



# Ligmincha Europe Magazine

# 15 – Winter 2014-2015



Meet the Belgium sangha

*Soul Retrieval* Internet Course

Lishu Retreats start in 2015

Preparing to Die



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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](mailto:magazine@ligmincha.eu).

You can find this and the previous issues at [www.ligmincha.eu](http://www.ligmincha.eu),

and you can find us on the Facebook page of [Ligmincha Europe Magazine](https://www.facebook.com/LigminchaEuropeMagazine).

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# GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

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

Every end is a new beginning. It is not only that the year 2014 ends and the year 2015 starts, but also in our sangha happens a lot. So, we want to invite you to sit in a comfortable chair and take some time to read the forty-four pages of this issue.

You probably know that on January 10, 2015, the yearlong online *Soul Retrieval* Course starts with a full-day webcast. Already nearly 2.000 people have registered. Every month in 2015 you can watch a live webcast, and Rinpoche has invited all the sanghas to organize meetings to watch and practice together. On the next pages you can read more, and you can also check on the Ligmincha websites and Facebook pages what your (local) sangha offer.

The Latin American 3 Doors Academy students graduated in September 2014, and the new 3 Doors Academies will start in the U.S. and in Europe in 2015.

Austria hosted the fifth, and last, retreat of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud*, but the teachings from the *The Oral Tradition of Zhang Zhung* will continue with the teachings of *The 21 Nails* during the Summer Retreat, August 10 – 16, 2015, in Germany.

In this Magazine we start with a new section called 'Preparing to Die.' Dying is a big issue, but most of us don't want to think about it, and postpone making preparations for it. We discuss an interesting and practical book by Andrew Holecek: *Preparing to Die: Practical Advice and Spiritual Wisdom from the Tibetan Buddhist*

**Begins January 10, 2015**

**The True Source of Healing**

A yearlong Internet course in Soul Retrieval  
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

**FREE and open to all!**

Register for Jan. 10 all-day webcast: [ligmincha.org](http://ligmincha.org)

Full course materials: [ligminchalearning.com](http://ligminchalearning.com)



In March 2015 you are welcome in Lishu Institute, India, to participate in a *Phowa* Retreat and/or a 6-Week Intensive Tibetan Language Retreat.

As a community we are growing more and more together. You can read about the changes taking place in the international organization, and how we learn more about each other. And, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche wants all the sanghas to practice the same way at each location where we celebrate *Losar*. You are invited to celebrate this event during the European Sangha Weekend, February 20 – 22, 2015, in Buchenau, Germany.

*Tradition.* We hope that this will be the first article of many to come on the issue of dying, and we would like to invite you to share your experiences in one of the next issues.

We introduce the Belgium sangha; you can read what happened in Europe and the activities to come; and more.

Last, but not least, we want to wish you an inspiring 2015, while you connect to the Stillness, Silence and Spaciousness.

In Bon,  
**Ton Bisscheroux, Chief Editor**





# THE TRUE SOURCE OF HEALING

## A Free, Yearlong Course in the Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval

You are warmly invited to attend a year-long Internet course in *Soul Retrieval*! Beginning this January, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will generously offer a free course that includes everything from monthly live webcasts to discussion forums, recorded webcasts, MP3 audio recordings, and downloadable print materials. It is based on Rinpoche's forthcoming book *The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life* (Hay House, summer 2015). Open to everyone from newcomers to experienced meditators!

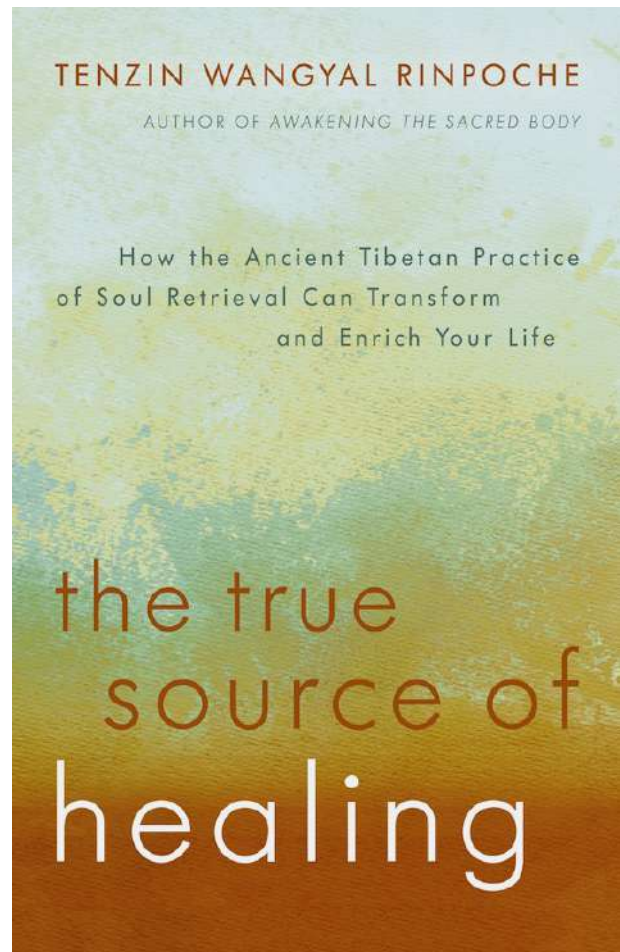
Rinpoche will start off the New Year – and the 2015 course – on Saturday, January 10, with a daylong Internet retreat, “Reconnecting with Your Joyful Essence: An Introduction to the Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval.”

This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn the practices of soul retrieval from your home computer, or – in some places around the world – in person at local group webcast screenings and guided meditation sessions. You can view just one webcast, or for truly life-changing benefits, commit to engage in the entire course with all its supports. Soon after each live broadcast, a recording of the webcast will be posted on the course site, [www.ligminchalearning.com](http://www.ligminchalearning.com), so you can view and review any webcast after its original broadcast date. MP3 recordings and discussion forums will be available in several languages.

### About the Course

Done in a committed way, the practices of *Soul Retrieval* can transform your life. They are typically used as a lifetime practice for nourishing one's inner being and restoring one's soul. More specifically, they can help you to:

- Avoid losing your vitality when faced with difficult life challenges.



- Revitalize your personal, family, and professional life.
- Recognize powerful internal and external sources of healing.
- Experience healing on all levels – physically, energetically, psychologically.
- Bring healing to others around you.
- Come home to your inherently joyful and creative nature.
- Progress on the path to higher liberation.

The practices in this course draw from the ancient Tibetan Bon Buddhist teachings of *Soul Retrieval*. While the course instruction contains none of the traditional Bon rituals, the guidance it offers is the heart essence of their healing powers.

### Course Begins January 10, 2015

During the first, full-day webcast event in the series on January 10, Rinpoche will lead two



teaching sessions and senior teacher Marcy Vaughn will lead two related guided-meditation sessions. Already nearly 2.000 people have registered to participate in the day's events! Most but not all other monthly webcasts to come will take place from 21.00 – 22.30 h (Central European Time) on the second Saturday of each month. See full course schedule on page 7.

The course will continue on February 14 as Rinpoche gives an in-depth explanation of the five elements and their relationship with one's soul (see "What Is Soul Retrieval," below). In March, he will guide us in noticing the ways in which we personally have lost our soul and help us pinpoint which element we are most in need of at this time. As the year continues, he will explain in detail how to retrieve these elemental essences, both from the natural world outside us and from the ultimate source of healing: our own inner refuge. He will give advice in overcoming the sense of loneliness that is so pervasive in today's Western society. Finally, he will explain how to use these practices for physical healing, as well as how to nourish one's soul on an ongoing basis, throughout each day and throughout one's life.

In each webcast event Rinpoche will guide a meditation, offer teachings, and give any instructions for formal and informal practice in the month to come. Soon after the webcast ends, video and MP3 audio recordings will be made available at the Ligmincha Learning course site. Downloadable print materials will provide added support in the practice.

Whether you attend these live webcasts online or in person at local screenings, participating with the worldwide sangha can lend a deep level of support. There will be opportunities online via a chat screen to ask Rinpoche questions about the practice. Local group screenings and practices will offer an opportunity to get to know others locally, learn about other local events, and experience further support and camaraderie.

As the New Year begins, we hope you will join participants worldwide in these revitalizing and healing practices!

### Register Now to Attend

You must register separately for each free live



webcast event, as well as for the free yearlong course with its full support materials.

- Register now for the first, full-day webcast event, scheduled for Saturday, January 10, 2015, at: <http://webinarjam.net>.

- Register separately for the yearlong Internet course with full support materials at: [www.ligminchalearning.com/soul-retrieval-course](http://www.ligminchalearning.com/soul-retrieval-course).

**Related teachings:** You are also invited to attend *Soul Retrieval* teachings in person with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche at Ligmincha's annual Spring Retreat in central Virginia from April 3 – 5, 2015. Learn more and register at: [www.serenityridge.ligminchainstitute.org](http://www.serenityridge.ligminchainstitute.org).

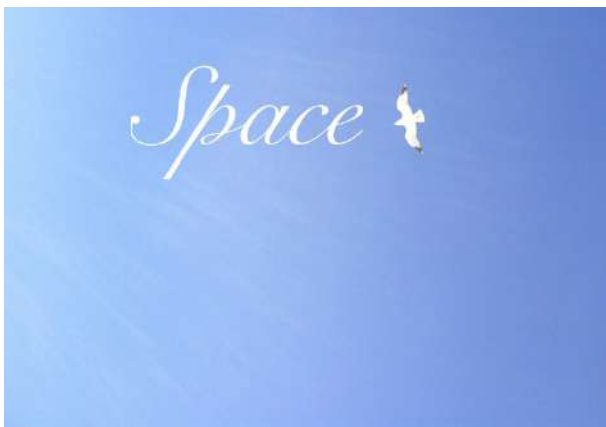
\* \* \*

### What Is Soul Retrieval?

*A young girl sits alone on the fireside bench, entranced by the embers and flickering flames. She absorbs the heat into her face and body, undisturbed by the chatter of nearby adults. As the flames dart creatively, arising from nowhere and dissolving into nowhere, she settles ever more deeply into an ineffable sense of joy in simply being.*

*Day after summer day, children play at the swimming pool. In the morning they dive, tread*





*water, dart below the surface, splash, float, play water games. Sometimes after lunch they return to swim some more. The longer they commune with water, the more they become one with that sense of flowing comfort and healing that only the water element can bring. The comfort stays into the night, and continues upon awaking.*

The elements of nature are portals to something very essential and sacred in us as human beings. They bring us closer to the moment, to our true selves. Many of us have had spontaneous experiences like the ones above – perhaps in childhood or during an extended vacation in a natural setting. But such intimate experiences with the elements can be fleeting, and they typically become little more than a memory. Most of us lose essential qualities as we grow older and are shaken by life's challenges. We lose the sense of the groundedness and connectedness that comes with communing deeply with the earth element; the flexibility and flow of connecting with the air element; or the sense of openness and freedom from one's conditions that comes with a deep relationship with the space element.

According to the teachings of the Tibetan Bon tra-



dition, when certain elemental qualities become lost to us, we lose parts of our soul. When we are able to retrieve those elements – when the qualities of the five elemental essences of earth, water, fire, air and space are balanced in us – our soul is restored to health.

Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explains that the sacred qualities of the natural elements are always there, deep within us. The external elements of nature simply permit us to recognize these qualities. They help us open our eyes, heart and mind to what is already within. For the same reason, certain meditation practices can also help us tap into this deep source of healing within us. The true source of the elements is our own inner refuge.

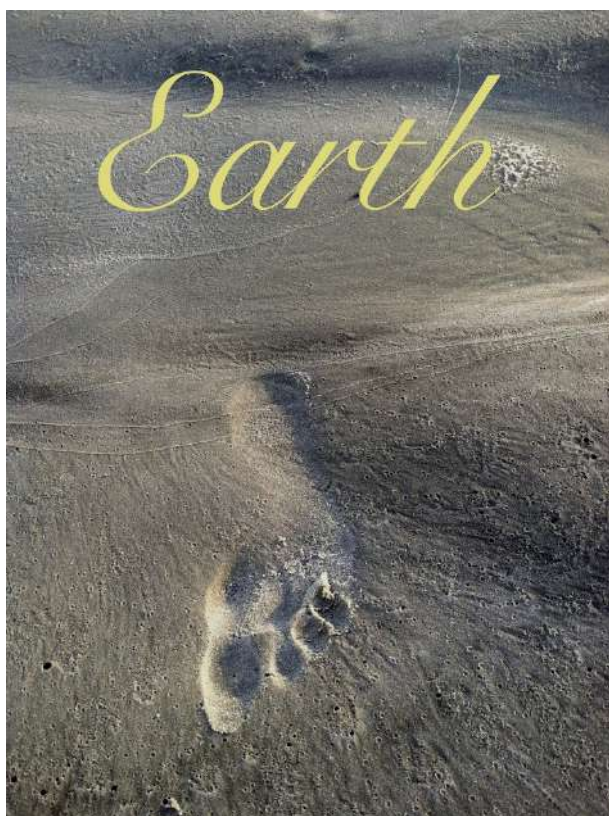


Ancient practitioners of the Tibetan traditions recognized the power of nature and its elements, and the power of meditation, to bring profound healing to our soul on all levels – spiritual, mental, energetic and even physical. Indeed, the elemental essences are said to be part of every experience we can have, from normal daily interactions to higher meditative states. They are the building blocks of both dream and reality. The teachings show how we can gain access to their healing properties at any moment of life.

