

the practitioner's physical ability to serve others.

For the fall 2001 university semester, Dr. Ngawang was invited to teach as a distinguished visiting professor at Virginia Tech, a university of 25,000 in Blacksburg, Virginia, USA. With Professor Robert Siegle, Dr. Ngawang has co-taught two courses in traditional Tibetan culture through the English Department and the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, as well as lecturing to the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine on traditional Tibetan horse medicine (another of Dr. Ngawang's specialties). In the larger New River Valley community, he has volunteered his time to teach a bi-weekly course in Tibetan language and to give a weekly traditional Tibetan Buddhist teaching. This is Dr. Ngawang's first visit to the United States, and part of his commitment to open traditional Tibetan medicine, culture, and religion to all those who might benefit.



**The Jomsom Buddhist Teaching and Medical Center** is Dr. Ngawang's next project. Upon his return to western Nepal in January, 2002, he will begin coordinating plans for this ambitious project that he sees it as the crowning final contribution of his life. Dr. Ngawang envisions a center, estimated to cost USD \$175,000, where the profoundly interconnected dimensions of medicine, folk customs and arts, and Buddhism can all be celebrated, preserved, and taught to all who might be interested. Each aspect of this institution is to serve as a working model of the classic arts and knowledge of the Tibetan tradition, one that can help residents continue those traditions as a vital part of their lives, that can serve as models for others to imitate, and that can teach all of us how to improve our lives.



Dr. Ngawang's current medical office is a room in his small trekkers' lodge, The Dancing Yak (which accommodates 25-30 guests) in Mustang district's central village, Jomsom. From this relatively small office, Dr. Ngawang, now 53, has already proceeded to treat approximately 75,000 patients, an estimated 50% of them at his own cost, since it is incumbent upon a Buddhist amchi to serve each and every person who needs help, many of whom, in remote Himalayan regions, live outside the cash economy (for centuries, trading services, barley, tea, salt, apples, and yak wool). The new institution would enhance the level of support Dr. Ngawang can provide his patients by gathering the books, ingredients, and facilities that are not possible under current funding conditions. To construct herbal baths, for example, is to provide a level of care and healing that is presently impossible for those most in need of it.

Dr. Ngawang foresees buying some of the land behind his Dancing Yak Hotel and building the region's best monastery, where large traditional teachings may be held. This temple would be a showcase of the best traditional Tibetan artistry, its symbolically carved doors and columns, its hand-printed books, its painted walls, its hand-loomed rugs all meticulous in meaning and detail. Featuring, among others, a large image of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, the temple would provide craftsmen models to imitate. More importantly, it would provide a setting where meditators could work with great clarity and a lama's support, and where those new to Buddhism could encounter it as a living force in people's lives. Dr. Ngawang plans for a large prayer wheel, glassed in against Jomsom's infamous wind, accessible to even the most aged practitioners in any weather. Instead of sitting alone at home, these residents