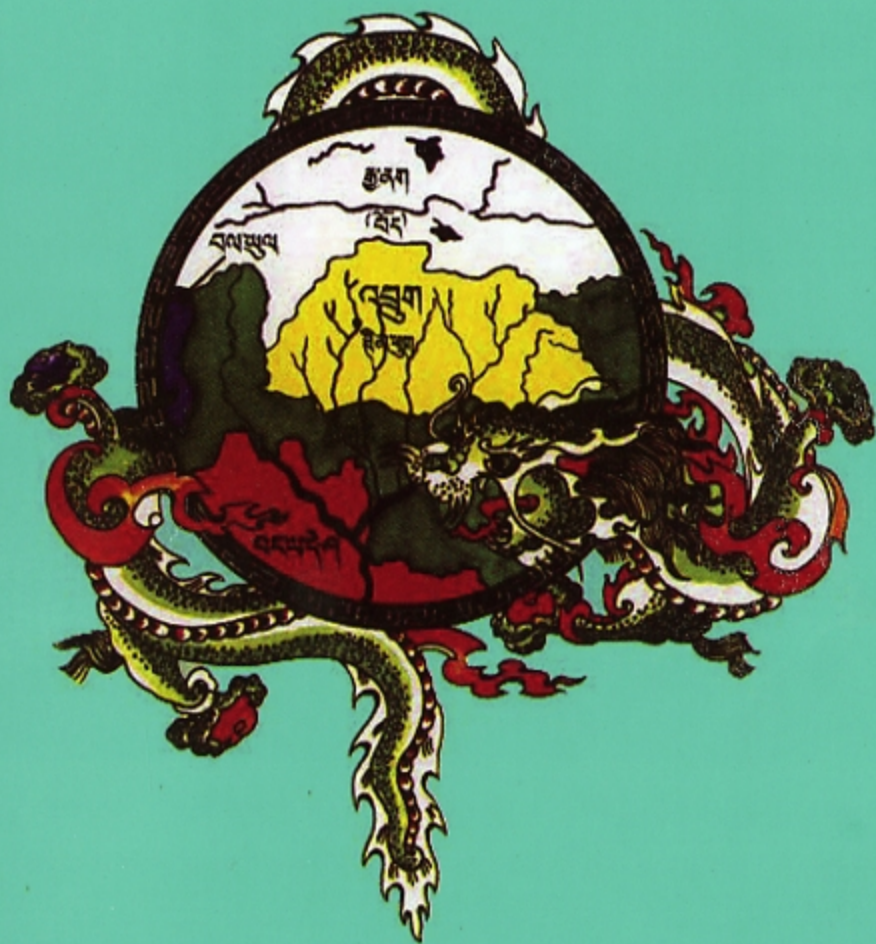


A HISTORY OF BHUTAN

Provisional Edition



COURSE BOOK FOR CLASS X

A HISTORY OF BHUTAN

CLASSES X



Department of Curriculum and Professional Development
Ministry of Education
Royal Government of Bhutan
Thimphu

Published by
Department of Curriculum and Professional Development (DCPD)
Ministry of Education
Thimphu

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Provisional Edition 1996
Reprint 2022

Forward

The vision of the Bhutanese education system is to produce ‘globally competent and nationally rooted’ graduates. Therefore, it is imperative to have the school curricula that are current and relevant to the times. It is through well-thought-out actions and concerted efforts that the national education aspiration can be achieved. The national vision must be embedded in the curricular documents and activities for natural and automatic infusion in the learners. Therefore, the curricular documents are planned and prepared to capture the essence and strategies so that they are current and relevant to the state of affairs around the globe in the 21st century.

Cognizant of the global trends and national aspirations, the history curriculum intends to involve learners in the process of gathering and synthesising information from various sources besides providing an avenue to study the ideals and values of our society. The contents and activities in history intend to preserve and promote our country’s unique identities, age-old cultural and traditional values, democratic values, local wisdom, community vitality, civic values, and a sense of duty, among others. This will help promote holistic development of the learners.

The history curriculum encourages both learners and teachers to use open-source and experiential learning besides traditional textbook-based learning. This will provide opportunities to both the learners and teachers to explore the historical processes and craft new perspectives through historiography. This is aimed at fostering analytical skills, creativity, exploration of information and synthesise of ideas apart from creating narratives based on information and data gathered, thus contributing to the field of historical knowledge.

Through the learning activities, the learners are expected to understand the evolution of people, places, events and realise the importance of living harmoniously. Furthermore, they should be able to embrace the attributes of a good human being, imbibe and portray a sense of belonging, thus contributing to national pride, unity, solidarity, and protection.

The National History School Curriculum has four strands – historiography, evolving civilisation, governance and peace and identity, spirituality and culture. Each strand is consistent with a seamless flow of learning throughout the key stages which comprises competencies and learning objectives. The principles of competency-based learning take into account the realities of the immediate environment thereby forming the foundation of the history curriculum. It also covers themes and topics on Bhutanese socio-economic practices, tradition and culture, religious heritage and the story of how our great forefathers, the hereditary monarchs in particular, contributed to creating a country known in the whole world for its unique identity.

It is with great expectation that we place this course book at the hands of the teachers and learners so that it will be used extensively as reference to enrich their knowledge which will enable them to develop and strengthen their love and dedication to *tsha-wa-sum*, and become constructive and contributing citizens.

Tashi Delek!



Tashi Namgyal
Director

FOREWORD

The Education Division is making all endeavours in fulfilling the directives issued by the Royal Government to make education meaningful to our children and outline the roles they are expected to play as future citizens of the country. We are proud that these endeavours should now culminate with the introduction of Bhutan History along with Bhutan Geography in classes IX and X. The introduction of these 2 subjects at this level of our schooling system, commensurate with the adoption of the joint BBE/ISCE syllabus with effect from 1995 and the subsequent joint certificate and examination system at class X with effect from March, 1996, is a major step undertaken by the Education Division in pursuance of Government directives.

This coursebook is intended to help our teachers and students understand that, it was under the leadership of the kings that Bhutan was able to maintain peace, unity and independence as well as embark upon the challenge of modernization which in turn brought about economic prosperity and social justice to its people. It is also intended to help them understand that the rich tradition of art, architecture and handicrafts have given Bhutan a unique identity and that preserving and promoting them form an integral part of the nation's efforts towards socio-economic development.

We hope our teachers and students will learn from the examples of our great historical leaders on their love, concern and dedication to their country and people so that our students of today will grow up not to become loyal and dedicated citizens to our *Tsawa Sum* but also that they, individually and collectively, will be able to contribute towards fulfilling His Majesty's visions of a strong, united, prosperous and sovereign independent Bhutan for all time to come.

It may be noted that course book is being published at this stage only as a provisional edition. The Education Division would welcome suggestions and comments from all the readers of the book to be appropriately incorporated in its final edition.

Tashi Delek

Dasho Sangay Ngedup
Education Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original written records of our country can be found in many of the dzongs, monasteries and private homes. The most useful records are:

- Choejung (ཚོམ་འབྲུང) : The history of religion which tells about the propagation of Buddhism in general or the history of one particular religious school.
- Logyu (ལོ་རྒྱུས་) : History chronicles
- Debther (དེབ་ཐེར་) : Annals, i.e. year by year reports of events.
- Gyalrab/Dungrab (རྒྱལ་རབས་གཞུང་རབས་) : Genealogies of dynasties or other important families.
- Neyig (གནས་ཡིག་) : Guides for pilgrimage to holy places which tell the story of these places.
- Thrungrab (འབྲུངས་རབས་) : The history of a lineage of reincarnations.
- Denrab(གདན་རབས་) : History of a monastery or a temple.
- Namthar (རྣམ་ཐར་) : Biographies or stories of lives of important religious persons or saints.
- Tentsi (བསྟན་ཚིག་) : Works relating to important events since Buddha's mahaparinirvana in chronological order.
- Pema Thangyig(ཕརྩ་ཐང་ཡིག་) : Biography of Guru Rinpoche.
- Kathang Duep (བཀའ་ཐང་བསྟུས་པ་) : Biography of Guru Rinpoche.
- Soeldeb Barched Lamsel (གསོལ་འདེབས་བར་ཚད་ལམ་སེལ་) : Prayer paying homage to Guru Rinpoche.
- Terma (གཏེར་མ་) : Religious texts which are said to have been hidden mostly by Guru Rinpoche to be rediscovered by a tertoenpa at an auspicious time many years later.
- Mani Kabum (མཎི་བཀའ་འབྲུམ་) : Describes the sacred works of kings and saints of early days.
- Peling Kabum(ཕད་ལྷིང་བཀའ་འབྲུམ་) : Describes works of Tertoen Pema Lingpa

The Education Division would like to pay its courtesy to the authors of the following sources for having used some of their information and illustrations:

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The Education Division is grateful to the following individuals and organizations for their guidance, assistance and contribution in the development of this book:

Concerned teachers of the High Schools in Bhutan for availing their time to read through the first draft and discuss in person or mail their comments.

Lyonpo C. Dorji, Planning Ministry for his valuable comments on the first draft.

Dasho Jigme Thinley for his contribution in the chapter on His Majesty.

Mr. A.K. Bhandari of the Foreign Ministry for information on Bhutan's relations with the world.

Mr. Tenzin Dorji, DDC, Thimphu for writing the Dzongkha scripts for first and second drafts.

Mrs. Jaime Zeppa, WWF for proof reading the final draft.

The Education Division would also like to extend its gratitude to all others who have contributed but have not been mentioned above.

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Chapter 1

JIGME NAMGYAL

The Architect of United Bhutan

We concluded our study of the history of Bhutan in Class IX, with two centuries of internal instability marked by civil strife and external threats. It was the death of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, made known only in 1705, that signalled the beginning of power struggles in western Bhutan. The prolonged state of internal strife and **civil war**, characterised by intrigues, treacheries and assassinations brought increasing external pressures culminating in the Duar War of 1864-65 which, for a time, threatened the very survival of the Bhutanese nation.

Although we noted that as many as over 40 Druk Desis reigned continuously throughout the period, the stability and prestige of the central government was never anything close to that of the Zhabdrung's Choesi Nyiden system of governance. All the incarnations who succeeded him during the period were either too young or found lacking in the personal charisma and political genius that he commanded. Each of them fell easy prey to the machinations of rival factions using them as means in their bid to gain control over the theocracy.

KEY TERMS

Architect of United Bhutan	civil war
annual subsidy	
<i>zimpoen</i>	
internal feuds	loyalty
central authority	rebellion
de facto control	<i>Droenyer</i>
leader of destiny	<i>Druk Desi</i>
mediation	annex

Observed against the backdrop of these upheavals, the rise of Trongsa Poenlop Jigme Namgyal during the **Duar War** and its immediate antecedents, was perhaps the most important event in our history since the Zhabdrung. His emergence as the unchallenged leader of a united country, even if only for the brief duration of the war, was certainly the most likely reason for the survival of Bhutan into the present century. It is with the story of this leader of destiny that we begin the next phase of our study of Bhutanese history.

The origins of Jigme Namgyal

The Dungkar Chhoeje of Kurtoe (Lhuntse) was one of the foremost families of religious nobility descending from Tertoen Pema Lingpa¹. It was during the civil wars raging western Bhutan in the early years of 1800s, that two brothers of the Dungkar Chhoeje, Pala Gyeltshen and Pila Goenpo Wangyal, brought added fame and prestige to the family name. Fighting on the side of forces supporting Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa II the brothers, more famously known as Pala and

¹The Dungkar Chhoeje line of Pemalingpa's descent came through the Khouching Chhoeje established by his son, Kuenga Wangpo, born in 1504 (see Chapter 7, Class IX)

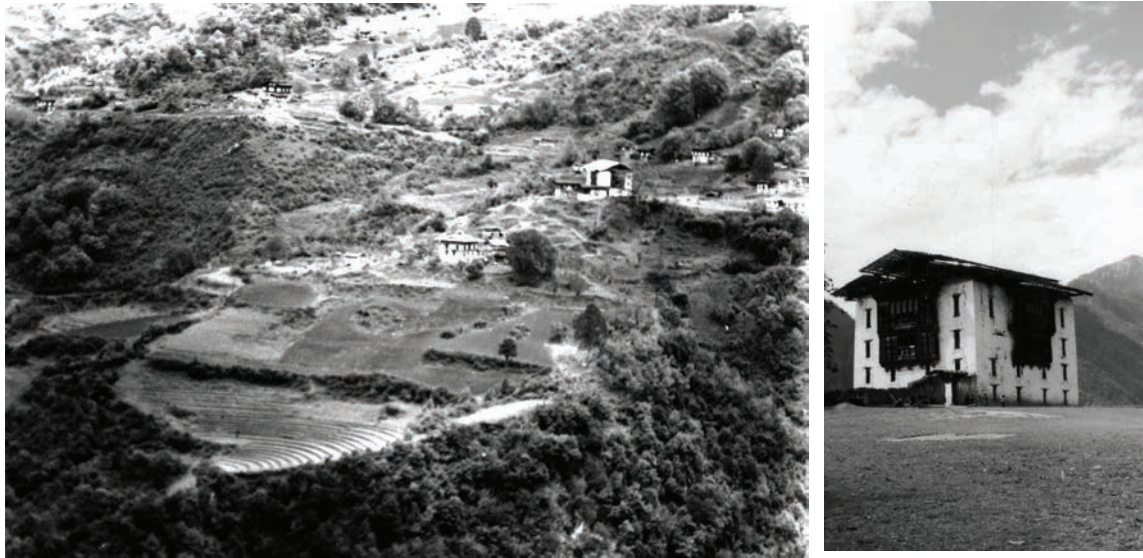


Figure 1-1 Dungkar where Jigme Namgyal was born and, the Nagtshang rebuilt by him

Pila, became widely celebrated for their bravery and feats at arm on the battlefiend². The wars came to a brief cessation in 1811 when the Zhabdrung renounced his role in the conflict and withdrew from the political scene. Pila, the younger of the brothers, wearied and deeply disturbed by the violence, took down his sword and returned home to Dungkar where he married Sonam Pelzom from the village of Jangsa. Born in 1825, Jigme Namgyal was the second of their three sons and a daughter. (See story of Pala and Pila in the box on page 3).

When he was around fifteen years of age, Jigme Namgyal began to experience repeated dreams telling him that he should go west towards Bumthang and Trongsa where

he would find his true destiny. Believing the dreams to be a divine prophecy, he made up his mind to leave home and go westwards. It is not known whether he left with his family's blessings or simply set out on his own. In any event, it would seem that he travelled alone and adequately provisioned for the journey. There are no accounts of his journey from Dungkar to Trongsa, which is said to have been taken several months, until we find him in the Tang Valley of Bumthang working as a sheep herder in the village of Narut. One can well imagine a weather-beaten and dusty young boy trudging along, either across the high and lonely Beyul Khenpajong range or over the dangerous pass of Rodungla, stopping to find work whenever he needed to for his sustenance, but keeping mostly to himself.

After some months in Tang he moved on to Chhume Valley where he met a person who has also featured in his dreams. The kindly Buli Lama blessed Jigme Namgyal, gave him shelter and arranged for his travel onwards to Trongsa. There, the lama

²The mastermind behind the civil wars putting two Zhabdrungs as rival desis was Trongsa Poenlop Tshaphugpa Dorji, who led a powerful coalition of Paro, Dagana, Trongsa and Thimphu, supporting the reluctant Zhabdrung Sungtruel whom he installed at Thimphu. Jigme Drakpa II was supported by Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang. In 1815, both the Zhabdrungs retired and Tshaphugpa Dorji took the throne for himself only to be murdered within months by his ally, the Thimphu Dzungpoen.

PALA AND PILA

For many generations, Dungkar Chhoeje family was known for producing individuals of extraordinary character. Pala and Pila are remembered even today as celebrated heroes of legendary qualities. They were both, men of super-human strength and martial accomplishment. There are many stories and anecdotes based on the adventures of Pala and Pila. One such story goes as follows:

Pala and Pila left their home as young boys heading in different directions. Pala, the elder of the two brothers, eventually joined the court of Paro Poenlop. A few years later, Pila set off to Punakha accompanying Zhabdrung. While returning home, he joined the service of the Trongsa Poenlop for a time.

It so happened once that the poenlops of Paro and Trongsa met and decided to hold a friendly athletic competition. Sword fighting was traditionally a popular event on such occasions. The Paro Poenlop fielded his best swordsman, Pala, for the event and the Trongsa Poenlop's champion for the same event happened to be none other than Pila. The two brothers, who has not met since they parted as young boys, faced each other in the arena. The fighting ensued with amazing displays of skill and stamina continuing into the twilight, until Pala remarked:

‘You must be my brother Pila!’

‘And, you must be by brother Pala!’

Pila responded.

The point of the anecdote is that there were no other swordsmen living to match the two brothers. They recognised each other through their invincible strength and skill as swordsmen. The story goes that the duel was called off and the two parted ways once more, never to meet again.

Pala continued to serve under the Paro Poenlop in the course of which, he has a son in the village of Tsentona. This was Sharpa Puenchung, who was to be the father of Kazi Ugyen Dorji of Kalimpong. He in turn rose to be Bhutan Agent and later Gongzom to the first Druk Gyalpo in 1907. His other son, by an earlier marriage, was Kitchelp Dorji Namgyal of the Bemji Chhoeje, who became Druk Desi.

Pila, as we have seen, returned to Dungkar and married Sonam Pelzom of Jangsa village. Dungkar Gyaltshen, his eldest son, succeeded to the seat of Trongsa Poenlop after Jigme Namgyal who assumed the throne as Druk Desi. The youngest son, Dorji, became Lhuntse Dzongpoen and father of Paro Poenlop Dawa Penjor.

arranged to have him presented to the Trongsa Poenlop as an attendant.

Early years in Trongsa dzong

Jigme Namgyal was readily accepted into the service of Trongsa Dzong and appointed at the lowest rank of servants as a *Tozep* (ལྷོ་གཟུགས་). The first years of his life in the dzong must have been in stark contrast to the genteel background of his childhood upbringing in a Chhoeje family. His daily duties would have consisted of hard labour such as fetching water and firewood, running errands, sweeping the courtyards and so on. As a *Tozep*, he would have been entitled to food from the common kitchen of the dzong along with hundreds of others of similar rank. But, the daily fares served there would have been far from the expectations of a young Chhoeje aristocrat. With his background in the remote and rural area of Kurtoe, he must have found it a difficult task picking up spoken *Dzongkha* and living by the strict disciplines of *Driglam Namzha* - the two essential necessities of getting along in court life. The slightest infringement in these aspects would have brought harsh corporal punishment.

While the poenlop would have given due recognition to Jigme Namgyal's family background, which made them distantly related, he could not have compromised court discipline by showing special favours or granting privileges to the latter. He would have expected the young man to stand on his own and prove his worth beyond doubt. In fact, being a relative, Jigme Namgyal would have been subjected to higher and more difficult standards of performance

compared to others of similar rank and age.

In 1843, while Jigme Namgyal still struggled on as a *Tozep*, Ugyen Phuntsho retired and was succeeded by Tshokye Dorji of Ugyen Choeling Chhoeje – yet another family with connections to Pema Lingpa lineage. It is said that Tshokye Dorji had earlier learned in a religious prophecy that his association with a man called “Jigme” from the east would be of benefit to the whole country. Perhaps it was for this reason, that Jigme Namgyal came under the poenlop's close and personal attention and began his rapid rise through the ranks.

Within the first year of the new Poenlop's rule, Jigme Namgyal was promoted as a *Zinggup* (གཞིས་སྒྲུབ་པ་) – attendant. Three years later, he occupied the joint posts of *Zimmang* (གཞིས་འཛུགས་ - junior chamberlain) and *Darpoen* (དར་དཔོན་ - chief of attendants) and was further promoted to the prestigious post of *Trongsa Tshongpoen*, in charge of the Trongsa Poenlop's trade with Tibet, in the same year.

As Trongsa Tshongpoen, Jigme Namgyal travelled extensively in Tibet where his dealings with the Tibetan authorities added wider dimensions to his training and background in court affairs. It was also during this period that he first met his future wife, Pema Choeki, the younger daughter of the former poenlop, who was at the Lhalung Monastery of Tibet with her brother, the Sungtruel incarnation of Pema Lingpa³. At the age of 24 in 1849, Jigme Namgyal rose to the important post of

³The Pemalingpa Sungtruel was Kuenzang Tenpai Nyima.

Trongsa *Zimpoen* (ཀྲོང་གསར་གཟིམ་དཔོན་ - chamberlain of Trongsa), a position that indicated the extent of trust and confidence that his loyalty and outstanding service had by then earned.

Among the many episodes in which Jigme Namgyal proved his courage and **loyalty**, an incident at Punakha was to prove the most important. His first assignment was to lead a large contingent of workmen from Trongsa to help in the restoration of the Punakha Dzong which had burned down in a major fire that year. He spent almost the whole year in Punakha supervising the workers. In 1850, the Trongsa Poenlop also arrived in Punakha where he immediately became the target of an assassination conspiracy.

It had become known that the Trongsa Poenlop, instigated by his young Zimpoen, harboured ambitions of consolidating his power in the eastern regions and asserting himself more aggressively in the west. A strong Trongsa Poenlop, as seen in the civil wars of early 1800s, had always been a threat to the power centers of western Bhutan. It is understandable that the central authorities would rather have such threats nipped into the bud by judiciously disposing of the incumbent poenlop.

However Jigme Namgyal, by now a keen observer of the political intrigues prevailing in western Bhutan, easily sensed the conspiracy and remained alert and watchful. According to an oral tradition, it is said that he never took off his sword nor slept in a bed for the whole duration of the poenlop's stay at Punakha. At the crucial moment when the assassins were to strike, Jigme Namgyal is said to have come on

the scene and effected a dramatic rescue of the much shaken poenlop who was already surrounded and helpless.

For this show of courage and loyalty, Jigme Namgyal was immediately rewarded with the additional post of Lhuntse Dzongpoen. When they returned to Trongsa, the grateful poenlop promised Jigme Namgyal the seat of Trongsa Poenlop when the time would come for him to vacate the post.

Reunification of the east and the first military venture into the west

In the same year in 1850, it was learned that the Dzongpoens of Zhongar, Trashigang, Trashiyangtse and the *Gyadrung* (ལྷོ་རྩུབ་) of Dungsam planned to revolt against Trongsa. The **rebellion** was secretly supported by the central government in Punakha. Mobilising their troops near Mongar, the rebel dzongpoens prepared to march on to Trongsa with military support expected to come from western Bhutan.

Jigme Namgyal was promoted *Trongsa Droenyer* (ཀྲོང་གསར་མགོན་པོ་འཕྲེང་ - guest- master of Trongsa) and dispatched in command of a large force of troops from Mangde, Bumthang, Lhuntse and Zhemgang. In a major battle that took place near Lingmithang in Zhongar, the Trongsa army routed the combined rebel forces. Throughout the winter of 1850, Jigme Namgyal led a relentless offensive pursuing the enemy all across eastern Bhutan. The dzongs of Zhongar, Trashigang, Dungsam, and Trashiyangtse fell to him and all the enemy dzongpoens were taken prisoner. The Sharchog Khorlo Tsibgye was thus,

once again, brought firmly under the rule of Trongsa.

Until then the Trongsa Poenlop's effective jurisdiction was only over the four districts of Mangde, Zhemgang, Bumthang and Lhuntse; his hold over the eastern regions being at best only tenuous. Thus Jigme Namgyal's first military expedition was not only one of his most successful but an important event that was to significantly strengthen the power base of Trongsa for the crucial times ahead.

The following year in 1851, trouble began in western Bhutan when the reigning 38th **Druk Desi** was murdered and the ambitious Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen, Chakpa Sangay, made a bid to take the throne for himself. His ambition was, however, stalled when the Central Monk Body rejected his candidature outright. Meanwhile, the supporters of Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861) installed him in Thimphu as 39th Druk Desi. The Zhabdrung, however, contracted smallpox and had to retire soon after. Chakpa Sangay seized the throne and was installed as the 40th Desi in Punakha. The Central Monk Body and the supporters if the Zhabdrung turned to Trongsa for armed assistance against the usurper.

As already said, the new Desi was unacceptable to the Central Monk Body and strongly resented by the public. The Zhabdrung, on the other hand, was widely revered and also came from the Dramitse Chhoeje family making him a distant relative Jigme Namgyal. The turn of event, therefore, presented an ideal opportunity for the Trongsa Poenlop to intervene in western Bhutan.

Flush with the success of his recent campaign in the east, Jigme Namgyal found himself once again leading the troops of Trongsa, this time against the central government. When he arrived in Punakha, it was found that the Desi had moved his base to Norbugang. Jigme Namgyal avoided needlessly attacking the Punakha Dzong but, in a skirmish that took place near Norbugang, he personally challenged and killed Mikthoem, the famous and dreaded *Nyagoe* (ལྷ་མོ་ལོ་གོ་ - champion fighter) on the Desi's side. Although the enemy was demoralised by the incident, no major battle took place and Jigme Namgyal retreated to Trongsa leaving the Desi still on the throne. The reign of Chakpa Sangay, however, proved short-lived when he fell victim to an assassination conspiracy engineered by his arch-enemy, the former Paro Poenlop, in 1852⁴.

It would appear that Jigme Namgyal's first military venture into western Bhutan was an inconclusive one. However, it had the effect of making him widely known as the man who defeated the famous Mikthoem. More significantly, the added knowledge and understanding of affairs in the West that he gained from the experience, were to prove useful to his later inroads into the region.

⁴The former Paro Poenlop, Agay Haap, was responsible for installing the Zhabdrung and seeking military help from Trongsa. When Trongsa intervention failed to dislodge Chakpa Sangay, he made a pretence of submission by sending him a brocade gho deliberately infected with small pox germs. The deshi, who tried on the gho, contracted the disease and died of it in 1851.



Figure 1-2 Wangdue Choeling Palace in Bumthang built by Jigme Namgyal

Trongsa Poenlop Jigme Namgyal

Jigme Namgyal succeeded to the seat of Trongsa Poenlop when Tshokye Dorji retired in 1853. The arrangement was in keeping with the promise made by the later after his rescue from assassination three years earlier. More important, however, was the fact that Jigme Namgyal has by then proved himself the man most capable and deserving of the position of Trongsa Poenlop.

With all of the central and eastern regions secured under his rule, the new Trongsa Poenlop now turned his full attention to the west. He was set on a course of active intervention in western Bhutan and in the process, as we will see, would soon succeed in making himself the indispensable political and military factor in the affairs of the region.

