

THE BHUTANESE EXPERIENCE OF STATE FORMATION

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STATE FORMATION IS an intricate process through which a community transforms itself from a simpler polity to a formal political entity. This transformation depends on a number of institutional possibilities. As the formal political structure presumes a body of the whole-time state functionaries, the community must generate enough economic surplus to maintain them at certain level of luxury and dignity. Another significant aspect of the process is that certain ideologies (or theologies), values and symbols as parts of the distinct political culture are instrumental in transforming the community into a distinct political system. Invariably, every community engaged in such a transformation has political traditions, events, legends and myths, to which the various components of the state structure are associated. In this way, each and every case of such a process conforming to the general pattern of state formation, provides uniqueness. The paper portrays the Bhutanese experience of state formation during the first half of the present century, which is of special interest, for Bhutan is the only lamaist political system surviving in the world. The lamaist system had a tradition of centralised control through the clergy. The harsh climate and difficult topography further shaped the style of life of the marginal agriculturalists, and pastoralists of the Central Asian plateau, to which Bhutan is jugged. We have presented in this paper the Bhutanese practices and events leading to the establishment of a dynastic rule. Then we have examined the British pattern of relationship with Bhutan, its internal power struggle within the ruling oligarchy and also between the king and the head of the Bhutanese lamaism. Lastly, we have analysed its status as an Indian state, Bhutan and Indian independence movement and the Bhutanese perception of their identity and destiny. While analysing all these events and processes, the paper reveals how Bhutan has ultimately emerged as a nation-state.

THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN OF AUTHORITY

The institution of the *Zhabs-drung* (the Dharma Raja) as the supreme authority emerged in the *Iho-mon* (Bhutan). Slowly, the

Zhabs-drung's authority was reduced to a mythical one, to be manipulated by the effective functionaries. In fact, the institutions of the *sde-srid* (the Deb Raja), as the temporal ruler, turned out to be the real power wielders of the country. However, as the *sde-srid* was elected ideally for a period of three years by the monks, *rdzongpons* (governors of the forts) and *penlops* (regional overlords), once elected, he was to renounce his nonreligious ties and undertake lesser sacred-vows. His effective control over the state apparatus was dependent on the regional lords—the *penlops*.

The traditional Tibetan government, on the pattern of which the Brug-pa government in Bhutan was fashioned, was possessed of both *Dharma* (*Chhos*: religion) and *Samsara* (*Srid*: world). While in organisational sense *chhos-srid-gyyis-aden* meant dyarchy of clerical and lay elements, in ideological sense it meant a synthesis. From this point of view, the norms of *Dharma* and the *Samsara* were two sets of laws, one for the domain of church and another for the state, there were two sets of officials, the monk and the lay, not necessarily working exclusive of each other. One also finds the monks and nobles closely connected and, thus, over-ruling the possibility of an absolute separation between the spiritual and the temporal estates.¹ The picture presented above was that of the orthodox Shakya hierarchy, which was very close to the *Brugpa* sect of lamaism.

It is a known fact that the nobility, in Tibetan cultural context, followed polygamy and polyandry. Because of the institution of the incarnations and the prince-abbotships, the sacred and the secular roles were invariably mixed up. The *zhabs-drungs* and other functionaries of the Central Council were invariably the monks. However, there were occasions when the regional rulers such as the *penlops* of Paro, Daka and Tongsa were house-hold chiefs. There was a provision that when such secular chiefs were elected to the office of the state, which were invariably located inside the *rdzongs*, they were expected to take the lower religious vows. The ministerial council (*chinlah*) of the Brugpa state in the 19th century at least in theory consisted of the lay and monk elements. It is difficult to ascertain its composition on the regional basis. The *rdzongpons* of the inner Himalayan valleys were strongly represented, while there was no representation from the eastern and southern Bhutan in the *Chinlah*. The council used to meet only on rare and critical occasions. However, Pemberton and Ashley Eden mention the parallel councils maintained on the pattern mentioned above, by the *sde-srid* and the regional

1. Sinha, N. C., *Prolegomena to Lamaist Policy*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1969, Calcutta, pp. 57 & 66.

chiefs of Tongsa, Paro and Daka. As these four functionaries were more concerned with the actual administration of the country, their councils should have been effective.

There was no hereditary landed aristocracy, as the ownership of landed property was not a prized possession in the rugged topography and harsh climatic conditions. In the normal situation the central government at Punakha used to meet for the annual festival, when the removal and changes of the official was effected (offices were manned by the persons loyal to the *sde-srid*) the bulk of the revenue in kind was received and in general the over-all administration of the country was reviewed. The taxes were imposed on each ryot's estate and they had to pay certain fixed tributes and give presents to the officials. The land revenue was assessed as forty measures of grain for each measure of seed used in the field. The revenue, paid by the subjects in kind to the local chiefs, was forwarded to the *penlops*. The *penlops* used to transfer at least a portion of the revenue thus received to Punakha and Thimphu *rdzongs* for the up-keep of the monks who lived there. The immediate requirements of the state were met from these central stores and the rest were used by the Dharma Raja, Deb Raja and the *Punakha* and the *Tashichho rdzongpons* in trade. Pemberton found the Bhutanese revenue so utterly insignificant that it was just enough to satisfy the demands of food and clothing. Consequently, all through his extensive travel from the Assam Duars to Bhutan, he found in 1830's the deserted houses, desolate villages and neglected fields. Not only the state revenue was not properly transmitted to the central authority, but even the gifts expressly meant for the *zhabs-drung* and the *sde-srid* were appropriated by the lower officials. The entire economy and administration were in chaos and all through the nineteenth century, there were ubiquitous civil wars. In fact, nobody was in effective control of the Bhutanese affairs.

LOSS OF TRADE AND DECADENCE OF THE RDZONG SYSTEM

As a consequence of the provisions of the treaty of 1774 between Bhutan and the East India Company, a number of steps were taken to ensure the trade between Bhutan and the Indian empire. The Bhutanese chiefs used to send their merchandise to the marts of Titalis, Rangpur, Dewangiri and Udalgiri. However, trade with Bhutan declined after 1831-32, when the Rangpur fair was stopped as an economy measure. With the emergence of Darjeeling, Titalia fair ceased to be attractive for the Bhutanese. Again, as soon as Kalimpong came to be recognised as a trading centre on the frontier of Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan in India, Phari, where the Bhuta-

nese had a number of privileges, ceased to be an attractive commercial point. Similarly, with the loss of Assam Duars, Dewangiri and Udalgiri fairs lost their significance. The point to be emphasised is that the Bhutanese state functionaries, monks and laymen alike, were engaged in trans-Himalayan trade between Tibet and India via Bhutan, through which they used to derive for themselves a significant income. With the type of political stability secured through the Indo-Nepalese war of 1814-15, the Assam war of 1826, the Sikkim war of 1860-61 and the Duars war of 1864-65, the Bhutanese traders were no more in an advantageous position. In fact, with the establishment of regular urban markets, where transaction was made through the the currency and weight and measures, recognised by the British, the British interests became dominant at the cost of Bhutanese and the Tibetans.

Important *rdzongs* (forts) such as Punakha, Wangdi, Thimphu, Simtoka, Paro, Ha, Sambe and Chhuka were located on strategic points in the inner Himalayan region of western Bhutan. The *rdzongs*, originally connected as the centres of the regional nomadic and trans-humance communities, were the defensible points against the frequent invasions from the potential enemies. They were manned by the most capable members of the community who acted as soldiers; the commanders had the adjoining areas within their sphere of influence because of sheer logistics. That was possibly the beginning of the institution of the *rdzongpons*. As we have noted [above the *rdzongs* were located in the heart of the pastoral communities which were in the habit of moving their habitation in search of the pastureland. The products of the pastoral communities such as cheese, butter, wool, hides, yak tails, ponies, dogs, young and sick cattle-heads were to be sheltered in a place, where they could be secured. The storing of such dairy and cattle-products was also essential to barter them against cereals, salt, silk, arms, etc. The *rdzongs* emerged as the handy institution for the transaction of such products. Needless to add that the location of the *rdzongs* on the mule track between Tibet and the Indian plains was of significance. The trading caravans from the distant places such as Ladakh, Nepal, Bihar and Tibet used to pass through western Bhutan. Only one such example of trade will be sufficient. Purangiri, the holy merchant from the Gangetic plain, was recognised by the first British governor-general in India as well as Teshu Lama of Shigaste, Southern Tibet, as their representative in Lhasa and Calcutta respectively. Clement Markham informs us of Purangiri undertaking a number of journeys from Calcutta to Lhasa and back and then even to Peking, across the geographically most difficult regions between Tibet and China.

In course of time, these originally defensive structures turned out to be commercial centres, which were to be defended as they had collected the economic surplus of the region. Because of their economic significance, strategically located *rdzongs* were further fortified into imposing structures. Again, as the land was converted into the Brugpa lamaism with their institution of the prince-abbotship, the chapels, shrines, monasteries and other religious establishments were added to the *rdzongs*, which also turned out to be the residences of the significant theocratic functionaries. Accordingly, the *rdzongs* gained religious significance besides having defence, commercial and economic power. Again, with the establishment of the effective Brugpa authority, the first *Zhabs-drung* is credited to have reorganised his administration on the basis of the Tibetan experience of *rdzong* administration. *Zhabs-drung's* monk associates and loyal soldiers were appointed the *rdzongpons* (governors of the forts) to the significant *rdzongs* with authority to administer the adjoining districts. In place of the age-old voluntary practice of the pastoralists storing their dairy products, the *rdzongs* were assigned to collect the state revenue. As the state rent was paid in kind, the *rdzongs* turned out to be the state-store houses, which could also distribute such articles to the monks and other functionaries, the consumers of the state revenues. Consequently, the *rdzongs* turned out to be the salary disbursing centres as well.

