



ZHEMGANG MONTHLY

FROM STEPS TO LEAPS

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FROM DZONGDAG'S DESK



Zhemgang Dzongkhag was fortunate to engage in an AM with PM-A dialogue with the Prime Minister which provided us with an opportunity for direct and open discussion forum to submit and raise issues and challenges pertaining to the development of Dzongkhag through video conferencing facility with the apex institution of our governance. This enabled us to leverage the benefits of technology saving time, money and resources.

During the discussion, we touched upon some critical issues such as intensification programs for reducing alcohol harm reduction, improving sanitation, road connectivity, electricity coverage and enhancing telecommunication networks. The forum also discussed about the development of Zhemgang tourism action plan under the national tourism flagship program, promotion of Birding tour and white water rafting as the unique tourism attractions of Zhemgang.

To connect or not to connect, as the approved structural town plan of Panbang, Tungkudenpa, Bramang and Annala under Panbang Dungkhag is being implemented, the Dzongkhag Administration is also exploring to establish a sporting hub and water based recreational center to boost the development of new township in lower Kheng.

The watershed event of the Dzongkhag in the 12th Five Year Plan will be the celebration of Diamond Jubilee (60 years) of Zhemgang Dzongkhag in 2023. Dzongkhag was separated from Monggar Dzongkhag in 1963. The government has approved the Diamond Jubilee celebration proposal and assured full support in making the event successful and memorable. To this effect, the Administration has already initiated the conceptualization and planning process of Diamond Jubilee celebration. This event would bestow us with an opportunity to understand the past, appreciate the present and prepare for the future of Khengri-Nam-Sum.

'AM with PM- A dialogue with the Prime Minister'



The 10th 'AM with PM' session was conducted with officials from Zhemgang dzongkhag Administration on 24 April, 2019 via video conferencing. It was a very fruitful session where the Dzongkhag officials interacted directly with Hon'ble Prime Minister.

The following submissions were made from Zhemgang Dzongkhag:

1. High alcohol indulgence and poverty rate in Zhemgang
2. Zhemgang has only 52% coverage of flush toilets and faces sanitation problems
3. Road Connectivity Issue - Out of 40 chiwogs under 8 gewogs, 10 chiwogs do not have road connectivity.
4. Electricity Access - The 10 chiwogs which do not have road connectivity also do not have access to electricity.
5. Annual Bird Festival - Zhemgang plans to revive the Bird Festival as an annual event from 11th November this year.
6. Diamond Jubilee Celebration - Zhemgang Dzongkhag was demarcated as a separate Dzongkhag in 1963.
7. Reotala and Ossey Road connectivity
8. Human Resource Shortage - Zhemgang Dzongkhag has no architect and no urban planner.
9. Prince Namgay Wangchuck Academy - Zhemgang Dzongkhag seeks the way forward on the institute.
10. Sports Complex in Panbang- 9.2 acres of lands have been identified for a sports complex in Panbang.

Local Government Key Result Area 1

Local Government Key Result Area 1: Gainful employment created and local economy enhanced

Programme Title: Economic development and job creation

Objective: To enhance local economy and create gainful employment

Collaborating Agency/ies: MoEA/MoLHR/MoAF/MoF/MoIC/TCB

Programme Strategies

As per the GNH Survey 2015, the average annual household income of the Dzongkhag is Nu. 137,520, which is the second lowest in the country against the national average of Nu. 231,502. It is predominantly an agrarian economy wherein almost 15 percent of the household income is contributed by agriculture and livestock sector. As the economic base of the Dzongkhag is very narrow, it has the potential to expand the economic base by enhancing other sectors of the economy especially through the creation of more CSIs (both farm and non-farm) and service centers.



It has a population of 17,763 (PHCB 2017) which is projected to increase to 18,917 by 2023. Almost 50 percent of the total population is in the economically active group (8764 as per PHCB 2017) which is projected to increase by 771 by 2023. This presents a unique opportunity for the Dzongkhag to reap the demographic dividend and enhance its economic comparative advantage through the supply of cheap and abundant labour.