In 1854, the two dzongpoens of Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang were contending for the throne of Desi. The reigning 41st Druk Desi, Jamtruel Jamyang Tenzin, was besieged by the Thimphu Dzongpoen who had gained control of both the bridges of Punakha Dzong. Jigme Namgyal arrived on the scene with his army ready to intervene. After carefully gauging the situation, however, he opted for a diplomatic initiative instead of Taking sides in the dispute. He enforced a settlement whereby the desi retained his throne and the rival dzongpoens withdrew.

This was to prove a major diplomatic triumph for Jigme Namgyal, significantly strengthening his political influence. In appreciation for the timely intervention, the Trongsa Poenlop was formally granted full administrative autonomy of appointing all

dzongpoens east of Trongsa Dzong. He was also given the right to retain for Trongsa a large share of the annual compensations paid by the British for parts of the Assam Duars they had annexed in 1841. These arrangements gave official recognition to the Trongsa Poenlop's total hegemony over the entire central and eastern regions, making him largely independent of the central authority in Punakha.

When Jamtruel Jamyang Tenzin died in 1857, the old feud between the dzongpoens of Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang resurfaced and, once again, called for the Trongsa Poenlop's involvement. In a complicated situation that had emerged, the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen ruled as desi from Punakha while the Thimphu Dzongpoen occupied the throne in Thimphu. This time, Jigme Namgyal chose to be more forceful and sided decisively with the Thimphu

Dzongpoen, nominating him as Druk Desi⁵, only to be assassinated the same year. The Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen, who was behind the assassination, now ascended the throne supported by Lhengye Tshog and the Central Monk Body. Jigme Namgyal reluctantly endorsed the settlement. As we can well imagine, he must have resented a settlement that involved the murder of his earlier nominee. However, he seemed to have decided to avoid further trouble and bide his time. For, trouble of a more serious nature was breaking out in Bumthang and he had to rush back to Trongsa.

⁵The sequence of Druk Desi, particularly from the 42nd onward, varies according to different sources depending on whether those reigning simultaneously with another desi are taken individually or as a single reign.

Conflict with Tsongdrue Gyaltshen

When Jigme Namgyal ascended to the seat of Trongsa Poenlop in 1853, there was the tacit understanding that he would retire after three years in favour of the outgoing poenlop's son, Jakar Dzongpoen Tsondrue Gyaltshen. As expected, Jigme Namgyal made no sign of honouring the understanding and, Tsondrue Gyaltshen took up arms against Trongsa in 1857. The armies of Trongsa and Jakar clashed on the field of Shamkhar below Jakar Dzong where the battle proved indecisive. Later in the year, even as the Trongsa Poenlop was beginning to gain the advantage in the impasse, the battle was joined by the desi on the Jakar Dzongpoen's side. As seen above, the recent settlement of affairs at Punakha had not been exactly to Jigme Namgyal's satisfaction. The new desi knew well enough that the Trongsa Poenlop would soon be back to set matters right. It might have been in the hope of forestalling such an eventuality that the central government entered the fray on the Jakar Dzongpoen's side.

The standoff continued indecisively until the Je Khenpo and the Zhabdrung's Zimpoen were able to mediate peace. Negotiations concluded with a settlement that provided for the Jakar Dzongpoen to be promoted to the rank of Jakar Poenlop and given administrative control over some of the eastern dzongs.

Although the outcome was a stalemate, Jigme Namgyal emerged the stronger having established himself as the undisputed Trongsa Poenlop. To that extent, he regarded the settlement as an important

strategic victory which he commemorated by building the palace of Wangdue Chhoeling on the battlefield of Shamkhar which was to become the private residence of his family. He had by then married Pema Choeki, the daughter of Tamzhing Chhoeje Ugyen Phuntsho.

With his base now secured by peace with the Jakar Poenlop, Jigme Namgyal turned his attention once again to the West. The opportunity came in 1861, when Darlung Tobgye, the Punakha Dzongpoen, ousted the reigning Druk Desi and helped install his ally, the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen, to the throne. There had been a secret understanding between the two that the former would in turn be made the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen. When the newly installed desi appointed his own nephew to the post instead, Darlung Tobgye turned to both the poenlops of Trongsa and Jakar for military assistance on his side.

Eager to reassert his presence in the west, Jigme Namgyal led the combined forces of Trongsa and Jakar against the desi. In 1863, the desi, by then in full retreat before the invading forces, suffered a crushing defeat at Lungtenphu in Thimphu. He was forced to retire and Jigme Namgyal assumed the additional title of Zimpoen to the young Choglye Yeshe Ngedrup, who at the time represented the Zhabdrung, and took full charge of rearranging the government. Darlung Tobgye acquired the post of Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen that he long coveted. The Thimphu Dzongpoen, who had wisely allied himself with Trongsa and Jakar was nominated and installed as the new Druk Desi and a close relative of Jigme Namgyal became Thimphu Dzongpoen.

The Trongsa Poenlop, as we have seen, already enjoyed full powers to appoint dzongpoens in the central region and the entire Sharchog Khorlo Tsibgye, since 1854. By 1864, he had also gained full control over appointing not only the dzongpoens of western Bhutan but the Druk Desi as well. In effect, Jigme Namgyal had clearly succeeded in making the position of the Trongsa Poenlop the most paramount throughout the whole country.

Jigme Namgyal and the Duar War

Since we have already dealt with the Duar War of 1864-65 in some detail in Chapter 11 (Class IX), our focus here will be on the role played by Jigme Namgyal in it. When Ashley Eden forced its way to Punakha leading the British mission in 1864, he found that the Trongsa Poenlop there was the chief negotiator on behalf of the government. To Jigme Namgyal the mission was both uninvited and unwelcome and he treated it with utmost suspicion. He saw that the British proposal of stationing a resident mission in Punakha and opening Bhutan to free trade as nothing but an invitation to British domination. He rejected the draft treaty brought by the British, insisting that he only wished to discuss the return of the Assam Duars to Bhutan- an issue that Ashley Eden said was not negotiable. The talks broke down and the British mission was insulted and humiliated.

Ashley Eden, in his report, graphically describes the humiliating treatment meted out to his mission by the Bhutanese. While most of the details of jostling and pushing could have been mis-interpretations of normal Bhutanese behaviour in a large

Figure 1-3 The statue of Dechog Khorlo Dampa in Trongsa Dzong.



Figure 1-4 Dorje Phagmo with the sacred relic in the silver reliquary in Trongsa Dzong.



The Religious Life of Jigme Namgyal

In the life of Jigme Namgyal, his military achievements overshadowed an equally important aspect of his life; his spiritual and religious achievements. Western writers have given Jigme Namgyal the appellation “Black Regent” ascribing it to his dark complexion and the black colour he preferred for his dress and riding steed. Bhutanese, however, associate his alias, “Deb Nagpo”, more with his spiritual connection to the Mahakala, the guardian deity of Bhutan, than to his physical appearance. The Mahakala, black in colour and in various forms, is the chief protector of the Buddhist faith.

There are numerous accounts of Jigme Namgyal invoking the Mahakala to battle on his side with miraculous results. For example, in the battle of Deothang he was credited to have shot down three British commanders with a single musket ball fired from the *Goenkhang* (མགོན་ཁང་ - shrine of the Mahakala) of Yongla Goenpa. It is believed that only fully realised lamas or true incarnates have the power to invoke the Mahakala to such purpose. Whether Jigme Namgyal was such a person was not known but there was a spiritual aspect to his life that he pursued with the same determination and energy as he did in his warlike activities.

As a young boy, Jigme Namgyal set out from home for an unknown destination inspired by a dream he believed to be a sacred revelation. It was a lama (believed predestined to assist him) who guided him to the court of the Trongsa Poenlop. And it was Trongsa Poenlop Tshokye Dorji who, inspired by a religious prophecy that he experienced, set Jigme Namgyal on the path to greatness. It was during his visit to Tibet some time in 1843, that he met the highly accomplished Lama Jangchhub Tsondrue of the Narthang Monastery. The

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lama prophesied that Jigme Namgyal was destined to achieve greatness for the benefit of the country and the Buddhist faith.

After he assumed the position of Trongsa Poenlop in 1853, Jigme Namgyal accepted

Jangchhub Tsondrue as his *tsawailam* (ཙ་བཞི་སྐྱེ་མ་ - root teacher) and invited him to visit Bhutan. The Trongsa Poenlop then embarked on a course of religious activity. Temples and shrines were renovated, religious festivals and ceremonies were instituted and hunting and fishing banned.

A new set of *Kanjur* (བཀའ་འགུར་ - 108 volumes of Buddha’s teachings) printed at Narthang was installed at Trongsa and read continuously for thirty times.

On the advice of Jangchhub Tsondrue, he built an image of *Dechok Khorlo Dampa* (བདེ་མཚོག་འཕྲོམ་ལོ་སྐྱོམ་པ་ - Chakra Samvara) and installed it facing west in the Trongsa Dzong. One of the self-created images of Tsangpa Gyaray’s vertebrae, in the form of Dorje Phamo (རྡོ་རྗེ་ཕག་མོ་ - Vajravara) was obtained from Tibet and placed in the new Dechok Lhakhang. It was Jigme Namgyal who donated the life-size silver image of Buddha

that graces the *Kuenra* (ཀུན་རྩ་ - Assembly Hall) of Punakha Dzong. During his brief retirement at Wangdue Choeling, he undertook an extensive pilgrimage and sponsored various religious ceremonies.

Jigme Namgyal thus bequeathed to future generations of Bhutanese a tradition of spiritual and religious fulfilment that was as important to our history as his achievements as a warrior and leader.

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crowd, there obviously was also some attempt to provoke the unwelcome Englishmen. For instance, Darlung Tobgye, the newly appointed Wangdue Phodrang Dzungpoen, is said to have insisted that the mission doctor eat the dhoma which he had chewed in his own mouth and, when refused, he is said to have thrown it angrily on the doctor's face.

Jigme Namgyal was fully aware of the consequences of his action. He also knew that the British had long-term designs on Bhutan and that, sooner or later, it must come to a fateful war. He probably presumed that the British, having suffered a bloody revolt by its Indian army in 1857, would not venture immediately on new foreign conquests. If so, he must have come to the conclusion that a war with the British might be better for Bhutan than rather than later.

Ashley Eden returned to report the failure of his mission and on November 12, 1864, the British declared war on Bhutan, annexing by proclamation all the Bengal and Assam Duars. As we have already seen, Bhutan lost the war in the face of vastly superior firepower. The central government signed the Sinchula Treaty on November 11, 1865, surrendering all the Assam and Bengal Duars and agreeing to free trade with British India in return for an **annual subsidy** of 50,000 Rupees.

For Jigme Namgyal, defeat in the war did not mean disgrace or downfall. In fact, he emerged even stronger from it. He stood up against the demands made by the British mission and inspired the feuding factions in

the country to put aside their quarrels and unite against a common external enemy. He was the principal military strategist who coordinated the counter offensives that surprised even the British. On the battlefield, he earned the admiration of his own countrymen and the respect of his enemies as a gallant and courageous leader.

The most famous of his victories took place at Deothang on January 27, 1865. In the first encounter, the Bhutanese side lost with Jakar Poenlop and most of his troops being killed. Jigme Namgyal withdrew and resumed the attack with greater force and routed the British column. He inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, took hundreds of prisoners and captured two British cannons. Similar attacks, all centrally coordinated by Jigme Namgyal, were launched all along the border and it took a month before the British could recover.

The Sinchula Treaty signed by the central government was conditional on the safe return of British prisoners and the two cannons. Jigme Namgyal, in the mean time, refused to accept its terms. It became clear to the British that it was Trongsa Poenlop Jigme Namgyal who really mattered in the country. Having made this point, Jigme Namgyal relented when the British began marching towards Trongsa in great force from Deothang, threatening to **annex** the whole country. He met the advancing British column near Yongla Goenpa and returned all the prisoners and the two cannons. The British withdrew and peace between Bhutan and the British prevailed until 1947 when India became independent.

Jigme Namgyal ascends to the throne as Druk Desi

With the Duar War concluded, Jigme Namgyal retired in 1866, passing on the seat of Trongsa Poenlop to Dungkar Gyaltsen, his elder brother. He spent his brief retirement at Wangdue Choeling Palace with his family, which by then also included his youngest son Ugyen Wangchuck. It would seem that he seriously planned on a life in retirement as we see him embarking on several religious activities. (See box on page 11). This, however, was not to be.

It was almost inevitable that peace with the British would soon bring about a resurgence of **internal feuds** in western Bhutan. In 1867, there emerged a complex power struggle among the dzongpoens of Wangdue Phodrang, Punakha and Thimphu. Although officially in retirement, Jigme Namgyal was soon busy in the west playing the role of power broker once again.

The Thimphu Dzongpoen, whom we saw appointed to the post following the civil war of 1863, was killed by the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen who, as we also recall, owed his position to Jigme Namgyal. The new entrant on the scene was Kawang Mangkhel, an ally of the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen, who took the seat of Thimphu dzongpoen. The two now threatened the Punakha Dzongpoen who at once turned to Jigme Namgyal for assistance. As the murdered Thimphu Dzongpoen had been his relative and appointee, Jigme Namgyal was, in any case, obliged to make an intervention. He arrived with a column of troops from Bumthang and besieged Kawang Mangkhel in the Tashichoedzong

in Thimphu. A peaceful settlement was negotiated by the Central Monk Body and, Jigme Namgyal returned to his retirement in Bumthang.

This, however, was to be only the prelude to a much more serious affair that emerged two years later in 1869. Darlung Tobgye had retired after appointing a nephew to the post of Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen. He was now allied with his nephew and Kawang Mangkhel against the Punakha Dzongpoen who, in turn, sought support from Jigme Namgyal. The situation took an ominous turn with the possibility of inviting interference from foreign powers. It became known that the both sides were in the course negotiating with the British as well as the Chinese in Tibet for military intervention on their sides.

Jigme Namgyal could not let such a situation pass and, decided to act firmly and decisively. He attacked the combined rebel forces garrisoned in the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. When resistance proved too strong, he had the Tashichoedzong set on fire which made Kawang Mangkhel rush back to Thimphu, leaving Darlung Tobgye and his nephew in a weakened position. The two sued for peace and, during peace talks, Jigme Namgyal had them both killed.

It is in this episode that we witness the first recorded incidence of violent behaviour ascribed personally to Jigme Namgyal. The killing of enemies while negotiating peace and setting fire to the Tashichoedzong seem to indicate radical departures from his earlier conduct of warfare, always marked by a preference for **mediation**. The only cold-blooded killing credited to him was

that of Migthoem, which was most likely in single combat. His ruthlessness in this instance can perhaps be interpreted in terms of his determination never again to allow foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country.

The episode made it clear that not only was internal dissension still rife but the danger of foreign intervention had not fully receded with the Sinchula Treaty. Jigme Namgyal saw the need for a strong **central authority** to ensure the country's future. In 1870, he ascended the throne as Druk Desi fully supported by the Lhengye Tshog and the Central Monk Body.

His reign was devoted mostly to rebuilding the Tashichoedzong which he had caused to be burned down in the war. The only disturbance was a rebellion in 1872. The deposed Thimphu Dzongpoen, Kawang Mangkhel, who had been allowed to retire unharmed in 1863, now volunteered his services to the government and was sent to Paro in leading central government troops against the rebel poenlop. There he negotiated a deal with the rebels whereby the poenlop escaped to India and he himself assumed the office of Paro Poenlop. The treachery, however, was short-lived, for Kawang Mangkhel was soon found with his head severed and thrown into the courtyard of Paro Dzong. A nephew of the absconding poenlop was installed as the new Paro Poenlop and the rebellion subsided. The following year in 1873, Jigme Namgyal retired and was succeeded by a first cousin, Kitshelp Dorji Namgyal as the new Druk Desi.

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Rebellion and consolidation of the central authority

With the country still unstable, Jigme Namgyal this time had no intention of fully retiring. Instead of returning home to Bumthang, he established himself at Simtokha and continued to maintain a physical presence at the helm of affairs. Even when trouble broke out in the east between his brother, Trongsa Poenlop Dungkar Gyeltshen, and his brother-in-law, Jakar Poenlop Pema Tenzin, both of whom requested his help against each other, Jigme Namgyal did not leave western Bhutan⁶.

Very soon, trouble began to brew as expected when the new Paro Poenlop revolted in 1877. Jigme Namgyal personally led the central government troops against Paro. Marching with him were Desi Kitchelp Dorji Namgyal and Thimphu Dzongpoen Lam Tshewang, who had succeeded his elder brother, the late Kawang Mangkhel, to the post in 1863. Jigme Namgyal's young son, Ugyen Wangchuck, and one of his adopted sons, Phuentsho Dorji, also accompanied him on the expedition.

As fighting in Paro dragged on, with Jigme Namgyal having taken the Paro Ta Dzong, another rebellion on a larger scale broke out to the east. The Punakha Dzongpoen in alliance with Damcho Rinchen, a former dzongpoen and a relative of the Paro Poenlop, forcefully enthroned the young Choglye Yeshe Nguedrup as a rival Desi. This was an open act of rebellion as the

⁶The trouble started when Dungkar Gyeltshen refused to honour the understanding that he would vacate the seat of Trongsa in favour of Pema Tenzin after three years. Jigme Namgyal refused to intervene as he regarded the quarrel as being between two close relatives.

incumbent desi was then busy fighting the rebellion in Paro. They were joined by Wangdue Phodrang Droenyer Angdruk Nyim who, after brutally murdering the dzongpoen, had taken the post for himself. Even Trongsa Poenlop Dungkar Gyeltshen, embittered by Jigme Namgyal's refusal to help him against the Jakar Poenlop, sent a small detachment of troops in support of the rebellion. There was every indication that what began as a rebellion by the Paro Poenlop was in fact a general uprising.

Realising the significance of the new development, Jigme Namgyal turned on the rebels in Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang, leaving his son Ugyen Wangchuck, in charge of the Paro Ta Dzong. After a serious military reverse suffered by Thimphu Dzongpoen Lam Tshewang who was sent ahead in the vanguard, Jigme Namgyal advanced with the main force and routed the combined enemy at Lobesa. He then paid siege to the dzongs of Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang.

As the tide began to turn against the rebels in Punakha, Damcho Rinchen made a pretence of deserting the rebellion and left for Paro supposedly on pilgrimage. There, he gained entrance to the Ta Dzong asking to meet Phuentsho Dorji who happened to be his nephew. In the process, he surprised the garrison and took both Ugyen Wangchuck and Phuentsho Dorji prisoners. Infuriated by the news of the treachery, Jigme Namgyal had all the relatives of Damcho Rinchen arrested and held hostage at Mendagang. Word was sent to Damcho Rinchen that the choice was between Ugyen Wangchuck's safe release and the lives of his relatives. Ugyen Wangchuck was released and in turn

the hostages were also let go unharmed.

Meanwhile, Paro Dzong was taken by the desi who managed to capture Chu Dzong and cut off water supplies to the dzong. The Paro Poenlop fled to India. Soon after, Jigme Namgyal re-conquered Punakha Dzong sending its dzongpoen fleeing to India. He then attacked Wangdue Phodrang where Angdruk Nyim had barricaded himself inside the dzong. He had the dzong mined with gun powder to be blown up in a last desperate act of defiance.

However, the Yangpai Lopen of the central Monk Body was able to dissuade him from his arsonist intentions promising to plead for his safety if he surrendered and spared the dzong. Angdruk Nyim surrendered and was taken prisoner along with all his supporters. By the close of 1878, the rebellion was finally crushed and the Chogyel Truelku retired to Talo Goenpa.

This was to be the last of Jigme Namgyal's military undertakings. Using the advantage of his victory, he decided to act firmly and decisively. Angdruk Nyim and his principal followers were publicly executed in the river below the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. The Central Monk Body failed to make the customary intercession on behalf of the condemned prisoners before their execution; perhaps indicating its resentment of the bloodshed and suffering caused by the rebellion.

Jigme Namgyal then began to place his trusted relatives and close allies to key positions. His elder son, Thinley Tobgye, who was studying at the Lhalung monastery in Tibet, was recalled to be the

Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen. Ugyen Wangchuck was installed as Paro Poenlop. Phuntsho Dorji, his adopted son, became Zhung Droenyer while Lam Tshewang, his loyal and proven supporter, remained the Thimphu Dzongpoen. When Kitshelp Dorji Namgyal died in 1879, Choegyal Zangpo, his trusted former Zhung Droenyer, as Druk Desi.

Accident and death

The final defeat of the rebellion and consolidation of central authority held good until Jigme Namgyal died three years later in 1881. Its success was because he retained **de facto control** over the country from his retirement at Simtokha, where he continued to live with his immediate family. Besides his two sons, Thinley Tobgye and Ugyen Wangchuck, and his only daughter, Yeshe Chodedon, the family included two adopted sons – Phuentsho Dorji, who was born in Wangdue Choeling on the same day and time as Ugyen Wangchuck⁷, and Alu Dorji, the son of Kawang Mangkhel and nephew of his loyal ally, Thimphu Dzongpoen Lam Tshewang.

In the winter of 1881, while returning from a visit to Punakha, Jigme Namgyal fell off his riding yak at Hongtsho near Dochula and was seriously injured. He was carried to Simtokha Dzong where he soon died of the injury. In the last hours before his death, Jigme Namgyal called together his sons and foster sons to his bedside. He told them that he had treated them all as his sons and

wished them to live as brothers helping each other. Above all, he entreated them never to fight against each other and to remain united against any threat to the country's future. With these words, Jigme Namgyal, the **leader of destiny**, passed away at the age of 56.

Conclusion

Jigme Namgyal was certainly the greatest national figure to emerge in Bhutan after Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Rising through the lowest ranks, he made himself the most powerful regional poenlop in the country, paving the way for a united Bhutan under his heirs. His achievements show the strength of his character and his determination to save the country from anarchy and dissolution.

Although he arose as a warrior, he also excelled in the art of mediating peace between the most intractable of foes. In every encounter, we see him determined to negotiate a settlement before resorting to arms.

The acts of violence, that he committed, must be understood in the context of widespread intrigues, treacheries and murder that prevailed in his time. Whatever he did, it is clear now to us that his intent was always to achieve national unity.

When British India, representing the greatest imperial power on earth, proclaimed war and threatened annexation, Bhutan was faced with a formidable challenge to its

⁷The birth of two boys on the same day and time and in the same place is considered specially auspicious.

very survival. Jigme Namgyal emerged as the man of the hour in whom the deeply divided dzongpoens and poenlops as well as the weak central government found the leader they all could trust and follow. More than any other factor it was Jigme Namgyal's leadership in the war and the consolidation of central authority and political power in

his own hands that laid the foundation of a united Bhutanese nation. Ultimately, it is difficult to understand Bhutan's survival as an independent nation without taking into account the decisive role Jigme Namgyal played in the affairs of the country even in his retirement at Simtokha in the final years of his life.

Student Activities

1. Construct a table showing the major military achievements of Jigme Namgyal. Specify the battle or event, the year in which it took place, its major causes and outcomes.
2. Make a time-line of the Age of Jigme Namgyal. On it locate the major internal and external developments during the period.
3. On an outline map of Bhutan show the extent of the Sharchhog Khorlo Tsibgye.
4. List the major steps through which Jigme Namgyel resorted peace and order in Bhutan.
5. Compare the political situation in Bhutan at the beginning of the Age of Jigme Namgyal with that at the end of it.
6. In chapter 11 of the Class IX Coursebook, we learnt that Jigme Namgyal performed great rites in Yongla Goenpa in honour of Phurba Lhatsho while in this chapter we learnt that he constructed a statue of the Dechog in Trongsa Dzong. Find out more details about Phurba Lhatsho (*Skt. Vajra Kila*) and Dechhog Khorlo Dampa (*Skt. Chakra Samvara*).
7. Describe and assess the strategy used by Jigme Namgyal to ensure peace and unity in the country before his death.
8. Trace Jigme Namgyal's family tree, including both his major ancestors and his descendants.
9. Discuss the likely consequences of
 - (a) the internal strife and
 - (b) the struggle with the British in India if not for Jigme Namgyal's able leadership.
10. Compare the political structure of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal's time with Jigme Namgyal's time, with the help of diagrams.

Chapter 2

DRUK GYALPO UGYEN WANGCHUCK

Monarch of Destiny

In the first chapter we learnt that the most important legacy of Jigme Namgyal's life-long struggle for national unity and sovereignty was the strong central authority that he established in the country. We saw that he sought to consolidate his achievement by placing trusted relatives and loyal allies in positions of power in the regions and at the centre. Thus, his 19 year old son, Ugyen Wangchuck, whom he had appointed Paro Poenlop, was in a position to take up the mantle when he dies in 1881; allowing for a smooth transition of power from father to son.

Early life

Ugyen Wangchuk was born at the Wangdue Choeling Palace in 1862. From a very young age he was taught reading and writing by his uncle, Kuenzang Tenpai Nyima, the eighth Sungruel incarnation of Tertoen Pema Lingpa. His real education and training, however, began at the age of eight when his father inducted him into his court as a common servant. The young Ugyen Wangchuck had to perform hard manual work by day and wait on his father with other attendants in the mornings

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KEY TERMS

Monarch of Destiny

network of alliance	<i>Gyadrung</i>
Bhutan Agent	mediator
KCIE	Oath of Allegiance
hereditary monarchy	<i>Gongzim</i>
British Political Officer	modern education
Monastic education	independence

and evenings. Growing up in the court of Jigme Namgyal, was in itself an exciting and challenging experience. Whether he was the Trongsa Poenlop, Druk Desi or in retirement, Jigme Namgyal's court was the foremost centre of political power in the country. Its atmosphere of intense activity, hard work and strict *Driglam Namzha* (ཐོག་ལྷན་གྱི་ལམ་སྐྱོད་ལཱ་སྐྱོད་ལཱ་སྐྱོད་ - etiquette) nurtured in Ugyen Wangchuck a strong sense of character and insight that was to serve him well in the course of his future career.

His first involvement in military action came in 1877, when, as mentioned earlier, he accompanied his father to suppress the rebellion in Paro. Although he was barely 15 years of age, Ugyen Wangchuck was given the opportunity to prove himself a man of courage and intelligence. During a crucial stage of the battle, as we recall, he was given command of the re-conquered Paro Ta Dzong and was even taken prisoner of war for some time. Ugyen Wangchuck came through the ordeal with courage, and his outstanding performance in the field was recognised when he was made Paro Poenlop in 1879.



