



# GATSAL



The year of 2016 was again filled with many events at DGL. In April we consecrated the new residential building for our teachers and fortuitously Togden Achoe, the most senior of the yogis at Tashi Jong, just happened to come by and so participated in this simple ceremony along with the nuns. This two storied building with its large pleasant rooms is a welcome addition to the nunnery.

Then in May Tsunma Aileen and I set off on a European tour which included the UK, Germany, France, Holland and Switzerland. We travelled for about 6 weeks and everywhere we were greeted with warmth and kindness by all whom we met. We thank our hosts in these various countries and venues for all their good-heartedness and excellent organisation. Tsunma Aileen and I were also able to fit in time for retreat in locations commanding views of ocean and sky.

In June the nuns finished their annual exams and our teacher Gen Tenzin Kunsel completed the last part of the 4 year Geshema exams. Gen Kunsel was educated at Dolma Ling Nunnery but has been teaching with us now for some years.

Unfortunately while we were away on tour one of our senior and brightest nuns, Tsunma Thaye Chotso, was

diagnosed with leukaemia. She was admitted into the hospital at Chandigarh and we did everything possible to help her. Unfortunately her condition was too advanced and she could not tolerate the chemotherapy. She passed away at the age of 37 years a few days after Khamtrul Rinpoche had visited the hospital and given Thaye his blessing. Her body was brought back to the Nunnery where the

her treatment from friends around the world and from this we have established a medical fund for the nuns.

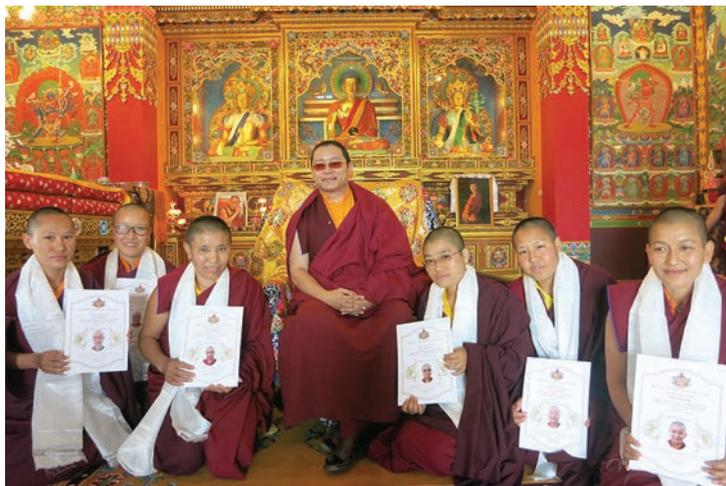
In July our office staff Dolma Keither and Tenzin Lhakpa travelled to Thailand to complete the second part of the Empowerment Training. Meantime a group of our graduate nuns went on pilgrimage to Bhutan which they enjoyed very much. We are grateful to Dr Tashi Zangmo and

Tsunma Namgyal and her colleagues of the Bhutanese Nuns Project for taking care of the nuns' arrangements during their visit.

In September we travelled to Ladakh to attend the Naropa Bone Ornament ceremony. This was a special occasion to celebrate the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mahasiddha Naropa who is one of the founding fathers of the Kagyupa lineage. During this week-long event His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa put on the original Bone Ornaments which

Naropa had bequeathed to the translator Marpa. This highly auspicious occasion is only enacted once in twelve years so many thousands of people attended and queued day and night for a darshan of the ornaments.

In October I gave some teaching on a short text by Atisha at the Root Institute in Bodhgaya and then travelled on to



Khamtrul Rinpoche with some of the nuns on receiving their Certificates

nuns undertook the necessary procedures to prepare her for the funeral. The next day the body was taken to Khampagar Monastery and the monks performed the due death rituals presided over by Khamtrul Rinpoche. Then Thaye's body was cremated at Tashi Jong. This marked a significant milestone for our Nunnery. We received much financial support for



**His Holiness the Dalai Lama presiding over the certificate ceremony for the first group of graduating Geshemas. "Our" Geshe is in the second row from front, on the right of photo.**

Nagpur in Maharashtra to attend the celebrations for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conversion to Buddhism by the great legislator Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar who was one of main architects of the Indian Constitution. Born as an 'Untouchable' he nonetheless struggled to become educated and eventually earned 3 doctorates from prestigious foreign universities. His conversion caused a huge wave of conversions throughout the Dalit community especially in Maharashtra so that nowadays there are estimated to be several tens of millions of 'Neo Buddhists'. We attended an interesting conference there and met many inspiring participants as well as old friends.

