actually notice a gliding into patterns of perception towards these people in my fantasy that were tainted by aggression and fear. This was either depreciation or an enhancement.

In spite of the insight, that everything is the inner mirror and that there is nothing out there, there was still the occasional feeling of being at the mercy of these behavioural patterns which were first and foremost taking place in the body sense. The most striking thing for me in a dark retreat is that – contrary to the lucid state in a dream, which to my experience is even more difficult to attain – it was easier for me to be aware that what I was seeing and hearing was self-created. When the clarity of everything being self-created diminished during the dark retreat, contradicting feelings of aversion and attachment towards one and the same object alternated completely autonomously. For me this experience became a healing recourse in everyday life, where, unless one is lucid, it is exactly the same: everything is dependent on one's own point of view.

The really surprising thing that became clear to me was that the people were not the cause for

the activation of my negative emotions. In other words the cause for the activation was not out there, but within me.

In a nutshell this means: first there was the inner disturbance, the agitation, the concepts arose – something that is not so apparent to me in everyday life, when situations or other beings seem to lead to a cascade of agitation, feelings and concepts. This realisation led directly into a deep feeling of compassion toward all beings, who are completely at the mercy of their experiences, and also toward myself in relation to my unwholesome earlier life. Within the scope all those thoughts and feelings, egoistic indulgence in guilt self-reproach or accusing others of having traumatised me, did not arise. Instead there was an insight into the so called dependent arising of countless circumstances that have caused all these experiences and appearances. This led to a profound feeling of connectedness with everything and everybody. And in a second phase I lived through the experience, that each person I have ever met, constitutes an old karmic connection, together with the opportunity to continue it in a positive or negative way. The feeling of connectedness with these encounters was overwhelming and extended to all beings, including animals, etc. In this phase I also had encounters with bright light appearances, which seemed to





Sky gazing during the the second cycle of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* in Austria in 2011.

be alive and which after about ten days very vividly changed into the perception of a life sized personification which seemed to be a huge black insect which noticeably radiated cold and which I perceived as an equivalent of death. Once I accepted everything, the coldness and the figure disappeared.

I have noticed that other people also feel at the mercy of their habitual patterns, which have possibly gone on for many lives, at the mercy of their perception and the feelings that follow, without being able to free themselves unless they have had the relevant teachings. I want to thank our wonderful teachers!!! The second effect was, that I myself, inasmuch as I could retain the lucidity (clarity) did not take any 'attack from outside' in everyday life personally any longer.

Spiritual experiences: everything was and is a spiritual experience

These experienced situations, independent of whether they had just been made up or came from memory, seemed to be directly projected into the room by a projector that seemed to be in my eyes and I could see partly three dimensionally, whatever I imagined (this did not occur in all

the dark retreats). These experiences were so vivid, that they reminded me of the reports on near death experiences and the retrospection of one's life. The light that lit up the space made clear beyond words, what was and is negative or positive, or in other words what would lead to persistent agitation and what would lead to peace and equanimity or inner bliss.

In longer contemplation with the light, a deep knowledge evolved, that the light in the dark retreat with all its appearances is the same that evokes dreams but also all appearances of everyday life. A realisation I also felt indescribably in the body sense.

Obstacles

I also felt that something prevented and still prevents me from keeping and deepening these realisations – but also, that they can definitely be deepened further. I also felt that something was and is still impeding me and I believe that this is caused by the so-called dark sides (agitation, disturbing emotions, thoughts connected to negative actions, etc.) which also tend to continuously arise in my daily contemplations hindering my progress.





H.E. Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, with Maximilian and Thomm Möslers.

These habitual patterns are all stored in the body sense and I had to cleanse and dissolve them before going further, something that became especially evident to me in one dark retreat. After some time (and this only happened in a few dark retreats) the visions and experiences became calmer and the space in front of me widened. During this process I slowly lost the feeling of time and space.

During one of the dark retreats my body sense and body feeling slowly dissolved, leading to a feeling of lightness, and all negative sensations and physical pain dissolved. I then experienced an unconditional acceptance by space. The corresponding feeling of perfection came close to what I had heard about the experience of light, that people with near death experiences talk about: an encounter with a light of love and compassion. Letting go completely, I dissolved into space. The feeling transformed into the most blissful state I have ever experienced so far, exceeding any previous experience made through drugs or of sexual ecstasy. 'The essence of the totality of unconditional love,' might be the best way to describe it. In this phase, that is to say from the viewpoint of space, I gained the clear insight that the experi-

ences of dream, dark retreat and everyday life – just as it is described in after death experience – are not really any different from each other. I was abiding in the experience of unity, free of concepts.

