

THE VOICE OF CLEAR LIGHT

News and Inspiration from Ligmincha Institute

Volume IV, Number 6

June 2, 2004

For easy reading, we recommend that you print out "The Voice of Clear Light."

IN THIS ISSUE:

"Advice on Developing as a Dzogchenpa" - from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in "Wonders Of The Natural Mind" and from Tulku Urygen Rinpoche in "The Dzogchen Primer" edited and compiled by Marcia Binder Schmidt. "Working From One's Relative Condition" - an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Ligmincha's 10th Annual Summer Retreat, 2002.

Ligmincha's Annual Summer Retreat at Serenity Ridge starts JULY 4! About the Upcoming Fall and Winter 2004 Schedule at Serenity Ridge. Ponlop Thinley Nyima Rinpoche, Lopon of Menri, to teach in the U.S. in June and July.

Sangha Sharing

"Transcription" a poem by Dean Grantham.

"A First Meeting" by Aline Fisher.

ADVICE ON DEVELOPING AS A DZOGCHENPA

From "Wonders of the Natural Mind" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

"It is very important to discover through self-observation which level of integration we are capable of practicing and to apply that level, otherwise there will be a gap between the Dzogchen teachings

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 2 of 10

and our aspirations as Dzogchen practitioners. When my master Lopon Tenzin Namdak gave teachings on the 'Zhang Zhung Nyan Gyud' in Italy in 1989 he said, 'The teaching is Dzogchen, we are not Dzogchen.' He was speaking about the gap between the explanation of the state or base given in the teachings and the dualistic condition in which we live in our conceptual mind. We can easily see if there is this gap when a passion such as anger arises. When we receive teachings, we learn about integration and self-liberation, but very often there is no functional relationship between what we have learned from the teachings about passions and what happens inside us when a passion such as anger arises. That means the teaching is not working and the anger we feel does not correspond to the anger we speak about according to the teachings. In practical terms, this is the gap my master was talking about. The moment a passion arises, we forget all explanations. To eliminate this gap when we try to apply integration, it is important not to follow blindly what the texts

tell us about self-liberation, but rather first look at our own condition and determine at what stage of practice we are, what level of practitioner we are, and then apply the appropriate view and practice. It is as if we are sick. We have to find out what illness we have and what kind of medicine we must take. So the first step we must take towards integration is to determine what level we have to work on, and not try immediately to apply the highest view of the teachings on integration and self-liberation, otherwise the gap will arise between the teaching and our capacity to apply it in the way we live. In this way, integration is one thing, and what we do is something else. We must connect what we learn about liberating the passions in the teachings and what we actually experience when we feel the passions arising."

From a chapter entitled "Integrating View and Conduct" by Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche from "The Dzogchen Primer" compiled and edited by Marcia Binder Schmidt:

"The main reason you cannot only teach the view is that quite a few people will then miss the main point by believing, 'I only need the view! There is nothing to do! I can give up all activities!' Of course, this may be true in some sense; however, what happens when someone gives up conventional Dharma practice too early is that such a person fails to do any spiritual practice in terms of purifying obscurations and gathering the accumulations. At the same time, he or she does not truly realize, progress in, and attain stability in the view. The end result is that the view remains an idea while your behavior shows no regard for good and evil. That is what Padmasambhava meant by 'losing the conduct in the view.'

"We need to integrate view and conduct. Padmasambhava said as well, 'Though your view is higher than the sky, keep your deeds finer
Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 3 of 10

than barley flour.' Understand the expression 'finer than barley flour' to mean to adopt what is virtuous and avoid what is evil, with respect for the law of cause and effect, with attention to the smallest detail. This is to keep harmony between view and conduct. The opposite, separating one's actions from the view, is to somehow convince oneself that there is no need to do the preliminary practices, no need for any good deeds, no need for making offerings, and no need to apologize for evil actions. One can fool oneself into believing one need only remain in simplicity. What this honestly means, though, is that such a person will have no spiritual progress. Ultimately, it is definitely true that there 'is' nothing to do, but this is true only after one has passed through to the other side of understanding, experience, and realization. To maintain an intellectual conviction of the view without having

undergone the training is a severe misunderstanding. This is how the self-professed 'Dzogchen practitioner' goes astray."

SOURCES:

"Wonders of The Natural Mind" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1998.

"The Dzogchen Primer" compiled and edited by Marcia Binder Schmidt. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002. The excerpt is from Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche in a chapter entitled "Integrating View and Conduct".

**NOTE: Both books are available from Ligmincha's Bookstore. See the website: www.ligminchastore.org or call: 1-866-522-5269.

