

Tashi Gachak

Tashi Gachak (ཏེ་གཤམ་གྲོ་ལོ་ལྷན་པོ་) which literally translates as horse dies, is a day in the calendar that reflects the Bhutanese traditional belief that a saddle break is the most inauspicious day to begin a journey. During those days when horses were the primary means of transport, it was believed that the horse would die and the saddle break if one begins a journey on such an inauspicious day.

Those who begin their journey on the day of Tashi Gachak are said to be sure to face life-threatening obstacles and suffer loss. Even the great Yogi Jetsün Milarepa is said to have lost his only personal worldly possession, i.e., an earthen pot in which he cooked nettle leaves for his meal while meditating in the mountains, because he began a journey on the day of Tashi Gachak.

The Tashi Gachak days are 2nd, 8th, 14th, 20th and 26th of the lunar month. The 6th, 12th, 18th, 24th and 30th are also considered to be inauspicious but not quite as bad. People are generally discouraged from travelling on Tashi Gachak days. If for some reason the person cannot avoid travelling on such an inauspicious day, then one of the common remedial practices is to perform *lamgyü* (ལམ་གྱུ་). *Lamgyü* is to act as if you are beginning your journey on a different day, often the preceding day, by enacting departure from home. People would often carry luggage or some belongings outside from the house, and leave them some distance away with friends or neighbors. They then pick up the things once they start the real journey. The other antidote is to perform *lhabsang* ritual before departure and also seek blessings and special mantra prayers from lamas. The auspicious days to begin a journey are the 1st, 7th, 13th, 19th, and 25th, 5th, 11th, 17th, 23rd, and 29th days of the lunar month. The 4th, 10th, 16th, 22nd and 28th are considered average.

If one encounters a funeral procession at the very outset of one's journey to some faraway places it is considered a good sign and the journey set forth can be a fruitful one. But, if at the outset of one's journey to a distant place one comes across a dead animal without any sign of physical injury or without its head, it signals disaster. It is advisable to discontinue your journey, maybe postpone it until the next favorable day. There are many such beliefs in Bhutan about omens being auspicious or inauspicious for travel.

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