

Interview with a Dakini

Recently **Ven. Roger Kunsang** met with an extraordinary Tibetan woman who is widely regarded as a dakini, an oracle, certainly someone regarded as very special by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, Dagri Rinpoche and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. This conversation with **Khadro-la** (who featured on the cover of our August-September 2008 issue) is a *Mandala* exclusive.

Ven. Roger Kunsang: *Can you tell me why you left Tibet?*

Khadro-la: It happened at the last minute. I didn't have the intention, and I didn't have the money to travel. I followed a sign that came in my dreams. There was a bus blowing its horn indicating its departure, and until I got on the bus I was unaware of where I was heading. I learnt from the other people on that bus that they were going to Lhasa and thence to Shigatse. A couple of days into the journey I learnt that they were also planning to go to Mount Kailash. One day, while we had stopped our journey at Shigatse, I was circumambulating Tashi Lhunpo Monastery when I came across an elderly man dressed in an Indian cloth *doti*. This complete stranger gave me 2000 *gormo*. He asked me to sit beside him, and begun to tell me many unusual stories. He told me that India was just beyond this mountain, and that I should be meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and many other lamas. He

kept urging me to head for India – and at the time it didn't feel at all strange, although when I recall it now it seems amazing to me.

Ven. Roger: *Was it very difficult to make your way to India?*

Khadro-la: Oh yes! There was much hardship. I had no mission of my own and was just following the pilgrims. I don't remember very clearly how long the journey was, but I did fifteen *koras* round Mount Kailash and due to my unusual actions and the words that I was speaking, rumors were going around that I was a dakini. People began to line up to see me, even seeking blessings from me. It was very tiring for me to deal with the crowds, but a very kind monk from a nearby monastery took good care of me with food and drink. He even organized a better system for the people who came to see me for blessings, etc. Many of those people expressed their wish to go to India with me. One night, quite suddenly and without any discussion, I



made up my mind to leave for India and so a man who was our guide led seventeen of us from the bus along the trail that leads to the border. He wasn't very experienced and it took seventeen days to reach Kathmandu in Nepal. It should have taken only seven days. We were in no man's land, and as there were no real paths or people to ask, it was impossible to tell whether we were even out of Tibet. We had to just follow the signs I got in my dreams. When we were confused about the way, I was instructed to go in the direction where there appeared a circle of light. Maybe this was the blessing of the Dalai Lama or Palden Lhamo.

Sometimes we had to walk all day without any food or drink, and sometimes we had to walk all through the night. We were not prepared for such a long journey.

When I arrived in Nepal, I fell seriously ill with food poisoning and could not continue with my companions towards India. I had to stay at the reception center in Kathmandu, vomiting blood, which made the staff suspicious that I had a contagious disease. I was left to sleep outside the building in a field. I was so weak that I couldn't change



Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Khadro-la preparing for puja.

position. When I needed to move, they used long sticks to push me back and forth because they were afraid to touch me with their hands. As my condition worsened, the staff thought I wouldn't survive, and so asked me if I wanted to leave a last message for my family and asked for the address to deliver it.

So I made a request for monks from a monastery to do prayers after I died and to take my body for cremation to a peak which I later found out is the holy Nagarjuna hill where Buddha had spoken the sutra called *Langru Lungten*.

I asked them to take my urine in a bottle and give it to whomever they met first at the Boudhanath Stupa entrance. By now I was semi-conscious, but they were kind enough to do this favor for me. The person who took my urine met a man at the gate who turned out to be a Tibetan physician. He tested my urine and diagnosed that I had been poisoned with meat, prescribed some medicine and even sent me some blessing pills. My health improved dramatically and I had many good dreams. When I recovered, I was sent to the Dharamsala reception center, together with some other newly-arrived people.

