

# Bhutan

*“Land of the Thunder Dragon”*

*Thimphu  
Tsechu*



**BHUTAN TRAVEL BUREAU**

Travel Agent / Tours & Treks

Post Box 959

Thimphu, Kingdom of Bhutan

Ph: +975-2-332105 / 321749

Fax: +975-2-325100

E-mail: [tours@btb.com.bt](mailto:tours@btb.com.bt)

Web: [www.btb.com.bt](http://www.btb.com.bt)





Dear Guest,

We hope that this booklet will help you gain a deeper understanding of our culture, and that the understanding enriches your stay in our country.

Wishing you a pleasant stay in Bhutan.

TASHI DELEK



**BHUTAN TRAVEL BUREAU**

Travel Agent / Tours & Treks



## ***AN INTRODUCTION TO BHUTAN***

### **Facts and figures**

<b>Area:</b>	<b>46,500 sq.km</b>
<b>Population:</b>	<b>600,000</b>
<b>National Language:</b>	<b>Dzongkha</b>
<b>National Flower:</b>	<b>Blue poppy</b>
<b>National animal:</b>	<b>Takin</b>

Nestled in the Himalayas, Bhutan had for centuries followed a policy of isolation. It is only in the latter half of the 20th century that Bhutan opened its doors to the world. Along with development, Bhutan has also cautiously opened its doors to tourists. Tourism is still developing in Bhutan guarded by guidelines aimed at safeguarding Bhutan's environment and cultural heritage.

### **Basic Dzongkha**

The national language of Bhutan is Dzongkha, though many other dialects and languages are spoken. English is also widely spoken.

Ku zu Zang pola	hello/greeting
Ta shi De lek	good luck, (also used as a greeting)
Ka din chey	Thank you
Choe gi mi ga chi mo?	What is your name?
Ngi gi mi...ing.	My name is...
ga toe mo?	..... Where is?
Nag.....na dep ing.	I'm staying at
Ga chi mo?	What is it/this?
Di lu ga de chi mo?	How much does this cost?
Gong boem	high price/expensive
Gang chhungkhu	low Price/cheap
Ming go	do not want
Tuip bay	okay
Lha zhim	good/nice
Ga tok to	happy/enjoyable

## INTRODUCTION

### **Tsechus**

A 'Tsechu' is a religious festival held annually by most Dzongs and monasteries. The festival is homage to the great deeds of the Buddhist Saint Padmasambhava, popularly known as 'Guru Rinpoche' who was responsible for introducing Buddhism to Bhutan. The dances (most of which are performed by monks) bring blessings to the onlookers, as well as instructing them about the Buddhist dharma.

### **Festival Etiquette**

The grounds where Tsechus are held are purified and consecrated by Lamas, so that when you are watching a festival you are, in essence, on the perimeter of a religious ground. The dancers, whether monks or laymen, are in a state of meditation. They transform themselves into the deities whom they embody on the dance ground. They generate a spiritual power which cleanses, purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators.

Because of the Sacredness of the location and the presence of the Royal family, Je Khenpo, Ministers and other high level guests during Thimphu Tsechu, the following rules should be observed by the general public;

1. **Once inside the Dzong premises, no hats or umbrellas are allowed.**
2. **Proper attire is required. For the tourists, full pants and sleeved shirts are appropriate. Shorts, tank tops, jeans and sports shoes are not allowed. Bhutanese law mandates that all Bhutanese wear traditional Gho and Kira inside the Dzong. We would also encourage and welcome tourists to dress in our traditional attire.**
3. **Photographers are requested to behave respectfully, and must always remain outside the dance ground.**
4. **Flash photography is NOT allowed.**
5. **It would be appreciated if the onlookers would adhere to respectful behaviour and conduct during the festival.**
6. **The dance ground is not a place to drink or smoke, talk too loudly or laugh loudly at inappropriate times.**

Tsechus are not common entertainment events, and are not held as tourist attractions. They are genuine manifestations of religious traditions hundreds if not thousands of years old. Today, outsiders are given the privilege of witnessing these sacred rites. Bhutan hopes that by offering this privilege to the outside world it in no way impairs or infringes on the sacredness or beauty of the ritual.

In order to maintain the policy of tourists being allowed to view the festival, proper behaviour would be appreciated.

### **Dress Code**

The Bhutanese dress in their finest clothes when attending a Tsechu. The preferred dress code for visitors is formal wear. Inside Dzongs and monasteries hats are not permitted as a rule. Full sleeved shirts and full trousers would suffice for men, the same or dresses for women. Ties are not necessary, jackets optional.

