



TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

Winter Newsletter

December 2005

PRESIDENT'S APPEAL FOR GENEROSITY

As we approach the end of the year, I'd like to wish you and your family a pleasant holiday season and a happy New Year, on behalf of the TRAS board and all of our overseas partners. I'd also like to thank you for your ongoing support of TRAS's work overseas.

Looking through TRAS records for the last ten years, I'm really amazed at the many examples of commitment and generosity displayed by TRAS members - most recently your response to the appeal for funds to rebuild the wall at Buddha Academy in Kathmandu.

I know that many of you are sponsoring children through TRAS. I'd like to ask you to consider making a contribution

this holiday season to support TRAS projects as well. A particular need is for vocational training - giving young men and women a skilled trade, such as carpentry or sewing, so that they can support themselves and their families after leaving school.

One of our members has generously offered to contribute \$5000 each year for the next three years to support the vocational training program at Buddha Academy, provided that TRAS and its members match the \$5000 each year.

Another generous donor has offered to match all donations made between now and January 31 which are designated for

future TRAS projects, up to a maximum of \$25,000.

And on a final note of generosity, if you're trying to decide what give someone for Christmas this year, you might consider making a donation to TRAS in your friend's or loved one's name. If you call our office before mid-December, we can send a Himalayan card to the recipient, telling them that you have made a donation in their name and thanking them for the donation.

We now accept donations by Visa or MasterCard by phone.

Thank you again for your continuing generosity!

Russil Wvong, President



Art Exchange Fosters Cultural Learning for Youth

"We brought the supplies to that noisy, excited and happy class of kids. It really was a treat to experience the classroom." *(email reporting that the art exchange materials had been delivered to Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten.)*

TRAS is piloting an exciting new educational art exchange program in

conjunction with Skylighting Arts and North Star Montessori School of North Vancouver and three TRAS schools: Munseling in Spiti, Buddha Memorial in Nepal and Lhasa Yuthok in Tibet. The program is designed to enrich the art program of participating classes and to introduce the different cultures to one another.

(Continued on next page)

Self portrait from student of Lhasa Yuthok, Tibet



Editor's Note

The theme of this month's newsletter is **generosity**. There is a wonderful Sanskrit word for generosity - *dana*. It encompasses all sorts of gifts: time, service, patience, kindness, to name just a few. Dana is giving with generosity of spirit, without desire for reward or recognition for our giving; it is giving with the joy of benefiting others. Traditionally, *dana* is illustrated by the alms bowl of the homeless monastic.



As we move into the season of celebration and giving we, at TRAS, ask you to remember with *dana*, those less fortunate than ourselves.

It is because of the generosity of TRAS members, that 20 nuns can now earn an income through sewing, and the wall at Buddha Memorial is now being rebuilt. It is also through the generosity of a TRAS member, that our office is now adorned with an exquisite antique Tibetan cupboard.

Our mission at TRAS is to provide financial assistance for health and education for children and youth in the Himalayan regions. We ask that you join us in

our mission by giving the gift of a donation this holiday season. To help you celebrate your practice of *dana*, we offer you our recipe for chai!

Slide Show Supporting Elderly People in Tibet

7 p.m. Saturday, December 17

Zuru Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre
318—336 East 1st Ave, Vancouver

Tras director, Jennifer Hales, traveled with Didi to her homeland in 2004. Jennifer will show slides of Didi's compassionate work with elderly Tibetans in Eastern Tibet. Entry by donation. Proceeds to "Gaywa Projects" which supports elderly Tibetans. (see gawaproject.org)

"Words are mere bubbles of water; deeds are drops of gold." Tibetan Proverb

Art Exchange (continued)

The schools do a series of five carefully designed art projects and then exchange them. Projects include a self-portrait, a collage made from everyday items, a unity banner, a virtue tree with individual leaves for each child and universal symbols.

The North Vancouver schools provide all the art materials, a camera to record the project and postage money. They have also agreed to raise funds for TRAS!



