



# ZHEMGANG MONTHLY

## FROM STEPS TO LEAPS

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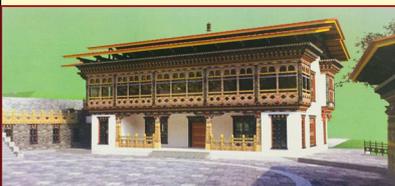
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Zhemgang to get new Zigrey

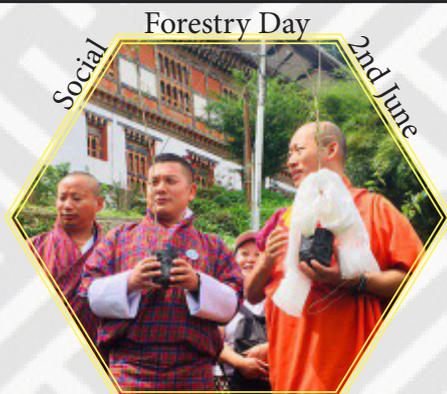


### UpComing Event

Dzongkhag Education Sector with support from Ministry of Education will conduct Summer Professional Development Program on "Search inside Yourself" and "Counselling" for more than 300 Teachers at Zhemgang Central School and Tingtibi Lower Secondary School from 3rd to 17th July, 2019.



### Month That Kept Us On Toes



Forestry Day

2nd June

Social



Meeting - Berti

4th June

Budget Review



Plan Formulation

5th-10th June

CBT Action



Namzha Training

21st June

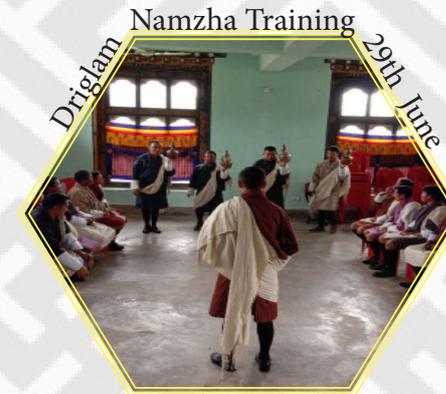
Driglam



Tsheltrim gets a new home

23rd June

Tsheltrim



Namzha Training

29th June

Driglam

### Tsheltrim gets a new home

All thanks to Dasho Dzongdag, Dzongkhag Administration, Zhemgang, Khengrig Namsum Community Based Scout led by Dr.Sonam Wangchuk of Yebilaptsa Hospital, Staff of Yebilaptsa CS and other kind hearted supporters. Tsheltrim Zangmo (30) from Langdurbi village in Zhemgang will now have something she dreamt all her life - A house to live in. She is paralysed from waist down, and moves around dragging her body. She is intellectually disabled too. She is recipient of His Majesty's Kidu.



# Launching and Certification of local organic product

The National Organic Programme (NOP) launched the Bhutan Organic Guarantee System (BOGS) documents on 5th, June at Norkhil Boutique Hotel & Spa. The launched documents graced by His Excellency Yeshi Penjor, Minister of Agriculture and Forest included the standard and conformity assessment that enables a producer/product to access the Bhutan Organic Mark which is essential for organic farming in the country that will serve as a manual and guidelines for organic farmers during the certification process. The Local Organic Assurance System (LOAS) is the system of registration with the NOP and on-going monitoring of organic farmers.



On the day, certified products from four Dzongkhags namely Cassava powder produced by Green Hill Farm of Pemagatshel, xanltoxylm or pepper from Trongsa, tomato and adzuki bean from Thimphu and rice and watermelon from Zhemgang were launched while three private farms and two farming cooperatives were also awarded with certificates.

The Best Organic Farmers Award for 2019 was awarded to the Gasa Rangzhin Sanam Dhetshen consisting 51-member cooperatives formed in 2015. The award was organised to encourage organic farming and to meet the country's aim to go 100% organic by 2020. The awards and certifications will now be organized annually.

Dzongkhag Agriculture sector has been working closely on organic activities with National Organic Program to promote the organic agriculture practices to come up with nutrient rich and chemical free agricultural products. Zhemgang Dzongkhag has successfully launched rice, watermelon and turmeric powder so far. The sector along with farmers are working steadily in adopting and promoting organic agriculture as the farming style rather than the conventional one.

**Contributed by Agriculture Sector**

## Signature Driglam

The Driglam Namzha (Tibetan: སློག་ལམ་རྣམ་གཞག་ ,Wylie: sgrig lam rnam gzha), in this modern context is often recognized and conceptualized by the people as set of rules that requires individual to live under tyrannical circumstances. Driglam is an art and beauty that enables every individual to live harmoniously within the society and it is also a driving gear to create a vibrant society.

