



# Ligmincha Europe Magazine

**# 30 – Autumn 2019-Spring 2020**



Letters to Students

Ceremony for H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche

Packed and Ready

Escape from Darkness

The Teachers of Lishu Institute



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## THE LIGMINCHA EUROPE MAGAZINE

is a joint venture of the community of European students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Ideas and contributions are welcome at [magazine@ligmincha.eu](mailto:magazine@ligmincha.eu). You can find this and the previous issues at [www.ligmincha.eu](http://www.ligmincha.eu), and you can find us on the Facebook page of [Ligmincha Europe Magazine](https://www.facebook.com/LigminchaEuropeMagazine).

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# GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers, Dear Practitioners of Bon,

It really feels strange to write that this is the last edition of the Ligmincha Europe Magazine. Ten years ago, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche asked if I wanted to make a newsletter for the European sangha, to enhance communication with sangha members from all the different countries in Europe and to help keep everyone updated about our projects and activities.

Since then, thirty issues have been published, and the European and worldwide sangha have grown closer together. In the beginning being an editor was a lonely job. I met the other editors only online, and there was little feedback from readers. That changed when I went to retreats in Europe and the US, where teachers and sangha members expressed their gratitude for our work.

Regrettably, since Summer 2018 we have not been able to publish the Magazine regularly. Over the years, editors came and went, but the past few years I have been unable to find anyone new. One of the things I have learned is that without the help of others, I can't do it, so here it ends.

We have a wonderful Teacher and Sangha, so I have been reflecting on how to continue with interviews and publishing articles in other ways.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who gave me his confidence

and saw my ability to do this before I was aware of having the necessary qualities. It was a great privilege to interview the Teachers and Sangha members who shared their experiences. I want to thank the editors, proofreaders and all the people who have contributed during the past ten years to this Magazine. It was a great joy and practice to work with all them.

In this edition we bring you letters from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche whose plans for a sabbatical changed because of the COVID-19 outbreak; advice from H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche concerning the Corona-virus; and a report from the *Tenshug* ceremony for H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche.

This issue also contains interviews with Lishu Institute Teachers Geshe Sherab Lodoe and Sangmo Yangri, and with 3 Doors Senior Teacher Laura Shekerjian.

Also, you can read an extract from the book *Escape from Darkness* by Sangmo Yangri, a poem, an article published previously in the *Voice of Clear Light*, and a *Phowa* text, as well as news from Europe and information about the 3 Doors online courses.

In Bon,  
**Ton Bisscheroux, editor**





# A LETTER TO STUDENTS FROM TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

Following is a letter from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche from November 29th, 2019, to the Ligmincha International sangha related to his plans for a yearlong sabbatical in 2021.

To All My Students,

I send you my heartfelt greetings. After much reflection, I am writing to share with you an important decision that I have made. As you know, I always encourage people to look deeply into and reflect on their lives. I, too, reflect on my life, family, and spiritual practice. As I turn 60, I find that I want to spend more time with my family and make space for personal retreat. So, starting on January 3, 2021, I will be taking a yearlong sabbatical. This will be a time for me to actively engage with stillness, silence, and spaciousness and explore them in a new way.

From now until the end of 2020, I will continue my usual teaching schedule globally and online. During this time, I encourage all of you to participate as actively as you can. In 2021 my only scheduled teaching activities will be summer retreats at Serenity Ridge in the US and Chamma Ling in Poland. In January 2022 I will resume my regular schedule. While I am away, I will not actively engage in social media. This means that I won't have any scheduled Facebook Live events. When inspired I may occasionally share poems, thoughts, and reflections. I look forward to returning from my sabbatical and sharing its fruit with all of you.

Preserving and sharing this tradition is my life's mission. My goal has always been to help my beloved teachers, spread the teachings, and assist Bön lamas and centers in any ways that I can. Every year the teachings spread, and more people are finding these beautiful practices. I see them bring so much goodness to people's lives everywhere I go. Teaching, writing, connecting, and sharing is what energizes me. It is joyful, spontaneous, nourishing work, and it is indescribably rewarding. It is my calling.

As always, stay connected – now, and during my sabbatical – to the teachings, to one another, to me, and especially to yourselves. [Ligmincha International](#), [The 3 Doors](#), and [CyberSangha.net](#) offer so many ways to connect, practice, and grow. They exist to support you on your path. I hope that you will take full advantage of them.

With much love and many blessings, now and always,



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



# A LETTER FROM THE LIGMINCHA INTERNATIONAL BOARD

Following is a letter from Ligmincha International's Board from November 29th, 2019, to the Ligmincha International Sangha related to the plans for Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's yearlong sabbatical in 2021.



## Ligmincha International

Dear Sangha,

Rinpoche has maintained an extraordinarily full teaching and travel schedule for more than 30 years. The Board fully supports our Spiritual Director, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, in his wish to take a yearlong sabbatical beginning January 2021. We are glad that he can take this time to focus on his life, family, and personal practice. We know that Rinpoche looks forward to discovering and sharing his insights with all of us in 2022 as much as we await seeing him return.

We are writing to share additional information to assist you and your local, national, or cyber sanghas.

- Rinpoche's sabbatical does not begin for more than a year. There are many opportunities all around the world to practice with and receive teachings from Rinpoche in person before his sabbatical (Rinpoche's global teaching schedule for 2020 is attached).
- Rinpoche's last retreat of 2020 will be at Serenity Ridge. We encourage everyone who can to attend. For those who cannot travel to the center, we intend to make the entire retreat available online.
- During his yearlong sabbatical, Rinpoche will hold summer retreats in both Europe (at Chamma Ling in Wilga, Poland), and the US (at Serenity Ridge, in Virginia). We anticipate these two retreats will be fully attended. Please encourage anyone in your sangha wanting to attend either or both to register as soon as registration opens. These retreats are likely to sell out.
- Our resident lamas, Geshe Denma Gyaltsen, Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso, Lama Kalsang Nyima, and Lama Yungdrung Lodoe are all actively teaching, offering instruction, and performing rituals. They are teaching extensively in Europe, Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States. Our geshe and lamas are excellent teachers, and we encourage everyone to seek opportunities to be with them. Lishu, in India, also remains a place of long-term study during this time, under the guidance of Geshe Thupten Negi, Geshe Sherab Lodoe and Dr. Sangmo Yangri.
- We will be inviting other Bön lamas to teach at Ligmincha centers around the world. These will be wonderful opportunities to extend our connection to the Bön lineage.
- We will expand our live and online practice opportunities in many languages. The Dutch, English, German, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish communities are already practicing together online in real time. We continue to seek opportunities for group practice online and in person. If your community needs assistance developing online opportunities, please write to our president Rob Patzig or board member Frank Jeri, whose email addresses are below.

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- [CyberSangha.net](https://CyberSangha.net) is and will remain an important place for community, connection, and access to free recordings of Rinpoche's teachings. The CyberSangha team will be actively supporting the global community just as they have since Rinpoche began offering live webcasts.
- Online courses with Rinpoche will remain available and new ones are being developed. These can be found both on [LigminchaLearning.com](https://LigminchaLearning.com) and on [GlideWing.com](https://GlideWing.com). Our intention is to release new courses in advance of his sabbatical.

Our own experience in learning of Rinpoche's intention to take time away from teaching left us all feeling many different things: happiness, sadness, anxiety, surprise, and more. But we are reminded of a story Rinpoche often shares at retreat. He had the great good fortune to live with his teacher, His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche for many years. They no longer have many opportunities to see one another, but their connection is never broken — they are never apart from one another in their hearts and minds. Like them, this coming time is a special opportunity for each of us to experience the connection that comes from abiding in the inner refuge. We are always connected.

Rinpoche's goal, the goal of Ligmincha International's Board, and the goal of our staff over the course of the next year is to ensure that all of us stay connected and can support one another in 2021. We are actively planning for Rinpoche's return in 2022, with a full calendar of online and in-person activities. In the meantime, we are here to serve and support each of you. Please contact any of us if we can be of assistance to you or your sangha.

We ask your support in communicating Rinpoche's announcement and the contents of this letter to your community.

In service,

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## ANOTHER LETTER TO STUDENTS FROM TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE

Following is a letter from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche to the Ligmincha International Sangha related to the cancellation of his retreats scheduled in a number of European countries this spring. All of these retreats will be rescheduled in 2021. Rinpoche had previously announced plans for a yearlong sabbatical in 2021. Instead, he will be taking six months off in 2020 and six months in 2021. In the mean time the retreat in Buchenau, Germany is also cancelled.

March 02, 2020

Dear Sangha,

After much reflection, and in consultation with leaders in the European Ligmincha communities, I have decided to cancel my upcoming visits to Germany, Austria, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. I am committed to rescheduling all of the cancelled events in 2021, and I look forward to being in Europe to teach at Buchenau, Germany and in Wilga, Poland this summer.

My decision is a response to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. As an organization we are responsible for everyone who comes to our events. Until this situation is better understood and becomes more stable, we do not want to put anyone at risk or unintentionally help spread this disease. So, it is prudent to postpone these teachings and support efforts to contain the virus and prevent further outbreaks.

On my side, I feel that the universe is saying that I should take my sabbatical earlier and in a different way than I had planned. Instead of taking an entire year away from my teaching in 2021, I will take shorter periods for family, personal retreat and creative activity. And I will take these shorter breaks more often. I will take six months of time in 2020, and another six months in 2021.

In my opinion, all the news and reactivity about the virus is part of a collective fear manifesting in our responses to what is happening in the world. Recently there has been so much negativity in society and on social media, between politicians, political parties, religious groups and individuals. There is so much energy spent in defending and attacking, and in being separate or cut off from others. It is as if the world is saying, okay, you need to take a break from being mean to each other. Now we have an opportunity to set aside our differences and work together for a solution to stop the spread of the virus, care for the sick and support the families of its victims. We can use this situation and all that it brings us as an opportunity for personal and collective growth.

I encourage all of you to pray, as I do, for everyone who has been affected by this or any other sickness — those who have died, those who are sick, those quarantined, their families, their loved ones — and for the welfare of all the healthcare workers and first responders.

As always, I send each and every one of you my love and blessings.

*Tenzin Wangyal*

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche





# ADVICE FROM H.E. YONGDZIN TENZIN NAMDAK RINPOCHE

On March 29th, 2020 a video was posted online on YouTube with *His Eminence Yongdzin Rinpoche's Advice for Western sangha's* concerning the Corona-virus. Here is an edited transcript.

Hello! I am Tenzin Namdak. I want to speak to all the Shenten and Yungdrung Bon sangha members and to share with you that nowadays there are contagious diseases all over the world. Many people are very worried, and indeed one should worry. But, it is not necessary to let oneself be overwhelmed by the worry. I would like to ask all members to not think too much and don't worry excessively. Before a problem arises, it is not necessary to worry too much. Instead, listen to the advice of knowledgeable and concerned government and medical people. Keep oneself in isolation/social distance, avoid travelling and the many activities that may mean exposing yourself or others to the risk of spreading and/or catching the virus. It is necessary to carefully listen, obey and exercise the advice about prevention of the disease.

Especially for practitioners, I have already many times taught the *Healing practice of Sipa Gyalmo/ Yeshe Walmo*. I hope everyone of you has had the transmission and instruction of this practice for individual protection and prevention of diseases. The mantra of healing is *OM A BHI YA NAG PO BE SÖ SO HA*.



