



EMBODYING THE SUBTLE AND SUBLIME FEMININE

The Story of Khandro Thrinlay Chodon

A spiritual master, mystic and Vajrayana Buddhist – Khandro-la or Khandro Thrinlay Chodon is all and none of these. She doesn't like boxes or definitions, as she believes in the INFINITE! Having attended her workshop on meditation and feminine essence, I came across, for the first time, an inner experience that felt authentic and it stirred me to my deepest core.

Khandro Thrinlay Chodon belongs to a lineage of authentic Meditation Masters, and this includes her great-grandfather Togden Shakya Shri and father Apho Rinpoche. Her maternal bloodline belongs to Lonpo Gar, a minister of the first Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo (604–50). The authenticity of her lineage is believed to be pristine and very precious and in this

era it is manifesting through her female embodiment.

Completely unassuming in her brilliance, Khandro Rinpoche, as she is known to her students, shares her journey in a candid chat exclusively with Beaute Espace Wellness/ Beauty Launchpad India.

Hers is a woman's journey, and one that is an evolution of a feisty feminine spirituality. Her aim in this life is to bring her ancient wisdom alive to this chaotic modern world, to manifest fully as a woman and to give back to her homeland, the Himalayas.

THE BEGINNING

I was fortunate to take birth in a spiritual family, surrounded by spiritual Masters, but that's not where my quest naturally started. I studied in a Catholic boarding

school – I could not connect to the things at home when at school. I was in awe of the presence of my father, a renowned spiritual master, but I found all this so different from the normal world at school! I felt a bit displaced between these two worlds. The duality puzzled me.

Our home was named 'Chimed Gatsal Ling', meaning 'Immortal Garden of Happiness'. Indeed, it felt as it was named. There were unceasing teachings imbued with pure love and care. My earliest memories of my parents was of them meditating in separate rooms with windows wide open facing the snow-capped Himalayan mountains and open blue sky. I used to jump into my dad's lap every morning and felt so comforted under his huge meditation cloak, listening to his peristalsis while he sat so still meditating. To me, it was the safest place on this earth. This unique

childhood has made a great imprint on my life. Our life was full of stillness, sharing the ancient wisdom teachings of compassion and community. We had very few material possessions yet we felt so rich in our way of life.

Then I lost my father - I was hardly 7 – he was such a great yogi. People from all over the world came to visit him in Manali. After my father passed away he sat in *Samadhi** for a long time. I noticed the energy around the house shift and I felt Impermanence. With everything changing I kept questioning the reality of my existence - who am I!? I watched as my cozy, happy family was falling apart and my mother was left behind to make ends meet. Many questions about life continued to intrigue me. My mother, herself a great *Dakini*** , died when I was 21. I also witnessed her body in *Samadhi*. Impermanence again and I was further drawn to the deeper aspects in life. The little time I spent with my precious parents had an unforgettable effect on my mind-stream and it has led me to seek and preserve the 'greatness' of what they were and what they offered the world.

THE SPIRITUAL CALLING & MEETING THE MASTER

My guru, Gegen Khyentse Rinpoche, guided my meditation practice and teachings intimately, with precision and clarity. Through our vigorous practice I was able to connect to my parents beyond the physical realm. Slowly, I began to understand impermanence in my life as being a part of my karma. With the deaths of my dearest ones, as well as all the sufferings that I experienced, became the beginning of my deep inner journey. So began the search within myself, and finding my own treasure.

In the physical realm of my life, everything fell apart and I had to delve deep inside to dig out my inner resources to keep going. It was a very difficult phase. Another thing that happens when you are the only daughter in a significant spiritual family lineage, is that you are inundated with proposals for marriage! Yet, I wanted to develop my education alongside the spiritual heritage I had received from my parents. I did not want to give in to being an object of marriage

and strongly resisted any proposals. I was a good student and finished my under graduate degree in India and a Masters in the United States.

Meanwhile I continued to ground my spiritual practice – understanding more and awakening to fresh insights with practice and experience. I didn't want to surrender to either becoming a nun or marrying into a prestigious family. So I stood firmly in my middle ground. This was not easy, especially in our culture.

It was only much later that I fell in love with the man who was to become my husband. He was a modern, highly realised Master and a kind person. I needed a male figure in my life, and the ninth Shabdrung, Ngawang Jigme, became my best friend and supportive husband when I was 28 years of age. It was a love marriage and a very beautiful one.

He always said "I don't have a very long life and you should marry me soon." I, however, wanted to either do a deep retreat or study in the US. My spiritual Guru advised me not to go for a long retreat but to be in the

world. Thus I chose instead to go to America for study, whilst not wavering in the dharma. My beloved Rinpoche supported me throughout - to keep an unwavering retreat-like mind intact from the challenges and temptations of a modern, materialistic, Californian lifestyle. Although I was young and full of worldly potential, I felt his continual protection.

While in America I realised just how much in love I was with Rinpoche. This was very useful because for the three years I lived there, nothing used to distract me. When I made any pocket money, I would call him. It became like my retreat and in fact I was meditating more deeply than in my homeland India! At the end of my three-year sojourn in the US, Rinpoche came to collect me. It was then, in the US that we married. Joanna Macy was the celebrant and a few senior Buddhist teachers and many western friends were present.

