



# GATSAL





## Dear friends,

Yet another year has flown by, while the world has witnessed much human destruction and many natural disasters. The suffering in samsara never ends.

Losar, or New Year, was in February, followed by the annual week-long fasting ritual of Nyungney, in which many people from Tashi Jong and elsewhere also participate [1]. We have also built a new retreat house next to our Tara House, where women can stay to carry out their retreats in a peaceful and safe environment. *(Read more about it on page 18.)*

In March, the Alliance for Non-Himalayan Nuns held a three-week gathering at Thosamling near Dharamsala for nuns ordained in the Tibetan tradition belonging to non-Himalayan regions like the Western nations, other Asian countries, and India [2]. Nowadays, there are many women from outside the Himalayan regions who are ordained but then find themselves without support or training, and often living in isolation from other monastics. This gathering was intended to bring these nuns together as a community in order to discuss their situation and become more interconnected.

During this time, Khampagar Monastery held its annual Guru Padmasambhava ritual dances at Tashi Jong, and many of our senior nuns joined the monks for the week-long pujas. Then, at the end of March, we all went to Jangchub Jong, the lovely hilltop monastery of His Eminence the late Dorzong Rinpoche, for three days of terma empowerments from our lama, Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche [3].

In June was the one-month holiday at DGL, and then I was elected as Vice-President of the Tashi Jong community for a three-year period [4]. Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche is always the President, and usually, a tulku connected to the monastery in Tashi Jong holds the position of Vice-President. However, now they have run out of eligible tulkus and are scraping the bottom of the barrel. Since I have been associated with Tashi Jong for 60 years (!), it seemed only fair to accept the role and become their first female representative.

During the monsoon, the nuns entered their yearly two-month retreat when the gates are closed and the nuns maintain noble silence. Felipe and I went back to Chukta Gonpa in Lahaul for a six-week retreat [5].

In August, thirteen of our young nuns went to Tashi Jong to receive novice (getsulma) ordination from

Khenpo Choeying Lhundrup [6]. The new academic term started in September with elections for the various positions in the nunnery.

Then, in mid-October, we held our Silver Jubilee to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery [7]. *(Read an account on page 11.)* The highlight was the presentation by senior Togden Trinley Kunchab of togden robes to our four nuns who have been in retreat for 16 years. Finally, we have Togdenmas in accordance with the wishes of the former Khamtrul Rinpoche.

In late November was Lhabab Duchon, simplified this year as the nuns had already performed their costumed drama for the Jubilee. We have started construction on a new accommodation building for future nuns, since, at present, we are full and cannot accept any new applications. *(Read more about it on page 19.)*

So, yet another year has passed, and we can only pray that 2025 will bring some stability and sanity to this planet. May goodness prevail!

With all best wishes in the Dharma,

*Tenzin Palmo*





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## CONFERENCE AT KHAMGAR DRUK SHEDRA

by Tsunma Tsewang Chodron (Kinnaur)

In June we had a four day conference at Khampagar College. Many nuns and monks who study and teach debate gather from all different lineages of Tibetan Buddhism to share their knowledge.

On the first day, we all assembled in the main temple where H.E. the 9<sup>th</sup> Khamtrul Rinpoche offered butter lamps, gave a speech and blessed the conference. There were also other speakers present at the time.

The main topic of the conference was tsema (valid cognition) which is related to the inner meaning of Buddhist philosophy. I was selected to deliver a speech during the conference so I prepared during the course of six months because I wanted to do my best in representation of DGL Nunnery.

Before my speech I was so nervous. On the day of the main presentation, my greatest feeling was of peace and tranquility, based on the kindness of the lama, Jetsunma la and the blessing of my Dharma brothers and sisters. Deep within my mind, I experienced a joy and clarity.

I had the good fortune to spend many years studying the philosophical treatises of Buddhist doctrine and the opportunity to contemplate them through scriptural knowledge and reasoning.

Of the eighteen speakers at the seventh General Assembly, I was the thirteenth. The theme of this conference was the four chapters of the Master Classics. Each speaker was given a topic from those chapters.

During my speech and the subsequent questioning, I was confident because I studied most of the answers. I learned many things while I was preparing for my speech and during the conference itself.

