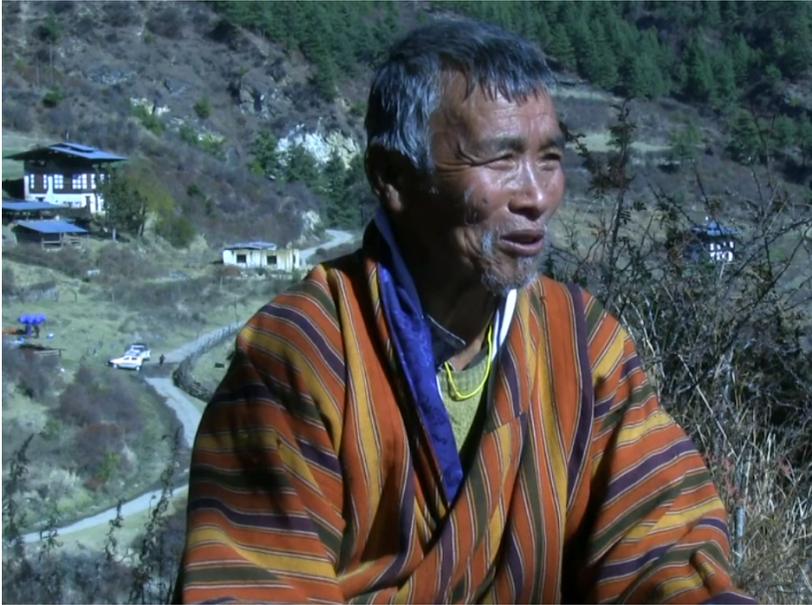


Karma Nyadru: The New Year Festival of Dogar Gewog

People in different regions have their own ways of celebrating the New Year (ལོ་གསར་པ་). People of Shar and Wang celebrate Nyilo (ཉི་ལོ་); those of Haa and Paro observe Lomba (ལོ་འབག), Lhotshampa celebrate Dasai (དགའ་ཉི་) and Doyas observe Lo (ལོ་) while the Sharchops celebrate Chunyipai Losar (བཟུ་གཉིས་པའི་ལོ་གསར་པ་). Similarly, people of Dogar Gewog have a festival called Karma Nyadru (ཀར་མ་ཉི་འདུག) to welcome the New Year. Generally, people have a belief that Karma Nyadru is celebrated by all the sections of the village of Dogar region in Paro. Karm refers to the stars in the sky and the star in this particular case refers to the group of stars consisting known to many as Pleiades and to the Bhutanese as Karma Mindrug (ཀར་མ་མིན་ལྷུག). Nya (ཉི་) refers to the full. Thus, Nyadru refers to the full moon and six stars. As the full moon and six stars are said to come together, the festival came to be known as 'Karm Nyarub' in Dogar.



Interview with Sherab Dorji on Karm Nyadru festival

According some local sources, the tradition of celebrating Karm Nyadru was started one of the disciples of Lam Barawa called Lam Peljor Gyeltsen. Lam Peljor Gyeltsen and his close friend Chilkarwa came to Dogar village and established their place of residence on a hill above the village. From that time onwards Lam Peljor Gyeltsen started this as a custom of celebrating Karm Nyadru in the village. Since then it has continued to be passed down to the succeeding generations. There are two versions of this event. In one version, the people believed that Pleiades and the Moon are male and female respectively. They meet only once a year on the fifteenth day of the tenth month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar. On the occasion of their meeting, people of Dogar join in

celebrating the Karm Nyadru to worship the moon and the Pleiades and pray to receive from them happiness and prosperity throughout the year.

The other version says that the Moon and the Pleiades represents Jaza (ཇམ་ཟེ་) and Belza (བལ་ཟེ་), and the celebration marks their coming together.

In order to prepare for the Karm Nyadru celebration, the relatives of the villages those who live away from the village return to the village before the 15th day of the 10th month to worship the moon. It is an occasion for great excitement. As a part of the festive event, the women prepare fruits, fill offering bowls with milk and water before the moon is up. For instance, when the Haaps celebrate their new year, they relish on höntö (མོན་ཏོ་), a kind of dumpling made from buckwheat flour and stuffed with green leaves of turnip. Similarly, on the Karm Nyadru, people of the Dogar region prepare a meal called *pasha* (པཤ་), stewed pork, rice and tea. A slice of *pasha* or pork must be provided for each and every member in the family and put on the plate.



Men head for the forest to fetch the lhashing

In a unique tradition during the Karm Nyadru festival, the people of the Dogar village raise the Lhashing (ལམ་ཤིང་). At about midday, all the men gather to bring down the Lhashing from the forest. They march towards the abode of the *dralha* (དྲལ་ལྷ) deity at the top of their village to offer him alcohol, food and to invoke his blessings. They entrust the deity with the responsibility of protecting the men while bringing the Lhashing from the forest. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, these men head for the forest to fetch the Lhashing.



Abode of the Dralha Wangdi at the top of the Langmikha village

The reason for raising the Lhashing in the village is that once there was a Neydrem Zaku Gem (གནས་བྱེད་ཟ་གུ་མལོ་ནམོ་), which is a non-human being who used to visit the village quite frequently. The Neydrem brought forth diseases and illnesses and caused torment and unhappiness among people in the village. This had compelled the villagers to invoke and seek refuge in a *dralha*, a protective war deity, who was supposed to be residing above the village. To stop the Neydrem from harming the villagers, the Lhashing had to be raised. Since then, the villagers, on the day of the Nyadru celebration, wake early in the morning and undertake the necessary rituals and effort, raising the Lhashing in the evening.