I arrived in Dharamsala not long after some monks from my village had quarreled with the staff of the center – and so they had a negative impression of anyone who came from the same area. Consequently I, too, became the victim. Since I was quite young I was asked whether I would like to join school or did I want to have some skills training. My reply was quite straightforward and honest. I said I had no interest in going to school and neither did I want to learn something else. When I was back at home I always had the very strong will to serve good meditators, and so I used to collect firewood and deliver water for the meditators who lived around my village. I didn't even know that Tibet was occupied by the Chinese and that that was why Tibetans went into exile. I was not tortured by the Chinese and I didn't have any lack of food or clothing. My only wish was to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and as I have a problem of going into craziness sometimes, I merely wanted to know from His Holiness whether that was good or bad. That was all I wanted, otherwise I just wanted to return to my own home.

Ven. Roger: *So you felt that this so-called craziness was your problem at that time?*

Khadro-la: Yes. And although I had completely recovered good health, I was still passing blood. Many of the newly-arrived people had diarrhea, but whenever the toilet was dirty I was accused of doing it because they all knew that I had a stomach problem. So I was forced to clean the toilet. And the staff there scolded me saying, 'You are said to be a dakini, so why do you have to rely on us? Why do you have to eat the food and take shelter here? Why don't you just pull the sun down here?' And so on and so on.

I couldn't take the food that was provided at the center, but sometimes I had to ask the kitchen staff for hot water. I was often kicked out and scolded. It seemed like it was the consequence of the trouble that had occurred between the monks from my village and the staff members at the center.

I couldn't get an audience with His Holiness because I was accused of having a contagious disease which might infect him. Some said I was mad. Some even said I ought to be leaving the center or be sent to an insane asylum. I was even banned from public audiences for several months. Instead, I circumambulated the Dalai Lama's palace every morning. One day, I heard that His Holiness was coming back home, so I hid beside the road to greet him. As his car passed by Namgyal Monastery, I saw a very bright light radiating on the front window of the car and inside I saw him with many hands around his shoulders! It was the first time I had ever seen His Holiness and I just jumped towards the car to prostrate, and I fell unconscious, almost under the car.

I was carried back to the center by a man from my village and again the shower of scolding began. But I think a very strong change happened in me by seeing His Holiness and I never got angry with the staff. I thought, 'Oh! They have to take care of so many people and of course they get upset sometimes.'

Despite many requests, I still wasn't given an audience with His Holiness. At a public teaching I managed to find a seat. As he came in escorted by security personnel, I was possessed by the protector and the guards took me away from the courtyard where the teachings were to take place, telling me to stay at the bottom of the stairs. I felt so sad to think what evil karma I must have created in the past that now I can't even see His Holiness.

The teaching began with the recitation of the *Heart Sutra*. I could hear His Holiness chanting, and as he was saying "no eyes, no nose," etc., I started to have a very strange feeling. By the time he was saying "form is empty and emptiness is form," I felt rays of light were showering on me, entering from the crown and filling my whole body. I felt lifted up in the air. I had a strong feeling of joy and sentiment.

As time went by, I came to know some meditators and came in contact with some great lamas such as Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche and Khalkha Jetsün Dampa. I received blessing water from them, and they, too, tried many ways to



Dagri Rinpoche, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Khadro-la; Lama Zopa Rinpoche with Khadro-la; Khadro-la

make my contact with His Holiness possible. But no progress was made, and so I finally made up my mind to return to Tibet. I was exceptionally sad at not being able to fulfill some of the tasks the old man in Shigatse has asked me to do. There were some important things that I should do, such as making a long life offering and some other secret thing, and time for all those activities was running out.

I informed Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche of my decision, but he insisted that I did not return. He said that he saw in me something more important than just an oracle; he could see some specialness in me. He said I would be very helpful to His Holiness, and advised me to remain in Dharamsala. 'I myself will make the golden bridge between you and His

was kicked or punched, because I found bruises on my body when I regained consciousness.

But after His Holiness granted an audience to all the other people, he asked to bring up the lady oracle and so I was taken to him. As soon as I went to him, I grabbed at his feet and went unconscious again. When I came back to normal His Holiness asked me about my home and many other questions, but I was just left speechless. No words came out – I was too overjoyed to say anything. Later I was able to tell him all that the old man had told me in Shigatse

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Holiness.’ As I listened to him, I wondered why such a great scholar and great lama said such comments about me. Soon after, and out of the blue, I was approved for an audience, together with other new arrivals.

