


[Current Issue](#)
[Previous Issues](#)
[Translations](#)
[Ligmincha International](#)
[Bookstore](#)
[PDF](#) | [Print](#) | [E-mail](#)

Volume 24, Number 1 / February 2024



Letter from the Editors

Best Wishes for a Great Year Ahead!



Dear Friends,

Happy Losar! Celebrate the Tibetan New Year beginning February 10, 2024, an auspicious time for letting go of the past and readying oneself for the new! As Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche had encouraged during the winter retreat, we should engage with our resolutions, and act, and be strong in the new year, and believe that we can!

In this issue we share an excerpt of Rinpoche's teaching that delves more deeply into why this letting go of old limitations is such an important aspect of transformation into a fuller, bigger, and more open and fluid identity. Enjoy!

We are happy to announce the publication of a special new book, *Flight of the Bon Monks*, by Harvey Rice and Jackie Cole. We were so fortunate to read the galley copy and couldn't wait to let you all know that this book is both a treasure and a real page-turner! It is the amazing true account of H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak and H.H. Lungtok Tenpai Nyima's escape from Tibet, and the survival of Bon. Don't miss the interview with the authors by Ton Bisscheroux below. The book is available through many booksellers.

More news and events at Ligmincha:

- Mark your calendar upcoming Spring Wellness Retreat April 10-14, 2024, in-person at Serenity Ridge and on Zoom.
- Celebrate Losar with Rinpoche and other Ligmincha lamas, teachers, guests and friends! See all the details below.
- See Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's upcoming teaching schedule.
- New Full Moon Series starts on February 23 with Rinpoche's webcast.
- Read the first in a series of "Sacred Interviews" with Geshe Denma Gyaltsen.
- You are invited to The Great Medicine Retreat at Menri Monastery in April.
- Announcing several Ligmincha Learning 2024 online courses.
- Dream Yoga online GlideWing course begins February 17.
- Upcoming 3 Doors Academies, practice day and other practice opportunities.
- From the VOCL archives, enjoy a previous Losar article from 2018 with gorgeous wisdom and photographs.
- In the Student and Teacher article, Rinpoche responds to a student's despair about feeling frozen with so many painful thoughts.
- Read the Spanish translation for the December VOCL.

In Bon,
Aline and Jeff Fisher



No One Knows Better This Fullness of Being

An Excerpt from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's 3 Doors Teachings, December 2023

Receive VOCL by Email

[Subscribe](#)

Bookstore & Tibet Shop

Ligmincha's online store is **currently offline** because of staffing issues.

We hope it will return soon.

In the meantime, visit the Bookstore & Tibet Shop when you come to Serenity Ridge Retreat Center. Most books published through Sacred Sky Press, Ligmincha International's publishing arm which supports books on Bon teachings and translations of texts, are available through [lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com).

About Voice of Clear Light

Voice of Clear Light is a free email publication of Ligmincha International. Your suggestions and contributions to *Voice of Clear Light* are welcome. To contact us, send an email to: voiceofclearlight@ligmincha.org

For more information about Ligmincha International, the teachings of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, or retreats at Serenity Ridge or our other regional centers, please contact us at:

Ligmincha International
554 Drumheller Lane
Shipman, VA 22971
office@ligmincha.org

Bring Voice of Clear Light to your email inbox >

[Subscribe](#)

Stay in Touch

Follow Ligmincha on



In the teachings, the two-fold topic of wisdom and compassion comes up again and again, two very simple things. I admire His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teaching a lot, and we all know very clearly that the Dalai Lama emphasizes the compassion aspect so much. He's so well known for that topic that he's even become famous for his message of compassion. He also teaches about the wisdom aspect, sunyata or emptiness; however, that message has not been embraced by as wide an audience as his teachings on compassion.

I think there is a very good reason for that. And I see it when I am presenting the idea of the "pain body" and of being "no one" to people who are steeped in Western psychology and therapy. At the beginning of the conversation, it seems as if all is going well. But as we get deeper into these ideas, I begin sensing that they don't like it, and that they have a problem with it or they have issues with it. And that can even develop to the point of their being afraid of simply considering it. Being afraid of an idea, though, just because it may be different than what you're used to, seems a bit strange to me. But I've personally encountered those moments when people are having difficulties simply with an idea.

So I wanted to talk a little bit more about these ideas of our being "no one" and of the pain identity. Just to clarify, it's not something that I made up, or that I simply had some dreams and ideas about. It's truly coming from the teachings, which are the source. And it seems like the most important point for one's self-transformation, the most important point and also the most ignored point. In terms of true transformation, I do think that it is absolutely the key, and that without that, there is no true transformation, *period*. Rather, there would only be a *kind* of a transformation, for instance a transformation only from one particular pain to another pain; from a bigger pain to a smaller pain; from more pain to less pain, from a confusing pain to a more clear pain. But any of these transformations will not, in a true sense, get rid of pain. Rather, it will just be a move to a new version of pain identity that you could again get stuck in.

However, that new version of pain identity always seems like a good one during that initial honeymoon phase of it. But it will one day become your ex, and you will have similar experiences with that pain identity as you've had with all of your other exes. Which may then lead you to adopting yet again another new seemingly better pain identity, and you will begin this whole process over again. That is the endless story of samsara.

So I wanted to talk just a little bit about that. We have two terms in Tibetan: *nang-dzin* and *dak-dzin*. So *nang-dzin* relates to an inner grasping. And similarly, *dak-dzin* means to grasp at a false sense of self. So *nang-dzin/dak-dzin* describes one's grasping as permanent that which you are only temporarily identified with. And that identification is not going to last at all, because that's the nature of any pain identity.

But there is another identity that we can call *big self*, which, although you will not like to hear it, I will say it anyway, it is that you are "no one." That's your big self, the potential to be anyone, which is the "no one". That "no one," the potential to be anyone, that's your true self. And when you are not realizing that, when you have not discovered that, then you always identify with *something* that is *someone*! And because that someone has a fear of being "no one," then that someone is always a weaker place to be than the "no one." It's less, it's weaker, it's more isolated, it's more limited and it's more conditioned. So that is why it's called *pain identity*: because it's somehow identifying with the weaker position. A conditional position!

