

Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India (“FOTSI”)

Annual Report and Newsletter for 2004 (abridged, altered for Internet)
(some items have been omitted, some names changed to protect privacy)

Projects in Tibetan Settlements of Southern India: Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal by Chela Kunasz, April 2005

Hello, Tashi Delek, and deep thanks to all of you! The Tibetans send their love and profound gratitude for all your help. They also sent greetings for a safe, happy, and successful **Tibetan New Year 2132, the Wood Bird Year** (which began Feb. 9). They say prayers every day for you, their benefactors, and for all beings, and they hope this year will bring happiness and less suffering in this world.

With our Tibetan friends' hard work and insight, we have continued to help provide essential medical services, basic support, education, self-sufficiency, and hope to many who have suffered major difficulties. The Tibetans appreciate that our efforts come in the midst of our own problems, including the war in Iraq, increasing terrorism, and the many other worthy requests for help.

In the fall of 2004 Chela had another interesting, all-consuming visit to the Mundgod Tibetan Settlement. Upon her return, FOTSI collected funds and sent December/January packets to our sponsored Tibetan people and projects and for special needs discovered during the trip. After consultations with the Tibetans and a January Board Meeting, FOTSI made several changes to further tune our efforts to be most useful and appropriate. This is discussed below.

This 2004 Annual Report includes a **summary of our financial data, a general outline of our work** (for new contributors and others interested) and **stories of the Tibetan people and the projects we pursue together, as well as changes in our projects and plans for 2005**.

Summary of FOTSI 2004 Financial and Operational Data

This year, 98 donors (from 16 states, Switzerland and Canada) donated to our projects.

During 2004 FOTSI sponsored:

- 51** individuals and families through **Representative's Office, Mundgod**
- 2** children at the **Tibetan Children's Village** boarding school, **Bylakuppe**
- 54** monks and nuns, **Mundgod** settlement
- 7 Dre-Gomang School or Drepung Gomang Monastery** staff or students
- 1** Nursing Scholarship student during an internship year in Delhi
- 3 Scholarship students** related to sponsored families getting **special help**
- 1 Special Nursing Scholarship** Student from Mundgod at Nursing School, Madras

In addition to these **119** individuals, we gave **special help to many very ill or injured people** (see stories below) and to **group projects** (see below) that directly **helped hundreds more**.

We made donations to the **Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital** in Bylakuppe, and the **Dhondenling Van Thiel Hospital** in Kollegal. We initiated a big project (funds sent in early 2005) for the **Doeguling Resettlement Hospital** in Mundgod. These hospitals serve the roughly 13,500 people in Mundgod, 15,000 in Bylakuppe, and 5000 in Kollegal. We sent \$1314.00 (contributed from 11 donors) to buy 5 cows (+some towards a 6th cow), and helped **38 students attend colleges and business schools** through the general scholarship fund in Mundgod, in addition to our 5 special scholarships listed above. We aided the **Home for the Elderly** in Mundgod and the **Central Tibetan School in Mundgod** (extra-curricular activities). We assisted individuals in

emergency situations due to accidents, emergency medical needs, weather disasters, etc. We helped publish several **important books for Tibetan culture and history**.

In summary, this year the **Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India projects** included: **sponsorship** of and special help to

- **lay people** of all ages and genders, (Mundgod)
- **monks or nuns** at 4 monasteries and a nunnery, (Mundgod)
- **especially needy children, TCV School** (Bylakuppe)
- **students and staff of Dre-Gomang School**, (Mundgod)
- **elderly residents of the Home for the Elderly** (Mundgod)

and **contributions** to

- **Emergency Fund** (administered by Representative's Office, Mundgod)
- **Self-sufficiency Fund** (administered by Representative's Office, Mundgod)
- **Scholarship Fund** (administered by Representative's Office, Mundgod)
- **Nursing Scholarships** (administered by FOTSI, with help from Mundgod)
- **Nuns Health Fund** (Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, Mundgod)
- **Monks Health Funds** (Gungru Health Fund, Emergency Fund, Mundgod)
- **Home for the Elderly and Infirm** (Solar lighting) (Mundgod)
- **Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital** (Bylakuppe)
- **Dhondening Van Thiel Hospital** (Kollegal)
- **Medical or Housing needs of individuals** (Mundgod)
- **Drepung Gomang Monastery publishing projects and staff** (Mundgod)

In 2004 we gave \$44,274.50 in donations to sponsored individuals and projects based in the Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal Tibetan Settlements in India.

From August 1, 1994 until December 31, 2004, the Tibetan Settlements in India project (first as CFT/TSI and later as FOTSI) has given \$264,623.43 to sponsored individuals and projects in the Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal Settlements. During that ten and a half year period, \$17,782.96 was spent on all expenses excluding travel, and \$12,862.72 was spent for travel to India (8 trips, which occurred in 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004). (Our director, Chela Kunasz, made 2 trips to the Mundgod Settlement for Tibetan relief work in 1987 and 1991 before the project was officially organized as tax-exempt).

Expenses

Travel expenses (India) in 2004 were \$1452.00. Mail fees, photos, copies, supplies, and computer needs were \$1960.05. This includes expensive registered mail to India and the cost of printing and mailing our newsletter. FOTSI paid \$40.09 selling donated stock (paid from the stock sale). We paid \$1628.88 for IRS filing costs, state registration, and the final payment on our no-interest loan for legal and IRS start-up costs. We also paid out \$1549.08 to repair, advertise and pay title for a donated auto for which we realized a \$3050.92 gain. Adding travel and all these expenses gives **\$6630.10 for 2004.** **As usual there were no salaries paid to anyone.** The Kunaszes and one other board member paid about two-thirds of the expense, with additional donations from others **helping very much.** We were especially grateful for the generous donations of three donors who helped with half the India travel cost, and another donor who was able to give us a special donation to help with costs this year only.

We offer our deep thank-you to all donors who helped with FOTSI expenses this year!

The occasional extra donations for expenses and expense allocations from larger donors help us **so much!** These make it possible for us to avoid a flat percentage expense fee (so difficult for some) on top of the fixed sponsorship amounts expected in the camps. On their side, the Tibetans have

avoided charging FOTSI a flat fee for their administrative needs. Other larger organizations with paid staffs ARE charged for expenses needed by the Tibetans on their end.

Real Life Stories - - 2004 (see newsletter back cover for “photo collage”)

Giggly Kids, Struggling Grandmas -- Tenzin Dolma and Grandma Kunsang

One of our delightful sponsored children, **Tenzin Dolma**, is now six. She came, along with her young sister Dawa and grandma Kunsang to a meeting and party we had at the Representative's Office in Camp #3. This Office is the heart of the administration of the refugee camp, called Doeguling (garden of all happiness) in Tibetan, but often referred to as the Mundgod settlement, since it is near the Indian town of Mundgod. Tenzin is now in first grade and studies math, English, science, Tibetan, and drawing. English is her favorite subject. She says she already knows what she wants to be in life... an English teacher! Her favorite game is basketball. There are 7 people in her home. Her mother and grandfather had gone out to sell sweaters in the city of Ahmedabad. The family has no father. The two little girls, Tenzin Dolma and Dawa, grinning broadly, sent best wishes and thanks to their sponsor. They giggled a lot. The younger girl, Dawa, said she wants to be a tractor driver when she grows up! Grandma Kunsang looks after everyone when the mother and grandfather are away. She is now 65, has digestive problems and bad knees. The kids are healthy this year, thanks to the sponsor's help and Kunsang's care, but Kunsang is finding it very hard to look after the 3 kids when the mother and grandpa are away. See Tenzin Dolma's smile in the collage photo, third photo in and two down from the left corner.

This year FOTSI made several changes in our Sponsorship Program and related Emergency Fund. First, due to inflation, especially in the cost of medicine and school tuition, the adult Tibetans are really having a hard time. They asked FOTSI to increase our sponsorship rate. Sponsorship groups from other countries are sending more. **Hence, FOTSI went through the difficult process of raising our sponsorship rates from \$7.50/month to \$10/month for all people sponsored through the Representative's Office.** (This doesn't apply to Tibetan monks or nuns at monasteries or nunneries, or to the Dre-Gomang or TCV Schools.) FOTSI has written to almost all sponsors about this. Most sponsors have already agreed to the increase. **If you paid ahead and have not sent funds to cover the increase for the rest of the year, and you are able to do this, please contact FOTSI to find out the extra amount needed until your next donation. This would help a lot; we're already sending the higher amount to India.**

In addition, there has been a new and unprecedented series of communications from the Representative's Office, in which he tells us that at present the children of Mundgod are well supported, and that the policy for the Mundgod settlement now is that they are no longer giving us new sponsorships of children and young people, but only sponsorships for the elderly! This is because they feel they have a crisis with regard to the elderly, especially those living alone or with other elders not in the Home for the Elderly. The Representative wrote: **“we have here elder people who are desperate in need of sponsorship help and also it is guidance from Dept. of Home to find sponsors for these elders, so please ...”** do help, he writes. As of 2004 we were sponsoring 15 elderly out 51 sponsorees, with two long-time requests for children pending, which we are still pursuing. This change is creating a problem when double sponsorships arise in the case of sponsorees getting new, special high-end sponsorships or other reasons, because for now we cannot help new children in place of previous sponsorees. **Please contact us if you have any questions. Also, do let us know if you know anyone interested in sponsoring a needy elderly Tibetan.** In the collage on the back of the newsletter, see the photos of newly sponsored elders **Dawa Bhuti, top row, 3 from left, and Tashi Dorje,** above the flags next to our long-time sponsored elder, **Tsering Choephel,** with his red-ribboned hat. **Gran Dolma,** (collage top row, 2nd from left), 67, was one of two sponsored elders who died this year. She had trouble eating and had very low blood pressure and little iron in her blood. Although she was being seen by doctors, nothing was helping. She was living with and caring for her 86 year old mother who had trouble hearing and seeing. Life got very hard.

