



# Ligmincha Europe Magazine

# 19 – Winter 2015-2016



Meet Chamma Ling Colorado

Appointed as Rinpoche

Kanjur in Chamma Ling Poland

Who is Tenzin Wangyal?



# LIGMINCHA EUROPE MAGAZINE 2016/19 — CONTENTS

## GREETINGS

- 3 Greetings and news from the editors

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- 4 Rinpoche's Family Time

## GOING BEYOND

- 9 The Wisdom of The 3 Doors Enriches my Life  
11 Connecting to a Deeper Sense of Self  
14 Students of Lishu Institute visit Menri Monastery  
18 Opposites Coexist

## EVENT

- 19 Third Bon's 24 hour Global Prayer

## THE SANGHA

- 20 The Five Star Retreat Cabins in Colorado  
26 What's Been Happening in Europe  
30 Speak less, Read less, Practice more  
32 Unblocking Your Creative Potential

## ART IN THE SANGHA

- 33 The Soul Retrieval has completed me  
34 Come along, Come along!  
35 Best Wishes  
36 Calendars for 2016

## PREPARING TO DIE

- 37 Helping to Die

## THE TEACHER AND THE DHARMA

- 39 How is the Soul lost and retrieved? It depends on your view and understanding.  
40 Compassionate Wisdom in Action  
42 Why Has Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Left for the West?  
47 Appointed as Rinpoche  
54 Free Six-Month Internet Course: Transforming Your World Through Service  
56 Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's 2016 European seminars and on-line teachings

## 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,

During his December live webcast Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche asked us to reflect on the past year. I found myself reflecting on 2015 developments in the Ligmincha Europe Magazine. For example, in the section *Going Beyond*, we started to include quotes from other spiritual or religious traditions besides Bon. We introduced a new section on *Preparing to Die*. After featuring an interview with Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen, the Ligmincha resident lama in Paris, we decided to introduce the other resident Ligmincha lamas as well. Once we had featured articles on all the European sanghas, we chose to interview sangha members in the United States, and will continue throughout 2016 with the other sanghas in the Americas.

national Newspaper of the Dzogchen Community of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. The article — which we found on the Internet — includes an interview with a young Geshe Tenzin Wangyal and a discussion of his 'discovery of America.'

What else can you read in this issue? Students from The 3 Doors and Lishu Institute share their experiences. Raven Lee, one of the teachers of The European 3 Doors Academy, shares an excerpt about Compassionate Wisdom in Action from her book *Unbinding the Soul*. Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang Rinpoche, who has taught in several Ligmincha sanghas in Europe, tells how he received the honorific title Rinpoche, and



**Meet the European Sangha**  
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While reflecting I realized the preciousness of the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Without these three we could not make this magazine, so I would like to thank the teachers who shared their wisdom with us, and the sangha members and all others who contributed to the Ligmincha Europe Magazine.

The World Wide Web plays a growing role in spreading the Dharma. During every month of 2015 Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche offered at least one free live Internet teaching. On the Internet you can also find many videos, courses, books, and magazines featuring the teachings. In this magazine you will find links to Rinpoche's recent recorded webcasts of 2015 and to his upcoming 2016 live webcasts. In addition, we share a 1990 article from the first issue of *The Mirror*, the Inter-

explains the differences between the designations of monk, lama, Geshe, Tulku, Rinpoche, Khenpo, Lopon and Ponlop. As always there is poetry, help in the dying process, and more.

The first chance of 2016 to be united in Europe with the Teacher, the Dharma and the Sangha is at the 10th International Losar Practice weekend in Buchenau, Germany. You can register for the weekend [here](#). And if you don't manage to attend, you will have many other opportunities to meet the Three Precious Jewels from your home computer or in person at a seminar or retreat in 2016.

In Bon,  
**Ton Bisscheroux, chief editor**



# RINPOCHE'S FAMILY TIME

Seeing photos on Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's Facebook page of a visit to India in October, we asked Rinpoche to share with us about his trip.

**Ton:** Did you plan your visit to India a long time ahead, or was it a spontaneous decision?

**Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:** I did not have any plans to visit India, but once I heard that the health of His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche was not good, and when I saw photos of him during his visit with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I could see that he really looked weak. I was sad to see that, and on the spot I made the decision to go. I was very lucky to have this window of time, which I had kept open for my family. So I took this time from my family to visit him, because this is also family for me.

Since I often assumed responsibilities in the Dialectic School, I had to ask him a lot of things.

**Jantien:** I can understand that the choice of staying with your family or going to visit a sick parent is not so difficult. How did your family respond?

**TWR:** My wife Tsering was very supportive and said "Yes, go, and take your time," and although my son Senghe does not understand everything that adults do, he is used to sharing me with others.

**Ton:** How was the health of His Holiness when you visited him?

**TWR:** At the beginning of my visit he was quite weak and he needed a lot of rest. Over the course of the days I was there, I could see his health was improving. And I was very lucky and fortunate to



His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

**Ton:** Can you describe your relationship to His Holiness?

**TWR:** My relationship to His Holiness is the same as to His Eminence Lopon Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche in that they have been my parents — both mother and father — as well as teacher, friend, supporter, mentor. They have been everything to me since I have been ten years old. When I was young I did not live in the same house as His Holiness, but we lived in the same monastery and I encountered him every day.

be able to visit him every day. Actually, I did not want to visit him every day; I wished that he could rest. Then on the second day when I was not planning to visit him I got asked the question why did I not visit him? Of course I wanted to be there, so right away I went to him. We talked about things that were light and playful and fun, and also had heartfelt conversations. And after spending quite a while there, I said, "I'll go now," and he replied, "Stay longer and have tea. Why are you in such a rush?" I offered to give him a foot massage with





Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche visiting some old friends.

hot *tsampa*. After that he slept very well, so I did that every day. It was very nice to visit him every day. Now his health is much better and we are all very happy.

**Jantien:** It was so nice to have the connection with him, by reciting the prayer and mantras for his health. Did His Holiness have a message for the sangha?

**TWR:** He had no particular message, but he is very aware that sangha members all around the world have been very actively praying and accumulating

Long Life Mantras, and he is fully connected with it. He is very thankful for that and sends his prayers and blessings to everybody. I told him that the Ligmincha sangha around the world have been continuously praying Long Life Mantras for him and he was very deeply moved and felt it, and appreciated that and asked me to thank everybody.

In the international community, we talk about the importance of the relationship between student and teacher, and we always need inspiration and



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche.





Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche with Geshe Thupten Negi and the participants of the first trimester of the Lishu Institute Three Year Residential Retreat.

a reminder to reconnect to that relationship for the sake of one's own practice and spiritual development. I see this situation as a great opportunity for us, as students, to reconnect with our teachers and to remember our connection. It reinforces and strengthens our own practice and connection.

**Ton: Are there also rituals performed for His Holiness, like the *Tsé Tar*?**

**TWR:** Yes, we did some *Tsé Tar* and we sponsored monks to do a lot of prayers in the monasteries

for the health of His Holiness. And also local villagers sponsored day-long prayers, and the kids in the schools prayed for him.

**Ton: Did you meet other people during your visit to India?**

**TWR:** I met most of my friends. And I met many village people, especially some very old ones that I have known for a long time. In past visits, they would come to visit me in the monastery where I was staying, but this time they were too old or too sick to come and visit me, so I had to go to all



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche with Bon students of the Central University for Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India.





Group of Bon students welcoming Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to the Central University for Tibetan Studies in Sarnath.

these villagers to show my support and love for them. For the last ten or fifteen years I have been financially supporting a group of very old people there, and I went to visit each of them to connect to them. That was wonderful. And in the Dialectic School I met with friends, and there were a lot of people I did not know, who were new to me. I gave a talk to the Dialectic School about my experiences of the Bon teachings in the West. And I also met people I had not seen for a long time, but have regular contact with on WeChat.

I spent a few days at Lishu Institute. As you all

probably know, the students there just finished their first semester. Then I went for the first time to Sarnath to the Central University for Tibetan Studies and gave a talk about the values of Buddhism in modern Western life: *How Westerners Value the Buddhist Teachings*.

**Jantien: How is for the monks to see that the Bon teachings are going all over the world?**

**TWR:** The Tibetan culture is a very open and sharing culture, so the monks are happy to see that the teachings are spreading and becoming available to many. And the lamas that have come to



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Sarnath.





Public talk at University auditorium at the Central University for Tibetan Studies in Sarnath.

the West find it meaningful that they can be helpful, and they learn as well from the Western culture. We are enriching the cultures of one another.

**Ton: During the Summer retreat in Buchenau, Germany, you said that your nephew was very ill. How is his situation now?**

**TWR:** His situation has improved greatly; he has almost fully recovered now. It feels like a miracle that he is almost back to normal. We are all very happy about that.

**Ton: I am sure that the sangha members will also be happy to hear that.**

**Jantien: Did you see during your journey also the consequences of the earthquake in Nepal?**

**TWR:** I don't have any updates from there, and I know there is still a lot of work to be done. Every situation is like that, at the moment it happens, a lot of attention is brought there. Soon after, the attention fades away, but the challenges continue for the people there. Fortunately, as far as our monasteries are concerned, they were not affected so badly. They can maintain and are grateful for everybody's support.

**Interview by Jantien Spindler and Ton Bisschoux**

Photos: courtesy of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



Students at public talk, Central University for Tibetan Studies in Sarnath.



# THE WISDOM OF THE 3 DOORS ENRICHES MY LIFE

**After a public talk by Raven Lee in Switzerland, a group of people with no meditation experience started to meet on a weekly basis under the guidance of Madeleine Bekassy, a graduate of The European 3 Doors Academy. They are enthusiastic about their experiences and want to share them with us.**

After graduating from The 3 Doors Europe Academy, I wanted to continue my growth and development, so I joined the Presenters Path, a training program for Academy graduates who wish to present The 3 Doors practices in their home communities and work places. It all took off when Senior Teacher Raven Lee came at the end of March 2015 and held a public talk in the small village outside of Basel, Switzerland where I live. Of the twenty-three people attending, six women were interested to go on and practice. So we met on a weekly basis for an hour and a half. We practiced Inner Refuge, deepening with *A*, *Om* and *Hung*, just as Raven had introduced at the public talk. In late autumn, following my approval as a Presenter, I added the *Five Warrior Syllables* to the weekly practice.

For me as a Presenter it has been a process. My biggest challenge was the language. I am Swedish, and in English there is a flow, but German was a new chapter! So I had some fear about guiding in the German language that I needed to take into my personal practice. In the beginning, I was a bit nervous, but with time it has shifted. I have such joy and feel confident. Our weekly practice time together is just beautiful. It is getting more and more powerful. It is very motivating!

One evening, a new woman joined the group. When I heard how the group described their experiences to her, and how practice had affected their lives, my heart was so touched. I had never before heard this in such a condensed way! I was speechless! I felt an enormous warm wave of gratitude arising within my body. On the one hand it was a gratitude and devotion to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, to the lineage and to these precious 3 Doors teachings; and on the other, to the group: gratitude that they are so open to receive. I was

amazed how in such a short time they had all experienced such beautiful transformations. It really moved me. We never worked actively with transformations in the way one does in The 3 Doors Academy. We have focused on the connection and deepening of Inner Refuge. So I was very surprised!

For this reason I asked them to write down their experiences and to share them in the Ligincha Europe Magazine as a big "Thank you." It is a pity that I did not take a "before and after" photo – the change is obvious! They look grounded, so light and with a warm spacious openness! Just beautiful!

One of them got a very nice compliment from a colleague at work: "There are many people smiling in this office, but there is only one who smiles from her heart – and that is you."

It is a gift, and as Sabina says, "*I Love gifts, don't you?*" This gift is a very precious one indeed.

Madeleine Bekassy



*"In the spring of this year I attended the first informational evening and had an impulse mainly toward meditation. It is amazing how quickly I can find an inner peace that previously I could not find within me.*

*My thoughts never came to a place of rest. Not even at night with great fatigue. My mind was not in peace. Again and again it was talking to me "do this, do not forget," and so on. At each short period of waking up, the talking mind was there again, and remained. It was difficult to be able to go back to sleep. Sometimes I was awake for hours.*

*With The 3 Doors meditation I quickly found a way to connect within two minutes with peace within. Isn't that amazing!!!!*

*More specifically, I think the meditation in our*



*group is beautiful. We meet once a week. Through group dynamics we find a harmony and it feels like energy is created, which is much more intense than when I practice at home alone.*

*It's hard to believe, but since the spring a lot has changed in me, and I go much faster to finding peace within me.*

*It works, and there are more and more positive situations in my life that I do not want to miss. I thank Madeleine wholeheartedly for this experience and guiding us. It is a gift for everyday. I Love gifts, don't you?"*

Sabina, Basel

*"I am a single mother with three children, a full time job and on top of this I have been studying (Federal professional education degree). I was often at the end of my nerves and my strength.*

*I'm grateful to Madeleine, who introduced us to the practice and has guided us to this new world of inner peace. Thank you, and blessings."*

Gisella, Basel

*"Early this year, I had family problems that overwhelmed me. The starting point was that I could talk with Madeleine about it. Madeleine told me about these practices. I gladly accepted the help and began to practice them. Just like that, without knowing or having any preconceptions. I continued because it makes me feel good. My husband noticed a change in me, and I was amazed as I was not aware of it myself.*

*I began to read the books of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and to practice every day. Around me everything seemed to be clearing and resolving. It was so clear to me what to do. During this time, my*



Madeleine with four participants of the meditation group (two are missing).

*Through the meditation I found the opportunity to mobilize my inner forces to remain calm, like a solid rock taking all these challenges easily. Meanwhile, I have passed my Federal exam with success and peacefully allow new challenges to arise.*

*The group meditations are beautiful and powerful. I thank Madeleine from my heart for the wonderful meditations and look forward to the beautiful experiences."*

Eveline, Basel

*"A few months ago out of curiosity I joined Madeleine's meditation group. The 3 Doors meditations opened a new way in my life to overcome difficult situations. Finding inner peace has helped me to become more confident and not to worry all the time. The group practices are a powerful tool, and I enjoy our weekly meetings.*

*family moved to a new home, I moved into my own office in a great location, and my whole family has found more peace.*

*Following this path is a big pleasure, also because some friends joined too. So we are a very nice group. We meet weekly with Madeleine and practicing together is very powerful.*

*I have expressed myself very briefly. Just want to say that this wisdom greatly enriched my life and for me things have changed positively with these practices. So I'll stay tuned in, realizing that it is not so complicated. It seems to me that with love, everything is very simple."*

Sandra, Basel

**Text and photo by Madeleine Bekassy**



## CONNECTING TO A DEEPER SENSE OF SELF

Fifteen people attended the *Transforming Your Life through Meditation* retreat at Pauenhof in Germany from November 7-13, 2015. This weeklong retreat served as an introduction to The 3 Doors Academy program, to get a taste of The 3 Doors teachings and the teachers, John Jackson and Raven Lee. Three people share their experiences, and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche elaborates on his reasons for creating The 3 Doors.

*"The week was amazing. These teachings are pure gold. I'm still the same person, but it feels like I've taken off several layers that prevented me from showing my real self, and I connected to a deeper sense of self. I feel more centered, more joy and more confidence. I have a clearer mind and feel less stressed. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's precision and clarity are very well communicated by John and Raven. I feel deep gratitude to have received these teachings and find them an immeasurable treasure that needs to be shared. Words can't describe it, but I know it from the heart.*

*The core of the teaching is the Inner Refuge. The*

*stillness of the body, the silence of speech and the spaciousness of mind are the three doors used to connect to a deeper awareness that is crystal clear and spacious. An awareness that is beyond the 'thinking mind,' it's a sense of 'being.' Throughout the week John and Raven introduced us step by step to these three doorways and how to put them into practice, deepening our understanding and offering new perspectives.*

*We worked with the painful, habitual patterns that can govern our life. We learned to look at them, to give them space and to accept that they're there, and by doing so release them and connect to the deeper awareness that allows responding with love, joy, compassion and equanimity. There were laughs, there were tears, but due to the safe and warm environment set out by John and Raven and the support of the group it never felt uncomfortable. I've literally seen old and painful patterns of myself being liberated and becoming freer.*

*Since the retreat I've continued to practice at home, applying it to my daily life and finding it really useful to stay connected to and clear obstacles within myself. Of course stuff still happens*



John Jackson and Raven Lee in the meditation hall at Pauenhof.



*and I still experience stressful situations, but I am able to see through them much more easily. A relative commented that I'm showing more of myself from the space of the heart. And it feels like that, that my heart warms and opens. I can only imagine what a two and a half year intensive program will do and can't wait to get started!"*

Marco, the Netherlands

*"The retreat of The 3 Doors brought me a deeper understanding of what meditation is all about. I felt a deep connection with the wisdom and space of the practice. I experienced on a deeper level what meditation can bring to me, and why it is so important for me integrate it to my everyday life. I've found the unconditional love in myself for all the people in the group and discovered a good glimpse of my true essence, feeling confidence in myself for who I really am. This is a great gift to me. The retreat brought me to this through expressing myself in the group, talking about my feelings and insights, and singing a song, which I never before thought of doing, in front of an audience. Now, back home, I feel a good foundation and natural desire to go into that Inner Refuge, because I recognize the feeling more easily.*

*I was able to experience a calmness, clearness, spaciousness and awareness of my true essence so that it seems that everything else is like an illusion. That's what I noticed back home. It was like the retreat was a big dream, but actually I experienced my true nature there. That is what touches me most of all, and what brings me a great deal of gratitude: that I was myself witness of that deep experience. And where I made a start during the retreat by liberating my own being, by getting really interesting insights into my patterns, and working with compassion. I truly wish I may benefit others. Just practicing being in that open awareness, and resting in it."*

Judith, the Netherlands

*"The practice we did during this 3 Doors retreat was familiar to me because I have been following Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's teachings for more than eight years. However, the way I connected to the practice was new, and I discovered depths in myself I have not been aware of before: first I felt a deep emotional pain, and after that I connected to space where that pain dissolved. Both of these experiences were possible because of the support of the teachers, Raven and John, and the group.*



Participants of The 3 Doors retreat: Judith, Marco and Ton.



*I got a deeper understanding of The 3 Doors, or the Three Inner Refuges. Making contact with the stillness of the body, listening to the silence of the sounds and connecting to the space, I have learned how to stop the thoughts running around in my head, and to create a distance from a situation where I feel blocked.*

*I was impressed by the effect of the Nine Breathings in clearing many blockages, and realized that I can always and everywhere inhale Sacred and Healing Space.*

*Preparing for our journey home, we were invited to reflect on how to use the insights from the retreat in daily life. I got an image that is very supportive for me: first I saw a young boy playing, then an old man resting on a couch, and after that an image came of an adult man, doing his job with confidence and joy. From my daily life I know that the young boy and the old man are not always in contact with the wider world and in the retreat I saw that the adult man also needs to be playful and needs to relax sometimes. This realization continues to be profound for me, and during the day I sometimes ask myself: Who am I (the boy, the old man or the adult)?"*

Ton, the Netherlands

## You can still register for the next European 3 Doors Academy

As a part of the Academy experience, there are six week-long group retreats that are held twice a year over a two and a half year period. For this European Academy, these group retreats will be held during the month of June in Tuscany, Italy and the month of November near Dusseldorf, Germany.

The next European Academy is scheduled to begin on June 6th, 2016. The European Academy is taught by [John Jackson](#) and [Raven Lee](#). Please apply before February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

For a complete listing of the schedule and Academy fees, visit the website: [www.the3doors.org](http://www.the3doors.org).



## Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche about The 3 Doors:

**Ton: Why did you create The 3 Doors program, and how is it evolving? I can remember you saying in Amsterdam once that students had been coming to your teachings for many years, but they did not change in their daily life.**

**TWR:** The vision for The 3 Doors is that the core essence of the Yungdrung Bon teachings is powerful and transcends cultural and religious differences. The essence is for all sentient beings, and when we communicate that essence, it deeply touches a lot of people. The Yungdrung Bon is a very rich tradition with a vast literature and depth of sophistication. That level is for many Westerners sometimes a bit difficult to understand. So we try to keep the essential aspect of the teachings on a secular level. His Holiness the Dalai Lama refers to this as *secular ethics*. Often when we have dharma teachings in the West, usually there is a huge group of people meditating together. Many people don't know one another; they lack a sense of connection to each other and particularly the relation between student and teacher is affected.

By contrast, The 3 Doors is a very close community. It is a very trusted, very connected group of people who work on a very intimate level together. They discuss their issues in life and feel supported in making changes in their own lives. This makes a great difference. Wonderful transformations have taken place in The 3 Doors Academy. More than one hundred people have been trained now, and it is going well. People who are close to those who have been in The 3 Doors training are impressed with the transformations they witness in their friends or loved ones. The family and friends of those in the Academy don't have many words for it, but they often say, "Wow." The people who have been in the program fully express their own experiences, because a core benefit of the program is to express the fruits of one's practice. And this expression often shows in people's faces, their words, and how they live their lives. But we still have a lot of work in front of us in order to expand and bring these teachings to different socioeconomic populations, and to bring the essence of the teachings to schools, hospitals, offices, and so on.



# STUDENTS OF LISHU INSTITUTE VISIT MENRI MONASTERY

Five days a week the students of the first Lishu Institute residential retreat have to study hard. In the weekend they are free and sometimes they organize a fieldtrip, in the first weekend of October they visited Menri (Medicine Mountain) Monastery. Brita Carmen Sommer reports.

We heard that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was coming to India in October, to visit His Holiness. When we heard that he would come to Lishu Institute everybody was excited. The last evening Rinpoche was with us, we asked if we could go with him to Menri Monastery, and he said YES!

For me it was so special, because I have never been in India before, and now we were going with Rinpoche to Menri Monastery.

**Saturday, October 3rd, 2015**

We had tea with His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche, we were blessed, and made a photo with him. We were presented with our



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Brita Carmen Sommer, with Menri Monastery in the background.

name and country, and there was a great elevated mood throughout the session. When we went outside and stood on top of the stairs, there was a huge golden eagle with over two meter wingspan hovering around, which came closer and closer and confirmed our ability to find the great inner spiritual freedom and space. Later, two eagles



In front of Menri Monastery, after the visit to H.H. Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche.





H.E. Menri Lupon and Brita Carmen Sommer.

were flying over the trees. A great experience.

When we visited His Eminence Menri Lupon, Jacek asked him if he would come to Lishu Institute to teach us. He said he would be happy to come in November, and we thanked him for that.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche joined us when we went to a school for orphans, located between Menri Monastery and the Nunnery. The road was insanely steep. I saw things that gave me a lot to think about. I have always worked with children, so I am familiar with the demands we meet in our Danish Institutions. But these kids, living in poor conditions, had the biggest smile. I did not take

photos, because I wanted to give my full attention to everything. We were shown around the dormitories. The smaller the child, the more stayed in one room. The biggest teenage girls had half a room and a balcony. There was a little personal stuff in the rooms because there were only two beds and a dresser. Next door to the youngest children's room, from 2 to 6 years old, lives an adult.

Then we saw the hospital room / a medical room with a single bed. It was neatly and properly outfitted and staffed by the finest small female doctor. They treated everything here, if kids were sick. If they were seriously ill, they would go to the hospital. I asked if they used oriental methods such as acupuncture? No, she looked very frightened, and showed me a lot of medicine packages with penicillin etc.

In the dining room good food was served in bowls. Tea was poured and they lifted all the cups and sang thanks for the food. We could see how happy they were. They giggled excitedly when I showed them the pictures, I had taken of them.

Down in the men's / boy's corner, it was cold and damp, and I smelled the usual Indian toilet tradition without bond and release. There was clean water outside, where they washed themselves



Boys at the school for orphans.





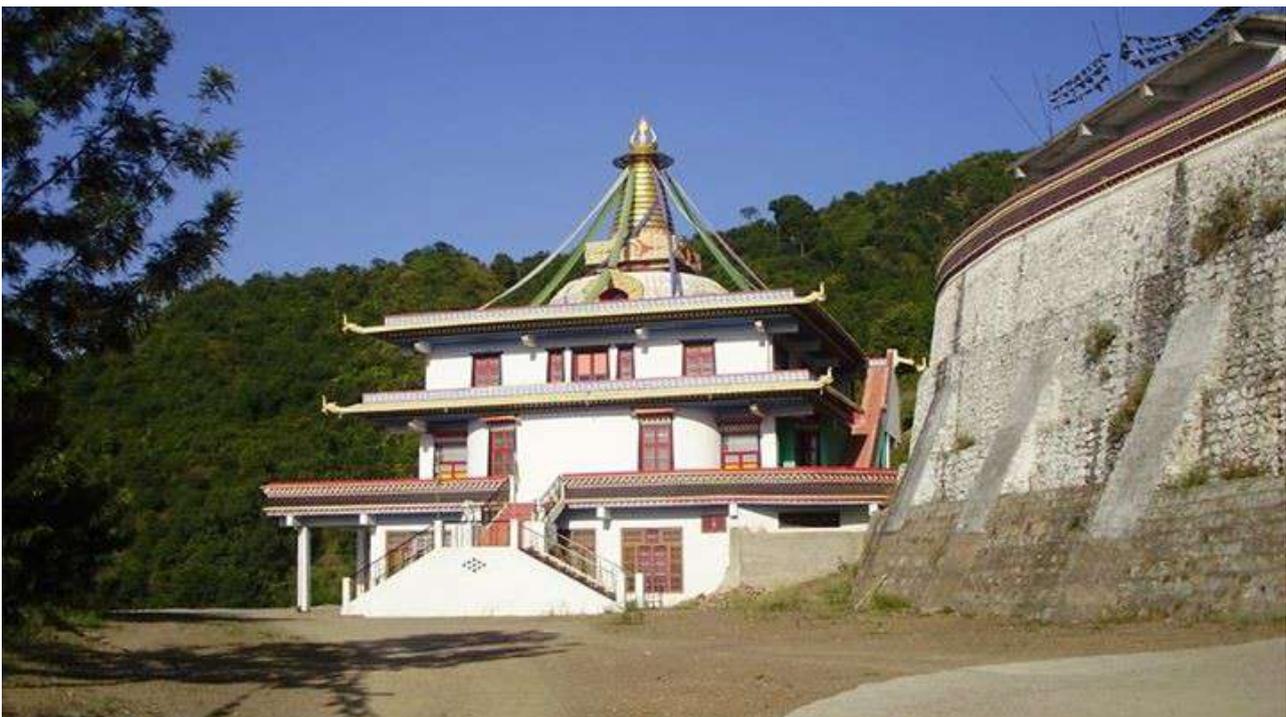
Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche turning Lopon Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche's (1917–1978) big prayer wheel.

and their clothes, and there were clean pure children in clean uniforms everywhere.

The visit to the house of the former incarnation of *Tulku* Pondse Jigme Tenzin in our group was the experience that affected us most in the trip to Menri. It was very quiet inside, and we felt *Tulkus* special connection and how it affected him.

#### **Sunday October 4th, 2015**

We visited the library and the museum of Menri Monastery, which was very interesting. There were not bookshelves as in our libraries, but book cabins with glass. I think it is because the houses are not heated, and to preserve the books better. The books are not books, as we know them, they are scriptures written on long pieces of paper one by one; not sewed together, as in ancient times. There is a museum of antiquities with fossils millions of years old, scriptures, and instruments for surgery and medicine seeds. There are old



Menri Monastery.



*Thangkas*, figures in jade and other fine stones.

Here it was so obvious, that this is not Tibet. These are the few things the Tibetan religious people could bring, when they fled over the mountains risking their lives. All their temples and sacred relics were destroyed by Mao's People's Liberation Army.

The rest of the afternoon I took photos of the buildings from Menri, so I will have a memory for life. For those I am really happy, to see a poster on a wall: Bon dialectic school; to see the monks actually in the philosophical discussions with clapping of the hands and shouting; to see the beautiful temple; be there myself, when they all were chanting the prayers we saw the wagon come in with the bread and afternoon tea; to see the four minor monks about 7-8 years old, where a little monk keeps disturbing his neighbor; and to see the patience of the others, trying to concentrate in spite of the little monk slapping him; to see the grown up monk telling the little monk patiently to behave better. I felt the energy of the chanting monks alone in a quiet place, when I unexpectedly saw them going around the corner.

Walking around among the buildings where the castle of the Bon protectors is built, after they escaped from Tibet. When Mao Zhe Dong came in

1959 with all his soldiers, ten times more than the Tibetan soldiers, and said he only wanted to be in Tibet for some years and then leave. I was thinking about their despair and effort in all these years. First all the killings of the monks and nuns and burning down all the temples, then the very dangerous escape over the cold mountains, crawling on hands and knees. When the Chinese soldiers saw them, they were, and still are, shot down cold-bloodedly. Then starting allover from zero in a new country, with a different language, different culture and different religions. They went to the hidden beautiful mountains and started building a temple, a monastery, a nunnery and school. There was a lot of work to be done. This was in great contrast with me, waking up in the morning, hearing all the beautiful birds singing, I feel I have found Shangri-La. If we are going to save the world, it will start from here, if we can preserve Menri Monastery and the teachings of our dear masters, we will save this beautiful planet. I wish that you at least one time in your life will go to these mountains and see this peaceful valley.

When you are interested in this exceptionally valuable learning program, go to [www.lishu.org](http://www.lishu.org).

**Text by Brita Carmen Sommer**

Photos by Daniela Zago and Brita Carmen Sommer



The Valley of the Menri Monastery.



# OPPOSITES COEXIST

**We want to share inspiring texts from other Buddhist streams and religions. Marlies Cober-Philippens has chosen this text from the book *Start Where You Are*, by Pema Chödrön, because “Pema Chödrön is able to explain to me the *dharma* very clear and simple, and at the same time she is telling me how to be human. To realize again and again that it is all like one taste, all coming from the Buddha within, reminds me to be open and aware.”**

“Good and bad, happy and sad, all thoughts vanish into emptiness like the imprint of a bird in the sky.”

This is as close as you could come to describing what it means to be a child of illusion. That's the key point: this good and bad, happy and sad, can be allowed to dissolve into emptiness like the imprint of a bird in the sky.

The practice and the view are supports, but the real thing — the experience of sound being like an echo of emptiness or everything you see being vividly unreal — dawns on you, like waking up out of an ancient sleep. There's no way you can force it or fake it. The view and the practice are there to be experienced with a light touch, not to be taken as dogma.

We have to listen to these slogans, chew on them, and wonder about them. We have to find out for ourselves what they mean. They are like challenges rather than statements of fact. If we let them, they will lead us toward the fact that facts themselves are very dubious. We can be a child of illusion through our waking and sleeping existence; through our birth and our death, we can continually remain as a child of illusion.

Being a child of illusion also has to do with beginning to encourage yourself not to be a walking battleground. We have such strong feelings of good and evil, right and wrong. We also feel that parts of ourselves are bad or evil and parts of ourselves are good and wholesome. All these pairs of opposites — happy and sad, victory and defeat, loss and gain — are at war with each other.

The truth is that good and bad coexist; sour and

sweet coexist. They aren't really opposed to each other. We could start to open our eyes and our hearts to that deep way of perceiving, like moving into a whole new dimension of experience: becoming a child of illusion.

Maybe you've heard that the Buddha is not out there; the Buddha is within. The Buddha within is bad and good coexisting, evil and purity coexisting; the Buddha within is not just all the nice stuff. The Buddha within is messy as well as clean. The Buddha within is really sordid as well as wholesome — yucky, smelly, repulsive as well as the opposite: they coexist.

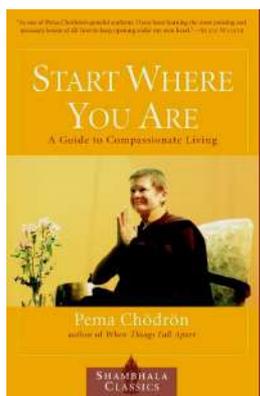
This view is not easy to grasp, but it's helpful to hear. At the everyday kitchen-sink level, it simply means that as you see things in yourself that you think are terrible and not worthy, maybe you could reflect that that's Buddha. You're proud of yourself because you just had a good meditation or because you're having such saintly thoughts. That's Buddha too. (...) They aren't at war with each other.

In meditation practice we struggle a lot with trying to get rid of certain things, while other things come to the front. In order for the world to speak for itself, we first have to see how hard we struggle, and then we could begin to open our hearts and minds to that fact. The view and the meditation (...) are meant to support a softer, more gentle approach to the whole show, the whole catastrophe. We begin to let opposites

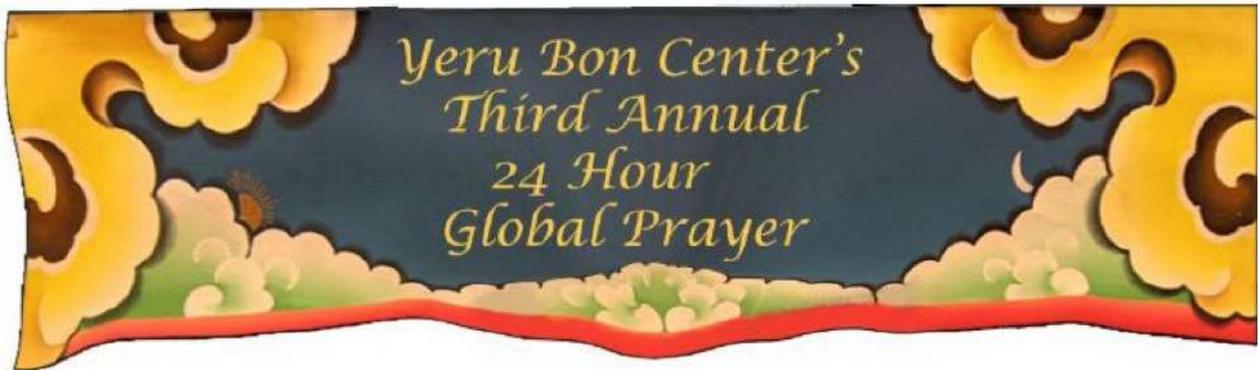
coexist, not trying to get rid of anything but just training and opening our eyes, ears, nostrils, taste buds, hearts, and minds wider and wider, nurturing the habit of opening to whatever is occurring, including our shutting down.

We generally interpret the world so heavily in terms of good and bad, happy and sad, nice and not nice that the world doesn't get a chance to speak for itself. When we say, “Be a child of illusion,” we're beginning to get at this fresh way of looking when we're not caught in our hope and fear. We become mindful, awake, and gentle with our hope and fear. We see them clearly with less bias, less judgment, less sense of a heavy trip. When this happens, the world will speak for itself.

**Text selected by Marlies Cober-Philippens**



# THIRD BON'S 24 HOUR GLOBAL PRAYER



## **The Harmony of Pray, The Sound of Meditation, the Peace of Bon**

**February 13, 2016**

Hard to believe it has been three years since our first 24 hour global prayer event.

Yeru Bon Center and Latri Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche invite Bon practitioners and friends of Bon to participate in our third annual Global Prayer and Meditation event. Last year's participation was well over 2000 people from all over the world. Majority were Bonpos, but we had soldiers and non Bonpos praying throughout the world. We received letters, photos and more from people around the world participating in this incredible event.

This year's global prayer event will be February 13, 2015, The birthday anniversary of Nyamed Shenrab Gyaltsen, the founder of Menri Monastery, the main monastery of Bon.

On this auspicious day, every prayer we pray is multiplied by 100.000. On that day, we ask all practitioners to pray and meditate for a minimum of one hour anytime between 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. within their time zones. Gather as a sangha, by your self, in a private place or public.

This year, there will be a release of a special prayer from Rinpoche and Menri Monastery to all registered participants.

So this is how it works: Our global prayer/meditation event will begin at Menri Monastery in India. His Holiness, Monks and Bon practitioners in that time zone will begin the global prayer event at 7:00 p.m. Prayers and meditation will continue with the next time zone, (going West), until our prayers have gone full circle around the world.

There is no fee for this event. We ask only that you register your participation and time zone by February 11, 2016. After you have registered your name or group name, Yeru Bon Center will send the list of participants to His Holiness at Menri Monastery. A special blessing will be given to all participants.

During your event, please feel free to post photos or messages of your gathering or meditation on Facebook or Twitter, so everyone participating around the world can see you and your group gather, uniting all Bon practitioners for this spectacular 24 hour global event. Participation in all time zones will keep the bond strong and going.

**REGISTER**



**Event**

**page  
19**

# THE FIVE STAR RETREAT CABINS IN COLORADO

To introduce Chamma Ling Colorado we interviewed John Jackson. Chamma Ling Colorado is different from the other Ligmincha sanghas we have introduced so far, because it exists in order to provide solitary retreat cabins for practitioners in the Bon tradition, as well as meditators of other spiritual traditions.

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

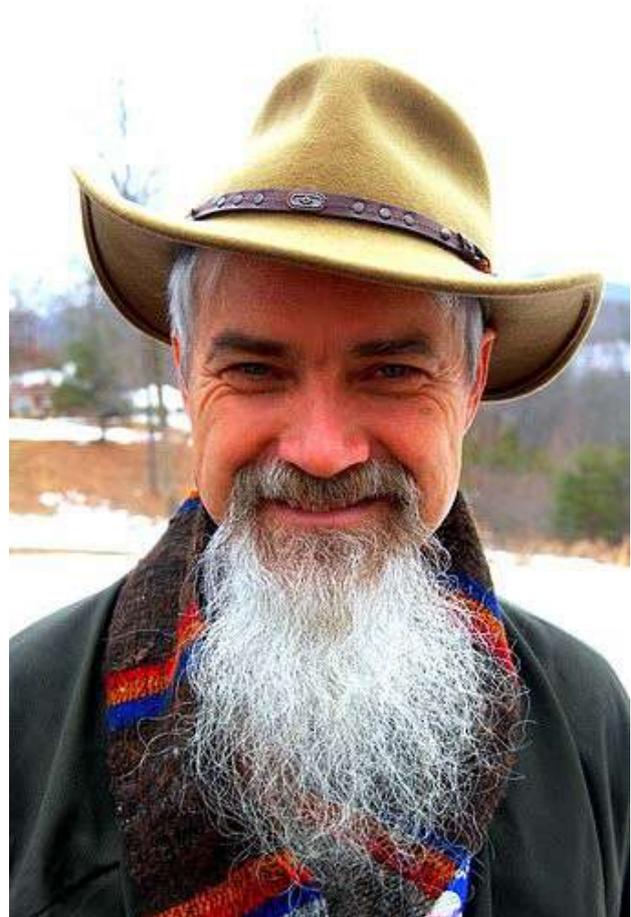
**John:** I met Rinpoche in 1992 when he was leading a retreat on *Sleep Yoga* in Richmond, Virginia, US. My wife and I were already associated with a Tibetan Buddhist center in the town where we live, about an hour drive from Richmond, and wanted to hear this new teacher in the area. When we went to the teachings, there were about fifteen to twenty people in someone's house. After an hour of teaching, during the break, we went outside for fresh air. There Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche walked up to my wife and I and said, "I've heard that you are from Charlottesville." And after we said "Yes," Rinpoche continued "I want to set up a center there. Will you help me find a place?" That was our first conversation, and a few months later we helped him move to Charlottesville, and establish Ligmincha Institute.

**Ton: Were you surprised by that question?**

**John:** Yes, it was a bit surprising. There were some people helping Rinpoche in Richmond, but they were more connected to Namkai Norbu Rinpoche. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was looking for a place to settle and create his first center. Before we met, he had already been looking around Charlottesville, and he had already come to the decision to create a center somewhere near there. We just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

**Jantien: Was there a practice group in Charlottesville at that time?**

**John:** No, at that time there was no sangha in Charlottesville. Initially we rented the upper floor of a house with three bedrooms. One bedroom was Rinpoche's bedroom, another was the office of Ligmincha, and the third bedroom was the library of Ligmincha. We used the living room as a



John Jackson, Managing Director Chamma Ling Colorado.

practice space. A few months after he moved there we organized the first Summer Retreat. For the next seven or eight years Rinpoche invited his teachers, His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche and His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, to come and teach every year during a three week Summer Retreat.

**Jantien: How have you been involved in Ligmincha and Chamma Ling Colorado?**

**John:** For the first few years I served as Vice-President of Ligmincha, while Rinpoche was President. In the early years my wife and I took the major responsibility for the organizational work, and there were a number of people helping. Between my job at the University and volunteering with Ligmincha, I took on more than I could do. I needed a break, and talked to Rinpoche about a reorganization, and spreading the responsibilities among more people, and I stepped back from being the main organizer, but continued to be on the Board for a couple more years. Then my



wife and I went for a six-month retreat in India and Nepal, I stepped back from the Board, and Gabriel Rocco took my position on the Board.

A few years later a friend, John P. Milton, came to the Summer Retreat at Serenity Ridge and stayed at my home. John is a meditation teacher, who studied with Dudjom Rinpoche and other great masters. He lived in Nepal for many years and served as the first White House staff ecologist in the seventies. He founded an organization called *Sacred Passage*, and also served on the Board of Directors of the Manitou Foundation in Colorado, which had land to donate to spiritual organizations who would establish retreat centers. John encouraged us to apply for a grant from the Manitou Foundation, so Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and I talked with him several times about it in 2000. At that time Rinpoche was not sure if he wanted to do this, because a few years earlier we had purchased Serenity Ridge in Virginia. Rinpoche did not want to start too many projects at the same time, because money is always a challenge when you are getting started. Finally he agreed to do it, but he said he did not want it to compete with Serenity Ridge. He wanted me to be the Director, and wanted me to focus on the Western half of the United States to try to attract people to this area and create a new organization in Colorado. It was quite a challenge to start something completely new with no existing sangha and no donors, but we managed to do it. Through the grant from the Manitou Foundation we got about twenty-two hectares of land, and we created a new organization, called Chamma Ling Colorado.

The land is very challenging in terms of creating buildings, because the mountains are quite steep. We have a parking place near the public road, but then you have to walk up to get to the cabins and the community house. The steep terrain increases our costs

for construction and maintenance as we can only use very small vehicles to bring materials up the mountain. The areas where we plan to build more cabins in the future are much more remote, so we may have to bring in materials by helicopter.

**Ton: What kind of people come for retreats to Chamma Ling Colorado?**

**John:** People come from all over the world, and a fair number comes from Europe. In Chamma Ling Colorado we have three different groups of people who come.

The first group are people who come for solitary retreat. Before they come, they file an application which we review and approve. They describe what kind of training they have had, what their retreat plan is, and how they will practice on a daily basis. We ask all this for we are not here to provide people with just a nice place for a holiday. We also want to make sure that people are stable enough to practice by themselves. The minimum stay is one week, and retreatants may stay as long as six months or even longer. We have the rental rates set up so it becomes less expensive the longer you stay. This way we try to support people in long retreats and in dark retreats. All of our cabins are designed so that we can seal the windows for dark retreat, or keep them open for any



Chamma Ling Community House.





Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaching at rented center near Chamma Ling Colorado.

other type of retreat.

The second group of people who come are those who attend the annual retreats with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. He comes once a year in September for three days. Usually about seventy to one-hundred people come for Rinpoche's teachings, from all across the United States. We usually rent a big meditation hall from one of the centers nearby, and typically we have a follow up retreat, led by another teacher. In 2015 Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught *Living with Joy, Dying in Peace*, followed by Alejandro Chaoul leading a three day retreat for caregivers – people working in hospitals or hospices, or taking care of their parents in their last phase of life. It was very much focused on how to help other people in the dying process with their own fears and challenges.

In 2016 we plan to have our annual retreat with

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Boulder, Colorado, at Naropa University, which was founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in the seventies. Naropa University was the first Buddhist university established in North America. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will be teaching on *The Essence of the Seven Mirrors of Dzogchen*. We expect this is going to be a big event, because the last time he gave a public talk in Boulder we had to turn people away due to overcrowding. In 2016 we will have a follow up retreat with Geshe Tenzin Yangton, the resident lama at Serenity Ridge, and he will teach *Phowa*. After the teachings, people will have a chance to practice in a five-day residential retreat where you actually do the *Phowa*, and try to get the experience of how you can take the consciousness out of the body at the time of death.

The third group of people are those that come to



Sang Chod at Chamma Ling Colorado.





Setting sun at Chamma Ling Colorado.

Chamma Ling for smaller group retreats led by a visiting lama or Western senior teacher. These retreats are held in our community house on our property, that can accommodate up to about twenty-five people. We had several lamas who have taught in the past. Geshe Nyima Kunchap, one of the most senior teachers from Nepal, taught on the *Red Garuda* fire ritual recently. We have also had Geshe Nyima Gyaltzen teach, and he plans to come again in 2016 to teach a series of retreats on *Soul Retrieval*. These small group retreats are intimate and last up to a week, and people can stay in one of the cabins or in the camping area in their tents. For the people who camp, we provide showers in the community house.

**Ton: Why do people come to Chamma Ling Colorado?**

**John:** The environment here is very unique and there is a wonderful presence to the land. The valley which stretches out below Chamma Ling is about 2.500 meters, and the mountains rise to about 4.300 meters above sea level directly above our cabins. The climate is very dry, with about

twenty cm rain over the whole year. You have a huge view where you can see for a hundred kilometers when you're sitting in the cabins, looking over the valley. It is very spacious. The land was a sacred meeting place for the Native Americans for thousands of years, and there are still many stone meditation seats and stone circles, which were created by the Indians, all over the Chamma Ling land and the adjoining land owned by the neighboring centers. Many Tibetan teachers who have come there have remarked the area looks and feels like Tibet.

There is also a unique cultural aspect: in a village of only seven hundred people there are twenty-three spiritual centers and retreat centers. To the one side of Chamma Ling is a Bhutanese Nyingma center named Yeshe Khorlo. They were one of the first retreat centers established in Crestone. On the other side is the Haidakhandi Universal Ashram, from the Indian Hindu tradition. Next to them is the Crestone Zen Center founded by Baker Roshi. Next to them is Vajra Vidya Retreat Center from the Tibetan Kagyu tradition. It was the mission of the founders of the Manitou Foun-



Stupa at Chamma Ling Colorado.





One of the cabins from the outside,



and one from the inside.

dation, which donated land to most of these centers, to have a place where many spiritual traditions are drawn together so there may be a dialogue between the traditions, and they may all support their retreat traditions. *The Crestone Spiritual Alliance* is a community organization where all the spiritual centers come together and discuss their shared interests. Each year they have a conference for the public where the representatives of these organizations share about their tradition and practices. There is also a walking pilgrimage tour of many of the centers, called the Camino de Crestone.

And last but not least, the cabins are very nice facilities, which Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche refers to as our Five Star Retreat Cabins. All the cabins use passive solar designs and very energy efficient. We had a number of other teachers from other traditions who have chosen them for their personal retreats, like Pema Chödrön and Reginald A. Ray, both teachers from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's tradition, as well as teachers from Namkhai Norbu's organization.

All the cabins are designed to support any kind of retreat, including dark retreat. They have windows, which can be sealed and a special ventilation system, to provide fresh air. There is a special pass through door in the wall, where a retreat attendant can deliver meals to someone in dark retreat. There are only a few places on the world designed for dark retreats. We rent this facility to anyone, not only to our sangha, but to people from any spiritual tradition. Last year Pema Dorje Rinpoche, a Nyingma master from Nepal, brought several of his students from Switzerland, to do dark retreat under his guidance and supervision. They chose to travel all the way from Europe as a group to do their dark retreats at Chamma Ling

Colorado.

**Ton: Can you tell about the structure of Chamma Ling Colorado?**

**John:** We have a Board of Directors who set the vision and high level policy. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is the President, I am the Managing Director, and Margaret Freund rounds out the board. The expertise of Margaret is that she is a real estate developer, and does business in Colorado and Virginia. She has managed the design and construction of all the facilities.

Further we have a Council with ten people on it, and they are responsible for manifesting all the activities, like coordinating our annual fund raising auction, marketing and communications, production and distribution of recordings and transcripts, treasurer and many more tasks. Three of the Council Members oversee and share the responsibility of the operation of the retreat cabins.

We have four cabins and our community house which are in operation for 365 days a year. For much of the day to day work – like preparing meals for the people doing dark retreats, and cleaning the cabins – we hire a select group of people from the local community.

**Jantien: How big is your sangha?**

**John:** Our sangha does not have a membership, so it is hard to give an exact number. During Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's annual retreat about seventy to one-hundred people from the entire region come, and that is very remote: it is ninety kilometers to the first traffic light. Many people who consider themselves as member of the sangha live four or more hours away. The way people think of distances is very different from Europe compared to this part of the United States. In the village of



Crestone there might be about a dozen people from our sangha, but the reach of the organization is quite large, because of the way people travel and are spread out in this part of the country.

**Ton: Are you connected to the other sanghas in the United States?**

**John:** Yes, of course. Many people who are involved with Chamma Ling Colorado are actually from other parts of the country. For instance Raven Lee serves on the Council, and she lives in Los Angeles and is also involved in the council of Ligmincha of California. There are people from California who come regularly to our events, as well as the sangha in the Pacific North West. Recently Macy Vaughn and Gabriel Rocco led a retreat for the graduates of the The 3 Doors Academy at Chamma Ling, and people from all over US came. I live in Virginia, right next to Serenity Ridge, so I am in constant communication and collaboration with Ligmincha International. When we have a big event, the bookshop of Serenity Ridge ships us all kinds of books and practice materials, for we don't maintain our own bookstore.

**Ton: You are the Managing Director of Chamma Ling Colorado. How much time do you spend there?**

**John:** I go there a couple of times a year, always at Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's retreat, and usually one other time. The people on the Council live in California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Virginia

and Washington. We do most of our business by phone and email, and physically meet as a group once a year.

**Jantien: Do you have a message for the European sangha?**

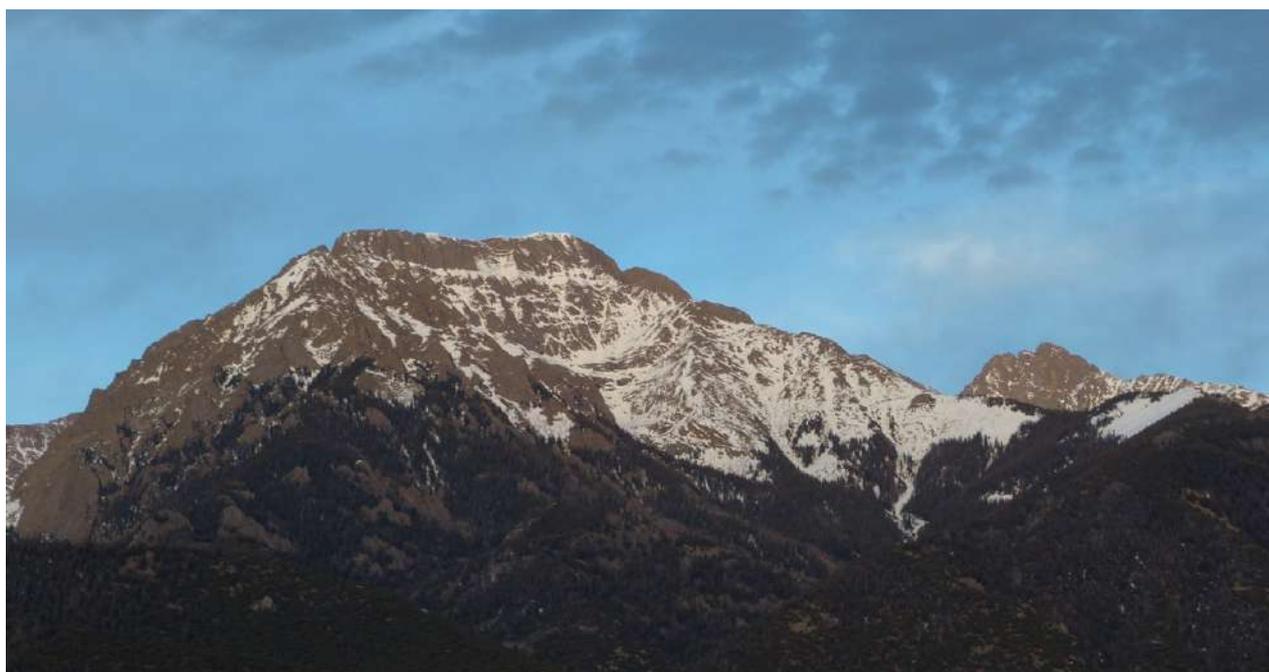
**John:** We welcome people coming from Europe, and will be happy to support them when they would like to enjoy a personal retreat. You can fly directly from several cities in Europe to Denver, Colorado, and it is easy to get from Denver airport to Chamma Ling Colorado. Please consider our center when you are ready to enjoy a powerful solitary retreat experience.

**Interview by Jantien Spindler and Ton Bisscheroix**

Photos: courtesy of John Jackson



Small group retreat with Alejandro Chaoul at Chamma Ling Colorado.



Crestone Mountains.



# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN EUROPE

Here is our report from what's been happening in the European sangha. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche gave Internet teachings, Geshe and senior teachers were invited by sanghas, and Chamma Ling Poland received the Bon canon of sacred Bon texts.



## November 27:

To a public talk on *Dream Yoga* in Slovakia, with Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang Rinpoche, about fifty people came. It was a wonderful evening with many new participants, and we

were amazed by the number and the enthusiasm.



## November 28-29:

Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang Rinpoche taught *Yeshe Walmo* in Vienna, Austria. It was great to know the background information when we went through the *Invocation of Yeshe Walmo*.



Geshe-la translated every word and explained them, and we learned how to perform the ritual. There were twenty-nine participants from Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.





**November 27-29:**

In Berlin, Germany, we invited Wolfgang Krebs to guide the practice of *the 21 Nails*, the teachings of the last Summer Retreat in Buchenau.



**November 19-22:**

Khenpo Geshe Gelek Jinpa visited Helsinki, Finland, to continue his Dzogchen *Ngondro* teachings from *Zhang Zhung Nyan Gyud*. His warm hearted teaching touched us all and encouraged us to turn our attitude towards more compassion. It is a rare opportunity in Finland to enjoy these teachings, and therefore they are greatly appreciated.



**November 21-22:**

Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltzen taught in the Netherlands in two places on *A-tri*. On Saturday, in Zwolle, about fifteen and on Sunday, in Eindhoven, about twenty-five people attended.





**In the late summer of 2015** the Bon canon of sacred texts, the *Kanjur*, reached Chamma Ling Poland. This is a very big step towards the development of our Sangha and validity of this place. Now we are trying to

bring also the *Tanjur*. It will be a complement to our prayers, many years of joint efforts and practices.

**We invite everyone to support our action to bring the Tibetan texts to Poland.**

The canon of Tibetan Bon teachings tradition is more than three hundred volumes of writings. It is divided into two parts: the first *Kanjur* (or *Kangyur*) are the teachings of the founder of our tradition, Tonpa Shenrab; the second *Tanjur* (or *Tengyur*) are comments to these teachings.

In the Tibetan tradition texts they are considered as the core of the spiritual path. That is why it is so important to possess, use and preserve them for future generations.

Having a complete set of writings in our *Gompa* is an extraordinary opportunity, to show our commitment and devotion to the teachings. Their presence at the Wilga Chamma Ling will also have a special, energetic impact on our practice and our actions. Only in a few exceptional places in the world, the full canon of the Bon tradition is present.

We have prepared a special thanks to everybody who contributes in this unique project and how you will be commemorated. You can read more about the thanks, acknowledgements, and how to transfer money at: [www.ligmincha.pl](http://www.ligmincha.pl).





**Free Live Webcast**  
**The Power of Warmth:  
 Physical Healing Through Meditation**  
 with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche  
**November 14, 2015 21.00–22.30 (C.E.T.)**

Register for the webcast at [www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org)  
 This is Part 10 of a FREE yearlong course in soul retrieval.  
 Learn more at [www.ligminchalearning.com](http://www.ligminchalearning.com)



**You can watch the recordings here:**

The True Source of Healing, Part 10 — The Power of Warmth: Physical Healing Through Meditation. [Introductory Video \(2:52\)](#) / [Full Playlist](#)



**Free Full-Day Live Webcast**  
**Healing from the Source:  
 Cutting the Root of Your Pain**  
 with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche  
**December 12, 2015 15.00–22.30 h. (C.E.T.)**

Register for the webcast at [www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org)  
 This is Part 11 of a FREE yearlong course in soul retrieval.  
 Learn more at [www.ligminchalearning.com](http://www.ligminchalearning.com)



**You can watch the recordings here:**

- [Cutting the Root of Your Pain, Session 1 — Practice](#)
- [Cutting the Root of Your Pain, Session 1 — Teaching](#)
- [Cutting the Root of Your Pain, Session 2 — Practice with Alejandro Chaoul](#)
- [Cutting the Root of Your Pain, Session 3 — Practice](#)
- [Cutting the Root of Your Pain, Session 4 — Practice with Alejandro Chaoul](#)



**Free Live Webcast**  
**Guided Meditation for the New Year**  
 From the Experiential Transmission Retreat  
 with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche  
**January 1, 2016 17.00 – 18.00 h (C.E.T.)**

Translations in multiple languages available  
[www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org)



**You can watch the recordings here:**

[Guided Meditation for the New Year From the Experiential Transmission Retreat](#)



# SPEAK LESS, READ LESS, PRACTICE MORE

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 second retreat. You can read his first contribution in [Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 15](#) on page 33-34.

Shenten Dargye Ling, a Bon monastery in Blou, France, established a meditation school in 2008 to offer practitioners an opportunity for in-depth study and practice of Dzogchen texts. Under the guidance of a Bon lama, these retreats, called *gomdras*, meet seventy days for four consecutive years. The second year of the current *gomdra* cycle which began in November 2014, focusing on the Bon text, *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud*, was held September 3 – November 11, 2015. There were twenty-seven participants. This is a diary of my experiences at this *gomdra*.

Change is the nature of the universe and so was it at this year's *gomdra*. Instead of one teacher, there were four teachers, with hours of outdoor practice with very changeable weather, with a lovely new wooden floor in the *gompa*, with wonderful salads from the Shenten gardens and a variety of interesting visitors to the Shenten grounds. H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche held a series of live streaming teachings during the *gomdra*, a first for Shenten, and fourteen of us witnessed the glories of a lunar eclipse at 3:30 am on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. All were frequent reminders of the preciousness of our lives and how rapidly it was passing. It held us together as a group.

This retreat was not silent. Some participants chose that option. Three participants from the previous year did not return. They were replaced by participants from an earlier *gomdra* cycle. One participant left for a family emergency and did not return. One free day a week was available for contact with the outside world.

The daily schedule, similar to the parent monastery, Triten Norbutse Monastery, remained the same. Morning chants began at 7:00 am and evening chants finished the day at 9:30 pm. There



H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.

were five hours of meditation, a two hour dharma lecture, and two hours of community work. Lights were out at 10:00 pm. Most participants locked their doors this year. I did not.

One of the Shenten lamas was always with us; leading the chants, guiding the meditation sessions, and teaching from the texts. Tibetan and French language classes met several times a week. On Tuesday mornings, Yongdzin Rinpoche gave the text teachings. With great clarity, compassion, and humor, he revealed to us the essence of the Dzogchen teachings. At 89, he continues to be an inspiration to everyone's practice. On his daily afternoon walks, he was always willing to answer our many questions with clear and direct guidance.

This *gomdra* focused on the Dzogchen teaching and practices of *trekchö* and *thögal* based on the first chapters of the *Ngözhi* text of the *Chaktri*, from the practice manual of Dru Gyalwa Yungdrung. These nature of mind meditation practices were taught along with various body postures, including *trul khor* and *tsa lung*, eye gazes, and breathing techniques to enhance clarity and bring stability into one's practice. Meditation practice was held indoors as open space, or as a dark retreat with blindfolds, or outdoors with sky gazing and sunlight practices. *Dream Yoga* and *Sleep Yoga* was done in one's room.

Dzogchen is a nature of mind meditation. Different from *sutra* or *tantra* meditation, one does not concentrate on an object or a deity visualization. Rather one's focus is an open space with unification of emptiness and clarity. With no grasping of anything; one is freed of conceptual thoughts and



emotions. No need to move, speak or think.

The nature of mind is the unification of emptiness and clarity, as the Bon texts specify; it is naked, it has never been covered, and unspeakable, not able to be spoken about, and indescribable, not able to explain in word or thought. It's not mental process but an experience. Think of trying to describe the taste of salt to someone who has never tasted it. Through the various Dzogchen practices we experience the awareness and clarity of our mind; thinking is not required.

With daily practice the mind slowly settles. No longer attracted to thoughts or emotions, the mind opens to the energy of awareness. No substance, no reference, no this or that, no subject, no object; just pure awareness. Thoughts and emotions do continue to arise but quickly liberate out of our consciousness into the nature of mind.

Slowly one's way of seeing begin to change, in subtle ways we sometimes cannot always detect. But the effect is still there. Nothing gets lost. With fewer thoughts, it is no longer as easy to be obscured and the mind slowly reveals a clear unbounded state. As your practice stabilizes, the experience of basic nature of mind becomes familiar, like an old friend. Without thoughts and emotions, rootless, we could say, without the obscurations or delusions, one experiences the clarity of open presence.

Awareness is not thinking. It is spontaneous clarity. Not boring, it's rather exciting and liberating. It is your nature of mind. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the *Ngondro*, the preliminary practices, for the experience of the accumulations in purifying the mind. Realization is gained through experience not by thought. It is liberation from our conceptual thinking. You view the world in a different perspective.

Devotion, inspiration, and refuge in the Buddha's teachings are essential. One should never underestimate the power of them. The awakened awareness of our actions; whether thought, speech, or action, is no longer obscured. Daily practice, along with the prayers and blessings of our teachers and lineage masters, awaken within us great reserves of energy and joy. It is our refuge. It will lead us to our eventual freedom from the pain and suffering of samsara. Samsara is just

a thought.

While we abide in the nature of mind; visions, lights, rays and sounds, develop. They are reflections from the nature of mind of our experience and practice. Called *trekchö*, the inner practice, and connected to the *thögal* visions, they are the result of the practitioner's integration with the nature of mind. This leads one to the clear light meditation practice. The speed of this development, of course, depends upon the practitioner's realization and stability.

All these practices connect with the *Phowa* practice, the transfer of consciousness at the time of death, when body and mind disconnect and our mind enters the *bardo*. With the body gone, the mind is left alone with a lifetime of thoughts and sense consciousness. Soon the visions of sounds, lights, and rays begin to appear. During this time, if we have stabilized our practice, the awareness of our mind integrates with the nature of mind. We realize these visions are arising from us, not from an external source. They are empty forms, like *thögal* visions. We have remembered the teachings we have received, practiced, and all is liberated into the natural state.

While in the *bardo* we are already in the natural state, so it is important not to become distracted by the visions. It may not be possible for one to achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime, so this practice of remaining in the natural state becomes essential. While in the *bardo* there will be no books or pieces of paper to help you.

The nature of mind will never leave you. It's your nature that cannot be separated from you. It is always there; the source of everything. All beings with consciousness have it. It is spacious, changeless, and limitless. No actions are needed but to experience it. No thinking is required, just relax and open to it. Once you have realized it, it must be practiced. Without practice it cannot help you. It is your path to Buddhahood.

**Text by Lowell Britson**

**Lowell Britson is a senior student of H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US.**



# UNBLOCKING YOUR CREATIVE POTENTIAL



*“Creativity can be seen as a state of natural flow, one that spontaneously and effortlessly gives birth not only to manifest form, but to all experiences of body, energy, and mind. This state of flow, which has its roots in openness, occurs only in the absence of hope and fear. It is at once naturally joyful, peaceful, compassionate, expansive, and powerful.”*

*“When you know how to tap fully into this open, creative flow, its beneficial qualities can extend to any area of your life. You can paint more masterful paintings. Your music can have more depth of connection. Your writing can be more genuine and moving. You will be able to solve problems at work, resolve conflicts with loved ones, or even shift your thought patterns with more natural spontaneity.”*

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche,  
*The Great Perfection of Creativity*, Shambhala Sun Magazine, November 2012.

~

Join us for this opportunity to free yourself from creative obstacles, nurture your capacity for joyful self-expression, and make positive changes in your life.

This retreat is for anyone who wants to explore how inspiration takes form and expression in your life — whether through creative problem solving at work, in resolving conflict in personal relationships, or in bringing your relationship to an art form to a new level.

The Tibetan spiritual traditions tell us that unleashing our dynamic creative energy is a matter of recognizing and tapping into the wellspring of creativity that already exists in us. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will instruct and guide simple meditation practices of body, speech, and mind that can help you to:

- recognize and clear physical, energetic, and mental obstacles blocking your creative flow,
- connect with and trust in your innate creative potential,
- discover the inner strength and confidence to bring your inspiration to full expression.

Public Talk and Seminar will be held in English with German translation.

**Public Talk:** Friday, May 6th, 2016 | 19.00 – 21.00 h |

€ 15 / reduced € 10

**Seminar:** Saturday, May 7th, 2016 | 10.00 – 18.00 h | Sunday, May 8th, 2016 | 9.00 h – 16.00 h |

€ 160 / reduced € 120 (incl. public talk)

**Early bird:** € 140 / reduced € 100, payment necessary till March 1st, 2016

**Location:** Ufabrik, Viktoriastraße 10-18, 12105 Berlin, Germany | U6 Ullsteinstraße



# THE SOUL RETRIEVAL HAS COMPLETED ME

**So beautiful that I have the opportunity to live  
More beautiful that I learned to forgive  
It's nice to have the courage of a rock  
Fall down and roll over to stand up  
I look inside and know who I really am  
No need to compare or to grow  
If I truly see the beauty of me  
And go on with living I finally see  
I no longer need to forgive  
Taking life as it is  
I laugh and I cry  
Without wondering why  
My needs are more less and less  
Now I trust instead of guess  
The Soul Retrieval has completed me**

***Astrid Keesen - Sulovari***



# COME ALONG, COME ALONG!

**I'm cycling, 'cause I'm Dutch.  
There are people and they watch.  
While cycling, while walking,  
while thinking, while talking.**

***In sunshine, in rain and in dust.  
Come along, come along,  
and sing with me that song!***

**The world is in a rush,  
And people need a hush.  
From pain, they are bleeding,  
From menace they are fleeing.**



***From war, from danger and distrust.  
Come along, come along,  
and sing with me that song!***

**Connecting with the heart  
in space we're not apart.  
In openness and warmth,  
the world can be transformed.**

***In empathy, in wisdom and in trust.  
Come along, come along,  
and sing with me that song!***

**Tonny Maas**



# BEST WISHES



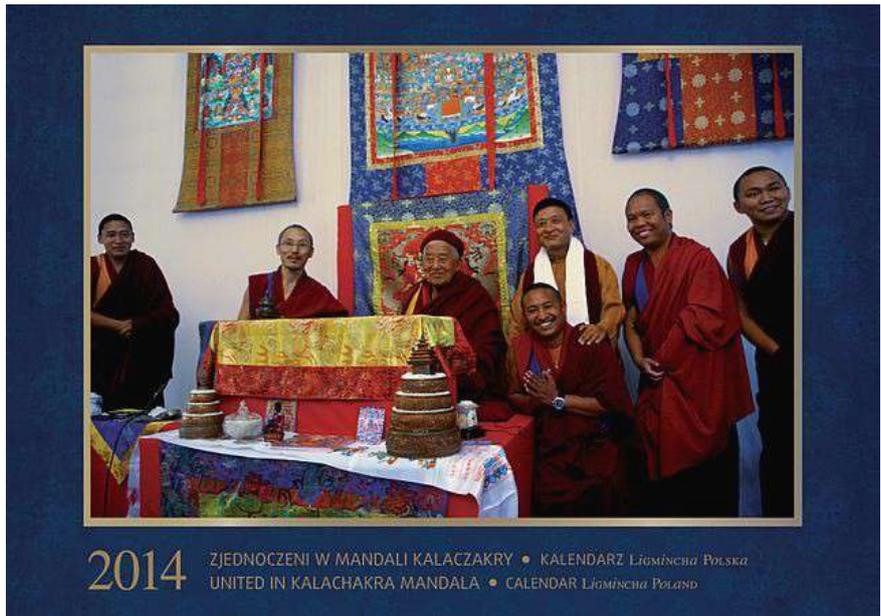
Created by Bridget de Claire



# CALENDARS FOR 2016

Dear Practitioners, Supporters and Friends,

As each year, Ligmincha Poland is preparing a calendar. The topic of the 2016 calendar will cover holidays and ceremonies of the Bon tradition. As usual, special days will be included according to the calendar prepared in the monastery, listing holidays and days particularly important for practitioners. Such days are determined on the basis of an oracle and astrological calculations and can only be known later, closer to the Losar. This is why our calendar will cover the Tibetan year from February 2016 to February 2017. The ordering and dispatch information will soon be available in Polish and in English at [www.ligmincha.pl](http://www.ligmincha.pl).



Cover of the Polish calendar of 2014.

We encourage all our friends and supporters to buy the calendar. The price of the calendar will be € 15 plus shipping costs (about € 2 or € 3).

## Calendar 2016



Lama Khyenno

This calendar for 2016 is designed by Bridget de Claire. She is a student of H.E. Lopon Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

You can download the calendar as PDF from the website [www.scribd.com/Bon-Calendar-2016](http://www.scribd.com/Bon-Calendar-2016), and make a donation to support the work of H.E. Lopon Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche:

Yungdrung Bön-Stiftung  
Deutsche Ärzte- und Apothekerbank  
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or use the PayPal Button on the Website:  
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**January 2016**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 🌸
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24 ☺
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



# HELPING TO DIE

In 2001 H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche gave a teaching of *Gyalwa'i-Chagri* in Austria. In 2010 a transcript was published by *Éditions Shenten Dargye Ling*. We reprint the pages 7-11.

## Preface

This practice manual completes the *Gyalwa'i-Chagri Teaching* that Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche gave in Waldzell, Austria in the year 2001. The introductory questions and answers were part of that Teaching.

During the two weeks of the Teaching many questions were asked about how to help friends, relatives or patients, practitioners and non-practitioners, during their transition from life to death. Rinpoche kindly referred to the basic practices briefly and later explained more for publication and distribution among practitioners. He also approved of the publication of the Thoedrol-text for the same purpose.

May this precious Teaching help to release the suffering of many of us!

(...)

Duluth, July 2009  
Waltraud Benzing

## Helping To Die

A question about the state of unconsciousness immediately after death:

*Q: How long, from the point of view of human time, does the state of unconsciousness immediately after death last?*

Rinpoche answers: How long this lasts depends completely on the individual person. It is not limited.

A question about helping during that period:

*Q: What can we do to help during that period?*

Rinpoche answers:

1.) The advanced practitioner

An advanced practitioner keeps in the Natural state, in meditation, continuously. The best thing for him is to keep this, so we leave him without touch from before dying until quite some time after the sign comes. Without anything, you must not disturb, leave as it is.

The purpose of this is very important: if you touch or do something, it disturbs him, keeps him from staying in meditation continuously. He is still in meditation, even after the sign comes. That means: when an advanced practitioner is dead, you can see he

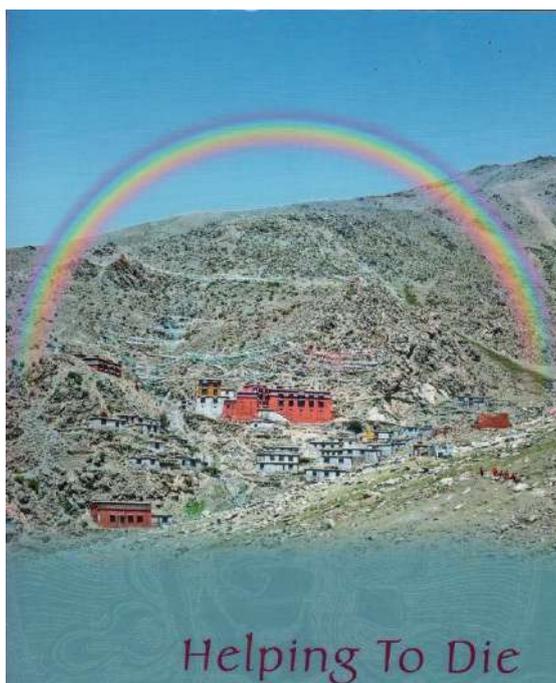
is dead, but he does not change colour, he does not change his posture, he is still straight, or in the position he has been in, it looks like controlled, like controlled body-posture, and still his consciousness, everything looks like dead. But then the special sign comes, mucus, white mucus comes, that is one sign. And also after he has stopped to meditate continuously, his head will hang down.

2.) In the case of the normal being

In the case of the normal being, there is no reason

for not touching or whatever else you may do. The text says, that if you dispose of the body or do something like cremating it, the diseased person will not completely feel it, but it will be like during unconsciousness. How long this lasts depends very much on the individual person, there is no limit at all.

What happens to the person next looks like waking up, and then this spirit is no more connected to the material body. And the text says, "His feeling is



like he immediately wanted to get up and to do something, wanting to do things, wanting to say something, all the feelings are very clear and alive.”

So then when he looks and wants to get up with his body, and tries to do so, his body cannot be connected to his spirit any more. Then he realises he has passed away, and that it is not possible any more for him to connect, which causes a lot of suffering, and he changes his mind and tries to figure out what to do now. Then he goes round to see and talk to the alive persons he was connected to, but nobody answers, and nobody sees him. That again causes even more suffering. There are feelings, and the

Traditionally one asks someone who has the knowledge, a lama for instance, to do this. The lama will be called and asked to do prayers and Pho-wa. All this is done to show the diseased person what he should do, and to guide him.

We hope that with this help also a normal being, who is not a practitioner, can go the direct way. And then after this we do Sur practice with the help of burning. And that is for the family, relatives, and whoever is close to the dead persons, to think of them and giving them by visualisation what they need. This ritual of burning of food supports the mind.

So one can use all these methods. The traditional pre-



H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.

spirit cannot be stopped, even if you close the door, like in a dream, you see. He can also not stop anything, but he can see many visible things.

At that time the only thing you can do to help, according to our believe, is to recite the Thödöl, as you call it: Bardo Thödöl. Traditionally this is recited continuously for three days and three nights.

Our tradition says that when they hear it, they will listen and try to realise that they are passed away. We hope that by listening and following the text he hears something gets through to him. That is one thing.

riod of time for this, according to the text, is 49 days. If one does it later, it can still bring some change to the situation. Prayers can be helpful at any time.

#### **Bibliography**

*Helping to Die, Dru Gyalwa Yungdrung practice manual Interpretation*

Commentary and Additions by Youngdzin Lopön Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche

Edited by Waltraud Benzing Éditions Shenten Dargye Ling, Blou, 2010.

#### **Text selected by Frits de Vries**

Photo from [www.shenten.org](http://www.shenten.org)



# HOW IS THE SOUL LOST AND RETRIEVED? IT DEPENDS ON YOUR VIEW AND UNDERSTANDING.

Some time ago someone in the sangha felt attacked by another entity. The outer cause was then neutralized by ritual. In the webcast of October 10, 2015, *Nourishing Your Inner Being 2 – Questions & Answers*, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche shows us in Bon there is also the awareness solution. The inner solution is to become more connected to one's essence of mind.

**Question: Do we need to do ceremonies and rituals for soul retrieval or can we follow the guided meditations and instructions by ourself as we are learning in these webcasts?**

You can do soul retrieval both ways, through ceremony and ritual or through personal practice. And as I explain in the book, there are very specific and traditional ways of doing soul retrieval in the causal vehicles of the Bon tradition.

Soul loss is sometimes attributed to one's soul being stolen by a spirit, by somebody external to you, by outer forces or entities. Because of this belief, there are particular soul retrieval rituals that are very detailed in forming a relationship with an external entity and in retrieving your soul back from that entity. There is no question that these rituals are very powerful, and for some people very beneficial. But for another person, that approach is too dualistic. Instead of attributing outer causes to soul loss, this person can look inward and discover that in not being conscious and connected to one's essence of mind, through a lack of awareness, one becomes disconnected and experiences the loss of positive qualities. One becomes less able to process life's experiences. So there are different methods of retrieval and reconnection based on different views of the cause of soul loss. Basically, both ways have value and what is right for you depends on your capacity for understanding.

The success of the method depends how you feel.



If you truly feel there is an external force responsible for your soul loss, if you believe that some person or entity out there has disturbed or stolen your positive qualities, I would first tell you that there is no one who is stealing your soul. If it is not possible for you to believe or to have confidence in this view, if you have a specific name or character that you strongly believe has caused your suffering, then you have to work with that level of understanding and a ritual will be a more effective way for you to retrieve your soul. Another person may not believe their loss of connection has anything to do with an external being, but has to do with their own lack of awareness. If you try to convince that person that there is a ghost or entity that is causing their soul loss, it would be hard for them to accept this. Therefore, the ritual approach might not seem necessary or effective for them. So the method used in soul retrieval becomes the method appropriate for the different levels of understanding.

In these last months, the emphasis of my teaching is from my book *The True Source of Healing*, which is not ritual related. I am confident you will be able to retrieve your soul through following the instructions described and guided in the book and in the Webcasts.

**Text selected by Frits de Vries**



# COMPASSIONATE WISDOM IN ACTION

During The 3 Doors retreat *Transforming Your Life Through Meditation* in November 2015, in Pauenhof, Germany, Raven Lee read aloud from her book: *Unbinding the Soul – Awakening through Crisis and Compassion*. The chapter touched all the participants. Jantien Spindler shares with us why the book touched her, and she selected the text Raven read in Pauenhof.

I have bought the book some months ago and have read it with much attention. For me the book is a great gift. I think that to tell your biography with all the intimate aspects takes much courage. Beside this, in the way Raven Lee shares the story of her life, she shows how a deep crisis can become a blessing. The personal transformation that gave the possibility to open to deep compassion and wisdom.

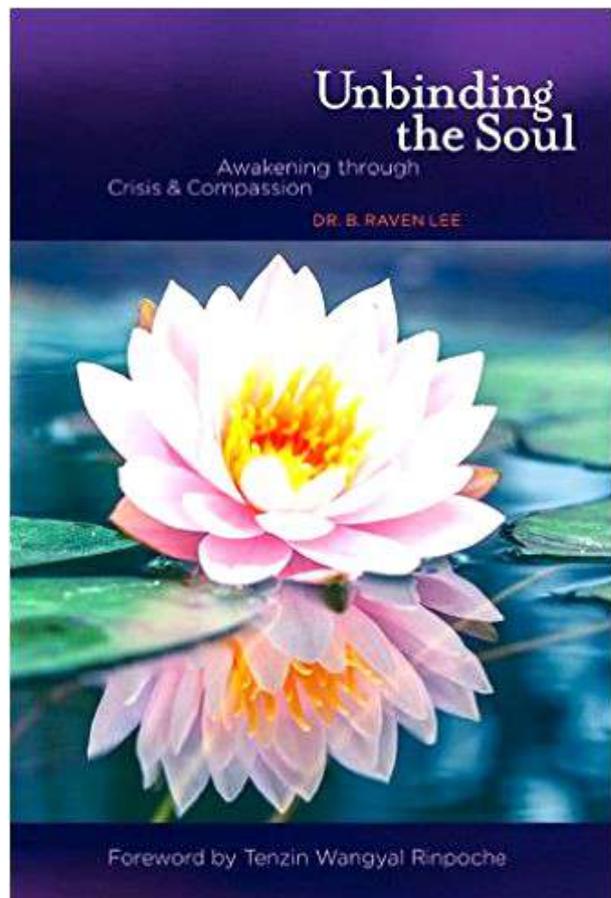
The compassion that is felt in every word, invited me to look again at my own life story and give light to painful events. It was as if I was telling my story to a very warm and open listening friend. It gives hope and motivation to go on working on my own hidden shadows. The integration of the scientific fields with practical solutions to challenging stories is also illuminating.

As Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche writes in the Foreword: "Raven has a sincere motivation that her own healing be of benefit for others. By expressing her own journey through suffering, along with her knowledge in the fields of psychology, science, and spirituality, Raven articulates and illuminates a simple message: opening to your own suffering can be a powerful door to transformation and become a path of healing and benefit for oneself and others."

All proceeds of the book benefit the Bon community. The book is available through [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

## COMPASSIONATE WISDOM IN ACTION

*"Practicing compassion felt easy when I opened my heart to others. Cradling my own wounds and vulnerabilities, however, felt foreign and unnatural. Yet, even self-compassion seemed remedial*



*when compared to the feat that was opening my heart to my father. Following the separation from my mother, my father had remained in Hong Kong. I welcomed the physical and emotional distance between my father and I, especially in the wake of Gary's death. Upon hearing of my father's plans to visit Los Angeles, I knew my ability to practice compassion would be tested to the limits.*

*I had clung to the hope that my father had mellowed and grow wiser during our time apart, but upon his arrival in Los Angeles, I soon realized that his drinking and his belligerence had amplified. One evening, after several glasses of scotch, my father descended into his ritual of complaining and barking orders. I remained calm and disengaged. Undaunted by my restraint, he simply shifted focus, directing his verbal attack toward his grandchildren. This was too much for me. For the first time since I was nine, I stood up to my father's bullying.*

*"You cannot insult the children," I insisted, firing the first salvo.*



*"I'll say what I want," he shouted back, eyes bulging with rage. "You're my daughter and you can't tell me what to do!"*

*"This is my house," I retorted. "You have to respect me and the children."*

*"Is this the way you treat your elders?" His voice teemed with incredulity that his dutiful daughter would answer back. "You're good-for-nothing. I'm leaving."*

*My courage rose. "I'll help you pack your bags."*

*We had each drawn our swords, prepared to do battle. My adversarial reaction fueled my father's anger. He stomped around the living room, screaming obscenities, and brandishing his fists.*

*Suddenly, everything slowed. My fury morphed into the fierce sword of compassion, searing my anger and opening my heart. Rather than seeing my father through the eyes of an abused daughter, I connected to the suffering of a lonely old man running amok on my balcony. A surge of love flowed from my heart, holding space for my father's rage, which suddenly began to subside. Reacting with compassionate wisdom I walked toward my father, took his hands and guided him to a chair. "Sit down, Dad. You're exhausted."*

*He stared at me like a child. "You hurt me when you said those things," he blurted, his eyes welling with tears.*

*"I'm sorry you were hurt. That was not my intention." A wiser, loving, spacious voice in me emerged. We sat in silence, gazing at each other, compassion filling the surrounding space.*

*"Dad, why have you always treated me as a servant?" No blaming or anger accompanied my words, just a gentle curiosity for the truth. My father looked puzzled.*

*"Why? You are my youngest daughter. You are supposed to serve me."*

*At that moment, all my yearnings, frustration, and pain vanished. I started to laugh. Suddenly, in a flash of understanding, I saw my father as a product of his upbringing, a man crippled by a culture that devalued women and was reared by a mother*



Raven Lee.

*who indulged his every whim. This moment of clarity collapsed what had been an impervious wall, allowing tenderness and acceptance to move freely between us. During the rest of my father's visit, our relationship began to shift. I learned to hold space for his drunken outbursts, which diminished in frequency. Following his visit, my father remained self-centered and quick to anger, calling occasionally to demand money. Now, however, I refused his demands out of love rather than anger.*

*Twelve years later, I returned to Hong Kong. My father lay dying, ravaged by liver cancer and emphysema. Despite his physical deterioration, he remained tenaciously himself, boasting of his romantic conquests and hounding hospital staff for cigarettes. To avoid confrontation, my family had not spoken honestly to my father about his grave prognosis. That honor fell upon me. As I sat at the bedside and held his withering hand, I gently told him that he was dying. In this moment of intimacy, our eyes met and a deep feeling of love seemed to flow between us. My father soon fell into a peaceful sleep. I remained at his bedside, chanting the Buddhist prayers he had heard his mother recite when he was a child.*

*Several days later, he looked at me mournfully and whispered, "Please ask your mother to forgive me. I have not been a good husband." Tears flowed down his cheeks, which I gently wiped away. Soon after, I returned to Los Angeles. As I said good-bye, I hugged him and told him how much I loved him. He smiled and we both wept. The last memory of my father was of this precious goodbye. He died three days later."*

**Text selected by Jantien Spindler**



## WHY HAS GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL LEFT FOR THE WEST?

**The Mirror is the International Newspaper of the Dzogchen Community inspired by the teachings of and under the spiritual guidance of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. In the first edition published in 1990 Frits de Vries found two articles on Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, which he shares with us, with permission of The Mirror.**

The first Tibetan Lama in Europe openly teaching Dzogchen to lay people was probably Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche according to [Wikipedia](#):

*"In 1976 Namkhai Norbu began to give Dzogchen instruction in the West, first in Italy, then in numerous other countries. He quickly became a respected spiritual authority among many practitioners, and has created centers for the study of Dzogchen around the world.*

(...)

*As interest in his teachings grew, Rinpoche dedicated himself to spreading Dzogchen and establishing 'gars' (Tibetan), seats of the International Dzogchen Community, throughout the world. Today there are gars in Italy, the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Australia, Romania, Russia, Spain, Ukraine and China."*

As a natural development these communities started to exchange information about the schedules and the teachings of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in the form of a newsletter. In March 1990 this newsletter took a definitive form and went on under the name *The Mirror*, the name of a famous wisdom symbol in the Dzogchen teachings. The first issue was published on Wednesday March 14, 1990, with a headline on the important visit of the Dalai Lama to their main center in Merigar, Italy. Much attention was given to the choice of the name of their newsletter. Here is a part of the answer to the question: "Why this newspaper is called The Mirror."

*"The mind's essential nature is said in the Dzogchen teachings to be like the nature of a mirror. A mirror's essential nature is clear, pure, and limpid; if this was not the case no reflections could arise in it. In the same way the mind's natural condition is one of clarity, purity and limpidity. A mirror will reflect whatever is placed in front of it, but the nature of the mirror is not stained by any reflection, no matter how ugly or terrible. In the same way, if an individual remains continually present in the contemplative state that is the inherent nature of the mind, no thought however beautiful or ugly, attractive or repulsive, can stain the mind's fundamental purity, or distract or disturb the practitioner, who remains integrated in a state beyond the*

WEDNESDAY 14th MARCH, 1990

In the Dzogchen teachings a mirror can be used in many ways as a metaphor to clarify various aspects of the teachings and as a symbol to explain the functioning of the mind.

# THE MIRROR

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DZOGCHEN COMMUNITY  
INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF AND UNDER THE SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF  
NAMKHAÏ NORBU RINPOCHE

FIRST YEAR

One of the ways in which a mirror is used as a symbol is to remind one to observe oneself at all times and to check whether one is distracted or truly present in the moment.



*limits of the ego and the judging mind, experiencing the world as the play of his or her own energies. This is the effortless state of 'Dzogchen', the 'Great Perfection', complete in itself, and lacking nothing. But when an individual is distracted, they are no longer in the state of the nature of the mind; they enter into the dualistic confusion of separating their experience into that of an observing subject who perceives a seemingly external world as an object. This is said to be like mistaking the unreal reflections arising in a mirror for reality itself. The Dzogchen teachings exist to enable those who have entered into this dualistic condition, with all its inherent suffering, to return to the 'primordial state' which is the mind's natural condition, the state of Dzogchen.(...)"*

The first issue of *The Mirror* consists of sixteen densely filled pages with:

- Interviews, like one titled *Maintaining the purity of transmission as the Dzogchen community grows* with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche himself.
- Stories such as one on the upcoming visit of the H.H. Dalai Lama to Merigar for the inauguration of the Shang-Shung Institute.
- Reflections from the base of the Dzogchen community in Merigar, Italy.
- Explanations, such as on practices for special days.
- News from the *gars* all over the world.
- Schedules and programs, like the teaching schedule of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and the Shang Shung Institute program schedule.
- Reports of retreats, such as the Christmas 1989/1990 retreat on the Dzogchen Longde, attended by 600 people. In this report we find the name of the young Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, assisting Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche.

*"About 600 people came to the Christmas retreat. During the first few days Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche gave a general introduction to the Longde series of the Dzogchen teachings to the whole group of participants in the big barn that has usually been used as a wood workshop. Then the retreat continued with Rinpoche giving the initiation of Ngonzog Gyalpo, an empowerment to practice the Longde Series, in the main house at Merigar to five groups of 108 people, and one group of 37. While this was going on the rest of the participants followed teachings in the barn from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, who explained the all-important basics of how one*

*enters contemplation and integrates it with one's daily life. Fabio Andrico also shared his experience as a practitioner of Yantra Yoga. (...)"*

We also find in this first issue of *The Mirror* an extensive introduction by Tuula Saarikoski of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal. She wrote an article on Tenzin Wangyal based on interviews during retreats, for as in Stockholm on *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud*. Here is the story.



**GESHE TENZIN WANGYAL**

*"I am not a Tulku and I am not a Rinpoche, just call me Tenzin Wangyal." This is how he introduced himself. I had heard of this young Bonpo Lama, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal, in the spring 1988. He was doing his Western Ph.D. at Oslo University. He had been at the Dzogchen Community's base in Italy, Merigar. He had given Bon teachings on retreats at Merigar, and in Oslo and Copenhagen.*

*He arrived at the Arlanda Airport, coming to Stockholm, Sweden. He looked very young, smiling, vigorously, and he carried a suitcase heavy with books. Having never met a Bonpo before I was very curious. I was interested in Bon; otherwise I did not expect much.*

*The retreat was a surprise. The young Geshe was a real Master, I felt, a true Dzogchenpa. His teaching was of the Shang-Shung Nyan Gyud (Zhang zhung snyan brgyud), his way of transmitting clear, direct and strong. He had a pleasant sense of humour. The fact that he was a monk added an aspect of power and an almost innocent purity to his youth-*



ful energy and his scholarly sophistication. When later, in the December of that year, I finally made a longtime dream come true, and went to live near Merigar, in Tuscany, Tenzin Wangyal was there back from India. He seemed to be on the road all the time, travelling from Merigar to Rome, from Rome to Naples, to Milan, to Venice or Bologna to give teachings of Dzogchen.

I wondered what his life had been like so far. "Who are you, Tenzin Wangyal?" I asked.

"I shall tell you" Tenzin Wangyal replied.

"I was born in India, at Amritsar, in 1961. My father was Buddhist, and my mother was Bon by religion. They were Tibetan refugees, and at that time they lived in Madiya Pradesh, in a Tibetan settlement, where they had a house. A house, and very big problems."

Because of his parents' difficult situation, Tenzin, their only child, was sent to a children's home at Simla. When he was seven, the home was closed, and the Tibetan children were transferred to a Christian school at Rurki, near Delhi. Four years of misery followed. Buddhist or Bonpo, the Tibetan children were taught the Christian moral codes, they learned to read and write Hindi and English, and their lives were hard.

"My father had died in 1970, and my mother had found a new Tibetan husband. My step-father was a Bonpo, he had been a monk in the Menri monastery in Tibet, and he wanted me to study in Dolanji, in the Bon monastery that the former monks of Menri had established some years before. I was eleven when I went to Dolanji, and I had to start from the beginning, learning how to read and write in Tibetan. The preliminary studies took almost three years."

Nevertheless Tenzin Wangyal, at 14, was the youngest in the group of fifteen monks who studied under the guidance of Menri Lopon Sangye Tenzin, who was also the principal Master of Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

"With Sangye Tenzin we went through the whole of the Shang-Shung Nyan Gyud. It took three years with no holidays. During that time I also did many retreats with Sangye Tenzin, doing Ngondro and Phowa practices. When we had come to the end of

the Shang-Shung Nyan Gyud, in 1977, we all wanted to start again from the beginning. So we did. Soon after Sangye Tenzin died, and before dying he said: 'It was a good sign to start again.' The same year Norbu Rinpoche came to Dolanji."

Lopon Tenzin Namdak started a Dialectic School in Dolanji. Grammar, poetry, astronomy, Sanskrit and all the various rituals were learned first, and after that, primary logic, vinaya, cosmology, prajnaparamita and tantra. The last year of eight years' studies in the Dialectic School was dedicated to Dzogchen again.

"Before we started to study Dzogchen, we were told to find a sign in a dream," explains Tenzin Wangyal. I had a dream in which I was in a tram. A friend of mine, another student of Sangye Tenzin's, was driving the tram and I was handing people the tickets. The tickets were square pieces of paper in all basic colours, and in the center of each ticket there was a Tibetan letter A. That was my sign."

"When I started to teach in the West, and we were doing the fixation on an A, I remembered this dream as I handed each person a square piece of cardboard with the Tibetan letter A in its centre."

There had been other signs, too.

"When I first came to Dolanji, Lopon Tenzin Namdak had a dream in which his personal divinity told him to take care of the new boy and to educate him. While I was studying in the Dialectic School, I did many retreats with him, and we did a Dzogchen practice every evening with Sangye Tenzin."

"My most important experience was the dark retreat. I spent 50 days and nights in the dark, when I was seventeen. Sangye Tenzin had told me to do it while I was still young, and Lopon Namdak helped me. I did the retreat in Lopon Namdak's house. For the first two weeks of the retreat nothing happened, but then the visions came and my practice developed."

In 1986 Tenzin Wangyal finished his studies as a Geshe, which is the equivalent of a Ph.D. in Western universities. His other important Masters were Geshe Yungdrung Namgyal, who was a Bonpo Geshe, but also Lharampa Geshe. This Master



received the *Lharampa degree*, which is the highest of the several *Geshe degrees* of the *Gelugpas*, from the monastic university of *Drepung*.

*“With Yungdrung Namgyal I studied the Gelug philosophy, and I studied the Nyingmapa tradition with Ketsun Zangpo, who is the most important contemporary Nyingma scholar.”*

*Lopon Tenzin Namdak and the first four Geshe*s to graduate from his school travelled in Tibet for eight months in 1986, visiting many *Bonpo monasteries*, such as *Nag Chu, Chabdo, Tsang, Dege* and *Nyangsong*. After returning to *Dolanji*, *Tenzin Wangyal* was invited to *Dharamsala*, to work in the *Library of His Holiness the Dalai Lama*, preparing a catalogue of all the *Bon texts* of the *Library*.

*“During the time that I spent in Dharamsala, I also published a book about my journey in Tibet, whose title in English is ‘The Helpful Jewel of the New Speech.’ I also wrote a summary of Shenrab Miwo’s biography and published several articles.”*

*Geshe Tenzin Wangyal’s scholarly career* was well established. *Professor Per Kvaerne*, an outstanding authority in *Tibetology*, of the *University of Oslo, Norway*, invited *Geshe Tenzin* to collaborate, and offered him the possibility of doing his *Ph.D.* according to the *Western academic tradition*. The *University of Lund, in Sweden*, gave him a *research scholarship*, and *Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche* invited him to *Merigar* to work with him.

Thus in addition to an *academic career*, there emerged the possibility of giving the *spiritual teaching of Dzogchen*. *Tenzin Wangyal* gave teachings at two retreats in *Norway*, one in *Denmark*, one in *Sweden*, and before going back to *India* he gave a retreat in *London*, as well as a long retreat of *transmission and practice* in *Devon, England*.

*“After some time in India, I decided to come to live in Italy. Here I started to work at ISMEO, the Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies in Rome, making a catalogue of all the Tibetan texts in Professor Giuseppe Tucci’s library. When I came to Italy for the first time, a year ago, I had planned to rest and take it easy, but I was drawn in all directions. Now I begin to understand the ways of the West a little better,”* he laughs.



*He has temporarily settled down in Italy, and found a car to his taste. Sometimes one can feel in him a nostalgia for the regular pattern of life in a monastery, for his “family,” Lopon Tenzin Namdak and fellow monks, for the school where he had already started instructing the younger monks before finishing his own studies, and where he was the chairman of the students of Dolanji for three years. Most of the time, though, he is happily driving fast on the highways of Italy from one city to another, where groups of the members of the Dzogchen Community wait for him to share with them his profound knowledge and his transmission. But for how long will he remain in Italy?*

*“I think I shall like the Americans and their way of thinking,”* he used to say, as if he was ready to move on. Then, a couple of days before *Tenzin Wangyal* was to leave for *America*, a telegram arrived from *India* with sad news. His mother had died after eleven days in hospital at the age of 48. Everything that had to be done for her had already been done. At the monastery in *Dolanji* the traditional rites to help the deceased had been performed, and the funeral, which according to the *Bonpo way* was to be held in three day’s time, had already happened. Everything had been taken care of, and for *Tenzin Wangyal* there was nothing to do there. Under this shadow of the loss of his mother, *Tenzin Wangyal* started his journey to the *USA*, where he planned to stay a few weeks on the *East Coast*, mainly at *Tsegyalgar, in Massachusetts*. He will fly from there to the *West Coast*, visit *Los Angeles, San Francisco* and also *Oregon*, where land has been offered for a possible future *Bon Foundation*. A group of devoted friends from



*Italy followed the young Dzogchen Master on his first trip to the new continent, where just six months before him his own master Lopon Tenzin Namdak had made a similar tour.”*

Tuula Saarikoski’s story on page 6 of the first issue of *The Mirror* is later followed by a short story of what looks like Tenzin Wangyal’s first visit to New York. On page 16, in the news section, *News From Tsegylgar* we find this impression:

### **LAMA TENZIN WANGYAL’S DISCOVERY OF AMERICA**

*“On January 25, 1990 Lama Tenzin Wangyal arrived in New York. The first two days were spent relaxing and going for ‘walkabouts’ – we heard the news in Massachusetts that Lama Tenzin Wangyal discovered the only two Tibetan restaurants in all of New York on his first days in the City. In Amherst, Mass., we had rented the ‘Unitarian Church’ for a public talk; Lopon Tenzin Namdak had spoken in the very same church the previous year. Around a hundred people came, which was a very good turn-out for a small town. Amherst has a student population of about 20,000 and the talk was planned before the beginning of a new term. So we were happy to see so many people. There was a good question and answer session after the talk, and one of the big questions was: “What is dualism?”*

*Throughout the weekdays we altered the schedule by inviting newly interested people to come every other night for further teachings, and the remaining nights we went to the houses of older students. Everyone wanted Lama Tenzin Wangyal in their houses and the whole feeling was very joyous. We were grateful to be brought back to the basics of Concentration, Fixation and Contemplation. Most nights we gave out A’s in five coloured tiges fastened onto wooden sticks on a base and we enjoyed the thought of how they may adorn so many interiors, and hopefully be integrated into people’s lives.*

*On two consecutive week-ends Lama Tenzin Wangyal gave teachings in Shelburne Falls. People who had come to last year’s summer retreat may remember the oasis of civilization not far from our camp-ground: the famous McCuskers store: our lunchtime soups had come from there. On the upper floor there is a very beautiful space, and about forty to fifty people came from all directions*



*to participate.*

*Lama Tenzin Wangyal taught from a text from the Shang Shung Nyan Gyud on Dzogchen. He had received this transmission from his own Master, Lopon Sangye Tenzin. Through the process of transmitting and translating and explaining the text he gave such a vivid example through his own being: how what really counts is indeed one’s very own experience and understanding of whichever practice one may choose to do. I think everyone participating respected his honesty and courage – as well as the fact that he had been somewhat rebellious in his response to the structure of his personal education.*

*For the second week-end we moved on to Powa teachings and practiced together on both those days. Lama Tenzin Wangyal urged everyone not to be satisfied with an idea or a concept, but really just to do it: practice for a full week, twice daily and then see for oneself whether there might be a change – something to be noticed.*

*We all did notice a feeling of inspiration – and back-to-the-roots experiences – simple distinctions of feeling and sensation. In that way it was a very successful process.*

*On February 13 we sadly waved bye bye to Lama Tenzin Wangyal – on his way to further Americas. We have invited him to come again – hopefully for a longer time.”*

**Text produced and selected by Frits de Vries**  
Photos from *The Mirror* and [Facebook](#)



## APPOINTED AS RINPOCHE

Recently Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang added “Rinpoche” to his name. Curious about how he got this title, the editors invited Geshe-la for an interview, and asked him to explain titles as Geshe, Tulku, Rinpoche and some other.

**Ton:** Rinpoche, I want to start with some personal questions. Where were you born?

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I was born in Dolpo, a culturally Tibetan region in the north-western part of Nepal, bordered in the north by Tibet. It is located to the west of Mustang. This remote region has preserved its Tibetan culture in relatively pure form, and the Dolpo are generally adherents of Bon and Buddhism. Politically it is part of Nepal now but many of the older generations still don't speak Nepalese.

**Frits:** Can you compare it to Ladakh?

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** Yes in some points, but people of Ladakh are trying to present themselves these days as Indian stronger. I visited Ladakh and even neighboring regions Lahaul and Kinnaur a few times. They are all changing. Culturally they are rooted with Tibet.

**Frits:** Is Dolpo interesting because there are a lot of Bon monasteries?

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** That is one reason since there are around thirteen Bon monasteries in the area and it was a home of many great masters. And then the history of the Dolpo is the second reason. Besides that, for the Bonpos the Yangton Lamas of Dolpo are very important. For example *Yangton Chenpo*, the Great Yangton, put the oral teaching of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* onto the script. And later, other members of this family played a very important role in bringing this teaching into the monastic curriculum. Before Menri Monastery was established in Tibet, the Yeru Wensakha Monastery was the main Bonpo Monastery in Tibet. In thirteenth century, Dru Gyalwa Yungdrung, the main lama of the Yeru Wensakha requested Yangton Gyaltsen Rinchen, the founder of the Dolpo Samling Monastery, to give the teaching of *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* to him.

**Ton:** Can you tell about your family?



His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche and Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang Rinpoche.

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** My father Tsewang Tashi was a practitioner and also a priest in the village called Tra. His father was from Buddhist family lineage called ‘Choekhortshang’ and his mother was a daughter of a Yangton Lama of Bon. Both of these two lineages are recorded as the two most important families of Dolpo by Prof. Snellgrove in his book *The four lama's of Dolpo: Tibetan Biographies*. My paternal grandfather Karma Choe wang was a Buddhist during the first phase of his life. And then he married a daughter of a Yangton Lama who is the most important family of Bon in Dolpo. Therefore he adopted the Bon in the later period of his life. Since then my father was adopted by his own maternal grandfather, Yangton Yungdrung Dradhul Rinpoche, who was the lama of the famous Samling monastery and also the founder of the new monastery called Tashi Namgyal in Tra village. He then trained my father to become his successor as lama of the Tashi Namgyal Monastery since my father is the eldest son of his daughter. That is the connection, the background of my family lineage.

When my father was young he studied with the





Choekhortshang Rinpoche with his mother, two brothers and sister.

present lama of Samling Monastery, who is also from the Yangton family lineage. He learned meditation, even became a physician of Tibetan medicine. And then he served as a priest in the village having a title of 'Chichoe' (*spyi-mchod*) that means 'common priest,' who's responsible to serve villagers without differentiation between Bonpo and Buddhist. So he was a priest for both. There were certain responsibilities on him like making rituals, taking care of the crops, like making rain, stopping hail, or something like this in general. Later when his maternal grandfather passed away he became the head lama of the Namgyal Monastery in Dolpo.

**Ton: Is your mother a practitioner?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** Yes, my mother, her name is Sangmo, is a practitioner belonging to a Buddhist family. The name of her family lineage is called Chokro, and this family lineage is very well-known in Tibetan world. My mother is a semi-nun. I introduced this term 'semi-nun' and 'semi-monk' when I gave a presentation amongst Tibetologists. It is a very typical tradition in Dolpo, where many Tantric or Dzogchen practitioners have many involvements in the monastic activities, and they have a family. It is somehow a practitioner's life in-between celibacy and lay people. Many of my

relatives are semi-monk and semi-nun.

**Ton: Do you have brothers and sisters?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I have three brothers and one sister. Two of us studied in the monastery, and one is at home in Dolpo, and takes care of our mother. My youngest brother, Amchi Yungdrung Tsewang studied Tibetan medicine to follow our father's steps. He is a physician in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he practices Tibetan medical knowledge and teaches at the 'School of Four Medical Science of Early Tradition,' which is near to Triten Norbutse Monastery. My brother Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso is now a resident lama at Chamma Ling Poland. My sister Palsang Lhamo lives in Kathmandu.



Choekhortshang Rinpoche with his three brothers.





The Samling Monastery in Dolpo, Nepal.

**Ton: Can you tell about your education?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** When I was around six years old, I went to a Nepalese government school in our village. There were similar schools in many parts of Dolpo. Since these schools didn't teach Tibetan, many families did not send their children to the school. Therefore, those schools closed one after the other. I began learning Tibetan reading and writing from my father. I also served as a shepherd for two years in my village, looking after the goats and sheep. When I was eight years old, I went to India with my grandfather, my father and the lama of Samling Monastery. There, I studied in the Central School for Tibetan in Dolanji of Tibetan Bonpo Settlement for eight years. Back in my homeland, later, the local Dolpo people started new private schools in different regions, where they teach in Tibetan and teach Tibetan religion. The school uniform is a *chuba*, which is a Tibetan traditional dress; so it is different from schools in Kathmandu.

**Ton: Can you tell about your education as a monk and how that evolved?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** At the age of seventeen, in 1992, I became a monk at Menri Monastery, the mother monastery of Bon. There, I joined Bon Dialectic School and studied Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen as main courses. Besides them I learned meditations, healing rituals, astrology, sacred dances, yogas and many others. Anyhow, after studying sixteen years in the Menri monastery, I became a Geshe in 2008.

During my study I had an opportunity to serve as a personal secretary for His Holiness the Menri Trizin Rinpoche; the spiritual leader of Bon for eight years. I also served as president for the Bon

Dialectic School for a year and also treasurer of Menri Monastery for three years. I have been the chief editor for *Bon-sGo*, the first journal of the Bon, which is very popular amongst the Tibetan society. Recently the education department of Tibetan Administration in India declared it as one of the three best Tibetan journals in exile.

**Ton: Why did you come to the West?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** Initially, my intention was to go back to Dolpo and teach there. But while studying at the Menri Monastery I discovered some personal interests: writing poetry and doing research in a more traditional way. The writing brought me in contact with many Western professors and researchers, and I started to work with some of these Tibetologists. In 2006 I was invited for the biggest conference for Tibetologists at the University of Bonn in Germany. I attended that conference and then later in 2008 I was invited by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche for a conference in Shenten, France. In 2009 I was invited by Leiden University in the Netherlands to work as an affiliated fellow in religious studies. There was a plan to study and live there for a longer time, but I had to go back to India. In 2009, a Czech Professor, Daniel Berounsky, invited me to Prague to study in Charles University. There, at the Tibetan department, I also teach Tibetan language, tradition, textual reading and some context of the religion to the bachelors, masters and Ph.D. students.

**Frits: When are you going back to Dolpo?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** Since I was enthroned officially in Menri Monastery, the community in Dolpo has been waiting for my return. Their hope and request is that I should go back now. They





Choekhortshang Rinpoche at Menri Monastery in 2015 during the enthronement ceremony.

started to reconstruct the monastery. But I came here for academic purpose and interest, and want to finish my Ph.D. study first. My research topic of the Ph.D. dissertation at Charles University in Prague is concerned with a Bonpo family of Dolpo. It will be based on its family genealogy. Right now I haven't decided anything about returning to Dolpo. Recently we started a Master project at the university for Tibetology, and I want to stay till it is finished. While I was studying in the monastery I had been wondering about the academic world, so doing research in Western universities is somehow my personal interest.

**Jantien: Did you ever get homesick?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I never felt homesick, because I left home when I was very young, but sometimes I miss my monastery. I miss the monastery more than my family. Once my mother told me the first time I was leaving for India, she felt that she was going to cry, and when she felt that, she immediately stopped. And later when my brothers left, she never cried. She told me that this decision made her stronger.

**Ton: I read in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* that people who stay behind should not cry, because it would make the process of the *bardo* of the person who died more difficult. So your mother practiced this.**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** That is true. When I was young and if I had seen the tears in my mother's eyes, I would have remembered it when I was studying and it probably would have made

me homesick. But now I had a positive memory to my mother and my departure, because she seemed happy with it.

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

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I met him when I was very young. One of his sisters was my school classmate. I got the opportunity to know him better when I was studying at Menri Monastery. Since then I have always stayed in contact with him, and sometimes we spend time together in Europe.

**Ton: We would like to ask you some questions about the Bon tradition and sangha. Can you tell about the difference between a monk, a lama, a Geshe, a Tulku, a Rinpoche, a Khenpo, a Lopon and a Ponlop?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** A monk lives in celibacy. Usually there are two kinds of monks; one is called novice monk; generally in Bon it is a monk who has taken twenty-five vows. And then the second is the monk who has taken a fully ordination, which has two hundred and fifty vows.

Geshe is a monk who completed the scholastic phase of monastic training and holds the highest monastic education degree from the educationally qualified monastery. It is something like a traditional monastic degree or title. You can compare it with the title of professor in the West, but it takes longer and is a higher study. I spent sixteen years to receive my Geshe title. Another difference is that a professor has normally studied





During the enthronement at Menri Monastery Choekhortshang Rinpoche in February 2015.

on one topic. We have no choice of what we want to study. We have to go through the entire curriculum. In the Tibetan schools only the Gelug, Bon and Sakya use the Geshe title, the Kagyu and Nyingma don't use it normally.

For lama there are three different categories. The first category is a family lineage lama. In Tibetan the term is *Dhung-gyue*. These lamas belong to the family lineage of very famous spiritual masters, like Shen in Bon. Shen is the family lineage of Tonpa Shenrab, the founder of Yungdrung Bon. All the children of the Shen family become automatically a lama. They don't need to study in the monastery, they are genetically lama. It does not matter if they are lay people or ordained, once they are involved in a religious practice, they will be respected and accepted as a lama. In Bon we have five main such family lineages. One of them, called Dru, could not continue their lineage because of the recognizing of fifth and eighth Penchen Lamas from this family. When the eighth Penchen Lama was recognized from this family, he was taken to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and became a monk along with his brother, and his brother was then entitled as a Ta lama. So the Dru could not continue their family lineage since both of their last boys were made Gelugpa monks. This family lineage was very important and connected with the Yeru Wensakha and Menri Monastery.

The second category is the *Tulku* lama; a young child or an adult person who is recognized as a reincarnation of an important lama. It can be recognized by written note of the previous life, it can be recognized through auspicious dreams or signs of certain lamas, or it can be recognized through religious lottery. However, it can be confirmed with the test such as where they have to choose possessions of the previous lama. If he or she chooses correct, he or she can be recognized as a reincarnation. For example Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is a *Tulku*. Unfortunately, in Tibet, some *Tulkus* were not recognized during their life.

The third category of lama is an officially appointed lama, through education, meditation, qualification and contribution. The Tibetan term for this lama is called *Lama Tripa*. All the heads of monasteries like the Lopen and the Khenpo belong to the third category. Both His Holiness the Menri Trizin Rinpoche and His Eminence the Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche belong to this category, because of their education, achievement and contributions to the Bon.

Rinpoche means 'Precious One.' In general a Tulku is naturally called Rinpoche. However, according to Bon tradition the Tulku system is not that important as it is in other schools. In Bon most of the Rinpoche titles are given only by official





Choekhortshang Rinpoche's weekend teaching in Hungary in 2015.

enthronement. Some family lineage lamas are not called Rinpoche but just lama. Majority of the great lamas of Bon are officially given the title of Rinpoche for the purpose of teaching, administration or maintenance of a monastery.

In my case I was given the title of Rinpoche by His Holiness the Menri Trizin Rinpoche through an official enthronement at Menri Monastery. It was because the people of Dolpo requested His Holiness for my enthronement as a Rinpoche of Namgyal Monastery in Dolpo. Actually the maternal grandfather of my father was a Rinpoche of the Namgyal Monastery and was a Yangton Lama – and my father succeeded him. When my father passed away the villagers choose me as his successor, because I was the eldest son. In the Bon tradition when a monk is given the title of Rinpoche, the monastery should enthrone him. When that happens, the person has to spend time in the monastery and teach there. In 2000, while I was studying at Menri Monastery, I received a journal where I read that they had registered my name in the religious department of the Nepalese government in Kathmandu as the head lama of Namgyal Monastery. Then they gave me the responsibility to take care of the monastery and the villagers. Actually, then I became a Rinpoche and it was approved by the Nepalese government. However, in a way, I refused the title Rinpoche, because for me it felt not as the right time to go back to Namgyal Monastery; instead I came to the West. When I would have gone to Dolpo, the monastery would have enthroned me. So, it happened in 2015 that some important people from my village wrote a letter to His Holiness Menri Trizin Rinpoche and asked to enthrone me. This way they tried to get me back to my village. I

went to Menri Monastery to edit few editions of *Bon-sGo* journal, and then all this happened so quick, that I could not tell even my mother and some of my close friends what was going to happen. So, officially I am enthroned as Rinpoche at Menri Monastery in February 2015.

Amongst the officially appointed lamas, Khenpo is a title that is designated as an Abbot for the learned and accomplished master through an official enthronement for the purpose of the monastic administration.

Lopon means 'head teacher,' which is enthroned officially for the purpose of educational responsibility amongst the qualified spiritual teachers.

However, it is important to know that the implementation of Khenpo and Lopon titles in some Buddhism schools are very different than in Bon.

Ponlop is a typical Bon term which is an abbreviation of 'Ponse Lopon.' In Bon, the Khenpo and the Ponlop of Menri Monastery are the most important. The Khenpo of Menri Monastery becomes His Holiness of the Bon. In the case of Menri Lopon, when his disciple will be the new Abbot of Menri Monastery then his title will be promoted to the Menri Yongdzin.

Then, there are monks who have finished a meditation retreat of more than three years. Usually, they are called *Drupthonpa*.

**Frits: Do you have a sangha in Prague?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** No, I don't have any sangha right now, because I want to keep all my time for my work at the university here in Czech





Choekhortshang Rinpoche's weekend teaching in Poland in 2014.

Republic. Initially, I wasn't available for giving teachings. I even never thought of it then. However, everything happened spontaneously when I visited Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in Berlin 2010. I attended his evening talk and there I was introduced to Ulrike Bross and other Sangha members. Then Rinpoche asked me to give an introduction of *Nine Ways of Bon* to Ligmincha Berlin. I agreed because I thought that it would be just only that. But it continued since students asked Rinpoche for more, and Ligmincha sanghas from Austria, Poland, Italy, Slovakia and Hungary also invited me respectively through Rinpoche's suggestion. Still invitations have been coming from many other countries such as Norway, Ukraine, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Argentina and even Columbia, but I could not accept them at the moment because of my involvement at the Charles University in Prague. Therefore, in Czech Republic I don't give teaching as I do in other European countries. However, I used to give just public talks in different towns of Czech Republic such as, Brno, Ostrava, Olomouc, Opava, Plzen, Luhacovice and Prague. Those were very successful and halls and theaters were mostly packed.

**Frits: Do you feel more a researcher than a teacher?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I don't know. I learned a lot from spending time at different universities. I have attended many international conferences as a researcher and did many presentations. This interest made me travel to many countries, like Japan, Canada, Mongolia, the

United Kingdom and many European countries for academic purposes. I spent one month at Oxford University and had opportunity to teach there.

**Frits: What do you think about preserving the Bon-Buddhist wisdom in the West?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** I am sure it will succeed, because I can see many sanghas, and outside of the sanghas people opening to the practices and teachings, and the number of people is growing. I started to teach in Berlin, and never thought I would also teach in other European countries. While teaching I saw many attendances coming from other Buddhist groups too.

**Frits: Do we need a monastery in Europe to preserve the Bon teachings?**

**Choekhortshang Rinpoche:** It would be good if there are one or two monasteries, but without it can also survive. There are many ways we can teach the community. If it was only *Sutra* we teach, then it would be important to have a monastery. But since we also teach *Tantra* and *Dzogchen*, it can survive in a lay community.

As I mentioned about the semi-monk of Dolpo, it is somewhere between a monk and a lay practitioner. They have a family, their own life, and they practice. So I think this kind of life can be adopted in the West.

**Interview by Frits de Vries, Jantien Spindler and Ton Bisscheroux**

Photos: courtesy of Choekhortshang Rinpoche



# FREE SIX-MONTH INTERNET COURSE: TRANSFORMING YOUR WORLD THROUGH SERVICE

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will continue with the free live webcasts in 2016. Great news is that there will be a free six-month course on *Transforming Your World Through Service*. See the full 2016 schedule below.

## **New: Transforming Your World Through Service**

We're excited to announce a brand-new, six-month Internet course with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche that begins February 13, 2016. The topic is *Transforming Your World Through Service*. Rinpoche especially encourages his students throughout the world to participate.

Serving others is fundamental to our personal spiritual development. Our commitment to making a difference to others and the world can fill our life with love and joy, but it requires a strong foundation of wisdom and compassion. This free, six-month course will support you in becoming as effective as possible in your service to others. You will learn:

- The fundamentals of enlightened leadership
- Meditation practices for cultivating wisdom and compassion
- How to rise above your ego to connect with a sense of collective purpose
- The best ways to inspire others to serve.

The free course will include everything from free monthly live webcasts (listed further below) to a discussion forum, recorded webcasts, MP3 audio recordings, and downloadable print materials. Stay tuned for information on how to register for the first live webcast on February 13. You will need to register separately for the six-month course with its full support materials—**registration is now open at [www.ligminchalearning.com](http://www.ligminchalearning.com)**.

## **Live Broadcasts from Serenity Ridge Retreats**

Each year, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches four seasonal retreats at [Ligmincha International's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center](#) (see dates and times below). As he's done in the past, Rinpoche plans to broadcast one teaching session from each of these retreats, giving everyone an opportunity to receive his instruction and engage



in a guided meditation from the comfort of their home computers or other devices.

## **One More Webcast in the Soul Retrieval Series**

If you've been following Rinpoche's 2015 yearlong course in *Soul Retrieval, The True Source of Healing*, you're already anticipating the final webcast in the series, *Soul Retrieval as a Lifetime Practice*, scheduled for January 9, 2016. As with all of Rinpoche's coming webcasts, this broadcast is free and open to all — there's no need to view any of the previous webcasts in the series to enjoy and benefit from the teaching and guided meditation. [Learn more.](#)

## **How to Stay Informed**

Answers to commonly asked questions about live webcasts with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche can be found on the [webcast FAQ page](#). Information there includes:

- how to stay informed about upcoming webcasts
- where to find video recordings of previous webcasts
- how to access simultaneous translation into as many as 12 different languages.

## **How to Contribute**

All these free offerings are made possible through the generosity of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and an international team of dedicated volunteers. Ligmincha International pays a fee to maintain the advertising-free webcast service. If you would like to support these efforts, [donations are most welcome.](#)



## Full Webcast Schedule for 2016

So you don't miss any of these coming free webcasts with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, mark your schedule now! Each webcast takes place on a Saturday, except as shown; all times listed are Central European Time.

We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming webcast!

- **January 1 (Friday), 17.00 – 18.00 h.**

Guided Meditation from the Experiential Transmission Teachings, Part 2. Broadcast live from the Winter Retreat at Ligmincha International at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all). [Learn more](#).

- **January 9, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*The True Source of Healing, Part 12: Soul Retrieval as a Lifetime Practice.* [Learn more](#).

- **February 13, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 1: The Value of Enlightened Leadership.*

- **March 12, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 2: Cultivating Wisdom.*

- **April 2, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Enlightened Leadership.* Broadcast live from the Spring Retreat at Ligmincha International at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all). [Learn more](#).

- **April 9, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 3: Generating Compassion.*

- **May 14, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 4: Service and Spirituality.*

- **June 11, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 5: Inspiring Others to Serve.*

- **June 25, 18.00 – 19.15 h.**

*Sleep Yoga.* Broadcast live from the Summer Retreat at Ligmincha International at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all).

- **July 9, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 6: Questions and Answers*

- **August 13, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

Topic to be announced.

- **September 10, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

Topic to be announced.

- **October 8, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

Topic to be announced.

- **October 15, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

*The Practice of Chod.* Broadcast live from the Fall Retreat at Ligmincha International at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all).

- **November 12, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

Topic to be announced.

- **December 10, 21.00 – 22.30 h.**

Topic to be announced.

- **December 31, 15.00 – 16.15 h.**

*Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 3.* Broadcast live from the Winter Retreat at Ligmincha International at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all).

Adapted from an article published in [Voice of Clear Light](#), December 2015.



## TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE'S 2016 EUROPEAN SEMINARS AND ON-LINE TEACHINGS

When	Where	What	More information
January 9 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: The True Source of Healing: Soul Retrieval as a Lifetime Practice	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
January 16 – February 7	Your computer	Interactive online course: Awakening the Sacred Body	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
February 13 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 1: The Value of Enlightened Leadership	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
March 5 – April 3	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Dream Yoga	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
March 12 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 2: Cultivating Wisdom	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 2 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Enlightened Leadership.	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 9 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 3: Generating Compassion	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
April 22–24	Paris, France	Weekend seminar: Living with Joy, Dying with Peace	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.fr">www.ligmincha.fr</a>
April 29 – May 1	Vienna, Austria	Weekend seminar: Outer, Inner and secret Tsa Lung	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.at">www.ligmincha.at</a>
April 30 – May 22	Your computer	Interactive online course: Tibetan Meditation — Achieving Great Bliss Through Pure Awareness	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
May 6 – 8	Berlin, Germany	Weekend seminar: From Inspiration to Manifestation: Unblocking Your Creative Potential	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.de">www.ligmincha.de</a>
May 14 – 16	Bulle, Switzerland	Weekend seminar: Bardo and Dream	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.fr">www.ligmincha.fr</a>
May 14 21.00 – 22.30 h (C.E.T.)	Your computer	Live Webcast: Transforming Your World Through Service, Part 4: Service and Spirituality	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
May 20 – 22	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Weekend seminar: A-tri, Part 4	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.nl">www.ligmincha.nl</a>

You can also watch on your computer 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week: Free Internet teachings and videos on YouTube, [www.ligmincha.org](http://www.ligmincha.org) and [www.oceanofwisdom.org](http://www.oceanofwisdom.org).

