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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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Dzogchen" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

"How can we develop the sense of the sacred? By remembering that the source of all is sacred, that space and light are sacred. Every appearance is beautiful if we go beyond prejudice and recognize the vibrant, radiant nature of phenomena. Remember that all beings have the buddha-nature. Remember the sacredness of the religious tradition. Spend time in nature, particularly places special to you, and open yourself to the beauty of the natural world. Begin each practice period with prayer and open your heart. End each practice period by dedicating yourself to the benefit of all beings. Engage in the practice as a way to help alleviate the suffering of all those you care about. Spiritual practice is an activity meant to benefit all; it is not only for yourself. Look into the night sky when the stars can be seen, feel the immensity and magnificence of the universe. Think about the complexity of your own body, the mysterious functions that support your existence. Broaden your mind

enough and you necessarily come to mysteries that are so much bigger than everyday concerns that to encounter them is to experience awe, to experience the sacred."

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book "Healing with Form, Energy and Light, The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen" is available online from the Ligmincha Bookstore at: www.ligminchastore.org or by calling toll-free 866-522-5269.

"BODHICITTA AND GREAT COMPASSION" - an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, the Abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Katmandu, Nepal, during the Ngondro Retreat at Serenity Ridge, November, 2003.

To practice bodhicitta is to generate and to develop enlightened mind on the basis of great compassion. That is, to develop buddha mind or enlightened mind for the benefit of all sentient beings.

We are practicing not only for our own benefit, not only for our own peace, but in fact, we have to think that our practice is for the purpose of helping all other beings, not only a few beings, all sentient beings in all universes, not just this universe. We believe that there are thousands, billions of universes. So we have to think of helping all sentient beings in all those billions of universes. So it is a very big mind, very huge! It seems to be impossible. On the basis of great compassion we develop this mind. If you

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don't have great compassion, this kind of mind, this intention, can not come. So, first we have to develop great compassion within ourselves.

Great compassion is very, very important. It is one of the two main pillars of the path of liberation. These two pillars are known as method and wisdom. Similarly, there are two kinds of bodhicitta, relative and absolute. Absolute bodhicitta manifests with one's development of wisdom, the meditation on and knowledge of the absolute truth. Relative bodhicitta, this great intention to help all sentient beings, is what we refer to mainly as method.

Without this great compassion, we can not get fully enlightened. In order to get fully enlightened we have to be liberated from two extremes - the extreme of samsara and the extreme of nirvana.

You see, sometimes, we are too peaceful. This can be dangerous as it can lead

us toward falling into the extreme of nirvana, or thinking only of our

own benefit. Upon experiencing some level of realization, we may then fall into a level of meditation like a cessation type of contemplation in which we are very peaceful and seem to have

completely purified our negative emotions. We may easily remain in this situation for eons and eons. It is said that one sentient being from hell will attain enlightenment much faster than one who has fallen into this type of meditation.

This extreme is a kind of nirvana, but it is not the final result, not full enlightenment. We call it causality nirvana, relative nirvana. There are still many things we have to purify, very subtle defilements. But in this state, because it almost looks like we don't have any defilements, if we don't also have this practice of method, of great compassion, we're in trouble. Great compassion is something that reminds us not to simply look out for our own wellbeing or to only look for our own peace. It actually brings about our getting reborn back into samsara in order to help all other beings, and this leads more swiftly to our own enlightenment. Therefore, great compassion is a kind of antidote, a practice which can protect us from falling into the extreme of nirvana.

We are protected from falling into the extreme of samsara mainly by the antidote of wisdom, the knowledge of the absolute truth. The real root of samsara can only be cut by this wisdom, and not by any other practices. Other practices help to purify many negative emotions, which then help bring us into knowledge of the absolute truth, but these practices themselves can not cut the root of samsara. The root of samsara can only be cut by knowledge of the absolute truth, also known as the view. Therefore, view is most important on the path, and this view or wisdom must always be combined with method, or great compassion and bodhicitta. Always!

