



# Ligmincha Europe Magazine

**# 3 – Winter 2011/2012**



**Interview with TWR**  
**Bon practices in prison**  
**Meet the Polish sangha**  
**Dark retreat: a place to go**  
**Nuns from Redna Menling**



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## THE LIGMINCHA EUROPE MAGAZINE

is a joint venture of the community of European students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.  
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You can find this and the previous issues at [www.ligmincha.eu](http://www.ligmincha.eu)  
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# GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

**Dear Readers, Dear Practitioners of Bon,**

We are happy to present you the third issue of Ligmincha Europe Magazine! This publication gives everyone an opportunity to connect to the European sangha and we hope that it brings you interesting news and inspiration to your practice.

The first issue, released in Spring of 2011, was called the European Bon Garuda Newsletter. With the second issue in Autumn 2011, we changed the name into Ligmincha Europe Magazine. And from now on, we want to make the magazine quarterly. Therefore, you can already expect the next issue in the spring. With this, we are in tune with the current proliferation of activities within the European sangha of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Newcomers from France have brought in lots of enthusiasm and initiative. By providing simultaneous translation and subtitles to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's internet teachings, they have inspired other sanghas to follow them.

There is another project worth mentioning, led this time by the Austrian sangha: a basic practice kit is being prepared, including descriptions of main practices and prayers which will serve as introductory material for newcomers. A similar guidebook is already in use in the Finnish sangha. Now, it will be available in English for translation into other languages. In the next issue, we are going to update you on these and other ideas and activities.

There are changes regarding this magazine we

want to let you know about. Anja Benesch resigned from the position of editor, so she can dedicate her time fully to the work for The Three Doors Program. Among other tasks, she is now in charge of preparing The Three Doors International Newsletter, already published twice and available online. We want to thank Anja for all the ideas, work, and enthusiasm she brought to the team.

Floor van Orsouw from the Netherlands supported us with the preparation of this issue, and from the next issue on, she will be a regular editor.



We want to thank all the other people without whose help this magazine could not exist, above all our proofreaders. We also want to invite everyone with ideas and the energy to realize them, to join us in creating this magazine. There are a lot of things to be done: finding topics, writing and editing articles, promoting the magazine, building a database of pictures, and checking the content and names for

consistency. The nice part of it is that from creating the magazine for others, you profit in the first place, learning a lot of new information and connecting with interesting people.

We also want to use this space for corrections. In the last issue, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Anne Klein were erroneously listed as authors of a poem attributed to Lishu Taring. Our apologies to Lishu Taring.

Enjoy reading the Ligmincha Europe Magazine!

**Ton Bisscheroux and Jitka Polanská, editors**





# WE NEED OPENNESS AND COOPERATION IN THE SANGHA

Through his teachings and by example, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has been inspiring thousands of people on their spiritual paths. What's more, he encourages everyone, not only meditation practitioners, to live to their full potential. As editors of this magazine we credit his spiritual leadership of the project with lighting our own creative spark. We asked Rinpoche about his current thoughts and his plans for the future. As this publication is a European project, we also asked for his perspective of today's European sangha.

**You have been doing so many things: you are the founder of Ligmincha Institute, Lishu Institute, The Three Doors program, the Prison Project. You write books, you travel around the world to give teachings, and much more. How do you manage all that?**

It is true that there is so much happening around me. But I cannot take all the credit. I am just trying to be aware of all the possibilities, create a space for them to happen, and continually inspire others. I put all the links together so these things can manifest without much struggle. I am lucky that there are so many people around me helping to bring these things into reality.

**You engage very much in your work, but it does not seem to cost you much energy.**

When you can create the space, work does not have to drain you. You are left with more energy to do more things. But when you are in the wrong space, one small problem may be enough to discourage you from doing anything at all. For example, when you are on a treadmill at the gym you may notice a small voice that says: "When is it going to be finished? I want it to finish!" That mental resistance is much stronger than the actual physical resistance you are experiencing. As long as you listen to that voice it's very hard to get anything done. I just feel very open and adventurous, with no expectation that everything will work out as I want it to. If something doesn't work, I try to spend as little time as possible thinking about the problem, and instead move on to something more interesting and productive.



**In recent years you have changed from a more traditional way of teaching to a more Western way. Can you tell us about this?**

I have not changed what I teach. The message is exactly the same as the traditional message. But I have changed the way I teach. As the times change, as the culture changes, as people are different, it is important to communicate in a way that people can understand well. So instead of giving examples of yaks or of butter, I am giving examples of computers and cell phones. And rather than putting lots of time and energy into emphasizing all the complex points of the ancient text, I am trying to go to the most essential part of the core teaching and communicate that to the person in the most simple and accessible way possible. There is only a limited amount of time for people to learn, and what they need is some solid experience that shifts their energy and their understanding.

I try to understand where each person is coming



from — what is happening in the person's life, what challenges the person is facing — and then offer the form of teaching that might be most beneficial for that moment in the person's life. It is very natural and spontaneous for me to do that, and I feel it is a gift I have. Many times, people from the audience come up to me after the teachings and say the same thing: “You have been talking about exactly what's going on in my life!” That is very gratifying for me, because it tells me I am touching their lives and their hearts.

Some teachers teach Ngondro without first checking the students' experience and level of commitment or preparation. I feel it's also important to know the readiness of the people you are teaching. If I find people who are ready, then I want them to make a full commitment to the practice, and only then will I teach Ngondro. As many of you know, after our retreat in Austria many people are engaging with the Ngondro practices and completing the repetitions. That is the traditional approach.



**You grew up as a monk, and now you are a husband and a father. Has family life changed your way of teaching?**

Family life changes the way I teach, and what I teach I try to bring into my family life. I talk about The Three Doors with my family and work on my

own personal transformations. Being a father brings up certain qualities and emotions. The affection for your child is incomparable. It is a very beautiful experience, special and enriching. But it also is an opportunity to work with attachment. Attachment to your child is much deeper than any attachment you can have to your possessions.



**Creativity has been a focus of your recent live internet teachings. Can you say something about your current projects?**

My latest book, *Tibetan Yogas of Body, Speech, and Mind*, came out in October. *Awakening the Sacred Body* came out in March. *Awakening the Luminous Mind* will come out in June. I just finished a one-hour documentary film about Bon. We are working on a book about soul retrieval. I would like to engage people more with live webcasts. There are many possibilities for enhancing access to the teachings.

In some sense, everybody is engaged in creativity most of the time, one way or another. Art can be a pure expression of inner realization, of your true self. If your art expresses sadness it can help you to heal. If it expresses your inner joy, it can enrich and complete your joy. Creativity allows you to fully realize what you are in the process of realizing, by expressing it in form, sound, or images. Sometimes expressions of art can also be dark and negative. If their purpose is to clear the darkness, then hopefully the space in which you create the art has a more illuminated quality. And hopefully you feel better after completing it.

In the Western world, we see so many products of a dead creative process, almost as though they are made by machine. These kinds of products are not going to last. A problem is that people tend to associate creativity with its end product, with the result. It is true that the product may be helpful to





others, and even benefit future generations. But for the creator, more important than the product is the liveliness, the joy, the flow of energy that comes during the creative process. The expression of thoughts, images and energies can be such a wonderful experience. It is like breathing. It gives you life, purpose, and meaning, it makes you feel complete, full, joyful. It's an expression of yourself. When you can experience that sense of creative flow, the result comes naturally.

#### **How do you see your projects in five to ten years?**

I would like to see more open communication between all the international sanghas, a warm and sacred bond between them. A new international website is being created as a doorway to all the sanghas and their activities around the world, and this will help. I also would like to see the organization as a whole become self-sustaining for the long term, with clear guidelines and consistent practice materials available for all the practice groups and centers. As an organization we are going through some changes. For now, each country needs to focus on nurturing its own sanghas, activities and projects.

#### **What qualities do you see in your Western students?**

People from the West are generally very open to exploring new things and new ideas. This openness is one of their best qualities. I find that many Eastern students do not easily shift their attention away from what they know, and they tend to learn through repetition.

My wife and I are impressed by the dedication of my students who return year after year to listen

to the teachings, try to understand them, and practice them. We also are often amazed by their generosity. I am lucky that the people I have attracted are service oriented: they do not only receive from me, but they also give back.

#### **And what obstacles do you see with Western students?**

Sometimes they are too open, continually shopping for the dharma and for new teachers. There is a question of loyalty, consistency, and stability in relationships, including marital relationships. These are the defects of too much openness.

#### **When people ask you how to deal with their unique problems, you often respond with the same message. For example, the *Nine Breathings of Purification*, *Tsa Lung*, *Inner Refuge*. Is it that simple?**

Yes, the answer is not complicated, the questions are. What helps people most is not so much a new and different answer, but one that they are able to hear and immediately relate to.

