



GATSAL



Dear friends,

This winter has been long and cold and only now in mid March is spring cautiously making a belated appearance.

Last September a group of our nuns attended the Debating Contest at the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery at Bylakuppe in the South. This was the first time any of our nuns had participated in this annual event where several nunneries in India and Nepal come together to debate with each other and hone their skills as well as make new friends. It was good exposure for the DGL nuns to witness more advanced debaters and also participate with other nuns on their own level.

In November four nuns completed their retreat of almost four years and emerged to be greeted by all the DGL nuns and staff holding khatas. It was a joyful occasion and the next day was - quite coincidentally - a picnic, so it was a time for everyone to reconnect with our dedicated practitioners and catch up on several years of nunnery gossip! After medical check-ups these four nuns then returned into retreat for a further 3 years.

On Lhabab Duchen which falls also in November, our spiritual director Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche visited our Nunnery to bestow the Bodhisattva Vow in an auspicious ceremony occupying the whole morning. As this was the first time that Khamtrul Rinpoche had performed this more elaborate Bodhisattva ritual, the students from the monastic college at Tashi Jong and many of the lay people also participated along with our nuns and DGL staff.

Over the Christmas period I was invited to a Sivananda Yoga Ashram in the Bahamas to attend their annual Interfaith Symposium. This charming Ashram is run by a group of Swamis and volunteers mostly from Israel, who are kindness and loving devotion personified. I was accompanied by my friends May Ling and Chrysanne and we enjoyed meeting with the other learned participants from various religious backgrounds. On this trip we also visited New York, Florida, Singapore and Thailand and everywhere met with such intelligent and good hearted people that one can only rejoice in how much goodness the world actually contains despite news reports to the contrary.



In January many of our nuns attended the Kalachakra Empowerment given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Bodhi Gaya to vast crowds of devotees, including many coming from Tibet for this event. This was a highly propitious occasion for everyone and a great blessing for our nuns. The nuns who remained at DGL made

their own pilgrimage to Rewalsar or Tso Pema. They made many prayers at the Guru Padmasambhava cave and enjoyed circumambulating the sacred lake.

This year Losar or Tibetan New Year in February was a quiet event since there was official mourning for the loss of lives and general suffering in Tibet especially at this time. However the nuns performed a pre-dawn ceremony for world peace and visited Tashi Jong to make offerings to the Rinpoches and the DGL monk teachers.

This year of the Water Dragon will mark an important step forward in our DGL training syllabus as we respond to the needs of our nuns who are graduating from their six years of basic philosophy and language studies. We are in the process of setting up a vocational guidance programme to encourage our nuns to explore their own talents and potential in various fields such as study, meditation, art, medicine, computer and secretarial skills, and so on.

So once again we sincerely thank all our kind supporters around the world for their continued interest and help in making our DGL Nunnery a vibrant reality.

May all beings enjoy happiness and the causes of happiness.

Tenzin Palmo



Lobsang
Norzom

2011 Class Awards Group with Khenpo Ngawang

ABOUT MYSELF

by Ani Lobsang Norzom

My name is Lobsang Norzom. I am 19 years old. I come from Ladakh. I studied up to the 6th grade in my village. I have 9 family members. They are at Ladakh. I have my parents and I have 2 brothers and 4 sisters. My parents had a farm growing. When I was at my school I liked nuns very much. Then I asked my parents I want nun. My parents also very happy they said is ok. I became a nun in 2006. I studied there in my village 3 years, there are one of small nunnery, there are 16 nuns there. The nuns work in home help to family. Then I spent my time looking after the home and feeding the animals.

