

# THE UNIVERSITY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS: SOME REFLECTIONS.

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## Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to follow the evolution and changing role of the university from its beginnings to the present day. It looks at the function of the university as an instrument of national and social development as a preserver, creator and disseminator of knowledge. The attempt then is to put the establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan in context and see its role as a vehicle for the furtherance of the ideal of gross national happiness.

## Introduction: The Enduring Legacy

The finest legacy of the medieval ages, the university has passed through various incarnations – as a religious institution, as a welfare institution, as an economic institution, and as a part of government, finally coming to assume its own character and chart its own destiny. The peculiar characteristics that differentiate it from other institutions and agencies in the society derive from the unique objectives that they exist to serve – those being: to preserve, transmit and advance knowledge.

The university, according to Cardinal Newman, is a place of teaching universal knowledge. The transmission of universal knowledge was, to Newman, critical to the idea of the university. He emphasized the essential unity of knowledge, and the universal character of the university. All branches of learning then were understood to come within the umbrella of theology, the queen of the sciences. Any discipline of learning that aspired to the position of a university subject had to be relevant to theology. Pride of place then went to philosophy, the study of knowledge.

To Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), “The faculty [of philosophy]encompasses therefore ‘all parts of human knowledge’. From the renaissance onwards, the idea of unity was conveyed by what was commonly referred to as ‘the scientific spirit’ that was supposed to inform all subjects of inquiry. The cultivation of *the gentleman* informed the various branches of learning and made for their sense of unity. Today, we have the concept of a ‘multi-versity’.

According to Eric Ashby (Yanase, 1989:138), over the centuries, the university came to exercise four principal functions:

*From Bologna and Salerno comes the function of the university to train the students for certain professions, like the church, medicine, and law. From Oxford and Cambridge comes the university’s function as a nursery for gentlemen, statesmen and administrators. From Gottingen and Berlin comes the function of the university as a centre for scholarship and research. From Charlottenburg and Zurich and Massachusetts comes the function of the university to be a staff college for technological experts and specialists.*

Millet wrote (1962:54), “What gives higher education its unique status is its relation to society at large. The objective of higher education – the preservation, transmission, and advancement of knowledge – implies not just a belief in the importance of knowledge.

There is, as well, a more practical goal: to enable individuals to develop their talents for the service of others.”

The province of the university is the realm of knowledge. Knowledge, according to Newman, is worth pursuing for its own sake by virtue of the fact that it brings virtue to the person who pursues it to be free from ignorance. But knowledge can also be useful in solving human problems including health, production, unemployment and as a means to improve the society.

It is now recognized that universities serve at least three critical functions: training, research and public service. Universities are expected to prepare the much-needed personnel to fill the high level scientific, technical, professional and management jobs. As the indispensable core of national capacity, the university faculty are called upon to produce graduates who are capable of performing such jobs.

Universities are expected to generate the knowledge and innovations needed for development through indigenous scientific research and technical know-how and disseminate this. The university staff are expected to initiate and carry out research that will generate knowledge and contribute to development.

The society expects universities to render the necessary high skill services to the community with the involvement of its staff in local activities, as the university is expected to be a reservoir of expertise that can be tapped by the government and the private sector. The community expects the university faculty to lead it in developmental activities by sitting on various committees and boards and by providing consultancy services to them.

Bloom (1984:382), with all his concerns about the decomposition of the university, believes “...that universities, rightly understood, are where community and friendship can exist in our time. Our thought and our politics have become inextricably bound up with the universities, as they have served us well, human things being what they are”.

#### A System Comes of Age

One of the significant features that has characterized the progress of Bhutan since planned economic development has been the phenomenal growth of education from fewer than a dozen schools in the early 1950, enrolling a few hundred students, taught by a handful of teachers to an impressive 450 or so schools and institutes, with over 150,000 students, taught by close to five thousand teachers. The ushering in of a forward-looking western style modern English medium education system has resulted in establishing one of the best systems in the region.

