

**Friends of Tibetan Settlements in India (“FOTSI”)
Year 2003 Annual Report and Newsletter (Abridged Web Version)
Projects in Tibetan Settlements of Southern India:
Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal by Chela Kunasz, March 2004**

Hello, Tashi Delek, and thanks to all of you! The Tibetans send their best wishes and deep thanks for all the help you have given. They also sent their greetings for a safe, happy, and successful **Tibetan New Year 2131, the Wood Monkey Year** (which began Feb. 21). They are daily saying prayers for you, their benefactors, and for all beings, and they hope that this year will bring happiness and joyful surprises.

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 those who have recently suffered major difficulties. The Tibetans appreciate that our efforts have been in the face of our own difficulties, including job loss, increasing dangers, wars and the many competing requests for much needed help from all sides.

In the fall of 2003 I had an interesting, labor-intensive visit to the Tibetan Settlement of Mundgod. After my return we collected funds and sent December/January packets for our sponsored Tibetan people and projects and for special needs discovered during the trip.

This 2003 Annual Report includes a formal 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 (skip to Page 3 for this)**. We conclude with final words and information about exciting upcoming events (MARCH 2004, and 2005).

Summary of FOTSI 2003 Financial and Operational Data

This year, 97 donors (from 18 states + Switzerland) contributed to our projects.
This year FOTSI sponsored:

- 49 individuals and families through Representative Office, Mundgod
- 3 children at the Tibetan Children’s Village boarding school, Bylakuppe
- 67 monks and nuns, Mundgod
- 7 Dre-Gomang School or Drepung Gomang Monastery staff or students
- 1 full Scholarship student (2nd year), Laxmi Memorial School of Nursing
- 2 Scholarship students related to sponsored families getting special help

In addition to these **129** individuals, we gave one-time help to very ill or injured people and to **group projects** (see below) that directly helped hundreds more.

We made donations to the **Doeguling Resettlement Hospital** in Mundgod, the **Tso-Jhe Khangsar Hospital** in Bylakuppe, and the **Dhondenling Hospital** in Kollegal, -- the three principal hospitals serving the roughly 13,500 people in Mundgod, 15,000 people in Bylakuppe, and 5000 people in Kollegal. We bought **11 cows** as part of the self-sufficiency project, and helped **30 students attend colleges and business schools** through the scholarship fund in Mundgod to which our organization was the largest contributor. 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, mental illness, and other problems.

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 3 monasteries, nunnery (Mundgod)
- **children, TCV School** (Bylakuppe)
- **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)
- **Dhondenling Hospital** (Kollegal)
- **Medical or Housing needs of individuals** (Mundgod)
- **Drepung Gomang Monastery community projects and staff** (Mundgod)

In 2003 we gave \$41,133.35 in donations to sponsored individuals and projects based in the Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal Tibetan Settlements in India. Since the trip to India was late last year and much of 2002's contribution was given in January of 2003, our budget and contributions to the Tibetan projects appear larger in 2003 than they did in 2002 and than they probably will in 2004,. (In 2002 we gave \$31, 814.50 to the projects).

From August 1, 1994 until December 31, 2003, the Tibetan Settlements in India project (first as CFT/TSI and later as FOTSI) has given \$220,348.93 to sponsored individuals and projects in the Mundgod, Bylakuppe, and Kollegal Settlements. During that period, \$12604.86 was spent on all expenses excluding travel, and \$11,410.72 was spent for travel to India (7 trips, which occurred in 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003). (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 2003 were \$1732.72. Mail fees, photos, copies, supplies, and computer needs were \$1346.50. FOTSI paid \$63.68 selling donated stock (covered from the stock sale) and a bad check fee from a bounced donation check. We paid \$1257.25 for IRS filing costs, state registration, and a payment on our no-interest loan for legal and IRS start-up costs. Adding travel and all these expenses gives **\$4400.15 for 2003.** **As usual there were no salaries paid to anyone.** The Kunaszes and one other board member paid most of the expense, with additional donations from others **helping very much.**

We offer a deep thank-you to all donors who helped with FOTSI expenses this year. The occasional extra donations towards expenses and offers from larger donors to allocate a bit to expenses help us immensely. Such donations make it possible for us to avoid a flat percentage expense fee (so difficult for some) on top of the fixed sponsorship amounts expected by the administration in the camps. On their side, the Tibetans have avoided charging FOTSI a flat fee for their administrative needs knowing we are a small volunteer group. Other larger organizations with paid staffs ARE charged for expenses needed by the Tibetans on their end.

Real Life Stories - - 2003 (some names or details have been altered for privacy)

Escape from Tibet, a Hard Life: A Newly Sponsored Grandson

Grandmother **Tseyang** (age 75) was born in central Tibet (U-Tsang) near Mount Kailash. In 1960 she escaped from Tibet, walking for a month (nights only to avoid detection) to reach Ladakh. She went with 70 to 80 people including her three daughters and her husband who died later. The family stayed in Ladakh for 7 years. Tseyang was 28 years old then, so the hard work was not so bad. Then she came by train to Mundgod. At first it was only a jungle. Camp #1 was tents. They lived in the tents and worked to build Camp #2. They had a small farm they worked. Tseyang's second husband became ill and was paralyzed for about 30 years; he finally died after a long illness. That was 3 years ago. Tseyang's grandson, **Gyatso**, is now 11 years old, attends Class 5, and lives in Camp #2. His nose sometimes gets severely blocked and he might need an operation in the future. For now he is taking medicine. His father was a village leader. Unfortunately, his father died two years ago of hepatitis. Gyatso shows signs of having had hepatitis, but has no symptoms now. His mother tries to make ends meet by selling sweaters in remote towns with other Tibetans. Tseyang has had stomach problems since she was young. Now she has arthritis and can't hear or see well, but she helps out by caring for the household and her grandchildren when her daughter and daughter's oldest son are gone to sell sweaters.

Our pretty new sponsoree, **Tashi** (10) broke her arm when she fell into a hole near the building site for new classrooms at the Central Tibetan School in Mundgod. Tashi lives near the school, and after hours the new concrete made an irresistible play area. Her broken arm needed surgery, and doctors put a steel pin in her little arm. When I met her and her mother, they explained that the arm was healing and surgery was scheduled to remove the pin. Fortunately, Tashi's sponsors were able to donate extra funds to pay for the pin removal and follow-up. Tashi's father was in Bombay for a few months to sell sweaters. Tashi has an older sister in Class 11 and a 7-year-old brother. Another sister is in college, a real stretch financially for them.

