



Gangteng Monastery: Living Jewel of Bhutan

Within the panoramic Black Mountain Range of central Bhutan lies the Phobjika Valley. High on a hill in the center of this “secret” valley is Gangteng Goempa, the largest private Buddhist monastery in Bhutan. For nearly four centuries Gangteng Monastery has remained an isolated, secret repository of the innermost teachings and traditions of Pema Lingpa, the patron saint of Bhutan. By the end of the twentieth century however, the ravages of time threatened to extinguish the bright flame of spiritual heritage embodied in this ancient site.



In 1996, the Gangteng Tulku initiated an international campaign to restore and preserve this threatened treasure. The restoration of Gangteng Goempa, a world-class model of environmentally sustainable architecture, is due to be completed in the fall of 2008. Gangteng Monastery is home to over 200 monks who come from all over Bhutan to receive essential education as well as spiritual training that they could not otherwise afford. The monastery also provides the local people with economic sustenance and vocational training. The Treasure Dances of Pema Lingpa are a living embodiment of the cultural heritage of Bhutan and are being offered in the west to raise awareness as well as financial support for the restoration and preservation for Gangteng Monastery, a living jewel of Bhutan.

Pema Lingpa Treasure Dances

2007 NORTH AMERICAN TOUR



Introduction: The Performing Arts in Bhutan

The Kingdom of Bhutan, locally known as Druk Yul, the Land of the Thunder Dragon, is the last remaining refuge of Vajrayana Buddhism. This small Himalayan country stands apart not only for the splendor of its pristine environment, but also for the values of the people who have chosen as their national aim "gross national happiness". An important expression of this aim is found in the performing arts. Whether welcoming in the New Year, planting rice, building a house, attending a local archery match, or expressing their Buddhist faith through religious ceremony, the Bhutanese people use traditional songs and dances to celebrate every aspect of life.



Educational Opportunities

In addition to full-length performances, the dance troupe is available to perform for elementary and secondary schools as well as private functions. The troupe is also available to give classes on Bhutanese folk dance, the art of weaving and traditional Buddhist thankha painting. Workshops on Buddhist philosophy and meditation are also available by request.



"Today, the dance [Dramitse Ngacham] has evolved from a local event centered around a particular community into something approaching a national art form, representing the identity of the Bhutanese nation as a whole." --UNESCO



Cultural Heritage: The Treasure Dances of Pema Lingpa

The Treasure Dances of Pema Lingpa, a national tour showcasing the finest of sacred mask dance (chham) and traditional folk dance (zhabdro) from the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, promises to be a rare and extraordinarily rich cultural experience for audiences of all ages. The tour results from Gangteng Tulku Rinpoche's wish to share with western audiences the legacy of Pema Lingpa, the patron saint of Bhutan, as represented by his mystical compositions of sacred mask dances together with the traditional Bhutanese folk dances, a living embodiment of this distinctive culture.

Repertoire

CHHAM ~ SACRED MASK DANCE

Originally choreographed by Padmasambhava, the Indian saint who established Buddhism in Bhutan and Tibet in the 8th century, the sacred mask dances were further developed by Pema Lingpa in the 15th century, and are still practiced today during the annual tsechus (religious festivals) performed throughout the kingdom. The dances portray epic tales of celestial heroes and heroines, the subjugation of malicious demons and the inner drama of our own spiritual nature. For the Bhutanese, it is believed that just watching the dances brings spiritual liberation. Dressed in rich robes of silk and brocade, the performers wear colorful masks representing sages, protective deities, legendary personages and animal forms. An orchestra of cymbals, drums, horns, conches and bells accompanies the aerobic and meditative arrangements.

ZHABDRO ~ FOLK DANCE

Traditional Bhutanese folk dance predates the mask dances and can be classified into three distinct styles: Zhungdra (classical form), Boedra (court form), and Rigzar (modern form). To compliment the mask dances the performance includes selections of each style. While the choreography changes between these three styles, they all share recurring themes implicit to the spirit of the Bhutanese people, that of impermanence and the preciousness of human life, cultivation of inner peace and harmony, respect for the natural world as a living entity, and the interdependent nature of all things.



Fee Support

Yeshe Khorlo, Inc., Crestone Performances, Inc., and the Padmasambhava Foundation are proud to provide funding and technical support for the Treasure Dances of Pema Lingpa.



Booking Information

To book the Treasure Dances of Pema Lingpa contact:

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For information about the dance program, technical requirements, fees and a photo gallery, please visit: www.pelingtreasuredances.com

"The sacred monk dances of Bhutan offer both a visual feast for the eyes and a spiritual experience for the soul." --Bangkok Post