

## Teaching Issue

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### Letter From the Editors

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#### Some Important News

This issue of *VOCL* contains two excerpts of teachings by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, the first on the fruits of cultivating open awareness and the second containing an explanation of Rinpoche's evolving approach to the teachings. Following this is some important news about the launch of a groundbreaking new program of teachings known as [The Three Doors](#)

Rinpoche wants everyone to know about this exciting new development, so be sure not to miss these articles.

It is so great to hear from you and to share your writings through *VOCL*! The section on *International Sangha News – Students Report From Around the World* features our sangha's many voices – they reach out and touch us from across the world. This month's article has retreatants' voices that you will surely relate to in their brief but heartfelt thanks. Their photographs, too, say a thousand words in capturing Rinpoche and the beautiful Serenity Ridge Retreat Center during the recent fall retreat.

For a future issue, we invite you now to share your personal heart experiences as they relate to the question: *Have you ever experienced someone's death and dying in a way that was a real teacher for you, as a way to open the heart?* Please share your experience (no more than 400 words) by emailing us at [voiceofclearlight@ligmincha.org](mailto:voiceofclearlight@ligmincha.org)

Also, don't miss the "What's New at the Tibet Shop!" link atop the **Bookstore & Tibet Shop** column (on the right side of this page). Here Ligmincha's Bookstore manager, Melissa O'Neill, fills you in on the store's latest news and of course, photographs!

All the Best,  
Aline and Jeff Fisher



## **“A Good Sign That Practice Is Working”**

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### **An Edited Excerpt From Oral Teachings Given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Summer 2006**

A good sign that meditation practice is working for you is when you start feeling happy for no obvious reason. You are not necessarily feeling happy because someone has said something nice to you or has given you a special gift — you are just feeling happy. Or, in a spontaneous, uninvited, unplanned, effortless way, you may find that you have thoughts of helping others or of being kind to them.

When you start becoming more and more conscious of changes like these, clearly this is a very good sign. Why? Because it is a sign of having a lot of space and light in oneself: of having the open awareness that is the fruit of meditation practice. As one gains more open awareness, space and light become spontaneously activated in everyday situations. Positive thoughts arise from that place, and these in turn lead to positive emotions. Positive emotions can then lead to positive actions, and most of the time positive actions have positive results. When you help somebody, you are more likely to get help back from people. When you give the right energy, you definitely receive the right kind of energy back.

Think of the opposite situation: Imagine you wake up one morning and find that everybody you encounter seems to be plotting against you. You feel like they all have been exchanging emails and phone calls to give you a hard time. The guy at the coffee shop is already waiting for you: “What do you want? Go to the back of the line!” Then you go to the Chevron station and they won’t accept your credit card. But it’s not that the guy at the coffee shop called the guy at the gas station. It is because you are presenting yourself in a certain way due to your own negative state of mind, and your negative experiences are a reflection of this.

Being a practitioner means working with yourself all the time. That is why we call it practice. On a morning when you feel like the world is against you, you can think to yourself: “I’m going to break this chain of negative responses now.” You can notice your state of mind and immediately take steps to break that pattern by cultivating open awareness. Then, instead of meeting resistance everywhere you go, you are more likely to experience opportunities. You are more likely to encounter the right person at the right time. When a business opportunity comes you are more likely to take it. It is all a question of connecting with and maintaining a sense of open awareness.



## **‘I Will Teach This Way for the Rest of My Life’**

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### **An Edited Excerpt From Oral Teachings Given by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Summer 2010**

*Over the past two decades, longtime students of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche have noticed a gradual distillation of his approach to the teachings. Today, Rinpoche’s teachings consistently reveal a decided emphasis on simplicity, clarity, and practical relevance of instruction, with an intention to help students of all levels arrive at a potent experiential understanding of the essence of a given meditation practice through the doorway of their own individual conditions. Last summer Rinpoche explained the evolution of this teaching approach.*

Each of the dzogchen masters of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu* practiced for a lifetime, and each came up with five lines as their pith teaching. In my own teachings I am emphasizing relating the teachings to your everyday lives and recognizing your own immediate conditions of body, speech, and mind. These are my five lines.

