

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."

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"THE ANCIENT BON PRACTICE OF SANG CHOD"

An interview with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Rinpoche, could you give us some background on the practice of Sang Chod that you'll be teaching in April?

TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE: The Sang Chod text I will be teaching from draws from various sources in the ancient Bon Buddhist tradition, particularly a text entitled "Sang," by the 14th century master Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen, the first abbot of Menri Monastery. Sang Chod is originally from the Cha Shen Thegpa (The Vehicle of Prosperity), the first causal vehicle of the Bon tradition. Nearly all Tibetans know about the ancient practices of the Cha Shen Thegpa and use them often in their daily lives.

Sang Chod and many of the other practices of the causal vehicle are very much about developing and strengthening the healthy energies we all need in order to be at our best in life. In the Sang Chod we focus mainly on our vitality or life force, our soul, our fortune, and our personal and inner power. When these forces are balanced within us we have a more stable foundation for whatever we want to do in life, including our spiritual development. A yogi who is practicing toward enlightenment needs to reinforce that kind of energy. A family can need that energy. One's business can need that energy. Even entire

communities and countries need that kind of force and energy. The practice of Sang Chod is a form of communication with nature and the nature spirits. In Bon as in many indigenous traditions, it is considered very important to live in harmony with the spirits of nature, to harmonize the elemental forces in the environment, to harmonize our own relationship with these forces, and to harmonize these forces within ourselves. It is believed that frequent physical illness, interpersonal difficulties, loss of energy, financial difficulties, etc., can indicate an imbalance between ourselves and the spirits of the environment. As a remedy we communicate and work directly with those spirits using offering rituals that include prayer, mantra and smoke purification. Through these rituals we can uplift our own fortune, personal power, life force and spiritual vitality, as well as those of the environment and its spirits.

Why did you choose to teach this practice at this time?

TWR: In the world today it seems like there are many more disturbances in nature, extreme disturbances. Our earth is clearly showing its unhappiness. We believe that it's not the gross elements of nature in themselves that are unbalanced and causing all this upheaval, but the spirits behind those elements.

I think it is wonderful to learn to use this knowledge to shift the flow of one's everyday life. But I also hope to inspire my students, through these ancient prayers and rituals, to try to collectively change something in their environment as well. These rituals can be used in group practice toward a greater, more global good. That is the purpose of spiritual practice, after all: We first improve ourselves so we are better able to help others.

How could one incorporate this practice into everyday life?

TWR: If you look at the cycle of one day, we generally have more energy in the morning, we get a little tired by the afternoon, and by late at night we have no energy at all. Each month or year has a similar cycle. People often think of starting new projects at the beginning of the month or year. In the West you have the idea of New Year's resolutions, for example. Every beginning has certain uplifting positive qualities, but these are not necessarily maintained.

The flow of life has its ups and downs. When the flow is upward it's not a problem but when it's downward we need some kind of solution, and these practices are that solution. It is important to know and to trust that one can reinforce what has declined; and that a lot of support is available to help us in this purpose. There are very clear, very ancient, and very effective ways to shift and change that downside - whether it is related to the environment, our health, or personal or business issues.

If we align ourselves more with the natural rhythm of the world then we will strengthen the upward momentum right from the beginning. If we create the right circumstances and the right energetic flow at the

right time, we are more likely to be successful.

It is traditional to do Sang Chod at the beginning of the day; as well as at the beginning of each month (the first day of the Tibetan lunar calendar), on the third day of the lunar month, and at Losar, the beginning of the Tibetan year. These are considered the most auspicious times to do Sang Chod.

When the energy of the sun, the moon or the environment is already rising, it helps you in uplifting your own inner energy through the practice. You kind of hold on to that energy and it takes you up with it. (Rinpoche laughs.)

“EARLY BIRD” REGISTRATION DATE IS MARCH 16 FOR SPRING RETREAT!

“SANG CHOD - CULTIVATING LIFE FORCE, PERSONAL POWER, FORTUNE AND SOUL”

April 19-23 with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Serenity Ridge

Retreat cost: (includes all meals; on-site housing is available)

\$400 if received by March 16

\$450 if received by April 6

\$500 if received after April 6

For further information see the Ligmincha website:

www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/06_sangchod.html

To register please contact Ligmincha Institute at: ligmincha@aol.com or (434) 977-6161.

NEW SERIES OF PRACTICE RETREATS

The practice of meditation is essential to integrate the teachings that have been heard and reflected upon. The opportunity for intensive practice in the community of other practitioners in retreat is precious and powerful. Responding to recent requests, Ligmincha Institute offers these practice retreats to support the deepening of meditative experience in the sacred space of our retreat center.

The first practice retreat will be a NGONDRO PRACTICE RETREAT, led by Marcy Vaughn, from March 24–26, 2006.

