
Foreword

As a former executive member of the Central Executive Committee of the TWA (1984-91), it is my pleasure and privilege to write this foreword for the upcoming issue of “*Dolma*”. TWA has come a long way from its early revival years and has made tremendous contributions to the Tibetan communities in all aspects of life; socio-economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian work. Most of all, it has empowered and uplifted thousands of Tibetan women, directly affecting more than fifty percent of the Tibetan population, and through them, the whole populace! It has been so delightful that with each new team of executive members over the years, we notice new talents and expertise. We clearly witness many young and highly educated women taking their roles and shouldering the important responsibility of running the organization and fulfilling the missions expressed by the brave women of 1959.

In addition to its long-standing dedication, another commendable aspect of TWA has been its sincere openness to changing needs and situations. It has continued to evolve, thereby maintaining its position as one of the most effective organizations to serve the Tibetan communities. In that respect, TWA’s very own magazine “*Dolma*” has played a very vital role. We learn about the myriad activities of the TWA board and its members all over the world through the magazine. The stories and articles you will read in this issue of “*Dolma*” offer a perfect example of what Tibetan women are up to. Many unassuming Tibetan women do such hard work but leave the credit to others; certainly, one of the foremost of such women is Tsering Dolker of Chandigarh whose humanitarian work is unparalleled, remaining unsurpassed in many ways.

It is also very encouraging to know that, since TWA has a quarterly newsletter about its various activities, “*Dolma*” now offers a platform for Tibetan women writers. Therefore, I would like to take the liberty to speak directly to you: it is my hope that you, Tibetan women, both inside and outside Tibet, will now take the opportunity to express your ideas, thoughts and opinions on any topic or issue that you care about the most. Just express it in writing and send to TWA! This is exclusively your platform!

I want to thank the President and all the members of TWA for your good work for Tibet and Tibetans, especially for Tibetan women! My sincere thanks also go to all those who contributed to this issue of “*Dolma*”.

Pema Dechen Gorap
Washington, D.C

June 25, 2007

Dolma Magazine is a tribute to our brave sisters.

From President's Desk

The Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) is delighted to release *DOLMA* in a new light. It was first published in 1989 as a TWA News Magazine. In 2006, TWA launched *Voice*, TWA's Quarterly Newsletter, to replace the work of *Dolma* Magazine. Readers have embraced *Voice* with great success as it is better suited for faster news reporting in light of our growing activities.

From now on, *Dolma* will be a forum for the intellectual expression of Tibetan women on themes and topics that are of relevance to them. The change is purported to contribute to the important objective of empowering Tibetan women in exile on multiple fronts. The Tibetan Women's Association not only seeks to address the struggle between genders and legitimate women's rights in society, but also to eliminate all subtle obstacles hindering the development and intellectual growth of Tibetan women. Given the vast ability and potential of Tibetan women, it is high time that such a forum is in place where women can express themselves to the fullest. Thus, TWA has taken this initiative to create a forum exclusively for women where their intellectual potentials and literary talents not only can be explored but can also find expression and recognition.

One of the main features of the new *Dolma* will be articles and essays written by Tibetan women of all ages. TWA has created an essay competition divided into two categories; one for school girls and the other for women of college age or older. Contestants will be prompted with different essay topics each year, and the three best essays from each age category will be selected and published in *Dolma* under the caption "Wisdom of Women's Words". The purpose of women related themes is to encourage women to write about themselves - their roles and responsibilities, interests and talents, and their inner feelings and experiences. We want women to reflect strongly on their self-perception. It is human nature for one to express views on things that others need to do. However, TWA believes that change begins with the self.

We hope this upgraded version of *Dolma* will be welcomed as enthusiastically as *Voice*. TWA would greatly appreciate your comments which will be considered in future editions.

Dr. B. TseringYeshi
President

Role of Tibetan Women in Tibet's Freedom Struggle

Below is summary of the first part of the book called 'Role of Tibetan Women in Tibet's Freedom Struggle'. The book will be published in September 2007. We welcome any suggestions, comments or criticisms. Please send them to editor@tibetanwomen.org

According to Sakya Sonam Gyaltzen's *Clear Mirror of History*, "The foundation of all such welfare and happiness could be definitely attributed to the king's lineage from King Nyatri Tsenpo till King Lha Thothori Nyentsen lasting some five hundred years and twenty-seven successive kings, but however this period had no king with connection to Buddhism. So, I have not dealt with these kings in detail". If we only consider the important religious deeds of kings and ignore the political activities of kings and ministers, then the history of Tibetan women will also not develop much and will remain stagnant.

There are historical accounts of Tibetan women who achieved a lot in spiritual matters, but the first Tibetan woman who became well known in political matters is Tsadmo Semakar, the younger sister of king Songtsen Gampo. As evident in historical account, she played her most vital role in bringing the rebellious Shangshung under the dominion of Tibetan kings and thereby strengthening Tibet's political consolidation.

Scholar Gendun Chopel's *The White Annals* mentions, "In the course of narrating Tibetan history, a Chinese historical text, written in a foreign language, gives a detailed description of an unidentified Tibetan queen". According to this account, such a queen may have existed at one point of time in Tibetan history. On such and other great Tibetan women of the past, for people both in and outside Tibet, TWA is conducting research at present.

The following article will now delve into ancient history of Tibetan women, but for future reference, we will explain the initial establishment of the Tibetan Women's Association, and their contribution towards their own race, political freedom, and the global community on a larger scale.

I. Tibetan Women's Association in Lhasa

As generally accepted, China started invading Tibet in 1950 from the west, and steadily advanced

towards Tibet's capital city, Lhasa. China adopted both peaceful and violent measures to control the whole of Tibet. In a diplomatic effort, wives of high Tibetan officials and aristocrats would be invited often to dinners held by the Chinese government. To fulfill their propaganda ploy, the Chinese government founded the first Tibetan Women's Association in Lhasa. It consisted of around 20 wives and relatives of influential officials of Tibet. The main responsibilities of TWA in Lhasa included representing Tibetan women at public meetings, educating the members of TWA on political matters, planting trees (bamboo), building new halls and assisting in paving roads.

In 1954, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was invited to visit China, the president and the vice-president of TWA were also invited. In order to lure the representatives of TWA into believing that China cared for Tibetan women's fate, TWA was invited to China twice after the first visit, and they were taken on various sightseeing tours and were given awareness workshops on health maintenance. The representatives also met with high Chinese officials who portrayed concern for Tibetan women in Tibet and the Chinese individuals whom TWA's representatives met with also depicted the same amount of concern for Tibetan women. In fact, China's long-term goal was solely to use TWA as their propaganda weapon.

The Tibetan government had from the very beginning tried to appease the Chinese and their policies; likewise Tibetan women had followed the government's appeasement policy and dealt with the Chinese in a friendly manner. The establishment of National Patriotic Women's Association (NPWA) and participation of Tibetan Women in it was not at all voluntary, but a formality of the appeasement policy. The Tibetan cabinet not only knew about the establishment, in fact they agreed to the founding of the Association. As the Chinese policing of Tibet steadily increased, Tibetan patriotism too intensified. In such an atmosphere reluctant members of the National Patriotic Women's Association started to withdraw and towards the end, NPWA was no more than a bare name.

Members of the Partiotic National Women's Association participated in the women's uprising in

March 1959. The president of the association, Takla Tsering Dolma and secretary, Trinring Rinchen Dolma both escaped to India, where they worked hard to establish two Tibetan border schools. To this time, the schools have nurtured and educated thousands of Tibetan children.

II. Tibetan Women Uprising Committee

Founding a committee or an organization is to challenge an existing unfair circumstance and to rise to confront it. The Tibetan Women's Association can trace its origin to March 12, 1959, a day on which women in Lhasa assembled and laid the initial building blocks in formation of the Tibetan Women's Association. Circumstances at the time required rapid action. Formation of the Tibetan Women's Association on that particular day was to challenge the ever-increasing Chinese incursion in the lives of Tibetans and to directly confront the danger caused by the Chinese occupation.

On March 12, 1959 Tibetan women gathered on the '*Dey Bho Yu Gyal* (Harvest Yield)' ground and after an extensive meeting, formally announced the formation of the Tibetan Women's Association. At that time, Gurtek Kunsang, Galingshan ChoTsun, Shongkha Tsenkang's Chimi, and Pelgong Pendol led the association. The aims and objectives of the uprising were announced at the meeting and the women present vowed never to submit under Chinese occupation and deception. They also declared they would fight for Tibet's independence.

Gurtek Kunsang quickly became the leader with the support of the association's members. She told everyone that Tibet is a peaceful religious country, and secondly China was so much more physically powerful than Tibet, it is wise to resort only to peaceful means in resisting China.

In our forty-seven years of living in exile, the peaceful way has proven to be the best of all methods. Considering the political understanding of the time, we cannot but laud and admire Tibetan women's actions and decisions during that time.

On March 12, 1959, Tibetan women protested in Lhasa for Tibet's independence, and also appealed to the Indian embassy located in Dicki Lingkha, the Nepalese embassy, Muslim leaders from Kashmir and the Butanese living in the Trom Sek Khang market. Two days later, on March 14th, first office

of the Tibetan Women's Association was formally opened in Tse Mon Ling. The office continued correspondence with the people's general assembly and exchanged views and information.

During the critical and dangerous period from March 12 - 19, 1959, when the Chinese artilleries were ready to strike the final blow on Lhasa, the newly formed Tibetan Women's Association gathered for general meetings three times, held two protest marches, and one demonstration. At the second general meeting, many members of the Lhasa Patriotic Women's Association joined in. The meetings yield few guiding rules for everyone to follow and women rushed to put their signatures on the bottom. Only women participated in these events.

On March 20, 1959, the morning after the third general women's riot, the Chinese military unleashed the heinous artilleries on the public in Lhasa. Thousands of people lost their lives, many of them were women. Those who survived were sifted during the days that followed. They were sent to prison and tortured in unimaginable ways.

III. Tibetan Women's Association in Exile

1. Kalimpong and Darjeeling (KaDor) Tibetan Women's Association

Tibetans in large numbers escaped to India. In Kalimpong in 1959, there was a mix of newly arrived Tibetans with Tibetans who already lived in the area. Tibetan women were eager to re-start the women's association and carry out the struggle from exile. After a few meetings, the Tibetan Women's Association was reestablished on March 10th, 1960. This date was exactly one year after the inception of the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) in Lhasa. His Holiness the Dalai Lama blessed the reestablishment of the organization by giving it a name, KaDor TWA.

Eight executive members were elected to serve for the first term of KaDor TWA, but they had no specific positions designated to them. These executive members were Noyon DeWang from Shigatse, Dhenyertsang Tashi Yangzom, Gyawa Youdon, Saytuolhoma's Dolma, Lachi Choezom, Chara Sepai Dickyi, Drigung Nay Mo's daughter Dadon, and Yangchen from Lhasa. Apart from regular workers, Gyatso Shar Nornang's wife and a few other females spearheaded the original work in the organization. They had taken vows to work

relentlessly and honestly for the Tibetan cause in front of the two protector deities of Tibet. They also declared to follow the path led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, work towards protecting and advancing the Tibetan culture and to carry on the decent role of women.

That year, TWA planned to protest the Chinese premier Zhou Anlai's visit to India, but on their way to Delhi, they were stopped and not allowed to pass Silliguri. As a contingency act, Shigatse Noyon Dewang, Khangmar Eishui Dechen Tsomo, and Digong Naymo's daughter Dadon, members of TWA, protested by laying on the railway tracks that Zhou Anlai's train was supposed to go through. That action got the media's attention and was rewarded with extensive coverage. Upon returning to Kalimpong, TWA participated in the March demonstration.

The KaDor TWA also celebrated all the important Tibetan ceremonies annually and on the 15th day of the forth month in the Tibetan calendar, they offered an extensive prayer. That became an annual ritual for the KaDor TWA.

In its history, the KaDor TWA had worked on various issues; one of them was to condemn Tibetans who were working for the Mongolian-Tibetan Bureau, passing on sensitive political information and selling out the Tibetan struggle. KaDor TWA stopped those spy's activities in their area and pointedly made them stop their operation. Also, upon learning the despicable condition at the monastery in Baksa (the first Tibetan settlement or transit point in India), KaDor TWA helped provide traditional printing wood for monks at Baksa. KaDor TWA is still continuing with these projects, but some of the leading members of the group have long since moved to other states in India.

2. Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association

In 1960s, visitors to Dharamsala could easily get an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and for local residents, there used to be one audience every month. His Holiness mostly spoke on religious conducts, but he also touched on Tibetan women's contributions to the struggle and how important it was to start a Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association in Dharamsala. He further expounded by saying that it would be challenging but having a functional TWA would be more beneficial to the

Tibetan cause, both in the short run and in the long run.

In January 1962, a month after that speech, six women in Dharamsala led by Kalsang Tsomo and Tseten Dolkar, started working to form a new Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association. Ten thousand rupees from His Holiness and a hefty sum from his two tutors helped kick-start the organization. People then started donating in various amounts. A businessman named Sonam Dorjee donated one thousand rupees; from that day on people started calling him *Tong Trak Wa La* (someone who has money in Thousands).

Kalsang Tsomo and the group spearheaded the office search and renovation. The first office was located at the Cooperative Association (Nyam Lay) office in Dharamsala. After discussing roles, Takla Tsering Dolma was appointed president, Rikha Dolma from Chamdo as director. Public Relation Officers were Kalsang Tsomo and Tseten Dolkar and Kyidrong Dingpon and Dromo Tashi served as the office managers.

In February 1962, Lord Chamberlain Phala, Takla Tsering Dolma and Mali Sab formally inaugurated Dharamsala's Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association. Within a few days, Wangdu Dorjee assigned preferred jobs such as knitting, weaving, and washing. Two people were sent to other areas to start business deals.

Women started Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association but the association did not differentiate between male and female workers. At that time, with the exception of three families, all families in Dharamsala had at least one person working at the association. Workers at the association celebrated holidays like His Holiness' birthday by putting up prayer flags, offering incense, mending roads in Mcleod and helping out the poor, sick and elderly.

3. Unification of Regional Women's Association into the Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association

In June 1964, KaDor TWA visited Dharamsala to offer His Holiness the first print of *Lamrin* (holy Tibetan Buddhist text) which was finished in the third month of the Tibetan calendar. On this occasion many existing regional TWAs decided to come to Dharamsala; among them were delegations from Shillong, Mainpat, Shimla, Chalang,

Dalhousie, and Dharamsala. In total, forty-five people gathered in Dharamsala with the goal of uniting all independent regional TWAs under one headquarter. Dharamsala became the unanimous center.

His Holiness gave an audience to the newly formed TWA and advised them to work towards raising Tibetan children with a clear sense of Tibetan identity, to help Tibetan women across India who are facing difficulty in maintaining their proper manner, and to make TWA a respectable and an acknowledged organization in the world.

With His Holiness' expectations in mind, women started to discuss their organization's move forward. After many meetings, Takla Tsering Dolma was elected as the first president and elected to work with her were Chamdoyabtsang Rikha Dolma, Kalsang Tsomo, and Tsetan Dolkar. After they formally took on the responsibility, they announced their plan to gather Tibetans in big Indian cities and provide them with livelihood in Dharamsala by expanding the Handicraft Center. They also planned to establish TWA branches in different settlements.

A year after the start of TWA and three years after the establishment of Dharamsala's cooperative association, the working conditions of the association had not improved much. In fact, workers at the association were only getting daily meals, no salaries, and at times had to work many hours. Through all of these financial hardships, few people complained since they were patriotic towards the cause and had no other source of income.

During such hardship, as workers gradually moved to find greener pastures, the Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association began to weaken. The fact that the association still operates and is carrying on preserving traditional Tibetan handicrafts is attributable to all the hard work put in by the founding members. It is also because the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE - now changed to Central Tibetan Administration CTA) oversaw the running of the association when it was facing financial troubles.

In the beginning, the Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association faced much financial hardship but there were many sympathetic and generous donors. Doctor Ama Lobsang had been one of the biggest contributors throughout and

Kalsang Tsomo, who worked the hardest everyday, donated her entire salary to the association. Though they are no longer with us, their contribution to our cause and particularly to the founding of the TWA will never be forgotten.

4. Establishing Uttar Pradesh Regional TWA

Noryon Dewa and Dadon promoted the idea of establishing regional TWAs at incense burning gatherings in Mussoorie soon after the founding of Uttar Pradesh Regional TWA. They read out from His Holiness' speech and persuaded people to join the association. From three different regions around Mussoorie, Taring Rinchen Dolma and 270 other women joined in the organization.

The newly formed regional TWA went on to make new chapters, and appointed Noryon Dewang, Drigong Dadon and Phuntsok Dolma from Jamyang Kyel for the executive duties. A place was rented for the relocation of Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association, but they were unable to follow through with the plan. In its place, a similar association called Rajpur Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association was established.

In January 1965, seventeen people from Mussoorie were given jobs at the association. On top of the Handicraft Center, Rajpur Tibetan Women's Association formally instituted the executive members and advisors. Taring Rinchen Dolma and Shan Devi (Indian) assumed the role of advisor and ten executives were elected. They were Noyon Dewang, Sakya Jetsun Chemi, Phuntsok Dolma, Drigong Dadon, Drakyab Namgyal Dolma, Ngapa Sangsky, Chatreng Ashel, Daupon's wife, Krochu Youdon, and Amdo Dolkar.

The Rajpur Tibetan Women's Handicraft Center was consolidated under the Home Department of CTA in 1976 and since then the head of the center has been appointed directly by the Home Minister. Though the management had changed, the plate on the front gate still reads 'Rajpur Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association'. Since the beginning, the number of members has fluctuated each year. According to current director, Mr. Karma Gelek, the number of women workers has been constant. Seventy six workers plus their families totals nearly four-hundred altogether.

