

THOSAMLING

Institute & Nunnery for International Buddhist Women

eNEWS letter Winter 2016/17

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Winter in Sidhpur:
The path through the terrace fields
behind THOSAMLING with the
majestic Himalayan foothills, the
Dhauladar Range, as a backdrop...

THOSAMLING
NUNNERY & INSTITUTE for
INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST WOMEN
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Sangmo's Column

January 2017: A new year has begun with new challenges for all of us in the whole world.

Review: 2016 I consider a bit as a transitional year of ups and downs.

First the ups: We were so lucky to attend another wonderful Kalachakra in the new year 2017 with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Bodhgaya (see pages 8+9).

New programs are developed for 2017 (see pages 9+10) and **new nuns** will join our nunnery. Welcome everybody!

Renovation work: Nyima Building where our lay practitioners stay got a facelift (see page 13), and the rooms look really beautiful now after all the work that got done by so many helpers.

Our **organic gardens** look terrific, with newly created permaculture beds, a herbal garden with a diversity of kitchen herbs, as well as a strawberry production on the roof (see pages 11+12). We are learning so much from all the people who just help out by sharing their knowledge with us. Thank you all very much! In about two years we will be able to provide our kitchen solely with vegetables and fruits from our own garden.

The biggest down was the sadness we felt at the loss of our lovely dog **Dawa**. It was unavoidable, despite a 24-7 intensive care by nuns and laypeople. I was abroad and could not be part of it, and maybe it was better for her and me, although it was difficult not to be there... (see box).

In the beginning of 2016 we could see that her health was quite weak: the kidney function was low, and also her liver was part of the deterioration. Dr. Catherine Schuetze, our friend and Australian vet, told me at the time, "Just take care as much as you can and make her comfortable."

At that time I did not want to think about losing her. But after a stroke she suffered in November, her health deteriorated more and more, and finally she passed actually quite fast. It was a hard time for everybody, and even the non-dog-lovers were moved to tears when she had to leave us.

I want to thank everybody who took care of her so well, and who – even after her passing – took care of all the mantras, prayers and rituals which were recited for her.

I decided not to burn the body after walking over the grounds of Thosamling. Dawa was born in my bed, played around and grew up in Thosamling, and protected the compound fiercely if necessary. She loved Thosamling, she loved the people, and everybody loved her back dearly.

She was the love bug of Thosamling, and many visitors asked if they could take her home with them – which was of course out of the question.



We all have to go one day, and Dawa had been sick for a long time. As a small puppy she had fallen from the roof of the main building and injured her kidneys, a fact we were not aware of until August 2009 when she suffered a first kidney failure and was described by 10 Western veterinarians (who were in Leh, Ladakh for a de-sexing program) as 'a dead dog' after seeing the results of her blood tests. But Australian vet Dr. Catherine Schuetze told me on the phone to continue with the treatment. Despite that, one night Dawa had seizures and her heart stopped beating, but somehow I managed to bring it back to work, although we almost gave up on her then. From that moment in 2009 Dr. Catherine used to call her "My Miracle Dog", and yes – that she really was.

I also want to thank Lobsang-la from Tibet Charity Animal Welfare in McLeod Ganj who was such an amazing and compassionate help during all this time.

Dawa finally lived until 22 of November 2016 adding seven years to her life.

She is dearly missed, but we are also very grateful to have her had as our friend in Thosamling as she was really special in having lots of love and compassion for others.

So I decided to let her rest in the soil of Thosamling. We even made a little grave for her, where white lilies and crocuses will bloom.

We are confident that Dawa, along with Queenie, her mother and Nyima, her sister who are both still with us, created and create lots of merits 'doing their job' at Thosamling and will have a very good rebirth, and we hope we will continue to work together for the benefit of all sentient beings also in the future.

OUR "MIRACLE DOG"



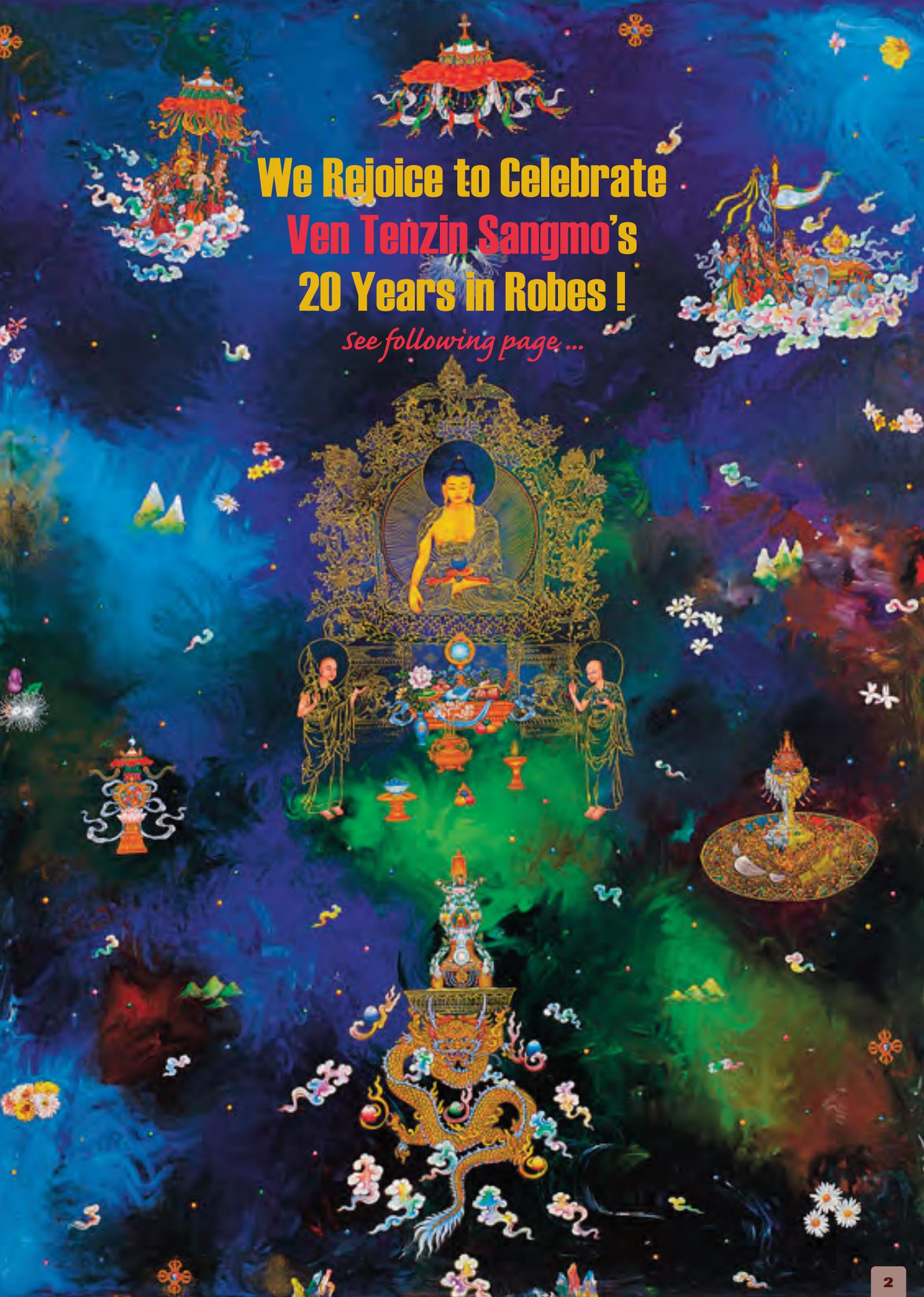
*Above: Sangmo and Dawa "at work" in Thosamling's office
Below: At Thosamling, May 2009, waiting for His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Dr Catherine Schuetze with (l-r) Nyima, Queenie, and Dawa*



