

NOMINATED • Pages 16–41

JETSUN PEMA



It is winter when Gelek, 12, escapes from Tibet to India. He walks over the mountains in canvas shoes in the deep snow, and after just a few days his feet begin to hurt. They swell up and burn like fire.

Gelek cries and wants to turn back, but it is impossible. His father has paid a man who is leading a group of refugees over the Himalayas. The adults look at his black speckled feet and say that he has frostbite. He could lose his feet. That night they take turns carrying Gelek on their backs, but he must walk the rest of the way himself.

It takes four weeks to reach the Nepalese border. A few days later Gelek wakes in a hospital bed. His feet are gone and just two stumps remain, wrapped in bandages.

Today Gelek goes to a Tibetan school in India.

When Gelek arrived in Dharamsala he was given soap and toothpaste.

WHY HAS JETSUN PEMA BEEN NOMINATED?

Jetsun Pema has been nominated for WCPRC 2006 for her 40-year struggle for the Tibetan refugee children in India. Her tireless work has saved lives and given tens of thousands of Tibetan refugee children a home, a family, education and hope for the future. Pema always puts the children's interests first and has built up Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV) into the exiled Tibetans' largest children's rights and educational organisation. Every year, nearly 15,000 refugee children get help through TCV. In the Tibetan children's



villages the children grow up in a loving Tibetan home with traditional Buddhist values like non-violence and respect for all life.





When Pema was nine she was sent to a boarding school in India. She only saw her mother once in ten years, because Tibet had been invaded by China.

Born in Tibet

Every year hundreds of refugee children risk their lives to escape from Tibet. Many are orphans. Others are sent by their parents to escape the oppression and poverty in Chinese-controlled Tibet. In Jetsun Pema's Tibetan children's villages they get a new home and the chance to go to school. She has fought for Tibetan refugee children for 40 years and the children call her *ama la*, which means respected mother in Tibetan.

Jetsun Pema was born in 1940 in Tibet. At that time her big brother, Tenzin Gyatso, had already been named Dalai Lama, Tibet's highest leader. When she was 9, she was sent to a boarding school in India. A few years later Tibet was

invaded by China. After a failed uprising in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled with his family to India.

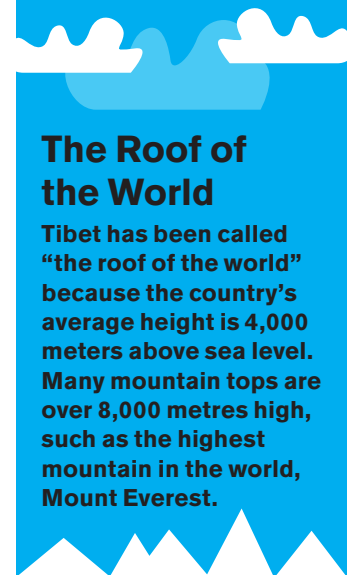
"I was so glad that they were alive, that nothing else mattered", remembers Pema. At the same time she was sad and angry.

"We had lost our land. Now we were refugees".

Children – Tibet's future

India gave the Tibetans land in Dharamsala in northern India. Here the Dalai Lama welcomed the 85,000 Tibetans who followed in his footsteps. But thousands also died in the mountains during the escape. Others died in the refugee camp, where there was a shortage of everything from food and medicines to places to sleep.

"Only the strongest could



The Roof of the World

Tibet has been called "the roof of the world" because the country's average height is 4,000 meters above sea level. Many mountain tops are over 8,000 metres high, such as the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest.

survive the cold, hunger and sickness. The children were hit hardest", says Pema.

To save the children – and Tibet's future – the Dalai Lama opened a children's home where his older sister, Tsering Dolma, took care of the children. In a short time



Who is the Dalai Lama?

Dalai Lama means "Ocean of Wisdom" and is the title for the Tibetans' highest spiritual and political leader. The current Dalai Lama is the fourteenth and was declared Dalai Lama when he was just four years old. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet.



A Tibetan welcome

When Tibetans want a guest to feel welcome, they place a thin white scarf around their neck called a *kata*. You can also give a *kata* to a religious or political leader when asking for their blessing or help. By presenting a white scarf you are showing that you don't have nasty intentions or bad thoughts. In the picture, 10 year olds Thardoe and Tenzin, show how to present a *kata*.



Why are the children escaping?

Tibet is currently completely controlled by China. The Chinese government claims that Tibet has always been a Chinese province. But until the invasion in 1951, China had no power over Tibet. The Tibetans had their own army, money and language. But after the Second World War the UN didn't recognise Tibet as a country. Since the Chinese invasion 1.2 million Tibetans are said to have died. They have been shot, bombed,

imprisoned, tortured, executed or have starved to death.

Since 1980, 7.5 million Chinese have moved to Tibet, and nearly all the schools are in the areas where the Chinese live. In the countryside, where 90% of the 6.5 million Tibetans live, half of the children have no school at all and the schools that do exist are expensive. The teachers teach in Chinese and treat the Tibetan children worse than the Chinese.



Dalai Lama





Pema was just 23 when she took over the work with the Tibetan refugee children.



At first the children's villages had no classrooms. Lessons took place outside, under the trees when it rained or to find shade from the strong Indian sun.



800 children came to Dharamsala to get help.

“The few houses we had quickly became full”, remembers Pema. The youngest slept in cardboard boxes while older children slept six to a bed or on the floor. They had terrible nightmares. Some had seen their parents killed by the Chinese. Others had lost their family during the journey.

Pema takes over

After a while, Tsering Dolma became ill and died. Pema was only 23 years old, but when the Dalai Lama asked her to take over she didn't hesitate.

“I wanted to give the children a real home, a family and an education. Temporary solutions weren't enough anymore.”

Pema applied for and received funding, both from old friends and international

aid organizations. She began by building new classrooms and small family houses for 25 children and a foster mother. The houses were called *khimtsang* which means home in Tibetan. As thousands of refugee children continued to come, the first children's village grew into a small town. Today, nearly 2,500 children live in the children's village in Dharamsala which has its own school, bakery, tailor,

sports hall, theatre and hospital. More children's villages and schools have been established all over India and a total of 15,000 refugee children are helped every year.