Although living Culture have existed since the origin of eternal life, the nomenclature Driglam traces its root to the 17th century and it was founded by the great Zhabdrung who sought to unify the country of numerous regions and leaders under one umbrella of the dual system (Religion and Politics). Since then, Driglam Namzha was strictly followed in the country through the course of centuries till today and it still remains as a signature value of every Bhutanese.

Driglam Namzha collectively consists of three words dgrig lam rnamgzha ( སློག་ལམ་རྣམ་གཞག ) and is to a great extent defined by the Buddhist ethics collectively of body, speech and mind values.

During the time and course where technology is predominant; preserving and implementing the values of Driglam Namzha is often considered odd. Nevertheless, Bhutanese take pride in preserving this intrinsic part of our culture that holds a serene, religious and historical background. When the contemporary era in western world peeps back to the mysteriously lost centuries, we harness the values implanted by our great grandfathers. The values and culture of Driglam Namzha maybe the only essence that we can embed in our children.

The daily activities of the day have different way of projection in Bhutanese context like having a meal or taking a walk. Our dress code is unique and it lets us present ourselves differently to the world. Our national language, Dzongkha is one paramount element that sets us apart from the world. To highlight briefly, Driglam Namzha has no second meaning other than collective human values and cornerstone what makes us Bhutanese. It's a courteous mode of individual development.



“A country stays ALIVE, when its Culture stays ALIVE” – Department of Culture, MOHCA

*Contributed by Phub Tshring, Dzongkhag Cultural Officer*

# Tingkar Ney, Shingkar

Tingkar Ney is located in Shingkar gewog, Zhemgang Dzongkhag. The gewog is approximately a day's journey by car from Zhemgang town. It takes an hour on foot to reach Tingkar Ney from Shingkar gewog center. The nearest household is roughly 20 minutes' walk from the temple. The temple is built at the base of a huge rock overlooking the Chamkharchu. A rock is perched on another rock forming a huge cave. There are four doorways called the doorways of the east, west, north, and south.

## History

The temple is popularly known as Tingkar Ney, but the Ney Yig (guide to the sacred site) refers to this place as Beyul Tingkhara (sbas yul gting kha ra, Hidden Land of Tingkhara). The Ney Yig also says that the temple is like the heart of Guru Rinpoche. The actual date and the person who built the temple are unknown, but the Ney yig claims that Guru Rinpoche had opened the door to the Ney (sacred site). The names of people who had sponsored meals and refreshment during the construction are on the wall; however, half the name list and the date of the construction are damaged.

Our oral source, Ap Rinchen Wangdi says that he has been the caretaker of the temple for the last 30 years, and before him his family was the custodian of the temple; unfortunately, he does not have any written document about the temple. However, his narrative refers to the huge earthquake that supposedly occurred in the rooster year of 1897. It is believed that the temple was completely destroyed by that earthquake, but the huge rock behind the temple had not shifted an inch. The popular belief is that Guru Rinpoche had tied down the rock with four iron chains, whereas another rock in the shape of a table had rolled down during the earthquake, and it lies almost a 100 meters below the temple.

According to the oral source, the temple was renovated during the reign of Trongsa Penlop (Provincial Governor) Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk (1862-1926). The Penlop presented statues of Guru Rinpoche, Khando Yeshey Tshogyal, Khando Mendarawa and Chukchizhay (11-faced Avalokiteshvara) to the newly renovated temple. The wall paintings were also completed during the renovation circa end of the 19th , or in the beginning of the 20th century.

## Architecture and Artwork

According to the caretaker, the temple had statues made of gold, but all the statues were destroyed during the earthquake of the rooster year (approx. 1897). Today the main statues in the temple include Guru Rinpoche, 11-faced Chukchizhay (Avalokiteshvara), Khando Yeshey Tshogyal and Khando Mendarawa. All the statues are made of clay. There are smaller statues of historical Buddha, Tshepame (Amitayus) and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. On the right side of the main altar is an old Tashigomang (a miniature temple, a three dimensional portable shrine) placed on the table. The current caretaker's grandfather Lengkong was a Manipa (ritual master) and he had travelled extensively with the portable shrine in the region and to the eastern part of Bhutan.

There are also two different shaped rocks: one spherical and the other triangular in shape. It is believed that these rocks have the potential to bless childless couples with children. The spherical rock blesses with a male child, and the triangular-shaped rock blesses with a female child. The childless couple has to carry the rocks and do 108 circumambulations around the temple. If one is unable to do 108 rounds, the couple can opt for 7 circumambulations, but the minimum requirement is 3 circumambulations.

