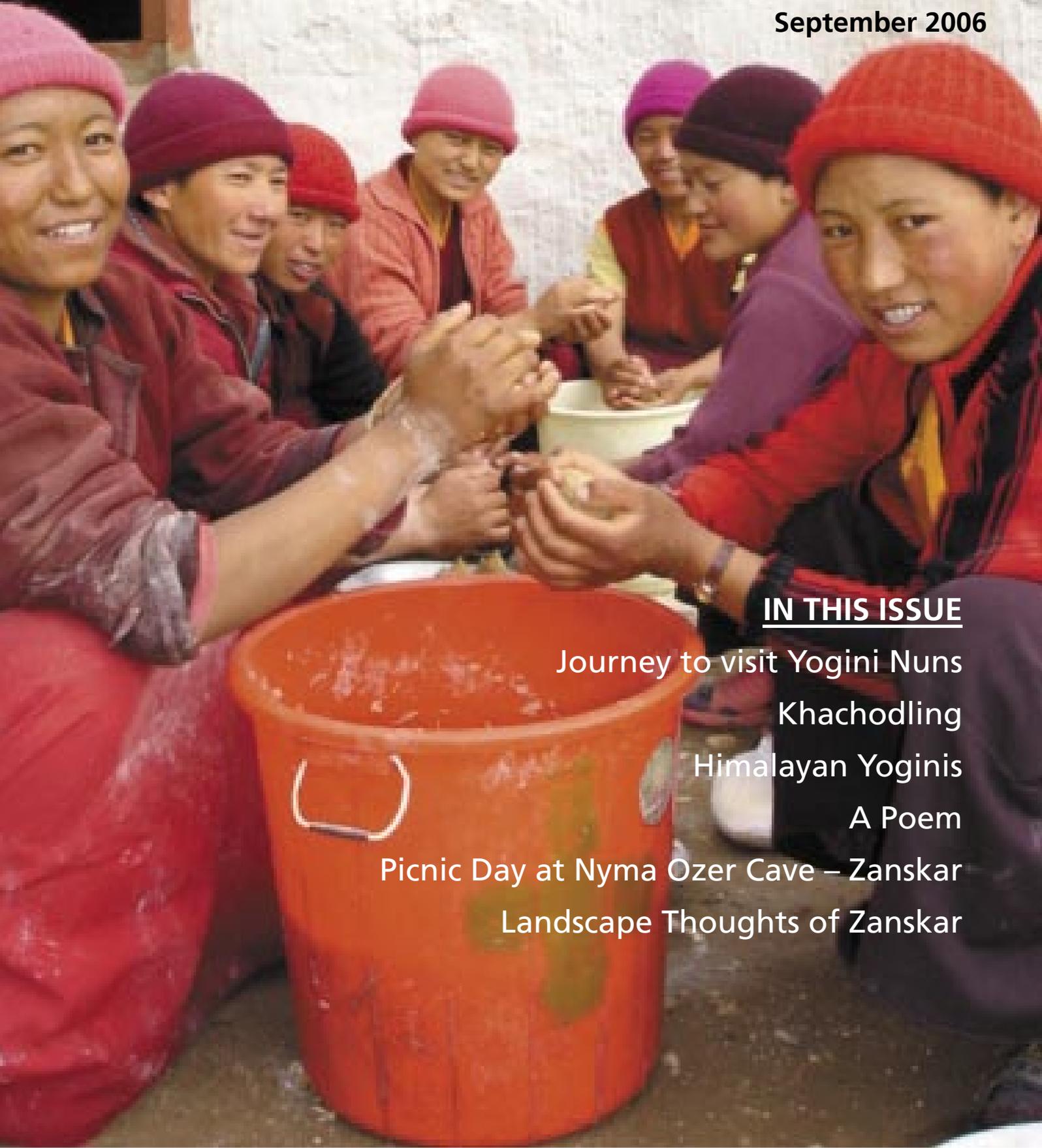


# YOGINIS OF THE HIMALAYAS

KHACHODLING LAND OF THE BLISSFUL DAKINIS

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September 2006



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## *News from Khandro Thrinlay Chodon's 2006 journey to visit her yogini nuns*

I would like to thank each and every one of you for support and patience in regard to this my main project of the Khachodling nunnery. It is a very remote area and I am wanting to develop the nunnery with a true spirit of practice. I trust that you have used any silence from me as a path for your practice of patience and devotion. The journey this year gives me much to happily report.

