



Exhibition on
*Life and Legacy of
Guru Padmasambhava*

An exhibition of rare thangkas, paintings,
sculptures and photographs

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*Life and Legacy of
Guru Padmasambhava*

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Art Gallery
Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre
40 Max Mueller Marg
New Delhi 110003

Organised by
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Disclaimer

The material contained within this catalogue is intended to provide information about the artworks displayed at the exhibition, 'Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava', held at India International Centre, Delhi. All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information. However, none of the organizations mentioned above can be held responsible for any errors.

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Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche is known all over the Himalayan region as the Sage of Himalayas. He lived in the 8th century and is credited with having spread the message of Lord Buddha to the countries and regions located in the Himalayan belt, including Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal in India and in Nepal and Bhutan and Tibet to the north. He is a most revered and iconic figure in the Buddhist world today and to many Buddhists, he is the Second Buddha.

There are ritual practices, symbolic images, mandalas and iconography which are associated with the Guru Padmasambhava tradition, which are rich in meaning and spiritual messaging. There are the 8 manifestations of the Guru, which have been represented through paintings, sculpture and murals, all very rich in symbolism but also being high art in themselves. The exhibition presented rare thangkas, paintings, sculptures and photographs which have been contributed by His Majesty's Secretariat, Bhutan; Tsurphu Labrang Office of H.H. Gyalwang Karmapa, Dharamshala; Palpung Sherabling Monastic seat of H.E. 12th Tai Situ Rinpoche; Tibet House, New Delhi; Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamshala; and photographs by Deb Mukharji and Tashi Lhendup.



With grateful thanks to

His Majesty's Secretariat, Bhutan

Tsurphu Labrang
Office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa

The 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa
Palpung Sherabling Monastic Seat

Ven. Geshe Lhakdor
Director
Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala

Tibet House, New Delhi

Deb Mukharji

Tashi Lhendup

Guru Padmasambhava. The Lotus-Born One.

Words, however resonant and erudite, cannot encompass the subject of the great Guru Padmasambhava, a name that encompasses 8 major manifestations, and countless others, since words and concepts will always fail to adequately convey the essence and activities of a fully awakened being.

When speaking of Padmasambhava we need to completely let go of our preconceived notions of how the world works, especially our tightly-held limited understanding of the mind's potential. What can be coherently said in our daily vernacular of somebody who utters the following soon after spontaneous birth in a lotus as an eight year old child?:

*My father is the pure awareness of rigpa, Samantabhadra,
My mother, the space of all things, Samantabhadri,
My line, the indivisibility of awareness and space,
My name, the glorious Lotus-born,
My homeland, the unborn dharmadhatu,
My sustenance, consuming dualistic thoughts,
My destiny, to accomplish the actions of the buddhas of past, present and future.¹*

And yet who later says to Tibetan King Trisong Detsen:

*No father, no mother, no lineage have I.
Wondrous, I have arisen by myself.
I was never born, and neither shall I die.
I am the Enlightened, I the Lotus-Born²*

Much can be stated regarding the kindness, life and activities of Guru Rinpoche, prophesied by Shakyamuni Buddha, regarded as the second Buddha, Amitabha Buddha in human form, a subduer of demonic forces, esoteric tantric yogi-helper of Abbot Shantarakshita, without whom Buddha dharma would not have been established in Tibet in the 8th century.

Let's establish first why he is regarded as a redeeming embodiment of kindness par excellence. We have been living in degenerate times for thousands of years, a moment in time when virtue is feeble and evil forces are raised high, when sentient beings' happiness is polluted and destroyed, when disease, famine and warfare arise together. Padmasambhava responded swiftly to the request of the King to come to Tibet to overcome negative forces, establish the great tradition of expounding and practicing the entire doctrine of the Buddha, in particular engaging in a very comprehensive and profound dissemination of the Vajrayana teachings. In addition he was indefatigable in visiting all the sacred places, countless mountains, lakes, valleys and caves, blessing them, and concealing many remarkable dharma treasures or *termas*, to be discovered centuries later for the benefit of generations to come. The text Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo³ further on states movingly that:

“his immeasurable kindness permeates all of Tibet, both the central and surrounding lands, and will remain right up to the last day of the final future age.”

He embodies therefore, an unprecedented and powerful restorative, cleansing and healing force

comparable to the influence of Shakyamuni Buddha in an era of increasing moral darkness, within the already impure interdependence that is samsara. As a Buddha it is said he manifests countless billions of emanations in sentient beings' world systems according to the level and needs of those beings.

