



# TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

Spring Newsletter

February 2005

## TRAS ON THE MOVE!

TRAS is on the move in all directions! A new logo, a renewed purpose, an updated website and an exciting travelling Tibetan Festival are ready in time for the Tibetan New Year – Losar greetings to all our Tibetan friends and all our members.

But a word about the state of the world first: in our December newsletter, Joan Ford wrote in her Sponsorship Report about “the sad state of the world with wars and natural disasters”, and we published a report on the destitute children in Nepal. Little did we know that Boxing Day would bring the horror of the worst natural disaster in years, and we know many of you will have given generously to help the stricken tsumani survivors. The problems Nepal’s children were facing have increased enormously in the past two weeks. The country cut the telephone and internet connections for a week and the airport was closed, so it is difficult to know just how bad the situation is. But we are sure that frantic parents are begging the Buddha Academy to take their children in; there are more desperate Tibetan children needing care since the forced closure of the Tibetan Reception Centre for Refugees, and Dorje Namgyal, the Principal of the Buddha Academy must be worked off his feet trying to offer shelter to as many needy children as possible.

Other agencies are working hard in the tsumani area, and Canadians have poured their hearts and wallets out to help. But please, don’t let us forget the other needy children in the world – and in particular those whom TRAS is able to reach out to, with YOUR help. Our thanks to all our donors and sponsors for your past help. Let’s continue together to make a positive difference in the lives of these Nepalese, Tibetan and Indian children.

## OUR NEW LOGO



Our new logo has been designed by Scott Plumbe, who painted the vibrant portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his visit to Vancouver last April. Scott is now a Director of the Society. He chose a mountain for our

logo because the Himalayan region is the one constant that unifies all aspects of TRAS’s projects from past to present and into the future. Like the mountain, TRAS is strong, stable and timeless. One of TRAS’s greatest assets is the duration of its existence - so Scott incorporated the date TRAS was founded. The style of the logo owes much of its visual inspiration to early and mid 20th century poster art. The overall feel was designed to reflect the early beginnings of the organization as a pioneer in support and aid for the Himalayan region, and the strength of the Society in supporting positive and sustainable changes in the mountain communities. A conscious effort was made not to reflect cultural and religious motifs that might refer to a specific region, ethnic or religious group in the Himalayas, but to be inclusive of all.

## OUR RENEWED PURPOSE

As we explained in the Winter Newsletter, our renewed purpose is “to raise and distribute funds for projects to provide health care and education to children and youth in the Himalayan region, including Tibetan refugees, and to collect and disseminate information throughout Canada about conditions in the Himalayan region, including the state of Tibetan refugees.”

## OUR UPDATED WEBSITE

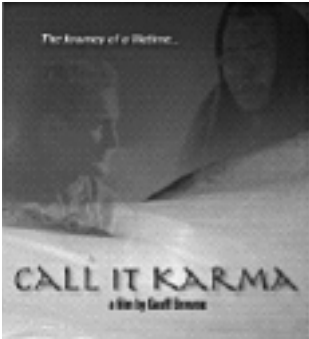
Visit [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca) to see our new look, designed by Directors Scott Plumbe and Russil Wvong, with help from Aranka Anema. On Page 7, you will find the updated ways to donate to TRAS - there is more information on the website or at the TRAS office.

### *In This Issue*

Tibetan Festival .....	2
A Visit to SHARE .....	3
MacLeod Ganj Clean .....	6
Sponsorship Report .....	7
Ways to Donate .....	7

## THE TRAVELLING TIBETAN FESTIVAL

Bringing Tibetan entertainment, food, handicrafts and an award winning documentary film to several locations in and around Vancouver. We hope to visit venues further afield later in the year. Share the enclosed postcard with friends who might be able to attend!



# Trans Himalayan Aid Society Presents the award winning documentary **"Call it Karma"**

**and an event of Tibetan music, art, food and fun!**

As the anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit to Vancouver last year draws nearer, TRAS and Vancouver's Tibetan community will celebrate the magic of Tibetan culture through a festival evening of film, art, food and music. Tibetan Cultural Festival will capture the hearts and minds of visitors as they view 'Call It Karma', an award winning film made by local director and producer Geoff Browne. The film, told with insight and humor, recounts the life story and journey of a Tibetan monk based in Vancouver who returns to his homeland for the first time in 7 years. Not long after Geoff Browne's first trip to Tibet he had a chance meeting with Tibetan monk Gyalten Rinpoche on a street in Vancouver. Their meeting and the friendship that followed inspired Geoff not only to accompany Rinpoche back to his village for a reunion after a six year absence, but also to retell Rinpoche's remarkable story about the pilgrimage of 1000 miles that he embarked upon, by foot, across the rooftop of the world.

