

Chapter 9

Role of the Christian Missionaries and Indigenous Bhutanese in the Education of Bhutan

This chapter has been divided in two different parts in order to present the documents in a systematic way-

(A) Role of the Christian Missionaries in the Education of Bhutan

(B) Contribution of the Indigenous Bhutanese in the Education of Bhutan

(A) Role of the Christian Missionaries in the Education of Bhutan

Coming to role of Christian missionaries in education, the role of the Jesuit priests from India cannot be over-emphasized. When traditional monastic education was the norm of the day in the 1950's, it was a Canadian priest, Rev. Father William Mackey, Society of Jesus (Jesuit), Darjeeling, India, who came to Bhutan in 1963 and nurtured the seeds sown by the Bhutan government and early Indian teachers to see the blossoming of modern education.

Way before Fr. Mackey entered Bhutan, two Portuguese Jesuits had come in 1627, and found in Paro a lama school (monastic) with about hundred students under Sabdrung Ngawang Namgyel¹ and despite the Jesuits interest to learn the local language they could not find a suitable teacher.² Had they stayed behind in Bhutan they probably would have cast a lasting impression as far as education was concerned but their goal was Lhasa, the Vatican of Mahayana Buddhism, and after several months they left Bhutan for their destined address.

There was a long vacuum of 181 years before Bhutan's frontiers felt the winds of Christian missionaries. In 1808 William Carey of Baptist Mission stationed at Serampore (Bengal) sent William Robinson to penetrate Bhutan but despite several attempts to do so the Bhutan authorities persistently refused him permission to cross over the border. Facing numerous odds he made several abortive trips from Serampore to the alien land and during one such a mission his wife died along the border. His last attempt was in 1811 when the mission was abandoned after he was robbed of almost everything by a band of 50-60 robbers, his servants murdered and himself wounded.³ As in the case of the Jesuits we can only speculate the educational changes he would have brought to Bhutan had he been allowed to enter the country.

We find another long gap of 152 years before Christian Missionaries actually entered Bhutan. Despite the first Catholic refusing to stay in Bhutan this time around they willingly opted to stay in Bhutan and unlike the case of Robinson who was repeatedly banned from entering the country the new batch of Jesuits were actually invited into Bhutan. The first to arrive was Father William Mackey followed by Brother Quinn, Fr. J. Coffey, Fr. Cherian, Fr. Perry, Fr. Joseph Paikedey and Mother Peter Claver. After Father Mackey's arrival in Paro in 1963, the above six missionaries joined Father in Bhutan.⁴ Later other Catholic missionaries from the Society of Salesian Brothers (Don Bosco) were to make their mark in Bhutan.

During his early years of Eastern Bhutan father Mackey's right hand man was Brother Quinn. He was a teacher of Tashigang Elementary School who taught History, Geography and English drama. We came to know about Brother Quinn that, "He was also suitably talented: he was a good teacher, handled children well, and had the aptitude and training to be great use of medical matters. He tended to be quiet and happily accepted the position of a Jesuit Brother in the partnership of a Jesuit Father. He had also a good sense of humour.....When it come to entertainment, Brother Quinn's specialists were concerts and drama. The kids loved performing these".⁵ In July of 1965, Father Jack Coffey arrived in Tashigang and joined the school.⁶ He was a teacher of English language. The other Jesuits also came and they began their work from East Bhutan, working their way down from Tashigang, to Kanglung, where they started the first high school, which eventually became the country's first college. In Sherubtse High School at Kanglung besides normal teaching programme the Jesuits had also started a vocational section. According to Howard Solverson, "It was a modest programme initiated by Brother Quinn. He envisaged an alternative for students not involved with games, and set up practical courses like typing and tailoring."⁷ He also solved many medical cases faced by the people in that remote area. Royal Government wanted girls to study at Kanglung and Father Mackey invited the Mother provincial of the St. Joseph of Cluny Sisters of Kalimpong to see about sending some nuns. In 1970 four Sisters of the St. Joseph of Cluny arrived at Kanglung to look after Sherubtse's first girl students, who would start school in that year.⁸ Mother Peter Claver, Superior of the Sisters, was well known to the royal family as she had taught princess Ashi Kesang in Kalimpong. In 1978, Brother Quinn moved to Jigme Sherubling High School at Khaling from Sherubtse along with Father Mackey.

Father Jack Coffey moved to Punakha in Western Bhutan and became the founding Principal of Punakha Public School on May 13, 1973.⁹ Father Joseph Paikeday also joined Punakha High School. Father John Perry who had taught in schools at Sherubtse, Punakha and Khaling joined as the Principal of Jigme Sherubling High School in 1983.¹⁰ When Punakha Public School was started in 1973 Mother Peter moved there along with Sister Rosa and Sister Paulette. Mother Peter was a robust nun who assisted Father Coffey in establishing the school. Regarding the contribution of the Jesuits in Punakha Public School which was later upgraded to a Higher Secondary School, it has been mentioned in the Sherig (Centenary) Saga that, “For almost two decades, the Jesuits were at the helm of school affairs. They laid the foundation of what was to become a premier school in the country”.¹¹

Table 9.1 Contribution of the Jesuits as principals of Punakha High School

Name	Period
Father Jack Coffey	1973-1975
Father Paikeday	1975-1981
Father John Perry	1981-1982
Father Kilorin	1982-1983
Father Miranda	1983-1989

(Source-*The Centenarian, 100 Years of Educating the Nation*, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan, 2013, p.40)

Regarding the contribution made by Father Jack Coffey, the founder-Principal of the School, Mr. Chogyal Tenzin, ex-student of the school recounted that, “He was very strict when it comes to discipline, and expected high standards. Missing a period was taken with a scorn. Hair had to be kept short and the service of Wangdi (i.e. Wangdephodrang) Military’s barber was sought to ensure this.... There used to be surprise roll-calls to ensure that everybody was in place and kept on toes.”¹² As a mathematics and grammar teacher he frequently conducted surprise tests which kept a close tab on the students’ progress. Excellence was his standard and only a score of 70 and above was satisfactory and a lesser performance would find the student hauled to

his office. He was prepared to tear answer script in half and even expel offending students but there was also a kinder and milder facet to his character. Chogyal Tenzin adds that, "Father Coffey would make regular trips to Thimphu in his Mahendra Jeep. On his return he would come with meat and bread for the school and occasionally sweets for the whole school. All would wait for the Father like children waiting for the return of a parent laden with gifts, expectantly....The Coffey days ended at the end of 1975".¹³

At the end of 1980s when Bhutan Government put an end to non-Bhutanese supervision of educational institutions, most of Jesuits left the supervisory post of the head of the institution and finally left the country also.

Another group of Christian missionaries holds the honours in the establishing technical education in Bhutan. The Salesians started the Don Bosco Industrial School at Kharbandi, near Phuentsholing, in 1965. The school was started at the initiative of the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Reverend Father Philip Giraldo (sic, Girardo) who was the founding Principal¹⁴ and Prime Minister Jigme Dorji played the major role in bringing the Don Bosco fathers from Shillong to start the technical school. Father Philip was joined by Joseph Pakma (coadjutor), C. L. Thomas (cleric), and two from Italian Central Province: Fr Antonio Stiappacasse (in-charge of the technical school) along with Fr. Jaime. Father Stiappacasse takes pleasure in fond memories of his brief Bhutan stay (1965 to 1966) before he left for Brazil with the following words, "I remember the year-end exhibition that we put up in Phuentsholing with everything students did during the year - iron gates, windows, doors and tables."¹⁵ Among the many trades taught were carpentry and tailoring etc. A few years later, another two Salesians joined the school- Fr. Dominic Curto and Bro. Gabriel Garniga. The third King and Queen used to visit the School very often and showed their appreciation to the Fathers for their valuable educational system.

The Salesians continued for some years, later the school was renamed as Royal Technical Institute, Kharbandi and the missionaries left the school. Despite being highly appreciated by the King and his ministers, particularly in the Education and Labour departments, the Salesians had to leave the kingdom in 1981 under a cloud of proselytization charges.¹⁶

The following is a detailed study on the contribution of Father Mackey and Father LeClaire, whose role to the modern education system in Bhutan was enormous.

Father Mackey's Role in the Growth of Modern Education in Bhutan

Father Mackey was born in Montreal, Canada on August 19, 1915. He was christened William Mackey and was affectionately called Bill or Billy. Both his parents were immigrants from Ireland and his father was a Protestant and his mother a Catholic. Despite his father being a Protestant Billy became a Jesuit priest in his adulthood suggesting a possible strong influence from his Catholic mother. In fact his entire early education was acquired in Catholic institutions: primary education at St. Michael's and then at St. Thomas Aquinas and secondary at Loyola High School. Despite being a brilliant student and a good athlete, and many worldly opportunities at his call, he still opted to be a priest being inspired by the thoughtful character and devoutness of the priests he had come into contact during his adolescence.

