

Unveiling the ancient roots of Torgya: A Monpa festival in Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract: This topic explores the Torgya celebration among the Monpa community of Arunachal Pradesh, tracing its origins and its connections to Tibet and the 5th Dalai Lama, as well as examining the Dzongs of Arunachal Pradesh under the 5th Dalai Lama's rule. Additionally, it highlights the significant folk dances performed during the Torgya Festival. As well as its importance to the monpa community. This topic covers overall a culture of Monpa community living in Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh. Due to limited availability of written sources on the topic. I had to rely heavily on oral sources, particularly information provided by informants from Tawang Monastery, where the Torgya Festival is held annually.

Key words: Torgya, Dzong (Administrative Centre), Gonpa(Monastery), Monpa, Chham (Dance).

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Monpas are an indigenous tribal group residing in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh, specifically in the districts of Tawang and West Kameng. Traditionally the Monyul (land inhabited by the monpa tribes) was traditionally have several divisions since time immemorial. The clusters of villages under Tawang districts are- Shar Nyima Tshosum, Dhakpa Tsogyel, Pangchen Dingdruk, Hro Jangdhak, and Mathing Lusum. Drangnang Tsodrug and Rongnang Tsozhi are under West Kameng District ¹. Lobsang Tenpa's reference to Tibetan scholar Chabpel Tsetan Phuntsok states, "Mon is an archaic Tibetan word for a low-lying region with narrow valley and dense forests ². As one of the 26 major tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, the Monpas possess a unique cultural identity. Although the Monpa tribe is distributed across two districts, their language may vary. However, their cultural practices, traditions, and customs remain remarkably similar, reflecting the tribe's shared heritage and history. The Monpa people are followers of Buddhism. It is generally believed that Guru Padmasambhava, locally known, as Lopon Rinpoche was instrumental in popularizing Tibetan form of Buddhism among the monpa people sometimes in 7th century A.D ³. Before Buddhism's advent, the dominant religion in the region was Bon, which Buddhist sources often portray as a primitive form of nature worship. In contrast to Buddhism, Bon focuses on cosmogony (the creation of the universe) and emphasizes achieving magical powers through union with nature spirits, manifesting in mountains, trees, lakes, and rivers. Salvation is not a central concern; instead, Bon practitioners seek spiritual power and connection with the divine through rituals and practices. Indigenous to the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, has been practicing the tradition of yak rearing for centuries. The Monpa community migrated from Tibet to western Arunachal, specifically the Tawang region, around 500BC. The Monpa people are known for their expertise in woodcarvings, paintings, and weaving. They are also deeply rooted in cultural practices such as water burial, constructing traditional houses from stones, and celebrating festivals like *Torgya*, *Losar*, and *Gaden Ngamchhod*. The Monpa society's culture and religion are deeply intertwined. Here, religion and culture are not viewed as separate entities. The advent of Buddhism in Mon area of Tawang can be traced back to the 7th century, when Mon Tawang, then called Yul-Mandegang, was ruled by a king called Kala Wangpo. He was said to be a contemporary of Tibetan King Songtsan Gampo.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

¹ T. Tashi, The Influence of Tawang Monastery on Cultural legacy in the Mon Tawang region. 2019, 2-4.

² Tenpa & Tempa, Brief History of the Introduction of Buddhism in Mon Region, 2013, 1.

³ Niranjana Sarkar, Buddhism among the Monpas and Shertukpens, 1980, 1-10.

Lobsang Tenpa's book, 'An Early History of the Mon Region (India) and its Relationship with Tibet and Bhutan' (2018), is a seminal work that comprehensively explores the history of the Mon Region of Arunachal Pradesh. The author has conducted an in-depth study of both the secular clan rulers and spiritual leaders of the Mon Area from the earliest historical times. It highlights the crucial stage in the region's history in the late 17th century and the subsequent formation of the Mon Region under Tibetan rule. This work is an invaluable resource for gaining knowledge on the political history of the Mon Region from ancient times.