For the pastoralists individual qualities such as riding, archery, swordsmanship, marksmanship, and qualities of leadership in raiding, attacking, defending the forts, camps and settlements came to be recognised as the characteristics of an effective chief. Such chiefs could establish their sway over extensive territories and carve out states for themselves. The most difficult tasks of such chiefs had been to generate surplus commodities for an evolved state structure, as the near self-sufficient economy of the pastoralists could offer a very limited amount of articles for the whole-time newly emerged state functionaries. The old tradition of the pastoralists resorting to the traditional transaction and thus, creating an artificial economic surplus through differential commodity pricing, could help the state to some extent. However, nuances of trade as an enterprise demanded long stretch of peaceful-conditions, besides an urban temperament.

The career of Jigmed rNam-rgyal dBang-phund (1826-81) provides a model of such a frontier chief, who could turn every conflict in his favour. He became Tongsa Penlop in 1853 and the then *Zhabs-drung* remained his ally up to 1861. It was he who organised the most hos-

tile reception to the British envoy, Ashley Eden, in 1864, which led to the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1865. All through this war it was Jigmed rNam-rgyal who managed all the war efforts on behalf of Bhutan, so much so that he could enrol the support from the Khampas (from eastern Tibet) against the British. The British did not hide their desire to drive a wedge between western Bhutanese authorities and the Tongsa. There was little choice for him but to accept the provisions of the Sinchula Treaty. However, it was a credit to his charismatic personality that in spite of the British support to his adversaries, he was appointed the *sde-srid* in 1870 and his brother, Kyitselpo Dorje, succeeded him in 1874. These events led to one of the worst civil wars fought in the Bhutanese history. In this civil war Jigmed lost not only his brother but breathed his last in 1881, leaving behind a host of enemies as inheritance to his twenty year old heir, Orgyan dBang-phund (b 1861, r 1907-26), who was destined to change the structure of the *Bruga-pa* polity.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DYNASTIC RULE

The then *sde-srid* and the *Zhabs-drung* died in 1901 and 1903 respectively. The then rJe *Kham-po* Yeshe dNgo's Grub (1851-1917) briefly held both the offices during 1903-5. However, this monk-official was said to be a recluse, who occupied himself entirely with the spiritual affairs of the country. It appears that unlike his predecessors he was not cut for the then demanding diplomacy evolved in the Indo-Tibetan relations, in which Bhutan had a serious stake. The Tongsa Penlop, with the help of his relatives, associates and lama allies, was able to manage all the secular affairs of the state and establish his claim for an unequal status among the Bhutanese.

In view of the factors mentioned above, the British seized the opportunity and despatched the resident political officer in Sikkim, J. C. White, with presents on the eve of the installation and election of the Tongsa as the hereditary ruler: "There being no hereditary Maharaja over this state of Bhutan, and the Deb-Rajas being elected from amongst the lamas, Lopons, councillors and the Chinlahs of the different districts, we, the undersigned abbots, lopons and the whole body of (the) lamas, the state councillors, the Chinlahs of the different districts, with all the subjects having discussed and unanimously agreed to elect Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, Tongsa Penlop, the prime minister of Bhutan (?) as (the) hereditary Maharaja of Bhutan in open durbar, on the golden throne of this day... the 17th December, 1907 at Poonakha-Phodang. We now declare our allegiance to him and his heirs with unchanging mind, and undertake to serve him

and his heirs loyally and faithfully, to the best of our ability. Should any one not abide by this contract by saying this and that, he shall altogether be turned out of our company. In witness thereto we affix our seals."²

Then there was the five inches square and the most precious seal of the *Zhabs-drung* affixed, followed by eight significant heads of the monk bodies and the regional governors. And lastly, there were 41 seals and signatures of what White termed as the second class officers. The coronation of the Tongsa Penlop as the *Brug-rgyalpo* in 1907 resulted into two significant provisions. First of all, the office of the *Zhabs-drung* with its sovereign status was reduced to non-existence. However, the role of the *Zhabs-drung* appears to have been divided into two. While some of the ritual roles of the *Zhabs-drung* were assigned to the *rJe-Khampo*, his political legitimacy was transferred to the *Brug-rgyalpo*. Secondly, with the abolition of the office of the *sde-srid*, its administrative and other secular functions were assigned to the king. Not only that, it is claimed that the institution of the *Brug-rgyalpo* is, in fact, the continuation of the institution of the *sde-srid*. The royal government of Bhutan publication, the *Deb Rajas of Bhutan* (1975) enumerates the deeds of some of the significant *Deb Rajas* and includes the reigns of all the four *Brug-rgyalpos* up to the present ruler, *Jigs-medts Seng-ge-dBang-Phyud* (1972).

BHUTAN UNDER WINGS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Charles A. Bell, White's successor in Sikkim, negotiated and concluded the Treaty of Punakha in 1910. At the conclusion of the treaty, the Maharaja himself remarked to Bell: "Bhutan had become part of the British empire."³ Charles Bell and Capt. R. S. Kennedy, while travelling from Buxa Duar in the plains to foothills on way to Bhutan, identified Punagu at the height of 7000 feet from the sea level and one day march from Chuka rdzong and five days march from Buxa railway station as an ideal site for a sanitorium and hill station. Similarly, 75 years ago Darjeeling was identified such a spot in Sikkim. After signing the treaty, the Maharaja thanked the Government of India for the grant of land at Kalimpong for the

2. White, Gohn C., *Sikkim and Bhutan*, 1971, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, pp. 270-71.

3. India Office Library (hence IOL): MSS: EUR: P 024, Secret External Foreign and Political Dept. No. 1, 7.2.1924, Letter to H.M.S. Secretary to India, Subject Status of Bhutan.

official residence of the Bhutan Agent and requested for the free supply of timber for constructing a building. He also offered a piece of land at Punakha or elsewhere to the Government of India for housing the political officer. In fact, Bell approved a site, Motitang (Thang), at Thimphu for the purpose, in case the British decided to have their office in Bhutan. Bell found the Maharaja a capable ruler, who had filled up the significant state offices with men of inferior rank or his own loyal relatives: "It is noticeable how the Maharaja has filled and is filling the main posts in the state with his relatives and adherents—Paro Penlop is his second cousin and a good friend to him in the past. The Thimphu rdzongpon is the father of his second wife. Punakha rdzongpon was a subordinate official of his own fief, Tongsa. The Deb Zimpon has served him since he (the Maharaja) was 12 years old. When he appoints his trusted servant, Rai Ugyen Kazi Bahadur, as Deb Zimpon, the latter will be transferred to the Council seat."⁴ He also made a note that all officials of western Bhutan, west of Pe-le-la range, were men of eastern Bhutan. In fact, the easterners had a thorough grip over the country. On their return journey, the British party chanced to meet the *ex-sde-srid*, who desired to use the good offices of Ugyen Kazi for getting back the *sde-srid's* office.

The Treaty of Punakha, 1910, "was sealed not only by the Maharaja but also by each of the councillors, with the seal of the Dharma Raja, who was the spiritual head of Bhutan and with the seal of the state hierarchy". Among the various benefits accrued from the treaty enumerated in a *Military Report on Bhutan*, two points need to be mentioned. First, the British could get a road from India to Tibet through Bhutan avoiding Chumbi Valley. Secondly, the treaty had been obtained "with entire goodwill of the Maharaja and his council and gives (gave) us (the British India) a people who are (were) proud of having become citizens (subjects) of the British empire".⁵ Very soon the occasion arose to demonstrate the Bhutanese subservience to the British. The Maharaja along with 13 notables of Bhutan attended the Delhi Durbar in December 1911; was invested with the title of KCSI and was granted a sum of Rs 10,000 towards the expenses incurred in this connection. He "knew and accepted the fact that none but feudatory chiefs in India were to participate in the *Durbar* and that, if he attended it, he would be required to perform

4. Ibid. F/5 C. 3:22 Follios, "Diary of My Mission to Bhutan": Charles A Bell's Personal papers, January 21, 1910.

5. Ibid. 780/5 2. Treaty 8 Punakha, 1910: Extract from correction to military report on Bhutan.

a similar act of homage as other chiefs entitled to an equal status". The Maharaja's request for an increased subsidy was rejected by the Government of India, to which he replied on 4 April 1924: "If they (the Government of India) are unable to accede to my request for the purpose of increase of the subsidy I do not mind it, as it is by the kindness of the British government I have become what I am."⁷

In course of the negotiation for the McMahon Line in 1913-14, the future policy of the British regarding North Eastern Frontier was given a careful consideration. Charles Bell put a proposal to the Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, on 23 January, 1914 for the creation of a North Eastern Agency. This Agency was proposed to "include the political works connected with Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and the strip (of land) between Assam and Tibet. The head of this Agency (was)... stationed at/or near Tawang".⁸ Tawang, located on the shortest possible route between Lhasa and Calcutta, was to be the headquarters of the political officer dealing with the lamaist people of Sikkim, Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. Bell, who was proficient in Tibetan language and lore, may possibly be labeled the architect of the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty and a cordial relationship between the two during the first twenty years of the present century. He decided to seek retirement because of ill-health. The Maharaja considered Bell's absence a great loss and wrote to the latter on 2 March, 1919: "...you my friend, are retiring from the government service... I was as much grieved to hear this news as if my own parents had died. From the beginning of the present time, you have succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the Tibetans, the Bhutanese and the Sikkimese... All these good results are due to your kindness. You have particularly rendered valuable assistance to us. You are the benefactor of Bhutan. You have been extremely kind to us. My earnest hope is that you may stay with us as long as you live... If I am free to submit a position (which he did to the Viceroy on 2 May 1919) on your behalf I propose to ask that you may be allowed to live with us continually..."⁹

Ugyen Wangchuk had witnessed one of the most impressive imperial displays of the grandeur and authority during his visit to Delhi and Calcutta and appeared to be very much impressed by the British

6. Ibid,

7. Ibid. L/P and S 512/2225 No. 8 Bhutan Affairs: Subsidies etc. transaction from H. M. to T. M. Bailey on 7 April, 1924.