I am confident of the importance and validity of this approach. This is not an effort on my part to teach in a unique way. Rather, for me it is effortless. It comes from my own personal development and understanding of what I value in the teachings. This is the way I will teach for the rest of my life, and I will go farther in this direction and not away from it.

As I have been teaching for the last 20 years in the West I have met all kinds of people, from all kinds of backgrounds and all kinds of needs and expectations. I have found that many of my students seem to be attracted by complexity. They are focusing more on what is difficult to understand and difficult to attain and on trying to accumulate more and more new teachings; and are focusing less on their personal engagement with the practice.

If you are looking for complexity, it is very easy to find in the spiritual traditions of Tibet, including the Bon tradition. There are so many different teachings of sutra, tantra, dzogchen, and causal vehicles, and there are all the various monastic systems with their emphasis on both complex rituals and intellectual learning. A single dharma teaching in itself may draw from a long text containing many divisions and subdivisions, and be taught point by point, concept by concept, definition by definition, one after the other.

If you wish to seriously follow the spiritual path and have some realization, are teachings like

these important? For sure. Without a doubt. Is following the traditional approach wonderful? Of course it is wonderful, and if someone is ready to do this, I encourage it. But is it important to enter the monastery, study in the traditional way, and finish with the geshe degree? Of course it is not. The traditional way, with all its rituals and intellectual learning, is beautiful and meaningful. But regardless of the form of the teaching, I feel it is most important that students understand the teachings on a personal level.

In my early teens as I was growing up under the care of my root teacher, Yongdzin Rinpoche, the most important part of my practice was to sit with him in meditation. We sat twice a day, especially before going to sleep at night. Of course I received the monastic education, but the most important part was sitting. If you ask, 'What is the most important thing in Bon,' it comes to a simple place: Abiding in the nature of mind. That is the answer. That is the teaching.

The masters of the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu*, each of whom had the sign of achieving realization, are good examples. What did they do? They really applied the teachings in their own practice and their own lives. They took it personally. In the story of the great master Tapihritsa, he visited Nangzher Lopo for one reason: to help Nangzher Lopo overcome his pride. Tapihritsa came not because Nangzher Lopo had missed five volumes of canon-text transmissions or three tantric initiations, or because he had forgotten to recite a certain mantra. No, Tapihritsa came to teach him only because he felt Nangzher Lopo had the obstacle of too much pride and needed to work on it.

In the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu* teachings themselves, students are challenged to call up their own actions, thoughts, emotions, and senses, and through these experiences they are introduced to the nature of their own mind. In my teachings here I am suggesting that instead of calling up thoughts, you can recognize the thoughts you are having right in this moment. Instead of creating emotions, you can observe the emotion that already exists in you, whether or not you have been conscious of it. Rather than analyzing the pain and misery of samsara, I am encouraging you to be awake to the pain you have right now, the pain you identify with. That pain is more personal and concrete. It is you.

In the end we want to change something in ourselves. We are not just working with theories and intellectual concepts. When you engage on a personal level with the practice, that is the most exciting, fresh, and lively place to be. Anytime you can touch this place so that your tears flow, your heart opens, and your blockages clear, it is a sign of being completely alive and completely changed. When you can work with yourself in this way, your practice can become alive in you all the time.

It is possible to come to a teaching for the purpose of learning a new, complicated visualization, only to leave feeling that you not only still have the pain or conflict you had hoped to overcome, but that you also have a new pain of struggling with the complicated visualization or of not being able to follow through with a commitment you made to practice. Is that what you want?

In the end, if you imagine a dzogchen master — a committed yogi meditating in a cave — what is this master doing? Abiding in the nature of mind. Working with whatever is interfering with that place. That is the core, there is nothing more. The form through which you learn that essence

can be elaborate or it can be simple. This is a personal choice.

