

Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India (“FOTSI”)
Year 2002 Annual Report and Newsletter (Abridged Web Version I)
Projects in Tibetan Settlements of Southern India:

Mundgod and Bylakuppe (by Chela Kunasz, March 2003)

Hello, Tashi Delek, and thanks to all of you! The Tibetans send you their love and profound gratitude for all the help this year and the many previous years during which many of you have helped them. They send their heartiest wishes for a safe, happy, and successful **Tibetan New Year 2130, the Water Sheep Year** by the Tibetan calendar. They are very concerned about the state of this world, as we are, and there are prayers going on almost continuously over there. They are praying for peace and justice in the world, and that all beings may work together for our future common welfare.

As in the past, we can all be proud and happy about what we have accomplished this year. With our Tibetan friends' aid and vigorous efforts, we have continued to help provide essential medical services, basic support, education, self-sufficiency, and hope to those who have recently suffered major difficulties. The Tibetans appreciate that our continuing efforts have been in the face of our own difficulties, including the downturn in the world economy, increasing dangers, and the many competing requests for much needed help from all sides.

This year I had a very special trip to the Tibetan Settlement of Mundgod, having left Colorado on November 29, 2002. Upon my return on January 15, 2003, I could begin to try to assimilate this visit which included 8 days of programs given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the interaction with many of our sponsored people, and the visits to see the fruits of our projects. On Christmas Day, I had the pleasure of sharing some Christmas cakes (donated by the Drepung Gomang monks) and tea and snacks provided by the Tibetan Settlement Office with about 60 of our sponsored people and relatives. On that special day I shared some of our difficulties, such as the fires and drought in Colorado, our financial downturn, and concerns about terrorism, and about Iraq and the war. The Tibetans are always very interested to hear our news as well as sharing theirs. As mentioned below, the Mundgod area is also suffering a particularly severe drought.

This newsletter will constitute a combined report of the Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India (FOTSI) and the Tibetan Settlements in India Project of the Colorado Friends of Tibet (CFT/TSI). To simplify operations, we have legally and financially transferred all of our funds and work to our new 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (FOTSI). This organization is legally tax-exempt and is incorporated in the state of Colorado. Since we know it is important that the on-going tragedy of the Tibetans and their unique gifts to the world are not forgotten despite the tumult of our shared world situation, we still very much support the Colorado Friends of Tibet. However, **please remember to make out future checks for our Tibetan settlements projects to “FOTSI”.**

This year, **93** people (from **20** states plus one from Switzerland) made donations to our projects. We sponsored **40** individuals and their families through the Office of the Representative in the Tibetan Settlement in Mundgod, in Karnataka State, India. (As of March 2003, we were awaiting photos and biographies for 7 new sponsorees, 6 children and one elderly person. Two of these were requested in late 2002.) We sponsored or sent material help to **3** children at the **Tibetan Children's Village** boarding school in the Tibetan Settlement of Bylakuppe, also in Karnataka State. We sponsored or sent significant help to **58** monks and nuns, and **6** people who are teachers, staff, and students of the Dre-Gomang School. We continued a full scholarship to the Laxmi Memorial School of Nursing for **1** Tibetan girl. In addition to these **108** individuals, we gave one-time help to very ill or injured people and to group projects which directly helped hundreds more.

We have made donations to the **Doeguling Resettlement Hospital** in Mundgod and the **Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital** in Bylakuppe, the two principal hospitals serving the roughly 13,500 people in Mundgod and 20,000 people in Bylakuppe. We bought **8** cows as part of the self-sufficiency project, and received a

report that our general scholarship funds had been used to help **65 students attend colleges and business schools**. We also contributed to **drought relief** and the **Home for the Elderly** in Mundgod. Sixteen donors sent funds for tea and food served when Tibetans (and others) came from the entire Himalayan/India area to Mundgod to hear the Dalai Lama.

In summary, this year the **Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India** projects included:

- **sponsorship of lay people** of all ages and genders (Mundgod)
- **sponsorship of monks or nuns** (at 3 monasteries, nunnery Mundgod)
- **sponsorship of or supplemental help to children** (TCV School Bylakuppe)
- **sponsorship of students and staff** (Dre-Gomang School, Mundgod)
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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 Scholarship** (administered by FOTSI, with help from Mundgod)
- **Nuns Health Fund** (Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, Mundgod)
- **Monks Health Fund** (Dre-Gomang Gungru Health Fund)
- **Home for the Elderly and Infirm** (Mundgod)
- **Doeguling Tibetan Resettlement (DTR) Hospital** (Mundgod)
- **Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital** (Bylakuppe)
- **Drought Relief** (Mundgod)
- **Medical or Housing needs of individuals** (Mundgod)
- **Food/tea for thousands during visit of the Dalai Lama** (Mundgod)

In 2002 we gave **\$31,814.50 in donations** to sponsored individuals and projects based in the Doeguling and Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlements in India. As this was a tough year for fundraising, it is not surprising that this number is about \$4000.00 less than last year. (Last year we gave \$35,902.00 to the projects). Travel expenses (to and within India) in 2002 were \$1710.00. Expenses for registered mail fees, photos and slides, supplies, computer needs, etc. were \$2320.28, and there was a loss of \$292.48 selling donated stock (covered out of the stock sale itself). The costs were higher this year as mail (especially registered mail to India) and other costs rose and supplies on hand dwindled. The expenses given include payments (such as the \$500.00 IRS fee and significant lawyers' fees) for the creation of FOTSI. We need to cover (in the next year) the remaining approximately \$1800.00 of that, and the special first year IRS filing cost of about \$600.00.

