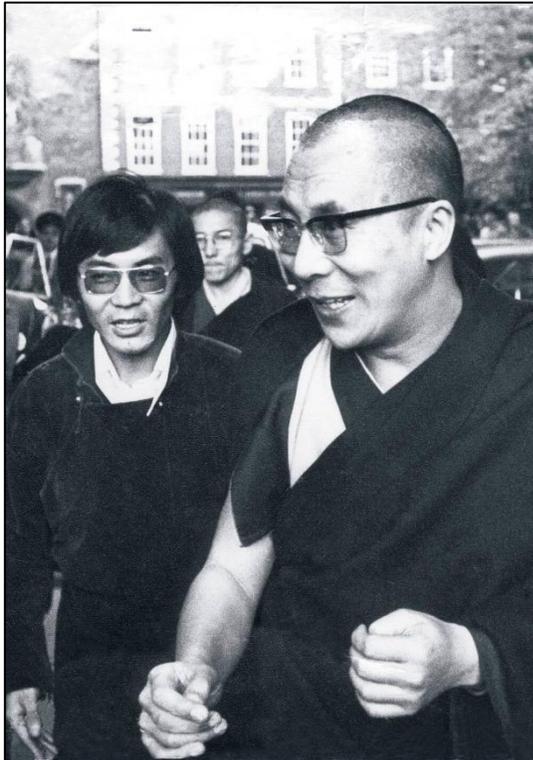


## MARY FINNIGAN'S PRESENTATION FOR THE INFORM SEMINAR, JULY 2020

I'D LIKE to thank Michelle for speaking direct, stark reality **truth** and for being one of the eight people whose open letter in July 2017 brought about Sogyal's fall from grace.

I first met Sogyal in the spring of 1973. Along with other people who shared my interest in meditation, I found him a place to teach – a house in Kilburn, London, which we squatted in the name of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.



I do not refer to Sogyal as Rinpoche. It is a title accorded to lamas in recognition of their contemplative realisation and scholarship. Sogyal was a charlatan who was never trained as a lama.

But we did not know this in the 1970s. We were naïve, ill-informed, and enthusiastic.

We felt lucky to be involved with a charismatic Tibetan guru, pictured left with The Dalai Lama on His Holiness's first visit to London in 1973.

It soon became obvious that our new-found teacher had an insatiable sexual appetite. He hit on virtually every pretty woman he encountered.

It did not occur to us then that this behaviour was not compatible with the power imbalance inherent in his role as a lama.

The late John Driver first sounded an alarm about Sogyal. John was a respected Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner.

I am a journalist, so after John's alert, I applied my professional skills to finding out more about Sogyal's background.

His ascent into guru superstardom occurred after the publication of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, and his role in the movie *Little Buddha*. His organisation, Rigpa, went global.

In 1994 a woman known as Janice Doe sued Sogyal for sexual abuse and battery. This was the first time we heard about the beatings he inflicted on members of his inner circle.

By the early noughties I had built up a dossier on Sogyal, But it lacked corroborative evidence – until Mimi Durand told me about her experience of rape and violence as a member of Sogyal's harem.

My essay, "Behind the Thangkas," went live on the internet in 2011.

Thangkas are sacred paintings. They hung in Sogyal's chalet at Lerab Ling. When an orgy happened, they were taken down to reveal pornographic images.

Soon afterwards, Sogyal's depravity was exposed in the Canadian documentary, *In the Name of Enlightenment*.

And soon after that I met Rob Hogendoorn. We discovered that we worked well as a team – so we wrote *Sex and Violence in Tibetan Buddhism*, which we are now updating for a second edition.

*Mary with HH The Dalai Lama in 1997, when she spoke with him about Sogyal's abuses*



Sogyal fled to Thailand after the publication of the eight-signatory letter. He died of cancer there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July last year, steeped in scandal and publicly disgraced by His Holiness, The Dalai Lama.

Thousands of students abandoned Rigpa between 2017 and 2020. But thousands stayed loyal to Sogyal, the cult leader who had brainwashed them into blind faith adoration.

*The last photo of Sogyal taken in Thailand during his cancer treatment*



*Sogyal with senior lamas who enabled him throughout his career and continue to support Rigpa*



*Patrick Gaffney at Dzogchen Beara, the Rigpa centre in Ireland*

So what of his legacy? Rigpa's public presentation emphasises business as usual.

Their schedules include teachings by ethnic Tibetan lamas and also with eye watering chutzpah – by Patrick Gaffney and Dominique Side. The two innermost disciples who knew beyond doubt about Sogyal's behaviour – who enabled it, condoned it and concealed it. Who lied about it in public and in private for more than 40 years.

But behind the scenes Rigpa is in big trouble. Most of its national groups are close to bankruptcy – and the Charity Commission for England and Wales is due to publish a report on a statutory inquiry into Rigpa UK. Two senior Rigpa insiders – Patrick Gaffney and Susan Burrows – have been disqualified as Charity Trustees, in advance of the report.

It is my view that Rigpa will not recover from the corruption it refused to acknowledge – and should be disbanded. To its everlasting shame, Rigpa has never apologised to Sogyal's victims.