

Trans - Himalayan Aid Society

Spring Newsletter

March 2003

NEWS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

Amidst all the talk of war in Iraq, trouble in the Middle East, potential famine for millions in Ethiopia, here are some small snippets of good TRAS news to brighten your day!

TRAS has received the final report of the completed the Pre- Primary Teacher Training Project, which trained 25 Tibetan pre-primary teachers in the Montessori method. This two-year course was designed to meet the specific need for qualified teachers in various Tibetan communities in exile. Some of the 25 participants had already been teaching, but with no qualifications or training, their skills were minimal and they could not be hired as permanent teachers, nor be paid a proper salary. The rest of the students were freshly graduated from school. The two year course combined the proven Montessori method with Tibetan language and culture courses.

The students did well, and are now equipped with excellent skills and teaching kits. 17 were immediately employed in various Tibetan schools in India, and we are sure their training will benefit the children and improve their standard of learning. It is well known that a good start in school leads to better results.

The other 8 will be appointed to other Tibetan schools when there are vacancies. It is expected they will all be working within a year.

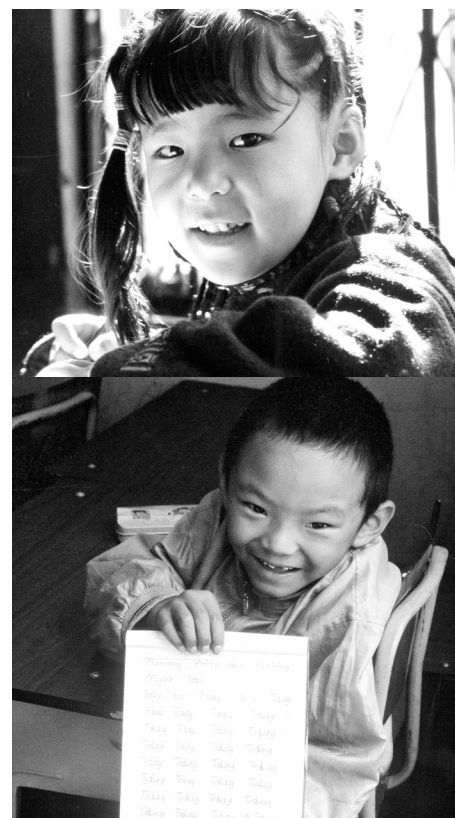
The Tibetan Department of Education writes, "*The DoE is highly thankful to TRAS and CIDA for funding this two-year Pre-Primary Teacher Training Course. Through*

this kind assistance 25 students have become fully trained Pre-Primary Teachers, who are making a useful contribution towards educating our young children who will be the future leaders in nation building. The DoE shall remain highly grateful".

Here's a letter to gladden anyone's heart! It is from the principal of the little **Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten in Lhasa, Tibet**. He writes, "Enclosing a picture of the children. They are all in good health and learning very well the four subjects. For the time being the two classrooms are being used to teach English and Chinese for adult students at night. Yours sincerely, Tsarong Phgyel".

Too bad the photo can't be in colour - their clothing is bright and their cheeks are rosy!

Again, TRAS is helping to give kids a good start, and the Principal is doubling the use of the space by giving much-needed language lessons to adults - with this skill, they will be able to take advantage of the growing tourist trade.



Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten

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The Tibetan Women's Centre in Rajpur, which supplies our beautiful Tibetan carpets and chairmats, started many years ago in a very small way in a rather dilapidated house left over from the British Raj days. They gathered together a group of Tibetan refugees and started weaving in a small way, to make ends meet. What a success story! Through hard work and perseverance, and help from TRAS and others, they now have a large weaving hall and centre, a creche for the children, housing for the growing population and an international market. But you should have seen their letters! Typed on a shaky old typewriter, in old fashioned print, and taking forever to get to Canada by snail mail. In the politest way possible, when filling our order for carpets to sell at the 40th anniversary, they hesitantly inquired whether TRAS might help them catch up to the 21st century by buying them a computer. This would speed up their transactions enormously, and improve the legibility of their correspondence. It would help them with their bookkeeping and data management for their handicraft centre.

