

*Bhutan*  
**HISTORY**  
CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION  
— CLASS VIII —



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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## 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Different historians share varied views about historical documents.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

## Buddhism: The Light on the Nation's Path

### Introduction

Since its advent and diffusion in Bhutan, Buddhism has played a fundamental role in shaping the Bhutanese way of life. All aspects of Bhutanese life, including birth ceremonies, social practices, beliefs, rituals, etiquette, languages, literature, medical science, astrology, festivals, folklore, and death rituals, revolve around Buddhism. Time-honoured Buddhist values and principles continue to shape the Bhutanese identity and societal characteristics and guide the nation's path to progress.

Before we explore the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan, we will briefly look at the situation in Bhutan before the advent of Buddhism and the traditions that had been followed during the pre-Buddhist period.

## Pre-Buddhist Traditions

Most early human societies everywhere went through a period during which people worshipped nature and its elements. In this regard, Lord Buddha said:

*To many a refuge do men go when tormented by fear – to sacred mountains and forests, to sacred groves, sacred trees, and shrines.*

Surrounded by hostile environments, early people were threatened by wild animals, food insecurity, injuries or diseases, and lack of control over natural phenomena or calamities. Seeking a sense of security, they took refuge in nature, such as mountains, rocks, forests, trees, lakes. In the process, people worshipped them as living entities or as abodes of non-human forces. This gave them a sense of control over their life. It gave them comfort in good times, courage in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. This belief system is called animism, where the natural world is believed to be animated with spirits.



Figure 1.1. Animistic ritual.

Some societies believed that a special practitioner called a shaman was required to interact with the spirit world. This belief was called shamanism. It was believed that a shaman could move through the spirit world or use spiritual energies for healing and other purposes. Many of these animistic and shamanistic beliefs and practices were later incorporated into the Bon tradition, which is commonly considered to be the indigenous religious tradition of Tibet. The early inhabitants of the

Himalayas, including the people of Bhutan, followed the Bon religion, which was infused with animistic and shamanistic beliefs, for many centuries before the arrival of Buddhism. However, it is important to note that the pre-existing Bon tradition had nothing to do with Tibet's formally organised modern Bon religion.

Animistic and shamanistic Bon religious traditions are generally categorised as *Bon-nag* (Black Bon) and *Bon-kar* (White Bon). In the Bon-nag tradition, animals may be sacrificed to appease deities, while animal sacrifice is not performed in the Bon-kar tradition. Long ago, animal sacrifices of Bon-nag were regularly performed in different regions of our country to appease deities. Later, live animals were largely replaced by statuettes or effigies in line with Buddhist principles after Buddhism came to Bhutan.





Figure 1.2. Shamanistic ritual.

Today, animal sacrifice is found only in a few communities, including those of Lhop and Monpa. In many Bhutanese communities, Bon-kar is widely practised as folk culture and not as a formal religious faith. The practice can be seen in the form of local celebratory rites, rituals, and festivals. Among them are Yak Lhai in Ura,

Bumthang, Kharphu in Mongar, Bonkor in Haa, Chaa in Lhuntse, Chodpa in Zhemgang, and Lhabon in Trongsa. These festivals are performed annually to worship and appease different deities for wellbeing and prosperity. These rituals and festivals have contributed to shaping a range of Bhutanese socio-religious and folk cultures even to the present day.



Figure 1.3. Kharphu in Mongar and Lhabon in Trongsa

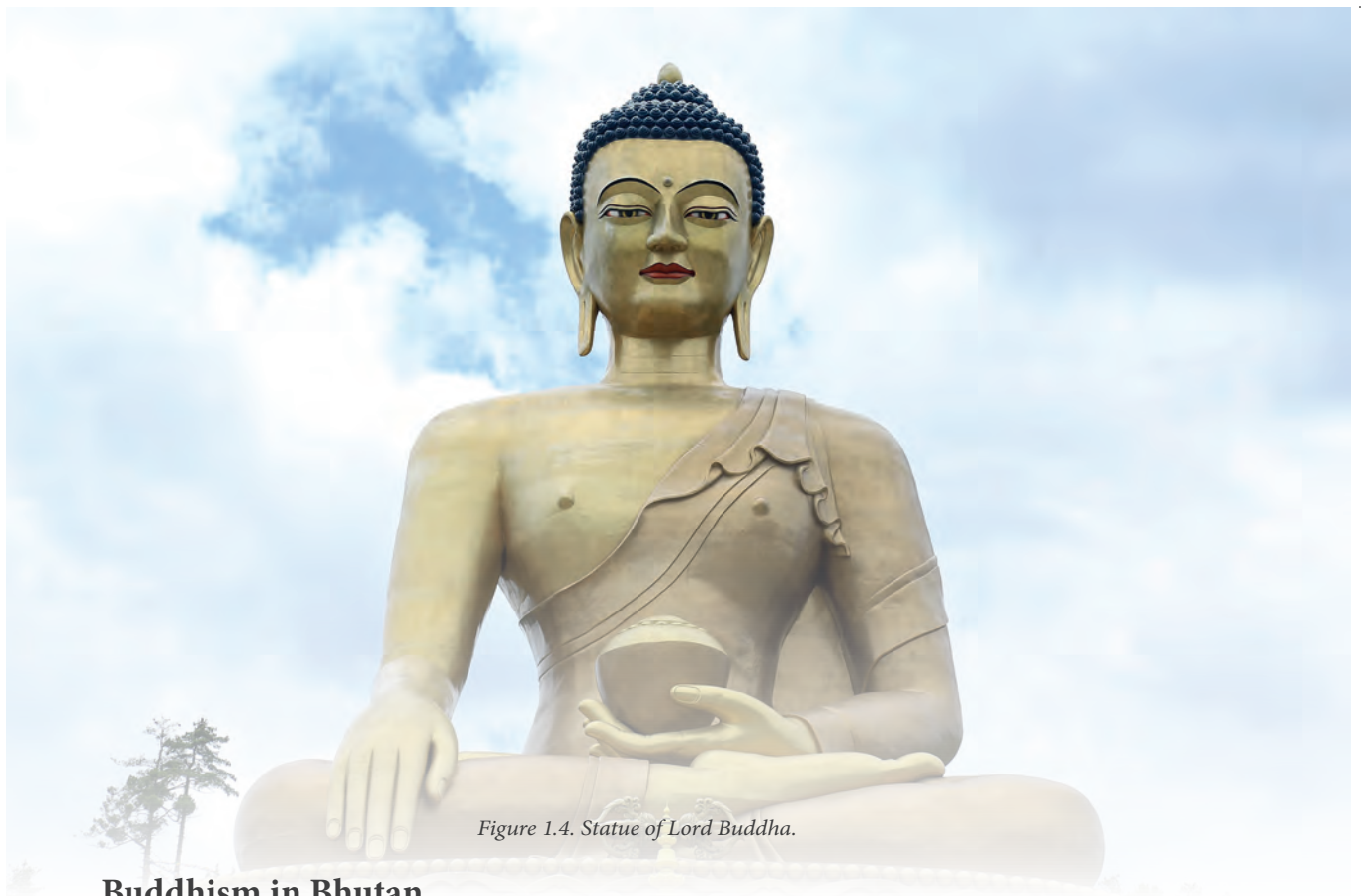


Figure 1.4. Statue of Lord Buddha.

## Buddhism in Bhutan

There are no ancient records indicating Bhutan's connections with India in the south. The early connections with the birthplace of Buddhism remain largely legendary.



Figure 1.5. Prahevajra (Garab Dorje)

Some oral accounts maintain that Bhutan was under the influence of Buddhism as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE through Indian Buddhist masters who meditated in Bhutanese hermitages and travellers and merchants who passed through the valleys on their way to and from Tibet.

For example, Rigdzin Garab Dorje (Prahevajra; traditionally ascribed to 1st century CE), the first human disciple of the primordial Buddha Dorje Sempa (Vajrasattva), was said to have meditated and died at the Danatika River. Rigdzin Garab Dorje was a foremost Dzogchen (Great Perfection) lineage master. His body was believed to have dissolved into rainbow light. Today, religious accounts and scholars identify the place where Rigdzin Garab Dorje dissolved into rainbow light as Riwo or





Figure 1.6. *Vajrasattava (Dorje Sempa)*

that the Buddhist missionary activities had some influence on Bhutan. Although we do not know who had visited the country, Bhutan's cool and serene mountains and ridges, conducive to meditative practices, attracted saints from several religious traditions, including Buddhism. Trade and other communications likely caused the Bhutanese people to come into contact with Buddhism that prevailed in the plains of Assam and Bengal. However, it remains unknown whether early Buddhism had any influence on the lives and belief systems of the Bhutanese people.

Chuwo Dantik, which is located near the Amochu River (Torsa River) some seven kilometres from Phuntsholing town. Today, the place is locally known as Duntim Ney (Duntik sacred site). If Rigdzin Garab Dorje had stayed there, it is likely that his disciple Jampel Shenyen (Manjushrimitra) would also have been with him there. Another version of the account maintains that Garab Dorje dissolved into rainbow light in Jemachu in Bongku.

Buddhism expanded rapidly during the reign of the great patron Emperor Ashoka (273–232 BCE). The religion spread to various parts of India and beyond, towards Central Asia in the west, Tibet, China, and Japan in the north, and Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka in the south and southeast. As Bhutan was near the Mauryan Empire and its renowned Buddhist universities, including Nalanda and Vikramsila, it is possible



Figure 1.7. *Emperor Ashoka (273–232 BCE)*



Figure 1.8. Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang

## The Arrival of Buddhism

### i) Construction of Two Temples

**T**he earliest account of Buddhism in Bhutan is connected to the founding of two famous temples: Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang and Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro. It is widely believed that these two temples were built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo (circa 605-650 CE?), considered the first of the Three Great Dharma Kings of Tibet. He undertook the construction of temples across the Himalayan region through his emanations to subdue a demoness (*sin mo*) believed to be lying supine across the landscape, with her heart located where the Lhasa Jokhang in Tibet stands today.

Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang were part of the more extensive network of temples built by Songtsen Gampo throughout the region. The precisely-located temples were meant to subdue the negative forces – in the form of the demoness – believed to be blocking the propagation of Buddhism. However, it is important to note that the construction of the temples does not mean Tibet's political suzerainty over Bhutan. The temples were built as an act of religious piety. Songtsen Gampo is credited with playing a major role in establishing Buddhism in the Himalayas.

Both Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang can be seen today. They share similar architectural features, such as an open and raised shrine, unlike those seen in present-day temples. The central statue of Jampa Lhakhang is Jowo Jampa (the future Buddha Maitreya) which is flanked by the past and present Buddhas – Marmey Zed (Dipankara Buddha) and Sangay Shakya Thubpa (Shakyamuni Buddha). The statues of eight Jangchub Sempa (bodhisattvas) also appear alongside the main image. In Kyichu Lhakhang, the main





Figure 1.9. Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro

image is Shakyamuni Buddha flanked by his principal disciples, Shariyi Bu (Shariputra) and Maugalyi Bu (Maudgalyayana). The statues of eight Jangchub Sempa surround the main statues.

These two temples are considered to be among the most sacred temples in Bhutan. They occupy an important place in the history of Bhutan due to their antiquity and as touchstones that mark the beginning of Bhutan's historical and religious consciousness. Bhutanese historians usually describe the founding of these two famous temples as the 'first arrival of the light of dharma in Bhutan'.

#### Legendary Narrative:

The legendary narrative *Mani Kabum* shares an account of the construction of Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang. It mentions that one of the consorts of King Songtsen Gampo, the Nepalese princess Bhrikuti (Thritsun), began sponsoring the construction of Buddhist temples in Tibet. In the process, she perceived a demoness whose splayed out form encompassed the whole of Tibet and Bhutan.

Following the astrological advice of another consort, Chinese princess Wencheng (Konjo), King Songtsen Gampo constructed twelve temples centred around Lhasa Jokhang, which was erected on the spot that corresponded to the demoness's heart while others nailed down the demoness's vital points. The four *lhakhangs* constructed on her shoulders and hips in the central regions of the country are known as *Ru-noen* (the horn-suppressor temples). The four *lhakhangs* constructed on her elbows and knees in the border regions are known as *tha-duel* (temples taming the border), and another four built on her feet and hands are known as *yang-duel* (temples taming the area beyond the border). According to this arrangement, Jampa Lhakhang was constructed on the demoness's left knee and Kyichu Lhakhang on her left foot.

## ii) Other Early Temples

Oral accounts maintain that King Songtsen Gampo executed and sponsored the construction of additional temples across the region around the same period, often said to be part of 108 *thaduel* (border taming)-*yangduel* (taming beyond the border) temples. One account says that an emanated form of Songtsen Gampo magically built Lhakhang Karpo and Lhakhang Nagpo (White Temple and Black Temple) in Haa. Another local account says Konchosum Lhakhang in Choekhor, Rinchen Geney Lhakhang in Chumey, Anu Lhakhang in Tang, Namkha Lhakhang in Tang, Khyi-nyal Lhakhang in Lhuntse, Pelnam Lhakhang in Paro, and Phu Lhakhang in Gasa were all built as *thaduel-yangduel* temples. However, *Mani Kabum*, believed by many to be among the earliest narrative sources on *thaduel-yangduel* temples, is silent on Songtsen Gampo's broader temple-building project, although it directly attributes the building of Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang to the king in the dynastic period. Pema Lingpa's treasure text, *Bumthang Dargud Lungten Kunsel Nyingpo*, mentions that on the instruction of Guru Rinpoche, the 37<sup>th</sup> Tibetan King Thrisong Deutsen (790–858 CE) commissioned the building of Konchosum Lhakhang in Choekhor to serve as the central life-vein of Bumthang.



Figure 1.10. Songtsen Gampo

Thrisong Deutsen was the second of the Three Great Dharma Kings of Tibet. Anu Lhakhang in Tang serves as its *thadul* (border taming) temple, and Rinchen Geney Lhakhang in Chumey as its *yangdul* (taming beyond the border) temple. The oral account states that when King Thrisong Deutsen dispatched his minister Bami Thrizher of Yarlung to Bumthang to build the temples, Guru Rinpoche personally provided the structural design for the temples. Later, when the temples were completed, Guru Rinpoche consecrated them. It is prophesied that if one renovates, cares for, and reconsecrates these temples, peace and happiness will descend upon the country. The types of inner objects installed in the temples vary according to the centuries in which they were built. Before the arrival of Guru Rinpoche in

the 8<sup>th</sup> century, temples usually contained the images of either Jowo Shakyamuni Buddha or Maitreya Buddha, flanked by the eight principal Jangchub Sempa as the main inner objects. These temples were usually built on the valley floor like Jampa Lhakhang and



Kyichu Lhakhang. The temples built from the 8<sup>th</sup> century contained either Nampar Nangzed (Vairocana) as part of the five Buddha families or Nampar Nangzed surrounded by the eight principal Jangchub Sempa as the main objects of veneration.

Anu Lhakhang in Tang contains Nampar Nangzed surrounded by the eight principal Jangchub Sempa. Similarly, Rinchen Geney Lhakhang in Chumey and Pelnam Lhakhang in Paro Jangsa contain Nampar Nangzed surrounded by the eight principal Jangchub Sempa as the main objects. So, it may be concluded that these temples were built in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE during the early diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet.

Despite the historical importance of these temples in our country, there is no surviving textual evidence or epigraphic records that reliably attest to their exact founding and history. Myths overshadow the historical facts surrounding their construction. Nevertheless, they are among the oldest religious foundations in Bhutan that could be placed in early diffusion beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Therefore, these temples are considered very sacred for the overall flourishing of Buddha Dharma in Bhutan.

