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ORAL TRADITIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

Bhutan’s intangible cultural heritage has been preserved in a wide variety of oral expressions such as proverbs, riddles, folktales, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dance, drama and prose. This invaluable heritage has been passed down to us from our ancestors as knowledge, cultural practices, social values and collective memories, and it is our responsibility to keep it alive for our future generations.

This research has revealed that certain forms of oral expressions are common among different communities while there are others unique to a particular group. The current study focuses mainly on those elements that are on the verge of or likely to be disappearing in the near future.

1.1. LANGUAGES & DIALECTS OF BHUTAN

In Bhutan, various languages and dialects have been in use as a tool for communication and co-existence, and these have evolved over many generations. Although Bhutan is a small country, there is a wide variety of rich linguistic and cultural diversity, in fact so wide that is said to even embarrass the Monsoon Dragon with its loud roar. Language experts George van Driem and Karma Tshering say (van Driem 1998) that with a population of just about three quarters of a million Bhutan has 19 dialects that are still in active use.

There is a wide range of languages spoken in the fifty four different countries of the Asian region. These languages have been classified into thirteen major groups namely:


The languages and dialects spoken in Bhutan belong in the Sino Tibetan group under the Burman sub-group derived from Sino Tibetan, mainly falling under Central Bodish and East Bodish, where they may be further classified as follows:

The Central Bodish languages, comprising:

The East Bodish languages, comprising:

The other languages that do not belong to the two sub-groups but are classified under Tibeto-Burman language groups are:


Beside these languages, Indo-Aryan languages like Nepali are used as medium of communication along the southern border region of the country. Karma Phuntsho (2013), clearly mentions there are some minor dialects spoken along the southern foothills which are not included in any group, as follows:


According to Tashi Tshewang (2013) all the languages and dialects spoken in Bhutan can be grouped according to region:

1. Eastern region: Mostly Tshangla kha, Chali kha, Cho cha nga cha kha, Brokpa ke or Merak and Sakteng kha, Dakpa kha, Zala/Brami/Khoma kha, Kurtoep kha and Gongduk kha.

2. Southern region: Widely spoken - Nepali, Rai, Kurus/Adivasi, Limbu or Subbha, Mongar and Ghaley, Sherpa, Tamang, Lepcha, Gurung, and Newar or Pradhan kha.

3. Western region: Commonly Ngalong kha, Lhopu kha and Olely kha.

4. North region: Laya kha, Lunana kha, Boe kha, Lingzhi kha, La kha or Sephu kha and Brok kat.

5. Central region: Kheng kha, Mangde kha, Nyen kha, Bumthang kha, Kurtoep kha and Mon kha.

Since there are Tibetan settlers in some parts of the country, the Tibetan language or Boe kha is also included as one of the languages of Bhutan. In addition to the above there is the sign language taught in Drakthso
Intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan

schools, Sang kha (code language used mainly by the Armed Forces to establish their identity especially in the evening) and the code languages invented by youth (mainly girls) for private communication. In Tshangla dialect this is called Gum-nang lo, meaning reversed or twisted language, reflecting that the words used are sometimes reversed or repeated within a sentence. Lastly there is Aloi kha or child language.

Dzongkha, the principal dialect of the eight western districts of Bhutan, has been in use within the administrative system since the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Commanding orders of 1st Desi Tenzin Drugey and lyrical ballads of Gelong Sumdar Tashi, Pemi Tshewang Tashi and other records like taxation and receipts and other records are maintained in Bhutanese cursive writing, joyig, a script that dates back to before the 10th century. As the dzongs were the centres of both temporal and religious affairs, the language used by monks and the officials came to be known as Dzongkha or language of the dzong.

In 1967 scholar-monk, Pema Tshewang (subsequently Director of the National Library 1973-1993) was assigned to the textbook division of the Education Department, where he played a major role in the development of Dzongkha, which hitherto had lacked a written form, to enable its adoption as a written language. In 1971 Bhutan’s 3rd king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck declared Dzongkha the national language of Bhutan. Apart from Dzongkha, Tibetan and Nepali have their own scripts.

The Table below provides a general view of the usage of different languages and dialects in Bhutan reflected in researches conducted by the Royal Government and private individuals.

### Examples of the usage of languages in Bhutan

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Language/dialect</th>
<th>Way of speaking</th>
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<td>Dakpakha/Zala/Brami/Khoma</td>
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<td>Mon</td>
<td>Ing gi ming zhe yo?</td>
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1.2. ORAL TRADITIONS WITH MELODIES

1.2.1. Oral Poetry

Generally, it is considered a virtue if one pleases the mind of the root teacher or an elderly person or the leader of the land. This can be done by making eight types of offerings, one of which is the offering of music accompanied by melodious lu or songs in praise of the respected ones. This is often called the offering of praising the body with melodious verses, music and dancing. Lu is simply converting the verses to vocal sounds accompanied by music and sung without the movement of body or any parts of the body.

Lugar drossum means folk dance, which is a display of vocal music along with the movements of arms and feet depicting six types of awareness of melodies. These are: 1. transformation of high pitch to low; 2. rapid movement from high to low pitch; 3. raising the pitch; 4. lowering the pitch; 5. singing in a very deep voice, and 6. singing in a very high-pitched voice. This way of singing with vocal tunes is called lu. Both lu and gurma (devotional songs) are mostly written in chokey (classical religious language) and inflated with symbols and metaphors to convey messages.

Internally, songs can be classified into gurma (devotional song), mani lu (the mantra of Chenrezig vocalised in song), tsangmo (poetry) and lozey (ballad or verses used in verbal exchanges). Songs which cannot be accompanied by the movement of hands and feet are also included in lu.

There are different types of mani songs, as follows: 1. Mani dang chigma, 2. Mani dang nyima, 3. Mani dang summa, 4. Mani thuje chenmo, 5. Bardo Mani, 6. Tibo dhana kosha, 7. Salbo nub, 8. Lhonub ngayab, 9. Shomo yarsho, and 10. Tashi dang. Amongst these, some are only sung for the purification of a deceased person’s soul and others are sung just in order to accumulate merit.

1.2.1.1. Devotional Songs

Gurma comprise a mixture of verses and prose composed by persons who visualize the essence of truth as a result of their devotions in order to inspire others by both the meaning and the melody. Other terms used for this genre are gurma, sung gur and nyam gur.

Although gurmas are not properly classified, there are also spiritual songs like thol-lu (songs dedicated to dharma) which arise naturally from the inborn talents of sublime beings. Such songs are mainly composed on the spot depending upon the situation and the mood of the composer. Great lamas and saints compose lyrics
and songs, bearing in mind that their compositions ultimately contribute to human happiness and increase faith in the Dharma. The songs can be in praise of the root guru (teacher), a description of a sacred retreat cave, an aid to development of realisation, advice to followers and a motivation to the lay people. Amongst numerous spiritual songs, those composed by the Great Yogi Jetsun Milarepa (1052-1135) are very popular for their melodies and attractive lyrics, whereas those of Lama Drukpa Kuenley are satiric of the social and religious customs of his time.

A gurma sung by Milarepa to the benefactor and the proprietors of Ragmo in Tibet is given below (Ruepai Gyaltshen 1999, translated from the Choekey):

The sacred place of Jangchub Dzong;  
Lofty white coloured Mountain of Lha tsen (local deity) above;  
Magnanimous devotees dwell in the lower valley;  
The snow clad mountain blocks from behind;  
The front is filled with wish fulfilling forests;  
Meadows wide and spacious;  
From the odorous charming Pema (Lotus);  
Come buzzing sound from the six legged hung wa (bees);  
From the temporarily formed ponds;  
Emerge water birds watching with stretched neck;  
On the expanded branches of trees;  
Beautiful birds produce melodious songs;  
While touched by the passing breeze;  
At the boughs display their dances;  
On the taller trees opening out;  
Monkeys exhibit different acrobatic skills;  
In the wide open meadows;  
Four legged beings graze everywhere;  
The herders, who look after them;  
Their melodious songs and flutes transform;  
Workers of the samsaric existence;  
Spread everywhere with their chaotic activities;  
I Yogi (hermit), who watches over these;  
On the all clear precious cliff;  
Guided by the transient aspect (of the world);  
Meditating on the river like illusory pleasure;  
Seeing the present life as a magical illusion;  
Feeling sorry for those who do not realise;  
As food, [I] consume the emptiness;  
Contemplating without distraction,  
Anything can rise to a diverse mood;  
Alas! The phenomena of this cyclic existence;  
To imagine the non-existence is amazing.
1.2.1.2. Songs

As mentioned above, a lu (song) transforms words into melody. A song is sometimes sung in a way which is very like the way gurma is sung. Lu are often composed in order to present the mood of a particular situation and sung without movement of the body. While generally rather longer than a four-line stanza, there is no standard length in the lu.

Lu are classified as Choe drel gi lu (religious songs) and Jigten phelpai lu (common folk song)

While singing religious songs, the singer kneels down on the floor with both palms folded against the chest showing gestures of respect, worship and paying tribute to one’s root guru or those of noble birth. Besides songs composed by Jetsun Milarepa, some of the religious songs are those found in the biographies of Khadro Drowa Zangmo, Azhi Nangsa Oebum, King Norzang and Queen Yethro Lham, Gelongma Pelmo, Prince Drimed Künden, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, Drukpa Kuenley, Gesar of Ling, Kheu Pema Oebar, Daelog Karma Wangzin, and Daelog Sangay Chodzom etc. The songs presented during the performance of raksha mangcham (mask dance showing the consequences of one’s deeds after death).

Common folk songs usually reveal the romantic mood between a lover and his beloved. The singer may keep his or her palms cupping the chin while singing. Examples of common folk songs are displayed by dance performers during the tshechus (mask dance festivals) by singing love songs between the pholay and molay as they meet. There are tragic lovers such as Alu Penjor from Wang Dalung and his beloved Goensa Lham, Gasa Lamai Senge and his beloved Galem from Chang village (in Punakha), Bada Chenmai Rigzin and her lover Namgye Phuntsho from Upper Ruebaisa and the sad songs of Yudring Zangmo when she was forcefully betrothed to a man she never loved. There are songs derived from stories of a cow called Ba Gachu Lhamo. Alao and Khoray from the eastern part of Bhutan, Ausa of Paro, Wawa of Haa district and Katsom (alphabetical songs) also fall into this category.

1.2.1.2.1. Spiritual Songs

A song based on alphabetical order sung by Khadro Drowa Zangmo to King Kala Wangpo from the mythical biography of Khadro Drowa Zangmo:

The King sings to Drowa Zangmo:

The charming lotus of the gods; Oh! Graceful Queen, please take heed to me; There is no essence in it looking from every direction; I have deep faith towards the sacred doctrine; In the serene temple of refuge; Let me meditate just like a hermit; In the palatial residence prosperous in all desires; Raising two innocent and healthy prince and princess; You, Drowa Zangmo the embodiment of White Tara; Came forth to meet the mother and child; Give a break to the practice of Dharma; My youthful elegant lady, please bear this in mind.

Drowa Zangmo’s response to the King:

Please! Listen to me, my heroic King; I had no authority to stay with my parents; Like a cow, tied with rope on its head; Like a ewe taken out of its flock; The eight fearsome heat and cold as in Tsa-ri (sacred place); The heat radiation of the demoness having arrived in this place; If Your Majesty practices Dharma leaving the family behind; Only this will lead you to the path of enlightenment; There is no meaning in being a profound King; Even if you have plenty of food and drinks; If Dharma is not practised in good time; Sinful people when in the Court of Yama; Like nanny goats and sheep together dragged; Across mountains and valleys when arrived at slaughter house; Even in the presence of affectionate spouse; On this earth mother and child will be heartbroken; On the day when Ha-chang the demon consumes mother and children; [thus] Mother will not stay but leave for the celestial realm.

1.2.1.2.2. Laity Songs

A melancholic song sung by ba ga chu lham (a cow) to her master Ap Dondup from the legend of ba gachu lham:

Dondup, my owner! Please, listen to me; Enjoyable winter has come to an end; The gloomy spring has spontaneously begun; Like burning fire, the heat rises up from the Indian plains; Diverse blossoms appear on dry slopes; From the tree tops melancholy songs by the birds are sung;
The muddy river spoils the dwellings of the fish; 
The mouths of blood thirsty flies and leeches are more painful than spears; 
My daughter Thrinley’s feet are softer than silk; 
The melancholy voice of Pel Dzom singing wa wa song; 
I find it uneasy to remain on this earth; 
The heavenly geese of Tibet, the land of great mountains, 
Unable to bear the chilly breeze of autumn 
Spreading all over in the plains of India, 
Now could not stay in the homes they made in the lotus like plains; 
Leaving behind their chicks with fledgling wings, 
With my words of assurance to the Mermaid, 
Flew back towards the mountainous country of Tibet. 

We humans and cattle, together 
In this land of medicinal herbs, the celestial realms of Paro, 
Let’s go past the gardens of the colourful palace; 
Let’s go and enjoy the nutritious grass on the highland meadows; 
Let’s go and see His Excellency Kuzho (of Paro). 

1.2.1.2.3. Alphabetical Songs

There are also alphabetical songs composed by knowledgeable and creative country folks in various languages and dialects. An individual ka-tsom may be about hardships, happiness and love or may give valuable advice, depending on the situation. For example, I present here a ka tsom from Kheng district, which is widely sung by the people of Wamling village, Zhemgang. The “Kawa namning lingpa,” Ka-tsom throws light on the nature of taxation during the ancient days.

As eagle glided in the sky; 
The hen became restless on the earth; 
Unable to be happy or sad; 
[Thus] I am made to cry; 
A hen, left without anything; 
After the falcon has taken entirely 
Carried away towards the Indian plains; 
And eaten voraciously and maliciously; 
Thinking of going to see it; 
But, couldn’t finish my weaving; 
This year, a hen has been taken; 
Next year, the tax will be exempted.