Visit [www.callitkarmathemovie.com](http://www.callitkarmathemovie.com) for information about the film.

### Screenings Across Vancouver, the Islands and the Sunshine Coast

Sat. Feb 26/05 . . . . .	Vancouver MacMillan Space Center 6-10pm
Sat. March 05/05. . .	Bowen Island Gallery at Artisan Square 12-4pm
Sat. March 19/05. . .	Nanaimo Malaspina Univ College 6-10pm
Thur. March 24/05 .	Salt Spring ArtSpring Community Hall 6-10pm
Sat. April 16/05 . . . .	Gibsons Heritage Playhouse 12-5pm
Sun April 17/05 . . . .	Powell River Patricia Theatre 2-6pm

### VISITORS TO THE FESTIVAL

- Learn about traditional Tibetan painting techniques from renowned artist Kalsang Dawa, soon to exhibit at the Royal Victoria Museum
- Listen to Tibetan folk singing; taste the sweet and salty flavors of Tibetan foods; browse through handicrafts and jewelry
- Learn about development projects aimed at supporting the education and health care of children and youth in Tibet and other Himalayan regions.
- Geoff Browne will discuss the making of his film and his adventures in the heartland of Tibet.
- In compassion and understanding, this event is non-political. Come discover and embrace the mysticism and depth of Tibetan culture!

For information contact Trans Himalayan Aid Society  
 E-mail: [tras@portal.ca](mailto:tras@portal.ca)  
 Tel: 604-224-5133  
 Web: [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)

## A VISIT TO SHARE

### Manali, North India

by Jen Hales

Last July, I visited Manali in the North Indian state of Himachel Pradesh. Manali is approximately 13 hours by car from Delhi and is a tourist haven. The small town centre is dotted with hotels, restaurants, trekking/travel agencies and gift shops catering to tourists, both Indian and Western. Despite the overwhelming number of tourist establishments, the surrounding environment and topography is stunning – mountains, rivers, valleys, and traditional villages – making the reason for the number of tourist establishments clear. However, there is extreme poverty in the villages, and none of the benefits of the tourist trade spill over into helping the villagers.

SHARE is a grassroots NGO started by Ren Madan who is an individual for whom I have gained an incredible amount of respect and admiration. He is a progressive, practical thinker and doer with genuine concern for the local villages, one of which has been his and his wife's (Leo's) home for almost 20 years. I was particularly impressed by Ren's support of women and his efforts to challenge traditional patriarchal attitudes and practices. Sunita, SHARE's vice-president (and a woman), was my guide, showing me around many of SHARE's projects.

The main TRAS project which SHARE runs is the Immunization and Sanitation Project. The goals are to immunize 1600 children and build 350 toilets, to improve the health of the population. This is the third project co-sponsored by CIDA and TRAS. The first saw over 300 toilets built. The second saw as many toilets and also a family health plan started which hundreds of villagers joined. This third project has the added dimensions of immunization and a pilot garbage collection scheme. SHARE also runs a TRAS project to encourage environmental education.

### SHARE Immunization Program

I visited a government primary school in Gojara village near Manali where 2 of SHARE's community nurses were administering immunizations to the students and teachers. SHARE's immunization program is going well. The SHARE nurses were giving Hep B#2 shots to 33 children and 3 teachers. The first Hep B shots were administered in June, and the third will be given in



"Ouch!"

December, completing the round of Hep B for these children and teachers. SHARE nurses visit all 16 schools in the Nagar Block of Kullu District. The goal is to immunize all primary children in the Block. SHARE has now covered almost all the schools, including private schools. SHARE returns to schools as new children enter. Families pay SHARE a fee for the shots. Each shot costs 30Rs per child and 80Rs per adult. Those who are mem-



Waiting their turn

## A VISIT TO SHARE (CONTINUED)

bers of the family health plan (another initiative of the TRAS-SHARE project) pay 20Rs per child and 60Rs per adult, and SHARE pays the remaining costs.

