



DZONGSAR JAMYANG KHYENTSE

Message to the Youth of Samdrup Jongkhar

Chokyi Gyatso Institute, Dewathang, Samdrup Jongkhar

13 February, 2014

Dear Rinzin Dorji,

I started writing this letter to you from Dewathang, Samdrup Jongkhar, where I really hope you can visit our Chokyi Gyatso Institute that's just been entirely re-constructed, and has some really beautiful new statues of the Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, Jambayang, Chenrezig, and the protectors — all of which I very much hope will shower blessings on you and your families here. Being here always rekindles the very fondest memories of my childhood here in Samdrup Jongkhar, and so I felt inspired to write to you.

Like you, I grew up in Samdrup Jongkhar. But the times are very different now than when I grew up here. Of course, the world today is far more technologically and scientifically advanced. You have mobile phones, television, internet, and all kinds of electronic gadgets we never dreamed of. But the world also has far more challenges than ever before, and these challenges have obviously now come to Bhutan too. To be honest, I am not at all sure that young people today are happier or more secure than in my time.

In these circumstances, I completely understand what the present situation has made you do and what you think is necessary, even when it means leaving your families and friends and struggling to find jobs that often don't satisfy you even when you find them. Bhutan is going through huge changes of all kinds, and it's inevitable that these changes will continue and grow. But it's really important to keep in mind that we don't have to be victims of these changes — we **do** have the power and capacity to monitor and manoeuvre these changes so they meet our needs.

One thing I really want to say to you is this: No matter where you are and no matter what you do, please remember not to forget your roots and the soil in which you grew up — if possible not just in

spirit but also in action. Even if you are away for a time, visit Samdrup Jongkhar and your home villages in Dewathang, Wooling, Lauri, Gomdar, Pemathang, and the other places you grew up as often as possible, don't disconnect yourselves, and try to do some good for this place that raised you.

I'm not saying this as a moralistic thing at all. The reality is that in the years to come, what we now call 'backward' will actually be a haven. In many parts of the world, urban life has become so intolerable that people are leaving cities to go back to the countryside. This can happen here in Bhutan. Every time I'm here in Dewathang, I see more and more clearly that this region can actually be a really good place to live in very many ways, and I hope from the bottom of my heart that you young people who grew up here will help make it so.

That's one reason I started up the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative, and I do hope some of you might become involved in that. It's also why we've just started a new and innovative education programme in English, Science, Math and other subjects right here at our Chokyi Gyatso Institute in Dewathang, which we're really rebuilding and making over in ways that can truly serve our community here.

I wish you and your families the very best in every way in your lives, so that everything you do creates benefit for Samdrup Jongkhar, for Bhutan, for the world, and for all beings. Let's work together to make our homeland and our home district a great place to be. In the years to come, I am really looking forward to seeing you and meeting as many of you as possible right here in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Finally I have a favour to ask you. I would like this letter to go to all Samdrup Jongkhar youth but don't have a way of finding out everyone's name and contact information. Can you kindly act as an emissary for me, transmit this letter to your Samdrup Jongkhar friends and acquaintances, and ask them to do the same so that it reaches as many Samdrup Jongkhar youth as possible.

With love and warmest wishes to you, wherever you are, from Dewathang, Samdrup Jongkhar.

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse,
Chokyi Gyatso Institute, Dewathang