

**Cultural Study of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa***  
**Of**  
**Bamti Bhandar, Ramechhap**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan  
University in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in  
Art in the Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology

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December 2020

## LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Cultural Study of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* of Banti Bhandar, Ramechhap” has been prepared by Mr. Gombu Sherpa (batch 2016/17) under my guidance.

This thesis has been prepared for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master's Degree in Nepalese History Culture and Archaeology Study. I am satisfied with his work and therefore, I forward it to the Evaluation Committee for final approval and acceptance.

---

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Thesis Guide

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13/12/2019

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge and thanks to many people and institutions for their assistance, guidance, and support in accomplishing this research. I am thankful for their aspiring supervision, invaluable beneficial criticism and friendly opinion during the project work. I am sincerely grateful to them for giving out their truthful and informative views on a number of issues related to the research project.

I am grateful to the Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology (NeHCA) at Tribhuvan University, Department of Archaeology (DoA) at Ramshahpath, Kathmandu, and Buddhist Philosophy Promotion & Monastery Development Committee at Pulchowk, Lalitpur for support during the development of this thesis project.

I wish to thank, first and foremost, my thesis supervisor Lecturer Prem Dhoj Lama for his aspiring guidance in thesis writing. Thanks also goes to Dr. Madan Rimal, head of Cultural Department for managing and supporting to write my dissertation in order to complete my Master degree.

I extend endless gratitude to the Banti Bhandar Sherpa participants in this study as well as the Sherpa community members who welcomed me into their homes throughout this fieldwork. I am especially grateful to Temba Sherpa, Dawa Nuri lama, Nigma Tendu Sherpa & Gelzen Sherpa for their time and support during my field visit. I am also equally grateful to the Head monk Sonam Tenzing Gurung for providing his time and giving information about *gonpa* and its rituals and festivals.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents and to my siblings for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you

Gombu Sherpa

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# Chapter One

## Introduction of the Study

### 1.1 Introduction

This study mainly discuss about the culture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. This *gonpa* is very important Buddhist monastery and cultural heritage of Ramechhap district. This *gonpa* lies in the Umakunda Rural Municipality Ward No. two of Ramechhap district which falls under Bagmati province of Nepal. This *gonpa* is situated north east from Kathmandu Valley. It lies on the traditional and ancient route to trekking and expedition to Mount Everest and can be accessed either by Jiri or Manthali route on foot or via vehicles. This village is 25 km from Jiri of Dolkha district and thirty minutes from Deurali pass of Ramechhap. This village lies in the northern part of Ramechhap district.

The territory of Ramechhap district is extended from Sunkoshi River in the south up to Likhu River and Rolwaling range in the north. Ramechhap district is mostly hilly region where altitude ranges from 1378-5000 meter. Buddhist, Hindu and Kirati religion people inhabit in this village and Ramechhap district. This district is one of the most promising areas to discover Buddhist tradition and oriental *gonpa* culture that remains hidden for centuries to the outside world. Thodung Samten Chholing *Gonpa* and Palyul Chyangma Urgen chholing *Gonpa* are the main Buddhist center of Bamti Bhandar Ramechhap. However, Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is considered to be much older one. This study focus on the study of Palyul Chyangma Urgen chholing *Gonpa* various historical and legend aspects.

This study aims at finding the authentic history of this Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. Knowing and understanding the history behind any *gonpa* is very important since it helps us to understand the various cultural and social aspects regarding contemporary time period. It also increases the cultural and religious value of the *gonpa*. This *gonpa* was initially known by the name *Chyangma Gonpa* or *Chyangma Lhakhang*. Sometimes the local people often use term '*Lhakhang*' instead of *gompa*. The local Sherpa people called Bamti Bhandar as *Chyangma* in their dialect which means sloppy bushy land made habitable by cutting all trees and bushes. Sherpa village are usually named after the behavior, land structure,

topography of that place (Lama, 2002, p.16). *Lhakhang* in Sherpa language means God home. Local people believe this *gonpa* to be more than 200 years old.

This study also gives information on art and architecture of this Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. Art and architecture are the inseparable and most eye catching components of any *gonpa* around the Himalaya including Bamti Bhandar as well. The idea, knowledge, stories, life related events and religious essence of Buddhism can be seen expressed through various arts and architecture of *gonpa*. This study analyzes and interprets such artistic features and *gonpa* architecture in the process of exploring concept, ideas, core values and religious affiliation. Initially Bamti Bhandar *gonpa* was one storeyed structure made of clay and stone only. It was more like *gyang* house with two windows and one door only. The structure of the Bamti Bhandar *gonpa* was very simple and primitive style with only one altar room. It was built by woman for good merit and karma. In the past, many *gonpa* were built by people individually for earning religious merit and well being of family and ancestors.

Bamti bhandar *gonpa* was demolished and constructed again in 2052 BS. That time *gonpa* was in very critical form because of inside structure heavily affected by moisture. Then this *gonpa* was made one storeyed court style buildings but with much larger altar space. But after the massive earthquake of 2015, it was reconstructed in two storeyed modern monastery styles with Tibetan architecture. Bricks, rocks, stones, cements, woods and such other materials are used for the construction of this *gonpa* (monastery). The main entrance of this *gonpa* is facing west direction whereas old one was facing south direction. The base area of new built *gonpa* is 1567.5 square feet. It is one of the centers of attraction for people for Buddhist community living in lower Solukhumbu and Ramechhap district.

This *gonpa* lies at an altitude of 2205 meter from sea level. This *gonpa* has very old *mani* walls and two stupa. Stupa is derived from the pali '*thupa*' and the root '*stup*' meaning 'to heap'. It is a hemispherical mound that enshrines relics or marks a spot of sacred to Buddhism (Lama, 2006, p.77). Among this stupa, one is considered to be older than *gonpa* and was built more than 200 years ago. These stupas are built like

the replica of Boudhanath and Swayambhunath. The Swayambhunath replica stupa is called *chorten PhakpaSinkun* and Boudhanath replica stupa is called *chorten Jhyarung Khaysor* in local dialect by monks and Sherpa. The Boudha *chorten* was made by the leadership of 8th generation earlier Gumba Dorje *Taktok* Sherpa according to the local residents of this village. This *gonpa* has total of 2 *ropanis* and 8 *aana* land area. Initially the *gonpa* was private but was registered as a public during the land measurement survey of 2031 B.S. Now, this *gonpa* has been registered in Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee under the registration number 133(Pu)/052.

Tibetan Buddhism consists of four major sects, which include *Nyingmapa*, *Kagyupa*, *Sakyapa* and *Gelugpa*. The sect *Nyingmapa* is represented historically by Shanrarakshita, Padmasambhav and Thisong De Chen, who together are known as *khyan-lob-chhoe sum* in Tibetan dialect (Kunwar, 1989, p.16). This *gonpa* is related with the *Nyingmapa* sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Based on the 2074/75 B.S yearly report published by Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee, there are 135 registered *gonpas* in Ramechhap district only. Until 2005, around 1489 *gonpa* were registered under *Gonpa* Management Committee (Lama, 2006, p.2). Most of the *gonpa* in Nepal belong to *Nyingmapa* sect. According to the Remote Region Development Committee, there are 762 *Nyingmapa gonpa* in Nepal (Kunwar, 2000, p18). This *gonpa* represents values, beliefs and lifestyle of Buddhist communities of this region.

Many Buddhist festivals like *Nyungne*, *Cheju puja*, *Bajraguru puja*, and other religious activities are the center of attractions of this *gonpa*. When performing rituals in *gonpa* or village, the assistant of head lama, *Chopen* first blow the conch three times followed by head lama beating the Drum three times marking the beginning of the ceremony. Then *Chotimpa* declare the rules regarding the rituals. The *gonpa* has most detailed and decorative interior. The gigantic and colorful idols of Buddhist pantheons and wall paintings are other attraction of this *gonpa*. Initially this *gonpa* falls under the *Dorje Dark* of *Nyingma* sect but now it falls under *Palyul* monastery.

The influence of Tibetan culture is prominent in the architectural style and religious practices in this *gonpa* and around the Himalayas of Nepal and India.

*Gonpa* reflects the lifestyle of Buddhist people. Lay men, lama and *gonpa* has very intimate relation in Sherpa community. *Gonpa* is termed as *vihara*, *Baha*, *Bahabahi*, monastery and *gumba* in different communities. The history of *gonpa* can be traced around Siddhartha Gautama time. During rainy wet season, Lord Buddha along with his *bhikkhus* stayed in Bamboo Forest Monastery at Raj *griha* for retreat (Bidari, 2004, p.3).

In *gonpa*, monks and nuns spend their whole life. Lord Buddha was the first one to address woman being able to go forth as a nun (Boland, 2010, p.1). *Gonpa or Viharas* are the place where monk practices *Shil* (discipline), *Samadhi* (concentrated meditations) and *Prajna* (wisdom) (Shrestha, 2009, p.1). *Gonpa* is considered as the village temple and theological institution. The term *gumba* is originated from the Tibetan word '*dgon-pa*' which means 'good man' (Kunwar, 1989, p.16). *Gonpa* is very sacred and holy place for Buddhist people. For this study, *gonpa* word has been used for addressing words like monastery, *gumba* and *vihas* in many contexts.

Since the beginnings, heritage property has been continuously managed, preserved and conserved by the local communities and other stakeholders (Shrestha, 2015, p.5) The Sherpa people of the Himalayan region are the guardian of the *gonpa* responsible for safeguarding this invaluable cultural heritage. Sherpa people are the ethnic race of Nepal living in the Himalayas for centuries. Central Bureau of Statistics (2001), shows that 10.74 percentage of total population is Buddhist in Nepal. Sherpa comprise of two words, '*Shyar*' and '*Pa*' meaning 'eastern inhabitants'. Sherpa originally migrated from *Kham* region of Eastern Tibet around 1510 A.D (Kunwar, 2000, p.45).

In Sherpa community clan is known as *Ru*. There are 21 clans in Sherpa community (Kunwar, 2000, p.47). The importance of *Ru* in Sherpa community is only limited to the marriage as two person belonging to same *Ru* cannot marry (Bista, 1967, p.189). The name Sherpa is also used to indicate other people inhabiting valleys and

mountain slopes around Khumbu region (Sestini & Somigli, 1978, p.15). During the time of Tsrong Chen Gampo, he came to Nepal along with Sherpa in his army to stop the Prime Minister Arjuna of India who created trouble after the demise of King Harsa Bardhan. In this course some Sherpa settled around *Rongsar* (Lama, 2002, p.17).

*Gonpa* has conventionally preserved both the material and intellectual Tibetan culture and has served as the fundamental locus for the generation (Lopez, 1988, p.1). Though this *gonpa* is very old and important Buddhist heritage, it has been damaged and destroyed by various natural calamities like earthquake, heavy rain and harsh climate as well as human cause like fire in the passage of time. So far known, this *gonpa* has been completely reconstructed two times.

The lack of proper research and awareness has resulted in the loss of many valuable information and damage of many original artifacts and remains of original *gonpa*. Lack of proper research and study of this *gonpa* and many other Buddhist shrines in Ramechhap as well as other part of nation has resulted in the loss of many important historical information and records that reflects our glorious culture and civilization. The *gonpa* is a prominent structure since the beginning in high Himalayas and life style of Sherpa people revolve around the *gonpa* culture.

This research study overall bring out information on history, art and architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. It also discusses on the socio cultural aspects of this *gonpa*. It has also tried to discuss on the impacts of 2015 earthquake on the *gonpa* and its condition after reconstruction and rebuilding.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problems**

*Gonpa* is one of the most important heritages of the Himalayan region. The importance of *gonpa* in the life of Buddhist communities around the Himalayan and Hilly region is very high. However, there has been very less study and research on the *gonpa*. There are only few articles written by foreigners and some unofficial articles written by individuals and organizations. Yet the information provided by them is contradictory to each other and seems very unreliable in many cases.

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* of Bamtibhanar, Ramechhap despite being one of the important and old Buddhist *gonpa* of Nepal has been ignored and remained under shadow in the eye of many historians and researchers. The absence of local efforts and publicity of other area like Tengboche, Namchebazar, Thame, Mustang Junbesi, Bigu and Kathmandu valley etc to promote and preserve their own monastery and lack of awareness among people of Banti Bhandar could be the possible reasons that this *gonpa* has remained in shadow.

To be more precise, the research problems are as follows:

- Insufficient study on the historicity of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.
- Insufficient study on the art and architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.
- Lack of sufficient study on the rituals and festivals of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

Human beings are curious by nature. Through suitable research, we are able to fulfill our curiosity and obtain knowledge and information regarding subject matters (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, p.44). In today's global context, where the finding, understanding, study, preservation, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage sites is of utmost priority and great significance, it is very essential to understand and acknowledge the importance of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* in terms of history, archaeology, tangible and intangible culture. The consecutive earthquake of 2015 had devastating impact on this *gonpa*. The joint effort of government of Nepal and local communities had made the renovation of this *gonpa* possible.

The main objective of any research is to obtain knowledge (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, p.44). My study aims at addressing the issues presented in the statements of the problem. However, the main objectives of my research are as follows:

1. Bring light on the historical background of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.
2. To study and research on the art and architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*
3. To study the rituals and festivals of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*

#### **1.4 Limitation of the Study**

This research has focused mainly about the historicity of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. It study the culture directly related with this *gonpa*. It doesn't include any information about nearby temples or any other buildings outside of *gonpa* periphery. Also it has only focused on the monastic architectures of the *gonpa* and slightly on the *Mani* walls and *chortens*. Any current culture or fad, that does not support or associate with the value of *gonpa* would not be included in discussions.

Also this research has been limited to the study of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* of Bamtibhandar Ramechhap. Though there are many other *gonpa* in Ramechhap and surrounding area of Bamti Bhandar, this research does not discuss about subject matter related with them. Also it has not study on the other aspects of *gonpa* like its economic and management aspects. Also there is not any study on the nearby temples and other tangible heritages which is not associated with this research topic.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Nepal is very rich in cultural diversity. It is the land of unity in diversity. It has been blessed with abundant cultural heritage. From Terai to Mountain region, there is diversified culture, tradition, language, religion and ethnic groups. Buddhism is the prominent and very ancient religion flourished in the mountainous and hilly region of Nepal including other parts. *Gonpa* is one of the significant and inseparable parts of Buddhism. It is directly linked with the identity of the mountain people. My research aims at studying one of these *gonpa* of hilly region.

*Gonpa* is the core of Buddhism. Every Buddhist community are influenced and deeply affected by the *gonpa* culture. In order to understand Buddhism and lifestyle of mountain people, understanding the *gonpa* is a must. *Gonpa* represents the glorious historicity of Buddhism and mountain people. However, relatively very few and handful study and research has been done regarding these *gonpa*. There are numerous old and important *gonpa* around the Himalayas.

They only do not represent the certain ethnic groups but represent the nation as well. They are the invaluable heritage of the nation. Knowing the *gonpa* concepts, its tradition and practices is essential to preserve and protect it. Understanding its role in Buddhist communities and how it shapes the lifestyle of local communities help to formulate effective plans and policies regarding the certain region. This study has focused on elaborating the *gonpa* meaning, its historicity, architectural features, ritual and religious activities.

This study has not only help in understanding *gonpa*, but help to create awareness about the significance of *gonpa* in our communities. This thesis provides enough information about socio-cultural and religious aspects of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. Much old and important information regarding this *gonpa* be preserved and recorded by this thesis enabling other for further study on *gonpa* and its cultural and religious aspects. It leads to the protection and promotion of these cultural heritages in local and global platform which can be the sources of generating revenues for local communities as well as the government.

## **1.6 Review of the Literatures**

Review of the Literatures refers to the study of previous finding or research and writing about it (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, p. 426). It can be understood as the comprehensive overview of all the ideas, theories and knowledge available on a topic related with the study of researcher till date. It provides up to date information about

the research topic till date. While conducting research reviewing of existing literatures associated with the topic of interest is very crucial.

Review of the Literatures is carried out until the completion of research by the researcher. It also helps in the finding of gaps in the previous studies and researches. Generally it begins with the search of the suitable topic for research. It not only guides the researcher: but also helps in understanding the research problems. While doing the review of such literatures, the researcher should choose the literatures which are written by expert and well-known authors. The materials of literature review normally includes books, journals, newspaper, research or thesis report, reports, microfilm, audio video etc.

There are only few articles and documentaries made regarding the Banti Bhandar *gonpa*. However these articles are published by local monk who worked in this *gonpa* for many years. Also some videos are made in YouTube by local media during Bajra guru *puja*. For the literature review many books, journals and articles written by local and foreigner writer regarding Buddhism, Sherpa culture and *gonpa* has been thoroughly studied and analyzed.

Meta-synthesis literature review has been conducted for this research study because of inductive research approach. The following books and publication have been studied for the purpose of borrowing and completing important ideas for this thesis work.

D.B Shrestha and C.B. Singh (1972) in their book ‘the history of Ancient and Medieval Nepal: In a Nutshell with some Comparative Traces of Foreign History’ has discussed about the ancient and medieval culture and tradition of Nepal. They have also mentioned about various myths and legends regarding the origin of Kathmandu valley and Swayambhunath Stupa as well. The researcher also included various historical figures like Emperor Ashoka, Licchavi kings, and Malla Kings and their contribution in the establishment and promotion of Buddhism in Nepal. The development and protection of *vihars (gonpa)* can be found during ancient and medieval Nepal by Hindu kings who can be regarded as a great example of religious

tolerance. The development of Buddhism in Tibet with the marriage of Nepali princess Bhirkuti and Tibetan king Tsrong Chen Gyampo has been explained by authors who resulted in the construction and development of *gonpa* in Tibet and surrounding Himalayas. The researchers have provided very less information about rituals activities and festivals related with *gonpa*.