**We look forward to an auspicious festival!**

## DAY ONE

### **DANCE OF THE FOUR STAGS (SHACHAM)**

**Costume: Knee length skirts and masks of horned deers.**

Long ago, the King of the Wind created much unhappiness in this world through his great power by making all sentient beings and the world tremble. Ugyen Rinpoche rode a stag belonging to the Sadag (the great Earth protector) and went around the world blessing the land in order to restore peace and happiness for everyone, thus subduing the King of Wind and the Earth. As a blessing the first incarnation of Nam Nying (Namkhe Nyingpo) formed the effigy of a stags face, and hence the Dance of the White Stag came to be. This dance is performed to pacify the world and to restore peace and happiness for posterity, as it is a re-enactment of an auspicious incident from the biography of a great one.

### **DANCE OF THE THREE KINDS OF GING WITH STICKS (JUG-GING)**

**The origin of Rigzin Pema Lingpa's Jug GING (the running GING with stick), Dri GING (GING with sword) and Nga GING (GING with drum) is as follows:**

The origin of happiness for all beings in the Three Worlds (Phenomenal World, the World of Astral Forms and the Spiritual World) is the religion of Buddha. To propagate this religion in the world, first one must listen to, learn and meditate upon the teachings of the Buddha- the mantra and the sutras. Any kinds of demons who are creating obstacles to the doctrine, human or non-human, who have no fast powers and bad thoughts, are called Jyungpo Nyulema. There are many means by way of magical formulae to subdue these malevolent spirits. One of the methods of dealing with these evil spirits was devised by the great Treasure-Discoverer Pema Lingpa. When he visited the celestial palace of Zangtog Pelri, Pema Lingpa saw the dance of the Three Kinds of GING who are emanations of Guru Rinpoche. The sacred teachings of these dances displayed to Pema Lingpa how Nyulemas can be overpowered by the GING-Cham dance.

The Jug GINGS have special powers to see in all the Three Worlds where they search out the Nyulemas who are fleeing and creating obstacles to the progress of religion. The Jug GINGS catch them with the hook of affection, tie them up with the lasso of compassion, and beat them with the self-less wisdom club, making them powerless. The Jug GING Dance portrays this.





### **DANCE OF THE THREE KIND OF GING WITH SWORD (DRI-GING)**

As with the previous dance, this one is based on Pema Lingpa's methods of overpowering Nyulemas with the Ging-Cham dance. As this is based on such a secret teaching, the dance is very sacred.

The Dri Ging dance shows how they separate the Nyulemas with their protecting deities; rob them of their life, fortune and wealth; purify their karma and defilements; and deliver their souls to the pure heavens.

### **DANCE OF THE THREE KINDS OF GING WITH DRUMS (NGA-GING)**

As with the previous dance, this one is based on Pema Lingpa's methods of overpowering Nyulemas with the Ging-Cham dance. As this is based on such a secret teaching, the dance is very sacred.

The Nga Ging dance depicts how the flesh and blood of the vanquished Nyulemas are offered to the Holders of Pure Awareness (Rig'dzin), meaning the enlightened ones. The burial of the defeated evil forces is displayed with burial dances and the beating of the drums of religion. This indicates that the mantra and sutra teachings are flourishing without hindrances.

This mask dance also offers a prayer for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings, thus making it very auspicious. Even just by perceiving the dancing figures, ones merit and reverence for the enlightened ones increase and the evil and dark forces are subdued. As the Buddha Dharma activities and its protectors increase, there prevails peace and comfort for all sentient beings. Therefore these blessing-charged mask dances should be performed in every place during religious festivals.

### **DANCE OF THE TAMSHING IN BUMTHANG (BUMTHANG TERCHAM)**

On the occasion of the consecration of the Tamshing monastery in Bumthang, Pema Lingpa built the temple of Lungrub Chholing at Tamshing in Bumthang Valley. One night before he was about to consecrate it, he had a dream. Five Tantrist brothers appeared and told him: "We have come from the Land of Sufferings of the 3000 worlds and for the consecration of your temple. Pema Lingpa, you must do a dance like this". After they had performed this dance, Pema Lingpa woke up. Because he remembered the dance clearly, he composed it using the work of the text "Phurpa Sogi Prtri". He called this new dance "The Dance of the Ging of the Tamshing Monastery" and miraculously discovered that when the dance is performed, all the Earth demons in the whole country are appeased and the Gods are rejoicing.

### **DANCE OF THE STAG AND THE HOUNDS (SHAWA SHACHI) 1ST PART**

This represents the conversion to Buddhism of the hunter named Gonpo Dorji by the great saint Jetsun Milarepa (1040-1123).