Tsering Tashi's doctoral thesis, 'The Influence of Tawang Monastery on Cultural Legacy in the Mon Region' (2019), submitted to University of Delhi, provides an in-depth examination of the Tawang area, including a comprehensive analysis of the traditional divisions of the Mon region and migration trends of monpa people.

Niranjan Sarkar's book 'The Buddhism among Monpas and shertukpen' (1980) has comprehensively discussed about the spread of Buddhism and its intermingling with the local elements in the Monpa society. This book also talks about same belief and rituals practice in society.

R.K. Deuri's work, 'Festival of Kameng' (1983), provides a comprehensive account of festivals celebrated in Kameng district, including the Torgya festival of Tawang Monastery, when Tawang was part of Kameng district. The work offers detailed insights into the Torgya festival, describing its entire process.

Neeru Nanda's work, 'Tawang: The Land of Mon' (1982), provides detailed insights into Monyul, the land of the Monpas. It discusses a rule established by Merak Lama Lodro Gyatso after the founding of Tawang Monastery, which required one out of three sons to be sent to the monastery. Failure to comply would result in a hefty penalty, which was ₹2000 in the 1970s.

Tashi Lamas' work, 'The Monpas of Tawang' (1999), explores various aspects of Monpa society, including their local self-government, customary laws, and the early kingdom history of Tawang. The book also provides a detailed account of the Torgya festival, including the dances performed during the celebration, and offers insights into the myths behind its origin. Additionally, it gives a brief overview of Tawang Monastery.

Lobsang Tenpa and Thupten Tempa's book, 'A Brief History of the Establishment of Buddhism in Monyul' (2013), offers a concise yet insightful exploration of Tibetan Buddhism's history in the Mon area, encompassing present-day Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The authors underscore the pivotal role of spiritual masters in disseminating Tibetan Buddhism, while vividly detailing the establishment of Buddhist institutions from the 14th century onwards. The work also sheds light on the spread of various Tibetan Buddhist schools in the region. This book provides a clear and accessible understanding of Buddhism's history in the Mon area, making it an essential resource.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To trace the historical background of the Torgya Festival.
- To understand the significance of folk dances in the Torgya festival.
- To preserve the traditional practices and heritage of the Monpa tribe.

4. STUDY AREA:

The present paper study area is located in Arunachal Pradesh, the North Eastern State of India. It shares international borders with Bhutan (160 km) to the west, China (1,080 km) to the north and northeast, and Myanmar (440 km) to the east. Domestically, it borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south. Geographically, the state spans between 26°30' N and 29°31' N latitude and 91°31' E and 97°30' E longitude, covering an area of 83,743 square kilometers. The terrain varies from snow-capped mountains and rivers in the north to the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley in the south, making Arunachal Pradesh the largest state in the Northeast region.

Arunachal gained statehood on February 20, 1987. Prior to this, it was a union territory, established on January 20, 1972, after being separated from Assam. The region's transformation involved.

- North-East Frontier Tracts (NEFT): Created in 1914 from parts of Assam Province
- North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA): Formed in 1951, comprising several frontier tracts
- Union Territory: NEFA became the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh on January 20, 1972. It gained state status on February 20, 1987, during Rajiv Gandhi's government ⁴.

5. METHODOLOGY:

This empirical study combines historical and field research to explore the subject matter. Primary and secondary sources were utilized to gather data. Secondary sources, including books, monographs, ethnographic reports, articles, and

⁴ D. Pandey, History of Arunachal Pradesh, 2012, 372-373.

research reports, were thoroughly reviewed to provide context and insights. The research design and methodology are outlined to provide a clear understanding of the study's approach.

