

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

João Cravinho

LIVING WITH CANCER

p.60

IS BHUTAN SUFFERING  
SYMPTOMS OF THE  
DUTCH DISEASE? p.40

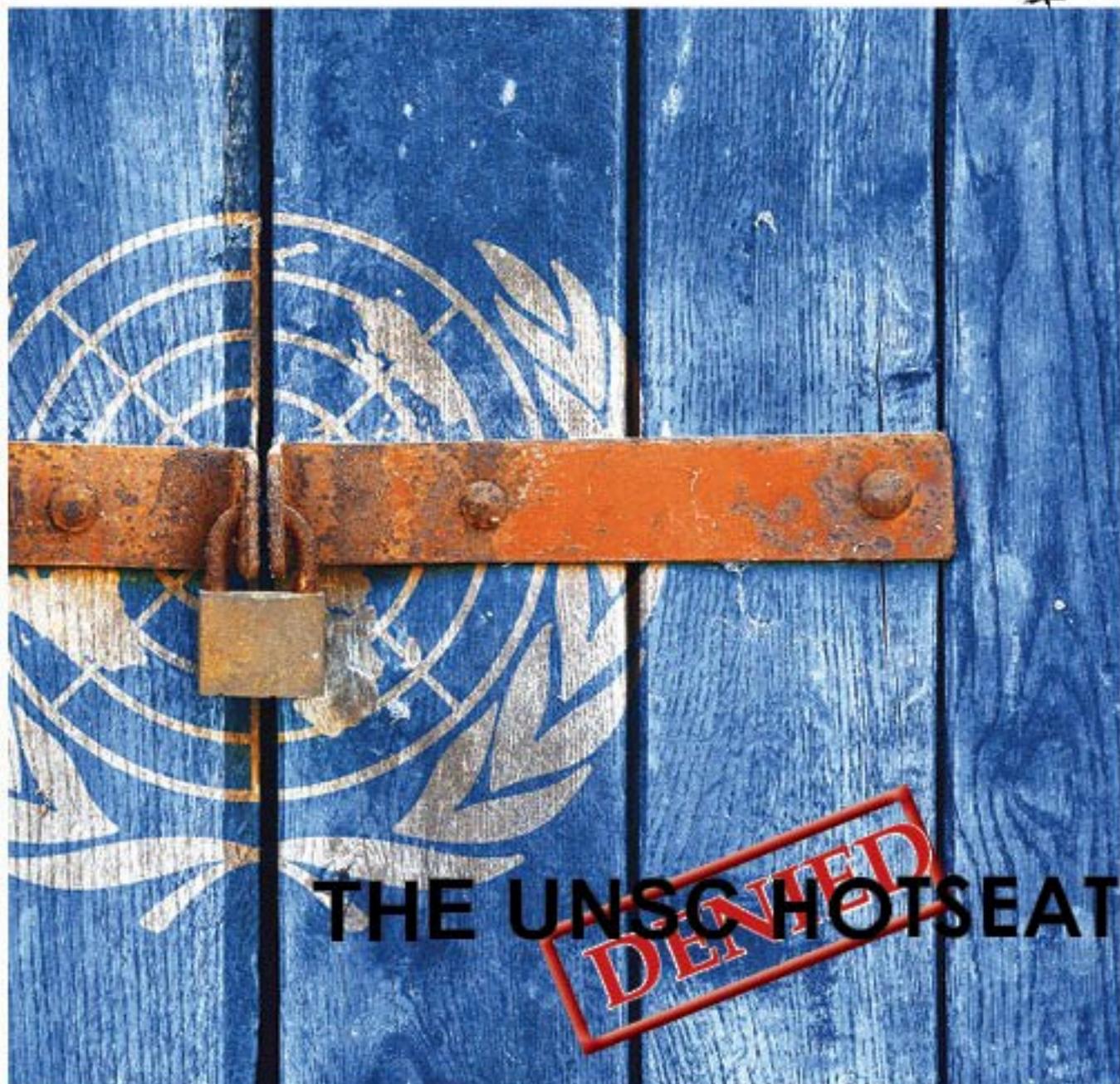
THE AMOCHHU  
PROJECT REVISITED

p.48

NJ 100  
NOV-DEC 2012  
ISSUE 2  
VOLUME 1  
[www.theravenmag.com](http://www.theravenmag.com)

# The Raven

Your  
Monthly  
Guardian



THE UNSC HOTSEAT

DENIED



**28 "BHUTAN, Is it in Central America?"**

**31 Amazing Thailand, indeed!**

**37 Fiction**  
A Mystery, by Karma Singye Dorji

**40 Is Bhutan suffering symptoms of The Dutch Disease?**

**42 Article**  
It Takes A Village and Not a 'Syringe' to Raise a Child

**48 Feature**  
The Amochhu Project Revisited

**51 Beautician Sham talks about his quirk.**

**54 Restaurant Review**

**56 The movie that everyone's talking about**

**60 Living with Cancer**

**75 Thumbs Up and Down**



**COVER STORY**

**10 IN PURSUIT OF THE HOT SEAT**

In 1999 when Bhutan announced it was going to bid for a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council there was hardly a ripple, leave alone a chorus of objection. That was partly because there was only one newspaper, no freedom of press, and most people probably didn't understand what it meant.

**INTERVIEW**

**62 TÊTE À TÊTE**

With Karma Phuntsho.

**MOST DISCUSSED**

**72 Recalling 2012**

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Sir/Madam,**

*The Raven* is very impressive. Very timely articles - and good writing. And good solid interviews. Really enjoyed the first issue.

**Bruce W. Bunting, President, Bhutan Foundation.**

Congratulation on the first edition of your magazine. It was insightful and covered a wide range of issues. I was personally impressed by the portion that covers scientific research works that could be further strengthened in collaboration with many other relevant agencies and individuals. Besides, the range of topics including in-depth interviews with top officials are the magazine's plus points. It was really a good beginning.

**Lekey Wangdi, Student, Philippines.**

The inaugural issue of *The Raven* was a great read. Way to go team. Keep the issues coming.

**Rinzin Pem, Thimphu.**

*The Raven's* inaugural layout, content and editorial mission statement has set a new level of excellence - hope it's sustained.

**Brian C. Shaw, Hong Kong.**

While being a Bhutanese journal, *The Raven* seems to be making an effort to provide a Bhutanese worldview: whether it is about Istanbul or China. Given the nature of the magazine, I hope the editors will think of having regular columnists who will be the opinion-makers, enabling the reading public, Bhutanese and non-Bhutanese, to not only have a better understanding of today's increasingly changing Bhutan, but also about the country's place in today's world. *The Raven* will also have to undergo the inevitable fine-tuning in its subsequent issues so that it can eventually establish a clear identity for itself.

**Bhuchung Tshering, USA.**

*The Raven* is indeed an excellent publication. The mistakes, as in typos, can be overlooked given the content of the magazine. The magazine, I am sure, will only grow stronger from here on. My best wishes are with the team and I hope, once the teething problems are over, *The Raven* will be able to sustain itself for a long time to come. We have already witnessed one excellent monthly publication fold but hopefully readers will not allow that to happen this time around. Congratulations once again to *The Raven* team.

**Nigel.**



Photo Courtesy: Twitter

## KUZUZANGPO!

**M**uch has happened in the last month with interesting developments on all fronts— Internationally, politically and socially. To highlight a few, Bhutan’s loss at the UNSC elections was met with many a, “I” or “We told you so,” kind of comments in mainstream and social media. On the Gyelpozhing land case people are awaiting with curiosity to see what the outcome will be after an order of suspension went back and forth. Meanwhile behind the scenes, political parties are busy laying out the groundwork for the upcoming elections in 2013. We hope to bring to you a few interesting new players in this field. News of the Pedestrian-day being moved from Tuesday to a Sunday was met with a big sigh of relief!

On the social front we have seen from two shocking cases that youth and domestic violence need addressing with great immediacy. It should make us Bhutanese – who rarely heard of such violence and crime – question ourselves as to how and where we have gone wrong. It goes against the very image of what we like to think of ourselves– peace loving, compassionate people. We have lived in a secure society where we didn’t have to live in fear, least of all of young people and own family members. In one a mother of two was assaulted so badly by two strangers, she was hospitalized. In another case, a 15-year-old was driven to shoot his own father who allegedly abused his wife, the boy’s mother, and the children. Last month one of our contributors, Tashi Wangmo, wrote a powerful piece about Domestic Violence. Her in-depth analysis of this problem shattered many myths that we had about our peaceful society. The problems of abusing family members, particularly women and children, is much more prevalent than we think, and the youth’s attitude to women and the elderly is getting more disrespectful with time. This problem cuts across all sections of society and is not socio-economic.

What is even more alarming is the media has not been able to access details of one of the cases because the family has allegedly received immunity from the media. A case that allegedly involved guns, drugs and severe violence towards family members, particularly the children, is off-bounds because of the family’s privileged status. Should the media be cherry-picking cases then? And because of such immunity, has it? If the media has been instructed to respect the privacy of some families, but not of others, and the media and law-enforcement respects this then we – media and law enforcement – are guilty of not being fair by treating people equally. Should this happen to a non-privileged person, would they be accorded the same treatment and privacy? The Bhutanese media is pretty respectful in terms of according privacy to victims and perpetrators of crime, so one wonders who has the right to immunity, who can get it, and does this affect verdicts?

Aside from depressing occurrences we have shining examples of people who bring us good news through their work. We applaud the efforts of Loden Foundation and many other Bhutanese people who work dedicatedly to improve society.

Last, but not least, an apology to all our contributors and readers for the errors in last month’s issue. A big Thank you to each one of you who wrote to and about us. Thank you also to contributors, readers and advertisers.

Stay Warm!!

**Sonam Ongmo**  
Editor-at-Large



**Post**  
Letters to the Editor  
"The Raven"  
P.O. Box:1047,  
Thimphu,  
Bhutan



**Mail**  
editor@ravenmag.com



**Facebook**  
facebook.com/  
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**WRITE TO US**



## TEAM & CONTRIBUTORS

**Executive Director** Kesang P. Dorji  
**Publisher** Dechen Ongmo

**Editor at Large** Sonam Ongmo  
**Managing Editor** Karma Choden  
**Feature Editor** Mitra Raj Dhital  
**Correspondent** Tshering Dorji  
**Designer** Tashi Palden

**AFD** Karma Wangchuk &  
Tshewang Dem  
**Circulation** Tshering Rinchen  
**Intern** Sonam Yangki



Nima Tshering has a PhD in economics, public policy & public leadership.



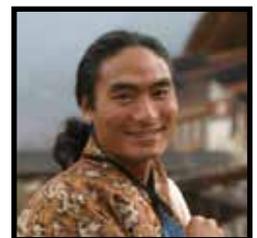
Peki Samal is a freelance writer and the former editor of *The Bhutanese*.



Karma Pem Wangdi worked as a reporter in the BBS. She now lives in The Netherlands.

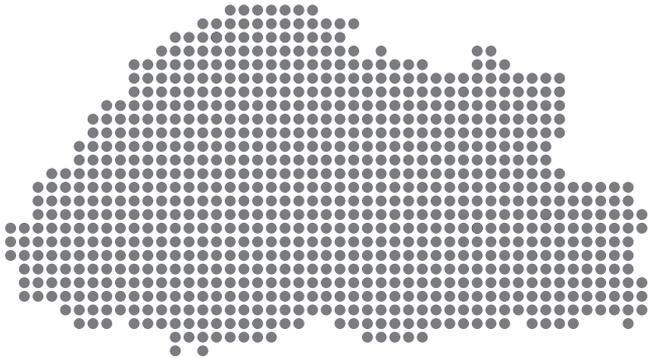


Sangay Phuntsho is a school-teacher by profession and writes regularly for local newspapers.



Karma Singye Dorji is the author of 'Dreaming of Prayer Flages: Stories & Images from Bhutan.'

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TRASHIGANG

## A community school marks its silver jubilee

Yabrang Community Primary School in Phongmey, Trashigang, began as an extended classroom that accommodated 57 students in 1987, with a lone teacher running it. The school recently celebrated its silver jubilee to mark the *Sherig* Century. Today, the school has 126 students supported by seven dedicated teachers.

TRASHIYANGTSE

## No to quarry

Villagers of Chumdu in Yangtse are against the Dzongkhag's decision to allow stone quarrying in Roshingdhung village. Three households have land below Roshingdhung and are likely to be affected by the quarry. Villagers say they can't give away their only cultivable lands. And, the 4.14 acres is the only land the three land owners have.

JAPAN

## Bhutanese Karate Master brings home gold medal

*Sensei* Ugyen Wangchuk won Bhutan a gold medal in the men's black-belt open category in Tokyo, Japan on November 25. He represented Bhutan in the tournament that saw a total of 500 participants from Australia, England, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Canada and Argentina.

THIMPHU

## A 15-year-old shoots his father

A 15-year-old boy shot his 38-year-old father to death on October 28. The teenager was detained in the Woman and Child Protection Unit on the day of the incident. The case will soon be forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for prosecution by the Thimphu police.

THIMPHU

## 75-year-old rapist imprisoned

The Thimphu District Court sentenced a 75-year-old man to nine years and three months imprisonment for raping and impregnating a 16-year-old girl.

# The Raven



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**The Raven** 



# quotes



**Private consumption shouldn't be mixed with national interest.**

←  
**RMA GOVERNOR  
DAW TENZIN**  
In a meeting with officials from the ministry of finance, financial institutions and the private sector.

**There will always be a replacement in the civil service but in politics, it is very difficult to get people.**



←  
**TSHEWANG TASHI**  
Who gave up her career of 23 years in the civil service to contest as a Druk Kyen-Ngyam Tshogpa candidate in the 2013 general election.



**We are strange and foolish people who love books.**

←  
**KUNZANG CHODEN**  
At the launch of the first two books by Riyang - a publishing house.

**We, at Great Britain, are looking at every possible ways to implement this noble philosophy.**



←  
**BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INDIA, SIR JAMES DAVID BEVAN**  
Commenting on GNH during his recent visit to Bhutan.



**We don't want Bhutan to make the same mistakes we made in Japan.**

←  
**PROFESSOR TETSUO FURUICHI**  
At a symposium held for Japanese and Bhutanese architects in Thimphu.



## On Unemployment

🐓 When leaders tell our young graduates to go farm, I wish they would take the lead by sending off one of their kids to go farm first: *Kencho Wangdi on Twitter.*

## On PM's speech

🐓 The PM's speech to *layaps* sounded a lot like campaign promises. Is the PM campaigning when he talks about the 11th Five Year Plan. Yes, especially when he tells villagers about the governments plan for next five years: *Opposition Leader, Tshering Tobgay on Twitter.*

## Gyelpozhing Issue

🐓 DPT says there was no corruption in Gyelpozhing. If so, why give back the land. There's no rational explanation to what JYT and gang are doing: *KP on Twitter.*

# The Raven



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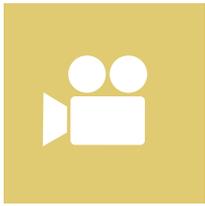
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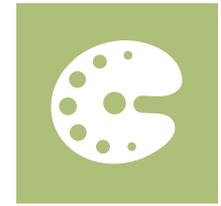
MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

# highlights

KEY ● Date ● Time ● Place ● Venue



## SPORTS

### 9TH NATIONAL INTER-DZONGKHAG TAEKWONDO TOURNAMENT

- DEC
- THIMPHU

Contestants from every Dzongkhag in the country are waiting in anticipation for the inter Dzongkhag taekwondo tournament to begin. Organised by the Bhutan Teakwondo Federation, the dates for the tournament have yet to be finalised.

### DRUK WANGYEL NATIONAL ARCHERY TOURNAMENT

- NOV-DEC 2012
- CHANGLIMITHANG, THIMPHU

Organised by the Bhutan Archery Federation, the tournament attracts teams from all over the country.

### GOLF - SENIOR ASIAN AMATEUR OPEN

- NOV 28-30
- HONG KONG

Three contestants from Bhutan participated in the Senior Asian Amateur Open Golf Tournament held in Hongkong last month.

## FESTIVAL

### DOCHULA TSHECHU

- DEC 13
- DOCHULA

To honour the heroes of the 2003 military operation, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck has commissioned the *Dochula Tshechu*. The festival promises to be different as it will be carried out by the Royal Bhutan Army rather than the monastic body.

## PROGRAMS

### YOUNG LEADERS FOR BUSINESS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- DEC 10-15
- WANGDICHOLING RESORT, BUMTHANG

Phuensum Gyalwang in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources and the learning exchange foundation, The Netherlands, is offering a program that will help those who are interested to explore their potential in the tourism and hospitality sector. The program will provide business opportunities and trainings by professionals in and outside Bhutan.

## CAMPAIGN

### WORLD AIDS DAY

- DEC 1
- LUGAR THEATRE, THIMPHU

Woezer Associates will organize a walk through the City to mark World AIDS Day. The organizers are expecting more than 500 participants to turn up for the event.

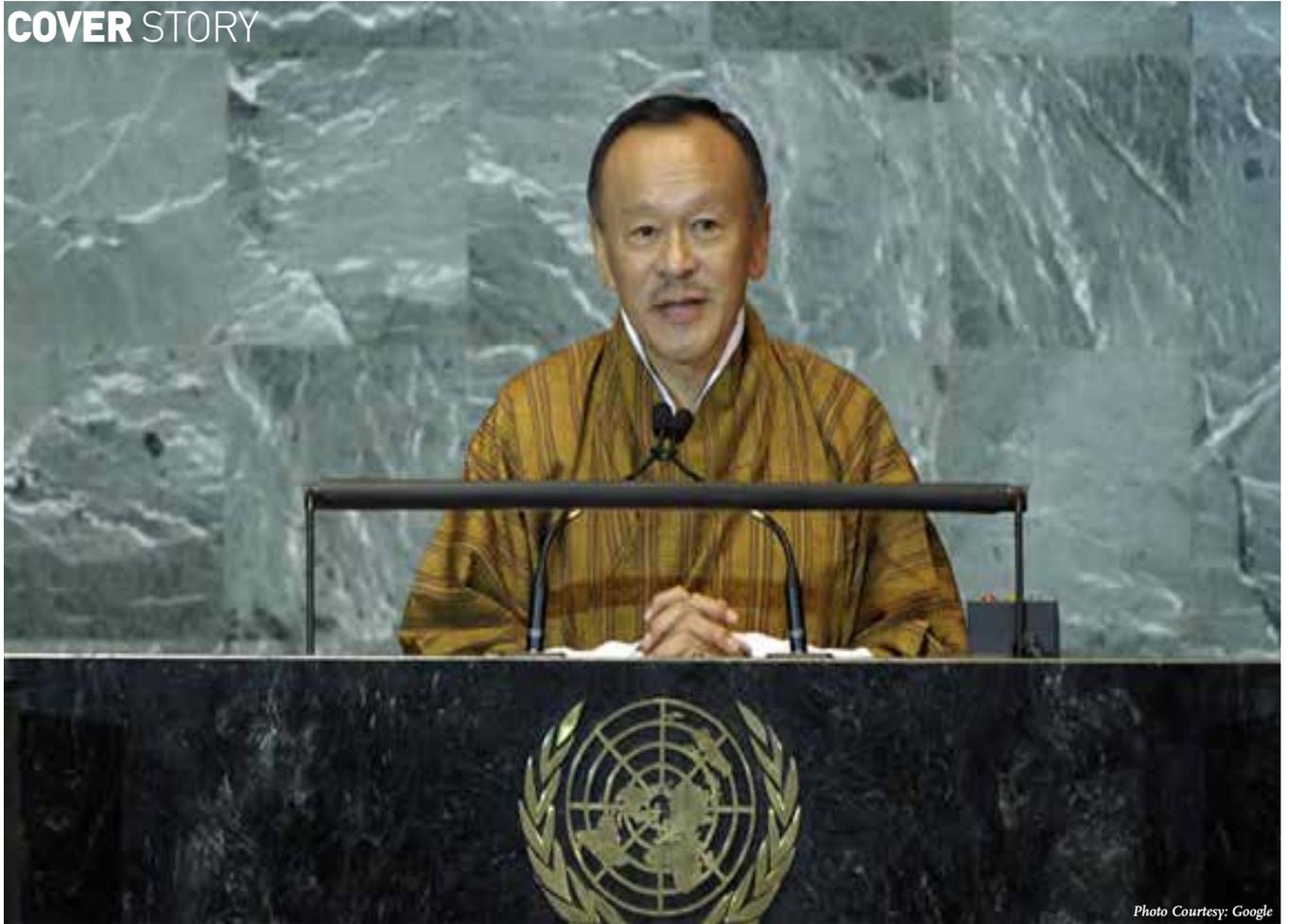


Photo Courtesy: Google

## IN PURSUIT OF *THE HOT SEAT*

In 1999 when Bhutan announced it was going to bid for a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council there was hardly a ripple, leave alone a chorus of objection. That was partly because there was only one newspaper, no freedom of press, and most people probably didn't understand what it meant.