Dawa, always available for a hug

**We Rejoice to Celebrate
Ven Tenzin Sangmo's
20 Years in Robes !**

see following page...



February 17, 2017 marks a date of personal commitment to Buddha, Dharma & Sangha by our Thosamling Founder and Abbess Venerable Tenzin Sangmo, who twenty years ago took her vows to renounce lay life and accept the responsibility of carrying and sharing Dharma as a Tibetan Buddhist nun.



Five years after her ordination with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, she set herself a remarkable task: create a nunnery for western monastic women and lay community to come together to live, practice, retreat and rejoice. Certainly her early life in robes was challenging and difficult as a western woman. She quickly realized the particular challenges facing others who found themselves in the same circumstances: in robes, but living alone and not in community with other practitioners, practicing diligently yet without direct daily contact and celebration with other nuns.

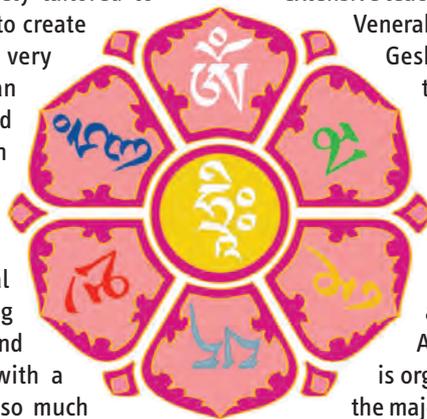
Two decades ago in Dharamsala there were a few other western monastics, yet most lived separate and isolated, focusing on their practice but missing out on the rich opportunities that come through living with others committed to vows on a monastic level. A nunnery or monastery is a special environment uniquely tailored to Dharma practice. Sangmo recognized the need to create such an opportunity for western nuns, as it is very difficult to find a place within traditional Tibetan nunneries due to language barriers and limited capacity and resources of nunneries to take on western nuns.

Venerable Sangmo got the idea that she would find a way to build a nunnery specifically for western nuns. It would be an International Nunnery and Institute that would offer living accommodations for nuns, as well as language and philosophy programs, and annual teachings with a resident Geshe. Now fifteen years later, with so much incredible work and tenacity, her vision is established and thriving.

As you can read in the newsletter, Thosamling in the past year alone hosted hundreds of women: monastics, lay practitioners and female travelers from all over the world came to experience the beauty that is manifest in the peace and presence here. Women from six continents have visited the nunnery, only Antarctica is missing! How amazing to set such a lofty goal and then live into its fruition. Initially, her vision was met with skepticism by another prominent western nun, who thought it would be extraordinarily difficult to establish such a place that would function well for western women. Often our individualistic lifestyle makes living in community very challenging, with cultural, linguistic and personality barriers. It sounded impossible at the time to build such a nunnery.

And yet the same prominent nun who visited TSL a few years ago confided that she is so very happy with how the nunnery has turned out. She feels it is vital for western nuns, especially newly ordained nuns, to have a place to be well trained in Tibetan Buddhist Dharma. She is very supportive of Venerable Tenzin Sangmo and the nuns here, and we are blessed by her heartfelt commitment to Thosamling's success.

What a perfect place to really see how your Buddhist practice is going. No shortage of opportunities to check in with Dharma, especially living in community. When we are isolated in our room or on retreat things might feel like they are going along fine, but coming into daily contact with many others is where the rubber meets the road, and can be quite the challenge indeed to really watch how your mind works!



And no one can better attest to that than the abbess herself who has grown through countless situations over the years, from an attack on her dog and the puppies by a wild leopard, to intruding wild dogs, people in real crisis who need immediate help, and others who just need a friendly smile of empathy from deep blue eyes of compassion. In so many ways, Ven. Sangmo loves the place and people who are drawn here, and shows it in the way she interacts with monastics, lay practitioners, staff, volunteers, guests and visitors.

Many comment on the presence of her warmth, humour, welcome, easygoing Dutch ways and show their affection and appreciation quickly.

