



Tibetan Nuns Project

2025: A Year of Anniversaries and Milestones

Fall 2025



2025: A Year of Anniversaries and Milestones



Nuns Take on Leadership of Dolma Ling



Celebrating the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama



Your Donations in Action



Housing for Elder Nuns



New Research Training Center at Shugsep



Legacy Story



Our Project Wish List

It's a very special year! 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Jang Gonchoe Inter-Nunnery debate, the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of Dolma Ling, and the 15th anniversary of the inauguration of Shugsep Nunnery and Institute.

When the Tibetan Nuns Project was founded in 1987, 99% of the nuns could neither read nor write and had no access to the intellectual teachings of their Buddhist tradition. This summer, a new record was set with 161 Tibetan Buddhist nuns undergoing the Geshema examination process, the completion of which earns them the highest degree of their Gelug tradition, roughly equivalent to a PhD in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. At Shugsep Nunnery, 60 nuns have attained their Lopenma degree, the highest degree of their philosophical tradition.

When the Tibetan Nuns Project was started, nuns of the Himalayan region had no access to the intellectual side of their Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Originally, we were helping largely Tibetan women, many nuns already, fleeing Tibet in search of the opportunity to freely practice their Buddhist tradition. Over the years, we established

two new nunneries in India and offered assistance to the few nunneries already in existence. Now, nuns of all the major traditions have gained the highest degrees available in those traditions, with education available in all.

As the Tibetan Nuns Project approaches its 40th anniversary, we would like to put more of our core programs on solid ground. To that end, we launched our Long-Term Stability Fund in 2022, a quasi-endowment to support the basic needs of around 900 nuns at seven nunneries in India, including education and food. You can learn more and donate in the Current Needs section of our website at tnp.org.

Long-Term Stability Fund

By donating to our Long-Term Stability Fund, you will help build a strong future for Tibetan nuns living in exile in northern India. Your support will help these dedicated and courageous women preserve their ancient wisdom at a time when it is increasingly under threat inside Tibet. The world needs the nuns' wisdom and compassion.

SHUGSEP THEN



AND NOW



DOLMA LING THEN



AND NOW



All of these milestones would not be possible without your generosity and kindness.



Tibetan Nuns Project

Established in 1987, the Tibetan Nuns Project provides education and support to more than 800 nuns in northern India. The mission of the project is to:

- Educate and empower nuns of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as teachers and leaders;
- Establish, strengthen, and support educational institutions to preserve the Tibetan religion and culture.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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Unless otherwise stated, photos are taken by the nuns at their respective nunneries.

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Nuns Take on Leadership of Dolma Ling

For the first time since the nunnery was inaugurated 20 years ago, Dolma Ling has transitioned to leadership by the nuns. On April 17, 2025, Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute, home to about 300 nuns from all Buddhist sects, appointed three senior nuns to assume leadership of the nunnery. The nunnery was previously led by a male principal.

The new leadership team includes two nuns who escaped from Tibet in the 1990s and one nun from the Indian Himalayan region of Kinnaur. Two of the nuns hold Geshema degrees, equivalent to a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, a qualification opened to women only in 2012.

Geshema Delek Wangmo has taken on the role of the nunnery's principal, handling all academic matters. Two other nuns, Venerable Ngawang Palmo

and Geshema Tenzin Dolma, share the responsibility for the administration of the nunnery.

The change reflects a shift toward a more collective approach to leadership. The responsibilities are being divided between three nuns instead of having one principal. The leadership terms will last three years. After that, the Tibetan Nuns Project and the Nuns' Committee will decide if they want to keep the nomination process or switch to an election system.

"It is so inspiring to see the nuns taking on the leadership of Dolma Ling and becoming even further role models for their community," says Lisa Farmer, Executive Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project. "We are so grateful to our supporters for your kindness and generosity. Our work would not be possible without your dedication to the nuns."



