

Chapter 2

Geographical and Historical Background of Education in Bhutan

Geographical Background

There is a great debate regarding from where the name of 'Bhutan' appears. In old Tibetan chronicles Bhutan was called *Mon-Yul* (Land of the Mon). Another theory explaining the origin of the name 'Bhutan' is derived from Sanskrit 'Bhotanta' where Tibet was referred to as 'Bhota' and 'anta' means end i. e. the geographical area at the end of Tibet.¹ Another possible explanation again derived from Sanskrit could be Bhu-uttan standing for highland, which of course it is.² Some scholars think that the name 'Bhutan' has come from *Bhota* (Bod) which means Tibet and 'tan', a corruption of stan as found in Indo-Persian names such as 'Hindustan', 'Baluchistan' and 'Afganistan' etc.³ Another explanation is that "It seems quite likely that the name 'Bhutan' has come from the word 'Bhotanam' (*Desah iti Sesah*) i.e., the land of the Bhotas much the same way as the name 'Iran' came from 'Aryanam' (*Desah*), Rajputana came from 'Rajputanam', and 'Gandoana' came from 'Gandakanam'. Thus literally 'Bhutan' means the land of the 'Bhotas'-people speaking a Tibetan dialect."⁴ But according to Bhutanese scholars like Lopen Nado and Lopen Pemala, Bhutan is called Lho Mon or land of the south i.e. south of Tibet.⁵ However, the Bhutanese themselves prefer to use the term *Drukyul*- the land of Thunder Dragon, a name originating from the word *Druk* meaning 'thunder dragon', which in turn is derived from *Drukpa* school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Bhutan presents a striking example of how the geographical setting of a country influences social, economic and political life of the people. It is a landlocked country and topographically it may be viewed as a country of mountains and ridges of varying heights, varied climatic and soil conditions, dense vegetation, mineral resources, agricultural practices and population distribution and their interrelation with each other.

Location

The country lies in between 26° 45' N to 28° 10' N latitudes and 88° 45' E and 92° 10' longitudes. It occupies a total land area of 46,500 sq. km, the maximum east-west extension of is 300 km and the north-south extension is 150-170 km.⁶ It is

bordered by India in the south and south east and by Tibetan occupied area of China in the north and northwest. The Indian states, adjoining Bhutan are Sikkim in the west, West Bengal in the south west, and Assam in the south, south east and on the east there is Arunachal Pradesh.

Major physical divisions- the country may be divided into four major physical divisions from top to bottom-

1. The Greater Himalayas
2. The Inner Himalayas
3. The Southern Foothills
4. The *Duars* Plains

1. The Greater Himalayas

The entire northern region of the country lies within the Himalaya with some of the highest peaks measuring more than 7,300 m. above the sea level. The Chomo Lhari peak (7,320 m) bordering the Tibet's Chumbi valley stands at the western end of the Great Himalaya. The peak is named for the Buddhist deity Dolma, who is worshipped both in Bhutan and in the Chumbi valley.⁷ In the east ward there is another snow-clad peak, Kula Kangri (7,554 m). The rugged territory is a barrier to communication and travel both within the region and beyond. For this, both living space and fertile agricultural soil are limited. In the past the Bhutanese traders took cloth, spices, and grains across the mountain passes into Tibet and brought with them rock salt, wool and sometimes herds of yaks but the trade came to an end after occupation of Tibet by China (1959) and gradual opening up of the southern border.

2. The Inner Himalayas

To the south of the Great Himalayas lies the Inner Himalayas. This range runs from north-west to south-east in the western side and from north-east to south-west in the eastern side of the country. Many of the central Bhutan's fertile valleys lie in this part of the country. These valleys are relatively broad, flat with moderate rainfall and are fairly well populated and cultivated. Some of them are Paro (2350 m), Thimphu (2545 m), Bumthang (2700 m), Haa (2575 m), two major population centres- Trashigang (757m) and Mongar (1329 m) lie in the eastern part of the country. Punakha (1,220 m) capital of Bhutan till 1955 and Wangdiphodrang (1,240 m) are also two populated valleys.⁸

3. The Southern Foothills

The average height of the outer most ranges of the southern foothills varies between 600-1500 m above the sea level. Some main rivers of the country such as Torsa (Amochu), Raidak, Sankosh and Manas passes through these ranges. Weathering action of the rivers is dominant in this region.