“My dream is that all refugee children should be able to grow up as brothers and sisters and get a lot of love from their house mother, just as in a real home”, says Jetsun Pema. 🌐

What is TCV?

The children's villages and the schools that Pema is responsible for are run by the Tibetan Children's Villages organisation, usually called TCV. TCV has:

- Five Tibetan children's villages with their own schools.
- Seven boarding schools.
- Seven day schools.

- Ten day care centres.
- Four vocational training centres.
- Four homes for young people.
- Four old people's homes (for example for old home mothers).
- Support for refugee children who do not live in the children's villages.

In 2006, TCV is building a Tibetan college in southern India.

Prayer flags





Jetsun Pema takes her daily walk in the Tibetan children's village. Everywhere children want to talk to her about what they have been up to.

Thousands of refugee children call Jetsun Pema *ama la* (respected mother in Tibetan). She has also been appointed "Tibet's mother" by the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala (exile means to live as a refugee outside your own country).

"I accepted the honorary title, not for myself but for our amazing foster mothers in the children's villages," says Pema."



The youngest children and those with severe disabilities live in the nursery. The boy playing with the rubber ball has a serious muscle disease.

Sponsors across the world



When Pema needed money she began to write to old schoolmates in other countries. They and their friends began sending small contributions. Slowly, but surely, news about the Tibetan refugee children spread and more people helped. Today, nearly all children in the children's villages have a "sponsor" who contributes to their education, food and clothes.



Rinchen, 11, ties prayer flags.



Tashi

escaped to school

When Tashi was little, her father died. When her mother became very ill, the family couldn't afford to buy her medicine. Her mother died before Tashi turned eight, and Tashi and her brothers and sisters became orphans.



Tashi, 12

Misses: My brother.

Loves: My sister and my home mother.

Likes: Going to school.

Dreams of: being a teacher.

Admires: Jetsun Pema.

Becomes angry: When it is hard to learn at school.



Tashi goes to school for the first time in her life.

Sometimes it's hard to keep up, but she tries hard and is happy when the teachers praise her.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that it takes 49 days before the soul leaves a dead body. During that time, Tashi and her brothers and sisters can't brush their hair, wash their faces, or dance or sing. They burn all the photos of their mum and give her clothes to the poor. One day Tashi's big sister Tsering says they must move to Lhasa, Tibet's biggest city.

"We can't survive in the village," says Tsering, who has just turned 12. "We must work to survive."

Loves older sister and home mother
Together with older sister Tsering and home mother Pempa Dolma.



Tashi spins a prayer wheel.

A hard life in Lhasa

In Lhasa, Tsering quickly finds work at a factory, but it is harder for Tashi. She is so little, just 8 years old. One day she sees a sign in a restaurant window. "Help wanted".

"The job is yours if you can manage," says the owner, a Chinese man.

He shows her how to scrub and rinse plates, cutlery and glasses in a huge basin. She fetches the water from a big barrel in the yard.

It is winter in Lhasa and

very cold. Tashi begins at five in the morning and works to eleven at night. After a day with her hands in the ice-cold washing up water, her fingers are numb. Suddenly a small bowl slips from her fingers and smashes on the stone floor. The restaurant owner's wife runs up.

"Clumsy girl!" she says and shakes Tashi. But she is kinder than her husband.

"Just don't do it again," she says and sweeps the broken pieces away so that her





husband won't see.

Tashi has to clear the tables herself. Sometimes she sees children eating with their parents. Then she becomes angry and sad. "Why was I born into a poor family?" she asks herself. "Why can't I go to school and go to the restaurant with my mum and dad?"

Before the sisters fall asleep at night they lie in the darkness and talk about the future. Tashi wants to quit work and go to school.

"Just wait a little longer," says Tsering. "If we work

hard we can save money and send you to India."

Tsering says there are Tibetan schools in India that are free for refugee children. They get food and a home and can live in freedom. But to be able to escape they must pay a guide to find the way over the Himalayan mountains. They don't have enough money yet.

Time to escape

One day the sisters get a tip that a group of refugees are about to go to India. The next day Tashi tells her boss

that she has to quit.

"I must go back to my village," she says. She doesn't want to lie, but if the police find out about the



escape the girls may end up in prison.

They leave at night. They are cramped into a truck for many hours with the rest of the group. Half way to the Nepalese border the guide suddenly says that he wants more money. The sisters succeed in contacting a relative who sends money with his friend, a kind and brave Chinese man.

Tashi in front of the famous Potala Palace, the Dalai Lama's old home in Lhasa in Tibet.





Tashi doesn't feel parentless and lonely any more.



→ The last stretch they walk over the mountains for nearly a week. They walk at night to not be discovered by the Chinese military patrolling the area. Tashi is really scared as she balances along narrow cliff paths along deep ravines. Early one morning they

come to a wild river. Everybody ties their ropes, tops and scarves together into one long rope and the strongest man crosses the river first with one end of the rope. He uses a long wooden pole and jumps like a pole vaulter over the river. Then they all cross, one after another. Tashi is soaked, exhausted and shaking from cold.

When the food and water run

out, they walk for two days without eating or drinking. The sisters throw nearly all their belongings away as they are too heavy to carry. At night, Tashi hears a stream but can't find it in the dark. In the end she takes ice from the ground and eats it. It is full of mud and grass, but Tashi is too hungry and thirsty to care. Suddenly she falls straight down in the darkness. She grabs onto some roots on the mountain side and calls for Tsering, who manages to help her up.

A few minutes later it is Tsering's turn. The



Around her neck Tashi has a picture of the Dalai Lama and another high lama, Karmappa. She also has the holy pills she got from the Dalai Lama when she came to India. Tashi remembers that he told her to study hard and look after her health. And that the Tibetans will soon get their land back.

sister sinks to her waist in a hole filled with sludge and has to be pulled out by two adults.