Thanks to the kindness of one of our most generous long-time supporters, the Tibetan Women's Centre now has a computer!



Pre-primary teachers' graduation ceremony



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VANCOUVER HOSTS TUVAN THROAT SINGERS *by Graham Peat*

Dear Friends: If you enjoyed the movie "Genghis Blues", you are already familiar with the unique music of that tiny republic in the centre of Asia, just over the mountains from Mongolia - Tuva. Tuvans, like Mongolians and Tibetans, have harmonized animistic and Buddhist cultures and have developed the most unique vocal styles anywhere using overtone singing. The Tuvans call it "hoomei" (throat singing or overtone singing). In fact, they have no less than six distinct styles. Tuva's foremost music group is on tour and coming to Vancouver for the first time. This is a rare opportunity to see authentic Tuvan musicians and hear their unforgettable music. Huun Huur Tu is the group - don't worry about how to pronounce it, just say you want to hear the Tuvans!

If you get really hooked on the vocal styles, show up at the Throat singing workshop given by Huun Huur Tu the next day. I'm going!

March 28, 2003, 8pm: Canadian Memorial Church & Centre for Peace (at 15th and Burrard St., Vancouver). Huun Huur Tu: Tuvan Throat Singers and Musicians. Experience other-worldly throat and overtone singing, and the expert folk musicianship of this group direct from Tuva.

Tickets: \$20 - \$30 at Festival Box Office 604-257-0366 or at Highlife, Zulu Records, Sophia Books. Visit the Huun Huur Tu website: <http://www.huunhuurtu.com/>

Want to learn to throat sing Tuvan-style, from Huun Huur Tu? Don't miss the Throat Singing Workshop on March 29, 11am - 1pm. Call 604-734-7907 to register. Limited capacity! Cost is \$25. Location: Shaughnessy Heights United Church, at 1550 West 33rd St., Vancouver, near Granville St. Learn more about Tuvan throat singing (Hoomei): <http://www.fotuva.org/music/t-perf.html>

This concert is brought to us by our favourite promoter, the man who brought us the Tibetan Festival last year, Robert Benaroya of Caravan World Rhythms

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Those of you who have been reading our Newsletter over the past three years will remember **Didila's Story**, which so closely parallels that of many of the Tibetans helped by TRAS over the years. Didila came to the TRAS 40th anniversary dinner and, as reported in our last Newsletter, was very moved by the slide show depicting the 40 year history of TRAS. She said it was like seeing her own life before her very eyes, and she was astonished to learn that TRAS had been started by just two people - two 'ordinary' citizens.

Didila has been trying to raise money to help a group of elderly, destitute Tibetan women in her old home town of Zadoh. She has received some help from friends, (and the old people now have mattresses and blankets, thanks to the help of generous TRAS members) but really didn't know what more she could do. Seeing that TRAS slide show inspired her, and helped her realise that even one person CAN start something that will lead to greater things. It gave her the determination to make cards and sell them before Christmas, in Vancouver. Where to sell them? The only market where she could get a stall was in Chinatown, and Didila had never been there. Her heart was still full of anger and fear from what she remembered of the Chinese occupation of her country.

Nervously, she booked a stall. She paid the rent - and the days went by. She did not go near her stall. Again she paid the rent and dithered. Then she remembered the TRAS slide show, and somehow gathered up the courage to open her stall..She set out her cards and the calendars which a supporter had given her, and wondered who her first customer would be, and how she could talk to them.

Suddenly a beautiful Chinese lady stopped and asked what she was selling. Didila started to explain, and to her astonishment noticed that tears were running down the woman's face. Finally the woman explained that she herself had been brought up in Canada, but she had always felt guilt and shame for the way the Chinese government had treated the Tibetan people. She had not been able to talk about this as a young person, but wanted to do something. She asked Didila what she was trying to do. Didila explained that the old people have no form of heating or cooking, and she plans to have a little kitchen built and equipped, and basic food provided. She also wants to build them a little shrine, where they can say their prayers. The woman asked her how much she needed and when Didila told her, the woman said, "I have it for you".

