

# Voice of Clear Light

# VOCL

## *A Complete Path to Enlightenment*

**An interview with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**



**In this interview, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche shares his thoughts about the upcoming teaching and practice retreats that he has chosen to offer at Serenity Ridge this fall and winter. He also talks about some of the visiting teachers that he is inviting to teach at Serenity Ridge each year.**

*VOCL: How does the physical practice of Trul Khor support one's meditation practice?*

*Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:* Trul Khor, or Tibetan yoga, is the “magical exercise” of the body. The body affects the prana (vital energy) and the prana affects the mind. So, we practice Trul Khor in order to balance our physical, energetic and

mental dimensions — the body, the channels, the prana and the mind. When the channels are positioned properly in our body the prana flows better through the body, and as a result it is much easier to meditate and rest in the nature of mind, without effort, without struggle.

The purpose of all the physical yoga practices in the Bön tradition, including Trul Khor, is to introduce various aspects of the natural state of mind. That is why there are so many different positions and different movements. Each movement helps to introduce different qualities, different states of awareness, and different experiences of the natural state of mind, such as experiences of bliss, of emptiness and of union. This is the ultimate goal of Trul Khor practice.

When you do the Trul Khor movements, obviously you will feel good in your body and your mind. But feeling good is not the only purpose. The practice also leads to a higher state of consciousness. I think it is very important that when people initially enter into the Trul Khor yoga practice, they have a very clear understanding and intention of the higher goal beyond the physical. If you have a clear spiritual goal from the beginning, then you will make much better use of the practice and you will have much better success at a deeper spiritual level, even while you enjoy all the physical benefits.

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For more information about **Ligmincha Institute**, the teachings of **Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**, or retreats at Serenity Ridge or our regional centers, please contact us:

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*VOCL: What is the purpose of the sleep yoga practice?*

*TWR:* Not just during the day, but every single night we have the opportunity to engage in meditation practice, either with the dream or the sleep yoga practice, or both. The purpose of the sleep yoga practice is to learn how to maintain awareness — to abide in the nature of mind — as we fall asleep and remain asleep. The process of falling asleep is similar to the dying process, and so it is taught that if we can achieve a state of mind that is close or equivalent to the natural state of mind as we fall asleep, we are more likely to be able to do so at the time of our death.

Think of it this way: Every single night we have the opportunity to engage in meditation practice for six to eight hours. That means that one can practice for the equivalent of 15 or 20 years just by engaging deeply with the dream and sleep yogas!

The sleep yoga practice is one of the six paths to enlightenment from the Ma Gyud (Mother Tantra). The Ma Gyud is one of the most important and revered cycles of teachings in the Bön Buddhist tradition. I learned these practices at a very young age from my teachers, and they continue to be an important part of my practice today. Through connecting deeply with each of the six paths of the Ma Gyud — the elements, dream, sleep, chöd, phowa, and bardo practices — we can learn to transform every moment in our life into a path to enlightenment. That is why I have been teaching these six practices to our sangha internationally for many years now.

Everyone lives in an environment that is made up of the five natural elements of earth, water, fire, air and space. Everyone dreams, sleeps, suffers from fear, dies, and ultimately travels to the next life through the bardo. So the purpose of practicing these six paths is to integrate dharma practice into every aspect of our lives. The elements teachings show us how to practice during normal waking life in our interactions with the elements, the environment, and people. The dream yoga teachings show us how to practice while we are dreaming. The

sleep yoga teachings show us how to practice while we are sleeping. The chöd teachings show us how to practice while we are afraid. The phowa teachings show us how to practice while we are dying. And finally, since we will all eventually travel through the bardo, the bardo teachings show us how to practice while in the bardo.

*VOCL: How does the sleep yoga practice affect our everyday lives?*

*TWR:* We start each day by awakening from sleep. But how do we feel when we wake up? Are we feeling restful, joyful, peaceful, with a lot of fresh, creative energy? Or do we wake up tired, exhausted, depressed, lacking inspiration, energy and direction? Every night we have so many different ways we can enter the realm of sleep. If we are able to maintain a positive experience of awareness each night as we fall asleep, there is a much greater chance to integrate that experience into our everyday lives.

Whatever we are thinking and feeling as we fall asleep is held in the mind and in our energy for the rest of the night. If we are able to abide in a peaceful, open space as we fall asleep, it will affect us very positively both during the night and during the day that follows. Similarly, falling asleep with disturbing, destructive thoughts will negatively affect our dreams, our sleep, and all our waking moments.