The Dzongkhag is also endowed with rich flora and faunal biodiversity, which could be tapped for economic gains through the development of eco-tourism products such as bird watching, fly-fishing and river rafting. In order to enhance the local economy, the Dzongkhag will focus more on the indicators as shown in the diagram above.

Submitted by Thinley Jamtsho

Tourism exchange Program - Manas Park, Assam

The Community Based Tourism (CBT) Team lead by Dzongdag, visited Manas Park, Assam on a tourism exchange program on 26th April to 28th April. The team had an opportunity to interact with the officials of our neighbouring state, understand the functioning of the parks, running of homestays and development of tourism as a whole.

A good number of homestays, camps and ecolodges has been developed around the park that caters to a swarming number of tourist from various locations. The program was marked with visit to various eco-lodges, safari in Manas Park and cultural program show. The observation, lessons and experiences gained through this exchange program will serve as important inputs in the development of Zhemgang Tourism Action Plan.

With "Braveheart of Kaziranga" Mr. Dharanidhar Boro



When in doubt, turn back

I grew up looking after cows. The job entailed herding the cattle into the jungles and leaving them there to graze – while I dipped my head in books or catch crabs in the stream. As the day passed and the Sun dropped towards the horizon, it was time to regroup the cattle and head them back home. Some cows, however, would have strayed off the herd and my job was to find them in the thick forest, where quite often I would lose my way.

“If you are lost, you should go back and find your own footprints,” my grandfather would advise me. I followed him and never got lost – even once.

For over 40 years, I followed the same advice when it came to my life too. Quite often I got lost in the medley of wrong choices and decisions – and found myself in the thickets of confusions and lack of confidence to move on. So I often turned back and found my footprints – from the place and the path I followed.

Hence, it is nice to be back to where it all started for me. This is the spot, where 51 years ago, among these splendid mountains of memay Ralang, Tshong Tshongma and Serkemla, with the Vajra Dakinis (Dorji Khandum) presenting at my birth, I saw the light of the world. The auspicious nativity was however countered with the sad economic conditions at home. My family was poor, and had nothing. We lived in a one-room hut that had to be repaired with each passing storm. For much of my childhood, the piece of cloth I wore was the only one I had. I had no slippers or shoes. We scrambled for food and there was not much to be found. So my sisters and I would wait for our grandfather, who was a lay lama and was served with some meat and rice for conducting rituals and religious ceremonies in the nearby villages of Radhi and Chaling. He rarely ate his lunch and instead packed them for us at home. All along my father was away, drafted into the army, following the brief war between our neighboring countries in 1962.

Nonetheless, the extreme poverty didn't deter us from being happy. My mother had an endless supply of jokes and songs and stories. Some, she made them up. She was extremely talented. She taught us never to blame our misfortune on someone and instead smile against any adversity – and never to lose our sense of humor. My grandfather assured us that everything was temporary and that we would one day be back to our former glory. He used to tell me how our great grandfather used to launch long pilgrimage expeditions to Tsari Rongkor in Tibet – with 30-40 horses and several servants and porters. My mother and my grandfather also kept reminding us that we are descendants of “givers from top and not receivers of alms from bottom (a Bhutanese aphorism to mean noble families who are not only wealthy but generous too) – and never to forget this fact even later in life. I was also told that one of our ancestors came from Aja and was a great yogi while our great-grandma who was still alive and living with us was an ashi from Tawang.



Today I stood here in silence for few minutes and paid tribute to my two greatest persons whose lives, characters, and optimism shaped me and my life – and the lives and the characters of all my siblings. From this ground, where three prayer flags stand today, like the wind, I fluttered away – launching my own expeditions into my own dreams and journeys. As years rolled by, I rose to positions of power and prominence. I did things that I wanted to do and achieve what I wanted to achieve. I travelled the world – and continue to do so. I have not only managed to come out of those miser-

able conditions but have personally helped hundreds of families to do so in distant places like Athang gewog. And of course I have tasted glory and fortune too. Yes, I have come very far. My grandpa was right. The condition we were in when we lived here was temporary.