Fate? A miracle? Or a mirage? Didila really didn't believe it could be true, but the woman meant it and gave her the money!

And that's not the end of the story. Didila found the people in Chinatown friendly and compassionate. Generous, too. She made \$1200 at her little stall. And the lovely lady who made the dream come true is helping even more. She has introduced Didila to a group of Asian women in Richmond who feel blessed in their lives and want to help others. They have started a charity called Planetary Hope, to help the less fortunate, and they are fundraising for Didila's old people. Her new friend's husband runs a martial arts school, and they have just held a "kickathon" to help. Later in the spring there will be a garage sale. Didila is helping TRAS, too, by spreading the word about our Society and its projects.

So what's the moral of this story? It is two-fold. **YES, ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE** (first George Woodcock, whose story inspired Didila, who gave the lovely lady a chance to help), and **'ORDINARY' PEOPLE ARE THE SAME THE WORLD OVER** - kind, compassionate, generous - regardless of the actions of their governments. Didila now has so many good Chinese friends - most, but not all, are from Taiwan and Hong Kong -and that's a good beginning.

SPONSORSHIP REPORT

by Joan Ford, Sponsorship Secretary

Many thanks to our faithful sponsors, who have pledged to support their children for another year, and to our new sponsors who are just learning the joy that comes from knowing they are giving a needy child a good start in life. We have many more children waiting to be sponsored - children at the Buddha Memorial Home in Kathmandu, a haven of safety in that troubled country, and Tibetan children in India whose families are in poor straits, through ill health and/or lack of work. It is never the fault of the children, is it? Why should they suffer because of government action or internal strife?

One newly sponsored teenager left his family in Tibet and struggled over the Himalaya to India, in order to get an education and a chance in life. His parents encouraged him to go - probably sacrificing the chance of ever seeing their child again, but hoping against hope that someone would take him in and give him what they are unable to provide in their homeland. Would we do the same in similar circumstances? It is hard to think of such an action as we sit, comfortably housed and fed and educated in Canada. While the need still exists, let us help these children!

Dawa Yangkyi

DAWA YANGKYI This young girl was born in Toe, Tibet, in 1986. She is an orphan, having lost both parents when she was a mere child. She is the youngest, with four older brothers and sisters. Soon after the death of her parents, Dawa was cared for by her uncle. On hearing about a special school in exile, Dawa was sent here for the sole aim of getting a modern education. She joined the Tibetan Children's Village School in Mandi last year. She is learning English and Tibetan in the language course set up for teenagers who come from Tibet to learn. She would like to be a tourist guide in Tibet. Dawa is a hard-working girl and is very friendly with her roommates.

Ngawang Sopha

NGAWANG SOPHA This 7 year old boy lives with his poor parents at the Tibetan Women's Centre (see story earlier). He is in the Pre-Primary class of the Primary school. His father does petty business in the winter, and his mother is a carpet weaver at the Centre. He has one older and one younger brother, and the parents do not have the money to afford his education.

THE DALAI LAMA IS COMING!

Canadian Tibetans and their many friends are thrilled to know that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be visiting Canada next year, 2004. He will be giving a Kalachakra teaching in Toronto, and will also spend two days in Vancouver. As more information becomes available, we will pass it on.

Volunteers Needed!

Our members responded generously with money to the appeal in the December 2002 Newsletter - but no takers for our offer to let you help us with our website, displays and stuffing the Newsletter! Come on, now - someone out there must have the necessary computer skills and a little free time? Help with the website is our most urgent need, so that we can keep it up-to-date, lively and interesting. The website works - Joan Ford reports 7 new sponsors via the website! So it is worth keeping it up to date. Can YOU help?

41ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!