From August 1, 1994 until December 31, 2002, the Tibetan Settlements in India project (first as CFT/TSI and later as FOTSI) has given **\$179,215.58** to sponsored individuals and projects in the Doeguling and Bylakuppe Settlements. During that same period, \$9937.43 was spent on all expenses excluding travel, and \$9678 was spent for travel to India (6 trips, which occurred in 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002). (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).

All of the travel expenses and most of the other expenses were donated by Chela and Paul Kunasz, but there were other donors who explicitly offered or allowed part of their contribution to FOTSI to be used for expenses. In general, unless there is an explicit offer or permission by a donor for funds to go towards expenses, funds are not used for this, but instead go directly and totally to individuals or projects of the Mundgod or Bylakuppe camps in India. However, to be frank, **this year was really difficult for us in terms of covering expenses**. As we slowly get more donors and fewer large donations, expenses are rising and becoming more difficult for us to cover. At some point, due to the time and funds needed to handle operations, we might even have to stop accepting new sponsorships in order to keep our activities going. **The occasional small extra donations towards expenses can help put this off, and offers from larger donors to allow a bit more to be used for expenses would both help a lot.** Thanks SO MUCH to those

donors who helped with expenses this year! It is important that the donors understand there is no pressure being applied here, we are just communicating our own situation, and we will attempt to find ways to be able to keep the projects going to the very best of our abilities.

Stories, Mundgod, 2002 (see newsletter back cover for “photo collage”)

(Since these stories are sometimes personal and may find their way onto the Internet, we’ve referred to many of the people by initials, occasionally substitute names, or in other ways to protect their privacy. All of the stories which follow are true and real facts about actual people.)

Pen Pals –Tibetan Boy K. corresponds with an entire 8th Grade Class!

One of our donors is a middle school teacher in California. For several years he has been coordinating a **pen pal exchange** between his sponsored Tibetan boy in the Central Tibetan School in the Mundgod settlement and the students in his classes. In 2001, some of his students even used the correspondence in their graduation speeches. K. is the youngest child in the family. One of his older sisters helps him with his letters, but he writes them all and adds drawings too. His is a single parent family, which works hard. K. loves soccer and science. In a recent letter to his sponsor, he wrote, “I am studying seriously without wasting my precious time and Golden time. Quotes from his letters to his pen pals include “Oh dear, I really felt very bad that your hamster died.” and “This year also we have losses in farm.”, and, in another letter, “Pay my Tashi Deleck to your family. Lastly, Happy Christmas”. One of the students wrote in September ’02, “President Bush is actually talking about going to war with Iraq. It’s weird, in school, I learn about these wars. But I never thought one would happen in my lifetime. At least, I hoped it wouldn’t.” They’ve exchanged photos but I’ve failed to get one in the collage.

The “Born Refugee” and “Born Tibetan” young adults of Mundgod

Among the teenagers and young adults of the Mundgod settlement, many were born there and many have come from Tibet. I attended a lively “rock” concert that many teens attended at an assembly hall in Village #3 Most songs were locally written and in Tibetan! The lyrics were not the usual Western ones. Two songs were about the Dalai Lama (to a lilting rock beat, a little strange for me), one was about walking the road, and another was about a school boy’s life. Only one or two were mildly flirtatious and romantic. The performers called themselves the “Born Refugee” group.

Many sponsorees are teens. **T.** is a female high school senior with a scientific bent who wants to be either a dentist or a nurse. She went to a special science summer school to prepare for college entrance exams. Her sponsor is trying to help her achieve her dream of college next year. An older sister had antibiotic resistant TB, but is better now and completing a business college program. **K.**, another teenager who had TB this year, is described below in the “Grandmothers’ Update” section. **S.** (20) is in her third year of a Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) program at a business college in Bangalore, and is one of our **Scholarship Fund students**. While in Mundgod we also visited the family of other students. **T.** (also 20) is in her 2nd year of a BComm program. Her brother, **TJ** had third line (very antibiotic resistant) TB and must rest at home. He hopes to return to his studies at the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi, India. Graduates of that institute can become teachers, tour guides in Himalayan regions, workers for the Tibetan Government in Exile, writers, etc. Since TB (especially the newer antibiotic resistant variety) is such a problem, there is a major effort to fight this disease and its spread, but in crowded needy areas, it is hard to eradicate. Our **Scholarship Fund** is really useful and important. The Mundgod Representative told me that the Dalai Lama was especially encouraged to hear about our help to post-high school students.

A Nun’s Story

“**Our nun**” is a Tibetan Buddhist nun who escaped from Tibet two years ago and came to the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in Mundgod. She was from a village about one day by car from Chamdo, the capital of Kham. She became a nun when she was 20 and is now 25. Although her father died, her mother is living in Tibet. She had slight pain in her chest area before she left Tibet, but it wasn’t bad. After she got to India, the pain slowly became worse. She was very shy about going to a hospital to have the male doctors examine her. In October, 2002, the Health Department of the Tibetan Government in Exile sent a team of female gynecologists to south India to check the health of all the nuns. “Our nun” was examined and told

she had several fibroid tumors (probably benign, but important to remove). The local DTR Hospital sent her to a gynecologist in nearby Hubli who verified that she needed surgery. But there was no money. The hospital was trying to get her on the list of Tibetans the (Richard) Gere Foundation helps at the Manipal Hospital in Bangalore, but this ended up in the usual health insurance time delays. The pain was getting bad. There was a need for funds, helpers, and a translator. I met with officials at the DTR Hospital who contacted surgeons in Hubli and helpers as well. I donated rupees (covered later by 3 FOTSI donors) which I'd been holding for an emergency, promised to supply the remaining needed funds, and the surgery happened! I've received a report from the doctor saying there was no cancer. She will need some more surgeries, but help is happening now! FOTSI is continuing to send funds to the **Jangchub Choeling Medical Fund** to cover many needs (medicine, checkups, and a possible second surgery) as well as the medical costs of other nuns. One nun wrote to us, "During my sick time no one like you who is very kind hearted to ask for help. I got very happy you're like my real mother so many thanks for your kindness. I can't forget your kind heart til I die..."

