

# KHACHODLING

NEWSLETTER 2008/EARLY 2009

www.khachodling.org

## Greetings from the Himalayas!



**Nomad eye care**  
*Training local people to educate and diagnose eye problems* **Page 7**



**Malaysia/Singapore**  
*Khandro-la's first teachings here began with candlelight pujas* **Page 4**

**Dakini's abode**  
*Khachodling nuns weave and learn self sufficiency projects* **Page 9**



**Zanskar Pilgrimage**  
*Khandro-la distributes holy items of her late husband, to his many monasteries in Zanskar* **Page 11**

**Mulbeck Hospital**  
*Serving people of all religions equally* **Page 6**



**News from Khandro-la**  
**Page 2**



**Stupa**  
*Padum community accepts offering to construct local style stupa* **Page 10**



*I AM HOME!*

October 2008

It is wonderful to be in Manali, my home where I grew up. After being away from home for so long I really understand how our being is seeped in the environment. I am totally enjoying the fresh air, the gigantic snow peaked mountains, the pine-wood forest and the flowing river. I am so happy to cook in my own kitchen and sleep in my own bed after travelling non-stop. Thank you Buddhas for giving me these few weeks

to rejuvenate before I begin travelling again.

Jane finally looks so settled in her cosy room; she almost thought the rest of her life would be spent driving in chaotic India, dealing with Indian bureaucrats and breathing the pollution of Delhi. However, in the midst of all this chaos, a real treasure of teachings emerged. The wisdom of my great master who always pointed out that every situation in life has to be taken as an opportunity to practice. Since this year we had no time to do solitary practice, I reminded Jane to see all intruding cars, cows on the road as a

blessing and to turn all frustration and disappointment into laughter, compassion and patience. It was hard in the beginning, but finally with plenty of opportunities, there was much success. We were able to accomplish our work and happily reach home.

Here in Manali, I am very happy to find my elder brother Sey Rinpoche and his family in good health. Imi-la, the life-long attendant of my late father and the pillar of our lineage, is 83 years old and radiates wisdom and joy of the dharma. Here, in my husband's home, Agu-la continues to love an

### *News from Khandro-la*

care for this beautiful Bhutanese home. Now we also have a new monk from Pangri who recently took his vows and will this winter begin his Ngondro retreat. Jampal, my middle brother, and his family are in Delhi. Without his unwavering support and encouragement, it would be impossible to achieve all that we have done so far. My little nephews and nieces have all sprouted tall and are all busy with their studies. We all miss our youngest brother Jigme, his wife Jasmine and little baby Yeshe who are now in Australia.

As I sit at home and reflect on this year's activities, I feel satisfied that baby Khachodling has become more firmly grounded here in India. The projects are all proceeding to grow and develop and the accounting procedures have been more firmly established. My brother Jampal is getting more actively involved in helping coordinate things and a beautiful team of people is emerging. Now we have our head office in Delhi to pursue this wonderful work.

Khachodling nuns in Zanskar have become stronger and more enthusiastic about their practice and their commitment to community has deepened. They are

now getting excited about the three-year retreat and the new self-sustainable projects like carpet weaving and making solar lamps.

This year I had time to do some pilgrimages and offer my late husband's relics and clothes as blessings to his ancient monasteries. He is said to be an emanation of Naropa. Every monastery welcomed us with much honour and I was able to spend a night in the Naropa cave which was awesome and a blessing. The people of Zanskar were delighted about the stupa that is being constructed in Padum in his honour. I was deeply moved to see the love and devotion of the local people for H.H the 9th Shabdrung.

The Khachodling medical projects are proceeding very well. The nomads of Tsomoriri received sun-glasses, reading glasses and had excellent consultations with the doctors who visited from Australia. At present two local people are being trained in basic eye-care.

At Mulbeck, Khachodling has acquired land for the hospital and now we can proceed with the plans to develop the site. Amchi and the nuns have renovated our small gumpa in Mulbeck and the traditional medi-

cal clinic continues to serve the local Kargil people.