Brave Nun's Two Escapes from Tibet (some details changed to protect people)

Young Tibetan children born in the Mundgod camp, like **Tenzin Dolma**, hardly know the world of their grandmothers or other laypeople, monks, and nuns who have experienced the tragedy of Tibet first hand. Tibetan nun **Ven. Dolma** is now 55 years old. She is from a small village in the Kham region of Tibet. When she was quite young, she had a medical problem that resulted in an injury to her arm. She looked after sheep, yaks, and goats near her home and did not go to school. All the monks and nuns in the monasteries and nunneries near her home were killed by the Chinese military; the buildings were destroyed too. There was a school nearby, but it was a Chinese School and she did not want to go there. Her parents had three children, herself and two brothers. When she was about 12, her mother died in childbirth.

When Dolma was 34, she went to Lhasa and became a nun, getting her nun's name of "Dolma". After that, in 1985, she escaped from Tibet. She started out with just one other nun and it took more than a month to reach Nepal. The escape route was difficult because they kept running into Chinese guards and military. Once some Chinese officials told them to go back. Her nun friend begged, "Please let us go on". But these men just beat her friend. It was very unpleasant. They had to go back and take a very circuitous route that went through a thick forest. Branches scratched their arms and they ended up covered with sores. At one point they came across a group of about 20 monks with two younger boys. Later, the monks were accosted by the Chinese, arrested, and taken away. Apparently the Chinese didn't see the 2 nuns. The monks managed to transfer the two boys to the care of the nuns, and the four of them got away.

For several days they continued without food, wandering through the woods. They were able to get drinking water from streams. Finally, they reached Nepal. The boys had relatives they reached with help from a primitive refugee center. But the two nuns didn't know anyone, and there was nothing for them at the refugee center, no food, no clothing, nothing. They earned a few coins by cleaning toilets at the refugee center. They begged a lot in Kathmandu and survived. Finally, a friend gave the nuns money to go to where the Dalai Lama was giving teachings. They attended that teaching and then went to Dharamsala, where the Tibetan Government-in-Exile has its headquarters. In a nearby forest village they rented a tiny room and lived there more than a year. Since there was no room in the nunnery in Dharamsala, they couldn't live there. The Dalai Lama told her there was a nunnery in south India where she could go, so she went to Mundgod and joined that nunnery. She was so happy that she had finally arrived at a place where she had food, shelter, and Buddhist studies. She stayed there about 10 years until 1996.

Dolma didn't tell her father where she was going when she left Tibet because she thought it would be dangerous for both of them. Later she sent photos and letters to tell him where she was and that she was okay. Her father kept writing and saying, "Please come home." So, in 1996, she got permission from authorities at her nunnery to go to Tibet for one year. She warned them at the time that it might take longer than one year for her to get all the way to her home in Tibet, try to assist her father who was ill, and get back to the nunnery. But she stressed that she *would* get back somehow. When she went back to Tibet, she was told that people from her area of Tibet were not allowed to go to India, and anyone who had done this was considered criminal. And, it did happen that after she reached her home area, she was indeed arrested. She was put in prison and moved successively to 4 jails. The first three were considered temporary holding prisons. Finally she was sent to a prison in the city of Shigatse. To her surprise, at Shigatse they released her and told her to go to her home. It took 2 months and 20 days for her to be released from jail.

When she finally got home, the local Chinese police and authorities gave her no peace. She was effectively under house arrest. They kept interrogating her brother and her father, asking who had originally persuaded her to go to India, how had she known what way to go. She wanted to return to India, because, not only was her life awful, so was that of her brother and father. It was much worse for them with her there. She was worried that she needed to get back soon and time was passing. She was watched all the time. It seemed impossible to get away. And, if she were to get

away, she could not ask for help from anyone, because otherwise they would be blamed and interrogated, and it might increase her chances of being caught. The Chinese asked her what she wanted to do. She answered that she needed to go back to India because she only had a short leave to see her father. The authorities said they'd kill her or arrest her if she persisted in trying to leave. Her father told her, "Don't try to go to India because they will kill you." Finally she managed to leave the house in spite of all the warnings, not carrying much, and hitched rides in trucks with Tibetans going to Lhasa, just blending in, not in her nuns' clothes. She was alone. She left Lhasa shortly after reaching it and started wandering through the hills, not on roads, so as not to be caught. got very wet, soaked up to her shoulders. She had started out from Lhasa with several kilos of barley tsampa (ground barley flour). As she went, she met people along the way, and, at the end, they numbered about 72. When her barley flour ran out, others gave her food. It took 4 months to reach the border.

When she finally arrived again at the refugee center in Kathmandu, she found it had improved a lot. They gave food, clothing, and shelter to everyone, and then all were sent to Dharamsala. She met the Dalai Lama and then went straight south, back to her nunnery in Mundgod. In her absence, a new monk abbot had been appointed in charge of the nunnery. The old and new abbots had made a new absolute rule, saying that if you go away and don't come back within your time limit, you've lost your place in the nunnery. Although people spoke up for her, it was considered that the nuns really should be discouraged from going back and forth and the rule was enforced, and Dolma had to leave the nunnery and had to try to survive with small jobs and in a crowded place with rent that she struggled to pay, even there in the camp. She gets some food at the nunnery and at work, but she also needs toiletries, clothing, medicine. Pretty difficult.

FOTSI has helped her with medical needs from our medical fund. She said this helped a lot. Her kind FOTSI donor has tried to help too. These kindnesses are making a difference for this brave nun. Nun **Dolma** sends her love and thanks to all FOTSI's donors! **We haven't included Dolma's photo** in the collage so as to protect her family in Tibet. But we have included the images of other nuns we've aided.

The Tsunami and the Tibetans

Many were deeply saddened by the tragic effects of the tsunami on many Asian countries and on Western visitors as well. Several donors contacted FOTSI soon after the tsunami to inquire about the welfare of the Tibetans. Fortunately for them, the Tibetan camps are not near the ocean and were not threatened. Some Tibetan families had children away at schools and colleges in or near Madras (including a nursing school), but these, too, are not located near the sea. Thus, as far as I have heard, none of the Tibetans were injured by that horrendous event. However, the Tibetans, too, were horrified by the tragic events' impact and so pulled together some of their own donations of food and goods and sent a delegation to visit Nagapatinam, the area in Tamil Nadu, southern India, which was most affected. The Tibetan aid delegation that traveled to Nagapatinam consisted of 23 Tibetans, including Tulku Thupten Rinpoche of Gaden Jangtse monastery from Mundgod and 15 fellow monks, Mr. Ngodup Dorje, the "Chief Representative" in charge of the 5 Tibetan camps in south India. Essential to the success of the mission was **Tsering Youdon, the daughter of one of the Mundgod Representative's Office staff** members. She speaks Tamil and performed the crucial duties of a Tamil language translator. This year I met Tsering and she told me of her work for the Tibetan Children's Village project as a roving social worker visiting various camps to study problems. Later, she and her mother sent interesting letters about the Tibetans' work in Tamil Nadu to their friend, Shanti Bhadriah, who is a FOTSI donor but also provides much support and help to the Tibetans on her own. Shanti kindly shared the letters and enclosed photos with me. Traveling from the Tibetan settlement to Nagapatinam was grueling (12 hours on difficult roads) and the weather was very hot. The Tibetans arrived at Nagapatinam at 3:30am. The most affected area there was called Akkalaipeltai, where more than 2000 people lost their lives and many were still missing. "Their fishing industry was brought to a standstill with about 1,000 boats destroyed by the tsunami. One boat costs about 15-20 lakhs (1.5 to 2 million rupees, which is at least \$35,000.00) and they feel it will be a very long time for becoming self sustaining", Tsering wrote.

“Also, many tourists who had come to Veilankanni Church were killed and dead bodies left unidentified. Many boats had come into the Village and destroyed homes and bridges. Though we had come after 2 weeks, the place was not cleared and many boats were found broken all over.” In addition to distributing 3 truckloads of relief materials, the monks and the other Tibetans said prayers at the local burial grounds. The people were quite surprised to see Tsering Youdon speaking Tamil and communicating so well with them. Other groups had no translator and so the help was more problematic. They shared about themselves as Tibetans and the whole thing was very warm, although so sad. See the collage photos of the monks distributing food in the 2nd row, right side, below the young monk with the dog. Just up to the left you can see Chief Representative Ngodup Dorje, Tulku Thubten Rinpoche, and Tsering Youdon, above the Tibetan flag.

