

Jamyang Ling - eine Schule im Himalaya

The school's 20th anniversary in Reru

by **Bernd Balaschus**

The Tibetan flag on the hood of our jeep fluttered in the airflow of our vehicle, as we turned into the last bend just before reaching the village Reru in Zanskar.

Tenzin Nyima Rinpoche, our young 14 year old guest of honour, who was accompanying us on our tour, observed with continual interest the landscape and the locals standing along the road. More and more people were leaving their houses to come and welcome the young Rinpoche. They were holding Katakas in their hands, white scarves given as a welcome greeting - some holding a bunch of fresh flowers as well - and bowing reverently to our young guest of honour, over and over again. For Tenzin Nyima it is the first trip to his father's home region. His father is an old friend of ours, Amchi Tsering Lotos, who accompanied us on our trekkings for many years as cook and as a Tibetan healer. After attending school in Manali for 9 years, his son, Nyima, left for the monastery Tashilunpo in South India, where he has since been receiving his education as a monk and a teacher.

Our jeep stops at the first teashop – a carpet is immediately rolled out for Rinpoche, where he takes his place: butter tea and biscuits are served, and the people crowd around him to receive his blessings. For our small travelling group, it's a special experience being able to witness lived Buddhist traditions at such close proximity. It

was very touching when an old bent woman, walking with the help of a stick, bowed down before the young Rinpoche.

After a short tea break, it's time to get back into the jeeps, since the actual reception given by the 182 school children of Jamyang Ling, the teachers and the co-workers is still ahead of us. After the first few hundred meters, we get a view of the school building situated on a slope of the valley. A long line of school children and adults welcome us with a hearty "Julay", kataks and flowers. It is a very special moment as Rinpoche and myself walk through the row and are literally



wrapped up in kataks. Flowers are thrust into our hands, and we look into the many faces which welcome us, some inquisitively, but always with smiles and much joy. Hands are shaken, and the greeting word of the Zanskaris, "Julay, Julay!" repeatedly rings out.

Then it is Mr. Rajinder, the

school head-master, who takes us by the arm and leads us up the stairway to the first floor of the teachers' building, into the „special guest room.“ "You must be very tired" he commented, "have a cup of tea!" And immediately a large pot of Chai, and another with butter tea, are carried in, and we lean back on the comfortable seats and cushions.



Rinpoche here at the school: on the one hand, as the incarnation of the old, wise soul of the late Lama Dorje Bulu, whom the Dalai Lama recognized and acknowledged within him, and on the other hand, as an ordinary fourteen year old boy with the totally normal needs of a young boy of his age. Tenzin Nyima is exhausted after the long trip, even more so from all the impressions and the first encounters in Zanskar. As we begin to talk about the welcoming of the local villagers, and of the old lady who knelt down before him in reverence, he bursted into tears. He had not been prepared for experiencing such a show of high regard during his secluded monastic life in Tashilunpo in South India. I hold him in my arms, talking to him in a quite voice, and for that moment I can only feel the small boy, who wants to be consoled.

Mr. Rajinder sits down with us and tells us about the events that occurred during the last school year: he particularly complements the presence of Marie and Jacqueline, our two trainees, and their work. Both have been in Reru for some months now and relate eagerly how they support the teachers to the best of their ability, present new ideas and insights to the teaching staff; and Mr. Rajinder tells us with a big smile on his face how popular they both are. Their authentic, unconventional way of conducting the classes is well received by the teachers, and particularly by the pupils.

No longer do they have to sit quietly, or say “Yes, Madam“, and repeat texts; but instead are encouraged to participate in lively interaction, genuine communication and are allowed to have fun – all of these define the way Marie and Jacqueline teach.