Although there should be 30 lines, but there are hardly any elderly people who can remember the remaining 18 verses. Similarly, there are other Ka-tsoms in Dzongkha and Tshangla kha and maybe other dialects too, but these were composed later by teachers and students after the modern education system was introduced to Bhutan. They generally have romantic themes.

1.2.2. Lyrical Ballad

Lozey (lyrical ballad or witty narratives) is a form of oral expression, appropriately described as one of the ornaments of speech. According to the accounts of elderly citizens in the western districts, the origin of lozey goes back to the 12th century coinciding with the arrival of Phajo Drugom Zhipgo (1148-1251). Often known as Togden Phajo, he was a Tibetan saint whose life and deeds are closely linked with the initial spread of the Drukpa School of teachings in Bhutan in accordance with the prophesy of Tsangpa Gyare (1161-1211), the founder of the Drukpa Kagyud Lineage. Phajo Drugom Zhipgo was followed by numerous Tibetan scholars who disseminated the teachings of the Buddha. Amongst these realised beings Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) was the destined leader. He instituted the traditions based on the Buddhist values of mi-choe tsangma chudrug (sixteen virtues for mundane practice) and reformed the old traditions, resulting in establishment of the dual system of government in Bhutan, whereby a temporal ruler coexists with the spiritual authority of the nation.

Amongst those indigenous traditions, the songs parshing mindru gyelmo and Zurchen gyi sheypa are the most popular in Bhutan and are sung especially during the construction of typical Bhutanese house made of rammed earth. These age old songs are solely sung by the people of central and western Bhutan. Parshing Mindru Gyelmo is an honorific name given to the wooden tools used for ramming earth, therefore the tools are respected and revered as an embodiment of Khandro Sonam Peldon, consort of Phajo Drugom Zhipgo. The song has many verses inviting the Parshing Mindru Gyelmo to visit from Tibet and concludes with
propitious words of seeing her off back to Tibet during the consecration ceremony for the new house. Similarly, Zurchen gi sheypa (song sung during the installation of four phalluses on the four eaves of the house facing the four directions) is also sung on the day of the consecration ceremony. Two groups are formed for the singing of the songs, normally separate groups for males and females. There are often verbal skirmishes between the male and female groups.

A quick-witted and verbally eloquent person may compose appropriate verses of response on the spot based on the nature of the opponents’ song. It is said that the verses of these songs are so long, “if sung till the end, it is believed that it could last for almost a day” as told by a few elderly citizens. There have been incidents in the past when the host family had to place a large palla (bamboo container) of ara (distilled home brew) down and request the verbally warring songsters to reconcile. However, these songs are actually a type of ballad or narrative poem to which a melody was added later. The recitation of lozey is still widely practised in the western part of Bhutan and is regarded as an entertainment and enjoyment by one and old alike.

There are variants of given names for lozey, sometimes it is also written as Losel; but, there is no clue why, since both terms have their separate sets of definitions. According to Lopon Kunzang Thinley, chief researcher at KMT Press, Thimphu, lozey is an art of speech which requires a unique skill in making rapid response. It requires constant flow like the hair on a horse’s neck, thus, the term ‘lo’ means statement and ‘ze’ refers to the neck hair, and in this context to the brilliance of the bantering back and forth. Lozey is defined as brilliant, intelligent, clever and bright. In both Dzongkha and Tibetan dictionaries, lozey is defined as any prompt statement constructed in verse well decorated with rhetorical qualities of similes and metaphors according to the situation. Such qualities can only be attributed to intelligent, quick-thinking and witty persons.

Lozey is an exceptional oral expression of Bhutan and very popular among the people of western Bhutan, namely Ha, Paro, Thimphu, Gasa, Punakha, Wangduephodrang and Dagana, and in the northern part of Trongsa district. However, the lozey of each district has its own unique characteristics in style, language tone and recitation tune.

Lozey is not sung merely to entertain the crowd. It is also a platform to showcase inborn talents in the art of speech and also acts as a medium for transmission of the tradition to the others. Lozey is of three kinds: popular lozey (which consist various subject and episodes occur depending on the moods and feelings), lojue lozey (a narrative, usually of epic dimension), and finally lozey labja (lozey associated with advice and guidance). Therefore, most often lozey dwells within these episodes; che toed (praising), nyen lu or zalu (romantic), dralu (odium), medlu (disgrace), trolu (joyful), cholu (sad), tse tshol (debating/challenging), trashi/monlu (supplication) and lozey labja (advice/guidance). Lozey labja is sometimes identical to kortam (innuendo or indirect statement).

Lozey has no fixed length, but may be long or short, which entirely depends upon the depth of knowledge of a person, but generally the shortest will vary from three lines to fifteen. Short lozey are called lozey do thum while long ones are called lozey jun-ringm. However, lojue lozey are historical accounts and regarded as the longest and some lojue lozey are accounts drawn from oral tradition of how the fortresses were constructed by Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyal.

These days long lozey can be found mainly as lyrics written in books, but some are still being kept alive through oral recitation, of which the following are examples:

A lozey recited by one Kakuru, secretary to Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861), lozey on Garp (attendant to a high official) Lung Gi Khorlo’s journey to Punakha and Wangduephodrang districts to distribute official letters of Choetse penlop, Gelong (monk) Sumdha Trashi of Sha Nyisho, Zimpon (chamberlain) Tshewang Trashi of Sha Kazhi, Jam (maidservant) Tshewang Pedroe of Shar Phangyuel and finally the lozey of Choep (religious practitioner) Sangag Dorje, Chungdue Gongshey and Akhe Gyem of Ha district. These are stories centred on characters whose experiences tell us a great deal about social and economic conditions during their times.

Sometimes lozey can be used as means of debate or verbal skirmishes between people of different communities or villages, and between male and female. At least two participants are required for a lozey. After one has recited the initial verse, the other responds depending on the gist of the preceding verse. This is called Lozey khaejew (lozey competition) in Dzongkha. While reciting lozey, the rules are very simple. Depending on the type, if the opponent has good knowledge, he/she must respond with the same similes and metaphors that were used by the other. The challenge will continue until a winner or a draw is declared. In both cases, messages will be conveyed through eloquent usage of metaphors and symbols. The
responses are never direct. Nevertheless, lozey can be used for both entertainment and wish-making in every aspect of life such as: Parshing gi she pa, Zurchen gi she pa, Dha she (description of Arrow), Gishey (description of Sword), Zo she (description of an Art), Shog da kuelwa (encouraging words while dragging large logs or boulders), Lang key (Praising words to the Oxen while ploughing), Che sho (making wishes while sowing seeds) and Bab she (wish-making while threshing rice) etc. A person who has the knowledge and skills is known as kham khe gyep (King of eloquence or an articulate person) in Dzongkha.

The following are some examples of lozey recited to fit different moods and occasions:

1.2.2.1. Praising

Bearing the fruit of virtuous deeds of numerous eons, The two protectors Dharmakaya and Sambhogakaya, Having realised and credence of none other than self, [I] prostrate with due respect to Guru Padmasambhava.

Emanation of a thousand protective Buddhas, Gracious to the entire southern universe, The glorious Dharma King, Thuchen Ngawang (Zhabdrung), I pay homage with my three doors (body, speech and mind).

This day of the auspicious month, Youthful, I feel at ease to recite a ballad. Though I don’t have a melodious voice and words, [I] make this offering of melody to the Glorious Drukpa (Zhabdrung).

All the people! Please, lend me your ears, To make an earthen house of southern Drukpa; One has to prepare the means of auspiciousness right from the beginning; One has to initiate the parade of songs and dances.

Towards the northern side of Bodhgaya, India, In Nepal, the land of sumptuousness, Between the elevated sky and clouds; Dwell the five Tshering sisters, the deities of wealth;

These five Tshering sisters, Vasudevas, Are the war deities, if powerful officials seek blessings of power, Are the gods of wealth, if people seek blessings of wealth, Are the gods of speech, if youth seek eloquence and a pleasing voice.

Amidst the gathering of people, Let me plant the doctrine of songs and dances.

1.2.2.2. Romantic Songs

Having visited all the magnificent fortresses, boe garpa (court attendant) Committed to return after three years. Not returning after three years, Does the mighty lord own his body? Or is his heart possessed by a lady of the country? I, the maiden of the village, Have to decide for myself.

The cool breeze having explored the Tibetan country Promised to return after three years. Not returning after three years, Is the body now owned by the Dharma King, Or attracted towards a deceiver? Even though captivated by the emanated Dharma King; Or attracted towards the deceiver; These leaves of the cypress of the south; Have to decide for myself now.

You, mighty river, have been to the land of India, Assured to come back after three years. Not returning after three years, Is your body controlled by the King of India? Or fascinated by the Indian girls? Whether he is controlled by the Indian King, [Or] fascinated by the Indian girls, I, the golden eyed fish, Have to decide for myself now.

1.2.2.3. Odium

(Provoking statement) Drinking from Dangchu River will not cause melodious voice; If it becomes melodious after drinking from Dangchu, The watermill owner of Sha Dangchu, Her voice might have changed into a flute.

Consuming milk and curd will not make the face charming; If it becomes charming by consuming milk and curd, You, the highland lady wearing taari (tiger-striped) kira, Your face would have a celestial appearance.

(Answer) If drinking the Dangchu River doesn’t cause melodious voice, By the Sha Dangchu watermill owner Having offered the first share of water to the gods above,
Then Tsheringma divine goddess of music
Will bestow the blessing of a tuneful voice;
If the blessings of speech are bestowed,
There will be no control over the sweetness of the voice.
If having milk and curd, doesn't make the face fair,
Of the highland lady wearing her taari,
Having offered the first share of the milk to the gods above,
Then Tshringma the divine goddess of music,
Will bestow the blessing of charm.
If the blessing of charm is bestowed,
Fairness of appearance cannot be measured.

1.2.2.4. Discreditable

To hoist prayer flags on the meeting of three ridges,
Both the ridges and wind are in disharmony;
From where can [I] hoist the prayer flags?
The hoisted flags are not fluttered by the wind;
Even the blowing wind is of no help;
Better not hoist the prayer flags there in the first place.
With this as an example,
To make a bridge at the confluence of three rivers below,
But the rivers and valley are in discord;
Where should the bridge be situated?
Neither is there traffic once the bridge is made,
Nor does it benefit the flow of traders,
Better stop building the bridge from the start.
Keeping this as an example,
You the maiden of the village,
Love is not in harmony with being a spouse,
Due to lack of fidelity inwardly,
The destiny to be together has perished outwardly.
With you the maiden devoid of faith,
Better it is to give up before we start loving;
(This is also spoken by a girl to a hopeful suitor)

1.2.2.5. Rhapsody

A hill that provides a clear view,
A hill that is much taller,
Looking from the lofty hill
On the path of circumambulating the divine Indian tree.
Heard of a tree being grown,
Thinking what the tree was like,
It is none other than wish fulfilling pagsam joenshing. (a mythical tree)
On that tree there is a bird perched.
Thinking what is that bird?
It was none other than the handsome a-ley buthri (a migratory bird from the south)
It sits with its right wing towards the east,
Inviting the Sun from the east.
Facing its left wing towards the west,
Appealing to the Moon from the west,
Its tail is pointed to India,
To invoke prosperity from India.
Its beak pointing towards Tibet,
To receive dharma teaching from Tibet;
Its back pointing up towards the Sky,
Welcoming bountiful precipitation from the Sky,
Its claws pointing towards the earth.
By collecting harvest from the soils,
[I] shall make offerings to the precious Buddha above,
Distribute alms to the beggars and
To relish a sumptuous party in pleasant mood.

1.2.2.6. Sentimental

The Sun that dwells in the Sky,
Sad behind the mountains before rising,
Unhappy in the middle of the Sky after rising,
Sad in the eternal the journey round the universe.

Similarly;

The river that descends towards the plains;
Depressed underneath the earth before appearing;
Cheerless while in the centre of the stream;
Miserable always while touring the Indian plains;
Likewise;

The Snow Lion of the mountain tops;
Saddens the heart of mountains if unexplored;
The mountain peaks and foothills are sad when exploring the inner ranges;
Always saddened going round Mt Kailash;

Like the examples above;

The many-striped Indian Tiger of the dense forest;
Depressed in the comforts of the lair before wandering out;
Gloomy in the jungle and meadows once wandering;
Always upset roaming cypress forest;

Similar to that;

The life of tsho ma garpa (attendant);
Has been gloomy while in the womb;
Remained dismal in the mother's lap after birth,
Always staying hopelessly staying in the great fortress.
1.2.2.7. Debating

**Question:**
My father is likened to a great mountain;
Can you embrace the great mountain?
My mother is likened to the great river;
Do you measure the river?
My uncle is likened to the white stupa;
Can you whiten the white stupa?
My friends count as the flowers in the meadows;
Can you collect all the flowers?
Offer them at the colourful shrine.
And, chime the melodious Dharma bell?

**Answer:**
So your father resembles the great mountain;
I transform myself into a pair of vultures;
And hold the great mountain in my arms;
Is your mother like the flowing river?
I transform myself into a pair of otters;
And measure the length of the river;
Is your uncle likened to the white stupa?
I manifest myself into pair of pigeons;
And I will repaint the stupa white;
Are your friends as many as flowers of the open field?
On the eight, thirtieth and fifteenth day;
From the pleasurable meadows;
Gathering the beautiful flowers;
Shall offer them at the adorable shrine;
If [I] chime your Dharma bell by its loop;
What words would you have for that?

1.2.2.8. Supplication

The cuckoo of the forest of lofty mountains;
I come from the wild jungles;
Roaming in the rich fields of the valley;
Having become addicted to the white rice sham bja;
[I] forgot to return to my woody abode on high;
Thanks to the king of birds;
I must return before I forget;
You the white rice sham bja kar chu, my feast;
Please remain undestroyed by hailstorms;
If I, the Cuckoo am fortunate to live long;
An aspiration to enjoy your taste again and again;
Here at this rich field, I will make.