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Therefore, we call the path of liberation a unification of method and wisdom.

RELATED EXCERPTS ON COMPASSION AND BODHICITTA

From "Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead" by Francesca Fremantle:

"Emptiness and compassion are completely intertwined. The relationship between them has been compared to that of a flame and its light or a tree and its leaves. Activity in the world is not truly enlightened unless it springs from the awareness that, in the absolute sense, nothing is being done or needs to be done. Yet at the same time, the awakened heart feels as its own the suffering of all who are not yet awakened. The bodhisattvas embody this activity for the welfare of all beings. Through wisdom the bodhisattva knows that samsara is illusion, and through compassion helps those who are under its spell. Both aspects go together all the way along the path. We cannot wait until we attain wisdom to manifest compassion.

Simply being as compassionate and skillful as we can at every stage is what deepens our realization of emptiness. They grow together, they mutually inspire each other, they are the two indispensable elements of the awakened state."

From "Buddhism Without Beliefs" by Stephen Batchelor:

"Insight into emptiness and compassion for the world are two sides of the same coin. To experience ourselves and the world as interactive processes rather than aggregates of discrete things undermines both habitual ways of perceiving the world as well as habitual feelings about it. Meditative discipline is vital to dharma practice precisely because it leads us beyond the realm of ideas to that of felt-experience. Understanding the philosophy of emptiness is not enough. The ideas need to be translated through meditation into the wordless language of feeling in order to loosen those emotional knots that keep us locked in a spasm of selfpreoccupation. "As we are released into the opening left by the absence of selfcentered craving, we experience the vulnerability of exposure to the anguish and suffering of the world. The track on which we find ourselves in moments of centered experience includes both clarity of mind and warmth of heart. Just as a lamp simultaneously generates light and heat, so the central path is illuminated by wisdom and nurtured by compassion.

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"The selfless vulnerability of compassion requires the vigilant protection of mindful awareness. It is not enough to want to feel this way toward others. We need to be alert at all times to the invasion of thoughts and emotions that threaten to break in and steal this open and caring resolve. A compassionate heart still feels anger, greed, jealousy, and other such emotions. But it accepts them for what they are with equanimity, and cultivates the strength of mind to let them arise and pass without identifying and without acting upon them."

From "Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and The Pursuit of Real Happiness" by Robert Thurman:

"We already feel our own pain and are powerless to do much about it. How much worse it is to feel the pains of others and be helpless to do anything for them. But when one makes the commitment to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all, a compassionate energy is released and the artistry for living transforms immediate relationships from struggle into living play. As our empathy and love flow out to embrace all living beings on earth, the galaxies, and beyond, we come up against not only black holes of despair but also vast suns of confidence and determination. By becoming a being

of radiant blissfulness, a bodhisattva is a living instrument that can effectively bring about the aim of all true lives - the happiness of infinite beloved others. This goodwill moves to tame the whole society, the whole world, even the universe so that it becomes a place in which the maximum number of people can attain the highest level of happiness. Since the universe is infinite, containing infinite beings in infinite universes within it, that will become a kind of messianic madness that explodes in the form of a vow to create a universe that itself works to liberate souls - a buddhaland or buddhaveise."

From "Cultivating Compassion" by Jeffrey Hopkins:

"Compassion is called the seed because it is the beginning of the path for bodhisattvas - those dedicated to becoming fully enlightened to be of benefit to other beings. Bodhisattvas are distinguished from other Buddhist practitioners in that they have great compassion, in that they themselves will free all sentient beings from suffering and the causes of suffering. They also have great love, in that they themselves will join all sentient beings with happiness and the causes of happiness.

"The seed is what begins the harvest. Without the seed, one cannot have the fruit. The source of Buddhahood is compassion.

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Though wisdom is required for the attainment of Buddhahood, unshakable compassion is the differentiating factor. Other types of practitioners must also understand the final nature of reality in order to attain their respective, but lower, types of enlightenment. Thus, compassion alone is the seed of Buddhahood.