6. DISCUSSION :

The term '*Torgya*' is associated with *Ngya*, or mantra, scriptures. '*Tor*' means a three-sided dough statue known as *Torma* (statue) and *Gyab* meaning to Throw it away therefore the word itself means a statue of three sided to be throw away and *Torgya* has various forms depending on the location. The size of the *torma* (three-sided dough statue) would be approximately 3 feet and 2 feet in breadth and for making the *Torma* the quantity of barley is proportionately more than other ingredients. *Torma* is made by a group of monks of Tawang Monastery fourteen days before the festivals begins and then *Torma* is painted with red colour. At the meanwhile, outside the monastery compound a huge number of dry bamboo leaves are collected in a heap which is called *Meachhang*. *Mechhang* was burnt on 2nd day of *Torgya* by the *torgya lama* accompanied by some other monks of the monastery. Meanwhile, the *torma* is carried to *Mechhang* by some monks called *Arpo*, accompanied by two mask wearing monks, one wearing a male yak horn and other one female yak horn mask. Both of them are known as *choige-Yap-Yum*. *Chonge* meaning servant, *Yap* means male and *yum* meaning female. After reaching the place *Torma* is thrown into the fire ⁵.

It's believed that since Bhutan follows the *Kagyü* tradition of Buddhism, while Tawang Monastery adheres to the Gelukpa tradition, Bhutan has historically shown animosity towards Tawang. This is exemplified by the ritual of burning a *torma*, a dough statue, facing towards Tawang, symbolizing the warding off of evil spirits in that direction. The *Torgya* ritual also differs based on the specific *Chokyongpa* (deity) being honored. In the case of Tawang Gonpa, the *Torgya* is dedicated to *Damche Choegye* (a deity), a primary deity associated with Je Rinpoche (the founder of Gelukpa sect of Buddhism). Initially Tawang gonpa would also burn *tormas*, directing them towards Bhutan, as a response to the perceived animosity. However, with the passage of time, the tradition has evolved. Nowadays, the direction in which the *torma* is burned is determined by the *Chipa Lama*, who checks the astrological charts to identify the most auspicious direction for the lama performing the ritual. This direction is determined based on the lama's birth animal symbol, ensuring a personalized and harmonious approach to the ritual.

The Tawang monastery was established by Merak Lama Lodro Gyatso from Merak Village, present day in Bhutan (Border village of Tawang). Subsequently, Merak Lama introduced a rule requiring every household in the Mon region to offer their middle son to Tawang Monastery as a monk. The systems still continued, but nowadays the villagers are not as keen to send their sons to the monastery. However, in all families of three sons, the middle one has to be sent to the gompa and the lamas come to take him away when the child is about eight. In case the family does not wish to spare the middle son, they have to place the usual *khada* and *chang* before the lamas and plead for *maf* which is normally granted only on payment of a *chatpa* (heavy fine) which can go up to Rs 2,000 ⁶. To meet the food requirements of the monks residing in the monastery, people began donating crops twice a year, coinciding with the Monpa community's dual cropping seasons - once in summer and again during autumn, known as '*Du Phu*' or currently as '*Khrai*'. Over time, this voluntary contribution, '*Du Phu*', became mandatory and was renamed '*Thhai*'. Two monks, designated as '*Ngyerpas*', were tasked with traveling from village to village to collect taxes, which were then brought back to Tawang Gonpa and offered in seven large utensils near the giant statue of Gautam Buddha. This ritual is reminiscent of the daily '*Yonchhap*' ceremony, where water is offered every morning in seven small utensils in Buddhism ⁷.

The donations received were distributed among the monks on the 5th day of every month. In ancient times, no external donations were accepted, and all expenditures for the three *Torgya* events were covered by the two *Nyerpa* monks who collected taxes from the villages. Interestingly, apart from the *Nyerpa* monks, one other monk, responsible for ring the traditional '*dha*' (a locally-made doll), had the privilege of donating '*Thukpa*' (noodle soup) once to all. The principle behind not accepting donations from outsiders was rooted in the belief that *Torgya* is a communal prayer, and therefore, all expenses should be borne solely by the collective donations of the community⁸

Origin of Torgya Dungyur

Torgya is believed to have originated during the lifetime of Merak Lama, dating back to 1861. Historically, prior to the 5th Dalai Lama, all previous Dalai Lamas held only religious authority. In Tibet, the religious head and political head were separate entities. During this period, Tibet faced numerous invasions from different directions, including wars with China led by the Manchu and wars with Mongolia. Tibet was surrounded by enemies on all sides. Political power came under the 5th Dalai Lama through a combination of religious influence, Mongol military support, and the fall of

⁵ R. K. Deuri, FESTIVALS OF KAMENG, 1983. 13-14.

