

**TRAINERS' TRAINING: DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT**

A partnership project between Central Tibetan Administration and Danish Centre
for Conflict Resolution
Else Hammerich and Bjarne Vestergaard

MIDWAY REPORT

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TRAINERS' TRAINING

PREFACE

We are happy to present our midway report, having completed two and a half months of the Trainers' Training, starting November 1st, and ending early April.

The report is meant for our partners in Dharamsala: The trainees and the Home Department of the Tibetan Government in exile. It is also written to our home base in Denmark, Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution and our sponsors, the Danida of the Danish Foreign Ministry and Ambassador Birgit Storgaard in New Delhi, who has given us good professional support. And finally the report is for our own recollection.

The report consists of summaries, narratives, our didactic model and planning and an appendix with overviews and examples of working papers, evaluations and works by the trainees. At the entrance is the teaching given to us by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who received us in a most warming and enlightening audience on November 29th.

We would be grateful for any feed back, questions or suggestions to the report.

Else Hammerich and Bjarne Vestergaard
Dharamsala, January 2001.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama Advice for the trainees

On November the 29th 2000 the group of trainees and the project leaders had the joy and privilege of being received in audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This was an encouraging and empowering event for all of us. The Dalai Lama received us with great warmth and gave us a precise teaching on the essentials of conflict resolution, from a Buddhist angle. Furthermore he stressed his hopes and expectations to the new NGO, that will be formed after the training. And he promised us full support from the government in exile – moral support as well as economic support.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Ask me a question and if some wisdom comes through my brain, then I will share it to you.

Question: What is the cause of conflict and what are the ways to resolve it according to Buddhist philosophy?

Answer: According to the Buddhist philosophy the main source of conflict is hatred and attachment, and the root cause of these conflicting emotions is ignorance. It is obvious - let us not speak in terms of Dharma but generally - that most conflicting crises arise due to feelings of repulsion. There is no concrete object we can pinpoint as a source of undesirable feeling. There are so many causes and conditions, which produce these conflicting crises,

including your behaviour and actions. For instance, when any person becomes your enemy or undesirable object, one condition refers back to your way of looking and relating with the person. If you relate to this person with doubt, suspicion and ill feelings, slowly and gradually the other person also dislikes you. At the end both start hurting each other, and then they become enemies.

There are in fact so many causes and conditions for enmity. Within these many causes and conditions, your way of conducting yourself is also included. But our usual way of thinking is "I have done my best to this person but he behaved so badly with me, so this person is so bad. I have behaved sincerely with pure motivation, but he gave me lots of trouble". And immediately a thought of revenge arises in your mind. This is not dharma talk. Just examine, how it happens. If we understand the reasons, causes and conditions, time factors and so-forth, then we realise that there is no concrete object to pinpoint as the main cause. If you think in these general processes and do a research, you cannot pinpoint a concrete object, and consequently you can reduce your ill feelings.

For instance, how many wars were fought in the earlier part of the 20th century? When the wars were fought, it was through pointing out one concrete object as undesirable,

without seeing how many inter-connections there are. When using force and weapons to destroy the opponents, it was presumed that there was only one concrete object. However, the reality is completely different.

From the perspective of dharma, we say that the root causes are hatred and attachment, and strong separation of "we" and "others". Building this strong notion of "self" and "others" is based on ignorance, or not knowing reality. All these problems are caused by ignorance of the concrete grasping of the self, which is diametrically opposed to the comprehension of selflessness. This is a very profound discussion of the Buddhist philosophy.

Even though not talking from the profound level of Buddhist philosophy, we can say that not to realise reality will result in a strong polarisation of "others" and "we". I am always saying that now that the world is one, there is no need to make a strong barrier of "others" and "we".

For instance usually we are saying "these Indians", and in reality our survival is dependent on Indians. Maybe an Indian is causing us problems; and it may for instance be due to a Tibetans' showoff and stylishness, wearing brand new watches, riding huge motor cycles – that definitely can make Indians feel uncomfortable. If we look down upon them, then of course it is a complete mistake to blame them for creating problems for us. If we think in a wider perspective, through knowing the real causes and conditions, then when

something goes wrong, we could instead think that there is nothing to blame them. In actual sense, it is our mistake. Indians are really kind, and our survival is depending on them. If we think in this way, there are no conflicts at all. Therefore, it is extremely important to know the reality and view the problem in a wider perspective.

