

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."

A printable PDF version of this month's edition of VOCL, in readerfriendly newsletter format complete with color photographs, will be available online later in the month. Please check the link for VOCL on Ligmincha Institute's home page at www.ligmincha.org. You can also access an archive of previous issues at:

<http://ligmincha.org/study/vocl.html>

IN THIS ISSUE:

"On the Nature of Progress Along the Path" – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

New works at the Bon Foundation

Spring and summer retreats at Serenity Ridge

"Early-bird" registration date for the spring retreat is March 7

The red garuda and tummo practices: what retreatants can expect - an interview with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

New items at Ligmincha's Bookstore and Tibet Shop

"ON THE NATURE OF PROGRESS ALONG THE PATH" – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, winter 2006.

During these winter retreats we have been following the chapters of the Bon dzogchen text entitled the Experiential Transmission of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud, or in Tibetan, Nyam Gyu Dru Gyal Wa'i Chag Tri; and all along we have been speaking of the three aspects of view, meditation, and the causes and conditions that manifest within one's own life.

In our first year, chapter one introduced us to the view, or the base.

Yet, it is the very same view, the very same base that we are now studying and practicing with two years later; and it's the same view we will be practicing with 10 years from now. The view is the same, the meditation is the same, the causes and conditions are the same. Twenty or 30 years from now, it will still be the same.

You see, as you continue coming to retreats year after year your progress is not measured in the amount of new material that you receive here. The growth that occurs, how far you have actually gone along the path, has to do with how much real experiential understanding you have gained. It also has to do with your ability to reflect honestly, confronting those very conditions within your life that are not easy to confront; and to recognize that there's always the possibility of overcoming those conditions. So, as we continue along the path,

deepening our connection over time, we develop our capacity as meditation practitioners by increasingly reflecting on and being aware of these difficult issues in our day to day lives, not by following the teachings on a conceptual level only.

In a way, you can learn more about the teachings on your own during the time in between your retreats here with me. During retreats I'm simply showing you aspects of the teachings, and showing how you can reflect on these within yourself. That's really all that I am doing; I cannot do anything else. All I can do is personally reflect on these teachings and then share with you the freshness of my own reflections – the freshness and the real sense of those reflections. In these moments that you are here with me, hopefully over time you'll feel that sense of freshness that I share.

For example, when we talk about the dzogchen view, we talk about seeing nakedly. What does that mean? And why is the entire chapter on the view related to the base? How difficult is it for us to connect to that base – at first just to connect to that base, and then to connect to that base nakedly?

In the end, it's very much up to you to see how much sense the base makes to you, how well you can access that base, how well you are able to nakedly see that base, and how well you can actually cultivate some connection to that base rather than simply having a lot of ideas about it. Very often the truth is that we are simply holding on to ideas about what all this means, and that is one of the main causes for not being able to further our development and move more deeply into the practices.

For example, in a moment of difficulty that you are facing – any kind of difficulty – you may be able to recognize that the difficulty is just a manifestation of your own mind; and by directly observing the problem, going to its root, you can experience that there is nothing there. Or, as you observe the problem you may only be able to feel a sense of its empty nature. Or, maybe you can only generate hope in that moment that it might turn out to really be empty. Or it may be the case that you cannot even think of wanting to see if that is actually the truth about the situation because you are so caught up with the surface issues and you feel like the base is just too far away from you, too far to get to, even though it may seem very easy for you to talk about.

As we continue to come to retreats here over the years, we all have a similar experience at the end of each one: It feels like we reach a nice conclusion about some aspect of the teaching and the practice. We will have had some nice experiences in meditation, and we feel some sense of resting, some sense of healing. We'll say, "I had a nice retreat" – we always say that at the end of a retreat. But what does that really mean?

The deeper benefit that we gain has more to do with whether the things

we've learned from our past retreats and the new things we learn from this and future retreats – whether these are taking root in a real place within ourselves. That is our path. Not "How much can I learn during this retreat, how much have I learned in the past, how much I will learn in the future?" - that is not the path. It is challenging for us to speak of the path in this way; I find that when I do, it presses some people's buttons. Learning something intellectually, or cognitively, may be difficult for some people, but generally speaking it is not that hard a thing to do. We love to think, we love to talk, we love to listen, we love to argue, and this is the very same frame of mind that we bring to the teachings. But the condition that I am speaking of, the condition that is the mark of real development along the path, is whether the teachings are truly making sense within one's everyday life.