**Text and element images by Polly Turner**, web-cast producer for Ligmincha International and editor of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's forthcoming book, *The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life* (Hay House, summer 2015). Adapted from an article first featured in *Voice of Clear Light*, the bimonthly e-newsletter of Ligmincha Institute.







### Full Webcast Schedule

Each live webcast of *The True Source of Healing* course is scheduled for the second Saturday of each month in 2015 with the exception of August (third Saturday). Each webcast will take place from 21.00 – 22.30 h, except the full-day webcasts as noted below. Within a few days after each live webcast, the recorded webcast will be posted at the course site, [www.ligminchalearning.com](http://www.ligminchalearning.com). All times shown are Central European Time.

#### **January 10, 2015, FULL-DAY LIVE WEBCAST \*:**

Reconnecting with Your Joyful Essence: An Introduction to the Tibetan Practice of *Soul Retrieval*.

#### **February 14, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

The Five Natural Elements: Finding a Healthy Balance.

#### **March 14, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Discovering the Deepest Needs of Your Soul.

#### **April 11, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Communing with Nature to Nourish Your Soul.

#### **May 9, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

The True Source of Healing: Your Own Inner Refuge.

#### **June 13, 2015, FULL-DAY LIVE WEBCAST \*:**

Tapping Into Relationships to Nourish Your Soul.

#### **July 11, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Overcoming Loneliness: Finding the Friend Within.

#### **August 15, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Nourishing Your Inner Being: The Heart of *Soul Retrieval*.

#### **September 12, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Nourishing Your Inner Being: Questions and Answers.

#### **October 10, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

The Power of Warmth: Physical Healing Through Meditation.

#### **November 14, 2015, 21.00 – 22.30 h:**

Healing from the Source: Cutting the Root of Your Pain.

#### **December 12, 2015, FULL-DAY LIVE WEBCAST \*:**

*Soul Retrieval* as a Lifetime Practice.

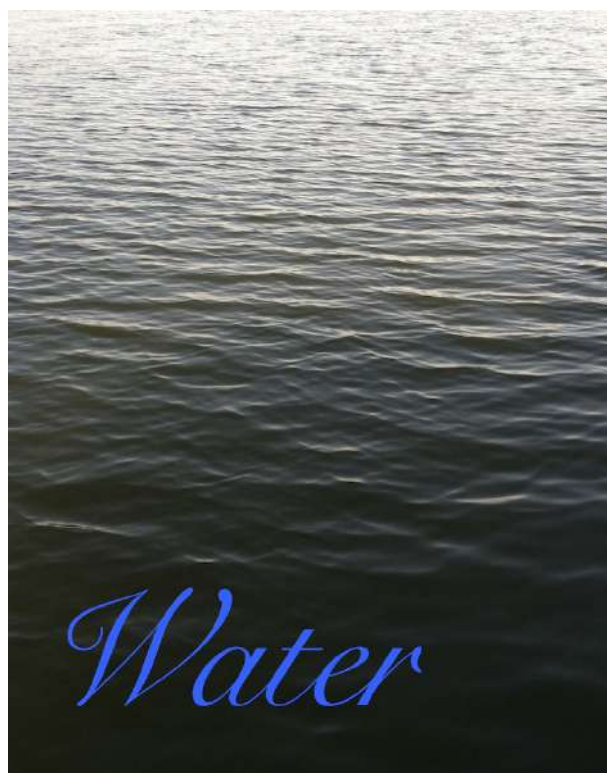
#### **\* Schedule for the full-day live webcasts on January 10, June 13 and December 12:**

15.00 – 16.30 h: Teaching with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

17.15 – 18.15 h: Guided Practice with senior teacher

19.15 – 20.45 h: Teaching with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

21.30 – 22.30 h: Guided Practice with senior teacher



## LAUNCHING LISHU INSTITUTE'S RETREATS AND STUDY PROGRAM

In the webcast of November 8, 2014, Rinpoche shared some exciting news with us: Lishu Institute in India is ready for take off. This brand new retreat center, established to help preserve the ancient spiritual tradition and culture of Bon, is organizing two retreats upcoming Spring and will start the 3-Year Residential Program in September 2015.

Some of us have already witnessed how Lishu Institute, beautifully located in the hills near Dehradun, in Northern India, can uplift your spirit. Upcoming Spring retreats are a chance for all of us to (re)connect to the place, to ancient wisdom and (thus) to ourselves.

### **Phowa Retreat**

A two week *Phowa* retreat with Shedrup Lopon Geshe Gelek Gyatso Rinpoche will take place from March 5 – 19, 2015. These teachings are part of the Mother Tantra, *Ma Gyud*. Students will learn



Shedrup Lopon Geshe Gelek Gyatso Rinpoche.

how to develop the right attitude in preparation of death and how to perform the *Phowa* practice at the moment of death. Shedrup Lopon Geshe Gelek Gyatso Rinpoche is one of the head teachers of the Bon Dialectic School at Menri Monastery, who received his Geshe degree in 2006 after more than thirteen years of study. He taught in western countries several times and looks forward to working with students at Lishu Institute.







Sangmo Yangri, receiving her diploma at the 14th convocation in March 2012.

### 6-Week Intensive Tibetan Language Retreat

The second retreat from March 20 – April 30, 2015 will be a six weeks intensive Tibetan language instructional retreat guided by Sangmo Yangri, Ph.D. All levels will be accommodated: teaching the basics to beginners so they will be able to start reading Tibetan mantras, prayers and texts and providing more experienced students with personalized, advanced instruction. Sangmo Yangri is author of a book on the life of Tibetan Bon master Palden Tsultrim, sought-after conference speaker and the first Tibetan woman to receive a Ph.D. in Bon Philosophy.

For anyone considering to take part in the 3-Year Residential Program, starting September 2015, these Spring Retreats are highly recommended.



Geshe Thupten Negi, Secretary Lishu Institute.

### 3-Year Residential Program

The Residential Program will offer university level education of the Bon doctrine in a very supportive environment. Students from the West will study the traditional Bon texts in depth as part of an organized group, guided by experienced Bon masters. The three main texts of the Bon tradition: *The Nine Ways of Bon*, *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* (The Oral Transmission from Zhang Zhung), and *Ma Gyu* (The Mother Tantra) are an important part of the curriculum, as well as Tibetan language, Tibetan yoga and practice/meditation.

### Volunteers

If anyone feels drawn to offer help to manifest these retreats: the Lishu committee is presently in need of a few good volunteers. We are looking for people who work well with others, with English language proficiency, and with abilities in computer and office skills, marketing, websites, financial and program planning. If interested please contact Geertje Bloemers in the Netherlands at [geertje.bloemers@lishu.org](mailto:geertje.bloemers@lishu.org).

Please check [www.lishu.org](http://www.lishu.org) for details and updates. Registration Spring Retreats is open at: [www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org) and [www.lishu.org](http://www.lishu.org). Link to November 8 webcast: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). (The part where Rinpoche talks about Lishu starts at 1:04 min).

### Text by Lishu Committee and Floor van Orsouw

Photos: courtesy of Shedrup Lopon Geshe Gelek Gyatso Rinpoche, Sangmo Yangri and Geshe Thupten Negi



# TRANSFORMING THE DISCONNECTED MIND INTO THE SPACIOUS OPEN MIND

When Raven Lee was in Hilversum, the Netherlands, for an evening talk about 'Transforming Your Life through Meditation,' Jantien Spindler and Ton Bisscheroux had the opportunity to ask her about The 3 Doors Academy.

**Ton: How would you define the 3 Doors Academy?**

Raven: It is an intimate setting where people are taught to go deeper to know who they truly are. Being supported in a warm environment, in an authentic presence, they will be able to speak freely, and be able to receive support and feedback. The word 'Academy' refers to a sense of 'school.' It is like a school where we receive instructions about who we are and who we are not.

**Ton: Can you explain who we are not?**

Raven: Deep within us is an authentic essence, and many of us growing up have glimpses of it. But then we are taught by our families, our culture, and our human condition to create an identity for survival, in order to fit in. And that identity causes us to react, rather than to say: "This is not who I truly am." That identity is not our true identity. It arises from our conditioning, the need to follow or rebel against rules, and is a reaction to what is happening in the external environment. The 3 Doors training creates opportunities to discover the true essence within us, the unchanging, open, innate awareness of joy, love, compassion and peace. When we are in the presence, all these qualities spontaneously arise.

**Ton: I can feel it when you talk about it.**

Raven: What do you feel?

**Ton: It feels like my heart is open. I feel present, focused, and there is an openness. And also, I don't know who I am.**

Raven: Yes, it is like that. When I am in that open awareness, the one that asks: "Who am I, what should I do?" disappears. There is just that spaciousness. And in that spaciousness is this genuine warmth that spontaneously arises. That does not



mean that sadness will not come. But underneath the sadness is a sweetness that never goes away.

**Jantien: For me it is really touching. When I am listening to you I feel warmth in my back, as if there is someone there. I remember Rinpoche's words: "The warm, strong mother is behind you." I feel safety and warmth, and from there I can face whatever is happening.**

Raven: Exactly. I think that sometimes we go into meditation thinking it is about having no thoughts, without realizing that meditation is to help us transform our dualistic mind. That part of us that is grasping is also the doorway to enter into this spacious mind. And when we do it, it is impossible not to feel warmth. And we start laughing! In The 3 Doors Academy we have a lot of fun discovering the truth. Being a teacher of The 3 Doors Academy is one of the most humbling and heart-opening experiences in my life, because I get to spend time with people who trust, who strip away their defences to be nakedly seen, and who share so openly. It is a lifelong relationship.

**Ton: So once you enter, you don't leave any more?**

Raven: Well, it is your choice. You feel connected, and once you learn what is most important in life, you do not wish to go back. You know it works. It can be challenging when you meet a part of yourself that is really difficult. But if you go away from this part it will still be there. You can try to turn your back on your self, but it won't go away. In order to go deep, deeper and deeper, to face parts of yourself that you may not even know are



there, you need the support. We need to know that we are loved, not because we are perfect. We are loved because we are. But definitely, there is a choice. Would you like to taste The 3 Doors?

**Ton: I have already been to 3 Doors Taste weekends, and they are really good experiences. I was amazed what happened in such a short time. But I can imagine that it is difficult for people who don't have the experience to know what 'presence' means. Can you explain it?**

Raven: We can sense when something feels tense. We can feel when someone says something that is not coming from the truth. But many of us may not have learned what is 'presence,' or may not feel we are truly loved. So to trust someone who says, "This is a group where love is there, presence is there." How can you trust that? We are not asking people to trust that it is going to be there immediately, but it is about developing and becoming connected to the presence, to sense this state of awareness. One feels that she is being witnessed and held when she speaks about her pain. Presence is a sense of warmth. It is the warmth of being witnessed. And I think that is why the program cannot just be a weekend meditation. It is a process where strangers come together and share a journey of discovery. But we are not really strangers, because everyone who joins the Academy is answering a call. Initially there is a sense of trepidation, but this dissipates quickly as we get to know one another. Presence is something that develops throughout the two and a half years of the Academy, and beyond. You sense the presence of Inner Refuge within yourself, and within the group. There is healing power when you are experiencing that presence.

**Ton: Is presence something you, as teacher, create, where the group can connect with?**

Raven: For the teachers, it is about holding the space, facilitating and guiding. And yes, in many ways, it is also as if we are creating the presence. But actually we do not create the presence. We provide the environment, guide the practice, so that the presence can be felt. It is always there. It is like the sun, which always shines. If there is mist

obscuring the sun, we can clear the mist, and then there is openness. So the presence is the open awareness and the warmth, the joy, the aliveness that arises from this open space.

