

# MUSIC FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF BHUTAN



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

## *Songs of Kheng Sonam Dorji*

Produced by  
Sonam Dorji



SFW CD 50405

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In Bhutan, a mountainous, landlocked country bordering India and Tibet, music plays an important role in daily life and religious rituals. Historically, Bhutanese music was comprised of two genres: traditional ballads called *zhabdro dangrem* or *zhungdra*, and sacred music performed at religious ceremonies and festivals. Today the genres have expanded to include livelier folk songs called *zhabdro gorgom* (including popular Tibetan-style songs called *boedra*) and Bhutanese contemporary music known as *lu-saar*.

This recording features the director and founder of the Music of Bhutan Research Center, Kheng Sonam Dorji, performing on *drangyen* (Bhutanese lute) and singing traditional Bhutanese music along with several of his own compositions. Produced and annotated by Dorji for the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival Program “Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon,” this recording brings endangered musical traditions to audiences outside of Bhutan. 41 minutes, 17 pages of notes with photos.



*Peach Blossoms in Thimphu*

## TRACK LIST

**1. DUNGAI NANGGO NIGMA**

*(The Orphan's Song) 6:41*  
*(Sonam Dorji)*

**2. ATTA SONAM DORJI**

*(Brother Sonam Dorji) 6:20*  
*(Sonam Dorji)*

**3. GAWAI NIMA SHAR**

*(The Song of Nature) 3:53*  
*(Tashi Penjor)*

**4. GOENZANG GI CHOGLA**

*(The Devoted Pilgrim) 4:21*

**5. JALU KEPAI MAJA**

*(Indian-born Peacock) 6:17*

**6. NAM-GUNGHI ENGLU ZHUGMI**

*(The Skies of Paradise) 3:56*  
*(Aku Tongmi)*

**7. NEY DINEY PHARLA JAYTSHANA**

*(The Princess and the Temple) 5:58*  
*(Ashi Wangmo)*

**8. NORBU RIGI PANGSHONG**

*(The Precious Treasure of Mountains) 5:41*  
*(Yum Phuntsho Chhoden)*

# Introduction to Bhutanese Music and Instruments

Sonam Dorji with Janet Herman and Katey Blumenthal

The Kingdom of Bhutan is located in the eastern Himalayas. Comprised of an area of 46,500 square kilometers, Bhutan borders Tibet to the north and India to the south. The Bhutanese landscape is protected under government mandate, ensuring that 68% of the country must remain under forest cover, thus protecting the regional variety of flora and fauna. Bhutan is sparsely populated with roughly 700,000 people, the majority of whom ascribe to Mahayana Buddhism. The population is comprised of five major linguistic groups—Sharchokpa kha, Khengpa kha, Lhotshampa kha, Ngalong kha, and Bumthangpa kha. Bhutanese citizens call their country Druk Yul, “the Land of the Thunder Dragon,” so titled for the roaring thunder through the landscape’s steep valleys.

Bhutanese culture is marked by unique painting and artisanal traditions, *tsechu* religious festivals, the distinctive architecture of its *dzong* temple fortresses, and a variety of musical genres including *dangrem* and *gorgom* folk songs and dances and *cham* sacred masked dances.



Festival in Phobjika

## Bhutanese Music

Music plays a major role in the daily life and religious rituals of Bhutan. Literary documentation of Bhutanese music dates as early as the 2nd century. As Indian scholar Najma Perveen Ahman has identified, the ascending and descending pentatonics of the Indian *raga botta*, or *raga bhupali*, were derived from the music of Bhotadesa, “the land of Bhutan.”

Historically, Bhutanese music was comprised of two genres: traditional ballads called *zhabdro dangrem* or *zhungdra*, and sacred music performed at



religious ceremonies and festivals. The genres have since expanded to include livelier folk songs called *zhabdro gorgom*, (including popular Tibetan-style songs called *boedra*) and native Bhutanese contemporary music, which Kheng Sonam Dorji calls *lu-saar* (also known as *rig-saar*).