See the invitation for details. After concentrating on the Tibetan side of our work and our extended family at the 40th anniversary celebration, we decided to celebrate NEPAL at the upcoming Annual General Meeting on May 7. Abby Fitch, co-leader of the two Nepal Study Tours for Young Canadians which TRAS sponsored in 1998 and 2000, has been in touch with several of the young people who went on the tours, and they are eager to share with us their news. Lynn Beck, in her Project Director's report, will be talking about the ACAP project, currently our largest, and how the recent unrest in Nepal has affected it. And we are happy that members of the Nepal Cultural Society will be joining us and introducing us to some of their music and dance. We look forward to seeing you there.



**You are cordially invited to the 41st Annual General Meeting of the
TRANS-HIMALAYAN Aid Society**

Wednesday, May 7, 2003, at 7.30pm

**Lutheran Campus Centre,
5885 West Boulevard, Vancouver, BC**

A short business meeting will be followed by refreshments and entertainment.

“REFLECTIONS ON NEPAL”

**3 and 5 YEARS ON - how their time with TRAS and on the study tours in Nepal
affected the lives of the young Canadian participants.**

MUSIC AND DANCE OF NEPAL by members of the Nepal Cultural Society.

Handicrafts will be on sale.

SHOPPING CORNER The following items, along with our glorious Tibetan carpets, will all be on sale at the upcoming Annual Meeting in May. If you can't attend, do phone the TRAS Office, email or write, for more details.

Children of the Himalaya

photographic exhibition by Dr Marion Tipple

Limited edition, signed, archival prints are available for purchase.

All proceeds to the Trans Himalayan Aid Society

Prices: Unframed and Unmatted 11 x 16" - \$175.00, 8.5 x 11" - \$100.00

Photographs	11 x 16	8.5 x 11
<i>Phuntzog Yangpachan Valley, Tibet</i>		
<i>Choedron Yangpachan Valley, Tibet</i>		
<i>People watching, Paro, Bhutan</i>		
<i>Watching the Yak Festival, Laya, Bhutan</i>		
<i>Nomad child, Kailas, West Tibet</i>		
<i>Village children, Kham, East Tibet</i>		
<i>Kasa, Minya Konka, East Tibet</i>		
<i>Milking Time, Altai Mountains, Mongolia</i>		
<i>Narantuya, Khovd, Mongolia</i>		
<i>Lessons, Tsurphu Valley, Central Tibet</i>		
<i>Karma Tashi, Tsurphu Valley, Central Tibet</i>		
<i>Dolma, Tsoga Lake, Ladakh, Northern India</i>		
<i>Young Monks, Yarlung Valley, Central Tibet</i>		
<i>Deke, Lato, Ladakh, Northern India</i>		
<i>Kesang, Central Tibet</i>		

Add your name, address and telephone number.

Original Tibetan Paintings. When she closed her art gallery on her retirement, a long-time TRAS member generously gave TRAS three wonderful paintings of Tibetan scenes. All the proceeds will go to TRAS projects. The paintings were done several years ago by master painters at the Tashi Jong Monastery in northern India. They are bright, colourful images of old Tibet, painted from the vivid memories of the master painter at the monastery and one of his pupils. One has already sold. The larger painting depicts a man and a woman dancing, and the smaller one has a delightful yak and rider crossing the countryside. We hope to have photographs of them soon on the website. Please get in touch with the TRAS Office for more details.

Tibetan Shoulder Purses. We were delighted to receive a large shipment of stylish Tibetan shoulder purses recently, from the Tibetan Women's Centre. They are made from traditional woven Tibetan wool fabric, in wonderful colours, with traditional designs on them. The shape of the purse, however, is modern and useful. It measures about 9.5 inches long, by 6.5 inches wide, with a series of zippered pockets and a long shoulder strap. TRAS directors snapped up several right away and find them very useful, as well as decorative! The remaining purses are at the TRAS office - come and see them! Only \$15.00 each.