Especially for the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism Padmasambhava represents the archetype of the perfect Guru, whose presence and instructions can easily launch the qualified disciple into the enlightened state. He is our Buddha Nature made manifest, as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explains:

On the absolute level, the teacher is one with the very nature of our own mind, which is the essence of Buddhahood, the tathagatagarbha...through the outer or relative teacher...we can bring ourselves to the realization of the inner or absolute teacher, which is awareness itself.”⁴

So, crucially, what this means for a practitioner, (in contrast to a mere academic scholar), is that practice involves erasing the dualistic mistake that sees one's own mind as separate from the awakened mind of Padmasambhava, who is also realised as united with the essence of our own personal Guru as well as with the *yidam* or meditational deity, (skt. *ishta-devata*).

The dedicated student then lives life, one might say, breathing the very atmosphere of Padmasambhava in all situations. One's body speech and mind, one's perceptions, all phenomena in fact are viewed as the display of Guru Padmasambhava, a pure awareness without any fixation whatsoever. Thus the disciple quickly gathers the accumulations of method and wisdom necessary to ensure full awakening. This is possible because whereas Padmasambhava has fully realised the all-knowing Buddha mind, we are still, as it were, hibernating Buddhas, but fully qualified to reach that exalted state.

Much detailed information is available of course to the modern student on the internet⁵, and indeed the reader is encouraged to study as much as possible the relative and historical aspects of this great being, (insofar as a being who is said to have been born miraculously either 8 or 12 years after the historical Buddha's parinirvana and is also turning up in the 8th century, can be viewed through a linear and limited historical framework!).

However that may be, it will be appropriate to mention a few more salient points in this short introduction to such a kaleidoscopic and hugely important personality.

Padmasambhava and his eight major manifestations embody the principles of the three kayas or essential ways in which Buddha energy manifests.

Simply put we can say that the *dharmakaya* is a spacious and open state in which confusion has never existed like an ocean, the *sambhogakaya* is continuous spontaneous energy perceivable only by exalted beings, almost like waves on the surface of the ocean and the *nirmanakaya* is the body that relates with all manner of ordinary beings, likened to a ship on the ocean that ferries beings safely to the shore.⁶

Like Padmasambhava we can also actualize these three kayas, if we practice well, beginning with his key instructions:

“don't conceptualize your experience, as it just makes you attached or angry. Day and night, look into your mind. If your stream of mind contains any non virtue, renounce it from the core of your heart and pursue virtue.”⁷

Reading his colourful life story may lead one to believe that his “crazy wisdom” was at odds with

the moral foundations of the Buddhadharma.

It is probably fair, though possibly not totally accurate, to say that Padmasambhava was being straightforward and honest when he uttered his famous lines to the effect that:

“Though my view is vast as space, my actions are precise like grains of flour.”, revealing his mastery of both relative and ultimate truth, spacious wisdom with obedience to karmic law.

Finally we can echo Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche when he says;

*“since both Shakyamuni Buddha and Padmasambhava appear in one billion forms in each of the one billion world systems, is there any reason why their emanations haven’t appeared in all the countries of this world? Who can state with certainty that a single place exists where a Buddha’s blessings have not reached?”*⁸

One thing is sure. Where Padmasambhava and his wondrous actions are concerned, doubt prevents benefit. We must take care not to be like the proverbial cave facing north where the sun never enters.

Kabir Saxena

Notes:

1. cited in www.rigpawiki.org
2. White Lotus. Padmakara Translation Group, Shechen Publ. 2008. p.12.
3. Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo: Rangjung Yeshe Publications. 2016. p.1.
4. White Lotus. p.11.
5. Eg. wikipedia.org/wiki/Padmasambhava; www.padmasambhava.org
6. Crazy Wisdom. Chogyam Trungpa. Shambhala Publ. 1991, 2012. pp. 20 and 31.
7. Advice from the Lotus-Born. Rangjung Yeshe Publ. 1994. p.29.
8. Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche. Ibid. p.20.



Guru Padmasambhava's altar at the exhibition

Thangka arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche

Ritual offerings prepared by the Gelongs of Punakha Dzong, Bhutan



From the collection of
His Majesty's Secretariat,
Bhutan

THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

Thangkas from Tsirang Dzong, Bhutan







THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

Applied thangkas from Jakar Dzong, Bhutan







Photographs by
Deb Mukharji



Taktsang, the Tiger's Nest, monastery, near Paro, Bhutan, where Guru Rinpoche came riding a flying tigress. Among the many who later came to meditate in the caves here was the famed Milarepa, who won Kailash for Buddhism after his epic battle with the Bon master, Naro Bon Chung three centuries after Guru Rinpoche.



