

TIBETAN NUNS PROJECT

Report on the 2013 Great Winter Debate - Jang Gonchoe October 4 to November 3 2013



*November 3, 2013, Dharamsala: His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks to hundreds of nuns at the conclusion of the Great Winter Debate or Jang Gonchoe event.
(Photo taken by Tenzin Choejor, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama)*

OUR GRATITUDE TO YOU

We are delighted to be able to share with you this report on the 2013 Great Winter Debate Event also known as the Jang Gonchoe and to tell you how your scholarship donation has helped the nuns.

This year's event took place from October 4th to November 3rd at Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute near Dharamsala in Himachel Pradesh, northern India. Over 400 nuns from 8 nunneries in India and Nepal were able to attend and over 200 were provided with scholarships thanks to the support of Tibetan Nuns Project donors like you. These \$100 scholarships helped cover costs such as bus fare, food for one month, border fees, and accommodation in Delhi en route.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEBATE FOR THE NUNS

For centuries, Tibetan monks have held an annual month-long debating session called Jang Gonchoe. The practice of debate joins logical thinking with a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy. It is an essential part of monastic education in the Tibetan tradition. Establishing a comparable debate session for nuns has been an integral part of the nuns reaching the level of excellence in their studies that they have.

This is the 17th year that the Tibetan Nuns Project has supported the annual Jang Gonchoe debate for the nuns, bringing them closer to equality with the monks in terms of opportunities for learning and advancement along the spiritual path.

At the conclusion of the event, His Holiness the Dalai Lama called all the nuns up to his residence and gave a brief talk, telling them, "I have witnessed nuns debating and they do very well." His Holiness then spoke to the nuns about the importance of their roles in preserving the Buddhist teachings and as future teachers and posed for photographs with the nuns of each nunnery and then with the entire group.

Many of the nuns had risked their lives fleeing Tibet to see the Dalai Lama and to find the freedom to practice their Buddhist faith. To be in his presence and hear his words of encouragement about their studies was a day they had only dreamed of.

Thanks to your support, the nuns have made great progress in their education. Venerable Lobsang Dechen, Co-Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project and a nun herself, recalls the early days of the Tibetan Nuns Project. "When the nuns arrived in India, they were ill, exhausted, traumatized and impoverished. Many nuns had faced torture and imprisonment at the hands of the Chinese authorities in Tibet and endured immense physical and emotional pain. The existing nunneries in the struggling Tibetan refugee community in India were already overcrowded and could not accommodate them.

"Most refugee nuns escaping to Northern India have had no education in their own language, nor have they been allowed education in their religious tradition while in Tibet. Many were illiterate on arrival and could not even write their own names."

Now, more and more, the nuns are able to teach other nuns and also lay students, and their experience at Jang Gonchoe has helped them on this path.

A DAY IN THE LIFE AT THE JANG GONCHOE

To give you a better idea of what one day at the Jang Gonchoe looks like for the nuns, here is the daily schedule for the nuns' 18-hour days:

5:30 am	wake up
5:30 am	breakfast
7:00 am	study session
8:30 am	preparatory prayer before debate
9:00 am	debating one on one
10:30 am	equal class level debating
12:15 pm	lunch
1:00 pm	break
2:00 pm	philosophy class session with their nunnery teachers
7 to 9:30 pm	nunnery-wide debate with one nunnery defending and another challenging
9:30 to 11 or 12 midnight	debate in pairs

PHOTOS OF OPENING DAY OF THE JANG GONCHOE: OCTOBER 3 2013



Thank you so much for supporting the nuns!
We are already looking forward to the 2014 Jang Gonchoe Debate.
Let us know if you'd like to be involved.

CONTACT INFO

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