

# **A simple phone call can change your life, says Georgina Teran**

written by François



**The documentary about Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the most senior and venerated living master in the Yungdrung Bon tradition, is completed now, right for the celebration of his 100th birthday starting in a couple of days. In this interview, taken by Alexandra Forget, Georgina Teran, the producer of the documentary, talks about the motivations behind the huge project and about her connection to Yundgrung Bon. The interview was held in 2018 but was reviewed by Georgina and Alexandra just before being published in Speech of Delight.**

**Georgina, you're a very successful film producer from Mexico with business activities in the US, Columbia and in Spain. Spirituality was never a priority for you. What brought Yungdrung Bon into your life?**

My ex-colleague Rosa Maria, with whom I had studied at university, called me very unexpectedly one day after almost two decades of no contact. She told me that she had just finished a 49 days dark retreat in a monastery. (It was Triten Norbutse monastery in Nepal.) She explained that while she was in the dark retreat, she had a vision that I was going to help monks of the monastery with a documentary about their master.

**Not knowing any of these particular practices, didn't you think your friend was a little mad, spending all this time in the dark and speaking about visions?**

Well, solitary confinement is used as a punishment for really rebellious prisoners, and often, results in the prisoners suffering from panic attacks and hallucinations. So, I thought this practice needed to be very potent spiritually if it gave her the tools necessary to handle such a long period confined alone and in the dark without suffering. I was actually quite intrigued. Then, she sent me a photo of

her master Yongdzin Rinpoche. He made a very strong impression on me instantly. I would be working, only to stop and reopen the picture Rosa Maria sent just to see him. I would close it and go back to work, only to repeat the process over and over again. Thus, when she urged me to come to the summer retreat in Shenten in 2013, I decided to go.

### **What was your impression when you first met Rinpoche?**

Rinpoche told me how important devotion was and I felt a strong sense of longing, when I saw all the practitioners doing prostrations in the Gompa and later chanting the Guru Yoga prayer. However, listening to Yongdzin Rinpoche's teachings later on during the retreat, it seemed to me that Rinpoche was answering questions I had asked myself throughout my whole life and that really astonished and moved me.

### **What kind of questions?**

Why can't people be happy? Why are we as humans constantly unsatisfied? Why is there so much discontent and violence in the world, which no political, religious or social institution seems to be able to solve? Who are the good guys on this planet?

Those good guys you see in the movies that really care about others.

### **Fundamental questions about life which are also the very foundation of the Dharma : « How to find true and lasting happiness and be free from suffering? »**

Yes, indeed. And with that visit I realized that I had finally found « the good guys », those who commit their lives to grow their spiritual knowledge and wisdom to help others.

### **Yet a documentary about a spiritual master is not the kind of film you usually make. It must have been quite a challenge.**

It has been. When Rosa Maria introduced me to Geshe Gelek Jinpa, he told me that they had been looking for someone to do the documentary for quite a while and what an exceptional and important master Rinpoche was. Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, the abbot of Triten Norbutse monastery, was writing the script, but when I looked at it, it seemed very complicated to me, there were a lot of names and locations I didn't know anything about. Then, there was also the language barrier. Many of the people we were going to interview only spoke Tibetan, Nepali or Hindi. Another problem we thought we were going to have was the difficulty for us and the crew to get access to the monasteries.



### **How did you solve these problems?**

I agreed to make the film under one condition: the team had to be made up of monks and we, the professional crew would follow and film their journey. So we could be sure that the spiritual knowledge and traditions were going to be treated with care and respect. Once Khenpo Tenpa and Geshe Gelek had informed the council members about the project and they agreed it should be done, all the monks and Geshes of Triten Norbutse monastery gave their unconditional support, and so we could go ahead and do it. We invited the crew of monks for specialized training in Mexico. They all learned very fast. The work was complex and intense, but they all seemed to enjoy it a lot, because they were doing it for their master.





