

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 Feb. 10. Please check the link for VOCL on Ligmincha Institute's home page at www.ligmincha.org. You can also access an archive of the e-mail and PDF versions of previous issues at: <http://ligmincha.org/study/vocl.html>

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"AND ONE'S HEART NATURALLY OPENS" - an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2005.

As practitioners of Bon, every single day, before every single practice, we recite the refuge and bodhicitta prayers. I would like to speak a little bit about the sense of bodhicitta that we are cultivating.

There are a lot of complex details and distinctions between different doctrines with regard to what bodhicitta means. But very simply, the core intention of bodhicitta, or compassion, is: "I care about others." It's quite simple, this notion of "I care about others." But, how much do I care? In what way do I care? What do I do when I care? What don't I do when I care? I can care in so many different ways. I care therefore I remain silent. I care therefore I speak through my awareness. I care so I go out of my way to help. I care so I pay attention. Even if I'm not in any position to help, nevertheless I still care.

So, at the heart of bodhicitta is this deep sense of "I care." I care about others. I care because others have life. I care because others have pain. I care because I know what that pain means. I care because I know what they're going through. I care because I know their weakness and the way they see the world. I care because of the way

they are caught up in that world. There are so many hundreds of thousands of ways to reflect a little closer on others' situations. And when you see those situations clearly, it's very easy to care about others.

As human beings we are all able to share others' pain. If you realize what someone is going through, you'll feel your heart open. Most of the time, probably 99 percent of the time, it's just human nature to open in that way. And when you're open, you are also less angry. When you're open, you are less greedy. When you're open, you are more clear. You're open, so you are less jealous. You're open, therefore you don't feel so much ego. That is the power of opening the heart. Then it just becomes a question of "What can I do?" When we're talking about a major crisis such as war, we can feel helpless. "I know the situation, I understand, but there is nothing I can do about it." But from the point of view of the teachings, you are not helpless, you very much can help. You can cultivate bodhicitta. You can open your heart, instead of simply opening your anger.

So you open your heart and feel, "I want to enter into the teachings in order to help other people." What this Mahayana bodhicitta prayer is saying is that ultimately the solution for human suffering is selfrealization, not simply helping through providing material means, say.

Of course, providing material goods can be helpful, but they are not the means for truly overcoming human suffering. That is clear from the teachings: The only way to overcome one's own suffering is to realize one's self.

For sure people can feel better when their painful circumstances and situations improve. But they can always find another pain in any given situation they're in, because the seed of their suffering is within themselves. They will not get rid of the seed of suffering by simply removing the external conditions that support one particular pain. So, the ultimate solution for overcoming pain is selfrealization.

When this truth is seen clearly, then the sincere wish naturally arises, "May I enter into the dharma to help other people." Of course you may ask, "How clearly can I feel that intention? How clearly do I understand the conditions of our suffering?" It seems that the teachings on the very nature of human suffering would first have to make sense to me in order for me to even begin working on developing that compassionate intention. I hear the teaching; I understand it. But do I really, really feel that every morning I am getting up and practicing truly to help other people? It's a good question to ask yourself. But right now, can you simply open your heart toward the idea of becoming that way? Yes, I think everyone can do that.

HAPPY LOSAR! Losar Tashi Delek! Happy New Year!

The Tibetan Losar, or New Year, begins on Tuesday, February 28. It is

the year of the Fire Dog, the year 2133, according to the Tibetan calendar.

For Tibetans, Losar is a time of great celebration and also of great prayer. And it's a time to visit with family, friends and distant relatives. It is a sacred time to travel to monasteries to make offerings and to receive blessings. Formal material offerings are made such as khatas, flowers, and the lighting of incense and butter lamps. Khapsay are tasty Tibetan biscuits that are specially prepared the night before the Losar festival using barley-flour dough. These khapsay are made in abundance as offerings. But there are plenty of khapsay to also be shared during the Losar festivities and even long into the days following.

Traditionally, there is much preparation done prior to Losar.

Buildings are whitewashed and thoroughly cleaned; special foods are prepared over time with great care; monasteries are adorned with their finest decorations; laypeople make their finest new clothes to wear for the occasion.

It is also a time for practices that symbolize purification of the past and the welcoming in of the future. It is a time to make amends, to work to create good signs and to seek the blessings and the help of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. We do this by, among other things, practicing generosity, compassion and wisdom; making offerings to the three jewels; and doing practices such as the sang or smoke offering and the hanging of prayer flags.

