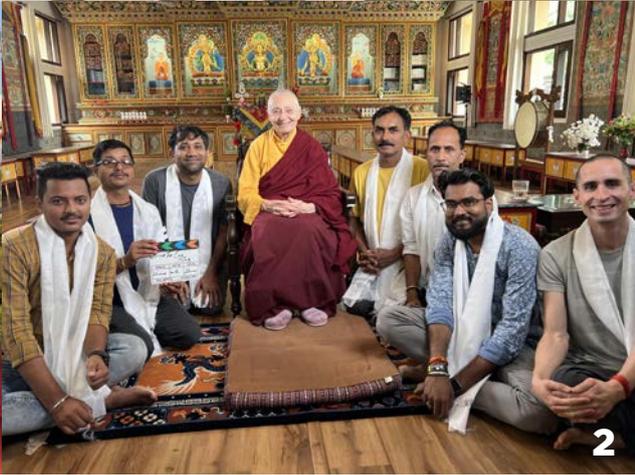


# GATSAL



## Dear friends,

Once again we are facing the end of the old year and welcoming the new!

In March 2023 many of our senior nuns joined the monks of the Khampagar Monastery at Tashi Jong for the annual Guru Padmasambhava ceremonies which lasts for a week and includes ritual dances performed by the monks.

Then in April Khamtrul Rinpoche bestowed a 2-day empowerment on the nuns who are in long-term retreat. Meanwhile I went with 20 nuns and my assistant Felipe to Delhi to attend the Global Buddhist Summit at which His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered speeches. I gave a talk on Nuns and the Nalanda Tradition [1]. Most people do not know that apparently there was a section of Nalanda Buddhist University in ancient India that was specifically for nuns with their own highly qualified scholars. Our nuns enjoyed exploring Delhi including

the National Museum which has a special room dedicated to a bone relic of the Buddha: an opportunity for prostrations and chanting.

Also in April our longtime accountant Tenzin Lhakpa left DGL to join her restaurateur brother in Toronto. We were sorry to see her



Jetsunma and Tenzin Lhakpa share a hug on her last day of work in DGL.

go but wish her every happiness in her new life's venture. Her nun assistants Ngawang Chozom and Trinley Paltso have taken over the role with skilful dedication and

good humour.

In early May a professional film crew came from Mumbai to help Felipe with the documentary he is making about the growth of DGL [2]. They were a nice group of men and coincidentally Tsoknyi Rinpoche came to us for a visit and gave a talk to the nuns which they appreciated because of his humorous delivery which keeps everyone attentive. Tsoknyi Rinpoche is a lama specifically concerned with nunneries — including Gebchak Gonpa in East Tibet. So he then gave a short interview on nuns for the film crew and after lunch went to visit the retreat nuns and stayed with them for a couple of hours. His talk to them was more serious – no laughs – but an important teaching on meditation practice [3].

Later in the month Penpa Tsering, Sikyong (Prime Minister) of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile came to visit us here at the nunnery. He talked to me about the early Europeans who visited Tibet in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries [4]. May is also the time for end-of-term exams



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before the one month holiday in June.

This year was my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday so to celebrate I went on pilgrimage to Japan with my friend May Ling. We were especially following Kobo Daishi (Kukai) who introduced Tantric Buddhism into Japan from China in the 8/9<sup>th</sup> century. So we stayed at Koya San where the main Shingon temples are located and also visited Nara and Kyoto which of course are overrun with tourists.

From there we continued to Korea where the Sakyadhita (Daughters of the Buddha) conference was being held in Seoul organised by the Korean Nuns Association [5]. More than 3000 women – both nuns and lay - attended from all Buddhist countries across traditions: the nuns are robed in white, pink, yellow, maroon, grey, brown and black with only their shaven heads in common. It was such a joyful event and beautifully arranged with talks, meditations, chanting and lots of workshops (including on how to make kimchee by a Master Chef nun!). The next Sakyadhita conference will be held

in Sarawak, East Malaysia in 2025. My assistant Felipe, office manager Dolma Keither and 5 DGL nuns also attended this conference.

During the rainy season in July and August the nuns remain in silent retreat and Felipe and I went to Lahaul for retreat at Peukar Gonpa



With the monks and nuns of Peukar Gonpa right after Jetsunma's retreat.

with the American nun Kalden who mostly lives there and also in the cave. The nuns at Peukar Gonpa were so kind and looked after us devotedly and with great cheer. I

stayed in the 'Lama's House' so was very comfortable.

In September the new term began with the annual elections to the various nunnery roles such as disciplinarian and store keeper (bursar). The big event of the month was the official Inauguration of the temple at the Khampagar Monastic College by His Holiness the Dalai Lama [6]. Thousands of people attended this auspicious event especially from Ladakh and Kinnaur and in the evening there were many traditional dances. The celebrations continued for several days with the monks performing jovial lion dances and spectacular dragon dances.

In November was Lhabab Duchen (Buddha's Descent from the Gods) when this year, in addition to the annual Dakini Dances, the nuns also presented a costume drama on the Life of Mahaprajapati who was the Buddha's aunt and stepmother as well as the first Buddhist nun.

Mahaprajapati was a remarkable woman, a queen who walked with 500 Shakya women barefoot for 400



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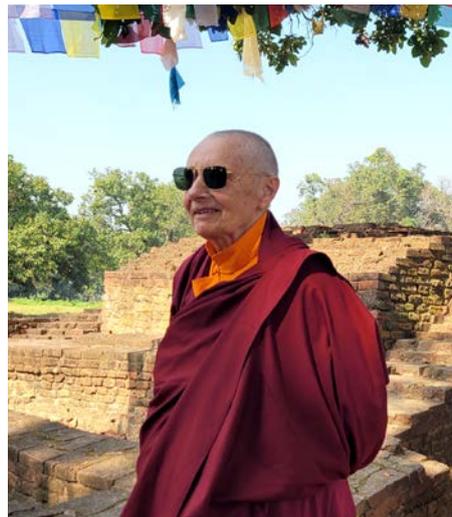
kilometres to request the Buddha for ordination and permission to lead the homeless life. Despite the Buddha's initial hesitation, with the urging of Ananda, the Buddha finally relented and consented to the ordination.

So after Lhabab Duchon I went with 10 DGL nuns to join a group of American women on a Mahaprajapati pilgrimage to Lumbini, Kapilavastu and Vaishali following (by car) the footsteps of this remarkable woman and her determined band of female followers. This pilgrimage was led by Wendy Garling who has researched and written a book on the life of Mahaprajapati (*The Woman Who Raised the Buddha*) and who retold the events at each stage of our journey from the point of view of these early Buddhist women.