In the forest, they look for the best Lhashing and after having found one; they sit at the base of the Lhashing. They offer Marchang (མར་ཇང་) at the foot of the Lhashing tree.



Offering Marchang at the foot of Lhashing tree

After Marchang offering, they recite the following invocation lines:

Let it not break, not even hit or be damaged

And not crack as it lands on the ground
Till this day in the following year,
Let the bigger ones not leave in the meantime
And the smaller ones not fall in absence.

As they recite the above lines, they echo the air with sounds.



A person, who was born in the best animal year, starts cutting the Lhashing tree

After the words of invocation are narrated, one amongst them, who was born in the best animal year, must start cutting the Lhashing. It is believed that if the village is going to be afflicted by sicknesses and misfortunes, the Lhashing will have either a broken branch or a damaged tip, but if it falls intact and in an accessible place, the village is going to experience happiness and prosperity. The Lhashing should be brought as tall tree. It should be of great height because an oath was taken to ensure that deity would protect the people from the evil powers from as far as the tip of the Lhashing could be seen. In order to consolidate and coordinate the individual strengths of the group members, wise elders use inspiring verses and chorus to encourage and coordinate the effort. Everyone sings as the group pulls or pushes the Lhashing tree to its destination place.

Around 8 pm, when the men return home carrying the Lhashing and taken to the center of the Langmikha village. The housewives arrive with alcohol offerings and food.



Slice of Paa sha (pork) put on the plate and going to offer

The bark of the Lhashing has to be peeled off from the root although its tip must be kept intact with a number of branches and leaves. Right below the branches is the wooden phallus Wangchu Chenmo (དབང་ལྷུ་ཚེན་མ་) tied to the main stem making it look like a crossed vajra. The Lhashing is not adorned with anything like other ordinary flags. Before erecting the Lhashing, they curse the Neydrem Zaku Gyem in four directions. The strong words of contempt and curses are as follows:

འག་གཅིག་ འག་གཉིས་ འག་གསུམ་ འག་བཞི་ འག་ལྔ་ འག་དྲུག་ འག་བདུན་ འག་བརྒྱད་ འག་དགུའི་ འག་ལས་འོང་མ་བརྟུག་ཟེད།

Let it not rise up even after,

A night, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine

ལྔ་མ་གཅིག་ ལྔ་མ་གཉིས་ ལྔ་མ་གསུམ་ ལྔ་མ་བཞི་ ལྔ་མ་ལྔ་ ལྔ་མ་དྲུག་ ལྔ་མ་བདུན་ ལྔ་མ་བརྒྱད་ ལྔ་མ་དགུའི་ ལྔ་མ་ལས་འོང་མ་བརྟུག་ཟེད།

Let it not rise up even after,

A month, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine

འོ་གཅིག་ འོ་གཉིས་ འོ་གསུམ་ འོ་བཞི་ འོ་ལྔ་ འོ་དྲུག་ འོ་བདུན་ འོ་བརྒྱད་ འོ་དགུའི་ འོ་ག་ལས་འོང་མ་བརྟུག་ཟེད།

Let it not rise up even after,

A year, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine

བརྟུག་པ་གཅིག་ བརྟུག་པ་གཉིས་ བརྟུག་པ་གསུམ་ བརྟུག་པ་བཞི་ བརྟུག་པ་ལྔ་ བརྟུག་པ་དྲུག་ བརྟུག་པ་བདུན་ བརྟུག་པ་བརྒྱད་ བརྟུག་པ་དགུའི་ འོ་ག་ལས་འོང་མ་བརྟུག་ཟེད།

Let it not rise up even after,

An aeon, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine

དེ་ལས་ སྲི་མ་མ་དགུ་བྱ་དགུ་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་མ་བརྒྱད་བྱ་བརྒྱད་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་བདུན་བྱ་བདུན་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་དྲུག་བྱ་དྲུག་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་ལྔ་བྱ་ལྔ་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་བཞི་བྱ་བཞི་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་གསུམ་བྱ་གསུམ་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་གཉིས་བྱ་གཉིས་ནེམ་ སྲི་མ་གཅིག་བྱ་གཅིག་ནེམ། གནན་མ་ནེམ་གནན་མ་.....

Suppress nine witches and her nine sons,

Suppress eight witches and eight sons

Suppress seven witches and six sons

Suppress six witches and six sons

Suppress five witches and five sons

Suppress four witches and four sons

Suppress three witches and three sons

Suppress two witches and two sons

Suppress one witch and a son...

Suppress them suppress.



Fixing the wooden phallus properly on the top of the lhashing



People of the Langmikha raise the Lhashing tree



Lhashing tree after hoisting



The people dance with a few songs.

After the erection of the Lhashing is completed, people return to their individual homes for dinner. This brings to the end of raising the Lhashing of the village, where people would then dance a few rounds to add merriment and excitement to the occasion and

then followed by children and youngsters roaming about in the village, reciting chants of lolay (ལོལ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་), wishes for the New Year from door to door in exchange for gifts of money and/or foods.

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