Sonam’s Freak Flood, Bumchung’s Surgery: Our Emergency Fund

After learning of the **changing realities** of refugee Tibetans in Mundgod during Chela’s visit in 2004, FOTSI made 4 major improvements to our programs. First, we increased the sponsorship rate for lay people as described above. Next, we wrote a new general scholarship plan (described below). Third, we increased funds for each cow purchase, giving extra for “cow insurance” and vet needs. Finally, we changed our **Emergency Fund** to exclusively target our sponsorees and members of their households. This will allow the Representative’s Office to best track our emergency funds as well as our sponsorees. We will help with family emergencies, medical emergencies and medicines, etc. Already, we’ve helped elderly **Lhawang** pay for his medicine, **Tseyang’s** family to cope with a family member with a brain tumor, and **Pema to buy glasses**. See **Tseyang and her great grandmother Kipa** on the bottom row, just right of the nursing student. In addition, we donated **\$275** to **Sonam Tsering** and her family (who had previously suffered major health problems) to pay off their agricultural loan for their cotton and other seed. In 2004 a freak storm flooded their small field and destroyed all crops. Sonam went away to cook for sweater sellers to begin paying off her loan. The flood was devastating to the family, as they’ve worked so hard and were finally seeing hope. No other farmers suffered like they did this year. In the past we sent funds for seeds after a very bad drought, but this year none was needed. We learned that **Bumchung**, mother in one of Mundgod’s poorer families, had had a leg surgery and was still in pain. The Representative’s Office helped us check everything and pay off her **\$250** surgery debt. Our continuing emergency help and sponsorship will help her get the medical attention she needs. We also sponsored her daughter to enter the Tibetan Children’s Village boarding school in Bylakuppe.

Tibetan Names.... Are They Confusing You?.... This may or may not help!

As Chela communicates with FOTSI donors, she tries to keep connections strong between donors and sponsored Tibetans. One source of confusion is Tibetan names. (Tibetans find dealing with and pronouncing **our** names challenging too!) Besides pronunciation issues, there are spelling challenges. Often hospitals and friends create havoc trying to phonetically spell Tibetans’ names. For example, our sponsored Tibetan nun, who first gave her name as “Tenzin Deetaen” has since been referred to as Tenzin Dhonden and Tenzin Dheden. Our monk patient, Cho Gyatso, gets his name spelled as “Che Khemtso” in the Manipal Hospital records. Also, Tibetans do not have last names (except a few from famous families). They usually have just two names, such Lobsang Gyatso, and sometimes, only one, such as “Topgyal”. But, “Lobsang Gyatso” could be married to “Tsering Lhamo” with a daughter named Pema Dolma! So, relationship is not clear. When young men start living in a monastery as monks, they may keep their original name, such as “Tashi”. Later, when they take novice vows, their new name is different, such as “Tenpa Dawa”, as is the case with our “Xerox Tashi” (see below). So, if we deal with a hospital, we must find out how they have spelled the initial name, get the “patient number”, and make sure the patient seen is the correct one. Later, if a monk takes final vows, he may or may not get yet another new name.

Also, many Tibetans have the same names. Monasteries and nunneries have ways of keeping people straight. In monasteries monks to identify themselves by not only their name, but also by their “Khangtsen” a dormitory grouping of monks usually from specific parts of Tibet or the Himalayas. Thus we know that two monks we have sponsored, Lobsang Sangyas Ngari and

Lobsang Sangyas Gungru, are two different people. However, we can choose to spell their second name as “Sangs-rGyas”(correct transliteration from the Tibetan), “Sangyas” (common nearly literal transliteration), “Sangyes” (close), or “Sangyay” (attempt at being phonetic). We have seen all of the above! Sangyay means, “Buddha”, and is a name just as “Jesus” is a name in Hispanic cultures. Nuns often add another piece to a nun’s name, such as “Ju-pa” or “Ga-pa”, which refer to regions of Tibet the nuns or their parents called home. Sometimes this is still not enough. FOTSI has two sponsored nuns named “Lobsang Choedon Ju-pa”. We call them **Lobsang Choedon Ju-pa #1 and #2**. We also have two sponsored monks, **Lobsang Ngawang Gungru**; we refer to them as “**senior**” and “**junior**”, although in Tibetan it is funny, since the words also mean “**larger**” and “**smaller**”, and the junior “Lobsang Ngawang Gungru” is an opera singer sized chant leader, while the “senior” or “larger” is smaller in height and girth!

Among our sponsored people, in addition to the duplicate names already mentioned above, there are many others. Here is a sample: **1) Tenzin Dolkar**, 28-year old nun, and **Tenzin Dolkar**, 22 year-old nursing student; **2) Phurbu Dolma**, 12th grader at the TCV School, and **Phurbu Dolma**, sponsored 22-year old business college student; **3) Pema Dolma**, age 61, lady with eye trouble and **Pema Dolma**, a 19-year old at nursing college in Madras; **4) Tashi Dorje**, an older Tibetan, recent sponsoree, and **Tashi Dorje**, a young medical worker monk and huge help to FOTSI; **5) Dawa Dolma**, our nurse in special training in Delhi (see nurse photo, next to elder lady Kipa in hat), and **Dawa Dolma**, on a general scholarship, in her first year at a nursing college in Hyderabad, and **Dawa Dolma**, the young sister of our sponsored child Tenzin Dolma; **6) Tenzin Dolma**, 6 year old girl mentioned above, and **Tenzin Dolma**, the Tibetan name of a young Canadian teacher who has worked at the Dre-Gomang School 8 years, who helps FOTSI, and is shown in our collage, left, teaching English to a class in front of one of her displays of religions of the world; **7) Tenzin Dadon**, long-time sponsored 9 year-old girl who skips rope, hopes to be a teacher (see collage top row, to right of boy in green), and **Tenzin Dadon**, 11th grader from a family whose sponsorship we recently gave up at the request of the Representative’s Office since she was given a special sponsorship from the outreach project of the Tibetan Children’s Village group. The above examples by no means exhaust the list of **duplicate names**, even those restricted to beneficiaries of FOTSI, but they give the idea of why it is important to be on top of who is who!

Sometimes FOTSI is asked about the **meaning of names**. To answer that here for all sponsorees is impossible, but here are some: Dawa (moon), Nyima (sun), Tenzin (Holder of the teachings; also refers to the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso); Gyatso (ocean), Pema (Lotus), Dorjee or Dorje (adamantine symbol of power and stainlessness); Thinley or Trinley (Virtuous works); Sangmo (woman of good heart and mind); Sangpo (man of good heart and mind); Dolma (Tara in Sanskrit, savior), Dolkar (White Tara; pure savior); Tashi (Auspicious, Good Luck); Migmar (Tuesday), Phurbu (Thursday), Choedron (lamp of the Truth); Jigme (Fearless), Sonam (Merit); Tsering (Long Life); Lobsang (Good Mind; also refers to Lobsang Drakpa (Je Tsongkhapa) founder of the same sect of Tibetan Buddhism as the Dalai Lama).

Ven. Thubten Lhatso and the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery

FOTSI has been working for years with **Ven. Thubten Lhatso**, the senior nun and an establisher of the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in the Mundgod Settlement. We have helped her somewhat, but most importantly we have worked with her and the nun Ven. Tenzin Norzom to run a Jangchub Choeling Medical Fund. We’ll give our yearly update on that below. Now we’d like to share from a great chapter about Thubten Lhatso in **Ven. Thubten Chodron’s** delightful book, “**Blossoms of the Dharma: Living as a Buddhist Nun**”. We highly recommend this 1999 book, which has a lot of interesting information by and about Buddhist nuns. Chela accidentally found this book in a used bookstore in Boulder. Later, after getting on the train from Hubli (near Mundgod) on her way home, she discovered that the book’s well-known and wonderful author, Ven. Thubten Chodron, was travelling on the same train, in the compartment next to her! Below, we share from the chapter about Thubten Lhatso, “A Nun in Exile: From Tibet to Mundgod” (pages 93-101). We have permission to share this with you from both Ven. Thubten Lhatso and Ven. Thubten Chodron.

“Born in the 1930’s Sramanerika Thubten Lhatso ordained as a nun when she was a child and practiced in her native province of Kham, Tibet, before going to Lhasa.”...”I became a nun when I was twelve years old. “.... “At age 22, I received the sramanerika (nun’s) vow. I also received the Vajrayogini initiation and did that practice daily, but was unable to do the retreat due to the turbulence caused by the communist occupation of my country. In 1958, my father, my teacher, and I left for Lhasa, thinking the situation might be better there. However, Lhasa was also occupied by the communist Chinese, and the atmosphere there was extremely tense. Fortunately, I had an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama there, which gave me much strength and confidence, qualities that would do me well in what was to come. By the spring of 1959, the Chinese controlled all of Lhasa, and we feared that our old way of life and our religious institutions were in jeopardy.”...”When fighting between the Tibetans and Chinese broke out in March 1959, my father and I wanted to flee that very night. Although we were unable to leave then, my teacher escaped. The following morning my father told me that we must leave that night and instructed me to get our things that were at a friend’s home. While I was gone, the Chinese captured my father. On my way back, I saw my father standing on the road with the Chinese police. I wanted to go to him and hold him so they could not take him, but I dared not because the Chinese might have killed us both. Helplessly, I watched as they took him away to a destination unknown to me.