At the end of November Felipe and I attended the AGM of the International Buddhist Confederation in Delhi where I was again elected as a president (there are 12 presidents and all the rest are male). I am also chairperson for a women's committee

dealing with Buddhadharma and the Role and Participation of Women in Society [7].

In December Khenpo Choying Lhundrup, principal of the Khampagar Monastic College at Tashi Jong, visited DGL daily for about 10 days to go through the



A snapshot of Jetsunma during the Mahaprajapati Pilgrimage.

bhikshuni vinaya (364 monastic rules for nuns) and encourage the senior nuns towards full ordination. The retreat nuns have also been attending his teaching [8].

We share the wonderful news of Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche for the first time bestowing the degree of Khenmo (doctor of philosophy) on four of our graduate nun teachers. This is an historical event for us and we are very proud of these nuns' accomplishments and grateful to Khamtrul Rinpoche for his participation in this auspicious ceremony [9].

So the year draws to an end on a propitious note and we wish you all well for the coming year ahead. Despite the despair and depredation happening in the world, there is also hope, compassion and goodness in which we should rejoice.

So may 2024 be a year of balance and reconciliation and we have the Year of the Dragon to look forward to!

All best wishes in the Dharma,

*Tenzin Palmo*

# Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of Mahaprajapati

by Tsunma Dechen Chotso

This year in November, Jetsunma, Wendy Garling (who wrote a book about Mahaprajapati), 10 senior nuns, some Westerners and Tashi, a nun from South India, went on a pilgrimage. First the nuns went to Delhi by bus and then to Nepal. We reached Lumbini on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of November.

Our first trip was to the Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini where the Buddha was born. Venerable Wendy Garling did a short teaching there and we offered butter lamps. We also meditated there.

We went to many places. Jetsunma and Wendy gave teachings about Mahaprajapati and Tashi translated them into Hindi for us. I learned that Mahaprajapati was a hard worker and that all nuns need to follow her example.

I liked every place we went to, but I had a special feeling at Kapilavasthu which was the Buddha's father's palace. The Buddha did not stay in the palace. He went to practice the Dharma. Kapilavastu is a very big place. It has old stones, many Bodhi trees and birds singing. I felt very peaceful there. We did kora, meditated and had lunch.

I thought it was helpful to learn about each place before we visited it. We knew some things before the pilgrimage, but it made each place more interesting when we learned new things.

I was very excited to go on this pilgrimage, but I was very shy at first. The Westerners were interested in us and wanted to know about DGL, being a nun and what we study. They were very friendly. I was very impressed with the Westerners who have become Buddhists and are following the Dharma.

The weather was good. No one got sick or tired. I hope to return some day.

I want to thank Jetsunma, Wendy and Tashi and all the people who organized this Pilgrimage.





# PILGRIMAGE TO NEPAL

In June, we went on pilgrimage to Nepal for the first time. It was a very special time in our lives. Nepal is a very precious place because Buddha was born in Nepal. We went on a pilgrimage to different holy places for fifteen days.

We reached Nepal on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. On the second day we started our pilgrimage to the temples around Boudha. On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Saga Dawa, we started to circumambulate the Boudha Temple at 1am and finished by 10am. We did 108 times around. We joyfully circumambulated the Swayambu Temple five times.

One day we went to Chunig Jangchup where the Guru Padmasambhava stayed in retreat for three months, and after that we went to the Maratika Cave. It's very amazing because it looks like it was built by some person, but it's a natural cave. There were natural images of Guru Padmasambhava and Amitayus Buddha in the Maratika Cave.

The guide told us this story: Guru Padmasambhava

received a long-life empowerment from Amitayus. Then he flew away after he destroyed Mara. On our last day there we hung prayer flags around the Maratika Cave. Then we went back to the city.

The next evening we went to Mustang Village. We stayed for two days and went on pilgrimage. One of the most holy places was the 108 water springs. It has natural, precious water. If we take a bath in the water spring, our obstacles and bad karma is gone.

On our way back to India, we stopped in Lumbini, where the Buddha was born. We went to many different holy places around Lumbini. In the time of the Buddha, his father had a large kingdom called Kushinagar. The weather was very hot. In the evening we came back by bus to Delhi where we stayed one night before reaching our nunnery on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

It was the first pilgrimage in our lives and our best memories. We will never forget these days.

by Tsunmas Kunsang Lhamo, Dolma Chotso, and Phuntsok Chodron



On Saga Dawa my Dharma sisters and I went to Nepal.

Our first stop was Kathmandu where we stayed in a hotel called Utpala for a week. It is near the Boudha Stupa. During the week we enjoyed visiting holy places near the city like Chorten Namsum, Yanglesey and Vajra Temple.

Before the day of the full moon, we all woke up at 1am. We did 113 circumambulations in Jarung Kashor Chorten. The stupa was built by mother Jadzima. The Tibetans call it "Jarung Kashor Chorten". Jarung means "it can be done" and Kashor is "slipped out of the mouth". The stupa is very precious because of its origins; whatever we wish for in this stupa will come true.

Next we stayed in H.E. Tsoknyi Rinpoche's Nunnery for one week. There are 70 nuns in this nunnery. They all are lovely. The next week we went to Maratika Cave. This is the cave where Guru Rinpoche attained the power over life through his practice with his consort Mandarava.

After that, we went to Mustang which is so far from the city. In Mustang, our Dharma sisters welcomed us with warm hearts. They are so kind. We spent a lovely memorable time. There we visited Chumig Gatsa, Guru Sangfug, etc.

Finally we took a bus from Nepal to Lumbini where we visited the birthplace of the Buddha. It was a wonderful tour.

by Tsunma Tsewang Chodron

By the grace and kindness of Ven. Jetsunma and all of our sponsors we had a golden opportunity to visit Nepal on pilgrimage.

We visited different sacred places including two main holy stupas called Boudha and Swayambu where we said prayers on behalf of all the sentient beings. People believe that if we pray there with faith, our wishes and prayers will come true. Then we went to the most holy pilgrimage site of Guru Padmasambava named Maratika where we said more prayers.

After a few days, we went to Mustang. We are very thankful to the nuns of the Mustang who helped us on our pilgrimage by showing us holy places. They made us very comfortable. One holy place we visited is named Chumig Gyatsa. We also got a chance to see ancient robes and other materials related to Guru Padmasambhava. Every place was very charming and peaceful, but travelling was very dangerous. The weather was very warm. When we reached Lumbini we were able to see more pilgrimage sites.