"WORKING FROM ONE'S RELATIVE CONDITION" - an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Ligmincha's 10th Annual Summer Retreat, 2002.

When we seek the truth within ourselves, it is a very natural tendency for us to want to avoid some things and to go somewhere and do something. It's very natural for us. Like what we are doing here right now - we are avoiding work and are here at the summer retreat! And here at the summer retreat, we are working with the nature of mind, as if the nature of mind was not at the office. This is very normal. But for sure, the nature of mind is the same at the office just as it is here. There are absolutely no differences. All the sacred qualities are there at the office just as they are here.

But for us, on a conventional basis, it makes a difference whether we are here or at the office - not because of the truth - but because of our conditions. We prefer to be in the gompa rather than at the office. We prefer to have less thoughts than a lot of thoughts. But that doesn't mean that when there are a lot of thoughts the nature of

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 4 of 10

mind is not there.

When we look at the notion of "discovering within" or "awakening within" what exactly do these popular titles mean? What does "discovering within" mean to you?

Student: It is "there already."

Rinpoche: And what does "It is there already" mean? It means that in any given situation, the nature of mind is there. However, even when we think this, it is often not the way we act. Instead, we feel we have to find a better situation to find the nature of mind. You think, "It is not here, I have to go over there - within there, yes; within here, no."

But if you really understand the idea of discovering within, it means that it is in every given moment, within every situation, and in every experience. There can never be a moment when there is not an experience-er. Every experience has got to have an experiencer, right? Whenever there is the experiencer, that is what I want to

connect with, that is what I care about. Sometimes there are good experiences and sometimes bad experiences. But if you look, in every given experience, it's just right there.

LIGMINCHA'S ANNUAL SUMMER RETREAT AT SERENITY RIDGE STARTS JULY 4!
**REGISTER BY JUNE 9 FOR THE REGULAR COST OF \$500 PER WEEK, OR AFTER JUNE 9 FOR \$550 PER WEEK (cost includes meals.)

This year's 13th Annual Summer Retreat with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will focus on Dzogchen teachings from the cherished text: The Twenty One Nails from The Dzogchen Oral Transmission of The Zhang Zhung.

The Twenty One Nails can be understood as the most direct possible expression of enlightenment, a Buddha's own natural condition. Each nail describes this state from a different point of view. The views are called 'nails' or 'seals' because they stabilize the experiential understanding of the natural state. For one who understands this, nothing else is needed.

In addition, Rinpoche will present pith instructions on the channels, vital breath, essential spheres, and sacred syllables from a section of the Bon Mother Tantra entitled: "The Empty Base of the Spontaneously Manifested Four Enlightened Dimensions." Continuing with the same insightful approach as he did last summer, Rinpoche will guide our tsa lung practice to a deeper level through instructions contained in these potent tantric teachings. During the

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM
Page 5 of 10

retreat he will also teach practices focusing on sacred syllables and sound.

This three-week retreat is from July 4 - July 24 and you can attend one, two or all three weeks:

Week One: Sunday, July 4 - Sat. July 10

Week Two: Sunday, July 11 - Sat. July 17

Week Three: Sunday, July 18 - Sat. July 24

**Please note that the beginning and ending days for each week are different than in previous years. Each retreat week now begins on a Sunday (instead of Monday) and ends on Saturday (to help travelers).

Call Ligmincha to register: (434)977-6161 or e-mail:

ligmincha@aol.com.

ABOUT THE UPCOMING FALL AND WINTER 2004 SCHEDULE AT SERENITY RIDGE.

Please note: We are announcing two changes to our annual winter retreat schedule this year. The retreat dates will be Dec. 27, 2004 to Jan. 1, 2005 (the retreat starts one day later than usual.) Also, for the first time there will be two retreats simultaneously taking place at Serenity Ridge during that week.

Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will teach Part Three of the

Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung for the entire week, and there will also be a Ngondro practice retreat (for those who have had Ngondro transmission) at the same time with Geshe Lungrig Gyaltsen. (Geshe Gyaltsen will be teaching the full Ngondro, with transmission, in September.)

There will be more information about these retreats in the next issue of VOCL.

SEPT. 22-26, 2004. "Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 1: Ngondro" with Geshe Lungrig Gyaltsen.

OCT. 27- NOV. 3, 2004. "The Heart of Realization" with Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. (Registration for this retreat is closed at this time; we have a waiting list.)

NOV. 10-14, 2004. "Trul Khor (Tibetan Yoga): Introduction - Harmony
Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 6 of 10

of Body, Speech and Mind" with Alejandro Chaoul-Reich.