**F**ast-forward a decade to 2012. Much had changed. With press freedom and democracy, there was a media making information accessible to people, who in turn asked many questions. So it is no surprise that a great deal has been said and reported about Bhutan's bid for the UNSC seat. However, apart from finger pointing there has been little analysis of what happened. There are lessons, especially for the government, that we can glean from this experience:

- i) Our understanding of what it really takes to conduct and win such a campaign
- ii) That such an analysis may reveal our dysfunction, especially at the Foreign Ministry - who had the task of launching this campaign, and
- iii) That this dysfunction is really a microcosm of working conditions at the Macro level in Bhutan. It is something that if left uncorrected or unacknowledged, we will continue to pay a price for. One that is more costly in the long run than the UNSC seat.

The Prime Minister as well as Foreign Ministry officials repeatedly said the process was more important than the seat. So what have we learnt – now that we don't have the seat? To understand that lets take a look at the journey.

Bhutan makes a decision, but does little for ten years.

Bhutan's decision to bid for the Asia-pacific slot as non- permanent member at UNSC was not taken arbitrarily. According to Lhatu Wangchuk, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Bhutan to the UN: "We looked at the candidates for the Asian Group [in 1999] and found that there were no candidates for the term 2013-2014. Bhutan was the lone candidate from the Asian Group for a long time until 2005 when Cambodia joined the race followed by the Republic of Korea in 2007." Ambassador Wangchuk, who will retire soon after serving 36 years largely as a diplomat, added: "Personally, I take it as a great honor and privilege to have participated in one of the boldest foreign policy undertakings of our country."

So at the time we announced our bid we had everything going for us – no other competitors. We also had the right conviction. Foreign Ministry official, Doma Tshering: "Our candidature was recognized as a call for a more democratic, representative, and equitable international system,

in which top decision making bodies and institutions, including the UN Security Council, is more inclusive and reflective of a greater diversity of views and approaches." Bhutan's foremost foreign policy goal has always been and remains the strengthening of its status as a sovereign independent nation, she said. Election to the UNSC would demonstrate unequivocally, even more effectively than UN membership, political recognition of state sovereignty by all UN member states.

But despite having the ball in our court, Bhutan appears to have done little to develop a clear-cut campaigning strategy for almost a decade. In fact, the Ministry was dormant on this issue until 2010. We have always been known to be last minute people, but while last minute may work in Bhutan, it doesn't in the international arena. So in 2010, we were suddenly confronted with the reality that we were no longer alone and there was competition. By now South Korea had also announced its candidacy. There was much to do.

### The Campaign

When Foreign Ministry woke up to this issue in 2010, it was without a leader. The Foreign Minister, Lyonpo Ugen Tshering, also a career diplomat, was unfortunately ill and unable to provide leadership for the campaign. For whatever reasons, the Prime Minister chose not to find a new Foreign Minister, but instead allowed Foreign Ministry to put forward, what many thought, was a weak substitute - Foreign Secretary. People at the Foreign Ministry have blamed lack of leadership and divisive ways of working that weakened an already enfeebled Ministry. "What little institution was left at the Ministry was killed by the UNSC campaign," one officer said. Another said, "If we had taken it seriously – from the moment we decided to run – then we should have been building up Human Resources." Yet another said there was no teamwork.

But what was happening in the Foreign Ministry is, perhaps, indicative of what happens generally in other sectors in the overall Bhutanese system. Other countries have professional foreign services where officers apprentice for years before they assume the role of ambassador. In Bhutan we have made ambassadors of people who have little or no experience as diplomats. And still, some even get posted as diplomats not

largely out of merit and ability, but more as a sojra, or they have a relative influential enough to make it happen. The Royal Civil Service Commission's imposition of certain rules instead of letting the Foreign Ministry set their own criteria may have also added to problems. As a result, over the years there have been embarrassing situations that the Bhutanese government has had to encounter given the lack of understanding of some people of the responsibilities associated with representing the country internationally. There have been complaints from people outside and within Foreign Ministry about the struggles for postings and travel, and people question whether diplomats are seriously serving the interests of the country while they are overseas. Are they there to enjoy postings or to build up bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations for the country? If this had been done consistently and diligently over the years, then perhaps the last minute dash to forge diplomatic relations or seek votes for a high-level campaign wouldn't have been so dire. And how can such oversight be hinged onto one man? We are equally complicit in it because this working culture persists not only in the Foreign Ministry but it is inherent in our system and in the way the Bhutanese work – enjoy the perks but not the duty. Putting in extra hours or doing our homework has little or no space in our working culture.

The Prime Minister still has the power to change the course of this working culture, but he seems to be very much like us, in that he makes room for it. To his detriment it seems that travel opportunities – very coveted amongst Bhutanese government employees – may be one reason why his delegation has consisted of officials who aren't even familiar with his office. The danger of this is that the Prime Minister has wound up with an unorganized, untrained, and unprofessional delegation that also doesn't do its homework. This was clearly reflected in one incident on the campaign. The Prime Minister, who is diabetic, had been tirelessly holding bilateral meetings and calling on Heads of States day in and day out for a week. After a string of such meetings one afternoon, he entered the Bhutan Mission exhausted and unwell. His blood sugar was extremely low and not a single person accompanying him was prepared to deal with it. For

diabetic patients maintaining their blood sugar level is very important. When it drops, a doze of sugar either in the form of a sweet or orange juice is all that is needed. Not one person with the PM was equipped. It was fortunate that he hadn't collapsed in front of foreign diplomats. Forget security concerns, or knowing how to be a part of a campaign, our professionalism, efficiency and preparedness at all levels is clearly lacking. If it had been another country's delegate anyone around the Prime Minister that day would've been held accountable for such a lapse. Instead, nothing happened.

So despite critics thinking his innumerable overseas trips have been nothing but pleasurable experiences, in hindsight, it is pretty amazing that in three years, Bhutan's profile in the international arena was uplifted at in a way it has never before. A Singaporean diplomat envying small Bhutan's ability to get the spotlight unlike Cambodia or S.Korea, is said to have remarked at our ability to garner international attention. Through his ability to capture audiences at international forums and spotlight GNH, it was also another surprise for many countries that a high level body like the UNGA endorsed the "Happiness Resolution" proposed by the PM last year. If only GNH and image could have gotten us the votes.

For many residing in Bhutan, this may not have mattered at all – and they have a point. Internally the nation was facing the Rupee shortage, banks had tightened credit, and some policies by the government were not sitting well with the public. The PM was harshly criticized for not staying home and accused of globetrotting. However, what many have failed to see is that meanwhile Bhutan's image in the international media prior to 2010 was becoming increasingly negative. Thousands of Bhutanese refugees that had been in the camps in Nepal were pouring into the UK, Australia and U.S after they agreed to

repatriate them. In the U.S alone about 30,000 had arrived.

On the Internet and in mainstream news, including New York Times, there were repeated articles about the Refugees, casting dubious shadows over Bhutan and its monarchy. By the end of 2010, there was a complete turnaround in the international media. Now they were raving about this little country. It is not an understatement to say that it is a diplomatic feat, when Bhutan managed to get one of its biggest dilemmas resolved during this time. The question of whether to take back the existing refugees who could prove they were Bhutanese, or leave them languishing in the camps was overcome when the U.S eventually agreed to repatriate all. This was achieved in discussions over the course of the UNSC campaign. Bhutan's problem with the refugees will not go away, but having it resolved in a manner where both sides have benefitted is more than remarkable. In a world where crisis after crisis pumps out refugees resulting from war and strife, not out of economic situations, Bhutan was able to clinch one of the greatest deals ever.

If we weren't blown away by it, at least some of our international critics were. An Inner City Press (Investigative Reporting from the United Nations) journalist who has been focusing on Bhutan's "ethnic cleansing" evidently said, "This is diplomacy at its highest."

However, it is clear that the entire approach to the campaign was divided, or as one described it "half-hearted." Apparently internal discussions indicated that even as we were nearing the election some thought we should have pulled out. But withdrawing midway was not an option. According to Ambassador Lhatu. "It would have sent a wrong signal to our supporters and well-wishers". Another claimed that apart from the fact that it (losing) was a done deal it was the half-heartedness of some at the Ministry that was to blame.

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### Election Day

As described by diplomats who were there, the atmosphere was tense, overwhelming and intimidating. Veteran diplomats and UN officials are aware that UN elections are highly political and as one said, "notoriously unpredictable". It involves coercion, arm-twisting, gifts and money – allegedly buying of votes. Yes, all this at the UN. According to diplomats South Korea had a huge delegation working the floor. "They had people stationed every three rows. It was a well-oiled machine where they were strategically positioned throughout the hall," said one. They also followed the other delegations on the floor keeping track of their every move. "That's diplomacy," someone sarcastically said.

"The only ones you can believe are ones who tell you outright they won't vote for you," said one diplomat. It is advised that 50 % of the assurances you get before the election should be discounted. And that is just what happened. "Going into the election Bhutan received a significant number of commitments and support from a



Photo Courtesy: Google

wide range of international partners. Regrettably, at the election Bhutan suffered a severe rate of attrition,” said one diplomat who was at the election.

Meanwhile, off-the-record conversations reveal that the Koreans had “skillfully orchestrated” their campaign. After all they have a power base at the UN, as well as money. “The determining factors were the powers behind Cambodia,” said one diplomat. With China and Russia actively lobbying for Cambodia it apparently took away from the vote bank commitments that

Bhutan had earlier received. “We saw the votes literally falling away,” said one.

#### Criticism

The day Bhutan lost the elections the Opposition Leader held a Press Conference calling Bhutan’s bid for the UNSC an “ill conceived and misguided Policy.” But for observers of this episode it should make us proud that we have in the Prime Minister and Opposition, two formidable people in our country. On one hand we have

a Prime Minister who “wowed” the International community and uplifted Bhutan’s profile in the international arena at a critical time. On the other we have an Opposition Leader who has single-handedly done his job of “opposing” extremely well. He has managed to keep a check and balance on the existing government and he has done what Oppositions do best – use every opportunity to incite and oppose – pretty successfully.

As the PM has pointed out, it is rather ironical that for someone who ran in

## COVER STORY

an election in which his party suffered an even greater attrition rate than the country did at the UN, the Opposition Leader should feel so strongly that the country should have never taken part in the elections.

Does this mean that his party's bid was ill conceived and misguided? Should he have pulled out at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour? It's good he didn't because even as one of the lone representatives of PDP he is making his contributions and a huge difference in the political landscape of Bhutan.

Also although Bhutan made great inroads globally with GNH, our efforts to campaign solely on this soft power did not pay off. There is an element of truth in what Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said; that we didn't

win because we couldn't afford to host \$20,000 dinners, and more. This is the reality in the world of realpolitik. What is soft power? It is a term coined by Joseph Nye (Harvard) in 1990 and is defined as "the ability of one state to change the behavior of others through the means of attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion and payment." Unfortunately, this dramatic shift in the foreign policy of many countries is just unfolding and coercion and payment still count.

According to writer Jonathan McClory: "No longer the purview of foreign policy wonks, soft power is now firmly embedded in the dispatches, speeches, and discourse of senior diplomats, world leaders, and news editors around the globe – and with good reason...A shifting balance of global power and the effects of instant information have

made soft power a critical component of foreign policy strategies. As more foreign ministers wake up to this new reality, soft power is no longer the preserve of western states." Bhutan may just have been ahead of its time.

In the end we all have our views about how things should've proceeded. But it should be remembered that for every loss, there is some gain, and short of consoling ourselves on our loss, we might as well learn from it. If you are a seasoned politician or diplomat, this should be all too familiar. Elections are won and lost all the time, and nobody – particularly a small country like Bhutan – wins the first time round especially given the politics and resources it takes. It takes decades to convince the international body of our capacity, our intent, and building alliances is



Photo Courtesy: Google

CHINA AND RUSSIA ACTIVELY LOBBYING FOR CAMBODIA APPARENTLY TOOK AWAY FROM THE VOTE BANK COMMITMENTS THAT BHUTAN HAD EARLIER RECEIVED.



Photo Courtesy: Google



### POSING FOR THE CAMERAS

PM Jigmi Y. Thinley with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon.

paramount. But most importantly it is preparedness. We can say it was a done deal, but we should look at our own working culture and our naiveté that may also have attributed to this loss. We gave it a shot when we could, and we lost. As ambassador Lhatu said with some nostalgia, “Bhutan will not be able to contest again for a long time, certainly not in my lifetime, because other countries in the Asian group have already presented their candidatures for 2050.” 🐦

BY SONAM ONGMO WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY TSHERING DORJI.

There are 193 member countries of the United Nations. Of that 192 members were present at voting. Elections were held on October 18, 2012 in New York during the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly.

Countries:	Total votes:
Rwanda	148
Republic of Korea	116
Cambodia	62
Bhutan	20
Tanzania	3
DR of Congo	1



### COMFORTABLY CANDID

The PM shares a light moment with his interviewer.

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## The European Union is now looking at a more political type of relationship with Bhutan, says Ambassador João Cravinho in this exclusive interview with The Raven.

### What brings you to Bhutan this time around?

Well, I am the ambassador to Bhutan. And, I want to come here as frequently as possible. This time, I am here for the signing of agreements on combating climate change for .4 million Euros and for various projects that are in different stages of completion. So, there's a lot of work that is ongoing and this means it's important to have a regular presence in Bhutan. Also, Bhutan is changing and the European Union is changing. The EU has become, since the Lisbon Treaty, a much more political entity. Our relations with Bhutan have been very good for various decades but they have been mostly technical. We are now looking at a more political type of relationship as well.

Bhutan of course has become more active in the international scene, and we're interested in following up on that and understanding the way Bhutan tends to position itself over the next few years. So there are a lot of reasons to come to Bhutan. Regular reasons related to the process of following Bhutan's path, that's my role as ambassador. And, also, specific reasons related to the development partnership particularly the new 4.4 billion Euro project that is being carried out in Bhutan.

**Some of Bhutan's existing bi-lateral development partners are in the process of either phasing out or down scaling their support. Against such a backdrop, Bhutan might have to seek out new multi-**

### lateral channels of development assistance. What is the European Union's stance on this?

Well, it's a matter for the Bhutanese authorities and not for us to decide. What I can say from our side is we very much appreciate the path Bhutan has been on and is continuing on. Therefore, we will continue to provide support throughout the period of the 11th Five Year Plan. As far as the European Union is concerned, there will certainly be no decline. We think that although Bhutan is making good progress, it is going to go through a delicate phase because of the consolidation of democracy, and because of the challenges between now and 2020 - when Bhutan expects to be fully self-reliant. So the message I have been transmitting to the Bhutanese authorities is that they can continue to count on the EU as a close friend and as a development partner.

### Where do you see the cooperation between the EU and Bhutan heading in the future?

It's heading in the direction the Bhutanese development philosophy takes it. In other words, for us, it is very important that our development support should be closely aligned with the priorities of the Bhutanese authorities. And these priorities are summarized, at the moment, in the 10th Five Year Plan and, in the near future, in the 11th Five Year Plan which is in the process of being finalized. We take that as our guiding document. We don't have a different philosophy that we seek to impose on the country. We

seek to work with the priorities of the Bhutanese authorities. So, if you ask where our development partnership is going, it is going where the Bhutanese development philosophy takes it. This means, of course, resources are never infinite, we need to make choices. We think that we can be very supportive to the various pillars that make up Bhutan's GNH vision. Namely, the environmental and socio-economical pillars are where we can make the most impact.

### Although we inhabit two totally different environments and climates, what lessons can Bhutan learn from the economic meltdown in the Euro Zone?

Firstly, we don't have an economic meltdown. What we have is a slower growth than we would have liked. We have had difficulties also with the governance



OUR  
DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERSHIP IS  
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PHILOSOPHY  
TAKES IT.

of the Euro. But that's basically resolved now. Bhutan has nothing similar in its make-up. We've created a common currency that brings together 17 countries. This is extremely complex and extremely ambitious, and it went through a difficult phase because the architecture of the Euro had some gaps in it. These gaps have now been covered. I think a year or so ago we were worried that it might collapse entirely but we've managed to put in place the necessary mechanisms to make sure the Euro survives properly. Now what we're doing is focusing on bringing growth back to the Euro Zone and that is something everybody will see during the course of the next year. We don't pretend to give any lessons to Bhutan as we do live in different contexts. For us, what is important in our relations with Bhutan is that, the development support has been ring-fenced so that it is protected and that it will continue in the same level if not higher despite the economic circumstances in Europe.

**In the face of the Euro Zone crisis, where traditional models of development have failed to guarantee prosperity, do you think that a new paradigm like GNH (Gross National Happiness) could provide an alternative solution?**

I think GNH is an extremely interesting paradigm that has attracted a lot of international attention and deservedly so. I remember two years ago when your prime minister presented it to the UN General Assembly in New York, I happened to be there, and it immediately attracted attention. Partly, of course, because in this cold, hard and dry world of economics, people were using terms such as happiness. But then, after the initial surprise, when people began to think more deeply about what was involved, it made a lot of sense that the approach to development should be a balanced one. It should be one that contains elements related to the environment, related to culture, related to personal satisfaction as

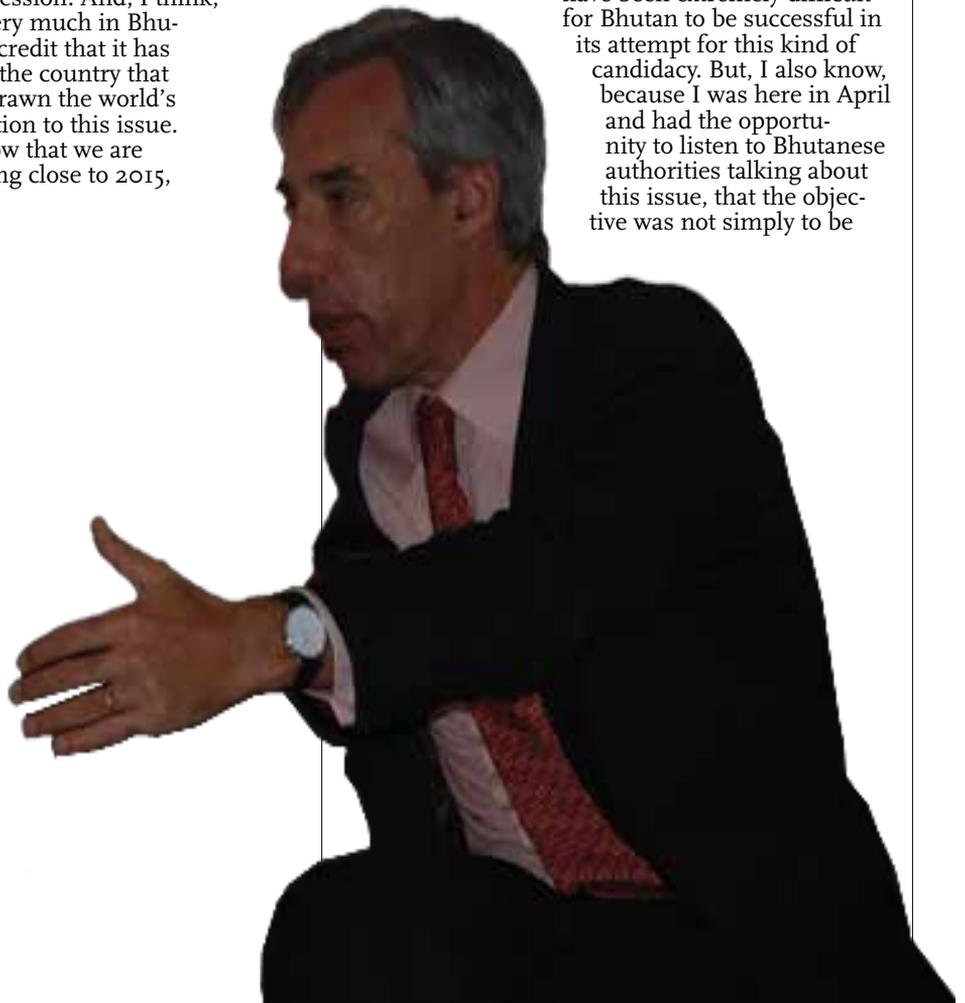
well as the more traditional socio-economic developments. In a certain sense, this is a continuation of the path which development philosophies have been on for decades.

