



JAMGON KONGTRUL LABRANG

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May 20, 2021

ON-GOING PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

The Labrang's activities are two-fold. First, the heart of the activities, is the preservation and propagation of Vajrayana Buddhism of the Karma Kagyu and Shangpa Kagyu Lineages, in particular that of the tradition from the First Jamgon Kongtrul, Lodro Thaye (1813 – 1899). Second are social programs for the poor and needy initiated and inspired as envisioned by the Third Jamgon Kongtrul, Lodro Chokyi Senge (1954 – 1992).

All activities in India are conducted under the **PARAMITA CHARTIABLE TRUST** and those in Nepal are conducted under **ANANDA SANGH**.

BUDDHIST MONASTIC EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAMS

At Pullahari Monastery (Nepal) and Kagyu Thekchen Ling Monastery (India)

Our monastic activities in Nepal and India continued smoothly during the pandemic. Lava's shedra monks who were retained in Pullahari due to the sudden lockdown in March 2020, were finally able to return to Lava at the beginning of March 2021. After a 2-week quarantine, all the monks were determined to be in good health. Thereafter, shedra classes resumed on March 17.

Both Pullahari and Kagyu Thekchen Ling monasteries observed the pandemic strictly and have not re-opened since the first national lockdowns in Nepal and India in March 2020. During this period, we have focused on boosting the immunity of all monks. A daily regimen of Vitamins C, B complex, Zinc and D3 are compulsory supplements for everyone. Additionally, traditional Tibetan herbal medicines are also given.

On-going activities of prayers, pujas and rituals at both monasteries have continued as usual. In fact, there are more pujas conducted during this time including those for the deceased and the sick from the coronavirus. They have helped to heal grief of families and loved ones. This is a reflection of how monastic activities mirror the need of the world for spiritual support.

As a precaution, non-residential teachers and staff are restricted from coming to the monastery. Classes are covered by our Acharyas except for Nepali Language and Mathematics in Pullahari Monastery. Regular ritual training and scripture studies are not affected and have continued as usual.

Monks are constantly updated about the risk of CoVid-19 and its variants. New information about its prevention is continually shared. The monks have organized themselves to manage and monitor security among themselves to ensure that no visitors enter the monastery compound and no member of the sangha leave. They have been effective.

For a few years now, we have been producing our own vegetables in Pullahari to supplement our daily need. The soil and weather conditions in Kathmandu are especially conducive. When the lockdown started in March last year, the Monastery decided to put more effort and resources to increase production. The result has been encouraging. Today, most of the vegetables consumed are grown in Pullahari. The monks are much more aware and appreciative of the food from their own gardens and more monks are volunteering to help.

At **Pullahari Monastery (Nepal)**, we have 220 monks today. Among them are 1 Khenpo, 1 Drupon (Retreat Master of the Mahamudra tradition), 1 Dorje Lupon (Vajramaster), 4 senior Umzes (Chanting Masters), 1 senior Choepen (Shrine Master), 13 Lamas and 16 Acharyas. Of the 220 monks, 142 are pursuing the 8-year basic curriculum in Buddhist monastic studies and training.

At **Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery (India)**, we have 135 monks today. Among them, 193 are pursuing the 13-year Acharya Program at the Monastery's Rigpe Dorje Monastic Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies. The Principal of the Institute is Very Ven. Drupon Khenpo Lodro Namgyal. Its teachers are 8 senior Acharyas who graduated from the Program. The 8th traditional 3-year Shangpa Kagyu Retreat concluded on February 12 this year with 11 Lamas.

The traditional **3-year Retreat Programs** will resume again this year, on October 27, Lha Bab Duchan. It will be the 9th Shangpa Kagyu Retreat in Kagyu Thekchen Ling's Ngedon Chag Chen Ling Retreat Centre, and the 7th Mahamudra Retreat at Pullahari's Kunzang Osel Dechen Ling Retreat Centre.

Kagyü Thekchen Ling Monastery is 30 years, and Pullahari is 29 years this year. Over the years, our sangha has matured and our activities have grown and expanded. Today, among our senior sangha are Venerables Choying Zangpo Rinpoche, Shelri Choktrul Rinpoche, Ngawang Chodak Rinpoche and Drupon Khenpo Lodro Namgyal. Among our senior administrators are Changdzo Tenzing Dorje, Sonam Chopel, Khenpo Chokey Gyaltsen and Khenpo Sherab Gyaltsen.

Khenpo Sherab Gyaltsen is also the Director of Rigpe Dorje Publications which have produced a large series of Tibetan works of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye and the Sadhanas and Instructions for both the Kamtsang and Shangpa Kagyu Retreats.

As part of our program for the Preservation of Traditional Himalayan Buddhist Culture, a vision of the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, some of our Acharyas are serving as teachers at other monasteries and nunneries, and also as project coordinators at local community temples.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS FOR THE NEEDY

**The Jamgon Kongtrul IIIrd Memorial Home, School, Healthcare Centre
& The Jamgon Kongtrul Eye Centre in India,
And the Annual Remote Outreach Cataract Program &
The Jamgon Kongtrul Third Memorial Foundation in Nepal.**

Thinlay Ngodup, a Trustee of Paramita Charitable Trust (India) is the senior administrator of our Social Projects in India. Together with the other Trustees, they work closely with Changdzo Tenzin Dorjee of Jamgon Kongtrul Labrang.

