

A HISTORY OF BHUTAN

A Supplementary Text for Class XI



Department of School Education (DSE)
Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD)
Royal Government of Bhutan
Thimphu

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Forward

The vision of the Bhutanese education system is to produce ‘globally competent and nationally rooted’ graduates. Therefore, it is imperative to have the school curricula that are current and relevant to the times. It is through well-thought-out actions and concerted efforts that the national education aspiration can be achieved. The national vision must be embedded in the curricular documents and activities for natural and automatic infusion in the learners. Therefore, the curricular documents are planned and prepared to capture the essence and strategies so that they are current and relevant to the state of affairs around the globe in the 21st century.

Cognizant of the global trends and national aspirations, the history curriculum intends to involve learners in the process of gathering and synthesising information from various sources besides providing an avenue to study the ideals and values of our society. The contents and activities in history intend to preserve and promote our country’s unique identities, age-old cultural and traditional values, democratic values, local wisdom, community vitality, civic values, and a sense of duty, among others. This will help promote holistic development of the learners.

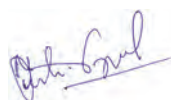
The history curriculum encourages both learners and teachers to use open-source and experiential learning besides traditional textbook-based learning. This will provide opportunities to both the learners and teachers to explore the historical processes and craft new perspectives through historiography. This is aimed at fostering analytical skills, creativity, exploration of information and synthesise of ideas apart from creating narratives based on information and data gathered, thus contributing to the field of historical knowledge.

Through the learning activities, the learners are expected to understand the evolution of people, places, events and realise the importance of living harmoniously. Furthermore, they should be able to embrace the attributes of a good human being, imbibe and portray a sense of belonging, thus contributing to national pride, unity, solidarity, and protection.

The National History School Curriculum has four strands – historiography, evolving civilisation, governance and peace and identity, spirituality and culture. Each strand is consistent with a seamless flow of learning throughout the key stages which comprises competencies and learning objectives. The principles of competency-based learning take into account the realities of the immediate environment thereby forming the foundation of the history curriculum. It also covers themes and topics on Bhutanese socio-economic practices, tradition and culture, religious heritage and the story of how our great forefathers, the hereditary monarchs in particular, contributed to creating a country known in the whole world for its unique identity.

It is with great expectation that we place this course book at the hands of the teachers and learners so that it will be used extensively as reference to enrich their knowledge which will enable them to develop and strengthen their love and dedication to *tsa-wa-sum*, and become constructive and contributing citizens.

Tashi Delek!



Tashi Namgyal
Director

FOREWORD

Our education system is making all endeavours in fulfilling the directives issued by the Royal Government to make education meaningful to our students and outline the roles they are expected to play as future subjects of His Majesty the King and citizens of the Country. In the course of our students education, particularly while in the schools, our country's history plays the most significant role of inculcating in them our rich cultural heritage and traditions, developed and passed down from generation to generation. A good knowledge of our history amounts to knowing our own identity, religious leaders, rulers and important events in history. They have, in the course of time, built great monuments and institutions, developed and preserved the rich art, architecture, literature, culture and traditions and protected our sovereignty to this day. Bhutan history should then teach us and our students to be responsible citizens to our Tsawa Sum.

Therefore, our students in the lower classes were able to learn Bhutanese history, geography and social studies from the course contents and course books developed on these subjects. With the decision of the Ministry of Education to also localize the class XI and XII courses with Higher Secondary Examinations in Bhutan being conducted by the Bhutan Board of Examinations with effect from 2006, studies with Bhutanese contents are now being extended even into these classes.

In conclusion, we wish our teachers and students to learn from the book. We wish them to learn from the examples of our great historical leaders on their love, concern and dedication to their country and people so that our students of today may grow up not only to be educated and productive citizens possessing the highest Bhutanese virtues of love, loyalty and dedication toward our Tsawa Sum but also that they, individually and collectively, are able to contribute towards fulfilling His Majesty's visions of a strong, prosperous and sovereign independent Bhutan for all times to come.

Trashhi Delek



Thinley Gyamtsho
MINISTER
Ministry of Education

INTRODUCTION

The History Supplementary text is divided into two units. The first unit on Cultural Heritage has three chapters treating Zorig Chusum: the Thirteen Traditional Crafts, Bhutanese Literature and Dance Forms. The second unit on Emergence of Drukpa Kagyud has two chapters focused on Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism and on the Pioneers of Kagyud and Drukpa Kagyud Traditions of Buddhism.

In the earlier classes, we have studied about some selected crafts like painting, sculpture, tailoring and embroidery and their significance. However, we did not treat deeply enough any of the thirteen categories of crafts. Thus, the chapter on Zorig Chusum briefly presents all the thirteen traditional crafts to arouse the curiosity of the students to look for more examples and information on this topic. This chapter would also instil a sense of appreciation for our rich and unique patrimony.

The next chapter of Unit One is on Bhutanese Literature. Here we would be moving into a totally new area. This section discusses some popular genre of Bhutanese literature with examples. However, it is important to mark that the chapter does not present an exhaustive list. Consequently, the information in this chapter can be used as a guiding to explore other genres more and admire the rich reservoir of knowledge and exploit it.

The third chapter of Unit One is also a familiar chapter as we have discussed dance forms in the lower classes. Nevertheless, the extra information this section offers is on the secular dances and songs. The part on the religious dance is also treated differently, but there is greater scopes for exploring this chapter. This chapter would allow the students to appreciate and eventually value the variety of dance forms, a cultural wealth of our country.

The chapter one of Unit Two focuses on the fundamental differences between Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana forms of Buddhism. The reason for offering this chapter is to clarify the confusions that prevail in the minds of the Bhutanese children with regard to the differences between the major traditions of Buddhism. This chapter would help our students to understand the basics of Buddhism.

The last chapter projects the brief life history of eight great pioneers of Kagyud and Drukpa Kagyud traditions. We chant their names in our prayers but never have opportunities to discuss who these personalities are. Thus, the hardships and endurance that these great pioneers underwent firstly to acquire knowledge and secondly to transmit it in full measure would not only draw devotion to them but also make them realize that the “Right Effort” always pays in the end.

The special feature of this supplementary text is that it allows discussions revolving around local themes. For instance, while discussing the dance forms, we can use the Yak Chham as an example from Merak and Sakteng if you are from that locality, or even the Wochupai Zhey if you are studying in Paro. Thus, it is extremely important to use this supplementary text as a guiding framework that allows you to exploit your locality more in all the topics.

Trashie Delek

Dr Jagar Dorji
Chairperson
Social Studies Subject Committee

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Unit One: Culture and Heritage

Chapter 1

Zorig Chusum བཟོ་རིག་བརྒྱ་གསུམ།: The Thirteen Traditional Crafts

Introduction

In the earlier classes we have studied about some elements of art and architecture. In this chapter, we will study more about the traditional skills that are ancient yet classic and refined, colourful, and in many ways unique to the Bhutanese society. These traditional skills or crafts that the Bhutanese have mastered for centuries are called *Zorig Chusum* or the Thirteen Traditional Crafts. *Zo* བཟོ། means the ability to make while *rig* རིག་། signifies science or craft and *chusum* བརྒྱ་གསུམ། is thirteen.

Though the thirteen traditional crafts were practised from the beginning, it is commonly agreed that only in the late seventeenth century were they formally categorized, named and grouped during the reign of the fourth Druk Desi Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye (1680-1694). The thirteen crafts are:

1. *Shing zo* ཤིང་བཟོ།: Woodwork
2. *Do zo* རྡོ་བཟོ།: Stonework
3. *Par zo* པ་བཟོ།: Wood, slate and stone carving
4. *Lha zo* ལྗང་བཟོ།: Painting
5. *Jim zo* འཇིམ་བཟོ།: Clay sculpture
6. *Lug zo* ལུགས་བཟོ།: Bronze casting
7. *Shag zo* གཤག་བཟོ།: Wood turning
8. *Gar zo* གཤར་བཟོ།: Blacksmithy
9. *Troe ko* རྩོས་ཀྟོ།: Gold and silversmithy (Working metal ornaments)
10. *Tsha zo* ཚར་བཟོ།: Cane and Bamboo crafts
11. *De zo* དལ་བཟོ།: Art of Papermaking
12. *Tshem zo* ཚེམས་བཟོ།: Tailoring and embroidery
13. *Thag zo* ཐགས་བཟོ།: Art of weaving

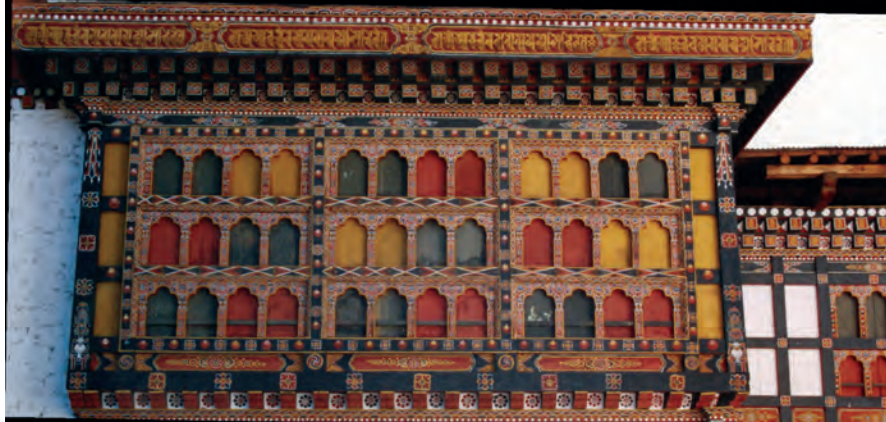
Shing zo

When considering the history of human dwellings, the use of timber predates the use of stones. Evidence of buildings framed with timber can be found in many countries, including even the pyramids of Egypt. Most virgin primeval forests that existed were used for structural framework and this began to develop into an art. Large temples were built simply using timber and without any metal fasteners. Instead, they were joined together using notches with thick pegs and nails made of wood, and these wooden structures were designed to last for centuries. Slowly, in many countries, woodworking became a profession and the craftsmen became the engineers, architects, carpenters and builders of their age. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, this craft began to disappear from many parts of the world as mechanization of works began when many industries appeared. While most people across the world are trying to rediscover and learn the secrets of this old tradition, the Bhutanese still practise this ancient art termed *shingzo*.



>> Figure 1.1. A cantilever bridge (Bazam བླ་མཐོང་མཐོང་)

Most of our houses, palaces, dzongs, temples and the bridges are fashioned from timber by the master carpenters, the *Zowo* འཕོ་ལོ་ and the *Zo-chen* འཕོ་ཆེན་. These are some of the finest examples of woodworking in the country and are appreciated for their uniqueness. Almost everything from designing, measuring, carving to completing the work is done by the master carpenters. In this, we can see the Bhutanese carpenters as the chief architects. People interested in becoming carpenters serve as apprentice under a master carpenter for a few years till they develop the confidence to practise the skills on their own. Master carpenters are found all over the Kingdom and for every important structure to be raised they are called upon to contribute. Trulpai Zowo Balep is even today revered as a great craftsman for his architectural skills exhibited during the construction of Punakha Dzong in 1637.



>> Figure 1.2. A window of a dzong

Do zo

Masonry is an old craft in Bhutan as in many other countries in the world. Most civilizations that flourished built vast cities, magnificent temples and palaces in stone. For instance, the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans all built fortresses of stones that express much of their culture. The pyramids of Egypt reflect the skills of the Egyptians, as do the *Dzongs* and *Chhoetens* མཚོད་རྟེན། of Bhutan. The art of stonework is not restricted or confined to one area in Bhutan, but is found throughout the Kingdom.



>> Figure 1.3. Trongsa Ta Dzong

The massive *Chhoetens* like those of Chhoeten Kora in Trashiyangtse and Chendebji are fine examples of the skills and artistic refinement possessed by the master masons. The people of Rinchengang village in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag are well known for their skills as they produce one of the finest stoneworks in the country.

The skills of the Bhutanese masons are reflected in the religious structures and secular buildings that characterize the Bhutanese landscape. The artisans from many villages have contributed to the construction of many dzongs.

Par zo

Carving in Bhutan has been experimented and perfected upon various materials like stone, wood and slate. Traditional Bhutanese designs carved on these materials create the most wonderful pieces of artwork. Since Bhutan has an abundant variety of wood, woodcarving is seen in many forms. Carved wooden masks of various shapes and sizes are used in religious dances; decorations are found engraved on houses, dzongs, palaces, temples and monasteries. Wooden symbols are found adorning altars and wooden containers like bowls and cups; wooden sheaths or scabbards and handles for knives and swords are all made of wood. The beautiful carved pillars and beams, printing blocks of wood and the altars are excellent examples of woodcarving.



>>Figure 1.4. A carved wooden pillar

Slate carving is another important art that has found its way into Bhutan. The material is found in abundance in Wangduephodrang and Pemagatshel dzongkhags. Slate is called *do nag* ལྔ་རྒྱུ་ and the artisan is known as *do nag lopen* ལྔ་རྒྱུ་སྒྲིབ་པ་ལོ་པ་།. Though not as diverse as woodcarving, works of slate carving can be seen everywhere: on the high passes, in the villages around *Chhoetens*, and at the junction of rivers. While crossing a pass or a *Chhoeten*, one can often come across carved images of deities, religious scripts and the mantras on slate that are embedded into the structures or rest on them.



>>Figure 1.5. Carving on slate

Stone carving has also survived in Bhutan for many centuries though less evident. One can often come across examples of stonework while passing through a village ruin or an earlier settlement. Products carved out of stone are the large grinding stonemills turned by water; the smaller ones used by peasants at home; the hollowed-out stones for husking grain; troughs for feeding animals; the images of deities carved onto large rocks and scriptures are examples that survive today.

Lha zo

One of the lasting impressions created in the minds of every visitor to Bhutan is the variety and range of designs and colours mirrored everywhere. These shades of colours are prominent in houses, in temples and monasteries, in dzongs and on every architectural piece. They are reflected on the prayer flags that adorn the mountain-tops and the sacred sites and valleys, in the intricately designed woven clothes, on wooden furniture and on the *chhoed sham* མཚོན་པལ་མ།, the altars. Undeniably, every material aspect of Bhutan is reflected in these shades of colours. Indeed, paintings represent the most amply people's beliefs and ideas, feelings and thoughts and aspirations and hopes, way of life, and the colours epitomize the Bhutanese art.

Painting is as old as the people themselves and the art of painting has been passed down from generation to generation, from a master painter, *lharip* ལྷ་རིལ་པ། to novice students. This profession, like most others, is considered an act of reverence and devotion and painters are believed to accumulate merit and influence their *karma*.