⁶ Neeru Nanda, TAWANG The Land of Mon, 1982. 74.

⁷ Nawang Norbu, aged 61 years, A senior Monk serving in Tawang Monastery since 1971, Scheduled Interviewed on 2nd April 2025.

⁸ Ibid.

rival powers in Tibet. In the early 1600s, Tibet was divided between different factions, mainly the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat sect, supported by the Dalai Lamas) and the Tsangpa dynasty (ruling from Shigatse, supporting the rival Kagyu sect). The Tsangpa kings were powerful and did not accept the Dalai Lama's spiritual or political authority. The 5th Dalai Lama and his Gelugpa supporters formed an alliance with Gushri Khan, the powerful Mongol leader of the Khoshut tribe. Gusher Khan believed in the Gelugpa school and saw the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader. So, Gushri Khan invaded Tibet, defeated the Tsangpa king, and handed over full control of central Tibet (Ü-Tsang) to the 5th Dalai Lama. This made the Dalai Lama not only the spiritual but also the political leader of Tibet. In 1642, the 5th Dalai Lama established the Ganden Phodrang government, with its seat in Lhasa. This began the tradition of the Dalai Lamas ruling Tibet, both spiritually and politically. The 5th Dalai Lama then declared that he would henceforth serve as both the political and religious head of these newly occupied territories. This marked the emergence of the concept of 'Lug Ngyee,' or the 'Head of Two,' referring to the dual role of political and religious leadership⁹.

6.1.1 Administrative Reforms under the 5th Dalai Lama.

When the 5th Dalai Lama assumed political responsibilities over Tibet, he became known as the *Gyelpo*, or 'King of Tibet.' This marked the beginning of a new era in Tibetan administration.

establishment of *Dzongs* (Administrative Centres)

The 5th Dalai Lama set up Dzongs, or administrative centres, throughout Tibet, Lhasa being the main *Dzong* (Capital of Tibet), including the Tawang area. One such Dzong, Gyangar Dzong, was established as a branch of Tsona Dzong.

Tsona Dzong: The Capital of Southern Tibet.

Tsona Dzong, located in southern Tibet, served as the capital of the region. Tawang, being part of southern Tibet, fell under the jurisdiction of Tsona Dzong. The 5th Dalai Lama appointed Merak Lama to oversee Tsona Dzong.

Administrative Divisions:

The administrative divisions were as follows:

- Lhasa remained the capital of Tibet.
- Areas up to Sela Pass fell under Gyangar Dzong.
- Regions beyond Sela Pass were divided between Dirang Dzong and Taklung Dzong.
- Two Dzongpons (administrators) from Taklung Dzong were responsible for collecting taxes and maintaining law and order up to Amartala.
- Dirang Dzong administered areas from Rahung to Sela Pass.

These reforms helped establish a more organized and efficient administrative system in Tibet during the 5th Dalai Lama's reign. During the time of the 2nd Dalai Lama, a revered lama named Tenpe Doima was believed to have lived in the regions surrounding Taklung Dzong. According to local legend, this area was once plagued by numerous Sinpo, or malevolent spirits, which caused disturbances and harm to people living between Assam and Amartala. Tenpe Doima's presence in the region was said to have brought solace and protection to the local population. The Establishment of Taklung Gonpa and the Tradition of Taxation. Pleased with Lama Tenpe Doime's presence, the Assam Raja offered gifts to the lama and his monastery, Taklung Gonpa. As administrators, the two Dzongpons of Taklung Dzong were responsible for collecting taxes from the Assam Raja. The taxation system was allocated as follows:

- 1% of the tax was sent to the Dalai Lama in Tibet.
- 7-8% was allocated to Garden Namgyel Lhatse¹⁰
- The remaining amount was retained by the Dzongpons for future use.

