

THIRD TIBETAN WOMEN'S ADVANCED LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Date: 18th – 27th December 2012

Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi



Figure 1 Participants for the 3rd Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training

Pre-Training

The TWA coordination team made our way to Delhi on the night of 15th December, a few days preceding the start of the Third Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training on the 19th. Pre-training preparations included: purchasing the training kit (stationery, yoga mats, water bottles, group prizes, mementoes for the panellists and trainers), finalizing the speakers and their travel mode, setting the menu, and arranging the Magnolia conference hall for the concluding panel discussion. The large stanchions in the room were decorated with the TWA logo. We also made sure all the technology was in order, checking to ensure all the presentations, videos, sound systems were functioning and easily accessed.

The spacious hall thus transformed into a setting fit for training our 25 participants, we welcomed the guests on 18th December. The team succeeded in making the training space at the Gandhi Peace Foundation comfortable and appealing as to welcome the participants traveling from near and far.

Training synopsis:

The ten-day ‘Third Tibetan Women’s Advanced Leadership Training’ (December 19 – 27) was held at the Gandhi Peace Foundation. We had 25 Tibetan women attend from many parts of India, including Chennai, Dharamsala, Gujarat, Gangtok, and Delhi. These women came from various backgrounds: there were graduate students, professional workers, political activists, and teachers. This time the training course was divided more or less into outdoor and indoor training; the Christmas holidays happened to be the sole reason for the slight changes. The 3rd series welcomed professional trainers including Lynda O. Lepcha, Director of Holistic Training Solution, New Delhi; Irene M. Santiago, Chair and former Chief Executive Officer of the Mindanao Commission on Women, and Convener of the Mothers for Peace Movement in the Philippines; and Tenzin Dhardon Sharling, member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and Co-Chair of the International Tibet Network. These women helped lead three main phases of training: identifying, understanding, and building leadership skills.

Once again, the Tibetan Women’s Advanced Leadership Training was generously funded by the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, through the Tibet Fund and the National Endowment for Democracy based in the United States. This training intensive encouraged hands-on experience of leadership. Activities included instruction in event management, an ambush lobbying of Indian leaders and opinion makers, participation in NDTV’s “The Big Fight,” a panel discussion with women leaders, implementation of social empowerment projects in Delhi, and also included cultural exposure trips to Akshardam, a Hindu temple complex.

18 December, Tuesday

Our phones commenced ringing early on in the morning, as participants began arriving from Dharamsala. Others continued to arrive throughout the day, registering, picking up their training kits, and obtaining their accommodation

assignments. The welcome dinner, followed by formal welcome address by the TWA President, marked the start of events.

19th December, Wednesday



Figure 2 Morning Yoga Session

The first day of the training began with a morning yoga session; it was beautiful to see how the whole group was slowly starting to come together. The Lhakar day began with a formal welcome address by the TWA President, which gave insight into the training's history, purpose, and objectives. TWA's General Secretary introduced the trainees and coordination team through the ice-breaker game "Two Truths and Lie." As we played, the laughter never seemed to end. The game "Secret Friend" was next introduced to the participants, the whole purpose being to maintain secrecy throughout the training period, but in the past we have witnessed many secret friends remain the best of friends in their real lives after the programs. The participants were then given the opportunity to decide on the ground rules that they wish to abide by for the rest of the training program. The participants were then divided into four groups with an elected team leader and time manager; the groups named themselves "Thenthuk

Dolma,”“Talaash,”“Unity Six,” and “Himalayan Queens.”The groups were graded for their basic leadership skills and overall group performance.

The next session was more of an orientation; TWA’s General Secretary led a session on “Proposal Writing.” This talk was meant to help the groups in their work on a social empowerment project designed to make the Tibetan presence felt in the Indian capital city. The session also featured last year’s participant Tenzin Choedon, now a staff member at TWA. She spoke on her experiences and shared her group’s tips on winning the previous year’s bonus prize.