Secondly, a main cause of conflict is the lack of justice and honesty. In such cases one must take counter measures. There is a technique to deal with such problems. If the conflict arises due to different interest and approaches, in that case both parties are right from their side. For these problems, we have to be open in our discussion and dialogue, with honesty, frankness and sincerity. Not feel afraid of each other, nor reproach the other for talking differently or thinking differently from you. One should say honestly, that you want these benefits and I want these. And now for both to receive these, we could do in this way. There is nothing to hide for each other, and there is no need to deceive each other. Be open from the heart - in this way we can solve the problems. If we do not go in the right direction, if we are dishonest, then problems definitely arise, and of course it is our mistake since we are telling lies. If the problem arises due to telling lies then one must go back to the track of honesty. There is no other solution than this. We must solve the problem by making the matter clear through sincere motivation, with honesty and justice. Taking care of the interest and benefits of others and respecting

them. I think that there are ways to act like this.

Question: What is your expectation of our forming a new NGO?

Answer: As long as there is human society, there will always be conflict. As I always say that if we do not want conflict at all, we have to make the entire humanity stupid or dull, and - then there will be no problem at all. We can take out the human brain, which thinks so much, then there is no conflict at all. This is impossible, even if we try, and it is really stupid idea, since human intelligence is so precious. As long as there is human intellect, definitely there will be different ideas, viewpoints, and different outlooks. This is also a kind of basis for human conflict. As long as human beings have conscience, and intellect to think about the future, definitely there will be conflicts. Conflicts are made by human beings and methods to solve them must be created through human intelligence. It is wise to dispel the conflict through dialogue, not through weapons and nuclear power. One has to discuss clearly to solve human conflicts. Therefore, this new NGO program is extremely important.

As I have mentioned earlier, the inter-related methods to resolve the conflict is, from the Buddhist perspective, dependent arising. This interdependent idea shows the reality very clearly. Therefore, if we implement the idea of inter-dependency, this will help us to realize the real causes and conditions of the problems. It is important to implement

the idea through honesty and justice. The basis of honesty and justice is love and compassion. If one has love and compassion in one's heart one will definitely think about others' purpose, and accept the others as they are. One will think that the other being is also a part of my being, and in that way we can remain truthful and open.

Naturally suspicion and doubts arise if we build thick barriers or walls between "them" and "us". Particularly if one holds strong hatred, this ill feeling towards others automatically will bring suspicion and doubt. In such circumstances, openness is impossible. Therefore, this inter-dependent view of Buddhism helps us to think more broadly and widely. If we set up good new NGO and if it gets more connected with many foreign countries, definitely it is possible that we can contribute new ideas to them. As a result we can also find another path to enter the UN. This will give some extra work and pressure to the Chinese embassy.

Question: After four months of training a new NGO will be formed. Will the Tibetan government support it? If yes, in what ways?

Answer: Yes, money! So, you need money. Isn't it? Not just a blessing but a concrete blessing. Of course, the Tibetan exile government will give full support. For the initial expenses, we can not give millions but the exile government could give a couple hundred thousand, but I don't mean in Dollars. OK. It is very important and you should form this NGO.

Question: Your Holiness, nonviolence is the best way to solve our conflict between Tibet and China, however sometimes, I feel it is taking a long time. Therefore, we would love to hear from your Holiness if there is any other ways to achieve our aim. Please advice?

Answer: I have adopted this idea or method of the middle way approach since 1973, for 27 years despite the lack of response from the Chinese government on a possible dialogue about Tibet. I still believe that the middle way approach is the best and most practical way and I think there is no reason to change that position. If you have something to say then that it is welcome, any criticism is welcome. Not just mere criticism of my approach but you must show some alternative solution; just mere criticism without any alternative solution is of no much use.

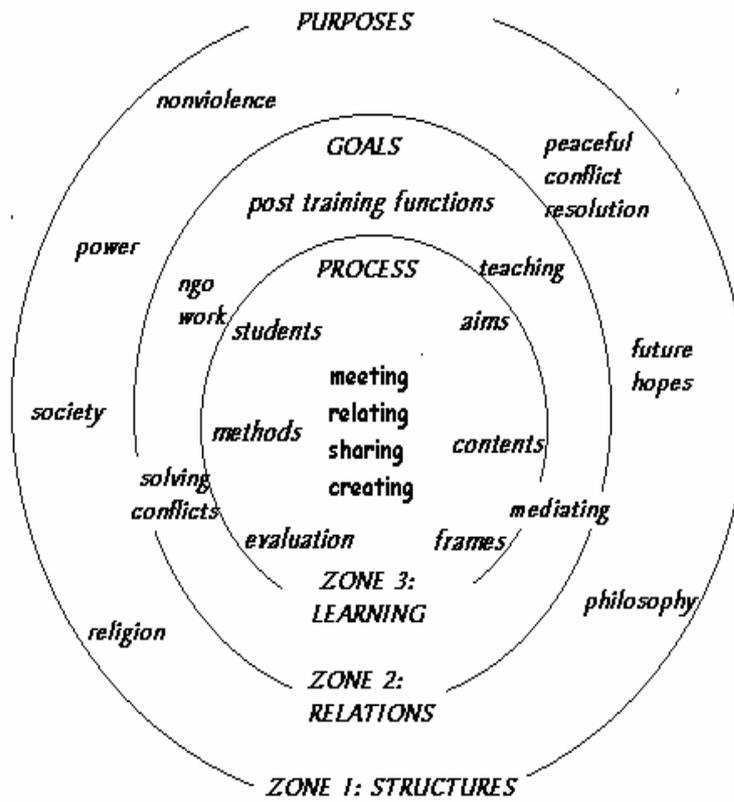
Question: We are given this training on the conflict resolution. Your Holiness, what is the best way to solve the conflict according to your opinion?