Take for example cases of childhood trauma, which involve one or a few very strong frozen pain identities that happened in one's childhood. That frozen identity remains stuck throughout one's adulthood, throughout one's life! And that identity is always interfering with any new situation, any potential situation, any expansion of one's sense of self, any new discovery; it always interferes with that. What manifests is, I **CANT DO IT!!** I don't want to go there. I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to think about it. I cannot do it. Always, it's a limitation. That identity, that traumatized sense of self is frozen, it's limited, it's conditioned, it's stuck! Therefore it's not able to transcend, to expand and go beyond or liberate. And that's why we suffer. We may see some possibility of expansion, but we can't go there, because it is so strong an identity that we are stuck in.

In a simple way, what I am trying to say is this: the pain identity is always identified with limitation and with weaker places in us. It's identified with some limited sense of who you are that is less than you are, that is weaker than you are, that is more lacking in completeness or qualities than you are. *That's* what we're identified with, with the pain identity.

These ideas point to our misidentifying ourselves with something weaker. But if we know this is the case, then we don't get too serious about our identification with that; we don't get too stuck about it. You come to realize that it's not true that your weakness is you, rather, your fullness is you, your strength is you. You recognize that the power you might feel in your control over people and situations is not a real power. Rather, your ability to let go of power is your real power. It's so much better to realize, *Oh, there's a need in me to control, and this need to control and to feel that I'm in control, feels like a power to me.* However, it's not a power; it's a weakness.



Follow Tenzin Wangyal
Rinpoche on



Search

Yet we commonly do the opposite; instead of recognizing it as a weakness, you are identifying it as a power. And therefore you're holding onto it until *it* kicks you out, or until *the system* kicks you out, or until *life* kicks you out, or *karma* kicks you out. So you see, it's just not possible or good to keep holding on to power. Far better to let it go with so much sense of grace and peace and joy. And that's the case even regarding one's own aging, sickness and death.

The last of our letting go is with regard to this famous *death*. We do not have control over it. When that moment comes, then you have two choices, to suffer while trying to control it, or to gracefully embrace it and let go of control, surrendering to the truth of impermanence. And for sure, those who surrender to the truth of impermanence, they are at peace! As well, their sense of self is much higher than simply this body; their sense of self is much bigger than this moment of the dying; their sense of life is bigger than this end of life. Life continues; that's their sense of life. And their connection, their existence, is beyond this death and beyond this life and beyond any other life. They have an expansion of the sense of self. That is their strength.

We are talking now about letting go of control for your life, and letting go of control of the process of dying. I can understand if you say, *I don't want to jump into that big of a topic right away, but I can start with dinner with my partner. I can let go of that. I'll say to them, 'Tonight I will go wherever you want to go.'* And with such a graceful joy and love for this person that you are with, for sure you will not have any negative consequences from eating the food that *they* enjoy or dining somewhere that *they* like but maybe you would otherwise avoid. It will not have negative consequences, *for sure*, because it will definitely enrich your well-being.

So think about some moments like that, just let go of control. You see, these little things matter to me, and I am very happy practicing them. So you can let go of these little things that you would normally control. Then you can move on to letting go of the bigger things in life. And it could even be fun to make a schedule for letting go of each one of those bigger things in life and be willing to change those things that you would not otherwise consider changing. That's not to say that each of those changes you make are necessarily changes into something better. However, doing so definitely strengthens your ability to keep from getting stuck in what you identify with. These are the identities that I refer to as the pain identities. And we do have a lot of them.

Freeing ourselves from being stuck leads us back to this sense of a simple identity. Nowadays people talk a lot about the idea of a minimalist lifestyle, this beautiful idea of living more simply. I was thinking about that today as I was sitting on a stoop just outside the lobby of this little hotel that I'm staying at while I'm teaching here in Bangkok. So there is all of this heavy rain falling outside, and I am just sitting out on the stoop. I was looking out on all of these tropical trees here, with a little pool over there, and just the rainfall. No one else was around, just me sitting. And a porter came by asking if I wanted to sit inside. I said, no, no, I wanted to sit outside. It was so joyful, all of this rain and the splashes of reflected light that the raindrops made on the surface of the pool. So beautiful! And I was just thinking, *this* is what we all need. We all need experiences of maximum joy with a minimum of things. Because we are so used to experiencing a minimum of joy with a maximum of things. This then, is the exercise that we need to discover: having so much appreciation for the very little things in life. You just open and observe, and you see.



Online Losar Celebration February 10 & 11, 2024

The Year of the Wood Dragon

Please join us in celebrating Losar! February 10, 2024, begins the Tibetan New Year, the Year of the Male Wood Dragon. Celebrate and practice online on February 10 and 11. Join Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, our resident and guest lamas, instructors and other guests for guided meditations, rituals, prayers, music and conversations.

This event is free and open to all on Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join!

To participate please [register here](#)

SCHEDULE

All sessions are New York Time/EST. [Check your timezone here](#)

Saturday, February 10, 2024



- **6-7 a.m.** Sang and LhaGyal Practice
Streaming from Chamma Ling Center, Wilga, Poland
- **7-8 a.m.** Guided Practice in English and in Polish: The Five Warrior Syllables
Led by Ryszard Adamiak, instructor, Ligmincha Poland
- **12:30-1 p.m.** Losar Greetings from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and his wife Khandro Tsering Wangmo Khymtsar
Welcome speech by Rob Patzig, President of Ligmincha International
- **1:30-2:30 p.m.** Sang Chod by Geshe Denma Gyaltzen, resident lama of Ligmincha Texas
Streamed from Houston, Texas
- **3-4 p.m.** Connection concert from Poland
Streamed from Chamma Ling Retreat Center, Wilga, Poland

