

Jamyang Ling - eine Schule im Himalaya

My stay in Reru

by **Annette Koppenborg**

All the discipline and reservations the children had so far exhibited just disappeared: 10 are lying on my back, 10 are sitting on my feet, another twenty are grabbing pencils and paper, calling out "please madame". They are painting in groups under small trees, sharing a box of pencils with each other. They hang on to every word I say; and all of them would prefer to have the broad felt-tip pens for closer inspection. Every picture gets a short comment: Appreciation. "Look madame." They are happy if I recognize anything: birds, butterflies, cars and the school Stupa.

What's missing here? The school seems peaceful, structured and well managed: teachers fully engaged with both heart and mind, even with the smallest; a monk filled with loving concern who, like a caring grandfather, emanates peace, composure and understanding: a highly observant and engaged headmaster. Everything is fine. Nevertheless, there is a shortage everywhere in the hostel. There are unsteady beds, damaged shelves and soiled blankets. The children urgently need new bed sheets, pillow cases, and a mother for the hostel to take care of the girls. Rajender, the headmaster, is everywhere, but he too urgently needs support.

I become thoughtful: How easy it is to spend three Euros at home, and how nice it would be for a child here to have a bed sheet. Or is having bed sheets a typical European concept? The majestic presence of the mountains, open plains and the constant rippling of fresh wa-

ter justify this place. Yes, many children can live here. The food is amazingly fresh and plentiful. The children look healthy. The cooks do not. Day after day, they stand at a large kerosene cooking stove – have only a small common room, which also serves as their bedroom. How can this be changed? Not as easy as buying bed sheets. This requires technical know-how and also certainly money. Oh yes, and there is one more modest wish, easy to fulfill, and this is for sun caps with school logo, one for each child. Sure, that's easy to do.

On the 15th of August, the weather changes abruptly. A sandstorm is brewing. The mountains are sprinkled with white powder, the window panes are rattling: well they

have survived the last twenty years, surely they will manage through today.....Doggi, the school dog hasn't shown up - too much hustle and bustle; he prefers the more peaceful everyday school life. Every morning at 7 am, he happily walks from Raru village to the school. A school to which a dog willingly goes to must

have a big heart. On the following day, the preparations for the school festival are in full swing; all the children are washing, cleaning, full of joyful anticipation, of excitement; washing all their clothes; hanging them up on the barbed wire fence.

The school celebration requires a whole week of work full of love and dedication. Finally, the parents arrive for this lovely long day: by foot, on horseback or by car.

20th August





smaller children want to be near us and sit next to us, sorting out the different colors of the yarn. The older boys help to give the right garment to the rightful owner. The older girls enjoy practising their sewing and coping with this task together with us. That's how it is here: nothing gets done alone, there is just too much work. But the solidarity and social competence, trust and inquisitiveness, are all very strong here. It doesn't matter if we are singing "Brother Jakob" or, as just now, we are working together.

We noticed that many of the children were wearing the same torn clothes everyday. They are ashamed and don't want me look at them. Sometimes, it's a pullover with a hole under the arm; sometimes, a pair of jeans that arrive with more or less just one leg, or an anorak with the lining hanging out. Beat and myself gather up our sewing kits and expertise, and arrange with Rajender for an afternoon. Every child can bring torn clothes along, watch us sewing, and if they wish also help.

We even find an untouched sewing box in the school, unfortunately only with sewing needles for an electric sewing machine. They seem totally out of place here, just like showers, shoe polish or supermarkets.

At the time we agreed upon, we are sitting in the garden waiting for our first sewing customer. A small boy appears and shows us a torn sleeve. Oh gosh, right to begin with, a major task. The jacket is of European out-door quality, no doubt a gift, and he is very proud of it. Now he has to take the jacket off and leave it with us. An older boy explains this to him. We start sewing, the word soon gets around, and not before long, the school garden is full of children and clothing.

Children are walking to the hostel, fetching pyjamas, shirts, blouses, just about everything. We are sitting in front of three piles of clothing and have no idea

how long we'll be here for. Older girls approach us highly interested, bringing along more needles and begin helping us. Now we can really start working. The small ones select the garn, cut appropriate lengths, and learn how to thread the needle. The older ones do the sewing. Sometimes, instead of darning the holes, they just pull them together and sew them, and surprise: the garments still fit.

But even more important is having fun together. The

Actually, I had only planned to do something in the school with the children together, and Beat just wanted to "have a look", but it turned out that something quite different happened.

