Once again it is time to present another Gatsal Newsletter to chronicle our activities of the last few months.

In the spring I travelled to Vietnam to attend a very successful Sakyadhita [Daughters of the Buddha] conference and visited a Nunnery in the hills beyond Hanoi which follows the Drukpa Kagyu tradition. It was very moving and quite surreal to witness 70 Vietnamese nuns performing a 2 hour Chöd ritual in Tibetan!

An important event earlier this year was the Annual Drukpa Council held at the Druk Amitabha Mountain nunnery situated on a hill behind the Swayambhunath Stupa in Kathmandu. His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa wanted 800 nuns to assemble for the main week-long ceremonies and so our DGL nuns went along accompanied by Khenpo Ngawang Zangpo and their English teacher Charanjit Singh. It was a 3 day bus ride in the heat but the nuns were very happy to participate in such an auspicious event and see many new sights. The ADC is attended by thousands of people from around the globe but especially from the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Bhutan, Garsha, Spiti and Kinnaur.

After Nepal I went on to Australia for the Mitra youth conference and then spent a few days in Singapore on the way back to India. In both countries it was lovely to meet with dear old friends again and cultivate some lovely new ones.

In May the majority of our nuns left for their annual holidays after completing their exams. However the 26 nun newcomers remain at the Nunnery since they are not permitted to return home for the first two years. They attended the daily rituals and also had classes in English and Tibetan. Many of them were also learning the first part of the Preliminary Practices [Ngöndro] from their nun Genla Yeshe Wangmo in preparation for the general retreat later.

Therefore in June these DGL new nuns and all the staff attended the Inauguration of H.E. Dorzong Rinpoche’s temple at Jangchub Jong which was presided over by our spiritual director H.E. Khamtrol Rinpoche. Everyone - both monastic and lay - attended from Tashi Jong and it was a joyful occasion lasting for 4 days. Jangchub Jong is situated on a beautiful forested ridge high above the Kangra valley overlooking the snow mountains and the terraced paddy fields below. At the height of the ceremony a rainbow appeared in the sky above the monastery.

Nowadays most of our nuns are immersed in their annual 2 month retreat for the Rainy Season. Apart from chanting the nuns have chosen to practice silence throughout the retreat. The retreat provides a welcome break from the academic program during the rest of the year.

So as not to disturb the retreatants, the newcomer nuns who do not yet have a sufficient knowledge of the Tibetan language, are continuing with their language classes while camped out in a makeshift dormitory and classroom in the Study Centre, which they look on as something of an adventure.

We thank all our well-wishers and sponsors around the world who once more have helped so much to make this Nunnery a continuing success.

Dear friends,
Recent Ordinations

During the past 10 months 2 groups of young nuns have been ordained by Khamtrul Rinpoche. They included nuns from Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling, Zanskar, Kinnaur and Lahoul in India, plus one nun from Bhutan. Most of these young women had been at DGL Nunnery for some months, joining in studies and pujas with the ordained nuns.

The evening before ordination the girls had their heads shaved by older nuns and were shown how to wear robes. This ceremony is of great significance to the young women and most of them pray quietly while their heads are shaved.

On the morning of ordination they put on their robes for the first time and met with Jetsunma who accompanied them to Tashi Jong Monastery. Jetsunma took the young women into the temple and showed them the statues of the Drukpa Kargyu lineage holders and also the stupa of the previous Khamtrul Rinpoche.

Khamtrul Rinpoche was assisted by Togden Achoe in the ordination ceremony. Once ordained, Togden Achoe addressed the nuns as Cho-la or ‘respected nun’.

On return to DGL Nunnery the new nuns looked very happy and shy as they were warmly greeted by their older ‘sister’ nuns.

The new nuns have settled in very well and are doing very well at their studies. The newer nuns are usually given the job of serving meals to Khenpo-la. They take it in turns doing this for several months at a time with an older nun. They then move on to gradually taking on other roles in addition to their studies. It has been found that this helps to build their confidence and to gradually feel that they are actively involved in the running of their nunnery.
BIOGRAPHY OF THE NUNS' TEACHER

LOPONMA TSERING LHAMO

I am Loponma Tserring Lhamo from Namdroling Nunnery. I am from the Yolmo Valley in Nepal. There are 4 family members in our house. They are, my father Rinzin, my mother Khado, my brother Tenzin and I.

