



GATSAL



Dear friends,

Well, it has been yet another year full of wonderful happenings for the nuns at Dongyu Gatsal Ling.

In May 2014 my assistant Tsunma Aileen and I left for a tour in South America – Brazil, Peru and Mexico – ending at Tara Mandala in Colorado. It was an opportunity to experience the warmth and colour of these ancient countries, still so steeped in their traditional culture merged with that of their Spanish inheritance. It was especially fascinating to finally visit Machu Picchu which has been on my ‘must visit in this lifetime’ list for many years. We really appreciated the affectionate kindness of our hosts and the people that we met in all these countries.

In late June almost all our nuns left for the Kalachakra empowerment which was bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Ladakh. There were about two hundred thousand people gathered for this auspicious event but

everyone agreed that the organisation was excellent and the crowds very well behaved. Our nuns were kindly looked after by the nuns of His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa in Ladakh. [see page 4]

On their return from Ladakh the nuns brought with them the big surprise of the year: eventually 25 young girls (some of them very young) from remote areas of Zanskar, Lahaul and Pangl. Normally we would not have accepted such young girls however they settled down very quickly, each assigned to a senior nun, and we have employed two Tibetan women to teach them general subjects in addition to learning Tibetan. In September these young girls were ordained as probationary nuns by His Eminence Khamtrul Rinpoche at a ceremony performed in our Temple.

That same auspicious day fourteen of our senior nuns graduated from the Pharchin level in their academic course and received their diplomas at

the hands of Khamtrul Rinpoche. This was an important acknowledgement of their many years engaged in the study of Buddhist philosophical texts. [see page 9]

In late September DGL Nunnery was blessed with a 2 day visit by His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje. He gave a White Tara empowerment and some teaching on Mahamudra as well as saying many encouraging words to the nuns. All of Tashi Jong, both monastics and lay people, attended this event which was very joyful. During this visit His Holiness also spent time with our nuns in long-term retreat and spoke with them individually.

The Karmapa was born in East Tibet in the Khampagar region where his mother was a follower of the Khamtrul Rinpoches. Our nearby Tashi Jong community was originally founded by the 8th Khamtrul Rinpoche for the monks and lay people who fled from

Khampagar in Tibet after the communist takeover. In addition His Holiness now lives at Gyutö Monastery which is only one hour from DGL. So there is a strong connection.

In October a large group of nuns travelled to Kullu to attend the Long Life ceremony held for His Eminence Choegon Rinpoche at his monastery of Dechen Chokhorling in Bhuntar on the occasion of his 50th birthday.

Then in December Tsunma Aileen and I were again travelling, this time to Taiwan, Pune, London, the Bahamas, Florida, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico and Israel and again Taiwan. Everywhere we were met with so much kindness and good feeling. In a world where mankind's wrong actions are so endlessly publicised, it is important to remember that there is also so much goodness in the world and the majority of people everywhere are kind and well intentioned.

Meanwhile our philosophy teacher Gen Tashi Gyaltzen [Gen Taja] from Khampagar Monastic College, together with two senior nuns attended the Annual Drukpa Council held at the Druk Amitabha Mountain in Nepal. Usually I am able to attend this important gathering of Drukpa Kagyu masters but on this occasion I was travelling abroad. Anyway it was an opportunity for them to listen to the words of many eminent Lamas and experience the hospitality of the Druk Amitabha nuns.

Back in DGL Nunnery His Eminence Dorzong Rinpoche and 9 senior monks from Khampagar bestowed the Getsulma [shramanerika] ordination on 22 of our nuns. The next day His Eminence Khamtrul Rinpoche gave the Vajrasattva and Akshobhya empowerments to monks and nuns at Tashi Jong for two days. This was a great blessing for our nuns.

In early January a group of nuns accompanied by Gen Taja went to Bodhgaya to participate in the annual Kagyu Monlam for 3 weeks as organised by HH Karmapa's office. It was a wonderful opportunity for our nuns to engage in philosophical debate with other nunneries and also listen to the daily talks of the Karmapa directed specifically at the nuns.

In late March our philosophy teacher Gen Tashi Gyaltzen received the title of Khenpo at a ceremony conducted by



Jetsunma with Tsunma Aileen and friends from Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina - Machu Picchu



At the wailing wall, Jerusalem

Khamtrul Rinpoche at the Khampagar Monastic College in Tashi Jong. This is a well deserved honour for him and all the nuns rejoiced.