The Handicraft Center also has a huge campus now. Many of the original workers have grown old and walk with canes. The second generation busily

works in the association while the future or the third generation cruises by the gate on their motorcycle.

The Center's teacher, Namgyal, has retired and now serves as a temple care-taker. For three hours, he shared with me many stories about the Center. There are three other elders, namely Lobsang, Tsering Phuntsok and Mitue Gyalnor Buchung, whom I did not meet due to time constraint.

- 5. Dharamsala Regional Tibetan Women's Association

Since the formation of the first three women's associations - KaDor Women's Association, Dharamsala Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association, and Rajpur Tibetan Women's Cooperative Association - the focus has been on ameliorating current and basic social difficulties in the Tibetan community. As they paid more attention to welfare issues, most of their capital centered on the handicraft centers, and in doing so these organizations in turn became conglomerate, rather than political organizations. Their political capital weakened as their work in the political field decreased.

On September 6th, 1984, at the meeting of eight organizations, His Holiness said that every organization has similar goals in helping the general public. He also mentioned that it is helpful to send an independent observer to an organization's meeting to demonstrate that the organization is indeed open and has nothing to hide from the public. He stressed that more organizations will be beneficial to public. His Holiness then inquired about the disappearance of the Tibetan Women's Association and said that it would be very beneficial to have a Tibetan Women's Association that would run and function like any other women's organization in the world.

Since that speech, Tibetan organizations have started inviting independent observers to their meetings. On September 10, 1984, eighteen women from Dhasa convened for the very first leadership meeting. On the same day, they approached the Office of His Holiness, the Tibetan Cabinet, and the Tibetan Parliament to brief them regarding their plans. Soon a voluntary meeting of women in Dharamsala was held where about eight hundred women participated.

The first executive members were elected and their names and positions were as follows:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Rinchen Khado | President |
| 2. | Gyaltong Tsering Dolma | Vice President |
| 3. | Adruk Tenzin Choekyi | Secretary |
| 4. | Sharling Pema Dechen | Under Secretary |
| 5. | Penpay Tseten Namgyal | Accountant |
| 6. | Namgyal Choekyi | Financial Manager |
| 7. | Gatong Dawa Seldon | Office Assistant |

Their primary effort was to establish a Tibetan Women's Association that could represent all of Tibetan women well. The newly formed Tibetan Women's Association had no money to pay salaries to its executives, but these patriotic women willingly volunteered their time and energy whenever needed. TWA also received donations from different sources when they needed money.

In an effort to consolidate the scattered Tibetan Women's Associations into one group, executives reached out to different Tibetan settlements and asked for ideas and opinions. The executives extended their outreach based on His Holiness's encouragement for having a legitimate Tibetan Women's Association. The responses showed unanimous support for the executives' plan to formally establish a Tibetan Women's Association.

Then President, Rinchen Khando, attributed TWA's successful re-establishment to many organizations' support and hard work. She stated that the TWA started in 1959, and later TWA was restarted in exile in KaDor, and yet again in Dharamsala. These courageous women who led TWA during those times lacked modern education and experience, but they worked hard out of their love for Tibet. Through incense burning gatherings and printing of religious texts, the women's organization represented Tibetan Women everywhere. In 1984, the old Tibetan Women's Association was revived, not started.

As explained by Rinchen Khando, Dharamsala TWA restored an institution that was fading away. In seven months, executives were able to set up a legitimate political organization which represented the voice of Tibetan women in the world.

IV. Central Tibetan Women’s Association

On April 15, 1985, the first-ever Tibetan Women’s General Body Meeting was held in Dharamsala. Dharamsala’s TWA organized the meeting which lasted for four days. To lead the meeting, representatives from thirteen different places elected Taring Rinchen Dolma as the President and Rinchen Khando as the Vice President. Under their direction, and in accordance with democratic principles, a charter containing seven points was ratified. The points include, TWAs position and actions based on the current situation, preservation and development of Tibetan cultural heritage, improvement of the Central TWA, and organizational development.

In the charter, there were sub sections containing twenty seven clauses, which included, commemorating March 10th, acknowledging changes in Tibet (particularly to population transfer), boycotting Chinese goods in Tibetan society, observing Pal-lha Duchen (15th day of tenth Tibetan month) as a day of action to help poor and needy local Tibetans, expanding regional branches, working for the health and safety of His Holiness, and most importantly, raising the future generation of Tibetans with a clear sense of Tibetan identity.

Three women were elected as advisors to the organization and they were Taring Rinchen Dolma, Jetsun Pema and Khando Tsering. Ten women were elected as executive members and amongst them, Rinchen Khando was elected as the President, Gyaltong Tsering Dolma as the Vice-President and Tenzin Choekyi as the secretary. At that meeting few individuals were honored for their

outstanding contribution to the founding of TWA. Noyon Dewang, Kalsang Tsono and Tsetan Dolma were recognized for their contributions to the Tibetan cause at the meeting and were presented the traditional white scarf.

May 1st, 1985, marked a new era for the Tibetan Women’s Association. It was the beginning of the Central Tibetan Women’s Association and the first working day for its president and three executive members.

Since then, many educated Tibetan women have held important positions in TWA. TWA has come a long way since its founding days even when they were confronted with lack of education and facilities. So far, there have been eight central executive bodies and TWA has been a leading organization in the field of politics, education, and social and economic campaigns for Tibet.

As one can learn from reading this history of TWA, it was formed during a time of need and desperation to take up the challenges facing Tibet at the time. TWA came into existence for the first time in Tibetan history on March 12, 1959. TWA’s status has undergone many changes since its initial formation. Now TWA represents Tibetan women on a global platform, and TWA is both capable and experienced.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has praised TWA saying that learning about the outstanding works of Tibetan women in this world is a source of joy, pride and confidence. These accomplishments are a product of new thoughts, new responsibilities and new experiences.

Interview with Tsering Dolkar: The Tibetan Mother Teresa



◀ Tsering Dolkar helping a patient



Tsering Dolkar & Lhakpa Dolma ▶

Tsering Dolkar is lovingly referred to as the Tibetan Mother Teresa for the effort and compassion she has dedicated to exiled Tibetans in need of medical assistance. Numerous Tibetans seek health care at

Nehru Hospital in Chandigarh, also referred to as P.G.I., from all over India because P.G.I. has advanced medical facilities that many other hospitals do not. However, many Tibetans find it

difficult to obtain medical care at P.G.I. because of language barriers and the hospital's immense size and confusing layout. Tsering eases this process for patients who seek her care.

Tsering's motivation for serving others stems from the suffering she endured as a child. Tsering was born in 1974 in Pokhara, Nepal, the town her father fled to in 1959 after serving in the Tibetan army. She attended school at the Tibetan Children's Village (T.C.V.) in Patlikhul and later transferred and graduated from T.C.V. in Dharamsala. She earned herself a place at Panjab University in Chandigarh.

During her primary education, Tsering learned that her sister, Lhakpa Dolma, would have to stay home and care for their sister who suffered from epilepsy. It was only several years after learning this news that Tsering discovered both of her parents had passed away. She very much mourned her parents' deaths and eventually returned home during school vacation. She sadly discovered that nobody in her family demonstrated any love for her. This feeling was reinforced when she turned to her father's friend (name withheld), for money after her second year of college. The money that her parents had left her was gone which left Tsering stranded. Through her current work, Tsering wants others to experience the love that was denied to her.

She was initially inspired to engage in her current work by a nun she encountered at P.G.I. one day. The nun was crying because she could not get a doctor to see her. Tsering helped this nun through the hospital and the process of treatment. Several weeks later, she encountered another nun who needed help. This nun was weeping because she could not afford a necessary back surgery. Upon Tsering's persistent request, the doctor agreed to perform the nun's surgery for free.

Tsering has continued this work throughout her adult life. She helps patients get free or reduced price treatment, finds funding for some forms of treatment, translates for doctors and patients, helps long-term patients find accommodation, provides accommodation in her home, helps people to navigate the hospital, and provides patients with the peace of mind that patients know someone is there taking care of them, helping them, and listening to them.

For an eight-year-old girl undergoing surgery to repair her fractured leg, Tsering provided a great deal of aid and companionship. The girl missed

school because of her surgery so Tsering decided to act as a substitute teacher so she wouldn't fall very far behind. She gave the girl math problems as well as handwriting and English assignments. Remembering the criticism she endured from her peers for not having proper attire, Tsering made sure to buy the little girl something she could wear to school once she recovered.

Tsering doesn't simply care for the medical needs of others. She cares for their overall well-being and also for the Tibetan liberation struggle. She was awarded the position of Vice President at TYC. Part of her responsibilities in the position includes looking after patients who migrate from northern India to Chandigarh. She has also helped organize candle light vigils and a peace march to Delhi in 2001. She has advocated on behalf of students who didn't pass Board exams to enter into Punjab University. For students already enrolled in Punjab University, Tsering tutors them in statistics. She has learned about medicine to better inform those who seek her help and finds housing for patients.

The numerous ways in which Tsering Dolkar touches the lives of others has earned her the title the "Tibetan Mother of Theresa." For all of her hard work, she has been invited to be the keynote speaker for new initiates of TYC and in 2005 she was nominated for an Unsung Heroes of Compassion Award. The Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) wishes to highlight her accomplishments and share all of her contributions with our readers. TWA sat down with Tsering Dolkar (TD) for an interview about her life and work experiences.

TWA: How old are you and where did you receive your education?

TD: I am 35 years old. I attended TCV Pathlikhul through class 5 and then transferred and graduated from TCV Upper Dharamsala. I received my Bachelors of Science from Punjab University in Chandigarh in 1994.

TWA: How did you start working at the hospital?

TD: When I first came to Chandigarh, I came to get my B.Sc. degree, but some of my older friends were RTYC executive members at Chandigarh at the time. From my second year on, I was executive RTYC member. I did not go home during my two months holiday very much.

During my second year, I was at the hospital helping somebody out when a couple of security

guys called me over and asked me if I knew the patient that he was pointing to. The patient turned out to be from the Transit school and had two helpers, but both of the helpers didn't speak any English. I found out later that the patient had died after few days.

I met another patient on a different day, and saw a woman crying on the fourth floor. She was from the Handicraft Center in Dharamsala. She told me that when she heard that her husband needed to be hospitalized in Chandigarh, she rushed there straight from Dharamsala and asked her neighbors to take care of her children. She was told by doctors that her husband needed to undergo surgery and that he needed blood donations from 4 people. I told her not to worry and that she should go back home and that I would take care of getting all the needed blood. I told her that she could come back later.

Another time, a nun from Toshita was hit by a car and her back disc was broken. I saw her crying on the phone. I asked her what had happened and she told me she had come for a medical check-up. She had two helpers, a nun and a monk, and they said that they went to PGI, but they could not understand the system. They said that they informed the Department of Health regarding their problem with PGI being so huge and them not understanding any of the process, and that they wanted to go to a private hospital in Ludiana. The Department of Health asked them what would happen if they ran short of money at the private hospital in Ludiana. They answered that they would even beg for money if they have to. They were crying so much. Although I did not know much about PGI policies at the time, I helped them since I could speak the language. That event was covered by Bod Kyi Dusbab (Tibetan weekly news magazine) for the first time in 1997.

I also served as the Vice-President of RTYC Chandigarh for 4 years during the time and helped various patients. The Vice-President's responsibility was to take care of patients.

TWA: After finishing your term at RTYC, why did you continue working for the patients even after your graduation?

TD: In 1999, another article was written about me in a Tibetan newspaper and that gave out my home address which caused me to get lots of letters from

different Tibetan settlements. All of the letters stated their appreciation of my work and requested me to continue with my work. I actually wanted to become a teacher. I am from Pokhara settlement and I always wanted to go back and become a teacher there. Now that I am involved with the patients, this is more rewarding. I also find it more satisfying.

I feel that by staying in Chandigarh, I can also help in many other ways and not just with patients. Sometimes during admission, some students have their parents with them, but some students do not have any parents helping them out. So I help them out with the admission process. Many times, when students fail one subject in their class 10 Board exam, they do not know what to do. If they have educated parents, then they are shown a path to follow, but if they have uneducated parents they just stay at home and do not pursue any degree. Thus, I help them by telling them that there are National Open exams and Punjab Board school exams that they can take. Those exams are usually easier than the national Board exam. I help those students get around to the right place.

After finishing high school, some students do not have the necessary amount of money to attend college, so many choose to stay home with their parents, help them out, and they take correspondence exams. I help connect those students with the right school and get the necessary paper work for them.

Since I do not have any parents, I really do not have a place to return to. Thus, I choose to stay in Chandigarh and help others as much as possible.

TWA: Do you ever plan on stopping or taking a break from what you are doing now to pursue your dream of becoming a teacher?

TD: I plan on doing this work in the future since many patients depend on me. If I leave, I think it will hurt future patients.

TWA: Has the thought of pursuing a doctor's degree ever cross your mind? Becoming a doctor will greatly enhance your efforts as a health worker?

TD: I just do not have time. When I go to Dharamsala to renew my RC (for 3 days), patients keep looking me up and I have to rush back to Chandigarh. I can't even get away for a few days,

I plan on doing this work in the future since many patients depend on me. If I leave, I think it will hurt future patients.

so 5 years is out of question. I am very happy with what I do now.

TWA: How is your relationship with the doctors at PGI?

TD: Usually it's pretty good. After Chandi Newsline published an article in 2001 entitled "Known as the Tibetan Mother Teresa who's the Lighthouse for those lost in the unknown land", many PGI doctors learned about me and their response to me improved after that.

The only one time I had some issues with some staffs of PGI was once when I helped a rickshaw driver as his wife was illiterate and didn't know the system well. So I volunteered to attend his surgery. The nurses asked how I was related to the man. They very sarcastically asked me if I was his wife. I told them that he was a rickshaw driver and I was his passenger. The nurses seem to think that a relationship is a must for someone to help others.

After Chandi Newsline published an article in 2001 entitled "Known as the Tibetan Mother Teresa who's the Lighthouse for those lost in the unknown land", many PGI doctors learned about me and their response to me improved after that.

TWA: How do you financially handle the strain of having to provide for all the sick people?

TD: I don't have any material wealth to contribute personally. Many times, the patients have organizations paying their medical bills. Sometimes when we have very poor patients and they are not able to pay for their medical bills, I write recommendation letters for them and send the letters to the Dept. of Health. I sometimes contact Dr. Tseten (head of Tibetan Delek hospital) directly, and he calls the Dept. of Health and we try to figure something out that way.

I also help to obtain a document from PGI called poor-free. If we have a signature from the highest doctor on a document attesting that a person is poor, then all the tests are free for the patients at PGI. But now rules have changed because of the new Director at PGI. Patients must now prove that they are under the poverty line. Indian patients bring a yellow paper to prove it, but Tibetans do not have such documents. On some major surgeries like kidney and heart transplants, doctors are quite understanding as those surgeries are costly

procedures. They let some poor Tibetans undergo the procedure for free.

TWA: Have you ever had to turn someone away because you couldn't help them financially?

TD: A very poor monk came last August for a surgery which wound up being unsuccessful. His second surgery was supposed to happen in October but the monk had no money since he used all of it for his first surgery. Chaudary Medicals loaned him medicine and we had enough to pay for his surgery. However, the medicine that Chaudary Medicals loaned totaled Rs.26,000 and we only had Rs.10,000 to pay them back. The monk is still fed on a feeding tube. He left two days ago even though his lungs are still very infected. He was first diagnosed with TB, but was later told that it was "hydrocyst" and then later they discovered that it was "dermoysyst." They cleaned out his lungs but he developed a cavity. He was so disturbed by the second surgery that he contemplated suicide. Now he is living in Dharamsala and taking TB pills.

There was another patient, (name withheld), who suffered from spinal TB. He had a poor-free letter and tried to get an MRI but they couldn't schedule him until ten days later. While he was waiting, his lower limbs paralyzed; he couldn't even pee. He had only one helper and it was during losar time. We borrowed money from Chaudary Medicals again for his surgery after which his functions were normal. The doctors told me to get Rs.5,000 to buy a few things for his care during his recovery. We borrowed the things we could and only wound up spending Rs.1,000. The patient was moved to Delek Hospital after that. My friend, Dawa Lhamo, sent 300 USD for the patient.

TWA: Are any organizations helping you out financially?

TD: In 1997 and 1998, a representative from the Department of Health asked me if TYC started my work or if I started it individually. They gave me Rs.3,000. I told the representative that I don't have parents to support me so sometimes patients give me some money when they leave and sometimes my friends send me money. I told him that I never complained to the Department of Health regarding lack of money; some of my friends might have taken it upon themselves to complain on my behalf. He told me to make bills for all of the travel expenses (rickshaw) and I told him that it is hard to make rickshaw bills and that I have managed so far

without a regular salary and that I think I will continue to do so.

Then I went to Dhasa one day and met with the Department of Health's secretary, Tsering Dorjee la, and told him that I was given Rs.3,000 by one of the Department's staff. I had gone to return the money to Tsering Dorjee la. Tsering refused to take the money back and said that it as an appreciation gift for all of my work.

Pa Tsering (Tibetan stand-up comic) also helps me out once in a while. In 2000, Ama Jetsun Pema (His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sister) came here and asked me if I have any financial help. She then agreed to give me Rs.1,000 per month from TCV which I still get.

When another article about me came out in 2001 Chandi Newline, Dr. Tsering Dorjee la, ex-TCV came to see me and he gave me Rs.20,000. Sarah College also used to send me Rs.2,000 and Rs.3,000 once in a while. TWA paid my room rent for six months in 2004. I once even got private audience with His Holiness.