The pandemic impacted some of our social programs and changed the pattern of activities. However, at the **Jamgon Kongtrul IIIrd Memorial Healthcare Centre** in Lava, Dr. Sonam and the pharmacist continued their weekly consultation sessions and the resident nurse, Lhadon, continued to attend to patients on weekdays. During the pandemic, patients queue outside the clinic. Everyone has their temperatures and blood pressure taken and are sanitized. Six patients are allowed into the clinic at one time. As 3 leave, another 3 are admitted.

From January to December 2020, the clinic had 1,826 medical consultations. The patients were from Lava and 36 remote villages within a radius of about 30km from Lava. Consultation by monks of Kagyu Thekchen Ling Monastery was 183. Hypertension, pulmonary, skin related problems and diabetes continue to be the major ailments. No Covid cases were detected at the Healthcare Centre. As the communities are basically agrarian and its people are poor, medicines continue to be subsidized and those who are unable to pay are treated free of costs.

On India's Independence Day last year, the Youth and Student organization of Lava presented a Token of Appreciation to the Doctor and Staff of the Healthcare Centre for their selfless dedication and sacrifice to the people of Lava and those of its surrounding villages.

At the **Jamgon Kongtrul Eye Centre**, due to the pandemic, all Remote Outreach Cataract Programs are put on-hold mandatorily since March 2020. This is the biggest set-back in the activities of the Eye Centre. The free on-going program reaches out to patients in remote, rural villages in the Districts of Kalimpong and Darjeeling, and also in Sikkhim. Cataract patients are mobilized to the Eye Centre for free surgery and intra-ocular lens implants. These patients make up about 45% of the Eye Centre's patients annually. They will not normally go to a hospital for consultation because of distance and poverty.

The Eye Centre's walk-in paying patients are from Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Sikkim. Due to the lockdown, patients were not able to go to the Eye Centre for check-up and consultation except in cases of emergency. Gradually, however, as the situation improved, the number of patients began to increase again. However, West Bengal is locked down again from May 15, and already we see significant decline in patient numbers.

At the **Jamgon Kongtrul IIRD Memorial Home**, despite vacancies for elderly, no admissions are allowed by the local authorities since the first lockdown in March 2020. This has not been lifted.

In March, 2020, we had 33 elderly (17 women and 16 men). The admission of 5 new elderly who had applied to join the Home were held back as council regulations did not allow new intakes during the pandemic. This regulation is still in force. During the year, we lost 5 elderly (1 woman and 4 men) due to old age. So, we have 28 elderly (16 women and 12 men) today. As soon as it is allowed, we will try our best to increase our number of elderly to 40.

The number of children is 54 (29 girls and 25 boys). Their high number compared to the elderly is circumstantial. Apart from 6 orphans, most are children of single-parents.

In response to the social reality here, the Home that started as one for destitute elderly in 1995 became intergenerational in 1997 when destitute children were accepted. The first 5 children were from deeply troubled families where the remaining parent could not cope nor care for them anymore. Marital, financial problems and those of ill-health and alcoholism are common social ills in rural India and Nepal.

Over the years, as we responded to the crying need for care of such 'outcast' children from deeply troubled, poor families, our Home also become a half-way house for them. Time to time, when problems at their home are resolved, a parent would approach to bring the child home. The reunification of these children with their families is strongly encouraged and is our aim.

The children may or may not have attended school when they join the Home. But upon admission, they are all admitted to the Jamgon Kongtrul IIRD Memorial School. This way, we are also accomplishing the heart-wish of the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche to provide opportunity for education to youths from needy backgrounds.

As we have not re-opened the Home after the nation's first lockdown in March 2020, all our residents are healthy, and the environment within the compound of the Home is safe. Every resident is given daily supplements of vitamins to boost their immunity and the Home is regularly sanitised.

Among our Social Programs, the **Jamgon Kongtrul IIRD Memorial School**, like most other organisations in the field of education, had the worst set-back due to the pandemic. Just 3 weeks into the commencement of the academic year on March 1, 2020 last year, the school closed on March 25, following the nation's lockdown. Apart from a very brief period of 3 weeks in May 2020 when everything reopened again, the School has remained closed.

Classes are conducted on-line. However, as we are a charitable school, most of our pupils' families do not own a computer or many are not able to set aside a mobile phone or laptop for their children to use for their on-line classes. So those children have had to go to their nearest community centres for on-line access. But the facilities and atmosphere there are often not conducive.

We feel that the children are losing out a lot in their education through not having direct interaction with teachers and classmates. Discipline is almost impossible to manage. Though the children are given homework and tested regularly, teachers are uncertain about their performance as they do not feel that they properly monitored.

This year, 2021, we had no new admissions. Our pupils remained at 303 (130 girls and 173 boys) in classes from Upper Kindergarten to Class 8. There is great uncertainty about the rest of 2021 as the 2nd wave of the pandemic is proving to be more catastrophic and there is also fear of a potential 3rd wave.

In **NEPAL**, we managed to hold a **Remote Outreach Cataract Program** in February 2020 before the pandemic broke out the following month of March. Altogether, more than 3,000 patients from 9 very poor remote villages in the Sarlahi District were screened and 416 were operated for cataract and given intra-ocular implants, Since March 2020, all outreach cataract programs are on hold. We have conducted at least one Outreach Cataract Program annually since November 1995 and we hope to conduct at least one program this year, 2021.

Jamgon Kongtrul Third Memorial Foundation was finally incorporated on June 18, 2020. By the lockdown on March 24, 2020, survey of the land and the construction of necessary retaining walls were completed, and our first meeting with the engineers and architect at the site too. Further progress of work has been hampered by the lockdown. Architectural design of the building is in progress and we plan to go through the design at the site when it is safe to do so again. A description of the Foundation's project, the Tsandra Tibetan Medical Centre and Hospice, is attached.