

Design Resource

Phyang Monastery

Life, Learnings and More from Ladakh

by

Prof. Sumant Rao and Ruchi Shah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/phyang-monastery>

1. About Phyang
2. Phyang Monastery
3. Contact Details



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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/phyang-monastery/about-phyang>

About Phyang

Phyang is a small village located just outside Leh. It owes its popularity to the Phyang monastery which is named after a blue mountain. It is also well known as a trekking destination. Being a hilly region, where people live and practice cultivation Phyang has a 2,000 people - strong population, with around 500 houses but just a few tourist accommodations.

Gang Ngonpo - The blue mountain, and Stok Kangri a snow-covered peak are located beyond it. The 600-year-old monastery is perched upon a hilltop, the village lays below with 1-2 storeyed houses amidst the yellow-green fields that are broken visually by zigzagged borders made of heaped stones. Phyang suffered heavy damages during the cloudburst in 2010, however the monastery remained relatively safe due to its high ground.



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Phyang Monastery

The Phyang Monastery was established in 1515. The current head 'Lama' or teacher is His Holiness Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche. Drikung Kagyu is one of the eight "minor" lineages of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism. The distinguishing factors of the Kagyu from other forms of Himalayan Buddhism are the esoteric instructions and tantra's that are underlined along with lineages of transmission that they follow.

The monastery has been recently refurbished and over 80 craftsmen and painters have put their skills into it. Following the traditional architecture it has been painted in the most vivid colors. Every inch of the niches and pillars outdoors, are covered in rich carvings that have been detailed beautifully. And the walls and ceilings indoors are covered in ritualistic paintings representing the future life of Buddha, the reincarnations of Buddha, the auspicious symbols of Buddhism, along with detailed tantric paintings etc.

Phyang also contains sacred temples within the monastery, and frescoes dating back to the 14th century.



Namgyal or victory stupa's built on the path to the Phyang Monastery.

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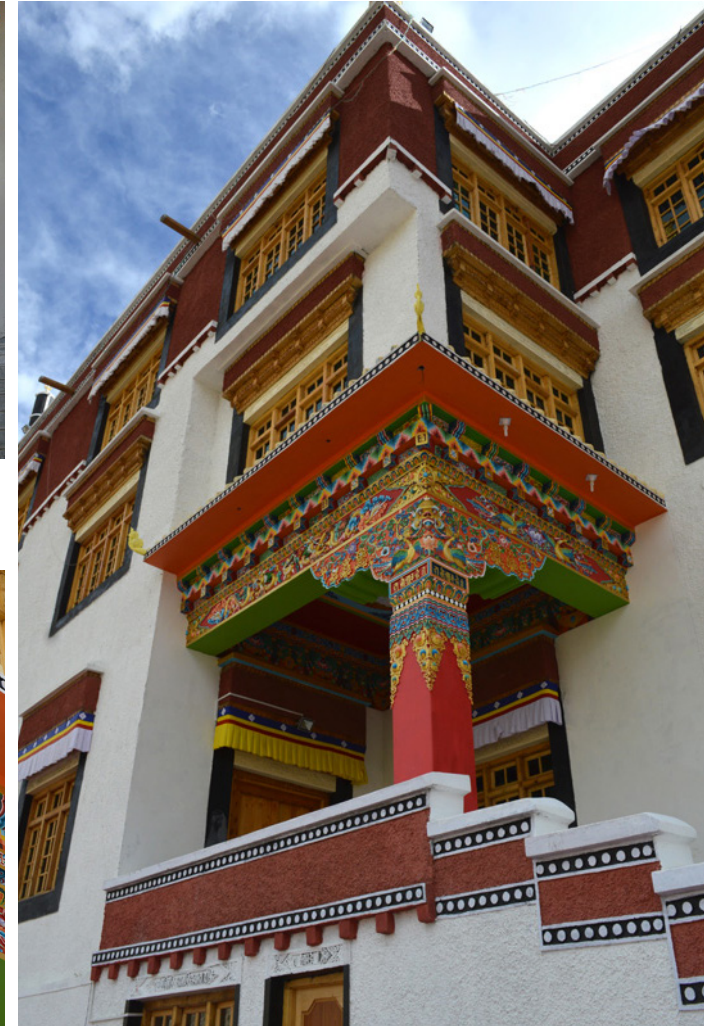
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The entrance to the Phyang Monastery.