The Ghar monastery at Lo Gekar, Upper Mustang, Nepal (12,500') , built by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century to celebrate the slaying of the demoness.



8th century chortens at Lo Gekar overlooking the Charang valley



The hillsides in the valley below Lo Gekar are still stained by the blood of the slain demoness, with chortens depicting her intestines, heart and liver. Also frequent in the valley are groups of chortens with their own message – White for compassion, represented by Chensirig (Avalokiteshvara), Blue for protection, represented by Channa Dorji (Vajrapani), Red for wealth and long life represented by Amitabha and Yellow for wisdom represented by Jampelyang (Manjushri)



The monastery at Hemis in Ladakh celebrates every year Guru Rinpoche's birthday in July with great festivities and dance drawing visitors from around the world.



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Image of Guru Padmasambhava at 16th c Chhairo gompas near Marpha in Lower Mustang, Nepal



Gurudongmar lake (17,800'), North Sikkim, in the shadow of Mount Kangchengyao (22,700'), commemorates the visit of Guru Rinpoche on his travel to Tibet. The lake also commemorates Guru Nanak, another holy traveler to the region



Monastery in honour of Guru Rinpoche at Chungthang, North Sikkim



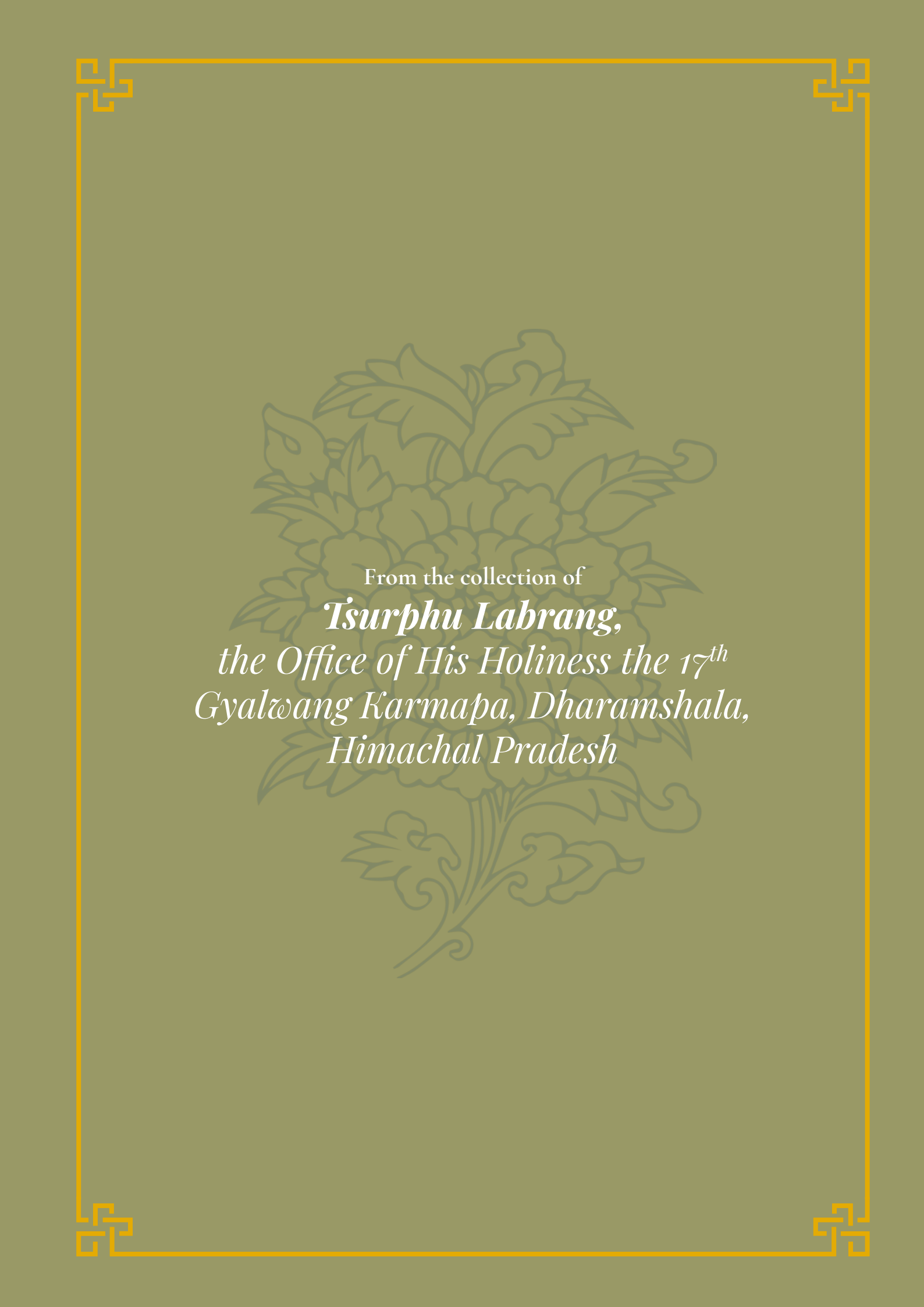
Guru Rinpoche's footprint on rock at Chungtang



