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Teaching Issue

Volume 14, Number 5 / October 2014



Letter from the Editors

A True Gem

Dear Friends,

This issue's teaching excerpt is from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's live June webcast on "Shifting Your Pain Identity." Rinpoche addresses how we deal with our roles in life, our identities, and how these can bring us pain, but he also maps a way out—a way to shift the mind that grasps these identities so strongly. We are so thankful to have this teaching to share with you by way of Polly Turner who helps make the webcasts possible (and who also transcribed this talk), and thanks to Vickie Walter who is always there to help us make sure the words are as clear as possible in the written form, and also to Marcy Vaughn for her edits and clarifying final vision. Be sure to print out this gem of a teaching as it is not only a reminder to ourselves of how we keep getting stuck, but also offers us a glimpse of the way up and out—a way to become aware and not be so painfully attached to our identities.

Also in this issue: a letter from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche about the newly formed International Ligmincha Mandala Council; don't miss Rinpoche's upcoming free live webcast on Oct. 11; two new online workshops starting this fall; links to Spanish and now Portuguese translations for VOCL; link to the latest issue of *Ligmincha Europe Magazine*; and finally articles to tell you why you need to come to this year's Winter Retreat at Serenity Ridge and stay for a special practice retreat afterwards!

Enjoy!

All the Best in Bon,
Aline and Jeff Fisher



A Letter from the Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

New Mandala Council Represents Worldwide Sanghas

Dear Sangha,



I send my greetings to all of you.

As many of you may have heard, the Ligmincha International Board had its first meeting this past July. It is wonderful to see the care and dedication of our new board members. I know that these qualities are shared also by each of you who are helping our worldwide Ligmincha sanghas.

It is now time for us to take the next step. As I mentioned in my last email to all of you about Ligmincha's organizational changes, we want to create a council of representatives from our worldwide sanghas. This Council will meet two or three times per year with our Ligmincha International Board. The name of this group is the Ligmincha International Mandala Council. The purpose of this council is to meet together in person or by conference call as a way to share what is happening in your sanghas, to share ideas, to discuss plans, and to collaborate and work together for the sangha and mission of Ligmincha. I am happy to announce that the first meeting will take place in October during the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu retreat in Maria Alm, Austria.

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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.

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:

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As we reflected on creating this group, it became clear that it is not practical to include every sangha, given how many there are. Therefore, to keep the Mandala Council to a reasonable size, we are inviting one representative from each sangha with legal status in its respective country. There will be occasions where I invite additional sanghas to participate, depending on circumstances. My request is that each person on the Mandala Council represent not only their own local sangha, but all sanghas in their country, as we want to ensure that the Mandala Council will represent the needs of the entire Ligmincha international sangha.

I have invited the Board of Directors of Ligmincha Austria, Ligmincha Berlin, Ligmincha Denmark, Ligmincha Finland, Ligmincha France, Ligmincha Germany, Ligmincha Mexico, Chamma Ling Torreon (Mexico), Ligmincha Netherlands, Ligmincha Poland, Ligmincha Slovakia, Ligmincha Spain, Ligmincha Texas (U.S.), Chamma Ling Colorado (U.S.) and Serenity Ridge (U.S.) to nominate or elect a member from their Board of Directors or from sangha members who are actively involved with the organization to be on this council.

My wish is that Mandala Council will help to support each sangha and all the Ligmincha organization as a whole. I look forward to this first meeting of the Mandala Council, and to the benefits that future meetings will bring.