I appreciated how well organized the conference was and particularly the fact that the nuns were given the opportunity to present, ask questions and give answers.

Everyone enjoyed the conference. Now we understand the topics at a deeper level and have more clarity about what we are studying.

*Photos courtesy of Khamgar Druk Shedra.*







# AN UNFORGETTABLE DAY

by Parchin Class 2

Finally! We did it! Guess what? This year we are the topper class in the debate competition.

The day before Second Saturday, we always have a debate competition with other classes. Last year we worked very hard on our debate skills. We practiced memorizing, speaking in unison and all the body actions like clapping, shouting and wearing our robes in a special way when we debate.

To be good at debate we need to trust and help each other. We have to pay attention to the topic we all agree on. If some of us don't understand it, the class topper explains it to us.

At the beginning of a debate, we feel nervous and apprehensive but the shouting and clapping gives us some

confidence to carry on.

If the debate is going well, we feel happy. We are still a little nervous because we don't know what the *damcha* (responder) will say, so we may not be ready for our next move.

We want to do a good job to show the younger nuns how to be good at debate, that is one of our motivations.

When the prize for debate topper was announced, we were shocked and in awe. We screamed a little because we were so excited, but we were afraid that we didn't hear our class name correctly. But we did! We smiled, laughed and high-fived each other.

Now that we have been in the debate topper for the first time, we will continue to improve our debating skills so we can be the topper class again and make our teachers proud.











# Creating the Play on Gelongma Palmo's Life

by Parchin Class 3

This year on October 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our nunnery's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the event our class was given the responsibility to prepare a drama about the life of Gelongma Palmo. We did that because Jetsunma wanted us to know more about her.

Every year at DGL we do a practice called *Nyungney* which is a purification practice combined with fasting. Gelongma Palmo was the first person to start this lineage.

Before this we didn't know much about Gelongma Palmo, so we read a book about her. Tsunma Aileen had offered a Thangka of 1000 Arms Avalokiteshvara to Jetsunma and the nunnery which had images of the life of Gelongma Palmo in its border. The artist, Bella Wilshire, created a booklet to go with the painting which we ended up using. The book was in English so we first had to translate it into Tibetan.

We had to make difficult decisions about choosing the actresses, writing the dialogue and making jewelry for the costumes. There were so many things to think about even the music which had to be copyright-free.

During the preparation and rehearsals for the play, we sacrificed our night time study, dinner and pujas. Sometimes we had headaches because we didn't get much rest at night and we missed dinner. We had to do most of the work in the evenings and at night because during the day we had our usual classes and debates. We all had our own duties so all the nuns were very busy.

We didn't really know how to teach the nuns to act. We had no experience with making the costumes and getting

fake hair. We needed help from many people like some laywomen who helped us with putting on sarees properly. They showed us how to put on makeup and helped us choose the right jewelry. They also fixed our hair and helped us look great for the audience. At one point, we had a bit of rain coming and the monks and lay people helped us move the things from the stage so they wouldn't get wet.

We felt very grateful for all the help we received because we knew everyone was doing it from their heart and giving us the gift of their time and care.

We would like to thank everyone who helped us with our play. We want to give special thanks to our Genla Drimey Sherab, Genla Lobsang Samten and Tsunma Tsewang Chodron from Kinnaur.

Some of the nuns in the drama were also participating in the Dakini Dances, which caused some problems because they had to change from one costume to another quickly.

After the drama was over, we felt very proud of ourselves and all the stress dissolved. We felt very happy because we had fulfilled Jetsunma's wish and we knew we could accomplish anything we wanted. We felt wonderful when we found out that some people were very moved by the story and even cried out of emotion!

The next day, Togden Trinley Kunchap told us that our drama was excellent and he appreciated that it taught many people about Gelongma Palmo's life. He said that even the next day he could picture the scenes in his mind.

A Tibetan saying: When people are doing good things, even rain is a blessing.





# MY EXPERIENCE AS GELONGMA PALMO

by Tsunma Yeshe Tsomo

This year on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nunnery, I played the main part in the drama that we put together. I got to play the role of a very iconic woman called Gelongma Palmo. When I first heard the announcement that the nuns wanted someone courageous and confident to play that role I thought to myself that I could do it, but I wasn't sure about my acting skills.

