



Ligmincha Europe Magazine

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Travelling with Rinpoche
The Dharma in the West
A portrayal of a sangha
Poetry in the Dharma



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The **Ligmincha Europe Magazine** is a joint venture of the community of European students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Ideas and contributions are welcome at magazine@ligmincha.eu. You can also visit www.ligmincha.eu or Facebook: Ligmincha Europe.

We want to thank all the people who contributed to this issue!

Editors: Anja Benesch, Jitka Polanská and Ton Bisscheroux; **Proofreader:** Masha Volynsky
Technical assistance: Lutz Dausend and Oliver Wirtz; **Cover layout:** Nathalie Arts



A GREETING FROM TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

Dear sangha,

I would like to use this opportunity and say a few words about our common European project and to let you know about its current developments and changes.

I agreed, together with the members of the European Board of Directors to dissolve the board. I arrived to a conclusion that there is no real need for it for the time being. If the need arises in the future, I'm open to discuss forming another body. In relation to this, I want to say how much I appreciate and thank Jan Dinkelaar and the other members of the board. They were engaged and worked to bring together valuable ideas and closeness among the sanghas in Europe. I also want to thank each of them for their continued engagement in the teachings and for the commitment to preserve Bon within their own countries. The sanghas in the different countries are now connected and exchange information mainly through the monthly international Skype meetings. I hope that we can develop this communication further.

Secondly, I would like to explain the reason why we have chosen to change the name of our worldwide centers from Bon Garuda to Ligmincha. In the beginning, the names of the centers and sanghas were not so well thought through. For example, some were called Garuda, others Bon Garuda, and still others Garuda Bon. After reflecting for a long time on this, I have decided to standardize the names, similarly to other networks of international centers and Dharma groups such as Rigpa or Shambhala. From now on, all organized sanghas will be named 'Ligmincha' followed by the geographic location, as for example Ligmincha Houston or Ligmincha Germany. In addition, all current and future residential retreat centers will be called Chamma Ling, also followed by the name of the location, as for example, Chamma Ling Colorado or Chamma Ling Poland. The only exceptions are Serenity Ridge, our retreat center in Virginia, and Lishu Institute in India, both of which will keep their current names.

I also would like to mention the development of

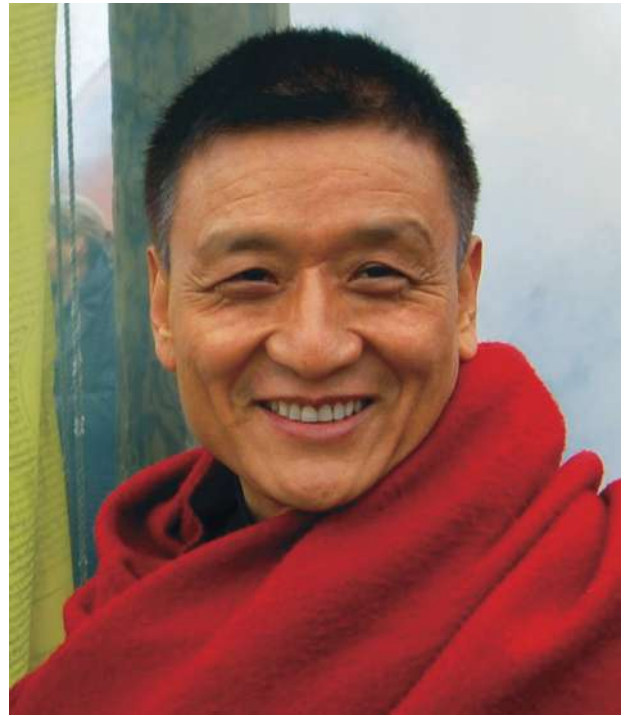


Photo by Stephen Ledyard

our worldwide website, the project headed by Lutz Dausend. I want to thank Lutz and Bogusia Dausend who volunteered to create and maintain not just one, but many of our websites. They also came up with the idea to have one Ligmincha website for all the countries. I know that many of you have been supporting the project a lot and I hope that everyone works on it with openness and clear communication. I'm looking forward to seeing the result, a website with information from different sanghas and with easy access from different locations.

My wish is that our sanghas expand in a cohesive way so that we can continue to connect with and support each other in the best way possible. As we all know, the teachings are a very powerful support for our growth. Many of us have experienced how the teachings have helped to transform our lives. Our purpose should be to share this gift with others. One way for each of you to share it is to focus on your own country, making a commitment to support the local sangha and help to bring the Bon teachings where they are needed. I request that you all do this.

With my love and blessings,

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



BEING TOGETHER AND PRACTICING ON THE TRIP



When was the idea born to organize this second Lishu trip?

The idea came last year in Amsterdam when Rinpoche was talking to Jan Dinkelaar. Jan wanted to organize a second trip to Lishu. Then Rinpoche mentioned that he would turn fifty in 2011 and the idea was born to combine the two events. Organizing it took about seven months, contacting a travel agency who would give us the best deal, talking to people, writing a flyer.... It was a lot of work. Sue Davis-Dill, Veronique Leenders, Wojtek Plucinski, Laura Caldaron, Bob Anger and Karoline Seltenheim supported me.

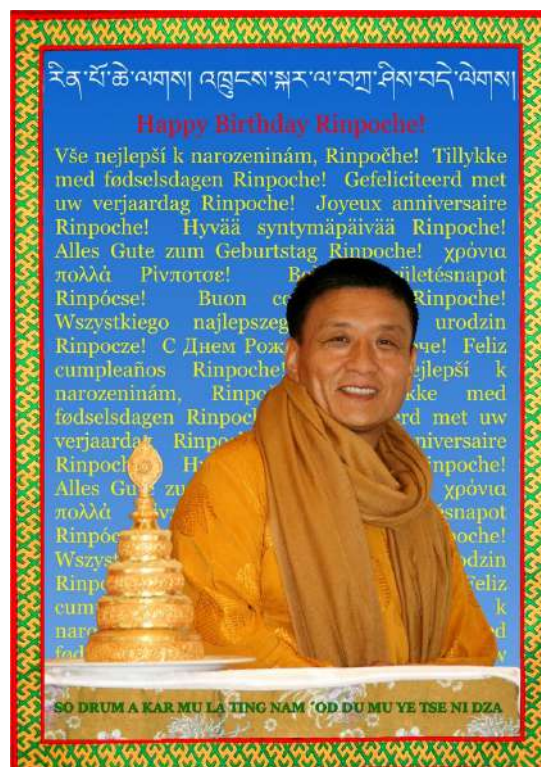
Normally Tibetans do not celebrate their birthdays. What made you decide to celebrate Rinpoche's birthday this time?

We decided to follow a western practice of making the fiftieth birthday a special event. We don't have a tradition celebrating birthdays and many Tibetans don't know their exact birthdays. That is why they take as their date of birth the 6th of July, which is His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday.

The trip to India and Nepal on the occasion of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's fiftieth birthday was organized by his wife Khandro Tsering Wangmo who is also president of Lishu Institute. In this interview, Tsering talks heart to heart about the trip. When you read it you will feel it.

What was Rinpoche's birthday present?

We did not want to take any gifts or money. Instead we wanted to do an animal rescue and release of fish or birds (*Tibetan: Tsethar*). Then Bogusia and Lutz Dausend came up with that wonderful idea of inviting the sangha to do recitations of one million Long Life prayers for Rinpoche. That was an everlasting and priceless gift. Four million prayers were recited by the worldwide sanghas. On the evening of the birthday celebration, Bogusia and Lutz gave Rinpoche a post card with his photo on it and birthday greetings in Tibetan and thirteen other languages. We have a copy of the photo and every time people come here I show it to them.





What was the highlight of the two weeks for Rinpoche?

It was being together. Rinpoche said: "Normally I am always teaching people or people come to have books signed, then they leave and do their practice. This time there was also a practice, but afterwards we were in the bus as friends. We were very open to each other, not just as master and student." Rinpoche also said that he'd like to do this more often, not always being the teacher but also just being together and going to different places. Rinpoche was especially happy to take people to the Menri Monastery and share memories from his youth at the house of his teacher, Lopon Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche.

What did you enjoy most during the trip to India and Nepal?

The most important thing was being together with sanghas from so many countries. Normally I just hear people's names, Rinpoche tells me what they do and shows me pictures. This time I actually met the people.

Would you talk about the places you went?

We spent two days in Delhi where people went shopping and to Hindu temples on their own. They loved it.

Then we went to Lishu which was a seven hour bus ride. The road was much better than two

years ago and the buses this time were nicer. We had seen photos from Geshela of the Lishu Institute construction site, but we never imagined that the whole thing was done. Two years ago there was only a hill there. Geshela and the team did such a nice job: the shrine room was ready, tea and snacks awaited for us. We raised prayer flags and Rinpoche gave a small teaching. There was also a Geshe from the Kagyu center who was helping there.

Geshela worked hard to get permission from the Indian government to legally receive financial support from the west. Normally that takes four years but Geshela did it in a year and a half.

People on the first trip to Lishu two years ago mentioned they saw children working there.

I saw the children too. I went to their huts and found out that the kids belonged to the laborers working there. When a contractor is involved he brings a whole crew. If it is far away from the city, they live there with their families till the whole construction is finished. And it is quite normal in India that a child helps its mother by getting water or breaking little rocks in to pebbles.

After visiting the Lishu Institute site, where did you go?

We had planned to visit a Nyingma monastery and a Tibetan Settlement but the travel agent didn't





know about a new rule from the Indian government which required a permit for westerners to visit Tibetan settlements or monasteries. So when we were driving from Delhi to Dehradun, we heard from the travel agency that we could not go, because the hotel where we were staying had informed the police where we were going. The travel agent told us that if we went there, people would get into trouble with New Delhi immigration when they went back to their countries. So we did not go. Instead, Rinpoche took people to Hadiwar, a Hindu place on the Ganges. The people who went there enjoyed the offering of a candle on a leaf which they floated in the river.

When we went back to Lishu for the closing ceremonies and to thank everybody, the German and Dutch sangha gave a surprise donation for the Lishu Institute.

At the Menri Monastery we went into the new yogi temple where we all had tea with His Holiness. Later he gave a little teaching and a transmission of Sherab Chamma. The monks did a short debate just for us.

We visited the nunnery which is close to Menri Monastery. The nuns were ready with tea and we asked for a Chöd practice.

Seventy nuns did a beautiful practice for us with the drums. Generally, in Tibetan traditions, nuns are trained only in Chöd practices, clearing obstacles prayers, but they are not given the opportunity to go any further. It was very special to hear that His Holiness opened the door for nineteen nuns. I was so happy to hear that they were officially admitted to become Geshe. After many people showed interest, I started trying to figure out how people can make donations to support a Geshe nun. After the Chöd practice we gave the head nun twenty-five thousand rupees we had collected for them from our sangha's.





Is there anything you want to say to the members of the European sangha?

First of all: a long life for everybody. I want to thank them for their cooperation and the beautiful heart and very joyful energy. I feel very fortunate to spend time with them, talking and joking with them. I will cherish these memories.

Your son Senghe was recognized as a

reincarnation of a former Abbot of the Menri Monastery.

And then you went to Nepal to celebrate Losar and Rinpoche's birthday.

Yes, on Losar on March 5th, we went to visit Tritten Norbutse Monastery and met H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung. The monastery cooked a beautiful lunch for more than three hundred people. The next day was the bird rescue and release in Godavari an hour drive from Kathmandu city. We preordered twelve-hundred birds. After Rinpoche released a pigeon, then all the sangha members and Lamas released as well. It was a beautiful moment.

The next day morning we went for a two and a half hour drive to Pharping. It is a place where people go to raise prayer flags and do pujas. We went there, put prayer flags up, and did a Sang Sol (smoke offering).

