



Zanskar Connection 2019

25th anniversary of Jamyang Ling

by Bernd Balaschus

As we drove through the village of Sani, we all eagerly watched out for the final curves just outside the village: With one glance, you can overlook a vast plain. The monastery Karsha, situated higher up on a steep slope, at first caught our attention: then later the range of mountains on the other side of Zanskar river, still partly covered with snow. Finally, during late afternoon, we had a breathtaking view of the sun setting over the lowland and over the village of Padum, situated in the far distance.

After having driven for twelve hours on a bumpy track, we decided to treat ourselves to accommodation in a hotel for the night, before continuing to our destination on the following day: Jamyang Ling School. We drove off the main road, on to the nearby village of Pipiting and finally found the well hidden Hotel Omasila. The many jeeps at the entrance didn't make things look too good, and so it turned out: there were no rooms available. After searching through the reservation book for quite a long time, we finally found ours, but the Hotel was completely overbooked because of a monastery festival taking place in Stongde the

following day. There was not much to discuss, Karin and Gerhard Euler, myself and our companions, Lakhphel and

we were happy to be able to fetch our luggage out of the jeep and carry it into our rooms.

At dinner we met Alice and Otto Silber and their friend Barbara, with whom we had arranged to meet here in Padum.

As an early riser, I noticed the following morning in the diffused light of dawn some people dressed in festive clothing standing next to the large prayer wheel on the other side of the road. Then at breakfast, there suddenly was the sound of a drum and now I recognized also the faces: habitants from the village of Reru, some teachers and village elders, as well as some former students from Jammu. It was the reception committee for us as "guests of honour", as it was so nicely stated in the official invitation sent to us per email to Germany. Some of the older women wore their traditional turquoise



Lhundup, got back into the jeep and returned to Padum. We stopped in front of the Kailash Hotel on the main road: I had often spent the night there with groups in previous years! There were still vacant rooms available and

headdress called „perak“. After breakfast followed a warm welcome from all sides and within a short time we were fully draped with kataks, the white welcoming shawls. Many hands were shaken, many hugs exchanged with familiar

ones. Then we started to stow away our luggage, took a group photo in the courtyard of the hotel and finally drove off; 18 long kilometres lay between Padum and our destination, the Jamyang Ling Model School in Reru. In front of us were some pickup jeeps, upon which

the loading areas were crowded with lots of young people. The village drummer was also somehow squeezed in and our caravan started to move along accompanied by the rhythm of the sound of drums, singing and dancing. We didn't get far: almost in

every village we passed through, people stood festively dressed holding thermos flasks full of sweet and butter tea and plates of pastries. And again and again kataks were presented to us, some of them in blue, orange or yellow colours. How many times have I driven along this route during the past 25 years. The bad condition of the road has hardly changed in all of these years. Time and again, road construction was going on, repairs were being made, the steep slopes were being secured, and often we had to close the car windows so that the heavy dust could not get in. It took us almost 4 hours for the drive of 18 km between Padum and Reru. Usually, it only takes 1 ½ hours to reach Reru. Here, too, crowds of people were standing at the roadside, carpets were spread out over the grass and seating provided for us. Many more thermos flasks and plates of pastries were ready. With every "wel-come" and "Julay", every katak handed over, I looked into faces that were only too familiar, with which many experiences and memories connected me. Again and again, the obligatory sweet butter tea, continual refilling and urging to take another pastry. We enjoyed this warm welcome and yet we felt pressured to get back into the jeeps

and drive the last few meters to Jamyang Ling School.

The drummer gave his very best, our elder students danced on the open loading area of the pickups that were driving along just in front of us. As we drove around the final bend to the school

the countless kataks weighed us down, and we could not carry the many bouquets of flowers that were held out to us: How glad I was to be allowed to share this extremely warm, moving reception with our travel group, a welcome that was meant for all of us. We

were curious about some new teachers and especially the headmistress, Mrs. Tenzin Choney, who had grown up as a daughter of Tibetan refugees in Leh. And of course curious about the elder students in Jamyang Ling Model School and students from Jammu, who were almost all present for this anniversary. Sonam Dolma, a student of the very first class in 1994, had invited us for breakfast on the journey

here, in Sankoo, just past Kargil, and had told us that she could not get a holiday to come to the school anniversary. She is an example of the number of female and male students who successfully completed their schooling in Jammu and were given a very good job within the Indian health system in a hospital near Kargil.