S.'s Story

S. is our full scholarship nursing student. In the 2001 newsletter we told of S.'s family's escape from Tibet, life in a jungle, and her father's sudden death just when she wanted to continue her education. She now attends the Laxmi Memorial Institute of Nursing, in Mangalore. At the end of her first year, she had a crucial practical exam. S. wrote: "We were given one patient to each student and had to do some experiment on them and had to write report according to it. You know what happened with me was...I have got a patient who is insane and really I was so frightened that he even does not allow me to check on him and not even allow me to touch him. So I dashed to Madam (the woman giving the exam) and told everything and our kind madam has given me other patient who is very good to do everything...." She passed all of her first year exams in the first division and sent us her first year's Karnataka State Diploma.. She has been busy this year, working in hospitals plus classes. In a March, 2003 letter, she wrote, "I am sending you my warm wishes, deep affection. Without you all (the donors) I won't be able to fulfill my dreams. I sincerely thank all of you for helping me. Currently, we're helping several other nursing students as well. We have especially supported women students, but help young men too.

C. and the Home for the Elderly

C. (whose whole name means "deathless goddess") was in Tibet until about 4 years ago. There she had very bad headaches which nothing seemed to cure. In desperation she asked a Tibetan Lama for advice. He suggested that she cut her hair "like a nun", and dedicate her life to helping others, which would be good whatever happened with her headaches. After cutting her hair short like a nun, and getting the nickname "the nun", she escaped from Tibet and ended up in Mundgod. There she dedicates all her time to working for the residents in the Home for the Elderly. She will do any work, no matter how unpleasant, and is always there, always cheerful. She was happy, working hard, and headache free until last year. Then she started having stomach pain and was found to have a tumor (benign). To thank her, local Tibetans took up a collection to try to pay her \$520.00 hospital bill. They came up with \$220.00. We received a request from the director inquiring if we could help the Home by paying the remaining \$300.00, to help C. and to encourage the other workers there. This was done, and I was lucky to meet C., who was quite well and visiting a resident of the Home who was in the DTR Hospital. In our collage is a photo of **Dakpa Khenrab**, the director of the Home, with our Tibetan social worker, **Tenzin Yangkar**, and one of our sponsors at the Home, **T.** In the past we've sent funding to upgrade the Special Care Wing of this Home, and in the last few months (December 2002-February 2003) we've sent funds for a **solar lighting system** for this wing. Now they won't have to work in the dark when the power goes out (often) in the camp, and won't have the noise, cost, and pollution of a diesel generator.

"Our Monk's Story"

"Our monk" is a Tibetan monk of Drepung Gomang Monastery. I visited this very ill young monk at the DTR Hospital in mid-December. I was asked if I could help him by visiting him during my stay, donating immediate financial aid, finding funds for a future ear operation and a sponsor. Fortunately, due to a number of FOTSI donors, most of this has been accomplished. He is 27 years old. He escaped from Tibet with his father. The father settled in Dehra Dun and got work as a tailor. They were very poor. In 1991 not

long after the two reached Dehra Dun, they decided that the son would go to Drepung Gomang Monastery and become a monk. The boy had no education and other difficulties. He made it to the monastery and has been a hard worker there for 12 years, helping the others, but not able to communicate or make close friends easily. In January of 2002 he received word that his father had died. This was a big shock and very painful. His Khantsen (dormitory group) is very small and poor. His health and mental state seemed to deteriorate after he heard about his father's death. He came down with TB (tuberculosis), was taken to the hospital and recovered some. By early December he was very bad again and ended up in an Indian hospital in the town of Hubli. The hospital staff thought he might have "brain TB" or some other brain disease because he was glassy eyed and uncommunicative. An MRI and X-rays showed he still had TB but no brain disease. They also found he had a bad ear infection, migraine headaches, and stomach problems. He was anemic and unresponsive. He had no visitors except monks who brought his food to the hospital. I visited him with two monks, including our sponsored monk health-worker, T.. I spoke to the sick monk in Tibetan (he speaks no English). We met with the DTR hospital head and the doctor (Mr. T.P.). Later I visited the patient many times. I went with sponsoree TT, who is also a recovering 2nd-line TB patient and who was familiar with a lot of the patient's medicines. Another time I went alone and took him some good calendar photos of Tibet and Mustang. He was surprisingly talkative and showed me his MRI and X-rays, which we discussed. We had a nice time and he blossomed with some happy smiles. Next time he was asleep on his bed with his monk's robes nicely arranged. The photos I'd given him were right by his head. I wanted to take a photo but was afraid the flash would wake him, so I left. Later I was happy to see him in the garden admiring flowers with other monk patients. He seemed a different person. Thanks for your donations and help! We're now collecting funds for his ear operation.

Young Children of Mundgod, Bright Hopes for the Future

FOTSI sponsors many children in Mundgod. A few are pictured in the collage. One is an 11-year old boy (Grade 5) who loves the Tibetan language and is interested in social studies and learning about other countries. Another is a 13-year old girl (Grade 6) from Camp #1. She loves marching in formation in school competitions. Others are mentioned in the Grandmothers' Update section below. In addition, this year we sent funds to help the **Central Tibetan School** in Village #3 buy **Tibetan nomad costumes** for competitions with other Tibetan schools, and for putting on a welcoming dance presentation for the Dalai Lama during his visit to Mundgod. These costumes are modeled by the students in the photo on the top row, right middle of the collage. The students won first place among 5 settlements in southern India.

Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) School in Bylakuppe

There are now 703 boys and 617 girls attending this school in the Bylakuppe settlement a few hundred miles south of Mundgod. Of these, 219 boys and 128 girls were newly admitted in 2002, with many being newly arrived from Tibet and others being from destitute families, orphans, or semi-orphans. FOTSI fully sponsors one girl and one at this school, and has sent ("pocket money") help to a third child. All of these children are from the Mundgod settlement. Our sponsored girl was in Mundgod when I visited in December because she was on vacation from the TCV School. She is now 17 years old and is very happy at TCV. She wants to be a doctor. This will be a challenge for her since as a young child she was very ill and still bears the painful results of that, having had 5 surgeries. She is a good student. A donor provides the \$360 per year for a TCV Scholarship. Another child and his sister were rescued from a very poor home and a mother who had lost her sanity in Mundgod. They are now well cared for at TCV.

Drepung Gomang School and Lobsang Choejor's Story

This school (with 140 students) is run by the Drepung Gomang Monastery for young boys from Tibet and the whole Himalayan region. We have helped the DG School for a long time with donations for school needs, teachers' salaries, and sponsorships of students. We help with **medical needs** at the school, and are currently working on setting up a system for better medical screening for the boys. We've just sent funds for **thick mats** for the students to sit on outdoors on the stone patio for studies or other school activities. We've also funded the rescue of the somewhat defunct **school computers** (new hard disk, etc.). We worked with the DTR Hospital to try to make sure that students who had **oral health screening** do get the **dentistry** which the screening showed was needed for 66 of the 140 boys. There is a photo of junior monks waiting for their oral health screening at the Hospital in our photo collage. **L.** (15) is one of our sponsorees. He left Tibet 5 years ago, escaping with a group of 30 other people. The first attempt failed (we hear this often), and he was kept in custody of the police for a week in Shigatse, Tibet. They had a hard time. He

returned to Lhasa, but tried again in a month. He was scared because penalties for trying again are more severe. When he left he had long hair and was 10 years old, but he was quite happy (he said) to cut his hair and become a young monk at Gomang, which he reached after his second attempt to escape Tibet. He is now in the 7th grade.

In the summer, the school is used to teach Tibetan subjects chosen by the lay students (boys and girls) who attend. They can study Tibetan reading and writing, Tibetan cultural topics, or Tibetan Buddhist religion (optional). This helps the children maintain their roots and helps adults have free time to work or relax.

Drepung Gomang School's Visit to the Home for the Elderly

T.D., a Canadian woman in her late twenties with a gift for teaching English, has taught at the Drepung Gomang School for 5 years. She also teaches, after school, many who come from the wider Tibetan community to learn English. She teaches 13 classes a day, 6 days a week! She is a talented artist and uses this skill to help in the settlement. She has an honorary Tibetan name. Her mother and grandmother have visited her at the School. They had a good time and approve very much of what she is doing. She is now printing a textbook she wrote for teaching English to Tibetans. A kind donor is helping her through FOTSI so she can stay and continue teaching as she wishes. She sent us this:

“For the past five years, I have been teaching English (grades 5 through 8) here in Drepung Gomang Monastery. Much as I enjoy the classes, expounding upon the complexities and foibles of English grammar tends to become really boring for both teacher and taught. To relieve the drudgery of a week of work on past tenses, I decided to take my classes out to the Old Age Home in a nearby camp to put written grammar into action.

Back in Tibet, the elders of the Tibetan community traditionally played a part in day to day life, especially with the rearing of grandchildren. Here in the refugee camp, most have children who have moved to work in the cities, or are subsisting on small plots of land with a cow or two. The Dalai Lama had the wisdom to set up the Home for the Elderly to fill a previously unknown need. Bringing a group of young student monks in to talk would make the elders feel they could still make a contribution.

It would also give the young boys a sense of their own history. After I had been living here for a couple years, I began to notice the difference between the local Indian villages and the camps in the settlement. The villages seem to have grown out of the soil. They are built with clay that has been lived upon for generations. Families live in the same houses their ancestors did, and history lies heavily upon the villagers as they follow the same customs and habits as their forefathers. The Tibetans, on the other hand, have for the most part only lived here for one generation, and most of the camps have an air of impermanence about them. In a sense, the Tibetans live on the land, while the local Indians are rooted in it. For two days before, we worked at preparing our questions in the classroom. On the designated morning, we set off as a group on the half hour walk, laughing and gloating as the younger grades had to attend their usual classes. When we arrived in Camp 3, many of the old people came to the doors of their rooms to see what the excitement was, and nurses assigned each student to a room. The actual asking of questions was done in Tibetan, as were the jotted notes. Once the set questions were done, many kids went to talk to other elderly who were impatiently waiting their turn, and ended up with more than one story. Meanwhile, those who had finished gathered around one old man from Amdo, who had come to India with the Dalai Lama in 1959, and had been his translator and bodyguard. He had stacks of old yellowed photos, and though he had been completely blind for several years, he could tell the story behind each one if the kids described the picture to him. He held them in thrall for about an hour, until all the interviews were done, and it was time for lunch. As we left, each student went to thank him, and his blind wrinkled face shone with happiness. Leaving, the old people were all standing at their doorways, waving. As we turned on to the road to head home, all the students were walking in groups, discussing and comparing, telling each other about their interviews. On the way back, we talked about the difference of custom in western countries, where homes for the elderly are the norm, whereas traditionally Tibetans stay together as families, and elders are cared for in the family home. It was interesting for me to listen to them argue back and forth over the merits of each system.