Answer: In addition to what I have said, the most crucial factor is determination. Our middle way approach has no progress, no response from the Chinese government's side and also sometimes among our Tibetans, there is no response, but despite that, we are fully committed to the approach and keeping our determination. Any sort of human effort needs determination. To overcome the obstacles for the determination, we need tolerance and patience.

Tolerance should not be considered as a sign of weakness. Since we have the truth, eventually it will bring results, if not in our generation then in next generation – the beauty of truth always remains. Force, aggression, power, guns - these are not beautiful and do not last long. Truth and honesty always inspire, and practice of tolerance and determination will prevail. These are important, for instance we have a saying: “link the rift nine times” - that is very good in practice. That is all.

Thank you

THE DIDACTICS OF THE TRAINING



PLANNING THE TRAINING

To plan and carry out an education of Tibetan trainers was a new professional and personal responsibility for us, and quite a challenge. We really needed a framework, in which we could reflect and discuss our ideas, so we looked for a didactic tool that was precise, comprehensive and dynamic.

The diagram above is what we finally constructed. It is inspired by curriculum thinking by the Danish Educational University, especially by the works of the late professor Carl Aage Larsen. We also have benefited from models of Hilde Hiim and Else Hippe in "Learning through experience, understanding and action" (Copenhagen 1997) and we are much indebted to an almost forgotten, but precious little book "The pedagogic of experience" by Else Schoubye (Copenhagen 1983)

This model was of great help to us, when we did the overall sketching of our programme. But also when we planned each module, and when in the middle of a complicated process we were in doubt: what to do tomorrow? Our trainees, who are not educated teachers, will very soon do educational planning themselves, and we wished to offer them a basic tool of mindful workshop designing. To this end the model has turned out to be quite useful.

A DYNAMIC MODEL

The most important is, that the diagram tries to picture something living: a learning process and its conditions. In such a real life process,

causes, effects and events are not strictly logical, and they can not be set up in a hierarchy without withering. Models are but poor and dull depictions of what goes on between people. Nevertheless they can be useful as linguistic schemes, to facilitate discussions.

We wanted a tool that could signify the constant movement and the inter-relatedness of the many factors of the learning process. So the model does not constitute a hierarchy and therefore it is circular. Furthermore nothing is fixed once and for all. All elements influence each other.

In the outer circle are the purposes of the education. They arise from concepts of human beings in society, history and in cosmos. In this circle are the very ideas of nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution, their conditions in society with its power structures, history and future hopes, and their relations to philosophy and religion. The outer circle also constitutes the Zone 1 of conflicts: the remote area in which we have no immediate influence, because we have no interaction there. This is the zone of the greater society, world politics, and major socio-economic and political conditions. We cannot directly deal with conflicts in that zone.

In the middle circle are the near-future goals of the education: the functions of the students after completing the programme. What are they going to use their learning for – what are their needs? In this circle is also the Zone 2 of conflicts: The area

of face to face communication. We can deal with conflicts in this zone by help of dialogue and negotiation, because we are in direct contact with the people involved.

In the inner circle is the very process of learning, with 6 interrelated actors:

- the students with their pre qualifications, life experiences and wishes
- the frames including instructors, venues and time
- the concrete aims of the learning
- the contents of the teaching
- the working methods
- the evaluations.

This circle also encompasses the Zone 3 of conflicts: the area of learning and training how to deal with the conflicts that take place in ZONE 2, which is daily life and community. Here we make use of our experiences and prepare what to do in real life. Here we can also analyse and discuss ZONE 1 conflicts, in order to understand them better.

In the following we describe how we used this tool in the ongoing design and revision of our training programme.

THE PURPOSES OF THE TRAINING

The main purpose was found through interviews with a wide range of Tibetans. The purpose was identified in dialogues with various officials of the CTA (Central Tibetan Administration) and Kalons (Ministers) from the Departments of Education, International Affairs and Home. In this partnership we agreed on this purpose: **to sharpen the tools of**

democratic processes, co-operation and conflict management within the Tibetan community in exile, in order to strengthen the community.