Drepung Gomang School: Lobsang & The Kingdom of Mon

We help girls and women like Tashi (see story above) who attend the coed Central Tibetan School and primary schools in Mundgod, various colleges and also nuns at the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery. The **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 2003 we helped the school upgrade their **computer** and funded **more dentistry for the students**. Working with others, we are helping the orphaned or very poor students there get the health and dental care they never had. In the summer, the school has taught 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.

This year, teacher Kristel Ouwehand, called Tenzin Dolma by the Tibetans, saw an opportunity to get even more enthusiastic English study out of her students by throwing "parties" for me. These parties were entirely planned and executed by the students, except for the questions in a competition in English, which she and I wrote. The students delivered speeches in English, and we had questions and answers in English. The artistic decorations produced by the students were spectacular and diverse. One student, Tenpa Tsering, wrote: "On the day of party, Ama Chela came. We arranged tea and cake to everyone. Ama Chela was very happy that moment. We were happy too. She told us that she has come to India many times but no one give such a great party in the previous time... Some of our students asked questions to Ama Chela about general. She answered our questions very peacefully and gently. During our party, we had a wonderful time. We didn't know how the time was passed".

Our Newest Sponsored DGSchool Student's Story

Lobsang is 9 years old, good in his studies, and friendly. He is from the fabled Kingdom of Mon, currently split down the middle between “China” (really Tibet), and India due to the so-called Mc Mahon Line. Called Mong-Mong in the past by Tibetans, this land may be more unknown than the hidden land of Mustang. His Tibetan is still hard to understand since Monpas speak a special dialect of Tibetan. Lobsang will soon learn the central Tibetan dialect. I visited him in his new home, a large room he shares with 8 other Monpa boys. Lobsang is now well, although after he arrived from Mon in July 2003, he had skin problems from the sudden change in climate (Mon is much colder.) He came to the Mundgod settlement together with his friend, Lobsang Gyatso (age 10), from the same small village (Tejpun) accompanied by an older monk. Lobsang’s father had died, and his mother had 3 other children besides Lobsang. She is a farmer. When the Monpa monk Lobsang Sopa (43) visited Mon in the summer, returning after being in south India since 1983, Lobsang’s mom asked this monk if he could take Lobsang to Drepung Gomang Monastery to be a junior monk and attend the monastery school. When the older monk himself had first gone to the monastery in 1983, there was hardly any place to live and everything was difficult. Now there are some large buildings. Back in Mon the mother and Lobsang Khechok’s 3 brothers are all okay. The kids are going to school and helping their mother.

Lobsang told me he really likes it at the monastery and is not eager to go home. He and his friend seem close and they like the school and the fact that they have lots to eat and good clothes. They like their room and the other boys with whom they can study and play. I carefully watched the interaction between the supervisory monk and the kids, and it looked good to me. The School says the boy is very happy, enthusiastic, and doing well. Later I saw him on the road to School with others and it indeed looked like he had many friends.

Amdo Pema’s Odyssey (intro by Chela, story by Kristel Ouwehand)

FOTSI loves helping children like Lobsang, but we also have a special place in our hearts for the **elderly Tibetans** who have been through so much sorrow and difficulty. Below we share the story of one of the Tibetans who lives in the Mundgod’s **Home for the Elderly**. When I was in India this fall, a monk health-worker came to see me with an elderly Tibetan who had a glowing face, but was blind and had asked help finding me. I had heard of Amdo Pema for years and was delighted to meet this well-known person. Not all Tibetans like milk, but it was a special wish of Amdo Pema to be able to get milk, so we were glad to help him out. **(If there is a donor who would like to continue this, it would come to about \$25.00 / year to provide him with regular milk—please contact FOTSI if you’d like to do this).** I asked Kristel Ouwehand to help me by interviewing him. Her Tibetan is much better than mine as she has lived in the camp for 6 years, studying there and teaching at the Drepung Gomang School in Mundgod. Below is Kristel’s narrative of Pema’s story.

“I spent the morning with "Amdo Pema" in his tidy, carefully arranged room in the Home for the Elderly in Camp 3. He keeps his room carefully arranged because he is totally blind, and has been so since his early thirties. He was thrilled by my visit, and brought out all his old photos. He could tell me the story behind each photo when I described it to him.

He was born in Rapgong , Amdo and was a monk in a small monastery called Rongbo. He was one of 9 children. Once, he and 7 friends decided to walk to Lhasa on a pilgrimage. Lying to his parents so that they'd not worry, they set off on the 3-month trip on foot. Much of the way, especially in the Golok area, there were no villages and they had to sleep in mounds of snow. He told me that nothing could make anyone understand that trip without having been there. The original plan, upon arrival in Lhasa, was to sell things to pay for the return trip, but plans changed and he came to India in 1954, working on the road-building projects near Simla, along with many other Tibetans. The work was difficult and dangerous.

He let me feel lumps in his hands, bits of stone that had been embedded, flying splinters from the same explosion that destroyed his eyesight. He was taken to a hospital in Simla, where 2 American

doctors ran a clinic. He was told he'd never see again, but the doctors got him into a school for the blind in Dehra Dun, where he learnt Hindi in Braille, and handicrafts such as weaving cane stools. He stayed there for 3 years, and then went to Kalimpong with a friend. In 1956 the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama came to India for a visit with Indian officials, and Amdo Pema had a chance to meet them in Varanasi. After that, guided by his friend, he made a pilgrimage to India's holy sites.

In 1959, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled to India, Pema went to Mussoorie, and had another chance to meet him. Upon hearing his story, the Dalai Lama asked Pema to act as his translator for the duration of his meetings with the Indians. This work lasted for 5 or 6 days. Then the Dalai Lama arranged for Pema to stay in the new Nursing Home in Dalhousie, which then had about 300 residents. None could speak Hindi, so Pema continued translating there for visiting officials and for patients who needed to go to the hospital. A handicraft school began, with about 500 Tibetan students. Pema was invited to teach both Hindi and weaving there. He stayed there until 1965.

Around 1961 the Dalai Lama again paid a visit, and again Pema was the official translator. At that time, many Geshes and high lamas visited him and asked for help in translation, and he wouldn't know until they had gone that they were high lamas, and not ordinary monks! According to him, those were the best years of his life, when he had the chance to help many people, especially the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans.