Utilizing the retained funds, the Dzongpons initiated two significant traditions:

1. *Mani Donngyur*: A ceremony held every three years in Tawang Gonpa, praying for the long life of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama in Tibet.

2. *Torgya Dungyur* (Ten Thousand mantras): A festival celebrated every third year, which emerged from the *Mani Dondup* tradition. That's how the concept of *Torgya Dungyur* every third year emerge¹¹.

These traditions continue to play an essential role in the cultural and spiritual heritage of the region

Myth Behind origin of Torgya Festival.

The Dungyur (Torgya) Festival of Tawang Monastery has a fascinating origin myth. Shan Pradhar and his nine sons ventured into a dense forest to collect firewood. While the sons struggled to cut down trees due to their young age, Shan Pradhar managed to gather the firewood. As they left the forest, Shan Pradhar spotted two sparrows flying away.

⁹W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet A Political History, 1976, 103-106.

¹⁰N. Norbu, Op. cit.

¹¹ Jambey Sangey, A monk at Sera Jey Monastery.

Curious, he followed one sparrow, leaving his sons behind. This decision led him to a challenging journey, forcing him to beg for food. Shan Pradhar eventually reached Kalaktang, where he encountered an old lady and a young girl. They warned him about demons that had killed the village men, but he bravely decided to stay and fight. Using his magical powers and clever tactics, Shan Pradhar defeated the demons, except for one that escaped. The defeated demon transformed into stone and vanished, leaving behind its progeny. Shan Pradhar continued his journey, reaching Amartala and Nahteng. A crow caught his attention, and he unintentionally shot it. After performing a post-mortem, he found a strange paddy grain in its intestine, which he believed indicated a nearby settlement. He finally reached Udulguri, where the king welcomed him and offered land, food, and money. It's believed Shan Pradhar represented Tawang Monastery, settling in Udulguri to collect revenue and perform rituals to counter natural calamities. The three groups (Tsok, Manvul lhawa, and Yulsum) starts assisting the monastery in various rituals and ceremonies. As a result of the people's contributions to Tawang Monastery, the Torgya Dungyur festival is thought to have originated, supported by these donations¹²

6.3. Traditional Dances During Torgya

6.3.1 *Gyelpo Gyelmo Chham*: A Traditional Dance-Drama.

As part of the Torgya Dungyur festival, held every three years, the Gyepo Gyelmo Chham is performed to showcase the rich history of Tibetan dynasties. This traditional dance-drama narrates the story of the king (*Gyelpo*) and queen (*Gyelmo*), highlighting their relationship and the monarch's plan to embark on a pilgrimage to India. Every three years, during the *Torgya Dungyur* year, this sacred dance is performed on the 15th day of the 10th month in the Lunar Calendar. Unlike other dances held within the monastery during *Torgya*, this dance takes place in the *Chamlang* area, located outside the main *Dukhang* premises.

The dance features 12 characters, including three female roles played by male monks and seven male characters. The male characters include three *Gyep*'s, an Interpreter (*Phrinpa*) played by *Dorjee Apa*, and his two sons (*Mlengchung*). The 5 female characters include 3 *Gem*'s, 1 *Aae*, and 1 *Burzepah*, with the female roles being enacted by male monks¹³. Through *Gyelpo Gyelmo Chham*, the audience is taken on a journey through the annals of Tibetan kingship, illustrating:

The system of monarchic rule.

- The roles and responsibilities of the king and queen
- The historical context of Tibetan dynasties

This vibrant and informative performance is an integral part of the *Torgya* festival, offering a unique glimpse into Tibet's rich cultural heritage.

6.3.2 *Dikchung Chham* (sinful person):

The *Torgya* festival features a diverse range of dances, each with its own unique significance. One such dance is the *Dikchung*, which portrays a person consumed by sin throughout their lifetime. Through this dance, the performer depicts the consequences of a life of wrongdoing, as the character is ultimately condemned to *Ngyelwa* (hell) to atone for their misdeeds. The *Dikchung* dance serves as a cautionary tale, reminding viewers of the importance of leading a virtuous life.

