

Dripshing: A Powerful Twig

The mythical *dripshing* (ཐིབ་ཤིང་) is a topic recognized by many Bhutanese, though not many can recount the story in its entirety. *Dripshing* translates as ‘invisible twig,’ or ‘twig that blinds,’ meaning that the person who holds the enchanted branch is rendered invisible to other people. The way one can find a *dripshing* stems from a myth of a crow and its boiled eggs, which goes as follows. Crow’s nests are usually located very high in a tree. To get a *dripshing*, one must steal a crow’s eggs, keeping in mind that the eggs should not be touched with one’s bare hands but rather by using a piece of cloth to obscure the scent of humans. A fire should then be made under the tree in which the nest sits. The crow’s eggs should be boiled in a pot set over the fire, and then the eggs should be boiled and put back in the nest.

When the crow returns to roost, it continues incubate its eggs, unaware of the fact that they have been boiled. However, when young ones do not hatch after the normal incubation period, people believe the crow will fly to distant lands in search of *dripshing*, as the twig will have the power to make the eggs hatch. They say the crow will fly to Durtrö Silwa Tsel (དུར་ཁྲོ་བཞིལ་བ་འཚལ་) near Bodh Gaya, the Naranjana River (རྩ་མོ་རྒྱུ་ན་), and the Ganges River to find the twig. Others maintain that the crow flies to the land of cannibals or *Sinpöyül* (ཐིབ་ཤིང་ལྷུ་བ་). The crow clamps the *dripshing* in its beak and flies back, exhausted and bloodied, to its nest, where it places the *dripshing* among the other twigs and leaves of the nest. Through the power of that twig, it is believed that young chicks will then hatch from the boiled eggs.

The crow’s progress is carefully observed. After the young ones fledge and leave the nest, the person who stole the eggs and boiled them would then climb up to the nest to identify and acquire the *dripshing*. The process of identification must begin quickly; otherwise, the crow may return the *dripshing* to its original place in India. The person who climbs up the tree would pick the twigs from the nest one by one, asking an accomplice below if he can still be seen. Some say that the twigs should be clamped between the lips while others maintain they should be placed on the head. When the perpetrator holds the *dripshing*, he would appear invisible to the person standing below.

Others state that while the crow is away, the whole nest should be dismantled and taken to a stream. Each constituent twig or leaf should be thrown into the stream, one by one. All the twigs, leaves and branches will follow the flow of the river, save one, the *dripshing*, which is carried upstream. Crows search out *dripshing* with the sole objective of having the benefit of its power to restore the defiled eggs, as the *dripshing* is necessary to remove the impurities so that young ones can hatch. For humans, the entire purpose of dismantling a crow’s nest is to take advantage of and enjoy the powers of invisibility provided by the *dripshing*.

A person who possesses a *dripshing* would likely be tempted to indulge in every possible deed, and likely he or she would accumulate non-virtuous actions. *Dripshing* can be hidden in the folds of a specific type of hat called a *dripshing zham* (ཐྲིཤིང་མཐོང་མཚན་མོ་). The person wearing it becomes immediately invisible; it can only be activated when directly touching the skin.

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