As you reflect on the degree to which that is true or not for you, it is most important to take an accurate account of those instances in your daily life where the teachings did not take hold, rather than simply focusing on those instances in your daily life where they did. However, that's the part that we usually want to avoid really looking at. We don't want to know clearly about those times when our practice, our understanding, was not working; we only want to reflect on those times when everything was working perfectly.

Our challenge as dzogchen practitioners is as simple as this: In a very general sense look at a difficult issue in life, observe it – and let it go, let it dissolve. How easy it is to say that; how hard it is, though, to do it. What makes it hard to dissolve is clearly the grasping mind. The grasping mind is clearly there. That's really what we are talking about. We are not talking about other fancy things. In the end, it comes down to oneself and how free one is of the hold of this grasping mind. That's where real growth and development along the path occur.

For example, we talk about the clear and naked view of the base. Let's just imagine when we go to sleep: Can we fall asleep with a clear and naked mind? Yes, some nights we can be clear and naked. How often are those clear and naked nights there? Can you get up in the morning with a clear and naked mind? You may say, "Yes, very often," or "No." In the end it comes down to oneself, it really comes down to oneself and particularly when we hit the more difficult conditions.

It seems like it's very, very important to see every moment of difficulty in life as a great opportunity to learn. Because those are the moments when you are going to find out more about yourself or your conditional self than at any other moments in your life. You'll see if that nakedness of view made a little sense during those moments, if the spontaneously arising meditation that the teachings speak about made a little sense in that moment, or if what is spoken of in the teachings as flexible, compassionate action arises in that moment. If these

experiences don't arise, then they don't arise, and one realizes that it's not working the way it's supposed to work.

Lately, during the teachings of the Five Warrior Syllables Practice and the Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltsen I've been talking quite a bit about the space: the vast, open, primordially pure space that is the base of all experience. The view here is very much about that space. If we don't actually seek so much to find that space, or we don't know how important the space is, then we focus instead on how to change the conditions, or on how to change the experience we are having with the conditions, don't we? And we often might not think that it's important to change our mistaken view of the basis of those conditions and experiences. But there's always this challenge of deepening one's ability to rest in the space. If you're not feeling comfortable, just pretending to feel comfortable is very hard to do. But with practice in resting in the space, you'll find that certain situations will bother you less than they used to. There's space enough in your view now to contain these difficult moments, but not enough space, yet, that no matter how strong they are, they're unable to destroy you. In the end it comes down to being able to narrow your focus so you can pinpoint exactly what part of the teaching is not working within you personally. Then, your practice becomes making that part work. It's not about having an intellectual grasp of the text so much. I know this is clear, but sometimes I think reminding might help a little bit, right?

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT THE BON FOUNDATION

Dear Ligmincha Friends,

We thought you may like to know that the 179-volume Yungdrung Bon Kanjur has been scanned and is available in an album set of 14 CDs. The scanning project began in 2001 when the Bon Foundation began to raise funds to provide training and equipment for scanning Bon texts and manuscripts at Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India.

H.H. the 33rd Menri Trizin has spent much of his life collecting Bon texts for study and safekeeping, and ultimately for housing in the newly completed Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Library. A critical part of the Abbot's mission is to make important Bon texts and manuscripts available to libraries, scholars, and practitioners. He wished to begin the scanning project with the Yungdrung Bon Kanjur.

The Yungdrung Bon Kanjur was scanned and digitized in 2006 by monks at Menri Monastery's new library. It consists of a collection of canonical texts authored by the founder of Bon, Tonpa Shenrab, and revealed by his students and embodiments. Bon Kanjur texts were originally translated from ancient sources, probably from the Zhang Zhung language, and have gone through various terma, or "revelations." During the 18th century the lama Kundrol Drakpa [b. 1700], a teacher of the Tibetan princes of the Gyalrong province, received funding and

support from various patrons to gather and catalog the many volumes of Bon Kanjur texts and to produce woodblocks of the complete set. Over the next two centuries, copies of the texts from Kundrol's woodblock set were broken up, destroyed or hidden, and it was thought that no complete version existed. In 1999, however, Mongyal Lhasay, a lama from the Mongyal Monastery in Kham and from the family lineage of Kundrol Drakpa, was able to collect and publish a complete handwritten set in Chengdu. It is this set that comprises the 179 volumes of the Yungdrung Bon Kanjur, and which that is preserved on these 14 compact discs.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the Kanjur, you are welcome to visit the Bon Foundation Web site, www.bonfoundation.org, where you will find the details for ordering them. The cost to libraries and other institutions is \$1,790 and to students and practitioners (for their altars) the cost is \$350. All proceeds from this project go to support the Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Library.

