

# Cultural Partnership Initiative

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# Buddhism, a Key Institution of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract

It is evident that the orthodox religion in a community plays a very important part in keeping with the tangible or intangible culture of a community especially when the religion that they are following is deeply rooted in their ancestors and heavily aligned with their daily activities whereby the natives turn irrevocably devout to what they follow. However, over the years, the imperative wave of modernity, globalization, the quest for ever insatiable economy development, westernization (I include this because the section of youth in most developing countries are naïve) etc., have a massive impact on the evolution of religion and its association (culture and tradition). It can also be deemed a threat to the very existence mostly of the intangible cultural heritage because lifestyles and living standards are changing rapidly. Realizing the facts of such inevitable occurrences, the concerned governments and agencies have developed strategies and established institutions in order to safeguard and keep the existence of such heritages consistent and alive most importantly for the generations of the future. The celebration of events like Yeongsanjae<sup>1)</sup> annually is an effective way of keeping Buddhism practices vibrant in South Korea where Buddhism occupancy covers only a fraction of the populace unlike in the olden days.

Amid the ever changing phases of life around the world, it is overwhelming about the fact that Buddhism is gaining increasing popularity especially in the west where a Lama (Learned monk) is invited to impart Buddhist teachings to a community of Buddhism-enthusiasts.

Keywords: Buddhism, Buddha, Bhutan, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), Yeongsanjae,

1) Find article [Yeongsanjae is designated as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage in November 1973 and inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.] <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00186> & <http://www.ichcap.org> & <http://www.cha.go.kr>

## Preface

This study is intended to just understand more of the importance of established religion in Bhutan based on the outline of Buddha's teaching and the natural course of approach towards the preservation of the religious culture through the centuries in the simplest manner with regard to brief history of Buddha or the origin of Buddhism in Bhutan and in Korea. Having said that, the origin of Buddhism in Korea is fascinating ever since the Koguryo<sup>2)</sup> period in the early 4th century although there are traces of proofs that Buddhism existed even before that. I understand that Buddhism in Korea is a perplex subject and need strenuous in-depth study, thus, this paper is based simply on the general aspect of Buddhism and due to limited source of references and adequately time-bound, I decided to add only certain subtle general facts. The study of Descending Day of Lord Buddha (Lhabab Dhuechen) celebration in Bhutan is considered one of the most important sacred days and religiously interesting how the people of Bhutan commemorate the day Buddha descended from heaven for the benefit of all sentient beings on this day. On the other hand, Yeongsanjae celebration in Korea is the highest and largest re-enactment of Buddha's teachings expressing values of Buddhism in respect to development of self-discipline. It is interesting to witness an elaborate session of how Yeongsanjae is celebrated especially the dissociation of different episodes of events inculcating dances, singing and rituals. Buddhism and religion as a whole is a vast and complex subject. This paper is a study of the general aspect of Buddhism establishment and its role in the daily lives of Bhutanese people and how it affects the culture and tradition in many ways. Similarly, Korean Buddhism is an interesting subject but needs immense in-depth study for a significant result. Since, it was crucially time-bound and short of source of relatively substantial references, because of the fact that many published books still awaits translation to foreign language(s) (English), this study is compressed with only subtle details.

## Introduction

I would like to first highlight the core definition of the term Intangible Cultural Heritage. Article 2 (1) of the UNESCO 2003 Convention in Paris defines; The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

Religion has played a very important role in the tradition and culture of the Bhutanese people. Buddhism is the dominant religion which has its roots in the hearts and minds of Bhutanese for thousands of years. As much as it is considered valuable, so much has equally degraded and shied away through time bit by bit. Thus, safekeeping the timeless custom and culture has always

