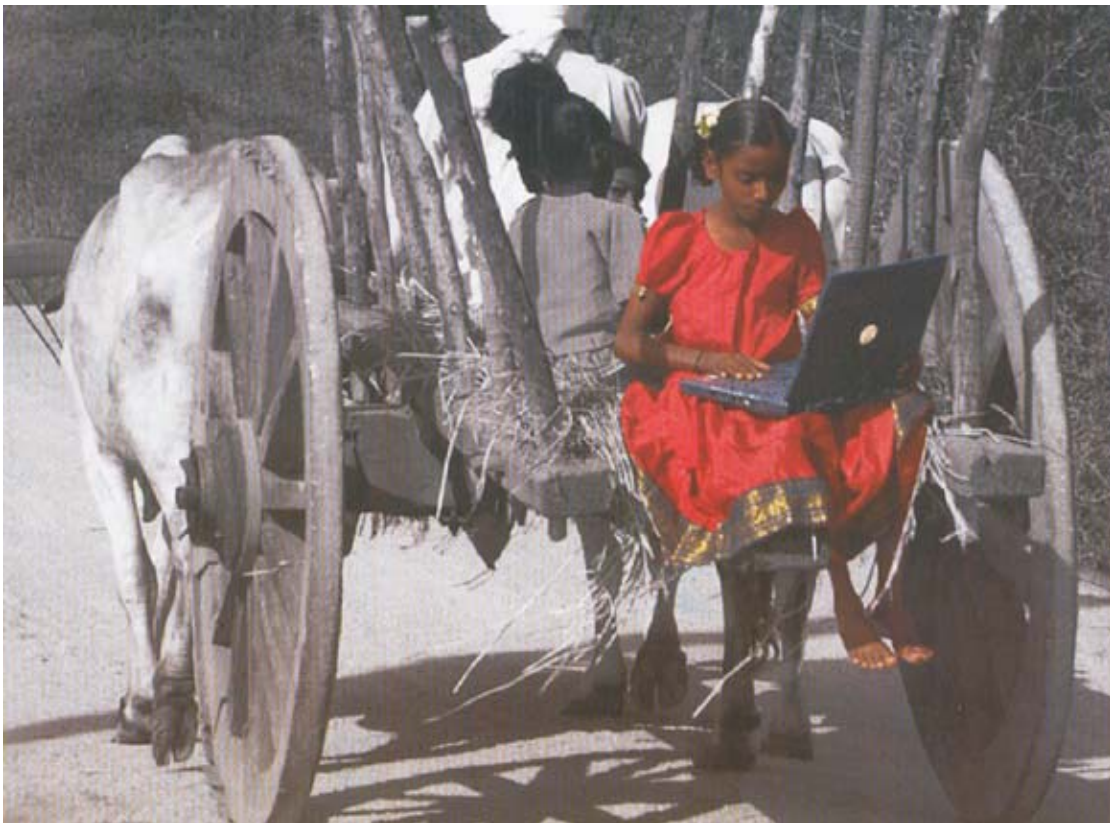


# Canada India Village Aid

Fostering self-help and economic innovation in rural India



## Why Should CIVA Exist?

*“Inspired by Toni Onley” Fundraiser September 16*

Autumn 2009

*Canada India Village Aid*

*is pleased to invite you to an evening*

*“Inspired by Toni Onley”*

*at Maurya Indian Cuisine*

*1643 W. Broadway (between Pine and Fir)*

*wednesday 16 September 2009 7:30—10:00 pm*

*\$100 per person ■ no-host bar*

*buffet dinner, entertainment, door prizes & good karma*

*All proceeds go to our self-help projects in rural India.*



*Lake Pichai, Jaisalmer, India, 1992*

*onley*

# Toni Onley: Memories of a "High Roller"

by Tony Phillips

Toni Onley (1928–2004) was beloved by all who knew him well, due in no small part to the fact that he was a 'High Roller'.