Sunday, February 11, 2024

- **3-4 a.m.** Guided Practice in German: The Ma Tri Mantra of liberation / Das MA TRI Mantra der Befreiung
Led by Florian Bruckmann, instructor, Ligmincha Germany
- **6-7 a.m.** Guided Practice in Spanish. Welcoming Losar with Life Force and an Open Heart
Led by Alejandro Chaoul, senior instructor, Ligmincha International
- **9-10 a.m.** Book introduction: The Lamp of Uza Rinchen Sal Illuminating the Illusory Vision of the Bardo, the Purifying Period of the Karmic Vision of the Six Lokas, and a Pure Vision of the Sugatas
Sangmo Yangri, Ph.D., teacher, Lishu Institute, Dehradun, India
- **11 a.m.-12 p.m.** Guided Practice in English Spanish. Prayers: Sherap Chamma practice, Long Life prayers and mantra
Led by Lama Kalsang Nyima, resident lama of Ligmincha Mexico
- **1-2:30 p.m.** Tibetan Astrology Predictions for the New Year
From Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortshang Rinpoche



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's Worldwide Teaching Schedule

Upcoming in 2024

Here is Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's upcoming teaching schedule. Rinpoche will be traveling a lot in 2024! His schedule so far includes retreats throughout the year in the U.S., Mexico, Italy, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary and Nepal.



You can find the latest listings and any changes in the Events section of the [Ligmincha website](#) or the [Serenity Ridge website](#). Please register for these online retreats through the specific Events box on the website. Updates will be provided on the website as they become available.

- February 26-March 1, 2024. Big Sur, California. [Tibetan Dream Yoga](#)
- March 8, 2024. Houston, Texas. Public Talk, [Melody of Luminous Poetry](#)
- March 9-10, 2024. Houston, Texas. [Healing with Form, Energy and Light](#)
- March 15-17, 2024. Berkeley, California. [21 Nails, Part 5](#)
- March 22-24, 2024. Mexico City, Mexico. [Dream Yoga](#)
- April 10-14, 2024. Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, Shipman, Virginia. [Spring Wellness Retreat](#)
- April 19-21, 2024. Bologna, Italy. [Spontaneous Creativity](#)
- April 26-28, 2024. Ligmincha Ireland. [Practice of the Six Lokas](#)
- May 3-5, 2024. Berlin, Germany. [Nine Winds, Part 2](#)
- May 10-12, 2024. Bulle, Switzerland. [The Heartdrop of Chamma, the Loving Mother](#)
- May 17-19, 2024. Vienna, Austria. [Sleep Yoga](#)
- May 24-26, 2024. Madrid, Spain. [Awakening the Sacred Body, Part 2](#)
- May 31-June 2, 2024. Amsterdam, the Netherlands. [The Six Lamps](#)
- June 22-July 6, 2024. Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, Shipman, Virginia. Summer Retreat: [Tummo, Part 4](#)
- July 19-21, 2024. London. Dream Yoga
- August 13-18, 2024. Wilga, Poland. [Tummo, Part 4](#)
- August 19-25, 2024. Buchenau, Germany. [TBA](#)
- August 30-September 1, 2024. Bourg-en-Bresse, France. [TBA](#)
- September 6-8, 2024. Budapest, Hungary. [Sherab Chamma Healing Practice](#)
- October 9-13, 2024. Kathmandu, Nepal. Fall Retreat: [Chod: Awakening Confidence by Taking Fear as a Path](#)
- November 16-17, 2024. Online: 3 Doors Retreat. [TBA](#)
- December 27, 2024-January 4, 2025. Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, Shipman, Virginia. [Winter Retreat](#)



Spring Wellness Retreat at Serenity Ridge

April 10-14 with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



In spring the world is born anew. Connecting to the rhythms and patterns of nature, we come into our own well-being. The Spring Wellness Retreat, Transforming Life and Health Through Nature, Movement, Breath and Meditation, is an invitation to bring awareness into the patterns of our daily life for reflection, renewal and transformation.

The retreat will be held at Serenity Ridge and online on Zoom. Experienced and practitioners and those new to meditation are both welcome!

Over four days, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and guests will share ancient methods, supported by modern research and scientific findings, to realize our inner source of well-being and grow beyond often unconscious self-defined limits to engage with our lives in creative, inspired and fun ways. We will discover ways to release stress, decrease anxiety, rebalance energy, deepen inner peacefulness, and reconnect to ourselves and the world around us. Be empowered to make healthier choices that support your wellness on every level!

Our days will include:

- Sunrise meditation (weather permitting)
- Tibetan yoga (for all levels of mobility)
- Meditation instruction appropriate for beginners and experienced meditators
- Connecting to the elements of nature through forest bathing and nature walks, river and stream access, sky gazing and evening bonfires
- Time for journaling and reflection
- Delicious, healthy, plant-based meals
- Guided relaxation
- Ancient Tibetan treatment for better sleep and relaxation
- Intermittent fasting (optional)
- Cold plunges (optional)
- Other modalities of self-care (optional, and additional charge)
- More opportunities to be announced!

Registration for the in-person retreat at Serenity Ridge is now open. Zoom registration is expected to open in March.

[Learn more/register](#)



Flight of the Bon Monks

Book Tells True Story of Bon Monks' Escape from Tibet and Survival of Bon



The remote cave where Tenzin Namdak studied for four years with his master

Harvey Rice and Jackie Cole, who are husband and wife, have written an amazing book that details the trials and triumphs of Bon's highest teachers during Tibet's most agonizing period and the founding of Menri Monastery in India. The book is titled Flight of the Bon Monks: War, Persecution, and the Salvation of Tibet's Oldest Religion.

The true story, which reads like a novel, is told through the voices of Bon's beloved teachers and is amplified by others who were likewise caught up in the turbulence of the era. The book focuses primarily on His Eminence Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche (called "Tenzin" in the book), His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche (called by his

original name "Sangye") and Samten Karmey, who became a writer and researcher in the field of Tibetan studies. The story is amplified by others who were caught up in the turbulence of the times, including Tenpa Woser, a monk from Menri who renounced his vows to protect the Menri Trizin, and David Snellgrove, the British scholar who chose Sangye, Tenzin and Samten to travel to London. The book covers the 1950 Chinese invasion of Tibet and subsequent rebellion and battle of Lhasa; His Holiness's and Samten Karmay's lifelong friendship and adventures before and after their escape together; Yongdzin Rinpoche's ambush and near death, captivity and escape; the founding of Menri Monastery in India; and efforts to secure the Bon religion.