Long ago, Jetsun Milarepa (1040-1123) was deeply meditating in a hermitage called Nyishangkurta on the border between Nepal and Tibet when he heard a man shouting and a dog barking. He went out of his cave and saw a red-haired stag who was sweating all over his body and trembling with fear. Because of his great compassion, Milarepa sang a religious song and the stag forgot his fear and lay down on the right of the Lama. Chasing the stag, a red dog arrived running as fast as lightning and full of fiery wrath. For the dog also, Milarepa sang a religious song. Immediately he allayed the temper and the passion of the dog. The dog lay down on the left of the Lama. Following the dog, a hunter called Gonpo Dorji arrived. He was a frightening, fierce and strong man, carrying bow and arrows. When he saw Milarepa, the stag and the dog, he wondered if the Lama had cast a spell on the two animals and became enraged. He told Milerapa "You protect

the stag and the dog, let us see if you can protect yourself from this arrow". As he shot a poisonous arrow, Gonpo Dorji's bow broke into pieces, the string of the bow was cut and the arrow was turned against himself. Gonpo Dorji was full of incredulity as Milerapa told him: "Gonpo Dorji, your arrow is returned, now listen to my song". As Milerapa was singing, a violent regret for whatever action he had done in the past overcame Gonpo Dorji. He confessed his bad deeds, and promised to take an oath not to sin again. He practiced the religion and attained full realization.

This dance is generally performed like a play in two parts. The first part which takes place the first day is quite comical, and usually there are two dogs and not just one like in this story. The first part is quite comical: the hunter's servant appears first and jokes with the clowns. Then comes the hunter crowned with leaves and carrying a bow and arrows. He is accompanied by his two dogs. These dancers are wearing a knee length yellow skirt and dog masks. The servant jokes very disrespectfully with his master who, before going hunting, must perform some good luck rituals. A priest performs the rituals in a way contrary to the Buddhist tradition, while the Atsaras and the servant go on with their jokes.

### **DANCE WITH GUITAR (DRANYEN CHAM)**

Performed in a cheerful state of mind in order to celebrate the establishment of the Drukpa School in Bhutan.

**Costume: Elaborate and heavy woollen cloths, traditional felt boots, long black skirts, yellow shirt, brown coat, sword and a circular headdress. One dancer is holding guitar called Dranyen.**

Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the reincarnation of Ugyen Rinpoche brought under his control the large Southern Land of Four Approaches (the old name of Bhutan) and he blessed it. He protected his subjects like sons by the heavy golden yoke of law. As if he was crushing them under his feet, he conquered many foreign enemies and he was victorious in all directions.

He built marvellous temples and palaces and made beautiful chortens and religious books, supports of the faith. He imposed very strict rules upon the newly established Monks and also upon the Tantric College. He supported the three jewels (Buddha, religion and community of believers) the admirable community of monks practiced together as part of their moral training. The monks pursued their training by listening, thinking, explaining, understanding and meditating upon the basic texts which are contained in the three baskets (the Buddhist Canon), essence of Buddha's doctrine.

The generous donors who give offerings to the gods and gifts to the people believe in the results of their actions. Because of their power in generosity, monks and laymen will be happy in this life and the life to come. This dance of the guitar is performed in a cheerful mood during the festival.

## **DAY TWO**

### **DANCE OF THE BLACK HATS (SHANA NYER CHIG CHAM)**

This ground purification rite is also performed prior to the construction of monuments such as Dzongs, Temples, and Stupas. Its aim is to subdue the malevolent beings of the ground in order to take possession of the site from them.

**Costume: Large black hat, felt boots, colourful brocade long gown, no mask.**

The Black Hat Dancers assume the appearance of yogis who have the power of killing and recreating life. Enemies of the doctrine who cannot be led to the field of Buddha by peaceful means are subdued through the Yogis manifestation of external compassionate

anger, even though internally they have an accomplished peaceful mind. They have the appearance of Tantrists who are good to beings through terrifying, though consummate acts such as killing and expelling bad spirits. The five poisonous enemies, which are the sins, disappear in the sphere of emptiness.

This dance can be also be referred to as "Gar" dance. It is derived from the different traditions of the tantras (text of Northern Buddhism). They say that with the help of the Gods who have meditated deeply upon the mantras (sacred formula), the "Gar" which are the gestures of the dancers hands are transformed into mudras (sacred mystic gestures). At the same time, their feet which pound the Earth are forming a mandala (mystic geometric figure).

The Black Hat Dancers who perform the ritual for the Earth firstly build a mandala and then cut the demons into pieces. Thus they take possession of the Earth in order to further protect it and they dance the step of the thunderbolt to impress their power on it (the thunderbolt step is a particular step in the religious dances).

To draw the mandala they use a practice from the "Tantra without Superior" (it is a text call Lamey Gyu), which is not known in the Hinayana (Small Path of Buddhism). Because these practices are so special the very act of seeing them purifies and dissipates the masses of mental obscurity, which has been accumulating through the ages (Kalpa). Thus the inner and outer obstacles are pacified. Because of its importance the Shabdrung himself used to perform this ritual.

### **DANCE OF THE BLACK HATS WITH DRUMS (SHANAG NGA CHAM)**

**Costume: length yellow skirts, bare-feet, animal masks, sword in the right hand.**

In honour of the victory of religion over its enemies who persecuted beings and Buddhists. The Black Hats beat the great drums of Buddhism. The sound of the drums resounds throughout the Three Worlds (Phenomenal World, the World of Astral Forms and the Spiritual World), and represents religion itself which cannot be depicted in any other way because it has no visible form.

