From January 24th to February 2nd, thousands of people from villages in India, Nepal and Tibet traveled to Bodh Gaya, India, for the 23rd annual World Peace Ceremony. As monks and nuns arrived under a giant, colorful welcome banner, the birth place of Buddha’s enlightenment became a vibrant sea of compassion and peace. All around were hundreds of large water bowl offerings filled with rose and marigold petals as well as large pink lotuses. The temple arches in the east and west were ornamented with hundreds of garlands of marigold, jasmine, and roses—a rich backdrop for the thousands of voices praying for peace.

Over the years, the World Peace Ceremony has become an event for Tibetans to strengthen their spirituality and preserve a way of life. On the evening of the 9th day, a deeply moving Butterlamp Ceremony known as the Marme Monlam took place beneath the Bodhi tree. Pema Gellek, one of the daughters of Tarthang Tulku, wrote afterwards, “standing in the midst of the assembly, seeing the faces of 10,000 people warmly illuminated by lamps, hearing their powerful faith rising up in the chorus of prayers was a magnificent, if not, overwhelming sight and sound. Many people were visibly moved and everyone’s spirits uplifted. The whole atmosphere of the temple was magically transformed by the sea of lamps and palpable upwelling of people’s faith.” During ceremonies such as this one, Tibetans display their extraordinary ability to transcend a history of hardship and transform it into a celebration of united hope for the future.

Thanks to supporters like you, every year the Tibetan Aid Project distributes thousands of books to the Tibetan refugees during the World Peace Ceremony. This year we were able to give away over 200,000 books, including over 100,000 of the Stog Kangyur—one of the collections of the direct teachings of the Buddha. Many people expressed great interest in this collection and understood it to be very rare and precious.

Water bowl offerings with a large lotus are a rich backdrop for the thousands of voices praying for peace.

We also distributed 11,875 books of the collected works of Dudjom Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist leader and scholar who wrote an extensive array of works, including poetics, history, medicine, astrology and philosophy. In addition, we donated over 2,000 books of the selected works of Jigme Lingpa, a master of esoteric doctrines and ethereal meditative experiences. All books were widely distributed, reaching monasteries, dharma centers, libraries and camp settlements throughout regions of the Tibetan exile community. Housed all across the Himalayas, these texts—through their presence and availability—will promote literacy, education and will help preserve Tibetan language and culture. Along with the books, we also gave away 10,000 tsas: miniature stupas made from clay. They are believed to prevent disasters, cure illness and provide atonement. The Tibetan Aid Project also contributed sacred art, including 3,800 art prints depicting Arhats, beings who have achieved spiritual enlightenment and freed themselves from all desire.

Though much has been done over the years, the need to help Tibetans is now greater than ever. Please join us in keeping this precious culture of wisdom and compassion alive—not only for Tibetans but for all humanity as well.
For thirty-two years Rima Tamar has been working for Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, studying his teachings and traveling the world. Here, she describes the path which lead her to Rinpoche in 1975 and culminated in her including the Tibetan Aid Project as a beneficiary of her living trust.

By Rima Tamar

I grew up in an upper-middle class Jewish family in Atlanta. I was fortunate to experience the things that money can buy at a young age, including private universities and international travel. Without the need to strive for possessions, I began to wonder about the purpose of life.

At age 24, after three years of marriage, my husband and I traveled around the country, looking for “something different” from our conventional lifestyle. After six months visiting various communities, we decided to separate. I took off alone on a backpacking odyssey through Europe and Asia. After three months of overland travel and many adventures, I landed in Dharamsala, a Tibetan village in India, and for the first time in my life, I felt at home. I was most impressed by the Tibetan people, who worked hard and had little, but seemed so peaceful and content. The children helped their parents without complaining, unlike many American children who seem never satisfied.

I decided to stay in Dharamsala for the next three months to study meditation and Buddhist psychology, and to explore a whole new way of being. Experiences I had during meditation retreats convinced me that studying and practicing Tibetan Buddhism would be my path in life.

After returning to my home in Santa Barbara, I began searching for a teacher and heard about the Human Development Training Program given by Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche. Having spent all my money on my travels, I decided to sell my diamond wedding ring in order to attend. This turned out to be the best trade of my life.

After finishing the two-month training program in 1975, I moved to Berkeley to work for the organizations founded by Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche. I have been here ever since. My job for the past 32 years has been comprised of traveling the world, visiting Tibetan centers as well as book and import shops, attending conferences and book fairs, and making Dharma Publishing books and art available in as many places and languages as possible.

I learned at a young age that having lots of cool stuff doesn’t make you happy. I feel extremely fortunate to be part of such a brilliantly conceived, meticulously planned movement to return the Tibetan culture with its extraordinary teachings and lineage to its rightful place on the planet. Much of the world’s resources are spent in wasteful and even harmful ways. My bequest will not.

It is heartening to have the opportunity to leave a bequest in my living trust to such a worthy endeavor. I encourage anyone searching for a way to leave a mark that will continue for generations and help to reestablish and preserve one of the most significant cultures on earth to consider a bequest to Tibetan Aid Project.

In recognition of her bequest, the Tibetan Aid Project is honored to list Rima Tamar as a member of its Wheel of Dharma Circle. For information on bequests to TAP call Judy Rasmussen at 510-848-4238 or e-mail: judyr@tibetanaidproject.org

New Estate Planning Tools

Phil Murphy, our planned giving specialist, has created several 10-minute, easy-to-view videos about important aspects of estate planning. As an artist brings Phil’s words to life, these videos are easy to listen to and fun to watch.

To view New Estate Planning videos, please visit: http://vimeopro.com/givingcoach/estate-planning-briefings

Phil is also available for free personal advice to anyone who is including the Tibetan Aid Project or its affiliated organizations in his or her estate plan. Please contact us at the TAP offices to be referred to Phil Murphy. You can also visit “How do I include the Tibetan Aid Project in my Will or Living Trust?” at http://www.tibetanaidproject.org/support-our-work/make-a-bequest.html