Balchandra Sharma (1976) in his book 'Nepal ko Aitihāsik Ruprekha' has extensively discussed about the history and culture of Nepal since the ancient time. Sharma has forwarded the various genealogy of Nepali ruler since the ancient time period in Nepal. He has tried to show how despite being Hindu kingdom, Buddhism has flourished in Nepal with the passage of time. Various Hindu kings in the past show strong support to Buddhism by building many *vihar* and monasteries. It is evident from the various stone inscriptions and documents that Nepali king were highly influenced by Buddhism. He also has explained about monks and nuns role in society and how their role and influence changes with time. However there are little to no information on rituals and festivals regarding *gonpa*. The history of *gonpa* has not been discussed as well.

Valerio Sastini and Enzo Somigli (1978) in their book 'Sherpa Architecture' has discussed about Khumbu Sherpa community and the ecological features of Khumbu region. They explained about Sherpa migration in this region and how they survive in this extreme climate. The Researchers have discussed about Sherpa architecture of Khumbu region and how has it been influenced by Tibetan architecture and tradition. This book deals with how local people utilize the locally available resources like rocks and woods to built the beautiful *gonpa* and how it has shaped the lifestyle of local people living in Khumbu region. But the authors has not mentioned in detail regarding the *gonpa* historicity. There is also absence of information on *gonpa* art. Their finding is mainly concentrated on Khumbu region which has resulted in the absence of any information regarding other parts of the country.

Sherry B. Ortner (1978) in her book titled 'Sherpa through their rituals' has discussed about various aspects of rituals practices held in Sherpa communities. She has unearthed the ritual thoroughly and did very critical analysis on the rituals and

ceremonies. She tries to link such ritual practice with structural conflict, contradiction, and stress in the wider social and cultural world. She has discussed about the fundamental cultural assumptions and orientations. The exorcism tradition in Sherpa community has been forwarded as a complex practice. The hierarchy in Sherpa community and its impacts on various rituals has been discussed too. The author shows various contradictory aspects and symbolic mechanism in such rituals practices. She has forwarded that in Sherpa rituals, much of the symbolic actions are for translating the external reality into subjective psychological states. However, her finding about *gonpa* is very limited. She has not discussed about rituals and festivals of the *gonpa*.

D.S Lopez (1988) in his article 'The Monastery as a Medium of Tibetan Culture' published in a quarterly magazine 'Cultural Survival' talks about how monastery preserved and represent Tibetan culture. He also mentions how china invasion in Tibet and Cultural Revolution of 1950 AD in Tibet has affected *gonpa* culture. He also describes how Samya *gonpa* as the first monastery in Tibet was built around 779 AD with the arrival of *Acharya* Santarakshita and Guru Padmasambhav in Tibet. Monasticism has fundamentally guided the Tibetan society and introduction of Buddhism in Tibet has been thoroughly discussed in this article. In this article there has not any information regarding monks and nuns, their ordination as well the *gonpa* culture of Nepal.

Ramesh Raj Kunwar (1989) in his book 'Fire of Himal: An Anthropological Study of the Sherpa's of Nepal Himalayan Region' has mainly discussed about how Sherpa people living in the extreme climate on high altitude region has survived since the beginning and how it has shaped their culture and life style. He has tried to explain the Nature-Man-spirit complex relation between Himalayan ecology and the Sherpa. He also tries to limelight the impact of various developmental project launched by the contemporary His Majesty's Government on Sherpa Culture. He has briefly talked about *gonpa*. There is no any information regarding the *gonpa* culture of Sherpa people. This research fills the gap in this book regarding the *gonpa* history, its tangible and intangible features.

Jagdish Chandra Regmi (1994) in his book 'A glossary of Himalayan Buddhism' has discussed about Buddhism and Buddhist center in the context of Nepal. He explained how Buddhist center has become a necessity in Nepal. He has explained about various sources to Nepalese Buddhism and Buddhist sculptures, Buddhist shrines and rituals and about Lamaism in Nepal. He also did comparative analysis briefly on Buddhism and Hinduism. The behavior and contribution of various historical rules of Nepal towards Buddhism has also been forwarded by author but he has not given any information on *gonpa*.

Ramesh Raj Kunwar (2000) in his book 'Himalayan Heritage: A Study of Society, Culture and Religion of Nepal' has extensively discussed about Himalayan culture of Nepal. He has explained how Tibetan Buddhism has influenced and flourished in the mountain region of Nepal. He also has discussed about various sects in Tibetan Buddhism. The meaning, significance and role of *gonpa* in the Himalayan region of Nepal have been thoroughly studied, analyzed and interpreted. He has discussed about Buddhist paradigm about life and religion. However the ideas, information and knowledge about *gonpa* are very limited and its historicity, monk and nun culture has not been discussed thoroughly.

Ngawang Woser Lama (2002) in his book 'The History and Culture of the Sherpa' has thoroughly discussed about the history of Sherpa people and their culture. He explains behind the meaning and possible idea of Sherpa name. He discuss about the Sherpa migration and the reason behind their migration which includes political and economical reasons. He also mentions about various Sherpa clan and discuss the relation and culture between various clans in Sherpa community. The socio-cultural, economical and religious aspect of Sherpa people are also mentioned in his writings. He also listed the various *gonpa* of Dolakha district and some of the famous Sherpa people. The researcher has provided no information regarding *gonpa* of Ramechhap. The historicity discussed is very limited as well.

Basanta Bidari (2004) in his book 'Kapilvastu: The World of Siddhartha' has talked about the life world of Siddhartha Gautama and his journey on becoming the Buddha. He has explained about his birthplace and his family life. The author has mentioned

about various incidents that happened in the life of Siddhartha and how the Buddhism took the form of great religion. He has also mentioned about Buddha, his teaching, his disciple and role of monasteries in Buddhism. The researcher has discussed about the concept of trinity: Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. The information provided by author only focus on the Buddha life and teaching. The insight on *gonpa* historicity, evolution and its rituals and festivals are totally absence.

Khenpo Ngawang Woser Lama (Sherpa) (2006) in his book titled ‘Nepalese Buddhist Tradition of Himalayan Region’ has explained about *gonpa* historicity. He has also discussed about the meaning and concept of *gonpa* and its culture. He insisted that *gonpa* is very important cultural heritage and identity of Buddhist community living in the Himalayan region. He elaborates about various concepts behind the *gonpa* construction and how it has shaped the local community. The researcher also has focused on various arts and architecture of *gonpa* and its significance. How *gonpa* plays the role in mountain ecology and how celebration of festivals is affected by *gonpa* culture as well as environment is thoroughly discussed. The author has discussed about various *gonpa* of Dolakha district of Nepal. Despite all these, he has not explained or mentioned about many old and important *gonpa* of Ramechhap district. Also, there is no any information available regarding Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

Basanta Bidari (2007) in his book ‘Lumbini: A Heaven of Sacred Refuge’ has intensively discussed about the Lumbini which is the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama. He talked about the story behind the Lumbini and how important it is for Buddhist. He has forwarded his findings and theory based on various archaeological collections and expedition carried throughout the times. The researcher has failed to mention any information regarding the *gonpa* culture of Northern Himalayan region of Nepal. Also there is very less information regarding Sherpa people and their rituals and festivals.

Dr. Khadga Man Shrestha (2009) in his article ‘Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ in ‘Ancient Nepal’ talks about various phase of Buddhism in the history. He has categorized the Buddhism into five phase of development through historical

perspective. He argues that Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is based on monastic and educational instructions basis. How monk changes from celibate to non celibate life has been discussed as well. Also the writer believes that Buddhism in today's context is popularized as *Buddhayaana Samyeksambodhiyana*. The researcher in his book has provided very less information about ritual and festivals of *gonpa*. Also there is no any discussion about the art and architecture of *gonpa*.

Trilok Chandra Majupuria and Rohit Kumar (2011) in their book 'Hindu, Buddhist & Tantric Gods, Goddesses, Ritual Objects & Religious Symbols' has intensively discussed about various Hindu and Buddhist pantheons. They have mentioned about various ritual objects and how such objects has important role and significance in various cultural and traditional activities. The concepts and significance behind various signs and symbols are also highlighted. The researchers have shown the inter relationship that existed between various Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddess. However, they have not discussed about *gonpa* culture in Buddhism.

The article entitled 'Buddhism in Nepal, Culture & Tradition' written by Associate and published in Annual Progress Report 2017/18 of Buddhist Philosophy Promotion & Monastery Development Committee has explained about the Buddhism in the context of Nepal. He mentions that with passage of time many forms of Buddha were introduced in Buddhism and how it has affected the culture and tradition in Buddhist community. He briefly discussed about life of Siddhartha Gautama and his enlightenment. The contemporary Gurus, Brahmins and people during Buddha time converted themselves into the disciple of Buddha and how it has given rise to the establishment of *sangha* and *vihars* (*gonpa*) has been discussed by the author in his article. He also mentions about various *vihars* like *Takshashila*, *Nalanda*, *Vikramshila* and *Odantapuri Mahavihar* and its role as an educational and religious center for all the knowledge seekers. The researcher has failed to discuss about the art and architecture of *gonpa* thoroughly. Also there is very less information regarding the *gonpa* of Nepal.

## **1.7 Rationale of the Study Area**

Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* is very important heritage for all communities of Bamti Bhandar. It has been one of the major attractions for the entire tourist trekking to Everest and its surrounding areas. This *gonpa* area is selected as the site of this study because of its features of unique cultural practices, local authentic structures, unique management, and enthusiasm of the community members for research and studies and accessibility.

The researcher is also the local residence of the Bamti Bhandar. His childhood has passed playing and studying around the *gonpa*. Though he moved to the city in early childhood, the rituals and festivals of this *gonpa* had deep impression on his mind. The various motifs in *gonpa* and its surrounding, idols, prayer flags and *chortens* have always attracted the researcher. Since there has not been any study on this *gonpa* and also the researcher had to frequently visit and stay in Bamti Bhandar, this *gonpa* site and location was chosen by the researcher.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the various rules and ways by which we accomplish research (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, p. 4). It generally implies the generally accepted steps and procedure taken for completing our research. Most of the researches are completed by using methodology which is very similar in nature. Depending on the nature of research, data are collected from various areas.

This segment has mainly focus on the methodical approach that is applied for the conduction of the research study. The various data collection tools and techniques gathered and utilized for the study, the details about the study area and the fieldwork experience are discussed below.

### **1.8.1 Research Design**

Research design is the pre determined scheme/structure and plan patterned for research (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, p. 118). Qualitative research approach has been

used in this research. Since this thesis has discussed about historicity and cultural aspects of *gonpa*, numerical data, table and chart has not been used. So, inductive approach of collecting qualitative data research has been chosen for research study since there is no any ground theory to test. The advantage of the qualitative research is the expression of personal views and interpretations in the research process (Sarantakos, 2012, p.94). This study follows descriptive research design, by which the cultural study of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is studied and observed through.

### **1.8.2 Nature and Sources of the Data**

This study includes both primary and secondary data information. Various tools and technique were implied for the purpose of collecting primary and secondary data. These data collected from the various sources were non numerical data and basically there were qualitative in nature.

The primary data have been collected through observation, solo interviews and group discussion. In other side, the secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished articles, documents, books, Internet, research agencies, ward office, Department of Archaeology and Buddhist Philosophy Promotion & Monastery Development Committee.

### **1.8.3 Technique of Data Collection**

Traditionally, researchers used qualitative data collection method for gathering empirical data from the field. This method involves observation, key informant, interview, case study, discussions, and so on. Rapport building is very important for researcher in ethnographic research. Being one of the local, rapport buildings with the communities was very easy and productive for the researcher.

Obviously despite the local connection, it was little difficult for researcher to explain the idea and purpose of research for the local communities. Many ongoing village issues and monastery related management had made people very skeptical about my research. Finally the researcher was able to pursue people to fully cooperate and understand the academic purpose and importance of studying and recording *gonpa*

information for the purpose of conserving the *gonpa* and passing the important historical and religious information regarding *gonpa* to the future generation.

Accessing the information about *gonpa* was very challenging. The original monk family taking care of *gonpa* had settled in the USA for very long time. Only children of the monk family are alive and they had very little knowledge of *gonpa*. Communicating with them was also very difficult because of time difference and they seem to be very busy with their work and less interested in passing information. So, the researcher had to travel here and there to find very old people of Bamti Bhandar who had knowledge and idea about *gonpa*. Only handful of people, over 70 years reside in Bamti Bhandar who grew up around *gonpa* since childhood. Many local monks who were actively involved with *gonpa* management and activities had either little knowledge about *gonpa* history or were feeling uneasy to share their knowledge for some reasons. But after many informal meetings and talk, many people open heartedly share their knowledge, ideas and views regarding Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa*. This study used the following techniques of data collection:

### **1.8.3.1 Primary Sources**

Primary source of data is an original source. Primary source of data are very reliable and useful and only the researcher has the right to explain, analyze and comment on it ((Dahal & Khatiwada, 2008, pp. 181/182). The data are collected first hand by the researcher for his research study. Generally primary sources of data collection are expensive and time consuming. The researcher has tried his best to collect the factual data and reliable information regarding the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. In this attempt following techniques were adopted for collecting required information.

#### **Observation:**

Observation has become one of the major sources and effective way of data collection. It is one of the oldest and most fundamental approaches in research method which involves collecting required and relevant data using ones senses. Being local, the researcher had the advantage of closely observing the *gonpa*. The researcher

also had the opportunities to participate in various rituals and festivals conducted in the *gonpa* since the childhood period.

After deciding to study about the *gonpa*, the researcher has spend more time in village *gonpa* for the minute and precious understanding of this *gonpa* structure and ritual activities. He also has tried to involve and observe the various rituals and festivals that occurred in the *gonpa* yearly. Observing the rituals and festivals has provided more insightful information on various festivals procedure and activities.

### **Key Informant Interview:**

In qualitative research, the most widely used method is the interview which can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured in nature (Bryman, 2008, p. 369). The researcher conducted key informant interview with informants who were knowledgeable about the *gonpa* and its rituals as well as grew around it. Those informants are old people of the Bamti Bhandar, intellectuals of the community, religious leaders, monks and head of *gonpa* as well as cultural experts. The audio recording of the interview and transcribing the information whenever possible is common in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008, p.380). The entire key informant interviews were recorded in the mobile phone recorder as well as important points and information found was written on the note during the time of interview.

This interview was the crucial tool to obtain in-depth information about the subjects. All the information accessed were filtered and managed for more authentic and reliable sources. Pre developed questions were asked to the informants as well as some new questions were developed on the process of interviewing.

- **One-on-one Interview**

Interview was done individually in natural setting. All the individual chosen for interview were met in their home or work place and were asked the questionnaire. This type of one-on-one interview helps to gain in-depth information regarding the subject matter. Enough time and friendly discussion was given for all individual interviews so that the interviewee could deliver information without any pressure and constraints. Many monks who had previously worked in *gonpa* were personally

interviewed. This interview helps the researcher to know about many aspects of rituals and festivals.

- Focused Group Discussion

Group interview was also done under controlled setting for the better understanding and more accurate information. For the purpose of gathering and group discussion, the researcher persuades monks and many available person interviewed earlier as well as some new people interested were gathered. The researcher was able to clear some misinformation and misunderstood issues regarding *gonpa* history and legends through the group interview. The advantage of this group interview was that the researcher did not need to ask questions individually.

### **1.8.3.2 Secondary Sources**

Secondary Source for collecting qualitative data for research is easy, cost-efficient and time saving in nature. The data collected from such sources are generally valid and reliable since it has already been used and evaluated by other researcher and expertise. In the first stage of this research available literature were collected and studied. Those literatures include international journals to local publications concerning the subject.

Access of international journals was accessed from authorized research institutions as well as online sources. Similarly access of local publications was obtained from public libraries, personal collections and semi government publications. These authorized institutions include Department of Culture, Tribhuvan University Library, and Department of Archaeology, Keshar Mahal library, Buddhist Philosophy Promotion & Monastery Development Committee office and such. The internet has been one of the important secondary sources of data collection for the researcher.

### **1.8.4 Data Processing and Analysis**

Data analysis is the most fundamental part of any research study. For this research study, qualitative data were collected. Such data refers to non-numeric, information such as interview transcripts, hand notes, video and audio recordings, texts and image

documents. Narrative and discourse analysis of qualitative data was carried out. Those data were re-observed and linked. Only coherent data with the field were documented. In the beginning all the audio data were transcribed in the paper and after transcribing, information were edited and translated to English language. After translation data were correlated with the context and interpreted and summarized and finally mentioned in the report.

The research methodology for this research study has followed the guideline of the American Psychological Association (APA). So this research is done in APA style format. However some minor rules and guidelines have been followed which is based on the guidelines provided by Central Department Culture, Tribhuvan University.