I had a good and unforgettable time. This had all been made possible by Ven Jetsunma and all our sponsors. I can't express their kindness in words. There isn't any word to say "Thank you" to them.

by Tsunma Jigme Chodron



# VISIT TO LAHAUL AND

Hello Friends. Today I am writing about travel to Lahaul.

First my Dharma Friends and I went to the Tara Temple. We stayed for 3 days and did a fasting retreat. We were in retreat with Togden Tsawai Lama, Khenmo Tsultrim, Khenmo Jigme, some nuns, some monks and lay people. When our fasting retreat was finished, we saw 21 Taras and we prayed. Then we went to Bhuntar where we prayed in the Temple. When we returned to Tara Temple it was raining very hard. We stayed at Sister Yeshe Dolker's house for one night.

In the morning, we left for Lahaul where we first made a pilgrimage to the Varahi Palace.

Next we went to my Dharma friend's village. It is a very beautiful place with high mountains, many evergreen trees, and lots of silence. For three days we rested and then we went to read Bhum in my Dharma friend's house. We did a one-day pilgrimage to Avalokitesvara palace.

After that we went to Sister Yeshe Dolker's house to read Bhum (*The Prajnaparamita in Hundred Thousand Verses*). We read Bhum five times. The second time was for Sister Yeshe Dolker's mom who had died. It was the first time in my life that I saw a dead person's body. We all went with the body when it was cremated. We did an Aksobhya puja for her.

After that I was so excited because we were going to Jetsunma's cave. We forgot to bring water and we had to walk in the mountains. When we walked, Sister Thupten and I were the last ones. Everyone else reached the cave and we saw lots of smoke. We thought that they made tea for all of us so we walked faster, but when we reached the cave we saw they were burning incense and having a puja. It wasn't tea. I felt so sad.

We put up prayer flags and prayed. It was not Jetsunma's cave. It was Green Tara's cave. We still had to walk and walk and walk. Finally, we arrived at Jetsunma's cave. We all drank water. Some nuns made food. Some put up prayer flags and prayed. I am so fortunate because my dream to visit Jetsunma's cave came true.

by Tsunma Dechen Paltso

A few years ago, I learned about Jetsunma's cave when I read her biography. Fortunately, last year my dream came true when I got the chance to visit therewith some of my friends during my last summer vacation.

By bus it took about one and a half days to reach there. Her cave was located on the top of a hill and the way to her cave is hard and dangerous, but we had the true conviction to reach there. So, it didn't seem so hard for us.

We walked continuously for about three hours until we reached our destination. At the top of the hill, near her cave, the whole place was so peaceful and charming. I felt so content there. We stayed there for a whole day doing some prayers and meditation, until it got dark, when we hung up some prayer flags.

We stayed in a local guest house where the owner was so harmonious and respectful to us.

The next day, we visited two other pilgrimage sites and lots of holy places before we started our journey back to our nunnery with lots of sweet memories.

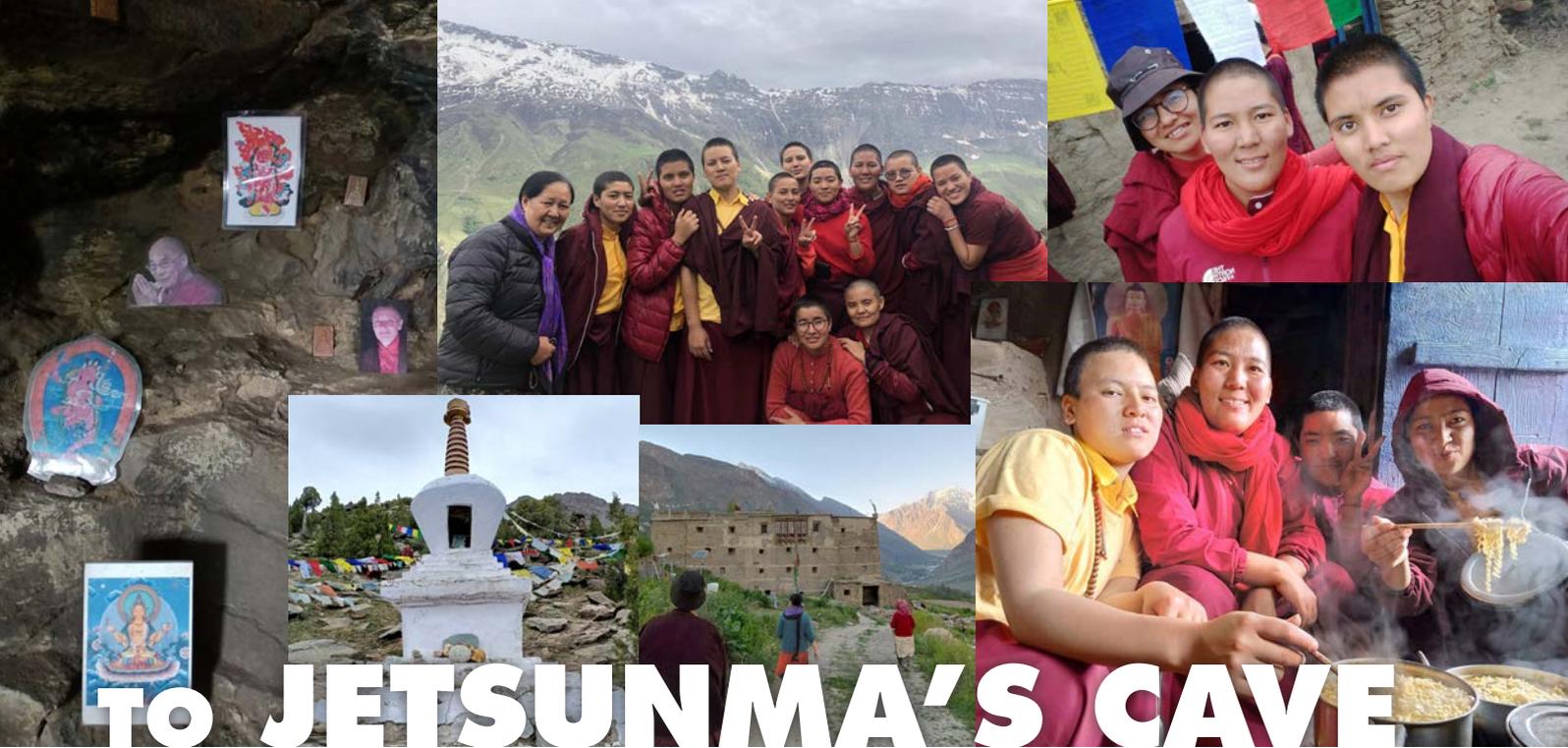
by Tsunma Dolma Lhamo

This year some nuns went to Jetsunma's cave in Lahaul. We were very excited. Sister Yeshe Dolker was our guide.

