

CHOELA TENZIN DADON



Choela (Tib.for Venerable nun) Tenzin Dadon (Sonam Wangmo) is a *sramaneri* from Bhutan who practices in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Choela Tenzin Dadon was born in Trashigang, Eastern Bhutan in 1977 and grew up in Thimphu, the capital city where she completed her high school education. Venerable holds a Master in Arts (M.A) degree in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University, India.

Choela Tenzin Dadon became a novice nun in 1993 at the age of 16 and received her *sramaneri* (Tib. *Getsulma*)

ordination from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India in 1999. She left her home country to pursue a systematic monastic education which was and to a large extent, still not available to nuns in Bhutan. Choela spent 13 years at Jamyang Choling Institute (a non-sectarian nunnery institute) in Gharoh, Lower Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India learning Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan language and literature.

Choela has long been an advocate of Buddhist women's issues, especially among female monastics in the Himalayan region. Since 1995, Choela has participated in nine Sakyadhita International Conferences for Buddhist Women, as presenter, translator and moderator. Choela has also conducted workshops on environmental issues and animal welfare in the Sakyadhita conferences. At present, Choela is pursuing her Ph.D. in Gender and Religion at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, focusing her thesis on nuns in Bhutan with the aim of improving the status and living conditions of nuns in her native country. Choela has written several articles, aimed at invoking policy changes in terms of achieving equal access to monastic education for nuns in Bhutan. Upon completion of her doctoral degree Choela Tenzin hopes to establish a practice centre for displaced and often forgotten nuns in Bhutan—to provide them with a decent living place and the opportunity to propagate the dharma, with the ultimate aim of transcending traditional barriers to monastic education and spiritual progress of Bhutanese women.

Choela is fluent in English, Tibetan, Dzongkha (Bhutanese), Hindi, Nepali and several Bhutanese dialects. Choela is an experienced teacher of the Tibetan language, and continues to teach Tibetan in Malaysia. Choela is also well-versed in all schools of Buddhism and has practiced in the Plum Village tradition of Zen Master Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and takes teachings from Theravada masters as well. Considering herself non-sectarian, Choela Tenzin Dadon is one of few nuns from the Himalayan region who is able to expound the dharma from the traditional and secular perspective.