

Voice of Clear Light

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Rinpoche's Update on Lishu and The 3 Doors Programs Two Different Approaches to Bon

During the Summer Retreat 2014 in Buchenau, Germany, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche gave an update on the progress of Lishu Institute and also said a few words about Ligmincha and The 3 Doors program. (This article was first printed in [Ligmincha Europe Magazine, Autumn 2014](#))

I would like to update you on the progress of Lishu Institute and also say a few words about The 3 Doors program.

As many of you know, I have been teaching for over 20 years in the West. And I have learned so much, perhaps even more than I taught. In the process of teaching I have realized that we are all different and have different needs. During the flight over here, I reflected that perhaps Tibetan lamas need to ask a simple question when teaching Westerners: Are their students coming to learn Bon and Buddhism or are they seeking help from Bon and Buddhism? These are two different things.

I have discovered that the majority of people don't come to me in order to become a Buddhist or Bonpo. They come seeking help, and primarily the help that they couldn't find in their own cultures or from the traditions in which they were raised. So they are seeking guidance.

To those seeking this kind of help, you don't try to lay out the whole philosophy of Buddhism. It took me a long time to realize this, and finally I have. But it has been a challenge to balance these two very different interests. As a teacher in the West I went back and forth and used different approaches. The way I have been teaching here in Buchenau this week is a kind of middle way.

Lishu addresses the interest at one extreme and The 3 Doors the other. I use the word extreme in a positive way here. The differing approaches of educating students through Lishu or through The 3 Doors are equally valid. Each is important for different people.

For the group of students drawn to study the teachings in depth, Lishu has been created. And this is very important, even if this group might be very small. And a group such as those gathered here at this retreat might be a medium-sized group, and this is also important. The 3 Doors might possibly be an even larger group, and it's equally important.

Through Lishu we will train Westerners who are seriously interested in learning the dharma, and willing to dedicate their life pursuing this. In the past, many people went to India and spent a considerable amount of time studying there, like Jeffrey Hopkins and Robert Thurman. This became their life's work. They went to a university and completed Ph.D. work in Buddhist Studies or Tibetology and they continue to practice and study. It is a lifetime pursuit. With Lishu we are creating a place where people will be able to go and spend years learning in as close as possible a way to the way I learned in the monastery. I don't think it's possible to do it in exactly the same way, but as close as possible.

It has long been one of my dreams to have a place where people can go and study for a long time. That's what we have been working on for a number of years now. So basically people will live at Lishu and learn the texts. As it has been evolving, we have changed the program from five years to three years and from three years to the possibility now of doing it year by year. So we are trying to become a little more flexible.

I could not see the possibility of doing this in the West, but the possibility of doing this in the East looked promising. However, in India everything moves at a different speed than in the West, so it took much longer than we had anticipated. So far we have established the Association, bought the land, raised the money, built the buildings, and now we are looking into the details of the kitchen. And the good news is that we are very close to beginning the program! We will soon be ready, so I want everybody to know this. We want people to come there, to study there and to support Lishu financially. A description of all these possibilities is available on the [Lishu website](#).

Another vision of mine is The 3 Doors. This program is experientially based and focuses on the essence of the teachings. It does not so much emphasize learning from the texts as it does gaining experience with the practices that bring direct benefit. Visit [The 3 Doors Website](#).

In the last three or four years we've probably trained over 100 people around the world in The 3 Doors Academy program. Those who have completed the two-and-a-half-year Academy have expressed much enthusiasm, and I trust this enthusiasm will continue and will expand to many different places throughout the world.

Both The 3 Doors and Ligmincha are like a family. In a way, The 3 Doors was born from Ligmincha and is now growing in its own way. It has a slightly different purpose as an organization. But always we support each other to grow. While there is much more to say about Lishu and The 3 Doors, I just wanted to highlight the progress of these organizations. I invite you to go their websites for more information. If you are open or if you are curious, you can always Google it!