At the inauguration of the Great Stupa last November in Mexico, H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche one day called Rinpoche and gave him the names for Senghe. He asked him to request a big puja in Menri Monastery and one at Tritten Norbutse Monastery. So we requested a thousand Yeshe Walmo puja and one thousand Drenpamankha Tsog offering. In February we went two weeks earlier to Nepal to have some family time. They did the pujas and then H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche recognized Senghe as a reincarnation of the 15th Abbot of the Menri Monastery, Kundun Yungdrung Tshultrim.

In the evening we celebrated Rinpoche's birthday with more than eighty people. The birthday party was outside in the garden of the hotel. We did a mandala offering.

Lutz and Bogusia Dausend offered the accumulated mantras from the worldwide sangha. Patricia Guerlin from Mexico offered in Tibetan the Tapihritsa invocation. We had dinner in the garden and a band sang some Tibetan and Nepali songs.



The enthronization took place the day after Rinpoche's birthday was celebrated.

Yes, on March 7th, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung told us, "Tomorrow afternoon we will do the enthronement." It was a big surprise, because we knew it was going to come, but not so fast. So we did not have much time to prepare. Normally Senghe is very busy, but on that day on the throne he was very still. He immediately changed when he sat on the throne. I was afraid that he would jump while sitting on the throne, or play with articles on the table, but he didn't.



Will Senghe be the next Abbot of the Menri Monastery?

Some people in Nepal said: he will be the next His Holiness. That is not true. They misunderstood the message. It is up to the people of the monastery to decide. Traditionally there is a special ritual to appoint an Abbot in a monastery.

How was it for you when you heard the news?

There was a happy moment. But I also thought: "If I have seven or eight sons and daughters, than giving up one is ok. But giving up your only son is a little hard." In the end it is up to him if he wants to go to the monastery. Now we are thinking of moving to Nepal in a few years, and we already went to see regular schools, because we want him to receive western education. And we want to be near the monastery, so whenever there is a ritual in the monastery we will let him go there.

When Senghe was younger he had all those phases. He always wanted to play with drums and bells. Every time we went to see a friend, Vicky, who lives in Charlottesville, he asked her to take out all the pots and pans and he played them like drums. When he was with my mother, who was living in Nepal just below the Triten Norbutse Monastery, he always wanted to go to the monastery. When he went there the monks were

playing with him and looking after him instead of singing mantras. Senghe was not happy about that kind of attention. He thought that maybe if he wore something similar to them, he would be accepted. So he wore a white towel wrapped around him and went up and wanted to debate with the monks. Then people called him the yogi

lama, and teased him with that. We never attached much importance to it but many people said we should look into it. They told me: "Ask him who his master is and he will reply." But I was just laughing. One day a Tibetan lady

named Pema Saldon asked him, "Where is your monastery?" Senghe said "Nepal," and we were laughing. So all these traces were there, but we never thought he would be the incarnation of an Abbot.

You are a mother, wife and president of Lishu Institute. Do you find time to meditate?

I have time to meditate, but I don't meditate like sitting cross legged. My way of doing it is a little different. I get up early in the morning and after washing my face, I don't go to the coffee machine, but I go to the shrine room. I offer water, candles and incense. Then I recite prayers and do prostrations. Then I prepare breakfast. I don't talk for half an hour and recite long life prayers, Sherab Chamma mantras and three Heart mantras. When I get a chance during the day, I try to recite some prayers. In the evening it is hard to meditate because people come and I have to make sure that Senghe gets to bed on time.

Interview by Ton Bisscheroux, edited by Rose Najia

Photos by André van Diejen, Bogusia Dausend, Joop van Spronsen, Martin Schröder, Sangmo Yangri

If you want to watch videos of this trip go to www.lishu.org



THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS OF THE TRIP

We asked sangha members who went to India and Nepal with Rinpoche to tell us about their most memorable moments of the trip. These are the impressions of Gabriele Penders from Germany and Katalin Jakab from Hungary.

Lishu Institute: already a tangible project

What a huge difference between the big city of Delhi with millions of people, the amount of impressions and noises and then to be on this bus ride through the smaller cities of northern India and finally on the streets that wind up farther and farther into the mountains, coming closer to the Mussoorie mountains, this green, fertile and calm area that was also used before by the British as a green recreation area.

In this special environment, on a plateau – surrounded by the Mussoorie mountains with a clear view into the valleys – the Lishu land is really impressively situated.

The opening and closing ceremonies were performed in the main building which had three levels over two days, and were led by Rinpoche supported by others, including Geshe Yungdrung Tengyal and the monks. Outside in the open, all participants celebrated the Sang Sol ritual together and hung up the prayer flags in long lines from one tree to another.

In this special atmosphere, being one with the elements and in that deep connection with the spirit of the Bon tradition, we also were offered some wonderful Indian snacks and typical butter tea. All these experiences have been so impressive that there was no question about wanting to come back and to go deeper into the teachings and to stay there for a longer time.

How wonderful it is to have such a great opportunity in the near future!

The money that was donated before was used for the construction of the main building. As the secretary of the Lishu Institute Geshe Thubten Negi, who lives in this place, has been in charge of the affairs here. And, of course, further donations are needed for the Lishu project to be fully realized.

Donation cheques from the Netherlands and Germany, which were handed to Rinpoche at the end of the ceremonies, were a further contribution to support Lishu.

And, of course, as usual it is possible for anyone to donate money to a bank account or directly at one of the retreats. For more information and pictures visit www.lishu.org.

Gabriele Penders (text and photo)



“It felt as if Rinpoche jumped back in time”

First thing that struck me was when I saw the building of the Lishu Institute with the roof already on a site, where there was nothing as only a year before. I feel very connected to this project because it will give more opportunities for us, the European sangha, to spend longer time staying in one place to study and practice. We then looked at the beautiful view of the mountains around and Rinpoche said: “Just imagine us sitting in meditation in the caves of that mountain as we get older.”

The second moment was when Rinpoche sat on the stairs of the Lupon's house near the Menri Monastery, in the same place where he used to sit as a young man, in the same position, looking in the same direction. It felt as if he jumped back in time taking us also back to that situation. It was a vivid experience for me.

Katalin Jakab



A TRUE JOURNEY, DAY BY DAY

During the pilgrimage Ryszard Adamiak, a Polish student of Rinpoche, kept a journal. We asked him to share a part of his reflections with us about how it all started.

Here we go! I had so many ideas about what to do during this pilgrimage, but the closer the departure got the more scattered my ideas were getting. In the end, they were replaced by space in which I could see shapes of the true journey. Since I was a child I have been fascinated by Buddhism. Every time I saw a Tibetan or a Mongolian Buddhist monastery my heart would beat faster and a good energy would spread through my body. I was brought up in Christian tradition and yet I remember myself as a little kid explaining to another child why reincarnation exists. I was five or six years old at the time.

Only a few hours of flight separate me from my beloved Asia. Isolated places and hermitages, monasteries and caves, sacred mountains, stones, floating prayer flags, lamas, yogis, practitioners. Ordinary people to whom I dedicate this journey. Thank to the many nameless practitioners the Tibetan spiritual tradition survived – and also thanks to great masters.

Hurray! We flew out of the cold zone. There is no more snow, only earth – clean and green. We left a mountain range behind us – maybe it's the Alps, maybe the Carpathian mountains.

The essence of Buddhism is the understanding that loss is an inherent part of life and happens to everyone. It's not that we have 'bad luck' when somebody close to us dies. When others lose something, we aren't hurt by it. But our loss, even

the smallest one, hurts us badly. It's the grip of our ego.

I'm very happy that for many years Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has been bringing me down to earth. (How true this sentence is when I have my ears clogged up and we are getting close to the clouds). I'm happy that I can be his disciple for all these years. They were difficult years, very difficult for me and also for Rinpoche. Yet he has never told me: "I have had enough of your drowsiness, sluggishness, lack of awareness and your always bringing me a bag full of problems". He never said that. On the contrary, he showed me new ways: if it didn't work out with this



Elwira Łuczek and Ryszard Adamiak with their Teachers

method, try another one. Don't just try. Do it. Now. Don't sleep through your life. Wake up. Right now. Thanks to him, year after year, month after month, week after week, day after day I walk a path he has shown us all. I walk it and I'm getting happier every day.

This process does not have an end. Every day I'm a different man. Today I am flying to India, which I wouldn't even dare dream about before. We are landing now, my stomach is in knots, we are flying right above the clouds. Now we are inside them.



We are getting close to the airport in Istanbul. The engines changed their tune. We feel the change in altitude, we are close to the ground, I can see the enormity of the multi-million city.

Waiting in the boarding hall at the airport in Istanbul I'm able to see through the glass wall the enormous plane we are taking to Delhi.

The majority of people that is travelling with me is very tired. It is hot in the boarding hall. In Poznań, my town, it was below 0° when we left.

A new stage in my life is beginning today. I'm getting closer to the source of those Teachings, to the Masters bringing them alive in uncertain and unstable times. I will stand face to face with a deep message of the Ancient Tibetan Tradition of Yungdrung Bon. I'm deeply touched – my life has come to a point when I'm going to India and Nepal.

The plane is circling above Delhi. Dreams are becoming reality – the plane touched the sacred land of Buddhism. Today, February 23, my foot touched Indian soil for the first time. I'm breathing the Delhi air. How different it is to European.

Today, February 24, I just did Trulkhor exercises! I have also made a practice of sending good vibrations in the form of light to all suffering beings. I saw many of them on the streets of Delhi yesterday. Poverty here is enormous. Stray dogs are walking on the streets, jumping into the trash picking leftovers, because they aren't getting any food. They are dirty and similar everywhere – as Małgorzata, who flew from Warsaw with Kasia and Elwira noticed. This is our 'Polish Four' taking part in the pilgrimage.

Małgorzata has already been to India before – she told us about Calcutta in the time when poverty and hunger where limitless. Walking

on the streets of Delhi I believe strongly in the truth of her words.

In the meantime many good things happened!

Rinpoche asked the Polish sangha to sit near him during the dinner, so we felt rewarded and honored. The rest of the day was also wonderful – we drove with Bogusia and her husband to the Tibetan district, where we had a great time. It was pleasant to look at Tibetans from different traditions and we found many interesting shops and purchased many good things there.

Today we had to wake up very early – quarter to five. I feel it and it is possible that I will sleep on the trip. While I was falling asleep I was very awake. It was difficult for me to let go and relax – I was still conscious and I fell asleep that way (at least I believe I was sleeping). I woke up before the alarm clock rang at 4.45. Now we are riding in a bus and the streets of Delhi are slowly filling up. I can still feel the ubiquitous energy inside of me.

Ryszard Adamiak (text and photos)

Ryszard wrote his journal throughout the whole journey. We could publish only a part of it, and you are welcome to read more at <http://10thway.blogspot.com>



"I'm very happy that for many years Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has been bringing me down to earth."



IN SEARCH OF A CHANGE — ‘THE FIRST LISHU TRIP’

On October 19, 2008 Wojtek Plucinski, a long-time student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, left Krakow in Poland for the first International Meeting in Lishu Institute. The trip also included a visit to the Menri Monastery. “I really wanted to go there together with my teacher and see the places he had talked about so often through his eyes and perspective,” Wojtek says. With the following text, he takes us there with him.

and crossing borders. It was a kind of magical portal to go through behind which some incredible things were concealed, things I could only conjecture but not see. Meeting the whole group of fellow travelers was amazing. I could not fathom how many nationalities there were, how many languages were mingling there, how wide the age gap was – from teenagers to retirees, or how many cultures there were: Americans, Germans, Dutch, Czechs, Slovaks and Latin blood of Mexicans and Italians. Despite all this diversity, we were all under one umbrella of Dharma, guarded by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

1st scene: Delhi

Outer experience

The beginning was hard. At the airport I tried to get into a taxi from the right hand side, with an almost maniacal determination, which totally took the taxi driver aback as he must have thought I was going to drive his taxi. I was discovering again that my habits were stronger than me and my awareness was even smaller than usual and finally I understood: this place is different, let it go, be open – and finally I let him drive his taxi. I was amazed by the uniqueness and beauty of many sights in Delhi. To avoid too many spiritual experiences, at least at the beginning, I balanced them out with shopping, dining and trying the extreme sport of getting around the city by a tu-tu. But somehow everything was coming back to my practice.