To the west, the wall paintings depict Guru Tshengay (eight manifestation of Guru Rinpoche) with Guru Rinpoche in the center, Khando Yeshe Tshogyal to the left and Khando Mendarawa to the right. On the north wall, there is Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara), and to the east Jampelyang (Manjushri). There are small prayer wheels embedded into the exterior wall of the temple.

The temple's protective deity is Terdag Zorarkye, a fierce deity from Khenpajong in Kurtoe. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche had entrusted the deity to look after the temple and the people of Kheng Rig Namsum. The people in that region say that in the summer the deity resides in Tingkar Ney, and in the winter he resides in Wamling village, adjacent to Shingkar gewog.

## Social and Cultural Functions

The family has a Kasho (Decree) from the Trongsa Penlop stating that the family is exempted from any kind of tax levied on the people. The responsibility of the family is to organize and conduct important rituals. The nearby villagers come with offerings of rice and ara (locally brewed alcohol), and help the host in the preparation during the rituals. The caretaker organizes and sponsors some of the following rituals:

- Nyungney (prayers and fasting) is conducted on the 1st month of the Bhutanese calendar as ordered in the Decree (Kasho).
- Tenda Tshechu (spral zla tshe bcu) is conducted on the 10th day of the 5th month of the Bhutanese calendar.
- Tsechus (prayers) are conducted on the 4th day of the 6th month, on the 10th day of the 7th month, on the 10th day of the 8th month, and on the 10th day of the 10th month of the Bhutanese Calendar.
- On the 22nd day of the 9th month of the Bhutanese calendar, a ritual on Lhabab Duechen (Descending Day of Lord Buddha) is organized.
- A ritual called Soeldep is organized by the villagers during the cultivation season, especially, before the plantation. This offering is made to have a good harvest.
- The villagers also perform a ritual called ney soel (gnas gsol). It is performed either to stop the rain, hail storm and cyclone, or, to pray for rain during the farming season, if there is a dry spell.

□ Source : Choni Tshewang, Lecturer, College of Language and Culture Studies, Taktse, Trongsa, Royal University of Bhutan.



# Dzongkha - more than a language

Language is not only a medium of communication – in that you don't learn a language just to be able to communicate with someone. Language is a bearer of culture and cultural values, it is a conveyor of feelings and belief systems. And language provides the key to unlock the social world around us. Simply put, if you don't speak the language or speak well, you cannot fully appreciate the intrinsic aspects of society. Your understanding remains shallow at best – and culturally alienated at worst.

Above all, to draw from the famous Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, language shapes our thoughts. And thoughts eventually dictate our actions. What this means is that the way a native English speaker thinks is different from someone who speaks Italian as mother tongue, who in turn will think differently than the ones who grow up with Dzongkha. In other words, the mind-sets of different native speakers differ – as per this theory.

Therefore, it is quite worrisome that Bhutanese children – our children are deprived of a good grounding in Dzongkha because of the “shortage” of trained Dzongkha teachers in primary schools (Refer Kuensel article, December 25, 2018). This is perhaps the tragedy facing our national language – whereby an issue such this doesn't raise any sense of alarm or uneasiness. I am a native Sharchopkha speaker and I learnt to speak Dzongkha in school. The role of schools in language education, therefore, cannot be overstated.

In my current position as a communication scholar, one of the areas that I specialise in is sociolinguistics – a branch of communication that looks at how language does too, and shapes, a society. My concern, therefore, grows out of a deeper understanding of the role that a national language plays in the process of nation-building and the sense of nationhood.

National identity compromised. Our goal of national unity and sovereignty will be severely compromised if the national language is accorded the second-language status – or if Bhutanese people do not speak well enough or take pride – to appreciate the richness of our culture, the importance of the social traditions or the taste for age-old folktales, stories and timeless wisdom. Both nation-building and sovereignty are a work in progress or a dynamic process – or both.

So, what can we do? What are the possible solutions? The following are what comes to my mind. Other social thinkers and commentators may have more or are free to add or diverge from mine.

Laws and policy. First, this is not an issue to be left to the Education Ministry or the Dzongkha Development Commission – although these agencies are at the forefront and can do more than what they are doing now. To start with, we need to move beyond the problems, mediocrities or blame-game and get down to some serious business. The issue warrants nothing less than a Parliamentary deliberation and perhaps an Act to protect and promote the national language – if there isn't one already. The Act should, above all, require the Government to pour resources to this area – and not limit to mere tokenism such as requiring Dzongkha on vehicle number-plates or shop signboards. Rather, workable plans, programs and strategies to strengthen it should be formulated whereby we get to a point where Dzongkha is used widely with pride and pleasure. Only then we will be moving beyond the current state of affairs.