Painters work on a wide range including painting simple motifs and the eight lucky signs to undertaking painting huge scrolls of *Thangka* and *Thongdroel*. These are paintings of images of Buddhist deities that are often painted on the walls, or in simple cloth.

Thongdrols are bigger in size and a mere sight of these huge scrolls is believed to deliver us to nirvana. Thus, it brings merit not only to the believers but for the painters as well. A *lharip* can decorate a house, an altar, paint a *Thangka* or *Thongdroel*, the statues of deities or on any other article and piece that need painting.

The materials used in Bhutanese painting are the natural pigmented soils that are found in most places in the country. These natural soil pigments are of different colours and are named accordingly. The black lump of soil is known as *sa na* ས་གནག།, and the red lump as *tsag sa* བཙག་ས།, for instance. The yellow colours can be obtained from Gasa and Bumthang, the red colour from Wamrong, black from Phuentsholing and Trashigang and white from Paro.

Jim zo

Clay sculpture is one of the ancient crafts in Bhutan, which takes precedence over brass or other metal works. One of the most celebrated works of a *Jim zo Lopen* འཛིན་བཟོ་སྒྲིབ་དཔོན། is the making of clay statues, papermache and clay masks, and other religious items. The clay statues made by Trulku Dzing during the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal are still found in many dzongs and monasteries.



>>Figure 1.6. A clay statue

The other claywork found in Bhutan is the art of pottery. Traditionnaly, while the making of statues and other religious items is done by men, the art of pottery is associated with women. Elsewhere in the world, we find three distinctive types of clayware: earthenware, stoneware and the china-clayware. But in Bhutan, we find only the first type, the earthenwares. These earthenwares are still produced using the same ancient techniques, and regardless of time or place, basic pottery techniques have varied very little. Earthenwares are basically made of clay, often blended clay and baked hard, the degree of hardness depending on the intensity of heat.

What is required for success in the work on clay is the composition of clay by using balanced materials, skills in shaping the wet clay and firing to the correct temperature. The baked items were then coated with lac to render them waterproof. In Bhutan, this tradition is almost dying but one can still come across some artisans around. However, the Folk Heritage Museum in Thimphu is taking initiatives to revive this beautiful art.

Lug zo

The period in history between the Stone Age and Iron Age is known as the Bronze Age because bronze was commonly used to cast containers such as cups, urns, and vases. People also shaped bronze into battle-axes, helmets, knives, shields, and swords. They also made it into ornaments, and sometimes even into primitive stoves. Bronze was developed about 3500 BC by the ancient Sumerians in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Historians are unsure of how this alloy was discovered, but they believe that bronze may have first been made accidentally when rocks, rich in copper and tin, were used to build campfire rings. As fire heated these stones, the metals may have melted and mixed, forming bronze. This theory is supported by the fact that bronze was not developed in North America, where natural tin and copper ores are rarely found in the same rocks. Bronze appeared in both Egypt and China around 2000 BC.

The earliest bronze castings were made in sand, and this method is still used today, even for casting bells. However, clay and stone moulds were developed later on. Clay is usually used nowadays for making bells.

Bhutan has a long history of bronze casting. Evidence found within the monasteries suggests that amongst the settlers, particularly among those who came in the seventeenth century, were a variety of crafts people, who provided the monasteries with ritual objects and ornaments for the deities. Some of the migrating craftsmen established shops for bronze casting at Punakha, Simtokha, and Thimphu Dzongs. The remnants of a foundry for bronze casting can be seen in Punakha Dzong.

Shag zo

Shag zo or wood turning is yet another ancient tradition that is found in Bhutan. Like other traditions, *Shag zo* is still a vibrant art and represents a part of the material culture.

A person skilled and engaged in *shag zo* is known as *Shagzopa* གཤམ་པ་ - master of wood turning. Unlike other arts that are found almost in every part of the kingdom, this art is limited to the people of Trashiyangtse and Kengkhar in Mongar in Eastern Bhutan.



>>Figure 1.7. Wooden products



>>Figure 1.8. A shagzopa at work

Shagzopa are skilled in making a variety of bowls, plates, cups and containers from a wide range of wood. Wooden cups that are made from special knots of trees known as *zaa* མཐོ་མེད་ are highly prized and represent the finest tradition of a *shagzopa*. While wooden bowls and cups are designed by *Shagzop* of Trashiyangtse, the people of Kengkhar are known for the special container of *ara* ཨ་ར་ལྷ་མོ་ called *jandam* རྩ་དམར་མོ་.



>>Figure 1.9. Jandam from Kengkhar

Gar zo

The art of blacksmithing began with the Iron Age when primitive man first began making tools from iron. Thus, the art of crafting the crude metal found in certain type of rocks and soil into a usable implement has been around for a long time. Some of the tools that man used were spear or arrow-tips, crude axes and knives as well as agricultural implements.

Iron smelters were small furnaces built from rocks that could withstand repeated heating. These furnaces looked like bee-hives with an opening at the top and an entrance on the side. The furnace was filled with iron-ore and charcoal and then set to fire. When the temperature rises above 2,800 Fahrenheit, the iron flows and forms balls, which are later hammered and made into various implements.

The origin of blacksmithing in Bhutan itself is not clearly known. But recent findings show evidences of this art having been one of the earliest occupations of the Bhutanese people. Records can be traced back to the fourteenth century and the visit of one of the Maha-Sidhas, Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo (1385-1464). The iron cast suspension bridges over

many rivers in the Kingdom go back to the fourteenth century and are strongly assumed to be the work of this highly renowned builder recognized for his engineering skills and for constructing bridges over gorges in many parts of the Himalayans. It is believed that Thangtong Gyalpo constructed as many as eight bridges in Bhutan using iron that was extracted in Bhutan. The remains of these iron works can be seen in Trashigang Dzong and the National Museum at Paro.



>>Figure 1.10. Iron chain links from the time of Thangthong Gyelpo.
(Tachog Lhakhang: Paro)

Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), is another saint whose expertise in all the thirteen crafts, in general, and the art of blacksmithing, in particular, is extolled even today.

Evidences of extracting iron-ore and casting implements as recent as in the twentieth century can be traced in many parts of the Kingdom. One village which took up this art and paid tax to the government in the form of tools and implements and in raw iron is Barshong village in eastern Bhutan. The extraction holes that have been dug up and the crude wrought iron left behind can even be witnessed today. The other areas where this tradition of blacksmithing and the actual extraction of iron from the rocks were carried out are Woochu in Paro and Chakorla in Thimphu in western Bhutan.

With the import of many tools from the neighbouring countries, the tradition of extracting iron and casting implements have, however, declined over the years. This art might slowly disappear in the years to come. As the iron industry evolved over time, blacksmithing became a specialized trade. The blacksmith who made suits of armour was an armourer. Blacksmiths who made knives were blade-smiths. One who made locks was a locksmith. Blacksmith who shod horses was a farrier. But there was no such distinction

made amongst the Bhutanese. Today, there are only a few Bhutanese who practise this art. The majority of the blacksmiths are the wandering Tibetans that are found mostly in eastern Bhutan who make a living out of this art.

Troe ko

The art of ornament making is also vibrant. The master craftsman is known as *Troe ko Lopen*. Jewellery used in Bhutan are of two main types: the ones made of semi-precious stones like turquoise ཁྲ་མོ། coral རྩེ་མོ། or etched agate (*zee* རྩེ་མོ།), and the second type comprise of the silver and gold ornaments like brooches རྩེ་མོ།, bangles རྩེ་མོ།, necklaces, earrings, and finger rings. The master craftsman engages in producing all these ornaments besides working on the silver amulet container, traditional silver boxes for keeping betel leaf, areca nut and lime. Ritual objects like butter lamp containers, offering bowls as well as musical instruments are also made. Gilding on silver and copper is also an art practised by the silversmiths and goldsmiths.



>>Figure 1.11. Brooces and bangles

Tsha zo

Most of the forests in Bhutan are richly stocked with bamboos and canes of various species. Bamboo and cane are raw materials of great versatility and forms an integral part of the lifestyle and economy of Bhutan.

Tsha zo are of two kinds, one made of cane and the other of bamboo. These products actually complemented the use of wood items. Among the large practical uses, they are used for making a variety of containers- *bangchungs* བང་ཅུང་།, *palang* པལང་།, *chungchung* ཅུང་ཅུང་།, floor mats and mats for drying grains, musical instruments like flutes, matted bamboo for roofs and fences, traditional bows and arrows and as quivers, among others.



>>Figure 1.12. Cane and bamboo products

These bamboo and cane products are of great commercial value. Some of the master craftsmen are found in the villages of Kangpara and Kengkhar and in Dogar (Bjoka) in Kheng in central Bhutan. It provides part-time employment to the people and is also a source of income for the family. It is observed that there is no particular caste or community who are exclusively connected with this traditional craft.

De zo

The art of paper-making has been in Bhutan for several centuries. It is also likely that the tradition was actually taken up by the lay people but for monastic use since it was the monks who could read and write in the past. For instance, in Trongsa a man was particularly employed to make *Desho*. He was called *Dezop*. The raw materials were supplied in the form of tax by the villagers.

This tradition is also not widespread and is confined only to certain areas in the country. The art of paper-making is popular in Bomdeling and Rigsum Gonpa in Trashi Yangtse. It is a simple art which is taken up by both men and women.

Desho དཤོ་ཤོ་གླིང་ is especially made from the bark of a plant known as Daphne (*Deshing* དཤིང་ཤིང་). The trees are stripped of the bark and tied up in bundles and carried home. The bark is then soaked in water to wash off the outer layer and the residue of dirt and then let to dry in the sun. Once it is dried, the outer hard layer of the bark is peeled off leaving only the soft inner tissue of the bark that is again soaked in water.

This soft fiber is then put in a big pot and treated with ash-water. The mixture is then boiled for many hours. The boiled fiber is then beaten into with pulp heavy wooden hammers. The mixture is then poured onto a screen and dried in the sun. Once dry, the fiber becomes a thin sheet of translucent paper that is peeled off and is ready for use. Today, the paper is used for a wide range of purposes including writing scriptures, envelopes, and wrapping presents and gifts.

Tshem zo

The knowledge and art of tailoring, of cutting and sewing cloth which are the two basic aspects of making clothes from a pattern developed slowly and gradually in Europe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Tailoring of garments is a popular craft. The three main crafts in tailoring are: stitching clothes such as the *gho* གོ་ and *kira* ཀི་ར། worn by men and women, embroidery (*Tshemdrup* ཚེམ་དྲུཕ་) and appliqué (*Lhemdrup* ལེམ་དྲུཕ་) and the production of traditional Bhutanese *Tsho lham* ཚོ་ལམ་, boots. Today, tailors are important members of the community.



>>Figure 1.13. Thongdroel



>>Figure 1.14. Tsho lham

The monks also practise this craft and in particular embroidery and appliqué. They also work on large scrolls, the *thangkas*, where they depict gods and deities. The other is the production of traditional boots which are made from leather and cloth and worn during important occasions by the officers. This is an old craft but its origin is unknown. Special craftsmen in the villages also make simple boots from uncured leather. However, this is a vanishing practice in the villages though it has picked up recently in the urban centers with support from the government.

Thag zo

Weaving in Bhutan was first mentioned in the biography of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo and this was most probably the first art to appear in Bhutanese literature. In addition to this, reference is also made to local weaving in the autobiography of Tertön Pema Lingpa. He seems to have mastered not only the crafts of metal, wood and stone but also weaving. Other than this, literary sources on the art of weaving are generally scanty and scattered.

Women of eastern Bhutan are one of the most celebrated weavers though weaving is an art that has widely spread throughout Bhutan. For centuries, people of eastern Bhutan paid much of their taxes in woven materials. People from western Bhutan would travel all the way to places in eastern Bhutan to trade in woven clothes. One of the brisk tradeing places was Gudama¹ in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Some of the finest weaving comes from Khoma in Lhuentse, and Radhi, Bartsham and Bidung villages in Trashigang. While women from Lhuentse are known for *kishuthara* སྒྲུབ་ལྗེ་ཐགས་ར་སྒྲུབ།, the women in Trashigang weave some of the finest ghos and kiras such as *mentshi matha* སྒྲུབ་ཅིང་མ་ཐ། and *aikapur* ཨ་ཁི་ཀ་ཕུར།, among many others. One type of cotton fabric woven in Pemagatshel is the *Dungsam kamtham* གཏུང་བསམ་སྒྲུབ་ཐགས་མ།. Decheling village in Samdrup Jongkhar is known for their cotton fabric known as the *Decheling kamtham* ཅེ་ཤེ་ལིང་སྒྲུབ་ཐགས་མ།.



>>Figure 1.15. Bhutanese textile

¹ Gudama is the corrupt form of godown. The British had a godown in the area and the place came to be known as 'gudama'.

In western Bhutan, the women of Adang in Wangdiphodrang are known for *Adha marthra* འཇ་མར་ཐ་ར་, *Adha rachu* འཇ་རཅུ་ and *Adha khamar*. In central Bhutan, the Bumthaps are known for the *yathra* and the *marthra* that are made of yak hair and wool. People in the villages on the west bank of the river between Nabji Korphu and Kela are known for making clothes with nettle threads. Weaving is also a vocation amongst the Brokpas of Merak and Sakteng. Men contribute in spinning wool into threads. They weave from yak hair and sheep wool.

Looms used in Bhutan are of four types: backstrap looms, horizontal-frame looms, fixed horizontal frame with backstrap (used in Laya) and card looms (for belts). The predominant type is the backstrap loom that is found in almost every house in eastern Bhutan. They are set up on the porches or in thatched sheds to protect weavers and the cloth from the sun and rain. Card looms and horizontal-frame looms are also used. The backstraps are the indigenous looms while the horizontal frame looms and the card looms made their entry into Bhutan from Tibet.

The main fibers used today for weaving are raw silk, cotton and acrylic. Most of the raw silk is imported from India through Samdrup Jongkhar. People also use nettles as materials for weaving. Many native dye plants can be found in eastern Bhutan along with stick lac (*tsho*), and madder which are preferred to the artificial synthetic dye imported from India. Bhutanese also grow indigo plants, strobilanthes, while the yellow leaves called symplocos are gathered from the wild. Native turmeric (*yongka*) is another source of yellow.

Conclusion

The *Zo rig Chusum* is mostly the trade of the layman though crafts like painting, statue making, embroidery and appliqué are also practised by monks. Besides this, there are several crafts like making butter sculpture and sand mandala, exclusively taught and preserved in the dzongs and monasteries. All these crafts are the wonderful medium of human expression.