Finding my father was difficult because the Kham dialect I spoke was different from the dialect spoken in Lhasa, so I could not easily communicate with people. However, after two months, I succeeded in locating him in one of the prisons. Finally, when some Westerners -- I think they were Americans -- came to visit Tibet, the Chinese released some of the old prisoners, my father among them. At that time, I was living in Lhasa and doing my religious practice. However, the communist Chinese regarded religious practice as useless and religious people as parasites on society, so they ordered me to work. Both my father and I began to work as manual laborers. Since he had to carry soil, sometimes his legs were completely swollen due to the strain. Exhausted from working all day, we were forced to attend political meetings organized by the Chinese communists each evening. During that period, I and many others suffered so much.”....” The Buddha said, ”Happiness arises from our previous positive actions, and suffering from our negative ones,” so we tried not to be angry with those oppressing us. In any case, anger is useless in such situations: it only adds more emotional turmoil to the physical suffering one is already experiencing.”.... In 1972, my father passed away.”...”... in the early 1980’s restrictions relaxed a little and the Chinese allowed some Tibetans to go to India.... When permission to go finally came through, I left all my belongings in Tibet, as if I was planning to return.”...”Thus I became a refugee.” In next year’s newsletter FOTSI hopes to share more, including information about founding the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery. See Thubten Lhatso (2004) in the photo collage top left corner, and as a younger nun, the black/white photo diagonally down to the right (from the book).

Scholarship Aid.... A Growing and Major Project of FOTSI

In 2004, FOTSI donated \$4735.00 to **general post high school scholarships** for students from the Mundgod Settlement (administered by the Representative’s Office in Mundgod), and \$2795.00 of **our own targetted scholarhips** to 5 students, making a **total of \$7,530.00**. Also, checks sent to India for scholarships late in 2004, but not cleared until 2005, totaled **\$3,945.00**. This will be officially included for 2005. In 2004, small scholarships were given to 38 first-year students through our then existing general scholarship program via the Representative’s Office in Mundgod. Of these, **26 were for women entering nursing schools! The others were studying computer technology, business, food production, web design, and hotel management.**

This year we changed our general Scholarship program entirely. After talking with parents, we worked out a new plan with our Tibetan social worker and the Representative, Mr. Dhondup Dorje. In 2005 we will be offering 2 scholarships of 30000 Rupees (about \$700 per year for at least 2 years) to 2 nursing students from our group of 26 first year students, and 4 smaller scholarships of 12000 Rupees (about \$300 per year for up to 3 years) to any post-high school student in a less expensive course of study. A small group of finalist candidates will be selected based on need and

scholastic achievement. There will be an essay test which will require students to write about their own values, plans, and dreams, as well as the history of their parents and grandparents (or other mentors in the case of orphans). FOTSI will grade and rank the essays and the winners will be chosen accordingly. We think all the finalist candidates will be worthy, and it will be a harrowing task to choose winners. Yet, the relatives of many students were excited about the essay test, requiring family conversations as input for the students to write the essays in a supervised classroom with no notes allowed. We're looking forward to supporting our new scholarship students and hope get to know them over a sustained period.

We will also continue our separate program of scholarships. Recipients are chosen carefully, from recommendations of social workers and community workers in the camp and never include references for relatives. In some cases, the recipients are our own sponsorees (with a donation from the sponsor) or members of sponsorees' households (with a strong recommendation by a social worker). This year we sponsored 5 students in that program: **Phurbu** (3rd year business college), and 4 nursing students: **Dawa Dolma, Tenzin, Nyima, and Kunchok**.

Success for Our Nursing Student Dawa Dolma

As we have written in past newsletters, our sponsored nursing student **Dawa Dolma** was originally hopeless following her father's death during her last year of high school in the Mundgod Central Tibetan School. Because she had to stay home a lot during her senior year in high school to care for her dying father, Dawa did poorly in exams for scholarships. It seemed her dreams of being a nurse were over, as was her father's life. However, Chela came to know of her, her faithful help to her father, and her family's history. At FOTSI we decided to take a chance on her, and kind donors stretched to help her. She did not let us down. In August, 2004, she graduated from nursing school, completing a 3-year program of General Nursing. She was one of 15 graduates (of 83) from her school who passed and obtained the certificate from the Karnataka State Examination Board for a Diploma in Nursing. In addition, she was accepted for a nursing internship program leading to entrance into a 2-year specialist nursing certificate. She is now working hard at the Sunder Lal Jain Hospital in Delhi, India. This year of "on-the-job" training is required as part of her admission into the advanced program. She wrote just recently, "We get lots of experience. At present I am rendering my practical work in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward. Though it is very tough but I do get to know how to handle when the patient is in emergency care. I try to give my best to the work. You know I am the youngest nurse in my ward and most of my seniors have more than 15 years service in this field. They do care for me and share their practical experiences with me, which I firmly appreciate, them being my senior. I cease here with lots of affection and regards!! Thank you so much for helping me. You will be ever in the garden of my memory. Thanks a lot again!!" See Dawa's photo on the bottom row, below the flag photo.

Family of Caregivers: Nyima and a Nursing Scholarship

Last fall, just before Chela went to India, she received a letter from the monk, Gen Dakpa, former Director of the Home for the Elderly in Mundgod, now retired himself. This long-time friend of Chela's wrote, "Today I have very humble request for you that I know one girl name **Nyima** Lak, as she use to hang around in Old People Home when she is very small. She have her mother and grandmother when she was little...Her grandmother worked in Old People's Home when I was administrator of old people home. That time with little money earned by her mother and small salary of grandmother was used to meet their end. Unfortunately after her grandmother left this world, her mother having financial problem to look after herself. But somehow with small salary of Old Peoples' Home, they can't able to manage themselves. She studied hard and finished her class XII this year. As she always wanted to do 3 year course in Nursing, which insures her job in future. She applied for admission and successfully she got admission in good college. Unfortunately her mother can't afford to pay her college fees, but in order to achieve her daughter dream and understanding the important of education in her life, she manage to get loan for this year college fee. I'm sure that it would be really hard to do same in next year and also to repay this year loan she took. She has been working as a sweater seller (to do her best towards this...). Thus I am kindly requesting your kind heart to find any sponsor for her study... I know her grandmother very

well. She is very kind-hearted mother and worked very hard and sincerely till her last breath for Old People Home and family..."After receiving this letter, Chela contacted potential donors and raised the amount requested from us. Nyima is now in her college and we're hoping she will do well. We received a letter from her thanking us profusely for the funds. Thanks to all who are helping Nyima realize her dream and continue her family's tradition of being caregivers. **If you would like to donate for her or others' scholarship for next year, please contact us.**

Four Generations In the House.... Tseyang and Konchok

FOTSI's hard-working **social worker, Tenzin Yangkar** (collage photo, bottom right corner), went with Chela to visit **Tseyang**, one of our FOTSI sponsored children. Tseyang is now 6, attending pre-primary school, with good health. Her extended family has been having a huge struggle, but you wouldn't know it from Tseyang's happy smile. Tibetans love children and protect them very much, giving to them at sacrifices to themselves. She lives with her great grandmother, **Kipa**, shown with her in the photo in the bottom row of the collage. We also met Tseyang's grandfather, **Passang**, the hardworking center of this extended family. Tenzin's aunt, young **Konchok**, was away at a nursing college in Madras, at great sacrifice to the rest of the family. I heard the family had banded together with others and bought a jeep to participate in the "taxi" business within the settlement but had to sell it to help with Konchok's tuition. After Chela reached Boulder, she received news that Passang had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. The message included from Tenzin Yangkar included a plea that FOTSI help pay part of **Konchok's nursing school tuition. We responded with aid to her.** Thanks to all who made this possible.

Nursing Tradition Continues into the New Generation

Our collage contains a photo of nurse **Sonam**, now 50, in blue and white, on the bottom row. Thirty years ago, when Sonam was 20, she received one of the first nursing scholarships for a Tibetan girl from a Christian teaching hospital in Bangalore, India, run by the Church of South India (CSI). She studied there for 5 years and later landed a job working at the hospital in Mundgod, which had been her home. Much more recently, she took advanced nursing training in Utah. After that she returned to Mundgod where she still works as a senior nurse. Her mother Ringdzin Wangmo, 89, and Sonam are happy that one of Sonam's two daughters, **Tenzin**, is one of our general scholarship holders in her first year at the KLE Nursing College.

Our collage (see photo to right of Sonam) shows **relatives** of another scholarship holder, **Tenzin Norzin**. Tenzin is studying at the Krupanidhi Nursing School in Bangalore (as is another FOTSI scholarship holder **Tenzin**). The photo shows Tenzin Norzin's father, **Tsering Dorje**, as he teaches thangka painting for no fee to interested Tibetan students in Mundgod. This classic art is a way to make a living, because community places of worship, households, and many foreigners are purchasers of these uniquely Tibetan paintings. Tsering Dorje says he can support his family adequately by selling his paintings, but can't afford the relatively huge cost of nursing college tuition (counting all expenses this is about \$1500/year). His daughter is hoping to compete for one of our major nursing scholarships in 2005.

Mundgod Solar Energy Continues to Delight! Home for the Elderly

There are many special older Tibetans in the **Home for the Elderly in Mundgod**, and visiting there is always a treat. This fall Chela again visited the Home, including residents in their rooms and the special care ward. There are many elder Tibetans who either have no relatives in India, or their relatives are too poor to be able to both help them and their own children. The squeeze that we have here in the USA, when we have to care for our parents and children going to schools and colleges, is also a huge problem for the Tibetan refugees. In fact, the problem of caring for the elderly has become a real crisis as we describe here in our newsletter.

