

T I B E T



HOW TO READ THIS ELECTRONIC POEM

This long poem opens on the computer screen in full screen mode, against a simple black background with no distracting menus.

Use the Right and Left arrow keys on your keyboard to turn the pages.

On an iPad just tap the right or left side or swipe your fingers across the screen

You can close the ePoem at any time, by typing Control and w (on a PC), or  and w (on a Mac).

T I B E T

བོད



L I T O T E J A D A - F L O R E S

P H O T O G R A P H Y

L I N D E W A I D H O F E R



1

a simplicity of stone and wind
blowing dust, drifting snow
white peaks, vast plateaus,
empty spaces and empty space.

a simplicity of history:
—lived saying prayers, counting beads,
chanting sutras, offering food to monks
who say prayers, count beads, chant sutras
for everyone else, for all sentient beings,
for us too—were conquered, beaten,
tortured, exiled in their own land,
—resisted smiling, died smiling.

a simplicity of smiles,
the ceaseless underground resistance of
unquenchable unfathomable happiness.

a simplicity of heart
free from anger, open, shining,
full of gifts, lessons, laughter,

a simplicity of mind
cutting through clutter
vwhat really matters?
in this simplified landscape
bare-bones thoughts.

compassion and wisdom
heart and mind—mind cool,
heart warm, full, overflowing.

beyond self: deep joy
behind self: deep mind
beside self: deep life
deep inside self: selflessness

we cannot trade places
we cannot trade addresses
we cannot trade traditions
or karma

what can we do?

we can refuse to forget
6,000 dynamited monasteries
in an avalanche of cheap plastic toys
from China,
we can try to understand when Tibetans
talk about their persecutors
with compassion not anger,
we can try to learn
what they teach us without trying.

2

water melting from glacier tongues
stone ditches carrying water miles, miles
water equals grass, willows, poplars, food
each blade, branch, trunk precious
each plant, horse, zo, cow, precious
each being, sentient or not, who knows?
who cares? precious, precious.

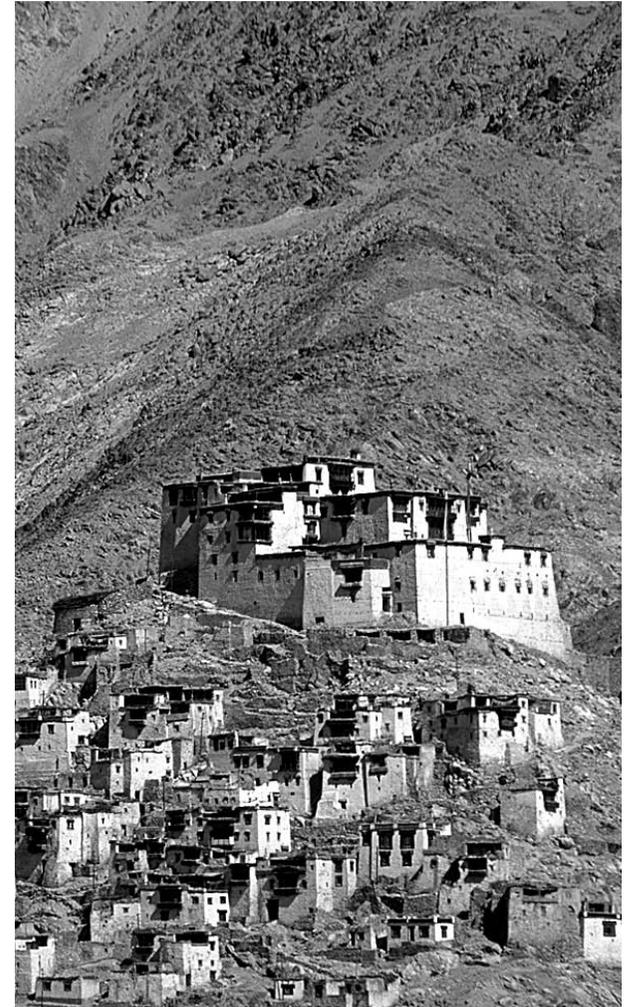
does the wheel of dharma spin faster
truer, in this high cold thin air?
fewer things, fewer obstacles, less
friction between mind and matter,
between passion and compassion,
between life and living? Does the axis
on which the wheel of dharma turns
run through some now nearly lost Lhasa?
I think not I think so I think not
the dharma is neither axis nor wheel
the dharma spins us as we try to spin it,
we are the spinning not the wheel,
but what about Tibet?
what about Tibet?

