

## Message from His Holiness the Dalai Lama

I congratulate the fact that a section of Tibetan intellectuals have established the Guild of Tibetan Writers. In the past, Tibet had a galaxy of consummate intellectuals, whose wisdom-rich works on multifarious aspects of learning served as many beautiful flowers, providing inexhaustible inspiration to the intelligent audience.

However, since the change of 1959 the Tibetan culture has suffered massive damage and decline. The older generation intellectuals, who managed to escape to the freedom of foreign countries, are gradually dying. At the same time, the younger generation Tibetans are coming under the influence of foreign customs and the immediate need of having to learn foreign languages. As a result, they find it difficult to develop the courage to promote multi-faceted works in our own customs and language. Therefore, an organization link the Guild of Tibetan Writers is the need of time.

The Guild has set itself the aims and objectives of preserving Tibetan religion and culture, of making critical assessments of the very many documents that are churned out to distort Tibetan history, and of offering recognition to our accomplished writers. These, I believe, are worthy causes, needing our attention. It is also vital to preserve our traditional values of good human beings and to develop a group of young Tibetan writers who can contribute a new chapter of heart-winning works on the history of Tibet.

With my prayer for the spontaneous fulfillment of the wish of this noble group,

The Dalai Lama

The thirteenth day of the twelfth moon in the Earth Tiger year of seventeenth Rabjung, Corresponding to 29 January 1999

## INTRODUCTION

Hello friends of Tibet! Welcome to the first English newsletter by the Guild of Tibetan Writers! Simply by picking this up, you have shown yourself to be one who is devoted to freedom of expression, one who is interested in opening your mind and the minds of others, one who teaches and practices compassion and understanding, and one who is dedicated to making a difference on this planet. Thus, we thank you for taking the time to read this. By doing so, you will educate yourself on the current situation in Tibet and learn how our newly founded organization aims to help keep the Tibetan history, culture, and religion alive.

Just by reading this brochure and becoming aware of our current situation, you are not only contributing to the freedom of Tibetans, you are also helping the protection of the freedom of all people around the world.

### A Brief History

At the local tea stall by his new home, a young man sits absorbed in deep philosophical banter with his friends. The sun shines down on his animated face and the cool mountain air tousles his hair. Behind him, eagles soar in wind currents and clouds meander past distant snow-peaked mountains. And although music drifts by and the sound of their voices chattering in some remote language is heard, surrounding it all is a deep, all-pervading silence. Within this expansive stillness, herein lies the sound of freedom. For the young man at the tea-stall was not always able to speak like this. This freedom of speech is new for him, and for all his countrymen who have withstood many hardships in order to come to India and resume a "normal" life. Before the Communist China's invasion, the Tibetans lived a very peaceful and simple existence under the leadership

of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It can be said that the Tibetans are the most spiritually evolved and socially responsible society in the world. About 20% of the Tibet's population then were said to be monks and nuns, some beginning their intensive spiritual studies at age of seven. The single aim of each citizen and monk (including their leader) is to help end the suffering of all sentient beings. Though the Tibetans were far from being considered a developed country before the communist Chinese came, they led a simple and happy life.

The Chinese annexed Tibet under the guise of wanting a more progressive and modern Tibet. The resistance of-



*A Tibetan woman during a peaceful demonstration for the Tibetan cause,*

fered by the ill-trained Tibetan soldiers and local Tibetans was no match for the war-hardened People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, the PLA swiftly took over Tibet and forced the Tibetan government to sign the Seventeen Point Agreement under duress. With the invasion of Tibet, the environment-friendly attitude and spirituality of the Tibetan people was trampled upon by a consumerist and

materialistic Chinese communist ideology.

The invasion has been followed by widespread environmental destruction of Tibet, resulting in deforestation, grassland degradation, uncontrolled mining, the extinction of wildlife, nuclear waste dumping, soil erosion, landslides and other perils. Beijing continues to extract various natural resources without any environmental safeguards and as a result, Tibet faces an environmental crisis, the ramifications of which will be felt far beyond its borders.

But of all the things that have been exploited and taken away, the most valuable treasure, which has been ripped from the hearts of all the Tibetans, is their freedom to practice their faith and lead their life as they choose. More than 1.2 million Tibetans are said to have died in Tibet since 1949 as a result of the political persecution, imprisonment, torture and famine. Over 6000 of Tibet's religious and other cultural centers have been destroyed. Today, although Beijing contends that religious freedoms exist, much of what tourists are able to see is orchestrated and watched closely by the Chinese authorities. There is a ban on photos of H. H. the Dalai Lama and anyone found possessing a photo of Him is taken into custody, questioned and punished.