By the time Billy Mackey entered his third year of schooling, he was considering joining not just the priesthood, but the Jesuits in particular. It seemed so expected of him. In 1931, the final year at school, he approached the Father of the school expressing his yearning to join the Society of Jesus. He was subsequently interviewed by four Jesuits to the satisfaction of all of them. After his graduation in 1932 he was accepted as a novice by the Society of Jesus.¹⁷ After two years of spiritual exercises he completed his novitiate in 1934. He then went to Regis College at Toronto for a three year programme in philosophy which he completed in 1939. The next step, in the long process of becoming a Jesuit priest was called Regency. This was a period of teaching which normally continued for three years and Bill was posted to one of the seven Jesuit colleges in Canada. During his very successful three pedagogical years he even managed to earn a diploma in physical education. In 1942 Billy Mackey finished his Regency and entered into a programme in theology. On the 15th August, 1945, Billy Mackey was ordained by Archbishop Charbonneau in the Immaculate Conception Church in Montreal and he officially became 'Father Mackey'.¹⁸ His educational/training period came to an end in 1946 with the completion of the programme in Theology. He was now Reverend Father William Mackey, S.J., with Licentiate in Theology, Licentiate in Philosophy, Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Physical Education.¹⁹

The Jesuit Order, from its inception, has been a missionary organization and expectedly he applied for a missionary work and was accepted for the Jesuit Mission in Darjeeling, India. In January 1947 he, in a group of five members, sailed for India. Father William Mackey's first posting was at St. Paul's Parish, in the small town of Kurseong, located in the Himalayan foothills in the south of Darjeeling. Then he became the Headmaster of St. Alphonsus School. There he for the first met Bhutanese students that were boarding in the hostel having come thus far as Bhutan had no high schools. Virtually all of them went to India with Darjeeling district absorbing most of them. After about ten years he was transferred to St. Robert's High School, Darjeeling, in 1959 as the headmaster.²⁰ Bhutanese boys were in Darjeeling at the behest of the Prime Minister, Jigme Dorji, who possessed great interest and enthusiasm in the education of his fellow citizens. He often visited schools and took great interest in all aspects of student activities. At about this time Father Mackey due to some factors gradually became unpopular with the local authorities and in spite of 17 years service in the field of education he was ordered to leave India in 1963.

At the same time the third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, had began taking initiative to modernize Bhutan with special emphasis on education. Till 1963 Bhutan's secular education system consisted of only primary schools and the King undertook to establish the country's first high school in that year. In keeping with the King's vision the Prime Minister Jigme Dorji approached the Darjeeling Jesuits in March 1963 for seeking help in setting up a modern school system.²¹ The Prime Minister had already met with Father Mackey, knew his exemplary work, and so invited him to establish the first high school.

The process of getting Father to come to Bhutan took a protracted seven months and eventually, in early October 1963, he arrived in Paro.²² He was subsequently followed by five other Jesuits. Father Mackey was sent to Eastern Bhutan to take responsibility of establishing the country's first high school. He started working with the headship of the Tashigang Elementary School and whenever time permitted, while on his visits to the primary schools in Eastern Bhutan, he toured places like TashiYangtse, Lhuntse and Mongar looking for a suitable school site. He was delightfully surprised that people were never really astounded to see him and they, in fact, gave him hospitality and accepted him as a person, regardless of the fact that he was the first European many had seen.²³ Early in 1964, the Prime Minister

came to Tashigang to select the new school site and solicited Father Mackey's opinion. The Father expressed his preference and Kanglung was chosen as the most appropriate site. But a temporary setback that shocked him came about on 5th April, 1964, when Jigme Dorji was assassinated at a guest house in Phuentsholing.

Father William Mackey worked hard for the Tashigang School. Besides controlling the school as headmaster, he taught thirty five periods a week, did his share of study supervision, took initiative in improving his staff, gave priority in obtaining science equipments and books for the school library, made several arrangements for the comfort of the boarders, organized and coached sports and games and having done all that he still had the time and energy to stage concerts and other functions. Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, ex-student of the Tashigang School recounted that, "During the Tashigang Tshechu in 1963, Father Mackey arranged a gymnastic demonstration.....Thereafter, the school was closed for winter holidays. During the holidays, Father decided to tutor us. During those days, Father Mackey invited Dasho Thrimpon, my father and the public for science exhibition, which was followed by a concert including singing".²⁴ In all his works in Tashigang he was ably assisted by two other Jesuits, Brother Michael Quinn and Father Coffey.

One May morning, 1964, the King visited Tashigang school and witnessed the tremendous progress made by Father Mackey.²⁵ He invited him to the royal palace at Decencholing to spend a month where he tutored the three royal siblings, Princesses Sonam and Dechen and Prince Jigme, a bit of English, French, Mathematics and Science. Before returning he assured the King that all the children were intellectually sound.

The King showed keen interest in Father Mackey's work and asked the Jesuit to establish a Bhutanese examination system. In keeping pace with the Royal command, Father Mackey started the Bhutan Matriculation System in Tashigang with his first sixth graders in 1964.²⁶ The students and System would grow together, progressing one year at a time until the students appeared in their class ten examination. In November 1968, Bhutan's first matriculation exam was held and results came out in December. Out of the twenty students who appeared, one got a first class mark, eighteen a second class and one a third. Nobody failed.²⁷ But the examination system was not affiliated to any university nor had the required

recognition in India and the students were unable to get admission into Indian colleges, so five students were sent to Australia on Colombo Plan scholarships.²⁸ The Bhutanese authorities realizing that they could not continue with the Bhutan Matriculation(class ten) sent Father Mackey to New Delhi to start the process of affiliating Bhutan's high schools with the ISC(class eleven) system in 1969. Later this system underwent a change into Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE/ class ten) and the Indian School Certificate (ISC/ class twelve).²⁹

The school faced a major problem of choosing the medium of instruction. The most widely spoken language was Sharchokpa but it had no written form. People from the south spoke Nepali while the official language was classical Choekey. Due to the lack of a popular written language amongst the majority speakers a decision was taken to conduct primary education in Hindi. Father Mackey thought that English should be the medium since it was an international language and it was already being taught as a subject in Bhutan's schools. His view was supported by the Bhutanese leaders as the better schools they had seen in India were all English medium institutions.

During his early years in Eastern Bhutan, Father Mackey's chief partner in building the educational system was Dawa Tshering, the Director of Education and the future Foreign Minister. He and Father Mackey liked and respected one another and worked in tandem for the educational development of Eastern Bhutan. Before Father Mackey's arrival, Bhutan had little that could be described as an educational policy and during his tour of Eastern Bhutan in 1963, he was to discover that schools operated independently with no common syllabus. He discussed this with Dawa Tshering and then two of them drafted Bhutan's first educational policy. Consequently, education administrators were recruited from India, other Jesuits arrived, more government officials were recruited and the wheels of education set into motion.

The building of a new school in Kanglung was a slow process. In January, 1964, the Prime Minister had asked the Dantak, (Indian Border Roads Organization) if they would build the school. But Prime Ministers assassination that year brought everything to a halt. In the following year the King himself took up the matter with the Dantak authority but a temporary stalemate intervened because the Dantak also

wanted to build a road north from Tashigang to Tibetan border. Laying the foundation was done by Ashi Chhoekei Wangmo, half sister of the King on 27 July, 1966. The King chose the name, 'Sherubtse' meaning 'Peak of knowledge', and thus was born Sherubtse Public School. Ultimately Dantak took the responsibility and new school was opened on May 26, 1968.³⁰

Sherubtse had all the facilities that a modern school needed. It was a showcase for both Bhutanese government and the Dantak while for the Jesuits the school represented father Mackey's real work since he was continuously involved in the progress of the institution from its very inception. When he moved to Kanglung in May of 1968, he still remained Principal of the Tashigang School. It had blossomed into a high school and he visited it at least once a week while a teacher in charge ran the school on a day to day basis during his absence. Besides having administrative responsibilities, he taught class ten mathematics. The jeep was not always available for his Tashigang trips, so often he made the visit on foot. He would leave Kanglung after the second period on Friday, teach and do his other work that afternoon in Tashigang and on Saturday morning hike back to Kanglung.³¹

In Sherubtse Father Mackey worked tirelessly taking on multifarious responsibilities of handling day to day office work, teaching, dealing with teachers and their problems, disciplining students and making sure that the support side of the school (the kitchens, the dormitories, the school vehicle etc) were in good order.³²

The King visited Eastern Bhutan about once a year. He would always spend some time with Father Mackey and discuss ways of improving the educational system. On the morning of 21st July, 1972 Father Mackey received the news that the King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck had passed away. The Father had not just lost an enthusiastic supporter but also a great friend and the kingdom a benevolent King and a visionary. The Jesuit called an Assembly and talked about the late King's interest in books, his contribution in modernizing the educational system, including the acceptance of English as the medium of learning. He also memorized the King's friendship and support.³³

Throughout his tenure at Sherubtse, Father Mackey enjoyed the full support of his late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, as well as of Dawa Tshering and Ashi Dechen, the young King's sister. She had been

appointed as the King's representative in the Ministry of Development when she was just seventeen years old and the confidence and faith she had on the Father is evident from one of her letters where she wrote, "You have full permission to do whatever you think is good for the country."³⁴ While Father Mackey was at Sherubtse, Dzongkha, now official language of Bhutan, was introduced as a subject. Before 1960s Dzongkha was a spoken language of Western Bhutan.