The light of wisdom does not change; light is light. And no matter what kind of darkness it is — darkness in a bottle, darkness in a room or darkness under a bridge — darkness is darkness.

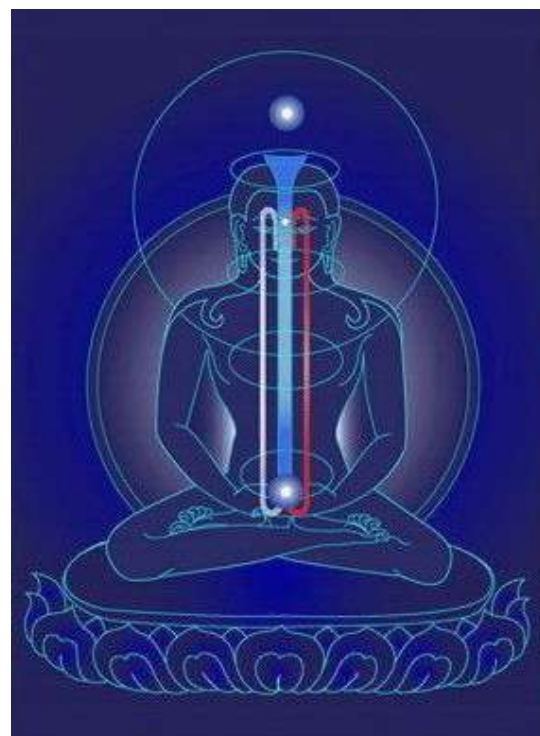


Illustration by Timothy Arbon







But everybody sees their own problem as unique, as more special than anyone else's. So I give them light for their specific problem.

#### **What is your dream?**

I want the teachings of The Three Doors to be universally accessible: through health care, through social services, through educational institutions. My other dream is that the teachings, which have been passed down unbroken for thousands of years, will be learned by a group of Western students as best as possible in the original form. Lishu Institute is helping to make

that dream possible.

#### **Is there something you want to say particularly to the European sangha?**

The worldwide sangha has matured over the years and is quite strong, but it needs a little more direction and connection. Each local center and sangha has grown in its own way, without much communication with the others. When we do the live webcast teachings, we can feel ourselves in one space, the cyberspace. Everybody says how wonderful and amazing it is to feel connected all around the world, listening together, practicing together. People cry. I think this feeling of connection is very important to have not only online but also offline. People sometimes travel to other countries to receive teachings. You make the online magazine. People in Spain work on the international website. That kind of oneness and cooperation is what we need more of. I encourage everybody to work on that bigger sense of sangha, to engage more in that direction.



**Interview by Ton Bisscheroux,  
edited by Polly Turner**

Photos by Bogdan Waszut, Bogusia Dausend, Cheyenne McQuilkin and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche





# TSETHAR CEREMONY: FISH RELEASE IN BERLIN

On 21st September 2011, the United Nations International Day of Peace, thirty-three people in Berlin had the unique opportunity to experience the ancient Tibetan ceremony of *Tsethar*, conducted by Khenpo Tenzin Yeshe. *Tsethar* is Tibetan for life liberation. Everyone received blessings, and about eighty happy fish swam off to their destinies. A report from Sarah Edgehill.

With helpful and friendly guidance from the Fisheries office in Berlin, we took utmost care to release fish which enhance the biodiversity of Wannsee lakes area.



compassion to other living beings. What a great simple solution, and it's all about life.



For me personally, it has also proven to be a great practise of the joy of giving, letting go, and enjoying openness. We as humans love to control, and by doing this simple ritual it comes down to having trust in the enormous potential of our mother nature that the right things happen if we let them in the natural way. International scientific environmental conferences in 2011, have identified regeneration as one of the top solutions for solving problems in the environment.

This was the first official ceremony of its kind in Berlin. These mirror carp fish can live up to one hundred years of age, so the inspiring thoughts that came to me with the ceremony were mixtures of intrigue and wonder about the potential lives and destinies of those fish. And perhaps the sea eagle population also benefits from the fish in three or four generations to come.

My foremost intention of the fish release is to generate a mighty ocean of positive energy for ourselves and our children, while simultaneously contributing to the renewal of life in our waters and oceans.

It is a great method of activating hope for our children, by introducing them to the experience of generating waves of







Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teachings are constantly reminding me of trust and openness, and the fish are a great practise of trust in the natural cycles of life. The openness follows automatically with the joy and appreciation of nature's amazing qualities.



We see the fish shortly, then they are gone, but we know they are there somewhere doing whatever fish do ... and that might be funny for some of us, but not for many fish at the moment. So it's great to do something positive for a change, and see fish swimming in water and not only dead on a plate. It's a simple small step to make a positive change for our mother nature, but it has enormous potential. So let us put the fish back into water where they belong.

I want to give Khenpo Tenzin Yeshe thanks for his blessings of this new project. With his dedicated support and appreciation for this great action, he has lit the fires of inspiration in many of our hearts, and I am truly honoured that he was part of the beginnings of such a beautiful ceremony here.

The *Tsethar* ceremony in Tibet consists of purchasing an animal that is intended for death and releasing it into its natural habitat.

### A letter from a guest:

"To bring fish back to nature is such a great thing. But to do this with a Tibetan ceremony, it was a blessing. I felt a very deep happiness. I think, if we could see how fish are smiling, we could have seen many big smiles yesterday. And the energy behind this action, giving living creatures the freedom and space for their free existence, was so enriching. This world could be such a peaceful place if each one of us lives with this energy. Power does not come from taking life, it shows itself in giving life. I learned a Tibetan wisdom on that day: "By giving life to someone else you enhance your own life time."

### Text by Sarah Edgehill

Photos by Catarina Jacques, Kerstin Heller and Wolfgang Reichert



# WHEN WAS TONPA SHENRAB BORN?

The birth of Tonpa Shenrab and other interesting topics were discussed at the recent conference *Bon, Shangshung and Early Tibet*. The conference was organized to celebrate fifty years of Bonpo Studies in the West. Jaroslaw Kotas, a researcher at Wroclaw University in Poland and a Bon practitioner, kindly prepared this report.

In September 2011 a remarkable meeting took place in London: *Bon, Shangshung and Early Tibet*. This event was organized by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in cooperation with the Shangshung Institute. Twenty-two scholars were invited to share their knowledge of Bon, Shangshung and Early Tibet and for two days these experts presented their findings to the international group of about a hundred in attendance.

## Most Prominent Speakers

The most notable of those presenting at this conference were H.E. Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Tenzin Namdak

Rinpoche was not able, due to health concerns, to attend in person but his recorded lecture on *The Nine Ways of Bon* was viewed.

## Kalpa Group and its Field Work

One of Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche's closest disciples, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, along with Charles Ramble, a Bon expert at the University of Oxford, presented a paper titled *Kalpa Group in Bon Studies*. This paper comes from the excellent field-work the Kalpa Group did in the village of Lhu-Drak. The Kalpa Group funds a range of projects that represent and uphold the diversity of the Bon religion of Tibet, as well as supporting communities where the Bon religion is still practiced.

## When Was Tonpa Shenrab Born?

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche shared the highlights of his newest book, *The Light of Kailash* in which he revealed an unusual perspective on the research being done on *the history of Shangshung and the early dynasties of the Tibetan kings*. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche presented information which was previously unknown to many researchers such as the age of Songtsen Gampo, the Tibetan king at



Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche's presentation





## The Eight Topics of the Conference

1. Forms of the Four Ways of Cause in the Bonpo tradition (Ramble, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, Samuel, Sanders and H.E. Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche)
2. Cosmology (Samten Karmay, Zhaba)
3. Shangshung language (Martin, Blezer)
4. Bon in relation to other traditions (Ermakov, Rossi, Mayer)
5. Bonpo lineages (des Jardins, Tsering Thar)
6. History of Shangshung (Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche)
7. Old Buddhist scriptures and arts (Cantwell, van Schaik, Yoeli-Tlalim, Dotson, Heller)
8. Funerals and mortuary practice in pre-Buddhist Tibet (Aldenderfer)

the time of his marriage to the Chinese princess, Wen Chen which he asserts was fifty-six years rather than thirteen years. Professor Namkhai Norbu also introduced his calculation of Tonpa Shenrab's birth date as 3927 BC.

Professor Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche is the founder of The Shang Shung Institute (SSI) in 1989 which cosponsored this conference. SSI was established in Italy and now has branches around the world.