4. The Duars Plains

The *Duars* plains are an extension of the Ganga-Brahmaputra plains of India. Only a very small part of this (nearly 10-15 km) lies in Bhutan. A greater part of this area of this division is dense forest abounding in wild life. The landscape of the southern portion of this region resembles that of the Assam-Bengal plain. It consists of fertile soil covered by *savana* grass, bamboo and *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) forests. Some of the important market centres such as Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gaylephug, Sarvang and Samdrupjongkhar lie in this division along the Indo-Bhutan border.

Administrative Divisions

Bhutan is administratively divided into four zones from north to south, each having its own peculiar ecology- eastern zone, western zone, southern zone, and central zone. These zones are further divided into twenty *dzongkhags* varying from 100sq km. in Punakha to 4,260 sq. km in Tashigang.⁹ Earlier there were 18 *dzongkhags*, 2 new *dzongkhags* were created in the Seventh Five Year Plan (1991-92 to 1996-97). There is local government in each of the 20 *dzongkhags* or administrative districts. Each *dzongkhag* is divided into several *gewogs* (county), while the larger *dzongkhag* are divided into *dungkhag* (sub-division of a district), headed by a *Dungpa* (head of sub-divisions). *Gewog* is the lowest stage of administration which is made of *chiwogs* (group of households). During the Seventh Five Year Plan period there were altogether 191 *gewogs* in the country.¹⁰ Each *dzongkhag* is administered by a *Dzongda* (district administrator) who is assisted by a *Dzongrab* (deputy district administrator). These divisions were made to formulate plans and take decisions on socio-economic development programmes.¹¹

Population

Different data about the population of Bhutan are given in different indigenous and non-Bhutanese sources. When Bhutan joined the United Nations Organization in

1971 it gave its population as 1.2 million, which, with an area of 47,000 square km, gives it a density of about 25 persons per square km.¹² As per the Department of Statistics a population projection was made based on 1980 census data.

Table 2.1: Population estimates by dzongkhag, 1980-1990

Dzongkhag	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Thimphu	64,300	71,674	73,674	75,554	77,336	79,039	80,684
ZONE 1							
Chhukha	97,200	108,347	111,370	111,370	114,212	116,905	119,480
Haa	17,000	19,061	19,593	20,093	20,567	21,020	21,457
Paro	39,800	44,364	45,602	46,766	47,869	48,923	49,941
Samtse	138,400	154,272	158,577	162,623	166,458	170,124	173,666
Total	292,500	326,044	335,142	343,694	351,799	359,547	367,031
ZONE 2							
Chirang	104,500	116,484	119,734	122,790	125,685	128,453	131,128
Daga	27,700	30,877	31,738	32,548	33,316	34,049	34,758
Punakha	34,500	38,457	39,530	40,538	41,494	42,408	43,291
Wangdi	47,700	53,110	54,654	56,049	57,370	58,634	59,854
Total	214,400	238,988	245,656	251,925	257,865	263,544	269,031
ZONE 3							
Bumthang	23,600	26,307	27,041	27,731	28,384	29,010	29,614
Sarbhong	112,800	125,736	129,244	132,543	135,668	138,656	141,543
Shemgang	43,300	48,266	49,612	50,879	52,078	53,225	54,333
Tongsa	28,600	31,880	32,760	33,606	34,398	35,156	35,888

Total	208,300	232,189	238,666	244,759	250,528	256,047	261,378
ZONE 4							
Lhuntshi	36,900	41,132	42,279	43,358	44,381	45,358	46,302
Mongar	71,300	79,477	81,694	83,779	85,755	87,643	89,468
Pemagatshel	35,100	39,125	40,217	41,243	42,216	43,146	44,044
Samdrupjong khar	72,200	80,480	82,726	84,837	86,837	88,750	90,597
Tashigang	170,000	189,496	194,783	199,754	204,464	208,967	213,318
Total	385,500	429,710	441,699	452,971	463,653	473,864	483,729
Grand Total	1,165,000	1,298,605	1,334,837	1,368,903	1,401,181	1,432,041	1,461,853

(Source-*Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan, 1990*, Central Statistical office, Planning Commission, Thimphu, July 1991)

But according to the Seventh Five Year Plan record country's population was corrected to 600,000 (1990) and projected population for the year 1997 varies between 713,211-768,050. Thus the total population figure for Bhutan during the period of our study is highly confusing one. In this connection, the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in an interview to Sunday (a weekly published from Calcutta) in October 1990 stated, "Our official population figure is 1.3 million, but actually it is closer to 600,000. People think Bhutan deliberately gave a wrong figure in the seventies, when we joined the United Nations. But in truth, someone had told my father that if he gave a figure less than one million, we would not be taken seriously by the U.N."¹³ If we compare the number of population shown in the report mentioned to United Nations with the Five Years Plan record we will find that it is just more than double.