Come 1984 and the national desire to found a university for Bhutan was first voiced when it was mentioned in the Draft Education Policy. Over the years, the aspiration of the Kingdom of Bhutan to have a university of its own became more crystallized and the dream is enshrined in

#### **Bhutan 2020: A Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Happiness:**

*We must take steps at the earliest feasible opportunity to establish a national university that is not only able to meet national needs but also those of individuals from neighbouring countries and even further a-field. The university should link Bhutan to the international world of learning and its establishment should be guided by the need to establish recognized centres of excellence.*

The Royal Charter issued by the fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck on April 13, 2003 enabled the birth of the Royal University of Bhutan on June 2, 2003, coinciding with the historic anniversary of the Coronation Day of His Majesty. The Royal Charter decreed that the Royal University of Bhutan be founded to

*provide, through the dissemination of knowledge and the advancement of learning and the granting of awards, for the economic and cultural development of the Kingdom of Bhutan and to promote the cultural enrichment, personal development and the wellbeing of its people.*

The then Prime Minister, Loynpo Kinzang Wangchuck inaugurated the Royal University with the then the Minister of Health and Education, Loynpo Sangye Ngedup as the founding Vice Chancellor. Founded on a distributive model with member-institutes spread across the country, the University is constituted by the federation of the following institutes:

- Sherubtse College
- Royal Bhutan Institute of Technology
- Institute of Language and Culture Studies
- Royal Institute of Management
- National Institute of Education, Samtse
- National Institute of Education, Paro.
- Royal Institute of Health Sciences, and National Institute of Traditional Medicines
- Natural Resources Training Institute.

These institutes are expected to follow their own stars and be centres of excellence in the various fields of academic and professional studies they elect to offer to aspiring Bhutanese youths and scholars from beyond our national boundaries who come partake of the unique experiences in which the Royal University may have an advantage.

### The University and National Development

A university is the expression of the needs of a community, a society or a nation, devoted to the fashioning of its intellect. As an institution of higher education, a university is dedicated to the pursuit and propagation of knowledge, to the study and clarification of values, and to the advancement of the interests of the society and the nation at large.

As the product of a decision of the society, the university acknowledges and advances the claims of the society on it. The claims of the society or the nation on a university are many – they include, but are not limited to, the academic, intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, economic, material, spiritual, occupational, artistic, physical dimensions of the life of society. Discovering, affirming and advancing these many dimension of the society is a critical function of the university.

The society looks up to the university as the repository of knowledge and wisdom. Universities have a common commitment not just to the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, important as it is, but a commitment to active participation in social transformation, economic modernization and the training and upgrading of the total human resources of the nation, and not just a small elite.

Professor Theodore W Schultz analyses the impact of education in general and that of higher education in particular upon the total activity of the society. He looks at higher education as a human investment and says that the fruits of education manifest in the

improvements in the capacity of people to produce economic wealth, the health of a working population, the technological skills of a working force, the availability of finance capital – all important determinants of the economic output or GDP of a society (Yanase,1961:46). These are extremely important conditions for the achievement of the goal of gross national happiness.

In its 1988 report, the World Bank highlighted the important role of universities, that being “to prepare and support people in positions of responsibilities in government, business, and in the professions”. The report went on to say that “High-level manpower must be trained and quality research carried out if development policies are to be correctly formulated, programmes appropriately planned, and projects effectively implemented”.

As an instrument of development, a university has a responsibility to assist the society in solving its problems. This responsibility entails the creation of knowledge which helps in the attempt to search answers to pressing social and national problems.

It is generally agreed that teaching and research are the twin pillars on which excellence in higher education rests. A group of fifteen leading American University Presidents argued that “One of the decisive elements in the quality of any society is the level it is able to reach and sustain in the quality of its research and scholarship” (Millet, 1962).

Nordestam (quoted in Matiru, 1991:50) identifies the conception of development into three categories: evolutionary conception, technocratic conception, and humanistic conception. The technocratic conception emphasizes efficiency in reaching goals, while a humanistic conception emphasizes the human element. Development plans could often be technocratically efficient but humanistically disastrous. The evolutionary conception would emphasize the middle path.