Today, the *Zo rig Chusum* is extolled for its uniqueness. For instance, the textile of Bhutan is known for its intricacy and uniqueness. The crafts are not only a source of income for the people but also show the identity of the nation. The skills that the craftsmen master are sources of knowledge distinct to the Bhutanese. Thus, in all its aspects, the *Zo rig Chusum* embodies the lifestyle and the philosophy of the Bhutanese.

Student Activity

Make a visit to the local community and write down the different crafts practised in the locality. Collect any additional information that you feel is important and but reflected in the text.

OR

Interview people who practice various arts and crafts in the locality and write about their history and their contributions to the society.

Chapter 2

Bhutanese Literature

Introduction

The term ‘Literature’ has no single meaning and taken broadly, it denotes all material, written or oral, and on any of the countless subjects. More narrowly, Literature may be regarded as writings in prose or verse or something that has been composed, which expresses ideas and values. The Bhutanese concept of literature refers rather to the general collection of texts like *Rigney* རིག་གནས། and *Zhung* ཇུང།. From this point, Bhutanese literature refers to those texts that yield knowledge and have positive value. As such, Bhutanese literature divides learning into five headings: grammar, dialectics, healing, the outer sciences and inner sciences that cover Buddhist doctrines and practices. These are not purely Bhutanese but are greatly influenced by the growth of Buddhism and have largely been influenced by other cultures too. The corpus of Bhutanese literature can be broadly classified as follows:

1. *Chhoejung* ཆོས་འབྲུང།: dharma histories and religious literature that include Kangyur and Tengyur
2. *Namthar* རྣམ་ཐང།: Religious biographies
3. *Gyal rab* རྒྱལ་རབས།: Historical chronicles or genealogies of dynasties or other important families.
4. *Logyu* ལོ་རྒྱུ།: Records or history of chronicles
5. *Ter ma* ཁཏེར་མ།: Treasure texts
6. *Srung* སྤྲུང།: Epics like that of Gesar of Ling
7. *Glu* ལྷུ།: Folk songs
8. *Nyam gyur* ཉམས་འགྱུར།: Religious poetry
9. *Nyan ngag* རྣམ་ངག།: Ornate poetry
10. *Karchag* དཀར་ཆག།: Catalogues
11. *Tshig dzod* ཆེག་མཛོད།: Dictionary

All of these genres literature deal mostly with the religious works but they also convey information on the social set up, the form of government and the economic life of the Bhutanese in general.

Chhoejung

Chhoejung means “origin of dharma” with reference to Buddhism. This type of literature includes dharma histories where the Buddhist canons, *Kangyur* ཀཀའ་འགུར། and *Tengyur* འཇུག་འགྱུར།, stand out as the best examples. *Kangyur* and *Tengyur* are both vast and complex and represent the teachings of the Buddha. *Kangyur* contains the translations of the Buddha’s teachings while *Tengyur* contains the commentaries on the texts found in the *Kangyur*.

The first translation of *Kangyur* and *Tengyur* was done by the Tibetan scholar Bu ston (1200-1364), which was finished in 1334. The first edition of the *Kangyur* was printed in 1410 in Peking, which was later taken up by others.

The *Kangyur* has three main sections known as *Dulwa* དུལ་ཁ། (Vinaya), *Do* མདོ། (Sutra) and *Gyud* རྒྱུད། (Tantra). *Chhoejung* also includes information on religious aspects other than those contained in the *Kangyur* and *Tengyur*. *Lhoyi Chhoejung* ལྷོའི་ཚོས་འབྱུང་། is a text authored by the 69th Je Khenpo, Geshe Gedun Rinchen. This text deals with the religious movements in Bhutan and the various schools of Buddhism that took root in Bhutan including the schools of Drukpa Kagyud, Chagzampa, Neyning pa, Shang pa Kagyud and others.

Namthar

Namthars are biographies of religious personalities. This type of biography treats not only religious issues but also socio-political issues. For instance, the *Namthar of Gyab Sindhu* contains the legendary account of *Gyab Sindhu*. It is considered an important work and the account records the legends relating to his visit to Bumthang in the eighth century and the establishment of a powerful Kingdom there that extended to the whole of Eastern Bhutan and as far as Hor in Tibet. It also presents the details of the invasion that *Gyab Sindhu* faced at the hands of the neighbouring King Nabudara, also known as Naoche, who ruled parts of the Duars, and of how he lost the battle along with his son. The climax of the *Namthar* is the visit of the Indian saint Guru Padmasambhava to Bumthang and of the introduction of *Vajrayana* or Tantric Buddhism to Bhutan. The work is a literary classic and has an important historical value for Bhutan.

The *Namthar of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo* is again of great historical importance. It gives us an account of 13th century Bhutan and of the visit of the important Buddhist saint Phajo Drugom Zhigpo who along with a line of lineage holders played a decisive role in shaping the religious movement in Bhutan. The biography gives us an account of his journey to Bhutan, his marriage to a Bhutanese lady and of the struggles that he faced especially with the other Buddhist schools. The biography is important as it reflects the social, religious and political aspects of Bhutanese life in the early years of the 13th century.

The biography of *Sherab Wangchuk* (1697-1765), the 12th Je Kunga Jamtsho (1769-1771) and the 13th Druk Desi by the 13th Je Yonten Thaye (1771-1775) gives us an account of Bhutan as it was in the 18th century including detailed information on the installation ceremony of Zhabdrung Thugtrul Jigme Dragpa, the mind incarnation of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal as the 27th Druk Desi (1810-1811). The details of this enthronement ceremony also throw light on the governance, modes of taxation and the social norms in the country. He was one great ruler of medieval Bhutan whose time saw numerous civil wars and witnessed the rise of the Manchus in Tibet, the extension and establishment of British power in India and of the rise of the Gorkhas in Nepal.

Sherab Wangchuk was born in a prominent family in the village of Khasakha in Thimphu. After serving as a monk till 1729, he was appointed as the Trongsa Dronyer when he was just twenty-five years old. As the Trongsa Dronyer, he was able to prevent the factional wars spreading into Eastern Bhutan, and for this success he was appointed as the Dronyer of Wangduephodrang.

While the civil war was still raging, he was appointed as the Paro Penlop and through his diplomatic skills, was able to end the war. On the death of the 12th Desi Ngawang Gyeltshen (1736-1739), he was unanimously elected as the 13th Druk Desi. The other literary works include those of Jamgoen Ngawang Gyeltshen written by the 9th Je, Shacha Rinchen (1744-1755), and of the 4th Desi, Tenzin Rabye (1638 - 1696) written by the 6th Je, Ngawang Lhundub (1724-1730).

Gyalrab

Gyalrab, which is similar to *dungrab*, literally means account or story of kings and can be translated as historical chronicles or genealogies of dynasties or other important families. The work of Gelong Ngawang, a 17th century monk historian of Trashigang Dzong, is a good example. The work is titled “*Gyal rigs jung khung sal wai dron me*,” རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཀྱི་ཀུན་སེམས་ལྟོན་པའི་དྲོན་མེ

བཞི་སྒྲོན་མེ། which is translated as “The Lamp which Illuminates the Origins of Royal Families.” This book is an authoritative text especially on the establishment of lineages in eastern and central Bhutan tracing their roots to Lhasey Tsangma, a Tibetan prince who settled in Dung Rawa in Jamkhar and Tshenkharla in Trashy Yangtse. The latest work on *gyalrab* is

the “*Druk gi gyal rab jung khung*” འབྲུག་གི་རྒྱལ་རབས་འབྲུག་ཁངས། by Lopen Pemala. This book traces the historical account of the ethnic composition of the people of Bhutan as well as the spread and growth of Buddhism, the coming of Zhabdrung to Bhutan and the establishment of the dual system of government, and finally the emergence of the Wangchuck Dynasty and the evolution of monarchy in Bhutan. The other work is by Lopen Nado titled *Druk Karpo* འབྲུག་དཀར་པོ། which presents the geographical features of Bhutan as well as the cultural, religious and political developments in the country since the 7th century.

Logyu

The term *logyu* literally means “tidings of years.” This type of literature maintains a record of history in chronological order. But it is often the case that they do not at all give a year by year account of subject, but rather present a narrative of events that are historical or quasi-historical in rough chronological sequence. The ballad of Pemi Tshewang Tashi and Gelong Sumdar Tashi are good examples of *logyu*.

Terma

Terma are the hidden texts that are rediscovered at a later date. The places from where such texts are discovered are called *ter kha* ཁཏེར་ཁ། and the treasure discoverer is called *terton*. Terton Pema Lingpa, is one the five major Bhutanese *tertons* who discovered texts not only within Bhutan but discovered important texts even outside Bhutan in many parts of Tibet. One such text discovered by Pema Lingpa is titled “*Lama Norbu Gyatsho*” ལྷ་མོ་རྡོ་རུ་བླ་མ་ཚོ།. Treasure discovery is still practised and a contemporary terton was the late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991). The Buddhist treasure discovery tradition centres round the activities of Padmasambhava who introduced Tantric Buddhism in Tibet and in Bhutan in the mid-eighth century.

Srung

The epic of *Ling Gesar Gyelpo* ལིང་གེ་སར་རྒྱེད་པོ་ is a fine example of literature that falls under the category of *srung*. Ling Gesar Gyelpo is the hero of one of the major epic cycles of Central and East Asia, known throughout Tibet and Bhutan. Gesar is a Buddhist hero and considered as a representative of Guru Padmasambhava and other deities. Ling Gesar Gyelpo is about the triumph of Buddhism over *Bon chhoe* and other religions. Such epics are recounted by people known as *srung khen* སྤྱང་མེན།. These people are called *srung khen* since they possess the art and knowledge of narrating the epics. The Gesar epic has been published in India, Bhutan and China. The Bhutanese version of the epic has thirty-one volumes.

Glu

Glu together with *gur* གུར། or *gurma* and *nyan ngag* form a part of the poetic tradition. *Glu* has its origins in music and dance. A large number of *glu* texts can be found in the terma literature including *Padma khang* པདྨ་པཀ་འཕགས། and *Mani kabum*. *Glu* can be also divided into the royal and popular songs: the royal songs or *gyal poi glu* རྒྱལ་པོའི་གླུ། and the popular or the *bangs gi glu* འབངས་ཀྱི་གླུ།. The songs also form a part of Bhutanese literature because they describe nature, religion, political issues, social values and many others using figures of speech and beautiful expressions. They also throw light on many events such as the advent of Buddhism to Bhutan.

Nyam gyur

Gur or *nyam gyur* is a part of *glu* which denotes a type of Buddhist song and can be found both in oral or written form. *Gur* might contain subjects dealing with spiritual realizations or religious instructions. Milarepa (1040-1123) was a great composer of *gur* and his songs run into hundreds of lines. These songs in a way helped to popularize Buddhism. Another great composer of *gur* was Drukpa Kuenley (1455-1529).

Nyan ngag

Nyan ngag means “speech agreeable to the ear” and is an ornate and metaphorically rich Buddhist poetry that has its origin in India. *Nyan ngag* is actually composed by people

with literary background including saints who had monastic education. *Nyan ngag* is the most ornate composition and stands out as a pure literary work.

Karchag

Karchag is a text that describes the construction of Buddhist structures like monasteries, temples, chhoetens and dzongs. It also contains a list of items like relics that chhoetens may contain. If it is of a holy place, it might contain the description of the sacred place along with a guide (*lamyig*) to it. We also find the names of devotees who extended help in the construction of these structures.

Tshig dzod

Tshig dzod is a dictionary. A number of Dzongkha dictionaries can be found built and edited by prominent Bhutanese scholars. *Dzongkha gi Tshig dzod* (Dzongkha Dictionary) published by Dzongkha Development Commission in 1993 and *Dzongkha gi Tshig dzod chenmo* (Advanced Dzongkha Dictionary) published by KMT publishing house in 2002 are excellent examples of *Tshig dzod*.

Conclusion

Bhutanese literature as classified above plays an important role in the academic lifestream of the Bhutanese. The monks in the monastic schools and also a great deal of our school children are all exposed to the above-mentioned genres of literature. The forms of literature listed above are not exhaustive but merely a mention of some popular ones. There are many other types of written literature, let alone the orally transmitted literature like *lozey*, *tsang mo*, folk tales, among other. All these forms constitute reservoir of Bhutanese knowledge and identity. Through the personalities portrayed in different types of literature, the Bhutanese philosophy is brought to light. These forms of literature are also sources of information that throw light on the past events and situations.

Student Activity.

1. The list of types of literature mentioned in the text above is not exhaustive. There are many other types of Bhutanese literature. Interview anyone in your locality and try to find a category of literature not mentioned in the text and briefly explain it. Share your findings with your classmates.
2. Choose any type of Bhutanese literary text and discuss with examples by interviewing anyone in your locality or through literature research.

Chapter 3

Dance Forms

Introduction

In Class VII, we briefly studied about religious dances. In this chapter, we will discuss the secular and religious dances that form an essential part of our rich patrimony. The dances are inextricably woven into the cultural and religious fabric of Bhutan. The nation's culture and religious influence can be clearly presented through these dances. The story of dances directly parallels the growth and evolution of Bhutan through the ages, and in particular of Buddhism in the country. Some western scholars who witnessed *Chham* འཆམ་ in Tibet or in other Himalayan regions have termed them as “wrathful dances,” since most of these masked characters have fierce appearance. Some call them as “mystery plays,” comparing them to the ancient Greek practice. Today, they are called “sacred” or “magic” dances or simply “masked ritual dances”.

Most of the *chham*, religious dances, were passed down through initiations and secret teachings. In the Buddhist world, it is believed that religious and sacred dances were first performed by Guru Padmasambhava in 765 A.D. when he performed the Vajrakilaya dance to overcome the demons and the Bon shamans for the establishment of Samye Monastery in Tibet.

The first treatise on mask dances was written in Tibet by the fifth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Lobzang Gyatso (1618-1682) and is titled ‘*Chham yig*’ འཆམ་ཡིག།. Mask dances are a part of the Tantric tradition and are believed to be one of the four Vajrayana teachings in which, through dances, one is cleansed of the sins and delivered to nirvana just by observing them. They also destroy evil forces and other obstacles. The Nyingma (the ancient) school was the first to establish the *chham* tradition that was taken up by the later Buddhist schools.