Later that same month we consecrated our Protector Temple. Khamtrul Rinpoche officiated along with some

togdens and monks from the Khampagar Monastery. Several of our senior nuns also joined in the ceremony. The Temple of the Protectors is dedicated to Mahakala and Palden Lhamo along with other minor guardians who are represented by statues and masks. Protectors are important in Buddhism to guard the integrity of the Dharma and help prevent obstacles to auspicious activities. Later Khamtrul Rinpoche presented certificates to a group of our graduating nuns.

That same month we hosted a special lunch for our workers who had built our beautiful Nunnery. Several of these men and women had been with us for 15 years and DGL is like their home. So although we are deeply grateful for all their hard work on our behalf, we were also sad to say goodbye. A few of these workers continue

to be employed at DGL as maintenance manager, plumber and electrician and so on. Buildings require constant maintenance in India's harsh climate.

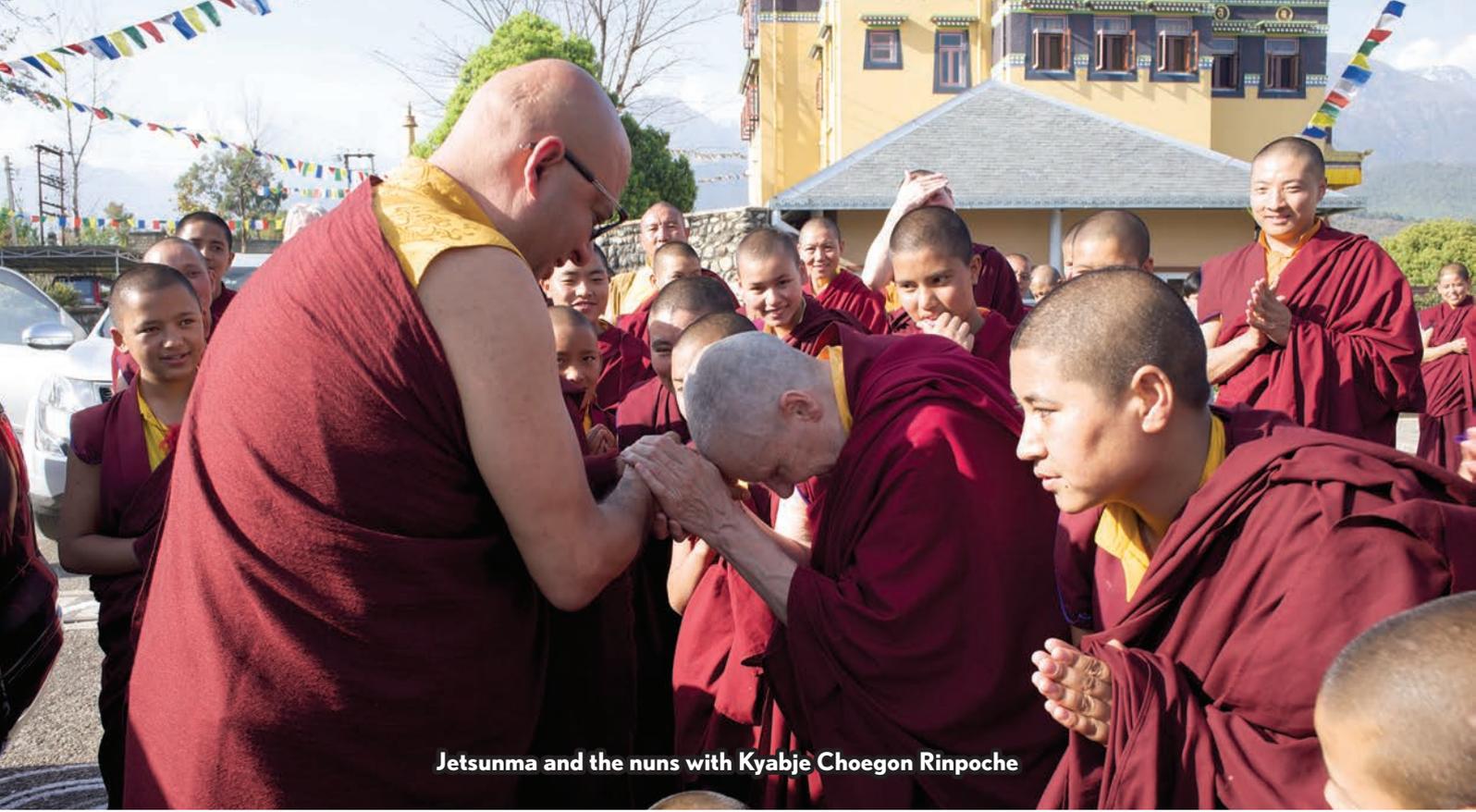
In late December I travelled to Mundgod in South India to attend an historical event: at Drepung Monastery His Holiness the Dalai Lama was conferring the Geshema degree to 20 nuns from various Gelukpa nunneries in India and Nepal. Apart from the German nun Geshe Kelsang Wangmo, this was the first time that this scholastic honour had been given to nuns. As mentioned above, one of the teachers at DGL is Gen Tenzin Kunsel and so we wished to attend this major celebration in her life when she became a Geshema. It was a very joyful time and we were well taken care of by the kind and hospitable nuns of Jangchub Choeling Nunnery.