DEC. 27, 2004 - JAN. 1, 2005. "Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 3 " with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

DEC. 27, 2004 - JAN. 1, 2005. "Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 1, Ngondro Practice Retreat" with Geshe Lungrig Gyaltsen.

PONLOP THINLEY NYIMA RINPOCHE, LOPON OF MENRI, TO TEACH IN THE UNITED STATES THIS JUNE AND JULY.

Ponlop Thinley Nyima Rinpoche, Lopon of Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India, is here teaching in the United States this month and next.

Ponlop succeeded Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche as Lopon of Menri beginning in 1992. He was born in a remote area of Dolpo, in Western Nepal. His family name, Yangton, traces back to Yangton Shenrab Gyaltsen, a famous dzogchen and tantric master born in the year 1077 CE. It was Yangton Shenrab Gyaltsen who first wrote down the Dzogchen Oral Transmission of Zhang Zhung (Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu), the sacred Bon text and source of so many of our teachings and practices. After completing a traditional three-year retreat in Dolpo, Ponlop went to the great Bonpo monastery in Dolanji to become a monk. He received his Geshe degree in 1989, and then taught there at the monastery until becoming the Lopon or Ponlop, three years later.

NOTE: See the website for The Bon Foundation where Ponlop's schedule is listed, and much more valuable and interesting information, including the Fall schedule for His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima who will also be coming to the States! The website is: bonfoundation.org. Thanks for their wonderful work in helping bring our teachers here!

Here is Ponlop's Teaching Schedule:

Houston, TX - June 2 Public Talk
June 5-6 Five Elements Teaching
Contact: Alejandro Chaoul-Reich: alec@rice.edu
Los Angeles, CA - June 12-13 Topic TBA
June 15 Topic TBA
Contact: Dika Ryan: Dika.Ryan@warnerbros.com
Berkeley, CA - June 19 Yun Lin Temple Topic TBA
Contact: info@yunlintemple.org
San Francisco, CA - June 20 Five Elements Teaching
Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM
Page 7 of 10
Contact: Laura Sherkijian: lauras@majornet.com
Portland, OR - June 25 Public Talk
June 26-27 Dzogchen Teaching
June 30 Chod Practice, Lecture
July 2 Matri, Lecture
Contact: Margaret Frison: m-frison@comcast.net
St. Louis, MO - July 9 Matri, Lecture
July 10-11 Five Elements Teaching
Contact: Andrea Norton: andreanorton@sbcglobal.net

SANGHA SHARING

Transcription

Like a spider dropping, walking, winding
Tethered to softly spoken words
I trace with tapping fingers
The last repose of flesh on bone
Chod trumpets call from caves above
Dark-feathered wings descend to stone
Chants bless the empty vessel
Drumbeat echoes come to rest
Dakinis rise to fill the air
On Six-Peaked Mountain's crest
I follow lettered paths
Thought's footprints scuffed in snow
And circle slow the sacred place
Where words can never go
This fragile map of dust
Points me toward hidden height
I climb up to a silent ledge
Belayed on threads of inner light
But then the traces come to mind
Of what I fear or hope to find
I cling to footholds where I stand
Forget to take my teacher's hand
So wrapped within my web I'll face

Each new repose of flesh on bone

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 8 of 10

Until I learn to hear both voices

My precious master's and my own.

- Dean Grantham.

A FIRST MEETING

The winter of 2000, my husband, Jeff, and I traveled to Nepal and India. It was an amazing journey, filled with wonder and challenge. One of my most memorable experiences was first meeting Ponlop Thinley Nyima Rinpoche, the kind, generous, and very wise Lopon of Menri Monastery in India.

The visit to Menri culminated a trip that began with our arrival in Kathmandu, Nepal, for the 2000 Millennium Retreat hosted by Tenzin Rinpoche and Lopon Tenzin Namdak. At the heart of the retreat was a beautiful introduction to Sherab Chamma through the precious teachings of Yongdzin Rinpoche and Tenzin Rinpoche. The sense of kinship was palpable amongst the whole group of students from around the world as we listened and practiced together as one great Sangha. On the eve of the new millennium, right around midnight, after an intensely moving practice of Sidpe Gyalmo that included the Sidpe Gyalmo invocation being recited aloud in about 20 languages, Rinpoche asked one member of each of the various communities present to offer prayers and wishes in their native language for both their country and for the world for the new millennium. A beautiful offering.