Perhaps during this sleep yoga retreat some of us will learn for the first time in our lives how to properly and restfully go to sleep; how to release and dissolve those last emotions, thoughts, feelings and disturbances; and how to develop better supports so that these disturbances will not return to influence us again and again. During the retreat we will engage with practices that can help us to recognize the natural state of mind during the sleep state. There will be supports to help us develop the proper position of the mind before sleep, such as subtle breathing exercises and sacred images and symbols to focus the mind. As a result of these practices, we may also find that the experiences of our daily waking state will also be transformed.

*VOCL: Why will students be asked to refrain from sleeping for a 24-hour period during the retreat?*

*TWR:* Generally speaking, both dream and sleep yoga are practices of awakened mind. They are based on how the awakened mind copes with a given situation — on the mind's emotional responses, thoughts and feelings. It is these responses of the mind that directly affect our dream and sleep states. For example, if our day has been very peaceful and oriented to spiritual practice, we can imagine how our dreams and sleep will be affected. Conversely, if the day has been very confusing, stressful and painful, our dreams or sleep will be affected very differently.

So during the retreat we will have the opportunity to focus intensely on the practice for a continuous 24-hour period. During that time we will use techniques such as gentle physical movement, pranic exercises, recitation of mantra, and silent, focused seated meditation to develop the strong intention to bring positive, awakened qualities into dream and sleep. Then, when we finally go to sleep at the end of the 24 hours, we will be able to see what kinds of experience arise, how much open awareness has been awakened, and how our reaction to the dream and sleep states has changed. It is my hope that this kind of intensive practice will give some clear knowledge and understanding of how to successfully integrate this wonderful practice into our everyday lives.

*VOCL: Could you share your thoughts about the other Bön teachers who are now coming to teach us at Serenity Ridge?*

*TWR:* I am very happy that we now are able to invite such well-qualified and wonderful teachers to Serenity Ridge each year. Ponlop Thinley Nyima, the current Ponlop of Menri Monastery, and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung, the abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery, are highly qualified and beautiful people. I grew up with them; we are all very close friends. I want all of my students to learn the teachings and practices they are offering so that we all can build on the same foundation and within the same energy field. This is what I feel Khenpo Tenpa



*Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche*

Yungdrung and Ponlop Thinley Nyima are able to give us.

All of my students who have been following the Experiential Transmission teachings can continue to develop a real sense of continuity with the lineage, with the teachers, with the teachings, and with the practices. There is no division, no separation, it is a continuation.

This is very important, because any spiritual practice, and especially the practices of the Experiential Transmission, are meant to be followed continuously for the rest of our lives. I feel it's important to have the right teachers to offer this cycle of teachings and I am so happy that Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung and Ponlop Thinley Nyima are able to come and share their knowledge and experience with us.

*VOCL: Why is Ngondro considered such an important practice?*

*TWR:* Ngondro is very important because it is the foundation for all the other practices of the Bön Buddhist tradition. Without a foundation one cannot build a house. In the same way, one cannot build a spiritual practice without a firm, stable foundation. The Ngondro is also considered a path toward “ripening” oneself, and that also is very important. When one becomes ripened [in one’s practice], then whatever one is learning and practicing will stay on that foundation. When one lacks a strong sense of spiritual foundation, often the result is that one continuously searches for more and different practices, from



*Ponlop Thinley Nyima Rinpoche*

different teachers, in different traditions, and so on. This often leads to more confusion rather than spiritual development. Understanding this notion of the Ngondro as being the foundation and a path toward ripening is very important.

*VOCL: Why is the winter retreat presented as a progressive series of annual teachings?*

*TWR:* There are few places in the world, and far fewer in the West, where one can study a complete path to enlightenment step by step, year after year, experience after experience — places where one can continuously work with one tradition, with one group of lineage teachers, with one path. Instead, it often seems that people are continuously shopping around, unable to have a deep experience of one dharma path before jumping to the next teacher or teaching. They bring the same patterns and habits of inconsistency that they have in ordinary life to their dharma practice. In my experience, that approach doesn't work.

Our winter retreat is a great opportunity to follow one path all the way through. Since the time I was little, I have always practiced the Experiential Transmission of Dru Gyalwa Yungdrung. I have found through personal experience that these teachings are something that we can really study, practice, hold in our hearts and keep for the rest of our lives. If we just work with this one cycle of teachings, it will eventually bring us to illumination.

*VOCL: Why have you added a Ngondro practice retreat to the annual winter retreat?*

*TWR:* Group practice is a very powerful way to engage deeply in meditation practice. For many years students have been coming to the winter Experiential Transmission retreats, where we learn the Ngondro, are introduced to the nature of mind, and study the view, meditation, and conduct of dzogchen. We learn wonderful exercises and practices during these retreats. Some of us have been able to find time to practice on our own, and for others it has been difficult.