## 1.9 Chapter Schemes

This thesis is divided into six chapters, which are as follows:

- First Chapter: Introduction of the Study  
This chapter has discussed about the subject matter of the thesis and process of obtaining the desired research information.
- Second Chapter: Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*  
This chapter mainly discuss about the history of *gonpa* along with legends related with Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. It also discuss on this *gonpa* premises as well as its condition after and before construction as a result of 2015 earthquake.
- Third Chapter: Art and Architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*  
This chapter focuses on the art and architecture features of *Gonpa* on Northern Himalayan region of Nepal as well as of researched *gonpa*.
- Fourth Chapter: Socio-Cultural Activities of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*

This chapter discuss on the various rituals and festivals of the researched *gonpa*.

- Fifth Chapter: Summary and Conclusion Sixth Chapter:
- This is the final chapter of the thesis. It has discusses on the finding of the research and conclude based on these findings.

## Chapter Two

### Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*

#### 2.1 Introduction

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is one of the old and famous *gonpa* of Ramechhap district. The name of this *gonpa* holds very deep and important meaning. The term ‘Palyul’ refers to one of the ‘Six Mother Monasteries’ of *Nyingmapa* tradition and the term ‘Chyangma’ is another name of Bamti bhandar in Sherpa dialect. The Term ‘Urgen’ refers to the Guru *Rinpoche* who is the founder of *Nyingmapa* tradition. ‘Chholing’ literally means Dharma temple but it also refers to one’s own awakened mind. The name of this *gonpa* tells us about which branch of Tibetan Buddhism it belongs to .It is equally famous among local people, trekkers and nearby districts by the name of Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* (Temba Lama interviewed on 13/03/2020).

Initially, this *gonpa* belong to the *Dorje Drak* of six mother monasteries of *Nyingmapa* monasteries. Its main origin or monastery is located in the *Lho-ka* region of Southern central Tibet. Generally, the monks at *Dorje Drak* pursue the study and practice of esoteric scriptures, sutra and traditional Buddhist philosophy. Mainly, they emphasis on the practice of the various tantric rituals and practices based on the *Vajrayana* tradition. The *gonpa* has very strict discipline and use of alcohol and meat are normally forbidden. Also if the meat is used, it should have died by natural death rather that slaughtered one. But now, this *gonpa* is under the Palyul tradition on *Nyingmapa* monasteries.

Many of the ancient *gonpa* of the Nepal are located on hill and away from crowded human settlement for peace and solitude. *Gonpa* of Nepal has Tibetan origin and signifies solitary places (Sastini & Somigli, 1978, pp.50/51). The *gonpa* was center of academicism as well as center for the study of painting, sculpture, embroidery, music, dance, chant and ritual. *Gonpa* were the archive of the Tibetan art and the libraries of the vast Tibetan literature (Lopez, 1988, p.1). Usually *gonpa* are made outside of village settlement. But in case of this *gonpa*, it is made in the middle of the village. Initially this *gonpa* was private *gonpa*.

In the past, in Sherpa communities they built private *gonpa* for earning religious merit. In the beginning, this *gonpa* was like village temple where people perform certain religious rites, rituals and festivals after discussion and consent of the *gonpa* owner. But now after this *gonpa* has become public property, it's managed by *Lopen* Sonam Tenzing Gurung and his assistant Pasang Sherpa. The *Lopen* Sonam Tenzing Gurung shown in figure 12 was sent by *Khenpo* Sange Rangjung *Rinpoche* shown in figure 14, on the request of villagers. This *gonpa* also has two students who will remain and study in this *gonpa* for two years. They were also selected and sent by *Khenpo* Sange Ramgjung *Rinpoche*.

## 2.2 Defining and Understanding *Gonpa* Concept

*Gonpa* in a simple sense refers to the Buddhist fortified place of learning, doing meditation and accommodation of monks and nuns. *Gonpa* is a social, religious and cultural institution. At one time the wandering place of Lord Buddha was called *Viharati*. Later, this word becomes so popular that it introduced the word *vihara* (Ratnashakya, 2075 p.13). In Kathmandu valley Buddhist monastery are called *vaha* which is the altered form of the Sanskrit term *vihara* (Locke, 1985, p.1). After many years, *vihara* was used to represent the organizational setting of the monks and nuns habitat. After many time lapses, this *vihara* was established more like an educational organization or University. E.g. *Takshashila*, *Nalanda*, *Bikramshila*, *Odhantapuri mahavihara* etc. (Ratnashakya, 2075 pp.13/14). In this prospect, Bidari(2007, p.207) has mentioned that:

“A monastery is a spiritual haven allowing withdrawal from this temporal world and renunciation of materialistic and hedonistic values, and at the same time an instrumental for bringing Buddhist ideas and beliefs to the lay population within the very same temporal world.”

Lama (2006, p.1) has defined *gonpa* in broader sense to be the moral and educational school of Lama lineage. In Lama Community, *gonpa* refers to cave or *tapoban*. *Gonpa* is an educational monument constructed for the purpose of substituting the

arts, knowledge and culture of *Mahayana* lineage in Buddhism. Monasteries (*gonde*), village temple (*gonpa*) represent Sherpa archaic culture (Kunwar, 1989, p.45).

*Gonpa* has evolved from private temple or monk residence to social, cultural, educational and religious institutions. Today the concept of *gonpa* has become very complex and dynamic. It has evolved in today's context and is now regarded as monk and nun residence, Buddhist temple, meditation and retreat center, educational center as well as socio-cultural place where many Sherpa rituals and festivals are carried out. A *gonpa* is considered as a community of monks or nuns, who have chosen to separate themselves from society, forming a new groups devoted to religious practice for salvation. If there is only community of nuns living together, then such place is termed as nunnery. The *gonpa* are generally the spiritual focus of the nearby villages and settlements. For lay men, *gonpa* is very sacred. It is place of learning, healing and salvation.

### **2.3 Brief History of *Gonpa* in the context of Nepal, Tibet and India**

*Gonpa* is one of the most important cultural heritages of Buddhist people living in Nepal, Tibet and India. The glorious Buddhist history and civilization has been preserved and promoted through the introduction and development of *gonpa* culture. Though the *gonpa* culture was developed long ago in Nepal and India, in Himalayan region, it was only introduced around 7<sup>th</sup> century AD after establishment of *Rasthul Nang Chugalkhang* and *Ramoche Gonpa* by Nepali princess Bhirikuti and Chinese Princess Kongjyolay respectively (Lama, 2006, p.1).

In the context of Nepal, *Ghar Gonpa* of *Lo Gekar* of Manang district is considered to be built at the same time as *Samye Gonpa* in Tibet (Darnal, 2017, p.3). After Tsrong Tsen Gyampo, during 8<sup>th</sup> century, with the arrival of *Guru Padmasambhav* in Tibet, with the effort of contemporary king Tisong De Chen, *Samya Gonpa* was established for the first time (Gurung 2075, p23). The history of *gonpa* goes back to the time of

Gautama Buddha. Anathapindika purchased *Jetavana* in Sravasti and dedicated it to Buddha and the *Sangha* (Bidari, 2007, p.112).

As mentioned in *Vinaya Pitak* under the pali literature of *Mahawagha* and *Chulu wagha*, during the time of Lord Gautama Buddha, the Anatha Pindak made *Jetavana vihara* for accommodation of Buddha and his disciple. Similarly, contemporary king Bhimbhisar donates *Bhenubhan* for staying of Lord Buddha (Lama, 2006, p.3). The king Brisha Barma from Licchavi dynasty spread Buddhism during his reign and established a monastery called *Manju Vihar* (Shrestha & Singh, 1972, p.10). This shows that Buddhism and *gonpa* culture was highly respected and practiced even during the Licchavi period of Nepal which can be understood from *Gum vihara* of Licchavi period (Locke, 1985, p.4).

Ancient *Maha vihara* of Nepal were more like an educational center. Later it became home of monks and were regarded as temples where books and idols of Buddhist pantheons were kept. It was similar like a Buddhist museum. It was a fine architecture made from stone, woods and clay (Ratnashakya, 2075 p 14). From the Licchavi period till the Malla period and still continuing to this modern time, beside from books collection, daily rituals and ceremony, various kinds of donation on the occasion of events and festivals has become important parts of *vihara* culture.

There has been dominance and prevalence of many important and famous *gonpa* since the ancient times. It is mentioned in many travel diaries of foreign missionaries, Chinese travelers and other historical documents. *Nalanda Maha vihar*, *Udantapuri Vihar* and *Bikramsil Maha vihara* are some of the ancient famous *gonpa* that plays vital role in the development of Buddhism (Lama, 2006, pp.8/11). Bhrikuti married to Tsrong Tsen Gyampo and spread Buddhism in Tibet (Shrestha & Singh, 1972, p.13). Bhrikuti is known as Harita Tara in Tibet. During Licchavi period of Nepal, Manadeva had built monastery called *Manadevasanskarit ChakraMaha Vihar* (Sharma, 1976, p.27).

Regarding, the development of *gonpa*, it was only after the establishment of Samye *Mahavihar* in Tibet, it flourished. It had a very huge impact and influence on neighboring and friendly nations such as Nepal, Bhutan, India, China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Cambodia and Japan. This contributed to the construction of *gonpa* in these nations rapidly. They built the *gonpa* with based on Samye *Mahavihar*. While building the Samye *Mahavihar*, Tibetan king Tisong De Chen followed the design of Udantapuri *Vihar* (Lama, 2006, p.3).

## **2.4 History and legends of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa***

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is regarded as very an old *gonpa* of Banti Bhandar Ramechhap. Many old local people believe it to be more than 200 years old. It was built by *Lakshindo Ru* of Sherpa community. People believe that it was built by Ani Khandoma. She was unmarried woman and lived as a nun her whole life. On the other hand, some people say she was a childless woman. Some people called her Tongma Ama as well as *Chumini*. She belonged to *Lakshindo* clan of Sherpa community. She used to sell rice beer by weighing it and it was the source for her livelihood (Pema Nima Lama interviewed on 20/07/2019).

After her demise, the *gonpa* was looked after by her relatives. Initially the *gonpa* was small one storeyed house made of stone, wood and clay. It had one door and two windows only. It was similar like *gyang* house (Dawa Nurbu Sherpa interviewed on 11/03/2020). On the left side of *gonpa*, there was a simple house for the pilgrim and other people to stay while coming to *gonpa*. The monk quarter was destroyed by fire around 1985. It is believed that many documents and materials of *gonpa* was damaged and lost during that fire. Villagers said that the fire was caught from firewood lit for cooking food.

Before 1980, the monks from Rigzin Padma Chewang Takshindo *Gonpa* used to visit Banti Bhandar *Gonpa* and help to perform monastic rituals and activities. After that, Dawa Pasang lama studied various *Nyingma* sect tantric scriptures '*Terma*' as well as

got teaching from various high monks and gurus and became the *Laprang* lama of this *gonpa*. He started giving blessing and knowledge during *Nyunge*, *Chokhyor Dhuchen* and *lobhav Dhuchen*. After his demise, *Khapa* Nuri Lama took the responsibility for performing various *gonpa* ritual activities for some years. Again after the demise of *Khapa* Nuri Lama, Pem Dorje Lama took the responsibility of continuing the *Nyingma* tradition of this *gonpa*.

Around 1996, the *gonpa* was heavily damaged due to adverse climate. Natural disaster like earthquake and heavy rainfall has damaged the structure of *gonpa* as well as has done irreparable damage to the paintings, frescos and other artifacts of the *gonpa*. All the wooden structures were heavily damaged because of moisture. The walls were also deformed. With the leadership of Temba Lama and other sponsor, the renovation and reconstruction of this *gonpa* took place. The three bronze human size idols of Lokeshwor, Siddhartha Gautama and Guru *Rinpoche* was made and imported from New Delhi to this *gonpa*.

This *gonpa* was redesigned by local carpenter Karmi Jangbu Sherpa who was famous for his skill in design and carpenter ship. This time *gonpa* was reconstructed one storeyed building style. The old idols were totally damaged because it was made of clay and permanently attached to the *chhosam*. The financial task was assigned to Dor Lhamu Sherpa. Around seven lakhs rupees were used for the reconstruction of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. Inside the old clay idols of this *gonpa* there were Small hand size golden statue of Buddha, paddy packed in cloth including iron *karda*, *khukuri*, and bells and kept as *jhong* for the idols. In 2001, 103 *Kongyur* was brought and kept in *gonpa* through the effort of Lakpa Tendi Sherpa and Temba Lama which can be seen in figure 8.

Before 1996, this *gonpa* was looked after by the *Lakshindo* clan of Sherpa community as the care taker of the *gonpa*. The key of the main door of *gonpa* was held by them. After 1996, Ka Puti Sherpa officially handed the *gonpa* to the community. Her husband Gelchiri Lama was the *Laprang* Lama of this *gonpa*. But after his demise,

she took the responsibility of looking after the *gonpa*. But due to family responsibility after some years, she handed this *gonpa* to the community. Before Gelchiri Lama, Pudoma Bau and Chheki Bau was the *laprang* lama of this *gonpa* respectively. In the past, this *gonpa* was very famous for *Chyangma Chechu* rituals.

## **2.5 Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* premises and its significance**

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* lies near the main trail heading towards the Everest trek. This is one of the centers of attraction of Bamti Bhandar. The *gonpa* is artistically made but its premises are also beautifully designed, constructed and has been the center of attraction for villagers and all other travelers. The Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* premises has old Mani Walls, two beautiful *chortens*, five installed *Darchogs* and colorful *Lungta* spread across *gonpa*, monk house and beautiful green courtyard. These premises help to create the religious and social vibes around the *gonpa* and reflect the traditional Buddhist history, architecture and social life.

There are two *chorten* near the *gonpa* courtyard as shown in figure 4. Both these *chorten* and stupa are considered to be very old. These *chortens* are considered to be the exact replica of Swayambhunath stupa and Boudhanath stupa. The Swayambhunath replica is called *Chorten Phakpasinkun* in local or Tibetan dialect. On the other hand Boudhanath stupa replica is called *Chorten Jyarung Khaysor*. Among these *chorten*, the Boudhanath replica is believed to be made by 8<sup>th</sup> generation of *Taktok* clan of Sherpa community. Local people believed that there was a stone mine near the *gonpa* place. The *Taktok* clan of Sherpa community brought the stones from that mine to construct the *chorten*. As soon as the *chorten* was completed, the stone mine was also closed as there were no more stone. The villagers believed that those stones picked from stone mine were all nicely shaped as if it was crafted properly by people. The Swayambhunath stupa replica was made by people from Deurali in 1990 in memory of their ancestors. Both the *chorten* are very important part of these *gonpa*.

On the northwest side of *gonpa*, there is the monk quarter. It is two storeyed building. It is shown in the figure 5 of image section. The lower section is concrete built while the upper floor is made of wood as well as zinc sheet wall and roofing. They have *gonpa* office and kitchen there. All the formal and informal meetings regarding the *gonpa* are discussed in this monk quarter. Many art objects and remaining from old *gonpa* are kept here. All the wooden plank art belonging to the early *gonpa* structure are kept in the store room of this monk quarter. Such wooden planks has the painting of eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism, paintings of tantric goddess, *Dakinis*, spiritual gurus and many other Buddhist pantheons. The kitchen for the *gonpa* is also attached to the same buildings. All the food and tea items are prepared for monk and visitors coming to the *gonpa*. The monk also sleeps here in the same buildings.

The *gonpa* has many prayer flags called *Lungta* and *Darchog*. *Lungta* are small square or horizontal flags connected along their top edges to a long string or thread. They are usually placed in windy or high places. They represent five colors symbolizing five elements of nature. These colors are usually arranged in the specific order from blue, white, red, green and yellow. Blue color represents sky, white represent air, red represents fire, green represents water and yellow color represents the earth. These prayer flags consist of very sacred prayers and symbols. They are used to spread peace and harmony in the world and believe that wind will carry the peace message around the world.

*Darchog* prayer flags are single rectangular shaped attached to the poles along their vertical edges. There are five *Darchog* planted near *chortens* on the southern side of *gonpa*. On the western side of *gonpa* there are many old *Mani* walls. These *Mani* walls forms very important part of the *gonpa*. These *Mani* walls are also very old, and have been the center of attraction of pilgrims and many travelers passing through the village. These *gonpa* premises have their own story and significances. Every structure in *gonpa* premises has huge social and religious significances. They represent the religion and symbolize the many important aspects of the religion. They help to understand the local culture and communities, religious sentiments and the

history. They carry the identity of the religion. They help us to understand the religion properly. They are closely linked with the life of local people.

## **2.6 Condition of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* before rebuilding**

Bamti Bhandar *gonpa* is very old Buddhist shrine and is well known as Bhandar *Gonpa* or Chyangma lhakang in local communities and its surrounding. It is one of the very important cultural heritage sites with rich social and religious values. It has two *chortens* near it which is considered older than *gonpa* itself. The art and architecture of the *gonpa* reflects local art and culture. This *gonpa* has been the center of attraction for not only local and surrounding communities but for all the trekkers going for Everest trek and expedition as well.

Despite being very old and important cultural heritage, Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* has gone through a lot of damage, destruction and exploitation over various periods of time. Due to the lack of proper knowledge, technology and concern, the process of dilapidation has been very evident in the case of this *gonpa*. The lack of security and lack of proper knowledge regarding the *gonpa* has led to frequent damage and loss of many important arts and crafts of the *gonpa*. The lack of support from government regarding the management and safeguarding of *gonpa* and its properties is very evident. The absence of concern from government can be seen as one of the major factors contributing to the damage caused to this *gonpa* over time. The damage to the *chorten* by the 2015 earthquake is shown in figure 11.

The lack of funds was also one of the major causes resulting in the untimely repair and construction of *gonpa* properties. It had put severe pressure on maintaining the social structure of this *gonpa*. The roof of the *gonpa* was largely damaged. Most of the *gonpa* walls were destroyed and it bulged outwards. The wooden timber frame and pillar supporting the *gonpa* was largely cracked. Most of the inner wooden structures were cracked and broken. All the windows and doors were cracked and displaced from

their initial positions. All the idols and statues were moved here and there and the place to keep those statues had a lot of cracks and tears. Overall, the condition of *gonpa* was critical and delicate and it needs immediate repair and maintenance. Due to its delicate condition, it also poses threat to all the monks and pilgrims visiting the *gonpa* for prayer.

The damage caused to the studied *gonpa* by 2015 earthquake and its aftershock highlights the seismic vulnerabilities of this mountain cultural heritage sites. Most damaged were observed exterior walls because of the weak lateral load resisting capacity of the stone masonry walls and can be seen in figure 26. All the important scriptures and statues inside the *gonpa* were moved out safely with the help of Nepal army which can be seen in figure 17.

## **2.7 Rebuilding of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing Gonpa**

For the purpose of reconstruction of this fully damaged *gonpa*, many initiatives were carried out from local communities as well as head monk of the *gonpa*. At the time, the *lopen* lama of *gonpa* was Sonam Tenzing Gurung. He visited many countries for the purpose of organizing funds for *gonpa*. With his and local communities efforts funds, donation and support was obtained from NGOS, INGOs, government sector as well as foreigners. Though this *gonpa* was heavily damaged by 2015 earthquake, its construction was completed only in 2019 because of lack of funds and support. *Gonpa*, stupa and monks quarters were all totally rebuilt. The *gonpa* was built totally different from old structures using modern technology, building materials and architecture.

The old *gonpa* was totally dismantled. New *gonpa* typifies the concrete construction style and is made to attract and respond to contemporary society which can be seen in figure 22. The total amount of funds collected for the rebuilding of *gonpa* was Rupees 1, 10, 99,814 (Sonam Tenzing Gurung interviewed on 12/03/2020). It was collected through the joint effort of head monk Sonam Tenzing Gurung and local people. Out

of the total fund, the total expenses were Rupees 1, 09, 72,831. The total expenses include the cost of labor, sand, iron rod, wood, cement, paint, stone, electricity, food and marbles as well as transportation.

Before the foundation stone was laid, special *pujas* were done by monks. All the craftsmen, builders, masons and expert were gathered for the purpose of construction. The main foundation is constructed on the individual footings construction process. Each column of the *gonpa* structure will have its own footing. The footing is a square pad of concrete on which the column stands as shown in figure 27. Then these footings are connected by a plinth beam, a horizontal beam that is built the ground level as shown in figure 16. All the wood structures, frame and components of the *gonpa* are made very decorative, carved and painted.

The main door of *gonpa* has extra structure built as extensions which act as a roof for the main door. On that structure one can see the beautiful carved decorations of many arts along with two carved dragons and two *Zeeba* or *Zipak*. The dragon in Buddhism is a positive icon and a creature of great creative power. They represent the strong yang principle of heaven, change, energy, wealth and creativity. It is also the vehicle of Vairochana, the white Buddha of the center or east. On the other hand, *Zeeba* is the creature created by Lord Shiva. *Zeeba* is normally shown with head and hand only. It is so because of hunger, he devoured himself remaining only hands and head. He is also regarded as the guardian of the practitioners. The exterior walls of the *gonpa* are painted red. The red color represents the 'god of the earth'. It also represents the boundlessness of the Buddha's teaching. The windows of the *gonpa* are decorated with ladder shaped black frame same like in Tibetan monastery. It is believed that black color is the color of the goddess of *Dharma* protection and can ward off evil spirits. All the windows and doors have beautifully decorated and painted eaves. All the traditional timber frames have been replaced by RC frames.

Once the building was completed, special attention was given to its decoration and painting. A separate room has been built directly opposite to the main altar room

which can be seen in sketch figure 15. It has a passage and staircase to the upper chamber of the *gonpa*. To enter the main altar room one should enter from the western door which lies in the main façade of the *gonpa*. The southern door leads to the room and staircase leading to the upper floor or chamber of the *gonpa*. Near the southern door, there is also another door which leads to the main altar room directly near the *chhosam*. The construction of the main altar room and first storeyed has been completed. However the upper floor construction is not yet completed. Its construction and completion maybe observed within one year time period. On the northwest side of the *gonpa*, two storeyed building is constructed as a monk quarter. It has *gonpa* office, kitchen to cook for monks as well as sleeping room for monks.

Built by local workers and expert, these impressive structures include all the artistic architectural details of the Tibetan tradition. The worker was being supervised the head monk of the *gonpa*. After the *gonpa* was rebuilt and opened for public, *Khenpo Sangaya Ramjung Rinpoche* was invited for the inauguration ceremony. The inauguration ceremony include *Ramne* festivals, blessing empowerment (*Wang*) ceremony from *Khenpo*, thank program for all the sponsors and finally speech from *Khenpo Sangaya Ramjung Rinpoche* on Buddhism followed by his farewell from *Gonpa*.

Due to the alterations in the architectural design, the loss of traditional architecture and aesthetic values cannot be neglected. The western concept of conservation and preservation can be heavily seen in all types of cultural heritage sites everywhere. In many cases, conservation of the physical fabric of the monuments or the conservation of the essence or spirit of the place seems contradictory while observing the reconstruction of such heritages whether it be *gonpa*, traditional structures or temples. The concept of restoration which implies the remaking of original objects or structures by using original materials, continuing skills of craftsmanship and traditional methods of construction seems very challenging, impractical and unscientific. The invention of modern construction materials, tools and technologies as well as western approach in building monuments and structures brought about the

changing roles of the traditional builders, changes in traditional styles and the breaking of the link between old and new practice.

Old way of repairing and construction often seems to bring the disastrous results and cause the loss of aesthetic, architectural and historical values. However the development and modernization has brought the outcome which has accelerated a process of change both physical and spiritual of *gonpa*. Change is inevitable and important and such change in *gonpa* cannot be neglected while our society is drastically changing and evolving. The conventional layout and atmosphere at many *gonpa* and monasteries have been hugely affected by the demand for more space to cater rapidly growing population and significant increase in the visitors and pilgrim's number. The change in *gonpa* architecture and structure maybe needs of time but preserving its traditional design and concept is equally crucial and important.

# Chapter Three

## Art and Architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*

### 3.1 Introduction

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* represents magnificent and rich Himalayan Buddhist culture and has abundant collection of art objects. Simply art objects mean a work of art of some artistic value. *Gonpa* is a living Buddhist heritage. It is like a museum which has a huge collection of historically important art objects like *thangka*, wall paintings and other beautiful motifs and old statue and idols of various design and shape. Such objects are the components of *gonpa* art.

*Gonpa* art of Nepal is principally sacred art which draws various elements from Buddhism, Hinduism and Bon Culture. The Tibetan Buddhism has highly influenced the *gonpa* art. Generally by studying the use of symbols and motifs as well as their composition, we can recognize the style and subject matter of *gonpa* art. The creation of individual paintings, rituals objects and sculptures as components of much larger work such as the interior of shrine or as an altar is frequent. The early art includes picture drawn with sculpted lines on cliffs faces and rocks. This can be seen in rock cave art of India, Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. The iconographic art of Indian culture entered Tibet along with the introduction of Buddhism in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and was slowly modified to include Tibetan themes and influences from China and Persia.

Many traditional art objects of significant historical and cultural values can be found in this Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. Many old wall and wooden paintings and sculptures are kept here. In different time period, because of lack of proper care, natural disaster like rainfall, moisture and extreme climate, many of such wonderful arts has been destroyed and lost. Some are heavily damaged and need proper care and repairing.

Due to the lack of proper security and attention, many art objects which were once the center of attraction has been lost and theft. Similarly many such art items are carelessly kept in corner of *gonpa* and monk shelter because of lack of space and

knowledge about proper handling and safeguarding items. The lack of training and resources also seem to be major reason behind the destruction of such art objects. In Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*, most of the old arts objects were lost, damaged and destroyed over time. The initial idols were made of stone, clay and paint and were attached to the altar where they were kept. When the *gonpa* was reconstructed and rebuild, the idols were damaged and destroyed because of their delicate structure and immovable constructions.

However, the walls had many paintings painted on the thick wooden plank. These wooden planks were 4 meter in length and 2 meter in width. It was around 3 inch thick. On the wooden plank, they painted the beautiful pictures of tantric god, erotic posed god, eight auspicious symbols and other Buddhist pantheons as shown in figure six. Though these paintings are safe now, they are kept in monk house without proper support and technical safeguarding.

The primary compositions of *gonpa* visuals art comprise of mainly murals, *thangka*, and Buddhist scriptures and rituals objects. These arts were created for using in the religious rituals and educational purpose. In order to personify the Buddha or deities precisely, Buddhist artist follow rules mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures regarding proportion, color, shape, stance, hand and body gestures and attributes. The accurate dating of *gonpa* art is very challenging and difficult because their creators conservatively followed the same artistic convention for generations.

We can find the huge influence of *Mahayana* Buddhism, tantric practice and Bon culture in the *gonpa* art. Around 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Mahayana Buddhism emerged as a separate school of Tibetan Buddhism. After that, the role of Bodhisattva was greatly prioritized in *gonpa* art. Bodhisattva is regarded as a compassionate being that stayed in earth after being enlightened in order to assist all sentient beings. Since the beginning, Bodhisattvas became important subjects of *gonpa* statuary art. Mostly, Bodhisattva Chenrezig is depicted in *gonpa* art that is often shown with thousand arm saint with an eye in the middle of each hand representing the all-seeing

compassionate one who hears our request. In *Vajrayana* practice, Chenrezig is known as *Yidam* or Mediation Buddha.

The tantric influence or *Vajrayana* influence can be understood through the frequent use of *vajra* in most *gonpa* arts. In Tibetan language, '*Vajra*' is termed as '*Dorje*'. *Vajrayana* incorporates much visualization during meditation, and most of the elaborate tantric art can be seen as aids to these visualizations, from visualizations of *yidams* to mandalas. Other interesting features of Tantric Buddhism in *gonpa* art are the common representation of wrathful deities. These wrathful deities are often depicted with angry faces; circle of flames, or with the skulls of the dead. These images and paintings represent the *Dharmapala* and their fearsome bearing contradicts their true compassionate nature. Their wrath represents their dedication to the protection of the dharma teaching, as well as the protection of specific tantric practices from disruption. Bon religion also has influence on the *gonpa* art. Sometimes, statue of the Buddha or Guru Padmasambhav is often paired with the statues of tutelary deity who often appears angry or dark. This tutelary god once harmed the local citizens but after *Guru* Padmasambhav subdued these negative forces and then they started serving Buddha

### **3.2 Painting**

Painting is very ancient human art. On the basis of *Jhatak* stories based on Lord Buddha life, many images of god and goddess are painted on piece of cloth, cotton or silk known as *Paubha* Art (Lama, 2006, p.57). Inside the *gonpa*, very artistic handicraft furniture with ornamented statues of Gautam Buddha, Boddhisattva, Dakini, *Dharmapal* and disciples are found. On the interior walls of *gonpa*, Buddhism and *Jhatak* stories are shown in very artistic way. '*Om Mani Padmi Hum*' i.e. Hail to the jewel in Lotus is a prayer of Avalokiteshwara (Majupuria & Kumar, 2011, p.101) is found engraved in all stone walls and many parts of *gonpa*.

Art and painting are not only the cultural product but the embodiment of human magnificent artistic thoughts. It reflects the political, socio-economical and cultural aspects of the society. It makes profound impact on the local people outlook on life, morality and aesthetics. These types of paintings provide important information about ancient garments, clothing, ornaments, tools, ritual objects, historical events, occupation and information about architectural tools and techniques.

Detailed study of such paintings can provide important information regarding social, political and religious lifestyle of the contemporary time period. The study of such paintings of *gonpa* is very crucial as it portrays the distinct historical and cultural values and wisdom. The spatial structure represents the *gonpa* architecture art.

### **3.2.1 Wall Paintings**

Wall painting is inseparable part of *gonpa*. Its history goes back to ancient time. It represents glorious human civilization and is the symbol of human advancement in understanding and expression of wisdom. Wall painting in *gonpa* has become the important source of finding: and understanding our religious history and background.

Wall paintings or murals mainly illustrate the religious teaching, historical events, myths and social life of Buddhist community. These murals ornamented the walls, ceilings and passages of *gonpa*. Some early murals were devoted to Bon, but most are of religious figures such as Buddha's, Bodhisattva, Guardians of Buddhist doctrines, Tara in the sutras, or Buddhist masters.

Wall paintings in the *gonpa* are related with the life of Buddha and Buddhist deities. Basically four types of stories are depicted in the wall paintings of *Gonpa* or monasteries. These four stories are *Jhataka* stories, Siddhartha Gautama Biography, Buddhist Historical stories and *Hetupratyaya* stories. The *jhataka* stories are the collection of literature concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal forms. In Theravada Buddhism, *jhataka* stories are in textual forms. This legendary biography of Buddha's previous life consists of 547 poems which are roughly collected in verses.

*Hetuprataya* refers to the twelve cause and conditions as mentioned in 2<sup>nd</sup> century *Mahaprajnaparimitasutra*. The twelve cause and conditions are called *gambiradharmas*. Lord Buddha thus said to Ananda that twelve cause and conditions are profound, difficult to probe and difficult to understand. *Hetuprataya* also refers to casual condition which has five causes which are as follows.

- the associated cause
- the simultaneous cause
- the homogeneous cause
- the universal cause
- the ripening cause

The most popular wall paintings show religious figures, such as Buddha's, Bodhisattvas, Guardians of Buddhist Doctrines, Tara's in the sutras, or Buddhist masters. In these paintings, there is always a head deity or human, who is usually surrounded by some other deities or humans. If the middle figure is featured alone, his surroundings are lavishly detailed. The color on the wall paintings is applied very carefully so that they do not fade excessively over time. One such painting made on wooden plank is shown in figure 6. It also includes various auspicious signs and symbols. Typically a prominent central figure is surrounded by other deities or humans, or by extravagantly detailed settings.

### **3.2.2 Thangka**

The *thangka* are the Tibetan Buddhist paintings on the cotton, silk or skin depicting Buddhist deities, mandala and scenes. In classical Tibetan, the word *thangka* means things that one unrolls. They are traditionally kept unframed and rolled up and covered with extra silk cover on the front. Such *thangkas* are found in variable size. They are typically displayed in certain occasions, ceremony and festivals for the brief period of time. Generally such *thangka* are made for private meditation or for teaching of monastic students. They possess very elaborate compositions including very small structures and figures. The main central deity is surrounded by many other known figures in a symmetrical order. The composition of *thangka* paintings

is highly geometric. Arms, legs, eyes, nostrils, ears are all laid out on a systematic grid of angles and intersecting lines.

The *thangka* paintings are very important and effective means of expression through which entire Buddhist philosophy could be taught. It is usually hung above the altars and on the wall to enhance the meditation and practice. *Thangka* paintings can be found in two types which are *patta* and *mandala*.

*Patta* paintings are done on cloth and in it a main deity is drawn in the center which is surrounded by other minor deities. *Mandala* paintings are done for ritual purpose. It has swastika sign in the middle which is surrounded by many other deities. *Mandala* is represented as a cosmogram. In Buddhism, the *mandala* ascertains the material depiction of the expository balance between the pure and impure as well as impartiality between the good and the evil.

*Mandala* is the representation of a landscape of the Buddha land or the enlightened version of a Buddha. It consists of an outer circular *mandala* and an inner square or circular *mandala*. The inner *mandala* has beautifully decorated and centrally placed *mandala* palace. Any part of the inner *mandala* can be occupied by Buddhist glyphs and symbols as well as images of its associated deities, to represent different stages in the process of the realization of the truth. *Mandala* is commonly used by tantric Buddhist as an aid to meditation. Buddhist *mandala* is envisaged as “sacred space,” a pure Buddha realm and also as an abode of fully realized beings or deities. It also represents the entire Universe, which is traditionally depicted with Mount Meru as the axis mundi in the center, surrounded by the continents.

### **3.3 Idols and Statue inside *Gonpa***

Palyul Chyangma Urgyen Chholing *Gonpa* belongs to the *Nyingmapa* School of Tibetan Buddhism. So there are three main gold plated bronze statue of founder of *Nyingmapa* order. In the main altar, the center has the two meter tall statue of

Shakyamuni Buddha flanked by Guru *Rinpoche* on the left and Chenrezig on the right. Beside this three statue, there are also five other miniature size gold plated bronze statue of Gautama Buddha, Guru *Rinpoche*, Tara and two other Buddhist pantheons.

Chengrechi is also a form of Bodhisattwa Avalokiteswara. He is called by the name Chenrezig or Pawa Cherenzi among Sherpa community. He is one of the deities towards whom the high amount of rituals attention is given in Himalayan Buddhist communities. He is also known as Six Syllable Lokeshwar. The six syllables are “*Om Mani Pad Me Hum*”. This mantra is seen as the condensed form of all the teaching of Buddhism. The ‘*Om*’ symbolizes the practitioner’s impure body, speech and mind. ‘*Mani*’ means Jewel which fulfills the wishes of sentient beings. The two syllable ‘*Padme*’ means lotus symbolizing wisdom. Final syllable ‘*Hum*’ indicates indivisibility and purity. He is always decorated with all sorts of ornaments and shown in princely form with crown on the head as shown in figure 23.

Normally he is shown white in color. He is shown with four hands in total. His right hand carries rosary and left hand left hand carries a full blown lotus. His other two principal hands are raised to the chest with the palms enjoined in *Namaskar Mudra* holding a round object known as jewel. The jewel is regarded as the symbol of knowledge. The background of the idols is beautifully painted and decorated with various colors and symbols. The idol of the Chengrechi is seated on the double lotus petal.

As shown in figure 24, the central statue is the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha in his most common and popular *mudras-Bhumisparsha Mudra*, translated as the earth touching gesture. The background of the statue is beautiful painted with various colors and the back head of the statue has sun painted symbolizing the appearance of light and wisdom in a godly way. He is found seated in Double lotus petal. The historical Shakyamuni Buddha is seen seated in meditation position with his right hand as a pendent over the right knee reaching toward the ground with the palm inward while touching the lotus throne. In the meantime, his left hand can be seen

with palm upright in his lap with the alms bowls resting in the palm. This gesture represents the moments of Buddha's awakening and his victory over Demon Mara with earth as his witness for enlightenment. This posture also represents the unwavering or firmness shown by the Shakyamuni Buddha while he was in the pursuit of enlightenment.

On the left side, there is the statue of Padmasambhava as shown in figure 25. He is also known as Guru *Rinpoche* and is the founder of *Nyingmapa* order. He is believed to be born out of lotus flower. He is shown with one head and two hands with two eyes wide open in a piercing gaze. On his head, he wears a five petalled lotus shaped crown. The three points in the crown symbolizes the three *kayas*. The *vajra* top symbolizes unshakeable *Samadhi*. He is shown wearing beautiful garments with ornaments.

He is shown in a mediation posture with right hand holding a five-pronged *vajra* at his heart. His left hand rests in the gesture of equanimity. His left hand also holds a skull cup brimming with nectar, containing the vase of longevity that is also filled with the nectar of deathless wisdom and finally the top is ornamented by a wish-fulfilling tree. He holds the three-pointer trident which is cradled in his left arm. The three points symbolizes the essence, nature and compassionate energy. Below the three pointers are three severed heads, fry fresh and rotten, symbolizing the *dharmakaya*, *sambhogkaya* and *nirmankaya*. These three statues are beautifully crafted, painted and decorated structure and are important assets of this *gonpa*. Their presence in *gonpa* represents the *gonpa* identity.

### **3.4 History of *Gonpa* Architecture**

The architecture of a place reflects its history and culture and usually carries stories about that place or communities. The *gonpa* architecture was influenced by the geography and the climate of that place and surroundings. *Gonpa* is one of the important connotations of Himalayan Buddhist architectural culture. Traditional style

of Buddhist monasteries can be traced back to early phase of Buddhism which can be observed in the well-preserved cave monasteries of Ajanta and Elora built in western India over 2000 years ago (Locke, 1985, p.4). The earliest monasteries were made from materials like wood and bamboo (Bidari, 2007, p.32). In all villages around the Himalayas, they have built one *gonpa* along with stone *mani* walls, village entry gate, *kani*, prayer flags and *chorten* (Kunwar, 1989, p.95).

Most *gonpa* were two storied buildings and ground plan conforms to a mandala. They all follow a general design of a central *chhosam* containing idols or *thangka*, benches for the monks and nuns to engage in prayer or meditation. Building materials most commonly used in Sherpa architecture are woods and stones (Sastini & Somigli, 1978, p.61). The influence of Tibetan culture is prominent in the architectural style and religious practices in the *gonpa* around the Himalayas of Nepal and India.

The replacement of traditional construction materials by modern materials has marked the evolution of construction practices of monastic temples over centuries (Rai, et.al, 2016, p.1948). Color holds very significant meaning in *gonpa* architecture and means a lot of things. The yellow and red colors are considered very sacred colors. The garments of monks and body of *gonpa* usually feature yellow or red color. Red, white and black are the main colors in the *gonpa* architecture. These three colors represent the three spirits that are in heaven, the earth and below the ground. White color represents peace, holiness and justice. It is regarded as the color of the wind and the sacred symbols. Red color represents the god of the earth as well as boundlessness of the Buddha's teaching. The black color represents the underground God and can ward off evil spirits.

The roofs of *gonpa* are made flat so that it will be easy to remove snow. The flat roof is also made in order to conserve heat since there are very limited sources of heating in the *gonpa*. All doors, windows and pillars are decorated with religious motifs. The interiors of the *gonpa* are decorated with various paintings to reflect the tantric

ideology. Though very simple and minimalist in the initial phase, today *gonpa* architecture has become very expensive and sophisticated structure.

Buddhist temples are the places that express Buddhist philosophy in symbolic way. Thus these places needed particular work of architecture to achieve its reality while conveying its message of philosophy to the human beings. So, there are several concepts found in Buddhist temples are used to achieve that the Buddhist philosophy in architectural built forms. Those architectural concepts use to express the meaning of Buddhist philosophy in to the human's mind through the built environment. So, the Buddhist built environment is came into being as outcome of several concepts.

### **3.5 General Standards in making Gonpa**

*Gonpa* construction is taken as a festival in mountain region. *Gonpa* is an integral part of the Buddhist community. The lay people contribute by doing donation for *gonpa* while the Lamas act as the main functionaries of this religion (Kunwar, 1989, p.51). *Gonpa* are generally considered to be built very close to the nature and not very far from village. Early Tibetans *gonpa* were virtually religious strongholds. It was built away from villages and towns (Sastini & Somigli, 1978, p.51). Based on Buddhist tradition, *gonpa* should be built in solitary place 500 *domba* or 2000 feet away from village and nearby the forest area (Kunwar, 1989, p.32).

While constructing *gonpa*, certain rituals and methods are followed. The first step is choosing the land for *gonpa* construction. These lands are chosen based on the instructions mentioned in the ancient text *Sachya Rinchen Kundu* and *Chyagameda Richyo*. In the ancient times, *gonpa* were constructed either on land given with *nangwa* (free will) or *Minangwa* (land which is not given but forcedly taken). Usually *gonpa* is constructed one *kosh* (3 km) away from area occupied by married householders. Such land is thoroughly tested by monk considering local deities, spirits and astrology (Lama, 2006, p.30).

The land is tested by monks in order to find out the auspiciousness or negative aspects as well as the spirits possessing the land. The main lama and expert astrologer fix the auspicious day for construction by looking at various sign and symbols that signifies the construction of the *gonpa*. If there is some negativity, then the monk worship their main deity, offer fruits and grains, hang prayer flags, burn incense and recites from holy texts to please spirits, demons, *Dharmapalas* and gurus. After that monk wait for the auspicious signs to appear and once it appears, then the construction work is started.

Generally while building *gonpa*, there should be high cliffs on the northern side and cliff sloping to flat land on the eastern side. Western side should have slope and southern side also should have cliff slanting towards the *gonpa*. Such location should have sufficient supply of water and wooded areas.

While choosing the tree for the *gonpa* construction, in the early phase a suitable tree is sought in the wood. This type of search for suitable tree should be searched on the auspicious day based on the divination. Such type of tree should be tall, straight, round and without any defects or being eaten by insects. Such trees found are usually marked by a stroke of axe on its eastern side (Malhotra, 1992, p.22). While constructing the *gonpa*, first *Mahorag (naag)* sketch is drawn and the area of armpit of *Mahorag* will be the center of *gonpa* (Lama, 2006, p.33). Before initiating the construction of *gonpa*, the local perform *sangserkyam* which is done in order to make local deities, spirits and tantric gods and goddess happy so that they won't disturb the *gonpa* construction work.

While constructing the main centre of *gonpa*, it is dug up to knee length and important objects are placed inside it and covered in order to remove any negativity that exists in the premises. If still any negativity is found, then it is removed by holy chanting and prayers. *Hetuphalnirdeshit* sutra emphasis on *gonpa* construction by mentioning that anyone who build *gonpa* will be born as a king in his next life and if

he follow the *gonpa* construction accordingly as mentioned in ancient texts then he will be blessed twice.

*Gonpa* construction in today's world has the mix of ancient art as well as the finishing touch of contemporary art and knowledge. Due to the venerability in the traditional *gonpa* structure made by traditional skills and knowledge, the government has addressed certain rules, regulations and instructions while making *gonpa* in today's context. These criteria given by government authorities are fulfilled while approaches are taken to have minimum impacts on the traditional design and architecture. In all parts of Himalayas in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and India, they all follow the same generally accepted standards in *gonpa* construction and all these standards are guided by the Buddhist texts and scriptures.

### **3.6 Characteristics features of *Gonpa* in Northern Himalayas of Nepal**

Historically as mentioned in the ancient texts of *Himbhat khanda*, the construction of *gonpa* in Northern Himalayas of Nepal started from the time of Tsrong Tsen Gampo and his queen Bhirkuti during 635 AD and continued since then. The *gonpa* in northern Himalayas has most detailed and decorative interior. The *gonpa* of Northern Himalayas of Nepal are very uniquely built and constructed. *Lo Gekhar Gonpa* of Mustang is considered to be the oldest *gonpa* of Nepal.

In Tibet, during the construction of *Samye Gonpa*, a female demon had caused a lot of trouble. She used to visit the *gonpa* site at night and destroy all the construction work done during the days. The female demon was called by the name *Dakini* by the local people. So, because of her action, *Guru Padmasambhav* decided to kill her. The demon *Dakini* was hiding in the region of *Lo* of Mustang. After *Guru Padmasambhav* caught her, he killed her and buried her head in a big *chorten*. He hides her intestines under the long prayer wall near Ghami village. The *Dakini* heart and blood is believed to have been thrown over the cliffs of Dhakmar. The red color of Dhakmar is believed to be the blood of *Dakini*. According to the popular story of Lomanthang,

*Guru Padmasambhav* then built the *Lo Gekhar Gonpa* to house many important religious objects.

The Sherpa *gonpa* is generally characterized by various canonical texts like *kongyur*, *tyengyur*, *bum*, *nyingmi gyu bum*, *domang*, *kathag de nga* (Kunwar, 1989, p.36). The altar in Sherpa language is called *chhosam*. Separate altar house is known as *lhakhang*. The altar has three shelves which include *chhi*, *nang* and *sang*. Lowest shelf is known as *chhi*, middle upper is *nang* and the upper one is called *sang*. The term *chhi*, *nang* and *sang* means exterior, internal and secret respectively. On the *sang* or upper part, statues of Buddhist pantheons are displayed like statues of Buddha, *Guru Rinpoche*, *Fawa Chenresi* and occasionally the picture of main lineage leader. These three icons are known as *chho-lung-tul sum* in short.

On the upper part of *chhosam* which we call *sang* has displayed idols of Buddha, *Guru Rinpoche* and *Fawa Cherenzig*. In short, the three icons on *sang* are known as *chho-lung-tul sum*. The full name for this trichotomy is *chhoku*, *lungku*, *tulku*. *Chhoku*, *lungku* and *tulku* signifies *Dharmakaya*, *Sambhogkaya* and *Nirmanakaya* based on Buddhist teaching and philosophy.

The altar items are known as *Chhoje*. These *Chhoje* are very essential in *Gonpa* and represents the unique features of *gonpa* in the Northern Himalayas of Nepal. It includes eight basic offerings:

1. *Chhyuen* (water for drinking)
2. *Chhepsil* (water for washing)
3. *Metok* (a flower for good smell)
4. *Dukpo* (burnt incense)
5. *Marme* (butter for fire or butter lamp)
6. *Thichhap* (scented water)
7. *Syalse* (simple uncoated *torma*)
8. *Rolma* (music)

Musical instruments are also very key components of *gonpa*. They are used during various ceremonies and festivals organized in *gonpa* from time to time. These types

of instruments are usually kept in the main altar room and it is usually regarded as the important part of the *Chhosam* or main altar of the *gonpa*. Monks are taught on how to use these instruments once they are affiliated with the Gonpa. Some of the instruments of *gonpa* are as follows:

- *Dhilbu* (bell)
- *Dadar* ( a sacred wand dressed up with silk streamers in five colors)
- *Pumba* (holy jug with peacock feather known as *mapchi do*)
- *Kangling* ( a thighbone trumpet)
- *Corthung* ( a conch shell)
- *Bukshell* (cymbals)
- *Damar* (drum)

The altars in the *Dukhang* usually have photos of the important lineage holder. Beside the photos, there are bowls of water usually seven in numbers kept as an offering to the deities. These bowls of water are regularly filled with new water. These water offering are one of the daily rituals practices before doing prostration to the three jewels- *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. Water bowls offering are regarded as sensory offerings.

While offering water, usually ‘*OM AH HUM*’ is chanted, which are the seed syllables of Buddha’s body, speech and mind. These water bowls are usually emptied at evening. While filling and placing the bowls, they are usually placed from left to right. While emptying the bowl they are usually removed from right to left.

The altar also has many flickering butter lamps and colorful *Torma*. *Torma* refers to the mix of flour and butter shaped into stupa. On the either sides of altar we can see many ceremonial trumpets and demonic festival masks covered with *khata*. These *torma* are often decorated in many shapes and colors. *Torma* is regarded as a sacrificial offering since in Buddhism, killing of any animals is forbidden.

Many *gonpa* in the Himalayan region are small in size. They have only one room which is called *dukhang*. This room is assembly hall and usually square in shape.

These halls are mostly decorated with bright murals, *thangkas* and other decorative structures. The main altar will have central statue with other two or more statues by the side. The main statues on these *gonpa* are usually Siddhartha Gautama, Guru *Rinpoche*, Future Buddha and Milerapa.

### **3.7 Architecture of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing Gonpa**

So far known, Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* has been reconstructed and renovated fully two times. The old *gonpa* had traditional flat roof structures with stone walls as shown in figure 1. It was constructed using stone masonry. It was basically very simple structure with one room altar and could accommodate only limited number of monks and visitors. The old *gonpa* was constructed using interior wooden frame along with wooden frame floor diaphragms and exterior stone masonry walls. 90 years old local from Bamti Bhandar recall this *gonpa* to very simple and like house shape long time ago (Pema Nima Sherpa interviewed on 20/07/2019). Another local from this village recalled his grandparents saying it was more like *gyang* house (Dawa Nurbu Sherpa interviewed on 11/03/2020).

In the later *gonpa* the main hall had the central part stretches up through the roof, and the hall gets light from that. The later image of this *gonpa* is shown in figure 2. On the top of that roof there was a golden colored pinnacle. It was relatively more complex structure than the old one. It also had relatively large space compared to the old ones and could accommodate more monks. Though it was also one room altar *gonpa*, the size of the *chhosam* was around four times larger than old ones. It had a lot of new paintings. Many Buddhist pantheons were painted on large wooden plate and attached to the walls of altar room. It also had many artistic furniture added in the altar rooms.

The recent *gonpa* is made two storied building with modern architecture features as shown in figure 3. It's made totally different from old one. The main foundation is also constructed in new area but close to the old foundation. The main façade of the

*gonpa* is faced towards western side. Directly above the main door on the roof of the *gonpa*, there is the wheel of life flanked by two deer as shown which can be seen in figure 3 as well. In Tibetan language such symbol is called *ridag choekar* and is depicted over the main entrance of almost all monasteries. This type of design above the main door on the top is customary features of all Buddhist temples. This two deer and wheel of life is the symbolic representation of Buddha.

Before Buddha was personified, he was represented by various symbols like deer, wheel of life, and peacock and so on. The deer are peaceful animals which represent peacefulness and compassion. Among two deer one is male and other is female. Both deer gaze up at the *Dharmachakra* which symbolizes aspiration for the *Dharma*. Those two deer are also regarded as the first disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha who was taught after Siddhartha Gautama was enlightened.

The first discourse of the Siddhartha Gautama after being Buddha is termed as *Dharmachakra* (Bomhard, 2013, p.48). Hub, rim and spokes are the three main parts referring the three higher trainings, the path to liberation from *Samsara*. The hub is for higher training in ethics, rim in concentration and the spokes in analytical training. There are eight spokes pointing in the eight directions. It represents the Buddha's noble eightfold path. Similarly there are four cylindrical shape golden colored *dhwajas* at the four corner of the roof. These *dhwajas* symbolizes victory over Mara. As soon as you enter to the main hall, one can see the most distinguishing features that separate the main hall of *gonpa* from the material world outside. The concentration of energy that is created with architectural principles in the main hall is very apparent and overwhelming. On the main door area and in the hall, one can see symbolic frescoes painted in many colors.

The ground plan is square in shape and represents the *mandala* which is a visible representation of the total of spiritual and natural forces. The lightness in the main hall is enhanced by the brightly colored decorative elements, beautiful combination of artificial and natural lights and artistically carved lines in the columns supporting the

beams. The central hall is theoretically reserved for the principal deities. All the ceilings and interior structures of this *gonpa* are beautifully carved, decorated and artistically painted with detailed structures and information of various Buddhist pantheons, signs and symbols and designs.

