

Today

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Summary: Dzongkar Choede today is a working monastery of more than 300 monks, where the day begins before dawn with chanting and runs through philosophy classes, debate in the courtyard, ritual practice, and the workshops where thangkas are painted, mandalas laid grain by grain, butter sculptures shaped, and incense rolled by hand. Its study program trains monks in Buddhist philosophy, logic, debate, meditation and ritual, following the Sera Jey monastic university texts. Alongside this run a school teaching modern subjects, a health clinic, and classes that pass the traditional arts to a new generation. Nothing here is kept behind glass: the tradition survives because it is practiced every day.

Tags:

COMMUNITY

MONASTIC LIFE

TRADITION

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Dzongkar Choede Today

Dzongkar Choede is a working monastery. More than 300 monks live, study, argue, chant, paint, cook, teach and pray here, and the traditions the monastery carries are not kept behind glass — they are practiced, out loud and in the open, every day of the year.

The day begins before dawn. Voices fill the prayer hall in low, layered chant, and the sound carries across the courtyard while the light is still grey. By mid-morning the same monks are in class, working through Buddhist philosophy line by line. By afternoon the courtyard has filled again, this time with the crack of clapped hands and raised voices as monks put each other's reasoning to the test.

A Community of More Than 300

The monastery is home to a monastic community of more than 300 monks, from young boys newly arrived to teachers who have spent their whole lives here. It remains an active spiritual, educational and cultural center, and it is open to all.

What holds it together is not a timetable alone but shared work: the kitchen that feeds everyone, the courtyard swept each morning, the older monks who look after the younger ones.

Study, Logic and Debate

At the heart of the monastery is its study program: training in Buddhist philosophy, logic, debate, meditation and ritual practice. Dzongkar Choede follows the Sera Jey monastic university texts for logic and debate, connecting it to one of the great scholastic traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

Debate here is physical. A standing monk claps to press a point; the seated monk must answer. It is loud, fast and often funny, and it is how understanding is tested rather than merely recited.

The Sacred Arts, Still in Practice

Dzongkar Choede is a guardian of some of Tibet's most demanding art forms, and it guards them by continuing to make them. Monks chant the tantric ritual arts and dance the sacred mask dances. They shape butter sculptures that will melt. They lay sand mandalas grain by grain over days, then sweep them away. They grind pigment for thangka paintings and roll incense by hand.

The monastery has taught thangka painting, and its incense-making center passes that skill to a new generation, offering young Tibetans both a craft and a livelihood.

Learning for the Modern World

Alongside monastic training, the monastery runs a school for its young monks teaching languages, mathematics, history and computer studies. A health clinic looks after the daily wellbeing of everyone who lives here.

In this way Dzongkar Choede prepares young monks not only to carry the spiritual traditions of Tibet forward, but to meet the world they will actually live in.

A Living Heritage

Born from the royal civilization of western Tibet, destroyed during one of the darkest periods in Tibetan history, and reborn in exile through courage and devotion, Dzongkar Choede is a symbol of resilience, continuity and faith.

But its history is not only a story of the past. It is a living heritage carried forward every day by its monks, teachers, students, artists, supporters and devotees — an unbroken tradition that stays unbroken because it is used.