

GATSAL



Above: Jetsunma teaching at Hemis Monastery, Ladakh, during the Annual Drukpa Council.

Cover: At Taktsang (Tigers Nest), Bhutan. (L to R) Tsunma Wangmo from Samten Choling Nunnery, Bhutan and Tsunmas Tsultrim & Dechen from Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery.

Once more it is my pleasure to greet all our friends of DGL Nunnery.

During 2013 I was travelling quite a lot especially in Asia. To celebrate my 70th birthday my friend May Ling from Singapore suggested a pilgrimage in China to visit the four sacred mountains of Buddhism, including Wu Tai Shan (dedicated to Mañjushri) and Putuo Shan (Avalokiteshvara/Chenrezig/Guan Yin) along with various ancient carved rock grottoes such as the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang. After the depredations of the last century, Buddhism is definitely on the rise again in China, with many old temples skilfully restored and filled with devotees offering incense, bowing and chanting.

In August my assistant Tsunma Aileen and I travelled to Ladakh to attend the Annual Drukpa Council being held at Hemis Monastery.

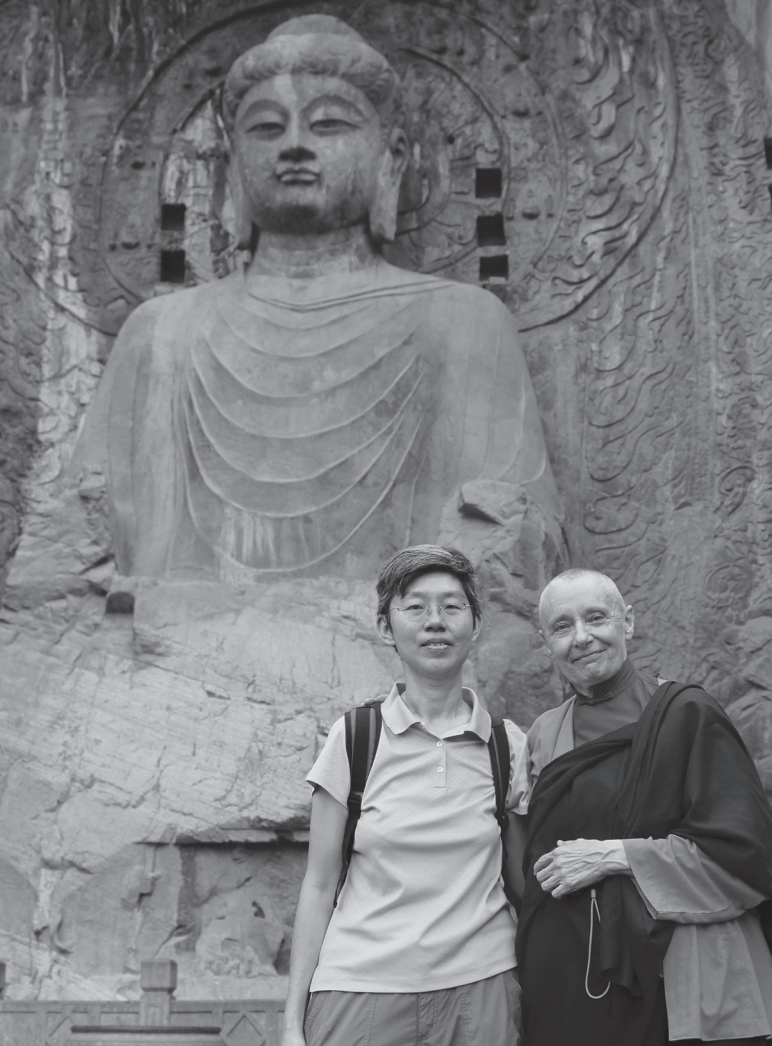
Along with HH the Gyalwang Drukpa there were many high Lamas and Khenpos from the Drukpa Kagyu tradition along with hundreds of nuns and monks and thousands of Ladakhi lay people who are so devoted and good natured.

In September we attended the International Buddhist Congress [IBC] in Delhi and in November travelled to Singapore and Korea where they have set up a branch of Sakyadhita [Daughters of the Buddha] which is an international Buddhist women's organisation which meets bi-annually in various Buddhist countries. The next conference will be held in Indonesia probably in June 2015. Recently I was elected as the president of Sakyadhita where I hope to serve to my best abilities since it is an organisation close to my heart.