DGL also has two senior nuns from other nunneries who have come here to teach philosophy, debating and Tibetan grammar. Gen Tenzin Kunsel from Dolma Ling is in the process of attaining her Geshema degree which is the highest award given in the Gelukpa tradition. Last year she came top in the preliminary exams. This will be the first time in Tibetan history than Himalayan nuns have received this scholastic title. The other nun teacher this year is Lopen Tenzin Wangmo from Namdroling Nyingma Nunnery in the South. We are always so grateful to these highly educated nuns for coming here to guide their Dharma sisters in their studies.

Then came April with news of the devastating earthquake in Nepal! Here at DGL we have a number of nuns from Nepal and of course all the nuns spent many hours performing rituals on behalf of this traumatised country. When we spoke of the thousands of people who had died or are injured, one of our senior nuns replied "Yes indeed that is so tragic. But we are also praying for the animals who have suffered too. We pray for all sentient beings".

Love and peace,

Tenzin Palmo

Kalachakra in Ladakh

by Tsunma Ngawang Chozom



Left: His Holiness the Dalai Lama offering prayers in front of the Kalachakra Mandala

Below left: His Holiness the Dalai Lama greeting the crowd in Ladakh

Below right: Traveling to Kalachakra across the Rhotang Pass



The 33rd Kalachakra offered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama was held in Ladakh, India. It was from July 1st to July 15th. From our nunnery most of the nuns got a chance to go there to get these auspicious teachings, vows and empowerment from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness gave us many teachings apart from the Kalachakra itself. So many people came from different countries.

The people of Ladakh organised this mega event very well. Foolproof facilities were provided such as sound system, video screens, toilets, seating arrangements, tea and snacks etc. The Ladakhi people were very nice and friendly and kind to all the visitors. I was surprised to see so many people gathered there to take part in this auspicious event. The organisers had erected nine huge gates for entry into the venue. It was even difficult in the evenings to get out of the venue.

The nuns from DGL Nunnery stayed in Naro Phodrang

nunnery which has been founded and supported by His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa. They provided us with very good rooms, beds and delicious meals every day. They were very kind to us.

Before the Kalachakra Teaching began we went on a pilgrimage to many holy places in Ladakh. It took us three days to do that. Ladakh is a very holy and beautiful place. We travelled to Ladakh by bus from the nunnery. It took us three days to reach there but we enjoyed the long journey through very high passes and treeless sandy desert very much. We saw beautiful snow laden peaks, rapidly flowing rivers on our way up there and back.



Attending the Annual Drukpa Council in Nepal

by
Tsunma Thrinley Chodron
& Tsunma Samten Dolma

It was the 6th anniversary gathering of Drukpa Amitabha Dongyu Palden Drukpa which was held for a week at the nunnery of Druk Amitabha Mountain. Our teacher, Khenpo Tashi Gyaltzen, Tsunma Trinley Chodron and me were sent there as DGL nunnery's representatives by Jetsunma. We reached Nepal on 25th December and received great hospitality. We didn't face any problem.

For two days we had small group meetings with our Spiritual leaders, teachers and students – included in our group were three nuns from Druk Amitabha.

The main subject of the meeting was to introduce ourselves and discussions on Buddhism, particularly on how preserve and keep our lineage teachings into the future. We were glad to have the opportunity to share our opinions on that.

We had time to meet our spiritual leaders which was precious time.

After listening to the views of everyone we felt very grateful to have Jetsunma as our Abbess. We listened to the views of everyone from other monasteries and nunneries at the meeting – so many have problems inside and outside as well – some have financial problems, some have educational problems. For us Jetsunma is like a loving, kind, compassionate mother – we have enough facility for our studies and we have a best and happiest nunnery.

After our meetings we had teachings from the main teachers, workshops, discussions and even an opera performed by the nuns of Druk Amitabha and some traditional dancing.

The meeting closed with many butter lamp offerings to dedicate the merit of our meeting for the sake of all beings.



Jetsunma offering Long Life Vase to His Holiness the Karmapa

VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS THE KARMAPA TO DGL NUNNERY

by
Tsunma Tenzin Chokyi

On 30th of September 2014 His Holiness Gyalwang Karmapa came to our nunnery to bless us. That was his first time to visit. We felt very happy to see him in our own nunnery. It was very auspicious day for all of us. We welcomed His Holiness with traditional ritual, offering him a great Mandala. After that he went to see our long-term retreat nuns.