The second will be a SIX LOKAS PRACTICE RETREAT, led by John Jackson, from June 16–18, 2006.

NOTE: Previous transmission for the Ngondro and Six Lokas practices is required for attendees.

March 24–26, 2006

NGONDRO PRACTICE RETREAT

With Marcy Vaughn

Foundational Practices of the
Bon Tradition

The ngondro is the doorway through which one enters the vast and profound Bon Buddhist path. A set of nine foundational or preliminary practices, the ngondro provides a solid foundation of understanding and experience upon which a strong spiritual life develops. It is often

described as a friend that accompanies you throughout your spiritual life.

The more you devote yourself to these practices that tame, purify and perfect, and the more you become familiar with the experiences that these practices bring, the more you will find spiritual practice grounded within you. Join your fellow practitioners in this three-day practice intensive to connect with the power and beauty of the ngondro. MARCY VAUGHN is a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Marcy teaches mindfulness-based stress reduction for the University of Pennsylvania's Program in Stress Management and is a therapist in private practice.

Note: This retreat is open only to those who have received the ngondro transmission.

Retreat cost (includes meals): \$150

June 16–18, 2006

SIX LOKAS PRACTICE RETREAT

Dissolving the Obstacles to Enlightenment

At one time or another each of us suffers strong emotions that throw us off balance, cause us to act in ways we later regret, and make us lose touch with our true nature. Centuries ago the masters of the Bon lineage developed the meditations of the Six Lokas specifically to purify the disturbing emotions and help us live our lives in a more balanced and relaxed way.

These meditations focus on the root causes of our suffering: anger, greed, ignorance, jealousy, pride and laziness. Through each meditation we examine our habitual patterns so that we may recognize them and then purify and transform them. The practices have a deep healing and transformative power, and are traditionally practiced in retreat as a preliminary to dzogchen contemplation.

This practice retreat is an opportunity to develop clear visualization, energize mantra practice, enjoy the support of sangha, dissolve emotional limitations, and simply and clearly be.

JOHN JACKSON has studied in Tibetan monasteries in India and Nepal and practiced meditation for 25 years. For more than 10 of those years he has studied with great masters of the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition.

Note: This retreat is open only to those who have received the transmission of the Six Lokas practice.

Retreat cost (includes meals): \$150

14TH ANNUAL SUMMER RETREAT: "TUMMO – INNER FIRE OF REALIZATION," JULY 2-22, 2006, WITH GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE AT SERENITY RIDGE

For 15 years Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has presented the dzogchen teachings of the Bon Buddhist tradition in the West. His teachings and commentaries convey a fundamental understanding of spiritual practice in the context of modern Western life. His ability to make these oncehidden

teachings accessible, while maintaining the purity of their transmission, has allowed his students to move beyond conceptual understanding and bring authentic dzogchen experience into their conventional lives.

In his soon-to-be-published book, Tenzin Rinpoche presents very simple, clear and direct instructions for integrating spiritual practice through the three doors of body, speech and mind. This summer, at Ligmincha Institute's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, Tenzin Rinpoche will combine material from his book with practice instructions from the text *Ku Sum Rang Shar* (Spontaneous Arising of the Three Kayas). This text is by Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen Rinpoche, a Bon master who achieved the body of light, or rainbow body, in 1934.

At this year's annual summer retreat Rinpoche will guide and instruct us in the practice of tummo (generating the inner heat) to burn away subtle obscurations and cultivate bliss. He will also teach meditation practices for retrieving healing essences from nature and the elements, which will include light fasting combined with herbal drinks to purify and rejuvenate the body and enhance meditative experience. We will engage the mind and speech with prayer, healing sounds, mantra and visualization; and we will incorporate the potent body movements of Tsa Lung, Trul Khor and prostrations. Rinpoche is happy to announce that both Geshe Nyima Kunchap and Geshe Tenzin Yeshe will join him at the retreat to help lead these practices.

It is Tenzin Rinpoche's sincere wish that through the intensive study and practice opportunity offered during this year's summer retreat, each student will find his or her own door to a life that is more physically healthy, energetically vital and spiritually fulfilling.

As always, you may come for one, two or all three weeks of the summer retreat. If you are new to Serenity Ridge, or able to come for only one week, Rinpoche recommends that you come to the first week, when an indepth explanation of the practices will be offered. Of course all are welcome no matter which week they attend. Each week is designed to be a complete series of teachings, and a direct and powerful healing experience with aspects of all of the practices presented each week.

Week One: July 2-8 / Week Two: July 9-15 / Week Three: July 16-22

Retreat cost PER WEEK (includes meals):

\$450 received by May 21; \$500 received by June 15; \$550 received after June 15

Note: Those who participate in the summer work retreat will receive a 50% discount on one week of the summer retreat.