While every retreat is a great opportunity for people to come together to practice, this is especially true during a retreat that is dedicated solely to practice. The environment is very supportive, the fellow practitioners are very supportive, the energy of the practice space itself supports us. We don't have all the obstacles and hectic activities of our day-to-day lives to distract us.

When the Ngondro practice retreat is held at the same time as the Experiential Transmission teachings, all the students and teachers are able to share this wonderful time together. Some people are learning, some people are practicing. I strongly recommend coming to the practice retreat, especially those who feel the need to do a personal retreat and are having difficulty getting motivated to do one on their own.

This is the best way to do a personal retreat, because the group supports us. There is less chance to be lazy, less chance to avoid or skip the practice. If we have a question, there is a senior student or teacher right there to offer an answer. Best of all, we can completely focus on practice. So I hope that many of my students will take this wonderful opportunity to come and practice at Serenity Ridge during the winter retreat.

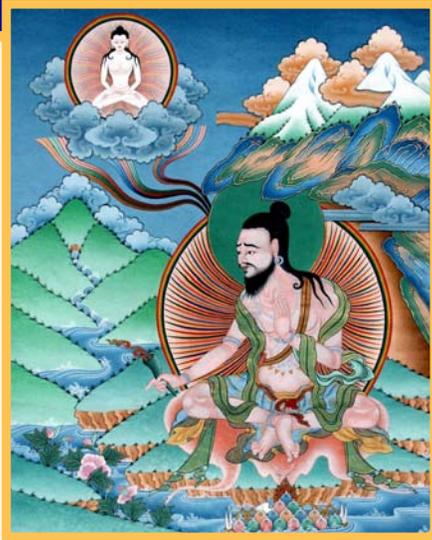
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To find out more about these retreats please go to the Serenity Ridge schedule on line at:

[http://ligmincha.org/schedule/schedule\\_sr.html](http://ligmincha.org/schedule/schedule_sr.html); or contact the Ligmincha office at: [ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:ligmincha@aol.com); 434-977-6161.

# The Bön Pantheon

*A column devoted to deepening our connection to our Bön lineage*



Many of us are familiar with the image of Tapihritsa, central to our Bön practice and to our shrines and thangkas. The white luminous figure of Tapihritsa in meditation posture radiating light and encircled by rainbow light is often visualized as representing the realization of all the masters of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu lineage, one of the three Bön dzogchen lineages.

At a Ngondro retreat with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung, he strongly urged us to learn about the masters and their lives and to recognize them as real beings like us. I was a bit awe-struck to hear him say that Tapihritsa learned these same teachings and practices that we are learning - just like us. Khen Rinpoche assured us that through connecting with the masters we will find inspiration and develop devotion. And through devotion we will open our hearts.

Here is "The Story of Tapihritsa" as told by Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche during the Summer Retreat in 2000 (excerpted from the edited transcript of his oral teachings translated by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche). Knowing the details of Tapihritsa's very real life makes the "Invocation of Tapihritsa," an offering composed and sung by Nangzher Lopo, Tapihritsa's student, all the more inspiring! It seems the perfect accompaniment to Lopo's great story. Enjoy!

- Aline and Jeff Fisher, Editors

## THE STORY OF TAPIHRITSA

*As told by Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche*

**TAPIHRITSA WAS AN ORDINARY PERSON** from a nomadic family in the country of Zhang Zhung. His main teacher was Dawa Gyaltzen. Tapihritsa practiced for nine years before attaining illumination. The place where he practiced is a holy place outside Mount Kailash called Senge Tap. After nine years of practice there, Tapihritsa achieved the rainbow body.

Tapihritsa was a contemporary of the king of Zhang Zhung, Ligmincha, and the king of Tibet, Tritson Detsun, and other famous yogis of Bön.

Nangzher Lopo was a very famous master, a knowledgeable and very accomplished practitioner, famous at that time in Zhang Zhung. Later he became the main student of Tapihritsa but Nangzher Lopo had a problem with pride and therefore had not become fully realized. In order to help Nangzher Lopo Tapihritsa emanated as a young boy and came down to the village where a rich man, Yungdrung Gyal, the main sponsor of Nangzher Lopo, lived. Tapihritsa came in the form of a young boy seeking employment in the family of Yungdrung Gyal, and he served them for a number of years.

Nangzher Lopo was meditating on a mountain where there were bushes, and Tapihritsa was taking care of the family's animals. These very places can be identified today in the Western part of Tibet. Today when people go to these powerful places they have a lot of experiences and visions. Some people who don't know the history of the place think they are seeing ghosts or something.