After the school celebration, there was a week of vacation, and during this time the staff had to get down to planning the curriculum and the examinations. The children are very industrious: even early in the morning, they are already engrossed in their exercise books, learning by heart, as they walk across the plains. We

like this: "Increasing the muscle tonicity to improve the blood circulation of the brain". Generally, physical exercise is built into their daily routines: Whether this is walking up to the Stupa, playing during breaks, or exercising before morning prayers. This school does not require a "walkability project" (as it is called in Europe when cities and people are to be allocated special areas for walking).

Here, the children enjoy having contact and come over to join us. We play little games, sing, joke and talk. On "Independence Day", we are left alone in the hostel with 80 children and one teacher. In Germany, I would say: This won't work out well at all! Perhaps with 30 and the three of us, but not with 80 children.

It's different here. The older children take care of the smaller ones. They are all good at assessing themselves.

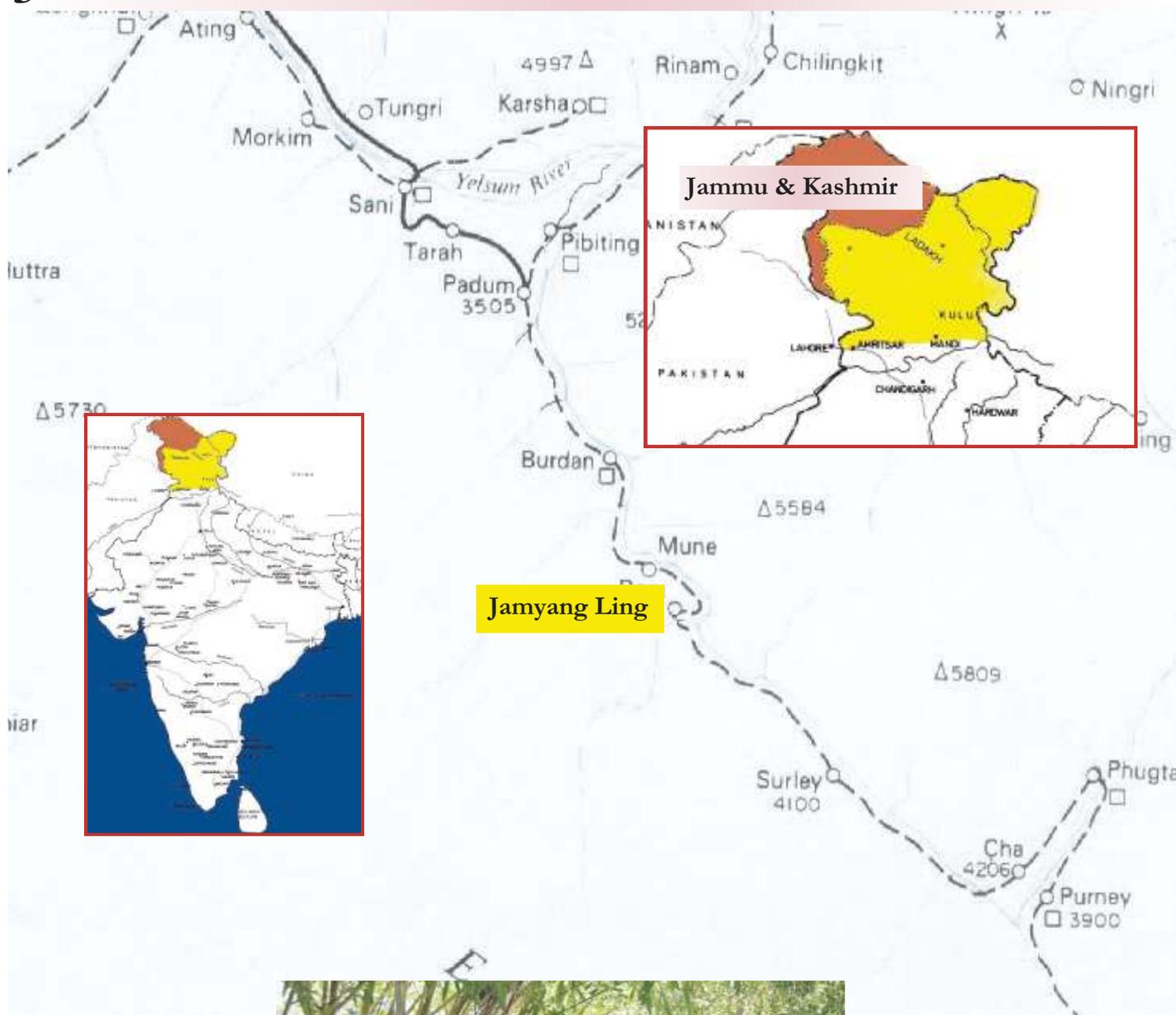
The peaceful surroundings, no traffic or danger, and egos that are not inflated or needy. They like having attention but do not beakon for it. They are enjoying the free day, are proud of the group that's representing them in town. And are curious about what the white "ladies" have to offer.