For many years, development was thought of exclusively in terms of economic growth. That was the only indicator that counted. And then in the 1980s, people like Amartya Sen and Mahbub Ul Haq began to work with the UNDP on alternative methods for measuring development. They produced a human development index. They took it from the level of the country to the level of the human reality. And now, what we are finding, in the last few years, is that, although there was a big improvement in the human development index, we now need to take a step further to integrate into the human development index other elements which are not present such as, the environment and the quality of life which the GNH concept manages to do. So, I find this, looking at how development has been progressing, to be on the one hand an important step and on the other, a part of a progression. And, I think, it's very much in Bhutan's credit that it has been the country that has drawn the world's attention to this issue. So now that we are coming close to 2015,

the end date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), people are thinking about what the focus should be after the MDGs. I think the concept of GNH will have a very important role to play.

**Bhutan recently bid unsuccessfully for the UNSC non-permanent seat. In your opinion, could we have done better?**

I can tell you that it is extremely difficult and extremely gratifying at the same time. Bhutan is a country that has recently embarked on the process of reaching out much more widely to other parts of the world. And, because it is recent, I think that it would have been extremely difficult for Bhutan to be successful in its attempt for this kind of candidacy. But, I also know, because I was here in April and had the opportunity to listen to Bhutanese authorities talking about this issue, that the objective was not simply to be



IT IS NOT EASY TO BE ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL. SOMETIMES, IT IS MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE TO BE OUTSIDE.

elected or simply to gather as many votes as possible. The objective was to gain a much deeper understanding of the world and to allow the world to gain a deeper understanding of Bhutan. And that I think has been successful. I know from personal experience that that is one of the most interesting aspects of running a campaign for the Security Council because it forces you to enter into contact with 182 other representatives in the UN. This process of outreach is extremely valuable in itself. Therefore, it shouldn't be seen simply as success or failure.

7) **In organizations such as the UN, where developed nations call the shots most times, why would small countries like Bhutan, with limited finances and diplomatic clout, want to secure a seat in the UNSC?**

It would have increased the country's profile but then again this already happened through the campaign. It would have of course obliged Bhutan to take difficult decisions. It is not easy to be on the Security Council. Sometimes, it is much more comfortable to be outside.

On the other hand, it is not true that the developed countries call the shots in the UN. They are a minority as they are numerically far fewer than for example the Group of 77 (G77). Having said that, the world is no longer separated into developed and non-developed or developing countries. That dichotomy, just like the old dichotomy of east and west and the cold war, is no longer valid in contemporary times.

Bhutan is a country that is actually very well positioned to be a bridge, if it should wish to be a bridge, to develop relations with countries with many different realities. It is a country on the one hand with



Photo Courtesy: Google

many challenges and on the other it is a country embarking on these challenges with a very open and fresh mind and taking daring positions on issues such as climate – preparing its population for climate change while seeking to be carbon neutral in its development path. I think Bhutan will be a pioneer as these are themes that are becoming central to the debates in the United Nations. And these are themes that are cross-cutting because if one looks, for example, at the G77 and sees China, China is not a member of the G77 but in the climate change negotiations it works with the G77, Chinese reality has absolutely nothing to do with the realities of countries of the Pacific and the Caribbean and even with countries of the African Continent. So, the G77 logic is highly questionable. And in just the same way, one looks at the developed countries and one finds, what I believe to be and I like to quote, very progressive and globally minded approach of the European Union – something that is no way near that from the United States. So these divisions no longer hold water. On our side we are very keen to work closely with Bhutan in the context of the

climate change negotiations.

8) **For the last ten years, Bhutan has been unable to take a decision regarding the WTO. From the European Union perspective, would Bhutan gain if it were a member of the WTO?**

I think this is very much a matter that the Bhutanese authorities have to assess carefully. And I am not sufficiently knowledgeable about the different aspects that are involved. Don't forget that Bhutan is a country whose trade is overwhelmingly with just one country. And this is a very different circumstance from that of most countries around the world. WTO is an institution that was designed to regulate, to be the governing institution for multi-lateral trade in many different directions. When you deal with one country only, well, I know that Bhutan wants to

diversify so it is not exclusively dependent on one country but, it is, above all, in bilateral discussion with that one overwhelming important trading partner that Bhutan can best find its solution. I think this is a delicate matter that the Bhutanese authorities must assess and it's not for us to be telling the Bhutanese authorities what the right thing to do is. We have enormous respect and confidence in their good judgment.

9) **You must be aware of the ongoing Rupee is in the country. What can Bhutan do to avert such a crisis in the future?**

When I came here in April and now again, this has been a very central topic in conversations. And I think there is a developing consensus that one of the roots of this problem is the reduction of dependence on imports from India alone. This means that the path of promoting import substitution, so the creation of industries that are capable of producing the necessary consumer goods for the Bhutanese public, is one element. The diversification of export is another factor so that Bhutan can avoid being depended exclusively on hydropower. And, ultimately, there will have to be balanced books, Bhutan still has a high degree or 30% dependence on donor support and there is a lot of work going on to reduce or even to eliminate that level of dependence. When that is achieved, it will certainly create much better circumstances for avoiding the Rupee crunch. But, at the moment, you have many more imported goods from India than exported goods and with parity between the currencies and with enormous ease of circulation of the Rupee in Bhutan; it's difficult to avoid the rupee crunch. It will be very hard, there won't be an immediate solution that can be found, but in the longer term the Bhutanese authorities would identify the nature of the problem and the way out.

10) **Bhutan's transition to democracy was a er of interest to the EU in 2008. Now with the next elections round the bend, to what extent does the EU's interest in Bhutanese democracy go?**

We fully maintain and understand that democracy is not just about elections. The elections are fundamental for democracy but they are an insufficient basis. In 2008, everything went very well and there was an EU observer mission - as you pointed out - which made a number of recommendations and which said that the elections were free and fair and also made recommendations on how to improve the electoral administration. Most of these recommendations have been taken on board and that's very satisfying for us. Now, for 2013, we are discussing with the Bhutanese authorities whether to send an observer mission - not because we are worried that the elections will not be fair, that is not a matter of concern.

11) **Bhutan goes to polls for the second next year. What can Bhutan learn from the democratic traditions of the EU and what are some**

**of the challenges that you see for the government that comes to power?**

It is true that there are very important democratic traditions in the EU. But, I would also point out that there have been very interesting democratic transitions in the EU. Twenty years ago, a number of EU countries, maybe 12 or so, were dictatorships. So, we have been through very interesting and rich experiences of democratic transitions and I think what we learnt from that are two lessons: Firstly, that each country does have its own specificities and, secondly, that in each case it is fundamental to consolidate institutions, and the holding of elections is one type of institution (creation of election commission and so on).

Also, other institutions like the parliament and the institution such as an active anti-corruption commission is very important including the auditors. These institutions are essential elements and you can legislate and create these institutions from one date to the next, but to consolidate them takes a number of years of appropriate practice. One of the aspects that I found very interesting in my conversations here with government ministers is the importance they attribute to precedent. They are very concerned to do things properly because they know that the decisions that they make, good ones or bad ones, will be cited as precedence. I think that is extremely important and a wise attitude. So I think we don't have many lessons to teach (because what we have to teach the Bhutanese already know).

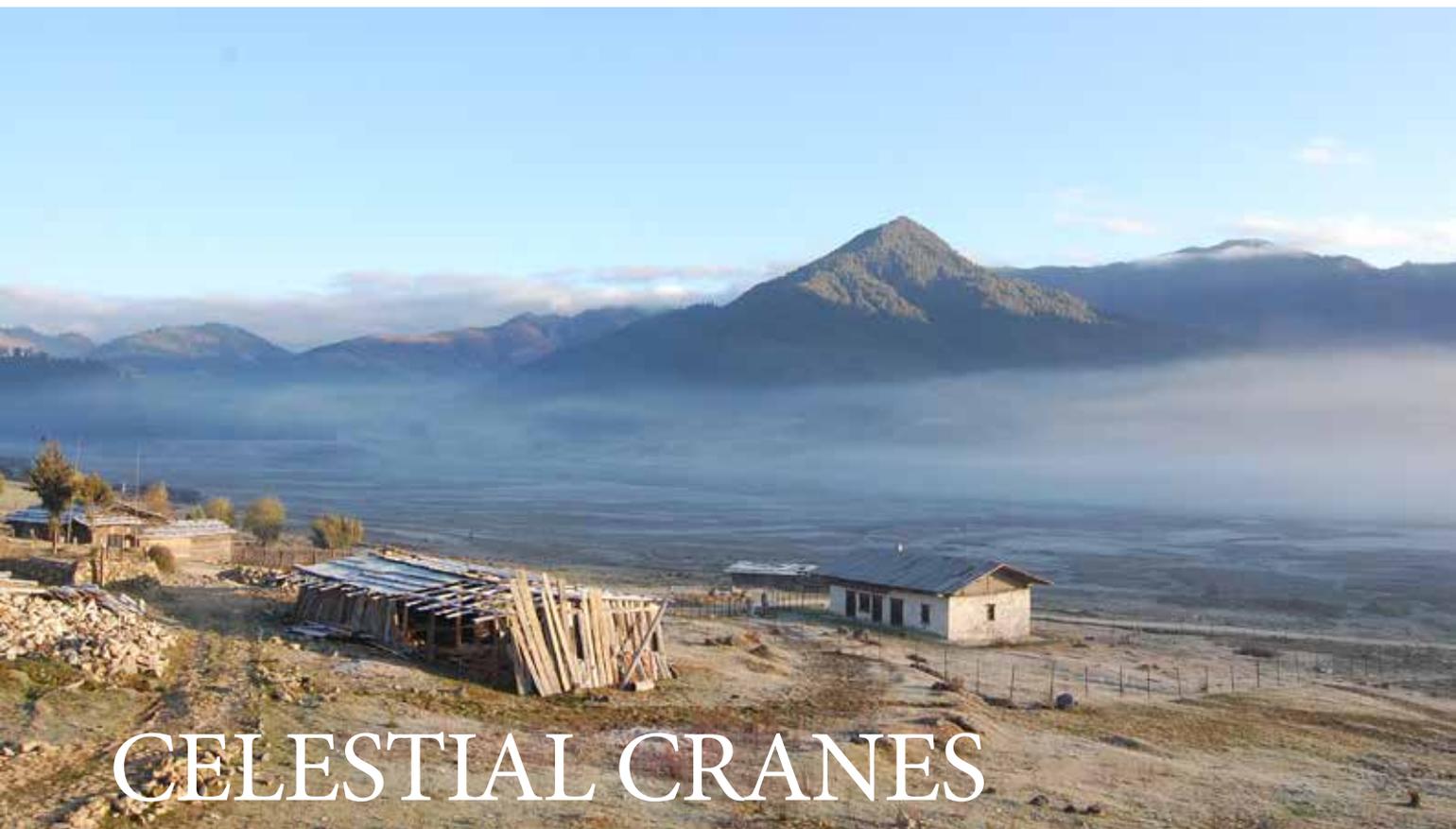
12) **Is there something you ld like the Bhutanese people to know about your own home country because most of us here can only think of Cristiano Ronaldo when it comes to Portugal along with the first two Europeans (both Portuguese) to set foot on Bhutanese soil in 1627- Father Estevao Cacella and Father Joao Cabral.**

Well, that is really telling you something. The European Union is 27, shortly 28, countries with very different experiences. And the country that I happen to come from, one of its historical trajectory has been very much marked by the period in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, when it reached out to the rest of the world - to the Americas, to Africa, to Asia. It was the pioneer of globalization.

The fact that the first two Europeans to come to Bhutan were Portuguese is not a coincidence; this is true of very many countries in Asia. For example, Vietnam - the one country of the region in South-east Asia which writes with Roman letters or alphabets is because the Vietnamese language was first codified by Portuguese Jesuits like Father Cacella and Father Cabral. And so the mark of Portuguese presence in the world is one that brings a great deal of pride to contemporary Portuguese. That also provides the country with a good background to understanding other parts of the world and that is an important reason why Portugal was elected to the UN Security Council. So, the historical experience which we had was extremely important in providing the backdrop for that moment.

Christiano Ronaldo is a contemporary expression of Portuguese reality, who of course is a very great player and of whom we are very proud of. But he is only one among many great football players. I think the Bhutanese football lovers will also recognize that apart from Christiano Ronaldo, some years ago, there was Luis Figo and Xavier - for those with a longer memory. So, I think, another aspect that the Bhutanese people will be interested to know is the passion that people have for football is something that has happened as a result of Portuguese football players - going round the world as pioneers in some cases.





# CELESTIAL CRANES



The picturesque Phobjika Valley, in the backdrop of the Black Mountain Range, has rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. This, coupled with religious importance of the Gangtey Monastery, has attracted religious and ecotourism to the valley.

THE HABITS, HABITATS AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE  
OF THE SACRED CRANES OF BHUTAN.



In the Phobjika valley, the Black-necked Cranes have a celebrity status, as witnessed by the Crane Festival held every year on November 11-12.



*Tamiki Nakashima, a senior environment officer at the Thimphu Thromde, captures the Black-necked Cranes - frame by frame.*



Farmers believe this rare and endangered bird better known in Bhutan as *Thrung Thrung Karmo* portends a good harvest if seen flying in circular patterns above their fields.

just like the Bhutanese people do,” says the senior environment officer with the Thimphu Thromde, referring to the Bhutanese propensity to consult astrological charts to determine favorable dates for moving or travel.

### An endangered species

The estimated global population of Black Necked Cranes is about 7,000. In the early 1990s their population in Bhutan was recorded at 1,743 individuals. The numbers dropped to 1,664 returning cranes between 1996 and 2000. Largely because of ongoing conservation efforts the numbers have gone back up to 2,352 cranes as recorded by the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN).

### Threats

The biggest threat to the continued health of Black Necked Crane populations comes, not unexpectedly, from human encroachment. The problems are most pronounced on their winter grounds where the wetlands have been extensively irrigated, drained, dammed, or else used for grazing livestock.

### The Crane Festival

The annual Black Necked Crane Festival in the Phobjikha Valleys helps raise awareness while enabling local people to supplement their income. In its fourteenth year since its inception, the festival today is a popular tourist attraction. Each year around November 11 and 12 (coinciding with

**T**he birds of heaven arrive in a sweet deluge after the monsoon has receded and the land looks to the sky in its greatest need. No wonder they have long symbolized blessings and plenty on the land.

For centuries, Bhutanese people have lived in close harmony with the Black Necked Cranes. Some, especially in Phobjikha Valley, believe they are the souls of formerly deceased lamas returning each year to pay their respects to the valley's Gangtey monastery. Farmers across the kingdom believe this rare and endangered bird better known in Bhutan as *Thrung Thrung Karmo* portends a good harvest if seen flying in circular patterns above their

fields. The Tibetan people believed that the cranes would guide and carry one's spirit after death. The Chinese have always associated them with luck. In Buddhism in Bhutan, and perhaps elsewhere, they are generally thought to be messengers from the heavenly realms of the gods. The sacred cranes also appear in Bhutanese folklore, song, dance and other forms of celebration, including the national sport of archery where the victors mimic the cranes after scoring a bull's-eye. According to the man who has been filming and studying these beautiful creatures, Tamiki Nakashima, the Bhutanese even attribute them with human qualities and sensibilities.

“They have auspicious days for moving



Phobjikha Valley is rich in faunal biodiversity and has, apart from the endangered Black-necked Cranes, 13 other globally threatened species.

His Majesty the Fourth King's birth anniversary) this collection of modern ecological moral tales, dances mimicking the cranes, and theater highlighting the behavior and cultural relevance of the birds makes a significant contribution to the conservation efforts to protect them. Part of the proceeds from the festival is also used directly to benefit the cranes.

#### A source of national pride

This last species of cranes discovered by a Russian Ornithologist has, today, become an important part of Bhutanese daily life and awareness. For the moment, the cause of the cranes have won over the need for harvesting potatoes, a significant landmark decision for both the inhabitants of the valleys where the



The annual Black-necked Crane Festival in the Phobjikha Valley helps raise awareness while enabling local people to supplement their income.



## PHOTO ESSAY



The biggest threat to the continued health of Black Necked Crane populations comes, not unexpectedly, from human encroachment.



The Black-necked Cranes (*Grus nigricollis*) are winter visitors to the Phobjika Valley from the Tibetan Plateau where they breed





The crane festival underway in the courtyards of the Gangtey Gonpa.



Dances mimicking the cranes contribute significantly to the conservation efforts to protect the magnificent creatures.

cranes roost and for the Bhutanese people in general.

The presence of healthy populations of the cranes in Bhutan is not merely a joy to behold but enhances our international reputation as a land where nature and the environment are valued above material gains.

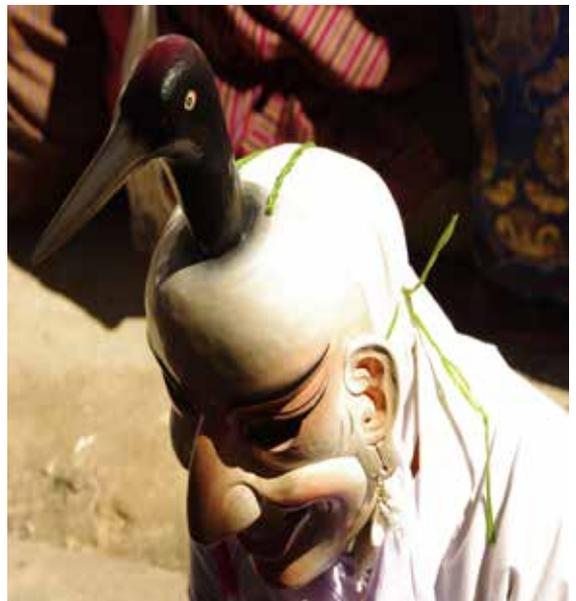
### Conclusion

It is said that when a child sees the white clouds of the Black Necked Cranes descend upon a valley, it is as if they have per-

ceived the very stars in the light of day.

It could be argued that this is perhaps the conjuration of an overactive, if poetic imagination, But there is no mistaking the wonder and delight a child, indeed adults even, may feel when they see the elegant cranes treading gently on a green and blessed land.

No wonder the farmers dance in ecstasy as the cranes fly overhead and women cover their mouths with delighted glee even as the crane frolic below them in their fields. 





THE PRESENCE OF HEALTHY POPULATIONS OF THE CRANES IN BHUTAN IS NOT MERELY A JOY TO BEHOLD BUT ENHANCES OUR INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AS A LAND WHERE NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT ARE VALUED ABOVE MATERIAL GAINS.

# Trends



- Walk the Wild Side with this animal print and contrast number.
- Forever 16, Chang Lam Square, Thimphu Bhutan



- Make a statement and stay warm in Red.
- Forever 16, Chang Lam Square, Thimphu Bhutan



- Can't go wrong with a Leather Bomber/ Biker in Black.
- Forever 16, Chang Lam Square, Thimphu Bhutan



- Go Knee Deep in these Riding Boots.
- Forever 16, Chang Lam Square, Thimphu Bhutan



## Election Advisory



**Attention  
Social Media  
Users**

- Social Media Platforms are media tools permissible under the Electoral Laws for dissemination of information and effective communication
- Misuse of these tools can be prosecuted under the Electoral Laws or the Penal Code
- Arrangements are being made to enable tracing of identity of such Social Media users

No person should, therefore, operate addresses and Social Media platforms using anonymous identity and fake addresses during an Election Period

# “BHUTAN, is it in Central America?”

A World Horticultural Expo called the Floriade was held in The Netherlands this year. Bhutan was represented by a group of volunteers called the friends of Bhutan.

**B**HUTAN, is it in Central America? Is it near India? Isn't that the happiest country in the world?" These are some of the reactions that we got from people visiting the Bhutan Stand at the Villa Flora. Bhutan was one of the 42 countries that participated at the World's largest horticulture expo - The Floriade, held in the city of Venlo, in The Netherlands.

It was a perfect platform to promote the country and make people aware of the factual aspects of Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. To do that, the organising committee set up the "House of Happiness" where we had a touch screen with a photo of smiling monks in the background. One could select the language in English, Dutch or German with a series of questions:

*Meet the person that is going to make you happier...Touch here.  
When was the last time that you*

*offered to help somebody without asking anything in return...Please wait a moment.*

*When was the last time that you had a good laugh...Please wait a moment.*

*Please think about the happiest moment in your life...Touch here.*

*Are you ready to meet the person that makes you happier...Yes*

*Look to the ceiling and greet the one who brings you more happiness...*

Looking up at the ceiling, you were greeted by your own image from a mirror. After all that is who makes "you" happy.