"Compassion is also like the water that rains down and grows the potential harvest, once the seed has been planted. Compassion moistens the mental continuum; through the continued practice of compassion, the bodhisattva's progress advances. In the state of Buddhahood, it has ripened; it is like a matured fruit for enjoyment by others in that only a fully mature compassion causes enlightened beings to appear to others to help them in whatever form is suitable to their needs."

From "An Open Heart: Practicing Compassion In Everyday Life" by The Dalai Lama:

"True compassion has the intensity and spontaneity of a loving mother caring for her suffering baby. Throughout the day, such a mother's concern for her child affects all her thoughts and actions. This is the attitude we are working to cultivate toward each and every being. When we experience this, we have generated 'great compassion.'

"Once one has become profoundly moved by great compassion and lovingkindness, and had one's heart stirred by altruistic thoughts, one must pledge to devote oneself to freeing all beings from the suffering they endure within cyclic existence, the vicious circle of birth, death, and rebirth we are all prisoners of. Our suffering is not limited to our present situation. According to the Buddhist view, our present situation as humans is relatively comfortable. However, we stand to experience much difficulty in the future if we misuse this present opportunity. Compassion enables us to refrain from thinking in a self-centered way. We experience great joy and never fall to the extreme of simply seeking our own personal happiness and salvation. We continually strive to develop and perfect our virtue and wisdom. With such compassion, we shall eventually possess all the necessary conditions for attaining enlightenment. We must therefore cultivate compassion from the very start of our spiritual practice."

Editor's note: A list of the resources used above can be found at the end of the newsletter.

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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE ANNUAL SPRING RETREAT, APRIL 21-25, 2004,
WITH GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE AT SERENITY RIDGE:

"Sacred Syllables: The Healing Power of Sound in the Tibetan Bon Buddhist Tradition."

Since ancient times meditative practices from a variety of spiritual traditions have used sound and its vibration as an essential tool for healing. Through the singing and chanting of sacred syllables and mantras - spiritual practitioners, healers and lay persons may access purification and restore harmony to a range of physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions. Guided by the mind and carried by the breath through subtle channels, the power of sound opens the potential to heal illness and dissolve energetic disturbances.

The Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition is one of the oldest and still unbroken lineages of wisdom to make use of sound for the well-being of its practitioners. The knowledge of how to take up the singing and chanting of Tibetan syllables to vibrate the healing potential in human beings is contained in a number of Bon texts, including the revered Mother Tantra.

During this retreat Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will explain the relationship between the sounds of particular Tibetan syllables and their healing qualities. With the capacity to translate ancient texts into modern western idiom, Tenzin Rinpoche will present these teachings on sacred sounds and instruct the meditations that empower their healing capabilities.

Register for this retreat by March 17 for the early-bird cost of \$350 or by April 7 for the cost of \$400 or after April 7, for the cost of \$400. Call Ligmincha at: (434) 977-6161 or e-mail: ligmincha@aol.com.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WHILE ATTENDING THE CONGRESS ON TIBETAN MEDICINE

As a reporter for the Voice of Clear Light, I was thrilled to be given permission to cover one of the lectures that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was to give during a four-day extravaganza on Tibetan medicine in Washington, D.C., last November.

Arriving at night, in the pouring rain, through snarled D.C. traffic, I made my way past the lit up dome of the Washington Capitol to the Second Annual International Congress on Tibetan Medicine to hear Tenzin Rinpoche's keynote address on "Healing With Form, Energy and Light." The hours of crawling through clogged traffic with my

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mind plagued by old issues and doubts set the stage for what was to be a transformative experience listening to my teacher.