Around 1996, the Chinese authorities started campaigns like "Patriotic Education," "Strike Hard," and "Spiritual Civilization," which were tailored to undermine Tibetan religion, culture, language and political activism. Among the restrictions one could not speak to foreigners, possess publications produced by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile or participate in peaceful protest demonstrations. The "Strike Hard" campaign also was implemented throughout China to wipe out corruption, but in Tibet the authori-

ties used it to enforce the correct "political ideology."

Many monks, nuns and lay people languish in prisons today, incarcerated for exercising their human rights. They are imprisoned because they have been caught or suspected of being involved in peaceful protest marches or demonstrations demanding basic political and religious freedoms, for not toeing the official line in religious matters or even for the possession of photos or materials from the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Even protests on environmental issues have been banned and participation in such protests will result in torture and prison terms. The Chinese authorities have restricted the movement of outsiders to certain places, and the have forbidden the discussion of environmental and economic issues.

Tibetan children, some as young as nine years old, have been detained and tortured by Chinese authorities. It is reported that children arrested for "political" offenses were routinely tortured, detained in deplorable conditions, often without notice to their families, and held for months or even years without a trial or access to a lawyer.

Meanwhile in India, the Tibetan culture is being maintained



*The 'Best Writer Award' being presented during the first meeting of Guild of Tibetan Writers.*

in small communities dispersed all over the country. In the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India exists a small hilltop town called Dharamsala, where the Tibetan Government-in-Exile operates and where the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, H. H. the Dalai Lama also resides. When it was evident that the compromise with the communist Chinese under the Seventeen Point Agreement of 1951 no longer worked, the situation became so tense that everyone in Tibet feared for the safety of their beloved leader. In 1959, H.H. the Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet. About 85,000 Tibetan refugees followed him into exile and sought refuge primarily in India and Nepal. The Tibetan man at the Indian tea-stall by his home laughs heartily. Who would have known by looking at him that only ten years ago, at the age of 20, this man was imprisoned in a Chinese jail? Who would have guessed that this man had endured interrogation for hours by the police? And withstood the body-quaking smacks of an electric baton that left him unconscious? Endured the scalding burns on naked skin from scorching hot metal in the dead of winter? These ruthless beatings and death-threats! Why? All because he was suspected of placing "Free Tibet" posters on some of the local buildings. A friend of his was caught with a tape of a speech given by the Dalai Lama during the Noble Peace Prize ceremony in 1989. His friend doesn't live today to tell the story because he was tortured to death in custody.

The Tibetan man at the tea stall is lucky to breathe in the clean mountain air, to discuss politics with his friends, and to smile once again. In short, he is lucky to be alive. But he will probably never see his family in Tibet again, for if he returns home, he will be killed. This young man understands the meaning of freedom.

This man is one of the writers for the Guild. But his story

is not unique. Almost every Tibetan here in India has a similar life-story and will modestly share it, with a shy smile to mask the pain that these memories evoke. Their freedom to talk and write about their personal experiences and histories is very important in order to retain the beauty of this dynamically unique culture and to tell the fellow Tibetans and the world at large how a nation of peaceful loving and defenseless people is facing extinction. Here in India, they have the ability to record and research their history, free from Chinese governmental scrutiny. Without these voices, their history will be re-written by the hands of a more powerful source, and the essence of their culture will be lost forever.

## THE GUILD OF TIBETAN WRITERS



*The Chinese Democracy educate Mr. Xue Wei and Guild members discussing Sino-Tibet issues.*

On March 19, 1999, the Guild of Tibetan Writers was founded with the blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Guild is an organization of all Tibetan writers who live in exile. It

is registered under the Indian Society Registration Act XXI, 1860 and it is a certified non-profit association (Registration number 1188/99).