You can learn through art, through ritual, through music, and all are good. What I am saying here is that it is important to understand the teaching on a personal level. For teachers in ancient times who were truly realized, that is how they engaged with the teachings and the practice. The elaborate teachings and rituals are beautiful and meaningful, and if you relate well to them, then engage with them. If you don't relate to the more traditional approach, you will not miss anything by following a more simple and direct approach to abiding in the nature of mind. That is my message here.

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## Introducing the Three Doors

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### A Letter From Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



Dear Beloved Sangha and Friends,

Since coming to the West over 20 years ago to share the teachings of Bon Buddhism, I have

seen many people benefit in their personal, relational and professional lives from Bon's legacy of wisdom and compassion. Over those two decades I have continually worked on how best to present the teachings coherently and effectively in a cultural context so different from my own. Almost without exception, the teachings and practices for healing body, speech and mind (The Nine Breathings of Purification, Tsa Lung, Five Warrior Syllables, and Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltzen) have been the most useful and transformative.

With the blessings of Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche, a meditation program is being created to present the pith teachings and practices of body, speech and mind to the public at large. This program, called **The Three Doors**, will be shorn of all religious and cultural contexts. This is necessary in order to make the medicine of these practices available to those who would otherwise find these teachings and practices too foreign or inaccessible.

In order to take these teachings into the world, we have created a comprehensive three-year training program for sangha members who feel called to be Three Doors teachers. Trainees in this program will be sangha members who integrate The Three Doors Practices into their lives and long to share their benefit with others. This training, called **The Three Doors Directors Academy**, will begin in the United States and Europe in 2011.

The three-year Directors Academy is an experiential, in-depth training in which you will learn how to transform your life using the Three Doors Practices (The Nine Breathings, Tsa Lung, Five Warriors Syllables, and Fivefold Teachings). You also will learn how to present these practices to others. After graduating from the Directors Academy, those who become certified as official teachers will be Three Doors Directors, authorized by me to teach programs for the public anywhere in the world. These public programs, **The Three Doors Seminars**, are weekend training programs that introduce the practices to the public in a secular form. Graduates of the Directors Academy may also choose to take these teachings to the world in other ways, for example, through hospitals, educational organizations, or business environments.

If you are interested in learning more about The Three Doors or the Directors Academy, I cordially invite you to visit the Website [www.the3doors.org](http://www.the3doors.org) or write to [info@the3doors.org](mailto:info@the3doors.org). For information about the European Directors Academy, visit the Website or write to [info.europe@the3doors.org](mailto:info.europe@the3doors.org).

Yours in the Dharma,  
Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

*Photograph by Rose Lettiere*





## Launching of The Three Doors Vision

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### Transformative Practices for Body, Speech and Mind



Kallon Basquin (L) and other sangha members. Photograph by ME McCourt

Though we didn't know it at first, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche had something very special in store for those of us attending Ligmincha's 2010 Summer Retreat. A long-held vision of Rinpoche's began to reveal itself over the three weeks as he lovingly encouraged us to face our "pain body." The pain body, he explained, is that mistaken "I," its imagination, and the suffering that is the result. Each week he gave us tools to face the pain body rather than running from it. He guided us to observe it nakedly and to arrive at the truth beneath the suffering of the pain body. That truth is held in the refuge place of stillness, silence and spaciousness. We learned to recognize how the pain body masquerades as truth and how it can be dissolved to reveal the profound spaciousness and freedom that are our birthright. We began to recognize how suffering and hidden obstacles distract us from our sacred body by creating the pain body as well as pain speech, pain mind, and pain actions. And we learned how to use special practices to disperse the pain body and awaken the sacred body. Those practices are the Nine Breathings of Purification, Tsa Lung, Five Warrior Syllables, and the Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltzen.



## This November: Live Webcast, Online Workshop

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### New Internet Teachings With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's final live Webcast of 2010, entitled **Nourishing Your Inner Being**, will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 16, from 7 - 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York time). This will be a broadcast of a free public talk offered in partnership with Unity Church, Charlottesville, Va. If you can join us in person, please do. Otherwise, participate at the link below! Because of our chat screen, Webcast participants, like in-person audience members, have a valuable opportunity to ask Rinpoche questions after his talk.