8. "Note on Our Future Policy and on the North East Frontier Policy Generally", prepared by C. A. Bell, dated 1 June, 1914.

9. IOL MSS. EUR: F 80/sc: 31 from H. M. the Maharaja of Bhutan to C. A. Bell: Bumthang, dated 2-3-1919.

system. He decided to send the Bhutanese youngmen to be trained as medical and vaterinary doctors, engineers, foresters, soldiers and teachers. As he knew neither Hindi nor English, he must have felt handicapped in communicating with the British authorities. In this context, possibly he realised the usefulness of Hindi (or Hindustani) as a link language between the British functionaries and the rulers of the various princely states. With a view to removing the language disability, he took steps in 1914 to establish two schools at Tongsa and Ha. The crown prince, Jigmi Wangchuk, was a student at the former school, from where he picked up the knowledge of Hindi and English. The political officer on tours to Bhutan frequently mention that the prince spoke Hindi as well as English. Not only that, this prince read his speech on the eve of his coronation as the Brugrgyalpo in Hindi on 23 March 1927. The Bhutan Agent informed the political officer that the new ruler would write the latter in Hindi. In fact, he did write a number of letters to Charles Bell, F. M. Bailey and other British functionaries in Hindi.

THE COURT INTRIGUES AND SUCCESSION DISPUTE

Ugyen Wangchuk was a capable ruler in more than one ways. He had studied the faction-ridden history of Bhutan and drawn lessons for himself. Unlike Tibet and Sikkim, there were no aristocratic families in his domain and he decided to see to it that the institution of aristocracy did not emerge even after the establishment of dynastic rule. For that matter he himself set the example by offering his daughter in marriage to his sister's son, Dorji Rapden, and took his sister's daughter as his wife and appointed his second wife's father the Thimphu *rdzongpon*. Two daughters of his sister's daughter, Aji Deckok (Phuntso Choden and Pema Dechan), were married to the second Brug-rgyalpo, Jigmi Wangchuk in 1925 and 1934 respectively (See the geneological table given at the end of the article). There were other examples of inter-marriage between these two families. Virtually, these two families maintained their supremacy for better than five decades in the body politic of Bhutan.

Ugyen Wangchuk projected his family along with his sister's as one to the extent that he expressed his willingness to accept her husband, Chimi Dorji Rapden, known as the Deba Dronyer; as his successor to the throne. Chimi Dorji's father, Pemba Dorji, was once the Tongsa Penlop. Chimi's son, Tsering Paljor, succeeded Dawa Daljor as the Paro Penlop in 1918, Chimi had himself made a great deal of money by trading. However, he seemed to have developed strained relations with his brother-in-law, who appeared to have changed his mind in favour of his son some years preceding his death

in 1926. It was felt by the political officer in Sikkim that if Deba Dronyer made a bid for power against Jigmi Wangchuk, the crown prince, after the Maharaja's death, his son Paro Penlop, would support him. It was also rumoured that the Deba Dronyer might attempt to obtain the position of Maharaja for his son. Against this, the crown prince had the goodwill and support of the British administration and among the Bhutanese his most effective supporter was the Bhutan agent, Raja S. T. Dorji.

Col. F. M. Bailey reported in his confidential letter to the Government of India on 13 August 1922: "The His Highness told [us] that if it was known that his (17 years old) son had the moral support of the Government of India, he was sure that no one would dare to act against him. I told him that he could be sure of this moral support. He asked that, in the event of his death, the political officer in Sikkim should come to instal his son in his place which fact alone would prevent any opposition. He told me that in a few months' time he proposed to appoint his son as Tongsa Penlop (who was already Tongse Dronyer since (1918) in his place (which he did in 1923) and that he would himself only retain the rank of Maharaja. Again, if he lived so long, he wished in about three years time to abdicate in favour of his son, who would by that time be old enough and would have sufficient experience to undertake the duties of the ruler of the state. This course would be considered to give his son a good start as Maharaja and lessen the likelihood of any opposition... He asked me if the Government of India would permit him to purchase 1000 old service rifles with 200 rounds of ammunitions each. I strongly recommend that... The mere fact that a number of modern rifles had been imported in itself discourage any opposition at the time of His Highness's death."¹⁰

The Maharaja expired on 21 August, 1926 and his son wrote to the King Emperor of England on 29 August, 1926. ... "Your Majesty... bestowed great kindness on my venerable father and conferred high titles upon him. Your Majesty gave him unlimited support and help in a way which is beyond measurement... we have no one except Your Majesty... in whom we can hope and on whom we can rely or before whom we can lay our grievances in the future. I would, therefore, request that Your Majesty will kindly continue to bestow kindness and love on me as was done in the case of my venerable father."¹¹ The

10. *Ibid*, L/P 4709: 1922—Copy of a confidential letter No. 394-P: P. O. in Sikkim.

11. P. 3035/1926—Secret transaction to the King Emperor of England from the Tongsa Penlop Jigme Wangchuk; Bumthang, 19-8-1936.

policy of the Government of India was that though the heir of the Maharaja Ugyen Wangchuk should not be installed by the political officer in Sikkim as desired by the late ruler, he should be promptly recognised and be given moral support. Paro Penlop, son of the head of the opposite party, moved to Bumthang, where the Maharaja had died along with more than 200 attendants. As Paro Penlop was the third significant state functionary as well as the late Maharaja's nephew, it was suggestive that he was not called by the Maharaja to his sick bed. The Government of India watched the events in Bhutan from a distance and when the apprehended course of events leading to conflict did not occur, sent a *kharita* through a clerk to Bhutan. This *kharita* was presented to the new Maharaja on 11 October 1926 in the presence of nearly 800 persons. The British made a note that there was no overt opposition of any kind to the new Maharaja, to the extent that the Chimi Dorji and Tsering Paljor, said to be the joint heads of the opposite party, prostrated themselves before their new sovereign. The factionalism and intrigues came to an end once we read the telegram sent by the political officer in Sikkim to the Secretary of State for India after attending the official coronation of Punakha on 23 March 1927: "Installation ceremony satisfactorily performed on the 14th instance in the presence of the Dharma Raja and chiefs and notables of Bhutan."¹²

It might have apparently been true that there was no visible sign of opposition to the new Maharaja. However, the political officer made a note that Chimi Dorji Rapden was absent from the installation ceremony on the professed ground of his mother's illness. It was also suspected that Tsering Paljor, the Paro Penlop, "would not be above an attempt to make trouble for the new Maharaja, if an opportunity occurred. This might be possible because he collected revenue from a large tract of land, thus was independent to a great extent from his sovereign. In fact, the late Maharaja was alive to this problem and had contemplated to curtail the Penlop's power."¹³ Col. Bailey informed the foreign secretary through his confidential letter on 28 April 1928: "The fact that the Paro Penlop's father did not attend the ceremony of installation points to his dislike of the present position and that is always possible that he himself or the Paro Penlop under his instigation may give trouble." Then he recom-

12. IOL MSS.: EUR: P 1416/1927, Minute Paper, Register No. 1416, dated 23.3.1927 from Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India.

13. Ibid. No. 307/P. from E. M. Bailey, political officer in Sikkim, to the foreign secretary, dated 28.4.1928.

mended the solution: "It seems to me to be essential to the present peace of the country that the independence of the Paro Penlop and Tongsa Penlop should be reduced."¹⁴ However, the political officers on tour to Bhutan in 1930's found the Paro Penlop an unmarried and impetuous person who did not possess a striking personality and was more interested in ceremonial lama dances and similar performances.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ZHABS-DRUNG AND THE BRUG-RGYALPO

Time and again we are informed that the institution of the *Zhabs-drung* came to an end with the establishment of the dynastic rule in 1907. However, Jigs-med Dorji (1905-31), born in Tawang region, came to be identified with the last official incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*. Charles Bell mentions in his *Confidential Report on Bhutan* in 1910: "Capt. Kennedy and myself visited the ta-lo monastery, seat of the Dharma Raja on 13.1.1910. I hear that the new Dharma Raja, at present aged six years, will shortly be conducted to Bhutan."¹⁵ It appears that Jigmed Dorji was conducted to Bhutan around 1920 along with his ambitious mother, brother and followers. The *Zhabs-drung's* mother appeared to be unhappy about the limited role of the *Zhabs-drung* in the administration of the country. It is claimed that she was instrumental in getting certain grazing permits issued to the frontier pastoralists of Tawang by the *Zhabs-drung*, which created a lot of problems for the king vis-a-vis the *Keshng* (the cabinet) and the Dalai Lama from Lhasa. His brother had gone to India to solicit support from the Indian nationalist leader, M. K. Gandhi, in favour of the *Zhabs-drung* against the Maharaja, a step which ultimately ended in the *Zhabs-drung's* death. F. M. Bailey,¹⁶ the political officer in Sikkim, writes in his confidential letter to the Government of India on the eve of the installation of the second *Brug-rgyalpo*: "On the 13th (March, 1927) we paid a call on His Highness and also on Shabdung Rimpoche... His present incarnation is 22 years lad the same age as the Maharaja. He was born in a village near Tawang in Tibet. He was shy and evidently unaccustomed to seeing strangers. On the 14th March at day break His Highness accompanied by the Dharma Raja went to the tomb of the first Dharma Raja... In the centre the

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid. "Diary of My (C. A. Bailey) Mission to Bhutan"—Folio No. 9.