Yours respectfully,

Mary Lanier

Bon Foundation Scanning Project

Dear Friends,

We're happy to announce that we have completed our 2007 "Bon Blue" edition of the Bon Foundation Web site. We want you to be the first to know that we are "up live" at www.bonfoundation.org. We've used recent photos, new designs, and new colors that give a wonderful sense of the exciting recent developments at Menri Monastery. In addition to updates about the children and sponsorships, you'll learn about the new library, as well as other important projects and newsworthy events at Menri, including the Make Room Dormitory Project.

From the home page you can go directly to exciting news about the recently released CD version of the complete Bon Kanjur (see "New Developments at the Bon Foundation"). The Web site describes how the Kanjur is now available to libraries, students and practitioners through the Bon Foundation.

The home page will also direct you to information regarding the Bon Foundation-sponsored final A-Tri teaching by His Holiness at Garrison Institute in the fall of 2007 and options for registering online or using the downloadable registration forms.

For a sense of the vibrancy of life at Menri, go to the Photo Gallery where you can enjoy a glimpse of Menri Monastery and Redna Menling Nunnery in 2006. The board and officers of the Bon Foundation invite you to explore these and many other links and features, which are easily navigated on the site. We hope you will enjoy what you find when you go to www.bonfoundation.org and that you will pass this email on to your friends and associates. The more readers we have, the

better for Bon.
In Bon,
Karan Shelley
President

SPRING AND SUMMER RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

** To register for the following retreats contact Ligmincha Institute at Ligmincha@aol.com or call 434-977-6161. For more information about retreats at Serenity Ridge and elsewhere, please visit

www.ligmincha.org

March 23-25, 2007

AND

May 18-20, 2007

Two Ngondro Practice Retreats
with Marcy Vaughn

The ngondro is the doorway through which one enters the vast and profound Bon Buddhist path. A set of nine foundational or preliminary practices, the ngondro provides a solid base of understanding and experience upon which a strong spiritual life develops.

Although the practices that make up the ngondro are called preliminary, many practitioners adopt them as their main practice, completing the accumulations of the entire ngondro many times over the course of a lifetime. It is possible to understand these beautiful practices as complete practices in themselves, for within each is contained a complete path to liberation.

The more you devote yourself to these practices that tame, purify and perfect the mind and the more you become familiar with the experiences they bring, the more you will find spiritual practice grounded within you. The ngondro then becomes a true friend that accompanies you throughout your spiritual life.

Join your fellow practitioners for either or both of these three-day practice intensives to connect with the power and beauty of the ngondro.

Note: These practice retreats are open only to those who have received the ngondro transmission.

RETREAT COST (includes meals): \$150

REGISTRATION DEADLINES:

March Retreat: March 9; May Retreat: April 27

April 18-22, 2007

“Conquering Negative Influences – The Healing Practice of the Red Garuda”

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Spring Retreat at Serenity Ridge is a time for healing and rejuvenation. Each year Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche introduces a therapeutic practice from the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet for

healing our physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions. During this retreat, Tenzin Rinpoche will transmit the tantric practice of self-transformation into red garuda, empowering us to conquer the negative forces that spread sickness and misery.

The garuda is a bird that is said to emerge from its egg fully matured and able to fly. It is a symbol of enlightenment, innately free from limitations. There are five types of garuda, one for each of the elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. The red garuda is associated with the fire element.

The teachings and practices of this mystical bird originated with the founder of Bon, Tonpa Shenrab. Although they are among the world's most ancient healing practices, they play a special role in our modern times. They have the power to conquer the forces of negativity that give rise to many forms of illness experienced today.

The red garuda practice cultivates absolute fearlessness and is particularly effective in restoring balance between humanity and our environment. It generates health and well-being not only for ourselves, but also for other beings, seen and unseen, who inhabit the natural world.

Please join us for this unique opportunity to experience Tenzin Rinpoche's personable teaching style, humor and warmth while receiving instructions in one of Bon's most remarkable healing practices: the red garuda.