Figure 2-1 Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck

Trongsa Poenlop

The long standing dispute between Trongsa Poenlop Dungkar Gyeltshen and Jakar Poenlop Pema Tenzin escalated into an open showdown after the death of Jigme Namgyal. As seen in the preceding chapter, Jigme Namgyal had regarded the dispute as one between two close relatives and refused to interfere even when both sides requested his assistance against each other. He was said to have told them he would endorse whoever came out the winner. Moreover, he felt that his presence in western Bhutan at the time was crucial and did not want to divert his energies elsewhere.

For similar reasons, Ugyen Wangchuck was also reluctant to get involved in the affair. Therefore, Pema Tenzin decided to take matters into his own hands. He dispatched his *Droensop* (མཚོན་གསོལ་ - assistant guest-master), Singye Namgyal, against Dungkar Gyeltshen, promising him the post of Trongsa Droenyer if he succeeded. The Droensop was successful and deposed Dungkar Gyeltshen. Pema Tenzin assumed the office of Trongsa Poenlop but did not keep his promise to Singye Namgyal. Instead, he appointed his own brother-in-law to the post of Trongsa Droenyer. This caused Singye Namgyal to assassinate Pema Tenzin and usurp the seat of Trongsa Poenlop for himself.

The turn of event brought very serious pressures on Ugyen Wangchuck to get involved in the affair. His mother, Ashi Pema Choeki, a sister of the assassinated Trongsa Poenlop, implored him to avenge the murder of his uncle. Ugyen Wangchuck,

hence, arrived in Bumthang with troops from Paro and besieged Jakar Dzong where Singye Namgyal had barricaded himself with the late poenlop's family members as his hostage. He threatened to blow up the dzong with gun powder if he was attacked, just as Wangdue Phodrang Droenyer Angdruk Nyim had done during Jigme Namgyal's time. In a dramatic encounter that followed, Singye Namgyal was surprised and killed along with his close supporters. Ugyen Wangchuck then declared himself the Trongsa Poenlop¹.

Strengthening of political unity

As Trongsa Poenlop, Ugyen Wangchuck began to pursue his father's strategy of strengthening his political position through family ties and alliances. His older brother, Thinley Tobgye, the Wangdue Phodrang Dzongpoen, was given the additional post of Paro Poenlop. When he died in an accident in 1883, Dawa Penjor, a first cousin, was appointed as the new Paro Poenlop. The office of Jakar Poenlop was abolished and another first cousin and son of late Pema Tenzin, Chhime Dorji, was appointed Jakar Dzongpoen. To further cement his **network of alliances**, Ugyen Wangchuck married Chhime Dorji's sister, Rinchen Pemo, and gave in marriage his own sister, Yeshey Choeden, to Chhime Dorji. After his mother died in 1884, Ugyen Wangchuck bequeathed the Wangdue Choeling Palace to his sister and her husband. The same year, Ugyen Wangchuck appointed Phuentsho Dorji and Alu Dorji, the two

¹Since a direct assault on the dzong would have led to its destruction as well as endangering the hostages, Ugyen Wangchuck lured out Singye Namgyal with peace proposals and gifts. In the process, he and his chief supporter were killed.

men he considered as his brothers, to the posts of Punakha Dzongpoen and Thimphu Dzongpoen respectively.

The last struggle for peace

Just as his father had to contend with jealousies and rebellions in his bid to establish central authority and national unity, Ugyen Wangchuck's rising power was bound to meet with similar opposition. The most serious of such oppositions came when his two adoptive brothers, Phuentsho Dorji and Alu Dorji, unilaterally appointed their own nominee as Druk Desi without consulting the Trongsa Poenlop. This was an open act of defiance, as the reigning Druk Desi was a nominee of Ugyen Wangchuck. To make matters worse, the two dzongpoens also hatched a conspiracy to assassinate Ugyen Wangchuck. They sent a letter and large bribes to the Trongsa Droenyer with the instructions to kill the poenlop. The loyal droenyer, however, not only refused to cooperate but reported the matter to Ugyen Wangchuck.

Ugyen Wangchuck felt grievously betrayed by the two men whom he had placed in high positions of trust. The unfolding situation called for firm action and a civil war became inevitable. Yet Ugyen Wangchuck wished to avoid a war. He realised that it would be damaging to the internal stability that he and his father had worked so hard to establish and maintain. He was also said to have expressed his deep concern for the suffering that a civil war would cause to the general public. Therefore, instead of reacting hastily, he invited the two dzongpoens to meet him halfway in the Shar district for negotiations. The two agreed but did not

come when Ugyen Wangchuck arrived at the prearranged meeting place. There was no one to meet the Trongsa Poenlop and not even a message had been sent. This was a great insult and Ugyen Wangchuck realised that he must deal with the situation with greater firmness. Deeply disappointed, he returned to Bumthang and began preparing for war.

The Trongsa Poenlop made a tour of all the districts under his jurisdiction and raised a force of 2,140 men under arms. In February 1885, he marched on Punakha Dzong. The Je Khenpo and the four lopoens of the Central Monk Body met the advancing Trongsa army and tried to mediate a settlement. Ugyen Wangchuck, however, refused to negotiate. He, instead, informed the monastic delegation that he had already sworn a sacred oath committing his own life to the guardian deities if his cause was not just. Further, he urged the monks to perform certain sacred rituals whereby the guardian deities may reveal who the real enemy of religion and the nation was.

In the meantime, trouble began to brew in the enemy camp with suspicions of treachery and intrigue that led to a series of infighting among the troops. Even the desi, the two dzongpoens had installed, refused to side with them openly, thus depriving them of any ground for legitimacy in their cause. When they approached the Zhabdrung's father to take on the seat of desi and side with them, he too refused.

Ugyen Wangchuck advanced up to Mendagang where an initial battle had been fought without a decisive outcome. The Trongsa army then crossed the river and

inflicted a resounding defeat on the enemy at Bjiligang above the dzong. Phuentsho Dorji fled to Thimphu with Ugyen Wangchuck in close pursuit. On reaching Simtokha the attacking force overpowered the garrison there and occupied the dzong. A subsequent battle at Lungtenphu resulted in the death of Alu Dorji's champion fighter which caused panic among his troops, who started fleeing in disarray. Once again, the Je Khenpo proposed mediation and this time both the sides agreed to discuss peace terms.

A meeting was arranged at Changlimithang where Ugyen Wangchuck was represented by Paro Poenlop Dawa Penjor, while Phuentsho Dorji led the opposite side. During the mid-day meal served to the negotiators, fighting broke out among some junior attendants. One old veteran of Jigme Namgyal's warring days took the sudden disturbance to be a sign of a treacherous ambush and drew his sword. While his sword was entangled in the folds of his kapney, he was attacked by Phuentsho Dorji. Paro Poenlop Dawa Penjor rushed to the rescue killing Phuentsho Dorji on the spot.

On learning of the incident immediately after, Alu Dorji and his family abandoned Tashichoedzong and fled to Tibet. Ugyen Wangchuck took over the dzong and appointed his cousin, Kuenzang Thinley, as Thimphu Dzongpoen². The desi was allowed to retire to a monastery. The following year, Yangpai Lopen Sangay Dorji, who

²He was the son of Dungkar Gyeltshen.

had been one of Jigme Namgyal's closest supporters, was nominated to the throne of Druk Desi³. Ugyen Wangchuck himself assumed the post of Gongzim to the desi in addition to the office of Trongsa Poenlop that he continued to hold.

The year 1885, thus, marked the end of the long period of internal feuds and civil wars that had plagued Bhutan since the beginning of the century. Trongsa Poenlop Ugyen Wangchuck emerged as the undisputed leader of the whole country. He had developed a strong network of allies, some inherited from his father and others established by himself through matrimonial alliances and key appointments. Above all, he commanded a superior and dedicated army that discouraged active opposition to his authority.

In 1890, Kuenzang Tenpai Nyima passed away in the monastery of Lhalung in Tibet. Ugyen Wangchuck travelled to Tibet where he arranged for the funeral ceremonies. There, he met many learned and high lamas like Khyentse Rinpoche and Kongtruel Rinpoche. He received important religious initiations and empowerments and was advised to

construct an image of *Guru Nangsi Zilnoen* (ཀུན་སྐྱོད་མེད་ཟེལ་གཞོན་) for the spiritual well being and prosperity of his country. He immediately commissioned the construction of a new temple at Kuje to contain a three-storied statue of Guru Rinpoche. The temple was consecrated in 1894.

³He was the person who convinced Angdruk Nyim to surrender without destroying the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong in 1879.

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Even as peace finally began to dawn in the country, a personal tragedy struck Ugyen Wangchuck in 1900. His wife, Ashi Rinchen Pemo, died after a long illness. She had borne him two daughters and three sons, but all the sons had died in infancy. Later, as were the last wished of Ashi Rinchen Pemo, he married Ashi Tsundrue Lhamo (Lemo), the daughter of his cousin, Thimphu Dzongpoen Kuenzang Thinley.

Appointment of Gyadrung

With internal stability finally secured, Ugyen Wangchuck felt it was time for Bhutan to strengthen its foreign contacts. He summoned Ugyen Dorji from Kalimpong in India and recruited him into the service of Trongsa. Ugyen Dorji was the son of Sharpa Puenchung whose father in turn was Pala Gyeltshen of the Dungkar Chhoeje. (See box on page 3). Ugyen Dorji's first assignment was to negotiate the extradition of Alu Dorji and his family from Tibet, where he was trying to muster Tibetan support to make a comeback in Bhutan.

In 1898, Ugyen Dorji organised a meeting between Paro Poenlop Dawa Penjor and representatives of the Tibetan government. The agreement signed at Phari provided for Alu Dorji to have administrative jurisdiction over Haa, Lingzhi and Gasa for his life time and, for his family members to be rehabilitated in their private estates in Bhutan. Alu Dorji himself settled in the Chumbi Valley where he died soon after the settlement was concluded.

Ugyen Dorji was then appointed *Gyadrung* (ཧྲུང་པོ་ - Officer-in-charge of the region near

India) in 1900. The *kasho* (བཀའ་ལོག་ - edict) by the central government gave Ugyen Dorji administrative powers over the entire region of southern Bhutan stretching from “Amartala in the east to Daga in the west”, and made him accountable to the Trongsa Poenlop. To the British, he was their ‘**Bhutan Agent**’ responsible for handling their relations with Bhutan. Residing in Kalimpong, Ugyen Dorji spoke several Indian languages and had a wide circle of personal contacts – assets that proved useful in his post.

Bhutan-British relations and the Anglo-Tibetan war, 1904

After the Sinchula Treaty of 1865, relations between Bhutan and British.

India steadily improved, despite minor incidents that continued to occur along the border. The British, nevertheless, continued to be wary of Bhutan as a possible source of trouble. In 1888, the Tibetans occupied a small strip of land in Sikkim and asked for assistance from Bhutan. Ugyen Wangchuck refused to be drawn into the conflict. The Tibetans were subsequently expelled by the British who now began to understand and appreciate the neutral stand taken by Bhutan.

British interest in Tibet traditionally centered around acquiring better trading rights in that country. By the turn of the century, however, the British government became obsessed with the idea that Tibet was falling into the Russian sphere of influence. Hence, their policy towards Tibet became more aggressive. In 1903, the British decided to send an armed

expedition and force their way to Lhasa via the Chumbi Valley. The British had earlier requested the Trongsa Poenlop to establish contact with the Tibetans for negotiations, but the Tibetan government rejected all such approach.

The Anglo-Tibetan war, which broke out in 1904, was to have a great impact on Ugyen Wangchuck's political future. He clearly understood the British power in India and made every effort to convince the Tibetans to avoid a war. In 1903, he was invited by Colonel Francis Younghusband, who was to command the British expeditionary force into Tibet, to a meeting to discuss the Tibetan-British situation. To avoid giving the British any impression that he was siding with them, Ugyen Wangchuck did not go himself but sent Kuenzang Thinley to represent him. His real sympathies lay with Tibet which, for historical and cultural reasons, had closer ties to Bhutan. Moreover, he did not want to put at risk the hard-earned internal peace of Bhutan by getting involved in a foreign war.

Kuenzang Thinley was warmly received by Younghusband and treated with appropriate protocol and respect. Ugyen Wangchuck was convinced that Bhutan could play a positive role in finding a solution to the problem and decided to offer his assistance in mediating a fair settlement. By then, however, the British had already started to march on towards Lhasa. They requested the Trongsa Poenlop to join their expedition.

The Central Monk Body and the Lhengye Tshog were initially opposed to the idea of Trongsa Poenlop marching with the British to Lhasa. Besides its other implications,

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they were concerned for his personal safety. Nevertheless, Ugyen Wangchuck was determined to proceed. His aim was not to fight in support of the British but to save Tibet from total defeat which he knew was inevitable. He proposed to help both sides by offering his services as a sincere and trustworthy mediator.

Leading a detachment of Bhutanese troops, the Trongsa Poenlop joined the British column in the Chumbi Valley. He was also accompanied by Gyadrung Ugyen Dorji and Thimphu Dzongpoen Kuenzang Thinley. He immediately succeeded in making a strong personal impression on the British troops and officers and began to win their trust and confidence. Colonel Younghusband observed that the Trongsa Poenlop was "straight and possessed of a natural authority". He also won the trust and respect of the Tibetans who preferred to deal with the British mostly through him.

The expedition reached Lhasa in August 1904 after two battles in which the Tibetans suffered crushing defeats. Ugyen Wangchuck entered the sacred city of

Lhasa in full *chibdrel* (ཚེས་གྲུབ་ - ceremonial procession) ceremony, wearing for the first time his raven-headed crown adapted from his father's battle helmet. The Dalai Lama had fled to Mongolia leaving the British to deal with the Regent.

Ugyen Wangchuck, along with the Nepalese resident representative, was the chief negotiator. After protracted negotiations, a new treaty was finally signed at the Potala Palace on September 7, 1904. He won high prestige as a mediator among the

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Tibetans who made him offers of lavish presents. For the Bhutanese, it was a matter of great national pride that Bhutan had been so successful a **mediator** between two neighbouring foreign powers. On his return, Ugyen Wangchuck was welcomed like a conquering hero. Zhabdrung Jigme Choegyal (1862-1904) even composed a poem in his honour.

Recognition by the British

In appreciation of the role he played in negotiating the treaty with Tibet, Ugyen Wangchuck was presented with the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (**K.C.I.E**) by the British. This gave

him the title 'Sir' John Claude White, the British Political Officer in Sikkim, was sent to Bhutan personally to present the insignia. Ugyen Dorji, whose services were also recognized, was promoted and appointed the Haa *Drungpa* (Administrator of the Haa region) by Ugyen Wangchuck.

Ugyen Wangchuck and John Claude White were to become very close friends. The latter even accompanied the former during a private visit to Lhalung (Tibet) in 1905, to attend the installation of the ninth Peling Sungtruel who was his nephew. Their personal rapport was to establish a very strong basis for future relations between Bhutan and British India.



Figure 2-2 Trongsa Poenlop Ugyen Wangchuck with Senior Ministers and Officials, Trongsa 1905

The first Druk Gyalpo

In 1903, Druk Desi Sangay Dorji passed away after a long reign of 18 years. Chogley Truelku Yeshe Nguedrup succeeded to the throne. As the last in the line of Druk Desis, it was to his credit that he presided over a smooth transition to a totally new era. In 1906, he retired to the Sangchhoekhor monastery in Paro, where he devoted himself to religious and artistic pursuits. He was in later years to be recalled once again to serve the nation as Je Khenpo from 1915 till he died in 1917.

After his retirement in 1906, no new Druk Desi was nominated. Zhabdrung Jigme Choegyel had died in 1904, and a new Zhabdrung incarnation had yet to be found and recognised. Thus the country, for the first time, came to be left with both seats of Zhabdrung and Druk Desi vacant for a time.

The political vacuum that emerged, encouraged Gyadrung Ugyen Dorji to petition to the Lhengye Tshog to consider electing Ugyen Wangchuck as hereditary King of Bhutan. He strongly argued that the changing times had made it necessary for the country to think of new ways to ensure its future as a sovereign independent nation for all time to come. The dual system of government, founded by the great Zhabdrung, had become weak with most of the Zhabdrung incarnations and

desis becoming mere puppets in the hands of regional poenlops and dzongpoens. Only a system of **hereditary monarchy**, with an assured line of succession, could ensure the continued peace and stability of the country and safeguard its independence. He reasoned that there was no person other than Ugyen Wangchuck, who had risen to be the most powerful leader of Bhutan and that he was the only person who had the respect and support of the people to fill the role of King. His proposal was discussed at great length and finally it was unanimously decided that Trongsa Poenlop Ugyen Wangchuck be chosen as the first hereditary King of Bhutan.

Thus, on December 17, 1907, with the signing and sealing of the **Oath of Allegiance** in a grand ceremony in Punakha Dzong, Ugyen Wangchuck was installed as the first Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan. The

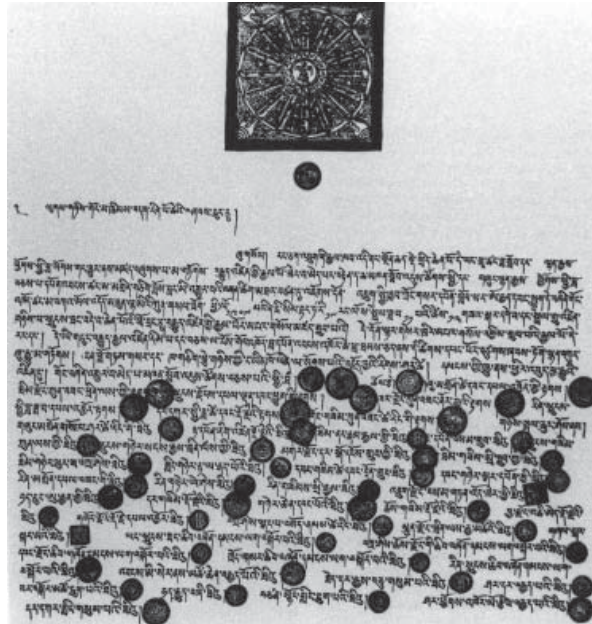
great *Nga Chudrugma* (འཇམ་འགྲུ་མ་) seal of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, which also the official seal of all the successive zhabdrungs, was imprinted in red on the top of the page of the document. It was then signed and sealed by all the members of Lhengye Tshog, the Central Monk Body, the poenlops, the dzongpoens, and other government officials as well as the senior monks. (See box on page 32). Two copies of the document were prepared. The ceremony was attended by an official British delegation led by John Claude White who, in his congratulatory speech, said:



Figure 2-3 The installation ceremony of Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck. First from left, J.C. White; Gongzim Ugyen Dorji (standing); Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck, seated in the centre



Figure 2-4 The last Druk Desi, Chogyel Truelku Yeshe Nguedrup



To the lotus of the Precious Judge, the Exalted one of the Dual System of Religious and Secular Law. It is submitted that while from former times in our kingdom of Bhutan the Great Regent took office from among any that came forth from the lamas and teachers of the monastic college or from the council of ministers and the regional governors, there was otherwise no hereditary monarch. Now therefore a contract has been drawn up in firm conclusion containing unanimous agreement, which is not to be altered, on the part of all officers and subjects including the abbot and teachers of the monastic community, the ministers of the council of state and the regional governors. According to the purport of this contract expressing the deliberations and common desire of all those mentioned above and made evident to all gods and men, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck, the leader of Bhutan and Trongsa Poenlop, has been empowered as hereditary monarch in the Palace

of Great Bliss at Pungthang (Punakha), the second Potala, on 17 December 1907, corresponding to the 12th day of the 11th month of our own year of the Earth Monkey, at a time of favourable astrological conjunction. Accordingly, we the above mentioned lamas and officials, subjects and followers, great and small, shall place our loyalty as witness and render service and honour to the king who has been installed on the Golden Throne and to the succession of his royal heirs. If otherwise there should be any kind of accusing talk arising from evilly disposed rumour of false gossip, then such persons are to be expelled from the common fold. In unalterable acceptance of this, the common seal of abbot, teachers and monastic community, there follow the individual seals of ministers and governors; lesser officials of the capital and provinces (“the junior most double rationed ones”); minor functionaries (“those entitled to riding mounts”); and finally the headmen of the “subject citizens” of each district.

Oath of Allegiance along with the English translation

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“I have known Bhutan for many years; and with an intimate knowledge of the political questions relating thereto, I am convinced you have taken a wise step in this consolidating the administration of the state. Sir Ugyen has been my friend for many years and you could not have made a better choice. His integrity, uprightness and firmness of character commend him to everyone and his accession to Maharajaship (Kingship) is not only a gain to Bhutan but also is of great advantage to the British government which will henceforth have a settled government with a man of strong character to negotiate with”.

The British India were happy with the course taken by Bhutan in determining its future. They understood that monarchy would guarantee the country’s stability as well as its continuous good relations with British India. Ugyen Wangchuck himself understood the power of the British and not only developed good relations with them but also gained their respect. Gradrung Ugyen Dorji was promoted and appointed as the **Gongzim** to the new Druk Gyaplo.

The Treaty of Punakha, 1910

In the same year that Ugyen Wangchuck ascended the throne, the British had proposed a new treaty to replace the old Treaty of Sinchula. It was, however, finalised only towards the end of 1909. The signing of the final draft took place on January 8, 1910 at Punakha between His Majesty King Ugyen Wangchuck and the new **British Political Officer** in Sikkim, Sir Charles Bell.

The annual British subsidy was raised from 50,000 Rupees to 100,000 Rupees. While Bhutan agreed to be guided by British advice

in its external affairs, the British were not to interfere in Bhutan’s internal affairs. There was no provision for stationing a resident British Agent in Bhutan.

The treaty further improved relations between Bhutan and British India. British Political Officers based in Sikkim visited Bhutan from time to time and were very supportive of the King’s aspirations for the kingdom. In December 1911, the Druk Gyalpo made a visit to India.

On the invitation of the British government, he travelled to Delhi on the occasion of the Coronation Durbar where he also met with King George V of England. The Druk Gyalpo was accorded a grand reception with a full guard of honour and had cordial meetings with the British monarch.

Internal reforms

Influenced by ideas of modern development, Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck introduced **modern education** which, he believed, to be the first step towards development. The only form of education available at the time in Bhutan was monastic learning which focused solely on religious studies. He began sending Bhutanese children to schools in Kalimpong in India and within the country, he built the first modern school at Haa. By 1914, forty six Bhutanese students had been enrolled. Gongzim Ugyen Dorji was given the additional responsibility of supervising the education and welfare of the Bhutanese students in Kalimpong. In 1915, a second school was opened in Bumthang for Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck and some of his attendants. By 1921, twelve students who had studied in India returned to form a

small core of educated professionals in the Bhutanese civil service.

The Druk Gyalpo started Royal Patronage to Bhutanese monks and scholars to study further in Tibet and, invited teachers and learned scholars from there to teach in Bhutan. The process produced some of the greatest Bhutanese scholars who contributed immensely to the improvement of **monastic education** in the country. The monastic communities within the country, particularly the ones at Trongsa and Bumthang, became renowned centres for the study of Buddhist philosophy and literature.

Among the other important measures that the Druk Gyalpo introduced for the development of the country were the first steps towards improving internal communications and the reduction of land

taxes and woola (ལྷན་ལྷོ་ - customary tax in the form of labour) obligations. He also made conscious efforts to encourage trade and commerce with India.

The last years of a great monarch

In 1917, Ugyen Dorji died and his son, Sonam Tobgye Dorji, who already held the office of Haa Drungpa, succeeded him to the post of Gongzim. The following year, Paro Poenlop Dawa Penjor also died. He was succeeded by Tshering Penjor, the grandson of Jakar Dzongpoen Chhime Dorji.

A few years later in 1922, the Queen, Ashi Tsundrue Lhamo, also passed away. Besides the Crown Prince, Jigme Wangchuck, born in 1905, the royal couple had three other

children: Dasho Jurme Dorji born in 1912, AshiKoencho Wangmo born in 1915 and, Dasho Naku (Karma Thinlay Lhundrup) born in 1918. The King also had two daughters, Pedon and Yangzom, by his first consort. Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck spent the last years of his life in Bumthang mostly in retreat, devoting himself to meditation and prayers. He passed away in August 1926, at the age of 64. Before his death, the Druk Gyalpo sent large donations of provisions, cloth and money to the Central Monk Body in Punakha and commanded that his royal remains be cremated at Kuje Lhakhang.

Conclusion

By 1885, after the battle of Changlimithang which marked the last struggle of feudal lords against his power, Ugyen Wangchuck had already emerged as the only leader capable of ensuring Bhutan's nationhood. His astute handling of foreign affairs steered Bhutan safely through a dangerous period of great power politics in the region. He avoided trouble with the Chinese in Tibet and befriended the British in India, thereby preserving and strengthening the **independence** of Bhutan.

He gave to Bhutan what Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal had envisaged – basically a strong government and national identity. Finally, it was his enthronement as the first Druk Gyalpo and the establishment of the hereditary monarchy that marked the beginning of a glorious era in the history of Bhutan. Under the wise and strong leadership of Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck, Bhutan maintained peace and continuity, to face the later challenges of

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modernisation which, in turn, as we will see in the succeeding chapters, were to bring about prosperity and social justice to its people.

Student Activities

1. List the major accomplishments of Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck.
2. Describe how he brought peace to Bhutan.
3. Explain and assess the development of Bhutan's closer relationship with the British in India.
4. Explain the strategy Ugyen Wangchuck used to secure his position as Trongsa Poenlop.
5. The Oath of Allegiance signed on 17 December, 1907, enthroning Ugyen Wangchuck is recognised as the basic constitution of Bhutan. Can you elaborate on it?
6. Distinguish between monastic education and modern education.
7. Evaluate the impact of Ugyen Wangchuck's internal reforms.
8. Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter. The year is 1926 and Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck has just died. You are asked by your editor to compose an obituary. What would you write?
9. Extend the family tree that you traced in the previous chapter, and don't forget to show the relationship between the Wangchuck family and the Dorji family.
10. Draw a diagram of the political structure during the time of first king and compare it with those you drew in the previous chapter.
11. Imagine you are one of the king's advisors at the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Punakha. What clauses would you not have agreed to? Are there important considerations that were omitted?

Chapter 3

DRUK GYALPO JIGME WANGCHUCK

The Consolidator

We now begin a new chapter with the basic understanding that, when Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck passed away in 1926, he left behind a kingdom that was free from internal divisions and that enjoyed good external relations, particularly with British India. It was, therefore, imperative that the consolidation of these gains became the chief responsibility of his heir, Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuk. In the last hours before his death, King Ugyen Wangchuck told his son that the greatest task lying ahead was to safeguard the kingdom's security and to create a **fair and just society**. It was with these words in mind that the 22 year old Crown Prince ascended the Golden Throne.