Certification system. Second, the promotion of the national language could expand to a certification system whereby anyone with the required skills and knowledge could become a certified Dzongkha language teacher. Everyone knows about the TESOL and IELTS certifications. The Dzongkha Development Commission could develop basic, intermediate and advanced Dzongkha Language Teacher's Certification (DLTC) courses, which could be delivered by public and private institutions. Anyone thereafter who is certified can teach Dzongkha in schools or anywhere in the world. Similarly, a basic DLTC certification could be a requirement for certain jobs requiring a public interface. Such a system could open an industry of its own, which will then go a long way into popularising the language. Private language centres will mushroom and some people might even venture into foreign soils to teach Dzongkha to the Bhutanese diaspora. English, which is one of the most difficult languages with complex syntax, grammar and even pronunciation has become the most popular language in the world – thanks mainly to such aggressive campaigns. It didn't happen just like that – or out of the blues.

New pedagogical approach. Third, systematic research needs to be done in earnest to further develop different pedagogical approaches to teaching Dzongkha. The existing rote-memorization-and-reprimand method may work within the monastic walls but not in a liberal education system. Besides, different native speakers have different ways to comprehend a new language and Dzongkha-teaching should factor these cognitive and linguistic realities.

Promotion through popular art. Fourth, the two agencies that have contributed immensely to popularising Dzongkha (besides the school education system) are the Bhutanese film industry and the Bhutanese Broadcasting Service. Could we inject more resources and recognition to these two institutions? Could we take a leaf out of the Korean wave, where over US\$ 200 million is injected annually into the K-pop industry by their government? Why don't we push what works instead of lamenting what is not working? Lastly, Dzongkha should be seen as more than a subject. It should be viewed as an education in itself – by integrating and expanding to other skills and aspects of society such as art, music, history, culture, folktales and values education. Some of these are imparted as extra-curricular already, which is not enough. It is high time we develop further and move them into the mainstream.

In conclusion, let me also point out that in the past any public discourse on the promotion of Dzongkha has been countered with the argument to do it at the expense of English – our current medium of instruction in schools. To me, these arguments are lame excuses or non-starters. The Dzongkha-English debate is not an either-or case. I know many friends and colleagues who are perfect in both. Some are perfect in three or even four languages (Dzongkha, English, Sharchopkha and Bumtap). Swiss people are, for example, fluent in all three official languages – German, French and Italian – and some even in English. Some of the best Dzongkha speakers of my generation are from Mongar, Lhuentse, Bumthang or Trongsa. English is the language that we need to engage with the World – and engagement with the world, at the political level as well as through participation in a globalised economy and travels, is necessary to enhance and sustain our very sovereignty. The call for protection and promotion of Dzongkha, therefore, should not be equated to cosmetic jingoism or ultra-nationalism but as a genuine concern to retain an important element of national unity, identity and stability. For, Dzongkha is more than a language. It is our national language – one of the binding forces that will ultimately define our destiny as a nation.



<https://dorji-wangchuk.com/>

# Words of Wisdom from Golden Throne



National Day  
17th December, 2012  
Changlimethang, Thimphu

“...with capable and dedicated citizens who have great love for our country; with the guidance of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and; with the ever-stronger bonds between People and King, I have great confidence that we shall achieve our goals.”

“Our People of Bhutan are unique. We have a sense of family, community and brotherhood that inspires us to come together in times of need. I have seen

this following natural disasters and most recently in the way in which all Bhutanese came forward to offer whatever little we could afford to rebuild the historic treasure, Wangduephodrang Dzong.”

“In other nations, difficult moments in their history are met with strife, violence and conflict as people sacrifice national interest in order to achieve individual ambitions. In Bhutan such acts and events have never occurred. Our way of life, our heritage, loyalty and values remain strong in the hearts of our People and our People stand ready, even in times of great personal hardship, to place Nation above Self. I am so proud of our People and offer my deep gratitude for the love you have shown for your Nation.”

“It is during times of prosperity and success that we must remind ourselves of the work that lies ahead. We have made a good start in our transition to democracy but much remains to be done. Our Nation has seen great socio-economic growth but it is more important that we have growth with equity. We must raise, with all our effort, the less fortunate so that they may, at the earliest, begin to partake in the opportunities brought by modernization and progress.”

“The government has provided education to our youth. But for the nation to prosper for all time, a sound education must be succeeded by access to the right jobs and responsibilities, so that our youth may bloom as individuals and at the same time serve their Nation well.”