After we had a good rest, we made our way to our campsite at the small lake above the barley fields of Raru village. Our old friend Amchi Tsering Lotos from Manali was already waiting to welcome all of us. And of course, with butter tea and biscuits!



grounds, we were absolutely breath-taken. All students, teachers, cooks and school staff were standing in double rows to greet us. We made a big curve around the school grounds, since there was not enough space on the road in front of the school for all the cars that were expected the coming days. A large car park had therefore been set up on the open area towards the Manjushri Stupa, with a decorated path leading to the school. Standing along the path were the elder students with kataks and the younger ones with small hand-picked bouquets of flowers. We could not shake so many hands, the burden of



Presenting a statue of Manjushri by H.E. Kundeling Rinpoche



.....
die neue
Schulleiterin,
Mrs. Tenzin Chonoy

There were still a few days left until the festival would begin on the 27th of July, and so we had time for talking, resting and watching everyone busy with their preparations. Earth was shovelled to level the area for the stage, wood was being carpentered, sawn and bolted. At amazing speed, elder students from Jammu built and managed a small restaurant. And not only the food (momos were the bestseller) and drinks were delicious, but also their business sense was well-developed. There was a cashier, a sort of waiter, who took orders. It turned out that I had the most expensive chai of my life when I paid with a two thousand Rupee note and finally said: keep the "change" for the cashbox, so that it may be full and bulging when closing the restaurant! The days passed, memories kept coming back to how it all began 25 years ago. Actually, it was 26 years ago, because during the summer of 1993 we camped with a trekking group at the same place but a little further up, next to the beautifully situated lake. And actually everything was due to Tsewang Samphel's invitation to have a cup of tea at his house. Tsewang had come up to the lake to pick us up and show us the way through the ripe barley fields of the village. The "Stone of Impulse" was in the very sense of the word a stone of the old, ruined school that someone from our group had stumbled over. A lot has happened in the last years: the ceiling construction of the hostel had to be replaced by a concrete ceiling after rainfalls, the tibetan teachers from South India were gradually replaced by local ones. Also not to forget the occasions when structured western thinking encountered eastern and indian way of thinking. During the first years, after having transported a Honda generator with 4 KW on horses from Manali across Shingo-la pass with 5.150 m to Reru, which demanded considerable effort, this disappeared a year later. An uncomfortable silence followed the question about its whereabouts. After digging into the matter, it turned out that the generator ran day and night .



