

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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"IMPERMANENCE" - edited excerpts from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche during a ngondro retreat in 1994 and by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche during a ngondro retreat in 2003.

Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

When we look back at the lives of some of our close friends and

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relatives who have passed away, and we look at how much they each struggled within their lifetimes, we can see that had they struggled and worried and fought a little less, and just relaxed a little bit more, they likely would have led just as full lives. We know this about life, don't we? Because it's the same way for us. We know very clearly all the moments in our lives spent struggling for various things, yet we never consider in the midst of those moments that tomorrow may be the day in which our life as we know it will end.

We must recognize that death does not only happen to those who live far away in distant places, who die in floods or earthquakes. We do not live in some paradise where death would not happen. Rather, recognize that the flood or the earthquake can happen right here, and that we can be the one who has the accident and dies. We normally don't think in this way. We always think that death is "out there" somewhere. So really connect with those people you've felt close to who have passed away, feel the impermanence in their passing.

Look deeply at the whole process of a close one's dying and relate to that person - because one day you, too, will be there.

Practice to develop your sense of impermanence by imagining your having a near-death experience; or imagine being kidnapped or lost, taken from your comfortable world; or imagine that your house has just burned down and that you've lost everything. Spend some time doing these practices, and see how your attitude changes about what is truly important in your life. After a while, your grasping mind will relax, and you will become more sensitive, more aware of the impermanent condition of all that you normally struggle for. If you find that your attitude toward these things changes over time, then that is a good sign that meditation is developing something in you.

Try to understand the complete reality of your own life and death, instead of struggling with just a piece of the whole truth. If you are really interested in struggling in life, then struggle for completeness. Develop more sensitivity to the impermanence of your present life and with practice you will change your attitude toward what is truly important during your lifetime.

Having a practice will benefit you so much when going through difficult life experiences. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama explained, if he had not been a practitioner he would have gone crazy when the Chinese took over Tibet. Through practice you can realize the richness within yourself. That richness is there within you, in your being, without your needing to rely on anybody or anything outside you to experience it. You can be completely alone with no possessions, and yet you will always have it with you. If you realize the richest part of yourself, then you can never be poor.

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But if your identity and your richness and your happiness all depend on the people and things surrounding you, then that richness is only temporary and can be lost very easily.

Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche:

This present life of ours is so precious. Maybe it is a result of many virtuous actions that we have accumulated over many lifetimes. So, it is important for us to understand how difficult such a life is for us to obtain. We should ask ourselves when we might find such a precious life again in the future. Is there any certainty at all that we can again find the same kind of life and situation? Maybe we will find a better one, maybe a worse one. We're never sure because the future is unknown.

Recognize that this very life that we have now is completely in our hands, whether we use it in a good way or in a wrong way. That is why

it is called a precious life.

We have this precious human life as a result of our accumulating virtuous actions from many lifetimes. So we have to think of this and realize the good things about this life, rather than always thinking of the negative things like having to work, and seemingly not having enough time to practice. Because we have been born into samsara, having difficulties is normal and unavoidable. But instead of thinking of the negatives, we can spend time thinking of the positive and fortunate situations in our life and how we should use them in a good way.

This life is not permanent. It is very much dependent on our material body, which is full of pain and misery and made of flesh and blood. This life will not last so long compared to the many, many lifetimes that we have had before and the many, many lifetimes that we will have in the future. It is said that this life is like a dewdrop on the grass in the summertime. It lasts for only one morning. It can go away anytime and at any moment due to any cause or condition.

So this life is very precious and fortunate and at the same time very transitory. So while we have this fortunate time, we must use it in a good way.

SANGHA SHARING: "An Example of Guru Yoga," by Ron Langman, who passed Mon, Oct 3, 2005 11:58 AM

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away after a long illness on Nov. 24, 2004.

[Note from the Editor: Ron Langman, a student of Tenzin Rinpoche, who lived in the Charlottesville area with his wife, Linda, and their children, had been seriously ill for the past couple of years due to a brain tumor. He was strong and courageous through all the phases of his dealing with his illness and, with the loving support and help from his wife and friends in the sangha, was able to attend several of Rinpoche's recent retreats at Serenity Ridge. Many of you may have met Ron, who sat at the back of the gampa in a wheelchair at the recent fall retreat with Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche. Every time I saw him he was holding his mala and glowing with a space he had found, kindly smiling at me. Ron's struggles with his physical body ended with his passing on Nov. 24, 2004.