Smiling and giving us a thumbs up most of the visitors agreed that in this day and age, especially in the West where people have to make extra time and effort for social contact, this was a simple experience to make them realize one thing. That in the end, a moment of reflection; a mere look at yourself in the mirror might get you thinking about who makes you happy - largely yourself. That it is through introspection and self-reflection - even if mirrors

were needed as an aid for some. Bhutan was lucky to have sincere well-wishers promoting the country and its culture. They volunteered their time and energy to make the Bhutanese platform a success. The stand was built with the help of sponsors many of them who had never even been to Bhutan, but had simply been inspired by the GNH philosophy. The organising committee for the Bhutan Stand were Dutch entrepreneurs – Ms Henriette Stroucken, whose company manages several sustainable projects, Peter van de Ven specialising in marketing and communication, and me, who's been living in The Netherlands for the past 16 years. Henriette Stroucken who was also the main initiator for Bhutan's participation at the Floriade said that although we did not get funding from the Royal Government of Bhutan, we got nominal support from The Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Brussels, The Tourism Council of Bhutan, The GNH Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Services. She also said that we were tremendously supported by The Honorary Counsel of Bhutan to The Netherlands, Mr Cornelis Klein. Some officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Services and The Tourism Council of Bhutan also



#### FRIENDS OF BHUTAN

Karma Pem Wangdi with The Honorary Counsel of Bhutan to The Netherlands, Mr Kees Klein and management of the Floriade, 2012.

came to promote the country. There were diverse art and cultural programmes from different countries. The Floriade park itself was organized around five themes .

**Relax and heal-** The importance of horticulture for health and wellbeing.

**Green engine-** Horticulture as a supplier of green energy.

**Education and Innovation-** The relation between innovation and education and development of the sector.

**Environment-** A green working and living environment delivers an enormous contribution to our quality of life, and the **World**

**show stage-** Nature is a great

theater and a source of inspiration, fun and entertainment.

The visitors got to see the world's most unique and beautiful flora and fauna, vegetables and fruits. More than two million visitors from all over Europe and other continents visited the Floriade out of which 1.6 million visited the Bhutan Stand. The Exhibition which was for six months saw about 20,000 visitors a day including school children. Louis Breul, one of the volunteers who is a former school teacher kept some of the school children busy by quizzing them on Bhutan.

*“Is Thimphu or Kathmandu the capital city of Bhutan? Those who think that the right answer is*

*Thimphu stand up and those who think Kathmandu is the capital, please sit down. Those of you who are standing may continue with the quiz.*

Not surprisingly, most of the students had never heard of Bhutan. They were asked a series of questions until a single student was declared the winner of the quiz and given a memento to remember a day in which she never imagined that information or knowledge about Bhutan would make her feel so special. 30 countries held their national day at the Floriade including Bhutan. We held ours on September 22, where special envoy of The Prime Minister of



**PETER VAN DE VEN  
AND HENRIETTE  
STROUCKEN**  
with the Bhutanese  
Ambassador to the  
European Union,  
Sonam Tshong.



GNH has caught the attention of not only the Dutch, but many others around the world who are struggling to find a balance between economic and social development.



**KARMA PEM WANGDI**



Bhutan, Lyonpo Dago Tshering and the former Dutch Sports Minister, Erica Trepstra launched “The Queen of Bhutan” tulip. It was an initiative of the Bhutan & Partners, a Dutch NGO to commemorate the Royal Wedding. They also dedicated the day to promoting friendship and cooperation between the Dutch and Bhutanese people. While there has been increasing skepticism and cynicism of GNH in Bhutan, I must say that it is a development philosophy which has caught the attention of not only the Dutch, but many others around the world who are struggling to find a balance between economic and social development.

That indicates that even though we may not have fully attained it ourselves or feel so positively

about it, there is certainly something about our country that is appealing to many. If there was nothing of it there then why would people feel so strongly about Bhutan? If people outside can believe in it and feel so strongly about it, maybe it is time that the educated Bhutanese tried to build upon what is there. GNH is not something that one person can promise the country, nor is it up to that one person to make it happen. It is a collective endeavour; a philosophy; an attitude; an approach to life, to development. It is nothing new to the Bhutanese. After all Buddhism is the same and we are no strangers to that approach. 🐦

BY KARMA PEM WANGDI

# Amazing Thailand, Indeed!



A grade 12 student at Woodstock School in Mussoorie, India, talks about her experiences at the elephant rehabilitation center in Chiang Mai.

I love Thailand. I love everything about it; the sights and smells, food, flowers and the people, who are so friendly and polite. I have lost track of the numbers of times I have been there, but last February I made another trip, one that will forever be etched in my memory. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had because it changed me.

I went to volunteer at an elephant rehabilitation center in the

Mae Taeng district in Chiang Mai, which is run by Sangduen Chailert or Lek, as she is known. Lek means small, and she is small. Shorter than me - 5 feet 5 inches at 17 - Lek, who is probably in her mid to late 40's, is close to 5 feet. She has a soft face and long hair and speaks relatively good English. Her husband, Darrick Thomson, who is Canadian, was once a sea-shepherd and a fire fighter. Together they are a force to reckon with when



#### MAE TAENG DISTRICT

The writer takes a break from bathing the elephant.

it comes to speaking up for these voiceless creatures. Despite her appearances, Lek is incredibly strong and inspiring and has dedicated her entire life to the much-needed salvation of Thailand's elephants. She has won several awards and there is even a book about her, "The Elephant Lady of Thailand."

The story of the Elephant Nature Park (ENP) began after 1989 when the Thai government imposed a ban on logging after real-

Some elephants continued to be employed in the illegal logging business and others were used in circuses, forced to beg on Bangkok's busy tourist ridden streets, or be rides for ignorant tourists.

izing that their vast and rich forests were being destroyed. It was also found that while there were about 100,000 elephants in the wild before, that number was now less than 3000. Meanwhile, the ban left elephants that had been brutally tortured and trained to cater to the logging industry, jobless. They were let loose or sold to entertainers. Those who were let loose either died because they could no longer forage in the wild while others wreaked havoc on crops and plantations creating tensions between the animals and farmers.

Some elephants continued to be employed in the illegal logging business and others were used in circuses, forced to beg on Bangkok's busy tourist ridden streets, or be rides for ignorant tourists. Unfortunately laws in Thailand do not allow for the protection of domesticated elephants, so the only rights they have are equal to that of livestock. The lack of proper rights results in the abuse and exploita-

tion of these majestic beasts, both physically and psychologically, with no consequences for its abuser.

Their plight caught the attention and compassion of Lek who set out on a mission to provide a sanctuary where they would be safe and rehabilitated. In 1996 she founded the Elephant Nature Park. She started with two elephants she bought, rescuing them from entertainers. Soon a US conservationist, Bert Von Roemer, of the Serengeti Foundation heard about her campaign and donated money, which allowed her to buy the 50 acres where the Elephant Nature Park now resides. Today, it has 150 acres and is a blissful sanctuary for 35 elephants.

I first discovered the park from a brief program on CNN about Lek. My mother and I thought it would be an enriching experience to volunteer there before I returned to school in February – a good time to go when it is much cooler. We went wondering what to expect, because



our earlier trip to the famous Tiger Temple in Kanchanaburi near the Burmese border turned out to be a disappointment. A National Geographic program said that the Tigers were rescued by monks and kept at the temple. However, reports have emerged that the tigers are actually drugged to remain calm and tame near hundreds of visitors who come to pose for pictures. Whether or not these ti-



gers have actually been rescued or poached is a controversial issue.

We arrived in the morning in Chiang Mai, the second largest city in Thailand, so we had a day visiting ancient Watts, a trip to a local museum, and a walk through the night market. The next day the Park bus picked us up from the hotel and took us to their office in town where we made the rest of our payment. We were given a

T-shirt each that said "Volunteer", and water bottles with a cover that had an embroidered gold elephant on it. The others on the bus were young teachers, students, travelers, and retirees from Europe, US and Australia who were either working in Asia or had come all the way just to volunteer. We drove about 60 kms outside of Chiang Mai to the northern jungles.

Upon our arrival we were divid-



#### REHABILITATED ELEPHANTS

The elephant (on the left) still limps from a broken leg.

ed into groups and over the week took turns to do sets of chores such as preparing food for the elephants, shoveling poop and cleaning stables, collecting firewood, and cutting grass and corn. Intermittently we had time to relax with lectures and talks on the situation of Thai elephants, learning Thai, going tubing in the river, and best of all bathing the elephants. Although the work was extremely exhausting

## TRAVEL



### THE VOLUNTEERS

and demanding, it was immensely rewarding. An elephant takes five times the effort and care it takes to raise a cow. For example, the average elephant eats about 300 kgs a day.

The great respect and admiration I have for these beautiful, animals grew exponentially. During bathing and feeding time we were allowed to be up close to them. This allowed us to connect at a more personal level. Most of the elephants had suffered abuse and torture so although they had been

at the park for years, they were still skittish and nervous.

There were two elephants that stood out to me the most, partly because their injuries were so obvious, and partly because that even after all the misery humans had caused them, they were still willing to forgive and love again. It is true, "an elephant always forgives, but never forgets." One of the elephants had been working for an illegal logging company when Lek found her. She had been forced to carry huge logs up mountains,

As the newborn tumbled downhill to its death, the mother was unable to move because she was chained.



#### A NORMAL DAY AT THE PARK

Chores include preparing food for the elephants, shoveling poop and cleaning stables, collecting firewood, and cutting grass and corn.

all while she was pregnant. One day, while she was working, she went into labor, but was forced to keep working. She was at the top of the hill when she gave birth. The newborn tumbled downhill to its death, but she was unable to move because she was chained. You would think that her mahout would give her a break after the loss of her calf, but she was put to work almost immediately. She was so depressed that she refused to work. Her mahout slingshot stones at her eyes and gouged

them with sticks. She was blinded. The other elephant had been used as a breeding vessel. She was chained while bulls were forced upon her to produce calves. The elephant had resisted and fought back during one of the breeding sessions and was severely injured by the much larger bull. Her entire lower body was crushed. When Lek found her she had an awkward gait. One leg still dangles limply above the ground. Lek eventually hassled the mahouts into selling her the decrepit elephants and they

were integrated into the ENP herd.

Darrick and Lek, one a vegetarian and the other a vegan, are trying to get the Thai government to pass laws for the humane treatment of tamed elephants in Thailand. Years ago the famous PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) got hold of a video by Lek which graphically showed the process of “crushing” – breaking an elephants spirit by extreme torture so that it succumbs to human orders. PETA launched a campaign for tourists to boycott Thailand. This outraged

# TRAVEL



## GENTLE CREATURES

Elephants may appear dangerous and intimidating but they have the capacity to be loving and gentle.

the Tourism Industry and Lek was reviled and physically threatened. Today she is still fighting these threats because ivory poaching in Asia and smuggling of wild elephants from Burma to Thailand for entertainment is strong as ever. As an ignorant traveler who didn't know anything of this I was complicit in their abuse when I took elephant rides or watched them perform tricks. After ENP it seems like an absolute sin to do any of this. I am still puzzled by the way the Thais revere the elephant as a god and then tolerate ruthless exploitation of the very animal that is their source of pride.

My experience at ENP has been

one of the most incredible times of my life, and I was glad to have had my mother there with me. The work taught me that although elephants appear dangerous and intimidating, they also have the capacity to be loving and gentle creatures. They are sensitive animals that require constant care and compassion, and if you are lucky enough they will be more than willing to reciprocate. Lek has created a wonderful situation that allows her park to operate without having to constantly search for funds. Instead of allowing tourists to ignorantly ride on the elephants she invites volunteers to pay to help with the daily tasks required to maintain

## TRAVEL DETAILS



**By Flight**  
From Paro Druk  
Air has direct  
flights to Bangkok



**Train**  
From Bangkok till  
Chiang Mai by train  
eight hours



**Stay**  
Elephant  
Nature Park  
Tel: 053 818754,  
818932 Fax:  
+66(0)53904033  
<http://www.elephantnaturepark.org>



**Climate**  
Best time to  
Travel - March &  
April, October &  
November - since  
the temperature  
is ideal - and not  
too hot.

the park and its residents. The fees, which are 12,000 baht per person for an entire week, include housing and food. The housing is basic, but homely, and if you're lucky you may even get a room with a view of the elephants enclosures.

If you're interested in volunteering at the Elephant Nature Park, or wish to satiate your curiosity about it, you can visit the website. You will find the option to volunteer for a week or two weeks or go as a day visitor. The website, is not exactly user-friendly, so you may have to put some effort into finding the right information. 🐦

The writer, *MAPEM R. LANIGAN*, maintains a blog at [mapemrose.blogspot.com](http://mapemrose.blogspot.com).

# *A Mystery*

Karma Singye Dorji



The story, rehashed in countless retellings by an endless stream of speculators before him, always threw up the same open-ended questions. It was like that old saying where everyone has an opinion but no one knows the facts.



## FICTION



*If he died in the crash like many people think, then why didn't they find any bodies?*

**T**HE YOUNG MAN they called Diamond of Enlightened Activity was scribbling confused notes at a bar called The Angry Monk. Working and reworking the phrases in his head he felt neither diamond-like nor enlightened. The story, rehashed in countless retellings by an endless stream of speculators before him, always threw up the same open-ended questions. It was like that old saying where everyone has an opinion but no one knows the facts. The details of the story made no sense now that he had decided to chew on it. He had started out convinced that he could dig far enough into the story to come up with something new to say but now he was beginning to feel like he was just another drudge in a long line of drudges who had failed to work out the murky details of the mystery.

It was, he thought despondently, like clearing cobwebs in a long disused room only to find a maze of other rooms filled with more cobwebs and secrets.

Diamond shook his head to clear his thoughts and reconsidered the key details of the Colonel's disappearance. Four members of the elite royal guards had gone missing more than two decades ago. One of them, a greatly admired if somewhat feared figure, appeared to have been under some sort of military escort. No one seemed to know exactly why one of the most trusted and decorated officers in the royal guards had been placed under arrest. There were, of course, all sorts of conspiracy theories floating around, especially in dimly lit bars where the sanity of their proponents seemed to evaporate with the alcohol fumes. As far as Diamond was concerned, none of them held up in the light of day.

There were rumors, for instance, that the Colonel was on his way to the capital to be tried for treason when he died. Others said it was all a ruse and that the Colonel was "missing in action" because he was secretly fighting a one-man war against an anonymous group with powerful connections who were plotting to overthrow the Royal House of Cherry Blossom Spring. That there was, in fact, to this day, a secret mole within the royal family who was even now laying the most elaborate of plans for a coup. The people who spread these rumors did not seem to consider the fact that the country was currently enjoying an era of unprecedented peace and harmony. That the royal family, in fact, enjoyed such complete and unquestioning loyalty and devotion across the country that the merest hint of a plot against the Royal House of Cherry Blossom Spring would have incurred the collective wrath of the army, the parliament, the people in the cities, and the cultivators in the districts from the heart of the country to the furthest border regions.

Time to consider the facts, Diamond thought. The wreckage of the car the Colonel had been traveling in was found months after the army first launched the most massive air and ground search the country had ever seen. The mangled military transport vehicle was eventually found at the bottom of the deepest gorge that sheered away from the highway, deep within the mountainous folds of the interior region, from where the Colonel was being brought to the capital. Local inhabitants who lived in the tiny terraced villages nearest the cliff the car had fallen off from called it the Wall of Butterflies, for the autumnal congregation of vibrant butterflies that clung to the sheer walls of the cliff, making it appear as if the dark and brooding wall was covered with a rippling blanket of multi-hued wildflowers. Nothing that would suggest either the Colonel's death or survival had materialized from the subsequent investigations at the Wall of Butterflies.

The door of the bar swung open and a blast of icy winter air cut through Diamond's reveries. Even without turning around he knew it was his laconic friend Eight Lucky Signs,

who shared a cubicle with him at the Mountain Mirror, the premier newsweekly in the country. Lucky had probably turned in his story on time, as usual, Diamond thought ruefully. No doubt he would have lead his story with a dramatic hyperbole and finished it with a flourish at the end. Lucky had a habit of giving every piece he wrote, however insignificant, a grandiose scope by saying things like: "...and this may, indeed, be the challenge of our times" or "...the dilemmas facing this small farming community may, indeed, be the questions we all need to ask ourselves as a country." He had an irritating way of using the word "indeed" that was, *indeed*, irritating.

If Lucky's annoying thumps on his back moments later was karmic punishment for his uncharitable thoughts, the strong whiff of drink and stinky-nut chew that emanated from Lucky's breath in waves was the icing on Diamond's cake of discontentment.

"Well," Lucky said, leaning in nauseatingly to glance over at Diamond's scribbled notes. "I see you're working on a dead-end story again. When are you going to turn that one in? Next year?" It had to be admitted, Diamond thought; Lucky had a natural talent for reading the worst handwriting in the world upside down. And for stealing leads that *he* had labored on for days. Still, he made for an interesting sounding board and, sometimes, bouncing ideas off the overweening lout had resulted in the most clarifying insights.

"I can't understand it," Diamond said, shaking his head again. "If he died in the crash like many people think, then why didn't they find any bodies? After all, it wasn't like he was the only one. There were four of them for god's sake! Why hasn't a single evidence of their final fate, a single bone, even, turned up after all these years?"

"Maybe the bodies were flung out of the car as it plunged over the cliff," Lucky said with a somnolent shrug, "Who knows? Anyway, all this talk of death and conspiracy makes me thirsty, I need a drink." Lucky motioned and the dour girl behind the bar came around the counter and poured a shot of Mountain Mist, from a decanter, carefully, as if measuring liquid gold. "And," said Lucky downing the drink with a quick gulp and wincing at the after-burn, "...the bodies may have been thrown out far enough from the car that they got caught in the rapids and washed away all the way south to the delta or the Bay of Tears. Or, maybe the bodies are still on the river, somewhere still within our boundaries, but pinned under a rock where the whitewater hides everything and lets the natural process of decomposition do its work? Either way, no way to know. If I were you I'd find something else to write about before the Chief chews you out." 'Chief' was their fast-talking irascible editor.

The reminder that he had been avoiding his editor, and the fact that he would get the tongue lashing of his life when he finally showed up with a story that might take months simply to begin, depressed him. "Damn!" Diamond said suddenly, slapping his fist down on the bar violently. "I just refuse to accept it. Come on, do you seriously think it's possible for someone like the Colonel to disappear so completely? This is a man who once survived a firing squad. A man everyone knew to be the best of all the elite guards, a man who was known as the 'Shadow of the King'. A man who could go for days without sleep when on the job, and who once snapped a full length firearm in two during a routine gun salute. Come on, this man was a legend. We have to find out what happened to him! Or, if he's alive, why he's being forced to hide!"

Lucky shook his head in a drunken stupor, raised his glass for another drink without looking up, burped loudly, and tried feebly to wipe the drool from his lips. 



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Nima Tshering has a Masters degree in Public Administration/International Development from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He also has a PhD in economics, public policy, public leadership, and democratic governance.

## IS BHUTAN SUFFERING SYMPTOMS OF THE DUTCH DISEASE?

**B**hutan may have a small economy, but it is resource-rich and its hydropower potentials have certainly boosted it lately. We also receive very generous foreign aid from our donor friends, especially from our closest ally in all respects, India. But we must understand that these large increases in our national income from too much capital in-flows can have dire consequences on our economy. We might eventually suffer from what some economists refer to as the Dutch Disease, if we do not put the proper policy interventions in place and on time.

### What is the Dutch disease?

It is a concept that explains an economic situation of The Netherlands where the discovery of large natural gas fields in 1959 caused the decline and near collapse of its manufacturing sector. The term, however, was coined in 1977 by The Economist magazine to describe that situation and is widely used to describe any negative impact on an economy through sharp inflows of foreign currency through discovery of large-scale natural resources. In the case of Bhutan this would be hydropower and foreign aid. According to the Financial Times lexicon, "The currency inflows lead to currency appreciation making the country's other products less competitive on the export market. It also leads to higher levels of cheap imports and can lead to de-industrialization".

Keeping the complex economics behind Dutch disease simple, there are three basic concepts. First is the "spending effect," second the "resource movement effect," and third the "monetary effect."

"Spending effect" occurs as a result of the extra revenue brought in by our export of hydropower and generous aid from donors. Since the people and the government now have more money to spend, we will increase our demand for labor in the non-tradable sector such as construction, housing, tourism, and other services, shifting labor away from the lagging sector such as agriculture and cottage industries. Not denying that this has had its benefits - in some cases more pros than cons - because it has led to overall growth, an increase in education levels, and improved the standards of living of the people. But the negative implications can be seen and felt in the agricultural and social sectors. Bhutan has one of the highest rates of rural to urban migration (according to UNDP) and rising income levels and demand for labor in the service sectors has attracted otherwise farming people into the towns. This has certainly had a huge impact on the agricultural sector. Think of all the high school dropouts looking for jobs as drivers, clerks, or anything they can find, and young

girls working in *drayang*s and other service sectors. If the jobs are available obviously they would prefer a less labor intensive job than toiling in the remote villages of their hometowns. As a result of the increased demand for non-traded goods (hotel employees, salons, massage parlors and other services demanded within the country) the price of these goods will increase. Recollect how our house rents have been increasing so fast. However, prices in the traded goods sector (potato and apple exports etc.) are set internationally, so that doesn't change. And think of all the imported construction materials. We find it is cheaper to import material from outside rather than buy it at home where it is not only scarce but also costly. This is an increase of the so-called "real exchange rate." Our Ngultrum becomes stronger or appreciates in real value. Don't be confused with nominal exchange rates where our currency is pegged one-on-one with the Indian Rupee. In reality, as more hydropower and foreign aid money comes in, our Ngultrum appreciates. The "Resource movement effect" happens as the booming hydropower sector draws labor and resources away from the lagging agriculture sector or our very small manufacturing sector. This is already happening in Bhutan. Think of how all the trucks that used to carry potatoes and cabbages

from farmers to the markets are now deployed at construction sites of new hydropower projects because they get paid higher at the hydropower construction sites than from transporting erratic farm produce. What this does is further deteriorate the profitability of the tradable agriculture sector. Again, this makes the ngultrum stronger. Think of a farmer getting the same amount of rupee from the sale of potatoes but who now has to pay a Bhutanese truck driver more in ngultrum because of the hydropower boom.

