

## Central institute of Higher Tibetan studies, Sarnath: Sharing Responsibilities amid the Global Pandemic

The role of a university is more than imparting mere higher education to the society; a university is also responsible for taking care of the larger humanity. Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi understands its role and responsibility to help the needy with all its capacity. The Institute has always been at the vanguard to promote the social responsibility activities like the Tsunami Relief, raising the Kerala Relief Fund, distribution of clothes and food to the poor villagers in the nearby vicinity of the Institute, plantation of trees etc. Since the outbreak of the global pandemic COVID-19, the Institute has adopted various preemptive measurements to curb the impact of the vicious and fatal virus even before the Government of India declared a complete lockdown. The Institute implemented all the precautionary guidelines of the Ministry of Culture, UGC, MoHFW, Ayush, the Government of India and with the help of its medical wing Sowa-Rigpa successfully controlled the reach of the fatal virus on its campus.



Since the Covid-19 virus is very new and people do not know enough about it, the need to sensitize the students and community is urgent. Under the aegis of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Professor Ngawang Samten, the Institute avidly conducted an awareness drive in time to disseminate the right knowledge about the nature, effect and affective remedies against

COVID-19. He conducted personal awareness meetings with small groups of students and staff members to spread awareness and debunk the myths and rumours regarding this global pandemic. Series of awareness campaigns, maintaining social distancing, are held on the campus. Awareness illustrative posters have been pasted at the entrance of every office building, and flyers have been distributed to the students and staff. Social media platforms are also being used to provide filtered and authentic information to the students and staff of the Institute.



### **Writing a New Rhetoric of Humanitarian Venture**

The sudden outbreak of the Covid-19 virus forced the Governments to declare global lockdown and India, at a very early stage, implemented it successfully. But the lockdown posed the problem of livelihood for those poor villagers and farmers whose work was intensely affected by the lockdown. These were the poor villagers who turned out to be the victims of the catastrophic event at a larger scale. The agony and the pain of these workers and villagers were immediately felt by a responsible institute like CIHTS, and its Vice-Chancellor quickly acted to ease the misery of the villagers near and around the campus.



Understanding the role of the university towards social welfare and responsibility, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath raised a handsome donation contributed by the faculty members, officials, the staff and the students. The Vice Chancellor's office arranged to prepare the kits consisting of items of sustenance and sanitization and distributed all these kits to the poor villagers of *Paterwan*, *Busera* and *Dhaniyalpur*, *Baripur* and *Sarnath* villages on 19th April 2020 and 10 & 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 respectively. Some of the faculty members have distributed rations to nearby three villages and other places including the rickshaw pullers. On 15<sup>th</sup> May, a group of members of the Institute went to distribute food, water, footwear for the migrant workers on the high -way to Bihar, which is a critical problem across the nation during the crisis.





### **Serving the Nation in Every Possible Way**

The Institute followed all the essential guidelines issued by the Government of India. Deeming safety as a primary aim, only the most essential services are being carried out, and only a few administrative offices are occasionally functional during the lockdown. During this turbulent time, the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor is regularly attending his office to look after the welfare of the students and the residential staff as well as maintaining a communication bridge between the Government of India and various other organisations. Following the clarion call of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, all the employees of the Institute were paid full-month salary. The office of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor is in regular contact not only with the residents of the campus but also with the non-residential staff and faculty members.

The global pandemic COVID-19 is not only a social problem, but it also troubles the whole world with economic deficiency. The world, after the outbreak of this pandemic, is never the same again. On the appeal the Prime Minister of India- Shri Narendra Modi, a nationwide PM Cares Fund was founded. Understanding its responsibility, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi also contributed the amount of five lakh rupees collecting it from one day's salary of all its employees.

### **The Timely Precautionary Measurements**

Taking the precautionary and safety measures at the very beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, CIHTS very actively banned the use of the lifts in all of its buildings, provided sanitisers for all its student, faculty members and staff. Every building of the campus and staff colony was adequately sanitised, and hand sanitisers were kept in all the buildings, including the hostels

and the entrance of the Institute. The well-guarded gate of the Institute also ensures proper surveillance for the safety of its students and staff.



Since the Institute is constructing various new buildings and a very modern and technologically equipped Sowa- Rigpa hospital is also under construction, the safety of the labourers was of utmost importance for the Vice-Chancellor of the Institute. Taking various precautionary measures he and his team assured the security and the comfortable stay for the migrant labourers and the construction workers on the site. The contractors of the construction were given the instructions to ensure that the labourers are taken care of by providing ration and giving assurance that their wages during the period of Lockdown period would be protected. Students and staff kept visiting the labourers' place within the campus to extend their help through the distribution of food and money.



## New Phase of Digital Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global catastrophe which has severely affected the lives of millions of people around the world, leaving millions homeless and across 165 countries are affected by the worldwide school and university closure. This unprecedented turbulent situation has also enabled universities to adopt the extensive use of ICT tools and digital learning. Though located in a serene, bucolic setting of Sarnath, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies boasts of having the best technologically advanced infrastructure in the country. The modern and global outlook of its Vice-Chancellor has transformed the campus classrooms with the best technology available, and interactive software is used to enhance the effect of learning among the students on the campus.



The state-of-the-art smart classrooms enable digital learning which facilitates the learning for the students of the Institute without any hindrance during the lockdown period. Faculty members of the Institute are urged to organise online classes for the students and to ensure the swift and smooth learning process the library extended the wi-fi facilities to all students on their mobile phones and other gadgets. Initially, faculty members used the ZOOM, MS-Meet, Google Class and other such ICT tools for online teaching. Keeping in view the need of the hour, the futuristic Institute officially subscribed the Cisco Webex application for 60 days with a complimentary subscription. Now the faculty members are using the Cisco Webex application for online classes. To ensure the continuous process of learning and research for its on-campus students, researchers and faculty members, the library of CIHTS discharged its duty

of issuing and return of the library books occasionally in April and May while abiding by the rules of social distancing and other precautions.

### **Teaching the Lesson of Self-Reliance**

During the nationwide lockdown, since the staff residing outside the campus, were asked to stay home, the everyday chores were maintained by its students daily. The proper cleaning and maintenance of the washrooms, sweeping the roads and lawns, watering of the plants, maintenance of its lush-green gardens and the thorough sanitization of the Institute was done with the help of the students and the support of the limited residential staff members on the campus. The faculty members and the students of the campus together enlivened the lesson of self-reliance and autonomy in the time of distress.



## Exploring the Creative and Positive Edge

Every dark cloud has a silver lining, and the creative fraternity of CIHTS understands it just right in time. To creatively involve the students residing on campus, an exhibition of Tibetan Calligraphy and Painting was organised on the birthday of H. E. Panchen Lama on 25th May 2020. Many students enthusiastically participated in the exhibition with their paintings and Tibetan calligraphy articles. All these art pieces were displayed in the Library Hall of the Institute. The exhibition was only for the students and staff residing inside the campus, and proper social distancing and other precautionary measures were followed during the event. “The creative side of our students has got a full flare during the exhibition and has certainly fanned off the anxiety caused by the global pandemic. The mesmerising colours and designs have given a new message of life”, said the Vice-Chancellor while carefully inspecting and judging the paintings.







### **Sowa-Rigpa's Medical Innovation: A Fusion of Tradition with Modernity**

At such time of crisis when the whole world seems to be plagued with an immense fear because of the unprecedented Covid-19 virus attack, all the laboratories and research institutes are trying to cope with the situation by finding the vaccine and proper scientific and authentic ways to curb the impact of this deadly virus. Sowa-Rigpa, which is a research-based medical wing of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, prepared a *khada*- a mixture of traditional herbal ingredients as an immunity booster to be used as tea and prepared powder of powerful traditional herbs for fumigation to purify the air. Since the Ministry of Ayush also emphasized on the use of Ayurvedic medicine, Sowa- Rigpa also took the lead to prepare immunity booster which was distributed to the employees and the students of the Institute. The corona warriors like all the police personnel of Sarnath police station were also shown respect by giving them ready-made liquid *khada* for boosting immunity, along with sanitizers, masks and other items of necessity on 7th May 2020.

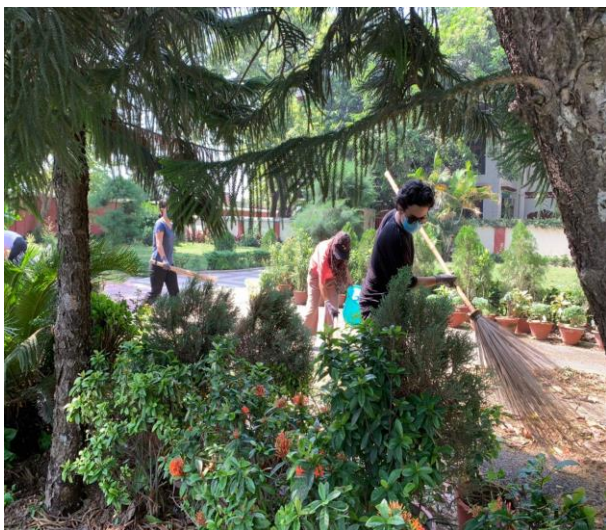


The importance to purify the ecological system around us resides deeply in the Tibetan culture. The Tibetan community has always been harmoniously co-existing with nature since ages. The legend has it that once during the period of the epidemic in Tibet, Guru *Padmasambhava* prepared powder of selected potential herbs (*Dhoop*) for fumigation to purify the air and this ended the effect of the disease. With the help of the Sowa-Rigpa department, the Institute rejuvenated such a potion which is used to purify and disinfect the environment on and off campus.



### **The Saga of Wishful Thinking and Help Continues**

The Institute is making a very vital contribution in the field of traditional as well as modern medical sciences. It is committed to the social and economic well-being of the community nearby. The Institute has been holding various outreach programs to make a difference in the ecological space of Sarnath in particular and Varanasi in general. The Institute's initiative to contribute towards the community is of paramount importance to its visionary Vice-Chancellor Professor Ngawang Samten.



Whether it is the issue of healthy sustainable development, cleanliness drive, awareness programs, pure environment, CIHTS has always been at the forefront under his guidance and zest. The continuous negotiation of its medical wing Sowa-Rigpa with the Ministry of *Ayush* has paid off with a very positive gesture, and path-breaking research and positive initiatives are taken under the worthy guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor amid this time of turbulence. There are some plans in the pipeline to be implemented in the coming weeks and months to take up some other projects to serve society incessantly.