Inner experience

This stage of the journey was about adaptation

Secret experience

It was recognising one's self in others' diversity and the diversity itself in the unity. Everything began to fit perfectly, new hues, flavours, fragrances, languages, countries, expectations, emotions; the journey started. Openness was the key.



2nd scene: Dehradun

Outer experience

A beautiful hotel, a beautiful garden, a spa (with an incredible Ayurvedic massage), meals prepared specially for us buffet style – a piece of heaven in the mouth.



What is more, we arrived at Dehradun at the time of the Diwali festival, which was the climax of our stay. Our senses were awakened, our wallets were poorer since we went to the Diwali celebration while there was a market of all sorts of things one could imagine and we were caught in the shopping trap (at least some of us).

3rd scene: Lishu Institute

Secret experience

I realised that our teacher's dream was coming true, that the practice was becoming real. When space exists, there is readiness; when clarity manifests itself, conditions appear, when there is determination, everything matures. We were witnessing our Teacher's practice bearing fruit.



4th scene: Dolanji

Inner experience

I was looking as if Dolanji was a three-dimension mandala, the orphanage and the school at the foot, the doctor's office, the chemist's store and grocery shop a bit higher, the next was the guesthouse (with access to the internet), higher than this was the monastery complex, and at the heart of it was the gompa and the Yeshe Walmo temple.

On my way to the monastery, I encountered a dog from my dreams. Once I had seen the same dog in similar circumstances in my dreams – I was wondering whether it would recognise me, but it

was sitting there in the middle of the road and did not show any interest in me whatsoever. The more I walked, the greater the tension and expectation became, and finally when we met: the dog wagged its tail casually. My dream wagged its tail – that was a good sign, was it not?

5th scene: Menri

Secret experience

Rinpoche once said that if we want to change something in our lives we should offer this intention and effort to Yeshe Walmo. My visit to Menri was supposed to support a change, healing in me – that was the plan. I had a big problem with the hungry ghosts realm. I believed that coming to the source of tradition would change something, that I would find support for the changes. I was looking for determination, strength and clarity, the refuge in this place would be the beginning of a change. On the last day of my visit to Menri I dared to approach the temple of Yeshe Walmo and offered her all of my efforts... And it worked! My attachments disappeared and never came back. Emotions and mind have been quiet and peaceful since then. But something went wrong with the body – I'm putting on weight! Rinpoche said that for this problem I should do the practice of prostrations!

Conclusion

Krakow, Warsaw, Moscow, Delhi, Dehradun, Dolanji, Delhi, Moscow, Warsaw, and Krakow, all these cities visited in 16 days. There were almost as many days as cities on the way. It soon turned out that time lost its inexorability, stretched itself out like rubber, and contained immense amounts of impressions, emotions, teachings and experiences. I did not return victorious like Gaius Julius Caesar, and I should rather have said as Victor Hugo paraphrased this famous maxim: "Veni, vidi, vixi"; I came, I saw and I lived it.

The real journey has just begun then.

Wojtek Plucinski

Photos by Maria Kulik

You can read the whole story with all the inner, outer and secret experiences of the five scenes at <http://10thway.blogspot.com>



THE NUNNERY REDNA MENLING AND THE STUDY OF BON

Sangmo Yangri is studying (Bon) Buddhism and joined the group visiting the Lishu Institute and Menri Monastery with Rinpoche. In Rinpoche's words, in the future Sangmo will teach Western students at the Lishu Institute. Gabriele Penders asked her for an interview.

Please can you tell a bit about yourself?

My name is Sangmo. It is my official given name, although Yangri is the nickname which my late father lovingly gave me. I was born in India. Up until the eighth standard, I did my schooling at the Central School for Tibetan in Dolanji. Dolanji is my home village, where I was brought up. I did my tenth standard at Kullu open school. I then went to the Varanasi Tibetan University, where I did my Shatri (B.A), Acharya (M.A), and M.Phil. I am currently working on my Ph.D. there.

How long has the nunnery been in existence?

Redna Menling was built across the river from Menri Monastery, the Bon monastery with which the nunnery is twinned, in the Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. The name 'Redna Menling' means 'Land of Precious Medicine'. It is the only Bon nunnery in India and one of only a handful in the world. It was completed in April 2001. Girls and young women from Tibet and the borderlands arrive here to study and live as nuns in accordance with Bon teachings. Redna Menling is a rapidly growing institution that fosters and encourages women as leaders and practitioners of the Bon tradition.

What areas do the nuns come from?

Most of the nuns are from the Nepal border areas,

such as Dolpo, Tarab, Tsarga, Samling, Tsophung, and Bale. There are six Tibetan nuns at Redna Menling, and they are from the regions of Kyungpo and Tromtsang.

What does the typical day look like for the nuns? What are their daily practices?

A brief outline of a typical day is as follows: the nuns wake up at 4.30, and start learning scripture until 6.00. From 6.00 to 7.00 is morning prayers, and from 7.00 to 9.00 there is a morning philosophical debate. From 10.30 to 12.00 they have philosophical teachings, from the philosophical masters of Menri Monastery at Dolanji. They have lunch at noon, and a break from 13.00 to 15.00. At 15.00 they do prayers, and then there is a study period from 16.30 to 17.30. A second philosophical debate session takes place from 17.30 until 19.00. Dinner is at 19.30. They

also hold weekly debate sessions, where two senior nuns answer philosophical questions posed to them by the student nuns, one by one. Once a week there is a day off. The day off changes every week, as it is dependent on the lunar calendar.



Sangmo Yangri, Shedup Lopon Geshe Nyima Dhondup, H.H. the 33rd Menri Trizin Rinpoche, Geshe Sonam Gyaltzen and Geshe Nyima Woser.

Recently two senior nuns went to attend a workshop on female empowerment, held at Dharamsala in India.

Do younger students also go to regular schools?

Young nuns, under the age of fifteen, attend the Central school for Tibetan in Dolanji. There are forty-six nuns still attending school, and nineteen philosophical nuns. School is from 9.00 to 15.00. The nuns that are still in school are exempted from the philosophical teachings, unlike the more senior nun students, in order to complete their schoolwork.



Who are the teachers of the nuns in the nunnery?

There are four philosophical masters who teach at Redna Menling. They are Menri Ponlop Thinley Nyima Rinpoche, Shedup Khenpo, Geshe Shenten Rabsal, Shedup Lupon, Geshe Nyima Dhondup, and Geshe Gelek Gyatso. These masters are in charge of the daily philosophical instruction.

You are studying (Bon) Buddhism in Varansi, can you tell a bit about your study? What is the difference to the Geshe study?

I received the same scripture teaching as a monk in the monastery, but I also had a more classical education. Aside from traditional teachings, we studied English, Sanskrit, History, Computer Science, and Economics. A Geshe degree from a monastery is very different from its university equivalent. Monks are awarded their Geshe degree through vocal debate, a traditional monastic approach. For a Ph.D., as it is abroad, one must write a dissertation, which is a long, arduous process.



Regarding my university education, I did my Shastri (B.A), Acharya (M.A), M.Phil. at the Central University of Tibetan studies in Varanasi. At present, I'm pursuing My Ph.D. degree. It's a research project, focusing on Bon and Buddhist Abhidharmakosa. It will be a comparative study. Some of my articles were published in Bonpo magazine, and (only in Tibetan) on the website: www.theyungdrungbon.com. I wrote an article on Drenpa Namkha, the great master of dzogchen and author of 'Bon Abhidharmakosa'. I also wrote about Vasubandhu – the author of 'Buddhist Abhidharmakosa'.

For my M.Phil. thesis, I wrote about the differences between Bon and Buddhist nuns. An excerpt was published in the Bonpo magazine. Unlike a Buddhist nun, according to Bon tradition, a Bon nun can take Bhikshuni vows. Those who

have three hundred sixty Bhikshuni vows are called 'Gelongma', or 'Dangsongma' in Bon tradition. There is a lot of controversy among Buddhists regarding this Gelongma status being given to nuns. I wrote in detail on this issue for my thesis.

There are at present three Gelongmas in the Redna Menling nunnery at Dolanji. Their names are Yeshe Jama, Sherab Palzin and Samten Palzin. They are the first nuns in this century who have taken this Gelongma vow.

When did it become possible for a nun to study for a Geshe degree? Where and for how long can a nun study before receiving this degree?

The teaching of philosophy at the nunnery commenced on 22nd December, 2010 under the guidance of His Holiness Menri Trizin Rinpoche. He provided equal teaching to nuns and monks alike. There are nineteen philosophical nun students. They are the first ever philosophical nun students of Bon. They are able to receive a Geshe degree, just like a monk. And they have to study for twelve to thirteen years in order to get a Geshe degree, just like monks. A lay woman cannot receive a Geshe degree, to do so she must be ordained as nun.

How are they financially supported? Are basic living costs able to be met? In what ways are we able to support these women from abroad?

His Holiness takes care of all financial matters relating to the nuns: food, housing, education etc. It would be very helpful to give donations to the nuns of Redna Menling. Donations from abroad should be given through His Holiness Menri Trizin Rinpoche.

Interview by Gabriele Penders

Photos by Sangmo Yangri



“I LIKE TEACHING HERE, BUT THEY NEED ME BACK IN TIBET...”

At the winter retreat at Serenity Ridge in 2008 Khenpo Tenzin Yeshe was showing the present sangha members how to perform the mandala offering ritual. He mentioned that he had done all the one hundred thousand times of building and dissolving the mandala in six weeks, in the monastery. It was in winter time, it was very cold and when he finished, his hand were bleeding.

As western practitioners, we are curious to know how people practice Bon in Tibet. How do lay people receive teachings there and which teachings?

People go to monasteries for a period of time, for example when they have a vacation, maybe for two to three months, and they ask a lama to teach them. They may be preliminaries, or some teachings from tantra, or even dzogchen teachings.

The Ngondro is the base for us. It is like a key to the door of teachings. If people don't have time to do all the Ngondro, lamas can tell them to do just Boddhicitta for example, or only some of the practices from the Ngondro. But if they want to go to a Tummo retreat or receive Powa teachings, for example, the lama usually tells them to complete the Ngondro first.

Do lay people have one root lama or do they go to different lamas?

It depends. Some of them go to one lama all the time, others ask for teachings and blessings from more than one lama.

How popular is the Dharma and meditation among Tibetan people nowadays?

Young people in cities are not very eager to practice. They enjoy the modern life-style and are not interested in listening to teachings. They have devotion and trust, but they don't study. It is different for village people, they want to study, to practice something. Usually not as much when they are young, but in their fifties, sixties, seventies everybody does some practices.

In 2004 you started to travel to the West and met non-Tibetan Bon practitioners. Were you surprised by anything?

It was very interesting for me that people in the West have many activities. They like to do many things, both work and hobbies. Tibetans are less active. I appreciate this very much and I would advise it to people in Tibet, even in my village. On the other hand, family relations are not so good here. Family members don't care about each other as we do. And many children don't like their parents and they say it. We never argue with our parents even if we disagree with them. We show a lot of respect to them. If you don't do that, other people think that you are not a good person.



Photo by Ula Deręgowska



What about the difference in the approach to the Dharma, did you notice any?

Sometimes people in the West say “I finished my Ngondro”, but when you ask them if they really completed 100.000 prostrations they say “no”.

When they say “finished”, they mean receiving teachings, not so much practicing. People in the West don't practice enough. The most important thing for them is to receive teachings and practice is less important. People also change practices quite often. They like to try something new instead of sticking to what they have. And sometimes they don't give a chance for a practice to develop, to sink in deeper.

