

Tibetan Nuns Project

The Center at Dolma Ling Nunnery & Institute

Home to over 200 nuns, Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute is fully funded by the Tibetan Nuns Project and was the first institute dedicated specifically to higher Buddhist education for Tibetan Buddhist nuns from all traditions.

Set in a serene area of the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh at the foothills of the Himalayas, the nunnery is surrounded by green terraced wheat and rice fields and looks up towards the snowy mountain peaks of the nearby Dhauladhar range. The town of Dharamsala, home to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, is about 20-minutes drive from Dolma Ling.

Construction of Dolma Ling began in 1993 and the major parts of the nunnery were completed in 2005. The nuns themselves took part in the construction of the nunnery, laboring to carry bricks and mortar, to dig the foundations, and to landscape and create the lush flower gardens that are a refuge for birds and insects. Dolma Ling was officially inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on December 8, 2005.

Currently over 200 nuns live and study at Dolma Ling.



Expanding Education and Opportunity

The nuns of Dolma Ling are provided with accommodation, food, health care and everything necessary to lead a religious life. Many arrived in exile with no education and unable to even write their names.

The education program at Dolma Ling has always sought to cover both the traditional spiritual education and some essentials of modern education with basic math and English to enable the nuns to live more full lives and to help make the nunnery more sustainable through income-generation projects such as their small shop, a tofu-making enterprise, the manufacture of prayer flags, malas and the annual Tibetan Nuns Project calendar.



This proposal is for the final major building of the Institute and will allow the nunnery to expand its educational program, to further the nuns' individual life skills and enhance their ability to generate income to help support the nunnery. The nuns have a great interest in learning new languages and in media studies.

The Center: Housing the Media & Language Learning Center and the Nuns' Restaurant

The last major construction project at the Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute near Dharamsala, India is for a multi-purpose building that will house:

1. The Dolma Ling Language Learning Center
2. Media and Computer Center
3. The Nuns' Restaurant

The Language Learning Center will provide the nuns with a dedicated language learning facility to advance their Tibetan and English skills, as well as provide them with the tools and resources to learn Hindi, Chinese, and possibly European languages.

The Media and Computer Center will include a dedicated computer room equipped to enable the nuns to advance their computer skills including basic computing, digital media, video filming and editing, and publishing.



The Nuns' Restaurant will be an income-generating café that will be fully operated by the nuns. The restaurant will serve healthy and nutritious meals to the local community and visitors.

The multi-purpose Center will be situated in front of the 6th nuns housing wing and next to the office. This building has been carefully designed to complete the visual impact of our female religious community development and to provide final essential facilities for the nuns and their teachers. The provision of these facilities will have the further advantage of freeing up two classrooms in the 6th wing, urgently required for regular classes.

The estimated costs for the building the Center is US \$175,000.

The Media and Language Studies Program

Active media training has already been introduced to the Dolma Ling study program using one of the 6th wing classrooms. One of our teachers who was keen to take up this program has, along with volunteer assistants, trained several nuns in still and video photography, in interview techniques and in cutting and editing footage to make videos. They have already produced a series of videos on life at Dolma Ling, the Tibetan Nuns Project and Shugsep Nunnery. The present media room is also used for teachers to show



movies to their classes, for the nuns to share the videos of various in-house events and to hold workshops.

Technology in the classroom is important because it is the pen and paper of our time and the lens through which we experience much of our world.

Following the success of this pilot project, and the interest of many more nuns to participate in this course, we are proposing to create a purpose-built media facility which will include language learning facilities for students to study intensively with well-qualified and motivated teachers. English language learning has always been an integral part of the Dolma Ling program, but it is hard for nuns who are studying Tibetan language and philosophy intensively to also become fluent even in English. Chinese, Hindi and other European languages are presently beyond their reach.

Currently the nuns write, edit, and publish their own annual magazine and also prepare the annual Tibetan Nuns Project calendar that is an income earner for the nunnery. These are both achievements to be proud of since the nuns arrived with us unable to even read or write their names.

The Media and Language Learning Center will be on the 1st floor of the new building and can be accessed directly from the 6th wing classrooms and therefore links into the study program. It will consist of a computer study area, a language classroom and two smaller media rooms.

Nuns' Restaurant

Of all the income generating programs introduced at Dolma Ling, the nuns most enjoy cooking and preparing food. They have frequently requested a restaurant. At times they have run a successful restaurant out of their storeroom that is presently turned into a thriving shop. However, this is an inadequate space without proper hygienic facilities and therefore this is not viable in the long term.



At present many nuns, local children and visitors buy packaged chips and other snacks from the nuns shop which are not good for their health and which creates a great deal of non-biodegradable waste.

We are therefore keen to greatly reduce the use of packaged snacks replacing them with wholesome food cooked with care by the nuns.

In addition, the nuns have successfully run a cyber café with 3 computers in a small room by the gate. However, this has had to be closed because the room was needed for the night watchman.

The surrounding area will be carefully landscaped to enable people to sit out in the sunshine during the winter. As the ground floor of this building will also accommodate the staff dining and lounge, the area will be designated for food and recreation. Visitors will be welcome. Toilets are also planned on the ground floor and first floor of the media center.

The estimated cost for the restaurant portion of the Center is US \$22,826.

From Illiteracy to Tech-Savvy Teacher: One Nun's Story

Delek Yangdron is one of the most senior nuns in Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute. She arrived in India in the winter of 1990 in the first group to form the newly founded Institute.

Illiterate on arrival, she began her education in Buddhist studies and progressed to completion of the first year of Vinaya studies. She was among the first group of nuns to receive training in computer skills and, because of her special interest in this area, she began teaching in the Dolma Ling computer room, providing basic computer education to the other nuns while continuing her own studies.



While in charge of the computer room, Delek Yangdron designed the nuns' yearly magazine and helped a senior Dolma Ling teacher with design for his book on full ordination for nuns.

While Delek Yangdron worked in the computer room, she learned Final Cut Pro video editing software and videography. The nunnery established a media section under her supervision. Along with documenting activities, the media section also makes staff and nuns' ID cards for Dolma Ling and Shugsep, burns CDs and DVDs, and copies Buddhist teachings on to MP3s for the nuns.

In 2010, Delek Yangdron made a short video of the month-long Jang Gonchoe debate session at Dolma Ling. Many nuns bought the video and sent it to their families in Tibet, who were happy to see the nuns doing so well in their Buddhist studies. The nuns there were encouraged that a nun had made the video herself.

Please Help Complete the Nuns' Center

There are many ways that you can help the nuns' fulfill their aspirations to have a vibrant media and language-learning center and income-generating restaurant at Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute.

PLEASE DONATE

- online at www.tnp.org
- by phone by calling (206) 652-8901, 10 am to 4 pm weekdays, PST
- by mail with a check or money order to the
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