**Ton: I find meditating on my own difficult. I do my daily practice, but I would like to have more structure to go deeper, and it seems impossible to do it alone.**

Raven: Yes, I think you are very wise to come to that realisation. One of the reasons that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche developed his vision for The 3 Doors was that he saw how some of the students coming to his teachings for ten to fifteen years had not changed. Meditation means to train the mind. So there should be change. Through practice, we learn to transform the dualistic mind, or what you could call the dull, disconnected mind, into the spacious, open mind. The 3 Doors Academy helps us to make this transformation. We work together as a group and there is a lot of support. Group support and practice helps one develop one's individual practice. It's not easy, but with the support of the group and the teachers, it gets easier.

**Ton: When did you meet Rinpoche for the first time?**

Raven: Oh, that memory always takes my breath away! I was born and raised Catholic, but in adulthood, I was drawn first to *Vipassana* and then later into Tibetan Buddhism. A friend of mine, who knows I am a Jungian therapist and work a lot with dreams, suggested I attend a book signing on *Dream Yoga* in Los Angeles. As soon as I saw Rinpoche there, my heart opened, and I knew that he was my root teacher. So, I went to his Dzogchen teachings that weekend and there was one empty seat right in front of Rinpoche. I sat there and looked at him, and it was like I was a child coming home to my mother. And when we started singing *Guru Yoga* I started crying. That is the joy and the warmth of presence.

**Interview by Jantien Spindler and Ton Bisscheroux**

Photo from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)





# THE 3 DOORS LATIN AMERICAN ACADEMY GRADUATES!

**The 3 Doors family is proud to report the completion of another big step towards Tenzin Wangyal's vision for our international community. The first Latin American Academy graduated in September 2014! We are pleased to introduce our new sisters and brothers and welcome them into our ongoing programs and activities.**

Please celebrate with the graduates in their boundless enthusiasm for their community, their teachers, and The 3 Doors practices.

through the wonderful practices of this training program.

As the time of our graduation approached, we found ourselves breathing the joy that filled the air. From the beginning of this, our last retreat, we felt a strengthened bond within our group, and this allowed a profound connection among us. From inner refuge, we shared our experiences as fellow brothers and sisters in an atmosphere of confidence in the bonds of love and friendship with one another and with our mentors. In the words of Patricia Vigil, "a collective space was generated that allowed us to see into each other's



Under a deep blue sky and the magical mountains of Tepoztlán, the 26th of September 2014 arrived. The thirty students from The Latin American 3 Doors Academy gathered to celebrate one of the most important events of their lives, our graduation ceremony and the end of a journey. During this journey we shared our joys and pains, revealed our vulnerability, and discarded everything we did not need. In this way we overcame our fear and deepened our confidence to be who we really are. All of this was possible because of the strength of our inner refuge, developed

eyes and embrace one another from the heart, healing us individually as well as collectively."

During the celebration, a spontaneous many-colored mandala of joy manifested from our hearts. The ceremony reflected our inner state and our shared respect and cooperation. From here, we received our dear root teacher, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who offered this beautiful invitation to take our hearts into the world, "This is just the beginning of a commitment that takes us to the liberation of ourselves for the benefit of





others.” During the two and a half year journey, we were guided by our beloved mentors, Laura Shekerjian and Alejandro Chauol, who listened and supported us with warm hearts through all difficult moments, and our ever-present warrior, Kallon Basquin, who with his clear vision was a sustaining force.

As many students said, *“We are deeply thankful.”* And this was reflected in the color, light, food, and music of the celebration as expressed in the words of the graduates themselves:

*“The luminous ceremony of ‘The Candles’ and the liberation of butterflies as a symbol of transformation, were very significant to me and lie deep in my heart as a commitment to honor all the 3 Doors practitioners.”*

– Efraín Díaz

*“The celebration was unforgettable. There were incredible flowers and pre-Hispanic music that brought together the vibration of the elements to surround and purify us. The chanting touched the fibers of our hearts, and we all vibrated in unison. Afterwards came the delicious meal, Cuban music, and butterflies.”*

– Laura Calderon

*“It was a festivity that came from the refuge, full of warmth, love and joy. We lived wonderful, magical moments, I will remember it as one of the most beautiful days in my life.”*

– Marisol Bernal

*“The loving company of everyone present in the refuge made our graduation day an unforgettable one in which each of us could honor the fruits of these incredible two and a half years. I experienced a refuge of peace that extends to all my brothers and*

*sisters. I have a feeling of openness in my heart and an enthusiasm to continue in the 3 Doors. I am forever thankful.”*

– Rosario Arellano

Now that 3 Doors Academies have graduated in the United States, Europe, and Latin America – with a second United States group to graduate next spring – we are happy to announce new Academies in all three geographic locations. Please apply! Transform your life through these simple and powerful meditation methods of body, speech, and mind that facilitate inner transformation and ripen the authentic expression of your unique gifts.

[Applications are now open](#) to the next U.S. Academy, which will begin in April 2015 and to the next European Academy, which will begin in June 2015.

The next Latin American Academy has just been announced for 2016; the application process will begin in 2015.

**Text by Anne Forbes and Laura Calderon**

Translation by Aline Mackissack and Lourdes Hinojosa





# MIND AT PEACE

In this section *Going Beyond* we are going to publish inspiring texts from other Buddhist streams and other religions. Nicolas Gounaropoulos, active in Ligmincha Belgique and Senior Dharma

Teacher in the Zen Buddhist Order of Hsu Yun, is the first to contribute. He has chosen this text by P'ang Yün, because this text speaks about the refuge experience and how we have to keep this experience simple.



Photo from: [www.anhui.travel](http://www.anhui.travel)

**When the mind is at peace,  
the world too is at peace.  
Nothing real, nothing absent.  
Not holding on to reality,  
not getting stuck in the void,  
you are neither holy or wise, just  
an ordinary fellow who has completed his work.**

***P'ang Yün***





# I AM FOR ACTION, NOT FOR REFLECTION

Every sangha has its own structure, and every country is in a way special. Belgium is a country with three official languages: French, Flemish – which is similar to Dutch – and German. And the person who ‘embodies’ Ligmincha Belgique, Nicolas Gounaropoulos, is also a Senior Dharma Teacher in the Zen Buddhist Order of *Hsu Yun*. Ton Bisscheroux interviewed him.



## **When did you meet Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche for the first time?**

In a bookshop I saw the book *Healing with Form, Energy and Light* right in front of me, and when I opened it I saw the pictures of the *Tsa Lung* movements, practices with the five elements, and found them very interesting. After reading the book I wanted to meet the author, and went to a seminar in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. That was twelve years ago.

Before I met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche I had another teacher, Tarab Tulku Rinpoche, who also taught on the elements and dreams. With Tarab Tulku Rinpoche I had done retreats in Belgium, France and Luxembourg during some years, but then he passed away. Soon after this I came in contact with the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. It was an incredible continuation.

Also, I have been practicing Zen Buddhism from the age of twenty. Since twelve years I have a little Zen sangha in Belgium, which is connected to the Chinese *Ch'an* practice. Zen is very direct, and I think that Zen has a lot of resemblances to Dzogchen. When I heard the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche about the refuge, I thought: that is exactly what every Zen practitioner has to learn. Perhaps, for me the best teachings for my Zen practice came from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. I find that the Inner Refuge from the Bon tradition can help to understand the essence of the Zen meditation practice. It is very complementary for me.

**I have also practiced Zen for a short period, but for me it was too difficult. While I was ‘just sitting’ there were so many thoughts that it felt almost like a torture.**

For most people it is difficult to start with Zen, because you need to have a taste of what refuge is to understand the essence of the practice. If not, you are quickly discouraged. Zen practice is often wrongly presented only from its cultural, monastic dimension. Rinpoche's teachings give us the key to integrate the practice in everyday life. It helped me a lot to integrate my Zen practice in my everyday life and how to use it for transformation too.

## **Can you tell us about Ligmincha Belgique?**

Until now I was alone, Ligmincha Belgique has no legal status, and I have collaborated with the Dutch sangha when John Jackson came in 2011, and Geshe Thupten Negi from *Lishu Institute* visited us in 2013. When Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche agreed to come to Belgium, he told me to contact the Dutch sangha to ask for support.

## **When visited Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Belgium for the first time?**

In October 2014 we organized the first seminar with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche on *Dream Yoga* in Brussels. It was wonderful because Rinpoche's teaching was very clear, and the people who attended the seminar were very enthusiast. I didn't do much advertising, but everything manifested, and about one-hundred-thirty people came from Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland. After the seminar I received a lot of e-mails expressing that the teachings touched them deeply.

## **Was it a great challenge to organize the seminar?**

When I started to organize the seminar I was alone, and it was amazing how everything went in a flow. The Dutch sangha took care of the finance and the bookshop. I knew a nice place, and when I





contacted them, there was just one weekend free, the one Rinpoche wanted to come. When I thought about how to do the sound, someone from the Zen practice group proved to be a professional working in a music studio. And he knew somebody who could make video recordings. For the advertising I used a flyer from Ligmincha France, and then one friend called me and asked: "Why don't you ask me to do that, because it is my work?" And other people from the practice group also offered to help.

During the retreat I also learned: don't make a problem where there is no problem. Sometimes we put too much effort in things, and then they go wrong. Sometimes we just have to wait a bit, and then things go along. Let me give you an example from the seminar. A friend works in a teashop, and I asked him to take care of the tea for Rinpoche during the retreat. He loved to do it. He had special tea made by monks, and he used a special small teacup, which kept the tea all the time warm. So, he did the hot water in a thermos, and Rinpoche could pour the tea in his cup. Rinpoche drank every five minutes some tea. During the retreat I was thinking: "This is not the right way, we have to go to serve Rinpoche directly. But how to do that with this little cup?" That became a problem for me. After the seminar we talked with Rinpoche about the tea, and he said it was wonderful, the taste was good and it was always warm in this little cup. There was no

problem at all, but I realized that we have tendencies to complicate everything. Rinpoche was so relaxed about everything, and that was the best lesson for me: how simplicity creates a flowing space. We just have to serve and trust, and give people responsibility. Organizing is a great teaching, it is a great lesson to stabilize the practice and not lose the connection.

And another wonderful manifestation is that my wife helped me a lot with the organization, and after the seminar she started to practice.

#### **What are your plans for the future?**

I would like more people to get involved in the Belgium organization. After the seminar, I send an e-mail to people asking if they wanted to participate in the Belgium Ligmincha organization, but there was not much response.

I hope that Rinpoche will come again in the future, and I would like to invite other teachers, like Alejandro Chaoul, John Jackson, Raven Lee, and Geshe Lundup, who lives in France.

#### **Are there practice groups in Belgium?**

At my place, in Namur, we have been practicing since six years, every week, *Tsa Lung*, *The Nine Breathings* and *Sound Practice*. Last year I started a group in Brussels, but it was too much for me. Now, I have proposed to do it once a month in Brussels, and combine it with Rinpoche's internet teachings. On the day of the broadcast I organize a gathering in Namur with a projector and a big screen, and the people who can't come there might join in Brussels a few days later.

#### **I have heard that you also practice *Tsa Lung* with children. Can you tell about that?**

It is an extracurricular activity, organized by an official organization working in the school. It is a weekly yoga course for children from seven to twelve years old. We do breathing exercises and the *Tsa Lung* and some *Trul Khor* movements. The idea is to do it very simple, sometimes in a more funny way. Children like to play, and the idea of movement is very interesting for them. They can concentrate for only five to ten minutes, and they have to move, otherwise the energy is moving everywhere. So, if you don't propose something else, they become agitated. In September we started for the third year. In the children who have participated, I saw a lot of changes when it





Geshe Thupten Negi in Namur, Belgium.

comes to concentration. I think that *Thrul Khor* is a wonderful practice for the children.

The children also love the *Sound Practice*. I slowly start to work with the breathing and holding breath. I propose to do it three times, and not five times, and if they can't hold the breath I tell them just to do the movement, and connect to the movement. After one hour they are very peaceful, and when they go out it is like they have charged the battery. They go outside and play. During the practice I see a lot of yawning, and that is a good sign of balancing. When I observed children just doing the movement, and not working with the breath, I saw the same. The idea is to learn them to be present in the here and now, and make contact with the body.

And sometimes we do stillness, silence and spaciousness, and I use words like stillness as a tree or silence like a cat, and be like the sky.

I also tried to practice with children of five and six years old, but that did not work very well, because for them it's more difficult to respect and understand the instructions.

**How did you come to the idea to do these practices with children?**

Working as kinesiologist, with muscular testing, many children came to me with questions about stress at school and family problems. I am a social worker, work since twenty-five years with people who have a handicap or psychiatric problems; worked in a prison; worked with an association for women with cancer; and after that, I wanted to work with children. I looked on the internet, saw an announcement that an organization nearby was looking for somebody to work with the children, so I phoned, and the next day I could start.