# Guru Rinpoche

## The Patron Saint of Bhutan

### Prophecy and Spiritual Accomplishment

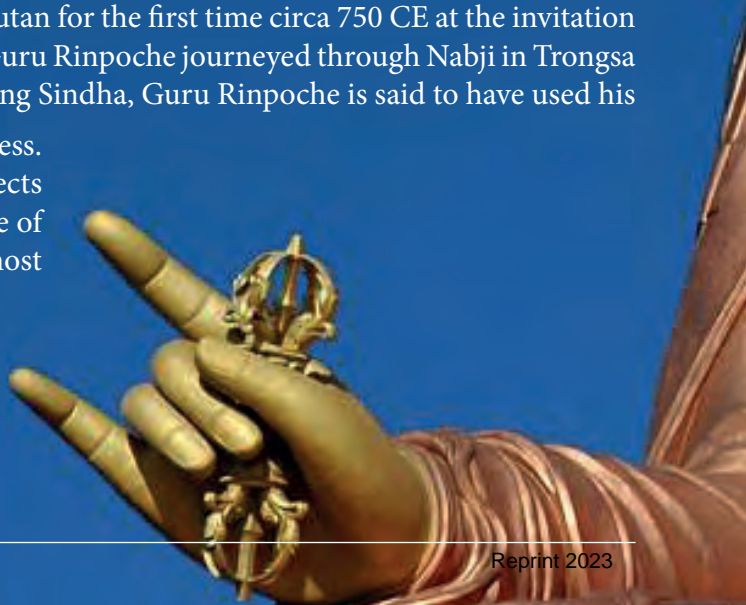
**G**uru Rinpoche, the precious teacher, also known as Padmasambhava (Lotus-born), is said to have been born according to the prophecy of Lord Buddha. The Buddha's prophecy quoted in the *Lamed dondzog duepai gyud* reads:

*Eight years after my passing away (mahaparinirvana) from this world, I will be born as Padma Jungney (Padmasambhava), far more superior than anyone in the world in the land of Oddiyana, and I will be the lord of Tantric Teachings.*

Following the Buddha's prophecy, Guru Rinpoche was born not from a woman's womb but miraculously from a lotus in Dhanakosha Lake, located in the present-day Swat valley of Pakistan. He led an ascetic life of training and accomplishment in tantric Buddhism. He is believed to have achieved incomparable spiritual realisation and was one of the most extraordinary beings in the annals of Buddhist masters. He is believed to have attained powers that enabled him to manifest in different forms wherever and whenever appropriate. He is considered a true manifestation of the enlightened ones in the form of a great tantric practitioner and master. Today, Guru Rinpoche is often called the 'Second Buddha' and is considered, after the Buddha, the most important religious figure in Bhutan and across the Himalayas.

### Guru Rinpoche's Arrival in Bhutan and the Spread of Tantric Buddhism

Although the two earliest temples, Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang, were constructed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, it was not until the arrival of Guru Rinpoche that Buddhism took roots in Bhutan. Guru Rinpoche arrived in Bhutan for the first time circa 750 CE at the invitation of the ailing King Sindha of Bumthang. Guru Rinpoche journeyed through Nabji in Trongsa to Bumthang. Arriving at the court of King Sindha, Guru Rinpoche is said to have used his spiritual power to cure the king's sickness. Shortly after that, the king and his subjects converted to Buddhism. Thus, the people of Bumthang are considered to be the foremost disciples of Guru Rinpoche.







Guru Rinpoche made several subsequent visits to Bhutan in his primary as well as emanative forms. He visited different parts of Bhutan, engaging in tantric practices, giving teachings and blessing hundreds of caves, mountains, lakes and temples as sacred places. Accordingly, Bhutan's religious history mentions:

*Guru Rinpoche had set foot on and blessed all the passes, valleys, mountains, cliffs and lands of the Southern Ravines [Bhutan] without leaving even a patch the size of a horse-hoof untouched.*

Guru Rinpoche meditated in places where evil spirits were believed to be residing. Using his supernatural powers, he alternately tempted, coaxed and tricked them, thereby subduing and converting them under solemn oaths to be the protectors of the Buddhist teachings for all times to come. He removed the harms of all negative forces and rendered the land productive, peaceful and harmonious for spiritual practices. He taught both humans and non-humans so skilfully that many attained realisation and became obedient dharma guardians. Guru Rinpoche is considered the leading light for introducing tantric Buddhism and tantric Buddhist culture in Bhutan. For many Bhutanese, Guru Rinpoche holds the central place in their hearts, which makes many Bhutanese historians claim that Guru Rinpoche is the patron saint of Bhutan.



Figure 1.11. Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava (Lotus-born)

### Origin of Doma Chewing in Bhutan

An oral account has it that when Guru Rinpoche arrived in Bumthang, he found that demons, spirits and local people were eating human flesh, bones and brains, and wearing the skin. Guru Rinpoche subjugated the demons and spirits under solemn oaths. Similarly, the people were made to pledge never to harm each other. To dissuade them from consuming human flesh and blood, he introduced the tradition of chewing doma. Betel leaf symbolises human flesh, betel nut bone, lime the brain, and the resulting red juice symbolises blood. Thus, he blessed these



Figure 1.12. betel leaf, betel nut and lime

substances as substitutes for their cannibalistic diet. He made both male and female inhabitants cut their hair short and bestowed religious vows. He blessed them with the wish that whoever took birth in the land of Mon (Bhutan) in the future will naturally possess the vows without having to receive them.

### Story about Guru's First Arrival

Legend maintains that in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, King Sindha built an iron castle and ruled the kingdom of Bumthang. One day, his kingdom was invaded by another king named Nawoche, who ruled the Duar Plains to the south. Before the ensuing battle outside the iron castle, King Sindha invoked the local deities for their help, but in vain. The forces of Bumthang were defeated, and King Sindha's son, Taglamebar, was killed. The distraught king lost faith in the deities and desecrated and vandalised all the temples dedicated to the deities.

This outraged the chief of the local deities, Shelging Karpo, who snatched the vital life force of the king. Consequently, the king fell seriously ill and was at the point of death. There seemed no way to find a cure. The officials at the royal court held discussions to find an immediate remedy. One of them had heard about the great tantric master Padmasambhava, who was reputed for his miraculous powers, meditating in a cave called Asura in Yangleshey, Nepal.



Figure 1.13. Guru Rinpoche First Arrival

A messenger was immediately dispatched with gifts to invite Padmasambhava to rescue the king.

Accepting the invitation, Padmasambhava travelled via Nabji in Trongsa Dzongkhag to Bumthang, where he assumed eight dancing manifestations to subdue the malevolent deities. As the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava danced, Shelging Karpo peeped out of his hiding in the form of a lion. Padmasambhava transformed himself into the mythical garuda and pounced on him, thus subduing him and binding him by an oath to protect Buddhism. To this day, Shelging Karpo remains the protective deity of Kurje Lhakhang. King Sindha's 'life force' was retrieved and offered back to him. Thus, the king was cured. Subsequently, the king and his subjects were converted to Buddhism and they supported the propagation of the new religion.



### Idea of Beyul and Terma

The term *beyul* appears in various Buddhist texts. Externally, in terms of topography, a *beyul* is a large and beautiful mountain valley encircled by a ring of mountains, cliffs and other natural barriers that are believed to keep away malevolent elements. Internally, a *beyul* is a land sanctified as a sanctuary or refuge, places where Guru Rinpoche deposited various *terma* (treasures) and where peace and serenity abound. They are remote and isolated but pilgrims can sometimes reach them through great hardship. Therefore, these places are called *beyul*, literally meaning the land out of reach of the ordinary but accessible to the fortunate at an appropriate time.



Figure 1.14. *Termas* (treasures)

It is believed that Guru Rinpoche visited the mountain valleys throughout Bhutan and left imprints of his hands, feet and body, and deposited thousands of *terma*. Most of the *terma* were statues, scriptures and other religious objects entrusted to the care of *terdag* or treasure guardians. The treasures were concealed for the benefit of future followers that have drawn Buddhist spiritual seekers for centuries. Some *beyul* are now inhabited, while others are occasionally visited by spiritual seekers and adventurers. Yet, others are still unknown. For example, one of the most renowned *beyul* in our country is the remote Khenpajong in Lhuntse. It can be reached through great hardship, which has prevented most people from making the journey.

*Terma* is hidden and rediscovered for four main reasons: first, the dharma shall not disappear; second, the instructions shall not be adulterated; third, the blessings shall not fade; and fourth, the lineage of the transmission shall not be shortened. The *terma* destined to be rediscovered shall be revealed only by spiritual heirs called *tertonpa* (treasure discoverers) at a preordained auspicious time. Many *tertonpa* have already come and worked in the service of the propagation of Buddhism. Others are expected to come at auspicious times in the future. The activities of *tertonpa* are believed to have ensured the continuity of the Buddhist teachings for many centuries until now.



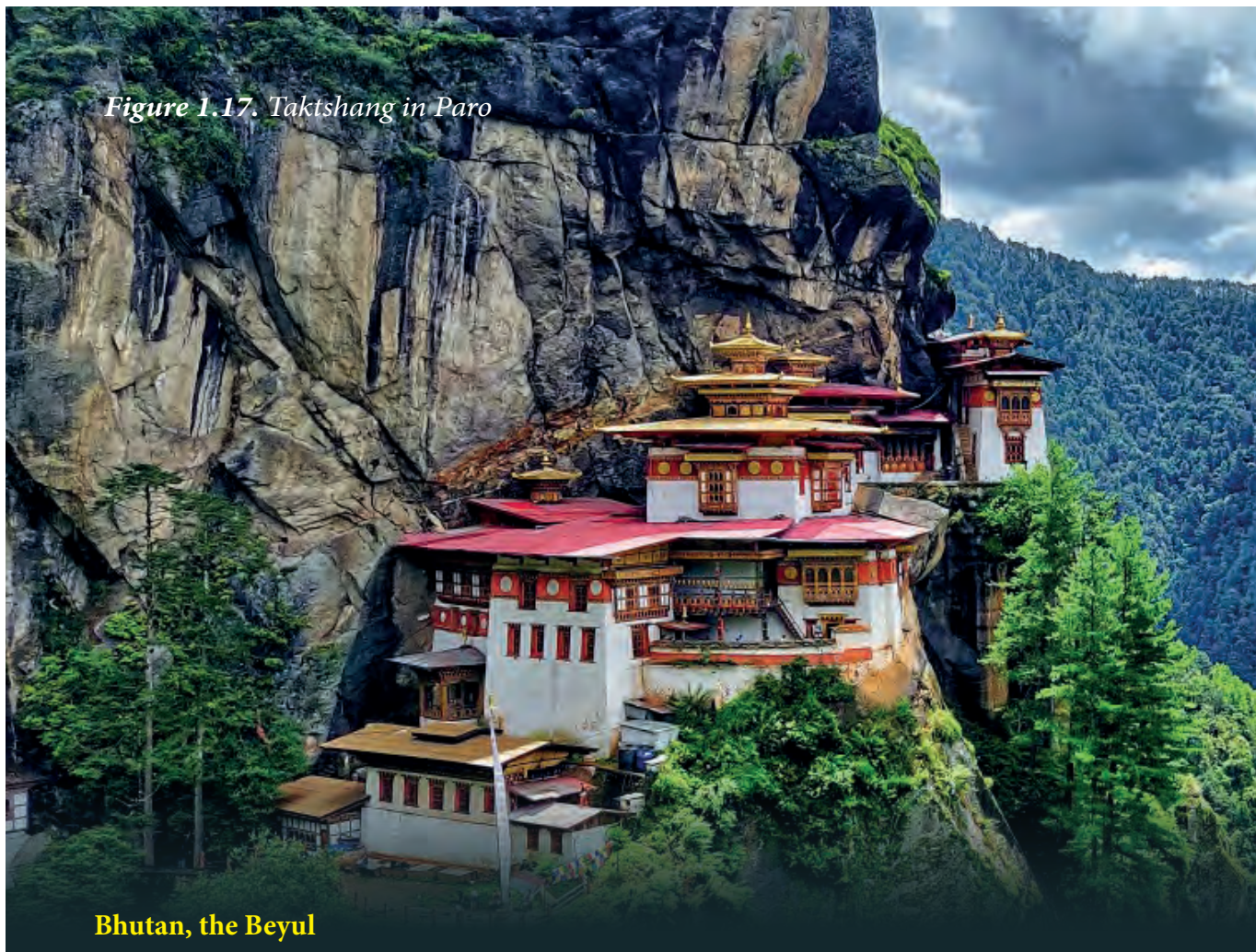
*Figure 1.15. Khenpajong in Lhuentse*



*Figure 1.16. Imprints of Guru Rinpoche*



Figure 1.17. Taktshang in Paro



### Bhutan, the Beyul

Buddhist followers regard Bhutan as an auspicious *beyul* or hidden land. Guru Rinpoche identified hills and mountain valleys in the Himalayas as sacred *beyul* for Buddhism. Bhutan is believed to be among the most sacred and sanctified.

Treasure texts mention that when Tibet was undergoing turbulent times, dharma practitioners of Tibet fled and took refuge in the glorious hidden land of Bhutan.

In terms of topography and the presence of Guru Rinpoche's treasures, Bhutan fits the descriptions and characteristics of *beyul*. For this reason, later Buddhist scholar-saints followed in Guru Rinpoche's footsteps and visited Bhutan throughout history, recognising Bhutan as a *beyul* that received Guru's blessings to find hidden lands and reveal hidden treasures. Given these circumstances, Bhutan's status as a *beyul* stands out as invaluable and sacrosanct in the Himalayas and is accorded a place and importance similar to the heavenly abode of Guru Rinpoche's Abode of Zangdok Palri (the Glorious Copper-coloured Mountain).





### Significance of Sacred Sites

Today, all the places Guru Rinpoche visited are considered foremost for all Bhutanese and are designated as Guru *ney*. They are important places of pilgrimage, worship and meditation. Taktshang in Paro, Kurje in Bumthang, Singye Dzong in Lhuntse, Nabji in Trongsa, Aja Ney in Mongar, and Pemaling in Trashiyangtse are considered hallowed because Guru Rinpoche practised and taught in these places. Such sacred places encourage people to go on a pilgrimage in search of their divine nature. For adherents, travelling as pilgrims in Guru Rinpoche's footsteps is a way of re-igniting his teachings and practices.

Each of these sacred places is of paramount importance to a particular locality as well as to our country. For example, Taktshang is known as the sacred site of the mind (*thuk kyi ney*) of Guru Rinpoche who manifested as the wrathful Guru Dorje Drolo to tame and teach beings. Kurje is the site where Guru Rinpoche left his first body imprint on a rock and where he taught the qualities of the Dzogchen Salwai Melong (Clear Mirror of the Great Perfection). Nabji is the site known as the origin of 'dispute mediation' where Guru Rinpoche mediated a dispute between two warring kings. Aja Ney is where Guru Rinpoche was said to have blessed 100<sup>th</sup> that fortunate followers still see today. Singye Dzong is where Guru Rinpoche manifested as Vajrakilaya (Dorje Phurbu) to teach beings. It is known as



the sacred site of Activities of Guru Rinpoche (*thrinley kyi ney*). Pemaling is considered a sanctified and pure sacred site. Among the numerous sites associated with Guru Rinpoche, this is the only one whose name includes the suffix 'ling'. So, each site is known for its special blessings and purpose.