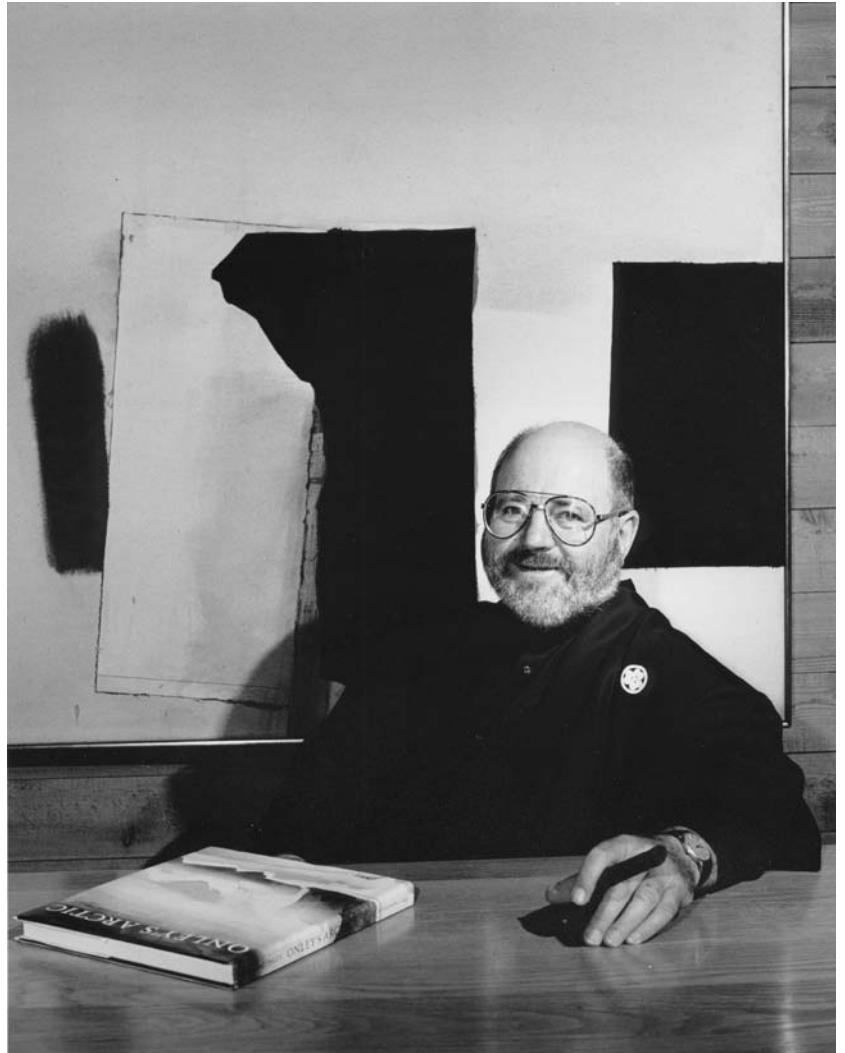
Toni did everything with his own amazing sense of style. He lived in a beautiful home masquerading as a nautilus shell, constructed entirely from cedar, nestling in a grove at the edge of the Shaughnessy Golf Club. The contents of his home could have filled a museum, ranging from wonderful pieces picked up on his travels to masterpieces by fellow West Coast artists, as well as many by his own hand.

Had his house been a living being, it would have been a *Doctor Who*-style 'Time Lord,' because it had two hearts. The main organ was located on the lower level, just beyond the small indoor pool and adjacent to the guest bedroom. This was his studio space which looked out onto the skeleton of an ancient redwood. It was here that he rolled the dice repeatedly with his imagination, nearly always coming up a winner.

It was here that supporters of CIVA were welcomed into his inner sanctum to witness completion of a unique oil painting that had been several weeks in the making, and which one of the attendees at a semiannual CIVA 'High Roller' dinner would take home if their ticket were drawn from the circular drum situated ritualistically on the dining room table, one floor up.