When the home in Dalhousie was dissolved in 1972, he was sent to the home in Mundgod. He is famous in this community, and all the monks, especially those from Amdo, know of him, as the amazing blind man, who translated for His Holiness. He doesn't look 80 years old, apart from his worn, gnarled hands, turning his rosary beads as we speak. Last year, with the help of monk friends, he made the journey to Bodh Gaya for the Kalachakra Ceremony. There he met the Dalai Lama who grasped his ear fondly and called him "my famous translator", and said that he had truly been blessed with a long life. The Dalai Lama made sure to have all of Pema's expenses paid out of his own funds. According to Pema he has had a lucky life. He doesn't see his blindness as a hardship, though he thinks it is hard on others. His one regret is not meeting his mother again before she died, as she had died with his photo in her hand, next to her face on the pillow. But Ak (Uncle) Pema, the sprightly 80-year old, is an example to everyone here. I don't think he himself realizes just how much he means to everyone. I left him after we had a cup of tea, and I was shown his treasures, a thangka and portrait of His Holiness on his altar, both signed by the Dalai Lama himself, with promises to return one day to make momos! (In the **Photo Collage** bottom row, just left of the children marching, is an old photo of Amdo Pema translating for Indian dignitaries. Just above that photo is one I took of Amdo Pema when I met him in 2003.)

Mundgod Solar Energy Works! Home for the Elderly Lights Up

There are many special older Tibetans in the Home for the Elderly in Mundgod, and visiting there is always a high point of my time in India. This fall I went a number of times to visit the Home, and visited many residents in their rooms and the special care ward. (See the **Collage Photo**, just above and left of the marching band, of me visiting a resident, and another diagonally up right, of our sponsoree, Tsering Dhondup by an artistic prayer wheel at the home.)

FOTSI sponsors elders at the Home and helps other residents occasionally, sometimes in times of serious illness or other special need. In the past we've also sent funds to upgrade the Special Care Wing of this Home, and in 2003 we continued to provide **solar lighting** for that wing. Now residents don'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. Other groups have also helped, with lighting near the lavatories and along the corridors from the rooms to those sites. (See **Photo**, left edge, bottom of collage.) **We have received a request for help with large outdoor solar lighting fixtures** for some of the heavily traveled areas of the Home. These tall, sturdy lights have proven themselves elsewhere in the camp. They cost \$700.00. **If any of you are interested in contributing toward this solar project, please contact FOTSI.**

News from the Tibetan SOS Tibetan Village School in Bylakuppe

We received warm Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2004 greetings from this school on behalf of our **sponsored and assisted children at the School**. We are sponsoring one girl who is now in Class X and doing well. She wants to work in the medical field as her harrowing experience with polio made her more knowledgeable than many, about both suffering and the power of medicine and surgery. Life is still difficult for her, since walking with her brace can be challenging. However, she loves her school, her friends, and the future the school opens for her. We are also sponsoring K.T., a small boy abandoned by his mentally ill mother, and we're helping his sister too. The school writes their "home mothers are doing their very best to care for the children despite the increasing number". They also look after the medical needs of the children, including 2-hour journeys to Mysore for serious illnesses. The teachers are proud that in the crucial grade XII standardized New Delhi exams, their students achieved 97%. They have Montessori to grade XII and an independent Commerce Stream. The main school has 1316 children and 30 "mothers" plus 119 other workers. They run a pre-primary school (615 children). Sponsorship is \$360/year, but other one-time donations are also welcome.

Sonam's Story (slightly altered to protect people in Tibet)

Sonam, now 18, was born in Kham, Tibet, in 1985. Sonam's family are nomads who had, as he remembers it, 5 yak and dri (female yak), about 43 sheep, 2 horses, 1 big black dog called Angel, 4 cows + one small calf. From two of the cows they got milk to drink, butter, curds, and tasty yogurt drinks. They wore sheepskin clothing. When Sonam was small he had a lot of work to do. He used a slingshot and small stones to help herd animals, throwing small stones at the rear ends of the big yaks to get them to keep moving. He collected dung for fires. He had nice nomad shoes, which came up to his knees, a hat, woven pants and a sheepskin top.

His mother had a relative in Lhasa. Everyone agreed it would be helpful if he went there to stay with relatives who had a shop. He was a bit scared about the idea because all he knew was being a nomad and living in the country, but off he went to Lhasa. The trip took 4 days on trucks. They took meat, tsampa (ground barley flour), and butter to eat. When they finally arrived in Lhasa, young Sonam thought it was AMAZING! He had never seen a "big city" before. This was 1991 and Sonam was only 6 years old. He met his relatives, who had more money than his parents. As Sonam wanted to go to school, they paid a fee so he could do that. He was lucky and was able to study Tibetan reading and writing. He also had to study Chinese. He had to study math using Chinese terminology. He attended school in Lhasa for 3 years, until he was 9.

Occasionally he went home during this period, traveling by truck. Once a great lama who had been born in Kham near their area but who had escaped to India in 1959, returned to his original home area for a visit (which the Chinese government has not allowed him to repeat). When Sonam and his family saw that lama, they were very impressed. This event had a great effect on Sonam's future life. Time passed. Sonam stopped school and worked in his relative's shop. When he had free time, he went to a nearby monastery, especially the small rooms where monks lived. He heard that people could save money to pay for escape to India from Tibet. Sonam became quite interested in becoming a monk in India where he could be with that great lama he'd seen. He did not tell anyone what he was thinking. After he was ten years old, he worked hard, saving all his money. Finally he told his relatives and parents what he was thinking and that he had saved enough for the trip. His older brother came to Lhasa and took Sonam's place in the shop. Sonam left Lhasa in a truck. He was the youngest in a group of 8 males. Each person in the group paid the Tibetan leader of this group about 500 Chinese dollars, or about 2500 Indian rupees (\$50 US). They went as far as the town of "XXX" in a truck. Next they walked for 9 days on dry ground and 2 days on snow. They went through trees even before they encountered snow so as to avoid the road. In the snow it was very cold. Sonam's shoes fell apart. The group went over many mountain passes. When he was agonizingly cold and his shoes were disintegrating, he began to think he had made a big mistake and was scared knowing he was the youngest in the group.

After what seemed a long time, they crossed into Nepal and hired a jeep, using half Chinese and half Nepalese money. After reaching Kathmandu, they went to the Tibetan Office for refugees. Sonam felt really strange. He had no shoes. In Kathmandu he bought shoes, and the group got food and clothes. He had to answer many questions. He was 12 and all the others were older, but they all wanted to go to school. He requested to go a specific monastery in south India. The group stayed 15 days in Kathmandu. Then he went to Dharamsala in north India in a bus with 70 people. There they met the Dalai Lama, who asked each person what he wanted to do. Sonam wanted to go to the monastery. He was given money and went to Delhi with two other refugees.

