

Bhutan Folk Festival
(December 13-15, 2008)
Detailed Account of the Activities

DAY-1 DECEMBER 13, 2008

9:00 am

Soon after the arrival of the chief guest, who may be a member of the royal family or a minister along with his/her attendants, the tourists will take their seat and one of the four *Lopens* will grace the opening ceremony with 'Zhugdrel Phunsum Tshogpa' and offering of '*marchhang*'

Zhugdrel Phunsum Tshogpa

Bhutan is a country which gives high importance to good signs and omens in doing anything. This goes back to centuries where our forefathers would always consider the auspiciousness of time, place and the way things are done so that there may arise no impediments in the course of executing a work at hand. That is why; the inauguration ceremony will be carried out with '*Zhugdrel Phunsum Tshogpa*' or a ceremony that calls for fulfillment of all auspiciousness.

Droma

There is a reason for serving '*droma*' first during the '*Zhugdrel Phunsum Tshogpa*' ceremony. It is believed that the human race started from the children of *Trewu Jangsem*, the reincarnation of *Chenrezig* or *Avalokestswara* and *Drak Sinmo*, the reincarnation of *Jetsuen Droelma* or *Goddess Tara*. There was no other food available then and they survived on *droenma*. This is one reason. The other reason is the medicinal value that *droenma* contains. It is said that *droenma* can eliminate all illnesses and help to extend your lifespan. But by far the most important reason in serving *droenma* first in a ceremony is that the people of *Laya*, who were the first Bhutanese to receive *Zhabdrung*

Rimpochhe when he came over to Bhutan offered *droenma* as the first meal. That portended to Bhutan being rich in all the nine varieties of crop in future and, hence its significance in a ceremony such as this.

Drizang

Drizang has its origin in *Khachhe*, a country blessed by Lord Buddha. It is believed that the good smell of *drizang* can quell the anger of the most malignant of all *Naga Spirits*.

In the year 1637, when Punakha Dzong was inaugurated, the king of Ladakh sent *drizang* as gift to *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal*. Taking that as a good omen for subduing all malignant *Naga Spirits*, it has been included as one of the important items in a ceremony.

Soelja or Tea

When *Zhabdrung Rimpochhe* visited *Samye Monastery* in Tibet, he agreed to supply tea ingredients to the monastery in future. Following that, tea is served as an auspicious sign during the ceremonies.

White Rice

Zhabdrung never was served rice after his birth. But to everybody's astonishment they found each morning morsels of rice underneath his tongue and in between his teeth. This they thought was the work of the Bhutanese guardian deities who in later years invited *Zhabdrung* to Bhutan. To keep alive the significance of such happenings white rice is still served in all the ceremonies.

Butter Wine Offering

The spirit or *Phap* which goes to making the wine is believed to have been originated from *Amrita* or nectar of longevity that the gods relished. Therefore, it is served in a ceremony to the guests so that they too may live a long life. Custom has it that the first offerings are made to the deities and then to the guests. There to, the person serving the drink has to first taste himself, a sign to show that it is not mixed with any poison, before serving the chief guest.

Flag

The flag symbolizes accomplishment of all tasks at hand, the flourishing of Buddha Dharma in the world and also the spread of the fame of country in all directions.

Butter and Flour

The heart of all cereals is supposed to be flour and the heart of milk, butter. The two are mixed together and the offerings made to the gods first and then on to the guests symbolizing never-ending food and wealth in the country.

Monetary Gifts

During the inauguration of *Punakha Dzong*, *Zhabdrung* made gifts of cloth, grains, gold and silver to the high-ranking monks and officials while making gifts of money to the

other visitors. Therefore, to help keep the tradition alive making of monetary gifts are continued to this day in a ceremony.

Distribution of betel nuts and betel leaf

The tradition of eating betel nuts and leaf in Bhutan goes back to the 8th century following the visit of *Guru Rimpochhe* to *Bumthang* valley. It is said that there were devil-like cannibals living there and that *Guru Rimpochhe* subjugated them through his spiritual power substituting the eating of human flesh with betel nuts and leaf.

However, the tradition of serving betel nuts and leaf in a ceremony could be traced back to the inauguration ceremony of the *Punakha Dzong* in the 17th century. The king of *Ghatiya*, is supposed to have sent gifts of betel nuts and leaves to *Zhabdrung Rimpochhe* during the occasion and taking that to be an auspicious sign, the betel nuts and leaves are served first in a ceremony before other fruits.

Serving of different kinds of fruit

The serving of different kinds of fruit to the *Lama* and guests is believed to bring enormous merit to all sentient beings ensuring peace and happiness in this lifetime and enlightenment in the next life.