Figure 1.18. Nabji in Trongsa and Kurje in Bumthang



Figure 1.19. Aja Ney in Mongar and Singye Dzong in Lhuentse



Figure 1.20. Taktshang in Paro and Pemaling in Trashiyangtse

## Buddhist Traditions

All the Buddhist schools established in Bhutan had their origins in Tibet. Historical records of Buddhism in Bhutan following the visit of Guru Rinpoche is not documented well. In Tibet, Buddhism almost disappeared upon persecution by the anti-Buddhist King Langdarma (reign: 838-842 CE). With the support of some surviving pockets in western Tibet and through the great effort of monks who survived Langdarma's persecution, Buddhism slowly began to revive in Tibet in the 11th century after more than seventy years. Buddhism thrived at the end of the 11th century and in the beginning of the 12th century. The period from the 7th century to the end of the 10th century is known in Tibetan history as the 'period of the Early Diffusion of Buddhism'. The teachings translated during that period were known as Ngag Nyingma (old tantras). The period from the 11th century onwards is known as the 'Later Diffusion of Buddhism'. The teachings translated during this period were known as Ngag Sarma (new tantras).

With the revival of Buddhism, many learned individuals emerged, and different Buddhist schools and lineages were founded based on their teachings. This gave rise to four main schools – Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyu, and Sakya. These major schools further split into many sub-schools and minor traditions, each having its own socio-religious tradition, philosophical views, teacher lineages, monastic institutions, classes of literature and a set of tutelary duties. However, all of them belong to Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism, teaching the same truths according to the same transmitted words of the Buddha. They differ only in outward methods based on their lines of transmissions, core texts and essential practices.



*Figure 1.21. Statue of King Langdarma (reign: 838–842 CE)*



## **Arrival of Buddhist Traditions in Bhutan**

Once the positions of their schools were secure in Tibet, Tibetan spiritual masters showed great interest in carrying out religious activities in the other Himalayan regions. Bhutan was regarded as a suitable field of conversion and activities for different traditions. Since that time, regular visits of Tibetan Buddhist teachers from different schools to Bhutan began. They founded monasteries and gathered followers. Many Tibetan religious personages were either attracted to Bhutan by the great pilgrimage and sacred sites of Guru Rinpoche or local patrons and recognition. Others sought the seclusion of the valleys of Bhutan to escape the turmoil of Tibetan politics, often caused by rivalries between different schools of Buddhism.

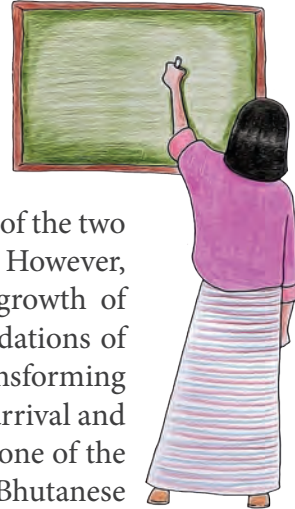
Between the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bhutan had no centralised authority. Therefore, it was easy for Tibetan Buddhist missionaries to settle and gather influence. From the 11th century onwards, the history of Bhutan is closely linked with the arrival of different Buddhist schools. Among the Buddhist schools that found their way into Bhutan were the Nyingma sub-schools, namely Kathog and Dzogchen; Kagyu and its offshoots, namely Lhapa, Drukpa, Barawa, and Kamsang; Sakya; and Geluk offshoots, namely Nenyungpa and Shingtpa. The masters of these traditions exerted varying degrees of influence in Bhutan, depending on the status of their patrons. Many of them played important roles in shaping the divergent socio-religious lives of the Bhutanese people.

Of all the Buddhist schools that came to Bhutan, none had a more pervasive influence on the socio-religious lives of the Bhutanese people than Nyingma and Drukpa Kagyu. The activities of their masters brought about the spiritual and cultural advancement of Bhutan. Hence, these two schools took firm roots in Bhutan. The minor traditions were either integrated into Nyingma or Drukpa Kagyu, or disappeared altogether. With Buddhism firmly established throughout the country, the people's belief systems changed from Bon animistic and shamanistic orientations to Buddhism. Their way of thinking became aligned with Buddhist values and principles. Today, the Drukpa Kagyu tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism is the state religion of Bhutan.

## Conclusion

The spread of Buddhism in Bhutan was a gradual and steady process that took place over the centuries. Bhutan was believed to have been under Buddhist influence since the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, but there seemed to have been no significant impact on the Bhutanese way of life in the early phase.

The lasting impact of Buddhism came with the construction of the two famous temples, Jampa Lhakhang and Kyichu Lhakhang. However, it was only after the arrival of Guru Rinpoche that the growth of Buddhism took a new turn. It was then that the firm foundations of tantric Buddhism and tantric Buddhist culture were laid, transforming Bhutan into a beyul or hidden land. Subsequently, with the arrival and rise of Buddhist schools in our country, Buddhism became one of the most important and unifying forces that have sustained the Bhutanese people and contributed to the evolution of our unique cultural and religious traditions and the growth of their distinctive national identity.









*Figure 2.1. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.*

# Chapter Two

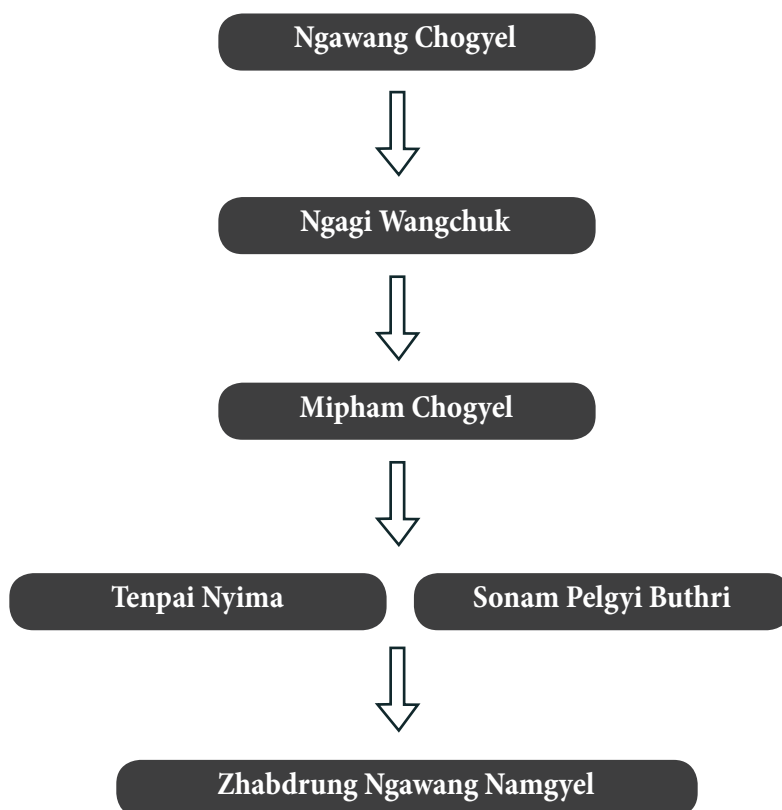
## Choegyal Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal: The Architect of the Nation State PaldenDruk

### Childhood and Education

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was born in central Tibet to father Mipham Tenpai Nyima, who belonged to the Gya lineage. Tenpai Nyima was the 16<sup>th</sup> seat holder of Druk Ralung monastery of Drukpa Kagyu School. His mother was Sonam Palgyi Buthri, a daughter of Kyisho Depa, the governor of Lhasa, a rising noble family. He was born in the Wood Horse year, CE 1594, at Gardrong of Druk Jangchubling when his father was 28.

Several auspicious signs marked his conception and birth. Zhabdrung was born as an exceptional child. His father named him Ngawang Tenzin Namgyal and his grandfather named him Mipham Tenzin Namgyal.

Zhabdrung began his education at a very early age of four. He studied under Lhawang Lodroe, a senior scholar and master astrologer at Druk Ralung, and Tagtsewa Padkar Wangpo, besides learning from his father and grandfather. As he took Genyen Dampa or lay Buddhist vows at the age of eight, he was given a long name, Ngawang Jigme Dragpa Chog Thamchedlay Nampar Gyalwa. However, following the prophesied name Ngagi Wangpo Nampar Gyalwai Dhey by Kunkhen Pema Karpo (1527-1592), a great scholarly master of Drukpa school, the name Ngawang Namgyal was mostly used as a shortened form of all the names. Around that time, the 24<sup>th</sup> Sakya Thrizin conferred him the name Zhabdrung, meaning 'at whose feet one submits', as a title of high-ranking noble figure. After that, he was widely known as Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. At the age of thirteen, he was enthroned as the holder of the seat of Druk Ralung monastery, succeeding his grandfather Mipham Chogyal.



**Figure 2.2.** Family tree of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal



## Dispute over Incarnation of Kunkhen Pema Karpo

As Zhabdrung was growing up, the controversy over the incarnation of the great master of Drukpa lineage, Kunkhen Pema Karpo, was brewing. Even as Zhabdrung was recognised as the incarnation of Kunkhen Pema Karpo, another child named Pagsam Wangpo born to the governor of Chongye province, was claimed to be the incarnation of the same master. Many high-ranking monks of Druk Ralung and other Drukpa monasteries strongly believed that Zhabdrung was the true incarnation of Kunkhen Pema Karpo.

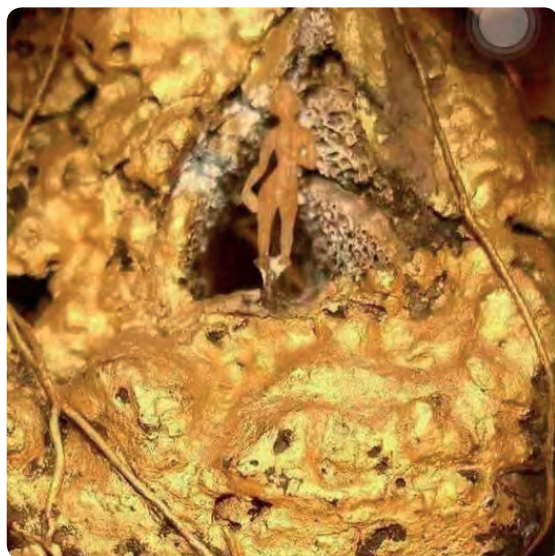


*Figure 2.3. Kuenkhen Pema Karpo*

However, others, including Lhatsewa Ngawang Zangpo, one of the foremost disciples and attendants of Pema Karpo, supported the claim of Pagsam Wangpo as the true incarnation of the great master. This split the Drukpa Kagyu School into two factions refuting each other's claim.

When Zhabdrung was enthroned as the seat holder of Ralung, solidifying the claim of Pema Karpo's incarnation, many Bhutanese patrons were in Ralung offering their respect and veneration. On the other side, Pagsam Wangpo was enthroned as the incarnation of Pema Karpo at Tashi Thongmoen Monastery in CE 1597.

Attempts by intermediaries to settle the dispute between the two parties in around CE 1605 did not succeed. When the dispute prolonged without a settlement, Pagsam Wangpo's father turned to Tsangpa ruler Phuntsho Namgyal to resolve the dispute in about CE 1610. That created a rift between Zhabdrung and Tsangpa ruler. The hostility between the two became worse after a reconciliation meeting at Tsangpa ruler's Zhegatse Palace in CE 1614 failed. Tsangpa ruler was 29 and Zhabdrung, 21 when they met for the last time.



*Figure 2.4. Rangjungkharsapani*

The relationship between the two continued to worsen due to several incidents. The worst happened when the Tsangpa ruler charged Zhabdrung with homicide for killing two attendants of Lhodrag Pawo Tsuglag, a Karma Kagyu Lama. The killing happened in a brawl at a ferry crossing. Zhabdrung and his attendants were returning to Ralung from Tsang. At the ferry crossing, Lhodrag Pawo Tsuglag and his men were in a hurry. So, they dragged Zhabdrung out of the boat. This enraged Zhabdrung's attendants and a fight broke

out between the two groups. Two of Lhodrag Pawo Tsuglag's attendants were killed in the fight. When Zhabdrung refuted the charge, the Tsangpa ruler accused Zhabdrung of disobeying his order and demanded that he surrender all the important relics of Druk Ralung, including Rangjung Kharsapani, the self-arisen image of Chenrezig Kharsapani on Drogon Tsangpa Gyarey's vertebra. Zhabdrung refused to surrender the relics, invoking the protection of his deity Mahakala. The invocation resulted in Lhatsewa Ngawang Zangpo's death from stroke, and the governor of Chongye stabbed himself to death. Several bad omens surrounded the Tsangpa ruler. He had to conduct repulsion and protection rites.



## Turning the Horse Southward

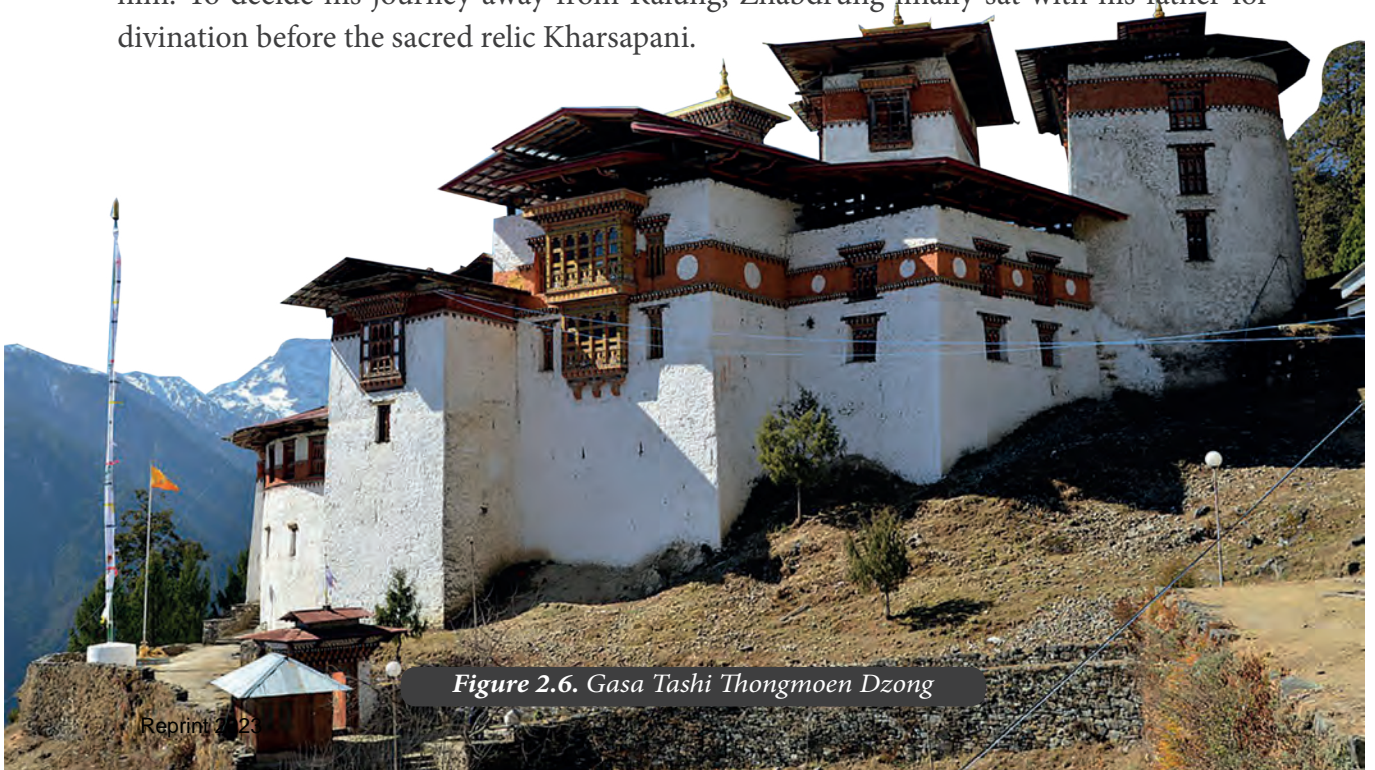
As his rivalry with the Tsangpa ruler grew bitter, Zhabdrung was forced to think of alternative ways to settle the prolonged dispute for good. He contemplated going to Mongolia for support. However, he had many Bhutanese patrons and disciples in Ralung loyal to him. Sithar, a Bhutanese patron from Goen, Gasa, happened to be in Ralung at the time. He suggested fleeing to the south when he came to know about Zhabdrung's plan. That night, Zhabdrung had a dream in which a raven led him to a place in the south.