“For me, I hold sacred the endeavors begun by my father, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. I have committed myself to bringing to fruition all the noble endeavors begun in his 34 years of service and sacrifice. I also hold sacred my duty to ensure the success of democracy and I shall work to lay the strongest foundations for a vibrant democracy within my reign.”

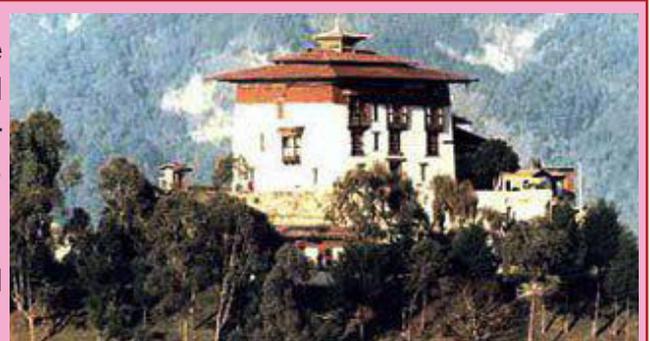
“Above all, I believe that the Golden Throne is not a Throne of wealth, power and prestige. The Golden Throne of Bhutan is a unique Throne of Destiny to serve our People and Nation.”

*Compiled by Dechen Pema Yangden*

## Did you know?

In 1963, when Zhemgang was created as a separate dzongkhag, the dzong was renovated under the command of His late Majesty, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk and renamed as Dechen Yangtse or Druk Dechen Yangtse dzong. Previously it was under Mongar Dzongkhag.

The administrative offices were separated from the old dzong in the mid 1980s to its current location.



# Commercial Winter Chili Production Program in Zhemgang

After the ban on the import of chilies from India due to excessive content of pesticide residues, there was shortage of the chilies in the country especially during the winter season and the ministry had to import chilies all the way from Kolkata, India to meet the consumer's demand. The Department of Agriculture in collaboration with ARDCs and Dzongkhags had prepared production plan for commercial winter chili through consultation meetings organized on June, 2017. The plan had been prepared mainly to substitute the domestic requirement and to make zero import of chili during the coming winter months.

The winter chili production plan was implemented in the southern foothills of the country where Zhemgang was identified as one among them to take up the venture. Considering the agro climatic condition requirement for chili, areas located in the wet sub-tropical zones (150-600 masl with annual rainfall of 2500-5500 mm and mean temperature of 23.60C) with assured irrigation water were identified for commercial winter chili production. So, in Zhemgang four Gewogs namely Trong, Ngangla, Phangkar and Goshing were identified for the program where in total, about 12 acres of land comprising of wetland and dry land were brought under chili cultivation in the Dzongkhag.

The major production supports were in the form of inputs such as providing efficient water use facilities, protected cultivation technologies and quality seeds which were provided from National Vegetable Program. The growers were also provided with capacity developments through awareness, demonstration and hands on practice on winter chili production techniques.



The main objective of the program is to make availability of enough quantity of green chilies in the domestic market during the lean season (Dec- March), therefore, staggered production was adopted which had to be started from the nursery production stage. Hence, in all the nursery production sites seedlings were raised at fortnightly interval thereby ensuring staggered transplanting and harvesting thereafter from a particular production site.

Nursery production was carried out in polyhouses/polytunnels as chili seeds require warm temperature for quick germination. Low cost polyhouses were constructed in all the nursery production sites. The materials for polyhouses (plastic sheet & nylon belt, green shed net) were provided by the department. Nursery raising was started from 1st August or latest by 15th August 2017.

Some of the major constraints faced during winter chili production was in regard to the temperature requirement for the growth of chili. The minimum temperature required is 24oc but the night temperature was very low during winter and most of the chili plants in the open field condition exhibited stunted growth. Thus, yield could not be achieved as targeted. Therefore, promoting chili cultivation in the protected shed/environment was considered as the best solution since the yield was high under protected condition.

Another barrier faced both in protected and open field was heavy infestation by mites where fruiting was greatly hampered. Therefore, it was very necessary to develop IPM on mite management and letting the farmers strictly manage on the sucking pest both preventive and through recommended dose of chemicals. The total yield contributed from the four identified Gewogs in Zhemgang Dzongkhag was 5 MT.

Despite several hiccups amidst the program, farmers were delighted and beaming with the turnover they got through the sale of green chili during off season. They had an opportunity to explore market without having to compete with Indian green chili. Furthermore, farmers were planning to extend chili cultivation area in the coming season. This encouraged many farm entrepreneurs to stand up for such ventures which could generate employment as well.