TWA: How did that go?

TD: He asked all the basic questions about my schooling and when I started my work etc. He asked me what my biggest problem was and I said housing is my biggest problem. He told me to contact his office regarding any issues I face. His office gave me Rs.20,000. Dr. Yeshi Dhonden also gave me Rs. 10,000 and told me never to distinguish between Indian and Tibetan patients. He told me to help them equally.

TWA: You help Indian patients as well?

TD: We helped Indian patients a lot in the past, but we encountered problems. There was an elderly Indian man at the hospital that seemed to be getting no attention from doctors. I asked him how he was feeling and he asked me for help. I was later told that he had been sitting around the hospital for ten months. Doctors told me that he needed an operation but that there was nobody who could sign for him for the surgery to proceed. I volunteered to sign for him.

He was hospitalized the night before his scheduled surgery. I wondered who helped him; when I got to his room there were police stationed outside. They asked me if I helped him. When I told them, "yes," they asked me if I had seen today's paper with an article entitled "Penniless Laborer Awaits PGI." I

Dr. Yeshi Dhonden told me never to distinguish between Indian and Tibetan patients. He told me to help them equally.

said, "no." The article stated that PGI is not doing anything to help the old man so PGI police got involved. I said that it was a good thing for them to get involved because I couldn't handle the case all by myself.

The police told me to come to them if I needed anything regarding the old man's case. A receptionist and another man came up and asked the police to ask for my name. The police didn't. The receptionist then blamed the police for ruining the hospital's image to build their own. None of the old man's relatives showed up to help him, even after we contacted them. If you have nowhere to go at PGI after your surgery, patients are usually admitted to the Mother Theresa Ashram Charity Home if they can get a letter from the hospital attesting their poor financial condition. All of the paperwork was filled out and the patient was ready to go to the Ashram when the police showed up to help him again.

After a month the man returned to PGI to visit me. The receptionist saw us together and asked me why I was going after him all the time. They thought I was helping him because of all of the publicity he received through the newspaper. I was then summoned to the Medical Superintendent who scolded me and threatened that he would hand me over to the police if I ever returned to PGI. When I told him that I not only helped the elderly man but also many other Indian patients with no newspaper mentioning, he told me to shut up. He then called security, told them that I was not allowing doctors to work, and told them to throw me out of the hospital.

So, then RTYC, Bharat Tibet Sanyog Manj, and I went to PGI the next day. I brought all of my documents with me to prove that I am not after publicity. In the end, the Deputy Medical Superintendent came and told the others that I was very helpful in the hospital. He provided the Medical Superintendent some clarifications on my behalf. After that incident I decreased my work with Indian patients. I still help them, but not as much as I used to. It seems that Indian doctors think I am taking money from the patients in exchange for my assistance.

TWA: Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the work that you do?

TD: In the past, there weren't that many patients, but the number of patients have steadily increased. We hired two workers to help us with the patients but due to not having any precise work schedule and having to care for patients around the clock, we can't find any assistants who are willing to stay with us for long duration. We would gladly welcome anyone who shares our commitment and passion to work for the patients.

Many times doctors at PGI are so overloaded with work that they don't give enough time to each patient and don't explain the illness well enough. We often end up going to private hospitals for second opinions. The workload is crazy and we are unable to assist all the patients when they need help. There are also many patients who choose to come to Chandigarh.

Many Tibetans are not health-conscious at all. If they get sick they usually wait for few days for the pain to go away, and if it does, no one follows up with a check up. Most of us don't even go for regular medical check-ups.

TWA: Your younger sister, Lhakpa Dolma (LD), is assisting you with your work. Is it voluntary?

TD: Lhakpa started helping in 1999. I think it's better if Lhakpa answers this question.

LD: I am helping my sister voluntarily. We go to bed thinking about the patients, we wake-up thinking about them, and we invest our whole day helping them out. I have learned a great deal about myself through my work and I have realized the importance of patience.

TWA: Are you going to involve your two younger brothers in this work as well?

TD: It's up to them. One of my brothers helped me while he was studying in Chandigarh.

TWA: Do you have people helping you out in other ways?

TD: Namgyal Phuntsok, an ex-student of Chandi, called me from Delhi one day. He told me that he really appreciated my help. He said that he was trying to go to America and if he succeeds then he told me that he'll send me Rs.1,000 per month. He

kept his promise. It has been about two years since that Namgyal started sending Rs.1,000 per month.

Norbulinga sent me Rs.10,000 recently. GuChuSum also helped a lot. We also have lots of others helping us out, and sometimes we forget to name people and their feelings get hurt. We would like to apologize to all those whose names aren't mentioned here, but we are truly appreciative of all their assistance.

TWA: You work with Tibetans who have arrived at their last stage of illness and you see Tibetans not taking proper care of their health. Do you have anything you would like to share with Tibetans regarding your thoughts on prevention of illnesses and health maintenance in the Tibetan community?

TD: Many Tibetans are not health-conscious at all. If they get sick they usually wait for few days for the pain to go away, and if it does, no one follows up with a check up. Most of us don't even go for regular medical check-ups. If some one is told that they are suffering from a certain disease, then people rarely research to learn more about the disease. Many just take painkillers. People should go for 6 months or yearly routine check-ups. Many think routine check-ups are expensive, but they usually cost around Rs.1,500 or less.

We also need to educate the Tibetan communities on Hepatitis-B and AIDS. If caught in its early stage, these diseases can be treated or at least their progression can be stunned. With regular check-ups, diseases can be diagnosed before they enter their most life-threatening stages. There are many young men who don't know that they have Hep-B and they continue drinking alcohol. Hep-B is asymptomatic, so unless we go for regular check-ups for such diseases, we won't be able to catch them in time for cure.

Also, we had no known HIV+ cases until 2002. Even then, there was only 1 man. In the last two years, many HIV+ cases started coming in the Tibetan community. We need to educate our community not to discriminate against HIV+ patients. Patients themselves seem to think that medicine for HIV is very expensive but there are certain HIV medicines that Indian Government gives to the patients for free.

The same goes for cancer. If caught in its first and second stage, it can be treated and patients can enter remission. But many Tibetans who come to PGI with cancer are in the advanced stage. Food pipe cancer is very common in our community due

to our unhealthy diet, which contains very little greens. For females, cervical cancer is most common. In our community, it is very important for females to get regular pap smears and mammograms. Some people are too shy to discuss such matters with doctors. They should be educated not to feel that way.

TWA: Thank you very much for your time and all the great work you and your sister are doing.

If anyone is interested in contacting Tsering Dolkar or would like to assist her work in anyway possible, you can reach her at:

Mailing Address:

Tsering Dolkar
House 3512
Sector 15-D
Chandigarh
Punjab 160015
India

Mobile Number: 988 839 8366

Email: lhakpa2001@rediffmail.com

TWA's Sponsorship Program

The Tibetan Women's Association initiated a sponsorship program in the late 1980s, several years after the organization re-organized in exile. The purpose of the program was to provide aid for disadvantaged Tibetan families. Most contributors come from western countries such as Italy, Germany, and Austria. TWA works closely with Patrizia Torlini of Italy, Karen Kold Wagner of Germany, and Pia Schild of Austria to connect sponsors and beneficiaries. Families exchange letters, pictures, and sometimes-even meet. Currently, over 130 families benefit from western sponsors.

TWA's sponsorship program began after His Holiness the Dalai Lama expressed concern about needy people in the Tibetan community in exile. The government researched the economic conditions of Tibetan families and discovered that many families are too shy or ashamed to ask for help and some don't know about available support systems. Moreover, many adhere to the philosophy that if they use other people's hard earned money then they will receive bad karma. His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked TWA to support families that do not receive financial support from the Tibetan government. If TWA could not find funds for those families, then families should be made aware that they could contact the Tibetan government for further assistance.

Initially TWA aimed to help women through its sponsorship program. In many instances, this meant financially supporting children's education. TWA received criticism for supporting children since people believed that enough support was already being dedicated to children through programs such as the Tibetan Children's Village. Despite this criticism, TWA continued this kind of

aid, insisting that supporting children's education mitigated the financial and social burdens placed on mothers as primary caretakers.

Part of TWA's original support for mothers was the establishment of a school for handicapped Tibetan students in Dharamsala. TWA initiated this idea in the late 1980s under the instruction of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In 1996 a school for handicapped students was established in Dharamsala, but not under the Tibetan Women's Association. Currently it is privately owned and receives funding so that students can attend free of charge.

Since its commencement, the sponsorship program has grown beyond simply supporting mothers. It now provides assistance to the elderly, disabled, children, and students in the Stitches of Tibet Program. Each of these groups is vulnerable in its own way. In 2005, TWA met with TCV, the Tibetan Medical Center, Norbulinga, and the Tibetan Welfare Officer to address any issues regarding overlaps between sponsorship programs in each of these organizations. The organizations agreed to improve communication amongst them to avoid multiple sponsorships of some families while leaving other families without any form of aid.

TWA's sponsorship program has made a significant difference in many people's lives, including needy families, the elderly, the disabled, single mothers, and women in the Stitches of Tibet program. Donors also benefit from helping exiled Tibetans. Says donor Kathrin Müllner, "It's important to support young people... But we should not forget the old ones. They are the ones who know the country, the culture, and the stories... For me the financial support doesn't really hurt... But to the people it means more than

only money. It's also mental support... Just to let them know there is somebody who cares and that there is a tribute for their life."

If anybody is interested in sponsoring or wants to know more about TWA's sponsorship program, please write to sponsor@tibetanwomen.org

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Anne Frank

Artists Speak



Sonam Lhamo



Kelsang Dickyi



Sonam & Kelsang speaking to Tibetan Media

Tibetan Women's Association in conversation with Tibetan female professional painters; Sonam Lhamo and Kelsang Dickyi.

Sonam Lhamo, also known as Selhatso, was born in Kanze, Eastern Tibet and Kelsang Dickyi was born in Lhasa, Tibet. They both graduated high school from Upper Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamsala, and both studied art at Polytechnic Institute, South Delhi. They exhibited their artwork at the Tibetan Museum in Dharamsala, India, from 15-24 June 2007. The stunning art on the cover page of this magazine is painted by Sonam Lhamo. The painting is called "Hope".

TWA: Is this your first exhibition?

Both: Yes. It has been very successful so far and the Tibetan community has been very supportive and appreciative of our venture. We are truly thankful for the support. Our next exhibition is in Sweden 15-24 August 2007, and in Paris 1-14 September 2007.

TWA: How long have you both been painting professionally?

KD: We just graduated this year, so not for long.

TWA: What genre of painting are you both into?

SL: My artwork has no specific name; it is just from my imagination. I did plenty of research on my art and found some similarity to surrealism.

KD: I do mostly decorative and colorful commercial art.

TWA: When did you start drawing?

SL: I started when I was seven years old in Tibet. My first drawing was of a mountain in our village called the Three Brothers. It has so many stories behind it. From the rooftop of my house, I could see that mountain which stood so majestically. So, I started my first attempt at capturing that magic on paper. That was my first painting at the age of seven.

KD: Sonam Lhamo and I are childhood friends and I was so influenced by her passion to draw. We have been best friends since then. My first drawing was called "Smiley Face".

TWA: What interested you in Art?

SL: I loved drawing since my childhood years, right Kelsang? Actually, we were both science students in high school, but we studied art in college. Kelsang knows very well that I was very different from other kids at school. I never wasted time or gossiped; instead we both used to sit together and talk all the time about Tibetan political issues, scientific theories, or paintings. We were very strange kids! Despite my interest in art, I never paid any attention during the art class we used to have in school. I was always doing something else, like stitching...

KD: Initially, I found it very hard and very difficult even to copy a piece art. Now, after diligent effort and countless hours of hard work over several years, my art has improved a lot.

TWA: Do you have any history of professional painters in your family?

Both: No!

TWA: Is it possible to make a living as a painter?

SL: It is very expensive. We are very thankful to our sponsors, without whom we could not be employed in our profession.

KD: Yes, I agree. It's a very expensive profession! I am not talking about just the school fees, but one has to get so many expensive materials for drawing and rent a separate room to draw, etc. I used to buy art materials from my pocket money.

TWA: What inspires you to draw?

SL : I love art! I inspire myself. My brother questions my choice of profession due to the financial risk involved, but I cannot stop painting. I read books on great artists of the past and they inspire me to keep painting.

KD: My Godfather, Christian, from France, and Sonam Lhamo.

TWA: Are your paintings from your own ideas or from others?

SL: I always do a lot of research on the subject of my art before I attempt to capture it on canvas. I am constantly debating and challenging my own ideas.

KD: All of my paintings are my own idea. I take advice from Sonam regarding the layout of my paintings.

SL :
*I love art!
I inspire myself... I read
books on great artists of the
past and they inspire me to
keep painting.*

TWA: Is there any deep philosophy behind each painting?

SL: Art is beautiful... nature is beautiful. My art is about humanity and there is so much inner feeling in each piece of art.

KD: Most of my paintings are decorative. They portray the outer surface of our tradition.

TWA: How long does it take to finish one painting?

SL: Just to think a concept through, it takes a minimum of 3 months. My piece "Timeless Bound" took almost 6 years to research until I was finally able to put it on canvas.

KD: My first painting "Smiley Face" took one month. I focused and concentrated on one painting. Most of my paintings take around 2 to 3 weeks to finish but the thought process for each painting takes around a month or two. Many great painters usually take years to finish one painting.

TWA: Are there any other Tibetan female professional painters?

KD: There are many Tibetan females who are interested in paintings but not many professional painters. We know of only one, Acha Pegha.

SL: Acha Pegha is extremely talented but unfortunately, she did not get a good response from our society. She now lives in Tibet.

TWA: Is it difficult being the first females to enter a profession that is mainly male dominated?

Both: No. We mostly work within the Indian society and there are so many female Indian artists. So, we usually do not face any problems. During our exhibition here, many Tibetan males came to us and encouraged and expressed their support for us.

TWA: Do you have any words of advice for female Tibetans seeking a career in painting?

SL: You must have someone who is always with you and supports you; otherwise you get lost if you are into fine arts. And one must remember that, "Art is something you cannot learn from others but develop within yourself."

KD: One must have natural talent and should not have financial problems for taking this course. One must work hard and be truly interested in this profession; otherwise there is no use for entering this profession. Hard work and smart work should help you reach your goal. I also want to encourage young Tibetans interested in the profession of art to contact us if they need any advice for their entry into the world of arts.

TWA: How do you think you can contribute to the Tibetan cause through paintings?

SL: Art is the only universal language. Its color can carry strong messages. For example, Tibetans mostly hand out brochures to bring awareness to our cause, but how many will read them? How many will even understand them? Many throw away the papers, but paintings are the fastest and strongest means to make others understand our message. Paintings can be very informative.

KD: During the opening of this exhibition our chief guest Kalon Tripa, Samdhong Rinpoche, mentioned in his speech that through the work of art we can bring awareness to Tibet's cause at an international level. Art brings out our true inner feelings and the outer customs of Tibet. So, we think we are contributing in a great way to the Tibetan cause. We will be doing many more exhibitions like this in different countries, and we hope we can bring international attention to Tibet's cause through our paintings.

TWA: What are your future aspirations or dreams?

SL: His Holiness the Dalai Lama recently said, “Within 15 to 20 years our Tibetan culture will vanish”. I took that as a great personal warning. I have the ability to present the Tibetan tradition, culture and morals visually on canvas. The canvas will last thousands of years and our younger generations will be able to feel and see how their culture was in the past. So, my dream is to research our histories and be able to put them on canvas.

KD: My future goal is to make an animation film abstract from Tibetan folktales, operas, and Tibetan mythology etc.

TWA: Have you received any official recognition or awards?

SL: No, but after high school I got an appreciation certificate from Upper TCV for my art.

KD: No.

KD:
*I also want
to encourage young Tibetans
interested in the profession of art
to contact us if they need any
advice for their entry into the
world of arts.*

TWA: Do you both have husbands or boyfriends? If so, are they supportive of your career?

SL: Ah! Yes! None of the journalists asked me that question before! My fiancé, Tsering Phuntsok, is my greatest support. He supports me morally. He knows me very well. He knows that I am crazy about art and he knows my abilities. He is always there to encourage me through my paintings, research, business, and everything else. When we first met, he knew nothing about art; now he is an expert (laughs).

KD: I have a boyfriend and he is very supportive.

TWA: Is there anything else you want to share?

SL: This message is for the youngsters of Tibet: “You have to know what you want, you have to know how to get it, and you have to do everything that is in your power to make your dream come true!”

TWA: Thank you and all the best for both of you!

Stitches of Tibet



The Tibetan Women’s Association was founded in 1959 in Lhasa, Tibet, after thousands of women peacefully marched to protest Chinese occupation of their homeland. In 1984, TWA was re-established in exile, and has continued to grow since then. TWA is now comprised of over 40 regional offices in India, Nepal, and around the world, with over 12,000 Tibetan women in exile serving as members. TWA is one of the largest and

oldest non-governmental organizations among the Tibetan community in exile. Its central executive office resides in McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, India.

Several goals outline the purpose of the Tibetan Women’s Association. They are: to increase global awareness of the situations of Tibetans in occupied Tibet; to bring attention to the abuses Tibetans suffer; to empower Tibetan women in educational, economic, social, and political fields; to help the poor, weak, disadvantaged, and aged through sponsorship; to preserve the unique Tibetan language, culture, and traditions; and to promote literacy and knowledge of health care. Stitches of Tibet (SOT) is a program that was implemented by TWA in 1995 to fulfill these goals by empowering female Tibetan refugees as well as Tibetan women already in exile.

