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Dharma Dogs: A Narrative Approach to Understanding the Connection of Sentience Between Humans and Canines

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Dharma Dogs

A Narrative Approach to Understanding the Connection of Sentience Between Humans and Canines



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Abstract

India has the highest population of stray dogs in the world¹. Dharamsala, a cross-cultural community in the north Indian Himalayan foothills, is home to a number of particularly overweight and happy canines. However, the street dogs of Dharamsala are not an accurate representation of the state of stray dogs across India. This paper explores why this may be through narrative stories about the day-to-day interactions between humans and dogs. The following research addresses religious motives as well as the lack thereof.



A dog who was given the name Manjushri, guiding fellow trekkers and I up a mountain

¹ “Projects”, Dharamsala Animal Rescue, accessed November 6th, 2016, <http://dharamsalaanimalrescue.org/projects/>

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Sleepy dogs in lower Dharamsala

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Introduction

"Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings; radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies, And downwards to the depths; outwards and unbounded, freed from hatred and ill-will."

-Metta Sutta²

Initially I was interested in connecting Buddhist philosophy with the treatment of street dogs in McLeodganj, Dharamsala. I thought ideals such as compassion and nonviolence would play a direct role in how people interact with other sentient beings around them, specifically dogs. After my first couple of interviews I quickly learned Buddhism has nothing to do with it. I felt discouraged with my topic. On top of that, when I told people my topic, many Tibetans and Indians were confused. They thought it was quite strange and didn't understand why I would write a paper on dogs. I wondered whether it was a topic worth studying, especially in Dharamsala where there were endless topics that interested me.



² "Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness", Sutta Nipata 1.8, translated from the Pali by The Amaravati Sangha. (Access to Insight, 2013)

Animals in Buddhism

I thought more about the connection between animals and humans³, and the illusory separation between the two groups. After reading *Animal Friendly Spirituality* by Andrew Linzey, I thought more about Buddhist and Hindu views regarding animals in comparison to the Abrahamic religions⁴. Linzey asserts that most religions are anthropocentric, focused only on the wellbeing and livelihood of humans. Religious hierarchies also tend to place animals below humans, and humans only second to deities and gods. Often animals, as well as nature, are forces to be “subdued” and gained “dominion” over by humans⁵.

In Buddhism however, the first of the five precepts is about a fundamental respect for all life. The five precepts are often considered the basic guidelines of conduct in the Buddhist tradition. The five precepts are essentially a vow that is taken by monastics, as well as most lay practitioners, which sets a standard for ethical behavior⁶. The precepts are as follows:

1. **Refrainment from taking life.** This precept is often stated as nonviolence towards all life. This applies to all animals, humans included. This practice of refraining from being violent towards other beings, as well as the self, is often referred to as *Ahimsa*
2. **Refrainment from stealing**
3. **Refrainment from sexual misconduct**
4. **Refrainment from incorrect speech**
5. **Refrainment from taking intoxicating substances**

The first precept, often considered the most important, also has a counter part. Not only should individuals practice Ahimsa (nonviolence), they should also practice Karuna, extending compassion towards all living creatures⁷. The first precept is in part based on the idea that all beings are just trying to avoid suffering and we all have the same claim to happiness. In fact, James P. McDermott, writer for

³ When referring to “animals”, it should be understood that this means non-human animals.

⁴ Andrew Linzey, “Animal Friendly Spirituality,” in *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*, ed. Andrew Linzey. (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 240-241.

⁵ “Genesis 1:28”, *The Bible*.

⁶ Dr. Paul Dahlke, et al., *The Five Precepts: Collected Essays*. (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1963), 2-13.

⁷ James P. McDermott, “Animals and Humans in Early Buddhism,” in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 32 (1989), 269-280.

the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, even asserts that the interconnection between animals and humans is as fundamental to Buddhism as the notions of karma and reincarnation. This brings about another Buddhist attitude, that of exchanging self with other. The same way all sentient beings hope to avoid suffering, they also all have inherent Buddha nature. A section of the Dhammapada, part of the Pali Canon, shows how likening oneself to others makes it hard to practice ill treatment or killing⁸. Verse 129 of the Dhammapada is loosely translated to:

*All tremble at force,
Of death are all afraid.
Likening others to oneself,
Kill not nor cause to kill.*

Not only do we all have inherent Buddha nature, we are also all made of the five aggregates, or, *Skandhas*⁹. The five aggregates are the different aspects from which we all arise, humans and animals alike. They roughly translate to material form or body, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. The aggregates constitute 'self-hood' and all sentient beings are made of these things. A film called *Animals and the Buddha* eloquently quoted, "[animals are the] same sentient being, just a different form of life"¹⁰.

However Ahimsa, Karuna, and shared essential aggregates may not be the encouraging force that causes Buddhists to be kind towards animals. *Violence and Nonviolence in Buddhist Animals Ethics* by James Stewart touches on what he believes to be the true motivating factors behind the treatment of animals¹¹. Stewart asserts that the fear of a bad rebirth is the driving force that pushes Buddhists to show compassion towards animals. In the Vedic¹² tradition, animals are venerated and honored. For this reason, they make very valuable sacrifices. Stewart believes that the Buddhist ideal of Ahimsa, essentially meaning nonviolence, actually arises

⁸ Verse 129 of the Dhammapada. Pali Canon.

⁹ Mathieu Boisvert, *The Five Aggregates: Understanding Theravada Psychology and Soteriology*. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995), 1-14

¹⁰ *Animals and the Buddha*. David Blatte and Bob Isaacson. 2014.

¹¹ James Stewart, "Violence and Non-Violence in Buddhist Animal Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 21 (2014): 623-655

¹² Vedic tradition is referring to a period of time in India during which the major Hindu texts, known as the Vedas, were written

from a sense of pity for the animals. In the Hindu tradition, sacrifice of cows and horses are two of the most meritorious sacrificial killings to perform, if they are done correctly. In contrast, Buddhist texts assert that killing a large animal brings about more negative karma than killing a smaller animal.