### Queen of the World

An iconic figure in the field of Bon studies, Samten Karmay, delivered a lecture on Sidpai Gyalmo titled *The Queen of the World and Her Twenty-Seven Daughters* which is based on a text discovered by Bonpo Master, Shechen Luga in 1017. This ancient text was found in a ruined Buddhist chorten in Ghatang in southern Tibet and published in Lhasa in 2007.

### Monpas Priests in India

Professor Fabian Sanders of The Università Ca'Foscari, Venice, Italy and a researcher for The Shang Shung Institute presented my personal favorite portion of the conference. He focused on the presence of Bon priests, *pramis*, in Arunachal Pradesh, India. This is where some of the ethnic group, Monpas, live. In my research I found Monpas living in Ladakh as well. These people are no longer within the caste system but in the

distant past they were likely to be emissaries of Buddhism in this area. Professor Sanders described the activities of the *pramis*, the Monpas priests.

I hope that this conference was the first scientific gathering on Shangshung and pre-Buddhist Tibetan history. There is a 'treasury of knowledge' of Bon waiting to be revealed as Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche mentioned in his lecture.

### Text by Jaroslaw Kotas

Photos by Sarah Edgehill and Barbara Kotas



### Jaroslaw Kotas

is a researcher and teacher at the Institute of International Studies, Wroclaw University, Poland. Dr. Kotas researches ancient Tibetan traditions, Bon history, practices and philosophy as well as other subjects. He has studied and practiced with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for eleven years and occasionally with H.E. Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche.



# I JUST GOTTA BE THERE

Sarah Edgehill was one of the participants in the conference *Bon, Shangshung, and Early Tibet*. Full of enthusiasm to help, she was able to see the event from the backstage.

## How did you happen to go to the conference, Sarah?

I was in Shenten Dargyé Ling at the beginning of July, for a couple of days. And there, outside the gompā, I saw an old looking leaflet hanging on the wall with the key words written 'BON', 'CONFERENCE', 'SEPTEMBER 2011', 'LONDON'. I thought immediately: I have to go there!

I come from New Zealand. If I was there, it would be near impossible to go for two days in London, but Berlin is only a couple of hours away. "I gotta go, look and see," I told myself.

You know, the conference is one of those things that complete the picture for me — the picture that I started to discover over twenty years ago. I travelled a lot then. I did a kind of *kora* around Tibet, visiting most countries in the Himalaya region, but I have never been to Tibet.

## You took part very actively, helping with the documentation of the whole event. Did you know anybody from the staff before coming?

No, actually, I just contacted SOAS and asked for permission to film the conference for any interested member of the European Bon community. The organizers replied that the conference would be fully documented with the production of a dvd as well.

They gave me contact details of the person responsible, Alex Siedlicki. He works with the Shang Shung Institute of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, and they are doing all sorts of interesting things like making documentaries on ancient Tibet, organising art exhibitions etc etc. I told him I'd be happy to offer my help and he said why not, yes. And so I became a kind of assistant to him and his colleague Pieter Kiewiet de Jonga.

## What did you do?

So, Alex and Peter were filming the conference as well as making interviews with some of the prominent speakers. My task was to inform the speakers at the registration about it and ask them if they were willing to give an interview. It was a great opportunity to meet them. Until then, I knew faces of only one or two of them. So, I had to approach them asking: "Excuse me, are you..?"

During the interviews I had the not so fun job of keeping the place quiet — not so easy in a conference coffee break — and so I couldn't really listen much to these incredible interviews with people like Samten Karmay, or Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung in discussion with Professor Charles Rambles. That was tough for me, as you can imagine. Some of the speakers are life long scholars of ancient Tibet and Shang Shung which is what I am so fascinated with and so, being there was a unique opportunity to get even deeper into this mysterious ancient tradition that I feel so much connected with.







Prof. Samten Karmay, from the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale, CNRS Paris talks about the *Queen of the World and her twenty-seven daughters*

I was fortunate to learn a whole lot in a really short space of time and was lucky to have a great spontaneous interview with Professor Charles Rambles about the ancient Tibetan ritual of *Tsethar* – freeing fish. My interest in this ritual became a project already and we realized the first *Tsethar* event in Berlin, on Wednesday September 21st. But that is another story. Anyway, the interview was one of my biggest delights of the conference.

Shang Shung conference was fantastic, a real mass of inexhaustible treasure of Bon – huge fusion of ancient, modern, scholar, spiritual, absolute and relative and miles of great smiles in between...

**Interview by Jitka Polanska**  
photos by Sarah Edgehill

**You can find more information about the *Bon, Shangshung, and Early Tibet Conference* at:**  
[www.soas.ac.uk/chineseStudies/events/bon-shangshung-and-early-tibet](http://www.soas.ac.uk/chineseStudies/events/bon-shangshung-and-early-tibet)

### Sarah Edgehill

arrived in Berlin in 1986 with the trans-Siberian train at the age of twenty-two. She went there to study art and settled there. Sarah was married thirteen years to a Rastafarian from Barbados and has two beautiful children. Since 2002, she has been filming reggae musicians and researching about spirituality in music. Recently, she has been working with youth in film projects on world change and environment consciousness themes. During her life, she completed many meditation courses and travelled to many temples throughout Asia. But she found her teacher in Berlin, where she met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche two years ago. "I never imagined before that I would have a spiritual teacher to whom I would feel so much love and devotion, but now it's absolutely the right thing for me."



# IT'S LIKE PEELING AN ONION

In August 2011, The Three Doors Academy Europe kicked off with its first Group Training Retreat at Finkenwerder Hof in Northern Germany. Anja Benesch shares with us what it is like to be a trainee.

When you join The Three Doors program, how do you know what you've gotten yourself into? Well, you can't really know until it finally happens, and the experience is sure to surprise you with its depth and intensity. For about a year I have been supporting Kallon Basquin and The Three Doors organization to create the first European Three Doors Academy. When he and the Academy Teachers, Raven and John, arrived in Berlin, the journey I had yearned for began. We left the capital city of Germany to abide in stillness, silence, and spaciousness, within the beautiful natural setting of Mecklenburgische Seenplatte, in a place called Finkenwerder Hof.



Twenty-four people from nine different European countries joined the first Group Training Retreat. After the first day of sharing our suffering and joys, I felt like diving into the safety of this circle which was so capably protected by what Tenzin Wangyal likes to call “the invisible firm hand” (speaking of Kallon).

During the first retreat, we abided in inner refuge for long periods of time, and the space into which all our pain and happiness dissolved got bigger and bigger, moment by moment. As it says in the teachings, it felt boundless, like the sky, and all that was needed for our qualities to ripen was the warmth of the sun – our own

awareness of the limitlessness and openness within us and amongst us. Through the gift of the group's deep listening and awareness, the more we openly shared, the more the refuge space we created expanded to embrace these unique, heart touching experiences. My confidence that anything could be hugged, healed, and dissolved in boundless space, deepened considerably during that week. What was new to me was the dimensions of boundlessness I discovered being in that group. I was struck by the power in this collectively held space, the depth of trust, and the directness with which we witnessed one another and our own minds. The fullness of our giving and receiving, allowing and opening, created a truly sacred space. I had known for a long time that I wanted to go on this journey, but I never expected how much I would like the trip!

Of course doing the Three Doors Academy is not like going to Disneyland and finding peace-and-happiness-ever-after. You are getting naked. You are looking at your anger, your dark sides, your behavioral patterns, your addictions, and the way you reject and avoid daily experiences. Sometimes I think I'm going nuts. But then I remind myself that this is just one of my smart egos engaging in pain speech, and I take the red pill of silence. I take many of the red ones these days. I used to be great at creating problems by thinking all day. Now I am confident there is another state in which I am not constantly disturbed by the inner chatter that makes me go crazy.

Raven and John, our humorous and fearless Teachers, guided us well in discovering the benefits of the *Nine Breathings of Purification* and the *Tsa Lung* exercises. In the middle of the week, we were given instructions on how to choose the issues we wanted to transform in our training and get started on the famous ‘sixty-three transformations.’ In small groups we discussed how to identify the ways in which our issue is connected to the root poisons, so we could get a clear idea of what to focus on when





doing the purification breathings with the channels. We also discussed the levels on which the pain can manifest – body, speech and/or mind – and the ways the issue is related to the chakras. I am telling you: this sounds easy to do but once you're really doing it every day, it can get totally complicated. At least, it gets complicated if you think and talk a lot about it, which is what you're doing when you write down your experiences in your 'transformation journal.' John once explained that going through the process of transformation was "like peeling an onion."