The link between democratic processes and conflict resolution is a certain concept of the core of democracy (within the formal structures of democracy): A dedication to solve conflicts within community through dialogue, not through enforcement of power.

From the main purpose we developed a future perspective: **The Tibetan community takes over and develops its own type of conflict management with Tibetan trainers and with a Tibetan manual.** This means an integration of the modern skills of conflict management and the Tibetan culture and Buddhist philosophy.

The purpose is closely linked to The *history and current situation* of the society in exile in India since 1959, Tibet being under Chinese occupation, oppression and non-existing negotiations with the Chinese administration.

The *future hope* and the common urge to regain the country and modernise society.

The *power structure* of society, as a relatively new democratic system with traits of traditional hierarchy.

The *Buddhist religion and philosophy*.

The very ideas of *nonviolence* are inscribed in the charter of the Tibetan community in exile, and are shared by our centre with our purpose of promoting *peaceful conflict resolution*.

The Tibetan community in exile is unified in the wish for regaining Tibet, democratise society and preserving culture and religion. It is also diversified in terms of education and status and in opinions. There are discussions on strategy: autonomy vs. independence, and nonviolence vs. more militant actions). We find nevertheless a broad consensus on the overall purpose of the project: **To strengthen the community in exile, “to stand united”**.

The dominating problem for the Tibetans in exile is of course the Sino-Tibetan conflict, which the trainees have no direct access to work with. This is what in our diagram is called a “Zone 1 issue”; Zone 1 is the area of structural conditions that the trainees not immediately can change. There are however mutual influences between Zone 1 and Zone 2: the area of direct relations with other people (home, work place, community etc.). Changed relations in a community may lead to changed conditions at the structural level. And – to a greater extend - vice versa. In this special case, as we have heard from many Tibetans:

“The better we are able to manage our own conflicts, the more energy and strength will our community have to make our common cause prevail”.

THE GOALS

By goals we mean the functions in the community, which the trainees will undertake after the training. This is a Zone 2 issue, because it refers to the direct relations with other people that the coming Tibetan Centre for

Conflict resolution will undertake. The most obvious functions are:

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS

- ❖ To train other people in conflict management as a part of democratic processes.
- ❖ To plan and set up training programmes, workshops, seminars, lectures and debates.
- ❖ To help working places improve teamwork, communication and conflict handling.

CONFLICT MANAGING FUNCTIONS

- ❖ To manage their own conflicts in a deliberate way.
- ❖ To support one of the parties in a conflict by impartial counselling.
- ❖ To empower the weaker party in a conflict.
- ❖ To mediate between individuals and groups in conflict, support them to find sustainable solutions.
- ❖ To facilitate meetings and dialogues, also about controversial issues.
- ❖ To be part of or lead negotiation groups.

NGO FUNCTIONS

- ❖ To initiate, organise and run an NGO of conflict resolution.
- ❖ To try to make the NGO a living example of conflict management and democratic processes.
- ❖ To link up with international networks of conflict resolution centres.
- ❖ To educate new trainers.
- ❖ To seek new knowledge and skills of conflict management.
- ❖ To analyse, report and learn from own experiences in a systematic way.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

The core of the training programme is the learning process, and this is a Zone 3 issue. In Zone 3 we work with insights and skills, that are needed in the direct relations of Zone 2, and that even can have an influence on the structural conditions of Zone 1. The inner circle is about what goes on between the instructors and the trainees, between the trainees themselves and within the single trainee. Here we find the social interactions, the personal meetings, the developments, and the happenings. We see this process as a mutual learning where all participants change, including the instructors.

To design the programme for such a process, many factors must be considered:

- ❖ THE STUDENTS - their life experiences, culture, education, motivations etc
- ❖ THE FRAMES of the training - what time, localities, materials and resource persons are at hand? What kind of back up from the community and government?
- ❖ THE AIMS are derived from the post training functions - what skills, knowledge, understanding should the trainees master after training?
- ❖ THE CONTENTS: What do we choose to deal with – what knowledge, concepts, theories, skills, principles, issues, and levels?
- ❖ THE WORKING METHODS: What actions do we choose to support the learning process?
- ❖ THE EVALUATIONS: how can we measure the level to which the aims are reached? What methods to use?

As the diagram shows **all these factors are interrelated and circular**, and do not constitute a hierarchy. Furthermore they are flexible – they can change when the situation changes. Zone 1 (over all conditions) is relatively fixed, but even they will change slightly due to the total of the process.