Jetsunma's cave is on the top of a mountain. When we first saw the cave we were very surprised. Her cave is unique because the front is made of mud and looks like a house. But inside it looks like a cave.

Her cave is so far from Thayul Gompa. We walked for three hours. It was very difficult because the path is not good. In some places it was very narrow. In other places, it was very rocky. The scenery was very beautiful. We could see the mountains wherever we looked. They had snow on them and there were many flowers.

When we reached the cave, we were very thirsty. We didn't have water, so we went searching for it. Finally we found some and drank it.



When we entered the cave, we saw that it was very small. How did Jetsunma manage to live there for twelve years?

We cooked some noodles. After we ate, we did a puja and meditated in the cave. In front of the cave we hung prayer flags. There is a Stupa near the cave. The Stupa is made out of mud and rocks and is very old. This is a very peaceful and wondrous place.

This trip was quite amazing and we felt fortunate to be able to visit the cave. We hope we get the chance to visit again. We really enjoyed our time there.

by Tsunmas Lekshe Dolma and Thubten Chodron

During our summer vacation, I went to Lahaul with some of my dharma friends. Our dharma sister, Yeshe Dolker had requested us to recite scriptures. We were all happy to do this because all the nuns like sister Yeshe Dolker very much. We told her about our dream to see Jetsunma's cave and asked her if she could take us there and with sister Yeshe Dolker's help, we were able to visit there.

The way to the cave was very hard, but when we arrived there, I felt like miracles were happening inside me. It was a peaceful place where I felt so calm.

When I think about the cave, I am shocked to know how hard it was to survive there without any facilities. I think it would be impossible for me to stay there. How did Jetsunma stay there for 12 years? I appreciate her for such deeds. Maybe one day I also will be able to do such deeds. I want to thank Sister Yeshe Dolker la because only by her grace and help was I able to visit there.

by Tsunma Choying Dolma

At the end of our summer holiday we went to Jetsunma's cave which was the best part of my holiday. It's a very high place and it took us many hours to reach it. After we reached the cave, we hung the Tibetan prayer flags and did some

rituals, meditated and stayed there for two or three hours.

Unfortunately, we had to face a few difficult moments because none of us took water with us and felt so thirsty and tired. After we searched the cave we finally found some water which made us feel alive again.

The place where the cave is, is so peaceful with a wonderful view of the high mountains. It's our good fortune that we have visited this place. I feel very blessed to have been there and I also wish that I will be able to go and visit again.

by Tsunma Ngawang Paltso

Lahaul is one of the most popular sacred places in India. It is the most beautiful and charming place I ever went. There are many villages in Lahaul and the weather is cold there even in the summer. The way to Lahaul is dangerous and risky.

In Lahaul, I stayed in Jamyang's house. There are six members in her family. Those are father, grandfather, mother, brother, sister and uncle. At first, I felt shy about staying there. For a long time it was hard for me to stay there. I couldn't even eat very well.

We read scriptures in Jamyang's house and in Yangchen's house. After a few days, we went to another village on a pilgrimage to visit other holy places.

We also went to see Jetsunma's cave. In her cave, we recited some prayers. We enjoyed it a lot. Near the cave there were so many trees and little flowers. It was very hard to climb to the cave because it was on the top of hill. I won't visit there again because walking was so difficult for me.

One day I got sick. It was a very bad day. But I liked that day a little bit because they took such good care of me. I felt very much at peace in Lahaul and I enjoyed being there with my nun friends. There were lots of people who were very helpful and kind to us. I will never forget those kindnesses. It was my first holiday with my friends.

by Tsunma Rinchen Chotso



# SHEDRA INAUGURATION AT TASHI JONG

This year, His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama came to Khampagar Monastic College for the opening ceremony of the college.

Before his Holiness' visit, the monks of Tashi Jong College were very busy with lots of work. On those busy days, many people like the laypeople from Tashi Jong, Kinnaur, and some other places, helped the monks. We, the nuns of Dongyu Gatsal Ling, also went to the College to help our Dharma brothers.

On the first day, some of our nuns went to make khapse (fried dough in different designs). Most of the nuns went to help the monks clean. Some nuns were washing the windows, some were working inside the Temple with the monks, some nuns were painting and working outside, while others were helping in the kitchen. There were also nuns who were working with the flowers for decorations. Usually the work started at 7 am and went until 8 pm, but on the last cleaning day, we started our work at 5 am and continued until 12 am. That day was our longest work day.

After finishing our work, we all – the nuns, monks, and laypeople, were very excited for the next day because we were going to see His Holiness in person. So we all worked together happily like a family and we felt very lucky to get a chance to help our Dharma Brothers prepare for this special day.

by **Tsunma Sonam Chokyi**

On 27/9/2023 His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to our monks' monastery in Tashi Jong. He is a very special Buddhist monk.

I was very excited to see him again. We went in the morning and we waited for him for three or four hours. During that time, we prepared tea and sweet rice. There were many people from outside and all were allowed to go inside the temple where we helped offer tea for monks and ordinary people.

Some Rinpoches and Khenpos offered Mandala to H.H. Dalai Lama who wore a Drukpa Kagyu hat. His Holiness taught us about Boddhichitta and emptiness. I was very happy to see His Holiness and hear his teaching but I was a little sad that I didn't get close to him and had to stand a little far away. In the evening we got to see the Dragon Dance and many different traditional dances from Tibet and Himachal Pradesh. This was a special day and I felt lucky to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama again.

by **Tsunma Samten Wangmo**

This year all the nuns have had a great time because this year was so fortunate for us.

For the first time in forever, we were able to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Tashi Jong.

I felt blessed when I saw him. He was shining like a bright sun. He was so attractive I couldn't stop myself from looking at him. It was such a sweet moment. When he entered the

temple (shrine) people crowded in, from all directions, but he was still calm and he was walking so peacefully. When he got on the throne, different cultural people came with various offerings. They dedicated all their offerings to him.

He blessed everyone with his precious dharma teachings. There was true conviction in his words. From his teachings, a great inspiration arose inside me. My whole soul got fully calm and content. He is the most considerate being I ever met in my life. Everyone was paying attention to his every single word. During the ceremony, some nuns and some monks served tea to the guests. We were really busy during the whole ceremony.