Ethnic Groups

The word ethnic group means "a self perceived group of people who hold common set of culture and tradition which is not shared by others with whom they are

in contact. It denotes a particular group expressed in terms of a sense of continuity in belonging.”¹⁴ On the basis of above mentioned point Bhutanese society is multi-ethnic. The social and cultural base of the country is constituted by many ethnic communities.

The first is composed of several groups of people belonging to Tibetan origin known as *Ngalops* whose ancestors moved to Bhutan in earlier periods. They are predominantly found in North, Central and Western Bhutan. The western Bhutan viz. the valleys of Haa, Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdiphodrang are traditionally populated by *Bodpas* or *Drukpas*. They are Tibeto-Mongoloid people and considered as heterogeneous, separated into many groups and subgroups. They are the dominant community of Bhutan and distributed all over the country in varied numbers. Among them, there are farmers, labourers, traders and shepherds. Landed aristocracy exists among a section of them. By religion they are the followers of Buddhism. In northern part, the places like Laya and Lunana are inhabited by the yak herders. In central Bhutan there are some groups of unique characteristics such as *Bumpthaps* and *Khangpas* primarily inhabiting the districts of Tongsa, Bumthang, Lhunsi etc. The west, north and central Bhutan may be regarded as pastoral culture area. The pastoral society comprises of different social groups of Tibetan origin. The pastoral groups in general were closely engaged in woollen trade and did lucrative business with the Himalayan shepherds but this has been affected in modern times. The people of pastoral area were the residents of high altitude and interior valleys. But due to population pressure and in search of livelihood they came down to stay in other places. This resulted in a massive social transformation in this area. The people living in pastoral culture area are comparatively more advanced.

The second is a distinct Indo-Mongoloid ethnic community, popularly called ‘*Sharchops*’. The *Sharchops* live in the eastern districts of Mongar, Tashiyangtse, Tashigang, etc. and form the second largest single community though some say they constitute the largest group (*Sharchhopka* 28%, *Dzongkha* (official) 24%, *Lhotshamkha* 22%, other 26% (includes foreign languages)¹⁵ and are considered to be among the earliest inhabitants. They are considered to be, along with the *Khengs* the indigenous communities presumably moved here in the past millenniums. They mostly hail from south-east Asian ethnic stock but a mixture with Tibetan stock cannot be ignored. Their occupation is mainly agriculture. Spinning, weaving, basket

making are some common artistic activities of the women. Animism and Buddhism are the two most important religious traditions followed in this area.

The third group is constituted by the Nepalese who mostly live in southern Bhutan. Nepalese settlers came to work in the southern foothills in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and others had migrated until such movement was banned by Bhutan in 1959. The descendants of these settlers, mostly Hindus, dominate southern Bhutan and are called as southern Bhutanese. Their settlements are in Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gelephu, Samdrupjongkhar, Sarvang, Dagana etc. There are also few Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths as well. Agriculture and trade are the main occupation of this region. Majority of the southern people are called *Lhotshampas* in *Dzongkha*, the national language.

Thus the three major ethnic communities *Ngalops*, *Sharchops* and *Lhotshampas* represent three distinct way of life. But as a result of modern communication and transportation facilities and the inter-ethnic interaction there has been an overlapping of some cultural treats amongst the people of three different ethnic groups.¹⁶

Language

Bhutan is a multi-lingual country; nearly twenty languages are in vogue. Most of them are dialects do not having any script (character) of their own. Except the national language *Dzongkha* and *Lhotshamkha* (language of the *Lhotshampas*), none of the languages has any developed literature, but all of them have rich oral literature. The government of Bhutan did not have any language policy till 1960's, till that time the classical Tibetan language, *Choekey* used to serve as the vehicle of intellectual discourses. In course of centuries considerable number of scholarly works had been written in *Choekey*. *Dzongkha* (means language of *dzong*/fortress) originated from *Choekey* functioned as the spoken language in the fortresses and places in western Bhutan. In the year 1961 the first formal language policy guideline was formulated when third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck decreed that *Dzongkha* would be the national language of Bhutan.¹⁷ But still in 60s *Choekey* continued as the literary form of *Dzongkha*.

