Celina: These kids are a part of our sangha, and of my heart

written by Jitka Polanská

When Celina Mejia was at Shenten Dargye Ling, last autumn, as a participant of Gomdra (seventy day long teaching and practice retreat), she was invited by a friend to give a donation for TISE Himalayan International School. “With this, I became more interested in the school, one of the heart projects of Yongdzin Rinpoche and Khenchen Rinpoche – and I decided to visit. Since then, the children that I met there have not left my heart,” she says.

These children are a part of our sangha

In March 2023 I visited THIS, the school in Siliguri founded and supported by Khenchen Rinpoche. I spent a few days there. It was a very touching experience to see how much all the staff of the school care about the kids, how much they are engaged. Norbu Lama and his team – they do a wonderful work, they are there for the children every moment, with all their energy.

I was talking to the kids, watching them playing, happily, I took many pictures and videos. It was a period just after the exams.

I was impressed. Older children are like brothers and sisters to the younger ones. All of them are kind and so polite, every time they met me they were showing me joy and interest.

Since I left the school I am thinking about how to transmit the feeling of closeness and connection that I took with me. Now I feel those kids are a part of our sangha. We should include them in our hearts.

Celina

Picture and video: Celina Mejia

More about the school:

[Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung: I am inspired to help those children]

The Longère: a top retreat place to become. Update on renovation

written by Shenten

The Longère is a long building adjacent to the Château of Shenten Dargye Ling. As you may know, it has been undergoing a profound transformation since the autumn of 2021. Once a woodcrafter atelier, built in the 17th century, Longère is currently being transformed into an attractive retreat place which would serve the community of practitioners connected to ShentenDargye Ling. Demanding and challenging work has already been completed on the building, but plenty of other things are still needed to be done.

To begin with…

The initial condition of the building was characterized by cracked walls with unsuitable interior coating, severely damaged exterior stones, an inappropriate and archaic drainage system which

exposed the building and its chalk stone base to constant humidity and lastly a courtyard of soil interwoven with invasive liana roots. Much work, especially in the interior, has already been accomplished, thanks to many volunteers whereas most parts of the exterior repairs we needed to hire professionals.

Gutters from the scratch

Replacing the existing drainage system was a complex process. It started with a several-day strenuous removal of the liana roots to enable the drainage pipelines to be installed underground. Complete gutter replacement followed. Old zinc pipes around the roof were changed respecting the original material; rain gutters and pipelines were extended underground and proper water reservoirs built. New pipeline system channeling the rainwater runoff to the nearby lake was installed underground. A half meter thick layer of gravel bed was installed around the exterior base of the building to stop excess moisture. Damaged eaves were repaired and heavily damaged cornerstones replaced.

As the cherry on the top, Khenpo Gelek reshaped the outside area and created a base for a future garden and terrace. All was done in three days.

Even though we are still far from the final accomplishment, the retreat room in the Longère already has had many interested prospective occupants. Drubdra Khenpo Tenzin Tsultrim being among them. Named by Yongdzin Rinpoche as the Treasure of the Instruction, this new retreat room, without a doubt, will be an excellent place for practice.

Inside out, upside down: Transformation of the interior

While many of the exterior reparations are mostly hidden from view, changes in the interior structure are striking at first glance. Some walls were removed and some new were built. There are now two separate rooms, each with separate entrances along with a shared kitchen, bathroom and toilet. Old cement isolation of the walls was removed. New natural hemp lime isolation, allowing the walls to properly breathe, will be installed by professionals this summer.

Electricity and water systems will be installed and the ceilings lowered to create needed space. Measurements for new windows and doors have been taken and we are awaiting the price estimates.

One big project on its own is the extension of the window door leading to the lakeside. The height of the door will be increased and the top frame ornamented by stones crafted and engraved with the Five Warrior syllables mantra – the beautiful artwork is done as an offering by Les Compagnons.

“If everything goes smoothly, as we hope, all work should be completed during this year. Please keep your fingers crossed!” says Shenten team led by Khenpo Gelek.