[Enter the broadcast site >](#)

**New: Spanish-speaking viewers** can access a real-time Spanish translation of Rinpoche's teaching/guided practice [at this broadcast link>](#)

**November 6 - 28, 2010**

**New online workshop with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche:  
'Achieving Great Bliss through Pure Awareness.'**

There is still time to register for a new three-week online course with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche that takes place Nov. 6 through 28, 2010. Space is limited, so register soon. In this workshop Tenzin Rinpoche will instruct and guide the practice of **the Fivefold Teachings of Dawa Gyaltsen**, a revered



Tibetan Bon dzogchen meditation master who lived in the eighth century A.D. This ancient teaching offers pith instructions for a meditation practice that guides one to enter a state of pure awareness that can lead to peace, joy, and ultimately self-realization. Throughout the three weeks Rinpoche will offer direct personal guidance in the practice.

[Learn more >](#)

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## International Sangha News□ □ □

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### Students Report From Around the World

#### *Sharings From Retreatants at Serenity Ridge*

From Oct. 6 to 10, 2010, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche taught at Serenity Ridge about “Sleep of Clear Light: The Practice of Sleep Yoga.” Students received instructions in how to bring more lucidity to both their waking and sleeping hours. A particularly memorable part of the instruction involved staying awake all one night and into the next day while continuing to engage in regular meditation practice. At day’s end, after finally drifting into a welcome deep sleep, practitioners were awoken twice in the night by designated sangha members who offered gentle assistance in the sleep yoga practice.

Below are a few sharings from retreatants in their own words and photographs.

\* \* \*



Serenity Ridge view. Photograph by Henry Kantel

**I will always cherish** the time I spent at Ligmincha last week. The teachings from Rinpoche, whose beautiful book inspired me years ago, and whose lucidity and love are continually inspiring. The interactions with other retreat-goers, wonderful seekers from all over the country, with so many profound experiences, questions, insights. The sweet little room, the awesome tea selection, the amazing food. Thank you!—  
*Henry K.*

\* \* \*



Koi pond at Serenity Ridge. Photo by Rose Lettiere

**Being at the retreat my sense of peace** has expanded. The whole experience has been transformative and special. My deepest respect and gratitude to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. —  
*Rose L.*

\* \* \*



Photograph by Rose Lettiere

**I have never heard a voice as beautiful** as the voice I heard that night — twice! — when I was awakened from a deep sleep. The voice asked me if I had experienced the sleep of clear light. "No," I answered sleepily, without opening my eyes. I wanted only to hear that voice, the most ethereal and pure voice I ever remember hearing in all my life. My friends at the retreat laughed when I told them afterward that it was like the voice of an elvish princess from "The Lord of the Rings."

Then the owner of the voice asked me, "Are you having samsaric dreams?," and I said yes. She said "Okay! Then I will sing you the Guru Yoga prayer." And she sang those four Tibetan lines, and that's when I dared to open one eye, and all I saw was a profile. I heard a most sincere and

excellent chanting of that prayer with which we'd begun every practice, all week long. And it just filled my heart with joy. It was like the goddess herself — the khandro! — was singing. And then I went back to sleep.

As we were practicing in the gompas the day before, I had felt like I was not a very good student, because whenever I tried to meditate in my exhausted state I just went off into dreams. But then I remembered something Marcy (our practice leader) had told us, about how she keeps her eyes open at half mast when she meditates, so that's what I did, and suddenly everything turned around! I saw that the physical exhaustion of staying up all night was my best friend because it offered only two choices: falling asleep or maintaining the intention to focus in meditation. I found an open space between those two contending forces and occupied it ... and that space is still with me, even after the retreat is over. I feel connected through that space to Rinpoche, to his students, and to the lineage.

