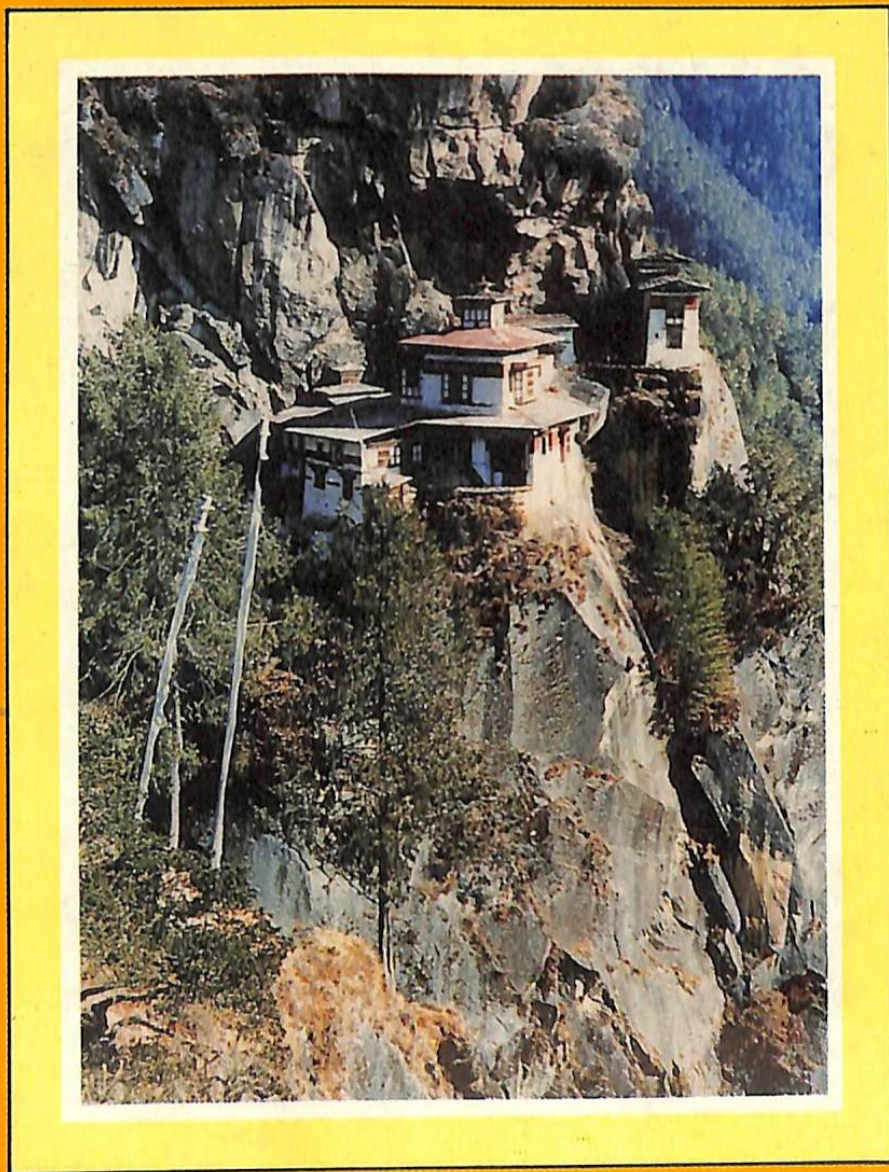
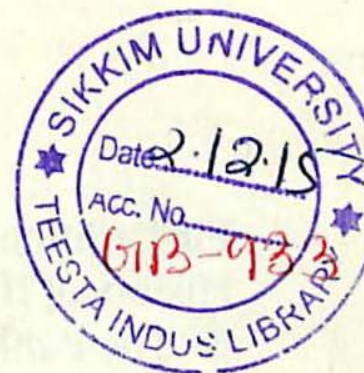


HISTORY OF BHUTAN BASED ON BUDDHISM



Dr.C.T.DORJI

HISTORY OF BHUTAN BASED ON BUDDHISM



Dr. A. C. Sinha

By

Dr. C.T. Dorji

Foreword by

***H.E. Lyonpo Dawa Tsering
Foreign Minister of Bhutan***

1994



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
THIMPHU

FOREWORD

A. A. C. Sinha

Dr. C.T. Dorji deserves to be commended for his research work on the history of Bhutan. The thesis entitled "History of Bhutan based on Buddhism" for which he was conferred the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy by the Magadh University provides valuable insight into Bhutan's past. This thesis which is now being published in book-form will make the history of Bhutan as seen through Bhutanese eyes - and records - available to a larger audience.

Bhutan's history is interwoven with Buddhism as the dominant personalities, both lay and religious, of Bhutan over the ages were eminent lamas, as-well-as Buddhist missionaries from Tibet and India, and the evolution of the Bhutanese social and political system, as-well-as the arts and culture, were deeply influenced by Buddhist philosophy and values.

I hope this book by Dr. C.T. Dorji will inspire Bhutanese academics and scholars to publish works on the history, arts and culture of Bhutan, so that the unique and distinctive national identity of Bhutan is made better known to the outside world.

(Dawa Tsering)

Thimphu,
1 January, 1993.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge with gratitude the whole hearted cooperation, guidance and help rendered to me by late Lupon Nado, the once Dzongkha Adviser, Department of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan and Dr. Artsa Tulku, M.A., Ph.D., Professor and Head, Department of Buddhist Studies, the Magadh University, Bodhgaya, India without whose help and guidance I would not have been able to complete the thesis. I am also grateful to Dasho Rigzin Dorji, Secretary, Special Commission for Cultural Affairs and Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs without whose help I would not have been able to obtain government clearance to submit the thesis to the university. They were, in fact, a constant source of help and encouragement to me.

I am grateful to several senior officials in the Royal Government of Bhutan who have enthusiastically read my thesis and graciously given their valuable advice, views, comments and suggestions which I have carefully incorporated in the book. Among them, I must make special mention of His Excellency, Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, Foreign Minister; His Excellency, Lyonpo Dago Tshering, Home Minister; Dasho Pema Wangchen, Secretary to His Majesty, the King of Bhutan; Dasho Rigzin Dorji, Secretary, Special Commission for Cultural Affairs and Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs ; Dasho Thinley Gyamtsho, Director General of Education; Sangay Dorji, Secretary, Dzongkha Development Commission and Dasho Shingkhar Lam, former Secretary to His Majesty, the King of Bhutan. His Excellency, Lyonpo Dawa Tsering has been gracious enough to contribute a Foreword to this book. I am deeply sensible of the distinction he has, thus, conferred upon me and I must take this opportunity to express my humble and whole-hearted gratitude to him. His benediction gives me a sense of fulfilment in the modest study that I have done on the history of our country.