2) See Introduction of Buddhism to Korea, New Cultural Patterns edited by Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu pg.1 & 29

been a priority and working towards the safeguarding of intangible aspect of culture has been a primary objective. One such aspect of protecting and guarding the sacredness of religious values and traditions, certain days are observed and commemorated as an important sacred days based on observations on the Bhutanese Lunar calendar. I have enlisted towards the end of this paper the public holidays to give the viewers a quick understanding of various occasions and when it is held. It feels seemingly necessary to lay down a fact that is of utmost importance yet very simple that the people of Bhutan have their daily lives pegged with beliefs and superstitions so much that for instance, before embarking on a long journey, an auspicious day to travel safely and seek protection against any possible unforeseen mishaps is chosen with the advice from a learned astrologer. Similarly, I have decided to briefly describe the death ritual practices as one of the key events affiliated with the lives of Bhutanese people. In relation to this, there are many auspicious and equally sacred days commemorating different important days and anniversaries of notable divine figures like Guru Rinpoche and Lord Buddha. The most common auspicious holy days are pegged on the 10th and 15th day (Full moon day) of every month based on the readings on the Bhutanese Lunar Calendar. Also, the 8th, 15th, 25th and 30th day of every month are considered very auspicious to accumulate good deeds. One such propitious day is the Descending Day of Lord Buddha (Lhabab Dhuechen) observed on the 22nd day of the 9th month on the Bhutanese Lunar calendar annually which is also declared as a public holiday.

### Buddhism in Bhutan

Buddhism was introduced to Bhutan as early as the 8th century AD<sup>3)</sup>. Guru Rinpoche (the Precious Master) on invitation from an ailing king came to central Bhutan in 746 AD<sup>4)</sup> to subdue a tarnished demon that had inflicted a serious ailment on him. He manifested into wrathful forms of mythical animals and furious forms of figures to subdue evil spirits and pacified into the guardians of Buddhism. Gradually the popularity of Buddhism started to flourish throughout the land. It is said that after introduction of the substantive religion, Buddhism played a key role in unification of the people whereby the history of Bhutan was rolled in its literature and manuscripts thereafter. By and by, many renowned Lamas (highly learned priests) mostly from Tibet visited



P1. An altar room in Bhutanese homes  
@ www.galenfrysinger.com

3) See in Class ix History & Civics Chapter 7. Ancient History Part II : Religion of early inhabitants, the first advent of Buddhism in Bhutan

4) See also 8. Guru Padma Sambhava : The second advent of Buddhism in Bhutan; Guru's early life, his visits to Bhutan

Bhutan, propagated Buddhism and established many Buddhist institutions. Today, one of the most important aspects of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Performing Arts is within the mainframe of Buddhism in Bhutan. It is the integral part of Bhutan's unique culture. The many Lhakhangs (monasteries) which were built centuries ago spread across the country always have holy days where they perform a mask dance appeasing the deities once subdued by Guru Rinpoche seeking protection from harm and for peace and prosperity across the country. Different Lhakhangs have different traditional performances of mask dances which have integrated into the lives of the community and proactively participated by all individuals. The monks regularly conduct prayers and also recite ancient religious texts so as to cleanse the spirit and clear our spiritual path. Most importantly, it has become a part of the lives of people of Bhutan to witness, participate and consider the importance of preserving the performing art and ensuring its viability by maintaining its consistency and popularity and also taking into consideration the apparent threats lurking around the art and measures being concerned. The people of Bhutan take refuge in the said Lhakhangs and monasteries during the time of misfortune, illness and distress by offering prayers and butter lamps and other forms of offerings in kind and in cash.