Hidden

When the group gets to the border with Nepal, the sisters have to hide for a few days at the home of the

The escape route went over the Himalayas.





The children in Tashi's home take care of a goat that they have saved from the slaughter house.

guide's old mother. Finally a woman comes who helps the children dress like sherpa girls from Nepal. She rubs Tashi's cheeks with black coal dust to hide her red cheeks.

"The police know that Tibetans have blazing red cheeks," she says.

The girls wrap their scarves around their heads and are told to look at the ground when they come to the border. Tashi is so scared that she shakes as they walk past the armed border guards. She lets her hair fall onto her face and waits for someone to shout: "Seize the Tibetans!" But nothing happens.

A bit beyond the border control a truck is waiting to drive them to Kathmandu, Nepal's capital and the refugee reception centre there. They are safe at last.

Tashi gets a new family

Now, Tashi and her sister live in the Tibetan children's village in Bir in northern India. Nearly all the children and young people who live here were born in Tibet. And nearly all the teachers have grown up in the Tibetan children's villages. Many of the children and teachers are orphans just like Tashi.

Tsering goes to upper secondary school and lives in a

dormitory with other young people. Tashi lives in a family home. Suddenly she has a mum and nearly 40 brothers and sisters.

"I don't feel alone and orphaned anymore. The children in the home are like my brothers and sisters and I

love my home mother. She is kind and cares for me like her own daughter. It feels like having a real family. The only thing that makes me sad is thinking that my brother still lives alone in Tibet." ☸



Sonam and Lopsang show what the Dalai Lama gave them.



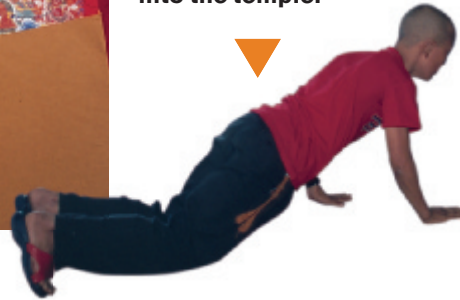
Sonam and Lopsang play cards with other refugees who have just arrived.



Dalai Lama speaks to the new arrivals.



Sonam shows respect for the Dalai Lama by lying on the floor when he comes into the temple.



The new life begins

Sonam and Lopsang, both 12, arrive in Dharamsala just as the sun rises over the mountain tops. After several months as refugees, they are about to begin a new life in the Tibetan children's village. But first they are to meet the Dalai Lama.

Refugees from Tibet first go to the refugee reception centre in Kathmandu in Nepal. That is where Lopsang and Sonam met.

When refugees come to Dharamsala in India, they must first meet the Dalai Lama and get his blessing. This is called having an

audience. Then the refugees begin school, go to a monastery or look for work.

The refugee shelter in Dharamsala is totally full. There are just two dormitories and many people already share a bed or sleep on the floor. Lopsang, Sonam and the other new arrivals are welcomed and

receive food coupons, soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste.

Sonam and Lopsang are happy when they hear they are being sent to the same place. They are going to the Tibetan children's village in Bylakuppe in South India. The Tibetans have been given land there by the Indian government and it's where most Tibetan refugees in India live.

An audience at last

Finally the invitation to the audience arrives. Everybody gets up early to have time to put on their finest clothes

before going to the temple.

Sonam and Lopsang end up in the middle of the crowd. They are incredibly excited and full of anticipation. When the Dalai Lama comes in they kneel, put their hands together, and bow forward, their foreheads touching the floor. This makes it pretty tricky to get a glimpse of the Tibetan leader. The Dalai Lama jokes and laughs with them, but is also serious.

"We will return to Tibet one day", he says. "But as long as we are refugees in India we must keep the



Father imprisoned

Wangmo, 13, is homesick after a few weeks in the children's village in Gopalpur.

"I miss my family so much, I just cry all the time. But the children and the teachers here say it's worst at the beginning and that I'll

feel better after a while. Almost everyone here has experienced similar things."

Wangmo's mother decided to send her to India after her father was imprisoned.

"My dad travelled to India to be blessed by the Dalai



Lama. When the Chinese police found out they accused him of being a spy. He was in prison for 3 years. We are scared that they will arrest him again, so now he's in hiding. My mother sent me and my sister here so we could go to school and be safe."

Father drowned



Choeky, 10 lives in the children's village in Bir. Her father was often arrested in Tibet. The police accused him of being a spy, because he travelled over the border to Nepal in his work. One day he didn't come back from the police station.

"My mother was pregnant, but we still travelled together to Lhasa to see what had happened. No one would say. In the end my grandfather heard they had thrown dad into the river, from a high bridge. Then we realised he must be dead, because no one can survive in that wild water. That was when my mother sent me to the Tibetan children's village in India."



Bracelet against imprisonment

Tibetan political prisoners began to make thin black and white bracelets from wool. Now Wangmo and many other Tibetans wear them to show that they have not forgotten all those who are in prison.

Tibetan culture alive. And you children must study hard and look after your health."

After the talk, everybody is allowed to greet the Dalai Lama and they all receive an envelope with a picture of Tibet's national deity, holy pills to hang as an amulet around their neck and much more. With their new belongings under their arms, Sonam and Lopsang run home to pack. Their new life begins tomorrow. 🌐

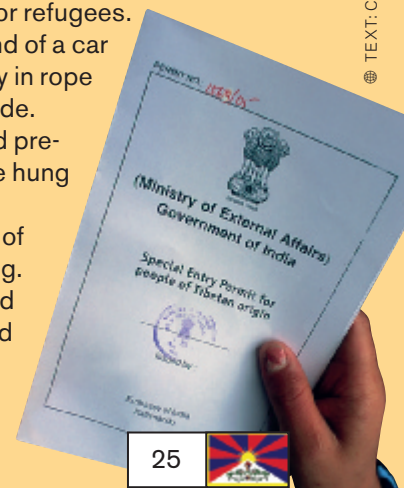
Hung from the precipice



Dolma, 12, escaped from Tibet over the mountains.