I must acknowledge the kind cooperation and help rendered to me in different forms by His Excellency, Lyonpo Sangay Penjor, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to Kuwait; His Excellency, Lyonpo (Dr.) T. Tobgyel, Minister of Social Services and Communications; His Excellency, Lyonpo C. Dorji, Planning Minister; His Excellency, Dasho Peljor J. Dorji, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland; His Excellency, Dasho Sonam Tobgyel, Chief Justice of Bhutan; Dasho Jigmi Y. Thinley, Home Secretary and Chairman

of RIM Board; Dasho Kunzang Tangbi, Zhung Kalyon, Royal Advisory Council; Dasho Khandu Wangchuck, Secretary, Royal Civil Service Commission, Dasho Kipchu Dorji, Auditor General, Royal Audit Authority; Dasho Pema Wangchuck, Secretary, Survey of Bhutan; Dasho Sangay Ngedup, Director General of Health; Dasho (Dr.) Kinzang Dorji, Director General of Agriculture; Bap Kezang, Director, Department of Revenue & Customs; Dasho Passang Dorji, Speaker, National Assembly of Bhutan; Dasho Meghraj Gurung, Director General of Management; Tashi Phuntshog, Director, Department of Informations and Secretary, National Assembly of Bhutan; Y.T. Wangchuck, Deputy Auditor General, Royal Audit Authority; Captain Yeshey Dorji, Managing Director, Development Communication Centre; R.K. Chhetri, Director, Ministry of Social Services; Sangay Tenzin, Deputy Secretary, Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs; Tshering Wangdi, Joint Director, Kuensel; Nima Wangdi, Joint Director of Education; Sonam Tobgay, Deputy Director, Special Commission for Cultural Affairs; Prof. M. L. Sudan; Surendar Mohan; Lt. Phuntsho Namgay, Sr. Lecturer, Royal Institute of Management (RIM); Kunzang Wangmo, Lecturer, RIM; Umesh Pradhan, Lecturer, (RIM); Wangdi, Instructor, RIM; Namgay Wangchuck, Principal, Royal Commercial Institute; Haap Chenchen, Research Officer, Dzongkha Development Commission; Lopon Sangay Dorji, Ex-Dzongkha Language Teacher of Yangchenphug High School; Dorji Dukpa, History Teacher, Pema Gatshel Jr. High School; P. D. Subba, Ex-Depot Manager, BGTS; Kunzang Namgyel, RIM; Cheten Zangmo, RIM; Kuensel Corporation and Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS).

I owe special thanks to Helen Fielding and Sheila Scobie for kindly editing this book. I do not have words to thank them for their immeasurable help and good counsel. I must also thank Alope Dey who ungrudgingly agreed to type the final copy of this book and my eldest son, Chenda Wangchuck for helping me throughout my work and in particular designing the jacket of the book. I also owe my whole hearted gratitude to Pema Lhamu who taught me the English alphabet without which I would not have been able to complete my education. I am also much indebted to my late father, Sangay Pelzang alias Sha Nhob who inspired me and taught me Buddhist literature from an early age, and to my root gurus for giving initiations to me.

All references used in this book are duly acknowledged in the bibliography.

Finally my inexpressible thanks are due to my wife, Sangay Xam; without her moral and practical encouragement it would have been difficult, if not impossible, not only to undertake the research but also for this book to see the light of day.

Thimphu
December 1993

Prof. A.

Dr. C.T. Dorji

P R E F A C E

This book is a slightly revised version of the thesis entitled ``History of Bhutan based on Buddhism'' submitted to the Magadh University , Bodhgaya, India for Doctorate in Philosophy. As a matter of fact, I started the work on this thesis in January 1975 availing the opportunity of some leisure and only completed it in 1990. The work continued on a slow and steady basis for 15 long years.

The History of Bhutan based on Buddhism is, indeed, the **first book** ever to appear on this subject in English by a Bhutanese. With the exception of some erudite books in Chhokey, little has been written on such a subject in English by Bhutanese scholars. My long years of contact with contemporary men and my personal experience of the many historical events within the country are invaluable in writing this book. The numerous conversations and personal observations that I made during the course of my many pilgrimages and visits to historical places throughout the country enabled me to gather a first-hand knowledge of the history of my country. My detailed study of the Buddhist literature in Chhokey was also a great help. It is my sincere hope that more Bhutanese scholars will come forward, in the near future, to contribute to the development of Bhutanese literature in English. **Bhutan being the last sovereign independent country of Mahayana Buddhism always fascinated men of adventure and daring.** It is hoped that this work will help bring about **a greater awareness of the richness and intellectual depth of Bhutanese civilisation and history.**

The entire structure of government, social, culture, customs and traditions of Bhutan are bound up with Mahayana Buddhism. The **Chhosi-Nyidhen or dual system derives its inspiration principally from the Buddhist doctrinal lore and the ethical concepts of the trinity of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha known as Sangye Chhyo-dang Gedun Soom.** Accordingly, people do respect such value system as Tha-dag Dham-Tshi (complete pledge) and Lay-dang Jum-Day (works, their causes and their results). **The Bhutanese code of conduct popularly known as Driglam Namzha is strictly followed by all.** It emphasises a strong sense of discipline with respect for elders and seniors, and love for youngers and juniors. Importantly, the seniors must know how to receive and reciprocate the respect shown by the juniors.

The dates mentioned in the book are on the basis of the Bhutanese almanac in the absence of a correspondence between Bhutanese and the Western system of reckoning time. An attempt has been made to use the most appropriate Bhutanese words and phrases in this book wherever possible. Therefore, I have given a glossary of non-English words and phrases used in the book. The original words and phrases exude a flavour which is so much a part of the Bhutanese way of life and culture. It is important to mention that one can only give an approximate rendering of the words and phrases, as they appear; frankly speaking, they are un-translatable and carry their own meaning, thought and feeling which the English language cannot exactly communicate.