Then, one day, something unexpected happened: The nuns who were in charge of organizing the drama approached me and asked me to play the role of Gelongma Palmo. When I first heard their offer I was full of joy and enthusiasm. It's what I wanted to do so I accepted the request and we started rehearsing. We practiced very hard for a long time.

Finally when the auspicious day came, we all got a little worried. The place where we were going to perform our play was near our main temple. Our nunnery was full of visitors and there were many monks, nuns and lay people.

When we were about to perform, the whole area was very crowded with people, which made me a little more nervous for my upcoming performance. When the play started, everyone was doing well. When it was time for me to go on to the stage, my heart started beating very fast. Since I had one of the main roles in the play, naturally I was very nervous.

Once I was on the stage, I looked at the crowd and then I looked at Jetsunma. Everyone was looking very curious to

see Gelongma Palmo. People were talking and screaming but Jetsunma looked very poised, she looked at us with lots of love and hope which I could see in her eyes.

I was feeling apprehensive but later when I saw Jetsunma I felt very calm and confident. I felt: now it's my turn to live up to her expectations and hopes. At the same time, the thought came that I had to play the role of Gelongma Palmo perfectly because it wasn't just for myself. It was for every single person who was watching. I should do it perfectly because I was representing Gelongma Palmo herself.

My main goal was to make others recognize that Gelongma Palmo was one of the great scholars and practitioners to exist at that time. I wanted others to know how much she suffered and how she attained enlightenment.

So, I tried my best to get into the role and apparently I managed to succeed. People in the audience were cheering. I was thoroughly satisfied with the result. I was happy because I could see that others were happy. Everyone saw that we put a lot of effort into our performance but no one really knows how much we really sacrificed, how much of our time and energy we gave to this and how hard we really worked before we went on the stage.

Therefore, I really want to acknowledge the work of every single person who contributed their time and talents to our play and I'd like to thank everyone who appreciated the role I played in all of this.







# THE MAMOS PUJA

by Dulwa Class

Photos courtesy of Diane Barker



In October our class had a special opportunity to do the Mamos Puja with the monks of Jangchub Jong Monastery. Some monks from Tashi Jong and one nun from Jangchub Jong joined us.

Mamos are very powerful feminine deities. Mamos have fierce, wrathful faces, but they have real compassion and are protectors of the Earth and can prevent diseases. The Mamos carry a bag which is usually closed but when they are angry because people have damaged the Earth, they open the bag. Then natural disasters and disease come out of the bag and all sentient beings are disturbed and have many obstacles.

Our disciplinarian instructed us to join the Mamos puja happening in Jangchub Jong and we all felt very lucky for that opportunity especially because for some of us it was our second time going and our minds were very calm.

There were three Togdens during the puja which made it very memorable. We all focused on sending blessings to the Mamos so they would calm down and give compassion, loving-kindness and health to the world and all sentient beings.

On the last day, an effigy of the Mamos was carried out of the temple and burned. We felt that all the obstacles were being removed from this world. When we went back into the puja hall we dedicated the merit for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The puja ended very peacefully. We were very happy and fortunate to have the opportunity to do this puja. We hope that we will be able to do this puja again in the future.

Our advice to all people is: Please try your best to keep the Earth clean. Don't use things that pollute the air and take care of all sentient beings.











# Silver Jubilee: 25 Years of DGL

by Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

On 17 October 2024, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dongyu Gatsal Ling. The monks and laypeople from Tashi Jong attended, along with our local friends and well-wishers. Several old friends connected with DGL had come specially from Australia and the US for this event. Unfortunately, Khamtrul Rinpoche could not attend since he was in retreat, but it was a joyful occasion for us all.

The nuns worked so hard to make everything a success. Apart from some speeches, the nuns performed their dance of the Five Wisdom Dakinis and a costumed drama based on the life of Gelongma Palmo, an 11<sup>th</sup>-century Kashmiri princess who became a nun and then contracted leprosy. She was banished from her nunnery and became a beggar. Through her devotion to Avalokiteshvara—the bodhisattva of compassion—she was finally healed and became the founder of the Nyungney fasting ritual. The performance had a rapt audience and brought tears to many eyes. But there was also appreciative laughter at the entrance of a nun in the role of Avalokiteshvara riding a snow lion!