The Department of Education began to think that Sherubtse was no longer a place for lower classes and so in May 1976, it was upgraded to Sherubtse Junior College commencing with class eleven that year and twelve in the next.³⁵ In 1977 the lower classes from Sherubtse were transferred to Khaling, a new high school in eastern Bhutan. A year later Father Mackey and Brother Quinn left Sherubtse and joined Jigme Sherubling High School at Khaling.³⁶ Father Mackey translates Sherubling as 'place of learning'. He managed Jigme Sherubling just as he had run Sherubtse by establishing a library, introducing all the programmes including sports, concerts and plays and thereby endeavored to provide entertainment while simultaneously raising interest among the children in education.

Father Mackey was happy as Principal of Jigme Sherubling. But in 1982, when he was sixty seven, the Bishop and the Jesuit Superior at Darjeeling visited Khaling and expressed the idea of handing over the high school to a younger man with Father Mackey staying on as an assistant. They discussed the matter with Nado Rinchhen, the Director of Education, and with his agreement Father Perry became the principal of Jigme Sherubling in 1983 and Rev. Mackay continued to teach Mathematics besides helping to guide Father Perry in running the school. Later that year Father moved to Thimphu at the invitation of the Director of Education.³⁷ According to a report of the Kuensel, "The staff and students of Jigme Sherubling School in Tashigang on July 17 organized a special programme in honour of Father Mackey. ----- Besides his friends and many of his well wishers, hundreds of villagers from the nearby villages had also come to bid him farewell".³⁸ Such was his influence and acceptance in the social life of Eastern Bhutan.

At Thimphu Father Mackey became the Secretary of the Bhutan Board of Examinations and soon after the Coordinator of Textbook and Syllabus Committee. At the end of 1985, he became the Chief Inspector, Inspectorate of Schools.³⁹ This

was a demanding job which included many hours on the road, time in the classrooms, time with teachers, time with students, full use of listening skills, assessment of general academic level of schools to inspect the adequate physical facilities in the schools and where possible, problem solving. He did all these with great passion. We can cite some examples from the report of the Kuensel regarding the role played by Father Mackey as Chief Inspector of school-a) “A team of school Inspectors led by Chief Inspector Father W.J. Mackey, have been inspecting schools in Samtse district since June 10 1990. According to Father, their visit is mainly to find problems, their solutions and to see general academic level. Their role is not to find faults but to see reality for the information of the Department”.⁴⁰ b) According to a news dated 14 July 1990, “All the schools and other Educational Institutes in Chhukha have made steady progress and improvements in terms of their organizational skills, facilities and the most important buildings of the teams of dedicated and capable teachers, said Father W. J. Mackey, Chief Inspector of schools. He also said, facilities do not make up for good teachers, good teachers produce fantastic results despite lack of facilities. He added that at junior and high school levels, the science and mathematical contents must be strengthened as Bhutan moves into the twenty-first century”.⁴¹ c) According to a news dated 10 August 1991, “A team of school Inspectors, working in four groups, led by the Chief Inspector, Father W. J. Mackey, completed the inspections of schools under Thimphu *Dzongkhag*. The main purpose of the inspection was to see if the NAPE (New Approach to Primary Education) system was being followed in the primary schools and how far it benefitted the school children. Further, the general academic level of the schools were also assessed”.⁴² Country’s first Mathematic teachers meet was held at Jigme Sherubling School under the Chairmanship of Reverend Father William Mackey in the year 1991 where the matters were discussed relating to text books, the curriculum, syllabus, exam etc, attended by the math teachers from all high schools and junior high schools.⁴³ In 1992, His Majesty the King elevated Father Mackey as an Education Advisor to the Department of Education, to be retained in government service for life in appreciation of his commendable service to the country.

Besides many awards and recognitions which he received in all the places he worked, Father Mackey was awarded the prestigious medal, ‘*Druk Thuksye*’ (Heart son of Bhutan), by the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1973. In 1985 he was

granted Bhutanese citizenship and Father said that Bhutan had helped him to grow, “culturally, intellectually and spiritually”.⁴⁴ On August 19th, 1989 Father Mackey turned seventy five years old. More than 250 former students, well wishers and friends organized a grand celebration in Thimphu to celebrate his birthday on 19 August 1989 as a token of affection and gratitude for his precious contribution to the nation.⁴⁵ We can cite an example of a birthday message to Father by a group of students from Jigme Sherubling school in Khaling, “Our grief lies in the feebleness of our attempts to express our devotion and gratitude to you, who have taken us at the high tide of our lives and opened for us the realm of knowledge and learning, and have let the sun of hope rise on the horizons of our young lives”.⁴⁶ Having been conferred the highest recognition as well as the citizenship by Bhutan it was now the turn of the country of his birth to acknowledge the Jesuits contribution. On 25 May 1994 the University of Brunswick in Canada conferred upon Father Mackey the degree of Doctor of Letters for his distinguished and lasting contribution towards the development of education.⁴⁷

At the age of eighty one, following a brief illness, he passed away peacefully in October 1995. The then Deputy Minister for Health and Education, Dasho T.J. Rixin, described Father Mackey as one of the pioneers of modern education in Bhutan, under the guidance of King Jigme Dorji Wanchuck. He described Father Mackey as a person who “endeared himself to the people of Bhutan by his simplicity, sense of humour and exemplary dedication to his work as an educator.” He further elaborated, “His sensitivity to and appreciation of the ancient Buddhist culture and traditions of Bhutan was one of his remarkable qualities.”⁴⁸ Actually, Father Mackey was never an ordinary missionary and in his 32 years in Bhutan he never converted a single Bhutanese to Catholicism and even admitted that he had been influenced by Buddhism. As a priest, he often said that, “God is at work in all religions, He loves every man and woman born into this world and is at work in every one of our lives”.⁴⁹ As a teacher, he asked his students to “grow and develop to be able to play a mature role as citizens of the country, to become solid individuals, ready to take up your responsibilities in family and government”.⁵⁰ For Father, children have been one of the delights of his many years in Bhutan. He said, “The kids are so self reliant, they’re out in the jungle much of the time. If parents in other countries saw a kid sitting on the edge of a 3,000 ft cliff looking over they would die

but with the kids here it is no problem. They are more down to reality than kid in developed countries”.⁵¹ Because of his universal spirituality and social versatility, Father was a lovable man to all. His fellow priests described Father Mackey as a man ahead of the times and an example to his colleagues.

