

## Chapter 10: Notes & References

The Tibetan phrase Stephen Batchelor still recalled was '*lama yin-na min-na, khong ré*'. The monastery we stopped at was Shri Dargye Ling Gompa, the old monk Ven. Khenpo Lobsang Jinpa and his nephew in Italy who asked us to make the donation was Gesh Gedun Tharchin.

The journey from Nyalam down to the Nepalese border through the untouched Himalayan forests is described by Vikram Seth who left Tibet on foot by this route in 1983 (*From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet*, Vikram Seth, Vintage, 1984).

When I visited Ajahn Sumedho in Thailand our wide ranging conversation included how teachers weren't perfect. We'd been discussing the use of psychological therapy by some

monastics and I'd made the point that some of the really impressive old monks one met are actually quite wacky, it's just that they have seen through that personality and don't believe it anymore. I suggested that the path was not one of becoming a whole human being, rather one of seeing that this personality is not me.

"Exactly. You don't become a saint with a halo over your head." Ajahn Sumedho replied. "Ah, but they will want to do that with you!" I told him. "That'll be my problem with this book. I'm not interested in writing hagiography; I want to write about you as a real human being, but some of the monks aren't going to want that. Bhante, they will make you into a saint!

"Yes," he laughed, "just like Luang Por Chah, put up in the sky, way up there. Now he can do no wrong! But Luang Por Chah wasn't perfect!" And then he told me a story of how Ajahn Chah had disappointed him early on and how "it led to a great release. I could see for the first time how miserable a mental state righteous indignation is. 'You should be setting the perfect example and you disillusioned me'. Until then I really suffered with the need to be perfect."

And Ajahn Sumedho not being perfect has been a great teaching for me, too. Yes, I needed to be inspired but then I needed to be shown clearly what I needed to do, and to realise it was possible for me to do it. Ajahn Sumedho did that by openly and honestly talking about what he was dealing with himself and how he was doing it. For that I have a lasting deep gratitude. It is why I've written this book.

Maps:

I used a combination of Google Earth and Google Maps to produce the background maps but for the place names and other local information shown I used two travel guides:

*Footprint Tibet Handbook*, Gyurme Dorje, 4th Edition, Footprint, Bath, UK. 2009

*The Mount Kailash Trek: A Trekker's and Visitor's Guide*, Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons. Cicerone, UK, 2007