Prayer flags are symbolic of the positive energy of lungta, or windhorse. The celebration of Losar is a time for raising this energy, and new prayer flags are hung for the occasion. Here's an excerpt from Sakyong Mipham's latest book, "Ruling Your World," where he emphasizes the importance of lungta:

"You see the image of windhorse printed on prayer flags that flutter in the breeze all over Tibet. It is the ability to bring about long life, good health, success, and happiness. When we have windhorse, we are able to accomplish what we want without many obstacles. On its back, windhorse carries a wish-fulfilling jewel. This jewel is the wisdom and compassion that it takes to act not on behalf of ourselves but for all beings. This is where real confidence and competence come from. Once we possess this jewel, our life becomes blessed. Whatever we want happens without difficulty. Just as if we were to jump on the back of a horse and ride across the open country, there is nothing in our way." May we greet this Tibetan year of the Fire Dog with our lungta raised as high as the bright, billowing prayer flags that stretch across the sky, and may the blessings of all the masters and their teachings along with the prayers of our growing global sangha be carried by the winds of compassion to touch all beings throughout space and time.

Losar Tashi Delek!!

- Jeff and Aline Fisher

INVITATION TO BON STUPA CONSECRATION CEREMONY IN MEXICO

Greetings!

Everyone in the sangha is invited to a very special event in Torreon, Mexico, Feb. 11-12, 2006 - the consecration of the first Bon stupa in the Americas!

Follow this link for more information:

<http://www.garudamexico.org/docs/stupatorreonenglish1.html>

In Bon,

Lee Hartline

“THE TEN PARAMITAS: THE KEYS TO AWAKENING” – the second in a series focusing on the practice of each of the 10 paramitas or perfections, the means of transcending the limits of one’s karmic tendencies Fully mastering these 10 virtues may take many lifetimes, but even the act of turning one’s awareness toward practicing them can have a transformative effect on one’s attitude and on one’s relations with others.

The Ten Perfections or Ten Paramitas

Generosity - jin pa (sbyin pa)

Moral discipline or ethical behavior - tsul trim
(tshul khrims)

Patience - zo pa (bzod pa)

Diligence or vigor - ton dru (btson ‘grus)

Meditation or concentration - sam ten (bsam gtan)

Strength, power, or capacity - tob (stobs)

Compassion - nying je (snying rje)

Aspiration - mon lam (smon lam)

Skillful means/dedication - ngo wa (bsngo ba)

Wisdom - she rab (shes rab)

“MORAL DISCIPLINE OR ETHICAL BEHAVIOR”

An edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, the abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal, November 2005:

The second paramita, or perfection, is one of ethical behavior or moral discipline (tsultrim), and for this we have external, internal, and secret teachings. Each of these teachings has its own level of ethical behaviors and moral discipline. Very generally speaking, within the paramita of moral discipline are basic guidelines for abandoning the 10 nonvirtuous actions.

We have our refuge practice with its strong commitment to take refuge in the three jewels [buddha, dharma, and sangha]. This is the refuge vow. This vow is necessary, because if you have a strong commitment inside, then the stream of commitment is there. One purpose of taking the formal refuge vow is that by doing so, you are making a commitment

in the witness of your teacher and the three jewels to never give up devotion to the three jewels. As long as you are able to keep this vow, then you are engaged with moral discipline and the second paramita.

In tantra we have millions of samayas, or commitments of the teachings. If we receive the tantric initiations we have to keep all of these commitments. I have heard people say, "I cannot keep the monk's vows, but I can be a tantric practitioner." But actually, there are more commitments for tantric practitioners than there are for monks!

With the dzogchen teachings we also need to keep commitments. Even in the case of regular meditation, if you commit to doing one, two, three or four sessions a day and you keep this commitment, this is part of moral discipline. It is not necessary to become a monk or a nun, but whatever your practice, it is good to make a commitment according to your ability. Make a commitment to something that you can do. If you are ready to do one session of meditation per day, make this your commitment. Then this becomes not only your meditation practice but the practice of moral discipline, as well.

Before composing a text, early scholars and masters would compose a sentence of commitment. "I am going to write this." If you make this commitment and write with good motivation for helping others, then from the beginning until you complete your writing you have a stream of commitment that continues. Even if it takes a full year, you will have all the benefit of making this commitment. If you want to enter a retreat a month from now, for example, and you have the intention to do a good retreat, you can make a strong decision and commitment now, and keep this commitment until you finish your retreat. This is moral discipline, ethical behavior. Involve commitment as part of your moral discipline.

