

insects are killed: they are brought up to the surface or buried deep into the earth inadvertently causing harm to their lives. So, days like the 8th, 10th, 15th, 25th, 30th and other holy days of every month in the lunar calendar are considered *duezang* (auspicious day) and any non-virtuous deeds carried out on these days will result in manifold karmic consequences. Therefore, farmers try to observe *duezang* on these days. Instead of farming activities, people attempt to visit monasteries, temples, and sacred sites to offer prayers to accumulate merits. Even if people are not able to make a pilgrimage to a sacred site on an auspicious day, they avoid harnessing their oxen and tilling the soil. *Duezang* is known by the term *sa-nyen* in some communities.

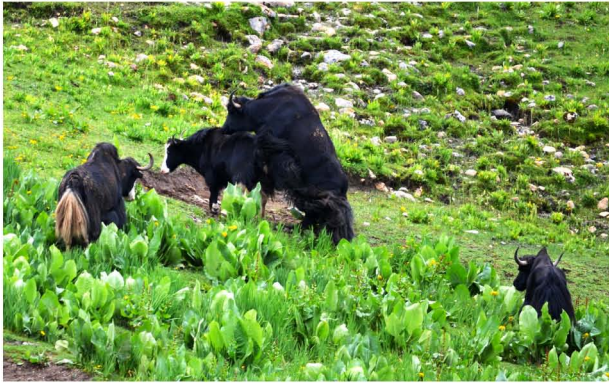
3.2.3. Animal Husbandry

3.2.3.1. Nomadic Herders

Livestock is an important part of agriculture in the country. The residents of high elevation settlements have limited arable lands, so they rear herds of yaks or dzo-dzomo (cross-breeds) and sheep to supplement

their means of livelihood. The herders of these animals are part of family groups domiciled in permanent homes in highland settlements where they grow high altitude crops. The herders move with their animals from place to place for most part of the year, but remain well connected to their families at home. That is why they are basically not nomads, but rather, semi-nomads. In the winter, when it is too cold to remain in their villages, the families travel with the herds down to low-lying valleys. However, a few members of the family also move to lower altitude villages to trade their dairy products with cereals, which they then transport to their highland homes. Some of the highlanders have enough cereals to last the next ten to twenty years. Pastureland or rangeland is very important for these semi-nomads to sustain their herds of animals. To avoid intrusions onto the pastureland by stray animals before moving in their own herds, the herders must guard the area for months to make sure that there is enough forage for their animals to graze. The health and produce of their animals are directly linked to the availability of forages in the pasturelands. They build sheds with stones, wood and bamboo for the herds and bamboo or wooden





pens for the calves. But *bja*, meaning yak hair tent, is commonly used as it can be carried with them as they move on. It is important that the herd and the camp move to another pasture on an auspicious day, which is decided in consultation with an astrologer.

There is a certain altitude below which yaks cannot survive. Consequently, pastures in lower valleys are often not available to yaks for grazing. However, the yak and siri cattle cross-breeds called dzo and dzomo can survive at altitudes of about 1200 meters above sea level in winter.

3.2.3.2. Dairy Production

When calves are allowed to roam freely with the mother, yaks and other breeds are milked once a day in the morning. But sometimes calves are weaned in their pens so that the cows can be milked twice — once in the morning and then again in the evening. There are different customs practiced in different parts of Bhutan, particularly in Merak and Sakteng communities, where yak calves are allowed to forage with their mothers while calves of dzomo and other breeds are weaned and even culled to increase milk production.

There is a beautiful song associated with milking in accordance with the legend of Thöpa Gali:

Now, to give an account of four ways of milking a yak:

*When three spring months have approached,
My [Thöpa Gali's] yaks are tended in the valley down
there.*

*The white-tipped mixed-colour limb-fastening-rope is
fastened,
My yak is milked like water in abundance.*

*When three summer months have arrived,
My yaks are looked after on the hills up there.
My yak is milked like curd [thick milk].*

*When three autumn months have advanced,
My yaks are tended in the great paddock down there.
My yak is milked like butter [very thick like butter].*

*When three winter months have come,
My yak does not produce even a single drop of milk.
The mixed-colour limb-fastening-rope is kept at the camp.
Now, the yearly wind blows outside,
The time has come when water stored inside the tent turns
to ice.*

Now, this concludes four ways of milking a yak.