With my Blessings,
Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



Shifting Your Pain Identity

An Excerpt From an Edited Transcript of a Recorded Live Webcast by Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, June 8, 2014



*Does the role you play in life bring you more pain than peace and happiness? In this teaching from a June 8, 2014, live webcast, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche explains how you can move beyond an identification with pain and come closer to your true self. Rinpoche begins with **short meditation and mantra recitation** to connect with Sherap Chamma, a female tantric deity of the Bon tradition who is the embodiment of love and wisdom.*

We can observe that the pain we experience in our life—whether we experienced it in the past or will experience it in the future—is related to one single cause. This cause is the same for everyone, and is called *dak dzin* [Tib: *bdag 'dzin*], which is the self-grasping mind, ego. You can also refer to it as “pain identity,” because you identify with the pain. So as I’m speaking, I want all of you to not just listen intellectually or try to analyze what I’m saying or, even worse, judge what I’m saying. Instead, focus within yourself to see what this means to you. What is your pain identity? What was your pain identity? Whatever your pain identity was, how much suffering has it caused within you? Whatever your pain identity is in this moment, recognize that it is causing pain within you.

The pain identity is basically a very simple sense of self, the way you feel yourself to be in this moment. How is that arising in you in this moment? Simply by looking at your pain, you come to experience this sense of self. Look very closely at the pain that you are experiencing now or that you have experienced in the past. Deep inside that pain, there is a sense of “I” waiting to be seen, waiting to be awakened, waiting to be illuminated, waiting to be guided, a sense of “I” that feels the need to be totally free from its own prison of pain.

Can you be aware of this at this moment? Can you feel your pain identity at this moment? Whether it is individual or collective—I feel pain, the two of us feel pain, we all feel pain—look at that pain. Deep inside there is a sense of “I.” There is an “I” which is very strongly identified with a specific role. It is very specifically identified with what you do or wish to do, or with a sense of who you want to be—an ideal, a sense of self. Who is that?

For example, when a mother or a father suffers, it’s a very specific kind of suffering that only parents know. Monks do not know this kind of suffering. Nuns do not know this. Singles who are childless will not know. If you are suffering as a parent, then I am talking to you. If you are experiencing pain, you look at your sense of self; deep inside you feel *I am a mother; I am a father; I love my children; I wish my children would do this, and not do that; I wish they lived this kind of life, and not that kind of life.* It’s the parent in you, the mother or father in you, who suffering. Why are you suffering in that way? It’s because you overly identify with the role of the mother or father. That’s why you’re suffering. That’s why you feel conflict with your children. That’s why you’re not able to give the warmth, love and peace you want to give them. That’s why you’re not able to give clear guidance to them. That’s why you don’t even



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feel close to them. That's why you feel they are avoiding you. That's why you feel that there is a disconnect between you and your children.

It all goes back to one single thing: identifying too much with the role of father or mother. My definition of "too much" is the level where it creates pain, conflict, disconnectedness. So if you are that person, I'm talking to you. I just want you to recognize that you are overly identifying with your role. You are not only a father or mother; you are more than that. I want you to just have a sense of that, a feeling of that. *Yes, I am more than that.*

Maybe some of you are trying to protect something. You're trying to take care of somebody, to love somebody, or you're trying to give something to somebody. But you are also overly identifying with the role of protector, or with the role of being in control. Just be aware that you cannot control it forever, or that you are not the only one who should control it or who is responsible for it. Perhaps where you are taking charge or controlling, you are overcontrolling it. There is no space for movement, freedom, flow, flexibility, creativity, because that control is occupying a space in which you are suffocating and you are suffocating other people as well.

Simply recognize this pain identity that needs to control. It has nothing to do with doing something better or perfectly or ethically or with generosity. It's more that there is a need to control, and that need has something to do with the inner pain that you are identifying with. Simply recognize that. *Yes, it's true—it's not about what I'm trying to do out there. I can feel it—it's my own need; it's my pain identity, and I need to shift it.*

How do you shift it? One might try to control that feeling, try to be in charge of it, and make the same mistake again. Don't do that. Don't try to control your feelings or thoughts. Simply be aware of them. Be aware of your need to control, a need that is producing the pain, conflict and blockages in the flow of creative action. And if you are not a parent, but you are someone who is trying to control in this way, I want you to simply be aware of your need to control. That need is your pain identity.