Puja to consecrate our Protector Room



Thanking our workers for their dedicated work



**Jetsunma and the nuns with Kyabje Choegon Rinpoche**

Coincidentally on our return to DGL our monk teacher Gen Sonam Wangyal received the Khenpo degree at Khampagar Monastic College in Tashi Jong. Kyabje Khamtrul Rinpoche awarded this honour to 5 scholar monks and the nuns also participated in the ceremonial chanting.

However February 2017 brought the especially sad news of the passing away of Kyabje Dorzong Rinpoche. Although Rinpoche had been ill for some time nonetheless his death was felt as a deep loss by all the nuns at DGL, many of whom had received their ordination and empowerments from him. I had known Dorzong Rinpoche for more than 50 years as he was a heart-son of the previous Khamtrul Rinpoche. He was both a scholar and a deep practitioner and he remained in tukdam for over 2 weeks after death. Tukdam is the meditation state at the time of death when the practitioner enters into the clear light nature of the mind. During this time the body does not decompose and remains supple. We all pray daily for his swift return.

In March once more our nuns went to Bodhgaya to participate in the debating with other nunneries at the Kagyu Monlam. In addition every day the Gyalwang Karmapa gave talks to the

nuns and this year initiated the historic process of ordination as bhikshuni or fully ordained nuns by arranging for a group of 19 nuns from various nunneries to be given the shramanerika or novice ordination by a sangha of senior nuns from Nanlin Nunnery in Taiwan. In the coming years these novice nuns will be receiving both training and further ordination leading to full bhikshuni ordination. We pray that

them an encouraging talk and spent several hours with the nuns in long-term retreat. His visit was an inspiration for us all. We are very grateful to Choegon Rinpoche for taking such time and trouble in the midst of his busy schedule and pray that he will visit us again and again.

We are very happy to announce the launch of a new and updated version of our Website [[www.tenzinpalmo.com](http://www.tenzinpalmo.com)].

This attractive new version is much easier to navigate and filled with information and photographs of the nuns and DGL (visit the Photo Gallery). We are deeply grateful for the expertise and endless hard work of our computer specialists Brian Sebastian and Gillian Boll who between them have created a beautiful website for the DGL Nunnery.

So once again we thank all our friends and supporters around the world. Our nuns are always

grateful for your kindness and continue to pray for peace and the well-being of all sentient beings sharing this beautiful but troubled and endangered planet.

May all beings be well and happy,

*Tenzin Palmo*



**Nuns paying their respects to the kudung (holy body) of Dorzong Rinpoche**

all will proceed smoothly as planned and the doors thereby opened for bhikshuni ordination in the Mulasarvastivada lineage followed by Tibetans.

In late March Kyabje Choegon Rinpoche who is one of our highest Drukpa Kagyu lamas visited DGL for two days and bestowed a Mahakala empowerment on the nuns. He also gave

# DEDICATION TO LATE TSUNMA THAYE CHOTSO

First of all I pay my great homage to late Tsunma Thaye Chotso and the meaningful ending of her life. For any being death is certain to all but the way of death always depends only on our karma. Only by this tragedy I really know the meaning of impermanence, that it's not just merely a word of sadness, happiness, gaining and losing etc. We need to understand very deeply how this precious human life is underlying beneath by impermanence and the changes only.