The goal of Bhutan’s development planning – gross national happiness - has now well crystallized and been internalized. The socio-economic and humanistic development of the people, against a natural environment, secured by the ideal of good governance, characterize the conception and management of development. The Royal University of Bhutan could not be more fortunate in aspiring to be an instrument for advancing a national dream.

The university and the nation could be great natural allies. As stated above, the province of the university is the preservation, creation and advancement of knowledge. And **knowledge is power**. Societies and nations are what they are because of their possession or lack of the power of knowledge. With knowledge comes power and power brings prestige to individuals and nations.

In this connection, it is interesting to see the correlation between the number of Nobel Prize winners and the relative power countries enjoy in the world today. Between 1901 and 1989, the number of Nobel Prize winners in Austria, for instance, grew from 3 to 10, in England, it grew from 15 to 65, in Germany from 27 to 50, in Sweden, from 3 to 21, in the U.S.S.R, from 2 to 12, and in the United States, it grew from a mere 6 to 162. (source: Nagi et al in Matiru, et al, 1995:338). The rise and fall of nations is a function of knowledge and its use.

Non-university institutions too can conduct research and create knowledge, but the universities are best positioned to provide an ideal atmosphere to carry out research by enabling older and younger minds to re-examine ideas and theories, to formulate new questions, hypotheses and new ways of looking at data. The universities provide constant

challenge to its faculty to explain their subject-matter to fresh inquisitive minds. This perpetual challenge builds up a conducive atmosphere for research and advancement of knowledge.

In 1977, for example, 80% of high-energy physics publications came from university-based Nobel laureate authors.

The domain of the university could be the whole world – encompassing its various dimensions. It could remain isolated in the realm of pure ideas and detach itself from all the happenings of the real world. It could otherwise be an active participant in the life of the society in which it is situated and assist social transformation. A university keen to avoid being branded an ivory tower shares in the national vision and development programmes without foregoing its commitment to extend the frontiers of knowledge by engaging in fundamental research that lay the foundation for applied research.

The changing wisdom of succeeding generations questions facts, discards ideas and demolishes theories. The pace at which knowledge becomes outdated threatens old certainties and assumptions. Therefore, universities, as the creators and transmitters of knowledge, need to keep themselves abreast of the developments that happen in the society and the big world further a-field.

As the activities of the society become more and more knowledge-based, it is essential for the universities to take cognizance of the factors like changes in science and technology which have brought about unprecedented transformation in the lives of people and societies. The ability of institutions of higher education to deal with and capitalize on the explosion and proliferation of knowledge will decide the quality and destiny of nations.

Universities are expected to undertake research that is relevant to the needs and interests of the nation. National research policies and the university research policies must rhyme in order to further the interests of both. National needs could be

- Educational
- Economic
- Social
- Political
- Scientific
- Technological
- Cultural
- Spiritual...

How the university views its role in addressing these areas of national need could determine its own goals and strategies. From a resource allocation rationale, universities often use the following criteria to assess the merit of research projects:

- social relevance or possible social impact
- fulfilment of national goals for development
- broadening the frontiers of knowledge in the area
- providing solutions to immediate problems
- capacity building in the area, among others.

The Royal University of Bhutan aims to “promote and conduct research to contribute to the creation of knowledge in an international context and to promote the transfer of knowledge relevant to Bhutan.” To this end, an interim Research Committee has been set up and a Research Director appointed. Recently, the university invited some external

players as well representing government agencies, the private sector, corporations, civil society, among others, to envision the future directions of the Royal University. Of particular interest were the following issues for the university to address itself to:

- the kind of graduates the nation wants
- the manpower needs of the country
- curricular programmes the university needs to offer
- the role of the university
- civil society
- ICT
- University and its links.

The relevant institutes of the University will need to engage themselves in search of answers to these needs of the society. Some member-institutes have been engaged in research work more than others and have provided valuable information for planning and development, including looking at the relative level of happiness that the people in rural and urban areas experience.

