



Ligmincha Europe Magazine

17 – Summer 2015



Meet the Serenity Ridge sangha

Chamma Ling in Valle de Bravo

Living a Worthwhile Life

The True Source of Healing



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THE LIGMINCHA EUROPE MAGAZINE

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GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers, Dear Practitioners of Bon,

In this edition we hope to surprise you with interesting articles, news, background stories, poems and beautiful photos.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche always invites us to make our practice personal. So, in these greetings I connected some personal experiences with the content of this magazine.

It is about ten years ago that a friend told me that she had met a wonderful Tibetan lama who was teaching about the elements, and she thought that I might be interested. But I was not so much interested in 'the elements.' But, two years later, when somebody else told me that she was going to a Dzogchen meditation group, I was immediately interested, and a few months later I went to a seminar in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. And when I told my friend later that I had found a very special Tibetan lama, it proved to be the same one she had been going to: Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche... You can read three more stories of how

people met Rinpoche the first time, in the article about Serenity Ridge. Since we have introduced all the European Ligmincha sanghas we will introduce the other sanghas worldwide, starting with the headquarters of Ligmincha International.

We want to share with you what Rinpoche said, when he was teaching in Amsterdam, about options that are offered in the sangha. There is no good or bad choice: you can choose to study the traditional Bon texts at Lishu Institute, do a more personal work program offered by The 3 Doors

Academy, visit seminars, or watch the free internet teachings. You also can read reports from participants of some of these activities.

We have another article on Holecek – a Buddhist, spiritual teacher and author of the book *Preparing to Die*. I think he hit the nail right on its head, when he says "Death is bad news for matter, but great news for spirit" (*Preparing to Die*, p. 87). I am always amazed what happens when some-

body close dies: I open up, and talk about how important it is to make preparations for my own death, but after a few weeks life is business as usual. At the next funeral it's the same old story. To remind us all of what we can do, we bring you excerpts from a free internet teaching by Holecek.

Recently I bought a digital download of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's latest book, *The True Source of Healing*, and put it on my smartphone. Since then I do not mind when I have to wait somewhere, because I can read the book on my phone. I am very excited about this book, but at some point I

realized that it is important not only to read the book, but also to practice the Inner Refuge, or 'making a date' with (one of) the elements. I also discovered, that when it is hard for me to connect to stillness, silence and spaciousness, reading a book inspires and opens me. So, again there is no good or bad.

Enjoy reading this magazine.

In Bon,

Ton Bisscheroux, chief editor



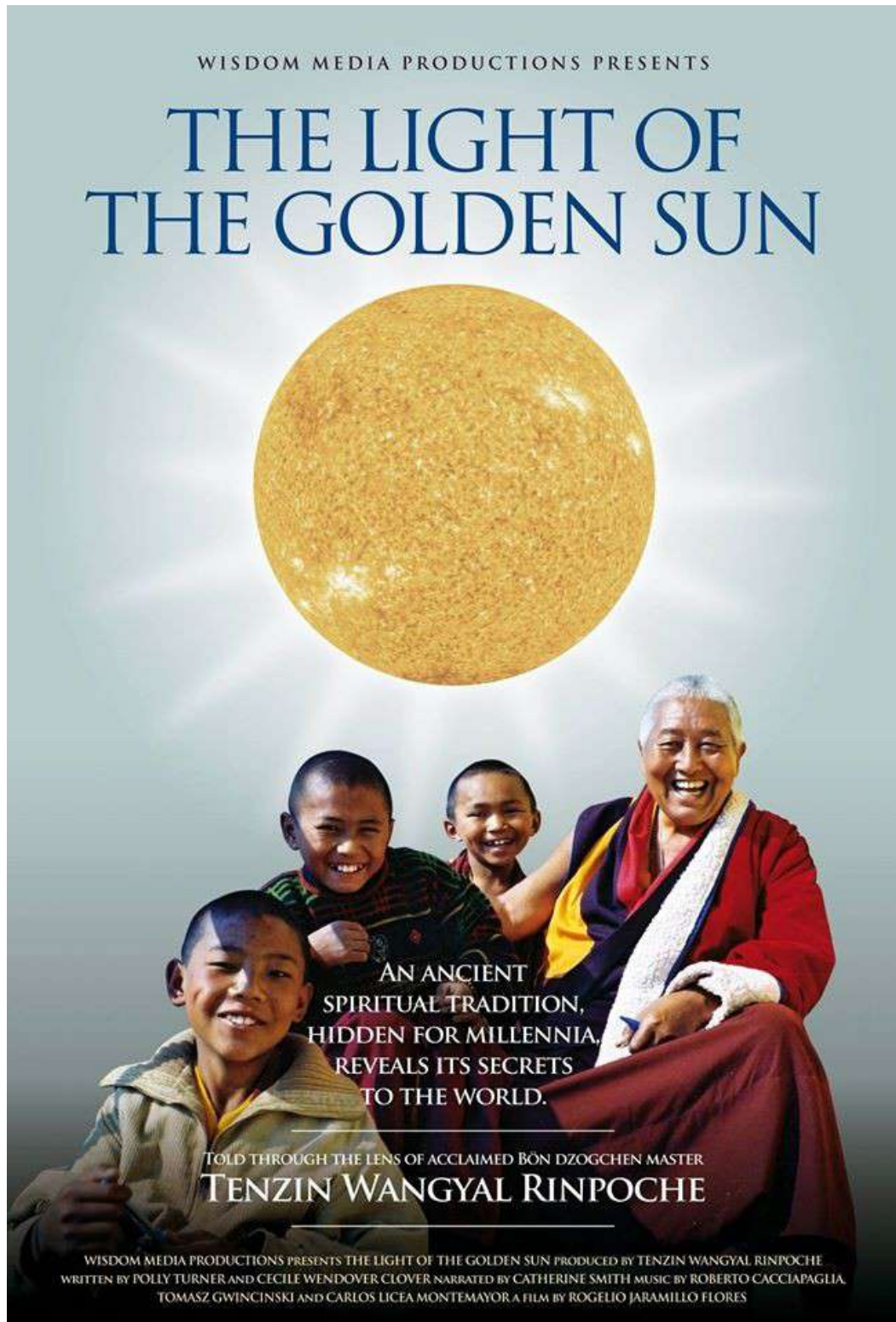
Ton Bisscheroux carries Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book always with him on his phone.



THE LIGHT OF THE GOLDEN SUN

This film by Rogelio Jaramillo Flores, and produced by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, tells the story of Bon, a rich spiritual heritage, hidden for millennia, whose

secret teachings are only now becoming known to the world. Since *Losar* (February 2015) you can watch this beautiful film on www.youtube.com.



OPENNESS, OPTIONS, AND LIVING A WORTHWHILE LIFE

During a seminar on *A-tri* in Amsterdam in May 2015, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche talked about openness and sangha and the options that are offered. Here is an excerpt, edited by Marcy Vaughn.

I want to talk about sangha and openness. I have been teaching in the West for the last twenty-five years. And one of the things that I have learned from my teaching is to be open to those who are learning from me. To be open means to be open to both the student's level of familiarity and lack of familiarity; to the student's ability to understand and to not understand; to the student's readiness to commit or not to commit. I developed a deep respect for those who are learning from me, for who they are. For me, the role of the teacher is not to teach what I think is right, but to pay attention to what the students are experiencing and how they are relating to the teachings. This is more important than my opinion of the right way and the wrong way. Trying to push everybody into the *right* way is not my style. At the end of the day, my intention is to help, and you help more people by being open. There are people who don't want to agree with you. Be open to them. Whatever they understand, meet them at their level of understanding.

You might ask, *but what is the right way?* Different people need different things. *But what is the right way, the best way?* There is no right way; there is no best way. Right is what transforms *you*. Best is what elevates *you*. There are a lot of people suffering with their Buddhist practices in the West. Buddhism is bringing more suffering into their lives, not because of the practice being done but because of their relationship to their practice.

The main point in teaching and in practice is to be open. What does that mean? I am bringing different opportunities to the West. At Lishu Institute in Dehradun, India, I offer people the possibility to study the texts as you would study in a university or as I did when I experienced my geshe training. In the beginning, I tried to make it a five-year program, but it did not work. So I made it a three-year program, and still that was difficult. Finally I said *Ok, I will give you the flexibility of coming*



every six months. I have been trying to accommodate and accommodate even more, and still it is difficult. But at least I am not stepping back. If there are only five people or even only one, we will do it! In September 2015 we will start. And if there are dedicated people who don't have any money, I'll find the money for them to do it. Money should not be the obstacle, because it matters; it is important. And above all, it is special to those who feel they want to do it. For those who have that level of dedication, they now have a place where they can do it.