After its recognition as the national language several measures have been taken to modernise the language. In 1971 the Dzongkha Division was created of the

Department of Education in order to prepare reading materials in *Dzongkha* for the school going children. The third King commanded Lopen Pemala and Lopen Nado, monks and scholars to write simple text books in *Dzongkha*.¹⁸ In 1971 a book entitled ‘The New Method Dzongkha Hand Book’ was brought out.¹⁹ It studies the dissimilarity between *Dzongkha* and classical language *Choekey*. In 1986 the Dzongkha Advisory Committee was formed with the mandate to formulate policy guidelines for its development and to standardize the language. In 1989 the Dzongkha Advisory Committee and the Dzongkha Division of the Department of Education were united in the form of the Dzongkha Development Commission²⁰ (later changed to Dzongkha Development Authority) to develop and modernize the language so that it may be used as medium of modern scholarly and literary works. The Commission has also been entrusted the job to preserve the rich traditions, heritage and legacies, stored in other indigenous languages and dialects. Two useful booklets were published by the Commission in 1990 entitled ‘An Introduction to Dzongkha’ and ‘A New Dzongkha Grammar’ which provided the style of pronunciation and small sentences for the beginners.²¹ *Dzongkha* language teachers were trained at Simtokha Rigney School established by the third King. The *Dzongkha* teachers comprised of monks, retired monks, gomchens and even astrologers who had some academic knowledge.²²

Second biggest indigenous language group is *Sharchop* or *Tshangla* which is predominant in eastern Bhutan. Besides these, there are two other dominant languages which include *Bumthangkha*, spoken in central Bhutan and *Lhotshamkha* or Nepali, a non-indigenous language, spoken in southern Bhutan. English is the medium of learning in secular schools and *Choekey* is used in monastic schools.

Table 2.2: Language and dialects spoken in Bhutan in 1998

Dzongkha	160,000 speakers
Cho-ca-nga-ca-kha	20,000 speakers
Brokpa	5,000 speakers
Brokkat	300 speakers

Lakha	8,000 speakers
Bokha (Tibetan)	1,000 speakers
Bumthangkha	30,000 speakers
Khengkha	40,000 speakers
Kurtopkha	10,000 speakers
Nyengkha	10,000 speakers
Chalikha	1,000 speakers
Dzalakha	15,000 speakers
Monpa	1,000 speakers
Dakpakha	1,000 speakers
Shar chop(Tshangla)	1,38,000 speakers
Lhokpu	2,500 speakers
Gongduk	2,000 speakers
Lepcha	2,000 speakers
Nepali(Lhotshamkha)	1,56,000 speakers

(Source-Driem, George Van(ed.), *Language of the Greater Himalayan Region*, Research School, CNWS, School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, Leiden , The Netherlands, 1998, p.2)

There were total 19 dialects/languages and 602,800 speakers.

But the above mentioned survey appears to be impractical as it does not indicate whether fluency or conversational ability or both was taken as the basis.

Historical background of education in Bhutan

Though it is speculated that Bhutan was inhabited as early as 2000 B.C.²³ as evidenced through archaeological discoveries of significant number of stones tools and megaliths in the country²⁴ its early history remains obscure as she is steeped in the mythology and legends. The country's established political history is closely linked to its religious history and the affairs among the various monastic schools and monasteries. Prior to the Tibetan settlement, small segments of the region were inhabited by the indigenous *Monpa* people who practiced the Shamanistic *Bon* religion. An early indication of some Tibetan influence can be deduced from fact that Bhutan's oldest extant Buddhist temples, the Kyichu *Lhakhang* in Paro and Jambay *Lhakhang* in Bumthang were all constructed by the King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo (A.D.627-649).²⁵