### **When you're open, miracles happen?**

I think it is also because of The 3 Doors program I have done. So many things changed in my life, and many external manifestations happened. Sometimes it is difficult to understand with my mind how things can happen. Before the training I wanted to have my own practice place, where I can give the Zen training, *Tsa Lung* classes and Reiki teachings. And during The 3 Doors training everything came, and we will start to build it in February 2015. Before The 3 Doors training it was just a dream, but soon it will be in my house. Another manifestation was to share my practice with others. I worked a lot on how to feel confident, and develop my expression of how I want to share my practice. I teach Reiki and Zen totally differently than before. It is as if all the teachings infuse all the aspects of my life. I found a deep connection with the inner refuge. I don't think too much about it, but expression has become a part of me, that is very present.

### **Can you tell about the Prison Project?**

Before I practiced with Rinpoche, I did Zen practice, just sitting, with prisoners. After I learned the *Tsa Lung* from Rinpoche, I contacted another prison. The jailors were enthusiast, because the practice changed the mind of the prisoners. It opened space in jail. We practiced for one-and-a-half year every week. The problem in that prison was that the group always changed. People were waiting there for their pronouncement in court, and had to go elsewhere for their prison sentence. There I did not work according to Ligmincha Prison Project program.

The Ligmincha Prison Project gives guidelines that you offer a short course of several weeks. I think that works better. And it is good to give people support after they have left the prison, because





for many prisoners it is more difficult to be outside than inside the prison. For most of them it is difficult to continue to practice when they are released. The Ligmincha Prison Project gives prisoners that support. Giving the training in the prison, it would be good to use Rinpoche's DVD with the *Tsa Lung*, but often it is not allowed to take a DVD into a prison. It would be nice if we, as sangha, could offer more practice in the prisons in Europe, also for the people who work there. The jailers say that there are many programs for the prisoners, but not for them, and they suffer a lot too. When we would teach the jailors how to practice, it would benefit a lot of people: the jailors, their families, the prisoners.

While I worked there I was also invited to go to meetings for all the people who work in the prison. A great problem was people with psychiatric problems who stayed in prison. I saw people who should not be there, but should be in a hospital. The jailers thought, "These guys are not feeling well, let's sent them to yoga classes." So I had some difficulties working with these people. It was nice to do, but also difficult because I was alone, and they closed the door behind me. When I had a problem I had to call by phone. Just by going there, I felt how precious it is to be free. Even when the prisoners want to take a shower they have to ask permission. Working with them I also had the chance to find compassion and equanimity for them, because I didn't have to know why they were there. The practice also helped me a lot to work with my own fears.

**You are the coordinator of the Prison Project in Europe. We once interviewed Hannah Lloyd about the Prison Project in *Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 3*. When people are interested, can they contact you?**

Yes, I would like to find a way to work with people in Europe. They can contact me at: [gounaropoulos@gmail.com](mailto:gounaropoulos@gmail.com). There is a whole program ready, and we offer short practice sessions. The Prison Project has no religious framework, so it is accessible for everybody. That's also what I deeply love in Rinpoche's teachings, he speaks everybody's language, and there is so much openness. There is so much compassion in opening the traditional framework and making it accessible to all, everywhere where it is needed.

**Do you make in the practices you offer a clear distinction between The 3 Doors and the Bon practices?**

It has to be different, but I am not the best person to explain why. I am more for action, not so for reflection. The 3 Doors Academy teachers, the Ligmincha Board and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche have done a wonderful and incredible work by creating a good framework. They continue to work on it, and we will see how it will manifest. There are a lot of people who can benefit of these teachings, but I can't wait till everything becomes clear to start helping people. My experience is: the simpler things are, the better things go. One of the most beautiful gifts with the Inner Refuge is that when you have a good connection with it, everything comes in the right way, how to look, how to act.



John Jackson in Pauenhof, Germany.

**What do you want to share with the sangha?**

For me it was very helpful to work deeply with one practice, and not change it after some time. One simple practice becomes more and more powerful. And when we always change we don't get a chance to see the depth. For me the *Breathings of Purification*, *Tsa Lung* and *Sound Practice* are all complete paths. I have been doing the *Tsa Lung* for years and every time there are fruits coming from the practice. Sometimes we think that complexity gives good result, but for me it is more repeating the same practice over and over again, and go deeper and deeper.

**Interview by Ton Bisscheroux**

Photos: courtesy of Nicolas Gounaropoulos



# WHAT'S HAPPENED IN EUROPE

Here is a report from what has happened in the European sangha. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche visited Austria, Belgium and Germany, and gave internet teachings. Some sanghas worked together inviting lamas and other teachers.



**October 14 – 19:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught Part 5 of *The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung* in Maria Alm, Austria.



**October 24 – 26:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught *Dream Yoga* in Maison Notre Dame Du Chant D'Oiseau in Brussels, Belgium.







**November 6 – 9:**

Khenpo Tsultrim Tenzin Rinpoche visited Bratislava, Slovakia. The first two days he taught *Atri*, fixation with characteristics (photo right). And he taught two days from *Zhang Zhung Nyien Gyü Dja Dral Dje Me* (photo top). It was enriching for our practices and we felt very honored to welcome such a great Master.



**November 22 – 12:**

Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang taught in Wrocław, Poland, *From Five Elements to Health and Wisdom*. More than thirty participants came to the teachings.







### November 28 – 30:

The Austrian and Slovakian sangha worked together inviting Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang for a weekend. On Friday he gave a public talk about *Phowa* in a very nice tea-house in the center of Bratislava, Slovakia. About twenty-five people participated, and amongst them some members from the Austrian sangha.



On Saturday and Sunday there was a *Chöd* retreat in the Drikung Gompa of the Buddhist Center in Vienna, Austria. More than twenty people participated – also some from the Slovakian sangha – and all enjoyed it a lot. It was very intense as we were looking closely at the text and Geshe-la explained the meaning of all the lines of *The Laughter of the Dakini (mkha' 'gro gad rgyangs)* – a *Chöd* text written by Sharza Rinpoche.



Geshe-la showed us also how to play the *Damaru* and bell and it was wonderful to do the practice together.



### December 6 – 8:

Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang taught in Orte, Italy, the ancient practice of *Chöd*. A dedicated group of fourteen people attended and experienced the great compassion this practice can generate.







**December 5 –7:**

Geshe Gelek Jinpa taught *Ngondro* from *Gyalwa'i Chagtri* in Helsinki, Finland. About 40 people attended.



## Free Live Webcast

# Sharing Your Inner Peace and Joy for the Welfare of Others

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

## November 8, 2014

19.00 –20.30 (C.E.T.)

Translations in multiple languages available



[www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org)

**You can watch the recording here:**

[Sharing Your Inner Peace and Joy for the Welfare of Others](#)

## Free Live Webcast

# Guided Meditation from the Experiential Transmission Teachings, Part 1

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

## December 28, 2014

21.00–22:30 h. C.E.T.





Translations in multiple languages available

[www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org)

**You can watch the recording here:**

[Guided Meditation from the Experiential Transmission Teachings, Part 1](#)



# LIGMINCHA BERLIN MOVED TO A NEW HOME

**The Berlin sangha moved to a new and bigger place, because the sangha expanded. Ulrike Bross-Kurat, chair of Ligmincha Berlin, reports.**

On September 28, 2014, we moved to our new and much more spacious rooms in a quiet area of Berlin-Friedenau, Germany, which means literally peace in the meadows! In the afternoon it was an uplifting feeling for all of us who helped on that day and during the eight weeks before renovating and setting up everything nicely to be finally sitting on our red cushions and chanting the first Guru Yoga together solemnly again.

The energetic opening of our center was done by a traditional blessing ceremony with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and one day later, October 22, 2014, by his very inspiring public talk on *Tsa Lung*, for which we had more than one-hundred visitors. We could not believe we were able to host so many people in there but this meant really stretching our capacities to the limit. By these two opening events the new *Gompa* and the whole center (altogether 120 m<sup>2</sup>) became much more lively and sacred than it was before. Everyone from the closer Sangha could feel that.

We offer now practice groups twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday. Our growth motivated a few more people to become members of the non-

profit organization Ligmincha Berlin and also to take over some tasks. We could certainly do with more of that and keep inviting people to donate and to work with us! We have a fifth board member elected in our annual meeting at the end of October 2014, and feel now with that increase that our working base and decision-making processes are stabilizing.

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to our beloved teacher Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche who has always encouraged us to think big, keep going and take risks, to his senior Western students who have already been here and supported us a lot, and last not least to our dear friends from Ligmincha Deutschland who were really fast in supporting us with their very useful contribution of new meditation mats.

**Text by Ulrike Bross-Kurat**

Photo: courtesy of Ligmincha Berlin

## Planned activities in 2015:

**February 13 – 15, 2015:** Geshe Nyima teaches *Dream Yoga*.

**March 27 – 29:** Wolfgang Krebs teaches *Introduction into the Practice of the Six Lokas*.

**May 8 – 10, 2015:** Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches: *Outer, Inner and Secret Tsa Lung*.





# THE END IS A NEW BEGINNING

**With the fifth retreat of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* in Maria Alm, Austria, from October 14 – 19, 2014, the cycle of five years teachings ended. Karoline Seltenheim, who was responsible for the organisation, looks back.**

I remember, when we discussed with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in 2009 to start a cycle of the *Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* teachings in Europe, Rinpoche very often pointed out the importance of these teachings.

international sangha, and many things happened. One of the highlights was that many of the new board members of Ligmincha International gathered on our last retreat in October 2014. We were honoured by the visit of the new chair of Ligmincha International, Rob Patzig. Several international meetings were organized during the retreat, where some people, who could not be present in person, participated through Skype.

We concluded the retreat in a very festive setting by having a gala dinner and in the evening we



Almost the same photo as five years ago...

When we started to organize this retreat, I thought if we would rent a place for approximately one-hundred-twenty people, that would be fine. So, it was a big challenge to manage that around one-hundred-forty-five people could participate during the cycle. Finally we ended these precious teachings with at least one-hundred-twenty people, and those who finished the five years cycle were honoured by Rinpoche with a beautiful certificate.

In the first European newsletter – now *Ligmincha Europe Magazine* – is on the front-page a photo of the first retreat in Maria Alm, and if you're interested you can read in that [newsletter](#) several articles on how it all started. Then it was already said to be the “start of building a community.” During these five years we grew together as an

could enjoy some excellent presentations of creativity of many of our international sangha members.

During this retreat the questions arose “Can we continue?” and “Will Rinpoche give another *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* cycle in Europe?” Rinpoche said that the teachings of *The 21 Nails* next year during the Summer Retreat (August 10 – 16, 2015) in Buchenau, Germany, is from *The Oral Tradition of Zhang Zhung*. He also emphasized that it is now up to us to practice, prepare for the dark retreat experience, grow together as an international sangha and find a home for Ligmincha in Europe. Of course, we will take his advice in our hearts.

**Text by Karoline Seltenheim**

Photo by Martin Schroeder



# 9TH INTERNATIONAL SANGHA PRACTICE-WEEKEND

*with participants from Europe*

**Losar 2015: February 20 – 22, 2015**

We are pleased to invite you to participate in our practice weekend in February 20 – 22, 2015. This weekend offers the opportunity to either deepen your practice or be introduced to practices as taught by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche under the guidance of experienced practitioners.

The upcoming gathering takes place around Losar since 2012 and offers:

1. Setting up the *Gompa*
2. Practices as taught by Rinpoche during the Summer Retreat 2014
3. Sang Chö



**Date** | 20 – 22 February 2015,  
Friday 20 February 2015 arrival 18.00 h

**Place** | Schloss Buchenau | Eiterfeld, bei Bad Hersfeld

**Costs incl. meals (vegetarian)** | 108 - 147 Euro  
(depending on accommodation preferences)

**Organizer** | Ligmincha Deutschland e.V.

**Registration** | [click here](#) (German form, English form follows soon)

**End of registration** | starting 13 February 2015 please contact us personally



# FEMALE ENERGY FLOWS THROUGH PAUENHOF

From April 23 to 27, 2014, a meditation retreat was held at the Pauenhof, Germany, guided by Marcy Vaughn. It was organized by the German, Finnish, and Dutch sanghas. The theme was *Sherab Chamma, Loving Wisdom Mother*. The following is an impression by Adrienne van der Maas. Thanks to Christel van Eijnatten for her feedback and editing, and Wieger de Leur for the translation.