On the other side is The 3 Doors program. This is very much about personal work. Several years ago there was a big conference in North America called "Buddhism in the West." H.H. Dalai Lama and many lamas from other schools were there. I was also invited, and so I went. One of the big discussions was "Teaching in the West." I found it was rather strange that there were extreme opinions being expressed. There were people saying: *This is right!* And: *That is wrong!* How you can have that? Buddha never said that one way is wrong. In the Bon tradition there are nine ways, and each of these ways exists because the capacities and needs of people differ. It is not that one



approach is right and another approach is wrong. It took me a little time to articulate my position for myself before talking to anybody else about it. It seemed like the wrong thing to say of a particular approach that it is not right, because that particular approach is right for some people. And that particular approach is wrong for some people. But in and of itself, it is not appropriate to say that an approach is not right. A fundamental principle of Bon Buddhism is that there is nothing *inherently* wrong.

Many things come from openness in my life. If I thought that only one approach to the path of liberation was right, then my walls would be very small and narrow. My ability to help people would be very limited. And my ability to touch people's hearts would be very limited, because then every heart should be like my heart, and that is a problem because it is simply not like that. The whole motivation to create The 3 Doors came from openness. The purpose of The 3 Doors is not studying texts, but working with practices to change yourself. Is working with yourself easier or is working with a text easier? Is working with yourself more interesting or is working with a text more interesting? Are both equally interesting? Are both equally important? It depends on who you are. We already have over one-hundred people who have graduated from The 3 Doors Academy. I do not have to evaluate or promote the program as good or bad, because you can talk to the graduates themselves. Every time I meet them, they are a little crazy, exclaiming, "Oh, it is so good!" It's amazing for me to witness the expressions of their gratitude and their transformations and how deeply their journey in The 3 Doors has touched them. Their experiences are much richer than my explanations could ever be. Sometimes people will ask me to say something about The 3 Doors. Why should I talk about it? Those in the program or who have graduated can tell me and others what they feel. This is far more alive than what I have to say. They are talking about real transformations. And one important thing is that they have touched the areas of their lives which are difficult. They are able to go in their practice to the exact places that need to be acknowledged and respected and transformed. They go to those areas and they have a lot of support to do so within their practice and from the collective presence of others in the program.

So we have Lishu and we have The 3 Doors, and in between we have all the activities in the Ligmincha sangha. Each person is trying to relate to the teachings and the practices from their own level and in their own way. This weekend is a wonderful example. We have the *A-tri* text. And within this text are many details. Some of these details are not all that necessary. So here we put more emphasis upon the core aspects and our experiences with those aspects. So 70% of our focus here is upon practices and experiences, and about 30% is on the teaching of the text. I think that balance is better. You might not understand every word, but I hope you have some concrete and valuable experiences during this weekend. Of course it is somewhat difficult to experience everything in two days! That's why if you feel you want to study a lot more, go to Lishu Institute!

Ligmincha, as an organization, is inviting more resident teachers. In Europe we have a lama living in our center in Poland, and a lama in living in Paris — Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen. In the past I have encouraged the sangha here that it may be a good idea to have a resident teacher. I don't know if they did not hear it, or if they forgot about it, and so I'll keep reminding them. To invite a teacher from Nepal or India is not that easy. The immigration takes months and involves dealing with lawyers and a lot of paper work. And the responsibility when you invite somebody includes health insurance and a lot of other things. But now, you have to do very little. Paris is a three-hour train ride from here. That presents an opportunity. You have to be open to it, and you have to see it. If you see it, there is no way you cannot take action. So I am encouraging the sangha here to come together and to take advantage of this.

I have been reflecting on what to do. For three years I have been teaching the *A-tri*. It is a Tibetan text and there is an English translation, so it would be great if Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen could come and go through the text with you. Those of you who are very new here might wonder why you have to study the *A-tri* text. But if you ask me — which perhaps you are not — then I say: *Yes! Go for it!* Take advantage of that great teacher and learn a little bit more. You will be meditating anyway, so it is best to learn a little bit more. I encourage you to do that. And organizationally, I am encouraging this, too. So perhaps



you can invite him every three months, and he can come to different parts of the Netherlands. I encourage everyone to be part of it. And for those who want to be part of The 3 Doors Academy, the opportunity exists. And for those who feel that The 3 Doors is too much and that studying Tibetan is too much, then you have a free webcast every month coming to your home. These are the options.

But please don't think that one option is better than the other. There is nothing like that in the dharma. So when anybody — including a lama — says that one approach is a little better than the other one, that attitude itself is fundamentally wrong. That is the lack of openness that we are talking about here. In saying that one approach is better than another, you are basically disrespecting someone, for there is someone who needs that approach, and you are not respecting that person. Imagine that I love carrying a mala and I try to convince everyone to carry a mala. Now someone says to me: *This mala is too heavy to carry!* And I say back to them, *No, you must have a mala; it is important.* So now we are getting into a discussion, and I am feeling a little bit rejected and a little angry, and I end up saying: *You are not a serious practitioner. Come on, you must have a mala.* And even further: *I think you are a bad practitioner!* Maybe even: *You are not even a practitioner because you don't carry a mala!* People say these things. It shows a lack of respect.

So be open to the teachings and learn whatever you can learn. And don't punish yourself or punish other people for having different paths. Know that the only spiritual practice worth doing is the practice that leads you to openness. Otherwise, even a spiritual practice is not worth doing. Unfortunately, for some people, so-called spiritual practice is nothing more than honoring their own painful patterns. Nothing changes. It is exactly the same product with a nicer label. If nothing has changed, you are fooling yourself in your practice. And when your spiritual practice does lead you to openness, do not simply experience that openness in your practice, but bring it into your life. The real meaning of openness comes in living with openness and sharing your life openly. Do what you can do with openness, not with blocks. Express your life with joy, not with fear. Express your life with creativity, not with pressure. Live your life with openness, for openness is the only

way to live a worthwhile life.

Transcript by Jantien Spindler

Edited by Marcy Vaughn

Photo by Anneke Dekkers



The 3 Doors: Upcoming Programs in Europe

Transforming Your Life through Meditation

Led by Senior Teachers John Jackson and Raven Lee, this 5½ day residential retreat is open to everyone. Participants arrive on location in Pauenhof, Germany, outside Düsseldorf, on November 8, 2015 and depart on November 14, 2015. Please find registration details and other information [here](#).

At this retreat, you will be introduced to the stillness of body, silence of speech, and spaciousness of mind as the three doors that connect you to the transformative power of this refuge. Through the daily practice of yogas of movement and breath you will explore the sacred architecture of the subtle energy centers and channels. Singing sacred syllables, you can clear blockages and open to the genuine warmth of being. You will be guided to reflect upon challenges that limit the fullness of your life, and learn how to bring these challenges to your practice in order to release them. Join us for this unique opportunity to deepen your relationship with yourself while being supported by the collective presence and companionship of the group.

The 3 Doors Academy

The next European Academy, led by Senior Teachers John Jackson and Raven Lee, will begin in June 2016, pending a total of 30 accepted applicants. Please find information about the program, curriculum, how to apply, and logistical details [here](#).



LIVING AND LEARNING AT LISHU INSTITUTE

Anna-Kaisa Hirvanen wrote a blog while at Lishu Institute for the first Spring retreat in 2015. More photos of Lishu Institute can be seen at www.ligmincha.fi.



Lishu Institute's main building.

Arrival in Lishu Institute

I arrived at Lishu Institute on March 18, 2015, after nineteen hours of fluid travelling through Helsinki – Delhi – Dehradun flights and a taxi ride to Lishu Institute. As before, my experience of arriving at Lishu Institute is like arriving home. I noticed that it is now the fourth time I am staying here, four months spent here already during the last three years!

Lishu Institute is built on a high hill, with open sky and beautiful nature around it. Arriving at Lishu Institute from the noise and dust of India is a nice big sigh – pure air, a peaceful rhythm of life and feeling of space. The rooms are clean and really comfortable, food is delicious and people friendly.

It was great to spend first few days upon arrival at Lishu Institute, resting, getting settled and orienting myself to the upcoming language retreat.

Our teacher Dr. Sangmo Yangri grew up immersed in the Bon-tradition from early childhood. Her father had a close relationship to H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche and took her to meet Rinpoche every

day at Menri monastery. They walked a long distance to the monastery over very steep roads. Sometimes little girl Sangmo felt so tired walking to the monastery that she wished she would have wings to fly! One day she asked Yongdzin Rinpoche if he could give her these wings so she could fly. Yongdzin Rinpoche replied that of course, it is possible. Then he taught her meditation posture and the practice of *Kuntu Zangpo* and told her to do the practice every morning. So she did! After one week she was ready to try her wings by the nearby field – ending up getting her clothes dirty and feeling disappointed because the wings didn't work yet! Many years later, when she was finishing her M.A., she went to see Rinpoche once again. Rinpoche asked her with a big smile on his face, if the two wings had been growing yet! (In Buddhist traditions, the two wings represent wisdom and compassion, and that the practitioner is ripening oneself through practice.)

After twelve years of study at the University of Banares (Varanasi), Sangmo received her Ph.D. in Bon-Buddhist studies, as the first Tibetan woman to do so.