The younger generation of today, who will be the leaders of our nation tomorrow, must learn to appreciate the wisdom and valour of our rulers and national heroes, and their great efforts and sacrifices in preserving the sovereignty and independence of our kingdom against foreign aggression and internal rebellion through the periods of our history. Among them, Lama Phajo, Drugom Zhigpo and his four sons; The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel; His Highness, Desi Umzey Tenzin Drugyel; His Highness, Tongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel; His Majesty, King Ugyen Wangchuck; His Majesty, King Jigme Wangchuck; His Majesty, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and His Majesty, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck are notable. The young Bhutanese, armed with courage and determination, should also follow in the footsteps of our illustrious forefathers and emulate their noble examples to preserve the sovereignty and independence of our country. The Dharma must continue to flourish like the golden sun-shine in the Druk Yul, the Land of Thunder Dragon.

This humble work is an attempt to inspire young Bhutanese scholars to undertake research work on the valuable social and cultural heritage, customs and traditions, religion and history of Bhutan. I hope, this book will fill an important gap in our present needs and it will be informative and useful, not only to students, but also to general readers wishing to find out more about the history of the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan.

As a humble student of history, I have undertaken this modest work as a means to broaden my own understanding and any flaws or inconsistencies it may contain are a reflection of my own ignorance. I must avail this opportunity to emphasise that the views expressed in the book are strictly and entirely my own and do not represent the views of any of the persons whose names have been mentioned. Therefore, I am wholly responsible for the views expressed in the book.

I have become increasingly aware of the unlimited scope for revising and improving this book. Therefore, suggestions, advice and sympathetic cooperation of all students and teachers of Bhutanese history and others working in this subject will be of tremendous help to me and I sincerely welcome them.

Thimphu
December 1993

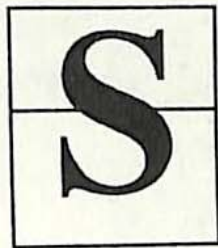
Dr. C.T. Dorji

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CHAPTER - I

Prof. A. C. Sinha



INTRODUCTION



Photo 1. Lord Buddha (wall painting of Tangu monastery)

HISTORY OF BHUTAN/INTRODUCTION

Bhutan, or ``Druk Yul'' which means the land of the Thunder Dragon, lies between Tibet and India along the slopes of the Himalayas, completely land-locked and cut off by mighty mountains. The Kingdom remained a sealed book for many centuries. Known as ``the world's last Shangri-La'', it was opened to the outer world only three decades ago. In fact, Bhutan was known in ancient times by several other names such as:

1. Lho Mon - Southern country of Mon
2. Lho Yul - Southern land
3. Lho Jong - Southern valley
4. Lho Men Jong - Southern valley of medicinal herbs
5. Lho Tsenden Jong - Southern valley of sandal-wood
6. Lho Mon Khazhi - Southern Mon country of four entrances or mouths

There are four different entrances into Bhutan:

- i) Sha Dungsam Kha in the east
- ii) Lho Pasam Kha in the south
- iii) Nup Dalim Kha in the west and
- iv) Jang Taktse Kha in the north

N.B. `Lho' which means `south', is prefixed to all names as the country is situated in the southern range of the Himalayas.

7. Bhutan is derived from the Sanskrit word Bhu-Utam which means ``High land''.

LAND:

Bhutan has an area of 47,000 square kilometres bordered to the north by Tibet, to the south by Assam and Bengal, to the east by Arunachal Pradesh and to the west by Sikkim. It lies between $88^{\circ}45'$ and $92^{\circ}10'$ longitude east and between $26^{\circ}40'$ and $28^{\circ}15'$ latitude north.

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Geographically Bhutan can be divided into three zones, firstly the foothills, secondly the central belt and thirdly the highlands. The climate in the first zone is hot and humid and is unhealthy especially during the monsoon. The second zone consists of mountain valleys with moderate rainfall. The third zone is the snow-capped mountains which is covered by snow throughout the year.

The first zone includes the whole of southern ranges such as, from east to west: Diagam, Samdrupjongkhar, Nganglam, Gayleyphug, Sarbhang, Kalikhola, Phuntsholing, Samtse, Chengmari, Sibsoo and Dorokha. The vegetation and forest are very dense. Mostly tropical, deciduous forest is found here where sal, sisoo, khair, semal and teak trees grow. The altitude varies upto 3000 ft. above sea level. The second zone consists mainly of the valleys of, from east to west, Tashigang, Mongar, Bumthang, Tongsa, Wangdiphodrang, Punakha, Thimphu, Paro and Ha. In this zone temperate coniferous forest is found. The trees include fir mixed with birch, rhododendrons, pine and oak. The altitude varies from 3,000 ft. to 10,000 ft. above sea level.

The northern zone comprises Himalayan mountain ranges and the three high peaks of Kula Gangri, Jumolhari and Gangar Pun Soom and passes running in between the snow ranges separating Bhutan and Tibet. These valleys and passes are mainly used for grazing sheep and yaks during the summer season. In this zone alpine vegetation, dwarf rhododendrons, moss, lichen and other flowering plants are found. The altitude varies from 10,000 ft. to 24,000 ft. above sea level.

Bhutan is the home for several interesting and rare animals, big and small. In the north are found the large, handsome wild sheep and wild goats, the snow leopard, the musk deer, the brown bear, the red panda and the illusive yeti or abominable snow-man. Fewer snow-men, however, have been seen by the present generation due perhaps to the fact that this rare beast is on the verge of becoming extinct. In southern Bhutan many wild animals such as elephants, buffaloes, deer and rhinos abound. Bhutan is also proud to possess Golden Langur. All kinds of birds are found including hornbills,

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peacocks, impayan pheasants, monal blood pheasants, snow pigeons, bare headed geese, falcons, crested serpent vultures, great horned owls, wild fowl, pelicans, swans, cormorants and many others. Insects and a variety of butterflies are found in Bhutan including the rare and famous Bhutan Glory.

Bhutan is Asian Switzerland. The complex mountains and valleys, high peaks and steep slopes and peaks with snow covered approaches form a fantastic setting for the Kingdom of Bhutan. Between eternal snows and humid jungle clad foothills are beautiful gentle valleys, lakes and fast flowing rivers and streams still free of pollution.