I had a very intimate time with the nuns and they were so happy I had come to spend this time with them in



this remote area when I have been so busy. I was able to offer them teachings and take them on pilgrimage. I feel so happy to know more fully their inner life and mind and am very happy to let you know that these nuns are really true practitioners, very pure, diligent and devoted. All distinguishing characteristics of the yogic lineage of my father and great grandfather Shakya Sri.

We began our journey at the end of July when the road opened into the Himalayas. We drove from Manali to Leh, Ladakh on our way to the even more remote area of Zanskar. Jampal, my brother, drove us through Lahoul to Leh. I was accompanied by Izzy,

an 18 year old Australian girl who has been serving me for the past 6 months, and another Australian friend Lena, who helped so much also with our activities on this trip. Jigme, my other younger brother, joined us from Leh, where we also picked up Lama Rigdzin one of the yogi students of my father who is now one of the main teachers of the nuns. Together we had so much joy to be reunited and travel by 4 wheel drive taxi into the magical land of Zanskar. Open sky, green pastures, yaks grazing, mountains of all shapes staring into the expanse of the blue sky and every place we were welcomed with so much respect handed down through generations of devotion to the profound lineage. The road was blocked on the way and so our arrival was delayed until late in the night and still the nuns were waiting with smiling faces. We had no way to let them know how late we would be but that didn't trouble them one bit! Still so patient and ever eager to serve.

Each evening Lama Rigdzin gave teaching with question and answer sessions for the nuns and lay people. Each morning we discussed progress and needs with the Khachodling nuns and according to their need I attended to the business. We did the official work regarding the land and we had everything measured to clarify the boundary, we met with local officials who are helping with construction. Every moment was filled.

As I had more time this trip the villagers were more involved and invited me continually to their homes, making offerings of butter and cheese and dried apricots.

The more I researched about the site of the nunnery the more and more I felt it is exactly the right place. A rainbow appeared as we were



measuring the land. Then as I was walking around the site I saw a high jagged mountain that overlooks the nearby gorge and Sani Valley. It felt



to me like a majestic protector of our activities there. Local people say that centuries before there was a nunnery on the same land.

One of the most renowned Zanskar masters Drubchen Ngawang Tsering attained nirvana at the monastery next to our site. In the absence of their own gathering space our nuns are utilizing this monastery for practice and teaching. The whole area felt so beautiful and blissful, it is the land of Naropa, Guru Rinpoche and Nyma Ozer. I would like one day to retire here and do my practice.

*Khandro-la  
Manali September 15, 2006*



# Khachodling

This is Khandro-la's own nunnery situated at Sani, Zanskar. Zanskar is more remote than Ladakh. It is comprised of several small mountain-locked valleys.

Khandro-la's 26 nuns plus two dharma teachers, an English teacher and one amchi make up the nunnery community. Nuns range from 9 to 43 years old. These nuns have been practicing together in the individual rooms they have built themselves. They have been waiting for Khandro-la's support for their teachings and guidance. In 2005 Khandro-la appointed Lama Rigdzin Wangdu who has been very diligently training them. On this visit Khandro-la was amazed and proud of their devotion and their skill in the practices. They have completed several ngondros and learnt Chod in this past year. During the heavy winter they are housebound and can't even get to Sani village only 1 km away – so they do retreat! Khandro-la has bought them a sewing machine for making robes and is beginning to purchase ritual instruments as they only have dharmarus.

This coming year they are going to learn the Drukpa Kargyud rituals and continue their meditation practice. Khandro-la is very proud and happy that the nuns themselves have chosen to level the ground for the gompa. (they chose to first build the gompa before their personal rooms)

## Khachodling Nunnery Construction Report

The land is on a 30 degree slope and the nuns are now levelling it with hand tools. They have chosen to do this as it helps purify their karma. Khandro-la has found a good local

engineer/architect to design and help with construction. Local style, knowledge and materials are to be used and soon we shall have a design. Khandro-la would like input from the West on this and in particular eco-friendly suggestions.



Immediately there is a need to build a fence around the boundary to keep out the animals and locate the site. Trees will be transported from Leh and put directly in the ground as 2m high cuttings around the boundary just before spring. These trees will be used for beautification and later some for construction. Much finance is needed for this aspect of the project now.

