



Her Majesty's address during the 20th Foundation Day Celebration, 9th June 2023

Today, I stand before you as a humble servant in delivering compassionate service, and one who worked very hard along with the members of my Tarayana family in bringing about transformative change to the lives of so many in the last two decades.

Tarayana Foundation would not have materialized had it not been for **His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck**. Everything good in my life has emanated from the wisdom of **His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck**. It was His Majesty who encouraged me to look into the welfare of our rural and vulnerable communities who were at risk of being left behind. I took it as my duty to embark on journeys into rural Bhutan, where I saw the need, felt it, and wanted to do something to address it through a formal channel. That was how Tarayana was born. We formally established the Tarayana Foundation in 2003 which was a very, very significant year in the history of Bhutan and for me personally.

I am very grateful for the presence of **His Eminence Desi Tenzin Rabgey** here today. His Eminence, who was then nine years old, blessed us with his presence when we established the Foundation. Therefore, the presence of His Eminence today is significant and means a lot to Tarayana. I would also like to thank our former Dorji Lopen who gave us his blessings at the start of our journey and continues to do so. Most importantly, my immense gratitude to His Majesty the King who formally launched Tarayana Foundation when he was the Crown Prince. We are very fortunate to have received His Majesty's blessings and good wishes on this journey. **Thank you Your Majesty.**

In the last 20 years I've gone back to those communities and seen the changes that were made in the lives of the rural population in the very far-flung areas of Bhutan. I'm gratified with and grateful to our field officers who with their sweat and toil, living with and working in these communities, have brought about many good changes in the lives of our rural population who needed the intervention of the Tarayana Foundation the most.

I also want to share with you how and from where we started. Twenty years ago and in my late forties, I walked into the three villages of then Lotokuchu A, B and C, in Samtse Dzongkhag. As I walked through the villages, I saw that all their dwellings were huts that could barely protect the inhabitants from the elements of nature. I felt that I had to do something for them. After serving lunch to the villagers I did something which was unprecedented. I told them that their villages were going to be gifted a new name; that Lotokuchu A, Lotokuchu B and Lotokuchu C were going to be renamed Lotokuchu Jigme, Lotokuchu Singye and Lotokuchu Wangchuck. I then made a solemn pledge that once they bore the sacred name of their King it was my duty to uplift their lives for the better. Some years later, when I went back again I saw the transformation that had taken place. Since then I've been on many visits to see the service of the Tarayana Foundation and I feel good that I fulfilled His Majesty's wishes.

I would like to conclude with a message on compassion. Our young members of the Tarayana family, members of the Tarayana clubs whether they are in schools or in colleges are working with compassion. What they do is something so touching; for instance the Tarayana club members contributed labour in the rebuilding of the Wangduephodrang Dzong and that I think that is something to be proud of. The club members in the rural areas help with paddy cultivation, gathering firewood for old couples, listening to their stories and so on and so forth; and the ones in the urban areas help their fellow students with tuition fees as well as collecting funds to give them a better life through access to higher education. These are just a few of the examples. The foundation of Tarayana was built on and through compassion and volunteerism. Therefore, I truly and deeply appreciate everybody past and present who have contributed to the growth of Tarayana and our service. I salute you and I thank you.

A little monk told me this about compassion; and I think that it will serve us a good reminder on how to focus on compassion. This little monk said and I quote, "Every morning when you get up think about the acts of compassion that you are going to do today, and every night before you go to bed reflect on the acts of compassion that you have done in the day." I thank you little monk.

I would like to conclude with the pledge that Tarayana Foundation will redouble our efforts to serve our communities better and in a very organized, intelligent and compassionate way in keeping with the emerging needs that surface with the changing times.

To all my very dear friends of Tarayana, I thank you, thank you so very much.

Tashi Delek