## Zhabdro dangrem

*Zhabdro dangrem* is Bhutan's oldest folk music genre and consists of highly ornamented long phrases sung at slow tempo. *Zhungdra*, the *dangrem* that, according to Kheng Sonam Dorji's research, have been performed since the 17th century at religious festivals in Punakha, the winter royal residence, are the most well-known examples of this type. The term *zhungdra* (national melody) is often used in a generic sense to mean any *dangrem* from throughout Bhutan, but Kheng Sonam Dorji believes the term should still be reserved for these special few *dangrem* of the Punakha repertoire.

Many Bhutanese believe *dangrem* songs are vehicles for religious expression and even consider them to be the language of the gods and goddesses. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, *dangrem* music was primarily performed to worship the gods; *dangrem* lyrics were mainly devotional in content. For the most part, the songs were composed by great *lamas*, *gaylong* (monks), *gomchen* (lay monks), and *geshe* (religious scholars). These sages, *lamas*, and monks sang

*“Many Bhutanese believe dangrem songs are vehicles for religious expression and even consider them to be the language of the gods and goddesses.”*

*dangrem* songs as part of their spiritual practice. Through oral tradition they passed down *dangrem* lyrics, which recounted legends of Buddhist deities. Today, Buddhists in Bhutan continue to sing *dangrem* songs to induce spiritual visions. Experts also teach contemporary *dangrem* music in formal settings, an initiative that began in 1970 under the leadership of the renowned Bhutanese dancer, Drimpon Sonam Dorji, a former instructor at the Royal Academy of the Performing Arts in Thimphu.

The *dangrem* tradition has evolved to become a frequent part of daily secular life in Bhutan. The popularity of *dangrem* reached its peak during the period of Bhutan's second king, His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck (1926–1952), who frequently welcomed musicians to perform in his palace, irrespective of their caste or social creed, and often honored the musicians with elaborate gifts. Under his reign, large groups of male and female musicians would regularly gather to sing *dangrem* tunes in the national archery ground as an expression of religious devotion and a means of public entertainment. Groups would perform *dangrem* as unaccompanied vocal song,



*Dangrem Performance at Chelela Pass, Paro*



National Folk Music Festival



Dangrem singers in Phobjika

as vocal performance accompanied by instruments, or—especially in the case of large *tsechu* festivals—as vocals with dance. Accompanying instruments included the *drangyen* (lute), *donglim* (vertical fipple flute), *zhurlim* (horizontal flute), *kongtha*, (bamboo harp), and *chiwang* (fiddle).

Secularized *dangrem* contain lyrics that honor kings of Bhutan, demonstrate pride in the Bhutanese nation, and express appreciation for nature, in addition to reminding the performers and audience members of Buddhist teachings. The ups and downs of human life and the shared social condition of the Bhutanese people are recurrent themes in the *dangrem* genre. One such example is found on track 1, “Dungai Nanggo Nigma” (The Orphan’s Song). The lyrics, sung in the Khengkha dialect (local language of the Kheng community) metaphorically address a mother’s sacrifice and the pain of loss through the narrative of an Eagle slaying a hen while she protects her chicks.

*Dangrem* has a distinctive melodic and rhythmic character. A typical *dangrem* song opens with a repeated phrase Kheng Sonam Dorji calls *lugo*. A second section, which he calls *zhey-yar*, follows in an improvisatory fashion; its melodies are played an octave higher and not confined to a standard rhythm.

The *dangrem* repertoire reflects the Mahayana Buddhist values of spiritual devotion, compassion, and tolerance. Despite the changing musical contexts and character of contemporary *dangrem* songs, the

genre has never lost its popularity in Bhutan. Instead, Bhutanese singers have included secular and external influences in their traditional *dangrem* songs.

