

# Damcho Dyson

**AGE** 45  
**PROFESSION** Former nun, PhD candidate, and latex lover  
**LOCATION** London, UK

**You were a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for over nine years. Why did you disrobe?** The retreat center where I was in France didn't support my doing lots of study and practice. Instead I was serving the community and working a lot. I made of it what I could, and I am really grateful for the incredible opportunities to meet some amazing masters and spend time with them and their teachings. But after so many years of being there, and really trying my best to make sense of it, I realized that the conditions weren't ideal for me on my path.

I also realized close to the time that I disrobed that I was carrying a lot of history in my body, and in particular a lot of guilt from an abortion I had years ago. I was paying penance for that by becoming a nun—by denying my body all sorts of sense pleasures and so on. After I disrobed, it became a matter of forgiving myself, and slowly unraveling the tight knot I'd tied myself into. So leaving the monastic life was not because I didn't have any appreciation of that path but because I realized I had come at it from the wrong motivation.

**Now you're a self-proclaimed "latex lover," and writing a dissertation about the ritualization of wearing latex. How did you get into that?** My life was in a position where I couldn't say what was going to happen beyond a month in front of me. I thought that I might as well enjoy myself, so I started saying "Yes" to whatever opportunity came up.

For some reason a friend of mine had an inkling that I might enjoy latex [laughs] and took me to a lovely lady who had been making latex clothing for 30 years. In that "Why not?" mindset, what would usually seem very intimidating to me—a rack of black latex—seemed rather enchanting. When I put it on there was something about it that was immediately empowering. It also felt like a way to enter into a ritual act like putting on robes while also having the enhanced sensation of

being in your form. It was a significant thing of anchoring me back to my body, which I'd been disconnected from for so long.

**Is there also a sexual component to wearing the latex for you?** There is, although I'd say sensuality rather than sexuality.

As a nun, you appear androgynous. No one's got an idea of your body under those loose robes. During my "un-becoming a nun" process it took me a long time, about six months, before I could sort of reenter a gender. And when I did, I discovered the joys of being a woman again, because I'd certainly forgotten them. So yes, sexuality has been a wonderful thing to re-explore, and latex has enhanced that for me.

**The latex scene and monasticism seem like such polar opposites. Are they?** In one way they are flip sides of a picture. But I think in both instances, it's just a person trying to make sense of their chosen embodiment in relation to their world.

People talk about transcendent BDSM [an acronym standing for Bondage and Discipline/Domination and Submission/Sadism and Masochism]; some do go into the fetish arena looking for a kind of spiritual experience. People from that scene have been coming to me and saying, "Oh, it's so needed that someone recognizes this is a spiritual path," because that's how they see it for themselves. I don't see it as a Buddhist path; and I certainly wouldn't pretend that what I'm doing is true dharma. But I don't see it as contradictory either. We are quick to pigeonhole everything in our lives. For me, this is just one of those things I use to break concepts in my own life. That's all.

**Could you describe the experience of wearing latex? What's the attraction to it?** There are some aspects of discomfort—it takes time and effort to get into something like a cat suit,

for example. In that way, it's like robes. You get used to doing it more quickly, but you have to be mindful as you do it.

If you're wearing tight-fitting latex—although that's not the only way people wear it—when you get zipped in, there's a feeling of being sprung like a rubber band and then encased in something like a big hug. From inside the latex, the closeness of the layer of material makes the body perimeter more tangible. And from outside, if a wind blows or there's heat from the sun or someone touches you, the sensation is amplified. It's like you've turned up the volume on your body consciousness.

**How often do you wear it?** I try to find opportunities to wear it every weekend. Some people wear it for something like 13 hours a day; they've been doing it for 15 years, and they see it as their accomplishment to pursue. I haven't gone into it yet in enough depth to see what an immersive experience of it is like, but I'd like to do so for my PhD research, to see how it affects the body and the mind.

**How did your family react when you told them about it?** Mom and Dad didn't bat an eye.

I wrote to the monks and nuns of the monastery I left as well, because I figured since I had set up a GoFundMe page called Bodhi Unbound for my PhD fees, eventually they'd find out and it would be a scandal and all that. But I told them, "I don't have any disrespect for what you're doing. I hold the monastic path in high regard. And I hope that I'm not damaging the dharma in any way with what I'm doing." I'm very conscious that I don't want to do that.

**Did they respond?** Yeah. Some said, "Go for it. Whatever makes you happy. I trust you." And others said, "Well, do what you want, but keep me out of it." [Laughs.] ▼

—Emma Varvaloucas, Executive Editor