

# GONPA GAZETTE



*'Canine' is my second language!*

“Sorry, I only speak English”, I say embarrassedly. It is particularly humbling when literally everyone I know speaks at least two languages! Call me naïve, but when Rinpoche said he needed an English teacher at the monastery, it never occurred to me I would have to learn Tibetan! I am teaching myself to read Tibetan so I can read the pechas (prayer books) during tsokpa (prayer services), but the monks can chant faster out loud than I can read silently in my head!

Everyone speaks Hindi, so I decided to learn, since for me it is easier than Tibetan. I know the important things: names of food; and numbers so I can tell time, schedule appointments, bargain prices...functional language skills!

Giving myself credit, I know as many broken English ‘dialects’ as I know the people who speak them. There is the standard South Indian way of speaking English, then the monks’ way, then all the different Tibetan and Indian lay people in my life. Listening to their unique use of English words, and remembering to use the same when conversing with them helps a lot; perhaps more than correcting their English to match mine!



*Subed Khan, one of my best Hindi teachers.*

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