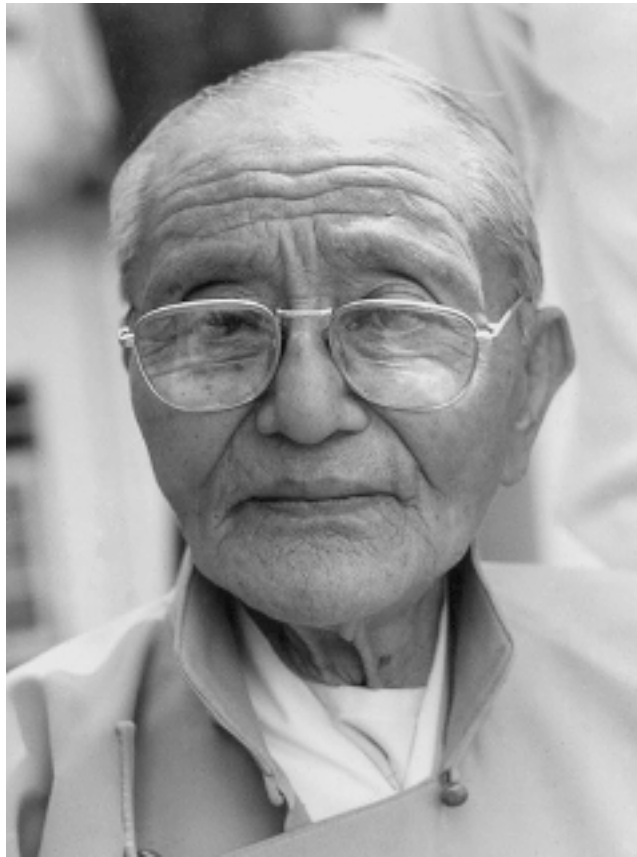


The Legacy of Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa



Press Release - May 16, 1995

Today, the Government and the people of Sikkim celebrated "State Day" to mark the completion of 20 years of Sikkim's integration with the Republic of India. It may be recalled that following a political mass movement against the monarchical regime and for the establishment of a democratic set up, the then Chogyal of Sikkim, the three political parties of Sikkim and the Government of India signed the historic Tripartite Agreement on May 8, 1973, thereby paving the way for a fully responsible democratic government elected on the basis of one man, one vote. After the first democratic election held in April 1974, a popular government was established in Sikkim with the Chogyal as its Constitutional Head. Soon thereafter, Sikkim became an Associate State of the Indian Union, and eventually, the 22nd State of India by virtue of the Thirty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975 which came into force with effect from April 26, 1975.

The people of Sikkim wholeheartedly joined the Indian Union in order to enjoy the democratic rights and liberties guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and also to be the beneficiaries of socio-economic and political justice enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution. In addition thereto, the people of Sikkim had high expectations that the Union Government would zealously safeguard the interests of the people of Sikkim guaranteed under the May 8, 1973 Agreement and also the provisions of Article 371 of the

Constitution of India which was specifically designed to protect the Sikkimese people for their all-round development and progress. Most unfortunately, the Union Government did not live up to our expectations over the past twenty years. It is true that we did get ample amount of central subvention for the economic development of the people and the State. But the central assistance for the economic betterment of the State was marred by rampant corruption at all strata of State administration, besides creating sharp communal disharmony and perpetuation of the British-inherited policy of divide and rule. For 14 years, the Central Government pampered former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari who institutionalized corruption throughout Sikkim and divided the united and homogeneous people into various ethnic groups with the ulterior motive of creating a vote bank for himself and his party. The Union Government chose it wise for over six years to sleep over the corruption cases against N. B. Bhandari and several top-ranking public servants who had amassed huge amounts of tax payers' money for their own benefit. Unable to tolerate the economic offences in Sikkim, I was compelled to move the Supreme Court and restore the consent earlier accorded to the CBI for the prosecution of all offenders in Sikkim including Mr. Bhandari.

What we achieved over the past 20 years is indeed a sad story. Corruption has engulfed the administration and the people; communal disharmony has ripped apart the fabric of unity and brotherhood amongst the three ethnic groups of Sikkim and the economic offenders - particularly the petty minded political and civil servants - have thrived unpunished due to the negligence and apathy of the Union Government. The net result is: democracy and socio-economic and political justice in Sikkim have become an illusion over the past two decades and people are beginning to feel that their struggle of the early seventies has gone in vain, for, only a handful of people have reaped the fruits of democracy in this tiny State. The yawning gap between the rich and the poor has widened to such an extent that I do not find appropriate words to describe it. As an architect of democracy and Sikkim's integration with the Republic of India, I am extremely disappointed to observe that the Union Government has, consciously or unconsciously, violated in letter and spirit the historic May 8, 1973 Tripartite Agreement and the specific provisions of the 35th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975 and that too, despite my innumerable letters, personal visits to Delhi and meetings with the Central leaders, and repeated requests for attention to our miserable plight in Sikkim.

At the very old age of 91, in the capacity of a signatory to the May 8, 1973 Agreement and the first Chief Minister of Sikkim, I am compelled to demand and call upon the Union Government to immediately restore to us - the people of Sikkim - the status of "Protectorate State" guaranteed to the Sikkimese by the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 thereby aborting all the instruments of merger like the Thirty-Fifth Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975 that reduced us to a part of India. This is because we have waited enough and eventually lost our patience. We, therefore, feel confident that we are competent to govern ourselves better according to our own political genius and outside the framework of the Constitution of India.

Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, First Chief Minister of Sikkim