Starting at midnight there was much celebration and delicious food (including my first momos), then more practice and finally, we were able to catch about 2 hours of sleep before we all headed up to Lopon's monastery, Triten Norbutse, at the break of dawn for the lungta and other ceremonies. The experience was dreamlike for me from the early morning sang chod offerings led by Yongdzin Rinpoche, to my first step into the monastery's gompa, to the sacred sound of chanting monks, to seeing Lopon sitting on his throne there with an enormous golden Buddha statue behind him.

Later that morning we participated in the enthronement ceremony for Tulku Jorge Rene. Every single monk and lama as well as all the visiting students lined up in a processional to pass by Jorge who was flanked by his parents and Rinpoche to pay homage and to personally offer him a khata. He sat on a small throne wearing robes looking bright-eyed and amazed. All the while the sound of monks incanting the mandala offering prayer filled the room and echoed down the hallways. The shared sense of gratefulness we all had in being there that misty morning felt like it must have made the monastery glow

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 9 of 10

brightly from its perch there on the slopes of Nagarjun mountain overlooking the Kathmandu valley.

A few days later, Jeff and I left the bustle of Kathmandu for 10 days of wonderful hiking with John Massie up in the Himalayas. As we hiked ridges and valleys, the incredible natural beauty of the landscape combined with the special kind of exhaustion that comes with high altitude hiking cleared my mind perfectly. We called it "unwinding the tapes." Repeating mantras throughout the days and feeling the fresh cool air, the quiet, the warm sun and the bluest of skies there, so easily kept me present as we hiked, one step at a time. Periodically, cheerful sherpas in flip-flops sang out "Namaste!" to us as they advanced past us, ascending steep grades effortlessly while carrying large bundles of goods strapped to their heads and shoulders. They were a great reminder that whatever path we are taking, it is only as easy or as hard as we decide to make it! We then traveled to India from Nepal for the last portion of our trip to visit Menri, the Bon monastery in Dolanji where Rinpoche grew up. We approached, hiking up the final hill and through the archway of the monastery, exhausted and a day sooner than we had planned. Not having seen anyone from Menri yet, we were suddenly surprised by the beautiful voice of His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima who was out playing with a single monk in the courtyard. "Who are you there?" he jokingly called out to us. Hugs, smiles, and joy as H.H. welcomed us back to what felt like our home and family.

Our stay in Menri seemed timeless. We saw the places where our teacher, Tenzin Rinpoche, had lived and studied diligently, the courtyard where he debated and practiced, and the tiny cinder block room where he spent 49 days in dark retreat. Walking the dirt path down the mountainside from the monastery that Rinpoche took daily for teachings at the home of his first teacher, Lupon Sange Tenzin, made me even more grateful that Rinpoche had after all this made it to the West and out into the world to cross paths with those who like me were fortunate enough to wander across his pathway.

And I still feel the blessings we received from Ponlop Rinpoche that one rainy afternoon we visited him in his home at the monastery. With much glee and laughter, he welcomed us in like old friends, instantly making us feel right at home. Affectionately holding our hands from that very first moment, he radiated happiness as his hands found ours over and over again throughout our visit. Although we did not speak the same language, nor did we have similar cultural backgrounds or life experiences, nevertheless we were like family there. Having tea and gazing from Ponlop's balcony over the rain soaked valley below felt like the only thing in the world to do.

Nearing the end of our visit, I was sitting on the floor in front of him in his living room, listening to him as he spoke so easily about the natural state, conveying its qualities not just through his

Mon, Oct 3, 2005 12:04 PM

Page 10 of 10

broken English, but also through his clear eyes and his beautiful hands. Time had stopped. There was nowhere else to be or anything else needed. I don't remember the questions we asked, but holding his hand I will never forget. Love and wisdom flowed through him and all around us in that space, and to this day, I still carry that.

- Aline Fisher

The Voice of Clear Light is a free, e-mail publication of Ligmincha Institute. Your suggestions and contributions to the Voice of Clear Light are welcome. To contact us, simply reply to this message and your email will reach the VOCL editor.

Anyone may subscribe to the VOCL by sending a blank e-mail to LigminchaInstitute-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

To unsubscribe, send an email to:

LigminchaInstitute-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

For more information about Ligmincha Institute, the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, or retreats at

Serenity Ridge or our regional centers, please contact us:

Ligmincha Institute

313 2nd St. SE Suite #207

Charlottesville, VA 22902

434-977-6161 fax 434-977-7020

ligmincha@aol.com www.ligmincha.org

For books, tapes and transcripts of teachings by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche as well as other books and items

supportive to Bon and Buddhist practice, please visit the Ligmincha's Online Store at www.ligminchastore.org or contact the Ligmincha Store at 434-220-0060

or orders@ligminchastore.org.