The scenery, temples, shrines, Dzongs and traditional Bhutanese houses are like something out of a geography book. At present Bhutan has twenty Dzongkhags. These are as follows:

Dzongkhags

1. Chhukha
2. Dagana
3. Gasa
4. Gayleyphug
5. Ha
6. Jakar
7. Lhuntsi
8. Mongar
9. Paro
10. Pemagatshel
11. Punakha
12. Samdrupjongkhar
13. Samtse
14. Tashigang
15. Tashi Yangtse
16. Thimphu
17. Tongsa

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18. Tsirang
19. Wangdiphodrang
20. Zhemgang

There is a rural charm about the mountains and their natural liveliness. The mountains of Bhutan are covered with perennial snow. The main peaks with their heights are given below:

Peaks	Height
1. Gangkar Pun Soom	- 24,596 ft./7,497 mtr.
2. Gangphukhang	- 23,524 ft./7,170 mtr.
3. Jaikhang	- 23,484 ft./7,158 mtr.
4. Jumolhari Gang	- 24,000 ft./7,314 mtr.
5. Kula Gangri	- 24,953 ft./7,600 mtr.
6. Masang Gang	- 23,484 ft./7,158 mtr.
7. Monla Karchung	- 23,950 ft./7,300 mtr.
8. Tshering Gang	- 23,163 ft./7,060 mtr.

RIVERS:

Bhutan has numerous rivers and streams which flow from north to south. These rivers are never navigable but they transport logs in summer and generate hydro electric power. The following are the principal rivers of Bhutan:

The Am-mo-chhu river starts from high peaked Dangla in Tibet and flows through Chhumbi valley and enters into western Bhutan. It enters the Brahmaputra through Phuntsholing as Toorsa river.

Two rivers flow from Jumolhari through the valley of Paro, one is known as Tsang-chhu and the other as Do-chhu. They join near Paro Dzong to form the combined river Pa-chhu which joins the Wang-chhu (Thimphu chhu) at Chhun

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zom. The combined river of Pa-chhu and Wang-chhu joins Ha-chhu near Chapchha and flows into the Brahmaputra via Chhukha known as **Raidak** in the Indian plains. This is the longest river in Bhutan and is 356 km. long.

The **Pho-chhu** river starts from Mt. Rinchhen Dzyo near Lunana which joins the **Mo-chhu** below Punakha Dzong. The Mo-chhu river starts from Masang Gang and Yagla Gang near Gyon in Gasa. The combined river is called Tsang-chhu which flows through Punakha valley and meets with Dang-chhu river near Wangdiphodrang Dzong. This combined river flows through Kalikhola and then through the Indian plains as the **Sankosh** before joining the Brahmaputra.

Mangde-chhu river starts from Gangkhar Pun Soom and flows through the valley of Tongsa and Zhemgang which joins with Bumthang-chhu, Kuru-chhu and Dangme-chhu. **Bumthang-chhu** is a combination of two rivers flowing from Mela Karchung and Bumthang Dar and flows through Bumthang Changkhar and is also known as Changkhar-chhu. **Kuru-chhu** starts from Kula Gangri and flows through the valley of Kurtyo (Luntshi). **Dangme-chhu** starts from the greater Himalayas and joins with the Nyamjang-chhu in the extreme eastern part of the country. **These three rivers meet near Gayleyphug** and take the name of the **Manas** which flows into the Brahmaputra in the Indian plains.

RACE:

The present population of Bhutan is 6,00,000. The average density of population is greater in the second zone which consists mainly of the valleys. The **original inhabitants of Bhutan are the Monpas**, a Mongoloid stock who lived in the dense forests of the Southern Himalayas. This race is still found in the Tongsa, Zhemgang and Dagana Dzongkhags.

Milo is another race of Bhutanese who inhabited the western part of the country. Milo in Dzongkha means one who does not go back. Sometime in the 9th century during the reign of King Relpachen (805 - 836) in Tibet, the **Tibetan army invaded Bhutan**. **Some soldiers liked the country and decided to settle down in Bhutan**. They were called Milo.

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Chhoje-Dungjyu are the noble families who are the descendants of high Lamas and ruling families in Bhutan. The present Royal family also hails from such a clan.

Lhotshampas (Southerners) are the inhabitants of Southern Bhutan. They originally migrated from Nepal and settled down in Bhutan for good.

Since there was slavery in India in the olden days, some of the slaves were bought by Bhutanese to work as their servants. They were known as Jowo and Jaam for males and females respectively. However, the system of slavery was abolished by the third King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1952 - 1972). They were also given land and equal status in the country.

A tribal people known as Tabab-Damteb (Dongya) lives on the banks of the Am-mo-chhu river under Samtse Dzongkhag. The population is very meagre and they lead an isolated life. This tribe resembles to the Todas race of North Bengal, India. Their clothes and customs are quite different from elsewhere in Bhutan. They live on the sale of a special betel leaf called paney todum which is very popular in Bhutan.

LANGUAGES:

Dzongkha is the national language of Bhutan. Literally Dzongkha means the language spoken in the Dzongs or administrative centres in all the 20 Dzongkhags in Bhutan.

Originally, Dzongkha was the language of Western Bhutan, within the boundary of Pele-La pass which was known as Ngalobi-kha; essentially the language of Sha-Wang-Pa-Soom i.e. the language spoken in three Dzongkhags of Wangdiphodrang, Thimphu and Paro. It was then known as Zhung-kha, the central language of Bhutan.

Like other indigenous languages and dialects of Bhutan, Dzongkha too was an oral language prior to 1971; the written language being Chhokey, the

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language of religion. Tibetan scholar, Thumi Sambhota formulated the alphabet known as U-chen and U-me, on the model of the Devnagiri alphabet (Indian script). He gave to Tibet its first systematic and written grammar known as Sum-Ta i.e. Sumchupa and Tagijugpa in the early 8th century. It was also known as classical Tibetan, the written language of Northern Buddhism in the Himalayan countries. However, the script of Bhutan is known as Lho-yig which was introduced by Guru Padmasambhava's disciple, Denma Tsemang in the 8th century. Thus Bhutanese scholars wrote an erudite Buddhist literature in Chhokey. Consequently, Chhokey remained practically unchanged for centuries in this country.

Since 1971, Dzongkha was not only recognised as the national language of Bhutan but also used as a written language with standardisation of spelling and grammar. Two Bhutanese scholars viz. Lojon Nado and Lojon Pemala composed Dzongkha grammar on the basis of Sum-Ta. Now Dzongkha is being taught widely in the schools in Bhutan and used in the government and private organisations.