6.3.3. *Khimdak Pegi*: A man from the plains was reborn as a fly in his second rebirth and landed on a pile of horse dung. When heavy rain washed away the dung, the fly found itself near a stupa (chortin) and flew away. Due to this unintentional circumambulation, he was reborn as a man in a poor family. As his family grew and prospered, becoming a large joint household, he awaited his final breath. However, his lifespan extended, and he had to endure harsh comments from his family members, who began to say that the elderly patriarch had become a burden and was no longer able to contribute to the household. Finding solace in meditation, this story is depicted in the dance¹⁴. 56.3.4. *Ja Dang Semchen Ridag*: This dance features performers wearing animal masks, representing the 12 animals of the Buddhist calendar, known as *Lho Khor Chungye*. Each animal symbolizes a year in the Buddhist cycle and is associated with individuals born in that year. And combines five elements (Wood, Fire, Earth, Iron/Metal, and Water) with 12 animal signs in a 60-year cycle. So, 2025 is associated with the Wood element and the Dragon sign so, 2025 is the Year of the (*Drul*) wood Dragon, meaning those born in this year are represented by the Wood Dragon symbol. The dance also

¹² · Tashi Lama, The Monpas of Tawang, 1999, 74-76.

¹³ Tenzin Yeegha, Tawang Monastery as a site of Memory the role of Tawang Monastery in Preserving Cultural Method and Practices, 2023, 83.

¹⁴ Tashi Lama, op. cit., 78-79.

conveys the important Buddhist message that killing animals is a sin, promoting compassion and respect for all living beings.

6.3.4. *Dunda Lhamo*: The *Dundo Lhamo* dance is a significant sacred dance performed during the Torgya Festival. This dance is Performed by four monks, adorned in the attire of female deities it is part of the ritual *Chham* (masked dances) to ward off evil spirits and purify the land. *Dundo Lhamo* is considered a protective female deity (a Dharmapala) in Tibetan Buddhism. The dance symbolizes the triumph of good over evil and the protection of the Dharma (Buddhist teachings). Monks wear elaborate masks and robes, and their movements are slow, symbolic, and filled with spiritual meaning. The dance is performed to the sound of traditional instruments like drums, horns, and cymbals, creating a mystical atmosphere.

This dance is usually performed on the second day of the festival, during the main Cham ceremonies.

6.3.5. *Pha Chham*: *Pha chham* performs in these three day of *Torgya* Festival every year. the word *pha* meaning Boar and *chham* meaning dance meaning Boar dance. There is no accompanying song in the *pha chham*. the dance must be finished before sunrise. as the boar digs the earth with its tusks, so the *chhampon* performs this dance begging permission from the deity under the earth called *Acholu* for the use of the land for dancing ¹⁵.

6.3.6. *Durdag Chham*: The *Durdag Cham* dance features performers dressed in red, skin-tight costumes adorned with white skeleton bones, accompanied by lion-cloths with demon faces and human skull masks. These dancers represent the guardians of eight cemeteries, home to protectors sworn to defend the sacred sites. During the dance, a monk places a Linga at the center, symbolizing evil forces. The *Durdag* performers dance around it, whistling to conjure the evil spirits into the Linga. The ritual takes a dramatic turn when a dancer portraying *Shenpa*, the butcher, appears and performs a wild dance. With symbolic movements, *Shenpa* destroys the Linga, representing the triumph over evil forces.