The dining room was located next to the second heart of *chez Onley*: his kitchen, really a galley, which may have reminded him of his days on the houseboat in Coal Harbour.

Here Toni expressed yet another facet of his creativity. Having bartered one of his pictures for the latest Italian *espresso* machine, he mastered the perfect *latte*. Here he also concocted marvellous pasta dishes, which could



be morphed into 1001 varieties. Perhaps this was another example of life copying art.

One may wonder if Toni himself had two hearts: how else to account for his unbounded generosity?

Friends of CIVA, especially his fellow board members, owe Toni an eternal debt of gratitude; without his fund raising prowess we would have been saddled with endless book sales, which might eventually have eroded our commitment to a higher cause.

With Toni at the helm, fund raising became fun! Money was raised in numerous and inspired ways, always with *panache* and a sense of genuine accomplishment.

Toni continues to inspire us in countless ways—not only by his redefinition of our landscape, but also by embodying the old adage "It is always better to give than to receive."

Toni, we miss you immensely! Thanks for your friendship, support and generosity—not to mention the wonderful tall tales, and the occasional ride in the four-wheel Roller!

Love, Tony Phillips

# Inspired by Toni Onley

by Sarah McAlpine

In the early 1980s Toni and I were both recruited to serve on the board of Canada India Village Aid, a newly formed non-profit group, by its co-founders George and Inge Woodcock, putting into practice their life-long philosophy of ruthlessly exploiting their friends for good purposes. As one of Canada's leading men of letters, George supplied the prestige that got this fledgling group going, while Inge, a force of nature, acted as his muscle—one quickly learned never to say no to Inge!

Up to this point CIVA's modest fund raising efforts consisted of craft sales, rummage sales, and used book sales, all run by Inge. Although great for volunteer morale, these events were extremely hard work with disappointingly small financial returns.

Toni's energetic talent for painting was matched only by his enthusiasm for life and his entrepreneurial vision. Almost immediately he told George, "It seems to me you are piddling away your energies to raise only a few dollars. Why don't we go on a trip to India together? You can write about your trip, I'll paint along the way, we can make a beautiful book together, and sell both it and the paintings themselves."

*The Walls of India* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1985, now a collector's item) was the result, and receipts exceeded \$125,000, launching CIVA as a viable organization. Toni donated his work and garnered us publicity beyond our wildest dreams—as he did for countless other nonprofit groups and ecological causes.

Over the succeeding years Toni organized another fund raising inspiration, which we referred to as "Toni's high roller dinners," held in his home/studio; guests were asked to wear dinner jackets and jeans (Toni wore his own signature pigment-smearred tuxedo jacket), enjoyed a gourmet buffet supper, and watched as he put the finishing touches onto a large oil painting. During the evening various

ingenious door prizes were drawn, culminating in one happy guest winning Toni's completed painting. In addition, each ticket (cost \$250) was an Onley original watercolour, so no one ever went home empty-handed. Not only were these evenings great fun, thanks to Toni's generosity and ebullient spirits, they raised between \$15,000 and \$20,000 annually for CIVA's village regeneration projects in rural India.

We would set up guest tables around Toni's indoor swimming pool, which he used to keep fit between sedentary bouts at his easel. We did not realize how perilously close some of these tables were positioned until at one dinner an elegantly attired guest stood up and fell backwards into the pool. He was fished out good-naturedly, whisked upstairs to change by Toni, and reappeared looking debonair in white gym socks and one of Tony's stylish kimonos. (We did notice that at subsequent dinners people tended to choose seats situated well away from the pool....)

In December of 1997 the entire CIVA board of directors set out on a joint expedition to inspect our various projects in India. Toni looked forward to this visit enormously, but was forced to cancel at the last moment when a routine medical exam discovered colon cancer.