In Winter 1993/1994 construction of 1st building started



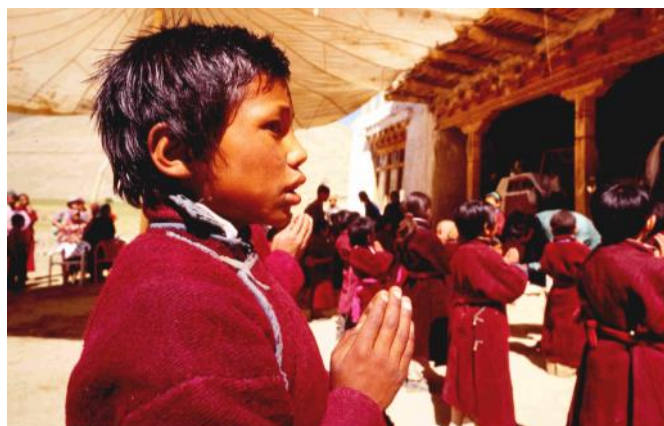
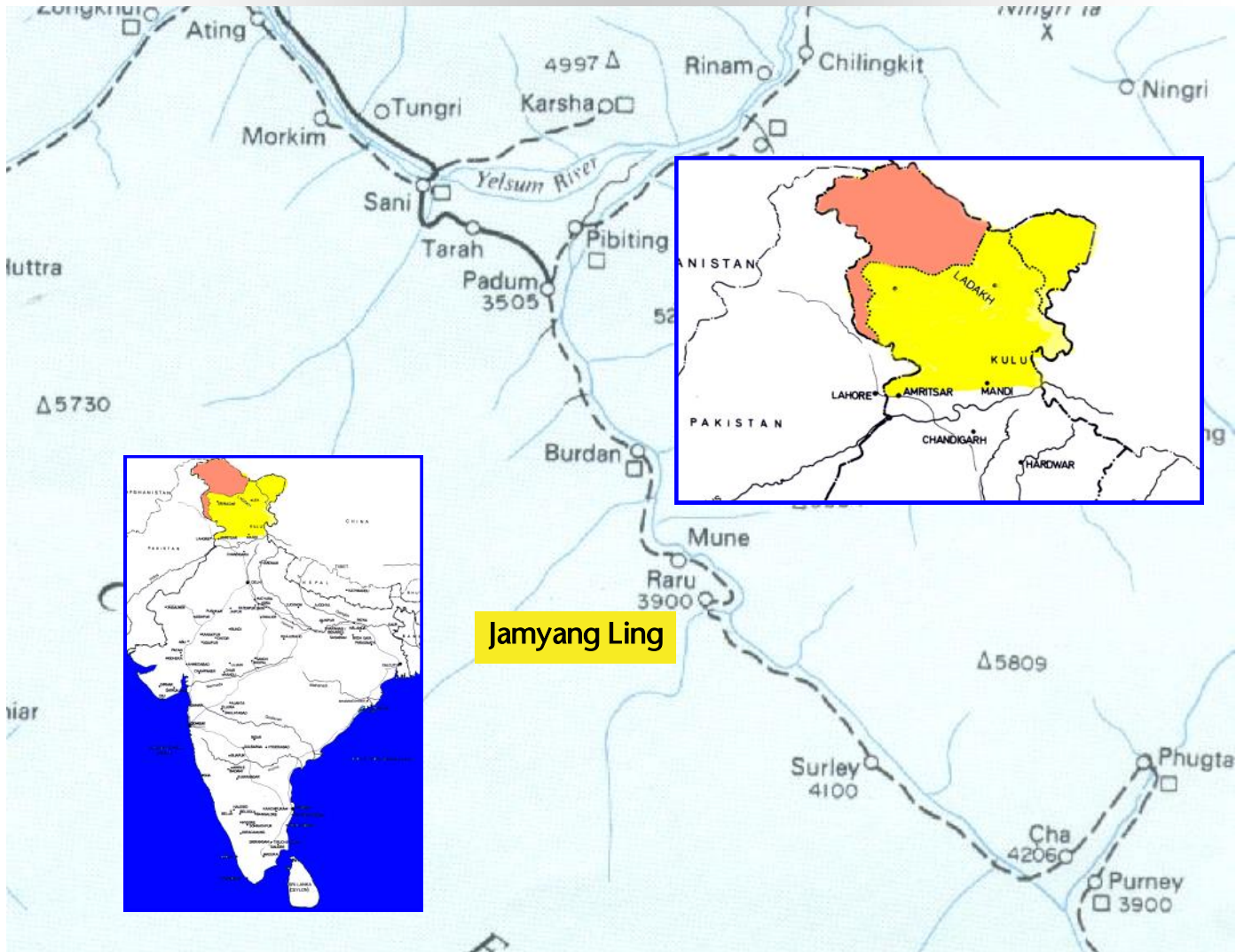
Just for a small 15 W bulb - the oil level sank steadily to the point of piston seizure. The generator was packed away in a tarpaulin and at some time or other transported on a pickup truck to Leh, where it was hidden in a backyard, well covered, just wasting away. The verbal roar of anger on my part must have been heard as far as Mune Gompa. With the result that the following year a repaired, functional generator had been reinstalled into the hostel. It was a perpetual struggle and effort of mutual understanding. A great help was the fact that Shambhala e.V. always appreciated the deep religious and spiritual convictions and believe of the Zanskari people, either through the construction of the Stupa, or through the rituals of the five Avalokiteshvara and Yamantaka Mandalas that were created in the school of Jamyang Ling.



At this point we give a hearty Thanks to all supporters and sponsors of Shambhala Charitable Trust and our school project Jamyang Ling Model School. Without this continuous support and tireless commitment the final success of this project would not have realised. Thanks to all members of Shambhala Trust for their intense involvement, especially founding und Trust members Jacques Alliod and Evelyn Stierle as future honourable members as well as Bettina Schell as longterm cashier.



