

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, nestled among the mountains of the Eastern Himalayas, had remained an enigma to the rest of the world for a long time. Bordered on the north by the Tibet regions of China, on the east by Arunachal Pradesh, on the south by the plains of Bengal and Assam, on the west by the Chumbi Valley and the Indian state of Sikkim, Bhutan has been aptly described as a 'mini yam between two rocks', hereby implying Bhutan's two powerful neighbours, Chinese Tibet and India. Though at times in the course of history her independence had been gravely threatened, she had succeeded in resisting the Chinese and the Tibetans, while the British did not consider it profitable to occupy the country.

As in the case of other Himalayan countries including Nepal and Tibet, a deep sense of preservation of her identity made Bhutan keep her doors shut to the entry of foreigners, particularly Europeans. Even in later times, after treaties of free and frequent commercial intercourse with India was signed, the Bhutanese were adamant in refusing the entry of European traders into their country. Naturally, therefore, her contacts with the world at large beyond her immediate neighbours were limited. Yet, within the Himalayan regions, and with her immediate neighbours, Bhutan maintained ^a fairly regular inter-relationship particularly in trade and in religious matters. But as far as her internal political situation was concerned, Bhutan exercised her own discretion. In this, however, she was aided by the British, who maintained by and large a policy of non-interference in her internal disputes. The Bhutanese authorities had in a few instances, solicited the help of the British in finding a solution to their problems but had found their appeals being politely but firmly repudiated.

Be that as it may, Bhutan did manage to remain independent and free. But, it has also been borne out that Bhutan was not entirely a closed country, guarded though her relations were with foreigners. In fact the train of events from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth, which is the main focus of this dissertation, throw light

on Bhutan's commercial relations with British India. The narration ends in 1907, with the emergence of a new era for Bhutan — the era of hereditary monarchical rule. How far this political changeover was interwoven with her economic and social life is a problem which can only be satisfactorily analysed after a thorough investigation has been made into a number of related issues including Indo-Bhutanese relations, commercial as well as political, for a period spanning nearly about one and a half centuries.

Bhutan : Land and People

Bhutan has often been described by travellers visiting the country as being one of the most picturesque spots on the earth. The main characteristics of Bhutan are its rugged and lofty mountains with numerous rivers flowing through the mountains ^{or} terrain. An idea can be formed of the scenic beauty of Bhutan by a description given by Captain Turner who visited Bhutan in 1783 -

"The prospect between abrupt and lofty prominences is inconceivably grand, hills clothed to their very summits with trees, dark and deep glens, and the high tops of mountains lost in the clouds, constitute altogether a scene of extraordinary magnificence and sublimity"¹.

For the most part Bhutan's northern frontier followed the crest of the ^Ggreat Himalayas. F.M. Bailey in the course of his journey through Bhutan and southern Tibet made mention of a series of 'subsidiary' ranges which ran south from the main range. He further wrote that in "each of the main valleys between these ranges is one of the large dzongs or castles from which the country is governed"². Amongst the major Bhutanese dzongs mention may be made of the following (i) Punakha dzong, (ii) Tashichhodzong, (iii) Parodzong, (iv) Wangdiphodrang-dzong, (v) Simtokadzong, (vi) Tongsadzong, (vii) Tashigang dzong, (viii) Hadzong. These dzongs have lost some of their historic role as feudal strongholds since the consolidation of Bhutan under the monarchy in 1907. But still they function as combined administrative centres and monasteries. They are the focal points of the social, religious, economic and political life of the surrounding country³.

In accordance with the physiographic setting and also according to considerations of relief, drainage, climatic conditions and natural vegetation, Bhutan can be divided into three broad basic geographic zones. The Himalayan foot hills which are often described as the Lower Himalayas, north of the Duar plains constitute the first zone. This area adjoins the basin of the mighty river Brahmaputra. The second zone lies to the north of the first and is often described as the Inner Himalayas or the Higher Himalayas.

It is the central or middle region of Bhutan which lies between the foot hills to the south and the small, narrow Great Himalaya zone of high peaks to the north. The latter is the third high mountainous zone which borders Tibet and comprises the snow-clad ^Ggreat Himalaya range⁴. The Merung-La separates Bhutan from the Chumbi valley of Tibet. From the Kulakangri group of high peaks the 'traditional border cuts across the Lhobrak drainage basin', which is in the Tibetan district bordering on the north of Bhutan, and runs north to the high peak of the Kharchu.

Numerous rivers together with their tributaries flow through the mountainous territory of Bhutan. Almost all the rivers flow from the Great Himalayan range which is the northern most high mountainous third zone and traverse down south into the plains, and eventually they drain into the Brahmaputra. This first zone therefore is an area which has the most cultivated land in the entire state, and the main crop is rice which grow in the plains as well as at heights upto 4000 feet⁵. As far the second zone is concerned which is also described as the Inner Himalayas or the Higher Himalayas, it may be said to constitute the central belt through which the rivers pass in narrow files producing innumerable cataracts. The principal rivers of this region are the Manas, Tchinchu, Amochu, Kuruchu, Dharla, Wongchu, and Mochu. The swift flowing Manas and its tributaries

