

Takila Chha Festival

The Chha (ལྷ) celebration is one of the age-old traditions and offering made to the local deities by the some of the communities in Lhuntse. The Chha festival is held at the Takila temple. Takila temple is the place where Gadpo (གདཔོན) and Ganmo (གནམ་མོ) statues meant for Chha festival is being kept. Takila Chha (སྐྱུག་གི་ལྷ་ལྷུ) is celebrated for four days to make offerings to the local deities of Wokhor Zhelngo (ཨོལ་འཕོང་ཞེལ་ངོ) and Kharshong Zhelngo (ཨོལ་འཕོང་ཞེལ་ངོ). Each day has its own unique activities.

Day one

The event begins at Phagidoong village from the evening of 13th day of the 7th month of the Bhutanese calendar. Sixteen people, eight male (including leader) wearig tender branches of tree on their head called *guthoe* (མགུ་ཐོང) or turban and eight female from lower Tangmachu valley wearing traditional garments Kigo Shingka (རྒྱུ་མོ་ཤིང་ཀ་) standing in single line begin dance known as Bro at Phagidoong village. The group leader, who is known as Bropon (བོ་དཔོན) guide the dance. It is believed that the dance is an offering to Wokhor Zhelngo (female) and Kharshong Zhelngo (male). These two nobilities are considered as the heads of the village



Day Two

The celebration continues at Baypazur near big cypress tree close to Kusunphel village. The cluster of dancers extends reciting Bro under the cypress tree.



At the same time a new group of Bro dancers from upper Tangmachu-Khashiling joins the event. It is believed that the dance of the day is an offering to the local deity of Kusunphel village called Chammi (ཇམ་མི), which is symbolized by one of the folks from the community. The community folks believe that Chhami male is nominated only from Dompola's family of Kusunphel as per the direction of an astrologer. The event commences with election of Chhami and escorting him to Baypazur. Once he arrives at Baypazur, he is offered with fresh food, locally brewed alcohol, fish, and Bro dance led by Bropon. Chhami then blesses the local community. The local community then offers food, alcohol, tea, etc. to the people gathered in their respective places called Doksa (དོག་ས་).

During the Chha festival, different village communities have their own designated place to settle. The group of village community settled during the particular day is called *doksa* by local people. Towards the evening, the Bropon and Bro dancers see off the Chhami to his residence, thereby ending the daylong celebration.



Day Three

On the 15th day of the 7th month of the Bhutanese calendar, the celebration of the third day Chha is held at Takila temple where present Guru Rinpoche's statue stands. The two groups continue with recitation of the Bro and there is also a dance of Gonpo (མགོན་པོ་) and Gonmo (མགོན་མོ་), also known as Mahakala (མ་ཉ་ཀ་ལ) and Mahakali (མ་ཉ་ཀ་ལི). The celebration is an offering made to Gonpo and Gonmo.



The celebration begins with a dance inside the temple and followed by Bro dancing outside. When Gonpo and Gonmo dance outside the temple, community starts offering foods and beverages and pray for good health and blessing.





Throughout the festival phase, one of the interesting engagements is playing with the *boma*, raw rice that is boiled, dried and is fried in sand. The ladies and men form groups, and play with the Boma, by rubbing each other's face with *boma*.



On the last day of the celebration, the 11 people including five from Tangmachu and six from Kharshong gathers at Baypazur (near the cypress tree) and conduct demon propitiating. It is locally known as Duegi Tangrab (ལྷ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ). In earlier days, the Duegi Tangrab was done by killing a pig. The slaughtered pig would be kept on a flat stone and Chhami, who carries leave to make seat cushion, has to sleep near to pig and narrate his dream. At present, instead of slaughtering pig, the 11 people collect five kilograms of pork and make offerings by cutting it into 100 pieces, along with fruits and wine. The day-long celebration ends with offerings to Chhami the *boma*, beverages and other food items at his house.

Sonam Chopel is a researcher at Shejun Agency for Bhutan's Cultural Documentation and Research.