Inauguration of Jamyang Ling School 1994 in Reru





The school depends on Your help

- How you can support the school project:
- **Membership** of Shambhala e.V. (annual fee from € 60,-)
- **Sponsoring** for a Zanskari child with monthly € 20,-
- **Contributions** in the form of one time donations

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Reru im Juli 2019 - by Karin Klinger

Reru was so overwhelming again! The 25th anniversary of the school project Jamyang Ling was the special reason and highlight of my trip this year. Distant Zanskar - again and again amazing, how close it is to me, how familiar and at home I feel here among all these wonderful people and events that take place. Accompanied by two girlfriends, we received a very warm welcome, stayed in the most beautiful of all tent camps (well organized by Bernd and Lakhphel, a former student), which was situated a little further away next to the small lake, the nearby stream and the bordering small willow forest. The lake - often so calm and clear, reflecting everything on its surface... This reminds me of the old Tibetan proverb: "If one does not stir up water, it becomes clear, if one leaves the mind undisturbed, it finds its own natural peace". The mind is calm and friendly, clear and open. The atmosphere is relaxing; at the same time alertness and clarity prevail. A little further up on the mountain, where the 3 guardian stupas are situated, I stand looking down at the Reru village, towards the fields of green barley and peas. I can see a colorful tent camp.....This is one of the most touching, unforgettable moments for me: about 85% of the former students of Reru - meanwhile students of Jammu Kotwal school, or even now students of university are here, almost all of them. They are involved in the complex preparations for the grand anniversary celebration of the school, actively and creatively shaping it. An atmosphere of industrious, energetic and well-organized creativity! There is so much to do! Everything is amazingly calm and concentrated, every day I see changes, creations...and that under the most difficult conditions. They magically conjure up a cafe in a tent, prepare delicious chais and momos, supply everyone with food and drinks: Everything is on a donation basis for the benefit of the school! They build a completely new, spacious stage for the festivities, provide space and shade for the numerous

guests, parents and relatives, friends from all over the Lughak valley. They even construct a new toilet for the most distinguished visitor, Kundeling Rinpoche. Many activities, building, painting, sewing, handcrafting, are being carried out....Everything is being thought of, from the biggest to the smallest detail! Greater recognition, gratitude and appreciation could not have been expressed by the "old" students! Their active presence and participation shows more than 1000 words: they all want to give something back of what they had received here with their school education and at home. During the days before the celebrations, there are many opportunities to meet old girlfriends for tea, dinner and party invitations, the program is both diverse and dense. A must is also the traditional Doksa trek to the high alpine pasture, where the women of all ages work really hard. They herd cows and yaks from the village and process their products. Everything is fully utilized: Milk is processed into yoghurt,

teachers are doing their very best! During the afternoon, after the official school programme, as a special surprise, elder students had organised and designed an exhibition: "The life of the people in Zanskar, yesterday and today". In each classroom, a "living museum" has been created which presented different themes and aspects of life here in the high valley, in a direct and tangible way. For example, in one room they show what people cultivate at this inhospitable altitude under these extreme climatic conditions, how they can utilize it and how they can preserve it for the long winter. What, for example, can be made of the important staple food barley? How is it roasted, ground and transformed into the ever prevailing, nutritious "tsampa"? The exhibition visitors get to know the popular "pemar", how „tsampa“ is processed with sugar and butter into a sweet snack, gladly served on special festive days. We learn how barley is brewed into "chang", how it is distilled into



Karin Klinger is honoured

"arrak"... how milk is transformed into yoghurt, butter and „churpe“, the highly valued very hard, dry cheese..... and much more. There was also a kind of "fashion

butter and cheese, the dung of the animals is dried and brought down to the village, indispensable fuel for the winter. Meanwhile, a work of art, an Avalokiteshvara mandala, a religious image, a symbol of love and compassion, is being created below at the school; 2 monks from Dharamsala work for several days, highly concentrated, to transform an inner vision into a picture composed completely of fine sand. Situated in the very center of the school, the room where the monks are working, is very special and so energizing. Students and

show", what do tall and small women and men wear in which season of the year, on which occasions? Where does wool come from, how is it used, how is it spun and woven. In every class you are welcomed, questions are gladly answered, everything may be touched, appreciated...sometimes the students play scenes from the Old Zanskar. Theater sequences bring the "museum" to life! Much of the old knowledge is preserved here or passed on to others, old traditions remain alive!