drain eastern Bhutan. The valley of the Manas contains a wild life sanctuary and is on the tourist map of India. Another important river, the Amochu cuts across in a south easterly direction and passes by the market town of Phuntsholing on the Indo-Bhutan border. In the plains it is known as the Torsa. The waters of Ha, Paro and Thimbuchu unite as the Wong chu and reach India as the Raidak. The Mochu or the Sankos runs for more than two hundred miles within Bhutan and passes by Punakha and Wangdiphodrang⁶. Important trade routes run along the valleys of the principal streams. Moreover the valleys of these rivers also produce excellent cultivable lands in central Bhutan. Rice, buckwheat, barley etc. are the crops most commonly grown. Another remarkable characteristic of the central zone is that it contains the most valuable forests of the country. Fir, spruce, cypress, as well as hard wood such as oak and maple can be found in this region. Again timber is found in abundance at an higher altitude of about 13000 to 14000 feet with birch predominating the heights below the timber line. The third zone which comprise the Alpine region of the ^Ggreat Himalaya range, has climatic conditions akin to the Tundra, and the natural vegetation is Alpine. Cultivated land is restricted to a few isolated plots in the high mountain valleys. Just below the snow line between 14000 and 15000 feet grassy vegetation is provided by nature for yak grazing⁷.

The geography of Bhutan is therefore rugged and not very conducive for easy living. This difficult terrain has therefore tended to make the Bhutanese a hardy race - capable of effort and industry in their struggle for existence. Even though this terrain has also contributed to a certain degree to Bhutan's inaccessibility, the river valleys and mountain passes have also provided important trade routes, which have been used by traders since time immemorial.

Bhutan can by no means be said to be a densely populated country. Even though there was no accurate census of the population of Bhutan prior to 1870, the various approximate estimates put forward by different authorities, range from 300,000 to a figure of one million during the years 1957-66. In 1864, the population of the country was estimated at 20,000. In view of the census of 1970 it may be said that the present population of Bhutan is 1.31 million in an area of 18,000 sq. miles, giving thereby a density of about 73 persons to a square mile⁸.

The population of Bhutan may be said to consist of four major cultural groups, namely the Bhutanese, the Tibetans, the Nepalese and the Indians. The Bhutanese of the Drukpa sect, are the most numerous, and it is they who are politically dominant and have given Bhutan her peculiar cultural identity. The Tibetan inhabitants of Bhutan may be

classified into two groups - the earlier migrants who represent various sections of the Mongoloid people and the later Tibetan refugees, who have sought refuge and rehabilitation in Bhutan since 1959. In the southern regions of Bhutan, and especially in the southern central region of Chirang, the original inhabitants of Nepal predominate. The people of Indian origin are said to be concentrated in the region beyond the Pele-La. They have been described as being not of Tibetan origin and not speaking Tibetan dialect either. They were 'allied to the people of the Assam Valley and to those living in the hills to the east beyond Bhutan'. They were said to be of a different type from the other inhabitants, of the country, smaller in stature, their complexion being darker with finer cut features, and their dress was also different. They were also said to profess Buddhism, though they were not so observant in its customs, and there were fewer monasteries and Lamas in this part of the country as compared to other regions⁹. It may be presumed that these people were originally inhabitants from the neighbouring state of Cooch Behar. In fact they were supposed to have been the rulers of Bhutan who were finally usurped by the first great historical figure of Bhutan, Ngwang Namgyal, who assumed the authority of Bhutan in the sixteenth century.

Besides their racial divisions, the people of Bhutan can also be said to be divided by virtue of their

professions. The Imperial Gazetteer of India has the following interesting account of the people : "The population consists of three classes, the priests, the chiefs or Penlows, including the governing class, and the cultivators. The people are industrious, devote themselves to agriculture, but from the geological structure of the country, regular husbandry is limited to comparatively few spots"¹⁰.

As far as the distribution of population is concerned, it may be said that the most densely populated areas are the Inner Himalayan valleys of the Central region, which may also be said to be the most fertile area in the whole of Bhutan. The towns of Paro, Thimphu, Wangdiphodrang and Tongsa are inhabited by about 5000 to 10,000 people. Tashigang situated on the banks of the Manas on the eastern side of Bhutan is also quite densely populated. Besides, concentration of population is also noticeable in the low lands where there are areas of productive soil, as for example the town of Phuntsholing which touches the plains of India has a population of over 10,000¹¹. Besides fertility of the land, climate also plays a part in determining the distribution of population. For example the Great Himalaya region in the north has a very sparse population because of extreme climatic conditions. Difficult terrain and inaccessible slopes also contribute to low density population areas, such as the Black Mountain and other

ranges in southern Bhutan where also incliment weather, steep slopes as well as poor soil make habitation physically impossible¹².

The population of Bhutan therefore is essentially of a mixed type. However, in spite of their divergent origins the people of Bhutan have succeeded in carving out for themselves definite national characteristics, which give them an identity of their own. Their habits of dress and food, their customs, religious practices, Pantomimic dances, are their very own, quite different from those of their neighbours, and have contributed in giving them a feeling of togetherness, and of belonging to one particular country, and helping them in preserving their identity and fostering their national consciousness.