For me this tragedy is not just only an ending of a life or a big shock but a great inspiration too, that this is how beings' life starts from birth and ends to the death only.

I feel very grateful to Thaye that her life became more inspirational for someone even after death also.

Whenever I remember the time that I spent with her it does not allow me to believe that she is no more now, still she is always in my heart with her best memories.

I shared my experience not just to remind us of the tragedy again but with great hope of other nuns must take it as an example to practice the remembrance of impermanence.

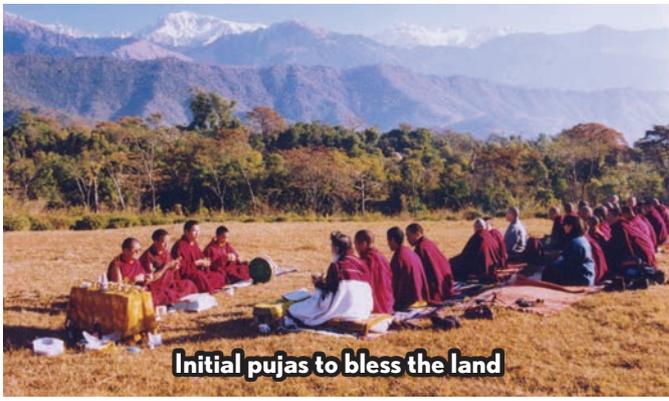
I pay my deep gratitude to venerable Jetsunma, staff members and all the nuns for supporting Thaye during critical conditions of her life.

At last not the least by the grace of Three Jewels may all beings get long life and enlightenment in this one life. Thank you all.

**Kelsang Wangmo**



REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DGL NUNNERY



Initial pujas to bless the land



Initial consultations regarding the building ahead



Our temple underway



Some of our dedicated workers

*“The DGL Nunnery is looking so beautiful. The workers worked very hard to build.”*

TSUNMA NGAWANG CHOZOM



The temple nearing completion



Jetsunma with Manu, Sanju and Krishan



Lama Lodroe, whose artistic vision has provided beautiful sacred spaces



Some of our nuns on first arrival. Tsunma Ngawang Chozom, back left

## TSUNMA NGAWANG CHOZOM

When I came to DGL Nunnery, I was twenty years old in 2005. It did not really look like a Buddhist nunnery because it was under construction. Only the dormitory was completed where the nuns were staying. Both dormitories are innovative and clean.

This is an earthquake disaster zone – so the buildings are built to survive earthquake. This nunnery is beyond my expectations because this is completely different from the nunneries I have seen in my village.

The rest of the buildings like the main temple, the stupa and the garden with beautiful flowers were not there when I first came here. It was not completed. I like the nunnery most. I found the nunnery and it was wonderful. So, I am lucky that I have good karma to be in this nunnery. Thank you very much!

The DGL Nunnery is looking so beautiful. The workers worked very hard to build.

## TSUNMA NGAWANG JIGME CHODRON

When I first came to DGL Nunnery there were no buildings. I felt very sad. I thought there was already a big nunnery and many nuns, but we were the beginners. At first there were only seven nuns.

Now our nunnery is looking so beautiful and clean. I am very happy to have my own nunnery. I am grateful to our Jetsunma a lot. Without her I can't reach the Dharma path. She is my great teacher on the Dharma path in my life and my next life. Because of her I reached my real root guru Khamtrul Rinpoche. I always pray for long life for my root guru Khamtrul Rinpoche, Jetsunma and all sentient beings.

## TSUNMA TSULTRIM PALMO

When I first came to DGL nunnery, the buildings were not here, we lived at Tashi Jong – in some of the monastery buildings. DGL site was an overgrown tea garden - which belonged to Tashi Jong community. When I came from Ladakh, I expected that there was already a nunnery and nuns, but there was not.

We were the first nuns of DGL. The nunnery wasn't started building yet. When I first saw the monks' monastery at Tashi Jong, I thought that was our nunnery. I was very happy to see it!