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$400 if received by March 7; \$450 if received by March 28; \$500 if received after March 28

July 1-21, 2007

"The Fireball of Primordial Wisdom"

Part II of the Tummo Practice from the Bon Tradition
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

This summer, Tenzin Rinpoche will continue to instruct us in the practice of tummo (generating the inner heat) to burn away subtle obscurations and cultivate bliss, from the text *Ku Sum Rang Shar* (Spontaneous Arising of the Three Kayas). This text is by Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen Rinpoche, a Bon master who achieved the body of light, or rainbow body, in 1934.

At last year's summer retreat Tenzin Rinpoche began the instruction of this beautiful and powerful tantric practice by teaching the outer, inner and secret foundational practices of tummo. The manner in which Rinpoche crafted each day of the retreat and guided the meditation sessions, allowing sufficient time to develop each stage of practice, led to powerful experiential results.

At this year's retreat, Rinpoche will provide similar opportunities for students to engage deeply with the practice to help maximize each person's experience of the benefits of tummo. Tenzin Rinpoche is

preparing a pre-retreat practice program; registrants will be encouraged to engage with this program daily for one month prior to the retreat. (More information will be provided at the time of registration.) In addition to tummo, the practices of the nine breathings of purification and the physical yogas of tsa lung and trul khor will reinforce the clearing of obstacles, hindrances and obscurations.

You may come for one, two or all three weeks of the retreat. If you are able to attend only one week, Rinpoche recommends that you come to the first week, when he will review the practices that he taught last summer. Of course all are welcome no matter which week they attend.

RETREAT COST (PER WEEK) – includes meals: \$450 if received by May 28; \$500 if received by June 13; \$550 if received after June 13. (Week One: July 1-7; Week Two: July 8-14; Week Three: July 15-21)

*Note: Participants in the summer work retreat receive a 50 percent discount on one week of the summer retreat (see below.)

June 24-30, 2007

Serenity Ridge Summer Work Retreat

This is a wonderful time to share with sangha and to be of joyful service.

For those who participate in the entire work retreat there will be a 50 percent discount on one week of the summer retreat. Our work retreat includes vigorous work periods, daily meditation practice and ample time for a swim in the pool or a walk along the Rockfish River. The work retreat is free of charge, and participants are provided with free tenting and meals.

THE RED GARUDA AND TUMMO PRACTICES: WHAT RETREATANTS CAN EXPECT - AN INTERVIEW WITH GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

THE RED GARUDA PRACTICE

VOCL: Can you tell us a bit about the red garuda practice?

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: The garuda is an enlightened, mystical bird that like an eagle is often depicted with a snake in its mouth. In the Tibetan traditions this image of the snake in the garuda's mouth symbolizes the conquering of provocations from underwater or underground spirits known as nagas. Because of man's ongoing destruction of nature a kind of war can be said to exist between the human and naga realms. In this war we humans have acquired a weakened quality, an inability to conquer those disturbing forces, which has led to a lot of illness and disturbances. This is where the support of the red garuda practice comes in. The red garuda signifies a sense of transformation. By transforming into this powerful healing bird we are better able to conquer the disturbances and create balance, toward healing sickness and preventing energetic disturbances in the environment and in ourselves.

VOCL: What is the source of these teachings?

TWR: The red garuda teachings are from a text known as the Red Garuda Sadhana. I received these teachings myself from my root teacher, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, and for the last few years have been emphasizing them more and more in my own practice.

VOCL: Why are you choosing to teach this practice now?

TWR: I find it to be an appropriate healing practice for this time. It seems there is a need right now for people to create more harmony with the environment. There are a lot of imbalances in the world, manifesting specifically in the form of cancer and other illnesses. This particular form of healing practice, which is related with the causal vehicles, helps to create more balance between humans and nature. Our primary focus at the retreat will be toward healing illnesses in ourselves and others, not only at the physical level of manifestation but also at the mind level. In particular, I feel it will be very good to do the practice in the environment around the Serenity Ridge retreat center. Serenity Ridge has given us so much; the practice will enrich the land's ability to give more.

TUMMO

VOCL: How will the 2007 summer retreat differ from last year's?

TWR: The summer retreat in 2007 will be a continuation of last summer's three-week retreat in which we focused on the foundational practices of tummo. This summer we will be learning and then continuously doing the main part of the tummo practice. The preparation part of tummo that we were doing last summer is very important. Because of the amount of time we spent with those practices, many people who participated witnessed the power of the practices and had some level of realization surrounding them. This July we will come back to those experiences as a basis to further enrich the realization of inner fire.