### Descending Day of Lord Buddha (Lhabab Dhuechen)

Lhabab Dhuechen, the Descending Day of Lord Buddha<sup>5)</sup> is celebrated on the 22nd day of the 9th month (coincides on 26th October 2013) on the Bhutanese Lunar calendar which marks the day Buddha descended from the heavenly realm to teach all sentient beings on earth. It is considered very auspicious day to accumulate good karmic deeds. In this regard, there is another two very important occasions to commemorate Lord Buddha viz., Lord Buddha's Parinirvana which falls on the 15th day of the Fourth month and The First Sermon of Lord Buddha on 4th day of the Sixth month both observed on the Bhutanese Lunar Calendar annually. (However, the same days on the Gregorian calendar gets shifted a day or two back and forth depending on the lunar observance by astrologers.) It is believed that on this day if one fulfills a virtuous deed the benefits

5) See the story of Buddha's Descend in Burlingame, Eugene Watson, tran. Buddhist Legends, Part III. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1921. When Shakyamuni's mother dies, she is reborn as a deva in the Trayastrimsha heaven which is presided over by the Brahmanical god, Indra. After the Buddha attains enlightenment, he goes to Trayastrimsha to teach the Abhidharma to his mother and other celestial beings. After three months of teaching in Trayastrimsha, the Buddha decides to return to his disciples and lay followers. The Dharmapada-Atthakatha records that when the Buddha is ready to return, Indra makes three ladders for the Buddha's descent. The ladders connect the summit of Mount Meru, where the Trayastrimsha heaven is located, and the earthly human sphere, near Sankashya city. The ladder, made of jewels, in the middle is used by the Buddha; the right ladder of gold is used by Indra; and the left ladder of silver is used by Brahma. Indra and Brahma are depicted as the Buddha's attendants. When the Buddha was descending from heaven, he looked upwards and all the worlds from the human world up to the highest heavenly realm were illuminated. As he looked around in each direction of the universe it became clear and unobstructed. And when he looked downwards, the illumination continued down to the hell realms. At that instant the beings living in these three realms could all see each other. The human beings saw the devas, the devas saw the humans, the humans and the devas saw the hell beings, and the hell beings saw the devas and humans. And all could see the Buddha descending from Tavatimsa gloriously. The Dharmapada commentary, composed by Buddhaghosa, states that "On this day when the beings of all realms saw each other, there was not one who did not want to be the Buddha." The Pathamasambodhi goes even further, saying; "At that time, of all the devas, humans and beasts, even down to the tiniest red or black ant, who saw the Buddha, there was not one among them who did not desire Buddhahood."



P2. (Left) Monks sitting among the prayer flags. Hoisted along the roadside (right), on mountains and hilltops are common sight.

are doubled and the wrong deed on the contrary, accumulates double-fold sin as well. Therefore, on this day Bhutanese people from all walks of life indulge in religious activities. The way of life of an individual in Bhutan is greatly influenced<sup>6)</sup> by religion and plays a huge part in everyday life. From early morning, offering prayers, the usual water offering in seven bowls (choepa), burning incense sticks to purify the surrounding air and lighting butter-lamp, prostrate and worship before the altar in one's own home, groups of people or individuals take a hike to a monastery, which is usually located far from the nearest road, to do the same. This way, they seek blessing from the god and goddess or local deities to seek protection, fulfill their wishes, wish for success in a quest, seek protection for one's family, seek guidance and cure for ill persons and pray to liberate all sentient beings from the world of suffering. Most often food offerings are also made in the temples or monasteries in order to receive blessings from the gods. This way, it is said that one accumulates good deed which will clear the way to heaven after death. The elderly people circumambulate Chortens (religious stupas) and chant prayers.

People also erect prayer flags on hill tops and mountains and bridges to ward off evil spirits and seek good fortune. They also dedicate prayers along with the prayer flags for the dead to clear his/her way from the darkness of samsara into the heavenly realms. These practices are often carried out more intensively during the auspicious days because the holy days are considered most sacred.

One of the essences of Buddhism is showing compassion. It is said that every living being be it small or large can feel pain and suffering and are bound to die and reborn in samsara. In the Mahayana Buddhism, a practitioner always prays for all the sentient beings to liberate from the world of suffering into the heavenly realm. Showing compassion in Buddhism simply means "putting oneself in the shoes of others<sup>7)</sup>." So, Bhutanese people always pray for all sentient beings to liberate from the world of suffering into blissful heaven and to be reborn in a place where they can further pursue the doctrine of Buddhism and help others find happiness.

