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TIBETAN NUNS PROJECT



HISTORIC DECISION | May 2012 Tibetan Nuns Granted the Opportunity for Geshe Degree

After years of deliberation, **Tibetan Buddhist nuns are finally set to receive Geshe degrees**, or the equivalent of a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy. The Central Tibetan Administration reached this unanimous and historic decision on May 19th 2012 after a two-day meeting in Dharamsala attended by high lamas, representatives of nuns from six different nunneries, and members from the Tibetan Nuns Project.

Previously, **Geshe degrees were open only to Tibetan monks**. Now nuns will be allowed to appear for the doctorate exams as well as be fully ordained and acknowledged for their monastic and academic abilities; they will be able to teach Buddhist philosophy in nunneries and schools. **To graduate with a Geshe degree, one studies the five essential Buddhist texts—all based on the teachings of the Buddha—over a period of about twenty years.** Method of study involves logical analysis and debate, combined with regular sessions of prayer and recitation.

Because the Geshe degree is granted usually on the basis of proficiency in dialectical ritualized debate, the Tibetan Nuns Project has always encouraged the practice and cultivation of debate: first, by initially setting up a system of literacy and education for the nuns, and later by sponsoring the month-long inter-nunnery debate competition—Jang Gonchoe. According to TNP Co-Director Elizabeth Napper, “debate is the way the nuns come to know what they study; it builds their confidence as well as their competency.”





For many years, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has advocated that a Geshema program for nuns be established. After seeing the nuns debate during the prayer festival on March 7th, 2012, His Holiness expressed his happiness at the level of knowledge the nuns showed while debating and strongly recommended that it was time to include nuns in the Geshe process.

Rinchen Khandro, Director of the Tibetan Nuns Project, attended the historic meeting in Dharmasala and expressed her gratitude to all the people who have made the nuns' dream of obtaining a Geshe degree a

reality and urged the nuns to "study hard." (Voice of America, May 22, 2012)

Finally, the **Tibetan Nuns Project would like to thank those of you who sponsor nuns or support Jang Gonchoe or contribute to TNP in any way** because, you, too, have helped make the Geshema degree a reality.

Thank you

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Tibetan Nuns Project
815 Seattle Blvd. S
Ste 216
Seattle, Washington 98134
US

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