SOT is a non-profit vocational training program that was established with the funding of the Lolwe Foundation of Denmark, Mr. Uli Franz (in memory of his late uncle Mr. Hans Franz) of Germany, The Cathedral Church of Saint David Hobart of Australia, the Danish Tibet Society of Denmark, and the South North Store of Germany. The purpose of the program is to enable economically

disadvantaged women who lack employment and education to be self reliant by teaching them tailoring skills such as sewing chupas, blouses, and Western clothing so that they can be economically independent in the future.

The program was inspired by a need among the increasing number of Tibetan refugees, uneducated, illiterate, and unskilled Tibetan women, Tibetan women who have dropped out of school, and single mothers who lack income. Each training session lasts eighteen months and trains ten students. Eight of the ten slots are reserved for new arrivals from Tibet; SOT reserves the other two slots for Tibetan women who are already in exile. To enter the program, women must undergo an application process which becomes increasingly competitive each year.

In addition to learning tailoring skills, students attend one hour of English classes each day, basic math education, and one health lesson over regular interval given by Tibetan Delek hospital or other health experts. The aim of these additional lessons is to make students more successful businesswomen after they graduate. During the program, students receive Rs.1200 stipend each month (a recent increase from the previous stipend of Rs.500/month). Upon graduation, each student receives a sewing machine. From 1997- 2005, Mrs. Phurbu Dolma la raised funds to provide these machines and from 2006 onward TWA will be providing them.

Funding for SOT comes from various sources. In the past, membership fees and international donors and sponsors significantly contributed to the survival of SOT. Profits from crafts produced during training supplemented this funding. TWA aims to create a production center for SOT which will employ future graduates and put back profits into SOT so that the program will become self-reliant in the future.

The first group of nine students graduated on 5 October 1996. It has been nearly eleven years since then and is now time to conduct a critical assessment of the progress of Stitches of Tibet. To carry out this research, the Tibetan Women's Association interviewed five current students enrolled in SOT and seven graduates. Informants were asked about their past, why and how they left Tibet, their initial experiences in Dharamsala, family circumstances, and their experiences with and evaluation of SOT. Additionally, the interviewer

asked graduates about their current occupations, whether or not they feel SOT positively impacted their lives and achieved its goals, and if they have any advice for future Tibetan women recently arriving from Tibet.

The current students range in age from twenty-one to forty-two. Four were born in Tibet and one was born in India. One reason students provided for moving to India was to pursue education. The woman who was born in India moved to Dharamsala to care for her elderly parents. Four out of five of the women attended Tibetan Transit School, but dropped out because the school work was too difficult for them. To earn an income, three of the women took up jobs as waitresses and some supplemented their income by selling dumplings (momos). One woman also babysat.

With few options, the five informants took the advice of their friends and enrolled in the Stitches of Tibet program. The women receive a monthly stipend of Rs.500 which is not nearly enough for them to live off of. It is especially difficult for the stipend to cover all of the expenses of women supporting families. One woman took on an extra job as a cook, another sold noodles, and other women borrowed money from friends.

Graduates of SOT report experiencing financial difficulties during their training as well. All of the graduates interviewed were from Tibet and their ages ranged between twenty-eight and fifty-seven. Reasons for leaving Tibet included getting an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, better educational opportunities for themselves and their children, a better life, and to visit relatives. Upon arrival in Dharamsala, women cleaned toilets, made tea, cooked, and stitched to earn money. When they realized that this would not be enough to support them or their families, women took the advice of their friends and enrolled in SOT.

Financially surviving the program proved difficult, but all of the women were glad to have completed it. After completing SOT, all of the graduates interviewed found employment. Five out of the seven students found a job within one month. It took two women several months to find a job; one had difficulty due to her small child. Three of the graduates were self employed whereas four were hired by other companies. One of the self-employed graduates made and sold jewelry, one was employed by SOT, and the other stitched for other companies.

Three of the seven students feel they are somewhat financially independent. The rest of the graduates report being very self-reliant and financially independent. Six of the seven graduates have recommended SOT to friends; one has not, and one of the seven reports that she will not recommend SOT in the future. Regardless, all of the graduates feel that SOT was crucial to their job procurement and that the additional English and math classes prepared them to be better businesswomen.

Although all of the students have an overall positive experience with SOT, each student offered positive comments and constructive criticisms to be used to improve the program in the future. All of the respondents thought their teacher was very good. Many complained that a monthly stipend of Rs.500 was too little to live off of, especially with no supplemental income. Some thought there were not enough skills taught, that the training was too short, and that it needed more variety. Overall,

respondents suggested that SOT provide a larger stipend (which TWA does now), train more people, teach more skills, serve lunch, shorten training, and provide housing.

The purpose of the Tibetan Women's Association as it relates to Stitches of Tibet is to empower Tibetan women in educational, social, and economic fields as well as help those who are poor, weak, disadvantaged, and elderly. SOT helps to achieve this goal by teaching women skills they can use to empower themselves and exercise economic independence. For some graduates, this goal has been achieved while others are still struggling. To ensure the success of all past, present, and future graduates, TWA is reflecting on the insightful comments of SOT's current students and graduates with the hope of implementing their ideas in the future and making SOT a self-sustaining vocational training program.

“Wisdom of Women’s Words”

Essay Competition Winners

In an effort to recognize and support talented female writers in the international community of Tibetans, TWA is sponsoring the Wisdom of Words Essay Competition. Tibetan women around the world were invited to ponder the topic listed below

As the 50th anniversary of the illegal occupation of Tibet approaches, the number of Tibetans living in exile is constantly increasing. Additionally, the ancient customs and culture of Tibet are suffering greatly under the oppressive rule of China. How can Tibetan women in exile contribute to the preservation and perpetuation of sacred Tibetan cultural traditions?

Creative responses in the form of an essay in either Tibetan, English or Chinese were invited from two categories of high school and college plus. We are going to feature the top three essays of both the categories in this issue of Dolma

College plus category

First Place

Nyima Tso, Norbulingka Institute, Dharamsala

(Originally submitted in Tibetan)

Introduction

Educated people usually worry about their language, script and traditional customs etc. Taking pride in being a Tibetan, today I would like to say a word or two on the topic of revival of lost qualities in our culture and further development of those good ones intact.

Everyone agrees unanimously that culture and customs are essential components in the survival of a nationality. In order to bring about revival of lost qualities and promotion of those good ones intact, prime focus should be given to promotion and maintenance of education, customs and

atmosphere. However, it would be proper to change according to time and human needs. Developments in culture are different in different years and centuries which are according to needs of the world. Both government and the people are currently striving in the revival of lost qualities in our culture. Even shunning traditional customs of wearing apparels made of animal pelt is needed and should be done away with.

1) Adapting to atmosphere and time

In Tibet, efforts in protection of culture are decreasing day by day, hence there is a great loss in Tibetan culture. Urban areas in Tibet with no usage of Tibetan language are increasing. While in exile, due to the hard work of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, numerous schools and monasteries have been established for the survival and promotion of

Tibetan culture. However, due to situations in exile and impacts from external forces, commendable achievements could not have been reached. In Tibet it is difficult to form a conducive atmosphere for protection of culture and a new culture is imposed where in there are liquor bars, brothels, gambling spots which leads to degeneration of Tibetan culture from the base itself. Because of such reasons people in Tibet attach hope on us in exile. Nowadays many westerners conclude Tibet as an abode of happiness and Tibetan culture a source of happiness. It is conspicuous that there are foreigners in every Tibetan settlement and dharma centres and various organizations have been established in numerous countries. Taking this opportunity we should spread our culture throughout the world albeit without mixing up. Such forms of precaution should be performed by each individual Tibetan according in respect to the time we live in.

2) Implementation of education

If protection and promotion of culture is to be sustained, it is a cardinal condition that implementation of education is needed. Human beings standards can be marked according to whether one has received education or not. A resident scholar in Tibet, Genshed Drublak, said, "If a nation is to return to its nationality, that nation's education should be promoted". Such wisdom is in accordance with time.

Nowadays in Tibet's universities there is increase in youth's loyalty to their nationality and interests in one's own culture as well as many strive on their own to hold a pen. Likewise in exile too irrespective of lay or monk, man or woman, there is increase in people who talk about culture and organize various activities for promotion of culture. This is the result of education. If we are to excel and make our culture valuable, it is all depended on implementation of education. Though we make progress in various areas there are numerous bad changes occurring also like taking drugs, prostitution by men and women alike, disrespect to parents and elderlies. Although in general in all nations and peoples there are both good and bad changes occurring, however, we as a people having deeply rooted religion, elaborate culture, compassionate leader, we should step forward from improvement to improvement and not step back into the dark group. In light of His Holiness's elaborate teachings, governmental leadership, school teachers, monasteries lamas and Geshe's teachings, every

Tibetan writer should voluntarily join such a movement in promoting our culture. Moreover one should implement these values himself or herself and thus achieve an overall responsibility.

3) Incorporation of good qualities from other culture to retention of own culture

The Tibetan culture does not lack any traits, but we are challenged in this difficult period of time. We, for example have profound inner meaning Buddhist philosophies, and medicine and astrological science which is unique to our culture. Additionally we are a model in terms of character and other values, yet we should work for the retention and promotion of such values. We have with us a ready to use and proud unique culture which saw its journey since the 7th century with later inputs by numerous translators and ancestors.

If we are to step forward according to time we should incorporate the good qualities of other culture into our culture as it is not possible to develop only within one's own culture. In this time where improvements are made in science and other disciplines, we have a problem in bringing terms and nomenclature into our language. In the past, the grateful translators have adopted many good qualities from other culture into ours and we have a well functioning culture. In order to maintain the functionality of our culture and in accordance with time, it is imperative for us to continue adapting to and adopting from others. In this industrial time or economical time as some call it, if we continue to while away our time and stick to the changes brought about by the ancestors, we can not run along time and might perhaps become extinct. Therefore we should smartly work according to time and adapt from others. For example there are many computer and other internationally popular books which we can not comprehend. There are plenty of good qualities in these books which can be incorporated into and make our culture richer. Usually when incorporations take place there are possibilities of diluting one's own culture, however, personnels like Geshe Lhakdor who is a scholar in both the inner and foreign wisdoms can skillfully adapt from others and thus shorten the gap and perhaps our culture might become so precious that others might dream to have one like ours.

Conclusion

The duty to reason out in order to be in accordance with time, protection of Tibetan nationality,

retention and shunning, and usefulness of old values, lies with the writers of a society. I thank the Tibetan Women's Association for providing this opportunity for Tibetan women writers to sharpen their pen. This is my small attempt out of emotional sentiments to communicate my small ideas although I am not confident whether this essay of mine turns out good or poor. Nevertheless, as a Tibetan's duty to respect and protect one's culture, I write this as my duty. With this I conclude with prayers for good development of Tibetan culture and an increase in number of Tibetan women writers.

Second Place

Ghang Lhamo, Norbulingka Institute, Dharamsala

(Originally submitted in Tibetan)

Introduction:

The natural order in this world is such that a whole ecosystem goes through a process of change and evolution, and finally degeneration. Human beings have been able to use their higher intelligence to reuse and reprocess things for the betterment and happiness of people. This is a source of both pride and happiness. Likewise, reviving the lost tradition, preservation and advancement of one's cultural heritage should also reuse and reprocess to synchronize and take advantage of the international movement.

Current Condition of the Tibetan Culture

The heinous occupation of Tibet by the colossal power of the East has caused great destruction to Tibetan culture and now, in the twenty first century, Tibetan cultural identity stands at the brink of extinction. Therefore, now is the time for an urgent resuscitation.

The late Penchen Rinpochi worked endlessly to promote the widespread usage of the Tibetan language. He traveled extensively to distant Tibetan areas to encourage protection and revitalization of Tibetan Buddhism and language. Though his contribution will always be remembered and his work and wishes will be carried on by faithful followers, it is increasingly difficult to preserve Tibetan culture in Tibet because of the non-cooperative political atmosphere.

In exile, under the auspice of His Holiness' promotion of democratic principles, Tibetan Buddhism has flourished. Led by three big monasteries, Buddhist studies are conducted

through the time tested traditional ways of listening, writing and debating, while at the same time research for higher learning continues unabated. Furthermore, the head of Tibetan Cabinet, Sangtong Rinpochi has instituted new educational policies, which preserve traditional culture and at the same time clear a path to continuous progress and advancement.

How to Preserve and Advance Tibetan Culture

One: Tibetan language is one of the most important aspects of Tibetan identity. Tibetan language usage in normal every day lives should be highly encouraged and diligently promoted by creating conducive atmospheres. People's love and high regard of their culture is a prerequisite for its culture to develop and prosper. With that said, for any aspect of Tibetan culture to improve, the public should participate and voice their opinion. In this advanced internet time, standardization of new Tibetan terms should be carried out abruptly. This is the way to preserve and advance Tibetan cultural identity in accordance with modernity.

Second: There is an increasing lack of Tibetan language use amongst Tibetan youngsters. To bridge this gap, all concerned parties – the Tibetan government, Tibetan organizations, and Tibetan individuals - should make Tibetan language usable in every situation. Doing so will create interest and provide youngsters with the tools they need to advance their mind through Tibetan language. All concerned parties must also confront the evils of the Tibetan character, laziness and lack of attention.

On the educational front, modern subjects like science, economics, business, ecology, and politics should be taught in Tibetan language at least up to the twelfth grade. Additionally, Tibetan culture and philosophy should be taught in classes. If there could be a significant increase in interest in the Tibetan language, it could become the primary language for learning about new cultures and philosophies. We should work to further that goal.

Three: The immensely profound Buddhist philosophy is the essence of Tibetan culture, but there are many traditional handicrafts that are less profound and needed to be explored more. These crafts should be studied in accordance with international economic development; in this way culture should adapt and adopt in order to advance. Many traditional handicrafts are outstanding in terms of quality in the world, but the production

scales are far from marketable. Even the use of many crafts in Tibetan homes and daily lives has diminished. Finding new ways of reviving the culture is very crucial.

Four: In order to bring in knowledge from international communities, there must be well qualified translation and research departments under one jurisdiction. The Tibetan government and other organizations should help find financial backing to support the work of these professionals. Not only should Tibetans focus on bringing in outside knowledge, but we must also promulgate Buddhism as well as beneficial aspects of the traditional Tibetan culture to the greater world. Translation works should always keep in mind that the core of the project is to promote and advance Tibetan culture. With that in mind, there should be plans to establish a qualified translation department.

Five: There should be careful consideration in the promulgation of Buddhism; even the smallest detail and explanation should be precise so that people can benefit from it. Politics and religion should be interpreted in their own ways.

Openness is crucial, as is competition, in acquiring valuable knowledge from other cultures. It is important to adopt new methods people can utilize in their daily lives. Though it is important to consider economic values, the ultimate quality of adopting new methods should be whether the new change can bring positive advancement to people's daily lives.

Six: Aside from the cultures that have been destroyed by those who were in power, the evolution of culture is based on competition and cultural practices that cannot be understood by people who have forgotten them.

The valuable and beneficial aspects of culture should be acknowledged. Humans have always relied on the method of using an outsider as a guide to understand one's own imperfections and through further discussion, one can see their own imperfections.

As the saying goes, 'You have eyes to see others, but you need a mirror to see yourself'. We must acknowledge that while Tibetan culture boasts many valuable qualities, it also has its imperfections. Those individuals that have a good understanding of Tibetan culture should work

together in demystifying our culture and advancing it with the modern time. The educated youth should lead the way in this regard.

Seven: Buddhism is an outstanding philosophy and the essence of Tibetan culture. It is the responsibility of all Buddhists, Tibetans included, and all those who wish and work for the happiness of human beings to protect Buddhism.

As following His Holiness' advice on doing comparative research on Tibetan history, Tibetan professionals all over the world should combine their efforts in order to save the dying Tibetan culture. This should be furthered in accordance with the reality of the modern time.

Eight: Tibetan costume has represented the good nature of Tibetan people but now these costumes are used solely for shows and exhibitions. As these costumes are no longer used in Tibetan daily life, it is time for knowledgeable individuals to gather together to change this. New costumes should be marketed in public so that Tibetans will happily use them on a daily bases. These costumes could also become uniforms for organizations so that we can revive this aspect of Tibetan culture.

Nine: There is a lack of a professional Tibetan women's guild in exile. This guild should be started. Individual women should study published materials from nunneries and organizations and try to get support from the Tibetan government and society in order to make up for the lack of female professionals.

Tibetan women should advance themselves through education and at the same time should understand what it means to protect Tibetan culture and be a good human being. Tibetan women should embody these qualities in their heart, mind and speech and be able to set a good example.

Conclusion:

The points mentioned above are methods in which we can preserve and advance our culture. To this end, it is important for Tibetan women to keep creating platforms for discussion so that advancement can continue. This is the opinion of an individual Tibetan woman.

Written on the fifteenth day of the fourth month, two thousand one hundred thirty four Tibetan year.
May 31, 2007

Third Place**Dolker Lhamo, Nepal***(Originally submitted in Tibetan)*

It is understood that there are numerous countries in this world with its own national identity, language, culture and customs. So, we Tibetans also do have our own language, culture and customs that can be proudly presented before other countries because of its uniqueness; this is also the Tibetan people's soul. A nationality is defined by its language and culture that forms an indispensable tool. If language and culture can be prevented from degenerating so will Tibetan as a nationality not degenerate. Degeneration in language and culture leads to the downfall of a nationality and such a phenomenon is evident in numerous cases of countries in this world. Therefore, we Tibetan brothers and sisters and more importantly Tibetan women should defect from this path of degeneration of Tibetan language and culture. All of us should not look down upon our language and culture and instead consider it of utmost importance in developing it as it is a duty for all of us and an unshunable duty as well as nationalism and voluntary loyalty to one's own nationality.