I studied in English New Public School for two years, then later my brother and I both studied at school in Shimla for six years. I had to start from 1st grade because I did not know Tibetan. After that I studied in Kathmandu Nepal for 2 years.

Once I had finished my schooling I became a nun in Namdroling in the year of 1993. Only 20 nuns were there at that time. In those days we learned ritual pujas from lamas and also studied grammar in private. Sometimes we received teachings from Khenpo Pema Sherab. In 1996 we were allowed to study for the first time in the Shedra (the school where the monks were trained). In the 9 year course we studied Madhyamika, (The Middle Way), Logic, Prajñāparamita, Abhidharma and Vinaya, plus Tantric texts. We also studied grammar, poetry, Tibetan History and the growth of Buddhism. We did one month's Ngondro and Dzogchen retreats each year. We also received empowerments.

In 1997 I became the Kyorpon. So the situation was a little hard for me as for one whole year I had to teach two classes and I hardly got time to learn my own lessons. To find the time for my own studies I used to wake up at 12:00 midnight or 1:00am. I used to memorise hundreds of pages. But, due to little time I did not have time to revise. So, I did my revision while taking my bath or washing my clothes. I didn't even have time to notice whether my clothes were perfectly tidy or not. Some time later a friend told me “Do you know you used to wear very faded robes?” I did not recognize this myself. Sometimes I slept in my robes and in the morning I only had time to make it straight.

Anyway, I feel I am so lucky to have had this chance to study in the Shedra at the very beginning. I was even luckier to become a disciple of H.H. Penor Rinpoche who is a Buddha himself in this degenerate time.

We finished our Shedra studies in 2004. From 2005 we started to have Nuns who are Lopons. (Lopon means qualified teacher) I have been teaching as a Lopon since 2005.

In 2006 I also worked as principle in Junior school. In 2009 I was invited to teach at DGL Nunnery. So, here I am, so impressed to see Jetsunma. She is a good inspiration for all nuns. I enjoy teaching here a lot. In 2011 another Lopon from Namdroling is coming to teach here in my place. I hope very much that the relationship between DGL Nunnery and Namdroling Nunnery will continue for many years into the future. There surely was a relationship in the past, which is why we have all gathered here through our motivation, supplication and karma. And this relationship will continue until enlightenment.

My hope for the future is to start a Nunnery in my own country Bhutan to give other young women the chance to work as nuns for the benefit of all beings.

BIOGRAPHY OF DEBATING TEACHER

GETSULMA YESHE LHAMO

I am Getsulma Yeshe Lhamo. I am from Jangchup Choeling Nunnery in South India. I was born in 1974 in eastern Bhutan at a place called Tashigang.

My father's name was Norbu Tsering and my mother was Photimo. Until I was 9 years old I helped my parents weave carpets and herd cows. Sometimes I also helped them in selling small things. My father died when I was only 12. Then I started learning a little reading and writing at the local monastery.

I saw a lot of suffering in my country particularly amongst the women. When young women marry they enter a life of hardship, caring for their children and husband, plus looking after the animals and farm. Although as a married woman I would be looking after these beings, I thought that as a nun my life would be more valuable as I could work for the happiness of all beings.

At the age of 18 I went to Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in South India. I took ordination there. I then had the opportunity to study Madhyamika, Vinaya, Prajñāparamita, Logic and Abhidharma.

Soon after becoming a nun I faced many problems such as illness. Sometimes this meant I could not study, but I never regretted my decision to become a nun. I had no money to buy medicines, so I was only able to pray to become healthy again.

I never thought to return to my homeland, because there I would not have the chance to read the texts and attend classes.

I also learned a little about science in my spare time. This has always been an interest. During my 18 years of study I also taught Dhudra (classes for debating and logic). I finished studying in 2007. For 11 years I attended debating competitions with other Nunneries. In 1995 for the first time nuns began debating in front of the HH the Dalai Lama, and I was so happy to get the chance to debate in front of him. In my Nunnery the other nuns then voted that I become their debating teacher.

In 2008 I was invited to teach debating at DGL Nunnery. Here, I have enjoyed teaching for the last 2 years. 3 evenings a week when she is at the Nunnery Jetsunma has given me English lessons. I have been very happy to spend this time with her.

My hope for the future is to start a Nunnery in my own country Bhutan to give other young women the chance to work as nuns for the benefit of all beings.
I have never ever imagined in my wildest dreams that one day I would have the chance to visit another country. Visiting Druk Amitabha Nunnery in Nepal, doing lots of pujas with big Rinpoches and huge crowds was wonderful.