So, in life if you are doing well, push harder. But if you are getting nowhere, just turn around. Retrace your footprints. Trace your roots. And launch yourself again. You will appreciate from where, and how far, you have come; what kind of hurdles you have crossed and how many things you have achieved in your journey called life. It will give you the confidence to move on. For, you and only you can find your path and walk your dreams.

*Submitted by
Karma Wangchuk*

Kyebu Lungtsen Lhakhang

The Kyebu Lungtsen Lhakhang is eight minutes away from the Zhemgang Dzong towards Trongsa. It is a two-storey temple built by eight households of Dungbi village in 2004, and it is located above Dungbi village, next to the highway. There are many prayer flags around the temple.

History

Kyebu Lungtsen Lhakhang is located in Dungbi village. According to oral sources, the Dungbi community has been following Bon Choe (non-Buddhist belief) since time immemorial. They sacrificed animals to offer to the local deity Kyebu Lungtsen, their kyelha (the deity of birth).

Prior to 2004, the village did not have a temple, so people performed rituals in their own homes. Meme Pawo La, a local healer (medium) used to perform all the rituals in the village. The community worships and offers rituals to the local deity to have peace and prosperity in the village, and also in times of calamity and problem. However, Lhajay Tshering, 61 years old, says that he didn't reap any benefit despite his dedicated offerings to Kyebu Lungtsen.

The caretaker Lhajay Tshering said that the idea of building a small temple in his locality was mainly to stop practicing Bon Choe. He said that in Bumthang, people worship the same deity without sacrificing animals, so he propagated the idea of not killing animal in his community. The community also decided to build a small temple dedicated to Kyebu Lungtsen. The eight households of Dungbi village contributed the fund and built the Lhakhang in 2004. They installed Kyebu Lungtsen as the main relic of the temple, hence the name, and any child born in the village are brought to the temple for blessing.

The oral source says that Thuksey Rinpoche (1951-2010, the 10th reincarnation of Tertön Pema Lingpa's son, Thuksey Dawa) consecrated the temple after its completion in 2004, and the community also stopped practicing Bon Choe. Now the community performs rituals to Kyebu Lungtsen without sacrificing animals. In 2016, the 70th Je Khenpo Truku Jigme Choeda blessed the temple during the Monlam Chhenmo in Zhemgang dzongkhag. Unfortunately, the temple was partially burnt in April 2017.

Architecture and Artwork

The two-storey temple is located on a hilltop above the Zhemgang highway. The temple looks like a simple Bhutanese house without a courtyard or prayer wheels. There is a kitchen to the back of the temple. The ground floor is used as a storage and the main altar is on the upper floor. Besides the statue of Kyebu Lungtsen, the other relics in the temple are the statues of Guru Rinpoche, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) and the present Buddha Sakyamuni. There are also volumes of religious texts. There is a wall printing of the eight lucky signs.

Social and Cultural Functions

The temple does not organize big rituals or other social functions, only the offerings to Kyebu Lungtsen is made on the 15th day of the 7th month of the Bhutanese calendar every year. The rituals are performed mostly by gomchens (lay-practitioners), and sometimes the villagers invite the monks of the Zhemgang Rabdey when they need to perform rituals for a long period of time.

Besides the offerings to the local deity and funeral rites, religious activities are also conducted on certain auspicious days.

Source :Bhutan cultural Atlas

Contributed by Karma Wangchuk

CONSECRATION OF TAMA MEDITATIN CENTRE

The Tshangchen Yoesel Thektse Ati-ling Meditation Centre was inaugurated by His Holiness 5th Kyabje Kathok Situ Rinpoche, Jamjoen Choekyi Ngyinjei on 12th April 2019





Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan

25th April, 2019

RIM Convocation Hall, Thimphu

".....Quality! It's easy to begin any work and even easier if we want to achieve mediocracy. However, if we want to see steady progress and constant improvement, we have to be prepared to shoulder greater responsibility. Healthcare is very important for each and every person, and we cannot fail in our endeavour to continuously improve the quality of our healthcare services."