Early Life

All the three sons born to King Ugyen Wangchuck by the first Queen, Ashi Rinchen Pemo, died in their infancy. It was, therefore, a matter of relief when Ashi Tsundrue Lhamo (Lemo), the second Queen whom, we may recall, the King had married after the death of the first, gave birth to a son in 1905. This was Jigme Wangchuck who, two years later, became Crown Prince when his father was acclaimed as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan.

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KEY TERMS

Consolidator	lineage
fair and just society	taxation
prerogative	<i>Nangi Lhengye Zhi</i>
bureaucracy	<i>drungpa</i>
<i>dzongtshab</i>	total supremacy
royal endorsement	standing army
policy of isolation	sovereign nation

The training and education of Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck began at the age of seven. As noted in Chapter 2, King Ugyen Wangchuck had begun the process of introducing modern education in the country. He had started sending selected young Bhutanese students for schooling to India and also built the first modern schools in Bhutan, the Wangchuck Lhodzong at Haa and the Thinlay Rabten, attached to the Wangdue Choeling Palace, in Bumthang. It was in the latter school that the Crown Prince, along with several children of attendants and the local nobility, began his formal education. The students were taught the Hindi and English languages besides traditional Bhutanese subjects.

Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck was brought to, as was his father before him, under the strict precepts of Driglam Namzha from a very early age. This aspect of his training and upbringing involved the tradition of serving his father as an ordinary attendant. He had to work for the royal household like any other servant and wait on the King for long hours every day.

In 1919, when he was only 14 years old, the Crown Prince was appointed Trongsa Droenyer. Since the King, as observed



Figure 3-1 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck

earlier, continued to retain the office of Trongsa Poenlop, his new position made him the chief household officer of the Royal Court. As such, when the Queen passed away in 1922, the full responsibility of overseeing the funeral rites, therefore, fell on the shoulders of young Jigme Wangchuck. Though grief stricken as he must have been, the Crown Prince successfully coordinated the massive funeral events. The following year, he was installed as Trongsa Poenlop.

Later in the year, the Crown Prince married Ashi Phuentsho Choedon, daughter of Chhume Zhelngo Dasho Jamyang and Ashi Demcho. The family of Chhume Zhelngo traced its direct spiritual as well as hereditary **lineage** to Thuksye Dawa, the “heartson” of Tertoen Pema Lingpa. Ashi Demcho was a daughter of Jakar Dzongpoen Chimme Dorji and his wife, Ashi Yeshe Choeden, who as we noted in an earlier chapter, was the grand daughter of Tamzhing Chhoeje Ugyen Phuentsho.

Thus, it was the marriage of Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck to Ashi Phuentsho Choedon that brought together three lineages of Tertoen Pema Lingpa into the Royal Family of Bhutan – the Dungkar Chhoeje, the Tamzhing Chhoeje and, the Chhume Zhelngo. Inter-marriage between cousins were widely spread custom in those days, particularly among the nobility. Its practice served to consolidate a family’s property and prestige.

The Coronation

In 1926, Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck died at his retreat near Kuje Lhakhang in

Bumthang. While his royal remains still lay-in-state, awaiting an auspicious date for cremation, the new Druk Gyalpo travelled to Punakha for his coronation. On March 14, 1927, barely six months after the passing of his father, Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck was crowned the second Druk Gyalpo. The coronation ceremony was presided over by the Zhabdrung with the Je Khenpo, the Paro Poenlop and all district dzongpoens of Bhutan in attendance. The British Government was represented by an official delegation led by F.M. Bailey, the Political Officer in Sikkim. The new King of Bhutan was offered the insignia of the Companion of the Indian Empire (**C.I.E**) by the British Government.

After the coronation ceremonies, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck made generous gifts to the Central Monk Body and the public at large. He granted large quantities of gold for refurbishing the gild coating on all the sacred images in Punakha Dzong and commissioned the construction of an entire

new *sertog* (གསེར་རྟོག་ - ornamental gold pagoda) for the dzong itself. New sets of complete volumes of the Kanjur and Tenjur books as well as mask dance costumes were presented to the dzong and generous gifts of food, clothing, livestock and money distributed to the public. His Majesty performed these benevolent acts of piety in memory of his father and for the spiritual well-being of the kingdom’s future. His Majesty then returned to Bumthang where he duly completed his father’s cremation rites.

Reform of the administrative and taxation systems

Soon after his father’s cremation ceremonies, the King made an extensive tour of eastern Bhutan. His Majesty then began a series of reforms towards fulfilling his father’s last wishes – to create a just and fair society. As His Majesty’s primary aim was to reduce the tax burden on the people, the reforms mainly touched the areas of administration and **taxation**. His Majesty adopted the strategy of lowering taxes by curtailing government expenditure through streamlining the district administration.

King Ugyen Wangchuck had allowed the district administrations at various levels to largely retain all their traditional powers and privileges. Only the districts of the eastern region were directly administered by the King in his additional capacity as Trongsa Poenlop. The new Druk Gyalpo was now determined to assume direct control over the administration of all districts of the kingdom. He began by making the appointment of regional poenlops and district dzongpoens the sole **prerogative** of the King. All policy decisions at the local level became subject to royal assent.

The central government was maintained in a small and compact form with the King as its head. At the highest level, the King was assisted by four officer bearers of ministerial rank constituting the *Nangi Lhengye Zhi* (འདྲ་གི་ལྷན་རྒྱུས་བཞི་ -the Central Cabinet), consisting of the *Zhung Kalyoen* (གཞུང་བཀའ་འབྲོན་ - government minister), the *Zhung Droenyer*

(གཞུང་མགོན་གཉེན་ - government guestmaster), the *Zhung Zimpoen* or *Gongzim* (གཞུང་གཞིམ་དཔོན་གོང་གཞིམ་ - government chamberlain) and the *Thimphup-Punap* (ཐིམ་ཕུའུ་པུ་ནམ་ - the combined office of the Dzongpoen of Thimphu and Punakha). A small palace secretariat constituted the entire civil **bureaucracy**. A small team of bright young clerks, working with bamboo quills, soot ink and strictly rationed traditional hand-made paper, took on daunting task of implementing the King’s reforms.

It was found that, at the district and gewog levels, officials maintained large numbers of subordinate officers and retainers under them. His Majesty resorted to the innovative measure of combining some posts in a single person and leaving many others vacant when their incumbents either retired or died. Many posts, particularly those of *drungpas* (རྫོང་པ་ -sub-divisional administrator), were altogether abolished. Several districts and gewogs thus came under direct central rule through lower ranking officials like *dzongshabs* (རྫོང་མཁན་ - acting dzongpoens). Of the poenlops, only the Paro Poenlop survived with an autonomous revenue base. The office of the Trongsa Poenlop continued to be retained by the King and, the Daga Poenlop was much reduced in status. Through such administrative reforms, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck soon succeeded in establishing **total supremacy** of the monarchy throughout the kingdom.

The administrative reforms were designed mainly to reduce tax burden of the people. King Jigme Wangchuck was always concerned about the taxation system prevailing in the kingdom. He would often recall that his father had wished to radically reform the system. The poenlops and dzongpoens imposed heavy and uneven taxes for the maintenance of dzongs and their own large retinues. Only a small share of the taxes went to the central government. The King's direct control over the administrative machinery and the taxation system throughout the kingdom would not only reduce the overall tax burden, but also strengthen the government's revenue base simply by cutting wastage at the district dzongs.

Later in his reign, the Druk Gyalpo was to initiate a meticulous review of the entire taxation system. In the 1940s, he issued kashos directly to the people seeking details of their tax obligations. The people were required to submit their reports directly to the King, without routing through the district officials. His Majesty held consultations with knowledgeable persons whom he summoned for the purpose from villages in the districts. What emerged was a complicated pattern of taxation that was both unproductive to the government and heavy and uneven on the people.

His Majesty then set in motion a massive programme of tax reforms starting from the district of Bumthang. In the process, many archaic forms of taxes that were either paid in kind or in unpaid labour were greatly reduced or abolished. These included the obligation to supply firewood and hay to the local dzongs. There were other items of

taxation in different regions. In the eastern region, for example, there was a system of "cloth tax" – the obligation to weave cloth for the dzongs. All such types of taxes were done away with. A free porterage service for the transport of government goods was made lenient and a system of payment for such labour was introduced for the first time. Reformation of the tax system remained the lasting preoccupation of the second Druk Gyalpo throughout his life.

In matters of legal process, His Majesty did away with all the harsher forms of punishment of criminals. Traditionally, convicted murderers were thrown into rivers tied to the bodies of their victims. Imposition of fines for offences was such that felons became reduced to absolute poverty without hope of recovery. Runaway slaves and prisoners had their achilles' tendon cut, thereby rendering them cripples for life. Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck abolished all such traditional methods of dispensing justice.

Religious reforms

The Central Monk Body and the regional rabdeys were brought closer within the central administrative machinery. The King took into his own hands the power to appoint Je Khenpos and the abbots of the rabdeys. Although the four lopoens were continued to be appointed by the Central Monk Body, their appointments were made subject to **royal endorsement**.

As did his father before him, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck continued to encourage and support Bhutanese monks and scholars going to the great monasteries of Tibet for

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higher studies. Promising monks of the dratshang were sent to the Kagyu centre of Dorje Drak and Mindroling. Many of them returned as outstanding scholars who later made notable contributions to the preservation of Bhutan's religious and cultural heritage. Foremost among them was Geshye Geduen Rinchen, a scholar and teacher acclaimed throughout the world of Lamaist Buddhism. (He retired as the sixty-ninth Je Khenpo during the reign of the fourth Druk Gyalpo). Others included Lam Nado¹ and Lopen Pema Tshewang², among many others. The former became a renowned teacher and writer who initiated the development of Dzongkha literature.

High Tibetan lamas and scholars continued to be invited to teach and practice in Bhutan. Besides monks, the king also encouraged and sponsored laymen to study traditional medicine and astrology in the most reputed institutes of Tibet.

Several members of the Royal Family became devout followers and patrons of some of the greatest Buddhist lamas. Among them, the most notable was the King's sister Ashi Wangmo, who was a close follower of the Sixteenth Karmapa. She became a nun and founded the Jangchup Choeling Dratshang in Kurtoe.

¹He wrote Druk Karpo, an authoritative source for Bhutanese history and died as the Abbot of Tharpaling in 1988.

²A leading scholar of the Pema Lingpa tradition, he was the founding Director of the National Library of Bhutan. He wrote extensively on Buddhism and the religious and cultural history of Bhutan and is the principal source for all writing on Bhutanese history including these chapters as well as Western publications on the subject. He retired from civil service in 1994 and actively continues his religious and scholarly pursuits as Abbot of the Nyimlung monastery.

The Royal Family instituted two private monasteries in Bumthang under royal patronage: one at the old temple of Tharpaling founded by Longchen Rabjampa in the twelfth century and the other at Nyimlung, on land and other resources donated by the Queen's family. *Shaydras* (ལྷན་ཁྱེད་ colleges of Buddhist studies), were attached to both the monasteries and renowned Buddhist teachers appointed as their abbots. The Royal Family attended important ceremonies at the two monasteries and the King made occasional inspection visits to ensure their high standards. The two monasteries continued to flourish as important Nyingma centres to the present day.

Efforts toward modern development

Since the early years of his reign, the King was keenly interested to introduce some degree of modern development. His Majesty proposed improvement of communications and forest conservation besides health and education services. Bhutan, however, did not have the financial resources to implement His Majesty's plans. Besides the annual British subsidy, the kingdom had no other source of external finance. While every visiting British Political Officer was sympathetic to Bhutan's need of financial assistance to support the King's plans, they could offer little material help. They made repeated proposals to their government strongly recommending financial assistance to Bhutan. But, the British government remained reluctant to respond in any positive way. The King was, therefore, able to make only tentative beginnings towards modern development during his reign.

In the area of modern education, the Druk Gyalpo expanded on the modest beginning made by his father. His Majesty continued to send increasing numbers of Bhutanese students to Kalimpong where Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji was responsible for their care and education. Students who had completed their schooling were selected for further studies or training in other parts of India. The two schools in Haa and Wangdue Choeling were improved and ungraded. Later in the 1940s, several new primary schools came to be established within the kingdom.

Another area of development that His Majesty keenly pursued was the improvement of public health services. British Political Officers, and medical doctors accompanying them in visits, discovered common diseases that were epidemic among the Bhutanese. They made fervent appeals to their government for assistance in the form of simple vaccines and drugs, but again to no avail. His Majesty, therefore, initiated gallant efforts in combating such epidemics with his own limited private resources.

The British government proved more forthcoming with assistance in the area of military training and supply of simple arms. Fifteen young men, recruited and selected for training with the British army at Shillong, returned to form the core of Bhutan's first **standing army**. More recruits followed in increasing numbers for similar training until they formed a detachment of royal bodyguards and a military brass band. Many of them later rose to high ranks and helped establish the Royal Bhutan Army,

the Royal Bhutan Bodyguards and the Royal Bhutan Police during the reign of the third Druk Gyalpo. The second Druk Gyalpo's armoury of five hundred modern rifles increased to more than two thousand with British help.

Foreign relations

Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck was the first Bhutanese leader to be fully exposed to the intricacies of foreign policy. Since the founding of Bhutan as a nation-state by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the seventeenth century, foreign policy was limited to maintaining the **policy of isolation**. While the world was in turmoil through much of his reign, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck maintained the age-old policy and steered his kingdom unscathed through the Great Depression (1930s) and the Second World War (1939-1945). It was, however, the gathering momentum of the independence movement in India that was closer to home and fraught with dangers and uncertainties for the kingdom. So was the rising Chinese power to the north.

The Punakha Treaty of 1910 did not provide for the stationing of a resident British mission in Bhutan. Bilateral relations with the British were conducted through the British Political Officer based at Gangtok in Sikkim. The visit of F.M. Baily in 1927 for the coronation, was followed by all of his successors. A.J. Hopkins, who was the last British Political Officer to visit Bhutan, came to present the Druk Gyalpo with the insignia of the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E) in 1947. Paro Poenlop Tshering Penjore, (who built

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the Ugyen Pelri Palace to accommodate visiting foreign dignitaries), played an important role in the conduct of Bhutan's foreign relations. He was responsible for the reception and care of all foreign visitors as they passed through Paro, which was then the gateway of Bhutan.

King Jigme Wangchuck made only two visits to India during his entire reign. He was invited to Guwahati on a one-day visit while on his tour of the eastern districts of Bhutan soon after his coronation. The second visit was to Calcutta in 1935, at the invitation of the Viceroy. The Royal Family including the Queen and the Crown Prince, was accompanied by a large entourage. Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji and his family were also in attendance during the visit. The return journey from Calcutta took the royal party by Bodhgaya on pilgrimage and through Gangtok and Chumbi Valley to Haa.

Besides making requests for development assistance, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck also persisted in demanding the return of Deothang which, as already seen, the British had taken from Bhutan in the Duar War of 1864-65. Although he was disappointed with the British for not responding to his requests, the Druk Gyalpo continued to maintain good relations with them. He was closely advised by his Gongzim, who had a sophisticated understanding of international affairs of the time.

The British government, on the other hand, was never clear about Bhutan's status vis-à-vis the British Empire. By and large they saw no advantage in extending development assistance to Bhutan. Instead,

they considered it to be in their own best interest that Bhutan remain outside the framework of the British Empire. An independent Bhutan bound by treaty obligations was an inexpensive means of securing some 250 miles of British India's vulnerable north-eastern frontier. On the question of Deothang, the British vaguely regarded its continued possession as a matter of imperial prestige. We saw earlier, it was the site of a humiliating defeat the British suffered at Bhutanese hands with the loss of two cannons in the war of 1864-65.

As the independence of India drew nearer, there was anxiety in Bhutan as to the policies that the new Republic of India might adopt towards its neighbours. Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck had tried to make his case with the British Cabinet Mission, which had been appointed to draw up plans for Indian independence. It claimed that Bhutan was never a part of the British Empire and that its independent status must be maintained. The British could not give any definite views on the subject. All uncertainties, however, ceased when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of the interim government of India, sent a message of goodwill to the Druk Gyalpo in 1946. The following year, the Government of India invited Bhutan to attend the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi.

When India became independent on August 15, 1947, negotiations for a new treaty between Bhutan and the Republic of India began in earnest. In the previous year (1946), a Bhutanese delegation led by the Gongzim had been in New Delhi to negotiate

the terms. On August 8, 1949, the India-Bhutan treaty was signed at Darjeeling, which replaced the Punakha Treat of 1910. While the two countries pledged mutual friendship and peace in perpetuity, some of the legacies of the old Anglo-Bhutanese treaty had to be carried over.

The Republic of India would not interfere in internal affairs of Bhutan and, Bhutan would be guided by Indian advice in the conduct of its foreign relations. Thirty-two square kilometre of territory in Deothang, which the British had so jealously guarded over 80 years, was returned to Bhutanese sovereignty. The treaty was a reflection of the bold idealism prevailing in the newly independent India and a precursor to the emerging dynamism of South Asian

cooperation. Above all, it laid the strong foundations of close India-Bhutan bilateral relations in future decades.

The Royal Family

In 1928, Queen Pheuntsho Chodeon gave birth to Crown Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Four years later, the Druk Gyalpo took as his second consort the Queen's younger sister, Ashi Pema Dechen. While the Crown Prince was the only child borne to the elder Queen, Ashi Pema Dechen gave birth to one prince and three princesses. The eldest, Ashi Choeki Wangmo, was born in 1937, followed in 1943 by Prince Namgyal Wangchuck; Ashi Deki Yangzom in 1944; and Ashi Pema Choedon in 1949. His Majesty's two



Figure 3-2 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck with Gongzim Sonam Tobgye in Haa in 1947

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brothers, Dasho Jurme Dorji and Dasho Naku (Karma Thinlay Lhundrup), never married; they spent their lives serving in the court as attendants. Dasho Naku served as Trongsa Droenyer for most of his life. Both the brothers died young: Dasho Jurme Dorji in 1933 and Dasho Naku in 1949. The King's sister, Ashi Wangmo, remained a devout nun throughout her life.

Life in the Royal Family reflected the tranquillity of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck's reign. The close affection among the two Queens and their children exemplified the harmony that prevailed in the royal household. His Majesty was himself a devoted father who gave much of his time and personal interest to the education, training and upbringing of his children. In fact, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck was well known for his

love of children. Wherever His Majesty happened to be residing, the children of surrounding villages had free access to the palace grounds. His Majesty would spend time everyday observing the children play. He freely interacted with the children, sometimes even joining in their games. Children were often given gifts of food, clothing and even money.

It was to the credit of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck that he built several palaces of great architectural splendour. In Bumthang, the Palace of Tashi Choeling (Domkhar) was built in 1937 for the exclusive use of the senior Queen. The old Wangdue Choeling Palace, as seen earlier, was bequeathed to the younger Queen. The Kuenga Rabten Palace, located on the Mangdechhu river, became the favoured residence of the royal



Figure 3-3 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck with his two sister queens Ashi Phuentsho Choedon (left) and Ashi Pema Dechen (right) and Betty Sheriff, wife of Political Officer, at Kuenga Rabten Palace in 1949. Three of the King's children from his second Queen, Prince Namgyal Wangchuck (middle) and Ashi Choeki Wangmo and Ashi Deki Yangzom, both dressed in boy's clothes, complete the group.
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court. Along the Mangde valley, where the Royal Family preferred to reside in winter because of the region's milder climate, were built the smaller palaces of Samdrup Choeling and Beleng.

Movement between these palaces in ceremonial processions according to the changing seasons became regular occasions of public spectacle, interposed by prolonged sessions of archery games, public fairs (melas) at Wangdue Choeling and mass religious ceremonies at Kuje Lhakhang. The King and the Royal Family never failed to keenly participate at these events. At the same time, life at the court and in the Royal Family was uncompromising in terms of discipline and etiquette. This aspect of court life had the historical effect of preserving and refining Driglam Namzha, which consequently survived and flourished as a vital attribute of Bhutan's national identity.

Illness and death

In 1949, Paro Poenlop Tshering Penjore died. The Druk Gyalpo travelled to Paro and installed Crown Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck as Paro Poenlop. Soon after his return to Kuenga Rabten, the King began to feel ill after an archery game. His Majesty's health gradually deteriorated thereafter and, in 1951, he was unable to even attend the wedding of his Crown Prince which took place at Paro. A series of ominous signs occurred in Bumthang and Mangde until the King finally succumbed to illness in March 1952 at the Kuenga Rabten Palace,

Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck's passing marked the close of the longest era of uninterrupted tranquility in the history of Bhutan.

Conclusion

Although Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck succeeded to a secured throne in 1926, Bhutan's monarchy was only nineteen years in the making. His long reign of twenty five years, marked by firm discipline and order, consolidated the internal unity of the country achieved by his father. The slow and meticulous reforms he initiated created the springboard from which his son and successor would launch the country into the modern era. With his strong adherence to the traditional policy of self-isolation, combined with genuine friendship towards neighbouring powers, he kept Bhutan safely outside the turmoil of political upheavals in the region and the world. Above all, with the signing of the 1949 treaty with independent India, King Jigme Wangchuck finally secured Bhutan's status as a **sovereign nation**.

In his analysis of the historical role of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck, Dr. Michael Aris writes in his book, *The Raven Crown*:

"If the primary duty of a hereditary ruler is to bequeath to his heirs a stable throne in a kingdom whose sovereignty is assured, it may be said this king did so in full measure"

Student Activities

1. Discuss what King Ugyen Wangchuck meant when he directed the Crown Prince to build a **fair and just society**. Outline the steps taken by Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck in order to fulfil the wishes of his late father.
2. Define the term **isolation** and outline how the policy of isolation affected Bhutan during the period of the Great Depression and World War II.
3. Specify the major internal reforms introduced by Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck. Point out why they were needed and what the effects of the reforms were.
4. Interview some of the elder people who remember or heard of the court life of the different courtiers of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck. Write them down and send them to the Education Headquarters with a request to include them in its future school textbooks.
5. Compose a skit based on life at the court of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck. The class may perform the skit during the school's annual concert.
6. Draw a diagram of the administrative structure during this time and compare it with those drawn earlier. Note the changes, if any, and discuss their implication to Bhutan's security and sovereignty.
7. Construct a timeline showing the main events that occurred during the reign of King Jigme Wangchuck.
8. Extend the family tree drawn in the previous chapters.

Chapter 4

DRUK GYALPO JIGME DORJI WANGCHUCK

KEY TERMS

Father of Modern Bhutan	
Head of State and Government	
Slavery and Serfdom	absolute monarchy
<i>Tshongdu</i>	Executive
elected representatives	two-third majority
<i>Lodroe Tshogde</i>	Legislative
<i>Lhengye Zhungtshog</i>	thrimpoen
<i>Lyoenpo</i>	Judiciary
<i>Choekye</i>	Five-Year Plan
barter system	monetary economy
modernisation	international relations

The Father of Modern Bhutan

Forty five years of hereditary monarchy that preceded the enthronement of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in 1952 had achieved a measure of national unity and security unprecedented in the history of Bhutan. As seen in the earlier chapters, the first Druk Gyalpo established central authority and secured friendship with the neighbouring countries. The long and stable reign of the second Druk Gyalpo greatly strengthened these gains. It was to be the twenty-year reign of the third Druk Gyalpo that would mark the crucial period of transition to modern development and wider international exposure.

Even before his succession to the throne, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck had clearly seen the need to open the kingdom to the outside world. Soon after his coronation, he initiated bold and courageous reforms setting Bhutan on the path to social and economic progress, thus radically changing the course of our history.

Early life

Crown Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was born on May 2, 1928, at Thruempang Palace near the Trongsa Dzong. His early education at the palace school included the Hindi and English languages besides traditional subjects in Buddhist literature. In keeping with tradition, the Crown Prince had an early start in his training at the royal court of his father. He received practical instructions from his father and court officials on Bhutan's rich tradition of customs and etiquette. In 1943, he was awarded the red scarf and made Trongsa Droenyer.

Later, the Crown Prince went to Kalimpong in India for a year and then to Great Britain for further studies. This was a major departure from old tradition made by the second Druk Gyalpo. He has well realised that a future ruler of Bhutan must be given a broader education and be exposed to wider horizons.



Figure 4-1 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck



Figure 4-2 Thruiepang Palace in Trongsa where Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was born.

On his return to Bumthang in 1950, the Crown Prince was appointed Paro Poenlop. The following year, he married Azhi Kezang Choedon, the younger daughter of Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji and Princess Choeying Wangmo Dorji. As seen earlier, Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji, the son of Gongzim Ugyen Dorji, was a third-generation descendant of the Dungkar Chhoeje family through Pala Gyeltshen. Princess Chhoeying Wangmo Dorji was a daughter of the Choegyal of Sikkim.

Both Ugyen Dorji and his son Sonam Tobgye Dorji had served the first two kings of Bhutan with outstanding devotion and loyalty. Ugyen Dorji, who had been appointed Gyadrung by Trongsa Poenlop Ugyen Wangchuck, was promoted to the post of Gongzim when the latter assumed the throne as King in 1907. Sonam Tobgye Dorji inherited all the titles and positions of

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his father under the second Druk Gyalpo. When Sonam Tobgye Dorji died in 1952, his eldest son Jigme Palden Dorji, who had earlier been appointed Haa Drungpa, inherited the positions of Bhutan Agent and Gongzim.

When Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck passed away in 1952, Crown Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, succeeded to the throne. With the training and education that the late King had so meticulously imparted to his son, the new King was well prepared for the throne. He had developed deep insights into the craft of government as well as firm commitments to Bhutan's rich traditions and cultural heritage. As the third Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty assumed the positions of **Head of the State and Government**, the Commander-in-chief of the army and the ultimate Court of Appeal.

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One of the first decisions taken by His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was to shift the royal court from Bumthang to Western Bhutan where his coronation was held. After receiving scarves of kingship from the sacred shrine of the Zhabdrung in Punakha Dzong, His Majesty participated in three days of public celebrations. Foreign guests included the Indian Political Officer based in Gangtok¹, the Choegyel of Sikkim and a delegation representing the Government of India, besides many friends of the Royal Family. Soon after the coronation ceremonies, the royal court moved to Thimphu which then became the permanent national capital. The Dechenchoeling Palace was built at Kashinang, north of Thimphu Dzong, as the new private residence of the Royal Family.