6) Rinchen Pelzang (2010) Religious Practice of the Patients and Families during Illness and Hospitalization in Bhutan, Religious Practices in Bhutan p.g 81

7) Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche is a highly venerated Buddhist incarnated teacher and writer born in Bhutan. He has established numerous learning and practicing centres of Buddhism and also teachings all over the world. Source: <http://khyentsefoundation.org/>

## Death

Death is an inevitable phase of life but it does not mean an end in it. In Buddhism, death is the beginning of another life because Buddhists believe that there is life after death. Therefore, when a person dies, it is very essential for the people to perform various rituals in order to clear his path in his afterlife so that he can be reborn in a more peaceful place. Death ritual is an elaborate ceremony attended by family members and relatives. As soon as a person dies, a learned astrologer is sought for to read the dates of cremation and the necessary rituals that has to be performed. Most importantly, a specific date for a favorable day for the deceased body to be taken out of the house is sought; a particular direction is also read out by the astrologer and it is also read out by whom the body of the deceased should be handled before the cremation.

The funeral session is deemed an expensive event because it is a large event involving many people who have come to show their respect and condolences, console and comfort and help the family of the deceased. During the cremation ceremony, a notable feat is the elaborate feast prepared comprising mostly of the deceased person's favorite foods and offered before the dead body. When the offer is made, family members and others pray that during his/her quest for search of heaven, he/she never goes hungry and that the meal shall sustain the hunger for the deceased and all the other sentient beings wandering in the afterlife. The ritual has to be performed on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 49th day after the initial cremation. It is believed that as soon as a person dies, his or her spirit wanders around the intermediate state<sup>8)</sup> (afterlife) therefore it is necessary during these periods of time that the rituals are performed so that the prayers would guide his way out of the intermediate state and be reborn in the heavenly realm. Then, thereafter, an annual death anniversary ritual is performed for three consecutive years. It is understood that the spirit of the deceased person has moved on well enough to be reborn according to his karmic fate<sup>9)</sup>. During this annual death anniversary, along with the ritual, the family members erect prayer flags on hill tops overlooking the valley to commemorate his or her death and pray that they be reborn in a better place or light butter lamps (sometimes more than one butter lamp are lit according to the need or their wish) at home or in Lhakhangs.

## Buddhism in Korea

The religion of 'Bon' (Bonism) is said to have existed during the pre-Buddhistic religion in Bhutan as was Shamanism in Korea. The system of worshipping Sun, Moon, Stars and gods of Earth, Mountain, sky and the gods of underwater existed even before the three kingdom era. It was only during the Goguryeo (or Koguryo) period that a monk from China named Sundo came to Korea with several Buddhist texts and images of Buddha and started teachings of Buddhism in

8) Sogyal Rinpoche quotes, '...tormented beings in the intermediate state after death...' Meditation, then, is bringing the mind home. Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, chapter 5

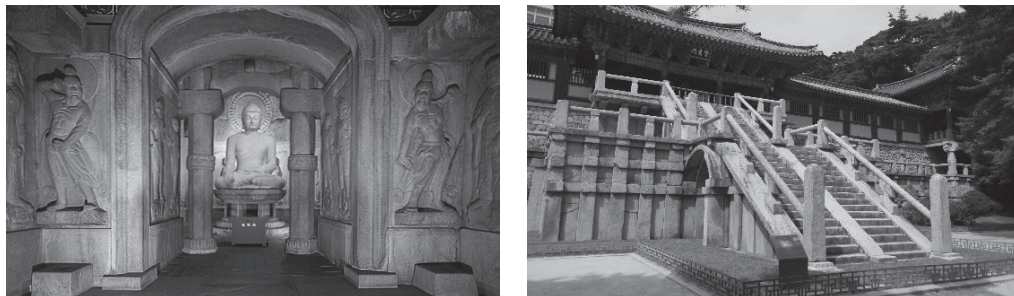
9) Find in Sonam Dorjee Progress Report 2004/2005 And Research Finding Preview [www.drokpa.org/bhutan\\_culture.html](http://www.drokpa.org/bhutan_culture.html)