Then I had a chance to come to Dharamsala. I reached by bus and after a while I was taken to my brother who is a monk. It was there that

I heard about the DGL Nunnery. I asked for his permission to join this Nunnery. I had heard that it was a very quiet and peaceful place for studying and practicing the dharma apart from that it has a class for studying English language. I also came to know that the teachers to teach us were very good and very kind. This nunnery is really a wonderful place with many more facilities that I had ever dreamt of. I have my sponsor that is so nice and kind to support me. I have this great chance to study and practice dharma for the benefit of all. I am very grateful to them and especially Ven Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo for making it possible for me. I want to be a good nun for all my life. I want to use my life as a nun to help others.

GOING ON PILGRIMAGE

ATTENDING HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA'S KALACHAKRA IN BODH GAYA

by Ani Tsultrim Palmo & Ani Tenzin Chokyi

In December we 24 DGL nuns went to Bodh Gaya to receive Kalachakra from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Some nuns went by bus and some nuns went by train. It was my luckiest day in my life because I got a wonderful opportunity to get Kalachakra such a precious holy place of the Lord Buddha. His Holiness said that if we get once Kalachakra from Bodh Gaya it was the same as we get 7 times at other places, it was because of holy place blessing.

Thousands of devotees people gathered for it. They are very kind and friendly. Even thousands of Tibetan devotees came from Tibet. It is my praying that this precious empowerment blessed all beings be happy.

It was my first visit to Bodh Gaya. It was also my first journey by train. For that reason I was highly excited about it. I could

stretch myself, lie down on my seat and enjoy various sights and sounds outside. I helped a few beggars and handicapped children who came into my compartment begging for alms and food. Most of the travellers on the train were going to Bodh Gaya also – the subject of their talk was on the dharma – we enjoyed their talks very much. Finally we arrived, I was amazed to see the large number of people who had gathered – more than 200,000 people. I had never seen such a large crowd. They were from different areas and different countries. It was my great fortune to be in that holy place. It was a great experience for me. I wished the teachings to continue forever. I have made up my mind to try my best to put into practice his teachings. May His Holiness live a long time and continue to teach us.



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at Mahabodhi Stupa, Bodhgaya

PILGRIMAGE TO REWALSAR

by Ani Ngawang Chozom

In January we went to Rewalsar. It is a very famous place for Buddhism, connected with Guru Padmasambhava.

We reserved a bus. It came here at 4am to pick up us. I and some nuns were first time that we got a chance there. We reached there about 8am, first we went up to the cave where Guru Padmasambhava did his retreat and teachings. It is a little bit far from the town of Rewalsar. It is found at the top of the mountain. Between them our bus was damaged so we ate our breakfast, which we took with us, then we went by foot. There was a very big statue of Guru Padmasambhava and there is a statue of Mandarava (his consort) too. There we did some prayers and hang up

some prayer flag and visited a Hindu temple too.

After that, we came back down to Rewalsar where the lake, Tso Pema, is founded. About this lake, there is a story of

Guru Padmasambhava and the King of Mandi, it is a very holy place. There were many people who came from different place we did some kora (circling) the lake and gave some biscuits to the fish in the lake. We went to a temple, which is not completed now, but there is a very big Statue of Guru Padmasambhava. I had never seen before like that.

It was a very nice trip for us. All nuns were very happy that day. I never forget it in future. May all people get a chance to go there.



NUNS EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP

I went to fourth annual Nuns Empowerment Program in Dharamsala. It was organized by the Tibetan Womens Association. It lasted seven days. There were 17 nuns from 8 different nunneries. I enjoyed the whole days very much. But I like the part which they taught us about Gender Socialisation.

We can do as a women same as a men. They cleared how women are making effort to do all things.

I realized that some times I have power within to do something but I can not because I have no confidence, so they improve my confidence. They taught about meaning of empowerment, importance of empowerment and why it is important among the women. It is very important for the nuns too. I gained many good knowledge there. I really thanked full to Tibetan Womens Association for that all.