### **DANCE OF NOBLEMEN AND THE LADIES (PHOLE MOLE) AND KYECHAM (ACCOMPANIMENT DANCE)**

Once Upon a time, in a Kingdom called Ngaden in the North of India, there was a King of Norzang who had five hundred queens. One day, the son of a hunter received a favour for saving the "life force" ('sog') of a serpent deity ('lu'): he could borrow from this deity the noose which brings anything. With it he caught the very beautiful daughter of King Driza, called Yidrogma, who was so beautiful that no human girl could compare. He offered her to King Norzang who became passionately attached to her. When the King stopped looking at all the other queens, they could not bear it. So they asked Hari, by black magic caused King Norzang's father to be disturbed by a dream, which was in the form of a prophecy.

This prophecy said that the father and son had enemies, savage men from the North, and that if they did not find a way of subduing these enemies immediately far away from the Kingdom, it will be too late and the Kingdom would be destroyed. Then, following his father's command, King Norzang was to leave for the North but his wife Yidrogma was not happy and she begged him to take her with him. The King explained to her in detail that he could not take a woman while going to war in a far country but that his heart was attached to her and was sad. Yidrogama, as a souvenir, gave him her ring, one of her clothes and the white silk which covered her head. Then he left for the North and conquered the foreign enemies. Afterwards he returned to his country and defeated all his internal enemies all his internal opponents. Fearing for her life, Yidrogma used her magical power to flee to her father. She was welcomed back and once again she came to the human world where she lived happily with King Norzang.



This is the classical explanation of the Dance of Phole Mole taken from the biography of King Norzang. Here is the explanation of what really happens in the dance, which is more of a comical and very crude play than a dance.

The actors are two princes, two princesses, an old couple and the clowns. The two princes are going to war and are leaving the two princesses in the care of the old couple. As soon as they depart the clowns try to frolic with the princesses and corrupt the old woman who is also behaving quite badly. When they return they return the princes are scandalized by the behaviour of the princesses and cut off their noses as a punishment. The old woman also has her nose cut. Then a doctor is called to put the nose back but the old woman stink so much that the doctor has to use a stick because he does not want to approach her. Finally the prices marry the princesses and everybody is reconciled.

### **DANCE OF THE DRUM FROM DRAMITSE (DRAMITSE NGACHAM)**

Chorten Zangmo, daughter of pema Lingpa, was living in the Monastery of Dramitse in Eastern Bhutan. Her brother, the well-learned Lama Kunga Gyeltshen has a vision of Guru Rinpoche and his Paradise, the Dramitse and established the tradition of the dance which depicts his vision.

**Costume: Knee-length yellow skirt, animal's masks. They hold a big drum and a drumstick.**

In the 15th century, the daughter of Pema Lingpa from Bumthang came into this world. This nun called Chorten Zangmo was living in the monastery of Dramitse in Eastern Bhutan. Her brother, the well learned Lama Kunga Gyeltshen not only saw Guru Rinpoche many times and heard his teachings but also went through the strength of his magical powers to the Zangtopelri heaven where he met Ugyen Rinpoche. At that time, the attendants of Ugyen Rinpoche were transformed into one hundred kinds of peaceful and terrifying deities. They took in their left hand a big drum and in their right hand a drumstick and performed a dance.

Kunga Gyeltshen witnessed this dance and when he returned to Dramitse and to the human world, he established the tradition of the dance along with the other drum dances. These were composed by the ancient Treasure-Discoverers such as Sangye Lingpa and Ugyen Lingpa. Kunga Gyeltshen called the particular dance the Dance of the Drum from Dramitse.

In the excellent heaven of Zangtopelri where the beings have accumulated merits, the dancers are decorated with splendid jewels. Just in seeing this dance, the Black Demons are vanquished and the white gods reign supreme. Men and Gods are happy and they gain Buddhahood, which is the ultimate objective.

### **DANCE OF THE STAG AND THE HOUNDS (SHAWA SHACHI) 2ND PART**

This is the second part of the dance representing the conversion to Buddhism of the hunter named Gonpo Dorji by the great saint Jetsun Milarepa (1040-1123). The story relating to this dance can be found on page 6 under the heading, 'Dance of the Stag and the Hounds (Shawa Shachi) 1st Part'.

This second part of the dance has more serious and religious tone to it than the first. Milerapa appears, wearing a long white dress, white hat and holding a pilgrim's staff. He sings with a soft voice and has his right hand near his ear. The two dogs, the stag and the hunter, one after the other, arrive in Milerapa's presence and he converts them with his song. The conversion is symbolized by a rope that the dogs and the hunter have to jump. This part exhibits acrobatics among the dancers.

## DAY THREE

### **DANCE OF THE LORDS OF CREMATION GROUNDS (DURDAG)**

They are the protectors of the religion who live in the large cremation grounds situated on the external edges of the Mount Sumeru.