You take one skin off and find another layer. And after peeling that one, you find another and then another, and the closer to the core you come, the trickier it can get. The onion's sharpness might make you sob more or laugh harder but the heart of the onion will be beautiful and soft, and after taking off that last layer there will be nothing left. And that's what we're doing, step by step: peeling, until nothing remains. No more hurt ego crying for shelter or untamed inner child craving a sweet taste while your empty body rebels on a rotten karmic cushion and your monkey-mind jumps up and down urging you to go somewhere else – anywhere else – and do anything other than hold this experience. For the moment, peeling the outer skins of the onions is fine. This is about taking our daily hassles, worries, and sufferings – and let's not forget our joys and happy experiences – into our practice. It is about transforming seemingly little things: Saying "Hi" to my wife early in the morning despite the fact that I am a 'Morgenmuffel' (not-a-morning-person); opening my heart to my father whose choleric outbursts used to make me turn away; giving up being shy with unfamiliar people out of fear; letting somebody know I have a crush on him despite my fear of being rejected; allowing myself to stop working so much and facing the feelings of unworthiness and sadness that bubble up as soon as I do so. As for what gets transformed and how thoroughly things shift, a spiritual friend in the training group reminded us of this question from *The Matrix*: "How deep down the rabbit hole do you wanna go?"

I am so grateful for The Three Doors program that

was envisioned and shaped by Tenzin Wangyal for the western mind, and is now being presented by these wonderful Academy Teachers who clearly speak with his voice and help us take these powerful practices into our bones. And I just love my buddies on the journey! Within six weeks of leaving Finkenwerder Hof in early September, approximately one-hundred-fifty emails have been exchanged on the group mailing list. We're sharing our experiences and asking each other to "Please host me" if we're in pain. We're sharing our dream work, our poems, and the results of practice in daily life. Life is so much richer now. "Be aware of the great gift you've given to yourself," Raven used to remind us after meditation practice.



What will be left of me once I lift the veil of all these identities, scratch off the emperor's new clothes, and be nakedly seen by everyone around me? I certainly do not know. I'm not always sure what I have gotten myself into, but I am so, so curious to find out. "Let's walk in beauty," John said in the beginning of the retreat. And so I begin to walk.

**Text and photos by Anja Benesch**

### **A taste of The Three Doors program**

Over the next several months, The Three Doors will provide free online sessions with Tenzin Wangyal and Academy Teacher Marcy Vaughn in order to give people a taste of what is happening in the Academy Training. For further information, check out the website: [www.the3doors.org/academy-curriculum/free-online-sessions-en.html](http://www.the3doors.org/academy-curriculum/free-online-sessions-en.html) or write to: [info.europe@the3doors.org](mailto:info.europe@the3doors.org)



# LISHU INSTITUTE IS LIKE A NEW PLANT

Geshe Thupten Negi is secretary of Lishu Institute, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's retreat and study center in India. Geshela visited Europe last summer together with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche where many sangha members had an opportunity to meet him. Geertje Bloemers recently went to Lishu Institute for a personal retreat and asked Geshe Thupten for this interview.

## **Please introduce yourself.**

My name is Geshe Thupten Gyaltzen Negi. I am from the Northern part of India, district Kinnour, Himachal Pradesh. I was born 20 December 1975. My father's name is Tenzin Premie and my mother's name is Sita Mani. I have three brothers and three sisters. Our family belongs to the astrological lineage. Beginning with my great grandfather and passed on to his son and then to my father we publish the Tibetan Astrology Almanac every year as we have for one hundred and ten years. Since my father passed away this is a project I have taken up.

My primary education was in my village of Lipa in Kinnour, to the seventh grade. I was fifteen years old when I first came to Menri Monastery on 11 May 1988. It was then that I met the Menri Abbot. He sent me to the English school in Dolanji which is a school for Tibetans. I learned English and Tibetan reading and writing. After that I joined the Bon Academy of Philosophy, and twelve years later in 2004 I received my Geshe degree. During my years of study I did social work with orphaned boys and newly arrived monks from Tibet.

## **Please tell us something about the beginning and development of Lishu Institute.**

I met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Menri Monastery and he had the idea of creating Lishu Institute in India. Many of his Western students want to study more deeply. Rinpoche considers India the best place to do this because it's a nice place and Westerners like India. It's an economical place, and it is easy to come and go. Therefore it was decided it would be India.

Rinpoche told me to find the land. I looked in different places but I could not decide which place

was the best for us. Rinpoche came and together we spent ten days looking for land and finally we found this place. There was a very good sign on this land. An auspicious flower that grows in Tibet and the Himalayas is growing here. It is known from the time of Tonpa Shenrab. This flower grows all over the Lishu land so we decided to buy this land.

After six or seven months we received the status for Lishu Institute as a non profit society to promote religious, charitable, educational and scientific activities. We composed a board of fifteen people with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's wife Tsering Wangmo as president. We then needed foreign financial contributions. In February 2010 we received permission to receive money from Ligmincha Institute in the United States. Rinpoche and I made plans for the building and in May, June we began construction. It took a year and six months and now it's there, a comfortable place for Western students.



Geshe Thupten with the traditional Kinnour hat

## **What has been your role so far and what will it be in the future?**

From the beginning until now I was general secretary. I have to look after all government affairs. I supervise the construction, communicate with the contractor, check the measurements, taking care that everything is going correctly, many different things. I am one of the Lishu Board members and I give my full day, all of my full time to Lishu. In the future I hope that I will continue as secretary. I will always support Lishu. If Lishu needs me, my contribution will always be for Lishu.







Anna-Kaisa Hirvanen, Dmitry Shumov and Geertje Bloemers

### What is your motivation to do this work?

My motivation is to bring peace to the world. Lishu Institute is like a new plant. The plant will grow up, with leaves. Then later on comes the flower. After that comes the fruit. Then the fruit will ripen and eventually we will use the food and people will enjoy the fruit and be happy.

Lishu Institute is like sand. I am one person. With the people on the board we are fifteen persons. More people will come and one day we will be all over the world. Different people in different places with a good education, serving different nations. Promoting peace and enlightenment in the world. I hope it works this way, I am working for that.

### What place does Lishu Institute have in the international Bon sangha?

The worldwide Bon sangha, from many different countries, will come to Lishu Institute to study and practice the Bon teachings. These students will return to their homes, share what they have learned and apply it to their own lives.

### Why do you think people would choose to study at Lishu Institute instead of monasteries like Menri?

Because Lishu Institute has a special view. From this view teachings will be given specifically for Westerners. The monasteries are more for Tibetan people, for how they want to go, where they want to go, what type of way they want to learn. The teachings in the monastery are in Tibetan language. But here we are teaching in the Western way. Here we are teaching in English, easy to understand. What people want, that's

where they will go. To Bon or Buddhist monasteries or to Lishu Institute. Like in the market where there are many vegetables. People choose what they like.

### Can you tell us something about the program for the next few years?

In 2012, from October 13 until November 9, we will have a one month retreat. The teachings will be: *Rigdruk Rangton (the Six Loka's)* and *Phowa*. The teachers will come from Menri Monastery and also from Varanasi University. At the moment we are preparing for this retreat: how to do the transportation from Delhi, how many people will be in the building and how many in tents, how we will serve the daily food, etc. Hopefully it will be successful.

And in October 2013 we will start the full time program. We are now developing the curriculum, under the direction of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. The teachings will be *the Nine Ways of Bon, Ngondro* and other teachings. Teachings that are important for our life, for what people need. The texts that will be used have not yet been finalized. Students will come for the time of six months to three years. Depending on how much time people have to be here.

### Do you have a message for the European sangha?

I wish you all the best, all who are contributing to the Bon sangha in Europe. I had a very good experience during my visit in Europe. It was very nice. Thank you for your kindness.

### Interview by Geertje Bloemers

Photos by Geshe Thupten Gyaltzen Negi and Geertje Bloemers

"My retreat at Lishu Institute is a healing experience. Being at the peaceful blessed land. View at the mountains... Practising in the beautiful, spacious, comfortable building. Being with Geshe Thupten Negi: open, warm, active, tirelessly working for Lishu, always there supporting and guiding my practice. I am so grateful to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for offering us this wonderful place to deepen our practice and study."

Geertje Bloemers



# LEARNING PEACE IN STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENTS

Hannah Lloyd is coordinator of the Ligmincha Prison Project in the United States. Once a week, she herself teaches Bon meditation practices – *The Nine Breathings of Purification*, *Tsa Lung* and *The Five Warrior Syllables* – in a prison. Ton Bisscheroux interviewed her.

## How did you get involved in the project?

Three years ago Rinpoche asked me if I wanted to get involved in developing a project for prisoners. I was very happy to do that. My basic responsibility is being coordinator of the international project. Initially I sat down to create the instructors handbook, so that we have structure to go by. That included the basic practices that are used in the project and distilling them into a secular form. We removed a lot of the dharma language, so it is available to anyone who is interested in learning these practices, which are very powerful.