The next day was a Sunday, and the class assignment was to write up the information into paragraphs, telling about the person's life, and describing the way they lived in the Home. This meant translating their written Tibetan notes into English, and getting all the past verbs right! The homework was to finish their stories, and at the next class, they each read their particular story to the class before I collected them for marking.

I heard later, from Dakpa, the Drepung Gomang monk who heads the Home for the Elderly, that two of the Class VI students began coming back regularly on Mondays to visit and help out. The hours in the Home made past verbs come alive for those students, and brought joy to the elders, who like nothing better than to be visited by the young people."

Many children T.D. teaches have walked over the Himalayas themselves and have remarkable stories of their own. **If you wish to sponsor a child at the Drepung Gomang School please contact us! We are seeking sponsors.** The sponsorship helps the whole school. The boys are raised as young monks, but they can decide to become laymen as their future lifestyle if they wish. If the child remains at the monastery as a monk, then if the sponsorship is continued, half of the \$15/month scholarship goes to continue helping the school and half is given to the monk as an individual sponsorship.

The Cow Sagas

In Tibet most people were nomadic herdspeople, dealing with animals. The Tibetans still like working with animals and do it well. Through the Dalai Lama's Representative in Mundgod, FOTSI contributes to a **self-sufficiency program**. This program has purchased sewing machines, offered incentives to sewing teachers, and bought vendor stalls. But the biggest part of the self-sufficiency fund is the **purchase of cows** for suitable families. Last year FOTSI purchased **8 cows**. In the past we've purchased many others. One of FOTSI's board members (not Chela) asked her friends for donations to the "Cow Fund" **in lieu of birthday presents** in Feb-March of 2003. What a great and generous idea! Because of that, 3 families will have cows! Another donor promised herself that if she won on a day when she went to gamble a little money, she'd give it to the Cow Fund. She won, and 3 families have been helped! Cows are about \$275 apiece in India, although the prices fluctuate. This wonderful program is extremely popular with the Tibetans.

Nakri and her calf

I visited the cow called "Nakri", which means "Black Mountain" in Tibetan. She has been a great blessing to the family of D. and N. . The cow recently had a calf, which needs a portion of the milk. The family still gets 2 liters twice a day for their own use. If they sell 2 liters, they net 22 Rupees per day, about 50 cents per day, and still have 2 to drink.

The Sad Tale of the Poisoned Cows

There was a band of Indians who poisoned about 30 cows belonging to Tibetans living in or grazing their cows in Camp #2. These people secretly laid out slow acting poison, which killed the cows slowly. Veterinarians (not knowing of the plot) were called and prescribed medicines as they worried about some awful disease like "mad cow". But the cows did not get better and the vets couldn't figure out the problem. Finally, the cows died. There was a canvass of the whole area and they found a place where poisoned food had been put out for the cows. Amazingly enough, Indian police arrested the perpetrators (not Tibetans). Horrifyingly enough, due to bribes being given, the poisoners were released the next day! The only good part is that, since the criminals' activity is known, it is not likely they will try the same thing again. Another bad thing is that they stole many of the carcasses and sold the poisoned meat! None of the cows we have purchased were killed. We are buying a cow for one elderly man, M. (and his wife and daughter), who lost a cow in this event.

Updates (2002)

We received the news in March, 2003, that the monk we'd helped with his treatment for Hansen's disease (**leprosy**) **has completely recovered!** He is symptom free and bacteria free! He will be returning to his monastery at Mundgod soon. He probably contracted the disease many years ago. (The disease is air-

borne, although it takes a lot of exposure, and perhaps low-resistance, to contract the disease.). Later, as he began working so hard at both his studies and his work with a health committee and needy sick monks, he came down with this truly terrible disease. We rejoice about his recovery and deeply thank his sponsor and those who contributed extra funds for his medical needs.

A nun we've been helping has finally reached a good hospital in the Punjab region of India. She learned she did not have brain cancer, but is suffering from brain lesions, probably from an accident 8 years ago. She is under treatment with medicine from that hospital. We don't yet know her prognosis, but she feels better.

The young monk who'd had his right eye destroyed and other injuries from a frightened yak in Tibet, completed his fifth and final surgery at Manipal Hospital in 2002 in Bangalore. He is well and studying hard. He is very happy about his plastic eye, lack of pain, and improved looks. I visited Manipal Hospital to thank the doctors and the social worker. There I met visiting doctor from Uganda They were hosting a world conference on plastic surgery.

Unfortunately, the delightful child **D.** who graced the lower left of our 2001 collage, fell out of an upper story window of a house her parents occupied while selling sweaters in an Indian town (a typical way Tibetan families earn money). She died that day to the great distress of her family and all who knew her. Her sponsor is now helping her sister so that she can continue helping the family.

Last year we wrote of several children who made it **across the Himalayas** to the safety of India. The children about whom we wrote are fine and at school in northern India. We've been awaiting news about other young Tibetans whose brother (one of our sponsorees) was trying to get them out. Some children attempting escape get frostbite, suffer serious snow related eye damage, or end up in Chinese Government prisons. We omit names and sometimes other details when discussing escapees since they worry about other family members still in Tibet.