These experiences are difficult to put into words, and people who are more eloquent and versed than I in every aspect, have had problems in describing them. But, my experiences are continuing to evolve.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to H.E. Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Yungdrung Wangden Kreuzer from the Bon tradition, without whom these experiences would not have been possible.

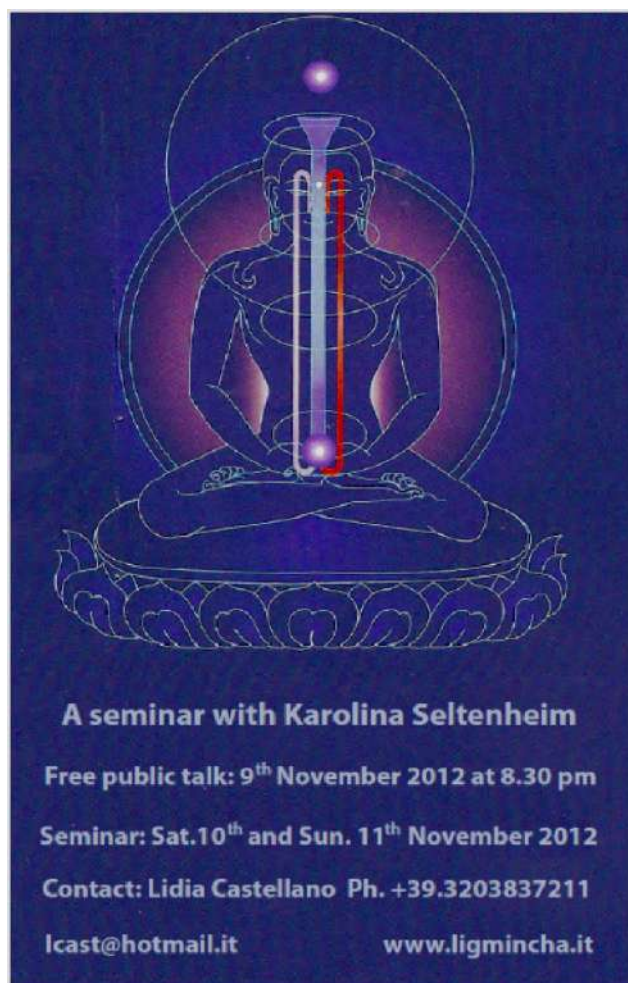
Text by Thomm Möslers

Photos: courtesy of Shenten Dargyé Ling, Thomm Möslers; Joop van Spronsen

You are invited to share your dark retreat experiences. Please send them to:
magazine@ligmincha.eu



THE TIBETAN YOGAS OF BREATH AND MOVEMENT



Ligmincha Italy organises a seminar with Karolina Seltenheim, according to the teaching of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Karolina Seltenheim, an Austrian Yoga Teacher and social counselor, is a long time student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. In this weekend she will introduce meditative mind/body techniques to support our experience of the Inner Refuge: the *Nine Breathings of Purification*, the *Tsa Lung Movements* (channels and vital breath practices). This is an ancient Tibetan practice that brings together the mind and the vital breath (*prana*), with specific body movements that clear and open one's energetic centers (*chakras*). These movements relate to the qualities of the five elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air,

and Space) and can help you to connect to your inner wisdom and achieve a relaxed yet aware state of mind both on and off the meditation cushion.

Free public talk:

Friday 9 November 8.30 pm

At: Libreria Aseq, via dei Sediari 10 Roma, Rome

Seminar:

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 November 2012

At: Associazione Mandala Viale dei Quattro Venti 47/A, Rome

Price seminar: € 80,00

Registration: lcast@hotmail.it



PARTY IN BUCHENAU

On the last evening of the summer retreat in Buchenau, there is always a party where sangha members can show their creativity. Here are a few photos from the party in 2012.



Rinpoche enjoys the show.



A young writer, reading parts from his first novel.



Five *Dakinis* dancing round a Lotus Flower.



The Refugees show there is a difference between *Refuge* and *Inner Refuge*. You can see that the meditator — being distracted — is not yet in the *Inner Refuge*.



Four ladies singing an Irish lullaby.