You went to Mexico, US, Poland, France – what distinguishes practitioners from those countries?

Mexicans have lots of faith, devotion, deep connection to the Dharma. Polish people are similar in this to Mexicans. They also like purification rituals and healing practices. When they have some difficulties, they come and ask me to pray or to perform some ritual, they have trust in it. Here in France, or in the US, people don't ask me that, ever. In the US, people are also interested in the Dharma, but it seems to me it is more like they wish to have proper knowledge, a good idea about it.



Do people in the West approach the teacher differently? Some say they ask many questions...

I taught young monks in monasteries as well and they ask lots of questions too, when they study dialectics. But it is true that lay people in Tibet don't ask lamas any questions. They just listen to them and see that as blessings. They never ask questions.



Khenpo Tenzin Yeshe was born as the oldest son of a nomadic family in the region of Kham in Eastern Tibet. When he was 18 years old, he became a monk, despite his family's disapproval. “I realized that if I stayed with them I would have the same life as they had: many children, hard work, and no opportunity to help anybody outside the family. I wished to get an education and more possibilities to be active in the world, to help people. For that, I had to leave.”

After taking the vows he studied with different lamas in Tibet for five years. In 1991, at the age of 23 Tenzin Yeshe went to India and continued his studies at Menri Monastery. In 1995 he went to Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu in Nepal and got his Geshe degree there in 2003, after 13 years of studies. In 2004, he started to travel to Mexico, USA and Europe, offering teachings in the centers founded by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and his students.

This year, he is going to teach in Poland and Germany in August and September. But his future is in Tibet where teachers of the Dharma are badly missed. “For me, this way of life is good, but they need me there and they asked me many times to come back. I am going to do that, to help. But I hope that I will be able to travel to the West and teach here too, occasionally.”

People in the West ask a lot, and that's a good school for the teacher. The teacher can make sure that people really understand. With lay people in Tibet you never know if they understood.

I like teaching here. As teachers, we can learn from western students.

Interview by Jitka Polanská

“THESE TEACHINGS CAN UNIFY US”

Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, the main teacher of Menri Monastery, has extensive experience teaching the Bon to Tibetans and Westerners. We asked him to explain to us how their approach to the teachings differs. He was very kind and responded to our request immediately.

Tibetan Bon and Buddhist teachings have spread in the West in the last decades. How is this reflected by lamas when they talk about it among themselves? Did you expect that something like this would happen?

According to my view and my experience with western students, the westerners are mostly interested in antique things. Technology is very advanced in the West, and life can be very tiring there. Technologies are beneficial for the external part of life, but internally, in the inner life of people, there are problems, suffering, deficiencies. And so the westerners look for something that would help them to be free from this inner suffering. Bon and Buddhism attract them as very old, very ancient wisdom. My students from the West are very interested in my teachings and in the culture it comes from, and they have lots of questions about it. And since I am a Geshe, I love to answer their questions. But it is not my goal to bring my culture to the West. I am trying to help those people to solve their inner problems. Actually, I never thought that Bon or I would come to Europe.

The presence of Bon in Europe – is it something that you and other lamas see as useful for the Dharma?

I think it is good to not keep the teachings secret, but to disclose the meaning, the purpose of it to other human beings. This is how the teachings continue to benefit this world.

Did your teachers encourage you to go and teach in the West, in Europe?

No, my teachers never said this. It were my western students who invited me to come.

In the West, teachers have to deal mainly with lay people, unlike in Tibet, India and Nepal,

where the core of the Dharma is cultivated in monasteries. In your opinion, how does this influence the teaching and the Dharma itself?

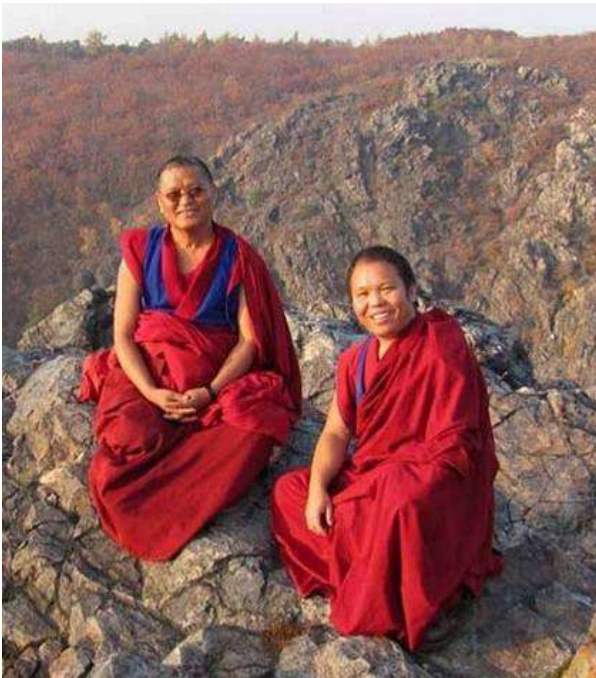
Actually, in the place where I was born and grew up, in the Himalayan region of Nepal, there are no monks. There are only lay people and tantric practitioners. Even in early times there weren't many monks in that area. We do give teachings to lay people in the East.



How does the contact with the western students influence Dharma teachers and the way of teaching?

In the West, I mostly try to help people in their present life. In the East, I usually give teachings and advice for the next life. This life is not so important in the East from the point of view of the Dharma. There are also more interactions in the West between the lama and the students. Eastern people generally have great faith and trust in their spiritual guides and say “yes, yes, yes” to whatever the lama says. In the West, people are more educated and don't believe so easily. They ask more questions. Another difference is that western people don't have so many vacations and they expect to get the teachings quickly. Once,





Menri Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche with Geshe Nyima Woser

one westerner visiting my monastery came to see me. He asked me: "Can you give me dzogchen teachings?" "How long will you be here in this monastery?" I asked him. He said: "A very short time, my taxi is waiting for me, maybe five minutes." "I'm very sorry," I told him, "You don't have time to receive teachings. Dzogchen teachings are not like coffee or an object. I can't just put it in your hand in a minute. It takes a long time." People like short teachings and they like to think about powerful energies being there, available for them – they always say something about "energy, energy".

How has your personal attitude toward western students developed with time? Did you have to adapt your way of teaching to them somehow?

In the beginning I taught in a very detailed way, like in the monastery. Later I realized: "Oh, these details take a long time," and I could see that some people were becoming tired of all these details. Then, I took the essence of the teachings and taught this.

I also don't teach so much on impermanence in the West. In the East, in the Himalayas, when I teach I say: "We are getting old, we are impermanent, we have to do practice," and all these kinds of things. In the West when I say it, people get worried and they become upset. I realized that western people don't want to hear

about suffering. And so I try to be more joyful with them.

In your opinion, what is the future of the Dharma in the West?

Right now the Eastern spiritual teachings are in fashion in the West. If these teachings truly benefit people here, it can have a long life, it will keep growing and developing. I believe this.

Do you think that there are some new qualities arising from the union between the eastern and western mind in the Dharma, in spiritual development?

The two cultures and traditions are different, but the main quality of the teaching is beneficial for both of them. All human beings don't want to suffer and seek happiness. These teachings that can cleanse and purify the obstacles to happiness can unify us.

Interview by Jitka Polanská

Photos by Tenzin Yangton, Alena Klozarová

H.E. Menri Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche was born in 1962 in the small Himalayan village of Tsakha in the Dolpo region of northwest Nepal. Many years ago, the Dolpo region was a part of the Zhang-Zhung kingdom. In 1979, Ponlop Rinpoche came to study at Menri Monastery, the main Bonpo monastery, and obtained his Geshe Degree here in 1989. In 1992, His Holiness and H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche appointed Trinley Nyima Rinpoche as the main teacher of Menri Monastery, giving him the title of Ponlop. Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche occasionally visits the Dolpo region of Nepal to give teachings to thousands of lay people, monks and tantric practitioners. He also regularly visits the United States and Europe where he enjoys teaching to Western practitioners.



IN SEARCH OF THE RIGHT PLACE TO BE

Traditional practice and The Three Doors

The Three Doors, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's non-traditional gift to Western students, will start with the first European three-year Academy in August of this year. In 2010, Tenzin Rinpoche also started teaching the cycle of five-year Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud, the deepest dzogchen teaching in the Bon tradition. How do we know which one is right for us? How do we know what is the right place for us to be? In a seminar held on the fivefold teaching of Dawa Gyaltsen in May 2011 in Amsterdam, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche addressed these questions and talked about how one can relate to both the traditional way of practicing and to the Academy training.

"All the teachings I have been doing lately are part of The Three Doors program. This program is an opportunity to go deeper, a way of engaging your life to create more sharing and more opportunities to share. It is a way to have more commitment, almost like a way to 'speed up'. Of course, you only want to speed up if it is something that you really feel drawn to, something you feel a connection with. Only then does it make sense. 'More commitment' could mean different things. Traditionally, commitment means committing to teachings, practices, sadhanas. For example, reciting mantras or reading texts is one way to commit, a more traditional way of connecting. Clearly it's one opportunity, one possibility. But it might not be a

possibility for everybody because of one's own conditions, limitations, upbringing, and so on. If it's not for you, it's not for you. One shouldn't force that. But then what does it mean to go deeper into the teachings? If this traditional form is not for you, then what is? It's important to find this out. You cannot just say "I don't know". That's not a good answer. "I am not doing it" is the worst answer. So you have to find out what this means for you.

The idea of The Three Doors was to create another possibility. I saw and felt the need to provide this opportunity both for individual transformation and also for the larger sense of collective transformation. But this transformation is still based on the principles of the teachings: The Nine Breathings, Tsa Lung, Five Warrior Syllables, and the Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltsen. It is supported by the books 'Awakening the Sacred Body', 'Tibetan Sound Healing', and 'Awakening the Luminous Mind'.



The Three Doors: Rinpoche's heartdrop for the West.

In this training program, I gave eighteen people a personal invitation. I said to that group: you have to do sixty-three transformations in your life, twenty-one in three areas: personal, family and professional. I want to see sixty-three things that you have changed and I will be the one judging whether they count or not. You cannot come to me and say: "I meant to fix my car for five years and now I finally did". That doesn't count. The ones that count are the deeper, personal shifts. This is what I wanted to see. And it's been an incredible experience for me. It's thousands of pages and a lot of work for me but it's my commitment to them. Each person has eighty to ninety pages. Everybody almost has



a little book that they wrote about their life. It was very inspiring, very moving. I learned so much from them. And they did change. I'd like to see this kind of transformation happening everywhere. I'd like to see it on a social and professional level. I'd like to see it in the way we teach, in the way we do business, in the way we interact with each other, and in the way we die. This is very important for me.

So it feels important to bring these teachings to help people make those changes on a very personal level. This is something I admire very much with that first group. They were willing to do that. It took a lot of time but they did it. And some of them said it was the most rewarding experience they ever had in their spiritual practice, and also the most challenging. So we started this program and I trained the first group of people. I personally don't train the next generations. It's just impossible for me to do. So these people will go to different places. It is like the branching of a tree and I hope it will go everywhere. The first one started in the US, the second one will be in Europe, and the third one will be in Mexico. From there hopefully it will go to more countries."

Student: "How do you relate The Three Doors to other traditional practices such as the Ngondro and other dzogchen practices that also lead to enlightenment?"

"I am very happy to answer that question. One simple statement is that at any given moment in your life there is the opportunity to deepen what is there. This is a question I want you all to look at. What is important to you at this time in your life? What opportunities do you have to deepen your growth? If you've been following the teachings you can see these opportunities and can be more committed to going deeper but only if you feel you are in the right place to do so. If you are not in the right place then it is a good time to find that out. You might need to work on that and be able to trust and commit.