"It was really scary and I was afraid the whole time. There were many times I thought I would die. The mountains were full of Chinese soldiers who looked for refugees. Every time the guides heard the sound of a car or people, they tied us children tightly in rope and lowered us down the mountainside. The guides were Nepalese and could pretend they were hiking. Sometimes we hung there for a long time, high above the ground and sometimes in the middle of the night. But I wasn't scared of falling. I was just terrified of being discovered and going to prison. I was also scared of what would happen to my parents if I got caught."

Residence permit for Tibetan refugees in India.





A day in the Tibeta

The day begins early in the children's village. Rinchen is 11 years old. In his home, the home mother wakes the boys first. But they fall asleep again while she is off waking the girls!

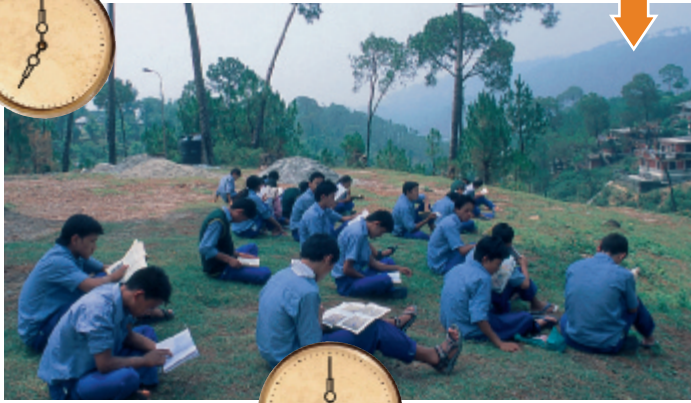
06.00

The alarm clock rings – it's time to get up. A massive family must wake, make the beds, wash and dress themselves at top speed. The elder children help to get the young ones up and ready.



07.00

Tibetans believe the mind works best early in the morning. That's why the children do their self-study an hour before breakfast.



08.45

A few times each week the whole school has a morning assembly. After a short prayer, the principal or a teacher talks about what has happened and what's new.



08.00

Before breakfast, the children say morning prayers. It is good for the body and soul, explains the home mother. When the children repeat their prayers – called mantras – they become calmer and more focused.



Tibetan breakfast – butter tea and tsampa (barley meal porridge) – is only eaten on Sunday mornings because it takes so long to cook.



Friends help each other with their hair.

One house – one home

Jetsun Pema wants the refugee children to grow up in a warm and safe home. That's why the children's villages have family homes instead of dormitories. They are called *Khimtsang* (meaning home in Tibetan). Between 25 and 40 children of different ages are cared for by one "home mother" and sometimes (if she is married) a "home father". The first home was opened by the Dalai Lama in 1967.

"My dream is that they should work like real homes where children can grow up as brothers and sisters," says Pema. And it works!

n children's village



09.00 – 11.00

In the mornings there are lessons.



11.00 – 11.20

During the break there's a lot to do. The basketball and football pitches are nearby.



11.20 – 13.10
Lessons



Cleanest class of the week!

Every week the "cleanest class of the week" is named in the children's village in Gopalpur. Here, Class III has won the beautiful picture of the famous Potala Palace in Tibet. They can have it on their classroom wall for a week, until next week's cleanest class claims it!



Cleaning the classroom windows!

After lessons the children help to pack away, tidy up and even clean windows if needed.

A school for mothers

"The 'home mothers' have the toughest job in the children's villages," says Jetsun Pema. They live together with up to 40 children and give them love and care from morning to night. To manage their work, all home mothers are trained for four months.

13.10 – 14.10
Lunch

During the lunch break, all the children rush home to their family homes where they help to tidy up and serve food. All meals are cooked at home and the boys and girls help with all the housework, from fetching water to peeling potatoes, washing clothes and making the beds. Just as they would have done at home in Tibet.

If the weather is beautiful the children love to eat outside. The older children take care of the younger ones and help serve.





Washing-up time



Egg and bread on the way home.



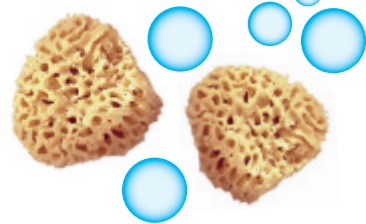
14.10 – 16.00

Lessons

After lunch the lessons continue, if the weather allows it. The children's village in Dharamsala is badly affected, for example, by the monsoon rain – the area is India's second rainiest place! When it rains hardest, the afternoon lessons have to be cancelled. Some students have extra tutoring while others stay at home and play, do their homework and the housework.



Sangay, 10, sweeps outside her home.



The big wash is done twice a week in all the family homes.



Lopsang Dorjee walks in his sleep!

Lopsang's mates in the dormitory have to keep an eye on him because he is a sleep-walker. "He tries the door and attempts to get out," they say. "Sometimes we have to help him go and lie down again."

Lopsang has recently moved to the children's village from Tibet. Around his neck he has holy threads and pictures of the Panchen Lama and one of Tibet's national deities.

"They protect me against evil. I hope that they will also help me stop sleep walking, but it hasn't worked yet!"





16.00 – 16.20

Tea time. Tibetans love to drink butter tea, black tea mixed with salt and loads of butter made from yak milk. It is served in a wooden or metal bowl.

It's important to be healthy. The home mother gives vitamins to her children.



16.30 – 18.00

Play and homework

Many of the family homes have pets which need to be both loved and washed.



It takes a while to peel potatoes for 40 brothers and sisters!



18.00

Dinner. The children's villages often serve Indian food like rice and vegetables. Tibetan food, such as *momos*, takes too long to cook.



20.30

Toothpaste delivery on the go before evening prayers. The home mother holds on to the tube hard.



21.00

Good night. "Sim-ja-nango". Goodnight. The lights go out. Many lie and think for a while or talk to friends beside them before they sleep. Others fall asleep straight away.



Sim-ja-nango!