Over the years she has stewarded many programs and accomplishments to benefit others: organizing several ordinations for lay women seeking to become monastics; building a temple with funding donated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and then hosting him here in 2009; requesting teachings from other Tibetan high lamas and esteemed international western nuns such as Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, Venerable Robina Courtin, Venerable Thubten Chodron, and Geshema Kelsang Wangmo. Venerable Sangmo established a home center for our resident Geshe Tsewang Nyima, who is an expert in Vinaya – monastic rules and visits every year to give extensive teachings in the Temple. The nunnery is also home to

Venerable Dawa Dolma, a Tibetan nun who will earn her Geshe ma degree next year and be available as a teacher here.

On a local level, Sangmo has supported Indian youth to start up Queenie's Bakery and her kindness extended to allowing them to cook out of the nunnery kitchen until they learned enough to create a separate project outside. Today their business, headed by two women, is going strong and growing.

A recent passion Venerable Sangmo has pursued is organic garden-ing. The nunnery is aiming to grow the majority of its vegetables, herbs and fruits within the next three years. Adding new programs with volunteers helping around the nunnery and in the gardens means that Thosamling is able to focus on developing Dharma programs more fully. This year TSL is the site of the resident nunnery for newly ordained nuns who take vows with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The nunnery will also host mindfulness retreat weekends twice a month, April–December, to open the grounds and facilities to those interested in learning meditation.

On Saturday February 18, 2017 Venerable Sangmo's local friends and those here at the nunnery were celebrating her in style with a lovely dinner, laughter, stories, and cake and ice cream. We are happy to share our love and rejoicing of her twenty years of dedicated service to the Dharma and the world. There are too many ways that she has touched hearts and minds to list.

If you are reading this, then surely you are one of those! Suffice it to say, we are looking forward to what she has in store for the next twenty years!

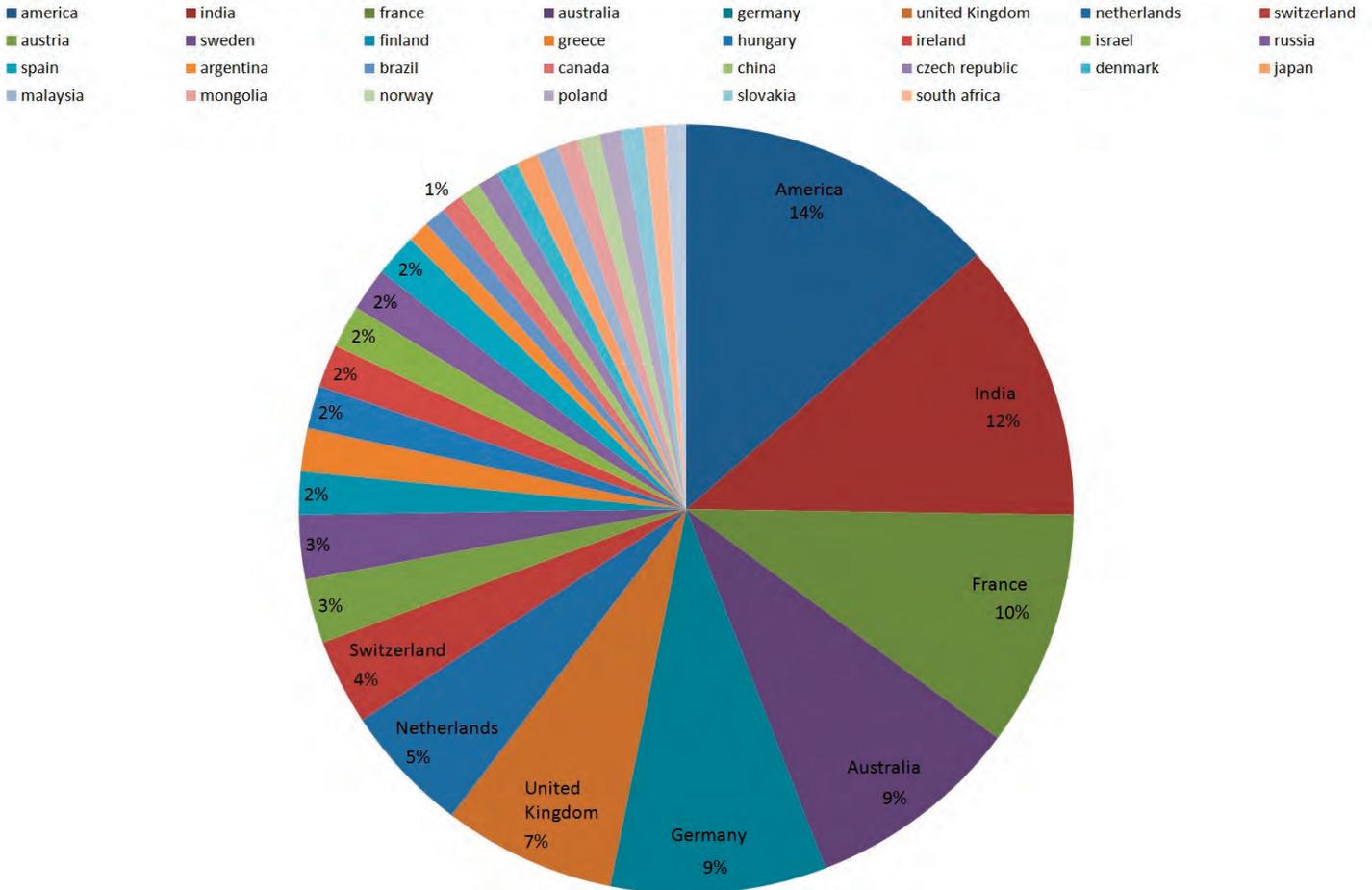
*To Venerable Tenzin Sangmo:
All our love and gratitude,
from the hearts of your Thosamling
Sisters and Family and Friends
everywhere.*

“Women of the World Unite” – at Thosamling !

No, this is not a proletarian, women activist call for change (although we are all in favour of that...). It is what we have had the privilege to experience at Thosamling throughout 2016.

