

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."

To access an archive of previous issues, visit www.ligmincha.org.

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On Letting Go and Traveling Light

The experience that one has before death - one's state of mind before dying - is considered to be of great importance in Tibetan culture.

Actually, one's state of mind prior to any departure one makes in life is important. Each departure that we make should be clear, healthy, and pleasant, because ultimately what remains in the wake of each of these departures is the image of that departure. And you see, as the process of dying approaches, it is very important that one's mind be oriented as much as possible towards one's practice, not really thinking about anything other than one's practices, one's inner-most support.

In the process of dying, whatever one has been familiar with in one's lifetime is now over. Regardless of the particular way in which you have been familiar with anything: you like it; you don't like it; you want it, you don't want it; in the process of dying you leave all of these familiar relationships behind. Everything has to be left behind when making this one departure - your children, your friends, your familiar world, your house, your identity, everything. It's a journey that one makes alone.

As you take this journey by yourself, however, whatever truths you have located deep within yourself - whatever you have authentically touched deep within yourself and are deeply familiar with - these are your own. The real knowledge and real understanding that comes about through your

connection to the teachings, and through your experience gained in your practice - these are of real value because they carry one through even the great departure of one's death.

Generally, for older people who are in the process of dying, you can clearly see two things: they are very unfamiliar with where they're going, and they are all too familiar with the conditional world that they are leaving. It's always hard to go toward what you don't know. It's also hard to leave what you're already very familiar with. In combination with each other, these two factors can get magnified greatly, right?

In Buddhism the emphasis is on non-attachment; not to be attached - especially not to be attached when you are dying. *Okay, so I will not be attached*, you say. However, you quickly recognize, *Well, I am attached*. So, what are the philosophical reasons that lead to one's developing an attitude of non-attachment toward conditioned phenomena arising within one's life? They are that the nature of phenomena is like an illusion; that they are projections; and, that they are impermanent.

When you really consider these reasons, then of course, cognitively, it makes sense not to be attached. But, really, how often in your daily life do you find these philosophical reasons making sense in the face of all that arises? Well, that depends on the depth of your understanding of these reasons. And, it also depends on your particular experiences in life. We may have found ourselves struggling to accomplish something and then realized in the midst of it, *Well, there's really not much there, is there? It's fine, actually, my not getting that. It's okay, if I don't actually accomplish what I wanted to accomplish here, because, even if I were to accomplish that goal, it's not really going to change me. It may appear that it will change me, but in reality, it doesn't*. In those instances you are really beginning to realize the illusory nature of what has seemed so solid in your own life up until then.

Recognizing the illusory nature of phenomena is very powerful in cutting one's attachment to this life. As well, recognizing the impermanence of phenomena is another powerful antidote for dissolving one's attachment to anything - it's impermanent! You long to hold on forever to that which you find valuable, right? But you're not going to live forever, are you? We hear ourselves saying, *I want that so bad that I'll struggle my whole life just to get it*. But, really, how long will you then be able to hold onto it? Not that long, right? We might say, *10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, but not long, really*. This is the truth, that you can not hold on to anything longer than that.

Within the practice, then, we reflect on these principles and apply them to the very things that we hold onto in our lives, and through practice comes a genuine sense of letting go, of forgiveness. And as

we continue to investigate these means, we gain an even deeper understanding, which allows us to be able to let go even more. When you truly experience these qualities, these principles, in relation to what arises in your lifetime, then you come to feel that you will naturally be able to let go in the process of dying.

So, there are a lot of aspects to explore about the nature of ourselves and phenomena, deeper and deeper aspects of truth, and their interplay with each other. Dream yoga practice is very closely tied with this interrelationship. Through dream yoga you can recognize during a lucid dream: This is a dream. What does that mean? It means: it's not real. And what does that mean? It means: don't worry about it. And, if you don't worry about it, how does that affect you? Suddenly, you can rest, relax. However, if you look at all of our sufferings - our pains and confusions - if you really look closely at where they are coming from, they arise on the basis of our misperceiving events, phenomena, ourselves as being real, as existing inherently, and as a result a strong sense of grasping develops. So, whenever we're convinced that something is really real, rather than recognizing it as illusion, as having the nature of a dream, or being impermanent, that is when we suffer.

So, how we face the moment of the death depends on our level of understanding and knowledge that we've gained within our lifetime of this illusory, dream-like nature of ourselves and appearances and how deeply this understanding takes root in ourselves, how clearly we have glimpsed these truths directly through our own experience, our own practice.

This excerpt is from "Dream Yoga: The Practice of Lucid Dreaming as a Path to Enlightenment," a 2-CD set of audio recordings by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. It is available through the Ligmincha Institute Bookstore & Tibet Shop. These recordings are an audio companion to Rinpoche's bestselling book from Snow Lion Publications, "The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep."

Price of 2-CD set: \$19.95, plus \$6 shipping within the U.S. (for international shipping rates please email us at orders@ligminchastore.org)

To order, please go to our store's Web site, www.ligminchastore.org/detail.asp?productid=349

RELATED EXCERPTS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF SEVERAL BUDDHIST MASTERS

From *This Precious Life* by Khandro Rinpoche:

The real intent behind any Dharma practice is to train the mind for the moment of death so that the moment of death can arise with confidence and without regret - regret in the sense of nonawareness, or ignorance. As we develop awareness, we get a better understanding of the very subtle thoughts that constantly shift the mind into nonawareness. Lacking awareness, we are unable to understand impermanence and the emptiness of thought, time, and a self - empty in the sense that they cannot be proven to exist. Imposing solidity upon that inherently empty nature, we spend whole lifetimes struggling with ourselves and others. When we look at all the sentient beings living like this, we can truly understand how difficult it is to become free from suffering in the midst of samsara.

The only way to free yourself from ignorance is the path of awareness. Training in awareness begins with you. It would be difficult to go outside of yourself to get this message - or to change the mind of anyone else. You are the one endowed with the qualities, teachings, and practices; you are the one with the genuine desire and ability to bring this to fruition. Therefore, you need to be the first one to transcend ignorance. Then and only then can you benefit others.

From *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche:

With continued contemplation and practice in letting go, we come to uncover in ourselves *something* we cannot name or describe or conceptualize, something "that we begin to realize lies behind all the changes and deaths of the world. The narrow desires and distractions to which our obsessive grasping onto permanence has condemned us begin to dissolve and fall away.

As this happens we catch repeated and glowing glimpses of the vast implications behind the truth of impermanence. It is as if all our lives we have been flying in an airplane through dark clouds and turbulence, when suddenly the plane soars above these into the clear, boundless sky. Inspired and exhilarated by this emergence into a new dimension of freedom, we come to uncover a depth of peace, joy, and confidence in ourselves that fills us with wonder, and breeds in us gradually a certainty that there is in us *something* that nothing destroys, that nothing alters, and that cannot die.

From *Luminous Mind* by Kalu Rinpoche:

Our life is like an hourglass that never stops. Each moment follows the next without respite. From minute to minute, life exhausts itself: we are babies, then adults, then old, then dead. One instant follows another relentlessly.

If we become conscious that death is inevitable for all of us, shouldn't we strive to practice Dharma from this very moment on? This precious human body we have right now can communicate, can

understand the teachings, is endowed with all the necessary faculties, and has met with Dharma. If we fritter it away, not only will we have to endure the reign of samsara's suffering, but we will not have a chance of finding a similar opportunity. That's why we must firmly resolve to use this life well, by practicing Dharma enthusiastically during the time that remains in this life - this quick, bright moment, like the sun piercing through clouds.

SOURCES:

Khandro Rinpoche. *This Precious Life*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2003.

Sogyal Rinpoche. *The Tibetan Book Of Living And Dying*. Edited by Patrick Gaffney and Andrew Harvey. HarperSanFrancisco, a Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

Kalu Rinpoche. *Luminous Mind*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997.

(Editor's Note: These books are all available from the Ligmincha Bookstore and Tibet Shop. To order, visit the store online at: www.ligminchastore.org)

UPCOMING RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

To register for the retreats listed below, please contact Lee at Ligmincha@aol.com or 434-977-6161.

Nov. 7-11

**Dzogchen Teachings From the Bon Tradition
with Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche**

This November we are fortunate to have an opportunity to study and practice with a preeminent teacher and practitioner of Yungdrung Bon Buddhism, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche.

Khen Rinpoche has visited and taught at Ligmincha Institute's summer retreats and given the transmission of *The Twenty-One Nails*, a supreme dzogchen teaching. In the past few years Khen Rinpoche has led retreats at Serenity Ridge in support of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's presentation of *The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung*. He also teaches widely throughout Europe. Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche is beloved and respected by those students and practitioners who have had the opportunity to learn from him.

We are quite pleased to announce that this year Khen Rinpoche's retreat will be open to everyone wishing to receive teachings from him. Of late, Rinpoche has been studying and translating a number of important texts, and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has asked him to share this knowledge for the benefit of us all. Khen Rinpoche is known for the depth of understanding, which he transmits with warmth and great humor in clear English. Please join him at Serenity Ridge for what will surely prove to be a wonderful retreat experience.

Retreat cost (includes meals; accommodations are available):
\$450 received by Oct. 17; \$500 received after Oct. 17

Dec. 27-Jan. 1
Annual Winter Dzogchen Retreat
The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung
Completion of the Cycle
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

A Personal Invitation From Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

This year, during the annual Winter Retreat at Serenity Ridge, I will present Part Four of the Chag Tri, the essential practice manual for The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung. This retreat will mark the conclusion of the first complete presentation of the Chag Tri, and I wish to invite every student who has attended any of the Part Three retreats over the past several years: View, Meditation, Behavior, and Fruition; as well as all students who have received Part Two: Introduction to the Nature of Mind. This will be a special opportunity for all of us to gather for the study and practice of the chapter concerned with clearing the obstacles to liberation, as preparation for the traditional 49-day dark retreat.

The retreat will focus on clearing the subtle channels and chakras, the practice of trul khor, and deepening our capacity to abide in contemplation. This retreat is a prerequisite for the seven-week dark retreat, for which I have decided to give instruction on an individual basis. Following this presentation of Part Four, I will begin the cycle of teachings again from the beginning so I encourage all of you who have an interest in the Experiential Transmission teachings and the practice of dark retreat to attend this retreat, which will bring the full sangha of dzogchen students together to deepen our practice, in community, at Serenity Ridge.

I am extremely proud to have the opportunity to offer these teachings as the centerpiece of my transmission of Bon dharma at Serenity Ridge. Of the many accomplishments Ligmincha Institute can point to, guiding and nurturing a community of practitioners devoted to the authentic Bon dzogchen path handed down from the Masters of Zhang Zhung a lineage unbroken from ancient times to this day - is the highest, the most remarkable, and personally the most fulfilling. Please join me at Serenity Ridge this winter.

Celebratory tsok: In honor of this extraordinary achievement, Ligmincha Institute will proudly host a celebratory tsok (special feast ritual and practice) at the end of the retreat to which all students, friends and supporters of Tenzin Rinpoche are extended a warm welcome. Please visit our Web site at www.ligmincha.org for more information.

Retreat cost (includes meals; accommodations are available):
\$400 received by Nov. 14; \$450 received by Dec. 5; \$500 received after Dec. 5.

SANGHA SHARING

A Mirror

Breeze stirs the high branches

An echo of afternoon rain

Still once more

No deeper than the traveler's hand

A bowl of fallen sky

Turns cold in failing light

I'll not stoop so low

When my thirst's an ocean

With just one shore.

The traveler walks on in darkness

Another comes

And bending close to drink

Finds in this humble face

The light of a thousand stars

- Dean Grantham

NEW ITEMS AT LIGMINCHA INSTITUTE BOOKSTORE AND TIBET SHOP

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To read descriptions and see photographs of the newest items at

Ligmincha Institute's Bookstore and Tibet Shop and 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/items.asp?CategoryID=16&SubCategory=0&Submit=Search>

LIGMINCHA'S 2008 CALENDAR

"Thangkas From the Tibetan Bon Buddhist Tradition"

The calendar features traditional Tibetan paintings of meditation

deities from the Bon Buddhist tradition, and includes written

descriptions of the images depicted in each thangka. All major U.S.

and Mexican holidays are included. The thangkas included in this

collection are:

*King Ligmincha of Zhang Zhung

*Nyame Sherap Gyaltzen

*Sherap Chamma

*Khandros of the Five Elements

*Red Garuda

*Tukje Kundrolma

*Tonpa Shenrap

*Drenpa Namkha

*Shenlha Okar and the Buddhas of the Six Realms

*Sangchok Gyalpo and Chemma Otso

*Gyerpung Nangzher Lopo

*Yeshe Walmo

Size: 11" x 8.5" (11" x 17" opened)

Price: \$14.95 plus \$6 s&h

DIETY CARD:

Tukje Kundrolma (khandro of Tummo practice) deity card, 6" x 8 1/2"

Price: \$4

RITUAL ITEMS:

Bonpo Mandala Set, sterling silver, with turquoise and coral inlay in the topmost piece. Price: \$1200.00

Damaru, fine quality wood, with gold plated center band with turquoise and coral inlay, red brocade carrying case. Price: \$155.00

Damaru, bone, golden-yellow brocade carrying case. Price: \$210.00