16. Ibid. P. Z. 329/1933: Confidential No. 6 (16)/P. 32, letter from political officer, Gangtok, to foreign secretary, Delhi, dated 11.11.1932.

Dharam Raja took his seat and on his left two high lamas... We then took leave from the Dharam Raja." It was noted by the British government that, "(a) the importance of the Dharam Raja had not suffered by the delay in reincarnation and (b) it was of interest that the ceremonial act by which the Maharaja was regarded as having established his succession was the putting on, in the presence of the Dharam Raja, of a silk scarf from the tomb of the first Dharam Raja".¹⁷

It appears that this new Dharma Raja was an ambitious man, who was all set for staking his claim for his last glory. The Bhutan Agent¹⁸ informed F. M. Bailey on 2 October 1931 that the main grievances of the *Zhabs-drung* were having "no power whatever and any large tract of lands in Bhutan to call his own". Col. Weir¹⁹ visited Bhutan in April 1931 to confer the insignia of the KGIE to the Maharaja and "was not able to see the incarnation of the Shabung Rimpoohe... (who) was in meditation in a hill top monastery, some 6 miles away from Punakha". The presence of the *Zhabs-drung* during the ceremony of insignia presentation was not recorded. That was exactly the time he was seriously planning his strategy to gain power. The Indian press reported that a brother of Bhutan king along with his two associates met Mahatma Gandhi on 5 May 1931 at Borsad in India and presented certain gifts on behalf on their mentor.²⁰ On inquiry it was found that the claimed brother of the Bhutan king was in fact Chokshi Gyalseen, a brother of Jigme Dorgi, the *Zhabs-drung*. Choksi was sent by his brother to solicit Gandhi's "necessary help for the restoration of his power" He had taken with him as presents for Gandhi 11 different kinds of cloths, two *panpots*, two *limepots* and one *pankhab* (apron) made of silk. He presented the articles to Gandhi and informed him that the *Zhabs-drung* would himself meet Gandhi and cultivate his friendship. It is claimed that in reply Mahatma Gandhi gave his visitor a letter in Hindi, which was translated into Tibetan in some office in Calcutta and, subsequently, delivered to the *Zhabs-drung*. It is also reported that the *Zhabs-drung* had sent his men to find out whether the Panchen Lama had come to Tibet along with the

17. Ibid. Confidential letter from the P.O. in Sikkim. No. 241/P., dated, Gangtok, 28.4.1927.

18. ILO MSS: EUR: F 127 from Raja S. T. Dorji to F. M. Bailey, 2.10.1937.

19. ILO MSS: EUR: L/PGs/12/2224: Collection 8: Bhutan P. O. in Sikkim No. 16(1), P/30/2.4.1931.

20. Ibid. PZ/58/1932: Confidential No. 16(10)/31 from P.O. in Sikkim to foreign secretary, dated 3.12.1931.

Chinese soldiers. In case it was true, he intended to bring the Chinese soldiers to Bhutan to regain for himself the temporal powers.

The British and the Maharaja became panicky on this development and swung quickly into action. In a letter to the foreign secretary on 5 October 1931, Weir²¹ assessed the situation and proposed a series of actions:

"It must be realized that the His Highness's position, although strong, is not sufficiently so to enable him to take drastic action against the Shab-drung. The latter is very highly revered throughout Bhutan and any drastic action might result in a revulsion of popular feeling against the Maharaja.

"(a) The His Highness should call the Shab-drung's brother to his headquarters and personally question his visit to Mr. Gandhi. If politically possible, it is desirable that he should be punished in some way...

"(b) The Maharaja should pacify the *Shab-drung* by means of reasonable concessions, but such concessions should not go so far as to make it possible for them to be interpreted as weakness.

"(c) It is possible that the *Shab-drung* may try to leave Bhutan for Tibet. This is most undesirable as he might be able to enlist the Dalai Lama's sympathy against the British government, and could also continue his journey to China. The Maharaja is being urged to prevent this, and use force, if necessary... The great importance of this is being impressed on him.

"(d) It is likely that the *Shab-drung* will try to enter India. The His Highness is being asked to prevent him from doing so, if possible...it will be dangerous for the Maharaja's position to use any extreme measures. If the *Shab-drung* does leave Bhutan... then he and his followers will under no circumstances be permitted to re-enter the country. He is unlikely to have much money, and it is hoped that this will render his movements more amenable to supervision by the Government of India."

Most of these proposals were carried through. The *Zhabs-drung* was confined to *Ta-lo* monastery under a strict watch. His brother and his associates were closely interrogated by the Maharaja himself, and they provided him with all the details. By the end of October 1931, an unsubstantiated rumour spread that the *Zhabs-drung* had fled from his confinement. The political officer was re-

21. Ibid. PZ 7004/1931: Confidential No. 6(10)—P/31.

requested to help the Maharaja by arresting the *Zhabs-drung* in case the latter entered the British territory. Armed forces were sent to watch the Indian and northern borders. A body of about 200 soldiers was sent to the Tibetan border with an order either to kill or arrest the *Zhabs-drung* in case he was found escaping Bhutan to Tibet.²² The rumour mentioned above emanated from the impetuous Paro Penlop. However, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse reported that the Dalai Lama had issued instructions to assist the *Zhabs-drung* in case he entered Tibet. This may indicate that the *Zhabs-drung* was probably in correspondence with the Tibetan authorities. To counteract all these moves on the part of the Maharaja, the *Zhabs-drung* was reported to be engaged in "performing ceremonies (*serceny*) to bring a curse on the Maharaja, a serious matter among the superstitious Bhutanese".²³

All the moves and counter-moves came to an end on 12 November 1931. In the words of the Maharaja: "Now on the 15th November 1931, I have received a letter in which it is stated that *Shab-drung* was staying at Ta-lo (monastery) with 4 monks and some of my body-guards (?). On the 12th November 1931, he was found dead. The fact of his having passed away was not even noticed by the monks who were sleeping in the same room as the *Shab-drung*."²⁴ The Bhutan Agent adds to the above: "His body was examined on the same day by Gangtey Tulku²⁵ (a high incarnate lama) and some other lamas from Tashichhojong but no trace of any foul play was found. It seems he died of heart failure."²⁶ However, the political officer in Sikkim informed the foreign secretary on 3 December 1931:²⁷ "The cause of the *Shabdrung's* death is still a mystery. I have, however, learnt the significant fact that one of the *Shabdrung's*

22. Ibid. PZ 72001/1931/Confidential No. 6(10)—P/31.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. PZ 58/1932/Confidential No. 6(10)—P 31, from P. O. in Sikkim to foreign secretary, dated 3.12.1931.

25. This 27 years old incarnate lama was Thimphu rdzongpon (in April 1931). His father was also Thimphu rdbongpon and he was related to the Maharaja. Col. Weir did not find him possessing "a very strong character". He was a close confidant of the king and was addicted to excessive drinking. In a letter to P. N. Bailey on 28 April 1921, the Bhutan Agent Raja S. T. Dorji writes: "I am sorry to say that this lama drinks a lot and His Highness also starts drinking when he (the lama) is there (with the king)". It is curious that "he died in June 1933, while the controversy on late *Zhabs-drung's* death was on and afresh". (Letter from the political officer in Sikkim to the Govt. of India, dated 29.11.33).