“Before and After” Updates

Last year we helped a young monk, **T** who had 2nd-line (antibiotic resistant) tuberculosis. As it was his second experience with TB, he had a hard time, and his life was in danger. He is now much better, has regained his lost weight, but is still required to rest a lot for another year. He is working with a computer at the Drepung Gomang Library, where he helps that library, which publishes books (such as those given out freely during the visit of the Dalai Lama) as well as maintaining library services. He also helped me when I was in the settlement. He donated funds left after his treatment was completed so that residents of the Home for the Elderly could rent transportation to attend the talks by the Dalai Lama when he in Mundgod. Last year we showed his photo with his bandido-style mask, which he needed to wear to protect others while he was in the TB isolation ward.

A “before and after” pair of photos appears on the collage to the right of the photos of T. The older monk with glasses is **LG**. Several years ago we searched for a sponsor for him, as he had had a stroke and had difficulty speaking and walking. The monks at the monastery helped him a lot (with donations of their own funds and assistance in going to ayurvedic India clinics which specialize in massages and medicines for stroke victims and other patients with neurological problems). However they needed a bit more help and requested a sponsor for him. I had met him years ago when he was in charge of the Guest House for foreign visitors in which I was staying. We found a couple to sponsor LG who looks so much better in the new photo than he did two years ago. His walking and speech are also vastly improved!

We have also helped various Tibetans who have had crumbling homes, poor water supplies and disfunctional outhouses. Now due to kind sponsors, there are strong walls, a nice water tank, a good outhouse, a good roof, and liveable space. Other groups have been the leaders in this type of help, but our group has sometimes added just a little more, enabling larger aid to come to final fruition.

In the bottom of the collage, near the center is an inset of the young monks at the **Thoeling** Monastery. High up in the center of that photo is the Dalai Lama, shown as he visited that monastery in December, 2002. On the right, next to a man in a dark robe with a white collar and above the corner of the inset photo

below, is our sponsored young monk, **T**, who sent his sponsor this photo of the historic visit. Tenzin had had serious health problems which are now resolved. Another FOTSI donor had also sent funds to help this small monastery, which is the rebuilt version of one of the most important and oldest monasteries in Tibet. (see Monastery Project, then Monastery Inventory at the website www.tarboche.org).

Grandmothers' Update The grandmothers of the Tibetan settlement are still working hard to hold families together and provide cultural continuity. FOTSI funds **help grandparents who live in a sponsored family** and grandparents living in the **Home for the Elderly**. We help others through contributions to the **Emergency Fund** in the Mundgod settlement (**\$497.00 in 2002**). Our collage shows a number of grandmas. One is grandma **B**. She was not well earlier in 2002 but later helped when her grandson got TB and missed his final exams and (what he really hated) several major athletic competitions as well. He is a sprinter and a high jumper.

On the left side of the collage, one photo down, is a small boy with his grandmother. She was staying with him and his older brother while the parents left to sell sweaters. She came from Tibet in 1966-67, travelling through Ronjong and ending up at Simla. She was young when she arrived in Mundgod in 1967 and was one of the original people who helped to cut down the jungle and build huts for the Tibetan refugees. In the collage we also see **K.W.**, who lives in the home for the Elderly, and is glowing at receiving hand-made gifts and a letter from her sponsor (collage, just under upper left cow). The other grandma, shown below the group photo on the top (right-near center), is another **K**. She lives in her own home in Mundgod and looks after cows. She says lots of prayers for her sponsor and told me she thinks of her every day.

Water

Water is essential for life, as we all know. And water is a big issue in the settlement. It is hard to show pictorially in an adequate light. Many water issues arose during my 2002 trip to Mundgod. There is the ongoing problem of polluted drinking water. **R.A.**, a friend, FOTSI donor, and tireless helper of Drepung Loseling Monastery (independently of FOTSI), asked my help in getting data from the DTR Hospital about water quality. He was trying to educate people about water issues and the fact that most of the water in the settlement has been certified as "unsafe to drink". Many Tibetans don't know how bad their water is. The DTR Hospital, to which we send funds, works hard to coordinate as much water purification, water testing, and hygiene education as possible, but it is a huge task, and really can't be done as it should. I learned the children of Mundgod have to be de-wormed twice a year. Partly this is due to water-borne worm eggs in the water. Also, many water tanks are open at the top and dead birds and bird droppings end up in some of the water. There are no real sewers in the settlement, and septic systems ooze sewage into the soil, often near supplies of drinking water. In addition to the pollution (due to overcrowding and infrastructure problems), the natural water is extremely hard, often causing stomach and other problems just due to hardness. The sewage seeping around underground is hard to locate. The (Richard) Gere Foundation has tried to begin dealing with this difficult issue, but limited progress has resulted, despite good efforts. The DTR Hospital's data, to be updated mid-2003, shows many areas of particularly bad contamination, for example, near the Drepung Loseling Monastery kitchen. There is a photo of an open sewage river (near where I stayed) in the collage, upper right, just left of the coconut tree.

Many Tibetans are too poor to buy fuel to boil all water. Beyond that, the Indian press just (Feb-March 2003) came out with stories that much of the **bottled water** (even that sporting "ISI" standards-checked) **is contaminated**, mostly with pesticides and sometimes worse. Typical brands such as Coca Cola's Kinley, Pepsi's Aquafina, and Bisleri (all of which I've used as safe water when I'm in the settlement) were found to be unsafe by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) according to a report in the Deccan Herald (2/6/03). The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has imposed a "Stop Marketing" order on several bottled water plants. One company official confided that sometimes pesticides were added to the drinking water to slow biological growth in the water since the bottles are often stored a long time! This is a hot topic now in India. The final word is not in. Some say the standards are unpractical. Others say the stories have been exaggerated. It was stated that imported European bottled water (such as Evian) was pure, but this water is very expensive in India. We should note that the news coverage is sometimes as uncontrolled as the bottled water. So this is important, but visitors to India who've consumed that water should not immediately panic!