When it comes to dzogchen practitioners, we do not speak of commitment in the usual way. Being in the natural state is your commitment. As much as possible, try to be unmistakably in the natural state. If you are in the natural state, there is nothing to keep or protect, you simply are engaged with your commitment.

So as you can see, there are so many different ways to engage with moral discipline. People are a little hesitant about making commitments, thinking that only monks or nuns must do this, but we don't need to think of it in this way.

"THE TEN BASIC PRECEPTS" - from a written handout used during oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2005

There are 10 basic precepts: three of body, four of speech, and three of mind. They involve not only what to avoid, but also what virtues to cultivate.

The three precepts of body:

One should not kill; rather one should protect the lives of beings.

One should not steal or take what is not freely given; rather one should practice generosity.

One should not commit sexual misconduct or cause others to break their vows; rather one should keep one's vows and respect the vows of others.

The four precepts of speech:

One should not lie; rather one should speak the truth.

One should not divide others or sow discord; rather one should speak in a way to reconcile or bring people together.

One should not speak harshly; rather one should speak gently and kindly.

One should not engage in gossip or idle chatter; rather one should speak in a useful way or say prayers.

The three precepts of mind:

One should not covet the possessions or accomplishments of others; rather one should learn to be generous.

One should not wish harm to others or bear resentment; rather one should cultivate the desire to help others.

One should not hold wrong views (such as thinking one's actions will have no result); rather one should practice the dharma, establishing oneself in a true and authentic view.

"WORDS OF ADVICE ON THE PRACTICE OF MORAL DISCIPLINE" - excerpts from the writings of several Buddhist teachers:

From "The Essence of Buddhism" by Traleg Kyabgon:

The second paramita is called shila (Tibetan, tsultrim), or ethics. A better translation would be "moral precepts," because all the paramitas are involved with ethics or morality, not just shila. The distinctive feature of shila paramita is that it is involved with the taking of certain precepts. In the Mahayana tradition, it is said that without precepts we are like a person without feet – we cannot get a foothold, we cannot stand upon the ground. As a Mahayana sutra says: "Just as you cannot walk without feet, so also can you not become liberated if you lack ethics or moral precepts." In Tibetan, tsultrim is always referred to as tsultrim che kangpa, which means "foot of moral precepts." So shila is seen as the foundation, that which grounds us in spiritual practice or connects us to the earth.

From "Many Ways to Nirvana" by His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

Where the practice of morality is concerned, particularly in the context of a bodhisattva practice, there are three types of morality.

The first is called the "morality refraining from engaging in negative deeds." The second is the "morality collecting virtuous qualities."

And the third is called the "morality of fulfilling the purposes of sentient beings." The three kinds of morality are linked. In order to develop the third morality, you need develop the second morality.

Unless you have the necessary virtuous qualities, it is not possible to

help others. In order to develop these qualities, you need to have developed the first morality. Unless you eliminate or avoid afflictive emotions, it is not possible to develop virtuous qualities.

From "Luminous Mind" by Kalu Rinpoche:

Maintaining discipline is calming and causes us to take mindful precaution, so that afflictions are weakened while faith, energy, and wisdom increase. Discipline facilitates the achievement of the two accumulations [of merit and wisdom].

From "Loving-Kindness" by Sharon Salzberg:

Moral conduct is the reflection of our deepest love, concern, and care. The Buddha once said that if we truly loved ourselves, we would never harm another, because we are all interconnected. To protect another is to protect oneself. To protect oneself is to protect another. Sila works on all levels of our relationships: our relationship to ourselves, to other people, and to the environment around us. Everything is interwoven. The things we do, the things we think about – the things we care about – all make a difference in the totality we are part of. If we want to quiet our minds, to bring our lives into spiritual truth, to see into the life of things, we need to live in harmony.

There is no way to disregard our behavior and then sit down in a formal posture on a meditation cushion and experience freedom, because each part of our life is thoroughly intermeshed with every other part.

SOURCES:

Traleg Kyabgon. "The Essence of Buddhism." Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama. "Many Ways to Nirvana." Edited by Runuka Singh. New York: Penguin Compass, 2004.

Kalu Rinpoche. "Luminous Mind." Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997.

Sharon Salzberg. "Loving-Kindness." Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002.

