

*Bhutan*  
**HISTORY**  
CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION  
CLASS VII

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Department of School Education  
Ministry of Education and Skills Development  
Royal Government of Bhutan  
Thimphu





"Your parents, relatives, and friends would be very proud of what you have achieved. At your age, to have completed your studies is your personal accomplishment. Your knowledge and capabilities are a great asset for the nation. I congratulate you for your achievements.

Finally, your capabilities and predisposition towards hard work will invariably shape the future of Bhutan. You must work with integrity, you must keep learning, keep working hard, and you must have the audacity to dream big."

- *His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck*



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Published by

Department of School Education (DSE)

Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD)

Thimphu

Provisional Edition: 2021

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ISBN



978-99936-0-492-1

ISBN: 978-99936-0-530-0

Cover & Layout design by: iBEST STUDIOS, Changzamtog, Thimphu

Reprint 2024

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## Foreword

We live in an interconnected global world. International historical trends and perspectives, types of governance, forms of civilization and culture influence the world order. Therefore, it is important for all citizens, including learners, to appreciate the worth of understanding History, and its impact on our present and future.

Different historians share varied views about historical documents. Learners need to comprehend and explain the importance of learning History based on various views and perspectives. They should view History as a perspective-based study and be able to relate the impacts of civilization on today's scientific and technological advancements. Moreover, learners must understand the significance of governance and appreciate diverse culture. Further, learners can avail the opportunity to learn how to write personal history as well.

Thus, this book sets the foundation for the intermediate learners to understand History based on political, social, cultural and economic dimensions of high school History education. In addition, it will help them to appreciate the value of History in determining human identity and promoting peace and harmony. The textbook caters to the learners who have already made the beginning for study of History as a separate subject with appropriate text, learning activities, and informative illustrations.

We are grateful to all our writers and reviewers from the Royal University of Bhutan, the Ministry of Education and colleagues from the Royal Education Council for their valuable contributions in making the text book relevant and stimulating for our learners. We hope that our teachers and learners enjoy teaching and learning History and contribute to the promotion of History education in the country.

Tashi Delek!



**Kinga Dakpa**  
Director General

## Introduction

History is the living past of humankind. It is an attempt made by the people through the centuries to reconstruct, describe, and interpret their own past. By informing about the past, history will justify the present and guide us through the future.

History plays a critical role in developing our learners' identity through the understanding of the subject from personal, national, and international perspectives. It deals with human interactions and social environment. History not only opens the door to the world outside in all its aspects, it also gives an opportunity to craft the historical processes through sources, historiography, and multiple interpretations. It encourages independent learning and research skills through activities like collaborative projects.

Therefore, History aspires to assist learners in understanding the evolution of social, political, cultural, and economic conditions of the people and about the places and events from the past. It inculcates a sense of belonging that leads to unity, solidarity, and protection of oneself and others.

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# Chapter One

Ancient Bhutan: Tracing the Country's Earliest Roots  
through Material and Oral Culture

# Introduction

Exploring our past is a valuable endeavour, especially in times of rapid change like today. It is important to study the changes in Bhutan's human and natural landscape as well as ancient cultural linkages, trade, and the rise and fall of ideologies and personalities. Past events, as points of reference, inform the present while inspiring and guiding the future. There are several ways to study the past. Here, we will focus on the periods before the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which is generally accepted as the beginning of Bhutanese history. The events that signalled the arrival of Buddhism to Bhutan are the construction of Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang and Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo (c. 605-50). Historians have also called this period the 'Early Diffusion' and 'Early History' of Bhutan.



Figure 1.1 Paro Kyichu Lhakhang and Bumthang Jampa Lhakhang

The period before this is classified as the ‘Pre-historic Period’ of Bhutan. Prehistory concerns itself with the period of human existence before written records were available. It is, therefore, the story of the earliest hunter-gatherer ancestors and their journey to the diversity of human activities within a vast span of time. We use two approaches to understand the pre-historic period - the study of material culture and oral culture. Material culture includes artefacts and features that have been created, tempered, or used by humans. Oral culture includes the origin myths, local and national identity narratives, folk songs, stories, and ballads. Studying these cultures help us unravel our past and connect us to the past in an informed and useful manner.

## Material Culture

Material culture refers to the physical artefacts, resources, and spaces that people use to define their culture. By examining the material remains left by early humans, archaeologists help us understand the socio-economic conditions of the past. To organise their findings and construct a historical narrative, they group these artefacts into different ‘periods’ and ‘cultures.’

For instance, archaeologists identified the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age based on the predominant materials used to make artefacts. Terms like Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) and Neolithic (New Stone Age) were originally used to define periods but later came to represent cultures from prehistoric times.



*Figure 1.2 Stone Adze*

One of the main clues about the pre-historic period of Bhutan is the discovery of artefacts and monoliths. Ancient artefacts and monoliths such as the *namchag* (stone adzes) and *doring* (megalith) owned by Bhutanese households have been discovered, indicating the presence of human civilisation during the Stone Age. The Bhutanese are great collectors of ancient artefacts. In our altar rooms and *lhakhang*, we often find *namcha tari*, fossilised

eggs, animal teeth, and stone utensils. *Namcha tari* is a stone iron axe, which the Bhutanese believe is a weapon of *lha* (god) and *lhamin* (demi-god) that had accidentally fallen from the sky during their battle. On earth, it is treasured as powerful *yang* (essence of wealth) and treasured in homes and passed down generations as an heirloom. Some of them are discovered by farmers from their fields or forests. A study on one of these stone adzes from Bhutan in the 1970s by Gale Sieveking, an employee of the British Museum, classified it as an artefact from the 'late Stone Age' with a suggested date of 2000-1500 BC. The study further remarked that similar stone tools are commonly found in the South Asian regions of Thailand, Myanmar, Yunnan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and parts of India (Assam, Bihar, and Orissa).

Similarly, several megaliths can be found throughout Bhutan. In Bumthang Dzongkhag alone, there are several of them: one within the current monastery complex of Kenchosum Lhakhang, another in Sumthrang Lhakhang, and a another between Ura and Tang. They are believed to have marked ancient political boundaries and used for ritual boundaries. Elsewhere in Nyidugkha and Tanabji in Dagana Dzongkhag, megaliths are believed to be *Do Namkhai Kaw* (rock pillars of the sky) and *Do Kelpai Genthey* (cosmic stone steps). Locals believe them to be self-arisen or self-created. None of these known megaliths has visible inscriptions. Unlike famous megaliths such as Ashoka's pillar in India, which has inscriptions in several languages, our megaliths need further investigation.



Figure 1.3 Nabji Lhakhang and monolith of the Lhakhang

Only one megalith in Bhutan stands out because it holds a distinct story. It is the megalith of Nabji Lhakhang in Trongsa Dzongkhag. It is said that this pillar was erected in the eighth century by Guru Padmasambhava to mark the oath of peace between two warring kings. Although no legible inscription can be seen on the pillar, oral stories associated with it indicates an additional function of such megaliths.

Irrespective of all such stories and beliefs surrounding monoliths, it is difficult to ascertain the actual reasons why they were erected or how their functions evolved.

Then there are fascinating man-made features in the landscape such as mounds, cliff and cave settlements, and other architectural ruins. At Umling Bangtsho in Lhuntse Dzongkhag, there are ruins of a nine-storey underground castle built by Bangtsho Gyalpo to hide from internal and external threats after he was exiled to Bhutan from Tibet by his brother. Its domed roof made of long and skillfully carved stone and large stone slab beds are unique to ancient and modern architecture.



Figure 1.4 Underground castle of Umling Bangtsho

Likewise, precarious cliff and cave settlements dot the northern parts of our country. There are many ruins of *dzong*, monasteries, limestone caves, and cliff settlements along the way to Lingzhi from Thimphu. The cliff settlement located in the upper Thimphu valley at a place called Pagoe Sham is particularly interesting. Here, on a vertical cliff, a ledge no wider than two metres and some 60 metres above the ground is the spot of a settlement so obscure that passers-by could easily miss it.

Humans are generally good at attaching stories to ancient artefacts and features to make them relevant. We see this time and again with lithic tools, fossils, caves, rock art, and ancient ruins.

The artefacts and features in the Bhutanese landscape tell us of a land filled with activities. These include making and using tools, marking boundaries, fighting, and building burial and ceremonial mounds. They include constructing secular and religious homes and leaving artistic expressions on rocks.

#### Fact about Nabji Lhakhang

*Nabji Lhakhang's name derives from the term náboed, which means 'taking an oath'. In ancient times, King Sindhu Raja and King Nawoche took an oath of non-violence against each other in the presence of great Guru Padmasambhava. A monolith, bearing the handprints of both kings and Guru, was erected at this location where the present temple stands. The stone pillar is known as nado (stone of oath).*

## Oral Culture

An oral culture is a form of human communication in which knowledge, art, ideas and cultural material is received, preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another. The transmission is through speech or song and may include folktales, ballads, chants, prose or verses. The Bhutanese have always been great storytellers. Much of what we know about our ancestors and

the environment in which they lived came to us through the use of various forms of oral transmission. We have rich oral histories in the form of folklores, belief narratives, songs, ballads, and origin myths. Oral cultures, especially of a place like Bhutan, which has had a fairly continuous experience of existence without any abrupt disruptions of colonisation, major wars, or natural disasters, are important. It means that there is continuity to our stories, no matter how many additions or omissions they may have had along the way. Therefore, Bhutanese have a strong connection to the past and a strong sense of belonging to the land.



*Figure 1.5 Oral tradition*

Oral stories play a crucial role in preserving the cultural identity and history of a community. They serve as a bridge connecting generations, passing down important lessons, values, and historical events. A prime example is the story of Prince Drimed Kunden, from which some names of places in Trongsa are derived. These names not only commemorate significant events but also reflect the values cherished in Bhutanese culture, such as kindness and selflessness.

Prince Drimed Kunden (Vesantra) was exiled to the wild mountains of northern Bhutan, accompanied by his wife and two children. On their journey across the Jowo Durshing range, commonly known as Ri-Nag (Black Mountains), they encountered people living in various places. Upon reaching present-day Changra in Drakteng Gewog, Trongsa, the prince is said to have given one of his eyes as alms to a blind, old man. Changra was originally known as Chenrey (Clear Vision) after the story of Prince Drimed Kunden's compassion and generosity. Similarly, upon reaching the present-day Bubja village in Trongsa Dzongkhag, the family came across three people who asked for their children. The kind-hearted prince, feeling pity for the people, gave away the children. Bubja village was earlier known as Bu Drel (separated from children). Drimed Kunden and his wife continued their journey to Duri Hashang, a name that still refers to a place near the source of the Mangde Chu river.

One such narrative tells of a Bhutanese monk named Tonpa, who served as a royal preceptor in the palace of Pragjyotisa, the capital of the kingdom of Kamrup (present-day Assam), during the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. He later accompanied Princess Amrtaprabha of Kamrup to Kashmir when she married Prince Meghavahana of Kashmir. The princess is said to have built a stupa and named it Lhotoenpa after the guru in his own language. This narrative suggests that Bhutan may have received initiation into Buddhism much earlier than Tibet.

### **Did you know?**

- As per the Jataka tales, Drimed Kunden and his wife went across Punakha valley on their way to Duri Hashang.
- Drimed Kunden in later life reincarnated as Buddha Shakya Thupa.

## **Conclusion**

The account of the ancient period of our history is based on various sources of information, such as megaliths, artefacts, oral traditions, and records found in religious texts. Although it was not part of the major civilisations in the well-known river valleys, such as the Nile, Indus, Euphrates, and Hwang Ho (Huang He), the Bhutanese civilisation dates back even earlier than the 7th century, which is generally accepted as the beginning of Bhutanese history.

### **Points to Remember**

- ❖ Buddhism started in Bhutan with constructions of Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang.
- ❖ Two approaches to understand the Prehistoric Period are the study of material and oral cultures.
- ❖ Namcha Tare (Iron Stone Axe) is believed to be the weapons of Lha (God) and Lha min (Demi-God).
- ❖ The megalith of Nabji Lhakhang is only megalith in Bhutan as it holds a distinct story.
- ❖ The story of Prince DremidKuenden and Bhutanese monk Toenpa are the evidences of early inhabitants in Bhutan.



### Revision Questions

1. Define Pre Historic in your own words.
2. Give examples of the artefacts discovered which indicate the presence of human civilisation in Bhutan during the ancient times.
3. Differentiate between the Material Culture and Oral Culture by providing an example each with a special reference to the Buddhism.
4. Name the megaliths found in Bhutan.



# Chapter Two

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Ancient Bhutan: Tracing the Country's Earliest Roots  
through Ancient Names and Socio-Economic Life

## Introduction

Many historians believe that the mountain tribes to the north of the Buddhist heartland in India were referred to as Mon tribes of the Himalayan mountains. They included Bhutanese.

It is important to know about the Mon tribes. To understand this, we need to study toponymy or the study of place names, their origin and meaning. Hence, it is important to understand the etymology or the origin of the name and how its meaning has changed throughout history to help us better understand Bhutanese history and geography. This chapter deals with the names our country has taken through the ages and socio-economic life of the early inhabitants.

Bhutan had many ancient names, each with an underlying intention. They provide us with insights into how our neighbours and we perceived this land we now call Bhutan.



*Figure 2.1 Ancient names of the country*

## Mon, Mon Yul and Lho Mon

Traditional Bhutanese historians believe that Mon is one of the earliest names given to our region. It is believed to be a derivative of the Tibetan word mun, meaning darkness. From a Tibet-centric worldview, this term referred to the dark southern lands of Buddhist Tibet, which were considered socially unrefined and had not yet received the light of Buddhism. Other historians believe that the term is related to the Chinese word mán, meaning

barbarians. Either way, many agree that the name, as it applied to our region, referred to a time before Buddhism flourished in the areas south of Tibet.

The Bhutanese do not use the old name *mon* anymore. However, groups of people in central Bhutan, still known as *Monpa*, believe that the word comes from *manpa*, meaning ‘old’ in central and eastern Bhutanese languages. This solidifies the claim that the *Monpas* are the earliest inhabitants of our land.

## Ri Drag Gi Yul

For a long time, Bhutan remained in isolation from the rest of the world. Even the valleys were disconnected, cut off by the mountainous terrain, hilly slopes, and dense forests. The name *Ri Drag Gi Yul* (Country of Mountainous Terrain) was derived from its geographical features. The people were called *Ri Dragpa*.

## Lho Mon Kha Zhi

Bhutan was also known for many centuries as *Lho Mon Kha Zhi* (the Southern Mon of Four Approaches). Historians referred it to the four gateways, namely Dungsamkha in the east, Pagsamkha in the south, Dalingkha in the west, and Tatsherkha in the north.