In summary one can safely surmise that Father Mackey played a stellar role in the development of secular education and in its dramatic expansion. During three decades after his arrival in Bhutan he crisscrossed numerous high mountains and deep valleys on foot, on horseback, in a jeep when available, and on a motorcycle for the sake of education in Bhutan. In his pioneering endeavor of building a sound secular education system in Bhutan he was never found wanting in enthusiasm and energy. It was well known that he loved every one of his long tough treks across the kingdom and every association with his close friends who included members of the royal family, shopkeepers, drivers, government officials, students, soldiers, little toddlers etc. In all his years in Bhutan, a country he came to love and adopt as his own, he showed equal care, compassion and concentration to his students whether rich or poor, royal or menial. His reflection of the years in Bhutan, in 1992, clearly manifests his profound love for the country and the people: “I feel honoured that I spend the last days of my life in a country I respect and among people whom I appreciate and love, and with whom I have spent 29 years of my life.”⁵²

The Bhutanese response is equally affectionate and appreciative and one native essayist writes of the pioneer as a man “opening the eyes of Bhutanese children” ... “compelling love and affection of a caring father” ... “the inspiring wisdom of a true educationist, and the warmth of a children’s true patron.”⁵³

Contribution of Father LeClaire in the development of modern education in Bhutan

Like pioneering Jesuit educationist Father Mackey, another Jesuit from Canada who played a major task in the growth of modern education in Bhutan was Father Gerald. E. LeClaire, S.J. He was also from Montreal, Quebec. After attending four years in D’ Arcy Mc Gee High School he entered the Society of Jesus at Guelph on September 7, 1947. After Philosophy in Toronto, he studied History at the University of Toronto for three years. Father LeClaire always had a urge “to teach and to preach” and to go on missions. When the Jesuit order included him in the mission

which was being sent to Darjeeling, his wish was fulfilled. He arrived by ship in Bombay in 1957 and was surprised by the large population and the extensive use of English in the country. His knowledge of India was limited to his history classes and the thesis he had done on India's independence movement. He was, to quote himself "struck by the friendliness and helpfulness of the people"⁵⁴

There he was assigned to the school department at St. Joseph's school for a short while during which he looked after the students of the upper division i. e. from class seven to ten. There were no Bhutanese boys at that time but the school did have a sizeable number of Thai and Burmese students, enhancing the international character of the school.

After attending a four years theology course in St. Mary's in Kurseong, father LeClaire was finally ordained a priest on march 22, 1961.⁵⁵ His priestly ministry began in Gayaganga in Darjeeling district as co-pastor and in 1965 he moved to Darjeeling. In 1966, he was made the Rector and Principal of St. Joseph's College in Darjeeling. It was during this time that he first came in contact with Bhutanese students. One of his Bhutanese students in the college remembered that Father LeClaire was such a man who "took great trouble and risks to solve the students problems".⁵⁶ Father's teaching centred on History and Theology.

When the third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, passed away in 1972 Father LeClaire visited Bhutan for the first time. He had come with a group of Jesuit priests to pay their last respects to the late King. When the Royal Government decided to set up a junior college in Kanglung in the 70's, Father LeClaire was requested to become the Principal. He, in 1978, accepted a posting to Bhutan and took over as Principal of Sherubtse College when Father Mackey who was in charge of the high school at Kanglung moved down to Khaling to set up Jigme Sherubling Higher Secondary School. Father LeClaire accepted the post in view of his relationship with the Bhutanese students in Darjeeling and in later period he said that, "I loved the Bhutanese students and that's why I eventually came to Bhutan".⁵⁷

Father LeClaire came to Kanglung in 1978 with the responsibility of phasing out the high school and transforming it into a junior college by consolidation and expansion and to introduce degree classes. In 1983, Sherubtse College was granted affiliation to Delhi University and became the first degree college in the country.

Although Sherubtse College had many drawbacks, such as remoteness of location, lack of good transport and communication facilities, and getting competent staff to stay on, furthermore as there was no other college in the country the students could not enjoy inter-collegiate contact. Yet under the supervision of Father LeClaire the college developed well with a beautiful and extensive campus, adequate academic facilities and the absence of distractions. But the most serious academic limitation of the college was in having only pass course in arts and commerce. In this regard Father LeClaire commented, “The pass arts and commerce courses is not challenging enough for the students. Several ways to improve the academic standard of the college were to redesign the course to suit Bhutanese needs and to have autonomy.”⁵⁸ The first convocation of Sherubtse College was held on November 18, 1986, where Father LeClaire, the Principal of the college gave a run-down on the history of the college-its growth since the site was selected by the third King and Father Mackey in 1964.⁵⁹ So Father had a clear vision in the educational development of the country and he was intensely involved in transforming the Sherubtse as a model institution.

With the Royal Government decision to hand over the running educational institutions to its own nationals, Father LeClaire left Sherubtse college in December 1988 and joined as the co-ordinator of higher education at the Education Department in Thimphu.⁶⁰ “My eleven years in Kanglung were happy and satisfactory. Building up the college was challenging and having done so was rewarding. I had full support from the headquarters and good teamwork with my colleagues”, said Father Laclaire.⁶¹ For eleven years he carried the burden of Sherubtse College. He had done a lot for the progress of higher education in Bhutan, his defining achievement is reflected in the Education Director, Thinley Gyamtsho’s words: “Father LeClaire’s name will be synonymous with the Sherubtse College”.⁶²

After serving 12 years in Bhutan, 11 years in Eastern part and 1 year in the Education Department, Father LeClaire left Bhutan in December 1989. In the last few weeks before his departure, he was treated to a round of farewell parties by colleagues, former students and government officials. Minister for Social Service and Communications, Lyonpo T. Tobgyel said that Bhutan would always remember Father LeClaire’s contribution to the country’s education system, especially by developing the Sherubtse College to the current level. Lyonpo Tobgyel told Father that he would “always be in the hearts of the Bhutanese people who would never

forget his contribution to the country”.⁶³ The Foreign Minister, Lyonpo Dawa Tshering, pointed out that Father LeClaire represented the higher standards of the Society of Jesus, the organization he represented. He also said that Bhutan was also grateful to the Society for its contribution to the world and for the quality of people they produced. “I hope that you will consider Bhutan as your second home”, he told Father LeClaire.⁶⁴ Dasho Paljor Dorji, Deputy Minister for Social Service, highlighted Father LeClaire’s service in Bhutan, his dedication to his work and his close relationship with the student.

After leaving Bhutan Father LeClaire returned to Darjeeling where he continued to work in the field of higher education. Father LeClaire was a selfless and dedicated educator. He was always attentive to the students’ various grievances. His classes were enthralling and lively. When he died in May 2010, in a letter of condolence to Father LeClaire’s family, Bhutan’s ambassador to Canada, Lhatu Wangchuck, said, “with the demise of Father LeClaire, the Kingdom of Bhutan lost yet another great humanitarian and selfless Canadian, who touched thousands of Bhutanese lives”.⁶⁵ Bhutan will always remember Father LeClaire “---as the forerunner of higher education in Bhutan and the architect of Sherubtse College.”⁶⁶

Thus the Jesuits and Salesians – Fathers, Brothers, Mothers and Sisters who arrived in Bhutan in 60s and 70s of the last century, taught in remote schools and contributed in substantial amount to the growth of modern education system in the country. They had helped to initiate, administer, and improve the schools and students not only through classroom teaching but also by introducing co-curricular and disciplinary activities. Their contribution in shaping country’s modern education system is unquestionably enormous. They sacrificed a large part of their lives in imparting education, skills, and moral values to the Bhutanese lads.

B. Contribution of the Indigenous Bhutanese in the education of Bhutan

Many native pioneers contributed a lot in the growth of development of education in Bhutan. Some of them are-

Gongzim Ugyen Dorji

Ugyen Dorji was a Bhutanese trader from Kalimpong. His business in India at the end of the nineteenth century gave him the opportunity to create good relations with the British, who ruled India at that time. In 1897, he was appointed as the Bhutan

Agent of the British.⁶⁷ He also maintained a good relationship with the Tongsa *Penlop*, Ugyen Wangchuck who in 1900 appointed him as the government's agent (*kutshab*) for the whole of southern Bhutan.⁶⁸ The British sent a mission to Tibet in 1903 led by Colonel Younghusband, both Ugyen Dorji and Ugyen Wangchuck accompanied him and Ugyen Dorji mediated peace between the British and the Tibetan government. When Ugyen Wangchuck visited Calcutta in 1906 Ugyen Dorji accompanied him and after returning Ugyen Wangchuck conferred him the title of Haa Dungpa.⁶⁹ When Ugyen Wangchuck was appointed as the first hereditary King of Bhutan Ugyen Dorji played the "role of King Maker".⁷⁰ Due to the farsightedness of Ugyen Dorji a cordial relation was always maintained between the King and the British government. The King resolved to employ him as the *Gongzim* or 'Chamberlain of the Ruler'.⁷¹ The letter in this connection was issued on 1908.⁷² Thus Ugyen Dorji received the honour which he really deserved due to his unparalleled services to the King. The letter of appointment, bestowed this position as a hereditary one to be passed down to his children in line of descent. In 1911, the Bhutan King was invited to be present at the Delhi Durbar; Ugyen Dorji again accompanied him and acquired the title of 'Raja' from the British Viceroy in recognition of his contribution in the improvement of Anglo-Bhutanese relations.⁷³ After returning from India the King and Ugyen Dorji set about the task of bringing about greater prosperity to the people of Bhutan. Ugyen Dorji had a strong conviction in the power of education and in this case he was impressed by his lifelong and trusted friend Dr. John Graham, Principal of famous Dr. Graham School of Kalimpong. Due to the initiative of *Gongzim* Ugyen Dorji, the first school for modern education was opened at Haa in 1914, later the school was renamed as Ugyen Dorji Higher Secondary School. In the year 2013 it was again renamed as Gongzim Ugyen Dorji Higher Secondary School.⁷⁴ Ugyen Dorji realized the importance of English and Hindi in order to modernize Bhutan and with his support the King established a mobile court school at Bumthang in the year 1915 and Ugyen Dorji took the duty of introducing English education. Teachers were brought from Kalimpong to teach in these newly established schools. In 1914, supported by the King, Ugyen Dorji took forty-six boys from eastern Bhutan and Haa in the west and put them in Scottish University Mission Institution at Kalimpong.⁷⁵ The children being educated in Kalimpong were funded privately through the funds of Ugyen Dorji.⁷⁶ Due to the personal initiatives of Ugyen Dorji Bhutan first saw the light of modern education. C.A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim

in his Annual Report on the Bhutan for the year 1914-15 mentioned that, “Forty-six Bhutanese boys are being educated by teachers appointed by Church of Scotland Mission at Kalimpong. They stay with Raja Ugyen during the winter at Kalimpong and during the summer at Ha in Bhutan. The boys are making good progress. Raja Ugyen appears to have made himself responsible for the expense of the undertaking, which is likely to promote the development of Bhutan on sound lines in no inconsiderable degree.”⁷⁷ Again C. A. Bell in his Annual Report on Bhutan for the year 1915-16 mentioned that, “A school has been opened at Bumtang (in Bhutan), the residence of His Highness the Maharaja, where English is taught to the Bhutanese boys besides their mother language, which is Tibetan. Having only recently opened, this school is at present attended by but eighteen students, but it is probable that with the assistance of Raja Ugyen Dorji, who appears to have made himself responsible for imparting English education to Bhutanese boys, it will gradually become an important institution in Bhutan. Another school has been in existence for last two or three years at Ha in Western Bhutan and here there are 46 boys. They came down to Kalimpong with Raja Ugyen in each cold season. Raja Ugyen obtained teachers from schools from Dr. Sutherland of the Scotch Mission in Kalimpong. He experienced some opposition at first from the parents of the boys and from his co-religionists outside Bhutan, but being backed by His Highness, he was able to brush his aside, and those who opposed now appear to realize that this modest amount of Western education is good for the country.”⁷⁸ Though there was lack of funds in the country 12 of the original students were trained in the 1920s as “teachers, sub-assistant surgeons, trainers, forest rangers, mining engineers, and vets”⁷⁹

This true patriot of Bhutan died on June 22, 1916 in his house in Kalimpong. He was a great visionary who paved the way for the true development of Bhutan by introducing the modern secular education and also maintaining Bhutan’s good relationship with British India. The first King realized the importance of secular education for the progress of his country but only with the help of his *Gongzim* that he became successful in this venture. Thus Ugyen Dorji played an important role in promoting modern education in Bhutan.

***Gongzim* Sonam Tobgey Dorji**

Sonam Tobgey Dorji, the eldest son of Raja Ugyen Dorji was seventeen years of age when his father passed away. He was one of the first Bhutanese to be educated

in a 'western-style school', i.e., St. Paul's School in Darjeeling. He possessed both modern education and the qualities of his father, and the King appointed him in all the hereditary posts. He helped the King in maintaining good relations with the British and also designated to become the Bhutan Agent for the British with title of 'Raja'.⁸⁰ Because of their fluency in the English language, it was beneficial for the Dorjis to make connections with their neighbours.⁸¹ In 1918, he married the princess of Sikkim, Choying Wangmo. Sonam Tobgey Dorji wanted to modernize Bhutan and during the period of second hereditary monarchy Sonam Tobgey began a "systematic review of social conditions, administrative practices and judicial proceedings".⁸² When India gained independence from the British, *Gongzim* Sonam Tobgey Dorji led a delegation to discuss Bhutan's relation with independent India and in 1949 a new Indo-Bhutan treaty was signed by which Bhutan's independence was recognized but Bhutan agreed to be guided by the government of India in regard to its external relations.

Being himself educated in modern English school Sonam Tobgey Dorji had a fascination for introducing modern education in Bhutan. Due to his tireless efforts Haa School developed further and he initiated the training of 20 boys in English and Hindi. From this school candidates were later selected for engineering, medical and veterinary work continuing the aspirations of his father and that of his King.⁸³ According to the Annual Report on Bhutan for the year 1922-23 by F.M. Bailey, Political Officer in Sikkim, "The school at Bumthang is making good progress There are 17 boys on the roll. The school at Ha has been transferred to Kalimpong under the care of *Deb Zimpon* Sonam Tobgay Dorji, Agent of His Highness the Maharaja of Bhutan. There are 24 boys on the roll. Of these two have been sent for training-one in Forestry and the other in Surveying. One of them appeared at the last matriculation Examination But the result is not known yet."⁸⁴ Again he in the annual report on hutan for the year 1923-24 mentioned that, "There are 20 boys under the care of *Deb Zimpon* Sonam Tobgay Dorji, Agent of His Highness the Maharaja of Bhutan, at school in Kalimpong. Out of these, one has won the higher grade teacher's certificate and four appeared in the matriculation examination."⁸⁵ Furthermore the annual report on Bhutan for the year 1924-25 by F.M. Bailey mentioned that, "there are 15 boys under *Deb Zimpon* S. T. Dorji, Agent of His Highness the Maharaja, at school at Kalimpong. Out of these eight appeared in the last (1924) matriculation examination. Three of them have passed the examination. One of these two is being trained as

Forest Rangers at the Forest Research Institute and College, Dehra Dun. Arrangements are being made to train the other boy as a Sub-Assistant Surgeon in the Campbell Medical School, Calcutta.”⁸⁶

Under the command of the second King, the momentum of education was further strengthened through *Gongzim* Sonam Tobgey Dorji and more Bhutanese were educated in Haa, Bumthang and India. The students who had received their education in Kalimpong continued to proceed to further studies in other parts of India.⁸⁷ Like his father Sonam Tobgey Dorji also looked after the children sent to India for receiving higher education. Sonam Tobgey Dorji was not only fluent in English but also well versed in western etiquette and many Europeans were surprised to meet such a dignified Bhutanese. With his wife Rani Chuni Wangmo he stayed mostly in Bhutan House, Kalimpong which was the social centre at that time.

Lyonpo Jigme Palden Dorji

Jigme Palden Dorji, the eldest son of Sonam Tobgey Dorji was born in 1919. He studied in North Point School in Darjeeling and in Bishop Cotton School in Simla. Annual report on Bhutan for the year 1941-42 by the Political Officer of Sikkim, B.J. Gould mentioned that, “Jigme Dorji, eldest son of Raja Dorji spent some weeks at the I.C.S. training school, Dehradun.”⁸⁸ When Jigme was 7-years old, second King Jigme Wangchuck awarded him with the Red Scarf and the title of Haa *Drungpa* (administrator) on his coronation day in 1927 in appreciation of the priceless services provided by the Dorji family to the kingdom of Bhutan.⁸⁹ In 1949, when crown prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck went England for further study, Jigme Dorji accompanied him. Perhaps the King would have seen benefit in having him study with his son, and this reflects the trust he had on Jigme Dorji and his ancestors who served the kings with all their loyalties.⁹⁰ After the death of Sonam Tobgey Dorji in 1953, Jigme became Bhutan Agent in Kalimpong, first Prime Minister of Bhutan under third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. He also served as Regent from 1963 to 1964. Jigme Dorji assisted the third King in ending Bhutan’s policy of isolation and to follow the policy of economic development by Five Year development Plans. Due to his initiatives Bhutan got entry into international organizations such as Colombo Plan.

Jigme Palden Dorji had given priority in modernizing Bhutan by implementing modern education. Whenever he journeyed in Bhutan, he used to bring

some children back with him and put them in the best schools in Darjeeling and Kalimpong.⁹¹ Like his grandfather and father Jigme took great interest in all aspects of the activities of Bhutanese students studying in India. Such as “While in Darjeeling, Jigmie Dorji would visit the schools and, if he found achievements to acknowledge, would host modest celebrations. If the achievements were particularly good, he would provide dinner at the restaurant in town - Glenary’s. If he were less pleased with student performance, he might take the boys for afternoon tea.”⁹² Jigme took the responsibility for inducing the Canadian Jesuits from India to involve themselves in the school at Tashigang in eastern Bhutan.⁹³ He invited Father William Mackey, the Canadian Jesuit from Darjeeling to start country’s first high school. Together they selected the site for country’s first high school at Kanglung.⁹⁴ This school was later upgraded in Sherubtse College.