"...for sustainable development and dynamic economic growth, first and foremost, our people must enjoy good health. Therefore it is our collective responsibility to formulate intelligent and innovative plans and policies, to ensure that the people of Bhutan will always have equal access to quality healthcare."

"We are a small, mountainous, landlocked, sparsely populated country, located between populous and economic giants, existing in a world that is characterised by uncertainty amidst a rapidly changing environment. The only way we can navigate safely and successfully into the future is by being diligent, sharp and steadfast. It is important that we always support and encourage those who are intelligent and competent. We must always remember to be a society that values talent."

".....it would be prudent of us to pay attention to our culture related to our workplace....

1. Professionalism: your conduct as you carry out your responsibility
2. Hard work: the culture of carrying out every task before you, no matter the size or scope, with diligence.
3. Trustworthiness and reliability: it takes time and effort to be trustworthy and reliable. Trust will not emerge on its own, but have to be actively cultivated and nurtured."

".....in the 21st century, change is taking place at a phenomenal rate. Our healthcare institutions should be agile and receptive, in order to take advantage of opportunities, and respond to new challenges brought about by digital revolution, and progresses in medical science, technology and practices. Of all our institutions, it is vital that our education and healthcare be the most dynamic, responsive and flexible. We have to establish a culture of being able to respond to changing times."

Compiled by Dechen Pema Yangden

What is Serkyem? What is its purpose? Why is it performed?

The Serkyem or Golden Drink offering, is part of Dharma Protector's practice like that of Setrap Chen's practice. In Tibetan, Ser means 'golden' and Kyem means 'beverage'. Serkyem remains largely a unique aspect of the Dharma Protector practice. Lamas of the past developed this practice as an offering to the Dharma Protectors to request for swift assistance with obstacles, problems and dire needs.

Hence, the Serkyem offering has become popular among modern practitioners who seek assistance.

The Serkyem offering is offered by pouring the beverage into a cup like a wine glass, which is placed into a lower bowl.

The Serkyem offering or Golden Drink/Black Tea is offered from a jug, tea pot or any vessel that makes pouring easy.

During the offering, the beverage is poured into the cup to the point where the liquid overflows down into the lower bowl.

"In Buddhism, the symbolism of the overflowing liquid is highly auspicious because it represents an abundant flow of merits, virtues, material resources and conditions that are conducive for one's Dharma practice."

The beverage can be poured a little at a time during the recitation of relevant passages throughout the liturgy.

"The Serkyem vessel can be of any material such as gold, silver, copper, brass or even glass. Offering vessels that are made of precious materials are considered highly propitious, especially for lay practitioners who want to create tremendous merits and establish the closest affinity with the Protector."

The overflowing of Serkyem is symbolic of an auspicious offering to the Protector.

Black Tea is traditionally offered as Serkyem because in ancient times, it was considered a precious beverage. The colour of black tea is golden and reflects the meaning of Serkyem.

"When tea is offered, it is traditionally offered piping hot as a direct request to the Dharma Protector for the swiftest assistance, heat being symbolic of rapidity."

Here, it must be noted that offering of cold tea should be avoided because of the reason stated above. Many Bhutanese prepare tea and then store it in a bottle from where it is offered. A bottle of tea even last for a month.

Tea is traditionally used but besides tea, beer or alcohol can also be offered because of the Tantric meaning behind such substances.

Alcohol of any kind is considered a wrathful substance, an example of this is during a Tsog offering, "a little bit of consecrated alcohol and meat is partaken to symbolize the psychic winds and bodily elements used in Tantric meditation; therefore beer or alcohol represents Tantric attainments and is offered to the Dharma Protector as a direct request to overcome all obstacles that obstruct spiritual attainments and to bring about beneficial conditions swiftly."

Tea and alcohol are not the only beverages that can be offered as Serkyem, "milk, which symbolizes spiritual nourishment may be also offered.

The actual Serkyem offering ritual begins with the pouring of a little of the beverage into the vessel so it's not empty.