Chai Tea

We have served chai at many TRAS events and our members always ask how to make it. We hope you enjoy it!

14 cardamom pods
1 inch fresh ginger – sliced
3 – 3 inch sticks cinnamon
8 whole cloves
dash of vanilla
few black peppercorns (optional)
4 ½ cups water
1 ½ cups milk
2 tablespoons black tea
sugar to sweeten to taste

Directions:

Using the flat side of large knife, crush cardamom pods to expose seeds. In saucepan, bring water, milk, cardamom pods, cinnamon, ginger and cloves to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tea leaves and remove from heat; cover and let steep for 5 minutes. Strain and serve hot. Sweeten with sugar as desired. Makes 4 -6 servings



Where are you going? Spiti!

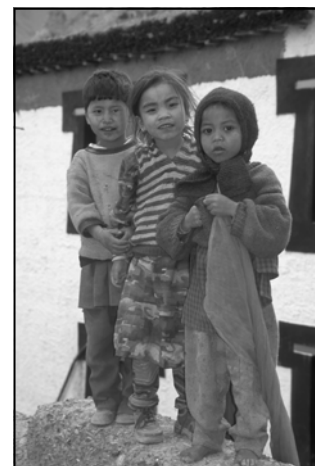
In 1996, Tras director, Marion Tipple, travelled to this remote region, tucked away in Northern India near the border with Tibet. She was one of a few foreigners who would participate in the celebration of Tabo monastery's 1000th birthday which included a Kalachakra Initiation given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

She discovered a desert-like valley, cut by a raging river and surrounded by snow-capped mountains, and a strong Tibetan Buddhist culture that has survived since the founding



of Tabo in 996, despite years of British rule and the Chinese invasion of Tibet. She also discovered Munsel-ling!

“*“Two times two is four, three times two is six,”* the sound of children chanting echoed through the remote desert valley as we walked up the rocky path to the school entrance. We had heard about the school while at Tabo, and had driven north to the small village of Rangrik. A large white-washed building glistened in the sunlight. A new plaque commemorated the inauguration of the school, (Continued on page 7)



THE MASTER AND THE SEWING MACHINES

Imagine 20 young country-women attempting to embrace a nun's life in today's Tibet.

They found a Buddhist Master (a follower of an incarnate Lama) living in the outskirts of Lhasa who acts as teacher and offers his house as a centre.

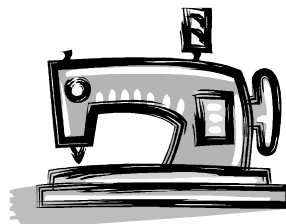
After meeting the Master, Tsarong Phungyal, principal of the TRAS-sponsored Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten, wrote to TRAS about the plight of this small group of nuns. Tsarong wrote that “some of them are practicing meditation in the mountain caves and a part of them are do-

ing odd jobs or they sit by the road in different places and chant scriptures to receive alms from passers-by. That is how they make a living.”

Tsarong had an idea about how the nuns could become more self-sufficient. He suggested a plan to the Master, “to set up a tailor's workshop at his home where he has two large rooms to offer.” Tsarong then turned to TRAS to

help buy 5 pedal-powered sewing machines with attachable small motors believing that, “the nuns will soon be able to master the skill of using the sewing machines, and gradually make some profit for themselves and benefit their community as a whole.” Tsarong, it turns out, also moonlights as a sewing machine repairman!

The young nuns have already braved the authorities in Lhasa to get identity papers so they can start selling and more than half of the total cost of \$600 has been raised by TRAS members!