And to contribute towards the Longère project, please visit this link.

pictures and text: Yana Karamari

Individual retreats with skygazing? Will be possible

written by Jitka Polanská

If you have a wish to support Shenten Dargye Ling, a place which has been blessed by many years of Yongdzin Rinpoche' s presence, a central place of gathering and practice of our community, you can do it now. A necessary and costly renovation of the farm house, the Longère, has been taking place since the autumn 2021. Khenpo Gelek´s plan is to transform the building into a facility for personal retreats. "There is a marvellous view over the fields and it is just perfect for the skygazing," he says. In the following letter, which we are happy to publish here, the team of Cogreagation Shenten Dargye Ling explains what works need to be done. As a myriad of drops create an ocean, every, even small contribution counts…

Dear sangha sisters and brothers, dear friends of Shenten Dargye Ling,
We hope that you are all in good health and doing well despite this very difficult period we have been living through since March 2020. One good thing is that we have been able to get together and support each other via online teachings and practice. We hope and pray that the situation in the world will get better soon and that we can start the teachings and retreats again at Shenten Dargye Ling.

We are very lucky to have been able to enjoy, over many years, the possibility of receiving teachings and initiations from our precious master and living Buddha Yongdzin Rinpoche, as well as from Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, here at Shenten. Thanks to our generous benefactor Loel Guinness they established this monastery and retreat center in 2005, and have been able to organize annual retreats with the help of many hard-working volunteers. Shenten Dargye Ling was recognized by the French Ministry of Interior as a Religious Congregation in 2006, confirming its status as a fully independent and authentic tradition.

The outside renovation was carried on by a team led by Monika Trojan. Monika, together with Pierre Averous and Alain Guéniot, is a member of the “building team” of Congregation Shenten Dargye Ling.

The buildings in Shenten are very old; the Château dates from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the Longère from the 17th century. This means that it is absolutely necessary to carry out renovations and repairs continuously. Over many years, and especially in the past two years, we have been undertaking major renovations in the Château. In 2020-2021 the old sewage systems, water pipes and hot water boiler were replaced, and the rooms were painted. We also painted the rooms and corridors in the Pavillion.

Until now we have managed to keep the renovation costs affordable by doing a significant part of the work ourselves with the help of many volunteers. However, in the next phase we need to hire professional people who have special the skills and experience required for repairing old buildings. In this situation, we turn to you once again and ask your help and support in this project.

There is an urgent and unavoidable need to repair the Longère, the long building adjacent to the Château. The walls of the building have severe cracks all around, and the stones are becoming displaced. It is absolutely necessary to repair and fortify the walls before they start crumbling and the building becoming unsafe to use. Old rain gutters, sewage systems and water pipes, as well as windows and doors have to be replaced. We began this project this autumn, but in order to be able to continue in the spring 2022, we must hire professional people with special skills to do the most demanding work.

In the second phase of this project, Khenpo Gelek has a dream and an earnest wish to turn one part

of the Longère building into a long-term personal retreat facility for practitioners, with two rooms and bathrooms and a small kitchen. This would provide a perfect place to practice sun-gazing with a beautiful open view on the lake side. Khen Rinpoche's former house could also be transformed into a long-term retreat house with two rooms. For that, we need to build a small kitchen and fireplace and to install a hot water boiler.

Lastly, it is necessary to order and install a gate to improve the safety in the area and to protect the property from thieves.

All this costs a lot of money, which we cannot afford without your generosity. Our very rough estimate of the costs at this stage is around 60 000 – 80 000 euros. All contributions, however small, would be greatly appreciated and welcome in helping us to complete this important project in 2022.

A quote from Zermig, the middle version of Buddha Tönpa Shenrab's biography:
"If motivated by the mind of pure devotion, even one palmful of soil elevates the building and one palmful of water settles the dust, and each drop of water held in the palm and countless numbers of dust particles held in the palm are causes of joy, happiness and merit."

May Shenten Dargye Ling, the most important seat of the original Tibetan culture and tradition in the West, develop and flourish for years to come!

Please send you donations to our bank account specially for this purpose:

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Another view of the Longére.