The strategic planning of the university commits itself “to ensure that the University is seeking to serve Bhutan and its people, responds to and adapts its provision to their needs.” It includes issues of programmes, staffing, resources, enrolment, and its vision for the next ten years, among others.

#### Soul of the University: The Curriculum

The curriculum is the content of the university’s offerings. It is the reason for scholars to visit the temples of learning. The curriculum is the *nanqten*, inner treasure, of an institution of learning. It is supposed to capture and present the deeper philosophy of the nation, the worldview of its people, their dreams and aspirations, their imagination of perfection and goodness, the principles of national and social life, their attempts to understand and use the possibilities opened up by science and mathematics. The curriculum is a system’s treasure chest. It sets goals and beckons pupils and scholars to engage in search of answers.

The Royal University of Bhutan has identified the following areas of study in the different institutes of the university:

- Teacher Education
- Business and Management
- Computers and Information Science
- Engineering and Technology
- Science, Agriculture and Environment
- Health
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Visual Arts, Design, Music and Communication (Source: RUB draft report 2005).

Of special interest to the University will be the niche areas like environment, tourism, natural resources, Buddhist Studies, Bhutanese and Himalayan culture, business administration and information technology.

Alfred North Whitehead (online) outlines three main methods which are required in a national system of education. They are the literary curriculum, the scientific curriculum, and the technical curriculum. He advocates the necessity of each of these curricula to

include the other two. For the utility and the wholesomeness of an educational experience to be achieved, it is essential to insist upon a sound balance amongst the intellectual, academic and aesthetic domains of education.

### The Power That Animates the University: The Faculty

It is possible to have a most forward-looking, dynamic and flawlessly conceived and perfectly formulated curriculum matched by fabulous facilities and resources. However, it is the academic community, the intellectual life and the love of knowledge that animate and give purpose and direction to institutions of learning.

In the words of Millett noted earlier, “The key element in the academic process and in the academic community is the faculty. There is no other justification for the existence of a college or a university except to enable the faculty to carry on its instruction and research activities. Without a faculty, higher education has no reason for being. It is the faculty which realizes or fails to realize the basic objectives of each college or university”.

It is possible too that we have a faculty so brilliant, so knowledgeable, so motivated that they can personally live out the essence of the curriculum, compensate for its possible lapses and fire the collective imagination of the university. Goodlad (1990:48) identifies four dimensions of faculty engagement:

- Facilitating Critical Enculturation
- Providing Access to Knowledge
- Building on Effective Teacher-Student Connection
- Providing Good Stewardship.

By virtue of its being the first university in the country, the Royal University of Bhutan is called upon to set standards for the highest quality of faculty. The university should bring together on its different campuses the finest minds of the country and as well from beyond. It is the faculty who will finally set the tone of the university and make it the lighthouse of the community. The integrity and honour of the university comes from the profile of its faculty, and that of the Royal University will be no exception.

Especially in a unique setting such as ours, the university faculty are expected to lead the community by being an authority in their respective disciplines and inspire their students to the highest standards of achievement that they are capable of. This responsibility entails knowledge of the subject, proper delivery, sensitivity to the needs of the learners, among others. The university faculty are expected to embody the essential wisdom of their discipline and bring it to the student.

Transmission of available knowledge is only part of the job of university faculty. They have to create new knowledge and stretch the boundaries of learning. Creation of new knowledge involves research. Research is often conducted in universities for reasons not necessarily related to academic or professional excellence, guided by the slogan: publish or perish.

We expect the faculty of the Royal University of Bhutan to engage in high quality research and contribute to efforts in finding solutions to the many challenges of development.

As discussed earlier, universities are best situated to engage in the discovery of knowledge which can be an asset to the system and it is the faculty whose job it is to constantly challenge the limits of knowledge and bring new insights to the understanding of issues and problems affecting the nation, and enhancing the opportunities for

prosperity and happiness. The capacity of a university to attract the finest minds to its faculty depends on the value it assigns to knowledge and its readiness to provide for its advancement.

