

Lopon praises our sangha for generosity and devotion, practitioners from Mexico say

written by Jitka Polanská



The presence of practitioners from Mexico always makes retreats at Shenten full of joy and warmth. Blanca, Sharo (Rosario), Adriana and Celina, all Mexican ladies who are followers of Yungdrung Bon, attend the summer retreats at Shenten. We had a conversation with them last year and brought it up to date now.

Sharo is originally from Chihuahua but now lives in Valle de Bravo. Until last year, she was a caretaker of The Great Stupa Bon for World Peace for six years.

Blanca comes from Zacatecas in the central part of Mexico, but she also lives close to the Great Stupa.

Celina is from Nuevo Laredo, which is situated in the northern part of Mexico and very close to the border with the United States. She now lives in the United States.

Adriana lives in Mexico City.

The ladies remember that Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, together with Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, came to Valle de Bravo already in 1995. Blanca met them at that time. "They performed a very beautiful ceremony, but then I forgot about the event - I did not know them then. Only later a friend reminded me that I was also there. After some time, I attended Lama Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche's teachings and I then also received a teaching about the preliminary practices, *ngondro*, from Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung," Blanca says.

Adriana was first introduced to Bon when Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche was teaching in Mexico City, twenty years ago. Celina too had been a student of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche before she came to Shenten. "There were his teachings in Valle de Bravo taking place already at the end of the 1990s. The land for the stupa had been there but nothing had been built yet. There were only a teacher and students, and everyone slept in tents," she recalls. "If I remember well - and I may not - the first teaching was on Chod," Celina says.

Valle de Bravo is a place with very beautiful nature and it is a popular holiday destination for many Mexicans. Now, it is also known for the Great Stupa Bon for the World Peace. Its construction began in 2003 and it was completed in 2010. In 2010, it was consecrated by H.E. Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche and Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.



Mexican sangha with Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung during his teaching in the Great Stupa in 2023



Blanca, who lives close to the stupa, had been hosting many teachers at her home throughout the years. “She took care of all of them, for many years,” Celina says. Nowadays, lamas can stay in the facilities on the land of the stupa.

Sharo, who started following Bon nine years ago, became the main caretaker of the place after two years she became a Bonpo. She was helped in this task by a team who was in charge for maintenance of the place.

“There are two kinds of visitors to the stupa. The first group are tourists who are just curious. The second are spiritual visitors,” Sharo says. She explained the meaning of the stupa to both groups and gave them the background of why and how it came into existence. “Even those who did not know anything before their visit, often leave with something positive, uplifting in their minds. They look different, smiling and happy,” she says.



Sharo and Celina with “Lopon”

“I explained to them that the stupa is exceptional both for its dimensions and because it has a meditation hall inside. Two hundred people can stay within, listening to the teachings, meditating. Every Sunday, there are meditations in the stupa, led by resident lamas, lama Kalsang Nyima and lama Yungdrung Lodoe,” Sharo says.

There must be approximately five hundred Bon practitioners in Mexico, the ladies estimate. A quite big group of them has been coming regularly to Shenten. “For the Grand Ceremony of Dutrisu in 2018 we were more than fifty, and at the summer retreats maybe twenty to thirty people used to come, even if flight tickets are quite expensive,” says Adriana. More than thirty people went to take part in the ceremony at Triten Norbutse monastery in Nepal, the seat of their beloved Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, in 2020, and many are planning to come next year to celebrate their master’s 100th birthday.

The love that Mexican students have for Lopon Tenzin Namdak is reciprocated by him. “Lopon likes the Mexicans for their strong devotion,” Adriana says. “There is a connection.”





Some Mexicans with their “Lopon”, H.E. Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, and with Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche at Shenten Dargye Ling

“I think for Mexicans it is very natural to live this connection with the teaching and masters in a similar way the Tibetans do,” Celina says. “We know that monasteries and lay followers need to support each other; monks work for us with their prayers, and we help them to keep going. Lopon told us that he really appreciates Mexican sangha for being so generous and open-hearted.”

Mexico is a catholic country. How do the relatives of these practitioners see their adherence to a completely different religion? Blanca comes from a very large family, she has fourteen brothers and sisters. “My father studied in a catholic seminar when he was young, and still, he has respected my choice since the beginning,” Blanca says. “You follow what you want, he told me,” she says.

“My parents passed away but my children (I have a daughter and a son) they both are okay with what I do and follow. They see it is as a good path,” Sharo says.

Adriana says that she was looking for some meditation technique because her husband was sick with cancer. “I wanted to learn meditation to help to heal him, as it is said in many books that meditation is good for that. He did not start meditating but my life was changed. My family does not have any problem with what I follow. If you are happy like this, go for it, they say,” Adriana says.

“My mother was against it,” Celina says, “but after time she has changed her mind. She told me she could see good changes in me.”

When you ask the ladies how it comes they always look happy and cheerful, they say: "It is because we are so lucky. Lucky to be with our masters, to receive the teachings, to have met LoPON. In any case, many Mexicans are like us," they add, laughing.

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