However, English has been adopted as the official language in Bhutan with the introduction of modernisation in 1961. It has also been used as medium of instructions in the schools and training institutes in the country. Some of the languages of Bhutan are given below:

1. Dzong-kha is the national language of Bhutan
2. Shachhobi-kha is spoken in Tashigang
3. Bumtabi-kha is spoken in Bumthang
4. Kurtyobi-kha is spoken in Lhunsi
5. Mangdibi-kha is spoken in Tongsa
6. Khen-gi-kha is spoken in Zhemgang
7. Dabi-kha is spoken in Mera and Sakteng
8. Bjobi-kha is spoken in the mountain areas of Northern Bhutan
9. Lhobi-kha is spoken in Taba and Damtey under Samtse
10. Ja-kha or Lhotsham-mi-kha is spoken in southern border of Bhutan by Lhotshampas or Nepalese immigrants. It is also a written language.
11. Byo-kha is spoken in Bhutan by the Tibetan refugees. It is also a written language.

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GENERAL OUTLOOK, CUSTOMS, DRESS AND JEWELLERY:

Bhutan was isolated from the rest of the world for many centuries, which inevitably led to the development of its own language, society and culture without external influence. The Bhutanese are remarkable for their capacity for hard work. They are a tough, hardy people and well disciplined people. They possess a strong patriotic feeling towards the nation. They are also very cooperative and courteous. It is customary for both men and women in Bhutan to have short close cropped hair and plaits were never worn in the past. The reason for this is that all inhabitants of Bhutan were converted to Buddhism by Guru Padmasambhava during the 8th century. They were also given the lighter form of Bodhisattva (Genyey Dampa). Hence their customs and forms of dress are unique. The men wear a garment called a gho which resembles the Scottish Kilt. The women wear a long robe called a kira which is wrapped around the body covering it from neck to ankle. The monks wear red robes with a sleeveless top. The required dress for men is a gho (gown), kerey (belt), a shirt, shorts for summer and long underwear for winter and traditional Bhutanese shoes (tsholham). The required set of clothes for women is a kira, a gutsum (petticoat), a wangju (blouse), a tyoko (jacket), a kerey (belt) and traditional Bhutanese shoes, known as zomilham. The required dress for monks is a tyotsi (a sleeveless coat), a shamtho, a meyo (under garment), a kerey (belt) a tsholham (shoes) and a long and red robe (bura). In accordance with Bhutanese traditions and customs, whenever men and women go to the Dzong, monasteries or attend official functions they must wear a kamney (long sash). The kamney for ladies is known as a rachu, a scarf decorated with various designs. The kamney is very important because it indicates the rank structure of officials, both secular and religious. Male citizens wear a white kamney with a long fringe at both ends. The honorific word for kamney is namza. The knighted officials wear red namza without fringes at the ends which represents equality with the monks. The knighted officials also wear a sword both on official duties and ceremonial occasions along with their namza. The public representatives in the Royal Advisory Council and High Court wear a blue namza without fringes, the ministers wear orange namza which represents equality with Lupon Zhib (Four masters) of the Central Monastic Body. His Majesty, the King and His Holiness, the Je Khenpo wear a yellow namza which indicates their supreme authority for administrative and ecclesiastical

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affairs respectively. The materials used for these garments depends upon climatic conditions. Bhutanese clothes are made of cotton, wool, raw silk, and brocade. In the past, namza was always made of raw silk. There are various patterns for ghos and kiras which are known as sertha, matha, aikabur, mentse-matha, lungsem, adha-matha, zhadima etc.

Bhutanese women usually wear heavy silver and gold necklaces with coral, turquoise, and other precious stones. Rings and ear rings decorated with pearl and turquoise are also popular. Women also use koma (broaches) and dopchu (bracelets) made of silver and gold in traditional designs. Thingka was very famous in the olden days but it has now been replaced by koma. Both men and women carry silver containers covered with gold plate for betel-nut, leaf and lime known as chaka and timi respectively.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES:

The staple food is rice. However, the diet also consists of wheat, barley, maize and potatoes. Yak meat, beef, pork, chicken and fish are also eaten. For vegetarians cheese and butter are used alongwith vegetables.

Bhutanese are fond of alcoholic drinks prepared locally known as ara and chhang brewed from rice, wheat and barley. The drinks are also used as part of offerings while performing ceremonies on different occasions. Similarly doma-pany (betle-nut and leaf) is also a part of Bhutanese tradition. Traditional Bhutanese tea is called suja which is a pupular combination of tea leaves, butter, soda and salt.

BIRTH, MARRAIGE AND DEATH:

Since Bhutan is a Buddhist country, people celebrate the birth of a child by performing a religious ceremony on the third day. The vital part of the worship consists of an astrologer writing a horoscope clearly indicating all the good and bad points forecast for his/her whole life with remedial measures. A

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head Lama is invited to perform Lhabsang-Thrusol (incense and water ceremony) and name the child based on auspicious signs. In accordance with Bhutanese tradition there is no surname. All relatives and friends gather on this occasion to offer a ceremonial scarf accompanied by gifts to the newly-born child.

In the olden days, the Bhutanese strictly followed arranged marriage negotiated by the couple's parents. However, now-a-days love marriages are also very common. In both cases, a wedding ceremony held by a Lama is essential in which the couple must take an oath to remain faithful to each other throughout their lives. On this occasion too all relatives and friends gather to rejoice. At the same time, ceremonial scarf and wedding presents should be offered to the married couple. According to Bhutanese custom, there is no hard and fast rule for the bride to go to the bridegroom's house as in the Indian system. It entirely depends on the number of people in each household. If the couple so desires, they can also settle down on their own and their parents would give them a share of their landed property to establish them. Polyandry is never practised in Bhutan and is also not allowed by law. Nevertheless, polygamy is allowed by law in Bhutan. All marriages now have to be registered with the court and a marriage certificate has to be obtained. The court will not take up a divorce case in the absence of a marriage certificate. In case of divorce on the grounds of adultery, the guilty party has to pay a heavy fine and also pay alimony for the children. The permissible age for marriage by law is eighteen for males and sixteen for females. Child marriage was prevalent but has now been abolished. (Marriage Act of Bhutan, 1982). Bhutanese women enjoy a sense of freedom and equality with men. They have the right to equal education, appointment and promotion in the service. At present, several of the ministeries in Bhutan are headed by the Princesses as representatives of His Majesty, the King of Bhutan. More and more Bhutanese women are now attaining senior posts in the service of Royal Government of Bhutan.