*Contributed by Agriculture Sector*

# Wamling Pong Lhakhang

## Description

Wamling Pong Lhakhang (temple) is located on a ridge above Wamling village. The temple is named Wamling Pong temple because of its location on a pong (hill in Kheng language). The temple sits at an elevation of 1600m, and it is 45 minutes walk up from the Shingkar community feeder road. This temple is privately owned, and it subsists on donations from private individuals and families. The temple is located east of Wamling and overlooks the paddy fields. An old mule track that leads up to the temple passes through the lower and upper Wamling village. This is the first temple on this mule track, and then comes five more temples namely Wamling Phu Lhakhang, Gangdar Pong Lhakhang, Gaden Tashicholing Lhakhang, Tashi Thongmon Lhakhang, and Tshokiling Shedra.

The Pong Lhakhang is located next to a one-storey traditional house with a small vegetable garden. According to oral sources, Wamling village had only five households in the past, and today it has over 75 households. Paddy is the main crop of the village and it is cultivated once a year.

## History

According to oral sources, the temple was established by lama Khampa Nungney from the small Wamtsas temple in Ura, Bumthang. The late Dasho Shingkar Lam (1928-2014) from Ura, Bumthang was considered to be the reincarnation of lama Khampa Nungney. It is believed that when this lama Khampa Nungney was visiting the village of Nimshong Phumeythang in Shingkar gewog, Zhemgang, he saw a rainbow over the valley on the opposite side. The lama visited the site where the rainbow had arched over because he considered this to be a good omen. He then informed the people of the propitious sign and had asked the people of that village to build a temple. The temple came to be known as Wamling Pong Lhakhang.

On the contrary, the thoyig (written record) maintained by the Department of Culture mentions that the rainbow was over the village of Nimshong and that the lama was in Wamling village. According to oral sources, it was built during the reign of the first Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, which corresponds to early 20th century. At one point, the temple used to be an important place of worship, and rituals for the good harvest was performed in the temple every year. Later it was decided that the community temple be moved to Wamling Phu Lhakhang.

## Architecture and Artwork

The one-storey temple is built in traditional Bhutanese architecture with wood, stone and mud. The structure sits on raised stone walls held together with mud, and the internal structure is supported by two wooden beams. The temple has one large wooden door facing north and two traditional Bhutanese windows to the west. A small Mani dungkhor (prayer-wheel) is in the hallway at the entrance of the temple. The temple has a serthok (golden pinnacle) on the roof, and just below the eaves there is a Kemar, a red band. The present owner's parents had replaced the main beams inside the temple, and later the current owner replaced the shingles with CGI sheets.

On the other half of the wall are paintings of Khenlop Choesum (the Bodhisattava Zhiwatso, Guru Rinpoche, and Thrisong Deutsen, the king of Tibet who built the Samye monastery in Tibet) and two of Guru Rinpoche's disciples in the corner. At the top, there are the Buddhas of the Three Times and Chana Dorji (Vajrapani). There are several paintings depicting the Tshering Namdru (Six Symbols of Longevity), the master Longchenpa, Jampelyang (Manjushri), and Dorji Sempa (Vajrasattva).

The main altar has statues of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) in the middle with Guru Rinpoche and Buddha at the sides. There are several smaller statues of Tshepamey (Amitayus) on the side of the main shrine. The temple follows the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Buddhism.

## Social and Cultural Functions

The temple served as a place for communal worship in the past, but now it has been moved to Wamling Phu temple. Nevertheless, the temple still organizes the following religious functions:

- The Kanjur is recited every year during the 3rd and 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar. After the recitation, the Kanjur is taken round the village to bless the place and the people.
- A Moenlam Chenmo (a prayer of good auspices) is performed for three days in the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar.
- Kagye Sadhana practice (Astamahasadhana) and other rituals are conducted to appease the local deity, Sumthrang Draktshen.
- An important ritual which the locals call Thogi Rimdro is performed in the temple for good harvest in the 3rd month of the Bhutanese calendar. It is performed after the seeds are sown. According to the source, it is believed that the deities protect the fields from wild animals.

Gomchens (lay practitioners) and monks from Tshokiling Shedra perform the rituals in the temple. Tshokiling shedra belongs to Namkhai Nyingpo Rinpoche whose seat is at Bumthang Lhodrakarchu.

**Jigme Wangdi, Asst. Lecturer, College of Language Culture Studies, Taktse, Trongsa, Royal University of Bhutan, 2017.**

# Orgyen Choling Monastery, Tsheldang

Orgyen Choling Monastery is located on the serene mountain top between two villages Tsheldang and Nakhar under Nangkor, Zhemgang Dzongkhag. People are unsure who to be grateful for the unpredictable farm road connection after a long wait. The snail's pace speed conditioned road limits few vehicles plying. But much to the greater delight the road has helped bring in some changes and seen few officials attending the beautiful annual Drupchen at the Orgyen Choling Monastery.