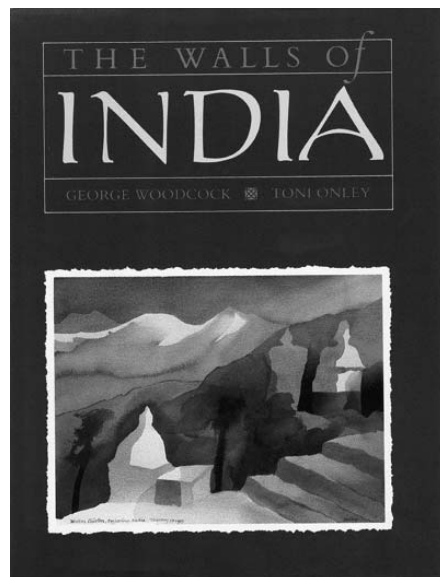
We left him behind in Vancouver, with all our best wishes. One of our first stops was to visit CHIRAG, situated up north on the edge of the Himalayas. One cold morning we walked a footpath up to the village of Mukteshwar (with no small trepidation due to the recent history of man-eating tigers in the vicinity). Just outside the village hung a large temple bell, and each of us rang it, sending Toni our prayers and the strength of tigers to speed his recovery, which upon our return we found to be complete.

Toni's generosity to CIVA was constant during his twenty-plus years on the board, but he supported many other organizations as well: environmental campaigns, the Canadian Society for Asian Arts, Arts Umbrella, the CNIB, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, and countless others. After years of struggling to make ends meet as a visual artist, he became hugely successful and never thereafter missed an opportunity to give back to his community.

And Toni was so much more than that. He was a genuine *bon vivant* who loved interesting women, good food, fine wine, his pipe, tailored clothes, his Rolls-Royce, his plane and the freedom it gave him, and jokes of all kinds. Most of all, he loved his family and friends.

**In his autobiography, *Flying Colours*, Toni wrote: "Art is my record of discovery, of places visited, of experience, and of the sense that I have lived." What a life he lived! What a guy he was!**

I am very happy that we have found an appropriate way to honour his memory—a dinner "inspired" by Toni, which he will surely attend in spirit. ♥



# Why Should CIVA Existquestion

by Ashok Kotwal



*Two faces of modern India*

The acronym CIVA stands for Canada India Village Aid. Does it make sense for a Canadian non-profit society to raise funds for Indian villagers?

Isn't India one of the fastest growing countries in the world, exporting software and other high tech items to the developed world?

Shouldn't Indian poverty be the concern of the Indian government, rather than that of Canadians?

I would like to argue that there is no inconsistency in answering all these questions in the affirmative.

India is indeed riddled with contradictions. It is a country of over a billion people, over three quarters of whom have incomes below two dollars a day in purchasing power parity. Thus India has the dubious distinction of housing the largest share of the world's poor. India also boasts some excellent technological institutes and management schools. It is not difficult to see how Indian firms have used this domestic talent to transfer technology developed in the West, and have managed to bring about major productivity improvements in Indian industry and service sectors.

Globalization has spurred growth in India through rapid technology transfer, and by providing markets for skill-intensive Indian exports. Yet very little of this growth has trickled down to the Indian villages where the majority of the Indian poor live. Even the urban poor are migrants, driven out of rural areas in search of employment.

Most of the rural poor have little or no education and make their living in subsistence agriculture. Income growth in agriculture and other informal sectors of the rural economy is a far more difficult process than technology transfer in the corporate sector. It depends on the functioning of institutions like local governments, credit co-operatives, and agricultural universities—all notorious for their inefficiency and graft.

It is possible to argue that the development of these institutions is precisely what defines economic development, and that India is thus still far from being a developed country. It is not hard for talented and highly educated people to boost incomes by absorbing productive technologies from abroad, but it is exceedingly difficult to improve the performance of rural institutions molded by traditional hierarchies.