The book includes many details the authors gathered from other books and interviews. Harvey worked for 18 years as a reporter for the Houston Chronicle, and Jackie has been a student of Bon for more than two decades and has many contacts in the worldwide Bon community. You can read an excerpt of the book at flightofthebonmonks.com. Ton Bisscheroux interviewed the authors.

Ton: Reading the book, I get a lot of information and details, and I have the feeling that you witnessed all the events you describe. How did you manage to do that?

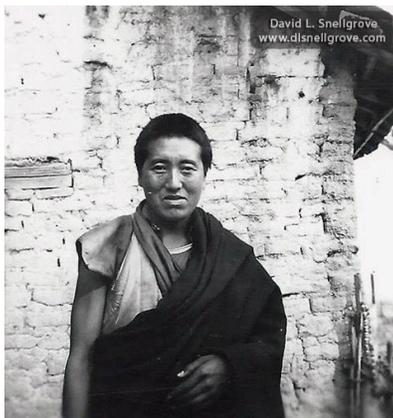
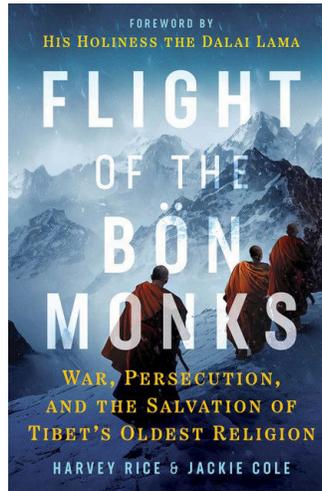
Jackie: We used narrative nonfiction as technique. In that way we try to make you feel you are there. In this style you tell a true story, but it reads like a novel.

Harvey: I wrote it in that way because I want to engage people, also those who are not familiar with Bon.

Ton: Can you talk about retrieving the information through interviews and literature study?

Jackie: We did many interviews and a lot of research. We probably have about 60 books on Tibetan history on our bookshelf, so we got details from a lot of authors.

Harvey: We spent many hours with Yongdzin Rinpoche, Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche (abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Nepal) and Samten Karmay. Over the years we talked with them multiple times, in different countries.



Yongdzin Rinpoche in 1960

Jackie: After sitting and talking with Yongdzin Rinpoche, we would go home and write it down. Then we realized that there were pieces of that story that weren't clear. So we'd go back the next day and talk to him again. It was like the first time he told the story, it was an outline. And then the next we would get a piece here and there. And then the next time we'd get information in between those pieces. While asking him these questions, at some point Khenpo said, "Oh, I never knew that." While we were doing our interviews, they were also writing up the official biography of Yongdzin Rinpoche.

Harvey: We also did an interview with His Holiness the 33rd Menri Trizin before he died. We had all these questions we wanted to ask him, and the first thing he said was, "No questions. I know what you guys need to know, and I will tell you" Kindly, he was very forthcoming in that long "interview."

Jackie: The other thing that we did after an interview is ask, "Is there somebody else we need to talk to?" That's how we

were able to fill in the story with more details, from interviews with Tenpa Wosar and Tsering Wangyal, and some others. Some information came out of books, but there is also information from the people who were there.

Harvey: We traveled to so many countries, Italy, France, Estonia, Great Brittan, Nepal, Tibet and India, to do research and interviews.

Jackie: We went to Estonia to meet the Norwegian scholar Per Kvaerne, and we met David Snellgrove before he passed away in Italy.

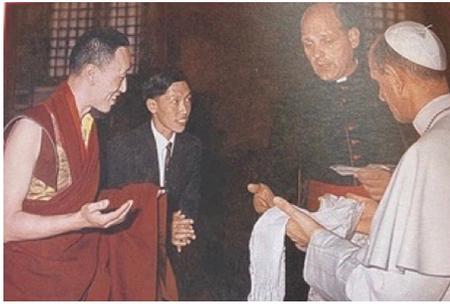
Harvey: We did not expect to get an interview with David Snellgrove. We had our tickets booked on a flight to Paris, because we're going to a retreat at Shenten Darye Ling. And we got this one chance to interview him. So when we got to Paris, we rented a car, and we had to drive straight all the way from Paris to Italy.

Jackie: We spent the night in Italy, interviewed David Snellgrove the next day, then drove back to Shenten. When we told people our story, they looked at us, and said, "Oh, How American. Later, we were in London, we went to the house where David Snellgrove lived, and the people invited us in, and were so gracious to take us to the backyard to see the stupa that Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak, Sangye Tenzin and Samten Karmey had built there. Every time, every corner we turned, we found out something new that send us down another path, and another way.

Ton: That was an amazing journey you made.

Jackie: Yes, it has truly deepened my devotion to this tradition. To hear their experiences and know the

courage and commitment, heartbreak and pain they went through to help each other and keep Bon alive is pure inspiration.



From left, Sangye Tenzin, Samten Karmay, Vatican official, Pope Paul VI. The two visited the pope in 1964.

Ton: Please tell us about the research you did to ensure the accuracy of the many historical events in the book.

Harvey: We were able to cross-check many events to make sure they were correct. We are indebted in part to these authors, because there are a lot of details about what happened in Lhasa in 1959. Like Melvin Goldstein, a preeminent historian on Tibet, had done a lot of research, and then there were other people who had done research on that as well. It gave a lot of detail.

Ton: What prompted you to want to write this book?

Harvey: I remember the very moment of the inception of the idea. I was working from my office in our house.

Jackie came in and said, "Harvey, I got an idea I'd like to run across you. My teachers told me a story, and I think it's a fascinating story about how Yongdzin Rinpoche was ambushed and shot in Tibet. I think we should write that story." I said, "That sounds like a great story. Let's do it." The next year we went to India and Nepal and did our first interviews.

Jackie: I thought, we've got to tell these stories or they're not going to be written down. And fortunately, Yongdzin Rinpoche, His Holiness, Samten Karmay, Khenpo and the whole group of them gave us permission and opened their stories to us.

Ton: What is the most important thing you want to communicate in writing this book?

Jackie: What I want people to know is how extraordinary these people are, and how extraordinary the country of Tibet is. How ancient Bon is woven into people's lives. And how extraordinary these Bonpos are, especially the main characters in the book. We could easily have lost Bon. It is a story of courage and devotion. It's also a story of forced migration, and with conflicts (all over the world) this is kind of a model of how that can happen. And how a person survives disaster, and what characteristics a person needs to have.

Harvey: We also wanted to engage people who never heard of the Bon religion, and give a basic idea of what it is. And then record this important piece of history that people would otherwise never know. There is a beautiful official biography of Yongdzin Rinpoche, but it is not a book that people are going to pick up in the bookstore. It's a very thick and expensive volume with a lot of religious aspects that most non-Bon readers would probably find daunting.

Ton: How long have you been working on the book?

Jackie: Ten years. We started in 2011, asking for permission and blessings, and we sold the book in 2022. When you write a book, you can self-publish it. But if you want to have a publisher, you get an agent who will sell it to a publisher. We submitted 52 agent queries before we got one to say yes. And the reason was not that the book was bad, but it's a niche book. The audience wouldn't be big enough for the publisher. So we want to prove them wrong. Now we want to make sure that it gets out far and wide, as much as we possibly can.

Ton: How did you work together on the book?

Jackie: We did all the interviews together, and we each asked questions. I transcribed them. Harvey did most of the book research, and he did most of the initial outline writing, and then we would work together to massage it into what we ended up with. It's been rewritten probably 25 times.

Harvey: I did the first draft in 2016. I got a four-month leave of absence from work and wrote the draft during that time. The final product is totally unrecognizable from the draft that I wrote.

Ton: Did you ever have the feeling this project would never end?

Jackie: It's been an interesting journey. I'm excited every day, and it feels surreal that we're actually going to have a book. It would not have been okay for me not to finish this. That's the kind of commitment that I had to it, and the responsibility I felt. It felt like an embarrassment for it to take so long, but Samten Karmay kept saying to us, "Take your time. It'll be all right."

Harvey: It was a great adventure, and I never felt that we were not going to get to the end. I always knew we would. We just didn't know where the end was.

Ton: When I came to the last chapter, Promised Land, I thought that would be the last chapter. But then you put an epilogue after it, How It Is Now. It was really interesting to see how things evolved. It already felt like the end, and then it continued. That was beautiful.

Jackie: My initial idea was that the story would end at the border when they got out. But as we learned more, the book became a little fuller and a little more interesting. It was like these little nuggets would come out.

Ton: When did you visit Tibet?

Jackie: In 2014. It was very difficult, physically due to the altitude and emotionally because of the totalitarian oppression of everything. There was also a bright side, because I now know experientially why the Tibetans use space and air for all of their analogies. I find that Tibet is the very definition of the word *vast*, and you can't really understand it until you've been there. We were up at Camp Hale, where they trained the Tibetans for the CIA. Colorado is sort of like the edges of the Himalayas, but there's nothing like the Changthang in Tibet.

Harvey: When we went there, they wouldn't even let us in the country unless we had a government-approved guide. Our guide was late to the airport, and they let us through the gate only after his arrival.



Menri Monastery in Tibet, 2014

Ton: When I was there in 1987, I hitchhiked and had all kinds of adventures.

Harvey: We did not tell anyone that we were doing research for a book, because if we'd done that, they would not have let us in. We went to Menri Monastery on the slope of Mount Shari Phowa in Topgyel. We were warned that there are spies in the monastery and if you try to interview someone, they will tell the Chinese, and it would go very badly for the person you interviewed, and it could go badly for us as well. We would ask things, but it wouldn't be like an interview. It'd be, "Oh, look at that. How about that?" And us being there, we learned so much.

Jackie: We were able to get to the cave where Yongdzin Rinpoche stayed on Lake Jerutso with his master for four years before he went back to Menri. Now, everything about it was intimidating. When we were at the cave, the police came and told us we couldn't be there. They made us pack up our tents and everything at dusk, and drive out of there. I was petrified. The Tibetans are amazing there was no lack of devotion that we saw in Tibet. They were circumambulating the Potala. They were doing chod in front of the Jokhang. They were prostrating in front of the Jokhang, with the Chinese soldiers on the next rooftop chanting cadence.

Ton: Are you Bonpos?

Jackie: I'm the practitioner, and Harvey is the support, although he's attended a few teachings. I came to Bon via a dream. And in that dream, there was a Tibetan monk in my backyard. Then I started to explore and research Tibetan Buddhism and found Bon, and stuck with it. In 1999 I started with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. We were very fortunate to have five or six teachers come through Houston every year, in particular, Ponlob Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and Yongdzin Rinpoche. Many years later, Ponlob Trinley Nyima was visiting, and the whole sangha came down to our house. While everybody was picnicking in the backyard, I looked out and Ponlob was sitting out in my backyard, in the exact same position and in the exact same place as my dream.

Harvey: I have long considered myself a secular Buddhist. I do not subscribe to all the trappings and gods and things, but the core philosophy of Buddhism and Bon, kindness and those things, that I do subscribe to.

Ton: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Jackie: It's been a great adventure for us to do this, and it's been very meaningful for me, as a Bonpo practitioner, to learn the underpinnings of all of this. And we also are extremely grateful to all the people that we've talked to, who were very generous with their time and their stories.

Harvey: We got a comment that we were insulting the monks, because we used their first names. But the thing is, Tibetans don't have last names. We just had to arbitrarily decide what we're going to call them in a consistent way, so the reader knows who we are talking about. And we decided to wait till the last chapter to use their full names.

Jackie: We asked Samten Karmay about what to call His Holiness in the book, because they had been friends from childhood. And he's the one who said, you call him Sangye. That was his name until he was picked as Menri Trizin.