SHARE will begin administering typhoid, MMR and diphtheria vaccinations in the near future. They were waiting to find a doctor who could be on-site while the vaccines are administered. Recently Dr. Sheila Verghese, a doctor from an organization called CHARMS (Community Health and Rural Medicine Society) agreed to help SHARE. Dr. Sheila also teaches the health workers once a week, testing them every 2 to 3 weeks. Once a week, she goes with a dentist to schools, so SHARE will fit immunizations in with her visits, as well as hold special immunization camps (4-6 per year) for people living in remote villages.

Ren explained that the immunization program and SHARE's health education are having a positive impact on communities. The mortality rates have decreased and fewer people are going to hospitals for typical diseases. SHARE health workers educate villagers on safe drinking water, nutrition, heart health, and the dangers of smoking and alcohol. However, health education is a very slow process, and change is gradual. SHARE also gives elderly people asthma inhalers at concessional rates

### SHARE Toilet/Sanitation Program

The Nagar Block has approximately 100 villages. 40 of these villages now have SHARE toilets. I visited 2 villages where SHARE has built toilets. This is the third toilet project which TRAS has supported, and with nearly 1000 toilets built, the villagers are now coming to SHARE to ask for help with toilets. SHARE leaves the villagers to design and build their own toilets, and sells them the materials at a reduced amount thanks to TRAS' financial support. The 'typical' SHARE toilet has a septic tank, or pit, covered with iron angles and flat stones. Some families have taken the initiative to use the flat land on top of the stones to grow vegetables, thus providing families with a nutritious food source. Those wanting more 'modern' toilets have incorporated flush toilets and/or an adjoining bathing room. Sunita told me that the new generation of families in general want toilets, and young people are starting to move out of extended family homes to build new houses with a toilet. She expressed that this is positive.

SHARE conducts ongoing monitoring of toilets to research ways in which to make the designs more efficient both in terms of labor and cost. The health workers also monitor the condition of the toilets, and encourage families to care for them properly.

In the villages I visited, most of the toilets were built by SHARE/TRAS. The government has built a few, but there is no follow-up program to ensure good maintenance. A few villagers have even been inspired to build their own toilets! 15 or 16 homes in each village did not yet have toilets, either because of lack of land or because the families still need motivating. SHARE continues its policy of encouragement and health education

Sunita explained that villages that do not have toilets are much dirtier and have worse sanitation problems than those with toilets. The villages I saw appeared to be very clean. Ren is hoping to enlarge this project to cover the remaining 60 villages in the Nagar Block. This will depend on future funding.



Plain or fancy, the toilets mean cleaner, healthier villages.



## SHARE Environmental Education Program – funded by the TRAS Barry Leach Memorial Fund

SHARE has started eco-clubs in several schools in Manali. As well as educating students about the importance of conserving the environment, SHARE hopes to gain a commitment from parents through their children to become more ecologically/environmentally-conscious. SHARE has also held environment rallies in town, campaigned to reduce plastics, and promoted the separation of garbage. In a few areas, local people are separating garbage, but it is a slow process. SHARE has found that shopkeepers and tourists – both Indian and Western – continue to throw garbage on the ground. It seems that many tourists adopt the habit of throwing garbage on the ground or in rivers in places like Manali, justifying it on the basis that local people do it, so why shouldn't they. I was surprised to learn this given the amount of environmental education many of us receive in the West and my assumption that many Westerners 'should know better', and was disturbed that tourists would be such a part of the problem.

Lack of garbage management, separation and recycling, and the high use of plastic (primarily plastic packaging) are some of the biggest environmental problems Manali faces. SHARE finds its biggest challenge is in educating people and changing attitudes.