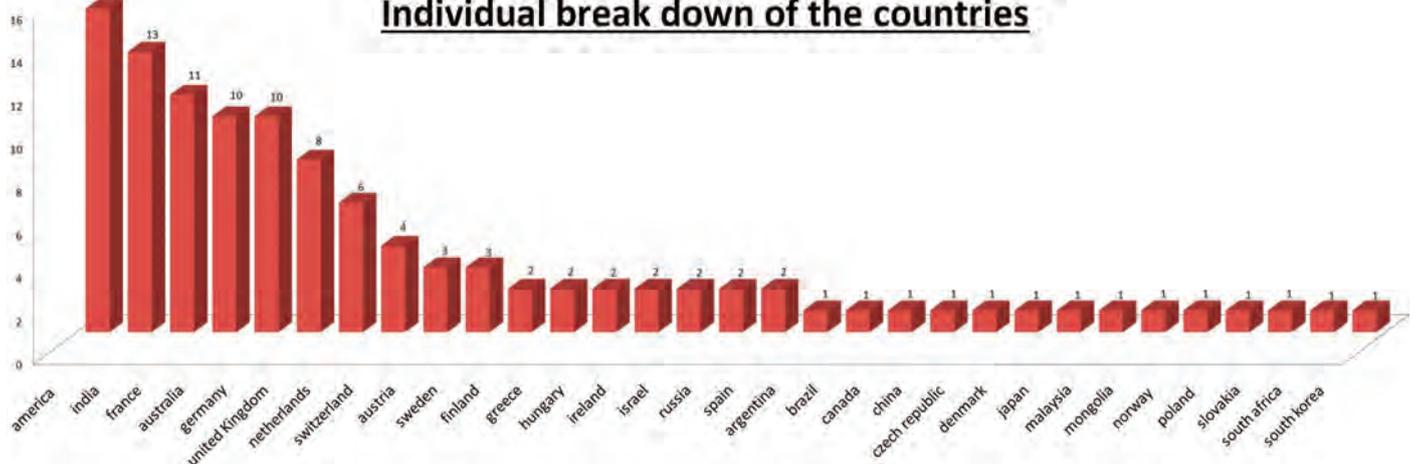
In the past year we had women from all over the world – 30 different nationalities! – staying at Thosamling, studying, meditating and doing retreat. Our guests as a whole are an array of different countries, nationalities and languages. (Check out the below diagram for the whole list of nationalities that visited us in the last year.)

The Different Nationalities at Thosamling during 2016



Altogether we had 110 women staying here in 2016, not including our nuns community, merely the actual number of women who came to do retreat at Thosamling – isn't that amazing?!

Individual break down of the countries



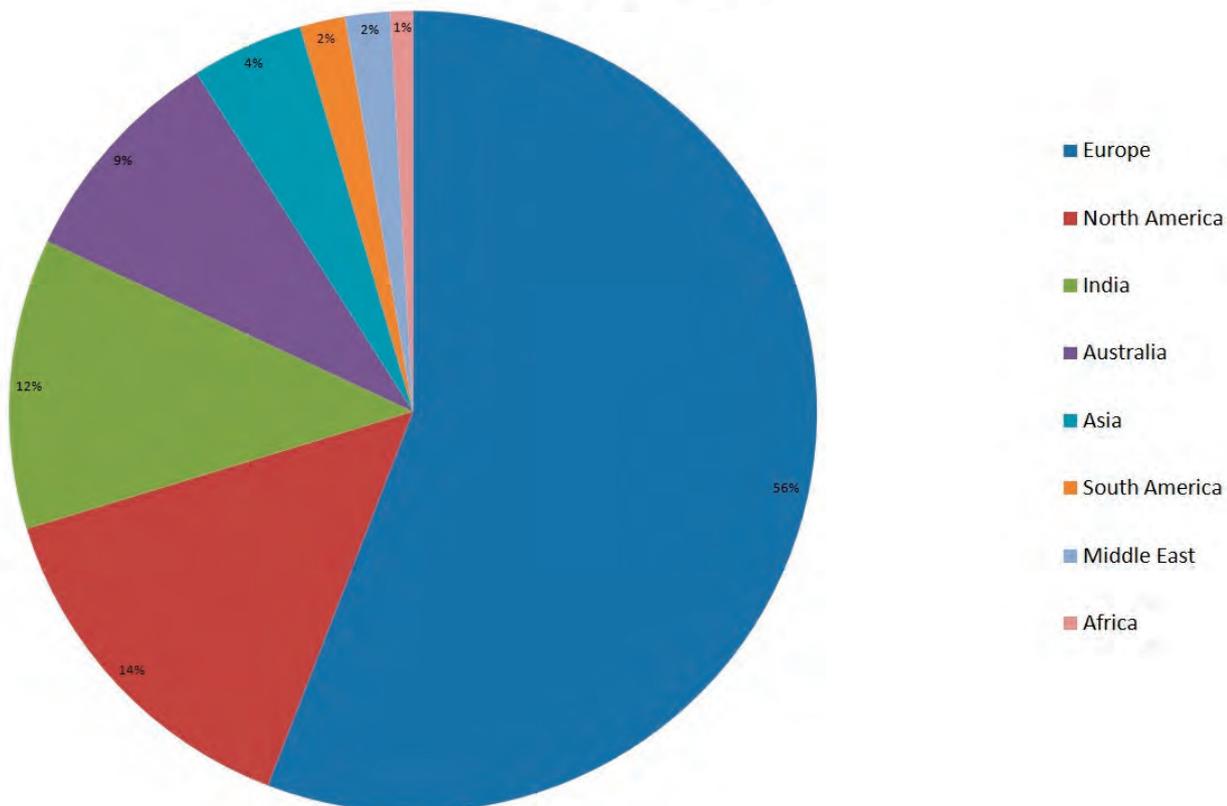
“Women of the World Unite” – at Thosamling !

Our nuns community also saw visiting monastics from 13 countries: USA, Canada, the UK, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, China, Tibet, Korea, and Australia. This is an excellent example of how far reaching the Dharma, especially Western women’s interest is in these times.