The deepest thing that happened for me this year is that I was able to visit my father's hermitages in Ladakh and celebrated my birthday at Khespang with the yogis. Some of the older yogis are his direct students and are great practitioners. Also, recently, one of my father's western students visited us here in Manali from Canada after thirty years, with her handsome young son. She shared amazing stories of my precious parents and my beautiful childhood. She is still an amazing practitioner and speaks fluent Tibetan. Reconnecting with her was a profound experience. She was Miss Canada in her day and is still very beautiful. Meeting her made me realize how quickly time flies and everything outside fades away but the inner beauty of dharma lasts for ever.

In one week I am leaving for Delhi to establish our office which is being renovated. Soon we will leave for Maratika caves for a pilgrimage where I will reconnect with great masters I have not met for many years. My visit to the long-life caves of Guru Rinpoche is dedicated to H.H the Dalai Lama's

### *News from Khandro-la*

long life and peace and happiness in the Land of Snows. After Nepal I will teach in Malaysia and Singapore for a few weeks. In February I will be back in Australia for a longer period of time.

Life is beautiful and the blessings are deep!

#### January 2009, Australia

Three months have passed ..... I am writing from the airport in Perth. I have landed safely in Australia, but we have missed our flight to Sydney and have to wait four hours to catch the next flight. I am using this time to write more news since I left India.

#### Nepal in late December 2008

My aspirations to visit this powerful cave of Maratika have come to fruition. There were many auspicious obstacles with the cancellation of our flight and long hours waiting at the little airport. At one point I almost thought that this wish would have to wait for another time. It was through the power of prayers to Guru Rinpoche that my cousin Jigme-la was able to arrange a little helicopter to take us (Stuart, Steve, Jigme-la and myself) to the caves. Flying in the helicopter

to these majestic caves was awesome. It was spectacular to soar over the high Himalayan ranges and look down at the villages, the thick forest and flowing river and gaze at the beauty and abundance of nature. The helicopter landed next to the cave and I felt that this was a direct invitation from Guru Rinpoche himself - in these very caves he and his consort meditated in the 8th century and attained the siddha of Buddha Amitayus, the state of immortality. I could not believe that we were all here to spend three profound days in the depth and serenity of this blessed place. The little gompa welcomed us with open arms and we offered prayers, hoisted prayer-flags and offered incense for peace and happiness on our planet. It was powerful to feel the ancient blessings of the caves, to meditate in them and witness the miraculous sites. There were little Hindu children and sadhus offering prayers and homage, as this place is worshipped by Hindus as an abode of Shiva.

Once back in Kathmandhu it was beautiful to see all the stupas which were blessed by Togden Shakya Shri himself. Just before his passing in 1919 he sent his three sons to renovate the three major stupas in

Kathmandhu - Boudha, Swayambu and Namu Buddha. We offered fire-puja, did prostrations and prayed for each of you. We also made offerings of light.

It was profound to visit my Master Dilgo Khyentse's monastery and pay respect to His Eminence Rabjam Rinpoche, who is now his lineage holder as well as his grand-son. So many beautiful memories came back of the days when I was in the presence of this unfathomable being! We also paid respect to His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa, the head of the Drukpas, His Eminence Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche and felt their blessings and support. We visited the Tsa Lung Master Kunsang Dorje and his beautiful consort. Finally I was able to visit Mathieu Riccard while he was in retreat. This man is a true inspiration! I also spent time with my old friend Ani Jinba. Christmas Day was very special as we were able to attend Rabjam Rinpoche's birthday at his residence. It was a beautiful bonfire party with Khenpo Pema Sherab and many wonderful people. This tour to Nepal was spiritually rejuvenating, emotionally heartwarming and a lot of fun!

### *News from Khandro-la*

Following the Nepal pilgrimage I travelled to Malaysia and Singapore for my first teaching visit to these countries. This was mid January 2009.

See Foon visited my home in Manali with our common friend Jane Parkin and she invited me to visit Ipoh, in Malaysia. It is an absolutely lush and clean place with great food. I offered some talks and performed a candlelight puja at the Drukpa centre. It was lovely to meet Jasmine and my little niece Yeshe, who were also visiting her home in Ipoh from Australia. In Penang my visit was organised by the very dedicated students of His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa. I offered candlelight puja in the beautiful centre. I have been wanting to support and serve His Holiness Gyalwang Drukpa's wishes for a long time. I always admire his unceasing work for our lineage. His dharma and humanitarian work is beyond our conceptual mind. In this visit at least I was able to make a small contribution to his unceasing activities. I pray that I will be able to serve his vision and work in the near future.