**The main function of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India is two-fold: to improve the workings of crucially important institutions for development, or to substitute for them when they are totally dysfunctional.**

We at CIVA have taken upon ourselves the task of aiding the developmental efforts of the best NGOs at work in Indian villages. Let me illustrate this point by introducing you to just a few of the projects we currently support:

Consider the pomegranate project of **PRAGATI ABHIYAN**, an NGO based in Nashik, Maharashtra. Several regions in Maharashtra are characterized by limited rainfall; the only way that small and marginal farmers in these areas can improve their incomes is by growing high-value crops that find a market in high-income areas, such as Indian cities or rich foreign countries.

One crop that does manage to grow in this dry area is the pomegranate, but the agricultural universities have failed to disseminate the requisite knowledge to the mass of poor farmers.

Pragati Abhiyan has taken up the challenge, organizing training camps for farmers by recruiting agricultural experts, exporting firms, and successful farmers. Practical knowledge is communicated at an appropriate level, so that the local farmers have no difficulty in absorbing it: their individual problems are being directly addressed. Visits are arranged to the successful farms of successful farmers. Farmers are taught cultivation practices necessary for their product to be certified as 'organic' and 'of

high quality' and would thus fetch a better price.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the effort, a systematic survey is undertaken to record the net improvement in the output over three years. Hopefully the knowledge will diffuse further through the area, causing an income growth of many farmers.

**APLE GHAR** ('our home') is an orphanage and residential school, built by Rashtra Seva Dal (RSD) in the drought-prone district of Osmanabad in Maharashtra after the great earthquake of Latur. Although the state government rushed aid at the time of the earthquake, it did little for the long-term problem of unsupported orphans.

Aple Ghar has not only housed and schooled those unfortunate children, but in the process has become a prominent place for learning in the neighbouring area. In addition to the state-prescribed curriculum, it imparts practical skills to help graduates find jobs in the surrounding areas. In order to provide nutritional meals for its students, the school management established a vegetable garden and a dairy. The expertise gained in developing its own agricultural resources has allowed the school to also serve as an extension centre to the nearby farmers.

**RASHTRA SEVA DAL** has also built a number of schools for the children of Dalits and Muslims, in the low-lying areas of the Kosi river valley in Bihar. These are some of the poorest communities in the poorest state of India, whom the government finds it easy to ignore. There were no government schools in these communities. The river changed its course last year, causing massive floods which wiped out thousands of homes and other buildings, including the schools. RSD is rebuilding these schools in more durable structures, rekindling hope once again.

Over large areas in West Bengal the groundwater accessed through government tubewells is contaminated by arsenic, with horrific health consequences for the villagers. A dedicated West Bengal-based NGO, **SWANIRVAR**, tests water, builds arsenic abatement plants, and disseminates crucial information to

households, particularly about the importance of collecting rainwater during the rainy season for drinking and cooking, at least until local wells are determined to be safe.

Development is a transformational process: as new technologies replace old technologies, old occupations disappear and new ones take their place. Though inevitable, this can have huge costs for groups such as the Maldharis, the migrant shepherd community in Gujarat. As open pastures shrink, their traditional way of life is dying. They are very conscious of the fact that their children will not be able to survive as Maldharis, and desperately need education to find employment in the new economy of India.

But their migratory lifestyle makes it impossible for their children to attend school; an affordable residential school is their only hope. Lalji Desai—one of their own sons who achieved a university education—founded **MARAG** to create such a residential school, one where parents would feel comfortable in leaving their children, even their daughters.