It was confusing in Delhi, but they found the Tibetan aid they sought. They were given more money and railway tickets for a train to south India, and someone helped them reach their seats on the train. They were told, "You will arrive where you are going the day after tomorrow at 6am". These railway tickets were cheap ones with hard chairs only, no place to lie down, and there were many people. On November 25, 1997, the train arrived in the town of Hubli, near the Mundgod Settlement. A monk met them when the train arrived. Sonam had long hair at that time. In Hubli he had it cut short. They rented an Indian taxi and soon reached the settlement. Having said he wanted to live in the house of the great lama, he was taken to the lama's old home. He was thrilled to give his last money, 100 Indian rupees (about \$2.25) to the lama as a gift. After an interview he was accepted as a new member of that home. That was an amazing end to his journey. Now Sonam attends school at the monastery and has a FOTSI sponsor. He is profoundly grateful to his sponsor, and also to others who helped with some medical treatment he needed.

Sports Day 2003

While in India I was invited to Sports Day in the Tibetan Camp. The kids had been brimming with excitement about this event for days. They made banners spanning roads and just couldn't wait for the annual sports and marching competitions for schoolchildren of all ages. We saw several of our sponsorees there. LC (13) would have won the 200-meter race for girls in her age group, but she turned to look back at her competition and came in third! The two **Photos** just right of LC show excited schoolgirls and two boys demonstrating their frog jump stances, underling the popularity of that part of Sports Day. Another **Photo**, just under LC's face, shows young spectators watching races.

Another sponsoree, Tenzin, participated again this year in the girls' parade marching competition. The marching groups are interesting because (except for different clothing) they are like 1776 British marching groups with fifes and drums that we might connect with the time of the American Revolution. In the early 20th century Tibetans picked up the tradition from the British influence in India and in Tibet (when Youngshusband marched into and stayed in Tibet circa 1904). (See the photo of one marching group in the **Photo** collage, bottom row.) Tenzin's sponsor kindly donated funds to pay for fruit juices and refreshments during the event (it was hot!) as well as some assistance for badges and prizes—a great contribution to a special day! Last year another donor helped pay for traditional Tibetan nomadic costumes for a cultural dance contest and later, a presentation for the Dalai Lama. The Indian Government allows contributions from foreigners for extra-curricular activities, but not for core functions such as teacher salaries and books. The Indians are proud of their contribution to the Tibetans.

Nurses, Heroines

Nursing is a heroic career choice. Nurses perform many miracles and unsung tasks of simple perseverance, making such a difference in our lives. Some of our FOTSI donors are health professionals. Medical/dental careers can pose a risk, sometimes, to the worker's own health. Some illnesses, more often found in countries such as India, are hard to detect until it is too late. Below is an excerpt from a letter written by one of our sponsorees, in which she tells the story of her sister who was in nursing school:

... “This year is a very dark year for us because (of) my aunty’s demise and also my younger sister’s demise due to malaria.... Last year my younger sister was studying at Mangalore’s M.V. Shetty nursing college. She had just finished her first year nursing course and came home for her holidays and she had caught malaria from there (the nursing college). But the sad thing is that she had not shown any malaria symptom. After reaching home, she said that she was not feeling well. So me and my sister went to Mundgod Hospital and there the doctor told us that she had caught viral fever and the doctor gave her two injections. After that she told me that she felt well. So, that evening she was fine and she felt as usual, but after two days she said she was not feeling well and also vomiting. So the next day my sister and I took her to our settlement DTR Hospital and there the doctor told us to check her blood and he said she had jaundice and she will be well soon because the blood test was negative. So sis and I stayed with my sister at the hospital as she was hospitalized. Suddenly around 5am we got a call from our sister that she is serious and the doctor took her to Nalwad Hospital at Hubli. It’s a private hospital. She became unconscious after saying “Achang” (a name we used to call my sister). It’s finally really very sad and tragedy to hear that malaria has totally damaged her brain. We feel very sad because of her demise at very tender age. She was just 21 years old. I think fate has not favoured us that we could stay with her throughout our life. God always calls nice people. “

Later I heard that another girl from that same nursing school who had been to other hospitals had also died of this type of malaria. A third student nurse was in New Delhi and just happened to be near one of the best hospitals in India. So, although she had a similar illness, she was saved.

FOTSI is sponsoring a number of nursing students. **Dolma**, now in her third year at the Laxmi Memorial Institute of Nursing in Mangalore, passed her 2nd year exams in the first division. She wrote that it is her goal to be a nurse for the “poorest of the poor” and that she wants to work for the Tibetan government and help poor Tibetans. In 2003 she worked in poor Indian villages. She is thrilled to be studying nursing. In past years we wrote of her family’s escape from Tibet, life in a Bhutanese jungle, her father’s sudden death just when she wanted to continue her education, and her joy at her FOTSI scholarship.

We are also sponsoring **TK**, who graduated from high school this year and is now attending Krupanidhi College of Nursing in Bangalore. The fees for nursing school are much higher than for other studies. Her fees will be more than 60000Rs (or over \$1000) per year. We are helping her but she also needs a loan for the rest. In her nursing school there are 3 other Tibetan girls. She sometimes sends us email. She is happy and excited about her opportunity to study in this 3-year program. Her sponsor also has to struggle to contribute to her scholarship but is joyful about it.

TD (21) is getting help from FOTSI’s general collage fund for her second year at the MGM Nursing Institute in Aurangabad. She is the only Tibetan at this college but has Indian friends among her classmates and stays in a hostel with them at the college. As TD was at her Institute when I visited, I spoke with her mother, who gave us a photo of her daughter in her nursing uniform. Her father is selling sweaters so he can earn money and also visit his daughter. Last year sweater selling didn’t go well, but he has hopes for this year. Aurangabad is 16 hours by bus from Mundgod and is in Maharashtra State. TD’s mother was born near the Tibetan border, in Tikooni. She has been in Mundgod, in Camp #3, for 24 years. Unfortunately, TD’s sister (16), has tuberculosis and is in the isolation ward at the hospital.

Cows 2003

This year we had 15 Self-sufficiency Fund donors. We spent \$2750 for cow purchases in 2003, which includes funds donated late in 2002. By fall, 2003, our FOTSI donations had purchased **11 cows**. These days cow recipients are given 7500Rs (about \$167) and buy their cows as they chose, from local Indian village cow sales, Tibetan monasteries, each other, etc. The price of cows has dropped. It used to be \$275 per cow. Now, the most expensive cows run as high as \$200, but the typical price is about \$170. The Dalai Lama’s Representative’s Office makes sure all selected families can properly care for and benefit from the cows, and that cows are purchased in a timely

fashion. They keep lists of all cow recipients and where they live. Cows are, as you know, very important for all of life in India. Besides producing dairy products, they are also used a lot for plowing and for environmentally friendly transport. (See the left edge, 2nd row **Photo** of an Indian with his cart giving a ride to a Tibetan lady and hay in the Mundgod settlement.)