I'll use three categories regarding this sense of identity: The first category is identifying too much with a role; second is a medium level of identifying with a role; third is less identification with a given role. At the first extreme, a person identifies so much with their pain that very often they destroy themselves and others. It is both collective as well as self-destructive. It happens because they can never figure out how to come out of their overidentification, and things go too far. Of course, it is always possible to come out of it, but in some cases the person loses the opportunity, and the result is collective destruction.

The middling level is where a person identifies strongly with a role. If this is the case for you, you may feel a lot of conflict within yourself, your situation in life or with the people you are participating with, in whatever role you are participating with them. You feel a lot of conflict within and around you, because once again you are identifying quite a lot with your role. Every time we identify with our role we feel the pain of whatever part is not being fulfilled and the pain of wishful thinking.

The third category is having less identity with a given role. Of course being in samsara, being in this world, there is no way to not identify with pain. The definition of samsara is the one who possesses discomfort or pain as a result of a grasping mind. As possessors of this grasping mind, we are samsaric beings. All suffering is the outcome or fruition of the grasping mind.

As I said earlier, there is no way not to have a grasping mind. But when you have a minimum of it, you feel less pain and conflict and more space, more flow, more awareness within yourself. You feel less pain with your work, who you are working with and who you are in a relationship with. You feel less pain with your family members. This is because you are not identifying too much with your pain or with that role.

So the big question is, why do we identify with our role, with our pain and with someone who we are not? The answer is very simple. We don't perceive another option. Because if we are not able to be aware of who we are, then the only option is to identify with who we are not. We don't perceive another choice. We are not even conscious that we are doing it. Every second, every moment, every situation, every relationship—even our relationship to God, to the deities, to teachers, to spiritual guides—we identify with our own pain and needs, and mess up some of those very special relationships. Even our sacred relationships are mixed with our own pain.

So how do we overcome this? When we are able to be conscious of who we are—even being closer to that experience for just a moment—something inside us begins to shift. How do you do that? How can it happen? Of course it's not that easy; then again, it is not very difficult either. It is always a question of being ready, mature and ripened. When you are ready, mature and ripened, nothing can stop you. But when you are not, it's very hard. The sun is shining unbiased in every direction, but the cave that is facing north does not receive the sunlight. This is not because the sun is biased or chooses not to shine, but because the cave is facing in the wrong direction.

What will make it easier to shift that pain identity? Again, it's very simple. Whenever you feel your pain body is active, whenever you are feeling a sense of that pain identity—a deep, deep, deep pain that is clearly connected with a sense of specific identity, like, *I'm a father, therefore I'm feeling the pain of my*

father role—simply recognize that. Recognize when pain speech is active. Recognize when you are complaining about your loved ones. Realize it has nothing to do with them or the situation; it's just the uncontrolled expression of your own awakened pain that is being expressed unconsciously in that moment through your speech. It is coming out.

When my pain identity is active, I did not plan it. I did not choose that vocabulary or that tone of voice. I did not choose to speak that loud or shakily, or to speak in that ungrounded way. I did it because my pain speech was awakened. When my pain mind is awakened, I am not choosing to have these crazy, crazy thoughts. I am glad no one is watching my thoughts. I'm glad most people don't know what I'm thinking. I'm glad my famous people don't know what I'm thinking. I'm glad to know this person who hates me does not know what I'm thinking at that moment. But even I don't know why I'm thinking what I'm thinking; I'm just thinking.

The imagination of pain mind is active and uncontrolled. What do you do at this time? Just be conscious. Be conscious that these thoughts are crazy. *These thoughts are not really my thoughts; they are coming from my inner pain mind. These voices are coming from my pain speech; these aches are coming from my pain body.* Just be conscious of that. And try to rest. At this moment, if any of you are feeling active pain body, speech or mind, realize that it has nothing to do with a given situation; it's just active.