In the same manner;

I, the gentle garpa of the village;
Hailing from the auspicious village;
I wander along the big towns;
Having fallen in love with the charming girl;
I forgot to turn back to my village;
Due to the tall order of my parents;
I must return before I forget;
You, the lady with clear vision;
If I, the gentle garpa live long;
An aspiration to reunite at the send;
[I] shall make to the magnificent mason;
Homage and the most gracious;
Lama, the body emanation of the Buddha;
The coming year will as happy as this year;
In the happy times of the coming years;
[I] make this wish to see you time and again.

1.2.2.9. Narratives

A historical ballad is an account of one’s experiences
told in the form of prose or verses. Lozey on Gelong
Zhonpai Dawa, Gelong Sumdar Trashi, Pemi Tshewang
Tashi, Tshewang Peldron (the maid servant) are good
examples of the stories of their life and deeds passed
down orally in the form of ballads. Furthermore, the
secret practitioners of Tantra teachings have also used
lozey in order to disseminate their methods of practice,
experiences and important topics. An example of a
pilgrim retelling his pilgrimage to sacred sites is given
below.

The realised astrologer of Tibet;
Recollected the Dharma whilst still in the mother’s
womb;
Learnt the alphabets at the age of five;
Sat in retreat at the age of six and seven;
Went on pilgrimage at eighteen years;
Visited the thirteen districts of Tibet;
Had seen the towering pinnacle of (Maitreya) Buddha
of Lhasa;
Also saw the self-risen Kharsapani (image of
Avalokiteshvara);
Saw the eminent eight lineage holders of India;
Carrying a kelzang khur shing (rucksack) on the back;
Wearing a gondepezha (meditation hat) on his head;
Holding a stick of renunciation with three joints;
Visited Pelphu temple of Paro Taktshang;
Visited Kyerchu temple of Paro;
Journeying along the path to Darchagang (in Punakha);
Saw the sacred site of the deity Chakrasamvara;
Underneath the jabzhi roof of Punakha Dzong;
Received audience from the Khenchen (chief abbot) of
monastic body;
Saw the sixteen sublime Arhats;
Saw the golden and silver statues of Punakha;
Saw the self-rising Kharsapani;
The most stunning deity is the deity of Nyizer temple;
The biggest statue is the image at Bajo temple; The most blessing deity is the deity at Chime Temple; Indeed, I have visited all these but; Missed out the Stupa of Great Purity from India; When I went to see the Indian Stupa of Great Purity; Locked with a padlock engraved with a tiger; A flexible metal latch of serpent’s head fitted from inside; Thus, failed to see the Stupa of Great Purity; Then, the realised Tsipa of Tibet; Made offerings to the Triple Gem dwelling above; Gave away alms to the beggars; Made propitiations to Ogyen Padma (Guru Padmasambhava); The outer lock engraved with a tiger disappeared; The flexible metal latch of serpent broke from inside; The base was surrounded by eight mighty rivers; The base that is encircled by eight mighty rivers; Whether it is seen by Mermaids; Or by the golden fish making circumambulation; Everyone else is forbidden to see; Yet, I have seen it now; Its waist is held by a vajra cliff; The reason it is embraced by the vajra cliff is; Whether it is seen by the cliff’s deity or not Whether it is encircled by buzzing bees or not; It is forbidden for everyone else; I, the realised Tsipa have seen it. The tip is embraced by the sun and rainbows; The reason it is embraced by the sun and rainbows is; Whether the tip is seen by the sun or not; Or circumambulations by the moon; Everyone else is forbidden to see it; Yet, I have now seen that. One, I, realised Tsipa of Tibet; Two, the parents who gave birth to me; Three, the teachers who taught me letters when young; An aspiration prayer to attain enlightenment together; [1] make here while making circumambulations of the stupa; May the father Guru grant his blessings?

1.2.10. Advice: Lozey as a Precept

Lozey associated with religious and laity activities;

Astrological guidance in constructing a house:
Seek the right spot on the day of the Mouse; Install the foundation rock on the Ox day; Erect the entrance door on the day of Tiger; Put the staircase on the Dragon day; Mount the rain gutter on the day of Snake; Place house roof on the day of Bird;

Superstitions and beliefs:
A crow is crowing indicating the coming of guests; Prosperous guest arrives at the door; The flame of fire in oven is speaking; The guest may appear then there is meat; The mewing cat is wiping its face; There may come an excellent and pious visitor.

Advice:
Don’t make a warm fire out of straw; If you ever make a fire out of straw; Instead of being gratified by warmth provided; You cannot later bear the suffering from cold; Don’t drink the cold water of the mountains; If you ever drink the cold water of the mountains; Instead of appreciating its cool effect; You cannot later bear the distress of thirst; Do not seek a lover from distant place; If you ever seek a lover from distant place; Instead of cherishing the present happiness; You cannot withstand the test of despair in the end.

1.2.3. Ode

An oral game, tsangmo or tsam-mo is short and melodious poetry normally sung for entertainment by people of all ages in all the regions. It is also considered as one of the ornaments of speech. There are several very similar names for the game, with each having its own meaning and definition, according to the elderly village people; tsam is a short poem either composed on the spot or learnt from elders or friends, which is recited to a melodious tune. Mo means divination or test. Therefore, it is a song sung to test the feelings of another person. In another version, it is also a song sung by individuals in a group, to make the same divination of feelings as above by a stick (tsang) pointing to the personal items already collected from each of the participants, guided by the rhythms of the song. Another very similar name to that for the stick tsangmo indicates that this tradition may have been derived from U-tsang province of Tibet. However, some elderly villagers interviewed about the game thought that the terminology had nothing to do with U-tsang at all. Taking their local knowledge into account, it seems likely that the slight difference in nomenclature might just reflect a local dilution of the term which has crept in over time. Although there are different names given according to how the game is played, Bhutanese commonly refer to it as tsangmo. Performance of the game is indigenous and unique to Bhutan, with the
poetic songs passed down from our forefathers through the ages and often sung in the respective dialects of the singers’ districts. While singing tsangmo, the lyrics are actually based on the moods and situation.

For stick tsangmo the rules are as follows: each male and female participant should place an item in the centre. A neutral person is assigned who either closes his eyes or sits facing away from the rest so that he does not know the owner of individual items. When one has finished his/her turn then the assigned neutral person will hold a stick and repeat the song once again. According to the beat of the song, he points at each item. Wherever the point of the stick remains when the song finishes, he makes a comment according to the meaning of the song, “whoever is the owner of the item is, the song’s message is (for example) Love. You are being loved by the singer, are you in love with him/her? If yes, you should tell him/her at the earliest possible.”

The message is clearly conveyed through the use of metaphors in the form of a four-line verse with two couplets. Each couplet is self-contained. The first usually makes a statement or describes a situation. The second one makes a response.

Then the owner is identified. Sometimes the owner may be the same sex as the singer in which case the group expresses its sympathy in chorus and ends in laughter. “In the old days people were also married through this divination game” explained a few elderly citizens. Apart from these rules, one does not have to stick to one form of expression. Participants can change the context of the lyrics as they desire. Since tsangmo is meant for fun, no individual is expected to get emotional at the message as the singer is also blind folded. Moreover, no one in the group clearly knows on whose item the stick will land at the end.

General tsangmo (i.e. not with the stick) is usually sung casually in a group, for example during celebrations, while on a walk, during the transplantation of paddy, weeding, collecting firewood, transporting manure in the fields, harvesting paddy, plantation of maize, harvesting maize and in a leisure period. This is an impromptu entertainment where you hone your skill in creating verses on the spot and also where you learn from and communicate with others. One person sings and another responds, the debate continuing until a winner or a draw is declared. This version of the oral game is played in an unstructured way so there are no particular rules. Today, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service arranges phone-in tsangmo sessions (akin to talk-back radio) among listeners from different places and the participants either choose to reply to the previous singer or sing their own part without aiming at anyone in particular.

Regarding the tune of tsangmo, there are more than four types depending on custom, language and dialect. According to the knowledgeable citizens, while singing tsangmo, the first participant must sing a stanza in praise of the Triple Gem or a divine being, as a way of making an offering. The subsequent participants may dwell on friendship, love, odium, discord, joy, sorrow
as they like, and end with verses of supplication or good wishes. A few examples of tsangmo are given below.

1.2.3.1. Praising

In the east appears a twinkling star;  
In the west emerge two twinkling stars;  
Twinkling of stars one after another;  
Finally, they all merge with the brilliance of the sky;

1.2.3.2. Romantic

In the vast, serene meadow;  
Filled with grazing *dzo* and *dzomo* (hybrid male and female yak);  
In the eyes of a calf;  
There is only one charming *dzomo*;

1.2.3.3. Odium

Coming from the country of China;  
The sword the length of 18 handspans  
One person was killed in the previous year;  
The evil is rising again;

1.2.3.4. Discord

Discovered from the depth of the Ocean;  
The right spiralled conch;  
Even though you are bright;  
I will have no need of you;

1.2.3.5. Joyful or Rejoicing

Radiance and rainbow filled the sky;  
Flowers and grains abound the land;  
By the warmth of one's love;  
We rejoice in the prosperity and pleasure;

1.2.3.6. Sorrowful

Amongst the most sorrowful of the woods;  
The dejected door step of the ground floor is worse;  
Amongst the many desperate human beings;  
I, the feeble one, am the worse;

1.2.3.7. Supplication

Brought together by the previous karma;  
Two of us, the couple;  
Like the sun and sky above;  
[I] pray for our unshakable existence;  
The tsangmo described above were taken from those prevailing in the western regions of the country. The one below is from Lhuentse district of eastern Bhutan.

1.2.3.8. Tsangmo of Kurtoe (Kurtoep speakers)

As the river flows downstream;  
It is the foam that returns;  
If it is to return, let it the river;  
I don't want the foam to return;

1.2.4. Narration

*Darshey* is a traditional practice where a man holding a *khadar* (auspicious white scarf) in his outstretched hands faces the seated crowd, and makes auspicious speeches at a ceremonial function, usually during religious and social occasions. (*The origin of the tradition is attributed to Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal when he introduced this practice during the consecration ceremony of Punakha Dzong in 1639.*) The tradition, however, may vary slightly from village to village in the use of language and presentation such as making speeches decked with maxims or simply narratives. The worldly tradition of *darshey* does not require to be sung like gurma, Lu or tsammo but is expressed more or less like a recitation. That is why a person may begin *darshey* with the phrase such as ‘*wo la so la* ...’ and end his speech by offering words of good wishes and aspirations such as ‘... let us pray that we see each other’s countenance again and again in future.’

Depending upon the talents and level of education, the performer applies poetic elegance in the speech; *darshey* is usually performed during auspicious occasions. *Atsara* (masked clown) also makes similar speeches during *tshechus*. Therefore, this section provides a sample of *darshey* performed during auspicious ceremonies and *darshey* performed by *atsaras* during festivals.

Bhutan has a unique tradition of stressing on *tendrel* (the independent arising of auspicious events). Any occasion or event has to begin and end on a positive and hopeful note. Whether it is house construction, marriage, promotion, or an important project, a ceremonial inauguration in the beginning and a well-wishing conclusion are very important social values. Thus, *darshey* is an important item in any ceremonial programme. *Darshey* means narration of scarf, especially presented by an eloquent person to the guest of honour adding some melody in order to enhance the auspiciousness of the ceremony. It is an indigenous oral expression practiced all over Bhutan. Depending on the languages, dialects and cultures, *darshey* is also called
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Legshey (elegant saying/narration of auspiciousness), Khashey (art of speech) and sometimes Nangwa drub (verbal approval). Unlike Gurma, Lu and Tsammo, Darshey has no complex melody, rather, it all depends on the tone and rhythm of the recitation.

Regarding the lyrics, the reciter uses appropriate words to meet the occasion, mostly decorating these with similes and other literary flourishes. There are no specific lyrics for darshey, and the elegance of the recitation depends on the literary and musical talents of the reciter. Moreover, there is great cultural diversity in darshey, as the length, flow and rhythm of individual darshey vary from village to village and dialect to dialect. However, darshey normally starts right after the ceremonial ritual. When it is time to offer khadar to the guest of honour, presiding guest, or whoever else is being honoured, an eloquent speaker holds a silken scarf and begins the darshey by saying “wo la so la” and concludes with well-wishing prayers and aspirations to the guest of honour and everyone gathered.

Sadly, darshey is slowly disappearing from our cultural landscape these days.

Amongst many different types of darshey, tendrel dzegoi darshey (narration of ceremonial functions) and atsarai darshey (narration made by Atsara (clown) during the performances of mask dance at festival) can cover all. The following are representative examples of tendrel zegoi darshey, gatoen tshechui darshey (similar to ceremonial narration) and atsarai darshey provided by some local experts in these matters.

1.2.4.1. Recitation for Ceremonial Functions/ Auspicious Occasions

Wo la so la! Today, in this perfect, prosperous and wholesome place,
Beneath the sky roof with no pillars to support it;
On the floor with no supporting walls;
Lion is the King of the carnivores;
If one leaps everyone follows;
Garuda is the King of birds;
If one flies everyone does likewise;
One who talks well is the King of maxims;
When the wise one narrates everyone knows.

Likewise, I appeal to the distinguished gathering here, kindly lend me your ears just like a deer listens to a sound.

Wo la so la! Today in this mansion of complete victory
(over evils), presided over by (the most gracious/benevolent root guru or whichever personality is presiding as appropriate) wise people seated in prominent places while the others adorn the remaining places in neatly arranged rows. All the dharma practitioners, dharma colleagues, families and relatives and all the fortunate ladies and gentlemen seated here, kindly lend your ears to my submission of the narration which has fewer words but generous meaning. As the saviour of the sentient beings Tsangpa Gyare had once said:

Prepare for a good omen and embrace auspicious occasions;
One may perfect the occasion (with details);
Likewise,

Today, the stars in the sky are auspicious;
The Sun rising in the east brings warmth;
The brilliant stars shining in middle is auspicious;
Yesterday, the day was prosperity;
Today is the day of fulfilment.

