

Voice of Clear Light

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Meet Resident Lamas for Ligmincha Poland and Ligmincha France Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso in Poland and Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen in France

Meet Ligmincha International's two resident lamas in Europe: Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso, resident lama for Ligmincha Poland, and Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen, resident lama for Ligmincha France. These articles are condensed from interviews conducted by Ton Bisscheroux, editor of *Ligmincha Europe Magazine*. An interview with Geshe Lhundup appeared in the Autumn 2015 issue.

Look for an article about Geshe Denma Gyaltsen, the new resident lama of Ligmincha Texas, in the February issue of Voice of Clear Light.

Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso, Resident Lama, Ligmincha Poland



Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso

Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso has been the resident lama of Ligmincha Poland since last March. He lives in the Chamma Ling Poland center in Wilga, near Warsaw.

Geshe Gyatso was born in 1981 in Tra village in the Vjer area, near Dolpo, where the oldest Bon monastery, Dolpo Samling, is located. The monastery was founded by Yangton Gyaltsen Rinchen, an important lineage master in the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud.. His great-grandfather founded the Tashi Namgyal Monastery.

His father was a Nagpa, a Bonpo lay practitioner, and a doctor of Tibetan medicine. His mother is a Nyingma practitioner, and from childhood he heard and learned many Nyingma prayers.. Geshe-la's birth name was Gyatso Choekhortshang, and he received the name Yungdrung Gyatso ("Ocean of Immortality") when he took his monk vows with His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the most senior teacher of thre Bon tradition.

Geshe Gyatso stayed in his village until he was 9 years old. From age 5, he spent his summers taking care of sheep and yaks. The winters he spent mostly with his fathers in a monastery. There he learned Tibetan reading and writing, recited mantras and sometimes helped his father prepare tsok offerings.

When Geshe Gyatso was 9 years old, his oldest brother, a student at Menri Monastery in India, sent their parents a letter asking them to send his younger brother to Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal.

"My father wanted to send me, but my mother objected, because she wanted me to live with family," he recalls. "So one day I went with my father to a neighbor village, and from there we left for Kathmandu. During our journey my father told my mother he was bringing me to the monastery."

After they arrived in Kathmandu, Geshe Gyatso and his father spend one and a half months near the Boudhanath Stupa. His father expressed his wish that his son become a monk, but he left the decision to the child, who also had to choose between a Bonpo, Nyingma or other monastery. Geshe Gyatso chose to study in the Bon tradition, because he connected deeply to Bon through tantric yogas and his time at Samling Monastery. So in 1990 he became one of the first monks to begin study at Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu. Sadly, his father died in an avalanche on his way home from Kathmandu.

“His Eminence Yongdzin Rinpoche gave teachings in the morning, and in the afternoon we did reading and writing,” Geshe Gyatso remembers. “At that time we did not have a dialectic school, or philosophy school, or meditation group, but we practiced as much as we could.” In 1994 a new large temple was finished, and His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche was invited for the consecration. After that, the dialectic school and meditation group started, and Geshe Gyatso joined the dialectic school, along with about 60 other monks.

In the dialectic school, Geshe Gyatso learned sutra, tantra, Dzogchen and all the Tibetan sciences such as grammar, Tibetan history, astrology, poetry, mathematics, drawing, painting, calligraphy and ritual chanting. He received his Geshe degree at Tritten Norbutse in 2009.

“I am very thankful for H.E. Yongdzin Rinpoche for all his loving kindness in teaching me directly during these years, and my other teachers also,” he said. “Yongdzin Rinpoche took care of me and raised me like my parents.”

During this time he performed different roles, serving as president of the dialectic school and as guest manager of the Tritten Norbutse Monastery for three years. During one year I worked as managing director of The Bumshi Medical School and also as a teacher of tradition and religious science. He served a secretary of the Bonpo Foundation and Tritten Norbutse Monastery. He participated in several conferences and seminars devoted to Bon tradition, Tibetan and Himalayan culture, environment and monastery management.



Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso

Menri Graduation, 2008

After receiving his Geshe degree, Geshe Gyatso taught younger monks and lay people different subjects connected with Bon tradition. He also was responsible for editions of Drey poi Beltam, a magazine of Triten Norbutse Monastery, for 10 years, and has been the magazine's main editor since 2010.