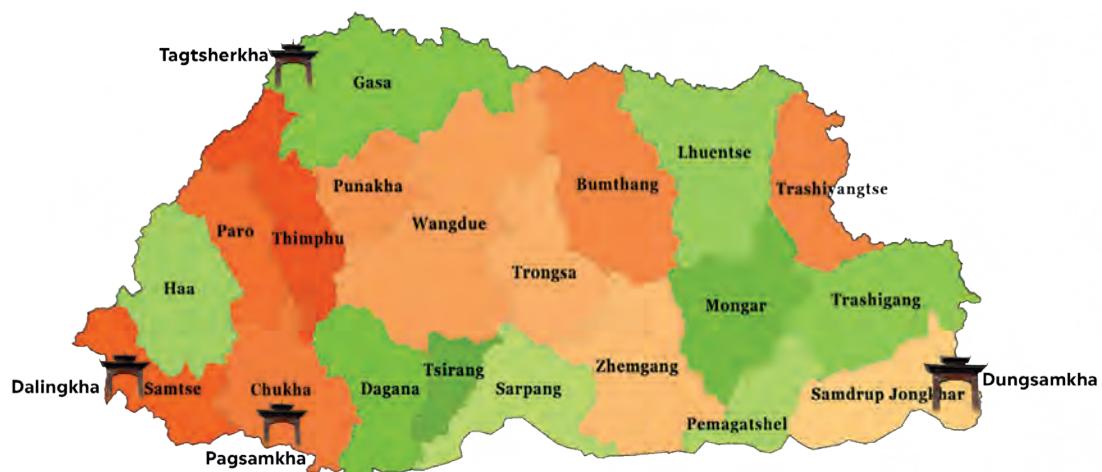


Figure 2.2 Map of Bhutan showing the approaches of *Lho Mon Kha Zhi*

Some believe that *Lho Mon Kha Zhi* was a conflation of the names *Mon Kha Zhi* and *Lho Kha Zhi*, where the former meant the four southern Mon approaches to Tibet, namely the four main Mon valleys of Paro, Bumthang, Kurtoe, and Tawang. *Lho Kha Zhi*, on the other hand, is believed to have begun in the 11th century as a clan appanage in western Bhutan.

However, the importance of the name lies in the impression of geographical and territorial unity it gave our country way before the creation of the nation state that we call Bhutan today.

## Menjong



Figure 2.3 Examples of medicinal herbs found in Bhutan

Another important name used for Bhutan is *Menjong*, the ‘land of medicinal herbs’. It is a tribute to our rich flora and botanical biodiversity and their abundance. In the Bhutanese traditional medicine system, which has its origins in Buddhist medicine or *nangpai men*, plants and minerals are vital ingredients for remedies.

## Tsenden Köpajong

*Tsenden Köpajong* means the ‘Country filled with *Tsenden*’. *Tsenden* refers to the coniferous tree, the Bhutan cypress (*Cupressus corneyana*), the national tree of Bhutan. Many old religious or secular institutions have old gigantic cypresses growing in their surroundings. It symbolises the socio-religious importance of the cypress.



Figure 2.4 Cypress tree

## Drukyul

Drukyul means the land of the Thunder Dragon. This name is popular with the Bhutanese today. We call ourselves the Drukpa. Druk or Thunder Dragon, and Druk Gyalkhab or Thunder Dragon Kingdom are interchangeable used to refer to the country.

### *Did you know?*

*The national anthem of Bhutan begins with this epithet, Tsenden Köpi.*

## Bhutan

Interestingly, there is no evidence of our southern neighbours, including those from Assam, West Bengal, and Bihar using any of the names for Bhutan mentioned above. They referred to the people from the northern highlands as Bhoetas or Bhutias, a term still used to refer to the people of Tibeto-Mongoloid racial groups in parts of India. It is generally believed that before the 18th century, people living to the south of Bhutan did not have a specific name for the country. Some visitors, such as the two Portuguese Jesuits Father, Estevao Cacella and Joao Cabral, who travelled to Bhutan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, referred to Bhutan as Cambirasi. No one knows the etymology of this term, although some believe it is a corruption of the term Lhokhazhi.

### *Did you know?*

*Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal established his seat in Bhutan and called the land Druk, the people Drukpa, and the state religion Drukpa Kagyud.*

Other onlookers and travellers from the south referred to the region to the north of Bengal as Bottan, Bottaner, Botton, Boutan, Bootan, Butan, Botenti, Pettent, Bhotanta, Porangké, Tobat, Thebet, Thibet, and Barontola. None of these names specifically referred to Bhutan until the latter half of the eighteenth century when a Scotsman by the name George Bogle

made the decisive judgment to distinguish the country from Tibet and designated the name Boutan to what he called the ‘Deb Raja’s country’. Scholars later tried to explain the etymology of the name by associating it to the Sanskrit term Bhotānta, which meant the ‘end of Bhota or Tibet, indicating that Bhutan was at the edge of Tibet but was never part of it.

Others believe that it came from the term Bhū-uttan; bhū meaning land and uttan meaning elevated in Sanskrit. Yet, others argue that the main part of Bhutan is derived from the word bod for Tibet, and tan may have come from stan, which refers to land or ground, as in the case of Hindustan. These are all, however, educated speculations at best.

## Social Organisation



Figure 2.5 Castle of Khoche clan at Bjoka, Zhemgang

Though civilisation began at different times in different parts of the world, they shared common features - raised children, earned a livelihood, made law, and practised religion. The social organisation of our early inhabitants constantly changed.

Geographical barriers isolated one valley from another. Each valley formed one social clan or more consisting of several families ruled by a chieftain, who was the founder of the clan. It has also led to the development of different dialectic groups, each occupying different regions.

## Economic Life



Figure 2.6 Farming in ancient days

The early inhabitants raised animals and moved from one place to another with herds of animals in different seasons. The highlanders moved with yaks to lower valleys in winter in search of pasture. They heavily depended on the forest and animals for their livelihood.

Later, people explored much information on farming, which encouraged them to do agricultural work for their survival. Gradually, they developed better knowledge of a variety of seeds, crops, land, and water and tried different ways of agriculture like *tseri* (shifting cultivation).

Besides farming, the families learned crafts work using different raw materials like bamboo, wood, metal, wool and nettles. Interaction among people gradually increased, and they learned to trade with one another following the barter system. The most exciting fact was that trade was developed later with neighbouring countries like Tibet and British India.

## Conclusion

Names of the country have evolved, just as languages and other forms of culture do, through ages. Today, our country is popularly known to the outside world as Bhutan and to ourselves as Drukyul.

The early settlement has a significant impact on the present world. The government, law and permanent settlement are the direct results of the early settlement.

Since then, agriculture and animal husbandry were practised as a prelude to much of what is still prevailing in Bhutan. Approximately 80% of the population of Bhutan still depends on agriculture today. It is carried out intensively as a major economic activity in the country.

### Points to Remember

- ❖ The study of the names of the places is called toponymy.
- ❖ The oldest name of our country is Monyul.
- ❖ Lho Mon Kha Zhi are Dungsamkha in the east, Pagsamkha in the south, Dalingkha in the west, and Tatsherkha in the north.
- ❖ The geographical features and climatic conditions influenced the social organisation of the early inhabitants.
- ❖ The main occupation of the early inhabitants was farming and animal husbandry.



### Revision Questions

1. Write different names of our country.
2. What was the main occupation of the early inhabitants?
3. Name the four gateways of our country.
4. "*The geographical and climatic features of the country had greatly influenced the social organisation of the early inhabitant.*" Justify the statement.
5. Is barter economy still practised in your locality? State reasons.





# Chapter Three

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Cultural Heritage: Bhutanese National Expressions

## Introduction

Bhutan continues to keep its cultural heritage alive when many countries have lost theirs to the forces of globalisation. *The dzongs and lhakhangs* that dot the ridges, prayer flags that flutter on the hilltops, mask dances that we enjoy watching, dresses we wear, houses we live in, and food relish show Bhutan has a distinct cultural heritage. Bhutan's identity is defined by the many tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Among them, art, architecture and crafts are among the more visible cultural elements. It lies at the core of Bhutanese life.



Figure 3.1: Tangible heritage

Figure 3.2: Intangible heritage

Tangible heritage is Bhutanese culture that can be seen and touched, such as dzongs, houses, temples, art, and antiquities. Intangible cultures are those that can be recorded but cannot be touched or interacted with, such as traditional knowledge, social beliefs and practices, rituals, festive events, songs, dances, traditional music, dramas and oral traditions.

Box 3.1: Concept on tangible and intangible heritage

## Zorig Chusum

*Zorig* means art and craft, where *zo* means the 'ability to make' and *rig* means 'science or craft'. Zorig also encompasses architecture. It has been categorised under thirteen different areas. Therefore, it is popularly referred to as *Zorig Chusum*, the Thirteen Traditional Arts and Crafts.

Bhutan remained isolated for many centuries. The northern boundaries were closed by snow-clad mountains and peaks while the southern foothills were inaccessible due to dense malaria-infested forests. Therefore, the physical landscape played an important role in developing and evolving a distinct cultural heritage for Bhutan, which includes *zorig*. The spiritual traditions rooted in Buddhism and pre-Buddhist practices also influenced the emergence of Bhutan's rich and vibrant cultural heritage. The Bhutanese have mastered *zorig* for many centuries.

Many historical and spiritual figures of Bhutan were great artists, architects, and craftsmen who contributed to the advancement of the Bhutanese *zorig* heritage. Khandro Sonam Peldon from Wang Danglo in Thimphu, the consort of the Great Drukpa Kagyu Master Phajo Drungom Zhigpo, was a highly skilled weaver of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo, who lived from the late 14<sup>th</sup> to mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, was a craftsman and an architect. He built eight iron chain bridges in Bhutan using iron extracted from the ores found in Bhutan. Similarly, Tertön Pema Lingpa was skilled in many crafts. He was a painter, an architect and a blacksmith. Even today, his works are visible in Pemaling, Tamzhing, Jampa Lhakhang, Kenchosum Lhakhang, and Mani Gonpa in Bumthang. As a young craftsman, he made iron frying pans and forged knives and swords which are revered as objects of worship. His masterpieces from the 15<sup>th</sup> century enriched the *zorig* heritage of Bhutan and contributed to the creation of a distinct identity for Bhutan. It also continues to inspire people outside Bhutan.

*Box 3.2: Patronage of arts and crafts*

## Types of Zorig

In Bhutan, there are broadly 13 types of *zorig*.

### Lhazo (painting)



*Figure 3.3: Lhazo (painting)*

Bhutanese painting is greatly influenced by Buddhism. The paintings represent people's beliefs, ideas, feelings, thoughts, aspirations, and the Bhutanese way of life. Traditional painters are referred to as *lhadrip*, which means 'one who draws *lha* or higher beings'. Therefore, painters are believed to accumulate merit through their work. Another feature of Bhutanese painting is that paintings are not attributed to the painter but to the sponsor or patron. Traditional painters are engaged in

mural painting (*debri*), statue painting, scroll painting (*thangka*), and wood painting. All traditional paintings, from the basic painting of the eight lucky signs to complex *thangka* painting, have Buddhist motifs right from.

## Jimzo (sculpture)

Clay sculpture is one of the ancient crafts practised in Bhutan even before brass and other metal crafts. Like painting, the traditional craft of sculpture is mainly employed for making religious statues and ritual objects, clay masks and pottery using clay as the primary material. Sculpting religious objects is considered a spiritual act. Therefore, sculptors choose an auspicious day to start a sculpting work.



Figure 3.4: Jimzo (sculpture)

## Pazo (Wood, slate and stone carving)



Figure 3.5: Pazo (carving)

The art of carving, typically done on stone, wood, and slate, is known as pazo. Wood is the most commonly used material for carving in Bhutan. Wood carving products primarily include altars, decorative items, traditional furniture, masks, and the dramnyen (a Bhutanese lute). Woodblock carving, introduced in Bhutan by Tertön Pema Lingpa, made it easier to reproduce religious texts. Images are also carved into woodblocks. Wooden carvings often feature the eight auspicious symbols, which are commonly seen in Bhutanese products. In addition to wood, stone and slate carving are also practised in Bhutan, with deities' images and religious inscriptions often carved into these materials.

## Shag zo (woodturning)

*Shag zo* is the art of woodturning, a craft that remains vibrant and forms part of Bhutan's material culture. A craftsman who practises shag zo is called a shaghzop.

Unlike other crafts found throughout the country, shag zo is primarily practised by the

people of Trashi Yangtse and Kengkhar in Mongar. The shagzops of Trashi Yangtse are well known for their wooden bowls (dapas) and cups (phobs), while the shagzops of Kengkhar are renowned for making wine containers called jandom. These craftsmen are skilled in creating a variety of bowls, plates, cups, and containers from different types of wood. Wooden cups made from special burls, known as za, are highly valued and considered expensive collectors' items.



Figure 3.6: Shag zo (woodturning)

## Lugzo (bronze casting)



Figure 3.7: Lugzo (bronze casting)

*Lugzo* is the art of bronze casting, which was first introduced in 17th century. It is primarily associated with Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who invited Newari artisans from Nepal to cast statues, bells, cymbals, vases, sertog (pinnacle for the roofs) and other religious objects. The remains of a foundry used for bronze casting can still be seen in Punakha Dzong today.

## Daezo (paper making)

*Daezo* or paper-making is another art that has been practised in Bhutan for several centuries. The craft of making traditional paper, known as desho uses the bark of daphne plant and can be traced back to the 8th century. It is said that the people of Bumthang exported desho to Tibet and bartered it for other goods. This tradition is not widespread and is mainly practiced in Trashi Yangtse. In the past, desho was primarily used for writing religious texts, legal documents, and letters.



Figure 3.8: Daezo (paper making)

## Tshemzo (tailoring, embroidery and applique)



Figure 3.9: Tshemzo (embroidery and applique)

Tshemzo includes three forms of art: tailoring, embroidery and applique. The basic form of tailoring involves making garments such as traditional costumes like Gho and Kira. However, the complex aspects of tshemzo include embroidery (tshemdrup) and applique (lhemdrup).

It is believed that the art of embroidery and applique was introduced to Bhutan by Drung Damcho Gyeltshen, the secretary

of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the 17th century. Traditionally, monks practiced embroidery and applique to make religious products such as thangka and thongdroel. In addition, the craftsman also made traditional boots known as tshoglham.

## Thagzo (weaving)

Thagzo, the art of weaving, is one of the oldest crafts practiced in Bhutan for centuries. The biography of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo mentions his consort, Khandro Sonam Peldon, as an expert weaver, and Tertön Pema Lingpa is also noted to have mastered this art.

In Bhutan, fabrics are woven by hand using three types of looms: the backstrap loom, horizontal frame looms, and fixed horizontal frames with backstrap and card looms.