A few words may be added here regarding the origin and early history of this country. Claude white had remarked that "the early history of this remarkable country is enveloped in great obscurity, for unfortunately owing to fire, earthquake, flood and internecine wars, its annals which had been carefully recorded were destroyed"¹³. Leo E. Rose says that, "the history of Bhutan as an integrated political system commences only in the first half of the seventeenth century with the establishment of the authority of Ngawang Namgyal, the first Shabdrung (Dharma Raja in

most non-Bhutanese sources). The early history of the area now comprising Bhutan is murky at best,¹⁴. Another well known authority of the early history of Bhutan, Michael Aris, sums up the situation thus : 'For a long time there was a good deal of confusion surrounding the origins of this state'¹⁵. After a thorough investigation into a number of primary sources, Aris has tried to prove that it was only in the 17th century that traditional theocracy in Bhutan was established after Ngawang Namgyal set himself up as the first Dharma Raja, and laid the foundations of a unified and theocratic Bhutan.

Ngawang Namgyal was supposedly born in 1594 in Tibet in a family of hereditary prince abbots of the Drukpa school of Buddhism, located at its main seat at Ralung monastery in Tibet. Together with his parents, Namgyal himself wished to be recognised by the king of Tibet as the rightful reincarnation of the founder of the Drukpa school, Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorji (1161-1211). However, realities forced otherwise, and Namgyal was not recognised as the reincarnation. This conflict, moreover threatened his position as the head of the Ralung monastery, and therefore, at the age of twenty three, in the year 1616, Namgyal set off on his fateful journey across the natural barrier of the Himalayas to take refuge in Bhutan. In Bhutan he defeated the reigning Koch prince¹⁶, and his political success enabled him to claim

the status of the reincarnated Lama, and acquire the title of the Shabdrung. The term Shabdrung however, does not carry the meaning of Dharma Raja or one who rules by reincarnation. It is simply an honorific address for a noble man or a high civil officer. Be that as it may, the Shabdrung had wanted his family rule to continue in Bhutan. Unfortunately, his only son was an invalid, and unable to rule by himself, whereupon prior to his death in 1651, the Shabdrung appointed a Drukdesi or a Deb Raja ^{to} ~~is~~ superintend the administration of the kingdom¹⁷. Thus originated the dual system of administration in Bhutan — the offices of the Deb Raja and the Dharma Raja, which continued upto the beginning of the twentieth century when it was finally abolished.

It may be concluded that Ngawang Namgyal was indeed the first great historical figure of Bhutan, and that the system of dual administration was started under him. However, it will not be judicious to accept conclusively that the theocratic setup of government was primarily established by Namgyal and that there is no evidence of a definite state formation in Bhutan in the pre-Shabdrung era¹⁸. In fact, concrete evidence of a king ruling in Bhutan has been found in an account given by an English merchant traveller, Ralph Fitch, who had visited many regions adjacent to Bhutan, as early as in 1584-85. In his own words Fitch says, 'There

is a country 4 daies journey from Couche or Quichen before mentioned which is called Bott^aonter and the citie Bottia, the king is called Dermain¹⁹. This 'Dermain' may be interpreted as being the Dharma Raja of Bhutan, thereby signifying that the institution of Dharma Raja predated the emergence of the first Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

Aris and many other scholars have briefly dismissed the period before the first Shabdrung as a period of legendary kings, religious Lamas or clan rule²⁰. But evidences go to indicate that Bhutan had a ruler in the form of a Dharma Raja even in the sixteenth century, and Ralph Fitch's allusion to this 'Dermain' does deserve a more serious consideration. A Dharma Raja is the supreme ruler by reincarnation, who can rule till death, and the whole concept of rule by incarnation owes its origin to Tibetan Buddhism. It may be inferred that such an institution based on the rule of reincarnation and having its roots in the Drikungpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism may have been prevalent in Bhutan from the 12th century onwards, when this particular sect had gained paramountcy.

Buddhism was first introduced into Bhutan by the Indian saint padma Sambhava in the 9th century, and the Nyingmapa sect, which traces its origin to the Guru's teaching, gradually started spreading among the inhabitants of Bhutan.

14

In the 11th century the Kagyudpa was propagated by a disciple of Marpa, who came to the Bumthang areas. In the next century, Lama Lhapa Sangye Rinchen alias Zejipal, disciple of Jikten Goenpo, founder of the important Drikung school, made attempts to gain a broad measure of control over western Bhutan. During the 13th century there arrived the first Drukpa mission under Phajo Drugam Shikpo, and the authority of the Drukpas was established after several centuries through a protracted struggle against the Drikungpas, with the arrival of Ngawang Namgyal²¹. The head Lamas of the Drikungpa school which was predominant before the Drukpas came on the scene, were succeeded by reincarnation. It will therefore be in perfect agreement with the known facts to assume that a system of rule by reincarnation was introduced in Bhutan during the Drikungpa rule prior to the political supremacy of the Drukpas.

Nevertheless the system of dyarchy in Bhutan, was introduced during the rule of Ngawang Namgyal. The post of the Deb Raja was elective and of a fixed tenure. He had an effective hold over the secular administration of Bhutan, and performed his duties in his judicial, military, financial, and mercantile capacities. The important position which the Deb Raja held, however, did not reduce the Dharma Raja to the position of a mere titular head of the Bhutanese dyarchy. His concern in things spiritual, as head of the priestly order, raised him in popular estimation.