The participants were then introduced to the concept of “Ambush Lobbying,” which was a practical outbound training exercise arranged for the following day. The presentation guided the participants through what, why, and who to lobby, followed by an interactive discussion with plenty of questions.

The morning was heavily loaded with lots to listen and grasp. The afternoon session was an exposure trip to the “Akshardam,” also referred to as Delhi Akshardam or Swaminarayan Akshardam. The temple complex contains millennia of representations of traditional Hindu and Indian culture, spirituality, and architecture. The building was developed and constructed by 3,000 volunteers and 7,000 artisans. Nevertheless this was not merely a sightseeing trip, it was a part of a challenging “visualization” project for group members. Not even a pen or paper was allowed in the temple, so it was all about one’s ability to observe, grasp, and get hold of minute details. When we got back, the evening session had the groups draw a blueprint of a Tibetan Akshardam. We called the day off after the groups presented their creations to the whole community of participants.

Quote from participant: “After attending this training I felt the importance of [having] such trainings in our community where we can have more knowledge, exposure, excitement and experience. A fantastic training”.

20th December, Thursday



Figure 3 : Trainees leaving for lobbying

As per the previous day's presentation on Ambush Lobbying, the groups readied themselves for an outbound practicum training. This was an exercise designed to give trainees a chance to experience what it looks and feels like to lobby. The TWA coordination team handed each a group a lobbying kit containing papers with the details of Tibetans who have self-immolated since 2009, copies of the pledge, and their travel and lunch allowance. At 9:30am the groups dispersed from the training venue, but some groups remained at their tables and strategized their plans. The organizing team had made it very clear to the trainees that the quantity is less important than the quality of people they use to lobby.



Figure 4 Lobbying

The groups reunited at the venue at 5:30pm, much happiness upon their faces. The groups had lobbied throughout the day and got eleven prominent Indians to sign the pledge. The signatories included members of Indian Parliament, politicians, senior journalists, and social activists.

Many of the trainees expressed a wish to be a part of a planned lobby day. Ambush Lobbying was a way to give these women an introduction to the process, and to give them hands-on lobbying experience.

The day concluded with group strategic meeting.

Quote from participant: "I feel like I, too, have the potential to make a difference in our society. For this task, self-confidence is a must, which I feel this workshop has helped to develop in me".

Phase Two, Building Leadership Skills

21st December, Friday



Figure 5 Lynda leading the session

Lynda Ongel Lepcha, the Director of Holistic Training Solutions, yet again kindly assented to our request to lead a three-day training on building leadership skills. The first day focused on “Leading the Self”: our brain at work, understanding one’s self, and creating plans for action. Lynda began by explaining how our brain functions while at work. She looked into the reasons why our brain often feels so taxed, and also elaborated on the challenge of avoiding distractions and maintaining focus. She discussed ways in which we can take full advantage of our mental resources, how to develop and maximize our insights to solve seemingly insurmountable problems, how to keep cool in any situation in order to make the best decisions possible, how to collaborate with others more effectively, how to make providing feedback more easily, and how to effectively change other people’s behaviour.

The next session got even more interesting as we looked into “Understanding the Self through Social Styles.” The whole idea was to come to an understanding of one’s own communal behaviors, and to develop awareness and understanding of dominant social styles. The trainees were grouped according to their styles, and in their groups they brainstormed the strengths and weaknesses of each kind of social style. It was interesting to see how comparable personality types were placed in the same group. The final presentations, which featured feedback between groups, proved both hilarious and revelatory.



Figure 6 NDTV "Big Fight" participation

Ten trainees of the Third Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training got the opportunity to participate in "Big Fight," an interactive programme on NDTV 24x7. The programme featured people from all different walks of life, expressing their views on the topic of discussion, "Are Indian cities safe for women?". It was moderated by Mr. Vikram Chandra.