Everything in this Nunnery is colourful and bright. The nuns are very nice and the rules are very strict. I am deeply grateful to Jetsunma-la for giving us so much.

In Nepal I came to see many beggars. At the Nepal border there was a boy asking me for money. I first asked him about his mother. He said that she was in hospital with fire burns, and that his 3 younger siblings were also with him. He said that he had to buy food for them so I gave him 50 rupees that I had with me.

Later on we went to a food stall. He was there having a meal with his siblings. I asked him if he had paid for the food with the money I gave him. He replied that they were eating the leftover scraps of food. Then I scolded him for not using my money.

But, I was very sad to hear that my money wasn't enough to get food for all of them. I was helpless!

There are many rich people in this world. But most of them don't have hearts that are kind enough to help the poor.

I now have a strong wish to work for the poor and needy in the future. May the mighty Buddha help me to fulfill my wish.

Continued on page 10
Venerable Khenpo Ngawang Zangpo was born in Tibet. He grew up with his noble parents. Realizing the lack of satisfaction to be found in everyday life, he gave up his worldly life and became a monk. He soon gained good knowledge about the real meaning of all phenomena.

In 2004 he was determined to come to India after his Monastery was closed by the Chinese. He came to India the same year. Once there he strived to listen, reflect and practice the Dharma. He became a genuine scholar.

Due to the kindness of the Tashi Jong’s senior Khenpos and staff they sent such a nice Khenpo to teach us. He has been teaching us since 2008. Khenpo Ngawang deals with all of his students with compassion.

He obtained the formal title of Khenpo this year on 22nd November. This day is very auspicious in the Buddhist calendar because Lord Buddha descends from Tushita Heaven after teaching the Dharma to his mother. The celebration of this anniversary was organised at Tashi Jong Monastery.

The ceremony started at 9:30am. First mantras were chanted. H.E. Khamtrul Rinpoche, Dorzong Rinpoche, Choegon Rinpoche and Choegyal Rinpoche were all there as well as a Rinpoche from Dharamsala. Many other Sangha members were there including our Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, and all of the nuns from DGL Nunnery.

Dorzong Rinpoche and the Rinpoche from Dharamsala gave speeches about how to become a good follower of the Buddha. His Eminence Khamtrul Rinpoche then gave certificates to our Khenpo Ngawang and the other Khenpo. After that, each one of us present in the hall offered Khatas to the Khenpos and to Khamtrul Rinpoche as a mark of respect and honour.

Another ceremony was waiting for us at DGL. Choegon Rinpoche came to visit us at 3-00pm. He was given a warm welcome by Jetsunma and the nuns and took the high seat to give us some advice. He also offered special prayers to the newly built statues in the new puja hall. He took a keen interest in the building work which was going on in the main temple. He also made some valuable suggestions.

At 7:00pm our puja started. We had decorated the puja hall in a delectable manner. Some of the guests attended the puja including our English teacher and all the DGL staff. They all showed keen interest.

Then the DGL nuns gave speeches on the Dharma. This was followed by an interesting religious debate by some of the nuns. It generated a lot of interest, especially when our Gen-la and Khenpo-la joined in.

The puja came to an end at 9:00pm. At last, we dedicated all our merit for the benefit of all sentient beings. It was a really memorable day for each one of us.
I am DGL Nunnery’s site manager. My name is Manish Kumar, but I am known as Manu. I am from a farming family near Yol, about one hour’s drive from DGL. I married some years ago and have a small son who is 3 years old.

I joined DGL Nunnery staff in 2001. I came to DGL with qualifications as a draftsman and with some years experience building mudbrick houses for Didi Contractor, an old friend of Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. Didi trained me for many years and when Jetsunma needed someone to manager the Nunnery site, Didi suggested me.

Over the years I have worked closely with the architect and the contractors. In the beginning we had many obstacles to overcome but work has proceeded and now we are nearing the final stages. We have nearly completed the traditional Temple in consultation with Dugu Choegyal Rinpoche and Lama Lodro, and we are working on a small guesthouse, the boundaries and the site landscaping.

I do many things at DGL. For example, I find the site labourers and supervise their work and the contractors’ workers also. I work with the architects and contractors on the plans; find suppliers, obtain best prices and order materials like steel, cement and wood, etc. I check the contractors’ bills for payment and pay the site workers. I am helped by the site assistants Sanju and Krishan who are extremely reliable and efficient and have worked with me for many years.