Yoga girl

Ngawang, 10, likes doing yoga with her friends in the yoga club every Saturday. Yoga is a form of relaxation, gymnastics and meditation which has been around in Asia for 5,000 years.

"When I started, it hurt. But not anymore. It's good exercise for both body and mind," says Ngawang.



Playing with stones

Tsegyal and Zuulung are playing Abdo. "Ab" means bowl in Tibetan and "do" means stone. All you need is 5 stones. The game is based on throwing stones up into the air. Throw the first one at the same time as you pick up another and then catch the other in the bowl (your hand). Then you throw two stones into the air while picking up the third. And so on as fast as you can.



Broken hoop

When the basketball net has been broken by too many hard dunks, it is fixed by cutting a pair of old jeans into long strips to tie the pieces of the broken net back together!



A gift of cows

Many years ago, some people in the children's village wanted to buy cows which could give milk to all the children. Pema suggested instead that they should loan money to the poor Indian families who lived near the village, so that they could buy cows. The families kept half of the cows' milk and the children's village got the other half as repayment of the loan. The families' debt was repaid long ago, but today the children's village still buys nearly all its milk from the same families who got the first cows.

Memory album

Many children in the children's village have albums where they collect everything from pictures of their families to pictures of artists, drawings and their thoughts on life. Tenzin, 12, has many pictures of her relations at home in Tibet in her album.





Cricket time



Barrel skating



Travelling haircuts

Every week an Indian hairdresser comes to the children's village. Here he is cutting Tsering's (11) hair. The hairdresser cuts most hair the same way: short. When so many children live close to each other, long hair can lead to a lice epidemic in the homes.

"If we were allowed to choose, I'd have long hair," says Tsering. His role model is John Abraham, an Indian film hero with long thick hair.



Their own national team

Jetsun Pema came up with the idea that the Tibetans in exile should have their own national football team. The team's trainer and many of the players have grown up in the children's villages. Tibet can't play in the World Cup or the Olympics because China controls Tibet.



From potatoes to football!

It's difficult to believe that the big football field in Dharamsala was once a potato field. It took seven years for Jetsun Pema, all the staff and the children to dig away the hill where the field was and remove all the earth. Pema herself dug for an hour a day until the football pitch was ready.



Cut the thread

The boys compete with the bottoms of cans and thread. It's simple: cut out the bottom of a drinks can and make a hole in it. Put a thread through it. The trick is to spin the bottom of the can and cut off your opponent's thread.

Jangchup is a part-time



Jangchup loves playing football and basketball with his monk friends.

Jangchup spins the prayer wheels, which are full of Buddhist prayers called mantras. When they have spun round once, he has prayed the same number of prayers as the number of papers in the wheels.



Jangchup has wanted to be a Buddhist monk since he was little. When the Dalai Lama's own monastery needed new monks his parents finally allowed him to join.

Many Tibetan boys dream of being Buddhist monks, just as children in other countries may dream of being professional footballers or film stars. But for Tibetan children it's not about being rich and famous. Living simply in a monastery and dedicating your life to Buddhism is the finest thing a Tibetan can do. Yet Jangchup's parents have asked him to wait before

begins to cry. The journey to the monastery takes three days and the Buddhist monk who greets Jangchup has surprising news.

"When the school term begins you must move to the Tibetan children's village and go to school there," says the monk. "You can come back to the monastery during school holidays and one weekend a month."

The monks used to go to school in the monastery, but now the Dalai Lama has decided that all young monks in his monastery should go to an ordinary Tibetan school. He thinks that modern monks need to learn subjects such as science and English. Besides, children who have chosen a monk's life may change their mind when they are older. They must then be able to get an ordinary job.

The first night in the monastery Jangchup shares a monk's cell with Thai, another young boy. The new friends talk in the dark for a long time before going to sleep. Jangchup misses his family – especially his mother – for the first time.

"But I don't regret anything", he says to Thai. ➔



Jangchup, 13

Born in: Tibetan settlement in Orissa, India.

Lives in: Tibetan children's village in Dharamsala and Namgyal monastery.

Likes: Football. Studying Buddhism.

Favourite football player: Ronaldinho.

Admires: My teacher at the monastery. He is kind-hearted and knows a lot.

Feels sad: When I feel alone. Then I miss my family.

Laughs at: The Indian comedian Johnny Lever.

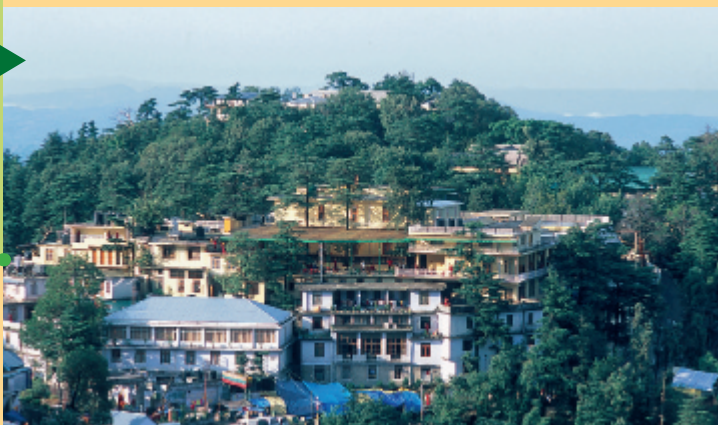
Jangchup's new home

Jangchup is a monk in the Namgyal monastery. It was created in Tibet in the 1700s and was located in the Potala Palace, which was also the Dalai Lama's home. When the current Dalai Lama escaped to India the Namgyal monastery followed. Around 200 monks now live here and all dream of one day returning to Tibet and the Potala Palace.

deciding. Monks, for example, are not allowed to get married nor have children. They leave their family for ever and get a new family in the monastery.

Surprising news

Jangchup is happy and full of anticipation when he says goodbye. But when he sees that his mum is trying to hold back tears, he also



e monk

When Jangchup is at the monastery, he lives in a monk's cell. The monks often swap cells, to remind themselves that possessions and the place where you live are not supposed to be important. Their home is meant to be in their hearts.