The overall plan is to build the main temple (gompa), a retreat centre for 7, living quarters, and a guest house.

## Finances

At this stage the only financial aid we have had is your support and the offerings made to Khandro-la for her first teaching tour and pilgrimages, which she has very kindly passed on directly to the nunnery. It should be mentioned that the local community are also very supportive and very devoted to her family lineage.

Khandro-la's personal contribution has enabled the commencement of the design and infrastructure. Some funds have also been given to buy the

trees. This year we especially need offerings for this aspect of the project in addition for the actual construction of the building. This will be the major fundraising projects for the coming year/s

During Khandro-la's future teaching programme there will be more specific efforts to raise funds for construction.

On this trip we were able to provide the nuns with dharma texts and schoolbooks as well as much needed pens and other small things they were lacking. These nuns are so poor that they do not even have knives – they cut vegetables with a sharp metal cup! During Khandro-la's visit they were borrowing everything needed. In Leh Khandro-la bought them some large cooking pots and tables and more recently in Menali she has purchased curtains, kitchen utensils and small accessories for them. The nuns are being well fed and they now able to make nuns robes. Lena offered a sewing machine.

## Nuns Sponsorship Offering

The sponsorship that people like yourselves offer goes into a general fund at the nunnery (not to each individual) and is used for the personal care of the nuns. It covers things like food, robes, books, toiletries, medicines and educational expenses. Any item of offering is for the use of all according to the need at the time. It is particularly important within a community to keep equality and the nuns recognise and have asked for this. They have appointed one nun to be in charge of accounts and all is being accounted for. Khachodling is now a registered Trust in India and will be officially audited every year.



# Khachodling: Offering Blessings Contact Nuns / Teachers

## Offering Blessings

**Imi-la** (Apo Rinpoche's most devoted life attendant and now Khandro-la's closest advisor) said "Whatever support you are giving to this project is the biggest investment you can make in your life. This is the perfect place, the perfect time and the perfect lineage and the work is very important.



It has the blessings of many great masters.

When you make offering don't have any doubts. If you have any regret after giving then the offering that has been made becomes wasted. When you offer or do something for the dhrama don't have any expectation for if even a little doubt comes then whatever merit you have made you will have spoiled it. Offer totally from the heart and the blessings will also overflow."

Sponsorship is a recipicol act. Blessings from the practice of giving and the actual prayers of thanks from the nuns themselves helps the sponsor. Ani Gayang ( a Khachodling teacher) has recently said "Every time a student practices everyone who is involved in the act are also practising along with them so the merit is shared equally."

Please feel free to ask for special prayers and pujas at special times. Just email Khandro-la at [khachodling@yahoo.com](mailto:khachodling@yahoo.com). She and the nuns are always there for you.

## Contact with the Nuns

Communicating with the Nunnery is actually quite difficult. Each winter the area is incommunicado because of snowfall and the summer months



we think the mail may get through though we haven't as yet tested this thoroughly.

If you would like to write to the nun you sponsor now (and please include photos if possible) please write and send your letter before October 1st to:

**Name of Nun**  
**Khachodling Nunnery**  
**Village Sani**  
**PO Padum, Distt. Kargil**  
**Jammu-Kashmir**  
**India 01983**

If you miss this deadline for mail getting through this year the next time to write is by the 1st May 2007.

It is also true that the nuns do not



write English so people who go to visit need to write for them. This is likely to be difficult so please be very patient!

## Teachers of Khachodling Nuns

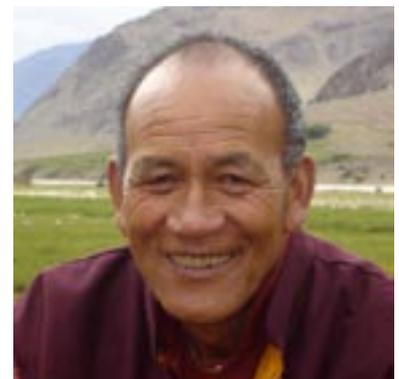
Khandro-la has provided excellent yogi practitioners to teach the nuns throughout the last year and with their help the nuns have made excellent progress.