I am honored to share this short piece that Ron wrote last August. He first gave it to Lee Hartline, who with the help of Ron's good friend, Jim Norman, deciphered the shaky handwriting and then typed it exactly as Ron had written it and passed it to Rinpoche. Ron's wish was that it would one day make its way out into the world. Those of us who have been touched by Ron are grateful for his honesty, his big heart and bright light.

This issue of The Voice of Clear Light is dedicated to Ron Langman. The Bardo prayer that Ron refers to, "The Prayer of the Intermediate State: The Precious Garland," can be found at the beginning of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book, "Healing With Form, Energy and Light." Reciting this prayer during the 49-day period after someone has died is recommended by our teachers.]

An Example of Guru Yoga

For many years, from 1980 on I have tried to gain some experience in meditation. I studied with Geshe Gudun Lodro. He taught Calm Abiding and Guru Yoga. In 20 years my meditations were uneven, unexceptional, and frenetic. Off in worldly concerns, fantasies, indolence and pride. That's how it was.

Last year the brain tumor that is in my brain flared up and I had to have surgery to remove part of my brain and the tumor. The doctors wanted me awake so that they could gauge how much good brain they were removing by asking me to do things during surgery. This was a long and arduous experience. As it progressed I started doing Guru Yoga with Lama Tenzin as my object of refuge. I repeated from the Bardo teaching, "Lama from your compassion bless me" and focused my mind on his image. As time drew on Lama Tenzin appeared as a great golden being and the Tibetan syllable Ah! began to come out of his

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body to me. I felt loved not only by Lama Tenzin but by the whole Sangha. It got me through the surgery.

So by this illness and great trauma Guru Yoga appeared to me in a powerful way. It has become true for me that moments of great suffering or fear can also become moments of great devotion and faith. I share this example with the Sangha in the hope that merit will come to us all to help Sentient Beings in as many ways as possible.

Gratefully, Ron Langman

HONORING THE 15th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DALAI LAMA'S WINNING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE.

It was 15 years ago on Dec. 10, 1989, a landmark day for all Tibetans, that His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His Holiness first received the news a month earlier while in California, just before he was to give his first dzogchen teachings in the United States in the form of a weekend retreat.

My husband was one of the many fortunate ones who had made the pilgrimage to see the Dalai Lama at that special time. As Jeff recalled, he first saw the headlines announcing the Dalai Lama's having been chosen for the Nobel Peace Prize an hour after arriving

in San Francisco on a red-eye flight, the morning before the retreat was to begin. Amazed and now even more excited to be attending, Jeff headed to Santa Cruz, where the teachings were to be held. He arrived only to find that the venue for the teachings had just been changed that day to a much larger arena 30 miles away in San Jose, California. Apparently the organizers of the retreat had not anticipated the large numbers of people that would want to attend the Dalai Lama's teachings and empowerment.

The next morning in San Jose, Jeff found himself among a sea of more than 5,000 eager hearts and souls from all walks of life that had amassed outside the great entrance doors to the arena. Lamas, monks and nuns in an assortment of brightly colored robes from all traditions swept through the crowd for their chance to sit in the reserved rows nearest the stage from which His Holiness would be speaking.

As His Holiness first appeared on stage, with his hands together in a gesture of prayer, everyone in the arena including the entourage of high lamas on the stage, gave him a standing ovation. Wave upon wave of thunderous applause resounded throughout the arena in recognition

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of this surprise bestowal of such a great honor upon His Holiness. The applause continued for several minutes until after much gesturing by the Dalai Lama for people to sit, the crowd finally settled back into their seats. Then, just before the very first words of introduction were spoken, suddenly the whole arena rushed back to standing and once again thundered their excitement over the great news, one last exclamation of love and gratitude, before finally settling down into reverent silence.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Buddhist master and well-known author of "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying," had the great honor of hosting the Dalai Lama in California. So it was also his great fortune to publicly congratulate His Holiness on his just being announced as the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was glowing:

"This is a triumph for the Tibetan people and all their hopes, a signal that the world acknowledges the justice of their struggle and supports their aspirations for freedom, born through so much suffering. It is a message of victory for all those throughout the world who cherish peace and human values, and a signal of hope to encourage all those other people who are struggling for their rights and their happiness. It is a tribute to your unwavering stand on nonviolence, and to your message of compassion and love, which has moved so many millions around the globe. And it is the long-awaited confirmation of your place as the most important spokesman for world peace in this troubled world of ours. For no one else has championed

the cause of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, of reconciliation and forgiveness as you have done. At long last the world has recognized what so many have known for so long."