## TSUNMA TRINLEY PALTZO

When I had decided to become a nun, I heard about DGL Nunnery. I was very eager to join this nunnery and very anxious to see this nunnery. The first time I came to DGL I was 13 years old. This was looking like a school, because the main temple and stupa were not there and there was not any sign of a Buddhist nunnery. The only buildings were the office, guest house and dormitory. The other buildings were under construction, like the main temple, stupa etc. The construction of the nunnery started 16 years back. Now it is complete. The first time I came there were 65 nuns. At present there are 105 nuns, studying and practising Dharma here. The location of the nunnery is quite ideal. There is no disturbance from any side for the Dharma practising nuns. The nunnery is equipped with all the facilities. I think this nunnery is matchless and I had chosen an appropriate nunnery. I like this nunnery very much and I want to thank Jetsunma, because of her we have this opportunity. May she have good health and live long.



**Tsultrim Palmo, second from left, on arrival in 1999**



**From the ground up, our kind workers happily created this wonderful space**



**Laying the paths, so welcome after years of walking through mud on site**



**Trinley Paltso preparing for ordination**

# THE ADMIRABLE PILGRIMAGE

I, **Tsering Wangmo**, was one of the nuns who went on a great pilgrimage to Bhutan. According to me, Bhutan is the country of peace. We went on our pilgrimage to Bhutan in July 2016. In our nunnery we all take a special trip after we have been in the nunnery for six years. There were 14 nuns who went on the pilgrimage. We stayed in Bhutan for two weeks. We all had a very exciting time.

From India we went by train. We had great hospitality from the Bhutan Nuns Foundation. There are many places to make pilgrimage in Bhutan. All the pilgrimage sites in Bhutan are very good. But I felt very good about Paro Chumphug Ney and Paro Taktsang. I also had good feelings at Kuenzangdrak Ney in

Bumthang. It is very peaceful and a good place to stay on retreat.

There are 20 dzong (districts) in Bhutan but the main one is His Holiness Je Khenpo's monastery at Tashichho

Dzong. All the places we went to were very inspiring. All the places have their own unbelievable histories. These places really touched our hearts very deeply and made us more confident in practising

Dharma. We also enjoyed the different kinds of delicious Bhutanese dishes, like ema datshi and kewa datshi. I think Bhutan must be the only country where everything is managed to make all people comfortable. We were also fortunate to meet with Je Khenpo and that is not easy for all people to do. The great pilgrimage we had in Bhutan was because of Jetsunma. We all thank Jetsunma from our hearts and pray for her long and prosperous life.



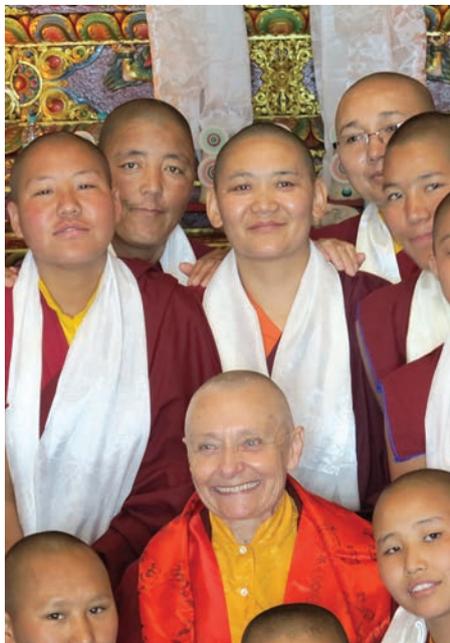
Pilgrimage nuns meeting with His Holiness Je Khenpo, in Bhutan

With regards and love,  
**Tsering Wangmo**

Tsering Wangmo was born in Tibet and lived in a town called Dergay. When she was about 14 years old, she went to Lhasa because her sister Tsering Palmo lived there. She travelled for 5 or 6 days by lorry. That time she stayed in Lhasa for two years before she returned to Dergay.

In 1999, when she was 18 or 19 years old, she left Tibet. Her sister and her family were able to take the short route because her sister had a passport. Tsering Wangmo and two nuns from Amdo walked on the long road. They had an old man and his son who were their guides.

One night while they were walking near a village, a dog started barking and woke the farmer. The farmer started looking for them and chasing them with a piece of burning wood. They were very scared and ran away very fast. They were very lucky to escape.



Tsering Wangmo (centre) with  
Jetsunma and nuns

For 5 or 6 days they walked at night and slept during the day. On the last day, they had to ride on a bus for two hours. The old man, who was their guide, told her not to wear her robes as it was drawing attention to their escape. The nuns from Amdo were wearing regular clothes. He had a blue jacket that was very dirty and smelled very bad. He made her wear his jacket and his hat. He also told her not to speak. Tsering Wangmo got sick on the bus ride but finally they got to Nepal.