## Sacred music

Bhutanese sacred music derives primarily from the compositions of mystic saints, yogis, and poets, whose writing dates as early as the 8th century. Generally, sacred songs in Bhutan invoke the transience of material life and reverence for the Buddhist cosmology. In Bhutan, sacred music is viewed as a metaphor for spiritual motivation in attaining enlightenment.

The sacred music of Bhutan is performed together with *cham* dances, or ritual masked dances. Dance and music are integral to Bhutan’s *tsechu* and *dormche* festivals, and other ritual activities at temples, and monasteries. In Bhutan, attending a performance of sacred music and dance is considered an act of spiritual devotion that will garner merit for one’s next life. Masks representing saints, sages, protective deities, legendary characters, and different animal forms are often featured in Bhutan’s colorful music and dance tradition. The instruments used in sacred music include *roelm/raim* (cymbals), *kangdu* (trumpet made from human thigh bone), *nga* (double-sided drums), *gyaling* (Bhutanese wind instrument), *dung chen* (long trumpet-like horn), *jail* (oboe-like reed instrument), and the *dungkar* (conch shell).



*Cham Dancer at Thimphu Tsechu*

**“Drukdra (melody of Bhutan) are gorgom songs composed by Bhutanese authors in Dzongkha.”**

raphy, costumes, and accompanying instruments. Court attendants of the second king called *boegarp* are believed to have helped popularize *boedra* songs; they traveled to Tibet and throughout Bhutan as part of their official royal service. Traders, pilgrims and Tibetan refugees also played a part historically in spreading *boedra*.

*Drukdra* (melody of Bhutan) are *gorgom* songs composed by Bhutanese authors in *Dzongkha*. Ashi Wangmo, Aup Tsheten Dorji, Lama Norbu Wangchuk, Thrichula, Ashi Choki, Lam Toka Rinpoche, Aku Tongmi, and Dasho Gaydon Thinley are some prolific *drukdra* composers.

*Gorgom* reached the peak of its popularity during the reign of the third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk (1951–1972), a great patron of arts. Some of the main musical instruments used to accompany *gorgom* music are *drangyen* (lute), *chiwang* (fiddle), *lim* (flute), *yangchen* (dulcimer), *kongtha* (harp), and *drangyen rigsaar* (electric lute).

## Zhabdro gorgom

*Zhabdro gorgom* is another genre which is found all over Bhutan. Comparatively lively and rhythmic, *gorgom* is sung much faster than *dangrem*, with notes and vocal phrases of shorter duration. Words are mostly in Dzongkha (the national language) or Tibetan, sometimes having an informal everyday character (a quality known as *phelkay*). Songs are often performed with dance movements, with dancers moving in a circle or sometimes in a line.

Subcategories of *zhabdro gorgom* include *boedra*, *drukdra*, *boedra rigsaar* and *drukdra rigsaar* (*rigsaar* being modern compositions and settings of the forms). *Boedra* translates as “Tibetan melody” (*Boe* means “Tibet” and *dra* means “melody”). Based on his original research, Kheng Sonam Dorji considers *boedra* songs to be adapted from the *boezhey* repertoire of Tibet, where the Bhutanese have modified to various degrees lyrics, melodies, choreog-



*Boedra Performance at Chelela Pass, Paro*



Lu-saar Dance



Aup Tsheten Dorji,  
composer of drukdra  
and lu-saar

## Lu-saar

*Lu-saar*, which literally means “new song” is Kheng Sonam Dorji’s term for contemporary Bhutanese music. *Lu-saar* (also popularly known as *rig-saar* or “new idea”) originated in the late 20th century and blossomed during the reign of Bhutan’s fourth king, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck (1972–2007). According to research conducted by the Music of Bhutan Research Center, “Zhendi Migo MoRang Go Ni” was the first *lu-saar* song. The lyrics were written by Lam Toka Rinpoche in the year 1967 with its melody adapted from the Bollywood song “Sayonara” by Ashi Chhoki from the film called *Love in Tokyo*. *Lu-saar* music emerged again with the composition of “Nga Khatsa Josai Lam Kha Lu” by Shera Lhendup in 1981. Then in 1985 “Doro Zamm” by lop Tashi Gyaltsen was another milestone for Bhutanese audiences.