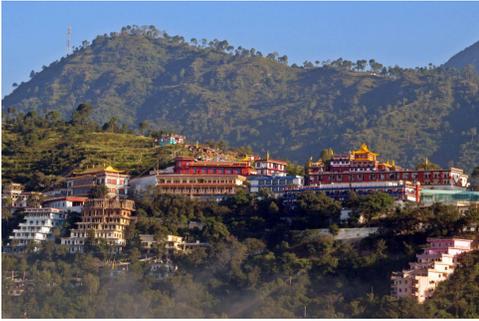
When and where is the book available?

Harvey: The publisher said it will be in the warehouse in early January and online on February 27, 2024 at www.amazon.com/Flight-Bon-Monks, or wherever you buy books.

Jackie: The first book signing is on March 8, when Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche teaches at the [Jung Center](#) in Houston.

**Menri Drupchen: The Great Medicine Retreat**

This April at Menri Monastery in India



Menri Monastery welcomes everyone to attend Menri Drupchen, the Great Medicine Retreat led by His Holiness the 34th Gyalwa Menri Trizin Rinpoche, spiritual head of the Bon tradition, in Dolanji, India, April 11-27, 2024.

If you plan to travel and participate at this precious event please register and contact the monastery's organizing committee. The last date for registration is February 29, 2024.

There is an information site to gather publicly available information about Menri Drupchen and to help connect people and information. Please visit this site to read the official announcement and to learn more about the ceremony, the schedule, the registration process and to connect with others.

[Learn more here](#)



Finding Protection in Our Own Inner Refuge

Tenzin Rinpoche Introduces New Series of 24-Hour Full Moon Practices



With the start of the Tibetan New Year, a brand-new series of Full Moon practices begins! You are warmly invited to join Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche on Friday, February 23, at 10 a.m. New York time as he introduces the new CyberSangha series on Finding Refuge Within. Rinpoche will begin the series with a teaching and guided meditation, followed by 24 hours of silent contemplation alternating with further periods of guided meditation and supportive mantra music.

Each full moon we will gather, and within the warmth and support of community, bring to mind a challenge we are living with in relation to our health and well-being, our close relationships, or the suffering we perceive in our world. As we reflect on how this lives in our body, our speech and our mind, we can open to and

embrace that pain, allowing it to loosen and release as we rest, abiding in the stillness, silence and spaciousness of being, the inner refuge.

This is our opportunity to connect with a sense of fullness and completeness in the present moment and find a deep sense of protection, no matter what challenges we face. By connecting with the inner refuge, not only are we empowered to transform our own pain, but we also become more available to compassionately support others who are suffering.

All participants are invited to light a candle during the group practice, if they wish, as a visual reminder of the sacredness of inner refuge.

The practice is open to anyone regardless of religious or spiritual background and takes place via Zoom. You can join in at any time during the 24 hours. We will be supported throughout by Ligmincha International's global community of practice leaders. There is no cost to participate, but registration is required.

For full details and to view the practice text in multiple languages, visit cybersangha.net



Upcoming Ligmincha Learning Courses

Three Heart Mantras, Ngondro, Sleep Yoga, Five Elements

Ligmincha Learning is happy to invite you to attend several online prerecorded courses with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche this February and March 2024. These online courses feature beautiful video teachings, guided meditations, readings, journal writing activities, and the opportunity to interact with senior mentors and classmates from around the world.

The Three Heart Mantras February 23-March 31, 2024

The Three Heart Mantras are used in many different meditations in the Bon tradition and play a major role in the ngondro 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.

[Learn more/register](#)

Ngondro, The Foundational Practices March 1-December 15, 2024

The ngondro teachings are a set of nine practices that offer complete instructions for taming, purifying and perfecting the suffering mind. Although these practices are

considered the foundation for entrance into the five-part cycle of Tibetan Bon dzogchen teachings, Bon's highest teachings on the nature of mind, many practitioners adopt the ngondro as their main meditation and complete the nine sets of 100,000 repetitions over the course of a lifetime. Within each is contained the entire path to liberation. They are considered to be the foundational practices for the entire tradition.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche rarely teaches the ngondro and recommends it for dedicated practitioners who feel a strong connection to the Bon lineage. Within the ngondro are found practices that are used within many other practices, such as the guru yoga prayer, bodhicitta prayer, refuge prayer, prostrations and the three heart mantras, so the ngondro supports and deepens all other meditation practices.

[Learn more/register](#)

Meditation, Breath and Movement: Tsa Lung External, Internal and Secret Practices Tentative: March 1-31, 2024

With Alejandro Chaoui

Tsa lung is a series of ancient yogic practices that brings balance and harmony to our physical body, energy and mind. The term *tsa lung* can be translated as the energy-winds (Tibetan *lung*, Skt. *rana*, Chinese *qi*) in the channels, for these practices are designed to open the subtle channels, guiding the healthy flow of the energy-winds so that we can enjoy good health and reconnect with more calmness to a quiet, peaceful mind.

[Learn more/register](#)

Sleep Yoga, The Yoga of Clear Light March 29-April 27, 2024

The course will introduce simple techniques to enter into sleep in a healthy, balanced way. Even if we do not consistently enter into clear light sleep, we can benefit from a refreshing, relaxed sleep that gives us deep renewal. This is supported by breathing techniques, physical postures and guided visualizations. Tenzin Rinpoche also will provide meditations to wake up in a beautiful way, feeling the blessings of sleep and stepping into our day with serenity. Through these simple practices we can transform our sleep to be one of tranquility and awareness.

[Learn more/register](#)

The Five Elements, Healing with Form, Energy and Light March 29-May 12, 2024

In this course Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explores how each of the five elements relates to our daily experiences, emotions and relationships. Rinpoche guides meditations for each of the elements, designed to help clear our obstacles and bring balance to our lives.

[Learn more/register](#)

Free courses; enroll at any time. [Starting a Meditation Practice](#); [The True Source of Healing](#); [Living with Joy, Dying in Peace](#)

Learn more at ligminchalearning.com



Interview with Geshe Denma Gyaltzen

Part of Sacred Interviews Series



Ligmincha International and Ligmincha Brazil launched a new online program in November called Sacred Interviews. During the first session, participants could ask questions related to their practice and to the teachings, and learn more about the life and background of Geshe Denma Gyaltzen, resident lama of Ligmincha Texas. Here are some excerpts from that interview.

There are times when I feel Buddhism is my path, and there are times when I feel disconnected. I

know I'm the problem, but could you give me some advice on how to find stability?

You should know. The questioner said, "I know that I am the problem." This is most important thing to recognize, the *I* which is the source of all the pain. Look inside yourself and find out. Discover who is the *I*. It changes and has many different faces. When you are excited, happy, it is the *I*. When you are sad, depressed, it is same. But it's in a different form, different face. You need to know that *I* is really important.

The second part is how to find stability. When you feel disconnected, how do you disconnect? You should think about that. Do you disconnect with the teachings or do you disconnect with the teachers? Do you disconnect with the practitioners? You should know that. Then you need to develop that, deal with that. Develop a better way. For stability you can practice Guru Yoga, *lame naljor*. Before every teaching we do the *lame naljor*. You have received all the teaching from your teacher. You should connect with your root teacher in the lineage. I will read the Guru Yoga prayer:

*From the crown of my head, palace of the great bliss,
I pray to you, benevolent root lama.
O precious one, grant me the blessings
To recognize my own true nature as a buddha.*

Ask the precious one, "Grant me the blessings." That way you should connect to your teacher. Then also there is your inner refuge. The inner refuge quality is connection without effort, without analyzing, without thought. No manipulation, no pretending, no expectations. It is a simple, lovely, joyful practice of trusting, connection. Normally Rinpoche gives the example of the mother and son, mother connecting to the child, that needs to make connection. This way the practice will become more stable.

How do I know when I am meditating, that I am in my true nature?

Resting in the true nature is the main practice of dzogchen. There are three paths, renunciation, transformation and liberation. In Tibetan we call liberation *togal*. What does *togal* mean? It has nothing to do with consciousness. Nothing is created. You don't need to visualize or to think anything. It's self-liberating. You don't need to plan anything, write anything, do anything. Thought just appears spontaneously. Sometimes there are good thoughts. Sometimes there are bad thoughts, like thoughts of anger, jealousy, desire. Any kind of thought can appear spontaneously. After some time they don't stay so long; the thoughts will soon disappear by themselves. If you sometimes add more and more thoughts, then that is different, because the thoughts will not soon disappear by themselves. But when a thought has disappeared before the next thought starts, you can have a little bit of the rest between them.

No matter how strong anger, jealousy or any of the five poisons may come, ultimately they are all liberated by themselves. After a while, when your anger has decreased, jealousy has decreased, ignorance has decreased, and then before the next thought or emotion arises, we can have a peaceful rest for a little while. Soon afterwards, another thought comes. That state between those two is called the natural state. It's very short-term. It's peaceful. Then you practice more and more extending that peaceful state. Extend slowly, then stay longer and longer. That is the natural state. The true natural state is that. Then you don't need to search any longer. Practice that.

Is it necessary to practice tantric practices to mature our mind before practicing dzogchen?

You don't have to. If you practice tantra it will be very helpful for your dzogchen practice, but you don't have to do it. It depends on the person. Tantric and dzogchen are different practices. In tantra, there are a lot of visualizations and transformations. In dzogchen you don't need to do these; it liberates by itself. You don't need to think. There's no visualization part. Sometimes before dzogchen, we do a purification practice, a preliminary practice to purify yourself inner and outer. And when purified, clearer parts come out, and when we put the essence in there, it will be clear. That's a benefit of practice and is helpful for practice. At the monastery there are some curricula where we have to practice sutra, then tantra, then dzogchen, each for eight years. Some of the dzogchen practitioners didn't know the philosophy, and so then the monastery made two groups of practitioners. There is a philosophy group or a meditation group. One group starts with meditation practice and finishes with philosophy. The other group starts with philosophy and finishes with meditation practice. When you practice tantra before dzogchen, it will be very helpful, but you don't have to.

How can we involve children in the dharma?

First you need to talk to children. You can talk to them about the 10 virtues and renunciation of the 10 nonvirtues, the four good actions of the body, four good actions of the speech and three good actions of the mind. We always talk about that. We can say, do not destroy anybody's life; do not take what has not been given to you; avoid sexual misconduct. These are good actions from body. Then four good actions for the speech. If somebody is interested in that, then they need to go deeper into that. Maybe they want to meditate after they learn about the 10 virtues. What is meditation? Peace in the mind. Then slowly, if they are interested, you can bring children into the dharma. In Tibet it was customary that in a family, one son would become a monk. Now that custom has changed. Now it is ordinary to send the

boys to school. After finishing school, they are asked if they want to become a monk or continue to study further. They have their own choice.

Animals seem to have so much love and compassion. Why are they considered to be part of a lower realm? How can we help an animal to evolve spiritually?

You say that animals have love and compassion. Not all animals have that. When you watch Discovery Channel, you see a lion, a tiger, a cheetah. They kill all the animals. And other animals eat meat all the time. They have compassion to their own child, but no compassion to other animals. They kill any animal they see, a big buffalo, a deer and also a small pig. Anything they kill, they eat. That's not so much compassion.

Also compassion and the responsibility are two different things. Some animals have compassion and responsibility, and some not. Look at the dog. They are so good and honest to the owner. When a male dog and female dog meet there is so much love for each other. After the female dog gives birth, their father is not taking any responsibility. When a puppy comes close to him, he's not happy. He growls. He has no compassion to his own child. A positive example is a duck. Male and female get together, then the female lays eggs. After the duckling come out, you can see how they take care of the little ones. One parent goes first and one goes after the ducklings. They protect all the ducklings. Both male and female duck take responsibility. So nice. I go to watch them and find it so peaceful.

Why do we call it the lower realm? Animals cannot express what is happening. They are happy or unhappy. What they need they cannot say, cannot express. They cannot learn the dharma. They will not do meditation. Some dogs are very interesting. One dog I miss a lot. When I was teaching at Chamma Ling in Crestone, Colorado Valerie's dog always attended my teaching. When Valerie said, "Go," the dog didn't go. He stayed between the hall and the kitchen, just listening. He didn't bother anyone. During the break, he was sent out. When teaching started and I rang the bell, he came to the teaching. That was so nice. I don't know how much he understood. He never asked questions. Is this right or wrong? Also, he didn't complain. He didn't say anything. He didn't ask anything. That is why animals are considered to be from a lower realm, because they cannot ask a question, because they cannot speak verbally.



The next Sacred Interviews conversation and practice will be with Geshe Choekhortshang Rinpoche on Saturday, April 6, at 12 noon New York time.



Tibetan Dream Yoga

GlideWing Online Workshop Begins February 17



GlideWing is pleased to offer Tibetan Dream Yoga, a four-week online video workshop with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche from February 17-March 17, 2024. Based on Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's best-selling book *Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*. This newly updated four-week workshop guides you in cultivating greater awareness, freedom and flexibility during every moment of life, including during your dreams at night. Spanish subtitles available. [Learn more/register](#)

Upcoming. May 11-June 2, 2024. [The Truth That Sets You Free](#)

Ongoing: [Focusing and Calming Your Mind, The Tibetan Practice of Zhine](#), a free two-week self-guided online workshop.

Learn more at glidewing.com



Nurture Your Practice in 2024

The 3 Doors Offers Support

The 3 Doors offerings include immersive programs to deepen your learning, global online gatherings to experience the vitality of community, and ongoing drop-in practice groups to receive the benefits of steady support. Pre-recorded programs and short daily meditations also are offered to bring attention to the present and connect with openness.

3 Doors Academies Begin in North America, Europe, and Latin America in 2024

This immersive 2.5 year training provides participants with the opportunity to engage deeply in the



process of self-discovery in the warmth of community. Follow these links for the latest updates.

North American Academy: The seventh North American 3 Doors Academy will begin in April 2024. The application deadline has been extended to March 15, 2024.

European Academy: The third European 3 Doors Academy will begin in October 2024. Applications are due June 30, 2024. For the Latin American Academy email frankjeri@hotmail.com

International Practice Day, March 2, 2024

Come together with fellow members of the 3 Doors community on Zoom.

Open to all and attendance is free.

[Learn more](#)

Ongoing opportunities are available for renewing your practice. Additional information and practice supports are available at www.the3doors.org.



Sharing the Timeless Joy

From the VOCL Archives

Enjoy Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's timeless wisdom along with with beautiful photographs taken by Salvador Espinosa at Menri Monastery in India while visiting there with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and son, Senghe, during Losar in February 2018, and from Serenity Ridge during that New Year's Sang celebration. Brief excerpts from Rinpoche's book *Healing with Form, Energy and Light* are interspersed in the article. Previously published in Voice of Clear Light, April 2018.



In the dzogchen view, the goal is already present. Nothing has to be developed, only recognized. The fundamental practices of dzogchen are not aimed at developing anything, not even positive qualities. The practice is simply abiding in the nature of mind in which all qualities are already present and can spontaneously arise.



Dzogchen does not attempt to overcome problems or correct their causes, nor does it renounce problems or attempt to transform them. In the pure dzogchen view, there is no such thing as a problem. When a thought or feeling or sensation arises, it is left as it is. It does not cause a reaction. And if there is a reaction, it is not further engaged.



Serenity Ridge Retreat Center in Shipman, Virginia during New Year's Sang



Salvador Espinosa (photographer), Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Rinpoche's son, Senghe

Dzogchen is the great knowledge of space and light. Space is the empty Great Mother from which all things arise as a luminous display, in which all things have their existence, and into which all things dissolve. The luminous display is the play of the five pure lights, the essence of the five elements. The manifestation is all things and all beings and all elements of experience. This is the basis of the dzogchen

view.



Student and Teacher

Together on the Path



*At times, the suffering we feel can be overwhelming, as a student shares below. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche responds with both compassion and wisdom in this exchange during a retreat in Mexico back in 2015 titled *The Power of Warmth, Physical Healing Through Meditation*. This webcast is archived on the [CyberSangha website](#).*

Student: I feel frozen and my thoughts are full of pain. I just want to stop suffering.

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche: We are all with you. We all want to stop suffering. But *trying* too much to stop suffering is a suffering too. So instead of trying to stop suffering too much, give a space to the suffering and allow the suffering to come and to go. Because every suffering wants to go away from you just as much as you want them to. They want to go. But most of the time, we hold on to them.

Your intense desire to get rid of the sufferings is the problem. That's why they don't go. You see, we grasp by wanting them, and we also grasp by not wanting them. Being more aware of your not grasping onto the pain is a much more important part of healing than your grasping at trying to rid yourself of the pain.

So what I would recommend is to be aware of grasping mind, of holding on. As we have practiced by taking the three precious pills [of stillness, silence and spaciousness], we are resting, going deeper, deeper, finding that space, finding that awareness, the power of awareness. We are able to rest. And when we rest, the sky clears. And when the sky clears, awareness arises. And when awareness arises, warmth is there. When warmth is there, the pains are gone or the conflicts are gone.

Learn more about the [entire 12-part course](#) on The True Source of Healing available on CyberSangha.net.

Here is a link to the entire [free course on The True Source of Healing](#), offered by Ligmincha Learning.

View this [short video](#) by Salvador Espinosa with text adapted from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's book *The True Source of Healing*.



Spanish Translation of VOCL

Link to December 2023 Issue Now Available

Look for the [translations of Voice of Clear Light newsletters](#) at the top of the [VOCL website](#).

[Read VOCL in Spanish](#)

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center
Headquarters of Ligmincha International
554 Drumheller Lane
Shipman, VA 22971
Serenity Ridge office: [+1-434-263-6304](#)
Ligmincha International office: [\(+1\) 434-263-3657](#)

[Subscribe to Voice of Clear Light](#)