Let us take an example: We choose to use a day for inputs and exercises on teambuilding. This piece of contents is derived from the post training function *to help working places improve team work*, which again is derived from the overall purpose *to sharpen the tools of democratic processes, co-operation and conflict management, in order to strengthen the Tibetan exile community*. But “teambuilding” may also be chosen, because the pre qualifications of the trainees are so diversified and their needs to find common ground so obvious. When we choose the working methods for teambuilding we have to look at the physical frames and the time available, and we also must see to, that it fits with a traditional Tibetan politeness and modesty. Maybe we will even change our own concept of “a team”, because we have learned something from the trainees, who represent a culture with a special sense of community.

THE FACTORS OF THE ACTUAL LEARNING PROCESS

- ❖ THE STUDENTS: we have interviewed the trainees about their working situations,

backgrounds, personal interests and attitudes to the training, and have till now found:

- *Education:* they are as different as can be, some have a BA degree from university, one even has a MA and a diploma education from abroad, some have only had few years of school, one still attends a primary school programme.
- *English:* all speak and understand the language, but at very different levels, some with sophistication and eloquence, others less secure. Some have difficulties finding and understanding words, especially abstract concepts.
- *Life experience:* their ages differ between 24 and 38. Some are born in India, Nepal or Ladakh, and some have escaped from Tibet in the nineties. Some trainees are corner stones in well established NGOs and institutions, others are struggling to get education and a modest position in community. Some are scientific researchers; some are learning the first steps of Buddhist philosophy.
- *School experience:* The trainees have very little experience with modern, experimental learning, the Tibetan and Indian educational systems being rather formal, stressing deductive teaching, the teacher's authority, reciting and learning by heart, tests and examinations, and as a whole being rather far from the daily lives of the student and the realities of life
- *Sex:* there are 5 women, 13 men.
- *Motivation:* All are enthusiastic, and all appreciate the usefulness of conflict resolution to society. Yet

their reasons seem varied, some have the point of gravity in the political sphere of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, others in the social sphere of conflicts within community, and others in the personal sphere of personal opportunity to get more education.

The trainees' high motivation, their valuable life experiences and bright heads are the richest resources of the training, as well as their diversified educational backgrounds. All this must be considered when planning every single module of the training.

- ❖ THE FRAMES of the training are set by the funding from DANIDA, which ensures spacious time, good locations for external and internal seminars and – most important – a realistic and productive goal: that the trainees will form an NGO of Conflict Resolution after completing the training.

The framework also includes the capacities of the resource persons involved. BV is an experienced psychologist and therapist, and EH has a long experience of training teachers-to-be in pedagogic. We have been working in Dharamsala before, and we both have studied Tibetan affairs and Buddhism. As experienced trainers of conflict resolution we are dedicated to be open and respectful to the trainees and their culture. We feel obliged to a certain quality of teaching and learning, which characterises modern Danish adult education and which has its

roots in the ideas of the Danish Folk High School.

Our main disadvantage is that we are teaching in English, which is neither our mother tongue nor the trainees'. We also represent a foreign culture. This is really felt as a challenge to deal with all through the training.

❖ THE AIMS are logically derived from the post training functions. These functions necessitate certain understandings and skills, which the trainees need to master in their three future functions: to educate other Tibetans, to manage conflicts and to make their NGO work. Some of the major aims are:

- To be able to use the tools of didactics in order to plan trainings and workshops, and select the best methods to a given situation, from a great pool of methods.
- To be able to carry out interesting and engaging workshops in accordance with the needs of the participants.
- To be able to act as democratic teachers: to take in suggestions and criticism, to teach in teams without power clashes, to focus on the needs of the students, to meet participants with different levels of understanding, to make group decisions.
- To understand, teach and discuss the essentials of democracy, which is to solve problems in community by communication
- To have a great pool of knowledge and skills of the most

important issues of conflict resolution:

- To understand how conflicts arise and develop, from personal to community and international level.
- To analyse conflicts concisely and impartially.
- To see and analyse the power structures behind asymmetric conflicts.
- To master clear communication like active listening and frank expression.
- To have the self-confidence to confront difficult situations and mediate between conflicting parties.
- To know their own personal causes and patterns of conflict, and to have tools to deal with them.

➤ To be able to organise and carry out NGO work.

❖ THE CONTENTS: The issues, we choose to deal with, are of course taken from the aims. And they are certainly influenced by the trainees' ideas: what do they need in their special situation, with their life experiences and cultural background? What are their visions of the new NGO? And what specific tasks are necessary in their community?

Therefore the contents are developed in a continuous dialogue with the trainees, and they are constantly connected with Buddhist thinking. The trainees have found that they cannot do this integration by themselves, but that they need lectures and dialogues

by Buddhist scholars. This is taking place throughout the training.