Social reforms

The initial years of the reign of the third Druk Gyalpo began with the continuation of reforms begun by his late father. Soon after his ascension to the throne, the new Druk Gyalpo made an extensive tour of the kingdom and began to implement land reforms aimed at directly benefitting the vast majority of his subjects. The ceiling on ownership of land was brought down to a maximum of 30 acres and surplus land redistributed to the landless. His Majesty reduced land taxes and granted tax exemptions to the poorer sections of the population.

His Majesty then launched a systematic effort to abolish the practice of **slavery** and **serfdom** which had prevailed since the seventeenth century. The strategy was to grant freedom to the serfs without antagonising their landlords. A royal kasho issued by the King gave all serfs the freedom renounce their servitude and leave their masters without fear of retribution. At the same time, the traditional rights of the landlords were fully protected. All those who wished to leave their masters were required to settle themselves in areas away from their old gewogs where the Royal Government would grant them land. They were also forbidden to take with them any property including their houses which belonged to their masters.

Serfs in their thousands converged on Dechenchoeling Palace from all over the kingdom for grant of land. Many thousands from Punakha, Wangdue Phodrang and Paro settled in Thimphu as full-fledged tax-paying citizens. Similarly, former serfs in other regions of the kingdom found new lives in different places where they started living as free citizens. It was to the credit of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck that such a revolutionary transition took place in a mere few years, and without serious social disruptions.

Constitutional reforms

While social reforms had been the preoccupation of both his father and grandfather, the third Druk Gyalpo began to move further forward by introducing basic constitutional reforms. The bold reforms that he introduced were revolutionary. That the reforms were initiated by the King was

¹ Bhutan did not allow resident missions to be based in the country and continued to conduct its external relations through the Indian Political Office in Gangtok,

in itself unique in the annals of history. Overnight, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck transformed the feudal **absolute monarchy** of Bhutan into a modern and enlightened one. The transformation derived from the farsighted political vision of a great King and statesman.

Tshogdu

The first of his constitutional reforms was the founding of the ***Tshogdu*** (ཚོགས་འདུན་- the National Assembly of Bhutan) in 1953. This was to be the highest legislative body in the kingdom and it convened twice a year. Its powers and functions were clearly defined to serve as an advisory body to the **executive** branch of the government in addition to its legislative role. Besides anacting laws, it discussed all matters of national importance and advised the Royal Government of its views. Members enjoyed complete freedom of speech in the assembly.

Membership of the National Assembly started with a total of 130 which increased to 150 in 1968. They included **elected representatives** of the people, representatives of the monk body and representatives of the Royal Government. All members served for a fixed term of three years. The Speaker of the Tshogdu was to be elected from among its members.

Until 1968, decisions of the Tshogdu had to be approved by a **two-third majority** and needed the King's endorsement to become law. On His Majesty's initiative in 1968, the procedure was amended to make all

decisions of the Tshogdu final and binding without Royal approval.

His Majesty believed that the people should be party to making decisions on issues of national concern that affected themselves as much as the King. He wanted his subjects to develop political consciousness and have a greater say in the affairs of state, thereby creating and preserving the political unity of the kingdom.

Lodroe Tshogde

Ten years after the founding of the Tshogdu in 1963, the ***Lodroe Tshogde*** (ལོ་ཤོ་མོ་ཚོགས་པའི་ལྷན་ཚོགས་- Royal Advisory Council) was created. It was, however, constituted formally only in 1965. As its name indicates, its function was to act as an advisory body to the King. It consisted of nine members including five (later six) ***Migsye Kutshabs*** (མི་མེད་སྐུ་ཚབ་-representatives of the people) elected by the National Assembly, two representatives of the monk body and the ***Kalyoen*** (བཀའ་འཛོལ་- Executive Minister) appointed by the King to serve as its chairman. Members of the Lodroe Tshogde, except for its chairman, who held the rank of Deputy Minister, were awarded the blue scarf. Their tenure of office was for five years except for its chairman, the Kalyoen, who served at the pleasure of the King.

The Tshogdu advised the King on policy matters and ensured the implementation of resolutions passed by the Tshogdu. Its members, being concurrently also members of the Tshogdu, served as a link between the **legislative** branch and the executive

branch of the government. The body began to evolve as an effective instrument for the working of the administrative machinery and government.

Lhengye Zhungtshog

In 1968, a major step was taken in the direction of participatory decision making at the highest level of policy formulation.

The *Lhengye Zhungtshog* (ལྷན་རྒྱུས་གཞུང་ཚོགས་ - Council of Ministers or Cabinet) was established as the highest executive body of government. Its members included His Majesty's Representatives in the ministries and members of Lodroe Tshogde besides Cabinet Ministers. The Lhengye Zhungtshog convened regularly under chairmanship of the King.

The Judicial System

Immediately after he assumed the throne, His Majesty abolished capital punishment. In 1968, the same year the Lhengye Zhungtshog was established, the Judiciary was separated from the executive with the establishment of the Thimphu High Court. This was followed by the establishment of district courts headed by *thrimpoens* (ཁྲིམས་དཔོན་ - judges) in 1969. Judicial functions at the district level, which had earlier been overseen by the dzongpoens in addition to their administrative responsibilities, thereafter became the full time responsibility of the District Thrimpoen.

The legal code introduced by Zhabdrung Ngawang Dondrub in the seventeenth century, began to be revised in 1957 and was

finally passed by the National Assembly in 1968. It consisted of seventeen volumes and was based on more modern lines. It laid down a system of justice and proper conduct by which the rights of the people were protected.

Administrative and other reforms

Besides social and constitutional reforms, there were others that were also as significant to the modern era of Bhutan. The executive branch of government remained small and compact. His Majesty continued to function with a small palace secretariat that was inherited from his father. The secretariat, based at the Dechenchoeling Palace and headed by the wise and able Gaydron Thinley as Chief Secretary, spearheaded the reforms launched by His Majesty in the initial years of his reign.

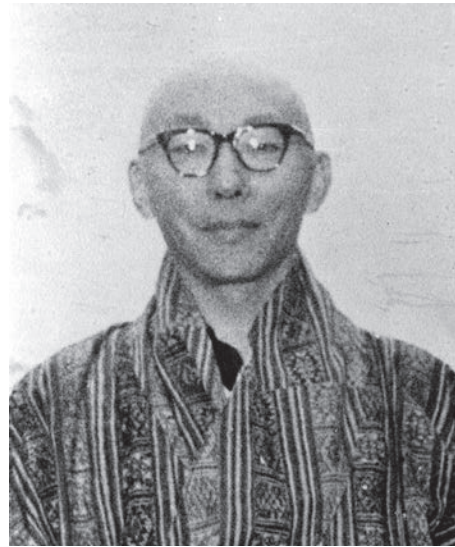


Figure 4-3 Late Lyoenchen Jigme Palden Dorji

Jigme Palden Dorji, the Haa Drungpa, was elevated to the rank of *Lyoenchen* (ལྷོན་ཆེན་ - Prime Minister) to assist the King

in matters of foreign affairs and the introduction of development programmes. Until his tragic assassination in 1964, Jigme Palden Dorji was an invaluable asset to His Majesty particularly in the fields of international diplomacy and modern education. He inherited the family tradition of taking responsibility for the school at Haa and the welfare of Bhutanese students at Kalimpong, India. He came to be best remembered for the personal role he played in convincing Bhutanese families of diverse backgrounds on the merits of sending their children to modern schools. With his legendary personal charisma and his wide network of foreign friends, he ensured easy admission to Bhutanese students in some of India's best schools. He applied these same personal qualities to the conduct of Bhutan's foreign relations with equal effectiveness.

As the pressures of modern development and growing foreign contacts increased in later years, the government inevitably grew larger and more defined. First, a Development Wing, headed by a Secretary General, was established. This was soon followed by the bifurcation of separate ministries created for the administration of technical departments that began to multiply. *Lyoenpos* (ལོལ་པོ་ - ministers) were appointed to head different ministries of the Royal Government². Over time, a more complex system of administrative hierarchy composed of departments and sections

evolved under the ministries. Officers of the rank of directors, assisted by deputies and assistants, headed by the departments with section officers of various grades under them. The Department of Manpower was instituted to manage the growing civil service³.

The first specialised government ministries that came into being included the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Forest, headed by H.R.H Prince Namgyal Wangchuck as *Tengye Lyoenpo*; the Finance Minister with *Tsilyoen* Babu Chhogyal as Finance Minister; and the Home Ministry headed by *Kidu Lyoenpo* Tamzhing Jagar. The Development Wing was upgraded to the Development Ministry, and took charge of the social sectors health and education and public works; with *Gongphel Lyoenpo* Dawa Tshering as Development Minister. The Ministry of Communications, including post and telegraphs, wireless and the Bhutan Government Transport Service, under *Zhapto Lyoenpo* Sangay Penjore, was established in later years.

The two older princesses, Their Royal Highnesses Ashi Sonam Choedon and Ashi Dechen Wangmo, were appointed as His Majesty's Representatives in the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Development respectively. All the ministers and the His Majesty's Representatives in the ministries were appointed members of the Lhengye Zhungtshog.

²Lyoenpos or ministers were given the saffron scarf which was traditionally the entitlement of the poenlops of Trongsa, Paro, Dagana and the dzongpoens of Punakha, Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang. Before the appointment of Lyoenpos, the two top senior officials serving under the Third Druk Gyalpo, the Lyoenchen and the Gyadon, were officers of the rank of red scarf.

³The administrative hierarchy was basically patterned on the Indian Administrative system. In the initial years, many Indian officers of the Indian Administrative Service served in the Royal Government on deputation as heads of departments or as advisors.

The District Administration

Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck initiated major steps towards modernising the local administration, making it more efficient in carrying out government policies and plans. In the early 1960s, the country was divided into 13 districts in the north and two sub-divisions in the southern Bhutan. In 1969, the district officers were placed under the newly created Home Ministry and the title of the head of district administration was changed from dzongpoen to **dzongda** (ལྗོང་བདག་ - District Administrator). As stated earlier, their **judiciary** powers were transferred to the new posts of thrimpoens.

The army and police

In 1955, two years after the creation of the Tshogdu, His Majesty undertook the task of organising the Royal Bhutan Army as a regular standing force. The first batch of army officers sent for training in India was commissioned in 1956. Six years later in 1962, the Indian army was invited to set up training facilities within Bhutan. A Military Training Academy was established in Haa. By the year 1965, the Royal Bhutan Army Headquarters at Lungtenphu (near Thimphu) and the Royal Bodyguard were established.

Bhutan did not have a police force till 1965, when the Royal Bhutan Police was established by Royal Command. Jigme Ling, the first police academy, was inaugurated at Gelephu. A Police Advisory

Team of the Indian Police Service was established at Thimphu for training and cooperation with the Government of India in police related matters.

The Royal Bhutan Army, the Royal Bodyguards and the Royal Bhutan Police were reorganised into different formations under separate commands with the King as Commander-in-Chief. Reforming the army

from the ancient *pazap* (པཟམ་ལུག་ - militia levy) system to a modern force involved such details as inventing nomenclature for ranks; coining new words and phrases for giving military commands; and designing insignia for ranks; badges and colours. His Majesty had appropriate words and phrases derived from ancient literature and adapted some tantric designs for the purpose.

Culture and traditions

While effecting the various reforms, the Druk Gyalpo emphasised the need to preserve the kingdom's rich cultural heritage. As a result, Bhutan witnessed a renaissance of its art and culture during the reign of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Numerous schools were established to promote traditional painting, dancing, singing and sculpture. The early 1950s witnessed a flowering of new songs (*boedra*) and dancing styles mostly inspired by life at the court. The National Museum was founded in the Ta Dzong in Paro and the Simtokha Rigney School was established in 1961. The Druk Gyalpo took great care to see that adequate books were published both in *Choekye* (ཚོལ་ལྷོ་ - a classical religious script) and Dzongkha.

Written Dzongkha language

For centuries, Dzongkha though established as the national and official language throughout the kingdom, was only a spoken language. All written documents and correspondences were in Choekye.

In the 1960s, His Majesty commanded the development of Dzongkha in the written form. This involved the difficult task of attempting to rewrite the entire Choekye grammar. Eminent teachers like Lam Nado devoted their entire scholarship to the effort. The Druk Gyalpo, himself a keen scholar and calligrapher, made invaluable contributions. Development of written Dzongkha became one of the main elements that helped unify the populations of the different valleys through a common language.

Development Plans

In the preceding chapter, we saw that the second Druk Gyalpo was able to make only tentative beginnings towards modern development. We also saw that India's independence during the last few years of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck's reign brought better hopes of acquiring financial assistance for modern development in Bhutan. It was during the reign of the third Druk Gyalpo that Bhutan acquired the commitment of Indian assistance for the development of Bhutan. The visit of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958 marked the beginning of Bhutan-India cooperation in development. Thereafter, His Majesty launched Bhutan on the path of planned social and economic progress. The policy of self-imposed isolation was

finally abandoned and closer cooperation and friendship with the outside world, particularly with India, was established.

Besides financial assistance, the Government of India committed large numbers of Indian administrative and technical personnel to help implement Bhutan's plans. Thousands of Indian skilled workers as well as labourers came to Bhutan for work. Above all, hundreds of Indian school teachers spread across the country, became a part of the Bhutanese landscape.

The First Five-Year Plan (1961-66)

The first **Five-Year Plan** was launched in 1961 with an approved outlay of Nu. 107 million, financed entirely by the Government of India. The major objective of the plan was to end the country's state of isolation by building roadlinks to India. Accordingly, more than half the budget was allocated for construction of roads.

Work began on the roads linking Thimphu and Paro to Phuentsholing, Trongsa to Gelephu, Tsirang to Sarpang and Trashigang to Samdrup Jongkhar. The end of the plan period saw over 1,700 kilometres of roads in the kingdom. Along with the construction of roads, modern road transport and communication facilities came to be introduced. The Bhutan Government Transport Service was established in 1962. In the same year, a postal agreement with the Government of India was concluded and Bhutan's postage stamps, which soon assumed international fame, began to be issued. Post Offices were established in Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing.



Figure 4-4 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Bhutanese national dress in Pari in September 1958

Education, which was recognised as the basis for national manpower development right from the time of the first Druk Gyalpo, was next in priority. Many new schools were built and hundreds of school teachers recruited from India to introduce a modern education system on a wider scale. A Health Department was set up in Thimphu with three hospitals and eleven dispensaries established in different parts of the country.

Other government departments established during the first plan period included the Department of Forest; the Department of Agriculture; the Department of Animal Husbandry; and the Hydrel Directorate. Model farms, seed multiplication facilities, agricultural research stations and livestock and sheep breeding farms came into being. Forest conservation and exploitation of forest resources began. The Geological Survey of India was invited to survey Bhutan's mineral resources. The fruit processing factory and the distillery at Samtse were augmented. With increased imports from India to sustain development projects and growing export of Bhutanese commodities to India, Bhutan's foreign trade began to grow substantially.

The Second Five-Year Plan (1966-1971)

With an increased outlay of Nu. 202 million, the second Five-Year Plan basically continued to pursue the same priorities of development as in the first plan. Agriculture was given ten percent of the total budget with the aim to increase the food production and the quality of seeds, as well as to develop cash crops such as apples, oranges, potatoes and cardamom.

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Modern farm implements and fertilizers began to be introduced. Agricultural research stations and fifteen extension centres were established. There was further progress made in the improvement of cattle and livestock with the establishment of breeding centres.

Education received increased priority with more than twice the budget allocation as compared to the first plan. By the end of the second plan in 1971, there were 105 schools with 11,600 students. A teacher training institute was established at Samtse and a technical school was opened in Phuentsholing. More than five hundred Bhutanese students received scholarships to study in India and abroad.

In the health sector, there was rapid progress with the initiation of programmes aimed at eradicating malaria, smallpox, leprosy and tuberculosis. By 1971, six hospitals and thirty four dispensaries were in operation spread over the kingdom. The training of Bhutanese nurses and health workers began during this plan.

Steps were taken to improve the township of Thimphu with the installation of water supplies and drainage systems. One of the major projects in Thimphu was the reconstruction of Tashichoedzong as the main seat of the Royal Government. Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck started the reconstruction of Tashichoedzong in 1962. It took thousands of masons, carpenters and other workers from all over the kingdom, seven years to complete its construction.

In 1968, the Bank of Bhutan was established, indicating that the country

had moved away from **barter system** and entered a **monetary economy**. Several other new economic activities were by then able to achieve increasing importance mainly because of the improvement of the road infrastructure.

The Third Five-Year Plan (1971-76)

In 1971, two years after the completion of the reconstruction of Tashichoedzong, the Planning Commission with Crown Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck as its Chairman was created to coordinate development activities. The Third Five-Year Plan was the first to be implemented under the guidance of the new Planning Commission. With the vastly increased outlay of Nu. 475 million, the third plan was also the first to receive support from the United Nations system although the contribution was only to the extent of three percent of the budget. Similarly, for the first time, seven percent of the outlay was financed from internal resources, indicating Bhutan's first step towards the goal of self-sufficiency.

Agriculture and animal husbandry strengthened their importance. Construction and expansion of roads still remained an area of high priority. The social services sector, with education and health sharing higher financial outlays, received greater emphasis. Other sectors such as forestry, mining, and power emerged for the first time with allocations at five percent to eight percent of the total budget in each area.

International relations

As we have seen, Bhutan's self-imposed isolation for centuries protected its

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independence and sovereignty from many of the world's turmoil. **Modernisation** and development, however, required greater contacts with the outside world. Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck foresaw the inherent dangers that Bhutan would face if it continued to remain in isolation. His Majesty, therefore, decided to end the age-old policy and opened the kingdom's doors to the outside world, bringing the country into the international mainstream.

The visit of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958 not only set in motion planned development in the country but also constituted an important landmark in the history of Bhutan's **international relations**. It was the first state visit by a head of the government of another country to Bhutan. Prime Minister Nehru, accompanied by his daughter Indira Gandhi and senior Indian officials, travelled from Gangtok, through the Chumbi Valley in Tibet to Haa and, finally over Jelela to Paro. Addressing a large public meeting held in his honour on the grounds of Ugyen Pelri Palace, the Indian Prime Minister declared:

“Some may think that since India is a great and powerful country and Bhutan a small one, the former might wish to exercise pressure on Bhutan. It is, therefore, essential that I make it clear to you that our only wish is that you should remain an independent country, choosing your own way of life and taking the path of progress according to your will. At the same time, we too should live with mutual goodwill. We are members of the same Himalayan family and should live as friendly neighbours helping each other. Freedom of both Bhutan and India

should be safeguarded so that none from outside can do harm to it.”

The historic visit resulted in the establishment of very close personal rapport between His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This close personal friendship and rapport between the two leaders was, in turn, emulated by their respective successors.

Indira Gandhi made her second visit to Bhutan in 1968, this time as the Prime Minister of India, and noted that when she first came to Bhutan with her father in 1958, the journey had taken six days and that, she now was able to make the same journey in less than six hours. This was an indication of the progress that Bhutan had achieved within a span of only ten years. While in Bhutan, she inaugurated the new Phuentsholing-Thimphu highway and laid the foundation stone of the Indian Embassy complex in Thimphu. It was only in 1967, that Bhutan permitted the opening of a resident Indian mission in Thimphu. In 1970, Bhutan instituted the Department of Foreign Affairs which was upgraded to a ministry in 1972, with *Chidrel Lyoenpo Dawa Tshering* as Foreign Minister⁴. The Royal Bhutan Mission was established at New Delhi in 1971. In the same year, President V.V. Giri of India made a state visit to the kingdom, marking the first ever visit by a foreign Head of State.

In 1962, a year after the launching of the First Five-Year Plan, Bhutan joined the

⁴Lyoenpo Dawa Tshering was to become the longest serving foreign minister in the world and entered the Guinness' Book of World Records as such in 1980.
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Colombo Plan, thus becoming a member of an international organisation for the first time. In 1969, the same year that the reconstruction of Tashichoedzong was completed, the kingdom became a member of the Universal Postal Union. In the meantime, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, under strong pressure from the National Assembly since 1966, began to campaign for Bhutan's membership in the United Nations.

In 1970, a Bhutanese delegation led by His Royal Highness, Prince Namgyal Wangchuck attended the United Nations General Assembly as an observer. It was on September 21, 1971, that the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved the candidature of Bhutan for membership in the world body. India sponsored Bhutan's membership in many international organisations, including the United Nations. Bhutan became a full member of the United Nations and opened its Permanent Mission in New York. Addressing the National Assembly of Bhutan on the occasion of Bhutan's admission to the United Nations, His Majesty described the historic event as “important as when Zhabdrung Rinpoche came to our land bringing unto us the message of the Truth and Dharma”.

In December 1971, Bhutan stood out as the second country, after India to recognise the newly independent state of Bangladesh. Resident diplomatic representation between the two countries was exchanged shortly after.

Illness and death

Since the late 1960s, the state of His

History of Bhutan

Majesty's health had been a matter of public concern in Bhutan. On July 21, 1972, exactly ten months after the admission of Bhutan to the U.N.O., His Majesty passed away in Kenya, thousands of miles away from his kingdom and his people. He was then only 44 years old. Bhutan suffered an irreparable loss at the untimely death of a monarch who had achieved so much for the country and was so greatly loved by the people.

Conclusion

His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck understood that Bhutan could not survive in a fast changing world if it did not adapt itself to new conditions. Determined to end the isolation of the country and to take it forward on the path of development, he brought in far-reaching social, economic and political transformations. Apart from social and economic development, His Majesty undertook important constitutional reforms. He established the National Assembly, reformed the land system and the legal system, and strengthened the system of district administrations. It was

his farsighted and enlightened leadership that Bhutan's transition from a feudal past to the modern era could take place without social upheavals. In doing so, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck proved himself enlightened ruler of great vision and rose to challenges of his time with wisdom and extraordinary courage.

Finally, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck led Bhutan out of isolation to fulfil the cherished desire of his people to become a full fledged member of the international community. He is thus rightly described as the 'Father of Modern Bhutan'.

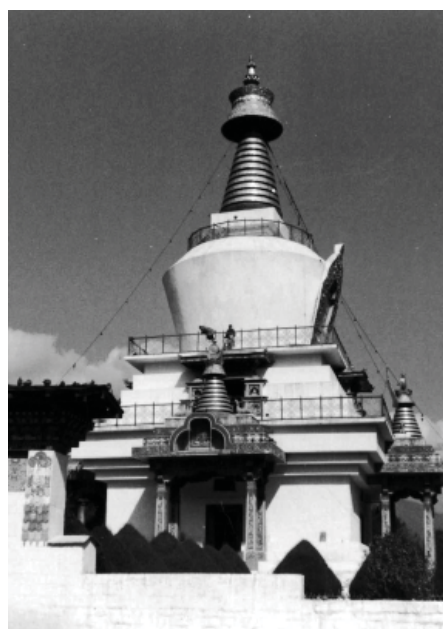


Figure 4-5 Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Memorial Chhoten in Thimphu built in 1974 in memory of the late king

Student Activities

1. Explain what is meant when it is said that Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck changed the course of Bhutan's history.
2. Assess the importance of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck's internal reforms for the modernisation of Bhutan.
3. Differentiate between **slaves** and **serfs**, explaining how they are both different from **free men**.
4. Describe the particular responsibilities of the National Assembly, the Royal Advisory Council and the Council of Ministers.
5. In class, hold a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages associated with the separation of the Executive and the Judiciary. Why do you think is a feature of most modern governments? Follow up your discussion by making a chart or diagram showing the operation of an independent judiciary and the advantages/disadvantages associated with it.
6. Briefly describe the main achievements of the first three Five-Year Plans.
7. Draw a map showing the major roads built during the time of the First Five Year Plan.
8. Give your assessment of the major contributions of the first three Five Year Plans.
9. Identify the major steps that brought Bhutan onto the international scene. Explain the significance of each one.
10. Examine the concept of **modernisation**. Identify those aspects that are beneficial to Bhutan's development and those that are detrimental to it.
11. Imagine you are an Indian newspaper journalist accompanying Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Bhutan in 1958. You have just arrived in Paro. Draft an urgent despatch to your head office in New Delhi describing
 - (i) your journey up to Paro and
 - (ii) the Bhutanese reception of the Indian Prime Minister and the party.
12. Draw the administrative structure during the third king's time and compare with the ones you drew in earlier chapters. Note the changes and discuss their implication to Bhutan's security and sovereignty.



Figure 5-1 Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangcuck

Chapter 5

DRUK GYALPO JIGME SINGYE WANGCHUCK

A Monarch of the People

In the preceding chapters we read about our first three kings. We now come to yet another dynamic monarch, the fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who succeeded to the Golden Throne in 1972.

The birth of Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck on November 11, 1955, was of special significance to the history of Bhutan. More than a century earlier, Drukdra Dorje, a revered tertoen, had rediscovered a sacred prophecy made by Guru Rinpoche predicting the birth of a prince in the Male Wood Sheep Year. In his famous *namthar* (ལྷོ་མཁའ་མཚན་ - treasure book), the tertoen foretold in meticulous details, how the enthronement of that prince as King of Bhutan would herald an era of unprecedented happiness and prosperity for the Bhutanese people. The tertoen further prophesised, that the enlightened rule of this king will cause the Buddhist Dharma and, in particular, the Palden Drukpa to flourish. In the current cycle of the Buddhist calendar, the year 1955 was the Female Wood Sheep Year.

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Education

Crown Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck

KEY TERMS

Monarch of the People	economic self-reliance
planned population	foreign trade
sustainable development	privatisation
environmental conservation	<i>Goongda Woola</i>
decentralisation	<i>Zhabto Lemi</i>
people's participation	secret ballot
Cultural and Religious Heritage	
bilateral diplomatic relations	<i>Driglam Namzha</i>
One Nation, One People	National Identity
Gross National Happiness	

began his education with private tutors at the palace. He later went on to boarding schools in India and England, returning in 1970 to continue his schooling at the Ugyen Wangchuck Academy in Paro. Both their Majesties the King and the Queen desired that he receive a uniquely Bhutanese education and upbringing. The Ugyen Wangchuck Academy provided the type of education tailored to this need.