In the center of the **Photo** collage is a picture of “**The Representative**” the chief administrative person in the Tibetan Camp at Mundgod. His name is **Dhondup Dorjee** and he took office in the fall of 2003, just as I reached Mundgod. His office administers our general scholarship funds, emergency funds, sponsored lay people, and our “cow” and other self-sufficiency donations.

I was offered the chance to visit all the cows but did not have the time, so I visited 5. Below I share a few cow stories.

We visited a friendly red cow (purchased with FOTSI funds) with horns painted blue (this helps identify her) and is named “Ma-ree”. She is pregnant with a calf expected in January. The owner and her husband have two kids now, ages 6 and 3 with a baby on the way. She is happy about the cow and looks forward to using the milk for her kids and selling it to neighbors, some of whom are shown in our photo taken in front of the shed which is the cow’s home base.

At another house we met a cow named Hathi who is named for the Indian village where she was purchased. Hathi is black and white and has a calf. Her owner is a young mother with 3 children. She is very happy to have fresh milk! They get 3 liters a day for their own use (or to sell) after the calf gets its fill. One can sell milk for 10Rs/liter (about 25 cents/liter). They need to buy hay and other things for the cow, so this is not their net profit.

Nyima’s Difficulties (help with a cow plus)

We visited Nyima, the new owner of a black cow which has had a calf. This cow’s name is “Nagpo”, which means “black one” in Tibetan. Nyima’s family is poor and is having a lot of problems, so she is grateful to have the cow and calf. The day we visited was really a bad time for visiting because her nephew had just died. In addition, Nyima’s daughter is currently unwell mentally and must take expensive medicine (\$40.00 = 1800Rs/month) to stay out of the medieval mental hospital in Dharwad. Fortunately, the Indian government pays for the medicine. However, Nyima has to travel often to Dharwad, a distance from Hubli, to get the medicine. We found out this is costing her about \$45/year, so we donated this money to her from a generous FOTSI donor who gave money for an **emergency** need. We were shy about intruding on her during her grief, but she was grateful for the cow and so we were able to learn more about her and her cow. Those wishing to help with either the emergency fund or the cow fund are encouraged to participate.

Dangerous Nuns now “More Dangerous”!

For Jangchub Choeling nun TD (28) 2003 was a hard year. She had skin problems, sinus infections, difficulties with crooked cartilage in her nose, and an ulcer (caused by Helicobacter Pylori bacteria). To help her, the nuns used money from her sponsor and our FOTSI Medical Fund for Nuns. Now she has recovered and is doing well. She is very skilled in philosophical debate (“a real threat!”her sister nuns say). Now that she is well, she hopes to be even more “dangerous” for her debate partners! The nuns as a group love their studies and philosophical debates partly because traditionally the Tibetan nuns did not have many opportunities for intellectual pursuits. The current Dalai Lama strongly supports the education of nuns, and these women are flowering. Now they not only pursue service activities and meditation, they do programs for the public (which they love) and study philosophy (as well as English, Hindi, math, etc.). Many go to Dharamsala every year (in north India) and demonstrate their skill in debates for the Dalai Lama and the public. This is a treasured treat for them. One nun wrote to her sponsor, “You, my benefactor, show very great kindness I can’t find words to express.”

UD is in 12th grade and speaks good English. She is 25 and attends the local Tibetan public high school for her education. She was born in 1978 in Bhutan to a Tibetan family who had earlier fled Tibet. She was 4 when she arrived in Mundgod. At 9 she pleaded to become a nun and was finally given permission. She said her original reasons for wanting to be a nun were mostly that the nuns looked so great in their robes and seemed fascinating! She now thinks those weren't very good reasons, but is very happy she DID become a nun, because now she knows more and is truly interested in Buddhism and a nun's life. This year she is studying English, History, Tibetan, and Geography. She studied math up to 10th grade and has been the nunnery accountant for 4 years. She is happy, healthy, and hoping to be a resource for everyone in Mundgod

The nuns like their independence and their growing opportunities. They are very grateful to their sponsors and to the sponsors of the Nuns's Medical Fund. In 2003 we especially helped with **dentistry and false teeth**. One young nun from Tibet was missing many teeth. We helped her get false teeth that really work for her. Earlier ones did not stay in place! Another nun continued medical treatment to shrink remaining **tumors** post her surgery and she is doing well. Others have suffered from **ulcers and hernias**. Most of those we helped are now better or at least improved. TD, who has **brain lesions**, is better, but still suffers headaches and needs to stay in a cool climate. Our funds helped 3 nuns with **ear operations and treatments--SD, TD, and TN**. TD, to whom we sent special aid, has recovered from **tuberculosis**. We were happy to learn that a German group is funding new rooms and the nuns' housing needs are being met.

Gelek's Fight to Live

When I visited the Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, the nuns brought the nun Tenzin Choetso, a fairly recent arrival from Tibet, to see me. She was weeping as she spoke of her desperately ill brother, **Gelek Tharchen**, a 20-year old monk. Tenzin said she was afraid her brother was dying. She wanted to know if there was anything we could do to help. It turned out he had **TB-meningitis**. This disease can arise when one has ordinary TB and the bacteria get into the blood, brain, and cerebrospinal fluid. On the brain, there can be many small sores, which show up after they heal as calcified bright spots on an X-ray. One also sees this symptom in Multiple Sclerosis patients. The boy had been to a doctor and was taking antibiotics that would have cured him. But later he consulted an Indian doctor working at the Loseling clinic, and that doctor (without doing any tests) told Gelek he did not have TB and he should stop his medicine!! Since Gelek was very poor, he was happy to stop taking his medicine. For a while he seemed okay. But, after a few months, he collapsed.

Gelek was taken to a small hospital operated by some Hindu Catholic nuns, followers of Mother Theresa, but they did not have the facilities to treat him. Next he was taken to the Gomang Dispensary, to Tashi Dorje, who said Gelek needed expert help immediately, and got him to the Shakuntala Memorial Hospital and Research Center in nearby Hubli. There Indian neurologists treated him with all the right antibiotics, anti-seizure medicines, etc. I know that because Tashi brought me the hospital's report, and I was able to show this to a visiting doctor with the "Flying Doctors from America" a group of doctors and nurses treating patients during a 4-day visit a few blocks from where I was staying.

I spoke to **Dr. Grattan Woodson** and a nurse named **Connie**. They said treatment in the Shakuntala Hospital seemed good to them as far as they could tell without seeing the patient. After looking at the medical reports, Dr. Woodson said there was a good chance this boy could survive and have a good life, although it was not guaranteed. He urged me to help Gelek and we immediately tried to do what we could. Unfortunately, there was no time for the American doctors to do more than go through the records. A visiting French doctor and monks who worked shifts at the hospital all helped. We all had high hopes. I was so sad to hear, soon after my return to Boulder, that an emergency shunt inserted in the middle of the night after I left had clogged and the boy had died. Some FOTSI funds were used to pay his bills holding up the Tibetans' good credit and paying the hardworking Indian doctors and the hospital. See the two **Photos of Gelek**, one near the center of the collage to the right of the Representative (wearing a striped shirt) showing him

in his hospital bed, and another, a close-up, showing his face, on the bottom row second from the right corner. I included two photos of Gelek because his struggle affected me a lot and is representative of a lot that happens to young refugees. **Dr. Woodson** is shown in a **Photo** of him wearing glasses, just diagonally to the right of Gelek's face.

Benefits from Gelek's Fight

One helpful aspect to the sad experience of Gelek was that his story was widely spread, especially to young men like him, and this has resulted in others asking for help. One such young man an 18-year old we will call Monk X. He had been having trouble walking and had been losing sensation in his feet and lower legs for some time. He had been to doctors locally but they couldn't do much for him and had not really diagnosed his problem. After I returned to the USA and Gelek Tharchen died, people living with Monk X went to see the Canadian woman teacher, Kristel, at the Drepung School. She sent me an email about Monk X, asking if FOTSI could help. I had left some rupees hidden in clothes in a box with monk friends in the camp, and I emailed them about that. They found the money, and Tashi Dorje went with Monk X by train to the excellent non-profit **Manipal Hospital in Bangalore**. Biopsies showed the boy has serious demyelination of nerves in his lower legs, etc. I don't know yet if this is due to Gullain-Barre syndrome or Multiple Sclerosis. More FOTSI funds were sent for medication and trips for checkups. We can rejoice in the fact that Monk X is now gaining weight, finding it easier to walk, and regaining sensation in his limbs. He is regularly taking medicines and gets checkups at the Manipal Hospital. He now smiles a lot and has high hopes. Monk X had hesitated to seek help because a relative had arrived with him at the settlement and died due to cholera. At that time the other Tibetan monks gave a lot of their money to try to save that young man, but he died. Monk X was embarrassed, thinking that he and his relative were a big problem for everyone else. Even when I was there, he and his friends debated telling me about his case. Some said they had seen how many came for FOTSI help and how difficult they thought it must be for me and they didn't want to add themselves to the list. I appreciated their thoughtfulness, but using FOTSI aid when really needed is the purpose of the trip, so I was glad when Monk X's illness was brought to our attention.

WG's Email from Dharamsala: Good News!

A friend of a friend, "WG", called me several days before I left for India, with questions about his own imminent trip to the Dalai Lama's city of residence in India (Dharamsala). As he turned out to be an experienced world traveler, I didn't feel he needed much advice from me. He asked if he could help with FOTSI's work in any way. I was happy to say, "Yes", and tell him of several Tibetans from Mundgod with health problems who had gone to that cooler area of India to recover. One was our dear "Monk Y", a Tibetan monk, one of our first sponsorees. In the past we wrote of this hard-working, brilliant monk, a top scholar but one who also exhausted himself working for others, both as a teacher and a health worker. The stress of his efforts probably brought out earlier exposure to leprosy in Tibet, or north India, when he lived in close quarters with many. Several FOTSI donors, including his sponsor, have helped Monk Y in his struggle to recover. The worst, as we reported earlier, is behind him, but the medicine is so intense (a combination of steroids and powerful antibiotics) that his body needs a lot of time to regain strength. It was lucky that "WG's" father had worked in leper camps in Africa, so he was knowledgeable about this disease. After learning the history of our monk, WG wished to visit him in his recovery hospital some distance from Dharamsala, get his news and see if he needed anything. Here is his email, which just arrived:

Chela -- Saw Monk Y.

Great visit. Terrible busride. He was so charming we're going back soon, bringing him a dictionary, vitamins, and a reading lamp, hoping he has arranged an eye exam so we can buy him reading glasses. Health EXCELLENT, considering . . . got a clean bill of health in Delhi, but for lingering weakness from the passing disease. He is no longer contagious, and his spirits are much better. I think he's reacting to the medicine, which is strong: His new living place, a Christian charity for lepers, is a country club compared to the hospital where he was staying. He has a garden, goats he talks to, and he is the Master of the Fishtank, and

worries about not giving them good enough food. In six months or so he will move either to Dharamsala or back south, depending on opportunity and where he feels called. He was bubbling over about you and his sponsor. Please tell her? I'll burn a CD of a few dozen photos, a five minute movie of him and his house, and a five minute audio of him talking about life and gratitude, translated at the end into English. More soon. Terrible, terrible internet connection. Any questions? Happy to answer. And he really does look great.
W G

Young Men: Where do I fit in?

Young people over the world, from Colorado to Afghanistan, Iraq, China, Tibet, etc. have to deal with dysfunctional families, illness, poverty, war, disabilities, peer pressure, and beyond that, simply trying to find their place in this world. Tibetan youth, especially boys, face difficulties peculiar to their situation in refugee areas, but common, in the ways mentioned above. Most Tibetan youth in the Tibetan settlements have the benefit of families, food, shelter, and the residual benefit of that supportive part of Tibetan culture which survives in these camps. However, some have little family supervision and fall in with bad groups, and even end up into drugs and other unfortunate paths. Others have trouble finding any forward path. Here are 2 unfinished stories of young men trying to find their way. There are other, more complex sagas, long, more painful and unfinished, which we may share in the future. Here are some hopeful "works in progress".

Pasang is no longer the little boy we once knew. Just as things seemed to be going well and he placed well in some track events at the camp, he came down with tuberculosis. He had to drop everything and recover but got hopelessly behind in school and flunked out. He lost his chance to participate in sports, which had meant so much to him. His beloved grandma aged and was ill. Finally, he got a chance to study traditional design and fabrication of Tibetan classical art features needed in the construction of some new special buildings being constructed in the camp. He had always liked art, and the environment around the new temple was great. The bicycle ride to the site from his home is hard to do each day in the heat of India, but it does keep him in shape when it isn't too hot to pedal hard. It is great that **some** young Tibetans are being trained in this art, because many Indians, who also need and aggressively seek work, are flooding in to take over this uniquely Tibetan skill and trade. Many local Indians are assiduously learning Tibetan language and arts skills and benefiting thereby. This is impressive and great on their part, but it is also important that young Tibetans acquire these traditional skills. Pasang wrote to his sponsor, "Whatever happens, I will try to be a good man." We hope that Pasang's path becomes smoother and wish him well. See the decorated tower that he worked on in a **Photo** in the collage, left side, 3rd row from the bottom, just below the older lady with the braids and folded hands.

