

# MODERN BHUTAN

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RAM RAHUL

*Head, Department of Central Asian Studies;  
School of International Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University*



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# Preface

Prof. A. C. Sinha

BHUTAN is an ancient land of ancient people. It has always existed as a politico-administrative unit in one form or another. In ancient times, in the Eastern Himalaya, next to Kamarupa (present-day Assam and the neighbouring States of north-eastern India) and Tibet, Bhutan was one of the oldest principalities. Until the first part of the seventeenth century, there never was an authority in Bhutan exercising a real control over the entire country. From 1616 to 1907, Bhutan was a theocracy. Since 1907 it has been a hereditary monarchy.

Bhutan is much too small a country compared with India or China, which it adjoins. Owing to its strategic location, it is a vital point in the mastery and defence of the southern glacis of the Eastern Himalaya. And thanks to the right policy and skilful diplomacy of its rulers it has always stood as a bulwark of stability in the region.

*Modern Bhutan* is the first book of its kind on Bhutan. I first describe the land and people of Bhutan and the dynamics of its social system. I follow it up with a history of Bhutan in which I make a survey of the period up to 1907, when the present line of kings begins, and then deal with the subsequent period. Next I discuss Bhutan's system of government, including its structure and functioning. I then go into the various aspects of the Buddhism of Bhutan,



especially the impact of the religion on the life and culture of the people. After this I consider Bhutan's relations with its neighbours, including China and India. I conclude the study with an attempt to make certain projections on the future of Bhutan so far as it is possible to do so on the basis of its history and politics and the nature of relations between China and India.

The system of government in Bhutan has its roots completely in Tibetan statecraft although in recent years it has undergone several notable and far-reaching changes. Despite the excellent documentation on Bhutan in Tibetan sources, I have not found it easy to trace the various phases of the structural development of the Bhutanese State, not even the evolution of the main offices and organs of administration in Bhutan. Besides, there are numerous chronological complications which have defied my persistent efforts to resolve. However, I have done my best to place faithfully on record all the relevant facts available in the archival material I have consulted in Bhutan and India, as well as in certain documents of Tibetan origin within my reach.

I have used the phonetic forms of the various geographical and proper names and have indicated their literary forms within brackets where they occur for the first time in this study. I have besides, appended a glossary of some Bhutanese terms of frequent occurrence and have indicated their literary forms.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the many courtesies which I have received from the officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan in the different parts of the country visited by me in the course of my field research

from time to time. I am especially thankful to A. S. Hebbar, Editor of Publications, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), for his most valuable comments on the organization of this study and for his kindness in letting me draw freely on his time and expertise. Above all, I am grateful to Kanhiya Lal Poswal, Home Minister of Haryana, who has taken a steady personal interest in my programme of exploration and research in the Himalaya and Central Asia during the last fifteen years, for encouraging me to write this book.

RAM RAHUL



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*Prof. A. C. Sinha*

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# I

## *Introduction*

BHUTAN LIES on the southern slopes of the western half of the Eastern Himalaya. It borders India in the south-east, south, and south-west (from the Me La trijunction between Tibet, India, and Bhutan to the 10,000-foot-high Rishi La trijunction between Bhutan, India, and Sikkim), Sikkim in the west (from the Rishi La trijunction to the Gyemo Chhen [RGYAL MO CHHEN] trijunction between Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet), and Tibet in the north (from the Gyemo Chhen trijunction to the Me La trijunction).\* The Pangchhen (SPANG CHHEN) Valley in the Mela border region is a sort of a no-man's land between Bhutan, India, and Tibet. A lama (BLA MA, Buddhist monk) from Eastern Bhutan discovered it in the nineteenth century. He just strayed into it. There is a holy lake in this region, called Pema Ling (PADMA GLING). Southern waters from it flow into Bhutan and northern waters into Tibet. The Donkya La (HBRONG KHYAGS LA) range separates Bhutan and Sikkim for the greater part. It also

\* La means a "mountain pass."



separates the basins of the Amo Chhu/Torsa River in the east from that of the Teesta River in the west.

Bhutan's boundary with India was demarcated in 1867-68 and 1872-73. The boundary between Bhutan and Sikkim is a natural divide. The boundary between Bhutan and Tibet follows the crest ridge of the Eastern Himalaya. This is a boundary sanctified by custom and usage. China, which took Tibet in the summer of 1951, does not recognize this traditional boundary. Thus this boundary is not effective any longer. This is now causing much concern to the Government and people of Bhutan.

