

- 1) pedoen lop thrid (guidance according to examples and meanings in the texts and commentaries;
- 2) mar thrid (guidance according to the absolute exposure of the meaning of a subject);
- 3) zub thrid (instruction by focus on detail within the subject)
- 4) sem thrid (mind guidance);
- 5) gom thrid (meditation guidance); and
- 6) thrid zab mo (profound guidance).

However, thrid also provides instruction and sometimes practical guidance in acquainting oneself with and gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's words and discourses, as taught in detail by the spiritual teachers and masters.

1.3.3. Tuneless Oral Narration

As mentioned earlier, there are oral narrations, called khashey, that require a melody and other khashey that do not. Previously elderly people and people with good oratory skills used to make these narrations according to the situation and their level of knowledge and experience. Narrations could be long and rambling or else presented succinctly in the form of properly arranged prose based on teachings. However, there is no record of established standards in these matters.

1.3.3.1. Departure Salutation or Words of Farewell

Yah! Now you are leaving your home and going to live in places that are far away. You must not engage in activities that are evil and harmful to you as well as to the society. Avoid telling lies, stealing and acting against the laws and always do things according to the principles of dharma. Avoid company of evil people but indulge in acts that are beneficial to yourself and others. Always come to the aid of those who are in dire need of help. Attitudes like these will eventually help you achieve your goals. May you not be left behind so that people look back at you; May you not do things that become their gossip. Be alert in all your plans and actions and be respectful and devoted to the King and your superiors and your colleagues at all times.

This salutation statement is normally made while seeing off any relatives or friends, our children and sometimes even our parents. The content of the statement comprises advice shared with heartfelt purpose, and thus it is called *Lamju-labja* in Dzongkha. Lamju means at the time of separation, and labja means advice.

1.3.3.2. Mourning Statement (narration for the deceased)



Re kab (narration for the deceased) is a traditional custom in Bhutan and increasingly being practised by everyone in the country. The statement is normally made actually for the spirit of a dead person as a parting gift to him/her.

Yah! (Insert name) “Hereafter, you have already left the physical body and today it has been *(Insert days)* since you have abandoned the world. I make this offering (of money) to take with you (symbolically) as a gift to your spiritual Guru. Do not linger around in the intermediate world, but maintain faith in your master and go along the path that will lead you to the Buddha Field.”

In certain parts of eastern Bhutan, an eloquent person amongst family members and neighbours at the cremation recalls the activities of the deceased. After every one or two sentences from the narrator, the others weep. This unique tradition is called *Ngu toed (rngu bsotd)* – weeping praise or a type of elegy.

1.3.3.3. Statement of Condolence

Statement of Condolence, called *Sem-so*, is constructed depending upon the situation (usually at the loss of parents, children, spouses or relatives). An example of a statement made to the bereaved family is given below.

This event has been unfortunate and I know you find it very hard to bear the loss. Nonetheless, it is only a matter of time as we are all destined to end in this way. After having been born in the realm of existence, as the saying goes, “there is no calling back after death and there is

no retrieving what is exhausted; in time, even the earth will crack open,” yet grieving is said to only cause the departed soul to suffer more in the intermediate state. Therefore, you must remain strong and concentrate on performing appropriate rituals so that the deceased will be able to find the right path. So you cannot afford to remain weak.

1.3.3.4. Propitiation to the Spirits

It is believed that there are 18 major evils or devils, 80,000 obstacles and 480 different types of diseases prevalent in this world. When we are possessed by any of these evils causing us to feel sick, the first thing we do is to consult the village astrologer to identify the causes. Then we conduct rituals to rectify the spells of the devil that took possession of the sick person by an eloquent person expert in the tradition. The ritual is called *doen chhoe* (propitiation of evil spirits). Laying out all the items required for the rituals, usually comprising all types of food consumed in the community and *sur* (roasted cereal flour mixed with butter and milk), the orator recites the words of propitiation in accordance with the tradition practised in the village, often in the local dialect, further refining the content according to his own skills and experience. A sample of such a propitiation conducted in one of the villages in western Bhutan is given below to illustrate this tradition.

“*Phyi! Phyi! Phyi! Yah*, the (Here the person who propitiates usually inserts the exact male or female birth year of the patient). Whoever is the possessor, whether you are cardinal King of the east or south or west or the north, whether you are the spirit of a dead male or female, an underground being or a local deity, whichever you are and from wherever you hail. You are intangible beings whereas we are tangible human forms. We cannot establish who you really are. But this person you have possessed has neither meat to eat nor the blood to drink. This person is left with just the skin on the outside and just stools and yellowish urine inside. Instead of clinging on to such a being, here are food items in bright and reddish colours and drinks of all kinds obtained from India and Tibet all assembled as offerings for you. These are offered to you with generosity.

On your part, without saying that the lame had not arrived, the deaf had not heard or the blind had not seen, please satisfy yourself with the feast we have offered; without embracing arrogance and jealousy, enjoy the feast with compassionate mind. Think of your root guru and go away while reciting Om Mani Padme

Hung, the mantra of Avalokiteshvara. Because once this consciousness or spirit leaves the body, there is nothing for it to do but wander aimlessly in the intermediate realms. Have you not received the teachings from a Lama while living in this tangible world? Have you never recited the Vajra Guru Mantra or six syllable Mantra? Oh! Please do not do this. There is neither flesh left to eat nor blood left to drink. Starting this day, please let this (man or woman) regain the appetite to eat, peace to sleep, relieve him/her of this ailment just like the loosening of a belt on the waist, just like removing a rock from the bed, just like removing a hat from the head. *Phyi! Phyi! Phyi!* Leave the life, fortune and wealth behind but take the diseases and evils away with you. *Phyi! Phyi! Phyi!*

This is only an example of how evil spirits are appeased to cure a patient in local tradition. Beside this, there are similar narrations made while making offerings to *zhi da* (local deities) and *ten-zug* (offering of domestic animals to the deities).

1.3.4. Riddle

As in other countries, Bhutan has a number of *Ngag tsed* (oral games) and *Khar tam* (riddles), a popular indigenous oral tradition. The tradition of oral games is found in different regions in the country under different nomenclature. For example in the Tshangla speaking eastern region it is known as *khar-shigpe*, while it is *shed-lo* in the Cho cha Nga cha speaking areas. The people of Trashi Yangtse call it *sho-long* while it is called *drap-drap khyep-khyep* in Paro and Wang (Thimphu) and Thed (Punakha) valleys. The people of Shar valley (Wangduephodrang) call it *shy-shyep* and the people of Haa call it *pey-tam* while the Bumthangpas call it by several names such as *meg-meg chop-chop*, *phiko ding ding*, *migto-goto-nyam nyam*. In Kurtoe (Lhuentse) district they call it *megpa chop chop* and the people of Merak and Sakteng call it *en-tshen chi go do*. In the southern region they call it *gaong khane katha*. Their ways of questioning also differ from each other.

Khar tam is an oral game played between two persons or groups in order to test each other's quickness of wit. In the old days people used to bet on the outcome, with stakes ranging from personal items to the family home and even land ownership, often leading to the loser being ousted from his home village. This system of betting seems to point to the use of the word Khar in this game. Khar means home and tam means speech or statement. The two words have been put together as Khar-tam, to mean puzzling statements put forward