I visited Dar-ul-fazl Children's Home, a European-supported/funded orphanage with a school attached. The home has 90 children from age 3 to 20 years of age. Sunita and I met with the teacher in charge of the SHARE eco-club. The school is currently doing 2 projects with students:

i. Worm composting and gardening:

The worm compost is one year old, and is 'thriving'. It has been a successful project. Because of the compost created, the school no longer needs to buy cow dung as manure, so is saving money. All the children participate in maintaining the worm composting and are responsible for digging, weeding, planting and composting the gardens. The students primarily grow flowers, and some cucumbers.

ii. Garbage separation

The school, under SHARE's initiative, started a program of garbage separation, but is having difficulty



Worm composting leads to great gardens.

keeping it going. The teacher explained that lack of garbage collection and separation is a problem. However, the children do throw garbage into bins as they clean the grounds.

There is not much in the Indian curriculum for environmental education. I felt that the teachers need more concrete and practical activities they can do with their children. The teacher and I discussed some ideas, such as



Cloth bags say 'Join us – no plastic bags.'

---

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

having the children print the environmental message on SHARE's cloth bags. The teacher was interested in this, particularly as an activity the children could do during the long winter holiday – being an orphanage, most children do not 'go home' for the holidays, and the orphanage has to find ways to keep them occupied. Sunita said she would follow up this idea.

Delhi Public School in Manali also runs a SHARE eco-club. Students have made cloth shopping bags, and used the left-over cloth to make smaller drawstring bags to hold dried foods. The students have then sold the bags to their parents and others. A third school made cloth bags to sell to trekking agencies, which spreads the environmental message even further, potentially reaching tourists/trekkers who are certainly contributing to the garbage problem in Manali.

I think teacher workshops in EE would be useful and appreciated. (Editor's note: a few years ago, TRAS sponsored two environmental education workshops for Tibetan teachers. These were extremely successful. We will try to pass the content on to SHARE)

The problem is huge, but Ren is determined to battle on. SHARE has been trying to organize a volunteer garbage separation and removal system in the villages across the river from Manali. Ren believes that, through networking with other NGOs, SHARE could organize some garbage management, but the process is difficult and slow. Ren has also been looking into getting a better quality, low cost incinerator (better than polluting the ground) and the possibility of compacting garbage and sending it to the plains for recycling. Ren will try to network with other NGOs, because the human resources of a single NGO are too few to work alone.

SHARE will also be working with trekking agencies on environmentally conscious and sensitive ways to run their businesses. SHARE has already sold its cloth bags to agencies, and will begin a broader environmental education program in the near future. Ren told me about a Mountaineering Institute that caters to approximately 18,000 school children from cities all over India each year. SHARE sees great potential in educating these children about the environment.

---

## TIBETANS KEEP MCLEOD GANJ CLEAN!

An article in the January Tibetan Review is good news! "McLeod Ganj, the town where most of the Tibetans in Dharamsala live, heaved a big sigh of relief when the local Tibetan Welfare Office (TWO) won back the contract to keep the area clean. TWO had the contract for the last ten years, but it went out of its hand three months ago when a private contractor won the bid. However this led to garbage keeping on piling up everywhere because the private contractor restricted himself only to keeping the streets swept. Complaints kept coming about it until matters threatened to get out of hand. As a result TWO was given back the contract, and as a result, its army of Green Workers are back in action to keep the town clean again. TWO started the cleaning project in 1994, initially as a voluntary project."

TRAS is delighted to see this outcome. In 1993 TRAS sponsored a large project with the Tibetans in Dharamsala, training environmental instructors. They did nearly all their practicum work in McLeod Ganj and worked in cooperation with the TWO Green Workers,

their Green Shop which sold water in recycled plastic bottles, and with the Tibetan Women's Association which sold cloth bags and put up posters in the schools. Tenzin Atisha, in charge of the TRAS project, was keen to get a truck and take over the municipal garbage collection, rather than just leaving it at the side of the road for the monkeys to spread around. He had found recycling outlets and arranged for unemployed Tibetan youths to do the pickups and deliveries. It is heartwarming to see that these efforts paid off and that the Tibetans are now officially in charge!

### THE 43rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF TRAS

The AGM will be held at the  
Lutheran Campus Centre, Vancouver,  
on Wednesday, April 27, 2005.

All members are invited to attend. Details will be sent to members in the Greater Vancouver area, or may be obtained from the TRAS Office

## SPONSORSHIP REPORT

by Joan Ford.

