

would find themselves with a form of exercise compounding religious, physical, and social benefits. The Jomsom Buddhist Teaching & Medical Center will also have an enclosed courtyard, with a medicinal flower garden, a place for preservation, for teaching herbalists, and for meditative calm. An enlarged kitchen, comfortable dormitories, a supply room, ample toilets, electricity, and drinking water will make this center a desirable stop for international guests as well as for local regional visitors currently without a fully functioning monastery.

Besides being able to host many people during large teachings, the Jomsom Buddhist Teaching & Medical Center will eventually offer classes in Tibetan letters and language (not offered in Nepal's government schools), medicine, carving and block-print making, thang-ka painting, and meditation. Dr. Ngawang expects to oversee and to teach some of these classes himself, though his main responsibilities as the center's amchi and head lama will be to continue to offer his medical and religious services. The Center will also serve as a site for traditional festivals, combining as they do a major social occasion, a renewal of folk songs and dances and music and drama, and the teachings of a lama to maintain the healthy balance of laughter, wisdom, and health that characterizes Tibetan culture.



Currently, Jomsom is Mustang region's district center (with its only airport, bringing in twenty- to thirty-thousand tourists annually)—the location of many district offices, such as the Red Cross, a Royal Nepal army unit, the Forestry Office, and a government school. Tens of thousands of Nepali, Indian, and Tibetan pilgrims also pass through Jomsom annually on their way to nearby Mukhtinath—as they have for centuries—a famous natural wonder where a natural gas flame emerges from the earth just beside a mountain spring. Dr. Ngawang's center will supply this central entry point for so many thousands of visitors and residents with information, lodging, medical treatment, and, most importantly, cultural preservation. It will be a national treasure for Nepal and a gift to all Himalayan peoples and their friends around the world.

As tourists begin to outnumber the local population two to one, and as the government-sponsored well-intentioned modernization efforts further dilute traditional Tibetan culture, the center which Dr.



Ngawang envisions will not only preserve those ancient traditions of wisdom, compassion, and healing, but allow them to speak in a profound way to the changing circumstances of daily life in the Mustang district.

*Above right, Dr. Ngawang carves in the tradition of blockprint carving he mastered in his youth. Above left, he reads the pulses of one of many who line up for his services wherever he goes. Right, he gathers medicinal plants on a slope of the Himalayas.*