THE BRIEF INTERLUDE

I was fortunate to come back to India and serve the increasing activities of my husband until his *Parinirvana**** on April





6th, 2003. We had lived together for only 6 short years, and in that time I served him completely - it was a lifetime in itself. In those years, I completely dedicated myself as a servant to Rinpoche and his work. Every minute of my time with Shabdrung Rinpoche was a blessing and a great learning. He embodied the extraordinary in such a simple and ordinary way and this touched my heart to the depth of all my practice. Whatever he manifested, from cooking, to playing football, to being a travel agent, and to being a spiritual master, it was all with ease. He was a great Hidden Yogi.

After Rinpoche passed away, once again everything changed. Full of grief and with a heavy heart, I decided to start again from scratch. I always love to go in 'Shunyata'****- starting from a blank page, from nothing – out of absolute ground zero!

STEPPING OUT

In 2005, one of our great Vajrayana**** Buddhist Masters invited me to Australia. It amazes me how my late husband had foreseen this. Two years before his passing, the Zanskar nuns had gone to him and he directly told them "after two years my wife will be dedicated to you." It was exactly two years after his passing that the nuns came to me in Ladakh while I was in a retreat! They asked me for help even though at this time I, myself, felt helpless! My precious

husband was no longer in this physical realm. I sat torn apart by the surrounding politics and chaos. I could only wonder how and what I would teach. However, the Master had clearly said "everything that you are going to teach will come from your own heart!" Trusting in this, I decided to follow "the flow and let it flow."

I accepted the invitation and found myself in Australia teaching! How strange it seemed to me, especially given where I was at in my life, often crying with all the pain that was stuck inside - all was reminding me of impermanence and death. Amazingly, it came to be that many westerners appreciated the simple truthfulness of someone like me, openly revealing myself. The teachings, which I knew from the heart, never fail. Buddhism is about being yourself! When you don't hold on to anything, things just begin to flow.

KHACHODLING - THE SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL MISSION

In essence, I don't have a fixed vision. I believe in the wisdom of the Dakinis. This is not to do with the male or female physical body. We focus on wherever we feel there is a need to reach out. Especially in the east, women need to manifest, as the culture has held this back. Our Khachodling projects include education (male and female), hermitages for women and medical

services – all for the Himalayan areas. We support the mentoring of children in learning the wisdom and love of their Himalayan heritage. On Sundays at my home in Manali we have classes to teach children. Their parents often also join because many of them have not had the opportunity to really understand their spiritual heritage. I don't just believe in intellectual intelligence. Spiritual and emotional intelligence is also very important in the overall development of the child.

Kha in Buddhism means sky or spacious dimension. So Khachodling is the pure land of the feminine, the blissful Dakini.

MESSAGE

I have travelled across the world and seen and met people at all levels. I have seen people so discontented! People with big houses can feel empty inside. It is so important to connect to your inner strength. No matter how much you progress outwardly, inside, if you are empty, then that's unfortunate.

Khachodling's entire work revolves around the essence of emptiness and compassion. Emptiness is the base from which all compassion arises.

We each have a huge responsibility just being born as a human being on this planet. That responsibility is to ourselves, to our children and to our planet. It's time to RECOGNISE this, but not get overwhelmed by the scale of the task. RELAX into the genuine motivation of the task. RELEASE all your fears and come to yourself. Then

REJOICE in yourself - but don't get fixated, don't blame yourself and don't let dissatisfaction take hold and connect to your essence.

This I call 'a goalless journey'. I am a strong believer in karma and am therefore not in a hurry. We don't have to do big things. Even one small act undertaken with compassionate, clear and wise intention is much more powerful than billions of meaningless projects completed.

Simplify and contain. I like to micro-focus on small things, like taking



care of my diet. I find it important to consolidate and strengthen the beneficial things I have done so far.

MINDFULNESS

In today's time of super connectivity, we tend to be either 'Mind-full' or Mind-less. However, beyond this is being MINDFUL. The endlessly wavering monkey-mind has been bossing you around too much. If you are mindless, half the time you will be spaced out. And if your mind is full you will be chattering all the time. It's time to watch this monkey-mind and make it work for you. Rather than you becoming a prey of your fickle mind, if you are mindful, your actions will not be wayward. You will not be carried away by your emotions. You will use discriminative wisdom. Your daily life will be so much more productive.



START ON A MINDFUL NOTE

When you wake up in the morning, wake up with gratitude. Spend two minutes just being aware, giving that space to yourself. Then take the next step. It's a very good idea to experience 5-10 minutes of stillness in the morning. Being

present with yourself will naturally create a deeper focus on the day ahead.

The sublime is the normal for Khandro La and she juxtaposes both so beautifully. Her journey is definitely an inspiration and destination, the journey itself!

Samadhi: At the time of death the gross outer elements absorb into the inner elements and these finally dissolve into the subtle and refined essence. The physical body stills its decomposition and the yogi remains in this state, often even emitting a pleasant fragrance.

Dakini (in Tibetan khandro) where 'kha' refers to the spacial dimension, without centre or circumference and 'dro' is goer, moving without fixation. It's the feminine principle (beyond gender) which is the heart essence of our ever flowing, undestructured true nature.

Parinirvana - a respectful way of referring to the passing away of a realised being.

Sunyata: translated most commonly as 'emptiness', it refers to the truth that all phenomena do not possess any essential enduring and independent identity.

Vajrayana: the esoteric form of Buddhism that developed in India in the 5th century and was brought to the Himalayan region in the 8th century