Quote from participant: "First of all I am really grateful that I got this opportunity and I would like to say thank you very much... Overall I found it all really well planned. All the members of TWA have worked really hard to make this training successful and I think you all have done really well. Thank you."

22nd December, Saturday

The second day of training given by Lynda was themed on "Team Leading." Having come to an understanding of their personal social styles the previous day, the trainees were then made to work in groups to understand the varying social styles of their teammates. This helped the teams understanding one another better, thus improving their overall group performance.

The trainees were then introduced to a very important aspect in planning for success: the Time Management principle. Participants learned how to keep up with a "Time Management Inventory," and the training head further elaborated on maintaining a "Time Management Grid." We took many lessons and tips from this session, including strategies to balance different areas of your life,

clarify your values and goals, and how to use a productivity system that fits you personally. We also learned that many important tasks like building domain competency, improving soft skills, career planning, setting goals, giving back to society, and other less tangible endeavors are often overlooked because they rarely or never appear on our “To Do” lists. Even if they do appear, they will always be last, and most always will given the least priority among other tasks.



Figure 7 Creativity on peak



Figure 8 Creativity on peak.2

The afternoon session featured a practical workshop on performing effective “Coaching and Feedback.” At this time trainees were introduced to the GEARS Model – “Goals, Evaluation, Alternatives, Results, and Support.” A trainee volunteered to be “coached” in front of the whole group by our master trainer.

Then team members took the exercise into their own hands, taking turns in leading coaching sessions within their groups. While an individual led a one-on-one coaching session with another team member, the remaining teammates helped the process by throwing out open-ended questions. It was fulfilling to see many happy faces as the goals of the exercise became more clear, and alternativeways to achieve effective coaching revealed themselves.

The groups worked on their group projects before we called the day off.

Quote from participant: “Great exposure through the outbound training sessions like NDTV studio participation, project implementation, and lobbying”.

23rd December, Sunday



Figure 9 Lynda's session

“Leading Organizations” was the theme as Lynda led the training for the third day. The other main topic was “Innovation,” which included discussion of the strategies and “tools” of innovation. Lynda explained that creativity and innovation are not interchangeable concepts. Trainees were then introduced to ways in which people have used their ability to come up with new ideas and products, to harness to creative ideas, and to bring them to market in a profitable manner. Further, key components of innovation, types of innovation, the “three seeds” of innovation, and the “sweet spots” of innovation were introduced to the

trainees with examples relating to products in the market. We also looked into “red ocean strategy” and “blue ocean strategy” concepts.

The trainees were then grouped according to their regions for ease of communication. The teams had to choose and implement a follow-up project as per the need and interest of the group. The groups worked together on a project planning worksheet, and it was impressive to see what they came up with.

Lynda’s three day training concluded. TWA’s President thanked our master trainer for her commitment and dedication with a presentation of a small gift.



Figure 10 Farewell group picture with Lynda

Quote from participant: “I have really enjoyed the ten days. The opportunity to meet all those ladies, the life lessons I learned, and the quality training which I have received have been the greatest gifts for me. I believe that in the coming new year each of us will be a better person. I wish every Tibetan woman receives this opportunity in the future.”

24th December, Monday



Figure 11 Participants with Irene

Irene M. Santiago, the Chair and former Chief Executive Officer of the Mindanao Commission on Women and Convenor of the Mothers for Peace Movement in the Philippines, was the head trainer for the day. In 2005, she was nominated with 1,000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Irene began the day with a very powerful video screening that touched on her first topic – “Women Being Taken Seriously.” This was followed by a group discussion on women’s leadership roles in present Tibetan society and in the exile movement, and the ways in which women’s roles and status have changed in recent years.

The next topic was “From Participation to Influence,” which highlighted the importance of being keeping a strong voice as women in a women’s association, in mixed organizations, and as parts of movements with regional and international links. As we assessed women’s leadership roles in these spheres, we attempted to decipher strategies to increase women’s leadership roles. We also discussed tactics on how to make women’s interests part of mainstream concern, by looking further into the pros and cons of women’s caucuses and committees.