Since Buddhists believe in the theory of rebirth based upon good deeds (karma), death and funeral ceremonies are solemn occasions in Bhutan. Immediately after the death of a person, a monk is invited to sit beside the corpse and chant prayers. Then an astrologer is consulted to fix the date for the funeral and an appropriate time to take the dead body out of the house. The funeral is at

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tended by all relatives and friends where a group of monks headed by a head Lama performs special prayers for the departed soul. After the funeral, the ashes are collected and thrown into the river or stream. However, some relics, especially skull bones are collected to be kept along with the effigy. Thereafter ritual performances are observed, if not daily then at least on the 7th, 14th and 21st days after the death when an effigy of the dead person is erected and food served. In well-to-do families, this practice continues till the 49th day. Then the effigy is burnt and ashes are again thrown into a stream or river which is the final ritual performance. The relics are made into a Tsha-Tsa (clay figures stamped with image of stupas) and kept in the caves in the mountains or holy places. A number of flags are hoisted bearing the religious name of the deceased person which is believed to be helpful in accumulating good karma for the departed soul to gain salvation. The anniversary of the death is also very important as the last ritual performance for the departed soul. This tradition is followed in Bhutan irrespective of the status of the family. All relatives and friends share the family grief and contribute liberally in cash and gifts.

ASTROLOGY:

Astrology is very important in Bhutanese society for Zakar or auspicious day and time. It was introduced into Bhutan during the 17th century by Khedub Ngawang Lodyo during the reign of The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel. Later on, a section for astrology was started in the Central Monastic Body and a master of astrology known as Tsibi Lupon was appointed. The same system was also introduced in all Rubdeys (Monastic Bodies) of Bhutan. The Tsibi Lupon's duty is to bring out a Bhutanese almanac every year forecasting the rainfall, natural calamities and harvest conditions. He is also consulted for horoscopes of Longkhor Chung-nyi (12 year cycles). The noted persons in astrology in Bhutan were His Highness, Desi Umzey Tenzin Drugyel (First Druk Desi); Lupon Shengab; Lupon Tenpa; Lupon Gyalpo; Lupon Ngawang Pelzang; Lupon Druk Penjor and Lupon Druk Dorji. It is believed that The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel was able to unify Bhutan under one ruling power and control with the help of His Highness, Desi Umzey Tenzin Drugyel who had profound knowledge

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of astrology which gave an accurate calculation of strategic moves in battles and wars. Thus The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel defeated all his rivals. Even today an astrologer is consulted at the time of archery tournament for strategic moves which will lead to victory. Astrology is especially important at the time of birth, marriage and death ceremonies and at the time of construction of buildings (foundation and inauguration) and all kinds of celebrations including promotion of civil and army officers. Purchase of land, going to litigation, undertaking long journey, shifting houses, etc. are also done in accordance with the Zakar.

MEDICINES:

Since Bhutan is rich in medicinal herbs, indigenous medicines were in use since time immemorial. The well known Bhutanese indigenous physicians were Lopon Tshering Samdrup, Ngawang Dagay, Chang Gyaltsen and Lopon Tshewang. His Highness, Desi Tenzin Drukpa (2nd Druk Desi) supplied medicinal herbs twice to Tibet free of cost for the benefit of humanity during his reign from 1656 to 1667. The First King of Bhutan, Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck sent a number of Bhutan students to the Indigenous Medical College at Chaphori in Tibet. When they came back from Tibet they greatly developed the indigenous hospitals in Bhutan. Even today the indigenous hospital in Thimphu, Bhutan plays a vital role in the treatment of incurable diseases. This also renders a good service to humanity.

NATIONAL FESTIVALS AND SPORTS:

The Bhutanese are friendly and their festivals are colourful. The self sufficient villages, tall houses and huge Dzongs (castle monasteries) present a picture of Bhutan as a fairy tale land which is contented, uncluttered and untouched. The socio-economic characteristics are based on traditions which promote national discipline. The customs, religious practices, dances and habits of dress and food are something unique which is different from other countries. The cultural heritage of Bhutan is very much evident today. Driglam Namzha (traditional etiquette) is strictly followed in Bhutan with respect for elders or those of higher ranks and love and affection for juniors.

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The important national festivals are celebrated with grandeur. These festivals are National Day (17th December), the Descending Day of Lord Buddha from heaven, Blessed Rainy Day, the birthday of Guru Padmasambhava, Losar (New Year) and the birthday of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. All Dzongkhags have their own festivals known as Tshechu which is celebrated annually. All monasteries also have some festivals where the religious dramas are enacted. On these occasions, holidays are declared and all people, both rich and poor, enjoy themselves.

The national sports of Bhutan are Datsey and Deگو. Datsey is archery which is very important as tournaments known as chhoday are played among different Dzongkhags. These tournaments are played on home and away basis where young girls gather to sing and dance to celebrate their team's victory. Deگو is a game of stones normally played by monks who have to refrain from playing archery. Other games also consist of sosom (javelin), pungdo (shotput), thongju (long jump) and keshey (wrestling). Now a days Bhutanese also play modern games like football, volleyball, basketball, cricket, hockey and golf.

MUSIC AND DANCE:

The traditional music and dance of Bhutan are normally based on religious and folklore themes. There are two types of music in Bhutan i.e. religious and traditional music. The religious music is a combination of trumpets, conch shells, horns, symbols, gongs, flutes and drums. This is normally played during religious festivals and celebrations including annual worship in individual homes in Bhutan. The traditional music is again combination of Dam-ngey (guitar), chiwang (violin) and lim (flute). This is normally played during national festivals and special occasions. Bhutanese dances are also divided into three groups - religious dance, ritual dance and folk dance. The religious dances are normally performed by monks during special prayers for the destruction of the enemies of Buddhism and for bringing peace to the country.