While reciting this mantra you should visualize Yeshe Walmo in the space in front of you, as illustrated in the image. The vase she holds is full of nectar and she pours a stream of nectar into your bowl, which you should have placed in front

of you, filled with clean water. Imagine and feel that your bowl is filled with healing nectar — that

the water in your bowl is infused with healing nectar and blessed by Yeshe Walmo. Reciting the mantra *OM A BHI YA NAG PO BE SÖ SO HA* many times, not only for short periods, but every day for quite a long time, should be done before any disease actually arrives. You should do this yourself and you should also advise others to recite the mantra. Doing these things can prevent the spread of the epidemic. This is said by Sipa Gyalmo herself and by the lineage master from whom I heard this teaching.

Also, some Tibetan medical people have produced a preventive herbal medicine called Nagpo Gujor. This powdered herbal medicine is wrapped in a piece of cloth, as a sachet. This should be kept around your neck and you should smell the herb every morning, and at any other time.

You should write the healing mantra *OM A BHI YA NAG PO BE SÖ SO HA* three times on a piece of any color cloth of about one square foot. Hang it at a high place, open to the sky, such as the rooftop of your house, like prayer flag. This can help to protect the whole area visible to the flag from the disease. You may also wear a protective amulet containing the healing mantra and seal of Sipa Gyalmo. There may be someone who knows or has experience making this who can help you.

All of these actions of hanging flags etc should be done along with recitation of the mantra and visualization of Yeshe Walmo holding a vase of nectar-water, so that the nectar-water in the vase falls into the water in your bowl, thus mixing together your water and the nectar-water of Yeshe Walmo. This blessed water should be used for purification by drinking or washing with it.

Followers who are capable of doing these practices should try them precisely as described. The main thing is to visualize Sipa Gyalmo with devotion and recite the mantra as much as you can. She said that reciting the mantra millions of times is important. The more times you recite the mantra, the better. But you should do it intensively, not only loosely remembering of it and saying the mantra only few times. Doing this is much better than too much worrying. That is what I wanted to say. Thank you!



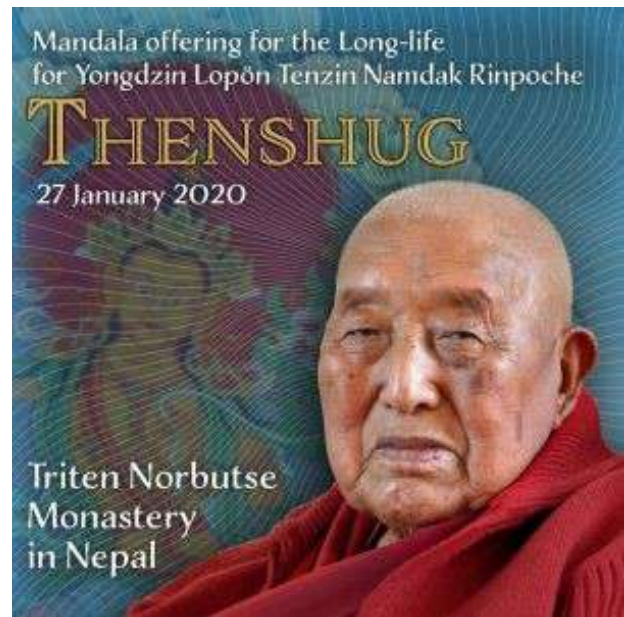


## TENSHUG FOR H.E. YONGDZIN LOPON TENZIN NAMDAK RINPOCHE

From January 22<sup>nd</sup> to January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Yungdrung Bon Academy of Higher Studies, called Shedra. On this auspicious occasion, the Monastery held many important rituals and events. One of them was a *Thenshug*, a Mandala offering for the Long-life for our most senior teacher and lineage holder, His Eminence Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche. Here is a report from Olivia Zsamboki.

Many Western disciples travelled to Kathmandu to participate in the *Thenshug*. For this occasion, all the Bonpo sisters and brothers around the world were invited to contribute to the Mandala offering for the Long-life for Yongdzin Rinpoche, as a way to show our aspiration and devotion, and express our heartfelt wish for him to stay with us at least one-hundred years.

The *Tenshug* ceremony took place at Tritten Norbutse Monastery, in Kathmandu, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This date is also special since Yongdzin Rinpoche celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday in January. On this auspicious occasion, the Monastery performed a Long-Life offering. His Western center, Shenten Dargye Ling in France, invited the worldwide Western Bonpo sangha to participate



through a joint effort and perform one Long-life offering to Lopon at the same time.

We are all connected to Lopon largely because our teacher is and was his student for so long. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's main teacher is Yongdzin Rinpoche, and he lived many years with him.

Through his kindness and ceaseless effort to spread the Yungdrung Bon, we have the precious opportunity to learn the Buddha's teaching and enter to the Path of Liberation. So, this *Tenshug* was a great opportunity for all of us to express our gratitude and care to him.



The shrine at Tritten Norbutse Monastery during the *Thenshug* ceremony.











*Tenshug* literally means “to stay firmly” or “stay everlasting.” This ritual is performed for an important master in order to create the conditions and merit to extend his lifespan. This is also an occasion for the students to express their devotion towards their master who keeps the Buddha’s teaching and spreads it untiringly, and to fulfill all his wishes. During a *Tenshug*, along the prayers, we traditionally offer special objects, such as a Mandala offering plate, a statue, holy scriptures, a stupa, a full set of new monk robe, a cushion for the lama, chakshing – the eight auspicious symbols, the seven precious royal emblems, the five offerings, namgye, torma, rakta, and medicine. Before the offering of the items, a puja that lasts several days is performed.

In order to perform the *Tenshug* ceremony, offering items of high quality were needed. Sanghas and sangha members individually could support and participate through contribution to

the expenses of the ritual. In addition, sangha members could accumulate the Long-Life Mantra for the health of Yongdzin Rinpoche until the ceremony.

Ligmincha International collected more than six million mantras for Lopon, offered to him by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Besides the mantras, money and other gifts were also offered to Yongdzin Rinpoche and the monastery. Many representatives of Ligmincha sanghas worldwide attended the events.

Since many Western students were not able to travel to Nepal, in January 2020, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Ligmincha International hosted a series of activities online and at our centers around the world.

**Text and photos by Olivia Zsamboki**



# CONNECTING TO THE TEACHERS OF LISHU INSTITUTE

In July and August 2019 two teachers from Lishu Institute, Geshe Sherab Lodoe and Sangmo Yangri, travelled through Europe. During the Summer Retreat in Buchenau, Germany during August, 2019 Florian Bruckmann and Ton Bisscheroux had a conversation with them.

**Florian:** I am really thankful that you came all the way to Europe to connect to us. I think this is the beginning of a good collaboration.

**Sangmo Yangri:** For me it was a massive experience to explore the European world, meeting all the people. By meeting people personally the warmth became stronger.

**Ton:** Geshe-la, can you tell about your trip through Europe?

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe:** Our foremost gratitude goes to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche; we are here because of him. Second, we thank Oliver Wirtz and Florian Bruckmann, who made this visit to Europe possible, and made our trip through Europe



Sangmo Yangri, Florian Bruckmann, Geshe Sherab Lodoe and Oliver Wirtz in Buchenau, Germany.



Geshe Sherab Lodoe, Sangmo Yangri, Ton Bisscheroux and Florian Bruckmann.

comfortable. For me it felt like my parents were around me. We appreciate the great support from all the sanghas in Europe.

This was the first time I visited the Ligmincha centers, and I felt connected to all these sanghas. Meeting people in person brought me closer to them. Wherever I taught in these centers I was happy to see that people were interested and had a great longing for these teachings. I don't know if I am right or wrong, but I feel the organizations are scattered, and I think it would be good if all the members of Ligmincha could meet once or twice a year to share their wisdom with each other and talk about development and support, and discuss needs so they can help one another. That would help develop the centers all over the world. I know everybody is busy and has his or her own priorities, so if they can't meet in person, they could use technology, like Skype or Zoom.

**Florian:** I agree with you. In the past Rinpoche was invited to several countries, and then sanghas would be created in those countries. Now we are growing worldwide, together with the other sanghas. Along with Menri Monastery and Lishu Institute we want to develop a strong community. Wherever you go, you feel at home.

**Ton:** I think that two decisive reasons why sanghas are spread all over Europe is that many people don't want to travel too far to practice together and they prefer to practice in their own language.







**Florian: Geshe-la, how do you like Europe?**

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe:** My first impression was that it is very tight and clean. It is free from plastic. In India we see plastic everywhere. The rivers in Europe all flow neatly and look very clean. The weather is suitable, people have all kind of facilities. My impression of people is that they value and respect time.

When I came from India I had the opinion that Eastern and Western people are different from each other. But meeting the people here I can feel that deep down all the people are the same: everybody seeks happiness, they need compassion, they come to receive the teachings, they practice and support each other. On the outside there may be differences, but at a deeper layer they are all the same.

**Ton: Did you see differences in culture or environment in the different countries here in Europe?**

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe:** Just a little. I belong to Tibet, and there are mountains everywhere, and we live in small communities. In Europe the cities look very similar, no mountains, and the fields are very flat. Looking at the mentality I see a huge difference between the Eastern and Western mentality: the way of talking, thinking, eating. The people I met here are very sensitive.

### **Bio Geshe Sherab Lodoe:**

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe** was born in 1975 in a Bonpo village called Tsarong, located in the Kham region in Tibet. He comes from a Bonpo family and his father was a tantric practitioner in the Monastery of Wadag Bon Gon, in Tibet.

He began his education with Lama Sherab Lodoe from the Tro Tsang lineage. He then obtained the preliminary teachings from Kalsang Yungdrung, Abbot of Ta Gon Monastery. At age 21 he was ordained as a novice monk by Kalsang Yonten Gyatso from the Amdo region. A year later he went on pilgrimage to the sacred mountain Kongpo Bon Ri and made more than one-hundred circumambulations around the holy mountain. For most people it takes 3 or 4 days to make one circumambulation, but Sherab Lodoe did one circumambulation per day. While doing the circumambulations he heard about Menri Monastery and had an inner calling to go there. He decided to undertake the extremely difficult journey of walking from Tibet to Nepal through the Himalayan region. He reached Nepal and from there he proceeded to India, finally arriving at Menri Monastery in February 1999. That year, on the auspicious fifth day of the Tibetan New Year — which is also the birthday of one of the greatest Bon Masters, Nyamed Sherab Gyalsten, who established Menri Monastery in the 14<sup>th</sup> century — he was given his monk's ordination by His Holiness the 33<sup>rd</sup> Trinzin Lungtok Tenpa Nyima Rinpoche and His Eminence Menri Ponlop Trinley Nyima Rinpoche. One month later he was admitted to the Bon Dialectic School of Menri Monastery. He studied Dzogchen, Tantra, Sutra and all the other ten major and minor sciences of Bon tradition. After fifteen years of intensive studies and practice he received his Geshe degree in 2014. During his studies, he gave lectures to the young monks. In addition, he was elected as the president of the Bon dialectic school at Menri Monastery and was the treasurer for a year. Furthermore, he was appointed by His Holiness Menri Trinzin Lungtok Tenpa Nyima Rinpoche to represent the Bon tradition at conferences involving the main five Tibetan Buddhism schools (Bon, Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya).

In 2018 he volunteered to come and to teach at Lishu Institute, where Dr. Sangmo Yangri was then the only teacher.





### **Bio Sangmo Yangri:**

Dr. Sangmo Yangri is a scholar, teacher, translator and the first Tibetan woman to receive a Ph.D. in Tibetan Bon studies.

She was born in Solan, India in 1980, close to Menri. She has been immersed in the Bon tradition and culture from early childhood as her father was a close friend and disciple of His Holiness Menri Trinzin Lungtok Tenpa Nyima Rinpoche and His Eminence Lopon Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.