During his studies at Menri, he had two opportunities to visit Europe when the monastery sent a cham dance group to France, Italy, Switzerland and Belgium. After receiving his Geshe degree, he was again invited to visit several countries in Europe, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia and Poland, where he gave public talks and some teachings. During his third visit to Europe in 2013, he spent one month in Vienna, Austria, making Bonpo tormas and conducting rituals and a cham dance. Then he began traveling and teaching throughout Europe.

In 2010 and 2011, while he was a member of the board of Triten Norbutse Monastery, Geshe Gyatso got to know Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche well because Rinpoche visited regularly. During his third visit to Europe he met Rinpoche in Berlin. In 2013 Tenzin Rinpoche asked Geshe Gyatso if he wanted to stay in Poland and teach in the Polish sangha, and other European sanghas. Since Geshe Gyatso was then still secretary of the Triten Norbutse Monastery, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche talked with Yongdzin Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche. In January 2015 Geshe Gyatso came to Chamma Ling Poland, and officially became resident lama of Chamma Ling Poland in March.

Since that time, several retreats have been held in Wilga, along with teachings and practices in different cities in Poland. Every day the sangha has morning and evening practices, which anyone can attend. People also invite Geshe Gyatso to conduct special rituals and visit their homes.

Although Geshe Gyatso would like to visit his family again in Dolpo (he has not seen his mother since 2011), his commitment now is to stay in Chamma Ling Poland. Contact with his family in Dolpo is difficult, but sometimes he talks with his brother and sister who live in Kathmandu.

Geshe Gyatso extends good wishes to the worldwide sangha: "I wish all the students of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, and all the other Bonpo sanghas, to develop and continue their own practice, so it will be helpful for our own life and to reach enlightenment, and that the practice

will benefit other beings, too.”

Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen, Ligmincha France



Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen

Geshe Khorden Lhundup Gyaltsen is the resident lama of Ligmincha France. He lives and teaches in Paris.

Geshe Lhundup was born in Tibet in a very small village called Damranji, in Kham, about 375 miles from Lhasa, to a nomad family. Although his father was not very interested in the dharma, his mother was a serious practitioner. When he was about 6 years old he began to tend the yaks and sheep. At about age 12, he made the decision to become a monk (all of his brothers and sisters also became monks or nuns) and went to Patsang Monastery in Kham. Patsang is one of the lineages of important Yungdrung Bon families.

His first master, Rashitogden Rinpoche, lived about 60 miles from Geshe Lhundup's home. The master was from the Nyingma lineage and also a lineage holder of Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen, a great Dzogchen master of the Bon tradition of Tibet. Geshe Lhundup learned much from his master, who spent his life in dzogchen meditation. He spent a year in the mountain with his second master, Berutogden Rinpoche, learning dzogchen and tsa lung. From his third master,

Togden Sherab Phuntsok Rinpoche, Geshe Lhundup received, along with about 200 monks from all over Tibet, transmission of all of Shardza Rinpoche's texts, plus trul khor and dzogchen teachings.

Geshe Lhundup was already a monk when, taking the advice of his uncle, a Phatsang lama who left Tibet in 1959, he decided to leave Tibet to study in India. In 1993, along with a group of 29 people (including four Bonpo monks) he escaped by traveling through the Himalayas, which included a month's walk from Mt. Kailash to Nepal. "The journey was very stressful," he recalls, "because we were afraid to meet the Chinese or Nepalese police, who would have sent us to jail."

H.E Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, most senior teacher in the Bon tradition and founder of Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal, was there to meet them when they arrived in Kathmandu. After offering them lodging at Tritten Norbutse for a week, Yongdzin Rinpoche encouraged the monks to continue on to Menri Monastery in India, where they could study for the Geshe degree.

Geshe Lhundup studied at Menri Monastery from 1993-2009, progressing through the eight levels in the Bon dialectic school. The traditional course of study for all the monks included sutra, tantra and Dzogchen, and also Tibetan grammar, poetry, astrology, medicine, mandala painting, yoga and meditation.