As anticipated, the largest number of women came from Europe, closely followed by our American lady fellows (North America, USA and Canada) and our Aussie neighbours.

Even more intriguing is that the numbers show that the second largest group of women staying at Thosamling in 2016, per country and not continent, after America – is INDIA!! Go Indian girl power! And we even had a small but valuable presence from the Middle East and Africa.

Geographical blocks



We would like to thank the women who gathered from all over the world to visit and stay with us in this last year. Each and every one of you contributed to our multi-cultured community and helped create an international village of women dedicated to the Dharma.

With such exciting numbers of women of different nationalities visiting us in the past year we can't wait to see everyone in the new year to come...



Dear friends,

What an amazing year 2016 it has been! – let's recap some of the main events of this incredible year.

Thosamling – a place of hearing and contemplation, a place of Dharma

Jhado Rinpoche teaching at Thosamling

The year had an auspicious start with Jhado Rinpoche giving a 21 Tara Initiation to an enthusiastic and extremely blessed crowd of nuns and monks as well as lay practitioners. Rinpoche's incredible kindness to Thosamling was made amply clear by his decision to

perform the initiation in Thosamling's Twenty-One Tara Gompa.

Thank you Rinpoche for your amazing kindness and generosity! It was an incredible day of great blessing and overall excitement that could be felt throughout the nunnery with more than two hundred people attending.



Kalachakra 2017 in Bodhgaya

The year concluded with our nuns leaving on the last day of 2016 for the great blessing of HH Dalai Lama granting the 34th Kalachakra Initiation at Bodhgaya.



Ordination

On April 14, two women ordained with Geshe-la in a heartwarming ceremony in front of a full temple of supporters. Their happiness and sheer joy touched all our hearts and made it a memorable day for the whole community at TSL.

What can we say?

A year that started with Jhado Rinpoche giving a 21 Tara initiation and ended with receiving the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Bodhgaya – that is indeed an incredible year!

Lharampa Geshe Tsewang Nyima

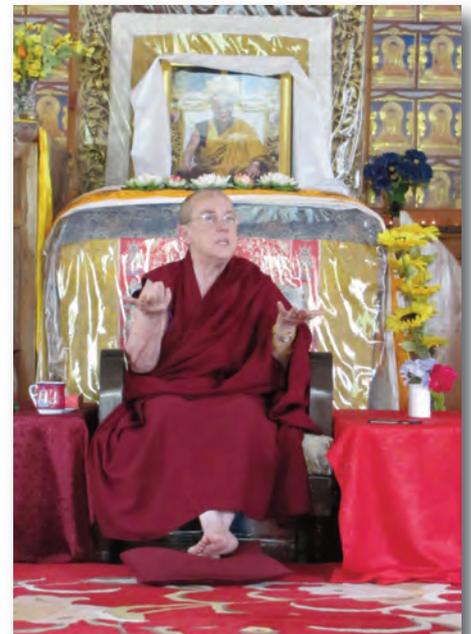
The following month saw our beloved Geshe Tsewang Nyima return to Thosamling to continue the third year of the Lam Rim teachings on Lama Tsong Khapa's Middling Lamrim.



Venerable Robina Courtin

In autumn, Venerable Robina Courtin visited Thosamling and gave a three-day course on wisdom and compassion to a group of thirty, both ordained sangha and lay people, who gathered in the gompa to hear Robina teach on emptiness and compassion in her energetic yet empathic style. We are so blessed to have such incredible teachers around us teaching dharma in the most profound yet approachable way.

Right: Ven Robina teaching in front of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's throne in Thosamling's gompa

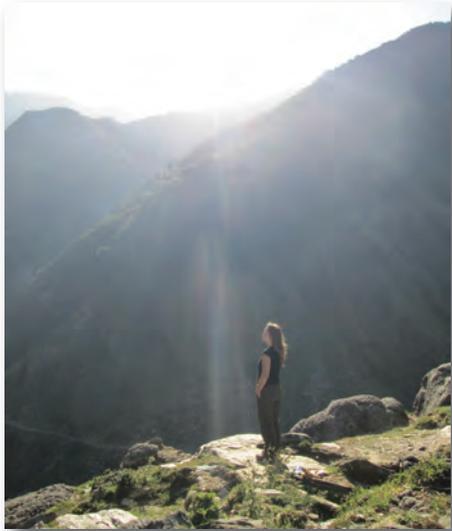


Life at Thosamling – behind the scenes ...

If for even one moment you were concerned that life in Thosamling is all about being serious and sober...let us unveil the fun parts that make this nunnery and retreat place such an amazing place:

Basketball

In 2016 we held our first ever Thosamling basketball game – where our residents (ranging from their early 20s to their late 60s) from Spain, France, Israel, the UK, Switzerland and the USA got together with our Tibetan language teachers to play basketball at the local school. A great time was had by all! Even a crowd of spectators walked up to watch the fun.



Residents' walk

Throughout the year our local residents often incorporate within their practice walks into the amazing nature surrounding Thosamling – whether it is going up the mountain for a sunrise stroll, or just wandering around the fields and villages in the area – it is one of the highlights of staying at Thosamling.



Getting together

At times, we even had a Sunday brunch. It's so much fun to have the community come together, cook and enjoy each other's company on these special days.

To recap the year –

it has been incredible, and we hope you enjoyed it too and we are looking forward to seeing you all and greeting new faces here at Thosamling in 2017!

Food

When the weather warmed up we had a pre-monsoon picnic, relaxing, looking at the splendid mountains, playing Frisbee and enjoying some great food.

On the topic of **FOOD**: during 2016 we had different guests helping out in the kitchen including a chef who had worked at a Michelin star restaurant and her friend, an awesome pastry chef from France (they both made unbelievable food & cakes); followed by two young cooks from India and Ecuador, an Israeli chef and restaurant owner, and a cook from Turkey. Due to their skills our Thosamling community could experience a whole variety of different flavors & dishes. And not to forget Baba-ji, our local Indian cook who makes incredible dal!



