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## WOMEN IN POLITICS: A LIFE EXPERIENCE OF QUEEN YESHE DOLMA IN THE HISTORY OF SIKKIM

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### Abstract

The position of women in the political sphere has been neglected. People could not think of women as a leader. Historians narrated that the major role of women is caregiver and companion which are more often expressed in private settings than in public. Women are less likely than men to become a leader. The Classical text of Manu Smriti also advised Men must make their women dependent day and night, and keep them under their control. She should be kept busy by attending to her duty like cooking food and looking after their children and home. Due to gender norms, women were confined to household work and are restricted to domestic roles such as wife, daughter, mistress etc. Politics was always seen as the task of men because when we talked about politics, it is related to leadership, and power and all these qualities according to the gender norms should be possessed by men and not women in society. Therefore, this paper will try to reconstruct the role and contribution of queen Yeshe Dolma, in the history of Sikkim whose contribution and work are usually lost between the wrinkled pages of the history of Sikkim.

**Keywords:** Women in Politics, History of Sikkim, Court culture, Queen Yeshe Dolma.

### Introduction

The Namgyal Dynasty was established in Sikkim in 1642 C.E.,<sup>i</sup> from that time onwards Sikkimese society was based on a patriarchal family system where women's voices are always subdued and Sikkim's history was always represented in an andro-centric perspective, where women's roles and leadership qualities have been neglected. Though there were women, who played an important role in the socio-economic and political field of the development of Sikkim. However, when historians wrote Sikkim's History, women's work was always kept behind the curtains. There is ample literature dealing with the socio-economic and political history of Sikkim, but this literature does not give much importance to the women's question in Sikkim. Discussion on the status of women has a unique position in the writing, teaching and learning of history; although there is very little work which defines women and their work in society.

The political system of Sikkim was typically theocratic patriarchal in nature.<sup>ii</sup> It was all about kings and aristocratic men who have unlimited power in their hands and controlled the societies. The ruler was only the secular head of the state, and he was all in all. Most of the influential landlords, who hold important posts in the administration were men.<sup>iii</sup> All the highest administrative power was held by the king and the other male officers in the royal court of Sikkim as well. They enjoy all the socio-economic and political power. However, from the mid-nineteenth century, the Sikkim Durbar (Sikkim Government) scenario was changed when queens started involving in the administrative work of the Durbar and showed their powers and supremacy. Among them, queen (Gyalmo) Yeshe Dolma,<sup>iv</sup> the ninth queen of Sikkim showed her excellent power in the royal court of Sikkim to protect the royal house and her husband's regime from the influence of the British. She was married to the ninth king of Sikkim Thutub Namgyal and his half-brother Lhasey Kusho Thinley Namgyal, in a polyandrous alliance which was then commonly practiced in Tibet as well as among the Bhutias<sup>v</sup> of Sikkim.<sup>vi</sup>

Empress Yeshe Dolma stepped in Sikkim at a time when Sikkim Durbar was facing political disturbance due to the influence of the British Government. The main motive of the British was to use Sikkim in order to build a trade relationship with Tibet. Due to these circumstances, Emperor Thutob Namgyal and Empress Yeshe Dolma faced many challenges during their lifetime.

As she came down to live in her new home on the borders of British India. Sikkim, located on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, the Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom was facing boundary issues with a link with the mountain passes that link British India to Tibet and to China Beyond. During such circumstances, she made an effort to find peace for her family and the Kingdom of Sikkim. She embraced her circumstances while facing tremendous hardships, she acted as an advisor to her husband, as a quiet rebel in the face of the empire, and as an informal mediator.<sup>vii</sup>

Before Empress Yeshe Dolma came down to live in her new home (Sikkim), Chogyal Thutob Namgyal was already married to queen Pending<sup>viii</sup>, a woman from the Palding estate belonging to Tashilhunpo (Tibet) but she died within a short period of time in 1880.<sup>ix</sup> During the time of the king's elder half-brother, the Tibetan epithets of Chogyal and Gyalmo which were used for the Kings