Historically, people used yarn made from sheep wool, yak hair, and nettles for weaving.

Today, the primary fibres used include raw silk, cotton, and acrylic, primarily imported from India. While eastern Bhutan was once renowned for its weaving skills, the craft has now become an integral part of Bhutanese life and culture, widely practised throughout the country.



Figure 3.10: Thagzo (weaving)

## Shingzo (woodwork)

Shingzo, the practice of using wood for construction, holds significant cultural and historical importance in Bhutan. For centuries, woodwork has played a vital role in

Bhutanese architecture, showcasing the skill and craftsmanship of local artisans. The masterpieces of Bhutanese architects and carpenters can be seen in the dzongs, lhakhangs, palaces, and bridges of Bhutan where woodwork forms a major part of the construction. Trulpi Zowo Balep is remembered even today as a great craftsman for his architectural ability displayed during the construction of Punakha Dzong in 1637.



Figure 3.11: Shingzo (woodwork)

## Dozo (masonry)

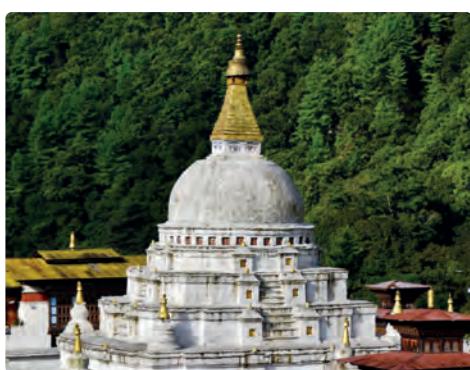


Figure 3.12: Dozo (masonry)

Dozo is the craft of traditional Bhutanese masonry or stonework. This craft can be seen in the building of houses, temples, chortens and dzongs. The massive stonework of Choeten Kora and Chendebji Choeten and dzongs are fine examples that reflect the skills and artistic refinement of the Bhutanese masons. The people of Rinchengang village in Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag are well known for their skills in traditional stonework.

## Tsharzo (bamboo and cane weaving)

Tsharzo is the art of weaving cane and bamboo to produce household products. The most common refined bamboo product is the bangchung, widely used as a plate in most Bhutanese homes. Other bamboo products include covers for religious artefacts, tshogtrung (vessels for serving food), baekhu (containers for wool and threads), and patsha dromchung (containers for jewellery and valuables). Various types of bamboo and cane are also used to make floor mats, winnows, mats for drying grains,



Figure 3.13: Tsharzo (bamboo and cane weaving)

storage vessels. Cane is widely used for making ropes and straps while bamboo is used for making nets, fences and walls. The people of Kangpara in Trashigang, Kengkhar in Mongar, and the Kheng region are known for their expertise in cane and bamboo craftsmanship.

## Troeko (gold and silversmithing)



Figure 3.14: Troeko (gold and silversmithing)

Troeko is the art of making intricate and elaborate designs out of and on precious metal surfaces.

Troeko craftsmen are called troekops. They make ornaments such as earrings, rings, brooches and bracelets, and ritual objects like butter lamp container (kongbu), offering vase (bumpa) and cups for water offering (ting),etc.

## Garzo (blacksmithing)

The origin of blacksmithery in Bhutan can be traced back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo (1385-1464) visited Bhutan and built eight iron chain suspension bridges using iron extracted from ores found inside the country. Barshong village in Trashigang, Woochu in Paro and Chakorla in Thimphu are known to be places from where iron ore was extracted. Blacksmiths made swords, knives, locks, horseshoes, spades, ladles, pots and pans. Even today, knives made in Woochu are in great demand.



Figure 3.15: Garzo (blacksmithing)

## Art

It is difficult to draw a clear line between art and architecture. They are differentiated by their function only. Architecture is viewed as having a practical function, while art is mostly created for an aesthetic purpose.

Art is an expression of human creative skills and imagination, normally in a visual form. It can be divided into three major categories. They are fine arts, applied arts, and performing arts. Some examples of fine arts are painting, sculpture, and drawing, while applied arts include photography, ceramics, and design. Performing arts include dance, drama, and music.

# Architecture

Architecture involves creating tangible structures and buildings that are beautiful based on creativity and human expression. It is categorised as an applied art.

## Types and Features of Bhutanese Architecture

Architecture in Bhutan fulfils not only the spiritual requirements but also functional and economic needs. Architecture is part of *zorig*. The Bhutanese architecture combines *dozo*, *shingzo*, *parzo* and *lhazo*.

The Bhutanese architecture can be categorised into religious architecture and secular architecture. The distinct features of religious architecture can be noticed in *dzongs*, *lhakhangs*, *choetens*, and palaces. On the other hand, secular architecture is represented by village houses. The most visible religious architecture is reflected in *dzong* while secular architecture can be seen in traditional houses. The distinct and easily noticeable differences between *dzong* architecture and secular architecture are presented in the table below.

### *Did you know?*

*During the olden times, the residences of the nobilities had jabzhi roof – a square structure with a pitched roof placed on the main roof.*

### *Did you know?*

*Traditional Bhutanese houses mostly have jamthok or drangim roof.*

Religious structure	Secular structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Has a central tower called <i>utse</i>, which houses several temples.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Does not have an <i>utse</i>, courtyard, <i>kemar</i>, <i>sertog</i>, and <i>gyeltshen</i>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Has one courtyard, sometimes two, surrounded by an outer structure that houses accommodation and offices.</li> <li>❖ <i>Kemar</i>, a red band, is painted around the external wall with a round motif at intervals.</li> <li>❖ Roof is adorned with a <i>sertog</i> (innacle) and <i>gyeltshen</i> (banner of victory).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Roof is generally adorned with a <i>lhadar</i>, a banner for the local deity.</li> </ul>

Table 3.1: Religious structure and Secular Structure

Traditional Bhutanese architecture is known for its unique features, primarily due to the following reasons:

- ◆ Architects plan in their minds and construct structures without any written blueprints.
- ◆ Construction is guided by an astrologer and involves rituals at different phases.
- ◆ Wood is used extensively in building.
- ◆ The dovetail technique is employed without the use of nails or screws.
- ◆ Walls are gently tapered and made of stone or rammed earth.
- ◆ Windows are multi-storied and trefoil-shaped.
- ◆ Timber roofs are weighted down with stones.
- ◆ The exteriors and interiors of buildings are adorned with colorful floral, iconographic, and spiritual paintings.

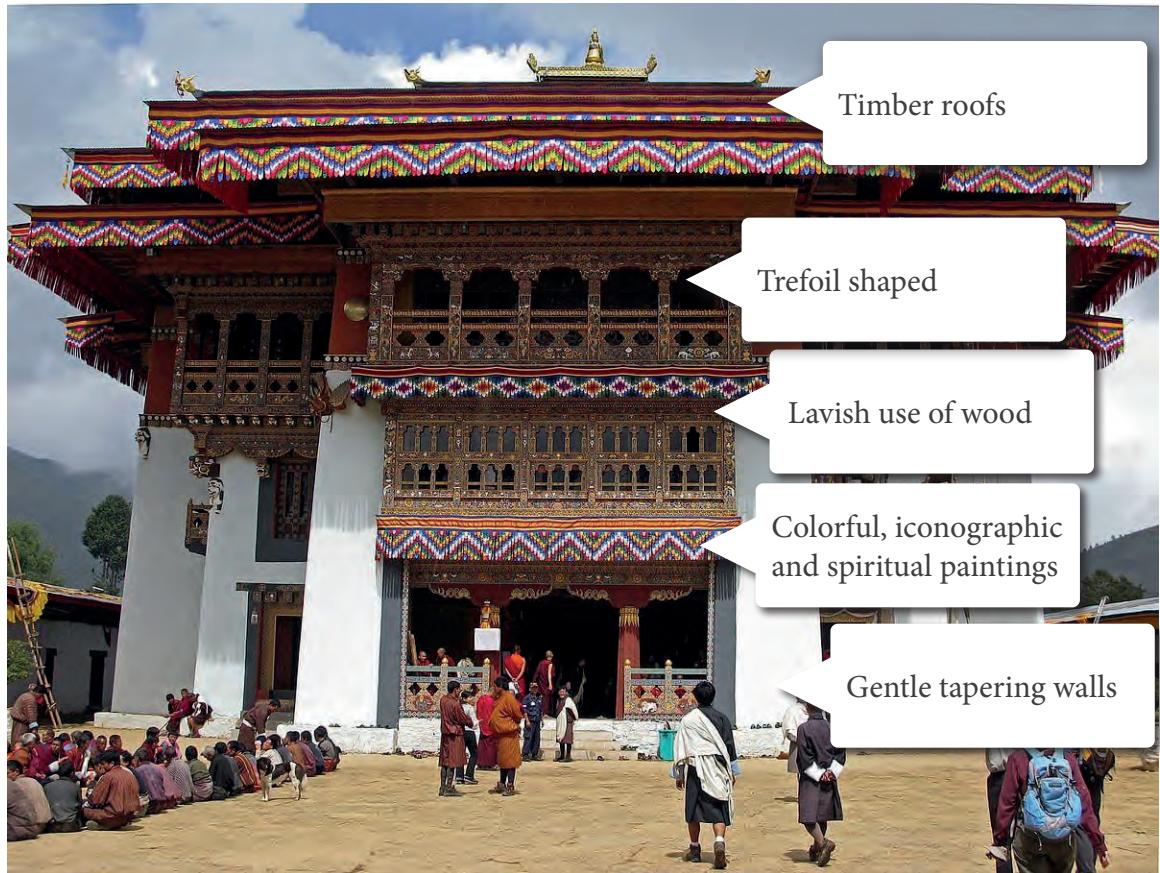


Figure 3.16: Features of Bhutanese Architecture

## Crafts

Like architecture, crafts are also an expression of human creativity, resulting in a tangible product such as jewellery, metal work, pottery, handloom, woodwork, and ceramics. Therefore, craft is considered applied art.

## Conclusion

Bhutanese art, architecture, and crafts play a vital role in shaping a distinct Bhutanese identity, reflecting the values and way of life of its people. As expressions of creativity and cultural heritage, they not only enhance aesthetic beauty but also foster community and continuity of traditions. In the context of globalisation, Zorig Chusum is increasingly recognised for its economic significance while still being cherished for its cultural value. It is crucial to preserve and promote Zorig Chusum as a heritage that inspires pride among the Bhutanese, ensuring that Bhutan remains easily recognisable on the global stage.

### Points to Remember

- ❖ Bhutan's identity is defined by many tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- ❖ *Zorig chusum* has been categorised under thirteen different areas.
- ❖ Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo built eight iron chain bridges in Bhutan.
- ❖ Tertön Pema Lingpa's masterpieces enriched Bhutan's *zorig* heritage and created a distinct identity for Bhutan.
- ❖ Art is an expression of human creative skills and imagination.
- ❖ Bhutanese architecture can be categorised into religious architecture and secular architecture.
- ❖ Traditional Bhutanese architecture is known for its distinctiveness.



### Revision Questions

1. Differentiate between Tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan.
2. Translate Zo Rig Chusum. Who Categorised it?
3. What are the 13 arts and crafts?
4. Define art, architecture and craft in your own words.
5. How many types of Bhutanese architecture are there? Name them.
6. Point out the distinct features of traditional Bhutanese architecture.





# Chapter Four

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Pema Lingpa: A Spiritual and Cultural Luminary of  
the Soil

## Introduction

Pema Lingpa is the most eminent native Bhutanese spiritual personality and a public figure in the history of Bhutan. He was a treasure discoverer, writer, artist, teacher, great mediator and public figure. His prominence as a religious figure spread beyond Bhutan to Tibet and other Himalayan countries during his lifetime and beyond. The works of Pema Lingpa have contributed to shaping Bhutan's socio-cultural, political, and religious identity as a nation state. He stands out as a 'Spiritual Father' and a 'Cultural Hero' of Bhutan.



Figure 4.1: Statue of Pema Lingpa

## The Prophecy

Pema Lingpa's birth was prophesied by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century. According to the prophecy, Pema Lingpa was the reincarnation of Lhacham Pema Sel, the daughter of the Tibetan King Trisong Deutsen and Queen Jangchub Drön. Lhacham Pema Sel fell ill and died at the age of eight, but before her death, she received many teachings from Guru Padmasambhava.

Before Lhacham Pema Sel passed away, she requested Guru Padmasambhava to foretell her future rebirths. At her request, Guru Padmasambhava prophesied that she would have five impure rebirths and five pure rebirths. After these, she would be reborn as a handsome and medium built boy by the name Pema in the Iron Horse Year in a village called Chel.

This is best shown by the inclusion of the treasure teachings of Pema Lingpa, particularly the liturgical literature and chants incorporated into the structured practices and rituals of the Drukpa Kagyu sect of Buddhism.

## Parental background

Pema Lingpa was born at Baribrang above the village of Chel located on the slope between Mebar Tsho and Kunzang Drak in Tang, Bumthang. He was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of the Iron Horse year, corresponding to 1450 CE, to mother Pema Drolma and father Dhondup Zangpo. His father came from Sumthrang Chöje lineage of Ura, a direct descendent of the Nyö clan of Tibet. His mother Pema Drolma was a herder. His birth was marked by auspicious signs such as rainbows shining for three days and a ray of light encircling the baby. At birth, Pema Lingpa was named Paljor. He was the eldest of nine sons. The conception of Pema Lingpa was preceded by his mother seeing auspicious dreams of the sun and the moon shining at the same time, girls dressed with ornaments singing and dancing to entertain her and a lady with a vase entering the crown of her head.

Similarly, his father dreamt of drawing mandalas and the sky filled with scriptures.

## Early Life of Pema Lingpa

One year after the birth of Pema Lingpa, his mother gave birth to his brother Guru. It became inconvenient for his mother to breastfeed and take care of two sons. Therefore, he was entrusted to the care of his maternal grandfather, Yonten Jangchub, a blacksmith. At the age of three, he was taken to Mani Gonpa above Chel where his grandfather had a smithy.

When Pema Lingpa was still an infant, Lama Chöying, the son and disciple of *Tertön* Dorji Lingpa (1346-1405), visited the family and prophesied that he would benefit the teachings and all sentient beings. The lama named the boy Ugyen Pema Lingpa.

Right from his childhood, his grandfather trained Pema Lingpa in smithery. He also learnt sewing, carpentry and masonry. Pema Lingpa enjoyed child play of making miniature models of *choeten*, thrones and temples, erecting prayer flags, and writing scripts on leaves. He also simulated conducting rituals and performing ritual dances.

Pema Lingpa was a bright child with the aptitude for self-learning without any formal training. He is said to have learnt Tibetan on his own. At the same time, he was naughty and hardly listened to others, even his parents. He had a huge appetite. His childhood behaviour earned him many nicknames from his parents and villagers. But people liked him all the same as he was helpful.