- Ani Tenzin Chokyi

It is thought by many that the men alone can run the society and the world. People think the women should stay at home, bring up children, take care of their needs and run their homes. That they lack in strength and courage. The only reason for this was because our societies were male dominated for a long time and women started feeling themselves inferior. But women have proven that they are in no way unequal to men. If women are given chance in education and in spiritual practice they can gain the same as men. It gives me lot of pain to see nuns who are intelligent not given chance to full studies in their life. Monks can get full studies and have any high position they wish to work for. Nuns are not given this chance and no real reason is given why not.

I think we Buddhist nuns and all women can work together to help us have same places as men.

- Ani Tsering Wangmo



Ani Tenzin Chokyi

Ani Tsering Wangmo



OUR WONDERFUL OFFICE STAFF

Tenzin Lhakpa

Dolma Keither

TENZIN LHAKPA DGL Accounts Manager

My name is Lhakpa and I am the Accounts Manager at DGL Nunnery.

My mother's name is Rinchen and my father is Gompo. My parents' arrival in India is a little different to most of our friends in Tashi Jong. They arrived in India before the Tibetan invasion. They were part of a group of close friends who went on Pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya. While doing pilgrimage they heard the shocking news of the invasion of Tibet and were told they could not return home.

This was very hard for my mother as she had a small son 2 years old who she had left with her own mother while she did the pilgrimage. She thought she would never see this child again, but about 25 years later my father was able to return to Tibet and bring the now grown up son to visit his mother. It was very good for my mother even though he had to go back to Tibet to his own wife and children.

Some months after my parents had arrived, they heard that Khamtrul Rinpoche had escaped to India and they joined him in Dalhousie. My eldest brother was born there and my other 2 brothers and I were born later in Tashi Jong. I was born in the year of the Snake.

My father had a sweater business. He would buy sweaters wholesale and travel to Gujarat and Maharashtra to sell them

to the Indian communities there. He did not make much money, but in those days our family did not have much expense. Our clothes were handed down from one child to the next and mother mended them again and again. We had no luxury items or toys. Instead we played outside in the caves and the bushes and in the summer we swam in the river. These days' children are much more expensive and bother their parents for new toys and clothes.

I went to 3 schools. The first on the border of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, then Dalhousie and the final years were in Mussoorie. I then got a one year scholarship to study commerce in Delhi. My parents had saved some money and were able to pay for the final years themselves. By now my brother was working in Taiwan, and I went there for 3 years. I was able to save some money there.

I returned to India in 2008. In 2009 I was told the Accounts Manager's position at DGL Nunnery was vacant and I was invited to apply. I was offered the job. At first I was a little nervous and not confident speaking English. This has improved so much with practice.

DGL Nunnery has many kind sponsors and donors. It has been incredible to see how generous people are to our Nunnery. I deal with all the accounts and associated

correspondence. I also do the banking and pay all the salaries.

Our nuns get a small allowance each month, which I pay them. I try to ensure that they spend it wisely. Each week I pay the cook and Kitchen nuns the money for groceries. I try to ensure that it is spent well so that their diet is nourishing and healthy. I am now learning to drive, but I am still a bit nervous.

I enjoy my job very much and I am very lucky to be able to put my Commerce training to such good use. I have learned so many things here. Many girls who study commerce never get a job and not many would have a job with this much responsibility. My parents are now very old and weak so I am fortunate to be able to have a job where I can still live at home and care for them.

I have known Jetsunma for many years as her first office was at Tashi Jong. I think the nuns are very lucky to have a director such as Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. I am also very lucky to serve the Nunnery. Khamtrul Rinpoche is our root guru and I am able to earn a living serving him and Jetsunma and working for their Nunnery. I think that what Jetsunma has achieved in the face of so many obstacles is incredible and I will continue to serve for as long as I can.

DOLMA KEITHER Receptionist and Office Manager

I am known as Keither and I am the Receptionist and Shop Manager at Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery.

My mother Sangmo and my father Dakpa lived in the same village in Kham as the 8th Khamtrul Rinpoche. My mother's family brought her to India quite early on and my father came soon after Khamtrul Rinpoche escaped from Tibet.

