

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 tsang mo 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 Kurtoc (Kurtoc 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 *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).

1.2.4.2. Ceremonial Recitation (another version)

Wo la so la! In this prosperous and splendid year
perfected by the stars and planets,
In this moment, enriched by music and prosperity;
During the waxing period of good fortune;
In the sky, shine the auspicious stars;
On the land, all enjoy prosperity;
In the middle, the Sun is so warm;
At this moment of threefold auspiciousness;

As in the words of the protector of sentient beings, the
noble Tsangpa Gyare;
Prepare for a good omen and embrace auspicious
occasions;
One may perfect the occasion to profusion.

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 tshechu 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 tshachu 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 from *Dragsho*, *Lamas*, *Tshongpon* and *Jinda* (*whichever it is*) out of great affection and appreciation.

Thus, the atsara expresses his gratitude. According to elderly people, the prayers and wishes made by an *Atsara* can come true in our lifetime. *Laepe go!* (Well done!)

1.2.4.4. Narration About an Arrow

There are quite a number of *boedra* (Bhutanese folk songs) dedicated to an arrow which can be danced in a group. But, this description of an arrow is similar to lozey in terms of creation, usage of different speeches and length but popularly, any descriptions as mentioned

are called *kha shey* 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 *Deu 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 paisangay* (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 folktale, 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.