Three Tibetan Buddhist nuns have taken on the leadership of Dolma Ling Nunnery. From left to right: Venerable Ngawang Palmo, Rinchen Khando Choeygal (TNP's Founding Director and Special Advisor), the former principal who is stepping down, Nangsa Choedon (Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project in India), Geshema Delek Wangmo (the new principal), Geshema Tenzin Dolma, Tenzin Palkyi (Project Coordinator, TNP India).

Rinchen Khando Choeygal (right), TNP's Founding Director and Special Advisor, and Nangsa Choedon, Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project in India, present kataks to the new leaders of the nunnery at a special celebration on April 17, 2025.



Tibetan Buddhist nuns gather outside the prayer hall at Dolma Ling carrying kataks, traditional Tibetan ceremonial scarves, to be offered to the three nunnery leaders as signs of respect and congratulations.

Celebrating the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

July 6, 2025 was the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, patron of the Tibetan Nuns Project. The nuns celebrated with dozens of special events ranging from prayers to public service. The annual Tibetan Studies debate at Dolma Ling was dedicated this year to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday and took place on June 4. It showcased the nuns' academic engagement and commitment to preserving the Tibetan language and culture. The nuns discussed and debated the topics of Perfection of Wisdom, Abhidharma, Signs and Reasoning, and the Tibetan language.

Here is a collage of photos by the nuns of the celebrations at Shugsep Nunnery and Institute and Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute, both nunneries that were built and are fully supported by Tibetan Nuns Project donors.

The celebrations continue! The Central Tibetan Administration has declared the period from July 2025 to July 2026 the Year of Compassion, marking the global celebration of His Holiness's 90th birthday. There will be events worldwide to show gratitude and admiration for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his lifelong commitment to global harmony through teachings of love, compassion, and altruism.



Important Reincarnation Announcement

On July 1st, His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a special announcement that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue. He said, "I hereby reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter." The news made headlines around the world and brought relief to all Tibetans.

TOP ROW: 1. The Shugsep nuns organized food offerings to the poor as part of the celebrations. 2. Both nunneries had elaborately decorated altars and offerings. The Shugsep nuns had a special three-tiered birthday cake decorated with the number 90 in Tibetan and the snow lions of Tibet. 3. The nuns at both Shugsep and Dolma Ling honored His Holiness the Dalai Lama's deep commitment to the environment by doing environmental clean-ups in and around the nunneries. The Shugsep nuns cleaned and tidied the residence of Tibetan elders at the Jampa Ling Old Age Home in Dharamsala as a gesture of respect and service. The nuns also planted trees and flowers within the nunnery grounds to beautify the environment and contribute to sustainability and biodiversity. They hope that their efforts promote care for nature and public awareness about environmental responsibility.

MIDDLE ROW: 1. Both nunneries held essay-writing competitions to inspire creativity centered around themes connected to His Holiness's life and messages. The nuns wrote in Tibetan as shown in this photo from Dolma Ling. 2. The Shugsep nuns also held an art show and here is a beautiful portrait by a nun. 3. Each year to mark His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, the nuns at Dolma Ling hold a flower contest. This year, the judging was done in the monsoon rains.

BOTTOM ROW: 1. Sangsol or incense offering ceremony is an ancient Tibetan tradition for special occasions such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday and at Losar, Tibetan New Year. 2. Prayers and offerings were central to the celebrations. On the 15th day of the sacred month of Saga Dawa, the Dolma Ling nuns held an overnight chanting of the Tara mantra. 3. Fun and games! His Holiness's birthday is a day of great joy. In addition to solemn prayers for his good health and long life, the nuns held laughter-filled fun and games, including trying to feed each other cake with blindfolds on and playing badminton in the courtyard.

Your Donations in Action

Kitchen Renovations at Dolma Ling

The Dolma Ling nuns are thrilled with the kitchen renovations completed this spring which make it safer and healthier for the nuns on kitchen duty. The old kitchen space was plagued with poor ventilation, a leaking roof, and intense heat of over 105°F or 41°C! Cooking was dangerous and almost unbearable for the nuns during the spring and summer.