At about 2 pm, after a special lunch, His Holiness left Tashi Jong. I felt a little bit sad, but then I remembered the moment when he was with us and it really helped me to rejoice in our good fortune. Then I felt better and cheerful again. His Eminence Khamtrul Rinpoche and Tsoknyi Rinpoche were there with us. As an offering, many different types of cultural and traditional dances were presented by laypeople. This was so enjoyable.

The next day we all received an empowerment from our Rinpoche. That was so rare. That night some of the monks performed the Dragon Dances and many other kinds of Dances. I enjoyed all the dances.

I can still feel those experiences in my heart. Those unforgettable days hold a special place in my memory. I



could never express my happiness and enthusiasm in words.

**by Tsunma Yeshi Tsomo**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Tashi Jong. It was the first time he came to Khampagar monastery. All the nuns and monks did lots of preparations. It was really so very hard.

On that day, nuns and monks with other laypeople welcomed His Holiness. He came to Tashi Jong for the inauguration of the monastic college. During that day we attended a teaching of His Holiness. Then we served tea and sweet rice to His Holiness and the other guests. After having such things some of our nuns went to the kitchen to help prepare a special lunch and attend the guests.

After some hours, people performed dances and different types of local songs. All the songs were dedicated to our Rinpoche and the other guests. The next day our Rinpoche gave us a long life empowerment and after lunch we had Lama Dances and the Dragon Dance. It was so amazing. They were the most unforgettable days ever in my life. I could never forget these special days.

**by Tsunma Choying Paltso**

The 9<sup>th</sup> month of the year 2023 was a very special, joyful, and blessed month for me because we enjoyed many things and we were blessed to

see His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in person.

First we enjoyed helping our Dharma brothers with lots of work before the ceremony.

The 27<sup>th</sup> of September was full of happiness and blessings because His Holiness came to Khampagar Druk Dharmakara College in Tashi Jong for the opening ceremony of the new college.

On that day, we went to the college at 5 am and did some kitchen work. When we finished all that work, we made two lines. On one side there were monks and on the other side there were nuns and laypeople. All of us were waiting for His Holiness. At 10 am His Holiness arrived. We all welcomed him, we were all full of happiness. Some laywomen were singing on the way to welcome him.

After that he started the ceremony with his pure heart and we all gathered in the Temple. Our Root Guru Khamtrul Rinpoche offered him the mandalas with the help of other Rinpoches and Khenpos. His Holiness gave us a teaching and told us to be compassionate, generous, and kind. It was a very special teaching for all of us. After having lunch, His Holiness went back to Dharamsala. The month of September of 2023 was the most memorable and blessed month for us.

**by Tsunma Shedrub Paltso**

At Tashi Jong on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, there was a big celebration

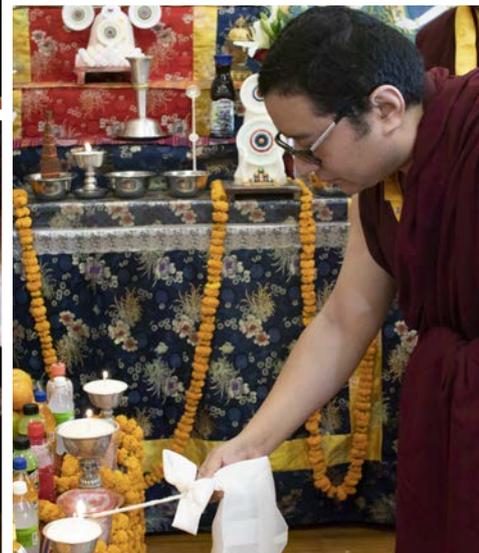
— the monks at Tashi Jong invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to inaugurate the new college.

On that day, so many people came to Tashi Jong. Most of the people were from the Himalayan region. Some of the groups that performed their traditional dances were Tibetan, Kinnauri, Lahouli, and Ladakhi. For the traditional Ladakhi dance, the men dancers performed their ceremony in Tashi Jong. I am Ladakhi, so I know a little bit about the traditional dance, which only men can perform, called the chapskan dance. Chapskan means a gold kettle.

The dancers should wear traditional Ladakhi dress and they also have to wear a black cap on their heads. They really practised a lot to balance the golden kettle on the top of their heads, which is full of local Ladakhi beer. The dancers have to be very experienced because this dance is very hard. The chapskan dance is one of the most popular dances in India.

In India, during big ceremonies such as Independence Day and Republic Day, people perform this dance. During ancient times the Ladakhi men dancers performed this dance in the king's palace. When men performed this dance in Tashi Jong many people were very curious to see it. I liked that dance very much because at that time I remembered my birth place and I really got so emotional. It was such a sweet and lovely feeling.

**by Tsunma Kelsang Palmo**



# THE KHENMO INVESTITURE

by Khenmo Tenzin Chokyi

Friday, December 29, 2023 was a very important day at DGL. Four senior nuns were given the title of Khenmo by Khamtrul Rinpoche. This is the first time nuns have received this honour at DGL.

The four of us tsunmas worked very hard for many years to reach this goal. Tsunma Jigme Chodron, Tsunma Samten Dolma, Tsunma Tsultrim Palmo, and I studied philosophy text for at least 12 years. After that, we studied Tantra for another 2 years. In addition to our studies, each of us taught many of the younger nuns for three to five years.

Our special day began at Tashi Jong where we visited with Khamtrul Rinpoche before we all proceeded to DGL with khatas and incense. Our nunnery was decorated beautifully by the younger nuns. It made us very proud.

After lighting a butterlamp with Jetsunma, Khamtrul Rinpoche was seated on his throne while all the tsunmas, many monks from Tashi Jong, and our families went into the temple where our names were called by the Chotrim (disciplinarian) and we went up to receive our certificates.

As part of the ceremony we were each given a special hat and new robes. Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo then presented each of us with a lovely statue, khatas, and an offering. Following that, all the Khenpos from Tashi Jong, the monks, the nuns, and the lay people gave us khatas and offerings. There were so many khatas that we could not see over them. I felt a little overwhelmed by the ceremony and all the attention I was getting.

Even though they had only a week's notice, our families came from Kinnaur, Ladakh, and Jangchup Jong Monastery to join us on this wonderful occasion. I was very pleased that my family came such a long way to be with me.

On the day of the ceremony, I was feeling neutral because I did not think I deserved this honour. Now, however, I am feeling pleased with myself and my accomplishments. It was a wonderful day for Jetsunma, all the nuns at DGL, the three other Khenmos, and me. I feel that I have received this honour for all of us, not just myself.





## ABOUT SAKYADHITA

by Khenmo Tsultrim Palmo

What a wonderful opportunity I had to join the 18<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita conference in South Korea.

