Dear friends,

Once again I reach out to contact all our friends from around the world through this Gatsal Newsletter.

In November 2007 I travelled to South Africa on a month long tour. It is a beautiful country and we found the people there to be very warm and friendly, but there are many social and political problems that create great tension throughout the land, and I sincerely hope that the message of the Dharma can bring some comfort and clarity into the situation there.

Then in February I was invited to Nepal by His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa, supreme head of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition. He had most graciously decided to ‘promote’ me to the rank of Jetsunma or venerable master as a gesture of respect and acknowledgement for all female practitioners. [see page 7]

In March I attended a conference in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on “Making Way for the Feminine -- For the Benefit of the World Community” which was attended by many people and included three of the main women gurus in India: the ‘Hugging Mother’ Amritananda-mayi (Ammachi), the amazing 93 year old Dada Janki, head of the Brahma Kumaris and the dynamic Anandamurti Guruma. Women and men from all over the world attended, especially from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, with Israelis and Palestinians as well as other parts of Asia and Africa.

In April 2008 five of our senior nuns began the traditional 3 year retreat in our newly built meditation centre. All the DGL nuns were so happy and tearful while offering the retreatants white scarves before the doors to the outside world were closed. Togden Achoe is responsible for their training and comes from time to time to give them further instruction. [see page 6]

In April/May I left for Australia and gave talks and retreats there in several cities. It was very pleasant to meet up with old friends and acquire many new ones. The tour climaxed with the conference on Happiness & Its Causes held in Sydney under the auspices of the FPMT Dharma organisation. There were many eminent psychologists, sociologists and neural-scientists participating along with some Buddhist speakers and an audience of about 2000 people in attendance.

In May the nuns had exams in Buddhist philosophy and English, which are never as bad as the nuns fear they will be! In early July I went to Mongolia for the Sakyadhita Buddhist women’s conference and in mid-July the nuns commenced their yearly two month retreat. In September this year we are accepting a fresh intake of young women to once again expand our Nunnery numbers.

Nowadays we have Bhutanese artists here who are working on the clay statues for the various shrine rooms. There are also Nepalese wood carvers creating the elaborate wooden shrine. We are fortunate that there are still dedicated craftsmen available to undertake this skilful traditional work.

Once again I gratefully thank all our kind friends and supporters for their help in making our DGL Nunnery an ongoing success.

With best wishes in the Dharma,
Tenzin Palmo
Every year we go to other monasteries to take different empowerments and transmissions from different Rinpoches. They are like Buddha in the samsara and very useful for us to practice dharma.

Empowerments and transmissions are very important to be related with all dharma texts. We are not allowed to read and to recite the dharma text without transmissions from certain dharma teachers. This time, in April, we went to Dzongsar Khyentse Chokyi Lodro Institute at Chauntra to take a great transmission of a special text from His Holiness Sakya Trizin, who is the head of the Sakyapa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. It was the second empowerment we got from him. The first one was Namgyalma [Ushnisha Vijaya] empowerment, which he delivered at Dzongsar Monastery at Bir. This time he blessed us with Hevajra tantric deity mantra which is called ‘Kye -Dorjey’ in Tibetan. I felt that his actual thoughts are very good. All the Rinpoches teach us dharma with great compassion and love. At first we took three jewel refuges. Also, he taught us the meaning of it. The meaning is that there is no way in the existence without refuge to Buddha. Three jewels of the refuge have capacity to save us from Samsara.

During the transmission he gave us the holy broom stick to experiment it in our dreams, by putting it under the pillow while we sleep. In dreams its impacts on us could be visualized. Further he gave us ‘Hevajra’ vows. Hevajra is a tantric deity in Buddhism. His Holiness Sakya Trizin told us not to violate the solemn vows. The most important vows of the above said tradition is to read its text without any fail everyday. After that His Holiness Sakya Trizin also ordained each of us with an auspicious name. We are asked to keep it secret until our death. Before our final journey we can reveal it to the person who'll perform puja for us after death. It’ll take our obstacles away and enables us to defeat the evil power within us and outside. We get many experience and knowledge from him. He is very simple Rinpoche and precious. We love his teaching very much. We are looking forward to seek more empowerments and transmission from him in future also.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE NUNS AT DGL

Tenzin Palmo and the nuns at DGL Nunnery thank our sponsors in a most heartfelt manner.

Your kindness helps our Nunnery to flourish and keep the Dharma alive.

Sponsoring a nun costs the equivalent of US$365 a year.

Cheques should be made payable to ‘Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust’ and posted to:

**Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery**

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Anyone wishing to make a donation to DGL Nunnery in their own country by Swift or Telegraphic Transfer, please email Eliz Dowling for details on eliz_palmo@hotmail.com

For further information or to contact Venerable Tenzin Palmo please email DGL on dgl.nunnery@yahoo.com

Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust is registered in India as a charitable organization designated for the support of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery and its activities.
In the past few months the nuns and staff have begun trying to organize the gardens and landscape around the Nunnery. The nuns have been learning about gardening techniques and also related environmental issues of soil conservation, water management, waste collection, recycling and re-using. We now compost all of our bio-degradable garbage. We also plan to set up our own plant nursery, a green house for herbs and in due course a vegetable garden. We hope to make Dongyu Gatsal Ling an ecologically responsible place of Buddhist study.

We are delighted that Dhruv Sud, a local architect and landscaper who developed the gardens at Norbulingka Institute, has volunteered to guide and inspire our nuns in their gardening efforts.

The extensive Photo Gallery continues to grow. We hope you enjoy the latest pictures including some stunning photographs by Karen Harris and Teh Li Lian taken with Jetsunma in Tibet last year.

Our website shop has many new teaching titles from Jetsunma’s last two years of touring, available on CD, MP3 & DVD, as well as new photographs and packs of cards.

So don’t miss out, visit www.tenzinpalmo.com for the latest information on Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery and Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo’s activities.

DGL Website

We are pleased to announce that our website has come on a long way since you may have last visited the site. Our local designer, Brian Sebastian, is a whiz with technology and you can now read media articles from all over the world, listen to teachings and even watch video footage of Jetsunma’s enthronement!

Find out ways that you can become involved, in ‘Support DGL.’ Since asking for volunteers to help translate Jetsunma’s teachings we now have a team of thirteen nationalities, helping to spread the Dharma to as wide an audience as possible. Thank you!

The extensive Photo Gallery continues to grow. We hope you enjoy the latest pictures including some stunning photographs by Karen Harris and Teh Li Lian taken with Jetsunma in Tibet last year.

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Suman Parmar - DGL's English Teacher

We are happy to announce that Mrs Suman Parmar a highly qualified local English teacher has joined the staff at DGL. In the past we have relied on foreign volunteers for our English program and although this certainly provided our nuns with an intriguing variety of personalities, teaching styles and English accents, we finally acknowledged that it would be better to employ a seasoned and qualified English teacher from around these parts. A grant from an organisation in Hamburg has made this possible.

Suman is a charming woman with a double MA in English and Philosophy as well as a B.Ed diploma in Education. She has been teaching at local private schools for some years and apparently decided that teaching Buddhist nuns would be an interesting challenge! The nuns love and respect her and we feel that the affection is reciprocated. Mrs Parmar’s husband is a professor at Palampur University. We are very happy to have Suman with us and hope that she will stay on with us for many years to come.
Farewell to Khenpo Tsering

Khenpo Tsering came to us in 2003 from the Dzongsar Institute near Bir as the teacher of Buddhist philosophy for our Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery. Although he belongs to the Sakyapa tradition, he has always adopted a non-sectarian approach to teaching and would participate as Vajra Master during the nuns’ pujas performed on special dates within the lunar month.

Throughout his 5 years residence with us Khenpo has always been scrupulous in his daily attendance, even teaching extra classes in the evenings. He has also taught the preliminary practices to the junior nuns during the annual holidays. Perhaps our Indian workers may think our nuns are very quarrelsome as each afternoon they engage in lively philosophical debates under the watchful eyes of the Khenpo and Lopons!

Living and working in this all-female environment must have posed many challenges but Khenpo’s sense of humour and appreciation of international cuisine kept him buoyant and in good spirits! While with us at DGL Khenpo’s command of the English language has made great strides and he also mastered the skills of driving our Bolero car (passing his driving test with flying colours the first time!)

We are deeply grateful to Khenpo Tsering for these years spent with us. He has in every way shown his dedication and commitment to transmitting the wisdom and learning of the Dharma to our nuns. We wish him every happiness and success in the years to come for all his future endeavours.

Goodbye Lopons

The Lopons [nun teachers] from His Holiness Penor Rinpoche’s Namgyal Ling Nunnery usually only stay with us for one year. Therefore once again we must bid goodbye to these excellent nuns who so kindly come here to teach their Dharma sisters. Lopon Ngawang Peljung and Lopon Rigzin Chodron have helped with teaching during this year and we are very grateful for their efforts and wish them well in their future activities. It is very inspiring to have accomplished and learned nuns to encourage our nuns in their studies.

Next term our own senior nuns will take the classes for newcomers and the junior philosophy class in logic. Therefore we will require only one Lopon nun from Namgyal Ling to help with the more senior revision classes and the debating. Likewise in the future some of the DGL nuns will be qualified to become lopons and khenmos so that the Nunnery will be independent and rely on our own nuns to teach and transmit the Dharma extensively.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo comes to the United States this Fall

Albuquerque, NM
Portland, OR
Berkeley, CA
Anderson Valley, CA
Santa Cruz, CA

Please visit www.palmousa.org for details
The most important time of a nun’s life is doing retreat. It should be gradually decreasing the disturbing emotions. Therefore, five of our nuns have chosen this path. Among the retreaters three are from Tibet (Thupten Lhamo, Kunsang Chodron and Dechen Paldon), one is from Kinnaur (Tsewang Chodron) and one is from Ladakh (Wangchuk Chodron).

According to Tibetan calendar Togden Achoe (the Yogi from Tashi Jong) found auspicious date and time to shift their accommodation and do puja before living in the retreat centre. That day Togden Achoe, our three teachers and all the senior nuns joined the puja with five of our retreaters. They finally departed for one year retreat on 29th March 2008.

At the moment they are practicing two face Phagmo and doing prostrations. There are four session in a day. They get up 4.00 am and bed time is 10.00pm. They also do Sur puja and Yoga too!

Their livelihood is being taken care of by our nuns Ani Rinchen Dolma and Ani Jigme Chodron. These two leave the food for the retreaters in their kitchen as the bell rings. If the retreaters need anything, they leave a note in their kitchen for the liaison nuns, about it.

Before going into retreat centre they had to organize many things. They requested H.E Khamtrul Rinpoche to give text of the translations scriptures because the texts are holy and it isn’t easy to get. Getting the scriptures they visited Togden Achoe to learn how to practice genuine text properly. Thus, the organising lasted for many days.

The retreat centre is a very nice and peaceful place. They have their own single rooms but they are practicing together. They had strived to prepare their rooms and puja hall. Our teacher Gen Jinpa had helped them in every need. He has been always kind to us. Jetsunma la and Monica ji were concerned that they might not have enough Buddha’s and other deity’s photos because the puja hall altar is decorated temporarily, but still it looks beautiful. They needed many puja articles to use while they practice so some of those things we had bought in Nepal and some in Delhi.

It brought great joy to our Jetsunma la and all the DGL nuns as well to organise the long retreats, which is our Jetsunma’s aim. We DGL nuns are extremely pleased because some of us are able to accomplish Jetsunma’s ambition. I think in samsara many beings attained a human body endowed with freedoms and resources. It is rare among these beings to know how to use their precious lives such as our five retreaters.

More of our nuns are looking forward to the time when they can do long retreat. Now they have to study hard for six years to be able to seek position of a long retreator.

May all beings do practice of genuine Dharma and to be well and happy.
It is with great joy that we tell all friends of Tenzin Palmo and Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery that Tenzin Palmo has been given the title of JETSUNMA, which means Venerable Master, by His Holiness the Twelfth Gyalwang Drukpa, Head of the Drukpa Kagyudpa lineage. His Holiness bestowed this honour on Tenzin Palmo at Druk Amitabha Mountain in Katmandu, a Nunnery of about 150 young nuns, on his birthday, the 16th February 2008. He did so in recognition of her spiritual achievements as a nun and her efforts in promoting the status of female practitioners in Tibetan Buddhism.

During the ceremony, His Holiness explained that Je means ‘accomplishment of a Yogini and Tsun means ‘accomplishment of the path of a Bhikshuni’. He went on to say ‘Men were always given the privilege to do all practices, but it was not given to women. This is very sad. But now it is different. It would be unkind if I would not give the title of Jetsunma to Venerable Tenzin Palmo for the benefit of all females in the world and the Palden Drukpa lineage.’

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo says ‘His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa has for a long time been concerned to raise the standard of female practitioners and give them due respect. As part of his campaign on behalf of women, he decided to ‘promote’ me to the rank of Jetsunma, using this as an expression of his regard for women in the Dharma. When I first heard of His Holiness’ plans I was quite shocked and dismayed, but the feedback from all over the world was so positive, that I realized this honour was not just about me but included all female practitioners on the path.’

The ceremony in Katmandu was attended by many of Jetsunma’s dearest friends and the three Dongyu Gatsal Ling nuns who are Trustees represented the DGL Nunnery. They say ‘We are really happy to have this opportunity to be with Jetsunma for her enthronement. All the DGL nuns are so proud that Jetsunma is the first woman in the Drukpa Kargyu lineage to receive this rare honour. This is a good example for all Buddhist women. All of the DGL nuns are very happy that this Jetsunma title is given to our own Tenzin Palmo.’

More photos, slideshows and video footage including the speech His Holiness the Twelfth Gyalwang Drukpa gave at this wonderful historical event, can be seen and heard on our updated website www.tenzinpalmo.com in Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, Media.
The Nature of Mind
Melbourne, Australia - May 2008 - 2 DVD Set
The nature of mind is clear and knowing. The root of all our problems is the creation of the ‘I’ or ego through wrong identification with our thoughts and feelings. Meditation is the means to peel away these layers of false identification and bring us back to who we really are. This DVD set includes some clear and simple instructions on meditation which is the foundation of the spiritual path.

How Negative Thoughts Create Our Difficulties
Tel Aviv, Israel - September 2006 - Audio CD
We project our version of the world through the distortions of our consciousness polluted with delusion, greed and aversion - and so we suffer. Usually we blame the outside situation and other people for our problems, rather than accept our responsibility. However the good news is we can develop a peaceful and happy mind. In reality the nature of mind is our most precious discovery.

The Six Perfections
Tel Aviv, Israel - September 2006 - MP3 CD
This teaching explores how far from being an obstacle to our practice, everything that we do when performed with the right attitude can be used in daily life as our means for transformation. Applying the Six Perfections - generosity, ethics, patience, effort, meditation and wisdom - throughout the day, is a way to give meaning to our life and until we use our daily life as our spiritual practice we are never ever going to change.

Buddhism in Daily Life
Melbourne, Australia - May 2008 - DVD Video
Due to the tendency to separate what we think of as our Dharma practice and our everyday life we greatly misapprehend what being a Dharma practitioner is all about. In this teaching Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo makes practical observations and suggestions on how to bring the two together and use our everyday life to enhance our practice no matter who we are with or what we are doing.

Using Daily Life as Our Spiritual Practice
Shambala, New York - October 2004 - DVD Video
There is always a temptation to regard our Dharma practice as separate from ordinary life: attending talks, meditation courses or sitting for meditation - and the rest of the time spent with our family, friends and job is just worldly activity. In this DVD Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo makes practical observations and suggestions on how to use our everyday life to enhance our practice no matter who we are with or what we are doing.

The Three Yanas
Shambala, New York - May 2008 - MP3 CD
The Three Yanas or Three Vehicles are the Buddhists schools: Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana, which deal with our motivation for practice. These talks cover the main topics in each of these schools: The Four Noble Truths, Bodhisattva motivation, Yogacharya School and an introduction to Vajrayana.

These titles and more are now available at http://www.tenzinpalmo.com/shop

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