Although many may believe that the Buddhist perspective sees animals and humans as totally equal, this isn't exactly true. While animals also share Buddha nature as humans do, they are still seen as hierarchically lower than man. Samsara¹³, for example, is not especially animal friendly because being reborn as an animal is seen as lower than being reborn as a human. Despite this, Buddhism does emphasize the commonality of all wandering spirits.¹⁴



¹³ Samsara refers to the material world in which all living beings are subjected to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth

¹⁴ Linzey, "Animal Friendly Spirituality", 240

Dogs in India

About 35 million stray dogs inhabit India, making it the country with the largest number of stray dogs in the world¹⁵. There are various ways this problem has been dealt with by the government and individual citizens. Some areas collect stray dogs from the area in a truck, drive them to a far away area, and drop them off there¹⁶. Multiple governments in India, including the Dharamsala government, have handled this issue in the past with mass culling. They used seizure-inducing poison that caused an extremely painful, and often slow death. While this method is no longer used in most areas, there are still often inhumane measures taken to deal with the stray dog population. However, in certain regions such as Dharamsala, many dogs seem very healthy and lack the aggression and timidity that many canines have in other cities.



¹⁵ "Projects", Dharamsala Animal Rescue

¹⁶ Tsering Thundup in an interview with the author. November 11th, 2016. Tibet Charity.

Tibet Charity

Tibet Charity was founded in Denmark in 1997, but the office in India did not open until 2005. The charity runs education programs, a free healthcare center, social development projects, a self-sustainable business project, and an animal welfare clinic. Tibet Charity has received recognition for their generous work from many important figures such as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the current Sikyong¹⁷, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, and many top authorities from the Central Tibetan Administration. In 2006 the Tibet Charity Animal Care (TCAC) center emerged when His Holiness spoke out about the need for greater compassion towards animals in India¹⁸. The animal care center provides free veterinary services for both stray dogs as well as household pets. Other than general treatment for injuries and illness, there are two major services TCAC provides.

TCAC runs an animal birth control (ABC) program in which they capture and sterilize stray dogs, as well as provide vaccinations and a full check up before releasing them back to the environment from which they were taken. From the beginning of April 2016 till November 17th, they performed 392 sterilizations¹⁹. To keep track of which dogs have been sterilized, they cut out a small triangle of the dog's ear. While some people may find this inhumane, it is done to the dogs while they are already under anesthesia from the sterilization surgery. In addition, the removal of a small piece of the ear is far more humane than repeatedly opening a dog surgically, only to find that it has already been sterilized.

Along with the ABC program, TCAC runs an anti-rabies vaccination program. Every September, for 10 days, Tibet Charity runs a rabies vaccination camp during which they move around Dharamsala vaccinating as many stray and domestic dogs as they can.

¹⁷ Sikyong is the leader of the Central Tibetan Administration

¹⁸ "Animal Care Section", in *Tibet Charity*. Ed. Tsering Thundup. McLeodganj, Dharamsala, India. 2015.

¹⁹ Dr. Pankaj Sharma in an interview by the author. November 17th, 2016. Tibet Charity Animal Care Center.

Tsering Thundup

“Whatever you do has to come out of love”

“It has nothing to do with Bodhicitta²⁰. We didn’t start thinking along Buddhist lines. You just need a good heart. Being kind to sentient beings is in human nature. Our vet is Hindu, the last one was Muslim.” From the start Mr. Thundup made it clear that Buddhist ethics were not the motivating factor behind their work for animals. “Buddhists are not born with some special innate quality. They grow up and develop these qualities from learning.”

Tsering Thundup is the director of Tibet Charity and has held this position for 10 years. Mr. Thundup is one of the few individuals I spoke with who does not accredit the healthiness and chubbiness of the street dogs to solely the Tibetan community. He believes their condition is largely due to the fact that in McLeodganj they have been able to keep the stray dog population under control. When there are more dogs in an area, each dog will receive less food. Tight control over the stray dog population coupled with a generous Tibetan community has led to healthy and well-fed dogs wandering the streets of Dharamsala. Mr. Thundup added that some older Tibetans initially did not agree with their sterilization efforts. One time, a few individuals even threw stones at the TCAC employees who were attempting to sterilize street dogs. Now however, most people accept the process and no longer view it as inhibiting a possible life.

Mr. Thundup agrees with many others that dogs in Dharamsala are generally treated with more kindness than in other parts of India. Again, he accredits this to their ability to control the population. Mistreatment doesn’t happen frequently because the dog population hasn’t reached a point where it is seriously impeding the lives of locals.

Mr. Thundup told me about the Jamste award. This award is a very new invention of theirs and is awarded to a local who shows significant compassion and

²⁰ Bodhicitta, in a very simplified definition, is one’s motivation to reach enlightenment in order to best help other sentient beings

care for the street dogs. This year was the first time they presented the award and there were four nominees. All the nominees decided on the winner, who received Rs.10,000. The first winner of the Jamste Award was Ani Soman Tsering, nicknamed 'Ki Ama la', meaning dog mother in Tibetan. She is an elderly Tibetan woman who tends to spend time in the main square of McLeodganj or on Bhagsu road. Mr. Thundup informed me that at one time she had around 25 dogs she was caring for. She was struggling to care for herself and all of the dogs so Tibet Charity found someone to sponsor her. They offered her a monthly stipend for her to spend on herself, not on the dogs, but she refused it. She told them that she did not need money for herself. She is able to take care of herself, but it is the dogs that need the help.

I asked Mr. Thundup if he felt it was their responsibility to take care of the street dogs. "If you do anything with the feeling you are bound to it, then it is more of a punishment. If the love is there or the desire is there, then you do it. Whatever you do has to come out of love. It is not Tibetans who created the dogs, we are not duty bound. That isn't why you should do it. It should be out of love and joy."

On the way out I stopped to sit with the two dogs resting on Tibet Charity's balcony. They were stretched out on the warm concrete, sunning themselves. They had found a peaceful and safe home in a bustling town.



Dog on the balcony of Tibet Charity

TCV Boys

I went to the Upper Dharamsala Tibetan Children's Village School (TCV) in search of a woman who I knew virtually nothing about except for the fact that she works at the canteen there and loves dogs. She was nominated for Tibet Charity's Jamste award, which is presented to an individual who shows exceptional compassion towards dogs. I asked around about where the canteen was and a little boy yelled "CANTEEN?" and started to migrate in that direction in a skipping-running manner. The boy was probably around four or five years old and I was jogging to keep up. Somewhere along the way one of his friends joined and they began chasing each other while still leading me to the original destination. We finally arrived at a nearly empty canteen, with only one older man sitting down and two dogs on the floor. When we walked in a small puppy jumped up from the floor and trotted over to us with her tail wagging. When I inquired about the woman nominated for the Jamste award, the man informed me that she was at the bank, and he had no idea when she would return. I turned around to see that the two young boys had dropped to the ground and were playing with the puppy. They poked its nose and gently scratched its belly. I joined them on the floor where we remained for 20 some minutes. After I left the building, I turned around and saw one of the young boys carrying the puppy in his arms to take him outside. Although I was never able to find the woman I was searching for, I did find a beautiful moment between these different types of life. The interaction between the two young boys and the small puppy were so gentle and kind; an exchange of happiness between seemingly unlike forms of sentience.



Boys at the TCV School playing with a puppy

Tibet Charity Animal Care Office
“Her name is Pantha”

When I first entered the gate to the Animal Care office of Tibet Charity, I walked passed a young Tibetan man who was playing peek-a-boo with a groggy and confused newly spayed dog. I proceeded to the doorway labeled ‘OFFICE’ which was empty of all life, humans and dogs alike. I continued into the connecting room, which seemed to be the kitchen, where I found two Tibetan staff members chatting and scrolling through their phones. After explaining who I was and why I was there, an Indian man entered who I soon found out was the veterinarian, Dr. Pankaj Sharma. I sat down to speak with the somewhat skeptical Dr. Sharma and the welcoming vet attendant, Tsering Gyaltsen. Both men have worked for Tibet Charity Animal Care for around two years²¹. After telling me about the various vaccination programs they run and the number of dogs they have sterilized and treated, I began to ask more about their personal feelings.

What motivates you to do the work you do?

PS: “It is the only thing that gives me food to eat.” Dr. Sharma didn’t elaborate any further on this question.

TG: “It is painful.” Tsering Gyaltsen went on to explain that the dogs they are unable to save motivate him to do the work he does. He told about the pain he experiences when a dog is lost despite all the effort and work they put into to trying to save it.

The director of Tibet Charity, Tsering Thundup, told me that when a dog dies you perform a small puja²² for them. Is this true?

PS: “The Buddhists do. They say some mantras, but I am a Hindu so I don’t do the puja.”

TG: “We go to bury the dogs in the forests. We burn tsampa²³, we recite *Om Mani Padme Hum*.”²⁴

²¹ Dr. Pankaj Sharma and Tsering Gyaltsen in an interview by the author. November 17th 2016. Tibet Charity Animal Care.

²² A puja is a ceremony, ritual, or offering that expresses religious devotion

²³ Tsampa is roasted and ground barley flour. A major staple of a traditional Tibetan diet

²⁴ *Om Mani Padme Hum* is one of the most common Buddhist mantras

The interview was cut short when a European man wearing a red shirt with the Buddha eyes on it entered with a small black and tan mutt. He told the TCAC staff that the dog needed to be sterilized. They asked him to sign a form to which he responded, "...but it's not my dog!" As the foreign man signed the paper, the timid stray dog became his liability. The man left and Tsering playfully tapped the young dog on its nose and smiled. They let the dog wander freely around the office until it settled down under the chair I was occupying.



Young dog waiting to get spayed under a chair in the office of Tibet Charity Animal Care

Dr. Sharma and Tsering Gyaltzen showed me around the clinic and took me back to the quarantine section. Two kittens and very small puppy were lounging inside the caged area. The two cats had just been sterilized and the puppy had distemper²⁵, a typically fatal disease. “Her name is Pantha,” Tsering told me as we both stared at the puppy that was staring back at us. “Because she is black and white. Like a panther.”

Do you always name all the animals?

TG: “Yes! We name all the dogs or else we cannot recognize them.”

PS: “...but I still can’t recognize or remember anyway.”



Vials of rabies vaccination

²⁵ Distemper is a highly contagious and often fatal canine disease that affects gastrointestinal function, respiratory function, and the central nervous system



Surgical room at Tibet Charity Animal Care



Surgical tools at Tibet Charity Animal Care



Refrigerator dedicated entirely to chicken skin to feed the dogs. They are also fed rice, dal, Pedigree dog food, and 'soy balls'.

Lali and Kali

I met Tsering Gyaltzen at 4:30 in the afternoon at the front gate of Tsuglagkhang, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's temple. When I visited Tibet Charity Animal Care earlier that same day, he told me about two puppies with Parvovirus²⁶ that he was going to treat later in the day. The puppies were only three or four months old and were being taken care of by a Vietnamese nun from San Jose, California named Marie. The two puppies were dumped in front of Tsuglagkhang Temple before they could even open their eyes. I followed Tsering down the staircase to a small apartment where Tam, a young Vietnamese woman, was living for only a few weeks. After slipping off my shoes, I followed Tsering into a white room with a bright red carpet. The room was mostly empty except for a mattress on the ground, some incense burning on the floor, a small table holding up a notebook filled with Tibetan script, and a shrine on the wall with a large photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama resting upon it. The only other door, besides the exit, was to the bathroom. Peeking through the crack in the door, I could see one of the small puppies trying to stand up. Tam told me that the black one is named Kali and the tan one is named Lali.

Tsering pushed open the bathroom door and got right to work. Using bent coat hangers he hung two bottles of IV fluids from the wall. One was a bottle of compound sodium lactate injection²⁷ and the other was sodium chloride and dextrose injection²⁸. Both the puppies are supposed to receive 70 mL of each per day. He attached the IV tubes to the puppies' front legs and began the flow of fluids. Tam carried in a pot of boiling water and Tsering poured it into two smaller plastic bowls. He proceeded to mix in colder water as well, to make a warm bowl of water. Tsering placed a section of the IV tubes in the warm water and told me it was so the liquids entering the dogs wouldn't be too cold. Tsering gave the dogs injections of

²⁶ Parvovirus is an occasionally lethal and highly contagious canine virus that is most commonly contracted by puppies. The symptoms are extremely unpleasant and include vomiting, lethargy, and bloody diarrhea. Parvovirus is preventable with a vaccination and also sometimes curable with proper treatment.

²⁷ Sodium lactate injection is an electrolyte replenisher and a systemic alkalizer

²⁸ Sodium chloride and dextrose injection provides water, electrolytes, and carbohydrates

Gentamicin, Intamox, and Tribivet. Gentamicin and Intamox are antibiotics used to treat a large variety of bacterial infections. Tribivet is a multi-vitamin in order to help Lali and Kali regain some strength.



Kali and Lali, 4-month-old puppies with Parvovirus living in a bathroom



Tsering Gyaltzen from Tibet Charity Animal Care and Tam hooking Kali up to an IV

While we waited for the 70 mL of fluid to run its course, we sat on the red carpet of the main room and chatted. Tsering believes dogs that live in Tibetan communities are generally much better off than in other areas of India. “When you enter an Indian society, the dogs are very unwell. Almost 90% of Tibetans feed the dogs. Tibetans have more compassion than other people for the dogs,” Tsering explained. He continued to explain that because most Tibetans are from nomadic societies, they have good relationships with animals, specifically dogs. Most nomadic groups rely on dogs, which leads to greater affection toward them. I decided to ask Tsering again about what motivated his work, without the presence of Dr. Sharma. “A high salary job won’t give me satisfaction. But although my job is low salary, I feel like I did something good.” I asked Tsering why Dr. Sharma said he was motivated by money. “He doesn’t like dogs. He doesn’t like animals. He will only look at the dogs closely when they are wearing a muzzle.”

The 70mL were up and it was time to switch the puppies’ IVs out. While Tsering unscrewed the IVs and switched them, Marie, the nun who looks after the

puppies, waltzed in. Although I felt slightly awkward and out of place, Marie was totally unruffled by my presence. After our brief introduction, Marie asked Tsering how the dogs were doing. “Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.”



IV fluids hung from the wall in the bathroom

“You have to come every single day until they are better or they die!” Marie said with a laugh. She turned to me and continued, “He wants to stop after a week, so I said two weeks. After two weeks, I will say three weeks. He’s not allowed to stop.”

Marie told me all of her neighbors don’t like her because she has too many dogs. She has six already, which is why the two puppies are staying in Tam’s apartment. When I asked her if it was okay if I took pictures of the puppies she responded, “Ask them! It’s their picture! They know their rights!” Behind Marie, outside the window, a large white dog with brown splotches jumped up and peered

in the window with a big grin on its face and its tongue hanging out. Marie turned around. "Oh! That's my dog! She is looking for me!"

While Tsering finished up the injections, Marie tried to teach him some Vietnamese words and poked fun at his pronunciation. Tam was giggling at him while trying to continue her studying. As we got ready to leave, Marie spoke in Tibetan and offered to pay Tsering for the treatment. Tsering refused to accept any money and told her, "I work with stray dogs. These are stray dogs. You don't need to pay me." Marie jokingly responded saying that if the puppies live, she will pay him. She turned to me and asked if I would like to go with her to feed the stray dogs.

I followed her quickly out of the apartment and up the stairs, trying to keep up as we walked past the front gate of Tsuglagkhang. Marie feeds the stray dogs around the temple every day, and she is by no means the only person who does. "All the dogs know me. Or they know this bag," she said lifting her large tote bag filled with dog food, rice, and chicken skin. She led me down behind the tea stalls, where the beggars who stay outside the temple live. They keep dogs with them and look after them, despite not having much money. They make their living by taking recycling out of the trash and selling it. Sunil and Ranita are two of the adults who live behind the tea stalls and 'own' the dogs.

A large scraggly dog and a very young puppy recognized Marie and ran up to her. Marie dumped out some of the large bag of rice and chicken skin onto a cardboard box and the two dogs happily wolfed it down. The small puppy is named Modi, and is the brother of Lali and Kali, the two female puppies with Parvovirus. Despite the condition of his sisters, Modi was extremely healthy and playful, and quite chubby as well. Marie told Ranita to feed the dogs again later that evening and Ranita agreed. As we walked back up to the main road, Marie confessed, "I have a dog problem. Dog syndrome."



Marie feeding the dogs behind the tea stalls next to Tsuglagkhang. On the right side of the photo is a pile of recyclables that are sold by the beggars.



Marie feeding Lali and Kali's brother



Lali and Kali's brother, Modi



Marie handing a piece of meat to Ranita, an Indian woman living behind the tea stalls, so that she could feed the dogs as well

Lali and Kali Day Two

"That's my purpose. To make sure they survive and run, run, run. Stay under the sun."

The next morning I returned to meet my new friends and watch the treatment process again. A few minutes after getting comfortable and set up in the apartment, Lali, the tan puppy, excreted clear brown liquid. Marie and Tsering both started dancing and cheering because it wasn't blood. Marie offered to take Tsering out to lunch when the puppies are all better and recovered. Tam was burning incense in the puppies' temporary home in the bathroom. Lali attempted to walk out of the bathroom but as she tried to step over the raised doorway, she tumbled down back onto the tile floor. "She wants to walk, but she has no power. No energy," Marie commented. Tsering began preparing Kali for the IV fluids and injected the needle into her front left paw. Marie held Kali as Tsering taped down the injection spot. "Now we have experience, looks like a hospital!" Marie said turning her head over her shoulder to face me.

"Animals have feelings just like human beings. But people kill, torture, and abuse." Marie was worried about the safety of the dogs once they are healthier and returned to the beggars by the temple. She said that's why she's here. "That's my purpose. To make sure they survive and run, run, run. Stay under the sun."

Tsering watched American Idol videos on YouTube while waiting for the IVs to finish up. Tam sat silently studying with her headphones in. Marie recited homework for her Buddhist philosophy class; she had over 10 pages to memorize. Marie takes class at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, but confessed, "taking care of these two little ones, there is no time to study."

Tsering stood up to check on the dogs. They still had a ways to go. He sat back down and continued to watch videos on YouTube, showing me ones he found particularly entertaining. I brought up the topic of euthanasia and he told me that many places in India euthanize puppies with Parvovirus without even trying to treat them. It is an extremely contagious disease, and some people find it safer to euthanize infected canines as opposed to exposing other dogs that could contract the disease. I asked if Tibet Charity Animal Care ever euthanizes dogs. The doctor and manager of TCAC usually tell Tsering to go to the euthanasia but he refuses. "We

don't want them to suffer alone. When we can't do anything we have to euthanize. I never go though because it hurts." He told me that when he learned Pantha, the small black and white dog I saw at the shelter, had distemper, he held Pantha and cried. He fed Pantha blessed medicine. He crushed up Mani Ribu, medicinal pills that have been blessed by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, mixed it with water, and fed the concoction to Pantha with a syringe. "When he was wagging his tail and wanted to eat, I was so happy. When I do these things and treat them, they motivate me. If there is small hope then don't give up."

Tsering went down to Tam's place every day to treat the dogs because he can't take Lali and Kali back to the clinic or they will infect the other dogs. Before he went to work he had to change his clothing and wash his hands as an additional precaution. He turned to Lali, who was sitting in her own excrement, and grabbed the roll of toilet paper. He wiped off her tail and feet thoroughly, saying, "dirty, dirty!" as he gently cleaned her off. When he finished, Lali stumbled over to the bowl of warm water and tried to drink from it. Tsering softly pulled her away from the water, explaining that if she drinks the water she will vomit. The puppies are still unable to eat or drink anything without it taking a serious toll on their bodies. Marie held Lali's head in her hands and put Lali's face very close to her own. While looking into her eyes and stroking her head, she said "ohhh Lali Lali Lali Lali oh Lali."



Dirty bathroom floor after the first non-bloody stool



Marie holding Lali while Tsering prepares her IV

Two weeks after my two days with Tsering, Tam, Marie, Lali and Kali, I bumped into Tsering. He informed me that Lali had passed away.

Christa and the Dog on Wheels

I met with Christa on a sunny Friday afternoon. We met in front of One Two Café, right next to Tsuglagkhang. She greeted me with a hug and a big smile, before turning to pat an older female dog, one that I had fed with Marie the day before. I followed her down some stairs leading to a wooded path. A young three-legged dog ran up to her, tail wagging and panting hard. Christa bent down smiling to give the dog some pats and scratches. She informed me it was her dog, Mico, who she brought from Bodhgaya²⁹. We continued along the path to her house passing two other dogs on the way, also owned by Christa.

Christa is from Germany and has lived in Dharamsala for thirteen years. She has been a vegetarian for over 35 years and has always loved all animals. She is a Buddhist and is quite fond of Dharamsala, but plans to leave once her older dogs pass away. She used to have 10 dogs but three have since passed.

She brought me into her home, the main room of which had dog beds lining the walls. A large, twelve year old dog named Bella let out a loud bark. Bella is deaf and couldn't hear us coming. We went out onto the porch and Christa showed me the room she constructed for her dogs. It was very spacious section of the porch with Plexiglas roofing and walls to protect from the elements. On the uncovered section of the porch laid a very old black dog named Sweetie. Sweetie was in a car accident over five years ago and broke her pelvis. Christa explained that no veterinarians here would operate on the spine, so Sweetie is permanently paralyzed from an injury that could have been healed. Since Sweetie's back legs no longer function, Christa bought a pair of doggy-wheels from Germany and had them shipped to India. She has purchased two sets of doggy-wheels, costing over a thousand euros in total. Sweetie may very well be the most photographed dog in India. However, most residents of McLeodganj no longer stare at Sweetie and are accustomed to her odd style of mobility.

²⁹ Christa, in an interview by the author. November 18th, 2016. Christa's home.



Sweetie's legs. Christa's dog who was hit by a car in Bodhgaya.



Sweetie's wheels.

We sat down on the porch and Christa brought me a lemon tart and a cup of coffee. She lit a cigarette and we began to chat. She does kora³⁰ every evening with all of her dogs. When they were younger, they did two laps around Tsuglagkhang in about 40 minutes, but now they only do one lap in the same amount of time. Christa told me the street dogs in Dharamsala are so much healthier than in other parts of India because of how many Tibetans put food out for them. As opposed to Bodhgaya, dogs in Dharamsala are very seldom kicked or abused.

Buddhist philosophy plays no role in Christa's love and affection towards the dogs. However, aspects of Buddhism are incorporated in her dogs' lives. Besides circumambulating with them every evening, she also says prayers over their food and whispers 'Om Mani Padme Hum' into their ears before bed. When one of her dogs passes away, she preforms a puja. She places a blessing pill in their mouth, wraps them in a blessed blanket, and buries them in the woods around the kora circuit with their faces towards His Holiness. Despite these practices, all the care and love Christa has for the dogs does not arise from some concept of Bodhicitta or compassion for all sentient beings. Her love for the dogs is self-arisen.

Christa lit another cigarette as I asked her about the puppies that live with the beggars in front of Tsuglagkhang. She told me that every year or half year the beggars bring in new puppies from outside McLeod. She was unsure where they got these dogs, but it causes a lot of unforeseen problems within the stray dog population in Dharamsala. The new puppies carry in diseases that harm the already present populace and increase the number of stray dogs in McLeod. Christa has spoken to Dharamsala Animal Rescue about this multiple times, asking them to speak with the beggars and convince them to stop, but Dharamsala Animal Rescue has yet to act on it. Although it may create bad outcomes, Christa genuinely believes that the individuals bringing in the new puppies mean no harm and are unaware that these diseases are so deadly.

Christa is yet another strong believer that the dogs in Dharamsala are so healthy because of the Tibetan community. It is a commonly held opinion that the

³⁰ Kora is a Tibetan word meaning 'circumambulate'. Walking around a sacred building or object.

dogs in Dharamsala are so overweight and happy because many Tibetans put food out for them. Christa told me about Kerala, a state in southern India with the highest literacy rate in all of India. The government in Kerala aspires to be a 'dog free state.' Citizens are commended for culling stray dogs and the practice of mass culling has swept over the state. Dogs that have been killed are sometimes tied to poles and displayed or carried around the streets. Despite her desire to visit Kerala, Christa said she could never to go a place that treated animals so brutally.

I stood up and began to photograph the dogs. I told her about my visit to Tibet Charity Animal Care and the people I met there. I mentioned meeting a vet, and she immediately responded with a strong word that expressed her dislike. Tibet Charity had a different vet previously who cared for the animals and loved them very much. Christa did not get a sense of care or love for animals from Dr. Sharma at all. In fact, Christa got that feeling that he genuinely disliked animals and only worked for the money.



Ollie



Another dog named Sweetie. This Sweetie is not Christa's dog, but Christa still feeds her and has created a small shelter for her.

Bhagsu Road

"But aren't you afraid of dogs?"

My good friend and fellow researcher, SJ Renfroe and I were walking along Bhagsu road towards McLeodganj, using the sleeping dogs on the side of the road as checkpoints to stop at. While we passed a dumpster, we heard a large boom and saw a white dog hopping in to search for some lunch. I peeked my head in the dumpster as saw that it was a mother dog with very swollen teats. We attempted to lure her out with the bag of dog food I had been carrying around, but she was more interested in the food scraps from the dumpster. We continued on for less than 30 steps when we saw a garbage truck headed towards the makeshift dumpster-dog-restaurant. A shared sense of panic came over the two of us and without words, only a glance, we decided we had to go back. Before we were even able to turn a full 180 degrees, we saw the mother dog hop out of the dumpster and casually trot off. As badly as we wanted to help the dog, she didn't need our help, and was far more capable than we truly gave her credit.



A mother dog searching for food in the dumpster

A couple of minutes later we came across an old, large, black and tan dog that had glowing golden eyes. We squatted down and sat there scratching his ears for a few minutes when four young men came to ask for a selfie. SJ and I looked at each other, looked at the dog, and then reluctantly rose to our feet for the photo. After taking a few photos, I dropped back down to continue bonding with my new friend. One of the men started conversing with us. He said he was from Punjab and that it was his first time in Himachal Pradesh. He was confused why we were petting the dog, so I told him I was researching the street dogs in McLeod. “But aren’t you afraid of dogs?” he questioned. We told him that we aren’t afraid because where we grew up, there weren’t many stray dogs and most of them were companion animals. He was terrified of dogs. He has been attacked and bitten by dogs twice, and is frightened whenever he has close encounters with them. “Maybe I have a bad presence or a bad aura and they can tell.” The way he spoke about dogs shed light on how differently dogs can be viewed in other regions.



Black and tan dogs I patted while speaking with the man from Punjab

Ki Ama la

The Ki Ama la, meaning 'dog mother' in Tibetan, was someone I had heard a lot about. I was told about how she had 20 plus dogs, and how she had to clear a spot on her bed to sit because they covered all inches of her home. I had heard she would go begging to restaurants for left over food to feed the dogs. She has been known to fall asleep on the side of the road with a buffer zone of dogs around her. I even saw her one evening while I was doing research at a café. She was slowly walking down a set of crumbling stairs and dogs were flocking to her. She tottered down Bhagsu road with a swarm of barking dogs in every direction. As I left the café, I walked past her feeding Parle G's, a popular tea biscuit in India, to a crowd of hungry canines, with a huge smile on her face. I decided I had to meet her.

I was having tea with my friend SJ at our new acquaintance Nawang's apartment. I told Nawang about my desire to meet the Ki Ama la and asked if he would help me translate. We planned a day and time to meet then decided not to wait and just go at that moment. We made our way up the hill towards the main square in McLeodganj, stopping to pat dogs along the way. When we were near the place I saw the Ki Ama la a few nights earlier, we began asking random individuals if they knew where to find her. Many of these people also referred to her as the Ki Mo mo la, meaning dog grandmother. We eventually found the right place, all thanks to Nawang's ability to get directions from various other Tibetans. We walked down some thin cement stairs and rounded a corner. At the bottom of the stairs was an elderly woman who had fallen asleep on a bucket next to her. There was a metal bowl with charcoal barely smoking: the remnants of a fire. Nawang called, "Mo mo la!" a few times until she woke up. I placed a katak³¹ around her neck as she sat on the bottom stair. Her face seemed kind, with deep valleys and steep peaks. Her knuckles were swollen and some of her fingers were bent and morphed. Her hair was short and gray; she wore a chuba³². The area was cramped and filled with clothing, cardboard, and large trash bags. Three dogs watched us cautiously and

³¹ A Katak is a traditional Tibetan white or yellow silk scarf that is given on various occasions

³² A chuba is traditional Tibetan attire

began to bark. They didn't cease until we had left and were out of the dogs' eyesight. Nawang translated what he was able to understand from her mixture of Tibetan and Hindi. The Ki Ama la's name is Ani Sonam Tsering and she is 81 years old. She used to have around 15 or 20 dogs but she told us that the Indian government took them. They came to operate on her dogs and then brought them to Manali. There were only three dogs around us as we chatted but she said the whole stairwell and vertical alley we sat in used to be filled with dogs. The Ki Ama la typically brings sick or injured dogs into her home. She told us the three dogs surrounding us were named Tsering, Kaduk, and Nalu.



Ki Ama la, sitting on the side of Bhagsu road

Nawang and the Ki Ama la weren't able to communicate very much, leaving me with many unanswered questions. One thing I was able to tell without the exchange of any words however was how much she cared for these animals. Ani

Sonam Tsering had very, very little for herself, yet she still gave all she had to the dogs. She wouldn't accept money or food for herself, only for the animals. Her genuine compassion towards the animals needed no translation because it was fundamentally about an appreciation for a shared existence through life.



Ani Soman Tsering sitting on the stairs outside her home.



Nalu. One of Ani Soman Tsering's dogs that lay at the bottom of the stairs



Tsering. One of Ani Sonam Tsering's dogs sitting on a pile of her belongings

Dharamsala Animal Rescue (DAR)

SJ and I spent hours walking from McLeodganj, down the hill to Lower Dharamsala, and along highways to arrive in a region known as Rakkar. Along the way, I couldn't help but notice the dogs shrinking in size and growing in timidity. We received some help from an older couple who traded a ride in their car for some cookies we had just bought. They dropped us off in front of a sign reading "Dharamsala Animal Rescue" with a red arrow pointing off the edge of the mountain. Once we got closer to the sign we saw the stone steps leading down the side. A few minutes later we heard a chorus of barking, a sign we were in the right place.

We walked past a pen of large dogs that all got up to welcome us. We approached a fenced-in backyard and saw a couple of staff members standing among a crowd of dogs. We exchanged 'namastes' and they opened the metal gate to let us into the fenced area. Directly inside the gate stood a nearly hairless dog that was clearly fighting a very tough case of mange. When I squatted down she came over to me, her eyes asking for some pats. I scratched her under her chin and searched for a furry place to pat that wouldn't cause her pain. I couldn't find a spot that wasn't raw.



First dog I met at DAR, suffering from mange

Kamlesh, the manager of DAR, greeted us. He walked us up a metal spiral staircase leading to a balcony that was used as an extension of the main office. We sat down to chat and enjoy the view of the dog-filled yard from above.

Kamlesh has worked at DAR for a little over 3 years³³. Prior to working on animal welfare in Dharamsala, he worked at a dog shelter in New Delhi. I asked Kamlesh why the dogs in McLeodganj seemed healthier than the dogs in Lower Dharamsala and beyond. He gave me two reasons for this discrepancy: McLeodganj is filled with many restaurants and cafes that throw away uneaten food and also give a lot of scrap food to the street dogs. On top of this, McLeodganj has a large Tibetan community. Kamlesh rationalized that because most Tibetans are Buddhist, it is in their nature to help the dogs. Tibetans also typically eat a lot of meat, so when they feed the dogs they receive a lot of protein and fat. Kamlesh told me that the dogs in Dharamsala generally face much less abuse than elsewhere in India. While he was working in Delhi, he received calls about dogs that had acid thrown in their faces.



View from the balcony at DAR

³³ Kamlesh in an interview with the author. November 26th, 2016. Dharamsala Animal Rescue.

Kamlesh explained their main programs to me, which are the mobile clinic, dog rescues, an ABC program, an education program, and an adoption program. The mobile clinic takes about 10 or 15 cases a day and treats dogs on location, as opposed to bringing them back to the rescue center. Dog rescues are only done when a dog is in very bad condition and they have to be taken back to DAR for treatment. Dog rescue cases are typically done for very bad cases of mange, significantly underweight dogs, and severely injured dogs. The ABC program is able to sterilize about 50 dogs every month. The educational program consists of school visits to educate students about rabies and the proper way to treat animals. The adoption program works through social media to help recovered dogs get adopted by a caring family. In the past month, 10 to 15 individuals overseas adopted dogs from DAR. Most of these dogs end up in the United States or Canada, which costs about 1000 to 1500 USD in transportation fees. Typically the dogs that are sent overseas are handicapped or only have three legs because it is very hard for them to get adopted in India.



Two puppies at DAR looking for a new home

I asked Kamlesh what motivated his work, to which he said, “We love animals, we can’t see them suffer. People appreciate our work and can see the difference.” Kamlesh told me that often he experiences push back to their work because many Indians don’t understand why you would help dogs and spend so much money on them when there are so many other issues in India such as malnutrition, crime, poverty and disease. I was able to relate to Kamlesh because I felt similarly about my ISP topic not being important enough to be a subject of research. He continued, “I feel so happy saving lives. Enormous satisfaction. It really motivates us.”



Puppy from DAR named Whitey. He has two broken legs but is recovering well

The interview ended when a dog that had just finished surgery was brought outside. The dog was a stray and didn't yet have a name. Two local Indian men brought the dog to Peepal farm, another animal clinic around Dharamsala. A woman who works at Peepal farm named Jo brought the dog into DAR for surgery because Peepal farm is only a recovery center and is unable to perform surgeries. The dog had an extremely swollen snout, covered in thick, bright blood mixed with iodine and stitches. The dog had bit a firecracker that was being used as a pig trap. The firecracker set off while the dog was biting it, completely mangling and disfiguring its face.



Dog who bit a firecracker that was being used to trap pigs. Just completed surgery at DAR.

Triund



Dog at the top of Triund

Panting while attempting to lap up our water, my friends and I took a break half way up our trek to Triund, a popular hiking spot in Dharamsala. The chubby black mutt in front of us stopped on top of a rock and turned around to look at us. He was obviously unimpressed with our pace. As we caught up to him, I reached down to pet his coat. As I scratched him, clouds of dust billowed into the air, making me cough. He looked up at me, the picture of innocence.

We switched positions as he slowed down, panting. He plopped onto the ground with an audible groan. I'll admit it; I felt a bit vindicated. We played leapfrog with this one particular dog all the way up the mountain, as if part of a silent race to the top.

Many two-legged and four-legged creatures were climbing up the trail that day, all in a kind of lopsided harmony. At the summit, where all the humans sat and hydrated, the dogs continued to run and playfully jump at each other. Occasionally a

dog ran up to me and my friends, tail wagging and body wiggling, only waiting to receive some pats and scratches before trotting off to the next group for affection. Almost every dog I interacted with had a small triangle of their ear missing, indicating that they are sterile.

At dinnertime we made our way over to the canteens that are set up around the top. While we waited for our soup, bundled up and shivering on a stone wall, we befriended an almost frighteningly large black dog. Given all of his padding, he did not seem nearly as cold as we were. The woman sitting next to the dog was a domestic tourist from Punjab. She stroked his head and didn't stop until she left the canteen. All of the dogs at the top received a lot of affection – a tax, perhaps, for guiding the trekkers up to the top.



Dogs at the top of the Triund Trek

Two weeks later SJ and I decided to do the Triund trek again. We started up the mountain in the early morning and made it to the top by lunchtime. We decided that this time we would continue on, past Triund to a point known as Snowline.

After a quick snack amongst the tents that covered Triund, we began to hike again. After only 2 or 3 minutes in, we met a white dog that quickly became our friend. When we first saw him he was lying down under the shade of a large boulder, but he hopped up and started along the trail to Snowline with us. The trail was quite rocky and very steep at parts. While SJ and I huffed and puffed, our furry white friend playfully pounced his way across the rocks. We named him Manjushri because we could tell he was wise. He quickly developed the nicknames 'Manj' and 'Shri'. On the way up, Manj was always 50 or 100 feet ahead of us on the trail. Whenever we stopped to catch our breath or drink some water, Manj would patiently wait a little farther up the path until we were ready to resume again. Manj was agile and swift, hopping from boulder to boulder and running across the steep mountainside. Occasionally Manj would stray off the trail, but he always came back to join us on our route.



Manjushri the dog guiding us up to Snowline



About halfway to Snowline we encountered a small Hindu shrine. Manj ran ahead and stuck his head into the opening of the shrine. He stayed in that position for 30 or 40 seconds, as if he was paying his respects. Once he pulled his head out he hopped up the steep slope behind the shrine in order to jump onto the roof. He stayed up there for about a minute, spending a couple of seconds here and there to try and bite the flag waving in front of his face. Manj stuck with us the entire way up to Snowline, and the entire way back down, past Triund, to the base. On the way down, instead of running ahead to lead the way, he mimicked my pace and stayed within a few feet of me. There are many dogs like Manj, which run up and down the mountains, guiding trekkers and tourists to their destination. This is just one of the ways that dogs have become a part of the society, rather than just a nuance, in Dharamsala.



Manjushri the dog entering the Hindu shrine on the way up to Snowline



Manjushri the dog standing on top of the Hindu shrine

Conclusion

Street dogs are feral, meaning they are descended from domesticated animals but have returned to the wild. This can cause issues for the strict dichotomy that humans like to create between culture and nature. Canines are both nature and culture, while also being neither. The ideal of culture versus nature became popularized during the Enlightenment³⁴. Because of this, most animals were either pushed into 'natural' non-human spaces, killed and eradicated, or domesticated as pets or commoditized products. While in most of the world dogs have been domesticated, in Dharamsala, none of these categories accurately represent the realm in which dogs exist.



Tibetan man scratching a dog on Bhagsu Road

³⁴ Aaron Herald Skabelund, "Civilizing Canines; or, Domesticating and Destroying Dogs" in *The Empire of Dogs: Canines, Japan, and the Making of the Modern Imperial World*. (Cornell University Press, 2011), 53-86.

I was walking towards Tsuglagkhang to drop off some final thank you gifts to Tam and Marie. I only had a couple of days left in Dharamsala and was attempting to internalize all that I had learned. While walking, I passed a group of monks. One monk stepped out of their discussion circle to stroke the back of an elderly dog. Slightly farther up the road, two young Indian men were chatting, one hunched slightly over in order to reach the head of a dog standing at his feet. The dog decided to sit down where he stood and landed on the man's feet, immobilizing him. The men chuckled and continued conversing.

On my very last night in Dharamsala I returned home to pack and clean up. A new neighbor arrived the day prior and moved into the apartment across the hall. It was around 7 o'clock as I walked down the endless stairs to my building. At the bottom of the stairs stood my new neighbor, Saunskruti, with a miniscule puppy that couldn't have been over 3 weeks old. Saunskruti is from Bombay and is visiting her boyfriend who owns a guesthouse in McLeodganj, Dharamsala. The puppy was crawling around the concrete hallway between our two apartments and Saunskruti was waiting for it to pee. I still had a significant amount of dog food left in the apartment so I ran to grab it. Saunskruti went to get the bowl of milk she was feeding the puppy earlier and we put the puppy food in the bowl. We watched as the puppy wolfed down the food. Saunskruti told me that she found the puppy outside on the street and another tenant of our apartment building has one of the siblings. She told me she called Dharamsala Animal Rescue to see if they would come take the dog, but they only work in Lower Dharamsala, not McLeodganj. They told her to call Tibet Charity. Tibet Charity has no vehicle to pick dogs up the way DAR does, and on top of that, the Tibet Charity kennel is currently housing dogs with Parvovirus and distemper. Tibet Charity told Saunskruti that they were unable to help her. She was tempted to keep the puppy, but she knew it wasn't a viable option. She decided that the following day she would bring the puppy to Dharamsala Animal Rescue where it could be put up for adoption. For the time being, however, she found a cardboard box and filled it with newspaper and a towel for the puppy to sleep in overnight.



The small puppy that my neighbor, Saunskruti, brought home.



Me, holding Saunskruti's puppy, who we named Panni

Everywhere I went, I witnessed endless interactions between people and dogs. I saw foreigners, Indians, and Tibetans alike, all feeding the street dogs. I saw the same three groups of people all shooing dogs away from their shops or homes. Despite the number of times I heard that the healthy dogs of Dharamsala is accredited to Tibetans, as one informant told me, its not that simple.

The dogs of Dharamsala are healthy because of organizations such as Tibet Charity and Dharamsala Animal Rescue, who perform sterilizations and vaccinations for local dogs. They are healthy because many members of the community, that defy a single demographic, feed them. Dogs in Dharamsala are not frequently mistreated the way they are in Bodhgaya or Kerala because the community does not accept it. It is not about Buddhism or religious values and ideals, it is about community values and ideals. Ultimately, it is not about religious motives or an attempt to gain more karma; it is simply about sentience. Every interaction I witnessed and story I heard shared one common factor: life interacting with life.



Appendix

Methodology

My methodology evolved as the goal of my paper did. Initially I conducted interviews and visited organizations. When I began to take a more story-like direction with my paper, I began to focus more on the dogs and the interactions I saw them having everyday. I began to carry around dog food, which attracted more comments and discourse from people passing by. By interacting more with people opinionated about dogs, and the dogs themselves, I was able to gain further insight into the status of dogs in Dharamsala. The major methods I used were interview and observation.



Obstacles and Strategies

There were many obstacles I faced throughout my ISP period, however a few in particular stand out the most. I became quite discouraged with my research at times and felt as though it was unimportant and wouldn't be able to provide any useful insight that could actually motivate change. Many people I spoke with in Dharamsala didn't understand why I would study street dogs. The discouraging comments turned into motivation for me when I realized how overlooked the topic truly is. The whole fact that people thought it wasn't worth studying became more proof for me that it was.

Another obstacle I encountered that is common when conducting research is contradiction between different informants about large generalizations. Some of my interviewees would tell me Tibetans are more compassionate towards the dogs than Indians are. Others disagreed. Some informants told me that Buddhist was a big motivating factor for the Tibetan people to feed and care for dogs, while many Buddhist themselves told me this was not the case. In order to deal with this, I took each interview as an opinion, and had to remind myself that none of the generalizations made by my informants could be taken as true. Everything I was told during my ISP period was a perspective, not a fact based statement.

Doing fieldwork is difficult. Sometimes possible interviews fall through or individuals cancel. One of the most important things that I had to remember during my fieldwork was to keep a level head and not get frustrated. Although during the ISP period, this researched seemed like my entire life focus, the people that were assisting me had totally different things going on. Help is help, regardless of the small details. It was inevitable that I would experience many little hiccups along the way but the best method to deal with these is continue looking at the bigger picture, instead of the printer that wont print, or the Wi-Fi that wont stop crashing.

Glossary

(in order of appearance within the text)

The Five Precepts: the essential guidelines to living a wholesome and ethical life in the Buddhist tradition

Ahimsa: the practice of non-violence towards all sentient beings

Karuna: the practice of compassion towards all sentient beings

Buddha nature: the seed of consciousness that is possessed by all sentient beings. Having Buddha nature means one has the potential to reach enlightenment

Pali canon: major collection of Theravada scriptures

Skandha: the five elements that constitute self-hood

Vedic: A period of time in India during which the major Hindu texts, known as the Vedas, were written

Samsara: The material world in which all living beings are subjected to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth

Bodhicitta: in a very simplified definition, Bodhicitta is one's motivation to reach enlightenment in order to best help other sentient beings

Tsampa: Roasted barley flour. A major staple of a traditional Tibetan diet

Parvovirus: An occasionally lethal and contagious canine virus that is most commonly contracted by puppies. The symptoms are extremely unpleasant and include vomiting, lethargy, and bloody diarrhea. Parvovirus is preventable with a vaccination and also sometimes curable with proper treatment.

Distemper: a highly contagious and often fatal canine disease that affects gastrointestinal function, respiratory function, and the central nervous system

Kora: Tibetan word meaning 'circumambulate'. Walking around a sacred building or object.

Puja: a ceremony, ritual, or offering that expresses religious devotion.

Khata: A traditional Tibetan white or yellow silk scarf that is given on various occasions

Chuba: Traditional Tibetan dress

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Suggestions for Future Research

There are many paths that I wish I had time to pursue during my research period. There are a plethora of street dog-related topics that could have been fruitful sources of information to study. The following is a compiled list of topics that I would have been interested to study if I was given more time.

- Studying the organizations surrounding the street dogs such as Dharamsala Animal Rescue, Peepal Farm, and Tibet Charity in more depth
- A more comparative study of the street dogs of Dharamsala compared to elsewhere in India or the world
- Studying with a more data-based approach in order to discover trends among the street dog population
- Working with one particular organization or person for a longer period of time in order to get a more in depth case study of a single situation
- Studying the dogs of McLeodganj in comparison to lower Dharamsala and beyond