Therefore, on this day of the convergence of prosperity, fulfilment and good omens; according to the saying “a new born child should be given a name” and “a good speech should follow the drinking of wine.” Today, to the patron and the entire local population, all sound in physical health and mind, all thriving with ample wealth and livestock in this place where peace and happiness flourish, to all congregated here in this place (where the teachings of profound sutra and the commentaries, empowerment and festivals, or consecration ceremony of house, temples and chotens, auspicious celebrating, the birth of a child or a wedding celebrations, and so on), may I be allowed to submit a few words of good omen.

(Depending on the nature of the occasion, anyone can add auspicious words in this) and conclude with well-wishing prayers and aspirations like this:

‘By the merits accumulated from my narration of auspiciousness, may the teachings of Buddha flourish, lengthening the life of those persons who support the teachings; particularly let the life of those who practice the dharma and meditation live longer than the flow of water in the mighty rivers; and let this world be free of diseases and famine, let wars and battles cease, let there be timely rain and let the crops and livestock flourish. Particularly in this land of sandalwood, let there be no mention of bad harvest
and war, hailstorms and famine at all, and let all the birds open their beaks and fill the atmosphere with the songs of good year and good omen and their blessings. Let all misfortunes be dissolved and every being attain the life of Buddhahood. Among all those who are gathered here, let the old live longer without any obstructions in their lives, let the younger ones be blessed with long and meritorious lives, let their fortune grow, their healthy bodies and prosperity come together and without hindrance rejoice in the melody of happiness and dance in peace. This is the aspiration of auspiciousness.

Also, to the generous proprietor and patron who has provided ample food and drinks in the prosperous house, in this indestructible mandala which is blessed by an unceasing flow of nectar from above which is collected in an ocean like a crystal mirror below. In between, the brightness of the mandala produces a colour so gorgeous that one can hardly restrain oneself from gazing at its brilliance. Here, without any harm and mishaps to the people, wealth and livestock, let there be growth and advancement unobstructed for 108 long years from the seeds of all the virtues.

May all refrain from negative deeds, harming not even the tiniest of insects and their eggs or hatchlings, and always lay a foundation for happiness, create a home of tranquillity and experience happiness and the growth of prosperity. Furthermore, with no bodily illness, no distress to the mind but by singing the songs of happiness and dancing in a state of well-being, let such occasions for celebrations occur again and again until the end of time. Let us all aspire that all of us meet in the same cheerful mood in future. Trashi delek (May good prevail).

Likewise, if I were to deliberate extensively on the preparation for a good omen to embrace auspicious occasions, it would be impossible to conclude the flight of a vulture even in eighteen days. So if I may present a summary, “an auspiciousness omen of perfection” means; the reckoning of Sky with congregation of wonderful Sun, Moon and Stars; the earth, together with the brilliant Sa ri (one of the 21 constellations) and the centre, the warmth of the Sun highlighted by the Sun, Moon and Stars. And “Initiating activities for abundance” means; inviting the gods and superior beings from the expanse of reality above; arranging in perfect seating and making the offering of perfect wealth by the prosperous and devout patron; (details can be inserted according to occasions such as promotion, marriage, birthday/birth anniversary, consecration of newly built house etc. by mentioning the name of the patron). For example, in an offering of khadar on promotion: “by showing the heroic talent and by benevolence of the superior, today having received the promotion of power and influence leading to this grand ceremony, I would, therefore, like to offer this leg she describing the auspicious white scarf to you:

This white silken cloth is the scarf of good luck; The tip of the scarf from Ogyen’s Tibet; Received from the hand of the emanated King of Tibet; It contains the blessings of precious Dharma; The end of the scarf came from the south of China; Received from the hand of the Chinese maiden; It holds the divine blessings of wealth and food; The middle part of the scarf is from Bhutan; Received from the hands of Ngawang Namgyal; It contains the boon of more children and riches.

For promotion: (insert name) I am offering this auspicious silken scarf to you today along with these hopes and wishes. As the saying goes, “Identity of a hero, name for a popular person and strength to the powerful horse.” Likewise, confided in by the superior leaders and trusted by the people, drawn from amongst many and elevated from amidst a few, you have been promoted to this rank with power and appropriate resources. You have a great responsibility to perform your duties fairly and equally, and without fear or favour, with dedication, commitment and loyalty, to accomplish all activities to help the general public. May you achieve all your goals without any obstructions. May you also progress just as the waxing Moon. With these prayers, I offer this auspicious scarf to you. Trashi delek.

For marriage: Today (insert name) the two of you, are fortunate human beings, having been born to virtuous
and wealthy parents. As a result of aspiration prayers in the past life and the height of present deeds, although you were born in different places and grew up in separate locations, you are now brought together by the karmic connections. Hereafter, by being a lovely couple, may you live without ups and downs in your life but be successful and live long without obstacles; with boys holding the right hands and girls holding the left, enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity; with the pleasant sound of ha ha and hi hi. To wish you these I offer to you the auspicious white khadar. Trashi delek.

Offering khadar to a new born:
Yaa! Having opened the door and come out into this lovely world you will grow up with sound health and mind. My prayers are that you will help spread the teachings of the Buddha, make contributions to the growth of prosperity in the country, work for the good of all the people and sentient beings and finally help lengthen the noble lineage of your parents in this world. With these earnest wishes, I offer you this white khadar with my prayers deep from the heart. Trashi delek.

Offering khadar to the Zo-wo (the chief Carpenter):
Today we celebrate the consecration of the magnificent house Trashi Gomang (magnificent home with numerous doors) well-constructed by the emanation of the divine artist Balep (Bishwakarma). As the saying goes, “We owe equal gratitude to the person in leadership, the benevolent parents, teacher who teaches us the letters and the carpenter who builds” and we must never fail to recognise them by their faces if we meet them by day, and by their voices if we encounter them at night. This is how we remember our gratitude. A joke is also added to entertain others.

That the white flag stands on the roof;
I owe it to my carpenter.
That I don’t have to pay him wages,
I owe it to my wife.
Trashi delek!

1.2.4.3. Recitation of Atsara (clown)

Generally, ordinary people perceive Atsara as a comedian that appears during tshechus in the midst of mask dancers wearing a funny mask, usually holding a phallus and a rattle in his hands to entertain the audience. However, the word came from the Sanskrit term achāriya; a title attached to a great spiritual teacher, who can claim his place among the 84 Mahasiddhas, representing all those who have within one lifetime attained direct realisation of the Buddha’s teachings. Their appearance as clowns represents our ignorance through which we fail to see the ultimate truth. That is why our forefathers had regarded the senior atsaras as the embodiment of guardian deities and sublime beings.

During such gatherings as tshechu all the dignitaries such as spiritual masters and monks, ministers, secretaries, merchants and the laities give them money as a mark of their appreciation. In return, the atsara also gives auspicious narration in the form of concluding words, which is a unique aspect of Bhutanese culture. Unfortunately, this good aspect of the atsara’s auspicious narration is now on the verge of disappearing.

Greetings:
Traditionally, formal greetings were initiated and exchanged only between people of equal status. Superiors would normally inquire about health and other family conditions and the subordinates answered as much as was necessary. The modern day verbal greetings with kuzu-zangpo emerged as a result of interaction with western society when there was a need for the equivalent of good morning, hello and so on. Being a clown, Atsara makes no distinction between high officials and simple citizens. All are equal during the tschechu and it is the time and the place where he can abandon the social proprieties. Therefore, he humorously bows down uttering Ya la! to those who give money to him and to those whom he approaches. Atsaras spontaneously greet one and all in the same
manner, as they symbolize ascetic beings and thus do not have to observe the normal greeting protocols. Today the habit is to add Rinpoche (Precious One) or some flowery words to the title to flatter the person being addressed.

When greeting an official:
Ya la! (Here they address the person by their appropriate title.) Today, having found your way to this special occasion of tsechu festival, it is fortunate for me to be able to meet Honourable Dragsho with your face as bright as the full Moon. Yet again, like today, I pray that I meet you in the coming year not here in this open ground, but up there in the pavilion wearing a red scarf and a sword as white as the water fall by your side on the same occasion.

When greeting a benefactor:
Ya la! Most prosperous Jinda! Very successful and prospering business today, and from now onwards also this is an auspicious time to pray in multiple of hundreds that you and your children and your grandchildren will continue to receive wealth in abundance like the Monsoon rains.

Concluding words:
This year, we gathered here to celebrate this grand festival, to commemorate the birth of Guru Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha, in a lotus flower at the Lake Dhanakosha on the Tenth Day of the Month. Having suffered no ailments in body and distresses in mind we have been able to come together again. Likewise, we make the wish to be able to congregate next year and the year after next, just as we did the year before. Without the disappearance of either the elderly from ageing, nor the children from our laps, and with the glory of our ancestry higher than the sky and the family lineage longer than the river; this is our prayer. With this prayer, I have received rewards of cash in hundreds and length but popularly, any descriptions as mentioned are called kha ibey and these can be sung very loudly and confidently by a single person. When the turn comes to an archer, he shouts out with encouraging words towards his cheering team before he shoots the arrow. The song must be sung with a strong and penetrating voice so that it can be heard by both onlookers and opponents. The song is an encouragement for his team mates cheering him from the other target. The content of the song is basically a description of an arrow and the archer himself.

On the other side of the Mo li la (name of a mountain pass);
Did you hear that Deo ja la yang ka (a kind of reed) is growing;
This man who is youthful in age;
Cut a pair of Deo ja la yang ka;
Feathers adorn the head of the arrow;
Its endpoint decked with metal;
The middle part, enfolded in silken scarf;
In the middle of a golden coloured meadow;
This will not harm the happy arrow;
In need it will destroy the points of opponents;
I release it to hit the target for the point;
I shall shake the white target;
Gentlemen, good friends in my team;
I release my team to let you dance cheerfully.
Alright alright! I am still here, my friends.

1.2.4.5. Narration on Paper Making and Calligraphy
This khashey is extracted from Aule (auspiciousness narration of Laya, Gasa district.)

The Drukpa Nagwang Namgyal of the south;
Born in the country of Tibet;
The good-hearted Tibetans sent him to the south;
Served faithfully by the southern people;
Having arrived in this southern land;
He imposed wood tax on all the men;
And Daphne plant tax on the women;
Despite exploring the hills and valleys;
[They] could not find Daphne plants;
But Madam Hendar the deity of the cliff
Helped find the Daphne plants;
Cooked them by water and fire;
Crushed them with the giant mortar and pestle;
Imposed tax on the dyers for the flowers
Used to brighten the colour;
Adding brightening hue [to the paper];
Au le sa, au le, au le;
The script started with ja gar ke du (language of India, i.e. Sanskrit);
And ending with *zo pai sangay* (complete enlightenment);
The art of making beautiful letters;
Wonder how these are written;
Au le sa, au le, au le.

From our forefathers we have inherited countless such
oral descriptions touching on different aspects of life
and different situations, composed with intelligence
and wit, which were passed on down to the future
generations through oral transmission by many people
over the years. It is hoped that these few khashey
translated above will provide the nucleus for future
researchers wishing to make an in depth study of this
topic.

### 1.3. ORAL TRADITIONS WITHOUT MELODIES

1.3.1. Stories

The literal meaning of the word *sung* is to protect or to
guard or narrate something. In this context, *sung* means
narration of an account from the past, proverbs, and such
stories that are accompanied by examples from relevant
situations expressed in varying moods. Narrated without
specific length, such accounts are considered appropriate
mode of informing others aimed at educating children.
Some of these narrations have been passed down orally
while others are found in written forms. Both constitute
the concept of stories. Stories that fall in this genre are
folk tale, legend, and historical accounts. Persons who tell
stories are known as *sung tangmi* (story teller) or *drung
tangmi* or *drung khen* (narrator of legends). It is beyond
the scope of this study to state how oral traditions have
originated and developed.

In the context of Bhutan such stories are generally
classified into three groups. These are: *Choe drel gi sung*
(religious stories), which are factual accounts of events
that took place concerning spiritual persons and their
activities, such as: *tog joed* (account), *kerab* or *namthar*
(biography, autobiography) of a historical figure, an
enlightened master, a dharma king or queen, or a
minister, providing an account of the legends and myths
concerning their deeds, preserved in written form by
their disciples, attendants or their followers. There are
also *jigten ngoe jung gi sung* or true stories of ordinary
life. People with literary talent often composed ghost
stories, romances and fairy tales, with fictional people,
animals, birds and so forth as the central characters with
the intention of providing moral lessons for the reader,
or listener when the account is narrated orally.

These three types of stories are briefly described below:

a) *Choe drel gi sung*: This includes *namthar* (biography/
autobiography), *namthar cha drawa* (an account similar
to biography), *ke rab tog joed* (biographical accounts of
famous persons) and other dharma-related stories like
legends and myths.
b) Jigten ngoe jung gi sung: This includes - gyal sid lojue (history of monarchy), ni de lojue (accounts of daily life), dzong gi chagrab (history of fortresses), mag drung (accounts of war and conflict), pawo lojue (accounts of heroism), dre due ki sung (narratives related to demons, ghosts and spirits), sa ne lojue (accounts of places), lung chog lojue (accounts of regions), yue goi lojue (accounts of villages), khar gi lojue (history of castles), nag tshang gi lojue (accounts about the nobility), and still others; choe drel ze go (accounts of religious ceremonies), gyal sid ze go (accounts related to a king’s deeds), ne kor lojue (accounts of pilgrimages), Tse dran lojue (accounts of sporting events), tshong dral lojue (accounts of trading activities) and toe sher lojue (accounts of disputes) amongst others. These are all nonfictional accounts of events, people and places.

c) Jigten cchoe sung: This group includes aloi sung (child lore/fairy tales), gwo droi sung (jokes/humorous stories), jig nang gi sung (horror stories), thruel nang gi sung (sorrowful/sad stories), gu kor gi sung (witty/deceptive stories), tse dang gi sung (romantic/love stories), sem chen gi sung (parables and fables) and other fictitious stories.