After lunch we offered him a performance of Dakini dances. On the following day His Holiness gave precious teachings, a transmission on Mahamudra and empowerment of White Tara. I was very happy at that time because we

were all dharma sisters with our dharma brothers of Khampagar and Jangchub Jong monasteries including all our Khenpos and Tulkus all together at this event.



His Holiness told us that our nunnery is beautiful and that nuns' inner knowledge is also good. He told the nuns that you are the future of Tibetan Buddhism. I was very glad to listen to his nice words about all the nuns in Tibetan Buddhism. He is one of the greatest masters that I have ever met. I will

always remember these auspicious days.
Thanks to all.





Jetsunma with our longterm retreat nuns

Retreat Nuns Emerge

Q There are many people who are suffering in the world. How can being in long-term retreat help?

A To help others, first we have to help ourselves by training our minds so we can be of use to others. My aim for retreat is to cultivate virtuous states of mind.

I can help others now but when I see what our Lineage Gurus have achieved then I wish to be able to cultivate those same qualities so I can be of more benefit.

I don't want to waste time during this precious human rebirth. For this reason, I want to stay in long-term retreat so I can cultivate these qualities.

When I came from Tibet, it was specifically to do long-term retreat. And everything that I do in retreat, I dedicate for all sentient beings.

It is helping through prayers for the world, because prayer is very powerful. We know this by experience.

Q You have been in retreat for more than 6 years now. Isn't that enough?

A Because the mind is the most important thing, I have to stay in retreat so that I can look at my mind and understand it. It is not an easy life in retreat because we are looking at our minds.

I have to do more retreat because I am not fully mindful yet. That means that I do not have internal power.

Q But what does internal power mean? Like flying in the sky or controlling the weather, that sort of power?

A No, of course not. How can that help anyone? Being fully mindful means that then I can fully benefit others.

People have different temperaments – some are able to use the day-to-day world as a means to look at the mind, some find the retreat situation more conducive. Our lineage teachers have dedicated themselves to retreat. If we follow their instructions, then slowly, slowly we can see our minds.

Through the kindness of the gurus, their practice will provide results in the future. They may not see the results now but through their effort and the kindness of the gurus, the results will come.

People struggle to meet with Lamas, find the conditions to study, practice and retreat. Here, we have all the good conditions to enable us to do retreat. For this reason, we must continue and do our best.

I became a nun because there is no essence. Here in samsara, there is no happy life. When we are out of retreat we see this.