Formerly Bhutan was a much bigger and more extensive territory geographically and had common borders with Assam, the principality of Bijni in Assam, Koch Bihar in Bengal, Bihar, and Nepal. After the war of 1864-65 with the British, Bhutan lost the entire strip of the Duars on the Assam and Bengal borders and the present Kalimpong subdivision of the district of Darjeeling. This territory now constitutes the rich belt of the famous tea gardens of Assam and Bengal. The development of the Kalimpong subdivision and the establishment of the tea gardens in the Duars particularly after 1914 have had a tremendous impact on Bhutan. In the 1950s, independent India gave Bhutan the 32-square-mile Diwangiri tract, which now forms the south-eastern tip of Bhutan.

The present area of Bhutan is 18,000 square miles and comprises the catchment areas of several great rivers and their affluents. From the bounding mountains of these great river-basins there run mighty spurs which form the watersheds between these river-basins. The general trend of the ranges which separate Central Bhutan from Eastern and Western Bhutan



is from the north to the south. The Pele La range, which runs from the north to the south, is the divide between Central and Western Bhutan. The Dong La (HBRONG LA) marks the divide between Central and Eastern Bhutan. These passes also divide Bhutan ethnically and linguistically. The people of Eastern Bhutan, their customs and their dialects, are quite different from those of Western Bhutan.

Bhutan's traditional name is Lho Mon Kha Shi (LHO MON KHA BSHI). The name *Bhutan* is derived from the Sanskrit *Bhotanta*, i.e. the end (*anta*) of Tibet (*Bhota*) or the borderland of Tibet. The Bhutanese, however, call their country *Drukyl* (HBRUG YUL), the land of the Druk school of Kagyupa (BKAH RGYUD PA) Buddhism of Tibet; they call themselves *Drukpa* (HBRUG PA), i.e. people belonging to the Druk school or the people of Bhutan; and they call their king *Druk Gyalpo* (HBRUG RGYAL PO). This is because the Bhutanese belong to the Drukpa Kagyupa, which has been the State religion of Bhutan since 1616, when Lama Ngawang Namgyal (BLA MA NGAG DBANG RNAM RGYAL), 1594-1651, of South Tibet firmly established it there. The expression *druk*, which primarily means "dragon", is the name of a small monastery in Central Tibet from which the Drukpa Kagyupa sprang.

There are also different names for the different regions of the country such as *Bumthang* (HBUM THANG, one hundred thousand plains) and *Kur* for the western and eastern parts of Central Bhutan and *Paro* (SPA GRO) and *Punakha* (SPU NA KHA) for the western and eastern parts of Western Bhutan. (In common parlance, Punakha is referred to as Puna. Properly, the name is Punthang.) There are also the



expressions *Kurto* (KUR STOD) for Upper Kur and *Kurme* (KUR SMAD) for Lower Kur. For Western Bhutan there is the collective term *Sha Wa Pa Sum* (SHA DBA SPA GSUM), short for Shar, Wang, and Paro or *Thed Thim Pa Sum* (THED THIM SPA GSUM).

There are three distinct physiographic zones in Bhutan: the low-hill southern zone rising to a height of 5,000 feet above sea level; the mid-hill central zone situated at a height ranging from 5,000 feet to 12,000 feet above sea level; and the high Himalaya northern zone stretching from the snow-line upwards. Correspondingly there are three climate and vegetation zones in Bhutan.

Southern Bhutan consists of a heavy network of steep hills, including the foothill and submontane lands covered with large tracts of dense forests. This zone is largely uninhabited.

Central Bhutan has several beautiful valleys and gentle slopes. Indeed it is the nucleus round which the Bhutanese economy has developed. The valley of Bumthang is the most elevated and fertile of all the valleys of Bhutan. Tradition connects it with the legendary Sindhu Raja of Kamarupa, who was responsible for the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan. Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuk (O RGYAN DBANG PHYUG), first king of Bhutan, made this prosperous valley the Gyasa (RGYAL SA, Royal Seat) of the royalty of Bhutan. Before the closing of the border between Bhutan and Tibet in the summer of 1959, there used to be a great trade fair in the valley twice a year. The fair used to attract large numbers of people from Tibet as well. The Bhutanese traders went to Tibet from here with the famous rice and blankets of the region. Up to 1959, the Govern-