Jigme is reborn!

Man or mosquito?

Jigme, 7, lives with the other young monks in the children's village. His parents left him at a monastery after the Dalai Lama identified him as a reincarnation of a Buddhist leader who died.

"It was a great honour for the family" says Jigme, who likes to do cartwheels.

Buddhists believe in reincarnation or *transmigration*, which means that when a person dies she is reborn in a new body. If you are reborn as a person or, for example, a mosquito depends on how you have lived. Rebirth doesn't stop until you have reached Nirvana. According to the Buddhists your soul is then pure and can be united with the universe and all living things. In Nirvana you no longer feel sorrow, pain, suffering or desire.



His hair grows

When the school term begins Jangchup moves to the Tibetan children's village. Monks aged 7 to 16 live here together in a family home. In the monastery they have shaved heads and monks' robes but in the children's village they let their hair grow and they wear trousers, jumpers and a school uniform.

Once a month, Jangchup puts his monk's robe on and goes to the monastery to study Buddhism and get to know life in the monastery.

After one year in the monastery and the children's village Jangchup is certain that he has made the right decision. "I will be a monk until I die," he says determinedly. ☸



Tibet and Buddhism

Buddhism is one of the major world religions. It was started in India 2500 years ago by a man known as Buddha ("the enlightened"). There are around 500 million Buddhists across the world. Tibet converted to Buddhism in the 700s and was transformed from a warrior nation to a peaceful land. The most important thing in the Tibetan culture became having "a loving, sympathetic heart and a calm, clear mind".

Buddha



The youngest political prisoner?

Posters on the walls in the monk's home in the children's village display the words "Free the Panchen Lama". He and the Dalai Lama are Tibet's most important leaders. The previous Panchen Lama died in 1989, and six years later the boy he was thought to be reborn as, Gedhun Choekyi, was found. But then China abducted Gedhun and his family and at the



Panchen Lama

same time said that a completely different boy was the "real" Panchen Lama. Today, no one knows where Gedhun is, but if he is alive he is 16 years old.

"It makes me sad and angry that he has been locked away for nearly all of his life," says Jangchup.



Tibetans love beautiful clothes, jewellery and large shaggy hats. They plait precious stones into their hair and sew silver coins and jewellery into their belts and clothes. But the Tibetan refugees in India often dress simply. They had to leave everything they owned in Tibet.

Lamo's wardrobe



"The only thing missing from my wardrobe is a digital watch, which would make it easier to get to school on time," says Lamo, who lives in the Tibetan children's village in Bir.

"My mother is still in Tibet and I haven't seen her since I escaped. But compared with those children who remain in Tibet, I feel lucky. I can go to school and be free."

Lamo admires Jetsun Pema because she has created the Tibetan children's villages and made it possible for refugee children to go to school and have a new home in India. "I've never met her, but if I got the chance I would say thanks. And ask how old she is!"

School Uniform

"We get two uniforms from the school every year. The uniforms for girls and boys are similar: blue trousers and blue-checked shirts. We wash one of the uniforms every Wednesday and Saturday, so we always have a clean one. At the end of the school year the children's village's tailor takes measurements for next year's uniform. We hand the old ones in, so a younger student can have it if theirs get worn out."

The wardrobe

"I keep my clothes in a locker just inside the door in the house. Our home mother makes sure we keep the lockers tidy. It's important when there are so many of us!"

Lamo, 12

Born in: Tibet.
Came to the children's village: When I was six.
Likes: School. Reading comics.
Wants to be: An English teacher.
Admires: Jetsun Pema.



Chupa

"The Chupa is our traditional Tibetan costume. My mother gave it to me. She bought it at the market in Lhasa and packed it when I

escaped to India. It was too big then, but now it's just right. I am really glad that I have it; it's the only memory I have of my mother."

T-shirt and trousers are favourites

"These are my favourite clothes. It doesn't matter that they are a little torn. I got the jumper from an older girl, who is like my older sister. She gives me her clothes when she grows out of them. That's what we do. The older ones take care of the younger ones. We only throw away clothes that are totally worn out. We also lend each other clothes."

No shoes indoors

Lamo's trainers. Tibetans don't wear shoes indoors.



Hats





Chupas suit everyone

Both girls and boys in Tibet wear a chupa, an ankle-length coat or dress that is held together with a belt. Usually it is made from simple material and is one colour. For a party it can be made of silk with beautiful patterns. The man's chupa has long sleeves and is made of thicker material than the woman's sleeveless dress variety.



Fine jewellery



Tibetans love big jewellery! Both men and women can wear earrings.

Rinchen's wardrobe

Rinchen lives in the children's village with his two sisters, Dolkar, 8, and Tso, 9. They came here from Tibet and have not seen their parents for many years. Many families do not even dare to write because the Chinese government opens and reads letters. But Rinchen has received a parcel containing Tibetan cheese and a chupa, a traditional Tibetan coat.



Rinchen in his chupa

Rinchen in his school uniform

Rinchen, 11

Likes: Reading comics, drawing, film, cricket and football.

Favourite artist: Penpa Tsering, who grew up in the children's village.

Wants to be: Actor or artist.

Favourite football and basketball player: Beckham and Iverson.



Married or unmarried?

It's easy to see if a Tibetan woman is married or unmarried, because only married women wear a striped apron over their chupas. The apron should match the dress. A married woman can own many hundreds of aprons, in order to change her style every day of the year!



One-sleeved cool style

Phuntrok and Tridhe wear embroidered silk coats which were worn by rich men in old Tibet. They had the long sleeves to show they didn't need to get their hands dirty, because they had many servants. It is typically Tibetan and pretty cool to let one coat sleeve drag along the ground. In Tibet, warm days can be followed by freezing cold nights. Traditionally, a Tibetan only put his arm in his left coat sleeve or tied both sleeves around his waist. In the evening chill he would put the whole coat on.

show who you are!

