Teaching Issue

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Letter from the Editors

Recharging with Soul Retrieval in the New Year



Dear Friends,

We love to share with you all! We'll start with a beautiful line from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's upcoming book, *The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life*:

"Recall a moment in your life when you felt complete, satisfied, fully alive, at home in yourself. Imagine that it is possible for you to feel that way not only now and then but most of the time. This is what soul retrieval practice offers."

- Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Stay tuned for more details about Rinpoche's new book scheduled to be published in English this summer by Hay House.

Rinpoche hits the nail on the head in this issue's teaching excerpt—he tells us the key to

success in bringing meditation practice fully into our lives! This edited excerpt is selected from Rinpoche's Jan. 10, 2015, webcast, "Reconnecting with Your Joyful Essence: An Introduction to the Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval."

Don't worry if you missed this first daylong webcast event in the yearlong series on soul retrieval—you can view the recorded webcasts at these links:

- Session 1: Teaching with Rinpoche
- Session 2: Guided meditation with senior teacher Marcy Vaughn
- Session 3: Teaching with Rinpoche
- Session 4: Guided meditation with Marcy Vaughn

Also, now is an ideal time to sign up for the free Internet course related to these webcasts .

See the article below for all the details, and please be sure not to miss the Part 2 webcast on Saturday, Feb. 14, 3–4:30 p.m. Don't forget that <u>you need to register first</u> —it's really easy and it's free!

Also in this issue is an article on Losar, with details of how individual practitioners and groups may want to prepare for and participate in the worldwide celebration of the Tibetan New Year in February; information about the March retreats at Lishu Institute in Northern India; articles on upcoming Ligmincha Learning and GlideWing online courses; details on Ligmincha's upcoming Spring and Summer Retreats at Serenity Ridge; and links to the recent *Ligmincha Europe* and to the

translated versions of the last issue of Voice of Clear Light.

Enjoy, and Happy Losar Everyone!

Aline and Jeff Fisher

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Soul Retrieval: Bringing Awareness to Life Through the Power of Commitment

An Edited Excerpt from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's Jan. 10, 2015, Webcast

What is the soul? The soul, of course, is very complex; there are many different cultures in the West, even in the East, with different understandings of the soul. From the perspective of the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition, the soul refers to the subtle balance of energies of the five essential elements: earth, water, fire, air, space. In the ancient Bon tradition, we believe that there is no way to survive as a human being unless the elements of our inner essence are all rich and alive and balanced in a very healthy way.



I want to talk about commitment. My hope is that many of you who are here with me today are serious and committed enough to follow these monthly webcast teachings, and that you will try to understand the practices and commit yourselves to practicing and to bringing about some real changes in your life for the better.

We know that without commitment nothing will work. We need to recognize that commitment is very important and that whether or not at first we fully understand a practice, we're not going to give up. We'll patiently apply ourselves to exploring how we can bring these practices into our

everyday life in order to deepen our understanding.

We spoke this morning of awareness and of watching our habits. Awareness is in every teaching. It is the key. I knew I would be talking about awareness today and as I reflected on what I wanted to say, I realized how often I talk about it. Without talking about awareness, none of the practices make sense. So my question is, are you committed enough to be aware of your life, to be aware of the places you lose your soul or you become the cause of another person's soul loss, and aware of where you become a cause of collective loss? How much are you willing to be aware? Are you brave enough, honest enough? Are you direct enough? I think it's very important to reflect in this way. Commitment and awareness are very important here.

There is a saying in the Tibetan tradition that refers to a person who has been in the teachings for so long and yet their head is so hard. They are so stubborn, that even if you hit their head right on the "X marks the spot," you will not be able to penetrate it. The analogy is they are like a piece of rock that has been in the ocean for thousands of years and yet, when you break it open, it's still dry on the inside. Some people are not touched deeply enough by the teachings. Somehow, they continue staying connected to the teachings, but the connection is on the surface. They never go deep enough, or are aware enough or committed enough to make real changes. So, are you willing enough, are you brave enough, are you committed enough to connect deeply? This commitment is very important.