By the middle of the 15th century, Bhutan had developed its own sacred dance traditions associated with the great *Terton* (treasure discoverer) Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). With the visit of Zhabdrung and the establishment of *Chhoesi Nyiden* ཆོས་སྤྱོད་གཉིས་ལུང་།, in the seventeenth century, *chham* was first instituted in the Dzongs. Soon *chham* was performed in most monasteries and today one can witness it being performed in almost every monastery by the monks. Nonetheless, there are slight variations in the dance patterns that vary from one region to the other.

Chhams are performed both by the monks as well as the lay people. The one performed by the lay people is known as *Boe chham* བོད་འཆམ།. Initially, the *Boe Garp* བོད་གཤམ།, the attendants, performed *Boe Chham*. The masks often represent the protectors of religion (*chhoe chong srung ma* རྩོམ་སྤྱོད་སྤྲུང་མ།).

The Bhutanese consider the very act of watching sacred mask dances a spiritual experience that can help one acquire merit and free oneself from the worldly desires and attachments. It also enables spectators with an opportunity to reaffirm their devotion and commitment to lead virtuous lives. Adorned in rich robes of silk and brocade, performers wear masks representing saints and sages, protective deities, legendary personages, and animal forms. These dances also convey the notion of tradition and demonstrate cultural values.

Types of religious dances

If we study the themes of all the religious dances carefully, we come to find that the notion of the establishment of religion, subjugation of enemies of the doctrine and purification, among others, appear to occupy the central place. Thus, The religious dances can be broadly grouped under three categories. However, it is important to remark that the examples given under each category will overlap. They are:

1. Instructive Dances
2. Purification and Protection Dances
3. Victory Dances.

1. Instructive Dances

The instructive dances are performed mainly to impart the teachings of Buddhism. It is through these dances that the lay people understand the merit of practising the doctrine and the demerits of not doing so. A good example of the instructive dance is the *Shaw Sachi* ཤམ་གཤི། (The Dance of the Stag and Hounds) and the *Raksha Machham* རྩམ་མཆམ། (The dance of the Judgement of Dead). Given below is an example of one instructive dance.

Shawa Shachi

‘The Dance of the Stag and Hounds’ is a didactic dance with deep religious significance. It is a dance about a hunter and his hounds that give up their evil ways of hunting and are become devout Buddhists.

The dance has its origin in the 11th century. During the time of the great cotton-clad Yogi, Milarepa, there lived an excellent hunter by the name of Gonpo Dorji. One day, after consulting the local astrologer, he sets out with his two hounds on a hunting spree. The hounds chase after a stag and finally stumble into the cave Katya, where the great Yogi Milarepa is meditating on the border between Nepal and Tibet. The yogi calms all of them through his *gurma*, religious songs and to the surprise of Gonpo Dorji, he finds the stag and the hounds together intently listening to the *gurma* of Milarepa. Gonpo Dorji initially shoots at Milarepa but soon he also confesses his sins and, offering everything that he possesses, becomes a disciple. Gonpo Dorji is later reborn as Khilarepa, the mind incarnation of Milarepa.

2. Purification and Protection Dances

The purification and protection dances are performed to purify the ground for construction and to cleanse the place of defilement before conducting a religious ceremony and during consecration. It is also performed to imply that the doctrine is protected from the evil influences of its enemies. Some examples are given below.

Degyad chham རྟེན་ཆེན་འཆམ། The dance known as Degyad chham is the dance of the eight spirits. The eight spirits are the *Dagpo* (owners་དག་པོ།) of the three realms of existence namely heaven (the realm of the gods), earth (the realm of human beings) and the underworld (the realm of the *Klu* ལྷ། or nagas). The eight spirits are *lha* (godsལྔ།), *dud* (devils་དུད་ཀྱི།), *tsen* (demonsཅེན་པོ།), *gyalpo* (ruling spiritsརྒྱལ་པོ།), *Shin je* (lord of the death or Yamaཤིན་ཇེ།), *Mamo* (fearful demonམ་མོ།) and *sa dag* (owners of the landས་འདུག་པོ།).

The spirits as named above try and harm other sentient beings, while Pel Yeshey Gonpo, the protecting deity with his extraordinary powers, takes the form of the chief of every spirit and brings them under his control. Pel Yeshey Gonpo takes up such a form to avert the harm of the spirits falling on to sentient beings and also in order to protect and safeguard the teachings of Lord Buddha. The dance is performed to invoke the faith and devotion of the people and to reaffirm the relationship between the protecting deities and humans.

Padling Ter Chham ཕད་གླིང་གཏིར་འཆམ།

Treasure Dance of Tamzhing or *Padling Ter Chham* is also known as the *Tshang pai Ging chham* རྩ་ཕུ་ཕུང་གཏིར་འཆམ། and traces its origins to the great saint and treasure revealer of the 15th century, Pema Lingpa. It is said that when Tertön Pema Lingpa was about to consecrate and sanctify the monastery of Lhundrub Choeling in Tamzhing, Bumthang, he dreamt of five brothers who claimed to be the tantric practitioners from Tongsum, “the Non-forgetting World of Three Thousand.” They performed a dance and asked Pema Lingpa to perform this dance while consecrating the monastery. After he woke up, the dance was written down immediately as performed by the five brothers. He later taught this dance to his followers. Today, the dance is still performed by the people in Tamzhing monastery. People strongly believe that witnessing this dance will save them and their families from any harm and misfortune befalling them. The dance is also believed to please the virtuous gods and spirits.

3. Victory Dances

The victory dances are performed to celebrate the victory of Buddhism over its enemies who tried to obstruct its propagation.

Chhoe zhey ཆོས་གནས།

“The Dance of Religious Offerings” has its origins in the 12th century and is attributed to Tsangpa Gyarey, the great ascetic and founder of the Drukpa Kagyud school of Buddhism. The dance, tracing its origins to Tsangpa Gyarey, is connected to a pilgrimage to Mount *Tsari*. Tsangpa Gyarey was on his way to *Tsari* to open the gateway for pilgrims when he was stopped from going further by the guardian deity of the *Yul Tsho*, turquoise lake, who turned into a frog, the size of a yak. Tsangpa Gyarey jumped onto the frog and danced. The deity of the turquoise lake was subdued and made the protector of Mount *Tsari* which he could then open for the devotees.



>>Figure 3.1. *Chhoe zhey*

Based on this episode, the *Chhoe zhey* was performed to celebrate the victory of Buddhism against its enemies. Mount *Tsari* became one of the religious sites for pilgrimage and many Bhutanese visited it in the past.

Chhoe zhey is performed by the lay dancers dressed in black gowns and silk brocades. They wear a silver amulet and a headband known as *thod* ཐོད. It is said that this dress was once used by the earlier Desis while migrating from Thimphu to Punakha in winter and from Punakha to Thimphu in summer. It was also the dress of the Kagyud monks in the earlier times before they actually began dressing in the red robes like today.

The *dra nyan* རྩལ་ལྷན།, guitar dance, is also performed in a similar way wearing the same dress but with a guitar in the hand of every dancer.

Padling ging sum པད་ལྷིང་གིང་གསུམ།

The three *ging* dances of Pema Lingpa are *gyug ging* རྒྱུག་གིང་།, *dri ging* རྩི་གིང་། and *nga ging* འུ་གིང་།. It owes its origins to Pema Lingpa, the great tertön. It is supposed that Pema Lingpa witnessed this dance being performed at the celestial abode (*Zangdo Pelri* ཟང་དོ་པེ་རི་ལྷ་ཁང་།) of Guru Padmasambhava. He witnessed how, while performing this dance, the evils known as *Nyul leyma* རྒྱུ་ལེ་མ། (similar to *dud* or *yidag* ཡིད་གསལ།) who obstructs and opposes the doctrine, were overpowered and subdued.

Gyug ging is performed by the laypeople wearing wrathful masks. While performing this dance, they depict the scene catching the *Nyul leyma* and subduing them with their selfless clubs of wisdom.

Dri ging is also performed wearing wrathful masks. The dance projects to the spectators how they pacify and suppress the *Nyul leyma*, purify their *Karma* and defilements and deliver their souls to heaven.

Nga ging is performed carrying a drum and a drumstick. Through this dance, the spectators are able to witness how the dancers offer the vanquished *Nyul leyma* to the *Rigzin lha*, the Holder of Pure Awareness. It also depicts the burial of all evil forces and at the same time the victory of the teachings of Lord Buddha and its extensive propagation without any obstacle and impediment. The three *ging* dances are considered sacred and are supposed to bring merit to all sentient beings that witness these dances.

Students Activity

Visit a nearby dzong or temple and witness the *Chham* being performed and choose one interesting dance and write its history and significance.

OR

If there are any dances distinct to the locality, you can write on the history, significance, dress code, numbers of dancers, etc. of the dance. This task can be taken as group

work and the finding presented to the class. The information can be gathered through observation, interview and any other convenient techniques.

A most *chhams* are performed wearing different masks, you can choose one dance and find out the names of the masks and write a paragraph or two about these masks.

Secular Dances and Songs

Secular dances are also an integral part of Bhutanese social life and an essential element of entertainment and celebration. They also have deeper spiritual significance like ensuring accumulation of merit and as a vehicle of deliverance from sufferings and attainment of ultimate happiness. The themes often revolve round eminent religious personalities and monasteries, on culture and tradition and about love and affection. In essence, the songs and dances reflect the values of the society. These songs also vary from region to region. The semi-nomads of Merak and Sakteng, the Doyas of Samtse, the yak herders of Laya and Lingzhi all have their own songs and dances that are distinct to their region.

Secular songs and dances can be classified into two main groups: the traditional and the modern. *Zhung dra* ཞུང་དྲ་, *Boe dra* བོེ་དྲ་, *zhey* ཇེལ་ and *zhem* ཇེམ་, *Tsangmo* འཕྲུང་མོ་, *Alo* ཨ་ལོ་, *Khorey* ཁོ་རེེ་ and *Ausa* ཨ་འུ་ fall under the category of traditional songs while *Rig sar* རིག་སར་ falls in the category of modern songs.

Songs may be further categorized into those that are dance-oriented and those that are simply vocal. *Zhung dra*, *Boe dra*, *Yul dra*, *zhey* and *zhem* are all examples of songs that can be danced while others like *Tsangmo*, *Alo*, *Khorey* and *Ausa* are only sung.

Songs can also be classified into religious and secular songs. *Choe lu* ཇོེ་ལུ་ and *Gurma* གུ་རུ་ are religious songs while *Alo*, *Khorey* and *Ausa* are secular. However, in this section we will treat the songs under two categories:

1. Songs with dances
2. Songs without dances.

1. Songs with Dances

Zhey is regional in character and is identified with Zhabdrung in the seventeenth century. Of the many *zheys*, the most notable are the *Wang zhey*ཕང་ཞེ་མེ།, *Wochu pai zhey*ལོ་ཅུ་པའི་ཞེ་མེ།, and the *Nub zhey*ནུབ་ཞེ་མེ།.

Wang zhey is originally the dance from the valleys of Thimphu, *Wochu pai zhey* from the village Wochu in Paro, and *Nub zhey* from Trongsa. The *zhey* is mainly performed by men. The dress worn by the dancers differs from region to region and *zhey* to *zhey*. On the contrary, *zhem* is performed by women and in case both men and women participate in the dance, it is known as *zhem gor*ཞེ་མེ་གོར།.



>>Figure. 3.2. Wang zhey



>>Figure 3.3. Woochu pai zhey

Zhung dra literally means the tune, melody or piece of music of the centre, often referred to the dzongs that were centres of administration and governance. Interestingly, most of the themes of *Zhung dra* focus on the establishment of the doctrine.



>>Figure 3.4. Zhung dra

Boe dra are the songs of the *Boe garp*, the attendants, and encompass a variety of themes.

2. Songs without Dances

Alo is usually associated with eastern Bhutan. It is sung mainly in the dzongkhags of Lhuentse, Trashigang and Pemagatshel. The ones sung in Lhuentse are known as *Kurtod pai Alo* ཀུར་ཏོད་པའི་ཨོ་ལོ།, the ones from Trashigang as *Tshangla Alo* རྩ་ཤང་ལོ།, the ones from Trongsa as *Mangde pai Alo* མང་འདུས་པའི་ཨོ་ལོ། and the ones from Pemagatshel as *Dungsam pai Alo* དུང་སམ་པའི་ཨོ་ལོ།. The main feature of *Alo* is that it is sentimental and is often sung to a departing friend or family members.

Khorey can be danced as well as sung. It is also a feature of the people of Pemagatshel and of the Brokpas of Merak and Sakteng. Unlike *Alo*, *Khorey* are joyous songs.

Ausa are songs that are unique to the valleys of Haa in western Bhutan.

Student Activity

Choose a song that is danced or just sung and comment on its theme and the occasion for performing it.

The Nine categories of Songs

The songs sung or sung and danced in Bhutan can be classified into nine categories. The examples given in the songs with dance and songs without dance will also fall in the nine categories as follows:

Chhoe glu རྩོམ་གླུ། and *Gurma* མགུར་མ།

The religious songs of the folk tradition must be distinguished from those called *gurma*. *Gurma* are those taken from religious texts such as the songs of the great saint Milarepa. Similarly, *chhoe glu* also has some religious themes, or it honours great lamas or religious figures.

Lama chhoe tod gi glu ལ་མ་ཆེས་བསྟོད་གི་གཞུ།

These are songs composed in praise of lamas, monasteries and sacred places. These songs are still composed nowadays and are popular. Such songs accompany consecration of monasteries and temples and are sung during religious congregation.

Gyal poi tod glu རྒྱལ་པོའི་བསྟོད་གཞུ།

These songs are sung in honour of kings and of great personalities. The themes often revolve round kings and their dynasties, their contribution to the country and the development activities initiated and the great welfare enjoyed by the society. Such songs are still composed and sung on occasions like the birth anniversaries and National Day.

Ga glu དགའ་གཞུ།

Most congregational gatherings are auspicious and mark joyous and festive occasions in the life of an individual, a family, a society or a country. Singing and dancing to celebrate happiness mark such occasions.

Dza glu མཛེས་གཞུ།

Love songs are very popular in Bhutan as elsewhere, and the themes of most of the *rigsar* songs are love and befriending girls. The nature in all its grandeur is compared to the girl's beauty. These songs are sung mostly in public or on formal occasions and for general amusement.

Thrul glu ལྟོགས་གཞུ།

The songs of emotions are not sung during formal occasions but may be sung to an individual. These songs are not so popular as the love songs.

Pa nyam gi glu དཔལ་ཉམས་གི་གླུ།

Heroic songs are popular songs that recount the life and brave deeds of the culture's heroes and heroines. In olden days, family elders sang these songs to their children to encourage bravery and fearlessness and to revive the glorious past. The majority of such songs were taken from the Gesar epic, and others sung in praise of kings.