Directly opposite to the main door, as soon as you enter the prayer hall, there is the 1.5 meter tall image of Siddhartha Gautama in the middle along with the idol of Lokeshwor (Cherenzig) and Guru *Rinpoche*. These three bronze statues are the principal deities representing the *gonpa*. They are all placed inside beautifully furnished structure which can be seen in figure 7. All the walls of the *chhosam* has beautiful furniture attached for keeping the idols safe. On the either side of *chhosam*, there are racks for all the religious texts. There are total of 108 *Kongyur* in the *chhosam* which are taken out in special occasion for chanting. In front of the *chhosam* there is a large seat directly in front of the Siddhartha Gautama statue. This seat is for high priest only. Most time this seat is kept empty. There is a large framed photo of *Rinpoche* in the seat.

There are four beautifully painted and carved pillars in the middle section of the room. These four pillars represent the four wisdoms which we have to gain on the path to enlightenment. On the ceiling and top of these pillars we can see the carving and painting of the dragons as well. In Buddhism, dragons are very holy and regarded as the protectors of religion and their thunderous voice will awaken all human beings from the delusion of this world.

The middle section of the floor is maintained for walking purpose which is directly in front of the middle section of *chhosam*. On the either sides of the middle section there are long tables for monk to seat and study in the main altar room. On the tables we can see many items like conch, bells and other religious items beautifully placed. These are only used by monks and played during certain ceremony and festivals. The walls and ceiling of the room are beautifully carved with many colors depicting Buddha's life, tantric deities and other Buddhist signs and symbols.

In the recently built *gonpa*, the random rubble stone masonry wall and interior pillars has been replaced by concrete block masonry. The timber frames have been replaced by RC frames in the newly constructed *gonpa* which is shown in figure 27. The windows are present on the three sides of the *gonpa*, excluding the side opposite the main entrance where the deities and scriptures are kept.

There are mainly three doors for entering inside the *gonpa*. The main door is facing towards west direction and other two doors are facing south direction. These two southern door constructions are shown in figure 22. This Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* architecture is made totally in contemporary styles. Despite this the old traditional concept of arts, religious values and sentiments has been maintained as much as possible. The architecture is very eye catching and one can find the modern skills and knowledge fully utilized on the design and construction of this *gonpa*.

## Chapter Four

# Socio-Cultural Activities of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing Gonpa

### 1.1 Monk, Nun and Monastic Ordination

The first monks were ordained by Siddhartha Gautama himself simply by reciting the words, “*Ehi bhikkhu* (Come here, monk).” In the ancient times, Buddhist monks were called as a *vande* or *vandana* as a term of respect. (Locke, 1985, p.2). According to the religious system, in order to be entitled as monk, one has to stay in *gonpa* for three years, three months and three days to which they call, ‘*lo sum da sum*’ (Kunwar, 1989, p.7). Buddhist community of monk is called *Sangha* (Majupuria & Kumar, 2011, p.67). Initially all the *gurus*, monks and nuns living in the *vihar* were revered with great respect in the society. They were the teacher and spiritual guide for the society and laymen. Monk of the highest rank is *Dathanaga* or senior most of all the monks in certain area in *Theraveda* monastery in the context of Ceylon or *Anuradhapura* (Hinüber, 2015, p.356).

Monk life style is generally guided by *Vinaya* which is the body of the rules governing the monastic lifestyle (Foltz, 2010, p.37). Monks originally lived in a single hut called *viharas* and when these huts were grouped together, it was called *sangharama*. Henceforth the word *vihara* represent the *sangharama*. *Varsavasa* was the place of retreat for all the wandering monks (Bidari, 2007, p.8). Lama, monks and nuns wear dress called *thache* which consists of *syando ringa* or *ringok*, *syam* or *yoljen* (Kunwar, 1989, p.45). The community of monks and nuns across the Buddhist world are called *Sangha*. They have preserved the Buddhist texts safe over many centuries and have taught and interpreted Buddhist philosophy for the laymen and community.

Tapussa and Bhallika were the first laymen to take refuge and learn about dharma making from Buddha directly after he attained Buddha hood. Since ancient time, prevailing sexism in society and the Buddhist hierarchy has created great barrier for woman to become nun and live the religious life in the monastic order (Boland, 2010, p.1). Buddha stepmother Prajapati, his wife Yasodhra along with five hundred Sakya women entered into the order as nuns after the request of Ananda (Bidari, 2007,p.9).

Monk is necessary for *sang-sirkim* for the purification of polluted house (Kunwar, 1989, p.32).

There were two type of shelter for monks. One was called *avasa* which was build near stream or in a forest and other was called *arama* build in the urban settings. When monks lived in *avasa* in rural settings they have to subsist on their own and when they live in *arama*, they subsist with the help of a patron (Bidari, 2007, p.29). Monks are two types;

- *Ngapa* monk meaning married and tantrik.
- *Dulva* monk meaning celibate.

During the Malla period in Bhaktapur, all the Buddhist monks who had returned to household life were told to act as a priest and preceptors (Shrestha & Singh, 1972, p.26). During the reign of Jayasthiti Malla, Buddhist *Bhikshus* who were householders were obliged to work and were not allowed to sit idle (Shrestha & Singh, 1972, p.26). The popularity of Buddhism has increased with the movement of Buddhist monks and nuns around the world (Otero, 2010, p.2).

In Buddhist community, monks and nuns mediate and pray for the lay community and all the sentient beings. Monks and nuns also guide all lay practioner on how to mediate, perform rituals and inform them about all the Buddhist pantheons. The laity, in turn, support and donate with all the food and other necessary requirements for monks and nuns. They are expected to perform a variety of roles in the Buddhist communities. Most important duty of monks and nuns is to preserve the doctrine and discipline of Buddhism.

The practice of monastic ordination can be traced back to the time of historical Shakyamuni Buddha. Soon after his enlightenment, he started the community of disciples known as *sangha* with only five monks. There are traditionally two stages of monastic ordination. A *Bhikkhu* or *Bhikkuni* first ordains as a novice. *Bhikkhu* is called *Samanera* and *Bhikkhuni* is called *Samanerika*. Then they reside in monastery or *gonpa*. After this process, both male and female novice may go higher ordination

which confers full monastic obligations and status. In *Theraveda* tradition, male novices can ordain at a very young age but not younger than 8 years. It is mentioned in traditional guidelines that a child before ordination must be old enough to scare away crows.

In the East Asian tradition, though people can live in the monastic communities from early childhood, the official ordination is carried out only after they reach 19 years. Women generally ordained after reaching adulthood. However, in today's context, they are equally treated as male novice and monk ordination is same. Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji who were Brahmin were the first five ordained monk by Gautama Buddha (Bomhard, 2013, p.43).

Higher ordination also termed as *upasampada* which signifies the status of full *Bhikkhu* or *Bhikkuni*, is given to novice only after reaching 20 or older. Those who undergo *upasampada* must follow additional monastic rules known as *Pratimoksa* which will govern their dress, etiquette and activities. There are 227 monastic rules for a monk and 311 monastic rules for nuns. These rules are based on the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

The one who becomes monks or nuns must shave their heads, always wears a robe provided by a particular *gonpa*, continuously study the Buddhist doctrines, observe the religious precepts depending on their religious advancements, practice meditation regularly and spread the teaching of Buddha and other higher spiritual leaders and *gurus*. Monks and nuns are traditionally supposed to abstain from eating after midday and refraining from any monetary transactions.

## **1.2 Monk Title and Hierarchy System in Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing Gonpa**

In Himalayan and Hilly Sherpa community, the term lama is generally used to refer monk. They are very holy and important person of the community. Since *gonpa* has become complex organization rather than resident of monk only, there has been establishment of hierarchy system in *gonpa* for smooth operation and efficiency in

flow of information intended by *gonpa* activities. This hierarchy is based on knowledge gained by monks, their study and years of experience, their contribution and the level of hard meditation they performed.

“*Lami lalthim gyelbu gelthim*” which means the lama’s power at the monastery is like the *misar’s* power in the village (Kunwar, 1989, p.103). In Buddhist community, monks and nuns are much respected people and are considered very holy and sacred. They hold the very high position in the Sherpa community.

In *gonpa*, generally there are various title and hierarchy like *Khenpo*, *Lopon*, *Geskos*, *Gelong*, *Getsuls*, *Komnyer*, *Nyerpa* and such based on their education and years of experience. In *gonpa* also there are higher administrative positions and lower administrative position. *Khenpo*, *Geskos* and *Lopon* are in higher administrative positions whereas *Gelong*, *Getsus*, *Komnyer* and *Nyerpa* are in lower administrative positions.

In case of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*, there were basically four types of monk hierarchy for the smooth operation of the *gonpa*. The four titles are discussed below;

1. *Khenpo*
2. *Laprang (Lobpon)/ lopen*
3. *Unjhyan*
4. *Chhetumba*
5. *Chopen*
6. *Tawa*

The devastating earthquake of 2015 totally destroyed this *gonpa*. After the starting of construction of *gonpa*, it was actively protected and guided by *Khenpo* Sange Rangjung *Rinpoche*. And thus the highest title *Khenpo* was added on the monk hierarchy of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

In the *Vinaya*, the term *Khenpo* refers to the one who gives the monks vows and has demonstrated the *Vinaya* conduct in highest level. The *Nyingmapa* and other Buddhist

Schools use the *Khenpo* title for those who have achieved the highest levels of mastery in *Shedras*. In case of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*, *Khenpo* Sange Rangjung *Rinpoche* gives the guidance to the *gonpa* administration and help for the various events and rituals organize in the *gonpa*. Under his administration, yearly two students are sent to Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* to work, learn and gain experience as a monk.

*Laprang* or *Lobpon* title was the highest title of monk in the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* in early time. It was generally used to refer to the owner or establisher of the *gonpa*. Generally it also refers to the great philosophical teacher. *Laprang* is the main lama of the *gonpa*. He is responsible for the overall decision of the *gonpa*. Untill today, Sonam Tenzing Gurung has been entitled as the *Lobpon* lama of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* for the past 15 years. He is responsible for overall *gonpa* administrative activities and talk with villager for the betterment of *gonpa* and communities. He gives guidance and decision while performing various rituals and festivals in the *gonpa*.

*Unjhyan* is the assistant lama of the *laprang* or *Lobpon*. He is basically responsible to look after the *gonpa* administration in the absence of head lama. Current *Unjhyan* of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is Pasang Sherpa. He is responsible to talk with the *gonpa* visitor and communicate with the villager for organizing various events and rituals under the supervision of head lama. He also teaches the two students sent by *Khenpo* Sange Rangjung *Rinpoche* in this *gonpa* and guide them to understand about daily *gonpa* activities and rituals.

*Chhetumba* refers to the security personnel of the *gonpa*. He is basically responsible to maintain peace and security during various *gonpa* events and rituals. He looks after the *gonpa* property and maintains peaceful and secure environment for all monks and *gonpa* visitors.

*Chopen* is the lowest title of the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. He is basically responsible to do all minor activities of the *gonpa* and do the work

addressed by *Lobpon* or *Unjhyan*. He mainly cleans the *gonpa* and also does daily work of offering water and replacing it in the *gonpa*.

After the 2015 earthquake, the *gonpa* was submitted to *Khenpo Sange Rangjung Rinpoche* protection and under his blessing. He sends two young monks or *Tawa* to study and work in this *gonpa* for two year time period. These *Tawa* also remain as *Chopen* in the monastery. In every two years, two new *Tawa* are sent for staying in this *gonpa* replacing the old ones.

### **1.3 Daily Rituals of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing Gonpa**

Rituals are religious activities or a series of behavior which an individual or group perform on regular basis. These rituals which are practiced regularly are based on prescribed rules and regulations mentioned in religious books and scriptures. These types of rituals have been practicing since time immemorial. Daily *gonpa* rituals generally can be understood as the daily activities of monk and nun in *gonpa*.

In *gonpa*, certain rituals are performed on daily basis in order to maintain harmony and discipline among monks and society. These rituals are guided by religious views, ideas and scriptures. Usually, head monk teaches these ritual and activities to young monks and guides them to practice in correct behavior. This daily rituals consists of, morning Buddha offering, meditation, cleaning and managing *gonpa* and its premises, praying for the peace and harvest of the villages around monastery and night chanting. Drums, bells, cymbals and other instruments signal the transitions between daily rituals activities occurring in the *gonpa*.

Daily rituals are strictly observed and performed in Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* on regular basis. Though the daily rituals activities in the past and present has been slightly different regarding time table as well as discipline, its practice and continuity has always been guided by religious texts, scriptures, learned behavior and knowledge from earlier *Laprang* lama. Before this *gonpa* was made

public, the daily rituals were based on owner and caretaker action. The rituals maybe similar but may not have been continued on regular basis since they were married and had daily household chores to perform for livelihood. Though offering seven bowls of water, lighting the candles or butter lamp and burning incense was done regular, as well as reading religious scripture, they were not done in time table basis like today.

In today's context, the *tawa* and assistant lama performed daily *gonpa* rituals and practices on regular basis. The *Chopen* Sonam Tenzing Gurung guide the *tawa* as well as assistant lama on how to perform these rituals. In absence of *Chopen* Sonam Tenzing Gurung, the assistant lama Pasang Sherpa will guide the *tawa*. Currently there are only two *tawa* in Banti Bhandar *Gonpa*. They were sent by *Khenpo* Sange Ramjung *Rinpoche*. These *tawa* will stay for two years in Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. They will learn about *gonpa*, its daily rituals, various Buddhist scriptures and knowledge regarding Buddhism. After two years, new *tawa* will replace the old ones.

The monks usually wake around 4 am in the morning. Then they bathe and get ready for meditation. After meditation they clean the *chhosam*. Then they will offer water in the altar and do prostration. The act of offering seven bowls of water to the main deity is termed as *henche* in local term. They also burn incense and light the butter lamp as an offering to the god. Then they all study and recite *kangsur* text. In the morning, they mediate and study which is repeated everyday beside festival time. At the same time, some monks will prepare butter tea and breakfast for monks. Around seven am they will have breakfast. After breakfast, they will again do meditation for certain times. The launch time is usually around 11 am in the morning. During day time they are mostly free and spend time reading religious texts and doing meditation. They are also free to wash their clothes, take bath and talk with friends and family.

In the evening they will remove the water from the seven bowls offered to the god. Usually while offering water, they fill the water from left to right bowls. While removing the water, they empty the bowls from right to left. After emptying the bowl,

they clean the bowl with clean cloth and invert the bowls. Then they light the butter lamp in front of the altar. The evening ritual is called *marmeh* in local dialect or Sherpa language. The term *marmeh* include ‘*mar*’ and ‘*meh*’ which means ‘ghee’ and ‘fire’. Then they recite the sacred hymns and study religious texts until dinner is ready. Dinner is usually around 8. After having dinner, they usually meditate and pray for one hour. After night pray and meditation, they sleep. Then again they follow the same activities next day.

#### **1.4 Festivals of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa***

In Sherpa community, it’s a social rule that each and every household of the village should participate in the rites and rituals at the *gonpa*. Sherpa festivals are characterized by two common aspects which comprise of worshipping of gods and spirits and singing, dancing, drinking and party. Visiting *gonpa* occasionally and doing prostration and circumambulation is regarded as a virtuous act among the Buddhist communities.

*Nyungne* is celebrated once a year in late spring for four days. Laymen act like monk for these period of time. *Nyungne* is a time of atonement and the observance of which brings participants with high and powerful religious merit .Fasting and other abstentions with humility and contrition acts is the main features of these rites. Laymen people experience the ascetic ethic while observing this festival (Ortner, 1978, p.33). A participant of this festival is purely voluntary and individual basis (Jangbu Sherpa interviewed on 15/07/2019).

This is also important festival of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *gonpa*. During this festival, ghee, rice, curd and *torma* is distributed among all the visitors of the *gonpa*. The first day is *sang* ceremony which involves making offering to the local gods in order to purify the area for ritual performance. During the day, they make the rituals objects for the altar and in the evening a big meal is given by volunteer

sponsors. Some laymen spent up to 15 days in *gonpa* for meditation and fasting during *Nyungne* (Dha Puti Sherpa interviewed on 11/05/2019).

On the second day, they spend whole day in *gonpa* doing simple prayers and recitations. Three times during day they recite long prayers begging for forgiveness from their sins, freedom from suffering and achievement of enlightenment. Other time they chant various mantras, formula of taking refuge in the Buddha, and some simple prayers. They perform many prostrations in front of the main altar. The penitents are served one large meal on the midday of the second day. On the end of the last fasting day, the monks make the altar items for a *tso*, to be held that evening. This rite is directed to the god Pawa Cherenzi who is god of mercy and compassion. Sherpa community believes that human being perform many sins knowingly and unknowingly in life. Such sin will cause trouble during the time of transmigration from one world to the other world. So in order to get forgiveness from such early sin, Sherpa perform one rite once a year known as *Nyungne*. The meaning of this term is ‘to remain on fast’).

This rite is done to get forgiveness from sin as well as to gain more religious merit. It is usually observed during the month of May or early June (Lama, 2006, p.139). Usually old males and females observe in *gonpa* for three days. This is done in order to get rid of sin and gain religious merit as well. This rite is observed mainly by fasting. During the fasting all people cite *Om Mani Pe Me Hum Rhi* and do prostrations before the altar. *Nyungne* festival which is like a bow to keep silent is also celebrated (Lama, 2006, p.140).

In Sherpa community, all Buddhist are called *nangpa* which is a Tibetan term referring insider or interior. For people outside the Buddhist community, they are called *chhipa*, which means outsiders. Fermented drinks like *chhyang* and *arak*, are very important in Sherpa and is needed in all rituals and ceremonies. Before drinking *chhyang* or *arak*, Sherpa touch it with ring finger and sprinkle upwards three times as

an offering to the gods. Such act is called *chhe*, *chhe* in local dialect meaning offering to Guru Rinpoche (Kunwar, 1989, p.19).

In most festivals people work as a *Jindak*. *Jindak* means sponsor. The *nying-ma* liturgical texts are known as *kama* and *tema*. Sherpa use especially *kama* text for ritual performances and in festivals. All the musical instruments are divided into three groups known as '*bu dung tul sum*'. It follows from blowing, clashing and beating three. The purpose of this music is to welcome and is termed as *chenden*. These items are very important for performing festivals.

The Sherpa lama performs various type of worship which are commonly known as '*sethi rongsal ki chhoka, chhyopa or namkhe gelbu ki chhoka, dorsem ki chhoka, konchhek chundi ki chhoka, hopangme ki chhoka*' and such. *Torma* is made from dough and is the indispensable part of the Sherpa rituals and festivals. The *torma* which are offered for food are known as *chhe-tor* (*torma* for food), *gyak-tor* (*torma* for *gyak* ) etc. The *chhyuwa* (a long gown made from wool) is the traditional male dress and *angi* (long gown) is the traditional female dress of the Sherpa community.

*Ramne* festival means *pran prastisthan puja*. *Ramne* is a religious rite which is performed while constructing the monumental buildings or after the completion of any religious materials. After performing *Ramne festival*, such place or materials becomes sacred from secular. *Ramne* is performed to bring and keep *hisiba* 'the light of the Sange or the knowledge' of the Buddha's mind. This festival has been observed in this *gonpa* for three times. Village and clan gods and various spirits are given offering during *kangsur* rite for protection of the village. The Sherpa's main gods are *Sange Chemdende* (Gautama Buddha), *Fawa Chenresi* (Arya Lokeswara), *Hopangme* (Amitabha Buddha), *Vajraasattva*. *Sethu* (hundreds gods including both peaceful and wrathful) is popular among Sherpa community. Ghost spirit is known as *shindi*. *Apso* is performed for the protection of the village (Kunwar, 1989, p.19).

*Teldha Chechu* is celebrated as the birthday of Guru *Rinpoche*. On the tenth day of the bright lunar fortnight, they celebrate the miraculous birthday of Padmasambhav known as *Chechu*. This falls on the Shrawan month according to the Tibetan calendar (Lama, 2002, p.196). On tenth of every month also there is some offering. This festival is celebrated in Tibet, Bhutan, India and Nepal. This is one of the main festivals observed yearly in Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*. It is believed that this *chechu* festival has been celebrated in Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* since the establishment of this *gonpa*.

But regarding dance rituals in *chechu* festival, there were no such thing as dance elements in the past. Around 12<sup>th</sup> century, there was a great master called Guru Chhoki Wangchuk. He was a visionary master and once in his vision he was riding white horse and went to *Zangdokpalri*-the Copper-Colored Mountain of Glory where Guru Padmasambhav resides. There he witnesses all the amazing sacred dances retracing Padmasambhav coming to Nepal and Tibet and all kinds of elements shown during rituals ceremony. When he came out of that vision, he explained and taught it to his disciples. Then they started this festival or commemoration and offering on the tenth of the fifth month. Then this has been observed and practiced throughout most monasteries in Tibet, India, Bhutan and Nepal belonging to *Nyingma* and *Kagyu* School since then.

During this festival, all the eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhav are shown to the visitors through dance by monks in *gonpa*. In this dance, six form of Guru Padmasambhav is shown in peaceful form while two dance is shown in little angry or aggressive manner resembling the Padmasambhav life activities. This *chechu* festival is also known as Dashami puja in Nepali language. It is related with *Vajrayana* tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Monks first prepare the *torma* related with the *chechu*. One day earlier before the *chechu* festival, the monk perform *sang serkim* early in the morning while doing puja. On the next day or dashami day, the monks perform various rituals and ceremony

before eating food. On the day of Dashami or *chechu*, all the villagers and pilgrims gather in the village. After 12, the monks wear various costumes and perform dances. The main lama then recites *Bajrakila* and *Garud* mantra while putting three black *tika* on the monks.

*Dhukpa Chechi* festival is celebrated on the occasion of Lord Buddha teaching for the first time to his five disciples after he was enlightened. Because it falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> (*chechi*) of the 6<sup>th</sup> month (*dhukpa*) of the mongol, it is called *dhukpa chechi* (Lama, 2002, p.195). In this festival, they worship three god of Buddhism. This festival usually falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of 6<sup>th</sup> month of the year according to the Tibetan calendar. According to Nepali month, it falls on the Shrawan month. It's usually celebrated one day only. This festival is large social gathering: and usually enable the social bonding among people of local communities and spread out villages. On this day, the formal education of children is initiated.

Another important festival celebrated in the gonpa in Himalayan and Hilly Buddhist communities and *gonpa* is *Mani Chyokor*. The idols of Avalokiteswora is kept in the worship place created by decorating various materials and high Lamas chant *mani* followed by all laymen and they go around the worship place. It is found that this festival is celebrated at different time period and in different occasion in various Sherpa village. In some Sherpa village, this is celebrated during Dashain festival, in some village it is celebrated in Magh month *Chechu* puja and while in some village it is observed during death rituals as well. It is believed that this tradition is carried out and planned by great teacher in order to attract and guide the family not interested in religious belief and activities into the path of religion.

Another important festival of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is *Lhabab Duchan*. This is also known as *Deva Abataran Divas*. It is one of the four Buddhist festivals commemorating four events in the life of the Buddha, according to the Tibetan traditions. It usually falls on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the ninth lunar month according to the Tibetan calendar. Local people believe that the effects of positive or negative

actions are multiplied ten millions times on this festival. This festival is celebrated to observe the descent of Buddha from heaven to the earth. On this festival, all the villagers gathered in *gonpa*. They actively involved in making *torma* and *khapsay*. *Gonpa* is decorated with flowers. The monk goes through their holy scriptures, offer lights and continuously pray to Lord Buddha whole day.

Another important festival is Saga Dawa festival. Saga means ‘the fourth’ and Dawa refers to ‘month’ in Tibetan. It is also known as the month of merits and is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. It is also called ‘the Poor’s Day’. In this day, people give more generously to the poor and needy people. In Buddhist communities, they practice giving to the monks and nuns as well as the poor of the community. Buddhist people believe that giving to poor and needy people helps to gain religious merits, and more so in the month of Saga Dawa.

This festival mainly commemorates the major events in the life of Buddha Sakyamuni which comprises of his birth, enlightenment and his *parinirvana*. During Saga Dawa people don’t eat meat. They become vegetarians during whole Saga Dawa period. They usually visit *gonpa* and make donation to monks and *gonpa*. Monk recites all religious scripture while being offered butter tea and donation by other monks and villagers. Circumambulating *gonpa* and *chortens* are very important and local villagers tend to do as much *kora* as possible during this festival.

*Losar* is also another important festival of Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*, It is celebrated yearly. It is considered as the beginning of New Year in Buddhist communities. The history of *losar* celebration is associated with the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet. Some historians believe that this festival is merged with the harvest festival of Tibet. Generally it is celebrated 15 days but the main celebration is done on the first three days. It normally falls on February or March and is based on the Tibetan lunar calendar. In the past, this festival was not celebrated in the *gonpa*. This has been relatively new phenomena in the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

Bajra Guru is one of the important festivals of Himalayan Buddhist communities. Each year only one *gonpa* is responsible for organizing this event. Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* organized this festival from 22<sup>th</sup> march, 2013 to 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2013. This festival is done for World Peace and especially for the peace and prosperity of Nepal.

In this festival, 100 million times *Japa Sadhana* of Bajra Guru Mantra is performed. *Bajra Guru Mantra* or twelve syllable *mantra* of Acharya Padmasambhav is ‘*Om Ah Hum Bajra Guru Pema Siddhi Hum.*’ *Om Ah Hum* refers to the seed syllable of three *vajras*. *Bajra* signifies *dharmakaya*, *guru* signifies *sambhogkaya*, and *padma* signifies *nirmanakaya*. *Siddhi* refers to the all supreme and ordinary accomplishment and *hum* refers to the spirit of enlightenment. This event includes prayers and rituals of *Bajra Guru*, preaching and discourse by venerable religious teacher or *Rinpoche* and *wang* ceremony. There were around 600 monks and nuns participating in this festival and including laymen and pilgrim from nearby village, there were total of around 1000 people in this festival. Everyday there will be *japa sadhana* and preaching by Acharya and *Rinpoche*. This festival is related with rituals associated with Acharya Padmasambhav.

Main religious teacher appeared were Venerable Khum Dzatrul *Rinpoche* and Venerable Jognang Yangsi *Rinpoche*. Chairman for organizing this event and festival was *Khenpo* Sange Ramjung *Rinpoche*. Vice chairmen were Mingmar lama Sherpa and Temba lama Sherpa. Secretary was Pemba Chhiri Sherpa and treasurer was Pemba Lama Sherpa. Many Sherpa from Bamti Bhandar and nearby Sherpa village were members. For this festival, the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* organizes food and accommodation for all the 600 monks participated in this festival.

All the monks and nuns were informed about this festival through news, media, social connection and frequent visits to many *gonpa* and monasteries around country. Many local villagers and Sherpa people from nearby villages worked as the volunteer as this

was considered very holy and rare occasion for the people of Ramechhap especially. This 15 days event was successfully organized by Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

These festivals are very important intangible heritage of Bamti Bhandar. Many of these festivals have been continuously celebrated since ancient times and it reflects important part of Buddhist beliefs and philosophies. Such festivals reflect the identity and culture of local community as well as various historical evident related with religious leaders and pantheons.

## Chapter Five

### Summary and Conclusion

#### 1.1 Summary

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is one of the most important religious and historical tangible heritages of Bamti Bhandar, Ramechhap. It is well known among the people as Bhandar *Gonpa*. In typical local dialect, it is called Chyangma *Lhakang*, which means Gods home. At the present moment, the chief master of this gonpa is *Khenpo* Sange Rangjung Rinpoche. He is a professor of Buddhist studies and a religious spiritual master who founded Ngagyur Nyingma Palyul Urgen Dorjee Chholing monastery, a school for lamas in Pharping. He is also the chairperson of Nepal *Nyingma* Buddhist Associations and patrons of the monastery. The head lama or *Lopen* of this *gonpa* is Sonam Tenzing Gurung.

This *gonpa* is regarded as very old *gonpa*. Local villagers consider this *gonpa* to be more than 200 years old. Although the authentic proof of when *gonpa* was built is not available, many generations of people from Bamti Bhandar has seen this *gonpa* in their life and spent their life around it. This *gonpa* was built by *Ani* Khandoma who was a celibate woman. She was called by the name Tongma Ama. She built this *gonpa* on her private property through her own individual effort. She belonged to the *lakshindo* clan of the Sherpa community. People believe that she sold rice beer as a source of income.

The *gonpa* made by *Ani* Khandoma was very primitive and simple in structure. The *gonpa* had only one room and was an altar room. It was more like a private temple. It was basically made of clay, stones, mud and woods. After her demise, the *gonpa* was looked after by her relatives. The *gonpa* was looked after by her relatives until 2052 B.S, which was then handed to the community. Since then this *gonpa* became community *gonpa*. Though it was registered as public during 2031 B.S land measurement act in Nepal, it was still managed by *Lakshindo* clan generation.

In the past, this *gonpa* had the statues of Buddha and Guru *Rinpoche* made of clay and mud. The later clay statue of Buddha and Guru *Rinpoche* was made by Kinuri

*Khapa* of Bhuktel and Kursang Dorje *Khapa* of Lumbu area. They also had painted the wall painting painted on the furniture of *gonpa*. But now, they have the bronze statue of Cherenzig, Shakyamuni Buddha and Padmasambhav painted in gold. They are brought from New Delhi, India. In the old times, this *gonpa* was mostly famous for Chyangma *Chechu*. Beside *Chechu* festival, festivals like Ngyungne and *Dhukpa Chechu* as well as Dashain and Tihar. *Dhukpa chechu* is celebrated on the 4th day of the 6th month of the year. It is celebrated as the birth of Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhav. On the *Chechu* festival, the Buddha statue and other are circumambulate around the *gonpa* by the villagers and they perform *chekur* dance. All the monks and local villagers participate in this act. They also carry *Kanjyur* while circling the *gonpa* premises. In Tihar festival, they decorate the *gonpa* with many colorful flowers and perform various rituals.

103 *Kangjyur* was brought in the *gonpa* after it was built again in 2052 B.S. The idols and scriptures were brought by helicopter in Bhandar village. The construction design was done by *karmi* Jangbu Sherpa who was very famous for his skills in carpentry and construction. Near the *gonpa*, there are two very old *chortens*. They are built as the exact replica of Swayambhunath stupa and Boudhanath Stupa. The local also often called these two *chortens* *Pho* and *Mho*. The Boudha *chorten* is believed to be built by 8<sup>th</sup> generation ancestors of *Taktok* clan of Sherpa community. The Swayambhunath *chorten* was built by Sherpa people of Deurali around 1990 in memory of their ancestors and relatives.

## 1.2 Conclusion

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* is one of the oldest and most important *Gonpa* of Ramechhap district. Although there is no evidence of the exact construction date of this *gonpa*, it is obviously more than 100 years old. This *gonpa* was made by Ani Khandoma who was also called *Tongma* Ama. People also called her by the title *Chumini*. People refer her as one of the early inhabitants of Banti Bhandar belonging to *Lakshindo* clan. Being woman and building *gonpa* in her time period through her

individual effort is really tough and great task. Her effort has taught us how people in ancient times were religion guided. Her action also provides us information that in the past many people built *gonpa* as a private chapel in the past. It enables us to understand the socio-cultural and religious aspects of people in the past.

Before this *gonpa* was made public, it was looked after by many generations of *Lakshindo* clan. Before 1995, this *gonpa* was looked after by Ka Puti Sherpa for many years after the demise of Gelchiri Lama who was the head monk of the *gonpa*. Before Gelchiri Lama, Pema Nima lama was the head monk of this *gonpa*. Chheki Bau was the head and *Laprang* lama of this *gonpa* who was the father of Pema Nima Lama. After Ka puti Sherpa left the *Gonpa*, many local monks used to look after the *gonpa* as the head monk until 2012. In 2012 this *gonpa* was submitted to *Khenpo Sange Ramjung Rinpoche* and he appointed Sonam Tenzing Gurung as the *Lopen* of this *gonpa* and this bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* was officially named Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*.

Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* was initially known as Chynagma *Lhakang* in Sherpa language or Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* in local community. This *gonpa* has been damaged and destroyed by various natural calamities and its structure has been weakened and damaged due to weariness brought by time factor as well. This *gonpa* has been renovated and reconstructed time and again. However, there has been no record of any written information regarding art and architecture of this *gonpa*. There are some old photos taken by trekkers and few people of Bamti Bhandar. Early stage of this *gonpa* was simple and minimalist. The recent built *gonpa* is more lavishly built which can be seen as the result of increasing wealth among Buddhist community and followers. This *gonpa* have adapted modern trends and designs in order to blend with modern aesthetics and non-secular functionality.

Especially Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* was very famous for Chyangma *Chechu* festival. It has been celebrated since the *Gonpa* was built in the village. The significance of festivals like *Chechu puja*, *Nyungne*, *Ramne*, *mani chyokor*, *Lhapab duchen* and

Saga Dawa can be understood through Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* which is celebrated yearly. The religious belief, faith and unity in community has been maintained and guided by various rituals and festivals celebrated in *gonpa* and other Buddhist heritage sites, which can be understood from the Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa*'s perspective.

When mainly considering about the Buddhist philosophy, it is individual task of achieving rituals. So, the function of the Buddhist environment would make people purity in mind without constraints and with self-guidance. The calm, serene and tranquil environment provides suitable background for it. So, they needed particular work of architecture. According to the above reasons the earliest Buddhist heritage like *gonpa* and *chortens* has located in rural areas of away from the city and large human settlements, where the context rich with the appropriate environmental qualities. So, the devotees has to go there as the pilgrimage. Such rituals and practices performed in *gonpa* help to achieve higher level of spiritual awakening. Such spiritual achievements gained from these practices motivate and energizes others in the path of performing rites, rituals and festivals continuously. Everyone is allowed to perform particular rites and rituals following certain conditions and disciplines. The main monk provides proper guidance to perform these rituals and ceremonies. All religious rites and rituals performed have social and religious values and are observed with particular purposes. Such rites and rituals reflect the social and religious aspects of that community.

This *gonpa* was greatly affected by 2015 earthquake. Many old and significant cultural heritage sites affected by natural calamities and other factors have been renovated and reconstructed in various phase of time. While building such sites: in many cases, the arts and architecture: as well as traditional construction style and knowledge have been compromised. The use of modern skills, technology and materials seems dominant and extensive in today's context. The involvement of government authorities and Department of Archaeology while renovating and reconstructing old heritage sites is a must and important procedure.