**Costume: White short skirts, white boots, white skull masks.**

On the external edges of a symbolic mandala where the assembly of the secret tantric deities are residing, there are eight large cremation grounds. Living in these cremation grounds are numerous protectors of the religion (Chhokyong) who are bound by an oath. Among them are the Lords of the Cremation Grounds who protect these areas.

Bound by a promise from which they cannot be diverted even for one instant, these Lords render powerless the assembly of demonic enemies who have violated their oath of not harming the Doctrine. They offer them to the gods of the mandala and they reduce them to mere name.



### **DANCE OF THE TERRIFYING DEITIES (TUNGAM)**

This dance is performed with the aim of delivering the beings by showing them the Zangtopelri, the paradise of Guru Rinpoche. Here Guru Rinpoche takes the form of Dorji Dragpo (Fierce Thunderbolt).

**Costume: Beautiful brocade dresses, boots and terrifying masks.**

This spectacular and dramatic dance has very deep symbolic meaning, namely that a sacrificial murder is performed. First the dancers representing the gods try to enclose the bad spirits in a circle and in a box. Once this is done, the main gods who holds the phurba (ritual dagger), kills them. He thus saves the world from them and delivers them into salvation at the same time. The men and the asuras (demons) who becomes enemies of Buddhism do not have the chance to be converted by peaceful means. Hence, Ugyen Rinpoche, who is the emanation of all the Buddhas, took the form of Dorji Dragpo "Fierce Thunderbolt". By slaying these enemies he liberated them into the superior sphere of bliss. By performing such an incredible feat which resulted in the happiness of human world, he helped increase faith in non-illusory acts.

### **DANCE OF THE HEROES WITH SIX KINDS OF ORNAMENTS (GUAN DRUG PAWO)**

They are named the heroes with the six kinds of ornaments because of the fact they are wearing five kinds of bone ornaments and they are holding in their hands a small drum and bell (drum and bell are considered as one).

For the purpose of the spectacle, these Heroes arrive dancing in order to be seen by all. The assembly of the gods of the tantras awake from their state of indifference to the sound of their divine drums. Thus the heroes, by the gestures of their bodies and by the sound of their melodies, lead the sentient beings who are in the wheel of reincarnation along the path of liberation.

### **DANCE OF THE JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD (RAKSHA MANGCHAM)**

This is based on the Bardo Thodrol (book of the Dead), a text hidden by Guru Rinpoche and rediscovered later by Karma Lingpa (14th century).

When all beings die, they wander in the Bardo ('Intermediate State') waiting to be led by the love of the Buddhas into the pure fields where no suffering exists. The beings are greeted by the Buddhas who appear both in their peaceful and terrifying forms. As a result, those who during their lifetime had no fervent adoration for the Buddhist Doctrine do not recognize them as Buddhas and are frightened. As the beings perceive they are enemies, they cannot be conducted into the paradise. The Buddhas, however through their various manifestations do not stay indifferent and perform good deeds unto the beings until the cycle of rebirth is complete.

Shinje Chhogyel, Lord of Death, estimates the value of the white and black deeds during the judgement. Also present are the White god and the Black Demon who live with every being from birth, and all the Shinje's helpers who emanate under numerous forms. These are the ox-headed justice minister; the wild hog-headed helper who takes account of the black and white deeds; the khyung-headed bird (the khyung is a mythical bird) who holds a small sword which cuts the root of the three poisons (ignorance, envy anger) and a big hammer which destroys the rocky mountains of sins; the lion-headed helper who holds a lasso which represents love and an iron chain which represents compassion; the fierce bear-headed helper who holds the magical noose which ties the means and wisdom together and saw which cuts selfishness; the serpent-headed helper whose mirror reflects all actions; and the monkey-headed helper who weighs them on a scale.

All these helpers are called Rakshas and they separate with equanimity the black actions from the white actions of all beings, just as in the case of the sinner, Nyelwabum and the virtuous Chimdapelkye. The frightening Court of Justice cannot be avoided by the condemned beings. But after enduring certain suffering, their sins are washed away and they are purified. Progressively they are led to the pure fields and paradise. Unfortunately some beings do not understand that everything is the result of their mind, whether it is pure or impure. The dance shows everyone that if they devote themselves to virtuous actions, they will be sent immediately to the pure fields and paradise. The different forms of Shinje's helpers shown in this dance are beings who are born into the human world where the doctrine of Buddha has been propagated. They are the Gods who have taken refuge in Buddhism.

After life, when they have to cross the Bardo and meet Shinje's helpers and the assembly of peaceful and terrifying deities, they recognize them as incarnations of Buddha. They are delivered from the frightening Bardo and go to the pure fields and paradise. The origin of this dance is to be found not only in the Sutras and Tantras, but also in the books discovered by Karma Lingpa (14th century).

The dance can be described as more of a play than a dance and lasts approximately two hours. Firstly, there is the long dance of all the Raksha who are the helpers of Shinje, the Lord of Death during the judgment. Then Shinje himself appears, symbolized by a huge puppet which holds a mirror. The white god and the Black Demon enter the courtyard with him. Shinje sits and all his helpers follow taking up their places in two rows in front of him. Then the judgment begins. First the Black Demon and the main helpers perform a dance. Then the sinner who is dressed in black and wearing a red hat, arrives. He is very frightened and tries to escape but is recaptured each time by the helpers. From his basket, a freshly severed cow's head is taken, implying that the sinner was responsible for killing it. The judge then weighs his actions. Afterwards the White God sings of the merits of the man, followed by the Black Demon who expounds the sins of the man. Finally a black strip of cloth symbolizing the road to hell, is spread and then the sinner is sent to hell.

This is followed by a general dance after which everyone assumes their former seating positions. Another man arrives. He is clad in white and holds a prayer flag and a ceremonial scarf, which altogether is implicit of his virtues. The same scene as above is re-enacted and at the conclusion a white strip of cloth symbolizing the road to heaven is deployed. Fairies elaborately dressed in brocade and bone-ornament come to fetch him. At the last moment, the Black Demon, furious at having lost a being, tries to grab the virtuous man but the White God protects him.

## **DAY FOUR**

### **DANCE OF THE TAMSHING IN BUMTHANG (BUMTHANG TERCHAM)**

On the occasion of the consecration of the Tamshing monastery in Bumthang, Pema Lingpa built the temple of Lungrub Chholing at Tamshing in Bumthang Valley. Just before he was about to consecrate it, he had a dream. Five Tantrist brothers appeared and told him: "We have come from the Land of Sufferings of the 3000 worlds and for the consecration of your temple, Pema Lingpa, you must do a dance like this". They then performed a dance, after which Pema Lingpa woke up. Because he remembered the dance clearly, he composed it using the work of the text "Phurpa sogi Prtri". He called this new dance "The Dance of the Ging of the Tamshing Monastery" and miraculously discovered that when dance is performed, all the Earth demons in the whole country are appeased and the Gods are rejoicing.

### **DANCE OF THE HEROES (PACHAM)**

**Costume: Knee-length yellow skirt and golden crown (Rina). No mask. They are holding a small bell (Dribu) and a small drum (Damaru)**

The great "Treasure-Discover" Pema Lingpa arrived at the summit of the Zangtopelri. It was in the middle of a marvellous palace of lotus beams, which reflected the wisdom large and deep as the sky, without obstacles. There he was met by the presence of Ugyen Rinpoche, the Lord who leads the beings of the Three Worlds. He was sitting among his assistants in the centre of a limitless mandala, which was made of lines of rainbow beams. In the mandala, the assembly of the sages, of the tutelary deities, of the heroes (Pawos) and the heroines (Khandom Pamo) were dancing in the form of various emanations of the peaceful and terrifying deities. All sorts of dances were performed and all sorts of harmonious melodies which are the sounds of the religion of Great Path (Northern branch of Buddhism) were sung. Among this congregation, the assembly of the peaceful heroes and heroines is the most important. Their function is to lead the believers of the human world into the presence of Ugyen Rinpoche. They are as numerous as the moving clouds and are critical to the celebration of this deep religion.

### **DANCE OF THE LORD OF DEATH AND HIS CONSORT (SHINJE YAB YUM)**

**Costume: Long brocade dress, buffalo mask.**

The Bodhisattva Manjusiri (Jampelyang) represents the body of Wisdom of all the Buddhas. He becomes the Lord (Je) of the Dead (Shin) and thus is called Shinje. Being the Lord of the Death, he is also the ruler of the Three Worlds (Phenomenal World, the World of Astral Forms and the Spiritual World) which he protects. His wrathful Buffalo face guards the four continents and blesses them before the arrival on earth of the Gods of Wisdom.





## **DANCE OF THE GING AND TSHOLING (GING DANG TSHOLING)**

On the occasion of the consecration of the Samye Monastery in Tibet, Guru Rinpoche initiated this dance to show to the people of Tibet the Zangtopelri, his paradise.

**Costume: The Tsholing have long colourful dresses and wear terrifying masks.**

**The Ging wear orange skirts, which hang like a skin, terrifying black and orange masks with a flag on top, and are holding a big drum and a drumstick.**

The dance depicts the paradise of Ugyen Rinpoche that is the Zangtopelri from where all the incarnations of Ugyen Rinpoche, essence of all the Buddhas, are sent into the Three Worlds. In the middle of a great solitary Palace, Ugyen Rinpoche is seated. On his right the holy men from Tibet and India are seated in a row, and on his left the learned men (pandits) from Tibet and India. In all the intermediate zones are the 108 "Treasure-Discoverers" (terton) who are his incarnations, and also his twenty-five disciples, including the King of Tibet, Trisongdetsen, who are receiving teaching and instructions. In the center of a rainbow, the assembly of tutelary deities (Yidam), heroes (pawos) and fairies (Khandoms), peaceful and terrifying, as if by magic, sing, dance and spread from the clouds three kinds of offerings. It is these that grant the realisation, ordinary and extra ordinary.

All the protectors of the religion, male and female in their fierce forms are guarding the four outer doors while the four Guardian Kings of the Directions command an army of the eight classes of spirits. These subdue all the demons, enemies such as devilish heretics who are creating obstacles to the doctrine of Buddha. All these wonders have been personally observed by the "Treasure Discoverer", Pema Lingpa.

Long ago in Tibet in order to introduce Buddhism King Trisongdetsen built a large monastery in Samye. Ugyen Rinpoche, by showing his magical powers through incarnations, subdued all the demons who were preventing its constructions. Thus he fulfilled the religious commitment of the King.





These incarnations are manifested in the Ging and Tsholing dance. The inner dance called the Ging is performed by the assembly of heroes (Pawos), tutelary deities and fairies as well as the various terrifying deities, male and female. The outer dance called Tsholing dance is performed by the protectors of the religion, male and female with their retinue of eight classes of spirit.

These dances which bring blessings are performed in order to remove obstacles to the doctrine as well as to bring happiness the sentient beings. When the Ging and Tsholing are performing this miraculous and agitated dance, they discourage the external demons and demonstrate clearly their magical powers so as to overcome them.

This performance is a purification dance before the arrival of Guru Rinpoche. People whistle to chase away the bad spirits and the ging hits everybody on the head with their drumsticks to chase impurity out of the body.

The Tsholing after having destroyed the evil spirits symbolised by an effigy in a black box are chase away by the ging who stays alone and performs a dance of victory by beating their drums.

### **DANCE OF THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF GURU RINPOCHE (GURU TSHEN GYE)**

The eight different forms of Guru Rinpoche which he had assumed in order to convert different kinds of beings into Buddhism are represented here.

Ugyen Rinpoche is the second Buddha and the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara (Thugje Chenpo), Lord of Compassion. When he was born as the son of a guardian of poultry, he made a vow to guide the beings of the world in general and particularly the people of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. That was why he came to these regions. When Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, he told his disciples a prophecy: "Don't be sad, I will be coming from the West". Thus he appeared as Ugyen Rinpoche, Master without any attachment of the great teachings.

When the 100,000 fairies of wisdom were begging the Buddhas of the 10 directions to send somebody to guide all beings, this was discussed at length and then all the virtues of their body, speed and mind were summed up in Ugyen Rinpoche. He came in order to guide the beings who live in the age of impurities.

His activities were beyond description. However, here is how he helped the beings of the continent through his eight manifestations:

- **He was born from a blue lotus on the lake of Danakosha in Oddhyana and he was invited to become the son of King Indrabhuti. Then he was called guru Tshokye Dorji "Diamond thunderbolt born from the lake".**
- **He renounced his kingdom and went to receive teachings from the Master Prabhati in the Maratika cave (Nepal). Then he was called Guru Shakya Senge "The Lion of the Shakya clan".**
- **After having listened to all the teachings of the Vajrayana "The Diamond Path" and after having fully mastered the sciences of all Indian Pandits, he obtained full realization and was able to see all the gods and tutelary deities ('Yidam'). Then he was called guru Loden Chogsey "guru who wants to acquire the supreme knowledge".**
- **After his marriage to the daughter to the King of Zahor, he was condemned to be burnt by the king. Through his magical powers, he turned the pyre into a lake and he converted this particular kingdom to Buddhism. Then he was called Guru Padmasambhava "born from a lotus".**

- When he returned to Oddhyana, the evil chiefs of this country wanted to burn him. But the fire could not burn his body and this was the sign of his realization. So the chiefs offered him the kingdom and its subjects. Then he was called Guru Pema Gyalpo "lotus-King".
- When he was preaching in the eight cremation grounds to the fairies (Khandoms), he caught the "life force" of the evil deities and he turned them into protectors of the doctrine. Then he was called Nyma Yeoser "Sunbeam".
- As five hundred heretic masters were trying to destroy the Doctrine of Buddha, he vanquished them all through the power of his words. He brought down the thunderbolt by his terrific magic formula and they were burnt. He was then called Senge Dradok " the one who speaks with a lion voice".
- When he was Senge Dzong in Kurtoe and at Taktsang in Paro, he was in the form of Dorje Drago "Terrifying Thunderbolt". He subdued all the evil spirits who hindered Buddhism. He blessed them as the guardians of the Doctrine and was then called Guru Dorje Drolu "Thunderbolt".

The fairy who is standing on the right of Guru Rinpoche is Mandarava, the lady of wisdom. Ugyen Rinpoche made her his own emanation for the benefit of the beings to be converted in the Kingdom of Zahor.