After the warm reception, we walk up to the small lake which is above the village, and settle into our camp. Tea and biscuits are served again, since our cook does not want to fall short of anything, and also wants to welcome us to our camp. We notice that some of the older pupils have already carried our luggage up: Time for arriving, unpacking, setting everything up for the next eight days. We enjoy the beautiful view of the surrounding mountains, the play of the clouds, which are reflected in the calm waters of the lake, and the inquisitive eyes of the young and older guests, who have just surrounded our tents. It is the peace and silence, the impressive landscape, which slowly enable us to forget the endless jolting in the jeep as it drove along earth roads full of potholes and bumps.

Thoughts on how our young Rinpoche could be feeling, urged me to take the path down past the village and further on to the school. Pasang and Amchi-la, his parents have already settled down, and Rinpoche too is resting in his room. As often, during the trip to Zanskar, it is just as fascinating to witness the two sides of the young

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A day later, the school festival will be taking place.

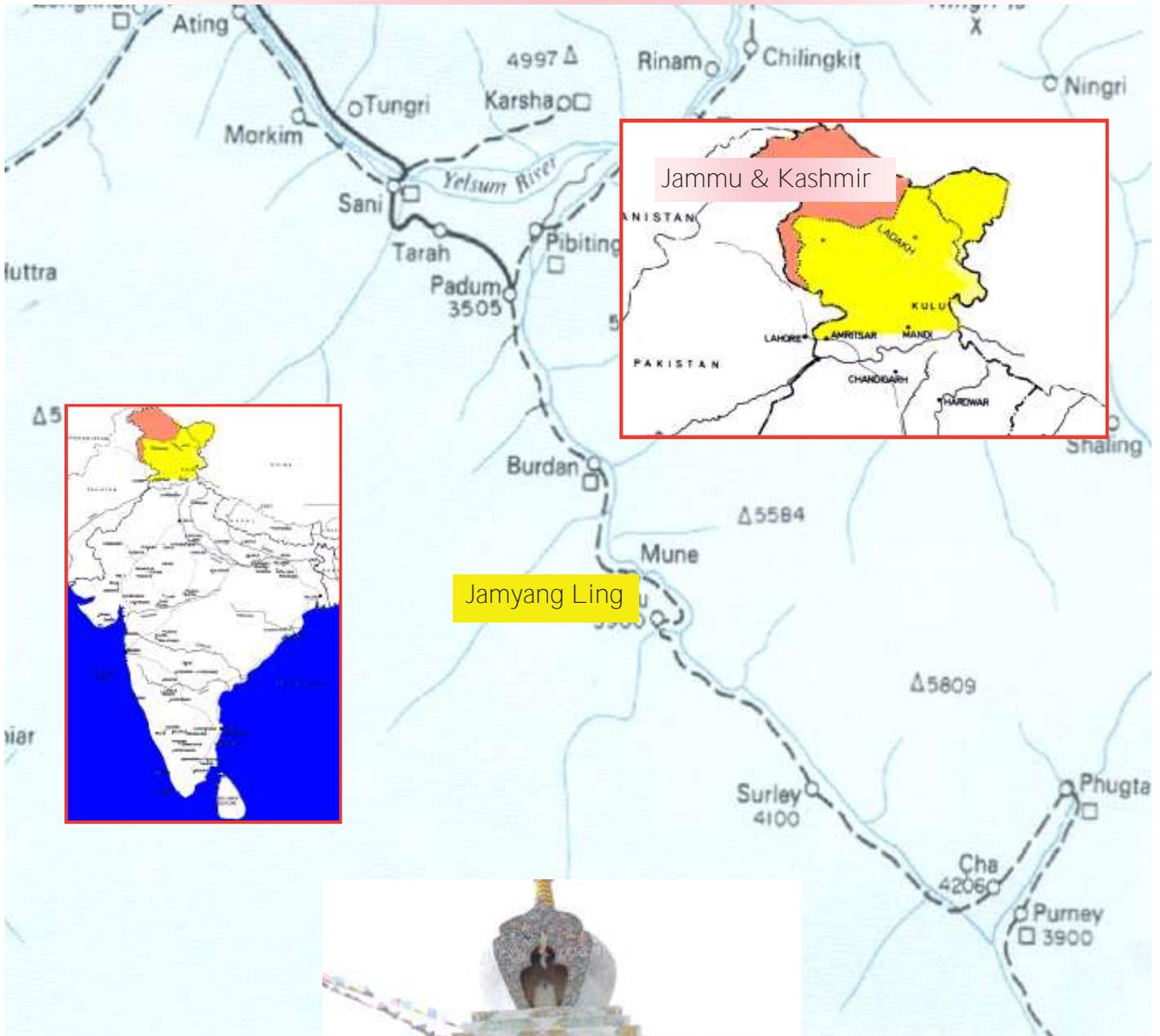