Being recently restored by craftsmen and artisans it enjoys a vibrant and different color palette.



The Phyang Monastery is a 3 storied building.

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The traditional Ladakhi windows can be seen perfect and precisely constructed on the structure. Bearing white fabrics - the windows denote that the rooms belong to senior monks.



A 20 feet statue of Shakyamani Buddha sits within the Monastery.

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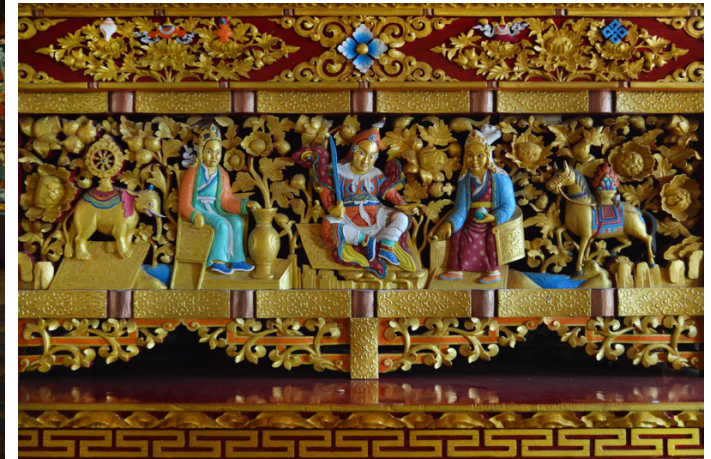
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The interiors prominent with red, are beautifully painted with different sorts of imagery derived from Buddhist philosophy. More than 80 artists have worked on the paintings within this monastery.



A painted mandala on the ceiling on the Monastery.



Gold painted - wooden carving on the Choktse's (table) and cupboards are present within the temple.

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Finer details of floral patterns painted on the walls with neat tube work can be seen in this image.



Chants have been written like a border passing through all the walls. The Bodhi script has been meticulously outlined with delicate tube work, imparting a slightly embossed feeling.



The four kings - protectors of the cardinal directions have been represented as a painting on a wall.

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Imagery that depicts stories from Buddha's life can be seen on most of the surrounding walls of the temple. They have been designed and painted to perfection.

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The statue of Buddha as seen from the front; preceding the statue is the throne on which His Holiness Drikung Skyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche (The head Lama and teacher at the Phyang Monastery) sits during festivals and rituals.

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A beautifully made 'Torma' or offering placed before Lord Buddha.



These torma's are handmade by some monks from the monastery who are specially trained in making them.



Ornamental silver bowls hold offerings, sweets and money given by the people visiting the Monastery.

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A statue of Shakyamuni Buddha - a story claims that the bowl the Buddha is holding, was actually 4 different bowls made from Sapphire and Lapis Lazuli gifted by the 4 different kings. The Shakyamuni Buddha fused them into one black bowl which he is seen holding.



Another mandala painted on the ceiling.



Peacocks symbolise wisdom in Buddhism. They have the ability to consume poisonous plants without being affected, making them synonymous with the great bodhisattvas. A bodhisattva is one who can take illusions as the pathway towards liberating and transforming the poisonous mind of ignorance and hatred converting it into thoughts of enlightenment or bodhicitta, which spans vibrantly like a peacocks' tail - as one can see in the carved peacock on a wooden panel.

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An synthesis of all eight symbols of Buddhism can be seen carved on this gold painted cupboard.