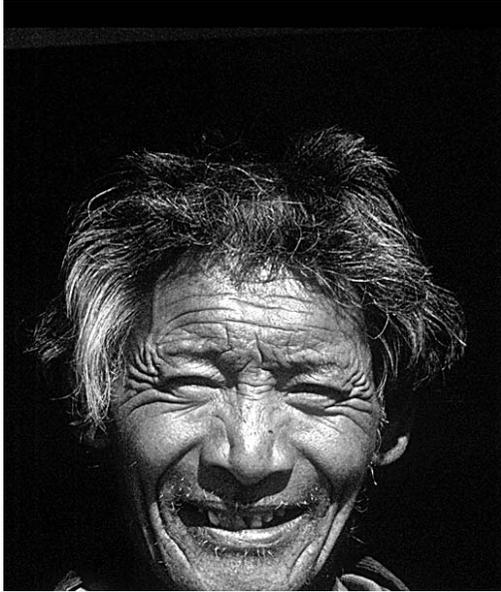
our Tibetan brothers and sisters
lotus petals scattered over the globe
by angry Chinese winds.

our Tibetan brothers and sisters,
living lessons scattered over the globe
by bitter Chinese winds.

smiling dharma messengers
scattered over the globe
by cold Chinese winds.

Tibet was already bare enough
empty enough, before
these winds began to howl.





3

so few Tibetans,
at home in exile
exiled at home
so few Tibetans
so many Chinese
so much money
to make to lose
so many friends
so few allies
so few Tibetans
so many killed
so many
so few.

4

Tibet suffers
from not being
completely real
in our minds
too far too high
too cold too fabled
It is hard to care
to act to close ranks
to protest to argue
to do something
to do anything
about a place
like a dream
about people
like dreams
inside a dream



5

in this world
we're always told
the squeaky wheel
gets the oil,
the wheel of dharma
never squeaks

—above—

blue prayers, blue sky, black sky, blue-black sky,

blue emptiness, pure

blue, blue prayers.

white prayers, white snow, white ice, white

cloud, white wind,

white prayers.

red prayers, red rock, rusty rock, rock ribs, rock

ridges, red rock-ribbed

land, red prayers.

green prayers, green and growing grasses, green

miracles growing out of

gray and brown, green

prayers.

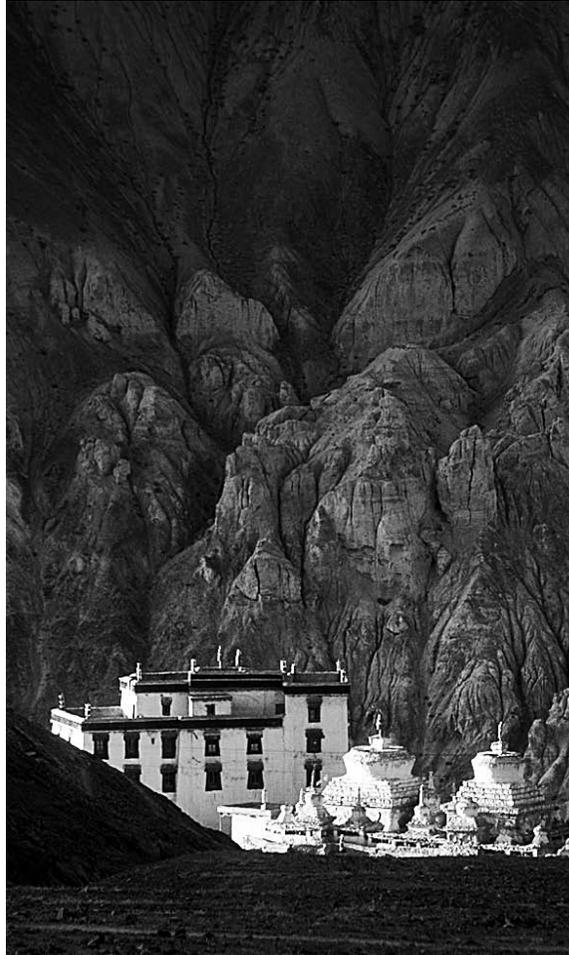
yellow prayers, yellow river sand, yellow barley

ripening toward harvest

sickles, yellow prayers.