Physical therapy at a Monastery: Lhakpa

When **Lhakpa** was 3 months old. the local hospital gave him an injection. After that, his leg became swollen, and there was a problem with his nerves. One leg was lifeless. His family took him everywhere trying to get help. They used Tibetan medicine and tried many things. When he was 7, his mother took him to see an old monk teacher at the Drepung Gomang Monastery. The family wanted the monk to say prayers for their disabled boy. Little Lhakpa attached himself to this old monk immediately and insisted he too wanted to be a monk. So the family allowed this, and Lhakpa was a junior monk for years. During that time the old monk gave the boy Tibetan medicine, did regular massage on his legs, and helped him with exercises. (Physical therapy Tibetan style!) Slowly but steadily through that time, Lhakpa's leg got better so that he could walk and then walk without crutches, etc! The old teacher made him do his exercises every single day. Lhakpa loved that old teacher who was helping him overcome his handicap! He went to school and studied Buddhist religious books at the monastery. He also began working in a Handicrafts Shop and learned to sew. Finally after some time, his connection with the monastery ended although his gratitude to the elderly monk did not. Now he is **working with a sewing machine** to help support his mother and spending half the year caring for his grandparents (in their 80's with vision problems). He walks quite well. He brought a gift for his sponsor who had years ago helped buy him a sewing machine of his own.

Scholarship Students: Bent on Success

Pema (20) attends Stella Maris College in Madras, founded by a Christian group. Pema attends this school with help from our FOTSI Scholarship donations. She was home on a break and I was lucky enough to meet her and talk. She is in her second year, having had Honors grades in her first year. She seeks a BA in Economics. She wants to do a Masters' Degree after her BA and become either an economics teacher or a School Principal. She studies very hard. This year she is studying monetary policy (!), Indian economics, microeconomics, statistics, math, psychology, accounting, and a course in agriculture and resources as exemplified in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The tuition is 15000 Rupees per year (this is about \$300/year). In addition, the transportation to/from the college in Madras is about 600 Rs. She saves money by buying the cheapest (and most uncomfortable) bus tickets, and can get the trip cost down to 250 Rs (about \$5). Earlier she was sick with jaundice and a fever, but was found free of hepatitis, the big worry. She has 3 sisters and 3 brothers. One brother is working in Nepal to help pay for the studies of the rest, and one sister, a nurse, is doing the same. When their father died it was very difficult. Everyone in the family is working and studying hard to try to be self-sufficient.

Tashi (21) is studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree. Her sister is studying nursing in Bangalore. We are sponsoring her grandmother, who is 77 years old, has high blood pressure and fevers. Her mother Tseyang (59) is also sponsored by FOTSI. Tseyang has had typhoid, tuberculosis, and hepatitis, but seems to have no symptoms now. Knees are bad. Neither woman has a living husband to help. They are trying to put the daughters through college. Tashi wrote, "As my mother is facing so much trouble from us (her daughters needing funds to attend college), really I am so thankful for your financial support."

Tashi Dorje, the Dispensary, and its "Elderly Monks" Project

Tashi Dorje, after escaping Tibet as a small boy, was very shy and studied hard. Later, partly inspired, as he told us, by the fact that one of our donors sponsored him, he became interested in how he could help others. First he did well in math at the Drepung Gomang School, and later he became a math teacher there, in addition to pursuing the traditional studies of Tibetan monks. He took courses and got a rural nurse certificate, and worked with Mr. Tenpa T.K. of the DTR Hospital (years ago) to learn more medical skills. He took advice from visiting Western doctors, and he learned Hindi, worked on his English, and picked up helpful things from Indian, Tibetan, and alternative Western medicine. He became good at bargaining with the Indians who sold top quality western medicines and learned how to read pharmaceutical catalogs, as well as how to translate many medical terms. He learned to do simple lab procedures and set up an early TB sputum test lab in the newly created Drepung Gomang Dispensary. He began acquiring walkers, commodes, and other items to help the elderly patients, who, along with everyone in Mundgod, were discovering the inexpensive services provided at the Dispensary (funded primarily by American donors separately from FOTSI). He is continually upgrading the services at this popular dispensary and gives better advice there than some doctors, although he always tries to get serious cases to good doctors whom he is continually seeking. Tashi is a real hero who evolves every year and has a lovely smile. This year he began a program to help elderly monks with regular blood pressure, glucose, and other tests as well as doctor checkups (at their homes!) and free or inexpensive medications. (Too bad we can't get something like this here!) Several FOTSI donors helped the Dispensary in 2003.

Doctors, First World Hazards (Health Insurance in the USA)

If you get sick away from home, you quickly remember how important doctors are. This year **Dr. Grattan Woodson** helped so much with understanding Gelek Tharchen's case, and I saw firsthand the great work that he and the other "**Flying Doctors and Nurses** from America" were doing. I was also very grateful for the Indian doctors who help the Tibetans so much. Most of these do a great service. Some (like some in America) are not good and dangerous to patients, due to incompetence and sometimes lack of resources. See the **Photo of Indian doctors** helping a

Tibetan patient in the lower right corner of the collage, with Dr. Woodson's **Photo** just up diagonally to left.

Without the **good doctors in Hubli and Bangalore**, FOTSI would be helpless in aiding our ailing sponsorees. I myself consulted **Dr. Pasang Norbu**, an excellent Tibetan doctor who has studied widely, including in the USA. He cautioned me when my swollen feet did not recover after my 4-day air/train trip to the Tibetan camp. Usually this swelling goes away after a few days in Mundgod. This time, after 3 weeks, my feet were still swollen. He asked if I were taking Hormone Replacement Therapy. After I said I was, he recommended I stop immediately, since blood clots can arise in this situation. I stopped the HRT and my feet quickly improved. It is possible he saved my life. His **Photo** is in the collage on the right side, 3rd row up.

When I returned to Boulder, I found that the University of Colorado (CU) had had a very **brief open enrollment period** for our health insurance without much reminder. I had remembered the old days, when if you didn't want to change anything, you didn't reply. So I missed the small window when our health insurance could be renewed. After two appeals we were still without protection in this land of unbelievable costs without health insurance. So in the last weeks before its demise, we rushed to get the checkups we'd long taken for granted but not done, and found several issues needing attention. The positive side was without that loss we wouldn't have discovered these health issues (not good!). **Remember your health insurance issues if you travel, and get regular checkups!**

Later, after complaints from many other retirees similarly left out, CU relented enough that we both got high deductible Catastrophic Only Health Insurance. That was a big relief in a country where medical treatment can wipe out a lifetime's savings. So here I give deep thanks to doctors, but add to the chorus concerning the need to do something here in the USA about our health benefits system. Some with health needs might find "outsourcing" doctor and pharmacy visits cheaper when traveling. This is NOT a criticism of doctors, but of our current system, which my own local doctor describes as irretrievably broken.