But Jigme Palden Dorji was assassinated at Phuentsholing in 1964 which brought an end in the life of such a dynamic person who could have contributed much more to the country. He was also the “greatest architect of present day Indo-Bhutan relations.”⁹⁵

Dasho Nado Rinchhen

The first school in the country was established in Haa, inside the dzong, during the time of the first King, but the parents were not forthcoming to get admission of their children in this new system of education. During the time of second King in the late 1940s, some officials and attendants of *Gongzim* Sonam Tobgay Dorji had toured the villages in Haa and jotted down the names of the children whom they thought as potential students and the list was submitted to the dzong. The following year some officials and attendants came to the villages with the list and the children were taken to the Haa Dzong School for admission. In Nado Rinchhen’s family the name of his elder brother was enlisted. But when the officials had come to collect the children his brother was herding cattle outside, so they did not wait and took Nado instead of his elder brother and got him admitted in Haa School. His mother came and appealed to get him out of school, but when the officials heard that she had four children they replied that one had to be admitted.⁹⁶ Thus Nado got acquainted with this new system of education.

Nado recollects some fond memories of his experiences at Haa School. The second King visited the school he recounts “we had a grand feast and received *soelra* from His Majesty”, he recalls again “at another time the students of Haa Dzong School were invited to the Third King’s wedding at Paro in 1952”⁹⁷ In 1950s there were a dozen schools in the country, the government decided to select the best students from these schools to send to India for the secondary level of education. In 1955, Nado was among the group of Bhutanese students to receive the first government of India scholarship to study in India. He memorized, “After studying for about eight years in Haa we went to India.”⁹⁸ Admissions into different schools were conducted on the basis of performance in tests conducted at Bhutan House, Kalimpong. Parents had requested not to send their children to warm places out of fear for malaria, so students were distributed among hill station schools of Nainital, U.P., Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Nado Rinchhen studied at the Birla Public School in Nainital, U.P., then at St. Joseph College in Darjeeling, forestry in Forestry College at Dehradun and bachelor’s in English and Political Science from a University in Kathmandu, Nepal. He was also the part of the first teacher and student delegate from Bhutan to India in 1958 and this delegate had the opportunity to receive an audience with the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.⁹⁹

In memorizing his service tenure in the Department of Education he said, “From 1973 till 1986, I worked in the then Department of Education as Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Director and Director General of Education. I served the Ministry as the Head for more than thirteen years.”¹⁰⁰ Nado Rinchhen was a member of the first National Education Policy Committee when it completed the policy in 1976 during the reign of the fourth King. Being himself the product of modern secular education Dashi Nado Rinchhen has contributed a lot in developing this system of education. According to him, the modern education system in Bhutan in the beginning faced two problems- one was the preference of monastic system of education over modern education and the other one was, lack of teachers in the country so bulk of teachers were appointed from India.

In order to make much progress in this system of education Daso Nado Rinchhen’s, who is now serving as the Deputy Minister in the Royal Privy Council of Bhutan, views that, “A key role must also be played by parents. Teachers or the schools alone, through caning or no caning cannot bring about the desired

developments in children. I, therefore, urge the parents and schools to join hands in developing for our country the most productive citizens with the GNH (Gross National Happiness) values.”¹⁰¹

Lyonpo Dawa Tshering

Dawa Tshering’s father was in service in the Dorji household. Dawa was a bright, educated in a style almost equal to that of the Dorji children. After graduating from University with a degree in Economics, he joined the service in the government, working with the Dorjis. His responsibilities included education and he along with the Jesuit priest Father William Mackey became partners in building Bhutanese education system in the 1960s.¹⁰² Throughout his tenure at Sherubtse in eastern Bhutan from the period of the establishment of country’s first high school Father Mackey got the support of Dawa Tshering in solving any problem. Dawa Tshering’s career in the Royal government covered a period during which Bhutan went through a rapid transformation from traditional country to the first stages of the development. In order to develop country’s new education system there was immediate need of teachers. Dawa Tshering went to Kerala in South India in 1962 and took the first group of teachers. Father Mackey said about Dawa Tshering that, “He collected 20 teachers, supplied them with some sugar and a bit of rice and dropped two at a school, walked on and dropped another two and so on. He told them he would pick them up at the end of the year. He says jokingly, “They couldn’t leave because they couldn’t find their way back”.¹⁰³ Actually Dawa Tshering gained a reputation among the teachers, in spite of so many difficulties he tried to bestow a descent salary for the Indian teachers and most of the teachers he brought became acclaimed teachers.

In 1960 Dawa Tshering became the first Director of Education of Bhutan.¹⁰⁴ In 1969, Dawa Tshering was appointed Bhutan’s first Minister of Planning and Development and in 1972 he became the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Under the command of the fourth King a National Education Policy committee was formed with Dawa Tshering as the Chairman. The first National Education Policy was completed and approved in 1976.¹⁰⁵ Dawa Tshering and Father Mackey played the major role in drafting the education policy. Mr. Prasad, an Indian teacher and inspector in Bhutan for many years while commenting on the pioneers of the progress of modern education in Bhutan said that, “The credit should also go to *Lyonpo Dawa Tshering*,

the then Secretary General in the Ministry of Development for his enlightened and active role in introducing modern education in Bhutan.”¹⁰⁶

Thus Dawa Tshering played a major role in modernizing education in the initial years and in building modern Bhutan. As recognition of his contribution he was conferred with the *Druk Thuksey* by the third King in 1966 and the Coronation Medal by the fourth King in 1974.¹⁰⁷

Lopen Kharpa

During the time of the second King many school were opened, the school in Trashigang in eastern Bhutan was one of them. In 1952 it was started with 30 students and three teachers Dr. Karchung, Lopen Kharpa and Dasho Karma Dorji and Lopen Kharpa was the first head teacher.¹⁰⁸ Lopen Kharpa was from Khar, Pemagatshel and was educated in India as he had been chosen in 1914, by the first King to go to school in India and obtained teacher training at the University of Calcutta.¹⁰⁹ After Father William Mackey took the charge of the Trashigang School in 1964 Mr. Kharpa became the second-in-command. He was fluent in English and taught English, Hindi and Mathematics. When Father Mackey came in Trashigang School he found that, “Mr. Kharpa, who was in effect the Bhutanese head of the school, was not so bad....He was excessive in his punishments and the boys lived in terror of his wrath, which could be invoked by the slightest infraction-perhaps just a movement, a slight noise, or less than perfect work. The lightest punishment might be a swift blow to the head with a stick.”¹¹⁰ Thus Lopen Kharpa taught very well and was a strict teacher.

Lyonpo Sonam Tobgey, an ex-student of the school who later became the Chief Justice of Bhutan memorized that, “Lopen Kharpa was an excellent and dedicated teacher. The Indian teachers were very nice to me but Lopen Kharpa’s teaching was superior. I owe him for certain values in my life through his teaching from 1960 to 1963. Despite his enormous contributions to education starting from Haa, Wangduephodrang, Trashigang and Sherubtse schools, he paled into oblivion. I learnt from his nephew that the last years of his life in Khar were sad and lonely.”¹¹¹

Tamji Jagar

Born in Bumthang, he joined to serve the second King as a teenager. In 1961, he became the first *Thrimpoen* or chief administrator of the Trashigang Dzongkhag.¹¹²

Later he became Bhutan's first minister of Home Affairs. Tamji Jagar had a good understanding of the rural people and while in Trashigang he contributed a lot in developing education of the Dzongkhag. Along with Father Mackey he planned the project of boarding facilities of the Trashigang School and completed it which provided accommodation to the students from distant areas. Tamji Jagar could speak Sharchopkha which was his first language, Hindi and he had studied *Choekey* and also probably *Dzongkha*, but no English. When there was a move from Hindi to English in schools of Bhutan though many people objected Tamji Jagar endorsed it and assisted whenever possible.¹¹³ Tamji Jagar spoke Hindi and Father Mackey spoke Nepali but both of them became very close friend and understood each other's languages. In 1964 when the Trashigang School faced shortage of food and about thirty students were unable to bring ration from home due to travel difficulties it was Tamji Jagar who provided rice and corn for them from his own stores.¹¹⁴ Such was his love for students and education.