**Lama Wangdue** is the Head Lama who guides the nuns on a daily basis.



He was born into a poor Zanskari family and happily became a monk at an early age. When he was 21 years old he met Apo Rinpoche and received the Ngondro and later completed the Six Yogas of Naropa and continued studying under Gegen Khyentse. He belongs to Bardon Gompa, which is under Stagna Rinpoche and Shabdrung Rinpoche. He is very proud to be supporting the work of Khandro-la, daughter of his guru. He has found the nuns to be very diligent and excellent practitioners and so he really enjoys teaching them.

**Lama Rigdzin** is one of the heart students of Apo Rinpoche and is providing deep dharma education and





## Other Himalayan Yoginis

advice. Born in Ladakh he became a monk at 10 years of age. He met Apo Rinpoche when he was 26. He received Mahamudra and Ngondro from him and then later completed the Six Yogas of Naropa. He resided at Apo Rinpoche's Manali home for 10 years and then returned to Ladakh and did 3 year retreat. Lama Rigdzin believes it his good karma to have met and studied with this great family. He believes spiritual qualities are evident in Khandro-la and is thankful to have the opportunity to support the continuation of the lineage through Khandro-la.

**Ani Gayang** was born in Tibet and has lived and studied in the monastery of Shaya Sri. She is one of the few nuns who has completed the Six Yogas of Naropa in Tibet. She has also completed many retreats and has prostrated from her home in Kham to Mt Kailash which took one year. She is now living in Tso Pema, India together with her sister and is so happy to be able to find her own lineage home with Khandro-la and her Khachodling projects. She has been waiting and practising for this to manifest. Khandro-la has asked her to teach the nuns in the higher yogi practices and she is very happy to do so as she can.

**Rigdzin** is a local Sani young man who has studied English in a very good Tibetan school. He is the son a local Headman of Sani village named Choedar. He is teaching the nuns English, mathematics and basic administration skills.

A female Amchi (a traditional healer) from the local community will be teaching the nuns who are interested in traditional medicinal skills like herbmaking and collecting, diagnosing and administering medicine.

**O**n this journey Khandro-la felt how important it was to support the long tern practitioners of Shakya Sri's yogi lineage who are getting older. They are deep in their practice but physically deteriorating. There is no support from the monasteries and they are old established students of Gegen Khyentse (her Master), Apo Rinpoche (her father) and Kunga Rinpoche (direct student of Shakya Sri). So Khandro-la wants to offer what she can to assist these practitioners pursue their dharma goals. This is in addition to the guidance and support of her own nuns at Khachodling in Zanskar.

### Mulbek

Is the location of the famous 8m high standing Maitraya statue cut into the rockface. It is situated 10 hours north-west of Leh, Ladakh.



Two nuns and one amchi (traditional medicine doctor) living in the local monastery are being trained by Lama Rigdzin in the yogic lineage



of Khandro-la's great grandfather. They are long time students of Apo Rinpoche, Gegen Khyentse and Sen-

gdruk Rinpoche. Every winter they do long retreat and in the summer they help locals with health problems. These practitioners are vital for continuing the yogic practices and for the medical assistance they give to the lay community. They are surviving in very poor conditions. Their main concern is their practice. Khandro-la is wishing to be able to support the nuns who in turn support the amchi and the local community. If you feel moved to sponsor please contact Khandro-la via [khachodling@yahoo.com](mailto:khachodling@yahoo.com)

### Lahoul

The valley of Lahoul is the birthplace of Khandro-la. Situated left of the Rohtang pass, 8 hours from Manali. Kardang Gompa was the home of Apo Rinpoche for 5 years after coming from Tibet.

There are many nuns in this gompa and the small surrounding gompas that are in need of support. Most are very old - in their 70's and 80's. Most of their life they have been serving the monks and practicing. Apo Rinpoche always said that these nuns are the backbone and heart of the monastery and they are the true and best practitioners. Many have died already and everyone has witnessed auspicious signs showing the strength of their practice. This shows that there is no difference between the monks and the nuns in spiritual practice. Khandro-la has been cared for since a baby by these nuns. She was carried on their backs and now these elderly nuns need her care. One is completely blind in one eye and some need hearing aids.

Some of the younger nuns are about to enter 3 year retreat.

Again if one feels moved to support please contact Khandro-la via : [khachodling@yahoo.com](mailto:khachodling@yahoo.com)



# A Poem and Picnic Day at Nyima Ozer Cave – Zanskar

The journey to Zanskar prepares the mind to expect miracles.  
The arrival at Sani open the doors of the heart with nothing to grasp onto; vastness becomes the way of life.