"The Serkyem is consecrated with three repetitions of the mantra Om Ah Hum, while purifying with incense. Then, the Serkyem liturgy is recited with each stanza describing an offering of the Serkyem to a particular being or a class of beings that play a defined role in our spiritual practice. During the offering, the Serkyem is visualized to be divine nectar that expands to fill an entire ocean. This ocean is made out of not just the beverage that the practitioner offered but of all the desirable things in the world that excite and please the 5 senses.

This vast ocean is offered to the Protector and to the other special beings mentioned in the liturgy. In addition, the request or what the practitioner wants to achieve is visualized to come into fruition with the assistance of the Protector."

As stated above this is the typical practice that has been done in the monasteries over the ages due to its proven efficacy.

Reference:

1. Bradley Kassian
2. Tshem Rinpoche



Contributed by Mohan Subba

Ùandhey Nèy

: -Religious site at kheng Buli.

Ùandhey Nèy is believed to be sanctified by lotus born Padmasambhava from immemorial time when Khènpò Dhàzer meditated three decades or more before was unlocked the door of enshrouded blessed site to all sentient being.

Pilgrimage to this natural conspicuous conch shaped image sculptured on a big stone has etched up while Padmakara subjugating propelled a rare & precious right sided conch shell over the fugitive local cocademon whereby a prominent engraved of Dungkar Yàekhèl left. A miraculous conch embossed has mantra tantra trajectory hollowed a stone where evil spirit transformed into it.

Dungkar Nèy or holy conch site is lying adjacent to the Bùrghàng river encompassed by a blend of deciduous as well as evergreen trees, lichens carpeted trunks & stones, creepers hanging loosely availing twitchel for squirrel & birds, wild banana flowers & fiddle heads yields culinary craze, decorative fern trees rooted on the earth has a sheds from it's parasol type of elongated leaves, & waterfalls with bubbling rivulets oozing out from the deep roots of trees were few aesthetic features that my eyes caught in a wink.



Contributed by Karma Wangchuk

Khandro Dorji Pagmo

Khandro Dorji Pagmo (Vajravarani) was born to mother Lhacjoe Doelma:

Before birth, As per Khandro mother she said that in her dream, saw a monk gave statue of Khandro Dorji Phagmo, right after statue placed on her hands, saw beautiful bunch of light rays dissolving into her womb, A monk and nun used to appear in dream to guide and advise on what to do and what not.

just after the birth; Khandro Rimpoche body was completely enclosed in silky fiber without single blood stain, four sets of beautiful rainbows circled the sun and Dharlam (two white strip silky clouds) which has stretched across the sky, canopy of rainbow light and flowery rain showered which is symbolic of extraordinary birth...The moment she was out of the silky fibre, uttered mantra ' Om Benza Bero Tshaney Ye Hari Nesa Hung Hung Phed So Ha' the mantra of Khandro Dorji Phagmo three times. As per the prophecy; in 2003 Khandro went to Zhemgang as per the prophecy of second consort of Guru Padmasambhava, Khandro Mebar Tashi Khendhen of right century. During visit to kheng Duenmang Tsachu(hot spring) to take natural hot springs bath, Khandro Rimpoche left handprints, we can find footprints...

Treasures discovered: Kapala (skull), Vajara Draggar (Phub), Shoe of Khandro Member Tashi Khendhen, Wamg Penpo (Phallus)..etc...

(Extracted from a book on Biography of Khandro Dorji Phagmo written by Tshering Tashi)

Khandro Rimpoche is now at the process of construction stupa and renovating hostel for nuns solely with the help of handful devotees, alternatively helping hand by nearby villagers, teachers and students....

May Love grows and Buddha Dharma flourish....

" The precious and scared womb of Dorji Phagmo, Dwells in it thousands of Buddhas, its place Buddha come from its a place Buddhas live in ultimate bliss"...