26. Ibid. PZ 8002/193. from S. T. Dorji to P.O. in Sikkim, dated 24.11.31.

27. Ibid. PZ/1932: Confidential No. 6(10)—P(31).

servants, who had accompanied Shabdung's brother on his visit to Gandhi and had been summoned to the Maharaja's presence to give an account of his actions, was found dead outside the wall of *Ta-lo* monastery in circumstances which indicate suicide by poison. It does not seem improbable that the Shabdung has sought a similar way out of the difficulties into which his recent imprudent actions have led him." Finally, we come across a Minute Paper which says: "...there is really little doubt but that the Shabdung Rimpoche was quietly poisoned".²⁸

Besides enumerating the lapses of the *Zhabs-drung* the Maharaja wrote to Col. Weir: "It was not customary in the past for the Shabdung to cohabit with women. But the present and his immediate predecessor had to fly to Tibet, and on account of keeping a woman, he could not retain his position with the monks. The present Shabdung lost his celibacy with his eyes open. This was most unbecoming, but I said nothing against his action."²⁹ Perhaps the Maharaja was inciting adverse feeling against the dead *Zhabs-drung* because he could not be unaware of the prince-abbotship of the past. At least the first *Zhabs-drung* was a monk house-holder. After getting this letter of the Maharaja, Col. Weir informed the Foreign Secretary on 3 December 1931: "...His lapse from celibacy, however, is a sin, which will never be condoned by them (Bhutanese) when it is more widely known. Any feeling against the Maharaja, which may have arisen in the mind of the Bhutanese owing to his virtual imprisonment of the *Zhabs-drung* in *Ta-lo* monastery, will disappear. By the death of the Shabdung Rimpoche a chapter of the Bhutan history fraught with potential danger to the existing rule may be considered closed."³⁰

The optimism of the political officer in Sikkim was not entertained at least in one significant centre of the lamaist world, i.e. Lhasa. The *Druk-Lechapa* (Bhutanese representative in Lhasa) was summoned before the *Keshang* (the cabinet) to give details of the circumstances in which the *Zhabs-drung* died. The *Lechapa* wrote to the Maharaja, who replied the letter with details. On seeing Maharaja's letter the *Keshang* sent a threatening letter to the *Brug-rgyalpo*³¹ on 4 April 1932: "that the incarnation of Shabdung Naga-Wang Namgyal

28. Minute Paper, Register No. 4087/32, Secret: Political Department, Government of India, dated 8 August 1932.

29. Ibid. H. M., Bhutan, to P. O. in Sikkim, dated 18.11.1931.

30. Ibid. PZ 58/1932: Confidential No. 6(10)—P/31.

31. Ibid. PZ 4038/1932: Confidential No. 6(10)—P/32, from P. O. in Sikkim to foreign secretary, dated 29.5.1932.

of Bhutan had been murdered (by the Maharaja) in conjunction with the Paro Penlop... the evil act of touching the person of the lama appears unseemly...you without considering his (Shabdung's) holy qualifications, have condemned him as a murderer and as one who unnecessarily creates trouble and who fines and punishes people without any reason. You accuse him of having sent reports to (Mahatma) Gandhi against Bhutan and also trying to go to China with a view of taking refuge... that the Shabdung Rimpoche misbehaved himself, but nothing to such effect was heard from any previous Tongsa Penlop. Moreover... he becomes entitled to rank and position in the Tibetan government... Please now send us, in support of what you have told us... a report giving the details of the doings of the incarnate lama... Please also arrange to hand over all the relatives of the incarnate lama, who are Tibetan subjects to Tsona Dzong-pon and the Tawang Dzong-pons without any late or hindrance or giving any trouble or harming their lives." It is reported that some of the head lamas such as the Shung Trat Shang of Punakha were ordered by the Tibetans to appear before the Dalai Lama along with the servants of the late *Zhabs-drung*.

The Bhutan court was very much disturbed by this development. The Bhutan Agent was sent to Gangtok to seek Col. Weir's advice. It was thought prudent to acknowledge the Tibetan letter in brief informing them that the Maharaja had nothing more to write beyond what he had already done in the past. The Maharaja's draft reply was approved by Col. Weir and was sent to Lhasa only after 4 July 1932.³² Meanwhile, the late *Zhabs-drung's* brother, Choksi-Gyalt-sen, considered to be the chief offender and the root cause of the trouble, continued to be in custody at Tongsa. Col. Weir,³³ in course of his routine tour to Lhasa, met the Dalai Lama and impressed upon the His Holiness to close the matter: "from the materials supplied by the His Highness I was able to convince the Tibetan government that the deceased Shabdung Rimpoche was not a Tibetan but a Bhutanese by birth. I also pointed out that any punishment inflicted by the Bhutan authority on the Shabdung Rimpoche or his relatives was purely an internal matter of Bhutan. I also impressed upon... that any dealing of Bhutan with foreign states were controlled by the Government of India, who were prepared to support Bhutan, if matters went further. I further impressed the His Holiness that the Maharaja of Bhutan was a devout Buddhist and that I personally accepted the His Highness's assertion that the death of the

32. Ibid. F. 157, 247 from Raja S. T. Dorji to F. M. Bailey, dated 4.7.1932.

33. Ibid.

Shabdung Rimpoche was due to natural causes. His Holiness then assured me that the case might be considered closed in so far as Tibet was concerned."

Possibly this was the last formal and official stand on the issue of the incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*. However, as a traditional society, the Bhutanese did not appear to be reconciled to the lapse of the institution of the *Zhabs-drung*. Consequently, a number of incarnations were identified. In such a situation, the Bhutanese loyal to the king had been adept in fixing an "accident" to hurry the luckless young lads to their *Nirvana*. Nari Rustomji, the advisor to the Maharaja in 1960s and an insider of the Bhutanese affairs, provided the picture of the last incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung* in his book on Bhuthan.³⁴ It so happened the the latest claimed-incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung* was reported to have appeared again in the Tawang region in 1960s: "Jigmie's (Lonchen: Prime Minister) most anxious concern during the Chinese aggression of 1962 (on India) had been that the latest reputed incarnation, a little boy of about six residing under the watchful and protective guardianship of a venerable lama Gomptse Rimpoche, in Tawang area of NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) should not be abducted by the Chinese and set up as their puppet... We succeeded happily, in locating the Gomptse together with his precious charge and bringing them both down to stay with us in the safe environs of Shillong. The young incarnation was later taken for studies to the Tibetan settlement of Dharmsala, presided over by the Dalai Lama. The manoeuvrings in certain orthodox quarters to restore him to his traditional dignity in Bhutan are, needless to say, not given official encouragement."³⁵ This incarnation, born some 25 years after the death of his official immediate predecessor in 1931 and his sister's son should be now in his late 20s. He may be considered a distant and obscure threat to an equally young and established fourth Brug-rgyalpo.

STATUS OF BHUTAN AS AN INDIAN STATE

The letter of Col. F. M. Bailey quoted above, which was written on 13 August 1922, incorporating the Maharaja's apprehensions and the request for installation of his son by the political officer was taken by the Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, with due seriousness. From a purely legal point of view, the central issue was whether Bhutan was a state in India under the suzerainty of the

34. Rustomji, N. K., *The Enchanted Frontiers*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1978, pp. 54-55.

35. *Ibid*, p. 92.

British empire.³⁶ This central issue was further split into two: (a) was Bhutan under the suzerainty of the British empire? and (b) if so, was it in India? As per the Treaty of 1910, Bhutan became a part of the British empire and British Government of India did control its external relations through the political officer in Sikkim. Thus, Bhutan was an ordinary Indian state under the British empire. The king was very much in the know of it, as he attended the Delhi durbar and paid homage as an ordinary feudatory of India. However, two points were raised in this regard. First of all, till 1922, the British did not treat Bhutan as an Indian state. Secondly, was it politically expedient to do so in the post-first world war phase of the British imperial policy? William Lee Warner's *Native States of India* incorporates the following criteria for a princely state: (i) the right to recognise succession and to regulate disputed successions, (ii) the right of intervention to prevent dismemberment of a state, (iii) to prevent gross misrule, (iv) to suppress rebellion against the lawful sovereigns, (v) to check inhuman practices or offences against natural law or public morality, and (vi) to secure religious tolerance. However, the British had never claimed and exercised these rights in Bhutan and, in fact, left it to itself. so far its internal affairs were concerned.

As per the secret letter dated 7 February 1924 from the Foreign and Political Department to His Majesty's Secretary of State in India, the Governor General and Viceroy considered the issue of "status of Bhutan" and then recommended a course of action:³⁷ "...seeing that a peaceful continuity of this newly founded dynasty would be in our general interest we are prepared to extend to the Maharaja's son that moral support on his father's death... we are, however, at present reluctant to shoulder the responsibility of regulating a disputed succession or repressing rebellion or even of preventing (beyond the exercise of our friendly influence) gross misrule or of checking practices against moral law or of securing religious tolerance in a region of which we know little, save that prior to the rise to power of the present and the first Maharaja, it was frequently the cockpit of internal strife. We have no wish for any extension of our commitments on the North East Frontier. Nor, so long as there is no apprehension of China's encroachment, do we see any need for it. Apart from sterilisation of China, all we want from Bhutan is friendly neighbourliness and general amenability to our control and this is sufficient

36. IOL MSS. P 1030: 1924: Secret/External/Political Department, No. 1, dated 7.2.1924.

37. Ibid.

tly safeguarded to us under the treaty... we ourselves feel that we should do well to leave the status of Bhutan in convenient ambiguity, with its easy transition—should this hereafter prove advisable—to the status of an Indian state... (Accordingly) we would propose... that while we cannot undertake to install his heir, we shall readily extend prompt recognition and moral support when the time comes, and he (the political officer in Sikkim) should advise the His Highness in the interest of a peaceful succession to adhere to his professed intention of gradually initiating his son into affairs of state."

The decision mentioned above was signed by six members of the Viceroy's Council, to which the Governor-General consented. In the light of the point raised above, a note was prepared for information on Bhutan in December 1928 and dispatched to Gangtok in January 1929. The note³⁸ states: "The Government of India consider it unnecessary to seek any extra-territorial jurisdiction. The result of this discussion in 1924 as to the status of Bhutan was that though, on a broad view of facts, it is under His Majesty's suzerainty (the Maharaja having paid homage) it is doubtful whether it can be regarded as an Indian state, and it is expedient to leave its status ambiguous as it is undesirable to extend British commitments in regard to Bhutan—while the status of Bhutan is left indeterminate (impossible of claiming jurisdiction over Bhutanese subjects) is unimportant, since it should be easy to solve any difficulty that may arise by diplomatic means." The issue of Bhutan was raised on various occasions in the 1930s but the same reply (as quoted above) was given. Thus, the status of Bhutan as an Indian state was ambiguous and the removal of this ambiguity was considered to be inexpedient and undesirable. The Indian Union largely removed this ambiguity in 1971, some five decades after the issue was first raised, by sponsoring Bhutan as a member of the United Nations Organisations.

