A MOMENTOUS GIFT

At this year’s annual World Peace Ceremony in Bodh Gaya, India, one thousand complete sets of the Narthang editions of the Kanjur, the words of the Buddha, and the Tanjur, commentaries by realized masters, will be given away. The 102 volume Narthang Kanjur and the 225 volume Tanjur contain teachings that reveal how to free oneself and all beings from suffering. Whether these books are studied by lamas in monasteries or placed on family altars, they are considered the most sacred of objects by Tibetans.

Before 1959, when Tibetans could still study the Buddha’s words in their homeland, access to the Kanjur and Tanjur was quite rare. For centuries the books had to be copied by hand, and even after printing techniques based on woodblock carvings were developed in the 15th century, few monasteries had sets. Today, copies of the Narthang are available, but they sell for $18,000, putting them out of reach to most schools and practitioners. With this year’s distribution, monasteries all over the Himalayan region will have copies in their libraries.

Due to our desire to support all lineages, the Narthang edition is being given away to high lamas in each of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In this way we hope to bring the teachings of the Buddha back into the center of study and practice from an original source.

Lama Palzang, a Tibetan who lives and works in the Nyingma community in America, has explained that the Narthang Kanjur and Tanjur contain the foundation for meditation practices that are widespread but not fully understood in the West. Speaking to the Tibetan Aid Project staff, Lama Palzang urged the importance of funding this project. The communities in exile, as well as Buddhist communities worldwide, rely on these teaching to keep the lineage of realization alive. Also being distributed this year at Bodh Gaya are 25 volumes of Collected Works by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), 20 volumes of Logic and Epistemology texts for the monasteries and nunneries, and a beloved collection on Mind Training with texts by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, Gyalsey Tokme, Kongtrul, Longchenpa, and Patrul that will be distributed to the entire assembly.

Just as 2,500 years ago
the Buddha rose from the bodhi tree
to teach the Dharma,
this January, his words will spread
from that same place,
enriching the lives of all beings.
Carried home on the backs of devoted practitioners
climbing mountains and crossing streams,
these texts touch thousands of people
refugees, monks, nuns,
and lay communities alike.

SHANTARAKSHITA — GREAT ABBOTT OF EARLY TIBET

In the eighth century, with Buddhism flourishing in India, the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen invited Shantaraksita to establish Buddhism in the Land of the Snow. Shantaraksita in turn suggested the King invite Padmasambhava.

Continued on next page
With great compassion, wisdom, and power, these three, known to Tibetans as the King, the Abbott, and the Teacher, established Buddhism in Tibet. They built Samye, the first monastery in Tibet, and there ordained the first Tibetan monks. Samye is also where many of the Buddhist texts were translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan.

Shantarakshita’s Tattvasamgraha, a remarkably clear and penetrating work in thirty chapters, surveys the fundamental principles underlying all major Buddhist philosophical viewpoints. In it he demonstrates how to define truth, eliminating confusion and resolving disputes. His systematic analysis creates a grand architecture of philosophical understanding where every stage of inquiry is a step on the path toward omniscience. The Tattvasamgraha, along with its extensive commentary by Shantarakshita’s student, Kamalashila, will be given away at the World Peace Ceremony in 2010.

Olivia has supported others in making planned gifts to TAP by hosting events at her Berkeley hills home. She also serves on TAP’s planned giving committee.

She compares meditating to shaping clay into pots. “Both involve centering, discipline, and breath awareness. In my twelve years studying at Nyingma Institute, my life has taken a wonderful turn. I’ve increased awareness of whatever activity is at hand and the importance of how I do it. Most importantly, I feel that my sensitivity for others has grown.”

She encourages others not to think of “estate planning” as something only for those with large wealth. “People don’t have to have a large estate to make an estate gift. Even a modest bequest allows us to continue to express our lifetime values. We can give in the direction our hearts are flowing even after we die.”

TAP is pleased to have Olivia Hurd as a member of our Wheel of Dharma Society. For more information, contact Rosalyn White at 510-848-4238, or rosalynw@tibetanaidproject.org.
CELEBRATING OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY

The Tibetan Aid Project is delighted to be celebrating forty years of supporting the Tibetan people’s efforts to preserve their culture. Judy Rasmussen, an early director, recalls, “In 1969 Tarthang Tulku often asked those who came to him for advice and teachings to send financial help to his friends to help them purchase food, clothing, schooling and medical supplies. He was direct in stating the need, but also humble, and always compelling. Some of the friends we supported back then are now among the most active and learned teachers preserving the Tibetan tradition today.”

By 1974, the Tibetan Aid Project was an incorporated non-profit managing the funds for the highly successful Pen Friend program. This program connected more than 2,000 Westerners, contributing $10 to $15 per month, with Tibetan refugees. Judy reflects that even forty years later, some of these cross-cultural friendships continue—a testament to the lives that were affected by these small but significant donations.

Also in the 1970s, TAP started the Jataka Tale Children’s Book series, adapted from teachings of the Buddha and produced in collaboration with Dharma Publishing. Local volunteers contributed the illustrations. Even today, every book sold yields a small royalty payment to help support the Tibetan people.

