

CAN & SHOULD BHUTAN
BE FOOD-SUFFICIENT?

BEING PRESENT IN
THE MOMENT

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TO FLY HIGH,
STAY GROUNDED

p.10

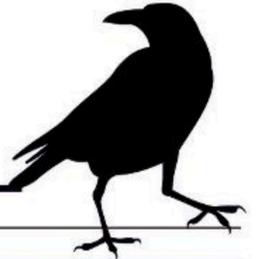
LIVING WITH
ADDICTION

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The Raven

Your
Monthly
Guardian



**PLATFORM TO THE FUTURE
OR ROAD TO NOWHERE?**





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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir/Madam,

I've just got hold of your third issue. And I must say that the overall design looks good, and the articles provide different views to various issues.

My best wishes to the team.

Gyeltshen, Mongar.

I have always liked the Photo essay section in *The Raven*. As photographs too can tell compelling stories, I would like to know if you can increase the number of pages in that section.

Also, I must comment that apart from the photo essay pictures, the photographs used in the articles were not of good quality. I am sure you will change that.

Ugyen Penjor, Paro.

Interesting articles. It is good to see that the magazine is trying to provide a nice variety to the readers by carrying articles by writers from diverse backgrounds. Good work.

Ngawang Dorji, Thimphu.

Most of the stories in your past issues were opinions of the writers. It would be nice to see stories that have interviews and are relevant to the readers rather than reading what the writer has to say about the subject.

Kinley Namgay, Thimphu.

Tshering Dorji's article *Five years on: a review of the ruling party* was very well done. It was unbiased and summed up the DPT government's term rather honestly. Well done.

Tashi Gyaltshen, Thimphu.

Most media houses are looking at other alternatives to sustain themselves. And in the process, their content is being hampered. However, in that midst, it is heartening to see *The Raven* striving to bring out good issues each month. And with each issue, the quality of the magazine is getting better.

Tobgay Wangchuk.



KUZUZANGPO!

As February rolls in, I'm wondering how many of us who made New Years resolutions have forgotten them already. Habits get the better of us, and so even though resolutions and commitments are made, many of us will find little change in ourselves by the end of the year. What we need is a conscientious effort to break out of undesirable habits and the only way, it has been advised, is by "being in the moment." We have a wonderful piece on this by Lama Shenphen, someone who is quietly admired by many in Thimphu for living the life that we would like to emulate. I have still not met Lama Shenphen, but my visits and chats with addicts and patients at the psychiatric ward in Thimphu have revealed the enormous impact he has had on some of their lives. They have nothing but praise for him. He has made a difference.

Thimphu can be a tough place for adolescents and young people. Alcoholism and substance abuse are now tired and sorry subjects that have been re-hashed by the Bhutanese media who has tried to bring about some change in this social issue. But little has improved. The danger of saying too much on this subject is that it can result in bans or mishandling of the problem by the government, which could only exacerbate it. We have seen this happen with cigarettes. A few years ago I had the opportunity to meet with an official from the Army Welfare Project (AWP) in Gelephu. I told him that as a social activist I had nothing personal against AWP, but that as one of the largest income grossing companies in Bhutan, AWP could and should take some responsibility in Bhutan's problem with alcoholism by using some of its revenue in educating and even building rehabilitation centers. It is an individual choice we make – to drink, to eat, to chew whatever – but if these substances are made widely available, especially to a society that is socially linked with alcohol, then it is hard to blame the people alone. It is, therefore, welcome news that AWP is now initiating programs to educate consumers on the dangers of alcohol consumption. The next step for them is to further engage by hiring experts to go around the schools to counsel school children. More importantly, they should contribute money to rehabilitation centers or even set up one in each district. If anything, the AWP owes that to Bhutanese society.

February is also the month when children go back to school. This is a great time for parents to sit down with their children and talk to them about many issues. Children should know that should they confront a social situation or an emotional problem, they have someone to turn to for guidance. School is fun, but it can also be stressful on a young mind. So take time to listen to your children's concerns before they head off to another academic year, it will help you understand some of their concerns and anxieties; things you never even think about because they haven't told you. Wishing parents, teachers and students a great academic year. Make it a meaningful one.

Last, but not least, we at The Raven would like to wish His Majesty the King of Bhutan a very Happy Birthday as he turns 33 on February 21.

Sonam Ongmo
Editor-at-Large



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WRITE TO US



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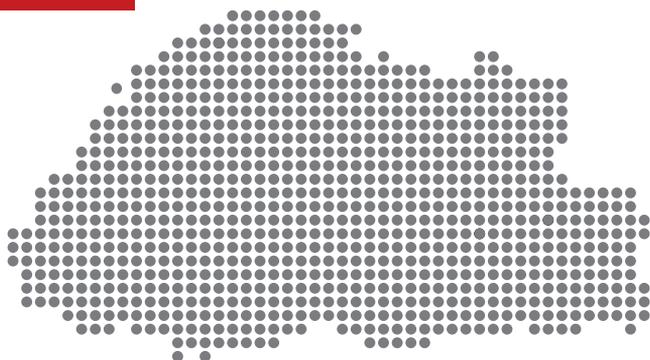


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JAN



TRASHIGANG

New air route underway

If possible, air services from Yonphula, Trashigang, to Guwahati in Assam, India will be opened by next year. This was highlighted by the government to a gathering of civil servants, corporate employees and people from the business community in Trashigang dzongkhag.

GELEPHU

Bird flu reported

More than 396 birds of 46 households were culled in Namkhaling village, Gelephu, following an outbreak of a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5NI in the locality. The outbreak was first reported in the police colony on January 14.

TRASHIYANGTSE

Another elephant tusk burgled

Yet another elephant tusk and a necklace of counterfeit dzee (cats' eye) were burgled from Risum Goenpa in Trashiyangtse on the night of January 17. This is the 14th elephant tusk that's reported to have been robbed from eight lhakhangs in the country to date.

HAA

Passanger bus razed in flames

The 22-seater bus was plying to Phuentsholing from Haa when its dashboard caught fire near the Jumja-Tala junction, about 1.5km from Gedu town. All 19 passengers on board were evacuated unhurt and no casualties were reported.

LAMPELRI

Royal Bengal tiger spotted in Lamperi

The presence of a royal Bengal tiger in Lamperi botanical park was confirmed recently. This confirmation has come a couple of years after a cow herder had complained of losing his cattle to the predator. Royal botanical park officials confirmed its presence, after they found the video that had captured the tiger about two years ago at Thadana in Lamperi, at an altitude of 3,900m.