And the “Monetary effect” is a bit harder to explain in layman’s terms, but it simply means that because of too much new money (think of generous foreign aid, hydropower sale money, or even the borrowed rupees), inflation in Bhutan is rising. Driven by power exports and large aid inflows, money supply in Bhutan has grown rapidly at an average rate of 30% per year since 1997. High inflation means the real value of the ngultrum becomes stronger even when it is nominally pegged to the Indian Rupee.

Growth diagnostics data analysis on Bhutan shows that macroeconomic instability would most likely stem from public spending that is increasing in size and deteriorating in quality. The public sector is becoming bloated, crowding out private sector activity. So the first policy intervention is to have fiscal discipline and manage spending wisely. The government has recently initiated this move, which is good.

There will also be continued upward pressure on the relative price of non-tradable goods as domestic credit becomes more widely available, risking a credit bubble (that is, an over-extension of credit to ever more risky borrowers). Therefore, the second policy intervention should be in monitoring credit expansion. The Royal Monetary Authority has started on this move, which is also good.

A third policy intervention is to not bring all the revenue into the country all at once, but instead save or invest some of this revenue abroad in special funds and bring them in slowly when needed. This is called sterilization and it will reduce the spending effect. This, however, can be politically difficult as there is often pressure

to spend the money immediately ignoring broader macroeconomic implications. The other option is that the government focus on investing this money in productive areas/uses with an eye on long term costs. The other thing it can do is that as the money comes in it goes into a “rainy day” fund – perhaps taking 10 percent of energy exports and putting it into DHI to make sure that it doesn’t spend everything that comes in. DHI could then invest

Don’t be confused with nominal exchange rates where our currency is pegged one-on-one with the Indian Rupee. In reality, as more hydropower and foreign aid money comes in, our Ngultrum appreciates.



this for the long-term development of the private sector etc.

In short, we can reduce the threat of something like the Dutch Disease by slowing the appreciation of the real exchange rate of ngultrum and by boosting the competitiveness of the non-hydro sector.

Some, however, argue that Bhutan is not The Netherlands and that while the flow of resources that took away from the manufacturing was bad for Holland – because it took away long term competitiveness, crippled the manufacturing sector and moved it towards less productive parts of the economy – this is not the case in Bhutan. In Bhutan, it can be argued that the flow is away from the agricultural sector to services. If these services are teachers, health-workers, salons, hotels and other private enterprises then it is said to help steer resources to optimal use for longer-term development in Bhutan and this can be a good thing. Sure the cost of living will go up, they say, but so too will the quality of life. So, while we may have elements of the Dutch Disease, will there be a long-term adjustment to the new economy of Bhutan. The old Bhutan was an agricultural based economy; the new one is now driven by hydropower and services, including tourism.

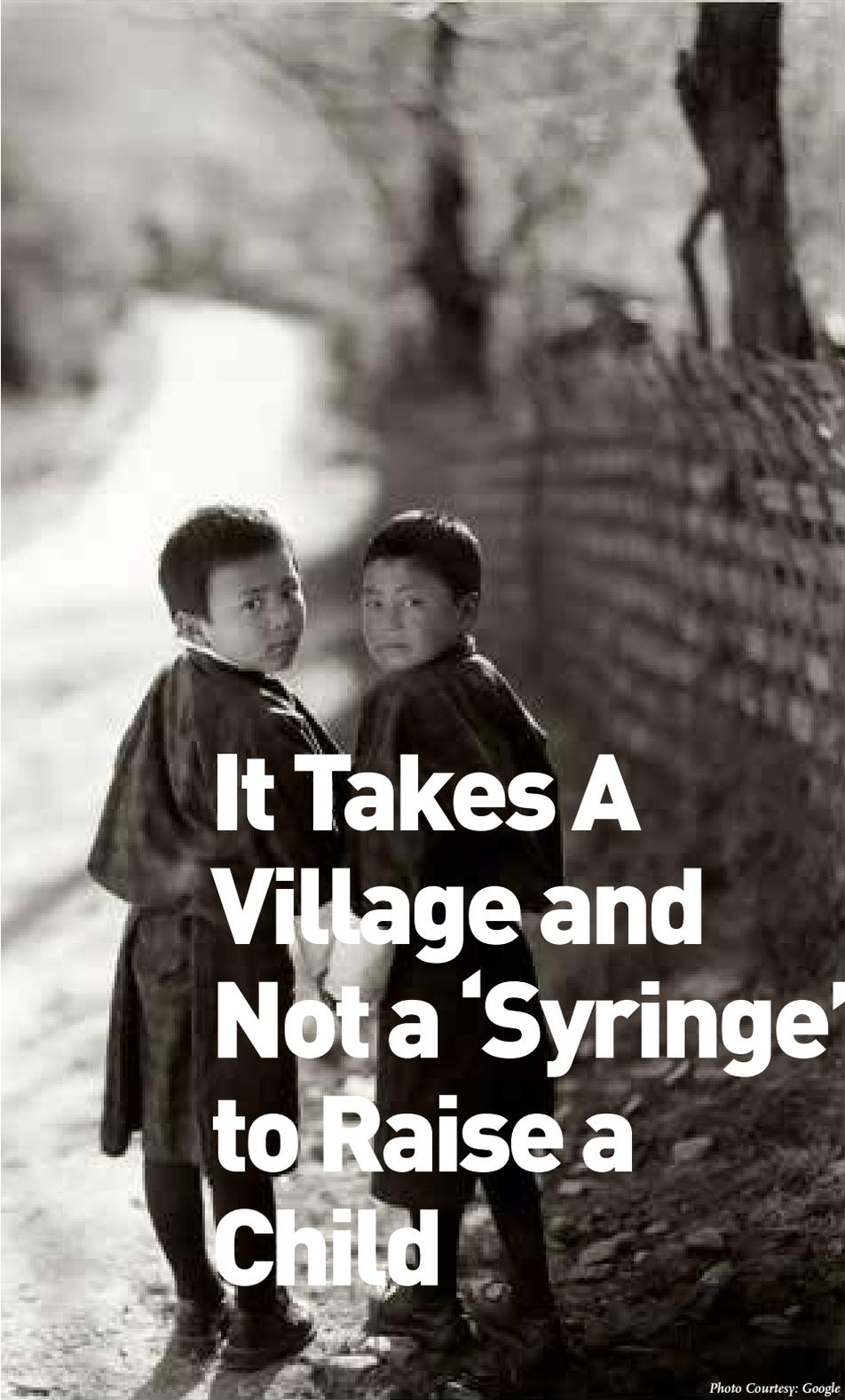
But this view would hold true only if tourism continues to grow, aid continues to flow in and the glaciers don’t dry up on us. But if Climate Change is happening then our government’s role will be to manage these adjustments and make necessary changes because the economic implications will be rough.

In the end we need to avoid extreme developments and achieve a more balanced approach to how we manage the repercussions that hydropower development and foreign aid can or has brought to our economy. 

There is a much better and compassionate way of educating children other than corporal punishment, says **Sangay Phuntsho.**

**W**hen I was in primary school at Ura in Bumthang in the early 90's, hearing the word *Lopen* simply sent my heart racing. I conjectured images of getting into trouble, or having done something wrong and then, thoughts of the unbearable stick would come to mind.

As a child the word *Lopen* was firmly associated with the idea of corporal punishment. I don't think that this is anything new. For many who belong to my generation it is common knowledge that this was the modus operandi of teaching - to beat and punish children with the notion that they were "educating" and "disciplining". It was so common and accepted that nobody ever questioned it; nobody knew whether it was effective or not. Nobody ever asked, did the children really learn? Hence nobody saw it as being wrong either. Where I went to school, the beatings and



# It Takes A Village and Not a 'Syringe' to Raise a Child

Photo Courtesy: Google

punishments were so frequent that my imagination involuntarily tied a teacher with punishment and hence instilled nothing but fear in me. In retrospect that was truly unfortunate, for I am a teacher now, and I wouldn't consider it very flattering if my students had that image of me.

I cannot deny that some taught us well, and meant well. But I guess they didn't know any better. Whatever the case, I remain grateful for the education I received. However, some of the teachers were so mean that they seemed better at punishing than teaching. I remember one of them had punishment techniques that were better than his ability to teach. He even had different equipments of torture, a whipping cane that folded in two, and a piece of electric wire.

I will never forget the incident when some of my friends and I were forced to strip and dip ourselves in ice-cold water one early frosty winter morning. Bumthang winters are brutal and we were, well, just children. And our crime? Coming late to morning study. We could have died from hypothermia. Luckily we didn't, but some suffered from cold and serious bouts of coughing, I suffered from serious stomach cramps the remaining of the day. It was a horrible and painful experience that I never wish upon any children. In those days our parents entrusted us to the teachers and the school, and it was up to them to do what they could, with us. Parents didn't complain.

Other's haven't been so lucky.

There have been incidents when a child succumbed to corporal punishment. A friend told me that in the late 50's when her father went to school in Wangdiphodrang, a boy was beaten and kicked so badly in his chest that he died shortly after. The case was never reported to the police, and the teacher never lost his job. That was then, at a time when farmers not only valued free education, but felt so privileged and fortunate that their children could get a seat in one of the few schools that existed in the country. In a culture where teachers are revered as *gurus*, it is sad that such abuse not only existed, but was tolerated and condoned. Today, after years of research and studies conducted by child psychologists, social behavioural analysts and learning specialists, the world is learning a different way. The discussion of how children should be taught and what kind of environment is best for learning, has taken a different direction. It has taught us that there is a much better and compassionate way of educating children, and even "disciplining" them. Mine was a childhood fraught with learning by the stick. Exams and class-tests were constantly followed by the cane. Some teachers beat us for every single error that we made in our papers. But more often than not, these beatings were because of so called "disciplinary" issues. Teachers beat students simply based on what was desirable or undesirable behaviour in their eyes. Sometimes the scoldings and beatings started right from the morning assembly, upsetting our mood the whole day.



## One teacher had punishment techniques that were better than his ability to teach.

To me, teaching those days seldom went beyond chalk and a blackboard, and the teacher's movement in the classroom rarely went beyond the front row - except maybe when he wanted to smack someone who sat at the back.

When I was in the fifth standard, I was accused of breaking into a near-by food store. I had a thousand and one reasons to prove otherwise, and I was so eager to proclaim my innocence that I couldn't stop from talking. But as soon as I started to speak the teacher slapped me hard across my face. That shut me up, but he continued to slap me repeatedly. After a dozen or so slaps, unable to bear the humiliation and his repeated accusations that I had done it, I gave in and said I did it. It was one of the most hurtful and humiliating experiences I have experienced. It impacted my sense of self, my view of education and the world around me. I hated school and I hated teachers. Not only was it difficult to accept a crime that I hadn't committed, but it was even more painful to

## ARTICLE



A senior teacher at Tsirangtoe Lower Secondary School said that he felt handicapped with the ban of corporal punishment.

see that I had hurt my parents, who were made to feel embarrassed for what I had not done. A part of me understands that teachers sometimes deployed such punishments with good intent, after all they have to maintain the order of the school. However, I think if they stand in the shoes of the child I am sure they will realize that corporal punishment injures a child for the rest of his life and eclipses his opportunities to blossom positively.

In my view, the Teaching-learning process in those days was irritatingly dull and full of lectures by people who never seemed to follow any of the rules in life. We never got the opportunity to contribute in our own learning process. We were never taught to question; instead we were told to listen only. We were never taught to enquire and be curious, for that was doubting the teacher. We were never taught to speak up, because that was being disrespectful, bold, and disruptive. Teachers kept on lecturing until the bell rang. We had a small one room library with few books, but

we weren't even encouraged to read or even go there. After all, they didn't expect us to write anything new in our test answers. If we regurgitated what they taught us, that was enough - complete rote learning. The only upside to rote learning from my childhood was that I managed to by-heart all the Buddhist prayers like the *Doelma* and *Barchoedlamsel*.

For society, however, the reputation of the school remained high. Every year, the students who appeared for the board examination would bring 100% pass marks. Besides, the students also exhibited exemplary discipline and behaviour when there were visiting dignitaries. In such fashion, teachers in the olden days were victorious in upholding what they thought was the nobility of the teaching profession, without realizing that not only was it immoral, but that the children had really learned nothing. They didn't prepare the children for the world, they prepared us to fear everything. Unfortunately, because of a lack of what a meaningful education was, soci-

ety during that time considered teaching one of the best professions and teachers were given great respect by all and sundry.

Whenever we were asked what we wanted to be in the future, more than half of us ironically, raised our hands and said our dream was to be a teacher. And this was not because we merely wanted to please our teacher, but because we envied the power they wielded, and the respect they got from society. Even at home, my friends and I would play the teacher-student game. Everyone loved being the teacher and punishing the others, clearly showing that we were learning how to love power and authority and the ability to have others obey us. They say children being told about good and bad behavior rarely has any impact because they learn more by looking and listening, and emulating the behavior of the adults. It was only when I was at Paro College of Education that I realized the journey the teaching profession has made. Today, teachers have learned better and work harder, but the irony is

that society no longer seems to see that. Currently the morale amongst teachers is pretty low. I came across many trainees expressing dissatisfaction with the profession. It also seems to be the last thing that most people want to be now. Once I happened to visit a village in Paro while gathering information for an assignment. In a soiled cow shed I saw a few children playing a teacher-student game. A girl who was enacting a teacher was holding a big stick, and pretended to beat her students when they didn't listen to her. A friend told me that at a private primary school in Thimphu which her nephews attend, one teacher put the pencil in between the child's tender fingers and pinched them together causing immense pain. That, for not doing homework.

In some ways teaching children without beatings and punishment is an alien approach to our society and many who want to be "teachers" are learning/hearing of it only now. For those who don't care about children, yet want to be a teacher, I think their want is for the power and authority the profession commands and not because they want to be an "educator."

During our training, the modules like Child Psychology really helped us understand the effect of corporal punishment on learners, both physically and mentally. We also learnt that Bhutan was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) without any reservation in 1990. Today, anyone wanting to be a teacher should know that Corporal punishment

is also against the teacher's code of conduct. While at the training college we took a basic counseling program to teach us an alternative way of working with children. The module holds significant value in teaching us the substitution for corporal punishment. But, in my opinion, one module in the six months semester seems to be inadequate. We hardly got the chance to exercise or put to effect how this works.

I am back in a primary school again. I was assigned as a PP (Pre-primary) teacher to Chhuboelsa Extended Class Room (ECR) under Tsirangtoe Lower Secondary School in Bhuan, after I completed my training course. On my first day, I entered the classroom with great excitement looking at faces that reminded me of myself decades ago and started a conversation with the children seated before me. I asked them many questions and they eagerly answered in a chorus. Once the ice had been broken and they seemed comfortable enough, I told them I wanted to appoint a class captain and asked if anyone was interested. Suddenly, everyone in the class raised their hands and started yelling enthusiastically. I asked if they knew the responsibility of the class captain. I was frightened and shocked when everyone unanimously said, "to beat la". I had come a long way, but it seemed like the message hadn't reached some parts of Bhutan. I realized I had a lot of work to do. The children, it seems, were learning well from corporal punishment. You get a little authority, even as a captain, and you have the power to "beat."

Moved by such experiences, I've talked with many of my colleagues, parents and students on how they

feel about corporal punishment in our schools. While, most of them are against it there are still some who genuinely support it, and I think it is because they do not know any better. A senior teacher at Tsirangtoe Lower Secondary School said that he felt handicapped with the ban of corporal punishment. With a mere basic counseling course, he said, teachers are helpless in handling the adverse behavior of some stubborn students. He claimed that he has witnessed the swift change in students' behavior after the ban, implying that it was getting worse. The teacher-in charge at Chhuboelsa ECR said that he has advised and spoken to many youth but he was still unable to identify their problem, leave alone finding the solution. He said they always came up with some excuse prompting the "counseling session to become an advising session." He said his advise was in vain when students took it lightly. He, therefore, felt that the only way these children would listen was through strict disciplinary action like corporal punishment. Another teacher believed that, the discipline is an act of love where sometimes we are required "to be unkind, to be kind". He quotes an excerpt from *You can win* by Shiv Khera: "We are all familiar with that big animal, the giraffe. A mama giraffe gives birth to a baby giraffe standing. All of a sudden the baby falls on a hard surface, and sits on the ground. The first thing the mama does is to get behind the baby and give him a hard kick. The baby gets up, but the legs are weak and wobbly and the baby falls down. Mama goes behind again and gives him one more kick. The baby gets up, but sits down again. Mama keeps

## ARTICLE



kicking till the baby gets on its feet and starts moving. Why? Because mama knows that the only chance of survival for the baby is to get on its feet - otherwise it will be eaten by predators.”

### But are we Giraffes?

When I heard these arguments I doubted myself and wondered whether corporal punishment could, in some instances, indeed be helpful? I recall an incident, when after hating school I had begun bunking classes and tried to force my parents to let me leave school. It was only with a painful slap that I received from my class teacher that made me stay back and continue my schooling. Today, I look back and wonder - would I have remained illiterate if he hadn't hit me? Then I ask myself the question, but why did I want to run away from classes in the first place and what made me want to leave school in the first place? Was it because I felt so misunderstood by my teachers and tired of the beatings and the way I was treated? If they hadn't made learning such a miserable experience I think I would have enjoyed school and not skipped classes. At

one point I even referred to it as the “golden slap” because it had forced me to stay in school and indeed changed the course of my life. But I shouldn't let that one incident sway the argument that corporal punishment, whether well intended or not, is right.

The golden slap is really a tap on the head with the good intent of making someone snap out of doing something stupid, naughty or silly. Corporal punishment on the other hand humiliates, embarrasses and hurts the child both physically and mentally. It is a punitive form of punishment that has many harmful repercussions to the overall development of the child's mental and emotional development. Unlike the educated parents in towns, most of the parents at Tsirangtoe that I've talked to feel that, a little corporal punishment should be allowed in our schools. They believe that strict discipline in schools will eventually shape a child better. Some even overtly blame the ban for the increasing youth related problems. I think this is because they fail to understand that causes of our youth problems are more complex than that. They

While there were about 400 children in less than a dozen schools spread across the country in the early 60s, there are now more than 200,000 children in 536 schools.

are, I think, confusing the symptom with the cause. The reason why we have youth problems and are witnessing a growing lack of respect for authority, is not because of banning corporal punishment, but because maybe such punishment or aggravation exists in their homes. What teachers also don't realize is that their duty is not to discipline the children. That is the duty of the parents, and it is something that a child should learn at home, taught by the parents. There needs to be a partnership between parents and the school to help the child develop the right manners and discipline. If the child is undisciplined then the teacher should simply push the responsibility onto the parents. A teacher's duty is to teach and educate and help steer the child in the right direction. But he/she must do the best he can in the most compassionate manner. If this doesn't work, parents have to be called in to help dissolve the situation of the misbehaving child. And yet still, if bad behavior continues despite warnings it should result in strict disciplinary actions like detentions, suspensions and ultimately expulsion. There is no need for teachers to resort to taking matters into their own hands and mishandling a child by physically abusing them.

But sometimes, I have heard people talking as if all teachers are in favour of corporal punishment as if it is a pastime for us. Recently, a member in WAB (Writers Association of Bhutan) explicitly mentioned in his post that “teachers love to beat their students.” It is really painful to digest such remarks and generalizations. Indeed, we teachers too hate having to scold our students for nothing. Our only wish is to see our students enjoying school and

learning; to see them happy and for us to enjoy what we do. There is nothing more annoying than to have misbehaving and troublesome children who disrupt the smooth running of a class or school. There is also nothing more saddening for us to see these children's lives ruined with neglect, punishment and lack of support from the faculty and their parents.