*Lu-saar* has steadily gained in popularity since the 1990s, reflecting Bhutan’s increasing exposure to external cultures and the force of globalization inside Bhutan. *Lu-saar* incorporates non-Bhutanese musical instruments and Western rhythmic structures. The evolution of *lu-saar* music has coincided with the economy of music in Bhutan, including private production of radio programs, the commercialization of music, the rise of Bhutanese movie-musicals, and access to cheaper recording technology.

Typical *lu-saar* lyrics narrate secular topics such as romantic love or reverence of nature. Most *lu-saar* songs feature Western instruments such as the guitar, piano, synthesizer, and drums. Unlike the *dangrem* and *gorgom* genres, *lu-saar* songs are simple, catchy, and often composed in various languages including Dzongkha, Khengkha, Sharchop, Nepali, and English.

# Bhutanese Instruments

## Drangyen

Featured in this collection of songs, the *drangyen*, or Bhutanese lute, is the oldest and most commonly played instrument in Bhutan. The literal translation of *drangyen* is, “listen to the melody” (*dra* means “melody,” *ngyen* means “listen”). With its distinctive sea monster head and meticulously hand-carved body, the *drangyen* plays a significant role in Bhutan’s unique musical and cultural traditions.

A *drangyen* is made from wood, leather, and yak or ox bone. A typical *drangyen* is approximately three to four feet in length, with a diameter of six to twelve inches. It is played with a plectrum made of bone, wood, or horn. The *drangyen* has two bridges, one at the base of the resonance chamber and one at the neck. The three sets of double strings are tuned to *pancham* (G5 in the American standard), *sadhaj* (C), and *madhyam* (F). In addition to these six strings, the *drangyen* has a supplementary string, the *ting ti*, tuned an octave higher than the other *sadhaj* strings. While the *ting ti* is usually played as an open rhythmic drone called *chikari*, it can also be played as a melody string. The *drangyen*’s soft and melodious sound is a result of its delicate craftsmanship and the technique required of its performers.

The *drangyen* is the main instrument used to accompany vocal performance in Bhutan. Historians estimate that performance of the *drangyen* dates back to the 8th century when the saint Guru Rinpoche first introduced Tibetan Buddhism to Bhutan. Many ancient Bhutanese frescoes and sacred *thangka* paintings depict gods and goddesses holding a *drangyen* in their arms. Temples and monasteries of Bhutan often depict the Bhutanese deity of music, Lhamo Yangchenma, holding a *drangyen* in her lap.



Drangyen

## Donglim

The *donglim* (bamboo fipple flute) is an aerophone popular in the jungle regions of Bhutan. In Kheng, it is known as the *badui-pa jing*, “cow herder’s flute.” Its hollow bamboo tube is approximately 20 inches in length. The *donglim* player blows vertically into one end of the flute while fingering its six holes to obtain various pitches. Performers produce quarter-tones and microtones by partly covering these holes.

## Zurlim

The Bhutanese *zurlim* is a category of aerophone. The distance between the mouth hole and finger holes distinguish different varieties of *zurlim*. *Zurlim* are generally two-and-a-half foot-long cylindrically bored bamboo flutes with one closed end. They are played horizontally, and the mouth hole lies less than an inch from the closed end. There are six uniformly sized finger holes that, like the *donglim*, performers cover both fully and partially to produce various notes and microtones.

