“Fire puja”, a ritual unique to Yungdrung Bon was documented at Triten Norbutse. Watch the video

written by Jitka Polanská



A year ago the monastic community of Triten Norbutse monastery in Kathmandu performed an extensive ritual, Kunrig Lezhi Gyunnga. In this “fire puja”, various kinds of offerings are burnt in fire and with this, obstacles of people, the dead and the living, are liberated. Esther Pérez de Eulate attended the ritual and documented it. Her video is now available on Speech of Delight´s YouTube channel and published here. We asked Esther about the making of the video.

Usha, my friend and the practitioner who commissioned the ritual, asked me to come to the monastery with her as a support and for company. I had not been there before and so it was a precious opportunity for me to see the monastery, Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, my root master, and to witness such a remarkable event. I took my camera with me, this is a habit of an ex-documentarist.

Originally, there was a film-maker from Kathmandu hired by Usha to make a video of the puja but he was very busy and could not do the work, and so I offered to do it. My proposal was accepted and my camera came in very handy (although I did shoot some images with my smartphone). I was happy to bring some benefit to the tradition of Yungdrung Bon, to which I feel very grateful to belong, as a follower.



Usha: I have trust that this will come helpful at the point of the death…

It was not always easy to understand what was going on during the ritual, as there were many things happening at the same time. The event was extensive and complex, but I did my best to collect as much information and video material as possible.

The abbot of the monastery, Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, who was the key figure in the ritual, explains the general meaning of it in an interview shown in the video.

> Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche: “The ritual is very popular, especially in the eastern part of Tibet. People usually make an effort to organize it when someone of their family passes away.”

Khenpo Gelek Jinpa, the head of Shenten Dargye Ling, who took part in the puja, explained together with the chant master of the puja, Yungdrung Tharching, the structure and the procedures of the puja offering.

> “Yongdzin Rinpoche told me that the puja is unique to Yungdrung Bon Tradition,” Esther says.



The ritual applies many symbols…

I made my first cut of the video by April of this year Then, I had to wait until autumn to meet Khenpo Gelek at Shenten to work on the second cut together. Khenpo Gelek leads the meditation program of Gomdra at Shenten, from September till November, and I attend the Gomdra. Its schedule is very intense but we still found time and worked on editing the film. A great fortune was having Lowell Britson and Ada Bird Wolfe at the Gomdra as well. Khenpo Gelek and Lowell edited the narrative of the video and made sure that it fits with the images, and the narrating voice of the documentary is Ada´s. After that, I took the material to Madrid, where I live, and finalized it.



All will be burnt, finally…

The ritual is amazing, incredibly impressive, especially in the second, culminating part with the open fire. Even if I see imperfections of the video, it still conveys the power of the ritual with its beauty, I think, and I am happy that I can offer it to the viewers.





At the end the complex texts of the ritual must be packed carefully and it takes time…

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atdhOTVWJVs