Tapihritsa was carrying a lot of wood in his bag for cooking food. He went to visit Nangzher Lopo to pay respect. Nangzher Lopo hesitated when he saw the behavior of this young boy. The way he was paying respect seemed special and mature, and he thought, "Who is this guy?" So Nangzher Lopo said to the boy that it looked like he

had worked through some doctrines and tenets. He asked him, "Who is your teacher and what is your practice? What are you carrying? Why are you behaving this way?" The young boy said, "My teacher is this vision. Visions are my teacher. My practice is thought-less, my meditation is all sentient beings. What I am carrying is my thoughts. I am behaving like this because I am a servant of the family of samsara." Since the young boy answered in that way, Nangzher Lopo was surprised and they entered into a debate. Nangzher Lopo said, "If these visions are your master, it probably means you don't have a master; if your meditation is thought-less, you don't need food; if you are meditating on sentient beings, that means you are enlightened; if you are carrying thoughts, you don't have desire; and if you are a servant of samsaric beings, you don't suffer!"

The young boy answered again (and in this debate the teachings have already begun). "If you don't realize that vision is your master, who taught Samantabhadra?" asked the young boy. "My practice is thought-less because in the base there is no thought, and when there is a thought, there is no practice. I am meditating on all sentient beings because I don't separate or discriminate among others, because if one is discriminating there won't be meditation. I am carrying thoughts. That means I don't have thoughts. Because I don't have thoughts, I don't have desire. I realize that everything is illusion. I help all sentient beings because I don't make a distinction between suffering and not suffering."

Then the debate continued. "If you are that good," says Nangzher Lopo, "we need to go in front of the king and debate. If you win, you will become my master. If I win, you will be punished by the king." Tapihritsa had a big laugh. "All karma and conditions, causes and results are false." Basically, he was teasing Nangzher Lopo, saying, "All these meditators are prisoners of

thoughts; they keep thoughts in a prison and are prison guards! All these intellectuals who debate don't realize they cast a net in the darkness. All these discussions are like a joke and a play, a weapon of words. All the sacred tantras are merely elaborations of one's mind. All these knowledgeable persons are meaningless - they know and have no experience." So he was teasing, saying, "These great views are bubbles of words - all these things are meaningless and make no sense. The real condition cannot be changed. The real essence cannot be practiced. Self-arising wisdom cannot be obscured. When you realize, you cannot re-realize or try to realize again. So what is the matter? Who is complaining?"

Now Nangzher Lopo was getting a bit irritated and realized this was not just a boy, but a special person. He was shocked and could almost not speak. In that moment of shock and surprise, he looked at the young boy who was sitting up in space and that is how we draw him - in space and in the rainbow. So Nangzher Lopo was really sad, realizing all this bad karma he had created by having the wrong view. He did prostrations and confession, realizing the boy was a manifestation of his teacher. Then he requested the teaching. Right at that moment, the owner of all the animals, Yungdrung Gyal, came and saw this discussion. He said, "What are you doing there all this time? Where are all the animals?"

So immediately Nangzher Lopo, who knew Yungdrung Gyal very well, said, "What bad karma we created! You put the master as a servant and I said all these things to him!" Yungdrung Gyal went into shock. Those shocks are good. When you wake up, you are in a different place. So the young boy went up into space and said, "I am Tapihritsa and I came especially for you."

So this is the story. Then Tapihritsa began teaching Yungdrung Gyal and Nangzher Lopo. He said, "Listen carefully and do not be distracted." So both were clearly listening.

Do you understand who Tapihritsa is now? This is not just a story; it is a fact; it happened. It happened during the seventh or eighth century. The teachings are the Dzogpa Chenpo, the Great Perfection. The result is the rainbow body. There is no doubt. If there is doubt in you, it is your karma.

(Actually, Tapihritsa asked them to listen carefully, but at the same time he was speaking to all beings, and Lopo is saying that basically he is talking to all of you.)

## *Invocation of Tapihritsa*

Emaho! How marvelous!

You are the heart emanation of Kuntu Zangpo, your body appears like a white luminous crystal, clear and without impurities, radiating light in the ten directions.

You are naked, without ornaments, signifying the innermost essence, the primordial state.

Endowed with the two-fold wisdom of emptiness and skillful means, with compassion you contemplate the benefit of beings.

You embody dzogchen, the great perfection, supreme among the teachings, the essence of the awareness of the realized ones, the peak of the way of realization, the heart of the tantras, of the essential scriptures, and of the secret instructions.