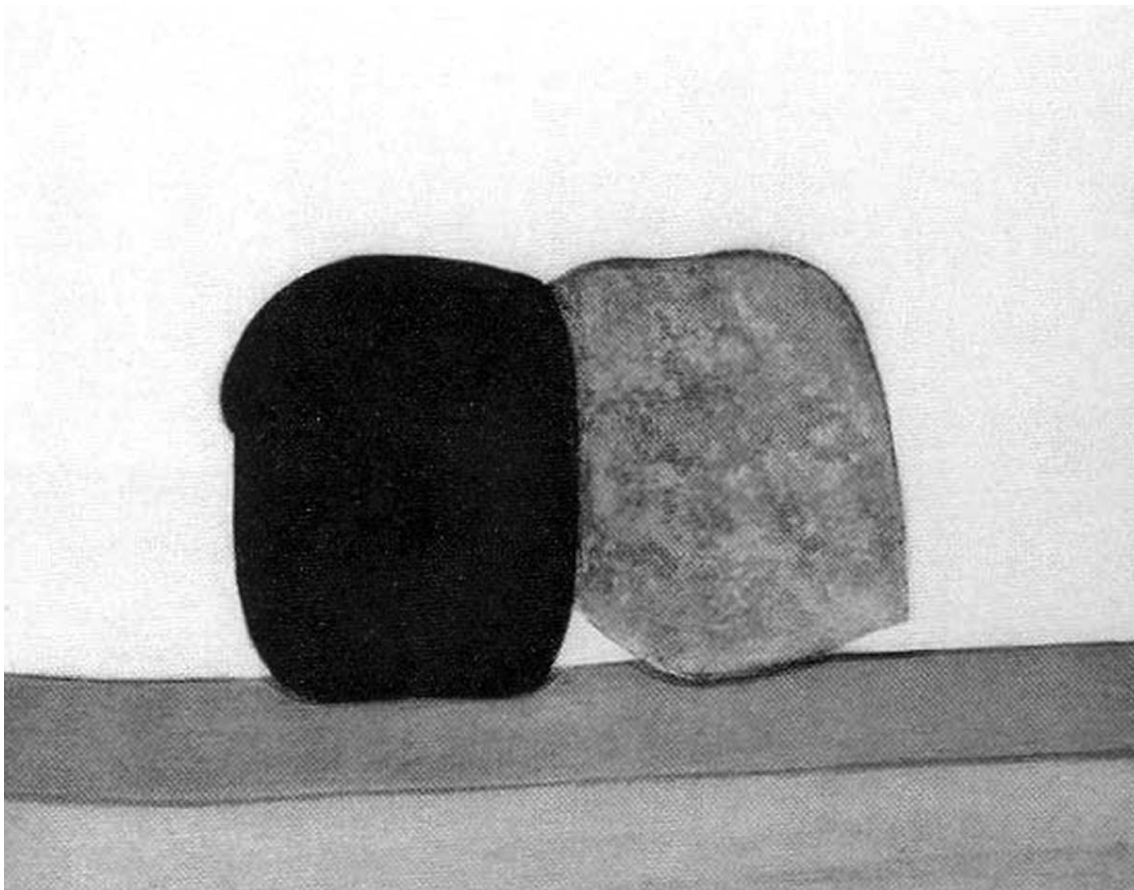
The West Bengal volunteer organization **FERRY** attempts to keep rural youth in their villages through vocational training: scooter repairs, electronics courses, mechanical knitting and embroidery, and whatever else answers local needs. Small in scale and modest in its aspirations, FERRY has been so successful that it has become a model of village-level economic innovation. (See article on page 8 below.)

CIVA supports all these projects through your generous donations.

**Shouldn't the Government of India or the state governments undertake these projects?**

**Yes; but what if they don't? Who then should do it?**

It is those of us who are lucky enough to escape the privations that mark the daily life in Indian villages, and yet can't help but react when we hear the bell toll. ■



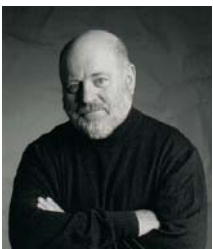
*Silent Two (1990) by Toni Onley*

*Here is my donation to CIVA's important work in rural India.*

I enclose a cheque made out to Canada India Village Aid in memory of Toni Onley:

\$50     \$100     \$150    I would prefer to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_.

