

SENT TO FAX NO : 206/672 3028
OF MR. GEORGE OTIS

TESTIMONY OF A TIBETAN:

In Tibetan language my name means the "Omniscient Buddha". I was born in a small Indian border of India and Tibet which in the 50's and 60's, served as a major trading centre for businessmen travelling between these two countries. Horses, Donkeys and ponies carried most of the traded items over the high passes.

My father had been a staunch Buddhist monk in northern Tibet, a place called Kumbum. That was a religious Centre for the Tibetans then and still is today. After leaving his monastic life, he married and started a small business. We were three brothers and one sister together with our parents. My father strictly adhered to the religious beliefs and traditions of Buddhism and so brought up all of us children under Buddhist teachings. Traditionally, there was a practice in Tibet to part away with one son from every family to become a monk. My father had chosen me to become a very religiously pious person if not a monk. As a young boy of 8 years, I still remember getting up early in the morning at 4 and memorizing Tibetan Buddhist scriptures taught verbally for 2-3 hours. Everyday I offered holy water to the house shrine gods, did obeisance 3 times and remained as far away from them as possible throughout the rest of the day, since the very sight of a Tibetan idol scared me, with their big eyes, angry faces, dagger in their hands and their attacking postures. A sense of great fear dominated my life. More out of compulsion than joy did perform all the religious ceremonies. As a young boy between 8-12, all these did not mean anything to me but it made a world of difference to my father who had vowed to teach me nothing less than Tibetan Buddhism.

I can remember sitting crossed legged with my father and together reciting many parts of the Tibetan scriptures which was all memorised. Our Tibetan neighbours looked up to our family because of my father's religious commitment and goal. Basically, the monks serve as the 'middlemen' between the general public and the deities. Their whole religious rites and ceremonies are geared towards appeasing these deities to free humanity from any harm and sufficing. In many ways the people, in general, do not have a direct approach to the gods. Neither do they have a personal relationship with any of their deities. In short, I felt like I was groping in the darkness looking for some alled 'god' or 'truth'. And I didn't find it, I felt frustrated and tried to compensate my inner hunger to know God through mere performance of religious rites and ceremonies.

Over the years, as I was finishing higher secondary exams in School, my interest in knowing about the Bible grew purely out of a comparative study point of view. The Lord, however, graciously provided me with opportunities of meeting Christian friends and listening to Christian preaching from the Bible. What made a deep impression in my mind about these groups of people were their