The after lunch session was a presentation on “Getting Attention for Women’s Issues,” as well to how to engage in effective advocacy. A workshop on

planning a successful advocacy campaign followed; the indicators were explained in detail, with plenty of group discussions, role playing games, and presentations to engage the trainees.

TWA's President thanked Irene M. Santiago with a traditional Tibetan scarf and a small souvenir from the Third Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training.

Quote from participant: "This training helped me in getting to know myself better. TWA should continue with this training in the future."

25th December, Tuesday



Figure 12 Lakpa Tsering la honouring the winner

Every evening during the training period, the groups had diligently dedicated time to work on and prepare their projects, and finally came the day to present and implement the projects.

Mr. Lhakpa Tsering la, Career Consultant and Project Officer of Empowering the Vision, kindly accepted our invitation to serve as a judge.



Figure 13 Unity Six

The team Unity Six's project title was **"Today's Readers, Tomorrow's Leaders,"** and their project implementation site was the Trukman Slum area. The objective of the project was to promote education for children by distributing educational kits and giving workshops. The team divulged that most of the children in the slum area are unaware of importance of education, and kits will essentially help in spreading and stressing the significance of knowledge. Therefore, we plan to invest in putting together these kits. They team returned content after spending quality time, motivating, and exchanging ideas with the children at the slum area, and for being able to bring a smile to many hearts.



Figure 14 Himalayan Queens



Figure 15 Himalayan Queens

The Himalayan Queens titled their project “**Love and Light,**”and their beneficiaries comprised of 73 physically and mentally challenged orphans in Missionaries of Charity located at Jangpura, New Delhi. The aims and objectives of the team were to make our presence as Tibetans felt in the Indian Community, a symbolic gesture of thank you to India for their hospitality for the past 53 years. The group hoped to make the children there feel loved and cared for, and to make their 2012 Christmas a very special and memorable one. The team was deeply moved when they met with the children at the missionary charity. Many team members expressed a newly felt gratitude for their own physical health and wellbeing. They greatly cherished the moments they could spend with the children, and treasured the simple assistance they could offer.



Figure 16 Talaash



Figure 17 Talaash

The team Talaash had their project titled **“TO OUR DADA DADI AND NANA NANI – We Love You”** (“To Our Grandparents – We Love You”). The project aimed to reach to the people who perhaps need love, care, and attention the most. The team hoped that through their service, they could convey to the youth the importance of caring for and respecting our elders.

The ultimate purpose of the project was to make the Tibetan presence felt in the capital city, and to express a heartfelt “Thank You” to India and its citizens for their hospitality, friendship, and support to the Tibetans over the past 50 years. The project hoped to show our utmost respect and thanks to the generation who helped make our lives much easier. The team believed that this project was their humble way of adding smiles to the world and making it a happier place. One of the key messages of the project was to connect to our core value systems of love, respect, and care. This team was beaming with happiness upon their return, holding fast the truth of the old adage, “the more you give to others, the more you get in return.”



Figure 18 Thanthuk Dolma



Figure 19 Thanthuk Dolma

The winning team ThenthukDolma’s project title was **“We Can Feel For You.”** Their first presentation slide read, “It’s not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving,” a quote from Mother Teresa. Their main objective in implementing this project was to let the poor cycle rickshaw pullers know that we care about and realize the hardship they have to go through every day to earn a minimal income. The team aimed to supply rickshaw drivers with winter clothing (especially needed in the freezing Delhi winters), to make them feel cared for, to show respect for their hard work, and to thank them for their service. At the same time, group members used this opportunity of exchange to

share with them our backgrounds, our history, and our identity, and to make the presence of Tibetans felt in the most positive way possible.

Everyone returned to the venue feeling content and satisfied after being able to touch the hearts of many under-privileged sections of society. Trainees felt that they were able to build bridges of understanding between themselves and the people they met, and believed they tapped into connections that emphasized our oneness as human beings.