Khamtrul Rinpoche went first of all to Dalhousie in northern India, but later on acquired the land which has become Tashi Jong Monastery and village. Many Tibetans from the Khampagar lineage settled here to be close to Khamtrul Rinpoche.

My parents met at Tashi Jong and married there. My mother had previously been married to my father's brother, which is common in our culture. I was the first child and was born in 1979 in the Year of the Horse. My parents then had 2 more daughters, one of whom died aged 11 in a road accident.

When the time came for me to go to school I was sent to the Tibetan

Government School in Mussoorie as the TCV schools in Dharamsala had not been established at that time. I was in Mussoorie for 13 years with 2 other children from Tashi Jong. We went home once a year for a visit and my father would come and visit me each year during a 10 day holiday.

My father died of cancer 9 years ago. There was no more money coming in so we had to live on my father's savings. I was fortunate to get a free scholarship for Delhi University and studied arts there.

I started working at DGL Nunnery in 2006. I knew of Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo before I started working there, having seen her at Tashi Jong. At that time I was helping my Uncle in his shop at Surat, and I got a call from my friend Phuntsok who had been working at the Nunnery. She told me that there was a vacancy in the office. I met Jetsunma and had an interview and was offered the job. This was wonderful for me as it meant I could return to Tashi Jong and live at home and I was able to look after my mother and help her financially.

Since then I have been offered many

opportunities and have improved my skills even more than in my college course.

Jetsunma has shown me great trust and is very generous in the way she shares information and lets us know what she is doing. She involves us rather than keeping everything to herself. She has encouraged me in so many ways. – such as learning to drive. I now do most of the driving for the Nunnery and am sometimes asked to drive the Togdens (yogis) and the high lamas.

My job includes being reception and shop manager. I make appointments for the many people who want to see Jetsunma and I care for all the items we sell to raise money for DGL. I also sometimes translate from English to Tibetan for Jetsunma and help in many ways.

I appreciate Jetsunma's trust and the opportunities she has given me, not only in my job but also she has given me a much better understanding of the Buddha Dharma which is part of my Tibetan heritage. Her dream is to help nuns into the future and I am so lucky to be part of this dream.

Interview with our Retreat Nuns



Our long-term retreat nuns were interviewed on the day before returning to retreat. With humility, they were not keen to readily answer our questions, we assured them we would not identify them individually and so they agreed to the interview.

Q: Why did you do retreat?

A: After becoming nun, we have three choices: either retreat; study or ritual practice. I have most interest in retreat.

It is a privilege to have this human life, which is very rare. Samsara is full of Dukkha (dissatisfaction) and I want to help every sentient being. To be able to do this, each one of us has a power within us. Through the practice of retreat we are able to develop this power and help sentient beings. This is the main aim.

After being in retreat for some time now, I realize that time is so precious. We are so fortunate to have teachers to provide teachings and to have all our needs met by the Nunnery. Samsara is impermanent, everything is changing and sooner or later we will be dying. Most important, the time is very precious.

Q: Now that you have finished your first 3 years, have you noticed change in your minds?

A: Change is difficult to say but we can see that we are solving our own problems more and reacting a little more softly around others than before.

Q: Why do you think it is important to do retreat rather than going out and helping in the community?

A: Real helping we can do after getting enlightenment. Real help comes after getting enlightened. Here in the Kagyu Lineage all our previous masters got enlightened through these practices rather than through study and teaching. My practice may not match these great masters but I will try hard to practice well.

I feel grateful to Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, without her this opportunity would not be possible. The teachers would not come, there would be no support. I was so surprised to read her story, coming from London, following Dharma and doing retreat for so many years. This was my first inspiration. The impulse was there before but on reading her story, growing up in England and leaving everything over there to come to this poor country. I was so surprised! I think, now I have to do!

Q: Why after 3 years would you want to go back in?

A: I have accumulated some merit from my retreat so far, but more is needed

Q: Now that you had time out in the world are there things you will miss?