We are sponsoring a number of elderly Tibetans, both at the Home for the Elderly and otherwise. In addition, we have been working for years on the illumination (by **solar lighting**) of the hallways and grounds at the Home. Many older people were falling in the dark due to the lack of light. **This year again, FOTSI sent funds (\$750) for two more large outdoor solar lighting**

fixtures and tubes. Last year we sent out a plea for this and we were happy to complete two important fixtures. The maintenance is well done and both these and our previously funded solar lights are working well and making a difference. In the past we helped the Home by paying to remodel their “intensive care” ward (not high tech by our standards, but helpful) with a lifted ceiling, skylight, and fan. We bought a large propane stove for cooking meals, and a cart to help workers carry away those who die. These things are not “romantic” sounding, but they truly help and were things other organizations did not fund. See the photo of one of “our” solar light fixtures in the center, lower half of the collage. In the lower left corner of the collage is a photo of a **105 year old Tibetan woman** who lives at the Home. She still walks about some, but as she needs to lie down a lot too, she says prayers using her rosary (see her left hand), while she pulls a rope that spins a traditional prayer wheel, which contains thousands more prayers for the world. Below nun Thubten Lhatso in the upper left of the collage are photos of two other **elderly women who live in the Home**, as does Mr. **Tsering Choephel**, shown with the red-banded hat.

GK Heath and Hygiene Projects-- and a “Thank You Recording Session”

This year the Gungru Khangtsen Health Fund had three special surprises for Chela when she visited their quarters at the Drepung Gomang Monastery. Perhaps the two most important were that the monk **Sonam Phuntsok** who has been waging such an epic battle with **antibiotic resistant tuberculosis** seems finally to be **truly recovering**. He is still taking medicine and not able to work hard, but looks and feels much better and is bacillus free. (See his **photo** in the middle of our collage just below the man under the Tibetan flag). Several FOTSI donors have helped him during this multi-year battle. He is so grateful to all, and always seemed to Chela to look like an overjoyed young puppy wagging his whole body whenever he came to see her. Next, the monks’ group had built a wonderful **“hand-washing-station” for children** who live in their part of the monastery, which was useful both for itself and the hygiene training it embodies. (See the photo on the right edge of the collage, halfway down from the top.) In addition to that station, there were also adult washing areas, showers, and both western and Indian toilets in good repair and very clean. When Chela was there, the **monks recorded ancient traditional prayers** for all beings and **wished to offer these as a thank-you to donors to their health fund**. The tapes embody the trademark multi-tonal chanting of Tibetan monks and the deep tones that sound like glaciers moving and avalanches in the depths of the Himalayas. The deeply felt prayers for the welfare of all made a special gift for the donors to whom they are so thankful. **Many refugee Tibetan monks were helped by this fund in 2004**, not only Sonam Phuntsok, but also a monk who broke his finger badly, monks with blood pressure problems, surgeries, tuberculosis, and digestive and skin ailments so common among newly arrived Tibetans. We share a photo of a sleeping young monk who had just reached Mundgod the day before after escape from Tibet. Note the somewhat wretched state of his exposed foot! See the photo on the right edge of the collage, just below the hand-washing station. **Please contact FOTSI about the GK Health Fund for monks. Their attention to hygiene and communication make this Fund especially helpful for the long-term and short-term health of refugee Tibetan monks. Any donation, one-time or periodically, is extremely helpful, especially as the monastery has recently had to cut back how much they can help with health costs.**

The Joy of Cows: FOTSI’s Cow Project Report (some names changed)

Chela was pleased to learn that groups from several countries have now increased their help to Tibetans for self-sufficiency projects such as buying cows, which we have been doing for years. Thus we are somewhat scaling back our participation in that project because there is a point at which there is not enough grazing land near the cow owners. However, having met and talked with some of the families and elderly “cow caretakers”, I was again struck by how important animal husbandry and in particular the milk that flows into the community from the local cows is.

One elderly lady, **Sangmo** (age 69) said that caring for her cows and the **new calf**, (shown in the photo collage with a protection cord blessed in the past by the Dalai Lama!) was what gave meaning to her life! Also, the Tibetans say that milk is hard to get, and so they really value having cows in

the neighborhoods. Owners sell the milk as well as consume it. Now, when we give money for a cow, we also pay for “cow insurance” as well as a vet visit and special feed.

Our Tibetan social worker, Tenzin Yangkar, and I had a fun visit with Sangmo and learned about her life. In Tibet Sangmo had lived in a village 4 days’ walking north of Lhasa. In 1959, when she was 24, she escaped from Tibet as the Chinese were invading and clamping down on the Tibetans. It took her 7 months to walk from Lhasa to Nepal to Batoling on the Indian border. She had to beg for food and find places to stop, rest, and gather resources to keep going. She came out of Tibet with one nun friend but had no relatives with her. From Batoling she took a jeep and then the railroad train to Gorakpur. They snuck on board because they had no money. She worked on road construction for a while in Manali, where she met and married Tenzin one year after escaping from Tibet. Tenzin was from Lhasa.

When Sangmo lived in Tibet, there were some neighboring nuns who had 14 female yaks (called “dri”), 25 goats, and 15 sheep. She herself owned 3 or 4 dri. She grew up taking care of her own animals and helping the local nuns with theirs. When she was 15, her father died and so did many of their animals. She was the eldest of her father’s children and had four younger brothers. The eldest of them died. Two of her brothers later became monks and are now at Drepung Gomang Monastery in India. One other brother and her mother stayed in Tibet. Sangmo left Manali after her marriage and went to Simla, and later to a place called Kasoli, near Chandigar, where she stayed for 4 years. She has been in the Mundgod settlement for 36 years. Her husband died 16 years ago. Sangmo’s only daughter Pema had to divorce her husband who had problems and became very difficult. Pema tries to make a living by selling sweaters in Aurangabad, India. She has also taught Tibetan carpet weaving at the local handicraft center and is involved with work for the Tibetan Women’s Association! Pema’s daughter, **Tenzin Sonam (20), attends nursing school and had a small FOTSI scholarship** for that. The three women, Grandmother Sangmo, daughter Pema, and Tenzin Sonam all feel strongly about making a difference. Sangmo loves taking care of the cows and providing milk to the community. Her cow, bred by local Indians, was originally named “Yamuna”, but she changed the name to “Mar Ri”, which means “Red Mountain” in Tibetan. The cow was giving 5 liters of milk a day. Now MarRi has just had a new calf, happily, a female. Sometimes Sangmo has spent half a day going with her cows to find a place to graze, but, with the new calf, she is buying hay and staying close to home. When she sells the milk, she sells it for 10 Rupees (\$0.25) per liter. She works hard every day around her house. FOTSI is now paying \$225 per cow, including the cow insurance, etc. Last year, we received \$540.00 for our cow fund. In late 2003 we had received donations for cows that were sent in 2004; **in total in 2004 we sent \$1314.00 for cow purchases.** As I was leaving her home, Sangmo smiled and expressed deep gratitude for the gift of the cow. Please see the photo of the **calf** in the **collage**.

Following Tenpa: Projects at Hospitals in Three Settlements

Mr. Tenpa TK, although his body was ravaged by childhood polio, continues to work miracles at hospitals in Tibetan settlements. We have followed him as he has worked at 3 hospitals: the Doeguling Tibetan Resettlement (DTR) Hospital in Mundgod, the Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital in Bylakuppe (near Mysore), and the Dhondenling Hospital in Kollegal (in south India not near any large city). **In 2004 we sent \$1,100.00 to the Dhondenling Hospital and \$200.00 to the Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital. In early 2005 we have already sent \$5,520.00 to the DTR Hospital.** Our donations to the Dhondenling Hospital were used for surgeries for poor patients, for surgical instruments and instrument trays, and for cataract surgeries. We contributed to an out-patient clinic near the Tashilunpo Monastery, run by the Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital, where our help is used for medical services for elderly lay people and monks who live near that clinic. **Early in 2005 we sent the DTR Hospital \$300 for essential supplies, \$2770 for installation of large outdoor solar lighting and \$2450 to completely rebuild all the toilets in the Hospital.** Patients were sneaking out at night, regardless of their illnesses and injuries, to relieve themselves in surrounding fields rather than face the bathrooms in the hospital! We’ll have more on these DTR projects in next year’s newsletter, since the work is happening in 2005. We’ll share just a little history now.

There is a capable **new young Tibetan doctor** at the DTR Hospital who works the night shift and also at the outlying clinics. She is shown with a young patient at the center of the collage just below the smiling elderly woman. She was concerned that sometimes criminals from outside the Tibetan camp come in at night. The hospital, with its drugs and small staff, is a possible target. She worried about how dark the hospital area is at night when she goes and comes. Also, it is difficult for patients' visitors in the evening. Thus, we were overjoyed when we found a donor who visited the Hospital and was taken with the plan for outdoor solar lighting. True to her enthusiasm, this donor completely funded the lighting project. The same donor, along with 8 other FOTSI donors, also rallied around the project to rebuild all the toilets at the Hospital. Thank you all so much! This is a perfect example of another "non-romantic" but essential project. More on this next year.