Quote from participant: “It was invaluable, fun, and effective for many of us. The organizers have worked really hard which I really appreciated.”

26th December, Wednesday

The teams dispersed around Delhi in the morning to advertise the final day’s panel discussion. Two teams took the responsibility of hanging posters around Delhi University, while two other teams worked on distributing the invitation cards to important and prominent offices around Delhi. The trainees were also given the option to attend the hour-long teaching of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the TCV Day School, Majnukatila, Delhi.

Ms. Tenzin Dhardon Sharling, Member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and Co-Chair of the International Tibet Network, was our trainer for the day. Dhardon Sharling focused mainly on building effective communication skills. The session began with an ice-breaker in the same vein as this topic; it was a fun way to learn and explore the ways in which human communication is a unique blessing. Trainees were quickly briefed on the basics of communications skills, and moved deeper into the topic.



Figure 20 Activity

The trainees also did an exercise in which they wrote a review on Twitter about an article featured in one of the leading news magazines of India. It was impressive to see the teams emerge with brief but compelling reviews.



Figure 21 Twitter

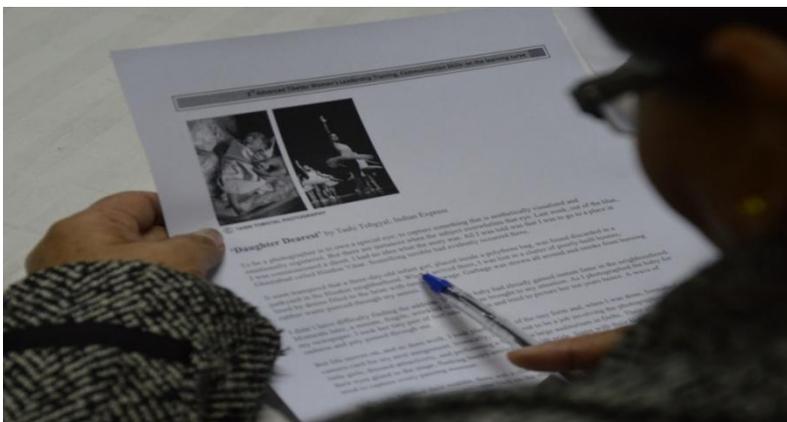


Figure 22 Twitter Review

The most fun part of the session was an activity called “AD ZAP,” a way for groups to practice marketing their message via the media. Each team was to create a TV ad for a new product, and in doing so demonstrate their creativity, innovation, and effective communication skills. Each ad had to demonstrate an appeal to a clear target audience – e.g., Indian or International? Women, men, or all? The team had to be able to answer questions about their product. Team ads were as follows:



Figure 23 AD ZAP



Figure 24 AD ZAP

- Himalayan Queens –“Dabang Gum,” a new energy gum. Tag line: “Dabang gum khao, Energy pao” (“Have Dabang gum and get energized”).
- ThenthukDolma – “Punch,” a new protection spray. Tag line: “Fear no more”
- Talaash – “Kangsha,” a new socks brand. Jingle: “Feel the Feet.”
- Unity Six –“Ring – ring,” a new candy to raise your height. Tag line: “ring ringkhao, lambay ho jao” (“have ring ring and get taller”).

Teams were graded and given feedback by trainers according to their success at delivering their message, marketing their product, and creativity in product design.

A special evening

As it was the final evening of training, we had a special farewell dinner followed by the revealing of secret friends. The teams held an impromptu talent night where groups and individuals performed songs and dances.



Figure 25 Farewell night

Quote from participant: “Thank you TWA for providing such an opportunity, I feel very happy and satisfied that 2012 came to an end so nicely. This training was the best Christmas gift I gave myself, and it was all possible because of you guys. Thanks a lot and god bless.”