The pupils and the teachers are busy all day: shelter against the sun has to be installed, garlands attached, and the tracks staked out for the sport competitions. The twentieth anniversary of the Jamyang Ling School will be celebrated.

It is one of the largest festivals in the year, to which nearly all of the parents from the scattered villages in the Lungnak Valley will be coming, in order to meet and see their children after a long period of time. The teachers and Students are very busy late into the night preparing last minute details, and the feeling of joyous anticipation of the coming festival can be clearly felt all over.



Jammu/ Kashmir und der Ort Raru



The long awaited day finally arrives: Already early in the morning we can hear the beat of the large drums, to which the pupils are practicing for their parade in front of the place of honour. Although it is nine o'clock, the guests from Padum and Kargil have not yet all arrived. Our young Rinpoche, Tenzin Nyima, does a more than good job as "the special guest of honour", leading the long procession of students, teachers and guests who had already arrived, up to the stupa on the opposite hill.

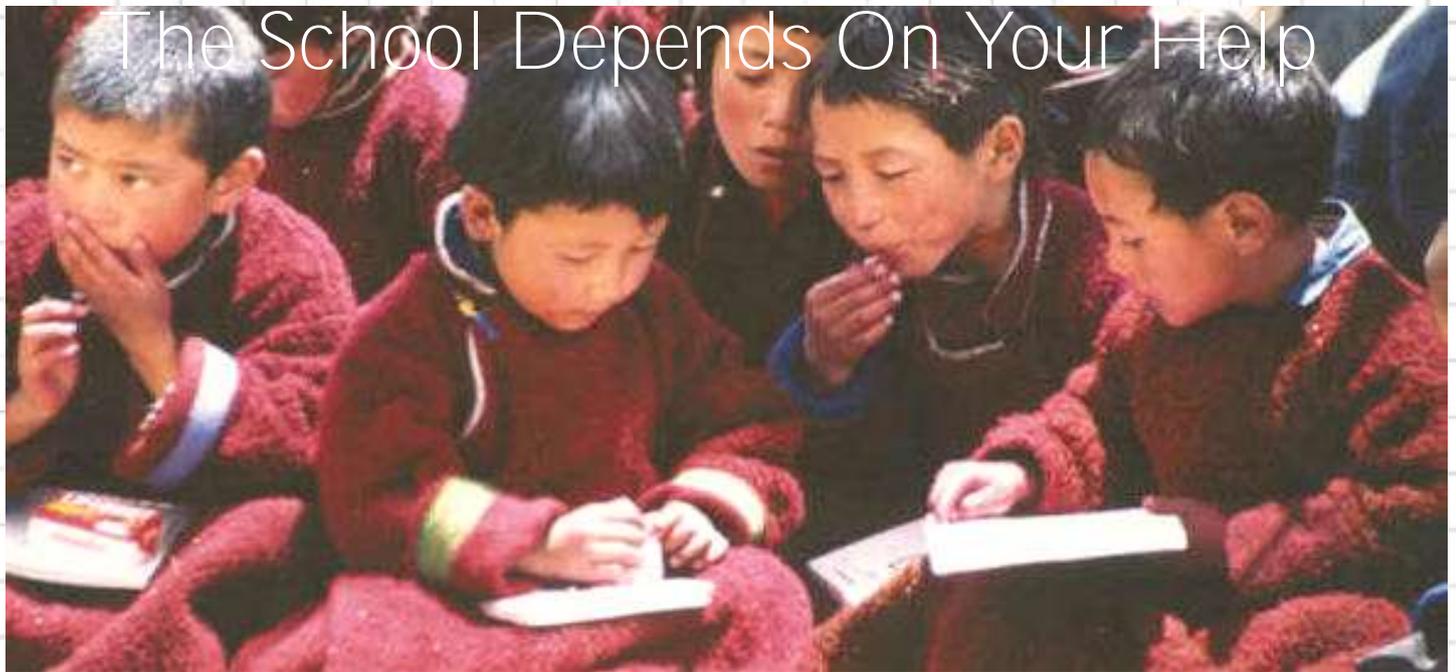
The school staff and volunteers from the village have