Mr. Tenpa TK, who originally transformed the DTR Hospital from its early state of being surrounded by **mud and cobras**, deluged by **floods on the insides of the walls** during the monsoon, and no mosquito nets or screens on the windows, etc., to something much better, took me on a tour of what still remains to be done. He has now returned to the DTR Hospital as chief administrator, after pursuing projects at the Tso-Jhe Khangsar and Dhondenling Hospitals. He showed us an older, dilapidated adult TB wing, in which patients sit in isolation and watch an ancient TV that has no audio (see the photo near the collage center, to the right of the outdoor solar light). He showed us an educational video-CD about AIDS with Tibetan commentary on which he was working. We saw a lot of successes as well as needs at the Hospital. **Tenpa told us he is seeking more instruments for the hospital**, blood pressure cuffs, and more specialized items. We visited a **young girl who had been badly burned** when her relative accidentally tripped when the electricity had suddenly gone off and he had spilled a large container of boiling water on the child. See the collage photo below the black/white photo of the child monks, showing the girl behind her gauze bed shield. Fortunately the child was being well cared for and even smiled at Chela during a later visit, as she was recovering well and with courage. Seeing this child, we were again reminded how much we are honored to help Tenpa at hospitals that serve so many.

The ICanBreathe! Story: Chela Loves the Masks

Adrien Bledstein herself suffered from air pollution and, instead of despairing, she has helped many by creating comfortable, light-weight functional masks with filters to help in polluted situations. In 2002 a friend of mine told me about Adrien's masks. She kindly gave me a 50% discount when I bought masks for myself and others working in the Tibetan settlements. I found the mask so useful that I have used it on every trip to India, especially on the plane and when going to the hospital with Tibetan patients in Bangalore. In 2004, the **ICanBreathe** company donated 5 masks each with 5 filters to FOTSI. We gave one to hospital administrator Tenpa TK himself, who, due to the twists in his upper body from childhood polio, has compromised lungs. See him wearing the mask under the Tibetan flag in the center of the collage. Another went to a donor who visits and does a lot at the Tibetan camp, and who, with a bad cold, was struggling with pollution and dust. The last was given to an older Tibetan monk who was supervising a traditional arts project where people were sanding. All the other workers had medical masks to protect them, but he had nothing. He was very happy to get the mask. He also tirelessly helps many. Thank you so much Adrien! For those interested in these masks, please see www.icanbreathe.com.

Photography, History, Laser Prints: Thank You to Chitra Photo

The Indian family that runs the **Chitra Photo** business has been working with the Tibetans in their refugee area since they first arrived in the sixties. I saw amazing black and white photos taken in 1972. These photos showed early arrivals to the Drepung Gomang Monastery (when there were no buildings, only tents and snakes) and little Tibetan boys being cared for by the monastery (see collage). Some of these photos were used in a recently written 2-volume history of the Drepung Gomang Monastery (all in Tibetan). FOTSI contributed some of the funds for publishing this **special history** as well as another **special book** (see author **Ven. Gomang Khensur Tenpa Tenzin** in the **upper right corner of the collage**.) Many old photos will be shown during the Sacred Art Tour of the Drepung Gomang Monastery in 2005 (see www.gomang.org). Now, Chitra Photos offers great service from a small shop in the Mundgod camp. I bought good Kodak film

there for 100 Rupees for each ASA 200 roll of 36. This was about \$2.20 at that time. The shop was offering “Lazer Prints” for 4 rupees apiece (10 cents). These are especially high quality, and use a digital process to get the most out of ordinary film. These prints were amazing. I have used them for our newsletter, to send to sponsors, for making special collages, and sometimes for our website or to send out by email. I also create display booklets to share with current and prospective donors and to help me remember who is who in Mundgod. These photos are essential for our program. Sometimes I show them to Tibetans when I’m looking for someone or wish to settle confusion due to many Tibetans having the same names. One day, on a special Hindu holy day, when I went to the Chitra Photo Shop, the owner had created an altar, half-and-half Indian and Tibetan, with a lovely photo of the Dalai Lama, as well as Hindu dieties, bedecked with flowers and nicely set out for all to share. NOTE: a few photos without explanation have been included in the collage for humor, fun, or to **keep you on your toes!**

Refugee Monk Emergency Fund: Crucial Aid and a Partly Revolving Fund

Kelsang, whose father was a Tibetan freedom fighter and member of the famous “Chuzhi Gang Druk” resistance group, was born in Kathmandu, near the Swayumbunath “Monkey Temple” in 1980. His family was having trouble surviving. For his sake, Kelsang’s family sent him to the Drepung Gomang Monastery in 1987, where he could go to the Dre-Gomang School. In 1995, when he was fifteen, he returned to Nepal especially to see his mother. He lived at home for 3 years, helping his mother and doing rituals for friends and relatives. At that time he started to have epileptic seizures, in the mornings sometimes, without much warning. This scared people. He returned to the Drepung Monastery and worked there at the office. In 2004, during a seizure, he fell down steep metal stairs and injured himself, knocking out some of his front teeth. He was poor and shy to ask anyone in the monastery for help. The Tibetan medicine he tried did not help much. Finally, he talked to a kindhearted monk and they went to see Chela when she visited the Monastery. After the young monk, Gelek Tharchin, died just after Chela’s previous visit to the settlement, FOTSI started a “Monks’ Emergency Health Fund” for those in immediate danger or suffering greatly with no other options for care. For Kelsang we paid to have false teeth made for him at the DTR Hospital and arranged that he go to the Manipal Hospital in Bangalore for an investigation into his seizures. A small cyst in his brain was discovered and is being watched. He is now on medication to prevent or reduce the seizures and possibly help shrink the cyst. He is so grateful; Chela wishes she could share his earnest demeanor and warm farewell with all of you.

We learned that monk **Tenpa** needed an emergency appendectomy in 2004. He didn’t have the money and so was putting it off. Since a burst appendix can be life threatening, FOTSI dispensed funds for his surgery right away. From friends and everything he could scrape up, he paid for transportation, helpers, special food, etc. Later, having recovered well, he got some funds from Drepung Gomang Monastery to cover part of his costs and returned much of that to our Monks’ Health Fund, so that the next monk with an emergency could be helped. We do need to keep sending money, but it is great that it is a **partly revolving fund** now, with monks putting what they can back into it. “Xerox Tashi” and the monks mentioned below all returned funds. Tenpa sent letters to some of the donors and wrote he so appreciated all who help poor and desperate people like himself. These days the Monastery is having trouble giving out funds for medical aid, which they had been doing for some time. This makes our fund even more important. They are finding out the perils of “health insurance” just as we are in our country.

Yeshe had TB in his vertebrae and a small lesion on his spinal cord. If FOTSI had not been quick in getting him to the Manipal Hospital for tests, an expert consultation, and medication, he might have needed a major and dangerous surgery or **might have become a paraplegic**. He is recovering well now, thanks to FOTSI donors. Doctors at Manipal were happy when their conservative treatment with antibiotics stopped the tuberculosis and the dreaded surgery was not needed. Yeshe wrote he was “very grateful for the donors’ help and found it difficult to find the words to express his powerful feelings”.

Gyatso, 19, has been severely ill several times now. In 2003 when first we helped him get to Manipal Hospital, the doctors did a major set of biopsies and tests and thought he might have Gullaine-Barre disease, an inflammatory disease of the nervous system. He was losing sensation from his hands and feet and the ability to walk. After treatment at the hospital, he improved a lot. He recovered so much, he was thinking of returning over the Himalayas, back to Tibet where he could be with his family. However, when he tried to go off the steroids he had been taking, he soon became very ill again. He has been back to Manipal a number of times, and more tests and consultations have been done. He also has a minor heart problem. His disease is now classified as CIDP, Chronic Inflammatory De-Myelinizing Polyneuropathy, with severe axonal involvement. For a while, he was not able to swallow properly, so that is why you can see the **feeding tube** running into his nose in Chela's photos of him at the hospital (collage, upper right corner, diagonally down one row/column). The doctors are still hopeful that this could be a disease that stops after a series of episodes. Unfortunately, his heart problem dissuaded doctors from switching him to an anti-cancer drug, usually a good substitute for steroids with fewer side effects. Every day, Gyatso remembers the "family" of donors and helpers who have saved his life. We appreciate the Manipal doctors and hope their optimistic view of his future comes to pass.

We continue to monitor the progress of new Monk Emergency Fund patients in 2005. Donations for this fund are always welcome! There are many ways people donate for this. One kind donor, **Phoenix Artemisia**, has run **Yoga Workshops** near Santa Cruz, California, which raised funds for this Emergency Fund and for our Nuns' Medical Fund.

Help for the Helpers: Sudden Shocks and Surprising Strength

The just mentioned photo of Gyatso (with his feeding tube) near the upper right of the collage shows him with Jigme, who works at the Dre-Gomang Buddhist Cultural Association (DGBCA), helps us do FOTSI's work in India. Jigme has long been involved in many helpful projects of the DGBCA. This year, Jigme himself lost his wife and unborn first child in August, when his baby died in the mother's womb and his wife developed liver problems. Both Jigme and his wife have been major contributors to everyone else's welfare in Mundgod for years. With deep concern, FOTSI helped Jigme fight for his wife and baby's life.

TT is a monk whom we sponsor and helped in the past with antibiotic resistant TB. Now he has an uncomfortable growth on his chest that will be treated soon. TT has helped his grandparents and many other residents of the Home for the Elderly in Mundgod. He also works on computer activities at the Gomang Monastery. At first we worried his growth might be cancerous, but after showing photos to doctors at the Manipal Hospital, we learned it was a keloid, and not dangerous to his life although sometimes very uncomfortable.