372 AD<sup>10</sup>), although it is said that during the initial period of introduction of Buddhism in Korea, it was understood on an elementary level. In the 5th century monks from Goguryeo went to Silla to preach Buddhism. The common people were the first one to get attracted to the teachings. Buddhism was very successful during this period that many kings turned themselves into monks and places renamed<sup>11</sup>: e.g. King Pophung (514-540. Promoting Dharma). Many monasteries and temples were also built. Goguryeo was the first kingdom of the 3 kingdoms to admit Buddhism and then Paekche (Baekche) and then to Silla.

Buddhism further proliferated during the Unified Silla Period (668-935). The major evidence of Buddhist influence is the prominent temple of Bulguksa and cave-retreat of Seokguram (Fig. P3) which is even seen today. The entrance of Zen Buddhism (Yogic approach to enlightenment) into Korea during the 6th and 7th century thus triggered evolvement of existing Buddhism practices into Zen style Buddhism. Numerous influential Seon (meditation) schools were introduced in Korea which had become popular in the neighboring China during the Unified Silla era.

During the Goryeo period (918-1392), the Seon (meditational practice) and Gyo (doctrinal studies) schools of Buddhism entered stiff competition with the former winning the majority and thereby instated as state religion in lieu of the existing Gyo practice. However, both practices inclined towards the similar viewpoints.

However, during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), the Buddhism practice was subject to massive suppression partly because during the Goryeo period (918-1392), monks were deeply involved in politics, folded in corruption hence, they were highly disregarded by the aristocrats and there was a strong rise in anti-Buddhist sentiments. Ever since the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), Buddhism underwent major reformation. Won Buddhism, a new Buddhist sect took place after the monks attempted a protest to revive Buddhism practices but however these actions were also suppressed during the colonial time. After Korea gained liberation in 1945, the Jogye Order took over the Korean Buddhism. Another sect called the Taego order came into being after



P3. Seokguram (Left) & Bulguksa Temple (right) in Gyeongju @ [www.aes.org](http://www.aes.org) & [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

10) See in Introduction of Buddhism to Korea New Cultural Patterns by Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu p.g 1 A Short History of Ancient Korean Buddhism by Ahn Kye-hyon

11) See also in Intro of Buddhism, L.R. Lancaster, Reception of Buddhism in Korea and Its Impact on Indigenous Culture by Inoue Hideo in her Summation pp.68-69

the Japanese colonization. The Taego order allowed monks to get married though nuns remained celibate as opposed to Jogye order where both nuns and the monks maintained strict discipline of celibacy. The Taego sect was also termed as 'Japanized Buddhism' since it was influenced by Japanese during the colonial time. Today it is the second largest holder of its sect of Buddhism in South Korea keeping alive its art and tradition lead by the Jogye Order.

### Yeongsanjae

Yeongsanjae is a reenactment of Buddha's teaching of the Lotus Sutra<sup>12</sup>) on the Vulture Peak in India. The term 'Yeongsan' is derived from 'Yeongsanhoesang' which means the Vulture Peak.<sup>13</sup>) The end word 'jae' is supposedly a synonym of Uposadha in Sanskrit<sup>14</sup>) which means offering ceremony among monks. It is performed for the living beings to realize the ultimate truth and attain enlightenment through the Buddha's profound teaching of philosophy by mitigating worldly desires. As much as it is performed for the living beings, it is also dedicated for the dead to find joy on accomplishing from the world of suffering to the heavenly realms while others say that Yeongsanjae's performance is also dedicated for world peace and national unification<sup>15</sup>). Though it is not known of the exact origin of the Yeongsanjae ritual, Neung-hwa Lee, author of the Joseon Bulgyotongsa (a book on the history of Buddhism in Korea), states that it was performed in the early part of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910)<sup>16</sup>). Yeongsanjae is essentially an external expression of the Buddha's doctrine and philosophy, and a means of practicing self-discipline. Yeongsanjae is performed on the 5th day of the 5th month on the Lunar Calendar which falls on June 6th which also coincides with the Memorial Day, a national holiday.