ment of Tibet used to appoint officers called Dre Dubpa (HBRAS GRUB PA, Rice Collector), who were based in Phari (HPHAG RI) in Tsang (GTSANG), Nang in Lhota (LHO BRAG), and Tsona (MTSHO GNAS) in Lhokha bordering Bhutan and whose sole duty was to collect as much rice from Bhutan as possible. Other Tibetans were not allowed to buy rice from the Bhutanese. The Punakha Valley is the least elevated of all the valleys of Bhutan. Rice is the principal crop of these valleys. Forests of beech, chestnut, and oak cover Central Bhutan. The maximum concentration of the population is in these central valleys.

Northern Bhutan consists of high snow-capped mountains which separate Bhutan from Tibet. The 24,784-foot Kulha Kangri (SKU LHA GANGS RI), the 24,600-foot Gangkar-punsum (GANGS DKAR SPUN GSUM), and the 23,997-foot Chomolhari (JO MO LHA RI) are the highest peaks in the Bhutan Himalaya. Considered sacred both in Bhutan and in Tibet, these mountains dominate Northern Bhutan. They are especially sacred in the Bon tradition. They are the seats of the Bon deities. The slopes of the mountains are covered with the birch, the magnolia, and the rhododendron. For many months in a year the summits with their bare rocks and lush grass are decked with snow. Population in this zone is sparse.

The foothills and the submontane lands have a humid, subtropical climate, and the vegetation consists of the evergreen bamboo, the fern, and the palm. The mid-hills have a cool, temperate climate, and the vegetation consists of several varieties of conifer, larch, pine, and spruce. Shrubs of



different kinds, especially juniper, distinguish the landscape. Farther north the temperature is cold. Indeed, it is severely so during winter.

Several great rivers like the Dangme Chhu/Manas River in the east and the Amo Chhu/Torsa River in the west cross Bhutan. Most of them rise in Tibet beyond the high Himalaya, drain the Bhutan Himalaya, and, flowing down the slope from the north to the south, eventually join the Brahmaputra in India. The union of the Nyamjang Chhu, the Kuru Chhu, the Bumthang Chhu, and the Mangde Chhu forms the Manas River, which is Bhutan's largest. The Manas and its tributaries drain the mountains of north-east Bhutan, including the waters of the highest peak Gangkar-punsum. The Kuru Chhu, the main tributary of the Manas, rises in Tibet beyond the crest of the central ridge of the Himalaya. According to tradition, Tibet's first king, Nyathi Tsanpo (NYAL KHRI TSAN PO), went up to Tibet from India along the Manas Valley route, the historic highway between Eastern India and Central Tibet. Pilgrims from Siberia and Tibet to the Hajo shrine near Gauhati in Assam have also always trudged along it. The Dhansiri River forms the boundary between lower Bhutan and NEFA (North-East Frontier Area) of India. The Sankosh, the Raidak, and the Torsa, known in their upper courses in Bhutan as the Mo Chhu, the Wang Chhu, and the Amo Chhu respectively, start either from the Great Himalaya or beyond and flow for more than a hundred miles to the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam and Bengal transversely to the ranges. The Sankosh is the dividing line between the Eastern and Western Duars as well as between Assam and Bengal. The Wang



Chhu and its tributaries drain the 23,997-foot Chomolhari group of mountains, as also the Thimphu, Paro, and Ha valleys. The natural route for those who would travel from India to Tibet is the one that goes up the Amo Chhu Valley. The Amo Chhu, which rises in the 15,219-foot Tang La on the Bhutan-Tibet border, drains Western Bhutan and the entire Chhumbi Valley of Tibet. The upper part of the course of the Amo Chhu is in Tibet and the lower in Bhutan. The Jaldhaka River, called Di Chhu in the upper part of its course, separates Bhutan from the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of North Bengal and forms the Bhutan-India international boundary here for twelve miles. The catchment area of the Jaldhaka reaches up to Gnatong, which is 12,000 feet above sea level, in Sikkim.

According to the tradition of Bhutan, the first Bhutanese descended from heaven. According to the Sanskrit tradition, it was the Koch tribe that originally inhabited Bhutan. The people of Tibetan origin arrived in Bhutan during the time of King Ralpachan (r. 816-36) of Tibet.

The origin and history of minor tribes like the Drokpa (HBROKPA), the Sherchokpas (SHAR PHYOGS PA) of Eastern Bhutan, and the Doyas of Western Bhutan in the Dorokha Subdivision of the Samchi District are obscure, as are those of the various other little known ethnic groups throughout the country. The Drokpas spread all over the country living at high altitudes. They are herdsmen tending cattle and especially yak, and they lead a nomadic life wandering with their herds between their summer and winter pastures. They are of Tibetan stock with their own customs and language. Over their coat, made of purple cloth and belted at the waist,



they wear a skin coat. They also wear boots made from hides. They wear a characteristic hat made of yak hair with prongs projecting sideways to drain rain water. They carry on trade between Eastern Bhutan and Tawang (RTA DBANG). The Doyas live at low altitudes in the foothills. They are agriculturists, although their methods of cultivation are most primitive. They wear a scanty dress. According to legend, the Doya kings ruled there for several hundred years. There are ruins of the Doya court at Demchhuka, north-east of Dorokha, across the Torsa River.

The bulk of the people of Bhutan are of eastern Tibetan origin and are physically quite like the eastern Tibetans, robust with prominent chin and strong bones and slit eyes. The people of Eastern Bhutan are different from those of Western Bhutan. The Bhutanese who live in the area east of the Dong La have more similarities with the people of Western NEFA. The Bhutanese who live in the area west of the Pele La have more similarities with the people of the Chhumbi Valley of Tibet and North Sikkim. The people of Eastern Bhutan came originally from the Assam Himalaya. Along the greater part of the northern border live the Tibetans.

The Nepalese of Southern Bhutan and the Lepchas of Western Bhutan came later, in the nineteenth century. The people of Bhutanese origin in the adjacent parts of Assam and Bengal are the descendants of those who spilt over to those areas during the civil wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are also descendants of the agents of the Bhutanese traders in Assam and Bengal.

Bhutan is primarily an agricultural country. The economy



of the country is mainly agrarian, with most of the people engaged in agriculture and livestock-rearing. Those who live in Southern Bhutan are mainly agriculturists. Those who live in Northern Bhutan are both agriculturists and pastoralists. They especially raise yaks, which play an important role in their economy. The chief food crops in dry cultivation are barely, buckwheat, maize, millets, mustard, and peas, and in wet cultivation rice and wheat. The Bhutanese practise both permanent and shifting cultivation, the latter mainly in Eastern Bhutan. For tilling they use both animal and man power. The chief implements used are the plough, the hoe, and the sickle. The plough is crude and primitive. Women do most of the agricultural work.

Formerly there was a flourishing trade between India and Tibet through Bhutan, the Bhutanese functioning as carrying agents. The trade routes that passed through Bhutan connected India on the one hand and Tibet on the other. They were mainly the Manas River Valley in the east and the Paro Valley in the west. From Assam, Bengal, and Koch Bihar the Bhutanese used to collect dyes, *endi* (coarse silk made of the produce of silk-worm fed on the castor-oil plant, called *eri* locally) cloth, *supari* (arecanut), and tobacco, and to exchange them for wool, tea, salt, and musk from Tibet. They also traded spices including chillis, lac, madder, rice, grains, and other agricultural and forest produce in return for the merchandise of Tibet. From India they also imported, increasingly in recent years, bars of iron, copper and silver, cotton textiles and woollens. To India they sent cattle and ponies, hides and skins, wool, beeswax, ivory, lac, and fruit including cardamom.



The Bhutanese women are good weavers; they weave on local looms erected in the porches of their homes. The carpets they weave are very artistic in design. Though Bhutan has plenty of goats and sheep, the Bhutanese purchase woollen dress materials from Bengal. Formerly they used to make metal utensils and decorative objects. They make fine paper. They are expert in woodwork which is evident from the beautifully decorated doors and windows of their houses and monasteries.

The common man in Bhutan wears ko (GOS), a sort of thick cotton or woollen gown reaching below the knees and belted round the waist. The folds of the front part of the ko are used as a pouch. High officials wear a kind of fine full-sleeved robe, which is wrapped round the body and belted round the waist. The dress is well-designed and is usually a combination of red and yellow. The chiefs usually wear the same type of dress as the common people; only the belt or sash is made of silk. The ko is now the national dress of Bhutan. Women wear loose coats. The lamas wear a kind of deep-coloured, maroon garment, one end of which is thrown loosely over the left shoulder; the right arm invariably remains bare. Common men rarely use shoes. Girls and women from custom wear their hair short. Girls and women in certain areas bordering Tibet, like those in areas bordering India, wear their hair long. They also wear peaked hats of bark or bamboo strips.