However, for us, the highlight was the presentation of togden robes by Togden Trinley Kunchab to our four nuns who have been in retreat for 16 years! This was the fulfilment of a long-held aspiration which the former Khamtrul Rinpoche had expressed to me for reviving the precious Khampagar *yogini* lineage, which had been lost during the time of troubles in Tibet.

The following day, these four nuns, now dressed in their Togdenma robes [red-and-white striped shawl and white lower robe], attended a puja for my long life conducted by the Khampagar monks and DGL nuns. Most of the Tashi Jong community likewise attended the puja, and Togden Achoe sent me a framed thangka of White Tara, which the former Khamtrul Rinpoche had painted in one day! Our Khenpo Sonam Wangyal presented me with a bronze statue of the former Khamtrul Rinpoche, which he had had made in Taiwan. The Tashi Jong lay community offered a sacred vase, so it was an auspicious connection.

At the picnic, the young nuns sang joyfully, and both the monks and the nuns joined in the games. We are very fortunate to have such a warm and friendly relationship with the Khampagar Monastery at Tashi Jong, which is only 10 minutes from DGL.









# DGL NUNNERY STUDY PROGRAM

by Khenpo Sonam Wangyal

## PRIMARY SCHOOL

The primary school at DGL Nunnery focuses on teaching the basics of the Tibetan language, including reading and writing, as well as subjects like Tibetan grammar and orthography. The curriculum also includes general subjects such as social science, English, and mathematics, along with memorization of essential prayers like the Fivefold Aspirations prayer. The goal is to build a solid educational foundation before advancing to higher studies.

## SHEDRA

### (Scriptural College Program)

At the scriptural college level, nuns engage in an 11-year course of study. They begin with reasoning and logic, studying texts such as the Compendium of Logic and Valid Cognition. Other key subjects include Tibetan history and the history of the Dharma. The major Buddhist treatises, including the Perfection of Wisdom, Madhyamaka, Abhidharma, and Vinaya, are central to their studies. The curriculum focuses on works by renowned Buddhist scholars, such as Butön Rinchen Drup and Kunkhyen Pema Karpo. The program involves daily study, debate sessions, and monthly debate competitions, which help reinforce understanding of the texts, honing their analytical skills. In the final years, focus shifts to visualization practices and the study of tantric texts and vows, preparing nuns for advanced spiritual practices.

The shedra also includes practical lessons in ritual arts like playing cymbals, making tormas offerings, and preparing butter sculptures.

## RITUAL PRACTICES

Ritual practices are an integral part of the nunnery's program. Daily in the morning they practice the Four-Mandala Tārā rituals and in the evening Mahakala puja, Chö and Sur. Every month, the nuns perform the Guru Rinpoche Sadhana on the lunar 10<sup>th</sup> day, the long Chod ritual on the full moon, the Vajravarahi practice on the 25<sup>th</sup> day and Akshobhya puja at the dark of the moon. Additionally, in the first Tibetan month, the nuns observe a special fasting ritual of Nyungney dedicated to Avalokiteśvara, which lasts for six days. These rituals are guided by detailed manuals and are fundamental to the spiritual life of the nunnery.

## ANNUAL RETREATS

The nunnery holds annual two-month retreats during the monsoon season where nuns perform extensive practices such as prostrations, mantra recitations of various deities, and mandala offerings. The retreats are progressive, with each year focusing on a different set of practices, starting with the preliminary practices and moving toward more advanced practices like guru yoga. Teachers, including Khamtrul Rinpoche and other senior masters, guide these retreats, which are vital for deepening the nuns' spiritual development.

## ACHIEVEMENTS & PARTICIPATION

At the moment we have around 120 nuns. Among them, 4 have become Khenmos or doctors of philosophy, 22 have become teachers, and 47 have earned the Rabjampa degree, demonstrating their expertise in the Perfection of Wisdom studies. The nunnery also takes pride in its participation in various educational and cultural events. From 2016 to 2024, nuns attended translation workshops, non-sectarian dialogues, and international Buddhist conferences, thus actively contributing to the broader Buddhist community.

## MEDITATION RETREAT PROGRAM

The nunnery also has a dedicated meditation Retreat program. Initially starting with 5 nuns in 2008, it has grown to 15 nuns. These retreats, guided by experienced masters, include practices such as the Six Yogas of Naropa and Mahamudra. The nuns receive empowerments and teachings in important Drukpa Kagyu lineage deities like Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini, with an emphasis on completing the foundational practices and engaging in advanced meditative disciplines. Finally four of our retreat nuns who have completed 16 years of practice have been honoured with the title of Togdenma

In summary, DGL Nunnery provides a comprehensive educational and spiritual program. From foundational studies in Tibetan language and Buddhist scriptures to advanced tantric practices and annual retreats, the nunnery nurtures the intellectual and spiritual growth of its nuns. Their participation in national and international dialogues and their contributions to the wider Buddhist community reflect the nunnery's ongoing commitment to education and practice.







# The Scholars of DGL Nunnery

by Tsunma Tsewang Chodron (Bhutan)

His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama thought that it would be an excellent idea for someone who graduated from the scriptural college to focus on a particular subject from within the Sutras and Tantras and study it thoroughly.

Taking His Holiness' wish to heart, the Department of Tibetan Culture and Religion took the initiative to conduct a program for which they invited monks and nuns from all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions to participate but had only two seats for each lineage. They conducted interviews and took our mark sheet to aid in selecting the candidates for the program. Our Khenpo, Sonam Wangyal, got chosen to occupy the Nyingma seat and Lhachoe Wangmo and I were selected to represent the Kagyu Lineage.

Basically, it is a four-year research program where we have to submit a minimum of twenty-five pages of essay at the end of each year and a minimum of one hundred and fifty pages in the final year. After selection, we were asked to choose a specific subject from one of the five major treatises which are Middle Way philosophy, Valid Cognition, Prajnaparamita, Abhidharma and Vinaya.

## Khenpo Sonam Wangyal

My research topic is about the Generation Stage (*Kye Rim*) of *Demchok* (*Chakrasamvara*). Generally, *Demchok* is the ultimate and pinnacle of the Unsurpassed Tantric system. Its practice has two main categories: the Root Tantra and the Explanatory Tantra.

It is said that most of the eighty four Mahasiddhas from India achieved realization through the *Demchok* Tantra. The founder of the Glorious Drukpa Kagyu tradition, Tsangpa Gyare practiced the Generation Stage meditation on nine deities, one of which is *Demchok*. Therefore, practitioners of the Drukpa lineage primarily hold *Demchok* as their principal deity.

Generally, deity visualization or Generation Stage practice also exists in Hinduism. However, when practicing the Generation Stage in Vajrayana Buddhism, there are initial Bodhicitta generation and final dedication. Furthermore, there are many differences from Hindu deity visualization methods, such as clarity of appearance, pure perception, maintaining ego, and so on. For example, Hindus visualize a deity as something separate and substantially existent. In contrast, in the Highest Yoga Tantra of *Demchok*, the visualization is like a rainbow, not substantially real, and the mind itself is viewed as transforming into the deity.

Generation Stage meditation is not just about visualizing oneself as a deity, but about purifying the entire mandala—both the container and the contained.

The purpose is to gradually purify the impure perception and attain the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

## Tsunma Lhachoe Wangmo

My research topic is about the Four Stages of Yoga in the *Prajnaparamita Abhisamayalankara* which are: Ground of Realization of 1. Selflessness, 2. No-Object, 3. No-Subject, and 4. No-Appearance.

Generally, the “Stages of Yoga” refer to the realization of Calm Abiding and Special Insight (*Shamatha and Vipassana*) combined, achieved through meditative power in a yogi's continuum. In the Mahayana tradition, this realization is further characterized by being embraced by method and wisdom.

The Four Stages of Yoga described in the *Prajnaparamita* are a gradual path to directly realizing the view of the Middle Way, established in relation to the primary objects to be abandoned. Therefore, all the realizations of yogis' paths are encompassed by calm abiding and insight. Without establishing those, there is no method to cultivate realization.

## Tsunma Tsewang Chodron (Bhutan)

I selected a topic from the text *Madhyamakavatara* written by the sixth-century Buddhist scholar Chandrakirti. There are verses in the text where Chandrakirti refutes Chittamatrin's view where they assert the inherent existence of the mind while refuting the existence of external phenomena.

When Chittamatrins were asked about the examples through which they can prove their view, they give four examples, one of which is as follows: When the beings from the hungry ghost realm look at a waterfall they see it as pus and blood, although the eye consciousness which perceives it exists in reality, the pus and blood doesn't.

Chandrakirti refutes this view by saying that if there is an inherent existence of the mind, then there should be an intrinsic existence of a physical object. If the physical object doesn't exist in reality, the same can be said about the mind which sees it.

So, in my essay, I explore whether there are common perspectives among the six realms of existence. When the beings from the six realms look at the same substance, it discusses the reasoning behind which of the six realms' perspectives is valid or invalid. This whole topic also points to the empty nature of all phenomena, which loosens our grasp of things we see as real. So, the concept discussed here is related to the fundamental Buddhist teaching about perception and reality.



# MEET THE NUNS

## Khenmo Tsultrim & Khenmo Jigme

We're from the same village in Ladakh, called Stakna, and have known each other since a very young age. There are a few years between us, so we didn't play much together as kids, but we went to the same school, and eventually we left our home together to become part of the very first group of DGL nuns. That was 25 years ago. Out of those nuns, most have since returned home to teach or be with their families, and we are now the only two left here from the original group.

**Jigme:** We first heard about DGL from my uncle. He was a monk and knew the leader of the nuns' society in Leh, Amchi Palmo. He had heard that she was taking nuns down to join a nunnery in Himachal, and suggested that we joined them if we wanted to. So a total of seven of us went, and we became the first nuns of DGL.

**Tsultrim:** Before then we didn't know Amchi Palmo or about the nuns' society, we had never even heard of a nun before. We had only ever seen monks, and I didn't know women could do that - but I always thought if women would be allowed, I wanted to do it too. I wasn't very interested in worldly things like farming work, music and so on. I wanted to do spiritual things.

**Jigme:** I also didn't feel like household life or marriage was a good option for me; it's a very hard life and also domestic violence is widespread, so that's another good reason to become a nun. When we left Ladakh, we dreamed that we would join a big, established nunnery with lots of nuns, old and young. That was our expectation. So when we arrived, we were quite surprised that there actually wasn't really anything - just the seven of us and Jetsunma in a small room in the monastery in Tashi Jong. We had to build our community together. Back then we only spoke Ladakhi - very little Hindi, no Tibetan, and of course zero English. So we had to learn those languages too.

**Tsultrim:** Later, we moved to a small house close to here, and eventually we got the land and built the nunnery little by little. Now it has become the nunnery of our dreams, and we feel very proud when we look at all the nuns. The nunnery has flourished very quickly under the guidance of Jetsunma and with help from our Khenpo Las, our teachers and our supporters. We always remind our little nuns how lucky they are - before, it was very difficult

to get any education, but now we have all the facilities to do it.

**Jigme:** When I see the little ones, I feel very inspired. When I first heard that we would receive the title of Khenmo from our Root Guru last year, I was shocked. I couldn't believe it, I never thought it would be possible for me to become a Khenmo. It was a gift, and now the young nuns have seen that it can be done. That makes me very happy.

**Tsultrim:** It was really a blessing and very auspicious for our families, for the nunnery and for the young nuns as an example of the result of hard studies.



**Jigme:** Studying hard is one thing I have learned from Tsultrim; she is very hardworking and disciplined with studies, and always doing the right thing.

**Tsultrim:** Only I like to put things off, always doing them "later, later". You are always on time with your tasks.

**Jigme:** But then instead when we have to go out, I am always late.

**Tsultrim:** That's true (giggles). We go many places together, like on holiday or often for walks and talk a lot. We like to do the same things and go to peaceful, uncrowded places. Jigme is very calm and peaceful too, and a humble nun. I have learned about that from her.