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and queens of Sikkim were removed and they began to address the Maharaja and Maharani of Sikkim, which was akin to all the Indian rulers.<sup>x</sup>

After the death of Thotup Namgyal's first wife in 1880. King had no desire to marry again, but in 1881, he was pressured by the lay ministers and Lamas (monks) of Sikkim to marry again.<sup>xi</sup> It is also stated in the Royal History of Sikkim, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 1881 (6<sup>th</sup> march, 1881), the Iron Snake year of the 15<sup>th</sup> Tibetan era, the Ministers and Lamas of Sikkim jointly submitted a request in writing to the Chogyal and his mother Queen Lhayum Monkyid, requesting that his highness should think of marrying a new queen.<sup>xii</sup> This address was accompanied by a sevenfold Nazar (gifts).<sup>xiii</sup> Therefore, the queen mother Lhayum Mankyid discussed the matter with the Chogyal and his half-brother Lhasey Kusho Thiney Namgyal, and they both agreed to propose for the hand of a single wife in accordance with the custom of two brothers sharing one wife jointly. The Chogyal Thotub Namgyal consented to marry a wife in this manner.<sup>xiv</sup>

Finally, the marriage proposal was accepted by the Lhading house of Tibet and the marriage ceremony was conducted at Lhasa, the bride was publicly announced to be the joint wife of the two men and when the marriage was conducted only the king's half-brother Thinley Namgyal was presented. Later Yeshe Dolma was conceived by him and gave birth to three children by Thinley while living in Chumbi Valley<sup>xv</sup>. Infact, she had three children from Thinley Namgyal before Emperor Thutob could see her for the first time.<sup>xvi</sup>

### The conspiracy behind the Marriage of Yeshe Dolma and Thutob Namgyal

According to Lall Bahadur Basnet, a pioneer historian of Sikkim stated in his book Sikkim; A Short Political "queen Mankyid<sup>xvii</sup>, lost her title "Queen", due to her marriage with her husband's illegitimate son Chanzod Karpo<sup>xviii</sup>. Therefore, she planned that her husband Chogyal Tsughud Namgyal should appoint Lhassy Kusho Thinley Namgyal as the new king of Sikkim in place of her legitimated son Thutob Namgyal. But things did not go according to her plan, Therefore, she decided to conspire with Tokhang Donyer Namgyal<sup>xix</sup>. Both worked together in the removal of Thutob Namgyal from Sikkimese gaddi (throne) in a succession of Lhassy Kusho Thinley Namgyal. With such an idea, both had planned for a second marriage of Thutob Namgyal along with his stepbrother with a Tibetan lady named Yeshe Dolma.<sup>xx</sup> So that the Tibetan bride will remain with the Thinley Namgyal and Thinley will get a chance to succeed his brother.

When Thutob Namgyal was young, the power of the state reverted to his mother queen Mankyid and Dewan Namgay, both are anti-British fractions. From their long residence in Chumbi Valley and close connection with Tibet, both Monkyid and Dewan Namgay were in the favour of Tibetan interest and their efforts were securing the succession of Lhassy Kusho Thinley Namgyal to the throne of Sikkim.<sup>xxi</sup> But, their plan failed when Thutob Namgyal was consecrated to the throne of Sikkim in 1874. With the coronation of Thutob Namgyal, as the ninth Emperor of Sikkim, the anti-British and pro-Tibetan faction in Sikkim once again directed all efforts towards securing Thinley Namgyal in direct succession to the throne. However, after Dewan Namgey's death in 1888, the anti-British elements in Chumbi palace became less strident in their bid to propagate Thinley Namgyal's cause.<sup>xxii</sup> It seems that behind all the events was a sinister design to overthrow Thutob Namgyal and place Thiney Namgyal on the throne.

According to the History of Sikkim, written by Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma and Chogyal Thotub Namgyal, the main objective of the Thotub and Thinley's marriage with a Tibetan woman Yeshe Dolma in a polyandrous alliance; was to grant an extension of Sikkim's property into Tibet. As that request was not yet answered, from 1874 onwards. The second one was to marry the Tibetan woman for the Emperor of Sikkim to unchanged the old Sikkim-Tibet relationship and the third one was to visit the sacred places of Tibet. Sikkim Durbar (Sikkim Government) even issued a request for two elephants from the British Government, so that they can be sent to Tibet. Two elephants and some buffaloes were sent up as presents to the Tashi Lama and the Dalai Lama from Sikkim.<sup>xxiii</sup> After the finalisation of the marriage, the Lhasa Government gave compensation for the delay in finalising the settlement of the Sikkim state extension in Tibet.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In 1885, however, under some circumstances, Thutob Namgyal went to Chumbi Palace. This was the time, Empress Yeshe Dolma got an opportunity to exercise all her feminine charms and switch to Thutob Namgyal, her co-husband, who had been neglecting her since her marriage more than two years ago because when Thinley Namgyal and Yeshe Dolma living at the Chumbi palace. It was reported that Empress Yeshe Dolma was bearing a child, and one of the officers named Drungyig Ngodrup sent a confidential report to the Khangsar Dewan (Minister) who was a pro-British, He took advantage of this situation and try to sow seeds of discord between Chogyal and Yeshe Dolma, however, Khangsar was not successful. Though this coldness lasted for quite certain years. Later Chogyal Thutob Namgyal realised that he himself had given the consent to marry in a polyandrous form.<sup>xxv</sup>



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Queen Yeshe Dolma

### Yeshe Dolma and her power in the Royal Court of Sikkim

Yeshe Dolma was an ambitious woman and a good conversationalist, an accomplished calligraphist and had a deep knowledge of the Buddhist religion. Therefore, it was not difficult for her to win the favour of the king who was young and lonely with considerable power at his command. She even realised that she would not live like a lay woman, being the wife of someone, she needed power, and prestige, and wanted to be part of the Kingdom of Sikkim. For some time, she managed to carry on with both husbands but after a year, she deserted Thinley, and threw her completely with Thutob and remained with Emperor Thutob Namgyal until her death. Empress Yeshe Dolma and Emperor Thutob Namgyal were to remain on the best of understanding, and Yeshe Dolma was to combine her wifely duties, alongside the role of a friend and counsellor through all thick and thin situation of Thutob's rule.<sup>xxvi</sup> Therefore, L.A. Waddell, in his travelogue, *Among the Himalayas*; *Bibliotheca Himalayica*, mentioned that she was unique as compared to other queens in the history of Sikkim. She has a striking personality. Small and slight, beautifully dressed in brocades, velvets and silks, with much jewellery of rough turquoises, pearls, coral and amber. Her hair was decorated with strings of pearls, which reached to the hem of her gown and wearing the curious Tibetan head-dress which was adopted by the other queens of Sikkim<sup>xxvii</sup>

Later, Empress Yeshe Dolma gave birth to two children from the Chogyal Thutob Namgyal, one son named Tashi Namgyal, who became the eleventh Chogyal of Sikkim and a daughter Choni Wongmo. Emperor Thutob Namgyal, the ninth Chogyal of Sikkim by the time twenty-eight years of age, of medium height, typically Mongolian in appearance and disfigured by a bad hare-lip. He was weak and easily led, and possessed a good deal of common sense.<sup>xxviii</sup> Therefore, Sunanda K Datta-Roy in his book; *Smash and Grab* stated; Emperor Thutob Namgyal was "a man of indolent disposition, whose inclination was to live in retirement and aloof from the worries and the government of his little state." And British thought too that he was entirely under the thumb of two Tibetan women one was his mother queen Mankyid and the second one was his second wife Empress Yeshe Dolma.<sup>xxix</sup>