gathered up the old prayer flags from the lofty flag pole, and already attached the new ones, as Rinpoche and the monks from Mune Gompa start to sing the mantras and prayers, with the purpose of bringing another year of fortune and blessing to the school project.

The smoke from the ritual burning of juniper gets more dense as the ceremony comes to an end, and we all circle around the stupa clockwise for several times, singing

mantras. We then climb down the hill together with the pupils, and return to the school buildings.



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

Bank account for your contribution:

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Report by Bernd Balaschus continued:

Tenzin Lakhphel takes over - as one of the youngest teachers, he will be primarily responsible for directing the programme throughout the day. Memories of the first day return, when he and another seven fellow school girls and boys were enrolled in the very first class of the newly founded Jamyang school. At that time, the children wore wool coats as improvised school uniforms, woven by the parents. Teaching was carried out in the first school building, where they sat in a room on a bare floor consisting of clay soil: two teachers lived in a small room next to the classroom. The window openings had been masked with cardboard as a makeshift, since window glass was neither purchasable nor affordable.

During the following years, the number of pupils and of teachers increased continually. After another seven years, the hostel was built, and improvements to the school building were undertaken every year: solar installations were installed on the roofs. In addition, the ceilings in the hostels were newly concreted, since a wooden roof built the year before could no longer withstand the load weight, and threatened to collapse. Wooden flooring was installed in all of the class rooms, so that the girls and boys who always sat on the floor could overcome the very cold winter months in March and April, without endangering their health.

During the summer holidays, former pupils have continually been coming back to Reru from Jammu; they hold seminars and pass on knowledge of their experience as students to the younger pupils, motivating them to take advantage of the opportunities for trainings that Shambhala e.v. provide, and to

take responsibility for their own future.

This allows the young generation to fulfil their strong desire, and need, to return part of the gift they received (the opportunity of a free education and training that was made possible by Shambhala e.V.). Five young former pupils from Reru came back to the village after their teachers' training in Jammu, in order to

work as teachers at their old school. Last year, Lobsang Tashi, one of the first pupils, was elected chairman, the organizational manager of the school. His schoolmate, Tenzin Lakhphel is not only a teacher, but also takes care of the 112 pupils in the hostel, after the lessons at school; he supervises the correct behaviour of the children, teachers, cooks and helpers, and at the same time, takes care of all the needs and problems of the children.

The school festival is a total success: many parents were able to experience what their children have learnt during the past months, and how they have developed. At the end of the event, under roaring applause, prizes

will be awarded for the last school year.

The coming week is a holiday. Pupils and teachers will go home to their villages along the wild and beautiful Lungnak-Valley, or they will visit friends and relations.



The Avalokiteshvara Mandala



Dear friends of Jamyang Ling school and our hostel in Jammu!