The first week of studies was full of laughter, challenges and we learned a lot. In the morning we had Tibetan language class, and the afternoon was for Bon-prayers, their meaning and pronunciation. In the evenings we dove into the



Dr. Sangmo Yangri and the heart of Lishu, Geshe Thupten Negi.



art of speaking Tibetan in everyday life. We are learning by baby-steps and, what is important, learning with joy!



Cham-dances in Clement Town, Dehradun.

On Sunday March 29 we headed to see traditional *Cham* dances in Clement Town, a Tibetan settlement in Dehradun, and a big monastery area. Rain and storms were accompanying the performances, but we fully enjoyed the color and strength of it all.

During the second week of studies we enjoyed the company of 7th Kundrol Namkha Thinley Wangyal Rinpoche for the whole week at Lishu Institute. On Friday we were happy to receive 9th Mingling Khenchen Rinpoche as a special guest. What a blessed week. There is magic within the silence of Lishu Institute!

Lishu Institute life

The past weeks in Lishu Institute seem to have flown fast. The simple and steady rhythm of life sets one's mind to rest and at the same time open for learning.

The nature around us has shown its power and strength, the weather changing quickly from cozy heat to big

strong rainstorms. And now, hearing the news from Nepal earthquake – which was also felt here as a subtle shaking, it is possible to really feel the crisis of the Mother Earth and its inhabitants.

On the weekend April 10 to 12 we received guests from Menri Monastery as Menri Lopon Thinley Nyima Rinpoche arrived for his first visit to Lishu Institute together with Menri Shedrub Kenpo who is the brother of our teacher, Dr. Sangmo Yangri, and two other Geshes from Menri.

Menri Monastery is located about five or six hours drive from Lishu Institute, so the institute will be enjoying the visits of skillful Menri teachers during the full-time study program that is starting in September 2015.

The small road that goes up the hill to Lishu Institute used to be a bit bumpy and rocky, but thanks to the efforts of Geshe Thupten, a new cement road is now being constructed by the Indian government. Things take time in India: this road was applied for more than one and half years ago. Finally things are happening, and the new road will be finished within a few days.

Even though learning Tibetan is challenging for me, I can clearly see improvement happening after these weeks of classes. I am now able to



After Mingling Khenchen Rinpoche's teachings.



recognize and write the alphabet, pronouncing the letters more clearly, speaking a few sentences here and there and even spelling out and reading some short pieces of texts and prayers or mantras. This is, of course, thanks to our great teacher Sangmo-La who is guiding us skillfully, making learning this complicated language to be a joyful and natural process.

Learning the language is opening the meanings within it, and as the language is carrying the whole Tibetan culture, it is also a doorway to a whole body of knowledge.



Tibetan language class.

studying and practicing in this peaceful environment. Within its simplicity, life at Lishu Institute is very rich.



Yangchen, the Master of Lishu's kitchen.

The sentences below, picked up nearby the World Peace Stupa in Clement Town, Dehradun where we visited during the first week of our stay, says it all for the moment:

***In the end, these things matter most:
How well did you love?
How fully did you live?
How deeply did you let go?***

Text and photos by Anna-Kaisa Hirvanen

The language has depths of wisdom in it, earth bounded playfulness and many, many layers to be learned. Most of all I enjoy the translations that we've been working on during the prayer classes. Going through the mantras and prayers word by word, opening their meanings and doing our best to find words to express in English is an inspiration for all of us, including Samsung the Lishu Institute dog, who has been eagerly wanting to attend the classes every day!

Our language retreat finished with a small ceremony on April 30. In the evening we burned butter lamps and candles to relieve the sufferings of all beings, especially those affected by the earthquake in Nepal.

Today, preparing to depart from Lishu Institute, there is already a feeling of missing the place, the people and the precious opportunity to focus on



CHAMMA LING IN VALLE DE BRAVO MEXICO

Elena Ochoa-Villasenor reports from the retreat in March in Chamma Ling Valle de Bravo, Mexico. This article was also published in the *Voice of Clear Light* in June 2015.

As many of you know, we held the consecration of *The Great Stupa for World Peace* in Valle de Bravo in 2010 with the presence of our beloved teachers, Venerable Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, Tenzin



Photo from 2010





Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche in 2010.

Wangyal Rinpoche and other teachers and monks. [You can read more about this consecration in the [Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 1 - Spring 2011.](#)]

Thanks to the generosity of one of the members of the sangha the interior of the stupa was remodeled using a new age-design. And we now have a truly amazing and beautiful *Ma Gyud* mandala created by lama Yungdrung Lodoe covering the space above us.

Many new additions have been completed that



we all enjoyed at our recent retreat held in March 2015. We inaugurated the kitchen and the dining room, and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche stayed for the first time in the lama house.

Last but not least, we 'planted' the first *Bodhi* tree, designed to be similar to the original one in Bodh Gaya, India, but made out of iron and copper. This project is going to give us the resources to begin the building of dormitories.

The tree has 108 leaves, and each contains the name of a family or individual who donated \$ 108 dollars. We are beginning the second of hopefully many more trees, with the idea of having members of all our sanghas around the world be pre-



The *Ma Gyud* mandala created by Lama Yungdrung Lodoe.





The *Bodhi* tree with the names of the donators.

sent in this beautiful woods of trees surrounding the *Stupa* and receiving the blessings. We invite you to be there with us!

If you'd like to learn more about the Bodhi Tree project and how to help, please email [Elena](#)

[Ochoa](#). It would be nice to have a "European tree." Learn more about Chamma Ling Valle de Bravo at www.ligmincha.mx.

Text by Elena Ochoa

Photos by Anja Benesch and Salvador Espinosa



Lama Yungdrung Lodoe.



HEAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR ANCESTORS

Marlies Cober, one of the graduates of The European 3 Doors Academy, shares with us some of her experiences.

“Do you want to be the one who can heal relationships with your ancestors?” This is what I heard Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche say in 2011. I had been thinking about starting The 3 Doors Academy, but the moment I heard these words there was no longer any doubt. Yes, this was and continues to be my deepest wish.

I started the European Academy that summer and didn't really know what to expect. Completing the Application was the start of learning more about the Academy process. I already knew about the

like the practice itself. As we hosted each other, we could see and hear our differences and also discover how much we were all the same. We shared our thoughts, words, and feelings. We sat in silence and in laughter or tears. Most powerful was the open space in our hearts as we hosted any pain that we shared by listening, being aware, and being present with each other. The power of the group circle was initiated by our teachers, who gave examples from their own lives in which they expressed their wisdom and experience.

I discovered that inside my body there are many layers of feelings. As I looked at these feelings I could allow space or could contract. When I chose to allow space, I could taste what was there. A deep connection with my ancestors awoke. It took



sixty-three transformations we would work on and was familiar with all the practices that would be introduced in the Academy. However, I could not have expected how deeply they would touch my feelings during these coming years. I had practiced the *Tsa Lung* and the *Nine Breathings* for a long time as well as the *Warrior Seed Syllables*. However, the way the Academy teachers guided us through these practices during our group retreats was fascinating because of what was coming up from my body and my inner speech. It really helped me become aware of how painful my thoughts could be. After some time, I could experience that what we were being taught was true, *really* true: in allowing the pain to be there, virtuous qualities can arise and healing will find its way.

The atmosphere inside the Academy group was

many moments and sessions of practice to just allow this to arise and it became clear to me that in healing my own pain, I was able to heal the pain of my ancestors as well. Time didn't exist. The very moment I got a clear insight, the moment inner warmth arose, I could feel that something had healed. This process is going on today. It seems to me that there is no limit to what can be healed. More and more I am aware of what is meant in the dedication poem: “In liberating my own being, may I benefit others.” When I'm able to look with a wider view, people and situations change. That is the power of The 3 Doors Academy. May we all benefit from these healing teachings and practices.