Around the eighth century Bhutan was governed by petty princes who seem to have close connections with India. The most powerful amongst them was Sindhu Raja who upon falling ill invited the well-known Indian saint Guru Padmasambhava for treatment²⁶ probably around 747 A.D. Padmasambhava established *Nyingmapa* order of monks in Bhutan and Sindhu Raja embraced Buddhism.²⁷ During the following centuries other monastic orders such as *Kagyupa*, *Sakyapa*, *Gelukpa* from Tibet expressed their sway in Bhutan and *Drukpa* sect of the *Kagyupa* order finally succeeded in gaining control of the country in the 17th century. The credit goes to Ngawang Namgyel of the house at Gya, at Rauling in Tibet. He arrived in Bhutan in 1616²⁸ and established himself as the undisputed ruler with the new title of *Shabdrung Rimpoche*. Outsiders referred him as the *Dharma Raja*.²⁹ For the overall governance of the country he created the office of the *Desi* which came to be known as *Deb Raja* to the outside world.³⁰ He constructed a number of *dzongs* or forts in various places which not only served as defensive structures but also functioned as religious, political, administrative and educational institutions. To each *dzong* he appointed a *dzongpen* (fort governor) with the exception of Paro, Tongsa and Daga where *Penlop* or Governors were assigned.³¹ A huge political vacuum arose following the passing away of Ngawang Namgyal in 1651 and the state of instability prominently underscored by the fact that of the 54 *Deb Rajas* (1651-1907), 22 of them were assassinated, dismissed or made to resign. Despite the relentless struggle for power

some of the *Deb Rajas* have been recorded to have worked for the progress of the country and monastic education continued with its utmost perfection.

Conflict between Tibet and Bhutan continued and in 1730 Tibet occupied some Bhutanese territory. In the south Bhutan's relationship with the kingdom of Cooch Behar was more an exercise in hostility with each party laying claims to and occasionally occupying frontier territories of the other. In 1770 Bhutan captured Cooch Behar King, the *Dewan* and several other officers and confined them and hold sway over Coach Behar by forcibly appointing the King's brother as the new ruler. In 1772 the *Nazir Deb* (the Defence Minister), Khagendra Narayan, proclaimed the boy prince Dharendra Narayan, as the Deputy King but Bhutan refused to accept this and drove away Khagendra Narayan. The latter appealed to the East India Company for assistance and Company marched to Cooch Behar and in late 1773 drove out the Bhutanese. In 1774 a treaty was struck between the East India Company and Bhutan which required the latter to restore the boundaries to the lines that existed before the Bhutanese invasion.³² Company was also seeking a trade route to Tibet and Governor General Warren Hastings sent several missions to Tibet and Bhutan commencing with George Bogle (1774), followed by Hamilton (1776-77) and Samuel Turner (1783). But conflict continued over the possession of 18 *Duars* (passes), a strip of narrow land ten to twelve miles wide extending from *Tista* River in the west and *Dhansiri* River in the east, eleven were in Bengal and seven were in Assam.

The Bhutanese committed frequent border violations in *Duars*. Captain R.B. Pemberton's embassy was deputed by the Company to Bhutan in 1838 but it did not meet with any success. In 1841 Company captured all the seven Assam *Duars* and in 1863 Ashley Eden, the Secretary to the Bengal Government, was deputed to lead a mission to Bhutan to solve the issue of Bengal *Duars*. But the mission underwent considerable humiliation at the hands of the Bhutanese which resulted in second Anglo-Bhutan war in 1864. Bhutan subsequently lost all the Bengal *Duars* and with the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865 Bhutan relented to free trade and conceded to the Company's right to arbitrate in all disputes that might arise between Bhutan and its neighbouring states. The British Government settled to make an annual grant of a sum of fifty thousand rupees to Bhutan.³³

The central power in Bhutan collapsed with the defeat at the hands of British and the political authority shifted to a powerful man named Jigme Namgyal of Tongsa

who became Deb Raja in 1870. He appointed his son, Ugyen Wangchuck as the *Penlop* of Paro who again became the *Penlop* of Tongsa in 1883 and rapidly established his influence over the whole of the country. He was aware that British India's influence would be useful to consolidate his power so he joined the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1903.³⁴ In 1907 the post of the *Deb Raja* was abolished and on 17th December he was enthroned as the first hereditary King of Bhutan.³⁵ Ugyen Wangchuck proved to be an able administrator, an astute diplomat and sharp statesman. He sowed the seed of modern secular education and two Hindi medium schools were opened in order to make communication easier with India where Hindi was the language of the common masses. In 1910 the Treaty of Punakha was concluded with the British Government by which the annual subsidy to the Government of Bhutan was increased from fifty thousand rupees to one hundred thousand rupees.³⁶

Jigme Wangchuck succeeded his father Ugyen Wangchuck in 1926 and his reign had been characterized as a period of unification and consolidation of the newly established kingdom. In order to increase the educational facilities he established some Hindi medium schools. This was the first prepared effort to lay the foundation of the modern Bhutanese system of education.³⁷ After Indian independence in 1947 a new treaty was put to force in 1949 between Bhutan and India. India raised Bhutan's subsidy to half a million rupees and Bhutan agreed to be guided by India in its foreign matters.³⁸ The signing of this treaty and many reforms introduced brought about major changes in Bhutan's internal and external policies.