All my thanks go out to Rinpoche and Serenity Ridge and Marcy and to all the rest who made this thing possible. "May we swiftly achieve the complete buddhahood of the three bodies!" — *Joe S.*

\* \* \*

**For me this retreat was a magical transformation** from inner randomness to whole joy and comfort. It also brought me to another level of sensitivity of the inner channels and chakras. The power of practices and my intense personal experiences were so far beyond what I ever might have expected at the time of registering for the retreat. — *Serge M.*

\* \* \*

**All of the Teachings are so precious** and the entire time on retreat with Rinpoche is so magical it is difficult to pick just one thing to share to convey the precious magic ...

Perhaps the absolute sweetest thing to happen to me since coming to Bon generally was when the Dakini came into the room, rang a little bell, asked about dreams and sleep, then sang Guru Yoga before leaving. I was on the top bunk with my head towards the door and for some reason my little electric candle went out so the Dakini probably did not see me.

Sounding the conch before the teaching and/or practice sessions, closing out the kitchen at the end of the day, tending the fire all night, helping with the Webcast, I could go on and on ... not to mention the Teachings themselves — in particular the blue *HUNG* at the heart chakra, this story works better in person. — *Gerry H.*

\* \* \*

**Ever since I first heard the refined, subtle, sublime** and rarified Dream and Sleep Yoga teachings around 12 years ago I had relegated them to a future lifetime! My ability to visualize

has never been up to my ideals and sleep has eluded me for most of my adult life! I felt that practices involving my dream and sleep worlds were not likely to be a part of my path through this life.

So it was with a somewhat casual attitude that I agreed with my wife that I should attend the 2010 Fall Retreat at Serenity Ridge only a couple of days before the retreat was to begin. Rinpoche's first teaching at this retreat significantly changed my regard for these teachings! When our guru stated that "the purpose of sleep yoga is self awareness" I knew that I could find a foothold and direct my attention and efforts toward that goal. The importance of establishing a practice relationship to my dream and sleep realms was also taught in that first session when Rinpoche stated "if we recognize the clear light in our sleep we increase the possibility of recognizing our true nature in the bardo." The sequence of falling asleep is the same sequence of dissolution through which we pass in the process of dying.

One of the main themes presented in this teaching focused on our identity, who we think, feel and experience our "self" to be. Our suffering and pain become who we think we are. We enjoy sharing our pain-stories and find those of others equally fascinating. In the practice sessions at this retreat we were encouraged to locate and experience as clearly as possible our sense of self, our ego, and then to explore the process of clearing and releasing those knotted and tangled energies that compose the conglomeration we feel that we are.

Rinpoche taught us that what we really are is an infinite sphere of light and that changing our focus from our tightly held ego to a deeper, more relaxed, expansive and more basic focus is the practice. I wrote in my notes: "In sleep our ego is less active and the experience of clear light has a better chance of being recognized. It is possible to miss it. The experience of clear light is without location and very spacious. It can be frightening. Knowing that the clear light is our true nature is very important. We normally grasp our ego and cling to that identity. In grasping who we think that we are we miss our true nature."

It was emphasized that we should strive to experience stillness of our body, silence of our energy and the space from which our thoughts arise and to which they return. We were warned that this can be difficult because stillness, silence and spaciousness do not include a sense-of-self. Ego is not nourished there. But we learned that the efforts we make toward establishing stillness, silence and spaciousness are well worth it because these are steps we can take toward the clear light. In the experience of clear light perfection is found as well as unshakable confidence.

At this retreat our teacher presented his expansive perspective on teachings which are profound and precious. The practices he presented are effective and inspiring. Our umdze did her usual excellent job, with gentle firmness guiding us toward deep stillness, silence and spaciousness. The gathering of students was a delightful bunch of colorful characters. It was fun for this old goat to be at Serenity Ridge with a few dear old friends and to meet many new ones as well!

In conclusion I must share that my life is now fulfilled since I finally experienced a lovely Serenity Ridge khandro serenading me with our precious Guru Yoga prayer as I lay in bed at 3 a.m.! What an uplifted, rarefied and amazing moment that was!

Please be sure to attend this teaching when it is offered again. You will be glad that you did!