Bag ton gi glu བཀའ་སློབ་གི་གླུ།

Marriage traditions are observed by all sections of the Bhutanese population. The day is of great significance for the bride and the bridegroom and for the family members. It is a day of great enjoyment and marriage songs form an indispensable part of the occasion.

Trashi mon glu བཞིས་སློབ་གླུ།

These songs of good wishes are sung on every festive occasion and during all social or cultural events of importance. Trashi Lebay song usually ends the occasion where everyone joins in the dance. The lyrics stress on the peace and harmony, prosperity and affluence, longevity and a promising future for the entire gathering.

Student activity

1. Interview a few elderly people and write their opinions on the various songs in their society.
2. In groups of four or five students, choose any song specific to a locality and comment on its type, theme and significance and present the findings to the class.

Unit TWO: Emergence of Drukpa Kagyud

Chapter 1

Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana

Introduction

For over two and a half thousand years, peoples from across the world have responded to the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism is today one of the four major religions in the world besides Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. It is also one of the fastest growing religions and continues to be a great source of inspiration to many people all over the world. Buddhism originated in India around 560 B.C. with the birth of Gautama Buddha to King Suddhodhana and Queen Maya. Buddhism has spread far and wide now. In the middle of the third century B.C., the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka carried out a variety of activities that had great impact on Buddhism. He played an important role in expanding Buddhism beyond its earlier geographical boundaries through a series of missions. These efforts contributed to Buddhism becoming an important religion and these missions served as a model for later Indian kings to send missionaries across the seas. Through the efforts of Ashoka's son Mahinda, Buddhism was exported to Sri Lanka, the Himalayan regions and Burma, amongst others.

The fervent support that Buddhism received during the reign of King Kanishka led to a series of reforms that were introduced. These reforms led to the division of Buddhism into various schools. There are three main schools of Buddhism that are practised today. They are Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. All schools in general agree about the Four Noble Truths, the Eight Fold Path, and the teachings about karma and nirvana.

Theravada

Theravada is also known as Hinayana. The Sanskrit term for Hinayana is “Lesser Vehicle” or “Small Vehicle,” of salvation. It is a conservative and traditional Buddhist way. By the time of the beginning of the Mahayana movement, around 200 B.C., early Buddhism had witnessed an extensive development of different traditions over two hundred years. The records claim the existence of eighteen different traditions though many more existed, with some passing out of existence. Many of these early traditions, now generally referred

to as nikayas, or “groups,” are very well known, having left a historical, textual, and doctrinal legacy. The best known of these early nikayas include the:

- i. Mahasamghikas, who internally divided to produce the Ekavayavaharikas, Lokottaravadins, Gokulikas, Bahusrutiyas, Prajnapativadins, Caitikas, and perhaps several others.
- ii. Sthaviras, who internally subdivided into the Vatsiputriyas, Sarvastivadins, and Vibhajyavadins. The Vatsiputriyas then internally divided producing at least four other nikayas. Further, the Sarvastivadins internally divided, producing the Sautrantikas.
- iii. Finally, the Vibhajyavadins subdivided producing the Mahisaskas, Kasypaiyas and the *Theravadins*. The only one of these which now survives is the Theravada which is also called “Way of the Elders,” or the “Doctrine of the Elders”, the ‘Elders’ being the group of the Buddha’s disciples who, immediately following his death, convened the First Great Council. It is Theravada Buddhism, also known as Hinayana, which now survives in Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Kampuchea (Cambodia), and Laos, and is, therefore, geographically referred to as the Southern School.

The Canon

The purpose of the First Great Council was to recite the Buddha’s teachings in order to agree upon a definitive version. So, what precisely did the Elders agree to be the foundation of their religion? The answer is that no one can be absolutely sure because the Buddha himself wrote nothing and his teachings were not written down in their entirety until four hundred years after his death.

It is believed that three of the Buddha’s chief disciples had memorized the three sections into which the Theravada canonical literature is now divided:

- i. Ananda is said to have memorized the *Sutta-pitaka* (the discourse basket or Sermons), a record of the Buddha’s teaching-stories in five collections;
- ii. Upali is said to have memorized the *Vinaya-pitaka* (the discipline basket) which records the rules for members of the Sangha and some for lay Buddhists established on the authority of the Buddha; and

- iii. Kassapa is said to have memorized the *Abhidharma-pitaka* (metaphysics, philosophy and psychology basket), seven scholastic treatises cataloguing kinds of mental states and possible relationships between perception and real objects of perception.

Though much of the Abhidharma was certainly composed at a much later date, both the Suttas and Vinaya lead directly back to the First Council and may indeed contain the actual words of the Buddha himself. These canons are referred to as the Pali Canon, as they are preserved in the Pali language of ancient India. It is also referred to as the *Tipitaka*, the “Three Baskets.”

The Principles of Worship

It was Vinaya or Discipline which laid the foundation of early Buddhism, and which in theory has governed the Theravada school ever since. Theravada monks submit to 227 rules of conduct that contain precise instructions about all aspects of religious life.

They are, for example, required to beg for their food, to abstain from eating after midday and to own no more than eight specified possessions, *viz.* a three-part robe, a loin cloth, a begging bowl, a water strainer, a razor and a needle. From an acquaintance with these rules, it is not difficult to understand the nature of the original Buddhist Sangha. The code of morality and conduct lies at the very heart of Theravada Buddhism. It contains little which is addressed to the layman and is meant for the monastic life. Both in early Buddhism and in Theravada today, the religious life is quite clearly regarded as in every way superior to that of the ordinary citizen. Indeed, one must become a monk to make any real progress of achieving Nirvana.

In essence, Theravada Buddhism is a religion for those who have renounced the world and the *Vinaya* (Discipline) clearly sets out to prevent monks from becoming entangled in worldly affairs. They are not allowed to work, to have money, to cook their own food, or to live under the same roof that a woman shares.

The Theravada Sangha enables the individual to pursue a severe and narrow path for his own salvation. The spiritual quest is, therefore self-centered. One becomes a monk for one's own benefit and not for the entire sentient beings as intended by the Mahayanists and the society in which one lives. There is, of course, a relationship between the Sangha and the society that is subtle. As long as a monk has to beg for food, he can never be completely

independent of the society. His daily almsround serves as a spiritual and moral example to all who see him pass. Giving alms is a generous thing to do and in this way the monk also provides the occasion for virtue.

Mahayana

Far from being the result of schism, or any form of dramatic upheaval, Mahayana Buddhism, the path of compassion evolved gradually, over a period of hundreds of years. In the hundred or so years following King Ashoka, there was a strong feeling in the various Buddhist communities that the religion had become too elitist and ecclesiastic, focusing on the monastic vocation at the expense of the path of the lay disciple.

The new movement that was growing emphasized a strong commitment to the ideal of compassion and merit shared by all sentient beings. It suggested in place of the goal of nirvana and the path to its attainment a new and higher aspiration for full Buddhahood through a path called the bodhisattva path or path of future Buddha's. Its hallmark was the creation of a new literature and the audacity to refer to itself as the "*Mahayana*" or "Greater Vehicle", while branding all earlier Buddhism as "*Hinayana*" or "Lesser Vehicle."

This new movement which emphasized on Buddhism as a liberating vehicle for the masses of Buddhist practitioners offered a new literature. This new literature was initially identified as the *Prajnaparamita* or "Perfection of Wisdom." This literature gave a new theory concerning the nature of Buddhahood. Mahayana drew much of its philosophical content from the Mahasamghika and Sarvastivadin schools of early Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhists put strong emphasis on the virtue of compassion, Karuna for all sentient beings. While the Hinayana schools had stressed wisdom, *Prajna*, the Mahayana, saw the combination of wisdom and compassion as the supreme ideal. Mahayana Buddhists also lay emphasis and stressed on emptiness, *Shunyata*, of all phenomenon.

Nagarjuna preached the Middle Doctrine or Madhyamika. His philosophy set out to show that reality resides somewhere in the middle, between two extremes. He described this mythical, inexpressible middle ground as "Emptiness" or *Shunyata*.

The other philosophy of the Mahayana Buddhists was the transcendent nature of the Buddha, and the attainment of Buddhahood for all beings by means of a course of practice known as the Bodhisattva path. Bodhisattva is the person who, having reached the

supreme spiritual pinnacle, chooses, of his own free will, to remain within the cycle of rebirth in order to promote the Buddha's Dharma and to help others along the path to Enlightenment.

Two centuries after Nagarjuna, two brothers, Asanga and Vasubandhu, began the second great philosophical tradition of the Mahayana called the *Yogacara*. While Madhyamika concentrated on an intellectual investigation into the nature of reality, *Yogacara* was concerned with psychology and with the insights that might be gained through meditation. The Yogacara School stressed that everything is merely the manifestation of the universal mind and that the subject-object duality is an illusion. And through meditation, the unity between subject and object may be directly experienced.

Of the fundamental differences in outlook that distinguishes the Hinayana School from the Mahayana, perhaps the single most important, concerns their respective attitudes towards the Buddha himself. Hinayana schools placed great emphasis on the events of the Buddha's life and their scriptures claimed to record his actual words. Although Mahayana Buddhism has equal veneration for the Buddha and his Dharma, the movement has devoted much of its energy to considering the Buddha's role as the representative of a transcendent principle, rather than concentrating on his life as an exemplary human being.

Vajrayana

There developed a form of Buddhism known as Vajrayana, the "Indestructible Way to Unity" focusing on the esoteric tradition. It is also known as the "Diamond Vehicle" and predominantly arose in northwest India during the seventh century A.D. It is also sometimes called the Tantrayana or Mantrayana (Vehicle of Sacred Utterance), said to be the path that allows enlightenment within a single lifetime.

It combined elements of Mahayana philosophy with the esoteric physiological and psychological practices of the emergent Tantric oral literature to form a powerful, unorthodox, and highly successful method for attaining enlightenment. It also includes extremely rigorous practices derived from the tantric yoga of India. After developing tranquility, freedom and loving kindness, as encouraged in Mahayana Buddhism, dedicated Vajrayana aspirants are guided through a series of tantric practices by gurus. The highest of these are lamas, who are revered as teachers. Some are considered as incarnate Bodhisattvas who have realized the Supreme Truth and can help others advance towards it.

Vajrayana also refers to the eternal Buddhahood resident in all beings, unsplittable and achieved through the cutting edge of wisdom (prajna). The spiritual exercises of Tantra aimed at identification with the Buddhahood here and now, and conceived of the individual as being of the same nature as the universe. So by self-purification, one could visualize one's chosen deity or Buddha-figure and thus attain unity with it.

The highest form of Vajrayana is the use of the subtle vital energies of the body to transform the mind. The practices used to transform the mind are levitation, clairvoyance, meditating continuously without sleep, and warming the body from within while sitting naked or thinly clad in the snow.

Vajrayana literature developed late in the school, thus necessitating a primary emphasis on the role of the guru or the spiritual master. The teachers utilized mantras, mandalas, mudras and others to bring about dramatic results for their disciples. The great saints of Vajrayana are called Mahasiddhas, known for possessing magical powers.

Conclusion

Mahayana Buddhism that was superseded by practices known as Mantrayana, Vajrayana, Tantrayana or simply Tantric Buddhism is popular in Bhutan. The Buddhism that entered Bhutan progressed over the centuries becoming an ever more subtle and powerful instrument for spiritual achievement. As a Tantrayana, it asserts that Enlightenment can be achieved in a single lifetime. The countless lives that Buddhism had traditionally insisted upon were to be achieved in a few brief years. Since Tantra is of immense power, its methods must be kept secret and only imparted by a spiritual master or guru. Tantric Buddhism deals with psycho-physical experience. It also involves the visualization of deities that are either benign or wrathful. Therefore, Tantric Buddhism has elaborate rituals and a vast pantheon of gods, goddesses, saints and demons. Another feature is the belief in the reincarnation of lamas.

The two great collections known as the *Kangjur*, 108 volumes, regarded as the teaching of the Buddha, and the *Tengjur*, 225 volumes of treatises and commentaries by Indian masters and other texts, serve as the main source of Buddhist knowledge. The centres of learning are the dzongs, monasteries, *shedras* and *lobdras*.

Student Activity

Do a group activity to trace the historical development of Buddhism in your locality. You can visit the community and find out about the emergence of Buddhism in the locality. The local understanding of Buddhism can also be recorded and presented to the class.

Chapter 2

The Pioneers of Kagyud and Drukpa Kagyud Traditions of Buddhism

Introduction

In Class IX Bhutan History, we studied about the propagation of Drukpa Kagyud tradition in Bhutan pioneered by Phajo Drugom Zhigpo in the 13th century as well as the meaning of Kagyud. Since the 13th century onwards, Drukpa saints in the name of the Ralung's seventh incumbent Jamyang Kuenga Sengye (1314-1347), Ralung's thirteenth incumbent, Kuenga Penjor (1428-1476), Ralung's fourteenth Prince-abbot, Ngawang Choegyal (1465-1540), the Divine Madman, Drukpa Kuenley (1455-1529) and many others have visited Bhutan to diffuse the Drukpa teachings in Bhutan. Finally, it was Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who unified Bhutan under the Drukpa banner. Thereafter, Drukpa ideologies have been deeply embedded in all spheres of Bhutanese life. However, nothing has been discussed on the great masters of the Kagyud and the Drukpa Kagyud traditions of Buddhism. Thus, in this chapter, we will discuss about the great masters who founded, consolidated and propagated the Kagyud and the Drukpa Kagyud traditions of Buddhism before its advent in Bhutan.

Tilopa

Early Life

Tilopa was born in 988 AD in the city called Zako in East Bengal to Brahmin Salwa and Saldenma. He also had an elder sister called Saldron. Before his birth, Tilopa's father, Salwa, and mother, Saldenma, made many offerings with the hope to be blessed with a son. On his birth, many astrologers came to prophesise his future but there was no similarity. Some said that he had the marks of a Buddha while others said that he possessed marks of a human being, a god, a demi-god, a naga, among others. He was named Salyo.



>>Figure 2.1. Tilopa (Paro Dzong)

Spiritual Education

In the initial phase of his childhood, Tilopa herded buffalos. However, one day, he had a vision of some women who instructed him not to stay idle herding buffalos but to go to the cemetery of Salavihara and to look for a master. Following the instructions that he received in his vision, he went to the cemetery and met the great master Lawapa from whom he received some teachings.

His other master was Nagarjuna who gave him instructions and named him Nada Tilo. He also received instructions from Namphar Gyalwa and Brahmin Saraha.