# BIOGRAPHY OF KHENG SONAM DORJI

Sonam Dorji was born in the rural village of Kaktong on 3rd November 1977, in Bhutan's south central Zhemgang District. From an early age, Sonam's mother encouraged him to play music. After her death, when Sonam was only 11 years old, he traveled by himself to Bhutan's capital city Thimphu, a move that would ultimately launch his musical career. In Thimphu, Sonam studied under the primary elders of the Bhutanese folk tradition, including Aup Talo Dopey, Dasho Aku Tongmi, Aup Tsheten Dorji, Lop Gangkar Wangdi, Aum Thinlem, Aum Sedy, Aum Ugyen, Aum Lhachem, and Lop Dengo. Under their mentorship, Sonam Dorji also mastered the *drangyen*. Sonam Dorji was 13 years old when his music was first broadcasted on the national radio. When Sonam was 15 years old, he began composing his own songs; his first national hit was "Maju Maju" (Don't go leaving me behind).

Sonam received an Indian Embassy scholarship to study music in Viswa Bharati University, West Bengal, where he focused on classical vocals, *esraj* (a classical Indian stringed instrument), and local folk



*Kheng Sonam Dorji*

music. Sonam continued his studies at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, where he graduated first in the master's music program. At that time, Sonam gave concerts throughout India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, which enabled him to expose Bhutanese music to South Asian audiences.

*"When Sonam was 15 years old, he began composing his own songs; his first national hit was 'Maju Maju' (Don't go leaving me behind)."*

Ever committed to documenting Bhutan's musical heritage, Sonam spent his university vacations conducting interviews with the country's elderly folk musicians, including Dasho Aku Tongmi, the composer of Bhutan's national anthem, and Aup Talo Dopey, the nationally recognized musician, artist, and



*Sonam Dorji sharing traditional music with school children*

dancer. These interviews are among the few existing first-hand narratives of Bhutanese music as told by its foremost performers and composers.

Sonam Dorji now plays eight instruments: *drangyen*, *yanchen*, *limbu*, *esraj*, *dotara*, *sitar* and *tambora*. He invented an electric *drangyen* which he calls the *rigsaar drangyen*. Sonam's musical vision is enhanced by his competency in nine languages: Khengpa, Dzongkha, Nepali, English, Sharchop, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, and Tibetan. Sonam's first national broadcast of a song in Khengpa, his first language, earned him the nickname Kheng Sonam Dorji. In the 1990s, Sonam began composing *lu-saar*—his term for contemporary Bhutanese pop songs—and released multiple well-received *lu-saar* albums. Sonam has since composed a number of film scores, including the soundtrack for the acclaimed *Travelers and Magicians* (2003), directed by Lama Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche.

Kheng Sonam Dorji was a featured performer at the 2008 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. In 2012 Kheng Sonam Dorji was a featured soloist in a pan-Asian ensemble led by Arun Ghosh at the BT River of Music Festival in London for the Summer Olympic Games.

In 2009, inspired by his international performances and partnerships, he bridged his musical and cultural interests by founding the Music of Bhutan Research Center (MBRC) based in Thimphu. Under Sonam's leadership, the MBRC's mission is to research, record, and archive the many musical traditions of the country's diverse regional, linguistic, and ethnic groups, and to document the country's finest living master musicians in performance and interview settings. MBRC is now officially recognized by the government of Bhutan as a Civil Society Organization.



Notable achievements include establishing the national Druk Norbu Awards for lifetime accomplishment in traditional music, initiating the first National Folk Music Festival, publishing the first book profiling master musicians in Bhutan, and producing CDs, videos, and other educational materials from an ever-expanding collection of MBRC field tapes.



*Sonam Dorji at BT River Music Festival during 2012 London Olympics*

For information about MBRC's projects and publications please visit:

[www.musicofbhutan.org](http://www.musicofbhutan.org)

Contact [bhutanmusic@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bhutanmusic@sbcglobal.net)

[somdomusic@yahoo.co.in](mailto:somdomusic@yahoo.co.in)

# POSTSCRIPT ON THE CONTEXT OF BHUTANESE MUSIC TODAY

A comprehensive knowledge of Bhutanese music has declined in the face of globalization and development. Many Bhutanese youth are choosing to listen to music from Indian cinema, as well as Western and Nepali pop, instead of their own traditional music. The number of experts and students of Bhutanese folk music is dwindling, endangering Bhutan's musical heritage. Kheng Sonam Dorji and the Music of Bhutan Research Center have embarked on the first-ever initiative to sustainably preserve and revive the folk music repertoire of Bhutan.

Through professional research, this album aims both to preserve Bhutanese music and to revive it in a manner compatible with 21st-century values. On one hand, preservation of Bhutanese folk songs reinforces basic values and traditional structures encoded in Bhutanese musical heritage. On the other hand, artistic creativity recognizes inevitable cultural change in Bhutan. Through knowledge of Bhutanese traditional history and respect for its musical traditions, Kheng Sonam Dorji's individual expression found in the following songs presents a source of innovative strength—a dedication to Bhutanese culture through embracing both the old and the new.



*“Through knowledge of Bhutanese traditional history and respect for its musical traditions, Kheng Sonam Dorji’s individual expression found in the following songs presents a source of innovative strength—a dedication to Bhutanese culture through embracing both the old and the new.”*



*National Folk Music Festival*

# Song Notes

## 1. Dungai Nanggo Nigma (The Orphan's Song)

Sonam Dorji, drangyen  
(genre: original song in dangrem style; language:  
Khengpa; region: Central Bhutan)

This song in the Khengkha language is taken from my true life experience. When I was nine years old, I lost my beloved mother, and at the age of 15 I composed this song dedicated to her. I sing about an eagle that represents the spirit that takes my mother away from me. Sacrifice and the pain of loss are the central themes of the song.

*When I became an orphan, depressed and  
helpless*

*No one recognized and accepted me.*

*No one cared for or loved me in this world.*

*My fortune faded.*

*As an orphan, my precious life races along in  
the dark.*

*When the eagle flies in from far away in the sky  
The hen tries to protect her chickens with love  
and care.*

*But when the helpless hen is slain by the  
predatory eagle*

*Unfortunate chickens are left behind like  
motherless children*

*Desperately longing for their beloved slain mother*

*When I see a chicken in the coop like a  
motherless child*

*My heart cries with great sorrow and  
unbearable pain.*



*Traditional Home in Sengbji, Trongsa*



*Sonam Dorji singing "The Orphan's Song"*

## 2. Atta Sonam Dorji (Brother Sonam Dorji)

*Sonam Dorji, drangyen and vocals; Atta Yeshe, flute  
(genre: original song; language: Sharchop; region:  
Eastern Bhutan)*

This song in Sharchop describes the farming life of Eastern Bhutan. I composed this song from the first-person perspective of a farmer who is working with dedication for his parents, his beloved wife, and his children in the village.

Farmers believe that the blessings of nature are needed for a good harvest, although nature is not always kind. The song starts with the farmer going into the forest to look for his ox. On the way he sees leaves falling, which reminds him that he must start his cultivation in the field soon.

*Brother Sonam Dorji is in the jungle  
In search of his dearest ox in the deep jungle  
Passing through the thick forest of oak trees  
I was lost in thought in the beautiful landscape*

*During the autumn season around the village  
I could hear the bird “kupee” singing tirelessly*

*For my loved ones I must keep on working  
And working tirelessly from field to field*

*O dearest oxen, Merchung and Serhung  
I salute you for all your hard work; may you both be  
ever stronger*

*Soon you will be free, with green grass and cold water.  
Crops in the field will grow faster with monsoon rain  
showers.*

## 3. Gawai Nima Shar (The Song of Nature)

*Sonam Dorji, drangyen and vocals (genre: lu-saar;  
language: Dzongkha; region: Western Bhutan)*

This song was composed by Tashi Penjor in the 1990s. It has four stanzas, each with its own theme and metaphors. It is considered to have been one of the most popular *lu-saar* (new songs) during the era of the Fourth King, and students performed it in his presence on many occasions. Parts of the song are very patriotic, praising both the Jeykhenpo (chief religious abbot) and the King for maintaining magnificent peace and harmony in the country.