On arrival in India, she did a 3 year retreat at Sherab Ling near Bir. In 2006 she came to Dongu Gatsal Ling Nunnery.

Tsering Wangmo, her sister who paid for the guides to help her escape from Tibet, still lives nearby in Bir with her family.

*As told to Rebecca Martin*

A TRIBUTE TO  
KYABJE DORZONG RINPOCHE'S  
LIFE AND HIS PRECIOUS  
CONNECTION TO OUR NUNNERY  
ALL OUR NUNS PRAY FOR  
HIS SWIFT RETURN



# GESHEMA TENZIN KUNSEL MAKING HISTORY

My name is Tenzin Kunsel. I came from Tibet where at that time there were not many nunneries – some were there but it was difficult to get the chance to stay in them. That is why Dolma Ling Nunnery was built near Dharamshala, for those of us who came out of Tibet.

I studied the Buddha Dharma, English and other subjects in Dolma Ling Nunnery and after more than seventeen years of study there, I joined Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery as a teacher – of debating and Tibetan language.

Then, from 2013 until 2016, I took my exams for the Geshe degree.

Then December 2016, in South India, I and the other Geshema candidates took part in the debating competition before an audience of almost 500 nuns – any of whom could debate with us and we gave answers to them.

Following that, on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, we received our Geshema Certificates directly from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Drepung Monastery. I was so happy and felt proud that we were the first Geshemas [in Tibetan history]. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had advised for many years that nuns should study and become Geshema, so I followed and achieved His Holiness' wish.

Now I am working as a teacher, and still there are more things to do – like raising awareness of Buddha Dharma in society. Especially, I would like to thank Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo and all the staff and nuns at DGL who gave me their full support during my four years of study for these exams.



## 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.tenzinpalmo.com](http://www.tenzinpalmo.com)**

on **Sponsor a Nun** page

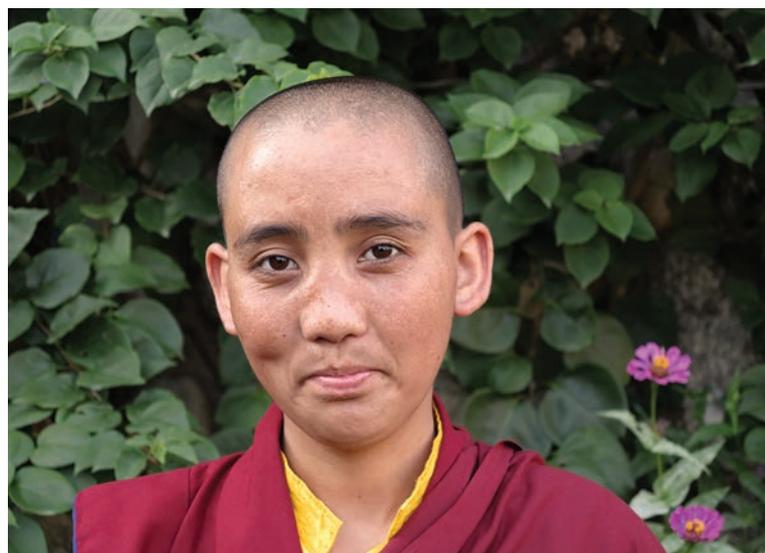
Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust is registered in India as a Charitable organisation designated for the support of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery and its activities.



# ABOUT MYSELF

My name is **Lekshe Dolma**. I am from Arunachal Pradesh. I am 21 years old. I became a nun in 2009. It was my own wish to become a nun but my family was also agreed with my decision. I went to the school in my village. I studied till sixth class. The standard of the education was not much good in the village, so cannot able to get good education. We are six siblings, of them two elder brothers and one elder sister are married and they are fully settled. I lost my mother at the age of eleven but we are so lucky that

our father looked after us with the caring and loving heart same as mother. My father never let us feel the loss of our mother. My family background is farmer and my family live very simple and easy life. After being a nun by practising Dharma only I knew the impermanence of living beings and how are we so attached to the Samsara. I pray for all the beings to be liberated from the Samsara. I am very happy in the Nunnery, I am very grateful for the Jetsunma and nunnery for their great support.