A: No, no! We have had a month of being busy out in the world. There is nothing to miss. We are privileged

and want to take full advantage of this privilege by practicing.

Back in Tibet, I didn't learn any texts, here at the Nunnery I have had the opportunity to learn. While I was at home with my parents, helping them, I felt that I was not really offering ultimate help for them. I wanted to practice and learn Dharma. My brother, who is a monk at the local Monastery suggested I come here. Being at home, I felt it was important for my parents that I should join a Nunnery, at home I was a burden for my parents.

Every night, after roaming in the world each day, at the end of each day we each reflected that being here in the retreat is best.

Q: Spending so much time in your practice, does it help you develop compassion for others?

A: Certainly. When we go out in the world and see how much people are suffering, just to earn a living. Their lives are really hard, sometimes it just makes you cry. What people do, just to survive, after working so hard, what do they get for their hard work? It is very sad. Everywhere, so crowded, everyone busy but what are they gaining? It's not any real gain. Real gain will come from Dharma and people do not realize this.

DEBATING COMPETITION IN SOUTH INDIA

by Konchock Palmo

In September 8 of us went to South India in Jangchub Choyling nunnery to participate in debate competition. Firstly, we went to Delhi by bus, after that we went to Hubli by train. After two days we reached south India. When we reached in Jangchub Choyling all the nuns looked very happy to see us. Then we take some rest. All the nuns helped us. Next day, we also joined debate class. Each day, we had debate class in the morning and evening up until 11 O Clock. We get a lot of benefit from it, debating in front of a lot of people helps us be more confident. Seeing how the nuns respect their teachers, how the junior nuns respect their seniors and how the seniors have affection for their juniors – we learnt many good information from them.

I think this visit we are very grateful to get opportunity to participate in this competition. I say thanks for Jetsunma, Khenpo, our office members and also nuns to support us.



How to Support the Nuns at DGL

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo and the nuns at Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery thank our supporters in a most heartfelt manner. Your kindness helps our Nunnery to flourish and keep the Dharma alive.

Sponsorship of a nun here costs \$365 per year.

Credit card and electronic bank transfers can be made online by visiting our website www.tenzinpalmo.com

Cheques can be made payable to *Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust* and posted to:

Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery
Village Lower Mutt
PO Padhiarkhar, Via Taragarh
Distt. Kangra HP 176081
India

US Donors can make their donations tax deductible by making them via Dongyu Gatsal Ling Initiatives, a U.S. not-for-profit organisation.

Kindly go to www.dglinitiatives.org or email info@dglinitiatives.org for further information.

