

A first step towards full ordination

The *getsulma dhompa* ceremony, presided over by HH the Je Khenpo, marks a watershed moment for the community

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In what could be a very early step towards full ordination eventually becoming available for nuns in Bhutan, a second level ordination, or *getsulma dhompa*, for nuns was conducted in Punakha last month.

NUNS

The event was significant, in that it allowed for many nuns in Bhutan, some of whom have been adhering to the required first level *genyenma* and *getsulma* vows their entire lives, the opportunity to be officially recognised.

The significance of the event was also evident, with HH the Je Khenpo presiding over the ceremony and conducting the required rites. Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck also attended the ceremony.

The idea to hold such a large scale *getsulma dhompa* follows the first ever international nun's conference that was held in Paro in December last year. At the conference, a debate took place on why full ordination for nuns in Bhutanese and Tibetan Buddhism is not available. However, almost all the Bhutanese nuns in attendance did not participate in the debate that was mostly discussed between the international participants and male monks.

Bhutan Nuns Foundation director, (Dr) Tashi Zangmo, said that it became apparent during the debate that, in Bhutan, not all nuns had the opportunity to receive *getsulma dhompa*, leave aside full ordination or *gelongma dhompa*. This is because, while *getsulma dhompa* can be received and has been provided in Bhutan in the past, it is usually an exclusive affair, reserved for the nuns of a particular nunnery, mostly of the Nyingmapa tradition.

As a result, the Bhutan Nuns Foundation organised the *getsulma dhompa* for all

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Director
Bhutan Nuns Foundation

nuns, irrespective of what nunnery or tradition followed. A total of 141 nuns from seven nunneries attended the ceremony that was held at the Sangchhen Dorji Sendrup nunnery in Punakha last month.

The ceremony was described in an email to this newspaper by a supporter of the nuns foundation, Sylvia Hansel, who was in attendance.

The nuns with their heads shaved, except for a last lock on the crown, entered the nunnery's lhakang. "As a group, the nuns answered the Je Khenpo's questions about their past conduct, and professed their steadfast intention to dedicate themselves to the path of spirituality," she wrote. The last lock of hair was then symbolically cut, they were dismissed and returned in groups of three with the special robe, shawl and mat required by the ceremony, on this occasion a gift from BNF's sponsors from Singapore."

She added: "The Je Khenpo blessed each group in turn and imparted ritual instructions. After that, the entire group returned again, wearing the newly blessed robes, to receive their Dharma name (*Chö meng*) from the Je Khenpo."

Following the ordination, the nuns will wear saffron robes, made of patched squares to symbolise the Buddha's original cloak, for all occasions.

Dr Tashi Zangmo said that some of the nuns, especially the elderly ones, were in tears after the ceremony, as they had been unaware of how and



Newly ordained: The nuns are blessed by HH the Je Khenpo after taking their *getsulma* vows

where to receive the ordination in Bhutan.

"I think this surely will be a stepping stone towards full ordination, hopefully being a Buddhist nation, I think we've to look into those possibilities," said Dr Tashi Zangmo. However, she added, achieving this was a very long term possibility, and that the research required should be carried out by those nuns, who are already educated.

Currently, the priority for Bhutan Nuns Foundation is to provide all nuns with the basic necessities. "Even if you have it, what will you do with it if you don't have education," said Dr Tashi. "We have to think about our basic necessities, food on the table, and education."

She added that the foundation is ready to help those Bhutanese nuns, who are interested in researching the issue of full ordination.

The foundation will organise further ordinations when required.

The ordination ceremony was fully supported by the Firefly Mission from Singapore.



Good day

- to perform daily rituals

A good day for rituals (*laza*) for those born in the tiger and rabbit years.

Generally a good day (*sogza*) for those born in the monkey and rooster years.

A bad day (*shedza*) for those born in the ox and dragon years.



JUNE 3, 2014

	Max	Min	
Thimphu	27	14	
Gasa	23	11	
Trongsa	24	15	
Bumthang	23	14	
Trashigang	30	16	
Sarpang	33	23	
Phuentsholing	34	23	

Source: Meteorology Division, DHMS, MOEA