There were nuns and lay people from 31 countries gathered for it. At the beginning, we started with the different kinds of traditions' prayers. I felt so blessed to get the chance to do it with my Tibetan nun sisters. It took only five minutes.

Every day there were different types of presentations and workshops. Some of the presentations were about nuns in the early days who did not have the opportunities we have now to be educated. Hearing about this, I felt lucky because I have had the chance to study the Buddha Dharma. I am very grateful to those who fought for the nuns' right to get good educations.

I attended some workshops during the afternoon

sessions. My favourite was the laughing yoga workshop. One of the Korean nuns taught us how to do it. It was lots of fun and energized me.

The event was held in South Korea so most of the nuns were Koreans. They organised the accommodations and food very well. The Korean nuns are courageous and energetic. It seems they can do anything and everything.

Our trip concluded with a pilgrimage to some sacred monasteries. Korean monasteries are built in a style that is completely different from Tibetan monasteries.

This was a very memorable time in my life. I would like to thank Jetsunma from the depths of my heart for giving me the precious chance to attend Sakyadhita.

May all beings be happy and healthy.

Select photographs courtesy of Olivier Adam



## AFTER SAKYADHITA IN SOUTH KOREA

by Tsunma Jangchup Sangmo

A trip to South Korea has been such a memorable journey and we could not help but give our most heartfelt thanks to Ven. Jetsunma, our generous sponsor May Ling and Sakyadhita International Conference organizer for giving us such a good opportunity to attend a historical event like Sakyadhita.

The event was hosted by Sakyadhita Korea in Seoul from June 23 to June 27, 2023. The event was so engaging with various kinds of programs such as paper presentations, workshops, exhibitions, meditation and cultural performances.

After completing the program, we all visited some holy Buddhist temples which were centuries old and were amidst trees and mountains. Those temples were looked after by monks. We also went to see another temple owned by nuns.

The conference was attended by more than 3,000 participants from 31 countries including Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, United States. The theme of this year's conference was "Living in a Precarious World: Impermanence, Resilience, Awakening." And attending such a conference gave me a lot of knowledge and I learned many new things.

After the event, we got to stay for another month with the help of Khenpo Ngawang Sangpo and Khamtashiling, Korea.

Actually, South Korea itself is located on the Southern half of the Korean peninsula. There are heavily militarized borders with North Korea and we got to visit that border area. We have seen their war remains like a train filled with holes made by bullets during war time and they have made a museum which was so emotional to look at.

Later we also went to visit their old president's house, followed by centuries old Buddhist temples. The place has coastal fishing villages, sub-tropical islands and very high-tech cities. It has a rich history, and they also have many traditional buildings like Buddhist temples and huge palaces. I feel so fortunate to have gotten a chance to see all of it. Khenpo also took us to two other temples and there we did chod. Many Korean lay Buddhist practitioners participated and they have great dedication and are working hard to learn about it.

Of course we enjoyed so much the South Korean's popular national dishes such as red rice cakes, Korean stew, kimchi and bibimbap and the temple foods which were so healthy. Korea is also famous for green tea, so we got to taste varieties of tea like lotus tea, Barley tea and Ginseng tea. Many coffee shops are also available.

So I must say the visit to South Korea was the most memorable thing ever happened in my life.



## One Month Holiday

by Tsunma Lobsang Wangmo

After long and busy months, we finally got our one month of summer vacation which is a fine break for us. Most of our nuns were getting excited to meet with their family and other relatives.

During my summer vacation, I visited Tsopema with some of our senior and junior nuns. It was such a long way. We reached there in the evening, which made us a little bit tired.

Next day we went to see the sacred places. Most places had been made in honour of Guru Padmasambhava. We also saw a big statue of Guru Rinpoche. It was a huge and attractive statue. As it is a holy site, I made a prayer there for all sentient beings including my beloved parents. It was such a peaceful place, which made my mind peaceful too.

By the grace of our elder nuns, we were able to travel to different pilgrimage sites. When we returned to our nunnery, I felt so blessed and satisfied. I have kept those sweet memories in my heart. I can't express my enthusiasm in words. I want to say thank you to all those people who helped me to made my wish come true.

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## Holiday at DGL Nunnery

by Tsunma Damcho Tsomo

At our nunnery, we get our one month holiday in June. This year we started our holiday on 31<sup>st</sup> May. After that some nuns went to their villages.

We were only thirty nuns left in the nunnery. Most were junior nuns, but some were senior nuns. We never stopped doing our pujas. We did the morning prayers (Tara puja) and evening prayers (Mahakala puja). In our nunnery, we have four big pujas each month. During our holiday it was difficult to do the big pujas, but we did.

At DGL we always get delicious and healthy foods. On holiday, our Nyerpa (kitchen manager) gave us more delicious food and lots of things to eat because there were only a small number of nuns to feed.

During the one month holiday it was difficult to clean all the gardens and playgrounds. Before our holiday, we usually finished our cleaning in 30 minutes. During the holiday it took us one hour or one and a half hours to clean all around the nunnery.

During our holiday time, we went to Prashar Lake which is up in the mountains. That place was very beautiful. On that day, there was a Hindu festival and there were lots of people celebrating.

After that we went to Tsopema which is a pilgrimage site of Guru Padmasambhava. We stayed one night in a monastery. In the evening, we circumambulated the lake. In the morning we went to see Guru Rinpoche's cave.

When I saw Tsopema I felt blessed and peaceful from inside of my heart. During our one month holiday we enjoyed every day. Living in DGL is more interesting than home.





## Holiday

by Tsunma Karma Dolma

During our holiday, 14 nuns from DGL went to the Dolma Lakhang in Bhuntar and did Nyungnye for a few days. After Nyungnye we went to Garsha in Lahoul. When we were travelling, the road was very narrow. On one side was the hill and on the other side the river far below. I was afraid the bus would go off the road. We enjoyed ourselves as well and I was so happy.

When we reached Garja, we met with very helpful and kind people. Then three of us took two days of rest in Jamyang's home. We read Bhum in some people's home. Bhum is a special Buddhist teaching. The next morning we all prayed for the benefit to all the sentient beings.

We went to Acha Yeshe's house and there we also read Bhum for her mother's good health. Unfortunately she died that day. That was a very sad moment for Acha Yeshe and all of us. After that we did a special prayer for her mother. On the day she died, her body was cremated. It was my first time to see a dead body.

This was such bad news for Acha Yeshe and us.

After that we planned to visit Jetsunma's Cave. Acha Yeshe also came to show us the way to the cave and helped us a lot in bad conditions. It was my second time visiting the cave. We prayed for Jetsunma's long and healthy life. I wish to visit the Jetsunma's cave once again.