News from the Tibetan SOS Tibetan Village (TCV) School in Bylakuppe

We received warm holiday greetings from the TCV School on behalf of our **sponsored and assisted children**. The TCV school hosts 1500 children, about half boys and half girls. Most are destitute or have come alone from Tibet. Children under 14 live in homes with "home mothers or parents" in groups of less than 30. Older children help the home mothers and learn to cook wash, and clean and live in hostels. TCV also sends generous stipends to 898 children living at home in settlements. This year, two of our sponsored girls were awarded these. Due to recent rules about double sponsorship, our FOTSI sponsors kindly switched to our scholarship project or sponsoring an older person, although they were attached to their sponsorees.

At the TCV School in Bylakuppe we have long sponsored **PD**, now in Class XII and doing well. PD faced several obstacles this year that might have been crushing to the rest of us. She has had an uphill battle since contracting polio, and later, TB, as a child. Yet, she is resolutely cheerful and looking at possibilities for her future career. She wrote, "Thanks for all the love, care and efforts you and my sponsor have done for me. I really don't mind if I will never walk like others as I have had all the loves from you, my sponsor, my family and relatives. With this love I can stand like a

strong rock and face even the most difficult periods with ease... I am grateful to you for sharing all those talks which really made me feel very glad that I am the lucky one to be loved by you all.”

Another FOTSI donor is sponsoring **KT**, a small boy, and also helping his sister, **SD**. The school writes that these children are cheerful and happy at the school. This fall, the Representative’s Office shared with us the deteriorating situation in a home in Mundgod where we have a sponsored child. So efforts were made to enroll him, now in 6th grade, into TCV at Bylakuppe, to help him, and to ease the burden on his mother. Unfortunately, his grade was full. In order to help the family we did send the boy’s younger brother to TCV. **TC**, young daughter of another sponsoree in a lot of difficulty, was also sent to TCV this year. A generous donor and another charity, “**Angels Without Wings**” have sponsored these two new additions to the TCV School’s rolls through FOTSI. **The sponsorships at this school, since it is a boarding school, are \$360.00 per year.** If you would like to sponsor a child from Mundgod to go to this school, let us know. We are only occasionally able to do this, because the school gives first priority to children newly arriving alone from Tibet. **But, occasionally, an emergency arises, and sometimes, with great effort, we can get a child from Mundgod into that school IF we find a committed sponsor at the \$360/year level. Currently we are sponsoring 4 children at this school, and sending help to another. One-time donations to help all the children are also most appreciated.**

Drepung Gomang School: History, Students, Lobsang and Mon (update)

We help girls and women like Tenzin Tseyang (see story above) at the coed Central Tibetan School in Mundgod, at the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, and at various colleges. **Drepung Gomang School** serves boys and young men from Tibet and the whole Himalayan region. We have long helped the DG School with school supplies, teachers’ salaries, student sponsorship, and medical needs. In 2004 we helped with a medical donation for a sick student and other needs. With donations received in 2004 but sent in 2005, we sent **money to buy science class equipment, such as microscopes and simple experiments.** We have helped the orphaned and very poor students there get the health and dental care they have never had. In the summer, the school teaches Tibetan subjects chosen by the lay students (boys and girls) who attend. This helps the children maintain their roots and helps adults have free time to work or relax. Chela took a photo of Kristel Ouwehand (aka Tenzin Dolma), a Canadian teacher who has been at the School for 8 years, while she was teaching monks at the monastery about world religions and had good displays covering her classroom. (See photo below black/white photo of nun). We were impressed with the new School Principal, Geshe Thubten, and with the new science teacher, Passang. This year two sponsored students will graduate from this school. They are both planning to go on with their educations. One sponsored graduate hopes to attend Varanasi University or one of its branches to learn more about science and become a translator. Since the Dalai Lama himself is actively promoting more science education this is not surprising. Efforts to upgrade Dre-Gomang School are ongoing.

When the first group of small Tibetan boys arrived in Mundgod, many homeless or from poor families, there was **no school at all.** See the black/white **1972 collage photo**, right half, middle. The boy whose face is the first clear one in the back row, is **Jamphel Lodoe.** When Jamphel arrived at the Mundgod settlement in the early 70’s, there were no buildings. His step-father had died, and his Tibetan refugee mother was having trouble supporting him and his sister, so with his agreement, he was sent off to the new Drepung Gomang Monastery, with monks who only spoke Tibetan, while he knew only Nepali. He did learn Tibetan and attended courses at the Tibetan Institute in Varanasi where he became the first certified “social worker monk”. He went on to become the intrepid monk who worked tirelessly in Jammu Kashmir running a school in the midst of the fighting among Islamic fundamentalists, Kashmiri independence fighters, and the Indian army. Forced out by militants, he now works at the Dre-Gomang School post a major bladder surgery. Unfortunately he is suffering new health problems, following his difficult life of service in many tough places. He has high blood pressure and varicose veins that can make walking painful. He works hard anyway, but since he’s been so valuable to FOTSI and everyone, we’re trying to get him to take care of himself. His photo in our collage shows Jamphel recently, wincing with pain. Happily, we found him a sponsor this year. He wrote again to those who saved his life last year by

donating for his bladder surgery and said, from his heart, that he would always remember all of them. **Do let us know if you know anyone who wants to sponsor a Tibetan monk or donate to our Monks' Health Funds.**

We have long sponsored **Thubten Tsering** at the Dre-Gomang School. At first, he had bleeding ulcers due to Helicobacter Pylori bacteria and recurrent fevers from earlier typhoid fever. He is now well. In 2004, his father almost died falling off a roof. It took a while to get Thubten's father to a hospital. Thubten and his sister were beside themselves. Thubten was overjoyed that his sponsor and other FOTSI donors were able to help him save his father's life and allow him to continue studies.

Lobsang, one of our sponsored children at the Drepung Gomang School, is ten years old, good in his studies, and friendly. Last year we wrote that he is from the fabled **Kingdom of Mon**, currently split down the middle between "China" (really Tibet), and India. Called Mong-Mong in the past by Tibetans, this land may be more unknown than the hidden land of Mustang. Lobsang was from a poor family in which the father had died. Last year Lobsang told Chela he was quite happy in his new home and not eager to go back to Mon. His behavior tallied with his words, and there was joy all around. This year I was sorry to learn that Lobsang had come down with Hepatitis B. He had lost weight, and had trouble eating. None of the other children who live with him were sick (all were checked). There was puzzlement as to whether he had had the disease when he arrived or had eaten contaminated food that others hadn't, or what. The good part was that he had been to the doctor often for treatment and checkups and he is now doing better. He is the youngest child in his group and they all look after him. Chela spent time in the place where he lives and had a good impression. In 2004 his sponsor sent extra funds for his whole living group. And, M. Punithakumar of the Los Angeles company, **Adore Travel**, where Chela buys her air tickets to India each year, also made a contribution used to help the struggling group of Monpas, including Lobsang. They were most thankful for the special help. See collage photo showing the **Monpa boys** (plus mentor in the back row), 2nd row from the bottom, center, next to solar light post photo. **Donations for such children or the DG School are eagerly sought!**

Updates of People and Stories from Previous Years

Canadian Dre-Gomang School teacher Kristel Ouwehand and I went to visit our dear friend, **Amdo Pema, the blind elderly Tibetan who lives in the Home for the Elderly** about whom we wrote in last year's newsletter. He insisted on taking us "out for tea" at the tiny restaurant within the Home for the Elderly's compound. We had a wonderful time; he was thrilled to hear that his remarkable life story had been published in our report. He was also grateful to the FOTSI donor who, after reading his story, sent money for milk in 2004 (\$25.00 for the year!) Due to his age, he sticks by his room now. He spends his days smiling, sharing stories with visitors, and using his prayer wheel and rosary to say prayers for the world. Meeting him is always an inspiring experience. Blind most of his life, living in a tiny room, dealing with old age, he brims over with love and gratitude for his life. Tenzin and I remember him if we're feeling beset. See his collage photo just diagonally up and left of the Elderly Homes outdoor solar light.

Passang, one of the teenagers we wrote about last year found it hard to get jobs doing art work for building construction in Mundgod. So, at 17, he joined the Indian Army. He wants to learn a skill so he can support himself and his mother. He is good at athletics. He hopes to be a fitness instructor, or, barring that, learn driving or auto mechanics, --something practical. His mother worries that there are bad peer influences in the army (let's go out drink!) and/or that if he doesn't qualify for good training he may end up cleaning endless latrines or catching a bullet. The army has a nice program for Tibetan recruits **under 18**. They stay together in an encampment in north India. There Passang learned the part of the horse-headed diety, Tamdin, in a classic Tibetan Opera-Play. Soon he will be 18 and go into basic training. His mother worries, but is happy that his recovery from TB was verified by his pre-military medical tests.

Sonam, the boy who planned his own escape from Tibet and whose story we shared last year, wrote that his eyes are getting better! Also, he is doing better in studies, now placing 8th in his class. He had been behind in some topics he couldn't study in Tibet. He wrote of the importance to him of his sponsor's letters and help, and Chela's visits. He also said, "Please don't forget me; I miss you very much." In the beginning, he was worried about trouble with his eyes and difficult school classes when he first arrived. Happy and enthusiastic now, he is flourishing. See his smiling face, collage lower right, under the weaving of the lady in green.

Sports Day continues to be a favorite of Mundgod's children. The kind donor who sends funds for juice, medals, etc. donated again in 2004. Chela helped give out medals and met the principal of the Camp 6 school at the event this year. See the photo with flags in the lower left of the collage.