Photos by Joop van Spronsen



PLAY

I want to play
Play with the plants
So courageous and beautiful
Grow by everything in their surrounding

I want to play
Play with the animals
Vulnerable and fully willing
To live as long as they're able to

I want to play
Play with human beings
So cloudy and funny
In forgetting their own pure nature

I want to play
With the sun, so bright
And the moon so secret and touchy

I want to play
In sunshine and rain
In warmth and coldness

Because I want to be
To be with you and you

Because my heart
Is feeling so happy then

Tonny Maas

Photo by Marlies Cober-Philippens



PURIFYING THE MIND WITH MANTRAS

On February 11 and 12 2012, Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang gave special teachings on the three *Heart Mantras* of the Bon tradition — mantras that are to be recited in the framework of *Ngondro* or preparatory exercises. Ulrike Bross-Kurat gives us impressions from a Weekend Seminar with Geshe Nyima in Berlin.

Although commonly known as the three *Heart Mantras*, the more precise Tibetan concept is of the *Three Essences*, which emphasizes their special role within the Dharma teaching context. One of the lesser known structures until now brings each of the three mantras in relation with one of the three *Kayas*.

Never before was it so clear to me, as through this experience and practice led by Geshe Nyima, that the mantras are highly compressed ‘essentialized’ forms and instructions which also include descriptions of the processes along the spiritual path. Through their frequent repetition and accelerated recitation during the session, it is possible to delve into their meaning until a sense of mental familiarity occurs, deepening more and more into a sense of fusion.

Geshe Nyima also showed us how important the associated visualizations are for the overall success of the practice. They are mostly done before but also executed during the mantra recitation.

For me, it was especially gratifying, meaningful, and exciting during this weekend to directly experience this form of spiritual practice, because my understanding of the recitation — despite long and various attempts and efforts to practice, even with the *Ngondro* practice — had not been very stable.

As I would like the teachings of the *Three Essences* as taught by Geshe Nyima to be well established, I was happy to summarize a few key points. I hope that some of the freshness and clarity that we enjoyed over the weekend comes through in this text.



Geshe Nyima begins by referring to the nine accumulations in the *Ngondro*. His remarks show that there are these nine only in Bon, and not in the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, the three additional accumulations exist only in Bon, the three *Heart Mantras* that are part of the cleaning practices. These mantras cleanse the practitioner's mind to receive sacred teachings of Dzogchen, like pure water cleans a vessel to conserve precious nectar. (This explanation is slightly different from the one which we learned in the *Ngondro* retreat in 2010 with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, but this is not essential and Geshe Nyima gave an overview of the different explanations.)

And then on to the individual mantras.

A-OMe-HUNG, AH A-KAR SA-LE WOE A-YANG OM-DHU

The first mantra that Geshe Nyima discussed with us is the mantra of Shenlha Okar, as it is generally known, but called *Mantra of the Dharmakaya* in the context of this teaching. The first three syllables, *A-OMe-HUNG* are not counted. The meaning of the mantra is associated with the



Nature of Mind and clarity and thus with Dzogchen. Geshe Nyima explains the structure of the nine syllables, beginning with the syllable *A* repeated three times. The first *A* is pronounced as a long *Ah* and is the base or unchanging essence in which a seed, not yet implemented, may be placed. The second *A* is the clarity or potential which arises from the base, as waves arise in the ocean. The third *A* is the Nature of Mind, unity, and emptiness which have now been reached. All three *A* syllables are thus connected to the Nature of Mind by a process of development.



Matri Thangka, with Tonpa Shenrab with his consort Sherap Chamma and the deities of the Six lokas

In the middle syllables, *KAR* is the white or wisdom that recognizes the whole. *SA LE* is illuminating, translucent, and clear, and *WOE* is light. These syllables represent the path, the practice of meditation and stand for the strength and the understanding gained through the practice. Through the recognition of the Nature of Mind, one can

become one with it and all concepts and thoughts are dissolving. The moment in which this happens is *WOE*, or light.

The last three syllables *YANG OM DHU* stand for the experience, the fruit of the practice, whereby the last syllable *DHU* is for the tigle Nyakchik, the unity or sphere by which the wisdom wind (*Yang*) is initiated. *OM* represents the five wisdoms. The visualization preceding the recitation is as follows: We visualize on our heads the *Sambhogakaya* deity Shenlha Okar with peaceful Ornaments. Out of his heart emanate

beams of light, which illuminate every syllable of the mantra. From here, it shines onto us, and thus we experience the blessings before we begin the recitation session.