## Visiting Kinnaur During My Summer Vacation

by Tsunma Sherab Dolma

At the beginning of our vacation we went to Bhuntar (Tara Temple) to attend the fasting ceremony for four days. Then we went to Kinnaur, I stayed in Nakko for three days. I really had a good time there and I was very happy.

After some days, we went to Chango to Jigme Chodron's home. I had a little bit of a rest. While there we recited Scripture in my dharma sister Jigme's house. We also went to other houses to recite scripture. It really took a long time there.

We had such an unforgettable time there because most of the time on this holiday I was reading Dharma Texts. We were a total of eight nuns who did the job. We went to different pilgrimage areas of Chango.

After that we went to another temple and we stayed there for four days. We went back to Nakko for a wedding ceremony. We stayed there for some days. The bride called us to come to her wedding and we did some prayers for her happy married life. We did some prayers and they offered us delicious food and I enjoyed it a lot.

After that my vacation was almost finished. Before it was over we went to Kaza and Rangrig in Spiti. We stayed there for two days and we enjoyed it a lot. Lastly we went to Kullu and that was the end of the holiday. It was my most unforgettable holiday ever.

# Back to Hometown

by Tsunma Lhacho Wangmo

The summer vacation started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and I made a plan to visit my hometown and my parents as it has been 5 years since I visited them.

I started my journey with my friend Samten Chodron by bus to Delhi for the next day's flight to Siliguri. On the way to the airport we were really fortunate enough to meet and get a blessing from our Rinpoche.

After staying one night at Siliguri, we continued our journey by bus to Bhutan and reached Thimphu (the capital city of Bhutan) by late evening. In Thimphu, I stayed with my two sisters for 5 to 6 days to get my passport and update my documents.

I also got a chance to visit a temple named Dechenphu which is the residence of a deity named Geynyen Jagpa Melen. He is special in the Drukpa Kagyu lineage. He is a Dharma protector.

On my way to my village I stopped in a place called Bumthang for two days. This is my favourite place in all of Bhutan, and I did a pilgrimage and got a blessing from Kyabje Namkhai Nyingpo. Bumthang is a place where

there are so many holy places that have been blessed by different Rinpoches and Guru Padmasambhava.

After two days I continued my journey for one more day to my village. I reached there late at night. Since it's been a really long time since I saw my village I couldn't express my happiness in meeting my parents and siblings. We had a dinner feast since they were waiting for me.



Days in the village were really refreshing as I could see old memories and I felt like many things were brought back to my heart. People were very busy working in the paddies and with other crops since it was mid-summer.

My sister is married and has a baby girl named Dechen Lhamo. Jetsunma gave the baby her name. Seeing her really reminded me of how old my parents and I are getting as time passes.

Since my parents went to Bumthang to get a blessing, I couldn't stay in the village, so after a few days I also went to the Bumthang and I stayed there for five days, getting a blessing from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche.

I really felt my journey to my hometown was full of blessings and joy.



## A Visit of Rewalsar (Tsopeema)

by Tsunma Rigzin Dolma

This year I spent my summer vacation in Rewalsar (Tsopeema) with one of my classmates, Samten Wangmo. It is a sacred place. We arrived there in the evening. When we reached there, my brother served us dinner which was so tasty.

The next day, my brother went into retreat. He is a monk. Samten and I decided to dedicate ourselves in his service. Every evening we made ourselves busy to accumulate merit. We did kora and other spiritual practices.

One day our Khenpo from DGL and some of his friends arrived there as pilgrims.

After a few days our nuns from DGL who hadn't gone home for their holiday came to Tsopeema. We all recited some prayers.

The next day we all went to see Guru Rinpoche's cave, which was really Guru Rinpoche's meditation cave and also a holy place. We all also visited some monasteries. Then the nuns went back to the nunnery.

Finally our time at Tsopeema was over. We came back to our nunnery for an early celebration for Venerable Jetsunma's birthday. I have many sweet memories of my time in Tsopeema.



## An Unforgettable Moment During My Holidays

by Tsunma Tashi Lhamo

Last year my holidays were in June 2023. My younger sister, Tenzin Palzom, and I went to Dolma Ling Nunnery. The main purpose was to learn something new and different. When I was there, I learned many things about being close and harmonious with everyone. I went there to learn something which could inspire me. I spent my time with some of my new Dharma friends. It was such a charming moment. I had many good and happy experiences during that time.

After a few days, I decided to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama so I went to Dharmshala to meet him. After three days, I got the call from his office, about meeting him. They told me to come in very early in the morning at 6:00 am.

When my sister and I were in reception we were both shocked. There were so many people there to meet him. They all were standing in a queue near the road to meet His

Holiness. We were able to see him easily, which was so unexpected. There were six groups which got the chance to meet the Dalai Lama. We took turns and our turn was last.

When I met the Dalai Lama, I had some questions I wanted to ask him for making a Dharma connection between us. I wanted to ask, but I couldn't ask them because one lady was crying in front of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She was crying so loudly that I forgot my questions. I felt very sad for her and nervous. But all my dreams came true because His Holiness recited the sacred verses of Avalokiteshvara and

Green Tara. I saw many people who came from different traditions with various offerings. They all were so content and calm, which made me calm too.

Thank you so much to Ven. Jetsunma la, Khenpo, and all the Genlas for giving me such a great opportunity. I will never forget this golden opportunity. It has a special place in my heart.





## Preparation for Lhabab Duchen

by Tsunma Jigme Chodron (C)

This year our Lhabab Duchen was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. This was the biggest day and a big challenge for my classmates and me because this year we were doing the biography of Mahaprajapati. This year our dialogue was in English which was the hardest part for us because we are little bit not perfect in English, but Felipe and Pema and some kind and warm hearted people helped us to do this performance. We had accepted the challenge. We worked very hard to put on a successful drama.

First we divided our work. Ngawang and Sonam worked on music and Rigzin, Samten, and I worked on acting. Felipe and Pema worked on Dialogue. Dayod and Kunsang worked on Costumes. During this time we faced lots of problems, but my classmates and I knew that we could do it and make the performance wonderful. We spent all our time working on the drama.

We all wanted the drama to go perfectly and hoped Jetsunma and all the guests would like our performance. Hopefully, Jetsunma, who is like our mother, and all the guests loved our performance. We were very thankful to everyone for giving us this biggest responsibility.

