

Bhutan Himalaya

Jigme Drukpa
Folk Music from Bhutan





Jigme Drukpa being blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. *Photo: Vana Malsi Estate*

1 **Pha Lama Nam** *Dong Lim (Flute) Trad.*

A traditional song in Zhungdra style, it talks about the importance of having a revered and trust worthy teacher in our lives.

2 **Taziling Kesa** *Yangchin (Dulcimer)/Song Trad.*

It is a very popular song in Boedra style rendered here with the accompaniment of the Yangchin (dulcimer) music. Composed by Chabje Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorji, it talks about his longing for home after he had to travel so far away in order to pursue his studies.

3 **Aku Pema** (Sung in Tibetan) *Dranyen (Lute)/Song (Composed by Palgon).*

A very popular song originally composed and sung by Palgon, a Tibetan singer. The song expresses the feelings of emptiness in Tibet without HH The Dalai Lama, one of the most well known figures from the world of Himalayan Buddhists.

4 **Alou** *Dunkar Lim (Flute) Trad.*

It is a Zhungdra song describing about the various places and spiritual experiences while on pilgrimage to Lhasa, Tibet, one of the two most important places for the Bhutanese, the other being Bodhgaya, in India. Ultimately, the composer is longing back for his beautiful hometown in Paro, Bhutan, where the paddy fields are surrounded by the green willow trees.

5 **Rila Kepai Joenshing** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Trad.*

A song in Boedra style with the dranyen (lute) as accompaniment, it talks about the futility and vanity of all lives. As we save, we spend; as we meet, we depart. As we live and we die.

6 **Kongtha Lu** *Kongtha (Bhutanese mouth-harp) Composer: Jigme Drukpa*

Perhaps one of the smallest instruments found on earth, Kongtha (Dzongkha) & Jiskang (Tshangla lo), the Bhutanese mouth-harp is played only by the women and girls in rural Bhutan. In this recording, I am just trying to demonstrate its music and sing along as I play it as an improvisation.

7 **Dranyen Lekshay** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Trad.*

It is a Zhungdra song sung in praise of the dranyen as a very beautiful musical instrument. Different features and parts of its body is compared to certain mythological elements including the water-dragon's head and its music to the voice of the Goddess of Music and Wisdom, Lhamo Yang Chenma.

8 **Yabchi Miwang Gyalpo** *Zur Lim (Flute) Trad.*

Extracted from the biography of Khandro Drowa Zangmo, the melody is rendered here with a bamboo transverse flute with six finger-holes.

9 **Phadi Lama** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Trad.*

Rendered on the Dungkar lim (ocarina-like flute), the melody is a very popular farewell song with its origins in Northeast Bhutan. Today, thanks to the Radio and TV, the song is widespread and ever-popular among the people throughout Bhutan. It talks about the bitter-sweet experiences of all people while they depart from each other after a gathering or a celebration, sometimes never to see each other again in the lives.

10 **Yong Yong Neljor** *Dong Lim (Flute) Composer: Jigme Drukpa*

Rendered on the six-finger-holed bamboo whistle, one of the most popular folk music instruments in Bhutan, the melody is a song about a wandering Yogi. He keeps on wandering about until his final realization of his Inner-Self, pretty much like attaining Enlightenment, through meditation in the forests and mountains in the Himalayas.

11 **Mi Mijur Notshe** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Trad.*

A song in Zhungdra style lamenting our inability to remain constant and firm without much changes due to the influences in our mind and environment.

12 **Yabchi Miwang** *Dong Lim (Flute) Trad.*

13 **Yartoed Gangri** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Composed by Chabje Jigdrel Yeshe Dorji.*

The song performed in the Boedra style talks about the interdependence of all things on earth, and each of us finding our own rightful places of dwelling. In other words, it talks about the karmic connections between all the different beings and their existence on earth.

14 **Neljorpa** *Dong Lim (Flute) Composer: Jigme Drukpa*

15 **Tashi Laso** *Dranyen (Lute)/Song Trad.*

This song is usually performed as one of the three concluding numbers wishing everyone gathered a very peaceful life without sickness, and instead filled with joy and happiness.

Jigme Drukpa, Bhutanese Folk Performer & Ethnomusicologist.

Jigme was born on 21 July 1969 in Terphu-Wongchelo in southeast Bhutan. His interest in music started as early as he could speak, when he witnessed the performances organized during the annual village festival in Wongchelo lhakhang (temple). At the age of nine he taught himself how to play a bamboo flute while working all alone as a cow-herder, helping his parents during his winter holidays from school.

Jigme learnt to sing and play the harmonica (mouth organ) while in Wamrong Primary School, then the nearest boarding school to his village. Determined to learn more about music, he moved to Thimphu in 1983 and entered Motithang High School, where he had the fortune to meet and study with Ap Dawpel, “the father of Bhutanese folk music”.

It was, however, not until 1988, when he was a student in Sherubtse College and recordings of his songs/music were made by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service Radio, that he became famous throughout Bhutan as a folk performer. Since then, he has never looked back. In 1989, while he was on a study tour with his classmates, All India Radio Shillong (India) made recordings of three of his songs. This marked his first international appearance as a Bhutanese folk musician.

Motivated to carry on with music, he travelled to Norway in 1993, and entered Rauland Academy in 1994 to pursue musical studies after spending a year learning the Norwegian language.

Six years later, in 1999, Jigme returned home as Bhutan’s first ethnomusicologist with a master’s degree in music from Grieg Academy, Institute of Music, University of Bergen.

Before he left Norway he recorded Bhutan’s first CD release, “Endless Songs From Bhutan”, in Grue Church with Ove Berg producing.

The years he spent in Norway helped to develop his musical horizons and identity, as he was able to travel and perform in almost all the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe.

Besides collaborating with several musicians from other cultures and giving live performances in over 200 cities worldwide in the past two-and-a-half decades, Jigme has composed music that can be heard in a number of documentaries, short/feature films and others productions including Travellers and Magicians, Taking the Middle Path to Happiness and, recently, The Red Door – a short documentary film.

As a songwriter and folk performer, Jigme has five solo audio albums (CDs) and two audio albums (tapes) to his credit.





Photo: Palden Dorji

NOSCD 1982