Figure 5-2 Crown Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck installed as Trongsa Poenlop in Trongsa Dzong in 1972



Figure 5-3 His Majesty receiving the guard of honour in the courtyard of Tashichoedzong on the Coronation Day of June 2, 1974

Special courses offered by eminent scholars and senior government officials at the academy added wider dimensions to the established curriculum. Besides formal schooling, the Crown Prince also received practical training in government. He attended important public functions and participated in official meetings including the Lhengye Zhungtshog. Accompanying his father on frequent and extensive tours of the country, gave him a deeper understanding of the country and its people. In 1971, the Crown Prince was appointed Chairman of the newly established Planning Commission and installed as Trongsa Poenlop the following year.

The Coronation

On July 21, 1972, the third Druk Gyalpo passed away and the reign of government suddenly fell upon the young Crown Prince. A resolution of the thirty-second National Assembly, however, required the institution of a Council of Regency to govern the country until the new King attained the age of 21 years. The thirty-seventh National Assembly which convened in September 1972, debated the issue and unanimously resolved that His Majesty assume the throne without the Council of Regency. Members argued that His Majesty had already proven his maturity and statesmanship. They expressed their complete confidence in his ability to assume the reins of the government. Bhutan thus came to be internationally known as the kingdom ruled by the youngest King in the world

Two years later, on June 2, 1974, when he was only 18 years old, His Majesty was formally crowned fourth Druk Gyalpo in

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the Tashichoedzong. The grand coronation ceremony held at Changlimithang was witnessed by the Bhutanese people in the tens of thousands. On the occasion of the coronation, for the first time in history, Bhutan opened its doors to a large gathering of foreign dignitaries. Foreign heads of states, ambassadors and representatives of all friendly countries attended the ceremony. Also for the first time, the international press was allowed to enter the kingdom. For the Bhutanese people, the coronation of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck meant the fulfilment of the sacred prophecy revealed by Tertoen Drukdra Dorje. Addressing the vast gathering, His Majesty shared with his people the vision he had for their future.

*“The most important task before us at present is to achieve **economic self-reliance** to ensure the continued progress of our country in the future. Bhutan has a small population, abundant land and rich natural resources and sound planning on our part will enable us to realise our aim of economic self-reliance in the near future.*

As far as you, my people, are concerned, you should not adopt the attitude that whatever is required to be done for your welfare will be done entirely by the government. On the contrary, a little effort on your part will be much more effective than a great deal of effort on the part of the government. If the government and the people join hands and work with determination, our people will achieve prosperity and our nation will become strong and stable.

The only message I have to convey to you today, my people, is that if everyone of us



Figure 5-4 His Majesty talking to the people before a plan meeting



Figure 5-5 Planning for Development

consider ourselves Bhutanese, and think and act as one, and if we have faith in the Triple Gem, our glorious kingdom of Bhutan will grow from strength to strength and achieve prosperity, peace and happiness”.

It was clear from the coronation speech that His Majesty had already formulated national goals in specific terms and charted the course that Bhutan should take towards progress and development.

Architect of Modern Development

Planning for development

The basic goals set by His Majesty for the modern development of Bhutan were summed up in the following nine points:

1. Gross National Happiness
2. Social and Economic Prosperity
3. People’s Participation
4. Strong and Efficient Administrative System
5. National Self Reliance
6. Preservation of Culture and Religion
7. Preservation of Natural Environment
8. Planned Population Growth
9. One Nation, One People

All the successive development plans that followed came to be based on these goals. As a result, the kingdom achieved impressive standards of modern development in a short span of time. As of 1996, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate averaged 6.7%. Per capita income rose from Nu. 2,000 in 1971 to Nu. 16,960 in 1996 and by end of 2006, GDP Per capita income was

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estimated at US\$1,414.01. With their initial beginnings in 1972, an effective and nationwide network of services infrastructure, ranging from health facilities and schools to metalled roads and sophisticated communication networks, came to be established.

Health, education, water supply and electrification programmes covered most of the country by 1996.

Education Services

His Majesty believed, as did his predecessors, that every citizen must be educated in order to create an enlightened and productive Bhutanese society. The expansion and improvement of education facilities and services received the highest priority. Free education at all levels continued to be made available and the literacy rate rose to 54 percent by 1996. Figure 5.6 shows the growth and expansion of education between 1971 and 1996.

Education facilities	1971	1981	1996
1. Primary & community schools	75	119	262
2. Junior High Schools	14	24	20
3. High School	6	6	10
4. College	0	0	1
5. Technical Institutes	1	1	2
6. Other Institutes (NIE, TTC, NID)	2	3	3
7. Rigney, Sherdra, Dub-dra and Sanskrit Pathshala	7	8	16
Total Schools and Institutes	105	161	314
Total Student Enrolment	11,610	38,402	84,157

Figure 5-6 Table showing development of education since 1971.



Figure 5-7 His Majesty the King and their Royal Highnesses the Crown Prince Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and Dasho Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck with students and teachers of Jigme Sherubling High School – May, 1989

With the primary enrolment rate of 72 percent, an ambitious national objective to achieve universal access to primary education by the year 2000 was set. The Royal Government stepped up construction of additional community and primary schools in all parts of the country. A non-formal education network was established to benefit school drop-outs and others who missed normal education enrolment. In addition, vocational and technical institutes, teacher training institutes, an institute for the disabled, a degree college and several monastic schools were in existence by 1995.

The vocational and technical institutes produced a core of national skilled workers that began to replace foreign workers and technicians. Similarly, the teacher training institutes and health schools produced

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increasing numbers of Bhutanese teachers and health workers, thus reducing the country's almost complete dependence on outsiders in these sectors. Besides providing religious education and training at all levels, the monastic schools served to promote Bhutan's religious traditions and values. By 2006, there were 169,776 students enrolled in 507 schools/institutes inclusive of 28 privately run and 646 Non-formal education centers.

Health services

Bhutan's efficient and effective health delivery system had, by the early 1990s, already become widely acclaimed among developing countries. Basic Health Units, within easy distance from every village provided basic medical care to anyone in need. Regional referral hospitals, capable



Figure 5-8 His Majesty visiting Yabilaptsa Hospital

of treating more serious cases, covered every dzongkhags. Improved health facilities and services not only brought effective and timely medical care, but also prevented outbreak of epidemics which in the past took heavy tolls on the Bhutanese population. All health services, including

medical treatment outside the country for very serious cases, continued to be provided free by the Royal Government.

Universal child immunisation was achieved in 1991. Life expectancy increased to 66 years in 1995 from 44 years in 1971. The

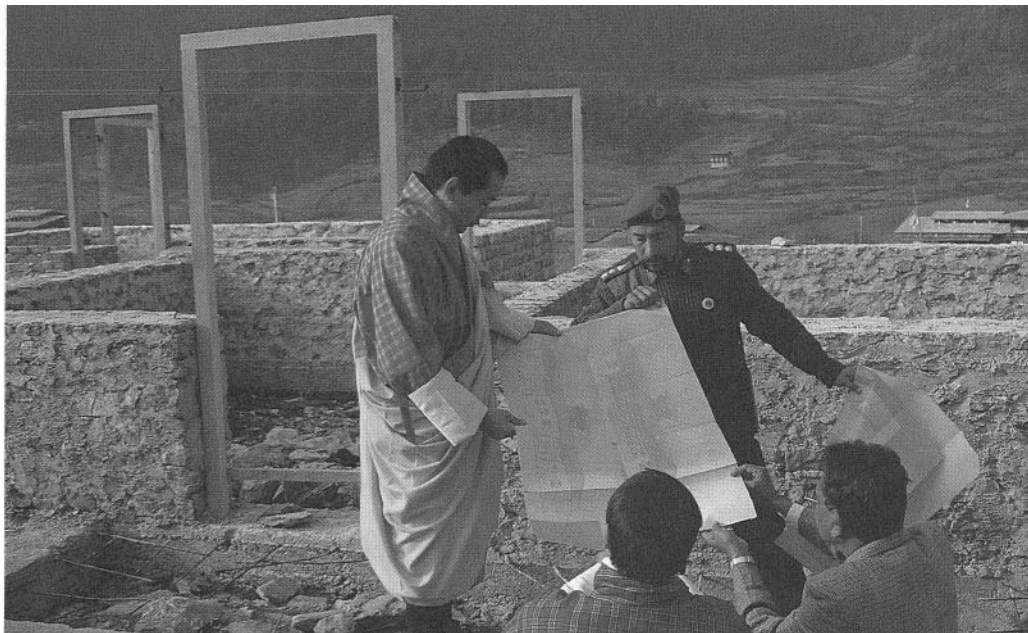


Figure 5-9 His Majesty reviewing the plan of a BHU in 1995

History of Bhutan

infant mortality rate, which was 103 per thousand live births in 1984, was reduced to 70, and maternal mortality rate was reduced to 3.8 per thousand live births from 7.7 in 1984. Bhutan's success in some of the health programmes such as leprosy control, Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI), Iodine Deficiency Diseases (IDD) and Essential Drugs Programme (EDP) gained regional and global recognition. The Information Education and Communication for Health (IECH) was established to educate the public on the need for better health, hygiene and nutrition practises.

Under another novel initiative inspired by His Majesty, the education and the health sectors jointly launched a unique project for **planned population** growth in September 1990. Through the schools and the Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS) in Thimphu, the project aimed at

educating people on the interrelationships between population and development, environment and natural resources and the quality of life. His Majesty believed that a planned population growth was an essential component of **sustainable development**. As of 2006, there were 29 hospitals, 176 BHUs and over 514 Outreach Clinics providing primary health care services across the country.

Rural development and agriculture

Another area of special interest to His Majesty was the developing of rural areas where 80 percent of the Bhutanese population lived. His deep concern for improving the quality of rural life led to major development activities, particularly in the field of agriculture. Construction of irrigation channels, introduction and distribution of improved seeds, application of improved methods and



Figure 5-10 His Majesty talking to the farmers

mechanisation of farming greatly increased agricultural production. Progress was made in the productivity of livestock through introduction of improved breeds and adaptation of modern management practices in animal husbandry.

Introduction of cash crop production with government assistance in marketing brought great increase in the cash income of farmers. High yielding potato seeds and different varieties of apples and oranges, which became some of the main items for export, were introduced. His Majesty also continued the tradition of granting land to the landless.

Every facet of rural life received close attention. Education, health, transport and a wide range of services including safe drinking water, improved housing and stoves, promotion of hygiene and sanitation helped secure better living conditions in most villages. A major drive towards rural electrification was also launched in the early 1990s and 1,318 were electrified by end of 2006.

Environmental concern

Long before **environmental conservation** became a matter of global concern, His Majesty was working hard to convince development workers and the Bhutanese people about the delicate conditions of Bhutan's environment. In his statements in the Cabinet, the National Assembly and at public meetings, His Majesty repeatedly warned that Bhutan was particularly vulnerable to the threats of natural ecological disasters. Excessive cultivation and deforestation could easily cause soil

erosion, landslides and floods, posing immediate threats to Bhutan and its people.

It was due to His Majesty's pioneering initiatives on environmental policies that Bhutan was one of the few countries where the natural environment remained largely intact in spite of development activities and population growth. Under the wise leadership of His Majesty, Bhutan managed to maintain 67.5% forest cover, the highest in the region. Bhutan's forest policy specifically gave precedence to ecological considerations over commercial advantages in utilisation of forest resources. In 1995, a large joint venture enterprise manufacturing plywood was closed down under this policy. Such approach towards the environment earned Bhutan worldwide recognition and support. In 2005, United Nations Environment Protection Agency awarded medal to His Majesty in recognition of his leadership of environmental conservation. His Majesty also received the Paul Getty Conservation Award on 17th October, 2006 from the World Wildlife Fund.

Communication system

His Majesty gave the communications sector high priority during the initial years of his reign. From less than 800 kilometres of motor roads in 1972, an extensive network of highways and feeder roads, extending more than 4554.73 kilometres by 2006, connected all the dzongkhags and population centres. Despite limited resources and the difficult mountain terrain, such achievements were possible as resources and attention were committed to this sector by Royal Command.



Figure 5-11 Satellite Dish established in Thimphu

In the area of telecommunications, Bhutan was already linked by satellite with the rest of the world by 1990. In 1994, all dzongkhags were also connected to the satellite network. Information dissemination to all corners of the country was also provided by the national media system incorporating daily short wave radio broadcasting and the weekly newspaper published in Thimphu. In 1999, television and internet services were introduced which brought Bhutan into a globalised world. The national airline, incorporated in 1983, has further opened Bhutan's doors to outside world increasing and improving our relation with other countries. Another breakthrough was Bhutan Telecom Limited launched the cellular mobile (B Mobile) services, coinciding with the His Majesty's Birthday on 11 November, 2003. In 2006, Bhutan's first private mobile company, Tashi InfoComm Limited operated the second cellular mobile network (Tashi Cell). These cellular services gradually helped to connect all twenty Dzongkhags.

His Majesty as Reformer

Economic Reforms

Since the beginning of His Majesty's reign, considerable progress was made in the area of industrial development with the establishment of major industries. The most significant achievement was the commissioning of Hydro Power Projects and exporting electricity to neighbouring India which include, the 336 MW of Chukha Hydroelectric Power Project, 64 MW of Basochu Hydro Power Project, 60 MW of Kurichu Hydro Power Project, 1020 MW of Tala Hydropower Project where full operation began in 2007. Bhutan also emerged as a net exporter of cement, carbide and ferro-silicon, besides agricultural products. The expansion of exports led to significant increase in the country's overall capacity to generate internal revenue.

The increase and diversification of Bhuta's **foreign trade** since 1983 has been

significant. Exports to third countries led to substantial foreign exchange earnings and improvement in the country's overall balance of payments. Annual revenue increased from Nu. 41 million in 1972 to Nu. 36.9 billions in 2006. By 2006, GDP per capita was estimated at 1414.01 US\$. Today Bhutan domestic revenue meets all her recurrent expenditure.

His Majesty initiated liberalisation of the Bhutanese economy with emphasis on development of the private sector. The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established and brought into the mainstream of economic policy formulation. His Majesty held frequent public meetings with the business community. The drive for **privatisation** went into full swing in the early 1990s. Strict guidelines were, however, laid down to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of privatisation. Existing monopolies, including those held by the Royal Government, were systematically dismantled. Promotion of new large scale enterprises were scrutinised to ensure broad based mass participation.

At the same time, Bhutan witnessed a proliferation of cottage, small and medium sized private sector enterprises under the aegis of special programmes supported by the Royal Government. Such programmes provided free training, liberal financing and other forms of assistance to private entrepreneurs.

Administrative reforms

In keeping with the needs of a dynamic society, the structure of the Government changed substantially since 1971. His

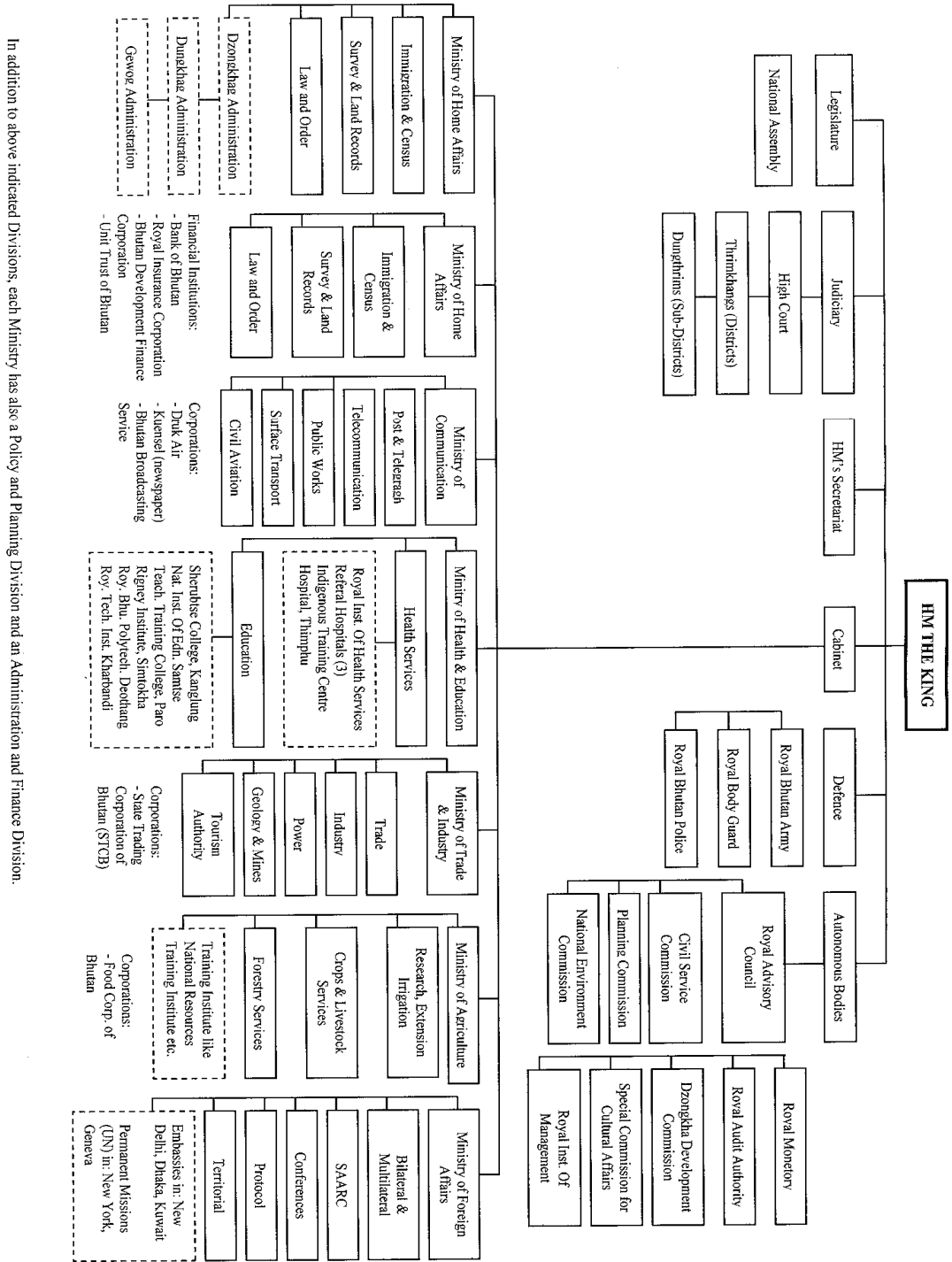
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Majesty believed that a good government must remain small and compact, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people it served. The ten-member Royal Civil Service Commission was established to ensure that every government organ met those criteria. The Commission's chairmanship was relinquished by His Majesty's representative in 1990 and since then, it was appointed on a rotational basis.

The Royal Advisory Council, established by the third Druk Gyalpo, was revitalised to play a more dynamic role in the governance of the country. Although the council had its traditional mandate of advising the king and maintaining vigilance over the civil service, His Majesty felt it lacked the necessary powers to carry its responsibilities effectively. In 1984, His Majesty proposed a revised set of rules for its functioning. The most notable addition was a clause stating that:

“If any person, including His Majesty the King, does anything harmful to the interest of the kingdom and the people, the Royal Advisory Council, without suppressing such matters, and free of fear from any quarter, shall bring it to the notice of His Majesty the King and, if necessary, even report it to the Cabinet and the National Assembly.”

The National Assembly, however, strongly objected to this clause as its members felt that it undermined the traditional values and sacred principles of absolute loyalty to the throne. His Majesty insisted that it was a necessary provision to ensure a sense of responsibility to the nation on the part of future rulers.



In addition to above indicated Divisions, each Ministry has also a Policy and Planning Division and an Administration and Finance Division.

Figure 3-12 Structure of Government 1993 (Source: Ministry of Planning, Thimphu)

The most far reaching of administrative reforms undertaken by His Majesty was the initiation of the process of decentralising the functions of the government. The move was based on the principle that the people themselves would best understand their own real needs. It was also taken into account that the civil servants working at the dzongkhag and gewog levels should be in the best position to understand and judge the needs of the people. His Majesty, therefore, continued to delegate increasing administrative powers and resources for them to respond effectively to the needs of the people. Above all, the policy of **decentralisation** was founded on the premises that for anything to succeed, the government and the people must join hands and work together.

Under the policy of decentralisation, the people participated directly in the planning and implementation of development activities that affected their own lives. The constitution of the *Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchung* (རྫོང་ཁག་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཚོགས་ཚུངས་ - District Development Committee) in 1981 and the *Gewog Yargye Tshogchung* (རྫོང་འོག་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཚོགས་ཚུངས་ - Block Development Committee) in 1991 brought the decision-making process down to the grassroots level. Elected members of these for a not only debate and scrutinise development ideas and plans proposed by the government, but also suggest new initiatives of their own.

As a part of the decentralisation process, His Majesty relinquished Chairmanship of the Planning Commission to a full

time Chairman in 1991. He instead took to travelling more frequently all around the country to hold direct consultations with the people together with officials of the ministries concerned. During such meetings, His Majesty encouraged the people to be frank and open, sharing with them his own and their mutual dreams and disappointments.

The most momentous change in the structure of the government came in 1998, where the long-standing cabinet was dissolved and a new cabinet was appointed. His Majesty developed full executive power to it and declared that he will remain only as the head of state, and not as head of government. Indeed this was the beginning of a historic journey towards constitutional monarchy. In December 2001, His Majesty commanded the drafting of a Constitution to pave way for the ascension of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and introduction of parliamentary democracy. On December 9, 2006, His Majesty the fourth Druk Gyalpo stunned the nation by announcing his abdication in favour Chhoetse Poenlop (Crown Prince).

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck ascended the throne on 15 December 2006, although the formal coronation was held on 6 November, 2008.

After 34 years of an enlightened rule, His Majesty the fourth Druk Gyalpo renounced the Throne and made his son His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck the fifth King of Bhutan.

Labour reforms

Contribution of labour as a form of taxation had been traditional to Bhutanese society. The second and the third Druk Gyalpos progressively reformed the system in their reigns. In 1980s, His Majesty initiated further reforms in keeping with his own ideal of **people's participation**.

Although the system was accepted by the people as a necessary step towards reducing the country's dependence on imported labour, it had its adverse ramifications in increasing urban migration and reduced agricultural productivity in the rural areas. It also proved to be disparate in that small and large households had to share the burden of labour contributions in equal measure.

Thus, on December 17, 1995, His Majesty announced the abolition of *Goongda Woola*¹. The mobilisation of *Zhabto Lemi*² was decentralised to the GYTs in order to reflect people's participation in its true spirit. In his National Day address to the nation on that day, His Majesty expressed his hope that the country had acquired the maturity to develop a sense of dignity of labour and would produce a national work force.

Legislative and judicial reforms

Since the beginning of His Majesty's reign, the National Assembly of Bhutan, founded by the Third Druk Gyalpo in 1953 as the nation's highest law making body,

¹ Fifteen days-compulsory form of labour contribution to the government by households.

² Voluntary labour for development activities.

began to see major reforms towards the broadening and deepening of its role and responsibilities. The **secret ballot** was introduced to ensure free and election of its members. As a measure of the importance he attached to its role in government, His Majesty has attended every session of the assembly since the time he assumed the throne. Besides deliberating on all matters of national significance and enacting laws, its role expanded to approving the Royal Government's Five Year Development Plans and the national budget.

The early years of His Majesty's reign also saw the largest number of laws enacted by the National Assembly. The most important acts were the consolidation of civil and criminal court procedures and the Bhutan Penal Act. Under these acts, justice was made more easily accessible to the common people, enabling the legal system to be effective and responsive to the needs of a rapidly modernising nation. Many offences were decriminalised and made compundable.

Inspired by His Majesty's concern for the difficulties caused to common people by delays in the dispensation of justice, the judiciary took the initiative to clear all the backlog pending cases by 1991. The exercise in itself brought lasting changes to the judicial system. For example, the High Court introduced daily unscheduled hearings, where all judges, including the Chief Justice, devoted one hour of every working day to dealing with unscheduled litigation. To save people from having to travel long distances for litigation, thrimkhangs were established in all dzongkhags and the larger drungkhags.

The judiciary itself came under basic restructuring. To strengthen the independence of the judiciary, His Majesty commanded the creation of a separate judicial cadre. This led to a significant enhancement in the prestige of the judicial system. High priority was accorded to human resource development in the legal profession with overseas training, study tours and degree courses in law made available to selected candidates.

A national legal course was also established for pre-service training for the prospective judiciary officials. By 1995, such steps had led to large numbers of university graduates applying to join the legal profession.

Cultural and religious reforms

His Majesty always recognised that Bhutan's **cultural and religious heritage**

represented the strongest cornerstone of its nationhood. The Bhutanese value system consisted of unique customs and manners, language and dress and arts and crafts, which all Bhutanese shared as symbols of common identity. It was the undiluted adherence to these values that ensured Bhutan's sovereignty through many turbulent centuries.

His Majesty observed that even the most developed of societies were beginning to discover the importance of spiritual contentment over material progress and were trying to rediscover their lost cultural values. Bhutan, on the other hand, was already in the position of having preserved its cultural values intact.

His Majesty stressed that a small and developing country like Bhutan with its small population can never have the



Figure 5-13 His Majesty visits new Shaydra – Dordaydrak, August, 1987

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economic and military strength to ensure national security. The preservation and promotion of Bhutan's cultural and religious traditions, therefore, continued to be one of His Majesty's consistent preoccupations. He was concerned that modern development would inevitably lead to the gradual dilution and ultimate loss of these traditions. He, therefore, launched a comprehensive programme aimed at preserving and promoting Bhutan's unique cultural and religious heritage as a long term means of assuring the Kingdom's sovereignty and independence.

By successive Royal Commands, the *Dratshang Lhentshog* (ལྷན་ཁྲིམས་ལྷན་ཚོགས་) and the *Kadzin Lhentshog* (བཀའ་འཛིན་ལྷན་ཚོགས་) were established in 1984 and 1986 respectively. The two lhentshogs, together called the

Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs, were given the responsibility of formulating policies to preserve and promote national culture and religion.

The *Dratshang Lhentshog* was made mainly responsible for the management and guidance of the monastic communities, including nunneries. By 1995 every dzongkhag in the kingdom had rabdeys, which are Dzongkhag monastic bodies. Greater efforts were made for monastic bodies and communities to become more self-supporting and capable of rendering useful spiritual and social services to the lay communities they served. Traditional learning disciplines, which included practical and philosophical courses, were supplemented by modern subjects like English language and mathematics.