In Tibet you must wear something on your head to protect you from the cold. And to look good! The hat a Tibetan wears depends on if they are a monk, musician,

woman or man or where they live. In the children's villages hats are mostly used when the children act, dance or perform music.



Dawa plays for the Dalai Lama



Make-up on



Penpa's CD for Pema

Several of the children who have grown up in the children's village have become professional artists. One of the most popular Tibetan singers, Penpa Tsering, grew up in "the music home". The children call him "brother Penpa". He dedicated his first record to Jetsun Pema, and the album's first track is about Pema!

Dawa, 12, must almost pinch herself to make sure it isn't a dream. She is to perform in front of thousands of people and Tibet's highest leader, the Dalai Lama.



Shoes on

The 7th of July is an important day for Tibetans across the world; it is the Dalai Lama's birthday. In Dharamsala they celebrate with a big dance and music festival outside the temple. It is a great honour for a school pupil to be one of the artists. But Dawa isn't nervous. She has practised every day after school for weeks.

A wet celebration

The monsoon season has just begun in Dharamsala and soon the rain is tipping down over the thousands of people who have queued for hours outside the Tsuglakhang temple. Still, they are happy. In their homeland, Tibet, the Chinese government doesn't allow people to celebrate Dalai Lama's birthday.

Dawa and her friends get changed behind the temple.

It is packed with other children, dancers and musicians.

"It's time" someone shouts. Dawa lifts her heavy string instrument and jogs with the others through the crowd. Suddenly she sees the Dalai Lama. He is sitting at the front. Jetsun Pema is also there.

Above the guests and musicians the organizers have hung enormous pieces of cloth with the Tibetan symbol for good fortune in black on yellow. When Dawa's group begins to play and dance they are dazzled by flashing lights; photographers from all over the world have come to film and take pictures of the Dalai Lama.

The young musicians get a massive applause, and Dawa sees the Dalai Lama waving to them as they leave the stage. ☉



Plait in place
Dawa gets longer hair with a false plait or braid. Having coloured ribbons plaited into your hair is a Tibetan tradition.



Keep the culture alive!

In all Tibetan children's villages and schools, the children learn a lot about Tibetan music, dances and theatre. Jetsun Pema wants everybody to try drama and instruments, singing and dancing to keep the Tibetan culture alive. Some children put a lot of extra effort into drama and music and perform at cultural festivals like *Lhosar*, the Tibetan New Year, and at the end of the school term.



Naljor



is called granny because of her pulse

When Naljor, 14, walks up the steep steps of the children's village she often stops to catch her breath. The other children call her granny, because she often walks slowly and bent like an old woman. They don't mean any harm, but it still makes Naljor sad.

Naljor has been tired and has had trouble eating since she came to India from Tibet when she was four years old.

"Mother died when I was born and I think that's why I am so weak," she says. "I didn't get any mother's milk."

The Indian doctors say that Naljor has a bad blood count and give her vitamins, but it doesn't help. In the end, the home mother sends Naljor to a Tibetan doctor.

Tibetan doctors, or *amchis* as they are called in Tibetan, have developed their medical traditions over 2500 years. When the

Tibetans escaped to India in 1959, a doctor succeeded in getting out of the country. The Dalai Lama gave him the task of opening a Tibetan hospital and starting doctor training.

The pulse reveals all

First the doctor asks how Naljor feels and where she comes from. Then he takes her wrists and begins reading her pulse. He doesn't count her heart beats but presses his finger tips at different pressures in different places. Through the pulse a Tibetan doctor can tell which of the body's organs are sick. A regular doctor often



The doctor checks Naljor's health by taking her pulse.

uses an X-ray to do this.

Naljor thinks it's good that the doctor is calm and speaks in a friendly way. Other doctors are usually so stressed. She doesn't know that Tibetan doctors must have what Buddhists call a "calm and clear mind" before they can meet patients.

The doctor gives Naljor advice about how she can eat better and also prescribes a medicine which she promises to take, despite the fact that Tibetan pills are well known for tasting really bad. But it is worth it if her dream of being fit enough to play basketball can become a reality. 🌍

Tibetan medicine includes thousands of ingredients from herbs and plants.



Tibetan doctors use three methods to examine their patients. They ask for a urine sample, take the patient's pulse and ask questions. It is said that they find out the same information by taking a person's pulse as other doctors do who use X-ray images.



Precious pills

The famous precious pills are made of herbs and finely ground precious stones and metals like gold, emeralds and rubies. The pills are sold in small silk bags and cost a lot of money.



Learn Tibetan!

Tibetan is becoming a neglected language in Tibet. The teachers in the schools are often Chinese who teach in Chinese. Preserving their own language is an important reason why Tibetan parents send their children to schools in children's villages in India.



Tenzin shows off her written Tibetan calligraphy!

Count in Tibetan

- 1 – chig 5 – nga 9 – gu
- 2 – nyi 6 – druk 10 – chu
- 3 – sum 7 – dun
- 4 – shi 8 – ggye

Hear Tashi count to ten at:
www.childrensworld.org

Write Tibetan

Tenzin, 12, likes learning the Tibetan alphabet and writing Tibetan letters. The Tibetans have had their own alphabet for over 100 years. It looks similar to the Indian language Sanskrit. Youloe came to the children's village in Gopalpur five years ago. At home in Tibet she couldn't go to school. "It was too expensive and the schools that existed were a long way from home," she says.

Speak Tibetan

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Mother | Yes | How are you? |
| Ama | La rey | Kerang kusu |
| Father | No | depo pey? |
| Pema | Mindu | What's your name? |
| Hello | Thank you | Kerang ming |
| Tashi delek | Tu djei tchey | karey rey? |
| Goodbye | Excuse me | How old are you? |
| Kaley shu | Gongta | Kerang lo katsey |
| | | rey? |

Tashi says

Tashi delek



Their own teacher training

Jetsun Pema wants refugee children to be taught in their own language in primary school, so they don't lose contact with their language and culture. That's why TCV has started its own teacher training; to make sure that there are enough good Tibetan teachers in future. The majority of teachers who work at TCV today, grew up in the children's villages.