**Jigme:** Our relationship has developed into a very good and close one over the years. Of course sometimes we disagree too, but when that happens we either talk about it or just ignore it, and usually things resolve themselves after a few hours or days.

**Tsultrim:** Sometimes it can be difficult for people to live or work closely together. In a community like ours, we do everything together - most even share a room with other nuns. My advice for keeping a good relationship for many years is to be patient. Remember that this is samsara; sometimes it goes up, sometimes it goes down. So be patient and friendly with one another, and talk to each other when there is a problem.

**Jigme:** I agree, talking about things is important. Also, here we of course have teachers and Khenpo Las to help us with advice on how to deal with things so we can live together. That helps too. I think the two of us will stay together in this community for many years.

**Tsultrim:** I think so too, for as long as we are in this life. But who knows?





## Mingyur Chodron & Jangchub Tsomo

Many people think that when a little one comes to the nunnery, they will be all alone. But actually, each one gets an older nun as their “Genla”. The little one is called the “Gethuk”. That has been our relationship for ten years now.

Genla means teacher, but it is more than that. Maybe like a guide or mentor. We live in the same room, and the Genla teaches the Gethuk everything from how to wash and dress themselves to the rules of the nunnery and how to behave and study, and they care for them if they are sick or have problems, almost like a mother.

**Mingyur:** When Jangchub first arrived she was around six years old, and when I found out that I would be a Genla I thought, “How can I manage that? I don’t know how!” I was the youngest in my family, so I never had to do that before. She was so cute, but a naughty one too, like the leader of the naughty ones. She wasn’t bad or mean, but she would always be running here and there, and every night I had to go out and search for her. I had to learn a lot about how to care for a child and how to be patient.

**Jangchub:** I liked Mingyur right from the beginning. That time I just felt so much joy to become a nun, and I was happy that she was my Genla. She has taught me everything, and we are very close and do many things together, like read together in our room.

**Mingyur:** I think I may have been a quite strict Genla, but only out of love, because I want her to have a good life and be a good nun. Now she is grown up, and it has become more like a friendship. I no longer tell her what to do every day, but I continue to be her Genla and teach and support her. And if we have disagreements, I mostly still decide in the end.

**Jangchub:** If at some point in the future I too become a Genla, I hope I can be as good as Mingyur was with me. I will try to do many things in the same way, but maybe in my own way too.

**Mingyur:** Jangchub is more calm, I think she will be more soft than me. That’s good. She taught me how to be more calm too. My advice to her when she becomes a Genla is to follow the rules, think about how to benefit others and teach how to do things properly. When you read, read properly. When you are in puja, stay in puja properly. And when you play, play properly too - don’t be shy; participate and have fun.



## Tashi Lhamo & Tenzin Palzom

When you live in a nunnery, everyone is your sister, but we grew up as sisters since birth. In our family we have three younger brothers and one more sister, and all of us are nuns or monks, but the others have stayed closer to our home in Nepal.

**Tashi:** Actually, I was in another nunnery for a little while first, but I was very interested in studies, and our uncle told me about Jetsunma and DGL and the study programme here, and it sounded perfect for me. Tenzin and I have similar personalities and interests, so after some years she wanted to come too, and I was so happy!

**Tenzin:** When I told our family that I wanted to be a nun too, our father disagreed - I’m the youngest girl, so he wanted me to finish school, marry and continue our family. But I persisted, and after some time he put my happiness first and accepted. When I came to DGL, Tashi showed me everything, and it was so beautiful here; I felt like I was in heaven! All the nuns were so curious, and many thought I was the older sister because I’m taller.

**Tashi:** Especially in the beginning, our relationship was a little bit different than with our other nun sisters. It’s a different bond - a lot of love, but sometimes we would fight more too. Now we don’t fight anymore, and our relationship feels more the same as with everyone else here.

**Tenzin:** We don’t stay in the same room, but we still do many things together. We both like to be calm and quiet and study, and in our free time to be creative and do crafts. I think we got that from our father who is a carpenter.