Figure 5-17 His Majesty addressing the Harare Non-Aligned SUBmit - 1986

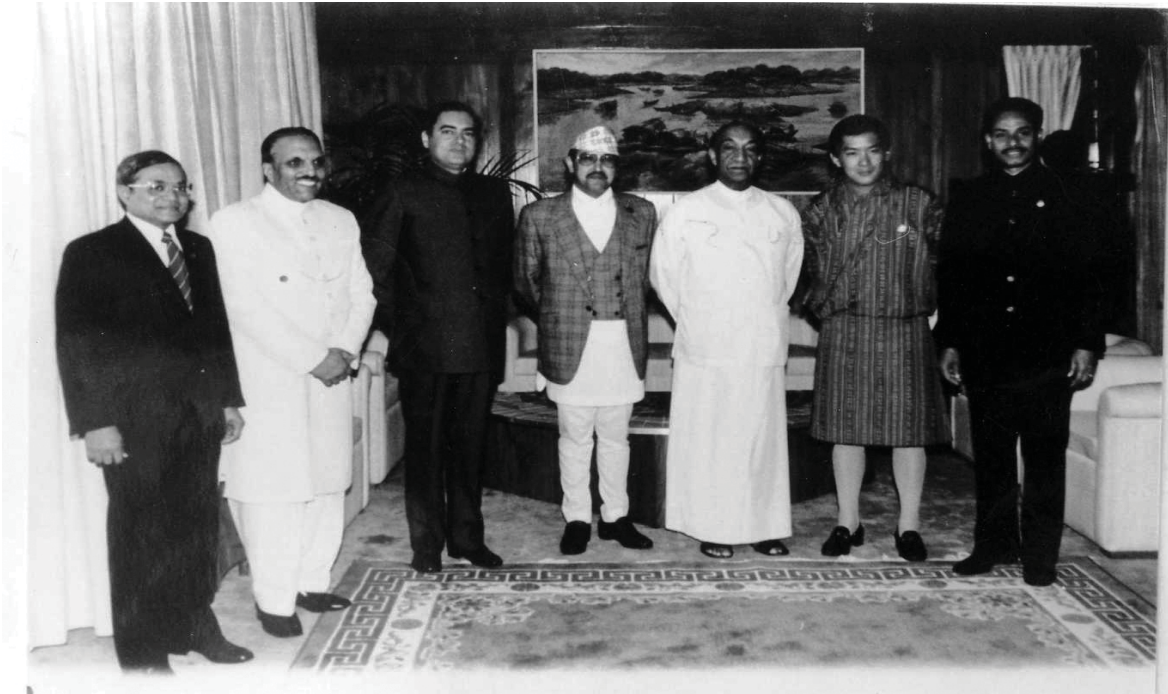


Figure 5-15 His Majesty with the other SAARC Leaders in the first SAARC Summit, Dhaka



Figure 5-16 His Majesyt with Prime Minister Narasima Rao during his historic visit to India in 1996



Figure 5-17 His Majesty participating in the Tika ceremony

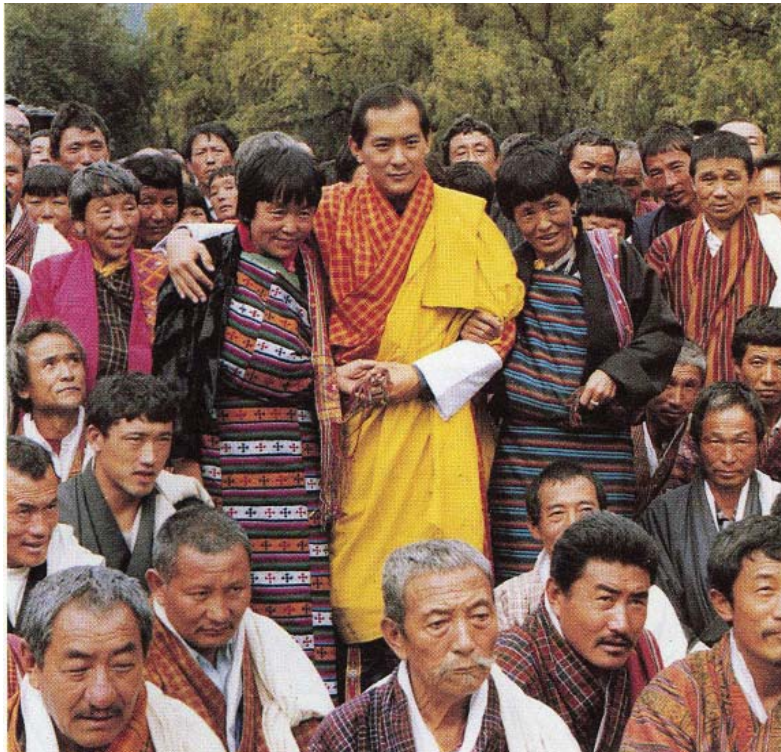


Figure 5-18 His Majesty with the people during a public meeting

The Kadzin Lhentshog was restructured and renamed *Solzín Lhentshog* (སོལོའི་ལེན་ཤོག་ཆོག་ལས་) by Royal Decree in 1995, upgrading its membership to include high level representation from different schools of religious practice prevailing in the country. This was to ensure that the diversity of Bhutan's various religious and ethnic cultures would be preserved in equal measure and respected for all time to come. Its other responsibilities included the development and promotion of *Zhungkha* (ཇུང་ཁྱེ་ལྷ་ - the National Language) and **Driglam Namzha** (the code of traditional etiquette); preservation and maintenance of national treasures and monuments; and the overall projection of Bhutan's religious and cultural values.

Foreign relations

His Majesty's role in Bhutan's foreign affairs began when he accompanied his father on a State Visit to India in 1971, where he cultivated close and cordial relations with many Indian leaders. After his coronation, which was attended by the President of India, the frequent exchange of visits by His Majesty to India and successive Indian Prime Ministers and high level delegations to Bhutan served to further cement India-Bhutan relations.

Indian assistance to Bhutan's development programmes grew from Nu. 437.2 million in 1972 to Nu. 9.00 billion in 1997, resulting in proportionate increases in trade and other exchanges of mutual benefit to the two countries. The signing of 1983 Indo-Bhutan agreements on trade and transit was

an important feature of the mutual trust and confidence that had developed between the two countries. In 1983, India opened its airspace to the fledgling Bhutanese national airline and a microwave telephone link was established connecting the two countries.

Membership in the United Nations brought new responsibilities as well as support through many of the world body's agencies. In 1973, Bhutan also joined the Non-Aligned Movement. His Majesty personally led the Bhutanese delegation to many of the movement's summit meetings, establishing close personal connections with many world leaders. His Majesty set up UN office in Bhutan in June 1979. In 1981, Bhutan joined International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank followed by World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNESCO in 1982. He has also actively participated in the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) since its formation in 1985.

In **bilateral diplomatic relations**, Bhutan could not afford a wide network of resident embassies. Starting with diplomatic relations with only India and Bangladesh in 1971, 26 ambassadors from friendly countries, based in either New Delhi or Dhaka, were accredited to Bhutan by 1995. Bhutanese ambassadors to India, Bangladesh, Kuwait and to the United Nations in Geneva were accredited in turn to those countries.

By his far-sighted leadership in foreign policy, His Majesty soon acquired the international stature of a respected statesman. Every foreign visitor who has met him in audience has left with lasting impressions of His Majesty's in-depth and

wide ranging knowledge of global affairs and the sincere and highly principled positions he has consistently maintained on important international issues.

National identity and the concept of One Nation One People

Soon after India became independent, Nepalese migrants, settled in southern Bhutan, made a bid for political power in the country. In the hope of gaining support from the victorious Indian National Congress, they adopted the name of Bhutan National Congress and planned a rebellion with outside support. The expected support did not materialise and the movement was successfully quelled. The third Druk Gyalpo later granted amnesty to the rebels, many of whom returned to the country. In 1958, the National Assembly granted citizenship to the Nepalese immigrants who have settled in Bhutan before that date. Thereafter, the Royal Government initiated various programmes to enable the Nepalese to join in the national mainstream.

The 1988 census of the population, however, revealed that there had been a massive infiltration of illegal immigration into the country over many years. It had by then become a serious situation, threatening the country's security. As a small and underdeveloped country, Bhutan lacked the necessary means to counter such threats. In the past, it had always been the strength of national unity engendered by a strong sense of national identity that had come to play in similar crises. After holding consultation with the GYTsm DYT and the National Assembly, the Royal Government initiated measures to stop the trend.

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Nation-wide programmes were launched in 1989 to strengthen national identity and to promote the concept of **One Nation, One People**. The southern Bhutanese people fully supported the policy, but anti-national elements among them led an uprising against the Royal Government. Widespread and violent demonstrations all across southern Bhutan took place during September, 1990. Acts of terrorism, which had begun earlier in the year, intensified further. Kidnappings, robberies and murder led to schools, hospitals and other public facilities being closed. Those that remained open were attacked and destroyed. Bhutan's peace and tranquillity and its image as the last Shangri-La were shaken.

Even during that difficult time, His Majesty remained deeply committed to national unity and the process of national integration. His firm determination to protect the country's security and integrity was clearly expressed when he said:

“It is the duty of every true Bhutanese to rally behind the Palden Drukpa in times of troubles and difficulties. Bhutan has remained a sovereign, independent country throughout the 1,300 years of its recorded history, not through mere good fortune but because our forefathers greatly cherished and valued our way of life and our unique national identity. They were, therefore, determined to safeguard and protect the Bhutanese nation against any threat to its well-being and security even at the cost of their lives. It has now become our sacred duty today to safeguard and protect the security of the Bhutanese nation. We must, therefore, ensure that the security and well

being of the Palden Drukpa is never again threatened.”

His Majesty thus expressed his confidence that as long as the people and the Government work together single-mindedly, all national goals and aspirations will be fulfilled and, that a bright and secure future is assured for Bhutan.

The Royal Family

On October 31, 1988, His Majesty's marriage to Ashi Dorji Wangmo, Ashi Tshering Pem, Ashi Tshering Yangdon and Ashi Sangay Choden was solemnised in the sacred Dechog Lhakhang of Punakha Dzong. Daughters of Yab Ugyen Dorji and Yum Thujee Zam, the four Queens

descended from very old Bhutanese families of distinguished lineage. Yab Ugyen Dorji is the grand-nephew of the fifth Zhabdrung Sungtruel Choglye Yeshe Nguedrup on the paternal side and the nephew of the sixth Zhabdrung Thugtruel Jigme Dorji on the maternal side. Yum Thujee Zam belonged to the Ngatshang Chhoeje lineage through the renowned Geshe Sherab Dorji.

The Royal Wedding was a very important national event for the Bhutanese people. It fulfilled their long cherished dream of ensuring the line of succession to the throne. His Majesty the King and Their Majesties the Queens have five princes and five princesses including His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.



Figure 5-19 His Majesty the King and their Majesties the Queens



Figure 5-20 His Royal Highness DASHO JIGME KHE SAR NAMGYAL WANGCHUCK, the Crown Prince, addressing one of the Youth Functions

A Monarch of the People

With his selfless dedication and hard work in the service of the country, fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck has not only gained the great love and loyalty at home but respect abroad. In his genuine concern for the happiness and well-being of his people, His Majesty has not compromised the ideal of “**Gross National Happiness**” – an ideal that he visualized when he ascended to the throne. National development, as idealised by His Majesty, must never be at the cost of happiness and spiritual contentment of the people. The high standards that His Majesty has set for achieving the goals of development continue to be a daunting challenge for planners. The result is that Bhutan today prides in being in a unique situation of development and rapid modernisation, where the benefits of

material progress is equitably distributed, the natural environment is protected and the culture and spiritual heritage of the people preserved.

Looking ahead to the future, His Majesty worked tirelessly for the kingdom’s continued prosperity and peace. With the three major power projects already launched during his uniquely successful official visit to India in March 1996, His Majesty has secured our future towards greater prosperity and Gross National Happiness into the twenty-first century³.

³ The Nu. 2000 million Kurichhu Hydroelectric Project with a capacity of 45 MW, the Nu. 2000 million Basochhu Project with a capacity of 60 MW; and the Nu. 30000 million Tala mega project with a capacity of 1020 M. (Tala Project where full operation began in 2007)



Figure 5-21 His Majesty serving the people



Figure 5-22 His Majesty having lunch with the members of the public in 1990

History of Bhutan

His thirty four years of glorious reign is indeed a Golden Era in the history of Bhutan. Promulgation of the Constitution of Bhutan (Tsa-Thrim-Chenmo), authorship of the Gross National Happiness (GNH), Good Governance, safe-guarding of the National sovereignty, the establishment of friendly diplomatic relationships with

many countries and the transformation of Monarchy into Constitutional Democratic Monarchy are some of the unforgettable contributions of our fourth king.

Above all, His Majesty's close contact with the common people and his deep concern for our welfare makes him truly a **Monarch of the People**.

Student Activities

1. Prepare a glossary of the key terms given in the box at the beginning of the chapters as you progress through the lessons.
2. Explain the significance of installing the Crown Prince as Trongsa Poenlop before he is enthroned as the Druk Gyalpo.
3. Read the coronation speech by His Majesty given on page 73. Identify the goals in his speech. Which of the goals do you think are most important for the development of Bhutan? List them in order of importance and justify your ranking. Explain in your own words how these goals could be achieved.
4. Differentiate between **Gross National Happiness** and **Gross National Product**. Assess their relative importance for the future of Bhutan.
5. Explain the statement "**His Majesty as the architect of modern development**" by giving examples.
6. Explain the development which has taken place in education, health, and communication services.
7. What do you understand by the term "**sustainable development**"? Explain with examples the steps taken in Bhutan to ensure sustainable development.
8. Suggest one measure for further ensurance
8. List the main features of the reforms in economic, administrative, legislation, judiciary and cultural and religious affairs. Discuss each of these features in groups in your class.
9. Discuss the difference between **centralized** and **decentralized** forms of government. What are the advantages and disadvantages that you see with each of these forms?
10. What have been the significant achievements in the foreign relations of Bhutan since 1972?
11. Why is His Majesty referred to as the "Monarch of the People"? Explain by giving examples.
12. Study the structure of Government given on page 80 and try to find out the names of persons heading each of the organizations mentioned in the structure of the government. Also, compare the structure with earlier structures, noting the changes and their implication to Bhutan's security and sovereignty.

Chapter 6

ART, ARCHITECTURE AND HANDICRAFTS

KEY TERMS

didactic function	<i>Jinda</i>
iconography	<i>debri</i>
<i>Thangkha</i>	<i>Thongdroel</i>
applique	sculpture
architecture	trefoil
dovetail technique	handicrafts

Bhutan's rich tradition of art, architecture and handicrafts is a vital aspect of our unique cultural heritage. Passed down from generation to generation since the ancient times, our artistic traditions have survived and flourished for many centuries. Today, they form an integral part of the history, culture and the distinctive identity of the Bhutanese people.

The Bhutanese form of art

The Bhutanese form of art is religious and anonymous. It does not exist for itself but has a **didactic function** within the framework of its Mahayana Buddhist traditions. It is seen first and foremost as a religious action. The aesthetic dimension plays only a subsidiary role. Bhutanese works of art have inscriptions of the *Jinda* (ལྷིན་བདག - donor) and not the artist. Contributing to the building or restoration of a temple or a chhoeten, or commissioning statues and paintings are considered acts of religious devotion by which the jinda as well as the artist accrues spiritual merit.

Paintings and statues are religious in their thematic content and are not subject to the individual artist's creativity; they follow

a set of precisely written rules. The set of written rules that the artist must follow is technically called **iconography**. Since the rules of iconography are very strict, the first responsibility of the artist is to observe them scrupulously. He must not express his personality but aspire to excel in his skill. Deviating from the set rules is believed to nullify the effect of work and the artist should be fully aware of this responsibility.

Since restoration is considered a pious act, many paintings have been repainted at different periods with only a few temples still retaining their original paintings. It is, therefore, almost impossible to get a precise idea of what some of these paintings were like before the 17th century. A temple like Tamzhing in Bumthang, which still retains part of the original paintings done at the time of its construction in 1501 by Pema Lingpa, is an invaluable treasure.

It is well known that the great saint, Tertoen Pema Lingpa (1450-1520) himself was an accomplished artist who could paint, sculpt and cast metal. As for sculpture, many images have been re-coated or re-gilded at different periods, although quite a large number have been kept as they were, mostly in the remote temples and monasteries.

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Bhutanese paintings and statues dating from the 7th to the 17th century had strong affinities with those of Tibet. They were also totally devoted to Buddhism. The style of certain statues of the period is similar to those of the Newari artisans from the Kathmandu valley of Nepal.

After the unification of Bhutan under Drukpa rule in the 17th century, the monastic community played a crucial role in the commissioning of paintings and images. Numerous temples were built in the dzongs established by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. All the walls were covered with exquisite frescoes and many statues adorned the altars, bearing witness of the devotion of the people.

In the 17th century, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal invited many artists from Tibet, Nepal and Ladakh to come to Bhutan to train local artists. Over time, Bhutanese artists started to acquire skills and to produce their own work.

Thus, Bhutanese art has become a harmonious blend of the local genius with external influences, making it unique to the country.

Around 1680 the fourth Druk Desi, Tenzin Rabgye, opened the School of *Zorig Chusum* (འཕེལ་བྱེད་ལྷན་ཁག་ - 13 arts). Some of the other great religious patrons of art were the third Desi Minjur Tenpa, the thirteenth Desi Sherab Wangchuck, the twenty fifth Desi Sherab Gyaltshen, the ninth Je Khenpo Shakya Rinchen, the thirteenth Je Khenpo Yonten Thaye and the last Desi and 53rd Je Khenpo, Zhabdrung Sungtruel Chogley Yeshe Nguedrup. All of them either restored or commissioned new religious works of great artistic value.

By the middle of the 19th century, the regional poenlops and dzongpoens began to commission religious works of art under their patronage. The most famous among them were the two successive Trongsa Poenlops, Tshokye Dorji and Jigme Namgyal.

With the advent of the monarchy in 1907, the Royal Family emerged as the most important patron of art. In the second half of the 20th century, the two most important jindas have been the Royal Grandmother, Ashi Phuntsho Choedon and Her Majesty Ashi Kezang Choedon, the Queen Mother.



Figure 6-1 Wall painting of the life of Milarepa (only a part), from Paro Dzong

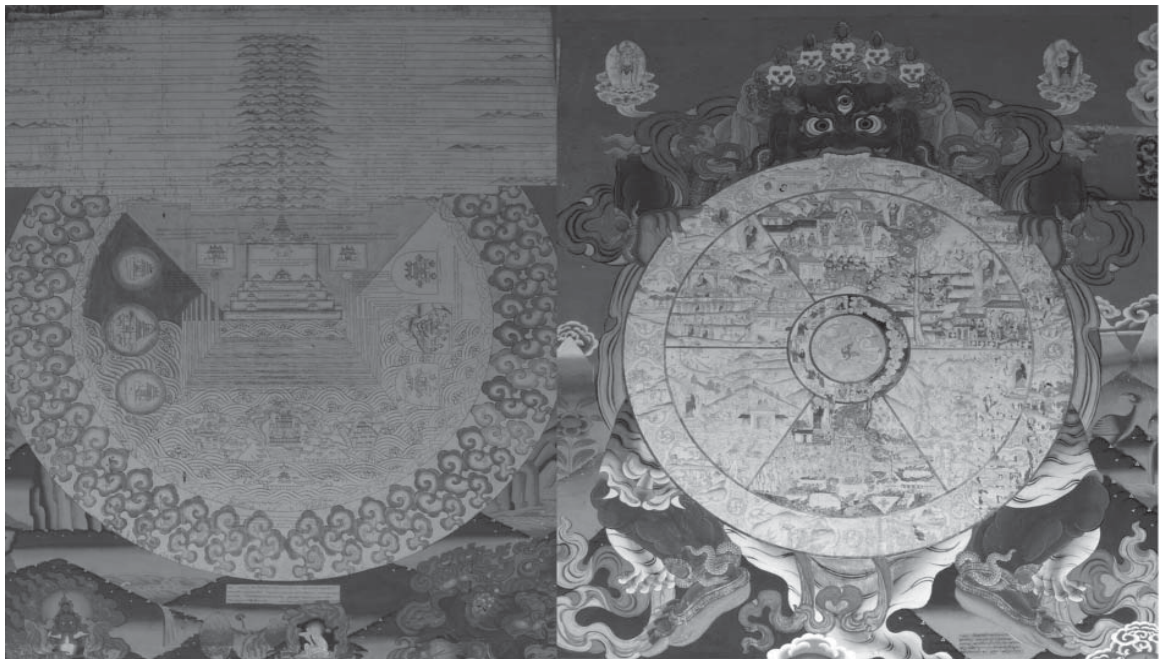


Figure 6-2 Murals depicting the layout of the Universe (left) and Wheel of Existence (right)

Painting

Bhutan's artistic tradition incorporates three kinds of paintings. They include painting of statues, temple wall paintings known as *debri* (ལྷོབས་རིས་ - frescoes) and *thangka* (ཐང་ཀ་ - scroll) painting. Bhutanese painters work with paint mixtures made from earth, minerals and vegetables. These are first powdered and then mixed with chalk, water or cattle hide glue. The four basic colours used in Bhutanese painting are white, yellow (mid-buff), red and grey. Different colours are created by mixing these basic colours. Imported chemical paints, *zangtshoen* (འབྲུག་ཚོན་), have come into increasing use in recent times. Though less resistant to the elements, chemical paints are preferred for their comparative ease of preparation and use.

Paint brushes made from bamboo, twigs and animal hair are used to apply the paint. Thicker brushes are mostly of pig's hair while thinner brushes are usually made of cat's fur.

A Bhutanese artist or painter is either a monk or layman and begins in the trade under the supervision of a master. Apprentice painters carry out preliminary work and the final touches are completed by the master. The colours are applied in set orders that have symbolic meanings.

Statue painting

Statues of all sizes are seen in temples, monasteries, dzongs and other religious monuments, as well as in most private

homes. Most statues are made of clay while others are cast from bronze, brass or silver. Clay statues are fully painted once they are dry. Bronze and other metallic works are painted only on the face and hands to highlight details of the eyes, mustache and head-dress.

Wall painting

The process of painting frescoes on the interior walls of temples and dzongs is a precise form of art and craft. First, the surface of the wall is made smooth by applying a thin coat of plaster which is left to dry. Then, a layer of thin canvass is pasted on the surface, when dry, with a specially prepared glue made from wheat flour and pepper powder. The pepper powder is resistant to wood worm. The cloth should be pasted in such a manner that it becomes indistinguishable from the wall surface. The wall is then ready to be painted. In some cases, the wall is painted directly once the plaster of clay has dried.

Most of the ancient paintings are centred around important historical figure who occupies most of the space. The outer edges are divided into small compartments into which minor figures are fitted. Their design indicate an Indian influence, from the 8th to the 12th centuries, that must have spread to Tibet and Central Asia via Nepal and finally found its way into Bhutan some time during the 15th century. Over the subsequent centuries, Bhutanese artists adapted and improved on the style as seen in the monasteries of Taktshang (17th century), Tango (17th century) and Phajoding (18th century). Still later, Bhutanese artists made a radical departure in the system by dividing

the focus into many figures and scenes. Illustrations of scenes from the lives of famous individuals surrounding the central figure began to be freely used. For example, one fresco in the Paro Dzong illustrates the life of Milarepa.

Scroll painting

Paintings executed on scrolls are called **thangkas**. Unlike the other paintings, thangkas are not displayed all the time. They are kept rolled up in boxes in the storerooms of temples and are taken out for display only on special occasions. Thangkas constitute some of the most important sacred treasures preserved in temples, monasteries and dzongs in Bhutan. One particular type which is much larger in size is called the *thongdroel* (མཐོང་གྲོལ་) which is displayed only during annual tsechus and dromchoes. Thousands of people gather during such occasions to see the thongdroel because it brings liberation by sight.

In making a thangka, the first step is to stretch a damp piece of cotton cloth on a wooden frame. The surface of the cloth is then smoothed by rubbing a mixture of lime/chalk and gum on it. On the smooth surface, a grid is drawn to help the artist put in details. To draw the grid the artist follows a set of rules laid down in sacred scriptures. It is believed that even a slight deviation is equivalent to committing a sin and, therefore, the work of art in that case has no religious value. In some cases, a “xylographic block”, with the required design engraved on a wooden block, is used. The cloth is pressed against the block and the design transferred to the cloth which is

then ready to be painted. Another technique used sometimes is the “pounce or spray pattern”. The desired figure is outlined on paper with pin pricks through which charcoal powder is sprayed to produce a dotted version on the cloth.



Figure 6-3 An artist working on a scroll painting

In some thangkas, gold paint is used to colour the background and fine black or red paint is used to give a coloured outline of the chosen design. Others have black background with white and red designs. When the painting is finished, it is bordered with multicoloured silk and brocade. Two staves are then stitched onto the upper and lower borders for suspension and stretching.

The thongdroel that is displayed during the annual tsechus and dromchoes, unlike the

usual thangka, is executed in **appliqué**, which means embroidering cloth on cloth. The designs are cut from pieces of brocade or silk cloth and stitched together onto a background cloth.

In comparison to old original thangka paintings, modern Bhutanese thangkas have become more ornate with increasingly lavish use of gold paint like the execution of Chinese landscapes. The earlier influences (prior to the 17th century), mixed with Chinese influence (after the 17th century) appears to have given Bhutanese painting a somewhat blended form that makes it unique.



Figure 6-4 Trashi Gomang

Sculpture

Till date, very few stone sculptures have been discovered in the country except for some miniature carvings of sacred letters on stone slabs found on mani walls and

chhoetens. Since Bhutan has a good supply of slate, most monuments include slate with intricately engraved images of monks, saints and deities. These, in particular, are preserved as valuable treasures of the country's artistic tradition. Some good examples of beautiful slate carvings can be found in Talo Goenpa and the central tower of Simtokha Dzong.

The most common **sculpture** is the clay statue which varies in height from a few centimetres like those found in the *Trashigomang* (བྱུག་ལྷ་མོ་སྐོར་མཚན་ - portable chapels) to several metres like those found in Kuje, Kyechu and Phajoding monasteries. The core of these statues are wood wrapped in cloth around which fine clay of uniform consistency is moulded. The other parts, such as the hands and head, are moulded separately and attached to the main body. In some cases, the clay is directly moulded into the main body without any support while still damp and soft. Other details are chiselled on the moulded clay. Once the moulded statues are dry they are painted all over. Besides images of gods, deities, saints and other historical figures, clay is used to make miniature chhoetens usually conical in shape called *tshatsha* (ཚ་ཤ་) which are kept in holy places and clefts of rocks. Sometimes, the ashes of the dead are also mixed with the clay mould. Tshatshas are usually whitewashed with lime or chalk.