Later Aileen and I along with

two nuns from DGL went to Bhutan to attend the first International Bhutanese Nuns Conference in Paro. This was organised by Dr. Tashi Zangmo, founding director of the Bhutanese Nuns Foundation and their patron HM the Queen Mother Tsering Yangdon Wangchuk graciously attended most of the 3 days sessions and later remarked that she had not enjoyed herself so much for a long time. There were nuns from Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam as well as 85 nuns from Bhutan several of whom gave talks. Ven. Lekshe Tsomo and Christie Chang, both former presidents of Sakyadhita, were also participating as also Rinchen Khandro Chogyal and Ven. Lobsang Dechen who are directors of the Tibetan Nuns Project.

In the past year our nuns have taken great strides forward in their debating skills thanks to their



Above Left: Longmen Caves, China - celebrating 70 on Pilgrimage with May Ling.

Above Right: Bhutan Nuns Conference. (L to R) Dr Tashi Zangmo, Jetsunma, Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Christie Chang, and Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck.

enthusiastic Genlas or teachers. Last October some of our nuns participated in the month-long nuns' debating contest held at Dolma Ling Nunnery. About 550 nuns from various nunneries took part in this very lively (and noisy) event. In January this year 20 of our nuns are going to Bodhgaya to join the Kagyu debates there. Nowadays our DGL nuns are also debating the monks of Khampagar Monastic Institute. This must surely be the first time in the history of Khampagar that monks have debated with nuns! They meet twice weekly in Tashi Jong. All this interaction greatly sharpens the nuns' debating skills.

DGL nun Jangsem Dolma attended a 6 week medical course designed for nuns and monks at Delek Hospital in Dharamsala. We plan to open our small clinic later this year. It will feature

Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Tibetan and Homoeopathic treatment with doctors in those disciplines attending on specific days.

From Thailand Ouyporn Khuankaew and her assistant Ginger came back to DGL to give further Leadership courses for our nuns in October. These seminars are very helpful and empowering for the nuns as they teach more skilful methods of communication and problem solving through games and other activities.

The past year has also seen more building progress after our wonderful Inauguration ceremonies of last April. The Protectors' temple (Gonkhang) is almost finished and also contains a room for making tormas on the lower floor. We also have a small building for offering butter lamps. Close by our newly completed accommodation for visitors named Tara House, we are

building the Dragon Café - a much needed addition to the Nunnery - where visitors can sit and enjoy hot or cold drinks and simple snacks. This will also include a small shop where articles for sale will be displayed.

This year the nuns have created a magazine in Tibetan - with photos - about life in DGL and short bios of their Lamas, etc. They are aiming for this to be an annual publication to help our Nunnery be better known in Tibetan-reading circles.

So once again we thank all our friends and well-wishers for their loving support and pray that the coming year will be filled with happiness, peace and spiritual fulfilment.

May you all be well and happy!

Tenzin Palmo



FIRST INTERNATIONAL BHUTANESE NUNS CONFERENCE

by Tsultrim Palmo and Dechen Chodron

Offering Gatsal Newsletter to Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck.

How fortunate we were to get the chance to go to Bhutan for the 1st International Buddhist nuns conference. We met there some very learned nuns from other countries. It was really good experience and also got some good ideas from various kinds of speakers.

It was our first trip to Bhutan, we traveled overnight to Delhi on a bus and then took a plane to Paro. On the plane we saw so many mountains, including Mount Everest and Kanchenjunga, all looking very beautiful, shimmering and covered in snow. The clouds also looked like snow covering the land. For a minute, everything is empty and impermanent – it looks like nature is offering us something which is new. I was so excited and so I offered some prayers. I felt very at home flying. Nature gives us real blessing and real knowledge so I always respect whatever I see.

We have had the meeting for three days. During that time the speakers talked about how the Bhutanese nuns situation with education programme, lives and healthcare. I really felt that the education

is the very important in our lives. Without it we can't use our potential. Education is like the key to open our good qualities.

Some of the topics covered by the speakers included: The importance of education for nuns; nuns engagement with the local community; nuns as agents of positive, social change; how to live as a community. Health and well-being.



Opening Ceremony of the Conference

There were hundreds of nuns who join the conference. Most came from Bhutan and some from other countries. The Bhutanese Nuns Foundation Director, Dr Tashi Zangmo, said that there are 26 nunneries in Bhutan, 5 of which are supported by the Government. She

started the nuns foundation in 2009 under the patronage of Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck, Her Majesty the Queen Mother. They help with the nuns education and health programs and also how to live good hygiene and to improve their courage. They were very nice, friendly and humble.