It is also important to be aware of where you lose your soul. Do you lose it mainly at work? How much energy do you lose at work? How much energy do you lose in your relationships? How much energy are you losing trying to be someone, or just trying to be yourself? Are you committed enough to be aware in this way?

In terms of practice, formal practice can mean anywhere from half an hour to an hour of practice every single day. Are you willing to do that? That's one aspect of practice. Then there is informal practice. Are you willing to be conscious five times a day during your daily life? Are you willing to remember five times every single day when you are draining yourself for no reason, like when you are putting so much effort into work that does not require effort? Because effort sometimes kills the spontaneity, kills creativity, and blocks the view; effort is not able to see the full potentiality of what can be done; effort loses something.

So are you willing to be conscious five times every single day, specifically at those times when you are becoming a cause of losing your own vital energy, life force, and soul? And are you

willing to turn it around, so instead of losing your soul you at least stop losing it and just sustain it, or better yet, plug into the power source, the source of healing, and retrieve your life force every time you see that you're beginning to lose it? Every time you are in the process of losing it, are you willing to become aware of that fact and retrieve it? Are you willing to commit yourself to being aware of this five times every single day? I'm repeating this quite a few times now. Do you hear me? Do you hear me?

You need at least half an hour of formal practice every day combined with five times of informal practice every day, which means in addition to meditating you commit to being aware in those moments when you are losing your vital energies! That's a very important step, because without awareness you won't change anything.

When you're aware, can you sustain, maintain, and not lose more of your life force? Or better, can you remember to take the three precious pills: stillness of the body, silence of the speech, and spaciousness of the mind? Are you willing to be aware of these pills—the white pill, red pill and blue pill? Are you willing to remember to take them five times a day when you are losing energy? How do you take them? You take them by releasing effort and tension and resting long enough to find connection to the source. In connecting, you retrieve from the source whatever you are in the process of losing or have been losing, or even have lost for so long that you are almost dead, or dying. Are you willing to reverse that, or at least prolong whatever is left of the healing energies of the soul that you still have? And are you willing to maintain that for a longer period of time?

I know some of you might be thinking, *Well I've already heard about the three pills.* I'm sure you have heard about the three pills, and have had glimpses of experiences, but I'm quite sure that you don't apply them frequently enough. And I'm quite sure that many of you have been continuing to lose your vitality and life force and energy. That is exactly the reason I'm emphasizing this now. I know that many of you already know of these three pills and are familiar with these exercises. What I'm emphasizing is that you don't apply them when you personally need them the most. That's the emphasis here, and as I'm speaking, you can probably recognize for yourself that this is true.

When you need them to be applied in your own life, in a very specific situation, when you struggle with a pattern or habit and you keep on losing energy again and again, then you are not remembering to practice; you are not applying them at that specific time and therefore you keep on losing energy. How much soul have you lost? How much vitality, humor, or laughter have you lost? How much playfulness have you lost and will keep losing unless you become aware in your daily life?

This is a very important point; I'm highlighting it again—it's not about your lack of familiarity with the practice, rather it's your lack of ability to apply the practice in the moment that you need it the most. That is the point for you to remember.

Half an hour a day of formal practice is one part of the commitment. So let's imagine that today you have a very busy day and can only do 15 minutes—okay, 15 minutes is fine, but it's not fine if you forget to do the informal practice five times that day. That is not fine. You've got to do the informal practice at least five times every day, because if you're not able to practice formally, then you may not be able to retrieve the lost soul energies as successfully, and it is in your everyday life situations that you are *losing* more vital energy without even knowing how much you are losing. That's a big problem. So I want to make sure that you make this commitment to remember your informal practice five times a day. On the second Saturday of every month we will come back together and help each other to reflect:

Did I really keep my commitment to remember to take the three precious pills five times a day? If you say,

Oh, I might have missed a few of the days, but most of the time I did remember, then that would be wonderful for me to hear!