During the late eighteenth century, it was reported that subordinate to the above mentioned two authorities of government, there were two councils. The council under the Dharma Raja consisted of twelve Gylongs. These Gylongs were ordained priests and were 'often possessed of wealth which they collected as charity and as fees of office and by trade'. These priestly councillors were not solely concerned with religious or literary pursuits but at times exercised an 'efficient control over less spiritual objects'. The council of which the Deb Raja was the head consisted of six Zimpes or councillors and was called Lenchan. The composition of the council showed that it consisted of lay and lamaist elements. The Lam and the Kalling Zimpes were devoted to the interests of the Dharma Raja while the Deb Zimpe was faithfully attached to the secular chief and was described as the 'private Dewan' of the Deb Raja, looking after his trade and other concerns while the Donnay Zimpe was his 'public Dewan'²².

Besides, enormous powers were also wielded by the provincial governors, or Ponlobs, who were six in number, and were in charge of the six main forts or the Dzonas of the country namely Paro, Daka, Tongsa, Taschichhodzong, Wangdi-Phodrang and Punakha. Among them, the Tongsa and the Paro Ponlobs were the most powerful chiefs of the eastern and western division of Bhutan respectively. The

other Ponlobs were also endowed with ample power, and the policing of the country, the levying of taxes and the administration of justice were committed to them. They kept the machinery of the Bhutan ^government in motion with the help of a host of subordinate officials like the Dzongpons, the Subahs and the Zinkaffs²³. The authority that these provincial governors exerted were really great, and the Deb and the Dharma Raja were powerless to act without their acquiescence. Their power increased as time went by and the post 1865 era in Bhutan saw a constantly raging civil war amongst these councillors for the attainment of real authority, with the Deb and Dharma Rajas being reduced to mere puppets. In fact Ugyen Wangchuk, who emerged in 1907 as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan, had himself originally been a Tongsa Ponlob.

It would now be worthwhile to dwell a little upon the historical significance of the name Bhutan. Leo Rose, in his book 'The Politics of Bhutan', has mentioned that the name 'Bhutan' is Indian in origin and has come into general usage in that country only recently. Some are of opinion that the modern name of Bhutan, or 'Bootan', as it was some times referred to in British documents, is perhaps a derivation from 'Bhotanta'. 'Bhot' is the Sanskrit name for Tibet and 'Bhotananta' meant the end of the land of Tibet or Bhot²⁴. According to Bhutanese scholars like

107314

E3 JAN 1992

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
1411 111 RECEIVED

Lopen Nado and Lopen Pemala, the name by which the Bhutanese themselves referred to their country was Lhomon. The Bhutanese used this expression Lho meaning 'the South' in various combinations such as Lho Yul, Lho Rong, etc. The term south has been used because it is the state which lies to the south of Lhasa, the centre of Tibet. The term Mon has a religious connotation. It has been said that in ancient times in Tibet, besides Buddhism, some kings of the royal dynasty followed the principles of the Bon religion, and were, therefore, exiled beyond the border. Some of these Bonpas wandered beyond the frontiers and established themselves in the southern region which was presumably Shutan, and gradually started spreading the Bon practices, in which the sky and earth, and the various cosmic gods and goddesses, such as those of fire, wind, sun, and moon were worshipped. Because of this, it was felt by the followers of Buddhism in Tibet that these people were deprived of the enlightenment of the teaching of Lord Buddha, and not comprehending the principles of action and retribution, and of merit and sin, it was as if they resided in a pit of darkness or mun²⁵. Therefore the term Mon may be taken to be a corruption of the word mun and together with Lho, or south, the etymology of the term Lho Mon would appear understandable. For this reason, the oldest inhabitants of Bhutan are also referred to as the Monpas, and the country as Mon Yul or Lho-Mon.

Historically the name Lho Mon was replaced by Druk Yul, on the land of the Drukpa. It is not easy to date the adoption of this term with precision though it is clear that it was certainly not earlier than in the 13th century. As mentioned before, it was in this century that the Drukpa school of Buddhism, was introduced in Bhutan by Phajo Drugom Shikpo, though this red sect did not attain supremacy till the seventeenth century when Ngawang Namgyal who happened to belong to the same sect, acquired paramountcy. It is more likely that the term Druk Yul was used more frequently from the seventeenth century onwards though some scholars tend to think that this name became common from the thirteenth century itself.

Survey of Research and the Objective of the Present Study

Systematic research works on Bhutan are limited in number, even though scholars both in India and abroad have conducted some studies on this country. Strangely enough it has been noticed that books bearing the title of South Asia generally do not contain even a mention of Bhutan. It is only natural to expect that a country like Bhutan, situated in South Asia and one which has always succeeded in retaining her independence, should be receiving a more critical appreciation in the eyes of the world. But

international attention on Bhutan has been curiously lacking. Richard L. Park has noted that "Scholarly work on current South Asian themes ... rests upon older academic traditions that emphasized principally the philosophy, religion and classical literature of these ancient civilizations"²⁶. However compared to other South Asian countries, emphasis on Bhutan's ancient philosophy and religion have been relatively less. That contingencies of various sorts, and not the disciplinary demands, often play a decisive role in the selection of research problems was emphasized by Lucian W. Pye. He said, "Far Eastern area studies have been strongly historical, concentrating on the impact of ancient religions, great traditions of civilization, and the development of formal schools of thought. African studies have been closer to the anthropological tradition, while South and South East Asian studies have emphasized political movements and nationalism and, when not concentrating on the contemporary scene, they have stressed the analysis of colonialism"²⁷.

