



XIZANG AUTONOMOUS REGION

By GUO YANQI

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Despite excelling in education and achieving many of her goals in life, Tsering Chugye remains deeply connected to her cultural roots.

The 30-year-old from the Tibetan ethnic group has come a long way from her humble beginnings in western China's Xizang autonomous region.

As a child, she shone early at school in the regional capital of Lhasa, topping her class in almost every subject.

Due to her excellent performance, she was accepted into a prestigious high school in Shanghai, and in 2010, she faced the daunting trek of thousands of kilometers across the country to study.

This was Tsering Chugye's first big challenge in life, she said. Living in a sprawling modern city like Shanghai was nothing like her home out west. The people, the food and the culture were all different, and she began feeling homesick.

Instead of being top of the class like she was back in Lhasa, she suddenly found herself at the bottom, having to work her way back up.

"I felt especially lonely on the weekends," she said. "But then I discovered some Tibetan friends, and the school provided support to help us adjust."

As overwhelming as this experience was, it gave Tsering Chugye a newfound appreciation for her unique culture, and she became determined to savor and preserve it at every opportunity. She embraced her nomadic and spiritual roots, and remained connected to the Himalayan landscape of her childhood.

"In my high school years in Shanghai, I came to realize that the world is like a kaleidoscope of cultural diversity," she said. "I took every opportunity to broaden my horizons, keeping up with my studies while actively participating in extra-curricular activities."

Staying true despite success

Educated in Lhasa, Shanghai, Beijing and New York, outstanding Tibetan woman takes her Chinese heritage around the globe



Teachers present *hada*, a Tibetan scarf for blessing, to Tibetan students who have just finished the national college entrance exam in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, in June. ZHONG FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tsering Chugye shares her thoughts at the International Youth Sustainable Innovation Summit last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Through these experiences, Tsering Chugye realized that her Tibetan identity was not a barrier but a bridge — one that fostered deeper cultural understanding and exchanges with other people.

"My identity as a Tibetan girl changed," she said. "No longer was it something that made me different, but rather it was something of great value. I began to ask myself: What can I do with my identity, and how can I contribute?"

Her classmates' curiosity about her hometown in the mountains surrounded by Tibetan history inspired Tsering Chugye to organize an event that would introduce them to

the region's language, food and traditional dance. With the school's support, the Tibetan Cultural Festival has become an annual tradition at her old high school, fostering cultural appreciation among students.

Overcoming adversity, Tsering Chugye eventually excelled in high school, and in 2013 she was admitted to Peking University in Beijing to study archeology.

It's here that her passion for her culture grew even more. As she delved into her study of the past, she began to understand the profound importance of her own cultural history.

She started organizing cross-cultural communication events in her spare time, inviting students from diverse cultural backgrounds



Tibetan students who study at Hefei Technology School in Hefei, Anhui province, make dumplings with their teachers to celebrate the Chinese New Year on Jan 28. RUAN XUEFENG / XINHUA



Tibetan students perform a circle dance, a traditional Tibetan custom, at their middle school in Hefei, Anhui province, in February 2021. ZHANG HONGJIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

“High school changed my life — not just by giving me access to better education but by giving me a world of possibilities. Now, I want to show Chinese culture to the world — to shape the way it is represented, sustained and shared.”

Tsering Chugye, founder of the Responsible Investing Advocates League

to share stories of their heritage.

She became increasingly drawn to the question of how cultures could be preserved and modernized in such a way that they could endure on a global scale.

In 2017, she went to New York University in the United States to do a master's in impact investment. Her study really shone a light on the combination of economic development with social and cultural sustainability. It was a perfect fit.

"The challenge of balancing personal happiness with social impact is what drew me in," Tsering Chugye said, noting that she began to understand how to leverage financial resources to support and sustain cultural heritage.

While at NYU, she founded the Responsible Investing Advocates League, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to exploring future trends in sustainable development, including cultural innovation through investment. She learned that empowering individuals was the key to preserving cultural heritage.

She later returned to China, and in 2023 she joined Tsinghua University's Schwarzman Scholars program, a prestigious one-year master's degree program in global affairs and leadership. There, she conducted research into cultural innovation and organized cross-cultural exchange programs, including a Tibetan dance workshop that introduced her heritage to students from more than 30 countries. She also began mentoring young professionals, helping them navigate their careers.

Her ambition gradually became reality as she conducted systematic research to model the cultures of ethnic groups in China.