Yeongsanjae is an elaborate Buddhist expressive event which consists of various exotic artistic acts. It includes Beompae which means Buddhist chanting along with traditional Korean vocal music. Beompae or Pompae<sup>17</sup>) inculcates all kinds of music and then incorporated in any Buddhist ceremonial rituals. As a matter of fact, it is important to know that Yeongsanjae ceremony is not merely a performance but also highly revered Buddhist ritual which has a deep spiritual emancipation of the ultimate truth and an awakening to the middle path to Buddhahood. Yeongsanjae is a huge dramatic ritual performance by Buddhist monks which consists of different acts accordingly. There

12) Lotus Sutra in Sanskrit is called Saddharma-pun-darika-sutra philosophical teachings delivered on the Vulture Peak (Griddhakuta), in Rajgir in the Indian state of Bihar.

13) Find in Convention For The Safeguarding Of The Intangible Cultural Heritage. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE. Fourth session Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates 28 September to 2 October 2009. Nomination for inscription on the Representative List in 2009 (Reference No. 00186). D. RL 09- No. 00186-pg. 1

14) What is Yeongsanjae? [www.pompae.or.kr](http://www.pompae.or.kr)

15) Find article in [www.thesoulsofseoul.net/2013/06/08/the-yeongsanjae-ritual-at-bongwonsa-temple/](http://www.thesoulsofseoul.net/2013/06/08/the-yeongsanjae-ritual-at-bongwonsa-temple/)

16) Find in the second stanza on this page [www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/CU/CU\\_EN\\_8\\_5\\_7\\_6.jsp](http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/CU/CU_EN_8_5_7_6.jsp)

17) See in What is Pompae? [www.pompae.or.kr](http://www.pompae.or.kr)

are many description of different episodes mentioned in different sources. The following description is derived from the inscription on the UNESCO Representative List which is brief and precise. However, some details are added for certain episodes from different sources.<sup>18)</sup>

Yeongsanjae is the highest and the biggest ritual utilized by Korean Buddhists to represent the world of Buddha based on the doctrine and philosophy of the Lotus Sutra. It is also a means for meditation and training.<sup>19)</sup>

The whole ritual takes place for 3 consecutive days in numerous orders characterised in different perspectives. The 12 different orders are however summarised and simplified with a brief description.

1. (Tajong) Siryeon (Reception Ritual): A huge bell is rung followed by a line of procession marking the beginning of the ceremony by invoking the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, guardians and spirits to seek blessings and protection and guide the ceremony to success.
2. Daeryeong (Spirit Reception): The spirit of the dead are invited to the ritual while the crowd gathered are enlightened on the meaning of this invocation of the spirits of the dead and at the same time through the words of Buddha's teachings in the form of prayers and chants the direction to the ultimate truth is being dissipated. The families of the deceased offer food and drinks to the deceased as an expression of love and respect.
3. Gwanyok (Cleansing of the Dirt): This is the cleansing ritual whereby the three Karmas are cleansed of 3 impurities (greed, anger and stupidity) with Buddha's teachings, chants and perfumed water.
4. Jojeon Jeoman (Donation of money): 'Jojeon' means money used in the nether world while 'jeoman' means endowing the money with value. It is the process of sanctifying the money to be used by the deceased in the afterlife.
5. Sinjung Jakbeop (Tea Donation): This is a tea ceremony dedicated to all spirits present with the hope that the ritual is fruitful and successful.
6. Gwaebul Iun (Reception of Buddha): In this process, a large painting of Sakyamuni Buddha is hung outside the temple and the make-shift altar before the large painting is thereby sanctified.
7. Sangdan Gwangong (Rice meal dedication): Along with religious chanting, food offerings are made to Buddha and the Bodhisattvas on the altar seeking blessing and guidance to the ultimate