*All donations are tax-creditable; all information is confidential*



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Donations can now be made online at our new improved website: [www.civaid.ca](http://www.civaid.ca)

# A Rumpelstiltskin Story

## How a small volunteer-run NGO in rural West Bengal is changing the lives of jobless local youth

by Sophie Low-Beer, Co-Chair

In April 2009 the board of Canada India Village Aid once again voted unanimously to continue to support the Foundation for the Economic Rehabilitation of Rural Youth (FERRY) in its work with rural youth in West Bengal.

CIVA and FERRY have been partners since January 2004, tirelessly chipping away at the ubiquitous problem of youth unemployment. Rather than attempt to provide all things to all people, FERRY holds steadfast to its specific goal: to equip young women and men with the means to take their first steps towards economic self-sufficiency.

In a country full of NGOs busy pursuing careerism and building infrastructure, FERRY's board members are amateurs in the best sense, constantly reassessing what they can offer the rural poor while following their mandate with fierce determination.

FERRY's recent project proposal was to fund three courses for youth in the Hoogly and Bardhaman districts of West Bengal for 2009–2010. These courses in machine embroidery, carpentry, and TV repair and maintenance will accept approximately 20 students each, and run for 8 to 10 months, on average 5 days a week, 5 hours per day. The combined cost of all three courses for the entire year is approximately \$5,640 Canadian dollars.

These subjects are not new to FERRY but, rather, have proven successful over the last several years. They are popular and well-attended, and they deliver the desired outcome: youth with marketable skills.

Although making youth employable is a small and very specific goal, it has profound ripple effects in these rural communities: aiding in gender equality by giving young women the tools to be self-sufficient, and helping to prevent migration to urban slums, thus curtailing intrinsically linked health, social, and economic ill effects.

At this time last year, FERRY's then Executive Secretary, Dr. Abhijit Gupta, gave CIVA and many of its generous supporters here in Vancouver an inspiring talk on FERRY's origins, its work, and the challenges of working in development in rural India. Since that time, with your help, FERRY has trained:

- 20 youths in electronic appliances repair and maintenance
- 24 youths in machine knitting woolen garments
- 20 youths in tailoring and sewing

The cost of giving 64 individuals a profession was a total of \$6,500 Canadian dollars, or a mere \$100 Canadian dollars per person.

Thank you CIVA supporters, and thank you, FERRY, for spinning straw into gold!

*In September Sophie Low-Beer, daughter Ella, and partner Drew Stewart begin a year's leave of absence from CIVA, whilst Drew pursues a degree in international development at the London School of Economics. Ella is not yet a committed board member, but we will miss all three of them.*

## The FERRY Principles

~~~~~  
**FERRY believes that in staying small, it is ensuring that the lion's share of its resources are spent on the people who need it most.**  
~~~~~

**FERRY hopes that in the future it will be able to help more and more young people out of the darkness and into the light.**

FERRY  
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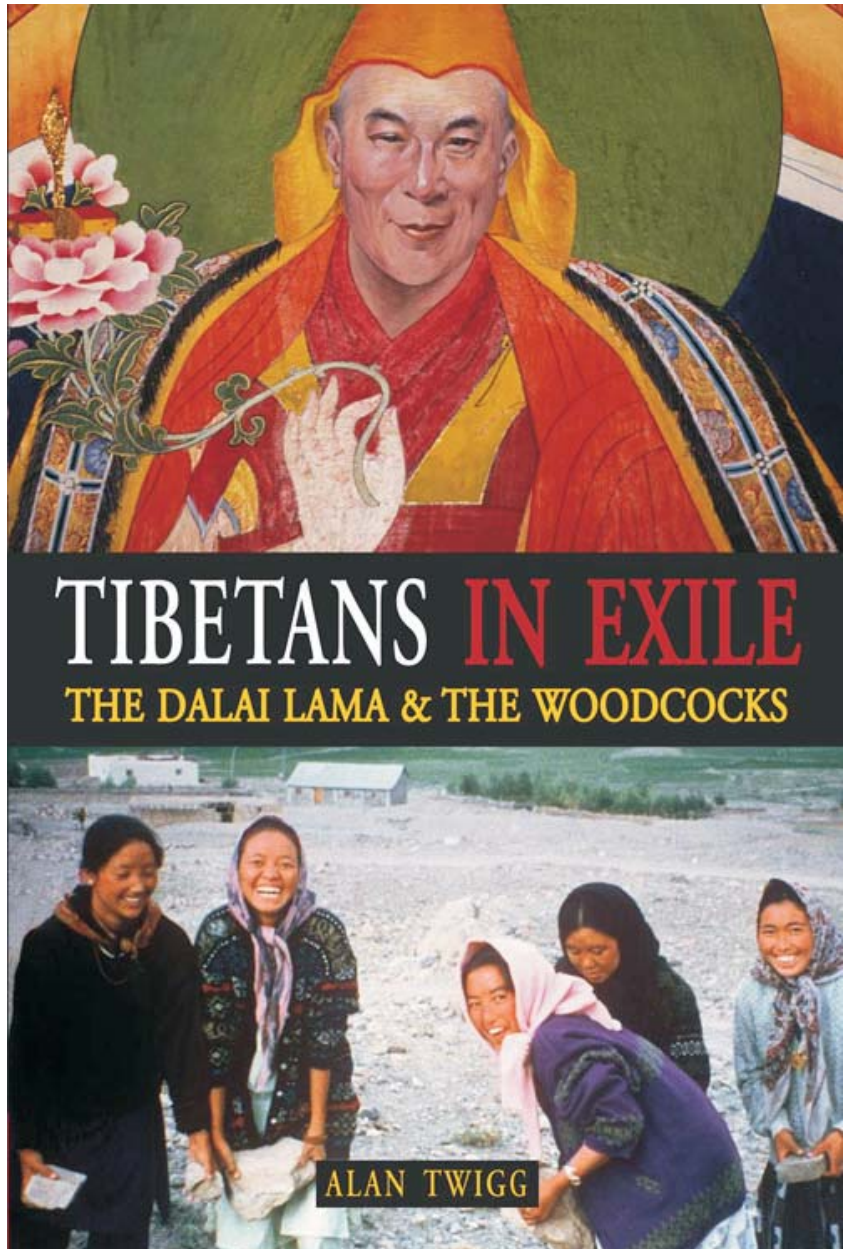
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# Tibertans in Exile: The Dalai Lama & The Woodcock by Alan Twigg

ISBN 978-1-55380-079-8  
trade paper 6 x 9 180 pp  
60 b&w photos 272 pp  
\$21.95

Alan Twigg has here recovered the amazing story of how **George and Ingeborg Woodcock**, while travelling in northern India in 1961, encountered many of the Tibetan refugees who had recently fled over the mountain passes. Appalled by the condition of the children—huddled together with inadequate bedding, surviving on a diet of thin soup and steamed dumplings—the Woodcocks vowed to help. Hearing of this, one of the children said, “You must absolutely come and see uncle.” This was Khando Yapshi, the Dalai Lama's niece. Among the first Westerners to meet with the Dalai Lama, the Woodcocks offered to campaign to provide humanitarian assistance. This was the genesis for the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society (TRAS), one of two remarkable non-profit charities spearheaded by the Woodcocks—the other being **Canada India Village Aid (CIVA)**—that have touched the lives of millions. Since 1962, TRAS has raised over \$5,000,000 and undertaken 300 projects. Both of the Woodcocks’ volunteer-based, low overhead organizations are still going strong today. Alan Twigg reveals the hitherto unknown private lives of this extraordinary couple, interviews their friends, and recounts ongoing efforts to assist Tibetans in Canada and Asia.

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