

Always choosing the toughest path

A smiling and earnest person, Chhonzin Angmo sits in the background and enters conversations tentatively, someone who is listening intently, and will not stay silent when there is something she wants to say! Frail and soft spoken, with a straight stream of silky hair so long that she can sit on it, she is also that extraordinarily inspiring person with a list of feats, spectacular even for one without visual impairment.

Chhonzin was born to a tribal family of Himachal Pradesh. Just 8 when she lost her eyesight, it was a terrible time for a little girl whose friends played and studied while she stayed home alone. She was also burdened with the knowledge of her parents' fear about what was going to happen to her – not only was she blind but she was a girl!

Then a visitor came from Ladakh, sent by Sangha Sena, a monk who founded the Mahabodhi Residential School Leh Ladakh, seeking special children from the region. Chhonzin was now completely blind. It took time to adjust to a place of strangers who spoke unfamiliar languages and ate unfamiliar food. But everyone was kind, and in this nurturing environment, Chhonzin began to develop her qualities of enthusiasm, seeking challenges, understanding at a very deep level that she was “normal”. After 10th, Chhonzin joined a school in Chandigarh along with her seniors from the Ladakh school. New experiences were in store: “Why are you getting in the way? Go and study with others like you!” At the same time, her extraordinary memory created resentment among the other academic achievers!

Seeking to live in Delhi and get the benefit of its education and employment opportunities, Chhonzing moved there in 2015. Starting with a basic course in computers at NAB, Chhonzin joined Miranda House, lived off campus, learnt to use a stick, and travelled alone in Delhi buses.

During this extremely difficult period, she learnt mountaineering and began to climb challenging peaks. While performing well in academics, she earned medals in competitive sports.

Completing her graduation and Masters with flying colours, Chhonzin cleared banking entrance exams and joined Union Bank in 2019, soon establishing herself as someone who proactively seeks responsibility – and fulfills it with competence and diligence.

Even today, Chhonzin gets cheated by vendors, falls into ditches and has to nurse her injuries herself before getting up and moving briskly forward once again. Her life is hard, but she meets every challenge like a gladiator. At every turning point in her life, she has chosen the more difficult route, not just for the learning but because it opens a path to others like herself, while showing the world that visual impairment need not be limiting.