According to the elderly people in the villages, although there are many types of stories they generally fall into one of three categories: ngoe sung (true stories), dre sung (ghost stories) and ro sung (stories related to death). As this category seems narrow and overlaps with others, it is mentioned here for information of the readers. In olden days, stories were told by parents, teachers, elders and friends to groups, to one another or to children, especially during leisure time and while in bed. Stories are told to ease weariness and to create fun, as well as for the conveying of moral and ethical lessons.

They cover a number of themes conveying various ideas and exchange of knowledge amongst families, friends and neighbours. In Bhutan, irrespective of the language in which it is told, a story usually begins with "dang phu ding phu (long time ago) and follows with appropriate gestures depending on the mood of the story. While narrating any type of story, though there is no written document of rules to abide by both narrator and listener yet, there are oral accounts and belief deeply embedded to all the Bhutanese irrespective of different regions. The rules are very simple: when the narrator starts a story he/she should not leave it unfinished, and the listeners have to be attentive and respond to every single sentence, uttering ‘Ong! Ong!’ If the rules are not followed, and the narrator stops before coming to the end of his tale, it is believed that evil spirits or ghosts who are also listening to the story, will make their own ending for it, or, if listeners are inattentive, these invisible spirits will respond instead, later causing sickness or even death.

There is a tragic story narrated by knowledgeable persons on disregard of rules to be observed while telling a story. The story goes as follows: Once upon a time two brothers lived with their cattle in a dense forest. In the day, while looking after their cattle they used to play various games to pass the time, and in the evening, they brought all their cattle back to the shed. While the older brother tied up the cattle and made them secure and safe from predators, the younger brother would prepare dinner on an earthen hearth for both of them. After satisfying their hunger, they would settle down for sleep near the oven to absorb the heat from it. Before going to sleep, the older brother would tell a story every night. Sometimes the theme of the story would be very enjoyable and at times sentimental. Occasionally, the story would be romantic or else a horror tale. On one night, unlike other days, the older brother narrated a rather boring story and the brother made an attentive response till the second half of the tale. Unaware that the younger brother had dropped off to sleep, the older brother continued the story. Later he heard an unusual voice making the response from the dark near their feet. Doubtfully, he asked his brother “Is that you brother?” When there was no reply, he realised his brother was already in a deep sleep. “Who is that?” shouted the older brother who quickly lit a lamp and then saw a horrifying figure he had never set eyes on before in his life. The evil spirit had caused no harm to him yet, but it had frightened him and he gradually began to fall ill after that. Rituals and divination gave no benefit, and gradually he weakened and finally died. However, the moral of the story is that both the story teller and the listener must be attentive and responsive to any type of story that is being narrated.

A few examples are given below.

1.3.1.1. A Religious Story

Choeden gi Gyalpo (Dharma King)

Long, long ago, in this world, there lived an incomparable Dharma King, who was an embodiment of Bodhisattvas. He was not only respected by his countrymen but also by the kings of other countries. Although the King ruled the country in accordance with the laws of the Dharma, due to the bad karma of the people and other beings, the country was experiencing a terrible draught. The King then gathered together all his knowledgeable and
resourceful ministers, and elderly Brahmins and sought their suggestions on how to make it possible for the rain to come in order to help the growth of the crops. The ministers and the Brahmins suggested offering libations to invoke the guardian deities according to non-Buddhist practices. The King knew that the non-Buddhist practices involved animal sacrifice, but he acknowledged their advice. Secretly, though, the King had a different plan.

With the intention of steering his subjects onto the path of virtue, he shared his plan with the ministers and intellectuals. “I have decided to make one thousand human sacrifices. Therefore, you must make preparations for the ritual” commanded the King, his command seeming heavier than a mountain falling upon them.

The nervous ministers pleaded with the King, saying that the citizens would feel uneasy at such activity, but, the King replied, “You do not need to worry about this. I can assure you that the people will not feel perturbed.” Then the King gathered his subjects and made this announcement: “In order to bring peace in the country, I have decided to make an offering of one thousand human sacrifices. Those of you who violate the laws and cause harm to the community will be sacrificed. For this, you are closely watched by my secret agents. Therefore, all of you have to be aware of the consequences of what you do.”

Believing in the seriousness of the Royal Command, the ministers spread fear by sending officials to arrest the violators of the laws. But, not a single violator was found. Having succeeded in making his subjects abide by the ten virtues and follow the path of Buddha dharma, the King was very happy. The King then opened his treasury and distributed alms lavishly to everyone’s satisfaction. In this way the King ruled the country in accordance with the Buddha’s precepts. The kingdom was then blessed with timely rain and a bountiful harvest that reduced the sufferings of the people and brought economic progress. Due to the wise rule of the Bodhisattva King and the collective prosperity of all the officials and subjects, everyone lived in complete happiness and peace.

1.3.1.2. A Humorous Story

Ap Wang Drugye

Long ago, there lived a man named Ap Wang Drugye in the district of Wang (present day Thimphu) who was famous for his wit and craftiness. One day, four thieves set out to steal cattle. On the way they came upon Ap Wang Drugye and asked him, “Oi! Ap Wang Drugye, where are you going?”

Ap Wang Drugye replied, “Can’t you see? I am coming from where my back is and I am going towards where I am facing. But the four of you look like you are going to steal cattle. Where are you going?” The foursome thought that since he already knew they were going to steal cattle, they might as well ask him teach them a better idea. They said, “Ap Wang Drugye, please take a little rest, we have something to discuss.” Then they said, “Since you already know what we are going to do, please teach us where to go and how should we go about it.”

Ap Wang Drugye replied, “I have already thought that four of you could not have done anything better than this. I think what you are going to do is very easy. How can this be done? Look across to the other side. There is a man ploughing with a pair of oxen. Consider those oxen as yours and you may take them away right now.” The four thieves said, “How can this be possible? Firstly it is broad daylight and secondly there is a man guiding the oxen to plough the field. This is going to be difficult.” Then, Ap Wang Drugye retorted, “In that case you might as well forget it. I said it is easy and you said it is difficult. So I am going.” As he was moving away, the foursome asked, “then, how should we go about this?” He replied, “Later when the ploughman goes to take his meal, he will leave the oxen to graze on the edge of the field. Then two of you will lead away the oxen while the other two will sweep the track to conceal the footprints. That is how you will fulfil your intentions.”

Then the thieves waited until the ploughman left the field to take his lunch. Right away they rushed towards the oxen. Two of them led away an ox each while the other two followed, sweeping clean the footmarks left behind and covering a long distance.

Later in the evening, they killed the poor oxen. Having completed the task, they went to Ap Wang Drugye and said, “Today, because of your idea, we got what we wanted without much trouble. As a gesture of our gratitude, please take as much as you want of the meat and the remainder will be equally divided among us.” Ap Wang Drugye replied “You want to look like good hearted men, after all. But I did not help you because I needed the meat. I have no one to feed and I cannot carry the meat. If you insist then, give me the bladder and a knuckle.

Then the four thieves whispered among themselves
saying, “Other times Ap Wang Drugye is said to be very
crafty but today he appears to be a good hearted man.”
So they gave him the bladder and a knuckle. Then Ap
Wang Drugye told them, “Now the four of you do not
need to fear or be in a hurry. It will be better if you take
your time and let the meat dry up a bit before you carry
it away.” Then he left them.

But, Ap Wang Drugye stayed at a hearing distance from
them and inflated the bladder. The four thieves were
cooking the meat, which let out a delicious smell right
up to his nose. As they were ready to enjoy the feast, Ap
Wang Drugye beat the knuckle on the inflated bladder
that gave out a bang sound. Upon hearing the banging,
the foursome looked at each other in shock. Then Ap
Wang Drugye once again beat the bladder and then
cried out loudly, “Please it is not I. It is the four of them.
They are down there drying the meat. Please forgive me.”
Then the four thieves said, “Now this Ap Wang Drugye
has messed everything up. If people come here there will
be big trouble. We should run away while there is time.”
So saying, they abandoned the meat and the sumptuous
meal and ran away.

Having allowed some time for the thieves to run away,
Ap Wang Drugye went to the spot and enjoyed a
leisurely meal. Afterwards he took the meat and went
home.

1.3.1.3. Fairy Tales

The Clever Fox

Once upon a time, there lived a clever fox. One day,
the fox was sitting in front of his den experiencing the
warmth of the sun. At that time a hungry tiger suddenly
appeared before him. The tiger began to think of a way
to kill the fox, but the fox knew that. Between their
conversations, the fox said to the tiger “Yaa! I was eating
my meal but I came out to bask in the sun without
finishing the food. Please wait here until I finish my
meal and come out.” The fox went inside his den.

The tiger waited outside but the fox would not come
out of his den. Out of frustration, the hungry tiger
went near the door of the den and called out “Oi! Fox,
come out of your den.” “Please, wait a while, I have not
finished my meal.” replied the fox. The tiger impatiently
waited again. Then the tiger was annoyed and called out
louder, “Why is it taking such a long time to finish your
food. What are you eating?” “How can I finish eating so
fast, I am eating a tiger’s heart” the fox replied. The tiger
was surprised by this, so he asked again “Where did you
get the tiger’s heart?” “My hunter friend killed a tiger
yesterday and gave the heart to me, saying that he might
bring me another heart of a tiger today.” Frightened by
the response, the tiger disappeared into the forest.

The Wise Son

Once upon a time, in a village there lived an old man
and his only son. One day the father fell ill and died.
Before he died he said to his son, “Listen carefully my
son! Never in your life serve an unkind King, make
friends with bad people or marry an unfaithful girl. You
must always serve a benevolent King, keep close ties
with good friends and settle down with a good wife and
live a happy life.” With these final words he passed away.

Some years later, the boy attended on an immoral King,
associated with a good friend and lived with a disloyal
wife to test the advice of his father. One day, the King
planned to go for hunting and the boy went together
with him as a bodyguard into a dense forest. Suddenly,
a tiger appeared from the thick bushes and attacked the
King, but the boy killed the tiger and saved the King.
The King thanked him for his heroic deed.

One day the boy stole from the palace a peacock, which
was the favourite pet of the King, and he left it with his
friend. Then he caught a wild peacock and took it home
and said to his wife, “This is the King’s peacock, I stole
it from the palace. I saved the King’s life from a tiger but
there was no appreciation. So, we are going to kill the
peacock for dinner.”
They killed the peacock and enjoyed the dinner. A week later, an announcement was given about the lost peacock, stating that the finder would receive an impressive reward. The King’s army was spread all over the country in search of the peacock. His friend kept the secret even when he was interrogated, but the greedy wife approached the King and revealed the secret thinking she would be rewarded. Then the King called him and asked “Why did you kill my peacock?” He replied, “I killed it because Your Majesty has not shown any special kindness to me for saving your life from the tiger.”

The King became very angry and said “There is no custom of the King showing appreciation to a servant.” The King then commanded to his guards, “Take him out of my sight and kill him.” At that time, he realised that the King was mean, so he admitted that he had not killed the peacock and he gave it back. So the King released him and he parted from his disloyal wife and left to live in a neighbouring kingdom which was ruled by a benevolent King.

There he served under the benevolent King but stayed with a bad companion. One summer day, the King set out on a long walk and the boy was also accompanying the King along with other attendants. They arrived at a place where there was no water. The water that attendants had been carrying was exhausted. The King was about to die of thirst. Surprisingly, when the boy checked his pocket he found three Chu-ru-ra (fruits of emblic myrobalan, commonly called Indian gooseberry) and offered them to the King to help quench his thirst. Later, he kidnapped the Crown Prince and kept him in his house secretly and left the Prince’s clothes and ornaments with his friend. An announcement was given out all over the country to find the lost Prince. There was a reward of precious gems to the person who would report the whereabouts of the Prince.

Immediately, the boy’s evil friend went to the King and revealed the secret and showed all the belongings of the Prince as proof. The King called the boy and questioned. “Have you murdered my son? The boy replied “Your Majesty, I have indeed murdered the Crown Prince.” The King questioned again, “What debt did I owe you that you have to murder my Prince?” The boy replied, “I offered three Chu-ru-ra to you and saved Your Majesty earlier, but you did not show me any appreciation. That is why I killed the Crown Prince.”

The kind King remembered the unforgettable deed and said, “If you were not there with me, I might have died and because of your help, now I stand here again to serve my people. Therefore, for the first Chu ru ra offered to me, I release you from imprisonment for murdering my son, for the second, I offer you my beautiful daughter as your wife and for the third fruit, I offer half of my kingdom to you for saving my precious life from the deadly thirst.

The boy realised the truth of his father’s final words and developed a deep sense of faith and trust in the noble activities of the King. Then, he prostrated many times before the King and submitted, “Your Majesty! Actually, I was testing the truth of the advice my father gave me on his deathbed. I don’t want anything in return, but I offer you the Crown Prince, unharmed.” The King was very pleased and realised that the boy was an intelligent, wise and devoted son and could make enormous contributions to the country. Thus, he appointed him as his Prime Minister. Due to the wise rule of the benevolent King and his wise minister, the kingdom experienced increased development, peace, tranquillity and happiness.

1.3.2. Religious Oral literature
1.3.2.1. Refuge

To describe the term refuge, one needs to understand this. If anyone is born in one of the three realms of sufferings, namely the hell, the hungry ghost and the animal realms, there is the suffering of extreme heat and cold in the hell realm, there is the suffering of starvation and thirst in the realm of hungry ghosts, and there is the suffering of having to work for others and being consumed as food in the animal realms. Awareness of these sufferings cause constant fear in the mind, which
leads us to have belief in and understanding of the teachings of the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and therein seek refuge.

