

# Bobby Sager

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Dear Friend Somewhere On the Planet:

Twelve years ago, my family foundation (Sager Family Foundation), the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and the Dalai Lama's private office began a ground breaking program called Science for Monks to teach Western science to Tibetan monks and nuns. It represents the first time in the approximately 1,500-year history of Tibetan Buddhism that Western science is being taught in the monasteries.

Last month, Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama addressed a luncheon gathering at my home in Boston and announced a decision by the leaders of the monasteries to make the study of Western science part of the core curriculum required of all monastic scholars in the Gelug tradition. His Holiness further commented that the decision to include Western science was the most significant change to the monastic curriculum in centuries.

This book, *Beyond the Robe*, tells the story of the decade long development of the Science for Monks program and what it reveals about the larger role Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns can play in their monasteries, in their communities, and in the world at large.

*Beyond the Robe* is a collection of essays from the monks and scientists containing the first insights that have come out of our historic effort. *Beyond the Robe* follows the monks' study of science, but it is not a science book. The real story here is what the study of science has revealed about who these remarkable men and woman really are and the much bigger role that they seem so suited to fill.

The title *Beyond the Robe* refers to monks extending their studies beyond the traditional monastic curriculum to include Western science. *Beyond the Robe* also refers to the monastics' potential for an expanded role in their community, not necessarily as scientists, but as more engaged citizens, more informed messengers, and more well-rounded scholars. Perhaps having a more complete worldview will give greater voice to the monks' centuries-old wisdom.

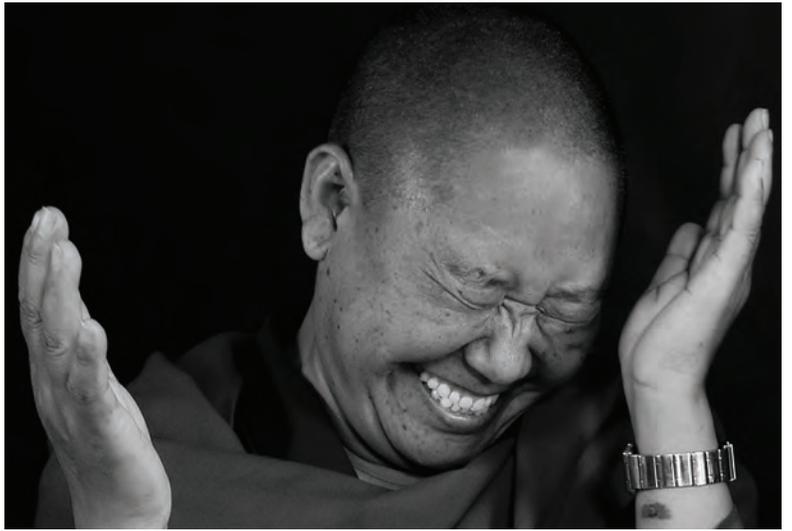
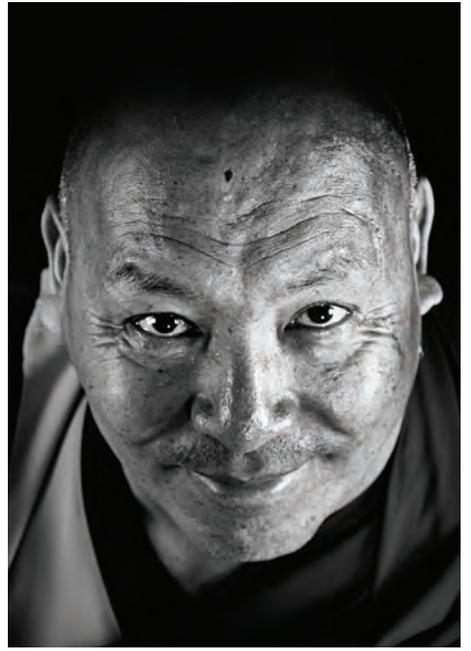
The Science for Monks program isn't an attempt to inject science into the monks' religious thought. It isn't, for example, about how the study of the human genome might affect someone's belief in reincarnation. The study of science is meant to add additional scholarly insight into the monks' understanding of scientific phenomena and into the nature of reality so that science and Buddhism can help each other to best serve humanity.

An excellent example of how scientists and monks have come together to make the world a better place is a new program the Sager Family Foundation has launched with the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics at MIT called Science, Monks and Technology. This program teaches monks practical technologies like solar power and clean water systems, empowering them to better the everyday lives of their fellow refugees living in the Tibetan diaspora. Leaders without ego. Leaders who are even tempered, dedicated, compassionate people. These are people who we should want to have the greatest possible voice.

The Dalai Lama says that academic study as an end in itself isn't enough. The job description of a monk is to make a positive difference in people's lives, which means that our initiative between monks and scientists only matters if it leads to actions that benefit our world.

I hope that Beyond the Robe helps you to feel closer to the monks and nuns and to better understand their immense potential to provide leadership in their world and further insight into ours. Instead of simply admiring them from afar, let's all get close enough to really listen.

Bobby Sager







# SELECTED CONTRIBUTORS FROM BEYOND THE ROBE

Seeing the tremendous importance of science and recognizing its inevitable dominance in the modern world fundamentally changed my attitude to it from curiosity to a kind of urgent engagement. I wanted to understand science because it gave me a new area to explore in my personal quest to understand the nature of reality. I also wanted to learn about it because I recognized in it a compelling way to communicate insights gleaned from my own spiritual tradition. The central question—central for the survival and well-being of our world—is how we can make the wonderful developments of science into something that offers altruistic and compassionate service for the needs of humanity and the other sentient beings with whom we share this earth.

— *His Holiness the Dalai Lama*

It is important to understand that Buddhism itself, as the lived practice of professional monks and nuns, is more than one third “science,” beyond “religion,” if “science” is defined as the quest for the empirical realization of the true nature of the universe, and “religion” is defined as faith in a belief system about the universe. The lifelong study of science by the Dalai Lama is not just due to a personal affinity he happened to have. It is a natural result of the culture he grew up in and the education he received.

— *Robert Thurman*

Science does offer a vast corpus of knowledge, but it does not necessarily produce wisdom. While the insights of science can help us change our world, only human thought and kindness can enlighten us about the path we should follow in our life. As a complement to science we must also cultivate a “science of the mind,” what we can call spirituality. This spirituality is not a luxury, but a necessity.

— *Matthieu Ricard*

We are persons whose bodies can be objectively studied according to the impersonal laws of physics but whose minds are subjectively experienced in ways science has not yet been able to fathom. In short, by radically separating science from religion, we are not merely segregating two human institutions; we are fragmenting ourselves as individuals and as a society in ways that lead to deep, unresolved conflicts in terms of our view of the world, our values, and our way of life.

— *Alan Wallace*

A legitimate conflict between science and religion cannot exist. Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.

— *Albert Einstein*

Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens.

— *Jimi Hendrix*