In spite of the policy mentioned above, the Government of Bhutan continued to have direct relations with Tibet without reference to the Government of India or the political officer in Sikkim. It so happened that in an imprecise frontier situation, the *Zhabs-drung* Jigmed Dorji was persuaded to issue certain documents granting grazing rights to the Tibetan frontier pastoralists sometimes in early 1920s. The Maharaja very rightly objected to this act of the *Zhabs-drung* and ordered his officers not to honour the content of the grant. Consequently, some mildly violent dispute arose among the trans-border pastoralists, in which a score of persons were injured and some cat-

38. Ibid, P 6349: Secret/Political Department.

the heads died. The Tibetan and the Bhutanese governments took up the cause of their respective subjects and there was a series of seven letters exchanged. Col. Bailey suggested to the Government of India on 5 April, 1928: "...that it would be undesirable for the Government of India to undertake any responsibility in small frontier matters of this kind... but should be in possession of facts".³⁹ These suggestions were accepted by the Government of India on 9 August, 1928.

There arose another occasion in the Tibet-Bhutanese relations to which we have already referred in the previous section in which the British Indian government decisively treated Bhutan as its subordinate state. Soon after the death of the *Zhabs-drung* Jigmed Dorji on 12 November, 1931, the Tibetan government sent for the Bhutanese representative stationed at Lhasa and demanded explanation. The Maharaja wrote a letter stating the situation in which the late *Zhabs-drung* met his end. The Tibetan authorities were angered by the content of the letter and they sent a reply to the Maharaja in an intemperate way as if a sovereign demanded an explanation from a subject country. The Government of Bhutan became apprehensive of an armed conflict with Tibet on this issue. It may be remembered that the Paro Penlop had sent soldiers to the Tibet-Bhutanese frontier in October 1931 after the supposed escape of the *Zhabs-drung* to Tibet. The Bhutanese government sent its Agent to political officer with a request for intervention which the latter did. We have already mentioned above how the political officer on tour to Lhasa impressed upon the Dalai Lama that Tibet had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan as it was an Indian state by treaty, and that he was confident that the *Zhabs-drung* had died of natural death (a statement which does not confirm to the British official records). And only then the Dalai Lama agreed to drop the issue between the two states.

The political officer in Sikkim went to Bhutan to present the insignia of the KGIE to the Maharaja and wrote a letter to the Secretary, Foreign and Political Department on 2 April, 1931. It is an interesting letter in more than one ways.⁴⁰ That was exactly the time the *Zhabs-drung* was trying to establish contacts with Tibetan authorities as well as Mahatma Gandhi in India. The political officer found

39. Ibid, P 3118/28: 204/P: F. M. Bailey to foreign secretary of the Government of India on 5 April 1928.

40. Ibid. L/P & E/12/2224: Collection 8, Bhutan, letter from Col. Weir, No. 16(1), P/30, dated 2.4.1931.

the Maharaja "very little more than an overlord of the province of Tongsa". The western Bhutan did not contribute anything to the Maharaja in terms of taxes out of the revenue it collected in kinds and spent them in the maintenance of the monk bodies. As frontier raids were stopped, slaves could not be captured for producing economic surplus for the *rdzongs*. The cash subsidy and liquor compensation of Rs 200,000 was distributed among the monasteries and regional chiefs to ensure the loyalty to the Maharaja. Then he emphasised the significance of Bhutan for the British empire itself: "If Bhutan is to advance on more modern lines and is not to be allowed to disintegrate, she must have increased financial support... It is necessary to stress the danger to the North East Frontier of India, if Bhutan collapses as an entity." The Maharaja was then in his mid-20s and had few confidential and experienced advisors on state affairs. He failed utterly to comprehend the British government's policy towards the Indian political parties and holding of a "Round Table Conference" in London. In fact, it is reported that he very clearly stated that "if an Indian were ever to be made political officer of Sikkim, he would never be permitted to set foot in Bhutan. (In such a situation)... he will now in all probability turn more and more towards the Political Officer in Sikkim for advice in matters regarding both internal policy of Bhutan."

IMPACT OF THE INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND THE BRITISH POLICY FOR N. E. INDIA

As mentioned above, soon after it was discovered that the *Zhabdrung* had been in contact with the Indian political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, he was confined to his monastery and died in a suspicious condition. In between, there were reports that the Government of India considered its policy vis-a-vis Bhutan as per Minute Paper,⁴¹ "...the substantive question is what degree of control is it permissible and desirable to exercise in Bhutan. We control its external relations but do not intervene in its internal affairs in the ways that we do in the case of ordinary Indian states. By these criteria Bhutan is not an Indian state in the accepted sense, and probably it is not less likely to become so than seemed likely in 1924. Col. Weir's opinion... was that modern developments (a hint towards the Indian freedom movement, the Round Table Conference in 1931, etc) will make closer union with India less desirable and probably

41. Minute Paper, Register No. P 7201/31, Secret/Political Department, dated 24.12.1931.

less desired by the Maharaja. On the other hand, he may turn to the political officer for advice in the way of informal and friendly suggestions rather than authoritative advice: "On 7th of that month of 1931, Col. Weir informed the Government of India about the increasing 'Gurkha menace', a population which did not owe allegiance to the Bhutanese king. Basil Could,⁴² the political officer in Sikkim, posed these problems in a more articulate way on 26 August 1938: "Both in Bhutan and Sikkim a very practical problem in politics is whether the local races are destined to be overwhelmed by the Nepalese", concentrated in the southern foothills.

The Government of India Act, 1935, proved to be a turning-point in the Himalayan states vis-a-vis the Government of India. The affairs of the Himalayan states such as Bhutan was handled by the British functionaries, who did not have much sympathy for the cause of the Indian independence movement. In case of Bhutan, the disgruntled elements such as the late Zhabs-drung and the Nepalese were identifying themselves with the populist movements in India. The British administrators appeared to be the benefactors of Bhutan which meant the king. The various political officers kept on impressing the Government of India all through 1930s for an increase in the cash subsidy of the king. It is not for nothing that we find no letter written in Hindi by the Maharaja after 1935. Raja S. T. Dorji⁴³ wrote to Col. Bailey on 6 October 1946 that he and the Maharaja were not happy with changes taking place in India. They found trouble from Nepalese subjects. However, they intended to ask the new Indian government for more amount of subsidy, custom-free imports and return of Buxa and Dewangiri Duars. By then A. J. Hopkinson had taken over as the political officer in Sikkim. He wrote to the Government of India⁴⁴ on 17 May 1946 on the constitutional changes: Bhutan Representation:

"2. Bhutan fears that it may be confronted with some decision classifying it as an 'Indian State', which it is not and lumping it along with other Indian states.

"3. Bhutan's treaty is with Britain. Bhutan at present wants to be and to remain within the British Commonwealth... even if India goes out of it...

42. Ibid. Letter from Political Officer in Sikkim, No. 6(2), P/38, Secret, dated 26.8.1938.

43. Ibid. F/157/247: from Raja S. T. Dorji to F. M. Bailey, dated 6.10.1946.

44. Ibid. Secret, from P. O. in Sikkim, No. 819/P, dated 17.5.1946.

"4. That achieved, they would enter into a new tripartite agreement with Britain and India and revised terms, including (i) increased subsidy, (ii) return of Buxa Duar and Devangiri in respect of the last named two small areas, Bhutan argues that the population is of overwhelmingly Bhutanese and that, if India is being given back to the Indian (it is equally reasonable) that Bhutanese territory should be returned to Bhutan.

"5 ... Indian interest requires a friendly and contented Bhutan within the India rather than the Chinese orbit: policy in this matter affects much more than merely Bhutan. Bhutan is now friendly and anxious for continued friendship but negligence or contempt would soon drive it—and much else besides—into the open arms of China...

"6. Possibly during the period of pre-occupation with internal problems, while her own statesmen are getting into saddle, India may not sufficiently realize these things, with resultant harm to India's future. To eliminate such a danger perhaps Britain ... might continue Bhutan's subsidy for a limited period until in future India takes up the matter..."