P4. Yeongsanjae includes food offerings with chants  
@www.thesoulofseoul.net

18) For more detailed descriptions find 'Sequence of ritual' in [www.bongwontemple.com](http://www.bongwontemple.com)

19) See in Convention For The Safeguarding Of The Intangible Cultural Heritage. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE. Fourth session Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates 28 September to 2 October 2009. Nomination for inscription on the Representative List in 2009 (Reference No. 00186). 2. Description of Element (CF. Criterion 1): RL.09 - No.00186-pg.2-3

truth from the world of suffering.

8. Beopmun (Sermon): A monk in place of Buddha confers the words of realization to the gathering and virtually showing the door to liberation.
9. Sikdang Jakbeop (Meal Ritual): This meal is offered to the monks conducting the ceremony which is uniquely accompanied by music and chanting, drumming and symbolic dancing as well. This meal offering ritual is also a gesture of kindness towards the non-living beings and all the other sentient beings in hell or living to attain enlightenment through Buddha's teachings.
10. Jungdan Gwangong (Blessing Ritual): (It is to invite and to worship Buddha's respected disciples one by one and ten Kings from the world of the Dead and their staffs with the endorsement of Jijang Bosal[Bodhisattva] at the middle altar.)<sup>20)</sup> Also it is the ritual seeking blessings for all those present (devout followers) for the ceremony.
11. Sisik (Meal offering for the dead): Otherwise termed as Gwan-eumsisik or Jeonsisik, 'sisik' means to give away the offerings.<sup>21)</sup> Literally, it is praying for the liberation of the suffering souls in hell to heavenly realms by cleansing of the three impurities from their karmas with Buddha's blessings and enlightening them with his teachings. It is also a congratulatory chant for the departed souls who have achieved to be in heaven.
12. Bongsong & Sodae Baesong (Farewell Ritual): Towards the end of the ceremony, the Buddha, Bodhisattvas are guardian gods are ceremonially seen off and finally the spirits of the dead are also fared well.

The most spectacular act of the ceremony is the irony at the end when all the props and clothes which had otherwise very beautifully adorned the whole ceremony are burned in a huge fire. This is to symbolise in the teachings of Buddha that nothing is permanent and that all living

beings dwell in nothingness. It can also be interpreted as mitigating the worldly material desire. One of the most precious elements of Buddha's teaching is to relinquish desire.

Yeongsanjae is dubbed as an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 50 in 1973<sup>22)</sup>.



P5. Kwaebul (Tangka) @ www.thesoulofseoul.net

20) Find in Ceremonial Procedures, meaning of procedure of Yeongsanjae ceremony 10, [pompae.or.kr](http://pompae.or.kr)

21) Find in Ceremonial Procedures, meaning of procedure of Yeongsanjae ceremony 12, [pompae.or.kr](http://pompae.or.kr)

22) See in Convention For The Safeguarding Of The Intangible Cultural Heritage. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE. Fourth session Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates 28 September to 2 October 2009. Nomination for inscription on the Representative List in 2009 (Reference No. 00186).4.c. Commitments of States and of Communities, Groups or Individuals Concerned. RL.09 - No. 00186 pg 8

A Yeongsanjae Preservation Association was also formed in 1987<sup>23)</sup> to preserve the culture and ensure its continuity. It is maintained by the Taego Order, based in Bongwonsa Temple, of Korean Buddhist sect which is performed also by the Taego monks annually and draws a significant amount of people from all over the country especially because its date of performance was moved to a national holiday on Memorial Day on 6th of June.