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The different religious dances are as follows:

1. Zhana Chham (Black Hat Dance)
2. Degyed Chham (Spirit Dance)
3. Shinje Chham (Dance of Yamaraja)
4. Le-gon Chham (Dance of the protective deity)
5. Lhamo Tsokhor Chham (Dance of Mahakali)
6. Serdang Ber-kor (Procession Dance)
7. Gonpo Mang Chham (Dance of Mahakala)
8. Dudag Chham (Dance of Sharmashan Lord)
9. Tum Nga Chham (Wrathful Dance)
10. Guru Tshen Gye (Dance of the eight manifested forms of Guru Padmasambhava)

The ritual dances are performed during festivals by laymen known as Byo Chham. These dances depict the traditions of ancient Bhutan. They are as follows:

1. Dam-Ngey Chhoje (Ritual dance with guitar)
2. Ragsha Chham (Dance of Yamaraja)
3. Dramitse Nga Chham (Drum Dance of Dramitse)
4. Shawa Shachhi (Dance of the Stag and the Hunting Dog)
5. Po Chham (Hero Dance)
6. Sha Chham (Deer Dance)
7. Chhung Chham (Garuda Dance)
8. Gingda Tsholing (Religious Dance of Padma Lingpa)
9. Peling Ging (Religious Dance of Padma Lingpa)
10. Pholey Moley (Dance of the Handsome Man and the Beautiful Woman)
11. Atsara (Clown Dance)

The folk dances are performed by young and old; male and female. They are based on the customs of different Dzongkhags e.g. Wangzhay of Thimphu, Wochhuzhay of Paro, Nup Chhorten Zhay of Tongsa, Aosang of Ha, Alo of Lhuntsi and Ache Lhamo of Tashigang. Besides, the common

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folk dances of Bhutan are known as **Zhungda** and **Byondha**. **Zhungda** is performed by standing in a straight line and **Byondha** by moving in a circle.

These dances are performed during national festivals, special occasions and annual worship ceremonies in individual homes. Lhotsham dances are those of typical Nepali origin.

ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE:

The **traditional arts and architecture of Bhutan** are unique. Bhutanese traditional arts **derived inspiration from Buddhist doctrinal lore and tantric mythology**. They became **highly decorative and ornamental** and were used in the Dzongs, monasteries, and chhortens. Bhutanese **calligraphic art** has a richness and illustrative genius. The Bhutanese architectural style is exhibited in the form of **Dzongs, monasteries, traditional houses and chhortens** which show an individualistic character. Architectural grandeur is expressed in the height and **massiveness** of the Dzongs. Both in form and design the concept of Dzong architecture is one of the **most elegant and harmonious in fortress-building** in the world. The traditional Bhutanese architecture has **no nails and no iron bars**. Dzongs have numerous outer and inner buildings and temples to serve the dual purposes of a centre of religion and civil administration. It is the focal point of all social, religious and political activities of the region. Bhutanese architecture particularly in the construction of monasteries and stupas conforms to certain scriptural canons both in design and workmanship. Bhutan's monasteries are not merely religious places but they also bear witness to the country's highly cultivated spiritual civilization and artistic temperament. The monasteries contain most of the artistic treasures of the country in the form of statues, wall paintings and carvings on pillars and beams.

The **genius of Bhutanese art** is best represented by its **frescoes and murals**. Bhutan's thangkas depict an artistic skill and a rare exquisite finesse. The statues are made of wood, stones, bronze, coral, pearl and other costly materials which depict Bhutanese fine craftsmanship. The mandala or mystic circle murals represent the Bhutanese Buddhist concept of cosmogony of the

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universe exemplified by the painting on the wall of Paro Dzong. The entire concept of birth and rebirth - the most fundamental laws of Buddhism illustrated in frescoes of the pictorial 'cycle of existence' (Bhawachakra) which are painted on the walls in Wangdiphodrang Dzong also display the skill of Bhutanese painters.

Bhutanese arts and architecture are not only displayed by Dzongs, monasteries and stupas but also by houses where wood carvings and wall paintings are prominent. House construction is also unique and has developed to suit climatic and local conditions. There are adequate rooms including a kitchen and cattle sheds on the ground floor which is well protected from wind and cold. A worship room known as a chhosho is a must in each home. This room has an altar with provision for keeping a number of statues. In the olden days the use of furniture was very limited. The aristocratic families used only a jabla (diwan) and a chodom (desk). No furniture was used by common people. The traditional wooden cups and laquered bowls known as lapho and dem respectively were used along with the clay pots. However, the Bhutanese now use all kinds of modern furniture and crockery and the old articles are preserved for decorations.

ECONOMY:

Bhutan is an agrarian country. The main occupation of the people is agriculture. However, animal husbandry and horticulture are also emphasised. Rice is grown in the central valleys and barley, millet, and potatoes are also grown in plenty. The people in the mountains rear yaks and mithuns and sell the cheese and butter. Apple production is also encouraged in the central valleys. Cardamom and oranges are plentiful in southern regions where they form the main cash crops. Forest resources are plentiful in Bhutan ranging from valuable wood to rare orchids and medicinal herbs. Since the rivers and streams of Bhutan are very swift a Hydro Electric Project uses water to generate 800 MW. of power. Bhutan grows various vegetables and fruits which contribute to the development of small scale industries e.g. a fruit preservation factory and distillery. Bhutan also has a number of small scale industries such as a candle factory, a match factory, a

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soap factory, a steel factory, a pencil and slate factory, saw-mills, weaving centres, basket making, metal works and cement plants. Almost all the factories are based on the raw materials available within the country. Bhutan also has lots of mines and mineral resources which include copper, coal, dolomite, graphite, gypsum, lead, limestone, marbles, mica, slate, talc, tungsten and zinc.

COINS, CURRENCY AND POSTAGE:

Since Bhutan has been sovereign country from time immemorial, it has its own coinage. In the past, Bhutanese coins were called zangtrum, matrum and tikchung. Bhutan also has its own currency with denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Ngultrums equivalent to Indian rupees. The modern coins of Bhutan are called Chetrum 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 and 100 which are equivalent to Indian paisa. Bhutan became a member of the Universal Postal Union in 1969 and introduced its own postage and stamps. Bhutanese stamps are beautiful and in high demand by stamp collectors.

EDUCATION:

Education in Bhutan was introduced during the 8th century. By then all Buddhist literature was translated into Chhokey (the language of religion) in Tibet from Sanskrit by the great translator, Thumi Sambhota and his colleagues.

Sometime during the 8th century a disciple of Guru Padmasambhava named Denma Tsemang came to Bumthang, Central Bhutan from Tibet at the invitation of Chakhar Gyalpo (Sindhu Raja) to be his tutor. Denma Tsemang introduced script called Lho-yig based upon Devnagiri which was different from U-chen and U-me (the Tibetan scripts). Since Bhutan had been a Buddhist country from time immemorial many eminent Lamas entered Bhutan from Tibet to preach Buddhism. At the same time, many Bhutanese scholars went to Tibet for higher studies. They returned with a high level of qualification based on the oral tradition and preached in Bhutan.