This information on bottled water is courtesy of Indian news clippings provided by S., a FOTSI donor who has visited the settlement often and who lives in India part of the year. S. noticed that the taste and smell of some of her bottled water in Mundgod was bad.

A Wonderful Memorial Helps Assuage the Ravages of the Mundgod Drought

In addition to water quality issues, there is the additional problem of a severe drought in the Mundgod area and other parts of southern India. In response, FOTSI sent \$1500.00 to the Representatives' Office for **drought relief**. There is a story behind this donation. A young couple was living in Broomfield with their son and the wife's extended family. The young woman (N) is Tibetan and her husband is a Pennsylvania born ethnic Kalmyckian Mongolian. N. has completed her training here as a licensed practical nurse. The couple and N's family have lived in Colorado for some time, N's mother having been one of the original Tibetans to come to Boulder as part of the US Tibetan Resettlement Project. All of N's relatives took on the project of caring for an elderly woman (B) in their home for a year as she was nearing the end of her life. The care they gave to B. was so extraordinary and meant so much to her relatives, that when B. died, the family, as an expression of their gratitude, decided to make a memorial donation to whatever charity N and her husband selected. They selected FOTSI and requested that the collected memorial funds (\$832.00) be sent to the Mundgod settlement to help Tibetans survive the drought with new seed and fertilizer, etc. FOTSI sent this money to Mundgod in 2002, along with \$668 from the Compton Foundation, with the special request that the Tibetans try as far as possible to use drought-resistant seed and planting techniques to maximally protect the environment. As the Compton Foundation does much to help the world's environment we are grateful to them on two counts. We hear that this year has also not been wet enough. Those people who grew only rice, the preferred crop, reaped nothing. However, other crops, such as cotton, were somewhat more successful. In our collage (middle-right side) we show a crew of Indian workers packing up many bales of cotton brought in by Tibetans this year.

The Fire

Near the end of my visit to Mundgod, I suddenly noticed that our FOTSI aided coconut tree plantation looked terrible. I'd heard that it was doing well, so I was surprised to see it looking as if the drought had destroyed it as well as the rice crop. Since we'd supported a good pump and well, I was puzzled. I snapped the photo of a monk standing next to a ravaged coconut tree on blackened ground. The black and white image here does not show the bad brown, as opposed to green, color of this coconut tree (upper right area of the collage). Later we learned that there had been a fire not far from where the Dalai Lama and 10,000 people were assembled. Visitors from the Himalayan region (north India, Nepal, Ladakh, Sikkim, Tibet, etc.) were camped across from the coconut tree plantation and had been cooking food. One person dumped some ashes on the opposite side of the road (where the trees are), thinking there were no live embers. Wrong. When everyone was inside the building, the fire started. Fortunately, many monks came out and subdued the fire with buckets of earth and water. I've heard the coconut trees have been saved and are now okay. In early 2003 we sent funds to care for these trees following the fire.

DTR Hospital News

The local hospitals in the settlements are central resources, not only helping patients, but offering health and hygiene education, testing water and water storage, dispensing water purification, immunization, and screenings for dental health and diseases such as hepatitis. We have sent donations to the Doeguling Tibetan Resettlement (DTR) Hospital for years. There is a photo in the collage (right, center, just below the mother and daughter) showing the Tibetan dental hygienist (**T.B.**) working on a patient at the DTR Hospital. This year we gave \$1050.00 to the Hospitals. Our hospital donations were used in many ways. In one case, we helped a 70-year old woman to get a needed surgery, and in another, we paid for transport of a mentally ill patient to an adequate facility. We also helped in other ways that will free up hospital staff time to see more patients.

Our contributions to the **Tso-Jhe Hospital** have helped set up and maintain a clinic near the Tashilunpo Monastery in Bylakuppe. This is used by old men and women living near that monastery as well as by the monks. We helped them purchase some medical equipment and some medical serum. We've also helped with several women's issues at this hospital as well as at DTR. Due to his continuing success, Mr. Tenpa

TK director of Tso-Jhe is now being asked to go to the **Kollegal Settlement** to upgrade the **Hospital** there. We will be sending funds to Kollegal's Venthall Hospital in 2003.

More Medical Aid

A FOTSI donor sponsors a health-worker monk at the **Drepung Gomang Dispensary**. This young man has had formal training as a rural health nurse and additional specialized training. During the visit of the Dalai Lama, he worked almost non-stop, providing free or at-cost medical help for the long lines of people who had arrived from the whole Himalayan region to see the Dalai Lama and also get medical aid. His sponsor sent extra funds to help him buy needed sterilization equipment for his work there, about which he was thrilled. In addition, we also sent significant funds last year to the **Gungru Khangtsen (GK) Health Fund** since so many were ill last year, including our leprosy patient, many TB patients, Hepatitis B patients, and others needing special treatments and surgeries. One young sponsoree needed treatment for double vision at the Manupal Hospital (and may still need surgery). Another monk returned to the Monastery with Hepatitis B after a very difficult experience in **Jammu Kashmir** (a north Indian area with many Islamic militants and contested between Pakistan, India, and locals who'd like peace and autonomy). This monk was running a school and community aid program for the ethnic Tibetans in the area (yes, there are some!) but it was an exhausting task as the bribery and bullets were ubiquitous. Finally the school and center was forced to close.