You mentioned Ngondro. I don't teach this lightly and do not believe in teaching it everywhere. Over these past twenty years, I've prepared people to receive the Ngondro. I teach it when people feel

they are ready, when they can commit to it and do it. It is a great opportunity to go deeper. I tell my old students, especially those who are in the role of teaching, to finish the Ngondro first! So that's one opportunity to go deeper. In the US, I finished only one cycle in the last twenty years. We started in Europe last year. It is serious for me. I teach it and expect people to do it, particularly those who have been with me for a long time.

So that's one way to commit. If anyone has a problem with traditional forms such as prostrations or reciting of mantras, I respect that. If it's a problem, it's a problem. You have to acknowledge that. Then you host it. That's my principle. I don't say "You are in the wrong place.

Get out of here!" No. The whole idea of The Three Doors is hosting a problem, acknowledging a problem. In this practice nobody can

have an excuse. The only excuse is your own laziness and ignorance. We don't have any form. Even the first time I went into our shrine room I did not sit on my throne. I said I don't want any throne. I don't want anybody to do prostrations here. I want you to take my pictures off the shrine. I don't want you to look at me. I want you to look at yourself. I'm just a messenger and a mirror. No more. Then if there is any problem it's not me, it's you! (*laughter*) This was my way of getting out of the problem.

So we say in The Three Doors: no shrine, no images. The syllables are there, the sounds are there, but there are no images. It is very personal. It is very direct, clear, fresh wisdom. I did not really know at first how everything was going to work out. I am really so happy that people taste this wisdom. I can see that. One of the students came to me and said "I've been practicing all these years to find space and awareness and can really feel the space coming alive now". I was happy to hear that. In our morning session of practice I was talking about the refuge place. That space, that awareness, that bliss, is not outside in the shrine; it's in you. It's not hidden; it's everywhere, even in your pain. That's what you discovered this weekend. If you look at your pain more closely than you ever have before, you discover space there. You discover awareness



The Three Doors Academy Europe will be open for applicants to step in for the second group training retreat in March 2012. Check the application process at www.the3doors.org. Applications will be accepted until January 2012.



there. You discover some quality there. It's just a taste but imagine extending that more and more: discovering more space, discovering more awareness, discovering more qualities. These things will change your life. So don't create a beautiful shrine outside. You *are* a beautiful shrine. In every channel, every location, you create a shrine: you create space, you create awareness, you create that quality.

Throughout the next months, The Three Doors will provide free online sessions with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Marcy Vaughn to give people a taste of what is happening throughout the Academy Training. More information at www.the3doors.org

The Three Doors and more traditional practice complement each other very well. One is more informal and one formal. I recommend that everybody who follows the Ngondro and the teachings more seriously in the traditional way do The Three Doors as well. But doing it the other way around is the question. For those people who do not feel like doing the traditional form don't do it! That's the whole idea. You will find your own forms. If you are Christian, you will find your own forms. If you are Muslim, you will find your own

forms. If you are not particularly following any kind of religion, you will still find your own forms. But the formless essence of the teachings is important. That you cannot skip. I feel the same thing in my own life. I am so happy with all the forms that I have in my life: I feel enriched but

know it is not the main thing. And yet I notice that if I'm feeling very happy I cannot but see beauty in this cup. If I am open I cannot help but see openness in

somebody I'm encountering in my life. Whatever form I find, wherever I express my inner realization, is valuable for me. But for me it is wrong to say this is the only right form. It's important to allow other forms for those who need other forms. Ultimately, each person needs to understand what their own forms are and then commit to using them."

Edited by Anja Benesch & Laura Shekerjian

Photo by Henk Scholten

THE THREE DOORS FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY

Raven Lee is one of the 12 people trained by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche who graduated at a ceremony held in June 2011 at Serenity Ridge. She has been chosen as a Three Doors Academy teacher and will be teaching at The Three Doors Academy Europe along with John Jackson. Here is what she shared with us about the ceremony.

"Sitting in front of His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima, I was filled with boundless gratitude and humility to be part of this first graduating group. During the remarkable three years of training, I came to realize the profundity of Rinpoche's vision and understood that the program was his heart essence and gift to us all. As I listened to His Holiness's acknowledgment of Rinpoche and the Three Doors, my appreciation and awe deepened. His loving and inspiring words became a seal of recognition and a direct connection

to the lineage. With each blessing of body, speech and mind that he conferred, I felt the strength of the immense kindness and wisdom of my precious teachers. Filled with unwavering trust and unshakable confidence, I eagerly step forward and share the jewels and heart drops of Rinpoche with my European sangha brothers and sisters."

Raven Lee

Photo by Courtesy of Ligmincha Institute



MONKS FROM THE MENRI MONASTERY CLOSE TO US

Thirteen monks from Menri, the main exile Bonpo monastery in India, spent almost three weeks in May and June of this year in the Czech Republic. They came to show the cham dance and other elements of Bon cultural and spiritual heritage to the broad public. Most of them had never been in Europe before. It was a great experience for them, and also for the people who took care of them during the visit.

I heard about them for the first time two years ago. A group of monks from Menri were supposed to come in Prague already in 2009. They were even mentioned on the posters promoting the *Tibet of the Mind* festival in Prague that year, but in the end, they didn't show up. The right conditions and circumstances – the organizers' possibilities, sponsor funding, tiny support from the Prague government and so on – came together this spring. But it was an adventure until the last moment.

A couple of days before the monks' departure it seemed they would not come this time either. Czech authorities refused to give visas to half of the ensemble – those with the refugee status in India – and the journey seemed to have finished before it started. It was the Minister of Foreign Affairs

himself who had to convince the officials of the Ministry of Interior that the risk of illegal immigration is not so great to justify ruining a cultural event Prague was waiting for.

In the middle of May the group finally arrived. For most of them it was the first trip outside India. Some came from Tibet directly to Menri and didn't travel at all. But watching them you wouldn't say that. They found their place naturally anywhere they went. You can see it from the pictures.



We were happy to spend time with those charming and clever guys. You feel very lighthearted in their presence. When you have a taste of it you will know what I mean.



I hope they will come to Europe again. They told me that they would like to see other countries too. Now, it is up to us to make it happen.

If you want to know more about the journey and see more pictures please contact the leader of the group Sonam Gurung at asonam@rediffmail.com, or on Facebook.

Jitka Polanská

Photos by Šárka Koliášová, Jiří Růžička



MENRI MONKS: “WE ARE HAPPY TO MEET BONPOS IN EUROPE”

Triyungdrung Marnangtshang, the editor of the Menri Monastery website and one of the horn blowers of the ensemble, and Rinchen Tsabtsa, the Yeshe Walmo performer, came to Menri from Tibet and had never traveled outside India before this journey. We asked Geshe Sonam Gurung and Geshe Tenzin Yangton – leaders of the group who can speak English well – to translate for these two young men, and we asked them what they liked most about Europe, about the Czech Republic. This is what they said.

introduced us to them as students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche he felt a strong connection. Meeting Bonpos here meant very much to him. “It is not like meeting other people, it is different,” he said. Bon in Tibet suffered a lot, he said, but he could see that thanks to our masters it could be preserved and spread.

They were happy because they could see that the Bon teachings have gone as far as Europe and took root here. Those clever guys got over all the distances so easily. They could clearly see that no distances exist.

Jitka Polanská

They liked the clean streets here, they said (everything is relative, they haven't been to Germany), they noticed how much we care about nature, the environment (sure, comparing to India it's true), and also good quality materials like wood used in houses and apartments.

Castles and cathedrals impressed them too. They said they could feel the power of protection they emanate.

And they enjoyed and appreciated the warm welcome from the local people. Triyungdrung said that when he comes back to the monastery he would tell everybody there about the friendly people and their big and sincere interest for Tibetan culture and religion.

He also said he had been writing poems every day of his stay here. Seeing Bon sacred objects treasured here and meeting Bon students touched him.

Rinchen Tsabtsa said that since the very beginning, when Geshe Nyima who lives in Prague



Photos by Šárka Koliášová, Jiří Růžicka, monks



ABOUT BON CHAM DANCE

At the beginning, the cham dance may seem monotonous and boring. But when somebody unveils the symbolic meaning of the gestures and stories in the background of various dances, it becomes fascinating. Otherwise, you just get beyond the boredom with time, as the dance guides you to a special state of consciousness. We asked Geshe Nyima Choekhortshang to tell us a bit about the cham dance.

What is the cham dance about?

Cham is a sacred dance, a dance with a religious meaning in Bon. Sometimes when we want to emphasize the sacredness of cham we call it by a longer name – *gshen gyi gar 'cham*, which means

performed there. Dancers re-enact the actions of the protectors, for example they play out Yeshe Walmo cutting negativities with movements of a sword. And there are some other dances – such as the lion or the yak cham – which we classify as 'indetermined'. They may be related to some rituals and texts, like the skeleton dance does. Eight offering goddesses is another dance of this third group.

When is cham usually performed?

At Losar, the New Year celebration. It takes up the whole day and still, not all dances are performed. There are some other important occasions when a cham show takes place, usually as a shorter version, but the most important festival takes place at Losar.



the dance of the *shen* – a Bon priest in ancient times. One group of the cham dances is related to Tonpa Shenrap, the founder of the Bon teachings. These dances show the story of Tonpa Shenrap's life. Other dances are connected with protectors of Bon, such as Yeshe Walmo, who is the main protector. But some monasteries have their own protectors who can appear in the cham

What happens at the festival?

There is a precise sequence of dances performed. At Menri Monastery we start with the dance of the main protector – Yeshe Walmo, who is an emanation of Sidpa Gyalmo. After that, the offering goddesses come and make offerings to Sidpa Gyalmo. Then another protector enters the scene.



Who are the performers? Does every monk go through training as a cham dancer?

No, cham dancers are chosen among those who can dance well. The word *cham* refers to coordination of movements of hands and legs. It

I think it will be Sidpa Gyalmo dance and another one which is called the black hat dance or also the Mother Tantra dance because it is related to this important Bon text.



distinguishes cham from other ancient Tibetan dances, like the 'gar' where you move only hands and arms, or, on the other side, the 'dro' which you perform mostly with legs. In cham, you dance with both hands and legs, which is not easy. So, the cham dancer has to have some talent, a good sense of body balance, flexibility. At first, more monks are admitted to the cham classes. They are taught some basic steps and the rhythm of the dance, which they should familiarize themselves with and learn how to count. We have to learn rituals related to the dance as well, so we read and memorize some texts. Then, we learn some simpler dances. There is one dance representing the cosmology of Bon. There are twenty-seven entities tamed by the protector Sidpa Gyalmo and forming her retinue now. So, you need twenty-seven dancers for this dance and their role is quite simple. Then, if a dancer is good, next year he is chosen again and he learns a dance which is more difficult. Not everybody advances to higher classes. Gradually, only the best ones remain and these are taught the most complicated dances.

Do you know what the monks are going to perform here in Prague, during the public performance?

Have you danced?

Yes, I did. I performed almost all the dances, except for two which require too much jumping and swinging on one foot. Only a few monks were able to perform that and they had to train for it for years.

Do monks want to be cham dancers? Is it prestigious?

Yes. Not every monk who wants to do it is allowed.

There is a selection. First, good dancers are selected. Then, if there is somebody among them who belongs to a lineage of teachings or is a reincarnation, he is considered to be the first choice. If the dancer is special, coming from a family of lineage holders of teachings or being a tulku, we believe that the protectors are pleased with it and the dance has more power. So, in the end, only a few monks from the whole monastery get the chance to become first class cham dancers.

Did you do a tour in Europe when you were part of the dance ensemble?

No, there was no such opportunity at the time.

Interview by Jitka Polanská

Photos by Jiří Růžička



BON MET WITH AN ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE IN HUNGARY

We asked Hungarian students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to tell us the story of their sangha.