Forbidden flag

Norbu, 13, got a question in a Buddhist chat-room about what Tibet's flag looks like. It is forbidden in China. In the middle of the flag there is a white, snow-covered mountain. This is the land of Tibet. The six red bands are Tibet's people and the six blue bands represent Tibet's dark-blue sky. A yellow sun shines behind the mountain top and represents joy about the light which gives freedom as well as spiritual and material happiness and prosperity. The jewel that the snow lions hold between them symbolises Buddhism. The yellow border symbolises that Buddhism should spread and flourish.



Cycle and chat to survive

Jetsun Pema wants the children in the children's villages to learn everything they need to be able to cope when they leave school. It is not just about reading Tibetan, maths and English but also about being able to handle a computer and learning to swim and cycle.



Dhondup with some of his pupils in the classroom.

Dhondup became a teacher

Dhondup came to the Tibetan children's village as a lonely refugee child when he was five. He still lives there, but now he works as a teacher!

"I wanted to help my school and my people and the best way was to become a teacher" he says. "It's really

important for refugee children to have a Tibetan teacher. We speak the same language and have similar experiences."

Dhondup looks up to Jetsun Pema as if she were his own mother.

"She often came to visit our home to talk and asked if we had any problems.



Chatting with Buddhists

Almost every day Norbu, 13, comes to the internet room at TCV in Dharamsala. If there is space he chats for two hours with other young people in Buddhist chatrooms.

"Often they are my age. We write in English and try to get to know each other. Most know nothing about Tibet, so they are very curious and want to know everything: where we are and who we are. I usually say that we are refugees in India and that we have lost our land to China. One person asked what the Tibetan flag looks like. I had no pictures to send, but tried to explain what it looks like in words.

Norbu has never come across a Tibetan who lives in Tibet in the chatroom.

"China's government claims that they have made

Tibet more free and open, but I doubt that. If they really could use the internet in Tibet and communicate more with the outside world that would be great."

When Norbu isn't chatting or doing his homework, he likes to read Tibetan folk tales. His favourite is about two half-brothers who are sons of a king.

"At first they argue about who is to take over after the king and one tries to kill the other. But it ends well, with both brothers being king and ruling together."

She also worked harder than anyone else."

Dhondup's parents stayed in Tibet and he has only seen them once in the past 20 years, in the neighbouring country of Nepal.

"It's the best memory of my childhood," says Dhondup.

Dhondup tells his students

that a lot has changed in the children's villages.

"The classrooms are better, the food is too. The students have more of everything, from pens and computers to books and clothes."



Save the goat



Tsering, 15, (right) replants a tree with her friend Kyi from the Eco Club.

The Eco Club saves the environment

The children's village's eco clubs do everything from taking care of plants and trees to picking up litter and studying environmental issues. They also try to encourage other children to take care of their natural surroundings.

In Tibet, people live close to nature. As Buddhists we must treat nature with respect", says Tsering, 15.

"My teacher in the eco club has explained how everything is connected. And that how we people live affects the environment in many different ways."

Tsering was just six years old when she escaped from Tibet, but she remembers that her mother used to say that we must all respect nature and all living things.

"Both Jetsun Pema and the Dalai Lama also often talk about the environment. This is good, because we children really listen to them."

Tsering believes that pollution is the greatest threat to the environment.

"We also cut down too many trees. People seem to believe that we have endless supplies of forest. But one

day perhaps we will wake up without any trees. And we can't live without oxygen."

Problems in Tibet

Tsering is afraid that the Tibet she grew up in isn't there anymore.

"China is cutting down our forests and blowing up mountains to build factories, mines, tower blocks and roads. They are also dumping radioactive waste in Tibet. Of course development and modernisation can be good, but not if you destroy nature for ever. My teacher has said that certain plants and animals are now extinct in Tibet, because of environmental destruction.



Tseten often leaps up to high places and climbs on the walls. The students become pretty surprised when a goat suddenly peeks in through the classroom window on the third floor.

Tsering wants to become a journalist. She believes it's a good way to help people who have a difficult life.

"I want to write about all the injustices in the world, not just about the environment or Tibet. All people are equal, it doesn't matter where they come from or what they look like." 🌍

Respect nature!

Jetsun Pema wants everyone in the children's villages to treat nature and animals with respect. Nothing is to go to waste either, and that applies to everything from rubbish to old clothes. For a few years now, glass, paper and plastic have been recycled. In many of the children's villages solar energy is used to heat water and buildings.



, and don't kill any flies!



The slaughterhouse staff had never seen anything like it. Throughout India Tibetan children came and wanted to buy goats due for slaughter with their savings.

“We saved two goats,” says Lobsang, 13. He is a member of the children’s village’s goat club in Gopalpur and helps to take care of the goat Tseten. “It’s fun and it reminds me of my home village in Tibet. We had goats there that I sometimes took care of,” says Lobsang.

The children’s villages have saved animals from slaughter for a year. They also try to not eat meat. Tibetans are meat eaters by tradition, because it is difficult to grow vegetables and other things in the cold, dry homeland.

“But in Tibet we only eat those animals in order to survive,” says Lobsang.

In the children’s village’s houses there are lots of ants, flies, spiders and beetles. Sometimes even scorpions! But there are neither fly swatters nor mousetraps. Not killing or using violence is an important part of Buddhism. It is called *ahimsa*. Tibetan children take time to save ants that have ended up in a puddle or earthworms that have ended up on the road.

“If I see a scary spider at home I’m not allowed to kill it,” explains Lobsang. “I try to capture it and let it out in the grass instead.” ☺



Useful Yaks

The yak is the Tibetans most important animal. Yoghurt, butter and cheese are made from yak milk. Yak manure is a good fuel, and woolly blankets, ropes and tent canvases are made from the long-haired coat. If a yak dies, everything is used, from the meat (for dinner) to the skin (for boots and bags). The tail is perfect for whisking away flies with.

The goat club together with the goats they saved from the slaughter house. Thupten, Lobsang (on the right) and Ngawang.

