At Shenten, I see my root master wherever I turn, says Khenpo Gelek Jinpa

written by Jitka Polanská



Soon, another three-week summer retreat begins at Shenten Dargye Ling. Khenpo Gelek shares his memories of past summer retreats, when they were blessed with the presence of Yongdzin Rinpoche, his root master. "It is important to carry on Rinpoche´s legacy, to celebrate it every summer with a gathering of us, his students," he says.

Khenpo la, you are now in Mexico and finalizing the documentary movie about your root teacher, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche. What held you back from doing it earlier? It has been put on stand- by for years...

There is more than one reason. The covid slowed down everything, then I struggled a bit to get a visa, and then we needed to coordinate among all members of the team to be available at the same time. It was not easy. Also, I wanted to go very much to visit Tibet, and had been waiting a long time to get a visa to China. Finally, I got it and could see my mum. That's also why I did not travel very much for teaching last year.

Soon you are going back to Shenten, to be there for the summer retreat, as every year. What does that event mean for you?

For me, it is a totally special event. Shenten is a place where I have spent a large part of my life, next year it will be twenty years since the "ling" was founded. For all of us, students of Yongdzin Rinpoche, it is a dharma home, a place blessed with his presence. But it is always open for

newcomers too, for everyone who wants to approach Dzogchen meditation or is just curious about Tibetan traditional culture.



How would you describe the traditional summer retreats at Shenten Dargye Ling to someone who has never been there?

It is not just a regular teaching on something. The retreat was established as a part of the enlightened activities of my teacher, Yongdzin Rinpoche, here in the West. Although he had started coming to Europe many years before Shenten was founded, Shenten became his seat, the place of his residence. For many years, until 2018, he spent several months of each year there.

The summer retreat was a main gathering of the year – many, many students were coming to be in his presence and listen to his teachings. For Rinpoche, it was very important that practitioners of Dzogchen meditation in Yungdrung Bon tradition had a place where they can stay together for longer periods, for teachings and practice. That's why he also, together with Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, designed the Gomdra. It is a unique in-depth four year meditation program, which has been held at Shenten since 2009.

> For Yongdzin Rinpoche, building a center in the West became a priority in 2001, Florens says

I have been coming to Shenten since 2011 and I also have many memories of Yongdzin Rinpoche, during those summers. He taught exclusively Dzogchen meditation.

Yes, Rinpoche was convinced it was the most suitable spiritual path for people who live in the West. In all those years, he completed teaching on all of the major four dzogchen cycles: Zhang -Zhung Nyen Gyud, “Atri” system, Drakpa Korsum, and Yetri Thasel. By the way, Yetri Thasel will be the topic of the next Shenten Gomdra, beginning in 2025.



And it was not ordinary teachings! Rinpoche is an ocean of knowledge, he could teach entirely from his experience, but he always taught from the original texts, and in the traditional way. He holds the full and complete knowledge of Yungdrung Bon tradition, and he did not make it less so for Western students. He transmitted it fully and thoroughly. Instructions, transmissions, initiations – all were given properly and completely. He really believed in the capacity of his western students. And I think it is very important to carry on Rinpoche´s legacy, to celebrate it every summer, gathering together as a community.



There were also many precious moments outside the teachings. I remember that late afternoons – evenings, Rinpoche used to be outside, people sat around him, asking him questions, listening. I remember Rinpoche laughing and saying: "I like chatting."

For many years he was going to the *Longére*, in the afternoon, to hold individual interviews with students. It is the building next to the *chateau* which we recently renovated with the scope to welcome people for longer individual retreats.





People could come to Rinpoche at any moment, to talk to him, to greet him. He was and is very open and friendly; he likes talking about daily life situations. He is not the one who would tell people to run away from life. He always spoke about integration of the practice into everyday life.

People often say that getting so close to such a great master was a blessing for them. They say that Rinpoche was always strikingly available.

Yes, you could meet Rinpoche anywhere around Shenten. I have collected so many impressions. Now, when I am at Shenten, I see Rinpoche everywhere, in every corner, in all ten directions, we can say. Seriously. Those are very vivid memories for me. It makes Shenten very, very special.









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