Text by Marlies Cober

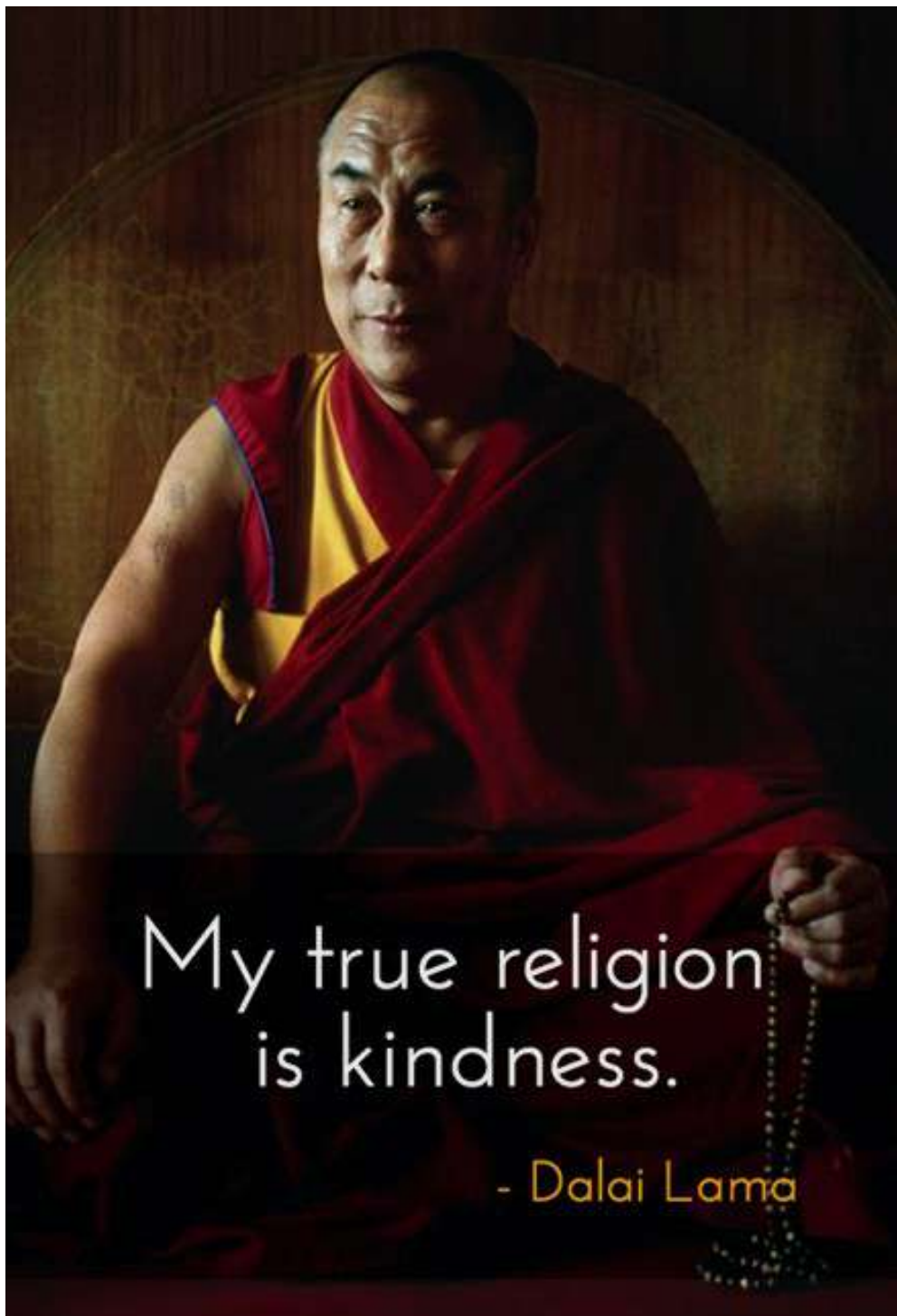
Photo by Anja Benesch



MY TRUE RELIGION IS KINDNESS

We want to share inspiring texts from other Buddhist streams and religions. This time Esther Drielsma chose a statement by H.H. The Dalai Lama, who recently celebrated his 80th birthday. Esther likes this message because it includes everybody, and goes beyond religion. And everyone can endeavour to

kindness at any time. You don't need to have studied to understand this. It is what everyone needs. When you realize this, in a split second it makes a situation or contact of a better quality. So many people love him, because he embodies kindness. He is kindness in everything.



SERENITY RIDGE: THE HEADQUARTERS OF LIGMINCHA

Since we have introduced all the European sanghas, we are going to introduce the other sanghas abroad, starting with Serenity Ridge. Ton Bisscheroux talked to first Sue Davis-Dill (Executive Director of Ligmincha International), Stella Richards (Operations Manager of Serenity Ridge) and later with John Massie (Retreat Center Developer).

Ton: When did you meet Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche the first time?

Sue: I first met Rinpoche in 1996 when I was living in California. I had been on a spiritual search for some time, had been going to different meditation groups from different lineages and somebody told me that I might be interested in Dzogchen. Around that time I got my first computer, and when I went online for the first time I typed the word “Dzogchen” for search, and up came www.Ligmincha.org. It said that Rinpoche was going to teach in Berkeley a couple of months later, and I decided to go there.

Stella: The head cook at Serenity Ridge is a good

friend, and when she was short of staff four years ago she asked me to help out. So I came here as a cook a few times a year and loved it. I have a background, though, in both economics and psychology. After some time I realized that my economics background might be helpful for the center, and I pounded on Sue's door, saying “You have to let me help you with your books!” Last fall, I became the Operations Manager.

Ton: What changed for Serenity Ridge when Rinpoche moved to California in 2012?

Sue: Up until then Rinpoche lived in Charlottesville – that is about a forty-five minutes drive from Serenity Ridge – and Rinpoche came out here only when he was teaching, so in one sense, not much has changed. We used to have a center in Charlottesville, and Rinpoche had his office there. The biggest change was in 2009 when we closed the Charlottesville center and its Tibet Shop and moved our offices to Serenity Ridge. This meant we no longer had a central location in the city where sangha could meet.

Stella: Probably not so much changed, since only a small percentage of our retreatants tend to be



Serenity Ridge: the *Gompa* and the *Garuda House*.





Sue Davis-Dill.

local. You may be interested in knowing that perhaps even as many as a quarter of the people who come here for our longer summer and winter retreats come from abroad. People come here from Ukraine, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, as well as from most countries in Europe and Latin America.

Ton: Can you tell about the sanghas in Charlottesville and Serenity Ridge?

Sue: Altogether there are about seventy-five sangha members who live nearby, some of whom are very active volunteers. We have a local email list that includes the sangha who live in Charlottesville as well as the area around Serenity Ridge and we use this to let everyone know about upcoming retreats or special events. Our resident lama, Geshe Tenzin Yangton, leads monthly practice in Charlottesville. We have plans for him to give more teachings at Serenity Ridge as well as perform rituals that the sangha can attend. We have some newer sangha members who would love to see the sangha in Charlottesville become more active. They are asking people what they would like to see in the sangha, and from there

will see what can be organized.

Ton: A few years ago the names of all the retreat centers were changed to Chamma Ling. Why did the name of Serenity Ridge not change?

Sue: When this property was purchased in 1998, there was a sign out front from the previous owners that said "Serenity Ridge." The people who built the house and barn named it this way, and Rinpoche decided to keep this name. When he changed the names a few years ago and asked all of the centers to take on the name Ligmincha and all of the retreat centers to take on the name Chamma Ling, the decision was to keep the name Serenity Ridge. He felt it could remain with this name because it also is unique in that it is the headquarters and houses the offices of Ligmincha International.

Ton: Can you tell about the teachings in Serenity Ridge?

Sue: Rinpoche teaches here four times a year, one time each season for from a weekend to two weeks. The teachings vary from Dzogchen teachings to teachings from the *Mother Tantra*. Marcy Vaughn does a wonderful job supporting Rinpoche with preparing support materials. So, when Rinpoche teaches at other locations the materials are already prepared, and they can be sent to where ever he is going. This year he taught *Dream Yoga* during the Summer Retreat, and next year he will teach *Sleep Yoga*. This fall he will be teaching on the *Five Elements*.



Stella Richards.



Ton: Can you tell about the resident lamas at Serenity Ridge?

Sue: From 2007 till 2010 Lama Kalsang Nyima was the resident lama. First he lived at our Charlottesville center, and in 2009 he moved to Serenity Ridge. In 2010 he left for Mexico, and became the resident lama for Ligmincha Mexico. Since May 2014 Geshe Tenzin Yangton has been the resident lama at Serenity Ridge Retreat Center. He teaches here, and also has been going to different locations nearby to teach, and is available to do rituals.

Stella: Geshe Tenzin Yangton is very popular, he is a young man with a lot of energy. His contribution to Serenity Ridge is extraordinary.

Ton: What goes on the rest of the year at Serenity Ridge?

Stella: We share our facilities with other like-minded groups throughout the year, at an increasingly busy pace. The folks in these groups have been unfailingly conscientious, grateful, and hard-working in their own practices; it is an honor for me to interact with them.

Sue: We have a very beautiful property and we want to use that as much as possible, and Rinpoche encourages that. When other people come we want them to feel welcomed, and they appreciate their stay here, the silence, the sacred space of the Gomba. It's amazing who finds us,



Geshe Tenzin Yangton.

and every year we are getting a bit busier. Stella is doing a great job running the facilities and caring for all the people who come here.

Ton: What are your plans for the future?

Stella: Right now we're expanding the possibilities for people who would like to come here and stay, helping us run our facility and having time for their own spiritual practice. It will probably be possible to stay for as little as one month, or as long as a year. Geshe Yangton has also graciously offered to help support residents in their Bon practice.

Sue: Relative to our future plans, we are planning to build a new building to house both the interna-



Many rituals are done at Serenity Ridge.



tional and Serenity Ridge offices, a new kitchen and dining room and media room. There will also be space for people working on international projects.

Ton: Can you tell something about the structure of Serenity Ridge?