—below—





Tibetan time

woodblock ink on paper

wrapped in silk

dusty shelves

Tibetan time

monastery time

nomad time

texts and time

birth and rebirth

Rebirth

is too slow

too long

too patient

Tulku time

over and over

and over

What will happen

to the world when the last

soldier in Lhasa murders

the last bodhisattva?

Can we assume

they will all be reborn

in the west?

I think not

Hard times

for sentient beings

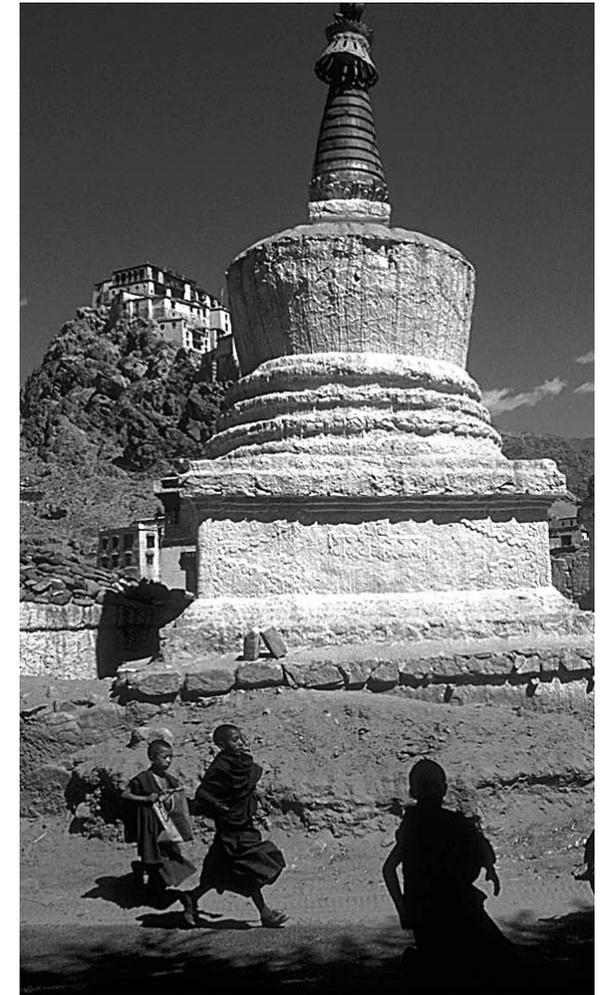
for all

sentient beings.

Avalokitesvara, can you help? will you help? are you not already helping? Buddha of compassion, what advice will your eleven heads whisper? Chenrezig, Buddha of compassion, who will you touch with your many arms? will you touch the Chinese? will you touch us? Avalokitesvara, Chenrezig, don't abandon Tibet....

Vajrapani, Channadorje, Bodhisattva of the thunderbolt, don't abandon Tibet...
 indestructible diamond, clarity and emptiness, method? action? where? what? what can we do? what skillful means can we use? does your thunderbolt ever really strike?

Maitreya, Buddha of the future, how may thousand years must we wait for your return? a short 40 years have been long enough to destroy thousands and thousands of monasteries, burn thousands and thousands of books, kill thousands and thousands of Tibetans, torture them out of their minds, out of their homes, out of their history, enough time to transplant thousands on thousands of Chinese into the empty garden of Tibet....
 Maitreya Buddha, is there ever enough time? is there enough time for Tibet? Buddha of the future, is there a future for Tibet?...



9

Tibet is not a place

Tibet is not a slogan

Tibet is not a dream

Tibet is a tradition

that lives only through living

that can't disappear

and won't.

Tibet is a precious gift

the world hasn't earned

but someday may.



10

far view, far views

thin air, blue ice

a perspective of

peak and plateau

wind scrubbed

thoughts

wind scoured

mind

a perspective of

wind and emptiness

pure perspective.

To close this electronic poem
type Control and w (on a PC),
or  and w (on a Mac).

Linde Waidhofer's photographs accompanying this poem were all made in Ladakh. Historically, Ladakh has often been called *Little Tibet*. Technically part of India rather than Tibet, Ladakh today is, sadly, one of the few remaining examples of a healthy, intact Tibetan Buddhist society.



Linde Waidhofer

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