However, people who did not attend the previous retreat are also welcome to attend this year. For all who are committed to receiving these teachings and who have registered well in advance we will provide special practice materials and possibly a support group to enable them to spend the month before the retreat in preparation. Everyone who intends to come to this summer's retreat should plan to do this preretreat practice to be ready for the summer retreat. This amount of time is minimal — it is not uncommon for practitioners to spend as many as three years preparing for the main part of the tummo practice.

VOCL: Many people associate tummo with the ability of yogis to generate physical heat in the coldest environments to the point where they can dry damp towels on their naked body using only their body heat. But the practice is known as "the inner fire of realization." What is the main reason one would want to engage with this practice?

TWR: "Inner fire" doesn't just mean burning something; it has higher transformative implications. The external heat is only symbolic of the far more subtle heat that is being generated through the practice. In

the end, the purpose of tummo is to burn away internal traces, internal obscurations of the mind. The subtle internal heat and the bliss associated with it are considered necessary to have the higher experiences of dzogchen practice. Bliss is a manifestation of the internal fire. If you have bliss it shows the inner fire is present.

We do the foundational practices of tummo in order to transform our self-image and create protection from external, internal and secret obstacles. We need to transform our identity in this way before we can access the more subtle experiences and generate the internal heat.

STUPA

VOCL: What can you tell us about the ongoing construction of the stupa in Valle de Bravo, Mexico?

TWR: In the last three years we have built four stupas: one in Poland, one in Nepal, and two in Mexico. When the second Mexican stupa is completed there will be a big consecration ceremony. It is traditional for major ritual to be involved in the consecration of a stupa. I hope that Yongzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche will return for this occasion. First, however, we must finish the construction.

Westerners need to understand the importance not only of material support for the construction of the stupa, but also of cultivating a relationship with it. Any way in which one can find a relation to the stupa is helpful, whether by making tsa tsas (small, votive-like tablets bearing the impression of a sacred symbol), by praying for the stupa's completion, or by contributing hard work, time or money — all of these are significant ways to cultivate this relationship.

There will be much benefit in attending the consecration ceremony. Anyone who wishes will be able to attend. Just by sitting right next to the stupa one will receive the blessings of its sacred symbolism as well as of the materials, books and relics inside it.

NEW ITEMS AT LIGMINCHA'S BOOKSTORE AND TIBET SHOP

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>

TRANSCRIPTS AND PRACTICE BOOKS:

The following transcripts and practice books are restricted to those who have received the respective teachings and transmissions

PRACTICE BOOKS:

The Ngondro Practice from the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, \$12

The Practice of Cho from "The Laughter of the Khandros," by Shardza

Tashi Gyaltzen, \$12

TRANSCRIPTS:

Cutting Attachments and Transforming Fear: The Practice of Cho in the Bon Mother Tantra. The Oral Teachings of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, from Ligmincha Institute's Fall Retreat, 2003. \$20

The Experiential Transmission of The Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu, Part 3: The Practice of the Path: Guidance on the Stages of Meditation on Clear Light. The Oral Teachings of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, from Ligmincha Institute's Winter Retreat, December 2004. \$20

BOOKS:

We now carry editions of books by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in foreign languages:

French:

Yogas Tibetains du Reve et du Sommeil. Paperback, \$28

Guerir par les Formes L'Energie et la Lumiere: Les cinq elements dans le chamanisme Tibetain, le Tantra et le Dzogchen. Paperback, \$28

German:

Die Heilende Kraft des Buddhismus: Leven im Einklang mit den funf elementen. Hardback, \$37.50

Dutch:

Het Wonder Van Onze Oorspronkelijke Geest: Dzokchen in de bontraditie van Tibet. Paperback, \$29

De Wekelijkheid van Slapen en Dromen. Paperback, \$29

Leven en Sterven als een Droom. Paperback, \$24

ITEMS RELATED TO THE FIVE WARRIOR SYLLABLES:

Bookmark of the Five Warrior Syllables, \$1

Five Warrior Syllables khorlo (mandala): Sacred mantras are written on paper which is then folded, wrapped with five-colored threads, and encased in plastic. The khorlo may be worn as a pendant or placed on one's shrine. It is considered to be a form of protection and also a connection to the sacred and powerful five warrior syllables. \$20