



SHAMBHALA PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Horticultural Hall 300 Massachusetts Avenue Boston Massachusetts 02115

Interview questions for Irini Rockwell

Q. Many are bound to compare the five buddha families to the enneagram, given its familiarity to many. How would you compare them?

A. In order to do justice to comparing them I would need to know the enneagram as deeply as I know the five wisdoms. Comparing can also make things more confusing than clarifying. However, as far as I can tell, the five wisdoms are more accessible because they deal with our immediate experience. Through our thoughts and emotions, we experience the energy of our inner being; through our sense perceptions (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching), we experience the outer world. We always bring our understanding of who we are back to our experience. Rather than being told who we are, we go through a journey of discovery. Another aspect is that we embody all five wisdoms to one degree or another. We are not pigeonholing ourselves and the energies shift depending on circumstance.

Q. What are the Five Wisdom Energies?

A. Five wisdom energies pervade our very being, our interactions with others, and every aspect of the phenomenal world. They manifest in posture, emotional tones, and personality types as well as in landscapes, seasons, and environments. The five are: Buddha/Spaciousness, Vajra/Clarity/Blue, Ratna/Richness/Yellow, Padma/Passion/Red, Karma/Activity/Green. A chapter on each.

Q. Where did they originate?

A. Traditionally called the five Buddha families. Historically, from early vajrayana or tantric Buddhism in India (4-500 AD), then took root in Tibetan Buddhism. Thirty years ago brought to West by Trungpa Rinpoche and developed as a practice for working with ourselves and others. Made these esoteric teachings accessible to non-Buddhists in an immediate and direct way. Book is about their relevance to our life, our experience.

Q. What do you mean by energy? How do we experience energy?

A. Energy is the basic vitality of our existence: the quality, texture, ambiance, and tone of both the animate and the inanimate. The world we perceive, conceptualize, and think we know is only a surface reality. Underneath it lies a magical realm, more

elusive and yet more vivid. Every philosophical, spiritual, and religious tradition, every art form, in every corner of the globe, in every century of human existence, teaches about this deeper reality. In the book we referred to it as the surprising and powerful force called energy. We can not understand energy conceptually. It is a more subtle level of being and communicating with our world. When we have a sense of how to work with energetic reality, we can creatively apply our understanding anywhere, anytime, no matter what we are doing.

Q. You say that each energy has its intelligent and confused aspects. As we become more aware of our behavior and the energy it originates from, how can we 'steer' ourselves toward our energy's more intelligent aspects?

A. Energy is neutral; our attitude toward it—in ourselves, others and our world—is what determines whether we are open (sane) or closed (confused). At times we shine; other times we feel stuck. When we allow ourselves to befriend our stuck places—instead of bottling them up or acting out—we relax into who we are, our sanity. Essential change comes about by our recognizing the inseparability of neurosis and sanity, the ultimate wisdom of energy work. Fully embracing the emotions that bind us, liberates us. We go beyond aligning with sanity (the sun) as opposed to confusion (the clouds); we embrace all aspects of who we are. When our sun and our clouds come together, we are a rainbow. Our wisdom is inherent; we just have to wake up to it. "Wisdom energy sees the light of wisdom within the darkness of confusion." s(Tara)

Q. Could you say more about how to work with emotions from this perspective?

A. We need to learn to welcome our emotions. Each energy has an emotion associated with it which is transmuted into a particular 'wisdom' or aspect of the awakened state of mind. Emotions are a vivid display of energy. The point at which our energy is negatively intensified is the most opportune time to work with emotions because that is when we experience the energy most vividly. When our energy is stuck over a period of time, we experience an imbalance in our psychophysical being, leading to mental and/or physical illness. Regaining our sense of energetic well-being comes from working directly with energy. In this work we do it with specific postures in colored environments. An attitude of unconditional friendliness, maitri, toward whatever arises in our being is the catalyst for turning our energy around. Loving ourselves has to do with accepting, relaxing, opening, and feeling warmth.

Q. How do the wisdom energies relate to personality types?

A. People express their energy through attitudes, emotions, decisions, and actions. We each display energy in our own unique ways—through body posture, facial expressions, mannerisms, word choices, the tone and tempo of our voice. Some personality traits we commonly classify as dysfunctional or neurotic and some we consider constructive or wise. When we are open to our own energy, we experience ourselves as warm and clear. When we are closed to our energy, we feel confused and stuck. Being open or closed determines how we view ourselves and consequently the world. Each of us have our unique ways of perceiving and interacting with the world.

Q. Do we have just one energy or several?

A. We are born with certain energies. Others we learn. Still others arise as we adapt to life. Some are more dominant; others more background. Recognizing our style has to do with paying close attention to our habitual patterns from day to day, moment to moment, in different situations. When we become aware of the mix of colors in ourselves, we no longer identify with just one energy. Defining ourselves as one or the other solidifies and centralizes our sense of who we are. By narrowing our range, we box ourselves in and miss the play of totality. Rather than saying we are red, or blue or green energy, it is more accurate to say we are more like a rainbow or kalediscope.

Q. How can I use the knowledge of my energy type—and that of my partner or children or co-workers, to make my relationships more productive and fulfilling?

A. Opening to others' energies often feels confusing. Trying to find the place to connect with someone can feel very awkward. When we are aware of another person's colorings, we can begin to see that her energies have some predictability. This gives us a sense of what we can and cannot expect from her. It's how we learn to dance with each other. It doesn't mean that she will always act the same way. The same person will manifest differently in different situations. As humans, we are both predictable and surprising. However, by looking at the patterns in relationships, we can see how energies resist one another or merge. When they resist one another, we become closed and polarized. When they merge, we become open to each other's full palette of colors.

Q. This system relates the different energies with various elements, senses, and colors. This leads to a question that sounds appropriate for feng-shui: can we impact our energies by manipulating our exposure to certain elements or colors?

A. We can work with being conscious of our environment and creating colorful environments that manifest the wisdom. We can create the ambience of each energy by physically changing the environment—moving furniture, decorating, adjusting the lighting. Then we can combine them to give a full sense.

Q. How do the energies relate to creativity?

A. The five energies provide a rich resource. Being creative is simply letting our energy flow through us freely. The creative process is one of the most rewarding ways of discovering inner wealth, our wisdoms. When we are being fully who we are—sensual, emotional, insightful—we respond with a creative gesture. Creating is not just for artists; it also exists in ordinary moments throughout our lives.

Q. You are currently traveling internationally to teach workshops on the five wisdoms. How do you find those outside of North America resonate with this approach? Do you find non-buddhists as well as Buddhists interested?

A. I have taught five wisdoms work in Europe and in North America. I have worked with Buddhists, but even more with people who are not. My interest is to make this work accessible to anyone and show how it can bring deeper meaning into our lives. Currently I am most interested in offering custom-designed workshops tailored to the needs and interests of educators, health professionals, organizational leaders, and artists. Five Wisdoms Institute is the container for the programs offered about this work. Please visit our website for more information. www.FiveWisdomsInstitute.com

I will give examples throughout.

Telephone: (617) 424-6277, ext. 249 Fax: (617) 236-1563 Email: publicity@shambhala.com