The monastery has been in place since early 1920s preserving and propagating the Buddha's teaching. Despite the isolation of monastery from modern means of living and road networks for many years, people of those two villages has been supporting to run the events throughout the calendar year with so much of joy furnishing community vitality. Much has preserved and still on smooth run with support from devotees and locals.

Historically late Meme Lama the father of the founder of the monastery has started and blessed the site with small retreat hut in place. Meme Lama couldn't build bigger temple from small retreat hut.

It was then in Mysore while the founder of the monastery Late Chene Lhendup Rinpoche was attending the teaching from His Holiness Polo Khen Rinpoche. There in Mysore His Holiness Polo Khen Rinpoche prophesized and directed Late Chene Lhendup Rinpoche that there is a special elephant sleeping shaped place surrounded by mountains with a form of male on right and female dragons on the left. Building monastery in the center would benefit all sentient beings and create enormous pleasant situation for dharma propagation in future.



In 1960s, H. E Khechen Dazar Rinpoche from Tibet visited the place and blessed it. Later in his visit there were so many unbelievable signals like rainbow rising on the hill of Monastery. He then said that it was the blessing and secret place of Bayu Lama Shakaya Ozer who had the rainbow body and other yogis during the 18th century. Later many great masters like Thuktse Rinpoche, late H.E Geyshe Pema Thinley and others great teachers are said to have been in retreat.

With the prodigious intent, late Chene Lhendup Rinpoche realized the importance of the presence of monastery and the order of Sangha to preserve and propagate the holy dharma to benefits the beings around. Consequently with great perseverance and with the support from his followers and people from those two villages, he started the work in 1970 and progressively came up with small temple.

Later in 90s Late Chene Lhendup Rinpoche offered the monastery to the present H.E Gangtey Tulku (lineage holder of Pema Lingpa Traditions in Bhutan). It was then from that time enormous expansion and changes picked up and given new atmosphere. Besides tending to everyday running of the monastery he has been the central supporter/benefactor for coming up of new temple. Today Orgyen Choling Monastery stands at its pride as one of the beautiful pioneering monastery in kheng Region. The monastery conducts several religious events, one of the highlight is the annual five days Drupchen with unfurling of Guru Thongdrel presided over by H.E Gangteng Trulku in the month of February. The monastery showcase mask dances and cultural programs for three days. However, the sudden demise of the founder Late Chene Lhendup Rinpoche in 2014 was great loss to the Monastery, locality and many people. Our Continue prayers and wishes could bring his successor home soon. Please keep praying and dedicating merits. The monastery once had 35 students, two teachers. Today when the means and ways in the monastery has enhanced many ordained monks once has turned their fate and chosen to become laymen.

To these days only couple of young monks with a teacher are seen studying, doing their daily evening and morning prayers. Nonetheless my father told me their (ex-Monks) contribution in those two villages and Monastery are immense. Thank you from my family side too, our annual Chogu (Ritual) wasn't challenging.

I have witnessed the annual Drupchen three years in a row, and each year I saw many changes and much better every year.

Khenpo Rigzin Wangchuk then undertook the initiative, put on place many masks for mask dances amongst many others. Rinchen Khandu, who resides in Taiwan and Singapore to these days has sponsored last three years' annual Drupchen. His financial aid went unnoticed, so many people are unaware of his help. He has fulfilled a promise he made to late Rinpoche. Unfortunately so far I haven't heard anyone coming forward to do the same.



# Ngangla & its community system

On the edge of Ngangla Trong ridge, you can see a beautifully renovated temple among a big old stone house and four other bamboo houses with unique banana leaf roofs. The old stone house belongs to the Khoche of the village, and the small house just below the temple is where the caretaker lives. The other three houses have a different story, though. Ngangla Gewog has three ethnic groups of people: Brela, Bjarpa and Lhamanpa. Each of these three social classes has a minimum of 45 households. The three houses near the temple and the land used to cultivate, which belongs to these houses, all lack a particular owner. These three social classes all share ownership. The houses and land belong to every household from these three groups for three years each (after which it alternates to another household). This unique system allows everyone a chance to own the houses and land temporarily. A household amongst one's own class is nominated every three years to stay in that particular house, but on the other hand the one who resides will be responsible to initiate activities happening in the temple. The major activities of the year are: Sertam, Derchoed, gyedpa tsechu, and Choedpala. Sertam is a ritual to appease gods and keep away destruction caused by wild animals and nature on their land. In this ritual, the interesting practice of blowing a conch shell is believed to stop hailstorms throughout the year. They also serve people with Karchu (watery buckwheat flour with local wine/bangchang). This happens on the tenth day of the first month in the Bhutanese calendar. Derchoed happens from the 8th day of the fifth month, gyedpa tsechu on the 8th month and Choedpala starts from the evening of 14th day of the tenth month of the year, which continues until the 17th day. Lay monks in the temple do all these offerings. Outside of the temple Bonpa and Pow do the offerings according to their own traditions for all these rituals, offerings and festivals except for Gayedpa Tsechu, which is done by only the lay monks. For these kind of activities, the active household serving the three year tenure should take care of collecting things for the offerings and should also take care of the people of one's class, who come for the offerings.