Kitchen work

On special occasions we had a whole lot of people gathering in the kitchen, working together to create a Christmas Eve dinner, a Christmas feast, and a New Year's feast.



THE 34TH KALACHAKRA FOR WORLD PEACE

BODHGAYA • INDIA • JANUARY 2017



His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama
at THOSAMLING, May 2009

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His Holiness the Great XIV Dalai Lama

conferred the **thirty-fourth Kalachakra for World Peace** upon more than 200,000 disciples who gathered for an excellently organized event which couldn't come at a more needed moment of time. The sacred site of Bodhgaya is one of the most important holy Buddhist pilgrimage places in the world. It was here under a banyan tree, which is now called the Bodhi Tree, that Prince Siddhartha of the Shakya Clan attained supreme knowledge and became a Buddha, an **Enlightened One**.

Each day of the long two-week schedule began in the very early morning hours for His Holiness who left his residence at Namgyal Monastery before sunrise to spend four and a half hours performing the prerequisite rituals for the Kalachakra Empowerment. These involved prayers, sadhanas, consecration of the vase, front generation, ritual cake offerings and self-generation practices. His Holiness took a very short lunch break before walking out onto the stage in front of the Kalachakra Temple, always pausing to wave to the crowd in each direction, while thousands waved back. As of the first day of the initiation there was an estimate of 200,000 people from 95 countries attending.

His Holiness began the fortnight with blessings, preliminary teachings and protection prayers for the attendees. In the initial days, the monks prepared the grounds and the environment with hours of chanting, prayers, sacred dances and praises. His Holiness encouraged attendees to take advantage of a break in the schedule to visit local pilgrimage sites such as Nalanda University and Rajgir, where the Buddha taught the Heart Sutra on Vulture Peak Mountain.



Inaugurating the **GUIDING THE DISCIPLES CEREMONY**, His Holiness said: "Bodh Gaya is an extraordinarily sacred place of more than 2000 years of age. It is the seat of Shakyamuni's enlightenment and therefore a supremely holy place for all Buddhists around the world. Some of the great Nalanda and Tibetan masters have accomplished their practices here. On account of this place being so sacred, we are doing the 34th Kalachakra initiation here in the following two weeks."

The next four days His Holiness gave an oral transmission and teachings on Archarya Shantideva's **A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE** as well as on Acharya Kamalashila's **MIDDLING STAGES OF MEDITATION**. The initiation itself began on the eleventh of January and concluded four days later.

On the last day His Holiness said: "On this oc-

casion I thought we might do a Chenrezig Permission from Tagphu Rinpoche's **CYCLE OF VISIONS**. It is called 'Avalokiteshvara Sarva-dugati Parishodana'. It is said that every time you receive this, one rebirth in the lower realms is averted." His Holiness then continued to teach on the mantra **OM MANI PADME HUM**, saying: "There are different explanations of Om Mani Padme Hum, but in general OM is the opening syllable while Mani means jewel and indicates the awakening mind of bodhichitta. Just as a jewel fulfills people's wishes, so bodhichitta benefits beings. PADME means lotus and indicates wisdom, the ability to discern right from wrong and how things are basically – how things are impermanent, in the nature of suffering and so on. PADME also indicates the ability to understand emptiness... MANI gives rise to the Form Body. The wisdom of the Buddha always abides in emptiness, seeing the diversity of things and being aware of their suchness. The lotus, indicating wisdom, gives rise to the Truth Body. Wisdom and bodhichitta, lotus and jewel, are combined in enlightenment."

Several nuns from Thosamling Nunnery, as well as our resident Geshe-la Tsewang Nyima attended, and nuns from Tibet, China, the Netherlands, Austria, Korea and the USA had all come together to join the group of ordained sangha. Venerable Tenzin Sangmo, Thosamling's abbess, and two nuns from the USA and China shared a tent in a venue set up and run by the Tibetan Buddhist Association. We brought many supplies with us and bought fresh veggies in the market. It was fun cooking over a hand-built fire place, with wood brought from the nunnery, and when that ran out we even learned how to cook over dried dung!

Continued on next page ...

Don't miss out on our new and shiny 2017 program!

For all of you Tibetan Language fans out there – Tashi Delek!

Thosamling continues to offer both Beginners and Advanced Tibetan Language Courses as well as a combined Dharma Text Tibetan Language Course that includes an introduction to Dudra, Lorig and Tarig.



For more information about our Tibetan language courses visit our website: www.thosamling.com

A special 10 day Tibetan Language Workshop

On March 20th Dr. Kurt Schwalbe will be leading a 10 day Tibetan Language Workshop at Thosamling, teaching the basics of the language in a relaxed and fun way. By the end of the short course you would be able to read simple devotional and practice texts in Tibetan – don't miss out on this amazing opportunity and **register today!**

Turning the wheel of Dharma

In March our resident teacher, **Geshe Lharampa Tsewang Nyima** (Drepung Loseling) will return to Thosamling to continue his 3rd year of teaching the canonical Tibetan text MIDDLING LAM RIM (lam rim = stages of the path) by Je Tsong Khapa.

Mind full – or mindful ?

Another very exciting addition to our yearly program is our:

Shamatha – Mindfulness Meditation Weekend Courses (see also page ••)

Starting from April 2017 and lasting till November 2017 on every 2nd and 4th weekend of the month, Thosamling will host a 3 day Mindfulness Meditation Weekend Course from Thursday to Sunday.

The course is tailored for those wishing to explore and experience the different Shamatha (calm abiding) meditation techniques in a peaceful conducive environment among like-minded practitioners.

For detailed information and registration visit our website: www.thosamling.com or email us directly at thosamlig@gmail.com

So, if you are in the area, come and join us – whether to sit in a profound Dharma teaching by Geshe-la, brushing up on your Tibetan with our in-house teachers and conversation partners, or immersing yourself in 3 days of quiet mindfulness meditation – all that and much more is waiting for you at Thosamling.