However, as a trend in this 21st century some rich Tibetan families instead of sending their children to Tibetan schools to learn Tibetan language and culture, they spend exorbitant amount in school fees and send their children to popular schools where they would learn foreign languages. These children consider this opportunity to learn in a foreign language extremely precious and during the course render their own language useless thus ending up in a situation with no knowledge of one's own customs and practices in addition to not being able to speak properly in Tibetan language.

Moreover, some parents spend exorbitant amounts in hiring side tuitions for their children to excel in foreign languages. They [parents] being illiterate in the *Ka Kha* (first two Tibetan alphabets) of Tibetan language, yet preach futility in future to learn Tibetan language. In doing this both parents and their children join a group of senseless people. This poor social situation where in one does not know their own language should be eradicated lest what will become of the future generation if this look down and carelessness upon Tibetan nationality continues. It is a well known sad situation that many children in our contemporary Tibetan society do not even know basic Tibetan language in communicating daily activities. Parents should take

prime responsibility in evolving excellent and enthusiastic Tibetan children, who are the future seeds of Tibet, interested in learning their own national language and culture. If parents set an example by not speaking in pidgin Tibetan and dressing improperly and instead speak in pure Tibetan language in front of their children and teach good manners in behaving in front of elderlies in addition to applying habits of prayers in the mornings and evenings which if coupled with graces before meals would yield good results for generations to come. Likewise Tibetan women in general should not stick to their very humble and shy nature and instead irrespective of fame and prizes should stand shoulder to shoulder with women in other countries and also with men in garnering good qualities. In view of this grave time and enormous sufferings endured by our forefathers which still continues, we should engage in debates and research in reviving our language and culture that we have lost and further the good qualities that are intact. We can do this through even dressing up properly and by singing Tibetan songs in creating a impact of Tibetaness on other nationalities.

Culture is the essential soul in promoting one's nationality. In order to walk on par with advanced nationalities in this dark time is a duty left by history and a precious act provided for by time. Therefore to learn Tibetan language is not a duty of only the poor Tibetans and orphans but a duty for all in view of the Tibetans in Tibet and in further developing the nationality and forms a basis for setting a firm stand in this world.

Nowadays there are many old and hard brain people who conduct their activities in English and send their children in English medium schools internationally with a view that Tibetan language is useless in future and takes immense pride in knowing foreign languages. No matter how well known one is in other's culture if that particular person does not have minimal base in one's own language, how can such a person represent Tibetan nationality. Nowadays many children when writing to their parents, relatives and friends use English and find it difficult to write well in Tibetan language. Some parents when writing to Tibetan government departments use English as a medium of communication and there are very few who can write properly in Tibetan language. Perhaps a reason could be that they are advanced scientifically and very well know ledged, yet if a nationality is to promote one's own language and

culture, and it does not take interest in its own language and culture and rather engage in learning foreign languages and new disciplines would eventually lead to the grave danger of demise of Tibetan nationality. While talking on telephones parents and children mostly communicate in a mixture of Tibetan, Chinese and Nepalese languages which eventually makes the children unable to comprehend Tibetan words and grammar. This leads to great harm to one's own language and ultimately we tend to look down upon and take disinterest in our own language which might see a day when there would be no Tibetan as a language and further lead to the lost of Tibetan nationality. In this tumultuous time where we Tibetans are scattered so is our language in grave danger of extinction. All Tibetans should not only take concern and extend support, as a Tibetan no matter where you are we should talk in pure Tibetan thereby protecting the language is an important step. Moreover, rather than always watching television during holidays, parents should engage their children in side classes of Tibetan language and show videos relevant to Tibetan language, some good points can be adopted and thus have an advantage. However, most parents and children nowadays watch foreign movies and hindi language soaps in particular, and take little interest in their children's studies. And if they miss out on any show then they act as if they lost something valuable. They [parents] consider educating children to be a duty of the school teachers which is totally wrong. Therefore in order to make their children take interest in their own language, if parents could organize various activities it would yield a good base of future seeds of Tibetans. Especially nowadays there is good opportunity in schools for girls; however, girls hardly participate in debates, oral recitations and sports. In all schools there should be separate events for both boys and girls which should encourage girls and later after school they can carry this confidence in achievements in the society where they can stand on par with man. Since in all schools there are mixed events, Tibetan girls because of their nature shy away from participation.

In our society if researches can be conducted scientifically and if anyone can specialize in a particular discipline it would be of enormous benefit to the society. Moreover, in order to make children take pleasure in learning Tibetan language, if story books, songs books, films and joke books in Tibetan language can be made, it would greatly help the children and thus protect Tibetan culture.

In many countries in the world today there are many colleges built to protect their language and focuses on specialization in a particular subject, we should also built international standard colleges. Just like there are English language websites we too should make Tibetan language websites where in children can make online friends since it is popular among children. Since there are 24 hours news channels in English, likewise news in Tibetan language can also be telecast. In radio services also if there are interactive programmes where in people can request for particular songs, convey messages on special occasions to their parents and relatives living in long distance locations, would lead to good relationship amongst everyone. It is pertinent to bring about standard unbiased Tibetan language documentaries and performances. Since both elderly and young alike like to watch films, it can be easily said that future seeds of Tibet will get encouragement and take pride in the language and thus protect the culture and also get opportunities to show many stories and legends.

Authors of standard papers and novels in Tibetan language should be accorded due recognition in our society and if good prizes can be given to them, the current writers and students too can get encouragements. Making use of modern education if text can be brought about in Tibetan language, studies can be conducted in Tibetan which would bring about revival of lost qualities in our language and bring further development in the good qualities intact.

Currently youngsters can not understand many terms and concepts in spiritual text which leads to disinterest in Buddhism. If some of the Buddhist text can be rendered into easy to understand Tibetan language and grammar, growth in interest by the future seeds of Tibet cannot be ruled out.

As the Tibetan Women's Association attached great importance and supervision to the current project, likewise in future too if the association can bring about and distribute compilation of articles and poems in Tibetan language it would be most beneficial for the women in our free and democratic society to make use of this democratic platform in championing the cause of Tibetan language and culture. Not only will it symbolize a reminder of sincerity to the future seeds of Tibet, it can lead to encouragement and pride as well as duty of all *Tsampa* eating Tibetans both inside and out of Tibet. I therefore request all to bear this in mind.

Following are the high school essay competition winners

First Place

Phurbu Tso, Suja T.C.V School

(Originally submitted in Chinese)

Tibet is a country encompassing all three provinces and it has history dating thousands of years back. In the land surrounded by ranges of high snow mountains, an extraordinary people and its culture has flourished.

In the twenty first century, Tibetan culture is not only admired and practiced by Tibetans, it is also highly respected by scientist all over the world. Unfortunately Tibet has been under Chinese occupation for close to fifty years and Tibetan identity and culture is under attack by the chauvinistic Chinese. There is a increasing evidence of moral corruption and diminishing value attached to the ancient culture and wisdom of Tibet.

Now we must strengthen our vigor and stand up to preserve and advance our Tibetan culture. We must carry this responsibility as we are the sole heir to our traditional culture and religion. On the cultural front, what sort of imprint women of Tibet will leave for the future? This is yet to be seen.

Tibetan Culture

There are different ways to understand physical realms as there are various ways to comprehend the mental realm. Tibetan culture as we understand at the present moment is a traditional culture that had been developed gradually by the people of Tibet for generations. It is a culture that had been influenced by different social customs and orders, first of which was the ancient Bon religion. Then there was the influence of Tibetan Buddhism that originated from India. Since Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, Tibetans not only became devote Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhism also became an integral part of Tibetans' daily lives. In this essay, my reference to Buddhism should be understood as Tibetan Buddhism.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said that Buddhism is not only for controlling people's mind, it is also for world peace.

Even though Tibetan culture is flourishing around the world, Tibet is suffering from Chinese

occupation and population transfer. In that way, Tibetan culture and language have been experiencing degradation to the point of extinction. Therefore all Tibetans, regardless of their gender should heed to the call of preserving our culture and protecting our father's land.

Tibetans are a unique race, and development of its traditional culture has not kept pace with the world that is modernizing. So it is particularly important for Tibetan women to work for the preservation of our culture.

The Important Nature of Tibetan Culture

For a good Tibetan woman, it is important to understand the Tibetan culture. Love for the culture will originate from practicing and experiencing it. Therefore Tibetans should study the culture in order to understand and build interest in it.

As I see it, Tibetan spoken and written language are two aspects of the Tibetan culture. Though Tibet is under China, we are still Tibetans, so it is more evident that we have to preserve our languages as it is the essence of our culture. We must learn to adapt to the situation and evolve so to continue the development of our ancient culture. Each one of us must build Tibetan identity and closeness to the Tibetan culture. Having Tibetan appearance is not enough, we must be patriotic and taken action.

One's love for the race is the foundation for any action and we must have respect for our activities. As we are exile on political ground, regaining our country and preserving our culture are responsibilities we can not hide from. Tibetans in exile are representatives of six million Tibetans in Tibet and it is our duty to promulgate our religion, language and culture in the world.

How to Preserve the Tibetan Culture

Tibetans should know and live its culture well and by doing that we will be able to advance our culture and pass it on. On this matter, Tibetan women have greater responsibility.

Tibetan women play an important part in promulgating the Tibetan culture. In order to pass our culture to the next generation, it is important to raise pure Tibetans. For that one must love Tibet and embrace its culture.

Women should not be relegated to the confinement of their small houses, nor should they involve themselves only with household chores. Women should diligently study both traditional and modern education to further their understanding and knowledge. That is one of the ways to contribute to the preservation and advancement of the Tibetan culture.

There is a campaign to allow nuns to become doctor of divinity, which is laudable. Highly accomplished woman like Ama Jetsun Pema, the head of Tibetan Children's Village and Gyari Rinpoche's mother, who have contributed handsomely to the Tibetan cultural heritage, must be acknowledged. On similar note, women working for the Tibetan government or Non-Governmental Organization must all strive to preserve and advance the Tibetan culture.

In today's society, culture and costume represents modernity and because of that advancing one's traditional costume is vital. For Tibetan mothers to wear traditional dress and wear traditional apron to signify being married is a beginning gesture.

Moreover, it is very important to develop the mental discipline. For example, just like Chinese women have four vows and three things to respect that serve as a guiding principle, Tibetan women should revere white Tara and from that develop the unique Tibetan quality of putting others before self. That should be passed on to the future generations. A Tibetan mother should get actively involve in political activities and encourage taking Tibetan traditional heritage as direction for any projects. These two are mutually dependent on one another.

Conclusion

The vast Tibetan culture has suffered much destruction in half a century that Tibet had been under China. Tibetan culture had been dishonored to a point where it now faces danger of extinction. The Tibetan Government in Exile has worked hard to preserve Tibetan culture and we individuals must support that endeavor. The danger facing Tibetan culture is grave but if all Tibebans (*Tsampaeater*) work together and diligently, our culture can be saved and revived. Such measure can be exerted by each individual.

There is a Chinese saying that goes, 'if we have will, we can achieve anything'. Like wise, exiled Tibetan should strive hard towards a common goal in

reviving our great culture, culture that includes our ancestral values and language. In fact, all Tibetan should work together to that end. In summery, Tibetans everywhere must support one another and fight for our rights. We must work to set a path for our future happiness.

Second Place

Lobsang Choezom, Upper T.C.V School

(Originally submitted in Tibetan)

Religion, culture and language are the identity of a race and country. They are an essential component of race. For Tibet in this desperate time, our religion, culture and language are more important than our soul.

Yes, we are children of the land of the snow,
We are the lord of the land of the snow,
Love for the race,
Patriotism toward the country is burning in our heart,
Women, mother of the land of the snow,
We were born in the roof of the world,
We must continue its legacy.

In the words of scholar Gedun Choephel, "*It is good to know other languages, but it would be shameful to forget your own language.*" In exile, Tibetan youngsters are ashamed if they do not know a foreign language, and at the same time ashamed to speak the language of our precious land. It is sad that this trait is prevalent among Tibetan youngsters, particularly young females.

Tibetan women often imitate females from highly developed Western countries and Asian countries like Japan and Taiwan. They wear fashionable modern dresses. As the Tibetan saying goes, '*If a dog mimics a person, then the dog burns its tail*'. Like this saying, pointless imitation will not benefit anyone. Rather, if Tibetan women wear traditional dress, then their body will feel more comfortable and it will look better as well. Additionally, this will help to preserve our culture.

Most women will eventually become mothers, which means she will become the first teacher of her child in many respects. It will be very difficult for the child to receive proper guidance if the mother has no interest in Tibetan culture, language and religion. Therefore it is imperative that women pay attention to culture as they can have a great impact on the survival of the culture.

The preservation of Tibetan culture is the purpose of our struggle for freedom. Tibetan women should keep in mind that one day they are going to be the mother of Tibet's future generation. With that in mind, women should practice Tibetan religion, language and good nature in their daily lives. Further, women should study Tibetan language and grammar, the essence of Tibetan culture, and gradually study the rest of Tibetan culture. They can then pass this knowledge onto the next generation.

A Tibetan child's knowledge and understanding of Tibetan culture and language depends on his or her mother. If Tibetan language is spoken to the child, if the child is sent to a Tibetan school, and if the child is taught of the good Tibetan ways, then the child will naturally understand and adopt the Tibetan ways. If all Tibetan mothers could teach their child the Tibetan way, then the future generation of Tibet will be able to preserve and advance Tibetan culture.

In short, one can say that Tibetan culture is born from Tibetan women. As long as Tibetan women assume this duty in a responsible manner, by taking interest in Tibetan religion and culture, then each woman can raise the future Tibetan generation in a proper way. Each woman will be able to impart the knowledge of Tibetan culture and encourage development. Women, in essence, are the root source of a race and its survival depends on women.

Third Place

Pema Youdon, C.S.T Mussorie

(Originally submitted in Tibetan)

I would like to begin by discussing what is considered to be Tibetan culture. Tibetan culture is the language that we speak, religion that we believe in, unique dress that we wear and the good nature of Tibetan people. In saying and in truth, culture is the essence of race.

The responsibility of preserving our culture falls on all Tibetans, but per topic of this essay, *How Can Tibetan Women Contribute to Tibetan Cultural*

Preservation?, and as a female, I would like to take this opportunity to write how we females can contribute to the preservation of Tibetan culture. The critical prerequisite for preservation of a culture is an interest in learning the culture and loving it. If we can foster love for our culture, there is no doubt that the culture will survive; therefore Tibetan women should foster love for our culture and use it in our daily lives.

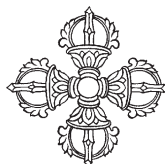
In the twenty-first century, Tibetan women have lost touch with our culture. Now it is difficult to distinguish between a Tibetan and Western woman. For example, Tibetan women these days rarely wear traditional dress; that is sad but real. The few that wear traditional dress only do so on special occasions and even these dresses are flooded with modern embroidery.

The good natured ways of our ancestral monkey father, who was the manifestation of Chenrezing and Orgress mother, are waning. This is a firm indication of the lack of preservation on our part. If we continue on this downward slope, Tibetan culture will become history.

Therefore, we the women of Tibet must come together and stop the careless ways that I have pointed out above. We must strive to preserve our costume, language and tradition by implementing them in our daily lives. There are different methods. For example, the current Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) is doing tremendous work. Women can start more organizations like TWA, and hold monthly and annual meetings about how to preserve our culture. I believe we women can contribute greatly to the independence of Tibet.

If Tibetan women work to preserve Tibetan culture and for Tibet's independence, I am sure Tibetan men will work for it as well. Therefore, from the bottom of my heart, I would like to request that Tibetan women concentrate their energy because we have a huge responsibility on our shoulder.

Finally, may His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for eternity and may Tibet soon be free.



Following are the articles and poems that some of our talented Tibetan female writers sent us. We wish to see more females using the platform that Dolma provides. TWA is hoping to make Dolma an annual literary magazine where skilled Tibetan female writers can freely express themselves and grow intellectually. If you have articles or poems that you wish to print on the next issue of Dolma, please send them to editor@tibetanwomen.org

Cultural Chaos, Redemption through Counseling

Article by Tenzin Dhardon Sharling.

Tenzin Dhardon Sharling is an exile-born Tibetan refugee. Having done her rigorous schooling from the most sought after TCV Schools, she embarked on doing a bachelors in English Literature from Madras University and a further Masters in Communication from the same institute. She treasures her one year stint with TWA, where she worked as the Research Officer. She then won the prestigious Sir Tom Farmer Scholarship to pursue MSc in Counselling studies from World famous Edinburgh University. Dhardon believes that becoming a refugee is uncalled for, but being a refugee is purely your call.

The significance of the word culture as 'a way of life' gets buoyant here in this context. The word culture is an umbrella term that projects the social, political economic and religious characteristics and aspects of the society. The culture in question is significantly unique, since it is a culture that has survived the worst atrocity of the 20th Century.

The dimensions and subtleties in Tibetan culture hoist a single cultural setting that has prevailed political chaos, social tragedy, economic wipe-out/depression, and religious repression. *'Whereas physical health risks and injuries sustained as the result of a disaster are generally similar across cultures, the psychological responses to disasters, loss and surrounding stressors tend to be different among cultures'* Lechat, (1990), But the people seem a wee bit oblivious to the gravity of such tragedy and contain themselves with strong cultural beliefs and hopes.

One cannot deny the fact that Buddhism is the jewel in the crown of Tibetan milieu. The greatest desire for a devout Tibetan Buddhist is to transform, be 'free' and attain final release, which is the enlightenment and reciting the mantra is a method of attaining spiritual merit of the practitioner. Men and women across various age groups are found prostrating, which is the commonest and widest used way for common people as spiritual practice to bring peace within. It is a self-cleansing act that induces regression through an altered state of consciousness. Moral policing is best done with the concept of metamorphosis of rebirth and trans-substantiation that acts as a restraining factor for individuals to indulge in bad deeds. It is based on the simple adage 'as you sow, so shall you reap' or 'what goes around comes around'.