Even Nari Rustomji; in his work *Sikkim; A Himalayan Tragedy* described Emperor Thutob's wife as no cypher, Thutob suffered from a curious morbidity and feeling of embarrassment arising it seems, from the misfortune of his having been born with an ugly hare-lip. But his wife was however more than compensated for his diffidence and had no hesitation, if so inclined, in fully upbraiding the British representatives in Gangtok for the supposed injustice and humiliations inflicted upon Sikkim's royal house and



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she was a protector of her husband and royal house against the British. <sup>xxx</sup> Therefore, it is relevant to note the significant role played by the consort of the ruler in the politics of Sikkim.

L.A. Waddell again mentioned, she was the woman, who had been credited with intriguing political matters and causing Britain's troubles with Tibet. <sup>xxxii</sup> She was bright and prepossessing and rather inquisitive. She asked so many personal questions to the British. Her husband Emperor Thutob Namgyal was a puppet in the hands of his crafty priests, who made a sort of priest-king of him. They encouraged him by every means in their power to leave the government to them, whilst he devotes all his time to degrading rites of devil worship, and the ceaseless muttering of meaningless jargon, of which the Tibetan form of Buddhism chiefly consists. They declared that he was a saint by birth and that he was a direct descendant of the greatest king of Tibet. <sup>xxxiii</sup>

Therefore, Alice Travers in her work *A women in the diplomatic game: Preliminary notes on the Matrimonial link of the Sikkim royal family with Tibet 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century considered*; the marriage of Emperor Thutob Namgyal with the Tibetan woman Yeshe Dolma as a turning point in relation policies to Sikkim, Tibet and British India. As Travers refers J.C. White <sup>xxxiii</sup> described Emperor Thotup Namgyal as totally under the influence of his consort Yeshe Dolma. Her marriage with the king of Sikkim was the main factor behind the decline of British influence in Sikkim. As she was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Kingdom. She had an exceptional ability and strength of mind as she belonged to one of the highly respectable families of Lhasa. <sup>xxxiv</sup> Similarly, P.R. Rao, stated that, With Thutob Namgyal's second marriage, the influence of the Tibetan faction had increased and consequently, the British influence had declined in Sikkim. <sup>xxxv</sup>

During the reign of Thutob Namgyal, Sikkim had to face a lot of challenges under the patronage of the British. British had already taken their footsteps in Sikkim during his father's time. In 1861, the Treaty of Tumlong was signed between the British Government and Sikkim. This treaty cancelled all the former treaties signed between the British government and Sikkim. By this treaty, the British secured valuable rights relating to trade, and the right to conduct geographical and topographical surveys in Sikkim. The relationship of Sikkim with her neighbours became the subject of British control. The Kings of Sikkim would not be permitted to live in the Chumbi Palace for more than three months in a year. Thus Sikkim became a de-facto protectorate of British India. <sup>xxxvi</sup> 1861, conflict had left Sikkim with a major economic problem. Their tax-paying territory on the plains had been annexed to Bengal and the annual payment from Darjeeling <sup>xxxvii</sup> was in suspension. <sup>xxxviii</sup>

Therefore, in 1883, Trade on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier which was taken care of by the British has been stopped by the Tibetans and to investigate the matter, the British Government sent Colman Macaulay, Finance Secretary, Government of Bengal, to find the reason causing the fall of trade, but the mission was failed. <sup>xxxix</sup> As soon as the Macaulay mission was withdrawn, Tibetan advanced thirteen miles inside northern Sikkim across Jelap pass and occupied a place called Lingtu fort on the Darjeeling road. <sup>xl</sup> Emperor Thutob Namgyal was against the idea of a fort at Lingtu because this would increase enmity between Sikkim and British Government. He was squished between the British and the Tibetans. On the one side, Sikkim had a close tie with Tibet, since the establishment of the Namgyal Dynasty. On the other side, the British government pressurised the Chogyal of Sikkim to mediate the problem between these two parties. Emperor Thutob Namgyal made a great effort to mediate between the two governments but he was not very successful. Therefore, Thutob Namgyal, instead of protesting against this, overlook the Tibetan action at Lingtu. <sup>xli</sup>

In fact, Emperor had entered into a secret treaty with Tibet in 1886, promising to prevent persons from crossing the Sikkim-Tibet boundary and agreeing that Sikkim was subject only to Tibet and China. This was a violation of the treaty of 1861, and Emperor was asked to return to Sikkim by the British government otherwise his allowance would be stopped. But Emperor Thutob Namgyal declined to return due to the opposition of the Tibetan authorities and informed that the Tibetans had constructed a fort at Lingtu and Tibetan had also stopped the trade. <sup>xlii</sup>

However, scholars like A.C. Sinha in his work *Sikkim; A Feudal Democracy*; defined that it was a queen Yeshe Dolam, who undertook the champion in the favour of Tibet with the support of the Bhutia courtiers which created a new problem for the emperor. Therefore, Tibetans occupied Lingtu at a point on the frontiers, which necessitated a British expeditionary force to be sent to evict Tibetans from Lingtu in March 1889. <sup>xliii</sup>

Therefore, J.C. White, the first British political officer while blaming Empress Yeshe Dolma for all these faults said “ Empress Yeshe Dolma was Born intriguer and diplomat, her energies were unfortunately, but naturally, owing to her Tibetan origin, misdirected for many years, until, finding out her mistake, she frankly confessed that she had been wrong, and turned her thoughts and attention to matters which should lead to the welfare of her husband's state” <sup>xliv</sup>



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For such reason, British Government stopped the payment of Rupees twelve thousand annually subsidy from the Indian estates. In 1885, when Emperor Thutob Namgyal was not able to manage even his household expenditures. He felt himself the object of his enemy's pleasure and the pity of his sympathisers. He saw no one amongst his people in whose honour or good faith he could trust. He felt it so keenly that he thought it better for him to go away to some foreign country. It was during those moments, Empress Yeshe Dolma remained a constant source of his strength and hope for the Chogyal Thutob Namgyal.<sup>xlv</sup>

She convinced him that he should not think of going out of his kingdom, because leaving his own kingdom and going to some foreign land, would only be a cause for sorrow. However, she persuaded the Lonpos (one of the clans of Bhutias) and Lamas of Sikkim, who are around her by suggesting that they should talk to his Highness on the above subject and persuade him to give some ideas. They once responded to her appeal by collecting a sum of Rupees five hundred which they offered as a nazar in support of their prayer that His Highness would remain in Sikkim and never think of going away elsewhere.<sup>xlvi</sup>

In 1888, the New Sikkim Ruling Council was formed by J.C. White. The main aim of forming the new council was the Emperor was insufficiently supportive of their mission during the battle with Tibet over Lingtu, and that he spent excessive time at his Chumbi Palace in Tibet instead of focusing on government affairs in Sikkim proper.<sup>xlvii</sup> Sometime around 1891, Chogyal Thutob Namgyal had no religious and administrative power in their own country and he was left with a limited monthly allowance of only Rupees five hundred and he had no authority and involvement whatever in government administration.<sup>xlviii</sup>

The defeat of the Tibetans at the hand of the British alarmed the Chinese and fearing to lose influence in Tibet, China began to negotiate with the British. After a prolonged discussion, an Anglo-Chinese Convention was signed at Calcutta on 17<sup>th</sup> march, 1890.<sup>xlix</sup> With the 1890s, convention, Tibetan hegemony over Sikkim had finally come to an end.<sup>1</sup> The 1890 convention fixed the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet and exclusive British control over Sikkim was increased in both the internal administration and foreign relations of the state.

Since the ruler was in the habit of living in the Chumbi valley, he was virtually cut off from routine administrative responsibilities. And this time it was an ideal situation for the anti-British intrigues to flourish with the support of the queen.<sup>ii</sup> J.C. White forced the ruler to come back to Gangtok, but Thotub refused to cooperate with the British in their design, he was put under confinement and subjected to extreme deprivation.<sup>iii</sup>

Due to Emperor Thutob Namgyal's attitude towards the British, the British got angered by the king and queen of Sikkim. Later on, in 1893, they were sent to Kalimpong and then to Kurseong, for two years of house arrest. The actual administration was passed down in the hand of a political officer. During such hardship journey, Empress Yeshe Dolma remained her husband's sole companion. Later, when the king was allowed to return to Sikkim, he found that the administration was changed which was not much to his liking. The Capital was shifted from Tumlong to Gangtok, which was not only the Political Officer's seat but also more centrally located. But then also, he always had a strong-minded supporter behind him as his consort Empress Yeshe Dolma, whom he tried to oppose J. C. White as well.<sup>iiii</sup> Later, Empress Yeshe Dolma died in 1910, and two years later Chogyal Thutob Namgyal also passed away in 1914.

### Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma's contribution to the History of Sikkim

While living in Sikkim, she rebuilt her palace in a Tibetan Style.<sup>liv</sup> She was engaged in literary cultural work and remained an active patron of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta for Tibetan studies.<sup>lv</sup> In 1907, when a Royal couple visited Nepal on tour for pilgrimage, her highness Yeshe Dolma sponsored some of the money to Buddhist Newars of Kathmandu to reconstruct the damaged temple of Svayambhu-Nath Chorten (temple) from the side of Sikkimese, as just to commented their visit to Nepal. On the west side of the Svayambhu-Nath Chorten, there was a smaller Chorten dedicated to the Indian Buddhist Pandita Vasu-ban-dhu which she had paid to have repaired and plastered with lime. For this work, she spent an additional Rupees One hundred and prayed for the firmness of faith and release from disease.<sup>lvi</sup>

Denjong Gyalrab (History of Sikkim) manuscript originally written in Tibetan over a century ago by the Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and his queen consort Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma was a pleasant gift for the Sikkimese scholar who wanted to study Sikkimese history. Yeshe Dolma, the principal author and driving force behind the original Denjong Gyalrab manuscript. However, due to her early death at the age of 43, her Denjong Gyalrab manuscript and its English translation remained unpublished. Later her



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granddaughter, her Majesty Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuk of Bhutan, released it, on May 2021 in the new form, The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicles of the House of Namgyal.<sup>lvii</sup>

### Honourship over the Land

During her reign for the first time, land ownership under the name of the queen was seen in the history of Sikkim. Before her, Sikkim's history always established the supremacy of the kings and kazis (Landlords) over the land since the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty. King was the sole owner of the land. Even though the Kazis had no proprietary right in the land, an internal system of the land division was the Chogyal was at the highest level. The property belonged to the Chogyal called "Royal Lands". All lands are under the direct control of the king.<sup>lviii</sup>

However, land under a person could be transferred by the king to another party. The land was used to be given as a bride price to the queen of Sikkim and the same land was passed down through the successive Gyalmos (Queen) of Sikkim. According to The Royal History of Sikkim: A Chronicles of the House of Namgyal; during the time of the Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal, he made a deed signed and sealed himself that after the death of his fourth wife, queen Dingka, a place called Dzongu, was transferred under the name of his fifth queen Monkyid Lhayum and thereafter, he himself made a grant of Dzongu land to his daughter-in-law Lhading lady Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma in lieu of marriage ornaments.<sup>lix</sup>

Therefore, Dzongu became a part of the queen's private estate. The Gyalmo left the land in charge of the person who are honest and loyal to the palace establishment. Therefore, it was administrated once by the Mali Kazi and later by the Rhenock Kazi<sup>lx</sup> During the later period, the land came under the hands of the Prime Minister, and thereafter, it came under the heir apparent to the throne.<sup>lxi</sup>

Lands had been the private property of the successive queen of Sikkim and they also collected taxes and produce from their land. According to the local tradition, the Chumbi valley, on the side of the border, only came into the possession of the Sikkim's king a little more than a hundred years ago as a dowry of a Tibetan queen.<sup>lxii</sup> Lachen and Lachung valley were also assigned to the queen at the time of Superintendent Campbell and Hooker's visit to Sikkim in 1849.<sup>lxiii</sup> In 1891, the place called Garjong in the west Sikkim, which was the private property of the queen was exchanged with the monastic land of the Kichaperi in west Sikkim and Melli in the South with the landholder Rizing Kazi.<sup>lxiv</sup>

Even later the Takshi Dzong was also assigned in the name of the eleventh queen Kunzan Dechan during the time of her husband King Tashi Namgyal.<sup>lxv</sup> Therefore, it showed that the custom of bride price and dowry was widely prevalent among the Royal family of Sikkim and it also proved that royal women also hold their own land. In the history of Sikkim not only the king but queen also grant the land to the people if they were happy with their services. Therefore, queen Kunzang Dechan gifted a small plot of barren land, for the construction of a small house to Ngwang Rabgey on 20th September 1967.<sup>lxvi</sup> This showed that royal women hold their own land and queens of Sikkim also had ownership over the land.

### Conclusion

Throughout the history of Sikkim, the death of the ruler has often caused a war of succession disputes and armed conflict, similarly, Sikkim also had the potential to fall into anarchy and civil war as the competing groups for political supremacy. All the socio-economic and political power was exercised by the king and their ministers. However, the power of the royal women and their involvement in the royal court was not taken into consideration. All the highest administrative power was held by the King and other male officers and whatever the contributions made by the queens in the history of Sikkim, all were neglected when history was written in the past.

However, queen Yeshe Dolma, a woman from the Lhading family of Lhasa was exceptionally intelligent and charming. She had a strong will, while the king was easygoing. The queen was not disposed to bother about the administration, especially as in accordance with the policy of the British-Indian Government of that period, she used to administer the state. She even kept the state seal. From time to time the king asserted himself and took matters into his own hands, but in the daily round of affairs, it was the queen that governed.<sup>lxvii</sup> It was already mentioned above that queen Yeshe Dolma, Thutob Namgyal's second consort was a gifted intelligent good calligraphist and very ambitious woman. Therefore, J.C White stated that She was extremely bright and well educated, although she will not admit that she has knowledge of any language except Tibetans but she talked well on many subjects and write well. However, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, she personally composed and engrossed in beautiful Tibetan characters the address presented by her husband Thutob Namgyal. Many Scholars pointed out that She was a most picturesque



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object, a harmony of gold and brilliant colours impossible to express in words.<sup>lxviii</sup> She made a commendable contribution to the history of Sikkim and her work is still remembered when women's questions arise in the history of Sikkim.

## References

- <sup>i</sup> Sikkim emerged as a Buddhist country, as a prototype of Lamaist Tibet, run by the Tibetan Lamas who established the Namgyal dynasty in 1642 C.E. to expand and also protect the Nying-ma-pa (Red Hat) set of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. Initially, the Tibetans used the term Demojong or Denjong for Sikkim which means the valley of rice. Phuntsog Namgyal was summoned to Yuksom and consecrated as Sikkim's first Chogyal (Dharma Raja).
- <sup>ii</sup> Sinha, A.C. *Politics of Sikkim: A Sociological*. Delhi: Thomas Press (India) Limited, 1975: 10.
- <sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>iv</sup> Gyalmo (queen) Yeshe Drolma, the ninth queen of Sikkim, belonged to the Lhading family of Lhasa in Tibet. she was a daughter of Namgyal Dorje and Losang Dekyi Sonam. Her father was an officer in the Court of Dalai Lama in Lhasa. In 1882-1883, Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma married to the ninth king of Sikkim Chogyal Thotub Namgyal and his half- brother Lhasey Kusho Thinley Namgyal, in a polyandrous alliance.
- <sup>v</sup> Bhutias of Sikkim are the people of Tibetan origin having almost same physical feature, way of living, cultural pattern, language, scripts and also the same religious faith.
- <sup>vi</sup> Andrussi, John A, Anna Balikci Denjonpa, and Per K. Sorensen. *The Royal History of Sikkim; A Chronicle of the House of Namgyal; As Narrated in Tibetan by Their Highnesses Chogyal Thutob Namgyal and Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma*. Chicago: Serindia Publication, 2021: 320.
- <sup>vii</sup> Denjongpa, Anna Balikci and John A. Andrussi. "Editorial Introduction" *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Gangtok, Sikkim: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 2021: 6.
- <sup>viii</sup> Chogyal Thutub Namgyal's elder half-brother's widow.
- <sup>ix</sup> Basnet, Lal Bahadur. *Sikkim; A Short Political History*. New Delhi: S. Chand, 1974: 44.
- <sup>x</sup> Upadaya, Rajen, *Peasants' Resentments and Resistance; A Glimpse on Rural Past of Sikkim 1914-1960*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2017: 65.
- <sup>xi</sup> Kazi, Jigme N. *Son of Soil: The Rise and fall of the Namgyal Dynasty of Sikkim*. India: Hill Media Publication, 2020: 136.
- <sup>xii</sup> Andrussi, John A, Anna Balikci Denjonpa, & Per K. Sorensen. 2021: *Op. Cit.*, 319.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Their Highness the Maharaja Sir Thutop Namgyal (KCIE) and Maharani Yeshe Dolma. *History of Sikkim*. translated by Kazi Dausandup: Typescript, 1908: 81.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Andrussi, John A, Anna Balikci Denjonpa, & Per K. Sorensen. 2021: *Op. Cit.*, 320.
- <sup>xv</sup> Chumbi Valley was the place in the norther part of Sikkim where kings used to spend their time during the summer.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Shukla, Satyendra R. *Sikkim the Story of Integration*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Co (Pvt) Ltd, 1976: 31-32.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Queen Mother Monkyid Lhayum, was the fifth wife of the seventh Chogyal of Sikkim (Tsugphud Namgyal) and the mother of the Thutob Namgyal. She was often called as the Dowager Rani in the History of Sikkim.
- <sup>xviii</sup> He was a son of Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal (Seventh King of Sikkim) from his concubine and later married to queen Monkyid who was the fifth wife of Tsugphud Namgyal and the mother of Thutub Namgyal. Queen Monkyid and Changzod Karpo had a son named Lhassy Kusho Thinley Namgyal.
- <sup>xix</sup> Dewan Namgay also known as Pagla Dewan in the history of Sikkim, who was an anti-British. He was the same Dewan whose expulsion, the British had demanded 30 years earlier. whose main interest was to get power in the administration.
- <sup>xx</sup> Basnet, Lall Badhur. 1974: *Op. Cit.*, 47-48.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Coelho, V.H. *Sikkim and Bhutan*. New Delhi: Vikash Publication, 1971: 20.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Kazi, Jigme N. 2020: *Op. Cit.*, 137-138.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Namgyal, Thotup and Yeshe Dolma. 1908: *Op. Cit.*, 82.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Andrussi, John A, Anna Balikci Denjonpa, & Per K. Sorensen. 2021: *Op. Cit.*, 322.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Kazi, Jigme N. 2020: *Op. Cit.*, 137.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Basnet, Laa Badhur, 1974: *Op. Cit.*, 49.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Waddell, L.A. *Among the Himalayas; Bibliothecca Himalayica*. Series I, Vol, 18. Nepal: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1978: 147.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> White, J.C. *Sikkim and Bhutan; Twenty-one years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1909: 22.
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