



TIBETAN NUNS PROJECT

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Tibetan Nuns Project The Jang Gonchoe Endowment Fund

BACKGROUND

Tibetan Buddhist debate is a unique method of learning that, until very recently, was not open to women. This form of learning has helped to produce many renowned Tibetan scholars over the centuries. These important Tibetan traditions can only truly survive in exile.

For centuries, Tibetan monks have held an annual month-long debating session called Jang Gonchoe. Monks from the great monastic institutions of Sera, Ganden, Drepung, Ratoe, and Dakpo Shedrup Ling took part in the Jang Gonchoe called *Jang* for the region west of Lhasa, where the event originated, and *Gonchoe* meaning “winter debate” in Tibetan.



2019 marks the 25th annual inter-nunnery debate. Once excluded from this form of learning, hundreds of nuns have gathered in Bodh Gaya to take part in the month-long intensive training session in debate. Photo from the 2019 Jang Gonchoe.

The practice of debate combines logical thinking with a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy and is an essential part of monastic education in the Tibetan tradition. To grasp the importance of Buddhist debate in the Tibetan tradition, you could compare it to the significance of essay writing in secondary and post-education. Both methods of learning develop skills in critical thinking, demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic, involve structuring and organizing an argument, referencing texts, and gaining different points of view.

Until the 1990s, Tibetan Buddhist nuns were excluded from this form and level of education. The Tibetan Nuns Project has worked hard to open up this opportunity for the nuns and make debate a core part of their education. 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. It is only by attending the Jang Gonchoe and getting intensive practice in debate that the nuns can advance their knowledge and gain the necessary confidence and experience to pursue higher degrees such as the Geshema degree, equivalent to a Ph.D. in Tibetan Buddhism.

THE NEED: SUPPORT THE JANG GONCHOE ENDOWMENT FUND

The Jang Gonchoe for nuns was started in 1995, and since 1997, the Tibetan Nuns Project has been fully supporting it.

The obstacle to wider attendance at the Jang Gonchoe has always been funding. The number of nuns wanting to participate in the Jang Gonchoe is increasing steadily. Sadly, more nuns wish to attend than there is funding available to support them.

The annual cost of the Jang Gonchoe varies depending on the location, the number of nuns participating, and the year. The nuns need funding to cover their modest food and travel costs and, depending on the location, their accommodations.

One of the greatest wishes of the Tibetan Nuns Project is to make the nuns' Jang Gonchoe sustainable. We created a Jang Gonchoe Endowment Fund so that revenue from the endowment can cover the annual costs.

The goal is to have \$600,000 in the endowment and, thus far, we have raised \$257,000 which is 44% of our goal. Since 2019 marks the 25th annual inter-nunnery debate, we hope that we can raise the remaining \$343,000 by the end of January 2020.

The individual costs for the event are very low. For instance, the food allowance for each nun is 100 rupees a day, equivalent to US\$1.46. With hundreds of nuns taking part for one month, these small costs add up. It now costs about \$30,000 a year to fund the event each year.

THE IMPACT OF DONATING TO THE JANG GONCHOE ENDOWMENT FUND

By donating to the Jang Gonchoe Endowment Fund, you are opening up a centuries-old tradition to the nuns and enabling and empowering them to become great teachers in their own right. The benefit of this is inestimable and will be an enduring legacy for generations to come. By helping nuns attend the annual Jang Gonchoe, you will also be helping to preserve the Tibetan religion, culture, and language – all of which are under severe threat inside Tibet.

This is a unique opportunity to build capacity and equality for the nuns, to foster the dharma for future generations, and to ensure that this unique tradition continues and grows.



Training nuns in debate has always been a top priority of the Tibetan Nuns Project. This archival photo from the early 1990s shows nuns practicing debate in a farmers' field.

TESTIMONIALS

"Last year the Jang Gonchoe was an excellent one. We debated until midnight each day. We were overjoyed to share our ideas and thoughts. There were about 400 nuns and all were full of enthusiasm and eager to debate with one another."

Tenzin Nyidon,
Dolma Ling Nunnery & Institute

"I would like to thank you so much for supporting our education. It is all because of your support that I'm getting all these opportunities to study dharma in Dolma Ling. It has been 10 years now since I'm studying here. It is only through debate and discussion with teachers and dharma friends that have helped me to improve my knowledge and understanding of the teaching in a much better way." Tenzin Chonyi,
Dolma Ling Nunnery & Institute

"A donation to this cause benefits beyond helping just the nuns... it benefits the Tibetan culture, it benefits refugees from Tibet, it benefits education for women, it benefits the Buddhist religion and community and all of this spreads like a ripple of compassion for others beyond that community. This is not charity; it is an investment in humanity."
Elen, a donor



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks to nuns at the conclusion 2013 Jang Gonchoe event. Photo: Tenzin Choejor, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama



PLEASE HELP EMPOWER THE NUNS AND PRESERVE THE DHARMA BY DONATING GENEROUSLY TO THE JANG GONCHOE ENDOWMENT FUND
Donate online at www.tnp.org or mail a check to the US address above