Contributed by Karma Wangchuk

Month that was

- 7 April - Opening of Langdurbi Chiwog Farm Road
- 8 - 14 April - 27 Youth and 7 GAO trained on Entrepreneurship
- 12 April - Consecration of Tama Meditation Centre
- 17 April - Duekhor Chorden Rabney at Buli
- 22 April - NHDC Presented New Zerey Designs
- Safe Drinking Water meeting with Gups, GAO and MoH Team from Thimphu.
- 22 - 27 - Dzongkha Language training at Tingtibi
- 24 April - AM with PM, video conference with Hon'ble Prime Minister
- 25 - 26 - Secretary, MoWHS, Dasho Chenchu Dorji visited Zhemgang

Mandala Offering

The practice of offering the Mandala consists of the ritual offering of the world, and all its wealth, to the Object of Refuge as an act of veneration.

The configuration of your hands contains the same meaning as the Mandala offering. The two fingers raised upwards in the centre represent Mount Meru.

The four corners formed by interlocking the other fingers, represent the four continents and you should imagine that all the wealth contained in the entire world is present in your hands.

When the offering is completed, if you would like to visualise those to whom you have offered the Mandala as happily accepting it, you should proceed to unfold your hands away from you.

If, on the other hand, you feel it is more appropriate to receive the blessings of the Object of Refuge to whom the offering is made, then you should unfold your hands towards you.

OM BANZA BHU MI AH HUM
OM Vajraground AH HUM
WONG CHEN SER GYI SA ZHI
Here is the mighty and powerful base of gold
OM BANZA RE KE AH HUM
OM Vajraline AH HUM
CHI CHAG RI KOR YUG GI KOR WAI U-SU
The outer ring is encircled with this iron fence
First ring
1 RII GYÄL PO RI RAB
In the centre, the king of mountains, Mount Meru
2 SHAR LU PAG PO
In the east, the continent Purvavideha
3 LHO DZAM BU LING
In the south, Jambudvipa
4 NUB BA LANG CHÖ
In the west, Aparagodaniya
5 JANG DRA MI NYÄN
In the north, Uttarakuru
6, LU DANG LU PAG
7 Around the east, the sub-continents Deha and Videha
8, NGA YAB DANG NGA YAB ZHÄN
9 Around the south, Camara and Aparacamara
10, YO DÄN DANG LAM CHOG DRO
11 Around the west, Satha and Uttaramantrina
12, DRA MI NYÄN DANG DRA MI NYÄN GYI DA
13 Around the north, the sub-continents Kurava and Kaurava
14 RIN PO CHEI RI WO
In the east is the treasure mountain
15 PAG SAM GYI SHING
In the south is the wish-granting tree
16 DÖ JOI BA
In the west is the wish-granting cow
17 MA MO PAI LO TOG
In the north is the harvest that needs no cultivation Second ring
18 KOR LO RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious wheel

19 NOR BU RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious jewel
20 TSUN MO RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious queen
21 LON PO RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious minister
22 LANG PO RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious elephant
23 TA CHOG RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious and best of horses
24 MAG PON RIN PO CHE
Here is the precious general
25 TER CHEN POI BUM PA
Here is the great treasure vase
Third ring
26 GEG MA
Here is the goddess of beauty
27 TRENG WA MA
Here is the goddess of garlands
28 LU MA
Here is the goddess of song
29 GAR MA
Here is the goddess of dance
30 ME TOG MA
Here is the goddess of flowers
31 DUG PÖ MA
Here is the goddess of incense
32 NANG SÄL MA
Here is the goddess of light
33 DRI CHAB MA
Here is the goddess of perfume
Top Ring
34 NYI MA
Here is the sun
35 DA WA
Here is the moon
36 RIN PO CHEI DUG
Here is the umbrella of all that is precious
37 CHOG LÄ NAM PAR GYÄL WAI GYÄL TSÄN
Here is the banner of victory in all directions
38 U SU LHA DANG MII PÄL JOR PUN SUM
TSOG PA MA TSANG WA ME PA
In the centre are all the possessions precious to gods and men