A very special part of my 2002 visit to the Mundgod settlement was the chance to attend talks and meetings with the **Dalai Lama** when he was in Mundgod from December 7th to 16th, 2002. Celebrating that, I've inserted two photos of him in the upper right corner of the collage. Just to the left of those is a small insert of the Dalai Lama as he appeared when he was about 16 years old and was forced by the Chinese Communist Government to sign the infamous "17 Point Agreement" between Tibet and China at Simla. This is from a historic photo in the Gomang monastery, whose new Prayer Hall was dedicated by the Dalai Lama in Mundgod in 2002. In addition to the talks, the Dalai Lama participated in interesting traditional events presented by both Tibetans and local Indians. I encountered people from 22 different countries. The Dalai Lama gave talks about the connectedness of all people and about the development of great compassion and selflessness, as well as ethics and other inspiring topics. Local Tibetans and Indians, including Indian beggar children (collage photo on left edge, just below the Dalai Lama photo), drivers, and small merchants all benefited from the influx of these foreigners as well as from the thousands who came from Tibet and the Himalayan regions. I was lucky to attend some other fascinating traditional events, such as a meeting with the **two State Oracles of Tibet, Nechung and Gadong**. Everyone was in a good mood, even the Indian security police, who were there manning security checkpoints since there had been threats on the Dalai Lama's life. Fortunately there was no violence, although there was much **air pollution** from so many people coming and going in a small area and the stress on the resources and sanitary facilities. FOTSI donated two air pollution protective **masks** (collage, right edge below beggar children) to sick and elderly monks with help from the manufacturer (see www.icanbreathe.com). I was excited to meet other Americans there, many of whom I'd communicated with but never met. One group helps the Drepung Gomang Monastery and organized a very useful meeting of visitors from the USA (see <http://www.gomang.org>). In the future they might be able to help his in several ways. Cooperating and working together will enable all of us to be more helpful.

After the Dalai Lama left there were special ceremonies at the Gomang Monastery celebrating the "doctor of theology" ("Geshe") degrees of two FOTSI sponsored monks. These monks have studied for over 20 years for these degrees. Only a few reach this level of study and achievement. These two have also worked hard for others, sometimes running the GK Health Fund, teaching, and doing other community services. During these ceremonies, which last several days, all the monks in the monastery are fed and given donations. Those donors who choose to sponsor such events thus help many refugees, especially those without sponsors. Photos from these events ("Geshe Tongos") are in the lower right of the collage, next to the setting nun in the lower right corner.

This year FOTSI presented a slide show at the University in February and then for a group in Northglenn, Colorado. In July, an artist donor and her husband hosted a FOTSI reception and slide show at their home, at which we enjoyed her wonderful art as well as the slides. The Drepung Gomang monks performed at the

Unity Church in Boulder July 26, and many of our donors were there and were acknowledged from the stage by the visiting Tibetans. Several other shows were given by request in Boulder. One was a presentation on Tibetan (and Hindu) culture for a group leaving on a trek to Mt. Everest, the purpose being to share cultural information to enhance interactions in Buddhist and Hindu Nepal.

We hope to present a new slide show sometime in the summer or fall. **If you have other activity ideas or suggestions, we'd love to hear them. If you would like to host or attend a show about Tibetans and/or FOTSI's work, let us know.**

Priorities for 2003 include finding funds for:

- **medical needs for individuals and for our medical aid groups**
- **the Self-sufficiency Fund** (includes cow purchases)
- **our Scholarship Programs**
- **new program at the hospital in the Kollegal settlement**
-

and sponsors for

- **children at the Dre-Gomang School or the School generally (\$15/month for sponsoring a child there)**
- * **recent nun arrivals from Tibet**

If you are already sponsoring someone or donating to a project, your **continuing sponsorship and help** is making a **big difference** to Tibetan refugees. If you **want to sponsor someone new, or you know someone who would, please contact me.**

Please remember to make your checks out to "FOTSI". I have tentative plans to revisit Mundgod, probably in November, 2003. If you are interested in teaching at the Drepung Gomang School, or if you are a nurse or an M.D. and want to work at a hospital in the Mundgod or Kollegal settlement, please contact me about that. Plans have to be made very far in advance for any visit to a settlement, since these areas are "Protected Areas" and require special permits.

During this year's visit, I saw that Tibetans in Mundgod are continuing to carry on with great courage and effort. The successes in this newsletter are the result of **all** the donors to FOTSI, as well as the hard work of Tibetans in Mundgod and Bylakuppe who manage projects and funds on their end. **THANK YOU ALL!** I also want to thank our FOTSI Board members, including Sherry Hart, Deborah Howard, Theresa Noland, and Paul Kunasz. In addition, FOTSI has benefitted from a very special postwoman who manages to get the sometimes very strangely addressed mail to me and teaches me how to negotiate the US mail system. And, a special, amazing and hard-working CU student, has continued to aid FOTSI as both a donor and an office assistant. Her youthful energy and support are a big help! I know that all of us Americans are also having problems and deep worries about the current war. I know we and the Tibetans are trying our best and that we share the hope for a profoundly better world and future.

With great gratitude and respect to all of you,

Chela Kunasz
Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India (FOTSI)

Email for more information and for address to send donations: chela@spot.colorado.edu

P.S. We'd like to share the good news that Ngawang Sangdrol, the Tibetan nun who was first arrested for taking part in political activities when she was 13 and endured unimaginable abuse in Drapchi prison, arrived in Washington DC on Friday, March 28, 2003. She was one of the "Drapchi 14," a group of young Tibetan nuns who received harsh extended sentences for recording (inside Drapchi prison) a tape of freedom songs that was smuggled throughout Tibet. Following immense international pressure, Ngawang Sangdrol was released from Drapchi on medical parole in October 2002, and has now been allowed to leave Tibet to seek medical treatment.