

## Voice of Clear Light

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### Lishu Institute Three-Year Program Begins in Fall

An Interview with Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche



*Lishu Institute will begin an intensive three-year residential program of study for students in fall 2015. The curriculum will include the Nine Ways of Bon, the Bon Mother Tantra and the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu. Students also will learn Tibetan. Lishu is located in Northern India in Uttarakhand, near Dehradun. At a retreat last summer in Amsterdam, Floor van Orsouw interviewed Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche about Lishu.*

**Q:** Rinpoche, how did the idea to create Lishu Institute arise?

**TWR:** During the time I have been teaching in the last 20 years in the West, I have felt a very strong need to have a residential training program. Teaching a weekend here, a weekend there—the longest being three weeks in the summer—does not provide enough intensity. Also as far as preserving the knowledge of Yungdrung Bon in the West is concerned, more dedicated learning and practice is needed. That was the primary reason for building Lishu.



The reason why it is in India is because we already have a number of facilities in the West. These facilities become very expensive for students to attend. So we thought India was the best. There are more teachers and, energetically, India is where a lot of these teachings originated. So we thought it was very good to put effort here, and we found the land in Dehradun.

**Q:** Could you tell us a little about Nyachen Lishu Taring, after whom you named Lishu Institute?

**TWR:** Lishu Taring is one of the very important scholars from around the seventh and eighth century in Tibet. Lishu Taring also has a connection to both Buddhism and Bon. He is a very important scholar. One day the name just popped up and that's how I named it.

**Q:** Why did you choose these three texts for the curriculum?

**TWR:** First, we chose the Nine Ways of Bon as an introduction to the Bon, which embodies nine ways, so that is some kind of overview of each vehicle. We thought it's very important. Then the last two years we will focus on tantra and dzogchen.

When looking at all the different texts and teaching cycles on tantra, Ma Gyud seems most appropriate because all the teachings are contained in it. Many of these I have been teaching in the West. And also it's the principal practice of my main teacher Yongdzin Rinpoche. So we thought that it makes sense in terms of the training of tantra to teach the Ma Gyud.

As far as the dzogchen is concerned, Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu is probably the most important dzogchen text in the Bon tradition. Lopon Sangye Tenzin taught us that. I have been teaching pieces of the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu here and there for many years. So we thought the curriculum should include Nine Ways of Bon, Ma Gyud and Dzogchen.

Probably we will not be able to finish everything in three years, but we will do as much as possible to finish in these three years. And we hope eventually we will be able to translate all these teachings into three books.



**Q:** What qualities are needed to become a student at Lishu Institute?

**TWR:** The most important quality is commitment – so that people have full commitment, that

they are willing to stay, that they are willing to learn. There might be things to memorize. There might be things to learn, things to practice, a lot of things. So the most important quality is the commitment.

**Q:** How will the Lishu training support the student in understanding and experiencing these teachings in one's individual path ?

**TWR:** You have a place that is environmentally very friendly. Books and supports are there. Teachers are there. Every day you have classes and access to the teacher. So I think it will be a great support for people who really want to learn. And it also will not be that many people.

**Q:** Does one have to continuously study or is it possible to do first one year and come back later?

**TWR:** One can do that. But as far as completing three years, we do not recommend taking a break. This way is best, particularly if somebody is feeling the wish to help other people. That clearly is required to continue and finish. If it is more for oneself, then one can take breaks . *[Note: Periodic breaks will be built into the three-year curriculum.]*

**Q:** How do you see the graduates of Lishu Institute being able to benefit the local sanghas, Ligmincha and Bon community as a whole?

**TWR:** Just finishing the program does not mean necessarily they will become teachers. There are quite a number of retreat requirements and practices. Attitude also is very important because teachers need to have the right attitude – not just get a Ph.D., publish a paper and become a professor. A group of lamas will evaluate the personality of an individual to see if that person can be a teacher or not. We have a clear, systematic way of doing it. When they have finished, they will have learned more traditional ways. They will be able to study the texts. So they will have much more to offer the sangha.



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