Continuation on last page!



Shambhala Charitable Trust: A supporter of education in Lungnak-Zanskar

Living one's life is a usual phenomena, but living for the society and country may become the exemplary role because interdependency is the law of nature in which human society most needs it. In this law of interdependency, Shambhala Charitable Trust and Lungnak Youth Association entered for support of Lungnak students struggle in every aspect. The role of Shambhala Trust in welfare for children is most challengeable and a Herculean task, that means Shambhala Charitable Trust had to overcome not only the hindrance of tough terrain of Zanskar where nearly four to five months people are cut off from Leh, Kargil and Darcha Valley. This

leads to complete isolation in winter, non-metallic roads to Zangskar and also non-motorable roads within Zanskar, likewise all other modern facilities are completely unavailable or non-functional. Despite Shambhala Charitable Trust and Lungnak Youth Association keep guts with big hope to enlighten the life of Zanskar-Lungnak's younger generation. Like me, there are hundreds of students from Lungnak who are feeling proud and kind towards Shambhala. Being a Citizen of India, people generally expect from Government whether it is local level, State and/ or Union level for prosperity in all affairs. In education, foreigners took responsibilities which are faster and more effective than Government of J&K State, LAHDC Kargil and Union Government.

Whatever I have experienced in my fourteen years under Lungnak Youth Association and Jamyang Ling Model

School, I would like to share with you: How Shambhala Charitable Trust is important for me. I would have been a sheppard or a farmer by now, if Shambhala Charitable Trust might have not entered in the field of education. Like me, hundreds of my fellow friends shared similar sentiments. The most unforgettable role of Jamyang Ling



Stanzin Lhundup, ganz rechts, im KC Residency, Jammu

Model School and it's Youth Hostel in Jammu is that I became at least a responsible, educated person. Still I feel, Shambhala envisions more than this and I would like to fulfil their vision as many other of my fellow friends would like too. To keep up name and fame of Lungnak villages and its supporters like Shambhala Charitable Trust and Jamyang Ling Model School, is one of basic duties for each alumni and alma maters of Lungnak valley.

Spiritually, I agree with the statement that "God exist in form of Man". My inner spiritual vision tells me, Mr. Bernd Balaschus is one fine example of dedication, boldness, determination, humbleness, calm- and softness as well as compassion to do welfare and helping hand to the down trodden: he is deserving this entitlement. One's inner strength is dependend upon the quality of the spiritual vision opted for, because spirituality is different for every individual.

I also believe that worship alone does not work sufficently; the work which Mr. Bernd is doing for us is also a kind of worship . He is a source of inspiration for all of us, both in educational field as well as in humanism.

I am always trying to walk along the footsteps of Mr. Bernd in every movement, in any moment of my life to help

the needy, at least, what I can do, to improve my co-fellows. Shambhala Charitable Trust brings us a concept of unity, togetherness, belongingness, collaboration and spirit of uplifting struggle in all of us.

Lastly, my deep gratitude goes to Mr. Bernd Balaschus and all other Shambhala Charitable

Trust members as well for whatever they have done in Zanskar and especially in Lungnak Valley. We will never forget it.



Stanzin Lhundup
Master in Social Work
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The return journey via Srinagar by Bernd Balaschus

Karin Klinger and her friends, Alice and Otto Silber as well as Barbara had left early in the morning as we made ourselves comfortable in the almost empty camp. Stretching out on the deck chair, another cup of tea or coffee, still talking to each other or to Amchila, who would be leaving us the next day. Finally we slowly packed our things together and said goodbye to this wonderful place at the lake. Our luggage was picked up by some students and we went down to Jamyang Ling school.