KULLU VALLEY PROJECT MAKES GREAT STRIDES

This project is the third which TRAS has funded through our partner, SHARE, in the Kullu Valley in northern India. The people in the 50plus villages which dot the steep slopes of the Kullu Valley are poor and lacking in amenities and government support. Thanks to the determination and hard work of Surendra Madan and his wife, who love the area and wanted to do something to help, SHARE was born to improve the health and wellbeing (through education, vocational training and employment) of the villagers. The first two projects which TRAS sponsored with SHARE saw hundreds of latrines built in 35 villages, in an effort to clean the environment and protect the water supply. Extra benefits have been privacy for the women and accessibility during the cold winter weather. The plan is that eventually the broken down 'manure' will be used on the fields.

In this third project, there are more components. SHARE is keen to immunize all the children against common childhood diseases, and also to immunize their parents. They want to expand their Community Health Plan, which entitles the member families to regular visits from the SHARE health workers. They want to educate key women in each village to pass on basic health messages - education is SO important! They want to train the villagers to recycle. And they want to provide sanitation and immunization services in the two shanty towns set up near the town of Manali for the Tibetan and Nepali traders.

Here's the first interim report - some problems still to be solved, but lots of success already!

Immunization: 1,915 vaccinations done. It takes several visits to the schools to organize the vaccinations. We have to follow the protocol of first talking to the head of the school. Sometimes, they designate a teacher to help our team to motivate the children and parents. Very often, we have ourselves to identify an active teacher. We would have many more acceptances if we could interact with the parents, but we are able to meet just a fraction of them as the houses are generally spread out in the villages. Where we are successful, the benefits are obvious.

Latrines: Objective is to construct 340 latrines. We are already ahead of target with 141 built! As in the previous

phases, the direct benefits of privacy for women, improved hygiene and cleaner villages are very much there. The felt need for toilets is growing and an increasing number of villagers are building toilets on their own. We have decentralized the operation so that the beneficiaries themselves are responsible for completing their own latrines. We supply the sanitary fittings and angles when at least 8 or 10 of them are ready to receive materials, otherwise individual families come and collect the materials themselves. Our health team checks on progress and helps where needed. The reduction of our contribution to each latrine by 25% has worked - the success of the latrines has proven that they are an important need. We still pay the full amount for really poor families and widows.

Community Health Plan: 340 families were slated to be enrolled in this project - already over 500 families are enrolled!

Shanty Town sanitation: Several problems here - the shanties have encroached on others' land, so finding a suitable place for the sanitary complex is more difficult than envisaged. We are trying to get someone to part with a small piece of land. Getting water to the complex and dealing with waste water from the washing area will be difficult.

Management of Garbage: Proper garbage disposal is a very difficult task both in rural and urban India. Even well educated people show no concern for this problem and are often the major culprits. We are working with the Manali municipal authorities to educate people to segregate bio-degradable and recyclable garbage, but progress is minimal. We will continue to try our best and persevere, and are putting more effort into this component.



SHARE health worker talks to a mother

TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

TRAS EXECUTIVE

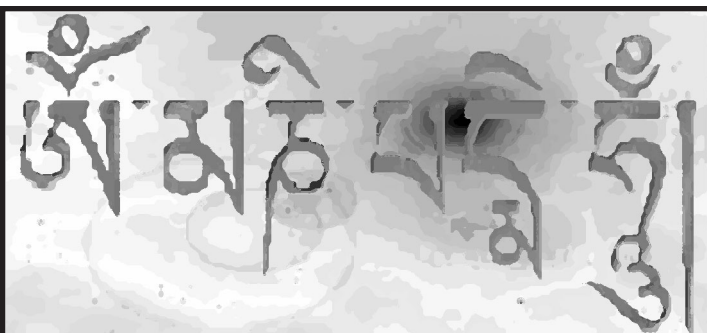
Patrons Mrs. Inge Woodcock
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Om Mani Padme Hum



Trans - Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS)

Yearly Membership donation (\$20) \$20

Possible Additional Donations:

Annual Donation of \$300 for the "Child Development and Education Project"
 at a residential school or in a settlement _____

Donation to the Old People's Fund, which supports a "Self-Help Project"
 for the elderly and infirm. _____

Donation to the general fund or other specific area of your choice. _____

TOTAL\$ _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Please write address and postal code on your cheque and mail to:

**TRAS Office - 5885 University Blvd.
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