She received her Master of Philosophy Bon philosophy in 2007 at the Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS) in Varanasi, India. Her thesis was on *The twelve interdependent originations in the Bon tradition*. She then completed a Master of Philosophy in Buddhist philosophy, writing her M.Phil thesis on *The lineage of Bhikshuni ordination in Bon tradition*. At CUTS the five Tibetan schools are represented; however the other four schools had Ph.D. students, whereas nobody besides Dr. Yangri did such in-depth studies in the Bon tradition. She felt it would serve the preservation of the Bon tradition and inspire other students, especially female students, if she were to do a Ph.D. in the Bon tradition. She completed her Ph.D. in Bon and Buddhist traditions in 2013, with a Ph.D. thesis dealing with the *Analysis of the traditional exposition of the way in which the world came into existence according to Bon tradition and Buddhism*. She received the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund for two years and in 2013 her work was given the Prime Minister (Sikyong) Award by the Tibetan Exile Government in India. She has written and published several articles and has been invited several times as a speaker at the Seminar on

Yungdrung Bon tradition at Menri Monastery, and has participated in several international conferences about Bon and Buddhism. She was interviewed on Voice of America's Tibetan News for her achievements. She edited the great scholar Palden Tsultrim's *A commentary on the Three Ornaments of Poetry* and in 2019 translated and published *Escape from Darkness – The Spiritual Journey of Buddha's daughter Shenza Nechung*.

During 2014 she taught on a voluntary basis at the Ratna Menling nunnery in Dolanji giving guidance to all the Bon philosophy nun students and preparing new study materials for them. In 2015, she was appointed as a teacher at the Lishu Institute by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and has given lectures on the Nine Ways of Bon, the hagiography of Buddha Tonpa Sherab Miwo and on the Tibetan language.

### **Ton: Sangmo, how did you experience Europe?**

**Sangmo:** I have the same outer experience as Geshe-la; the environment is very clean and green. When I talked to people in the different parts of Europe I saw that people deep inside are all the same: they have the same feeling of loneliness and rejection, fear and longing for love and companionship.

I talked with sangha members and their families. In Finland we had a *Phowa* retreat in a school in the countryside. People said that many years ago there was a school in the countryside. When people moved to the city, the school was closed. That is similar in India, where the younger generation moves to the cities for jobs, and older people stay behind. The same issues are everywhere: climate change, global warming and leaving the countryside.

Before I came I expected that European countries would be very cold. My mother had also that impression. She put several warm sweaters in my luggage. When I saw Hollywood movies I always saw people wear warm clothes. But when I came here I hardly wore warm clothes because everywhere it was hot. Global warming is generating a great fear. In India it is normal to experience hot weather. I thought that in Finland it is always cold, but when we did the retreat it was hot.





Teaching in Wilga, Poland.

**Florian: Sangmo, why did you choose to study at a University and not in a monastery?**

**Sangmo:** As child I had a close connection with His Holiness the 33<sup>rd</sup> Menri Trizin Rinpoche, His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, with geshe and senior monks. So, I received the great teachings of the Bon tradition in a natural way. I had no intention of becoming a nun, and only monks and nuns can study in the monastery and nunnery. And at the time I started to study, the Geshe course could only be done by monks. Now we also have a Geshe-ma course in the nunnery. So, for me it was not possible to study in this way. In Varanasi I did two master studies and a Ph.D. The university is open to monks, nuns and lay people to study, male and female, Eastern and Western students. They offer high philosophical teachings similar to a monastery. We could study all the higher philosophy studies of the Bon and Buddhist traditions as well as teachings like Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi and English, history and economy, etc.

**Ton: You have the title 'lama.' Can you explain what lama means, and how you got it?**

**Sangmo:** Lama is a combination of two words 'la' and 'ma.' 'La' is a short form of *la-na-med-pa*, which means most supreme or unsurpassable. So, it refers to a person whose wisdom is unsurpassable, most supreme. 'Ma' refers to mother, which represents a great quality of love and compassion. A lama is a teacher who has the quality of wisdom and compassion. In early Tibetan Buddhism this term was not very much used, but later the title lama became more popular. You could call everybody with the qualities of wisdom and compassion a lama. I am not a lama, but it was Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's



Visit to the [Liebfrauenkirche](#) in Frankfurt, Germany.

great kindness when he suggested that people should address me as lama. We have a 'Ligmincha lama group,' and Rinpoche included me in that.

When you look at it as an academic title it is different. At the university you get the title Doctor or Ph.D. When you have finished the Geshe course in a monastery or nunnery you are called Geshe or Geshe-ma, they are not called lama. Lama has very many meanings on the inner, outer and secret level. Also historically there have been many meanings for the title lama. I could write a whole book on the meaning of lama. I see the word lama as a quality, rather than limited to someone who should have a red rope.

**Florian: Sangmo, can you tell us more about your family?**

**Sangmo:** I have a very loving, compassionate and supportive family. My father died in 2005. He was a great practitioner. He was a former monk of Gur Gyam Monastery. He was a student of Khyung Tul Rinpoche who was a master in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1897-1955), and was one of the greatest masters in that century. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is regarded as a reincarnation of that lama [read the article in [Ligmincha Europe Magazine # 5](#)].

Before the Chinese came to his place, my father escaped from Tibet in 1959. When he came with his master to India he took on his yaks many Bon scriptures, written in gold and silver. He preserved many old and precious texts. He could have carried personal belongings on the yaks, but for him the Bon texts were more valuable. Later my father offered all these precious texts to Yongdzin Rinpoche.







Sangmo Yangri with her husband and son.

He married my mother, who was 27 years younger. My mother belonged to a good family, and she lost her father at a young age. There is a story that he was poisoned. At age 17 or 18 my mother was brought, by her uncle to Dolanji, the village where Menri Monastery was situated. At that time many people living there had fled from Tibet to India. It was a rough time, so my mother had to be brought into a safe family, otherwise it would have been very difficult for her. My father was asked to marry her, but first he refused because of the gap in the age. When my mother's uncle, who was a great monk, summoned him, he finally accepted the marriage.

My parents had three children: two boys and me. My eldest brother has a business and helps my mother. And my other brother is the principal teacher and abbot of the dialectic school of Menri Monastery. He has been teaching in Menri Monastery for more than fifteen years.

I have been married since 2015, and my husband is very supportive and loving. We have a son, born in 2017. It is because of my strong and supportive family that I can do what I am doing now. Because of them I could travel to Europe. I see my mother as my inspiration and as my best friend. In every phase of my life she encouraged and supported me. She never let me do any work in household and told me to study. She always told me not to

worry about the family. In 2005 she lost her husband and we had a rough situation without a stable income, but she never put any burden on me. There are no words that can express my gratitude towards her.

I had a lot of challenges in my life, but they never discouraged me. And I am so lucky and fortunate with my family. My husband studied at the same university. He dedicated ten years to the Za-Mongyal-Yungdrung-Ling Bon Monastery, founded by Kungtrul Rinpoche, that is close to Lishu Institute. He spent his childhood at the Bon Children's Home in Menri Monastery. He leads a simple life, he never demands anything and never complains. He practices Dharma in a real life and had a clear understanding about all the samsaric ups and downs. For him my mission is bigger than his, so he takes care of our child.

**Florian: You wrote a book about a female Bon practitioner, Shenza Nechung. Can you tell how that project evolved?**

**Sangmo:** When I was at the University I spend a lot of time in the library. While reading the spiritual texts and books I found many life stories about female practitioners, about their achievements and realizations. In the Bon tradition we are more familiar with the life stories of the male practitioners and their achievements, realizations and lineage. There is a lot of wisdom,





and we are grateful for that. And there is a part that is neglected. In the Bon texts you can find many texts about great female practitioners, and in the oral recordings they talk a lot about their achievements. All these life stories were in the minds of people, and it was appreciated, but not put in the light.

At Lishu Institute I met all kinds of Western people, and we often talked about this topic. With the help of Anja Benesch, Anna-Kaisa Hirvanen, Tiana Tefy, Iwona Zawadzka, Rob Patzig, Vicky Walter and Marcy Vaughn, I was able to write the first book about a female practitioner. In 2017 during the ceremony for His Holiness Anja, Anna-Kaisa and I met and talked in the Protectors Temple, and the project of my book *Escape from Darkness – The Spiritual Journey of the Buddha's Daughter Shenpa Nechung* manifested.

Tenpo Shenrap Miwo is the founder of the Yundrung Bon teachings. His story includes his family: he was married and had several sons and two daughters. About his sons there are many books, but about his daughters there is not so much known. Both his daughters were great practitioners. The younger one is more commonly recognized and so I thought it would be good to highlight her life story, and it felt good to begin with her story this female practitioners project. I have a list of other female practitioners and their work, but they are not very well known. My second book will be on the *Bardo* teachings by a female practitioner, who attained a rainbow body.

**Ton: Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche said that in the West we ask a lot of questions, while Tibetans are more devoted — they just listen to teachings and don't ask questions. What is your view?**

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe:** Personally, I really like it when somebody asks a question. I don't appreciate devotion with lack of wisdom. There are practitioners who had a blind devotion and later they suffered because of their ignorance. Devotion plus Wisdom is what I mostly appreciate. I don't appreciate devotion and stupidity. I have also seen Europeans with a lack of devotion, for example when they put a sacred text on the floor. That conduct makes me feel uncomfortable.

**Sangmo Yangri:** I think it is a matter of cultural differences. I don't think people here do it

intentionally, but they do it out of ignorance.

**Florian:** The German sangha wrote about it in the Gompa etiquette, but obviously we did not emphasize this enough. Sometimes people say they are Dzogchen practitioners and that we don't need to adapt to the Tibetan culture. But that is a mistake. Those people misunderstand Dzogchen and don't know much about Sutra and Tantra conduct, or about not engaging in negative deeds or pride. As a Western practitioner I see that some people have no clue about the whole system of teachings, and yet still say "We are Dzogchen practitioners. This is the best, and the rest we don't need."

**Sangmo Yangri:** I agree. If someone has really understood Dzogchen then all these qualities will spontaneously manifest. But some people are stuck in thinking that they 'know' what Dzogchen is.

**Ton: Can you talk about the students coming to Lishu Institute?**

**Sangmo Yangri:** Lishu Institute was founded in 2008 and has been operating since 2015. The program provides learners with an in-depth study and practice of the three main streams of teachings of Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen. We started with a program for three years, with three semesters of ten weeks. We concluded this program in June 2018. The first year we taught the *Nine Ways of Bon*, the second year was on the *Six Methods of the Mother Tantra* and the third year was about the *Four Cycles of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud Teachings*. In this period we had thirty-six students from ten different countries. One student from France did the whole 3-years cycle. Several students have done one or two years of this cycle. From Hungary we had three participants, who have studied for two years. Now they all are able to support their sangha. The Finnish sangha profits from the long term studies done by Anna-Kaisa Hirvanen at Lishu Institute. We had students from all over Europe, the US and Mexico.

After this cycle we changed the program because we found out this commitment for 10 weeks is difficult for most Western students. Now people can come for two weeks, one month or two months, so more people can benefit from the teachings at Lishu Institute.



**Florian:** We want to send one or two sangha members from Germany who are dedicated and have time. We will do fundraising to make it financially possible for them to go for one to three months. When they come back they can share their experiences.

**Ton: Sangmo, can you tell how you became a teacher at Lishu Institute?**

When I was working on my Ph.D. in 2013, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche asked me if I wanted to teach at Lishu Institute in the future. I was lucky to be asked, because Lishu Institute is a great place for lay practitioners, and for me it is a platform to grow more and more.

**Florian: Can you tell more about the daily program you offer at Lishu Institute?**

A typical schedule of Lishu Institute is: four practice sessions, two teaching periods. *Sang* ritual is performed in the morning, prayers to the protectors in the evening, and at night we perform a *Chöd* practice.