"Cultural identity is how we view ourselves, while cultural innovation tells us how our legacy can be known by the world," Tsering Chugye said.

Through the RIA League, she continues to mentor and support people who are passionate about making a positive and sustainable social impact, while also working to create investment opportunities for cultural enterprises.

Reflecting on her journey, Tsering Chugye said the high school program for Tibetan students was a turning point.

"High school changed my life — not just by giving me access to better education but by giving me a world of possibilities," she said. "Now, I want to show Chinese culture to the world — to shape the way it is represented, sustained and shared."

Her story is not only one of personal success but reflects a rising generation of young Tibetans who are not only seizing opportunities but creating them. Tsering Chugye hopes to continue fostering cultural exchanges, social innovation and meaningful investments to ensure that her ethnic heritage is not only preserved but also actively shaping the future.

"Culture is not just something we protect," she said. "It is something we live, something through which we evolve and something we share."

Tibetan student finds meaning helping others

By GUO YANQI

When a magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck Dingri county in the Xizang autonomous region on Jan 7, Dekyi Drolma, a 21-year-old Tibetan woman, quickly jumped into action.

Using social media, she mobilized friends and reached out to Tibetan student networks across China. Within days, she helped raise around 140,000 yuan (\$19,500) to buy emergency supplies.

She then traveled with peers to deliver the goods to some of the hardest-hit villages near the earthquake's epicenter.

Dekyi Drolma is a senior at Nanjing University — one of China's top schools — on an educational journey that began with a national initiative to provide students from Xizang with access to education in more developed areas.

Dekyi Drolma was born in a small village in Dranang county of Lhokha. After completing primary school, at age 14 she left home to study in Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

Even at that young age, she felt a sense of responsibility for others and began tutoring children back in her hometown during summer and winter breaks.



Dekyi Drolma poses with students she tutors in her hometown during the summer and winter breaks in recent years. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In a borrowed room in her village, she taught subjects including Tibetan, Mandarin, mathematics and English. Those classes became an informal local tradition and would continue for the next seven years.

Later, some parents insisted on paying her, but she would only accept a small fee. If a child was

from a low-income family, the cost was minimal.

Word spread quickly and the classes grew. Some students made remarkable progress under her tutelage, which motivated her to continue.

"I cannot promise to change anyone's fate," she said. "But I do hope to

make a difference and help them see more possibilities."

The classes continued after she moved to Tianjin, a municipality in northern China, to attend high school. When she graduated, she ranked 36th among Tibetan students from inland schools and earned admission to Nanjing Uni-

versity through the national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*.

Her transition to life away from home was far from easy.

At first, during her middle school days in Xi'an, she struggled with the distance from her family and the unfamiliar social environment.

"I felt isolated," Dekyi Drolma recalled. "Not just because I was far from home but also because I was lost when it came to connecting with others."

She admitted feeling hurt when classmates mistook her quiet focus on schoolwork for coldness. "I was upset when people called me aloof, even though I was just trying to study," she said. "But now I've learned to handle that."

Over time, Dekyi Drolma found her social footing — learning to adapt, communicate and form meaningful friendships. Her experience has strengthened her resilience and shaped her view of the world.

"Immersing yourself in a real environment is totally different from learning online," she said. "I attended high-quality lectures, learned about cutting-edge technologies and experienced cultural diversity."

Her sense of connection to her roots carried over to her relief efforts for the Dingri earthquake. After organizing the online donations, she kept detailed records of

items purchased, and she helped transport supplies — including children's clothes, blankets and women's hygiene products — to people affected by the quake.

While deeply attached to her Tibetan identity, Dekyi Drolma no longer feels culturally distant from peers who come from other ethnic backgrounds. As a member of Generation Z, she shares the same digital world and social interests as other young people.

"I love Tibetan music — it gives me emotional comfort and reminds me where I come from," she said. "But I'm also a fan of K-pop, and I enjoy hiking, traveling and scrolling short videos."

Still, life at the university has been challenging. Attending one of the best schools in China means that Dekyi Drolma is just one of many talented students. The shift pushed her to reflect on what success truly means.

Excellence is not about being better than others, she said. It's about making progress, staying true to yourself and living a meaningful life.

Nowadays, she is preparing to start a business in Xizang. She hopes to serve her home region, but she is equally ready to explore other opportunities.

"Whatever I do," she said, "I want it to create value — not just for myself, but for others."