The technique of making larger bronze statues follows a procedure that involves hammering of metal sheets; working on the hammered sheets to get the desired shapes; engraving designs; and joining the separate parts together with rivets. Most of these



Figure 6-5 Stone sculpture (photograph taken at the National Museum)



Figure 6-6 Small statues being made

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images are gilded and some are ornamented with coral and turquoise. The images are sometimes inlaid with silver and adorned with jewellery.

Some statues are made of lacquered wood and have a striking expression, such as Milarepa's statues in Dungtse Lhakhang in Paro.

Statues dating back to the 16th century have very simple but striking features. Their bases are not carved and no definite influence can be observed in them. Statues from the 18th century onward are much more ornate, being inlaid with semi-precious stones and having bases carved into a double row of lotus petals.

After the statues are completed, a religious ceremony is performed for their consecration to give them the necessary religious value and sanctity. The inside of the statue is hollow and contains a *Sogshing* (སོག་ཤིང་ - tree of life) and the other elements of *Zung* (འབྲུག་མཚན་ - sacred prayers, relics and jewellery).

Architecture

Bhutanese **architecture** is famous for its originality, its harmonious proportions and its adaptation to the landscape. We learned in chapter 2 (Class IX) that the first recorded buildings in Bhutanese history were the temples of Lhakhang Karpo and Nagpo in Haa, Kyechu in Paro and Jampa, Koenchogsum and Gayney Lhakhang in Bumthang, built around the 6th and the 7th centuries. From the 11th century until the early 17th century,

numerous lamas and their disciples built temples and monasteries all over the country. From the buildings dating back to the 17th century that still exist, it can be seen that they were relatively small structures with a courtyard enclosed within their walls. In most cases they were only one-storied. Built close to the temples were the lama's residence with the quarters for his disciples. Among the most active temple-builders in the 15th century were Ngawang Choegyal, the great grandfather of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, and Tertoen Pema Lingpa.

Fortresses such as Jathel Dzong, Chelkha Dzong and Dongoen Dzong were built by the Lhapa Kagyu religious school which once dominated the western region in the 12th century. In the eastern region, stone castles called *khar* (མཁར་) were built mostly by the local nobility. In the early 15th century, the saint Drubthop Thangthong Gyalpo, who we learnt in a lower class was popularly known as Chagzampa, visited the country and built iron bridges in different parts of Bhutan.

The architectural landscape changed in the 17th century when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal introduced the construction of dzongs which became the model for all monasteries built or restored from that time. Gangtey Goenpa, Dramitse and Tango monasteries are based on the dzong model. After Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, one of the most active temple builders was the 4th Desi, Tenzin Rabgye, who at the end of the 17th century had Taktshang and Tango built in their present form.

From the second half of the 19th century and especially after the earthquake of 1905, temples and dzongs are restored and palaces were built. The active patrons were Jigme Namgyal and the successive Kings and their Queens. Some of the best examples of Royal patronage are the Kharbandi monastery in Phuentsholing, the Memorial Chhoeten in Thimphu, the new Kyechu Lhakhang in Paro and the newly built Kuje Lhakhang in Bumthang.

Special characteristics of Bhutanese architecture

In Bhutanese architecture, there is generally no planning and designing done on paper before a structure is built. The chief carpenter is the master of work and he has the size, layout and structure in his mind. He uses parts of his body for measurement and

proportions of the different features of the building. He supervises other carpenters, stone-cutters and village workers. No nails are used and the wood pieces are assembled by the **dovetail technique**. The many examples of traditional Bhutanese architecture that we see were all built in this way.

Architectural styles differ from place to place and from different periods in time. The differences in style are due to :

- availability of building materials;
- physical and climatic conditions;
- social and economic development; and
- religious and cultural traditions.

The main materials used have been stones, compressed earth (mud), wood and bamboo.

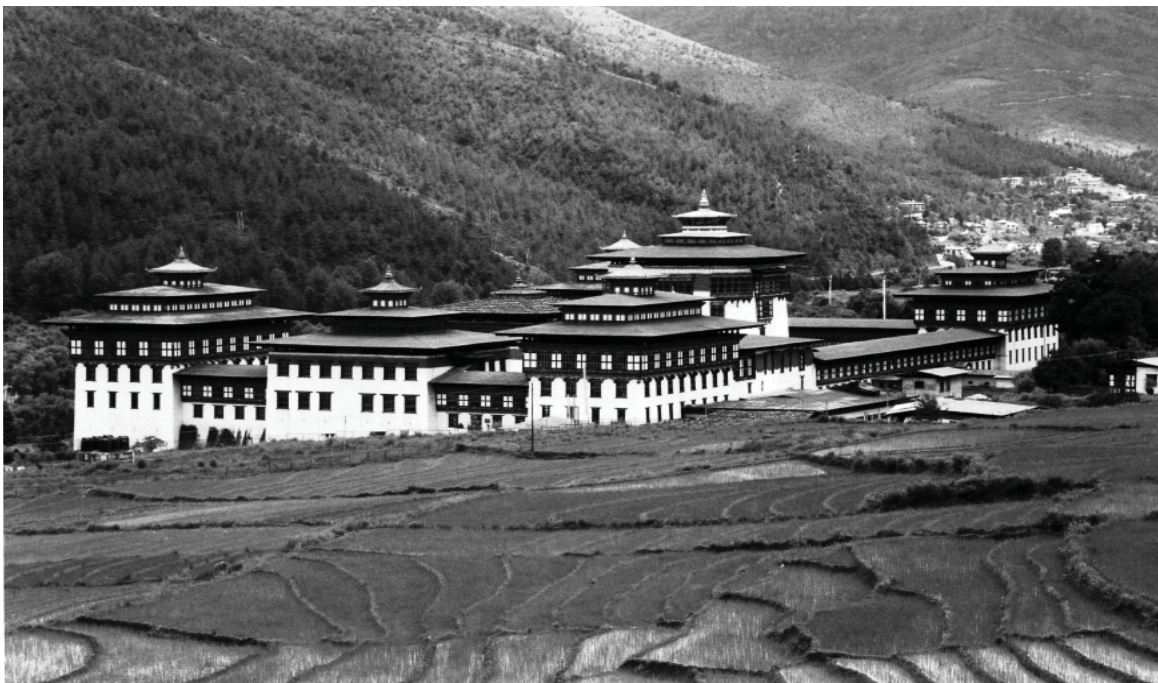


Figure 6-7 Tashichoedzong, a fine example of Bhutanese architecture

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Stone or rock is mostly used for dzongs and religious buildings while village houses are made of stones and compressed earth. Wooden shingles are commonly used for roofing. In some parts of eastern Bhutan bamboo mats are also used for roofing.

Wood is used especially for windows, balconies of dzong buildings and temples. Windows have a distinctive **trefoil** shape and elaborate lintels painted with geometrical floral and motifs.

The characteristics of Bhutanese architecture are generally:

- lavish use of wood;
- sloped whitewashed walls;
- window size increasing with the stories;
- the trefoil shaped windows; and
- the pitched roof covered with shingles and weighed down with stones.

Once the building is completed, artists often embellish it by painting different auspicious motifs. The selection of the site for any building, as well as the different steps of the construction, are guided by the astrologer's calculations and always followed by rituals. For religious buildings, the configuration of the site and good omens are considered very important.

Different types of buildings

Lhakhang (ལྷ་ཁང་ - temples)

Temples are usually one or two-storied buildings with a wide red stripe at the upper level of the walls and a gilded roof ornament. A small courtyard may be enclosed in the walls with the residence of the lama attached to it.

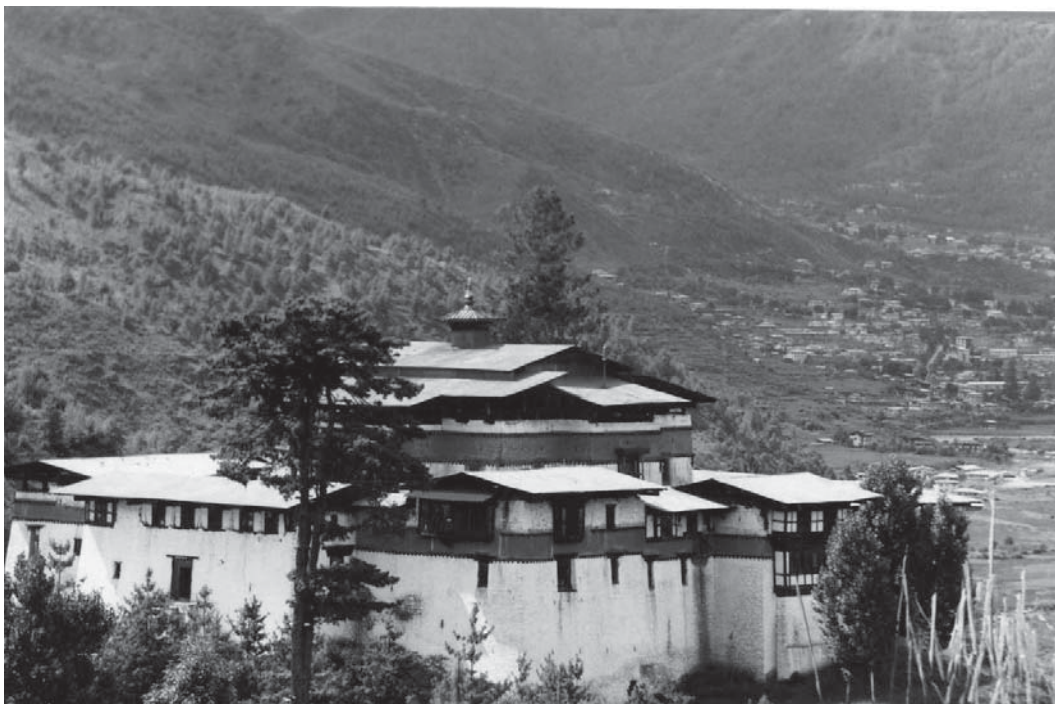


Figure 6-8 Simtokha Dzong, an example of a basic pattern dzong

Inside, the ceiling is supported by pillars, which divide the space into a shrine and an antechamber, and the walls are covered with paintings. The altar occupies one side of the shrine with the other side usually devoted to protective deities. The rest of the space is left empty to be used by devotees for prostration or performance of rituals.

Many temples are also housed in monasteries and dzongs.

Goenpa (དགོན་པ་ - monasteries)

The monasteries are of two types: the cluster type and the dzong type. The cluster type is probably more ancient. It consists of one or two temples housed in a building and

surrounded by small houses, which serves as living or meditation quarters for the monks. Some examples of the cluster type are Dzongdrakha in the Paro Valley, Dodedra, Phajoding, Chari and Trashigang nunnery in the Thimphu region, Kuenzangdra and Tharpaling in the Bumthang region as well as most of the monasteries in the eastern region.

The dzong type is a monastery built like a fortress with a main tower, housing many temples and a surrounding outer structure which provides accommodation for the monks. The most impressive examples of this type are Tango in the upper Thimphu valley, Talo in Punakha, Gangtey Goenpa near Pelela and Dramitse in eastern Bhutan.



Figure 6-9 Chhoeten Kora in Trashiyangtse

Dzongs

These gigantic structures with their massive walls and elegant woodwork are among the most impressive forms of architecture in Asia. The basic pattern of the dzong is the *utse* (འུ་ཅེ་ - central tower) which generally houses several temples, a courtyard surrounded by an outer structure which houses monks quarters, administrative offices, and the kitchen. Trashigang, Dagana, Mongar, Gasa and Simtokha dzongs are good examples of this pattern. However, most of the dzongs have two courtyards, sometimes at split levels separated by the central tower. One courtyard is for monastic use while the other is for administration. Good examples of this structure are Punaka, Wangdue Phodrang,

Paro, Thimphu and Jakar Dzongs. Trongsa is the most complex of all dzongs with an intricate pattern of buildings, towers and courtyards.

Chhoetens (མཚོན་རྗེ་མོ་ - stupa in Sanskrit)

Chhoetens are built in memory of eminent lamas or to pin down evil spirits. They are also built to protect a region against evil spirits at places which are potentially dangerous such as crossroads and passes as well as landslide and accident prone areas.

Bhutanese chhoetens are of three styles:

Huge stone chhoetens which are often whitewashed, are built on the model of the stupa of Jarungkhashor (Boudnath) in



Figure 6-10 Chhoeten Degye inside Paro Dzong

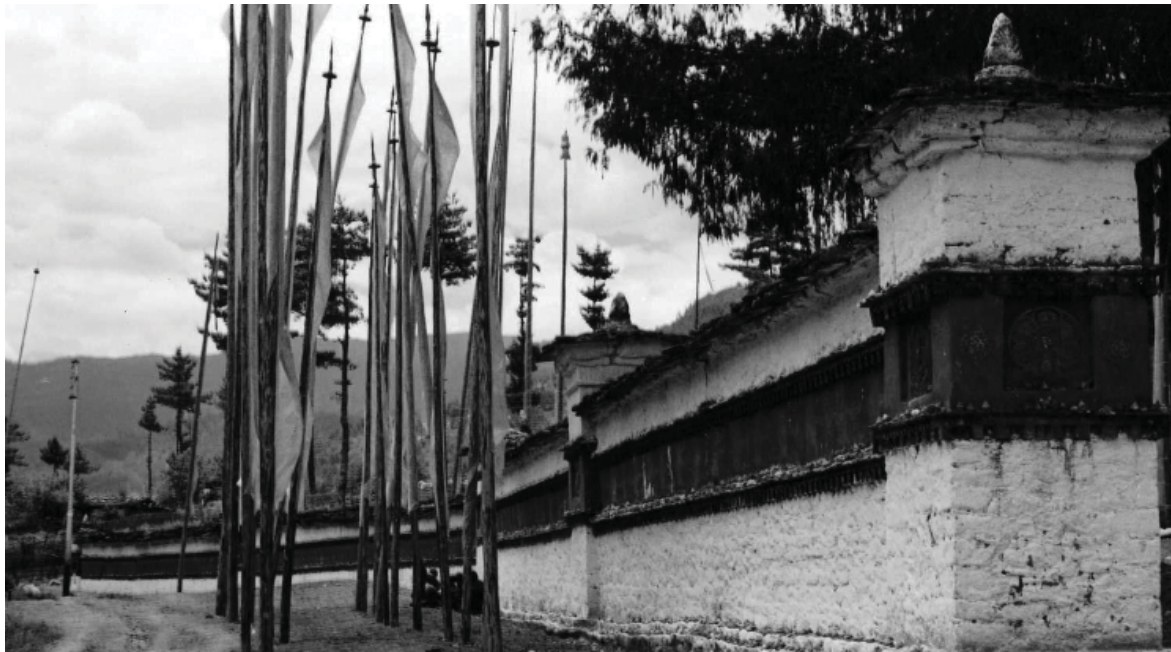


Figure 6-11 A Mani-wall



Figure 6-12 Kuenga Rabten Palace in Trongsa

Nepal. Good examples of this style are Chendebji (Trongsa), Kurizampa (Mongar) and Chhoeten Kora (Trashiyangtse).

Stone chhoetens resembling the Tibetan style are common throughout central and eastern Bhutan. They are often covered by a wooden frame.

Chhoetens of a purely Bhutanese tradition are primarily widespread in western Bhutan. Their outer structure is a square stone building with a red stripe at its upper level and shingle or stone-slab roofs. A chhoeten of the Tibetan style is sometimes erected inside that of a local type structure. The Bhutanese style chhoeten can also be found in a series of eight, called the *Chhoeten Degye* (མཚོན་རྟེན་ལྔ་བརྒྱུད་). These chhoetens commemorate eight great events of the life of Lord Buddha and each of them has a different shape.

The selection of a site for the construction of a chhoeten is suggested by an astrologer; a Sogshing and the other elements of Zung are put inside the structure and a consecration ceremony is performed. The chhoeten then becomes sacred and dismantling it is, therefore, a serious sin.

Mani-walls

Mani-walls are stone walls that support a number of stones carved with sacred formulas. These formulas are either those of the three protective Bodhisattvas (Chenrezi, Jampelyang and Chhana Dorje) or a simple prayer *Om Mani Padme Hum*, from which the name has been derived.

Palaces

Construction of palaces took place with the coming to power of the Wangchuck dynasty, starting with Jigme Namgyal, the father of the first king. It can be explained by the fact that from the end of the last century the country experienced a period of stability and peace, and the need for fortress type Dzongs had diminished.

Palaces were built between 1870 and 1940 and are mostly found in the Bumthang and Trongsa regions. Their basic pattern is very similar to that of a dzong. A central building houses the residence of the master, and the upper floor, the private chapel. It is surrounded by a courtyard enclosed by an outer structure in which the servants' quarters and the kitchen are located. The palaces have been richly decorated with woodwork, and even the outer building has been embellished with numerous painted windows.

The palaces of Lamey Goenpa, Wangdue Choeling, Ugyen Choeling in Bumthang; Kuenga Rabten, Samdrup Choeling south of Trongsa Dzong and the mansions of Gangtey in Paro are good examples. Ugyen Pelri Palace in Paro is different from these palaces in that it was built on the model of the *Zangdopelri* (ཟངས་མཚོ་གཤམ་པ་ལྷ་མི་ - the celestial abode of Guru Rinpoche) by Paro Poenlop Tshering Penjor around 1930.

Village houses

Village houses are not built of the same material all over the country. While the

western region favours compressed earth (mud) for the walls, the central and eastern regions use stones. In eastern Bhutan, bamboo is an important raw material for any construction. In southern Bhutan, houses had mud walls with thatched roofs.

However, houses all over the country display distinctive uniform features: rectangular shape, two or three stories high, upper floors almost totally made of a framework of wood and plastered bamboo panels, pitched roof and trefoil shaped windows. The upper floor is used a living quarters and private chapels while the lower floor is used mainly for keeping domestic animals and for storage.

During the past twenty years, the design and structure of the Bhutanese architecture have changed, especially in urban areas due to the availability of new materials like cement, steel rods, metal sheets and slates as well as due to the change of purpose of the buildings. In urban houses, the ground floor these days is often used for shops. However, the traditional features of architecture have been maintained.

As for the rural houses, they have improved tremendously. Glass panelled windows, smokeless stoves and improved latrines are becoming more common; painted designs are applied more and more lavishly; and the roofs are made of corrugated metal.

As with the dzongs, the rural houses also contribute in giving landscape in Bhutan its charm and uniqueness.

Handicrafts

Handicrafts, as works of art, constitute a living tradition and are a unique feature of the Bhutanese culture. In the past, **handicrafts** provided the people with many of the basic things they needed. They also provided materials for trade with India and Tibet. Today, some of the products are exported abroad. Their unique design, durability and beauty have won Bhutan great popularity among many countries of the world.

Bhutanese goldsmiths and silversmiths who do minor craftwork in their spare time earn additional income by selling the things they make. Very little mechanisation is involved in production. Almost all production is by hand, from dyeing hanks of thread and cutting bamboo to weaving and braiding. The skills in handicrafts are developed in different regions of the country according to the availability of raw material. Each region specialises in some craft work.

Bamboo products such as *bangchung* (བང་ཅུང་), *palang* (པལང་), *zem* (ཇམ་), *chhungchu* (ཅུང་ཅུ), etc. come from Kheng. Trashiyangtse is famous for its wooden containers. Thimphu is well known particularly for its exquisite metal-work; Laya in the north for its yak-hair weaving; the central areas of Mangde and Bumthang for their beautiful woollen clothes; and the eastern region for its cotton and silk fabrics.

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Figure 6-13 Bamboo and cane products at the Handicrafts Emporium in Thimphu



Figure 6-14 Wooden products at the Handicrafts Emporium in Thimphu

Bamboo and cane products

The bangchungs are made of bamboo or cane cut into thin strips and braided. Some are coloured to form geometrical designs. The tall cylindrical churns for making butter are made of bigger strips of bamboo sewn together with bamboo cord. They are completely sealed to prevent leakage. Small containers are also made to keep spices, salt or cheese. The traditional bows and arrows are also made of bamboo.

Wood products

Wood products are made from a variety of timber species such as walnut, maple, pine, etc. The most common products are bowls and plates. They are shaped on treadle lathes. Some of the bowls are lined

with silver. Bowls made from *zaa* (མེ) with silver and gold linings are highly valued. The receptacles are also made to be used as serving dishes for food. There is the *jandom*

(ཇོ་དཔལ་ - traditional wine bottle) with silver or copper lining. Wooden bowls, receptacles and jandoms are usually lacquered black or red with wood extracts.

There are a wide range of masks for the various mask dances. These masks are made from wood as well as from daphne bark paper mixed with glue. Masks include the faces of the different Bodhisavatas, deities, humans, and animals and birds. The masks

of some of the *atsaras* (ཨ་ཙ་ར་ - clowns), most of them with their own legends in Bhutanese folklore, have the most artistic facial expressions. Finally, there are the *damnyen* (ཌམ་ལྷོ་ལོ་ - Bhutanese guitar) and other musical instruments often beautifully carved from wood.

Metal products

Blacksmiths, goldsmiths and silversmiths make objects such as swords and knives of



Figure 6-15 A collection of Bhutanese metal art works



Figure 6-16 A village woman weaving on a traditional loom



Figure 6-17 Ghos and kiras

various kinds with each kind suited to different purposes. Knife sheaths and sword scabbards, *Bathras* (མཐོ་མ་ - small case for carrying doma), ear-rings, rings, *Koma* (ཀོ་མ་ - brooches), *chakar timi* (ཕྱག་མཚན་གྱི་མི་ - small case for doma), and *tsune timi* (ཚུ་ཞེ་གྱི་མི་ - small case for lime) are some examples of metal products. The handle and scabbard of *pata* (དཔ་འཛུགས་ - sword) as well as most other objects mentioned above are made of silver coated with gold. Silver is beaten and then embossed or engraved with Bhutanese designs such as the *tashi tagye* (བཀ་ཤིས་རྟགས་བརྗོད་ - eight lucky signs). These objects are inlaid with precious stones such as *turquoise* (ཀའུ་) and *coral* (རྩུ་རྩུ་). Knives and swords are made of steel.

Besides jewellery and items of everyday use, Bhutanese metal work includes a wide variety of articles for religious ceremonies. There are the *karmey kom* (དཀར་མེ་ཀོང་མ་ - butter lamp containers), *chhoepa ting* (མཚོན་པའི་ཉིང་ - sets of containers for water offering), the *doong* (རྩུ་ - trumpets) and *jaali* (ཇེ་མི་ - oboes), the religious musical instruments. *Sungkhor gows* (སྤང་འཁོར་གུབ་ - small ornamental boxes for sacred relics) are intricately carved and ornamented.

Handloom products

The fibres used for weaving are cotton, wool, silk (raw and fine), yak hair and nettle fibre. The raw silk that is commonly used in

the eastern region is mostly imported from the neighbouring Indian state of Assam.

Yak hair is commonly used by the high altitude inhabitants of the country, *bjobs* (འབྲོག་པ་ - nomads), for weaving tents, waterproof coats and other clothing. Nettle-fibre is now used to make very strong bags but at one time it was also used for weaving clothes.

The dyes are made from vegetables and minerals. In recent times, chemical dyes have also come into use.

The woven materials have been named according to their combination of fibre, colour and pattern. Checked woollen material is called *mathra* (དམར་ཁྲ་), *serthre* (སེར་ཁྲ་), or *tsangthra* (གཙང་ཁྲ་) depending on the colour (mathra for red, sertha for yellow and tsangthra for red mixed with some other colours). These materials can be used to make either gho or kira. Woven kiras that have a white background with designs in silk are called *kishithara* (སྐྱོད་ཤུག་རས་ - thara is the Sharchhop word for kira, from which one can deduce that they are specialities of the eastern region). Those with a blue background are called *ngosham* (སྐོན་ཤུག་). Another type has a yellow background with green and red stripes in a warp pattern and is called the *menzimuthra* (སྐོན་ཚེ་དམར་ཁྲ་). Other varieties are *moentha* (མོན་ཐག་), *aikapur* (ཨ་ཀའུ་ཤུར་) and *lungsem* (ལུང་སེར་). From the name one can assume that moentha was the first type of kira worn by the Moenpa women of the earlier times.

History of Bhutan

Besides the brocade designs, the Bhutanese handlooms are generally either striped (horizontal for women, vertical for men) or checked. The fibres used for these materials can be wool, cotton or silk. Traditionally, only wool was used for the checked materials, but nowadays other fibres have also come into use.

The *kera* (མེད་རགས་ - belt), that fastens the gho or kira at the waist, and the *rachu* (རག་ཅུ) are also woven by women on handlooms. The material that is heavily demanded today among the Bhutanese as well as foreigners is the *yathra* (ཡའ་ཁྲ་). It is produced mostly in the Bumthang region and is made from sheep wool. Overcoats, coats and jackets

are made from this material and some Bhutanese businessmen have started exporting them to other countries.

Conclusion

Bhutanese art, architecture and handicrafts are integral parts of the kingdom's rich cultural heritage. They stand out uniquely in the world today. They reflect the rich customs, traditions and social values of the people and, therefore, manifest the country's cultural identity. These artistic treasures of Bhutan are a source of pride to the nation. It is, therefore, paramount that they are preserved and promoted as an integral part of the Kingdom's nation building efforts towards socio-economic development.

Student Activities

1. Explain what we mean when we say: Bhutanese Art does not exist for itself but has a didactic function within the frame of the religious system.
2. Describe the major forms of Bhutanese art, architecture and handicraft.
3. Identify three important Bhutanese works of art and explain why they are important.
4. Explain what we mean when we say Bhutanese art is “religious and anonymous”.
5. Differentiate between Bhutanese art and art found in other countries, particularly that in the West.
6. Visit a nearby temple and make observations of its wall paintings and statues. Compare them with the descriptions given in the text. Do you think they are ancient or modern? To answer this question have a class discussion.
7. Is there a place nearby where statues are made? If so, visit the place and get as much information as you can about their work. Compare your collected details with the information given in the text. You can share your findings with your friends in the other High Schools by sending a copy of your write-up to the schools.
8. Draw an outline map of Bhutan. On it draw pictures of various Bhutanese handicrafts, locating them in the regions where they are produced.
9. Bring an example of a handicraft made by you or one of your family members to school. Show it to your classmates, describing how it is made and what it is used for.
10. Draw a picture of a Bhutanese building. Label its main parts, telling what they are made from.
11. Visit a local craftsman. Have him describe his work. Share what you find out with your classmates.
12. Evaluate the role of art and culture in the Bhutanese way of life.