Classroom and Media Equipment

After the old projector broke down, donors helped the nuns at Dolma Ling purchase two new ones which are available to all teachers. The projectors are particularly useful for teaching Tibetan and science. Your support also enabled the “media nuns” to purchase some updated computer and printing equipment which are a huge help in maintaining visual archives and producing essential documents.



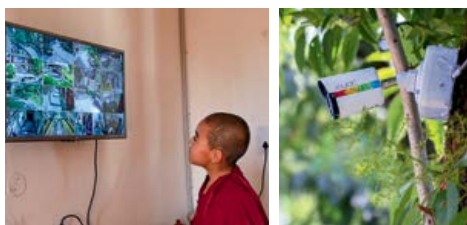
Repairing Leaking Pipes at Shugsep

Last fall, the nuns at Shugsep began experiencing serious problems with leaking underground water pipes. The severely corroded pipes caused dampness in their rooms and posed a health hazard. The nuns did all they could to fix the pipes themselves, but they had no choice but to also hire outside help to replace the pipe system throughout the nunnery with good-quality PVC pipes. Thank you for your help with this big emergency project.



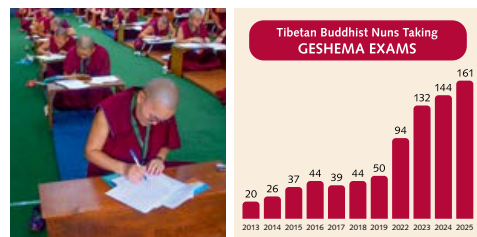
Improving Security with CCTV

The nuns at Dolma Ling installed 18 new CCTV cameras equipped with night vision, motion detection, and color-enhancing features, to improve security and day-to-day monitoring of the nunnery. The system is being managed by the team of media nuns, giving them hands-on experience with technology and security management.



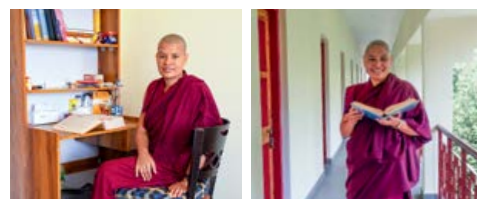
2025 Geshema Exams

In the summer of 2025, 161 Tibetan Buddhist nuns from seven nunneries in India and Nepal took various levels of their four-year examinations for their Geshema degree. After a one-month final study period, the exams started on July 21st. The Geshema degree is the highest level of training in the Gelug tradition and is equivalent to a PhD in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. The degree was only formally opened to women in 2012.



Housing for Geshemas Doing Tantric Studies

At last, after about six years, the 16 rooms for Geshemas doing Tantric Studies are now built, furnished, and occupied! 13 Geshemas from Nepal and India began their Tantric studies program in April 2025.



Shugsep Retreat Center

For the first time since Shugsep was re-established in exile by TNP, the nunnery now has a purpose-built facility where senior nuns can enter long-term retreat within their own community. The most enduring benefit is the strengthening of teaching capacity within the nunnery. Many of the nuns who will use the retreat center are Loponma degree holders. Following their retreats, they will be fully qualified to guide junior nuns and contribute to the wider community. This creates a sustainable cycle of study, retreat, and teaching that secures Shugsep's role as a respected Nyingma institution.

Another lasting impact is the inspiration provided to younger nuns. The retreat center makes visible a clear path of progression: from study to retreat to teaching. This opportunity was previously limited because retreats had to be undertaken elsewhere. The presence of this facility within Shugsep will elevate aspirations, set higher standards, and strengthen the confidence of the next generation of nuns.



9 Nuns Graduate from Tantric Studies Program

Nine Geshemas graduated in February 2025 from the year-long Tantric study program at Gyuto Tantric University. This program was launched by TNP in 2017 and it is supported by the Geshema Endowment Fund. The nuns received blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The program takes about one year and qualifies them for advanced leadership roles.