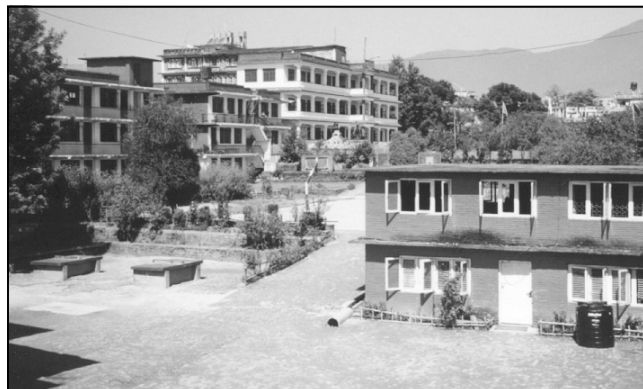
A Conversation with Dorje Namgyal—Buddha Memorial Home

While in Kathmandu last year, TRAS director, Jennifer Hales visited Buddha Memorial Home and met with principal, Dorje Namgyal. She recently wrote to Dorje to find out how things are, now that a year has passed. Their conversation follows:

Jennifer: Last November when we talked in person, you raised three priorities of the school – **vocational training, sponsorship, a new farming project**. What is the status of each of these today? Let's start with **vocational training**.

Vocational training has also been a "wing to fly on" for the school.

Dorje Namgyal: Vocational training has been a very important part of the Home and extremely beneficial for teenagers who are not academically inclined. Many past students have jobs and are doing well. In Nepal, it is easier to find a job with a trade or a skill than with academic qualifications. Vocational training has also been a "wing to fly on" for the school. The tailoring students take care of alterations, repairs, the stitching of new uniforms. The carpentry class builds window frames, doors and necessary furniture when needed. This decreases school costs and also gives the trainees experience. There is however, concern that the school won't get adequate funding in the future.



This year, the vocational training sponsored by TRAS was a big success. The past 3-year course funded by TRAS and CIDA finished last April and many of the trainees have got jobs now. Dr. Ian Penn of Vancouver visited here recently (he is the donor of our infirmary) and now also kindly agreed to support the new course of vocational training through TRAS. This course will be on a smaller scale than before, with only 14 students, as TRAS will not be getting CIDA help any more for this project.



Jennifer: You also talked about the continued need for **sponsorship**.

Dorje Namgyal: The Home is continually taking new boarders, many of whom pay no tuition or other fees because they are children of very poor or handicapped people, or come from extremely remote areas of Mustang where families are farmers in a harsh environment and earn very little. Thousands of children are displaced from their homes and villages because of the current conflict in Nepal. Many of these come to the Home. Sponsorship support is a back-bone of the school, which does not like to turn away poor and deserving children.

Jennifer: You also told me about a **new farming**

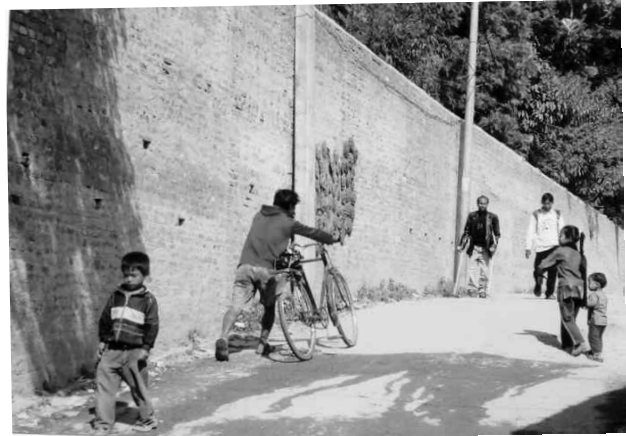
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BUDDHA MEMORIAL WALL IS REBUILT THANKS TO TRAS SUPPORT!

Thanks to our generous supporters, we have raised **all** of the money necessary for the Buddha Memorial Wall Rebuilding project (and a little extra, which we will provide to them to help with their Vocational Training programs.) We received this note from Dorje:

"Thank you so much to the generous donors who have made our wall rebuilding possible. Already we have built large parts and the remaining will be

done very soon, especially during the winter holidays. We are enclosing here a few photos of the wall collapse last summer and some of the rebuilt boundary wall with very strong stone and even pillar foundations. With our warmest regards, ..."