But I must admit from my innate experience that the Tibetans lack detailed knowledge and understanding of Buddhism and hence it becomes a mere showcase or decorative wearing, falling short of substance and hence the overdose of social problems in this impressive culture. Time is rightly ripe for people to shred themselves of the abstract sensing of religious doctrines and instead don a realistic approach.

Fifty years in exile, the Tibetan society has come a long progressive way in terms of materialistic gains; from bullock carts to cyber marts, from living in huts to multi-storeyed building, from snail mails to multi-media messaging. But one thing that is stagnant and remained unshaken is the mental health services with cultural stereotypes acting as a deterring factor. Culture has managed to resist the concept and practice of therapeutic counselling. *'Cultural beliefs and practices is a dominant force...portraying the past, living the present and predicting the future'*. Flyvbjerg, (1994).

History is indeed a driving force. The general feeling is that Tibetans are confused immigrants, traumatized expellees and refugees, discouraged and dissatisfied. The distraught college students (me included) are casualties of intercultural mobility and cultural shock is the keyword.

With a pristine social outlook, the inside is rotting. The social life is a mere replica of the virtues of Buddhism at the outset while its people live in a cauldron of vices. Family feud, gender violence, child abuse, character assassination and other social evils are maintained within the realms of the family corridor and letting it out is a sinister act.

The Tibetan culture is in dire need of therapeutic counselling to facilitate the appraisal of human resources, so that karma and its reverberation will no longer be a deterring factor for people to approach problem (natural and man-made) which is generally handled by an uncanny notion of it as the repercussion of your evil deed in your previous life. Tibetan's construction of mental distress are intimately linked with cultural, religious and political factors and refuse to be positive about 'western approaches' to dealing with mental distress in a pragmatic and integrative way.

An individual's response to stimuli and situations is governed by the traditional cultural values. It is seeing the horizontal through the vertical and with the implicit goal of the society to bring about a greater degree of conformity to the norms of the cultural stereotype, breaking free is seen as something revolutionary. But cultural values and power in this hearsay has been involuntarily a destructive force compelling an individual to tread the restricted path and not the liberated aisle in pursuit of one's goal.

A trend in the Tibetan culture is seeking the advice of a future/fortune teller (a spiritually ordained monk). Prior to embarking on an important decision in life, the concerned individual seeks the prophecies of a monk and once the forecast is gloomy, the opportunity is never banked on and one chooses to remain oblivious to its immense prospects. With an overpowering spiritual aura,

rational thinking and logistic reasoning is left to the backburner.

Setting my foothold on the threshold of high school in 1996 and ready to face the much hyped class ten board exams, it was time to tread a milestone in terms of choosing your stream. I geared courage to forgo Commerce and Science and chose to get into humanities stream and followed suite for my College Studies. This important decision was deliberated after much discussion with a career counsellor. I then began to reflect on the role of a counsellor as being confined purely to giving academic guidance. Counsellor as healers of human anxiety was both unheard and uncalled for.

Yes, it is mandatory for any counsellor to be sensitive to the problem of cultural encapsulation. Conceiving the compatibility of counselling in a cultural tradition should be pacifying and encourage involuntary embracing. Imposing a "one size fits all" model on the targeted sample is sheer imprudence and unethical. Respect for the beliefs, rituals and desires of those affected can accomplish far more than unwanted attention and interventions.

Therapeutic Counselling is as necessary as the water we drink and the air that we breathe in and it irks me to no end to see my people being deprived of this necessity in life.

On Becoming an Heiress to the Kingdom of Exile & Refugees

By Tenzin Dhardon Sharling

Ever since the unfolding of the Chinese wrath, approximately 1.2 million Tibetans were killed, which the Chinese Communist Party denies. "Estimate is not reliable because the Tibetans were not able to process the data well enough to produce a credible total. There were, however, many casualties, perhaps as many as 400,000", French Patrick, 2003. With 6000 monasteries destroyed, the religious repression saw the mysterious death of the 10th Panchen Lama and continues to witness the frivolous mind games that China plays with the missing 11th Panchen Lama.

Monks and nuns are still imprisoned and many Tibetans continue to flee Tibet yearly. "A refugee is

someone who: owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country". Article 1A (2), Refugee Convention.

Refugees: Fear of Persecution is the keyword:

The atrocities of Chinese persecution on the fleeing Tibetans caught the limelight when a Romanian mountaineer caught on his camera a group of 80

Tibetan civilians who were trying to reach a refugee camp in Nepal, came under fire from Chinese troops on 30th September 2006 and saw the death of a 27 year old Tibetan nun, Kelsang Nartso. *"They were hunted like rats and shooting like dogs"* The Romanian climbers, Alexandru Gavan and Sergiu Matei reported. This became an international rage when a Romanian TV station and BBC released the video footage.

With no exercise of human rights, what is missing profusely is the freedom of expression and Tibetan language in education and authentic Tibetan culture is on the verge of extinction. With increasing infant mortality rate and decreasing life expectancy and forced abortions and sterilization on the prowl, Tibetans have become an ethnic minority in their own land which is very much akin to *"Claims to genocide and ethnic cleansing construct Italian exiles from Istria as the only genuine Istrians and hence as survivors"*. Ballinger, Pamela 2003.

The cultural damage that the PRC rule wrought upon the entire Tibet is generally condemned as a "nationwide catastrophe". The exodus of torture and persecution continues much to the oblivious nature of Concerned International Bodies. It's a rape in the broad day light. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that: *"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."*

Fears on the border:

The upsurges of Tibetan refugees who are transiting through Nepal en route to a third country, India, have been a tryst with stroke of mishaps.

A key provision of the convention stipulates that refugees should not be returned to a country where they fear persecution. But deportation by Nepal Government is a recurring activity. *'The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees today (Saturday) expressed grave concern about the fate of 18 Tibetan asylum seekers deported to China by Nepal. The Nepalese authorities decided to go ahead with the deportation on Saturday, ignoring last-minute appeals by the UN refugee agency and human rights groups. UNHCR learned that the deported group included eight unaccompanied minors, some as young as 13. UNHCR officials described the move as a blatant violation of Nepal's obligations under*

international law'. UNHCR Press Release, 31 May 2003.

The Tibetans crossing the Mountain in clusters escape on foot on a perilous journey across the Himalayas. Although the Chinese side of the border was sealed in 1960, Tibetans have continued to flee since then. Most arrive via Nepal, and the first point of registration is the reception centre in the capital Kathmandu.

Rape of Tibetan women peculiarly gang rape by Nepali border police is a routine and with the increasing brothels on Nepal border the naive and hapless Tibetan women are forced into flesh trade. *'Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the camps and among displaced groups is a high priority activity'* UNHCR Global Appeal 2006. Fearing deportation cases the women chose to remain mute. *"Tibetan women are easily preyed upon; their language is wholly different from Nepali; their clothing, manners and features immediately mark them as Tibetans."* Maura Moynihan, Consultant to Refugees International, (May 13, 1997).

In 1995 a Buddhist nun was gang-raped at the border, became pregnant and is now living in a slum in Kathmandu with her infant son, too ashamed to seek assistance for herself and her child. On the nights of December 15th and 16th, 1996, a 22 year old Kunga Lhamo was raped 12 times by a group of Nepali policeman in uniform. *"What happens to historical memory and cultural identity when the state borders undergo racial transformation?"* Ballinger, Pamela. 2002.

Refugees in Exile:

Exile stories have a long-standing history from the Old Testament to ancient Greece to Shakespeare's fictional lover Romeo to the world's spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Born in exile India, I grew up being synonymous with the words, 'exile and refugees'.

I can only reflect on it with innate nostalgia. *"The moment of exile is, probably one of the most intense experiences in the lives of the individuals subjected to it"* Ballinger Pamela, 2003.

Finding exile in India is the biggest blessing. Large numbers of Tibetan refugees first arrived in India in March 1959, after a failed uprising against the Chinese suppression that compelled the flight of

the Dalai Lama. *'Tibetan refugees arrived at the height of the Cold War, after Communist China asserted control over the region'*, Susan Banki, 2004. More than 48 years after the exodus from Tibet began; the refugee community in India now numbers around 130,000. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is the cornerstone of refugee protection, had begun its work on

1 January 1951. Fortunately, Tibetan refugee began in 1959 when in the subsequent decades, the document has been the foundation of the agency's efforts to help and protect more than 50 million refugees.

Since 1962, assistance programmes for the refugees have included the establishment of agricultural settlements and vocational training schemes. State governments in India have allocated refugee families an average of three acres of land each and have assisted them in constructing houses. They have also given Tibetan communities, assistance in establishing water supplies, civic amenities, handicraft centres and schools. *"Here, I should like to draw attention to the Indian Government's remarkable endeavours to settle these refugees"* Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, 20 November 1967, UNHCR General Assembly meeting. The Indian authorities have also provided ration cards, identity papers, residence permits and travel documents for registered Tibetan refugees and established separate schools for the Tibetans. *"States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education."* Article 22 of the Refugee Convention.

Separate settlements were identified and established in geographically suitable areas so as to provide them with economic, social and religious autonomy. A fully democratic Tibetan government-in-exile has been established in Dharamsala (also known as Little Lhasa, is now the hub for International tourist attraction) Himachal Pradesh, the seat of the Dalai Lama. *"Exile is not primarily a geographical location; it is a state of mind through which one becomes what one has left behind"*. Oivind Fuglerud, 1999

It is common to distinguish between internal exile, i.e., forced resettlement within the country of residence, and external exile, deportation outside the country of residence. Tibetan story caters to both but the focus is on the latter which can also be

a self-imposed departure from one's homeland protest or to avoid persecution.

The biggest fear of 48 years in exile is the Cultural degeneration with loss of authentic language. *"Gathering on the edge of "foreign" cultures,: gathering in the half-life, half-light of the foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language: gathering the memories of other worlds lived retroactively: gathering the past in a ritual of revival: gathering the present"*. (Homi Bhabha). Daniel, E. Valentine (1996). The Tibetan youth become easy targets or deserving victims of western culture hit globalisation and tend to integrate easily into the mainstream life of the host country. *"I am more of an Indian, except for my Chinky Tibetan face"*, Tenzin Tsundue, 2003.

Nationalism in Exile;

Tibet is today a Stateless nation with an alien government controlling the country but deep within, Tibet as a nation thrives in the spirit and psychology of the Tibetans. Tibetan Nationalism in a nutshell is positive nationalism with its benign being and is best seen through patriotism. *"I actually think that nationalism can be an attractive ideology. I like its Utopian elements."* Anderson, Benedict 1993.

The surge of Tibetan nationalism wears a general outlook of being morally ambivalent. It is true that to a large extent Tibetans did not have a full-fledged nationalism before 1950. But Tibetan Nationalism thrived in exile India. The dominant religious character of nationalism is well captured by the national anthem, modelled after traditional religious prayers used by Tibetans in exile to express their national aspirations. This kind of Tibetan nationalism is advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. *"Nationalism encourages good behaviour"*, Benedict Anderson, 1993.

One striking feature of Tibetan nationalism is its long distance nationalism. The nationalistic struggle, spearheaded by Tibetan Women's Association, Students for Free Tibet and Tibetan Youth Congress, rests heavily on email/Internet nationalism. *"Newer examples of nationalism are the long-distance nationalisms of migrants: Tamils in Norway working for their own state in Sri Lanka. Some of the most ardent Sikh nationalist is situated in Australia and Canada - thanks to the Internet and cheap airline tickets"* Benedict Anderson, 1998.

On September 1, 1995, Tibetan nationalism and international feminism came together in front of a global audience, when nine exiled Tibetan women, representing TWA, staged a demonstration at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing. From the Tibetan perspective, the women had created history by becoming the first Tibetans ever to hold a protest on Chinese soil.

Tibetan nationalism is deeply ingrained in feeling of nationality and patriotism and reflects a deep moral tension between solidarity with oppressed Tibetans in Tibet and a growing resentment with less than half a century struggle in exile. It gets aghast with International bodies and the theme slogan for 10th March uprising is “*UNO, We want Justice*”. Torn with agony and hit with desperation, it is the unconditional positive regard that keeps the struggle going. “*Three generations of Tibetans have lived through this darkest period of our history, undergoing tremendous hardship and suffering. Yet the Tibetan issue is still very much alive*”. H.H the Dalai Lama, 2001.

The Middle way approach seeking genuine autonomy within the framework of PRC is what I foresee as the most peaceful, prospective, positive and pragmatic solution. This sacrifice comes to the fore, fearing the extinction of Tibetan culture in Tibet with an overbearing Han Chinese Culture becoming the domain. This was a big, daring and difficult ideological shift in gears from claiming complete independence to genuine autonomy within the Chinese rule. “*Nationalism typically makes certain political claims based upon certain beliefs*”, Wikipedia Encyclopaedia.

Tibetan nationalism is a unified discourse and November 23 and 24, 2006, saw the height of patriotism with a nation wide protest by the Tibetans who deliberately and literally chased Chinese President, Hu Jianto out of India, on his first ever state visit to India. The self immolation bid by young Tibetan activist, Lhakpa Tsering on November 25, 2006 taking on the inspired path of late pao(martyr) Thupten Ngodup left every spectator gasping for breath.

Making the host country India appalled by the boorishness of this Nationalistic activity, the Indian Government gave deportation warning to the high profile Tibetan activists and writer, Tenzin Tsundue, a week prior to November 23rd, 2006, thus defying Article 22 of the convention “no

contracting state shall expel or return...a refugee... to the frontiers of territories where his life...would be threatened...”

The crux or the underlying argument is that the Tibetans in Tibet can't engage in such activities, and hence it becomes a prerogative for the Tibetans in exile. One thing is for sure, the Tibetans do take the humility and affections of Indian Government for granted. This supports the concept of long-distance nationalism where the activists “*Don't have to face consequences of their actions,*” Dr. Laura Jeffery.

In this context, Nationalism seems more of a growing hostility towards the conquerors because of which the people become marginalized. Nationalistic sentiment combined with desperation and anger makes a powerful brew for Tibetan activists. “*Nationalism encompasses the two phenomena noted at the outset: (1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty.*” Gellner, 1983. Tibetan Nationalism fits into both.

The plight of Tibetans commands international attention and Tibetans have always had strong support proffered to them from all corners. With the Dalai Lama's strong emphasis on a non-violent struggle, the scope of finding narratives to a popular armed struggle for Tibet is dished out relentlessly. To this end, the Tibetan nationalist struggle past is one of political, not military, “*Naturalizing the status of the nation through the denying or forgetting of violent struggles for the nation is not uncommon*” .Anderson Benedict, 1983

Exile as the Nursery of Nationalism;

Lord Acton (1834-1902), one of the greatest historians of Victorian period made an aphoristic statement ‘exile is the nursery of .nationalism’ that spurred debates, reflections and journals. Nationalism in exile sees the facades of both pros and cons in positive patriotism and vicious violence, but truly it is only in exile that nationalism takes birth and grows into a fine young lad.

With an incessant urge to retrieve their lost homeland the Tibetans are wrought by the tragic truth of Lhasa being the Forbidden City. “*Exile, it is*

often said, is the nursery of nationalism. If so, then the yearning for a homeland has a long history.” Anthony D. Smith, 2004. The quest in Tibetans to forge their fight for a relentless end, sparked the streaks of nationalism.

With Indian hospitality, it is oft repeated and strongly felt feeling that ‘Loosing our independence is indeed a blessing in disguise’. Tibet and India share an indomitable past and pertaining to the present situation, India has definitely been the second home, sounds cliché but very true, ‘a home away from home’.

Reflecting on the forty eight years of Tibetan Refugee in exile, a miraculous wonder is the unbroken ties of Unity, Social, Cultural and Economic factors that knit the Tibetans strongly under the realm of a common Buddhist belief and a God-King in the spiritual and political leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Disunity is the least feared factor.

Tibetan Nationalism wears a religious outlook and with more than one thousand Buddhist monasteries of remarkably high architectural standard and their success in developing viable monastic communities similar to those of Tibet, Tibetan cultural preservation and freedom to religion is best seen and practiced in exile India. “Refugees will be accorded the same freedom as nationals “to practice their religion... and the religious education of their children.” Article 4

Tibetan refugees, which was hitherto an Indian affair is now, with the advent of ICT and globalisation a global phenomenon. “Tibetans have also moved abroad, have adapted themselves very well.” High Commissioner’s Statement, Geneva, 43rd Session of ECOSOC. The most active

and highly successful student led activist group SFT, functions with its headquarters based at New York and through its branch offices across the globe and like wise TWA and TYC has gone global with its regional chapters around the world.

Researchers such as Gellner and Hobsbawm, have had a wee bit hostile attitude to nationalism, but with my innate, practical hands on experience with Tibetan Nationalism, I could only agree that “nationalism is present every day, it’s in the air we breathe” Michael Billing.

It is only in exile, that the nursery of Tibetan nationalism began and has now etched the higher realms. Hoisting the Tibetan national flag, singing the national anthem, donning the walls with the portrait of the H.H the Dalai Lama and significantly struggling for freedom in Tibet, is a norm here in Exile but becomes a cause for criminal conviction in PRC ruled Tibet.

Conclusion:

Reflecting on my Country’s past history and focussing on its present nationalistic struggle from the exile territories, the patriotic feeling in an individual faced with long-distance Nationalism, is rekindled.