The stream flies down the slope near Khachodling.  
Cows wander.  
On the hill young nuns seek liberation.  
Flying overhead eagles  
Bring omens of success.  
Naropa and Nyima Ozer  
Visited here reminding  
Us that our time is short.

Dancing is the way of Naropa  
Inner discipline is developed  
Through personal aspiration.

Flowing with intent of liberation  
We bring happiness to others.

Our Guru is here  
there is no need for tears  
Our Guru is here  
showing the face of liberation  
Our Guru is here  
unfathomable in action  
Our Guru is here  
guiding us in our dharma  
Our Guru is here always in our heart

How fortunate we all are to have met  
through the grace of our Guru.  
So all I can say is  
“Sankyou”  
“Sankyou”  
“Sankyou\*”

(\*in Zanskar “thank you” is pronounced: “Sankyou”)  
and offer a prayer of liberation  
Hoping no obstacles arise on the path

And auspicious circumstances ripen your merit.  
Offering all the merit from the generosity, abundance of food, dancing, singing and kindness you have given to me, to all beings. May they all come to know your hearts as I have.

Lena

**O**n our trip to Zanskar we visited the Guru Nyima Ozer cave above the village of Sani. All the nuns came with us and we had to walk for an hour up a steep



rocky path to get there. I was amazed at the strength and dedication of the nuns. One of the nuns carried a pressure cooker and heavy container of kerosene for cooking on her back in a basket. Also some of the other nuns carried backpacks full of vegetables, a packet of rice and things required to make us tea. The nuns with these things walked up to the caves first so they could prepare tea for everyone when they arrived after the long arduous walk. Later they cooked us

not one but two delicious meals. It was amazing to see what could come out of a tiny kitchen (that was full of smoke) in a cave in the wonderful land of Zanskar.

Whilst up at the cave the nuns did a puja with Khandro-la and their teachers Lama Rigzin, Lama Wangdu and it felt so special to hear the chanting and the singing of these wonderful nuns. Their devotion to Khandro-la was ever present, in all that they did for her. We stayed up at the cave for the whole day and it was so beautiful to be a part of something that rarely comes along.

When we were leaving a group of about eight nuns slid down the steep rocky side of the mountain and at first I was afraid for them however I soon realised that they were okay and we were all praising their courage and bravery. This picnic day was for me so special, I feel so fortunate to have had this opportunity to witness true devotion form these happy, strong



and loving nuns. My entire time with Khandro-la these last six months has been a great learning for me and I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

Izzy (Isabelle)

18 year old girl who attended Khandro-la for 6 months



# Landscape Thoughts of Zanskar

Travelling through the Himalayan Range from Manali to the remote village of Sani to visit our nuns, it becomes impossible

drive vehicles can traverse these roads.

We see yaks, horses, marmots and

behold.

These mountains aren't to be taken lightly. We see a huge pile of boulders



- unusually angular, and we hear that a whole village is buried underneath! The mountain had belched! A new village has popped up on the other side and for now looks safe.

to recall other landscapes. The unending mountains, the variety of pearl colours, the intangible, powdery appearance of these colossal monuments opens subtle pathways in the body and art hangs in a new gallery of the mind.

nomads. Villages get fewer until we are dwarfed by mountains that plummet into ravines with wild waters that writhe and twist their way over and around boulders that have lost their



The range is alive and moving, rising 5 cm a year from the sheer pressure of two plates fighting for space. This causes great ripples as earth is forced upward - moving on its side. You see strata layers exposed, not just a few layers but layer after layer for 1000's of meters. It gives the appearances of seeing many natures, a spine and the backbone of life carrying the weight of the world.



footing (no wonder the children here are afraid of swimming).

Glaziers startle the senses with the brilliance of their purity standing out against the ebony rocks. One of these had made its way down to the rushing stream only meters from the road and there, ended abruptly in a sheer cliff of ice, turquoise blue. Another had spanned a valley, creating in the late afternoon sun, a splendour and joy to

Humans seem so small in the vastness of the mountains, insignificant before the powers of rock, rivers and snow.

*Lena*

We enter the valley of Zanskar after Kargil, the Fortu-la pass at 4147 m. The road becomes progressively worse. Only Jeeps and four-wheel

KHACHODLING LAND OF THE BLISSFUL DAKINIS

# YOGINIS OF THE HIMALAYAS

NEWSLETTER

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