Arrived in Ladakh

Centuries of wisdom surround me, ground me
 Grace, Grace from the Gods
 Peace for the people
 arriving in Paradise
 a garden full of flowers and fragrances
 a place never to be left
 a place always to be in my heart
 to be one with the air and the light
 Breath
 cease talking
 Breath
 cease thinking
 Breath
 cease organizing
 Breath
 be present, be at one
 here, I can be myself
 Breath

by Annette Koppenborg

Jammu/ Kashmir und der Ort Raru



Around 10.00 am, we get support from the camp above the school. Then there is a workshop and singing. The afternoon is free. A small group of boys are standing gathered around the teachers' house. They want to watch television. No problem: even on Sundays there are about 25 pairs of shoes in front of the room; but this is an absolute exception for a free day. The children particularly enjoy the company of the male teachers. This is an event for men! We stay outside with the girls and talk about animals and washing. Experiencing plans constantly being changed, and just having to adapt to what is happening, can be an interesting and sometimes challenging experience for persons such as ourselves, who are used to working. On Mon-



Mrs. Beat Bremer & Mrs. Annette Koppeborg

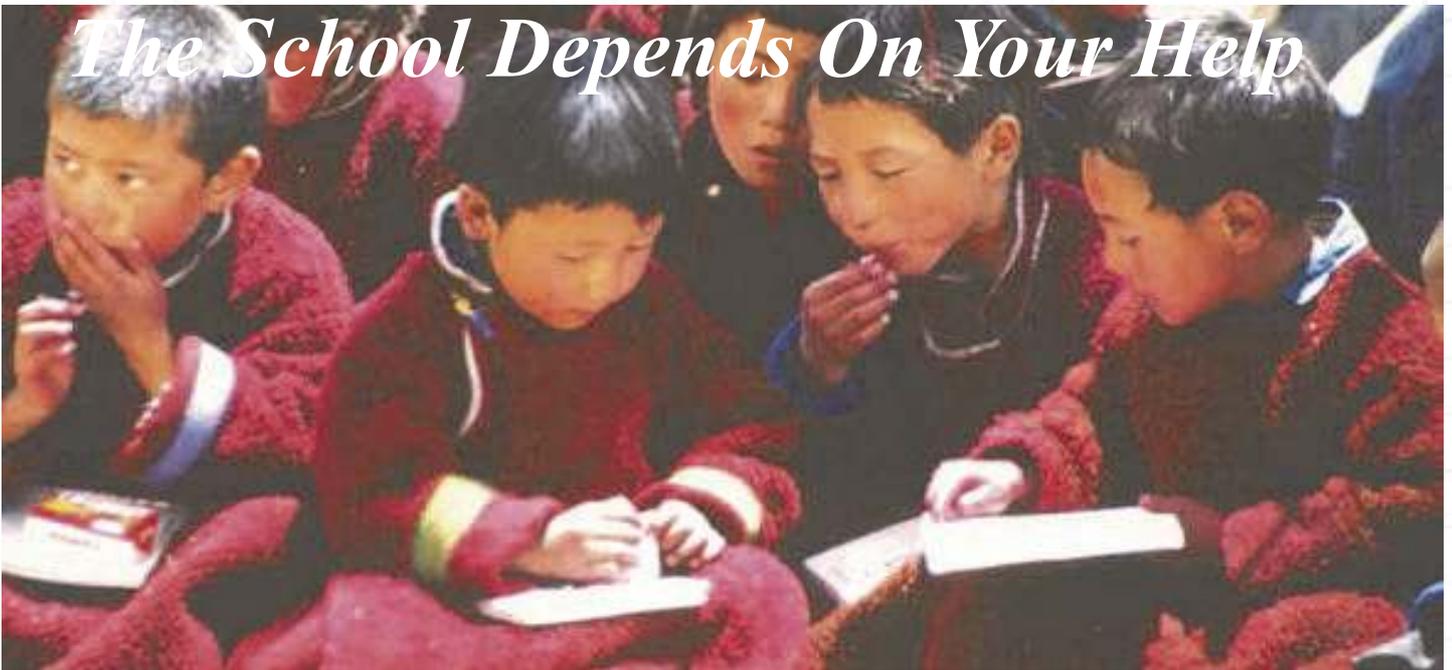
day, there was according to a tightly planned schedule supposed to be a picnic, a school trip. But on Monday morning everything was as usual. The answer: "First of all today, we have to buy groceries." No problem, everyone is around anyway. Around and about meant seeing sheep strolling over the planes during the daytime and in the evening, watching the mountains casting shadows, that shrink or expand across the planes; continually hearing the voices of children and "Julay, Julay"; and to read sentences like:

"Three things cannot be hidden:

The sun, the moon, and the truth".