The mantra is also important for the *Trek Chö* practice (self-recognition through the *A*), during which it can be recited. Its main benefit however, is for the improvement of the mind.

<p>ཨ་ཨྲྀ་ཧྲྀ། ཨྲྀ་ཨ་དཀར་སལེ་འོད་ཨ་ཡང་ཨྲྀ་འདུ།</p> <p>A-OMe-HUNG, AH A-KAR SA-LE WOE A-YANG OM-DHU</p> <p>ཨྲྀ་མ་རི་མུ་ཡེ་སལེ་འདུ།</p> <p>OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE DHU</p> <p>ཨ་དཀར་ཨ་མད་དུ་རི་མུ་ནག་པོ་ཞི་ཞི་མལ་མལ་སྐྱུ།</p> <p>AH-KAR A-ME DHU-TRI-SU NAG-PO ZHI-ZHI MAL-MAL SO-HA</p>





Geshe Nyima with members and guests of the Berlin Sangha.

OM MA TRI MU YE SA LE DHU

The second mantra is a deeper exploration of the main mantra in Bon of eight syllables, comparable to the *Om Mani Padma Hung* mantra of Tibetan Buddhism. With the exception of the first two syllables *OM* and *MA*, each syllable symbolizes a further manifestation of the *Nirmanakaya* Buddha Tonpa Shenrab, to alleviate the suffering of beings in the six realms of existence through specific antidotes. For example, the field of hungry ghosts is purified by generosity, which is taught as an antidote or quality of the deity responsible for this area. According to the interpretation of Shardza Rinpoche, this mantra is connected to the *Nirmanakaya* level. We begin the mantra with the visualization of the *thangka* in which Tonpa Shenrab (symbolized in the mantra by *OM*) is in the center, in union with his consort Sherap Chamma (symbolized by *MA*). Other manifestations of Tonpa Shenrab are shown in the lower portion of the *thangka*, with the different colors, forms, and attributes depicting the qualities and antidotes that they represent.

In the visualization, we imagine in the heart of Tonpa Shenrab, on a moon disc a counterclockwise-rotating *OM*, and in the heart of Sherap Chamma on a sun disk a clockwise-rotating *MA*. The light emanating from the two deities facing each other and the rotating syllables passes on to the deities especially the ones of the *Six Lokas*, illuminating from here the six realms of existence, thereby purifying them from the poisons of the mind. Our corresponding mind-state is, that through this mantra, everything is transformed.

Geshe Nyima finds this mantra extremely helpful if someone dies or suffers, and it is also good for animals. The primary benefit of the mantra is to clear karmic traces.

AH-KAR A-ME DHU-TRI-SU NAG-PO ZHI-ZHI MAL-MAL SO-HA

Geshe Nyima calls this the mantra of *Sambhoghakaya* or the so-called light body. It

is especially useful for dealing with external obstacles, such as to ward off or to overcome disease.

The first four syllables represent the top four Bon deities, Sherap Chamma (*AH*), Shenlha Okar (*KAR*), Sipa Sangpo Bumtri (*A*), and Tonpa Shenrab (*ME*). The next three syllables *DHU TRI SU* are for the lower realms to be cleaned, with the following syllables *NAG PO* for cleaning of the three higher realms, and *ZHI ZHI MAL MAL* collectively understood to be the antidote to karmic obstacles. ('Everything dissolves into happiness when all obstacles are overcome.') The final two syllables, *SO HA*, are 'very so wrathful' with the power to overcome all negative external forces. Interestingly, the two syllables *SO HA* have the same meaning in Hindi and in Chinese.

The short form of the visualization that we can make before the recitation (there is also a longer one) is as follows:

1. All I see is in the form of the four deities.
2. All I hear is the sound of the mantra.
3. All I think is the same as the thought of Kuntu Zangpo, the purest form of the mind.

Thank you, Geshe Nyima, for the so content-rich and joyfully given teaching, as well as for the blessing ritual for our *malas*.

Text by Ulrike Bross-Kurat
Translated by Patricia Char

Photos: courtesy of Geshe Nyima; Sarah Edgehill



OPENING THE DOOR TO BON

On the back cover of the book *Opening the door to Bön* Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche says: "I strongly recommend this excellent guide-book for practitioners and for anyone else who would like a window into the view and practice of Bön. The practices of *ngöndro* are very important, because they provide the firm, stable foundation one needs for engaging in any of the higher practices of the Bön Buddhist tradition, including *Dzogchen* practice. Readers will benefit from the high level of clarity, depth and detail that *Geshe Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche* offers regarding all aspects of these wonderful and essential teachings."