27th December, Thursday

TWA's Third Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training concluded with a conference on "Women's Leadership Roles in Asia." Addresses were given by veteran Indian women leaders: Dr. Kiran Bedi, India's first and highest woman ranking officer and political activist; Jaya Jaitley, former political leader and social activist; Dr. Alana Golmei, activist for Burmese human rights; and Radha Bhatt (Radha Bhen), leading activist and chairperson of the Gandhi Peace Foundation. These women's talks marked the concluding session of ten days of Tibetan Women's Advanced Leadership Training (TWALT), organized by the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA).



Figure 26 President giving welcome speech

Twenty-five young participants of TWALT from exile pockets in India—Sikkim, Chennai, Gujarat, Dharamsala, and Delhi – were joined by guests and the press at Magnolia auditorium of the India Habitat Center, New Delhi. The two-hour discussion touched on the ways in which over the past centuries women in Asia have been key figures in the promotion of non-violence; from homemakers to nation builders, they have led on the path to progress and advancement.



Figure 27 Dhardon la- Moderator

Moderated by DhardonSharling, activist and member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile, the discussion established that women in Asia, and particularly Tibetan women, have persevered as agents of positive change in the 21st century.



Figure 28 Dr. Kiran Bedi

Dr. Bedi stressed that leadership is both innately personal and professional, and that true leadership involves realizing that “you are what you are from inside out.” Dr. Bedi cited His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, and Mahatma Gandhi as exemplary leaders who are “leaders in performance and not in position.”



Figure 29 Jaya Jaitley

Jaya Jaitley, spoke about “three symbols of leadership: the jail – preparing you for the sacrifice of freedom in pursuit of greater freedom, the spade/shovel – representing individual action in cleaning the drain, and the ballot box – making you deserving of a leader.” Jaya lauded Tibetan women for being exemplary leaders and for walking the right path. “Women are instrumental in peacekeeping because they will not resort to violence... they have the strongest weapon – the strength of will.”

Radha Bhatt stressed that leadership prowess is already exhibited by the common people in villages in Asia, evidenced by their every day acts of defiance. Radha expounded that leadership at the grassroots level provides bedrock support, a foundation for bigger movements in society. She also reiterated Gandhi-ji’s message of how individual action can bring about change: “Be the change you want and expect to see in society, and in this way Asia can become a harmonious region on the globe.”



Figure 30 Panelists

Dr. Alana Golmei shared her early experiences of fleeing from conflict in Manipur and getting involved with the Burmese human rights struggle. “You cannot run away from a problem and you cannot expect another position of power or authority to solve your problem, but you should [try to develop] the solution.” Dr. Alana expressed her thoughts on the importance of networking and advocacy skills in the human rights struggle, and said that Tibetan women “should reach out, expand and build a strong base to ensure the sustenance of the struggle and the movement.”



Figure 31 Question Answer session

The panel discussion was followed by lunch; it was an opportunity for the trainees to interact with and learn from the speakers and invitees.



Figure 32 Launching Annual Magazine Dolma

Quote from participant: “This kind of leadership training is a huge investment by TWA for creating future women leaders. I feel blessed to be a part of it.”

Conclusion:

These young women participants shared a commitment to take strident steps in their everyday lives to perfect their leadership skills, to carry the mantle of female leadership. They thus hope to continue on within a legacy of women’s leadership, and thereby secure a safe and sound future for women across the globe.

The Tibetan Women’s Association extends deep gratitude to the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, the TIBET FUND, and the National Endowment for Democracy, all based in the United States, for having supported us with the much needed financial aid that made this training possible. We also thank our amazing participants who made this training happen with their enthusiastic presence and active participation. We look forward to being able to create many more such platforms to empower and encourage women to climb to higher scales of leadership both in personal and professional fronts. Thank you, sponsors, for making this project a reality.

Sponsored by Shelley and Donald Rubin foundation and National Endowment for Democracy

Supported by: The TIBET FUND

Organised by Tibetan Women's Association