

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 later in the month. Please check the link for VOCL on Ligmincha Institute's home page at www.ligmincha.org. You can also access an archive of previous issues at:

<http://ligmincha.org/study/vocl.html>

Wishing everyone a Happy 2007!

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HEARTFELT THANKS FROM TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

A special heartfelt thanks from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to everyone for their prayers and wishes for his father, La Chung, whose health is continuing to improve as he recovers from a very serious illness.

Rinpoche returned to the U.S. at the end of December after spending a month in India with his father who had surgery for esophageal cancer.

The tumor was completely removed. La Chung was very emotional and appreciative when he heard that the sangha had been praying for his recovery and long life. His condition has been steadily improving.

Again, Rinpoche thanks everyone greatly for their support in his being able to personally help and serve his dad in his time of need. He thanks everyone for their prayers, and continued support of La Chung.

Bridging Two Worlds

Part One of a conversation with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche about his newly published book, "Tibetan Sound Healing"

An excerpt from "Tibetan Sound Healing" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

Our fundamental awake nature is not produced or created, but is already there. In the way the vast expanse of the sky is present but may be obscured by clouds, we too are obscured by habitual patterns that we mistake for ourselves. The practice of the Five Warrior Syllables is a skillful means that can support us to release our negative and limiting behavioral patterns of body, speech, and mind, and make room for a more spontaneous, creative, and authentic expression. In this practice, we

recognize, connect with, and trust what is already there. In a relative sense, we begin to practice loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, qualities that bring great benefit experienced and expressed in our relationship with self and others. Ultimately, the practice brings us to the full recognition of our true self. In the teachings, the metaphor for this experience is a child recognizing her mother in a crowd – an instant, deep recognition of connection, an experience of home. This is referred to as the natural mind, and that mind is pure. In the natural mind, all virtues are spontaneously perfected.

VOCL: We've been enjoying your new book "Tibetan Sound Healing" and the accompanying CD of guided meditations for each of the chapters of the book. It seems like a very direct way to present these wonderful teachings to a modern-day audience. What drew you to writing this unique book?

TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE: With all of the Tibetan Buddhist and Bon teachings coming to the West, it seems that in general people are still having difficulty truly accessing them. Wonderful teachers from all of the Tibetan Buddhist schools are now living here in the West or visiting very often, yet the number of people who are actually able to find benefit from the teachings in their daily lives seems to be low. I think that much of this has to do with the fact that these wonderful teachings are being presented within the boundaries of the time and place of the ancient culture in which they first took root. So, I've tried here to communicate important and essential teachings of this tradition in a way that would overcome those cultural boundaries and be an effective means of bringing their direct benefit into one's everyday life – into one's being, into one's thinking, into one's feeling, into one's planning, into one's action, into one's work. My hope is that my book will be a bridge between the ancient wisdom of the Bon Buddhist tradition and all aspects of modern life here in the West.

VOCL: You've said that doing the five warrior syllables practice can change one's life.

RINPOCHE: Yes, there's no question that it can change one's life, but whose life is that? The person who is willing to understand the depth of these teachings, the person who is willing to find support for doing this practice, the person who is willing to commit to doing this practice, and to do it to the end - not simply start doing it and then stop. For those individuals, there's no question that it can change their lives in many ways.

VOCL: Would you explain more about how the five warrior syllables practice works in doing that?

RINPOCHE: For example, let's say that you wanted to bring more of a sense of love into your interactions with society, or into your family life, or into your relationship with just one other person, or simply

to bring more of a sense of love within yourself. Your ability to actually manifest that increased sense of love will be greatly affected by how many traces of anger there are within you, either on the surface or residing in a very deep place within you. Or, those traces may even be totally hidden from your consciousness. These different levels are similar to the different stages of a disease, whose traces may be immediately apparent, or exist deeper within the body, or they may even lie hidden and undetectable yet one day be the cause of a sudden heart attack or stroke.

This practice begins with gaining clear recognition of these traces within you that keep you from having more love, say. The focus is not so much on a general wish one has - "I want to live my life in a more loving way." Of course, that recognition is very important, but what you actually have to do in order for that greater sense of love to manifest is not just simply to want to have it, dream of having it, or wish or pray to have it, rather you need to trace your lack of love back to its fundamental core seeds and conditions within yourself. Those causes and conditions are not the particular ideas you have, such as "Oh, I'm not able to love my wife," or "I'm not able to love my community." These thoughts are only labels describing the effects of your lack of love. The root cause has nothing to do with the intellect. It has to do with traces of anger that are abiding in a deeper sense within you.