With this book, Latri Khenpo Geshe Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche succeeded in writing about complicated matters in a simple way. And despite the simple words, when I read the book, I could feel the depth of these teachings. Several times I had the feeling that what he wrote was obvious, but reading it was very inspiring, and made me have a look at my daily conduct.

In chapter one he writes about the origin and history of Bon. In chapter two he explains how we can receive the teachings in a proper way. In chapter three he describes the fourfold practices to train one's own mind. In chapter four he gives instructions for the nine preliminary practices, also known as the *Ngondro*.

We bring you parts of chapter 2, *The Proper Way to Receive the Bön Teachings*.

"To develop inner awareness and wisdom, it is necessary to develop the right view toward the teachings. This will not be possible if the practitioner has a wrong attitude about the teachings. Before learning the basic teachings or the preliminary practices, one must establish a solid foundation for future growth and a deep understanding of Bön. Without a good and proper foundation, one's practice will not be stable and reliable. Therefore, it

is very important to start with a good understanding of the basics of proper practice.

PURE ATTITUDE OF TEACHER AND STUDENT

Before receiving the teachings, it is essential to prepare oneself by having a pure attitude (motivation) and genuine compassion from the heart.

As an example, in order for a farmer to expect a good crop, it is important to have fertilized the soil. When there is good soil, one can plant and things will grow. If the soil is not good, then whatever one plants will not grow. In the same way, the student's motivation has to be very pure and proper in order to increase positive energy, understand the wisdom of the teachings, and benefit all sentient beings. (...)

PROPER MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS

The essence of the Bön teachings is based on compassion, love, non-violence, and kindness. If you practice accordingly, you will obtain a better understanding of your own nature, and the nature of all phenomena.

In other words, the ultimate goal of practice is to discover your natural state of mind and to achieve enlightenment. Discovering your true nature is essential to purifying your negative thoughts, which are influenced by the five poisons: anger, attachment, ignorance, jealousy, and pride. The ability to generate pure thoughts helps you to be of benefit to other sentient beings and gives a meaningful purpose to your life.

As an example, we can be like a lotus flower, which is beautiful even though it is growing in the mud. Its beauty is never affected by its surroundings. As we are born into the miserable conditions of this cyclic existence, we need to emphasize how to overcome or free ourselves from suffering. By applying the teachings to our everyday practice,



we are not affected by the poisons of this world.

The teachings of Bön are like a mirror that is able to reflect the appearance of objects. In the same way, through practice, you will be able to notice and realize the influence of negative thoughts and the five poisons, and therefore mindfully control and subdue them. Use the practice as a mirror to reflect your inner self. The more you are able to overcome or subdue negative thoughts, the more you will improve your understanding and the level of your practice.

QUALITIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS

Two sets of characteristics are required of practitioners: qualities to avoid (the three faults of the container and the nine faults to avoid), and qualities to achieve (the knowledge of holding, the knowledge of understanding, and the knowledge of realization). (...)

QUALITIES TO BE CULTIVATED BY THE TEACHER

In order to achieve enlightenment, we need to practice meditation. In order to meditate, we need to realize the nature of our mind. To realize the nature of our mind, it is important to have instruction and guidance from a teacher. There is no history of achieving enlightenment without following a teacher.

Without a guide, a person who does not know a particular country cannot make a proper decision about where to go. In the same way, we sentient beings have no knowledge of how to enter the path of enlightenment without a teacher. In the past, the great masters, scholars, and translators of Zhang Zhung and Tibet followed their teachers' instructions and achieved enlightenment. In the eighth century the great master Denpa Namkha followed 108 teachers to achieve enlightenment. We sentient beings need to have a qualified teacher who can guide us and tell us what to do and what to avoid.

It is important to find a qualified Bön teacher who has received the transmission of the Bön teachings through an unbroken lineage and can lead us in the right direction. He must have knowledge of the Bön teachings in general, and have his own experience of realization of the nature of mind through meditation. He must

also be fluent in the particular subject he is teaching and have the wisdom and knowledge to guide his students. Without discriminating among his students, he needs to be enthusiastic about teaching them tirelessly for the benefit of all sentient beings. (...)"