Through practice, you will clearly come to know that moment to moment you are able to change, that moment to moment your negative force, your karmic force, your addiction, your ignorance, your ego is not driving your life; instead, moment to moment your awareness is guiding your life; moment to moment your awareness is protecting you; moment to moment your awareness is showing the source of healing; moment to moment your awareness not only shows it, but you are then able to retrieve it, able to feel how much nourishment is available. You are already beginning to feel that you are taking great medicine, and that's what we call this informal practice the three *precious* pills. Soon you come to find that there is no way *not* to take them every day, and you might even find that five times a day is too infrequent, because applying the practice is so much fun and so effective, and you can see right in front of your eyes that things are shifting and changing and going in the right direction. As this happens, you will take the three precious pills more often. And I welcome you to take them as often as you wish as there are no ill side effects!

So the point I am emphasizing is the necessity of personalizing the practice. With any spiritual practice, any dharma practice, unless the practice is personalized, it is not going to work. The Buddha taught different vehicles, and there are many systems of doctrine. In the Bon tradition, there are the nine ways of Bon. The Buddha taught the nine ways of Bon because people learn in different ways. Some people realize the truth one way, and others who do not get it that way have to approach the teaching differently. Realizing that, the Buddha taught in slightly different

ways—slightly more open ways, or slightly more limited ways; some ways are more dualistic and some ways more non-dualistic—but he always taught according to whatever each person needed to hear in order to realize.

In the same way, all of these teachings are available to us, and rather than label them as this *on e is good but this one is better*

or

this one is for me and this one is only for this group,

you must discern what teaching is for you at this moment in your life. And when you ask that question, you will get an answer to the question. That is the way of personalizing practice. At each moment in our life we are different. There are moments in life when we may be so fearful, where everyone seems to be attacking us and everything seems difficult. Then there are moments when we are so open and everyone seems to be contributing to our life, enriching our life, helping us. So there can be a degree of openness that we experience at one time in our life that's very different from another time.

So I'm strongly encouraging you to make the commitment to half an hour a day of formal practice and to five times a day of bringing awareness to the informal situations where you habitually lose your soul. And through bringing awareness, you will not lose your soul, but sustain it, or better yet, reconnect or charge it up. What better time to make this commitment than right now, at the beginning of this year, 2015? This can be your New Year's resolution. People make resolutions to go to the gym more, to find a meaningful relationship, to lose weight, to eat healthier. But, an important New Year's resolution could be about how you will not lose more of your soul than you have been losing, and how moment to moment you can guide your life and retrieve your soul and heal your soul. That's a very important resolution!



In the dharma and in Buddhism, people don't talk or think so much about health and wealth and love; these things are not particularly emphasized, even though personally everybody secretly emphasizes them! Collectively in the teachings we don't emphasize them enough, because somehow we think these are not that important, these are goals in samsara or something like that. Yes, they are in samsara, and yes, we are in samsara and yes, individually we do emphasize these in our life secretly or unknowingly. So it's important to acknowledge openly here that your personal health is important. Do you pay attention to your health? Regarding wealth, maybe you don't care about money, but everybody needs money, so the question of wealth is, to some degree, important. What is your relationship to money? Do you have a good

one? Does money keep coming toward you, or do you have a problem with money and money keeps running away from you? Well, make friends with money! And as for love, everyone seeks connection, different forms of connection. Whatever kind of connection you are seeking, have you found one?

These aspects of life are very personal; health, well-being, relationship—all are very important. Once these basics are quite good, then you move up to the second level of awareness, social awareness. I think that's very important for all of us. Consider how much emphasis you put on social awareness in your life. What is important for you? What is important for your country, for your neighbors, your family, or for your spiritual community? Many of us here in this cyber-sangha, or in any part of the Ligmincha International group and sangha, come together as part of a spiritual group, and it is also very much a social circle that we've formed for very specific purposes and very specific reasons. How is your social engagement with these people, and what does it mean to you? How does it enrich your life, and how can you enrich someone else's life? These are very important questions to ask.