Left: Rebuilding the wall at Buddha Memorial Home

Above: The finished wall!

Conversation (Continued from page 4)

project, - the school had purchased a plot of unspoiled farming land, suitable to grow vegetables and fruits and have cows and other animals. Your goal was to send children to the farm each weekend for 'farming education'. How is this project?

Dorje Namgyal: The farm project is going on well. Just as with the vocational training program, the school doesn't believe that all children should be on an academic track. Gardening and agricultural skills will be very important in the future whether students end up returning to their home village or staying in Kathmandu where there is an increased demand for gardeners.

Every Friday groups of students go there and do lot



In areas of the Himalayas, our traditional flower of this holiday season, the poinsettia, grows to tree-like proportions. In December, hillsides are adorned with the shrub's brilliant red blooms, presenting a stunning and festive landscape.

of work. We planted rice in the summer and recently got our first harvest of 2500 kg of high quality of rice. We planted 1000 trees which hopefully will bear fruits in 2 to 3 years time. We have also planted some vegetables but due to too much rain, this wasn't a big success.

There is also a water problem. We need a deep well for water pumping which will cost Rs. 250,000 (about Can. \$ 4500 or so). We don't have the money for it. We are also hoping to buy 5 cows which will cost about Rs.120,000 (about Can. \$2000). We are looking for this help.

SPONSORS NEEDED!

We currently require sponsorship for six children to continue their education. Two are from Buddha Memorial, two are from Doeguling Tibetan Settlement in Mungod, India, one is at Dekylling in Dehra Dun, India and one is at Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussorie, India. Please continue your kind generosity by sponsoring a child today.

Ashish Adhikari was born in 1996 in the Ramechap district of Nepal. His family, forced by Maoist rebels, to leave their home, moved to Kathmandu 2 years ago. There, the family of 9 lives in a small rented room and has difficulties making ends meet. Asish's father appealed to

Buddha Memorial to help with Ashish's education. He is now in class 3 and would welcome your financial assistance.

Sangyal Tsering is 7 years old and comes from the Amdo region of Tibet. His father is a farmer in Tibet; his mother has passed away. Sangyal travelled with a group of children and an escort by foot and often at night, hiding during the day, across mountains and rivers

to Mussorie, India to attend the **Tibetan Homes Foundation**. He is now enjoying reading story books and playing soccer. Sangyal needs your financial support so that he can continue his studies.

Tenzin Woedhen is 7 years old from Zayul, Tibet. He has one younger sister. He is attending the second level of Kindergarten at **Dekylling Tibetan Settlement**. His father is a farmer in Tibet. His mother is employed at Dekylling as a tailor but is having difficulty

meeting Tenzin's schooling expenses. Please consider sponsoring Tenzin.

Kunga Younten was born on October 5, 1989. His family of 10 - his parents, 6 children, an elderly grandfather and an aunt - are Tibetan refugees who now live in Mundgod, India. They barely scrape a living from a small plot of land and have no extra money for

the children's education. **Doeguling** Tibetan Settlement has accepted Kunga to the school and he is now attending Class 8 and requires sponsorship to continue.

Lhakpa Tsering was born in 1989. His parents, Tibetan refugees, settled in Mungod, India. His father deserted the family. His mother works for only 3-4 months in the winter selling woolen garments for minimum wages. Lhakpa, his older sister and mother live with their grandmother,

who is 68 years old and dependent upon the family. Lhakpa attends class 10 at **Doeguling** Tibetan Settlement but requires sponsorship to continue his education.

Tenzin Ghale was born in 1996 in Kathmandu. His family is very poor. His father works as a guard and his mother spins wool in a carpet factory. He has one younger brother. Tenzin had to leave his school when his family could not pay his fees. His father approached **Buddha Me-**

morial for help. Tenzin now attends class 2 there but a sponsor is required to pay his schooling costs.