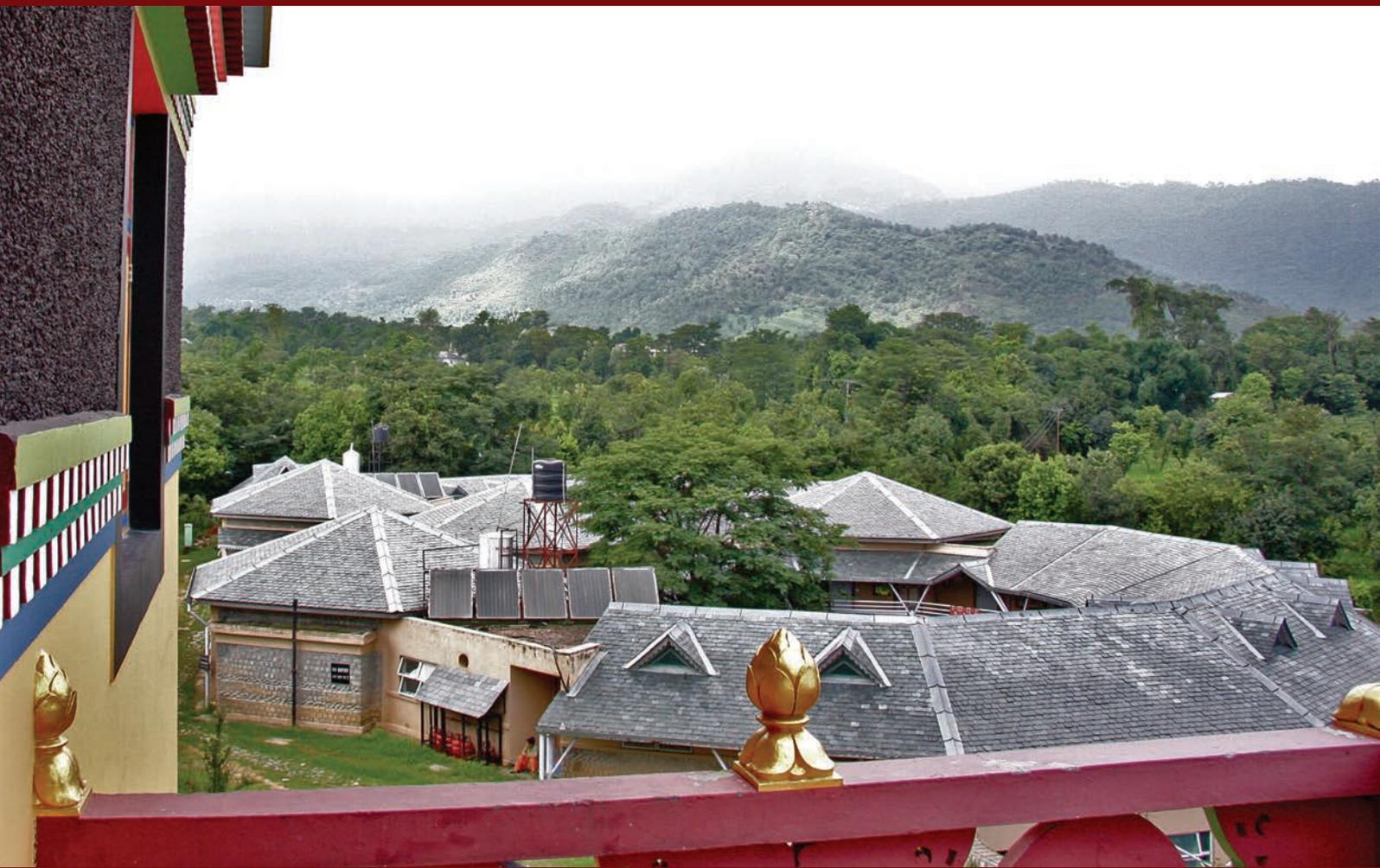


My name is **Dolma Chotso**. I am from Lahoul & Spiti. I was ordained as a nun in 2010. My family members are quite happy that I have chosen to be a nun. When I was young, I always would think of becoming a nun. My dream came true when I was ordained and gave my life to Dharma practice and there can be no better place for doing that than DGL Nunnery. I often feel I am very lucky. I am studying really very hard. I like nun's life. Our nunnery is a very nice place. It is very peaceful and quiet here.

**Front cover:** Flower ornaments adorn our front courtyard to welcome visiting Teachers

**Back cover:** View towards the nuns living area from our temple terrace

Photo credit front and back cover - Käthe Nennstiel



**BY AIRMAIL**

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