*"Don't think that the teachings are complicated, our restless, moving mind is."*

With this statement Marcy Vaughn starts the retreat. She makes a fist and then opens her hand. The essence of the teachings and of your nature are as simple to realize as unfolding your hand, she explains. In this seminar we'll work with our habits, judgments, and assumptions about ourselves and our world. Marcy calls these karmic imprints the pain identity. We can learn to dissolve these imprints in the openness of our Natural Mind. In this practice we do that by connecting with the wisdom which recognizes our nature and the love which supports the release of our pain identity. Both these qualities are embodied by *Sherab Chamma*. The vase she holds in her right hand is a symbol for love and kindness. The mirror in her left hand represents wisdom. This practice is a tantric meditation that helps us recognize our true nature through the three doors of body, speech, and mind.

In preparation for the practice we do the *Nine Breathings of Purification* and a short *Guru Yoga*. Then we reflect on our physical body here and now. We direct our attention to those areas of the body that bother us. With clear awareness of the physical sensations we experience, we rest our attention in the stillness of the body without any judgment. In this way we host the physical sensations; we look at the painful areas in our bodies with loving attention, which enables the release and healing of what goes on behind, within, or around these painful places.

We continue with breathing exercises to open the mind for experiences of the past and expectations



of the future. This opens the space for blocked positive qualities, like loving kindness, to arise. In this part of the practice we focus on the pain identity and on "Who is the one with doubts and insecurities; who is experiencing this?" It is not so much about what we experience, but about the one experiencing. That's the one with stories, ideas, wishes, demands. That's the one with an agenda, who wants the pain to leave and dissolve, and who wants this sooner rather than later. Marcy's comment is that the Natural Mind has no agenda, it looks from open space; it is about discovering that both are related, the event (trauma, pain) and the one looking, and by giving space we enable the transformation of both the pain and the one who suffers.

In the last part of the practice we rest deeply in connection with loving wisdom and then from that connection we radiate wisdom and love to those who suffer around us.

This may sound simple, but for me as a practitioner it's enormously complicated. It's not only my mind. I missed parts of the introduction and transmission, because I don't hear a lot, due through a forty year old partial deafness. Other practitioners seem to dissolve painful experiences effortlessly, have beautiful experiences, and see impressive images. I hear little, see only darkness when I close my eyes, and don't feel anything but the pain in my body. Then Marcy says something that lifts me up. "Go to that pain, go into it and see the event, look more closely, and deeper, go there." At last I know what to do. Immediately my painful





bodily experience shifts into a calmer and milder sensation.

Practitioners have come from far for this retreat: United Kingdom, Finland, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. What brings us together is our common interest in practicing together and Marcy's teaching on female energy. After the meditation, Marcy shares some experiences of her practice with us. Her openness flows through the group and stimulates us to share more. Marcy vocalizes this when she says: *"It's important to allow and host and heal our collective wounds in a group."*

With this, Marcy draws attention in her teaching to the influence that the lives, behaviors, and thoughts of our ancestors have on us. On an unconscious level we carry that with us. As soon as we connect with our ancestors, we encounter those hidden, secret, and collective wounds. Of course we have that influence on our own offspring and we want them to be spared from this. We wish for a better life for our children and especially more love instead of more suffering from our collective wounds. These practices allow us to express these intentions. Through recognizing this, the practice of *Guru Yoga* develops a deeper dimension for me. *Sherab Chamma* is the guide as I focus on painful experiences, rest there, and experience openness and discover my true nature. The tendency to avoid painful experiences is human and usually a pattern of survival. Becoming aware of discarded emotions and hidden fears means recognizing what is inside of you and remaining close to your own experience and through this, your true nature. Marcy calls this becoming intimate with yourself. In this process, *Sherab Chamma* can be an example, a help, or a mirror of our own true nature. Connecting with the ancestors opens the door to realizing their pain; connecting with the lineage of transmission or the refuge tree, the lineage of enlightened masters, opens the door to light and space. It is a beautiful journey from collective pain to collective wisdom.

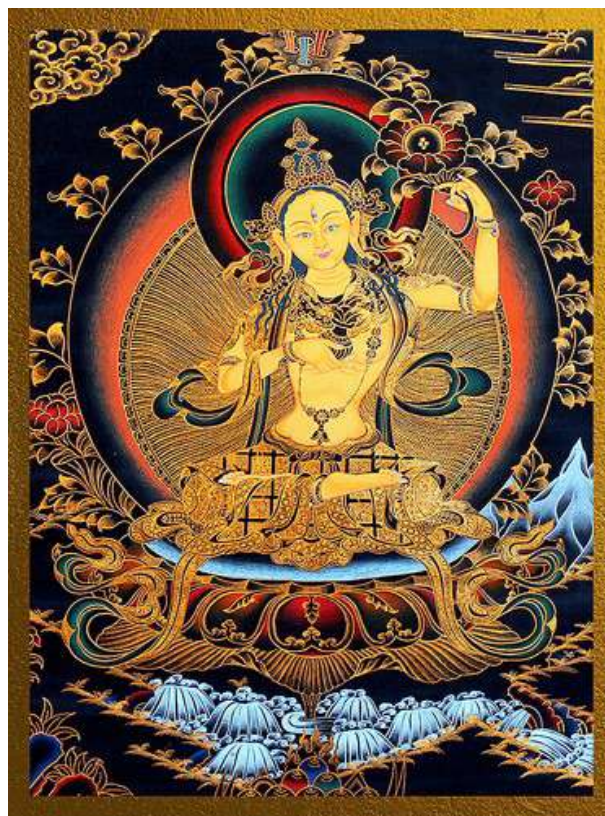
Marcy tells us about her respect for Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and the gift of talking from your heart: *"Drop your individual protection and show who you are; allow all suffering to move and flow through you; feel love and wisdom shining like a jewel."*

The practice of *Sherab Chamma* during the day and the invocation of Yeshe Walmo in the evening were supported by the whole group; this support was tangibly present and such a special experience. The wish to do a fire ceremony, to empower experiences and release suffering, arose effortlessly.

This intensely beautiful retreat ended in a fitting way, with a ceremony for the well-being of loved-ones who suffer from their conditions.

We are grateful for Marcy's inspiration and her personal style of teaching, which allowed for personal exchange and reflection on the practice, for her attention to questions, humor, and space for all of us.

**Text by Adrienne van der Maas**



**From March 6 – 8, 2015 will be the next *Sherab Chamma retreat* with Marcy Vaughn in Helsinki, Finland.**

**Information and registration: [www.ligmincha.fi](http://www.ligmincha.fi).**

**From March 10 – 15, 2015 will be the *Sherab Chamma retreat* with Marcy Vaughn at the Pauenhof in Germany.**

**Information and registration: [www.ligmincha.nl](http://www.ligmincha.nl) or [www.ligmincha.de](http://www.ligmincha.de).**



# WE ARE GROWING TO ONE COMMUNITY

In the [Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 13](#) Rob Patzig informed us about the newly formed Ligmincha International Board. He said that many activities were underway. Curious about that, Ton Bisscheroux invited him for an interview.

**In June you had the first meeting of the International Board. What has happened since?**

When we met in June it was our first chance to come together and learn about each other, discover what we have in common and what different skills we bring to bear. And it was then that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche shared with us his vision for Ligmincha International. Rinpoche sees us uniting together to serve the *dharm*a, study and practice – becoming one community instead of forty separate communities. Since then we have been talking, skyping, and having calls to discuss how best to implement his vision.

Before the International Board was formed, Rinpoche and a group of dedicated practitioners had already spent almost three years discussing and creating a set of bylaws and planning for the changes Rinpoche wanted to make. This group was primarily or exclusively American, and so the first project for the board was to discuss those bylaws and adapt them to an international organization's needs. So we spent three months rewriting the bylaws to give them a more international feel, and in November Rinpoche signed them. You can find those bylaws soon on the Ligmincha website.

We have also drafted a charter and language for the bylaws of affiliated organizations: the Ligmincha and Chamma Ling centers around the world. These are based on the International Bylaws and are guidelines meant to help ensure that we all serve the same vision and purpose, but they offer flexibility based on the needs of different groups and the laws of different countries.

A big change organizationally is that Serenity Ridge, our retreat center in Shipman, Virginia is now owned by Ligmincha International. That means that as our headquarters it is not just a Virginia or even an American center. It belongs to



us all, and it must serve the needs of the international community in addition to being a retreat center. Previously Serenity Ridge was run more or less independently. The Board formed a committee with responsibility to oversee the retreat center and report back to the International Board. We hope that more and more activities at Serenity Ridge will be related to global activities as time goes by.

We are having conversations about how we make sure that we understand Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's vision, and also understand the needs of practitioners from forty practice groups all over the world. How do we make sure the communication goes in both directions, so that Rinpoche can hear all the voices, but not hear from hundreds of people all the time? And also make sure that his vision is clearly communicated to all the sangha members. Our needs are not always the same and we need to respect our differences. For example, anyone who has been to retreats in different locals – Mexico, the U.S., Poland, Austria, etc. – can see that there are differences in culture and in our daily practices as well as language. But we have to make sure that the vision for Ligmincha and our support of our Spiritual Director, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, is the same wherever we go. This is one of the primary roles of the International Board, trying to balance those





needs, making sure that there is good communication, setting up the policies and procedures to help those things happen.

### **How are you going to implement the vision worldwide?**

We are in the process of forming committees, made of practitioners with different skills and different sets of experiences from all across the community. Some of these are:

- A Committee of Practice and Trainings, which will work to provide more transcripts, videos, audio recordings, more practice materials and practice support, as well as guidelines such as what is required for one to serve as an *umze*.
- The Serenity Ridge Executive Committee (discussed above) responsible for oversight of the activities at the center.
- The Mandala Council, which is perhaps the most immediately important and active group (see below).



Members of the Mandala Council, present in Maria Alm.

The ultimate goal of the Board and of the Committees and the Mandala Council is clear. There was a place for Bon in Tibet and India, and now it is everywhere else in the world, and we would like it to be a place for new people in twenty, fifty or a hundred years. We need to provide stability, like the *Ngondro* gives us stability in our personal life. As we bring in more teachers and instruction and opportunities for practice together and alone we can have more

support. Rinpoche said that he feels that this is the right time to start this project, because now we have strong practitioners in all the countries where he teaches, we have a lot of experience, good *umzés* and practice leaders, we have people who have shown enough long term commitment to the teachings, and we have the practical experience in the different areas we need, like fundraising, organization, information technology. Rinpoche has always had dedicated students serving him faithfully in every way, but until now we haven't had the breadth of people, skills and resources that are required for an international organization of our size.

### **What is the task of the Mandala Council?**

The first task for the Mandala Council is to find ways to share more. Rinpoche is really emphasizing that we should recognize that we are kind of a big family, and that we are scattered across many continents and countries and we speak different languages, but we are a community of practitioners. So, let's start doing things like a community.

The first thing Rinpoche wants us to do is to practice the same way at each location where we celebrate Losar in 2015. He is working with all the resident lamas to see what they can do at the different locations, and he will come with a plan about what we will be doing and how to coordinate that. It is a small thing, but it is a nice gesture: starting a new year, doing the same thing, coming together and sharing a practice.

The Mandala Council focuses on sharing experience, successes and challenges of the different sanghas. We have the same challenges everywhere, like: Where do we practice? How do we pay for it? How do we get the teachers to come? Who will manage things? How do we recruit volunteers? There are many talented people in the sangha. The Berlin sangha is very organized and they are doing great with volunteers, and also in Austria I saw during the retreats that everything was done by volunteers. Other places have bigger challenges with finding and retaining volunteers, so we should share our experiences, consult each other, and share our resources. This is just one small example. In the future our hope is to create some shared funds for when there is a specific project,





e.g. when a small sangha is trying to organize something in a new country and wants to invite a teacher, but they don't have the money, we might join together to support that.

We want to know a little bit how our community looks like, because we don't know much about each other. We don't know about our demographics, we don't know how many people come to the teachings. We have the impression that in Mexico and Poland there are many young practitioners, but in the other countries most practitioners are in their late forties or older. That's fine, but we need to know, because the way we communicate with them is different. Members of the Mandala Council are going to do two surveys. One survey will be going to the board of all the sanghas and asking: How often do you meet? Where do you meet? What practices do you do the most? What kind of thing would you most like to see done? The second survey will be sent to practitioners, to everybody who is on a mailing lists or comes to teachings. The questions will be something like: Do you only follow Bon, or do you have other teachers as well? What practices do you do at home? What support materials do you wish you had? What languages do you speak? The Council is at work on these things now.

Another task the Mandala Council is going to do is reaching out to every place where Rinpoche teaches or has taught, and create a catalogue of the teachings they have, the transcripts they have, what practice material they use. Once we have that catalogue we can give that to the Practice and Training Committee, and say, "Here is what we know that exists. What can we do with it?" We also want electronic and hard copies of everything that everybody has, to make a library of Rinpoche's teachings. Later we may also try to collect historical video and sound recordings from the teachings.

**Do you think that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is going to teach more because the International Board takes care of the organizational tasks?**

I don't know if Rinpoche can teach more. He already travels and teaches so much. I can't keep

up with him! I think he will do more through the internet. As an example, in November I completed the fourth year of the *Trul Khor* training with Alejandro Chaoul. Rinpoche was not there, but on the last day he joined us via Skype and gave us the transmission live. This is a new way for him to be involved in practices where he is not the primary teacher or when other activities prevent him from being present physically. In the webcast from November 8th, 2014, he talked about the next years online teachings on *Soul Retrieval*. With advances in technology, we can all be with Rinpoche more by being a part of the cyber sangha. We are also working to support Rinpoche's teachings that are on [Glidewing.com](http://Glidewing.com). And we also have a site called [Ligmincha Learning.com](http://Ligmincha Learning.com) that John Jackson runs and where you take a course on the *Five Elements*, *Sherab Chamma* and *The Three Heart Mantras*. Our goal is to have more online courses available led by our senior teachers, and we want to do that in English, German, Spanish, Polish and other languages.



Rinpoche is our spiritual director, and he should not have to worry about administrative and organizational issues. He definitely has a strong interest in these things and he is very aware of all that is happening, but there are things we can and should do for ourselves within the context of Rinpoche's vision. The bylaws are clear, as is our mission. If you can solve a problem locally, you should solve it locally. And if you can't solve it locally, you have the resources of the Mandala Council and the International Board. And if we can't solve it, or have different opinions or if we are confused, we ask Rinpoche what to do.





### **What will the role of other Bon lamas be in the future?**

Rinpoche has been actively bringing Bon lamas together all around the world, so they are talking about the practices in their community. And we are actively trying to place lamas in any sanghas that have the means of supporting them. We can only benefit by having more direct support from the lineage, from lamas and Geshe who have gone through a traditional cycle of training, that are able to support the meditation practices and the traditions from *Zhang Zhung* and from Tibet, whether it is *Torma* making or ritual practices like *Soul Retrieval*. Having them in the sangha is inspiring and a really solid support. They let us see directly the benefits of the practices and the teachings. We have seen that with Lhari-la Kalsang Nyima. When he was the resident lama in Serenity Ridge – now he is in Mexico – he was active in the community, and many people came because they wanted to meet a Tibetan lama. He was very jovial and a great teacher. When he went to Mexico we lost that momentum, because we did not have him. I know for Serenity Ridge it has an enormous value to have a lama here. Geshe Tenzin Yangton came to us this past summer. Now there is a lot of enthusiasm arising to practice with him and receive teachings from him. For any place that has a permanent center we want to create the opportunity to have a lama there.

I think that is why Lishu Institute is also important. It is not that we should only import lamas to help us, but we should have practitioners who are dedicated and have the desire to go to a three year program. I think the teachings of the Buddhas and the enlightened beings have succeeded in so many places around the world because they adopt the forms of the different cultures. Ultimately, there have to be western lamas and Geshe if Bon is to really establish a permanent foothold outside of Tibet and Nepal.

**When sanghas invite Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche there are always more than one-hundred people coming to the teachings, but when a sangha invites another Bon lama mostly no more than twenty-five to forty people come. From the sanghas who invite a Bon lama I heard that they are very enthusiastic with the teachings which are traditional. Do you think that their popularity will grow in the future?**

Rinpoche has been teaching for twenty-five years, has a relentless travel schedule, is every month in the magazine *BuddhaDharma* in the section [Ask the Teachers](#), and his command of English is so complete that people really find him accessible. Almost none of the other lamas have this extensive immersion in Western culture. Twenty-five years from now our resident lamas may very well be the ones who have hundreds of people coming. When His Holiness came the first time





there were only thirty or forty people, and now three or four-hundred want to attend!

**Can you tell how you met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche?**

My wife and I teach yoga and we were not only interested in the physical movement, but also the *prana* yoga (the breathing), the meditation, the concentration. In yoga there are references in certain texts to inner fire, *Tumo*, but no one teaches *Tumo*. Most senior yoga teachers even

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche the first time, and I knew I had found my teacher. I have been going to his teachings ever since.

**When people want to support Ligmincha, what is the best way to start, on a national or international level?**

When you have a special idea how to help the international community you can reach out to a executive director or any member of the board. But for most people the best place to start is a



have not heard of it. We talked about how wonderful it would be if somebody could teach us *Tumo*, because it sounded like a powerful practice. One day I decided to Google '*Tumo teaching*,' and one result came up in English: Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaching two hours away from my house *Tumo*. It was the Summer Retreat, and it ended the day before I decided to search for it. And I realized: "Oh, there is a Tibetan lama teaching *Tumo* just a little ways from my home and I did not even know, and he has been doing it for three years. I want to meet this guy!" In 2008 I went to Serenity Ridge when Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche taught Dzogchen, and I did not understand most of what he said even though his English is very good, but I loved the practice and loved his presence and just having the opportunity to sit with him. In 2010 I met

local or national practice group. That's what happened to me and to most of us serving the international community: we got involved in a local sangha and then got more and more involved. As you create opportunities for yourself to serve more, different opportunities will manifest. The organization is amazing, because almost everyone is a volunteer, and all the work that needs to be done gets done. Serving the sangha, at any level of the organization, is an incredible opportunity to practice off of the cushion. Personally it is among the most rewarding things I've ever done.

**Interview by Ton Bisscheroux**

Photos by Martin Schroeder, Oliver Wirtz and Rob Patzig



# LIFE IS A MATINEE

**Lowell Britson started in September 2014 in Shenten Dargye Ling in France a four-year meditation cycle. Here is his report from his experiences at a Bon meditation school during the first retreat.**

Shenten Dargye Ling, a monastery in Blou, France, established a Bon meditation school in 2008, to offer practitioners an opportunity in depth study and practice of Dzogchen texts under the guidance of a Bon lama. Called *Gomdras*, these retreats meet seventy days for four consecutive years. The third Gomdra at Shenten began in November 2014 with the Bon text *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* and Geshe Gelek Jinpa as head teacher. There were twenty-seven participants from all over the world. I was one of three Americans.

Why spend seventy days in a Bon monastery chanting, memorizing and practicing ancient Tibetan texts isolated from the regular world? For me, it was an extraordinary opportunity to deepen my practice. A practitioner for over thirty years, studying any Bon text with a lineage holder was indeed a precious opportunity. One makes a written application and then waits. Three months later I received an acceptance email from the Shenten administrator. I was thrilled.

Organizing that much time off required me to leave my job. There was not a doubt in my mind what to do. The first program would run from September 5 – November 13, an excellent time to be in the Loire Valley of central France. And so, I am keeping a diary of my experiences for the next four years at Shenten. I hope you will find it interesting.

With all the different languages and habits, the settling in took a couple of weeks. The daily schedule was arranged similar to the parent monastery, Triten Norbutse Monastery, in Nepal. Morning chants began at 7:00 am and evening chants finished at 9:30 pm. During the day we spent five hours in meditation, an hour lecture, two hours of work, i.e. food services, cleaning halls, restrooms, and the remainder of the time in private practice. Private time could be chanting,

Lowell Britson is a senior student of H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche. His previous teachers include Suzuki Roshi and Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He was past president of Olmo Ling Bon Center and Institute in Pittsburgh, PA, USA.



more sitting, walking, writing, contemplating or learning Tibetan. All lights were out at 10:00 pm.

The retreat was not silent. Some participants chose to do so but it was an option. I'd done a month of silence with another meditation group, so I chose to talk to my fellow practitioners. There seemed to be enough silence with only twenty-seven people among the ample Shenten grounds.

We were allowed one free day a week to use our email or to have contact with the outside world. No one was allowed to leave the grounds without permission. One of the Shenten staff arranged for any contact we needed with the outside world. They shopped for us, did our laundry, filled prescriptions, did our banking, and helped all of us in too many ways to mention. Only two people left the premises; one for family health reasons, the other job related. Both returned to complete the retreat. Everyone was assigned a single room. No alcohol, no smoking, and no sex. All meals were prepared for us and served in a dining hall. Meat and vegetarian entrees were available with tea and cookies at all times. No one gained any weight.

Most of the practices were in Tibetan, except for the teachings, which were in English. The French participants had a translator. The ground staff was all French. After seventy days everyone was using some French words, either correctly or not.

Time passed incredibly fast as we integrated our meditation and practice. The pain of sitting long periods also passed after the second week. We became experts in arranging our cushions for pain-free sessions. We shared all the information freely. Potassium and magnesium became key





elements in our diets.

The weather was glorious. The Loire Valley, famous for its good weather, did not disappoint, with beautiful autumn mornings, evenings with clear starry skies, and lovely sunsets. We practiced outdoors much of the time. The light and its shadows were always memorable; the silence broken only by the song of birds. Only eight days were rainy and quite cold. Somehow the hot showers made us forget them.

Geshe Gelek was always with us, leading the chants, guiding the meditation and practice sessions, teaching the Dzogchen texts, stretching our Tibetan vocabulary and providing the answers and support to our practice. On Wednesday mornings, Yongdzin Rinpoche gave the text teachings. With great clarity and compassion, he revealed to us the essence of the Dzogchen text. At eighty-eight, he was always an inspiration to our practice. On his morning walks, he was always willing to support us with our endless questions.



This *Gomdra* covered the Dzogchen preliminary practices (*Ngondro*), which are nine separate practices which require one-hundred-thousand recitations of each practice to purify the mind of obstructions and negative traces in preparation for the text teachings next year. Most of the time was taken up with these practices, either as a group practice or in private. It is our homework for the coming year.

For me, the deepening silence coupled with daily practices and the *Ngondro* practices opened the doors of inner wisdom within my heart. Long neglected with the daily life of work, family and academic challenges, a clear and empty mind was soon revealed. An awareness of my primordial nature slowly opened with a flood of unbounded compassion for myself and others. The changes were slow and subtle but continue to remind me of the importance of my inner life and inner wisdom.

These experiences were a result of practice and

the prayers and blessings of our teachers and lineage masters. The first day began with hours of sitting, daily chanting, intense morning teaching sessions and words and energy of these practices which never really ended. They were in my mind when I woke up in the middle of the night and when I boarded the plane to return home. They are still with me as I write this article.

The powerful Dzogchen teachings delivered by dedicated and accomplished Bon masters also awakened in my heart and mind great reserves of energy and joy. The nature of mind was always there. I just didn't know it. All one needs to do is relax and experience it. No effort required. It's ridiculously easy. It is our freedom from pain and suffering.

The Dzogchen teachings are all about discovering and remaining in the nature of mind. As a precious jewel we care for, it enables us to be joyful, happy and yes, even satisfied. Slowly our craving mind stops. No more wanting. Driven by this newly discovered awareness, negative emotions

also begin to decrease. Clouds of doubt may appear, but our nature of mind is pure and the winds of awareness, along with our daily practices, reveal an open sky with a blazing sun. It is the Dzogchen path.

It is helpful to know the nature of mind will never leave you. It's always there, 24/7. All beings have it. It is spacious, changeless, and limitless. No actions are needed but to experience it, no extra effort to comprehend it. No thinking required, just relax and enjoy. Like the lotus flower, our nature of mind is pure, fresh and strong; growing from the mud of our *samsara* and yet not affected by it. We are indeed fortunate.

My awareness is always moving, it is the wisdom of our nature of mind. It is our intention; formless, empty and impermanent. It is a vision like a matinee.

**Text by Lowell Britson**

Photos: courtesy of Lowell Britson and by Frits de Vries



## BEST WISHES

Wild and free in all dimensions -  
connected with the space -  
looking to the dharma -  
friendly in a never ending way



*We wish you a happy christmas  
and a funny new year*

Bridget de Claire





# PREPARING TO DIE

This is the first of a series of articles we want to dedicate to an important life event: dying. Frits de Vries has read several books on this issue, and shares his understanding with us.

