



# Tibetan Nuns Project

Fall 2017

30  
years

2017 is the  
Tibetan Nuns Project's  
30th Anniversary



## Another Historic Achievement



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## Another Historic Achievement



Twenty nuns received their Geshema degrees in December 2016. Now, like monks, they will have an important opportunity for further study. *Photo courtesy of Olivier Adam.*

For the first time in the history of Tibet, nuns will be given the opportunity to receive higher education in tantric studies. Although there have been accomplished female practitioners in Tibet's history, women have never before been given an opportunity to formally study Buddhist tantra.

Traditionally, monks who have attained their Geshe degree, equivalent to a Ph.D. in Tibetan Buddhism, must also study tantric treatises in order to become fully qualified masters capable of teaching their complete tradition. Monks have always been able to receive these teachings at one of the great tantric colleges.

After the first-ever Tibetan Geshemas graduated in December 2016, a committee of representatives from six nunneries approached His Holiness the Dalai Lama for advice on starting a tantric studies program for the nuns. He kindly gave detailed instructions about the curriculum and the treatises to be used. His Holiness recommended that the Geshema nuns study as a group at Dolma Ling Nunnery.

The committee then asked the Tibetan Nuns Project to provide funding for this groundbreaking program. On August 30th, the program was fully funded. The two-year program starts in the first week of October. Two teachers are being hired and the Geshema nuns will receive training in tantric theory, rituals, and mind-training techniques used by those engaged in advanced meditation.

## News in Brief

- This year we are splitting our annual 8-page newsletter into two parts, this Fall issue and a Winter newsletter in November. We'll have lots of news to report on after our 30th Anniversary events in October.
- From August 15–26, 39 nuns sat for the four different levels of Geshema exams hosted at Jamyang Choeling Nunnery. Previously, the exams were held each year in May, but the nuns asked if they might be held in August because of the cooler weather during the monsoon.
- The annual, month-long inter-nunnery debate, the Jang Gonchoe, will be held at Dolma Ling Nunnery starting on October 2. Thank you to everyone who has donated \$100 scholarships and who have supported our Jang Gonchoe Endowment Fund.

- From October 2–5, we'll be marking our 30th anniversary with events in and around Dolma Ling Nunnery.
- Huge thanks to the 14 donors who funded the new camera equipment for the nuns' Media Team based at Dolma Ling. We'll be reporting back on the impact of this via our website, Facebook, and blog.





## Tibetan Nuns Project

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.

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

# Updates from the Nunneries

## Geden Choeling

**157 nuns**

The nuns attend regular classes in philosophy, English, and Tibetan, with additional classes in basic computing and library visits a few times a week. Geden Choeling has one Geshema graduate. This year, four nuns took their first-year Geshema exams and one nun has taken her final-year exams. For the first time this year, two nuns, Ven. Lobsang Jangchup and Ven. Phuntsok Dolma, had the opportunity to attend the Emory Tibet Science Initiative program from May 24 to June 30 at Drepung Loseling Monastery in South India.



Debating at Geden Choeling

## Sakya College for Nuns

**53 nuns**

As they advance through their training, the Sakya nuns will earn a series of degrees equivalent to that of the Sakya College for monks. The senior class has now completed their eight years of study and will be receiving their Kachupa degrees, equivalent to a B.A. After two more years, they will attain the Lupon degree, equivalent to an M.A. Those who



complete 13 years of study, pass a final examination, and compose and defend an original thesis, will be awarded the Rabjampa degree (Ph.D.).

This year, the nuns stayed at the college during the summer vacation for special Tibetan grammar classes organized by visiting teachers from Sarah College and the Central University of Tibetan Studies at Sarnath. The nuns had a short 10-day break returning to their studies in mid-July.

## Dolma Ling Nunnery

**235 nuns**

We have hired a trained nurse, Mrs. Dawa Dola, to take charge of the nunnery clinic. It has been very helpful to have her taking care of the nuns' health issues, including a recent screening for anemia.

Dolma Ling has six Geshema graduates. In August, two nuns took their fourth and final year of Geshema exams, three nuns took their third-year exams, and seven nuns took their second-year exams. On May 26, the nuns had their inter-house quiz competition on six subjects: Tibetan history, Buddhist philosophy, debate, Tibetan, English, and general knowledge.



TNP Founder and Director, Rinchen Khando Choegyal, with the 6 Geshemas at Dolma Ling



# Tilokpur

## 96 nuns

Every year in January and February, the nuns from Karma Drubgyu Dhargya Ling Nunnery (Tilokpur Nunnery) join the Kagyu Monlam in Bodh Gaya and, prior to the event, participate in the Kagyu nuns' debate competition. This year, seven nunneries took part and three Geshema graduates – one each from Dolma Ling, Jangchup Choeling, and Jamyang Choeling – were invited by His Holiness the Karmapa to judge the debate session.