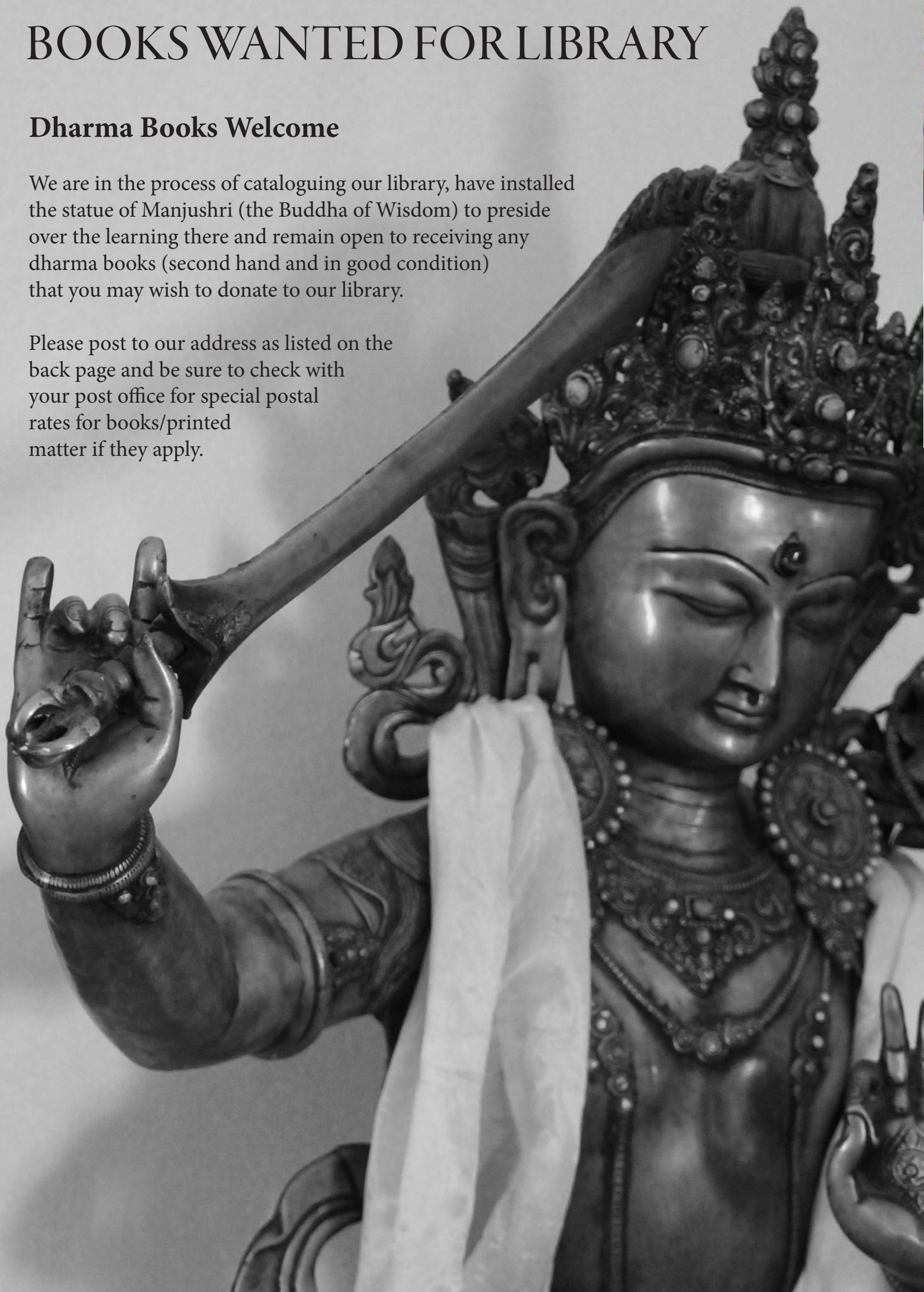
Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust is registered in India as a Charitable organisation designated for the support of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery and its activities.

BOOKS WANTED FOR LIBRARY

Dharma Books Welcome

We are in the process of cataloguing our library, have installed the statue of Manjushri (the Buddha of Wisdom) to preside over the learning there and remain open to receiving any dharma books (second hand and in good condition) that you may wish to donate to our library.

Please post to our address as listed on the back page and be sure to check with your post office for special postal rates for books/printed matter if they apply.





ON SITE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES HERE AT DGL

Reading back on old Gatsal newsletters, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo in June 2006 rejoiced in the Nunnery finally moving to our current residence on Nunnery land. She wrote: We continue to live on a construction site as the study centre/library/prayer hall and nuns' retreat centre rise up. These buildings will not be ready for more than a year,

and then comes the challenge of building the traditional Temple – the Jewel at the Heart of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery.

All of the initial buildings have indeed risen up and are now in full use and the Temple, being the final major piece of work, is coming closer to completion.

Work continues on a daily basis

all around us here: from the depths of the earth, to improve and expand our septic system (perhaps unromantic, but essential), to the very top of the site, where a Tara Mandala is being painted on the Temple ceiling. It is a constant reminder to us of the remarkable kindness of so many people on whom we rely to bring this Nunnery to completion.





BY AIRMAIL

To:

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