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Announcements Issue

Volume 13, Number 6 / December 2013



Letter from the Editors

Historic Times



Photograph by Stephen Ledyard

Dear Friends,

This past October, a first-time meeting of nine Tibetan Bon lamas, all of whom have been teaching Bon in the West for many years, took place at Serenity Ridge. Hosted by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, this historic gathering is special in many ways. Get a glimpse from Polly Turner's article of the wonderful history that was made by the event, and enjoy the pictures, too! Also this past fall, Rinpoche hosted Ligmincha's third annual Buddhism and Science conference at Serenity Ridge, marking another historic bridge-building effort here in the West. Enjoy Vickie Walter's article on that

event. And from Poland, Ton Bisscheroux brings us in words and pictures a richly textured glimpse of the historic consecration of the Bon Gompa in Poland. Beautiful photos accompany his article.

And finally, we're happy to announce that our own lama, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, will be making history again with Ligmincha's third free full-day webcast, taking place on Saturday, Dec. 14. Come join this Internet retreat from your computer and share with a friend!

Also in this issue, be sure to check out the upcoming online workshops beginning in January, the latest *Ligmincha Europe Magazine*, a link to the Spanish translation of October's VOCL, new Serenity Ridge retreat listings posted for 2014, recordings of recent webcasts by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, and an end-of-year fundraising request with a letter from Rinpoche concerning the repairs needed at Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center.

Happy Holidays Everyone!

In Bon,
Aline and Jeff Fisher



Free Full-Day Webcast on Dec. 14 with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche!

Also Mark Your Calendars for Free Dec. 29 Webcast

Join us online on Saturday, Dec. 14, 2013, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York time), for this full-day Internet retreat on "Purifying Your Karma Through Mantra" with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. Live teachings and guided practices will offer a timely opportunity to clear the karma you've accumulated over the past year, satisfy longstanding karmic debts and free yourself to live a more joyful, spontaneous life. A variety of practice supports are available, as well as real-time translations in multiple languages.

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](#).

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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On Dec. 29, 2013, 3–4:30 p.m. Eastern Time U.S. (New York time), Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche will be giving a live webcast on “Nurturing the Sacred Community,” broadcast from the annual Winter Retreat at Serenity Ridge (not a public talk). How meditation practitioners relate with each other as a community, or sangha, can play an essential role in their spiritual growth. Tenzin Rinpoche will discuss the role of sangha from the perspective of the Bon Buddhist teachings, including how to manage conflicts and connect more creatively with others.

[Learn more about the Winter Retreat](#)

[View a recent recorded webcast from Oct. 12](#) on “The Open Heart: Healing in the Dzogchen Tradition” with H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

[View other recorded Ligmincha webcasts](#)



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Rinpoche on



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Historic Homecoming

First Meeting of Bon Lamas Who Live and Teach in the West Held at Serenity Ridge



Photograph by John Jackson

To a casual observer, it might have been no more than a comfortable gathering of Tibetan monks and other countrymen, laughing and chatting like the old friends they were. For those knowledgeable, however, the two days of meetings in October 2013 in central Virginia were truly historic. For, this was the first time since the Bon teachings were brought to the West that these nine Tibetan Bon lamas had an opportunity to meet, support each other and share their years of experience and knowledge related to teaching Western students.

Some had been teaching in the West for decades with little support from their peers. Among them was Geshe YongDong, who first began teaching in

Paris and then British Columbia in 1999 and who, four years later, founded Sherab Chamma Ling, a Tibetan Bon Buddhist center in Courtenay B.C., Vancouver Island, Canada.

“It’s very difficult when you come to a different culture, different language, different people,” explains Geshe YongDong, affectionately known as GesheLa. “Most of my life was in a monastery as a monk. Suddenly, I came to the West and everything was different. Even going to restaurants—I had never before used a fork and knife.

“As soon as I heard about the lama meeting planned for Serenity Ridge, I thought it was a wonderful idea,” GesheLa adds. “Many Bon lamas have come to the West to share the sacred Bon teachings. But we all have busy Western lifestyles, and even if we have had the intention to get together, until then we had not had the opportunity.”

The indigenous spiritual tradition of Tibet, Bon is among the world’s most ancient, unbroken spiritual lineages, tracing its oral history back 18,000 years. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution this rich heritage was gravely threatened. Countless monasteries in Tibet were destroyed, and many monks lost their lives. During the conflict only three senior lamas managed to flee the country; under great hardship they bore the responsibility for founding new monasteries in India and Nepal in the hope of preserving the sacred traditions. There, they taught new generations of monks—some of whom, like Geshe YongDong, chose to bring their knowledge and training to Western students.

Another of these young monks was Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who first arrived in Italy in 1988 and soon went on to teach in the United States. In 1992 Tenzin Rinpoche founded Ligmincha Institute; and in 1998 he established Ligmincha Institute at Serenity Ridge, the retreat center in central Virginia where—fully 25 years after his initial arrival in the West—the historic meetings took place.

“I had been feeling a need to gather all the other lamas who teach in the West to do something collective and collaborative,” Tenzin Rinpoche says of his recent efforts to pull together the meetings. According to Rinpoche, his 2012 attendance at the [Second North American Nonsectarian Conference of Tibetan Religious Schools](#) in California reinforced the need for all Bon lamas teaching in the West to meet for a similar purpose. H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and Latri Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche were instrumental in supporting the effort.



Most of the assembled teachers had already met each other, most of them at Menri Monastery near Dolanji, India, one of two main Bon monasteries outside of Tibet. "But really getting to know someone requires spending time with each other, sharing and exchanging," says GesheLa, who adds that almost all their waking hours at Serenity Ridge were spent chatting and sharing.

"Having this whole weekend to connect was extraordinary. There was no ego involved. We were meeting heart to heart, not head to head. I could sense this was everyone's feeling. Sometimes it was very emotional, and sometimes we couldn't stop

laughing. I have never seen anything like this."

According to GesheLa, all the lamas expressed the same intention: to develop the sacred Bon teachings and benefit students. "When we talked about how our Tibetan culture and spirituality were destroyed, and how difficult the challenges were for the masters we learned from, tears came.

"When the lamas can connect like this, our students can also connect better with each other. These meetings have given me a lot of energy and strength that I will carry on my return to [my center on] Vancouver Island."



The meetings' agenda covered five primary topics:

1. How to maintain future connections between the various spiritual teachers, as well as between their centers in the West.
2. Ideas for standardizing all the Bon chants used by Western students, including adopting the same language and melody across all the Bon centers. As a result of the meetings, three different chanting booklets are being planned—one short form, one medium, one long. "The Bon teachings and Bon lineage are the same, carried to the West and the world," says Geshe YongDong. "If you are in Canada, you should feel confident to know that you can come to my center and receive the same Bon teachings within the same Bon lineage as you would receive anywhere else in the West."
3. How to support Tibetan Bonpos who come to the West, whether through financial, spiritual or other means.
4. How to adapt the Bon teachings for the modern Western mind. "People are people, no matter where they are from," GesheLa says. "But once you have a better understanding of the culture and way of life in the West, then you can better understand individuals and their personalities and adjust the teachings in relation to Western needs."
5. Plans for future meetings. The Serenity Ridge participants agreed to meet annually. Next year's meeting will be at Gyalshen Institute, Geshe Lhundup Chaphur Rinpoche's center in El Cerrito, Calif.

"Sometimes lamas need to just be lamas together, laughing and connecting with each other," Geshe YongDong notes. "There is a natural distance between students and teachers, and the teachers don't have much opportunity to show who they truly are. It's very important to rejuvenate. In my opinion, it is important for people in the East, as well, to know the importance of lamas meeting together to support each other. In the world today, the Bon sacred teachings offer much benefit for the mind and for one's health."

Says Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, "It was very important to me to have this kind of exchange and mutual support. Most important was the ability to sit, laugh, share and eat together, and to share our thoughts about what we can all pursue collectively in the future. I am looking forward to our meeting next year at Gyalshen Institute."



Photograph by John Jackson

Present at the October meetings at Serenity Ridge were:

- **H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche**, the head instructor (lopon) of Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India
- **Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche**, the abbot (khenpo) of Tritten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal
- **Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**, founder and spiritual director of Ligmincha Institute, Shipman, Virginia, www.ligmincha.org
- **Latri Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche**, founder and spiritual director of the **Yeru Bon Center**, Los Angeles, and abbot of La Tri Monastery in Kham,

Tibet

- **Khenpo Geshe Tenzin Dargye** (Tamdin Gurung), abbot of Dhorpatan Monastery, Nepal
- **Geshe YongDong**, founder and resident lama of **Sherab Chamma Ling**, Tibetan Bon Buddhist Centre, Courtenay B.C., Vancouver Island, Canada
- **Geshe Tenzin Yangton**, assistant to H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche
- **Geshe Lhundup Chaphur Rinpoche**, founder and spiritual director of **Gyalshen Institute**, El Cerrito, California
- **Lama Khemsar Rinpoche**, founder and spiritual director of the **Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Study Centre**, United Kingdom; the Tibetan Yungdrung Bon Institute, Miami, Florida; and Kunzhi-Ling Lugano, Switzerland.
- **Amchi Nyima**, a doctor of Tibetan medicine who resides in Nepal

Geshe YongDong and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche were interviewed by Polly Turner.



Buddhism and Science Conference a Big Success

New Dialogs Conference Brings Researchers to Serenity Ridge



Ligmincha Institute's third annual Buddhism and Science Conference was a great success, according to both presenters and participants at the event, held Oct. 9–10 at Serenity Ridge Retreat Center in Nelson County, Virginia. And part of what made the conference so special was not only the quality of the presenters but also that intangible "human quality"—the connection among the presenters, their interaction with participants, and the welcoming atmosphere of Serenity Ridge and Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, founder and spiritual director of Ligmincha.

"We are very pleased with the results," says conference organizer and presenter Alejandro Chaoul-Reich, director of research for Ligmincha Institute and a faculty member at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. "I knew we had really top presenters, but it went way beyond what I expected, both in terms of the quality of presenters and the way they connected with each other and their audience. They were really engaged—their smiles said it all." The presenters donated their own time to attend the conference, even paying for their own transportation.

This year's conference theme was "New Dialogs Between Buddhism and Science: Researching the Effects of Meditation and Compassion on Health and Well-Being." The two-day event had a more intensive research focus than did the two past conferences, the first focused on the paranormal and the second on both scholarship and research. This third conference not only built on the other two but also expanded the research content.

In addition to Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, nine other presenters from throughout the United States shared their research in areas ranging from the benefits of Tibetan sound healing on breast cancer patients' cognitive function, to mindfulness and behavior change, to compassion-based training for clinicians, to a longitudinal self-report on the effects of intensive meditation practice, and even to the effects of meditation at the cellular level. Making use of modern technology, participants viewed presenter Catherina Kerr's presentation via Skype when she became unable to attend in person.

The presenters' visit was enhanced by the presence of a group of lamas who had just prior to the conference attended the first meeting of Bon lamas in the West, organized by Tenzin Rinpoche at

Ligmincha Institute. Presenters were able to interact with the lamas during tea breaks and at other times. Many of the presenters also knew each other personally and professionally, which contributed to the collegial and friendly interaction, which was palpable to the audience. During the retreat, they engaged with each other and participants, and enjoyed an informal dinner with Tenzin Rinpoche.

More than half of the presenters remained after the conference to attend the annual fall retreat that followed, whose topic was "The Open Heart: Healing in the Dzogchen Tradition." And almost 30 of the research conference's 80 participants also extended their stay at Serenity Ridge to attend the fall retreat.

In addition to his presentation on Tibetan Sound Healing (the basis for Chaoul-Reich's research study), Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche also welcomed the group, answered questions, led meditation sessions and gave a beautiful closure.

"Our intent at these conferences is to share, learn from each other and explore new ideas for future dialog and research," Rinpoche says. "I believe that in the future, the kinds of practices we do in the Tibetan Bon and Buddhist traditions will be widely seen as a potent medicine for preventing and healing many forms of illness. For centuries, meditation practitioners have directly experienced these beneficial effects, and Western research is increasingly exploring and confirming the benefits."

The next Buddhism and Science Conference, "Pathways to a Healthy Mind," is scheduled for Oct. 7-9, 2014 (beginning on Tuesday evening and ending Thursday around noon). It will be followed by the fall retreat Oct. 10-12, whose topic is "The Healing Power of Primordial Awareness."

In the meantime, conference organizers and presenters are working to establish more relationships with other institutions, and possible new research projects may arise. Presentations from this conference are being transcribed to put in a volume that will be made available to the public. In addition, a new book based on Ligmincha's first annual Buddhism and Science Conference is in the works, edited by Berkeley physicist David Presti with chapters authored by each of the conference's presenters plus Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

Stay tuned for more!



Support Serenity Ridge in Your End-of-Year Giving

With a Special Letter from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center nobly serves many purposes. It is the headquarters of Ligmincha International. It provides a wonderful environment to experience the Bon Buddhist teachings through retreats and live webcasts. It supports the Three Doors participants during retreats and transformations. It houses Bon Buddhist texts and a bookstore that distributes books and practice items related to Bon Buddhist wisdom. Most recently it is home to a small crew of interns whose activities help support the mission of Ligmincha International.



Photograph by Brian Harris

As you consider your end-of-year giving, please remember Serenity Ridge! Our current fundraising efforts are focused on much needed improvements for Serenity Ridge, including:

- Repairs and infrastructure upgrades to the Gompa and Garuda House
- Updates to the private rooms, bunk bed rooms, dorms and dorm bathrooms
- Repairs and enhancements to the water treatment system and outdoor lighting
- Repairs to the bookstore--the roof and some of the interior was seriously damaged by a downed tree during a major storm over the summer.
- Other updates that will prepare Serenity Ridge for a build out of the dining area and kitchen

We very much appreciate any contribution you can make towards these improvements. To learn more download [our fundraising brochure](#) that contains a special letter from Rinpoche, or [visit our website](#). Thank you for your generosity!

[View letter from Rinpoche in the fundraising brochure](#)



Tenzin Rinpoche's Schedules by Date and Location Online

Busy Year Planned for 2014

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's worldwide schedules for 2014 are now available on the Ligmincha International website. You can view schedules by date and by location. Additional items will be added during the year if Rinpoche's schedule changes.

[View Schedule by Date](#)

[View Schedule by Location](#)



Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche Appearing in Documentary

View 'Fire and Ashes: The Crisis of the Church'

Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche appears in a new, 50-minute Italian-language documentary, "Fire and Ashes: The Crisis of the Church" ("Fuoco e cenere: la crisi della Chiesa"). The documentary will be broadcast on Swiss National Television RSI La1 on Sunday, Dec. 22, at 20.40 local Swiss time, and can be viewed by computer via streaming video beginning the following day [at this link](#).



Ligmincha Learning Online Workshop Jan. 11–Feb. 22, 2014

'The Five Elements: Healing with Form, Energy and Light' with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

Ligmincha Learning is pleased to offer a six-week online course, "The Five Elements: Healing with Form, Energy and Light," from Jan. 11–Feb. 22, 2014. The course will give participants a thorough introduction to the Five Elements practices of the Tibetan Bon Buddhist tradition.

The six-week course is based on videos of Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche exploring 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](#)



Three-Week Online GlideWing Workshop Begins Jan. 11

'Awakening the Sacred Body: Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement' with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

This three-week online workshop, with personal guidance from Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, makes accessible the ancient Tibetan yogic practices of breath and movement. These practices are designed to awaken your subtle energy body, and open and clear your energy centers and channels, while enhancing your physical fitness, mental well-being and spiritual growth.

The practices involve focusing your mind and directing the subtle breath while engaging in a series of easy-to-perform body movements. The practices consist of two ancient teachings: The Nine Breathings of Purification and the Five Tsa Lung exercises.

[Learn more about this three-week workshop](#)



Consecration of Gompa in Wilga, Poland

Four Days of Special Teachings and Ceremonies



Ligmincha Poland was very happy to welcome H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and several other lamas in Chamma Ling Center in Wilga, Poland, from Oct. 24–27, 2013, to perform rituals for the consecration of the new built Gompa. It was very special to see all these lamas together, performing the rituals, giving teachings and having a good time together.

In 2006 after the visit of His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima Rinpoche to Chamma Ling Center in Wilga, construction of a gompa was initiated in the place indicated by His Holiness, who is the abbot of Menri Monastery in Dolajni, India. They have been working for seven years on this project and received great support from our teachers, like Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche and many other Bonpo geshe.



More than 400 people from 24 countries were present during these days. A Bonpo kalachakra ritual was performed to purify the gompa and the site. H.E. Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche taught from the text *The Seven Mirrors of Dzogchen*. And Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche also gave some teachings.

You can read more about consecration of the gompa in Wilga in a special edition of the *Ligmincha Europe Magazine* that will be issued in December.

[Here are pictures of this special event in Poland](#)

You can see more pictures on the [Facebook page for Yungdrung Bon in Pictures](#)

[And here are more great pictures!](#)



View Recorded Webcasts of H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche in Poland

Teachings in English with Polish Translations

H.E. Menri Lopon Trinley Nyima Rinpoche, head teacher of Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India gave webcast teachings in Poland recently on "Precious Human Life," "Spiritual Practice in Everyday Life" and "The Spiritual Path and Material Life." (In English and with Polish translation.)

[View recorded webcasts](#)



View 2014 Serenity Ridge Retreat Schedule

Mark Your Calendars!

A schedule of all the major retreats at Ligmincha Institute's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center is now available on the web.

[View schedule](#)



Latest Spanish Translation of VOCL

View October Issue

The October 2013 issue of Voice of Clear Light has been translated into Spanish.

[View Spanish translation](#)



See Ligmincha Europe Magazine's Autumn Issue

Celebrating Their Tenth with Many Wonderful Articles!

[View Autumn issue](#)



'Healing with Sound: The Five Warrior Syllables' with John Jackson

Weekend Retreat Feb. 1–2, 2014, at Serenity Ridge

Learn how to use the power of sound to help heal physical illness, clear psychological and energetic disturbances, and uncover positive qualities such as love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

[Learn more/register](#)



Upcoming Events

Ligmincha's Serenity Ridge Retreat Center

The retreats described below will take place at Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha Institute's retreat center in Nelson County, Va. To register or for more information, click on the links below, or contact us at registration@ligmincha.org or 434-263-6304.

Dec. 27, 2013–Jan. 1, 2014

**Winter Retreat—Dzogchen Practice Retreat
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

Open to all, from those who have attended any part or all of the Experiential Transmission or any other dzogchen teaching, to those who wish to experience the practices.

[Learn more and register](#)

Feb. 1–2, 2014

**Tibetan Sound Healing—The Five Warrior Syllables
with John Jackson**

[Learn more and register](#)

April 11-13, 2014

**Spring Retreat—Winds of Change: Discovering the Healing Power of Mind and Prana
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

[Learn more and register](#)

June 22-July 12, 2014

**Summer Retreat—The Twenty-One Nails, Part 2
with Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche**

This teaching is among the innermost secret cycles of Tibetan Bon Buddhist dzogchen, directly cutting through doubts about one's natural state by tracing the nature of mind back to its source. Join us for one, two or three weeks! All are welcome.

View all 2014 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](#) or the [Ligmincha Institute website](#).

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