In the light of the facts given above, a note was prepared for the Cabinet Mission on 10 August 1946, which states: "In practice it may well prove difficult to secure a tidy solution of the future of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan and even of the Eastern states or Kashmir. This will largely depend on the future policy and fate of China and hence of Tibet. The Government of the (India) Union must be prepared for complication on the North East Frontier and evolve a policy to meet them. This may well have to be that of maintaining all the principalities in virtual independence of India but as buffer and, as far as possible, client states. There may be greater advantages in according Sikkim a more independent status than in seeking to absorb Bhutan as well as Sikkim in the Indian Union, adding the communal problem of Buddhism to those of Islam and Hindu... the government would be well advised to avoid entering into fresh commitments with any one of those frontier states or seeking to redefine their status. Their importance is strategic in direct relation to Tibet and China and indirectly to Russia, such adjustment of their relations with the (Indian) Union as can usefully be affected ... by those political strategic considerations... account of which it is hoped that the treaty will take rather than by constitutional niceties which do not help defence policy."⁴⁵

45. Ibid. Secret, 4357, File No. 1.

The Sikkimese and the Bhutanese representation desired to meet the Cabinet Mission with their respective proposals. However they were informed earlier that the mission could not meet them.⁴⁶

THE BHUTANESE PERCEPTION OF THEIR IDENTITY AND THE BRITISH EFFORTS TO MAGNIFY IT

Raja Dorji informed Col. Bailey on 30 June 1947 of their intention of getting the Indo-Bhutanese treaty revised. However, he felt that it would be impossible for Bhutan to remain completely independent. In that case, Bhutan would like to be a protectorate under India as well as Great Britain.⁴⁷ About two months later, on 27 August 1947 he informed Col. Bailey again that the newly independent India desired to step into the British government's shoes insofar as Bhutan was concerned. Further, he reported that Bhutan had agreed for a standstill agreement and desired an early negotiation for fresh arrangements between the two states. Raja Dorji⁴⁸ reasoned: "An independent Bhutan would be an ideal thing but on consideration we are inclined to think it will not be practical, and there are bound to be difficulties, if we demand both independence and subsidy. During the forthcoming negotiations, a few of the points we are definitely going to discuss are free overseas custom and retrocession of underdeveloped lands like Dewangiri, Buxa, etc. We are thinking of asking for an increased subsidy and in return (of) handing over our foreign relations."

G.E.B. Abbel, private secretary to the Viceroy wrote a letter to R.N.J. Harris, private secretary to the Secretary of State of India on 18 July 1947 enclosing the items of Bhutan's memorandum submitted to the Government of India. The proposals made in the memorandum were the following: "The Government of Bhutan is aware that she can not reclaim such lands which have since been developed considerably. But she requests His Majesty's government for the restoration of those lands which are either populated by Bhutanese, only used by Bhutanese or have been hitherto underdeveloped and kept as forests: (a) a very small area of Buxa Duars populated mainly by Bhotias, (b) the underdeveloped areas of Dewangiri used only in winter for grazing Bhutanese cattle for an annual grazing fee to Assam, (c) under-

46. Ibid. Letter No. D 4334 - C. A./46, dated 29.5.1946, from Foreign Department of the P. O. in Sikkim.

47. Ibid. F 157/247: from Raja S. T. Dorji to F. M. Bailey, dated 30.6.47.

48. Ibid. Dated 27.8.1947.

developed or forest lands adjoining the borders of Bhutan such as: (i) the Buxa Duar reserved forest, the Sachaphu reserved forests, and Dhumpara reserve forests from Paro Khola to Sankos (which is) about 100 square miles; (ii) the Northern part of the Ripu reserve forest, Chirang reserved forests, the Manas reserve forests in the Goalpara district, the north Kamrup reserve forests, Bahabari reserve forests, Shubankatta reserve forests, the underdeveloped khas mahal land of Dewangiri and Darang reserve forest... The total area of these territories in Assam is approximately 400 square miles."⁴⁹ Abbel wrote to Harris these comments in the same letter: "There can, of course, be no question of ceding any territory from British India to Bhutan before the transfer of power, and I gather from the Bhutan Agent...that this is not seriously expected. His Excellency...hoped Bhutan will accept the fact that the new Government of India inherits the treaty position of H.M. government in regard to Bhutan and that Bhutan would seek to maintain with the new Government of India the same friendly relations as has existed between them and the H.M. government."

Raja Dorji expressed his apprehension to F. M. Bailey on 1 December 1947, that the new India government was likely to interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan.⁵⁰ Bhutan desired to maintain some relations with the British government in London, but was informed by Sir Basil Coude that as the two countries were far away and isolated from each other, such a relationship would be impossible. Reacting to the above, Col. Bailey wrote to Raja Dorji on 17 January 1948 from London: "If the government here (Great Britain) definitely will do nothing, I think you could approach the United Nations Organisation and ask that steps be taken to maintain your independence and prevent your being absorbed by either India or China... could you not come yourself to discuss this or send Jigmie? I would be glad to do all I could to help you at this end, but could not do so without some authority from the Maharaja. If you would like me to do anything I think the Maharaja should write to me a letter in Bhutanese with his seal, of which you could enclose a translation."⁵¹ This was the same Col. F.M. Bailey who explored posts of the eastern Himalayas and was the political officer in Sikkim in 1920s, who had re-

49. Ibid. File Copy, External 7.445: G.E.B. Abbel, private secretary to the Viceroy to R. M. J. Harris, private secretary to the Secretary of State of India, dated 18.7.1947.

50. Ibid. Dated 1.12.1947.

51. Ibid. Dated 17.1.1948.

commended exactly 25 years back to the colonial government in Delhi to intervene in the succession dispute and install the Maharaja's son as the ruler as in any other Indian state. Meanwhile the Bhutanese delegation went to New Delhi to negotiate a standstill treaty between the new Indian government and Bhutan. Apparently the Bhutanese were impressed by the sincerity of the new Indian regime. Naturally, Raja Dorji⁵² replied to Col. Bailey on 16 September 1948, "... it was too late to take your advice. When your letter reached me, we were just going to Delhi... I am afraid no good purpose will be served by either me or Jigmie going to London to discuss Bhutan affairs. It may only put India's back up."

Rani Chuni, Raja S. T. Dorji's wife and Sikkimese ruler Sir Tashi Namgyal's sister, expressed their feeling of being let down by the British on the eve of their departure from India. She wrote to Col. Bailey apparently in reply to his letter to her husband. "...The British government can do nothing for Bhutan now, but can you tell me why before they left India, (they) did not give us back what they have (had) taken from us—our territories? Or arrange reasonable compensation for it? It was wrong that they should leave us as they did at the mercy of the Indian government. Anyway we have started our negotiations with India(n) government. We were at Delhi last May and they treated us very well. Indeed. Nehru is a great statesman and a gentleman. He and all the people (functionaries) in the foreign department are far more outstanding and sympathetic (to the cause of Bhutan) than Weightman or Caree or anyone of their predecessors had ever been to us. It is sincere that India has no intention to encroach on her neighbour (ing) countries; she has not got energy for it, but within India, they want a strong united India without any independent states to make mischief."⁵³ F. M. Bailey⁵⁴ in reply to this letter wrote to Raja Dorji on 1 September 1948: "...I must say our government have treated the princes badly... leaving them to the mercy of the (Indian National) Congress government. I always felt that the Foreign Office in Delhi did not understand North East Frontier matters and were always unsympathetic towards them." Even at this stage, however, he desired either Raja Dorji or his son Jigmie Dorji to go to London to discuss affairs of Bhutan with a view to safeguarding it from being absorbed in India.⁵⁵

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

The Indian leaders took steps to effect the details of the above-quoted letter from Rani Chuni. Bhutan did not have representation in the Indian Constituent Assembly, summoned in 1947. Finally the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949 was signed at Darjeeling by the Bhutan Agent and the political officer in Sikkim on 8 August 1949. This treaty clearly establishes Bhutan as a sovereign power which was dependent on India for financial and diplomatic support. A few significant points may be noted here. First of all, unlike the past, the treaty was signed by the representatives of the two governments. Secondly, this treaty was rectified by the *Brug-rgyalpo* and the Governor-General of India. Thirdly, as in the past, India undertook not to interfere in the internal administration of Bhutan, while Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of India in its external relations. Fourthly, India increased the subsidy granted by the British from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. Fifthly, India agreed to return to Bhutan about 32 square miles of territory in Dewangiri region as a gesture of friendship. Sixthly, in case a dispute regarding the application of the treaty, it would be decided by a committee consisting of an Indian and a Bhutanese representative presided over by an Indian High/federal court judge nominated by Bhutan. Those stipulations worked to the satisfaction of both the contracting parties at least for a decade. In between Bhutan came in the news only twice in the 1950s. First in 1952, when the second king died and, assured of Indian support, the succession was without any controversy. Secondly, when the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru visited Bhutan in 1958 and impressed upon the Bhutanese to introduce some development schemes.

Meanwhile, the administration was run on an autocratic feudal pattern. The landlords controlled the bulk of the state's income and sent the residue trickling to the government treasury. The government was, in fact, a body of about 130 semi-elected members; drawn even from the village headmen as official representatives of their districts. Even his council "met once a year, if an emergency arose, or if the Maharaja had an announcement to make... the government merely rubber-stamped the Maharaja's wishes. There were no trained people and illiteracy was 100 per cent... the government was so scattered and isolated, (that) administration was limited to a few officials... the 'capital' moved with the Maharaja and nobody bothered a great deal about anything. Whatever little medicine the hospitals and dispensaries had expired beyond their effective dates in storage because of lack of interest or authority to issue it. Schools were unattended because teachers were not paid and had to find other means to supplement their income. Even the 'army'

were subject to this feudal indifference, for while 'on paper' it was supposed to number 2,500 with a ceiling of 20,000, it was really only a militia which was occasionally issued guns for practice for a few days, after which they were returned to the headmen and the 'army' returned to the villages and fields."⁵⁶ In such a situation it took no time for the discontent to erupt in the form of a political movement started by the Bhutan State Congress.

THE BHUTAN STATE CONGRESS AND FAILURE OF DEMOCRATIC CAUSE

The Nepalese population is concentrated in the south eastern and south western foothills of Bhutan. It may also be pointed out that the larger concentration is in the western part of Bhutan, which is, in fact, an extension of the Nepalese predominance in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal. Nepalese from Nepal to Darjeeling hills and then to Bhutan have naturally been expanding during the last hundred years or so. Many of the Nepalese fortune-seekers and pioneers had amassed an appreciable amount of wealth. However, there were some unscrupulous immigrants, who flouted the law of the land, and when, apprehended while taking advantage of the open border, crossed to India or Nepal. It is a fact that the Bhutanese civil and criminal laws are simple and rather anachronistic by the prevalent western standards. However, the Bhutanese have been at a loss, when the immigrant offenders, taking advantage of their multiple citizenship, could run away to the safety of the Indian courts. In the early 1930s a complicated civil suit was filed in the district court of Darjeeling by one Akhal Singh Limbu, an ex-employee of Bhutan government, who had allegedly run away with the state revenue. The members of his family were arrested and the political officer of Sikkim issued an order of warrant to arrest him at the instance of the Government of Bhutan, who claimed the offender to be a Bhutanese subject. Akhal Singh contended that he was an Indian, who could not be arrested without proving his offence as per Indian laws. The government of Bengal sided with Akhal Singh. The matter went up to Delhi for consideration of the government and ultimately the claimed Bhutanese offender was not surrendered as the Indian laws came in the way. The Bhutanese took a lesson from the proceedings of this episode and decided to deal with the Nepalese more harshly. The annual reports on Bhutan from 1911 to 1946 are replete with such cases of extradition of offenders from across the border.

56. Patterson, George, A., *Peking Versus Delhi*, Faber and Faber, London, 1963, pp. 216-17.

Inspired by the Indian independence in 1947, the Nepalese organised the Nepali Congress and the Sikkim State Congress on the pattern of the Indian National Congress. In such a situation, it was difficult for Bhutan to remain unaffected by the political transition across its southern border. On the open border and dual citizenship between the two countries, it was possible for some discontented elements to create political turmoil in the otherwise placid Bhutanese politics. A group of Bhutanese Nepalese "refugees" led by D. B. Gurung, D. B. Chhetri and G. P. Sharma formed the Bhutan State Congress in November 1952 at Patgaon (Goalpara, Assam). Initially it was something like an association of the Nepalese for the redressal of their grievances against their government. Then it began to include serious demands such as the abolition of the feudal system, democratisation of administration; civil and political rights for the Bhutanese and closer ties with India.⁵⁷ The party took pains to identify itself with the Indian National Congress substituting the spinning wheel with that of the Buddhist symbol of Dorji. It is logical to believe that the party extended its activities to the south eastern foothills in a clandestine way and it had a good number of Nepalese supporters. They claimed to represent 64 per cent Bhutanese Nepalese out of a total of 7,00,000. In 1958, it submitted a petition to the Indian Prime Minister on way to Bhutan against the "autocratic and arbitrary rule" of the Maharaja. However, no serious efforts were made to extend its activities in the inner Himalayan valleys and enrol the *Brugas* as its members.

The Nepalese, divided among themselves on caste and tribal lines, had settled down in the Bhutanese foothills after strenuous efforts. Many of them, unaware of the democratic, civil and political rights, were not willing to take the risk of losing their land and shelter by supporting the cause of a vague forum of doubtful credibility. The Bhutanese State Congress, after submitting a number of memorandum to the king and passing numerous resolutions from the Indian territory, decided to extend its operation in Bhutan itself. Drawing upon the experiences of the civil disobedience (satyagraha) launched by the Indian National Congress, the party sent a body of about 100 volunteers to offer satyagraha on 22 March 1954. The Government of Bhutan, worried by the wild rumours about the intent of the Congress volunteers had mobilised the national militia to deal with the situation. The Congress activists were ordered to disperse and return to India which they refused. The militia swung

57. Gurung, D. B., "Bhutan's Woes", *Mankind*, Vol. 4(7).

into action and chased them to India. The party leaders took shelter in India once more. However, on the expressed desire of the Government of Bhutan, the Government of India asked the Bhutan Congress not to use the Indian territory as its base for its anti-Bhutanese satyagraha. This was the first and the last organised movement in Bhutan, which ended in a shameful fiasco. The Congress shifted its headquarters to Siliguri and kept itself alive up to 1969 by issuing statements to the Indian newspapers. Lastly, the *Brug-rgyalpo* offered amnesty to its leaders, such as D. B. Chhetri, and permitted them to return to Bhutan on condition that they would not take part in any political activity.⁵⁸

A number of reasons may be identified for the failure of the Bhutan State Congress as a political party in the body politic of Bhutan. First of all, Bhutan was ruled in the 1950s on dynastic despotism, where civil and political rights of the subjects were not recognised. Secondly, in the absence of an effective media of communication such as roads, wheeled transport, radios, newspapers, etc. and prevalence of almost universal illiteracy, it was a premature effort to educate the Bhutanese politically. Thirdly, neither the Congress extended its activities among the *Bruggpas* nor the latter recognised the former as their own. Consequently, it remained exclusively a Nepalese political party on the southern frontier of Bhutan. As the Bhutanese were reluctant to accord national status to the immigrant Nepalese, they did not consider it respectable to associate themselves with their cause. Fourthly, even the Bhutanese Nepalese did not identify themselves with the cause of the Congress at large. It was because of their threatened and insecure existence in Bhutan and internal division among themselves. Fifthly, the Congress committed a blunder in identifying itself with the Indian National Congress, considered by the Bhutanese rulers a disruptive force. In this context, readers may be reminded of the clash between the second *Brug-rgyalpo* and the then *Zhabs-drung* who had infructuously in 1931 tried to solicit Mahatma Gandhi's help to regain his lost power. Sixthly, the Government of India under the leadership of the Indian National Congress was itself not sure how much control it could have on Bhutan. Thus, the attitude of the Indian National Congress to the Bhutan Congress was ambivalent. However, India was interested in the stability of Bhutan, which was realised in the continuation of the dynastic rule. This was a major policy inheritance for India from the colonial rule in which

58. Kuensel, *The Official News Bulletin*, Royal Government of Bhutan Thimpu, 31 October 1969.

discontinuation of the dynastic rule in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim was considered inadvisable and against the larger Indian interests. Lastly, Bhutan was making all possible efforts to express its autonomy and distinctiveness from India as a strategy to claim sovereignty. The efforts made by the Bhutanese Congress were contrary to the Bhutanese policy mentioned above and, was opposed tooth and nail by the *darbar*.

In this paper we have portrayed the traditional theocratic structure of the lamaist political system, the pattern of the trans-Himalayan trade and the fort system of administration. It was definitely a complex structure in which sacred and secular roles were evolved by a pastoralist and marginal peasant community. As it was intricately involved into a series of patron-priest relationship between Tibet, China, Mongolia, Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, it is difficult to conclude that the pre-monarchy Bhutan was a state in the modern sense of the term. Elsewhere we have termed it as unsettled peripheral (frontier) zone between the culture cores of Indo-Gangetic plain and Tibet.⁵⁹ Thus such a zone is a combination of overlapping economic, social and cultural factors and is not governed by either of the two cores. Incidentally, defiance, dissent and conflict have been the main ingredients of the frontier personality. We have shown above how the mighty British India colonial administration extended its control on Bhutan. Our analysis suggests that, at least for the first four decades of the present century, Bhutan was practically an Indian state.

Secondly, we have examined the succession dispute within the Wangchuk household and the conflict between the second king and the head of the *Brugpa* sect of lamaism. Another significant point is that in spite of its being a monarchy, Bhutan has no aristocracy. As evidenced by the genealogical table provided, at the end, the role of the aristocracy had been performed by the extended royal family. It is interesting to note that there have been numerous marriages between the families of Ugyen Wangchuk (1861-1926), the founder monarch of Bhutan and his sister, Aji Choden; fusing the two into one. As against it there is another scenario. The conflict between the second king Jigme Wangchuk (1905-52) and the last official *Zhabdrung*, Jigme Dorji (1905-31) resulted into a major crisis for the state, in which not only the Bhutanese clergy was involved, but also the British-Indian administration, the nationalist Indian leader, M. K. Gandhi

59. Sinha, A. C., *Bhutan: From Theocracy to Emerging Nation-State*, Department of Sociology, NEHU, Shillong, MSS, 1982.

and the Dalai Lama. Ultimately, this conflict was resolved after the mysterious death of the *Zhabs-drung*, in which the king and the British Indian administration did not crown themselves with glory.

Lastly, we have explained the impact of the Indian freedom movement on Bhutan, the Bhutanese perception of their identity and the emergence of Bhutan State Congress and the failure of the democratic cause. It appears that in spite of the British and the royal Bhutanese efforts to keep Bhutan away from the Indian freedom movement, Bhutan came under the influence of the Indian democratic movement. In the preceding paragraph we have referred to the death of the *Zhabs-drung* Jigmie Dorji. One of the reasons for his end was his efforts to solicit Gandhi's assistance in his favour, against the king and the British. Another aspect of the scenario was the emergence of a rather weak democratic movement launched by the Bhutan State Congress in the 1950s. With the withering away of the Bhutan State Congress and its movement, the only other institutional threat to the monarchy, the dynastic rule of the Wangchuks, emerged in the form of the question of the Brugpa identity. The third quarter of the present century dawned with newer dimensions of international complexities, in which Bhutan emerged as a nation-state.