In Hungary many people are interested in Buddhism. In Budapest, we even have a college specialised in Buddhism – The Gate of Dharma Buddhist College.

I attend this college. The story of Bon in Hungary started there. One of the founders and teachers, Katalin Jakab, met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in 2002 and became his student right away. She says that his teachings charmed her from the very first moment.

Rinpoche taught in neighbouring countries and so she started to travel to follow his teachings. She

also introduced her students to Bon. She translated some of Rinpoche's books and thanks to them Bon became known in this country. Many people felt that the teachings spoke to them and began to look for ways to come in contact with the teacher. Katalin and the school sponsored interested students so that they could take part in some retreats abroad, for example in Poland. Many young people joined the sangha as a result. Vienna is very close to Budapest and we went there for the Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltsen the first year, and Five Element Soul Retrieval this spring. We also listen to Rinpoche's online teachings, with translation.

Eleven people from our country entered the five-year cycle of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud in Austria last year. Katalin helped many of us to get in there and we are grateful for that. As Rinpoche said, it is

a long-term personal commitment. But it was also helpful to build a sangha – Ligmincha Hungary. Now we have a framework for our functioning and for organizing programs.

The first event was held this spring, during Easter holidays. Katalin, encouraged by Rinpoche, invited Karoline Seltenheim, an Austrian long-time student of Rinpoche's and a prominent figure in the sangha, to Budapest.

During the weekend seminar, Karoline focused on Tsa Lung and Nine Breathings of Purification as explained in Rinpoche's new book, *Awakening the Sacred Body*. Karoline is a nice person and a good teacher. Participants were inspired by her simple and accessible teaching style with many practical examples. Newcomers liked Tsa Lung

right on the spot and those who were already familiar with the teachings deepened their understanding. Everyone drew a lot of inspiration for practice in daily life. We formed a practice group led by Péter Tongori. We meet every week in a place that the college offered to the sangha. For the time being there are nine practitioners but we are growing.

We are planning to organize listening sessions of Rinpoche's online teachings with translation. We would be grateful if Karoline visited us again, to deepen the relationship between Austrian and Hungarian groups. And of course we would like to host Rinpoche in this country.

Kata Bertók

Photo by Hungarian sangha



HOW I BECAME A BONPO

Péter Tongori from Hungary was introduced to the Bon by his grandmother. Here is the story of how he became a follower of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.



My first encounter with Tibet's oldest spiritual tradition – the Yungdrung Bon – happened in 2003. My grandmother gave me Rinpoche's book *Healing with Energy, Form and Light* with the words: "you should read this". She knew that I was interested in these kinds of things. We talked about the Bardo Thödol and other Tibetan Buddhist teachings and stories. Grandma also liked Alexandra David-Neel's books very much, which spoke about many unknown aspects of Tibet.

Reading the book was very exciting for me. It gave a good summary of the nine paths of Bon in theory and practice. In the part describing the shamanistic way I read about elemental spirits called *tsen*. The book says that they like cliffs and don't like if somebody blocks their routes. If this happens, they can cause heart disease as revenge to that person. When I was reading these lines I recalled a family story and I realized the bigger picture at that moment.

When I was a child, my father closed a path running through our property. This place is on top of the hill. After a few years, while my grandfather was gardening there, his heart began to hurt. Later on he had a heart attack and he had to leave this place and his hobby due to the illness.

Nobody recognized the secret relationship between his problem and the *tsen*. After reading these lines I went to my grandmother instantly and shared with her what I thought might be the reason for my grandfather's illness. She agreed and she told me that a year before, during a stormy night, when she and my grandfather were sleeping in the house, she had a terrible dream. A dark man appeared to her and ordered her to leave this place. When she tried to object, the stranger got angry and my grandma felt a hand grabbing her heart. She woke up terrified and gasping for air. She asked me not to try to scare this creature away, because she was afraid of me getting hurt.

I promised her I will do no such thing – I already had another plan in mind. I decided to help the ghost with dedications and food offerings. After a few days I went to our property alone and I made offerings following the instructions of Rinpoche's book.

I didn't know these practices very well, but I really wanted to help the *tsen* and my grandfather. Since then, every time when I am there I do food and mandala offerings to local spirits. And we haven't had issues caused by that angry mountain spirit since then.

These events convinced me that Rinpoche is an authentic and authoritative teacher. From that time on, I wanted to meet him and receive the blessing of his teachings. This opportunity came last spring in Vienna. With our Mentor, Katalin Jakab, we participated in the Five-fold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltzen held by Rinpoche. The Gate of Dharma Buddhist College in Budapest sponsored our stay there. It was a wonderful meeting and my dream came true. In times like these you can really unite with the Lama in your heart.

Péter Tongori

Photos by Miklós Gaul and Maria Kulik



IRRESISTIBLE ATTRACTION OF THE SANGHA BOOKSTORES

During retreats, we can find more and more items to buy, and we actually buy more and more: books, cards with Bon icons, statues, thangkas, calligraphies and many other sacred and ritual objects related to Bon. Veronique Leenders has been working closely with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche on coordinating and developing the sangha bookstores within Ligmincha Europe. Veronique is a very suitable person for this task; she has been involved in the book trade for almost 40 years. She has worked for a publishing house, as a freelance editor of children's books, as a librarian and as a buyer for a big bookshop.

Veronique, let's tell the story from the very beginning. When and how did you start your selling career within the sangha?

It was eleven years ago. Since Rinpoche started coming to Holland we have been selling his books at retreats. I have a seller's eye and I quickly noticed that people like to come and see if there is something interesting to buy, and we started to think of how to enrich our merchandise. The idea was to raise some money for the sangha this way. We started to produce recordings of the teachings to sell to participants, as well as prayers on CD, or cards with sacred images that we produced ourselves. And gradually, our horizons expanded. When somebody travelled to India or Nepal or Tibet, I asked them to bring some items for the shop. And of course, from the very beginning, many things were arriving with Rinpoche.

Now your responsibilities have become 'multinational'. I could see you running the shop in Vienna and in Berlin too...

Yes, two years ago we started trying with Rinpoche to bring more of a system and coordination into the business. He asked me to supervise the shops in Berlin, Buchenau, Vienna, and also at the retreats of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud teachings in Austria. My experience helps me understand what people like to buy and what we should order from Nepal. This way, we are more successful, we can give more work to the craftsmen who produce the items and we can

please the buyers as well. The volume of the things sold during retreats has been growing. Now, we are trying to coordinate with the publishers of books we sell in Europe and with Ligmincha Institute in the US.

How does it feel, keeping a shop during seminars? What would you say to people who would like to help you?

If you like to be in the center of things, the shop is the right place for you. I think there is no participant who would not come and see what is in the shop. You get to talk with many people there. But you have to keep in mind that you can find yourself in situations of total confusion and you have to be able to just go along with them. Flexibility is needed. There are many things to take care of – listen to people and answer their question, mark down the sold items, take the money and give change back, display and order the goods, but the most important thing is to remain calm and to go with the flow. Some people cannot bear all those impulses coming to them. But when the team has the right attitude, then there is lot of joy and fun.

If people want to buy something in between seminars can they contact you?

Yes, I can send them a book, or other things by mail. It's possible and I have already done it. They can contact me by e-mail: leenders6@hetnet.nl.



Interview by Jitka Polanská

Photo by Cristina Vadala



AWAKENING A SANGHA

Lidia Castellano is an Italian student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. His guidance and wise example led her back from India to Rome where she didn't feel at home before. Now she tries to build Ligmincha Italy.

Lidia, when I met you for the first time in 2008 you were leading a tranquil and contemplative life on your own in India and it didn't seem you would ever want to go back to Italy. Now, a bit more than two years later, you are talking to me from your apartment in Rome and I know you are very active in building a community of Tenzin Rinpoche students in Italy. What happened in between?

Many things happened. But all was set in motion even before we met. I had felt somehow out of place in my city, Rome. I have spent many years of my life in India. I fell in love with the country when I was twenty and since then I would come and go for many years. The place got into my blood. Then, due to family and health problems, I couldn't continue going there till 2002. That year, I started attending a course for yoga instructors in Rome. I was studying yoga and related things such as Indian philosophy and suddenly it flashed through my mind: why am I studying about India here in Rome, when I can experience it myself? So I went there again after twenty years. Since 2004 I almost settled there, enjoying peaceful retired life. But in 2007 Rinpoche broke into this peace. His book *Tibetan Yoga of Dream and Sleep* landed in my hands in a bookstore. I was always attracted by those stories from ancient times about spiritual seekers meeting true teachers, their gurus, and feeling immediately a strong urge to follow them. I had been wondering if this was still possible in these times. I personally met many good teachers in my life but I never felt a strong bond. But after reading the book I wanted very much to meet the author. I found out



he would be teaching about dream yoga in Spain in only two months. I went there and after that I decided to join him and a group of his students on a trip to the Lishu center and to Menri Monastery. This was in October 2008.

We were sharing a hotel room in Dolanji, where we were visiting the monastery. I remember one evening you were telling me about your meetings with the Abbot of the Menri Monastery, H.H. Menri Trizin Rinpoche. You were very impressed by what he told you.

Yes, but this was already my second time meeting him. I had already gone to the monastery two months earlier. I wanted to see the place where my newly found root teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, used to study.

But that's true, meeting and talking with Menri Trizin was an awakening experience. He was quite hard on me, actually, asking: "What are you doing

all the time, spending your life going here and going there, it's not useful for you and for anybody else. You should stay here, instead, for some time". I took what he said seriously. It made me think. I was thinking about it every day during those two months between the two visits. And the last day of my second visit to Menri I went to him and I told him that yes, I accept his

invitation and I would come back soon. I couldn't stay right then, my visa was about to expire.

And did you come back?

Yes, I came back after some time and spent two months there. I was in retreat most of the time. His Holiness gave me some practices to do and he also told me not to talk. It was a very strong experience. I found out how many useless things we say every day, and how much of a waste of energy it is. I found out that in silence I could focus much better on what I do. This silence was giving me such a big sense of freedom! But after a few weeks I started to talk again because I noticed



that I started to hate people who were talking and I didn't want to build a sense of superiority.

After two months I was ready to leave. For as much as I liked it there, it wasn't my place. A monastery has its own purpose and program which I don't fit in. When I left, I kept on living my usual life, travelling to Europe mostly to prolong the visa and coming back to India as soon as possible. Then, the rules for obtaining Indian visas changed and you now had to have bigger breaks between stays. I couldn't come back so quickly.

This started to keep me in Rome for longer periods of time. But I still felt disconnected from the city, from people here. There were a few months when I was having a hard time, thinking "and now what?" And even if I was considering settling there it seemed difficult for me to make a living. Then I started to understand that the problem is not Rome, but my attitude, my resistance to the situation. All the time when I was here, instead of living it I was

planning to escape to India, and this doesn't let anything good to happen. I felt I had to stop doing this. And I stopped quite radically. I cancelled my flight to India which was paid already and I lost the money.

And how did things change for you exactly?

Yes, opportunities started to manifest, besides yoga teaching I started working as a guide. I didn't give that a chance before, my mind wasn't there. Now I am trying to follow the example of my teachers – to be open to what life is asking me to do, and not create more conditions by wanting something else than what it is.

In March of this year you organized a seminar with Rinpoche in Rome. He came to teach there after many years. How did you feel, being the only organizer?

Rinpoche's accepting my invitation was one of the things that confirmed to me that I was going in

the right direction. I asked him to come teach in Rome when I met him in Madrid the year before. I asked him out of blue, very spontaneously. I had no idea what I would do if he said yes. Then, of course, preparations kept me busy for quite a few months, and it was a new experience for me, a new role. But everything went well. Rinpoche came for ten days and had his vacation here and I could spend some time with him, going to see him in his apartment, having lunch with him, in a very family-like atmosphere.