He even spent twelve years in strict meditation at Somapuri where he attained a high level of knowledge. For the next twelve years, he unified his meditation practice with his daily work of pounding sesame seeds during day.

Tilopa is also believed to have received direct teachings from Buddha Vajradhara (Dorji Chhang).

Transmitting his teachings

Tilopa wandered mostly in Bengal preaching, and meditating. Among his students, Naropa received his main teachings. He also debated with many heretics and subjugated them.

The greatest achievement of Tilopa is that he was the pioneer of the Kagyud lineage. He entered parinirvana in 1069 leaving behind a tradition that had spread far and wide.

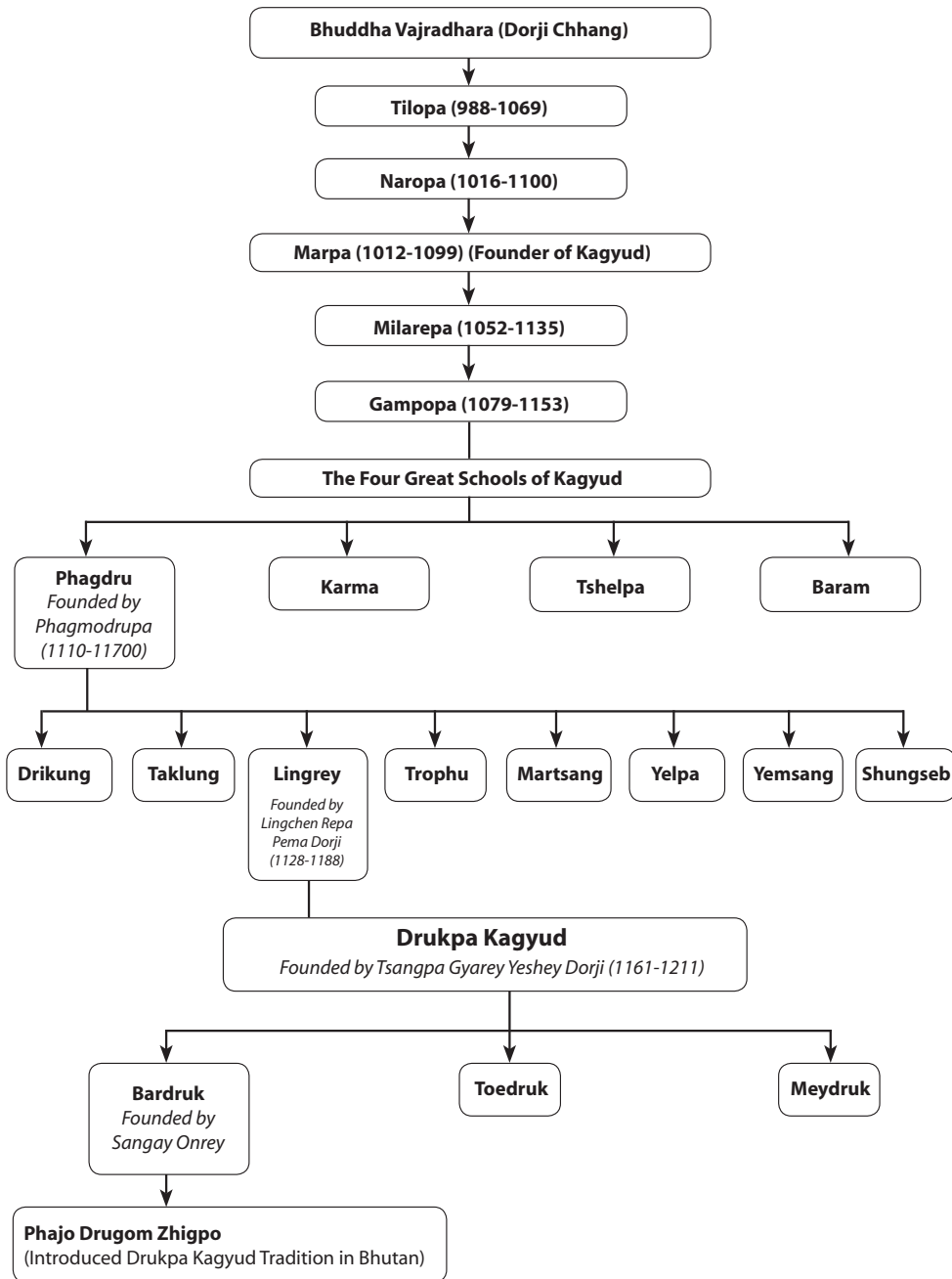
Naropa

Early Life

Naropa was born in 1016 corresponding to the ninth month of the Fire Male Dragon year in the city of Dzambu in Srinagara, a district of Bengal in the east of India. His father was King Ziba Gocha (Santivarman) and Queen Pelgi Lodre (Srimati), daughter of King Kelden Dragpa (Srimatkriti). Before the birth of Naropa, the wish of the royal couple to have a son did not materialize. They had a daughter called Princess Pelgi Yeshey (Srijnana). Thus, taking the spiritual advice of Dragpai Lodre (Yasomati), the royal couple made lavish offerings and said prayers with full devotion.

Thus, Brahmin Sangwai Lodre (Guhyamati) was invited on the birth of their son to prophesise the future of the young prince. The Brahmin prophesised that the child would either become the Lord of the Earth or a Buddha and it was named Kuntu Zangpo (Samantabhadra).

The royal couple had deep regard for the doctrine, but yet they wished their only son to succeed as the king. The deep interest in dharma displayed by the child worried his parents. Thus, they prevented him from learning to read and write. However, the boy had no difficulty of learning in secret. At the age of eleven, Naropa was able to convince his parents to let him go to Kashmir to receive the teachings of the Buddha. He was allowed to go but on the condition that he returned.



Please note:

The arrow mark (↓) means “master of” or “teacher of.”

The plain line (|) indicates that a religions tradition developed offshoots.

>>Figure 2.2. Geneological chart of Kagyud and Drukpa Kagyud spiritual lineage



>>Figure 2.3. *Naropa (Paro Dzong)*

In Kashmir, Naropa was ordained as a lay disciple by Namkhai Dragpa (Gaganakirti). He was also named Namkhai Ningpo (Gaganagarba). He studied rhetoric, arts, medicine, grammar, and epistemology. During his stay in Kashmir for three years, he mastered the five branches of learning and became an outstanding scholar. Then, he returned home accompanied by thirteen scholars.

Naropa learnt and explained the mantras and sutras in lecture halls for three years at the end of which, dharma was made accessible to everyone and the whole country was filled with the words of the Buddha. The dedication of Naropa to religious affairs displeased his father, so all the learned scholars were made to leave the palace offering lavish presents. The royal couple also insisted that Naropa should marry so that the noble line will continue. This turned to be an obstacle for Naropa to take the path of enlightenment. However, not to displease his parents, he agreed to marry if they managed to find a girl by the name of Drimedma (Vimala) who is unprejudiced, of noble birth and from a Mahayana family.

The troubled king disclosed the demands of his son to Yeshey Chenden (Jnanacaksumant), the chief minister who confidently agreed to look for such a girl as described by Naropa. After searching for a year, the chief minister who was accompanied by another minister reached the village of Dambuka in Bengal. There, they met a young and beautiful girl who displayed the qualities described by Naropa. She was called Drimed Dolma (Vimaladipi), the sixteen years old daughter of Brahmin Kargyal (Tisya) and Brahmini Nigu. She also had a brother called Nagu.

The parents of the girl did not wish to part with their only daughter. However, the two ministers with the help of the village community, were able to convince the parents to let their daughter marry Naropa. Thus, at the age of seventeen, Naropa married the sixteen year old Drimed Dolma who also became his disciple and took refuge in the Dharma with fervent conviction and devotion.

At the age of twenty-five Naropa was totally dissatisfied with his life as a prince and he yearned to renounce the world. His father and father-in-law decided on a divorce when they failed to convince him of his obligation as a prince and a husband. As far as his wife was concerned, she did not wish to obstruct Naropa from taking the spiritual path and she became his dharma companion.

Spiritual Education

Naropa went to the hermitage of Ga-wai-tsel (Anandarama), Kashmir where the abbot Sangay Chab (Buddhasarana) and master Yeshey Öd (Jnanaprabha) ordained him as a novice monk. He was also named Sangay Yeshey (Buddhajnana). He stayed with them for three years receiving various teachings in tantras and sutras.

At the age of 28 years, he had acquired a vast knowledge but he felt that without being ordained as a bikshu, he would be an incomplete self. Thus, he went to Puna in Kashmir where he was ordained a monk by abbot Choki Lama (Dharmaguru), master Choki Yeshey (Dharmajnana) and instructor Choki Jangchub (Dharmabodhi). He continued to pursue higher studies under their guidance.

Naropa then went to Pullahari where he had many disciples to whom he explained the various teachings of the Buddha. Some of his disciples even became erudite in the five branches of learning. In the course of six years at Pullahari, he wrote many texts besides making commentaries on several Buddhist texts.

He then joined the University of Nalanda and was unanimously appointed by the 500 scholars as the head of one of the departments. However, the custom of Nalanda demanded that every new scholar who was installed should debate with the scholars from all the philosophical systems. Thus, a throne was made in the middle court of Nalanda after making an announcement inviting scholars, monks and observers to come and witness the debate. The king presided over the debate and Naropa debated first with all the Buddhist

monks for half a month and came out victorious. During the next half of the month he defeated all the other scholars in the intellectual and philosophical battle. The boundless knowledge of Naropa in all spheres of learning impressed the scholars of Nalanda and they requested him to be their abbot. He was thus named Jigme Dragpa (Abhayakirti) and then conferred the rank of the abbot of Nalanda University. Even many scholars from other faiths embraced the doctrine of the Buddha.

As the abbot of Nalanda, Naropa was able to enrich its different branches with his knowledge, wisdom and experience. He also gave monastic vows and instructions on meditation. Thus, when he decided to leave Nalanda in search of a master, the department heads on behalf of the university begged Naropa not to leave. However, he was determined and took leave from Nalanda shouldering his robe, picking up his alms-bowl and walking staff.

Becoming a disciple of Tilopa

A variety of apparitions and visions helped him to find the path that led to his master. However, his failure to understand the signs of visions and apparitions brought his breakdown after a very long search for Tilopa. Finally, he decided to commit suicide by cutting his nerve with a razor, disgusted with himself for failing to find his master. At this critical juncture a man dressed in cotton, his hair knotted in tuft and with blood-shot eyes appeared and introduced himself as Tilopa and accepted Naropa as his disciple. For twelve long years, Naropa endured twelve major and twelve minor trials involving physical hardships to acquire the true essence of the teachings of Tilopa, and finally received the core of the Tantric philosophy. Naropa was thus instructed to go and work for the wellbeing of the sentient beings.

Transmitting his teaching

After spending some time in the western part of India Naropa returned to Pullahari. It was here that he spent time transmitting the teachings that he had received from Tilopa and many other masters. However, the core of his teaching was passed on only to Marpa, the Translator.

Finally, in the tranquillity of Pullahari, he entered into parinirvana in 1100 corresponding to the eighth day of the first month of the Iron Male Dragon at the age of eighty-five.

Contributions

The texts and the commentaries that Naropa wrote during his six years stay at Pullahari before meeting Tilopa enriched the Kagyud tradition of Buddhism.

The teachings of Naropa known as Naro Choedrug or the Doctrine of Naropa is one of the core elements of Drukpa Kagyud tradition. Thus, the teachings of Naropa are very important in Bhutan.

Marpa

Early Life

Marpa was born in 1012 to Marpa Wangchuck Öser and lady Gyamo Dode in Pesar, Throwa valley of Lhodrak Chukhyer in Southern Tibet. He belonged to the rich Marpa clan. Marpa was the youngest of the three children. He was named Tarma Wangchuck.

From his childhood Marpa was very short tempered, stubborn but very intelligent. His father predicted that if he took the right path, he would be of great benefit to all the sentient beings, but the contrary would bring disaster. Thus, Marpa Wangchuck Öser decided that his son should be entrusted to Dharma from the beginning.



>>Figure 2.4. Marpa (Paro Dzong)

At the age of twelve, Marpa was entrusted to a teacher of the locality who named him Chökyi Lodrö. He began his education with the art of reading and writing which he mastered without difficulty. Though he was exposed to the doctrine, Marpa proved to be very aggressive and liked to fight. This worried not only his parents but also the whole neighbourhood since there were probabilities of Marpa killing himself or others in the conflict. Finally, his parents decided to find a master from far away and entrust Marpa to his care. Marpa agreed and took with him two yak-loads of paper, some ounces of gold, one silver ladle, a saddle of teakwood, a roll of heavy silk brocade and a good horse as his provisions.

Spiritual Education

Marpa went to the monastery of Nyugu valley in the Mangkhar region since the great master Drongmi Lotsawa had just returned from India. He offered the two yak-loads of paper to Drongmi Lotsawa and requested to accept him as his student. Thus, for three years, at Nyugu, he studied Sanskrit and Indian colloquial languages and became conversant in many of them. Thereafter, Marpa travelled to India three times in search of dharma.

From Nyugu, he went north of Loto in search of gold. He exchanged his horse and the teakwood saddle for gold. As he travelled to Kyerphu in Tshang, he accompanied the prince of Lokya, and while departing, he told that he was going to Nepal to study translation. The prince who was a man of doctrine gave him some ounces of gold as a parting gift.

In Lhodrak, he communicated his wish to have his share of inheritance which he would sell for gold and that could be used for his education. His parents and neighbours were not keen on sending him out of Tibet, but Marpa was able to convince them and managed to get his share of inheritance that he sold for gold, except for a plot of land and the house.

Marpa had initially planned to travel to India with two friends but he journeyed alone since the others were held back by their families. However, at a place called Tsinesar in upper Nyang, Marpa met the translator Nyö of Kharak and travelled as his servant since he was carrying more gold. The two reached Nepal, and one day they noticed a big crowd on a mountain. On inquiring, they were informed that two Nepalese disciples of Naropa, namely, Chitherpa and Paindapa were back from India and were performing ceremonies. The name of Naropa made him yearn to be his student.

The two also joined the first day but the next day only Marpa went and requested if he could learn translation from them though he did not have much gold to offer. They told him that he could stay with them till he was acclimatised to the hot weather but advised him to go and look for Naropa, the great master who would teach without any payment. He stayed at Swayambhunath for three years receiving many teachings from the lineage of Naropa at the end of which his two gurus gave him a letter addressed to Naropa's novice monk Prajnasimha of Nalanda. The content of the letter stressed that the Tibetan should be taken to Naropa.