## ZURPA

Zurpas are one group in the community that aren't part of these three classes of people. Many years ago, during the times of first and second Kings, people had to pay taxes throughout the Kingdom. People of this lower part of Kheng/Zhemgang were paying taxes of every kind, including everything from chili powder to woven cloth. A group of people put forward a petition to one of the Queens (they said Ashi Phuentsho Choden, but this is uncertain) stating they will serve the Queen instead of paying taxes, as they couldn't afford to pay taxes. The Queen accepted their proposal. Even today, Zurpas do not contribute much during community events and do not play an active role within the community. Today there are around fifty Zurpa households.

## AGRICULTURE

People in Ngangla trong mostly depend on subsistence farming and animal husbandry for their livelihood. Maize is cultivated most among their crops, but this is mostly used for brewing local wine, Bangchang. Maize is also used to prepare Kharang, which will be mixed with rice to cook for meals. Only a small amount of rice is also harvested in some of the villages of Ngangla due to the water scarcity. They also grow buckwheat (sweet and sour), millet, foxtail millet, finger millet, wheat and other crops. They sow the seeds between February and March and harvest it by June and July. They also plant Darun, which is a kind of climber with Maize. The oranges in most of the villages of Ngangla are the source of cash income. They practice shifting cultivation, burning down the large area of bushes. The landowner gets his/her friends to help plant the seeds in the large area, which takes about a day to plant with 17-20 heads of people. A lay monk makes offerings to the deities, spirits and gods to protect their crops from natural disasters and wild animals. Even though cattle are seen raised by a few households, pigs are seen at most of the houses. But these pigs are not raised for commercial use, but rather personal use. Butter and cheese are rare in the village. Many of the people raise hens for eggs and some even have small poultry farms to sell eggs among the villagers. Every time there is a guest in their community, boiled eggs and wild potatoes are offered abundantly, no matter whether the visitor is a high level guest, such as a minister, or just a new person in their village. The offering is always the same.

Villagers are also lucky to have so many wild foods available, which are too abundant to name. Some of these are: Garki, Jugpang, Torma Jug, Bjo, all of which are wild potatoes. These can be boiled and eaten or can be a good curry with local cheese and dried fish. Khatkala Meto is a white flower, which is a little bitter but makes perfectly delicious curry with cheese.

## DEVELOPMENT

Ngangla Geog is also one of the places relatively untouched by modern developments until now. Most of them live in hut-like houses made from woven bamboo and banana leaf thatched roofs. The roofs need to be changed every three years, and even the whole house needs replacement at times. If we look into their kitchen, their stove is made from three stones grounded into mud that can hold a pot to cook. But now in some houses gas stoves are also seen. Recently, B-mobile and Tashi networks have become available to them, to their delight. They use solar energy to light rooms but have to burn kerosene and candles when the solar energy fails. Much of the development work taking place, like electricity and roads, are still in process. The road that is paving its way from Panbang has now reached a place only two hours walk from Ngangla, and the road coming from Panthang has reached more than half way to the one coming from Panbang. But even if the road is completed, people will have to wait for the Pantang Bridge, for which the government has yet to complete designs. It is expected to be complete in more than two years. The bridge in Panbang, though, will be completed within a few months. Only when the bridges are completed will lower Zhemgang be connected.

After the completion of roads and connection of electricity, one potential resource for human development in Ngangla would be tourism. Ngangla is a good place for bird watching and observing culture, where Choedpala gives a glimpse of Buddhism, Bon and Shamanism. Two hours walk from Ngangla, people can also see how traditional Bangchungs are woven in Bjoka. They are also likely to export some of the crops and grains that they grow, if their steep landscape does not demotivate them. On the other hand, they can also sell some of the organic foods that they don't plant but can harvest from plants naturally growing wild in the region.



