

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 after Jan. 10. Please check the link for VOCL on Ligmincha Institute's home page at www.ligmincha.org. You can also access an archive of the e-mail and PDF versions of last year's issues at: <http://ligmincha.org/study/vocl.html>

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Sangha Sharing

"Side A" by Dean Grantham

"Appreciating Where We Are" – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, 2005

Every time we are together on retreat is a unique time, a special opportunity. It is important to recognize it as such, and to look at how you can make the best of this present moment with this present teaching. For example, there is more time to reflect in new ways and at greater depth. There is more time for practice. By practicing more and reflecting deeply, there is no question that the results will be very different than when you are practicing at home.

In my generation, growing up with parents who were refugees from Tibet, we heard much about their hardships. Our parents went through a lot of difficulties in losing their country. All of our teachers also went through a lot of difficulties during that time. When they first arrived in India, many of our teachers had to work on road construction crews. That's what they did! They not only had to deal with the heat, the hunger, the poverty, and a new language and a new culture, but more, they had to deal with their fear of losing all the vast knowledge of the spiritual lineage and with the need to protect and preserve it. In their experiences in Tibet and their escape to India, they did not find any clear direction or solution. It just came down to a question

of survival.

Personally, having grown up in India with those parents and teachers and then coming to the West, I try to never lose my perspective and to remember all the many diverse situations I've encountered in life.

If you are to gain a larger perspective of life, you either must be forced to go through challenging situations as my parents and teachers did, or you may choose to go through those situations in an effort to help people. Based on your particular circumstances and your willingness, you may feel that you are able to actively go to those difficult places and live through hardships in order to help people.

After a certain amount of time you become exhausted. Then, when you return home, all that you used to complain about seems rather silly.

And when you hear others complain about similar things in their lives you see how much time we really waste doing that. You can see that life really has given you so much, probably even more than you need.

In many cases that's true.

There is a line I repeat that I think one should always remember: "If you do not appreciate what you have now, then you don't deserve more, nor should you look for more."

Remembering that, just begin now to appreciate what exists in your life. Sometime later, after you have confronted the challenges of life and find yourself in a new and different place, you will be able to see today's difficulties from a more open perspective.

"EARLY BIRD" REGISTRATION DATE FOR THE ZHINE RETREAT IS JAN. 12
"ZHINE - THE MEDICINE OF TRANQUILITY," FEB. 23-26, 2006
WITH GABRIEL ROCCO AT SERENITY RIDGE

One of the most compelling reasons to attend the annual zhine retreat is that it affords an opportunity to step out of the stress and demands of daily life and come home to ourselves. Tenzin Rinpoche encourages all of his students to relate to the practice of zhine as medicine, a tonic of tranquility that relieves the deadening effects of destructive habitual patterns, emotional reactivity, and the endless thoughts that captivate attention and lead us astray.

This retreat is for people at all levels of meditation experience.

Everything begins with zhine, and its continued practice accompanies the practitioner all along the path. For beginners zhine strengthens the attention and develops the powers of concentration necessary to calm the mind and experience inner peace. Students engaged in the healing practices of the Bon causal vehicles or those from the Mother Tantra will find that zhine deepens and enhances the results of those practices. Committed students following Rinpoche's dzogchen teachings of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung will find that the intensive practice at the zhine retreat quickly strengthens their ability to stabilize mindfulness and abide in contemplation.

In addition to daily practice of zhine on 'A,' zhine on sound, and

other supports, the instruction will be reinforced by a zhine text provided by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who strongly recommends zhine as a lifelong practice for all his students.

Gabriel Rocco is a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, having studied and practiced with Rinpoche since 1993. He is a member of the Ligmincha Board of Directors. Gabriel received his master's degree in contemplative psychotherapy from Naropa University. He is the mindbody health specialist at the Wellness Community in Philadelphia and a staff instructor for the University of Pennsylvania's Program for Stress Management.

RETREAT COST (includes meals):

\$200 if received by Jan. 12; \$250 if received by Feb. 2; \$275 if received after Feb. 2

COME TO THE SPRING RETREAT AT SERENITY RIDGE: APRIL 19-23, 2006!

"SANG CHOD: CULTIVATING LIFE FORCE, PERSONAL POWER, FORTUNE AND SOUL"
WITH GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

When we can relate to the world of nature as alive with wisdom beings and spirits, we can be healed and blessed by them.

Ki Ki So So Lha Gyel Lo!

There is a sacred relationship between the spirits connected with nature and the elemental world in which we live – the earth we live on, the water we drink, the fire that warms us, the air we breathe, and the space through which we move.

In our modern lives, many of us have lost our sense of this sacred relationship, which in turn can cause a decline in four essential qualities: life force, personal power, prosperity and soul.

The causal vehicles of the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet contain meditation practices, visualizations and rituals for retrieving and cultivating these essential qualities. During this healing and empowering retreat, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, a holder of this living tradition, will explain how such practices relate to nature spirits and deities such as drala and werma, and trace them back to their ancient sources in Bon.

Rinpoche will describe how to recognize when life force, personal power, fortune or soul has declined. Participants will learn how to use smoke, prayer flags, and the ritual of Sang Chod to retrieve and reinforce these qualities in themselves and give power to their own sacred relationship with the natural world for the cultivation of harmony and world peace.

Retreat cost: (includes all meals; on-site housing is available)

\$400 if received by March 16; \$450 if received by April 6; \$500 if received after April 6.

To register please contact Ligmincha Institute at: ligmincha@aol.com or (434)977-6161.

“THE TEN PARAMITAS: THE KEYS TO AWAKENING” – a new series focusing on the practice of each of the 10 paramitas or perfections, the means of transcending the limits of one’s karmic tendencies.

Fully mastering these 10 virtues may take many lifetimes, but even the act of turning one’s awareness toward practicing them can have a transformative effect on one’s attitude and on one’s relations with others.

So, what better way to start off the New Year than with a closer look into the first paramita, that of generosity?

“GENEROSITY”

An edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche (Khen Rinpoche), the abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal, November 2005:

The Ten Perfections or Ten Paramitas

Generosity - jin pa (sbyin pa)

Moral discipline or ethical behavior - tsul trim
(tshul khrims)

Patience - zo pa (bzod pa)

Diligence or vigor - ton dru (btson ‘grus)

Meditation or concentration - sam ten (bsam gtan)

Strength, power, or capacity - tob (stobs)

Compassion - nying je (snying rje)

Aspiration - mon lam (smon lam)

Skillful means/dedication - ngo wa (bsngo ba)

Wisdom - she rab (shes rab)

Through our practice we can develop our generosity, or jin pa, and over time our efforts will bear fruit in our obtaining the perfection of generosity. "Jin pa" refers to conventional generosity, but there is also generosity beyond samsara, which we call the perfection of generosity.

With regard to our practice, we can speak of generosity with possessions, with protections, and with the teachings. The practice of generosity with possessions involves our giving anything we can, such as food or shelter, to those who are in need. Even if one has not much to give, one can still exercise this practice of generosity and open and release one’s self from attachment through giving even small things.

Through the generosity of protection, we try to protect or help those who are in danger or in a difficult situation.

Then, we have the generosity of Bon, of giving teachings. This involves giving advice and showing the unmistakable path that leads one to release from suffering. If we try to help someone to relieve their pain or suffering even for a moment through giving advice, this is the generosity of the teaching.

In the monastery we have four practices of offering. In the morning,

there is the sang; in the late morning, there is the water offering; in the late afternoon, we do a sur or burnt food offering; and at night we do chod practice or body offering. These four practices are also forms of generosity.

“Practicing Generosity” - an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, summer 2005.

The practice of generosity is all about the specific issues you are working on in life, and about giving away whatever it is you are holding onto. It is not a question of the particular thing you are giving away, but of the place from which you are doing the giving. As we gain more openness as a result of our meditation practice, then in time we gain a strong enough and ripe enough motivation to take some action in giving.

Just imagine that someone is accepting your gift not for their own sake, but rather, in order to help you cultivate your generosity. They don't want any particular gift such as money or other items, rather they are only interested in receiving that which you have the hardest time giving. The act of giving in itself is the true practice of generosity.

There are some things that we cannot imagine giving. I cannot imagine giving my life. If there was a hungry tiger there, I cannot imagine giving my life for it. But someone else might. Buddha did. That is an example of giving one's own body in order to meet someone else's need.

Start at your own level, with the things you feel you've been holding onto for so long. As a result of practicing generosity and openness, you will begin to feel, “I can really let this go. Not only one thing, but there are a number of things in my life that I can give.” Whatever the cause, whoever wants it, and whoever it will be helpful for, it does not matter. I'm sure that if there is something that you don't want to give due to greediness and attachment, there will be someone else who wants it. Maybe the person doesn't really need it, but is thinking, “Oh, that would be nice to have.”

But for you, when you are able to give, you yourself are benefiting more than anyone else. You will only be able to practice generosity when you feel a certain amount of openness as a result of meditating and reflecting. On feeling this openness, you start to realize the possibilities for sharing, for giving. It becomes a wonderful opportunity to start thinking about the right time and space and situations to take those actions.

From “A Path with Heart” by Jack Kornfield:

Compassionate generosity is the foundation of true spiritual life because it is the practice of letting go. An act of generosity opens our body, heart, and spirit and brings us closer to freedom. Each act

of generosity is recognition of our interdependence, an expression of our Buddha nature. But for most of us, generosity is a quality that must be developed. We have to respect that it will grow gradually; otherwise our spirituality can become idealistic and imitative, acting out the image of generosity before it has become healthy. Whether it is generosity with our time, our possessions, our money, or our love, the principles are the same. True generosity grows in us as our heart opens, grows along with the integrity and health of our inner life.

From “The Heart of the Buddha” by Chogyam Trungpa:

A traditional way of developing generosity is to offer our food to someone else. Even if we are hungry, we hold our plate of food in our hands and give it away mentally before eating. At that very moment of giving something away, we are actually beginning to practice the paramitas. By giving away something personal and significant in our lives, we are helping to clarify our attachments and to overcome the habitual pattern of spiritual materialism.

From “Kindness, Clarity, and Insight” by His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

There are three types of giving – the giving of resources, of one’s own body, and of roots of virtue. It is the most difficult to give away your own roots of virtue, and it is also the most important. When you have a strong sense of giving and dedicating to others your roots of virtue, you no longer seek for any reward for yourself. Even though mere giving can be done by those seeking their own benefit, a Bodhisattva’s giving is not involved in selfishness at all.

From “The Infinite Life” by Robert Thurman:

Generosity keeps you open through deeds, making you aware of others’ needs. It seals your insight into selflessness by allowing you to let go of all possessions – including your body, your mind, and even your good deeds – in order to find true contentment in helping other beings.

SOURCES:

Kornfield, Jack. “A Path with Heart.” New York: Bantam Books, 1993.

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama. “Kindness, Clarity, and Insight.”

Translated and Edited by Jeffrey Hopkins. Co-edited by Elizabeth Napper. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1984.

Thurman, Robert. “Infinite Life.” New York: Riverhead Books, 2004.

Trungpa, Chogyam. “The Heart of the Buddha.” Edited by Judith L. Lief. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1991.

Editors' Note: We would like to take a moment to offer our heartfelt thanks to those who have generously contributed, shared, inspired, encouraged and helped with the VOCL. Its manifestation comes through many open hearts. Thank you Marcy for inspiring this series by sharing

Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche's teachings on "The Ten Paramitas" with us, and for all the generous giving and sharing that you do within the sangha! To Polly, we thank and trust her wisdom and clarity in editing, proofing and sharing! To Mary Ellen, thank you for keeping us all so well informed about the upcoming retreats and teachings and for your latest creation of our beautiful "dressed up" VOCL online! To Sue, thanks for generously keeping us up on the latest wonderful supports and offerings in Ligmincha's online bookstore. Helen, thanks for your kindness and friendship, and your help in passing the VOCL reigns to us! And to our teacher, Tenzin Rinpoche, who radiates the ten paramitas always! A million thank-yous would not be enough for the inspiration and guidance that you share and give to all so generously!

- Aline and Jeff Fisher

SANGHA SHARING

Side A

Are we only needles
Pulled along in vinyl grooves
Mumbling earthly mantras
Worshipping whatever moves
Circuits tuned to amplify
What comes around that bend
Loving touches, lonely cries
The noise of lifetimes without end
We sing ten thousand verses
Of chasing pleasure, hating pain –
And then the master whispers
His familiar old refrain
By turning down the volume
With our presence and our skill
We'll see the world is spinning
And the needle just stands still.

- Dean Grantham