Our retreat nuns being welcomed by our newest arrivals

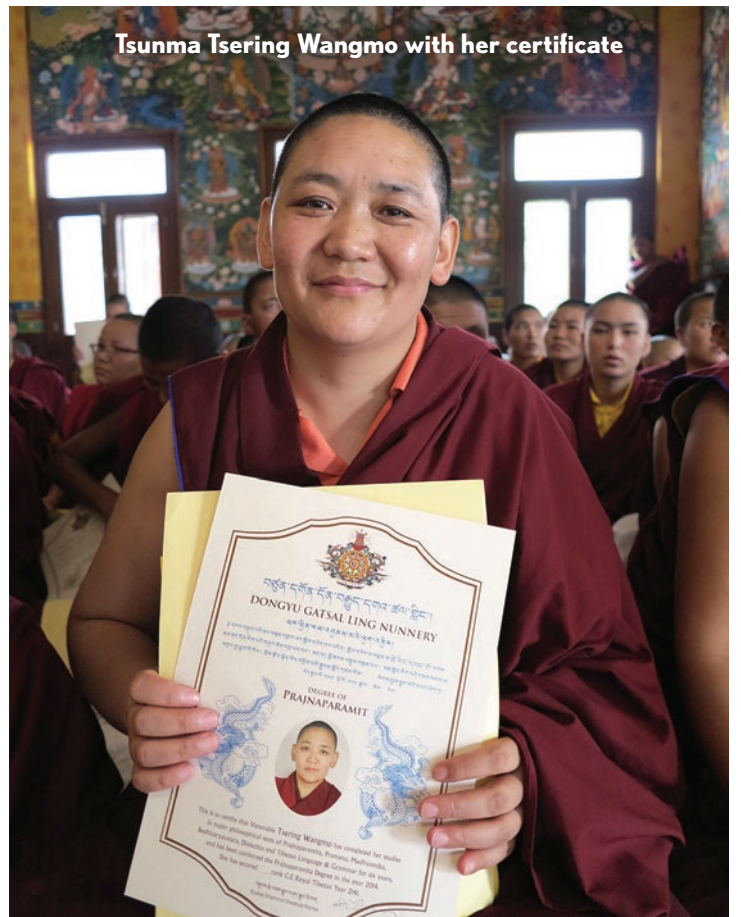


A PRECIOUS DAY

by
Tsunma Tsultrim Palmo

What a precious time it was. On the auspicious day we invited our Root Guru, His Eminence Khamtrul Rinpoche to give us our Prajnāparamita Certificate. We are the fourteen nuns who graduated. I felt very happy for it. We got the chance to study the holy dharma including the Prajnāparamita texts, Madhyamika Philosophy and so on. Many people like to study dharma but they can't get the opportunity to do this. Also I was very happy that I received the certificate from our Root Guru. That was the happiest day in my life.

Tsunma Tsering Wangmo with her certificate



TRANSLATING THE DHARMA

Our nuns are learning English as part of their study program here at the Nunnery.

For the more advanced students this includes translating dharma teachings from Tibetan into English. Here, an extract from a Teaching offered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, translated by Sherab Zangmo from Bhutan.

When we say practicing dharma, it doesn't mean changing clothes, staying in monasteries and reciting prayers. We are not sure whether it will become dharma. However dharma means we should know how to think well. If we know how to think well then everything we do with our body and speech can become dharma. But if we don't know how to think in a proper manner, there will be no benefit even if we meditate, recite prayers or spend our whole life in a monastery.

So whatever practices we do, it entirely depends on our thought or mind.

PRAISE TO THE GURU

*Oh! The guru of three times
Please grant me blessings
That allow me to cut off my afflictions
And cultivate good qualities toward others*

*Oh! The guru of precious one
Please cut off my ignorance
With your compassionate mind*

*Oh! The guru, the noble one
Please show me the right way
That leads me to Buddhahood
For the benefit of all beings*

*Oh! The Guru, the compassionate one.
Please bless me to see
My Buddha nature mind
So that I can transform
My wild mind in to a calm mind*

Tsunma Tsultrim Palmo

Our nuns have produced their second Tibetan language magazine, including articles and poems which they have written. In addition, Tsultrim Palmo has written this poem in English.