Milk provides different by-products: churning the milk produces butter and cheese in general, but some people make cream cheese and whey-cheese, which is further processed into fermented-cheese and dried-cheese. In order to make churning less monotonous, a song is sung in the Merak–Sakteng community of eastern Bhutan:

Now, to describe the three-word song on churning the milk:

Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!

*Ah! At dawn this morning,
I offered the milk libation of a hundred yaks, which were
milked.*

*Not a single drop of saliva has drooled from the mouth,
Not a single drop of mucus has dribbled from the nose,
No filth has dropped from the hands.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Do not let the milk fly into the air,
Do not let the milk leak from the end of the churn,
Do not let the milk leak from the middle of the churn.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*When I draw up the churn-stick,
It is like elevating beings to the path of heavenly liberation.
When I thrust down the churn-stick,*

*It is like suppressing cyclic sufferings of the lower realms.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Let the churning give yak-head sized butter,
Let the churning give sheep-head sized butter-flecks,
Let the churning give horse-head sized cheese.
Let there be enough to offer presents to lamas,
Let there be enough to give presents to high-ranking officials.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

*Let there be enough to make offerings to lamas,
Let there be enough to give alms to beggars,
Let there be enough to feed myself,
Let there be enough to give to people.
Om Sangla Mani Padme Hung!*

The three-word song on churning the milk is completed.

In order to have superior breeds and higher milk production, breeding is quite important in animal husbandry. Most breeding takes place in summer and normally the young ones are born in the spring. Once breeding is decided by the herder, a close watch is kept to avoid inferior breeding. In some cases, a cloth piece is used to cover the rump part of the cow to avoid disturbance from other inferior bulls.



3.2.3.3. Culling

Koe, a dwarf cattle breed, results from crossbreeding of *goleng* (bull) and *dzomo*, a hybrid of yak and cattle. *Dzomo* gives the highest quantity of milk amongst the highland animals. *Dzomo* also lives longer than lowland breeds such as *jatsham*, which give the highest quantity of milk amongst local breeds, and jersey cows, which give the highest quantity of milk amongst imported breeds. In order to obtain the most out of *dzomo*, normally its offspring, the *koe*, is culled one week after its birth. The female *koe* gives very little milk while the male *koe* is not strong enough for use as a pack animal. Only one or two *koe* with very good skin colours are spared for conserving the breed of *goleng* and *golengma*. The meat of the *koe* is considered very special. This is common practice in Merak and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan.

In the autumn season, people also cull the fattest yak for *shanor* (animal meat for consumption: *sha* means meat, *nor* means animal). The *shanor* is often undertaken by an individual household or by combining two or three households depending on the availability of healthy yak as well as demand for the meat. This practice is to stock up one year's meat provisions as well as to buy grains





from lower altitudes. Shanor is done when butter and cheese stocks are not sufficient for consumption by the household. Besides milk and its by-products, culling gives the highlanders sufficient meat for their own consumption as well as some for sale in the market.

At the time of shanor the entire family moves out of the village and camps at the site with enough provisions for a few days. Sunny days are chosen for the shanor event to allow the meat to dry. This was an annual practice in Merak village but the custom is slowly dying out.

3.3.3.4. Castration

Castration is an important activity in animal husbandry. It helps to control the spread of inferior breeds and also helps to maintain animal health especially for pack animals. Besides, uncastrated bulls are extremely difficult to look after during the breeding season. However, the traditional castration method is a delicate and dangerous task and may cause death to the animal.

While castrating, the animal is laid down in recumbent position with its belly facing the sky, so as to give easy access to its genital parts. The limbs are tied and held

firmly to avoid accident. In the traditional method, only simple equipment is required: a razor-sharp knife and a piece of woollen thread. The operator gets hold of scrotal sac and with the razor-sharp knife, the operator cuts one-third of the lower scrotum. This exposes the testicles and are gently pulled out and removed. Some ointments are then applied to the wound and the scrotal sac is tied with the woollen thread. In some cases, it is left untied and the animal is released. Castration is easier on younger animals as the spermatid cords are tender and easily severed while pulling out the testes. It is also less painful for a younger animal and the wound heals faster. Spring and late autumn or early winter are the best times of the year for castration as there are fewer insects around then, and hence there is less chance of the wound becoming infected. This method of castration is applicable only for oxen, yak, ram, and dzo.