Nun's Health Projects --- Many Happy Results!

The Tibetan nuns we've met in India are very diverse. Many have had harrowing experiences in Tibet; some have lived in Ladakh; others were born in Mundgod of refugee parents. Most are intelligent, remarkable women. Having shared stories of Dolma and Thubten Lhatso above, we have space here only to celebrate a few of the many **health successes** in which our FOTSI Nun's Health Fund has played a major role. Through a monk in Mundgod who helps nuns get medical help, we met a 19-year old nun who had been in an automobile accident in Ladakh, where she was doing social work and community building projects. She was frightened because she had lost the sight from one eye and there was no sign of improvement. Chela provided FOTSI funds to pay for exams and possible surgery and gave her advice about hospitals in Bangalore when they met there in 2004. Subsequently, **Tashi** had eye surgery and **we joyfully report her sight has been completely restored!** She was so grateful that she cried in Chela's arms when they met.

Lobsang Choedron got new teeth in 2004 so she can finally eat well. **Tsering Dasel** completed her tuberculosis medication. **GC** is still taking medication to shrink her non-cancerous tumors but is doing well and always comes to say "thank you" for our support. Nun **NJ** has struggled with eye trouble and a hiatus hernia. We helped her this year. She has always helped the other nuns, such as our sponsored **TD**, who has brain lesions, from an accident or beating in Tibet long ago. Early in 2004, our friend Bill Guthrie met with TD in Dharamsala. She stays there a lot since the cold weather, better for her headaches. She is better than earlier. **Lobsang Dolma**, sponsored by FOTSI, had throat problems in 2004. We helped her and she has recovered. FOTSI is paying for eye exams and various medical consultations and treatments. **Tenzin Norzom**, nunnery secretary and letter writer for non-English writers, has also had problems from a brain infection that caused damage to optic and aural nerves. See a **group photo of some nuns helped by FOTSI** in the collage, diagonally down to the left from the black/white photo of the small monks. The nuns love FOTSI's **Nuns' Medical Fund**, which has saved and changed the lives of many.

Newly sponsored Tibetan Nuns.... Dolkar and others (story names changed)

Dolkar (25) is from a village about 2 days by car from Chamdo, the capital of Kham. She was a nun in Tibet but left Tibet in 1999 and has been at the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery about 4 years. She now studies the Perfection of Wisdom course and debated in Dharamsala before the Dalai Lama in 2003. She is a good student, currently under the guidance of Ven. Thubten Lhatso, the senior nun. She has some minor health problems. Her parents and 2 siblings are still in Tibet. Thubten Lhatso was thrilled we could find a sponsor for this nun, who feels the joy of having a caring sponsor. Our nun sponsorships are small because the nuns' housing and food are covered by other sources of income, and our own Medical Fund helps with health issues. However, our sponsorships are meaningful because they allow the nuns to buy personal items, books, pens, paper, and sometimes to travel for debates and other inspiring trips they can sometimes take, a real morale booster. We are also newly sponsoring 2 other nuns at Jangchub Choeling Nunnery.

We are still sponsoring nuns for a minimum of \$70/year. Sending extra is also allowed. Please contact us if you wish to sponsor a nun. Currently we are directly helping 16 nuns

as well as the entire Jangchub Choeling Nunnery with our Medical Fund. Donations of any amount to the Medical Fund are always welcome.

Medicines, Dispensaries and Pharmacies: India and the USA

Last year we wrote of our gratitude to doctors -- Tibetan, Indian, and western, who save and improve lives and make our medical projects work. We wrote of nurses and nursing students who also play a major role. This year we met a professional Indian pharmacist at the DTR Hospital and kind Tibetan monks dispensing medicines at the Gomang Dispensary. Chela personally benefitted from medicines she bought there. The fact that drugs are cheaper in India and there are non-profit dispensaries in the Tibetan camp helps the Tibetans a lot. Sometimes, however, since prescriptions are not always demanded in India as they are in the USA, there can also be problems.

For example, Chela found she was having problems with swollen ankles that did not go away with time after she arrived in Mundgod. In 2003 the Gomang Dispensary gave Chela what seemed to be a magic medicine for swollen ankles. She asked for it again in 2004 and her ankles responded well. She decided she better find out what it was, as the Tibetan monks couldn't explain in English. She consulted Dr. Norbu and found it was a powerful steroid! No wonder it worked like magic! So she took it briefly to get rid of the swelling and stopped. The problem is that elderly Tibetans can hear about such a drug and get it from various dispensaries. If they continue taking it for a long time (and who wouldn't, it makes one feel so great!) it would really be harmful. Many older Tibetans have a lot of trouble with their knees and backs. This is also true of Americans. The whole world would like young knees and backs! In the third world however, the ease of getting drugs is both a blessing and a curse; and, of course, there are many drugs not available in remote areas. Chela's "magic" medicine was "dexamethasone". You can learn about it on the Internet.

The other interesting "drug news" from 2004, was that there is a **new drug for giardia** available in the USA. **It has been available for many years in other countries** such as India. This drug is **tinidazole, trade name tindamax**. You take 4 tablets once and within a day or two, you magically recover from giardia! It used to be you had to take one or two rounds of flagyl (metronidazole) for about 10 days each and you felt awful the whole time. Chela had taken her one dose to India and back, and it wasn't until she was back for a while (sick and not improving) that she realized she had giardia. She took her medicine and the next day was suddenly fine. We don't recommend self-diagnosis, but Chela was lucky that time. You can read about tinidazole on the Internet. We recommend it; however, you **will** need a doctor's prescription for it in the USA!

Events—2004 and 2005:

On March 26, 2004, FOTSI helped the **Tibetan Village Project (TVP)** with a reception and program at **Boulder's September School** to welcome monks of the **Drepung Gomang Monastery** to Colorado. That night Chela shared slides bringing out **efforts the monks make to help the wider Tibetan settlement**, including a dispensary, vegetable garden, tree plantation, summer school, and aid to new refugees from Tibet. While the monks visited Boulder, FOTSI assisted the TVP to help the monks, who broadcast a program on KGNU radio and gave a Tibetan culture and history show at the Boulder Public Library. A number of FOTSI and TVP donors and others attended these **community events**. See www.tibetanvillageproject.org for more about them.

In **August of 2004 Vikki Hughes**, a local artist and great friend of FOTSI, hosted a **wonderful party featuring FOTSI** and its work. This was a relaxed event to which Vikki invited friends and neighbors she thought would enjoy a short presentation about FOTSI plus a chance for friends to catch up and enjoy delicious refreshment. The group included those who came for a fun and a hopefully inspiring evening, those who wanted to learn something new, and some who became FOTSI donors. There was no feeling of pressure to become a donor, only a fun evening. We all had a great time, were grateful to our superb hostess, and FOTSI benefited too. **We thank Vikki profusely!** We are considering having a follow-up gathering to enjoy sharing the projects in which some guests participated. **If you would like to host a FOTSI party (of any type, small or**

larger), please contact Chela. These things can be arranged in any way you like. Even if you don't feel up to hosting such an event, if you would like to **attend** one, also let us know. In the past, we've given presentations at schools, churches, senior centers, a Kiwanis club, and the Boulder Public Library to name a few.

Our wonderful **volunteer office work helper, Michelle Harris, has donated a "Cry of the Snow Lion" DVD** which we can share for an event, or just a casual get-together of FOTSI donors.

In **June of 2005** the Drepung Gomang Monastery will begin a new **tour of the USA and Canada**, entitled "**Sacred Arts of the Land of Snows**". We mentioned this last year, seeking aid and suggestions for a possible Colorado visit. FOTSI put a serious effort into this. However, difficulties in scheduling and visa problems for the monks, resulted in our not planning a local event. The Sacred Arts Tour is quite a different monks' tour. There will be many arts displayed, paintings of lay people as well as special traditional thangkas, classes, interactive programs, and presentations involving sacred art of other cultures. Tour members include the former abbot of the Drepung Gomang Monastery, artists from Tibet with long artistic lineages, and a Canadian artist to help communicate. See www.gomang.org/sacred_tour.html for info and a tour itinerary.

Priorities for FOTSI for 2005

These days the most need is for sponsors of elderly people. Please contact FOTSI if you want to sponsor an elderly person. The cost of these sponsorships, as all sponsorships through the Representative's Office (not through monasteries or nunnery) is \$120/year.

All our projects contribute to the Tibetans. For those wishing to add to their sponsorships or invite friends to participate, we suggest our **Emergency Fund, Medical Funds**, our new **Scholarship Programs**, the **Self-Sufficiency Fund** (cows, etc.), the **Dre-Gomang School**, or the **Home for the Elderly**. If you especially want to help or sponsor a child, you can do so at monastery school or at the TCV School. If you are already helping a person or project, your **continuing help makes big difference. Contributions for expenses are also vital.**

If you want to teach at the Drepung Gomang School, visit a sponsored person or project, or work as a nurse or doctor in Mundgod, please contact us. Plans must be made far in advance for any visit to a settlement, since these areas require special permits in addition to visas.

The successes in this newsletter are the result of **all FOTSI donors, and the hard work of Tibetans in the settlements who manage projects on their end. THANK YOU ALL!** We also deeply thank our FOTSI Board members, including Sherry Hart, Deborah Howard, Theresa Noland, and Paul Kunasz. Let's celebrate the achievements and joy of our efforts!

With great gratitude and respect to all of you,

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