As your soul is healing, as you feel increasingly well and you have something to give to others, then social awareness becomes increasingly important. Ultimately, the awareness of achieving buddhahood comes. But there is some sense of sequence here. You cannot say, *I am looking for final liberation, but I don't care about society; I don't care about family; I don't care about my friend; I just want to achieve rainbow body or realization!*

You can see that even the word realization itself doesn't work from that view. So acknowledge that you must take care of your health, your love, your wealth, your work—take care of those aspects of your life, too.

I hope that with these teachings and these messages that you are clearly able to personalize them in your life, using the medicine that's just right for you. And that your practice can be particularly geared for you personally in the most beneficial way. And when you gain health, your awareness not only stays with you—the sense of "I'm well"—but it expands to social awareness and ultimately to the liberation of yourself and all sentient beings, as we pray in our dedication.

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Upcoming Webcast on Soul Retrieval Is Feb. 14 Register Now—and Sign Up for Free Online Course!



Throughout 2015, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is offering a free, yearlong Internet course on the topic of Soul Retrieval. The course includes everything from free monthly live webcasts to multi-language discussion forums, recorded webcasts, MP3 audio recordings and downloadable print materials. It is based on Rinpoche's upcoming book *The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life* (Hay House, June 2015).

Read an excerpt from the book's introduction .

Información en español

Please join us for the next free live webcast in the series!

Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015 3–4:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York time) The Five Natural Elements: Finding a Healthy Balance

According to the Tibetan Bon teachings of soul retrieval, when certain elemental qualities become lost to us, we lose parts of our soul. When we are able to retrieve those qualities—when the essences of the five natural elements of earth, water, fire, air and space come into balance within us—our soul is restored to health. In this free live webcast, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will discuss the five elements, their characteristic qualities, and signs of balance and imbalance. He will explain the outer, inner, and sacred elements, and how they can influence us physically, energetically, mentally and spiritually. Rinpoche will then guide a simple practice for connecting deeply with each of the elemental qualities, and give suggestions for practicing in the weeks and months to come. This webcast introduces Part 2 of a free, yearlong course in soul retrieval and is open to all (viewing Part 1 is not required).

All course offerings are free and open to all. You must register separately for each live webcast event, as well as for the yearlong course with its full support materials.

- Register now for the Feb. 14 webcast
- Register separately for the free yearlong Internet course with full support materials.

During the live webcast, real-time translation will be offered in as many as 12 languages. You can access these translations here.

Also you can view recordings of last month's full day webcast on Jan. 10: Reconnecting with Your Joyful Essence, in four sessions:

- Session 1: Teaching with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche
- Session 2: Guided meditation with senior teacher Marcy Vaughn
- Session 3: Teaching with Rinpoche
- Session 4: Guided meditation with Marcy Vaughn

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Tibetan New Year Begins Feb. 19 Ligmincha International Prepares for Losar, Year of the Wood Sheep



Losar, which in Tibetan means "new year," is celebrated widely by Tibetans and Tibetan Bon and Buddhist centers throughout the world. This time to reflect on the passing of the old year and face the possibilities of the new year will be celebrated by Ligmincha International centers worldwide.

Traditionally, the first day of Losar begins three days of celebration. Preparation for the new year, the Year of the Wood Sheep, will be held on Feb. 15, and celebration will take place Feb. 19–21, 2015.

For those who live near a gompa (meditation hall), the first day of Losar is when families go to the gompa to pay their respects to the lama, circumambulate the temple, offer prayer flags to the monastery, raise prayer flags at one's home and spend time with family. Often Tibetans will bring offerings to the gompa, such as flowers or butter lamps or cookies for tea with the lama, and receive blessings that all activities of the coming year will be successful.

Below is a suggested schedule for Ligmincha centers throughout the world with a resident lama, for other Ligmincha centers or practice groups, and for individual practitioners.