As a young craftsman, he made iron frying pans, forged knives and swords. He received his first religious training from Lama Choden of Rimochen. Pema Lingpa married Lama Choden's daughter, but the marriage did not last. So, he returned to his village to look after his dying grandfather. When he was looking after the temple at Mani Gonpa that he inherited from his grandfather, Pema Lingpa started to have visions and unusual experiences.

## Tertön Pema Lingpa and Discovery of Treasures

Guru Padmasambhava foresaw power struggle in Tibet and the destruction of Buddhist doctrine all over Tibet. Therefore, he concealed many religious and sacred artefacts and prophesied that these termas or treasures would be rediscovered later at auspicious times by his *tertön*, his spiritual heirs. Guru Padmasambhava hid *terma* and entrusted them to guardian deities until their discovery.

Further, it was prophesied that five Tertöns Kings (ସତ୍ତଵାନ୍ତର୍ମାଣୀୟାଙ୍ଗୁଳୀ), 108 major *tertöns*, and 1,000 minor *tertöns* would be born to discover the treasures and contribute to the continuity of Buddhism. The term *tertön* is a combination of 'ter', which means treasure, and 'tön', which means to reveal. Therefore, the term *tertön* means treasure discoverer or treasure revealer. The treasures (ter/terma) that *tertöns* discover at a predetermined time are religious and sacred artefacts such as religious texts, statues and ritual instruments.

Pema Lingpa was one of the five King Tertöns, and the treasures he revealed consisted of both *sater* (earth treasures) and *gongter* (mind treasures). *Sater* is revealed from solid space such as cliffs, lakes, and temples. On the other hand, *gongter* is discovered based on a clue seen by the *terton* in a dream, written in the sky or heard as a sound.



Figure 4.2: Pema Lingpa's discovery of Treasures

The spiritual activity of Pema Lingpa as a *terton* began in the summer of 1476 when he went into the woods behind the temple of Mani Gonpa to pick mushrooms. On his way back home, he fell asleep, where he sat down to rest. There, he was awakened by a voice and saw a monk in rags. The monk gave him a scroll and advised him to read it carefully and vanished. Pema Lingpa read the scroll, which instructed him to go to Naringdra at the bottom of the valley on the full moon night of the month, along with five companions, to fetch the destined treasure.

On the full moon night, in accordance with the instructions in the scroll, he took five companions and went to Naringdra. At Naringdra, he fell into a trance, took off his clothes, plunged into the river's deep pool, and reappeared with a chest containing a yellow scroll. No one could read the scroll. Therefore, it was transcribed using the alphabetical chart inside the casket and with the help from a scribe from Ura.

This event was followed by a vision of Khandro Yeshe Tshogyal, the consort of Guru Padmasambhava, giving him instructions on the ritual chants and steps for ritual dance. After this, his *terma* and rituals were displayed at Dungkarbi, a village near Mebar Tsho. The sacred dance of Khandro Dey Nga (Five Classes of Dakinis) was the first dance Pema Lingpa composed based on visionary instructions.

### Did you know?

*There is belief that if we have deep devotion and offer prayers, we can see sacred images such as lhakhang, prayer flags, monks, and butter lamps in Merbartsho.*

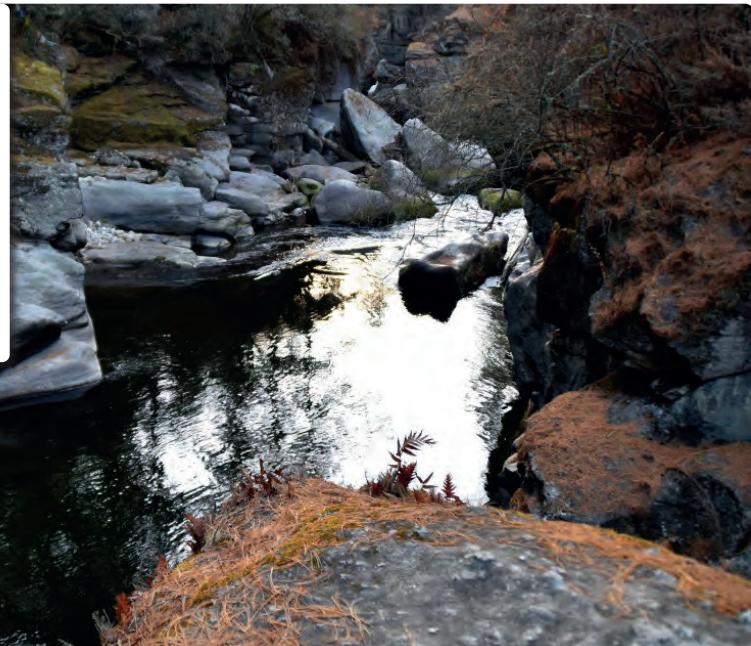


Figure 4.3: Mebar Tsho, the burning lake

His second act of treasure extraction happened in the same place. It was witnessed by a large crowd, including Thubpa Tashi, the Governor of Chokhor valley. The governor commanded that Pema Lingpa would be rewarded if he revealed *terma* and punished if he could not. This was a moment for Pema Lingpa to prove himself as a *tertön* and spiritual heir of Guru Padmasambhava. He lit a butter lamp and prayed that he may come out of the pool with treasures and the butter lamp still burning if he was a heart son of Guru Padmasambhava and drown if he was a devil. He then plunged into the deep pool holding the butter lamp. To the crowd's amazement, he came out with a statue of the Buddha and a sealed *kapala* (skull), the butter lamp still burning. The deep pool came to be known as Mebar Tsho, the burning lake.

After this event, the name and fame of Pema Lingpa spread far and wide. This led him to travel outside his village to other places in Bumthang and Kurtoe and beyond Bhutan to Samye and Lhodrak in Tibet to discover *terma*. Pema Lingpa's life as a treasure discoverer is filled with many experiences of visions, dreams and trances.

## Pema Lingpa's Influence on Buddhism

Pema Lingpa contributed immensely to the establishment of sacred places, restoration of old temples, and building new ones. Mebar Tsho still continues to be a place of pilgrimage and worship. He built Pemaling temple in his village and Tamzhing temple, which became his principal seat. He restored many temples such as Jampa Lhakhang, Kenchosum

Lhakhang, Mani Gonpa, Chal Lhakhang, Chokhor Lhakhang, and Langmathil Lhakhang in Bumthang. The fund to build and restore these temples came from the gifts and offerings he received from his sponsors and disciples. These sacred places of pilgrimage and temples became the seats of learning from where Buddhism spread to the communities around it and ensured its continuity.

In Tibet, Lhalung temple became the seat of his tradition as he received support and sponsorship from the prefects of Lhalung, who had administrative control of Lhodrak region. Even today, his reincarnations are referred to as Lhalung Sungtrul. Pema Lingpa also travelled to teach his disciples, who included the rulers of Gyantse, central Tibet and southeast Tibet, as well as Monyul, which is present-day Arunachal Pradesh. There are records indicating that as many as nine thousand people attended his teachings in Ney, Tibet.



*Figure 4.4: Tamshing Lhakhang, Bumthang*

Pema Lingpa was a writer. The texts he wrote and those he discovered run into many volumes. These texts influenced both the Nyingma and Kagyu schools of Buddhism in Bhutan and Tibet. This is best shown by the inclusion of the treasure teachings of Pema Lingpa, particularly the liturgical literature and chants in the liturgy of the Drukpa Kagyu sect of Buddhism.



Figure 4.5: Ging Chham



Figure 4.6: Tsholing Chham

Pema Lingpa composed religious dances. Peling Tercham, the sacred dances of Pema Lingpa, such as Pedling Gingsum, Ging and Tsholing, and Khandro Dey Nga are performed all over Bhutan during *tshechus*. These sacred dances have contributed to the propagation of Buddhism as people watched them with devotion.

#### **Did you know?**

*Ging and Tsholing Cham show Guru Padmasambhava's glorious Copper-coloured Palace - Zangdopelri.*



Figure 4.7: Khandro Dey Nga

Pema Lingpa and his descendants were respected and influential. They emerged as leading religious nobilities. Through a line of incarnations, the transmission and spread of the Pema Lingpa tradition was ensured. Lhalung Sungtrul Jigdrel Kunzang Pema Dorji (1968- ) is the 11<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of Pema Lingpa. Similarly, Thugse Thekchok Tenpai Gyeltshen (1951-2010) is the 10<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of Pema Lingpa's son Thugse Dawa Gyeltshen (1499-1592?). Gangteng Tulku Kunzang Rigdzin Pema Namgyal (1955- ) is the 9<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of Pema Lingpa's grandson Pema Thinlay (1564-1642). Pema Lingpa tradition, founded on Guru Padmasambhava's teachings, flourished even during the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal when many other Buddhist schools declined. These spiritual lineages of Pema Lingpa's descendants continued to spread his teachings outside Bhutan as far as Kham, U-Tsang and Toe in Tibet.



Figure 4.8: Pema Lingpa incarnations. From the left, Gangteng Tulku, Lhalung Sungtrul and late Lhalung Thugse Rinpoche.

Pema Lingpa contributed to and influenced the spread of Buddhism in many ways. As a tertön, he discovered numerous *terma*. As an architect, he built and renovated many temples. He was an artist and composed sacred dances, rituals and chants, and wrote many religious texts. He was also a painter and painted Buddhist iconography. He forged metalworks as a blacksmith, which are now religious and sacred artefacts.

## Contributions of other Tertön on Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Bhutan

Bhutan saw many *tertöns* before and after Pema Lingpa, native Bhutanese as well as spiritual figures from Tibet, who carried out their treasure discovery activities in different parts of Bhutan. Tshering Dorji and Ngawang Drakpa are two important native Bhutanese *tertöns*, who had close associations with Thugse Dawa Gyeltshen, son of Pema Lingpa. They were also connected to the same spiritual master Drubwang Rinchen Chödor, a prominent disciple of Pema Lingpa, who combined Nyingma and Kagyu teachings.

## Ngawang Drakpa



Figure 4.9: Neyphu monastery

Ngawang Drakpa was born in a family of a lama in Sha Kunzangling in Wangdue Phodrang where Longchenpa established one of his eight spiritual seats. Since his childhood, he travelled to Paro to study under Drubwang Rinchen Chödor. He received most of his teachings in Bodmori in Paro, where his master built his hermitage. He excelled in meditation and was engaged by his teacher to teach other students.

Ngawang Drakpa founded the monasteries of Bodmori and Nayphu in Paro. He revealed treasures mostly from Kyichu, Chumophu, and Taktshang in Paro and only on one occasion from Southern Tibet. The treasure he revealed from Kyichu Lhakhang is one of the Five Envoy statues of Guru

Padmasambhava known as *Kutshab Ter Nga* that grants liberation merely upon seeing it. He reincarnated in the line of *Nayphu Trulku*. The ninth reincarnation of Nayphu Trulku Ngawang Sherdrup Chokyi Nyima (1980 - ) resides in Nayphu Monastery and gives teachings and empowerments in different countries. His father is from Yagang Pirbi, Mongar, and his mother is from Thegchen Norbugang, Punakha.

## Tshering Dorji

Tshering Dorji was born in lower Paro in an ordinary family. He was a notorious youth with a bad temper and disliked even by his parents. He spent most of his time killing, fishing, hunting and stealing. The turning point in his life happened when he and his friend stole a cow and slaughtered it to find a calf inside. Coinciding with this incident, the death of his mother also influenced him to take the spiritual path and took refuge in Drubwang Rinchen Chödor. Tshering Dorji was appointed as a tantric master in Medri located in lower Paro by Thugse Dawa Gyeltshen and Drubwang Rinchen



Figure 4.10: Dongkarla Gonpa

Chödor. He also travelled on a few occasions to Sikkim and Tibet. Guided by prophetic visions, he discovered Dzogchen texts from several places in Tibet and Paro. Tshering Dorji was responsible for establishing Dongkarla Gonpa in Paro as his main seat to spread his teachings. Even today, the seat continues to be an important sacred place of pilgrimage.

Both Tshering Dorji and Ngawang Drakpa contributed to the spread of the Dzogchen tradition, which was merged with the Pema Lingpa tradition and then ultimately absorbed into the Drukpa school.

Bhutan was also blessed by the visits of many spiritual masters and *tertöns*. Some of them who are remembered even today are Sherab Mebar, Dorji Lingpa, Karma Lingpa, and Drukdra Dorji.

## ***Sherab Mebar***

Sherab Mebar came to Bhutan from Tibet. He is remembered for revealing treasures from Nup Tshonapatra lake in Haa.



Figure 4.11: Tertön Sherab Mebar



Figure 4.12: Ugyen Guru Lhakhang, Paro

Tertön Sherab Mebar is mainly associated with Ugyen Guru Lhakhang in Pangbisa, Paro, where uthoe (skull) is preserved. One of the pair of *rolmo* (cymbal) he discovered is still preserved as a sacred artefact in Rinpung Dzong. It is displayed for public viewing on special days.

### ***Did you know?***

*Tertön Sherab Mebar extracted nga (drum), dung (long horn), and rolmo (cymbal), from Nub Tshognapatra lake.*

## Dorji Lingpa



Figure 4.13: Tertön Dorji Lingpa

Dorji Lingpa came to Bhutan from Tibet. He was active in western Bhutan and Bumthang. His son Choening Gyamtsho, who inherited the monastery in Lingmukha, Punakha, established several lineages. Among his descendants are the family of Ugyen Choling in Tang, Bumthang. One member of the family, Tshokey Dorji, became Tongsa Penlop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The family of Ugyen Choling uphold *Kangso* and *Lama Kadu* ritual treasures revealed by Dorji Lingpa. These rituals are performed during the annual festival of Jampa Lhakhang at Chökhor, Bumthang, as well as in some parts of western Bhutan.

## Drukdra Dorji



Figure 4.14: Image of Tertön Drukdra Dorji

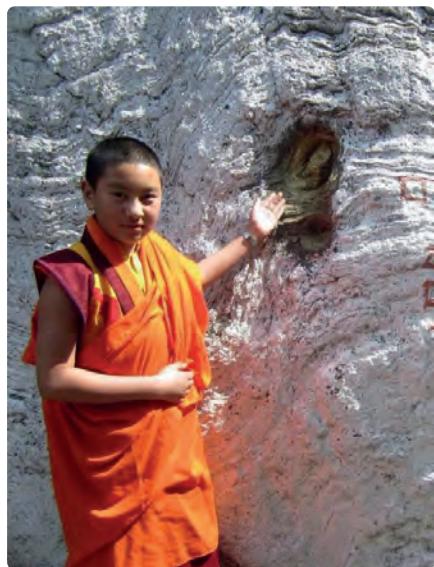


Figure 4.15: Truelku Ugyen Drodrel Thinley Kunchab, the reincarnation of Tertön Drukdra Dorji

Tertön Drukdra Dorji visited Bhutan and travelled to Chumophu in Paro, Tandin Ney and Tselung Ney in Thimphu, Passang Amai Ney in Chukha, and many other sacred places and discovered treasures. He was active in the first half of the 18th century during the eighth Desi Druk Rabgay (1707-1719). His greatest contribution to Bhutan is his prophecies for the benefit of Bhutan's king, country, and people. Trulku Ugyen Drodul Thinley Kunchap, the reincarnation of Tertön Drukdra Dorji, was born in 1999 in Phobjikha in Wangdue Phodrang. Today, he resides at Sangchen Chokhor Buddhist College in Paro to pursuing his Buddhist studies.