*Masked dancing at the Dochula Festival*

*There the joyous sun rises.  
And there rises the peaceful moon*

*In the conjunction of sun and moon  
Mother earth blossoms with sparkling light from  
the dark*

*In highest respect to the Jeykhenpo,  
In highest respect to the great king;*

*For in pursuing virtuous activities together  
They have brought peace and harmony to the land  
of Bhutan*

#### **4. Goenzang Gi Chogla (The Devoted Pilgrim)**

*Sonam Dorji, drangyen and vocals  
(genre: drukdra; language: Dzongkha; region: Western  
Bhutan)*

This song by an unknown Bhutanese composer can be categorized as a *drukdra*, one of the two sub-categories of *zhabdro gorgom* (relatively lively, rhythmic Bhutanese songs). *Drukdra* gained popularity during the era of the Third King. The song describes the devotional and compassionate nature of several figures such as a lama, teacher, parent, and soul mate.

*My root lama (guru) residing in the mountain top monastery  
Has asked me to hike up time and again  
I am grateful that you have called me, though  
I have yet to receive blessing for my present life  
and future.*

*The minister who resides in the Dzong (fortress)  
Has asked me to follow his command in the Dzong  
I am grateful that you have commanded me to visit  
But still you failed to alleviate my suffering  
from poverty*



*Guru Rinpoche Rock Painting*

#### **5. Jalu Kepai Maja (Indian-born Peacock)**

*Sonam Dorji, drangyen and vocals  
(genre: drukdra; language: Dzongkha; region: Western  
Bhutan)*

Here is another folksong in which the birds of different species are described. It is a beautiful seasonal song.

*Indian-born peacock I am.  
And what is it to be Indian:  
Born in the land of India,  
I also grew up in the land of India.  
The place where I grew up,  
Has extreme hot weather.  
It has an unbearably hot climate,  
Thus I wish that I had Drizang Gabur (saffron holy water)*

*Black neck crane of Tibet  
I am a crane born in the land of Tibet.  
Born in the land of Tibet,  
I also grew up in the land of Tibet.  
The place where I grew up  
Is a land covered and surrounded by snow.  
Land of Tibet is surrounded by snow and extremely cold,  
Thus I wish that I had cold-proof shoes for my feet.*



*Punakha Dzong*

*Khaju (Cuckoo) of Bhutan  
I am a khaju born in the land of Bhutan  
Born and brought up in Bhutan  
Bhutan is the place where I grew up,  
It is the land of religious dharma.  
In the land of this Buddhist country,  
May I receive teaching and enlightenment hereafter.*

## **6. Nam-gunghi Englu Zhugmi (The Skies of Paradise)**

*Sonam Dorji, drangyen and vocals  
(genre: drukdra; language: Dzongkha; region:  
Northeastern Bhutan)*

This is one of the most prominent *drukdra* songs, composed by Aku Tongmi during the era of the Third King. The devotional song describes Princess Tshering Zangmo, who has been longing to become a nun in the temple. She believes that to become a nun she must purge herself of mundane desires and attachments.