... continued from previous page

Many Tibetans who also stayed in this tent city stopped by to share their appreciation for our nuns' cooking style. A Tibetan man, Lobsang, commented that he now lived in the USA in Vermont, where they also enjoyed making cook-outs, which made the American nun smile.

Venerable Sangmo had this to say: "Overall, the event was so well organized. The camp was clean, the Tibetan Students' Association and

Congress did a super job of keeping everything functioning smoothly, which was really amazing and which I want to say thank you for and express our appreciation for this massive undertaking." Indeed, His Holiness the Dalai Lama went out of his way to mention this very point on the final day, saying how deeply appreciative he was for the excellent organization and the way the event unfolded.

At a time when the world seems to be coming undone at the seams, this event that peacefully

gathered over 200,000 participants from across the globe, should give us all reason to pause and rejoice. His Holiness addressed concerns about his health and long life, saying he thought he could easily live to be 100, i.e. for another twenty or so years, so we should relax and keep our minds at peace. He instructed everyone to take time every day to reflect on bodhicitta and emptiness to make the best use of receiving the Kalachakra Initiation and to be most useful to the world at large.



EXCITING **NEW** MINDFULNESS MEDITATION PROGRAMME OFFERED AT THOSAMLING IN 2017

Shamatha



His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave us the name THOSAMLING, which means 'Place of study and reflection'. As part of our commitment to follow His Holiness' advice we are very happy to introduce our new **THREE-DAY SHAMATHA (MINDFULNESS) MEDITATION WEEKENDS** at Thosamling.

Every 2nd and 4th weekend of the month (from April to November) Thosamling will host a mindfulness meditation program aimed at teaching and exploring the different techniques of Shamatha and Mindfulness meditation.

The courses will be open to both men and women – no prior knowledge of meditation is needed – and are led by Thosamling nuns in English. Shamatha, or calm abiding, and mindfulness provide a solid foundation for the different meditation practices that can be used as a tool in everyday life.

The Shamatha weekends are suitable to newcomers who are curious to know more and experience different mindfulness meditation techniques, as well as for more experienced meditators who can benefit from joining a group of like-minded practitioners enjoying three days of silence and practice.

During the Three-Day Shamatha (Mindfulness) Meditation Weekends the nunnery will be in silence, also outside the guided meditation sessions in the meditation hall. Course participants and the whole community (ordained sangha + residents) will embrace the silence and benefit from the joined atmosphere of silent mindfulness and reflection.

So – take a break from your hectic, busy life and come join us at Thosamling for three days of introspection, peace and tranquility at the beautiful foot hills of the Himalayas – at the end of these three days you just might not want to go back home ... !

News from Thosamling's garden

By Helene Hinz – a Thosamling resident and enthusiastic gardener



Our aim with the vegetable and fruit garden is to produce as much food as possible. To make this happen we are testing different gardening techniques while drawing upon local knowledge. Spring is around the corner promising a fresh start with plenty of energy coming from our gardening team.

Learning from each other

Anil, one of the members of Thosamling's gardening team, is also a farmer in his village. He grows onions, potatoes, garlic, spinach and coriander using traditional Indian techniques. Indian farmers have always used cow dung as fertilizer and they also knew about compost long before we did. He learned from his family and brought his experience in agriculture to our garden where he built four traditional Indian beds for onions and garlic. We are not only learning from him. He is also learning from the volunteers about their techniques and now he prepares the permaculture beds by himself and teaches other members of the gardening team.

Multi-cropping

Planting only one sort of vegetable in the same field repeatedly leads to a poor soil. To avoid this, we are rotating the crops and are also learning how plants work together, mi-

xing the different crops in the garden beds.

Different plants have different abilities: leguminous plants e.g. take the nitrogen from the atmosphere and bring it into the soil making it available for other plants that don't have this capacity and must absorb it with their roots. Plants need nitrogen to produce chlorophyll and proteins.

Marigolds and lemongrass are well known for repelling insects. Basil and Tomato not only go well together on the same plate but the smell of basil confuses insects which seek to eat tomatoes. Furthermore, both plants share the nutrients under the soil surface.

The permaculture beds

Last year we prepared many beds following the permaculture technique. Permaculture is a system of agricultural and social design principles that follow the patterns of a natural ecosystem. For our garden this means that we improve the soil and nourish our crops by adding different layers of leaves, wood, dry grass, weeds, green grass and cow dung. As a result, we don't need to use organic fertilizers and the crops grow better. The soil is covered by a layer of hay that decomposes slowly adding more carbon to the soil as well as holding the humidity and protecting in this way the nutrients from the sunlight.



Composting

Compost is the way nature works: leaves fall from the trees, some fruits and greens rot on the ground, animals leave their dung behind, etc. This process produces nourishment for plants and is a continuing cycle repeating itself constantly. To grow big amounts of vegetables and improve our soil organically we need compost. And there are different ways of making it. In our garden, we are using two different techniques.

The first one is mixing all the organic kitchen waste with dry leaves as well as green and brown grass and then wait for it to decompose. The result is a beautiful black soil with plenty of nutrients for our crops. But the quantities are not as big as what we need.

The second method that we are using is putting layers of brown leaves, green grass and weeds as well as cow dung in a square of two by three meters until we reach a height of 1,5 m. We cover the pile with a crust made of a mix of cow dung and soil to protect it from sun and rain. Then we let mother nature do her work. The decomposition process produces heat and inside the pile a temperature of 70 to 75 degrees Celsius is reached which kills any unwanted seeds and pathogens. Later, when the temperature cools down again, it is a nice environment for beneficial fungi and bacteria. This method is used in an organic agricultural technique called biodynamics, a technique that works not only with the soil, but also with the cosmic system.



Strawberries

Strawberries close to the Himalaya region are rare and since we really like them, we decided to plant them at Thosamling.



Inside the pipes (see above) we put a mix of soil and compost to provide our strawberry plants with sufficient nutrients. By placing these pipes on the roof terrace, we protect the crops from animals (who also like strawberries!) and we are also putting an empty spot in Thosamling to use.