We like this, especially since the sun and moon seem so close here that it feels like you can touch them; and there is an absolute climate of trust.

The School Depends On Your Help



Ways you can support our school project:

- As a member of Shambhala e.V. (annual subscription € 60,-)
- As sponsor for a Zanskar child, monthly € 20,-
- A contribution in the form of a single donation
- By ordering our set of postcards with 12 motives of the school and Zanskar

As an association, on a non-profit basis, Shambhala e.V. can issue a receipt for your donation, which is tax-deductible

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Bernd Balaschus visits the Jammu Hostel

In October 2014, after a longer break, I visited our hostel in Jammu. Shortly before, the worst rainfalls since decades had caused havoc in this part of Kashmir. Our hostel had also badly suffered during the weeks of the continual and heavy rainfalls. Water had penetrated ceilings and walls, and had destroyed lots of furnishings and furniture, or rendered them useless. The situation for the girls is particularly distressful. Often, they have to share beds in overcrowded dormitories, due to the very large class sizes of the latter three grades, which have increased over the past three years.

Autumn 2014 marks the 10th year of relocating grades 9 to 12 from Reru/Zaskar to Jammu. When we first arrived in Jammu in 2004, the actual existing constructional conditions resembled ruins. There were large gaps in the long buildings, walls had partly collapsed, and the sanitary installations were of no use whatsoever. There were no chairs, tables or beds: and there was only one water pipe that emerged from the ground and had running water, which enabled cooking and washing for the children.

Year after year, we bought additional uninhabitable living spaces from the original landowner. During the following years, all the rooms were renovated, and the gaps in the building were filled up with new living areas. In 2012, we were able to inaugurate the newly renovated building with its two floors. It is bright and friendly, with a large dining room and an assembly room. For the first time, the schoolchildren had a safe place for dining, and during the rainy season, a dry roof over their heads, giving them a place to do their homework.

Rinchen, who is responsible for the Hostel, does his work in an absolutely befitting and excellent way and is a great help to us. He has implemented an effective structure into the administration of the hostel: Getting up at 5.30 am in the morning, the morning prayers together; after this, breakfast: and within a

short time thereafter, the first school bus is waiting outside to take the first batch of the school children to the KNIT college nearby.

The hostel is situated in lushious, green fields outside of the city centre and is quiet: it is situated away from the city noise, which has a positive impact on the quality of living for the school children.



The Hostel ruins in 2004



organisation to the very limits of what is financially possible. The monthly expenses for the hostel and the current substantial construction costs have totally depleted our budget: we would therefore truly appreciate

The extensions and renovations have brought our organisation to the very limits of what is financially possible. The monthly expenses for the hostel and the current substantial construction costs have totally depleted our budget: we would therefore truly appreciate it if you would continue to generously support our school project, Jamyang Ling.

There is still much to be done for those who are responsible in Reru and Jammu. My most sincere thanks go to all of the helpers and staff, for all the work they

have so far done, and for the tireless efforts they put into this project.

Berd Balaschus, Director of Shambhala e.V.



The new Hostel in 2014

Karin Klinger on tour with Shambhala Group in Reru



Dear friends of our School-project Jamyang Ling !

After three years, I was finally there again, in Reru; this time with a Shambhala group. Certainly, a highlight

of the entire journey. Due to the years of being in continuous contact, it's possible to gain direct and first-hand insights into the school life and the village structure there: so wonderful to be immersed again in the friendly presence of these people.

This summer, Annette and Beat were also in Reru as trainees for Shambhala e.V. Highly committed and enthusiastic, they were working and living for awhile with the children. Their experiences and feedback are a valuable contribution to the project.

Eight enriching days full of deep and profound impressions, conversations, festivities, all direct experiences that could be truly felt and sensed. During this time, I noticed again how important and essential it is for the travellers to have direct contact with the people, teachers, school children and the villagers. For example, one evening we spent time in the common rooms together with the 140 school children, Mr. Rajendra, the highly committed and kind headmaster, the cooks and other helpers in the hostel. It was touching to see how disciplined and yet playful the children are, sitting on the ground in large groups, doing their homework together, praying, singing and eating. Here and there, a sleepy head falls down onto a schoolbag; a full school day is long.