### **Did you know?**

*Taktikothi, Chhukha, is known initially as Tathel, meaning horse's footprint. The horse belonged to Tertön Drukdra Dorji.*

## **Karma Lingpa**

Tertön Karma Lingpa was a Tibetan. One of the *terma* texts he revealed was *Bardo Thoedrol*, known to many as the Tibetan Book of Dead. Literally, *thoedrol* means 'Liberation through hearing' and *bardo* means 'intermediate state between death and rebirth'. Therefore, *Bardo Thoedrol* means 'Liberation through hearing about the intermediate state between death and rebirth'. Tertön Karma Lingpa did not visit Bhutan, but *Bardo Thoedrol* greatly influenced Bhutan and the Himalayan region. In Bhutan, it is passed down mainly through the line of Lhalung Sungtrul and Thugse. *Bardo Thoedrol* is read for the dead to help their consciousness tide over the intermediate state and get a good rebirth. People also read it to prepare for death. During *tshechus*, *Bardo Thoedrol* is dramatised through *Raksha Mangcham* dance or the Dance of Judgement. The Bhutanese criminal trial system is believed to have been influenced by Volume *Ma* of *Bardo Thoedrol* as it contains a detailed vision of the judgement of the dead.



Figure 4.16: Image of Tertön Karma Lingpa

# Conclusion

Bhutan was blessed by the activities of the King Tertöns and many major and minor *tertöns*. Their contributions and legacies have enriched the socio-cultural and religious life of the Bhutanese. The temples and monasteries they established continue to be seats of learning and places of pilgrimage. The *terma* texts and artefacts continue to inspire people to practise Buddhism. In modern times, their contributions have become attractions for tourists and pilgrims from outside Bhutan.

Of all the *tertöns*, the legacies of Pema Lingpa continue to gain prominence in Bhutan. The Bhutanese understand his timeless contributions in Bhutan's socio-cultural, political, and religious development to build a rich and unique identity. He is the best example of a native Bhutanese spiritual figure.

## Points to Remember

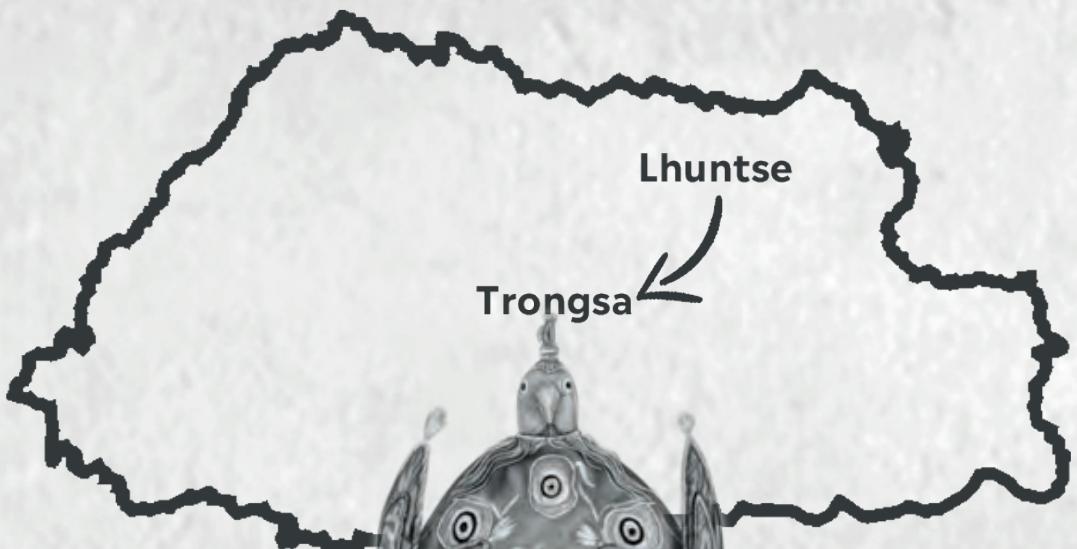
- ❖ *Tertön*: The term *tertön* is a combination of two words – ‘ter’, which means treasure, and ‘tön’, which means to reveal. Therefore, the term *tertön* means treasure discoverer or treasure revealer.
- ❖ *Terma*: *Terma* refers to treasures hidden by Guru Padmasambhava and entrusted to guardian deities until their discovery.
- ❖ Types of *ter*: There are two types of *ter*. They are *sater* (earth treasures) and *gongter* (mind treasures)
- ❖ Tertön Pema Lingpa: Tertön Pema Lingpa was one of the five King Tertön who was prophesised by Guru Padmasambhava.
- ❖ Birth and early life of Tertön Pema Lingpa: Tertön Pema Lingpa’s parents saw auspicious signs before and during his birth. He was an extraordinary child.
- ❖ Tertön Pema Lingpa’s treasure discovery: Tertön Pema Lingpa revealed both *sater* and *gongter*.
- ❖ Tertön Pema Lingpa’s spiritual and cultural contribution: He was an architect, artist, writer, painter and blacksmith.



## Revision Questions

1. According to Guru Rinpoche's prophecy, how many lives will Lhacham Pema Sel live before being born as Tertön Pema Lingpa?
2. Describe the auspicious sign of the birth of Tertön Pema Lingpa
3. Compare your childhood with Tertön Pema Lingpa's childhood.
4. Why did Guru Padmasambhava hide Termas and how did the Guru prophesise it be discovered?
5. Do you think it was wise on the part of Governor of the Chokor valley to force Tertön Pema Lingpa to extract treasures? If you were Tertön Pema Lingpa, how would you have reacted? State the reasons.
6. What were the contributions of Tertön Pema Lingpa, which helped in the spread of Buddhism at home and abroad?
7. Explain the term Bardo Thoedrol.
8. How did Bardo Thoedrol influence Bhutan and other Himalayan Region?





# Chapter Five

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Jigme Namgyel: The Man of Destiny

Reprint 2024

## Introduction

Jigme Namgyal was the first modern national hero of our country. He lived at a time when the nation was divided and people were constantly fighting with one another. History credits Jigme Namgyal for uniting our people, ending countless civil wars, petty rivalries, and laying the groundwork for lasting peace. In particular, he is remembered for laying a strong foundation for the Wangchuck Dynasty.

## Family Origins

Jigme Namgyal was born in 1825 in Khethangbi Naktshang<sup>i</sup> in Lhuntse. His father, Pila Gonpo Wangyal, was the twelfth descendant of Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) from the Dungkar Choje family. Jigme Namgyal's mother was Sonam Pelzom, the daughter of one of Pila's subjects at Jangsa in Lhuntse.



Figure 5.1: Dungkar Naktshang

### *Did you know?*

*Khedrup Kuenga Wangpo's (Tertoen Pema Lingpa's son) great grand son Choeje Taphel established Dungkar Choeje family.*

Jigme Namgyal had at least six names. When he was born, his parents called him Samdrup. As he grew up, he was given the name Jigme Namgyal. In history, he is popularly known as Deb Nagpo. The British referred to him as Black Regent, because he had a dark complexion, wore a black *gho*, and rode a black horse. In a *thram* (record) in *Chungey Gonpa*<sup>ii</sup>, he is referred to as Kusho Nagpo Gongsar Jigme Namgyal. His *choeming* (religious name) was Drimi Sherab.

Pila Gonpo Wangyal was a descendant of Dungkar Choje. He was described as a strong, intelligent, and educated man. At the age of fifteen, he went to Gangteng Gonpa in Phobjikha and studied under the Fourth Gangteng Trulku Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal (1759-1790). From there, he went to Tibet to study in Lhalung Monastery under Peling Sungtrul Tenpai Gyaltsen. After his studies in Lhalung, Pila returned home. At that time, Zhabdrung Thugtrul Jigme Drakpa II (1791-1830) was in Punakha. As Pila's cousin Tenzing Chogyal was married to the Zhabdrung's sister, he was part of the escort during the conflict of 1809. After several years at the court of Zhabdrung, he returned to Dungkar in Kurtoe.

He married twice. His first wife was Lhadon, the sister of Gangteng Trulku Tenzin Sizhi Namgyal (1759-1790). The couple took charge of the household of Dungkar, but shortly she passed away. Then, Pila married Sonam Pelzom with whom he had five children. Jigme Namgyal was born in 1825 as their third child. His two elder brothers were Dorje and Dungkar Gyaltsen. His younger sisters were Tshering Doma and Yudron.

*Box 5.1: Background on Pila Goenpo Wangyel*

## Character



So far, no photo of Desi Jigme Namgyal has been found. The only visual representation of him is a fresco at Chugney Gonpa in which he is depicted as a monk wearing the *tendrel uzha*.

The British described him as a man of average height with dark skin. Bhutanese historians say he had a strong, athletic appearance, which earned him the reputation of being invincible. Buli Lam Dorji met Jigme Namgyal when the latter was 15 years old. According to the lam's description, Jigme Namgyal was a remarkably intelligent man. Bhutanese history remembers him less as an administrator and more as a soldier, who was both feared and respected by people.

*Figure 5.2: a fresco of Jigme Namgyel at Chugney Goenpa*

## Early Career

Not much is known of the young Jigme Namgyal, who lived in Dungkar until the age of 15. Oral accounts describe his early life like a fairy tale, filled with dreams and visions. He was believed to be a man of destiny. Unlike his father, there is no record of him studying under a *lam* or going to Tibet to study.

In 1840, he travelled to Trongsa. He wanted to enroll either as a monk in the Trongsa Dzong or serve as a *garpa* (common retainer) at the court of Trongsa Ponlop<sup>iii</sup>. (governor of Trongsa). Oral stories recount how he made his journey to Trongsa, spending three to four months in Naro Gup's house in Bumthang looking after his sheep and cattle.

Like many political leaders of his time, Jigme Namgyal started his career as a *garpa* at the court of Trongsa Ponlop Tamzhing Choje Ugyen Phuntsho. He rapidly rose the career ladder. In 1843, Tamzhing Choje Ugyen Phuntsho was succeeded by Wangchen Dorji (alias Tshokey Dorji). Jigme Namgyal continued to serve in the same court. Soon, he won the trust of Ponlop Tshokey Dorji. In 1843, Jigme Namgyal became the *zingup* (attendant). Three years later, he occupied the posts of *zimnang* (junior chamberlain) and *darpon* (chief of attendants) at the same time.

In 1848, Trongsa Ponlop appointed him as the inner *zimpon* (chamberlain). Later, he was promoted as Ponlop's Tshongpon (governor's merchant).

## Trongsa Tshongpon

The *tshongpon*'s job was to travel to the trade marts in towns along the Tibetan frontier, where he bartered Bhutanese products for Tibetan goods. During one such trip in around 1847, he met his future wife, Pema Choki, the daughter of his first master, Trongsa Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho. At the time, she was living in Lhalung with her brother, Lhalung Trulku Kunzang Dorje Tenpe Nyima (1843-1891), the eighth Peling Sungtrul.

## Trongsa Zimpon

In 1848, at the age of twenty-three, Jigme Namgyal was promoted to the post of Trongsa Zimpon. He returned to Dungkar for the first time after becoming *zimpon*. While in Dungkar, he received complaints that Lhuntse Dzongpon was vicious. True to his character, Jigme Namgyal did not waste time to oust the *dzongpon*.

In the same year, Punakha Dzong was destroyed by fire. The following year, the Central Government summoned labour from all the *dzongkhags* to carry out the reconstruction of the *dzong*.

Like the other *ponlops*, Trongsa *Ponlop* sent men from the districts under his jurisdiction to Punakha, led by Zimpon Jigme Namgyal. Trongsa Ponlop's jurisdiction included Trongsa, Bumthang, Zhemgang, and Lhuntse. This was his debut in state politics. By then, Trongsa Ponlop was one of the most powerful leaders in the country. The feuding *dzongpons* of western Bhutan turned more and more frequently to Trongsa for military support and mediation.

That year, many *nyagoes* (strong men), *dzongpons*, and *ponlops* gathered in Punakha. During breaks from work, strong men competitions were held, in which Jigme Namgyal emerged victorious.

Against the advice of Jigme Namgyal, Trongsa Ponlop visited Punakha to see the progress of the *dzong* reconstruction. During the visit, Zimpon Jigme Namgyal was on high alert and successfully prevented an assassination attempt against his master. The attempt took place in the Thang Dzong where a meeting among high officials was held. Sensing danger, Jigme Namgyal stationed himself near the door. When he noticed his master trembling with fear, he immediately stormed into the hall. With one hand holding his master and the other a sword, he safely rescued Trongsa Ponlop. The officials who had hatched the assassination plot did not dare confront Jigme Namgyal as he had already earned the title of nyagoe by then.

Subsequently, Trongsa Ponlop and Jigme Namgyal returned safely to Trongsa. The *ponlop* was so grateful to Jigme Namgyal for saving his life that, as a token of gratitude, he promised to make Jigme Namgyal his successor before his son Tsondru Gyaltshen. As an immediate reward, Jigme Namgyal was appointed as Lhuntse Dzongpon.

## Trongsa Dronyer

In 1850, civil strife broke out as officials from the east gathered in Mongar in an attempt to forcefully oust Trongsa Ponlop. Until then, Trongsa Ponlop did not have absolute control over the entire Sharchog Khorlo Tsibgye (eight eastern districts).

Jigme Namgyal was 25 years old at the time. He was promoted to the post of Trongsa Dronyer (guest master of Trongsa) before he was sent to Mongar to quell the protest. Jigme Namgyal trekked to Mongar, suppressed the rebellion, and took over four *dzongkhags* of Trashigang, Dungsam, Zhongar, and Trashigang.

In addition to securing the allegiance of the *dzongpons* of the eastern *dzongkhags*, Jigme Namgyal made the *subhas* (Bhutanese officers in the south), who governed southern foothills, accountable to Trongsa Ponlop. By the end of the year, all areas east of Pelela were under the jurisdiction of Trongsa Ponlop, making him the most powerful leader in the country.

In 1851, a civil strife broke out in the central government. Chagpa Sangay became the 40<sup>th</sup> Druk Desi, yet due to his differences with the monastic body and his inability to get along with the officials and people, a civil war broke out. As the central government and the monastic body raised forces to remove the *desi*, Trongsa Ponlop sent Jigme Namgyal to the west. Accompanied by Dungkar Gyaltshen and Kitsep Dorji Namgyal,

Jigme Namgyal trekked to Punakha to remove Druk Desi. He was not successful, but he was able to weaken his enemy by killing their strongest man, Migtho, the *nyagoe*<sup>iv</sup>. In the meanwhile, Jigme Namgyal managed to escape to Trongsa<sup>v</sup>. Eventually, Paro Ponlop Agay Haap managed to kill the *desi* by sending him a silk *gho* infected with smallpox.

### Did you know?

*Migthoe was the son of Muktsen, the local deity of Trongsa. That is why he possessed supernatural powers and was considered the strongest man of Chakpa Sangay.*

## Trongsa Ponlop

Although Tshokey Dorji had promised Jigme Namgyal the post of Trongsa Ponlop in 1850, a rumour was rife that Tshokey Dorji's son would succeed him. Disappointed, Jigme Namgyal pretended to be unwell and lived in *Laozhong*, a village above Trongsa Dzong, for some time. After consulting his trusted men, Ponlop Tshokey Dorji named Jigme Namgyal as his successor for a term of three years, after which Tsodru Gyaltshen would take the post. Accordingly, in 1853, at the age of twenty-eight, Jigme Namgyal became Trongsa Ponlop.

As Trongsa Ponlop, one of the first things Jigme Namgyal did was fulfill his root guru's advice by building a west-facing image of Dechog (Skt. Chakrasamvara) in the Dechog Lhakhang. In addition, he installed a silver statue of Dorje Phagmo and held an elaborate consecration ceremony for it.

Yet, soon, another civil strife broke out in the central government. This time, it was between the 41<sup>st</sup> Desi Barchung, alias Damcho Lhundrup, (r. 1852-1855), Jamyang Tenzing, and Kalyon Kasha. Ponlop Jigme Namgyal marched to Punakha and settled the dispute. For his contribution to mediating the dispute, Trongsa Ponlop was allowed to retain the land taxes and four loads of coins from the east. Unlike other *ponlops*, he was not required to send them to Punakha since then. In addition, he was given the power to freely appoint the *dzongpons* of the eastern region.

Because of political instability and constant civil strife, people were not happy and longed to lead a peaceful life. Jigme Namgyal came as a saviour, establishing a stable government and giving Bhutan a political identity. He consolidated power and emerged as the national hero, and laid a solid foundation for the Wangchuck dynasty.

## Conclusion

Jigme Namgyal had dreams and visions. Therefore, he was considered as man of destiny. He devoted 38 years of his life to unifying the country and laying the foundations of a unified Bhutan. An intelligent, courageous, and loyal son of the land, he is remembered for the many battles he fought and his political acumen. His contributions not only shaped the nation's history but also established a legacy that continues to inspire future generations.

<sup>i</sup>Pila constructed the Khethangbi Naktshang. It was known as Pila Naktshang. Today, it is known as Jigme Namgyal Naktshang.

<sup>ii</sup>The gonpa still holds the ritual objects he donated, which are registered in the thram under his choeming or religious name, Drimi Sherab. The caretaker of Chungey Gonpa said that Jigme Namgyal was ordained as a monk and, as per the monastic tradition, was given the name Drimi Sherab.

<sup>iii</sup>It is said that before venturing out, he planted a tree and wished that if he was destined to become a successful garpa or a monk, let the tree grow healthy. If not, let it die. Today, this tree thrives in Dungkar.

<sup>iv</sup>Desi Chagpa Sangay's strongman was Migthoe. Migthoe's mother was from Tangsibji in Trongsa, and he settled in the western region after marrying a woman from Lapsakha. When Jigme Namgyal and Migthoe met on the battlefield, Jigme Namgyal told him that it was not his responsibility to defend a land he was not born in. Migthoe retorted, 'A dog barks from where it is fed.' When words fell on a deaf ear, Jigme Namgyal, Dungkar Gyaltshen, and Kitsep Dorji Namgyal waylaid him. One night, when Migthoe was walking home after his duty, the three pounced on him in an ambush and killed him.

<sup>v</sup>Avoiding the traditional route, the three returned home through Gasa and Phuma Jangthang. Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861) helped the three by sending sixty of his attendants as escorts up to Gasa. Unfortunately, on the way back from Gasa, Desi Chagpa Sangay's men killed all sixty attendants. The escorts were resting in Kabisa when the Desi's men set the house on fire. Trongsa Dronyer and his party travelled via Laya and stopped briefly at Lhalung before descending to Trongsa.

*Box 5.2*

### Points to Remember

- ❖ Jigme Namgyal was born in 1825 in *Khethangbi Naktshang* in *Kurtoe*
- ❖ At the age of 15, Jigme Namgyel began his career in the court of *Trongsa Poenlop*
- ❖ In 1848, at the age of twenty-three, Jigme Namgyal was promoted to *Trongsa Zimpoen*
- ❖ *Zimpoen* Jigme Namgyal was rewarded the post of *Trongsa Poenlop* in 1853



### Revision Questions

1. List down all the names acquired by Jigme Namgyal.
2. Account for Jigme Namgyal's journey from Lhuentse to Trongsa.
3. Fill in the following table with reference to the posts held by Jigme Namgyal.

Year	Age	Post
1843	15	Garpa (Common retainer)



4. How did young Zimpon Jigme Namgyal win the good will and trust of his master in 1850?

# Chapter Six

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Bhutan and British India: Bhutan's relation with her immediate foreign neighbor

## Introduction

Bhutan went through difficult times for 200 years after the official announcement of the death of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1705 CE. Internally, there was political instability with endless conflict among the *dzongpons* and *ponlops* for the post of Druk Desi. Thus, the country was divided into several factions.

Externally, the country came into contact with the British East India Company only in 1772. Since then, Bhutan had several contacts with them, which led to modern development.

## Battle of Cooch Behar

Even as the internal instability plagued the country, Bhutan faced British India in the south time and again. The incident that brought Bhutan in contact with British India for the first time was over Cooch Behar.



Figure 6.1: Map showing the location of Bhutan

## Causes of the Battle

Cooch Behar had maintained a close link with the Himalayan neighbours since it became an independent kingdom in 1510. Bhutan is said to have interfered in a family dispute over the throne between Upendra Narayan and Dina Narayan in 1730 CE. The former sought support from Bhutan against the latter, who was supported by a local official of Rangpur, Muhammad Shah Rangila. The Bhutanese forces defeated Dina Narayan and his Mughal supporters and made Upendra Narayan the new ruler of Cooch Behar, *Gya Chila* (Bhutanese agent in the south). Since then, Cooch Behar became a friend and protectorate of Bhutan.

Bhutan intervened in the affairs of Cooch Behar for the second time when its ruler, Raikat Ram Narayan, sought Bhutan's help against the sixteenth Druk Desi Sonam Lhundrub (alias Zhidar), who invaded Sikkim and the principality of Morang (Vijaypur) in 1770 CE.

During the reign of Desi Zhidar, Bhutan intervened in the succession feud of Cooch Behar in 1772 CE. Bhutan captured Raja Dhajendra Narayan and his brother Diwan Deo (finance minister) and held them captive in Punakha. The political scene changed when King Dharendra Narayan sought help from British India, promising to surrender half of the

state's revenue in exchange. The British sent their large troops under Captain John Jones to expel the Bhutanese from Cooch Behar.

## Events of the War

Bhutan fought her first battle with the British at the fort of Cooch Behar on 22 December 1772. Despite Bhutan's successive victories, she was defeated in the end by the British forces. A treaty was signed between Cooch Behar and British India. The treaty declared British India as the ruler of Cooch Behar and warned that Bhutan should not raid Cooch Behar in the future. British India also took possession of all the low-lying cultivated land up to the foothills and declared it as the new border, forbidding the Bhutanese to cross it.

Infuriated by the annexation, Desi Zhidar personally led the Bhutanese forces to regain the lost territories in the south in January and attacked the Chichacotta garrison held by the collector of Rangpur. The collector was responsible for taking possession of land under the command of the British government. However, the Bhutanese troops lost the battle, compelling them to move retreat northwards. In April 1773, Captain John Jones occupied the post of Daling (present-day Kalimpong).

Meanwhile, Tshenyi Lopon ( present-day *Yonten Lopon*) Kunga Rinchen declared himself as the seventeenth Druk Desi. He blocked all the return routes of Desi Zhidar back to Bhutan and ordered all district heads to kill him if he tried to re-enter Bhutan. This forced Zhidar to move into exile to Tibet.

## The Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty (1774)

Desi Kunga Rinchen proposed to negotiate and sign an agreement with British India. He even requested the sixth Penchen Lama of Tibet for mediation. The Penchen Lama wrote to British Governor Warren Hastings to settle the disputes in March 1774.

The battle of Cooch Behar finally ended by signing a treaty of friendship between Bhutan and British India. In the negotiation in 1774 CE, the principal representative of Bhutan was Sangay Gyatsho, who was later appointed Daga Ponlop in recognition for his service. The treaty was signed on 25 April 1774.

The summarised provisions of the treaty are:

1. Bhutan regained its lost territories in the east, the land of Chichacotta and Palaghat and, in the west, the land of Kyranty, Maraghat and Luckypur.
2. The Bhutanese were allowed to trade in Rangpur, and, in return, the Bhutanese agreed not to offer any shelter to criminals who were hostile to British India and to allow British troops to follow them into the Bhutanese territory.

3. The Bhutanese agreed to release the Raja of Cooch Behar and his brother.

The signing of the treaty marked the beginning of Bhutan's friendship with British India. It also marked the start of trade and commercial relations between the two countries.

#### Did you know?

*The Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1774 is also called 'Ten Points Treaty' because it contains ten provisions.*

## The Bilateral Missions

The British were interested in opening a trade route to Tibet and establish a permanent agent in Bhutan. Therefore, a series of missions were sent to Bhutan.

### George Bogle Mission, 1774

The mission was headed by George Bogle, who was accompanied by Dr Alexander Hamilton, the surgeon. The purpose of the mission was to gather information on the geopolitical setting of Bhutan and start a commercial link between Bhutan and Bengal besides studying the possibility of establishing a trade route to Tibet through Bhutan.

Desi Kunga Rinchen insisted that only Indian and Tibetan merchants be allowed to cross through Bhutan. Similarly, the British agreed to allow the Bhutanese to sell their horses anywhere in India without custom duties.

This mission was of considerable political interest to Bhutan. For the first time, it heralded Anglo-Bhutan relations.

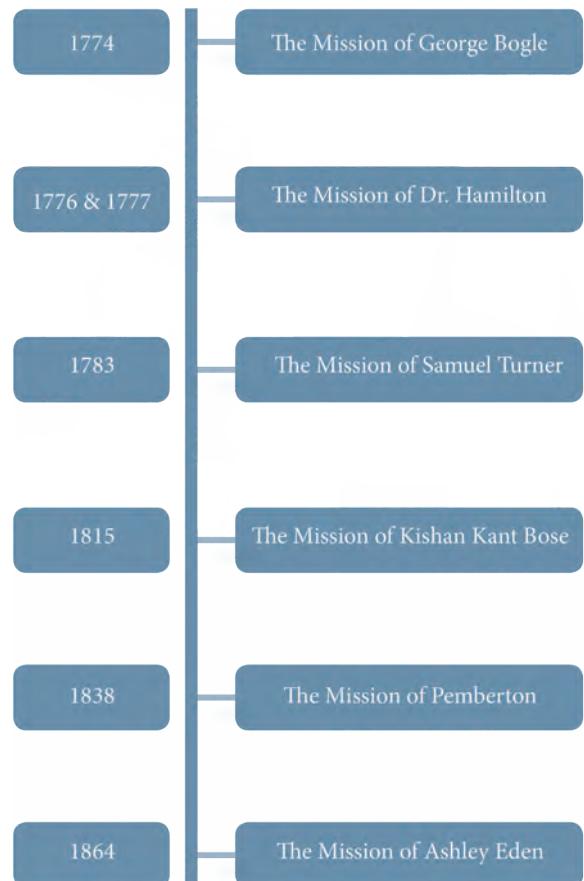


Figure 6.2: Timeline showing different missions sent by the British Government to Bhutan

#### Did you know?

*George Bogle is said to have planted potatoes on his way to Tashichhodzong.*

## Dr Hamilton Mission (1766, 1777)

To strengthen the links between the two countries and to study the Bhutanese claims of Ambari Falakata and Jalpais (Jalpaiguri district), Dr Hamilton was sent to Bhutan. Bhutan got back Ambari Falakata from British India based on his recommendation.

Dr Hamilton made his second visit to Bhutan in 1777 to congratulate Thirtrul Jigme Sengye on his enthronement as the eighteenth Druk Desi on behalf of Governor-General Warren Hastings.

## Samuel Turner Mission, 1783

The new ruler of Cooch Behar claimed ownership of all the land the British government returned to Bhutan and requested the Governor-General reclaim it. However, the Governor General favoured Bhutan, for he wanted to secure trade links with Tibet by maintaining peaceful relations with Bhutan.

This mission was led by Captain Samuel Turner, who was accompanied by Surveyor Lieutenant Samuel Davis to sketch the scenes of Bhutan. The mission consolidated George Bogle's effort at building Anglo-Bhutanese relations. The sketches of Bhutan by Samuel Davis brought Bhutan to the notice of the outside world.

## Kishan Kant Bose Mission, 1815

This mission was sent to collect information on the Bhutanese state of affairs in the face of deteriorating relations between Bhutan and British India at the beginning of 1792 CE.

The British government in 1816 accepted the Bhutanese claim of Maragahat based on the report submitted by Kishan Kant Bose.

The British attitude towards Bhutan gradually changed. Bhutan was no more on the priority list of the British. The Kishan Kant Bose Mission was the last mission sent by the British before the Duar War.

## Pemberton Mission, 1838

This mission came to Bhutan without the Bhutanese government's permission. Captain R Boileau Pemberton proposed to sign an agreement for free movement between the two countries.

### *Did you know?*

*Among several missions sent by the British government, the mission of Pemberton was the only one that entered Bhutan from the eastern part of the country (Kaling Duar). The rest of the missions entered from the Buxa Duar.*

The Bhutanese government rejected the proposal as Trongsa Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho opposed it.

The mission did not achieve anything. Instead, it further damaged the relations between the two countries.

## Ashley Eden Mission, 1864

This mission arrived in Bhutan at a time when relations between the two countries were deteriorating. The mission proposed a treaty between the two nations (see box 1). However, the mission decided to leave before the situation worsened. Before their departure, Trongsa Ponlop Jigme Namgyal forced Ashley Eden to sign a treaty agreeing to return the Assam Duars to Bhutan.

The mission was a significant failure, and the relationship between the two countries was severely damaged. Thus, it led to the Duar War in 1864.

The draft treaty of Ashley Eden included the provisions, such as the return of Ambari Falakata to Bhutan, to station a permanent Political Agent in Bhutan and establish free trade between the two countries. The Bhutanese leadership demanded that an additional clause stating the return of the Assam Duar to Bhutan be included. Ashley Eden said that he had no authority to insert this clause. The situation became tense when the parties could not come to a consensus. Each side made insulting remarks and gestures at the other. Threats and counter-threats were exchanged.

To the British, the treaty was invalid. Eden did not have the government's approval to sign the treaty with a new clause. So, he signed it and cleverly added the words, '*under compulsion*' in English, which the Bhutanese could not read.

*Box 6.1: Provisions of Ashley Eden Mission*

## The Duar War

Between 1864 and 1865, British India waged war against Bhutan, marking Bhutan's final war fought against a foreign sovereign power.

On 12 November 1864, the Governor-General of British India issued a proclamation of war against Bhutan. The two common reasons were frequent Bhutanese hostilities on the borders and the humiliation of the Ashley Eden Mission in 1864. British India sought to permanently annex the entire Duars and occupy Bhutanese dzongs along the frontiers.

British India's forces, consisting of approximately 3,000 men and 600 elephants, were divided into four columns. They launched attacks on Bhutan from four points.

After ten hours of heavy firing and the use of ammunition, the left column took Dalimkote Dzong. When the British forces reached the dzong, the Bhutanese forces had already retreated. They found two wounded Bhutanese and a Bengali in the dzong.

The centre-left column took possession of Pasakha without encountering any resistance. Similarly, the right-column took Dewathang. The Bhutanese frontier forces were no match for the superior British forces.

Meanwhile, the right-centre column marched with 2,000 men and 150 elephants to Bishensing, present-day Sarpang. To their surprise, they found only a small stone house occupied by an old lama.

By the end of January 1865, the British forces had taken control of all the forts in the Duars, from Dalingkha to Dewathang. The main body of the Bhutanese army retreated, leaving a smaller contingent to guard the forts.

Until 1865, Bhutan had 18 Duars. Seven were in Assam and eleven in Bengal. The Duars are a narrow tract of land in the foothills. They were the gateways to Bhutan that separated Bhutan from the British Indian territory.

Buxa Duar was one of our eleven Assam Duars and is today better known as Pasakha. Part of it is still in Bhutan's territory. It was one of the oldest towns in West Bengal and an ancient trade mart between India and Bhutan.

*Box 6.2: Information on Duar*

## Bhutan's Counter-attack

On 27 December, the 48th Desi Kagyu Wangchuk sent a letter to the British Brigadier General. The desi accused the officer of jeopardising the friendly relationship between the two countries.

The Bhutanese forces led by Trongsa Ponlop Jigme Namgyal attacked the British forces based in Dewathang on 30 January 1865. The Bhutanese cut off their water supply and communication line by occupying the main pass. Unable to hold the fort, the British forces retreated under cover of darkness on 4 February 1865. Fleeing in haste, they left behind their wounded officers and two 9.2-inch howitzer guns. Trongsa Ponlop took the guns as victory

trophies, which were later returned to British India after signing the treaty of Sinchula.

Trongsa Ponlop lost sixty of his men, including his knowledgeable secretary, Lopen Gangchen (alias Zhalphan Roipai Dorji), who was wounded and was taken away as a prisoner of war. It is believed that the Lopen Gangchen was forced to translate Bhutanese documents into Assamese before he died.

## Final British Attack

In March 1865, the British retaliated with 3,000 soldiers to regain their lost dzong but reputation. In the ensuing battle, some forty Bhutanese soldiers under Paro Ponlop, who were holding the Balla pass, were killed.

Another contingent of British forces consisting of 1,500 troops ascended the hills of Dewathang. On 1 April 1865, they recaptured the dzong. The British sepoys were ruthless, killing 120 Bhutanese who surrendered.

The Bhutanese troops were no match for the better-armed British army even though reinforcements were sent. While the Bhutanese troops were equipped with stones and matchlocks, the British troops had mortars and modern rifles.

The 49th Desi Desi Kayu Wangchuk was in favour of peaceful settlement but Trongsa Ponlop wanted a fight. The British threatened full-scale invasion and advanced their troops to Pasakha, and occupied Dewathang for the third time. Eventually, the Ponlop Jigme Namgyal agreed with the desi for a peaceful settlement, which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula.

## The Treaty of Sinchula

The Anglo-Bhutan war came to an end after one year. On 11 November 1865, the Treaty of Sinchula was signed between Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Bruce and Desi Zimpon Samdrup Dorje and Zhung Dronyer Damcho Rinchen.

The treaty marked a new chapter for Bhutan's foreign relations with its southern neighbour.

Although Bhutan lost one-fifth of its territory, the country started receiving a subsidy from British India.

1. Establishment of friendship between the two countries.
2. Permanent British annexation of all the Duars.
3. Release of British subjects in Bhutan.
4. Annual subsidy to be increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000 in three years.
5. Liberty to suspend the payment of compensation by the British government.
6. Establishment of free trade.

*Box 6.3: Provisions of the Treaty of Sinchula*

## Conclusion

The period between 1705 CE to 1907 CE is marked by internal instability and external invasion. During this period, Bhutan came across British India and fought as many as eleven wars with them. The aftermath of the war was the establishment of better relations between the two countries, which evolved into a long-term relationship between Bhutan and an independent India.

Today, the 250-year-old brass statue of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, loaned by India, is one of the sacred treasures enshrined in Simtokha Dzong. The beautiful statue is one of the few reminders of the Anglo-Bhutan war in which Bhutan had to cede eighteen Duars.



*Figure 6.3: Brass statue of Zhabdrung spotted from Dalimkote Dzong during Duar War by the British*

### Points to Remember

- ❖ Bhutan first came into contact with the British in 1772.
- ❖ Economically, British India was interested in Bhutan because they wanted to establish a trade route to Tibet through Bhutan.
- ❖ British India sent several missions to Bhutan to understand the political situation of the country as well as to establish a trade route to Tibet.
- ❖ George Bogle's Mission was the first mission Bhutan received from British India.
- ❖ Cooch Behar was once a protectorate of Bhutan.
- ❖ The Anglo-Bhutan Treaty marked the beginning of Bhutan's relations with British India.
- ❖ The Duar War started due to the ill-treatment of the Ashley Eden Mission



by the Bhutanese.

- ❖ The Bhutanese rejected the Ashley Eden Mission for it failed to meet the demands of the Bhutanese side.
- ❖ The British troops attacked Bhutan from four different directions in the Duar War.
- ❖ Bhutan counter-attacked the British Indian troops at Dewangiri on 19 December 1865.
- ❖ Jigme Namgyal took two Howitzer guns from the British Indian troops as victory trophies in Dewangiri.
- ❖ The Duar War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula on 11 November 1865.

### Revision Questions

1. Fill in the table on the Battle of Cooch Behar.

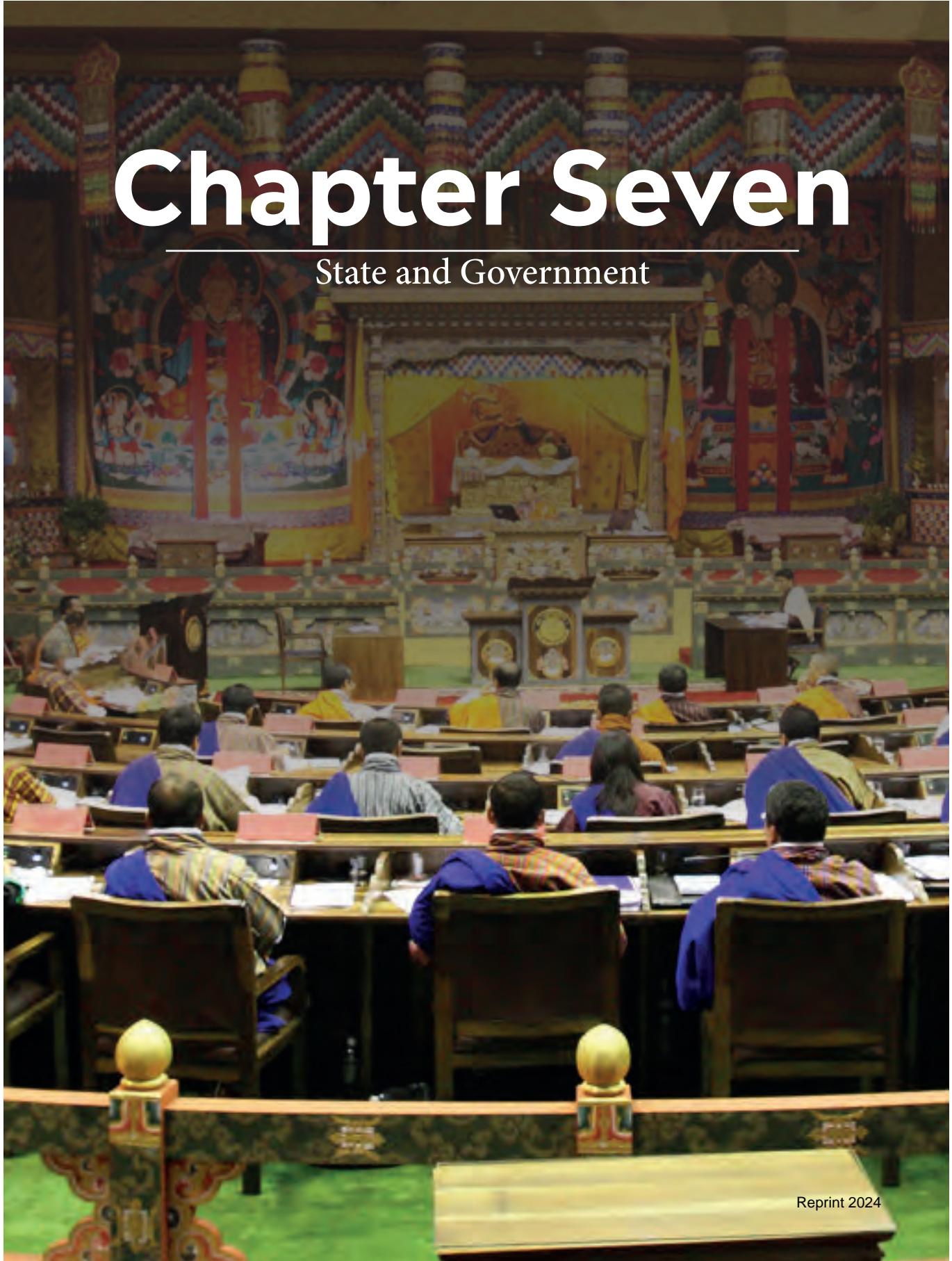
Year	Causes	Events	Outcomes

2. Why was British India interested to Bhutan?
3. Describe how the Trongsa Poenlop Jigme Namgyel proved his courage in the Duar War.
4. With reference to the Duar War, answer the following questions;
  - a. When did the battle take place?
  - b. Explain the causes of the War.
  - c. Briefly explain the events of the war.
  - d. Write the outcomes of the War.
5. In connection to the provisions of the Treaty of Sinchula, 1865, provide examples to prove the Bhutan was benefitted by the treaty.



# Chapter Seven

## State and Government



# Introduction

Different countries have different forms of government. Bhutan is a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. It is important to understand what it means to be a state and a government.

## Concept of State

State is a community of people characterised by a population, a sovereign territory, a government, and the freedom to enter into relations with other states. Today, the status of a state is confirmed by its membership of the United Nations Organisation.

State is the biggest and the most important entity of a country. Within the domain of state falls the three broad entities; government, market or the private sector, and civil society which is also known as the third space. State creates the conditions for other entities to function well.

In Bhutan, the institution of monarchy personified by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo is the head of the state and represents the state. The executive, the judiciary, the legislature, civil society, and the private sector are different governing institutions within the state. The state endures while other entities change.



Figure 7.1: Features of State

## Features of state

The following are common features of state:

### 1. Population

Population is one of the most important features of a state. There can be no state without a sizable number of people. Although ancient scholars like Plato and Aristotle defined an ideal size for a state's

### Did you know?

*The Greek philosopher Plato has prescribed the population of 5,040 for a country to qualify as state.*

population, their ideas are no longer applicable to modern states. The population of a modern state is typically diverse, comprising people from different races, religions, languages, and cultures.

## 2. Territory

There cannot be a state without a defined, sovereign territory. The territory of a state refers to land, water bodies, and the air space above them. The territory is the home of the people and the source of natural resources for them. There is no fixed size of a territory. States can be as big as Russia and as small as Vatican City. Territory provides people with a sense of permanence, continuity, and attachment. Therefore, it is often referred to as the motherland.

## 3. Government

Government is the political face of the state. Government broadly includes the legislature, executive, and the judiciary. Government brings order, unity, and harmony to the state by providing basic services, law and order, and justice.

**Legislature:** It makes and amends law in the country.

**Executive:** It implements the plans and programmes.

**Judiciary:** It interprets and applies law in the country.

## 4. Sovereignty

There are two types of sovereignty: internal sovereignty and external sovereignty. Internal sovereignty means the state is supreme over all its citizens and entities. In Bhutan, internal sovereignty rests with the institution of monarchy. External sovereignty means the state is free from foreign control. A state cannot exist without both types of sovereignty.

# Concept of Government

Government is a system of rules by which state is organised and governed. It is a political system comprising the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. The government has the right and duty to make, implement, and enforce state laws. There are different forms of government such as democracy, monarchy, and communism. There are different levels of government such as the central government, state government, and provincial government. In Bhutan, there are two levels of government, namely the central government and local government.

# Features of Government

Different forms of government have different features. Following are some key features of a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy.

1. Monarch as the head of state

His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo is the head of state who exercises a number of Royal Prerogatives, including the granting of citizenship, land, and other forms of kidu. His Majesty appoints senior public officials listed in Article 2 (19) of the constitution and may command bills and other measures in Parliament.

2. Separation of power

As provided for in Article 1 (13) of the Constitution, there is a separation of powers among the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. The Executive is represented by the elected government; the Legislature is represented by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the National Assembly, and the National Council; and the Judiciary is represented by the courts of justice. The separation of powers ensures checks and balances among the three branches of government.

3. Representative government and parliament

Except for five eminent members of the National Council appointed by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the members of the government and parliament are directly elected by the people. The elected government and parliament are accountable to each other. Parliament has the power to revoke the government through a vote of no confidence and the government has the power to dissolve parliament.