*Separation of body and mind  
is the definition of death.  
When death happens, the mind continues,  
driven by the lack of recognition  
of the nature of mind.  
This mind endlessly takes rebirth in  
a variety of realms,  
and this is the definition of  
the suffering of cyclic existence.*

**Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

## Clear Light

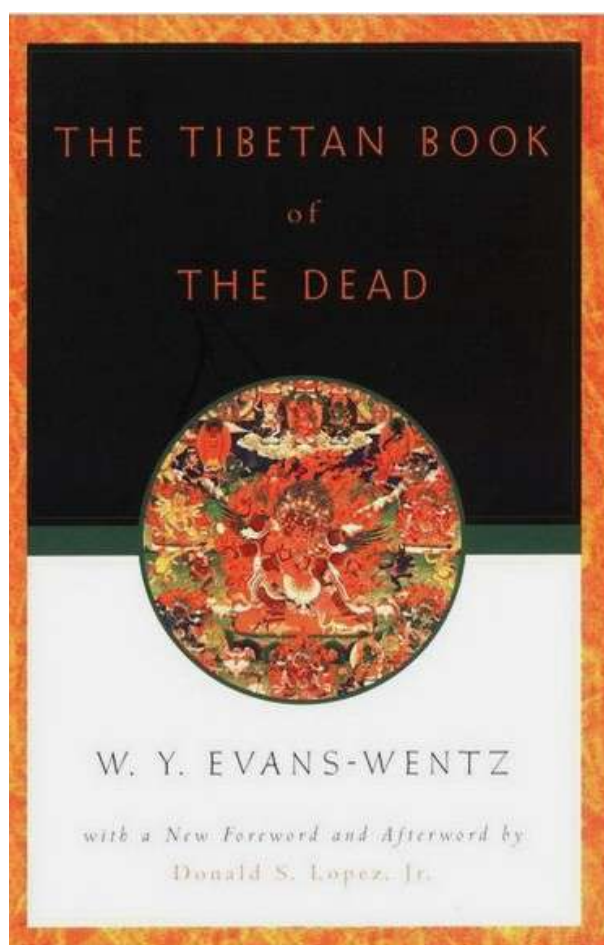
In 1927 a part of a Tibetan text called *Bardo Thödol* was published in English as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This title was coined by the editor of the first translation, Walter Y. Evans-Wentz, because he assumed a relationship with the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The meaning of the text was quite a deviation from the prevailing Judeo-Christian view of death in the West.

"Since its first translation into English in 1927, this book has aroused enormous interest among psychologists, writers and philosophers in the West, and has sold millions of copies." (2)

It played a role in the roaring sixties when a book appeared called *The Psychedelic Experience*, subtitled: *A Manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (3). The manual was dedicated to the writer Aldous Huxley, who experimented with mescaline and has written about it in *The Doors of Perception*. In this famous essay there is a crucial talk on fixing his attention on the Clear Light, as it is called in the *Bardo Thödol*.

After the sixties came a period of silence around the book and only recently, in 2006, appeared a first full translation of all twelve chapters of the *The Great Liberation by Hearing*. From the editor's introduction:

"The Tibetan Book of the Dead includes one of the



most detailed and compelling descriptions of the after-death state in world literature. It is not surprising therefore that when Chapter 11 of our text, 'The Great Liberation by Hearing,' first appeared in English, in 1927, it caused a considerable stir and has remained one of the most well known of Tibet's literary works ever since. In our work for the first time, we are presenting a complete translation of all twelve chapters of the compilation of texts known as the The Tibetan Book of the Dead, which includes nine chapters not translated in W.Y. Evans-Wentz's original publication." (4)

As the title of Evans-Wentz suggests the book is about death, but the editor explains clearly the book is also about daily life:

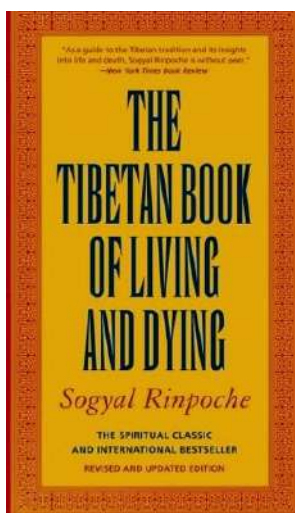
"The compendium of texts known as The Tibetan Book of the Dead contains exquisitely written guidance and practices related to transforming our experiences in daily life, on how to address the processes of dying and the after-death state, and on how to help those who are dying." (4)



In the full cycle of existence, the composer of the *Bardo Thödol*, Padmasambhava, distinguishes six intermediate states (5). In each state you can use the specific meditative techniques you have practiced and developed for recognizing the ultimate nature of mind. And so you can finish the epigraph from above: *“Recognizing the nature of mind is wisdom, when one fully realizes the nature of mind, suffering is extinguished.”* (1) The mind then continues after death and is liberated from *samsara*.

*“The term ‘intermediate state’ (bardo) refers to key phases of life and death identified as: the intermediate state of living, the intermediate state of meditative concentration, the intermediate state of dreams, the intermediate state of the time of death, the intermediate state of reality and the intermediate state of rebirth. During each of these phases, the consciousness of a sentient being has particular experiential qualities, and corresponding to these qualities of experience there are specific meditative techniques conducive to realisation of the ultimate nature of mind and phenomena.”* (6)

The question is: what are these ‘specific meditative techniques conducive to realization’ and how can we learn them? The updated answer comes from Sogyal Rinpoche.



### New Impulse

The *Bardo Thödol* got a fresh new impulse in 1992, when Sogyal Rinpoche stressed the inseparability of what we call ‘life’ and what we call ‘death’ even more in the title of his book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. The author wrote: *“I have written ‘The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying’ as the quintes-*

*sence of the heart-advice of all my masters, to be a new Tibetan Book of the Dead and a Tibetan Book of Life.”* (7) This book has been an unprecedented success. The fertile foundation was laid by a growing interest in the West about near-death experiences, owing to the groundbreaking work of Kübler-Ross, *On Death*

*and Dying*, and the germinate connection with Tibetan Buddhism on death and dying, as taught by Sogyal Rinpoche and other Tibetan masters. In his book Sogyal Rinpoche places a strong emphasis on the highest Buddhist teaching called Dzogchen, as found in the Nyingma and Bon traditions.

From the early eighties on, Sogyal Rinpoche had already build an organization called Rigpa, for starting and maintaining retreat centers, organizing conferences, seminars, retreats, etc. The success of the book led to a great expansion in the work of Rigpa.

*“Over 3 million copies have been printed, in 34 languages, and the book is available in 80 countries. It has been adopted by colleges, groups and institutions, both medical and religious, and is used extensively by nurses, doctors and healthcare professionals.”* (8)

Spiritual teaching and practice groups are well-organized and found all over the world. According to their website [www.rigpa.org](http://www.rigpa.org): *“Rigpa aims to present the Buddhist tradition of Tibet in a way that is both completely authentic, and as relevant as possible to the lives and needs of modern men and women.”*

With the spreading of the message of the *Bardo Thödol* all over the world, in a language everyone can understand, through a solid organization called Rigpa, accessible for everyone, with practice groups, teachings and trainings, the death-and-dying movement has been definitely put on the map. You can order online prayers for someone sick or deceased with suggested offering prices. With the twentieth anniversary of the book of Sogyal Rinpoche 1992-2012 even a special congratulation website was maintained. What can be added to the groundbreaking work of Sogyal Rinpoche?

### More practical and applicable

In 2013, Buddhist practitioner, teacher and writer Andrew Holecek published *Preparing to Die: Practical Advice and Spiritual Wisdom from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition* (9). What can be added, what is missing, was the first question Helen Tworlov, Tricycle founding editor, asked Andrew Holecek in an interview on his latest book (10). Holecek answered that what he adds to



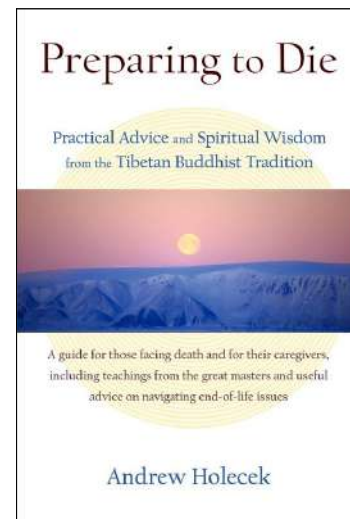


Sogyal's book is that he wanted to synthesize the dozen or so books that had been published on the subject since the publication of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* in 1992, but in particular trying to put it into a format that would be practical and applicable for people: *"What I thought I would do was create something that would give people really highly helpful tips, things that they could use now, things that they could use to help others now, that would help them and others through this otherwise challenging time."*

He adds no new material, but puts the existing material in a conveniently arranged structure. This objective is clearly reflected in the structured organization of the main part of the book 'Spiritual Preparation.' This first part is arranged in a threefold time-sequence:

1. what can you do *before* dying,
2. what can you do *when* dying,
3. what can you do *after* dying.

Each episode is put in a social dimension and is subdivided into: what you can do for *yourself* and for *others*. You have then the practical arrangement of the first six chapters.



Next to the main part the book of Holecek contains a well-organized arrangement of two other parts. The second part has three chapters about all practical preparation: before death, stages of dying and after death. So the next three chapters of part two fit seamlessly to the same time sequence with a third subdivision added as: *practical matters*. You thus get a 3 x 3 table for the first nine chapters of the book. In the following table the main topics of the first nine chapters *Preparing to Die* are conveniently reflected:

9 chapters	before death	during dying	after death
what can you do for <i>yourself</i>	<b>1. what can you do for <i>yourself</i> before you die:</b> practices and meditations, like: <i>tonglen</i> ; reverse meditation; pure land practice; <i>phowa</i> ; <i>shitro</i> ; etc., but also dharma wills and the dharma box	<b>3. what can you do for <i>yourself</i> as you die:</b> knowing the signs of outer and inner dissolution, <i>tukdam</i> , peaceful and wrathful visions	<b>5. what can you do for <i>yourself</i> after you die:</b> the view, first step, advice from the <i>Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> : bright and soft lights
what can you do for <i>others</i>	<b>2. what can you do for <i>others</i> before they die:</b> shortly: <i>"keep your views about death for yourself unless there is an invitation"</i>	<b>4. what can you do for <i>others</i> as they die:</b> sacred listening, holding environments, advice from Sogyal Rinpoche: saying goodbye, peaceful death	<b>6. what can you do for <i>others</i> after they die:</b> the view, power of merit, reading the <i>Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> , monastic rituals
practical matters	<b>7. before death</b> legal issues, wills, disposition of property, demystifying hospice, managing pain	<b>8. when dying</b> caring, need of the dying, stages of dying, signs and symptoms of death, spiritual matrix (Holecek)	<b>9. after death</b> funeral directors, care for the body, unexpected death, odors and changes, disposition, working with grief from a Buddhist perspective

The main topics of the first nine chapters of the book *Preparing to Die*.



Part two ends with Chapter 10 on several difficult issues, like organ donation.

The third part are heart advices from eighteen contemporary spiritual masters, i.e. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. The book ends with several useful checklists: spiritual, farewell, practical.

#### FAREWELL CHECKLIST

Think about the holding environment you want as you die. Do what you need to do to prepare that sacred space. If you don't have a dharma will, you could dictate your wishes to your spiritual friends when you realize you are going to die. Ask them for help in implementing your wishes. Here are suggestions for what to put into your dharma will:

- Who do you want to be with you when you die? Is there anyone you feel may disturb your death and should therefore stay away?
- Do you want many people coming through, a very quiet space, or something in between?
- What do you want the space to look like – a shrine, photos of your teachers, of Loved ones? What other sacred objects do you want? Do you want candles or incense?
- Do you want people to be able to say goodbye in ways other than a funeral or memorial service? How?
- If you are a great lover of nature, would you like your friends and family to gather outdoors, at one of your favorite locations?
- Is there anything you want said or read at your funeral?
- Would you prefer silence?
- Do you want someone in particular to lead the gathering?
- Is it to be a party or some other form of celebration?
- Are there particular values or human qualities you want emphasized?
- Is there an important cause or charity you want to benefit?
- If you want to be cremated, where would you like your ashes to be scattered?

Part of the Farewell checklist; (9) p.313

As compared to the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche, the new book by Andrew Holecek does improve the structure and choice of what to do: in the dimension of time; in

the social dimension, specified as for *yourself* or for *others*; in the practical dimension. Many death and dying situations are possible in these dimensions. The book by Sogyal Rinpoche is more a narrative on his own life story and also tailored to teaching and explaining the Dzogchen perspective. The book of Holecek is indeed more practical as it intended to be.

#### Dimension of experience

The book of Holecek offers countless helpful possibilities for what we can do for ourselves and others in the three time-stages: before death - when dying - after death. In the interview (10) he makes a division of death and dying related to your meditation experience in three levels of practitioners: 1. going to enlightenment, 2. having no fear, 3. having no regret. We may hope to belong to the second category when dying as Buddhist practitioners.

Sometimes Holecek gives a clear advice for practitioners. Like in chapter 4 'What to do for others as they die,' where in the section 'Looking Forward' a dying practitioner is presented. He suggests one of the best things we can do is to help them to look forward:

*"Tell them that the relative is dying, the ultimate is not dying. Give them hope that they can recognize the ultimate, the nature of their mind, the mind that is unchanging and undying. You have to give a little promotion on the deathless side."*(11)

But, I missed in the chapter "What can you do for *yourself* as you die" some practical advice for Buddhist practitioners, which I found in other books.