## What is the idea behind the Prison Project?

Rinpoche wants to make the practices available for prisoners, both for those who are currently in prison and may be there for a long time, and those who are initially preparing for release soon to the general community. The reasoning here is that if they are interested and willing to practice, they will be able to settle in the nature of mind. From this space we all make better decisions. We will help them to develop skills for stress reduction, both those who are incarcerated, and those who return to their communities. Returning to the communities is a high risk time for prisoners. The recidivism rates are very high. That has to do with not having changed their inner process and not having had tools and skills available, to develop a lifestyle that will take care of them when they return to the community.

## Is it easy to contact prisoners in America?

No, it is not easy. Here we have an entire protocol, and having worked with the prison systems for a couple of years in our local prison in Charlottesville – a maximum security prison – I had a little bit of a better sense that I need to be mindful that the administration there see their job as security. I don't want to do anything to interfere with that to give them any problems.

**So, it is not that simple that you make an appointment, walk in and start your teaching.**

No, we first need to establish a relationship with the administration. We need to let them know what we are doing, and also who we are. So they can check us out, and be sure we are not going to be a security problem for them. They need to train us to their protocol, their rules and regulations for visitors and instructors coming into their system. Most prisons have a volunteer program. So if they decide that they want us to come in and do this, then we have to learn the volunteer's instructions. This consists of what they expect from us, what to bring and what not to bring, what to wear, what to say. When we are allowed in, they can fingerprint us and they can do criminal background checks and they need a certification letter from Rinpoche, saying that we are ok to teach.



When we go to a prison system we point out to them there is research backing these practices that show that prisoners who participate are much easier to manage, and that makes the guard job easier as well. There is less fighting and aggression. We can give something valuable to the prisoners and to the prison system at large.





### **Do you give prisoners a DVD with recorded instructions from Rinpoche?**

The first time I went there I said: “You have so much equipment here, that’s wonderful, can I show them a DVD?” and they said: “Oh, no.” We cannot legally distribute it or leave it in the prison systems, but we give people the handout from the inmate package, with all the instructions for the practice. We tell the inmates that they can get online and do the practice with Rinpoche on YouTube, because he is there. And the book *Tibetan Sound Healing* is also very helpful.

### **Do prisoners come for meditation?**

Sometimes they just come because there is something to do. They are honest with you about that. Sometimes they had experiences in the past, and they say “I am very glad that it is here.” Sometimes it is just curiosity. But most respond to the idea that it is to learn something that is an opportunity to reduce stress. Many find it very stressful to be in custody.

### **Do they ask questions after you gave instructions?**

Yes they do, and some I do not have answers for. Sometimes I tell them “I will ask my teacher”, or I go to the vast store of information and translation centre and look for answers. At the end of a practice there is time to share their experiences.

### **Is the Ligmincha Prison Project also active outside of the United States?**

Yes, in Mexico City, and Morales in Mexico. Szymon Jablonski has been doing it in Poland for quite some time in Warsaw, way before we started the Prison Project. He supported us and let us know how things worked for him. Several other sanghas in Europe, like Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Finland, France, Denmark and Switzerland are working on translations of the handout. The handout contains an instructor’s packet and an inmate packet with text and images of all the practices. It also tells the benefits of the practice, like anxiety reduction, anger reduction, reduction of negative thoughts, improved relationships with staff, and many more.

### **Do you have a title for your program?**

We just call it *stress reduction*. We were also thinking of a name for the entire Prison Project, but so far we haven’t come up with anything. So if

somebody has an idea, let us know.

### **If our readers get interested in the Ligmincha Prison Project, can they contact you?**

Yes, my email is: [hannahlloyd@mac.com](mailto:hannahlloyd@mac.com).

Eventually my goal is to identify coordinators in each country, so people can contact the person who is in charge in their country and get the information, get the material and get started. For the European sangha the coordinator is Nicolas Gounaropoulos, email [gounaropoulos@gmail.com](mailto:gounaropoulos@gmail.com).

Working for the Prison Project is quite a commitment in time, energy and is a great service. Each prison system is different, and also in each country the laws and regulations are different. Some places are very easy to enter and they make you offering for the instructor to come in on a regular basis and that they are expected at that time, and establish a relationship with the administration of that prison system.

Rinpoche wants to be sure that every instructor just does the basic instructions. We are not qualified to teach anything else. The method in which you present the teachings is something that should reflect the essence of the way in which you received these practices yourself.

### **Interview by Ton Bisscheroux**

Photo by Cindy Jackson

#### **‘Prison project’ in Belgium**

“In 2011 I was teaching Bon meditation in two jails. For a three month period I was visiting weekly a group of women and I was teaching a male group – also on a weekly basis – for seven months. We practiced *The Nine Breathings of Purification, Tsa Lung, Five Warrior Syllables* and *resting in the nature of mind*. During that time I realized more than ever how Rinpoche’s teachings are accessible and totally adequate to our modern society in all conditions and places. The inmates entered directly in the practice and were talking with me about the positive effects they experienced. Now I am planning to create a project of teaching these practices to prison guards.”

Nicolas Gounaropoulos



# SISTERS IN BON

**Lidia Castellano during her last visit to Menri monastery, in the summer of 2011, went to see how the nuns from Redna Menling Nunnery – which is a part of Menri – were dealing with a quite radical change in their monastic lives: the studies of philosophy and dialectic school being open for them since December 2010.**

Dakinis and female goddesses play very important roles in the Bon tradition. Bon has great female meditation masters and dzogchen teachers who attained rainbow bodies. Even the famous Lishu Taring, a great sage and master of the past, is said to have been a girl who later changed her gender and the first nun ordained in the Bon tradition was Tonpa Shenrab's daughter. Women are recognized as having the same opportunities and potentialities as men, and can also follow the complete course of dialectic studies in the monastic system, which is not common in other traditions. In December 2010 the Menri Monastery, following this tradition, finally gathered the necessary resources and opened the philosophical studies programme to the nuns of Redna Menling Nunnery which is a part of the monastery. It means the nuns from Redna Menling can follow the twelve or thirteen years long course of studies that concludes with the Geshe degree just as their male counterparts of Menri do. During my last visit to Menri, in the summer of 2011, I was curious to see how the nuns were getting along with this quite radical change in their monastic lives.

Redna Menling is situated on the other side of the valley, across the river, as tradition requires, at half an hour's distance from the monastery. One fine morning, myself, Sangmo Yangri, a young woman who grew up in Dolanji and is now studying for her PhD at Varanasi Tibetan University, and my friend Patrizia, left the guesthouse of the monastery and walked through the valley to the nunnery. When we reached it, we were welcomed by most of the nineteen adult nuns living there. They willingly sat down with us to talk. Sangmo's translation from Tibetan was a great help in our conversation. Thanks to the warm friendship that I developed with her I could talk to the nuns with ease.

We were offered tea and biscuits as we sat in front of the Temple, moving every now and then to follow the shade to stay cool. Yeshe Jamma, a soft spoken but very determined woman of thirty-four, offered to tell us her story. She came from Tibet together with two friends to follow the spiritual path. As she told us, even as a young girl her warmest wish was to be a Bonpo nun taking the full ordination of three hundred sixty vows prescribed for women. She had grown up in a small village in Tibet, where her main occupation was tending the family animals, and she could not go to school.

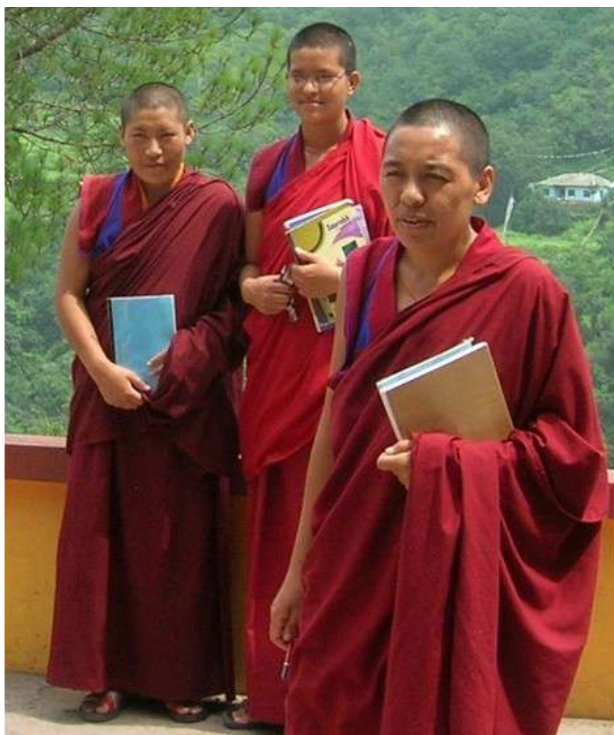


At the age of twenty-two she had taken the first twenty-five vows in Tibet, but she strongly wished to receive the full ordination from the main authorities of Bon, H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche and H.H. Menri Trizin Rinpoche. To accomplish this she had to leave her home. She went through many difficulties before finally reaching Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal, where she and her two friends took the twenty-five vows again with Yongdzin Rinpoche, later to be followed by the three hundred sixty vows. But first they had to make up for their lack of schooling; in the five years that they spent there, they learned to read and write and received the entire basic education. There is no nunnery in Triten Norbutse, so they were waiting for the chance to move to Menri Monastery in Dolanji in India, where the nunnery





was being built. The journey to India again was not an easy one for the inexperienced young women, but finally they managed to reach the monastery and settle at Redna Menling nunnery.