Preparation and Rules of the Torgya Dancers

Preparation starts one-month prior to Festival. The sacred dances performed at Tawang Monastery are executed by young and experienced lamas, who adhere to strict rules. These guidelines are essential, and failure to comply results in fines. The dancers must first show respect for the dances and then learn them under proper guidance. They follow precise patterns, and only lamas of the Gelukpa sect participate, bound by rigorous rules. Before performing, the dancers meditate and maintain dietary restrictions, avoiding onions, garlic, and non-vegetarian foods. Certain customs, like handling sacred items associated with Palden Lhamo, require special prayers to maintain their sanctity. The dancers practice in a designated area called *Chhamlang*, under the tutelage of an instructor, for several days leading up to the festival. During practice, the dancers follow a strict schedule, from 4 am to 5 pm, without leaving the grounds without permission. Throughout the festival, the performers reside together, separate from other monks, and are not allowed to leave without permission.

These rules are believed to ensure the dances' spiritual integrity and prevent adverse consequences. By adhering to these guidelines, the lamas honour the traditions and maintain the monastery's sacred atmosphere ¹⁶.

The Three-Day Torgya Festival

First Day of Torgya: Monks perform a ritual called *Torma* Offering, involving creation of butter sculptures (*Tormas*). Sacred chants and rituals are conducted to ward off evil and ensure peace.

The festival begins with the *Chham* (masked dance) performed by monks in elaborate costumes representing various deities. This ceremony symbolizes the warding off of evil spirits and negative energies. the end of the day, the giant *Torma* (butter sculpture) is paraded and later burned, symbolizing destruction of evil spirits

Second Day of Torgya: On the second day of *Torgya*, the abbot of the monastery gives teachings or blessings to the devotees and he bestows *Wang* (blessings) upon the devotees gathered for the festival. Monks distribute blessed *Tseri* and *Tse-Chang* (Blessed food) to the public. This sacred ritual is believed to bring peace, prosperity, long live and spiritual growth to the attendees.

Third Day of Torgya: The third and final day of *Torgya* is considered highly auspicious, as it marks the release of animals from captivity, symbolizing compassion and liberation. This act of kindness is believed to accumulate merit and bring blessings to all sentient beings.

The *Torgya* Festival in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, is a vibrant three-day Buddhist celebration held at the Tawang Monastery, usually in January. Each day has distinct rituals and significance.

¹⁵ Niranjan Sarkar, DANCES OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH. 1974, 154.

¹⁶ Norbu, op. cit.

7. CONCLUSION:

The Torgya Festival is a significant cultural and spiritual event for the Monpa community in Arunachal Pradesh, showcasing their rich heritage and traditions. This vibrant celebration, held over three days at the Tawang Monastery, is a testament to the community's deep-rooted Buddhist values and their connection to the natural world. Through its various rituals, dances, and ceremonies, the Torgya Festival embodies the essence of Tibetan Buddhism, emphasizing the triumph of good over evil, compassion, and spiritual growth. The festival's intricate preparations, strict rules, and sacred dances performed by the monks underscore the importance of preserving traditional practices and honoring the monastery's sacred atmosphere.

The Torgya Festival also highlights the Monpa community's history, migration, and interactions with neighboring regions, reflecting the complex cultural dynamics of the Himalayan region. As a celebration of faith, art, and community, the Torgya Festival is an integral part of the Monpa identity, promoting unity, prosperity, and spiritual well-being among its people. In conclusion, the Torgya Festival is a treasured cultural event that showcases the Monpa community's rich heritage, spiritual traditions, and communal harmony. Its significance extends beyond the festivities, representing a profound connection to their history, faith, and the natural world.

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Oral Narration:

1. Nawang Norbu, aged 61 years, A senior Monk serving in Tawang Monastery since 1971, Scheduled Interviewed on 2nd April 2025.
2. Passang Tsering, aged 55 years, a Priest in Jang Circle, Tawang District, Scheduled phone Interviewed on 10th February, 2025.
3. Pema Drema, aged 63 years, A netizen of Kharsa, was scheduled interviewed on 3rd October 2024.
4. Sonam Lama, aged 56 years, A priest in Sum rang Village of Jang Circle, was scheduled Phone Interviewed on 2nd February, 2025.
5. Thutan Tashi, aged 70 years, Senior Netizen of Jang Circle, Tawang, Scheduled Interviewed on 20 December 2024.