**On top of that, they were discovering different countries and cultures throughout the course of the documentary and must have gained a lot of interesting experiences?**

We traveled to India, Nepal, Dolpo, Mustang, Tibet and many European countries. Geshe Gelek also travelled to Spain and Colombia. In Colombia, we presented the Teaser of the documentary to the film industry. During our stay, we got an unexpected visit from a Colombian producer accompanied by an indigenous princess from the local Muisca tribe. They had heard about our presence and wanted to meet Tibetan monks. They just came to my door and rang the bell.

The princess told us about a very old and famous prophecy which exists all throughout the American continent, from North all the way down to South America. It says, that one day, when the eagle and the condor fly once again together in the sky, the world will find balance. One of the elders expressed that female energy has a very important role in the return of the spirituality.

**What happened next?**

They invited us to an important gathering in the mountains of various indigenous tribes who came from all over the American continent in order to discuss matters of that prophecy. They were very happy to meet Geshe Gelek. They told him that it was time for the big mountain of Tibet to reconnect with the big mountain of America. Some of the leaders of these indigenous tribes also attended the presentation Geshe Gelek gave the film industry, in which he spoke about meditation and spiritual wisdom. It was too short, of course, but they wished to learn more in the future.



**You might have heard about a prophecy attributed to Padmasambhava, known as Guru Rinpoche, who lived in Tibet in the 8th century, which says something like: «When the iron bird flies and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the world and the Dharma will come to the land of the red faced man». So it looks there are similar prophecies on both sides.**

Indeed.

**When do you plan to release the film?**

We don't know. There are a lot of factors that impact the release, but we are doing everything we can to give it the best distribution possible. However, a lot of that process is out of our hands. I would be deeply happy if this documentary of H.E.Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche's life could touch the hearts of many people, touch and inspire and benefit them and maybe, even change their lives, just as it has changed mine.

**Georgina, I thank you very much for this interview and wish you and all your team a lot of success for the release of this documentary which our sangha is very impatient to see.**

Thank you!!!

*Pictures: courtesy of Georgina Teran*

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# Khenpo Gelek Jinpa: With Yongdzin Rinpoche's 100th birthday coming, I contemplate the good he has done

written by Jitka Polanská



**Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the most senior living master in the Yungdrung Bon tradition who is celebrating 100<sup>th</sup> birthday soon, has changed the lives of many people. Khenpo Gelek Jinpa, the abbot of Shenten Dargye Ling, is one of them. In this account, Khenpo Gelek recalls his first encounter with Rinpoche and connects the awakening of his spiritual pursuits to the inspirational personality of the beloved teacher.**

The celebration of Yongdzin Rinpoche's centenary is coming soon and I take the opportunity to contemplate all the good Rinpoche he has done for me and others.

The first time I heard about him was at the beginning of the eighties. Tension between China and India weakened a bit at that time, more information was passing through the borders; people could send letters to each other. I was a young boy then and I lived in Kham in Tibet with my family. One evening - I have a very clear memory of the situation - my father said at the dinner that Chime Yungdrung was alive, living in India where he had founded a settlement and a monastery. Chime Yungdrung is the name Yongdzin Rinpoche received by his parents. My mother's mother and Yongdzin Rinpoche's mother were relatives, they are from the same family, and I remember my



mother saying that Yongdzin Rinpoche's mother was surely happy to have the good news and that she was lucky to have such a great son.

My first meeting with Rinpoche took place some years later, in 1986. I was nineteen years old then, working as a nomad, taking care of the cattle of our family. It was late spring and at that time of the year, villagers usually ask for a ritual to protect their crops. My father told me to come down from the mountains for the ritual. I went and heard many people talking about an important master who was visiting our region, Khyungpo, and was giving initiations. I went to see the master, together with others. It was Rinpoche and I was blown away. Hundreds of people were waiting for him, some crying, some laughing and showing much joy. His relatives were so proud of him, you can imagine.

Shortly before, our village lama told me that I should become a monk. He planted a seed of this thought in me. After I met Rinpoche, the thought became much stronger, and I decided to take this direction in my life. I took basic monastic vows and started studying Bon philosophy with my first master, who was one of the first geshe – graduates from Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India. He taught us very clearly.