For settling disputes and for attending to other day-to-day matters, every Bhutanese village has its own council, headed by the gup (HGO PA, village headman). In the southern parts, where the population is dominantly of Nepalese origin,



the village headman is called mandal. The village council refers unsettled disputes to the authorities of the dzong (RDZONG, district).

The Bhutanese houses are not built on plan due to uneven surface. They stand close to one another in clusters, and each such cluster is a village. The ordinary houses are oblong in shape; the better ones are more irregular. Most houses in Northern and Southern Bhutan are single-storeyed; in Central Bhutan they have two or three storeys, with a number of rooms provided with wooden balconies. The ground floor is for the livestock. The chapel and the living rooms are on the first floor, generally without any ventilators or windows. A wooden ladder cut from a single piece of wood or a wooden staircase leads to the first floor. The fire-place in the main living room is the centre of the house. The chapel is generally in the living section of the house. The top floor consists of the store rooms. The doors and windows are made of wood and carved beautifully. No iron nails are used for fixing the doors and windows. Where the pine is available, roofs are made up of planks and held down with stones. Where the bamboo is available, it is used instead of wooden frames. Where grass is available, roofs are thatched with dried grass. A strip of cloth inscribed with a prayer or hymn generally flutters over the house top. Almost every house has a farmhouse and a farmyard properly fenced with boulders. In the farmyard pigs and chickens may frequently be seen roaming about freely. Most peasants have two sets of farms and pastures, one set at higher altitudes and the other at lower altitudes. In the winter they move down to the farms and pastures at lower altitudes; and in the summer they move up



to the farms and pastures at higher altitudes. This offers an interesting parallel to the practice of transhumance found among the nomads and indicates that the ancient Bhutanese society was a nomadic one.

The Bhutanese are great builders. The dzongs, monasteries, and palaces are solid buildings of superior structure and plan. The dzongs and monasteries have been built with an eye to defence. They are sited on hills or spurs and are provided with defensive walls. The numerous strong, iron-chain suspension bridges, built on the principles popularized by the great ascetic Thangton Gyalpo (THANG STON RGYAL PO, 1385-1464), are vital links in the communications system.

Among the people of central and north Bhutan social stratification is based on economic status. Most Nepalese groups in the southern parts of the country practise the caste system. All Bhutanese groups, including the Nepalese, are endogamous. The people mostly practise monogamy. Polygamy is also there, but the consent of the first wife is necessary before a man can take a second. Only the wealthier section of the Bhutanese society practises polygamy. Formerly the Bhutanese also practised polyandry, but now there is no evidence of it. Perhaps the practice is still prevalent in the remote northern parts. The present social laws, however, do not countenance it. Usually the wife goes to live with the husband's family. In the past it was equally common for the husband to go and live with the wife's family.

The Bhutanese society permits divorce. There is no great fuss over seeking divorce. Either party can decide on a



separation. Of course, consent of both parties is essential. Otherwise the party that desires separation must pay compensation to the other party. Formerly compensation used to be paid in kind. Since the recent codification of social laws, the compensation has taken the form of money. The present laws require every case of divorce to be registered. Therefore, though simple, divorce is an expensive proceeding, and only the wealthy can afford it.

The Bhutanese observe a joint family system of a sort. All members of a family live in one household. Cultivation of the agricultural land is the responsibility of the entire family. Indeed, it is the women who are generally in charge of all the work of the household, including agriculture, for the men, always hard-working and full of enterprise, have other things to do as well, such as accompanying a trading caravan or taking part in military exercises and sports.

According to custom, in Eastern and Western Bhutan, the eldest son alone had the right of inheritance; and in Central Bhutan the eldest daughter alone had it. The younger sons of the family either became the dependants of their eldest brother or entered the monastic order or joined the service of a dzong or married girls who had inherited property from their parents in the absence of male heirs. One who married an heiress and lived with her was known as a magpa. In the event of the eldest son choosing to become a monk, the property went to the second son. If there was no male heir, it went to the eldest daughter. In the event of the first son dying without issue, the second son could succeed to the inheritance even if he had become a monk. The acceptance of an inheritance in such a case entailed renouncing the



monkhood or, as the Bhutanese put it, "returning the vows."