Suggested schedule for Ligmincha centers with a resident lama

Serenity Ridge (Geshe Tenzin Yangton), Ligmincha Mexico (Lama Kalsang Nyima and Lama Yungdrung Lodoe), Chamma Ling Poland (Geshe Yungdrung Gyatso), and Ligmincha Texas (Geshe Denma Gyaltsen), Ligmincha France (Geshe Lhundup Gyaltsen) and Lishu (Geshe Thupten Negi)

Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015:

- Sangha gets together to clean the gompa, make any needed repairs and also to make kapse (special Tibetan cookies for Losar) if they wish. Complete any projects that have begun during the year so that everything is fresh and ready for the New Year with new energy.

Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015 (Losar):

- 9–10 a.m.: Lama's choice what to do; possibly sang chod (fire ritual).

Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015:

- 9–10 a.m.: Sang Chod (fire ritual) and replace main prayer flag(s) with new flags(s).
- 10–10:30 a.m.: Break for tea and dresil (Tibetan sweet rice.)

- 10:30–11:45 am: Each person offers a tea light in gompa; followed by recitation of Nyame Sol Dep, in honor of Nyame Sherap Gyaltsen's anniversary birthday offering on the fifth day day of Tibetan New Year (Feb 24).

- Note: Place Nyame Sherap Gyaltsen statue or image on table near shrine to offer khata to

image of Nyame Sherap Gyaltsen.

- Do khora (circumambulation) around gompa or stupa while reciting Ma Tri mantra.

- 12 noon (NY time): Watch live webcast message from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Ligmincha resident lamas worldwide.

- Followed by tea or potluck lunch or dinner (depending on time zone).

Suggested schedule for all other Ligmincha centers or practice groups

Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015:

- Same as above.

Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015:

- Optional: Sang chod.

Saturday, Feb 21, 2015:

- Same as above, led by umdze.

Suggested schedule for individual sangha members who are unable to travel to a center or practice group

Sunday, February 15, 2015:

- Clean home, office, shrine, and make any needed repairs. Complete any projects that have begun during the year so that everything is fresh and ready for the new year with new energy.

Thursday, February 19, 2015:

- Morning practice of sang chod if you have received this teaching or any practice that you have received.

Saturday, February 21, 2015:

- Open shrine, offering water, candle, incense, flowers, tea and wine, cookies.

- With whatever prayers or practices you have learned, reflect on the upcoming year with positive energy for success for all that happens. You may practice Guru Yoga and a practice such as recitation of Three Heart Mantras, focusing their energy on the new year, with the support of the images of the deities and/or masters, to deepen your spiritual practice.

- Optional: Raise prayer flags.

- 12 noon (NY time): Watch live webcast message from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Ligmincha resident lamas worldwide.

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Documentary on Bon Set for Release on Feb. 21 With a Message from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Dear Sangha and Other Friends,

I am very excited to let everybody know that The Light of the Golden Sun is finally being released. This one-hour documentary film tells about the rich history of Bon, how it came to the West, and the role that Ligmincha has played in recent years.

We have been working on this documentary for many years with the help of many people. Because of a significant delay in the release date, some segments of the film are not fully updated—for example, my son, Senghe, has grown up so much since the film's completion! But I'm happy that it is finally coming out, and trust that it will offer understanding for new people and enjoyment for my longtime students. In the future, we hope to produce many other, shorter films as a way to communicate the teachings.

With my warm wishes and blessings,

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

The Light of the Golden Sun (63 min.), a film by Rogelio Jaramillo Flores, will be released Feb. 21, 2015, on the Ligmincha YouTube channel.

More than 50 years ago, the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition was driven from its refuge deep within the Himalayas. This is the story of the long and difficult journey that followed. Told through the lens of one Bon teacher born in exile—Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche—this film reveals something very precious and very old: a rich spiritual heritage, hidden for millennia, whose secret teachings are only now becoming known to the world. There may be no unbroken spiritual tradition more ancient than Bon, which traces its beginnings to a buddha who predates Shakyamuni by thousands of years. Yet this tradition today may be facing its greatest challenge thus far: to preserve its rich heritage beyond the land of its birth.