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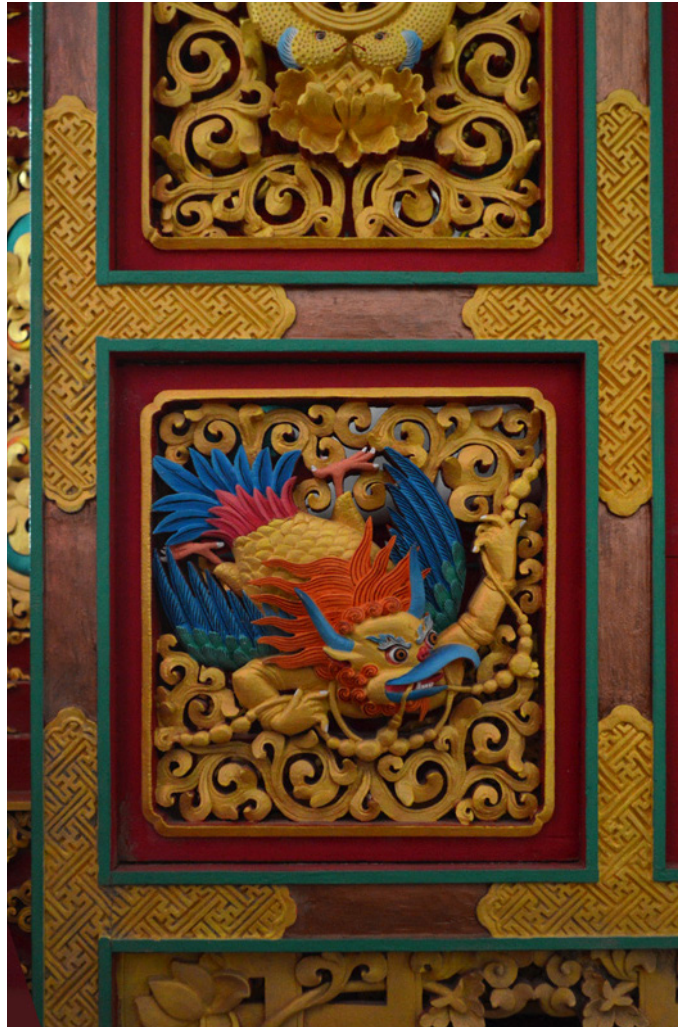
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The Garuda 'King of Birds' is also created on another niche of the cupboard. Garuda is the vehicle of Amoghasiddhi, the Buddha who personifies the all accomplishing wisdom.



The entire space of the Monastery is vibrantly painted and geometrically divided with pillars and niches on the ceilings.



Peacocks are painted on the ceilings and walls frequently.

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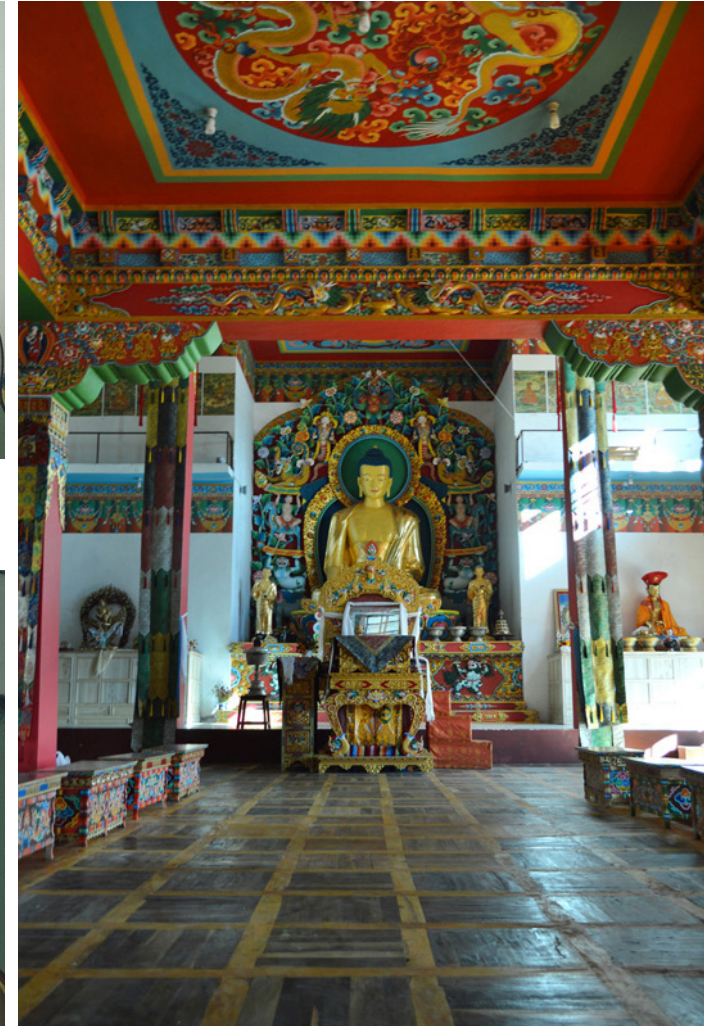
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Details of different characters on the walls divulge the fine tube and line work done by the artisans.