You point out the natural state, the base that is self-clear of delusion, which is samsara, of liberation, which is nirvana, and of the defects and virtues of sounds, lights, and rays.

Having completely dispelled the darkness of the minds of beings, you enable us to experience the base as empty and rootless, and simultaneously realize all stages of the path.

Experiences and realization become manifest, and samsara and nirvana liberate in one's natural mind. In that vastness, the three dimensions, which are the fruit, are arrayed.

With one-pointed devotion I pray to you, Tapihritsa, protector of beings. Grant the blessings of bestowing the empowerment upon me and other beings.

May the external, internal, and secret obstacles be pacified and may the error of self-grasping, which is ignorance, be liberated. Having recognized self-awareness, may the view and the conduct be fully realized.

Please bestow upon me, at this very moment, the great meaning beyond intellect of the primordial base, empty and rootless.

To you, Tapihritsa, noble protector of beings, I pray:

May the beings of the six realms be protected by your compassion and may my mind be liberated!

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## UPCOMING RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

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### OCTOBER 26–30, 2005

#### Magical Movements of Zhang Zhung

Tibetan Yoga from the Bön Buddhist Tradition  
with Alejandro Chaoul-Reich

Tsa Lung Trul Khor Introduction and  
Tsa Lung Trul Khor II, Continuing the Training  
(retreats to be held concurrently).

Retreat cost (for either retreat; includes meals):  
\$350 received by Oct. 5; \$400 received after Oct. 5.

Information:

[www.ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/05\\_magic\\_movements.html](http://www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/05_magic_movements.html)

### NOVEMBER 2–6, 2005

#### Sleep of Clear Light

The Sleep Yoga Practice From the Bön Mother Tantra,  
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Retreat cost: \$450 received by Oct. 5;  
\$500 received after Oct. 5.

Information:

[www.ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/05\\_sleepyoga.html](http://www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/05_sleepyoga.html)

### NOVEMBER 16–20, 2005

#### Part One: Ngondro

with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche

Retreat cost (includes meals):  
\$450 received by Oct. 19; \$500 received after Oct. 19.

Information: [www.ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/05\\_ngondro\\_partone.html](http://www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/05_ngondro_partone.html)

### DEC. 27, 2005–JAN. 1, 2006

#### Ngondro Practice Retreat

Instructor: TBA

Retreat cost (includes meals):  
\$200 received by Nov. 9; \$250 received by Dec. 7;  
\$275 received after Dec. 7

Information:

[ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/05\\_ngondro\\_practice.html](http://ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/05_ngondro_practice.html)

### Dec. 27, 2005–Jan. 1, 2006

#### The Flexible Behavior of Dzogchen

Part Three, Chapter Six of the Chag Tri  
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Retreat cost (includes meals):  
\$400 received by Nov. 9; \$450 received by Dec. 7;  
\$500 received after Dec. 7.

Information:

[www.ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/05\\_dzogchen\\_behavior.html](http://www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/05_dzogchen_behavior.html)

### February 23–26, 2006

#### Zhiné

Medicine of Tranquility  
with Gabriel Rocco

Retreat cost (includes meals): \$200 received by Jan 12;  
\$250 received by Feb. 2; \$275 received after Feb. 2.

Information:

[www.ligmincha.org/program/sr\\_teachings/06\\_zhine.html](http://www.ligmincha.org/program/sr_teachings/06_zhine.html)



*Ligmincha Institute's*

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### CALENDAR:

Ligmincha Institute's 2006 Calendar! Available October 17. "A Time of Change for the Ancient Bon Buddhist Tradition of Tibet," photographs of masters from the early years of exile in Nepal and India from the archives of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Includes auspicious days for practice. Price: \$12.95

### ARTICLES AND BOOKS:

"Sacred Sound: The Healing Power of Sound in the Bon Buddhist Tradition of Tibet." An interview with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Reprint of article from Snow Lion's Newsletter, summer 2004. Booklet, 8 pages. Price: \$2.50  
"Blazing Splendor: The Memoirs of Tulku Urygen Rinpoche." Paperback, 432 pages. Price: \$19.95

### THANGKA:

Tapihritsa surrounded by silk brocade, with gold plated dowel end caps at the bottom edge of the fabric. Dimensions of painting: 17" w x 23 1/2" h; Dimensions including brocade: 27 1/3" w x 47" h. Price: \$435.

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Dark bodhi seed. 108 beads. Approx. 36" in length. Price: \$22.00

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Fine quality ritual drum with gold plated center band adorned with turquoise and coral. Comes with fabric banner and brocade carrying case. Price: \$145.00

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