## About My Best Teacher: Jigme Chodron (A)

by Tsunma Tsundu Zangmo

First I would like to say “Thank you.” I am so grateful because you are my best teacher. You have played an important role in my life. You know me better than anyone else. When first I came to DGL nunnery, I was so small. First I met you. You always loved and cared for me like my parents. In terms of education, you showed me the best books. You even sat down to read with me with your heart and mindfulness. When I fell down, you were the one who was able to put a smile on my face. At that time I thought, “I have a good teacher who always loves and cares about me.” And you guided me on the right path. Without your love my life would be meaningless. I will never forget you. Thank you very much Teacher, Jigme Chodron, for guiding me, inspiring me, and making me what I am today. This is all because of you.

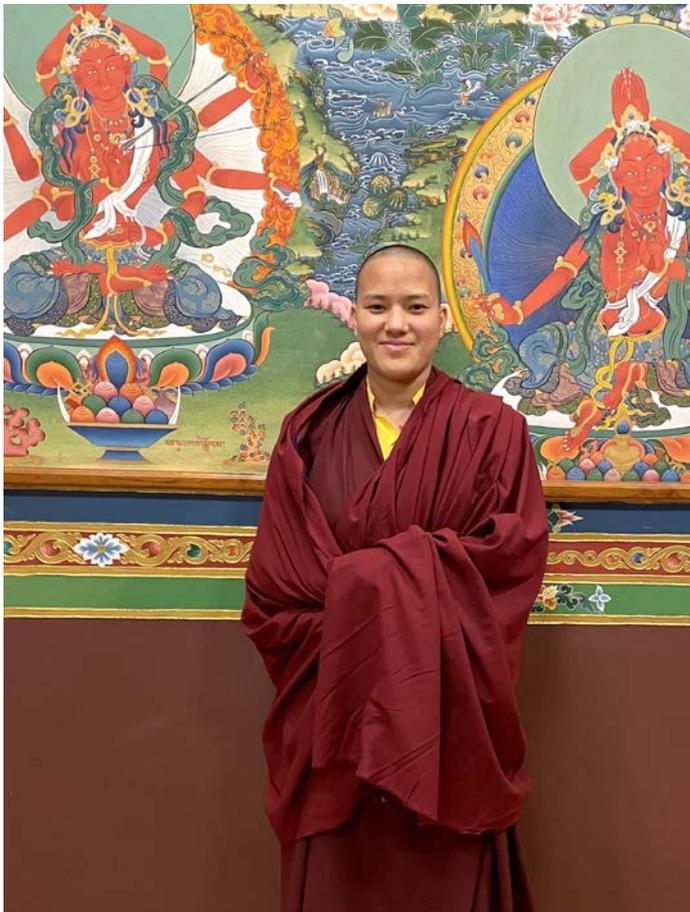


# Friendship

by Tsunma Chophel Dolma

Friendship is an important part of our lives. Everyone should have a friend who can support us in every way. A friend should be loyal to everyone. We can't describe the love of a friend. A loyal friend always tries to make us comfortable. Our friend can understand our feelings without saying a word. The value of a friend is more than any precious thing in this world. Friendship can't be described in words. It is a deep feeling which has a special place in heart. Lucky are those who can find a loyal friend in this fake world. A loyal friend always speaks up for us. She always guides us to the right way.

In short, true friendship is what gives us a reason to stay strong in life. Some people don't even have families, but they have friends who are like their families. We can see having true friend mean a lot to everyone. My friend is the one with whom I can share my thoughts and feelings. Loyal friends are like blessing. It is very important to have a friend in this world.



# My Ambition

by Tsunma Sherab Donkar

In this wide samsara, many people have different kinds of ambitions in their lives. Some want to be the best artist, some want to be a photographer, some want to be a psychologist. My ambition is to become an abbess. The abbess is the one who is the head of the convent and in Tibetan we would call her Khenmo. It's not easy to be an abbess. We would need a lot of education and I am trying my best to attain my ambition. I hope I will fulfil it one day.

Right now, I am studying, practicing Buddhism and reading different types of books which will give me a lot of information to build up my knowledge. They inspire me to do things confidently. It's also extremely helpful for my imagination and ability since it wakes up a large number of dead cells in my brain.

I would like to look after and take care of all the nuns and want to gain their knowledge as much as I can. I hope I will be able to fulfil my ambition and help others with all of my efforts.

# Impermanence

by Tsunma Sonam Yangdon

I had thought about many topics and finally, I decided to write about Impermanence. I think it is very important to know about. Impermanence is something very visible but we mostly just talk about it. Since the minute we came into samsara, we have been getting older and older by the second. Nobody wants to be older, but actually it's impermanence so we have no choice. Everything changes from moment to moment. Nothing stays the same as before. Therefore, nothing is permanent. Understanding impermanence is an important part of the practice of Buddhism as a philosophy. It changes the way you look at life and at the world if you live with this understanding. It is necessary to realize that now is the time to do good deeds, serve others, to serve the world, and to help others. Otherwise when we die, there is no way to serve beings and to make yourself a better person.



# Thankful for My Parents

by Tsunma Yeshi Chodron

I am thankful for my parents. They inspire me on the path to achieve success. Everything is value-less, as compared to my parents' love. I truly believe in their love. They raised me since I was a small child. They always motivate me. My parents are like an incarnation of a god for me. They gave me whatever I wanted even if they didn't have enough money. My parents could walk barefoot, but they wouldn't let me have bare feet. They usually work hard just for my comfort. I can't express their love in words. I just want to repay their kindness, but I think, I can't even if I became their servant for my thousand lifetimes.

It would be my great pleasure, if ever I could do anything for them. I can't see Buddha with my naked eyes, but I can see his kindness and miracles in those beings, for whom I feel gratitude. They represent the true meaning of love. May they get every good fortune which they really deserve. They are good teachers in the true sense of the word.



## Water

by Tsunma Sherab Tsomo

Water is most important in our lives. Water is the life of men and plants, as well as animals. It is a transparent liquid. It can exist in three forms – liquid, gas and solid. It is made of two gases – oxygen and hydrogen. It is the cheapest thing in the world. It is used in almost every industry. A lot of mineral water brands are available in the market. The shortage of it can cause drought and famine. It has been estimated that its level is going down in certain areas. That can be dangerous. I always try to save water. When some people forget to turn off the water tap, I turn it off and when I see that person I tell her, “Please don’t forget to turn off the water.” I know some places do not have much water so we are lucky and we must be careful and not waste it.

# 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.dglnunnery.com](http://www.dglnunnery.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:** The brand new Khenmos of DGL. From left to right - Jigme Chodron, Samten Dolma, Tsultrim Palmo and Tenzin Chokyi.

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



**BY AIRMAIL**

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