Through this practice, once we have identified those traces and connected with them, we then use sacred sound to clear them and create more space internally. As we sing the sacred warrior syllable A ("Ah") again and again, for example, our awareness connects with the primordial purity of that seed syllable and its vibration in a very direct, nonconceptual way. The syllable A itself has a spacious, clearing quality. Sounding it helps us clear the root of our troubling situations and experiences better than through any other means. A short half-hour of this practice works on a far different level of effectiveness than, say, if you were to talk with a friend for hours about what is at the root of your anger.

VOCL: As practitioners, even though we try hard to manifest our good intentions it's not uncommon that we fail to do so when we encounter certain situations in daily life. We're thrown off balance despite even years of developing a compassionate attitude, say.

RINPOCHE: Yes, whether it's about developing a loving attitude or the willingness to understand others, or feeling a sense of peace or compassion - all of these good intentions, again, depend on one's going back to the root. Either you have a good sense of love within you or you don't. If you do, then there is no way that others will not experience a sense of kindness in every word that comes out of your mouth. Kindness is expressed spontaneously in everything you do because that's what is there within you. If it's not there then the

question becomes, how can you help to bring out that quality in yourself?

VOCL: Before we go into how the five warrior syllables practice works to do that, why are these syllables considered sacred?

RINPOCHE: According to our tradition, the five warrior syllables originated from the first buddha, the first enlightened being. They are the original source of all the letters of the Tibetan alphabet, of all the teachings, of all of our knowledge. So naturally these sounds are considered very sacred. They are called warrior syllables because they conquer negativity at every level – at an external level, at an internal level, as well as at a subtler level to conquer the deepest obscurations of mind that obscure wisdom.

VOCL: Each syllable, then, conquers a different level of negativity - can you explain further?

RINPOCHE: Yes, going back to the example of love - which is a quality that exists in every being, is cross-cultural and the foundation of every religion - the absence of love can manifest in a relationship at several different levels. It can manifest in clearly perceptible ways, such as through physical fighting, through speech, through attitude, through thought. Two people can have so much animosity and be giving each other such a hard time that they almost kill each other.

Therefore, you can say that for them, manifest anger is clearly the enemy; that is the obstacle, and that is what needs to be conquered. In another relationship a couple may not fight because for whatever reason they are good at suppressing their anger - maybe they're afraid of fighting. But that does not mean they have resolved their problems; the anger just hasn't manifested so clearly yet. But their level of animosity for one another may be the same as it was for the first couple, it's just that they are holding it in a place within themselves. Instead the anger manifests in a more subtle way within each of them, as charged-up energy, stress, loneliness, isolation, and so on. Those traces are the enemy, or the problem that this couple faces, and that is what needs to be conquered here.

Now imagine another couple with the same intense negativity, but the traces of anger remain at a much deeper, subconscious level within them. The result is that anger manifests more as a sense of depression. Each person does not consciously experience bad feelings toward the other, or perceive the other to be bad, rather they hide their feelings even from themselves. They repress it all, so that it doesn't even manifest as form or language. It becomes hidden within sadness or depression. Those hidden traces are the obstacle for this couple, and that is the enemy to be conquered.

These three examples point to three of the five different levels in which obstacles may arise that prevent us from, in this case, living in a more loving way. Each of the five sacred warrior seed syllables works to conquer one of the five levels of enemy or obstacle that could

keep this wish from coming true. That's why these syllables are called warrior seed syllables, and that is why they are considered sacred.

VOCL: With regard to the power that these warrior seed syllables have in our daily lives, you say that that the syllables don't begin with transforming a given external obstacle in our life, but rather they begin by transforming our relationship to that obstacle. Would you say more about that?

RINPOCHE: Sure, I'll clarify this point, continuing with the same issue of loving-kindness, which I think is something that we all need to develop more of. Let's say that you're having particular difficulty with someone regarding this simple issue of love. Specifically, you feel that this person doesn't acknowledge you, doesn't see you, doesn't thank you enough, and just doesn't love you. Everything negative about them, you perceive as having to do with their inability to love you. That becomes your clear object of focus. You end up feeling then that he or she is the obstacle to your developing loving-kindness toward them, right?

As a result, you become unwilling to see things from the other person's perspective. Maybe that person is seeking exactly the same thing from you that you want from them. So somebody probably just needs to take the first step here - the one who has a little more blessing, a little more awareness needs to take the first step and change their view of the other person. When one person takes this very first step, then both people may find they are immediately and magically transformed. But if you don't change your view, your world will not transform, and that person forever will remain an apparent obstacle to your developing loving-kindness toward them. Then, even if that person happens to change in many ways as an individual, from the perspective of your unchanging view of them they still won't appear to have changed at all. What does this example show? That when you change your view, the whole world can change with it.

VOCL: As dharma practitioners, it's not uncommon for us to have an improved life on the cushion and yet still live a second more troubled life out in the world. How can the five warrior syllables practice serve as a bridge between the meditation cushion and our everyday lives?

RINPOCHE: That is a very important question, because I feel that building a sturdy bridge between those two worlds, the one on the cushion and the one out in one's worldly life, will be the key to successfully bringing the benefits of Buddhism into Western culture. If that bridge is not built well, then Buddhism will not have much of an effect. Not only are most Westerners unfamiliar with the world of the cushion, but between meditation sessions practitioners themselves often become stuck in the material world, where they are living out most of their lives.

VOCL: And how does this practice help us bridge those two worlds?

RINPOCHE: You see, all of the negative emotions and negative thoughts we have, and all the many experiences and situations that arise in our world from those negativities, are like the many branches on a tree, but they all come from the same root. We use the metaphor of there being many different doors leading into a castle but they all lead to the center of the castle, and there is only one center. So, no matter which branch it is that you recognize as a problem or an obstacle in your life at this moment, either external, internal or secret, you see it because you have the ability to recognize that particular level of problem. With this practice, when you find one of these secondary causes, these branches, manifesting as specific problems in your life out in the world, then you can use it as a means to trace your way back to its source or root. And not just back to the negative traces as a source - all the branches always trace back, ultimately, to the source of all, to the space that is commonly found on the cushion during deep meditation. So, by first starting with a particular branch of worldly situation or experience that bothers you, and that you would like to resolve, the practice works to bring one's awareness back to the luminous space within the heart. Through addressing that specific issue that makes your worldly life tough, and clearing the traces that cause it, you are able to find your way back to the ultimate root of all of your worldly issues. When you create more space there, all aspects of your life will be affected in a positive way.

My wish is to strengthen this bridge between one's practice and daily life through the guidance I offer in this book and the accompanying CD on the five sacred warrior seed syllables practice. I hope this practice continues to be of help to many people in making that connection for a long time to come.

VOCL: Often we find ourselves caught in what are really just different variations of the same negative situation in our lives. And we've become used to struggling with each branch or situation as it ensnares us as something separate or unique. Would you explain further how turning one's focus away from these various branches and toward their root affects a transformation of all the many branches?

RINPOCHE: Sure, I'll go back to the example of love. Let's say that I'm trying to be more loving to someone and I'm not able to because I have deep traces of anger. So, I start thinking to myself, "I want to love this person. I want to love this person this weekend, so I will take this person to a movie, because that is my idea of what being loving is. On Monday I want to take them out to dinner, because that means I am being loving; and next week I want to give them a gift." Somehow, I now have a long list of things to do - not of how to be or to feel, but of what to do - to express that love. We complete the list or we don't, and we still find ourselves in the same place. And then we repeat the process in another way with the same results. We fail very often by doing different variations of those kinds of things.

In this particular case, if I instead effect a change at the root level by tracing back to my deeper obstacles of anger rather than simply trying to change my actions, then not only will I change what I originally intended - my being able to better express love toward this person - but I am also discovering the ultimate source of anger, the open luminosity from which all experience arises. This is the same source from which love arises, and not only love but also joy, equanimity, and also compassion - all of the four immeasurables come from there! So the obstacle of anger in this case has given me a great opportunity to go back to its source and find all the immeasurable qualities naturally perfected there at the source.

EDITORS' NOTE: "Tibetan Sound Healing," by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and edited by Marcy Vaughn, is available online at Ligmincha's Tibet Shop. The cost is \$19.95. 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/detail.asp?productid=331>

LIGMINCHA'S UPCOMING RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

February 22-25, 2007

"Uncovering the Healing Powers of Attention – The Bon Buddhist Practice of Zhine"

with Gabriel Rocco

One of the most compelling reasons to attend the annual zhine retreat is that it affords an opportunity to step out of the stress of daily life and come home to ourselves.

In our normal human experience it is easy to get caught up in discursive thoughts, habitual patterns and destructive emotions. The inability to maintain focused attention or to abide in clear, open awareness is an obstacle not only to our living fully in the present, but also to our spiritual awakening.

The practice of zhine (calm abiding) develops the strong and stable attention and stillness necessary to overcome the continual movements of the mind. When we can train ourselves to abide naturally in clear, calm awareness, the healing powers of a focused mind are revealed. Tenzin Rinpoche refers to zhine as the "medicine of tranquility." Bon texts further speak of its power to create the real person. Zhine is the foundation for all dzogchen practice; everything begins with zhine, and its continued practice supports the practitioner all along the path.

This is a retreat for people at all levels of meditation experience. Beginners will learn to develop the powers of concentration necessary to calm the mind and experience inner peace. Experienced students will find that zhine deepens and enhances the results of their daily practice. Committed students following Rinpoche's dzogchen teachings

of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung will find that zhine strengthens concentration and establishes the mindfulness necessary to abide in the open clarity of contemplation.

This February's retreat will center around the practices of zhine on A and zhine on sound, and will also guide students in applying calm abiding to other Bon practices taught by Tenzin Rinpoche. Join in the warmth of community and the stress-free environment of Serenity Ridge for four days of calm abiding practice.

RETREAT COST (includes meals): \$250 if received by Feb. 1; \$275 if received after Feb. 1

March 23-25, 2007

And May 18-20, 2007

"Two Ngondro Practice Retreats"

with Marcy Vaughn

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 base of understanding and experience upon which a strong spiritual life develops.

Although the practices that make up the ngondro are called preliminary, many practitioners adopt them as their main practice, completing the accumulations of the entire ngondro many times over the course of a lifetime. It is possible to understand these beautiful practices as complete practices in themselves, for within each is contained a complete path to liberation.

The more you devote yourself to these practices that tame, purify and perfect the mind and the more you become familiar with the experiences they bring, the more you will find spiritual practice grounded within you. The ngondro then becomes a true friend that accompanies you throughout your spiritual life.

Join your fellow practitioners for either or both of these three-day practice intensives to connect with the power and beauty of the ngondro.

Note: These practice retreats are open only to those who have received the ngondro transmission.

RETREAT COST (includes meals): \$150

REGISTRATION DEADLINES:

March Retreat: March 9; May Retreat: April 27

April 18-22, 2007

"Conquering Negative Influences – The Healing Practice of the Red Garuda"

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Spring Retreat at Serenity Ridge is a time for healing and rejuvenation. Each year Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche introduces a therapeutic practice from the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet for healing our physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions. During this retreat, Tenzin Rinpoche will transmit the tantric practice of

self-transformation into red garuda, empowering us to conquer the negative forces that spread sickness and misery.

The garuda is a bird that is said to emerge from its egg fully matured and able to fly. It is a symbol of enlightenment, innately free from limitations. There are five types of garuda, one for each of the elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. The red garuda is associated with the fire element.

The teachings and practices of this mystical bird originated with the founder of Bon, Tonpa Shenrab. Although they are among the world's most ancient healing practices, they play a special role in our modern times. They have the power to conquer the forces of negativity that give rise to many forms of illness experienced today.

The red garuda practice cultivates absolute fearlessness and is particularly effective in restoring balance between humanity and our environment. It generates health and wellbeing not only for ourselves, but also for other beings, seen and unseen, who inhabit the natural world.

Please join us for this unique opportunity to experience Tenzin Rinpoche's personable teaching style, humor and warmth while receiving instructions in one of Bon's most remarkable healing practices: the red garuda.

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$400 if received by March 7; \$450 if received by March 28; \$500 if received after March 28