*She who resides up in the paradise in the sky is  
None other than the princess Ashi Tshering Zangmo.*

*The attire that you wear is as soft as a prayer flag,  
It looks more beautiful when you wear it,*

*It is beautifully woven with wonderful patterns,  
Magnificent attire that fits you perfectly.*

*My first visit on my pilgrimage was Varanasi in India,  
There I paid homage to Dorji Dhen, birthplace of  
Buddha.*

*My second visit on my pilgrimage was Tsari (name  
of village)  
There I paid homage to Tsayri.(name of monastery)*

*My last visit on my pilgrimage was Lhasa in Tibet,  
There I paid homage to Jaw Shacha Muni, core  
treasure of Potala.*



*Thimphu Bridge*

## 7. Ney Diney Pharla Jaytshana (The Princess and the Temple)

Sonam Dorji, drangyen

(genre: drukdra; language: Dzongkha; region: Bumthang)

This is a devotional song that describes two monasteries visible from the place where the author is meditating. The song praises Kurjee Lhakhang and Jampel Lhakhang and the main guardian deities residing there. It was composed by Ashi Wangmo when she was meditating in the temple of Pema Sambha Bumthang. The younger sister of the Third King of Bhutan, Ashi Wangmo is one of the eminent *drukdra* composers in the country.

*When the land of dharma is viewed from a distance,  
There can be seen a palace inhabited by Ugyen  
Pema Jungny*

*Kurjee monastery is built upon the cliff of Zhykar  
It is very auspicious to see the renowned  
temple Kurjee.*

*I prostrate at your feet with a very pure heart and soul.  
Devoted to you, I seek refuge until I attain a  
Buddhist essence.*

*When I look down from the temple, I meditate.  
I can visualize Pha Gon-po, my only protector.  
Jampel Lhakhang is a very renowned monastery.  
It is very auspicious to see it built on the site of  
Bumpa thang*

*I prostrate at your feet with a very pure heart and soul.  
Devoted to you, I seek refuge until I attain a  
Buddhist essence.*

## 8. Norbu Rigi Pangshong (The Precious Treasure of Mountains)

Sonam Dorji, drangyen (genre: drukdra; language:

Dzongkha; region: Northern Bhutan)

The song tells of a merchant who travels to Tibet on horseback for his usual trade business. Along the way, the merchant urges on his weary horse while commenting on the stunning landscape. He prays that he and his beloved horse will arrive safely to their destination.

*In the evergreen treasure valley of the world I live.  
Right in the center of the valley here blossom  
beautiful flowers*

*The first night, I slept under the protection of invisible  
night deity of the valley.*

*I halted the second night in the peaceful cottage that  
has an awesome host,*

*Right below the pinnacle there is spiritual space  
which can accommodate hundreds of travelers.*

*Beneath the first floor there lies space which has  
capacity to host hundreds of mules.*



# Credits

Produced by Sonam Dorji  
Annotated by Sonam Dorji with Janet Herman and Katey Blumenthal  
Photos by Jane Hancock  
Smithsonian Folkways executive producers: Daniel E. Sheehy and D. A. Sonneborn  
Production manager: Mary Monseur  
Production assistant: Joan Hua  
Editorial assistance by Katey Blumenthal, Jim Deutsch, Janet Herman, Preston Scott, and Rebecca Winsor  
Design and layout by Romeo Martinez

Additional Smithsonian Folkways staff: Richard James Burgess, director of marketing and sales; Betty Derbyshire, director of financial operations; Laura Dion, sales and marketing; Toby Dodds, technology director; Claudia Foronda, customer service; Henri Goodson, financial assistant; Will Griffin, marketing and sales; Emily Hilliard, fulfillment; Meredith Holmgren, web production and education; David Horgan, online marketing; Helen Lindsay, customer service; Keisha Martin, manufacturing coordinator; Jeff Place, archivist; Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist; John Smith, sales and marketing; Stephanie Smith, archivist; Jonathan Wright, fulfillment.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Jane Hancock, Janet Herman, and the Heart of Compassion Foundation for making this album possible. I would also like to thank the Bhutan Foundation for its support of this project. Contact Sonam Dorji at [somdomusic@yahoo.co.in](mailto:somdomusic@yahoo.co.in) and [www.musicofbhutan.org](http://www.musicofbhutan.org)

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