Recently, however, following the codification of social customs, the right of inheritance was conferred equally on both sons and daughters throughout the land.

Serfdom or slavery of a sort was prevalent in Bhutan in early days. In both the Ahom and Mughal periods the men taken prisoner in the course of military expeditions and winter raids on the plains used to be treated as slaves and made to labour for the dzong or the State. Closer contact with the British towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, considerably discouraged this practice. The present Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuk (HJIGS MED RDO RJE DBANG PHYUG, Fearless Mighty One) has now abolished it.

When a person dies, the body is kept in the house for several days according to the economic and social position of the family concerned, and food is offered to the body. The Bhutanese invite the lamas to cremate the body. The ashes are collected after incineration and are thrown into the river. The Bhutanese give away to the lamas certain personal articles of the deceased. They also entertain them with food and drink. Besides, they offer food and light butter lamps in the *gompa* (*DGON PA*, monastery) for the welfare of the soul and put up flags inscribed with the scriptural words *Om mani padme hum* ("the jewel is in the lotus") on house tops. If a person dies in an epidemic, the body is first buried for three days and then cremated.

Buddhism of the Tibetan form has been the State religion of Bhutan since the time of Sindhu Raja, who was a contemporary of Guru Padmasambhava. The social and cultural



life of the Bhutanese centres in a number of old and new gompas. The Taktshang Gompa (STAG TSHANG DGON PA) in Western Bhutan is the oldest and most sacred of all the monasteries of Bhutan. *Taktshang*, meaning the "tiger's nest", gains its name from an ancient legend which says that in the eighth century a tiger flew over the mountains from Tibet carrying on its back Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan. The abbot of the Taktshang Monastery, which is perched on a jut of the sheer vertical face of a granite rock, is believed to be an incarnation of the Guru.

A section of the people, especially in the extreme east and the extreme west, still believe strongly in animistic practices, known collectively as Bon (PON),\* which was the religion of Bhutan before the advent of Buddhism. They still practise black magic, though on a much smaller scale than before. Even Buddhist Bhutanese, being conditioned by their natural environment and way of life, sacrifice animals to avert the evil influence of spirits. Some of the Bon practices have crept into Buddhist rituals, and the lamas feel the need to engage the adherents of Bon to look after that part of the rituals. In Eastern Bhutan, owing obviously to the fewer monasteries there, the Buddhists are less strict in the observance of their rituals than elsewhere. The Doyas are entirely animists. They offer monkey flesh to the spirits in order to propitiate them.

The folk tales of Bhutan mainly relate to how the earth was created, how man appeared on the earth, how the people migrated to Bhutan, and how Buddhism spread there.

\* *Bon* is the cult of spirit worship and sorcery.



Archery and quoits are national games. In the archery game, the archers shoot arrows from their bows at a fixed point. The game of quoits, which consists in a stone on a flat palm being projected at a fixed mark, requires more skill and accuracy than archery. Both these games are quite exciting. Horse-racing is also an important item in the annual game of archery. Music is associated with all the games. The favourite instruments are trumpets, drums, and clarionets as well as the ceremonial horns of the lamas. During the annual festivals the lamas arrange dances on the premises of their monasteries and dance both with and without masks. People assemble in their best dress in the common ground, irrespective of sex, age, and status, and enjoy the festivals.

Bhutan has a great potential for economic development. The principal resources are the unending forests for forest-based industries and cottage crafts, the perennial rivers as sources of limitless power for industrialization, and mineral deposits like gypsum and limestone though to a lesser degree. These resources are quite substantial from the point of view of commercial and industrial exploitation. The forests cover two-thirds of the country. Besides the tremendous forest resources, Bhutan also abounds in medicinal herbs and plants, which can be exploited commercially. Bhutan can also commercially exploit the tremendous power resources of its great rivers. Both soil and climate are highly suitable for horticulture, especially for the cultivation of fruit, cardamom, and tea. Small-scale timber-based industries are already producing goods for home consumption. The Bhutanese factories will soon be producing matches, pulp, and rayon. Not-



withstanding all these advances in the industrial field, it is agriculture and animal husbandry, thanks to the new impetus they have received from the process of modernization in operation in the country, will continue to dominate the economy.