Rinpoche-la had left with all his companions; teachers and students were enjoying the day off after all these memorable days. Karin and Gerhard Euler were given the guest room at the school, I stowed my luggage in the room that had been available to the monks from Dharamsala. Time for resting, short walks, conversations with teachers and students. I was particularly touched by the encounter with Lobzang Rinchen, a student from Jammu, who came holding the hand of a little timid boy and asked me to transfer the many years of support he had received to this little boy. He is a half-orphan and new to the hostel and comes from a very poor background. It gave me great pleasure to assure Rinchen that his support still would continue and that Shambhala e.V. would grant another sponsorship to that little boy from now on.

The departure to Kargil was planned for 3.00 am in the morning. Following a short break, we intended to continue at 11 p.m. from there to Srinagar. But none of the planning worked out: the taxi drivers didn't want to go on because of fatigue - then it was suddenly declared that the Zojila Pass would be easier to access in early morning hours. We enjoyed staying at the hotel and the dinner. We then set the alarm clock for 1.00 a.m. At Drass, we made the obligatory tea break with warm bread from a bakery. The rest of the trip down the



steep and narrow serpentine of the Zoji-la Pass proceeded without any problems. As we descended into the Kashmir valley, the vegetation began slowly to change, trees, bushes appeared and soon lush green meadows. We had agreed to drive nonstop through Srinagar, but we weren't able to do so. When we had to stop for the 2nd time at the access road to Jammu in front of large military and police barriers, our driver got scared. Therefore I walked over to the officer in charge with my "government papers": Apparently, it was impossible to continue on because about 6 landslides had made the road to Jammu completely inaccessible. So we made a decision: if we had to stay overnight in Srinagar, then surely on houseboat. It should have four bedrooms for all together 14 persons. We decided to spend the afternoon on Dal Lake and let the Shikaras, as the rowing boats are called, row us across the lake. What an experience! Rarely have I seen our students so relaxed and happy. Next day, we arrived safely in Jammu and heard the news that all roads, all communication channels in Jammu & Kashmir had been closed down and military was moving in. What a blessing of the Buddhas and all of our guardian angels, that we could have had free transit on that very single day.



Karin Klinger continuous her report

A highlight of the festival was the following visit of Kundeling Rinpoche on the 2nd day. The huge welcoming reception shows how important his visit is to the school and for all the people living in the area. Everyone is waiting for him with smiles on their faces, kataks in their hands, the white scarves as a symbolic wish of happiness. Their faces reflect anticipation and high regard. Rinpoche arrives, comes down the road and walks through the rows of people. Despite the exhausting journey, he seems relaxed and very present. He is so impressive with his presence, kindness, simplicity, lightness and depth. He makes as much contact as possible, touching and blessing the people, here and there a friendly word. He begins his talk with the question „What makes you happy?“, indepth teaching follows. Later he gives an "initiation", distributes the blessing of "Tara", in Tibetan Buddhism the female aspect of love and compassion. Again and again, he em-

phasizes it's importance for the school, he esteems continuity and the people who contribute to it! Later, he will meet up with the teachers for a more specific conversation with them, and here, too, personal contact is very important to him. It's a tremendous experience! At the end of these two rich, impressive days..... finally the evening with a huge party, music and dance performances. Here too, as I have so often noticed, the combination of tradition and modern life is so fascinating! Young, dynamic, adults, now with city-experience, students of Jammu and then the local inhabitants of whom some have never even been beyond the Lungnak valley. High-tech equipment" with "Bollywood" or "Jammu Rock dance Performances" meet ancient Zanskari dances and songs, slow and meditative in their movements. Nothing seems artificial or cramped. Amazing how everything can co-exist at the same time. Old and young are still celebrating late into the

night.

Our time is coming to an end - high time to pack and prepare ourselves for the rest of the journey. After many farewells, with such a heavy-heart (again, I have not been here long enough!), but at the same time, ready for new paths; we will now beginn the hike through the wild west of Zanskar. We will be walking through extraordinary wild nature that still seems to be to some extent totally unspoilt.

Now we are experiencing completely different aspects, e.g. the enormous increase in road constructions and the strong structural changes it entails. The "old Zanskar" is changing, so clearly visible this year! And again. I see how valuable school education is in these times of change. Helpful to deal wisely and creatively with new demands, to cultivate old, valuable knowledge, traditions essential for survival, and at the same time to weave in creative innovations that make life easier.