During August of 2013, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of laying the foundation stone for our school. For this special occasion, monks of the Gyuto Tantric University came from Dharamsala to Reru to create an Avalokiteshvara Mandala in the main school building. The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is considered one of the patrons of Tibet and is highly respected as the embodiment of benevolence, love and compassion. For the local population, the teachers, the pupils, and last but not least, for us western visitors too, it is an outstanding and blessed experience to be able to watch the creation of this mandala – it certainly expresses the important points that we always considered when developing our Jamyang Ling school project: the involvement of locals as our partners, respect for, and appreciation of, their cultural and religious inheritances and customs.

Before the first grain of sand touches the chalk lines of the mandala, a Blessing-Puja ceremony takes place, together with the monks creating the mandala, with the amiable monks of the nearby Mune Gompa, and naturally with our “special guest“, the

young Tenzin Nyima Rinpoche from Tashilunpo.

Whenever we had time, we would go as a group, or individually, into the room that had been specially prepared for the monks, to watch their concentrated and meditative work: colours and sand are mixed in small bowls, then placed in a narrow tapered funnel, and another metal instrument is applied to extract the grains of sand.



It is this ratchet, monotonous noise that puts us into a sensuous, meditative state. Three monks work mostly on the mandala, hour for hour, whilst one monk takes a rest or

attends to other tasks concerning the mandala.

We have the special permission to preserve the Avalokiteshvara Mandala for one whole year, and will then destroy it during a special ceremony, before finally dispersing it into the Zanskar river.

May many people be touched by the blessing of the mandala, may it promote benevolence and compassion among the people.

Bernd Balaschus

Board of Directors - Shambhala Trust



Our Visit to Reru in summer 2013



In August 2013, monks of Dharamsala created an Avalokiteshvara Mandala in Reru -Tenzin Nyima Rinposche was a guest of honour.

Thank you so much for your support!

Our school project in Reru and the hostel in Jammu are both growing and prospering - and the twenty years of continual support are bearing fruit of a special kind: the summer before last, five former students returned as teachers to their home in Zanskar after completing their teachers' training in Jammu.

Overall, last year was in many ways challenging for our school project: more than 60 of the older pupils in Jammu have to be educated and be provided for; not only with lessons, food, daily transport, etc. We also have to address the challenges that the now young adults have to cope with. We are glad that Rinchen continues giving the pupils in the hostel advice and support in all of their concerns: they need help in taking the leap from basically archaic times to modern times: and this was achieved, even in the seventh year in Jammu.

This summer, both Mrs. Marie Gärtner and Mrs. Jacqueline Heinz have been in Reru for Shambhala e.V. and were able to make many changes locally on site, thanks to their personal commitment and enthusiasm; their experiences provide us with important feedback,



which helps us with our future work. We would like to take this opportunity for expressing our sincerest thanks for their cooperation and their admirable contribution to making the school project a success.

As always, continuity is what matters most of all. The school needs the presence of people, and not least the financial means, which make it possible to continue maintaining the substance at the same level that the school has achieved. And not only its structural state, but all of its dimensions: social, cultural, spiritual and ...that of human beings.

Therefore, at this point we would like to ask for your support, and thank all of you so much for the help that continually flows in from our donors and members, enabling the school to remain what it is for so many children from this impoverished and remote region in the Himalaya: A great opportunity for a personal future. We trust and hope that we can continue to rely on your support - just as the children in Reru and Jammu!

My warmest thanks, **Evelyn Stierle**

Trekking Tours in the Himalayas

Zanskar Special

02. 08. - 30. 08. 2014 with

Karin Klinger, Bernd Balaschus

We have also planned a tour to Reru for 2014, 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 can talk to us about the Avalokiteshvara-Mandala and witness its desolution. 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 Indien 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 per 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 und Ladakh

11. 07. - 01. 08. 2014 with Klemens Ludwig

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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 highlights 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 2014
on 15th november 2014 in
Nibelungenstr. 40, 72768 Reutlingen

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