Other nuns living there come mostly from the Nepal-Tibet border areas and some Himalayan valleys in India. Mostly they have taken the twenty-five vows for the moment. The average age for taking vows is around twenty, and the choice is made with full awareness and self-responsibility. The girls who grow up here and receive shelter and education will also be able to choose whether to stay on as nuns or leave. For the moment, they wear nun's robes and shave their heads in homage to the Monastery which is hosting them.

We were invited for lunch in the dining hall. After lunch we resumed our talk with six of the nuns, asking them about their studies. They shared their difficulties in following the subtle and complicated subject of philosophy. They found it difficult, they said, but also very exciting. It is something very new for them and at the same time something which they had strongly wanted: hard and challenging maybe, but making them discover and realize all the unsuspected potentialities of their minds! So much so that when I asked about their dreams for the future, some told me they wanted to become meditation or philosophy teachers and

to help other women to get the same opportunity as they were enjoying.

While we were waiting for the girls to return from school, I invited the nuns to ask me some questions. They did: all of them concerned my spiritual and mediation experience in Bon, the practices I do, and how I got to know the monastery and the teaching.



When they went to pray in the temple we joined them, delighted by the sweet sound of their singing. One by one the girls returning from school appeared: we greeted them with some sweets and they accepted them smiling. Then each one rushed off to change from school uniform to their robes. It was their snack time. We all sat down for tea. When we finished our tea we left our sisters in Bon with happiness and warmth in our hearts.



**Text and photos by Lidia Castellano**

# GO FOR YOUR DARK RETREAT IN THOGAL HOUSE

One of the very few places in Europe where you can do the dark retreat in the Bon tradition is Thogal House in Shenten Dargyé Ling in France. We asked Geraldine Dubreuil, who is currently in charge of this munkhang, about how dark retreats in Thogal House are organized.

## Aldine, when did you open Thogal House?

In September 2010, after His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche and His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche blessed it.

## How many people can stay in?

We have three rooms, two small ones and one big room, thus three practitioners can stay at the same time. Each room has its own toilet and shower, and meals are served through a special serving hatch, always in the darkness.

## How are practitioners assisted?

I am the current *munkhang* assistant for the practical matters such as warm meals, hot water thermoses and other small items. For the spiritual guidance we have one Geshe and one Lama available all year long. They perform a blessing ritual at the start and at the end of every dark retreat and can be consulted at any moment.

## How many people have you hosted already?

Twenty-seven up to now, and they stay for an average of a seven-day period. Khenpo Tenpa Rinpoche advises to start slowly, up to seven days straight.

## What would you recommend to bring and to keep in mind?

Bring your own thermoses if you really drink lots of hot drinks. This practice is a very deep purification on many levels. We are here for practitioners to give them all kind of support and advice depending on their mind and specific circumstances.

## What are the costs of the stay?

The daily current rate for the small room is € 38, for the first two weeks. Then the price decreases to € 32 a day for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> week, € 24 a day for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> week, and € 18 a day for the 7<sup>th</sup> week. It includes two warm meals a day and hot water service. 25% discount is available for people with the monthly income below € 1.200.



## Interview by Jitka Polanská

Photos by Shenten Dargyé Ling



As a student of H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche Geraldine (Aldine) Dubreuil has been affiliated with the Yungdrung Bon tradition for

twelve years. She translated from English to French some volumes of the Healthy Mind Interviews by Henry Miles Vyner. She facilitates interactive workshops based on the Bonpo tradition. She has been elected in SDL's Board of Directors until July 2013. At this time she has practised in Shenten's *munkhang*, dark retreat twice.

You can write her for more information at: [contact@shenten.org](mailto:contact@shenten.org)





# MY SHENTEN DARGYÉ LING

Château de Modtais at Blou in the Loire Valley was purchased by a philanthropist and researcher Loel Guinness and donated by him, as a project of his Kalpa group supporting the Bon tradition, for use as a retreat and research center. It is the European seat and the summer residence of His Eminence Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and it is run by a group of long term Bonpo students supervised by him and by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery.

Jitka Polanská who went there in August 2011 for the first time shares here her impressions from the place.

France has probably many places like this: a big mansion of white stones fringed by an alley (were they linden trees?), the old glory slightly run down by impermanence, genius loci hanging around or maybe dwelling in that one hundred and fifty year old pine in the park...

But I haven't travelled through France and so, for me, Shenten Dargyé Ling was quite a unique place: all shining with whiteness of its walls, illuminated at night by the moon and by falling stars. And throughout the week of my visit, light was also coming from the spacious minds of the lamas who were there.

B u d d h a

Lamas' presence changes our presence. When my mind meets another mind deeply, it dives into spacious silence. That's why, I think, I am such a bad reporter during retreats. Before I arrived to 'Shenten' I thought of asking Yongdzin Rinpoche for an interview for the magazine. And it was perfectly possible: there was an opportunity a few times to ask him for an appointment. I could see how available he was for anyone approaching him. But I lost my desire to do that. I was drawn to come closer when I saw him sitting outside, in the freshness of some evenings and mornings. But it was enough, more than enough, just to be there with him, together with the others, in silence. "Who cares?" I would have answered to the voice in me who had planned to bring back an article – if the voice had ever risen up in my head. I was even slightly surprised when my colleague editors reminded me of my intention after I was back home. Did I really plan it?



Empty moments in Shenten, with a smile





## Sangha

Sangha supports us on our spiritual path as well, showing us where we are standing right now, in terms of the mind's stability and peace. At lunch time, my mind got sometimes wild and whirling with questions, mainly of two kinds: "Why did they say this?" and "Why did they do – or didn't do – this?" It was taking my inner silence away but I could clearly see that what was outside was also inside.

So, it was a kind of practice, the lunch practice. When my mind was able to keep spacious, the questions dissolved into the mind that didn't feel the need for answers, and inner silence wrapped every misunderstanding into harmony. Silence is full of potential. It opens space between people, sometimes it even opens space within the speech of others.

Silence is magic.



The rear of the Lamas' wing



From the place of the evening practice







## Dharma

When I was just about to leave, waiting for the car to take me to the train station, I saw Yongdzin Rinpoche sitting outside on his bench. I dropped my bag and walked toward him to say goodbye. It was like flying into his embrace. He opened his hands, raised them slightly up, and I touched them with my face. "I'll come back soon," I said. I don't know why. The question is what does 'soon' mean. I think it was more like giving another kind of promise: "I know what you mean by all that and I won't let it out of my sight. With your blessings, I'll go where you are. Soon. In this lifetime."

Many beautiful things happened in Shenten Dargyé Ling, within the infinite space of mind. I want to thank all those people who were there with me and who made it possible for us to be there. I didn't come to be happy, I was already happy. But heaps of happiness were there for me. Go and see.



# HOW GARUDA FOUND HIS NEST IN POLAND

**“This is a story of a great Teacher, his infinite love and compassion and far-reaching vision, patience and determination,” says Wojtek Plucinski, a senior student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and a prominent person in the sangha. Wojtek's article chronicles the development of the Bon community in Poland.**

In August 1995 a Tibetan lama, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, visited Poland for the first time. He was full of energy and joy, and he opened the gates of the Bon tradition to the group of people awaiting him.

Rinpoche's teachings began with an introduction to Dzogchen and to a six-fold practice, a simple but an extremely valuable program of traditional practices that all of us have been doing to this day. The six-fold practice consists of *The Nine Breathings of Purification*, *Securing Boundaries*, *Guru Yoga*, *Refuge*, *Boddhicitta*, and, of course *the Dedication of Merit*, which is the only proper way to finish each practice session.

After the six-fold practice came *Zhine*, the practice of calm abiding that grows from the silence without which it is not possible to enter the world of meditation. Then, we went further, to the practices of *Rushen* and *A-Khrid Ngondro*. Rinpoche also taught from the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud*, the lineage transmitted to him by Lopon Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche. We also learned the practice of the *Six Lokas* – a journey within through an ocean of emotions, with much to work with...

