



5th December, 2004

Foreword

Seeta Giri's "The Vital Link: Monpas and Their Forests" is the first comprehensive study of the Monpa communities of Bhutan. It gives a deep insight of their origin, history, their spiritual practices and how they live in harmony with nature. The Monpas sustain the environment as the environment sustains them having being interdependent on each other for thousands of years.

This documentation of the Monpas, who are very few in number, living in the heart of our country, is very timely as mainstream culture erodes their original way of life. They are very precious being the last of the remaining original inhabitants of our country with their religion and self-sustaining livelihoods having existed before Buddhism came to Bhutan. Having met the Monpas in their villages in Langthil geog in Trongsa and in Adha Rukha in Wangdiphodrang, I understand their need to improve their quality of life while at the same time preserving their age-old beliefs and customs. This must be facilitated and respected without the Monpas becoming a museum society.

The rest of Bhutan can learn from the Monpas to understand and appreciate our origins and to know that independence comes from dependence on each other and the environment. The fruit of Seeta Giri's research not only creates awareness of the Monpa communities but also instills appreciation and responsibility for the vulnerable communities in our country. I commend and congratulate Dr. Giri for shedding light on Monpas of Bhutan.

Tashi Delek!

Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck
Queen of Bhutan