

through the eastern gate

A Documentary Film by Mironel de Wilde & Julien L. Balmer

Switzerland 2006

Digital Beta • Widescreen • 25 fps

52 minutes • E/f/g

buddhist voices

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Sister Yeshe

Venerable Yeshe Chodron is a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. She became a Buddhist in 1994 when, at the age of 17, she encountered Buddhism while travelling in India. She has since trained with Tibetan Lamas in the Sakya tradition and currently teaches Buddhism and meditation retreats at various centres in India and Australia. In addition to her meditative practice and personal studies, she has worked with the poor in India, HIV-positive patients, nursing home residents, and students, offering counselling and other services. Sister Yeshe is committed to living the traditional contemplative life of a wandering mendicant - she may often be seen wandering the streets of Sydney and India with a Buddhist begging bowl!

Sister Yeshe is the author of *Everyday Enlightenment – How To Be a Spiritual Warrior at the Kitchen Sink* (HarperCollins Publishers).

www.kalyanamitrafund.org.au



H.H. the 41st Sakya Trizin

His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin was born in Tsedong, Tibet, in 1945. He is the supreme head of the Sakya School, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. His Holiness belongs to the ancient and distinguished royal family of Khön, whose history dates back to the early days of Tibet, even before the arrival of Buddhism there.

From the age of 3 he began to receive all the major initiations and teachings of the Sakya tradition, including those in the most advanced esoteric doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1951, at the age of 6, he formally received the title of Sakya Trizin (the Throne-holder of Sakya) from the Dalai Lama - thus becoming the 41st holder of this position. In 1959, he was forced to leave his royal palace behind and flee to India following the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

Besides working ceaselessly for the preservation and successful reconstitution of Sakya's rich and profound Dharma heritage, His Holiness has given numerous initiations, written a large number of texts, and in particular has bestowed the vast Lam Dre teachings on no fewer than 11 occasions. He travels regularly to teach in many parts of the world.

www.paldensakya.org.in



Tenzin Palmo

Venerable Tenzin Palmo was raised in London and, while in her teens, became a Buddhist. In 1964, at the age of 20, she decided to go to India to pursue her spiritual path.

There she met her Tibetan guru, His Eminence the eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche and became one of the first Westerners to be ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun. She remained with Khamtrul Rinpoche and his community in Himachal Pradesh, northern India, for six years. He then sent her to the Himalayan valley of Lahoul in order to undertake more intensive practice. For another six years Tenzin Palmo practised in a small monastery and remained in retreat during the long and snowy winter months which last for half of the year. Seeking more isolation and better conditions for further intense practice, she found a nearby cave where she lived for another 12 years, most spent in strict retreat. She left the cave in 1988 and soon after opened a nunnery in Tashi Jong, northern India.

www.tenzinpalmo.com

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sufi voices

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Aziz Abbatiello

Aziz Abbatiello is a whirling dervish upholding the traditions of the Mevlevi Order of Sufis who follow the great 13th-century Islamic poet and mystic Jellaleddin Rumi. He grew up on the West Coast of the United States where his parents were among the first to take up Sufism from teachers who came there from India and the Middle East. At the age of 17 Aziz began to study fervently the Sufi practices under the guidance of his father so that he could join the ceremonies with his family. Now he spends much of his time in Turkey studying and practising with sheikhs in Istanbul and Konya – a holy city for the whirling dervishes. The rest of his time he spends in San Francisco involved in woodworking and carpentry, while he continues his prayers and remembrance of Allah. Aziz has been a semazen (whirling dervish) for seven years and a student of Sheikh Sherif Baba Efendi for the past five years.



Sheikh Sherif Baba Efendi

Sherif Baba (Sheikh el-Haj el-Fakir er-Rifa'i Mehmet Sherif Çatalkaya) was born in Istanbul, Turkey in 1944. He began his religious training at the age of 6 in a school where he learned to memorise the Quran, and continued his traditional religious education at the age of 17 at the Fatih Mosque Medresse. He taught Quran studies in various mosques in Istanbul and Bursa before meeting his true teacher on the path of humanity at the age of 33. Sherif Baba received intensive Sufi training in the Rifa'i-Marufi, Halveti, Kadiri, Bektashi, Nakshibendi, and Melami Sufi Orders in Turkey, where he is revered as an eren, one who has attained. He is currently the spiritual head of the Rifa'i-Marufi School of Sufism headquartered in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He teaches regularly throughout the United States and Turkey, and has lectured on spirituality and healing at universities and conferences throughout North America. He hosts of the annual Rumi Festival in Chapel Hill.

www.rifaimarufi.org (Rifa'i Marufi Order of America)
www.sherifbaba.com



Sheikh Nail Kesova

Born in Istanbul in 1939, Nail Kesova became acquainted with Islamic mysticism in his early childhood, due partly to his family's interest. While earning his university degree in economics he became part of the Istanbul Mevlevi Mutrib group – a mystical performance ensemble. In subsequent years he studied music with Ahmet Bican Kasaboglu and was also appointed semazen (whirling dervish). In 1994, after 15 years of continuous training he was declared a sheikh by Celaleddin Celebi, a direct descendant of the great poet and sage Jellaleddin Rumi who founded the Order of the Whirling Dervishes in the 13th century. Nail Kesova continues to live in Istanbul and teaches frequently both in Turkey and abroad.

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yoga voices

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Thomas English

Growing up in Ottawa, Canada, Thomas was deeply aware that there was much more to this life than the physical, instinctual existence it seemed all around him were living. At the age of 21 he began searching for answers to the meaning of life and existence. It was then that he met his first spiritual teacher, who began to unfold for him some of the mysteries of the traditional cultures and philosophies of mankind. By the age of 25, in 1999, feeling the need for a more practical spiritual understanding, he set off for India where he met Swami Vivekananda Saraswati and discovered Yoga. He has been studying and practising Yoga under the direct guidance of Swami ever since, discovering along the way many answers to the deepest questions of his soul. In particular, he has realised that the universal Consciousness is something internal, ever-existing, and within the heart of every being.



Ronela Vainio

Ronela Vainio was born in Finland in 1978. As a teenager, she was curious about Yoga and other Eastern spiritual traditions, although at that time she did not go deeply into them. Later, living and travelling in India in 1999-2000, she met Swami Vivekananda Saraswati in Rishikesh, which became a major turning point in her life. She was amazed at Swami's power and wisdom. All the teachings she received made so much sense and suddenly the missing pieces in the puzzle of her understanding of life came together and formed a beautiful picture: a pathway to God. Endless wanderings came to an end, and life opened up with a new light and a meaning to truth. Ronela has a background in theatre studies and comparative religion. She has been studying and practising in Asia under the direct guidance of Swami since 2002.



Swami Vivekananda
Saraswati

Swami Vivekananda Saraswati, a university-educated engineer born in 1962, has been teaching Yoga for nearly 25 years. A member of Mensa who speaks five languages, he first explored parapsychology and the science of the mind at age 16, before beginning an intense and extensive education in Yoga three years later. In 1990, he left his native Romania for Copenhagen to found NATHA, now Denmark's largest Yoga school. Eight years later, he journeyed to India to take the Swami order oaths and in Rishikesh opened Agama Yoga, which has since grown into an international school, with branches in Thailand, Rishikesh, Israel, and Greece.

Swami Vivekananda's expertise ranges from chiropractic and alternative healing to the teachings of esoteric Christianity and the Kaula Tantra tradition. He also specialises in the authentic, transcendent, and practical Kashmir Shaivism, a nearly lost study within Yoga.

www.agamayoga.com