For students there are also possibilities after the retreat to visit Menri Monastery and other nearby monasteries and stupas. In January – February, 2020 we had a *Powa* and *Bardo* retreat from *Mother Tantra*. We had another 4-week retreat in February – March, 2020 with *trekchöd* and *tögal* from the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud* teachings.

Lishu is a beautiful place to stay, with nice rooms and a great view. These circumstances support practice. Geshe Thupten Negi will help foreign students in getting the permits needed. You can find the latest updates about the teaching

program on the [Lishu Institute webpage](#) and [Lishu Institute Facebook page](#).

**Ton: When you want to study at Lishu Institute do you have to know the Tibetan language?**

**Sangmo Yangri:** No. In the first year program we taught Tibetan so that people could read the original texts. Now though, Geshe Sherab Lodoe teaches Dzogchen and Tantra in Tibetan and I translate it into English.

**Ton: Is there something you want to say to conclude this interview?**

**Sangmo:** Yesterday, during the info evening here in Buchenau I felt a great connection between the Ligmincha sanghas, The 3 Doors Academy and Lishu Institute. They are different manifestations from one source and all three branches are great paths of the Bon teachings. For me these three branches of the Bon tree, offered by Tenzin Wangyal, are opportunities for all kinds of people according to their needs.

Tonpa Shenrab Miwo has taught nine different ways, according to the differing capacity of practitioners. Lishu Institute is a more traditional approach for Westerners who want to understand the teachings in more depth. The monastic part of the teachings would not work for most Western practitioners.

**Florian: Maybe we can invite you in the future for trainings in Europe.**

**Geshe Sherab Lodoe and Sangmo Yangri:** We would gladly accept your invitation.

**Interview by Florian Bruckmann and Ton Bisscheroux**



Sangmo Yangri talks about Lishu Institute at the info evening in Buchenau.



## Online Courses

### May – June 2020 — Untying the Knots of Limitation

**Laura Shekerjian**

6 prerecorded classes with guided practices,  
2 live online practice and discussion sessions

### May – June 2020 — Embracing Death in the Inner Refuge

**Marcy Vaughn**

6 prerecorded classes with guided practices,  
3 live online practice and discussion sessions

### September 2020 – May 2021 — The 3 Doors Online Compassion Project

**Marcy Vaughn and Gabriel Rocco**

9 month online program

### October – December 2020 — Igniting the Fire of Creativity

**Marcy Vaughn**

6 prerecorded classes with guided practices,  
3 live online practice and discussion sessions

### December 2020 – January 2021 — The Healing Power of Silence

**Gabriel Rocco**

6 prerecorded classes with guided practices

[www.the3doors.org](http://www.the3doors.org)





# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN EUROPE

Here is our report of what's been happening in the European sanghas. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Sangmo Yangri and Geshe Sherap Lodoe (teachers at Lishu Institute), visited Europe. Some sanghas invited *Geshes* and other teachers.



**August 13-18, 2019:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught during the European Summer Retreat in Buchenau, Germany, on *Twenty-One Nails*.



**August 20-25, 2019:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught in Wilga, Poland, on *Inner Heat and Bliss*.







**September 13-15, 2019:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught on *Sherap Chamma* in Rome, Italy.



**September 6-8, 2019:**

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught on *Spontaneous Creativity* in Budapest, Hungary.



**January 3-5, 2020:**

Chokhortshang Rinpoche taught the *Practice of Tsewang Rigdzin* in Budapest, Hungary.







**November 8-10, 2019:**  
Sangha weekend with Geshe Choehortshang Rinpoche, who taught on *The Six Lamps* in Biezenmortel, The Netherlands.



**March 6-11, 2020:**  
Marcy Vaughn guided in the Pauenhof (Germany) the practices of *Sherap Chamma* and *Sipé Gyalmo*.







**January 8-12, 2020:**

*Direct Introduction into the Primordial Wisdom State of Mind according to the Ma Gyud (Mother Tantra) with Drubdra Khenpo Tsultrim Tenzin Rinpoche in Bratislava, Slovakia.*



**February 21-23, 2020:**

Wolfgang Krebs guided the sangha weekend in Hofheim am Taunus, Germany.





Free & live at [f tenzinwangyalrinpoche](#) | Learn more at [cybersangha.net](#)



## PRAYERS AND MANTRA

### [The Mantra of Clear Light](#)

July 21, 2019

### [The Mantra of Liberation](#)

July 28, 2019

### [The Mantra of Purification](#)

August 4, 2019



## SERVING OTHERS

### [Opening Your Heart with Gratitude — Q & A](#)

October 28, 2019

### [Cultivating Compassion](#)

November 21, 2019

### [Cultivating Compassion for Our Natural World](#)

December 12, 2019

### [Retrieving the Elemental Essences from Nature](#)

December 19, 2019

### [Opening to a Deeper Wisdom](#)

January 16, 2020



## PITH INSTRUCTIONS: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE HEART ESSENCE OF DZOGCHEN

### [To Forgive Is to Be Forgiven](#)

August 28, 2019

### [To Accept Is to Be Accepted](#)

September 4, 2019

### [Feeding Your Strengths, Not Weaknesses](#)

September 11, 2019

### [Through the Eyes of the Heart](#)

September 18, 2019



## PITH INSTRUCTIONS: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE HEART ESSENCE OF DZOGCHEN

### [Facing Fear, Finding Peace](#)

March 15, 2020

### [Discovering Your Refuge Within](#)

March 19, 2020

### [Making Friends with Your Fear](#)

March 21, 2020

### [Being Playful with Your Fear](#)

March 26, 2020

### [Dancing with Your Fear](#)

March 28, 2020







## DEVOTION TO THE MASTER YONGDZIN RINPOCHE

### Devotion to the Master Yongdzin Rinpoche, and Personal Stories

January 26, 2020

### Mandala Offering and Long-Life Practice for Yongdzin Rinpoche

January 26, 2020



## THE SHERAP CHAMMA PRACTICE

### Full Moon Meditation on Sherap Chamma

February 9, 2020



## CONVERSATIONS LIVE

### Poetry From the Heart: Tibetan Women's Voices

August 11, 2019

### Poetry of Tibet

December 15, 2019

### The Power of Forgiveness

January 4, 2020

### Tibetan Kunye Massage and External Therapies

January 8, 2020

### Meet the Teachers: The 3 Doors

February 26, 2020

### Fear as a Doorway to Liberation, Part 1

Apr 11, 2020

### Fear as a Doorway to Liberation, Part 2

April 25, 2020

## LIVING AND DYING

### Prayers and Rituals for Healing

April 1, 2020

### Bardo Teachings on Living and Dying

Apr 18, 2020



## MUSIC FROM THE HEART

### Music From the Heart, Session 1

March 29, 2020

### Music From the Heart, Session 2

April 26, 2020

### Music From the Heart, Session 3

May 3, 2020

## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Special News on CyberSangha

October 17, 2019

### Welcome to Our New Website!

October 17, 2019

### Connecting with the Sky and Nature

May 5, 2020

# FULL MOON SERIES 2020 – A LITTLE WORK AND A LOT OF JOY

The first Ligmincha Zoom Marathon was on January 11, 2020, where mantras were recited together for the Long Life of His Eminence Yongdzin Rinpoche. On February 9, 2020 a cycle of Zoom Marathons started on the full Moon of every month with the *Sherap Chamma Meditation and Recitation*.

It started with our first Zoom Marathon in January. Inspired by the commitment of many, the idea was born to recite Mantras together over a 24 hour period for the Long Life of His Eminence Yongdzin Rinpoche, and to present them along with the many other collected Mantras to Yongdzin Rinpoche during the *Thenshug*.

This was such a positive experience that Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche immediately came with a new idea: to do the *Sherap Chamma Meditation and Recitation* every month at full moon.

In a few weeks the Development Team put this wonderful series on its feet, receiving much support from the Ligmincha worldwide sangha. 74 Mantra Hosts from 21 countries in 16 shifts of 90 minutes each participate in this wonderful monthly event. All of them have contributed and continue to contribute to the fact that a little bit of work has become a lot of joy.

In April we calculated a total of nearly 2.500 hours of mantra recitation. More than 1.000 computers and other devices logged in at one time or another, and many of them had more than one person participating.

Rinpoche said: "It was wonderful being able to join a couple of times, together with my family, Tsering and Senghe. I'm looking forward to the next 24-hour practice on June 5."

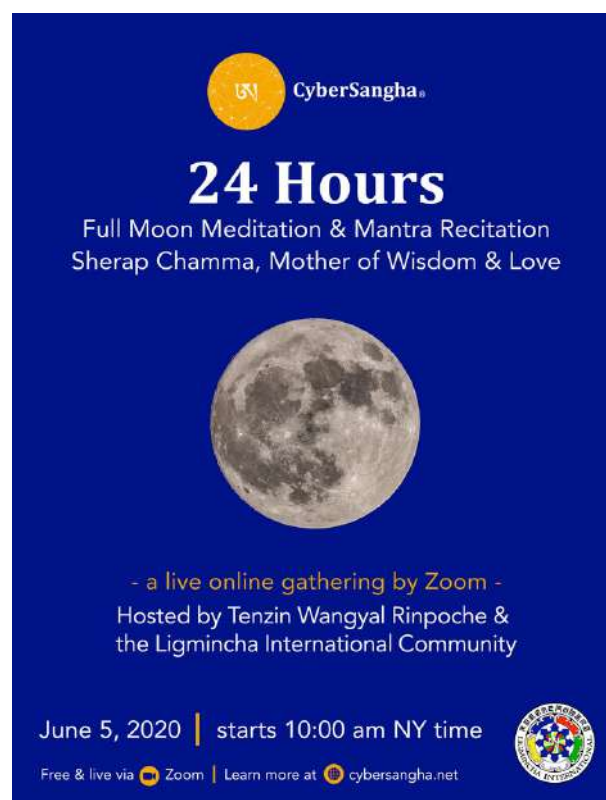
You can read more about the Full Moon Series at [www.cybersangha.net/24-full-moon](http://www.cybersangha.net/24-full-moon).

The dates for 2020 are:

June 5  
July 5  
August 3  
September 2  
October 1  
October 31  
November 30  
December 30

All sessions start at 16.00 h Central European Time (10 am New York Time) and continue for 24 hours, until the next day, 16.00 h Central European Time (10 am New York Time).

We are looking forward to your participation. Please [register](#) in advance for this free Zoom meeting.



The poster has a dark blue background. At the top left is the CyberSangha logo, which consists of a yellow circle with a Tibetan symbol inside, followed by the text 'CyberSangha®'. Below this, the text '24 Hours' is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath that, in a smaller white font, is 'Full Moon Meditation & Mantra Recitation' followed by 'Sherap Chamma, Mother of Wisdom & Love'. In the center of the poster is a large, detailed image of a full moon. Below the moon, the text '- a live online gathering by Zoom -' is written in a smaller white font, followed by 'Hosted by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche & the Ligmincha International Community'. At the bottom left, it says 'June 5, 2020 | starts 10:00 am NY time'. Below that, in a very small font, is 'Free & live via Zoom | Learn more at cybersangha.net'. At the bottom right is a circular seal with a colorful design and text around the border.



# DAILY ONLINE GOMPA

As a response to the COVID-19 virus a daily Online Gompa, where mantras are recited together, is offered since March 16, 2020 for common practice to our Sangha.

As recommended by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, the Ligmincha Sangha is praying for all those who are affected by the coronavirus or any other sickness: the deceased, the sick, those in quarantine, their families, their relatives and for the welfare of all the health care workers and first responders.

Many Bonpo practitioners collect Mantras of the female Protector Yeshe Walmo. Her practice is dedicated to providing strong protection and support in times of illness, epidemics and generally in relation to healing:

ཨོཾ་ཨ་བྱི་ལ་ནག་པ་བློ་བྱ་ལྷ་མོ། ཨོཾ་

## OM A BHI YA NAG PO BÉ SÖ SOHA

There are various practices and Deities recommended by our Lamas in the Yungdrung Bon tradition at times like these. All these practices are the same in essence. One can practice what one feels a connection to and for which appropriate teachings have been received. Reciting as many mantras as possible and dedicating it for the welfare of beings is very beneficial.

**May all beings benefit!**

On the initiative of Ligmincha Italy and Ligmincha Germany we offer our Sangha a daily Online Gompa as a platform for common practice. This practice is a meeting of practitioners and it is not guided, and several senior students join daily.

We meet daily from 19.00 h to 20.00 h Central

European Time. Our online Gompa is [Zoom](#) based. We would like to ask you to enter the room in silence and if possible to participate for the whole hour. You can unmute your microphone so that you can be heard, while being in a silent atmosphere.


**We will start at 19.00 h sharp and proceed the following structure:**

1. *Guru Yoga*
2. *Refuge*
3. *Bodhichitta*
4. *Mantra Recitation of the female Protector Yeshe Walmo*
5. *Dedication*

**Further information:**

- Cost: Free
- Schedule: daily from 19.00-20.00 h Central European Time (1-2 pm New York Time)
- Zoom Meeting ID:  
[www.gompa.ligmincha.eu](http://www.gompa.ligmincha.eu)


### Daily Online Gompa



ཨོཾ་ཨ་བྱི་ལ་ནག་པ་བློ་བྱ་ལྷ་མོ། ཨོཾ་  
Om Aa Bhiya Nagpo Bhed Sod SoHa

Daily since March 16, 2020 | 7-8 pm  
Central European time

You can join in zoom through [www.gompa.ligmincha.eu](http://www.gompa.ligmincha.eu) - The session is unguided; several senior students join daily. Please join for the full hour of this joint mantra recitation. Microphone can be unmuted as long as no background noise is introduced.







# ONE MOMENT OF INATTENTION

## One moment of inattention and it's gone

*Ton Bisscheroux*



# PACKED AND READY FOR WHATEVER'S NEXT

In the *Summer 2019 Edition of Buddhadharma* an interview on *Phowa* with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was published. We reprint the article.

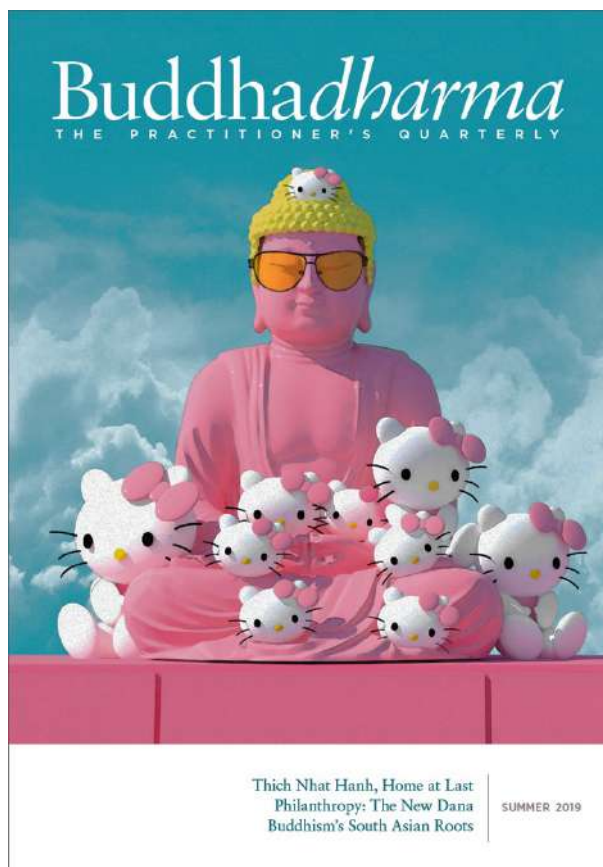
Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche offers a fresh teaching on *phowa* practice and how navigating the various transitions in our lives, including the very small ones, lays a foundation for navigating the much bigger ones when they come.



Illustration by Danai Tsouloufa.

In the most basic sense, *phowa*, as practiced in Tibetan Bön Buddhism, centers on the transference of consciousness at the moment of death. These teachings can prepare us to project our consciousness directly into a pure realm at the time of death, increasing our chance for liberation in a single lifetime. The time of our death may feel remote and unconnected from our day-to-day reality, but *phowa* begins now, in this realm of existence. Every day, we undergo a seemingly endless parade of transitions, from the mundane – one day, one week, or one year into the next – to major life transitions that can be much more difficult to adjust to. By recognizing each transition – recognizing that we have a choice, becoming aware, and then letting go of our attachment – we also prepare ourselves for the great transition at the time of death.

My teacher Yongdzin Rinpoche once said to me that the purpose of practicing *phowa* is to “be packed and ready” when the great moment of our passing approaches. Being packed and ready means just as we are, not bringing anything with us. Whether we are crossing to the other side of this life or simply passing from one phase of life to



another, we endeavor to enter empty-handed. Tibetan Bön Buddhist teachings tell us that transitions themselves – even the great transition at the end of this life – are not the cause of suffering; it is our insistence on trying to take things with us that's the problem. We can't take anything, and in trying to do so we disturb our minds. So, our practice is to work with ourselves and that sense of attachment, because we all find something – usually many things – to become attached to.

***We must pay attention and be willing to change.***

When you walked into the room where you are now sitting, at the very moment of entering, how fully did you walk in? How conscious were you as you crossed the threshold? How much of your “stuff” – your stories, plans, replayed conversations, the lingering discomfort in your mind and emotions – did you bring in with you? Every moment of transition is an opportunity to practice awareness and clarity, to learn about ourselves, to see the ways we become stuck, and to let go. Each time we practice this, we can reflect a little more and be open to seeing our habitual patterns. We





must pay attention and be willing to change. And if we find ourselves resisting change, we can pray that we will change: *"I know I need to change. May I change. Give me the strength to change."*



Different transitions challenge our attachments in different ways. Just going from one day to another – Friday into Saturday – is not so hard for most of us. But what about going from one season to another, one year to another, one job to another, one relationship to another? Each of these transitions becomes harder as our attachments and expectations around them increase. Perhaps you are used to being able to get up and run or jog each day. There may come a time when this is no longer possible, and you must forget about jogging. That kind of change can be very difficult to adapt to. Maybe you've always had one kind of relationship with your parents, but now it's become another kind of relationship. Now, instead of gathering for barbecues or parties, maybe you visit them in a hospital or nursing home and hold their hands. It's a change. You are not used to it. It's hard to transition to the new phase of life if you're still attached to the previous one.

Because bigger transitions are more difficult, we must focus on our ability to let go now. If you look at this moment of your life, right now, how many things could you let go of? Think of one thing at this moment that you are attached to, that you're identifying with, that you are holding onto, that causes pain. Perhaps you have a difficult relationship with someone in your life because of a grudge you are holding onto, or perhaps your attachment to the relationship itself is holding you back. Now compare how hard it would be to let go of that attachment with the letting go you will

have to do at the time of your death. Which would you prefer, dying or letting go of that attachment? There's no question, right? You would let go of that attachment. So why not just go ahead and do it?

With awareness, we can see that when we struggle with a transition, it has something to do with an attachment, whether to an identity or to something external. If you let that one thing go, and then another thing and another and another, then all the smaller things you can let go of will help you to be free. Each act of letting go benefits you, making it easier to let go of the harder things that will come along the way. If we do not apply ourselves to these opportunities to let go, if we can't handle the little things that come along, then we are certain to have a harder time with the big things.



Letting go is like cleaning your garage or your closet. How many of us have cleaned our closets and found stuff in there that we were not using? This is a simple opportunity to practice letting go. When you open your closet and see something you put in there five years ago that you haven't used, haven't even touched, go ahead and take hold of it and let that one thing go! Energetically, these small acts of letting go can make a big impact. Even just deleting photos from your phone – a simple act of selecting and then deleting – can lighten our attachments. Do you know someone who has too much stuff, whose house has almost no space for people to move, let



alone any sense of spaciousness? Energetically, that's not good for us. In a monastery, the monks clean a lot. When they clean the gumpa, shine the floors, clean the shrine, it's seen as a purification. Both a shrine and a closet are easier to clean than the chakras. If you cannot clear your central channel, at least open your closet and clear some of those blockages.



There are many ways to enter the next moment. Ceremonially, socially, we do various things that are symbolic. In the Tibetan tradition, we perform a lot of big ceremonies at the end of the year. The end of the year is a time for clearing the old year, so we do purification and rituals. We raise a prayer flag on the first day of the new year, symbolically raising all the forces of elemental energies. In our daily lives, the principle is the same. We can find a way to bring the best out of each new space, new time, new purpose, new mission, new beginning, new phase of life, new moment. It doesn't have to be the end of the year. Every morning can be like this. In the Tibetan tradition, every day we make an offering of the fresh water on the altar. This is an old tradition, and lately I've been feeling a strong connection to it. Bringing something fresh to the shrine, my sense of the day ahead feels very different. That sacredness, that freshness, that sense of connection, of offering, that sense of not forgetting the refuge or source, connecting there to start my day, is very powerful.

Often, at times of transition, we behave without awareness. We behave with condition, with pain, with fear. We feel we don't have a

choice. Just knowing we do have a choice can make all the difference. The choice comes when we can take time to be still, silent, spacious. We practice not doing, not saying, not thinking (not thinking is harder, but at least not doing and not saying).

Then, once we have calmed down, we find a new space from which we can do and say and think, and what we do and what we say might be different from what we originally would have said or done. One thing that we want to be able to see clearly and to say to ourselves is, *"If it's not good, I will not make it worse."* Leave it as it is.

We have so many opportunities to be aware. Think about approaching it this way: I'm going to handle this little transition well so I can handle the next, harder one even better. Each time we make these little transitions and feel free, feel good, the world opens up for us. Moments, places, locations, changes, transitions happen all the time in life. These are all opportunities to cultivate and practice to better support the transition of *phowa* practice at the moment of death. Beyond just preparing us for the big transition at the end of life, bringing this mindset into times of transition can make our lives easier, more productive. In the end, whether doing the *phowa* practice or walking from one room into the next, it's about how clearly we enter, how clearly we go to the next day, how clearly we go to the next thing. Every entrance is interesting if we approach it with clarity.





# HOW DO WE WAKE UP TO WHO WE ARE?

We interviewed Laura Shekerjian, one of the Senior Teachers of The 3 Doors, and an active member of the Ligmincha sangha in Berkeley, California, US. We talked about how the Bon teachings influenced her work as a psychotherapist, as well as the importance of connecting to the body.

## How did you meet Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche?

I met Rinpoche in 1996, when a close friend and fellow therapist invited me to his teachings in Berkeley, California, where I live. At the time, I had a four-year old daughter and was not looking for a practice or a teacher. But my friend, who was very involved with Rinpoche and had edited a few of his earlier books, insisted that I come.

When I met Rinpoche, I felt an immediate connection to the tradition and continued to attend the teachings, even though I really didn't understand much of what he was saying. During one of these weekends, Rinpoche asked who was interested in doing *Ngondro* and for some reason I raised my hand, even though I had no idea what *Ngondro* was. And in this way, little by little I got involved with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and the Bon. I didn't really decide anything; it was just right for me. When my friend left Berkeley in 2000, he asked me to take over the organization for Ligmincha in Northern California and ever since then I organize Rinpoche's weekend teachings, prepare a written transcript of every teaching he offers here, and lead a bi-monthly practice group.

## Which teachers have influenced you in your life and profession?

At different moments in my life, there have been wonderful teachers who guided me. In the Bon, my main teacher for over twenty years has been Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. I am particularly inspired by how he continues to open the teaching to everyone and help people focus more directly on their own experience. I am also amazed at how he continues to deepen his own understanding of how to offer the teachings and express his creativity in so many ways, whether writing books or creating all kinds of venues to bring the Bon to others. I am also grateful to him



### **Laura Shekerjian**

*is a psychotherapist practicing in Berkeley, California, and a long-time practitioner in the Bon tradition. Holding Masters degrees in psychology and Buddhist Studies, for thirty years she has worked in individual, group, and classroom settings to actively engage her clients and students in the process of self-discovery. As a Senior Teacher of the 3 Doors, she has taught in The 3 Doors Academy in Latin America and Europe, and has offered several workshops and online courses.*

for creating many opportunities for me to share the teachings as an instructor of Ligmincha and more recently as a teacher in The 3 Doors.

Menri Lopon Rinpoche is another teacher who has impacted me. I am moved by his kindness, his knowledge, and the way he teaches and embodies the tradition. And though I didn't have much personal contact with him, Menri Trizin 33<sup>rd</sup> was also an important teacher over the years. With all of these Bon teachers, for me it was not just the quality and depth of what they offer, but how much I learn by just being in their presence. This



has shaped and continues to shape the way I practice and teach.

**How have the Bon teachings influenced the way you work?**

Most of my clients have no background or interest in Buddhism or Bon, and I try to work with them using their own frame of reference. When I started to work as a psychotherapist, I kept my spiritual practice and my clinical work separate, not knowing quite how to bring them together. In my clinical work, my focus was on helping people see and work through their issues and patterns, while the focus of my spiritual practice was connecting to what we call “the inner refuge” or “essential self.” As I matured both in my clinical work and in my meditation practice, I slowly brought these two parts of my life together. I was supported in this by the way Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche has increasingly encouraged us to bring our personal work into meditation practice. One of the concrete ways his teaching has changed the emphasis of my clinical work is that I not only help my clients recognize how they are caught in habitual patterns, but encourage them to also recognize the parts of themselves that reflect the openness and freedom of the essential self.

Obviously, we need to both recognize and release old patterns as well as strengthen our access to our essential self, but it can be challenging to find the right balance. We don't want to bypass personal issues in an attempt to reside in the openness of a freer self, but we don't want to get stuck in these issues either. So many people see personal development as dealing with one issue after another. And when we don't recognize the purpose of self-transformation — to liberate ourselves from our pain identity — and don't experience who we are in our larger, more essential self, we can lose ourselves in the darkness of psyche and the challenges of external life. That's a hard way to live.

**Can you tell more about the vision Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches that has changed you?**

One thing that I appreciate and have benefited from is the simple focus he offers. I have studied and practiced Buddhism for quite a while now and have been exposed to many beautiful, traditional practices, but the simple focus on the three doors of the stillness of the body, the silence of speech,



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Laura Shekerjian in Berkeley, California in February 2020.

and the spaciousness of the mind, helps me connect my practice more directly to my own life. I also appreciate Rinpoche's emphasis on resting into the space of release. I've realized over the years that I tend to overemphasize “work” and don't spend as much time connecting to what I sometimes call “the arrival.” I've learned that as I work through something, I need to stay with the openness that emerges and allow this openness to bear fruit, rather than going quickly into the next thing that has to be worked with. Rinpoche's continual emphasis on resting and allowing manifestation from the clear, open space of being has helped me see my biases in practice. In this and in other things, I often have the experience of hearing “the same teachings” in a way that is fresh and supportive of my deepening.

**Before you met Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche were there other Buddhist teachers you studied with?**

No, I was not somebody who did a lot of “shopping.” I did a lengthy degree in Buddhist studies, but that was more from an academic perspective. I studied a bit of mindfulness but never really had a personal practice. When I connected with Bon, I was struck by what an incredibly rich tradition it was and realized that it

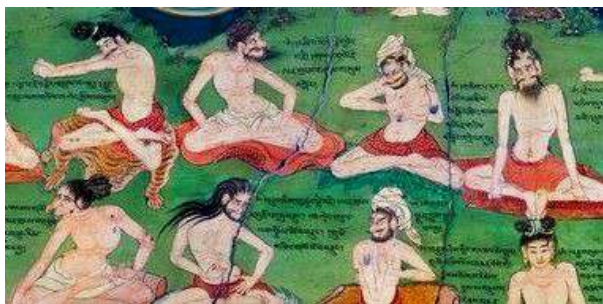




contained more than enough to guide and inspire me for the rest of my life. Therefore, I had no need to seriously look further since I could spend the rest of my life deepening what these teachings offered me.

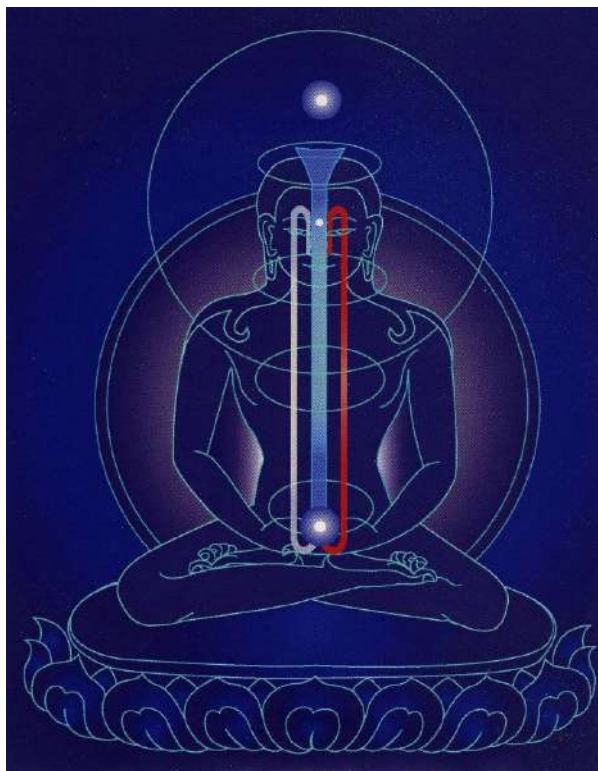
**When you teach, you focus a lot on the body. Was it through your study that you got interested in the body?**

My interest in the body evolved as a result of personal exploration. My overall interest in my studies was to help myself and others wake up to who they were. I began this academically with a degree in philosophy and continued this emphasis in Buddhist Studies. But this all stayed academic. I realized I needed a model and some tools to actually work with people, and so I got my degree in psychology and became licensed to work as psychotherapist. I felt that the West had their own language and wisdom regarding how people wake up to themselves and wanted to explore this with others. My body practices came later. I had already been studying hatha yoga for a number of years and later began doing practices that involved working with the subtle channels, movement, and breath, for example, tai chi, *kum nye* (the yoga taught by Tarthang Tulku in the Nyingma tradition) and *trul khor*, the yoga of the Bon.



In 2004, I began teaching *trul khor* through Ligmincha and recognized that I was not only drawn to how we can use our body to release subtle energetic blockages and open access to our essential self, but how in the process we could learn a lot about how we habitually hold ourselves in the world. I continued this exploration in the university where I was asked to teach in the somatic psychology department and train therapists to use their own kinesthetic experiences in their work with clients.

**Where does your interest in the body come from? For me that has always been the place I**



The three channels and the five chakras.

**don't want to be, because of unpleasant memories that are stored there. You have developed a special language to invite people to become interested. That really supported me in my process.**

I developed this slowly. I became aware that as I learned the various practices, I found myself almost translating the words of the guidance into a language that was more body-based, more kinesthetic. For example, for me the word “feel” is more evocative than the word “observe.” It brings me closer to myself. And I felt a difference between awareness that stayed outside to witness and one that penetrated and joined. So I started to wonder if there might be others who could connect more directly to themselves if the guidance included language that was more kinesthetically based.

In the West, I think being fully in our bodies is not so easy. As you said, part of it is because of the way our entire history is stored there. We also don't generally live our lives in a sensory-based way. I think we literally don't pay much attention to how much comes to us through our senses. Much of what we do is mediated by the intellect, and obviously this has been reinforced intensely by the focus on electronics. When we aren't in the body, we can't really be present. We can't feel





how we are in the moment. And on a deeper level, we can't open into the larger "body" of the essential self because we aren't even connected to this one. In meditation practice, I noticed that we establish our posture and then basically forget about the body as we work only with the mind. Even if we are doing body movements, how many of us are truly connected to our body as we do them? The body, which never lies, gives us constant feedback about our current state. For example, I see some students in meditation, trying to release into openness without being aware that they are frowning or clenching their jaw. This speaks to some experience of chronic tension, some challenge that the meditator isn't conscious of. This tension then participates in the practice. Whether we have a good practice or not, this tension is part of us and needs attention. The tangible presence of the body is a door into what we call the pain identity and at a deeper level becomes a door for the larger "identity" of a more liberated self.

What I am going to teach in the spring and fall in Europe has to do with the grounding quality. What is it to be truly grounded? Without ground, there can't really be expansion. Expansion without ground is spacey and empty of the power of true openness. The vast expanse of being of the first refuge of the body is indestructible because space cannot be affected in any way. To find the true power of this openness, we have to work through the blockages of the body and of the limited identity we carry. This means we have to be willing to

really go into our experience, to fully inhabit what's there so we can release it. This sense of going into something is part of what I explore through body. Most of us don't inhabit our whole body. In particular, it can be challenging for many of us to come down into the lower chakras. All the mental activity and the focus on electronics and "doing" brings the energy up. The lower chakras are not only where a lot of personal pain is stored but are the doorway into full manifestation or expression of who we are. So to ground we have to be present to ourselves and in ourselves. And so many of us just aren't.

**For many years, while I was doing my practice I was completely out of my body. I did the exercises as they were instructed, but didn't connect to my body. For a long time, it was just impossible. What effect does it have on the practice when you are not present in your body?**

It is to your credit that you recognized something important about your relationship to your body. Practice is meant to help us recognize where we are, what our starting point is. In this sense, all practice is useful, regardless of what we are able or not able to do. We can only develop from where we authentically are. This is not to say we can't have experiences that are outside our usual limitations. Of course, that is possible. But to work through the patterns that habitually block us, we need to really connect with how they are manifesting. The experience of not connecting to the body is itself an experience. We need to come into relationship with that, without judgment, and







keep opening to all of what that is. We don't want to try to make ourselves be somewhere or do something that isn't aligned with where we truly are. That kind of effort comes from the pain identity and has nothing to do with the true flow of our evolution.

**As long as I was in my mind, I had no notion of the possibility of living more fully in my body. In The 3 Doors Academy I realized that I used the door of the mind – the spaciousness – to create a safe space, and experienced that I was not grounded, not connected to anything.**

Many of us are drawn to one door more than the others and as you say, sometimes we get lost there. Some people are connected to body in a dull way, where they just are asleep in themselves. They don't have the vitality and clarity of consciousness. Others get captivated by the movements of energy and have no spaciousness or clear awareness. In our practice, we want to ultimately connect with all the three doors, clear their obstacles, and discover the qualities of the inner refuge that each supports.

#### **Can you tell more about the work you do?**

Part of the work I've done is train new therapists to sit with people by staying in touch with their own experience in the moment and what comes up in them in response to how their clients interact with them. I call this relational awareness, and it includes deep listening, not getting caught in our own experience, and not taking things personally. I think in many ways this kind of focus is very compatible with what we do in The 3 Doors.

In my clinical practice, I work with individuals and couples. I like the couple focus in particular because there is someone on the couch next to you holding your toes to the fire and preventing you from presenting yourself in a way that hides the flaws. We all have images we uphold and we all hide a lot of who we are. The immediacy of confronting this in the presence of someone who is very close to you (and I'm presuming a good relationship here!) can be very powerful. The mentor and peer relationships in The 3 Doors can also have this quality.

In general, what I like about being a psychotherapist and a teacher in The 3 Doors is the opportunity to accompany someone on their journey in a very deep and intimate process. People approach this in different ways: some do it deeply and others more superficially. But regardless of the depth or duration of their journey it is incredibly satisfying to help someone take steps into something freer and larger than their usual sense of self. As I mentioned earlier, in this as well as all the teaching I do, I am guided by the same question: How do we wake up to who we are?

#### **At some point Rinpoche invited you for The 3 Doors Academy.**

Yes. Ten years ago, he invited me and others to participate in a project that was incredibly inspirational but very unformed. In the beginning, none of us had any idea how it would evolve. Even through the first few retreats I taught I had no idea exactly how this differed from teaching or offering practice in other contexts. As we began to



explore and express Rinpoche's vision of bringing the wisdom of this tradition to everyone — not just those who felt connected to Buddhism or Bon — we began to see the power of creating a format and a community that supported individuals to bring the practices directly into the aspects of their life that needed them. I give a lot of credit to Rinpoche and Kallon Basquin and so many others for shepherding The 3 Doors into the dynamic, creative, and impactful organization that it has become.

### **How do you experience the difference between The 3 Doors Academy and the Bon teachings by Rinpoche?**

As far as the teachings go, there is no difference. In everything he offers, Rinpoche encourages people to work with themselves using the wisdom of traditional practice. What The 3 Doors provides are opportunities for people to come together to practice this deeply and methodically. It also provides the mentorship and collective support for people to sit together and share their experiences in an ongoing way. This includes the possibility of working one-to-one with a teacher, sharing and deepening in a small group, and participating in the larger group of the Academy or the larger sangha as a whole.

The other difference has to do with who can participate. You don't need to have a particular interest in Bon or Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's teachings to be able to benefit from The 3 Doors. I know 3 Doors students who had not studied with Rinpoche, went to Serenity Ridge in Virginia, and just couldn't relate to such a traditional setting with all the thangkas and altars and things like that. It was not their doorway. So, I think it is very important to have ways different kinds of people can connect with these teachings, and clearly, one of Rinpoche's great skills is creating these doorways.

### **Can you tell about developments in The 3 Doors?**

The 3 Doors continues to offer different kinds of courses, some online and others in weekend workshops. Many of our courses are open to

everyone. This year, the monthly meditations led by the Senior Teachers will alternate between graduates only and anyone who wants to sit together and practice. This includes graduates from The 3 Doors Academy, people who participated in a workshop or online course, and newcomers who are just curious about the teachers or the practices. Some of our online courses are prerecorded to make them more accessible to people who can't attend live sessions. With respect to Europe in particular, as you probably already know, the EU community invites Senior Teachers to offer workshops several times a year in different countries in Europe. We hope in this way to provide a continuity of practice for people who have already attended our events and also to provide an opportunity for others to participate and learn. We also intend to train more 3 Doors teachers so that the practices can eventually be offered in many other languages.

### **Interview by Ton Bisscheroux**

**Laura's workshops in Europe planned in spring 2020 have been cancelled because of the corona virus, and will be rescheduled in 2021. If the world situation with the virus allows, the fall workshops will proceed as planned.**

**For Laura's online courses check:**

[www.the3doors.org](http://www.the3doors.org)





# ESCAPE FROM DARKNESS

*Escape From Darkness* by Sangmo Yangri is the biography of Shenza Nechung, Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo's youngest daughter. In the Bon tradition, there are numerous female lay and nun practitioners who attained high spiritual states. Their stories are included in Bon texts and also are a part of local folklore. These stories, however, have not been extricated from the texts or recorded from the folklore. This book is an attempt to fill a void that has been left for centuries.

The book starts with the Blessing of His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the Appreciation of His Eminence Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and the Gratitude of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. The commentary by Sangmo Yangri, and the reflections from Tsering Wangmo Khymsar and Marcy Vaughn makes the book come more alive in the present time. We reprint the pages 47-50.

## COMMENTARY

by Sangmo Yangri, Ph.D.

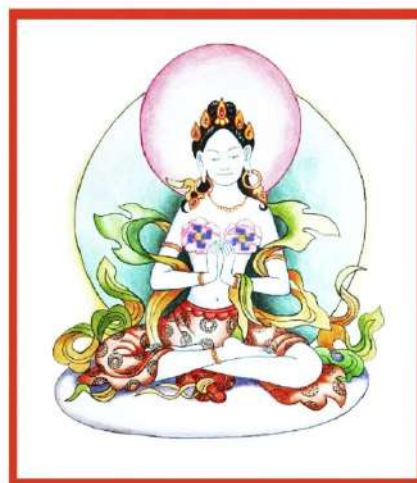
The life story of Shenza Nechung, an excerpt from the biography of Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo (*Do Zermik*), is a complete teaching in itself on how we become trapped by afflictive emotions and how we can attain liberation from them. This means that if we diligently follow the guidance in this text, the door to buddhahood is open to us, as well.

This biography also shows us that already from the time of Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo, every single being – regardless of gender – has the ability to receive, study, and practice the Bön teaching and ultimately to realize buddhahood.

Nevertheless, Shenza Nechung's life story also reflects our own ignorance, both at the individual level and as a society. For example, one of Buddha Tonpa Shenrap's followers, Azha Sangwa Dhodü, talked about women as “obsessive and passion-

## ESCAPE FROM DARKNESS

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF THE BUDDHA'S  
DAUGHTER SHENZA NECHUNG



Translated by Sangmo Yangri, Ph.D.

You can order *Escape From Darkness* in the [Ligmincha online store](#) or at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).

ately attached to sensual pleasure.” And later, when asked by the queen to go and request the help of Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo, he blamed Shenza Nechung and the queen for making him interrupt his practice. How many of us have not looked down on someone else or, when gaining some experience in our practice, developed pride about it?

If we read this as only a historical account of some faraway culture believing in demons, then it will be merely a bedtime story. If we read it directing our mind not outwardly but inwardly, then the journey of Shenza Nechung can be a tremendous inspiration on our own path.

Although the description of all the characters and places, especially the demon Khyappa Lakring, are extremely detailed so that we might have a solid visual image of a demon and his iron palace, the demon actually is a symbol of our five afflictions and lives nowhere else than in our mind. As the queen Poza Tangmo, the mother Shenza Nechung, said when addressing to her daughter, “Listen to



me, my daughter. Whether one goes to higher or lower realms depends on one's mind. An afflicted mind is like a demon."

The journey of Shenza Nechung, from the moment she was misled by the demons until her realization, is our own journey. First, being completely deluded, she embraced the demon's world, even stating that she would not listen to Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo himself. The afflictive emotions in this case are like the iron palace with one hundred sealed doors. Then she experienced suffering – her own and that of her children. Realizing the source of all suffering, and having great renunciation of samsara, she turned towards the Yungdrung Bön teaching to gain liberation.

confession.

- Devotion – crucial whether we practice sutra, tantra, or dzogchen.

### Remorse and Confession

The great suffering and difficulty Shenza Nechung experienced in bringing up her children, which included the killing of innumerable animals, brought her deep regret. Later, when she was released from the captivity of the demon, she performed a great austerity practice. Severing her breasts and giving them to her children, she uttered these prayers: "My two demon children, born to me as my karmic debt, who devour a hundred animals each morning and evening, now, through the great blessings of Tonpa Shenrap and through my great austerity practice of severing



Buddha Tonpa Shenrap Miwo.

When she was offered the choice, Shenza Nechung chose to do a practice of the five kinds of offering. She then performed it with strong, unwavering devotion and obtained liberation. Nowadays, we have the immeasurable fortune to have access to the high tantric and dzogchen teachings. We might be tempted to neglect "simpler" teachings and practices such as making offerings. Such attitude will only mislead us.

### Developing Remorse and Compassion

In the life of Shenza Nechung, two important points emerge:

- Having genuine remorse and making a great

and offering my breasts, may your hunger be completely satisfied! May all the animals be freed from their servitude of satisfying the hunger of you children!"

Shenza Nechung was then prepared to set off on the path of purification. Generating confession for her misdeeds, she sought help from Tonpa Shenrap Miwo, requesting him to reveal a great method for purifying her misdeeds. Tonpa Shenrap's blessing, her unshakable faith and devotion in his teachings, and her great diligence in practice brought about her liberation from the suffering of samsara.





In the Yungdrung Bön tradition, genuine remorse must be endowed with the qualities of four powers:

- *Ngar jé gyö pi top*: The power of generating deep regret for all misdeeds that have been accumulated from countless lifetimes and regret for all misdeeds of the three times – past, present, and future – that have been done through generating negative thoughts toward others.
- *Chir mi je pi damche top*: The power of commitment to not repeat misdeeds from this moment onward.
- *Nyenpo gewe top*: The power of accumulating virtuous deeds of body, speech, and mind as an antidote.
- *Pangpo ten gyi top*: The power of witness; one generates these qualities – regret, commitment to not repeat, and virtuous deeds – in front of a great witness such as one's own root master or the three jewels of buddha, dharma, and sangha.

### Devotion

Whatever practices we do, devotion is the foremost foundation for them. In the Yungdrung Bön tradition, there are four causal aspect for generating devotion in the mindstream of a human being:

- A genuine master
- Enlightened teachings
- Misfortune
- Ailments

In the life story of Shenza Nechung, misfortune becomes a reminder for her to follow the path of dharma, and then generating great devotion to the Buddha and his teaching opened the gate of dharma to her. In the Perfection of Wisdom sutra in the Yungdrung Bön tradition, the four types of devotion are described:

- *Kyo ngal mé pi dé pa*: Generating devotion devoid of weariness and sadness, similar to a child following its mother with full dedication and without any second thoughts.
- *Thang lhö mé pi dé pa*: Generating steady devotion, like the string of a bow in wintertime, neither too tight nor too loose.
- *Gyun thak ring we dé pa*: Generating a continuous flow of devotion in the practice of dharma, like the continuous flow of a stream or river.
- *Chir mi dhok pi dé pa*: Generating firm devotion



Sangmo Yangri.

in accomplishing dharma practice without pulling away, just as the dead cannot return to their previous form.

When one practices and generates these qualities of devotion, then devotion opens the gate to the dharma teachings. Devotion helps us cut through the path of samsara. Devotion leads us on the path of enlightenment.

Devotion helps us understand the essential meaning of the Buddha's words. And devotion helps us realize the illusory nature of phenomena.

Shenza Nechung's life story demonstrates the importance and the result of making the five aspects of offering with full devotion, and how such devotion can lead to liberation.

In a nutshell, only when all aspects of spiritual practice come together in our practice and become integrated in every aspect of our life can we attain liberation from worldly pleasures and attachment.

**Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux**



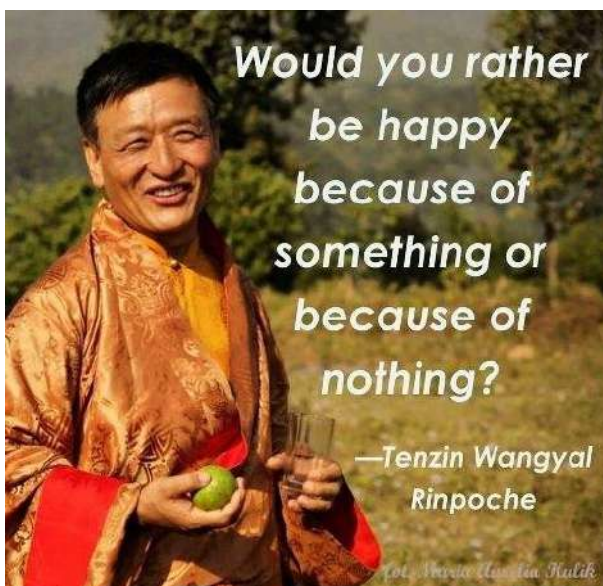
# ON FINDING YOURSELF IN THE NATURE OF MIND

We reprint an edited excerpt from oral teachings given by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, that was published in *The Voice of Clear Light*, April 2007.