With the accession of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in March 1952 Bhutan witnessed the dawn of a new era. The year 1953 saw the establishment of the National Assembly, followed by the formation of the Royal Advisory Council (1965) and the Council of Ministers (1968). In 1961, First Five Year Development Plan was launched with an outlay of 175 million funded by India.³⁹ Modern education was a part of the Five Year Plan programmes and the third King made English as the medium of instruction in modern schools. Hindi medium schools were converted to English medium and many new schools were set up all over the country. In 1962 Bhutan joined the Colombo Plan and United Nations Organization in 1971. It is a small wonder that the third hereditary King is known as "the architect of modern Bhutan".⁴⁰

With the passing away of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, his son Jigme Singye Wangchuck, ascended the throne in 1972 as the fourth King. He adopted a policy of participation in international affairs and socio-economic cooperation in diverse fields with the world at large.⁴¹ He made concerted efforts to the spread of education in modern lines, improved communications, and modernized agriculture and sanctioned the harnessing of the hydro-power resources in the country.

Effect on Education in the backdrop of Geographical and Historical context-

1. Bhutan's geographical contiguity to India and Tibet has greatly contributed in the development of its culture based on which the country's education system grew up. Firstly, the people of Tibetan culture migrated into Bhutan Himalaya and settled down in north, central and western regions. Thus Tibet contributed in framing the ethnic and cultural elements of these regions. Secondly, people of Indo-Mongoloid culture penetrated Bhutan from the east. Thus north-east India contributed to the people and culture of eastern Bhutan. Thirdly, Nepal and the Indian states like Sikkim and West Bengal contributed in forming the ethnic, social and cultural elements of southern Bhutan.
2. The Great Himalaya has largely shaped the psychology, life style, spirituality and religious beliefs of the people of Bhutan. In this 21st century's fast moving materialistic thinking it is at times difficult to understand and gauge the spiritual devotion of the Bhutanese traditional monastic teachers and preachers. To someone it may be out-dated but to them it is a matter of national identity, pride and ethos. In this connection another point is to be analyzed- had the Bhutan been subjugated by different ethnic/religious groups, the course of history of education, life style, worship, and politics might have been different. Bhutan never faced any foreign domination despite several invasions allowing it the freedom to plan, execute and monitor education system in her own unique way. Despite Bhutanese tenacity, unity in times of aggression, and the love of independence one must also concede that geography, in the form of rugged and harsh terrain, also played a significant role in preserving the nation's sovereignty and thereby the freedom to frame and execute a type of education policy that suited the country most. Being a small landlocked country it was natural for Bhutan to imbibe some ideas and inspiration from her great and gigantic neighbour in the south but the country

never lost the value of its own culture, language and history while drawing out its plans for modern education.

3. West Bengal is the most easily communicable route between India and Bhutan. If Bhutan wants to establish communication with outside world for trade, commerce and other purposes West Bengal plays a very crucial role. This geo-communicational dependence of Bhutan on West Bengal is determined by geography itself. It can't be changed. The classic example of such dependence of Bhutan on West Bengal is the modern SAARC road which facilitates the trade between Bhutan and Bangladesh. Since time immemorial the Bhutan's traders carried their trade and commercial activities through the Bengal plains with the rest of the world. So, in discussing the Bhutan's educational development one can't overlooked the Bhutan's next door neighbour Indian state- West Bengal.

4. There is a great impact of India in the growth of Buddhism in Bhutan. In the eighth century A.D. an Indian saint Guru Padmasambhaba introduced Buddhism in Bhutan and it became a Buddhist country it developed a religious identity distinctly of its own but it continued to draw inspiration from its neighbours specially India. Having accepted a religion of the neighbouring country it was natural that religious education system of Bhutan also gathered inspiration from India.

5. Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan tradition has a great impact on the Buddhism in Bhutan. Various sects of Buddhism such as *Kagyupa*, *Sakyapa*, *Gelukpa* etc., penetrated into Bhutan from Tibet. Monastic education system of Bhutan followed the same path as the education system of the monasteries in Tibet. The aim of the Bhutan's monastic institutions is to preserve and promote Bhutanese culture which is a legacy of Tibetan monastic education system. 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 in Buddhism. They returned with a high level of qualification based on the oral and written traditions and preached in Bhutan.

6. Bhutan is known for its monasteries famous for learning and for being in possession of rare manuscripts and excellent paintings. The basis of educational growth in ancient and medieval times was primarily religious and the education imparted was highly pragmatic and practical. But the fragile

political situation in the country for the period from seventeenth century to nineteenth century caused to the hindrance in the educational development. Modern education sowed its seed only after the ascendancy of hereditary King in the twentieth century, when Bhutan opened its door to outside world.

7. Till 1970's *Choekey* or classical Tibetan language was the vehicle of academic activities among the educated classes of Bhutan. Still it is the medium of learning in monastic schools. Naturally Bhutan has an inalienable connection with Tibet and *Choekey* language.

8. Because of varied stocks, the rugged mountainous terrain and its inaccessibility, there is a great linguistic diversity in the country. Though the official language is *Dzongkha*, a number of local dialects have survived within the country and on account of geographic isolation; sometimes people living in one village cannot understand the dialect of other village. Naturally, modern education system in the beginning also varied from valley to valley.

9. In the beginning of modern educational system it was not possible to provide educational facilities in the remote areas because many of the areas were not linked with the roads. Settlement pattern was a factor due to which the availability of educational facilities had become a problem because the size of the villages of the country varied between 2-100 houses and the average was 43 houses only.⁴² Due to this random pattern of settlement, many people were not in a position to avail government educational policies benefit and this resulted in more illiteracy in the country.

10. Bhutan's rugged terrain is a severe constraint to the progress of communications and educational system in the country. The population being scattered in small groups among hamlets high in the mountains, the way to school mostly involved a walk of some hours, therefore, many of the school buildings were so laid out that the small pupils could stay there all through the week. Sometimes parents had to make huts by themselves outside the school for their children. It was natural that without the residential system in the school, many parents showed their unwillingness in sending their children to that school.

11. Geographical division and differences inside Bhutan has affected the growth of education system. In those valleys where the communication system

developed, education was also developed. Thus geographical disparities laid to the varied educational development within the country.

12. When Bhutan came in contact with the British Indian government and Anglo-Bhutan Treaty was signed in 1910 the first hereditary King of Bhutan, Ugyen Wangchuck (1907-1926) realized the linguistic handicap and took steps to familiarize Bhutan with English and Hindi. He established two secular schools where the medium of instruction was Hindi. The second King Jigme Wangchuck (1926-1952) set up 7 to 10 Hindi medium schools at Bumthang, Haa, Wangdiphodrang, Tashigang, Damphu and Paro.⁴³ Actually Hindi was easier for the Bhutanese people as they often visited the Buddhist religious sites in India for pilgrimage purpose and medium of communication was Hindi. The third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1952-1972) finalized to opt for the English medium schools in view of the reach and available texts in the language. Jesuit missionary Father William Mackey was invited from Darjeeling to set up English medium schools.

13. Bhutan's actual modernization in the educational system began after India's independence. Bhutan's first and second Five Year Development Plans were fully financed by India in which educational development was a main factor. Indian teachers were the pioneers of the Bhutan's modern educational system. Bhutan followed the curriculum of the Indian schools. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations conducted the Class X and XII examinations till the beginning of the 21st century. Sherubtse College, was the only college in the country to offer degree courses and was affiliated to the University of Delhi till the founding of the Royal University of Bhutan in 2003.

14. Indian teachers were the pioneers of the Bhutan's modern education system. They responded to the Bhutan's call in establishing a new modern system of education. These pioneers had to work without any medical, commercial, intellectual, social facilities in rugged terrain and led an isolated and deprived life. They could not avail any facilities of modern amenities. Their sincere contribution and enormous devotion to work weaved the isolated valleys into an effective chain of the modern system of education.

So, conservative outlook of the Bhutanese people, their predominantly religious notion combined with country's inaccessible mountains, forests and inadequate communications prevented contact with outside world and this sort of splendid isolation was bound to deter the infiltration of modern education in Bhutan.⁴⁴ But gradually modern education holds its sway in this country at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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