

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."

Happy Losar! Thursday, Feb. 7 is Losar, the Tibetan Year of the Earth Rat, 2135. Tashi Delek Losar!

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"ON THE NATURE OF THE PATH AND BEING IN THE WORLD" - excerpts from "Tibetan Sound Healing" by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

The heart of the spiritual path is the longing to know and to be your true and authentic self. This has been the motivation of thousands who have gone before you and will come after you.

According to the highest teachings in the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition, the true self that we long for is primordially pure. Each one of us, just as we are, is primordially pure. Of course when you hear that, you may think that it sounds like a great principle or philosophy, but you may not particularly feel that way right now. For your whole life, you have been flooded with images and messages that you are not pure, and it is easy for you to believe that you are not. Nevertheless, according to the teachings, your true nature is pure. That is who you really are.

What is the distinction between an enlightened and an ordinary action? An enlightened action is not predetermined. You walk forth with internal bliss, and the positive quality spontaneously manifests for whoever needs it. That is called enlightened because it does not have any particular design or purpose. It manifests only when a need arises. It is not like the example that I gave previously of the woman driving on the highway, who was planning to love her mother for the weekend. Her action would not be enlightened, because she had a very particular person in mind. She might have yelled when someone cut her off in traffic, even as she was planning not to yell at her mother. Of course, she ended up yelling at both the person driving in front of her and her mother. There is no enlightened quality in that. When there is an enlightened quality, this burning bliss is simply available; it is ready to come out. For an enlightened being, there is no need to manifest a quality. The circumstances are the only reason that it comes out. If there is a need for that quality to come out in order to help another person, it comes out.

So what is enlightened quality? What is the most enlightened way of doing business? How can we be with each other in a more enlightened way? I think it is very simple. It is our experience; it is a sense of openness; we are not excluding but are including. Openness is wisdom, and wisdom must be present for any form of action to be compassionate. To the degree that wisdom and compassion are present, an action is more enlightened. If a relationship has wisdom and compassion, it is a more enlightened relationship.

EDITORS' NOTE: "Tibetan Sound Healing," by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and edited by Marcy Vaughn, is available online at Ligmincha's Bookstore and Tibet Shop. The cost is \$19.95. For order information, please go to www.ligminchastore.org. Or, go directly to: <http://www.ligmincha.org/store/by-type/books/24-tibetan-sound-healing.html>

LIGMINCHA INSTITUTE'S UPCOMING RETREATS AT SERENITY RIDGE

** To register online for the following Serenity Ridge retreats, or to learn about other retreats scheduled worldwide with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, visit www.ligmincha.org, and click on "Retreats." Or, contact Ligmincha Institute at Ligmincha@aol.com or 434-977-6161.

March 26-30, 2008

Focus Your Attention on "A"

with Gabriel Rocco

**Early-bird registration date is Feb. 27

The annual zhine retreat affords an opportunity to step out of the distractions of everyday life and come home to yourself.

The ability to maintain focused attention and abide in clear, open awareness not only enables you to live more fully in the present, it also cultivates spiritual awakening. The practice of zhine (calm abiding) develops the strong, stable attention and stillness necessary to overcome the continual movements of the mind. When you train yourself to abide naturally in openness, the healing powers of a focused mind are revealed. Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche refers to zhine as the "medicine of tranquility." Bon texts further speak of its power to create the real person. Zhine is the foundation for all

dzogchen practice; everything begins with zhine, and its continued practice supports the practitioner all along the path.

This is a retreat for people at all levels of meditation experience. Each year, senior student Gabriel Rocco presents updated practice instructions for zhine as taught during the previous year by Tenzin Rinpoche in his centers worldwide. While the focus of the retreat is on "zhine on A" and "zhine on sound," practitioners are also guided to devote their developing attention to the practices of guru yoga, nine breathings of purification, tsa lung, and the dedication of merit. These essential practices are applied in an unhurried manner that supports a deepening connection to the Bon lineage as well as to one's meditation.

New and beginning students will learn to develop the powers of concentration necessary to calm the mind and experience inner peace. Experienced students will find that zhine deepens and enhances the results of their daily practice and brings glimpses of profound open awareness. Committed students of the tummo practice will find that zhine strengthens concentration for their visualizations; and students of dzogchen will find it establishes the mindfulness necessary to abide in the open clarity of the Great Perfection.

Retreat cost (includes meals; accommodations are available):

\$350 received by Feb. 27; \$400 received after Feb. 27

Annual Spring Healing Retreat

April 16-20, 2008

Reclaim Your Soul and Rejuvenate Your Life Force

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

**Early-bird registration date is March 12

Many spiritual and healing traditions bring each year to a close with purification practices, then

enter springtime with practices to cultivate and benefit from the sense of renewal and elemental vitality that come with the season. In keeping with this custom, at this year's spring healing retreat Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will introduce us to the richness of soul retrieval, an ancient practice of the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet.

The Tibetan people traditionally view the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space as pervading all of life and as the essential components of our entire worldly existence. The soul (la) is said to be composed of these elements at a very subtle level – and it is believed that a traumatic event or other shock can cause an individual to lose connection with the elements and become dispirited.

The shamanic rites of soul retrieval (la gu) and life-force retrieval (tse gu) are methods of calling on the living essence of the elements – the elemental spirits – to balance and heal the individual. At this retreat, Rinpoche will explain how to diagnose the need for soul retrieval as well as how to perform it. Through ritual and meditation practice, one can bring back the positive qualities that are missing or reinforce the qualities that are weakened in oneself or in others. This past year has brought many difficulties to individuals, communities, and nations, as well as to the natural environment. We have experienced what the ancient Tibetans would refer to as a "black year." During the retreat Tenzin Rinpoche will emphasize practices for home clearing, land clearing, and full soul and life-force retrieval to overcome the negative influences that have darkened our individual and collective lives.

Rinpoche suggests that this spring retreat is an opportunity to do far more than collect new information. He invites new students and experienced practitioners, including those who have attended previous soul retrieval teachings, to directly experience and seriously practice these powerful shamanic methods for healing, growth, and spiritual awakening.

Retreat cost (includes meals; accommodations are available):

\$450 received by March 12; \$525 received after March 12

May 1-4, 2008

Vital Breath: Harnessing the Healing Power of Movement and Sound:

Tsa Lung and the 5 Warrior Seed Syllables

with Marcy Vaughn

**Early-bird registration date is April 2

This May offers an opportunity to learn and engage in two ancient practices from the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet. In a four-day retreat at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center in Nelson County, Va., Marcy Vaughn, a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, will introduce and guide the simple yet powerful practices of the five tsa lung exercises and the Five Warrior Syllables.

Each participant will learn to identify negative patterns and obstacles in body, breath, and mind, to clear these obstacles, and to cultivate and manifest positive qualities in everyday life.

The five tsa lung exercises bring together focus of mind, breath, and physical movement to open subtle energy channels and centers in the body. Through the process of identifying negative patterns, without judgment or analysis we clear these patterns through the tsa lung exercises.

As we clear obstacles, we bring clear attention to the space that opens up within us. Meditation is all about becoming familiar with this space, the source of infinite positive qualities. Abiding in this openness is the best medicine for healing our lives, and the simple yet powerful tsa lung movements enable us to benefit from this medicine.

The Five Warrior Syllables Practice relies on the power of sound to help heal physical illness, clear psychological and energetic disturbances, and support the spiritual practitioner to abide with clear and open awareness. Guided by the mind and carried by the subtle breath through the channels and chakras of the body, the power of sound helps to uncover positive qualities such as love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Through practicing with five sacred and powerful sounds known as the Five Warrior Syllables, we transform our lives and discern a clear path that begins with openness and leads to spontaneous, virtuous action in the world.

Marcy Vaughn is a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Marcy teaches mindfulness-based stress reduction for the University of Pennsylvania's Program in Stress Management and is a therapist in private practice.

Retreat cost (includes meals; accommodations are available):

\$275 received by April 2; \$325 received after April 2.

INTERVIEW WITH GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE ON THE ANNUAL SPRING RETREAT

During the Spring Healing Retreat at Serenity Ridge, April 16 to 20, 2008, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will be teaching the soul and life-force retrieval practices from the Mother Tantra of the Bon tradition. In a Dec. 21 interview at his home, Rinpoche offered more details about ul retrieval and its relevance to one's daily life.

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The Voice of Clear Light: Are soul retrieval and life-force retrieval two separate practices? How are these two connected?

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: The text I will be teaching from has two parts: soul retrieval (la gu) and life-force retrieval (tse gu). These two factors are distinct, but they are integrally related. Somehow, the soul appears to serve as a deeper foundation of the life force. If the soul is healed, the life force is strong. If the soul is damaged, the life force declines.

VOCL: In the Bon tradition, what is the meaning of soul?

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: One way to look at your soul is as your spiritual essence: that which is fed by the activity of virtue. Another way we can look at the soul is as a balance of the five natural elements of earth, water, fire, wind and space at a very subtle level. In the Tibetan spiritual traditions, this balance of the characteristics of all five elements equates to one's spiritual essence.

In one individual, all five elements may be in balance. Another individual may naturally have a lot of fire in their personality, more so than other people. Yet, within each element there is always some level of the four other elements; for example, the fire element is comprised of space fire, air fire, earth fire, and so on. So, even someone with a fiery personality can have a healthy balance of the elements.

However, sometimes we can lose this balance because of negative karmic ripening; because of long-term pain, conflict, stress or tension; or because of lack of skill in dealing with situations that arise in our lives. When one faces more than one is able to digest or deal with, when it becomes too much, it begins to damage the individual. It does not necessarily affect your physical health right

away, but it may affect your personality, your mood, or in a deeper sense, the emotions and thoughts that arise from that imbalance of the elements.

Someone with a lot of fire may normally have a sense of joy, of creativity, of enthusiasm, while

still maintaining some sense of stability from the earth element and flexibility from the air element, for example. But when there is an imbalance of the elements, the person will not feel the same. They may feel unhappy, with no desire to do things, and no energy. They won't know what to do, they won't have the same sense of creativity. If they live too long with that imbalance, over time they may become physically ill.

In the soul retrieval practice the practitioner can retrieve the elemental essences they need by connecting with nature, with the forces of time, with the forces of the enlightened refuge tree, of the healing spirits, of the support of the community of practitioners, of one's individual wishes, of ritual, of mantra — through all those things, formally or informally the practitioner is able to retrieve the qualities.

It is important when coming to these retreats not to think you are coming only to learn something in order to help yourself, or to come only because you work in a healing profession. Of course, you can come for those reasons, but most important, every now and then, once or twice a year, you should attend a retreat like this to retrieve the qualities you need and help put yourself back on track. Internally, spiritually, energetically, you are coming back to that place where you are a healthy, balanced person.

VOCL: How is the soul-retrieval practice viewed from the perspective of the higher Bon teachings of tantra or dzogchen? What can a tantric or dzogchen practitioner gain from these practices and rituals of the causal vehicles?

TWR: For an accomplished dzogchen practitioner, their character may be such that everything they encounter in their day-to-day life — whether it is challenging or stressful situations in their work or at home, or their own thoughts and emotions — their experiences are like snow falling into the ocean. The snow never damages the ocean. The moment it touches the water, it dissolves. It does not accumulate, it enriches. It does not take up any space. For someone who is living in that kind of space, it is not necessary for them to do soul retrieval.

Or, for an accomplished practitioner of tantra, whenever they encounter challenging situations in their work or family life they know right away that these challenges are not negative or destructive, but they are an opportunity to grow and do something positive. Immediately the challenge becomes a path of transformation, of growth and enlightenment. The challenge does not become something that weakens, damages or destroys you, or causes you to lose your soul. In tantra, challenges become the means for personal development.

But for most of us, sometimes we may be hit with a challenge, and before we can deal with it we are hit by another challenge. When there is a constant onslaught, we may feel like we can't cope anymore. As we are engaged with one problem, other deeper issues come to hurt us internally, and there is a pervasive imbalance of energy. When this cycle persists, soul retrieval is very necessary.

If you are deeply affected by a big shock or trauma that happens in your life, it will be because of the accumulation of past imbalances. In someone who has not accumulated these imbalances, the trauma will not have the same, lasting effect.

This April's spring healing retreat is an opportunity for people to engage in collective soul retrieval, with internal meditation practices, with physical movements, and with rituals. This will be the first time we will be doing the full soul and life-force retrieval rituals here in the West. It will be a special opportunity.

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AUSPICIOUS BON AND BUDDHIST DATES FOR 2008

**Note from Ligmincha's Bookstore and Tibet Shop: Here is a list of both Bon and Buddhist auspicious dates for 2008. We were unable to include them in our 2008 calendar, "Thangkas from the Tibetan Bon Buddhist Tradition." We will include the auspicious dates in our 2009 calendar.

The positive effects of practice are multiplied on these and all auspicious days.

February 7 Losar - Tibetan New Year

February 10 Anniversary of Birth of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen

Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen was the founder and the first abbot of Menri Monastery in Central Tibet and lived in the late 14th century.

February 21 Anniversary of Birth of Tonpa Shenrab

Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche was the founder of Bon.

June 18 Saka Dawa Duchen

Buddha Shakyamuni's Birth, Enlightenment, and Parinirvava

July 6 Birthday of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

July 18 Zamlung Chisang

Universal Prayer Day

August 5 Chokhor Duchen

Buddha Shakyamuni's First Teaching of the Four Noble Truths

August 9 Anniversary of Death of Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen

November 19 Lha Bab Duchen

Buddha Shakyamuni's Descent From Heaven

November 27 Anniversary of Death of Tonpa Shenrab

December 10 Anniversary of Receipt of Nobel Peace Prize by H.H. the XIV Dalai Lama. His Holiness received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

Other auspicious days include:

Lunar and Solar Eclipses

New and Full Moons

Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice

Spring Equinox and Autumnal Equinox

All Tibetan dates are based on the Tibetan calendar published by the Men Tsee Khang, the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute, Dharamsala, India, 2008.