Images at Chungtang monastery



View of North face of Kailash from above Diraphuk. Peaks guarding Kailash on either side are Vajrapani (l) and Avalokiteswara (r). Guru Rinpoche meditated at Kailash and was worshipped and remembered with veneration a thousand years later.



From the collection of
Tsurphu Labrang,
the Office of His Holiness the 17th
Gyalwang Karmapa, Dharamshala,
Himachal Pradesh



Guru Rinpoche Thangka

Kunchok Chidu of the Gatherings of all precious jewels
Hand painted by Tashi Wangchuk, thangka artist from tashi Jong, Himachal Pradesh
Size: 24"x36"

Arranged for this exhibition by Tsurphu Labrang, the Office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa,
Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh

THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

Painted by Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting based in Dharamshala

Arranged for this exhibition by Tsurphu Labrang, the Office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa,
Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh





GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

Four different paintings of Guru Rinpoche which is yet to be framed in brocade. Painted by the Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting based in Dharamshala.

Size of each painting: 24"x36"

Arranged for this exhibition by Tsurphu Labrang, the Office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh





TRADITIONAL TIBETAN APPLIQUÉ EMBROIDERY THANGKA

According to the *Dungkar Tsigzö* and *The Content of the Potala Palace Appliqué Thangka*, the earliest appliqué thangka produced in Tibet was the *Thongwa Dönden*, i.e. wish fulfilling, made by Gyaltshe Choegyal Rabten Kunsang Phag in the Earth-Dog Year of the Lunar calendar (1408 CE). Subsequently, tashi Lunpho Monastery made their magnificent appliqué thangkas and all the other great seats of learning started to follow the fashion of making huge appliqué thangkas and putting them on public display on auspicious dates. The Kundu Shelthang Chenmö Namshay states this as well.

The great Fifth Dalai Lama established art schools and workshops to preserve this unique Tibetan knowledge of making these thangkas and from that day on until today, it has been preserved as a living tradition.

On view:

Embroidery Thangka of Guru Padmasambhava

Size: 26" x 38"

This unique appliquéd and embroidered thangka has been made by Tenzin Gyaltzen Ghadong, founder of the Traditional Tibetan Applique and Embroidery Thangka Art Centre.

Arranged for this exhibition by Tsurphu Labrang, the Office of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh



From the collection of
*The 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa,
Palpung Sherabling Monastic Seat*

Eight manifestation of Guru Padmasambhava

Embodiment of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra manifest from the heart of Buddha of limitless light invoke by immeasurable compassion from the divine lotus at lake dhanakosha in the kingdom of Oddiyana. He is PADMA VAJRA.

In the kingdom of Oddiyana, He liberated the beings and fulfilled the noble wishes of the king Indrabhuti. He is PADMA RAJA.

In the holy place of Bodhgaya at Vajrasana and surrounding holy places, he manifest as second Buddha. He is SHAKYA SIMHA.

In the sacred cemeteries of Mahasukha and the land of Beta, he is surrounding by dharma pala's. He is SURYA PRABHA.

At the charnel ground of Kashmir and many sacred places around Arya bhumi, he is surrounded Mahasiddhas. He is DHIMANVARUCHI.

In Magadha and south of India, he transformed all evil forces and enlightened all confusion and at the stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal. He is SIMHA NADU.

At The Kingdom of Sahora, he transformed the conflagrating fire into lotus lake and liberated the king and all the beings of the kingdom. He is PADMASAMBHAVA.

At the sacred places of the Paro Taktsang, in the kingdom of Bhutan, he tamed all the gods of the locality, blessed all the mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers as sacred realm. He is VAJRA DROLO.