The main contents of the training are:

- Understanding conflict: definitions - positive and negative aspects - zones of conflict - dimensions of conflicts - escalation of conflicts - basic and personal human needs - personal, community and international levels of conflict - concepts of nonviolence - concepts of democracy -
- Meeting conflicts: patterns of reaction (fight, flight and opening), opening and blocking language, nonviolent communication - active listening, frank expression - feelings at stake -
- Solving conflicts: philosophy and steps of basic conflict resolution - international conflict solving - the role, ethics and tasks of the mediator - the culture and techniques of negotiation - support of one party of a conflict - empowerment of the weaker party - working with one's own conflicts -
- Creating a culture of democracy and co-operation: the art of dialogue - team building - facilitation of meetings - democratic group decisions - respecting minorities - formal and informal leadership - power structures in professional life -
- Training conflict resolution: general didactics - planning and facilitating workshops, seminars, lectures, educational meetings - democratic learning and teaching principles - engaging communication -

- Future NGO work : Visioning, planning, founding and inaugurating the NGO - finding support in community - fundraising - economy management - organising a democratic and efficient organisation -
- Contacting and joining the international networks - planning and conducting community surveys.

- ❖ THE WORKING METHODS are derived from the future functions of the NGO, and from the aims and contents that follow from these. Furthermore, the working methods are drawn from awareness of the culture, habits and wishes of the trainees. Some methods are similar to those used at our former trainings in Denmark and abroad. And many are created due to the development of the actual, living process of the training. What actions did we choose to support the learning process?
- ❖ Some questions we have to answer are: How much priority do we give to the social interaction? How is the balance between inductive / deductive teaching? How much lecturing / exercise - bodywork / mindwork? - experiments / guided exercise? - inputs / dialogue - / teamwork / individual work? - practice / theory? teachers' decisions / participants' decisions?
- ❖ Our main training strategy is to give short and fairly precise lectures, followed by dialogue, group or individual exercises, feed back and further dialogue. This deductive

method ensures a firm theoretical structure for learning. However when we turn the strategy upside down, starting with the experience, and picking up reflections and theory afterwards, the trainees acquire a personal and close learning. This inductive teaching – or experimental learning – we use more and more during the training.

The trainees are used to a fairly formal teaching, so they enjoy our varied and practice-oriented approach, especially role-plays, used experimentally. They feel they gain from real life tasks, taking place not in the classroom, but directly in their community. For instance doing pilot surveys and giving pilot workshops.

The training flourishes when the trainees are given genuine responsibility, so they are conducting a growing number of events. When organising their future NGO, they carry out meetings in Tibetan and only tell us the outcome of their discussions. Or we have common planning meetings on equal foot, where we provide them with the information, they need.

❖ THE EVALUATIONS: the trainees evaluate all modules of the training. We use many methods, either quantitative (how many trainees preferred what elements during a day?), or qualitative (why did they find what elements useful or less useful?), or a combination of both. Or the trainees write personal letters to us, expressing their opinions and needs as frankly, as their Tibetan politeness allows. Often they invent and carry out new forms of evaluations.

We sometimes use multiple choice tests or questionnaires, either answered individually or in groups.

Later we will furthermore interview each trainee, about their, needs and their personal visions of how to contribute to the coming NGO.

But the only way, we really can evaluate the training, is by constant and frank communication with the new trainers after the programme. Therefore we appreciate, that we shall visit the NGO twice for supervision and support, after half a year and after a year.

SUMMARY OF TRAINERS TRAINING MIDWAY

Recruitment

Department of Home did the recruitment; when we arrived in October half of the participants were chosen, and together with Department of Home we arranged two public promotion meetings. One week later we had our 18 participants. 5 women, 13 men, 1 government official, 1 government volunteer, 1 government contract employee, 5 officials from various Tibetan NGOs, 1 medical researcher, 1 language teacher, 8 students, age 24 – 38.

Interviews

We interviewed all the participants and put almost the same questions to all of them. The questions circulated around their work, educational background, history, personal interests and their ideas about the training programme and the coming NGO. We did so in order to have a profile of each participant and also to see at the end of the training, if their and our wishes and expectations are fulfilled.

Inauguration

The inauguration took place at Kashmir House Hotel, our head quarter where we have rented a great suite, which we use as meeting room and classroom. From Department of Home came Joint Secretary Mr. Dorjee and project co-ordinator Mr. Wooser. Minister Mrs. Rinchen Khando from Department of

Education participated with the official inauguration address, much appreciated by the trainees. It was a pleasant afternoon with good speeches. Nevertheless we were still not sure, how much support the training and the new NGO would have from the government. Everybody was smiling and we had a lot of teas and cookies, and from here the real work started.

Seminars

We have so far held 3 standard seminars at Kashmir House of 4 days each, 2 sleep-in seminars at Norbu Lingka, also of 4 days each, and 10 single study days at Kashmir House.