My thanks to all our sponsors who have paid their sponsorship dues for 2005. If you have not yet sent in your payment, please can you do so before the end of February. The first quarterly payments go to the children early in March. If, for some reason, you are unable to continue sponsoring your child, please let the TRAS office know as soon as possible, so that we can try to find another sponsor to care for the child. Thank you. Here are case histories from three schools which take in needy Tibetan children. We know of many more like them.

**Tsering Youdon.** She is a 14 year old girl from Kham Bawa in Tibet. Last April, she joined the Tibetan Children's Village school in Suja which was set up to help newcomers from Tibet. The teenagers are put in a special class for 2 years, because many of them have had no schooling previously. They are

then tested and upgraded to a higher class or vocational training, depending on their aptitude. Tsering's father and mother are simple farmers, with 4 children. Her brother is a monk. Tsering was able to go to boarding school for the primary grades in Tibet, but there was no money to continue further. Knowing the value of education, she decided with her parents' blessing to escape to India. She travelled with 14 other people, mostly monks. It took almost a month of walking to reach Nepal. Luckily none of them fell ill or was captured. She misses her family, but is doing well with her lessons. Her future ambition is to become a good politician in the future free Tibet.

**Birdos Tamang** belongs to a poor family. He has two elder sisters and one younger brother. The family lives in Sindhupalchok district which lies in the eastern part of Nepal. Birdos is the only school going child in his family. His elder brother and sister had never had

the opportunity to go to school. Birdos's father is often sick and cannot do much work. His mother works in the field for other people. The family has no other means of earning so it is impossible to send their children to the school. Seeing this poor condition one of the village headmen had pity on them and brought Birdos down to Kathmandu and requested help. He is in class VI at Buddha Memorial School.

**Tenzin Choesang** is a 6 year old boy who comes from the village of Kaza in the remote, rocky Spiti Valley, where life is very hard. He goes to the Rinchen Zangpo Society School in Spiti, along with his older brother. His father is a drawing teacher and his mother works as a seasonal labourer. Their

salaries are not enough to pay for school fees, so the School is looking for a sponsor for this active little boy.

**Tenzin Lobsang** is another active boy, 5 years old, who also lives in the Spiti Valley in northern India. He has one older sister. His father is working temporarily in an office while his mother looks after the family. There is no money left over for education, so the Spiti School is looking for a sponsor to help him.

### WAYS TO DONATE

TRAS is happy to announce more ways to donate to the Society, to help the Himalayan children and youth. TRAS continues to accept cheques, of course, but if you wish to use your credit card, please go to the secure site run by [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org), or contact the TRAS Office. TRAS can accept gifts of property, stocks and securities, and gifts In Honour of someone special. Leaving a legacy could be an ongoing contribution. Do you know a school which would do a fundraiser for the children of the Himalayas? Visit [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca) or phone the office at 604-224-5133 to learn more.

**Thank you!**



# TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

## Tras Executive

Patron ..... Mrs. Dorothea Leach  
 President ..... Dr. Marion Tipple  
 Vice-President ..... Ms. Abby Fitch  
 Secretary .....

Treasurer ..... Ms. Gabriela Sava  
 Sponsorship ..... Dr. Joan Ford  
 Project Director ..... Dr. Lynn Beck

## Trans - Himalayan Newsletter

Editor ..... Daphne Hales

### TRAS Office

5885 University Blvd.  
 Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1K7  
 Programme Manager - Aranka Anema

Tel: 604-224-5133  
 Fax: 604-676-2554  
 e-mail: tras@portal.ca  
 TRAS website: www.tras.ca



## DIRECTORS

Dr. Frank Beck	Dr. Videsh Kapoor
Bill Haberl	Scott Plumbe
Daphne Hales	Peter Roberts
Jennifer Hales	Brian Sheffield
Heather Hamilton-Wright	Russil Wvong
Georgina Henderson	

## Trans - Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS)

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

### Possible Additional Donations:

- Annual Donation of \$360 for the "Child Development & Education Project" at a residential school or in a settlement .....
- Donation to the General Fund or Project of your choice .....
- Other Donations (eg: gifts of property, stocks, In Honour, legacy) .....

TOTAL \$

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts may be made by credit card, see [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca), or phone the TRAS office, 604-224-5133.

Or write your address and postal code on your cheque and mail to:

**TRAS Office - 5885 University Blvd.  
 Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1K7**