After receiving more advice, Marpa and Nyö journeyed together to India. On arriving at Nalanda, Marpa decided to stay there and look for Naropa whereas Nyö travelled on in search of other masters. Marpa met the novice monk of Naropa and gave the letter to him. The monk informed that Naropa had gone to Laber in western India but welcomed Marpa to stay with him. Fortunately, however, the news came that Naropa was at Pullahari and Marpa travelled there accompanied by the novice monk. At Pullahari, Naropa accepted him as his student. At the end of one year, Marpa was directed to travel to Pandita Jnanagarbha of the monastery of Laksetra in western India. He received all the teachings from the Pandita and returned to Naropa who further directed him to go South and learn from master Santibhadara. He also received teachings from great masters like Maitripa and many others as recommended by Naropa. At the end of twelve years, Marpa returned to Tibet promising to come again to meet his master, Naropa.

On the arranged date, Marpa and Nyö met and travelled together along with two other scholars. The extent of Marpa's knowledge became a source of discontent for Nyö, so he insisted that one of the scholars carry his books. The scholar carrying the books was bribed and instructed to throw it into the middle of the Ganga while crossing it. However, Marpa did not react strongly but halted in Nepal for fear that he might accumulate negative emotions if he accompanied Nyö.

On reaching Lhodrak, he found that his parents had passed away. So, he travelled to different parts of Tibet. He became renowned as a great master as well as a wealthy person and had many disciples. He also married Dagmema and son Tarma Dode was born. Then, he returned to India all alone and offered gold to all his masters. After receiving more teachings from Naropa, he returned to Tibet. There he gained more fame as a great master as well as a translator since he began to translate texts.

Marpa returned to India alone for the third time despite the request of his disciples to send his son, Tarma Dode, to receive the remaining teachings. In India, he travelled meeting

his masters and also in search of Naropa. At the end of eight months he met Naropa who agreed to transmit the final teachings at Pullahari. So, the two travelled there and Marpa received the lineage teachings mainly through oral transmission. At the end of three years, Marpa received blessings from all his masters and left for Tibet through Nepal and settled at Dowolung in Lhodrak.

Transmitting his teachings

He travelled spreading the teachings of his masters to different parts of Tibet. He also converted his house into a learning centre and had many disciples who later became learned and worked for the propagation of the doctrine. Milarepa was the disciple who had many incidents with Marpa and who was also the one who succeeded him. The training of Milarepa is an example of how Marpa could transform a black magician to a renowned scholar.

Marpa entered into parinirvana in 1099 corresponding to the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the Bird year.

Contributions

Marpa did not establish a monastery but converted his home into a learning centre. This was a great example which became popular in Tibet and helped people receive the teachings from homes of their masters instead of travelling far and wide to the monasteries.

Besides imparting the doctrine to many, he also left behind a vast reservoir of knowledge by translating many esoteric texts from Sanskrit to Tibetan. The translated works made the doctrine accessible to all the Tibetans which otherwise remained the domain of those who were literate in Sanskrit. These texts also served as references for the later scholars and practitioners.

Milarepa

Early Life

Milarepa was born in 1052 corresponding to twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the Male Water Dragon to Mila Sherab Gyeltshen and Karmo Kyen in Kyanga Tsa. He was named Thopaga. When he was four years old, his mother gave birth to a girl who was named Peta Gonkit. His father was a rich tradesman who had a vast estate and the

family was very influential in the community. Unfortunately, when Milarepa reached the age of seven, his father was seized with a serious illness. Thus, thinking that he would not recover, he entrusted his wife, children and the estate to the care of his brother and sister till Milarepa was of age to take responsibility of the family and a testament was made and signed. Finally, Mila Sherab Gyeltshen passed away.

Soon, after the funeral of Mila Sherab Gyeltshen, the property was divided between the uncle and aunt leaving nothing for Milarepa, his mother and his sister. They were compelled to work as field labourers. When Milarepa was fifteen years, his mother with the help of his maternal uncle had accumulated some wealth. It was spent organising a feast for all the people present during the signing of the testament. During the feast, Milarepa's mother read the testament and requested the brother and sister of her late husband to restore the patrimony to them. The trustees reacted strongly and rejected the request.



>>Figure 2.5. Milarepa (Paro Dzong)

Finding no way to get back the properties, Milarepa's mother and maternal uncle decided to send him to study. He was first sent to Tsa to study under a popular teacher of the region. However, Milarepa's mother thought that the best way to avenge the injustice would be to send her son to study black art. Thus, she sent her son to Yarlung Kyorpo. There, Milarepa studied under lama Yungtun Trogyal for one year after which he was sent to get instructions from Khulung Yonten Gyatsho of Nub Khulung in Tsangpo valley.

At the end of two weeks, he was able to acquire the art of causing death and on the day when his paternal uncle's son was getting wedded, Milarepa applied his art and made the house collapse. The action killed all the people attending the ceremony except his uncle and aunt whom he spared with the aim to make them suffer. He then returned to his previous master to learn the art of launching hailstorm which he applied during the harvest time and destroyed all the crops of his uncle and aunt.

Filled with remorse for all the sufferings that he had caused, Milarepa decided to embrace the doctrine. Thus, as instructed by his teacher, he proceeded to Nar in Tsang valley where he found a teacher. However, this teacher instructed him to go to Lhodrak and look for Marpa, the Translator.

Spiritual Education

He went to Lhodrak and met Marpa but the great master refused to accept him as a disciple unless Milarepa made a big offering. Since he did not have any gifts to offer, Marpa demanded that he should construct a nine-storied tower all by himself. But before that, he had to construct and dismantle many structures of varying shapes and sizes. Only after more than six years of rigorous struggle and ordeal, was he accepted as a disciple. By then, the tower was also on the verge of completion. Thereafter, Marpa empowered Milarepa with all the highest order of esoteric teachings. Marpa also advised him to meditate in the high mountains of the Jomo Langmo (Mt. Everest) region. Milarepa said to have visited Taktshang in Paro valley where he meditated for three months. Milarepa was clad in thin cotton cloth from where he got his name 'Repa', and kept long hair. He lived on simple food like roasted barley flour and on nettles. His only possession was a cooking pot. Besides meditating in solitude, he also preached many disciples who also lived like him clad in thin cotton cloth and with long hairs. They were also known as Repas.

Milarepa imparted his teachings to many lay disciples and even transformed many into individuals with high moral values. Amongst his highly advanced disciples was also his sister Peta Gonkit. The disciples of Milarepa did not belong to any complex monastic system. Gampopa was the most learned monk amongst Milarepa's disciples who shouldered the great responsibility of transmitting the Kagyud teachings.

Finally, Milarepa entered into parinirvana at the age of eighty-four in the Wood Hare year corresponding to 1135 AD at Chuwar.

Contributions

Milarepa became a folk hero. Most of the anecdotes of his life are enacted as plays and dramas.

The songs that he sang which are simple but laden with profound significance are a source of wisdom and lesson even today. These songs are highly appreciated by many people. His biography and the "Hundred Thousand Songs" that he sang are translated into many languages and read by many people.

The high mountain caves where he meditated are places of pilgrimage for the Buddhists. Even the nine-storied tower that he built before being accepted by Marpa as his disciple was also a place of pilgrimage, until it was destroyed by the Chinese in the 1960s.



>>Figure 2.6. Wall Painting depicting the life of Milarepa (only a part of it) from Paro dzong.

Milarepa is also a legendary figure and highly esteemed as the unrivalled meditation master. Today, he is an example for many practitioners.

Gampopa

Early Life

Gampopa was born in Nyi clan to Wutso Gabar Gyalpo in Sewa Valley of Nyel in central Tibet in 1079 AD corresponding to the Earth Sheep year. His father was a physician and popularly known as Nyiwa Lhaje. His father had two wives known as Yunlaza and Sangdan Dranma. However, as far as the name of Gampopa's mother is concerned, we are not very sure about it since it is difficult to know whether Yunlaza or Sangdan Dranma was the mother.² The parents named him Dunpa Dharma Drak. He was also known as Nyiwa Gunga. Gampopa had a younger half-brother³ from the other wife of his father.

Even as a child, Gampopa was compassionate and displayed extraordinary qualities. Thus, his father who was a wise man educated him well. Under the careful guidance of his father, he took up medicine as his subject in which he demonstrated great skill and intelligence. He also received many Tantric teachings of the Nyingmapa tradition from various masters. Thus, at the age of 16 years, he was recognized as a great physician and a scholar. At a later stage, he mastered all the eight branches of medical science.



>>Figure 2.7. Gampopa (Paro Dzong)

2 Gampopa's mother's name is also given as Ngalsa and Somoza Chelcam. (Stewart, J.M., 1995:9.)

3 Another version has it that Gampopa was the third of the four sons. (Gyaltshen, K., 1990: 187)

When Gampopa attained the age of twenty-two, he married the beautiful, intelligent and gentle sister of Dharma Ö, the powerful local king. He continued to practise religion but mainly focused on medical consultation as his profession. Consequently, he came to be known as Dakpo Lhaje, the physician of Dakpo. In due course of time, his wife gave birth to a son and a daughter.⁴

Many years after his happy marriage, an epidemic broke out in the region. Gampopa worked day and night serving people. However, his medical skill could not heal the epidemic victims. In the midst of the terrible epidemic, he found that his only son had succumbed to death when he returned home one evening. Again, he found that his only daughter was suffering from the same sickness when he returned home from the cemetery where he had taken his son's body. A few days later, even his daughter died and Gampopa went to the cemetery for the second time taking the body of his daughter. He prayed for her quick and good rebirth like he did for his son.

Several days later, his wife was also infected by the same illness. Gampopa tried all his medical knowledge and skills to cure his wife. He even performed many healing rituals. Treatment using medical tools and herbs also turned ineffective. His wife suffered and became weak but refused to surrender to death. Gampopa suspected that her attachment to something was not letting his wife die in peace. On inquiring, he came to know her attachment to him and her fear that he would marry another woman which kept her suffering. Thus, with his uncle Palso as witness and putting a sacred book on his head he vowed to become a monk even if his wife recovered. The urge to become a monk dawned on him after losing his two children and witnessing so much suffering during the epidemic. After Gampopa took the oath, his wife died in peace.

Struck with pain after the loss of his whole family, Gampopa divided his property into three portions. He used one portion for the funeral of his wife, another for meritorious charities and the last, he retained as a means for his spiritual learning, putting end to his worldly affairs. He even built a stupa known as Jomo Chhoeten,⁵ the "Stupa of the Wife" in memory of his wife.

⁴ Another version has it that Gampopa had only one child. (Gyaltshen, K., 1990: 187)

⁵ It can still be seen in the region of Nyel.

Spiritual Education

Gampopa realized the unsatisfactory nature of the worldly affairs and the phenomenon of impermanence. Thus, he went to Nyi Thong to meditate and practise Dharma. This step taken by Gampopa worried his uncle, Palso, who thought that his nephew was struck with grief after loosing his wife. Palso went to see his nephew who, to his surprise, was at ease and happy. Gampopa felt the need to have instructions on Dharma after the visit of his uncle so that he would fulfil his vow to become a monk. Thus, he packed a few of his belongings and, un-noticed to his relatives, moved away from Nyi Thong to Poto Monastery in the Phan Yu region north of Lhasa. The monastery was the stronghold of the Kadampa tradition.

At Poto Monastery, Gampopa had audience with Lama Potowa Rinchensel, the abbot. In the course of their discussion, he asked if the monastery could accept him as a student. The abbot agreed to impart teachings to Gampopa but on the condition that he provided for his food and clothing himself. This did not interest him since his view was that a master should have the compassion to guide the students according to their needs. Considering that Lama Potowa Rinchensel and himself did not have karmic affinity to be teacher and student, Gampopa returned to Nyel.

In Nyel, he gathered sixteen ounces of gold to support his spiritual studies and returned to Gyachakri Monastery of Phan Yu where he was accepted. Thus, at the age of twenty-six years, he was ordained as a monk under Lama Gyachilwa and was named Sonam Rinchen, "Precious Merit." He also received teachings from Shawa Lingpa and Chadulwa Dzinpa. In Maryul, the great Kadampa master Geshe Maryul Loden Shenrab gave him oral instructions on meditation and many other Tantric transmissions. In central Tibet, he mastered all the Kadampa teachings of Jowo Atisha under the guidance of several masters like Geshe Nyugrumpa and Gyayon Dak, among others.

To practise all the teachings that he received, Gampopa built a small house near Gyachakri Monastery and meditated there. The small farmland that he owned supported his needs. He studied during day and meditated at night and finally his understanding of both theory and practice of the Dharma reached its peak.

Meeting Milarepa

The first time that he heard of Milarepa was from three beggars when Gampopa went out for a walk near Gyachakri Monastery. On hearing the name of Milarepa, his faith was so strong that he fainted and remained unconscious for half a day. Later, he started to pay homage to Milarepa by prostrating towards the snow-clad peaks. The next morning, he went in search of the three beggars to inquire of Milarepa. From the eldest beggar, he came to know that Milarepa lived at Gungthang, west of Lhasa and that his master was Marpa, the Translator. Thereafter, the beggar agreed to guide Gampopa to Gungthang. He sold his land and house, bade farewell to his Kadampa masters and set out in search of Milarepa accompanied by the old beggar to whom he agreed to pay for the service.

At Tsang in upper Nyang, the old beggar fell sick and could continue no further. Gampopa took him to the nearby monastery of Sajya and left his guide in the care of the compassionate monks there. He gave the old beggar his share of gold and passionately journeyed ahead in search of Milarepa.

Arriving at Dronso Charwa, he met some tradesmen and one of them called Dawa Zungpo of Nyanang informed that Milarepa had moved to Chuwar in Drin. He journeyed but on the third day, his energy was fully drained out and he lay down about to die. Luckily, a Kadampa monk passed by and offered some water and saved Gampopa. The two travelled together since the Kadampa monk was also going in the same direction.

A day later, he arrived at Trashigang and a lady of the village agreed to take him to Milarepa the following day. The next morning, the daughter of the lady guided him to the camp of Milarepa but he could not have audience with him. Instead, he met one of the disciples called Sebenrepa who instructed him to stay in a cave nearby till he had purified himself of human pride. He was provided with provisions. At the end of half a month when he had lost all his hope of seeing Milarepa, the girl who guided him to the camp came to tell that Milarepa wished to see him.