Protecting Nuns from Cold and Mold

In the spring, we asked for your help to insulate the ground floor of Sherab Choeling Nunnery, home to about 100 nuns in the remote Spiti Valley, high in the Indian Himalayas. The nuns were getting sick from cold and mold. We are so grateful that this project is now fully funded and the urgent work can be completed. Photo by Olivier Adam.



Winter Classes for Tibetan Children

Each January, senior nuns at Dolma Ling volunteer to teach local Tibetan refugee children during the children's school holiday. Geshema Tenzin Kunsel, one of the first 20 nuns to graduate with her Geshema degree, has been very dedicated and responsible for the special classes teaching the children reading and writing in Tibetan.



Warm Heads, Hands, and Hearts

Since 2016, the wonderful volunteer knitters at Wool-Aid have been sending handknit sweaters, scarves, shawls, hats, and mittens to Tibetan Buddhist nuns in India, making sure that the colors match their robes.



Inter-Nunnery Debate and Geshema Graduation

Last autumn, hundreds of nuns from India and Nepal gathered in Bodhi Gaya for a month of intensive training and practice in monastic debate. The 2024 Jang Gonchoe inter-nunnery debate ran from October 25th to November 27th and 13 nuns graduated in November 2024 with Geshema degrees. 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Jang Gonchoe.



A New Stove

Thanks to you, the Shugsep nuns were able to buy a new flatbread stove. The nuns' old stove broke down and was burning the bread. The nuns bought a new 6x3-foot gas-powered stove to make a range of flatbreads like chapatis.



Thank you!



Deepest thanks to all our wonderful sponsors who provide food, education, shelter, clothing, and basic medical care to 956 nuns in India. More sponsors are always needed. Visit tnp.org

Teachers' Salaries

Your support helps fund 41 teachers at seven nunneries in India. The annual cost of one teacher's salary ranges from \$1,500 to \$5,000, depending on the location of the nunnery and the skills of the teacher.

The ultimate goal is to empower the nuns to become teachers and leaders in their own right and to help preserve Tibet's unique culture and religion.

Your donations fund 17 teachers at Dolma Ling Nunnery, of whom three are nuns, four teachers at Shugsep, seven teachers at Geden Choeling, five teachers at Tilokpur, four teachers at Sherab Choeling, three teachers at Sakya College for Nuns, and one nun in charge at Dorjee Zong Nunnery.



Housing for Elder Nuns

Our most pressing current need is to provide safe, comfortable rooms for elder nuns at Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute.

The Tibetan Nuns Project was founded almost 40 years ago in 1987. The nuns are aging, some are ill and have mobility issues, and they need suitable, safe accommodation. The Dolma Ling nuns need your help to build 20 double rooms to house 40 older nuns in a purpose-built two-story building. The aim is to create a comfortable living space for elder nuns while fostering their sense of community and caring for each other.

One of the elder nuns at Dolma Ling who needs housing is Ani Rigzen, aged 75, who was tortured in Tibet and is the sole survivor of her family. She used to work in the tailoring section of the nunnery but she has vision problems and finds sitting painful. In spite of her suffering and past trauma, she carries with her years of quiet devotion and peace.

This special building will:

- Be wheelchair accessible on the ground floor
- Have low-rise stairs for those who have difficulty climbing stairs
- Have slightly larger rooms than the regular dormitory rooms
- Have a private bathroom for each room with handrails and a Western-style toilet
- Have a small kitchenette in each room
- Be equipped with an alarm bell system for vulnerable nuns

Thanks to generous donors, the foundation has been funded so now we are raising funds for the rooms. The total cost for the 4,900-square-foot building is \$657,000.

The nuns have dedicated their lives to preserving and sharing the Buddha dharma and Tibet's rich culture and religion. They have endured trauma and great suffering in escaping from Tibet and losing their homeland. Their lives as refugees leave them very vulnerable. As they age, the elder nuns have a number of special needs and mobility issues, but they remain an important source of inspiration and guidance.



Geshema Delek Wangmo, the principal of Dolma Ling, shows Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, the foundations for the housing for elder nuns during his visit in late August.



