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**Subject: Buddhist Nuns Retreat at Shravasti in 2020**

For the first time in over 2000 years, Shravasti in India will be the site of a summer rains (Varsa) retreat for Buddhist nuns. Sponsored by His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, 108 fully ordained nuns (bhikshunis) practicing within the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya system—whether living in Asian or Western countries—will gather for a "half Varsa," a six and a half week monastic rains retreat, July 1 to August 20, 2020. Fully ordained nuns are invited to apply for attendance and full sponsorship including travel by December 31, 2019. English language proficiency is required.

While nuns of the Dharmaguptaka lineage have carried out rains retreats in their respective countries for hundreds of years, the International 2020 Bhikshuni Varsa is unprecedented. For the first time, bhikshunis from many countries will join in the ancient rites of the rains retreat, sharing the meditation lineage and wisdom of their traditions. The retreat program includes teachings on the Buddha's monastic code, meditation practice, wisdom, and community discussion led by a team of respected senior nuns.

Venerable Wu Yin, among the foremost Vinaya Masters and founder of the Luminary Temple, Venerable Guo Kai of Dharma Drum Sangha University in Taiwan and Venerable Thubten Chodron of Sravasti Abbey in the US, have consented to offer teachings and Venerable Heng Ching of the National Taiwan University is offering guidance in curriculum planning. Khenmo Drolma, abbess of Vajra Dakini Nunnery in the US and senior nun in the Drikung Lineage, is the lead organizer. Teachers are still sought from the Korean and Vietnamese traditions, and nominations are welcomed.

H.H. Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, is the 37<sup>th</sup> Throne Holder of the Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The International 2020 Bhikshuni Varsa continues his vision to revive the spiritual heritage of Shravasti, one of Buddhism's ancient Indian holy sites. The Buddha himself did 25 rains retreats at Shravasti and delivered most of his discourses there. In his time, nearly 2600 years ago, communities of monks and nuns thrived at Shravasti. Today, only the monastery ruins remain, and the town's former glory has disappeared.

To invigorate the education, medical facilities and economic activities of the local community, as well as the spiritual heritage, Rinpoche recently opened the non-sectarian Great Shravasti Buddhist Cultural Center, a Stupa and Temple with a residential complex about one kilometer from the ancient Shravasti ruins.

The Great Shravasti Centre will host a rains retreat every year, rotating monks' and nuns' communities of Buddhism's Theravada and Mahayana traditions. The first Great Shravasti Center rains retreat, held for 108 monks of the Theravada tradition, ran from July to October 2019. HH Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche's decision to offer Great Shravasti Centre's second retreat for nuns is a significant recognition for women in Buddhism.

Accommodations at Great Shravasti Center include double occupancy rooms, air conditioning, pure water, and professionally prepared meals. More

information about the 2020 Bhikshuni Varsa and the Great Shravasti Center is available at: <https://vajradakinunnery.org/shravasti2020/>