Serenity Ridge Summer Work Retreat: June 27–July 1, 2006

This is a wonderful time to share with sangha and to be of joyful service.

Our work retreat includes vigorous work periods, daily meditation practice, and ample time for a swim in the pool or a walk along the

Rockfish River. The work retreat is free of charge, and participants are provided with free tenting and meals.

For those who participate in the entire work retreat there will be a 50% discount on one week of the summer retreat.

A BON STUPA IN THE WEST

The first Bon stupa in the West was consecrated on Feb. 19, 2006, in Torreon, Mexico. There are pictures on the Ligmincha Website home page. You can go to <http://ligmincha.org/index.html> and follow the link to a page with thumbnails of many more images. The April VOCL will carry a firsthand account by Lourdes Hinojosa and other sangha members who attended. In the meantime, here is some information about the stupa and how you can contribute to this important, sacred project.

The Great Bon Stupa for World Peace

What a Stupa Signifies

A stupa (Sanskrit), or chorten (Tibetan), is a sacred structure that symbolizes enlightened mind. It is an architectural representation of the entire path to liberation. Every aspect of its outer form and inner content is alive with symbolic meaning. The power of the stupa is to project the mind of the teacher for the benefit of future generations; therefore, its very foundation is compassion.

A Stupa Is Intended to Awaken You

For the practitioner, the function of the stupa is to support faith by encouraging the aspiration to acquire the qualities of the enlightened mind. For all people, it supports a connection to the Buddha mind and the expression of devotion. Anyone who sees or otherwise comes in contact with a stupa has a seed planted in their stream of consciousness. Eventually, their suffering will be relieved, their obscurations cleared away, and the continuity of the mind of the Buddha will develop in them.

Bon in Mexico

In May 1995, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche brought the Bon Buddhist teachings to Mexico. The response to his teaching was so enthusiastic that two years later Rinpoche founded GARUDA, Tibetan Cultural Association, with the support of H.H. Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, and a group of dedicated students. During his visit to Mexico City in 1998, Rinpoche expressed his vision of a retreat center in Mexico where students could study and practice and where the first Bon stupa in the West could be built. In less than six months 10 hectares in the mountains of Valle de Bravo, State of Mexico (about two hours from Mexico City), were donated for this specific purpose by Nizzo Bejar.

Lopon Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche

The Stupa for World Peace is dedicated to the Venerable Lopon Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche, dzogchen master and teacher of Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. His reincarnation is

Tulku Jorge René, born in Chihuahua, Mexico. Tulku Jorge Rene was recognized by H.H. Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima Rinpoche and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. His Holiness has given him the name Ponse Jingme Tenzin.

Although each individual sangha may have its own projects, participating in the realization of the Stupa for World Peace is a special opportunity for all students to receive enormous blessings.

How to make a donation for the stupa:

Ligmincha Institute is a 501(3)(c) non-profit organization.

Contributions are tax deductible. We accept donations by check, money order or credit card (MasterCard/Visa)

To make a donation please contact:

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BON PANTHEON - a column devoted to deepening our connection to the Bon lineage – celebrating the life of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen

On March 4, we celebrate and honor the birth of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen (1356-1415), the founder and first abbot of Menri Monastery, the major Bon monastery in Tibet. Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen established Menri in 1405 near the site of Yeru Wensakha, a great Bon monastery founded in 1072 but later destroyed by floods in 1386. It was after the destruction of Yeru Wensakha that Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen chose to undertake his lifelong mission to restore, preserve and reform the Bon traditions. In the recent book "Opening the Door to Bon," Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche writes that Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen was guided by oral transmissions from Sidpa Gyalmo (the chief protector of Bon) to establish a new monastery. Because of this divine intervention, the building of Tashi Menri Ling, in the Tobgyal village of Tsang Province, was considered a miracle.

Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen attracted many students from all over Tibet, and Menri Monastery became known as the "mother monastery" of all Bonpos. He inspired many new Bon monasteries to flourish throughout Tibet. At the same time, Buddhism was also being revitalized under the leadership of his contemporary, Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug school of Buddhism. In fact, the founding of Menri in 1405 was followed just four years later by the founding of the first Gelug monastery, Gamden. Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen (Nyame means "the peerless") was born in 1356 in the district of Gyarong and he lived to be 59. He was the first master to hold all the transmissions and empowerments of all the Bon lineages and was greatly revered for his achievements and realization. He established the monastic code still used today.