### Conclusion

With the evolution of time and inevitable wind of modernization and globalization effervescently circulating the world has altered many facets of culture and tradition and often pushing religion to the meager side and adopting a life of fashion and modernity is swifter than one can imagine. Modernization and ‘Westernization’ has always been a threat to the very culture and tradition of a society and often a cause for disintegration of cultural practices. The pace of economic development and quest for material gain has an immense adverse effect on the proliferation and stability of Buddhism in developing countries. It remains as one of the major threats and preserving and maintaining stability and continuity is a tremendous challenge for the state. One of the factors affecting the existence of a religion is the fight for survival in a multi-religion society where an influence on one over another is hyper and often conflicts arise due to difference in opinions and when interests collide. Therefore, it is essential to achieve a balance of diversity and standardization of co-existence by promoting and supporting each other’s beliefs. In the developed society, where the reach of Buddhism has not achieved so much ground it is seen as mere object for amazement than actually realizing its pure meaning and its practical motives. For instance, it is possible that the rituals meant to heal an ailment could lose its meaning and maybe used as a mere performance for a group of tourists or for entertaining foreign guests. This example is in relation to one of the aspects of the constant change in the Intangible Cultural Heritage as time goes on. Anything that is characterized by intangibility is vulnerable to alteration. This should be highlighted as an alert because even in a Buddhism flourished society, change is bound to take place. It is commendable that we develop an approach in such a way that changes are accepted but the value and sacredness remains intact. However, one of the core essences in the doctrine of Buddhism is being and showing compassion and simplicity, which is earning much respect all over the world. People now desire to take refuge in Buddhism and its peacefulness and tranquility and seek meditation and contemplation from the worldly chaos. Its growth around the world is slow yet it has achieved so much over the years. There are many well-known institutions and centers established in many countries deliberating Buddhist teachings.

It is important for the state to know that educating the youth would amplify the security of

23) See in Convention For The Safeguarding Of The Intangible Cultural Heritage. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE. Fourth session Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates 28 September to 2 October 2009. Nomination for inscription on the Representative List in 2009 (Reference No. 00186).4.c. Commitments of States and of Communities, Groups or Individuals Concerned. RL.09 – No. 00186 pg 8

Buddhism and its sacredness because of the fact that youth take up majority of the fraction of the population and instilling knowledge would have a long term effect. The belief and ardency in Buddhism is a mere vague and obligatory in the minds of the younger generation. Creating awareness among the youth is one of the most important steps in the viability of a religious event because of the fact that influence of modernity does not take long to tempt and alter the ignorant minds. The realization of the feeling of responsibility to uphold one’s religion is an important factor in promoting continuity where one’s religion is deeply tied with the culture and tradition.

“Life is boundless, that we did not come out of nothing and cannot become nothing. We are both beginningless and endless.” Tibetan Book of Death.

### List of Festivals in Bhutan (based on religious propensity)

Traditional Day of Offering	12th January
Losar	11th – 12th January
Punakha Tshechu	20th- 22nd February
Chhorten Kora	25th February – 11th March
Gomphu Kora	20th – 22nd March
Paro Tshechu	23rd – 27th March
Zhabdrung Kuchoe	20th April
Lord Buddha’s Parinirvana	25th May
Birth Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche	18th June
First Sermon of Lord Buddha	12th July
Thimphu Tshechu	14th – 16th September
Blessed Rainy Day	21st September
Jakar Tshechu	12th – 15th October
Descending Day of Lord Buddha	26th October
National Day	17th December

(Courtesy of Rinchen Tours & Treks 2013)

### List of Buddhist Festivals of Korea

Seolnal	1st January
Seokga Tansinil*	8th May (Lunar Calendar)
Baekjung	15th August (Lunar Calendar)
Yeongsanjae	6th June**
Tripitaka Koreana	27th September–November 10th*** (based on 2013 event)

\* Also called Lotus Lantern Festival commemorating Buddha’s Birthday or ‘the day Buddha came.’

\*\* The day coincides with Memorial day

\*\*\* 45 day-long festival