NEW ARRIVAL AT LIGMINCHA'S BOOKSTORE

To see photographs of the newest items at Ligmincha Institute's Bookstore and for order information, please go to

www.ligminchastore.org and click on "search by category or description" and then click on "New items." Or, go directly to:

<http://www.ligminchastore.org/items.asp?CategoryID=16&SubCategory=0&Submit=Search&offset=0>

"Sacred Landscape and Pilgrimage in Tibet: In Search of the Lost Kingdom of Bon" by Geshe Gelek Jinpa, Charles Ramble and Carroll Dunham. Photographs by Thomas Kelley. Forwards by H.H. Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima Rinpoche and H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.

In 2002, Gelek Jinpa, a graduate of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, traveled to Tibet on pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and in search of the kingdom of Zhang Zhung. This book is Geshe Gelek's journal of his spiritual quest, and is accompanied by 160 breathtaking photographs by his traveling companion, photographer Thomas Kelley. Includes a 60-minute DVD documenting the pilgrimage, with wonderful interviews with Gelek Jinpa's teacher, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.

Hardback, 204 pages.

"The one-hour DVD in itself is a don't miss for any student of Yongdzin (Lopon) Rinpoche and the Bon tradition. It is very professionally done, and has wonderful interviews with Gelek Jinpa's teacher, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche. It's a beautiful and memorable teaching in itself." - Polly Turner

Price: \$65

Don't forget that Feb. 28th is Losar, the first day of the Tibetan Year of the Fire Dog, and the time of year to hang new prayer flags. You can find our windhorse prayer flags listed online in the category of 'ritual items' or by going directly to:

<http://www.ligminchastore.org/detail.asp?productid=82>. And, if you wish to offer a prayer flag in the name of a loved one to be blessed and hung at Serenity Ridge, go to:

http://www.ligmincha.org/ways_to_help/prayerflag.html for directions on how to order one.

May this be an auspicious year for all!

LIGMINCHA COUNCIL NEWS

There are so many people who give so much of themselves toward the needs of Ligmincha Institute, Serenity Ridge and our teachers. These are the ones who help to create the space that allows us to receive the precious teachings. We on the Council would like to take a little time each month to say thank you to just a few of them, and to ask for additional heartfelt assistance. We want to encourage everyone in our sangha to think of ways they can apply their experience and energy to helping Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche realize his dream of bringing these precious teachings to as many people as possible.

This month we share some words from Lee Hartline, Raven Cypress Wood and Kim Carey.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

FROM LEE HARTLINE, PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO RINPOCHE,
THANK YOU TO:

***Sue Davis and Kevin O'Neil, for setting up the downtown Charlottesville space for public talks.

***Richard Fauteaux, Greg Kelley, John Massie and Norman Dill, for

being available to help do virtually anything at Serenity Ridge.

***Cece Clover and Sangye Dekye (Trish Cowan), for helping Rinpoche with countless tasks done with heart.

***Lisette Takayama and Ron Greathead, for always being available to attend our visiting geshes, receiving them as guests, cooking meals, chauffeuring them back and forth. An additional thank you to Lisette for always being willing to cook for the lamas during retreats.

FROM RAVEN CYPRESS WOOD AND KIM CARY,
DIRECTORS OF RETREAT COORDINATION,
THANK YOU TO:

***Polly Turner for volunteering to help, and spending hours with setup for Winter Retreat the day after Christmas.

***Armin Raderbauer for climbing the trees of Serenity Ridge during the Summer Retreat and hanging the flags so very high!

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Ligmincha's Downtown Charlottesville Center Needs Your Help

The tasks listed below would be a wonderful gift of time from one person or a group of people willing to make an ongoing commitment to help out at the downtown center in Charlottesville, Va.

***Cleaning the downtown center

We need help with general household cleaning in our downtown space. Tasks include: cleaning the kitchen, the bathrooms, and the shrine room; polishing the shrine room objects; vacuuming; and washing the windows to let the clear light in and out. It would require one to two hours per week.

***Assisting Lee in the office

Here's an opportunity for anyone who can make a regular commitment for a few hours a week:

Lee needs help with general typing and filing, cleaning up the mailing list, going to the post office, assembling mailings, stamping, sealing, etc. It would require one to two hours per week.

MAKE A DONATION

TOWARD CANDLES, FLOWERS, WINE AND OTHER SHRINE OFFERINGS

For those who don't have much time or for some reason can't get to a retreat, we would like to offer the opportunity to make a donation toward purchasing the candles for the shrines, or the wine and tea for Yeshe Walmo, or the flowers for the gumpa and Garuda House shrine rooms. A few dollars go a long way, and help to turn the wheel of dharma.

***TO VOLUNTEER your assistance in any of the above ways, or to suggest other ways you can help, please contact Lee Hartline at ligmincha@aol.com, or call 434-977-6161.