Guru Nyima Ozer/Surya Parva (top image)
Guru Senge Dradok/Simha Nadu (bottom image)
Size: 17"x26"

Arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche



Guru Pema Jungne/Padma Vajra (top image)
Guru Lodhen Chogsey/ Dimanvaruchi (bottom)
Size: 17"x26"

Arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche



Guru Rinpoche

Size: 17"x26"

Arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche



Guru Pema Sambha/Padmasambhava (top image)

Guru Pema Gyalpo/Padma Raja (bottom image)

Size: 17"x26"

Arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche



Guru Shakyasenge/Shakya Simha (top image)
Guru Dorjee Drolu/ Vajra Drollo (bottom image)
Size: 17"x26"

Arranged for this exhibition from Palpung Sherabling
Monastic Seat of His Eminence the 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche



From the collection of
Tibet House,
Delhi



Padmasambhava: Eight Forms (Tib: gu ru mtshan brgyad)

Origin: Tibet

Period: 19th Century

Material: Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton

Description:

The eight special forms representing eight different time periods and locations in the life story of Padmasambhava. Here the Eight Forms are surrounded by the famous Eighty-four Indian Adepts (Mahashiddha) of the Abhyadatta System. The depictions of these Eighty-four Mahasiddha are based on the documented descriptions of Jonang Taranata (1575-1635) as commissioned and painted as murals in the Ganden Puntsogling Monastery, Tibet.



Guru Tso-kye Dorje Zangdok Palri (Pure Land-Copper Coloured Mountain)

Origin: Tibet

Period: 18th Century

Material: Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton

Description:

At the invitation of the second religious king, Trisong Detsen, Guru Padmasambhava came from the western country of Uddiyana to Tibet in the 8th Century, to firmly establish the teachings of Buddha there. He founded the first Tibetan monastery Samye and the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The picture shows, in a vision, the pure existence plain of the Tantric master, Zangdok Palri, which means 'Glorious copper-coloured mountain'. In the connection of the 'Lotus-Born' with Avalokitesvara and Amitabhas embodied the three plains of existence of Enlightenment. The varied clothing and attributes are allegories of his enlightened qualities and knowledge. The Vajra held in the right hand in front of his heart is a symbol of immeasurable compassion, and the overcoming of the emotions. The staff Khatvanga, held in the crook of his arm, is a symbol indicating his mystical companion. On his right sits his disciple-consort Mandarava, the daughter of a Mandi King of Kullu Valley, and on his left is Yeshe Tshogyal, a Tibetan queen. Grouped around the three central figures are the 'Eight Principal Manifestations of the Guru' (Gu-ru mTsan-brgyad), which are related to the stages of his spiritual life. In the rainbow dance Kingaras to the sound of their hand-drums, the Enlightened Beings Amitayus, Manjushri, Vajrasattva, Vajrapani and Syama Tara complete the holy gathering.



Guru Tso-kye Dorje

Origin: Tibet

Period: 18th Century

Material: Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton

Description:

Along with King Trisong Detsen and Acharya Santarakshita, Padmasambhava is considered one of the principal early teachers to bring Buddhism to Tibet in the 8th Century. Padmasambhava has numerous forms representing outer, inner and secret aspects of his spiritual being. He is also known by many different names which generally follow chronologically his life story. Aside from Trisong Detsen and Santarakshita, the most important figures to interact with Padmasambhava were his principal Tibetan consort Yeshe Tshogyal and the principal Twenty five Disciples.



Guru Padmasambhava

Origin: Tibet

Period: 12th Century

Material: Bronze

Description:

Padmasambhava, “lotus-born,” an Indian teacher said to have been miraculously born in a lotus flower, is revered by all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Padmasambhava is credited with taming the forces opposed to Buddhism in Tibet, such as indigenous gods, which he transformed into Buddhist protectors. It is also said that Padmasambhava concealed his teachings, known as treasure teachings, throughout the Himalayan landscape to be discovered by foretold disciples at opportune times in the future. Revered by Tibetans as the Second Buddha, Padmasambhava can be recognized by his lotus hat and elaborate dress, which combines secular, Tantric, and monastic elements (boots, long sleeves, and outer robe).