Sue: Serenity Ridge is now headquarters of Ligmincha International, which was previously named Ligmincha Institute. The Ligmincha International Board created a committee called the Serenity Ridge Executive Committee, that is in charge of oversight for the overall activities and policy making for Serenity Ridge. Our Ligmincha President, Rob Patzig, is on this committee, as well as Ligmincha International board members Gabriel Rocco and Pam Rodeheaver, as well as our Retreat Center Developer, John Massie and me. We have weekly meetings, where Stella joins us, and focus on the amazing number of details that come with running a retreat center. This committee reports to the International Board. Ligmincha International, and therefore Serenity Ridge, is a non-profit religious educational institute. We also have Serenity Ridge Council, and we have many volunteers who have a significant role at the retreat center from retreat coordinators, sangha members who assist our resident lama and Rinpoche when he is in residence, to volunteers who come help with creating walking trails.

Stella: The Executive Committee's general oversight is much like other Boards: it is primarily focused on policy and procedures and also helping to ensure a sense of continuity. In terms of the day to day operations of the center, I serve as the Operations Manager, and oversee the Center's staff. We have a mix of part-time staff, residents who live on site and volunteer their time to maintaining the center, and traditional volunteers who help with all manner of activities, from helping teach Geshela English to coordinating retreat activities.

Ton: How can people ask the resident lamas for prayers or to do rituals?

Sue: We have a link on the website where people can ask for prayers or rituals. At this time we only have a link for Lama Geshe Tenzin Yangton, but we are going to make links for the Geshes who reside in Europe. And people can always contact any center with a resident Lama directly.

Stella: Many people ask for rituals; it keeps Geshe Yangton quite busy.

Ton: Is there something you want to share with our readers?

Sue: We warmly welcome members of our international sangha to come to Rinpoche's retreats at Serenity Ridge.

Stella: I think we have an amazing group of people working here together to support the needs of retreatants. Please do come to one of our retreats. We'd love to have everyone visit.



John Massie.

Ton: John, you're involved from the first hour. When did you meet Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche the first time?

I first met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and his teacher, H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche at a small house in the western Virginia mountains in the summer of 1993.

In autumn of 1992 I trekked with Australian friends through lower Dolpo from Dhorpatan to Jumla via Dunai and Ringmo. I frequently encountered the image of *Tapihritsa* for the first time in that magical landscape. Since 1980, I made many trekking trips to Nepal, spent a lot of time in high altitude Tibetan Buddhist culture areas and had seen graphic representation of many Tibetan Buddhist deities. This image was new to me and noteworthy for the distinctive simplicity with which *Tapihritsa* was represented. It made an impression but I must confess, in my ignorance at that time, I viewed it as a primitive graphic style of rural artists. I had never seen it in Kathmandu. I had only heard of Bon, knew nothing of it and had



never heard the word Dzogchen. Qualities of Emptiness and Naked Awareness were little more than words encountered in general reading on Buddhism.

That winter I returned home to my life and work designing houses and gardens near my home in the Shenandoah Valley.

The following summer I attended the annual *Tai Chi* festival, a Taste of China, in my small town, Winchester, Virginia. On the last day, we went to a park on top of the Blue Ridge mountains to practice in a final session. In saying goodbye to those departing, I casually asked a couple traveling in a van where they were headed next. They replied that they were going to receive teaching from some Bonpo lamas a couple hours away. I was immediately interested as only nine months previously I had been walking thru lower Dolpo, a Bon region of Nepal. Now I hear of Bonpos near my home in Virginia. I got directions and knew exactly the remote house where the teachings were being held. I coincidentally happened to be working on a job in the same county and had traveled the remote road frequently. In fact, the following week, I was scheduled to be on that job site where I was designing the house, gardens and outbuildings for a large horse farm. Taking this as a sign from the universe, I decided I would stop and see these Bon lamas.

The day was typical Virginia summer: incredibly hot and humid. I turned off the main road and shortly came to a cluster of cars parked at the entrance to a long drive. I could not see the house, but knew this must be the place. I started walking in the heat, up through the trees. At some point I passed into a zone of freshness and comfort out of the intense fire. It felt like going through a sort of force field. Ha, little did I know. I continued on until I saw a small single house in the woods, quiet, empty and oddly, no people to be seen. As I approached the house, a door opened. A beautiful young woman with long red hair in red appeared. She was completely covered in red clothing. That certainly got my attention. As I understand it now, someone who is still a wonderful member of the Sangha, manifested as a Red emanation of *Sherab Chamma*: an appearance to cut thru the dullness of forty-six years in waiting. So I would not miss the point. She

beckoned and invited me to enter the door. The interior was crammed with people sitting on the floor sharing out food from a giant feast that was laid on a table deep in the room. Beyond were two Tibetan lamas and a shrine raised above the floor in a beautifully transformed space. It was clearly the basement room of an American vacation cabin that had been made into a shrine. I sat, received a plate of food and something to drink. At some point we went out into the yard where everyone ate the food and made quiet conversation. Someone took me over and introduced me to the Lamas. We had a brief exchange. That was sufficient. I got the contact information for Charlottesville and then went on my way to the job across the mountain.

That day was the last day of the first summer retreat that Rinpoche led in Virginia. It was the first day I encountered him and Yongdzin Rinpoche. I have no specific memory of the Samsaric things that occurred that day. But the heat, crossing the boundary, the woman in the red dress, appearing for the *Tsok*, and meeting my teachers is still fresh as if it happened today.

I am forever grateful for this meeting in the Virginia woods and may it always lead to benefit for all.

Five years later we found Serenity Ridge, but that is another story.

Ton: Can you tell something about your role at Serenity ridge?

Since that first meeting, I have assisted with the initial land search for Serenity Ridge, designed and oversaw the transformation of the barn into a beautiful *Gompa*, did the architectural design and oversaw the building of the *Garuda House* accommodations building and its library for Tibetan texts. I also oversaw the renovation in 2009 of the lama house. Currently, I am designing a new building for Serenity Ridge that will house the offices of Ligmincha International and Serenity Ridge, a new kitchen and dining room, and media room. I have designed Lishu Institute's main building. In my spare time I continue to walk the mountains of Nepal.

Interview by Ton Bisscheroux

Photos: courtesy of Ligmincha International



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN EUROPE

Here is our report from what's been happening in the European sangha. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche visited the Netherlands and gave internet teachings. Geshes were invited by sanghas, John Jackson visited Poland and Alejandro Chaoul visited the Netherlands.



June 17 – 21:

John Jackson lead a meditation retreat with the *Practice of the Five Elements* in Chamma Ling Poland.



May 21 – 22:

Alejandro Chaoul taught in Utrecht, the Netherlands, on the outer, inner and secret *Tsa Lung*. He explained the three levels of practice to about sixty people.



May 22 – 24:

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught the third part of a cycle of *A-tri* teachings in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. About one hundred sixty people attended the weekend.





June 26 – 28:

Ligmincha Germany welcomed Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen at the *Tibethaus* in Frankfurt where he gave his first public teachings in Germany. Nevertheless, he was greeted by many familiar faces, as many of the twenty participants had taken part in the *Losar* retreat in Buchenau, which Geshe supported earlier this year. The weekend revolved around the topics *Tsa Lung*,



Bodhicitta and *Refuge*, allowing new students to become familiar with these beneficial practices and long-term students to deepen their knowledge.



June 19 – 22:

Geshe Choekhortshang Rinpoche taught *Phowa* from *Mother Tantra* in Budapest, Hungary. Nearly one hundred and fifty people attended the teaching for three days.



May 9 – 10:

Geshe Choekhortshang Rinpoche taught the *Dream Yoga* from the *Mother Tantra* in Orte, Italy, to a group of thirteen people – some of whom had already followed his previous teaching there. The atmosphere was friendly and warm.





Free Full-Day Live Webcast **The True Source of Healing: Your Own Inner Refuge**

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

June 13, 2015

15.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)

Register for the webcast at www.ligmincha.org

This is Part 5 of a FREE yearlong course in soul retrieval.
Learn more at www.ligminchalearning.com



You can watch the recording here:

[The True Source of Healing, Part 5: Your Own Inner Refuge](#)



Free Live Webcast **Dream Yoga**

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

June 27, 2015

18.00–19.15 h (C.E.T.)

Translations in multiple languages available

www.ligmincha.org



You can watch the recording here:

[Dream Yoga — Live from Serenity Ridge](#)



Free Live Webcast **Tapping Into Relationships to Nourish Your Soul**

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

July 11, 2015, 21.00–22.30 h (C.E.T.)

Register for the webcast at www.ligmincha.org

This is Part 6 of a FREE yearlong course in soul retrieval.
Learn more at www.ligminchalearning.com



You can watch the recording here:

[The True Source of Healing, Part 6: Tapping Into Relationships to Nourish Your Soul](#)



DREAM YOGA IN BUDAPEST

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Budapest!



Dream Yoga August 29 - 30

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, the outstanding representative of Bon Buddhism, will visit Hungary by Ligmincha Hungary's invitation. Rinpoche will teach the practice of Dream Yoga, a powerful instrument of Awakening which will help deepen your awareness not only during everyday experiences, but also during sleep, a state in which we spend about one-third of our lives.

"If we cannot carry our practice into sleep, if we lose ourselves every night, what chance do we have to be aware when death comes? Look to your experience in dreams to know how you will fare in death. Look to your experience of sleep to discover whether or not you are truly awake," writes Rinpoche in his book The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep.