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

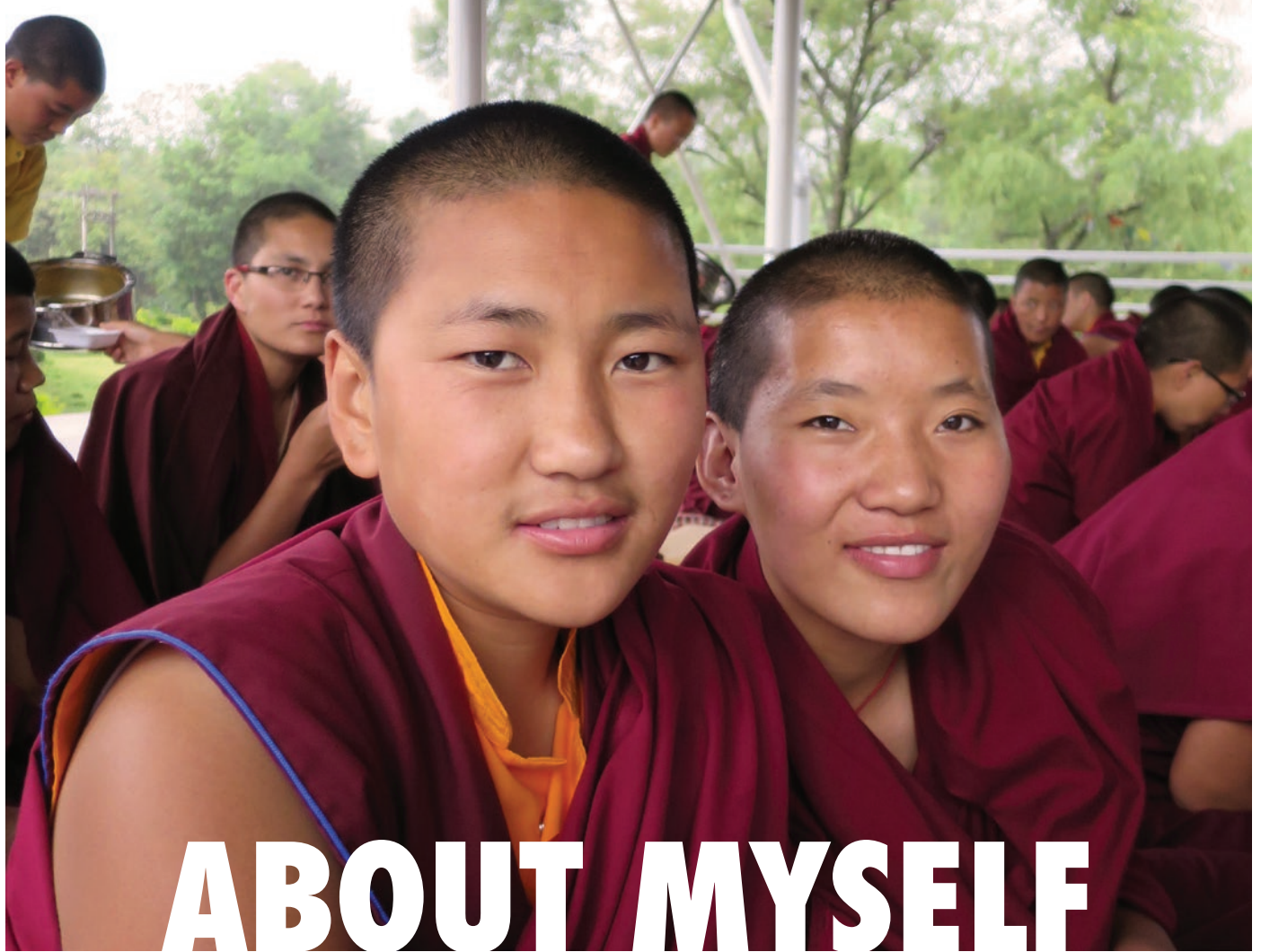
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ABOUT MYSELF

If I introduce myself, I am Tsewang Chodron. I am from Bhutan, a small dharma country which is located between Tibet and India.

I am 25 years old. I came to DGL nunnery last year and after staying in the nunnery for one month I got ordained.

I have two older brothers and one younger brother. My father passed away a long time back, so my mother stays home alone. She is a religious and independent woman. It is through her that I got my connection with Buddhism and she strongly believes in cause and effect. Whenever we do wrong she used to remind us that it was negative to do wrong deeds.

As I grew up I naturally felt strong faith in Buddhism. Actually my Mom is not a person who studied Buddhist philosophy but she has enough knowledge about Buddhism which has been passed on by her parents. So it is my mother who opened the door to Buddhism. She is the most kind and

compassionate person whose kindness I could never repay even if I become her servant for a thousand lifetimes.

As a child I knew we had to prostrate but I didn't know why. I saw many statues of Lord Buddha but didn't know who he is. Later, when I was in my middle secondary school, I read the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni. His story was so understandable – how he left behind the luxury of the palace and went in search of the truth. How kind and full of compassion he was to all without exception. It really touched my heart.

As I grew up, there were so many questions in my mind, which went unanswered. Even if I go to temple and prostrate, questions arose in my mind. What do I wish for? What is the best prayer I could make? And the biggest question that used to arise in me when I am sad and angry; when sad, I question – why am I born? When angry, it makes me feel uneasy. I wanted to control my anger, but how? These questions were

always in my mind. Later, I got some answers to my questions but I was not satisfied as time and again I would tune into my old habit, so I decided to dedicate my life to Buddhist practice.

I don't know how my mother must have felt when I first told her my decision to become a nun. I felt uncomfortable as I am the only daughter in my family and it is my responsibility to look after my mother. But I have deep feeling in my heart that if I practice dharma, I can repay my parents kindness.

My mother happily agreed to let me become a nun. When I left home to start my new journey I felt sad to leave her behind when she most needed me. When I told her my feelings, she smiled and said, I have great confidence in you that you will practice dharma well. Don't worry about me. If you practice dharma well you will have already repaid me.

This is my greatest encouragement for the rest of my journey ahead.

Front cover: Latest intake of nuns visiting the memorial Chorten for the previous Khamtrul Rinpoche at Khampagar Monastery

Back cover: Debating with the monks from Khampagar



BY AIRMAIL

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