4. Apolitical local governments

The Constitution provides for apolitical local governments across all 20 dzongkhags in the form of Dzongkhag Tshogdu, Gewog Tshogde, and Thromde Tshogde. These structures are established to ensure the decentralisation and devolution of power and authority. Local governments play a vital role in ensuring that local interests are considered in the development and management of their social, economic, and environmental well-being.

Monarch as the head of state

Apolitical local governments

**Features of  
Government**

Separation of Power

Representative government  
and parliament

Figure 7.2: Features of government

# Conclusion

The three branches of government, executive, legislature, and judiciary are equally important for the smooth functioning of both the government and the state. In the modern era, the status of the state is assured by its membership in the United Nations Organisation (UNO). The main features of a state include population, territory, government, and sovereignty. With the establishment of the Democratic Constitutional Monarchy in 2008, the systems of central and local government were further strengthened, enhancing governance and promoting the principles of democracy.

## Points to Remember

- ❖ Population ,territory, government, and sovereignty are the four main features of state
- ❖ State is the biggest and the most important entity of a country
- ❖ His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo is head of the state
- ❖ The elected prime minister is head of the government
- ❖ Government comprises the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature
- ❖ Monarch as the head of state, separation of power, representative government and parliament and apolitical local governments are the four main features of government.



## Revision Questions

1. Explain State in your own words.
2. Explain features of state.
3. Why is Bhutan considered to be a State?
4. What is government?
5. Identify two features that differentiate government from State.





# Chapter Eight

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## Civics and Citizenship



# Introduction

Civics is a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens. It is the study of history, traditions, structures, and processes of governance and democracy. It is aimed at producing an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry committed to the values and principles of democracy. In a democracy, media plays a key role to inform citizen and make responsible decisions. Citizenship deals with attitudes, values, outlook, and skills which help citizens to be more involved in society. Together, civics and citizenship create a more skillful and engaged citizenry.

## The concepts of civics

The following are the key concepts important for understanding the subject.

### 1. Democracy

The concept of democracy is about recognising democratic and legal institutions along with their roles and one's role in improving the way in which they function. For example, an elected government is a key democratic institution and the quality of an elected government depends on how well the citizens cast their votes in elections.

### 2. Democratic values

The concept of democratic values is about recognising a set of social, political, and religious values that citizens live by. It is about respecting commonality, diversity, and a shared national identity. For example, a shared sense of equality and tolerance in a multi-lingual country like Bhutan is key to a harmonious society.

### 3. Justice

The concept of justice is about understanding the rule of law, application of laws, and how the courts and Parliament function. Understanding the system and processes of justice is key to getting justice. For example, understanding how courts of law function at different levels increases a citizen's chances of getting justice.

### 4. Participation

The concept of participation is about engaging in the nation building process as proactive, informed, and empowered citizens. It is about participating in democratic and decision-making processes. For example, some democratic institutions such as Parliament cannot exist or function without the participation of the citizens.

### 5. Rights and duties

The concept of rights and duties is about understanding and recognising fundamental rights and duties which belong to all human beings. Every citizen is granted a set of rights and is charged with the obligation to fulfil a set of duties. In the Constitution of Bhutan, the rights and duties are enshrined in Article 7 and Article 8 respectively. For example, a Bhutanese citizen has the right to the freedom of speech and the duty to fulfil the National Service.

## Difference between civics and citizenship

Civics and citizenship are closely related and often used interchangeably or together as a topic of study. However, there is a delicate difference between the two.

Civics is concerned with imparting civic knowledge whereas citizenship is concerned with promoting the right attitudes, values, outlooks, and skills. Civics is knowledge-based and citizenship is skills-based.

Civics is the study of the structures and workings of democratic institutions which create active and engaged citizenry. On the other hand, citizenship fosters and promotes attitudes, values, outlooks, and skills which help citizens to be more involved in society. Together, civics and citizenship create a more skillful and engaged citizenry.

## Basic citizenship skills

The following are a few citizenship skills particularly relevant to Bhutan.

### 1. Responsibility

A citizen must be driven by a sense of responsibility for oneself, one's community, and nation. A responsible citizen fulfils his or her duty to fellow citizens and state. It brings progress in society.

### 2. Fairness

A citizen must be driven by a sense of fairness. A fair citizen treats his or her fellow citizens equally and justly. It brings justice and harmony in society.

### 3. Cooperation

A citizen must learn to work together with fellow citizens in cooperative spirit to achieve common goals. It fosters unity and teamwork.

### 4. Community participation

A citizen must be driven by a sense of belonging to the community of fellow citizens whose members are dependent on one another and whose needs can be met when they stick together. This brings the spirit of volunteerism, charity, and sense of belongingness.

### 5. National identity

A citizen must recognise that he or she belongs to a national community sharing the same socio-cultural and political identity. This collective identity creates the nation and helps citizens appreciate and strengthen national security and sovereignty.

### 6. Global awareness

In a globalised world, a citizen must understand other countries and their cultures, and develop respect for diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles.



Figure 8.1: Concept of Citizen

## Citizenship

Citizenship is a status of being a citizen. It means individuals belonging to a political and socio-cultural community. However, citizenship is more than the fulfilment of legal requirements. It is the willingness to contribute to the state with the right attitude combined with the ability to contribute with the right skills.

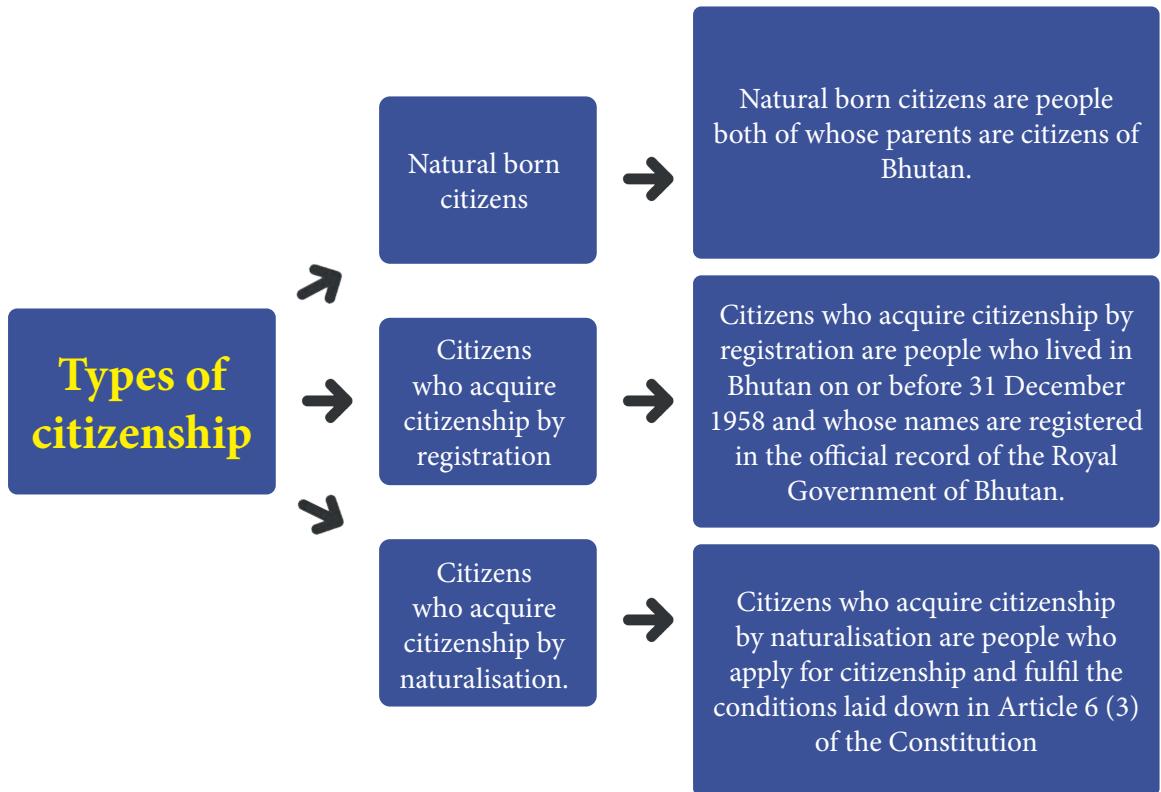


Figure 8.2: Types of Citizenship

The Article 6 (3) of our Constitution states that a person who applies for citizenship by naturalisation shall:

- a. Have lawfully resided in Bhutan for at least fifteen years;
- b. Not have any record of imprisonment for criminal offences within the country or outside;
- c. Be able to speak and write Dzongkha;
- d. Have a good knowledge of the culture, customs, traditions and history of Bhutan;
- e. Have no record of having spoken or acted against the Tsawa-sum;
- f. Renounce the citizenship, if any, of a foreign State on being conferred Bhutanese citizenship; and
- g. Take a solemn Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution as may be prescribed.

## Citizenship and Media

Today, in this globalised world, the media plays pivotal roles. Therefore, we need to be aware and responsible to engage with the media.

The media is broadly understood as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, films, billboards, mobile devices, and the internet. Today, with different forms of media merging on the internet and assuming similar characteristics, the definition of the media has become blurred. It is a medium of transferring information and messages. They are also called mass media because they reach a large audience.

A critical part of the media is the news media that focus on delivering or transmitting news to the public. They include print media (newspapers, news magazines, newsletters), broadcast media (radio and television), and the internet (online newspapers, online magazines, news blogs).

## Conclusion

Civics is a social science. It fosters private and public character traits that support self-governance and democratic participation. It creates a communally-minded citizenry that cares for the common good more than individual interests. Civics molds a nation of dissimilar individuals into engaged citizens. Civics and citizenship are used interchangeably. But citizenship is the skills needed to promote right attitude, values, and outlook towards life.

Our Constitution has clear definition of citizenship and laws determining citizenship application.

In democracy, the media is important means to inform citizens so that they can actively participate for common welfare of the community.

### Points to Remember

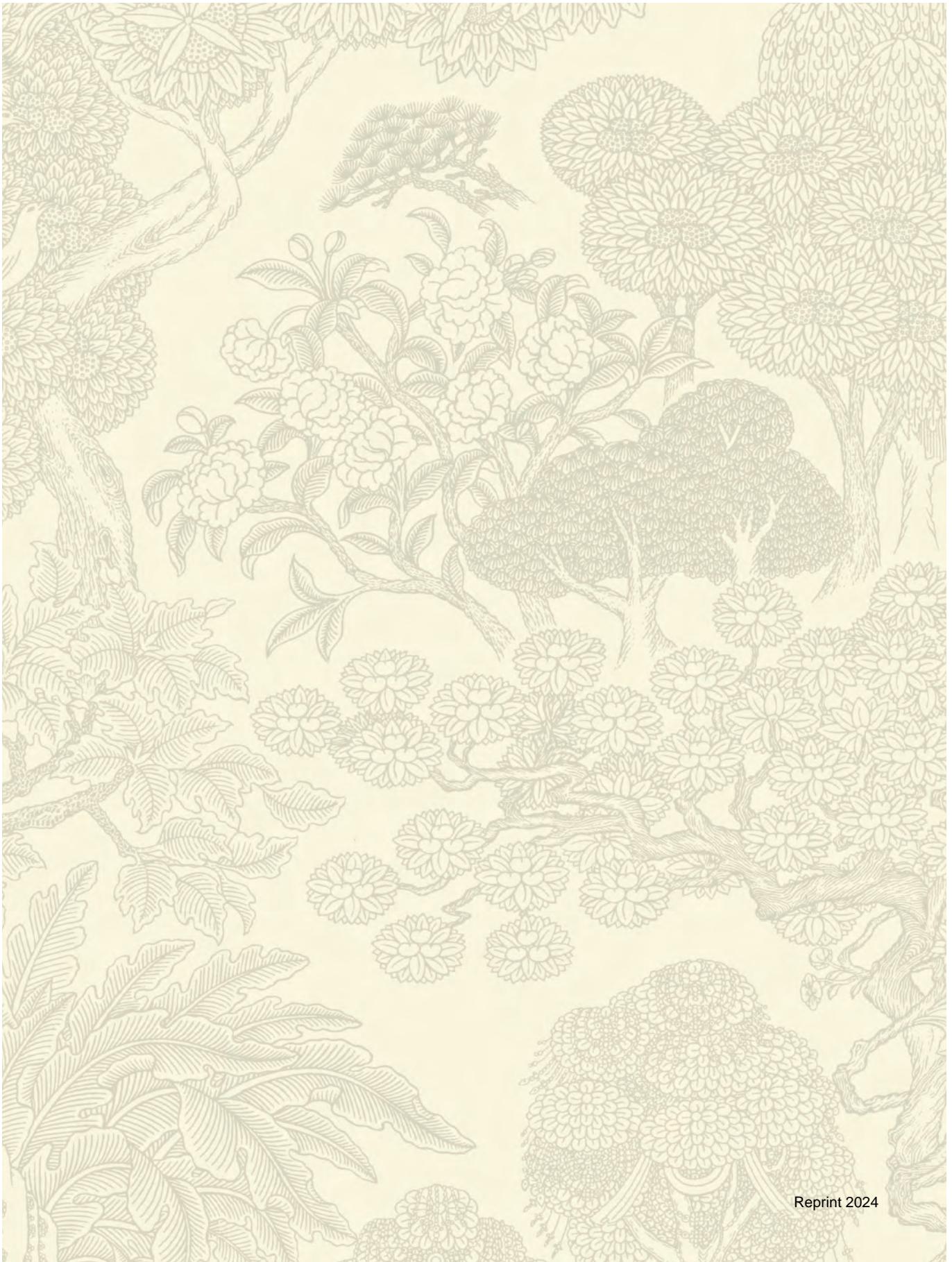
- ❖ Civics is a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens.
- ❖ Civics aims to produce an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry committed to the values and principles of democracy.
- ❖ Citizenship fosters and promotes attitudes, values, outlooks, and skills which help citizens to be more involved in society.
- ❖ Civics is knowledge-based and citizenship is skills-based.
- ❖ Our Constitution classifies citizens into three types:
  - Natural born citizens
  - Citizens who acquire citizenship by registration
  - Citizens who acquire citizenship by naturalisation.
- ❖ Media consists of newspapers, news magazines, newsletters, radio and television, online newspapers, online magazines, news blogs and social media.



### Revision Questions

1. What do you understand by the term Civics?
2. Write differences between Civics and Citizenship in your own words.
3. What are three types of citizenship classified in our Constitution?
4. How do we become Bhutan's citizen by registration?
5. Article 6 (3) of our Constitution states citizenship by naturalisation. List down its clauses.
6. Explain media in your own words.
7. What kind of role does media play in promoting civics and citizenship values?





Reprint 2024