



# Tibetan Nuns Project

Winter 2017

## Celebrating 30 Years of Empowering and Educating Nuns

Established in 1987, the Tibetan Nuns Project provides education and support to more than 700 nuns in northern India. The Project is dedicated to:

- Improving standards of food, sanitation, medical care, basic education, and training in existing nunneries.
- Working towards future self-sufficiency through innovative educational opportunities.
- Establishing further facilities for refugee Buddhist nuns.



Director and Co-Directors greet the Dalai Lama as he arrives for a group audience with the Tibetan Nuns Project

On October 2nd, the Tibetan Nuns Project celebrated 30 years of work to provide humanitarian aid and education to refugee nuns from Tibet and to nuns from the Himalayan regions of India.

It was a chance to reflect on how far we have come together and how much is still needed.

“Our early days were very hard. A huge influx of nuns arrived in India from Tibet with nothing,” said Rinchen Khando Choegyal, founder and director. “The nuns were in bad health, 99% couldn’t read or write, and they were traumatized from being imprisoned and beaten. We supported the nuns with their immediate needs and turned our attention to the future—building two nunneries and establishing a system of education for them.”

With the vision and unwavering support of our patron, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and with the compassion and generosity of our global family of supporters, we have been able to accomplish many things including:

- Creating a ground-breaking educational program for nuns;
- Feeding, clothing, housing, and educating almost 800 Tibetans nuns;
- Building two nunneries;
- Establishing the annual inter-nunnery debate, the Jang Gonchoe;
- Laying the groundwork for higher degrees for nuns;

- The awarding of the Geshema degrees for the first time in the history of Tibet; and
- Providing studies in Buddhist tantra for the Geshemas for the first time ever.

“It is very sad that we have lost our country,” said Rinchen Khando. “But at the same time, we belong to a strong refugee community with a vision. Through the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the vision is to preserve our culture and religion, and to go back to Tibet.”

The chief guest, Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay, spoke about the way in which the Tibetan re-establishment of monastic institutions in India has defeated Chinese Communist government attempts to destroy Tibetan culture and institutions. He then commented that with the historic achievement of awarding the highest degree to nuns, Tibetans have actually enhanced their tradition. He said, “All this started very small... You all worked to empower women and to have nuns on an equal footing with monks.”

He added that the Chinese leadership may have thought that they had won because the foundation of Tibetan civilization which is Buddhism is gone. But then in exile, the Tibetan culture and religion is being preserved. “Brick by brick, stone by stone” the major monastic institutions are being rebuilt.



Nuns and guests at the 30th Anniversary Celebration



# Thank you for helping us on this path

Without the support and dedication of many people—His Holiness the Dalai Lama, our three devoted directors, board members in India and the U.S., our monastic and lay teachers, staff, sponsors, donors, and kind friends around the world, the Tibetan Nuns Project and the nuns would not be where we are today.



Patron  
His Holiness the  
Dalai Lama

Director  
Rinchen Khando  
Choegyal

Co-Directors  
Elizabeth Napper  
Ven. Lobsang Dechen

Project  
Coordinator India  
Tsering Diki

U.S. Executive  
Director  
Lisa Farmer

Sponsorship  
Tenzin Dase – India  
Reebee Martz – U.S.





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#### Photo captions:

On October 4th, His Holiness the Dalai Lama kindly granted an audience to a large group of function attendees: Long term supporters and friends (1); Director Rinchen Khando Choegyal and Shugsep donor Betsy Gordon (2); first batch of Geshemas (3); Geshe teachers of the nuns (4); Shugsep Lopons (5); TNP staff and Tibetan Women's Association Executive Committee (6). The function itself was a festive event with weeks of preparations (7). The chief guest arrives (8); talks (9); appreciations (10); lunch (11); entertainment by Tibetan students (12) and U.S. Board members who all attended (13).

Photos courtesy of Nuns Media Team, Tenzin Choejor and Norman Steinberg





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### Ways to Help the Nuns

- Sponsor a nun
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- Visit our Current Projects page
- Consider leaving a legacy gift in your will
- Donate stock



The Tibetan Nuns Project is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible in the U.S.