TSANG ZHING YI DU WONG WA DI DAG
This magnificent collection, lacking in nothing
DRIN CHÄN TSA WA DANG GYU PAR CHÄ PAI
I offer to you, my kind and holy root Lama
PÄL DÄN LA MA DAM PA NAM DANG KYE PAR DU YANG
Together with you, Venerable Lineage Lamas
JE TSUN MA PAG MA DROL MA
And the twenty-one Venerable Mother Arya Taras
LHA TSOG KOR DANG CHÄ PA
Together with the assembly of Gods
NAM LA ZHING KAM UL WAR GYIO
I offer this pure and beautiful collection to you
TUG JE DRO WAI DÖN DU ZHE SU SOL
In your compassion accept what I offer for the sake of all beings
ZHE NÄ DAG SOG SEM CHÄN TAM CHÄ LA
Having accepted these, to myself and to all beings
TUG TSE WA CHEN POI GO NÄ JIN GYI LAB TU SOL
Please grant your blessings through your great compassion.

SHORT MANDALA OFFERING
SA ZHI PÖ KYI JUG SHING ME TOG TRAM
By virtue of offering to you, assembly of Buddhas visualised before me
RI RAB LING ZHI NYI DÄ GYÄN PA DI
This Mandala built on a base, resplendent with flowers, saffron water and incense
SANG GYÄ ZHING DU MIG TE UL WAR GYI
Adorned with Mount Meru and the four continents as well as the sun and moon
DRO KUN NAM DAG ZHING LA CHÖ PAR SHOG
May all share in its good effects.
IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATA YAMI



Contributed by
Karma Wangchuk

Gongphu Lhakhang of Zhemgang

Temple is located in Gongphu village, Trong gewog, Zhemgang dzongkhag. It is situated at an elevation of 4783.5 ft above sea level. The temple is 45km away from Tingtibi town, and from the temple one can see a beautiful view of Gongphu village.

History

According to oral sources, the origin of the name Gong has two narratives. One story narrates that in Chakharbi village (3km away from Gongphu village), there lived a dumb man who always came home with cane shoots. When the villagers asked him from where he brought the cane shoots, he would point upward and say that he brought the canes from gong (in Khengpa language, gong means high or above). The villagers followed him and they also found the cane shoots. From then, the villagers called the place (from where they got the cane shoots) as Gongphu. Later, Chakharbi village also shifted to the present Gongphu village, and nobody knows the reason behind the relocation.

The second narrative states that the village's name is not Gongphu; instead it was called Gomphu (gom means meditation and phu means higher ground). It is believed to be the place where Guru Padmasambhava meditated in a cave that is near the present village. Thus, the village came to be known as Gomphu, and gradually over time people started calling the village as Gongphu.

Gongphu temple is thought to be one of the oldest in the region; unfortunately, the date of its construction is unknown. According to the caretaker, the temple was built by Beyul Lama called Shakya Ozer who meditated at the site of the present temple. People believe that beneath the temple there is a lake, and because of that one can see traces of water in the four corners of the base wall.

Architecture and Artwork

Gongphu temple is a one-storey building. It is constructed in a traditional Bhutanese style of stones, woods, and mud.



In front of the temple there is a courtyard where the mask dances are performed. Small Mani Lakhors (prayer wheel) are embedded on the exterior wall of the temple.

The interior walls have paintings of the peaceful and wrathful deities in the middle, paintings of the four great Guardian deities, Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara), Guru Tshengay (the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche), and also a painting of dharma protectors. Oral sources say that Trulku Ugyen Tshering alias memey Lhadripa did the painting in 1975.

The main relics inside the temple are statues of Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, Tshepamey (Amitayus), Chana Dorji (Vajrapani), the Zhabdrung, and Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara). There are also some old religious texts in the temple.

Social and Cultural Functions

Gongphu lhakhang serves as an important place to conduct annual rituals and other offerings. The village community sponsors all the social and cultural events at the temple. The gomchens (lay practitioners) and sometimes gelongs (monks) of Gangtey trulku perform the rituals in the temple. Some of the rituals that are organized at the temple are:

Dechen Zhingdrup (ritual to Amitabha) ritual is conducted for three days on the 1st month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Nyungne (fasting and prayer) is organized for three days on the 3rd month of the Bhutanese calendar.