Audience with H.H. the Dalai Lama

On the 29 of November His Holiness the Dalai Lama received us at an audience. The trainees, Mr. Wooser and we, the instructors were present.

Buddhist philosophy

One of our most important goals is that the training combines our approach with the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism and philosophy. Furthermore many of the participants have uttered a wish for more information and knowledge of their own Buddhist tradition. In order to integrate our methods firmly with the background of the trainees, we arrange meetings with Tibetan scholars, until now Geshe Sonam

Rinpoche, lecturer of philosophy at the Tibetan Library.

Homework

The group is divided into four study groups; these groups are doing homework in between seminars and study days. The groups report on their work when we all are together.

Pilot projects

We have so far launched an investigation on the misunderstandings and tensions between trainees born in India and those born in Tibet (see appendix). A more comprehensive project was an investigation in the Dharamsala area of the Indo-Tibetan conflicts, about which there is also a report.

Public Relations

The participants are working on publishing the speech His Holiness gave during the audience. E.H and B.V have been interviewed to a Tibetan magazine. Other publications are in process.

Preparing the coming NGO

During each seminar we are using time for meetings and discussions of various elements of forming the new NGO, in order to give the trainees the possibility of reflecting and planning, how they want to run their NGO, and we also try to give them ideas of how to go about.

THE SUMMARY AS A NARRATIVE

We met the participants first time during the initial interview, and afterwards we were asking ourselves many questions as to the diversity of the group, especially the levels of education and English language. However, when it came to their engagement in their community and in the training, every one was eager and prepared for a wholehearted participation.

Our first seminar started just after the inauguration, and the level of shyness was still much at stage. Now we can say it has evaporated, due to time and informal training, and also

because we are putting more and more responsibilities in their hands, like morning meetings, pilot projects, reports, PR, NGO preparation and energising body work.

We have up until now been through most of the basic conflict resolution skills, and are diving deeper into those issues relating directly to the exile community. (See list)

All the participants have written at least two case stories, one on a personal conflict and one on a community conflict. These case stories are being used as background material for analysing and working

with the various methods we are teaching.

A highlight was the first two pilot projects. One was about the tensions and distance between those Tibetans, who have lived in India from their birth, and those who have newly escaped from Tibet. This is quite an important issue in community. Luckily we have both groups represented at the training, so they interviewed each other and made a report on the problems, their causes and their hopeful solutions. (See appendix).

The second and more comprehensive pilot project was a survey of the Indo-Tibetan conflicts. Many of the trainees had mentioned the problems in their case stories, so we send them out in the field for a whole day. They had been trained thoroughly in interview techniques and briefed about how to make an investigation; the rest was up to them. This piece of work moved the group to be a real working team, and the group as such gained a lot of self-confidence. From this point the group work reached another level of meaningfulness. Here follows some remarks from the evaluation of the Indo-Tibetan pilot project:

- ◆ Active listening is the key to success of human relations. It can be used in everyday life, at meetings, conferences, and interviews among friends and family – to share joys and sorrows.
- ◆ The fieldwork cultivated the group feeling.
- ◆ I have gained a lot of experience about other people's points of view – and also my own weakness.

- ◆ It was evident from the interviews that 99% of the people hated the conflicts and wanted to solve them peacefully, it's good to know that I am going to be a trainer of conflict resolution when all the people want to resolve conflicts. What's more?

Before the pilot project we had been walking uphill in a dust of theories and minor group works. Definition of conflicts, rules of conduct, basic human needs and personal needs etc. The Tibetans are used to a rather formal teaching, so they didn't complain but in fact enjoyed the training for a period. But later it became evident from the level of enthusiasm and contact between us and them, that it was time to make a major change and put the reins in their own hands. It was time to break down the wall between training and real life.

During the introduction to Basic Conflict Resolution we made a lot of role-plays and that made the learning room much more alive. Tibetans are very playful and talented – and often the whole group burst into laughter and the learning took a more delightful path.

Another interesting event was when we the first time introduced the *Cafe-method*. We did so to show some more enjoyable and efficient ways of distributing information than the traditional way of group work and reports in plenary. Soon after they had to prepare questions for the audience with H.H. the Dalai Lama, and spontaneously the participants

invented their own *Tibetan-cafe-method*, which worked perfectly. In a brainstorm they extracted the essence of all questions put forward, and ended with five great and most productive questions to His Holiness.

The audience with H.H. the Dalai Lama was surely the first step from being an assembly to really have the feeling of being a group. It was an important event for the participants since such a small and private audience none of them had experienced before. Also for us the meeting with the Dalai Lama was magic, for he has a unique way of being present. The most beautiful thing about the meeting was that he had all his caring focus on the participants, and his answers to their questions turned out to be a brilliant lecture on conflict resolution. It was a true Tibetan event, some of the participants came half an hour late, and one had never worn a chuba (Tibetan traditional coat) before. He had borrowed one a bit too large, but in front of the temple an old Tibetan woman helped him, and finally he was as elegant as the rest.