Waiting for the planting season

That's how we are getting ready before the planting season starts. Little by little Thosamling is learning by sharing with different people, experimenting and making its own experience, so that we can increase the amount of delicious organic food that we produce in the garden and serve as healthy dishes to our residents.



“All phenomena are merely labelled.”

This is one of the key themes the Buddha taught, and nowhere is it more true than at Thosamling’s animal paradise.



The tunnel

In the past year a new resident has joined Thosamling: A tiny baby mouse was found abandoned outside of Sangmo’s room during monsoon. One of our long-term residents took the tiny creature (literally) to heart and hand-reared him to the vibrant healthy being he is today – thank you Virginia!

However, in the process of growing, our mouse started featuring some peculiar and rather human-like characteristics. Sera – as he was called – is extremely fond of his morning cornflakes ‘n milk (if he could he would have ordered some coffee with that as well...). He also managed single-handedly to eat a whole cheese spinach momo, the same size as himself, and be extremely happy in the process.

But the main issue is that Sera is so big that it is hard to decide whether he is a mouse or a rat. Hence, the Thosamling community is now split between ‘the mouse camp’ and ‘the rat camp’ (a source for more heated debate than current American politics...).



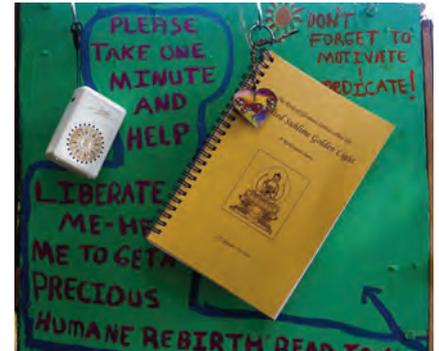
Pelza and ... the house

Our beloved nun Pelza (a strong supporter of the mouse camp) worked ardently to provide Sera with a new home that will suit his (literally) growing needs, both physically and spiritually.

The house comes fully equipped with a master bedroom and a built-in gym with poles and ladders to climb, a mouse (rat?) treadmill, tunnels to run through and a prayer wheel to circumambulate – we are a nunnery

after all. Keeping in mind Sera’s spiritual needs, the house is decorated with mantras and holy images.

Soon Sera will live in rodent paradise in Thosamling’s library, with spectacular views of the snow mountains.



So, whether mouse or rat – being (specifically) merely labelled, Sera is a source of great joy to all of us here.

Newsticker ••• RENOVATION OF ACOMMODATION BLOCK FINISHED! •••

During the winter months an energetic and cheerful group (at times) of residents from different countries (Holland, Spain, Canada, Russia,

Great Britain + India) joined hands and renovated TSL’s retreat rooms.

Our enthusiastic bunch plastered the walls, scrubbed the bathrooms,

sanded the woodwork and painted the walls, making everything ready for the season to start and waiting for you to come and join us.



New leaves on our bodhitree planted by His Holiness Ling Rinpoche

Retreat at Thosamling

... a beautiful place to do a study, meditation or practice retreat

Sidhpur, as well as the whole Kangra area, is a special region, referred to as "Heruka's Crown". The name Sidhpur consists of the two syllables **sidh** and **pur**: **sidh** is short for 'siddhis' (spiritual realizations), and **pur** is the Hindi word for 'place'. Throughout history practitioners have in fact shown that Sidhpur is a **place of siddhis** ...

We can provide you with a comfortable retreat space – a room with a view, mainly organic food, and – last not least: a most supportive peaceful environment amidst the fields at the feet of the Himalayan Dhauladar range, and all this for very reasonable prices. Thosamling's kitchen is well known for its variety of tasty and healthy foods!

We can help you prepare for your retreat, and our extensive library is available to you. See you soon at Thosamling!

thosamling@gmail.com



How to become a Friend of Thosamling

The purpose of the **Friends of Thosamling membership program** is to gain consistent financial support to enable our nunnery, retreat center and teaching institute to continue to make Dharma available for everyone. Annual operating costs continue to rise each year and by assisting us to cover part of our expenses your generosity helps to fulfill Thosamling's vision to provide an excellent place for international Buddhist monastic and lay women to pursue Dharma.

As always, the Dharma is available for free for everybody. That was and will always be the case.

Yet in a practical manner, there are costs involved: maintenance of buildings and infrastructure; accommodation and training for the nuns; upkeep of our temple and grounds; funding of our resident Geshe's living expenses and his teachings; support for small-scale environmental projects we are undertaking with nearby communities, among other initiatives. Most importantly, your support directly enables us to provide a low cost, lovely place for the practice of Dharma in a peaceful location, close to precious teachers. Your support will also help to fulfill His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wish for

all newly ordained western nuns to spend two years following ordination training at Thosamling, a program that we are currently setting up.

Our **Friends of Thosamling initiative** seeks to identify ten new members at each level of membership. If we can gather the support of just fifty new members in this way, we will meet almost a quarter of our annual operating costs. Our goal is to raise 13,250 € and with the help of our friends from around the world we are sure we can do this!

Thosamling is a unique place for ordained and lay women to live and practice together. It is a special opportunity not readily available in many places. We want to make sure that all of our programs, services and accommodations will continue to be offered into the distant future.

With your kind help, together we can keep the Dharma alive and available to all who seek happiness and freedom from suffering. By becoming a **Friend of Thosamling** you will also accumulate extensive merit for yourself and will benefit all sentient beings. We are also offering benefits as listed below for various levels of support.

With heartfelt thanks for your generous support,
Ani Tenzin Sangmo

Tenzin Sangmo

Level of Membership	Annual donation (Euro)	BENEFITS							
		Newsletter	Name on prayer list	Prayers for family	Discount on stay	Discount on courses	Free retreat 2 weeks/year	Dharma gift	
FRIEND	75	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	–	
MEMBER	150	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	
SPONSOR MEMBER	300	✓	✓	✓	10%	–	–	–	
SPECIAL MEMBER	350	✓	✓	✓	15%	–	–	–	
ROYAL MEMBER	450	✓	✓	✓	15%	15%	✓	✓	