With deep gratitude and sincere appreciation — *Bob A.*

\* \* \*

**Overall this practice greatly expands** my recognition of “presence” during the waking state and that is a very blessed thing. This aware spaciousness which appears as all these states. I wrote this poem about the retreat and would like to share it:

### ***Being Sleep***

*Sleep  
And  
Waking*

*Being*

— *Teala S.*

\* \* \*

**Let's put it this way:** Gazing at the sky is a whole different thing for me now. In five days it felt like I became a different man, more respectful and mindful of my nightly sacred sleep-time journey, and more consciously aware in the waking state. I was not prepared for the difficulty, subtlety, and nuance of the beautiful clear-light practices. I gained a lot from my five days of group practice and intensive learning, and I'm deeply grateful for my time at Serenity Ridge. Thank you teacher, assistants, staff, and fellow participants. I feel deep gratitude for the 17,000-year unbroken Bon tradition of teachings. New tools in hand, and with consistent home practice, I now have well-founded hope of a more joyful life and “lucid death process.” Whether death comes a callin' later today, or fifty years from now, I'm ready to accept her consciously, and peacefully. I got what I came for, and much more. Call me “Giggling Buddha.” — *Walter W.*



## **Upcoming Retreats**

### **Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center**

The retreats described below will take place at Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha Institute's retreat



center in Nelson County, Va. To register or for more information, click on the links below, or contact us at [Ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:Ligmincha@aol.com) or 434-263-6304.

**Nov. 3 - 7, 2010**

**Tibetan Yoga, Part 2: *Trul Khor* Training From the *Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu*  
With Alejandro Chaoul-Reich**

The contemplative movements of Tibetan Yoga (*trul khor*) enable us to enter all three doors of body, energy and mind through a single practice, offering a powerful, skillful means for clearing the obstacles and obscurations to openness and clarity in meditation practice.

Open to students who have received the Part 1 teachings of  
*Trul Khor*

(  
*Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu*  
) since Jan. 1, 2000.

[Learn more or register >](#)

**Nov. 16, 2010, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York time)**

**Live Internet Broadcast**

**‘Nourishing Your Inner Being,’ With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

This will be a live Webcast of a free public talk in Charlottesville, Va., offered in partnership with Unity Church.

[Attend in person >](#)

[Enter the broadcast site >](#)

**Dec. 27, 2010 - Jan. 1, 2011**

**Dzogchen: The View, Meditation, Behavior, and Result**

**The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 3**

**With Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

The Experiential Transmission of the Zhang Zhung Masters is the centerpiece of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche’s dzogchen teachings and is presented at Serenity Ridge each year at our winter retreat. *Prerequisite:* Practitioners who have already received the Part 2 or higher-level teachings in a previous cycle of

teachings are warmly invited to attend this retreat.

*Chag Tri*

[Learn more or register >](#)

**New: Extend your stay!** You may stay up to three days after the winter retreat for personal retreat time. For more information or to register for an extended stay, contact the Ligmincha office at [Ligmincha@aol.com](mailto:Ligmincha@aol.com) or 434-263-6304

**April 13 - 17, 2011**

**Living With Joy, Dying in Peace:**

**Gaining Comfort and Intimacy With the Dying Process**

**Annual Spring Retreat With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

Denying our own mortality not only separates us from the vibrancy of living in the moment, it also leaves us ill equipped for the critical moment when death comes to ourselves or to our loved ones. The Bon Buddhist tradition is rich with knowledge and methods for using this Great Moment wisely. Through teachings and guided meditations, in this five-day retreat Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will help us to: recognize death as a doorway to opening the heart and achieving self-realization; prepare for our own death; and learn how to promote a more peaceful, uplifting dying process in others.

[Learn more or register >](#)

**June 26 - July 16, 2011**

**The Six Lamps**

**19th Annual Summer Retreat With Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

Details to come soon!

**To register for any of the above retreats**, or for more information about teachings in the Bon Buddhist tradition of Tibet, please contact us at [Lig](#)

[mincha@aol.com](mailto:mincha@aol.com)

or 434-263-6304, or go to:

<https://www.ligmincha.org/retreats/retreats.html>