"I escaped Tibet after torture took everything from me, my family, my home, my culture. Even now, with failing eyesight and constant pain, I carry those scars. Dolma Ling is my only family, the only home I have left. With your support, a senior home here would mean I could spend my last years with dignity and peace, surrounded by my sisters. This would be the greatest gift of my life."



Can you see what's wrong with this picture? The elder nuns at Dolma Ling currently have to use Indian-style squat toilets which can be difficult to use with mobility issues. Access to Western-style toilets would greatly ease the elder nuns' daily lives.

New Research Training Center at Shugsep

A new Research Training Center for senior nuns is being launched at Shugsep Nunnery and Institute. A generous donor has provided the funds to equip the room and start the program.

This new initiative will strengthen Shugsep's academic and research foundations by creating a center that combines traditional Buddhist studies with modern research methods.

So far, 60 senior nuns have graduated from Shugsep with their Luponma degree, the highest degree in their philosophic tradition, roughly equivalent to a Master's.

Out of these, 30 Luponmas are currently working within the nunnery, taking on important responsibilities in both administrative and teaching roles.

Now, under the expert guidance of a certified professor, the first three Luponmas will join an intensive one-year training program. After successfully completing the program, the nuns will be able to train future generations of nuns, thereby bridging the continuity of advanced learning within the nunnery.

The trailblazing Luponmas will ensure that future generations of nuns will benefit, sustaining advanced learning for years to come.



Legacy Story — Poke Haffner

Why I've Left a Bequest to Help the Nuns

Poke Haffner is a retired lawyer who practiced in Alaska for 35 years before moving to an island in the US Pacific Northwest. A long-time sponsor, this year Poke designated a bequest to the Tibetan Nuns Project.

She said, "I want my bequest to make a real difference in the lives of real people. I am confident that TNP will apply whatever they receive from my estate in precisely that way — to make a real positive difference in the lives of the nuns they support. The nuns themselves are making immense efforts on their own behalf as well as for the preservation and betterment of the Tibetan culture and traditions, and for the dharma as it is embodied in those traditions and the people. I can't think of any other organization that would more effectively apply my bequest."

"I think that TNP does a very good job of stewarding the donations I have made over the years... The developments at the various locations have been amazing and it's clear that the nuns' lives have been improved without excess or waste. The opening and success of the Geshema program, and the Tantric studies that follow it are precisely the sort of development I would have wished for the nuns and for the world. I applaud those women whose tenacity and commitment has shown itself in their pursuit of these higher degrees of learning and their actions to give back to their communities and the younger nuns who follow them. Gratitude to the Dalai Lama who has encouraged and sponsored these developments. I look forward to the day when a fully empowered woman teaching in the Tibetan tradition is no longer an exception."



"I can't think of any other organization that would more effectively apply my bequest." Photo of nuns at Sherab Choeling by Olivier Adam.

Our Project Wish List

Here is our wish list of current needs for the nuns:

HOUSING FOR ELDER NUNS: Provide safe, comfortable and accessible rooms for elder nuns at Dolma Ling Nunnery and Institute. There are nuns who are fragile and ill who need your help.

FURNISH THE RETREAT CENTER: Please help provide beds, tables, chairs, and kitchen equipment for the Shugsep Retreat Center. \$16,800

SPONSOR A NUN: Sponsor a nun for just \$1 a day and provide her with education, food, shelter, health care, and opportunity.

TEACHERS' SALARIES: Help fund teachers at various Tibetan Buddhist nunneries in India. The annual cost of one teacher's salary ranges from \$1,500 to \$5,000, depending on the nunnery and the teacher's skills.



LONG-TERM STABILITY FUND: Build a strong and stable future for Tibetan nuns living in exile in northern India.

No matter what the future of Tibet holds, you can help these dedicated women preserve their unique religion and culture and get education, food, shelter, and health care.

AREA OF GREATEST NEED: Enable us to help the nuns with any urgent needs by donating to the Area of Greatest Need.

To Help You Can

1. Make a gift online at tnp.org
2. Call our office in Seattle, US at 1-206-652-8901
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