Thus Tamji Jagar was a true custodian of the people's well being. He cared for the country's future. He was a patron of Bhutan's culture and tradition and at the same time wanted to modernize the country through modern education

Babu Tashi

Tashi Tshering, popularly known as Babu Tashi was from Dungmain village in Pemagatshel in south-east Bhutan. People used the term 'Babu' to denote respect. He was selected by the first King to go to school in India. He acquired teacher training at the University of Calcutta, so he and Lopen Kharpa were the first two trained Bhutanese educators and some of the Bhutan's first schools also started by him.¹¹⁵ He was the teacher of the Bumthang School along with Babu Phento and Babu Karchung and they taught subject ranging from Hindi to Geometry.¹¹⁶ He had also instructed the third King in English and Hindi in his childhood.¹¹⁷ He could speak Sharchopkha which was his first language, Dzongkha, Hindi and English.

Zangley Dukpa one of the established educators of Bhutan memorized that, "It was Babu Trashi who opened the junior secondary schools in Yurung, Mongar and Trashigang in 1959...Babu Trashi was settled in Nangkhor although he was from Dungmain. Therefore our parents took us to Nangkhor (six hours journey on foot) towards the end of 1958. In the evening of our arrival in this important destination, we

were given a feast by Babu Trashi - red rice with red, big and long dried chillies and pork *paa*....In the morning of the next day, we stood in a circle with our respective parents behind us in the courtyard of the Nangkhor Nagtshang. There came Babu Trashi again and distributed three 'shikhis' and four/five round sweets to each of us as he came around talking to our parents individually. He said we would get more of those sweets and 'shikhis' if we went to school. When he came to my father who, along with others, begged him for Kidu on the pretext that I should succeed my father as the village Lam in Dungmain. Babu Trashi said in a philosophic tone: 'Sending your son to school is my Kidu for you. You will soon realize it'...It was the first and the last opportunity for me to see Babu Trashi, a highly trained teacher as I realized later."¹¹⁸

Later Babu Tashi became the first *Nyerchen* of the district of Trashigang who was in charge of all accounts and payments in addition with the collection of taxes. Father Mackey realized and recognized Babu Tashi's abilities and his work for education. He was also a strict disciplinarian and a religious person.

Ashi Tashi Dorji

Ashi is an honorific title for an aristocrat Bhutanese lady. Tashi Dorji was the eldest daughter of Sonam Tobgey Dorji. Born in 1923 she epitomized the women of Bhutan of her time. When Bhutan was still in the period of isolation *Ashi* Tashi Dorji was an educated lady and exposed to the outside world. She was one of the first Bhutanese women to receive a modern education. Realizing the benefits of modern education Sonam Tobgey Dorji sent her daughters- Tashi Dorji and Kesang Choden (who later became the queen of the second King) to St. Joseph Convent in Kalimpong.¹¹⁹ Mr. B.J.Gould, Political Officer of Sikkim, in his Annual Report on the relations between the British Government and Bhutan state for the year 1939-40 mentioned that, "The eldest daughter of Raja Dorji, aged 16 passed the senior Cambridge Examination obtaining a 'credit' in every subject."¹²⁰ After that Tashi Dorji studied science at Loreto House in Calcutta and later studied medicine at the Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi.¹²¹

Ashi Tashi at the age of eleven took the role of an assistant in her father's office at Bhutan House, Kalimpong, helping her father to organize files, type and draft official letters. On the command of the third King, *Ashi* Tashi served as his representative in

Trashigang for two years beginning in 1955 to administer the large western district.¹²² She had also a great concern for developing modern education in the country particularly in eastern Bhutan. When Father Mackey arrived in Paro from Darjeeling in 1963, *Ashi* Tashi decided that Father should engaged himself to establish the new high school in eastern Bhutan. As she was aware of the condition of eastern Bhutan she told Father Mackey that much development had taken place in western part so it was the time to build country's first high school in eastern Bhutan.¹²³ With the establishment of country's first high school at Kanglung in 1968 her dream was realized.

Zangley Dukpa

Born in 1950 in the village of Dungmain at Pemagatshel *Dzongkhag* (previously under the Shongar *Dzonkhag*) Zangley Dukpa was admitted in the Yurung School in 1959 along with the twenty six children of the same village when the school was opened. Most of the parents tried not to send their children to school but all their attempts were in vein. Students lived in their own hutments built around the school. Zangley Dukpa recollected about the system of education, "Rote learning was common. I memorized the whole history book of Napoleon in Hindi without understanding the meaning of the text!"¹²⁴ After completion of his junior secondary level he joined in the Teacher Training Institute in Samtse in 1968. He was selected as a teacher in Sarbhangshir Primary School (August 1970 to February 1973), then at Paro High School (March 1973 to June 1975). In 1975 he went to Singapore to complete a certificate course in education from the Institute of education and after returning from there he joined in Trashigang Junior High School. From 1980 to 1981 he worked as head teacher of the two high schools-Lamidara Junior High School and Haa Junior High School.¹²⁵ After that he went to the University of Bristol, England and completed Master's programme in Education and after returning he anticipated in drafting the education policy on advice of the Director of Education, Dasho Nado Rinchhen. According to him teaching profession is very challenging and a teacher played a model role in the society. His view is that for overall improvement of the school it is necessary to give adequate degree of autonomy to all the heads of schools and there should be training and in-service courses for them.¹²⁶ In 1989, he took the charge of Sherubtse College, the only higher education centre of the country. He tried his best to upgrade it.¹²⁷

As an honour of his contribution in the field of education he was awarded Red Scarf from the fourth King. In 1997 he was appointed as the *Dzongda* of Chhukha and later joined in politics and became the first democratically elected Minister of Health in 2007. Thus from the beginning of a career as a primary school teacher to the principal of the country's premier institution Zangley Dukpa contributed a lot in developing country's modern education.

Dasho Gagey Lhamu

Royal Government took the initiatives to admit girl children in modern schooling system in the 1950s. Gagey Lhamu was among the first ten girls of the country who took admission in the Haa School. There was a festival in the Haa *Dzong* where she went with her parent; there some officials came with *Dasho Jigme Dorji* (who became the Prime Minister of Bhutan in 1953) and they listed her name along with nine other girls all of whom were admitted in the Haa School.¹²⁸ In the first year she stayed in a hut near the school with her grandfather and from the second year the girls were provided with food and lodging facilities. The medium of teaching and text books all were in Hindi. She studied there till 1956, after which some boys and 7 girls were sent to India leading to her admission in St Philomena Girls' High School in Kalimpong. After that she received an Indian Government scholarship and took admission in a missionary school and later joined Dr. Graham's School where she did a secretarial course for two years. After returning Bhutan in 1965 she joined at Thimphu Public School as teacher-cum-office assistant. From 1965 she was upgraded as a regular school teacher and continued till 1993 in the same school and then joined the High Court of Bhutan.¹²⁹

Due to her outstanding contribution towards the country the fourth King Jigme Singey Wangchuck awarded her with Red Scarf on 5th October 1993. *Dasho Gagey Lhamu* has made a comparison about the condition of modern education of the country in 1950s and of a later period in the following manner, "When I look at those days and compare and contrast the school facilities after the commencement of First Five Year Plan, there is a drastic improvement in the schools both physically and academically. During my time, one could easily count the number of schools and teachers on fingertips, but now due to drastic increase in the enrolment of students both in urban and rural areas, it is extremely difficult to accommodate them.....Many

new schools have been opened where good, dedicated and highly qualified teachers are available...Now if parents want to send their child to school, facilities are easily available. During my time, parents were very reluctant to send their children to school. As such, they resorted to every means in hiding their children even when they heard about the coming of officials to select the students.”¹³⁰ *Dasho Gagey Lhamu* can be considered to be an example of what a woman can achieve through education.

Chandrakala Gurung

Chandrakala Gurung is the country’s first woman graduate. After completing her school level education she passed from Darjeeling Government College in the year 1956 and became the first woman graduate in Bhutan. After that she joined as a teacher in the same college probably because of the absence of high schools in the kingdom. In 1968 she joined as a lecturer at the newly opened Teachers’ Training Institute at Samtse which trained students for primary schools of Bhutan. She recalled that, “At that time not many students qualified to become teachers. The trainees had studied till class VIII, some even till class VI. But some were really good and went on to become some of the best teachers.”¹³¹ Thus Chandrakala Gurung was the teacher of many teachers of newly established primary schools of Bhutan in the 70s. In 1976 she became the principal of the institute and in 1982 it was upgraded as National Institute of Education and started to train students for secondary schools and later post-graduate certificate course in education and in-service training for teachers were also introduced. When she has started many of the students in the institute were older than her but later the situation changed.