It has been an exhilarating journey from innate reflection of my inheriting the refugee trademark and sitting on this article. I can admit with conviction that only a Tibetan in exile is and can be bestowed with such enriching experience of manifesting nationalism through literature, which, for a Tibetan in Tibet, can only be a far cry in the wilderness and manifested only in dreams.

Things We Ask For

By Tsering Lama.

Tsering Lama grew up in Kathmandu, Nepal and currently resides in Vancouver, Canada. She studied Creative Writing and International Relations at the University of British Columbia. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of Students for a Free Tibet.

After construction of the road to our camp ended last week, the fifty households here decided to throw the Japanese sponsors (whose road project it was) a day-long party at the community hall. We hadn’t asked for the paved road but our gratitude and sympathy grew by the day as we saw the workers fumbling for twelve long months to build a

sixty-kilometre road from town. When the Swiss aid agency gave up after blowing their funds half way, there was a week where we thought that was it. The road to our camp would be half smooth cement and half mud. Then the Japanese pulled up to the camp in their white jeeps like the Swiss had, with a different red and white flag pasted on the car doors,

and offered to complete the project. As the construction wrapped up, it was felt in the kitchens and at the cistern taps of the camp that we should thank the foreigners by feeding them breakfast, lunch and dinner; it was only right. The date set was today.

They ate at the hall, sitting on plastic chairs set in a row on the stage, while we sat on the floor in circles and played cards for hours on. A regular stream of people walked up the steps of the stage and greeted and attempted to entertain them. The kids carried out a traditional dance. The camp administrators explained the large cartoon map of Tibet that hung from floor to ceiling behind them. A few lost grandmothers wandered up to the stage too and discussed, up close, the map amongst themselves.

Why, a boy playing cards said, imitating an old woman as his circle looked at the hunched grandmothers, The place looks the same now as it did then; that's my monastery! The burst of laughter rose up from his circle, over the noise of the hall for a moment. Dinner had been served by then and mother and I were going around offering tea. Butter tea? Milk tea? I poured the drink into the cup resting in my mother's palm and she passed them on. Around this time, the Japanese began to leave the stage and say their goodbyes. The administrators offered more silk scarves before allowing them to go towards the door. But at the door, the Japanese stopped again, this time before a short man whose face was tough like leather but oily, and whose limp right sleeve was pinned to his shoulder and followed his movements like a sulking child. It was my father at the doorway, and they recognized him, more so than anyone else there. He had surprised me like this before. My father has a way of befriending the right people; if it weren't for the failures of his body, he would have gone far in the ranks of the exile government. The Minister of Education, my father once told me, currently stationed in Dharamsala, was a childhood friend, and father used to boss *him* around.

Where is he going, my mother asked when he followed the Japanese out of the hall. I shrugged and carried on with the tea. The year of roadwork affected him more than anyone else. Newly debilitated by the sugar disease and jobless, for what tourist will buy silver trinkets from a dusty-faced one-armed merchant in this time of leprosy and polio, my father spent his long days observing the progress of the roadwork. At night, I listened to the Indian soap operas usurped by the Nepali radio

station for their sophisticated dialogue, the obvious beauty of the Hindi language beside the plain horse-trotting sounds of Nepal. Meanwhile, father recounted to mother, night after night, the information he gathered standing for hours on the hilltop where our refugee camp sits. Hopeless Nepali workers must be watering down the cement. Go back twenty meters, see new cracks – in work they did yesterday! They dig up holes then they patch, then dig them up again. Mother encouraged father; she of course added in her bit of news that spreads around inside the camp, Well, do you know... Dhundup brought in two crates of eggs on his motorcycle and then they all broke on the way here because of those sudden cracks in the pavement. No egg dishes at the restaurant this week, he told me. I'll give him my condolences tomorrow morning then, father said resolutely. Fine, wash up – you have sweat trails on that dusty face.

Father was so absorbed by the Swiss, then Japanese, funded aid project that led singularly to this hilltop camp of short, sunburned Tibetans where he resides that it gave him little time to mourn the loss of his right arm. The ambition of smoothing a lumpy mud road with one so slick you can hardly feel it underneath you. The sight of a dirt road slowly lightening meter by meter into bright grey. The smell of the tar, the joy the driver of the fat rolling pin must feel, the bright, certain white line that perforates the still road. These things wrapped around my father's thoughts for the past year.

Of course, all lasting passions, if passions are ever lasting, develop gradually (it took my grandparents decades to love the sugar tea of this exile land equally to the yak butter tea, thick and lingering like their past lives in Tibet) and father wasn't always interested in the roadwork. When the yellow-haired Swiss first drove onto the gravelly road of the camp's administrative office, the giddy children ran following behind their four-wheeler and even I watched them duck into the offices. Later, I walked home to tell him what I'd seen; instead I found mother sitting on the doorway steps, wiping her eyes with her apron. Father's condition had deteriorated; I was to wait by the gravelly road for an empty taxi to come along.

There were two months of father sleeping the days away, remembering and forgetting that a stub, not an arm, lay attached to his shoulder. Mother went from one task to another, and I saw little of her. She did stop me once to ask me to go call my older

brother from Mingma's store where they had a telephone. I called him, asked him to call me back at Mingma's and hung up. My brother knew the routine well and called on his stolen Indian phone line. Mother was at the store by the time he called and I shared the edge of a stool with her, pressed my ear to the receiver as she shouted about father into it. My brother likes to give advice and mother recites his words. Radish is good for the blood system, so is honey. Should I make him walk around? He doesn't leave the bed much. Open the windows, right. And the doors too?

My brother lives alone in Bangalore, a city none of us have ever seen. I have lived in India too; I did my studies in a small town in the north, not unlike where I am now. But he has seen more than anyone else in the family, and many at the camp. How long does it take to go from one end of the city to the other, we ask. He tells us it is quick because the city is so large; its roads span six times the width of ours so one can weave in and out of each lane. He has a steady job there waiting tables at a fine restaurant and an apartment with a roommate whose daily activities we know well.

Back then, a year ago, my brother's absence was still strange, his welfare was a part of every conversation somehow. Yet whenever we spoke to him over the telephone, words seemed scarce at times. We asked each other how we were, then dispensed advice on diet, the proper way to lock doors and answer them when someone rang. Where was the frankness with which we talked about him and his roommate in the kitchens of the camp? How was he really doing? Why couldn't we tell each more? And...what else? Tell me something, my dear. How's your roommate's new job? And...say something. What can I say...I go back and forth like a mad lady. What...? What...? What...? We said that word again and again when the connection faltered for an instant. Brother responded in the same way. The word multiplied. This constant asking, what did we expect from it? New words? Mother, mother, he then said loud, enough for me to hear through the thick red plastic. What? she responded softly and not hastily because this time she knew for certain something would be said. Maybe I'll come home soon.

So what? Let him come and let him go. As he pleases, isn't it? Father said this many times; it upset mother into a blinding haze. It's just like this road they're building; I have nothing to do with it, it has nothing to do with me! Mother shook her head.

Where am I? What has happened to my life? she seemed to wonder when she shook crumbs off her apron into her palm at the foot of the bed, then left for the kitchen.

Everyone here knows the story of my brother's birth. There was one child before him, a boy who took years to come along and didn't survive his first night after a shaky caesarean from my mother's narrow hips. What then, I asked one languid afternoon in the kitchen, snacking on boiled buffalo meat with my mother's friends. Then there was time, they told me, A few years; then a pilgrimage to Boudhanath in the capital, another one further to Takmalukche where Siddhartha the prince who would become Buddha cut his flesh to help a mother tiger feed her starving cubs. Then a good premonition from the monastery in the camp. A final assurance that a healthy boy would come soon to replace the one whose karma had been so pitiful.

When my mother's friends and relatives noticed the emerging new life between her hips, they put her to a long bed rest, they trickled by daily with plastic bags of spicy potatoes, momos, flat bread, blessed biscuits from the monastery. It was another difficult birth, too demanding for my mother's body permanently exhausted from the exile's trek across the Himalayas as a little girl. So she had her second caesarean (I would be the third and final) but the pain didn't matter because the child was healthy and the young couple's home wouldn't be empty after all. Sometimes I wonder what they thought when I came along so easily to swell her belly, to ask more of her without their even asking for me.

One day, I took my father to the edge of the camp, the gravelly road and the cliff past it, the first time because he asked for my help. It was a few days after the phone call with brother. The next few times, I went because he mentioned it with a brief smile. I prepared a plastic bag of flat bread with butter and chilli paste, a thermos with tea, the radio, and a small carpet to sit on. He held my free arm with his left hand as we walked along the camp's narrow paths, cradled by waist high stone fences that allowed people in their homes full sight of those walking by. We stopped along the way at the calling of people drying their clothes outside, sorting out pebbles from lentil on their porch, washing themselves under a tap. Any other person might've avoided people but father has always been unguarded. He has old friends and routines. Before the illness, he smoked and drank tea with his friends at the teashop, frequently visited our

relatives in the camp and in the capital, delivered memorized phrases in Spanish, Japanese, English to the tourists in town.

At the edge of the camp, is a cement base ringing an immense sepal tree. Here I would unroll the carpet, spread butter and chilli on bread, wipe cups on my blouse and keep them filled for hours with tea. We looked out at the gravel road and the valley past it where the great river, which parallels the winding road, surges by unmoving boulders and buffalos. Across the valley, at eye-level, is the Machupuchari, a white peak named for its tip shaped like a fishtail. I believe it's the chasm between us and the mountain that makes the cool wind at the camp steady and unbroken. Down the hill we see trucks heaving soil to mounds of soil, tiny figures pointing here and there, others with their hands elbow-deep deep in metal bins. We stared at the scene for a while. Then father said, now this is really good. I felt he was right and nodded at this.

The first days we didn't realize how fixed the scene of roadwork would become to us. We asked each other questions that we couldn't answer. What is the gravel made of? I remember how that one stumped father. He looked at me and said that he had no other choice but to ask them. Others joined us; children stayed a few minutes, the elderly stayed longer. The last of grandmother's friends from the camp's home dropped by too. So, you're back at the camp; what class are you in now? she asked me, searching for my name. I've finished college. Going to be a teacher at the school here then? They're going to be looking for a nursery tutor, I hear. She wants to write stories, my father informed her. Educated people are lucky, aren't they? she said and squinted down the road. Now, what do you think they're doing there? Father shuffled forward to sit beside her and to share what he had observed.

The next day, she returned with two other ladies from the home. They came: heavy revolving prayer wheels in their hands, prayers on their dry lips. They sat on the edge of the base, dangled their short legs over it, and heard my father fill them in on the roadwork. One of them recognized me because my brother and I teased her gangly son when she lived with her children. Yet she couldn't figure out why she knew my face so well. How was my brother, she wanted to know. Was he out selling trinkets, they wondered. He's working in India. What a dear, said the lady from the previous day;

the others smiled sympathetically. Does he ever call and say that he wants to come back? All the time, father responded. What a dear. No one forced him to leave; that was his own doing. Oh, well... Now he thinks he says these things about coming back for *my* benefit, to make *me* happy. Do you know what he does when he calls? He gives advice to his mother on what I should do about my health, a living. No! I don't need him or his help. Stay there! The one with the gangly son broke in, Yes, yes, that's *just* how the kids are: too wise all of a sudden; you're right, to this I can attest like no one's business.

Butter tea? Milk tea? We were at the fourth circle of card players when mother leaned in. Go see where your father is. Outside the hall, I saw a dull blue shape of the loom factory, its ridged aluminium roof, before me. We watched an Indian movie there once for a wedding, sat one hundred on the school benches after dinner. It rained and rained, and the noise against the metal roof drowned out the movie's sound. But my father sang the lyrics to the movie's song so that brother and I could hear and imagine the hero and heroine singing. He and my mother had seen the same movie two decades before in the capital, when they were a young couple.

I headed down the gravel road to my right towards home; perhaps father was in bed. The river behind me quieted as I walked by the clinic, then the school with its vast soccer field. When I reached the cluster of homes at the back of the camp where we live, I looked for father in his room but I didn't see him there. Then I checked the kitchen across the courtyard. I felt my way around in there as I called out to him. Neither moonlight nor sunlight permeates that room. It is always a dark room because its three windows edge against the foot of another hill. He was not in the kitchen however, or the prayer room or my room or the toilet down the road.

On my way back to the hall, I prayed inside that he had found his way back to mother. All sorts of silly girl thoughts poked into my mind. Had he left us for the Japanese men, who presumably go from village to village, offering to finish the gruelling jobs others abandon? If this was so, he should at least have the soundness of mind to tell mother and I before following his new passion. Could he be angry with my brother for leaving the camp to see the world, then? Or had something happened to father? Had the river, whose noise was growing as I walked towards the hall, hidden my father in its

turmoil? Could he swim with one arm if that he stepped over the ridge in this darkness? Could anyone in this camp save him if he fell?

I walked by the sepal tree and look out at the silhouette of the Machupuchari and the black gorge past the road. Then I saw him there, the shape of a man with uneven limbs standing in the middle of the road, staring down the hill. Father! I looked all over. What are you doing here still? He didn't turn but waved his hand at me and said, Shush! He kept staring down the miserable black road. I was surprised by his response. I had looked everywhere for him. I decided to leave him there. Let him go wandering into the night if he wants. Look there, he then said softly, it's your brother. I saw him down the hill. He was just a figure right then, walking slowly up the curving road. He carried a backpack, which seemed to be heavy, bearing down on his every step. Father and I stood there, amidst the crickets and frogs, savouring the scene for a while. His haircut makes him seem younger, doesn't it? I said. He's lost a little weight, too, father responded. I did not think to go get mother. I did not think to ask why my brother walks at that time, rather than runs, rather than drops his bag and runs towards us. At that moment, I think

only about tomorrow and the day after when we will speak freely, face to face about the mundane things in the camp, the daily matters in our family. How nice it will be when his presence becomes normal and dull again. What a luxury to see your loved one enough to tire of them, to be unafraid to argue.

The figure drew closer, near enough so we could hear his footsteps over the noise of the insects and the river. Father pulled in a deep breath and exhaled forcefully. I went forward a few steps and stopped. Something of this excites my father and he walks too, he kept walking. I watched as he heads down the hill and his figure darkened. My brother continued towards the camp. They looked at each other from a few meters apart. Brother seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then he carried on. Suddenly, their bodies were only a metre apart. Father stopped and looked at brother but then brother walked on past him. He continued towards me. I stood there perplexed by his cold return. I looked at him, then my father, then him. Then, at that moment, I saw the young boy's face for the first time, and it became so clear, and I saw my father. I saw my father who stood frozen in the middle of the road, still facing downhill.



Poetry Section

Secret Tibet

By Woesser.

Woesser is a well known Tibetan writer. Through her courageous and powerful messages of unity and solidarity to fellow Tibetans under Chinese rule, she has gained popularity amongst Tibetans and sparked many political discussions on her blog. China shut down her blogs in a futile attempt to silence the voice of Tibetans in Tibet, but as Woesser puts it, "Though my blogs are shut down, they cannot stop my speech and my writing."

Woesser. "Secret Tibet." Translated by Susan Chen, Jane Perkins, Buchung.D.Sonam, Tseten Gya, Phuntsok Wangchuk, Sangje Kyap and Tenzin Tsundue. <<http://www.tibetwrites.org/news/woesser.html>>. 21 June 2007.

Dedicated to the imprisoned Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, Bangri Rinpoche and Lobsang Tenzin

I

When I think of it, what do they have to do with me?

Palden Gyatso¹, imprisoned for thirty-three years;

Ngawang Sangdrol², locked up since she was twelve;

then the newly-freed Phuntsok Nyidron³

and Lobsang Tenzin⁴, imprisoned somewhere.

I don't know them, really, haven't even seen their photos.

I only saw on the web, in front of an old lama,

shackles, sharp knives, cattle prods with multiple functions.

Loose skin, bony cheeks, furrowed wrinkles,

a recognizable handsomeness from his youth,

1. Palden Gyatso was an ordinary Tibetan monk. At the time of the Lhasa Uprising in March 1959, he was twenty-eight. Because he refused to betray his teacher, he was arrested and imprisoned. His sentence was later repeatedly extended. He was brutally tortured and not released until he was sixty, after which he escaped to India. From Dharamsala, the residence-in-exile of the Dalai Lama, he told the world of his life and suffering in his autobiography, *Fire Under the Snow* (edited and co-authored by Tsering Shakya; Chinese translation by Liao Tianqi).

2. Ngawang Sangdrol was a nun and twelve years old, when she was arrested and imprisoned in 1990 for participating in a street protest in Lhasa. This made her the youngest female political prisoner in Tibet. After her release nine months later, she again demonstrated and was re-arrested in 1992. This time she served eleven years of her sentence. In jail she was one of the fourteen nuns who composed songs about their life behind bars. When a tape recorder was smuggled into prison, they were able to record their songs and the resulting tape shocked the outside world. They became known as "The Singing Nuns". Under strong international pressure, Ngawang Sangdrol was released in 2003 in very poor health. This saved her serving ten more years of imprisonment.

3. Phuntsok Nyidron was a nun who was sentenced to nine years in jail in 1989 for "spreading anti-revolutionary propaganda." A further eight years were added to her sentence in 1993. She is one of the fourteen nuns who, while inside Drapchi Prison (TAR's Prison No 1), recorded songs yearning for their nation's freedom and praising the Dalai Lama. In response to global pressure, she was released on 24 February 2004, in a deteriorated physical condition, thirteen months before her sentence expired. Phuntsok Nyidron was the last of "The Singing Nuns" to leave prison.