In 1998, Rinpoche began a series of teachings on Bon ‘shamanism’ and Tantra. Rinpoche lifted the curtain to reveal the exceptional richness of the

teachings related to external phenomenon, internal emotion and mental process and he showed us the means are easily within our reach.

We started to study *Ma Gyud* in 1999. At that time we learned *Chöd*, *Dream Yoga* and *Sleep Yoga*, *Bardo* and *Phowa* as well as the *Practice of Elements*. We learned *Tsa Lung* and Rinpoche introduced us to the *Ma Gyud* dakinis and the six gates of *Ma Gyud* were opened. In the same year Rinpoche taught on the sacred syllables: *Ah*, *Om* and *Hung*.

Throughout these years, his teachings were increasingly focused on those aspects that would help us practitioners in our daily lives. Rinpoche gave us meditation tools to make us better practitioners, better students and better people.



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in a Polish folk costume

The practice of *Sherab Chamma* soon became the main practice of the Polish Garuda. Then we deepened *Rushen* practices from the *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, *Life Force Retrieval practices*, *Five Seed Syllables*, *The Three Doors*, *Six Lamps*, *Tummo*, *Five Verses of Dawa Gyaltzen* – all these extremely valuable methods gave us an opportunity to discover secrets of our soul and to experience healing. Only then we could see the depth and endlessness of the nature of our mind. Rinpoche was tirelessly returning, sharing his time, knowledge, love and faith with us.







The Polish sangha during the summer retreat in Wilga; Wojtek Plucinski in the first row

The year 2000 marked the beginning of a new period when Rinpoche began to invite extraordinary Bon teachers, lamas and Geshe. Some of the most important personages of Bon and great Teachers honored us with their presence and teachings. His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche blessed our new center and His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche visited us three times giving his priceless teachings and blessings.

Thank to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, other precious Bon lamas started to bring teachings to Poland. Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche has been coming to Poland already for seven years. Both he and Chongtrul Rinpoche have their own sanghas now in this country. The Polish sangha is fortunate to receive teachings from Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche and His Eminence Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche who both come every year. Khenpo Thenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche comes every year since 2006. His teachings are related to the *Yetri Tasel* and *Namkha Truldzio* series. H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche focuses on Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud.

Among other monks who visit us I would like to mention Geshe Lungring Gyaltsen, Khenpo Tenzin Yeshe as well as Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima and Geshe Namgyal Nyima. A master of *Trul Khor* Alejandro Chaoul has been coming to teach us for seven years, and so we have been given a unique opportunity to learn the 'magical movements'

from one of the most senior students of Rinpoche and a person to whom we owe a lot. Laura Shekerjian, another *Trul Khor* teacher, has followed him. It is unique opportunity to learn from students of Tenzin Rinpoche who continue his teachings.

Today, sixteen years after Rinpoche's first visit, the Polish sangha has nine centers in the main Polish towns: Warszawa, Krakow,

Sopot, Wrocklaw, Poznan, Katowice, Lodz, Bydgoszcz, Andrychow. And we have Chamma Ling – our retreat center in Wilga near Warsaw.

Each practice center has the same teaching schedule. We organize practice groups, but also film shows, lectures and open meetings, thus continuing the activities of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

The main hero of this story is our Teacher, showing us infinite possibilities in our lives. But he is surrounded by many practitioners who made all this possible throughout the last sixteen years of his teaching in Poland. Their commitment produced visible results and is a living example of the fact that, even though the Garuda's nest is located in the infinite space of our mind, it is much easier to find it among friends and among people dedicated to the same cause. We dedicate all our efforts as merits to all sentient beings, as Rinpoche does.

**Wojtek Plucinski has recently moved to Mexico where he had spent a big part of his life. He is currently dedicating his energy and creativity to the Mexican sangha.**

**Text by Wojtek Plucinski**

Photos by Maria Kulik and the Polish sangha's archive



# CHAMMA LING - THE LAND OF THE WISDOM LOVING MOTHER

Chamma Ling, a retreat center founded by the Polish sangha in Wilga near Warsaw attracts many people to return. Bogdan Waszut lives there together with his wife Ula and their two children. He speaks about his experience of moving there as a typical urban resident, about what he has found and what we all can find by spending time there.

This is the place where we experience unique states of mind from our contact with the teachings, teachers and others who stay in this space so different from the one we are used to. Time spent here motivates us to action, inspires us to persist in practice, and wakes hope for changes in our life. The Land of the Wisdom Loving Mother allows us to perceive our own wealth. My challenge is to make this place more accessible and available to all of us.

In the beginning there was the vision of our Teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. From there, ideas, plans and projects grew. Many people were involved in the search for the right place. After several attempts the idea came up to purchasing the place that we had been renting since 2003.



Chamma Ling – the Land of the Wisdom Loving Mother – is located in a beautiful area in the middle of a forest where people from Warsaw traditionally come to spend their holiday. It is close to the river Vistula and lakes and only fifty kilometers distance from Warsaw so it is easily reachable from the Polish capital. The majesty of its trees, the clarity of sky, and the pervasive silence allow us to hear the beat of our own hearts.



However all those wonderful qualities were overshadowed by lack of money: we were short of funds. At this point we began to rent cabins to practitioners in an effort to raise funds but it would not have been enough to buy the place. Then something extraordinary happened! After Tenzin Rinpoche made an appeal to the German Sangha, an anonymous donor offered us 30% of the what we needed! From that moment everything began to take shape. In the Spring of 2004 we became the owners of the *Land of the Dharma*, land of great potential. With this, a new chapter opened in the history of Ligmincha Poland. At this moment, when hopes becomes reality is like a big blue sky, while everyday's life prose is like white clouds floating init.

Our next challenge coming our way was the modernization and







Five years spent at the Land of the Wisdom Loving Mother have changed me in the way I consider others and myself. Chamma Ling is like a white screen on which you can see the projection of your own mind and a pure land of limitless potential.

There remains plenty to do. The new Gompa is emerging step by step, through many challenges. It is already capable of seating two hundred practitioners and I deeply trust that it will be completed

development of the Center. Where to start? What is the highest priority? We decided to raise funds for a Stupa. During the Summer retreat of 2005 Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche indicated the place where our Stupa should have been built and it was finished within a year.

soon. An action arising from a pure intention must be successful. The idea of the Chamma Ling didn't originate from ego, but from the need to create a holy place of practice for all Bonpos.

**Text by Bogdan Waszut**

Photos by Kate Dańko and Klaudyna Luna Kopala

2006 brought the visit of His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima. That year we laid the corner stone of the new Gompa and I became the administrator of the Center. My first night was scary for me, a city dweller with the solitude and the darkness in the forest. Those days were really tough, but I will skip the details. Our only support was the practice and hard work from dawn to dusk.



The profit from the auction, held during the European summer retreat in Buchenau in 2011, was granted to Chamma Ling in Poland. The money is being used to repair the roof of the kitchen.





## IMPRESSIONS FROM ZHANG ZUNG NYENG GYUD RETREAT 2



Each October in Austria the five year cycle of teachings on Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud takes place, which is quite an event for the European sangha. Pictures by Joop van Spronsen and Péter Tongori and a text by Heide Mitsche try to communicate what it was like to attend the second part of the cycle – dedicated to *'the Introduction into the Natural State of Mind'*.

Boundless blue sky, sun shine, snow and mountains all around us – I deeply breath fresh, pure air and focus on the horizon until I feel inseparable with that spaciousness, silence and stillness...



... I almost forget that one hundred and fifty other people are sharing this experience of sky gazing with me – the bell and the prayers bring me back to the mountain, the Hochkönig. It is my first experience of sky gazing and I experience deeply how this meditation allows me to open up and to connect with inner space.







Full of this intense experience, laughter and happiness accompany us back to Maria Alm, where we are staying for five days to receive teachings on *'the Introduction into the Natural State of Mind'*.

The wonderful hostel, located in the middle of the Austrian Alps in Salzburg, offers all facilities for a comfortable stay and allows everybody to enjoy the stillness, silence and spaciousness around and within us.



From that wide, open space and the warmth of the sun outside we went into the darkness of our rooms to meditate before going to sleep. This was again another amazing experience as we are not used to looking at the darkness and to enjoy it.