Above all, the ban seems to have affected the morale of teachers who have known no other way to run a classroom or school than with corporal punishment. They feel that this instead empowers some parents who have first of all never taken an active and positive role in their children's lives, leave alone education and discipline. Some teachers feel that banning corporal punishment ties the teachers hands who are left to deal with troublesome children while parents blame, sue or even beat teachers for the the bad behavior of these children. It demoralizes hundreds of teachers across the country. What our education system, society and the parents of troubled children fail to realize is that this is a joint effort and without it, there are bound to be lapses in how our children are educated and disciplined. We are not talking about teachers who like beating for the sake of beating - like in my childhood. We are talking about teachers who are trying to do their jobs as best they can with the limited exposure they themselves have and the limited resources available to them. It is not the work of the teachers/educators alone to discipline a child. Our role is to

teach mainly but it is the parents/ family's role to provide the values and discipline. For too long the Bhutanese attitude and society has put the onus on the teacher's alone. Education, is not limited to the school. The examples of what kind of person you want your child to become, begins in the family. Many of the parents today are educated, how many of them really take an interest in helping with home-work and communicating with the teachers?

If parents cannot handle the few children they have, then they shouldn't expect a teacher who has 35 to 40 children in a class to perform wonders. People don't seem to realize that teaching is not a simple 9 to 5 job. A Teacher is involved in the lives of 35/40 children everyday. There are lessons to prep for and assignments to correct, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of these children day in and day out till the end of the school year. Parents who seem to leave all the responsibility to the teachers should work with us and support us. With no parent involvement and support some of them come in with the smallest complaints and harass the teachers.

For instance, this year alone, many parents charged our teachers. A non-national school teacher of Pelkhil High School in Thimphu was beaten-up by a parent of a student in April this year. The reason, we heard was the teacher smacked the child twice on the back during class. The father of the student, it is said, pulled the teacher out of the classroom, and beat him up. Such disrespectful incidents can

demotivate the teaching community. What must be remembered is that there are negligent people on both sides - the parents and in the teaching community. In August this year, an expatriate teacher at Sipsoo was arrested for violating the teacher's code of conduct. Lured by showing some test questions, he harassed two class VIII girls by showing a porn movie and physically and sexually abusing them. Radhi JHSS principal was charged this June for acting unfriendly to the whole community including teachers and students. He manhandled the school caretaker two months after his arrival. He is also alleged to have held another teacher by the collar and accused for verbally assaulting and humiliating school staff in the meetings. Worse, after a minister's visit to the school on September 30, 2010, the same man forced his teaching staff to drink two cases of beer, even though they didn't want to. And now we have a case where a teacher allegedly injected students with a used syringe as punishment.

What we as teachers must keep in mind is that such ill-thought, reckless, and ignorant behaviour of a few has serious implications on the entire teaching community. The status and nobility of the teaching profession can be better promoted only by our teachers who love and care for the children, their staff and their profession. The hard work of hundreds of teachers can be completely overshadowed by the blunder of a single teacher. Our profession therefore requires us to be extra cautious of what we do, both inside and outside the school campus. We are talking about the education of not one child, but of the entire nation, and for the next generation. Every stakeholder should do their share. Parents should help out in any way they can to support teachers and their children's school, and the Ministry of Education has to assist teachers and principals with putting in place of corporal punishment, effective disciplinary measures in place that can have far-reaching consequences for those - parents/ children/ and teachers - who do not comply. As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child," and our people and society have to realize that if parents do not step up to take more responsibility for their children, schools alone cannot be blamed for an education system which many see as failing. 

# THE AMOCHHU PROJECT REVISITED



A hydropower project draws attention to everything it touches. And, in the process, it sometimes draws attention to itself.

It is time we contemplate this question before it is too late: How can we build a Dam without compromising the existence of an ancient 400-year old heritage? “It feels like I am being driven out of my country,” says Bhaktiman, a farmer from Lingden with a lost, helpless look on his face. He belongs to this 400-year old community in Chukha Dzongkhag whose history and ancestry is embedded in the village that he continues to live in today. Its ancestry is tied to the *Lhops* or *Dhoyas*, an indigenous people that have been associated with this region from the time of Bhutan’s origin and may hold the key to many anthropological and historical questions that we may have about the origin of our nation. Unfortunately, this seems to have little or no meaning, and



## A BIRD’S EYE VIEW OF AMOCHHU.

certainly very little value to a development project like the Amochhu Hydroelectric Project that is now at their doorstep, threatening their existence.

Lingden lies in the foothills of Southern Bhutan closer to Samtse. The strategic location of the village allows for panoramic and sweeping views of the great Indian plains and scenic sunsets. If we talk about untainted, this may be a part of Bhutan that has remained pretty much the way it has for centuries, far from the prying eyes of tourists and cut-off, even despite its proximity to the Indian border, because there are no roads that penetrate the villages.

And now even before the rest of the country, forget the world, learns about the village and people of Lingden, their village will

disappear. According to official estimates from an agriculture office in Chukha, about 276 households will be displaced and this number could increase to about 500. Of these, 64 Doya households will also fall into this category. Given that each household comprises about 10 members, around 5,000 people would be displaced making it the highest number of displaced people by any development project so far. The Punatsangchhu project displaced 90 families. A farmer from one of the affected areas said: “there cannot be a greater calamity. Where will the displaced families go?” The government has plans though – the normal rehabilitation plans to be more precise. It will compensate these households with land or cash.

But such compensation plans often come with little research and no assistance whatsoever to a people who have no way of managing their finances or estates, nor the psychological tolls it takes on them. Take for example the people of Babesa. This was a village in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan in which people are expected to have more exposure and understanding of money management. When the government appropriated the beautiful paddy fields from the rice farmers, they were compensated with land or cash.

Then they were on their own to figure out what to do with it. There were tragic stories of how farmers who had never seen large sums of money in their lives, ill-spent the money buying cars and frivolous things. It was tragic that ancestral farms that had been the sustenance and livelihoods of generations, were lost within a year. For the government to show up with no money-management scheme for these villagers who have lived off the land for generations and not educate, guide, assist, step by step on how they should invest or use their money, is really showing a lack of respect and negligence for its people. It is also setting itself up for innumerable problems in the future. Displacing a community may be easy to do, but taking care of its aftermath is what they will be unprepared for. Social problems, unemployment, homelessness, alcoholism, drug abuse, are all going to increase if people don't manage their displacement well. Society has seen a spate of these problems in the last few years and one wonders where they

come from? There are some serious questions that need to be weighed here. How can we guarantee that none of these problems will be tied to such displacements. Is there a provision whereby such projects can be carried out without displacing so many people?

The government says there is added incentive, as it will provide 10,000 units of electricity to each household over the project period. The authorities also say "employment opportunities" will be created.

But let's take a hard look at these carrot sticks that the government is dangling before the villagers. Chhukha Dzongrab Pema Dorji in a public consultative meeting on the hydroelectric project held at the College of Science and Technology on October 29, said, "no assurance can be given to the villagers that they would be compensated with land." He further

added, "if it's for your country you should be ready to sacrifice your land."

But that is easier said than done when it is not your land you are sacrificing, but somebody else's. How can communities who have spent hundreds of years in that locality abandon it as if they were checking out of a hotel? The people here breathe the air, drink the water and feel the soil of their villages in their blood. This is the only way of life they know. Studies have shown that many indigenous communities suffer from severe psychological problems when a way of life is pulled out from under their feet.

As for employment opportunities, would these people be happier living on their own land, farming it and being self-sufficient or as construction workers engaged in strenuous labour at a noisy, polluted site for a meager salary?

**ABOUT 276 HOUSEHOLDS WILL BE DISPLACED BY THE AMOCHHU HYDRO PROJECT.**



*Photo Courtesy: Tarayana Foundation*

Yes, the most important thing is hydropower. A reservoir during the dry seasons will possibly not dry up and there will be continued supply of clean energy.

But extensive research that has already been conducted on other Dams tells us that displacements are fraught with problems and come at a huge cost. What we need to look at is this. Yes, while development projects like hydropower are extremely important for Bhutan, isn't Gross National Happiness too? Aren't we a country that has been built up on Gross National Happiness? For a generation now we have seen and believed that Bhutan is a largely happy place because people – especially in the rural and far-flung regions – have been content living the way they have, with as little as it may be. They have been the true upholders of this philosophy, while we in Thimphu have proudly espoused its values.

So, is the government acting for a few who complain about the economy, and unemployment in Thimphu, at the cost of these people? Isn't it the cumulative happiness of these innocent villagers and farmers who cherish their ancestral lands and livelihood what makes up the Gross National Happiness of Bhutan?

An article written by Courtenay Forbes, a Safeworld Student Writer, titled "The vulnerability of Indigenous Tribes: Traditional Custodians of the land" reveals that this problem of how we deal with indigenous

communities is not new. Globally, countries have dealt the very same way that we are with our indigenous groups. But, wait a minute, isn't Bhutan supposed to be leading the way in unconventional methods of development? More than doing that with vegetables (becoming the first country to become organic) why don't we start with people. How we treat our indigenous groups will show the world by example because as Courtenay says; "Indigenous and tribal people have a sense of stewardship towards the land they inhabit, and take many measures to ensure the preservation of these natural habitats, an idea that is low on the list of priorities for many 'developed' nations. The lack of political and legal infrastructure of such communities, however, leaves them vulnerable to human rights abuses. Governments of the countries that contain indigenous people have a sense of right to use the land, and homes, of tribal peoples as they see fit."

The Amochhu dam is going to be 35 m high, 22 kms towards Pachhu (river) and 20 kms towards Amochhu (river) and the submergence will be 175 m deep. The backwater of Pachhu will stretch 11 kilometres and Amochhu's backwater will stretch 23 kilometres submerging 12 villages in three gewogs of Samtse and 21 villages in two gewogs of

Chhukha.

A project of this scale means that it disrupts natural seasonal changes in the river, and ecosystems are destroyed. It ends flooding that help to clean out the silt in rivers, causing them to clog. Studies show that the plant decay caused downstream of major dams produces as many greenhouse gases as more conventional methods of producing electricity. Reservoir dams can also break into massive flash floods. Arundhati Roy, the Indian writer and activist wrote in one of her essays against the Sardar Sarovar dam:

"All over the world there is a movement growing against big dams. In the First World they're being de-commissioned, blown up. The fact that they do more harm than good is no longer just conjecture. Big dams are obsolete. They're uncool. They're undemocratic. They're a government's way of accumulating authority (deciding who will get how much water and who will grow what where). They're a guaranteed way of taking a farmer's wisdom away from him. They're a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. Their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute. Ecologically, they're in the doghouse. They lay the earth to waste. They cause floods, water-logging, salinity, they spread

disease. There is mounting evidence that links big dams to earthquakes."

However, considering all these facts if the government still wants to go ahead, 60 year old Agam Singh Rai from Lingden says, "The government wants us to move now after equipping our villages with all modern amenities. If we move we want the very same things in the land we are compensated with." For those opting for cash compensation, the rates vary from around Nu 2,000 to Nu 5,000 an acre taking into factors such as whether the land is *chhuzhing* or *kamzhing*. This is said to be way lower than the going market rate for land in that area.

More than 5,300 acres of land will be required for the project. The total project cost is Nu 43,776.76 million and the preconstruction including infrastructure is scheduled to begin by 2013. And this is just the beginning. The Sunkosh reservoir which has a power generation capacity of 2,560 MW is also in the works. Imagine how many more people will be displaced.

Bhutanese decision makers and leaders "need to weigh the pros and cons very, very carefully," an engineer from the Department of Hydropower and Power Systems said on grounds of anonymity. If an official from within the project says this, then it might be time to give it some serious thought.

BY PEKY SAMAL 

## WHAT'S YOUR QUIRK

Beautician Radhay Sham, popularly known as Shyam.

### Age

I am 30 yrs old.

### Place

I was born and brought up in Wangduephodrang. Now I run a beauty salon in Thimphu.

### Life

Life is a mixture of joy and sorrow. But in the end, life is beautiful.

### Career

I turned my passion into a career and have been a beautician for the last 15 years. My customers are mostly middle-aged women, who I prefer.

### Food

I like all sorts of Bhutanese dishes.

### Vision

To help the old and the poor although I am not rich. I respect humanity and respect human beings no matter who they are.



### Entertainment

I like dirty jokes and love to dance. Besides, I love listening to sentimental english and Dzongkha songs.

### Love

I have never experienced it but I do believe in love at first sight.

### Interest

I like fashion, even did a course on fashion designing in India.

### Style

For me, style and fashion is comfort. It doesn't bother me as long as I am comfortable with what I wear.

### Dislike

I dislike those who humiliate other people to feel good about themselves.

### Quirk

People leave negative comments and call me 'little girl' for what I am. But, I just don't care about what they say and I carry on with my life the way I am.

## KNOW YOUR FOOD

# “Fruit of the Gods”



Yellowish and mushy, the Aanday is enjoyed by many.

## NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutritional Information  
Nutritional value per 100g

Calories	70
Energy	293 kJ
Cholesterol	0mg
Carbohydrate	18.59g
Sugar	12.53g
Dietary Fiber	3.6g
Fat	0.19g
Protein	0.58g

## CARBOHYDRATES

A great source of carbohydrates and energy.

## PROTEINS

Rich in protein.

## VITAMINS

Contains vitamin A (33%), Vitamin C(13%), Vitamin B-Riboflavin(208%), Folate(2%), Vitamin C (9%), Calcium (1%),

## MINERALS

Contains minerals like iron, calcium, phosphorus, manganese, potassium, sodium and copper.



Photo Courtesy: Google

**E**very Bhutanese would have experienced the curdling thickness a raw Aanday (Persimmon) leaves behind in the mouth. Not a nice feeling, but that is probably because you picked the astringent fruit. The astringent variety is very high in tannin which causes the thickness; the same component also in red wine and tea. This variety needs to ripen before you can enjoy it.

Widely available varieties in the market are the astringent local Aanday and the *Jiro*, originally from Japan. Bhutan also grows the non-astringent variety, the Hana Fuyu (Winter Flower). Though Hana Fuyu is usually mistaken for its astringent cousins- *Jiro*- it is actually larger, more reddish orange in color and can be eaten fresh.

Either way, it's great news for Bhutanese if you need to pack in more natural vitamins, because Aanday is full of it. It is rich in dietary fibers, and vitamin A. It

has flavonoids that fight oxidants and reactive oxygen species that causes aging and formation of chronic maladies. People with sensitive eyes should try it as it has an important dietary carotenoid, Zea-xanthin, which provides towards protective light filtering functions in the eyes. As a good source of vitamin C, it helps in resisting infectious agents and pro-inflammatory free radicals making it a good choice for people who suffer from arthritis. Aanday has the valuable B-complex vitamins like folic acid, B-6, thiamin which helps in metabolic activities. Even though it has high sugar content and carbohydrates, this fruit is low in calories and can be a perfect sweet substitute.

A fresh Aanday will contain minerals like manganese, copper, potassium and phosphorus which all aide in eliminating free radical, help in muscular, skeletal, and digestive functions, and production of red blood cells. The Catechin contents is known



**Astringent or not**, aanday is good for wrinkles and pores.

to have anti-hemorrhagic (bleeding from small blood vessels) and anti-infective properties.

Aanday is not known to cause an allergic reaction and can be enjoyed by pregnant women and babies alike. However, un-ripened Aanday has been known to cause Bezoars, a formation of 'foodball' when the tannin shibuol in the fruit reacts with acid inside the stomach. It is generally advised to avoid eating the fruit on an empty stomach.

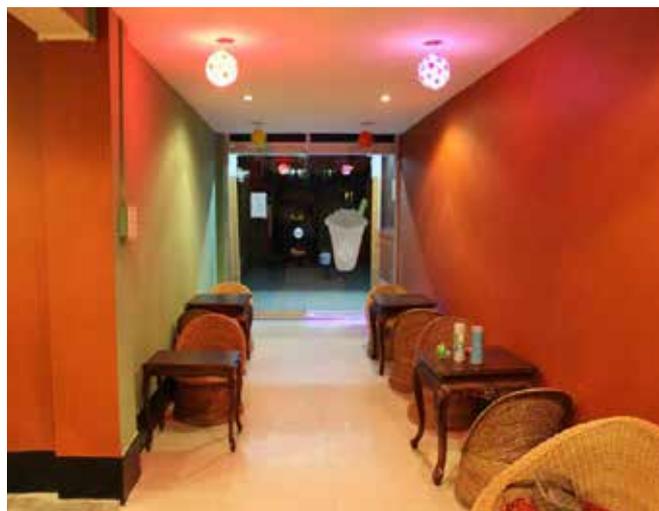
Traditionally, Bhutanese enjoy it as fruit leather (dried whole or sliced). The chewy treat can be a great snack which also aides to soothe acid reflux. A good reason for us to grab this 'fruit of gods' and enjoy in the goodness it brings this season. 🐦

Sources: Internet/Web, ministry of agriculture website

Source: USDA Nutrient Database



## REVIEW RESTAURANT



# The Bubble Tea House



#### WHERE

Next to Druk Opticals, Clock Tower Square, Thimphu

#### SPECIAL

Fast Food

#### TIMING

10 am – 8 pm

#### CONTACT

# 77205779, sonam\_wang09@hotmail.com

#### EXTRA

WiFi

**B**oba Tea is a tea based drink infused with fruit or milk and Tapioca balls, also known as tapioca pearls or bubbles. This “fun” drink, which has gained popularity worldwide over the years, has now seen many variations – simple green, black or white teas infused with fruit flavouring, fruity milkshake versions with a shot of tea and then the iced blended, fruity slush kind - more like smoothies - popular with younger children and adults alike. All these variations come with the chewy, fun and filling black tapioca balls at the bottom of the cup which gives it the signature “bubble-tea” name. The fact that Tapioca or Taro, which is a sweet potato, is the base for Boba tea, almost makes it like a snack in a cup.

Boba Tea first originated in Taiwan in the 1980’s and gained popularity throughout Asia in the 1990’s. It has since become increasingly popular the world over and, now, thanks to The Bubble Tea House and its proprietor Sonam Wangchuk, Bhutan’s capital, Thimphu, is finally on the bubble tea map with its first taste of Boba tea.



The fact that Tapioca or Taro, which is a sweet potato, is the base for Boba tea, almost makes it a snack in a cup.

Sonam Wangchuk, a young aspiring entrepreneur, came up with the idea of introducing the product when he heard of success stories of other entrepreneurs who took the idea and introduced it in their respective countries. He started the Bubble Tea House in Thimphu, in October, this year.

The Bubble Tea House in the clock tower square has a varied menu to pick from. With eleven Bubble Tea flavours, the more traditional picks such as 'Original', 'Taro' and 'Jasmine' are the favourites of customers, the tea house also offers six different Smoothies that tantalize your taste buds to choose from.

The Bubble Tea House, by January next year, will be adding some more flavours to its menu, while coming up with smaller portions for those who think the present portions (400ml) are too filling.

Prices - Bubble Tea Nu. 160, Smoothies Nu. 165 and Cocktail Juices Nu. 110 a cup. 



THE BUBBLE TEA HOUSE FLAVOURS



KIWI MOCKTAIL



## REVIEW MOVIE



# Thank you, Sir!!



**DIRECTOR**  
Tshering Gyeltshen

**CAST**  
Tshering Gyeltshen, Tshering Zagmo, Karma Samdrup, Namgyel Lhamo

**SYNOPSIS**  
Thank you sir, is a story of a young enthusiastic teacher bounded by obscurity of life both personally and professionally. The movie portrays the lives of teachers and the circumstances they work with, particularly in a rural setting.

The director of movies such as *Chepai Bu* and *Muti Thrishing*, Tshering Gyeltshen brings to the audience yet another film with a story-line that differs from the usual love sagas the Bhutanese film industry continuously churns out.

The story may somewhat be similar to the 1967 Hollywood blockbuster *To Sir, with love* but, by taking a different approach, one that mirrors the Bhutanese education system, Tshering Gyeltshen manages to put across to the audience that an educator, if dedicated and passionate about his craft, can also be a good friend to students - a friend that opens doors to set them on the right course.

By taking a different approach, one that mirrors the Bhutanese education system, Tshering Gyeltshen manages to put across to the audience that an educator, if dedicated and passionate about his craft, can also be a good friend to students .



**THE CAST - BONDING TOGETHER.**

As more and more schools and teachers are held accountable like never before for a student's overall performance, the film's release couldn't have come at a better time. Tshering Gyeltshen who plays the role of an English teacher is reason enough to watch this film, and his charisma makes the changes he brings to the students' world seem entirely plausible. The cast, along with the fine cinematography, captures the complex nature of situations typical to schools in the Bhutanese landscape.