I can see you are very active on Facebook, posting all the Dharma related information there, you founded a group 'Ligmincha Italy'. Is building a sangha your priority now?

You know, in one of the webcasts Rinpoche gave I realized I was the only Italian present and I was thinking that's not right, that I would like to change that. There are other Bon dzogchen practitioners in Italy, but they are scattered, there is no community. Of course, some of them may prefer it that way, but personally I feel very much that it's important to connect with a teacher in the Dharma, and with people following the teacher. I was always a person on my own, but now I see the beauty of sharing what I have with other people, with a sangha. And since there is no sangha in Italy for the time being, I have to create one, so I am not lonely here. (laughing)

Interview by Jitka Polanská

Photos by Anja Benesch and Mirka Janoskova



MY LOSAR IN PRAGUE

Floor Van Orsouw from the Netherlands came to see how Losar is celebrated in Prague, and wrote a lively article about it.

On March 5th the New Townhall in Prague, Czech Republic, was decorated with colourful prayer flags and gave way for the public celebration of Losar; Tibetan New Year. The start of the year of the iron rabbit, the year 2138, was a day of cham dance, meditation and yoga workshops, music performances, film presentations, a market with books and Tibetan products, and even a wedding ceremony led by Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang, Bonpo monk, teacher and researcher who currently lives in Prague.

Last year was the first time I felt part of the collective Tibetan New Year's joy thanks to all the Losar wishes of my Facebook friends. This year Jitka Polanská invited me to come to her hometown for the annual Losar event, organised by the



Jitka Polanská, Geshe Nyima Woser and Floor van Orsouw

Dzogchen fellowship; students of the Tibetan lama Chogyal Namkhai Norbu. Together with Jozho, another student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, we arranged a stand with several of Rinpoche's books, a slide show with pictures of Menri Monastery, information about the weekly practice group in Prague and a pile of European newsletters. In the afternoon we gave a presentation about Tsa Lung and Rinpoche's book *Awakening the Sacred Body* to a group of people. An interesting experience: meeting all kinds of obstacles from technical to personal and yet feeling the joy of sharing something that is so meaningful in our lives.

The Losar event in Prague started in 2003 as a non-profit beneficial action for the international charity organisation A.S.I.A. and even as the event has grown over the years, it is still on non-profit base and gathers funds for projects in support of Tibetans.

The entire medieval building was breathing a multicultural Losar atmosphere. Tibetan products in every corner, the smell of Indian food, Czech sweets and Italian coffee, the sounds of bells and prayers according to a tight schedule. In between activities in the main hall there was a photo display of the first annual Lishu trip. How wonderful to see His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima, Rinpoche, Tsering, Senghe and cham dancers from Menri Monastery projected on the wall of that big hall!

Traditionally in Tibet Losar was celebrated during fifteen or even more days.

For Bonpos the first month of each Tibetan year is considered a holy month, since it is the birth month of Tonpa Shenrab and Nyame Sherab Gyaltsen.

In India the celebrations take three days. Smoke and food offerings, purification rituals and cham dances are being performed, and new prayer flags are being hung out.

The Losar event in

Prague is a result of the cooperation of various Czech Buddhist groups and it attracts not only Buddhists, but also a big general public. This is quite unique I think.

Several activities of the program were led by Geshe Nyima: a meditation workshop, a short meditation session and a wedding ceremony. It was a memorable moment for me to softly sing along with him the dedication in a hall full of people at the end of the ceremony and at the beginning of a new year.



Floor van Orsouw

Photos by Maan Rokaya



EXPRESS YOUR EXPERIENCE – POETRY IN THE DHARMA

Lately, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has emphasized the value of creative expression for spiritual growth – and of its sharing. Floor Van Orsouw asked Kalsang Norbu Gurung who studied at Menri monastery and received a doctorate at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands about basic notions of the Bon poetry tradition.

Many of us would like to be more creative, but are somehow unable to unlock their creative potential. Last summer, during the Three Doors retreat in Buchenau, Rinpoche spoke about expression through writing. Throughout history yogis express their deep experiences in poems and songs. Certain poems, called 'nyam gyur' in Bon and Tibetan Buddhist tradition, are even able to give the reader the same experience the writer had. So, a poem or a song may be a gift we offer to others. "It boils down to the way you see yourself, feel yourself. We focus on the outcome, not on who is creating," Rinpoche explains in the recorded webcast of his talk *Discovering Your Creative Potential* that he gave on April 20th this year.

Poetry in the Bon tradition

Poetry that we know in the West is not quite the same as poetry in the Bon tradition. In Tibetan culture there is not such a phenomenon as a 'professional poet'. Poetry mainly consists of so called songs of realisation written by masters and monks. Part of the education program in the monastery is a poetry course in which the monks and nuns learn to compose poetry in all the existing traditional forms. Like in Western poetry there are traditional and modern ways of writing poems. In the traditional way each line consists of the same amount of words or syllables. If the first line has seven words, the other verses should also have seven words. Each verse usually has four lines. The number of verses is undefined. The traditional forms are used more often than the loose modern form, especially when it concerns a poem that is written in praise of one's lama.

Two sangha members share their poems in the following pages: enjoy them, and send us your poetry and other creative work. We will publish them in the next issue of the magazine.

Floor van Orsouw

Because of Teacher's great compassion
In extracting essence from that heart's center,
Scripture which explains by way of blessings
Is scripture of knowledge, the single effortless one:
This is the king of all scriptures
Powerfully piercing, like the great Garuda
Leaping strongly like the lion
Extending everywhere like the sky.
Moistening everything like the ocean.

Poem by A. Klein & T. Wangyal (2006), *Unbounded Wholeness*, p.291; photo by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Designed by Anja Benesch



ZHINÉ

Silence confusion
silence blockages
silence how do I judge?
whom do I see as myself?
through whose eyes do I watch?

Silence the wind is lying down
silence thoughts fluttering
silence appearance of space
like the clouds breaking open in the sky
discovery of myself

Silence there is consciousness
silence there is no self
silence where am I?
as finding a for long times hidden treasure
the purity of the child tears of being touched

Marlies Cober-Philippens



©Ligmincha Institute Bookstore



Praise of slowness

I brought a blue khatag
from my last trip.
I put it on the shrine.

Isn't it beautiful
in the morning light?

Water is slower than air,
I can't rush so much,
I have to slow down.

It's like walking in water.
I feel so slow now.
Slow, fluid,

a bit dumb...



The Buddha mind

remembering the monks from Menri

There was something special about them,
I can't say what exactly.
Somebody asked me to spend some time
for them and I said yes, as a part of my
service, just to help.

But the duty turned into pure pleasure soon.
It did. They were like the cloudless sky.
I don't know if this is the way they always are,
or just on holiday, but for me, they were this.

I couldn't perceive any side thoughts around,
and so there was nothing to think about,
except for the organization.

Serving them was beautiful,
it was like flowing in the sky.

They were just open.
They were the Buddha-mind.

The heart mantra

for all the masters represented by Tapihritsa

The door out and the door in,
the main distraction from any phenomena,
an everlasting reminder to be present
in a dream-like reality.
Very simple to remember:
I love you.

Jitka Polanská



“WE CAN TRUST WESTERNERS”

Triyungdrung Marnangtshang, one of the monks from Menri Monastery visiting Europe in May and June 2011, writes poetry and he did so during the trip as well. We asked him to share a poem with us. He chose one and our part was to face the challenge of delivering its meaning in English. A precise and poetic translation of a poem written in a traditionally structured manner and playing with metaphorical expressions is not an easy task at all and it would be quite hard to find somebody who can spend time on it. Geshe Namgyal Nyima who lives in Berlin kindly worked on a rough translation with us, consulting it with the author and explaining us nuances of the poem .

In the first three verses, the poem speaks about the author's background; the second half of it is related to the journey to Europe. At the beginning, Triyungdrung mentions three places where his life has unfolded. “Due to my previous good karma I was born in Tibetan land,” he says. He made his first cry, leaving his mother's womb, in a nomadic land, in high mountains. Later on, he moved to live in a valley. Then, his karma has brought him to a distant mountainous area in India where he is living now.

Then Triyungdrung is describing qualities and influences that he gained from the four main directions of the world – north, south, east and west. In the north, in his native Amdo region, in the area of lakes called Kokonor, he gained speech. In the south, in India, in the village of Dolanji where the Menri Monastery is located, he was introduced to the dialectic and philosophy. From the east, troubles come for monks caused by the current wild rulers of his land. The west, the place of hectic life, is a source of many distractions for his young mind.

And what are the forces uplifting his life? Affection for Tibetan culture and people, a result of his karmic traces; encouragement and inspiration given him by others; his loyalty to and love for the Yungdrung Bon which keeps him pursuing the monk's path; and the ability to write

poetry: pleasures and joys granted him by his creative mind and confidence of speech.

The second half of the poem is dedicated to the overwhelming experience of the journey to Europe. The flight in a plane that brought them here was a strong experience that evoked lots of thoughts and ideas in the author's mind. This machine, a powerful invention, lifted him on metal wings to the sky; crossing the space, they met clouds, sun and moon. Looking from the sky to the ground made the author think about the ancient wisdom texts which say that above the four continents that constitute the earth the sun arises and sets at the same time. But this was clearly contradicted by his direct experience. Bon cosmology also came to Triyungdrung's mind. According to it, all people in origin were ‘black-headed’ – but in the West, people have fair hair.

Following this, the author is indirectly referring to Gendun Choephel. Gendun Choephel, a monk who became a famous Tibetan opinion leader of the last century, and who said that Westerners lack compassion. But Triyungdrung says: “Wait a minute, let's examine this matter a bit more before we accept this judgment as true – it doesn't look like this.” According to Gendun Choephel, Westerners are not trustworthy people: if you ask them where to go, they may point out the wrong direction to you. Triyundrung doesn't agree with that: “There is no ground for thinking like this, let's not be suspicious,” he says.

Gendun Choepel admired technological skills of Westerners. He compared the intelligence of western scientists to an electronic torch. Tibetans always see sources of light – symbolized traditionally by butter lamps – as sources of wisdom. Triyundrung, fascinated by the remarkable progress of technology visible in the West says, at the very end of his poem: “Maybe it is even more than that”; implying maybe that the intelligence driving the progress may be compared to even more powerful source of light.