THIMPHU

DNT ensures equal shares

Through its 'Mitsers Thoblam Chathrim' or the 'Citizens' Dividend Act' the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) promises to ensure equal shares in the minerals and other natural resources after its registration with the ECB. According to DNT officials, the clause is inspired by Article 1, Section 12 of the constitution that states "the sovereign power belongs to the people of Bhutan".

MERAK

Road over tourism

The farm roads that were left half way to Merak and Sakteng will now be stretched until the gewog offices in the 11th Five Year Plan. This step, according to officials, was taken because the locals expressed that farm roads would benefit them much more than tourism ever did.

The Raven



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quotes



I ask you to have confidence in our education system. I am a proud product of Bhutanese schools.

Neither the government nor the Royal Monetary Authority has frozen loans, it's just that our banks are out of money.



There's a solid foundation for this relation as mutuality of interest. And the relations are very warm and friendly, so it's something I would seek to build on.

As a speaker and legislator, we make laws, and I know our laws, just as I know the legal precedent this case is setting.



There is no room for money power or muscle power in a small country like ours.



HIS MAJESTY THE KING
in His address to teachers at the RUB convocation in Paro.



PRIME MINISTER JIGMI Y. THINLEY
in a meeting with the people of Wamrong.



INDIAN AMBASSADOR V.P. HARAN
on Indo- Bhutan relations.



TSHOGPON JIGME TSHULTRIM
on the Gyalpoishing case.



CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER, DASHO KUNZANG WANGDI



On politics
Average height of PDP supporters has decreased by two inches in the last four years because of consistent hammering by the government.
Jigsnews via twitter.

On the new parties
Gettin registered with ECB was the easy part and hardly the reason for the kind of jubilation we see around as though the elections itself had been won.
-kencho wangdi via twitter.

On 2013 elections
This election is not about the parties. It is about us. It is about our children. It is about our future.
Lekey Dorji via twitter.

On Inflation
A water boiler that cost Nu. 900 last year now costs Nu. 1750. What has happened?
Drukileaks via twitter.

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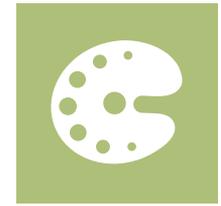
MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

highlights

KEY • Date • Time • Place • Venue

FESTIVAL

PUNAKHA DOMCHOE

- FEB 15 -19
- PUNUKHA

Punakha Dromchoe is an annual festival introduced by Zhabdrung to commemorate the victories over the Tibetans. During the festival, the *pazaps* dressed in battle gear to relive the scenes of the 16th century.

TAKIN FESTIVAL

- FEB 21-23
- GASA

The Takin Festival is held every year to showcase Bhutan's rich natural heritage, raise awareness on conservation of biodiversity, and provide off-season ecotourism opportunities to the tourism sector.

4TH NOMADS' FESTIVAL

- FEB 22-23
- CHHOKHORTOE, BUMTHANG

Organized by the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, the festival will showcase Bhutanese exhibitions. The highlight of the festival is the yak show.

MOVIE

SONAM & SONAM

- FEB
- CITY CINEMA

Sonam & Sonam, a movie by Tshering Wangyel, will be playing next at the City Cinema, City Mall, Thimphu.

CONFERENCE

PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN ASIA

- FEB 15-18
- THIMPHU

The Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs will be organizing the Protection of Cultural Property in Asia Conference in partnership with INTERPOL.



TO FLY HIGH, STAY GROUNDED

The introduction of domestic flights has been a messy affair. MITRA RAJ revisits the potholes and bumps in the road, and proposes that what goes up does not always have to come down.

Domestic air services were introduced grandly on National Day 2011. A few months later, both airlines had to shutdown, the consequence of a rushed project and bad decision-making.

Heavy financial losses grounded Tashi Air.

Druk Air, also enduring heavy losses, discovered that the government had been in too much of a rush to get the airports in Bumthang and Tashigang ready for a National Day launch. It had left out a crucial final layer on one runway and repaired only half of the other runway. The cracks and potholes on both runways gave Druk Air enough reason – and rightly so – to call off its domestic services.

Only very recently has the government completed resurfacing and repairing of both runways. Druk Air has now resumed flying to Bumthang and Tashigang. Tashi Air has been granted time until October this year.

With the envisioned tourist demand not materializing, the government is now encouraging its more than 12,000 civil servants, who fall in the category

of P5 and above, to fly when travelling to Bumthang and Tashigang as well as to Sarpang, where another domestic airport was recently constructed.

The government reckons this measure will create the demand, while decreasing its own expenditure, on fuel and travel allowances. Obviously, not all civil servants are thrilled about that. In fact, many of them may try *not* to utilize domestic services.

Lyonpo Nandalal Rai had told the media, that his ministry, while summing up the travel, mileage and daily allowances of civil servants, had come to the conclusion that flying was cheaper than traveling by road.

“Besides, travel cost, we’re saving on the human resource output,” he said. “People can go to these dzongkhags, reach within hours, get their work done and return earlier to resume work here.”

Most civil servants, however, see it differently.

“It just means we’ll not be claiming any more mileage, and travel and daily allowance stretched over many days,” said one, without realizing how

it reflects on the mentality of civil servants - looking for ways to claim money despite the inefficiency of road travel.

As many a media report has suggested, the initial failing of domestic services is all down to poor government functioning.

For one, the financial sustainability problem can easily be attributed to the government choosing two instead of one airline to operate. The request for proposals for domestic services, even a second revised one, never mentioned that two companies would eventually be chosen. Almost all involved, some senior government officials included, were surprised when the cabinet licensed both Druk Air and Tashi Air.

The government reasoned that Druk Air was always eligible to operate domestic services because of its incorporation act. A cabinet press release explicitly said that Druk Air need not actually bid for domestic services in the first place and pointed out that having two airlines avoided a monopoly.

The latter point was a highly perplexing explanation as just a few months earlier, the



government seemed adamant to not let Druk Air enter domestic services. It had argued then, albeit weakly, that domestic service would burden Druk Air and cause its international service to deteriorate. Despite Tashi Air's pleas that the market was not big enough for two, the government stuck to its decision.

After repeated delays and

ambitious deadlines not being met, domestic services were finally introduced more than a year behind schedule on December 17, 2011.