4. Lobsang Tenzin, born in Lhasa in 1966, was a sophomore student in the Department of Tibetan Language and Literature, Tibet University, when he was arrested during the so-called "Lhasa Riot" of 5 March 1989 and charged with murdering an armed Chinese policeman. Although there was no evidence to prove his involvement, he was sentenced to death with two years' suspension. Under international pressure the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, which was later reduced to an eighteen-year sentence. From 2004 he still has ten years to serve. The facility where he's detained - Pomeshan Prison, Nyingtri Prefecture - is for high-profile political prisoners. One of its twenty-five inmates has become insane. Lobsang Tenzin has serious heart and liver damage caused by brutal beatings and now has trouble sitting and standing straight, experiences temporary blindness as well as severe headaches. There is concern that he might not survive until 2014 in his current medical condition.

a beauty that doesn't belong to the mundane.
 Becoming a monk early in life,
 the Buddha's spirit glows in his face.

October, outside Beijing, chilly wind of autumn, a changed world.
 I was reading the biography I downloaded in Lhasa,
 seeing the sentient beings of the Snowland crushed
 by iron hoofs from outside. Palden Gyatso in a quiet voice:
 "I spent most of my life in prisons
 built by Chinese in my country"⁵.
 And through another voice,
 one can "recognize the forgiving words."⁶

Once in a while, the masked demon reveals its true face,
 frightening even the ancient deities.
 Yet, the challenges have emboldened the ordinary birth;
 who turn prayers in the deep nights into cries under the sun,
 who convert whines behind the high walls into songs spread wide.
 They are arrested! Punishments increased! Life sentences!
 Executions postponed! Shot dead!

I usually keep quiet because I barely know anything.
 Having been born and raised under the bugles of the PLA,
 I am a suitable inheritor of Communism.
 Egg under the red flag, suddenly cracked and broken.
 Nearing middle age, belated anger is about to blurt from my throat.
 I cannot stop my tears for the suffering Tibetans younger than me.

II

Yet, I do know two serious cases of prisoners still in jail,
 both of them tulkus and Khampas from the East.
 Jigme Tenzin⁷ and Angang Tashi⁸ or Bangri, Tenzin Delek;
 these are their names from birth and their dharma names.

5. From the internet Chinese edition of *Fire Under The Snow*, Chapter Eleven, "In the Ruins".

6. From the Polish poet Miloz's *Chui Tan Ji* (Chinese translation by Du Guoqing, Taiwan).

7. Jigme Tenzin is a reincarnate lama from the Tibetan region of northern Kham. Bangri is his religious name. Around 1997 he and his wife, Nyima Choedron, founded an orphanage, Gyatso Children's Home that once housed around fifty street children. The couple were accused of having acted as spies and been involved in activities that threatened state security. After their arrest and respective sentences of fifteen and ten years, the orphanage was closed and many inmates became homeless again.

8. Angang Tashi, a reincarnate lama from the Tibetan region of southern Kham, is also known by his religious name, Tenzin Delek. But Tibetan inhabitants of the Nyagchu (Yajiang) and Lithang area usually call him as Big Lama. He travelled the heartland of farmers and nomads, spreading Buddha's teaching, setting up charity organizations to school orphans, care for the poor and elderly, repair roads and bridges, protect the environment, and educate citizens against smoking, drinking, gambling and killing animals. However, in December 2002 he was sentenced to death on charges of "spreading splittism" and "plotting a series of bombings". The sentence had a two-year suspension and there is widespread suspicion that this case has been fabricated. There has been pressure on the Chinese Government over the past two years by international monitors, the Tibetan exile community, and some intellectuals in inland China, to apply the law and allow a fair and open retrial. The request has so far been denied. Meanwhile, many Tibetans in the region have been accused of involvement in the alleged bombings, including Lobsang Dhondrup who has already been executed. Others are imprisoned.

As if the forgotten password is recalled, these names
push open the high gates of recent memory once closely guarded.

Yes, initially in a post office in Lhasa he asked me
to write a telegram, saying with a smile:
“I don’t know how to write the words of Chinese.”
He must be the first tulku among my many friends.
One year on New Year’s Day we went to a photo studio
on the Barkhor; in front of a tacky backdrop we took a photo together.
I also brought him into Zhu Zheqin’s MTV⁹ to perform the elegant mudras.

A bespectacled U-Tsang woman became his partner.
They started an orphanage for fifty kids begging in the street.
I sponsored one, but an incident soon suspended my limited compassion.
Why were they arrested? I don’t know.
It’s said that one morning something happened,
something about raising the Snow Lion flag at the Potala Ground.
I admit I neither wanted to know too much
nor had any urge to visit him in the prison.

Yes, several years ago he stared at an apple rolling
in strong currents of the Yarlung Tsangpo:
“Look, the karmic result is coming.”
I, drawn by his fame, didn’t know how to react to his pain.
He is well known in this era of shifting sides and silence;
teaching dharma from village to village,
confronting the government on its false policy.
The peasants, nomads, and orphans
he has raised call him Big Lama.
He is also a thorn in officials’ eyes
and needle in the flesh; removal, the only relief.

With a pack of tricks, they finally trapped him after 9/11.
Magnificent way to accuse him, in the name of “anti-terrorism,”
punishing one to warn many. They said he hid bombs

and pornography, as well as planning five or seven bombings.
I remember, half a year before he was locked up, he was very sad:
“My mother passed away, I am going into a one-year retreat for her.”
Such a sincere follower of the Buddha,
how could he be involved in bombing and killing?

9. Zhu Zheqin, the singer who became popular with her recording *Sister Drum* (*Dajie Gu*), came to Lhasa in 1996 to produce her new MTV, *Yangchen Ma* (*Yangjin Ma*). There are several shots of mudras performed by a lama, who is *Bangri Rinpoche*.

III

I also knew Yoen Lama who taught me the sutras
 for taking refuge and meditation. In Sera Monastery,
 his students were crying and said to me that when he was meditating,
 police cars suddenly took him away to the infamous Gutsa prison
 for his involvement in this or that attempt to overturn the government.
 With a few monks, I rushed to see him;
 the road was swirling dust without today's paving.
 Under the hot sun, we saw only the icy faces of the armed soldiers.

As suddenly as he was arrested, so he was released
 for lack of real evidence. Having survived the catastrophe,
 with heavy emotion he gave me a strange rosary
 made from steamed prison buns,
 bright yellow flowers outside his cell window,
 and crystal sugar his family sent.
 Every bead is ingrained with fingerprints;
 the warmth of his touch can still be felt on each of the beads
 from reciting the mantras for those ninety odd days of humiliation.
 All 108 beads, each one is hard like stubborn pebbles.

I also know a nun only half my age. That summer;
 while she marched around the Barkhor shouting the slogan
 known to every Tibetan, plainclothes policeman rushing to cover her mouth,
 I was shopping for pretty dresses for my 28th birthday.
 And at fourteen, I was busy passing exams
 to go to high school the next year in Chengdu.
 One of my essays was dedicated to the PLA fighting Vietnamese.

Seven years later, after expulsion from her nunnery,
 she runs errands for a kind merchant. She is tiny
 and always wears an ugly woollen hat, even under the strong sun.
 "Why not put on something else?"
 I intended to give her a fabric hat. She refused:
 "I have a headache, the woollen hat makes me feel better."
 "Why?" I never heard such a thing.
 "They beat me in jail. My skull was damaged."

As for Lobten, a professional with a bright future everyone envied,
 after a crazy night of drinking, he alone got on a bus to Ganden Monastery.
 It's said he threw lungta on the pass and shouted that fatal slogan
 several times. He was immediately arrested by police
 stationed in the monastery. The Party Secretary decreed:
 "True words spill out after getting drunk."
 One year later, one more ex-prisoner becomes a vagabond
 on the streets of Lhasa.

IV

Having got so far in composing this poem,
 I am unwilling to turn it into an accusation.
 But among the imprisoned, why do the ones in monastic robes
 always outnumber the others? This contradicts commonsense.
 We all know the line separating violence and non-violence.
 We are indeed the offspring of the holy Ogress – Sringmo,
 preferring to have monks and nuns suffer for us.
 Let them be beaten, let their sitting wear out the jail floor.
 Endure it, lamas and anis, endure it for us!

There is no way to know how they have tortured one's body and mind,
 those intolerable minutes and seconds, those unbearable days and nights.
 Mentioning the word "body," I cannot but shiver.
 I am so afraid of pain, a slap could leave me shattered.
 In shame, I count days for them, their endless sentences.
 Oh, the hearts of Tibet are beating in the hell of reality!

Yet, in sweet teahouses along the Lingkhör,
 mindless gossips fly from table to table.
 Yet, in the gardens serving tea along the Lingkhör,
 retired cadres revel in playing mahjong until sunset.
 Yet, in small bars along the Lingkhör,
 plump pot-bellied officials get drunk every night.
 Oh, let's be happily passive; it is better than becoming an amchok.
 "Amchok" means ear and refers to those invisible informers.
 Such a graphic nickname. Such Lhasawa humour!

Betrayals by quietly peeping and whispering,
 the more one does so, the larger the reward.
 It can make one big. Once, in the street,
 strangely, all of a sudden I had to tightly cover my ears,
 worrying they could fall into someone's hands if I wasn't alert;
 worrying they could become amchoks reaching out to everywhere,
 growing sharper, like Pinocchio's nose getting longer everytime he lies.

How many suspicious "ears" are around?
 How many are wrongly suspected amchoks?
 Who is an amchok? Who is not?
 Such an absurd scene, it's more destructive than sugarcoats or cannonballs
 Thinking of these, sadly and reluctantly I discovered:
 there is another Tibet hidden behind the Tibet we live.
 This now makes it impossible for me to write this poem lyrically!

V

I remain silent. I have long become used to it
 for a single reason, because I am full of fear.

Why is it like this? Who can clearly explain?
 After all, everyone feels the same, I understand.
 Someone said: "Tibetans' fear can be felt through touch."¹⁰
 But, I want to say, the real fear has long permeated the air, everywhere.

At a mention of past and present, he burst into tears
 frightening me. His face was covered with the shawl
 of his burgundy robe, while I could not control my laughter
 to disguise the pain that had gripped my heart.
 While people around glared at me with blame in their eyes,
 he lifted his head from the robe. We exchanged eye contact.
 The slightest shiver made us aware of the weight of each other's fear.

A reporter from Xinhua, an offspring of northern Tibetan nomads,
 smelling alcohol-soaked on Moon Festival evening,
 scolded me with his Party throat and tongue:
 "You think you can find out something?
 Who you think you are?
 You think you can change anything?
 We change everything.
 Why you create problems?"
 Am I really breaking any rule? I wanted to talk back
 but only saw in his face the cruelty of a running dog.
 There are more people, more serious unrest.
 Would all of them be knocked out of the game?

I nearly hear them singing in soft chanting voices:
 "Fragrant lotus, withering under the sun's rays;
 snow mountains of Tibet, being scorched under the burning sun.
 O! Rock of Permanent Hope, protect us
 the youth swearing to bring independence!"¹¹
 No, no, I did not intend to overshadow poetry with politics,
 I am only wondering, in prison, why the anis in their teens are fearless.

Thus, let me write, only for remembrance of my pitiful moral pride.
 Of course I am not qualified to find out anything, change anything.
 I am only admitting to my innermost feelings.
 Far away from home, amidst foreigners, eternal strangers,
 with slight embarrassment, safely and quietly, I say:
 when I think carefully, how can they have nothing to do with me?
 And this poem can only express my humble respect, my concern from afar.

10. From the radio programme, Deutsche Welle, 11 June 2002: "Neue Zürcher Zeitung in Switzerland made a detailed report on Tibet... The first article is based upon the reporter's visit to Tibet. It describes the street scenes and the way Tibetans feel about themselves. The article then goes on to say: 'Yet, when we tried to get closer to some Tibetans, those confident mountain people somehow became ultra cautious strategists.' One cannot but wonder if this is their way of self denial... Many people are in fear; they are afraid of the trouble that might be invited by mentioning their own nationality... The national flag of PRC is everywhere in Tibet. Tibetans' fear can be felt through touch."

11. In 1993, in the notorious Drapchi Prison, Ngawang Sangdrol, Phuntsok Nyidron and another twelve nuns recorded their songs of resistance to express the darkness and brutality they had suffered, and to give voice to the wishes and hopes hidden deeply in the hearts of the Tibetans. These lines are from one of their songs, which were to reach the outside world.

No One Loves Like I Do

By Tsering Lama.

Tsering Lama grew up in Kathmandu, Nepal and currently resides in Vancouver, Canada. She studied Creative Writing and International Relations at the University of British Columbia. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of Students for a Free Tibet.

He leapt after the letter though it had fallen into the pond already. What's it matter if nothing was salvageable? He was in the zoo, Royal Nepal zoo, in the pond at the centre of it all. This is where he and someone met to hold hands, to sit on an iron bench, to love like peacocks.

How to be beautiful and in love again?

Was it dehumanizing wandering back into the zoo, purposeless, like catching a show at the cinema alone? Why not just do that instead? Why see the rhino's armour under cracks in dry mud? Why throw roasted peanuts at the lions through black metal bars? They may turn their necks but will they look at you?

Place matters to other people. He couldn't even say how long he had been here.

Frank O'Hara, where will the adventurous broken heart go next? Come, meditate in this emergency. Under the bodhisattva tree by the zoo's entrance. Come, this could be your reincarnation.

The new paintings all over the zoo show a man in swimming trunks being attacked from every direction. Lion at his head, vulture at his torso, alligator at his knee. Porcupine waiting in line. Stay away from the animals, warns the red script.

How humiliating to alone in this day and age.

He stood in the green pond and began to write the letters again as the paper fell apart in his hands. Thick clumps of paper plunked into the pond as the pen tore away. Plunk plunk. The words following. *Now I have begun. Now I have begun.*

Even the geese on the shore walked away.

Streetfood

By Tsering Lama.

A woman roasts corn streetside to sell. She is crouched in dust, fans charcoal with cardboard. It is one more cigarette drag to her lips before another newspaper leaf should be set into the fire when a girl with a plastic bag full of oranges rushes by. She trips on herself and she and overpriced oranges tumble to the ground. She looks up from the ground and a sudden goat, he reaches tongue for her face. We overhear the mister is at home with a boil on his rear the size of a lychee, much redder, balmy and rich. We hear he once told a girl, If I had known you long ago, I would've fallen in love with you many times over. All the restaurants are closed today with yesterday's riots, so we eat streetfood together.

One Morning as a Girl

By Tsering Lama.

One morning as a girl I was following, crouching
 as I walked on a pathway, little mounds of dirt the size of my fists
 dug by ants or other some small creature.
 No large animal would dig holes one tiny
 perfect ball of dirt at a time. It made sense to me
 that their world would be as measured and
 small as my own. I was in fact walking through
 the old refugee settlement where my parents
 once met. I went along greeting passersby
 who smiled back and responded in kind. *Tai delek*
Mo Bhigmo, Tai delek Ang Pasang. I was
 saying Tai delek with the enthusiasm
 of a perfect country bumpkin, I think I always
 wanted to belong *there* and not the city
 where we say Tashi delek, where we all
 get the same last name: Lama, small and short.
 Once, my father said mother and he were the
 best looking couple in the settlement. A couple before
 they were a couple because of sister, he then added.
 I saw rare photographs of them back then.
 I think they were better looking than I have ever been.
 Ahead on the pathway, as a cow pressed her hoof
 into the perfect bit of dung, I saw through
 Mo Palmo's window, she was dropping
 the last ball of dough into the pot of bhaktuk.
 I told my cousin who waited by the dung,
 if only I didn't have crooked
 teeth, I would be completely happy right now.

Her Story

By Tenzin Dickyi. She was born and raised in India. She studied in TCV Pathlikhul and Lower Dharamsala. Dickyi moved to the United States when she was thirteen. She is currently studying at Harvard University, and majors in English Literature.

In the first year her cheeks are too vivid;
 proclaiming her presence, her absence.

She learns the sound for water. Pani.
 Swirls in her mouth words unfamiliar.

She eats rice twice a day with her fingers.
 This diminishes its festivity.

A small boy tells her the Himalayas are rising;
 the walk back will take longer, she thinks.

She begins to cook with stranger spices,
 reluctantly acknowledges her expertise.

She denies that being here means not being there.

In the final year she accepts the possibility of betrayal.

Voice

By Tashi Yangzom. She went to school in Dalhousie in north India and currently pursuing IB course on Pestozzi scholarship in the United Kingdom.

We had no idea of tomorrow,
 Never realized until it came.
 Little joys we had turned sorrow.
 In a moment, in a moment,
 In a moment we lost our land.
 Like it was a castle on beach-sand.
 Those outsiders, those invaders.
 Took the heart out of our life!
 Can u tell me? Can somebody?
 How is it to be a nobody?
 Living on a foreign land,
 Houses we stay in, we cannot call'em 'home'.
 Treading the path of compassion and peace,
 Hoping our voice is not lost in our own silence;
 Our wings have broken, our wings have broken,
 And we cannot fly!
 So, can you tell me? Can somebody?
 "How is it to be a beggar?
 A beggar for our own wings,
 For the freedom we own"
 We are people with no land to call our own,
 Like birds with no sky to fly in.
 If it was bound to happen this way,
 It is bound to happen other way too.
 This has been caused by some cruel actions;
 The One up there even wonders,
 How do my angels celebrate and smile
 After falling so low,
 Their wings have got power but not His magic!
 The One up there wonders again
 How do my angels do and smile?
 Leaving behind humanity thousands a mile.

Really!
 We had no idea of tomorrow,
 Never realized until it came.
 Little joys we had turned sorrow.
 In a moment, in a moment,
 In a moment we lost our land.
 Like it was a castle on beach-sand.
 Now, can u tell me? Can somebody?

If you have any comments or critiques regarding the layout or the content of Dolma Magazine, please write to editor@tibetwomen.org

Bhod Gyalo!

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