The topics helped to change us, so everything depends on good education, with patience and tolerance and loving-kindness. We gained the skills to live in a community.

From the speeches delivered by various learned and spiritually oriented people one could safely conclude that real compassion comes from seeing the suffering of others. You feel a sense of responsibility and connectivity with each other and want to do something for them.

The Bhutanese people are very hard workers, especially in their arts and crafts.

May every nun get a full chance to study holy dharma, those who really want to do it in the depths of their hearts. May the Buddha always be with them and bless them.

NUNS EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP



Ouyporn and Ginger with some of the nuns who took part in the workshops.

At the start of our academic year the nuns were fortunate to welcome back Ouyporn Khuankaew and her colleague, Ginger Norwood, from the Thai based Buddhist activist group: International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice. On their previous visit they offered an empowerment workshop for the senior nuns, on this occasion they were able to continue their work with the senior nuns by offering an advanced workshop training and facilitated an introductory course for the younger nuns. All the nuns enjoyed taking part, learned lots and all in a supportive atmosphere with plenty of fun.

Below, some feedback from the nuns who participated:

I got an opportunity to join four days' empowerment workshop course. It was so beneficial for those who don't have enough confidence.

Ouyporn and Ginger taught us how we develop our confidence. They gave information on different types of power including:

- Power Over
- Power Sharing
- Power Within

They taught us not to use power over whenever we have some task to do. It gives some stress to others. Whenever we work in team we should use power sharing and power within. When I heard these phrases from them I felt very surprised because I

couldn't recognize them before. If we have diligence, we have the potential within us but we are unable to see it. What we have practiced during our workshop it is very useful for those of us who work in a team. I really liked to learn these things very much.

Secondly, the depth listening it is very important. When someone speaks we have to listen carefully. It improves our concentration and also it shows how important the speaker is.

Thirdly, I got much experience when we played some games. Through those I have learned so many things when we do in teams. First we should discuss what to do and how we do it and what is the method for it, only after that we do.

I learned about the role of a Coordinator, who is not just a boss in a group, but he or she has to listen to all peoples decision in group very carefully and then decide. She has to be mindful and use mindful speech. She might have some home experience and can learn to have all these qualities in her kind & compassionate heart. We should ask for ideas & opinions before making decisions.

A good coordinator uses these skills:

- Use power sharing
- Fair
- Kind hearted & compassionate
- Positive thinking
- Ask for ideas & opinions to make decisions
- Good listener

- Brave & confident
- Honest
- Responsible, active & clever
- Encourage other people.

I thinking it is very important to discuss first the things which we are doing in a group. I found that it's good if the coordinator encourages people in the group by using power sharing. Then the team work is accomplished very positively and happily. Thus we can achieve our main goal.

I learned that it is important to give full attention to the person who is speaking. I also learned how to do meditation while walking. It is called walking meditation. There was lot to learn in this workshop

In the words of Tsunma Jigme: A good team work needs a good coordinator. The qualities of a coordinator are to use mindful speech and have experience. We also need kind heart and compassion. We also ask for opinions to make decisions. It is very important to be brave, confident and fair and we need to use power sharing.

During the workshop, there is a game it is called standing up together. Without first discussing this game is very difficult. Just like in community we try to work together but with no discussions we are not able to reach anywhere. We need to depend on each other through our discussions. We also need to prepare how we do this together. It is very important to have discussions together. With discussions we can do anything.

OUR DEBAT

by Tsunma Ngawang Chodron

It was Friday 8th November. There was a debate competition in our nunnery. It was the first time that our nuns debated with monks. Most of the young nuns participated in it and they did very well. All senior nuns were very happy and admired to see them. The whole group debated very well. Most of the youngest nuns also did well. I think that some people wouldn't believe that these young nuns who were debating like that had only joined some months ago in DGL nunnery. Eight monks came from Tashi Jong for it. They were also of same class as some of our junior nuns. It was organized to improve the debate and give confidence to our nuns. This idea was given by our Genlas. When they were told about it the small nuns accepted it very happily and were looking forward to it. The nuns got lot of positive feelings and great experience by participating.

Kalden Chotso thought that just doing debate with monks is very good, because they are monks and they have good experience and we are nuns so we don't have experience like them but we still did it.