We expect the university faculty to be the think-tank of the system because it holds perhaps the largest fund of knowledge and expertise in diverse fields. The university faculty should participate actively in the issues affecting the local community, conduct studies which are of immediate concern to the community, provide leadership in educating and empowering the people.

Besides, the university faculty will be looked up to by the whole education system to provide advice and professional support in the different fields of academic studies. By virtue of their seniority and experience, the university faculty have a responsibility to the professional community as it looks for standards and examples of good practice.

Above all, the kind of values that the faculty impart to the students is critical. To quote Einstein, "It is not enough to teach a man a specialty. Through it he may become a kind of useful machine, but not a harmoniously developed personality. It is essential that the student acquire an understanding of and a lively feel for values. He must acquire a vivid sense of the beautiful and the morally good. Otherwise, he - with his specialized knowledge - more closely resembles a trained dog than a harmoniously developed person. He must learn to understand the motives of human beings, their illusions, and their sufferings in order to acquire a proper relationship to individual fellowmen and the community."(quoted in Goodlad, *ibid*:227).

#### Institutional Integrity: the University's Life Force

A university derives its greatest strength from its institutional integrity. Institutions of higher education aim to provide the most conducive environment for achieving their vision and goals in the advancement of learning. According to the Commission on Higher Education (1994), "one of the attributes which permits an educational institution to provide such an environment is integrity: integrity in the manner in which an institution specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs of research, pursues its fields of service, demonstrates sensitivity to equity and diversity issues, allocates its resources, and serves the public interest."

It goes on to say that "A significant measure of an institution's quality is the integrity with which it communicates and interacts with its constituencies and the public. This integrity is reflected in the honesty, openness, and the concern for its constituents that an institution reveals in the establishment and conduct of its programs."

The strengthening and advancement of institutional integrity in the Royal University of Bhutan in the manner mentioned above will be critical contributors to advancing the goal of gross national happiness.

#### A GNH University!

The purpose and scope of a national university include and transcend the function of validation and award of degrees and diplomas, regulation and control. A national university is the expression of the desire of a people to participate in the world of learning and scholarship, to learn and to employ the best that is thought and known in the world to usher in 'a current of fresh and true ideas', as in the language of Matthew Arnold.



A national university enables a people and a society to discover and appreciate the wonderful creations of the human race in the diverse fields of art and literature, science and technology, philosophy and mathematics, economics and commerce, history and sociology, information and communication and the fruits of many other human endeavours that have shaped and guided mankind's thought and action.

A national university opens up the vast treasures of the marvels of the human mind etched in the world's masterpieces, in civilizations, in the creative possibilities that have characterized the genius of our race as it tries to understand the mysteries of life and nature, as it seeks to come to terms with the limitless powers that surround our lives.

We participate in a universal celebration of the unity of knowledge and the unity of the human race and draw confidence in the solidarity of our hopes and our dreams. A national university is a powerful instrument.

More importantly, a national university is the articulation of a nation's unique voice. It is an affirmation and assertion of the intellectual destiny of a country. It is a symbol of national identity, an expression of its sovereign self, and a celebration of its cultural and intellectual heritage. The birth of a national university is the spontaneous proclamation of the coming of age of a system, the maturity of a mind, and the confidence of a people. It is the telling of a story that begins in the childhood of a nation, develops through time and fulfils the prophecy of the ancients: Let there be light...

A national university surveys the consciousness of a people, the psyche of a society and the aspirations of a nation. It journeys through the intellectual, psychological, social, political, spiritual, cultural, artistic, philosophical, moral, economic and material dimensions of a people and a nation. It locates and participates in the inner, subjective life of a society and finds ways to convey those urges and imaginings.

A national university is a wide-awake consciousness that follows what went, and goes, to the making of the nation, what makes its sovereign self, what guides its destiny, on what principles it coheres, what gives it meaning and purpose, what its convictions and values are, where it is going, and how it will sustain itself.

A national university is the veritable autobiography of the mind and soul of a people and a society. It has to follow the pulse of the nation. It is called upon to register and proclaim the timeless and the evolving, the reflective and the active, the national and the universal. The Royal University of Bhutan has no ordinary responsibility.