Christoph Baumer writes in his book "Tibet's Ancient Religion – Bon"

that each year, at the time of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen's birthday celebration, the monastic code is read aloud to the assembly of all the monks at Menri Monastery. The code begins: "The laws of the king are like a golden yoke. These laws of Bon are like a silken ribbon." The principles of behavior are divided into three parts, the "four basic rules, then the group of the first 25 monastic rules, and finally the 250 perfect principles." The four basic rules provide the basis for all further vows. They are promises to abstain from killing, from stealing, from lying, and from violating chastity. It is written, "These four vows are like the four legs of a horse, and thus they must be unconditionally and precisely kept."

Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen also helped to make public debate an important institution of the monastery as a means for monks to test their theoretical knowledge. This is still an important daily practice at both Bon monasteries in exile; Menri in Dolanji, India, and Tritten Norbutse in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The original Menri Monastery was destroyed during the Chinese invasion in 1959, and was then rebuilt in Northern India where today's lineage holder, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima, through an unbroken succession since Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen, resides as the 33rd Menri Trizen. In 1977, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile officially recognized the abbot of Menri, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima, to be the head of the Bon religion. In an excerpt from a letter posted on the Bon Foundation's website, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpa'i Nyima writes:

"Since the time of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen, Menri Monastery has been the 'Mother Monastery' for all Bonpos, whether inside or outside of Tibet. Bonpos everywhere are very happy if the Menri Monastery is developing well. It means that the Bon religion and culture are going well. That is why, as Menri Trizin, I have a very heavy responsibility. I am glad that I have you all to help me in this challenging task." (See the Bon Foundation's Website: www.bonfoundation.org)

Bonpos continue to recognize and celebrate Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen's birth and wonderful legacy. Below is the traditional prayer to Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen. On a CD entitled "Musique Traditionnelle Bon" the prayer to Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen is included as "Chant for the 1st Abbot of Menri," a prayer that is technically called a 'request for planting the seed':

DHE CHEN GYAL PO KUN ZANG GYAL WA DHU!
MI JE ZUNG DHEN SHE RAB MA WE SENG!
ZAM LING BON GYI TSUG GYEN NYAM ME PA!
SHE RAB GYAL TSEN SHAB LA SOL WA DHEB!

Editors' Notes:

Several wonderful resources on Bon history and the Bon lineage are available at Ligmincha's online bookstore and Tibet Shop

(ligminchastore.org):

Baumer, Christoph. "Tibet's Ancient Religion – Bon." Translated from German by Michael Kohn. Trumbull, Ct.: WeatherHill, 2002. (\$60)

Nyima Dakpa. "Opening the Door to Bon." Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2005. (\$15.95)

Per Kvaerne. "The Bon Religion of Tibet." Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996. (\$65)

There are several Websites full of current and historic details on the Bon lineage, as well as beautiful visuals:

The Bon Foundation: www.bonfoundation.org

Yungdrung Bon Association in France: www.yungdrung-bon.net/
www.bonpo.net/deities.html

* Another auspicious date in March is the birthday of Tonpa Shenrab, the founder of Bon, on March 17. This is also the day of a full moon and a lunar eclipse – quite an auspicious day for practice!

* There is a wonderful sacred image of Nyame Sherab Gyaltzen available from Ligmincha's Tibet Shop with the prayer to him printed on the reverse (price \$4) (see ligminchastore.org).

- Aline and Jeff Fisher

LIGMINCHA COUNCIL NEWS

From Candace Byers, Fundraising

The sangha is manifesting the first paramita, generosity. As of Feb. 28th we have raised \$185,000 including the original grant and the funds raised to match it! Thank you everyone for your very generous contributions, your prayers, and aspirations. Rinpoche has given us the go ahead to begin the second wing of the Garuda House. We still need about \$115,000 to be able to reach our goal of \$300,000. Many people in the international sangha have just received their letter from Rinpoche. We will surely make our goal, but we still need help and prayers. Several people have been able to get matching grants from the corporations they work for, a great way to increase your gift. If you want to know which corporations make matching grants, just call me at the number below.

Generosity also takes the form of giving your time. We are blessed with so many practitioners with such deep and varied talents. This year the Council's fundraising efforts will include seeking grants from foundations. Donna Russo and Scott Clearwater have agreed to help me with this. If you have experience in this area or connections to a foundation, please call or email me anytime.

During this year's summer retreat Gabriel Rocco will generously continue to be our Master of Ceremonies at the auction and the banquet. Pam Rodeheaver will continue as the master of the treasury. Juanita Rockwell will direct our thespians, and Kim Cary will orchestrate our

musicians. If you are itching to be in the limelight, please contact Juanita at JRockwell@towson.edu or Kim at kimbo@lynchburg.net. Donna Russo has agreed to help continue the new tradition of the silent auction. Emily Lewis will help coordinate the live auction with the help of many others. Of course we are helpless without Sue Davis and Norman Dill.

We need some help with information systems and software that would simplify the administration of fundraising. If anyone has a background in distributed information systems please call me at any time.

Thank you everyone!

Candace

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