

THE VOICE OF CLEAR LIGHT

News and Inspiration from Ligmincha Institute

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May 5, 2004

For easy reading, we recommend that you print out "The Voice of Clear Light."

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SUMMER AND FALL RETREATS

Greetings Everyone,

As we expected, and are pleased to announce, the registrations for both the Ligmincha Summer and Fall Retreats are very high in numbers.

The summer retreat with Tenzin Rinpoche presenting the 21 Nails is ahead of the usual pace for registrations by the beginning of May, and the number of registrations for the very special fall retreat with Yongdzin Rinpoche, Tenzin Rinpoche, Khenpo Tenpai Yungdrung Rinpoche and Geshe Lugrig Gyaltsen have reached capacity for our current ability to host the retreat. As of this date, the fall retreat is closed to new registrations. But as we all know, due to the truth of impermanence, things change! So please read on.

Ligmincha Institute is grateful for the early and continuing registrations from all sangha members, dharma students and friends.

We also want to make everyone aware that registration for the summer retreat is increasing in numbers quickly, and for the first time we have had to "close" registration for a retreat far in advance of the dates for these retreats.

Tenzin Rinpoche is very aware of these facts and has asked me to send this announcement to encourage those of you who believed you had "more time" to make your plans for summer and fall. We truly do not wish to disappoint any of you who want to receive teachings on the 21 Nails and be with Tenzin Rinpoche this summer, nor miss the final opportunity, this fall, to be with Yongdzin Rinpoche at Serenity Ridge.

As concerns the summer, you may still register, and we encourage you do so promptly in order to save a space.

The fall is an entirely different and new situation for us. For those of you who wanted to attend this retreat we are requesting that you contact our Ligmincha office and place your name on the waiting list as soon as possible, and not later than two weeks from today. The number is (434)977-6161 or e-mail: ligmincha@aol.com.

This is quite important!

In two weeks we will determine if the number of people on the waiting list warrants our exploring ways to increase the total capacity of how many we can host for the retreat. There are a few options that Tenzin Rinpoche is considering as to how we might augment our retreat capacity, but we need to know how many are still wanting to come. Please make it possible for us to make a decision by adding your name to the waiting list.

Thank you,

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Gabriel Rocco

"ON THE NATURE OF MIND" - AN EXCERPT FROM "HEALING WITH FORM, ENERGY AND LIGHT" BY TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE:

"Realizing the nature of mind, we find that what we are in [is] the inseparable state of awareness and emptiness. When we realize that, we realize the essence of space. If we abide in the nature of mind, merged with space rather than identified with what arises in space, there is an effect in life. There is nothing to defend, no self that needs protecting, because our own nature is spacious and can accommodate everything. Emptiness needs no defense. Space cannot be damaged. No one can do anything to it. An opinion or image can be attacked and hurt but the space in which the opinion or image exists is indestructible. It does not age, does not develop or deteriorate, isn't born, and doesn't die. Through this realization, confidence and fearlessness arise. Though experience arises without ceasing, we remain connected to the unchanging space in which it arises. We need not try to own it or claim it. It is here already, beyond hope and fear. When the nature of mind is realized, the spontaneous perfection of all phenomena is understood and primordial purity is realized.

"The practitioner of Dzogchen first tries to understand this space of the nature of mind. Then he or she must recognize it through meditation and the pointing out instructions of the teacher, then develop the connection to it. Finally, the practitioner integrates with space, which is what 'abiding in the nature of mind' means. It's not that the practitioner becomes something different. We have to use the language of development to talk about the path, about how to get somewhere we want to go. But really there is no place to go, there is nothing to develop. It's a question of waking, of recognizing what already is.

"When the space of the nature of mind is realized there is still a flow. This is the luminosity; there is movement, sensation, liveliness. Experience is richer than it was, not poorer. Qualities arise endlessly. Compassion or sadness, anger or love may arise, but the practitioner doesn't lose the connection to the space from which they arise."

From "Healing With Form, Energy and Light" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Edited by Mark Dahlby. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2002. Available at Ligmincha's Bookstore.

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EDITED EXCERPTS FROM ORAL TEACHINGS GIVEN BY TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE,
DECEMBER, 2002:

The nature of mind is not like a place where you go as a subject and arrive there as if it were an object. There is no place to go.

There is no such place you can visit. There is no such form that you will experience.

What does that mean 'no form'? If you are expecting to see form you are not going to see anything - guaranteed. We are so conditioned to seeing some 'thing,' to having something there. It is very, very difficult for us to get rid of that mind, to not expect.

An experience of the nature of mind is just an experience. It is not the nature of mind. If I see a cup, I can say, "This is a cup" because I see it. But with the nature of mind we know we cannot see it as we see a cup. There is nothing to see there. So you can not say of anything, "This is the nature of mind." You can find yourself there when causes and conditions come together, when you overcome your subtlest perceiver. There, nobody is looking for the nature of mind; nobody is wanting to look; nobody is interested to see nature of mind.

If you are able to create the right body, the right energy and the right mind together, then there is no way not to experience the

nature of mind. As we always say, "There is no power or force that can stop the result when all the causes and conditions come together."

"QUALITIES OF THE NATURE OF MIND" - EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF TWO BUDDHIST MASTERS.

Here are two precious jewels among many more to come:

From "The Heart Treasure Of The Enlightened Ones" by Patrul Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche:

"It is no good looking anywhere outside you for the ultimate nature of mind - it is within. When we speak of the 'mind,' it is important

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to know whether we are talking about the ordinary mind, referring to the innumerable chains of thoughts that create and maintain our state of delusion, or as here, about the nature of mind at the source of all those thoughts - the clear, void state of awareness completely free of delusion.

"To illustrate this distinction, Lord Buddha taught that there are two ways to meditate - like a dog and like a lion. If you throw a stick at a dog, he will chase after the stick; but if you throw a stick at a lion, the lion will chase after you. You can throw as many sticks as you like at a dog, but at a lion only one. When you are completely barraged with thoughts, chasing after each one in turn with its antidote is an endless task. That is like the dog. It is better, like the lion, to look for the source of those thoughts, void awareness, on whose surface thoughts move like ripples on the surface of a lake, but whose depth is the unchanging state of utter simplicity."

"The Heart Treasure Of The Enlightened Ones" by Patrul Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002. You can order this book online at: www.shambhala.com.

From "Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State" by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche:

"The mind is the most subtle and hidden aspect of our relative condition, but it is not difficult to notice its existence. All one has to do is to observe one's thoughts and how we let ourselves get caught up in their flow. If one asks 'What is the mind?', the reply might be that it is the mind that asks that question. The mind is the uninterrupted flow of thoughts which arise and then disappear. It has the capacity to judge, to reason, to imagine and so on, within the limits of space and time. But beyond the mind, beyond our thoughts, there is something we call the 'nature of the mind', the mind's true condition, which is beyond all limits. If it is beyond the mind, though, how can we approach an understanding of it?

"Let's take the example of the mirror. When we look into a mirror we

see in it the reflected images of any objects that are in front of it; we don't see the nature of the mirror. But what do we mean by this 'nature of the mirror'? We mean its capacity to reflect, definable as its clarity, its purity, and its limpidity, which are indispensable conditions for the manifestation of reflections. This 'nature of the mirror' is not something visible, and the only way we can conceive of it is through the images reflected in the mirror. In the same way, we only know and have concrete experience of that which is relative to our condition of body, voice, and mind. But this itself is the way to understand their true nature."

"Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State" by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

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Translated from the Italian by John Shane. Edited by Adriano Clemente. New York: Arkana, 1989. Available at Ligmincha's Bookstore.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES TO TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE!

Although a few days late, this issue now arrives on a very special date - May 5 ^ the honorary birthday of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche!

May this be a wonderful day of celebration and of prayer for our teacher's happiness and long life!

Here is the Long Life Prayer for Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche by Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, in Tibetan and then English:

Chog sum gyal wa se che chin lab dang

Don dam lu wa me pe den tob dang

Nel jor dag gyi ting dzin nu pe thu

Ten zin kye bu'i ku tse thar chin shog

Through the blessings of the Three Jewels,
the Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas,

The strength of the ultimate unfailing truth,

And the power of the meditation of us practitioners,

Holder of the Teachings, may your lifespan be
perfectly fulfilled.

NEW OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY TIBETAN ASTROLOGY AND CALLIGRAPHY

Retreat with Geshe Nyima Kunchap, at Serenity Ridge, August 11-15, 2004.

For the very first time, an in-depth introduction to the centuries old system of Tibetan Astrology will be the focus of a retreat at Serenity Ridge. It will be the first in a series of dharma arts and sciences retreats organized by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to support students in broadening their understanding of the Bon tradition and enriching the quality of their lives.

Geshe Nyima Kunchap, an experienced teacher traditionally schooled in Tibetan astrology, will introduce us to the science of divination and

the study of time cycles, the compilation of the calendar, medical diagnosis, study of time cycles, and the creation of horoscopes based on individual birth charts and the cycle of the elements within each person. Geshe Nyima will discuss specific practices that traditionally are prescribed to strengthen an individual whose life

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force has weakened or become unbalanced. This holistic system of analysis and prescription is unique to Tibetan astrology.

Geshe Nyima will also teach and guide us in the art of calligraphy.

The beauty and grace of this art bring the practitioner into the present moment and touch one deeply. As Tenzin Rinpoche says, "In practicing calligraphy one develops a deep relationship with the seed syllables. Gazing at the syllables, or painting them, is a powerful form of meditation through which one develops many subtle, positive qualities."

This retreat will be of interest to students of meditation, dharma arts, astrology, and health related sciences, as well as to those who simply wish to be on retreat for personal reasons. Please join us in August!

Geshe Nyima Kunchap Lama was born in 1964 at the border of Tibet and Nepal in the Dolpo region. At the age of 8, Geshe Nyima began studying the art of thangka painting with his grandfather and at the age of 14 he became an ordained monk at Menri Monastery. In 1994 he received his geshe (doctorate) degree and then became a lecturer in the Bon department of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varnasi. Since 2000, Geshe Nyima has visited Moscow for one month each year and given teachings on elementary astrology, astronomy, horoscopy, and ritual offering to accomplish good fortune.

Required Reading: Retreatants will need to obtain the book "Tibetan Astrology" by Philippe Cornu. The book can be purchased prior to or at the retreat for \$16.95 from the Ligmincha Institute Bookstore. Call toll-free: (866)522-5269 or visit: www.ligminchastore.org.

Retreat Cost(includes meals and materials for calligraphy): \$400 if received by June 23, or \$450 if received by July 21, or \$500 if received after July 21. Dormitory Housing is available.

Contact Ligmincha Institute: (434)977-6161 or e-mail: ligmincha@aol.com

COME TO THE SERENITY RIDGE SUMMER WORK RETREAT:
JUNE 27 - JULY 3, 2004.

Come enjoy the beauty of rural Virginia as we prepare Serenity Ridge for our annual summer retreat. This is a wonderful time to share with sangha and to be of joyful service. Our work retreat will include vigorous work periods, daily meditation practice, and ample

time for a swim in the pool or a walk along the Rockfish River.

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The work retreat is free of charge and participants are provided with free tenting and meals. For those who participate in the entire work retreat there will be a 50% discount on one week of the summer retreat.

Editor's Note: Here are a few precious reminders from the sangha about some of the rewards of doing a work retreat.

Jim Clark shared his heartfelt experience that it is through selfless giving that karma is purified. He stressed that it is only when we get down to the tasks at hand, to giving without expecting reward, to not choosing the glamour jobs that our egos want but rather doing what needs to be done (including cleaning toilets) that we purify karmic traces.

For me, the work retreat is a beautiful practice of devotion. It's about letting go, of no longer being so wrapped up in my own story and needs but rather feeling free and open to share and give. It is a great time for practice in so many ways. When the giving and living and working comes from that natural place of devotion and gratefulness, there is nothing better! - Aline Fisher

And from senior student Jeff Fisher:

The continued health and well-being of Ligmincha, this ship of the dharma, which Rinpoche captains, can not be solely his responsibility. Impossible. Nor does it fall on the shoulders of our appointed officers. It's too big a task for just this handful of folks. The huge responsibility for the growth, maintenance and preservation of this precious ship, he has said, falls primarily on us, the community of sincere practitioners. It needs our conscious participation, in whatever capacities we can imagine, to sail long into the future. It's easy to miss the fact that it has come this far simply through countless practitioners' individual offerings of their time, their financial gifts, and their own precious energy and attention.

Work retreats offer us a great opportunity to invest ourselves again. And it affords us a beautiful space to practice, to purify, and to find the view and meditation that we have been nurturing spontaneously manifest in our best moments as our own flexible behavior. All for the benefit of a vision much larger than us! Joyful effort in the best sense! When you feel inspired come join the fun!

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There are so many ways you can help at Serenity Ridge. Just call or write Ligmincha to see how: (434)977-6161 or e-mail: ligmincha@aol.com.

"THE POWER OF PRACTICE - A TRUE STORY SURROUNDING A GREAT BON LAMA'S PASSING" - This article and interview were given to Tenzin Rinpoche by his friend, Sandy Sinha, of Sikkim, India and then edited by Aline Fisher, for VOCL.

In the Buddhist and Bon traditions, a lama may choose to die in a certain posture. The position of the body at death is believed to be very important in affecting the transference of prana or life-force from the body. The posture may affect through which chakra the prana will exit the body and thereby, in which of the six realms rebirth will occur. Masters prefer to die in the lotus posture. This is believed to aid them in transferring their prana through the crown chakra helping them to be reborn in the higher realms.

Here is a true story of a great Bon lama's passing, occurring not that long ago in Gangtok, the small hilly capital of Sikkim in the Northeastern part of India. Yungdrung Tenzing, who was about seventy years old, chose to die sitting in the lotus posture, what is known in Tibetan as "thugdham." He asked that people not touch his body for 3 days until which time he would leave his body. He then went through the outer signs of dying including the cessation of both his breath and the beating of his heart, but remained in that meditative posture for thirty-three hours. It was on August 31, 1973, at the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital in Gangtok, that this great lama passed away.

The news of this special passing spread quickly. People of Sikkim flocked to the hospital with their khatas (silk scarves) paying respect to the departed lama, draping them on his body at the end of the three day period. It is believed that lamas who pass away at their will (in thugdam) have miraculous powers, and a blessing from such a lama would be very beneficial.

The great Bon lama had been treated by Dr. Pemba Tonyot, a Sikkimese doctor. The following is an interview of Dr. Tonyot done by Sandy Sinha. The doctor, now 68 years old and retired, was a bit weak after a recent operation but showed interest in recalling and telling the story of the famous Bon lama's passing.

Sandy: Dr. Pemba, can you tell us what exactly happened that day?

Dr. Pemba: As far as my memory goes, this lama, who was very old,
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was brought in for treatment at the hospital. But then quite suddenly, the lama decided to give up his life sitting in the lotus posture. To be frank, I don't know much about these things. But I

do know that incarnated lamas can sit in the meditative position for hours or days called, thugdam in Tibetan, and have the power to give up their lives at will.

Sandy: From a medical point of view how did you regard this incident? Were you surprised? Did you object?

Dr. Pemba: As a Buddhist, I was not at all surprised by the lama's decision. Living here in Sikkim, I took it all very normally. In terms of medical science, I don't think there is an answer on this yet. It is difficult to say what happens. The body of a dying person should follow the usual progression of rigor mortis and decay. But I saw this lama who sat up in the lotus posture and had asked that no one touch his body. He had decided to die in that posture. While the hospital authorities don't allow such things in the hospital, there were so many people gathering to see the lama and offering khatas to demonstrate their faith and receive blessings, that we agreed and allowed it.

Sandy: Do you know of any other incidents like this?

Dr. Pemba: Yes, because I was the only doctor who knew Tibetan, the treatment of such lamas or Rinpoches was usually assigned to me. I knew one Tantric lama who practiced in retreat in caves in the hills of Sikkim for months or years. Once, he was admitted to my hospital and was under my treatment. He was in the general ward and he too went into thugdam position and gave up his life in that position. He was a Nyingma lama.

Once, I was assigned the treatment of the sixteenth Karmapa of Rumtek in Sikkim. He was under my treatment for three months and I was witness to his many miraculous powers, which could not be explained from the medical point of view.

And once, Dudjom Rinpoche, a great lama of the Nyingma sect, also regarded as a reincarnation of Guru Padmasambhava, was brought to the hospital. We found that he had appendicitis and that an operation was needed to remove his appendix. But he refused the operation. A devotee of Rinpoche's asked me to convince him that the operation was necessary to save him from the pain. I explained everything about appendicitis to Rinpoche but he did not agree to the operation. Instead he asked me to call another Rinpoche, Yangthang Rinpoche. Yangthang is a village in West Sikkim. Dudjom Rinpoche's devotees rushed to find Yangthang Rinpoche and upon his arrival Yangthang Rinpoche started doing some type of puja. He chanted mantras moving his hand as if throwing something on Dudjom Rinpoche's body. This process was repeated for three days and Dudjom Rinpoche was healed.

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From the medical point of view this is very hard to explain. Sikkim is full of such miracles.

In this next interview, Sandy Sinha spoke with Lama Yungdrung, a Bon lama and founder of the only Bon monastery in Sikkim. He, too, was witness to the passing of the great Bon lama, Yungdrung Tenzing, in 1973.

Sandy: Lama Yungdrung, what do you remember of that day?

Lama Yungdrung: I was in my puja room that day when someone came and informed me that a Bon lama had given up his life in the thugdham position at the hospital. I immediately went there and offered a khata over his body. He was sitting in the lotus position with lots of khatas over his body. He was almost submerged in a sea of khatas. There were lots of people gathered in the hospital to pay their respect and receive blessings from the departed lama. The king of Sikkim had also sent his secretary, Mr. Karma Topden, with some money and a khata to pay respects.

After some rituals by two Kagyu lamas, the lama was taken to the crematorium and was cremated. It was a bright sunny day and his body was burning with full flame. In the middle of the flame we noticed a green flame which was very auspicious.

Sandy: Can you explain how the lama would have acquired such control over his life force?

Lama Yungdrung: Just as you need preparation for your life, you also need preparation for your death. In the Bon tradition, we go through nine ways of lifetime disciplines, which involves the recitation of mantras, prostrations, meditations and much more, to acquire such control. This is not very easy. Merely talking about it will not do. Practice is very important. In the case of this great lama, his years of practice were evident at his passing. Only those who through years of practice have acquired such spiritual strength can actually pass in the thugdham position. So these incidents are not ordinary occurrences.

Editor's Note: There is a picture near the end of Tenzin Rinpoche's book "Healing With Form, Energy and Light" of the great Bon lama, Yungdrung Tenzing, taken at the time of his passing.

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NEW ITEMS AVAILABLE AT LIGMINCHA'S BOOKSTORE

These new items can be found by going to Ligminchastore.org and clicking on "Search by Category" and then clicking on "New Items." You can also call the store toll-free:(866)522-5269.

TRANSCRIPTS OF TEACHINGS BY TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

"Powa Teachings from the Bon Mother Tantra" Ligmincha Institute's Annual Fall Retreat, Serenity Ridge, Shipman, Virginia, October 23-27, 2002. Available only to those who have received transmission.

Price: \$16.00.

BOOKS

"Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State," by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Price: \$12.95.

"My Observations on Tibet" (in Tibetan), by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Price: \$15.00.

"The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols," by Robert Beer. Price: \$18.95.

COMPACT DISC

"Melodic Wisdom: Songs of the Garuda," by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche and the monks of Tritten Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal. Price: \$20.00.

JEWELRY

"Mandala of Sherab Chamma" Dimensions: 1 Π" square. Price: \$20.00.

ALSO,

Please note that we have added a new page to our website listing "Books in Foreign Languages by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche." Our online store does not carry these books at this time, although there is contact information listed on the website for those books which can be purchased directly from the publisher in the countries in which they are published.

A LETTER OF THANKS FROM THE EDITOR

This issue is dedicated to my husband, Jeff Fisher and to all those who support and connect us as we make our way on the path.

It's always great to come home after traveling - to friends and family, to our teachers and to our supportive community. Coming home a few days ago after being away on a wonderful trip with my mom, I

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was nourished once again into the connection of truly coming home. It was a long day of travel, of planes and buses and rental cars, of beautiful mountains and crowded airports, of speed and slow lines, of little food and lots of moving, of dry deserts and the humid, Virginia air of home. I drove the last hour alone through the moist night air, exhausted and exhilarated with few thoughts left. Home at last, I touched that deep space and presence that certain supports foster, and I felt enveloped and surrounded, at once lost and found. For me, Jeff is like a live wire to the truth, no longer only about concepts or effort, but actual behavior over and over and over. I was again plugged in and inspired to somehow try to write about this space that is beyond words.

Devoting my energy to this newsletter since coming home has been a gift to me and now I offer it back to the space - to my teacher, Tenzin Rinpoche, to the truth of the Bon teachings, to all Dharma teachers, to the sangha who continuously remind me that "I can," and

to all sentient beings everywhere!

In Bon,

Aline Fisher

P.S. And to set the record straight, I think you all should know that Jeff is the ghost editor of the Voice of Clear Light, always there behind me, leading me. He is there late at night and early in the morning, helping, editing, suggesting, inspiring, reminding, pushing and praising, but never looking for anything in return. To Jeff, for helping to bring us a newsletter filled with light - thanks and surprise!

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contributions to the Voice of Clear Light are welcome. To contact us, simply reply to this message and

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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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