Shot over a seven-month period with a 750-member crew, Thank You Sir stands out in a world of spoon-fed plots and standard fare because of the film's non-traditional structure and elements. 🐼





## REVIEW BOOK



# An Elephant's Adventure Series from the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan



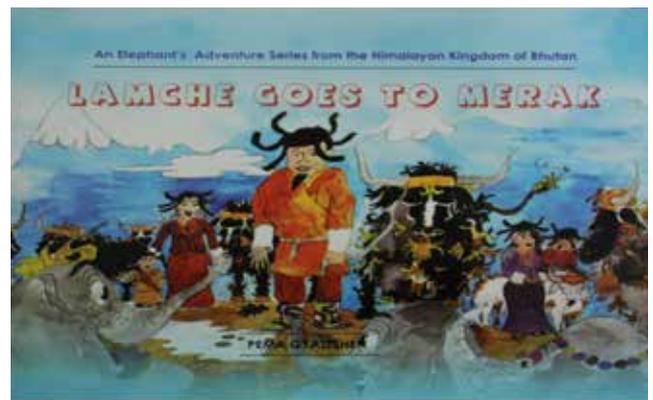
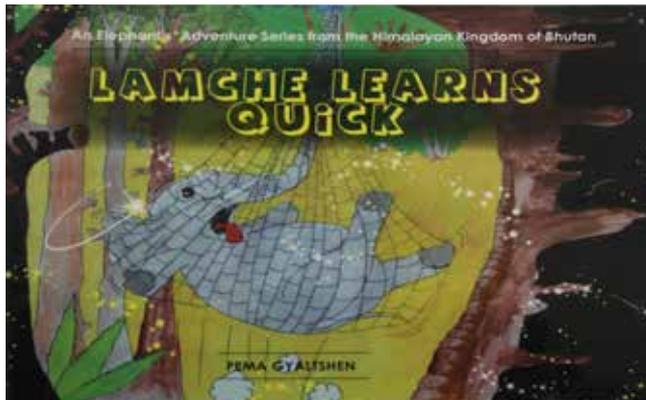
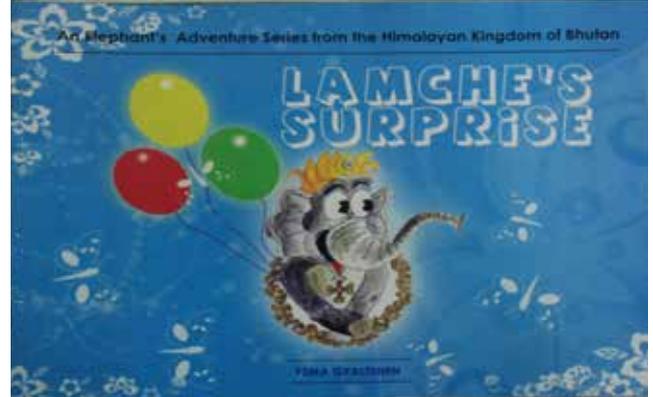
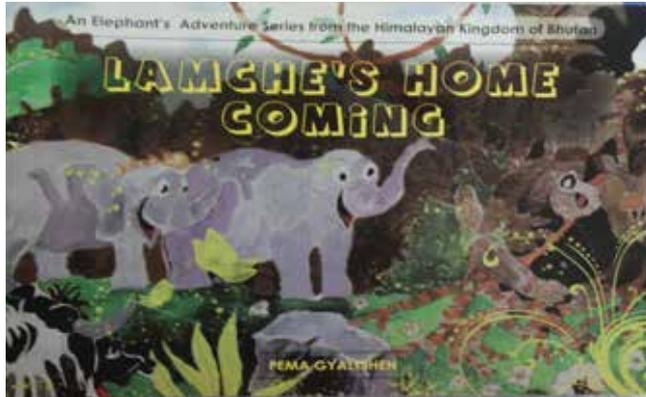
**AUTHOR**  
By Pema Gyaltshen

**PUBLISHER**  
DSB Publications

**T**he Elephant Adventure series is a great set of books that parents and older siblings may enjoy reading to children. It is a series of five installments in total with titles such as 'Lamche Goes to Merak' and 'Lamche Learns Quick' - immediate favorites. The series doesn't indicate which age group these books are intended for, but from its illustrations and the way the book has been written, it could be assumed that it is meant for children who are eight years of age or below

The books are a colourfully illustrated series about a young elephant, Lamche's adventures in and around Bhutan, taking him to new places like Merak, where he and his family befriend a group of Yak herders who are more than hospitable. There, Lamche makes a strange new friend, a young Yak named Dawala. Lamche also discovers the joys of travel with his family and learns new lessons from his various encounters along the way. Overall, the series imparts interesting facts to children, such as the extent of an elephant's memory, and Dawala's difficulty in coping with warmer weather and why. The series draws particular attention to being helpful and compassionate and in doing so demonstrates how team work and a little unexpected help can go a long way. It also emphasizes the importance of harmony between people and animals. Imparting these lessons through the life and travels of Lamche also makes the series something worth considering for little ones.

The series draws particular attention to being helpful and compassionate.



It is unclear if the author, Pema Gyaltshen – a teacher by profession - intends to continue the series, but it would be interesting to see where Lamche's adventures take him next. Pema Gyaltshen is a first time children's author and the five books in the series suggests a promising start. It

might not have made as big an impression owing to presentation and readability, but with a little more attention to illustrations and detail, Lamche can definitely make an impact. 🐦

### No one is struck with cancer because of the accumulation of past sins, says the first woman president of a political party in Bhutan, Lily Wangchuk.

It was a routine health check at the JDWNRH hospital in 2011. Lily Wangchuk, the former Executive Director of Bhutan Media Foundation, was in the midst of preparing for the Royal Wedding then, and she hadn't been feeling too well; a little weak as she described it. Perhaps exhaustion from all the preparations, she thought. She hadn't been sick and was not prone to being sickly either, but she thought a visit to the Doctor might help. After a consultation, the Doctor took her blood. Weeks later the Doctor called to inform that they would have to run some more tests to determine the anomalies in her blood. Lily didn't think anything of it.

A few weeks later Lily went to collect the final results of the biopsy from the hospital. The Doctor wasn't there but the results were. Lily read the scrawl on her health slip and saw the word "carcinoma." She immediately called the Doctor to confirm her suspicions. "Yes," the Doctor replied when

she asked if it meant cancer. "You have cancer."

The Doctor told her that it was endometrial cancer (cancer of the lining of the uterus or the womb) and reassured her that it was in the early stages and could be treated successfully.

Endometrial cancer is apparently common although the exact cause is not known - increased levels of estrogen (hormones) are believed by medical professionals to have a role by causing a build-up along the lining of the uterus. High levels of estrogen in animals result in excessive endometrial growth leading to cancer.

To understand how this happens, it is important to know something about Estrogen. It is a hormone and hormones are vital chemical substances that are produced in humans and animals. They are messengers transmitting information from one cell to the other and influence every cell and organ in our bodies regulating every aspect of our develop-





“I could not think of breaking this news to my family, especially my mother who is 84 years old.”

ment and growth. Metabolism, bone development, sexual function, tissue function, cholesterol, and even moods are all a result of hormonal function. In women estrogen is responsible for the development of their sexual characteristics and reproductive cycles. As a result Estrogen is contained in birth control pills and it is used in menopausal treatment. While excessive use of estrogen can lead to cancer, different brands can also treat cancer in some depending on the person. So it is advised that estrogen treatment should be used carefully assessing ones medical condition. It is advised that women, once they are in their thirties, have regular pelvic examinations and *Pap smears*.

But even with reassurances from the Doctor that it could be treated, news of this nature is never easy to digest or comprehend. Lily went into a state of shock and slowly felt the gravity of the news sink. There were tears, and moments of serious contemplation of what would or could happen

to her. Her older brother had also succumbed to cancer and died, and she knew firsthand the experience and pain of knowing that a loved one was dealing with a terminal illness. “I could not think of breaking this news to my family, especially my mother who is 84 years old,” she said. Instead the first person she called was her spiritual teacher.

But Lily is known to be a go-getter, a person who will find a way - no matter what or how - to beat the odds to get what she wants, and this is what she did with the prognosis. She became determined to overcome it at all costs. She quickly planned a trip to the National Cancer Institute in Thailand without informing her family or friends. “I have always been very independent and strong willed so I thought I could do this alone.” But, once in Bangkok, she realized it was a bad idea, and realized that this was unlike any other challenge she could deal with on her own. After all, she was staring death in the face. She broke down and eventually broke the news to her family.

After a series of new tests in Thailand, she found out that her cancer was not in the first stage but at an advanced stage (third). She underwent six cycles of chemotherapy after the removal of her uterus. Following every operation, depending on the type, a cancer patient is required to undergo either radiotherapy or chemotherapy, or both from anywhere between one to two months or more.

Lily lost weight and her long hair was no more. She suffered bouts of nausea, depression and fatigue. Chemotherapy is a treatment where medicine is used to kill the

cancer cells. In the process of killing the cancer cells it also attacks normal healthy cells and leads to these disastrous side effects. “It was not the cancer that made me suffer, it was the treatment,” she said. Now her hair is growing back, but she prefers to wear a wig because it makes her feel normal again when she is around people.

During the course of her illness, Lily realized that people were extremely ignorant about the illness she was suffering from. They came to see her as well-wishers and talked about how many people they knew had died from cancer, inadvertently reminding her - like she wasn't aware - of this killer.

This lack of awareness made her realize that there was a serious need to discuss this illness not only as a disease but also as a support group on Facebook for people who were suffering from or who had relatives suffering from cancer. She also wanted to dispel the belief that one was struck with cancer because of the accumulation of past sins.

Lily's cancer is in remission, and she looks back at her cancer experience positively. She now knows that she makes a difference in the lives of her family and friends and that it is reason enough to keep her going. As a young girl, I had this dream to start an orphanage. As ironic as it seems, I can now focus on starting that orphanage,” she said, knowing that fate had decided that she can never be a mother. 



# A Buddhist practitioner who set up The Loden Foundation, Karma Phuntsho believes that Bhutanese society must now be more ethically driven.

**Q You have successfully managed to bring the knowledge of the past and relay it in contemporary language for people to understand today. And because of your work, you are one of the few well known Bhutanese Buddhist scholars abroad. Your comment.**

I am not quite sure if I am that well known. I would say that I am one of the very few Buddhist academics working abroad. There are so many Buddhist lamas and Khenpos, who are philosophers and who have a much better reputation than I. I may be one of the few who transmits our own culture and philosophy in the universal idiom, especially in the intellectual academic idiom.

**Q: Why did you choose to seek an Oxford education, when you were already a learned Lopen?**

I was very fortunate to get admission in Oxford with no undergraduate degree or real academic credentials apart from the English language test and few essays I wrote. One main reason that drove me towards the west for a college education was of my experience as a monk. In the late 1980s and 90s, university graduates would have this great deal of

self importance and weird sense of sophistication. They would see education as equivalent to English and would look down on the monks, even though the monks were very learned. If you look at the depth of the Buddhist education to that of modern education, it is incomparable. University graduates at that time used to be very supercilious and arrogant and as a monk I could feel it acutely. Some of the monks I respected so much would suffer a lot of condescending attitude from these young graduates. Therefore, I decided to get a similar kind of education.

**Q: In your pursuit to digitize potis (Buddhist texts) for future generations, what challenges did you face?**

In the past projects which I have run, there were tangible challenges like finances apart from the cultural challenges. [Some] Bhutanese are very conservative, especially when it comes to their heritage. For example, a temple owner would want to be very protective about the relics, and books are part of the religious relics. And many monks would

also have a rather conservative stance on this because they believe in secrecy and the restrictive access to the materials, especially if the materials were of high esoteric content. So we have to respect the cultural sensitivity of course. In all our projects, we have given full copyright of the documentation of the archives to the owners, after all it's their ancestors who produced and protected it for this long. It's not at all fair for us to come with a camera and claim the copyright. We follow a policy that the copyright remains with the owners, but they cannot place restriction on educational purposes. Of course, they have the right in further development of the materials, commercialization of the materials, etc. Our main objective is to make it available for educational purposes.

**Q: Can you tell us how much progress you have been able to make in documenting these texts?**

For the last eight years, we have managed to archive 24 temples and two private collections. We have gone around the country visiting significant temples, especially those with significant libraries and we have so far digitized about three million pages. These are quite ancient books, and they come from [the] early 13th century all the way to



↑  
**LOPEN KARMA  
PHUNTSHO**

1930s, 40s and 50s. Basically we cover all the pre-modern monasteries and their archives - anything that was printed on traditional paper, which was done before the industrial production was documented.

**Q: Has the government been supportive of these initiatives?**

Yes, they do provide support in terms of cooperation to enter a temple or lhakhang owned by the government. Also the work we are doing and its end product will be delivered to the National

Library's archives. So we are building their archive at no expense to them. All they have to give is official and moral support, and that they have given very willingly.

**Q: What about challenges from temple caretakers and owners of private lhakhangs? Is there resistance at that level or does the official government letter work all the time?**

The official letter does not always work. One example would be the Pagar temple, which is downstream from Thimphu, well known for



centuries as a book production temple. Our team went to Pagar with an official permission, and we photographed the archives for a month. Then a local lama came by and informed us that Pagar does not belong to the Central Monastic Body or the government. So the team was chased out. Eventually it was taken over by the Central Monastic Body, and the week we were preparing to revisit it, it got burnt. Pagar lost all their written materials, except for the set we photographed during that one month. If they had allowed us, we would have at least saved the digital copy of everything they had. These are exactly the kind of reservations we have faced from people be it for political, religious or social reasons, or because they were just generally unwilling.

**Q: Talking about fire trag-**



## I was very fortunate to get admission in Oxford with no under graduate degree or real academic credentials.

**edies, what kind of loss did you experience when Wangduephodrang Dzong was burnt? What did you feel as a Buddhist and as someone trying to document these archives?**

It was a very sad thing to see Wangdue Dzong burn. But I would say it did not hit me as hard as the Kenchosum temple in Bumthang, which was razed by a fire a few years ago. According to records I had found, the Kenchosum temple was renovated by Pema Lingpa, about 500 years ago. It was a very old establishment with very old relics (which they managed to save), but there used to be a broken bell- a huge

gong- which certainly came from the 1st millennium (8th century) that was badly charred by the fire. I was hit very hard by this, probably because it was one of the oldest standing temples besides Jambay and Kichu Lhakhangs.

As a historian I was aware of how many times Dzongs have been razed to the ground by fire. This may be the second fire Wangdue dzong suffered. I don't also know if Wangdue had a major manuscript collection- probably they did. When I did the cataloguing of the Gangtey monastery, I found that the Kangyur there had been copied from the one in Wangdue.

**Q: When you talk about manuscripts throughout Bhutan, there are few monasteries that are really old and have original manuscripts. So does that mean the rest of the lhakhangs have reproduced manuscripts?**

Out of the 2000 or so temples, as per Department of Culture, we can probably say that 10% of them would have a substantial library. By substantial, I mean hundreds of books rather than thousands. Most temples, pre 20th centuries will have quite a lot of original and unique manuscripts with them, especially if they had a scholarly lama who was the member of the estab-

ishment. The scholarly lama would collect quite a lot of books, which would be left to the monastery. However, in most of the big monasteries, you will find a common set of books - the Kangyur, Tenjur or Sixty Volume Büm, the hundred thousand version of the perfection of wisdom, the Getongpa, which is the 8000 verses of Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom and Domang, the praise of the Bodhisattva Tara.

**Q: What kind of books would you consider valuable and original?**

There are books which can be printed from wood blocks. Unless the wood blocks are destroyed, the manuscripts printed from wood blocks are not very

rare. In case of Kangyur, it would be printed in Tibet- the Bhutanese would travel with huge collection of papers to print from wooden blocks and bring it back to Bhutan. For some books, there were wood blocks carved here in Bhutan. Punakha Dzong, Trongsa and Phajoding had a lot of wood blocks carved. With Punakha, we have lost all the wood blocks in the fire, so that basically means that even the books printed from these wood blocks are rare. Sometimes, we find very rare wood blocks and hand written manuscripts which is more valued. Our focus is mainly on the hand written ones, because they are by definition unique as they are the only piece- there wasn't [any]



## A local lama came by and informed us that Pagar does not belong to the Central Monastic Body or the government.

such thing as photocopy then. However, we should not mistake that a particular manuscript is the only copy - copies would be made by many scribes. Each scribe would attribute a different error and a writing style which is unique and more precious.

**Q: Apart from wooden**

**blocks and paper, what other kinds of materials did we use?**

Due to abundance of paper making materials, Bhutanese straight away went to write on paper. By the time literacy came to Bhutan, paper making practices was well known around the country. Local historians would claim that even as early as the 8th century, Bhutanese were making paper and taking it to Tibet, where paper was scarce. It was one of the best exports of Bhutan during those days, since Tibet did not have abundant plants to make paper.

It was one of the main presents made by the Bhutanese to Tibetan lamas for religious projects. Bhutanese paper was of the best quality and very thick. Due to lack or limited resource, the papers in Tibet were made as thin as possible. With Bhutanese paper, we find that special manuscripts pages are stacked to create more thickness, and can be as thick as a codex.



**Q: What methods do you use to document manuscripts?**

We use a digital camera for many reasons. The lack of electricity in remote lhakhangs, and the need to carry generators to charge our laptops and batteries is one reason. Two, with old books, they are so fragile that it might destroy the book while feeding it through the scanner. Also there is no portable scanner that would fit the big Bhutanese books like the Kangyur that are roughly 70 cm long and 20 cm wide. With cameras it's much easier - we just set up a station and start clicking.

**Q: There is a wealth of very old knowledge that Bhutan possesses. Do you think our mainstream population is even aware of what we are sitting on?**

When we are talking about mainstream, there are two kinds - the educated mainstream and the Bhutanese mainstream. When we talk about the educated mainstream, like us who have gone through the school system and who don't always have enough knowledge of Dzongkha or Choekey, then most people are not aware. When they see the 108 volume of Kangyur, they probably think it might have only prayers. But what we have in there is actually a lot of history, parables, and philosophies, ethical and moral theories. It's



## For the global population it's a wonderful project -making the Buddha's word accessible.

the collection of so many things - 108 volumes and almost the size of encyclopedia Britannica, though printed in tight format, both sides and loose leaved.

**Q: What is unique to Bhutanese manuscripts that are different from the rest of the region?**

One of the amazing things about Bhutan is the life writing. We find that a lot of the lamas were very enthusiastic biographers. They would write their own biography or the biography of their lama, so quite a lot of historical knowledge has been retained through these biographies. Although you need to properly screen through what we call hagiographic information - hagiography is the study of saints - as these biographies might contain a lot of praise for the lama, miracles of the lama, meditation experience of the lama. But we finally get a little bit of history, perhaps a political leader the lama met. This trend is quite similar to medieval Europe. In the 18th and 19th Century, Bhutanese were very great biographers and historians - they were quite enthusiastic. Though

initially most of our literary heritage came from India, we basically follow the Tibetan way of writing namthars -religious history.

**Q: There is a huge project by Khyentse Rinpoche to translate the Kangyur to English. Do you think this will simplify the Kangyur for the Bhutanese and the world?**

We cannot expect the world population to learn the original languages, so I think for the global population it's a wonderful project making the Buddha's word accessible. For Bhutan especially, it is going to at least affect the cultural and linguistic heritage. I think people who would have had a little motivation to learn Choekay in order to learn the Buddha's word may give it up, when there is an easier way of reading the English version.

**Q: There has been a wave of renewed interest in Buddhism. Do you think that it's a compromise we have to make, rather than entirely lose the tradition of passing the Buddha lineage?**

Yes, I suppose so. You can't

stop the society from changing - we probably have to go with the change and as far as possible making the change positive and try to reduce the damage.

In the 1990s Bhutan had discovered Hollywood was following Buddhism (laughs). Richard Gere and Robert Thurman was visiting Bhutan and talking on Buddhism. It is a bit sad when we have really learned and almost enlightened lamas around us who would impart the same knowledge, in our own language, but we would rather have somebody from outside transmit that knowledge in a foreign language. Though a bit ironic, the good outcome is we are interested and want to know more about Buddhism and the Bhutanese culture. They found English was practical. I do understand how they understand it - some have truth in it, because some monastic[s] were very poor in transmitting and communicating with the younger generation. Still the irony is this lot wants to do it in a foreign language (laughs).

**Q: Let's talk about your**

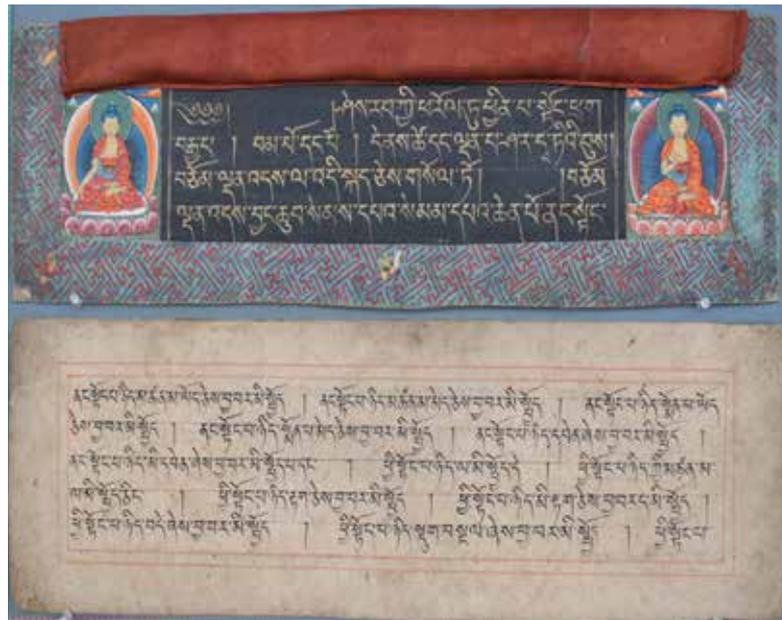


initiative with the Loden Foundation. It was a perfect example of bodhisattva philosophy being implemented. How did you do it?

You put it across rather grandly by calling it a bodhisattva initiative. Yes, the inspiration definitely comes from bodhisattva ethics and morality. It is something that I wanted to do, partly to repay the kindness to the teachers who have imparted their bodhisattva idioms to me and others. It started basically as a small token to help others get the opportunity I got. I had the luxury of exploring a diverse range of education system. So while I was at Oxford, I befriended a potter who was a large Welsh ex-policeman, and during one of our conversations he told me of how his missing education was very difficult for him and he wanted to help someone get the schooling he didn't. That was how it started- Robert sponsoring a young girl from Bumthang. After which a few other people joined and that is how Loden began.

**Q: The Loden's efforts have diversified to early learning centers. What are your reasons behind starting this program?**

We saw that one of the areas neglected outside of urban areas during that time (2004) was that rural children did not have access to pre-school education and they had to compete with



A DIGITAL COPY OF AN ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

children who were pre-schooled. So we decided to set up these centers for rural communities, and try to blend traditional upbringing with modern early child care techniques. To make sure that we nurture the traditional forms of upbringing, we try to promote sitting on the floors (of course carpeted to keep them warm), play with locally made toys and keep the duration short so that they can help and be with their parents. There is also the local upbringing process which is in fact very educational, since the main part of education comes from role modeling and if children don't learn from their elders at the critical stage, that's when the child psychology is impacted.

**Q: Another initiative of the Loden Foundation is the Loden Entrepreneurship Program. Through this you have been able to help nurture entrepreneurial dreams. Yet, there are still so many out there unemployed and unwilling to take up blue collar jobs. Do you think it's a cultural issue?**

I don't think it's a cultural issue per se. When you go to the villages, you see the Bhutanese are most enterprising. I could compare the average Bhutanese to an average Briton and say that the Bhutanese is twice more enterprising and hard working, especially the farmers and villagers who have not been to school. Our own culture is not anti-entrepreneurship or laid back. I think it's the education system - the theoretical

learning though very important, left out the more practical and personal life skills. It is mostly the young school and college graduates who are more laid back and not willing to roll up their sleeves.

**Q: Then perhaps it is a cultural issue, considering that there is lack of dignity for blue collared jobs, which our system and society perpetuates?**

Our education system has gone wrong somewhere. If we look at the farmers, who have not gone through this system and brainwashed by it, they don't have any problems rolling up their sleeves to do hard labour. They have worked on their land with dignity, and if they had more land they would be dignified farmers. Dignity

in more ways was measured by the amount of land you had. But now when you look at the younger generation who has been through [modern] the school system, that's where they have acquired a new sense of dignity and the notion of what is a respectable job. The education system sort of develops on it; when you have a child going through for good 12 to 15 years, and imagine those years swallowing things from the text books. Unless we bring them up with the respect for both blue collared and white collared jobs, after 15 years of thinking and respecting them as different, we will not be able to change the mentality. We have to gradually change it through the system. Of course, it would help if the bureaucrats and the leaders would lead by example, but I sometimes wonder how many of them actually do farming or their own gardening. It's how we look at it- we could either look at it as manual work, or a luxury to be in touch with nature.

**Q: To move to an entirely different topic- Do you think you were portrayed correctly in the movie - *The Lady*?**

Well, I must say a lot of my friends who went to see the movie called me up immediately to tell me that the guy who played me was not at all like me. He was more masculine and scarred.

**Q: Have you watched the movie yourself?**

I have, and I was rolling in my chair, I couldn't help laughing

when a well built Karma appeared. But the role was more or less accurate. He tried to once meet me, but I was not in London that time.

**Q: I believe you performed the last rites for your friend Michael Aris. How does that feel, performing the rites for a close friend?**

When you use the word 'perform', I don't know how people will react. It was a not a grand funeral ceremony that happened. But I as a very close friend and a supporter of the family and also as somebody who could be slightly more composed than the rest of the family, I had to organize things. The family members were totally shattered and I was in a slightly better position. So I basically had to put together the events with the help of Michael's secretary. We had a very unique funeral for him - it was a cremation of course - we had a Tibetan lama, a Benedictine priest, and I, who chanted prayers for Michael. So it was a funeral I performed in that sense, not in the traditional sort of way.

**Q: Was it heart breaking for you to see a man estranged from his wife, the Burmese leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi, on his death bed?**

Well I have seen far greater unfairness in my life. I have lived with the Tibetans in India- I actually ran a nunnery for two years, and most of the nuns were political prisoners who had been tortured.

But of course, it was heartbreaking for Michael, who was not only knowledgeable but cultured and sensitive. He was very helpful to me - he was more or less my local guardian. For him to be separated

from his wife and not allowed to go to Burma was devastating. As soon as he was diagnosed with cancer, he said: "Karma we are going to Burma." But, the visa never came through. So it was heartbreaking in that sense that a remarkable man who was so devoted to his wife and her cause, be destroyed by a disease. It was a very rapid decline - he was walking fairly well in January, in February and March he needed a walking stick, and then he was bed-ridden - it was so fast. It was partly because he went through so much stress - for his children, his wife, and his work which sped the cancer.

But what I felt sad about is that for a highly educated person, who had access to so many lamas and books, he was not spiritually prepared for death. One can imagine how a person like Michael could be prepared - he was a cynical academic to begin with, he had two boys to bring up, and his wife's cause - he wouldn't have thought of dying, but rather what to do next. So I sort of understand that he was not prepared. It was sad especially when the ability and lack of internal composure and wisdom to deal with the stress, anxiety and emotions that was churning inside him. It is much easier to deal with other people, perhaps, but very difficult to deal with your own emotions when they run wild.

**Q: You were near him till the end. What kind of comfort were you able to provide Michael at his death bed?**

I suppose as a Buddhist monk then, I was of more comfort to him by his side than the others

because I knew what to do and say, and also because we had a lot in common to talk about - I was a Buddhist scholar and he was a Bhutanese historian and we had so many people we knew in Bhutan. I think that helped.

**Q: Can you describe how Suu Kyi's mental state was, towards the end of Michael's life?**

I wouldn't know for sure, because I only had one phone conversation and few letter exchanges with her. On that one phone call, the time when I had to break the news to her that we are losing Michael, she sounded very desperate at the other end saying: "Karma there must be something we can do, there must be." They hadn't seen each other for some time. But one couldn't help admiring Suu more by knowing this story, because she sacrificed her personal happiness and welfare for her people and democracy is outstanding and probably incomparable. There are very few people, Mandela perhaps, who gave up what they already had for the sake of a greater cause.

**Q: Do you still keep in touch with Aung Sang Suu Kyi?**

We have never been in constant touch. It was around Michael's death we were closest. After his death, she again went through a long spell of house arrest. It was difficult to get in touch with her.

**Q: Owing to your popularity, you have been able to find support in celebrities like Joanna Lumley, the Dalai Lama and our His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck- what brings such**

**luminaries together for a cause?**

Not quite sure about my popularity (laughs). Among the three, I would say they are all driven by kindness. I have known our king as The Crown Prince in Oxford, and one of the things that stood out was that he was very kind, gentle and highly compassionate. Of course, the Dalai Lama is well known for his approach bringing compassion into real life. And Joanna Lumley, she is among the British celebrity who is most engaged in charity work and that probably means kindness and compassion. So, these three certainly share a sense of compassion and kindness.

**Q: Has it been difficult to find the spirit of volunteerism in Bhutan?**

As a cultural scholar, investigating the Bhutanese cultural transition - there are two different worlds we are talking about. Look at our traditional world, which had a great deal of social volunteerism. When I was young, houses would be built through voluntary labour. If my family built a house, the rest of the village would come to help. If our neighbour built [one], then all of us would go and help out. All we had to do is feed the people; the volunteers. Now it's difficult to find voluntary labour even in villages. There is a serious disintegration of community happening all across Bhutan. And I think it's partly because of the economic boom - or the supposed economic boom - that probably created the cash labour and the gradual detachment from the community. It's tragic that with this community spirit break down, a lot of cultural heritage is lost.

But religious volunteerism is still alive and healthy and also deeply



**It was after Michael's death we were closest. But, after his death, she (Aung Sang Suu Kyi) again went through a long spell of house arrest.**

ingrained in our culture. You build a chorten or a temple, many people will volunteer labour. If we want to paint the Changangkha lhakhang turret in gold, many rich people will contribute.

But helping somebody go to school is something very new. Such things didn't exist in the past and it's a new culture to provide scholarships or help somebody with medical bills, etc. This is something Bhutanese will have to learn slowly and we are learning. We are trying very hard to inculcate this new spirit of volunteerism even with the Loden programs.

**Q: What are your future plans with the Loden Foundation?**

We are looking more toward the corporate sector to garner their social responsibility and make it mu-

tually beneficial. Now that our private sector is growing, it is necessary that we promote a more ethical and far more responsible business model. We don't want to go the same route taken by the west to end up with economic recession and ecological degradation. What we want to do is make the idea of ethical business a common thing - it's always a matter of habituation and we need to make it a popular culture that rubs on so people believe in it. It would be great to have the Bhutanese wanting to do business only with ethical business houses, which will in turn change the CSR policy of the business houses.

One of the challenges is bringing Buddhist values into business, and more Bhutanese are going to face it. Spirituality and religion are part and parcel of our own daily lives. Your business should be your religion in a way - you are doing it properly and it should lead you to enlightenment as much as you sitting in a meditation cave. That is one artificial dichotomy we have whereas we should merge the secular and religious lives so that a businessman can feel quite at home inside running an ethical business and thinking he is doing good for the society and also accruing good karma.

**Q: Since you have achieved a great deal, what are your plans for the future?**

It would be to complement



textual heritage with the oral heritage. Our heritage has largely been oral. But things are developing quite fast and the only sad part is how much are we losing in this course of development, especially in respect to culture? We have gone straight from oral to audio visual society and skipped the literary phase. That's why we probably have very poor reading culture.

But seriously, in order to get a holistic picture on our past we cannot completely rely on the books. We have to also listen to the folk stories and local narrative that ordinary villagers

tell, learnt and passed down by memory. We are probably the last generation the oral culture has touched. There is so much being lost - for example, no one makes mustard oil anymore, because we can easily buy vegetable oil. Such local knowledge is slowly dying and this is the kind of thing I want to do - record this whole process. It is a five year project if it comes through. 🐦

# Recalling 2012

It was a roller-coaster of a year. It had its own swing, a mix of highs and lows. The water male dragon year considered auspicious for starting new ventures, marriage and bearing dragon babies is drawing to a close.

The whole nation is pulsating with excitement as elections are due next year; and 2012 could not have ended on a more exciting note. The Raven looks back in nostalgia through a stack of

moments and memories that defined the eventful year. In the beginning of 2012, a long running controversy was laid to rest. The state funding saga that hogged the limelight for the last four years came to an end. Even after lengthy deliberations that went back and forth, the two houses of Parliament couldn't reach a consensus. The bone of contention was the issue of constitutionality of state funding for political parties. The winter parliament session in January withdrew state funding for political parties.

During the same session, the controversial Tobacco Control Act was amended and a lot of its provisions were relaxed. This Act in particular invited fierce resistance from certain quarters of Bhutanese society and considerable attention from the international media. A group of concerned citizens started a Facebook movement followed by a signature campaign to amend the law, which they claimed was ridiculously draconian and one that infringed on civil rights. On the political front, the National Assembly Speaker's decision to quit politics caused quite a ripple. Rumourmongers had a feast. The Anti-Corruption Commission has levelled criminal charges in the Mongar district court against the Speaker and the Home Minister for their involvement in the Gyelpoizhing land allotment case during their terms as Mongar Dzongda.

The Gyelpoizhing case, dug out by the media, stirred discussions

both in mainstream and social media. Other media investigations like the Bhutan Lottery case generated equally heated public debate, as did the Denchi land compensation issue and the Trowa theatre case.

The country's mainstream media itself took a rough tumble. The government's advertisement policy, particularly the ECB's notification to provide advertisement only to three state-owned media houses, upset most of the private media firms. This decision was later revoked. And it did not help the government's credibility when a confidential memo from the information and communications minister barring the bi-weekly, *The Bhutanese*, from receiving government advertisements, was leaked. The minister struggled, with characteristic bravado and clumsiness, to explain that one.

In the run up to the 2013 parliamentary elections, four new aspiring political parties declared their intent to contest. The Bhutan Kuen-Ngyam Party and the Druk Chirwang Tshogpa have already applied for registration with the Election Commission of Bhutan while the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa will do so in a few months' time. The Druk Mitser Tshogpa, however, dissolved into a youth political lobby group. The new parties are grappling with finding credible leadership and candidates. The "headhunt" is in full swing.

Meanwhile, the economic climate grew brutally grim. The country's economy still tosses and turns as it rides out a tsunami of difficulties. The rupee crunch brought to light our economic vulnerability.





The government hit the panic button. As immediate measures, imports were curbed, taxes were raised and financial institutions cut back severely on lending. Such drastic moves affected most businesses, small and big. The most hurt were the construction industry and car dealers. The central bank had to sell foreign currency reserves to meet the increasing rupee demand. All the while, the country's debt has been on the rise and inflation peaked to an all time high in the second quarter of 2012.

A typical case of a good intention gone bad, the government's decision to introduce Pedestrian Day on Tuesday earned the ire of many Bhutanese. This issue generated as much hype as disdain. Eventually, when criticism reached intolerable heights, the government gave in, doing away with the pedestrian day on Tuesday. It was shifted to the first Sunday of every month.

The Prime Minister's meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at the sidelines of the Rio Summit ruffled a few feathers, both in the Indian subcontinent and back at home. It was followed by listless conspiracy theories written by India-Bhutan watchers and foreign policy experts.

The 20th round of Bhutan-China border talks took place in Thimphu. The two countries agreed to solve the issue at the earliest "in the interest" of both nations.

One of the biggest achievements in 2012 was undoubtedly the United Nations' endorsement of the happiness resolution. In its wake, the country was hurled into the world centerstage. However, Bhutan's bid to claim a rotational

## The minister struggled, with characteristic bravado and clumsiness, to explain that one.

non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council did not receive the same approval. Bhutan lost to South Korea.

Following this unsuccessful bid, the opposition leader questioned the government's foreign policy priorities and demanded that the government reveal the expenses incurred during the campaign.

The Prime Minister, in response, called the opposition leader an unpatriotic and disloyal citizen, fuelling a war of words between the government and the opposition party.

On a happier note, the Tourism Council of Bhutan won us a certificate from the Wanderlust Travel Magazine as a top country destination. Magazine readers voted Bhutan as their favourite travel destination after Japan. Bhutan scored 96.27 percent, only 0.6 percent short of Japan's score.

We bid farewell to bitter-sweet 2012. But with elections, political campaigning, and all that jazz, 2013 will surely turn out to be a wonderful rollercoaster ride. Brace up! 🐦

By Tshering Dorji

### MOST DISCUSSED NEWS IN OCT

# 150

Of the 3,500 tigers in the world, 150 call Bhutan their home.



# 686

After the Oriental Bay Owl was spotted in Bhutan, the number of Bird species found in Bhutan has shot up to 686.



# 56

Nu 56 fetched the same amount of goods and services in 2003, as Nu 100 fetches today.



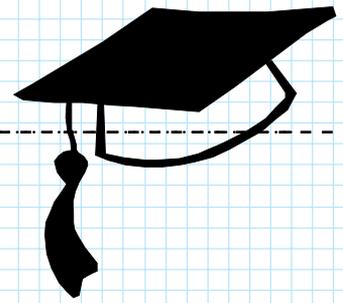
# 25

Local government posts still remain vacant, despite three rounds of local government elections.



### **Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck by Dhondup Roder**

Trained as a Graphics Designer, Dhondup believes beauty can be playful. His work attempts to find a balance between minimalist elegance and the visually quirky. He works as a freelance Graphics Designer in Thimphu.



### UNSC Elections

Bhutan lost the UN Security Council seat after garnering just 20 votes out of 192 votes cast.



### Bhutan Kuen-Ngyam Party

BKNP may have been the last to declare itself as a political party but it was the first to register with the Election Commission of Bhutan..



**S**tudents enrolling into the Continue Education program in Sherubtse college has increased from three in 2007 to 30 currently. According to College authorities, the continuing education students perform better both in academic and co-curricular activities.



### Domestic Flight

The inaugural flight to Gelephug Domestic Airport has been a success, in that this route is the third network in the domestic aviation.



### Amochhu Project

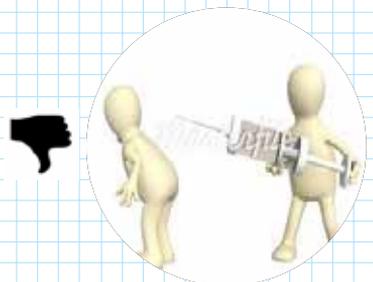
The Amochhu Project dam will be fed by two rivers whose back-water will submerge 12 villages in Samtse and 21 in Chukha.



**P**rice of doma shot up by 32 percent compared with last year.



**A**s the inflation rate in Bhutan has decreased from 13.5 in the second quarter to 11.17 in the third quarter, the price of good and services has decreased by 2.36%, according to the consumer price index.



### The Strict Disciplinarian

Tshokey, a Dzongkha teacher of Budhashi community school in Goshing, Zhemgang allegedly injected students with a raw and unsterilized syringe as punishment.



### Tshewang Tashi

Tshewang Tashi is the first woman civil servant to join politics this year. She will contest from the Bhutan Kuen- Ngyam party.



**T**he water level of the Thorthomi glacial lake has been lowered by five meters last month. The lake is considered a potential threat downstreams.



**B**hutan's rupee debt stands at Ngultrum 45 billion (71% on hydropower and 28% on short term liabilities).

## LAST WORD

**A**round this time, in preparation for the annual *choku* at home, my uncle comes over to make *sikam* for the family. The block of meat would be left out in the cold the night before so that it gets chilled enough without totally freezing over. The next morning, he lays out a mat and takes out his special *dozom* with a flourish, which he inspects by running his thumb the entire length. As he zeros the tip of his *dozom* to tentatively mark the thickness for the strip on the pork hide, he is like an artist slowly driving his knife through hide, lard and meat. My uncle is an excellent *sikam* slicer.

I have always been fascinated with what our hands can do when the mind and heart have our back. My uncle is as good at traditional painting as he is at slicing meat. He is also good at shaping chopping blocks. He is a simple and ordinary man, but he seems to find inspiration from the mundane things that surrounds us. The joy of really giving the best is what gets him revved up, as most should. It really isn't about the task as long as it's done well; it becomes the measure of a person and what he/she deems "important". Yet, here we are trying hard to inculcate dedication, determination and dignity back into the fabrics of our very own society, which is ironic especially when it is evident our forefathers put their back (read literally) for their future, of which we are lucky to benefit from. An agrarian society actually alludes to our ancestors who had to have a "hands on" attitude about living.

Putting the "blue back in our non-existent collar" may be difficult when the mind has been aggressively reset from the time we joined school. The bourgeois in modern education have managed to change a "hands on" attitude to slowly but surely a "hand it over" attitude.

This November brought two events in Thimphu, which is symptomatic to each other in a sense; the Global Entrepreneurship Week was a campaign to recognize entrepreneurial practices and provide a forum for policy makers and speakers to promote a "culture of innovation". The other event was the celebration of the World Diabetes Day, where citizens rallied against unhealthy lifestyles and took to testing their blood sugar level.

To point out the obvious, Bhutan is suffering from two lifestyle diseases.

Unemployment, in Bhutan, is begotten by avoiding to "roll up the sleeves".

Diabetes stems from ignoring a life of discipline and determination. It is not so much what can be avoided but what can be done with it. A proper "rewiring" of attitude is what it will take to begin the mend. Maybe it's wishful thinking, but if we do that, we may probably be on our way to saying goodbye to these maladies that cripple our society. In the words of Bruce Lee, "knowing is not enough we must apply, willing is not enough we must do." And the question we need to ask is do we have the fire to work up a storm? 

**Karma Choden**

(Managing Editor)