His Holiness replied:

"First, I would like to extend my greetings to you all, my Dharma brothers and sisters, gathered here. Also I wish to thank Sogyal Rinpoche and all of you for your congratulations upon my receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. I consider this prize to be some kind of recognition of my motivation and its sincerity. So essentially the credit goes not to this monk Tenzin Gyatso, but rather to the sincere motivation of altruism. Every human being has the same potential for compassion; the only question is whether we really take any care of that potential, and develop and implement it in our daily life. My hope is that more and more people will realize the value of compassion, and so follow the path of altruism. As for myself, ever since I became a Buddhist monk, that has been my real destiny - for usually I think of myself as just one simple Buddhist monk, no more and no less."

It was about a month later, on Dec. 10, in Oslo, Norway, that His

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Holiness was officially awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Here is a brief excerpt from his acceptance speech:

"I accept the prize with profound gratitude on behalf of the oppressed everywhere and for all those who struggle for freedom and work for world peace. I accept it as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of non-violent action for a change Mahatma Gandhi whose life taught and inspired me. And, of course, I accept it on behalf of the six million Tibetan people, my brave countrymen and women inside Tibet, who have suffered and continue to suffer so much. They confront a calculated and systematic strategy aimed at the destruction of their national and cultural identities. The prize reaffirms our conviction that with truth, courage and determination as our weapons, Tibet will be liberated."

[Note: California quotations are from "Dzogchen: The Heart Essence of the Great Perfection. Dzogchen Teachings given in the West by His Holiness the Dalai Lama." Translated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa and Chokyi Nyima. Edited by Patrick Gaffney. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2000. (This book is available at Ligmincha's store. Visit www.ligminchastore.org.) His Holiness's acceptance speech in Norway is available in its entirety at www.tibet.com/DL/nobelaccept.html.]

-Aline and Jeff Fisher

NEW ITEMS AVAILABLE AT LIGMINCHA'S STORE

We are pleased to announce the addition of the following items to our online store:

1. The Spanish editions of the three books by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:

"Senacion Con Forma, Energia Y Luz"; "El Yoga De Los Suenos"; "Maravillas Do La Mente Natural." Price: \$16.95 each, plus shipping.

2. Our new deity cards! Each card is printed on high quality card stock, with clear printed images of the Buddhas and protectors of the Bon tradition, including Tonpa Shenrab, Shenlha Odkar, Tapihritsa, Yeshe Walmo, Sidpa Gyalmo and Nyame Sherab Gyaltzen. The invocations of Yeshe Walmo and Tapihritsa are printed on the backs of their respective cards. Price: \$4 each, plus shipping.

3. Tibetan damaru (ritual drum): \$35, plus shipping.

You can find all of these items at www.ligminchastore.org. Click on "Search by Category" and then "New Items".

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There are many other Dharma items and books that would make great gifts for friends and family this holiday season. So please visit the online website or call Ligmincha's store toll-free (866) 522-5269. (In the Charlottesville area, call 434-220-0060.)

And don't forget to order your 2005 calendar filled with Tenzin Rinpoche's beautiful calligraphy!

REMINDER: "EARLY-BIRD" REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR THE ZHINE RETREAT IS DECEMBER 22.

Register to attend the Zhine (Calm Abiding) Retreat, Feb. 24-27, 2005, with Gabriel Rocco at Serenity Ridge, by the "early-bird" date of Dec. 22 for a special fee of \$200.

This retreat is appropriate for new and experienced zhine practitioners. Through its skillful means, zhine strengthens the attention and develops the powers of concentration necessary to calm the mind, experience inner peace, and enter the tantric and dzogchen practices of Bon.

Contact Ligmincha Institute at ligmincha@aol.com or (434) 977-6161.

OFFERINGS

From "This Precious Life" by Khandro Rinpoche:

"The main point of meditation practice, the essence of Dharma itself, is to be completely honest and to work with that honesty in a simple way. To understand the practice of meditation is to understand simplicity. The basic foundation of the teachings lies in how very simple and ordinary - and yet how profound - things can be. No meditator can afford to get caught up in things that aren't all that necessary. We really need to understand this: instead of creating great seriousness and grave issues, we need to lighten up and open

ourselves up to our true nature."

"This Precious Life," by Khandro Rinpoche. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2003. Available at bookstores or visit www.shambhala.com.

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