Bhutan has been home to some of the oldest religious traditions of the world; it has had highly realized and accomplished spiritual masters and scholars. It has been a land of prophecies and incarnations, miracles and mysteries, healing herbs and magical streams and rocks. These are a rare gift. They have made us what we are and given us our uniqueness as a nation and as a people. Our university has to draw inspiration from these our springs of faith and worship.

Our country is home too to some of the most sacred texts that have captured for us the breath of the divine, the words of the enlightened ones, way to salvation and the path to nirvana. Our many abodes of the gods and goddesses who preside over the happenings and goings-on of our life dot the length and breadth of our country. There is a text in the prayer flags that span the valleys and in the mud-cones that we call *chhachhas*.

Our temples and lhakhangs have been our university over the many years we have called this land our home. They have given us confidence and security and been a reason for our well-being and happiness. The new university will do well to take them into confidence.

This, our land of the peaceful dragon, is a natural laboratory of a special kind. Home to myriad species of flora and fauna, Bhutan is considered as one of the ten biological hotspots in the world. The diversity in landscape and altitude is matched by the variety in animals and plants, some of which are among the rarest of their kind in the world.

For centuries, our policy of self-chosen isolation has bred a culture and a way of life that is uniquely Bhutanese – be it the choice of a development path, the option of a system of governance, or alliance with the international community. As the world around marched, this land of the Buddha, Padmasambhava and Shabdrung, this sheltered valley, freer from the bitter blasts attendant upon less happy climes, chose to survey, from the snug canopies of the mighty Himalayas, where the rains had started beating nations and humans.

It seemed as if she knew what was always there: that all the sound and fury of the world would dissipate and that after all the Faustian adventures, it would come to value its soul.

Our myriad humble homes and hamlets have been our university of a special kind to teach us the timeless lessons of humility and tolerance, the power of love and compassion, the need to care and share, the laws of action and consequence, the essence of simplicity and the value of *thadamtsi*, the love of our sacred institutions, and the goodness of humanity. These, our priceless lessons of life, are dear to us as a nation and as a people.

Our country has been the cradle of some of the finest treasures of the human race. It has also been a pioneer in discovering and advocating the benefits that come in with the right of vision so amply demonstrated by our enlightened leaders as they take the country forward to ever widening vistas of progress.

It will be the responsibility of the university to assimilate and advance the spirit and force of the many exciting changes that are happening in the country today. In the preamble to our Constitution we *solemnly pledge to ourselves to strengthen the sovereignty of Bhutan, to secure the blessings of liberty and tranquility and to enhance the unity, happiness and the well-being of the people for all times...*

Pakhlivala (1994) quotes: “The Constitution has been reared to immortality, if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title. It may, nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly or corruption, or negligence of its keepers – the people.”

How do we prepare our people to absorb and further the intent and power enshrined in the sacred document?

The Royal University of Bhutan will be judged by what it makes of our natural, cultural, social and spiritual heritage.

It is important for the university to inspire and promote a culture of a learning society – both as a means and an end in itself. Today, computers and computer-controlled equipment are beginning to penetrate every aspect of our lives – homes, offices, factories and centres of learning. Technology is rapidly transforming a whole array of occupations – health-care, medical services, energy production, food processing, construction, repair and maintenance of sophisticated scientific, educational, agricultural and industrial equipment.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1984) says that a learning society is committed to a set of values and a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to their full capacity...Educational opportunities should extend beyond our schools and colleges to include home, workplaces, libraries, art galleries, museums, science centres, and the like. Enhancement of the base of gross national happiness will depend a lot on the university being able to foster a culture of a learning society.

### A University with a Difference

Many universities around the world have bartered their soul to the market. Universities and institutions of learning were supposed to be great conserving places – fountains of wisdom, citadels of values and centres of enlightenment. They were supposed to be the satellites and lighthouses of nations and societies. They were expected to inform and inspire, draw out the best in individuals and institutions and be the conscience-keepers of nations.