Be that as it may, inspite of the limited coverage being given to Bhutan, some useful studies have been conducted on that country in recent years, and of these a number of them concentrate on Indo-Bhutanese relations, which in turn throw light on the attitude of Britain towards colonial India, thereby stressing the aspects of colonialism, as referred to by Pye. Apart from Indo-Bhutanese relations

some other relevant studies having a bearing on various social aspects of Bhutan have been published in recent years. It will serve no useful purpose to present a review of all such works, but reference may be made to the following in particular .

Nagendra Singh's Bhutan : A Kingdom in the Himalayas - a Study of the Land, its People and their Government (1972) makes a good text book, providing a fairly comprehensive description of the political and economic development of Bhutan over time. To know about the geography and environment of the region, P.Karan's Bhutan - A Physical and Cultural Geography (1967), may be referred to. Another useful addition is, Bhutan : Development Amid Environmental and Cultural Preservation (1987) written jointly by P.Karan and Shigeri Jigma. To know about the contemporary political dynamics, The Politics of Bhutan (1977) by Leo.E.Rose is indispensable. As far as the culture and religion of Bhutan is concerned B.Chakravorty's Cultural History of Bhutan Vol.I and II (1979) provides interesting information. The author's Ph.D. thesis entitled, 'Some Aspects of Religion and Culture of Bhutan', has been incorporated in the two volumes of this book. The first volume deals with the tenets and practices of the four Lamaist Sects of Buddhism

and their differences with each other, about Guru Stonpa, the great Buddhist preceptor of the 5th century, and other aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. The second volume too concerns itself mainly with the various Buddhist sects and rituals and ceremonies ^{of} Bhutan. Another book dealing also with the Tibetan traditions existing in Bhutan is Ancient Bhutan (1979) by Blanche C. Olschak. It contains, besides oral information, films, photographs, Bhutanese texts in archaic Tibetan language and exact maps with precise inscriptions in Tibetan orthography.

As far as the historical works on Bhutan are concerned it will be noticed that comparatively more number of research works have appeared in print. Michael Arts in his book, Bhutan - The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom, (1980) deals in the main with the origin of the state of Bhutan, the religious intrigues between various Buddhist sects of Tibetan origin and a critical survey of some old extant Bhutanese texts having a bearing on the early history of Bhutan. Ram Rahul has written a number of useful books, including Royal Bhutan (1989). As the name suggests the book provides a synoptic political history of monarchical Bhutan. A concise narration of Bhutan's history can also be found in Bikrama Jit Hasrat's History of Bhutan - Land of the Peaceful Dragon (1974). The author was invited by the Royal Government of Bhutan in July 1974 to plan and

write a history of that country. The book was subsequently published by the Education Department of Bhutan. The work outlines the country's historical legends, introduction of Buddhism and the unification under Ngawang Namgyal's dual form of government in 1651, and the history of its fifty four Deb Rajas. An objective account of the establishment of hereditary monarchy by Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 and changes brought about by his three successors in the nation's constitution and social and economic spheres are also broadly outlined. Another book, said to be unique in several way is, The Dragan Country, the General History of Bhutan (1974), by Nirmala Das. It is a history of Bhutan written basically from original sources which were hitherto not available to foreign scholars. This was possible mainly due to His Majesty Jigme Wangchuk who made the material available to the authoress. The first part of the book dealing with the general history of Bhutan from the origin of that country upto her relations with post independent India, is rather inadequate and sketchy. The Dzongs and Monasteries of Bhutan occupy a large portion of this book, and Das believes that no history of Bhutan can be written without a good knowledge of the history of the two most important sectors in the country's life-the Dzongs and the Monasteries, around which the life of the country centres.

But coming to the specifics of Indo-Bhutanese relations, mention may first be made of British Relations with Bhutan (1974) by Shantiswarup Gupta. The author wrote this volume for his doctoral dissertation from the Allahabad University in 1946. Interestingly enough the author who served in the Indian Foreign Service tried several times to secure the official permission to publish the thesis, but it was only after his retirement in December, 1971, that the permission was granted. Gupta could give an account of British relations with Bhutan only upto 1880 because under the rules in force at the time of his work, the records were made available only upto that date. The choice of the end date was thus made not on the basis of any academic calculations but due to pragmatic considerations, based on institutional limitations. But in any case it is possible that Gupta is the first to undertake any comprehensive and systematic study of Indo-Bhutanese relations during the British period of Indian History.

"India and Bhutan" (1974) by Kapileshwar Labh, is another valuable book on Indo-Bhutanese relations. The information available from this book is exhaustive, together with a lucid and analytical narration. This study grew out of a doctoral dissertation and provides an interesting account of Bhutan's first contacts with the East India Company in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and

her confrontations with the various British missions. Labh brings the narration right up to the coronation of Jigme Singhe Wangchuk in 1974. The main emphasis of this book is essentially on the various British missions and their logical culminating point - the treaty of 1910. It is on the whole, a useful pioneering effort, and can be termed as a comprehensive study.

A subsequent study in the same vein is that by Arabinda Deb, Bhutan and India, a study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865), (1976). This is also a fairly comprehensive volume on the subject even though the emphasis throughout has been on the detailed narration of political events, intrigues and strategies leading upto the Duar War of 1864-65. This book was presented as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of North Bengal.