Lha-Tri Khenpo Geshe Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche

is the Abbot and lineage holder of the Lha-tri monastery in the Derge area of the Kham region of Eastern Tibet. His father was a lama of the Te-Wa monastery in Tibet and the third reincarnation of Tsultrim Phuntsok, a great Bon practitioner of Eastern Tibet.

Born in Tibet in 1959, he grew up in Nepal at Dorpatan, the first Bonpo refugee community. At age six, he started his religious studies under the guidance of his father and from Tsultrim Nyima Rinpoche, the Abbot and founder of Dorpatan Monastery.

He is the founder of several Bon Centers. In Europe there are centers in Vienna, Minsk (Belarus) and Moscow. He travels regularly to these centers to give teachings.

Text by Ton Bisscheroux

Photo from website: www.ligminchatexas.org



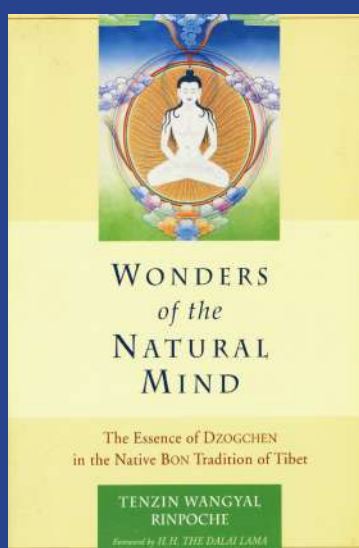
ADVICE ON DEVELOPING AS A DZOGCHENPA

In October 2012, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches in Austria the third cycle of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud: The View, Meditation, Behavior, and Result of Dzogchen*. We have selected text from chapter 8 of the book *Wonders of the Natural Mind*, where Rinpoche talks about integration.

“It is very important to discover through self-observation which level of integration we are capable of practicing and to apply that level, otherwise there will be a gap between the Dzogchen teachings and our aspirations as Dzogchen practitioners. When my master Lopon Tenzin Namdak gave teachings on the Zhang Zhung Nyan Gyud in Italy in 1989 he said, ‘The teaching is Dzogchen, we are not Dzogchen.’ He was speaking about the gap between the explanation of the state or base given in the teachings and the dualistic condition in which we live in our conceptual mind. We can easily see if there is this gap when a passion such as anger arises. When we receive teachings, we learn about integration and self-liberation, but very often there is no functional relationship between what we have learned from the teachings about passions and what happens inside us when a passion such as anger arises. That means the teaching is not working and the anger we feel does not correspond to the anger we speak about according to the teachings. In practical terms, this is the gap my master was talking about. The moment a passion arises, we forget all explanations. To eliminate this gap when we try to apply integration, it is important not to follow blindly what the texts tell us about self-liberation, but rather first look at our own condition and determine at what stage of practice we are, what level of practitioner we are, and then apply the appropriate view and practice. It is as if we are sick. We have to find out what illness we have and what kind of medicine we must take. So the first step we must take towards integration is to determine what

level we have to work on, and not try immediately to apply the highest view of the teachings on integration and self-liberation, otherwise the gap will arise between the teaching and our capacity to apply it in the way we live. In this way, integration is one thing, and what we do is something else. We must connect what we learn about liberating the passions in the teachings and what we actually experience when we feel the passions arising.

If we find we are unable to integrate our passions, this is probably because we are confused about our level. Instead of applying the appropriate practice, we are trying to apply the superior practice while we are still on the inferior level. This might cause us to interrupt or even give up practice saying, ‘This teaching does not work,’ when in fact we are not applying it in the right way.



In fact, it is best to start with the lowest level of practice, of mindful attention to all our actions of body, voice, and mind. At times we can observe how we only notice the actions of our body after having performed them. For example, I may get up to walk out of the shrine room and accidentally kick somebody, then curse someone else for being in my way, and finally think badly of both people, before even stepping outside the door! I have performed these negative actions of body, voice,

and mind with distraction, and this creates problems within myself. In fact, if I kick someone, I am kicking myself, as in the Tibetan saying, ‘If you hit a stone with butter, the butter loses; if you hit butter with a stone, the butter loses.’ In the end it is always I who loses. Often, we do negative things not because we have bad intentions, but because we are inattentive, but the effect is the same. So when we start to practice, we must first develop mindfulness, that is, effortful attention to the actions we perform, as a kind of base.”

Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux

