

Teaching Issue

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A Note From the Editors

Inspirations for the Tibetan New Year



Happy Losar! Hope you all are enjoying the new *Voice of Clear Light!* In this issue we focus on a teaching about impermanence given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche during last summer's retreat: a timely message as the Tibetan New Year begins and we face many new challenges.

For us, adapting to this new and improved version of *VOCL* has been a challenge and an impermanence practice. We are still trying to let go of habits and attachments related to the old text-based email version and have faced a steep computer learning curve. But as we complete this fourth issue in the new format, the rewards of our efforts are becoming more and more evident. There is a wonderful small group of big hearts (and brains) helping to make *VOCL*

happen. We are enriched and connected through their help and dedication. We also appreciate those of you — subscribers, friends, sangha — who have let us know how much you appreciate getting this newsletter. Mostly we are grateful to be a part of this effort to manifest Rinpoche's vision.

Many of our readers have already discovered that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Ligmincha Institute are both now on Twitter. Rinpoche tells us that he plans to send occasional personal updates and inspirations from his travels worldwide; when you sign up with Twitter you can choose to access these "Tweets" either via the Internet or, within certain countries and with

certain wireless services, as a text message to your cell phone. Learn more and view recent posts at <http://voiceofclearlight.org/stay-in-touch> .

There's a new feature in the Tibet Shop column on the right — see if you can find it. In this issue you'll also find a Sangha Sharing piece on Losar accompanied by a photo montage. Both are visual treats – enjoy!

Be well and happy!
Aline and Jeff Fisher
Editors



Teachings

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‘Reflecting on Impermanence and Living Life Fully’ – an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, summer 2009



Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche presented teachings from the A-Tri dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Bon Buddhism during Ligmincha Institute's 2009 Summer Retreat. In this edited excerpt Rinpoche explains the practice of impermanence, one of the practices that comprise the

A-Tri

Ngöndro or preliminary practices.

Taking time to meditate regularly on impermanence can help you to be more open, free, and resilient. Every time you have an experience that requires you to directly face the reality of impermanence, such as when you lose someone or something you care about, take some time to reflect on that situation, on the changes it brings to your life, and on what this means to you personally.

Look at your own body and the many changes it undergoes related to birth, old age, sickness, and death. We all think of the human body as something very precious. But what makes this human life so very special and precious is that we are born in a time and space where we have access to the knowledge of the dharma, where we are able to engage in meditation practice if we want. Take the time to notice the beauty of what you have. Start the impermanence practice from that place.

In addition to reflecting on the preciousness of human life, you can reflect on your basic physical and emotional needs, the things needed to support this precious human life. What are the right foods you should be eating, what are the things you need for comfort? Maybe you will find your body is asking for healing, attention, love, and caring.

We all know that there are some things in our lives that we just love to do, right? Maybe you like to take time off to hike, bike, swim, or to see some beautiful artwork or to be with family or friends. You may think to yourself, “I’m going to do these things once I finish this deadline, or that job, or that project!” Somehow it just doesn’t happen. We stay stressed out, fighting to simply get to the next step or the next goal. But there is always yet another step or another goal. We never seem able to stop and rest and give ourselves what we truly need in life; we never seem to live fully in the moment.

How are we going to end this cycle? What are the basic needs we should not put off? How can we take care of these needs? It is important to reflect on this.

At the same time, it is also important to not get stuck in the belief that we need things to be in a certain way. It can become an unending habit to think, “My body needs this; my body needs that.” Instead, recognize that life is always changing and try to go with the flow. That is where the practice of impermanence helps, do you see? Reflect on living life fully with all of its changes.

Having a flexible view can make everything in life easier. For example, in this society people commonly make a distinction between work and fun. When someone asks “Are you traveling for work or for pleasure?” the subtle implication is that work is painful. People who live life without making this distinction are fortunate. They tend to have much less stress and tension and are more productive and joyful.

Change is inevitable. Life itself must come to an end, and nobody knows for sure when, where, or how they will die. It is true that we have needs and must accumulate some things in life, but

this understanding must be balanced with the reality of impermanence. The needs we have in this life that are going to be met, will be met. But if certain needs are not being met, we must try not to struggle so much for them that we are swept up into a lot of tension and stress. If you drive others crazy trying to get something, you will drive yourself crazy as well!

Reflect, too, on the temporary nature of all relationships. Whoever you are with, no matter how beautiful the connection is, in the end you go your own way in life and they go theirs. But that does not mean a relationship can't be enjoyable. Life is actually much more fun knowing that it is impermanent.

So, look at your life and reflect on these three important aspects of the impermanence practice: Recognize the preciousness of your human body; acknowledge your basic needs in life; and accept the inevitability of change. We need to make the time to reflect on these three. Meditating in this way on impermanence can help prepare us for the challenging situations that arise in life.

The practice of impermanence helps us to let go of our attachments. When you let go, you suffer less and you live more fully. In the end that is what we want, isn't it? If you are suffering a lot, it means you are not letting go.

You see, when we come to realize the truth that there is no real solidity in this world, this realization helps us to turn our minds to the teachings, to the dharma. This lack of solidity does not mean nothing exists and that you should act irresponsibly; it is not like that. The effect of this realization is to turn you toward the teachings and toward your inner work as a practitioner. In your ordinary daily life it turns you toward being with family and friends, toward expressing your love for them, and toward fulfilling your basic needs as a human. As you recognize the impermanence of everything in this life, you turn in a positive direction and find fullness there. It is not just "Everything is dying, nothing is real." No, instead it is turning inward and finding a real fullness that permeates your whole life.

I truly believe that the practice of reflecting on impermanence can help you become more open, free, and connected. It can help you define what is valuable in life with more clarity and wisdom, realize the meaninglessness of many worldly things, turn away from the attachments of samsara, and be resilient in the face of change.



Sangha Sharing

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A Losar Memory – Tibetans and Westerners Join Together in One Voice



Tibetan villagers young and old began arriving at the gate of Menri Monastery in first light of Losar after hiking the steep slope from their homes in the valley below. Carrying khatas and dressed in their finest traditional outfits of the brightest reds, azures, turquoises, and yellows, they gathered within the courtyard in front of the gomba as giant plumes arose from a smoke offering in their midst.

I joined other villagers and monks circumambulating the gomba, grateful to be sharing in an ages-old connection to the Bon tradition on this special day. Within no time the scattering of walkers became a major procession. A handful of us students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche had converged here in India for this first Ligmincha Losar retreat. We felt welcomed by monks and villagers alike, and their excitement about our presence there was palpable.

As I walked along silently reciting the *Tu-Ti-Su* mantra, I recalled how Rinpoche had first introduced this mantra to me five years



earlier, before he'd had a chance to include it in any formal teachings in the West. He and I were in Richmond, Virginia, painting the walls of a room in a friend's house that Rinpoche had

just chosen to become the first headquarters for his new Ligmincha Institute. As we applied the paint, Rinpoche began softly singing a beautiful Tibetan melody. I was intrigued, and he suggested that I simply sing along. I was soon in love with the melody and comfortable with the Tibetan syllables, so as we painted, I casually asked him what it was we were singing. He smiled and said simply that “it brings good energy to the room,” and that “it’s like a folk song to Tibetan Bonpos,” meaning that everyone knows it. Little did I know, then, the true depth and power of that mantra. I simply sang!



Surrounded now by Bonpo monks and villagers as we all circumambulated the gumpa, venerating this wonderful connection to the Bon lineage, I tempted fate and began to softly sing aloud the *Tu-Ti-Su* mantra amidst this silent procession. The young children who had attached themselves to me immediately grew wide-eyed and began singing along, and quickly the chorus grew to include everyone walking within earshot. Soon children were clutching my hands and my sleeves as we all, villagers, Westerners, and monks, sang in one unified voice, sounding a prayer for a New Year of happiness and prosperity for all sentient beings, with the wish that the Bon tradition and its teachers be blessed to flourish forever into the future.

A KAR A ME TU TI SO NAG PO SHI SHI MAL MAL SOHA

— *Written by senior student and VOCL co-editor Jeff Fisher while on retreat in India following the Losar celebration at Menri Monastery, 1995. Photographs by Stephen Ledyard, taken during a 2007 pilgrimage to Tibet.*



Intensive Study in a Retreat Setting

New Summer Tibetan Language Program

This summer brings an opportunity to immerse yourself in the study of Tibetan language. Join **Geshe Namgyal Nyima**,

author of

Colloquial and Literary Tibetan: Practical Usage

(Berlin 2008), for an intensive program at the Serenity Ridge retreat center in two 12-day, successive courses from June 26 through July 19, 2010.

[Learn more >](#)



Upcoming Live Internet Broadcasts

Dzogchen Teachings and Guided Practices With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Just scheduled: A full series of 2010 live Internet broadcasts with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. The first Webcast will take place on Tuesday, April 13; five others are scheduled throughout 2010. [Learn more >](#)



An Internet Retreat

[Print this article](#) / [Print full issue](#)

Participants From the Online Workshop With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Share Their Experiences



[Download the presentation by Dr. Steven D. Erickson, PhD, titled "Blessings in the Workplace: Feedback from the first workshop"](#)

“Even alone in my room with my MacBook, I felt a great support and many blessings the whole day and during the night too. Thank you for this powerful experience.” —
Claude-Lilia, Switzerland

“I’ve taken and given more than a hundred various workshops, Tenzin Rinpoche is the clearest teacher/transmitter I’ve ever encountered.

You do not have to have a background in the teaching, nor a familiarity with the Bon tradition, to feel and see results immediately that create meaningful change.” —

Jeanie, New York

“I had chosen to see what Tibetan Sound Healing could do to help me with one state of mind that I have had every morning for many years. It is like depression, a very heavy and dark feeling, [along with] suppressed frustration, anger, sadness, and guilt feelings. Already after one week there was a change. It was just not there. A surprise for me. I also found a very nice feeling, a quality within me, that I was not aware I had. **To have this result in so little time, no one would believe me. It has to be experienced in order to be believed.**

” —

Madeline, Switzerland

“I found it very helpful to be able to go back and listen to any teaching as many times as desired. It was also so helpful to read the questions and answers. It feels intimate — in the sense that there feels to be a strong connection to the other students and Rinpoche.” —

Ellen, Minnesota

“This steady, gradual step-by-step instruction enabled me to integrate these teachings into my daily life in a deep and meaningful way. [Rinpoche’s] ongoing support by keeping us all in his prayers and answering our questions made me feel completely surrounded by loving-kindness throughout this learning process. **I am calmer and more positive in the face of negative encounters, and I am deeply grateful for these transformative practices. Thank you, thank you, thank you ...**

” — *Kathleen, Massachusetts*

“The explanations of each part were excellent and the introduction was clear and helpful even to a long-time practitioner. Rinpoche, I must also thank you again for the energy and compassion you put into your teachings. Even within a long-distance electronic medium I could feel your love and guidance emanating from my screen.” — J

ackie, U.S.

“It was an incredible treat (and blessing) to be able to ask Rinpoche questions about the practices and to get his responses. That kind of access alone made the workshop worth the price! The thoughtful questions and comments from the other participants enhanced the experience, and I felt a wonderful connection with everyone during the workshop. **I would definitely do another workshop with Rinpoche in this format.**

” —

Cynthia, Colorado

“A great surprise at the potency of an online course. I learned a lot about myself and how

I block my own progress. Rinpoche and this course provided guidance to help me bring practical practice into my life instead of living it only on the cushion.” —

Karen, San Francisco

“It gives you the chance to have an intensive, supported, personal retreat. I often decide to have personal retreats when I have free time but without support it is difficult to persevere. This way it was natural and effortless to keep on.” —

Katalin, Hungary

“A precious gift was given to all of us practitioners. Many, many thanks.” — *Miroslava*

Janskova, Slovakia

To learn more

Rinpoche gives a comprehensive explanation of the Sound Healing practice in his book *Tibetan Sound Healing: Seven Guided Practices for Clearing Obstacles, Accessing Positive Qualities, and Uncovering Your Inherent Wisdom*, available from

[Ligmincha Institute's Bookstore & Tibet Shop](#)

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To register for the upcoming workshop or for more information, visit www.glidewing.com ; or see the video at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt7-oT-6VU>

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Upcoming Retreats

Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center

The retreats described below will take place at Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha Institute's retreat center in Nelson County, Va. To register or for more information, click on the links below, or contact us at Ligmincha@aol.com or 434-263-6304.

March 10 – 14, 2010

Ngondro: Part 1 of the Experiential Transmission

With Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima

[The Ngondro](#), Part 1 of [the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung](#), is the entrance to a cycle of Bon dzogchen, or “Great Perfection,” teachings, which until the past decade were part of a secret transmission passed one-to-one from master to student. The ngondro teachings, a complete set of practices in themselves, offer instructions for “taming” oneself, for purifying, and for perfecting; and are the prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung.

[Learn more or register >](#)

March 10 – 20, 2010

Ten-Day Practice Retreat

With Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima

Join us at Serenity Ridge this March to engage in self-directed personal meditation practice and to participate in optional daily guided practice sessions led by Serenity Ridge's resident lama, Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima. Come for a minimum of three days and a maximum of 10 days.

[Pricing and schedule >](#)

For more information or to pre-register, please [email Ligmincha](#) or call us at 434-263-6304.

April 14 - 18, 2010

Sacred Waters: The Healing Practice of Sipe Gyalmo

With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Join Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Serenity Ridge this spring when he offers a special healing experience for the general public, health care professionals, and anyone who is currently encountering illness.

[New: Extend your stay >](#)

[Learn more or register >](#)

June 2 - 6, 2010

Introduction to the Nature of Mind: The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 2

With Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche

This year we are again very fortunate to have Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, the head teacher of Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India, teaching these beautiful and essential practices to us. The concise and essential practice manual of [the Experiential Transmission](#), the *Chag Tri*, provides pith instructions for those who aspire to practice dzogchen, the path of self-liberation.

[Learn more or register >](#)

June 20 - 26, 2010

Summer Work Retreat

Free of charge. Whether you join us for one afternoon or the full week, this is a wonderful time to share with sangha and to be of joyful service. 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. Participants are provided with free tenting and meals, and for those who participate in the entire work retreat there will be a 50 percent discount on one week of the summer retreat.

For more information or to register, please email Ligmincha at Ligmincha@aol.com

June 26 - July 19, 2010

Summer Tibetan Language Program

With Geshe Namgyal Nyima

This summer brings an opportunity to immerse yourself in the study of Tibetan language. Join Geshe Namgyal Nyima, author of *Colloquial and Literary Tibetan: Practical Usage* (Berlin 2008), for an intensive program at the Serenity Ridge retreat center in two 12-day, successive courses from June 26 through July 19, 2010. Open to beginning and intermediate students.

[Learn more >](#)

June 27 - July 17, 2010

Awakening the Self, Discovering Joy: Self-Realization Through the Three Doors of Body, Speech and Mind

19th Annual Summer Retreat With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Our own body, speech and mind can offer direct access to profound inner transformation. The keys to effectively unlocking these three doors are found in the ancient Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet, whose powerful meditation practices help to remove physical, energetic, and mental blockages that keep us from achieving our highest potential. Join us for a unique, life-changing opportunity to discover your unbounded being, the source of authentic joy. Registration is available for one, two, or all three weeks.

[New: Extend your stay >](#)

[Learn more or register >](#)

Oct. 6-10, 2010

Sleep of Clear Light: The Practice of Sleep Yoga

With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Centuries ago, Tibetan yogis developed the practice of sleep yoga to transform these dark

hours of ignorance into a path toward enlightenment. A powerful tool for awakening, sleep yoga is more than a practice of the night. It helps us to integrate all moments — waking, sleeping, meditation, and even death — with the clear light of awareness. During this intensive five-day retreat, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will teach and guide us in the clear-light sleep practices of the Mother Tantra, one of the most important cycles of teachings in the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition

[New: Extend your stay >](#)

[Learn more or register >](#)

To register for any of the above retreats, or for more information about teachings in the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet, please contact us at

mincha@aol.com

or 434-263-6304, or go to:

[Lig](#)

<https://www.ligmincha.org/retreats/retreats.html>