When Gampopa met Milarepa for the first time, he saw him seated on a big boulder surrounded by his disciples Nyishing Repa, Loro Rechung, Gomthak Jodor, Seban Tonchung, Mekong and Konggur. He offered his gold to Milarepa and introduced himself. Signifying that Gampopa was accepted by Milarepa, the gold was returned to be used as a means to support his spiritual practice.

Initiations and Instructions from Milarepa.

To establish the spiritual relationship between the two, Gampopa received his first initiation from Milarepa in Chuwar, Manlung. Thereafter, Milarepa transmitted all his teachings at different stages to Gampopa who practised it diligently. He also received all the empowerments and blessings of Milarepa. Finally, Milarepa instructed Gampopa to go to a place called Gampo Dar and start preaching. As a parting gift, Milarepa gave him a golden arura,⁶ fire starting kit and a tinder-pouch.

On the day of his departure, Milarepa accompanied him till Shamboche. Seated near a stone bridge, Gampopa received his final instructions which focused on cutting the bond of attachment; not falling into the traps of the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance. Milarepa also revealed the cheeks of his buttocks that were covered with lumps of hard callus. Through this, Gampopa understood that it is only through dedicated effort and endurance that dreams, plans and hopes would materialize. The gesture also indicated that Gampopa was chosen by Milarepa from many disciples as the upholder of the Kagyud teachings.

Transmitting his teachings.

After parting from Milarepa, Gampopa went to central Tibet to meet his old Kadampa teacher Geshe Nyugrumpa. From there, he went to Oelka and meditated in silence there for six years at Sewalung in Nyel and seven years at Gelung in Oelka. Here, he realized the basic nature of mind and the full essence of Milarepa's words and was illuminated.

As instructed by Milarepa, he then went to Gampo Dar. Thus, from the name of the place he came to be known as Gampopa, the man from Gampo. Attracted by the splendour of Gampo Dar and the mountains of Dakla Gampo, he built a house at Sanglung to enter into a twelve-year retreat with the hope of attaining the state of being able to transform the five elements into nourishment. However, two monks called Geshe Gyalwa Chungtsang Chen and Geshe Nyanak Marpo came to seek audience with him. Soon, sixty more disciples assembled round him to receive his teachings. The number swelled to 51,600 disciples. Thereafter, he dedicated his time to transmission of his teachings to his disciples. He also found time to meditate for the wellbeing of the sentient beings and to write texts. He also founded the Dakla Gampo Monastery and established a strong monastic community with many learned monks and yogis.

⁶ It is a name used for medicinal herb myrobalan. The Medicine Buddha is shown as holding it in his right hand.

Finally, in 1153 corresponding to the fifteenth day of the sixth month of Water Bird Year, Gampopa entered into parinirvana. On the eighteenth day of the month, Phagmodrupa officiated at the cremation and the last rites of Master Gampopa.

Contributions

Gampopa enriched the Kagyud teachings by assimilating the fundamental teachings of Atisa and Milarepa. He was able to combine the two since he had received teachings from great Kadampa as well as Kagyud masters. This assimilation had benefited many practitioners.

The establishment of Dakla Gampo Monastery and the strong monastic system also helped in the propagation of Kagyud teachings. The diffusion of his teachings was also done mainly through his learned and worthy disciples.

Dakpo Kagyud, the school of Buddhism established by Gampopa became the fountain-head of many Kagyud branches. The four offshoots of Dakpo Kagyud were Karmapa founded by Karmapa Dunsum Khyenpa; Phadru order by Phadru Dorji Gyelpo; Baram order by Baram Darma Wangchuck; and Tselpa order by Tselpa Tsondu Dragpa. These sub-schools also advanced the propagation of Kagyud teachings.

Phagmodrupa

Early Life

Phagmodrupa Dorji Gyelpo was born in 1110 AD to Athar and Za Achek in the Dung Üe clan at Takpa Korkor in Dro Ne, Kham, eastern Tibet. His father, Athar, was a cruel man and his family earned their livelihood through impure means. However, from his childhood, the non-virtuous acts of his father and other family members did not have any negative influence on Phagmodrupa. He remained unstained like the beautiful lotus in the mud and showed interest in the Dharma. Thus, at the age of four, he took the novice monk's vows from Khenpo Phagpa Trulpe and Yanthub Tsultrim. His initial education focused on reading and writing in which he excelled without much guidance. He also studied the Dharma diligently and took keen interest in imbibing the noble roles and responsibilities of a monk.

Spiritual Education

At the age of eighteen, Phagmodrupa realized that it was important to understand and practise Dharma under the guidance of a master when still young. He offered all his belongings to the monks, friends, hosts and others of upper and lower Kham. He then went to Ü Tsang, central Tibet which was the land of great masters. He received teachings from many great masters like Tolungpa Chenpo, Dawa Gyeltshen, and Jomo Lhajema. They were all great in the different aspects of Buddhism. Thus, he acquired the quintessence of all elements of different Buddhist traditions. Yet, he continued to look for a master from whom he could learn more.

Meeting Gampopa

Phagmodrupa accompanied Khenpo Rinpoche Shangsumtokpa to Dakla Gampo Monastery. There, he met Gampopa who greatly impressed him with his knowledge and wisdom. Realizing that there was karmic relationship between Gampopa and himself, he decided to stay at Dakla Gampo Monastery. In the course of his two years' stay at Dakla Gampo, he demonstrated devotion not only to Gampopa but also to all the monks. Phagmodrupa mastered all the essence of hearing, contemplation and meditation but he continued to learn and meditate ceaselessly.

Founding of a Monastery

Phagmodrupa founded a monastery at a place called Phagmodru in the Tsethang region of south Tibet. It became a seat from where he imparted his wisdom and knowledge to his disciples. Thus, the name of the tradition he established came to be known as Phagdrü Kagyud and his name Phagmodru.

He became so popular thereafter that the Sakya ruler of Tibet appointed him the Desi or the chief administrator of Nedong Province. The strengthening of political authority was very much welcomed by Phagmodrupa. He made sure that the combined political and spiritual power remained in the hands of his descendents since it invested in them the authority to propagate the teachings of the Buddha effectively. The Phagdrü family continued to rule till the Rinpung family seized power in the fifteenth century.

Towards the end of his life, an evil-doer poisoned his food. Phagmodrupa suffered from pain but showed no hatred to the culprit. He instead asked four fully ordained monks to chant mantras to neutralize the negative actions of those with evil thoughts. After the completion of the chanting of mantras, Phagmodrupa regained his health.

However, at the age of sixty-one, Phagmodrupa entered into parinirvana in 1170 AD corresponding to the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar.

Contributions

Phagmodrupa Dorji Gyelpo founded the Phagdru Kagyud which became the source of eight independent sub-schools. The eight sub-schools are Drikung, Taklung, Trophu, Lingre (or Drukpa), Martsang, Yelpa, Yemsang and Shugseb. Each sub-school had a different approach that catered to the different interests of the people. Thus, these schools promoted the extensive propagation of the Dharma.

The establishment of Phagmodru Monastery also acted as a seat of learning for many sub-schools and produced many learned monks besides imparting the teachings to the lay disciples.

The strengthening of political authority was also significant because it was used positively to promote the doctrine. He was also able to demonstrate the importance of fairness and compassion even in temporal affairs.

Lingrepa Pema Dorji

Lingrepa Pema Dorji was born in 1128 AD. He began his education by studying medicine. Later, he became a monk but stayed with a woman called Manmo and broke his oath of celibacy. Thus, to cleanse themselves of their sin both of them went on a pilgrimage clad in cotton.

At the age of thirty-eight, Lingrepa Pema Dorji met Phagmodrupa and became his disciple. He also separated from his wife since his master detested married disciples. He proved to be one of the most enlightened students of Phagmodrupa. After his master entered into parinirvana, Lingrepa introduced the Lingre Kagyud. He also founded Naphu monastery which became the centre from where he propagated the Lingre Kagyud teachings. He also wrote several texts and worked hard for the welfare of all the beings. He entered into parinirvana in 1188 AD.

He was succeeded by his student, Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji who founded the Drukpa Kagyud school of Buddhism.

Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji

Early Life

Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji was born in 1161 AD to Gyazur So Tshape and Marza Darkyid in Khule Sarel, upper Myang at the foot of Haogang in the Gya clan. He was named Yudrung Pel. He had an elder brother called Kalden.

At the age of four, he began to learn reading and writing under Lopen Tathangpa where he showed skill and intelligence. Unfortunately, his mother, Marza Darkyid, died when he was eight years old.



>>Figure 2.8. Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji (Paro Dzong)

Spiritual Education

Tsangpa Gyarey was ordained a novice under Lopen Tathangpa at the age of eleven and was named Sherab Duetsi Khorlo. His other teachers were Geshe Omthangpa, Lopen Khorewa. His brother Kalden and Lopen Tathangpa passed away when he was fifteen years old. He went to study under Lopen Kharlungpa after completing the last rites of his late brother. He stayed for some years learning logic and the doctrine.

His father invited Lopen Kharlungpa to Sarel when Tsangpa Gyarey was twenty-two years. There, he continued to learn the Tantras and Sutras and became a young scholar and began to teach besides continuing his search for wisdom and knowledge. He imparted the words of the Buddha to the people of Shang, a district of Tsang. Later, he settled in the hermitage of Drogo Kanchig where he had many patrons and disciples.

Tsangpa Gyarey heard about the greatness of Drupthob Chenpo Lingrepa when he was making his rounds for alms. Thus, he proceeded to Ralung to meet Lingrepa who had come there. He had audience with Lingrepa and was accepted as his student. After making a pilgrimage to Lhasa and Samye, he followed Lingrepa to Naphu where he received teachings from the great master. His learning was obstructed by smallpox attack but his master took compassionate care of him. He concentrated on meditation after he was healed. His spiritual growth also comprised debate with scholars like Geshe Langdor and even with his master at times. He spent five years at Naphu and was able to master all the precepts. During his stay at Naphu, he also corrected books copied by his friends.

At the end of five years, he wanted to go to Kharchung Dolpo to practise meditation but Lama Ngodor invited him to teach his disciples. His master had passed away when he returned from his trip. He gathered provisions by preaching and through contributions to build a Kudung, an embalmed body or stupa, of his master. Tsangpa Gyarey was twenty-eight years then.

Transmitting his teachings

Tsangpa Gyarey went to Kharchung accompanied by seven disciples and there, at Chagphurchen, he entered into retreat for three years. He even composed a text, when in

retreat, after which he returned to Naphu and looked after the monastery of his late master for a year. From Naphu, he travelled to and meditated in secluded places of Kharag gi Ri and Chushul gi Ri, Gompakhar and Dendup Truen.

It was at Tsari Dongpokhar that he came to be known as Tsangpa Gyarey⁷ after his three months meditation. His only possession was an alms-bowl, a lighter and a bag and he survived wearing a thin cotton garment like Milarepa.

He received his final teaching from Lama Zhang who also gave him the monastic ordination and conferred the religious name Yeshey Dorji on him at the age of thirty-three.

He founded the first monastery at Longdol in the environs of Lhasa, followed by that of Shendrup Choekhorling at Ralung. These monasteries became the source of wisdom and centre of Kagyud learning. The Shendrup Choekhorling monastery later became the ancestral seat of the Gya family.

Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji spent the remaining part of his time teaching, discussing religious topics, meditating and visiting important places. He spent time singing mystical songs or *gur* since it not only enchanted him but healed the disheartened souls. He also made it a point to visit the monasteries of his lineage gurus like Gampo, Phagmodru, Taglungphu, among others. A big chunk of the offerings of gift made by the devotees were sent to Naphu, the monastery of his Guru.

At the age of forty-five, he was residing at Phaonkar in the Ue region from where he had a magnificent view of the Namgyiphu valley which arrested his wish to visit it. Accompanied by his entourage, Tsangpa Gyarey visited Namgyiphu and heard the thunder of dragon. This was an auspicious sign and was interpreted as an indication that, like the thunder of the dragon, his teachings would spread far and wide. Thereafter, to mark the occasion, he built a monastery and named it Druk Sewa Jangchubling (The Awakening Place of the Realized Dragons) after the consecration. His lineage and followers came to be known as Drukpa.

In the year 1211 AD corresponding to the twenty-fifth day of the third month of the Iron Female Sheep year, he passed away. However, he was able to entrust the responsibility to his

⁷ *Tsang is the name of his birth province and pa attached to it would mean man from Tsang. As far as Gyarey is concerned it has to be divided into two parts: Gya is the name of his clan and rey means cotton. Thus, his name could mean The man of Gya clan from Tsang clad in cotton garment.*

nephew, Dharma Singye, since he had premonitions before he entered into parinirvana.⁸

Contributions

Tsangpa Gyarey also had a deep concern for the social welfare of the people. Thus, he was involved in the construction of highways, guest houses and supply of provisions to the poor.

His skill as a mediator was highly sought after to bring reconciliation between different conflicting parties.

The missions that he despatched as far as China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and the Himalayan countries helped people understand the value of life and the words of the Buddha.

The monasteries that he founded and supported also upheld the doctrine and attracted many disciples and devotees.

Conclusion

Tsangpa Gyarey Yeshey Dorji was succeeded by his nephew, Onrey Darma Sengye (1177-1237), who founded the Bardruk and served as the abbot of Druk Ralung. As instructed by his master and uncle Tshangpa Gyarey, he passed down all the Drukpa Kagyud teachings to Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. It was Phajo who brought the Drukpa Kagyud teachings to Bhutan.

The advent of Drukpa Kagyud to Bhutan is very significant since many aspects of Bhutan and the Bhutanese are associated with it. Take, for instance, the name ‘Drukyul’ for the country and Drukpas for the people which originated from the Drukpa Kagyud School. More still, Bhutan was unified under the Drukpa banner.

The system of government is also much in line with the one established by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, an important Drukpa personality. The laws codified by him are the fountainhead of the legal system of Bhutan. The traditional etiquettes observed even today

⁸ During his cremation, the twenty-one joints of his vertebrae turned into twenty-one images of Avalokitesvara. One of it, known as Rangjung Kharsapani, is preserved as the sacred relic of Punakha Dzong.

are also formulated by many successions of Drukpa personalities from the thirteenth century onwards.

The prayers that are chanted and the rituals conducted are much influenced by the Drukpa Kagyud tradition. Even the origination and the consolidation of the present monastic system are associated with the Drukpa personalities.

Student Activity

The names of pioneers of Kagyud and Drukpa Kagyud traditions are chanted in our prayers. Interview anyone in the locality about one of the pioneers and record the oral versions recounted by the respondent. The work can be done in groups. Each group can take one pioneer and collect information on it. The findings should be presented to the class.

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