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The **Dzong** was the only seat of learning in Bhutan in the olden days. The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel invited his tutor Lhawang Lodyo from Druk Ralung in Tibet for the inauguration of a monastery called Cheri Dorji-Den in 1620 in Thimphu, Bhutan where 30 monks were ordained for the first time in Bhutan. Then The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel started the Central Monastic Body in Punakha in 1637 with 600 monks. The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel was not only important because he unified Bhutan under one ruling power and control but he was also vitally important for the advancement of education in the country. Every Dzong in Bhutan constructed by The Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyel had a body of monks to study and worship. Therefore, the Dzong was a central focus for the development of society, culture and religion. The administration of the country was also based upon the Buddhist religion as the rank structure was also derived from the Lamaic tradition.

Tandin Wangyel and Ngawang Sonam of Bumthang were two eminent Bhutanese scholars. His Highness, Desi Ngawang Jamtsho introduced Drabi Dratshang (Lexicographical Division) in the Central Monastic Body. Ngawang Sonam was appointed head of the division with the rank of Drabi Lupon. He concentrated on the teaching of grammar, Buddhist higher philosophy and astrology. He produced many Bhutanese scholars including Ngawang Pelzang and Kunga Jamtsho. The latter became the 12th Je Khenpo of Bhutan. Drabi Dratshang still plays a vital role in the Central Monastic Body with regard to the study of Buddhist higher philosophy. The characteristics of Bhutanese literature are unique in the present world. The entire teachings of Lord Buddha are found in Bhutan preserved in various monasteries. Some of them are also found written in gold. The Bhutanese craftsmen also made a number of wooden blocks as part of printing technology in the past.

The Central Monastic Body headed by His Holiness the Je Khenpo also emphasised the study of Buddhist philosophy and meditations. Many institutes were set up in the country where the monks undergo the above courses. A nunnery was also started in Bhutan at Punakha where women too could go for higher study in Buddhist philosophy and meditations. All these

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institutions are supported by the Royal Government for the development of education.

However, the study of Bhutanese grammar and literature was centralised at Simtokha Rigzhung Institute under the able guidance of Ven. Lam Nado, Dzongkha Adviser, Royal Government of Bhutan. He is an exemplary scholar of Bhutan today. The students who passed out from Simtokha Rigzhung Institute were appointed in the schools, courts and Dzongkhag administration and rose to a high position in the service of the Royal Government owing to their profound knowledge in the Dzongkha language and Buddhist philosophy.

As far as modern education in Bhutan is concerned the credit should go to His Majesty Ugyen Wangchuck, the First hereditary King of Bhutan (1907 - 1927) who selected 30 intelligent boys and sent them to Kalimpong (India) to study Hindi and English. The second hereditary King, His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck was also well versed in Hindi, English and Buddhist philosophy in Chhokey . The modern schools were introduced into Bhutan during the reign of the second King of Bhutan (1927 - 1952) and many Bhutanese boys received modern education. However, the students were sent to India, especially to Kalimpong and Darjeeling for higher studies. The third hereditary King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck also studied Hindi, English and Buddhist philosophy in Chhokey and went to London at the age of 15 for higher studies. Many schools and technical institutes were opened during his reign from 1952 - 1972. Bhutanese students were sent to western countries for advanced study in different subjects. The present King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck received education in Darjeeling (India), London and Bhutan. Education was especially emphasised during the first five year plan in Bhutan (1961 - 65). Today Bhutan has an increasing number of national engineers, doctors, teachers, lecturers in college and clerical staff.

The system of education in Bhutan is also something unique as special attention is paid to the learning of Dzongkha (national language) and traditional disciplines known as Driglam Namzha. The students follow Bhutanese customs and wear national dress.

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The system of education in Bhutan is diversified as one can either join modern schools or monastic schools. But they are equally treated in terms of their qualifications and status in the service. Women are also able to receive equal education and have access to the same appointments as men in the service of the Royal Government where they have the opportunity to rise to high posts depending upon their qualification, capability and dedication. The Royal Government is giving support and encouragement to Bhutanese scholars to go for higher studies not only in the country but also to all over the world in order to accomplish their education.

HEREDITARY MONARCHY:

As a matter fact, the hereditary monarchy dates from 17th December 1907 with Wangchuck Dynasty heading His Majesty, Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck who became the First hereditary King of Bhutan in accordance with the prediction of Guru Padmasambhava. It was said in Kathang Dudpa:

"Bumthang Chhoney Thriyi Zurchka-non
Gyal-sid Chhyo-Thrim Chongwi Ngatul-jon"

Which means - my spiritual incarnation from Bumthang will ascend the throne to rule this country. Thus Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck became the first hereditary monarch and ruled Bhutan from 1907 to 1926, His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck from 1926 to 1952 and His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck from 1952 to 1972. In the course of time, the planned developmental activities were undertaken and the country joined world organisations such as the Colombo Plan in 1962, the Universal Postal Union in 1969, and the United Nations in 1971 to strengthen and maintain international relations.

The following important organs of the government have been set up for the smooth functioning and effective administration of the country:

1. National Assembly (Tshogdu)
2. Royal Advisory Council (Lodyo Tshogdu)

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3. High Court/District Courts/S.D. Courts (Thrimkhang)
4. Planning Commission (Chhagyo Lhentshog)
5. Royal Civil Service Commission (Gyalzhung Zhiyog Lhentshog)
6. Royal Audit Authority (Gyalzhung Tsizhib Wangzin)
7. Special Commission for Cultural Affairs (Solzin Lhentshog)
8. Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs (Dratshang Lhentshog)
9. Different Ministries/Departments/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag
10. Royal Bhutan Army (Dagpi Mami)
11. Royal Body Guards (Kusung Mami)
12. Royal Bhutan Police (Thrimsung Gagpa)

The present King of this country was the youngest monarch of the present world at the time of his coronation. Under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan had made a radical change during the last two decades, and it can undoubtedly be said that more development and progress will be made within the next few years. But the development of Bhutan will certainly show a distinct difference from the development of other countries, at least in the way that hopefully it will not bring negative aspects along with the prosperity of the nation and its socio-economic and socio-cultural structures. In this strife-stricken world Bhutan continues to be a fountain of peace.



Photo 2. Bhutanese folk dance by women



Photo 3. Bhutanese folk dance by men



Photo 4. Bhutanese Archers



Photo 5. Mountains and Yaks