Teaching Location: Hotel Bara, Hegyalja str. 34-36, zip code: 1118, Budapest, Hungary

Programme:

Saturday, 29 August 2015:	9.00 – 10.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	10.30 – 11.00	Break
	11.00 – 12.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
	14.00 – 15.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	15.30 – 16.00	Break
	16.00 – 17.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	17.30 – 18.00	Questions and Answers
Sunday, 30 August 2015:	9.00 – 10.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	10.30 – 11.00	Break
	11.00 – 12.30	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	12.30 – 13.30	Lunch Break
	13.30 – 15.00	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation
	15.00 – 15.30	Break
	15.30 – 17.00	Teachings on Dream Yoga, Guided Meditation, Blessings

Donation: Entire Dream Yoga Course: HUF 21,000 (HUF 16,000 with prior registration).

Prior registration is valid upon receipt of a downpayment of HUF 6,000 if you are interested, we will send you the account number and information about catering options.

You can register at the following address: Info@ligmincha.hu

We look forward to the participation of all those interested at this exceptional event.



EMBRACING THE THREE PERFECTS

TEACHINGS ON GURU YOGA, BODHICITTA, REFUGE AND DEDICATION AND THE FIVE TSA LUNG EXERCISES

with Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen

September 18 – 20, 2015

Ligmincha Berlin Center, Laubacher Strasse 21, 14197 Berlin, Germany

We are very happy to welcome Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen as our guest in our new Center in Berlin. From September 18 – 20 he will give fundamental teachings of the Bon tradition. They are called “Three Perfects,” which means the three main principles of practice. The first principle is related to the motivation, connection and devotion to the practice and includes explanations on the Guru Yoga prayer, Refuge and Bodhicitta. The second principle is referring to the meditation practice and the integration of emptiness. The third principle represents the dedication of our practice to the wealth of other beings by which we can secure our merits of practice and overcome our self-referentiality. Geshe Lhundup will give us as well instructions for the Five Tsa Lung and other exercises of Tibetan Yoga for inner wisdom and clarity.

Geshe Lhundup is a Ligmincha Resident Lama in Europe and lives in Paris, France. He studied many years in our mother monastery Menri in India, where he received his Geshe title.



This is a wonderful opportunity, to receive teachings from another Yungdrung Bon teacher and to learn the Tsa Lung exercises directly from an authentic source. Newcomers have the possibility to get a profound introduction in teaching and practice. Experienced practitioners can deepen their own practice and clear questions and obstacles in direct contact with Geshe Lhundup.

Lecture: Friday, September 18, 19.00 – 21.30 h / € 5

Seminar: Saturday 19, 10.00 – 18.00 h, Sunday 20, 10.00 – 16.00 h / € 100, red. € 70

Information and registration on www.ligmincha.de/berlin



THE HEALING PRACTICE OF THE RED GARUDA

TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF THE RED GARUDA

with John Jackson

November 6 – 8 2015

Ligmincha Berlin Center, Laubacher Strasse 21, 14197 Berlin, Germany



Mythologies throughout the world recount the story of the eagle-man, the one who transcends and rises above mundane existence to connect with the spacious, luminous sky. From the western Himalayas, across India, to the Mongolian plains, to the Indonesian archipelago, the Garuda represents this transcendent quality present in all humans, that which empowers and removes all obstacles to our spiritual development. The Red Garuda is especially known as a healing practice for emotional and physical problems, both for ourselves and others, for the fiery strength of enlightened energy quickly burns away all obstacles. It also is known for its ability to resolve issues related to disturbances of the nagas, the beings of the waters. Please join us for a weekend and connect with the power, strength and wisdom that lie within our innermost being.

John Jackson is a long-time practitioner of the Bon tradition, having studied over twenty years under the guidance of H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Nyiama Dakpa Rinpoche. He is the director of the Chamma Ling solitary retreat center in the mountains of Colorado, US, (www.chammaling.org), co-leader of The 3 Doors Academy for Europe, and leads retreats throughout North America and Europe.



Lecture: Friday, November 6, 19.00 – 21.30 h / € 5

Seminar: Saturday 7, 10.00 – 18.00 h, Sunday 8, 10.00 – 16.00 h / € 120, red. € 80

Information and registration on www.ligmincha.de/berlin



A NAIL



**The mind and all mental states dissolve
into the space of the nature of mind.**

All activities dissolve into the space of stillness.

All forms of speech dissolve into the space of silence.

**All the clouds of thoughts and recollections
dissolve into the space free of thought.**

*from The Twenty-One Nails,
a Bon dzogchen text
(published in: The True Source of Healing)*



THE SMILE THAT TRANSCENDS AGE



The Smile that Transcends Age

Within this body that ages by the elements
of karma,

is the mind of a child which has the joy to play.

Age and time bring this appearance of
growing old,

But the smile of youthfulness transcends time.

Written by Ababa Albany, CA 6/3/15

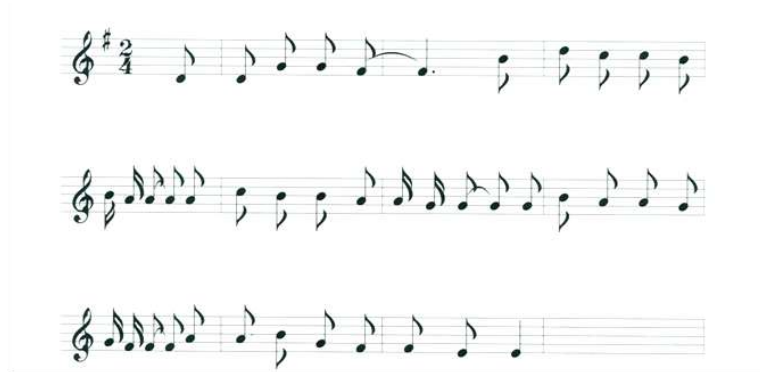
Translated by Raven Cypress Wood



WeicoNote



OPENNESS IS THE KEY



Openness is the key,
in everything you want to be.
In miracles, that you'll go to see.
limitless, that will set you free.
In sky, in sea, in field and tree.

Openness is the key,
In bending; I'm one of Thee.
Solving in this sparkling sea,
of happiness that glows in me.
In life as lively as it can be.

Openness is the key
Openness is the key....

Text and music by Tonny Maas



LEVELS OF LUCIDITY

Frits de Vries listened to a free teaching by Andrew Holecek called “A Proper View on Death” found at www.tricycle.com. He tried to list and unlock all the important points.

In his teaching Andrew Holecek emphasizes the importance of the view. The right view is the first step on the Noble Eightfold Buddhist path. He connects this view to our inevitable journey through the three *Bardos* after death. Of central importance in his teaching is the guidance on this journey provided by a map of the territory through which you will journey. But first Holecek teaches the notion that this journey is not external, but takes only place in our mind.

“The journey of the Bardo is the journey after death. It is nothing more than a journey of the mind. It's a journey into and through the mind. It's nowhere else. This view alone brings about a tremendous sense of understanding in terms of the power of the contemplative path, and the power of meditation.”

Holecek goes on to paint a map of the journey for us. Guiding his development of this map Holecek uses two fundamental Buddhist concepts: the *trikaya* and the three *Bardos*.

“There are two principle doctrines that I think are helpful to understand. These are like the frameworks for the entire Bardo journey. The first is the teachings on the trikaya. (...) By studying the Tri-kaya and the three Bardos all together, we're studying a map of such elegance and sophistication, that when we enter the territory, we'll be able to orient ourselves. Where are we? What do we need to do?”

Next he expounds the relation between these basic concepts and connects them in what he calls a vertical mandala.

“The Tibetan Buddhists speak a lot about mandala principal, mandala meaning an organizational template. I like to view this idea or this teaching on the Trikaya as a vertical mandala. It acts as a kind of skeleton upon which we can hang a great



Andrew Holecek.

deal of helpful information. The trikaya literally means three bodies; tri meaning three and kaya meaning body.”

“The doctrine says that a Buddha has three *kāyas* or *bodies*:

The *Dharmakāya* or *Truth body* which embodies the very principle of enlightenment and knows no limits or boundaries;

The *Sambhogakāya* or *body of mutual enjoyment* which is a body of bliss or clear light manifestation;

The *Nirmāṇakāya* or *created body* which manifests in time and space.” (wikipedia.org/Trikaya)

KAYA	MANIFESTATION	OPPORTUNITY FOR RECOGNITION
Dharmakaya	Formless	At the end of the bardo of dying
Sambhogakaya	Ethereal form	During bardo of dharmata
Nirmanakaya	Form	During bardo of becoming

Table 1. The three kayas and opportunities for liberation in the three bardos.

(Holecek, *Preparing to Die*, p 44)

These kaya/body names are of Buddha bodies and they are pure. Our impure human bodies are *Nirmanakaya* manifesting in time and space. Of course there is a big difference between the pure *Nirmanakaya* body of the Buddha and our impure *Nirmanakaya* body. I assume Holecek uses ‘*Nirmanakaya*’ when he talks about the painful *Bardo*



process of dying associated with our release of the *Nirmanakaya*.