Guru Zahorma

Origin: Tibet

Period: 13th Century

Material: Tibetan Bronze

Description:

Padmasambhava, “lotus-born,” an Indian teacher said to have been miraculously born in a lotus flower, is revered by all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Padmasambhava is credited with taming the forces opposed to Buddhism in Tibet, such as indigenous gods, which he transformed into Buddhist protectors. It is also said that Padmasambhava concealed his teachings, known as treasure teachings, throughout the Himalayan landscape to be discovered by foretold disciples at opportune times in the future. Revered by Tibetans as the Second Buddha, Padmasambhava can be recognized by his lotus hat and elaborate dress, which combines secular, Tantric, and monastic elements (boots, long sleeves, and outer robe).



From the collection of
Tashi Lhendup



Painting of Guru's consort, Khandro Yeshe Tshogyel in Tamshing Lhakhang. Restored in 2015, it is one of the earliest paintings in Bhutan which was documented and preserved by the Department of Culture.



Image of Guru Padmasambhava in Dungkhor Lhakhang. The mural was painted in 1960s and has more of a Chu Tshoen style that refer to a water-mixed shaded technique. It was painted on a cotton cloth and then pasted onto a wall plaster.



Image of Guru Padmasambhava in Thadrak Lhakhang, a religious meditation centre and a school of Vajrakila tradition located near Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.



Image of Guru Padmasambhava in Nobgang Lhakhang. Such murals date back to the 19th century and were painted with locally prepared canvas attached to a wall plaster.



Image of Guru Rinpoche in Chakarzur Lhakhang, which is believed to have been built in one day by Yab Tenpai Nima (father of Zhabdrung).. The mural of Guru Rinpoche was painted in the 1960s on extended walls.



Painting of Guru Rinpoche in Khangza Lhakhang at Phajoding. The image shows Guru Tshengyed, Tshepadme, Chenrize, Kaygued Lams and Gongdue Lha Gue. The painting was prepared on a cotton cloth and then pasted onto an earthen plaster.



Painting of Guru Padmasambhava from the 19th century in Nyangmed Chum Lhakhang.



Statue of Guru Rinpoche in Phudrup Goenpa in Paro, Bhutan.



Painting of Guru Rinpoche in Ta Rimochen Lhakhang in Bumthang. The monastery was built by Tertön Pema Lingpa in the 14th century to mark the sacred place where Guru Rinpoche mediated. The mural was painted directly on an earthen plaster with pigments and organic dyes.



Statue of Guru Rinpoche in Shugdrak Goenpa, which is located on one of the four holy cliffs in Bumthang where Guru Rinpoche mediated and left his foot prints.



Painting of Guru Rinpoche in Changangkha Lhakhang, which was founded by Sey Nima, son of the 13th century Drukpa Kagyu master, Phajo Drugom Shigpo. The painting, which dates back to mid-19th century, was prepared directly on a mud plaster with mineral pigments.



Image of Guru Rinpoche in Tag Ga Lhakhang in Bumthang.
The mural was painted directly onto an earthen plaster.



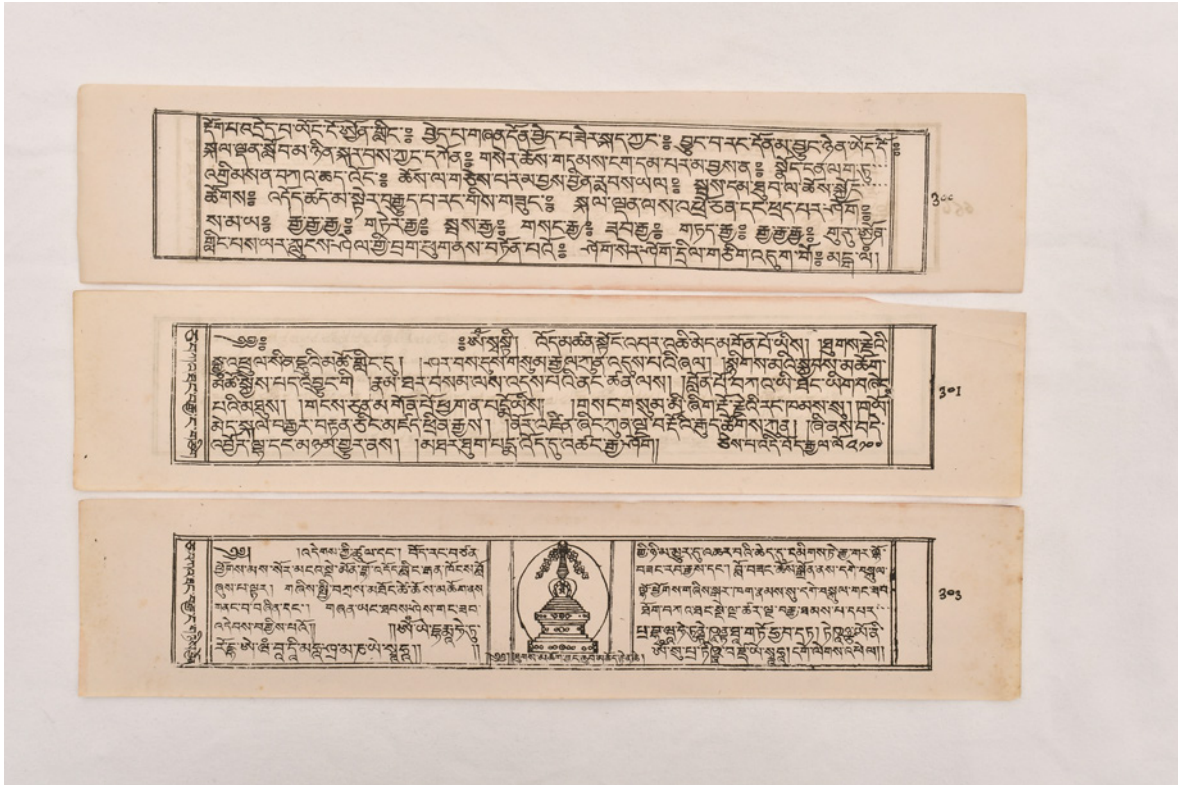
From the collection of
Library of Tibetan Works and Archives,
Dharamshala