I am very satisfied with my job and have always felt part of the DGL family. I think of my work like it’s for my family. I am very much proud to work for Jetsunma and the Nunnery.
Our Trip to Nepal
by Tashi Chotso

On the 21st March 2010 we went to Nepal by bus. His Holiness the 12th Gyalwang Drukpa had arranged for our long journey. We left for Delhi in the evening and arrived at 9-00am the next morning. There we changed buses for the trip to Nepal. We arrived at the border at midday on the 23rd. We stayed at the border for more than 8 hours, and then started the last leg of the journey. We arrived at Swyambhunath on the 24th.

We were then taken to Druk Amitabha in smaller vehicles. The whole journey was interesting and full of adventure.

HH Gyalwang Drukpa Rinpoche invited all the DGL nuns to attend the 2nd ADC. He invited 800 nuns of the Drukpa lineage. Once there we did pujas for 7 days. It was such a beautiful place. We received blessings from many high lamas and Rinpoches.

Jetsunma took us to see His Holiness and he gave us a blessing and a teaching.

The Druk Amitabha nuns were very good at Pujas and ritual dances. They are doing their own work very nicely. We also saw 30’ bronze statues of Buddha Amitabha and a 35’ statue of the omniscient one Padma Karpo.

On the 30th March we went for a circumambulation of the Swyambhunath Stupa for purification of negative karma and the accumulation of merit.

We enjoyed the delicious traditional vegetarian meals prepared by special volunteer chefs from Bhutan, Nepal and Vietnam. Really, it was a wonderful journey for us.

Our Trip to Druk Amitabha
by Samtem Chodron

First of all I think I was so lucky and fortunate to join this Nunnery and get a chance to visit Nepal for the first time. It is thanks to Jetsunma that I went, because she has such a good relationship with HH Drukchen Rinpoche, and that is why we were invited to Nepal.

I never thought that I should ever receive teachings from him. He taught us about virtue and non-virtue, and inspired us all to practice the Dharma sincerely. Rinpoche told us that faith and compassion are very important.

There were so many monks, nuns and lay people there from many countries. Every day we were given delicious food, and all of the other nuns were very friendly. They took us on a two day pilgrimage, which we enjoyed very much.

There were 2 performances by the nuns of Druk Amitabha. We were asked to participate in the performance. The nuns could do the religious dances very well. All those present enjoyed it and applauded, and I felt really surprised that the Druk Amitabha nuns were so talented.

So that is the life which we enjoyed and spent happily in Nepal. During the ADC we got a chance to circumambulate the Swyambhunath stupa in the middle of the night. We were supposed to complete 13 koras. At 12 mid night we set out on foot and did not complete the koras until 9-30am.

I felt so tired after completing only 4 koras, but we were so lucky to get this chance to walk along with Rinpoche and after we went back by taxi.

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. 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
Village Lower Mutt, P.O. Padhiarkhar, Via Taragarh
Distt. Kangra, H.P. 176081, India

Anyone wishing to make a donation to DGL Nunnery via Tenzin Palmo’s account 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 Tenzin Palmo please email DGL on dgloffice@gatsal.org
Dongyu Gatsal Ling Trust is registered in India as a charitable organization designated for the support of Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery and its activities.
I am Trinley Paltso. I am 16 years old and was born in Kinnaur. I was sent to a village primary school at the age of five. Then I studied in a high school up to the middle standard.

At that time I began to feel that there is too much suffering in the world. I used to get sick myself after seeing someone in physical or mental pain. Certain diseases were a recurring phenomenon around me, such as headache, stomach pain, backache, fever etc.

Poverty was a different kind of suffering. I began to search for a cause for all these problems so that I could help myself and other sentient beings.

Slowly, I began to realise that Buddhism had an answer to all these endless problems. I could help with others’ suffering if I could be ordained as a Buddhist Nun in a good Nunnery.

One day, I heard about DGL Nunnery near Palampur, founded by Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. I was lucky to be accepted by this Nunnery three years back. I am quite happy here and doing my best to study and practice Dharma in a dedicated manner.

I have no doubt in my mind that I will succeed one day in achieving my aim fully.

I shall spread the message of Lord Buddha all over the world and help others to put an end to their suffering by becoming the true followers of the Tathagata. Then there will be complete equanimity and harmony in the world. I pray that I shall live to see the fulfillment of my humble dreams.
BY AIRMAIL

To:

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