"The painful Bardo of Dying is associated with our release of the Nirmanakaya. It's called painful because it's painful for us to let go. It's painful for us to release our grip on all things made of form and of course most are archetypical this body."

Holecsek presents an interesting explanation of the gradual unfolding and vision of the pure *trikaya* in one's journey through the *Bardos*, leaving the impure *trikaya* behind.

Next to the template of the *trikaya* is the second template, connected to the three *Bardos*. The first *Bardo* is the *Bardo of Dying*. The second *Bardo* is the *Bardo of Dharmata*. The third *Bardo* is the *Bardo of Becoming*.

These three *Bardos* are discussed in detail in Holecsek's book *Preparing to Die*, which is introduced in the in the [Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 15](#), p. 36-40.

Holecsek points to the teaching, "A Proper View on Death" and the contrast between 'experienced practitioners' and 'the rest of us' or 'for the most of us' when we travel through these *Bardos*. As Holecsek explains the three *Bardos* the importance of meditation experience is emphasized as he describes the *Bardo of Dharmata*. Without the proper preparation developed through meditation one's chance of liberation in this *Bardo* are slight for 'the rest of us'. A spur towards spiritual practice is implied.

I. Bardo of Dying

"This is the Bardo, or gap, that occurs at the end of life. It classically heads its onset when we become afflicted with a condition that will fundamentally end with our death. This can take place in a matter of seconds if you're involved in a car accident, or years or decades if you are involved in a kind of chronic, debilitating, progressive disease."

The *Bardo of Dying* is painful for most of us

because it is painful to let go, as we have seen above. For the phases of outer and inner dissolution, a detailed description is found in his book *Preparing to Die*. For 'experienced practitioners' we repeat the clear advice of Namkhai Norbu for the *Bardo of Dying* from *Longchenpa's Advice from the Heart*. (1)

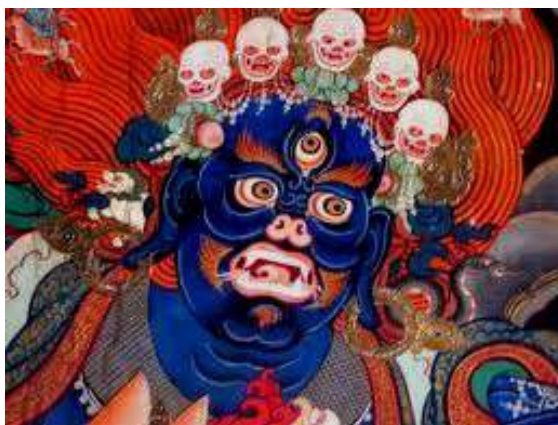
"As soon as you recognize that you are dying, you should enter the state of Guruyoga. In that way you are beyond time. You notice what is occurring in your body at that moment, such as the dissolution of the elements, but since you are in the state of instant presence, you do not experience suffering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

At the end of the painful *Bardo of Dying*, the mind transfers into the *Bardo of Dharmata*.

II. Bardo of Dharmata

In Holecsek's vertical mandala the *Bardo of Dharmata* is related to the *Dharmakaya* as well as to the *Sambhogakaya*, through a connection he makes between two phases in the *Bardo*. First, one experiences the emptiness phase and then the luminous phase. The first phase is referred to as the emptiness phase or the *Dharmakaya* *Bardo*. This is the phase of the awakened nature, the true formless and therefore deathless nature. Diligent and perseverant practitioners will clearly see the importance of Namkhai Norbu's advice.

"If we do have some level of familiarity with this deathless nature which we practiced during life, this is referred to in the beautiful phrase of the Tibetan tradition as 'the union of the mother and child luminosity.' The child luminosity refers to your own level of recognition of your deathless nature. The mother luminosity is this primordial mother which gives birth to all manifest reality. If you can identify with this deathless nature while you're still alive, if you can die before you die, then when this deathless nature is revealed, mother



and child reunite. The result of that reunion is fundamental awakening. This is the greatest opportunity that we have."

Holecsek warns us against the most important adversary we have, our ego.

"Ego dreads it the most because the Dharmakaya, from ego's perspective, is death. We enter this kind of double bind situation on this spiritual path. More than anything we long for liberation of the Dharmakaya or the Dharmata. But on the other hand more than anything, we dread it because from the ego's perspective it's death and the dissolution of all form."

The second phase of this *Bardo* is referred to as the luminosity phase or the *Sambhogakaya* phase. If you missed your chance, as an experienced spiritual practitioner, in the first phase of this *Bardo*, you get a second chance in this second phase with the possibility of recognizing the appearing deities as part of your own luminosity, as has been written in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

"This of course is where famous legendary hundred peaceful and wrathful deities of the Tibetan Book of the Dead arise. Now it's well beyond our scope to discuss these, but these hundred deities are simply primordial or archetypal expressions of the awakened mind as it first starts to shine and radiate as the luminosity of emptiness."

So it is worth studying the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as a preparation for dying. Even if you see a lot of fleeting images in this phase of the *Bardo*, if only one image stands out it is enough, the keyword is 'recognition.'

According to Holecsek in this *Bardo* as a whole there is not much for 'the rest of us' to do because the first phase lasts merely 'a finger snap' and the second phase will usually be only 'fleeting images of light.' We basically black-out like in a dreamless sleep. But for experienced practitioners, having some familiarity with the 'nature of mind,' there is a chance of liberation. Here is

potentially a very special result of advanced meditative training called *Tukdam*.

"But if you're a practitioner, if you're a yogi or yogini, fundamentally 'you' can do whatever you want. You can rest in the nature of your heart mind indefinitely. In fact this particular resting in the mind is referred to in the Tibetan tradition as Tukdam, which is kind of a post-death meditative absorption. This is fairly common place in the Tibetan Buddhism."

Holecsek explains briefly the mission of H.H. the Dalai Lama to let a group of scientists investigate the phenomenon of *Tukdam*. Advanced practitioners have shown post-mortem signs of inner meditative life.



"(...) Besides their perfect poise, there will be other signs that show they are resting in the state of the Ground Luminosity: There is still a certain color and glow in their face, the nose does not sink inward, the skin remains soft and flexible, the body does not become stiff, the eyes are said to keep a soft and compas-

sionate glow, and there is still a warmth at the heart." (www.rigpawiki.org/Tukdam)

This warmth in the region of the heart especially can be truly felt. Western science has no explanation for this result of Tibetan Buddhist meditative training.

III. *Bardo of Becoming*

As a dream yoga teacher himself Holecsek refers not by accident to experienced practitioners as the ones who practice *Dream Yoga* or *Sleep Yoga*.

"But a sleep yoga practitioner or someone who's familiar with the luminosity, the emptiness of their own heart mind, they maintain a kind of constant consciousness. A twenty-four/seven level of awareness so that when they drop into sleep, their body might be going into a sleep mode but their mind continues to stay awake in a formless level."

After the dreamless sleep in the *Bardo of Dhar-*



mata for 'the rest of us,' we will wake up somewhat bewildered and confused, according to Holecek, in the karmic *Bardo of Becoming*. It lasts on average around forty-nine days. This state is very similar to a normal dream. If you don't have control over your normal dreams, you don't have control over this *Bardo* 'dream' either.

"The winds recur and according to the Tibetan description at this point, the very subtle body leaves this physical body and begins this interesting and potentially terrifying journey in the after-death state, which constitutes for most of us, the post-death experience, which according to the Tibetans, on average lasts around forty-nine days. So this state is very similar to an unrecognized dream — a non-lucid dream."

Holecek continues his lesson with some penetrating questions. Can you recognize your dreams, while you are dreaming that you are dreaming? Can you be awake in your dreams? Holecek calls it a concordant expression of the karmic *Bardo of Becoming*. The recognition of deep dreamless sleep is even a step further, a concordant expression of the luminous *Bardo of Dharmata*. In short we might say the degree of recognition in the dream and sleep state is a predictor of how much recognition we will have in the intermediate *Bardo* state.

"Again we can gain some sense of suggestion about how much recognition we will have in these after-death states, by how we relate and recognize what happens every night when we fall asleep. "

This is where your former training in *Dream Yoga* and *Sleep Yoga* will pay back. The first and foremost book where we can learn about *Dream Yoga* and *Sleep Yoga* is of course the classic of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*. In chapter 10 we find a clear link between dream capacity and traveling in the *Bardo*.