“The people of Bhutan, bearing the fruition of their virtuous deeds in the past life and that their strength still unexhausted; both the country and the people, firstly explored and blessed as a hidden land by the second Buddha Ogyen Guru; having been bestowed with the teaching of Vajrayana Tradition by masters and teachers who came in innumerable numbers and caused it to mature through transmission and realisation; the country was named Druk Yul and the people living here were named Drukpa.” (Paraphrased from the Lhői Choejung, the famous history of Bhutan written by the 10th Je Khenpo, Penchen Tenzin Chogyal.)

Starting from the King above, down to the humble citizens in the village, children, and elderly people seeking refuge in the Triple Gem, the thoughts and actions of all are in line with the precepts of the teachings of the Buddha. This has been made possible by the existing harmony between the King, the officials and the citizens. That is why in this increasingly interdependent global community, Bhutan is viewed with love, respect and appreciation.

Owing to their unstinted devotion and confidence there are few Bhutanese of mature years who have not received empowerment and instructions in the teachings or have taken no vow from a spiritual teacher. Moreover, in the morning as soon as they wake up and in the evening before going to bed, our older generation never fail to pay homage and gratitude to their tutelary deities, to their root gurus, to their forefathers and to the King in their humble words. This rich tradition is, however, on the verge of disappearing, just as the sun sinks over the western horizon, leaving only a dark shadow behind.

1.3.2.2. Morning Prayer

Verse for taking five precepts:

[I] seek refuge in the Lama, the Spiritual teacher;
[I] seek refuge in the Buddha;
[I] seek refuge in the Dharma;
[I] seek refuge in the Sangha
I seek refuge in the excellent objects of refuge (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (recited a hundred times or more).

“Root Lama, who is all-knowing! Today due to the everlasting blessings of the Three Jewels and the aspirations of my beloved parents who watch over me with compassion, without any obstacles in my path I am able to see the morning light once more in my life. Please grant me blessing to succeed in my plans and actions today and prevent me from indulging in negative deeds. Please bless me so that I can engage in virtuous deeds that are beneficial both to self and others and accomplish them without any obstacles.” (These words are followed by the recitation of Mani, Vajra Guru, and end with the prayer of aspiration to liberate all sentient beings from the realm of suffering in this mundane world.)

1.3.2.3. Evening Prayer

“Yah! By the benevolence and blessings of the Precious Three Jewels and the graciousness of my King, and in particular by the immeasurable love and kindness of my parents, all my activities that I have carried out have been accomplished due to the strength of your enormous wishes. To everyone I offer my deep gratitude. In addition, to my root teacher, tutelary deity and the Three Jewels who have been the sole guardians and source of inspiration to my parents, and to all the sentient beings existing underneath the vast stretch of the sky, I pray for your protection until the breaking of dawn.” (Subsequently, they recite the same mantras cited in the morning as instructed by their Gurus and conclude with prayers of dedication of merits to all the sentient beings.)

1.3.2.4. Empowerment

Within Tibetan Buddhism, an empowerment is a prerequisite stage allowing the practitioner to engage in certain practices in order to benefit others. The term
“empowerment” is the translation of the Tibetan word wang, which literally means “power”. In this context “transmission of power” is more accurate. It refers to the transmission of power from master to disciple, in particular the power of wisdom. Tibetan Buddhism is based on the premise that every being has the potential to attain supreme happiness (also called Enlightenment) and the empowerment is part of the process allowing this potential to fully manifest.

The Buddhist term wang means ‘power’ and in this context means ‘empowerment’ that is, the transferring of power from spiritually realised master to disciple. The principal power to be transmitted is the power of wisdom which, with realisation of one’s full potential, leads on to attainment of supreme happiness. The conferring of the empowerment has the effect of preparing the ground (one’s mind stream) for the seed (the teachings) to ripen within. Eventually the seed becomes a shoot, then there is a bud and finally, a flower. That flower is the flowering of the enlightened mind. The empowerment is part of the process allowing the mind’s full potential to be revealed.

Generally, the term Wang refers to the power, authority and influence of a person. In the present context of use of the three words Wang, Lung and Thri, the meaning of Wang is a wholesome approach to awaken the essence of Buddha Nature in sentient beings and ripen the nature of mind and to destroy any delusion in our minds so that they become as clear as the immaculate mirror. In other words, Wang is a force for destroying afflictive emotions and for making mind as clear as its true nature, pouring the power of wisdom into a clean vessel. By means of rituals, we attain fruition in the form of blessings of the four kayas (dimensions) on our impermanent state and help ripen the true Buddha nature that lies within us.

The empowerment initiates a student into a particular tantric deity practice. By receiving the empowerment the student enters into a samaya connection with the teacher. The ritual for performing an empowerment can be divided into four parts:

1. Bum pai wang (Vase empowerment)
2. Sang wai wang (Secret empowerment)
3. She rab yeshe kyi wang (Wisdom empowerment)
4. Tshig wang rinpoche (Precious word empowerment)

The qualities of the empowerments:

1. The Vase (Bumpa) empowerment symbolises purification of the body, senses, and world into the body of the deity and may include a vase filled with water, or washing.

2. The Secret empowerment involves receiving nectar to purify the breath and speech (of the negative
karma accumulated through negative speech) into the speech of that deity.

3. The Wisdom Empowerment cleanses away the impious elements committed through negative thoughts of the mind. It grants the blessing of the Vajra (adamantine hard and clear) mind and enables ascent to the dharmakaya (truth body, or reality body) level of realisation.

4. The Precious Word Empowerment eradicates cognitive obscurations including defilements of body, speech and mind and grants the blessing with the Vajra wisdom and achieves the quality of svabhavikakaya (body of the essential nature of a Buddha) level of realisation. This fourth level can be seen as the sum of the other three levels.

Put in very simple terms, the purpose of receiving Empowerment is to be led safely and surely on the path towards spiritual betterment as a human being so that one may eventually attain the ultimate bliss. Group wangs held by various spiritual masters remain extremely popular in Bhutan. Held usually in the winter months in southern Bhutan, or in summer in the heartland, they are attended by thousands of devotees who have come from far and wide to avail of the opportunity of participation in such an important spiritual event.

1.3.2.5. Oral Transmission

The term Lung or jag lung means an oral transmission or reading transmission which is passed down from master to student and general devotees without missing any words and without making any commentaries. Nonetheless, simply listening to reading and studying the canons and scriptures is also considered an empowerment. The student listens to the teacher while reading the text by the master who holds a transmission, ultimately going back to the author of the text. In this way, the student receives the blessing of the lineage without which he or she will not be able to understand the text in depth. Some teachers even consider it inappropriate to read a Dharma text for which one has not yet received a transmission.

As it is said that, “acquiring oral transmission is prodigious learning,” the knowledgeable and learned people are those who have studied from different masters and elder citizens having knowledge of culture. We become knowledgeable by acquiring the following qualities:

- Getting an opportunity of learning various fields of knowledge.
- Single discipline but learned many times.
- Single discipline but learned from different masters.
- Learned together with many friends in the institutes.

Gaining these qualities, one becomes knowledgeable and well educated and even clears the doubts and finally acquires the quality of one with profound learning. Therefore, listening and receiving oral transmissions from eminent personalities and even from our parents is very important to become perfect human being.

1.3.2.6. Discourse/Instructions

Thrid literally means to lead or guide or take along the path. In the context of teaching, its meaning is to lead the sentient being to the Buddha land away from the swamp of samsara, or the guiding of sentient beings towards the path of enlightenment away from the vast ocean of worldly sufferings. Thrid can be further categorised as
1) pedoen lop thrid (guidance according to examples and meanings in the texts and commentaries);
2) mar thrid (guidance according to the absolute exposure of the meaning of a subject);
3) zub thrid (instruction by focus on detail within the subject)
4) sem thrid (mind guidance);
5) gom thrid (meditation guidance); and
6) thrid zab mo (profound guidance).

However, thrid also provides instruction and sometimes practical guidance in acquainting oneself with and gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Buddha’s words and discourses, as taught in detail by the spiritual teachers and masters.

1.3.3. Tuneless Oral Narration

As mentioned earlier, there are oral narrations, called khashey, that require a melody and other khashey that do not. Previously elderly people and people with good oratory skills used to make these narrations according to the situation and their level of knowledge and experience. Narrations could be long and rambling or else presented succinctly in the form of properly arranged prose based on teachings. However, there is no record of established standards in these matters.

1.3.3.1. Departure Salutation or Words of Farewell

Yah! Now you are leaving your home and going to live in places that are far away. You must not engage in activities that are evil and harmful to you as well as to the society. Avoid telling lies, stealing and acting against the laws and always do things according to the principles of dharma. Avoid company of evil people but indulge in acts that are beneficial to yourself and others. Always come to the aid of those who are in dire need of help. Attitudes like these will eventually help you achieve your goals. May you not be left behind so that people look back at you; May you not do things that become their gossip. Be alert in all your plans and actions and be respectful and devoted to the King and your superiors and your colleagues at all times.

This salutation statement is normally made while seeing off any relatives or friends, our children and sometimes even our parents. The content of the statement comprises advice shared with heartfelt purpose, and thus it is called Lamju-labja in Dzongkha. Lamju means at the time of separation, and labja means advice.

1.3.3.2. Mourning Statement (narration for the deceased)

Re kab (narration for the deceased) is a traditional custom in Bhutan and increasingly being practised by everyone in the country. The statement is normally made actually for the spirit of a dead person as a parting gift to him/her.

Yah! (Insert name) “Hereafter, you have already left the physical body and today it has been (Insert days) since you have abandoned the world. I make this offering (of money) to take with you (symbolically) as a gift to your spiritual Guru. Do not linger around in the intermediate world, but maintain faith in your master and go along the path that will lead you to the Buddha Field.”

In certain parts of eastern Bhutan, an eloquent person amongst family members and neighbours at the cremation recalls the activities of the deceased. After every one or two sentences from the narrator, the others weep. This unique tradition is called Ngu toed (rNgu bSod – weeping praise or a type of elegy.

1.3.3.3. Statement of Condolence

Statement of Condolence, called Sem-so, is constructed depending upon the situation (usually at the loss of parents, children, spouses or relatives). An example of a statement made to the bereaved family is given below.

This event has been unfortunate and I know you find it very hard to bear the loss. Nonetheless, it is only a matter of time as we are all destined to end in this way. After having been born in the realm of existence, as the saying goes, “there is no calling back after death and there is
no retrieving what is exhausted; in time, even the earth will crack open,” yet grieving is said to only cause the departed soul to suffer more in the intermediate state. Therefore, you must remain strong and concentrate on performing appropriate rituals so that the deceased will be able to find the right path. So you cannot afford to remain weak.

1.3.3.4. Propitiation to the Spirits

It is believed that there are 18 major evils or devils, 80,000 obstacles and 480 different types of diseases prevalent in this word. When we are possessed by any of these evils causing us to feel sick, the first thing we do is to consult the village astrologer to identify the causes. Then we conduct rituals to rectify the spells of the devil that took possession of the sick person by an eloquent person expert in the tradition. The ritual is called doen chhoe (propitiation of evil spirits). Laying out all the items required for the rituals, usually comprising all types of food consumed in the community and sur (roasted cereal flour mixed with butter and milk), the orator recites the words of propitiation in accordance with the tradition practised in the village, often in the local dialect, further refining the content according to his own skills and experience. A sample of such a propitiation conducted in one of the villages in western Bhutan is given below to illustrate this tradition.

“Phyi! Phyi! Phyi! Yah, the .... (Here the person who propitiated usually inserts the exact male or female birth year of the patient). Whoever is the possessor, whether you are cardinal King of the east or south or west or the north, whether you are the spirit of a dead male or female, an underground being or a local deity, whichever you are and from wherever you hail. You are intangible beings whereas we are tangible human forms. We cannot establish who you really are. But this person you have possessed has neither meat to eat nor the blood to drink. Starting this day, please let this (man or woman) regain the appetite to eat, peace to sleep, relieve him/her of this ailment just like the loosening of a belt on the waist, just like removing a rock from the bed, just like removing a hat from the head. Phyi! Phyi! Phyi! Leave the life, fortune and wealth behind but take the diseases and evils away with you. Phyi! Phyi! Phyi!

This is only an example of how evil spirits are appeased to cure a patient in local tradition. Beside this, there are similar narrations made while making offerings to zhi da (local deities) and ten-zug (offering of domestic animals to the deities).

1.3.4. Riddle

As in other countries, Bhutan has a number of Ngag tsed (oral games) and Khar tam (riddles), a popular indigenous oral tradition. The tradition of oral games is found in different regions in the country under different nomenclature. For example in the Tshangla speaking eastern region it is known as khar-shigpe, while it is shed-lo in the Cho cha Nga cha speaking areas. The people of Trashyangtse call it sho-long while it is called drop-drop khyp-khypep in Paro and Wang (Thimphu) and Thed (Punakha) valleys. The people of Shar valley (Wangduephodrang) call it shey-sheyp and the people of Haa call it pey-tam while the Bumthangpas call it by several names such as meg-meg chop-chop, phiko ding ding, migto-goto-nyam nyam. In Kurtoe (Lhuntse) district they call it megpa chop chop and the people of Merak and Sakteng call it en-tshen chi go do. In the southern region they call it gaong khane katha. Their ways of questioning also differ from each other.

Khar tam is an oral game played between two persons or groups in order to test each other’s quickness of wit. In the old days people used to bet on the outcome, with stakes ranging from personal items to the family home and even land ownership, often leading to the loser being ousted from his home village. This system of betting seems to point to the use of the word Khar in this game. Khar means home and tam means speech or statement. The two words have been put together as Khar-tam, to mean puzzling statements put forward...
for the opponents to solve. There are superstitious beliefs concerning the involvement of evil spirits while the game is being played. The believers are mostly the Tshangla speakers. It is said that after the game has been concluded, one must drive away or see off the evil spirits beyond the country’s border. This is called Don nung-mey (see off the evil spirits) in Tshangla language. If it is not done properly, it is believed that mishaps will occur in the village at any time and at any place.

Riddle is played like this- Question: “A thing that shows fist from the Sky? What is it? Do you know?” “If not, can you give that Mansion, Temple, Monastery, Dzong, Village or good livestock, whichever it may be?” If the respondent does not know the answer, then he/she should admit “I don’t know. Have it! What is the answer?” “Ok. The Mansion is now mine.” The answer is “The flower bud of the banana.” Thus, he/she wins the bet. Then it is the turn of the Respondent to ask the question, and so forth with the stake remaining the same.

In the context of games, in general terms a riddle is a question testing ingenuity in finding the answer. A riddle may sometimes be called an enigma, meaning a puzzling thing. Another term for riddle in conundrum, or conundrum, a riddle may sometimes be called an enigma, meaning a puzzling thing. Another term for riddle in conundrum, puzzle with a short answer.

Bhutanese riddles are of two types, generally fitting the definitions above:

- **Khar tam thung ku** (short riddle) enigma: a puzzle with a short answer
- **Khar tam rem** (extended riddle) conundrum: a riddle in which a fanciful question is answered with a witticism.

Elderly people with good knowledge of their local culture say “There are stories from the olden days when the loser had to go into exile”. Riddles are played mostly for entertainment but they also test how quick-witted one is. People of any age can participate and it is a platform to showcase astuteness and also a sharing and learning process. It is said that Khar tam thung-ku have always been the most popular amongst Bhutanese and that Khar tam rem are rarely practiced in the country. Educationists consider Khar tam rem to have been introduced by Indians and other foreign teachers after the establishment of the new education system in the early 1960s. A new oral tradition, the conundrum enriches cultural heritage, notwithstanding.

Following are some examples of enigmas:

### 1.3.4.1. Examples of riddles

#### Western Region

- It drinks from the dark lake; rests in the cliff but stays in the ground. What is it? **Writing pen.**
- A stooped old woman never satisfies her hunger. What is it? **Sickle.**
- Hands always stretching but no one gives. What is it? **Tree branches.**

#### Tshangla speakers

- It retreats during the day but comes out from the cave at night. What is it? **Door bolt.**
- It becomes rich at night but poor during the day. What is it? **Peg to tether the cattle.**
- A tall girl carrying a flat stone on her back. What is it? **Fingernails.**

#### Merak and Sakteng

- An tshen chi go go. Ten tall sisters each carrying a flat stone on her back. What is it? **The ten fingers.**
- An tshen chi go go. There is a huge lake on either side of a gigantic mountain. What is it? **Nose and two eyes.**
- An tshen chi go go. Two sisters, competing for their height. What is it? **Two pestles in motion.** (That is, pestles used for pounding rice or roasted corn)

#### Kurtoep speakers

- Sholo sholo doh sholo. A red bag with golden coins inside. What is it? **Red chillies.**
- Sholo sholo doh sholo. A very tall person wearing a half gho. What is it? **Prayer flags.**
- Sholo sholo doh sholo. Beneath the earth, a pair of cymbals beating. What is it? **Turnip.**
Bumthang

- **meo meo chop chop/ phe ko ding ding/ mig to gu to nyam nyam**
  
  One who questions: **mig to gu to nyam nyam**
  
  Responder: **nyam nyam** (only once while starting)

- A handful of crystal stones lying in a cave. What is it? **Teeth.**

- Two bulls are about to fight, but hindered by a ridge. What is it? **Two eyes and the nose.**

- A hermit meditating in a cave. What is it? **Tongue.**

**Lho tsham speakers**

- Channel of the sky, fields of leaves, five assistants but a lone worker. What is it? **Pen**

- Spears on the tip of a small tree. What is it? **Wheat**

- Small and tiny figure but, jumps energetically. What is it? **Grasshopper**

1.3.4.2. Examples of Conundra

**Question:** There is a rooster perching on the tree. It is facing towards north and its tail pointing to the south. As strong wind blows from south to north, if the rooster laid an egg, on which side will it fall?

**Answer:** Rooster will never lay an egg.

**Question:** Once in a village, there lived four friends. All of them are physically impaired. One is blind; one deaf; another dumb and the last one has no legs. They have planned to make a visit to another village. So, how will they go?

**Answer:** Eventually, limbless will guide and the dumb will carry him and the other two will follow.

1.3.4.3. See-off the Riddle Evil Spirits

Though there is neither written nor oral account for evidence of evil spirits’ involvement in the riddle game yet, that belief still prevails in the mind of Tshangla people. As it is part of a cultural tradition which has been handed down through the centuries and taught to them by their forefathers they didn’t see any need to question them as to how the belief came about. This is a sad situation, as there are hardly any villagers who have any knowledge about how the evil spirit is supposed to dwell in the riddle game. And, why drive evil spirits beyond borders? However, the wordings are narrated by an eloquent person and others say the names of different places and gradually lead up to calling out the names of places that are beyond the borders.

Thus, I present here the wordings of how to see off the evil spirits. Lyrics are actually the names of different tools associated with *kam-thag* (cotton weaving); *kres-shing* (machine to segregate cotton and seed), *sonda-ring* (spin wheel), *wai-dam* (reed), *pun pa-lang* (end feed shuttle), *key-thag* (wrist belt), *shugu-dong* (bigger reed to help heddles separate the threads) and *thag-chung* (beater plank).

**Lyrics**

- *kre kre kre-ta shing* [son son son-da-ring] [wai-dam dam thur mey-ne] [pun pa-lang thur mey-ne] [key-thag dom thur mey-ne] [sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne] [thag-chung dong thur meyne] O sheg-pa-ya don? (Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of villages and places.

- *kre kre kre-ta shing* [son son son-da-ring] [wai-dam dam thur mey-ne] [pun pa-lang thur mey-ne] [key-thag dom thur mey-ne] [sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne] [thag-chung dong thur meyne] O sheg-pa-ya don? (Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of villages and southern places.

- *kre kre kre-ta shing* [son son son-da-ring] [wai-dam dam thur mey-ne] [pun pa-lang thur mey-ne] [key-thag dom thur mey-ne] [sho-gu-dong dong thur mey-ne] [thag-chung dong thur meyne] O sheg-pa-ya don? (Where did the evil spirit arrive?) Mention the name of places across border.

1.3.5. Tongue-twister

*Chetsal* or tongue-twister is another form of sung or spoken word game, using words or groups of words designed to be difficult to articulate properly, usually because of a succession of similar sounds. Tongue-twisters can be long or short and are popular among Bhutanese of all ages.
There are countless tongue-twisters in different languages in Bhutan. There is neither an age barrier nor the need for a good place to play this complicated word game, therefore young and old alike can play it anytime and anywhere. Nowadays, every district in Bhutan is experiencing the effects of rapid changes and the trend towards globalisation. Due to rural-urban migration and youngsters’ involvement in modern education and other forms of entertainment, the tongue-twister game is increasingly left unpractised and consequently has now become an endangered oral tradition. Nevertheless, there are elderly people who have good knowledge of this game and there is still a chance to revive and document it.

Following are a few examples of the tongue twister.

1.3.5.1. Short Tongue-twister

Dzongkha:
- Si si sha mu ka sha sha za sho
- Thab ki jabs ki tsha ja zi ka sha tsha za sho
- Thab ki jabs ki ja zi nyim di tsha ja zi
- Gu mai shom da tu pag pa se se shom da sab ke ke
- Nya rui li nga li rui li li (Nya means arrow and li means bow)
- Pba gi lo gi ja jai gu to tsha za sho.

1.3.5.2. Longer Tongue-twister

In the longer tongue-twister, one goes on repeating the sentence as long as one’s breath lasts without missing the order and clarity of the words.

Dzongkha:
- Pebi me thang gi poen lap le jil ki ka tsha chi da ma -tsha nyl jil li li bu jam chil jil li nyl bu jam nyl jil li sum bu jam sum jil li zhi bu jam zhi jil li nga bu jam nga jil li dru bu jam dru jil li duen bu jam duen jil li gye bu jam gye hji li bu jam gu hji li chu than bu jam chu than (and so on)
- Ta chi ga chi sab chi thiw chi ta nyl ga nyl sab nyl thiw nyl ta sum ga sum sab sum thiw sum ta zhi ga zhi sab chi thiw zhi ta nga ga nga sab nga thiw nga ta dru ga dru sab dru thiw dru ta duen ga duen sab duen thiw duen ta gye ga gye sab gye thiw gye ta gu ga gu sab gu thew gu ta chu than ga chu than sab chu than thew chu than (and so on)

1.3.6. Childlore

Popularly known as aloi lu in Dzongkha, childlore is the folklore or folk culture of children and young people. It is concerned with activities which are learned and passed on by children to one another, through games, songs, chants and so forth. Childlore chants of western Bhutan have no tune so it is no more than just a recitation as a poem. Childlore in Kheng and eastern Bhutan comprises chants sung or recited without melody. There are a large number of childlore chants and songs in Bhutan with similar styles but in different language. Almost all childlore chanting contains rhyming words and lines linking from one to the other.

1.3.6.1. Western Region

Let the children play;
They need a small basket to play;
The basket needs canes to weave;
The cane needs a knife to cut;
But the knife is with the blacksmith;
You need la-tsi (musk) to please the blacksmith. But, la tsi is with the brokpa;
You need bangchang to please the brokpa;
You need a chang sho to sieve the chang.

So, you want a mare;
And you want a foal from a mare;
You want to send the foal to India;
And bring money from India;
So you want to take money to Tibet;
And bring flag clothes from Tibetan;
And hoist a flag on the roof of your home.
1.3.6.2. Kheng Speakers (central Bhutan)

Brother Moon!
Give me the leftover food;
It was kept on a shelf;
Where is the shelf?
It was burnt in a fire;
Where is the fire?
It was put out by water;
Where is the water?
It was drunk by an ox;
Where is the ox?
It fell down a cliff;
Where is the cliff where the ox fell?
A flood washed it away;
Where are the remains washed away by the flood?
Artemisia plants have grown over it;
Where are Artemisia plants?
An ox has eaten them;
Where is the ox?
It was taken for ploughing;
Where is the ploughed land?
Maize has been grown;
Where are the maize crops?
It has been cooked;
Where is the cooked maize?
It was kept on a shelf;
Where is the shelf?
It was burnt by a fire.

1.3.6.3. Tshangla Speakers

Oh Brother Moon!
Where do you sleep?
On the bank of Kuri (chu);
What do you eat?
I eat rice;
What is your curry?
Fish from the Gongri (chu);
Where is your leftover food?
Left on the manual grinding stone;
Where is the manual grinder?
It was burnt by fire;
Where is fire?
It was put out by water;
Where is water?
It was drunk by ja tsba (a hybrid ox);
Where is the ox?
The ox was taken to the field for ploughing;
Where is the field?
The ox was scratched up by the chicken.
Where is the chicken?
It is on the man shing (name of a tree);

Where is the man shing?
It was cut down by the axe;
Where is the axe?
The axe was thrown in the blacksmith’s workshop with a clang.

1.3.7. Moral Instructions

Moral instructions deal with skills and qualities that should be learnt, secured and practised that have been formulated by thinkers, leaders, teachers and elders and other wise beings in accordance with the needs of worldly living. Sometimes they are also known as the oral instructions of spiritual teachers, who have created them as the guiding precepts for their followers and other lay people. As such, they are called lab ja (bslab bya) or zhal dam (precious words) in Dzongkha.

Once born into this world as human beings, it is most important that both the spiritual and temporal aspects of our lives be conducted in accordance with the dharma and with the law. Therefore, it is important to learn the meaning and implications of moral instructions so that we understand the difference between good and bad acts, so that can avoid bad thoughts and acts just as we reject poisons, and can embrace good thoughts and acts just as we cherish medicines. In this way it is possible to be of service in our beautiful mountain kingdom, just as the sun in a cloudless sky is able to send its light and warmth to all parts of the world in equal measure.

Moral instructions are given in order to guide others in their thoughts and acts. Therefore such instructions should be provided with a calm but assured approach, sometimes with great humility, sometimes with feeling, and often outwardly in a remonstrative manner. But
inwardly the goal should be to help others to be true to their fundamentally good and compassionate natures.

Moral instructions are of different types as given below:
1. Instructions related to dharma given by lamas and saints,
2. Guidelines of our forefathers to steer their young people and children along the right path,
3. Affectionate and Reassuring;
4. Reproach or Rebuke,
5. Encouragement, and
6. Indirect advice.

1.3.7.1. Religious Precepts

*Koon chog sum* (the Three Jewels) including the root teachers are the ultimate guardian, protector and refuge for all Bhutanese who have faith in the Buddha Dharma. For Buddhists, there are three obligatory instructions to follow. These comprise three abstentions, three adoptions and three general instructions.

a. The three abstentions

i. After taking refuge in the Buddha, do not take refuge in mundane gods.

ii. After taking refuge in the Dharma, refrain from harming any sentient beings.

iii. After taking refuge in the Sangha, do not rely on people who oppose the sacred doctrine.

b. The three adoptions

i. Having taken refuge in the Buddha, do not neglect or destroy old images or any material pieces found from damaged images.

ii. Starting from a single letter which contains the meaning of sacred doctrine, meditate on this and take it as the Buddha Dharma.

iii. Pay respect not only to monks but also to those who wear red, yellow and orange and even to a piece of cloth lying on the ground.

c. The three general instructions

i. After taking refuge in the Buddha, one should have the same regard and respect for an image resembling the Buddha or one that is damaged as for a true image of the Buddha.

ii. After taking refuge in the Dharma, one should regard even a single syllable that is related to the Dharma as the precious Dharma of the Buddha.

iii. After taking refuge in the Sangha, one should avoid abusing anything that bears the sign of the member of Sangha or carelessly disposing of any cloth that is red, orange or yellow in colour.
1.3.7.2. General Instructions

Having settled in the community of worldly beings, no matter how superior you may be in terms of your social class, knowledge and rank or how humble you may be, it is very important to observe and live in accordance with the cultural and traditional norms inherited from our forefathers. Therefore, all good and positive activities that benefit not only ourselves but even all the humanity are to be followed and practiced in accordance with the instructions of the enlightened beings. The following instructions are translated from the works of Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182-1251) written in the "leg she thruel gi dra wa".