The 4-day conference on Tibetan medicine entitled "From Tradition to Evidence: Research and Practical Applications" covered a wide range of topics. Bon and Tibetan Buddhist masters, scholars, and monks, as well as doctors, researchers and practitioners gathered to present and discuss their methodologies regarding mental health, mindbody medicine and neuroscience research, tonglen practice, diet and nutrition, as well as Tibetan treatments for arterial disease, high cholesterol, and arthritis. In attendance at this international gathering were Tibetan scholars and practitioners such as Robert Thurman and Alan Wallace, and medical doctors such as Dr. Choeying Phuntsok, a senior Tibetan physician practicing in the West, who has taught and helped many of us within the sangha. Tibetan Buddhist masters, Gehlek Rinpoche, and Tulku Thondup presented teachings. The highlight, though, was the warm welcome shown by this respected group toward the inclusion of the Bon perspective on health and medicine presented by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, the Abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery, through various panels, discussions and presentations.

I arrived minutes before Tenzin Rinpoche was to give his keynote address to an audience of a couple hundred people in one of the large ballrooms there. After Mary Lanier of the Bon Foundation introduced Rinpoche, he devoted the next 2 hours to teaching about healing through the five elements as well as guiding us in a meditation practice. Clear, direct, funny, and personal in a deeply moving way, Rinpoche literally captured the attention and enthusiasm of a very diverse audience.

Rinpoche told the audience how he grew up with a strong connection to

nature and to the elements during his training as a monk at Menri monastery in the mountains of Northern India. He said that, just as Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche had advised he do several years ago, he has focused on the teachings and practices of the elements more and more as he's been leading retreats throughout the world. His latest book, "Healing with Form, Energy and Light: The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen" published in 2002 in English, Russian and Polish will soon will be published in French, German, Japanese and Korean.

After my ordeal of getting to the talk, I found myself basking in Rinpoche's great words. He explained that on all levels, physical, mental and spiritual, one's health and well-being are greatly affected by the balance of the elements within oneself. When the elements are unbalanced or lacking, we experience blocks, problems, pains, and diseases. By connected to the elements, invoking their essence through practices, we can correct the imbalances within ourselves on the form or physical level, the energetic or pranic/emotional level, and on the level of light or the

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most subtle level of the mind.

As Rinpoche writes in his book, "Healing With Form, Energy and Light":

"Study of and practice with the elements is meant to positively affect our well-being by giving us the tools to bring the elements into the balance that underlies health and wholeness in any dimension of experience. It does not take great intuition to know when we are in or out of balance. We all know these experiences. They fall along a continuum from the most disturbed imbalance - psychosis or serious illness - to perfect balance, which occurs only when we can abide in the nature of mind, the buddha-nature. in our daily lives we are somewhere in between, moving from being more in balance to being more out of balance, and back again.

"The idea of balancing elemental energies can be usefully applied to any human function, quality, or activity; health, relationship, spiritual practice, psychological make-up, emotional state, physical environment, and so on. Using imbalance of the elements as a primary metaphor, we can understand illness and unhappiness as well as obstructions on all levels of spiritual practice. Balancing the elements then becomes a metaphor for healing, for the development of positive qualities and capacities, and for the elimination of negative qualities."

Within the course of his presentation that evening, Rinpoche guided us in a healing meditation for balancing our element of space.

With his guidance, we invited the openness of the space element into our bodies (especially into any areas in pain), into our hearts, and

into our minds. There was a palpable shift in the audience and almost immediately, I experienced great openness as the knots of tension that had developed on my way there, melted away. It was truly healing and uplifting. Just what the doctor ordered! Rinpoche concluded the meditation practice on space, by emphasizing that this sense of openness is most associated with our unchanging essence, and thus our subtlest sense of self. But we habitually associate more with the grosser levels of self which are greatly influenced by conditions, and therefore fluctuate dramatically. I left for home that evening feeling as though Rinpoche's presentation was made for me. Now, free of congestion, the traffic mirrored my own energy flowing effortlessly. I was no longer clogged on the inside. Blissfully balanced the whole trip home, I was certain that my healing was just one of many within the audience that night. Who could know all the great benefits that would manifest over the next few days as the conference continued to heal, inspire and connect the many people in attendance to the effective practices of these ancient Tibetan traditions?

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- Aline Fisher

EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like to hear about your experiences with healing and the elements. Share a poem or article about your experience with all of us through our newsletter. Send your contribution to me at: jfishbon@aol.com.

