

The Importance of Panglhasol Ceremony: A Study

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Abstract

Sikkim with all its spectacle and tranquillity offers a great variety of spiritual cultural ethnicity. The vast range of occasion involving different spiritual ceremony adds to the vibrancy of this beautiful mountain state. Among its most popular spiritual, Pang Lhasol is celebrated with a great deal of exhibition and grandeur. It is amongst the popular ceremony in Sikkim and it endows colour and elegance to the already colourful state. Sikkim annually celebrates the festival of Pang Lhasol which falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month according to the Tibetan Lunar calendar.

Keywords: Pang-Lhasol, Kham Minyak, Sakya monastery, Khye-Bum-sa, Kabi, Chagdor Namgyal, Bhetsen, Pangtoed Chaam.

Introduction

The Legends of Pang Lhasol

The legend of Panglhasol goes back to the 13th century when a prince of Kham Minyak while on pilgrimage in Tibet had performed a miracle by raising the main pillar of Sakya Monastery single hand. He was therefore given the title of Khye-Bum-Sa meaning 'the strength of many people by Sakya Lama and was offered his daughter for marriage which Khye-Bum-Sa accepted. The newlywed couple settled at Phari in Chumbi Valley. The couple had no child and therefore after consulting religious authorities saw a prophecy where Lepcha seer in the dying lands southwards would be able to give the boon of child. Khye Bum-Sa proceeded accordingly southwards of Tibet and reached present day Lingchom area by sheer fulfilment of supernatural events. Here Khye-Bum-Sa met a hoary headed couple engaged in cultivation and he enquired about the prophesy. The hoary headed couple led the strangers to a small hut like cave Phyak-Tse below Phiongong at present Rong –Pa. There they saw the hoary headed man wearing his native apparel and was sitting on a raised throne and he was Thekong Tek, Lepcha Chief of Sikkim. The Lepcha Chief blessed the couple and upon returning to Tibet the couple had a son. Khye Bhum-Sa visited the Lepcha Chief again to express their gratitude. It was then that the Thekong Tek insisted for oath of 'Blood Brotherhood' between him and Khye Bumsa.¹

Thekong Tek and Khye Bumsa sat on a raw animal hide with the intestine of the animal tied around them and blood splattered all around and took the oath of 'Blood Brotherhood' under the witness of Mt. Khanchendzonga. To perpetuate the treaty and its objective of unity, peace and harmony amongst the future generation of the land, a symbolic stone was erected as per tradition with blood splattered over it. The place where the oath was taken is presently known as 'Kabi Longtsok' in North Sikkim. 'Kabi' meaning our blood, 'long' meaning stone and 'Tsok' meaning erect in Lepcha. Altogether meaning 'the erect stone with our blood which is an oath sworn'. According to this legend Pang Lhasol is celebrated annually commemorating this oath taking.²

This festival received a boost during the reign of third King Chagdor Namgyal. It is said that the enthronement of the King Chagdor Namgyal (1686-1717) in the year 1700 was protested by his step sister Panding Ongmoo, who later invited the Bhutanese soldiers to invade Sikkim and attack her brother. The Bhutanese succeeded in occupation of Rabdentse Palace and compelled the then ruling King to flee to Tibet. However, the King got an opportunity to study Buddhism in Lhasa for a period of five years. Remaining amongst the learned lamas had exercised a great influence towards monasticism in his mind. In the mean time, with Tibet's



Neydup Bhutia

Assistant Professor,
Dept of Buddhist Religious History,
SIHNS Sheda, Pangthang,
Taktse, Gangtok, E. Sikkim, India

intervention, the Bhutanese evacuated Rabdentse Palace retaining the region east of the Tista River now Kalempong sub division of Bengal.

However, King Chagdor Namgyal on his return was escorted by Lama Jigmed Pawo, the third Incarnate of Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo. Jigmed Pawo gave a boost to this festival by celebrating it in a more ritualistic manner. On the other hand, King Chagdor Namgyal also devoted his time to promote the monastic rites & ritual. It is said that he had a pure vision (Dag-sNang) of a 'Da-lha'(war-deities) in his dream and eventually on advice of the lama Jigmed Pawo he composed Rongchham (mask dance) and subsequently choreographed a Pangtoed Chaam or a warrior dance dedicated to the war-deities. Consequently, this neo-mode of festival was a title of 'Pang Lhasol' or worship of the Guardian Deities with a formal eulogy or (sgra-lha-dpangs-bstod). This festival was first held at Pemayangtse monastery in the presence of King Chagdor himself. Evidence can be seen in the form of pictorial depiction in a Thanka that preserved at Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok.

The Celebration

To this day the mountain god is invoked and prayed upon at Pang Lhasol to continue protecting Sikkim and its people. The festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th month of the Tibetan calendar corresponding to late August/early September. The 'chaams' which are part of this festival are unique and the spectacular Pangtoed or warrior dance was choreographed by the third Chogyal Chador Namgyal and Lhatsun Dzogchen Jigmed Pawo, which is said to have appeared to him in a vision.

The festival also marks the commemoration of blood brotherhood sworn between the Lepchas and the Bhutias at Kabi in the 13th century.

Formerly, it was observed with warrior Dance at Royal Chapel at Gangtok. Later it spread to other parts of Sikkim. Today, this festival is mainly held at Pemayangtse monastery in West Sikkim, Rabongla Monastery in South Sikkim and Thangu monastery of Lachen and Thomoche in Lachung, North Sikkim with warrior dance. However, normal prayer called- Naysol is offered in all the major monasteries throughout the country. During this festival the farmers bring to the monastery, tribute of their offering including fresh fruits, and pray for the timely rainfall and bountiful harvest.

Highlights and Important Rituals of the Festival

The colourful festival of Pang Lhasol is replete with some elaborate rituals, prayers and thrilling dance performances by monks and lay mans; amongst them the most famous and the one that keeps the visitors hooked to their positions is the awe-inspiring warrior dance called 'Pang-Toed Chaam' that aims at invoking the guardian deity, Mt. Kanchenjunga; Lamas wearing fiery red-faced masks with crown of five skulls, riding on a snow-lion represent the guardian angel and simply provide for a spectacular show with their enthralling dance and acrobatic moves on eclectic sounds of echoing drums and cymbals. The entry of Mahakala, the protector of

Dharma, is profoundly awaited amidst the dance and which brings about a dramatic twist to the whole performance.

During the Pang Lhasol, a unique practice being followed by the lamas of the former Royal Chapel was the offering of Bhetshen to various places of worships in Sikkim. Bhetshen means multi-coloured sacred threads that are prepared from the wool of Sheep and Yak's fur. Bhetshen symbolizes an offering of the flock of beasts as a tribute to the local Guardian Deities for protecting and fostering the animals.

The sacred threads are normally prepared at Tsuklakhang monastery, Gangtok, according to one lama called Champo Lhundup, who was deputed from Pemayangtse monastery, to perform rituals in this monastery. The threads are duly consecrated with the prayers and then dispatched to following places:

1. Chumbi valley in Tibet.
2. Kabi Longtsuk in North Sikkim.
3. Ongdutse, in Labrang, North Sikkim.
4. Pemayangtse monastery, West Sikkim for dispatching to different sacred places of South-West Sikkim.³

Aims of the study

At outset my keen curiosity to pursue this topic and aims of objective as observed by me, thus, Sikkim is tiny Himalayan vale, different ethnicity lives here and reverence and beliefs their own perspective idols, like wise ethnic of Bhutia they do revere upon to the Mount Kunchen Junga as a chieftain deity of Sikkim, so, called festival Pang-Lha-sol is tribute prayer to the Mount Kunchen Junga, being showing a deepness devotional gratitude for which the chief deity have been protect and being blessed all times to his followers, during my study I found numerous persuasive subject as indigenous history, folklore, culture, folk dance and folk tales etc, folk dances and cultural practices are still prevails and its celebrate once in the year in grant manner, very antique attires and masks are being apply during the performances, monks and publics jointly perform dance and mainly core dance as well dance of Vajra Yana act performed by higher rank monks only. It's believed that, once, made over this culture of offering ritual and performing rite-dance country will be remained peace and tranquillity, if done an virtual type of rite and performances consequences will be very drought and famine across the country that's the foremost divine-prophecy, indeed, it has written in the text. Hence, this subject is really a fascinating to know something more go deep in to root where many thing yet to reveal and explore.

There is extensive area in the field of Pang-Lha-sol rite and folklore, to pursue a field base study and pursue research on the said topic and its culture, with keeping fact of all the views above, author attempt to highlight some cultural folklore stick about Pang-Lha-sol of Sikkim/Beyul Dremojong.

Conclusion

Panglhasol the spiritual and temporal tradition is equal to that of the lifespan and vital energy for all Drejongpas' but today this important ceremony is setting down like a dull sun set. I have

been waiting since long time to do something for Sikkimese in this concern topic like a hungry and thirsty man for an about two years but due to some conjunction I could not do as thought. Although, with the blessings of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and my own aspiration today I got a great opportunity to do some research on expected topic? So, here I want to dedicate my little effort of doing these deeds to all Sikkimese people.

May all enjoy prosperity!

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