There were a lot of us waiting anxiously. I saw His Holiness coming toward us and I saw him with so much light radiating and many arms, just as I had seen him before. As soon as I stood up to make prostrations, again I was possessed and taken away by the security guards. Perhaps I

and he heard all about me and my problems. I was confirmed as the oracle of the protector and His Holiness asked me not to go back to Tibet. His Holiness granted me different empowerments and instructions, and I began to do the retreats that he advised me to do.

Ven. Roger: *Where were you living? Outside the monastery or somewhere else?*

Khadro-la: A house was given to me by the private office within Namgyal Monastery. It’s the same house I live

in today. It was during that time when the teacher in the Dialectic School was murdered by the group of Shugden worshippers, and there were rumors that I too would be assassinated. The monks of Namgyal Monastery were very concerned about my safety. That's how we became close. Actually, I tried to refuse their protection. I told them that if my fate is to be killed, then nothing can make it not

some say I am Vajrayogini, and others say I am Tara. It might be their own pure appearances. I myself think I am nothing special.

When I was young some people said I was mad. Some said I was dakini. I don't know. I have no doubt that I have very strong karmic imprints from the past, because I have been very dear to His Holiness and many other high lamas

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happen, but that if my karma is not to die, the Shugden worshippers cannot harm me. The monks didn't listen to me and they continuously took good care of me.

As I was very weak physically, His Holiness contacted Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche and I was sent to France for treatment. At that time I came to know Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Indeed, because of my poor health I came to know so many people!

During my retreat and practice there have been some good signs and some positive outcomes too, but I like to say that all of these are just hallucinations. Whatever good happens is no more than the blessing of His Holiness. I myself am no better than the poorest being among the rest.

About two years ago, His Holiness advised me that whenever the opportunity comes, I should give teachings or any kind of service that I can deliver to those who are in need. But I know I have nothing to offer to others. To tell you honestly, in my mind I have a very strong belief that the essence of life is only to have the realization of bodhichitta and emptiness. Though it is difficult to gain, my primary wish is to achieve indestructible faith in these two before I die. If I cannot help people to generate these things, our meeting is just a waste of time. Other than that, I am the poorest by inner, outer and secret perspectives. The best side of me is only that I met the best Dharma, best practice and the best lamas.

Ven. Roger: *When did you first feel that you were a dakini?*

Khadro-la: I always think I am *not* a dakini. I don't know who I am. Some lamas say I am Khadro Yeshe Tsogyal,

from Tibet and outside of Tibet. Some lamas from Tibet, whom I never knew, sent me love, respect, good wishes and often offerings and praises. Another reason is that sometimes the words to express the view of emptiness come out of my mouth automatically – something I have never heard and studied before – but I can't remember later what I said.

Ven. Roger: *Can you talk about the ways you can help the Dalai Lama?*

Khadro-la: I have a goal: there is a vast, outstanding lineage of teaching, empowerment and instruction by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. It's now been about 360 years since he first revealed them, and since then, it hasn't been possible to reveal them completely again. I feel a strong karmic connection with this special lineage, so my sole wish is to restore this entire lineage for His Holiness. He can pass it to many others and I myself am very interested in practicing this lineage.

Also, I am planning a retreat center specially dedicated for this practice. I wish to have a small group of serious practitioners there. Maybe they could be geshe who have completed the study of *Madyamaka Prajñāparamita* and who have the strong will for the practice but are looking for a suitable environment. If I can accomplish this, it will be a very good offering to His Holiness which I am confident will be the milestone cause for his long life. It is a very important teaching related to this entire world and there is no doubt that it is also important for the Tibetan cause. I think that when His Holiness calls Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Dagri Rinpoche his beloved disciples, he means because of their relation to this lineage. ☸

Ven. Roger: *Thank you!*