Castrating a horse is more difficult as the testicles tend to recede into the body. The horse is laid down, and the testicles are firmly held in the hand, and then tied with the help of V-shaped wooden tool to avoid the possibility of them slipping back. Then a sharp knife is used to make an incision in the centre of the tip of the scrotum to expose the testicles, which are then pulled

out. The spermatic cords are severed and the testicles are thrown away. Post-castration procedures are the same as above.

3.2.3.5. Shearing

The next major activity in the highlands is shearing. Before it is shorn, the sheep's legs are tied together and it is laid on the ground. The shearer cuts the wool off, tuft by tuft, with a knife, taking about half an hour to shear each sheep. Yaks are not laid down prior to shearing, but their forelimbs and hind limbs are tied and they are tethered by their horns. When shearing yaks, the soft hair is pulled out by hand while the coarse hair is clipped with scissors or cut off with a knife, from the dewlap to the abdomen and the tail.

Although the time of shearing slightly differs from place to place, yaks are shorn once a year in the late spring, while sheep are shorn three to four times a year starting in spring.

3.2.3.6. Custom of Sparing Animal Life

Saving the lives of animals, or *tshe-thar*, is considered a virtuous deed. The life forms of all sentient beings are believed to be interconnected through the continuum of time. Thus, all living beings of today could have formed part of our own personal ancestries in the past. In philosophical terms, this concept is often expressed as them being the rebirth of our mother during infinite times in the past. Whether they have been our mothers or not, we must respect every living being irrespective of size and species, as all would find it hard to bear the pain of being killed. Therefore, saving an animal at the time when it was about to be butchered is considered a virtuous act. Although an animal cannot express this outwardly to us, the escape from the near death situation must bring an immensely gratifying relief. The saved animals, especially bovines, are left to roam and graze freely in the forest, where they are guarded by someone paid to protect them. Spared from slaughter, they are left to roam until they die natural deaths.

Another form of saving an animal's life is called *tentsug* or *tsheddar*. The animal is offered to a particular deity as a riding pony. The animal is kept in the herd but forbidden from being put to use for any purpose such as a pack or riding animal or from being shorn with metal instruments. *Tentsug* is offered to deities to appease them and in return, animal herds and owners are protected from unforeseen harms and epidemics.

3.2.4. Social Customs

3.2.4.1. Regulation of Social Manners

3.2.4.1.1. Etiquette

Driglam denotes 'order, conformity and uniformity' while *namzha* refers to 'the principle'. Hence, *driglam namzha* means abiding by the principle of living in harmony and in pure forms concerning physical, verbal and mental behaviours.

Every society has its own code of discipline in order to regulate human conduct, enabling people to live together as civilised human beings. The Bhutanese code of *driglam namzha* covers a wide range of social norms. These include speaking, eating, drinking, walking, sitting, dressing, relationship, patriotism and gratitude. It is a way of showing gratitude for the benefits one has received from parents, leaders, elders and spiritual teachers. These distinctive social customs have been carefully maintained and preserved over generations by our forefathers. Today, they are deeply rooted in our society and remains as an insignia of our cultural identity.

Precisely, *driglam namzha* involves action, speech and thoughts. Accordingly, it can be described as follows:

1. Physical Etiquette (*lueki driglam*): It means conducting oneself through the body. This covers the conduct of eating, drinking, walking, sitting, seeing, dressing, showing respect, and physical gestures.
2. Speech Etiquette (*ngagi driglam*): It means conducting oneself through speech. This covers speaking the truth, speaking gently and politely, speaking in a respectful way, and saying words that are beneficial to others.
3. Mind Etiquette (*yiki driglam*): It means conducting oneself through the mind. This covers faith in the Three Jewels (Tri Ratna, that is, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), dedication to work, loyalty to the country, good intentions, showing kindness and gratitude, and trust in the cycle of karma.

Among the three aspects of *driglam namzha*, mind etiquette is the most important of all because the mind influences and controls our actions and speech. It is through intelligence that human values can be analysed, understood, appreciated and followed. Therefore, to rectify our thinking and have the right attitude is most important. Thus, mind etiquette plays a vital role in the person's maintenance of quality and decency.