You can order Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book "Healing with Form, Energy and Light, The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen" online from the Ligmincha Bookstore at: www.ligminchastore.org or call toll-free 866-522-5269.

EARLY-BIRD DATE FOR THE CALM-ABIDING (ZHINE) RETREAT IS JANUARY 14.

Register for this 4-day retreat on: "Calm Abiding: The Foundation for Dzogchen Practice" to be held at Serenity Ridge, February 26-29, 2004 with Gabriel Rocco, senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. More information is available on our website: www.ligmincha.org or in the latest brochures.

If you register by the early-bird date of January 14, the cost is \$200; or by Feb. 4 for \$250; or after Feb. 4 for \$275.

Call Ligmincha to register: (434) 977-6161 or e-mail: ligmincha@aol.com.

A PEEK INSIDE LIGMINCHA'S NEW CALENDAR FOR 2004!

Ligmincha's beautiful new 2004 calendar contains portions of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's journal written during the trip that he and his master, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, made to Tibet in

1986. Tenzin Rinpoche had just graduated from Menri monastery in India, earning his Geshe degree, the monastic equivalent of a doctorate, and Yongdzin Rinpoche, who had not been back to Tibet since his escape during the Chinese invasion in 1960, was now permitted to visit. After an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, they set out on their seven-month journey to Tibet. Rinpoche documented their trip with marvelous photographs as well as keeping a journal along the way to record their amazing experiences on this pilgrimage.

Ligmincha Institute's 2004 calendar gives us a glimpse of Tibet

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through the eyes of our teachers on that trip, a most precious gift. Although it is not possible to include photographs in this newsletter format, I'd like to give you a peek at one of the excerpts of Rinpoche's diary that fill each month. You'll just have

to imagine the accompanying photographs until you see them. This excerpt is from the month of July.

"Yongdzin Rinpoche, Khenpo Nyima Wangyal, and I traveled nearly three days on foot to reach Menri Monastery. It was one of the most exhausting times of my entire life. The one donkey we had was used for carrying our bags. The first day we walked across a high plateau and then made a dangerous crossing of the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River in a skin boat. The second day we crossed a wide, flat desert. All afternoon we walked in the hot sun, and in the evening we stopped in a small village at the base of the mountain that leads to Menri Monastery. Everyone in the village was very happy to see Yongdzin Rinpoche again. We spent the night with a family who were patrons of Menri Monastery. It was like a dream. I was so completely exhausted, I simply lay down in the hay stored for the animals. All night long I could hear people from every part of the village come to tell Yongdzin Rinpoche what had happened during the 25 years since he had escaped. They spoke of the invasion of the Chinese, of the people who had been tortured, and of the many who had died. They talked of those who had supported the invasion and those who had resisted. They told of the destruction of almost all the valuable scriptures and statues, and of how a few had been saved. Some of the instruments - the conch shells and trumpets had been preserved during the Cultural Revolution because they were used to call people for lunch or work. Otherwise, anything connected with religion was destroyed. There were many sad stories. People cried and Yongdzin Rinpoche listened. Yongdzin Rinpoche was not exhausted at all, he was full of energy and listened to all of their stories, all night long."

This is a full-color 11x11 calendar with the months, days and dates

in English and Tibetan, Bon and Buddhist auspicious dates and major U.S. holidays. It is available for \$15.95, plus shipping from the Ligmincha bookstore. You can order it online at www.ligminchastore.org, by phone (434) 220-0060, toll-free (866) 522-5269, or fax (434) 977-7020. For more information email us at orders@ligminchastore.org. To order online, first click on 'search by category or description' and then where it says 'select a category', choose 'calendars' in the drop down box.

ALSO COMING IN JANUARY AT THE LIGMINCHA STORE!

Ritual items such as water bowls, butterlamps, mandala sets and more will soon be added to our website! See the website:

ligminchastore.org.

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RESOURCES

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

Serenity Ridge or our regional centers, please contact us:

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