The fairy who is standing at his left is Yeshey Tshogyel. She is a representation of the goddess of knowledge, mother of all the Buddhas. She helped to establish Buddhism in Tibet for the benefit of all beings.

The Sixteen Fairies (Rigma Chudrug) are sixteen emanations of the same person. They are goddesses of Offerings who are divided into four categories. Each category is again divided into four, which make 16.

This dance brings total happiness. People believe in the manifestations of Ugyen Rinpoche during the dance. A changeless faith in the glorious deeds of Ugyen Rinpoche's mind, speech and body is born to them.

### **RELIGIOUS SONG (CHOESHEY)**

Performed to commemorate the opening of the gateway for pilgrimages to Tsari Mountain (Eastern Tibet) by Tsangpa Jarey (1161-1211), founder of the Drukpa School.

**Costume: Very similar to the Guitar Dance. Elaborate and heavy woollen clothes: long black skirt, yellow shirt, folded brown coat, felt boots, a circular headdress and a sword.**

When Tsangpa Jarey arrived in Tsari, a frog, which was the guardian deity of the lake of Turquoises, turned itself into a yak and prevented him from going further. When his three religious friends arrived at this place, they asked the best way to remove this obstacle. Tsangpa Jarey jumped on the frog, performed a dance and said "If anybody wants to compare himself to me, the son of the glorious Drukpa lineage, let him come". Then the frog changed itself into a rock but in spite of this, the saint impressed his foot on the rock as if it were mud. Thus the frog was subdued. It offered him his life force and he accepted. Then after establishing the frog as guardian deity of the place, he opened the gateway to pilgrimages. All the believers undertake a pilgrimage to Tsari even now, and just by reaching this place, they obtain perfect happiness.

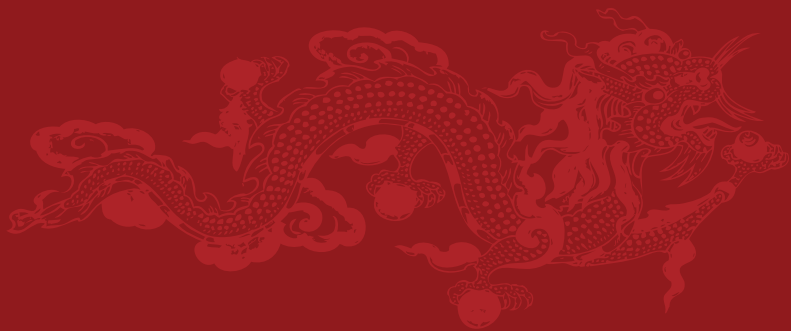


## GLOSSARY

- Atsaras** Clown who are dressed in red trousers and shirt, with a long red nosed masks. They represent holy teachers of India (Acharya). Their present form reminds people that these teachers may appear in these forms in the future.
- Bodhisattva** "Buddha-to-be". A being who has the capacity of gaining Buddhahood in his life but who refuses it in order to be Jhangchub Sempa (Compassionate One) reincarnated in the world to help the other beings.
- Chenrezig** Known also as Thuje Chenpo (Sanskrit: Avalokiteshavra), he is the Lord of Compassion. He is one of the protectors of Tantric Buddhism
- Milarepa** Buddhist saint of the Kagyupa religious school (1040-1123). Born in Tibet, his fame has crossed the centuries due to his devotion for his Master Marpa, and for his high religious accomplishments in mystic religious songs.
- Oddhyana** (In Dzongkha: Ugyen). Birthplace of Guru Rinpoche. Nowadays in West Province in Pakistan.
- Pema Lingpa** Buddhist saint of the Nyingmapa religious school (1450-1521). Born in Bumthang, he discovered many religious treasures, built monasteries and composed dances which he had seen in visions.
- Terton** Buddhist saints who discovered religious treasures hidden centuries ago by Guru Rinpoche.
- Ugyen** Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, or Pemajungne are the same Rinpoche, known under different names. He was a religious saint and teacher who went to Tibet and Bhutan in the eighth century to introduce Tantric Buddhism. He is considered a God, as the Second Buddha and his abode is called Zangtopelri. His retinue is composed of many heroes, heroines and fairies, which are known as Pawo, Pamo and Khandom.
- Ngawang Namgyal** Hierarch of the Drukpa religious school (1594-1651). Born in Tibet, he came to Bhutan where he firmly established the Drukpa School, unified the country and organized a system of laws.
- Mandala (Dzongkha Kyilkhor)** Cosmic diagram







## **BHUTAN TRAVEL BUREAU**

**Travel Agent / Tours & Treks**

**Post Box 959  
Thimphu, Kingdom of Bhutan**

**Ph: +975-2-332105 / 321749**

**Fax: +975-2-325100**

**E-mail: [tours@btb.com.bt](mailto:tours@btb.com.bt)**

**Web: [www.btb.com.bt](http://www.btb.com.bt)**