Thupten Chodron said that at first she got some panic and got frightened. After she thought, Why am I frightened - we are all humans. Even if there are some differences between us, we all have the same brain! So my fear was lost. Then we got enthusiasm to debate with monks. In future she thought that it is good if they continually do because it is helpful for all of us and it was very enjoyable during the debating.

Kunsang Lhamo, Dolma Chotso and Dechen Dolma said that first they were afraid nevertheless when they were debating they answered all the questions as well as they could. They thought that it's still useful if they debate with monks in future.

Month Long Residential Debating Competition

We went to Dolma Ling Nunnery in August to join the debating. Each day, we debated from 9 to 12 and each evening from 7 to 11. I got lots of benefits from joining there. I feel more confident compared to before and I think that education is very important for our life. Also, whatever we learn or know about the dharma I feel that it is very important to practice.

There were many nuns so when we participate between them we were very happy because we had this good opportunity which will help us in our dharma practice. All the nuns and Gen las were very kind. So it was a very happy experience.

Tsunma Konchog Palmo



TING NUNS



My name is Sonam Dolma, I come from Darjeeling and I am 15 years old. I have already completed three years at the nunnery and I am very happy here.

When the monks came from Tashi Jong Shedra to take part in a debate competition with us, 35 nuns were selected to take part in this and we were divided into four groups. We all practiced very hard under our trainers for three days before the debates. It was a new experience for all of us to debate with the monks. I was in the first group to go forward and I was slightly afraid. However I said to myself, what is the being scared? Others like me have already debated with confidence, thus my fear disappeared. Though here and there I forgot some points the debate went well and I want to say thank you to my teachers for encouraging us to face the competition boldly and with confidence.



Kyabje Khamtrul Pema Nyinjadh with Jetsunma and some of the nuns.

Visitors to Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery

At DGL we often have visitors - almost every day- coming from near and far. We are happy that so many people want to visit our beautiful temple and surroundings.

Last year we were privileged to receive Kyabje Khamtrul Pema Nyinjadh who came to Tashi Jong to meet with his spiritual 'twin' Kyabje Khamtrul Shedrup Nyima. This was the first time that these two incarnations of the 8th Khamtrul Rinpoche had met with each other. After this auspicious event, Khamtrul Pema Nyinjadh who is the heart-son of HH Gyalwang Drukpa and was trained in Bhutan, came to DGL and had lunch here along with his retinue of Bhutanese monks and laypeople. This was a joyful occasion and the nuns were so happy to meet Rinpoche again.

Later in the year Maneka Gandhi came to see us

along with our friend Catherine Schuetze who for many years was a director of Vets Beyond Borders. Maneka Gandhi is the widow of Sanjay the son of Indira Gandhi and is very involved with the Animal Rights movement so she gave a talk to the nuns on this topic.

Two old nuns from Tayul Gonpa in Lahaul also

came and stayed for a few days. Tayul Gonpa is high up on a mountain where I stayed for several years and I always remember the unfailing kindness of the Jomos or nuns there. Now both Ani Zangmo and Ani Trinley Wangmo are in their 80s and there is no one there to look after them. However they remain cheerful and our nuns were fascinated to hear their stories. DGL



Ani Trinley Wangmo, longtime friend Monica Joyce and Ani Zangmo

Initiatives in New York are involved in fundraising for these old nuns left behind in Lahaul.



Jetsunma, Gen la Taja, Tsunma Jinpa and Catherine sharing Christmas lunch at DGL
(Catherine has for many years offered wonderful Veterinary service to DGL dogs via Vets Without Borders)

What a wonderful experience to find myself at Dongyu Gatsal Ling, as a visiting nun for a few weeks! Everything and everyone here is uplifting and inspiring. The place is incredible. Of course, there is this perfect location, on the countryside, calm foothills at the feet of the mighty Himalayas whose snow caps flamboyantly reflect the rising and setting sun rays day after day. But that's not all, of course. I have never seen such a beautiful configuration of modern buildings anywhere else in India. The buildings are not too small, not too big, neither too crowded nor too distant from each other, not too similar nor too dissimilar. The nunnery is very pleasant to live and circulate in, and to look at — convenient and friendly, modern and traditional, no boring squares or plain spaces, no aggressive facades or details, and so full of flowers and beautiful niceties. A blessed sense of caring for everything pervades the place. I feel it both very quiet and lively, in short, very conducive to both community life and contemplation. As for the nuns, they are impressive. I don't share their studies, so I can't say anything about that, but I do share tiny bits of their daily life, some meals, and the main rituals of the lunar calendar.