Another study of the same type is that by Manorama Kohli India and Bhutan : a study in Interrelations 1772-1910 (1982). This also originated as a doctoral dissertation in which the authoress discusses in detail as to how "led partly by a desire to reach almost the inaccessible region of the Himalaya combined with the objective of building up a secure north east frontier, Bhutan was discovered as a 'Gateway' to Tibet". She also finds that "a closer examination of the Indo-Bhutanese relations, particularly from the last two

decades of the nineteenth century onwards would indicate that the geostrategic location of Bhutan did constitute a serious strain in the thinking of the British Indian leadership in the formulation of their policies towards Bhutan and other Himalayan Kingdoms".

Another work concerning itself with Indo-Bhutanese relations is Britain and the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhotan (1984) by A.B. Majumdar. The author asserts that most of the work on Bhutan does not deal with earlier Indo-Bhutanese relations during the British regime. He says that it was only in the first quarter of the nineteenth century that the British became conscious of the realities of their eastern Himalayan frontier and hence the object of this book was to analyse and deal with the relations of the British with one of the Himalayan Kingdoms - Bhutan, during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The book ends in 1899. Yet another book dealing with the complexities of Indo-Bhutanese relations is Bhutan and the British (1987) by Peter Collister. Based mainly on the diaries, records and letters of the main participants of the various official missions sent to Bhutan, this book is not a history of that country but a narration of the two hundred years of association between Bhutan and the British. The author admits that this is a book about Bhutan as seen through British eyes. He has dealt at great

lengths on political relationships between India and Bhutan as these were generally either the cause or the out come of successive missions. Towards the end he has attempted to summarize the benefits accruing to both sides from this long relationship. It is neither a history of Bhutan, as mentioned before nor an account of the countrys' complex and distinctive culture which is woven into the history and religion of that region.

One thing however needs specially to be mentioned, partly as a justification for undertaking the present study. It must have been noticed already that more than one researches have been undertaken emphasizing upon the political dimensions of Indo-Bhutan relations. Studies on the commercial relations existing between the two countries are practically nonexistent. The above mentioned books do contain passing references to the trade carried on between the two countries, but nothing substantial can be obtained. One particular book however, needs to be mentioned, which do provide some information on trade relations between the two countries. The book is Trade through the Himalayas - the early British attempts to Open Tibet (1951) by Camman Schuyler.,

Originally the work was undertaken as the writer's Ph.D. thesis at John Hopkins University, but it has since

been extensively revised in the light of further research. It starts with a historical background of Tibet upto 1774, and reflects the commercial minded diplomacy of the eighteenth century English Company members. Even more important from the point of view of diplomatic history, these events form the background for the later, better known British efforts to open Tibet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though providing some information on Bhutan, the emphasis is on Tibet and the book ends with the complete closure of Tibet to the British in 1793, following the Sino-Nepalese war. There is thus a complete lack of information on Indo-Bhutanese economic relations especially during the post 1865 era. There is thus a gap in our knowledge and the present work aims at reducing this gap as much as possible.

Though Bhutan did have contacts with the outer world contacts which included commercial exchange and religious propagation - it was nevertheless with the advent of the British on the scene that relations between India and Bhutan became much more definite and systematic. The East India Company, as is well known, came to India along with other European trading and commercial companies, as a mercantile body and their main interests were admittedly in the field of trade and commerce. But with the acquisition of political authority in Bengal they were secure enough to further their trading and commercial interests, and wished

to extend these interests to Sikkim and Bhutan and indeed as far north as Tibet. In an effort to do so they felt obliged to strengthen their northern frontiers and to consolidate their position all along the line. Thus a position was soon reached when commercial and political interests became coterminus²⁸.

These interests slowly and inevitably brought India into closer contact with Bhutan. The complex course of relationship between the two countries during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries has not yet received a complete and adequate coverage. Material however, are not lacking but it cannot be claimed that all information have been collected and subjected already to a searching and interpretative study. The present work does not claim to have done that either. Here only an attempt has been made to review the commercial aspect of the Indo-Bhutanese relations, by a reconstruction and reinterpretation of the data already available. However, political and commercial relations being so closely interrelated, it is difficult to concentrate entirely on one aspect while completely ignoring the other. Therefore, though commercial relation between the two countries is the main problem to be studied, the political intricacies have also been dealt with to some extent, whenever necessary.

It is said that by trade a country flourishes, and the Bhutanese must have accepted this theory very seriously since nearly the whole of the population of Bhutan were engaged in commercial activities to a greater or lesser degree. The commercial minded diplomacy of the British led them to exploit this serious profession of the Bhutanese to suit their own ends, and through Bhutan, gain access to the more lucrative markets of Tibet and China. How this relationship of confrontation, between a great and perhaps the strongest colonial power of its time, on the one hand, and one of the smallest countries of the world on the other, came to influence the entire eastern Himalayan region and to frame British policy in these parts, deserve some attention.

It is admitted that there is a certain amount of arbitrariness in the choice of dates. But it is unavoidable at the present state of our knowledge. Even then a few explanatory words are definitely called for. As far as the beginning of the study at 1774 is concerned, it may be said that the first conscious and systematic effort at regularising trade relations with Bhutan by the British East India Company was made in that year. The trade flourished through many vicissitudes, and in 1907, Bhutan emerged into a hereditary monarchy for the first time in history, in the emergence of which the British India government, also

contributed its mite. How far the British participation even though indirect, was owing to economic and commercial factors, and also, to what extent Bhutan's own changing commercial fortune dictated a change in the form of government are proposed to be examined. Whether such conjectures are meaningful in the present context can only be judged after the material has been collected carefully and presented faithfully in line with the sequence of events.

Sources of Data

The sources of data for the purpose of this dissertation may broadly be classified into three categories. In the first category may be placed the printed reports of the various British missions which visited Bhutan. The reports of George Bogle (1774) and Thomas Manning (1811-12) on Bhutan were edited by Clement Markham and first published in 1875 in the form of a book entitled Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa (1875). The report of Samuel Turner who visited Bhutan in 1783 was published much earlier in 1800 in the form of a book entitled An Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Tibet containing a narrative of a journey through Bhutan and part of Tibet (1800). Later the reports of Babu Kishen Kant Bose (1815), Pemberton

(1837-38), Griffiths (1837-38) and Ashley Eden (1864-65) were compiled together under the title Political Missions to Bootan edited by H.K. Kuloy (first published in 1865). Among other books, which by virtue of their providing first hand information, may be regarded as primary source material, mention may be made of Bhutan and the story of the Doar War by David Rennie (first published in 1866, reprinted in 1970). Rennie was the surgeon and medical in-charge of the 80th regiment, that was sent to Bhutan during the war of 1865, and gives a detailed account of the military strategies of the Doar War. It also does mention occasionally the traders both of India and of Bhutan, and their trading activities as well. The next book which was again an account of Bhutan by the author, who was physically present in the country and noted down his experiences and observations was Sikkim and Bhutan - twenty one years on the North East Frontier (1887-1908) by Claude J. White (first published 1909, reprinted 1971) White was the first Political Officer to Sikkim and had been sent to Bhutan to present the insignia of knighthood of Ugyen Wangchuk, the then Tongsa Ponlob of Bhutan. This book is more of a travelogue and again provides first hand information about that country. Lastly India and Tibet - by Frances Younghusband (1971) is again ^a an account by Younghusband himself of the famous expedition led by him to Tibet in 1903, and there are important references to Bhutan as well.

Primary

This is as far as the published ^{primary} source material are concerned. The authors of these books had themselves been present in Shutan, and hence the information provided in these books are not based on any secondary source material. Coming to the second category of data, references have exhaustively been drawn from the secondary source material, that is the various books and journals available. It may be noted here that not only books on Shutan, but also on Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and the North Eastern frontier of India, have also been referred to. Besides Parliamentary Reports and the Correspondence between Fort William and India House, have also received due attention. It may be worth while to mention here that the bulk of this work of collecting secondary source material has been done at the library of the University of North Bengal, and the National Library, Calcutta.

As far as the third category is concerned, archival data has been used extensively. It may be mentioned however, that archival data has been mostly used only for the latter part of the dissertation that is from 1865 to 1907. The National Archives in New Delhi has been the main centre, though some material have also been collected from the West Bengal State Archives in Calcutta. At the National Archives, the whole of the Foreign, External Index, has been more or less thoroughly investigated. Besides, the various reports

on the external trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan from 1878-79 to 1906-07, have also been examined. These volumes provide valuable information regarding the quality and volume of the goods imported and exported to and from Bhutan and India. Lastly occasional data from gazetteers and newspapers have also been collected to some extent.

A word or two might also be mentioned as far as the Bhutanese records are concerned. In the first place, original Bhutanese records are not very easily available. It is known that the fire at the Punakha Dzong in 1832 and the great earthquake of 1897 destroyed practically all the historical records that were probably there. Apart from these the difficulties of obtaining official access to Bhutanese data are also practically insurmountable. However, in the British records itself, there are occasional translations of letters and documents written by the Bhutanese themselves which provide their point of view. However, it has to be admitted that the main dependence have been on the British records, mainly due to their availability. Nevertheless, in spite of this dependence, an impartial opinion has been endeavoured to be given, as far as possible. It cannot be claimed that any historical writing will be completely freed of bias. But to have a distorted lop sided view is what destroys the essence of narration. Thus, here

even though the bulk of the material are derived from British sources, the Bhutanese view point has not been overlooked altogether.

Synoptic View of the Study Frame

It has been decided that the present work undertaken would progress along the lines of the much tried and tested method of chronological narration. Hence the various incidents in the history of commercial contacts between India and Bhutan have been enumerated and carefully examined as far as possible. This whole period from 1774-1907 has been further subdivided into smaller periods of time on the basis of fluctuations in trade and the vicissitudes in the trade relations between India and Bhutan.

Though the work in the main starts from 1774, it has been thought necessary to provide a brief background of the commercial contacts existing between the Himalayan regions and other countries, before this date. Though it is true that with the advent of the British on the scene, Indo-Bhutanese relations took on a more meaningful and systematic form, it must be remembered that trade relations had existed centuries before the advent of the British on the Indian soil. However, credit goes to the British for

reviving up this trans-Himalayan trade, even if it was to serve their own commercial interests. Chapter II therefore, besides providing the backdrop of pre-British contacts of the Himalayan kingdoms, also attempts to elucidate how certain events combined to facilitate British contacts with Tibet and Bhutan, and culminate in the sending of a first ever commercial mission to those countries.

The third chapter has been entitled as the 'High Tide of Commercial Intercourse 1774-88'. The first commercial missions achieved a fair amount of success and certain other events combined to prove that this was indeed a period when Indo-Bhutanese relations reached an all time high.

However, the ebb of this tide started soon after 1788, and thus began an 'Era of uncertain prospects' as Chapter IV has been designated. Lack of statesmanship on part of the British, as well as certain misfortune which befell them, together with the lack of cooperation on the part of the Bhutanese made this period an uncertain one for the British, as far as commerce was concerned. It may be said of the British that attempts were made by them to improve matters by the deputation of various missions to Bhutan, during this period.

The differences could not in the end be amicably resolved. Repeated outrages and hostilities, which were

not at all conducive for trade finally saw the British government of India on the war path. This broke out the Duar War or 'the battle over land for tea and freedom for trade', as the fifth chapter has been named. The Bhutanese were very much at the receiving ^{end} in this war, and the treaty of Sinchula signed at the end, put a lot of power into British hands.

Nevertheless, peace was not in sight. Frequent violations of the treaty of Sinchula, together with a constantly raging civil war in Bhutan, served to vitiate further the relations between the two countries. It was also at this time that the British were seeking to establish more closer commercial ties with Tibet, with Bhutanese help. Chapter six namely 'Centralisation in politics, for the sake of commerce', serves to emphasise the British desire for a strong and centralised Bhutan, that would help them to gain access to Tibet and Central Asia, while at the same time strengthen the Indo-Bhutanese commercial ties as well.

In other words the British wanted a strong man to be at the helm of Bhutanese affairs and also appeared not to favour the dyarchy. It seemed that their wish was fulfilled when the Tongsa Ponlob Ugyen Wangchuk assumed the authority of that country. Relations with Tibet also seemed to improve with the sending of the Younghusband Mission in 1903. Thus

it seemed that the commercial dream of the eighteenth century British statesman was at last about to be fulfilled.

Obstacles and barriers were still prevalent as the seventh chapter 'Fulfilment of commercial diplomacy', would show, but nevertheless with the crowⁿing of Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan, promises of a long lasting friendship with that country was in sight.

Notes and References

1. Turner, S., An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet Containing a Narrative of a Journey Through Bootan and Part of Tibet, New Delhi, 1800, reprinted 1971, p.20.
2. Bailey, F.M., 'Through Bhutan and Southern Tibet', in Geographical Journal, Vol.64, 1924, p.292.
3. Deb, Arabinda, Bhutan and India A study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865), Calcutta, 1976, foot-note, p.12.
4. Singh, Nagendra, Bhutan a kingdom in the Himalayas - A study of the land its people and their government, New Delhi, first published, 1972, third revised edition, 1985, pp.6-7.
5. *ibid.*, p.7.
6. Deb, Arabinda, *op.cit.*, p.13.
7. Singh, Nagendra, *op.cit.*, pp.9-10.

8. *ibid.*, p.13. However in recent years considerable doubts have been raised about the accuracy of these figures, and some scholars think that these figures have been inflated to some extent.
9. White, J.Claude, Sikkim and Bhutan-Twenty one years on the North East Frontier 1887-1908, New Delhi, reprint, 1971, p.13.
10. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.II, 2nd Edn., 1885, pp.412-13. Quoted in Nagendra Singhs ' Bhutan A Kingdom in the Himalayas, p.14.
11. Singh, Nagendra, *op.cit.*, p.15.
12. *ibid.*, pp.15-16.
13. White, J.Claude, *op.cit.*, p.99.
14. Leo, E.Rose, The Politics of Bhutan, London, 1977, p.23.
15. Aris, Michael, Bhutan - The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom, Ghaziabad, 1980, p.XXV.
16. Clement Markham in the introduction of the Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa, has said that previous to the arrival of this Shabdrung, the country was occupied by people from Kuch Bahar or modern Cooch Behar. The Shabdrung was supposed to have displaced the reigning ^o Kach prince. This has been corroborated by Kishen Kant Bose in his, 'Account of Bootan' who asserted that the Koch prince with his family went underground while

those who remained were converted to the 'faith and custom' of the first Shabdrung.

17. Misra, B.P., 'Early History of Bhutan', in the Himalayan Miscellany, Vol.I, No.1, March, 1987, p.12.
18. *ibid.*, p.9.
19. Foster, William, (ed.) Early Travels in India, New Delhi, reprint 1968, p.27.
20. Misra, B.P., *op.cit.*, p.9.
21. *ibid.*, p.10.
22. Deb, Arabinda, *op.cit.*, p.33.
23. *ibid.*, pp.34-35.
24. *ibid.*, footnote, p.12.
25. Bhutan, Land of the peaceful Dragon, by Hasrat, Bikram Jit, Thimphu, 1980, p.1.
26. Foreward by Richard Park in The Politics of Bhutan, by Leo, Rose.
27. Pye, W.Lucian, and Verba, Sidney (ed.) Political Culture and Political Development, Princeton University Press, 1965, Introduction, pp.5-6.
28. Kohli, Manorama, India and Bhutan A study in interrelations 1772-1910, New Delhi, 1982, Preface, pp. IX, X.