Be still. Be silent. Be spacious. And allow what you are experiencing. Allow as Sherap Chamma would allow, like a mother who is open, wise, kind and compassionate. When a child is expressing pain by jumping around or screaming, and their imagination is going crazy, what does the mother do? The mother does not go crazy like the child but, rather, hosts the child, gives the child space. Gives protection to the child and gives acknowledgment, a sense of sacred presence. Those crazy manifestations feel that space, that sacred presence, that kindness, that awareness, and gradually these crazy manifestations exhaust themselves in that pure space, in that absolute silence, in that pure spaciousness of the heart. They dissolve. In the end, there is a very genuine, natural sense of stillness and silence that is experienced. At that moment you have shifted your pain identity or pain body into stillness, your pain speech into silence, your pain mind or imagination into spaciousness. It is free, calm, connected and feeling peace, feeling restful. It's feeling a deep inner healing.

So, be aware. Every moment when you encounter your own inner pain, your pain identity, just be conscious. Be directly aware. Recognize it has nothing to do with the other person or the situation. It is simply activated by your own pain.

In the Tibetan traditions we often talk about practitioners of superior, middling and inferior capacities. This translation doesn't seem very popular in the West, but that's what it is. So if you don't like to be called an inferior practitioner, I'll suggest something you can do. Whenever you are in conflict with someone, whenever you feel deep pain within yourself, immediately ask yourself, "Where is this coming from?" Very often you immediately think, "Of course it's not me, it's the other person. It's my famous person, my father, my mother, my husband, my ex, my wife, my child, my boss, the situation—it's not me." Automatically we think that. So whenever you think your problem has 100 percent to do with someone else, recognize that you are an inferior practitioner. I'll repeat this again, for fun. Some of you might not like it. But it's still for fun. Whenever you think that your own pain or conflict has 100 percent to do with someone outside you or with another person, you can think, "Oh, as I am doing what I'm doing at this moment, I must be an inferior practitioner."

Or, you might think to yourself, "I'm experiencing this pain, this conflict with this person, but it's us. It's both him and me; it's her and me; it's them and me; it's the situation and me; it's a collective thing. Together we have to figure out a solution." If you approach your problem or pain in that way, you can consider yourself a middling practitioner. You can think, "I'm doing this, I'm trying to make the situation 50-50, so I must be a middling practitioner. Not the best, not the worst, but the middling one."

But if you think your pain has nothing to do with anybody else—because everything that you see or feel you have created and you realize that it is only a projection of your mind—you can say, "Well, wonderful, I am a superior practitioner." Try not to sit too long with that thought; otherwise, you will immediately become a middling or inferior practitioner! But at least you can recognize that you are projecting something from the inside out rather than blaming someone else for your pain.

We create every single pain. Every moment that you recognize you are the creator of your pain, you have an opportunity to not create further pain for yourself or for others.

Listen to the entire recorded webcast [here](#)



Upcoming Webcast on October 11

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche on 'The Healing Power of Primordial Awareness'

Mark your calendar for these upcoming webcasts with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. You can participate in any of these free events by visiting the [live-broadcast page](#) on the Ligmincha Institute website.

You can also [click here to view](#) any webcasts you've missed.

- **Oct. 11, 2014 (Saturday)**, 3–4:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. "The Healing Power of Primordial Awareness." Broadcast live from the **Fall Retreat** at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all).
- **Nov. 8, 2014 (Saturday)**, 1–2:30 p.m. Eastern time (10–11:30 a.m. local time California). "Sharing Your Inner Peace and Joy for the Welfare of Others." Broadcast live from California.
- **Dec. 28, 2014 (Sunday)**, 3–4:30 p.m. Eastern time. "Guided Meditation from the Experiential Transmission Teachings, Part 1." Broadcast live from the **Winter Retreat** at Ligmincha Institute at Serenity Ridge, Nelson County, Virginia (not a public talk, but webcast is open to all).



[View the live webcast](#)



Ligmincha Learning Six-Week Course Begins Oct. 13

The Five Elements: Healing with Form, Energy and Light

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. Each section of the course includes a video of Rinpoche's teaching, Rinpoche leading a guided meditation, readings from *Healing with Form, Energy and Light*, and assignments for journal writing, discussion, and formal and informal practice. The course is designed so that you may integrate study and practice into your everyday routine, learning at your own pace, yet enjoying the support of classmates and the course mentor.

[Learn more and register](#)



Tibetan Dream Yoga Begins Nov. 8

GlideWing Online Four-Week Workshop

In this four-week online GlideWing workshop, set for Nov. 8–Dec. 7, participants will explore and practice the ancient Bon Buddhist teachings of Tibetan Dream Yoga. This workshop, which includes personal guidance from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, provides detailed instruction for dream yoga, including foundational practices done during the day.

[Learn more and view introductory video](#)

[Register](#)

Coming in January 2015: [Awakening the Sacred Body: The Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement](#)



Space Still Available for Special Winter Dzogchen Retreat

First in Five-Part Dzogchen Series Begins with Ngondro



Space is filling fast, but there is still time to register for the Winter Retreat 2014 with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche scheduled for Dec. 27, 2014–Jan. 1, 2015. This retreat, "The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 1: Ngondro," is the first in a special five-part series of this renowned Tibetan Bon Buddhist dzogchen teaching.

Dzogchen is considered the highest teaching in Bon and Tibetan Buddhism. Its fundamental tenet is that reality, including the individual, is primordially pure, complete and perfect, and that nothing needs to be transformed (as in tantra) or renounced (as in sutra) but only to be recognized for what it truly is. In this way, suffering self-liberates. The view, practice, meditation and conduct are all

based on self-liberation—allowing all that arises in experience to exist just as it is, without grasping, aversion or elaboration by the conceptual mind.

Part 1: Ngondro includes the foundation practices and the entrance to this cycle of Tibetan Bon dzogchen teachings. A complete set of practices in themselves, the ngondro teachings offer instructions for taming, purifying and perfecting oneself. Although the practices that make up the ngondro are called preliminary or foundational practices, many practitioners adopt them as their main practice and complete the nine parts several times over the course of a lifetime.

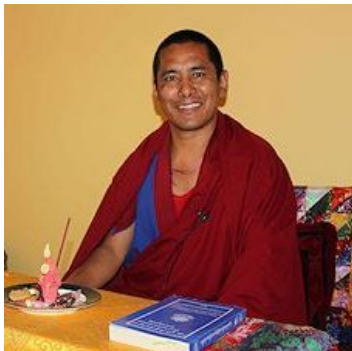
Part 1: Ngondro is a prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission series. The series will be held each December for the next five years and will conclude on Jan. 1, 2019.

[Learn more and register](#)



Ngondro Practice Retreat or Individual Practice Retreat in January

Resident Lama Geshe Tenzin Yangton to Guide Ngondro Retreat



Geshe Tenzin Yangton

Immediately following our annual winter retreat with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, you can extend your stay at Serenity Ridge Retreat Center to continue your practice of the ngondro, or for a personal practice retreat.

The Ngondro, Part 1 of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, is the entrance to a cycle of Tibetan Bon Buddhist dzogchen, or "Great Perfection," teachings, which until recent decades were part of a secret transmission passed one-to-one from master to student. The ngondro teachings, a complete set of practices in themselves, offer instructions for taming, purifying and perfecting oneself. They are the prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission cycle.

Guided practice retreats will be led by Geshe Tenzin Yangton, Serenity Ridge Retreat Center's resident lama, in the gompa (meditation hall) at Serenity Ridge. They include four practice sessions each day and one 15-minute private interview per week with Geshe Yangton. Students who have received the ngondro teachings and transmission of the Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung prior to Jan. 1, 2015, are warmly invited to attend the ngondro practice retreat with Geshe Yangton.

In addition, anyone who wishes to engage in personal—silent—practice retreat is warmly invited to join us at Serenity Ridge. The Garuda House shrine room will be available for those wishing to engage in personal retreat.

The following options are available:

Jan. 2–4, 2015:

- Ngondro practice retreat led by Geshe Tenzin Yangton or
- Individual practice retreat

Jan. 2–11, 2015:

- Ngondro practice retreat led by Geshe Tenzin Yangton or
- Individual practice retreat

Jan. 2–18, 2015:

- See above for Jan. 2–11; individual practice retreat only for Jan. 12–18

Participants are welcome to attend one, two or all three practice retreats.

[Learn more and register](#)



Links to New Portuguese and Spanish Translations of VOCL

[View August Issue](#)

Thanks to sangha members in Brazil, we bring you a new translation of the August issue of VOCL—now in Portuguese! We also continue to have the Spanish version available, thanks to sangha members in Mexico.

Be sure to look for links to the translated versions in our updated VOCL menu bar at the top of each issue. Links also will be added below the date of each VOCL as the translated versions become available.

En Español: Gracias a los miembros de la sangha de Brasil, les traemos una nueva traducción del ejemplar de Agosto de La Voz de la Luz Clara (VOCL) - ¡ahora en portugués! También continuamos teniendo la versión en español disponible, gracias a los miembros de la sangha en México.

Asegúrate de buscar los enlaces para las versiones traducidas en nuestra barra de menú actualizada de VOCL, arriba al inicio de cada ejemplar. Los enlaces también serán añadidos abajo de la fecha de cada ejemplar de VOCL conforme las versiones traducidas se vuelvan disponibles.

Em Português: Obrigado aos membros da sangha do Brasil, nós trazemos uma nova tradução da edição de Agosto da Voz da Clara Luz – agora em Português! Nós também continuamos a ter a versão em Espanhol disponível, graças aos membros da sangha do México.

Procure os links para as versões traduzidas em nossa barra de menu atualizada da Voz da Clara Luz (VOCL) no topo de cada edição. Os links também serão adicionados após a data de cada VOCL assim que as versões traduzidas estiverem disponíveis

[Read August VOCL in Portuguese](#)

[Read August VOCL in Spanish](#)



Ligmincha Europe Magazine Summer Issue

Student-Teacher Relationship Featured

The latest issue of *Ligmincha Europe Magazine* includes a lengthy article on “The Inner and Outer Spiritual Master” with teachings, questions, discussion and history regarding the student-teacher relationship. Many thought-provoking topics. It helps to print this one out!

[Enjoy this 40-page issue](#)



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 registration@ligmincha.org or 434-263-6304.

Oct. 7–9, 2014

New Dialogs Between Buddhism & Science: Pathways to a Healthy Mind
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Renowned Researchers

[Learn more and register](#)

Oct. 10–12, 2014

Fall Retreat – The Healing Power of Primordial Awareness
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

[Learn more and register](#)

Oct. 31–Nov. 2, 2014

The Sacred Body in the Bon Tradition – Spiritual Guidance from the Tsa Lung Sol Dep
with H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche

[Learn more and register](#)

Nov. 6–9, 2014

Trul Khor – Completing the Training: Tibetan Bon Yoga, Part 4
with Alejandro Chaoul-Reich joined by Geshe Tenzin Yangton

Open to all who have done Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Tibetan Bon yoga as taught at Ligmincha Institute's

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center and Chamma Ling Colorado Retreat Center since 2009.

[Learn more and register](#)

Dec. 27, 2014–Jan.1, 2015

Winter Retreat – The Experiential Transmission of Zhang Zhung, Part 1: Ngondro
with *Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche*

This is the first in a five-part series—to be held over the next five years—of special Bon Buddhist dzogchen teachings based on the ancient Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu texts. Part 1: Ngondro is a prerequisite for further study of the Experiential Transmission series.

[Learn more and register](#)

Jan. 2-18, 2015

Ngondro Practice Retreat

with *Geshe Tenzin Yangton*

or Individual Practice Retreat

3-Day, 10-Day and 17-Day options available

[Learn more and register](#)

[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 registration@ligmincha.org or 434-263-6304, or visit the [Serenity Ridge website](#).

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