**Tashi:** Tenzin is really good at knotting and drawing, and I like to weave and recycle waste materials into items like baskets, bags or pencil cases. In that way we can save the environment, maintain cleanliness and get fresh oxygen, so we can live a long life and bring peace and compassion to sentient beings. After I finish my studies, I would like to go and teach about it, maybe in places where they don’t have the Dharma yet.

**Tenzin:** I have more years of study left than Tashi, so we will be separated for some time. I will miss her a lot, but it’s okay. I don’t know yet what I want to do after - for now I just focus on doing my best here, but eventually, when our parents get older, we will probably return home to care for them.



# Brand New Retreat Centre

On the auspicious day of Lhabab Duchen (November 22, 2024) we were honored with the presence of one of our Senior Togdens from Tashi Jong, Togden Thutob Nyima who came for the occasion of inaugurating our brand new retreat centre. We did a brief puja for the *rabne* (consecration) and Togdenla blessed all the rooms which will be open for female retreatants from the month of December, 2024.

We used to have a short-term retreat centre for female practitioners in the nunnery but since now we have more nuns doing long-term retreat; they have now occupied that area which closed the opportunity for visitors to do retreat here.

Wanting to provide a safe and conducive environment for female practitioners, Jetsunma expressed her wish that it would be good to have a retreat centre for visitors to come and do their practice. At the time we had a big storage room next to Tara House which was mostly empty. So we tore it down and on those foundations built the new retreat centre.

With everything now complete, we are able to provide accommodation and food for up to 6 female practitioners. The rooms are ample and very comfortable and since the space is within the nunnery grounds, it provides a safe and conducive environment for practice.

Three vegetarian meals from the nuns' kitchen will be delivered every day.

Noble silence will be upheld and all phones/computers etc. will be disallowed during the period of retreat. Although retreatants will be allowed to circumambulate the stupa and temple and also to attend the nuns' pujas in the temple, they should not wander around the grounds nor go outside the nunnery boundaries.

We must clarify, however, that we are not a Dharma Centre which means we don't facilitate any courses or ongoing training on meditation. From that point of view, practitioners who join the retreat centre should have a good idea of what they are doing.

For those who will be doing basic meditation practice such as the foundational levels of Shamatha, some of our Khenmos (senior teachers) have offered to provide advice on the practice once a week to those who might need it.

If you think this would be suitable for you, we request you to thoroughly read through our retreat page on the website and, when you feel ready, fill out the application form in order to be taken into consideration.

<https://dglunnery.com/retreat/>







## New Accommodation for Senior Nuns

Recently the nuns expressed concern that there is no longer any more room for accepting fresh applications. They are aware that we need more young nuns for the future of Dongyu Gatsal Ling, but at present we have to turn away new candidates for lack of space.

Therefore they requested that we build a new accommodation block to house the senior nuns. Consequently we looked around our grounds and decided on an area of wasteland behind the kitchen which had previously not been utilised. Immediately our maintenance team got together with the contractor and a bulldozer made short work of clearing the site ready for construction. The contractor reckons it will take about one year to build a

two-storey wing with nine rooms per floor and bathroom facilities. With two nuns sharing a room, this will accommodate 36 nuns and bring our numbers to 150 nuns altogether.

In the past until now we have relied mainly on the modest donations from our friends and supporters around the world. As the Buddha said, drip by drip the jar is filled. So we rely on the good-heartedness of all those who appreciate what we are accomplishing at DGL and wish to help us in our efforts to secure the future for Himalayan nuns.

If you would like to make a contribution for this new project, please visit:

<https://dglunnery.com/donate/>

## 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.

We welcome your contribution to support our nuns and accept credit card, check/cheque, direct deposit or electronic bank transfer.

US residents are entitled to tax-deductible donations via Dongyu Gatsal Ling Initiatives, a US not-for-profit 501(c) (3) organisation.

Full details for all these methods of payments, including link for US donors wishing to make a tax deductible donation, can be found by visiting our website

**[www.dglunnery.com](http://www.dglunnery.com)**

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

**Front cover:** Our brand-new Togdenmas Kunsang Chodron, Thubten Lhamo, Dechen Paldon and Tsewang Chodron.

**Back cover:** An aerial view of the temple and the surroundings of DGL Nunnery.





**BY AIRMAIL**

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