9:30 am

The chief guest will deliver a short speech followed by good-luck prayer by the head of the ceremony. These over, the guests will be given *Tashi Khadhar* or good-luck scarves marking the beginning of program.

Good-Luck Scarves

Most Buddhist countries make use of *Khadhasrs* and they are of different kinds. There is one bearing the eight lucky signs. The others include *Nim Delek*, *Moentshig Chhuri*, *Ashing Khadhar* and plain scarves. But a common characteristic of all scarves is that they all come in white colors.

We in Bhutan too make use of *Khadhars*. They are used when we go to meet high *Lamas* or king. And regarding the quality, it may depend purely on one's affordability. But the message or significance of offering scarves is the same. For the one who makes the offering, it is a symbol of untainted faith and loyalty while for the one accepting it; it is a symbol of pure love and compassion.

Further, we make offerings of *Khadhars* during a person's promotion with the hope and prayer that he will carry out his duties without any let or hindrance and that his work may benefit not only the country but the world at large. On his part, the person accepts a scarf symbolizing his pledge to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of his post.

Scarves offered during a marriage ceremony bear a different message. It is a symbol that the marriage will endure for a lifetime and that even as they live together they will find absolute happiness in each other.

The other occasion where scarves are offered is in welcoming a guest or friend to your place. This comes with a prayer that there will be no untoward incidence during his or her

stay and that any deliberation will be carried out in the light of trust and confidence in each other.

The same message goes with the offering of scarves during the guest's departure. It is to say that he may enjoy good health and happiness on the journey forward while at the same time their relationship will last in all good faith.

But it is not only during good occasions that scarves are offered. They come in handy during a person's death as well. Relatives, friends and those close to the deceased may offer money wrapped in scarves to the deceased so that he or she may carry them as gifts to the guiding lama. Such scarves are pure white symbolizing that the way forward for the dead will be pure white and without any obstacles.

9:50 – 1:00 pm

For two hours from 9.50 to 11.30a.m, there will be dancing and archery match at one end of the ground and game of discuss and dart at the other end. And even while these matches are going on, there will be people explaining about these games and stalls selling darts to the guests.

Dancing

Like archery, discuss and dart matches, there will be also dancing competition irrespective of which team wins the above games. There are two aims to it. One is for entertainment and the other is to establish name and fame for the dancers during such occasions.

Cheering up one's team and running down the other team through dancing

In archery, dart or discuss match, the dancers will cheer one's team while trying to distract the players of the other team through songs and dances. But it so happens that however much the dancers may distract them, some players do very well putting the dancers to shame.

Traditional Bhutanese game of discuss

It is not known when exactly the game of discuss first started. What we know for sure, however, is that the monks played discuss as early as we can remember when they went out bathing by the river side and during the times they went out to perform rituals in the villages. Most often a match would be arranged between the monks and the layman at intervals between the rituals to cheering onlookers. This aside, it is also a game played by cow herders to while away their long days in the forest since it is the easiest and cheapest of all games.

A discuss is a circular disc fashioned out of stones and the size would depend on a person's strength to throw it across. The targets are a hollow in the ground with a peg driven in the centre. They are set at 30 meters from each other with throw-line drawn at four meters from the foot of the peg. The size and the length of the peg standing above the ground level are immaterial so long it holds firm in the ground. The important thing is to arrive at a consensus between the contending parties regarding the length from the peg

of a discus for counting on a point. Normally, it would be set at four inches or at the most six inches.

When it comes to measuring the discus from the peg, one cannot measure from any outcrops of the peg. It should be measured exactly from the base of the peg. Similarly, if a discus is covered in soil and not visible to the eye, it does not get a point however near it may be to the peg. The other standing rule is that if a discus is broken into pieces following a hit from another discus it cannot obtain a point. However, consideration may be given to a discus which is broken in half or much smaller than half with the agreement that the player would complete at least two rounds with the broken piece.

It is considered lucky if a discus lands on top of the peg. Only if the peg is uprooted by a hit from another discus by your own party member or a member from the opposition party, no point is given to even such lucky landings. The same applies with a discus that has landed on top of the peg or near it which is broken into pieces or thrown away from the peg by another discus. Then the latter discus obtains the point.

In any case, the rules governing a game of discus, whether in setting the game point, performing victory dances, the choice of targets and the number of players in each party are all similar to that of an archery match.

Traditional Bhutanese game of darts

There is no written record of any kind on the game of darts in the country. But verbal history has it that the legendary king **Ling Gesar** who, after having left to 'Jang' or the Northern Country never came back for a long time driving all of his followers in deep mourning and timeless waiting. Tired then, the followers went into the forest and occupied themselves with playing darts and that from then on this game is believed to have taken birth.

Traditionally, this game used to be played by the cow herders in the villages over a feast and never was it included in the list of sports. It was only in between 1970 and 1990 when the *Youth Association of Bhutan* attempted to popularise it and make it a part of Bhutanese sports but all in vain. Not to let it die a pitiful death, *Mila Communication* then came to the forefront in 1998 arranging annual matches and today it is very much part of a sporting event in Bhutan as any other.

The material for darts has to be of a hard wood and in Bhutan the most popular wood used in making darts is Red Wood. Feathers can of any bird but the best choice would be that of the feathers of Blood Monal Pheasants, Snow Cock or Water Fowl. The lower end of the dart carries a nail or a hard peg (dart head) so that the dart sticks to the target on making a hit.

On coming to the size of a dart, it has to be between four to six inches in length and from six to nine inches around. The length beyond the main body of the dart from the point where the feathers are attached to the dart to the tip of feathers has to be between four to eight inches and as to the length of the nail (dart head), it has to be three or six inches sticking out of the dart.

The targets have to be three inches in thickness and four inches in width. The total length of the target measures one foot nine inches with six inches below the water mark and the other half above the water mark.

The target range is set at thirty five meters from each other and the throw-line is drawn at six meters from the foot of the target. This leaves a length of twenty nine meters from the throw-line to the opposite target.

A hit on the bull's eye commands three points. Other than that, any hit even if it slightly touches the bull's eye gets only two points. In the event, however, if a dart makes a hit on another dart that has made a hit on the target, the two commands similar points. There are also incidences where a dart on the target may break into pieces following a hit on it by another dart. But so long the nail of the broken dart is not removed from the target; it still is counted a hit. The same goes with a dart that breaks through another dart on the target and hits the target which again is counted a hit.

A hit breaking a target into half will not obtain any point if the dart is not sticking on any broken part of the target. But not so with a skidding dart that hits a target without its feathers touching the ground; it will be counted a real hit and accrues two points. The other kind of hit may be one with feathers touching the ground. In such a case, the referee is the only person who is empowered to pull the target out of the ground and see whether the hit is supported by the feathers. If the dart does not fall off the target even when the target is pulled out, it is counted as genuine hit and gets two points like any other direct hit.

Then there is the water mark at the base of the target. This is also a dividing line for counting points. Any hit below the topmost water marking or even slightly touching it is considered a ground hit and gets only one point. And there are also times where a hit may be above the topmost water mark but the nail (dart head) is covered in soil and in such a case it falls within a ground hit and gets a point only.

The scale for measuring a close hit has to be four inches in length but depending on the consensus among the parties it could be also of six inches in length. When a measuring is done, the rule is that the scale has to be clear of grasses of the ground and the measuring taken directly from the target and not from any outcrops of it.

If the dart is covered in soil and there is no where by which to take a clear measure from it, it cannot be counted as a close hit because any close hit needs to be measured from the main body of the dart and not from the feathers or dart head. Similarly, if there is a close hit but where the target has fallen off, the reinstallation of the target by the referee has to be honoured by all participants.

In conclusion, it may be mentioned that the painting of targets, setting a game point, the way it has to be concluded, victory dances, selecting the targets and numbers of players to be included in each party are all similar to that of an archery match.

From 11.30 there will be a display of how to declare a victory followed by distribution of prizes.

Display of victory

There will be at least three games in a match. Any game won in the course of the match is declared through a victory call. However, the final victory celebration is different. Here, the winning team will fix three darts on the target covered in silk scarves of five different colours. It will then select four or five team members who know how to dance. They will make three victory calls by way of uttering Aha! three times followed by dancing in front

of the target. These over, they will sound the victory at the top of their voice bringing the match to an end.

1:00 – 2:00 pm

Starting 12a.m, lunch will be served to the guests. Each of the village blocks will bring their specialities to the ground. The number of items and taste will be recorded by means of a secret ballot and prizes distributed to the top three winners.

Bhutanese dish

Amongst other food items, the main Bhutanese dishes are red and white rice and cakes made from buck wheat or millet. And when it comes to drinks, there is butter-churned tea, sugar and milk tea, skimmed milk, butter milk and fruit juices. The tea leaves are extracted from different tea herbs like *Nyashing Thuep*, *Dhomsil*, leaves of a tree called *Tebsi* that grow wild in the forest. The other is brick tea from China.

And coming to curry, there are many kinds. But nothing goes without adding chilly making Bhutanese curry always hot and to that end, the Bhutanese never add sugar to curry.

Meat and vegetables

The kinds of meat that Bhutanese relish is beef, pork, chicken, fish, mutton and yak meat. On the other hand, the vegetables that Bhutanese normally eat are chilly, radish, beans, brinjal, potato, turnip, pumpkin, asparagus, greens, dried leaves of turnip, ferns and orchids.

Meat items and curry

The Bhutanese term for meat served in large pieces is called *pak*. *Pak* are again of different kinds. They are namely beef *pak*, head meat of either pig or ox, roasted beef, pork slabs, dried pork slices, yak *pak*, yak meat with fat, *pak* made of hides, stomach cut outs, roasted fish etc.

When the meat is well cooked, the other ingredients are added to it. This may be turnip, radish, and cabbage, dried leaves of turnip, ferns, greens or potato along with onion, chilly, cooking oil and salt.

The main curry items are *Norsha Maru*, made of beef, *Phagsha Maru*, made of pork, *Phago Maru*, made of head meat of pig, *Jasha Maru*, made of chicken, *Yaksha Maru*, made of yak meat, *Kagnchu Maru* or curry made of leg bones of pig or ox, *Gongdho Maru* or egg curry, *Nyasha Maru* or curry made of fish, *Rasha Maru*, made of mutton, *Jasha Nyazam* or curry made of minced chicken, and *Shakam* or curry made of dried meat slices. Now when we say *Maru*, it is a meat item where onion, ginger, chilly and oil is added minus other vegetables.

But meat items come in different kinds through addition of other ingredients as well. Normally, dried chilly along with rice noodles is added to the meat items. At other times, cheese or greens and asparagus are added to the meat.

Vegetable curry

Bhutanese also prepare pure vegetable dishes. Some of them come mixed with cheese while others are fried in oil or cooked in big sizes.

In summary, the following are the main curry items without meat:

Aema Dartshi or Chilly mixed with cheese.

1. *Aema Marngo* or chilly fried in butter.
2. *Semchum Dartshi* or beans mixed with cheese.
3. *Laphu Dartshi* or radish in cheese.
4. *Dholom Dartshi* or brinjal in cheese.
5. *Kewa Dartshi* or potato and cheese.
6. *Endho Ngartshoe* or turnip in cheese.
7. *Kakuru Jaju* or pumpkin in cheese.
8. *Lom Kam Jaju* or dried turnip leaves with cheese.
9. *Nagkey Dartshi* or ferns with cheese and
10. *Ola Chuto Dartshi* or Wild Orchids with cheese.

Chilly pickles and salads

There are three ways to prepare chilly pickles. One is made from chilly powder mixed with onion, salt, mint, pepper, cheese, ginger and tomato. The other is made from dried chilly slightly burnt on fire. Yet another kind is from fresh chilly with other ingredients remaining the same. But there are also special ways of making pickles. That is by adding minced meat to the above ingredients.

Then we have salads of four different kinds. One is prepared from cucumber and the other from radish mixed with green chillies, chilly powder, cheese, onion, ginger, tomato and of course salt is a must in all of these mixtures. They are taken with fried liver, sausage, pieces of dried meat and yak meat that have been kept buried in wheat, barley and rice for years.

The above food items are of the general type that is relished by the Bhutanese people. But there are special delicacies specific to a region that one may get to taste them during annual festivals in these places.

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Beginning 2.00p.m, there will be a competition among men and women from different villages in measuring grains and butter. The guests may participate in the competition if they are interested.

When humans first appeared on Earth, they lived on food they did not have to grow. After sometime, human values degraded and along with it such uncultivated crops also withered away slowly, leading people to divide what they have by means of measuring equipments.

In Bhutan too, people used *Sang* for measuring small weights and *Goed* for heavy items. For measuring cereals, they used *Dre* for small quantities and *Bah* for larger quantities.

In the beginning, people in Bhutan had to pay their taxes in kind. These included meat tax, butter tax, salt tax, fish tax, paper tax, ash tax, coal tax, vegetable tax, cattle tax, fire,

water and firewood taxes, crop taxes etc.. But all of these taxes were abolished with the establishment of hereditary kingship in the country after 1907.

3:00 – 4:00 pm

Starting from 3.00, prizes will be distributed to the best participants thereby ending the program.

4:00 – 5:00 pm

BREAK

5:00 – 7:00 pm

There will be a drama showcasing various kinds of Bhutanese dress from ancient to present times.

The drama dates back to three hundred years. It features an 18 year old boy called Mangku and his teacher a thirty five year old lay monk called Mani Pema. Mani Pema is so called because he lives his life chanting mani (sacred syllable) and on alms. He goes begging after every ten years. He meets high to low people and knows them well by the way they dress and their mindset.

Generally, the drama presents in an eggshell, the livelihood of the Bhutanese and how it evolved over the centuries under the leadership of our hereditary monarchs.

7:00 – 8:00 pm

Beginning 7p.m, the guests and others who are interested in archery match the following day, enter their respective enclosures. This will be followed by astrologers referring stars and with monks flinging ritual cakes against the opponent to ensure victory. They will also have dinner together in their respective enclosures.

The archers are expected to gather in a temple and see that astrologers are consulted for timing of the match, the choice of target, the choice of the first player in a group and rites to be performed for expelling any hindrances. They are also supposed to keep away from their wives, visiting a dead person's house or a place where a woman has given birth recently.

They will perform rites to ward off any negative influences and also tying up the effigies of the best players in the opposition group with black threads so that it undermines their performances the next day.

DAY-2 DECEMBER 14, 2008

7:30 -8:00 am

The archers from two villages will gather at their respective enclosures at 7.30a.m in the morning whereas the guests will assemble together around 8a.m in the morning.

8:00 -9:00 am

They will then find out the direction of *Drachen* (negative energy) and then walk to the archery ground.

Drachen

Finding out the direction of *drachen or negative energy* basically means referring to the guidance provided by the Astrologer the night before on timing of leaving their enclosure and the direction in which they should exit from their enclosures. Additionally, it also means the direction from which they should enter the archer ground. If there is a risk of facing the negative energy, they should find ways to avoid the direction by way of changing the path.

After having identified the direction of the negative energy, the archers have to walk to the ground lowering the heads of their bows and flags. They should never face or even look in the direction identified by the Astrologer as being negative. In the event of facing or rather entering the mouth of the negative energy, it is believed that you will not accomplish anything that given day and which also means a sure defeat in the match.

9:00 – 12:00 noon

At 9a.m, the archers will gather at the ground and make offerings of butter-wine to the deities. Following that and for two and half hours starting from 11.30, there will be archery match and dancing by the ladies. And even as these are going on, there will be demonstration of making arrow heads and bows on the other end of the ground and with people explaining the significance of bows and arrows. This also means that there will be a stall set up where one could buy bows, arrows, bowstrings, finger guards all packed and ready to be taken along with you.

***Marchhang* or offering of butter-wine**

It is believed that the spirit that goes to making wine is derived from the heavenly drink called Amrita or drink of longevity. The first offerings are made to the gods and goddesses and to all the spirits dwelling in the area with the prayer that no untoward incident will take place during the day.

Dancers

Archery is such that even if a team loses the match, the dancers from the losing team still has a chance to earn name for themselves. And dancing is not only for entertainment but an opportunity for any dancer to establish their name and fame.

Cheering up one's team and running down the opposing team

The dancers of a team whether, be it in an archery match or any other match will try to cheer up one's team by throwing all praises while running down the players of the opposing team through songs and dances. This is basically aimed at distracting the players of the other team so that they may not hit the target. But there are players who despite the distractions caused by the dancers would still get their targets putting the dancers to shame.

Traditional Bhutanese game of Archery

Ever since human beings first appeared on the Earth were the bows and arrows born. These bows and arrows may be fashioned from different materials and may even be of different sizes and shapes but the universal usage was same all over the world in the beginning and that was for hunting, as weapons of war and as sporting equipments in archery matches.

In Bhutan too, the bows and arrows were put to the same usage as well. They were used for hunting and in wars from early on. But the real respect for and interest in bows and arrows by the Bhutanese people, took a step ahead in and around the 15th century. *Lama Drukpa Kuenley*, a Tibetan Buddhist Adept is believed to have shot an arrow from *Nangkartse* in Tibet with the prayer that it may land in a house where lay his lady of destiny who would continue his lineage. This arrow is supposed to have landed on the stair of a house in *Toep Chhadhana*, belonging to a man *Tshewang*.

Many centuries later, Bhutan saw in 1907 the establishment of the hereditary monarchy. The first king *Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck* was a keen enthusiast of archery and started the culture of archery matches in the country in full measure. The succeeding kings followed suit and with the beginning of 1961, archery was recognized as a national sport.

Arrows in Bhutan are of five different categories. One of them is for used in warfare called *Makdha* and the other is for hunting called *Shadha*. Then you have an arrow of a different kind used in rejuvenation of the soul called *Tshedha* and one used in rituals aimed at enhancing luck known as *Chhadha*. The fifth is our arrow used in archery matches.

Arrows are normally fashioned out of bamboo. However, the bamboos are also of different kinds. There are bamboos that have a tapering end while there are others that

have only very narrow spaces between the knots. Each species grows in different places and are known by the name of the places they grow namely, *Jala Yangkar*, *Dodar Saam*, *Jedhi Saam*, *Jinkar Saam* and *Menchung Saam*. There is no other place in Bhutan other than those mentioned above to find the right species.

A bamboo is straightened on fire and painted black on top with soot mixed in gum. This space is for pasting the feathers on four sides of the arrow. And when it comes to the choice of feathers, the best ones are those extracted from Monal Pheasant, Snow Cock and Water Fowls. There again are two different kinds of feather. One is called *Zhadro* and the other is called *Chidro*. It is said that **Chidro** is archers' favourite in the swiftness of an arrow.

The best gum to paste the feathers on an arrow is fish gum for its good holding power. Bhutanese also love colours and, therefore, one will find arrows beautified at the crest by coiling threads of different colours in rainbow or other shades.

The normal length of an arrow is four spans of a player's hand. The thickness depends on the kind of weight that an individual can handle. This also means that the size of an arrow head is dependant on the thickness of an arrow. Most arrow heads are made from tin welded together by copper and polished by a file.

A quiver is called *Sorey* in Bhutanese language. They could be made from wood or bamboo covered with bamboo netting or hide from outside. For easy carrying, every quiver will also have a belt to hang from the shoulders.

Although, all bows are made from bamboo, there are of different kinds. The ones that grow in *Nub Daleykha* are known as *Daley Sintham* and those that have their origin in *Samtse Trodhum* are called *Jangmi Poezhu*. Still there is one called the *Lhopi Shazhu* which is grown in *Taba Dramtoe area*.

There are again two different kinds of bows. A solid piece of bamboo with tapering ends and a handle attached at the centre is called *Changzhu*. Then there is one where two pieces are joined together at the centre by copper or tin plates and one that can be folded together when not in use. This kind of bow is called *Tapzhu* which literally means foldable bow.

The bow string can be also fashioned from different materials. One is woven from a kind of tree creeper called *Tshelmi Pungkued* and the other kind from *Uebel Zocha* or a special species of nettle. The finger guards, numbering three in all are made of soft skin while the arm guard may be made from either skin or cloth.

While it is important to have a good archery set, the archery ground has to be an equally good place. It should be a beautiful stretch of ground and one with no mountains or cliffs shadowing the target from behind. The two targets are set at a length of around 150 yards from each other and a space of three arm stretches has to be maintained on either sides of the target.

The targets are also of three kinds. They are *Zongba*, *Ueba* and *Chogda Ba*. *Zongba* has to have a height equal to a foot and a width equal to two hand spans. *Ueba* is smaller than *Zongba*. But by far the smallest is *Choda Ba*. It is one foot in height with a width ranging from a size of a palm or one hand span.

Be it any kind of target, all targets has to be covered by cloth and painted in white. The centre holds a bull's eye painted in rainbow colours. The base of the target is painted in red and yellow bands with water marks below it. They are in turn topped by paintings of five-petal lotus flowers.

There are three ways in which an archery match could be played. *Dodhum* is a friendly match played in the villages during New Year and Winter Solstice between friends. The losing party may host a lunch or curry only with the winning party arranging the rice in the latter case.

The other kind of match is on money. Usually, there will be three rounds of matches and the party winning two of the matches is declared the winner.

Chogdha is something different from the ones mentioned above. It is a much serious match played between two districts, blocks or villages. There is no monetary stake in this kind of match but a strong belief that the place of the winning party will have a lucky year, fewer illnesses and all good happenings while the place of the losing party will be drowned in bad luck all throughout that year. During such matches, the parties will invoke the help of astrologers and local guardian deities. So it is a match not only of people but all forces coming together.

The matches are set at 24, 23 and 25 game points. If one party finishes the first two game points and the other party finishes the last 25 game point, it is considered a draw. There is no fixed rule for the number of players in a match but a good number is 13 players in each party.

When it comes to scoring points, a hit on the target means two points and a hit on the bull's eye means three points. Any other hit that does not stay on the target receives only one point. On the contrary, a skid hit on the target receives two points if the ...does not touch the ground. Then there may be a hit where the arrow is covered by grass or soil on top. This is considered a ground hit and gets one point only. The strength of such a hit, however, lies in that it gets a point even while there may be a close hit by another arrow. The other rule is when an arrow tears off a part of the target and sticks on the ground. It also gets two points. Not one which may tear part off the target and does not stick on the ground. It will receive one point only.

Close hits that are nearest to the target get points. And any doubtful cases are measured with the help of a measuring scale.

Any party winning the first game point is entitled to sounding it aloud only. However, the final victory is celebrated by planting three arrows on the target and covering it in silken scarves of five different colours to the accompaniment of a victory dance in front of the target.

As mentioned above, after having decided the winning team, the winner will decorate the target with silken scarves and to the accompaniment of songs the players will assemble at the ground carrying the target. They will lower their bow strings following which prizes will be distributed. This will go on for about an hour from 11.30 to 12. 30.

Lowering of bow strings signifying the end of a match

The closing of the match will see the dancers joining hands together in an act that they would miss each other in future. After that is the distribution of prizes. Once this too is

over, the participants will form a line with the one carrying the *Wheel of Life* leading the procession followed by one carrying silken scarves of five colours, the target bearer and the final scorer on either horseback or on the shoulders of two other players. Additional colour includes two other dancers on either side of the procession dancing their way through. On reaching the place where an offering of butter-wine is set up, the procession will make a round of the arrangement and offering of the wine made to the local deities in thanksgiving for a day passed without any mishaps. The players will lower their bow strings thereafter marking an end of the day.

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Victory celebration by the winners of the Archery Tournament

1:00 – 2:00 pm

It will be brought to the ground by the families of the players from each team and served to all the players in strict adherence to traditional Bhutanese etiquettes. This over, the players will thank the families for bringing the lunch followed by distribution of prizes.

Lunch formalities

It all starts with the scarf bearer of the local guardian deity and the dancers singing and making the first offerings of the lunch to the gods and goddesses dwelling in the area with the prayer that no mishaps would occur to them.

Thereafter, the players and dancers including other participants will sit in a line on the ground by hierarchy and age. Young men, expert in servings and who have been chosen for the occasion will then serve the lunch without faltering in the order the items have to be served.

2:00 – 4:00 pm

There will be a competition in pounding rice and grinding grains between ladies and men from each of the village blocks. The guests can participate if they are interested in such a competition.

Traditional equipment for pounding rice consists of Lhiu and Laglhiu. Lhiu is a round wooden or stone block with a hole in the middle. They are normally fashioned out of hard wood and hard stone. Laglhiu, on the other hand, is a long pole-like structure with a handle set in the middle.

In the absence of modern machinery, our forefathers used these kinds of equipments for pounding rice and other cereals. For winnowing the husks, they used a flat bamboo winnower called Bichhab which is used even today in the villages.

Then you have the flour mills. These mills are run by water and called Churag. It consists of two flat stones with grooves placed one on top of the other and turned by water current. One could say that it is a bigger side of a Rangthak, the hand turned pounding stone slab.

Before the establishment of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan, people had to pound rice and flour not only for their own self-consumption but for officials of the government and also for paying taxes.

4:00 – 4:30 pm

The best among the competitors will be awarded prizes.

4:30 – 7:00 pm

BREAK

7:00 – 9:00 pm

There will be a dance program where the guests could participate as well.

Songs and dances are not only a source entertainment in Bhutan. Most of them are composed by scholars and learned masters in the past containing spiritual lines. Hearing them is believed to wash away the sins in a person and paving the way to enlightenment in future.

The singing and dancing on the stage will not be restricted to Bhutanese songs and dances only. Guests from other countries could stage their own songs and dances whereby it will be an exchange of each other's culture.

DAY-3 DECEMBER 15, 2008

7:00 – 7:30 am

All the guests and participants will assemble at the ground. Soon after that one of the four *Lopens* will start performing the '*Tagoen*' and '*Kago*' rituals to the performance of fire dance or '*Meychham*'. Participants may then volunteer to join the procession in carrying the Holy Scriptures around the place (*Kagyur Lingkor*).

7:30 – 8:30 am

Tagoen and Gektre Mechham or Fire Cleansing Ceremony.

Bhutanese tradition has it that whenever you want to start any good work, whether be it '*wang*' (blessings) or '*rabney*' (inauguration ceremony), it is essential to first perform the fire-cleansing ceremony to the accompaniment of '*Tagoen*' and '*Kago*' rituals to ward off any disturbances by harmful spirits. Two monks will be selected for the fire dance. Wearing red and black masks, which is representative of '*Shenpa Marnak*', each of the monks will carry a burning torch in the hand and a pouch of wood dust which they will sprinkle on the fire in course of performing the dance. The dance will begin only after receiving the fire mantra from the monks.

8:30 – 4:00 pm

People will line up by the roads to receive the Holy Scriptures as they are carried along in procession burning incense, offering tea and snacks to the persons carrying them and singing songs.

Kanjur Lingkor {*carrying the Holy Scriptures*}

'Kagyur Lingkor' or around the place in a procession.

'Kagyur' is the recorded teachings of Buddha by his disciples. Carrying it in a procession in around the places is called 'Kangyur Lingkor'.

Regarding the benefits of doing such a procession not only those who carry the Holy Scriptures are blessed but in time past people did the procession to bring down rain or stop incessant rain or other natural calamities.

Burning incense and offering tea and drinks

When the Holy Scriptures are carried to each village in course of the procession, the villagers will receive them by burning incense to cleanse the atmosphere and making offerings of tea and drinks with the belief that no one will suffer from pain of thirst in their lives. It is also a means to earn merit in life and socially to help in cementing ties among the villagers.

This follows entertainments during the lunch hours which include traditional songs, dances and sports which go a long way in helping preserve our culture.

12:00 – 1:30 pm

This time the lunch will be offered on the grounds of *Dongkhaipang* at *Nobgang* by a family who will receive '*Ngou blessings*' for his volunteerism. Then there will be a break of one hour during which, the people will entertain them-selves to traditional sports like wrestling, '*Parey Sherey*' or testing the arm strength, shot-put and '*Chabchha*' or a game of pebbles. Prizes awarded, the procession will then continue on its journey forward.

The 'Ngou Blessing' after the lunch

A devotee, whether be it an individual or family will host the lunch for earning merit or for their own personal satisfaction. The host will then receive 'Ngou' with the prayer that the merit he has earned from this good act will benefit not only him but all the sentient beings.

Sports for Men

During the lunch break, the people will entertain themselves to traditional sports like wrestling, arm-strength testing, discus throwing etc. Such sports are believed to have come alive during the times when Bhutan was divided into several principalities with each principality ruled by a chieftain. The rule of the hour was then strength and every time two parties came together for an occasion, they would make arrangements to test the strength of each other's followers by way of such contests.

Wrestling

In a Bhutanese wrestling match, the contestants will put their shoulders together with the right hand holding the belt of the other person on the back and the left hand holding the belt in front. Each person will try to toss the other person around with the ultimate aim to pin him down.

Victory depends much on the strength of an individual. But sometimes tricks also work and a stronger person may fall prey to them. Then there are others who may dislocate their shoulders in exercising excessive strength in a match.

A person is declared the winner if he manages to pin down his opponent two times out of three rounds in a match or the other person gives up after the first round.

Arm-Strength testing or Parey Sherey

Parey Sherey includes holding the other person's arm with two hands and holding it tight even as the opponent struggles to free himself.

There is no trick involved in this match. All depends on a person's strength of hands. There are stories where an arm would be pulled out of the body in such a match without the person even realizing it.

The holding is done in turns and each person is given three rounds. Whoever manages to set himself free is the winner.

Shot-put

There are two kinds of shot-put called '*Doedho*' and '*Chongdho*'. But they mean one and the same thing. It involves throwing across a stone of any selected size.

The person will hold the stone in hand and resting it on the shoulder flings it across making a short run. The winner is the one who can throw the furthest.

Games for women

Women's games include '*Chhabchha*'. The player will pick up four pebbles in one hand and even as she tosses one in the air she has to put down the other three on the ground at the same time. Then she has to pick up two from the ground before the one tossed in the air touches the ground. This is counted as one round and the player gets a point.

This game is not as popular as it was long time ago. There was a time when there used to be matches held between villages at stakes as much as 200 kilograms of rice. But it was not the stake that people worried so much about. Rather a village would be worried about the ill-luck a defeat in such a game would bring upon it. The game used to be also played among friends during New Year and when there was less farm work to be done over a lunch or dinner.

1:30 – 4:00 pm

The procession will be over around 4.00p.m with prayers that there will be no illness of any kind or death in the country.

4:00 – 4:30 pm

Tashi or concluding ceremony

Whatever good work you do, it is necessary to dedicate the merits to all sentient beings with prayers that they may cherish happiness and be freed from sufferings of any kind. This is called '*Tashi*' in Dzongkha.

Offering of scarves (*Tashi Khadar*)

White scarves are then offered to all the guests and participants with prayers that they would all be free of sickness and sufferings of any kind and that they will all live in undiluted faith with each other in times to come.

4:30 – 5:00 pm

BREAK

5:00 – 7:00 pm

There will be a game called '*Tsangmo*' starting from 4p.m to 7p.m where the test of fate for adopting each other as brothers and sisters will be held. Following that, there will be a bon fire and dancing from 7p.m to 8.30 and the day will end with dinner.

Tsangmo

People never had to learn the wordings of '*Tsangmo*' from any teacher in the past. They just picked them up in their day to day work. It is like an astrologer reading your life. Different things would be spread out on the ground with each an owner. But this will not be revealed to the one who would cast the match between two things. The owners of two articles that are matched with each other are thought to be related to each other in their past lives. So depending on their ages, they will have to adopt each other as brothers and sisters or father and son after the game.

Concluding ceremony

After the entertainment, it should be concluded with a dance of auspiciousness and with the prayer that there will be peace and happiness in the country and that everybody will be free of any negativities or obstacles in life.