**Translation of Geshe Namgyal Nyima,
in cooperation with Jitka Polanská**



Europe . . .

through his eyes



Triyungdrung Marnangtshang

ནུབ་ཕྱོགས་ཡུ་རོབ་^{EUROPE} ཟློང་དུ་སླེབས་པའི་ཚེར་སྒྲུང་ཐན་ཐུན།

ཕྱོན་པས་གསལ་བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་སྒྲོན་པ་བསེལ་ཐུན་ཁ་བའི་ཡུལ་དུ་བཏབས།
 མོག་མའི་རིགས་ཞེན་དུ་སྒྲུང་བཅད་པོ་མཐོ་སྒྲུང་འབྲོག་ཐང་རི་ནས་མཆེད།
 གཞུགས་གཞིའི་ཡུང་པོའི་འཆར་ལོངས་རིམ་པ་དམའ་མོ་རོང་བའི་ཡུལ་ནས་བྱུང་།
 མི་ཚེ་ལྷ་མའི་གོང་ཐང་དོན་པོ་ངེས་མེད་རིལ་བསྐྱལ་དགོས་བྱུང་།

བྱང་གི་ཁྱི་གཤོག་རྒྱལ་མའི་ངོགས་སུ་ཨམ་སྒྲོན་ཆོན་པ་དག་ལ་བྱུར།
 མོ་ཡི་ཚེ་བའི་རྒྱབས་ཀྱི་ཁོད་ནས་རིག་ལམ་ཐར་ཐར་ཡིད་ལ་བྱུང་།
 སར་གྱི་ཆང་གི་བཟེ་ཁ་བཅན་ངོས་རིལ་རིལ་མགོ་པོར་རྒྱག་ངལ་བྱིན།
 རུབ་ཀྱི་ཡོ་ལང་རྩ་ཚོགས་ཁོད་ནས་རྒྱང་རྒྱང་སྒོ་ལ་གོམ་ཁ་སྒྲུང་།

བག་ཆགས་ཤིག་གིས་ཀུན་ནས་བསྐྱངས་ཏེ་རིག་གཞུང་ཞིག་ལ་དུངས་ཀ་ཟབ།
 རམ་འདྲེགས་ཤིག་གིས་རྒྱབ་ནས་སྒྲོར་ཏེ་སེམས་པའི་ཁམས་ལ་ངར་ཤྱགས་བསྐྱུན།
 ལ་རྒྱ་ཞིག་གིས་འདུན་ནས་བཏེགས་ཏེ་ངང་འགོས་གོམ་རྒྱང་ཤྱགས་ཀྱིས་བསྐྱོད།
 སེམས་པའི་ཚེར་སྒྲུང་སྒྲོན་པོ་ཞིག་གིས་རིག་བྱེད་དག་ལ་བདེ་སྒྲུང་འཛོལ།

རིག་གསར་རིག་པའི་ཅལ་གྱིས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཚུགས་བྱའི་གཤོག་འཇུར་དབྱིངས་སུ་ངོམ།
 ཨ་ཕྱོན་ནས་མཁའི་མཐོངས་ལམ་གཤག་ནས་དོག་མོས་རུ་ལྷད་མོར་ཉལ།
 སྒྲོན་པའི་བང་རིམ་ཐོལ་གྱིས་བརྟོལ་ནས་ཉི་ཟླའི་ངོགས་སུ་མགྲོན་ལ་བཅར།
 ཉིན་འགྲུངས་ཤིག་གི་ཡུན་ལ་བསྐྱོད་མཚམས་ཐང་ཆེན་ཞིག་ལ་དལ་གྱིས་བབས།

ཟློང་བཞིའི་ཉིན་མཚན་འཆར་རུབ་མཉམ་ཞེས་མཛོད་ཀྱི་གཞུང་ན་གསུངས་མོད་ཀྱང་།
 སར་གྱི་ཡུལ་དང་ཉིན་མཚན་མི་མཉམ་ཉིན་དགྲུང་གཉིས་ཀའི་གོ་རིམ་ཐོག།
 སངས་པོ་ཟློང་པ་རྒན་པོའི་དག་ནས་མགོ་ནག་མི་ཞེས་གསལ་མོད་ཀྱང་།
 རུབ་ཟློང་འདི་ཡི་རྒྱང་གཉིས་འགོ་བ་མགོ་སེར་རིགས་ཀྱིས་བྱལ་བ་འདུག།

གཞན་པན་སྤྱི་ཆེའི་རྩམ་དང་བྲལ་མིན་ཡུན་གྱིས་བརྟག་བྱའི་ཡུལ་དུ་ཡིན།
 རིག་འཇུག་ཐབས་ཤེས་སྒྲོག་གི་སྒྲོན་ལས་མི་ཆད་སེམས་པའི་ཁོ་ཐག་ཆོད།
 དངས་པོའི་མི་ལ་འབྲེག་ལམ་སྒྲོན་མིན་དུ་བྱང་སེམས་ལ་སེམ་ཉི་ཡོད།
 རྒྱ་ལ་སེར་པོའི་རིགས་གཏོགས་ཀུན་ལ་དོགས་ཐོན་མི་དགོས་རིགས་མཐུན་ཚོ།



AWAKENING THE SACRED BODY – A BOOK ABOUT LIFE

***Awakening the Sacred Body* is the latest book of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche published in January of 2011 by Hay House. Translations are about to be released. In the book, Rinpoche shares with us his understanding of the practices of Tsa Lung and Nine Breathings of Purification, and shows us how by applying these precious ancient methods we can 'move forward' in our lives. We bring you parts of his preface to the book believing it may bring a strong impulse of inspiration to your daily practice.**

"The particular teachings we will explore together in this book have helped me to move forward in my life, to deepen loving relationships, to expand creativity, and to support me in contributing more fully to my students and my lineage within the indigenous Bon tradition of Tibet. The meditation practices described within have been treasures for me and for my students. They are simple, direct, powerful methods suitable for anyone who is willing to reflect upon his or her life, and can support each of us to recognize and release familiar patterns that no longer serve while embracing the fresh and spontaneous possibilities available in each and every moment.

It is very important from time to time for each of us, as individuals, to reflect upon and take stock of where we stand in terms of our personal development, our commitments to our relationships and to our society, and our spiritual aspirations. When we are willing to look directly and honestly at where we actually find ourselves in life, the very limitations that we identify become the doorways to greater potential. (...)

I was educated in India as a monk in the Bon tradition from the ages of ten to twenty-five. I

have great love and appreciation for my teachers and respect for my training, which was rigorous and unceasing. I have continued reflecting upon these teachings and bringing them into the life I now live as a husband, father, and teacher. In the past, I used to carry my books with me and read from them constantly. I have stopped doing that. It is not that I don't read at all anymore, but now I focus on bringing alive the teachings I have received and studied. This is what is challenging for me – to apply these teachings in all situations of life. This is the place where my life has energy, and this is the place from which I am inspired to write this book.

Life gives us so much opportunity to work spiritually. And I feel very thankful for the difficult situations I have encountered in my life because when I face something that is difficult and bring it to my practice, I can see real change. Every time I teach on these topics it is very lively

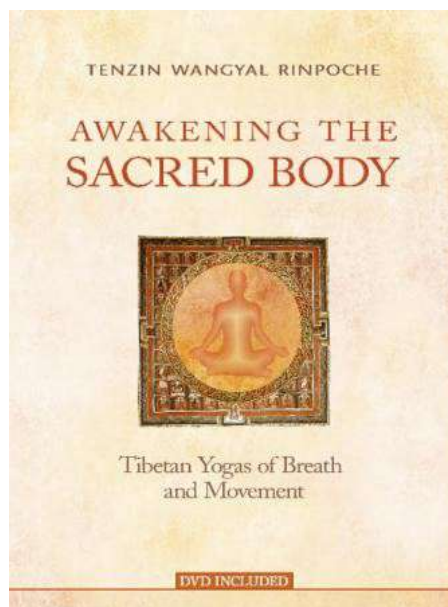
for me. I am teaching them not as an expert but as one who is on the path. I feel that what I know is small, but the possibility to realize is vast. There is much of value in these ancient teachings, and as we learn to apply them, the creative possibilities of life present themselves ceaselessly.

I sometimes fear there is a danger of losing this precious knowledge that has come from a tradition of deep reflection and heartfelt commitment from teacher to student

through thousands of years. I can already see how much has been lost from my teachers' generation to my generation. I can also see the possibility of what might get lost in the next generation, and so this also motivates me to bring this knowledge forward.

It is my hope that this book will guide and support you (...)."

Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux



FROM A HANDFULL OF ASHES

A story about the origin of the Five Warrior Syllables as it was told by Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang during his very first teaching to Western students in Berlin, in February 2011.



According to the traditional Bon account of its origins, many thousands of years before the birth of the Buddha Shakyamuni, the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche came to this world and expounded his teachings in three successive cycles. At first, he taught the 'Nine Ways of Bon'.



As it happens, this was also the topic that Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang chose for his very first teaching to Western students in Berlin in February 2011. It was an enriching experience for both the Berlin sangha and Geshe Nyima. One talent of Geshe Nyima became very clear to us: he is a great storyteller! Among others, he shared with us the background story on the Five Warrior Syllables.



"The Five Warrior Syllables are very powerful, so powerful that they can destroy your negative emotions, attachment, anger and jealousy. No other thing can destroy those negativities like the Five Warrior Syllables. And there's a story in the Bon tradition that tells of their origin.



The story says that Tonpa Shenrap's palace was attacked by demon Khyapa Lagring and his servants. They stole his horses, they kidnapped his daughter, and they burned his 'kadrom', the box with sacred scriptures used in ancient times. The demons wanted to destroy Tonpa Shenrap's power to attract so many followers to his teaching.

Yiky Khyeuchung, one of Tonpa Shenrap's main disciples, came in and saw all the damage. He rushed around and looked here and there. When

he found out that 'kadrom', the precious box, was burned, he reached inside the box to see if anything was left. He took out just a handful of ashes. But when he looked inside the ashes, what did he see? The Five Warrior Seed Syllables."



In his book *Tibetan Sound Healing*, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explains: "There are Five Warrior Syllables — A, OM, HUNG, RAM, and DZA — and each syllable represents a quality of realization. They are referred to as 'seed syllables' because they possess the essence of enlightenment. These five syllables represent the body, speech, mind, virtuous qualities, and actions of enlightenment, respectively. Together, they represent the true and fully expressed nature of our authentic self. (...)

We begin the practice of meditation more familiar with our suffering and confusion than with the purity of our being. The problems that we bring are the energy or fuel that will power our path. The clearing of our blocks through engaging the power of the Five Warrior Syllables offers us the opportunity to glimpse the open sky of our being. The dissolution of these blockages reveals wisdom and makes positive qualities available. This is the warrior's path."

Anja Benesch (text and photo)



MASTERS OF THE ZHANG ZHUNG NYENGYUD

For the next three years the topic of the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at the summer retreat in Buchenau will be the *Pith Realizations of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu Masters*. In the book *Masters of the Zhang Zhung Nyengyud* the heart teachings of the ancient Bonpo dzogchen masters are reported and commented on by H.E. Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the supreme lineage holder and teacher of Yungdrung Bon. The book, edited by Carol Ermakova and Dmitry Ermakov, carries not only words of instructions and stories but also blessings, and as such it can become a key to unlocking the doors of our mind, a guide on the path to realizing the true Nature of Mind. Here we publish the section where H.E. Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche explains how to approach the Dharma nowadays: *A word on practicing in modern times*.

“Sometimes I read you the biographies of the Lineage Masters who spent their whole life in a cave. So maybe some of you think of cutting off your living conditions and going and living like that. But that is not possible in modern times.

It is important to understand this. According to the times we live in, usually, don't think that you should go away from some certain place to search for solitude or something. You can read history or biographies of the early Masters, but that time is over. You have to think: we are now in modern society. It is not easy. In early times, especially in Tibet – although not all Tibetans were practitioners, not at all – some people would first study and gain knowledge, and then realize, and then practice. They would spend their whole life in solitude. In those days, if someone went into solitude seriously then anybody nearby who saw them staying in some cave somewhere would

immediately serve them and help them. The local people knew that the practitioner was a living person who needed simple things like firewood, food, tsampa or some simple things. They would serve the practitioner willingly. He would not be living in luxury at all, but he would not be starving, so in that way he could spend his time practicing continuously. Those practitioners were real, living people but they didn't care about their worldly conditions. I mean, they didn't expect or prepare any living conditions at all because they already knew someone would help them, in those days. But that time is over. The texts are still there, the system is still the same, it is written here, but if you do this nowadays, you will starve if you don't prepare anything, you see. Follow the teachings but don't follow what these Masters did. If you try to, you will be starving or freezing!

In modern times it is better for practitioners to prepare. I am always talking about our two conditions. Whatever you are doing in your lifetime to ensure your living conditions, you should carry on with that, but don't have too high expectations or go after a reputation: that doesn't help very much. But you have to do something to earn a living. Otherwise, we call it *Ngejung* – you collect many different teachings, you listen to many different Masters and suddenly you think: “Oh, this life is no use!”, and you stop everything and try to concentrate on practice for a little while. But your property, possessions and facilities won't last so long. If you go back and try to carry on with your job, relationships and so on, afterwards it is really hard to find work. So it is better to carry on continuously in a simple way, not doing anything special, not having too high expectations, not expecting luxury, but just living in a simple way.”

Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux