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Dragons can be found created across tables, pillars and roofs within Buddhist architecture. They are carefully carved and exquisitely painted - bringing out every single line or texture on their body.

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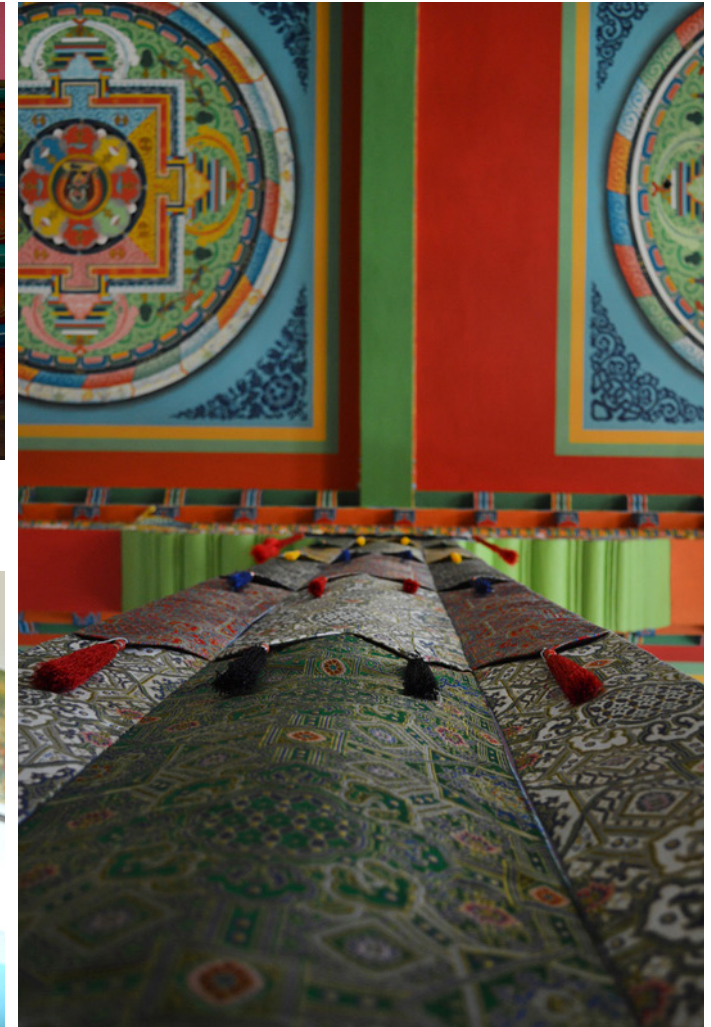
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The painted 'choktse' or low oblong table is typical of Ladakhi interiors whether it is a monastery or a home.



The top of the Rinpoche's throne reveals floral forms and symbols of Buddhism, a Garuda deity that are fused effortlessly into a pattern flowing across the throne.



Ethnic fabrics can be seen running down the entire length of columns and pillars dotting the room.

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