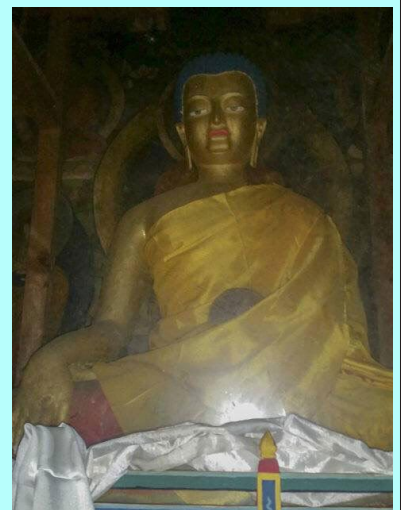
Recitation of religious texts containing one hundred thousand verse is conducted for five days on the 5th month of the Bhutanese calendar. Tsechu is celebrated on the 10th day of the 6th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Nyungne (fasting and prayer) is again organized for two days on the 7th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Lhabab Duechen (Descending day of Lord Buddha) is celebrated on the 22nd day of the 9th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

A three-day mask dance Tsechu is performed on the 10th day of the 10th Month of the Bhutanese calendar.

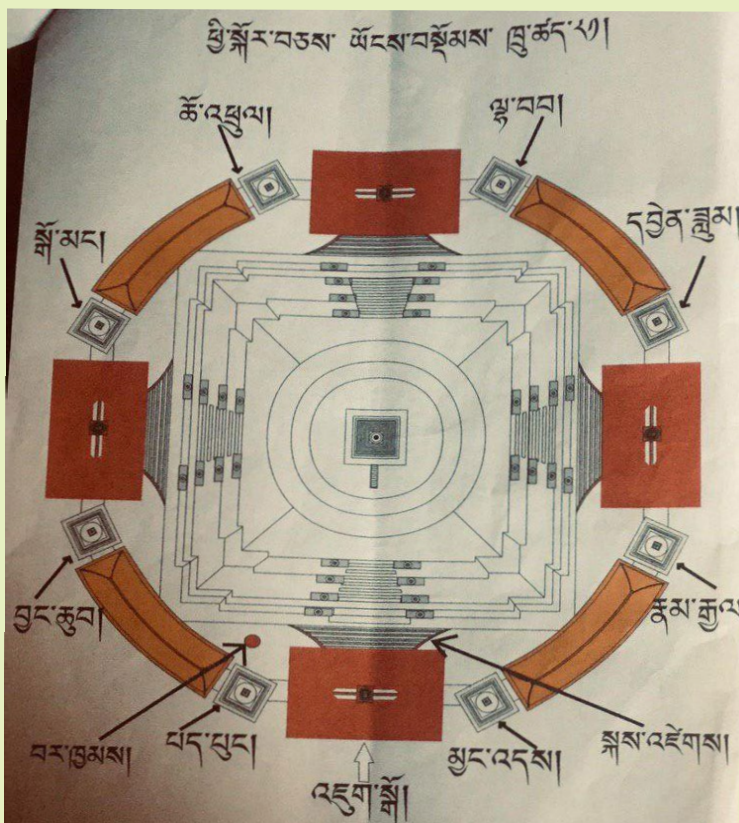
Source :Bhutan Cultural Atlas



Jaroong Khashor Choeten

Under the kind royal advice and sponsorship, this Jaroong Khashor Choeten is under construction at Tungku Denpa (Andhula) by the former soldiers of Zhemgang Dzongkhag (Khenrig Namsum). It will be a majestic religious monument once it is completed.

The place around will be developed and lucrative opportunities and avenue for our aspiring youth will be created thereby. The religious ceremonies will also be sponsored by devoted families and thus, social harmony in the region will be greatly enhanced as foreseen today la. While sadly bypassing the proper Zhemgang that remains with pristine environment and holistic nature, alternative facilities created may cater to better opportunities to more people living around. The efforts put up by our former soldiers in all 20 Dzongkhags are commendable.



Langdurbi Farm Road



Opening of 24 km Langdurbi Chiwoog Farm road starting from Ringdibi bridge and cutting through Digala. The day was celebrated with cultural programs, an archery match and NCD screening with HIV & Leprosy test by Health Team.



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