Updates (2003)

KT, the 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. This year he helped us tour the temple art that our sponsoree Pasang is learning as a profession. He had no trouble climbing the scary catwalk scaffolding that we both took to see the rooftop work. We celebrate his recovery!

Last year we mentioned a monk (Monk Z) who had had a difficult experience in **Jammu Kashmir** (a north Indian area overrun with Islamic militants and contested between Pakistan, India, and locals who'd like peace and autonomy). Monk Z ran a school for 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 was forced to close. He returned to south India. During my visit in 2003 I discovered he was quite uncomfortable. After he was given FOTSI medical funds, he found out he had a very large stone (about 2.5 inches long) in his bladder, most likely due to the highly mineralized water of Jammu to which he was not accustomed. This stone caused a lot of pain and bleeding. He had surgery in November. The stone was the largest the surgeons had ever seen and needed a more major operation than usual. He has recovered and wrote a warm letter to us (there were 10 of us who contributed for his surgery and care). He wrote, "**You have given me a new life.**"

Our contributions to the **Tso-Jhe Hospital** have continued to help 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. Due to his continuing success, Mr. Tenpa TK was asked to go to the **Kollegal Settlement** to upgrade the **Hospital** there. In 2003 the funds FOTSI sent to the **Dhondenling Van Thiel Hospital** there were used for badly needed **cataract surgeries**, which help people be more self-sufficient. **Thanks so much to the donors to the Hospitals!**

We helped **many** ill monks through our **Gungru Khangtsen Health Fund** and thank the donors to that very much appreciated project. Although we don't usually get involved in building projects, we donated a small amount towards the completion of the second story of a building housing monks. Their older building's second floor was **deemed unsafe**.

Upcoming Events—please come if you can!

There are marvelous events coming up in Boulder, Colorado, in late March 2004. There is a **reception and a chance to meet monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery at 6:30pm on March 26 at the September School in Boulder, and there is a performance by the monks at the Boulder Public Library Friday evening, March 27 at 7pm**. Net proceeds will be divided equally between the Gomang monks and the Tibetan Village Project, which is hosting these events. The monks will use the funds to establish a "Food Foundation" to ensure proper nourishment of the 1500 monks at Drepung Gomang Monastery; the Tibetan Village Project will use the funds to repair a bridge children need to cross near a poor village in Tibet. For more information feel free to contact FOTSI, or see www.gomang.org and www.tibetanvillageproject.org.

Sacred Arts of the Land of Snows: Please help in 2005

The "Sacred Arts of the Land of the Snows" tour will be very different from other foreign tours by Tibetan monks. This tour will feature exhibitions and demonstrations of intricate **Tibetan arts and craftwork** as well as interaction with the monks. There will be hands-on displays where visitors can learn something of sand mandala construction, mask making, butter sculpting and prayer flag printing, watching and questioning the artists at work. Stages of thangka painting will be shared. A display of some large items, beautiful, interesting, and unique to Gomang's tradition, will be included. The tour will involve programs about artistic traditions of various faiths. Everything will be explained carefully in English. Kristel Ouwehand, a Canadian teacher and artist who has lived and worked at Gomang for more than 6 years will help facilitate communication with the Tibetan monks, many of whom come from families who have been artists for generations.

One of the artists who will come to the USA on the Sacred Arts Tour is monk **Longtok Gyatso**, 35, who arrived in India in 1994 from Amdo, Tibet. His relatives in Tibet are nomads in the summer and farmers in the winter. Before Longtok became a monk at the age of 12, he was a shepherd who looked after the sheep. A brother makes applique thangkas. After his 16-day trip out of Tibet, Longtok went through the refugee center in Kathmandu to reach Drepung Gomang Monastery in south India. He studied thangka painting in Tibet from ages 17 to 24, and his ambition is to start a school to train young thangka painters, initially in India, and eventually, if possible, in Tibet. He joined the Art Tour to share the great artistic traditions of Tibet and Tibet's current situation, but he also looks forward to learning more about Western art. He is shown doing a traditional thangka painting in a **Photo** in the collage next to the construction photo.

The Tibetan political situation is still a main focus of concern of the tour (and of ours). The monks will share slides showing the history of Gomang Monastery--the beginning, struggles in Lhasa when the Chinese military came, the hardships of the original few monks who fled with the Dalai Lama to north India, the efforts to reestablish the monastery in south India in a new environment, climate, and amidst many new cultural influences. Former abbot, Geshe Tsultrim Phuntsok will tell his story, as he lived it, through each stage. **If you are interested in helping to set up a visit in Boulder or another city for this Sacred Arts of the Land of the Snows Tour, please contact Drepung Gomang Monastery through their website: www.gomang.org.**

Sharing with Seniors in Thornton Colorado

In 2003 FOTSI presented a slide show about Tibet (as well as FOTSI's work) at the Thornton Senior Center near Denver, Colorado. We also assembled a display of Tibetan items and crafts, enjoyed by many. **If you have activity ideas or suggestions, or you would like to host or attend a show about Tibetans and/or FOTSI's work, let us know.**

Priorities for FOTSI for 2004

All our projects contribute to the Tibetans. For those wishing to add to their sponsorships or invite friends to participate, we suggest **Medical Funds**, our **Scholarship Programs**, the **Self-Sufficiency Fund** (cows, etc.), the **Dre-Gomang School**, and/or the **Home for the Elderly (solar lighting)**. If you are already helping a person or project, your **continuing help** makes **big difference**. If you want to sponsor someone new, or you know someone who would, please contact FOTSI.

Please make your checks out to “FOTSI”. **Sometimes letters are slow coming from India (especially since 9/11)**. In general, if you expect to hear from FOTSI to receive a receipt or to check on anything, please contact FOTSI (Chela) by email, phone or regular mail. I have plans to revisit Mundgod, probably in November, 2004. If you are interested in teaching at the Drepung Gomang School, or if you want to work at a hospital in the Mundgod or Kollegal settlement, please contact us. Plans must be made very far in advance for any visit to a settlement, since these areas require special permits in addition to visas.

The Tibetans in India are pursuing life with great courage and effort. The successes in this newsletter are the result of **all FOTSI donors, and the hard work of Tibetans in the settlements who manage projects and funds on their end. THANK YOU ALL!** We are grateful to our FOTSI Board members, including Sherry Hart, Deborah Howard, Theresa Noland, and Paul Kunasz. Let’s celebrate the achievements and joys of our efforts!

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