Chandrakala Gurung is one of the great educators of Bhutan. She has been the mentor of many teachers of the country. Zangley Dukpa, former Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan said that while he took admission in TTI, Samtse, it was Chandrakala Gurung who took special care of him as a teacher and played a vital role in his success in the examinations.¹³² Thus she has left a legacy. It is really remarkable that she joined in the teaching profession in a institution at a time when there was no female trainees there. Five women joined in the institute in the second year. According to Ms Gurung the country’s education has come a long way. She summarized the progress of education as: “Most of the schools and institutions were

headed by Bhutanese teachers and educationists. Even our own university was established. More and more girls were enrolled in schools.”¹³³

Dasho Pema Thinley

Pema Thinley, first heard the word ‘es-school’ (school) when he was taken away from his home with some other children to get admission in the school at Mongar *Dzongkhag* in 1958.¹³⁴ There he stayed in a hut with his cousins under the care of his grandfather. They were taught in Hindi. In 1962 when the medium of learning was converted to English, many teachers came from Kerala. In 1965, 27 boys including Pema Thinley were transferred to Tashigang High School for secondary level education under Father William Mackey.¹³⁵ In 1968 he completed the Bhutan Matriculation and was selected for admission to St. Joseph College, Darjeeling. But as Bhutan matriculation was not recognized, he could not take admission in the college of Darjeeling. He joined as a teacher in Yangchenphug Public School. Fortunately he got the opportunity to study in Australia under the Colombo Plan Scholarship scheme and left for Australia in December 1969.¹³⁶

After six years of study in Australia he returned and joined Yangchenphug Public School in 1976 and continued there for six years. Then he worked as the Principal of Paro Central School, the Director of the National Institute of Education in Samtse, the Director of the Curriculum and Professional Support Division, Principal of Sherubtse College, the Director, Director General and Secretary of the Ministry of Education and joined Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan in the year 2012.¹³⁷ From the commencement of his career in a school to the post of Vice Chancellor of the country’s university he has been a part and parcel of the modern education system where in he took various responsibilities for the cause of upliftment of education. His view about Bhutan’s education is that, “I am a believer in the power of education. It has meant so much for me and I believe it can open up many opportunities for all people at any stage of their lives. ...We must never shy away from continually investing in the education of our people. This is a profound wisdom that our successive kings have used to guide Bhutan to where we are now. Opportunities to learn and better their lives have to be made available for people of all ages and abilities, at affordable costs, at any point in their lives, thus creating a truly learning society.”¹³⁸

Dasho Jagar Dorji

At the age of ten Jagar Dorji first heard the word “escoori” (i.e., school) when he was admitted to Trongsa Primary School in the beginning of 1960s with ten other boys from his village Tangsibi. He recalled about his school life that, “Teaching at that time was basically, traditional, lecture-oriented. Teachers used to teach us by reading the text from the books and explained their meanings, and we learnt the text by memorizing.”¹³⁹ He joined in Teachers’ Training Institute in 1968 and completed the course in 1970 and joined in Tshokana Primary School at Tsirang *Dzongkhag* where under the guidance of the head teacher he passed class X examination from the W.B.B.S.E. in Kalimpong. He was approved with Government of India’s Scholarship in 1976 to study in Punjab University and got B. A. and B. Ed degree in 1980. There after he taught in the schools at Trongsa, Bhur and Kalikhola and in 1981 got a scholarship to do masters degree in the University of London Institute of Education, UK.¹⁴⁰ After returning from England he joined in the National Institute of Education (previously known as Teachers’ Training Institute) as a lecturer. In 1989 he became the head of the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division. In 1994 he returned to Samtse as the Director of the National Institute of Education. Later he also became the Director of National Institute of Education, Paro.

From a teacher in a primary school to the Director of national Institute of Education both in Samtse and Paro, Jagar Dorji played a vital role in the initial growth of the country’s education. He worked on the history and geography course books, curriculum and took initiative to develop the National Institute of Education of both Samtse and Paro. He also completed his doctoral degree from the University of New England, Australia in the year 2000. For the first time in Bhutan this educationist has wrote a book on Bhutan, ‘Quality of Education in Bhutan’, in 2003, as a result of his deep association in the field of education. In mentioning the role of teacher in education system of Bhutan his view is that, “Traditionally, Bhutanese parents have little role in educating their children. There is a saying ‘keep wealth in one’s possession, and keep children in other’s possession’. This means that if you wish children to be educated, and brought up to be productive, mature and responsible, it is not the parents who can do it. They have always trusted the teacher to do so. This tradition has not died down as yet.”¹⁴¹

Ashi Dechen Wangmo Wangchuck

Ashi Dechen Wangmo Wangchuck was the eldest daughter of the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. When she was just seventeen years old she was appointed as the king's representative in the ministry of development and this position continued when her younger brother assumed the throne in 1972.¹⁴² In December 1974, she accompanied the King to India to discuss the plans for economic development of Bhutan.¹⁴³ She was responsible for the development of social sectors particularly education and health and guided Bhutan's effort at expanding reach of development services to all sections of the society. In regard to the progress of education in eastern side, considering the dedicated role played by Father Mackey, *Ashi Dechen* wrote to him that he had been given full permission to do what he thought good for the country.¹⁴⁴

Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley

Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, born in 1952 began his modern education at Dr. Graham's Homes in Kalimpong and went on to Pennsylvania State University in the USA for masters in Public Administration.¹⁴⁵ His family has a history of serving the country, his father had left his parents at a young age to serve the second King and this continued during the time of the third King. He was the Director of Education in 1980s and nurtured the country's education system. As the Director of Education he opened several new divisions such as Teacher Education, Non-Formal education, School Planning and Building, Planning and International Coordination, Curriculum and Textbook Division etc.¹⁴⁶ All these were created to fulfill the increasing demand of modernizing the education system. He later became the zonal administrator and twice minister in the erstwhile Council of Ministers. He was also the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan. A passionate leader, *Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley* brought about significant developments in the education sector in Bhutan. He inspired the launch of the Educating for Gross National Happiness in the country.

Thakur Singh Powdyel

Born and brought up in the farming village of Dorokha, Bhutan, Thakur S Powdyel, began his primary education in his village school at Dorokha, then moved to Samtse Central School to complete his high school education. This was followed by college

in Shillong, India, for pre-university, undergraduate, and postgraduate studies and finally did a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. He finally capped his carrier as the first democratically elected Minister of Education in Bhutan. This distinguished educationist has taught at school, college and university levels within the country and is also the visiting professor Kyoto University in Japan and Maharishi University of Management in Iowa, USA. He made tireless efforts to achieve universal primary enrolment, gender parity and did much to restore Education to its essential, core function by initiating the Green Schools programme under the mission of GNH.

He is the recipient of the sacred *Dakyen* from His Majesty the King (April 11, 2008) as well as several international recognitions for his contribution towards education.¹⁴⁷

H. B. Vishwa

H.B. Vishwa, though not highly qualified in so called formal education has played a meaningful role in the field of country's modern education. After completing teachers training in 1970 he joined government service as a teacher in Dorokha Primary School in Samtse and worked for two and half years in that position before becoming headmaster of different schools. He was promoted to Education Officer from 02 September 1987 to 30 September 2000 in different parts of Bhutan.

Finally he served the erstwhile National Institute of Education, Paro, as Administrative Officer looking after the administration and finance of three different divisions i. e., the main institute Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS) and the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERD). He attended a short training programme of 25 days in the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in New Delhi in the year 1982 under the UNESCO fellowship.

He had the opportunity to undergo a special training programme on Educational Planning and Administration in the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi in 1999.¹⁴⁸

Below is a list of native teachers given by Father William Mackey, who made an outstanding contribution to education:¹⁴⁹

Tashigang: Babu Tashi, Lopon Karpa, Dr. Karchung, Dasho Karma Dorji

Ha: Lupon Dago (Received Thuksey Medal on National Day, 1973, for work in education)

Mongar: Lupon Phuntsho

Thimphu: Dasho Pema Wangchuck

The list of native contributors given above is by no means exhaustive or even close to a complete list. Despite repeated trips to the kingdom, and numerous interviews, I was either rewarded only by flimsy reports which were difficult to corroborate with documents or other respondents and my several pleas to the Department of Education yielded only a blank response. It goes without saying that with the level of education that is present in the country today there must have been many unsung native heroes who must have had roles, major or minor, and it is my fervent hope and prayer that the sons of the soil will fill up the huge void left in this section of my thesis.

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