Moving on to Singapore, there were five wonderful women like five dakinis, who prepared a talk, a candlelight puja and a yoga day for my visit there. They were each new to Dharma and they

were keen to learn. They were all artists and decorated the candlelight mandala with much love and beauty. I am totally touched with their love and enthusiasm for the teachings. I plan to visit them again.

August 2009, New Zealand

Now I am in Nelson, after being in Australia for almost six months. I have a lot of news to share but I will wait. So much has happened and I have already made a pilgrimage to central Australia.

Please wait patiently for the next phase of the news. Till then I send you lots of fresh air and boundless compassion from our retreat on Avaloketeshvara (Buddha of Compassion) in Golden Bay, New Zealand.

Thank you for your support and all of you are always in my heart and prayers as I journey this path of dharma. I do feel the blessings of my masters and the protection of the lineage. Without their grace life is meaningless and whatever one does is shallow.

Isn't it?

- Khandro Thrinlay Chodon



### *Mulbeck Hospital*

***Mulbeck lies in the Kargil district - between Zaskar and Leh - an ideal location to serve this vast Himalayan area with few services.***

Khachodling's Amchi, Ngawang is a traditional doctor who has been serving in this community for thirty years. The main clinic is in the city of Kargil and is renowned for its services. People come from as far away as Srinigar (6 hrs drive) for treatment. The area has a majority of Muslim clients and people deeply respect the Buddhist Amchi and his team of three nuns as they work tirelessly to serve all members of the community equally with care and respect. Many locals, including muslim people, are so touched by his compassion that they have requested to study this ancient Buddhist art of healing.

The main clinic is in the busy city of Kargil, the capital of Zaskar. There is a smaller clinic, with the herb preparation area (includes grinding high Himalayan herbs with mortar and pestle) as well as the home and gompa of the medical service, in Mulbeck, about 25 kms away, towards Leh. Amchi-la offered this clinic to Khandro-la as Khachodling gompa to on one of her visits. It overlooks the famous Chamba statue - a naturally occurring rock carving of the standing Buddha of compassion ( see picture). Last year (2007) Khandro-la's pilgrimage group had a wonderful stay here. We learnt much about recognising herbs and processing them for medicine. This year, the three smaller upstairs rooms were joined to make a large

shrine room in which Khandro-la happily performed pujas during her stay as she travelled to and from Zaskar.

### **Pilloung Community**

Khandro-la looked at the land for the hospital last year, and this year it was offered to the Khachodling Trust amidst much celebration with the local community. The villagers put on a two-day party for Khandro and her Khachodling team. Everyone celebrated this auspicious event with dancing, and an abundance of flowers, food and local beer called Chang.



Next day the team went for a walk around the village and had a picnic at the site where a holy rock is imprinted with a little dakini's footprints.

The land of the hospital site has a magnificent backdrop of large basalt-like rocks. They overlook the entire site like protectors.



Khandro-la's vision is that the traditional medical hospital, the allopathic hospital and a small gompa

will sit below these huge rocks. The size of this entire project will depend on the support that comes, but there is room to expand in the future and include herb cultivation, a guest house, a learning institute, a library and even a coffee shop/restaurant...who knows? With the blessings of the masters and good intention everything is possible!

The blessings for this project are manifesting already. Khandro-la was having dinner at a local home where two Germans were staying and they offered to calculate and draw up plans for the water needs of the future site. So, over the next weeks of their stay they carefully measured the supply of water from a nearby source and calculated the size and location of the pipes needed in the future. In these seemingly small ways Khandro-la's vast vision is manifesting. People from all over the globe are working together to bring alive something that is benefitting themselves and others.

Mulbeck Hospital is to be the base headquarters of "Khachodling Medical Services for the Himalayas". The eye restoration project as well as an extended range of other outreach medical projects (like dental services, education) can all be managed from this centre. Detailed site planning will commence as soon as the topographical plans have been completed. Skills and funds for this project are now needed. Should you be able to assist please write to [info@khachodling.org](mailto:info@khachodling.org)



*Lake Tsomoriri lies at 15,000 feet above sea level - snow, wind and smoke adversely affect the eyes of nomadic people. Training locals in eye care education begins.*



From the West - eye surgeons, Dr Geoff Cohn and Dr Richard Rawlins, optometrist Dean Psarakis and Jane Miknius, (Khandro-la's assistant), all from Australia. From the East - Khandro-la and the trainees - Dorje, a young Lahouli man, Lama Tsewang, a monk from Khandro-la's family gomba, who began training last year, Amchi (traditional healer) Ngawang from Khachodling Mulbek, as well as an ani amchi also from Khachodling Mulbeck. In Lake Tsomoriri a monk and a layperson briefly joined the team of trainees and in Leh, Dechen, an enthusiastic and helpful young student, also assisted. Satish and Lobsang were our fearless drivers. There were other support people from the local monastery and government authorities.



This year Khandro-la and the western doctors developed relationships with doctors at the hospital in Leh. Dr Wangchuk, the eye surgeon, is now working closely with Khachodling to continue training local people in eye diagnosis and care. This year's programme identified that the major focus is now to train local people who can deliver "barefoot" type services - educate people in eye care (e.g. washing their eyes and wearing sunglasses), diagnose and treat minor infections as well as refer people to the annual clinics for eye operations. It is difficult to find trainees with the necessary commitment and skills for this work. Despite this, Khachodling has begun training a monk, a nun, and a lay person in 2008.



Two Tsomoriri locals are presently under the continued instruction of Dr Wangchuk in Leh. Both have been living and studying with him and will return to Tsomoriri in winter to apply their knowledge. Neither of them have done this type of work before, so they are finding it difficult. Nevertheless, they are trying their best. We found that our trainees didn't have basic maths skills. This is important when prescribing reading glasses, so there were a few innovative lessons when we tried to convey the concept of "minus" by giving and taking away biscuits and oranges!

The amchi nun from Mulbeck was very enthusiastic to learn, though a little hampered by her lack of English. She has however mastered the art of prescribing the glasses and identifying some infections and has

### *Eye Care for Nomads*

applied this to her work in the Mulbeck/Kargil area. She will receive more training from Dr Wangchuk when he goes to Mulbeck later this year. Dechen, the young girl from Leh is, now aspiring to a career in eye medicine and has returned to school. Tsewang improved his skills in his second year and he will be available for this project each year. He records intake history, knows how to prescribe glasses and generally helps coordinate the activities of the project.



This year Khandro-la wanted to show the beauty of this remote area and its culture to the western doctors and those from other areas of the Himalayas. We were fortunate to have Langpo Rinpoche, the head lama of the nomads, along with us for the trip. He is a young, energetic, modern Rinpoche, who chauffeured Khandro-la in his little maruti car over the high Himalayan

plateaux at such a high speed that no one could keep up. It was beautiful to see his love and respect for Khandro-la and the intimate bond between them. Their relationship goes beyond this lifetime, for in his last life Langpo Rinpoche was a close student of Apho Rinpoche (Khandro-la's father) and studied in her home when she was a little girl. The nomads were thrilled to have both their teachers visiting at the same time and stopped our medical team many times along the way to offer tsampa, tea, curd and rice under the shade of beautiful tents decorated with flowers. They had ridden long distances to setup the welcome tents and at every stop children and adults were dressed up in their finest traditional clothes and traditional turquoise head-dresses. Just before we got to the Lake itself, what a surprise! Khandro-la and Langpo Rinpoche were met by over a hundred horsemen who then raced alongside our jeeps to the town! It was truly a spectacular display! It was a touching moment of genuine devotion.

The nomadic people of this area are very devoted to Khandro-la and many came both to receive blessings and to have their eyes treated. Sometimes old people would sit for hours doing their mane prayers while the doctors and trainees set about their work.

Khandro-la told them to pray for the western people who had supported this eye camp and had trav-

elled such a distance to help them. It was wonderful to see how thankful they all were for this service.



One of the highlights was at the end of the eye camp. Langpo Rinpoche organised a picnic for us in a very beautiful spot. He arranged horses for us to ride to this magnificent picnic area surrounded by snow-capped peaks and vast pastureland under a vast, clear blue sky. There were streams running nearby and horses galloping as the monks prepared delicious food. We played cards and walked, danced and had a lot of fun.



## Carpet Weaving

*It was only last year that Khandro-la was talking among her nuns and discovered that Ani Tsering was skilled in carpet weaving. Now, one year later, the nunnery has a small carpet weaving room and the first trial rug is off the loom!*

The picture below is of Ani Tsering weaving the first trial carpets. The first carpet has been produced for Susy Benson in Sydney who was kind enough to donate the money for the wool last year. Susy has a strong interest in helping the nuns support themselves and was very happy to fund them to begin this weaving.



Ani Tsering purchased the colourful wools in India as they are not available in Zanskar. The loom was made earlier with a small fund donated by friends from Vajradhara Gompa in northern New South Wales in summer 2007.

## Solar Lamps

*Bringing Light to Zanskar*

For two weeks in October 2008, two nuns (Ani Sonam Ladrol, Ani Kunzang Drolma) and Konchok Chokyi (a 21-year-old western student of Khandro-la who has lived at the nunnery for two years) attended a solar lantern workshop in Leh, Ladakh. They learned how to build, market and sell solar lanterns. The solar lantern is a new design that has been developed over the past eight years by a small company in Canada. It will be very useful in remote areas as the materials to produce it can

be found locally. The lamps are portable and eco-friendly and make an excellent product for the nuns to assemble, sell and maintain in Zanskar. Fellow villagers—householders, farmers, nuns and monks, students, office and medical workers—are all benefiting from this very simple but reliable solar lantern. The lantern itself can be put anywhere and carried around almost like a flashlight. Long treks to and from the shepherd houses, watering fields at night, hosting large get-togethers during summer and winter, holding prayer sessions and meditation retreats—all these activities require a well-designed, lightweight solar lantern. And the fact that it is eco-friendly makes it an excellent example to remind Zanskaris of the importance of preserving their environment. Additionally, the nuns were taught how to start a small micro-credit scheme in Zanskar to help poorer individuals, especially women, buy a solar lantern over an extended period of time. In the future, the nuns will be able to offer workshops to other nuns from other villages on solar building, accounting and micro-credit schemes, so all nunneries can benefit from the Khachodling nuns' pilot project. May success prevail and wisdom and compassion increase!



### Memorial Stupa for Padum

*For centuries the people of Zanskar have been followers of the Shabdrung lineage. This lifetime His Holiness the 9th Shabdrung, Khandro-la's late husband, visited Zanskar many times and manifested many miracles. Through his blessings the river that used to flood changed course and avalanches were stopped. Many peoples' lives were saved by his power.*

Since the early demise of her late husband in 2003, Khandro-la has held a wish to construct a stupa, a sacred structure symbolizing the enlightened mind of the Buddha, in his honour for the dedicated people of Zanskar. This year that wish has finally come true.

In Padum, the capital of Zanskar, the people have already built a Phodrang (teaching palace) on a high hill in the town which is the site where His Holiness taught when he visited. Khandro-la met with the local people there on an afternoon in late July 2008. It was a great joy to see how much people welcomed her with deep honour - from young children and women to town elders. They flocked to her with flowers, kataks, milk, tsampa, dried cheese and freshly made butter. Tea and chang overflowed in every house that she visited.



At the meeting Khandro-la reminded the local people of their dharma values and offered them the funds to make the stupa. People were so moved and tears of joy flowed from their eyes. This winter villagers are collecting materials (mud and stone) and during summer they will contribute their labour to construct the stupa. (a Buddhist monument that symbolizes the enlightened mind) Relics from ancient masters, prayers mantras and sacred objects will fill the centre of the stupa and it will be consecrated with many prayers and ceremonies by a realised master. This stupa will bring peace, prosperity and harmony to the people of Zanskar and from this high Himalayan region to the world at large.

*Forever gratefully dedicated to the memory of my late husband, His Holiness the ninth Shabdrung, Ngawang jigme of Bhutan.  
May this stupa become an inexhaustible source of inspiration for this land, its people and all who see it.  
May all prosper, have peace and live in harmony as they cherish and preserve the precious dharma.  
Khandro Thrinlay Chodon 2009*



## Pilgrimage through Zanskar

*The ancient land of Zanskar is known for its pilgrimage sites, especially those of Naropa and Guru Padmasambhava. This time Khandro-la was able to spend longer than usual here and it was with great pleasure that she took the nuns along with her as she made holy pilgrimage to some very special ancient sites and monasteries.*

On this pilgrimage Khandro-la visited the old monasteries where the monks had requested that she bring His Holiness, her late husband's, clothes and effects. These are preserved by such monasteries as heirlooms so local followers can be blessed and inspired. It was beautiful to watch Khandro-la and her retinue of nuns being welcomed by the monks of monasteries through the region. It was also touching to see the care, respect and awe with which the monasteries received these pieces of holy attire. Khandro-la also gave pendants that had been made in Taiwan to everyone. The pendant had a picture of Rinpoche on either side, on one side from his first life and on the other from his ninth life. Monks rushed to receive this pendant, which brought them great joy and contentment as they felt the presence of their lost master in their unchanging devotion.

All along the way, villagers were waiting to welcome Khandro-la with outdoor picnics as she passed by. They offered tsampa, tea and yogurt while dressed in their best clothes - for the women this meant donning their heavily laden turquoise headdresses. Sometimes they waited for hours for the passing car. One particularly touching picnic was at a small bridge where a husband and wife very humbly had waited for 5 hours just to catch sight of



Khandro-la and offer her hot milk and some grilled cheese!

Dzungkul monastery is built at Naropa's cave. It was the place where Naropa attained the state of Chakrasamvara. There are two very special caves here and Khandro-la spent the night meditating in the main one. His Holiness Shabdrung is said to have been an emanation of Naropa. On the way to Dzungkul she invited three professional old singers of dohas (songs of enlightenment) to sing. In ancient times these songs were sung by villagers to preserve the ancestral values. Nowadays, however, people no longer value such profound songs, but rather enjoy the modern Bollywood songs of passion. These singers are now old and no-one is continuing their lineage and it is on the verge of extinction. They deeply appreciated Khandro-la's request for them to sing and her open encouragement for the locals to value this heritage. Khandro-la recorded their singing and is encouraging the nuns to learn these songs to keep the traditions alive.

Sani Gompa put on a huge cultural show this year and had Khandro-la officially open the large new prayer wheel. Khandro-la stayed at Bardon Gompa which is perched on a very large boulder. The next morning she was invited to cross an old style rope bridge that spanned the roaring river in the deep canyon below. We hoisted prayer flags as the bridge swayed! It was scary.

Every place Khandro-la went she offered pujas and hoisted prayer flags and did the incense-burning puja. People in return offered cheese, butter and tsampa so there was no room left in the car as we all squashed in on top of each other. The nuns chanted mantras throughout the journey and katas flew in the breeze out of the car window as we remembered, all of you in faraway lands who are connected to the Khachodling projects.



### Mid-January 2009



#### Penang

This was Khandro-la's first teaching visit in Malaysia. She taught at the Drukpa Centre and offered a Candlelight Puja. The temple was beautifully decorated and there were two visiting monks from His Holiness Drukchen's monastery. Everyone was very happy to have Khandro-la and they enjoyed her chanting and teachings. The founders and sponsors of His Holiness' centre welcomed Khandro-la with great respect and all the arrangements for her visit were made with the utmost care and dedication. She had to sit on a huge throne and, as you know, that is not her style. Nevertheless, she did a beautiful presentation.



#### Ipoh

This was Khandro-la's first stop in Malaysia. She stayed with See Foon, who organised for her to give a public talk which was attended by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. She met See Foon's friends and blessed her small gomba. She was also taken to visit the very special meditation caves in Ipoh where the 16th Karmapa and many other great masters had meditated. She offered a Candlelight Puja in His Holiness' Drukpa centre, which was attended by many local practitioners. Khandro-la was able to meet up with her sister-in-law and her baby niece, Yeshe, who were visiting her family from Australia.



#### Singapore

In this flourishing modern city it was beautiful to offer a public talk, a candlelight puja and a very special day of one hundred and eight sun salutations. Five wonderful dakinis organised Khandro-la's first teaching visit to Singapore. Together their artistic and organising talents ensured the most splendid candlelight mandala with exotic, colourful flowers. This has inspired all the candlelight pujas to come.