These places of learning were called upon to lead and empower, establish and promote categories of right and wrong, discover and assert the human capacity for goodness and virtue

Unfortunately, many universities have followed the call of the market and factories and become corporations. They have even borrowed the market metaphors to prove and proclaim their viability and relevance in the narrow utilitarian sense of the term.

Universities have a lot to account for their fall from grace. They have to rediscover their lost ground and renew their commitment to the nobler functions of enlightening and empowering individuals as people and not as mere economic entities.

Even as the tide of consumerism and materialism makes inroads into our system and often seems to challenge our nobler selves, it is singularly important for the national university to lead, instead of simply being led by the call of the market. Why can't the market be relevant to the university ideals, and national goals, for a change?

This is the challenge for the Royal University of Bhutan: engineering and rediscovering the true mission of education and bring it to bear on the reshaping of the society. It has to find its culmination in much more than achieving parity with other universities in the conventional sense of term, but in being a mighty instrument for fulfilling just what is its authentic role – a bringer of light to the society.

The goal of gross national happiness is built on the premise of the essential goodness of people and that the Bhutanese people will be able to bring out the best in them. The Royal University of Bhutan can be a powerful instrument in influencing the minds and habits of people. The highest destinies of the university and the noblest dreams of the kingdom converge at the Royal University of Bhutan.

### The Imperative of Name and Symbol

What is in a name? Everything. The ability to invent names and invest them with meanings is one of the unique achievements of human beings. A name is, therefore, more than nomenclature. It is the embodiment of an idea, the objective self of a subjective notion, the manifestation of a wish, a dream. A name is our other self, a proclamation of the identity of a being or of an object. A whole body of associations and meanings are

invested with names. They carry enormous responsibilities and expectations. Names are therefore, extremely important.

Our national university is called the **Royal University of Bhutan**. In the first instance, the scope of the university covers the whole of the country. It is Bhutan's university. It is a university and in this capacity, the Royal University of Bhutan has to be true to the spirit of the highest traditions of university education. Most important of all, our university is **Royal**.

In this spirit, the Royal University of Bhutan is expected to symbolize and exemplify the nobility of person, thought and practice in its being as an institution. It has to imbibe and cultivate the highest standards of excellence in the means and ends of its pursuit. It has to aspire to be *royal* in the cultivation of the best minds to look for and to value what is true and good and beautiful. It is rare privilege for the university to be called **royal**. It is a tremendous responsibility too.

Our university carries the **Crown**. It is the most elevated and sacred symbol of our country and our sovereignty as expressed by the person and majesty of our beloved monarchs. The crown represents the regal power of our kings as well as stands for the state. The crown has associations with investiture, with coronation and with the royalty of kings and queens. The Royal University of Bhutan bears the sacred responsibility and honour of having to measure up to the standards that originate in the name and the symbol that it carries.

## Conclusion

Our country has had the privilege of learning from the experiences of other countries to decide and develop a way of life and a development path that best suits the needs and aspirations of our people. Similarly, the Royal University of Bhutan has been singularly fortunate to have the opportunity of looking at best practices from universities around the world and selecting a path that enables it to set standards in the best traditions of higher education and be a powerful instrument for the furtherance of our development ideal of gross national happiness.

The Royal University will serve our society's interests best and promote happiness if it "aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, of cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life", as Newman desired.

Our university should aspire to be a community of teachers and students who are unconditionally committed to seek to know what we can understand, how we can interpret the world with that understanding, and how that knowledge can be used. For certainly, as the famous German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, believed, "...the university is the place where both society and the nation come to the clearest self-realization."

A meeting point of finest minds of the Bhutanese and the finest minds of from far and near. The confluence of Platonic thoughts and the ideas of Newton, the truth of the Eight-fold Paths of the Buddha and the vision of Gandhi, the wisdom of Shabdrung and the mind of Shakespeare. The old faithful reading the scriptures as his food gets cooked by laser beams. The Royal University of Bhutan should be such a garden where every flower must bloom. We couldn't expect a university to do more to advance the ideal of gross national happiness.

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