Tilokpur nuns cleaning up garbage by the river and the sacred cave of Tilopa

The nunnery's new academic year began in March. The senior nuns have now reached the seventh year of their Kagyu tradition study program, called Uma Gongma, and have another five years before they get their degree. In April, the nuns elected a new team of nuns who will take on different leadership responsibilities in the nunnery. They also work hard to care for the local environment, routinely cleaning the river and the public areas around the nunnery, as well as recycling, planting trees, and growing vegetables.

## Sherab Choeling Nunnery

### 62 nuns

Special classes on Lamrin were held for all the nuns during the winter months. Villagers often request pujas, which are performed by the nuns in the nunnery. Sometimes, the nuns are also asked to visit homes in the village to perform pujas. These are strictly scheduled for Sundays, so that the nuns don't miss their studies. Overall, the nuns are in good health. The nuns take care of all the nunnery responsibilities on a rotating basis including, cooking, cleaning, taking



care of the nunnery's three cows, growing vegetables, and looking after the temple.

## Nuns Not in Nunneries

In addition to seven nunneries, the Tibetan Nuns Project also supports 150 nuns who are living and practicing the dharma on their own. Most of these nuns live around Dharamsala and Tso Pema and spend their time on retreat or meditating.



Courtesy of Brian Harris

# Shugsep

## 85 nuns

In January 2017, the majority of the nuns travelled to Bodh Gaya to attend the Kalachakra Initiation followed by the Nyingma Monlam. After retuning, they elected a new nuns' committee to take on the responsibilities of the nunnery for the next several years. On April 4th, the nuns had their annual prize distribution celebration, with chief guests Kalon Ven. Karma Gelek Yuthok from the Department of Religion and Culture and Ven. Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, speaker of the 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

On the last Saturday of each month, the nuns assemble in the prayer hall for debate, discussion and speeches on philosophical texts. Every year on May 8th, the nuns offer *tsok* to celebrate the anniversary of the passing of Jetsun Rigdzin Chönyi Sangmo (Shugsep Jetsunma), the great female master and abbess of Shugsep Nunnery in Tibet, who passed away in 1953.



## Our Project Wish List

Thank you for educating, empowering, and caring for the nuns and for helping them to become leaders and teachers. We are always looking for more sponsors. To sponsor a nun, you can:

1. Visit our website at [www.tnp.org](http://www.tnp.org)
2. Call our office at 1-206-652-8901
3. Or complete the enclosed form on page 4.

### We have 7 current projects that still need support:

1. Water Storage System: \$3,380 still needed
2. Mandala table and dining furniture: \$2,081 still needed
3. Debating scholarships: 88 scholarships still needed (\$100/each)
4. Debate Endowment/Jang Gonchoe: \$199,000 still needed
5. Teachers' Salaries: \$4,092 needed this year
6. Changzod Building Furnishings: \$31,630 still needed
7. Sustaining Nunneries: \$14,719 still needed





## Tibetan Nuns Project

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**2018 Calendar**  
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**2018**  
**TIBETAN NUNS PROJECT**

This wall calendar (6.25" x 7") is filled with beautiful color images of Tibetan life and culture, as well as inspiring quotes for each month. Included are the Tibetan lunar calendar and ritual dates for those who do Buddhist practices, plus major holidays in the U.S. and Canada.

◆ Are you willing to help with sales in your area? ◆  
Please contact us at [info@tnp.org](mailto:info@tnp.org)

Shop our online store for dolls, prayer flags,  
malas, hoodies, pujas, sponsorships and more:  
<http://tnp.org/products/>

### Calendar Order and Donation Form

I would like to order: \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the 2018 Calendar  
U.S. \$12.00 + \$1.85 S&H (\$.65 S&H each additional)  
WA state residents add \$1.30 each for tax  
Please contact our U.S. office ([info@tnp.org](mailto:info@tnp.org)) for shipping worldwide.

### Donation

I would like to make a donation of: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like my donation to be: ☐ One-time ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly

☐ Please use it towards the greatest need.

☐ Please use it for \_\_\_\_\_

### Sponsorship

I'd like to sponsor a nun for \$30/month.

I will send payments: ☐ Monthly (\$30, €22) ☐ Quarterly (\$90, €66)

☐ Semi-Annually (\$180, €133) ☐ Annually (\$360, €266)

Make checks or money orders payable to: **Tibetan Nuns Project.**

Enclosed is my check for: \_\_\_\_\_ or charge my credit card: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ I am interested in leaving a gift in my will to the Tibetan Nuns Project.  
Please send me information.