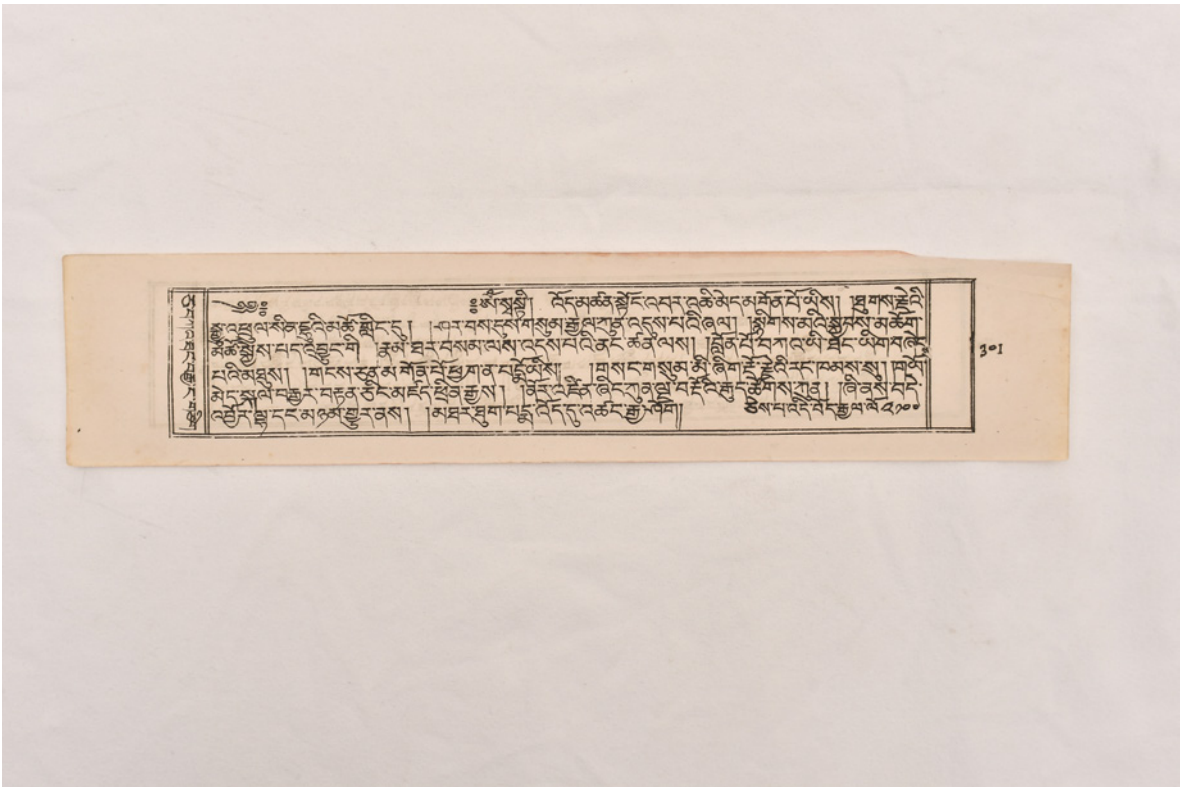
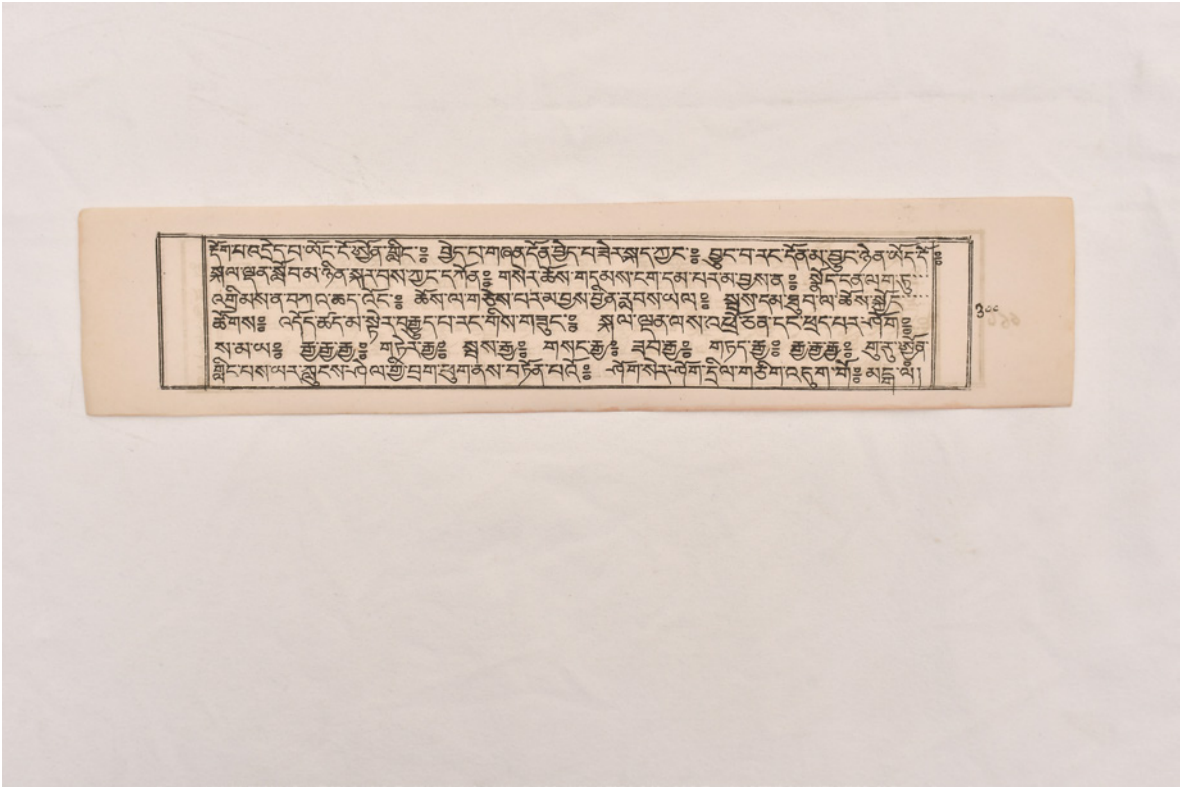
KATHANG DENGA

Text of the Five Chronicles

A terma (spiritual hidden treasure) biography of Guru Padmasambha revealed by Ogyen Lingpa at the Crystal Cave in Yarlung (Yarlung Shel Kyi Brag), in Tibet

Published period: Contemporary





ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १ ॥ अथ श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे श्रीकृष्णस्य उवाच ॥
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Guru Padmasambhava

Gild Bronze Statue
Period: About 17th Century
Height: 30.5 cms

Donated by the Private Office of H.H. Dalai Lama (28 July 1971)

Arranged for this exhibition by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives Museum



Guru Padmasambhava

Gild Bronze Statue
Period: About 17th Century
Height: 16.7 cms

Donated by the Private Office of H.H. Dalai Lama (28 July 1971)

Arranged for this exhibition by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives Museum



Garab Dorje

Gild Bronze Statue

Period: Unknown

Height: 8.5 cm

Donated by the Private Office of H.H. Dalai Lama (03 May 1975)

Arranged for this exhibition by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives Museum



Guru PADMASAMBHAVA
Thangka arranged by the committee
by Ministry (Shreebhagwan Maharastra)
at the Embassy of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka



PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH



