

3.1.2. Wine Oblation Ceremony

Marchang or wine oblation ceremony is an offering of *changphue* or offering of wine to invoke the glorious teacher, the four assemblages of deities, the dakas and dakinis of the three realms, the dwellers of charnel grounds, guardians of directions, the local guardians (Kshetrapalas) and asking them to remove all obstacles so that the work may be accomplished successfully. On certain occasions, such as an elaborate chibdre ceremony, the *marchang* offering is performed twice. The first offering takes place outdoors at the end of the chibdre procession while the second offering is made during the *zhugdre phunsum tshogpa* (seated in the rows) ceremony as described below.

Performance of the *marchang* ceremony is not limited to specific places but is held anywhere depending on the nature of the programme — be it in the temple, residence, courtyard, or in an open ground. The *marchang* ceremony is in line with the traditional custom of presenting a guest with wine called *dongchang* in a container, the lip of which was decorated with three horns of butter (*yardron*) on the guest's first visit. This *dongchang* or *marchang* gesture is to wish the guest a long life and success in all his endeavours. So, the act of offering first to the deities and then to the honoured guest is clearly depicted in ceremonial presentation.

The verses for the *marchang* ceremony were composed by Kunkhen Pema Karpo in the 16th century. During the ceremony, in accordance with the recitation of the verses



by monks, the *marchang* is offered first to the lamas and deities, and then offered to the dignitary. After the *marchang* is offered to the guest, it is followed by the offering of a small white flag.

For the reigning monarch and the Head Abbot, instead of the white flag, the National Flag of Bhutan is offered. The offering of flag symbolises victory over all the negative forces, and increases fortune and luck for the people.

3.1.3. Zhugdre Ceremony

The phrase in Dzongkha literally means 'seated in the rows' whereby participants are seated in rows at the ceremony, which is called *zhugdre phunsum tshogpa*. The *zhugdre* ceremony originates from the tantric teachings of Buddhism and has been adopted to be performed during happy and auspicious occasions. *Phunsum tshogpa* means grace, glory and wealth combined to represent the three essences of happiness.

The ceremony begins with a general invocation to the higher beings that have helped shape the destiny of the kingdom and made it a land of peace and tranquillity. Their powers and blessings are sought for the acquisition of the triple attributes of grace, glory and wealth. The ceremony is held during important functions to mark such occasions as promotion, marriages, visits of high dignitaries and consecration and inaugural functions for new buildings and enterprises.

For the *zhugdre* ceremony, participants are seated in order of rank and seniority. The dignitary who is being honoured sits at the head of the row, usually facing all the participants. Once everyone is settled, different items of offerings are made first to the shrine and then to the dignitaries and participants. The first offering comprises the sweet root known in Bhutan as *droem* (in Sanskrit, *kesar*) and fragrant saffron water (*drizang*) and tea with saffron rice. This is followed by the offering of *marchang* and *chagep* (token money), and other food items such as *zhugdre* offering. *Zhugdre* begins with *doma* (betel nut) and *panye* (betel leaf) and then a fruit that grows on a tree high up from the ground to signify the importance of the occasion. The number of items can range from 11 to 21 or as many as can be afforded in terms of time and resource, but they must end in an odd number and with a hard item such as walnut or *chugo* (dried cheese) to signify indestructibility by malignant spirits.

Prayers are recited while the offerings are being distributed. In Bhutan, the beginning of *zhugdre* ceremony dates back to 1616 when Zhabdrung





Ngawang Namgyal, arriving from Tibet, was received with a zhugdre ceremony by Lam Druk Namgyal of the Obtsho family at a place called Lebnathang in Gasa District. Then at the consecration of Punakha Dzong, an elaborate zhugdre phunsum tshogpa was performed and the ceremony gained immense popularity thereafter. In order to receive what is being served during the occasion, participants are expected to bring their own *phop* (bowl) and *tora* (small piece of cloth, usually white, to receive food items) to the ceremony to receive what is being served during the occasion.

The final stage of the zhugdre ceremony, known as *trash* *moelam*, is a prayer for the good health, wellbeing and prosperity of the dignitaries and those present on the occasion. It is designed to help guests accumulate merits in order to attain the highest qualities of which man is capable, in this way benefiting not only those present on the occasion but also all sentient beings.

3.1.4. Consecration Ceremony

It is a custom that any significant structure or item is appropriately consecrated to grant a divine blessing. This is called *rabney*, which means to seal firmly. The ceremony is performed upon completion of a new or renovated structure, in order to assure its durability and resilience against natural and manmade disasters. It is a very special ceremony whereby constructions (such as temples, stupas and/or statues) are consecrated with wisdom energy bestowed from the Enlightened Ones, which is then absorbed into the construction

or object. This wisdom energy is sealed with prayers and meditations and the energy will remain alive and active until or unless requested otherwise. The *thangka* (religious scroll pictures), statues and stupas, which have been consecrated in this way, are considered effective in granting blessings and protection, and thereby fulfilling the wishes of the devotees. A lama or local priest performs this *rabney* ceremony. The most popular structures that are generally consecrated comprise private or public building structures or infrastructure, monasteries and temples, stupas, and statues. The ceremony is also carried out for the installation of prayer flags and prayer wheels. Besides these, Buddhist wall hangings, murals, and even new or second-hand vehicles are also consecrated.

3.1.5. Milk Libation

Cattle or yak owners perform milk libation to appease their local deities and livestock gods. Right after the milking, the person faces the direction of the local deities, holding the milking-pail in the left hand and a twig or leaves in the right hand. Dipping the twig into the milk, the person sprinkles a few drops of milk in the direction of the deity. During the act of sprinkling, the person says some propitious prayers. There are no standard written verses for the prayers: people just say some propitious words appealing to the deities that their animals be free from illness and animal predators, and that their produce be bountiful. The main prayer will be dedicated to the gods of livestock. It is in fact a thanksgiving to the gods for ending the previous day successfully and seeking their support in the days to follow.

3.2. TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

3.2.1. Religious Traditions and Customs

In the 7th century when the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo began building temples, Bhutan also saw the light of Dharma. In the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche visited Bhutan at least three times, gave the teachings and blessed the land.

During the 9th century, when King Langdarma and his Bonpo ministers were harassing the Buddhists and causing destruction of both monasteries and scriptures, many of the learned lamas came to Bhutan to practise in safety. In the 13th century, Phajo Drugom Zhipo established the root of Drukpa Kagyud tradition in Bhutan followed by his sons who continued the lineage after his death. Many other teachers followed him to strengthen the tradition. There were also Nyingmapa