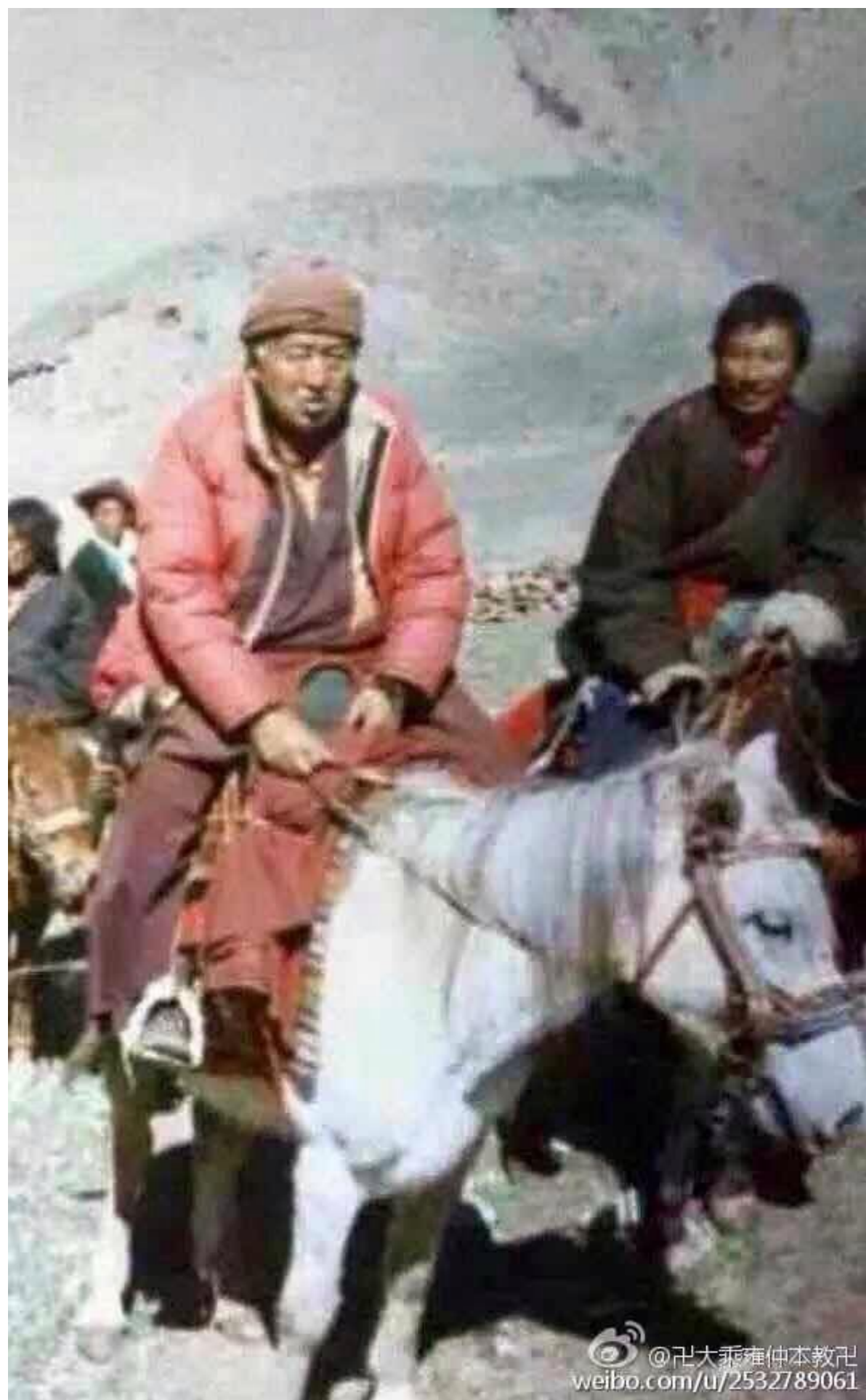
In 1992 Rinpoche came back to Khyungpo for a visit. At that time, I was already a fully ordained monk. During his stay, I and a few other fellow monks decided to follow him abroad. I did not have any other wish than receiving teachings from him, as he was a single lineage holder for some most precious instructions. While Rinpoche was still in Tibet, we set on a perilous journey to Nepal through the bordering mountains. In our group, there were some lamas who distinguished themselves afterwards, such as Ponlop Tsangpa Tenzin, the head teacher of Triten Norbutse, or Geshe Samten Tsukphud, the resident lama at Shenten and others.