The Guild of Tibetan writers is an apolitical, cultural, and educational organization that supports nearly one hundred Tibetan poets, librettists, editors, authors, researchers, and writers. Our broad range of subjects includes Tibetan Bud-

dhism, culture, history, and medical traditions as well as other disciplines. Most of our members have recently escaped from Tibet, so they bring with them a rich resource of information about the current situation in the country. In addition, the five-member office team often travels to different schools, monasteries, and settlements in the surrounding areas to correct misinformation about Tibetan History and to interact with the local Tibetans in exile to get a feel of contemporary Tibetan life and culture in exile. Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of International Pen, the Guild aims to conduct objective research on the history of Sino-Tibetan relations as well as to protect freedom of expression and to work for the development of the Tibetan Community.

Guilds of writers exist in all countries and play important roles in social advancement. The writers in Tibet, however, live under Chinese Government control, denied of freedom of expression. Thus, the writers in Tibet are not able to make significant contributions for the social development of Tibet.

So, the Tibetan writers in exile scattered throughout the Tibetan Diaspora, in the light of freedom they enjoy, have taken the responsibility to conduct research on the history of Tibet to counter the politically motivated and distorted information churned out by the Chinese government.

Since the commencement of our Guild, we have published two books on the history of Tibet. In addition, we produce a monthly journal, *Chitsok Melong* (Community Mirror) in which we distribute over 4000 copies per month throughout the entire Tibetan community residing in India and Nepal.

On March 19, 2000, we had our first three-day conference in which all our guild members and local Tibetan teachers met together to discuss the evolution and progress of the Tibetan language.

## OUR MISSION

We have formed the Guild of Tibetan Writers in order to

- Preserve the religion and culture of Tibet,
- Provide economic support to needy Tibetan writers,
- Promote friendship and cooperation among Tibetan writers and to pool their energy for a common cause

## OUR ACTIVITIES FOR THE FUTURE

As the guild develops, we would like to broaden the scope of our production to help disseminate the true history of Tibet throughout the world. This will help to ensure that the correct information on our culture and history flourishes. At present, our annual expenditure is at the bare minimum amount required to keep these projects going. However, as the Guild develops, we would like to launch several new projects. Some of these include:

- Publishing books of objective research and analysis on the history of Tibet in order to counter the Chinese government's propaganda.
- Translating material relating to Sino-Tibetan relations from Chinese, English, and other languages into Tibetan as well as translating important historical works of Tibetan scholars into major international languages.

- ❑ Instituting an award for Tibetan and foreign writers who have made important contributions to Tibetan culture.
- ❑ Searching for meaningful life stories and producing biographies.
- ❑ Providing training specifically for young Tibetan women writers.
- ❑ Presenting Tibetan history in the form of a picture book for children and semi-literate adults.

The members of the Guild have already composed several works that merely await financial assistance for publication. Furthermore, the translation of this historical research into other languages is of great importance. Of course, future expansion cannot continue without support from others. We have a very modest aim to publish at least one book a year. Currently, our only sources of revenue are donations from governments and non-governmental organizations, as well as membership dues. Those wishing to join the guild may send in their applications and works for scrutiny by our Board of Directors. If the Board decides to accept the application, they will be provided with a certificate recognizing their membership. The Board of Directors is elected by the guild membership for five-year terms.

The Board of Directors is entrusted with the responsibility of supervising the work of the guild's three sections: the Research Section, the Translation Section and the Editorial Section. The employees of the guild need not necessarily be its working committee members. Similarly, the working committee members need not necessarily be its employees.

Your help in assisting this noble cause is highly appreci-

ated. In doing so, you will be a catalyst of truth, justice, and freedom. You will help unshackle the chains of oppression that bind this country. Help let the light of truth shine down and banish the darkness of propaganda. The future of humanity lies entirely in our own hands.

Thank you for your kind heart and auspicious generosity.



*Staff of office of the Guild of Tibetan writers.  
(Front row from left: Mr. Karing Thupgyam, Mr. Labrang Kelsang.  
Back row from left: Mr. Kelsang Tsondue, Mr. Kathup Gyal, Miss Dekyi Dolma.)*

Please send any contributions to:

*The Guild of Tibetan Writers  
Session Road, Dharamsala  
Distt. Kangra,  
H.P. INDIA  
Tel: 01892-26215  
Email: [Chitsokmelong@hotmail.com](mailto:Chitsokmelong@hotmail.com)*



བོད་ཀྱི་རྩོམ་པ་པོའི་མཐུན་ཚོགས།

The guild of Tibetan writers

*"DEDICATED TO PRESERVING A PRECIOUS CULTURE"*



*The chairman of the Cabinet, addressing the conference during the 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Guild of Tibetan Writers*