In order to directly experience the nature of mind, during dzogchen practice we try to create certain conditions within the body, speech and mind. We use postures or movements of the physical body, practices of the breath, and the concentration and focus of awareness of the mind.

It is not as if the nature of mind is a separate object, a separate place where you as a subject can take a bus, train or a plane to. It is not like that – there is no place to go, no place to search for the nature of mind. Nor is the nature of mind a form with a particular shape or color that you can experience. If you are searching for your nature in those ways, you will not find anything. That is guaranteed. We are so conditioned to always be expecting to see some THING. It is very, very difficult for us to rid ourselves of the mind of ours that has expectations.

If you go out to find a job, you go with the expectation of finding one that pays well, say. That expectation helps guide your search toward finding the right job for you. In looking for the nature of mind, though, it makes no sense to look with the expectation that you will see something, because there is nothing to see.



Now you may be thinking, "There's nothing to see? Well, that's a little discouraging." Maybe you are curious about what this means. You are beginning to realize that you cannot experience the nature of mind in the same way you can experience your dreams, your thoughts, your feelings, or any kind of form. The nature of mind will not be seen in any of those ways. It is possible that during meditation, sometimes you will see various colors or shapes that are signs or qualities of some experience of, or connection to, the nature of mind, but even these are not the nature of mind.

The introduction to the nature of mind is essentially about creating the right causes and conditions – that's really what it is. In the same way that by placing a mirror in different locations you find that your view changes, so too by putting your body in the right position, your breath in the right position, and your mind in the right position, you are able to simply find your self in that place. But when you find your self in that place, it is not that you are seeing something, it is only that you are being. The moment you think that you are seeing your nature, you are actually not. You see, one of the subtlest obstacles to resting in the nature of mind is not being able to get rid of the seer, the one who sees. Until you get rid of the observer, the perceiver, the subject, the nature remains hidden.

So, you don't create or force the experience of the nature of mind; rather, you can put the proper conditions together for finding your self there. It would be a good idea to look at all that we experience in our lives in that same way – understanding that we can't always achieve the results we want by forcing them, but we can instead try to set up the proper conditions for those results to arise naturally. Often we ignore the advantages of setting up the proper conditions and just struggle to force the result into manifestation.

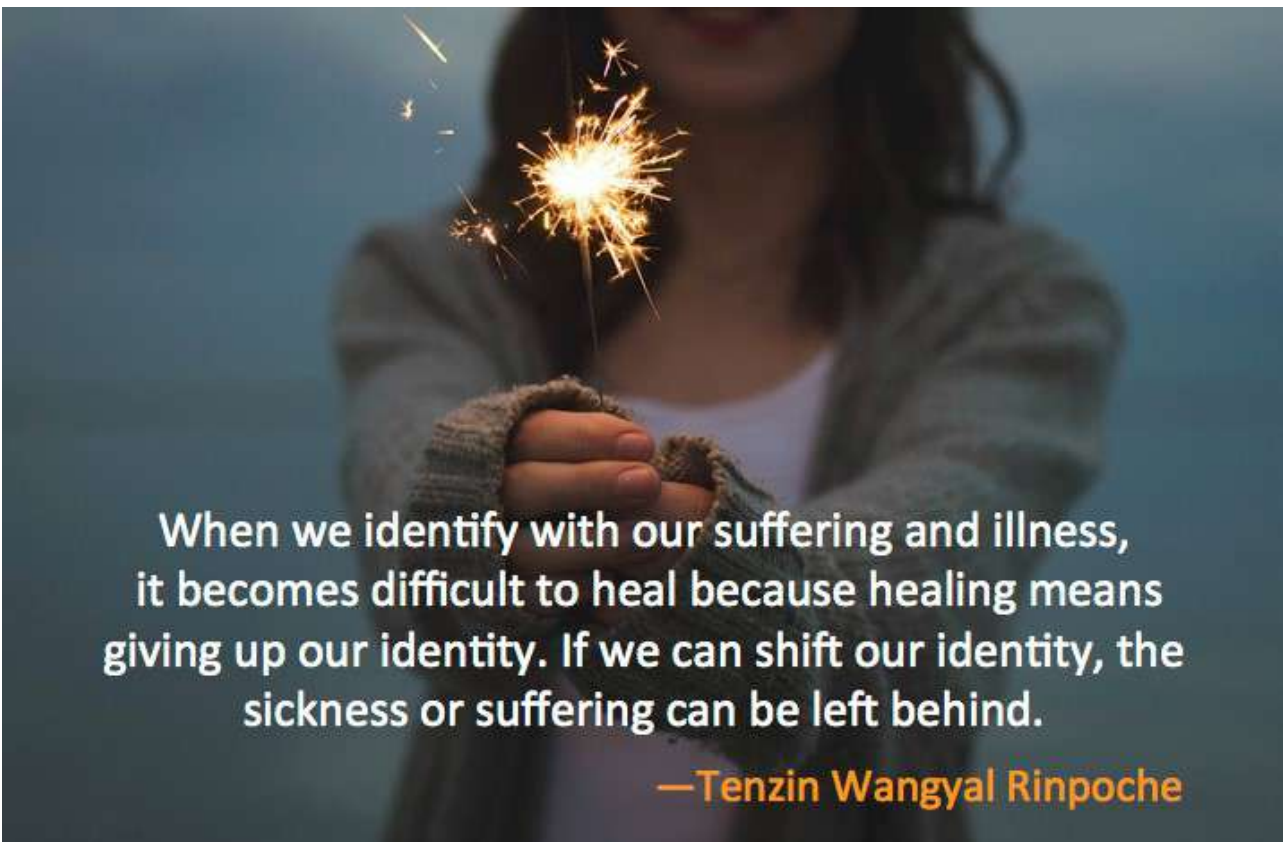




For example, you want to be happy. So what do you do sometimes? You just try to force yourself to be happy, even though in a relative sense you are simply in the wrong place to support being happy. Let's say you are somebody who has a knack for electronics, who is fascinated working all day long on computers and has so much knowledge about how they work, and yet you may not be able to cook even a cup of tea for yourself. Now, if you were put into the position of being a chef at a restaurant, then that would definitely be the wrong place for you to be happy. So, you don't realize you are in the wrong place, the wrong time, the wrong situation, and all you know is that you want to be happy. The location makes you suffer, the situation makes you suffer, the timing makes you suffer, and yet you simply push yourself to be happy. You just cook furiously, and the customers continually are dissatisfied, and eventually the restaurant has to go out of business. That forcing of the situation would obviously be the wrong approach. What should you do instead? Focus your effort on changing the place, changing the timing, changing the circumstances to make them the right ones for being happy. If you do find the right conditions, then you'll be naturally happy. You create the causes for natural happiness rather than futilely struggling to force the result.

Many times in our lives we get stuck simply because we don't know we are trying to force a result that is not supported by our circumstances. We may only be repeating to ourselves, "I want to be happy, I want to be happy, I want to be happy." The added tension created by trying to force your happiness actually tends to worsen your situation. It actually creates the opposite effect, digging you deeper into that unfortunate situation. Do you see how that kind of narrow, result-oriented focus can be a kind of a secret obstacle for us at times?

This is especially true regarding the practices of the nature of mind. So, what is the introduction to the nature of mind? You understand that it is not the same as my saying "Look at this cup" (Rinpoche holds up a teacup). Rather, there are exercises, practices and techniques that all create a space where there is a greater chance to have experience. None of those techniques you learn are the nature of mind. None of those practices are the nature of mind. They are a very skillful means. In one important sense the only time you will have an experience of the nature of mind is when you are not practicing. But you must begin with the practice and then during the session you forget the practice. How can you forget the practice? When you come to the place



When we identify with our suffering and illness,  
it becomes difficult to heal because healing means  
giving up our identity. If we can shift our identity, the  
sickness or suffering can be left behind.

—Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



where there is nothing at all you could call effort, that is the moment when you find yourself in the nature of mind: free from your thoughts, feelings, emotions and conditions, abiding in the space of infinite potential, in which there is a cause for the perfection of every experience that could arise. There is a sense of nothing lacking, because everything is perfected. The sense of longing, lacking, missing, not having enough – none of those experiences are there. On the contrary, there is the sense of being complete, perfected, whole; and you find your self.

So, regarding the introduction to the nature of mind, the important point here is not to get too attached to the techniques or methods, but to work with them so you can create the right position of the body, the right breathing, the right focus of the mind. If you are able to bring together the right conditions of body, energy and mind, then there is no way not to experience your nature. As we always say, there is no power or force that could possibly stop the result when all the causes and conditions are together. The same is true with regard to being happy. If all the causes and conditions for your being happy are together there, you will naturally be happy, and there is no force at all that can stop you from being happy and make you suffer. Likewise, if those causes and conditions are not there, if the causes and conditions are the wrong ones, then there is no force that can make you feel good. That is why the whole notion of cause and effect, or the law of karma, is so important in the dharma.

So, we must develop those causes and conditions that support the experience of the nature of mind without being too attached to the tech-

niques or practices. This does not mean you don't learn how to do the practices precisely; you do learn them – very precisely. However, it's just like an old man who walks from one place to another with the help of a walking stick: His goal is to arrive at the new location, not simply to become attached to the walking stick, right? We also know that if the old man tries to walk there without the stick, for sure he will not reach his goal. Therefore, when walking to the new location he makes sure he has a firm grasp of the sturdy stick that supports him. Once he reaches his destination, the walking stick is no longer important to him. The practices, the techniques, are exactly like that. The methods are exactly like that. They never lose their potential to be of benefit when the need arises, but just don't get attached to them. Is that clear?

**Text selected by Ton Bisscheroux**





## TENZIN WANGYAL RINPOCHE'S 2020 EUROPEAN SEMINARS AND ONLINE TEACHINGS

When	Where	What	More information
Flexible dates and times	Your computer or other device	On Facebook: Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche LIVE	<a href="http://www.cybersangha.net">www.cybersangha.net</a>
Anytime you like you can start	Your computer or other device	Free Online Courses: Starting a Meditation Practice, Parts 1 & 2	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>
Anytime you like you can start	Your computer or other device	Free Online Course: Host Training Program	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>
May 23 – June 21	Your computer or other device	Online Course: Meditation Breath and Movement	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>
June 20 – July 3	Your computer or other device	Online Retreat: The Seven Mirrors of Dzogchen	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.org">www.ligmincha.org</a>
June 20 – July 26	Your computer or other device	Interactive online course: The Three Heart Mantras	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>
June 27 – July 26	Your computer or other device	Interactive online course: Tibetan Dream Yoga	<a href="http://www.glidewing.com">www.glidewing.com</a>
July 18 – September 6	Your computer or other device	Interactive online course: Transforming Our Emotions Through The Six Lokas	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>
August 10 – 16	Wilga, Poland	Retreat: Tummo: Part 2	<a href="http://www.ligmincha.pl">www.ligmincha.pl</a>
August 22 – September 20	Your computer or other device	Interactive online course: Sherap Chamma: Mother Of Wisdom And Love	<a href="http://ligminchalearning.com">ligminchalearning.com</a>

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