We chit chat a bit here and there in English or in Tibetan. What strikes me, and inspires me most, is that they are very gentle, generous, and sincerely caring, and at the same time, uncommonly self-confident, open-minded, curious and enterprising. For young women brought up in remote high Himalayan valleys, this mix of qualities is rather uncommon — at least unknown to me. All this combined with their simplicity or natural ease makes them absolutely lovable. Such qualities, and the spirit it gives to the nunnery, must come from the sense of security, worth and creativity that Jetsunma and their unique training impart to them. I have visited a few nunneries and met hundreds of nuns in the Himalayas. Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery gives me a unique and soothing sense of lightness, kindness, and inner freedom. It gives me the particular feeling that something never done before, yet completely authentic, is happening right here, and that it will ripe delicious and meaningful fruits for generations to come — a beauty I pray will reach very far! And so, I pray for the long life and good health of Jetsunma, and for the long life of all those who support this precious development in a way or another. As we say, may all be happy!

by Tsunma Ngawang Chodron



LHABAB DUCHEN

Lhabab Duchen is the day when Lord Buddha came back from Tushita heaven. On November 24 we had a small program in the afternoon and big puja in the evening. The preparation was started from the day before, when senior nuns made butter lamps, some nuns made Tormas and small nuns cleaned around the nunnery. In the evening Genla Tashi Gyaltzen and some nuns decorated and prepared for the puja in the temple. Some Indian people decorated the temple with small colourful lights. Next morning nuns did puja for three and half hours. We invited all the Khenpos and teachers from Tashi Jong for lunch and to see our small nuns' program. The lunch was at 11:30 and program started from 1:00pm. First there was a show in the library of handwritings, paintings and some artefacts by nuns. There were different kinds of handwritings and paintings. All were very beautiful. After that the small nuns showed the story of Buddha's descent from Tushita heaven and then a skit about parents. All Khenpos and Genlas much enjoyed it. After tea khenpos and monks went back to Tashi Jong. Our nuns did the usual evening puja at 4:30pm.

At 6 o'clock our main puja was started. Gen Tashi Gyaltzen la, Gen Tsultrim Zangmo la, Gen Tenzin Kunsal la and our English conversation teacher Nancy la joined with us. We did puja for Buddha and the sixteen Arhats (16 elders who preached Buddhist doctrine). In the middle of the puja some nuns delivered teachings and some did debate. All of our programs went very well. But we were all sad for one thing because Jetsunma was not there on that precious day. We all missed her very much. That night our temple looked very beautiful and like heaven.

SAVING ON PAPER

Our newsletter is available in electronic format. If you would prefer to receive this rather than our printed version please let us know. Email our office at dgloffice@gatsal.org and please mark the subject field "please send electronic newsletter". Please include your name and postal address as it appears on your newsletter so we can match you with our records.



ABOUT OURSELVES

My name is Ngawang Drolma Lhamo. I am a nun. I am from Nepal. I have four younger brothers and one younger sister. I am the eldest child in my family. My complete family live in my country.

I was ordained as a Buddhist nun in 2009 in Nepal. At my previous nunnery we did not have any facility for study of Dharma and its practice. That is why I came to India and joined the DGL nunnery. I like it very much.

My ultimate aim is enlightenment. It is my humble wish to help beggars and very

poor people. I would like to share dharma with them and help them to come out of their misery. I came to DGL in December 2011. I love it here and am so happy because Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's love and care of every one of us. All are treated equally and there is no discrimination. Ven Jetsunma is my role model. I get a lot of inspiration from her personal life which has been full of struggle and hard work. I pray that her dream come true and for her long life. It is my wish. Thank you for giving me chance to write a few words about myself.

My name is Tsewang Chodron and I am 14 years old. I belong to the village of Tashi Jong in the Kinnaur District of Himachal Pradesh. I belong to a Buddhist family. I am a nun of DGL nunnery near Palampur. My parents are farmers. I have two brothers and three sisters who are studying in a place near my family village. I am having a good time at the nunnery and study is going well.

I love to eat different types of Tibetan foods, reading books and meditation. I love to stay in peaceful, calm places, to see waterfalls and natural creatures. I love the functions organized by the nunnery. My life is going very well and I am thankful to Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo for giving us this opportunity.

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.



BY AIRMAIL

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From:

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