Alas!

The fortunate ancient time has gone;
The wise and knowledgeable elders have passed away;
Stupid people are now born;
The knot of sacred Dharma has loosened;
The fragile rope of human traditions has been disconnected;
The golden yoke of secular law is broken;
The ocean of basic negotiations has dried;
The Tiger pattern of heroic courage has disappeared;
The essence of prosperity and shame has been vanished;
The soul of nobilities is unprotected;
While the behaviour of immoral human beings is allowed;
Ignoring the future advantages;
Counting only for temporary existence;
Neglecting the noble culture;
Adopting the deluded cultures;
Not following the advice of eminent beings;
But following the foolish people;
Not equalizing the noble acts;
Seeing numerous people engaging in unwholesome acts;
Instead of following the noble ones.

Thereby, in order to bear good fruition, whatever you undertake first, build confidence and trust in the Three Jewels. Though success depend entirely on the previous karma and accumulated merits, cautious acts at present times is important. Enthusiasm and vigour are important tools to accomplish your dreams and wishes. Attaining the heights will be difficult for those that lack counselling and forward moving. Knowing one's limit of the present is the ultimate sign of a courageous man.

1.3.7.3. Heartfelt Advice

Do not show too much softness even to your child,
He/she cannot adjust with the customs later;
Never hate too much even to your enemies;
One will bear the karmic consequence even if you are victorious;
Do not be too dependent even to your beloved ones,
You may be hostile to each other later;
Do not explode too much even to your servant;
There will be no one around you later;
Do not suppress too much on your subject;
They will keep in their mind;
Do not act partially even to your friends;
It will create wound in their heart;
Do not instruct odd customs even to others;
It will harm even to you later;

The kindness of a person is dependent on his/her character;
Be humble,
Humbleness depends on how talkative you are;
Do no talk nonsense.
The distinction of intelligence and stupidity depends on how one understands the wisdom in others;
Take time to judge,
Cleverness and foolishness depends on how independent one is;
Be independent.
Do not talk too much,
Do not forget whatever you said,
Do not accept everything that is offered;
Accomplish whatever you have accepted.
Do not admit any questions;
Be absolutely sure what you have admitted
A bad person is unfit in society
Be wholesome person
A garrulous person is unfit among friends
Do not talk too much.
A bad person by nature is unfit for company;
A person without the knowledge of tripitaka is unfit as a Buddha's follower;
A person not afraid of defilements is unfit among dharma practitioners.

[Translation ends here.]
who love us sound harsh as beneficial medicines taste bitter,” though we consider them as harsh, scolding and physical punishments are intended to divert us from the paths of wrong doing.

1.3.8. Proverbs and Aphorisms

In Bhutan, proverbs and aphorisms are widely used both in general conversation and talks, and also in more structured settings. This is popularly known as Pebe tam or Pe tam and also considered as one of the ornaments of the art of speech. Literally, Pebe/pe means example, simile, illustration and tam means speech, conversation, talk or an account. Thus, Pebe tam is a figure of speech which appears often in a phrase or short verses. Pebe tam are composed by intellectuals and wise people, based on after based on experiences and truths and often used to show the right direction to youths. Some proverbs are extracted from lozey and it appears in verse, prose and sometimes in mixture of both verse and prose.

The terms Pebe tam, Pe tam, Kha tam, Leg she, Lung drang and Lab ja are synonyms and used by different people in their respective languages. They are considered the ornaments to the way of speaking and important part of our speech.

As “proverbs are the ornaments of speech” without the use of some proverbs our conversations are like dead plants without leaves and flowers, while a speech decorated with proverbs is well received by listeners. Proverbs are classified as two types:

1.3.8.1. Religious proverbs

Any proverbs that convey the concept of sacred Dharma and are told by spiritual masters, parents and elders to guide their followers on the path of virtue are called choe drel gi pebe tam (religious or spiritual proverbs).

For example:

- Peace and suffering are like the sun in the summer season; it shines and then disappears a moment later.

1.3.8.2. Laity Proverbs

Jig ten pai pe tams (secular proverbs) are mostly associated with the daily activities of ordinary people. These are mostly composed by experienced and learned elders and by the enlightened beings to direct our actions along the right path.

- The bird on top of the tree and the sun on top of the pass. Sow the seeds in spring, rear livestock in summer, store the grain in autumn and conduct rituals in the winter season.

- The normal traditional life of the village, even the mighty King cannot change.

- If you want to feed on a boneless fish and reap fruits without undergoing hardships, you must be born a fortunate person.

- Eat what is acceptable to your body, attire yourself in accordance with time and tradition, speak as appropriate for the occasion, do your work at the right time and make your best effort, bear burdens according to your strength, and make plans according to your ability.

1.3.9. Poem

A literary work written in a meter, verse, prose or in a mixture of both verse and prose with various types of speech used is called Nyan tsom or just Tsom (ode, a poem or poetry). These are written according to the level of education and knowledge of the writer with the purpose of communicating to the readers or listeners the intended messages in poetic sentences.

These written pieces can either be sung or just narrated and mostly written in Chokey. The subject of Tsom covers all genres such as narratives for example legends, stories, human dilemmas, relationships, descriptions, commentaries and elegy, satirical and verse fable etc. Beside these, Ka-tsom (alphabetical poetry), is a unique poetry genre and it is as popular among farmers as among literate and/or articulate people. It is a type of acrostic poem whose first line begins with the first Dzongkha letter (ka), follows alphabetically and ends with the last letter (A). Thus it will have 30 lines. Similarly, there is an ode called a Tsom (reversed alphabetical poetry) it starts with the last letter (A).
and ends with the first letter (ka). This literary form became popular among common people to describe the world around them which is sensitively portrayed through many symbols and metaphors. Lyricists were mostly lamas, monks and scholars who had and have undergone monastic education and are highly learned persons. In the Tibetan way of definition, *nyen ngag* refers not merely to poetry in verse but to pleasant composition, a Buddhist tradition derived from ancient Indian poetic text called *Kavya* in Sanskrit. Normally, *Tsom* appears in any of these forms: *Tshig ched* (verse), *Tshig lhug* (prose), and *Pel ma* (the two mixed in alternating sequence).

Tshig ched simply means that each line of text has a certain number of words to it, having odd numbers starting from 5, 7, 9, 11 till 21 although longer lines are occasionally seen. Tshig lhug is text which has not been written in lines of defined numbers of words and hence which is literally ‘relaxed text’. Pel ma is a type of written composition where verse and prose are alternated by turns.

### 1.3.9.1. Religious Poetry

Khedrup Kunga Wangpo (1505- ) the heart son of Vidyadhara Padma Lingpa (1450-1521) composed with whatever emanated in his mind, at the time of gaining realisation and experience while meditating at the cave of Rangjung Pal Gyi Phodrang at the neck of a mountain which looked like a great gliding Garuda near the hidden country of Khenpa Jong in Kurtoed.

[I] supplicate to all the venerable gurus;  
May your blessings purify all my defilements;  
May I be naturally diffused with the sacred doctrine;  
In the sphere of cloudless light;  
Blessed by the essence of Sun and Moon;  
Ornamenting the four worlds beautifully;  
Clouds of the southern world are not affected by darkness;  
On the mountain tops rising like pinnacles;  
Dwells the carnivorous Snow Lion;  
Content with the turquoise coloured mane;  
The fierce blizzard does not cover it;  
In the deep golden Ocean;  
Lives the blessed skilful fish;  
While pursuing the pleasure of food;  
The perilous sharp hook does not harm it;  
In the exquisite mature forest;  
Live the agile, acrobatic monkeys;  
While it is their destiny to pick flowers;  
Missed the hands of the hooligans;  
The centre of a vajra cliff;  
Is the blessed ground of the Garudas, King of birds;  
Whilst eating its meal, the black snakes;  
Does not disturb the ferocious mind of Vajrapani;  
In the magnificent mansion of the world;  
Kunga Wangpo has settled well;  
Practicing the Buddha Dharma by destiny;  
Is not affected by the untimely death;  
The monks who are connected by karmic destiny;  
Well settled under a Lama;  
Practicing on the sacred teaching;  
Do not embrace negative thoughts and disloyalty;  
To the knowledge of primordial purity;  
There exist sectarianism and prejudice without limit;  
To an unblemished ultimate essence;  
Do not bathe with incidental impure water;  
To all the faithful people congregated here;  
I, Ngagi Wangpo the aged one;  
While expanding the branches of realisation;  
It is an inherent nature of varied study;  
Who will dishonour to the words of Vajra;  
What certainty is there of the wrong viewed persons;  
Create mental base to practice in accordance with the Dharma;  

### 1.3.9.2. Narrative Poem

A narrative poem extracted from the *sung bum* of the 9th *Je Khenpo* (chief abbot) Shakya Rinchen (1710-1759) and presented here in translation.

In the mountainous country filled with bountiful flowers;  
An open place where wild animals make playful dance;  
Where one can hear melodious songs of birds;  
In a peaceful solitude and sacred hermitage;  
A hermit, contemplating of visualization;  
From you guys, who enjoy health and wealth?  
Milk and butter along with a letter;  
Sent with pure faith and loyalty;  
I have received parcel without any damages;  
[I] the follower of Buddha, dwelling in this place;  
Without having any part of vast knowledge;  
Have been practicing just bearing the name of Lama;  
Without having any part of vast knowledge;  
Without having any part of vast knowledge;  
My life while connected with distractions;  
Just like the pond where the flow of the stream is dried from above;  
Without realising, it is being gradually ended;  
While the death arrives inadvertently;  
There is no solution but to suffer as destiny;  
Means the nose ring that binds you as humans;
The assembly of self without freedom;  
Whoever we see fascinates our mind;  
While you are in a hermitage comfortably;  
Like the yogis of the ancient times;  
Spending time committed towards Dharma;  
This is fruition of numerous generations;  
Of accumulation by countless virtues; 
Again towards the useless distractions in this life;  
By not involving in such meaningless acts;  
Just like the freedom gained by supreme masters;  
[If] concentrated on the success and clearing doubts; 
Fulfil the great achievements for both present and future;  
This is a clearly said as the heartfelt advice.

1.3.9.3. Alphabetic Poem (kha tsom)

A poem constructed in alphabetical order is known as a kha tsom. Each letter generates a poetic sentence and yet connects the essence with the other sentences. Translations of such a poem cannot do full justice in the same sequence. Given below is a praising alphabetical poem by khenpo (master/scholar) Tshering Dondup dedicated to his root master, His Holiness Drub Wang Pema Norbu Rinpoche, and presented here in translation:

May all be good and well!  
From the manifestation of ultimate emptiness of primordial purity;  
A physical manifestation with incandescent rainbow; 
However, [its] an excellent master that liberates all the sentient beings;  
It is you who knows! My only refuge Drub Wang Lama; 
Melodious tone of speech without noisy crowds;  
By the nectar of heartfelt instructions with completeness; 
To the sentient beings attracted towards the foodstuff;  
[He] takes care with love and affection like the rays of the Moon;  
The essence of vast and in depth knowledge of Tathgata;  
[It is] a natural condition of inseparable union of experience and emptiness;  
The acquired profound knowledge of the present are;  
Beyond the dualistic fixation of immature thoughts and expressions;  
Within the dharmadhatu sphere of cognizance and bliss of pramita;  
Though the guardian of sentient beings, the single father had already left;  
An affection of love similar to the cow herder;  
There is no other companion than you, the protector of all the sentient beings;  
In the world of numerous sacred places of India, Nepal Tsari;  
Undergoing unbearable hardships of heat and cold weather;  
For the thriving Dharma of teaching and practice in all the directions;  
No monk or unachieved master can compare with you;  
Lord of ordained monks wearing red and yellowish robes;  
The great Yogi, who has no concept of accepting and rejecting of material things;  
The steersman of all desperate and helpless sentient beings;  
You are the definite wondrous emanation of bodhisattvas;  
In the world bounded by eight worldly concerns of five poisons;  
Even traveling all over the directions throughout days and nights;  
As you are the only personification of love and kindness;  
Please! Hold on till the attainment of the land and the path of Buddha;  
Extremely amazing the qualities of you, the protector;  
[It is] beyond our knowledge being the principle of ati yoga;  
Nevertheless, as propelled by my unwavering faith;  
[1] make offering of your great qualities, my Lord, in this melodious song.

1.3.9.4. Ode of Advice

Ode of advice of His Eminence, Lama Norbu Wangchuk alias Tshangkha Rinpoche to his nephew, Choeki Dorji:

Listen here! [My] nephew Choe dor (short form of Choeki Dorje);  
As I (maternal uncle) become heavy, burdened by age;  
Even though the time of singing has passed;  
Some kind words are offered here for you;  
As a sign of mastering the knowledge of general science;  
Words as beautiful as lotus plants, Decorated by the ornaments of poetry, Should enchant the hearts of scholarly masters;  
As a sign of mastering the unique internal science;  
The great and astounding skandhas as the basis;  
By the might of realising the ultimate nature;
Should fascinate the heart of scholars who realised the essence;
As a sign of mastering the vital Sutra and Mantra;
The essence of Buddha nature as the basis;
Knowing all the cyclic existence and transcendence;
Should charm the heart of all supreme teachers;
Even the well-being of celestial realms;
Seeing the suffering of heat and cold of the hell below;
Should strike their desiring mind;
As a sign of mastering the three perfect qualities of refuge;
By giving away the present well-being to the wind;
And making great effort to attain the ultimate bliss;
Should appeal to the hearts of people leading purposeless lives;
You, Chokey Dorje [my] youthful nephew;
Examine meaning of the seven points of realisation above;
No need to advise if you see their meaning;
If you have not, stimulate yourself again and again;
[Thus] from Tshangkha monastery;
By an old man of dog year cast aside from the mist of mankind;
Composed a poem of what came to mind.

Written quickly while in the bed of my retreat.

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English References