We crossed the mountains safely and stopped in Kathmandu, waiting for Rinpoche there. When he arrived, he told us we could not stay with him and should go, instead, to India, Menri monastery, to

complete our studies. I was very disappointed. Personally, I had no wish to become a geshe, I just wanted to receive precious teachings from Rinpoche and practice it. I obeyed him, of course, what else I could do, and we went to Menri. But there, my mind was never relaxed. The monastery is great, it gives excellent education, there was His Holiness Menri Trizin Lungtok Tenpai Nyima, but still, I was not happy. We were monks with low status and could not get teachings directly from His Holiness. So, I was thinking: why did I undertake such a dangerous journey, risking my life, if I still cannot study with the greatest masters?







After two years, I could not go on anymore. I decided to leave the monastery and reach Yongdzin Rinpoche in Kathmandu. I hoped he would not chase me away. Later, the other monks from my group joined me.

Rinpoche did not say anything. He accepted things as they were. The most beautiful period of my life started. We were there, with him, receiving teachings from him, it was wonderful. Every day we learn and practice. Finally, I graduated at Triten Norbutse and received my geshe degree there. Rinpoche gave us complete instructions in sutra, tantra and dzogchen, and all the necessary initiations. And not only one time. I think I received Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud five times, from Rinpoche. Each time, you get more understanding, more clarity.

I also received personal advice from him on different occasions, throughout the years. I remember it when I feel disturbed. This happens, of course, I am an ordinary being and can feel angry or disappointed or jealous, all these things. Thanks to Rinpoche, I keep focusing on integration of my practice to the difficult moments of my life. Some of his sayings have helped me greatly to pass through hardships. He used to say: "Do not follow people's mouths. If you do that, you will have to cry hundreds of times because someone said bad things about you, and you will have to laugh hundreds of times, because someone said nice things about you. You will be completely dependent on others. You will not be yourself."





“Do your best,” he said, “and don’t worry too much. Don’t expect too much either. What is supposed to come will come. Whatever. Do your best. You cannot do more than your best.” And then he said: “Be honest. Be honest and truthful and transparent.”

And I also remember him saying: “Leave it as it is. Human beings worry often about nothing, we worry about the past, which is not there anymore, we worry about the future which has not happened yet. The past and the future, they are both nothingness. Even if bad things happen, let them go. We can remember them, but we have to let go, not hold on. Otherwise more stress and anxiety will come. Do not chase after the path, do not create the future, keep your mind clear.”







I learned so much from my master. Sometimes he did not fulfill my expectations, and I learned from it too. This is, you know, the biggest instruction. It happened once that Rinpoche gave us teaching on the outer cycle of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyud but refused to give us the inner cycle of the teachings. We were already senior teachers ourselves, at Triten Norbutse, and we felt humiliated by this decision. He crushed our egos.

With time, Rinpoche became somehow inseparable from my mind. I bring him with me all the time. His presence, blessings are always with me. I see him around me all the time, really, no joke. I feel so lucky. I'm really fortunate to have spent so many years with him.

I think many people from our sangha feel the same. He has had a great impact on the lives of all of us. That's why so many people are planning to come to Kathmandu to celebrate Rinpoche's birthday. It is good to celebrate and commemorate all Rinpoche's achievements together.

There was nothing before he came to India and Nepal. Now, two great monasteries that he and His Holiness Menri 33<sup>rd</sup> Trizin founded preserve and spread the tradition of Yungdrung Bon - dharma teachings, arts, culture - outside Tibet.

I am very happy that my team and I completed the documentary about Yongdzin Rinpoche last December, just in time for Rinpoche's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was not planned this way, but it happened. Both Tibetan and English versions are ready and will be screened during the upcoming celebrations. I think it is very auspicious.

*Photo credit: Khenpo Gelek Jinpa*