Judy explained the next step: “In the 1980s, as the Tibetan community in India became more established and could meet their own immediate needs, there was a shift to supporting the rebuilding of monasteries and nunneries. Together with the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center, the Tibetan Aid Project began sponsoring large-scale ceremonies and offerings to monks and nuns to help them keep their traditions alive.”

In 1989, the first World Peace Ceremony in Bodh Gaya, India took place. That year 800 texts were given to the 500 participants. Since then, the World Peace Ceremony has blossomed, creating an ideal venue for distributing books to the more than 10,000 people attending annually. From Bodh Gaya, the books are carried back to over 3,000 monasteries, nunneries, and lay communities throughout the region. In 2010, we will help with production and shipping costs for over half a million more books, making a total of 3 million texts distributed over the last two decades.

As we celebrate our fortieth anniversary, we are fortunate enough to be moving into a new office space in downtown Berkeley, located at 2210 Harold Way. We share our new building, owned by our sister organization, with Nyingma Trust, an organization headed by Judy Rasmussen that is dedicated to sustaining the community of long-term Western Dharma practitioners founded by Tarthang Tulku. Colorful Tibetan prayer flags are also being sewn in the building, and Dharma Publishing will be opening a storefront bookstore on October 10. This new building is expected to be Tibetan Aid Project’s permanent home. We invite you to visit us to see our new offices, learn more about our projects, and help us commemorate our forty years of helping the Tibetan people.

MANGALAM RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF BUDDHIST LANGUAGES

This July, the Tibetan Aid Project welcomed a new sister organization, the Mangalam Research Center. Mangalam, which means “fortunate blessings,” occupies the building that adjoins the Tibetan Aid Project’s new home in downtown Berkeley.

The purpose of the Mangalam Research Center is to lay the groundwork for accurate translation of the precious texts of Buddhism into Western languages. The first step is to review existing translation terminology. Students, scholars, and perhaps eventually lamas and monks will work on creating a database that can be shared with other serious students. The Mangalam Research Center houses a spacious library, as well as classrooms, conference facilities, and a beautiful temple.

Events & Updates

Every time you use GoodSearch, powered by Yahoo search engine, the Tibetan Aid Project receives a penny. Just as every book makes a difference, every penny adds up. Thank you for all of your support, big and small.
INTERVIEW WITH ANETTE KOEGLER

Tibetan Aid Project supports the Yeshe De program, which prints and publishes texts sent to the annual World Peace Ceremony in India. Anette Koegler is the bindery manager. She has her Master's degree in Tibetan Studies from Humboldt University in Germany and traveled in Tibet for two years. While growing up in Germany, she was exposed to the problems in Tibet through her mother, who works with Tibetan refugees.

What has kept you committed to Yeshe De for seven years?

The work at Yeshe De is challenging but very rewarding, and meaningful on many levels: it is essential for preserving the Tibetan cultural heritage. Only 2% of the texts we are printing have been translated yet. A huge treasury of knowledge needs to be preserved for future practice and translation. Also, the work is very inspiring. Everyone participating in it greatly benefits from working on the texts, as do all beings. I feel there is nothing more worthwhile I could do with my time.

What is the work like and what do you enjoy most?

I enjoy working with my hands, because the results are very tangible. And I like working within a team of dedicated volunteers of various backgrounds. One reason why I enjoy this project is because there is learning and growth on so many levels. I notice it in myself and everybody around me. Together, we work on this huge project with goals that seem undoable if you calculate the numbers, but which are doable if you engage them without fear. By setting big goals and doing a little bit more than we think we can, we are challenging the limits of what we think is possible. The whole project is set up so we come to look at ourselves closely and learn to transform our minds. Knowing what can be done if a small, dedicated group of people work together in this way keeps me going.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, Linnea and Rick Christiani attend the Taste & Tribute dinner in San Francisco. They generously donate enough to sponsor a library’s worth of Tibetan books. They have also volunteered their time at Dharma Publishing to help produce the books. While working on the books, they often wondered who would end up turning the pages and value the wisdom they contain.

Their questions were answered in the spring of 2008, while trekking the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal. After crossing an 18,000 ft. pass called Thorong La, they descended into the Mustang district, a high, windy area surrounded by 8,000 meter peaks and dotted with villages accessible only on foot or horseback. After 16 days on the trail, they arrived in the village of Marpha. Stupas and Mani walls marked the way, and prayer flags fluttered from rooftops above. At the local monastery they were honored by an audience with the head lama in his private study.

There they spotted a book on the lama’s table, published by Dharma Publishing! They could only imagine the journey it had made to get to this remote place. The Lama grew excited at the mention of Dharma Publishing and was clearly thrilled to learn of their association. The book on the table was bound Western style, but the Lama took down some traditional cloth-wrapped texts from a shelf as well. He explained that he studied from these books every day and used them to prepare his Dharma lessons for his students. “I am so glad to have met you,” he repeated. “These books are the most important things in my life.”