**Text by Heide Mitsche**

Photos by Joop van Spronsen and Péter Tongori



# EUROPEAN SANGHA PRACTICE WEEKEND

For many years, following the wish of Rinpoche to practice under the guidance of experienced practitioners, we have offered sangha practice weekends in Germany. These weekend retreats are held at the Castle Buchenau near Bad Hersfeld and are open to practitioners from all countries. The next European sangha retreat will take place, for the first time, during Losar, February 24-26 2012. The emphasis will be on two general practice topics:

- exercises from the summer retreat: Pith Realisation of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud Masters,
- additional exercises from the Ngondro and Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud Part 2

For those who may not be familiar with these practices, the retreat will also include exercises such as *Tsa Lung*, *The Nine Breathings of Purification* and *Zhine*.



For further information please contact [gabriele.penders@ligmincha.de](mailto:gabriele.penders@ligmincha.de) or visit the website [www.ligmincha.de](http://www.ligmincha.de)

**Text by Gabriele Penders**

Photo by Joop van Spronsen

## SACRED SONGS: CONNECTING THROUGH MUSIC

Last autumn in Utrecht, The Netherlands, an intercultural festival was organized. The festival was intended as a small countermove, in a period in which contrasts rather than similarities between spiritual traditions tend to be highlighted. Various local groups were asked to choose and perform a song or dance from their spiritual tradition, related to the theme of giving, sharing and generosity. All the songs would be woven into one composition by a professional voice artist. The songs would then be known as 'Sacred songs'. The idea was that those listening would not need to distinguish between the various traditions, but would merely 'undergo' an experience of interconnection between all the different traditions through the common thread of spiritual art.

Our Bon Buddhist practice group was approached

by the organizers, and invited to join in this venture. As we liked the idea of contributing and were curious to meet the other musicians and dancers four of us decided to join. In total there were some fifty participants, among them a Gregorian choir, an Alevitic dancing group, a solo singer from the Coptic church, a Jewish rabbi, an Evangelical church choir and a Gospel singer from the Evangelical church. As an ultimate gesture of offering our group chose to sing part of the Chöd sadhana. The result was a beautiful composition of Sacred songs in which could be felt this shared source and interconnection of many traditions of many different styles.

**Text by Willemijn Cuijpers**

Photos by Jeanneke den Boer





# HOMeward JOURNEY FROM BUCHENAU

View from the train window  
into sky and SPACE  
oh, what a travel companion  
the rainbow  
followed that evening  
by a silver circle  
of full moon

*Diana Huppert*

Photo by Natalia Borza

# A THOUSAND NEW THINGS

Animating each cell  
eliminating the lie  
that dwells inherent...  
stagnant memories,  
the sleeping self awakens.  
Dissolves.  
Past, no more  
only open present.  
Held by skies  
by galaxies  
worlds within worlds.  
Realizing the mystery  
within ones own self  
Breath traverses  
a thousand new things  
moments swelling ecstatic.

*Cielo (Mary O'Sullivan)*

Photo by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



# BIRDS IN THE MORNING

A vibrant blue and green bird, possibly a Blue-crowned Motmot, is perched on a dark brown branch. The bird has a bright blue crown, a black face, and a long, deeply forked blue tail. Its body is primarily green with blue accents on the wings and tail. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest setting.

Bird chirp flown out of my ear.  
Out, like a bird leaving through the hole of a birdhouse.  
First one, then two.  
Like colour blobs thrown onto a canvas.  
What is it like, when I return the bird?  
Or even the whole flock of birds?  
Back to the starting point?  
To be all ears, the loop closed?  
What is it like, when starting point and endpoint touch each other?  
When the endpoint discovers the starting point  
and the starting point the endpoint?  
What great bird chirp show,  
without bird, without chirp, without ear, without morning?  
In the morning.

*Angelika Krone*

Photo by Jose Soto  
FB: Rainforestbirdingexperience Gamboa





# TIBETAN YOGAS OF BODY, SPEECH, AND MIND

Published in November of 2011 by Snow Lion, *The Tibetan Yogas of Body, Speech, and Mind* is the latest publication by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Some translations are also available at this time. In the book Rinpoche shares with us his understanding of the stillness of the body, the silence of the speech, and the spaciousness of the mind as the three doors to enlightenment. We bring you parts of the Preface and Introduction, believing it may help to deepen your practice while engaged in your daily life.

“The teachings and practices of Bon permit direct experiential insight into the human mind. Ultimately, Bon offers a complete path to enlightenment. As Bon Buddhist practitioners, we practice meditation not only to relieve mundane suffering and conflicts but also as a spiritual path for this lifetime and for beyond this life as well. Practicing meditation is a means of liberating not only ourselves but all beings from all the causes of suffering. This is why we recite a prayer of compassion at the start of every meditation session and dedicate the merits of our practice to all beings at the close of each session.

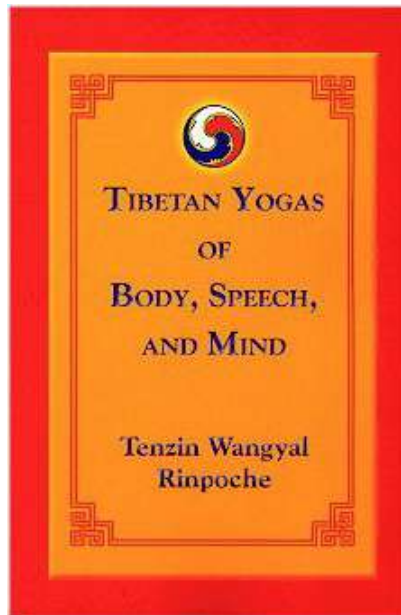
Everybody is looking for happiness and the causes of happiness, and everybody wants relief from suffering and the causes of suffering. Yet we usually look for happiness and relief of suffering in all the wrong places and in all the wrong ways. The root of suffering is the self-grasping mind from which attachment, aversion, and other afflictive emotions arise. Every negative action of our body, speech, or mind that is based in this self-grasping mind creates a seed of karma, a habitual tendency that traps us from one lifetime to the next in a cycle of suffering known as samsara. To help reveal an end to this cycle, this book draws on a vast system of knowledge to show the many ways

that body, speech and mind can instead be utilized as doorways to happiness, contentment, better health, and ultimately liberation. (...)

Is it possible to have genuine experience without going through many years of intellectual training? The answer is yes. The process begins with receiving the wisdom teachings known as the dharma. But hearing or reading about the teachings is not enough. Neither is reflecting on what you have heard or having good intentions to practice meditation. Many people feel that because they go to retreats and accumulate knowledge they are good practitioners, but the teaching cannot ripen in you until you actually practice it and your practice begins to deepen. Your ability to experience the great bliss that comes from recognition of your true nature depends on nothing but practice.

By helping you discover a deep source of knowledge and wisdom, meditation practice can bring you to the sense of connection, completion, and fulfillment that you yearn for. Ultimately, it can help you arrive the more profound sense of peace and happiness that comes only from connecting with your deeper essence.

Ideally, you should be open to the infinite possibility of intellectual learning but not get lost in it. Through study combined with practice, you can gain direct experience of the truth in the simplest of places: your own body, speech, and mind. (...)



“Whether physically, energetically, or psychologically, we experience ourselves mainly through our pain. It is hard to recognize *rigpa*, the enlightened nature that is our self, the nature that we share with the deities. The small self is more familiar to us. The small self is the one through which we express our pain, and because it is so familiar, it becomes an important door through which we may discover our bigger self - and through this discovery, release our pain. (...)

Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux



# TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE'S TEACHING PROGRAM IN EUROPE 2012

## March

15	Italy	Montepulciano (Siena)	Public Talk: The Essence of Dzogchen Meditation in the Native Bon Tradition of Tibet
16 - 18	Italy	Rome	Dream Yoga
23 - 25	Russia	St. Petersburg	Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltzen
31 - April 1	France	Paris	Tibetan Sound Healing

## April

6-8	France	Grenoble	Awakening the Sacred Body
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## May

4-6	Germany	Berlin	Living with Joy, Dying in Peace
9	Poland	Szczecin	Public talk: The Three Doors
10-13	Netherlands	Amsterdam	Awakening the Luminous Mind
16 - 17	Switzerland	Bulle	The Practices of Tsa Lung & Five Warrior Syllables
18 - 20	Switzerland	Zurich	The Practice of the Six Lamps, Part 2

## July

17 - 22	Poland	Warsaw	The Practice of the Six Lamps, Part 2
24 - 29	Germany	Buchenau	The Pith Realizations of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud Masters, Part 2

## August

31 - September 2	Russia	Moscow	The Chöd Practice
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## September

7 - 9	Finland	To be announced	Tibetan Sound Healing
14 - 16	Germany	Frankfurt	Awakening the Sacred Body

## October

16 - 21	Austria	Maria Alm	Dzogchen teachings: The Experiential Transmission, Part 3
26 - 29	Spain	Barcelona	To be announced