Back in our camp, there were many conversations and discussions about all that had happened and about deep

experiences. Some of the things that came up were the excessively high expectations prevalent in Germany, and our rigid habitual patterns. Here in contrast, the flexibility and serenity of the people, an alertness and attentiveness, a pronounced ability to improvise and be creative with what little they have. Many in our group were spontaneously motivated to support this exceptional project or to help the children directly.

Due to my continuous contact with the school project, I can see what is changing, and what is working. I was thus positively astonished when I saw this delightful, protective stone wall, totally completed, standing right before me in front of the hostel. In the meantime, a proper little garden and the school woods have been

created, giving precious shade and humidity! Sometimes, classes can take place outside in the small woods.

After the huge school celebration, parents, school children and friends were sitting together: they were celebrating reunions or

were just relaxing in the green surroundings.

I have now been in Reru for the sixth time. I particularly value the fact that over the years my contact to the people has deepened, and that I can experience how the project and the children are developing. I see, dear Shambhala friends, how your help and support benefits everyone in a direct and meaningful way, and would like to express my sincere gratitude for everything. Do continue supporting the school. This superb and unique project, with its complexity of school and hostel in Reru and in Jammu, needs continual and reliable support.



Visiting our school in summer 2014



In august 2014 Karin Klinger along with a Shambhala trekking group visited Jamyang Ling in Reru/ Zanskar.

Thank You so much for Your support!

It is now 21 years since the school was founded in Reru. And our hostel in Jammu is celebrating its 10th anniversary. It is a profound pleasure to be able to witness how this marvellous project continues to grow and flourish. This summer too, a tour group set up tents at a distance above the school. And even though it was only for a few days of being together, the impressions were so substantial and lasting that it seemed as though they been there for a few months. I also had the privilege of experiencing this two years ago.

All the travel reports talk about the way of living together there, encounters and reunions: things that we are neglecting here in the West, or have forgotten.

This time, Annette and Beat were in Reru for Shambhala e.V. They were there somewhat longer and came back with significant perceptions and information. Such committed involvement certainly helps us - as in previous years - to ensure that the school project will continue to be successful. Thanks to the wonderful spirit of cooperation between the school children, par-



ents, teachers, staff and the monks of Mume Gompa, we have achieved a great deal. But there is still much more to be done for improvements and so much need for renewals: As for example, the school kitchen in Reru.

And unfortunately, because of the extreme rainfalls in the region around Jammu, renovation work will be required in the hostel. Last but not least, care has to be taken for the daily provisions of currently a 140 school children in Reru and more than 60 in Jammu. We kindly ask you to continue with your support in helping us to meet these demands.

At this point, a warm word of thanks to our sponsors and members for their continuous contributions. As a saying goes: "Many small people, in many small places, doing many small things, can change the world."

We are confident and sincerely hope that with your help, the Jamyang Ling School will continue to be a place full of possibilities for the children of Zanskar. Thank You!

With my warmest greetings, Bettina Schell

Trekking groups in the Himalayas

Zanskar Special

01. 08. - 29. 08. 2015 with

Bernd Balaschus

We have also planned a tour to Reru for 2015, where we will spend several days in Reru within the scope of the Zanskar Special. We will participate in the life of village locals and get to know the school project Jamyang Ling by meeting teachers and students. As in the previous year, we will invite monks of Mune and Phuktal Gompa, so that they will lead a ceremony to dissolve the Avalokiteshvara-Mandala from 2 years back.

We will be living in comfortable tents, camping somewhat above the village, near a small lake, and have time now and again for personal contacts and for ourselves. The mountain landscape of this fascinating part of the Indian Himalay, often called „Little Tibet“, awaits us after our stay in Reru, with an 8 - day trekking over the Shingo-La Pass (5.150 m) to Zanskar Sumo, and then to continue by bus to Manali. During this trek, we will also walk to the famous Phukthal rock monastery.

Shambhala Tours & Meditation has a newsletter which we be pleased to send to you, upon request.

Spiti, Tso Moriri and Ladakh

04. 07. - 25. 07. 2015 with Jan Dost

01. 08. - 22. 08. 2015 with Klemens Ludwig

In the old Kingdom of Spiti there is a rare opportunity to experience, directly and authentically, the local traditions with their Tibetan roots, and the monastic life of the Buddhist monks. The trek to Tso Moriri Lake and the journey on to Leh will be other highlight of this tour.

Both Spiti tours: 3.390,- Euro

Zanskar Special: 3.590,- Euro

Detailed touring information can be obtained at:

Shambhala tours & meditation

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The annual membership meeting 2015

on 14. November 2015 in

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