Watch the trailer here

Lishu Institute Retreats Begin this March in India! Rinpoche Encourages Students in New Opportunities



Ligmincha's Annual Spring Retreat at Serenity Ridge Registration Now Open



Why not jump-start your healing and transformation with a more concentrated retreat on Soul Retreival during this year's Spring Retreat at Serenity Ridge? On **April 3–5, 2015**, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will teach on "The True Source of Healing: How The Ancient Tibetan Practice Of Soul Retrieval Can Transform And Enrich Your Life."

The practices taught in this retreat, drawn from ancient Tibetan Bon Buddhist teachings, can help you revitalize your life, experience healing on all levels, and bring increased happiness and well-being to yourself and others.

Learn more and register

Learn more about monthly webcasts on Soul Retrieval

Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will offer a public talk on the topic of Soul Retrieval on March 31 in Charlottesville, Va., from 7–8:30 p.m. Learn more

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Summer Retreat Topic Is Dream Yoga Registration Opens Feb. 17

Registration opens Feb. 17 for Ligmincha's Annual Summer Retreat at Serenity Ridge, to be held June 21–July 4, 2015. Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will teach on the topic of "Dream Yoga."

The practice of dream yoga deepens our awareness during all our experience. It is a powerful tool of awakening and can help us recognize the true nature of mind. This is a rare opportunity to spend two weeks in person learning and practicing dream yoga with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (who will offer two daily teachings) and the support of the sangha in the serene environment of Serenity Ridge.

You are welcome to attend one or both weeks. Serenity Ridge's annual Fundraising Auction will be held near the end of the first week, on June 26.

Learn more

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'The Three Heart Mantras' Begins Feb. 6 Still Time to Register for Ligmincha Learning's Online Course!

Ligmincha Learning's five-week online course on "The Three Heart Mantras" will be held Feb. 6–March 14. The Three Heart Mantras are used in many different meditations in the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition, and play a major role in the ngrondro (preliminary) practices. They are

said to be the essence of enlightenment in sound and energy, and as we sing or chant the mantras our awareness is transformed to be in union with the buddhas. They are used for purification, protection and as primary practices toward self-realization. <u>Learn more and register</u>

The next online Ligmincha Learning course is "The Six Lokas: Transforming Our Emotions." It is a six-week course scheduled for April 4–May 23. Learn more and register

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March 7 GlideWing Online Workshop Tibetan Dream Yoga with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

The next four-Week GlideWing online workshop will be held March 7–April 5. Participants will explore and practice the ancient Bon Buddhist teachings of Tibetan Dream Yoga, with personal guidance and support from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. This workshop provides detailed instruction for dream yoga, including foundational practices done during the day. Learn more and register

Here is the calendar of upcoming GlideWing online workshops:

- May 9–31, 2015: Tibetan Meditation: Achieving Great Bliss Through Pure Awareness Learn more
- July 11–Aug. 9, 2015: Awakening the Sacred Arts: Discovering Your Creative Potential Learn more
- Sept. 19–Oct. 11, 2015: Tibetan Sound Healing Learn more

Spanish and Portuguese Translations of VOCL Links to December Issue Now Available

Read VOCL in Spanish Read VOCL in Portuguese

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Winter Issue of *Ligmincha Europe Magazine* New Section on Preparing to Die

The beautiful new issue of *Ligmincha Europe Magazine* is now available. The magazine offers a broad scope of sangha news in Europe and worldwide and includes a section on preparing for death.

Enjoy this issue

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Upcoming Retreats

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center

The retreats listed below will take place at Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, headquarters of Ligmincha International, located in Nelson County, Virginia. To register or for more information, click on the links below, or contact us at <u>registration@ligmincha.org</u> or 434-263-6304.

April 3–5, 2015 Spring Retreat – The True Source of Healing: How the Ancient Tibetan Practice of Soul Retrieval Can Transform and Enrich Your Life

with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Learn more and register

June 21–July 4, 2015 Summer Retreat – Dream Yoga with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Attend one or both weeks. Registration opens Feb. 17.

Read more about retreats

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 <u>registration@ligmincha.org</u> or 434-263-6304, or visit the <u>Serenity</u> Ridge website