This research has discussed and summarized the knowledge and information regarding the socio-cultural aspects of the Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa*. It has mainly elaborated information regarding historicity, tangible and intangible aspects of this *gonpa*. The limitation of research study for the purpose of clear understanding and detail study in subject matter has made it impossible to cover all the subject matter related issues. However, there are style many aspects of *gonpa* that is needed to be studied. The *gonpa* is full of Buddhist pantheons paintings, many religious signs and symbols and other artistic features. Also the story behind these signs and symbols and role of such Buddhist pantheons in *Gonpa* and community is needed for establishing faith and belief in community. The economic aspects of *gonpa* also need to be studied.

This thesis will be guidance for people who want to study on Bamti Bhandar *gonpa* or any other *gonpa* around the Himalayas of Nepal. This study will help for the better understanding of story behind Palyul Chyangma Urogen Chholing *Gonpa*. The rituals and festivals of *gonpa* can be understood with the help of this research study. Much important information regarding some aspects of Buddhism, Sherpa cultural activities and beliefs can be understood with the help of this thesis.

For the protection, preservation and promotion of our *gonpa* or any cultural heritage sites, the understanding of the its history, art and architecture, rituals and festivals linked with it and how it has shaped our community and nation as a whole is very crucial. Such information is needed to be delivered to our present as well as future generation for the continuity and preservation of our monastic *gonpa* culture as well as any other cultural aspects. This can be possible only through proper research study and documentation. This research has gathered important and relevant information on Palyul Chyangma Urogen Chholing *gonpa* which will be helpful for better understanding of this *gonpa* as well as other cultural aspects, and will help for any future research studies.

## Appendix-A

### QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

Information of Interviewee:

Name:

Age:

Permanent Residence:

Q: What is the name of this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: How old is this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: Who built this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What school of Tibetan Buddhism does this *gonpa* belong to?

A:

Q: What did people call this *gonpa* in the past?

A:

Q: How the name Palyul Chyangma Urgen Chholing *Gonpa* name was given to this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What is the name of main monk of this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What are the main festivals of this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: How was the festival celebrated in the past and now?

A:

Q: What are the usual ritual activities of this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What was the old *gonpa* like?

A:

Q: What are the main Gods of this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: How many scriptures are there in *gonpa* and what are they?

A:

Q: What was the old *gonpa* like?

A:

Q: What was the construction material of old *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What was the reason behind damage and demolition of old *gonpas*?

A:

Q: What was the interior of old *gonpa* look like?

A:

Q: What is the view and belief of local villagers regarding village *gonpa*?

A:

Q: How old is the *chorten* of the *gonpa*?

A:

Q: Who built those *chorten*?

A

Q: What are those *chorten* called in local language?

A:

Q: What is the name of village and *gonpa* in Sherpa language?

A:

Q: Who is the chief master of this *gonpa* in present time?

A:

Q: How many monks and nuns are there in this *gonpa* now?

A:

Q: How can we become monk or nun?

A:

Q: What is the monk hierarchy in this *gonpa*?

A:

Q: What is the role of monk in the village?

A:

Q: How often do villagers visit *gonpa*?

A:

## Appendix-B

### LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The people listed below were contacted and interviewed for collecting the information on this research related subjects.

Name	Place	Date of Interview	Age
Mr. Sonam Tenzing Gurung	Bamti Bhandar	12/03/2020	52
Mr. Karma Wangchu Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	12/03/2020	86
Mr. Dawa Nurbu Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	11/03/2020	55
Mr. Temba Lama	Bamti Bhandar	13/03/2020	61
Mrs. Doma Lama	Dokharpa	16/03/2020	80
Mrs Dor Lamu Sherpa	Dokharpa	16/03/2020	59
Mr. Dha Kipa Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	11/03/2020	74
Mr. Lopsang Chhiring Lama	Bamti Bhandar	14/03/2020	81
Mr. Gelbu Lama	Bamti Bhandar	13/03/2020	58
Mrs. Pasang Dikuma Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	13/03/2020	82
Mr. Chhiri lama(Sherpa)	Bamti Bhandar	14/03/2020	70
Mr. Ngim Tendu Lama(Sherpa)	Bamti Bhandar	14/03/2020	77
Mr. Pasang Lakpa Lama	Bamti Bhandar	15/03/2020	84
Mr. Ongdi Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	17/03/2020	35
Mr. Jangbu Sherpa	Chunikhel	15/07/2019	51
Mr. Mohan Tamang	Lalitpur	10/07/2019	52
Mr. Pema Nima Lama	Bamti Bhandar	20/07/2019	90
Mrs. Dha Puti Sherpa	Bamti Bhandar	11/05/2019	80

## Appendix-C

### GLOSSARY

*Acharya*- a teacher or master

*Arak*- local wine

*Bhikshu*- *gelong* in Tibetan; a fully ordained Buddhist monk

*Bhikshuni*- *gelongma* in Tibetan; a fully ordained Buddhist nun

*Bön*- a spiritual tradition of the Tibetan ethnic region

Buddha- it means one who is 'Enlightened' or the 'Awoken One'

*Chhoka*- worship

*Chhokhang*- private altar room

*Chhosam*- small altar place

*Chhou manja*- sacred dress

*dharbujen* - Prayer flags pole

*Dhilbu*- bell

*Digpa*- sin

*Dulva*- monastic rule

*Geshe*- a learned Buddhist teacher or scholar

*Getshul*- a novice

*Gompa (gonde)*- temple or monastery

*Japa*- It is derived from the root *jap*-, meaning "to utter in a low voice, repeat internally,  
mutter

*Kangyur*- the hundred volumes of teachings in Tibetan translation and known as the

*Tripitaka* which makes up the doctrine of the kind teacher Buddha Shakyamuni.

*Khapse*- typical bread made of flour, salt and ghee mixed with water and milk and fried  
in oil

*Khata*- a traditional ceremonial scarf symbolizing auspicious, normally made in silk and  
white in color, being used as an offerings or greetings

*Khenpo*- a learned abbot

*Khenpo*- abbot

Lama- a spiritual master or guru in Tibetan Buddhism, venerated by students; but it is  
now used as a polite form of addressing any monk

*Lha*- God

*Lhakhang*- shrine room or god place

*Lobpon*-also spelled as *lopen* or *lopon* in Bhutanese; a Buddhist teacher who has received  
the highest level of teachings

*Losar* -Sherpa New Year

*Mani thungkyur*- big prayer wheel

*Mani*- jewel

*Mho*- It means female in Tibetan dialect

*Phayen* or *phen-yon*- religious benefit

*Pho*- It means male in Tibetan dialect

*Pravacana*: It refers to exposition, expounding, reciting, orally explaining, speaking or  
talking about a spiritual idea or doctrine or treatise.

*Ramne* - to consecrate the objects or any form of worship

*Rinpoche*- literally, “the precious one”; an honorific title for a spiritual master whose previous life as an accomplished practitioner or a recognized enlightened master; usually refers to an incarnate *tulku* or highly spiritual and respected practitioner

*Rongsar*:- *Rongsar* means border of Dolakha district in Nepal

*Ru*- Sherpa clan

Sadhana- The term sadhana means methodical discipline to attain desired knowledge or goal.

*Sangha*- Buddhist monastic community

*Samadhi*- a state of intense concentration achieved through meditation. In yoga this is regarded as the final stage, at which union with the divine is reached (before or at death).

*Sangharama*- it literally meaning garden (*arama*) of a community (*sangha*).

*Sirkim*- libation drinks to the god

*Tapoban*- It means serene forest for doing meditation and yoga

*Tengyur*- the 213 main commentaries made by scholars and *siddhas* on the Tripitaka in Tibetan

*Thangka*- a traditional Tibetan scroll painting, normally depicting a tutelary deity

*Thupa*- heap

*Thyanga*- prayer-beads

*Torma*- figures made mostly of flour and butter used in tantric rituals or as offerings in Tibetan Buddhism

*Tulku*- literally: “*nirmanakaya*”; an incarnation of a realized being who has chosen to be reborn in *samsara* to benefit sentient beings.

*Vajra- dorje*- It refers to thunderbolt which is an irresistible force and “diamond” which can cut any substance but not be cut itself. This is often represented by a scepter held by a practitioner in his or her right hand in a ritual practice, together with a bell held in the left hand; this symbolizes the union of compassion (*vajra*) and wisdom (*bell*).

## Appendix-D

### IMAGES AND FIGURES



Fig. 1: Very old picture of Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa*



Fig.2: Picture of Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa* after it was rebuilt in 2052 B.S.



Fig. 3: Recently build Picture of Bamti Bhandar *Gonpa*



Fig. 4: *chortens* which are considered as the replica of Swayambhunath and Boudhanath



Fig. 5: Picture of monk quarters.



Fig. 6 picture of new monk student with old wall painting painted on wooden plank



Fig.7: photo of main *chosam* in the altar room with three principle deities and photograph of Rinpoche.



Fig. 8: *Kongyur* placed in the main altar room



Fig. 9 Drum used during rituals and festivals



Fig. 10: Photo of two *Kangling* of *gonpa*



Fig.11: *chorten* destroyed by 2015 earthquake



Fig.12: *Lopen Sonam Tenzing Gurung of Bamti Bhandar Gonpa*

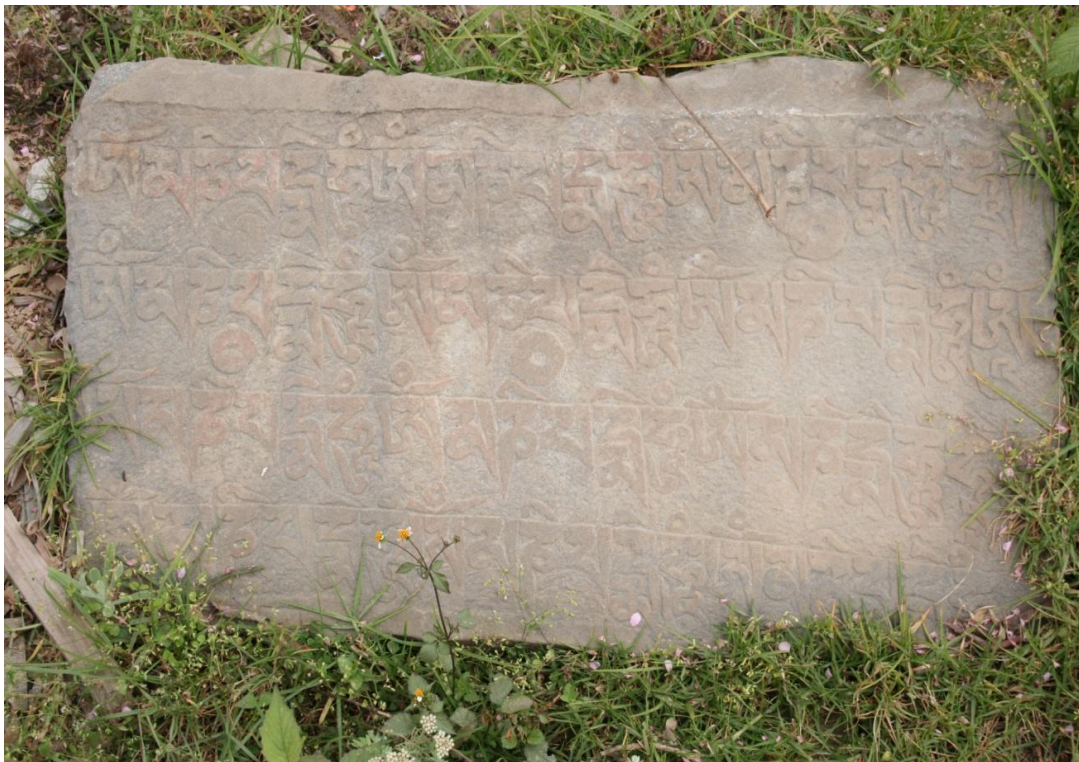


Fig. 13: old stone inscriptions of *mani* walls scattered around the *gonpa* premises



Fig. 14: *Khenpo Sange Ramjung Rinpoche* in *Ramne* and empowerment ceremony (*wong*) in *Bamti Bhandar Gonpa*

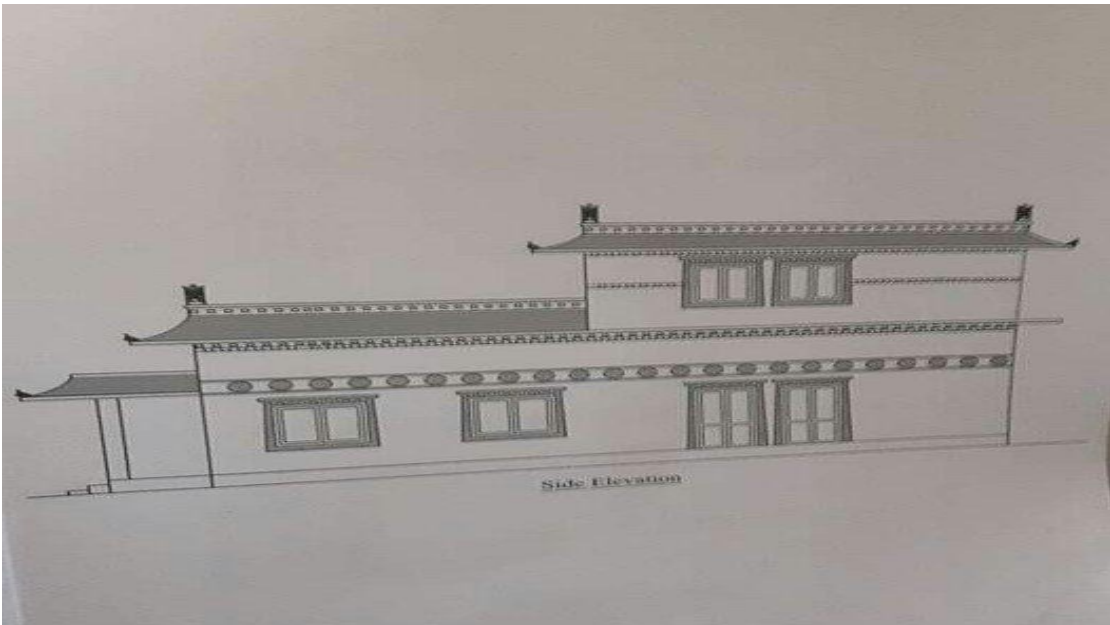


Fig. 15: side elevation sketch of recently built *Bamti Bhandar Gonpa*



Fig. 16: *gonpa* foundation being constructed after 2015 earthquake



Fig. 17: Army helping to bring idols and statue from *Gonpa* after 2015 earthquake



Fig. 18: resident's carrying *Kongyur* around *gonpa* in festivals



Fig. 19: villagers gathering in the occasion of *Ramne* in *Bamti Bhandar Gonpa*



Fig. 20: Construction of monk quarters



Fig. 21: villagers gathering in the *Dhukpa Chesi* festival in Bhandar Gonpa



Fig. 22: *Gonpa* construction going on southern sides with two extra doors beside main altar door



Fig. 23: Statue of Chengrechi in Banti Bhandar Gonpa



Fig. 24: Statue of Siddhartha Gautama in Bamti Bhandar Gonpa



Fig. 25: Statue of Guru Rinpoche in Bamti Bhandar Gonpa



Fig. 26: damage on exterior wall by 2015 earthquake



Fig. 27: Beautifully carved and painted concrete column inside Bamti Bhandar *gonpa*

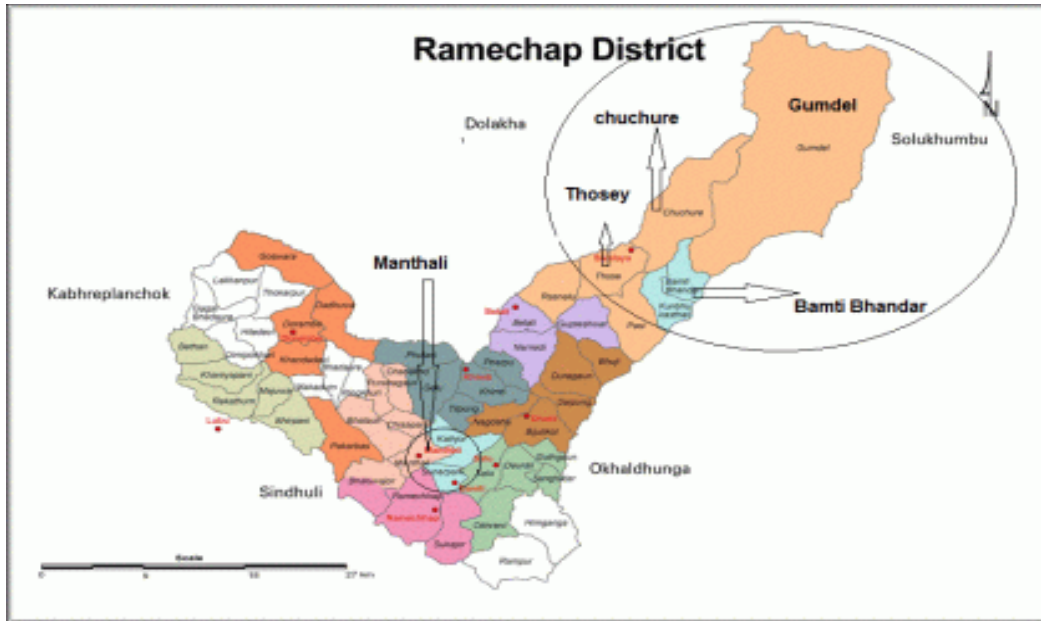


Fig. 28: Map of Ramechhap district

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