"Experiencing death is very similar to entering dream. The possibility of remaining present during the intermediate bardo after death, of staying aware and undistracted as the after-death visions arise, depends on the capacities developed in dream yoga. We say that dream is a test for the bardo. This is the integration of the dream state

with the intermediate state, understanding that reactions to the phenomena of the dream will be the same as reactions to the phenomena of the bardo. The accomplishment at this point depends on the development of lucidity and non-grasping in dream." (2)

Before we can understand this test and we are capable of integrating the dream state with the *Bardo* state, we probably first have to finish the four foundational practices of the Dream Yoga (2, p. 90-96). The first practice is to see daily life as a dream: *"Keep reminding yourself that you are dreaming up your experiences."* The second practice is to let go more and more: *"Removing grasping and aversion."* The third practice is to reinforce your intention to recognize that you are dreaming while you are dreaming, it is called *"lucid dreaming."* The last exercise is, when you wake up in the morning, to strengthen positive thinking about small results of the night. And then,

"As the practice changes the experiences of the visions of the day, the change is integrated into the dream. Lucidity arises in the dream state. There are successive levels of lucidity, from the first experiences of being aware that the dream is a dream, to a powerful lucidity in which one is totally free in the dream and dream itself becomes an experience of almost shocking vividness and clarity." (2)

Conclusion

The view supported by the map of the territory drawn by Holecek, with the vertical mandala, the *trikaya* and *Bardos*, culminates in your ability to be aware in your dreams and more specifically to the successive levels of lucidity of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Now it is our task to use this map to support our imagination when we transform our ambition into efforts toward liberation.

Notes

(1) Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Longchenpa's Advice from the Heart*, Shang Shung Pub., Arcidosso, 2008, p. 57-60.

(2) Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*, Snow Lion, 1998, p. 139-140.

Text by Frits de Vries

Photos: from internet



THE TRUE SOURCE OF HEALING

We bring you an excerpt of chapter 2 of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's latest book, *The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life*. Hay House released the book in early July 2015. This book supports Rinpoche's free, yearlong internet course in *Soul Retrieval*.

Retrieving from Nature

Experiencing the natural world as sacred is a source of nourishment for the soul. Connecting with the elements and retrieving one's soul in this way is an honored approach in Bön. When the sacred relationship with nature is cultivated, true healing is supported.

What is a sacred relationship with nature? I define as sacred anything that brings you closer to yourself, to recognizing the truth of who you are. Imagine two people who visit the mountains for very different reasons. One is a shaman, the other a mountain climber. The shaman approaches the mountain to consciously weaken his ego and strengthen his connection with his inner wisdom. The athlete approaches the mountain as a challenge to conquer. While the mountaineer may be immersed in nature and feel excited and stimulated as he climbs, in relishing achievement he unconsciously feeds his ego. By experiencing his worth as something that can be measured and attained, he is disconnecting from himself. His relationship with nature is not a sacred one.

You can experience nature as a teacher constantly transmitting knowledge and wisdom to you, or simply as a place to engage your ego. When you enter into a sacred relationship with nature, qualities of the elements awaken within you, and you discover and connect with your genuine self.

Tibetan Roots

Traditionally, the ancient practice of soul retrieval

involves cultivating a sacred relationship with the spirits of nature. The idea of nature spirits may not fully resonate with you, but knowledge of this perspective can help to increase your understanding and motivation for change, because it enters you into a relationship with the natural world that is dynamic and alive.

Like many indigenous cultures, the Tibetans consider the forces of nature to be alive with unseen beings. To Tibetans, cultivating a relationship with the spirit of a tree or rock or stream is no less important than honoring human relationships.

When you connect with the liveliness in nature, you are not lonely. Relaxing in front of a fire and feeling its warmth, you become aware of the spirit

of the fire. Sitting by a river, you can form a relationship with the water spirits. Developing a deeper level of closeness, communication, and respect for an element and its spirit helps you awaken the essence of that element within you.

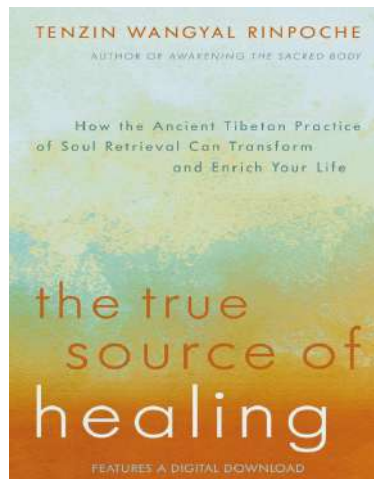
Making a Date with the Elements

A friend of mine, feeling old and sick, made a point upon arising each morning to sit on her porch

and look at the sky and listen to the birds. This simple addition to her morning routine made the rest of her day go more smoothly. It left her feeling more open. On the mornings she didn't do it, she could feel the difference. Being with the sky didn't involve any complicated meditation postures, visualizations, or mantras, yet it awakened the healing qualities of her inner spaciousness. In a direct way, this illustrates the way nature can nourish us.

Making a special date with the elements is something anyone can do, yet few people think of doing it. It is a matter of finding the time and place to be with the elements and feel their liveliness.

When making a date with nature, you can be assured that, unlike some of your friends and relatives, nature will not judge you, try to convince



you of anything, or expect anything of you. To make the connection, all that is required of you is to be still within yourself, silence your internal chatter, and open your heart. If you can rest in stillness, silence, and spaciousness, you will be open to receiving what nature has to offer.

If you have been feeling that your problems are solid and overwhelming, go to a place where the space element is evident. This might be a mountain overlook, a broad field, or a tall building with a window view. Choose a day when the sky is clear and a time when the sun is not directly in your eyes.

When you can connect long enough, gazing at a clear sky can open your heart and mind, and awaken an experience of inner spaciousness. It can bring you home to who you are, to the true nature of your mind. By the end of your session with the space element, all the challenges that have been weighing on you may seem lighter. You may feel better able to accommodate whatever arises in your life.

So, just as my friend did, consider spending quality time with the space element in a place where the sky is open and clear. Whether you travel to an open area or simply look out your window, use the time to connect with and nurture a feeling of openness.

If you have been feeling stuck and are in need of the air element, you can seek out a windy location. Go to a spot where people fly kites. Consider a high point, such as a hilltop or mountain pass, or visit the beach. In our daily lives there are many opportunities to experience the air element. You can connect with it anywhere the wind blows free — even on a city street. The skyscrapers in a city like New York create a wind-tunnel effect. As the wind blows around you, become aware of your inner playfulness and flexibility.

It's a Tibetan tradition to toss thin papers containing prayers into the breeze, imagining that the air

disperses the prayers throughout the universe. The purpose of this ritual is to raise your *wind-horse*, your life force. A mythical Tibetan creature, the windhorse symbolizes the space element, the subtle energy of inner air. It brings good fortune, ensuring that every circumstance you meet will lead to your success and well-being. As the wind lifts your prayers into the sky, your inner wind raises your energy. You can explore this connection between the outer and inner winds in your practice. The more you connect with the wind element and merge with its qualities, the more flexible and resilient you will be. You will feel yourself opening to new perspectives and will sense your potential for expansion and growth.



Make a date with Nature and discover your True Self.

If you have been lacking energy, vitality, or inspiration and are in need of the fire element, find a place where fire is active. Sit by a campfire or a fireplace, enter a sweat lodge, or simply light candles. A good way to connect with fire is to sit in the sun and feel your skin absorbing its warmth. In Northern Europe, after the long, dark winter, people congregate outdoors to celebrate the return of the sun's rays. There is even more power in remaining aware as you actively engage with the fire element.

The point is not to become so absorbed in the fire that you lose yourself but rather, through connecting with fire's energetic warmth, to find yourself. As you become more receptive to and engaged with the qualities of fire, feelings of joy are likely to replace sadness and depression. In your innermost being, you *are* joy. Fire awakens this in you. Even when the flames subside or the sun disappears behind a cloud, the warmth and joy remain.

Make an appointment with the fire element. Whether you sit by a campfire or in a sunny spot by a window, feel fire's blissful vitality arising within you.

Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux
Photo by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



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

When	Where	What	More information
August 15 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Overcoming Loneliness: Finding the Friend Within	www.ligmincha.org
August 18 – 23	Chamma Ling Poland, Wilga, Poland	Retreat: The Twenty-One Nails, Part 3 (of 3)	www.ligmincha.pl
August 29 – 30	Budapest, Hungary	Weekend seminar: Dream Yoga	www.ligmincha.hu
September 12 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Nourishing Your Inner Being: The Heart of Soul Retrieval	www.ligmincha.org
September 19 – October 11	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Sound Healing	www.glidewing.com
October 10 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Nourishing Your Inner Being: Questions and Answers	www.ligmincha.org
October 24 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Topic to be determined. Broadcast live from the Annual Fall Retreat at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center	www.ligmincha.org
November 14 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The Power of Warmth: Physical Healing Through Meditation	www.ligmincha.org
December 12 15.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Full-Day Live Webcast: Healing from the Source: Cutting the Root of Your Pain	www.ligmincha.org
January 1, 2016 17.00 – 18.00 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Guided Meditation from the Experiential Transmission Teachings, Part 2. Broadcast live from the Annual Winter Retreat at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center	www.ligmincha.org
January 9, 2016 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The True Source of Healing: Soul Retrieval as a Lifetime Practice	www.ligmincha.org

You can also watch on your computer 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week:

Free internet teachings and videos on [YouTube](#), [Ustream](#) and www.oceanofwisdom.org