In the book *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep* Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche advises practitioners having a problem with focusing:

*"Often practitioners say they have a hard time maintaining the visualization, or that the visualization interferes with sleep. (...) The teaching also prescribes this kind of focus at the time of death. When presence is maintained during death, the whole process is very different. Maintaining this presence is really the essence of the practice of the transference of consciousness at the time of death (phowa). (...) If successful, the practitioner does not experience the turbulence and distraction of the after-death experience but instead is liberated directly into the clear light."* (12)





Since *Guru Yoga* is an important part of our meditation practice, we can use it on the moment of our dying. Namkhai Norbu emphasizes on the relevance of *Guru Yoga* when he gives an elaborate, almost three pages commentary on the *Seventh Word of Advice of Longchenpa*,  
*"You may have subjects, wealth, retinue, merits and your fame  
 May fill the entire world;  
 Yet at the time of death these things will be of benefit whatsoever  
 Be diligent in spiritual practice! This is my advice from the heart."* (13)

Here is the central part of Namkhai Norbu's comment:

*"As soon as you recognize that you are dying, you should enter the state of Guruyoga. In that way you are beyond time. You notice what is occurring in your body at that moment, such as the dissolution of the elements, but since you are in the state of instant presence, you do not experience suffering in the ordinary way. In that state, death also poses no problem to you. We should dedicate ourselves to the practice of Guruyoga and become good practitioners of that."* (13)

Still, the book of Holecek offers you a lot to think about: How ambitious do you want to be before death in your practice? Do you want to change your Western look on dying in a Buddhist view on dying? What kind of help do you set-up for the after-death period?

To conclude, Holecek's work is a well-organized reference work for Death and Dying, it is more than a supplement to the book of Sogyal Rinpoche, which in itself is the contemporary mouthpiece of the *Bardo Thödol*. Chapter 4 of the *Bardo Thödol*, *The Introduction to Awareness: Natural Liberation through Naked Perception*, based on one of the two key aspects of the Great Perfection teachings, Cutting through Resistance, counts only twenty pages and ends with:

*"So it is that, for the purpose of nakedly perceiving the manifestly present intrinsic awareness, This Natural Liberation through Naked Perception is most profound."*

*Thus, [by following this instruction], one should familiarise oneself with this intrinsic awareness."* (14)

**Text by Frits de Vries**

**This is the first article on 'Preparing to Die.'**  
**We would like to invite you to share with us your experiences with death and dying, which can be personal or professional, or an inspiring text you have read. You can also send us questions you want to ask Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Contact us at:**  
[magazine@ligmincha.eu](mailto:magazine@ligmincha.eu).

## Notes

- Epigraph, (1): Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, *Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 12*, Spring 2014, p. 17.
- (2) Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 1992, HarperCollins Publishers, p. 102.
- (3) Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Richard Alpert, *The Psychedelic Experience*, A Manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, University Books, 1964.
- (4) Editors introduction, p. xxix, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2006.
- (5) Root verses of the Six Intermediate States, p. 29 – 34, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2006.
- (6) Glossary of Key Terms, p. 479, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2006.
- (7) [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)
- (8) [www.living-and-dying.org](http://www.living-and-dying.org)
- (9) Andrew Holecek, *Preparing to Die: Practical Advice and Spiritual Wisdom from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition*, Snow Lion Pub., 2013.
- (10) [www.tricycle.com](http://www.tricycle.com)
- (11) Andrew Holecek, p.101.
- (12) Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*, Snow Lion, 1998, p. 115.
- (13) Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Longchenpa's Advice from the Heart*, Shang Shung Pub., Arcidosso, 2008, p. 57-60.
- (14) p. xxxviii and p.57, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2006.

## Bibliography

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States, composed by Padmasambhava, translated by Gyurme Dorje, edited by Graham Coleman with Thupten Jinpa, Viking Penguin USA Pub., 2006.

Walter Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan book of the dead*; or, The after-death experiences on the Bardo plane, according to Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English rendering, London, Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1927.



# ACCEPTING IMPERMANENCE

In the **Buddhadharma Winter 2007** issue a question about impermanence was raised in the section 'Ask the Teacher.' Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche gave an answer.

## QUESTION:

I received a breast cancer diagnosis in January and have almost finished chemotherapy, which will be followed by radiation treatment. Many cancer survivors say that attitude is key to survival. I understand that having hope and a good attitude, eating the right food, exercising, and so on can probably help, but there is always the possibility that the cancer will recur. Some of this disease is purely genetic; good diet and attitude may make no difference. So I'm confused about where to stand between accepting impermanence and having the hope and desire to live until my old age, which may help my recovery.

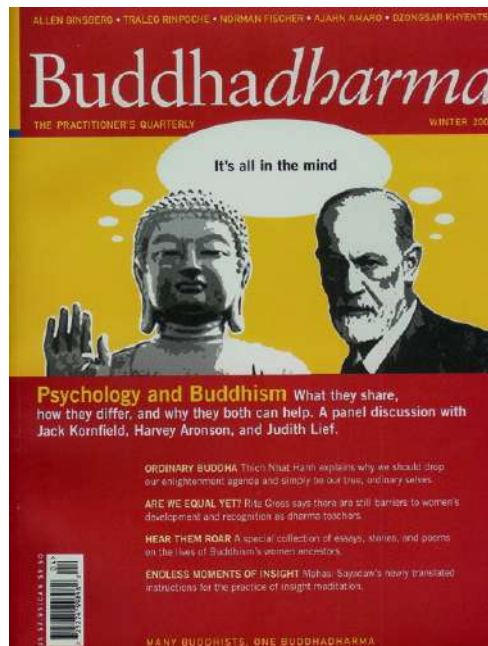
## TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE:

Open awareness is our natural state of mind, which allows all positive qualities to be experienced and expressed in life. When facing challenges such as living with a lifethreatening illness, openness can be easily obscured by our fears as well as our hopes. Even when using the word "openness," we need to observe whether we are creating expectations only to become disappointed when those expectations are not fulfilled. That is expectation, not openness. With openness, whatever the outcome, we are fine. Openness creates a dynamic other than hope and fear.

We become familiar with the power of openness through reflecting upon impermanence and death. This is part of dharma practice throughout one's life and not only when one is sick or dying. The moment one is born is the moment to realize impermanence is true.

In the West, impermanence often has a negative

association. While the initial reflection on the truth of impermanence or the inevitability of one's death might be unpleasant or even shocking, deeper exploration leads to the freedom to live life fully in the present moment. If you become sad or depressed while reflecting on impermanence, look closer at your experience. You'll discover it is your attachment that causes you to suffer. Once you recognize that attachment, notice how you experience it in your body, your emotions, and in your mind. You may notice tensions in your body, restrictions in your breathing, or agitation in your mind. Through gentle physical exercise, skillful *pranic* breathing exercises, and mindfulness-awareness practices, you can release those negative habits.



We are often more familiar with our tensions, sadness, and negative thoughts; we need to release them and become more familiar with open awareness. As you experience more clarity and openness in your body, breath, and mind, rest in the space that has become clearer. Bring clear attention to that opening. In that openness you can discover peace and freedom. That openness is the source of limitless positive qualities. This discovery is the real purpose of impermanence practice. Each one of us can

realize: "Yes, it is true, I am dying. Not only am I dying, but thousands are dying at this very moment." Death is not personal. It is not a failure. It happens to all living beings. Acceptance is important, and that is why a daily prayer in Buddhist liturgy concludes with the line: "Bless me to understand impermanence deeply."

Once we understand and accept the truth of impermanence, the power of that acceptance supports us to continuously expose hidden fears and attachments and release the restrictions of those hopes and fears, allowing each of us to live fully and well in this moment, whatever the







[www.kellyjbaker.com](http://www.kellyjbaker.com)

conditions of the moment present. Genes are also conditions and are not primordially true. Don't limit your experience by thinking that your condition is genetically determined and that's it. Release that view into openness.

If you are modifying your diet, don't think, "I have cancer and I might die, so I need to eat this food." Instead, allow what you eat to nourish you as you live fully and well in this moment.

At the very moment you discover anxiety or fear,

release it through the support of your dharma practice. Each moment you release tension and anxiety or abandon negative thoughts, you can experience a glimpse of open space in you. Recognizing and resting in the space that has become clearer, you develop increasing familiarity with the openness of your natural mind and cut the habit of hope and fear that binds all living beings in suffering. This open awareness is the best medicine for living and for dying.

**Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux**



[www.rainelife.wordpress.com](http://www.rainelife.wordpress.com)



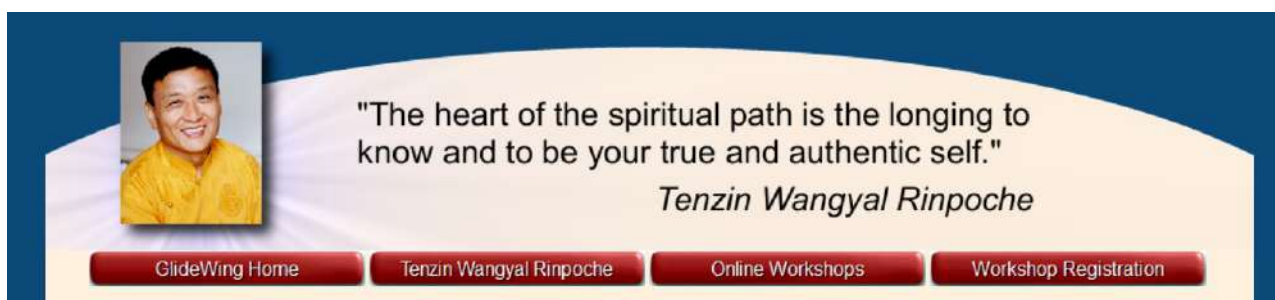
# TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE'S ONLINE WORKSHOPS



**Ligmincha Institute** offers excellent online meditation instruction drawn from the wisdom traditions of Tibet. Each meditation courses is crafted by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche working with experts in educational technology to provide clear

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When	Where	What	More information
January 10 – December 31	Your computer	Free Course in Soul Retrieval: The True Source of Healing	<a href="http://www.ligminchalearning.com">www.ligminchalearning.com</a>
February 6 – March 14	Your computer	Online course: The Three Heart Mantras	<a href="http://www.ligminchalearning.com">www.ligminchalearning.com</a>



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When	Where	Subject	More information
January 10 – February 1	Your computer	Interactive online course: Awakening the Sacred Body: The Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
March 7 – April 5	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Dream Yoga	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
May 9 – 31	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Meditation: Achieving Great Bliss Through Pure Awareness	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
July 11 – August 9	Your computer	Interactive online course: Awakening the Sacred Arts: Discovering Your Creative Potential	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
September 19 – October 11	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Sound Healing	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>





# TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE'S EUROPEAN SEMINARS AND ON-LINE TEACHINGS UNTIL AUGUST 2015

When	Where	What	More information
January 10 15.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Full-Day Live Webcast: Reconnecting with Your Joyful Essence: An Introduction to the Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
February 14 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The Five Natural Elements: Finding a Healthy Balance	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
March 14 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Discovering the Deepest Needs of Your Soul	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 4 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The True Source of Healing	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 11 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Communing with Nature to Nourish Your Soul	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 17 – 19	Paris, France	Weekend seminar: The True Source of Healing	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.fr">www.ligmincha.fr</a>
April 24 – 26	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain	Weekend seminar: The True Source of Healing	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.es">www.ligmincha.es</a>
May 1 – 3	Vienna, Austria	Weekend seminar: Awakening Sacred Art: Discovering Your Creative Potential	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.at">www.ligmincha.at</a>
May 8 – 10	Berlin, Germany	Weekend seminar: Inner, Outer, and Secret Tsa Lung	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.de">www.ligmincha.de</a>
May 9 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The True Source of Healing: Your Own Inner Refuge	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
May 15 – 17	Gruyères, Switzerland	Weekend seminar: Sherap Chamma	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.fr">www.ligmincha.fr</a>
May 22 – 24	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Weekend seminar: A-tri, Part 3	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.nl">www.ligmincha.nl</a>
June 13 15.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Full-Day Live Webcast: Tapping Into Relationships to Nourish Your Soul	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
July 11 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Overcoming Loneliness: Finding the Friend Within	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
August 10 – 16	Buchenau, Germany	European Summer Retreat: The Twenty-One Nails, Part 1 (of 3)	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.de">www.ligmincha.de</a>
August 15 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Nourishing Your Inner Being: The Heart of Soul Retrieval	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
August 18 – 23	Chamma Ling Poland, Wilga, Poland	Retreat: The Twenty-One Nails, Part 3 (of 3)	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.pl">www.ligmincha.pl</a>

