The eight-spoked Golden Wheel (khorlo) represents Buddhist teachings and the eight-fold path leading to enlightenment.

The vast majority of Bhutanese are Mahayana Buddhists. The practice of Buddhism in Bhutan dates mainly from the eighth century visits of Padmasambhava, also known as “Guru Rinpoche.”

Guru Rinpoche is credited with the Buddhist teachings that have largely defined Bhutan’s history for the past thousand years. He incorporated many nature deities, which were originally part of the local Bon pantheon, into present-day Buddhism.

While there are many sites in Bhutan associated with Guru Rinpoche, the most celebrated is Taktsang, or “Tiger’s Nest,” located on a remote cliff several thousand feet above the Paro Valley. According to tradition, Guru Rinpoche reached the place atop a flying tigress to meditate in a cave. The monastery at Taktsang burned in 1998 but was rebuilt and reconsecrated in 2005. It is now open to the public.