

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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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS: JOIN US IN COMING DAYS FOR TWO LIVE INTERNET TEACHINGS

This week Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will be leading the annual spring retreat at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge retreat center in Virginia. Whether or not you are planning to attend, be aware of two wonderful opportunities coming up soon to experience Tenzin Rinpoche's teachings from you home in real time via live streaming video.

- On Sunday, April 19, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. Eastern time (New York time), Rinpoche will guide the practice of Sherap Chamma, a simple yet profound meditation practice that cultivates wisdom, love and compassion. (For our Internet audience only.)
- On Wednesday, April 22, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Eastern time (New York time), Rinpoche's teachings will be broadcast live during his free public talk at Ligmincha Institute's meditation center in downtown Charlottesville. (If you can join us in person at this talk, please do!) During the broadcast Rinpoche will draw on ancient Tibetan wisdom as he explains how you can transcend fear and live more joyfully even during uncertain or threatening times. Rinpoche presents the ancient Bon teachings in a way that is fresh and relevant to modern daily life.

TO PARTICIPATE in these teachings or for more information, visit www.ligmincha.org and click on "Retreats."

For now, VOCL offers one of Rinpoche's teachings in print form. Please read on!

-- Aline & Jeff Fisher

"APPROACHING DEATH FREE OF ATTACHMENT"

an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche during the

bardo retreat, July 2000.

This retreat is a wonderful opportunity for us to have (Lopon) Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche here, especially for those of you who don't know him. Yongdzin Rinpoche is the principal teacher of the Bon Buddhist tradition, and for me personally, he has been my root master and the person who cared for me when I was growing up. This morning I was making a little pancake for breakfast for him, and he said, "Oh, this is what I used to make for you!" When I was ten years old I didn't know how to cook, so he made me that pancake a number of times. Now thirty years later, he could say, "This is what you learned from me!" [laughter] I have been very fortunate, and we all are so fortunate that I can now share my teacher like this with you. There are so many different ways we can approach learning the dharma. When we approach the bardo teachings in Lopon's scholarly way, very carefully going through all the details of the ancient texts, I know what must go through new people's minds! Please have patience. Understand as much as you can of the details. Try to get as much as possible. But as I said this morning, don't worry about what you don't get. Listen and try to understand, and what you don't understand, don't worry about. This is the place to work with what you do understand, what you do connect with, what you do feel. And what you don't understand, don't walk too much in that area.

Speaking a bit more on what Lopon said today, we are cultivating devotion, inspiration and connection, and if you didn't want to do that, you wouldn't be here. It is your wanting that brings you here – wanting to engage with the practice, and ultimately, hopefully, the wanting and wishing and desiring will be the basis of your illumination. Illumination comes from there. In the West sometimes people misunderstand this. Especially in the '60s and '70s, spiritual pursuits often seemed to be more about "Don't work, be happy, have no attachment, do whatever comes to mind." This is not what the teachings are saying. The teachings encourage us to be responsible. Whatever happens to you, the consequences are based on your actions. For example, love is at the foundation of all spiritual traditions. We all seek and want to be loved. But there is a degree to which love can be painful, if it is based too much on attachment and too little on loving-kindness. At the same time, there may be some people in your life with whom you would prefer not to engage too much in this lifetime. It is okay to feel this way about someone. Just be sure not to engage with them in a negative way. These are examples of the kind of detachment that is helpful in preparing for one's own death.

You may know someone who is in the process of dying, or who is experiencing sickness or old age. In each of these cases, one of the most difficult internal things people face before they die – the external difficulties would be the sickness itself, the medical treatments, the pain, etc. - is that they don't want to give up. That is the most common form of suffering. People don't want to give up their body, their loved ones, their identity. They don't want to give up their wealth, or anything else they are familiar with. They don't know what will happen if they let these things go. What really happens? It is very hard to know, but for sure one is going to lose everything when one dies. Those close to one who has died feel sad for one year, two years, and then later, people forget.

The most difficult thing people face at death is their own grasping mind. It seems silly to talk about attachment to a fancy dress, but you never know what a person might be attached to as they die. I may be attached to the idea that I made so much money, it is all there in my savings

account, but now I can't use it. I have a beautiful house, beautiful things, but now I cannot use these things. I have so many good friends and I didn't spend enough time with them. All these feelings are based on intense and serious attachment, which is hard to step back from. The moment you step back from it, it hurts.

We have the question of how one can help dying people. The teachings at this retreat give part of the answer: Never create a situation that contributes to a dying person's sense of attachment. That is the lesson here. Avoid being someone to whom the dying person feels attached, and avoid creating a situation that reminds the person of things that evoke attachment. Does that make sense?

As the person approaches death, when you engage in conversation with them you can get a sense of where the person is. Of course you don't want to say outright, "Come on, be detached. It is okay for me to be attached, but you are the one who is leaving!" Of course you don't want to go with that. Instead, you can try to loosen up the conversation so it is lighter and more spacious. The mind should not be holding on, not only at the moment of death but also at the time of any departure, such as going on a long journey, or even going to sleep. Your state of mind right before you fall asleep has a strong effect on the quality of your dreams. And your state of mind before death has a strong effect on your experiences in the bardo, or on your experiences in your next life to come.

During any major transition it is important to have a sense of lightness and spaciousness. At those times one should not cultivate heavy and dark experiences. So, lighter and spacious – that explains everything.

A LETTER TO EVERYONE ABOUT OUR SUMMER 2009 AUCTION!

Greetings to the worldwide sangha,

Each year during summer retreat we celebrate and support Rinpoche's dream of developing Ligmincha Institute's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center with a lively auction and banquet.

Traditionally, this has been the only public fundraising event that Ligmincha Institute holds to finance land-development projects at Serenity Ridge.

The second wing of the Garuda House is complete. But we still have a large mortgage to pay before we can begin to plan for a new teaching hall and a new building to house a new kitchen, dining room, café and bookstore. We are doing our part to cut costs, and thanks to the work of Sue Davis-Dill, Norman Dill, John Massie, Melissa Yates, and many other dedicated volunteers too numerous to mention, our current lama house and bookstore are now beautifully renovated. We need your help to continue the development of the retreat center, home of the Bon tradition in the West. Your enthusiastic participation and support are essential at this important time of growth. All donations are tax deductible.

Every year we seek auction donations of quality practice- or shrine-related items that can inspire or deepen our practice. Below are examples of items that have helped to generate lively bidding in the past:

Crystal objects: stupas, crystal balls, malas, phurbas, vajras

Tibetan singing bowls and drums, large or small
Tibetan or English texts that have been used by our teachers
Silver or gold gaus or amulets
Malas made from precious or semi-precious stones
Photos of our teachers or of sacred sites
Thangkas, prayer banners
Items blessed by His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, or
Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche
The deadline for donating auction items is June 1, 2009. Please call or email me if you have an
item to donate.

From my heart,
Candace Byers, Director of Fundraising
CandaceB108@aol.com

UPCOMING RETREATS AT LIGMINCHA'S SERENITY RIDGE RETREAT CENTER

The retreats described below will take place at Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha Institute's retreat center in Nelson County, Va. To register or for more information, please visit www.ligmincha.org and click on "Retreats"; or contact us at Ligmincha@aol.com or our new telephone number, 434-263-6304.

April 29 – May 3, 2009

The Six Lokas Purification Practice

A dzogchen retreat with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche

June 3 - 7, 2009

The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part One: Ngondro - Dzogchen Foundational Practices With Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche

June 3 - 7, 2009

Ngondro Practice Retreat

Practice leader to be announced

June 21 – June 27

Summer Work Retreat

June 28 – July 18, 2009

Summer Retreat 2009: A-Tri Dzogchen With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

To register for any of the above retreats or for more information, please visit www.ligmincha.org and click on "Retreats"; or contact us at Ligmincha@aol.com or 434-263-6304.