From the very beginning the participants told us, that when it came to integration of modern methods and Buddhist philosophy, they had a lack of knowledge. So we invited Geshe Sonam Rinpoche as our first guest teacher at a seminar at Norbu Lingka. He was in great spirits, made a lot of fun and presented an absorbing lecture on conflict resolution from a Buddhist point of view. Again we experienced a unity in the basic ideas of Buddhist approach

and ours. At the tea break the trainees had the rare opportunity of asking questions and seriously discussing various elements of his speech with this learned scholar, a situation that does not occur when he conducts his daily teachings at the library.

Another issue is the forming of the NGO, which is to start at the end of the training. We are regularly having meetings about this future work. Some of the meetings the trainees carry out independently in Tibetan language. We are giving small inputs like how to organise an NGO about the economy etc., but since it is their future and their NGO, we are not steering the events, only supporting the continuous work and pooling their ideas.

Conclusions

At the first meeting we saw a flock of migrating birds with searching and experienced eyes, and we had – and still have – many thoughts on how to go about. But fortunately, as it often happens when two cultures shake hands, we were surprised, and learned quite a bit.

Maybe due to Tibetan cultural heritage, the trainees have a fantastic sense of togetherness. They interrupted each other, the silent ones became more silent and the talkative talked even more, and quickly informal leadership was formed. We were terrified, but for no reason, because they were in fact had organising themselves, and deliberately or not, in a way so that their joint talents came to the utmost usefulness. They coached each other

- the silent ones started to talk and the talkative gave space. With a remarkable speed they took the arts of attentive listening, empathic interviewing and democratic respect for minorities to their hearts.

When we give an introduction or teach new methods, they are quick to season it with Tibetan herbs and spices. They are a matter-of-fact group, enthusiastic with conflict resolution at personal and community level. They are courageous and

Their working processes are right to the core, as for instance the pilot project.

Their playfulness and fine sense of joining forces make them a strong and efficient group. Seen from a very formal point of view, they are a most original group, and here lays their strength. They are going to form a

brand new NGO, a task that takes quite a lot of work, acuteness and muscles and we feel sure that they will be able to do so.

The final hilltop we have to climb is the forming of the NGO. Here we will need thorough discussions and practical agreements with Department of Home. These meetings are in a positive process.

It is obvious that without a strong support from the Central Tibetan Administration, the NGO will have a difficult time if any time at all. Positive rumours of the trainees' work are steadily spreading in the civil community. We are encouraged by the outspoken expectations to the trainees, and the warm support to the NGO, that the group received from His Holiness during the audience.

SUBJECTS AND SKILLS

that we have worked with 1.11.2000 – 31.01.2001

SUBJECTS AND SKILLS

General **process tool**: Action, reflection, learning, and strategy.

Three **Zones of conflict**. Zone 1: area of socio-economic and political conditions. Zone 2: Area of personal and community interaction. Zone 3: Area of learning and preparing. The mutual influence of the zones.

Basic **conflict understanding**: definitions, positive and negative aspects, management vs. transformation, issue & relation.

Ground rules vs. intentions for zones 2 and 3

Active, attentive **listening** to thoughts and ideas (head), feelings (heart), needs (stomach), intentions (feet).

Dialogue as a distinct discipline.

Frank and open **expression** of thoughts, feelings, needs and intentions.

Giving and receiving **feed back**.
Receiving criticism.

Observation, interpretation and judgement.

Interview techniques. Conducting impartial and respectful interviews.

Survey theory and practice, reporting. Pilot projects. Community investigation.

Three **patterns** of meeting problems. Fight, flight and opening. High / low concerns for issue and relation.

Opening and blocking **language**.

Democracy, dialogue and conflict.
Decision making, respecting minorities. Voting vs. consensus. Formal and informal leadership. Group co-operation.

Downhill: Basic conflict resolution, a transformation process.

Uphill: Conflict escalation.

Needs: Personal vs. basic needs. Interests vs. needs. Values, needs and human rights.

Facilitating meetings. Planning and carrying out interesting and engaging presentations.

Didactics: mindful planning of workshops and trainings. Carrying out pilot workshops in Tibetan communities.

Teambuilding.

Analyzing conflicts, using all the acquired tools.

NEXT STEPS

International conflict understanding. The philosophy and practice of **nonviolence**. Systematic integration with Buddhist **philosophy**. The culture of **negotiation** with real life assignments. Mediation and **conflict councils**. **Mediation** in Tibetan community. Conflict resolution at **schools**. NVC **nonviolent communication** (Rosenberg).