Tashi Delek, Dawa



Dawa

By Stevie Bahrey

The registered letter, for some reason, engendered a sense of apprehension. The colorful envelope was clearly from India, but the name and address of the sender were unknown to me. It could only concern my Tibetan foster child, Dawa.

In polite Tibetan Buddhist fashion, the greeting was first to wish me well in health and spirit. The next line went on, "I am sister, Khondo Dolma, of the late Dawa Sangmo. I am unfortunate to say that our dear, loving and sweet Dawa is gone – a most terrible shock as it will be for you. She had fallen sick quite suddenly and despite all efforts to save her, and her child's life, both passed away."

Dawa was 14 and just starting high school when I sponsored her. For 14 years we have kept in touch, with letters, pictures and reports.

Dawa, always ambitious and hardworking, obtained her degree in accounting followed by a year in Computer Studies, and then found a position in her home village, at the Mundgod boarding school. Even working full time, Dawa helped her parents with farm work at harvesting and planting times.

I smile remembering her letters. Recently, one ended "Please take care of health and always for you I say prayers and for long life. I am much thankful to you for sponsor and financial help, though, I know you are too old – that difficult to walk, and to sleep – but always still kindhearted for poor children need help." She signed it "Oceans of Love – Dawa – Tashi Delek."

Farewell, gentle Dawa, and all blessings on your journey. Tashi Delek.

Spiti (Continued from page 3)

Munsel-ling (Place of Lighting the Darkness / Enlightening Ignorance) by the Dalai Lama, just three days earlier."

Munsel-ling, has been a TRAS project for many years. Several students are sponsored by TRAS members and this year, students at Munsel-ling are participating in the TRAS cultural art exchange. (page 1)

In the summer of 2006, Dr. Tipple will return to Spiti for her third visit and she invites you to join her for the first TRAS tour to visit Munsel-ling and the monasteries of the Spiti Valley. Details will be available within the next few weeks. For further information, please contact the TRAS office at 604 224 5133.

"Kindness is the language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Mark Twain

TRAS Office has a new look!

A very rare and unique hand-painted antique Tibetan cupboard is now adorning the TRAS office thanks to a very generous donation from members Bill Corden and Jennifer Peng. Unfortunately this photo does little to convey the exquisite artistic beauty of this wonderful hand-painted treasure!

Bill and Jennifer just happened to have a matching box which is

sitting proudly on top of the cupboard.

The cupboard is fittingly serving as a display area for our Himalayan handicrafts.

A huge thank you to Bill and Jennifer!





TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

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Joan Ford
Dorothea Leach



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Tras Board at the Strategic Planning Workshop on November 26.

Left to right: Debbi Salmonsens, Jen Hales, Lynn Beck, Brian Sheffield, Videsh Kapoor, Kathy Gibler, Daphne Hales, Rob Asbeek-Brusse, Heather Hamilton-Wright, Russil Wvong, Abby Fitch

E-mails Needed

Please send us your email address. In this age of technology and of environmental responsibility, it is our goal to offer you the option of receiving your newsletter electronically. We would also like to provide regular updates and invitations to events by email!



Is it time for you to renew your annual membership? Please be kind enough to send in the coupon to the right or phone the TRAS office to make your payment by credit card.



We now accept payments by Visa and MasterCard!

Phone the TRAS office at 604-224-5133 to make your donation or sponsorship

payment by credit card today!

Would you like to donate to or join TRAS?

Annual Membership Donation (\$20)..... \$ 20

In addition, I would like to:

Sponsor a child's annual education (\$360)..... \$ _____

Donate to the project of greatest need (at TRAS discretion)..... \$ _____

Donate to the project of my choice (Name)..... \$ _____

Donate to future projects..... \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Name: _____

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Would you like your donation acknowledged in the TRAS newsletter? Yes ☐ No ☐

Gifts can be made by credit card at www.tras.ca or phone the TRAS office 604-224-5133

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