*Figure 2.5. Raven*

It was considered a prophetic dream. The raven was interpreted as Laygoen Jarog Dongchen, the raven-headed Mahakala, inviting Zhabdrung to the south. At the same time, Zhabdrung received a letter from Goen Obtsho Lam Druk Namgyal, inviting him to the south to avoid his adversary in Tibet.

Around the same time, Zhabdrung also received information from a close associate working in the court of the Tsangpa ruler that an imminent attack was being planned to eliminate him. To decide his journey away from Ralung, Zhabdrung finally sat with his father for divination before the sacred relic Kharsapani.



*Figure 2.6. Gasa Tashi Thongmoen Dzong*



*Figure 2.7. Pangri Zampa monastery*

The divination confirmed his destiny to the south. Having chosen to head south, some thirty Bhutanese monks, including Tenzin Drukgyal, prepared to accompany Zhabdrung. Tenzin Drukgyal was from the family of Goen Obtsho, the descendants of Druptshob Terkhungpa, a trusted Bhutanese associate of Zhabdrung who later became the first Druk Desi. Zhabdrung fled to the south in CE 1616 at the age of 23 under cover of darkness.

When Zhabdrung and his entourage crossed the border into the south, they were welcomed in Goen by the monks and armies of Obtsho Lam Druk Namgyal, who were accompanied by Laya Yendzong Choje and his subjects. They were hosted by the family of Obtsho Lam in Goen with a grand reception. From there, Zhabdrung headed to Thimphu through Lingzhi. Along the way, he blessed many devotees and named several places. When he arrived in the Pangri Zampa monastery established by his ancestor Ngawang Chogyal, he remembered the place as the one he saw in his dream. This was the place the raven led him to in his dream.





Figure 2.8. *Lam Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo*  
(1184-1251)

### Home away from Home

The southern state was well-prepared to welcome Zhabdrung by then. Several ancestors of Zhabdrung had already visited Bhutan and had established several monasteries and family establishments. Lam Ngawang Chogyal (1465-1540) had several monasteries in Bhutan. His son Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk (1517-1554), the great-great-grandfather of Zhabdrung, also founded several small monastic temples later replaced by *dzongs*. Zhabdrung's father, Tenpai Nyima, the son of Mipham Chogyal (1543-1604), had also visited central Bhutan and founded several monastic centres. This is why Druk Ralung in Tibet already had several Bhutanese monks and patrons. Mipham Chogyal was the son of Ngagi Wangchuk.

Besides, Lam Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo (1184-1251) had firmly established the root of Drukpa Kagyu School of Buddhism in Bhutan after he arrived in CE 1222. His five sons further expanded the domain of Drukpa School in Bhutan, strengthening the foundation of Drukpa Kagyu in the Southern Land. These establishments proved critical to Zhabdrung's escape to Bhutan and his success right from his arrival in Bhutan.

Bhutan being home to many well-established Drukpa Kagyu masters, ancestors and patrons, it was a home away from home for Zhabdrung. He enjoyed full support and hospitality wherever he visited. While in Pangri Zampa, many local patrons of western Bhutan came to see him. Lam Tshewang Tenzin of Tango, the descendent of Lam Drukpa Kunley, and Changangkha Choje, the descendant of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo, were among the key figures to welcome Zhabdrung, offering their support at all times. While visiting Paro, the descendants of Drungdrung and Zarchen Choje received Zhabdrung and offered their respect and support. Zhabdrung was thus already popular in Bhutan. His visit to different places increased his support base at the grassroots in the form of patrons and followers.

Zhabdrung visited Drukpa establishments across western Bhutan – in Paro, Haa, Punakha, Wangdue, and Thimphu. He built on this support base and laid a firm foundation to unify the Southern Land into a state we now call Bhutan.





# Chapter Three

## Dzong: The Faithful Sentinels of the Land



### Dzong

*Dzong* is a Dzongkha and classical Tibetan term for a massive protective enclosure, a fort or fortress. Therefore, the term *dzong* can sometimes refer to massive rock enclosures such as *drag-dzong*, the rock fort and massive forest enclosures such as *nag-dzong*, the forest fort. In general, *dzong* can be understood as a massive fort or fortress, either natural or human-made.

The *dzong* we are going to discuss in this chapter is the human-made forts and fortresses. Forts are the built structures for defence, while fortresses are massive structures with defensive enclosures to protect a community. Fortresses in Bhutan are of two types, namely fortified monasteries and palaces and castles.

The major *dzongs* in Bhutan, used as district headquarters today, are examples of fortified monastic *dzongs*. However, Wangdue Choling Dzong in Bumthang and Kunga Rabten in Trongsa are the palace *dzongs*. Fortified structures such as Drapham Dzong in Chokhor, Bumthang, which are in ruins today, are perfect examples of castle *dzong*.

## Emergence of Dzong System in Bhutan



*Figure 3.1. Statue of Nyoe Gelwang Lhanagpa*

The tradition of dzong in Bhutan began after the construction of the first fortified monastic dzong in Chelkha on the northern border of Paro by Nyo Gyalwa Lhanangpa (CE 1160-1224), a Drigung Kagyu master.

This monastic dzong, commonly known as Chelkha Dzong, was built towards the end of the 12th century in CE 1194. It started the first monastic community in Bhutan, which later came to be known as Lhapa Kagyu because this Kagyu school was then propagated by the people of Lhasa and arrived in Bhutan through Phari. Later, the Lhapa monastic school expanded the reach further down from Chelkha to Paro and Thimphu and built a few more dzongs to spread its dominion over the region.



*Figure 3.2. Ruins of Chelkha Dzong*

Before Chelkha Dzong was built, there were mostly palaces, castles or mansions known as khar and phodrang. Therefore, the dzong system is understood to have first begun by Nyo Gyalwa Lhanangpa through the establishment of Chelkha monastic dzong for the first time in the territory of Bhutan.

It is notable that after a brief beginning in the early 13th century, the system of dzong did not sustain after Lhapa Kagyu School lost its dominance to Drukpa Kagyu School since the arrival of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo to Bhutan in CE 1222. The system of dzong, however, resumed with the vigour of expansion and development in Bhutan after the arrival of

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in CE 1616. Zhabdrung introduced the dual system of a spiritual and secular purpose, taking the system of dzong to a different level.

The standing dzongs of Bhutan we see today result from Zhabdrung's efforts in integrating the disintegrated regions into a state of rule and order under one ruler. As he consolidated different regions into a nation state, he constructed several fortified monasteries known as dzong at strategic locations not only to institute monastic schools but, more importantly, to wield power, rule and unify the country.

The strategic aim of dzongs built by Zhabdrung with the dual purpose – as centres of monastic and secular administration – in his greater project resulted in the formation of an independent country of Bhutan. His project is known as the unification process, which was an initiative to unify the country under one rule and spread Drukpa Kagyu School's dominance across the region.

As Zhabdrung's unification of Bhutan expanded from the western region to the east, the system of dzongs flourished across the region. His trusted appointees assisted him. Today, Bhutan has at least a dzong at every regional centre, which is still used as the centre of the dual system of secular and spiritual order. This tradition established by Zhabdrung in the 17<sup>th</sup> century continues to grow both in its architecture and purpose in modern times.



## Architecture of Dzong



Figure 3.3. Choekhor Rabten Tse Dzong



Figure 3.4. Inside Trongsa Dzong

*Dzongs* are an architectural masterpiece of Bhutan that continues to evolve over time and inspires architectural trends for new building structures. They are massive masonry structures with elaborate wooden architectural designs traditionally built with local materials, mainly stone, wood and mud. Alien materials such as metallic nails are rarely used in the construction of *dzongs*, unlike in today's construction culture.

The layout of the *dzong* is mostly square or rectangular with the fortification of structural walls. *Dzongs* always have courtyards within the enclosure surrounded by residential units known as *drasha* for monks. Another part of *dzongs* is administrative units in the secular block used by court officials in the past and district administrative officials today. Major units within the complex include a *dukhang*, also known as *kuenra*, the main assembly hall of the monks and several temples known as *lhakhangs*. The most important structure is the central tower, known as the *utse*, which is taller than rest of the structures and is at the centre of the complex.

## Dzongs in Different Periods and their Location

The *dzongs* in Bhutan can be chronologically categorised into early medieval *dzongs*, medieval *dzongs*, and modern *dzongs*.

Early medieval *dzongs* were built before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They are of two types – monastic dzongs and castle palaces. Chelkha Dzong built by Nyo Gyalwa Lhanangpa at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Bamey Tokha Dzong, Jathel Dzong and Dho-ngoan Dzong in Paro and Thimphu, respectively in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, are early medieval monastic *dzongs*. They are monastic fortresses built to expand religious dominion. From the early medieval monastic *dzongs*, only Dho-ngoan Dzong stands in the form of Dechen Phodrang monastery in Thimphu.

Some of the *dzongs* built during the early medieval period are castle dzongs. The examples of early medieval castle *dzongs* are Drapham Dzong in Bumthang and Zhongkhar Dzong in Mongar built by local ruling lords before the arrival of Zhabdrung as fortified palaces of the rulers. The two *dzongs* are believed to have been built in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century respectively. Both are in ruins today.



Figure 3.5. Do-Ngoan Dzong built in 13th Century.





*Figure 3.6. Ruins of Zhongar Dzong in Mongar*



*Figure 3.7. Punakha Dzong built in 17th Century.*



After the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in CE 1616 in Bhutan, many more *dzongs* were built at regional centres to unify the country for the expansion of both monastic and secular power and at borders for defence and communication. The *dzongs* built during the period of unification and feudalistic temporal rule, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, can be classified as medieval *dzongs*. There are at least eleven major regional *dzongs*, sometimes known as Chogi Dzongchen built during the medieval period. The major regional *dzongs* are identified as five major western *dzongs* and seven major eastern *dzongs*. Apart from Semtokha Dzong, which has never been a district centre, and Trashi Yangtse Dzong, which was shifted to a new location in 1997, these *dzongs* are district centres even today. The *dzongs* underwent architectural changes and expansion over the years.

Similarly, several defence forts were built during the medieval period known as Chogi Satsham Sungwai Dzong, the *dzongs* built to defend regional borders. These *dzongs* were built for border defence. Smaller border posts are sometimes known as *Dradzong*. The border forts served as the first line of defence against enemies at the borders and as points to monitor travellers, oversee tax collections, and as points for interaction and communication with neighbouring states, such as Sikkim, British India, and Tibet. Darling Dzong and Tendung Dzong in Samtse, Damsang Dzong in Haa, Dewangiri Dzong in Samdrup Jongkhar, Tashi Thongmon Dzong, now the administrative centre of Gasa district, and Drukgyal Dzong in Paro are all regional defence forts built during the medieval period.

Wandgue Choling Dzong in Bumthang built by Jigme Namgyal is the only medieval palace built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the first royal palace in the history of Bhutan.



Figure 3.8. Drugyel Dzong, Paro



Figure 3.9. Gasa Tashi Thongmoen Dzong

The system of *dzongs* continues to grow and evolve with time. New *dzongs* are being constructed in several districts, which did not have a medieval *dzong* for district administration. Haa Dzong is the first modern *dzong*, followed by Chukha Dzong and Pema Gatshel Dzong, which is still under construction. There are also a few palace dzongs, such as Domkhar Dzong in Bumthang and Kunga Rabten in Trongsa built by the second Druk Gyalpo as the royal palaces. These palaces also served as the centre of governance from where His Majesty ran the affairs of the state.



Figure 3.10. Wandgüe Choeling dzong



## Role of Different Officials

Before the institution of monarchy was established, Zhabdrung was the supreme leader and head of the state. Under his rule, an appointee known as *Druk Desi*, the regent, oversaw political affairs and state administration. Another key appointee is *Zhung Dronyer*, the state chief of protocol. The personal chamberlain to *Druk Desi* was known as *Gongzim*. After *Druk Desi*, the next in rank were the three regional governors known as the *Ponlop Namsum* or *Chila Namsum* – Paro Ponlop, the regional governor of the west; Daga Ponlop, the regional governor of the central south; and Trongsa Ponlop, the regional governor of the east. Three *dzongpons* of Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang were directly under *Druk Desi*.

Of the three *ponlops*, Trongsa Ponlop was the most powerful ruler overseeing the administration of the whole of the east. The districts he administered included Trashigang, Lhuntse, Trashi Yangtse, Zhongar (present-day Mongar), Jakar, Zhemgang and Dungsam, which include parts of present-day Samdrup Jongkhar and Pemagatshel. All of these districts were administered by a *dzongpon*, except for Dungsam, which was administered by a *drungpa*, a sub-district administrator. All of them reported to Trongsa Ponlop. All the major *dzongs* had a *drongyer*, the chief of protocol; a *zimpon*, the chamberlain, and *nyerchen*, the chief treasurer to assist *ponlops* and *dzongpons* in their daily affairs, besides several lower-ranking officials within blocks and sub-blocks.

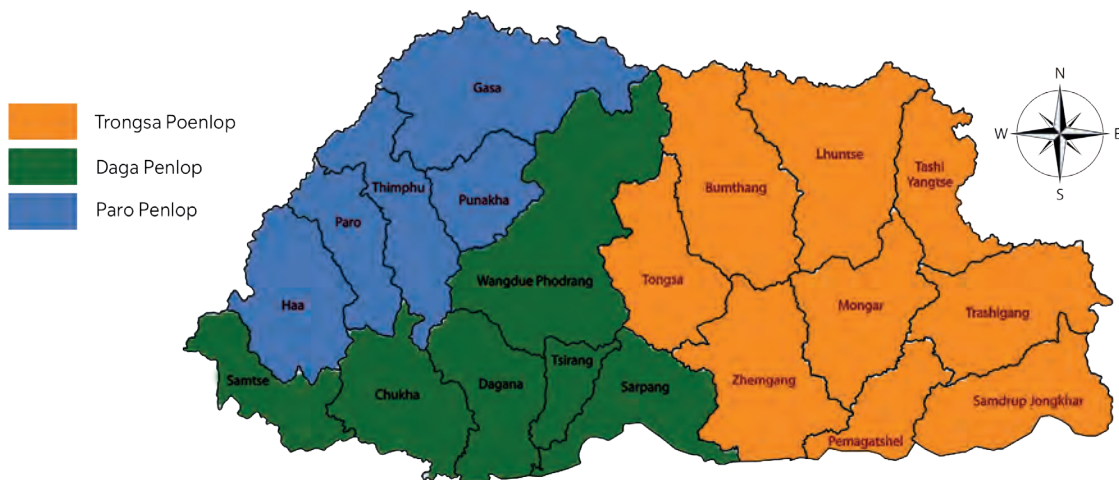


Figure 3.11. The jurisdiction of Paro Ponlop, Daga Ponlop and Trongsa Ponlop over different regions of Bhutan.

To oversee religious and spiritual affairs of the state, Zhabdrung appointed *Je Khenpo*, the chief abbot of the state religion. *Je Khenpo* was assisted by *Lopon Zhip*, the four spiritual masters. Today, Zhung Dratshang has five lopons. A *lam* was appointed at every major state monastery and a Lam Neten in each district monastic centre known as *rabdey*, housed in the *dzongs*. The monastic system remains almost the same.

It must be noted that, after the death of Zhabdrung was revealed, the seat of Zhabdrung was held by a temporary substitute known as Lama Thripa for some time as the Gyaltsab. The first Lama Thripa was Gyalsey Tenzin Rabgye, who ascended the throne in CE 1667.

As the medieval secular system gave way to a modern one, the officials and their roles changed too, particularly since the enthronement of the first Druk Gyalpo in 1907. More changes took place in the secular system of Bhutan when the country adopted parliamentary democracy in 2008. This system is called democratic constitutional monarchy.

His Majesty the King is the head of the state under which is the elected government headed by the Prime Minister. The government oversees the executive matters through ten ministries headed by a minister each who is assisted by a bureaucrat in the position of secretary. Each ministry has several departments headed by an executive head in the position of director or director general. In today's system, the district centres in the *dzongs*



Figure 3.12. Gyalsey Tenzin Rabgye



are headed by *dzongdag*, who is the district chief executive officer. Offices of all the ten ministries and other state bodies are stationed in the *dzongs*. *Dzongrab*, the deputy district executive officer, is the second in command in the *dzongs*.

Before the institution of monarchy, the primary role of the officials in the *dzongs* was to oversee law and order and coordinate the collection and delivery of annual taxes to the centre. Today, officials working with the sectors representing the ministries and departments implement policies and plans, and undertake and monitor developmental activities in the communities.





# Chapter Four

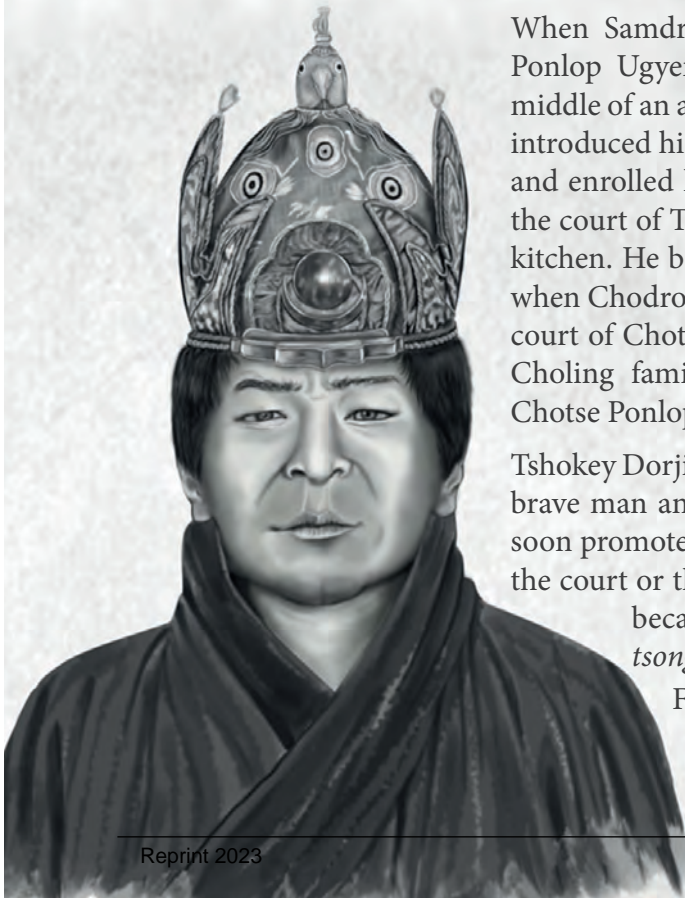
## Jigme Namgyal

### Introduction

When Samdrup arrived in Trongsa in CE 1843, Chotse Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho of Tamzhing Choje was in the middle of an archery game. Samdrup bowed before him and introduced himself to the ponlop. The ponlop accepted him and enrolled him as a *tozey*, the lowest-ranking retainer at the court of Trongsa with access to food from the common kitchen. He became a *zimgarp*, an attendant to the ponlop, when Chodron Wangchen Dorji, the chief of protocol at the court of Chotse, also known as Tshokey Dorji from Ugyen Choling family, succeeded Ugyen Phuntsho as the 16<sup>th</sup> Chotse Ponlop.

Tshokey Dorji had recognised Samdrup as an intelligent and brave man and was among his favourite retainers. He was soon promoted to the post of a *zimnang*, an inner official of the court or the assistant to the chamberlain. And soon, he became *darpon*, the chief of attendants, and then *tsongpon*, the merchant of Chotse.

Five years after he joined the court at the lowest



of the ranks, he became chozim or chotse zimpon, the chamberlain of Chotse in CE 1848. Upon becoming the chamberlain, he was also entrusted the position of Lhuntse Dzongpon. While on his way to Lhuntse after taking up the post of Lhuntse Dzongpon, he met for the first time his destined spiritual master Lama Jangchub Tsonдру in Bumthang, who would later become his most trusted spiritual advisor and master.

### Lama Jangchub Tsonдру the Root Teacher



Figure 4.1. Lam Jangchub Tsonдру

Lama Jangchub Tsonдру was born in Olkha in Tsang valley of Tibet in CE 1817. He was born to father Tandin Wangyal and mother Dorji Dolma. He began his education as a child at a small Gelugpa monastery. However, he later mastered the philosophy and practice of Kagyu and Nyingma schools besides the Gelug tradition.

Lama Jangchub Tsonдру first visited Bhutan after meeting with a trader from Paro at Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Tibet. Wishing to meet a qualified Kagyu master in Bhutan as convinced by the trader, he travelled through Phari to Paro. Paro Ponlop Tsulthrim Tharchin was the first Bhutanese to host him while in Paro. He then went to Gorina monastery to meet with the 25<sup>th</sup> Je Khenpo Sherub Gyeltshen, who hosted him as his student and gave Kagyu teachings. Since then, he visited Bhutan several times.

On his third visit to Bhutan, he came to Bumthang from Lhalung monastery crossing Monla Karchung pass. The family of Tamzhing hosted him in Bumthang, where he met with the 15<sup>th</sup> Trongsa Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho, who became his first lay patron in Bhutan.

On his fourth visit to Bhutan in CE 1849, too, he came via Monla Karchung to Bumthang. He was hosted at Tashi Peling in Bumthang, a family manor of Jakar Dung. At Tashi Peling, Lama Jangchub Tsonдру conducted a ritual of long-life empowerment for a gathering. It was said that although it was time for empowerment, he waited by reciting auspicious prayers until Jigme Namgyal showed up. This marked their first meeting, after which Jigme Namgyal always followed Lama Jangchub Tsonдру for spiritual guidance and teachings.



Lama Jangchub Tsondru then visited Trongsa for the first time at the invitation of Ponlop Tshokey Dorji. In Trongsa, he was said to have indicated that Jigme Namgyal would succeed to the throne of Chotse Ponlop. Returning from Trongsa, he spent time in Kurje in meditation. When Jigme Namgyal visited Lama Jangchub in Kurje around the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of Iron Dog year, CE 1850, he received the teachings on the practice of horse-headed deity Tandrin. The teaching was given following a prophecy that said that the sun of peace would shine in the country if Jigme Namgyal received the teachings of the deity Tandrin. It is likely that he received the name Sherub Drimed from the lama as his religious name on that day.



Figure 4.2. 25<sup>th</sup> Jekhenpo Sherub Gyeltshen



Figure 4.3. Raven headed helmet for Jigme Namgyal, which became the sample for the crowns of the Bhutanese monarchy.

With a close bond of master-disciple relationship, Lama Jangchub Tsondru offered various teachings and empowerments of deities important for Jigme Namgyal's future. He was also responsible for designing the raven-headed helmet for Jigme Namgyal, which became the prototype for the crowns of the Bhutanese monarchs. The lama died at the age of 39 in Trongsa Tadzong in the Fire Dragon year CE 1856. His funeral was conducted at Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang.



## Legacy as Chotse Zimpon

As *chozim*, the chamberlain to Trongsa Ponlop, Jigme Namgyal's popularity grew as a man of exceptional intelligence, leadership qualities, bravery and strength. One of the highlights of his legacy as the chamberlain to Chotse Ponlop was his first encounter with the western officials in Punakha when he led and supervised the workers from the east during the renovation of Punakha Dzong in CE 1849.

As a huge number of workers and their leaders gathered in Punakha, the workers often competed in sports of strength. In most of them, Jigme Namgyal came out the winner. As these games represented regional supremacy, a silent regional tension was building up as the western officials were looking for small excuses to provoke a contest between the regions in an attempt to suppress Jigme Namgyal. But none could beat him.



Figure 4.4. Choezim Jigme Namgyel saving the life of Trongsa Poenlop.



Figure 4.5. Jigme Namgyal saving the life of Trongsa Poenlop

However, the political plot to suppress the power of Trongsa and its team from the east grew only bigger. While celebrating the completion of the *dzong* renovation, the western officials plotted to kill Trongsa Ponlop at the archery range. But the plot was thwarted by Jigme Namgyal's vigilance.

The last attempt was made when Trongsa Ponlop was taking leave from the chamber of Druk Desi inside the *dzong*. Jigme Namgyal remained alert, sensing an imminent threat to his ponlop. When he saw that the western officials encircled his ponlop in an attempt to assassinate him, he rushed from behind the door and bravely shielded him. He escorted the ponlop out with one hand while the other hand held his sword, ready to be used.

In recognition of his bravery and loyalty, Trongsa Ponlop Tshokey Dorji promised to appoint Jigme Namgyal as Trongsa Ponlop on his retirement, although his son, then the chief of protocol at the Trongsa court, was next in line for the post.

### **Reunification of Sharchog Khorlo Tsibgye**

In CE 1850, after successful representation of Chotse in Punakha, Jigme Namgyal was promoted to the post of *chodron*, the chief of protocol, at the court of Chotse. His predecessor, Chodron Tsonдру Gyaltshen, the son of Ponlop Tshokey Dorji, was appointed Jakar Dzongpon.

Around that time, the *dzongpons* of Trashigang, Zhongar and Dungsam rebelled against Trongsa, exercising independent power over their regions. The situation had the potential to fragment the eastern region once again. The new *chodron* was entrusted to bring the rebellion in the east under control. He marched with his troops to the east and suppressed the rebellious *dzongpons*. The whole of the eastern region, including Zhemgang and Jakar, were once again brought under the direct control of Trongsa Ponlop, ensuring a firm unification of the eastern region for the last time. This reunification of eastern Bhutan led by Jigme Namgyal was most likely the final phase of unification, laying a firm foundation for the Bhutanese nationhood.

However, the internal strife for power among political ranks continued. In CE 1850, when Zhabtrul Jigme Norbu was enthroned as Druk Desi in Thimphu, Wangdue Dzongpon Chagpa Sangay appointed himself Druk Desi in Punakha. On the central monastic body's request for support, Jigme Namgyal, assisted by his two brothers, led troops from Trongsa to Punakha in CE 1851. A most feared strongman, Tapon Migthoe, who led the troops for Chagpa Sangay, was killed in an ambush, leading to the defeat of Chagpa Sangay.

Having brought rebellion and internal strife under control, he earned the heroic name Jigme Namgyal, meaning 'complete victory without fear'. Later, Jigme Namgyal settled several similar political issues at the centre as Trongsa Ponlop using both force and diplomacy.





*Figure 4.6. Jigme Namgyel assisted by his two brothers lead troops from Trongsa to Punakha in CE 1851*

## Significance of Trongsa Ponlop to Jigme Namgyal

As promised in CE 1853, Jigme Namgyal succeeded Tshokey Dorji as the 17<sup>th</sup> Chotse Ponlop on the condition that he would relinquish the position to Tshokey Dorji's son Tsonдру Gyaltshen after three years. At around that year, he married Ashi Pema Choki, the daughter of former Chotse Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho, from the Tamzhing family.

By that time, Jigme Namgyal had established his power and leadership in the political community of Bhutan. That achievement was even more significant than becoming Druk Desi because Trongsa held dominion over major parts of the country. The administrative dominion over the eastern region, including Zhemgang and Bumthang, made Trongsa the centre of authority over more than half of the country. Therefore, besides his personal strength of leadership, bravery and intelligence, the position of Chotse Ponlop strengthened his power and authority to a great extent.

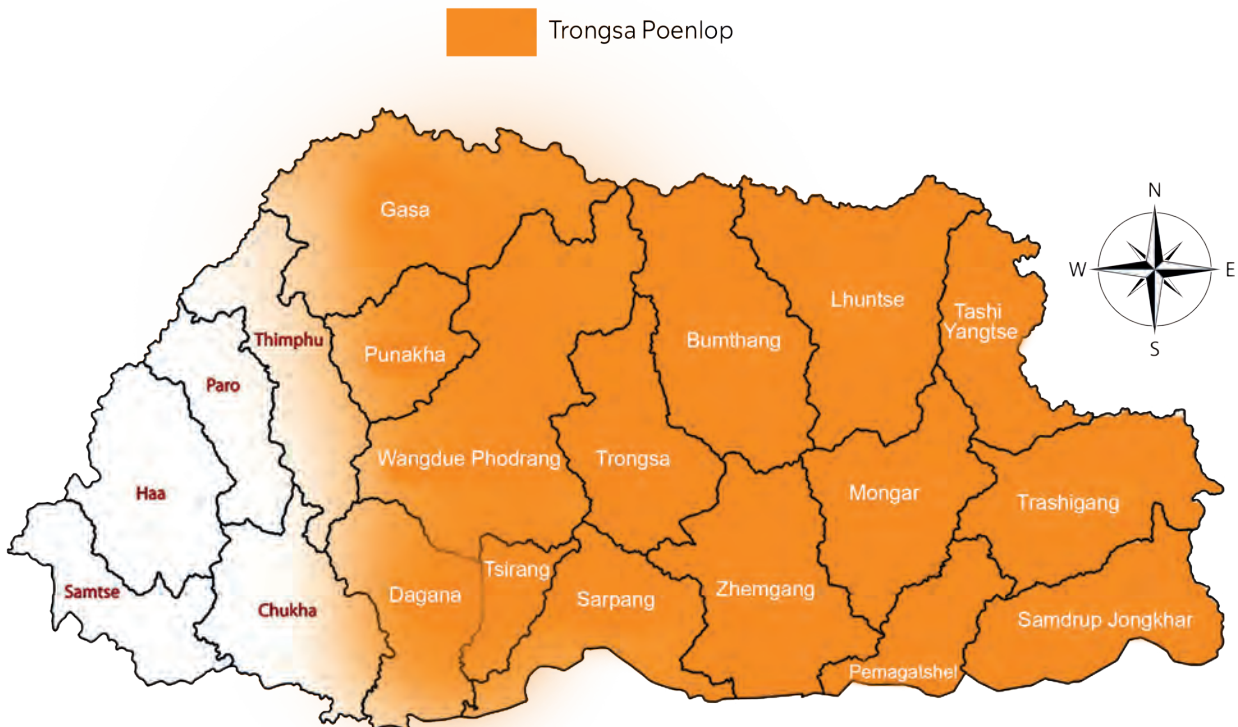


Figure 4.7. Map of Bhutan showing the jurisdiction of the Trongsa Poenlop Jigme Namgyel

By now, Jigme Namgyal had become the most sought-after leader to settle internal strife at the centre even as he firmly managed and administered the eastern region. In CE 1854, he successfully settled the dispute between Thimphu Dzongpon Uma Dewa and Wangdue Dzongpon Kunga Palden over the installation of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Druk Desi. His successful diplomacy was rewarded with the centre giving him complete power over the eastern region, including the power to appoint the *dzongpons*. He was also allowed to keep the annual compensation paid by British India for occupied Assam Duars.



## Significance of Trongsa Ponlop to Jigme Namgyal

As promised in CE 1853, Jigme Namgyal succeeded Tshokey Dorji as the 10<sup>th</sup> Chotse Ponlop on the condition that he would relinquish the position to Tshokey Dorji's son Tsonдру Gyaltshe after three years. At around that year, he married Ashi Pema Choki, the daughter of former Chotse Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho, from the Tamzhing family.

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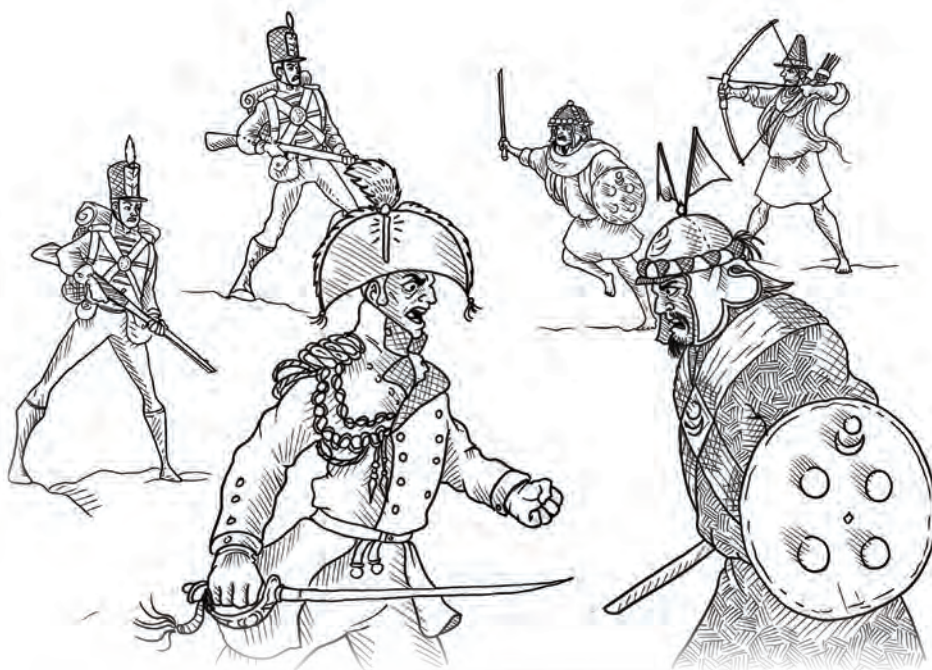


Figure 4.8. Duar War

In CE 1857, a conflict arose between Jigme Namgyal and Jakar Dzongpon Tsonдру Gyaltshe because Jigme Namgyal refused to keep the promise to pass on the post of Trongsa Ponlop to Tsonдру Gyaltshe. However, with peaceful mediation by the clergy of the central monastic body led by Je Yonten Gyaltshe, Tsonдру Gyaltshe was promoted to the post of Jakar Ponlop, and Jigme Namgyal retained his post of Trongsa Ponlop. The two later became great supporters of each other. Again, in CE 1862, when a dispute arose between Punakha Dzongpon Darlung Tobgay and Desi Nagzi Pasang, Jigme Namgyal joined force with Jakar Ponlop, who was behind Punakha Dzongpon. Jigme Namgyal replaced Nagzi Pasang with Tshewang Sithar as the 48<sup>th</sup> Druk Desi while Darlung Tobgay was granted his wish to become Wangdue Dzongpon. This event also elevated his position among the western officials, earning respect and regard for his authority.

Let us not forget that with his authority over the eastern part of the southern duars, Jigme Namgyal played several important roles in dealing with British India as the foremost political figure. One notable role he played was bringing all the country's leaders together to defend against the British invasion during the duar war in CE 1865. Jigme Namgyal led the troops in Dewathang. His relentless effort to take over the Bengal duars led to the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula on 11 November of the same year.



*Figure 4.9. Signing the Treaty of Sinchula.*

Jigme Namgyal served as Trongsa Ponlop for 14 years, the longest till then, until he retired at Wangdue Choling in CE 1867 after installing his elder brother Dungkar Gyaltshe as his successor.



## Becoming 51<sup>st</sup> Druk Desi

In CE 1869, when the parties of Punakha Dzongpon Drang Tashi and former Wangdue Dzongpon Sigay were in conflict with Thimphu Dzongpon Kawang Mangkhel and Wangdue Dzongpon Darlung Tobgay, Jigme Namgyal was requested to support Punakha Dzongpon Drang Tashi and his party to fight against the troops of Darlung Tobgay who had installed Kawang Mangkhel as Thimphu Dzongpon after killing Khesar Tobgay.



Figure 4.10. Desi Jigme Namgyel.

Jigme Namgyal joined Punakha Dzongpon Drang Tashi's men from his retirement and put an end to Darlung Tobgay and his nephew at Wangdue Phodrang using the brutal tactics of setting Tashi Chodzung on fire. On Jigme Namgyal's arrival in Thimphu, Kawang Mangkhel stepped down from the post of Thimphu Dzongpon in favour of his brother Lam Tshewang in a peaceful settlement. The following year in CE 1870, recognising Jigme Namgyal as the undisputed leader, the central monastic body, the *dzongpons* and the *ponlops* unanimously appointed him as the 51<sup>st</sup> Druk Desi. While on the throne of Druk Desi, Jigme Namgyal successfully suppressed a brief rebellion from Paro Ponlop Tshewang Norbu in CE 1872. He restored Tashi Chodzung damaged by fire in the previous year. It was during his time as Druk Desi that Colonel Graham completed the southern border demarcation.

The conflicts at the frontiers decreased during his time as Druk Desi. In CE 1873, he stepped down from the post of Druk Desi and retired in Semtokha Dzong. He appointed his cousin, Chamberlain Ketshelpa Dorji Namgyal, as the next *desi*. Jigme Namgyal, however, remained active in the background. He was responsible for bringing an uprising of western leaders under control against Desi Ketshelpa Dorji Namgyal alongside his son Ugyen Wangchuck. This brought the whole nation under his control yet again, even without holding an official post. Jigme Namgyal died in CE 1881 at Semtokha Dzong.

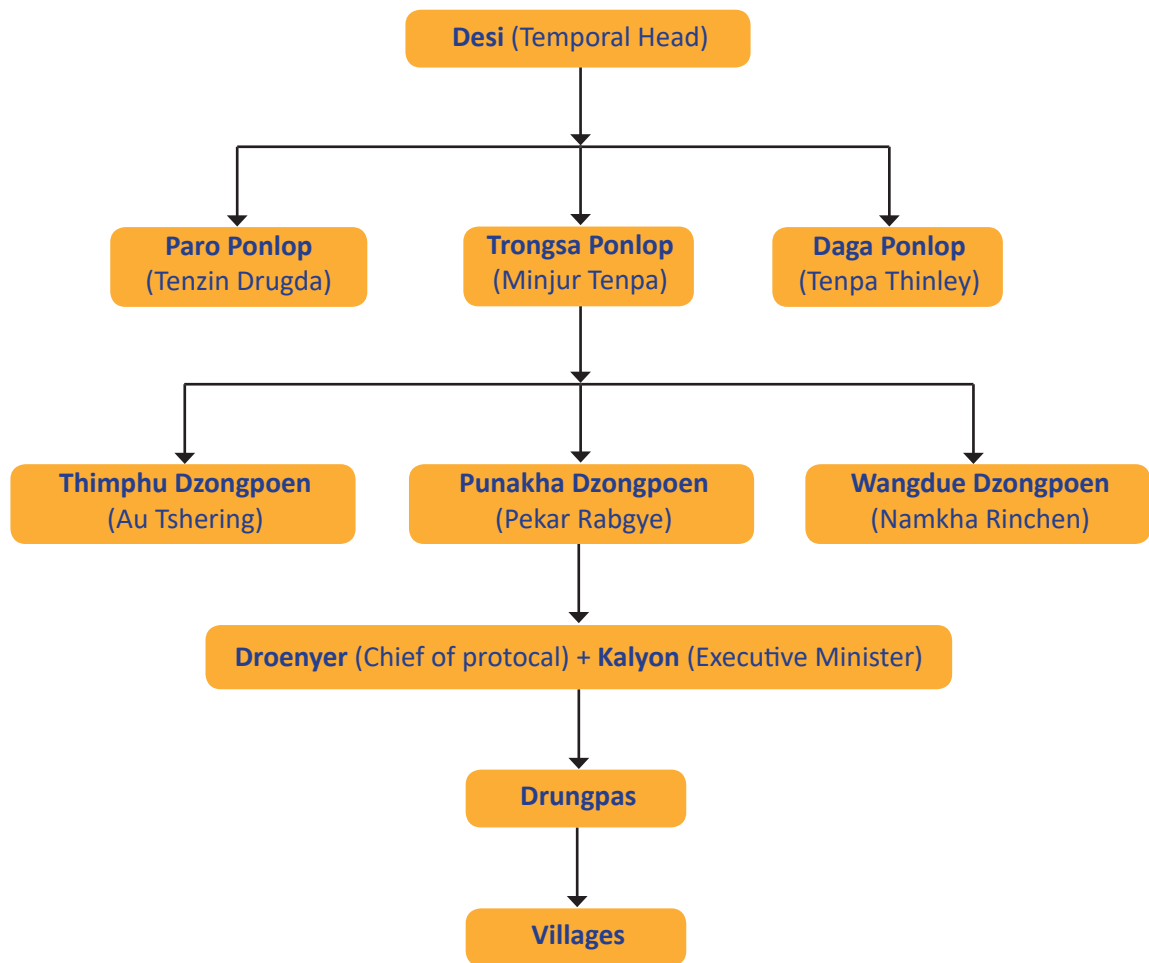


Figure: 4.11. Insert an organizational structure of government under Desi Jigme Namgyal.

We now know that, since his appointment to the post of Chotse Ponlop, Jigme Namgyal grew more powerful and stronger, effectively laying the foundation for a stable nation that we now call Bhutan. His unchallenged leadership as Chotse Ponlop continued until his death, exercising the same power and authority throughout his life with or without an official position. In this way, he paved the way for his son as his successor who would later emerge as the unifying force to begin a new era for Bhutan. Jigme Namgyal's stable and peaceful leadership for the nation as Chotse Ponlop was significant in the establishment of Bhutan's hereditary monarchy.



ཡུལ་གྱི་མོན་པར་བཞུགས་པའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་ཕྱི་ལོ།

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# Chapter Five

## Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck: The Father of the Foundation of Modern Bhutan



### Childhood and Education

In around CE 1855, Lama Jangchub Tsonдру sent to Jigme Namgyal from Tibet a mule whose colour matched the colour of deity Palden Lhamo's riding horse through a person called Jawla.

The lama invoked deity Palden Lhamo to protect the family of Jigme Namgyal. The mule was sent with an auspicious omen to bear a good son to Jigme Namgyal. Following this event, Jigme Namgyal's wife Ashi Pema Choki, the daughter of former Trongsa Ponlop Ugyen Phuntsho of the Tamzhing Choje family, was gifted with two sons.

In CE 1856, Jigme Namgyal's first son, Thinley Tobgay, was born. He became a monk and later briefly served as Wangdue Dzongpon. The second son, Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck, the first hereditary king of Bhutan, was born in the Water Dog year, CE 1862, in the Wangdue Choling Palace.

Ugyen Wangchuck learned reading and writing early from his uncle, the eighth Peling Sungtrul Kunzang Dechen Dorji.

*Figure 5.1: Druk Gyalpo  
Ugyen Wangchuck*

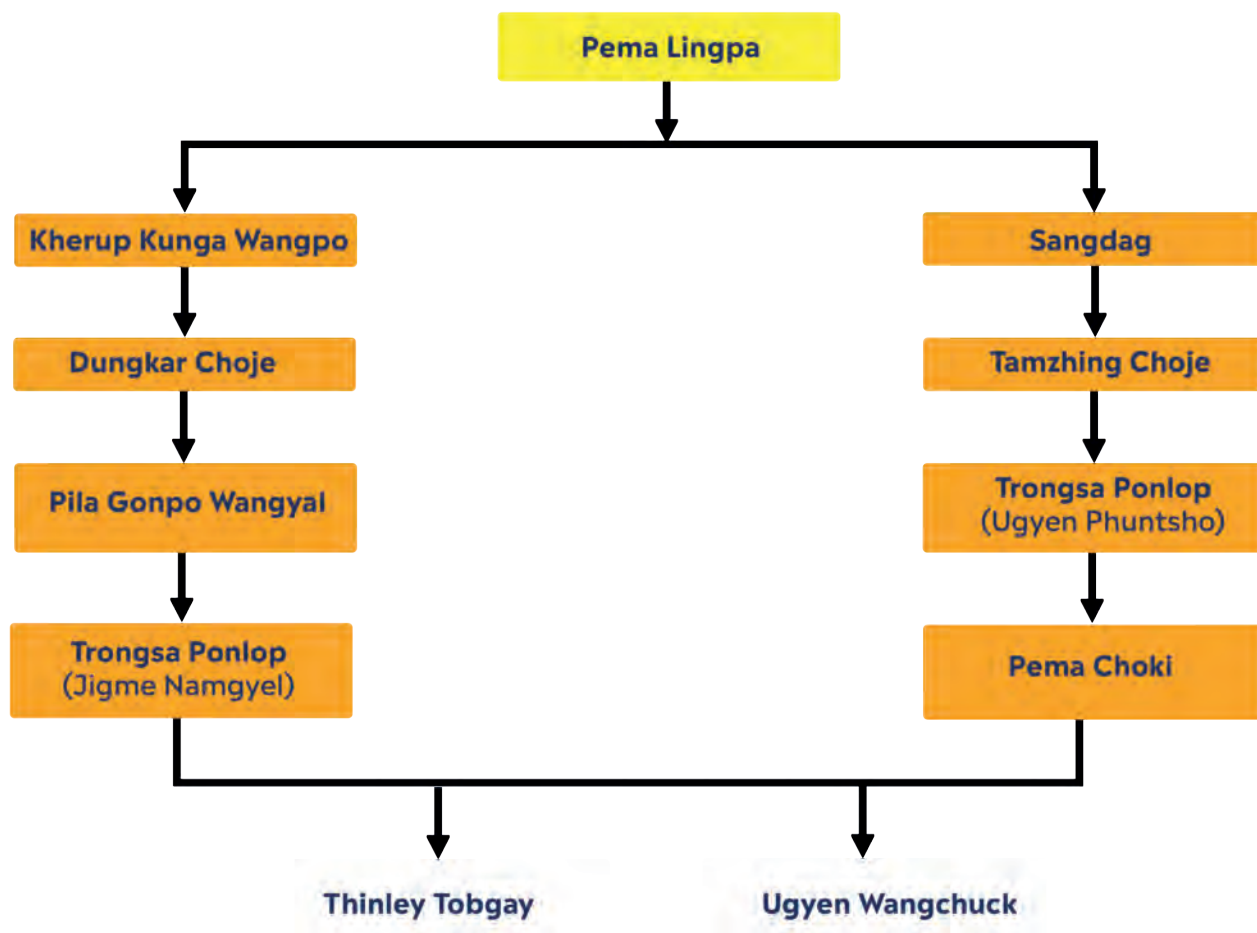


Figure 5.2: The family tree of Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck

Like his father, Ugyen Wangchuck began his life at his father's court serving at the lowest ranks as a *tozey*. He gradually joined outdoor attendants as a *zimgar* and indoor attendants as a *changarp*, working in the fields and collecting firewood. He was never given any special privilege as a son of Jigme Namgyal.

Through rigorous grooming and training, Ugyen Wangchuck climbed the ladder of his career with the knowledge and skills required for statesmanship since his childhood.

## Emergence of Young Ugyen Wangchuck

Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck began playing an active role in the political affairs of the state at a very young age. In CE 1869, Punakha Dzongpon Ngedup joined a rebellion started by Paro Ponlop Tshewang Norbu in CE 1862. Ugyen Wangchuck fought for the first time at the age of 14 in CE 1876 alongside his father, who launched an armed campaign to suppress the rebellion. Desi Ketshepa Dorji Namgyal, Phuntsho Dorji, and Thimphu Dzongpon Lam Tshewang joined the campaign. The party managed to take over the watchtower of Paro.

Dzongpon Ngedup, in a coup, appointed his own Druk Desi and Gongzim, the chamberlain to Druk Desi, in Punakha, the winter capital. Jigme Namgyal had to march towards Punakha in CE 1877, leaving behind Ugyen Wangchuck and Phuntsho Dorji at Paro Tadzong. When Jigme Namgyal was away, former Punakha Dzongpon Damcho Rinchen, whom Jigme Namgyal ousted, took Ugyen Wangchuck hostage in Paro. Jigme Namgyal, in turn, took Damcho Rinchen's family hostage and secured the release of Ugyen Wangchuck. In the following year, Ugyen Wangchuck was appointed Paro Ponlop at the age of sixteen. Two years after his appointment to the post, his father died in Semtokha.



*Figure 5.3: Ugyen Wangchuck as Paro Poenlop*



## **Building on the Legacy of his Father**

After his father's death, the responsibility to continue the legacy of his father fell on the shoulders of young Ugyen Wangchuck. Embracing the new era that required new methods for peace and advancement, Ugyen Wangchuck walked in his father's footsteps and adopted a new way of accommodation and reconciliation. He often forgave and accommodated many rivals, who had previously turned against him and his father. However, where required, he used full force in his power to ensure the suppression of rivals and rebellion.

The first of such actions after his father's death was when he had to deal with Dronsop Sengay Namgyal, who killed his uncle, Trongsa Ponlop Pema Tenzin, in CE 1882. Dronsop Sengay Namgyal plotted the assassination with two equally disgruntled courtiers, Chumeb Wangayla and Mangdeb Dendup, who had been terminated from the court of Pema Tenzin. After assassinating Pema Tenzin in Jakar Dzong, Dronsop Sengay Namgyal took the post of Trongsa Ponlop for himself. In revenge, Ugyen Wangchuck launched an attack on Sengay Namgyal in Jakar Dzong but his troops failed to defeat the army of Sengay Namgyal. Then, Ugyen Wangchuck hatched a plan to subdue Sengay Namgyal and his accomplices with the help of his mother.

Ashi Pema Choki convinced Sengay Namgyal into negotiation, promising Ugyen Wangchuck's acceptance of peace and reconciliation. Ugyen Wangchuck was supposed to return to Paro to continue to hold the post of Paro Ponlop, while Sengay Namgyal was to continue to hold the post of Trongsa Ponlop. In the middle of enjoying the reconciliation party inside Jakar Dzong, Ugyen Wangchuck and his men killed Sengay Namgyal and his accomplices. Their hearts, heads, and hands were buried on the bank of Chamkhar Chu over which a stupa was built to mark the suppression and sealing of all adversaries. A ritual of suppression and consecration of the stupa was performed by his uncle, the eighth Peling Sungrul Rinpoche.

With the post of Trongsa Ponlop vacant now, Ugyen Wangchuck assumed the post of Trongsa Ponlop in early CE 1884. He also became the chamberlain to Druk Desi at the same time. His brother Thinlay Tobgay was installed as Paro Ponlop while also holding the post of Wangdue Dzongpon. However, as his brother died soon after this appointment, Ugyen Wangchuck appointed Jampa as Wangdue Dzongpon and his cousin Dawa Penjor to the post of Paro Ponlop. Dawa Penjor, in the past, defected with his uncle Dungkar Gyaltsen and fought against his other uncle, Jigme Namgyal. This is one of the several pardons Ugyen Wangchuck granted in his reconciliatory approach to peacebuilding.

## Battle of Changlingmithang: End of Internal Strife

Soon after assuming the post of Trongsa Ponlop, Ugyen Wangchuck married Rinchen Pemo, the daughter of Pema Tenzin, while his sister Choden married Jakar Dzungpon Chimi Dorji, the son of Pema Tenzin. Historians say this cross-cousin marriage laid the foundation for the future royal family, stabilising power and authority through a solidified union. After bearing two daughters, Rinchen Pemo died in CE 1900. Two years after her death, Ugyen Wangchuck married Ashi Tsonдру Lhamo, also known as Ashi Lemo, from Khoma, daughter of Wangdue Dzungpon Kunzang Thinley, in CE 1901.

While things were apparently stabilising, Ugyen Wangchuck's otherwise best friends, Thimphu Dzungpon Alu Dorji and Punakha Dzungpon Phuntsho Dorji, were plotting against him. When the 56<sup>th</sup> Druk Desi, Lam Tshewang, died in CE 1884, Alu Dorji installed Gawa Zangpo, a monk, to the post of Druk Desi and his brother as the chamberlain to the *desi* without the knowledge of Ugyen Wangchuck. In a separate incident, Phuntsho Dorji married Ugyen Wangchuck's lover, Dechen Zangmo, and Alu Dorji married Dechen Zangmo's sister. These marriages brought Alu Dorji and Phuntsho Dorji closer in partnership to overthrow Trongsa Ponlop Ugyen Wangchuck. The next bold step the two took was bribing the chief of protocol of Trongsa to assassinate Ugyen Wangchuck, who instead alerted the *ponlop* to the threat.

In the face of such indications of rebellion from the two, Ugyen Wangchuck approached the situation sensibly and carefully. Ignoring the threats, he first invited his two friends to a meeting in Sha, Wangdue. When the two refused to show up, he was convinced that the two old friends were seriously against him, which would disrupt the peace and stability of the country. In CE 1885, Ugyen Wangchuck offered prayers in major temples in Bumthang and Trongsa, entreating the deities to support the right side, whichever that may be. He then marched with his troops to Punakha. Paro Ponlop, Wangdue Dzungpon and most of the *dzongpons* of the eastern region supported him. On the other side were the 57<sup>th</sup> Druk Desi, the chamberlain to the *desi*, *dzongpons* of Gasa and Lingzhi, led by Alu Dorji, Phuntsho Dorji, and former president Dzungpon Damcho Rinchen, who Phuntsho Dorji's uncle.

After fighting for two days at Zomphakha and Jiligang, Ugyen Wangchuck's forces took over Punakha Dzong. The enemy troops retreated to Thimphu. Following the enemies to Thimphu, Ugyen Wangchuck's troops captured Semtokha Dzong, which then became their base. The following day, the two parties fought at Lungtenphu, where Ugyen Wangchuck's troops killed two formidable warriors from the enemy ranks and won the battle. Following this defeat of Alu Dorji and Phuntsho Dorji's camp, the clergy convinced both sides to negotiate.

The meeting for negotiations was arranged at Changlingmithang. Ugyen Wangchuck's party offered to serve lunch for the gathering. Paro Ponlop Dawa Penjor represented Ugyen Wangchuck, while Phuntsho Dorji represented the other side at the negotiation table. The negotiation fell apart when Wangdue's chief of protocol, Ugyen Dorji, attempted to kill Phuntsho Dorji with a strike of his sword. But Phuntsho Dorji managed to strike back but Ugyen Dorji was hit with the back edge of his sword. In the meantime, Dawa Penjor and other companions joined Ugyen Dorji and killed Phuntsho Dorji.



*Figure 5.4: Alu Dorji appointing a new Desi and his brother as Chamberlain to the new Desi*



*Alu Dorji and Phuntsho Dorji bribing chief of protocol of Trongsa to assassinate Ugyen Wangchuck.*



*Ugyen Wangchuck waiting for the two Dzongpoens at Sha in Wangdi for meeting and two Dzongpoens failure to come for meeting*





Figure 5.5: The Battle of Changlimithang

Fierce fighting broke out between the two sides. Ugyen Wangchuck joined the battle. At one point, when his troops were beginning to be overwhelmed by the enemy troops, Ugyen Wangchuck fought with bravery, killing a dozen of them singlehandedly. This boosted the morale of his troops, which led to the defeat Alu Dorji's side. Thimphu Dzungpon Alu Dorji and his collaborators fled to Tibet. The captured enemy troops were thoroughly humiliated and demoralised to ensure that they never joined such plots in the future.

That was a decisive win for Ugyen Wangchuck, bringing an immediate end to armed internal strife for power. When Alu Dorji and his accomplices sought help from Tibet and Chinese officials, Ugyen Wangchuck resolved the conflict, bringing all the adversaries under control by CE 1886 through peaceful diplomacy. This solidified his father's legacy and reaffirmed his emergence as the undisputed leader and heir to the line of power. He was by then already the power figure and unchallenged ruler of Bhutan.

## Becoming of Sir Ugyen Wangchuck

With his approach of peace before war, forgiving enemies, and being kind to his subjects, Ugyen Wangchuck was the most powerful person ruling Bhutan, even as Trongsa Ponlop. A new political era began under his leadership, making peace, stability and security of the country the core ideals of politics unlike in the past.

In CE 1887, Ugyen Wangchuck laid the foundation of modern diplomacy when he took a non-aligned approach towards the political situation between British India, Tibet, and China. While maintaining a stable relationship with Tibet, a new phase of relationship started between British India and Bhutan grounded on goodwill, trust, and confidence.

Ugyen Wangchuck met a well-established businessman with modern education based in Kalimpong known as Ugyen Dorji. He would assist Ugyen Wangchuck in bringing modern development to Bhutan. Ugyen Dorji was a cousin of Ugyen Wangchuck. He was a son of Dzongpon Sherpa Penchung, who was one of the sons of Pala Gyaltsen, the brother of Jigme Namgyal's father. He became the representative of Bhutan to British India and later the chamberlain or *gongzim* to Ugyen Wangchuck.

Following the advice of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (CE 1820-1892) and Kongtrul Lodro Thaye (CE 1813-1899), Ugyen Wangchuck started the construction of Kurje temple and the statue of Guru Nangsi Zilnon dedicated to peace and stability of the country. Around that time, he also began one of his key visionary projects of propagating education. He sent some Bhutanese students to study in Tibet for the first time.

Ugyen Wangchuck emerged as an international diplomat in CE 1904 when he successfully negotiated peace between British India and Tibet. After some clashes between Tibet and British India, Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India, sent a mission headed by Colonel Francis Younghusband to Tibet in December CE 1903. The Tibetans saw the mission as an invasion with 3,000 soldiers and 7,000 support assistants under Brigadier James Macdonald.

When Bhutan's intervention was sought for negotiation, Ugyen Wangchuck initially sent Thimphu Dzongpon Kunzang Thinley. When the *dzongpon* returned home without success, Ugyen Wangchuck travelled to Tibet accompanied by Ugyen Dorji, Wangdue Dzongpon Kunzang Domchung and around 50 civilian assistants. The British troops and Tibetans had already clashed before the arrival of Ugyen Wangchuck. The British had taken over Gyantse, destroyed temples and looted valuables. Both the British and Tibetans looked up to Ugyen Wangchuck for a quick negotiation.

The negotiation was successfully concluded on 7<sup>th</sup> September of the same year when the two sides signed a treaty at Potala. Ugyen Wangchuck was instrumental in bringing the two sides together, which earned him great honour, appreciation and respect from both sides. The following year, Ugyen Wangchuck received the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire from British India, honouring him with the title of 'Sir'.



*Figure 5.6: Ugyen Wangchuck wearing the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire*

When John Claude White came to Bhutan to confer the insignia, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck initiated, for the first time, a discussion on modern development and improvement of the country's socio-economic situation. Since then, the relationship between Bhutan and British India began to deepen.



## **Institution of Hereditary Monarchy: Ugyen Wangchuck becomes the King**

With his leadership amply demonstrated, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck was now regarded as the foremost leader of Bhutan although he continued to hold the post of Trongsa Ponlop.

In CE 1906, the discussion on installing Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the King of Bhutan began when the last Druk Desi, Zhabdrung Sungtrul Chogley Yeshey Ngodup stepped down from the post. Having come through an unstable political situation mired in internal strife until CE 1885, it was clear to the Bhutanese that the old system of the theocratic rule established by Zhabdrung was not working without an unmatched authority and strong leadership at the centre. Haa Drungpa Ugyen Dorji put the idea of kingship into a formal proposal and submitted it to the state council, explaining the relevance and benefits of appointing Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the King of Bhutan. About a year after the proposal was put forth, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck was enthroned as the first hereditary king of Bhutan with the title Druk Gyalpo on 17 December 1907.

All the representatives of key institutions, high-ranking clergy officials, regional leaders and representatives of the people endorsed the oath of allegiance and placed their seals on it. With the new political order, Bhutan embarked on a new era of modernisation under the leadership of Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck. The new king initiated socio-political changes with plans for welfare and development for the nation. In need of monetary resources to implement his development ideas, His Majesty Ugyen Wangchuck sought an increment of the annual British subsidy which was Nu 50,000 per year. The request was granted and the subsidy increased to Nu 100,000 upon signing a treaty in Punakha on 8 January 1910.

His first royal visit to Delhi in CE 1911 helped King Ugyen Wangchuck see new opportunities for advancement in socio-cultural, economic, and technological fields. As his development ideas could not be realised owing to lack of funds, he focused on promoting education. His Majesty started the earliest modern school in Wangdue Choling Palace in Bumthang with Gongzim Ugyen Dorji as the teacher. A class of 15, including Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck, were taught English and Hindi. Later in around CE 1912, Gongzim Ugyen Dorji established another school in Haa with some 46 children. Those children would later go to Kalimpong for higher studies. In the meantime, Bhutan continued to send Bhutanese children to study in the monasteries in Tibet.

In the 1920s, at the king's request, British India helped train several Bhutanese school children in various professions. Three were trained in teaching, two in medicine, two in veterinary medicine, four in forestry, three in agriculture and dairy farming, and one each in weaving, tanning, and mining. They were the first batch of Bhutanese trained in the modern professional fields of development.

After laying a firm foundation for modern development and cementing Bhutan's relationship with its immediate neighbour, British India, His Majesty Gonga Ugyen Wangchuck passed away on 21 August 1926 in Thinley Rabten in Bumthang.



Figure 5.7: The historical genja declaring Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the first Druk Gyalpo

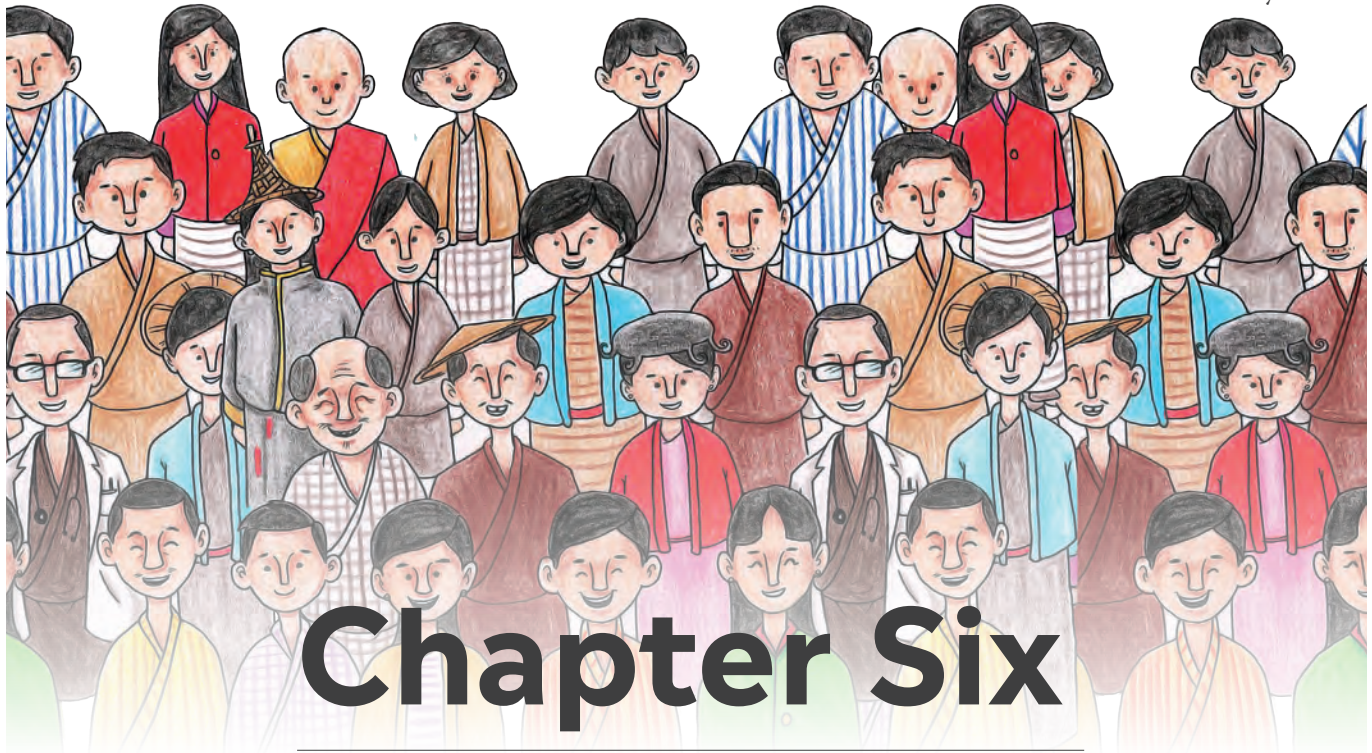


Figure 5.8: Enthronement ceremony of Ugyen Wangchuck as the First Druk Gyalpo







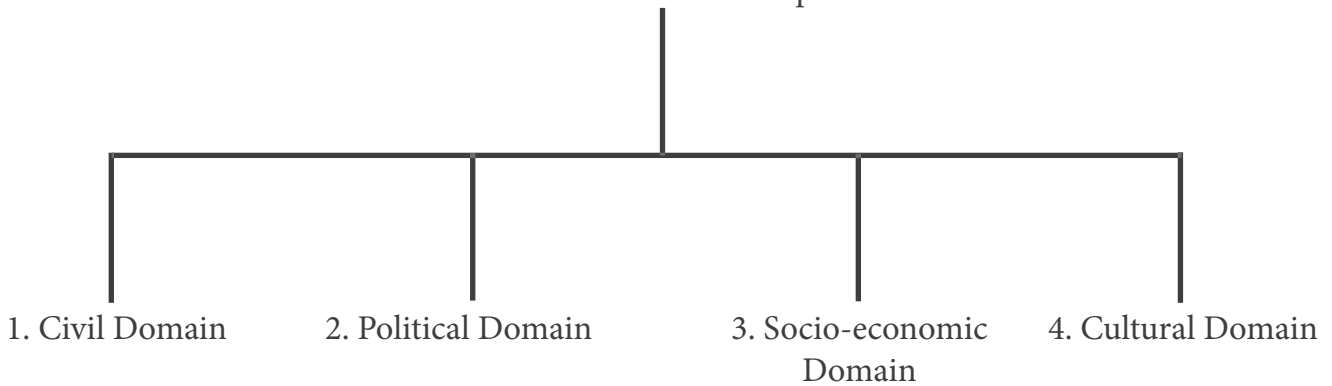


# Chapter Six

## Good Citizenship

### Four domains of citizenship

Domains of citizenship.



*Figure: 6.1. Domains of Citizenship*

The four domains of citizenship are civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural. These are areas in which people express themselves and participate in the country as citizens.

## Civil domain



Fig 6.2.Civil Domain

The civil domain of citizenship refers to the way in which citizens recognise, shape, and pursue community values, relate to the government's decisions that impact their lives, and how they express their rights. This domain includes the freedom of speech, opinion, and expression; access to information; and the rights to freedom of assembly and association.

In the Constitution of Bhutan, these rights and freedoms are enshrined in Article 7 with reasonable restrictions when it concerns matters such as the sovereignty, security, and unity of the country and the rights and freedoms of others. These restrictions are underlined in Fundamental Duties under Article 8 thus: *A Bhutanese citizen shall preserve, protect and defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and unity of Bhutan and render national service when called upon to do so by Parliament.* The fundamental duties highlight the community values the Bhutanese citizens must live up to, such as preserving, protecting, and respecting the environment, culture, and heritage of the nation and acting against corruption.

In Bhutan, the civil domain of citizenship is formally represented by the growing number of civil society organisations such as associations, foundations, and cooperatives promoting discussions and dialogue on issues related to gender, media, culture, and animal rights.

## Political domain



Fig 6.2. Political Domain

The political domain of citizenship refers to citizens' ability and skills to participate in the country's political process. It relates to citizens' right to vote and elect their representatives at different levels of the government or stand for elections. Political citizenship requires knowledge of the political system and norms, and skills for democratic participation. It is crucial to citizens because it concerns electing the right leaders, holding them accountable, and helping them make the right decisions, or standing for political offices to play leadership roles. This domain is responsible for democratic rights, fairness and justice, and the quality of leadership at all levels of society.

The right to vote is clearly enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan in Article 8, Section 6: *A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to vote.* By far, the largest space in the Constitution is dedicated to this domain of citizenship with articles on Parliament, political parties, the formation of the government, elections, public campaigns, and national referendum.



## Socio-economic domain



Fig 6.4. Socio economic Domain

This domain of citizenship has two aspects – social citizenship and economic citizenship. Social citizenship concerns the right of citizens to social security, a safe and secure environment, and the right to live a decent life irrespective of their ability. It is about protecting the weaker and vulnerable sections of society, such as the disabled, the young and old, and the unemployed. Social participation as citizens is important for mutually beneficial social interaction among citizens and equality and quality of life.

Among many provisions in the Constitution of Bhutan that underscore the importance of social citizenship is Section 19 under Article 9, which states that “The State shall endeavour to promote those conditions conducive to co-operation in community life and the integrity of the extended family structure.”

Economic citizenship concerns citizens’ right and ability to participate in the country’s economic activities. It refers to understanding and asserting the rights to economic wellbeing or material comforts of life such as the right to work, right to a minimum daily wage, right to own property, right to practise any lawful trade, and right to equal pay for work of equal value. Economic citizenship is important because a citizen’s economic standing in society determines how well they do in other aspects of life, such as education, political participation, and social wellbeing.

## Cultural domain



*Fig 6.5. Cultural Domain*

The cultural domain of citizenship refers to how citizens relate to cultural identities, expressions, and values of society. It concerns the knowledge and understanding of cultural commonality, cultural diversity, and recognition of the rights of minorities. It also concerns the importance and ability to live in a multicultural society and adapt to changing cultural symbols and values. Cultural citizenship requires knowledge and understanding of historical monuments, language and literature, music, the arts, customs, and folklore. Without the cultural domain, citizenship will lack human values that make life meaningful. Cultural citizenship is particularly important for countries like Bhutan, whose national identity is defined by cultural heritage.

Cultural citizenship is pivotal to promoting cultural diversity and resilience underlined by Gross National Happiness in Section 2 of Article 8 of the Constitution of Bhutan and the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity. It means that citizens of a country must have good knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures, both local and global, that they are able to withstand the negative impacts of globalisation and cross-cultural interaction.

## The relationship among four domains

Civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural citizenship are closely linked. Citizenship in the context of these domains means active participation with adequate knowledge and skills. Active citizenship in these four domains makes human life complete with civil and democratic rights, good socio-economic standing, and educational and cultural empowerment. If citizens are not empowered in one domain, it will affect their participation in others.

For example, freedom of speech and expression does not mean much without basic education. Citizens would not have the knowledge and skills to express themselves effectively without education. Likewise, the right to vote does not mean much if citizens are not politically well-informed to make the right choice. Casting a vote with little political awareness can even be counterproductive. Citizens' political participation can be severely limited if they are socially and economically marginalised and lack the right platform. Similarly, the right to gainful employment is not complete without the right to discuss wage and work conditions.

## Who is a good citizen?

A good citizen is one, who protects and unifies the country, contributes to nation building, builds peace and harmony, and puts the interest of the nation before oneself.

## Attributes of a good citizen



Figure: 6.6. Ways to become a good citizenship



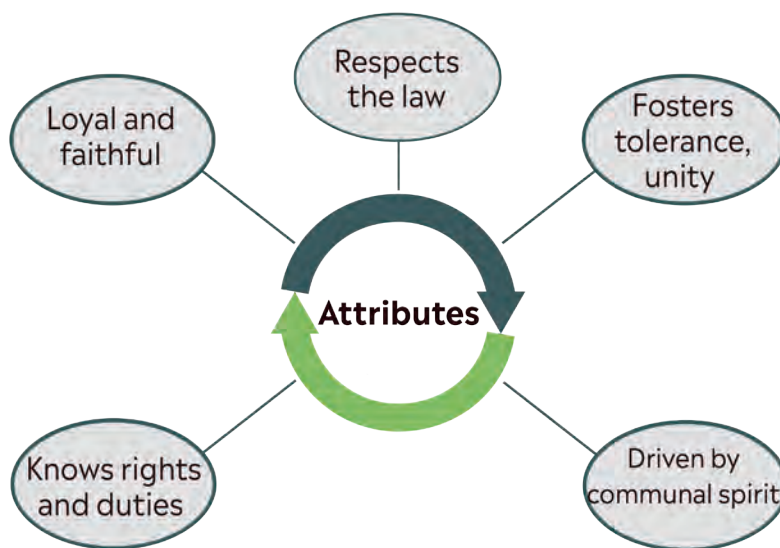


Figure: 6.3. Attributes of a good citizen.

### A good citizen demonstrates and lives the following attributes.

#### 1. Loyal and faithful

A good citizen is loyal and faithful to the Tsawasum (King, Country, People), respecting the principles of Tha Damtshi (ཐ་དམ་ཆེག་) and Lay Judrey (ལས་ཀྱི་འབྲས་). A good citizen puts the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and unity before one's own interests.

#### 2. Respects the law

A good citizen respects the law of the land, upholds justice, pays taxes honestly, and acts against injustice and corruption.

#### 3. Fosters tolerance, unity, and equality

A good citizen fosters tolerance, unity, equality, mutual respect, and the spirit of brotherhood among people from different religious, linguistic, and regional backgrounds.

#### 4. Knows rights and duties

A good citizen asserts one's rights and fulfils one's duties, namely civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights and duties. A good citizen respects the rights of others.

#### 5. Driven by communal spirit

A good citizen is not self-centred or individualistic. He or she works for the good of the community (གཞན་དོན་) rather than individuals (རང་དོན་) because the community is more important than oneself or individuals.

## Define community



A community is a group of people sharing a geographical location, a socio-cultural or religious identity, or civil or political interest. A community can be a village or town, a religious or ethnic group, or a political or business association. A community shares a sense of belonging to a place, interest, or identity. It can be a small association such as a truckers' association, a whole city such as Thimphu, a whole society such as Bhutan, or the whole world, often referred to as the global community. A community can even be a group of people on the internet sharing the same interest, such as gaming, cooking, cycling.

## Importance of living with commonalities and diversity

Living with commonalities and diversity is crucial to the individual as well as community life. Living with commonalities means recognising and respecting a way of life, ideas, and lifestyles that are the same as or similar to one's own. Living with diversity means recognising and respecting a way of life, ideas, and lifestyles that are different from one's own.

Human beings are social animals, and they cannot live as indifferent members of a Community. All individuals in the community are intertwined and interdependent. What each of them does has a consequence for others or the whole community. So, each member contributes to making the community friendly or unfriendly, harmonious or hostile, depending on how they embrace similar characteristics and respect differences.

Commonalities bind a community together. Therefore, they are a unifying feature. Diversity can take many forms, including ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity, cultural and religious diversity, educational levels, sexual orientation, political views, and physical ability.

Think of the members of your community who eat meat and those who do not. These two groups of people represent diversity. They must learn to accept each other's food choices and the reasons for making the choices. Or, think of the members of your community who drink and those who do not, who smoke and those who do not. These are small aspects of diversity most members can live with. Now, think of the members of your community who look different from you, speak a different language, or practise a different religion. We must all learn to live together with such differences.

Inability to live with such diversity leads to several conflicts we can see all around us. Therefore, it is important for the members of a community to live, as common Bhutanese expressions go, ‘like water and milk’ (ཐུད་པ་ལྷོ་མ་བཟུམ་) or ‘like trunks and mushrooms’ (ཤིང་དང་ཤ་ཐུ་བཟུམ་), which stress the importance of mixing without any resistance and recognising interdependence for mutual existence and prosperity.

## **The role of the media**

The media play or are expected to play various roles, depending on where they operate. In a fledgling democracy, the media’s primary role can be educating and building a democratic culture. In a conflict-ridden country, the media are expected to play the role of peacebuilding. In a poverty-ridden country, the media are expected to set the agenda for development. Traditionally, the media are expected to inform, educate, and entertain. Generally, they are expected to respond to the needs of society and help address those needs. They cannot work in isolation from the issues or challenges society is dealing with.

However, there are broad roles identified for the media anywhere to play, including the following.

### **1. Informing and educating**

The media must not only inform the public but also educate them. Informing means keeping the public abreast of what is happening around them. Educating means helping the public make sense of what is happening around them. It means explaining an issue and putting pieces of information and news into context. For example, a piece of news on chilli shortage in Bhutan serves the purpose of informing. When the media delve into why there is a chilli shortage, the public is educated.

### **2. Entertaining and providing an outlet for creativity**

The media must keep the public entertained in a healthy way. The media’s role of entertaining should go beyond providing a platform for reality show singing, dancing, and celebrity news. It should include more intellectual and stimulating content such as drama, literature, the arts, and poetry that opens up an outlet for creativity.



### **3. Serving as a forum for public discourse**

The media must serve as a forum for public discussion and debate on issues that matter to them. This implies that the media should serve as a medium for freedom of speech, opinion, and expression. This, in turn, implies that the space in a newspaper or airtime on television or radio should belong to the public. Without the media, public discussions and debates will be limited to certain sections of the population and miss alternative views.

### **4. Acting as a watchdog**

A watchdog guards a home and keeps the family alert to possible dangers and threats. Similarly, the media's role is to keep watch for corruption, unethical practices and conduct, and wrongdoing in the government and public institutions. The media's role is to sound the alarm so that the public can stop them. The watchdog role of the media is mostly aimed at people in power to keep them accountable and clean.