Then the price of air tickets to fly domestic services turned out to be too expensive for the common people, even though there was no monopoly. Druk Air charged \$ 170 one way to

Bumthang, which was \$ 80 less than Tashi Air, yet public feedback was that domestic air travel was as expensive as flying international and so was unaffordable.

One month into domestic services, both airlines were running at a loss. Six months later, the rupee shortage further exacerbated the problem and



so loans from the financial institutions were stopped. Tashi Air found itself in a black hole.

Without profits or loans, Tashi Air pleaded to be exempted from domestic services until its international service made a profit. The government relented and Tashi Air sold its small plane so that it could get enough money to lease a bigger one for international services.

Obviously, Druk Air and the other bidding companies would have viewed this exemption from domestic services as a variance from the requirements of the request for proposals and the contract that has been signed.

That same month, Druk Air pulled out of the Tashigang sector. Its officials said it was not safe as the runway was developing cracks and small potholes. Less

**TASHI AIR,
I HEADED FOR
YONPHULA FROM
PARO**



than a month later, Druk Air stopped flying to Bumthang too, again quoting safety reasons. The runway there too was beginning to see pot-holes.

The reasons for the runways having problems so soon were their premature opening, lack of budget and Druk Air's use of a plane heavier than the runways could handle.

Media reports on the issue



IN THE CASE OF THE BUMTHANG AIRSTRIP, A FINAL LAYER HAD ACTUALLY BEEN LEFT OUT BEFORE BEING DECLARED OPEN. THIS WAS AGAIN A RESULT OF INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.

revealed a blame game between Druk Air and civil aviation authorities. Druk Air said the runways were unsafe while civil aviation said the runways could still be used as long as they were inspected and cleaned daily.

Even if the runways were safe, what was confusing was why the runways deteriorated so soon. Media reports also revealed that repairs on the Yonphula

airstrip runway had not covered the full length of the runway prior to launching of domestic services. Government officials openly declared this was because funds had dried up.

In the case of the Bumthang airstrip, a final layer had actually been left out before being declared open. This was again a result of insufficient funds.

If Tashi Air alone had been

chosen, the problems with the runways may never have surfaced as it was using a much smaller plane than Druk Air.

Druk Air's larger plane was allowed to carry only half of its capacity so it could have caused the runways to disintegrate only because the runways were not totally completed in the first place.

Whether the cabinet placed pressure on civil aviation to complete the airports quickly and clear Druk Air's heavier aircraft for unfinished and therefore unsuitable airstrips is an issue that needs review.

More pertinently, the issue brings to light the need for civil aviation to become an independent and strong organization immune to any outside interference with complete adherence to international norms of aviation safety and standards.



A third airstrip opened in Sarpang recently. At first, the government envisioned Sarpang becoming a major international airport but Indian government concerns on Bagdogra and Guwahati becoming overshadowed, caused it to be downgraded to a domestic one.

Whether there is enough reason for tourists to visit Sarpang by air is a question that remains unanswered. Businesspeople there say that the coming of an airport has not given their businesses any boost.

“The airport may serve useful only if you have to transfer a serious patient to the hospital in Thimphu. Otherwise, for heoteliers like me, we hardly see any tourists or for that matter even people traveling by air to Gelephu,” said the proprietor of Hotel South Druk in Gelephu town.

What people do know is that the airport is in a sensitive security zone so the safety of planes and passengers is an issue. Once again, whether the airstrip is ahead of its time or not, only time will tell.

While the introduction of

domestic services may have been rushed or has failed, it is in the country’s best interest that this endeavor now succeeds. The benefits are obvious: faster travel times, faster public services delivery if government officials use it, and economic benefits to businesses in the dzongkhags if more tourists use it. But what must not recur is continued decision that contradicts logic merely for the sake of meeting deadlines and promises.



↑
**THE YONPHULA
AIRSTRI
GENERATES
CURIOSITY**



WOODLAND

EXPLORE MORE

Being present in the Moment - Haiku...

By SHENPHEN ZANGPO



Generally, we are distracted and never experience life in its fresh and raw state. We drive to work thinking about the meeting we attended the day before. We drink coffee lost in thoughts about next year's vacation. It is as if we spend our entire lives being mentally in some other place. This state of mind causes us to be dissatisfied with the present moment. As a result, our lives are often dull and tedious.

Instead of covering our experiences with layers of hopes for the future and regrets for the past, we could instead embrace the vibrancy and unpredictability of the moment. Take spending time with our friends as an example. We enjoy the experience, but then destroy it by hoping that the time will never end and fearing that it will.

This attitude creates a sense of anxiety and dissatisfaction, and so we seek escapes through meetings, workshops, relationships and shopping. But even these interactions are ruined by our inability to live in the moment. Instead of acting as a means to open us to new and exciting possibilities, we again shroud them in hopes and fears. Soon they become part of the monotonous routine that we are desperate to avoid. We are caught in an insatiable cycle of craving.

When we are unable to stay in the present moment and find joy in everyday activities, we are often depressed and lack a sense of worth. Then if distractions such as relationships or workshops do not arise, we disappear into dark snooker halls or glitzy bars. Nights are lost to drugs and alcohol, but the inner emptiness remains.

Instead of smothering our experiences with hopes and fears, we could instead choose to touch life deeply at each moment of the day. Without judgement and manipulation, we embrace all situations and accept every experience as equally part of the journey of life. When we do this, we begin to live in a direct, fresh and vibrant way. Experiences are no longer coloured by regrets for the past and hopes for the future, nor do we divide them into good and bad. Instead, we see things in their natural and raw state – refreshing and untainted – free of fear, anger, desire or attachments. In this state of mind, we fully experience the coolness of the breeze, the wetness of the rain and the heat of the sun. Likewise, we are as happy working in a hotel kitchen as we are being a guest. We find satisfaction living in a penthouse in Taipei or sleeping on the streets of Dhaka. We are truly alive!

There are many methods for helping us to live fully in the moment, such as watching our breath or being aware of our actions. The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh invites his students to experience the vibrancy of the moment through an orange-eating meditation. Rather than scoffing down the fruit while their thoughts are

elsewhere, students are taught to be fully aware of each action – the sensation of removing the peel, the fragrance of the ripe flesh and finally the pungent taste of the fruit. Each action is a goal within itself. A method popular with monks and samurai warriors in ancient Japan was the practice of writing haiku – a form of poetry closely associated with Zen Buddhism.

To create an authentic and vibrant haiku, the mind needs to be still. This is the essence of the practice. When our minds are undisturbed by thoughts of past or future, we touch the present moment. Our prejudices are calmed and so we experience the natural beauty of simple and ordinary experiences. In reality, the beauty is a reflection of the splendour of our own mind free of projections.

Unlike English poetry, the words in a haiku do not have to rhyme. Instead, the emphasis is on capturing the uniqueness of everyday experiences and expressing them in three brief lines of verse. A good haiku is direct and raw, not philosophical and dry.

Here are a few examples of haiku. The first is traditional. The latter two are modern.

*Wearily
I return to my hut
The moon fills the sky*
Santoka

*Dark and faded facades
Dust settling in the streetlight glow
Kolkata sleeps soundly*
Shenphen Zangpo

*The sun
a deep red ball
fading in the dusty sky*
Sonam Palden

Next time you are walking home, slow down. Be aware of your envi-



INSTEAD OF SMOTHERING
OUR EXPERIENCES WITH
HOPES AND FEARS, WE
COULD INSTEAD CHOOSE
TO TOUCH LIFE DEEPLY AT
EACH MOMENT OF THE DAY.

ronment and non-judgementally observe your surroundings. You may notice a weed in the gutter caught in the evening sun. Perhaps the paint peeling from a building will catch your eye. Suddenly, you begin to find the beauty in the ordinary. If you have a pen and paper roughly write down your feelings in the form of a haiku – you can edit the work later. As a result of living in the present moment, you may feel a deep inner sense of contentment. You will be present in the moment. You will need nothing more. 

Shenphen Zangpo was born in Swansea, UK, but spent more than 25 years practicing and studying Buddhism in Taiwan and Japan. Currently, he works with the youth and substance abusers in Bhutan, teaching meditation and organizing drug outreach programmes.



The Pleasures of Birding in Bhutan

↓ **Plumbeous water redstart (male)**, shot in Dob Shari, Paro. This species is found in streams with higher populations of insects such as mayflies.



← **The Long-tailed shrike** favors dry open habitats and is usually found perched atop bushes. They are capable of vocal mimicry and include the calls of many species including lapwings, cuckoos, puppies and squirrels in their song. (Shot in Hontsho, Thimphu)



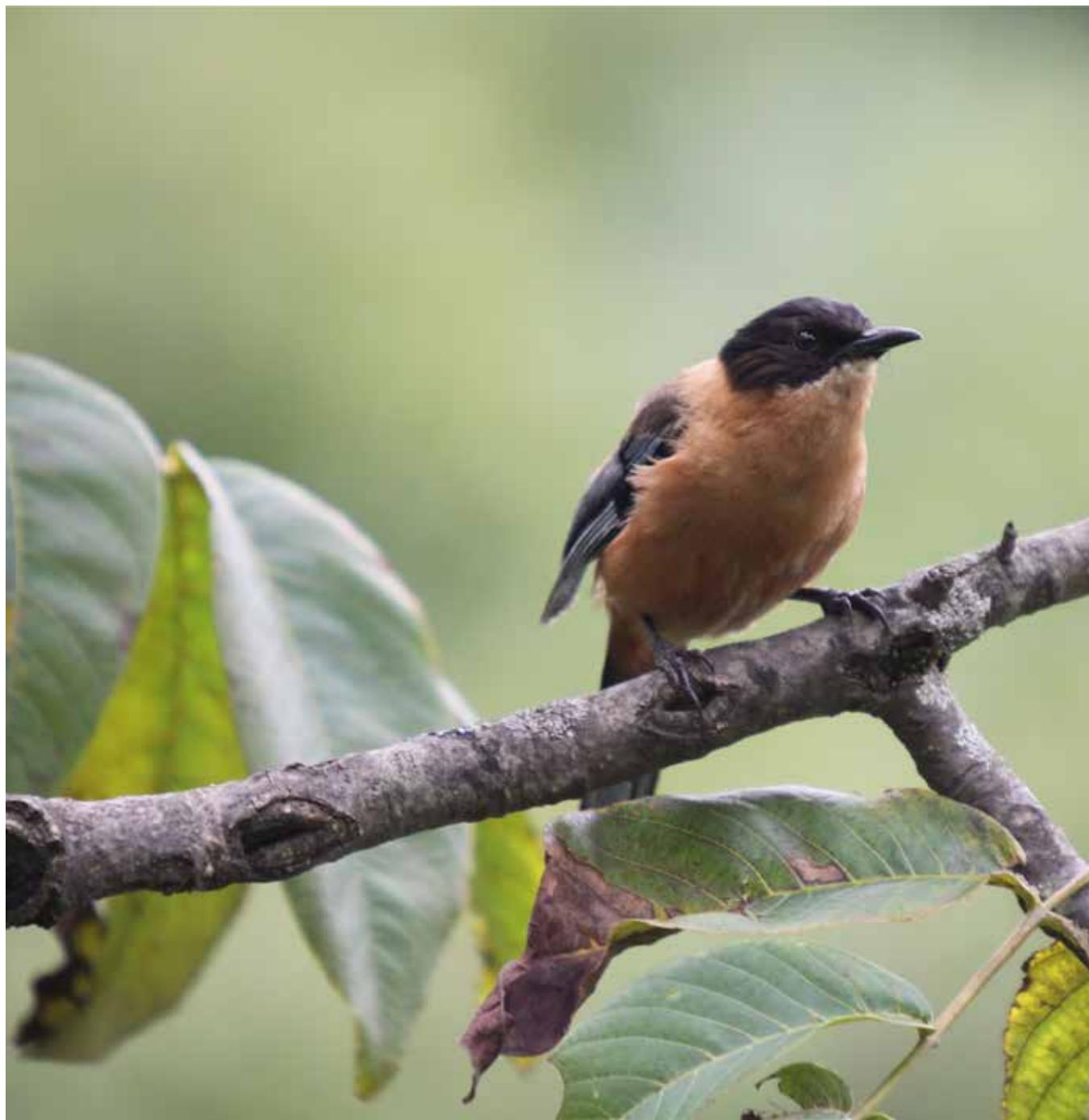
AZHA KEZA, A FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST AND TRAVEL GUIDE, SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE ABOUT SHOOTING HIS FAVORITE SUBJECT - BIRDS.

All photographers have their favorite subjects. For me, I enjoy birds. They fascinate me. Their liveliness, elusiveness, perkiness; their colors, shades and even characters never fail to enamor me. I was sneaking a shot of this bird (Plumbeous Water Redstart) by a stream in Dhob Shari, Paro. A couple of them were mating, so I sat still not wishing to intrude upon this

intimate dance that was going on. But like a spy or a voyeur I enjoyed the beauty of the naturalness of this activity. After following them for less than an hour, one of the female birds posed for me. For more than 20 minutes she posed and strutted, an un-intentional model, giving me full opportunity to shoot away to glory, while the male took cover in a bush.

Possessive and territorial, the male

bird suddenly hovered over my head and then pooped on my back. Perhaps he was mad that he had eventually lost the interest of the female to me. I was least bothered. Instead I was so absorbed in my subject, I ignored him. But his warning became clear when he perched himself on my camera lens and began making daring calls. I stopped clicking, agreed with a smile, and withdrew my camera. I couldn't but agree with





↑ **Plumbeous Water Redstart** belongs to the Muscicapidae family.

← **The Rufous Sibia** feeds on berries and insects. It is found in Bhutan, India and Nepal. (Shot in Dangdung, Trongsa)



→ **Grey Backed Shrike.** Among the shrikes, they breed at the highest altitude. They are partial migrants, with some populations moving south in winter. They breed in summer from late May to early July. The nest is built in a bush and about three to five eggs are laid.

PHOTO ESSAY



Charles Darwin's observations in "The Evolution of Species" - the sensual faculties of the birds are far more responsive than human.

Covering 38,394 sq. kilometers, Bhutan boasts 70% forest cover, which is home to more than 750 species out of the 2,900 species of birds in Asia. Bhutan is considered a birding paradise. At least 14 of these species are globally

threatened and ten fall within the restricted range. The white-bellied heron (*Ardea Insignis*) is considered critically endangered by the IUCN because of its low population status and loss of habitat. The diversity of birds in Bhutan is largely attributed to the variety of climates and habitats ranging from 95 to 7,550 meters. This is accentuated by the

migrations of hundreds of species between breeding grounds across a vast expanse of countries north of Bhutan and wintering grounds of the subcontinent of India.

Bhutan has achieved status as one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world and has an incredible range of habitat type due to extreme topography and climatic conditions ranging from sub-tropical conditions

Rufous Sibia or the  **Heterophasia capistrata** is about 21 cms in size. They are found in broadleaved & coniferous forests.



 **Plumbeous Water Redstart (female).** Their preferred habitat is fast moving streams with boulders.

in the south to Alpine conditions in the north. As one progresses north, the wildlife changes accordingly as the elevation increases This has resulted with each community being blessed with a unique assemblage of wildlife.



FACTS

The **Plumbeous Water Redstart** is a species of bird in the Muscicapidae family. It is found in Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Their preferred habitat is fast moving streams with boulders. Streams with higher populations of insects such as mayflies appear to be preferred.

The **Long-tailed Shrike** has a characteristic upright “shrike” attitude when perched on a bush, from which it glides down at an angle to take lizards, large insects, small birds and rodents. It sometimes indulges in kleptoparasitism and takes prey from other birds. It also captures flying insects in the air. They sometimes impale prey on a thorny bush after feeding just on the head or brain.

The bird’s usual calls are harsh, grating and scolding likened to the squealing of a frog caught by a snake. They are capable of vocal mimicry and include the calls of many species including lapwings, cuckoos, puppies and squirrels in their song.

The **Rufous Sibia** is a species of bird in the Timaliidae family. It feeds on berries and insects. It is found in the northern parts of the Indian Subcontinent: India, Bhutan and Nepal.



Can & Should Bhutan be Food-Sufficient?

By KUNGA T. DORJI

As a child in the 70's, Sonam remembers how village relatives came often to visit her family in Thimphu in the winter months. They came bearing sacks of red rice, dried beef, dried chillies and vegetables, and an abundance of cheese and butter.

In return, her father, who worked for the government, accommodated the relatives for two weeks during which they sold more of their rice at the Sunday vegetable market, visited the hospital and monasteries and had themselves a small vacation of sorts – a nice reprieve from the harsh summer and life on

the farms. The rice, dzow, and the other food items that the village relatives brought, saw them through the winter without her mother having to buy much from the market. This lovely inter-dependent relationship and culture between the town and farm dwelling folks seemed to benefit everyone. It was probably the way of life for many then.

It is different now. Sonam now has three children but many of the folks who came to visit her family as a child are no longer. Their children no longer live on the farms because they are now educated and no longer farm. Others, educated or not, left for

 **A PADDY FIELD
IN TSHOKANA,
TSIRANG**

better prospects. And for Sonam, there are no more relatives who come visiting the way they did, with an abundance of gifts from the farms. She realizes nostalgically that a certain way of life is, indeed, no more. Her children only know that she has to buy everything from the market, most of which is not even produced in Bhutan.

Today, agricultural land in Bhutan comprises only 7.7 percent of the total land area, and the notion of complete food self-sufficiency for Bhutanese in the future has become an impossible dream.

Nobody has believed otherwise but perhaps realizing the increasing food imports decade after decade,

the government has been warming to the idea that food self-sufficiency is necessary for strategic food security and, therefore, a worthwhile pursuit. Since the 1990's, the target for food self-sufficiency was set at 70 percent – meaning that the country should import only 30 percent of the food it consumes.

It should be noted that 70 percent target is for food grains as, symptomatic of developing countries, cereals account for 75 percent of the Bhutanese diet composition. The tenth five year plan thus proposed a great leap forward, attempting to propel Bhutan's current rice self-sufficiency of 50 percent up to 65 percent. Mission impossible, for sure.

“Possible,” says Ganesh Chhetri of the Department of Agriculture. “But it requires a lot of investment and changes in the way we do things.”

He explains that the key structural issue is to drastically enhance agricultural productivity. Most Agriculture officials admit that rice cultivation needs a boost in technology, infrastructure and commercialisation – of revolutionary proportions. If this does not happen, we will suffer food shortages and our population, where incomes are rising, will become net importers of food permanently. Prime breeding ground for food inflation and food insecurity.

“We have to invest especially in farm mechanisation and irrigation,” says Ganesh Chhetri. “If we can successfully do this even only in Samtse, Sarpang and Samdrup Jongkhar (the three largest rice growing areas) and double the output from there, we

will achieve 65 percent rice self-sufficiency.”

Irrigation is especially critical although it has not yet been explored adequately because of concerns about geological instability and lack of technical know-how. But, as Ganesh maintains, many countries link irrigation with hydropower. It's about time our hydropower-driven country did too.

Then, as suggested by McKinsey, the agriculture sector needs to breed a culture of commercialisation.

The US and European Union give massive farm subsidies — over \$150 billion — to farmers as direct income support which helps them sell internationally at 40-50 percent lower than the cost price. If Bhutan wants to meet its long-term objective of enhancing agricultural production, the government will have to start giving massive direct income subsidy/support to our farmers in the same way. It must boost rice subsidy support, which is less than one percent today, to at least 10 percent, which is the maximum actually allowed by the WTO.

Government assistance in production alone will not suffice. Assistance must stretch into processing with technological advancements such as better and bigger mills, and into organization, by creating farmers' cooperatives. And, with most local rice species, such as the *Chuzagang* Rice fetching premium prices, the government must help in branding.

Agriculturists also argue that wetlands need to be zealously protected from conversion for other purposes. “Urban encroachments into traditional wetlands



WETLANDS SUCH AS CHANG JIJI AND THE AREA WHERE THE SUPREME COURT IS BEING CONSTRUCTED WILL BE SEEN AS MISTAKES 30 YEARS FROM NOW.

such as Chang Jiji and the area where the Supreme Court is being constructed in Thimphu will be seen as mistakes 30 years from now,” says one. Another suggests we could create more wetland if farms on steep terrain were swapped for potential wetlands existing in forests. “The Constitution says we must keep 60 percent forest cover and we have 72 percent so why not use some part of the 12 percent excess we have to make more food?” he says. “Climate is changing, the middle class is growing fast, dietary habits are changing, food prices are soaring. And food self-sufficiency couldn't be more critical.”

So the road ahead for the agriculture sector, particularly in cereal production, appears arduous. There's work to be done – farm mechanisation, irrigation, commercialisation, wetland protection and expansion.

It is a road not taken, but take it we must. For only with such a large-scale overhaul of the system will rural Bhutan be motivated to break out of the prevailing

subsistence mentality and produce more for themselves and for their urban brethren. Only then will we all be reasonably food self sufficient.

What is being done to make Bhutan food secure today?

Bhutan's planners gave highest priority to agricultural development in the early years of planned development. This was because Bhutan's economy was largely agrarian. The sector snagged as much as 39 percent of the total budget outlay in the fourth plan period. This figure shrank over successive plan periods and, by the eighth plan, focus had shifted from food self sufficiency to food security. Today, the tenth plan sees the RNR sector continuing to boost food security, adopting it as one of its four policy objectives in addressing poverty alleviation and balancing regional development. As priorities go, food security has enjoyed pride of place over the last two decades, as is evident from the developments that have

taken place over this time. For one, farming systems have transformed. More and more farmers rotate crops and so see less pest or disease outbreaks. Manure, fertilisers and farm machinery are used now more than ever before. The procurement and distribution of fertilisers, seeds and seedlings and farm machinery has been privatised; and the government provides transport subsidy so that these remain affordable and their prices stay the same in all dzongkhags. Increasing investment in research has allowed the introduction of improved crop varieties.

Research and service centres have cropped up all over the country in addition to central programme centres such as the National Soil Services Centre in Semtokha and the Agriculture Machinery Centre in Paro. There are currently over 120 RNR centres and 50 agriculture extension centres across the country with extension agents specialised in production and management of crop, livestock and forestry products.

Land use and land ownership patterns have changed as well. Tseri, which was characterised by low crop yield and high environmental damage, is discouraged. The RNR sector offers incentives to convert tseri land into permanent cultivation holdings such as orchards and agro-forestry systems. Meanwhile, as land holdings continue to fragment, the landless can always enjoy their prerogative of seeking land kidu through the Welfare Office of His Majesty the King.

A lot more is being done across the RNR board today. The sector is working with the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan on crop insurance schemes to protect farmers from unpredictable wildlife and disease attacks as well as natural

disasters. One-stop-shop service centres are soon to sprout in farming communities while programmes initiated with the FAO aim to address impacts of soaring food prices. The tenth plan also hopes to see 3,000 kilometres of farm roads constructed. All this, and yet agriculture officials say Bhutan is not food secure enough. All this, and yet more begs to be done.

What are the implications of the new Economic Development Policy for food security?

And yes, more begs to be done, but how? Part of the answer may lie in the new Economic Development Policy (EDP).

Adopted in April 2010, the EDP aspires to bring about a minimum economic growth rate of nine percent annually and steer Bhutan into the ranks of middle-income nations by 2020. It is described as "a clear, stable and transparent policy framework" that outlines major economic reforms in a broad range of priority areas that include finance, foreign direct investment, tourism – and more significantly from a food security perspective – trade, health, transport and agriculture.

It recognises that agriculture is the sector that is critical for balanced and equitable development and alleviating poverty as it provides the livelihood of three quarters of the population. It stresses that the farming sector needs to be mechanised with focus on high value products such as high yielding varieties or organic vegetables, fruits, herbs, floriculture and medicinal plants; and that production of food must be made cheaper.



THE EDP DOES NOT IDENTIFY FOOD SECURITY AS A SPECIFIC GOAL. IT FAILS TO LOOK AT THE NUTRITION ASPECT OF FOOD SECURITY.



The EDP thus underlines development in areas such as irrigation, commercial farming, research, dairy, poultry, fisheries, bee-keeping, piggery, horticulture, feed and fodder, trade in food and natural resource products, organic farming, rural services, phasing out of harmful fertilisers, marketing, preservation of prime agricultural land, bio-prospecting, crop insurance, and the concept of ‘One Gewog, Three Products.’

Food security alarmists will be happy to see three specific incentives spelled out clearly by the EDP: all farm machinery shall be exempt from sales tax and

import duties; any other agricultural input shall also be exempt from sales tax and customs duty; and, while commercial farmers and processors of their products whose businesses are established between 2010 and 2015 shall enjoy an income tax holiday of 10 years, commercial farming of organic products shall get a tax holiday of 15 years.

In the final analysis, one could say that the EDP makes a strong case for food security.

However, it does not identify food security as a specific goal. It fails to look at the nutrition aspect of food security. It does not even make an explicit reference

↑
**PADDY CULTIVATION
 UNDERWAY IN THE
 WANGDUE VALLEY**

to food security.

What will a food self-sufficiency goal cost us?

Ideally, every nation should be food self-sufficient. Every nation wants to. There’s nothing quite as reassuring as knowing that you can produce all that you need. But the world we live in is not a perfect one. And for countries such as ours, every day brings us face to face with the reality that total self-sufficiency in food is just not possible. Nor is the pursuit of such a goal desirable, for it would entail a host of economic, environmental and social costs.

ARTICLE

An MOAF research analysing the findings of the 2007 Bhutan Living Standards Survey points to that very conclusion, surmising that “encouraging household food self-sufficiency is not a useful strategy for achieving food security or reducing poverty.”

The research suggests that the economic costs of a food self-sufficiency goal will be particularly heavy. Achieving rice self-sufficiency, for example, would require

a 150 percent tariff rate. By limiting rice imports, the tariff would raise the prices of both local and imported rice threefold. Of course, rice farmers would gain immensely, as much as Nu 2.3 billion annually. But rice consumers, who form the majority of the population, would lose Nu 3.7 billion as the higher rice prices would reduce their purchasing power.

People must eat. In order to

eat, food must be affordable. Question is, how can the food we produce be made affordable when the food we can import from India is always cheaper? The answer: government subsidies. But, using the logic of the research quoted above, subsidisation of all food products on such a scale would prove rather expensive and unsustainable, especially for a government as cash-strapped as ours.

A food self-sufficiency goal would also mean that all agricultural land



would need to be 'protected' zealously. Urban towns like Thimphu and Paro were all rich rice-growing areas but the cost of urbanisation has cost us. To prevent further damage, it will cost us more as infrastructure would have to be stretched increasingly farther away from the core centre. At the same time, all across the country, farmers would lose out in terms of opportunity costs.

"A farmer who could do better economically by using his land for other purposes, such as building a house, would lose out on that opportunity because he would not be allowed to convert his land for any purpose beyond farming," says an official of the Department of Agricultural Marketing.

The environmental costs of pursuing a food self-sufficiency goal would be no less taxing.

Not forgetting that agricultural land makes up less than eight percent of the total land cover, we would need to expand the extent of our fields. With climate ranges from the sub-tropical to the alpine, Bhutan boasts the potential to sprout farm fields just about anywhere. Even in our protected areas. While the very idea of encroaching into these hallowed environs seems outrageous today, food self-sufficiency might necessitate just such outrageousness. We have enough forests to spare. But this could put Bhutan's green reputation at stake.

We could opt not to expand our farm lands. But striving to produce much more food from no more fields than we currently have would be akin to achieving mission impossible. For our farms to be that productive we



would have to use fertilisers of every kind and consequence in unashamedly noxious measures. And this would go against another goal – to become supposedly "the first organic country in the world". The realities we will then face: pesticide residues, ground water pollution, acid rain, air pollution, soil degradation and a whole lot of unhealthy food. Again, our green reputation will be lost irrevocably.

But there is the concern that a food self-sufficiency oriented Bhutan, especially at this juncture in its socioeconomic development, may be counter-productive. As societies develop, they become more dynamic and vital with the emergence and growth of non-farming communities. For us, becoming food self-sufficient would require a large section of the population to remain farmers for generations, no matter what other opportunities lay ahead. But these are flimsy arguments. Bhutan is a landlocked country relying heavily on imports and

the flipside of not being self-sufficient can also be dire.

Yes, the social implications for food self-sufficiency appear to be a mixed bag of blessings and curses. There are benefits to be gotten but, then again, there are costs. But in the end, if the benefits of going self-sufficient outweigh the costs, then there is no question of what we should do. After all, our ability to remain independent and self-sustainable for centuries was precisely because we were self-sufficient.



A FAMILY IN BUMTHANG HARVESTING MILLET

The writer is a freelance journalist, he hosts a talk show and a game show on Radio Valley, 99.9 FM, and is the lead singer in one of Bhutan's best known rock bands, Who's Your Daddy.

From Lisbon with Love

By ARUN BHATTARAI



A scholarship titled “Doc Nomads” had me enticed with the idea of being the literal nomad in a strange land. This was how I came to be in Lisbon. I had just been awarded a masters scholarship course in documentary direction under Erasmus Mundus. It is one

of the many scholarships awarded by the European Commission to enhance quality in higher education between Europe and the rest of the world.

And so here I was on my journey from my little country tucked away in the heart of the Himalayas, across the Atlantic Ocean to a strange land,



A FADO SINGER IN ALFAMA

Fado is a traditional form of portugese music and was originally considered as a music of the lower class.

completely unknown to me. The entire travel process was even stranger.

One should know that Portugal, though a part of the European Union, still has very strict visa protocols compared with other EU countries. It took close to two weeks in a hot box of a room in New Delhi, traveling



in confusing elevators – with all their S1, S2, S3, L1, L2, L3 levels – of the visa office, only to get rejected twice. This despite a confirmation from the university of my enrollment acceptance. I was too afraid to try a third time and returned to Bhutan, dejected without a visa confirmation and a relatively lighter wallet. There

were letters sent back and forth, phone calls made, and after a great deal of angst my visa finally came through.

The very next day after my arrival in Lisbon, I ventured out to explore my locality. I didn't know enough to plan a route so I simply marched right out the door intending to get lost if I did. Ten minutes into my walk I found myself confronting the castle of Sao Jorge. There was certainly no missing this one because the castle stands grandiosely in the center of Lisbon. It is not hard to miss. This medieval castle atop a hillock overlooks the city and the Tagus river. As I stood there I could see why it was built there – just as our ancestors favored strategic locations for our Dzongs. Like our towns branched out of the Dzongs, so also it seems that Lisbon was born here at Sao Jorge (Also known as St. Georges). Also like our Dzongs, it is a fortress that served, at one point in history, to fend off invaders.

And not only did that remind me of Bhutan, the popular legend surrounding the Saint – St. George, to which the castle was dedicated to – it seems was for his bravery in having saved a virgin from the claws of a dragon! Now this felt nothing different from the stories swirling the patron saints of our own monasteries and Dzongs. At this point, I began wondering how the first Europeans who ever came to Bhutan, two Portuguese priests who found their way there around 1627, must have felt when they saw our Dzongs. Did they return to incorporate some of our myths and styles? Did they also notice and say, despite the different religious backgrounds, “hey, wait

a minute. These people have similar beliefs like ours!”

Although the castle existed before it got titled “Sao Jorge” it was titled so after it was dedicated to St. George, the patron saint of England. Crusader knights from the British Isles had accompanied the first King of Portugal, in the re-conquest of Lisbon in the 11th Century from the Moors (Berber Muslims from the Iberian peninsula and the Morocco region) during the Reconquista – a period in which they inhabited parts of Europe and fought with Christians for centuries.

I eventually clambered up to the castle and took in the view. The houses below were clustered together and all had similar red roofs, so red they looked like they'd just come out of the kiln.

Beyond Sao Jorge was the Tagus river, its blue just a little more deeper than the sky. Not very far, the Tagus meets the atlantic ocean sealing the countrys destiny of a rich and proud seafaring history.

Lisbon is not a difficult city to explore. A lot can be seen on foot. I discovered that here the best directions come from friendly residents than the google map on my phone.

TRAVEL

Much of Lisbon's history still lives in its rich ancient architecture and as I ventured on my walk I stumbled upon Alfama. It is close to the Sao Jorge castle and is quintessential of what an old Portuguese city must have looked like, because it is the oldest district in Lisbon. With its small squares and quaint narrow streets Alfama, derived its name from Al-hamma, an Arabic name for fountains and baths, a testament to its Moorish history. This part of the city was occupied by poor fishermen and still continues to be occupied by the poor. However a combination of its Fado bars, its fishermen and poor inhabitants all lend a romantic bohemian ambience to this neighborhood. An earthquake in the 17th century destroyed a major part of the

city, but is said to have spared this corner of it. I found myself relaxing over a drink at the Tejo bar at Alfama enjoying the sights and sounds and quite proud at my accomplishment in having navigated Lisbon like a true nomad. The Tejo bar was a noisy place with travelers, free-spirited walkers and wanderers, tourists and some musician strumming a tune to his own interpretations of Bob Dylan and Tom Petty songs.

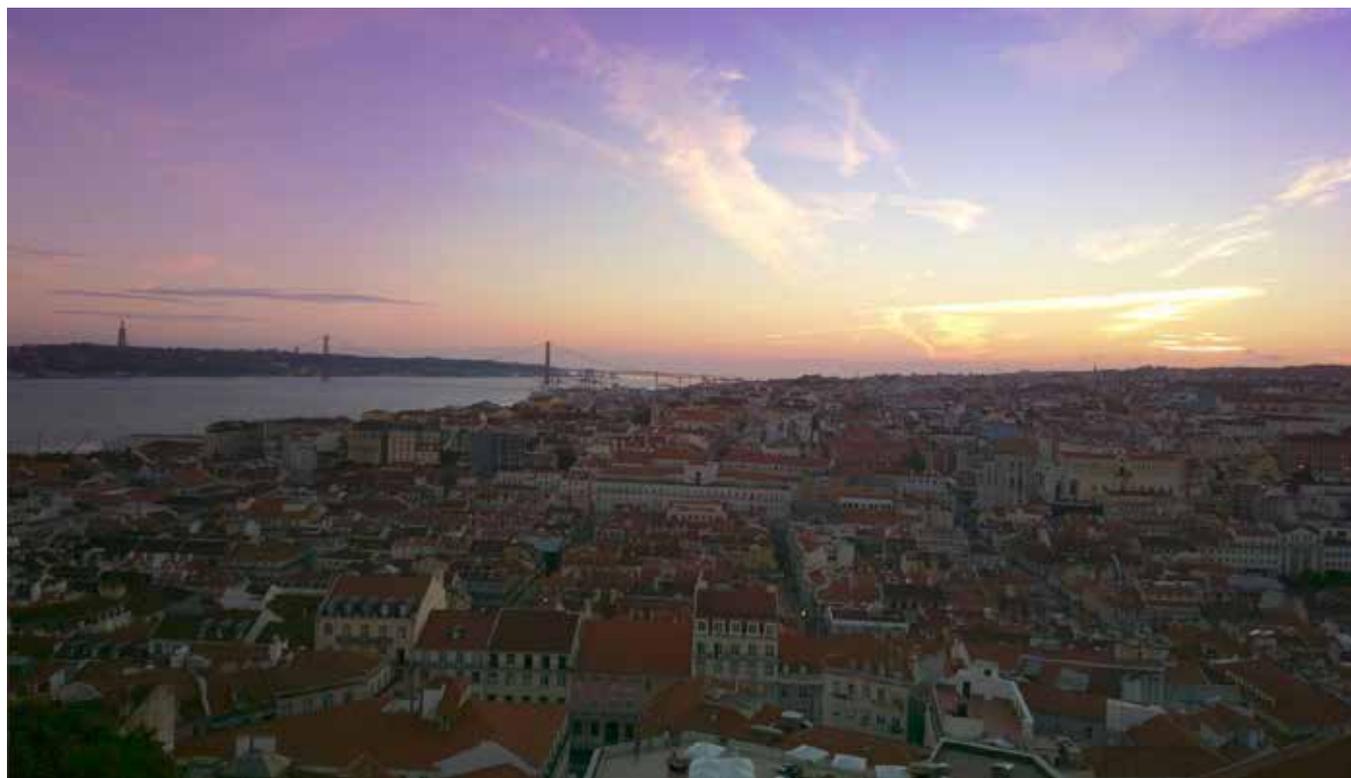
Lisbon is not a difficult city to explore. A lot can be seen on foot. I discovered here the best directions come from friendly residents than the google map on my phone. The metro services are good, but I chose the bumpy but classic ride on trams which cover a major part of the city. Lisbon has huge open squares just right for a wanderer to get

lost. On one of my wanderings, I discovered Rossio Square. Many portugese describe this square as a living book that represents their history, because since the Middle Ages it was the location for staging bullfights, revolts, celebrations, and sometimes even executions. Today, however, Rossio Square offers a vast choice of stylish hotels, bars, cafes and exciting restaurants. -

The Tagus river is about 15 minutes walk from Rossio Square. A walk by the river towards Caisdo Sodre is the perfect getaway simply to pose for a picture, or to watch the waves wooing the dark shores and practice portugese with the local fishermen. The sound of the musicians practicing Fado by the river adds a beautiful dimension to a wanderer's



**A BIRD'S EYE VIEW
OF LISBON FROM
SAO JORGE**





GETTING ON A TRAM IS THE BEST WAY TO EXPLORE THE CITY

reverie. Fado is a traditional form of portugese music and was originally considered as a music of the lower class. It is said to have gained in popularity when a Portugese Duke fell in love with a prostitute who was an excellent singer of Fado. History aside, this music is intense and passionate, similar to Spanish flamenco, and reverberates with a melancholic tinge. A popular Fado singer of Portugal is Mariza, giving Fado music her own interpretation yet remaining true to its roots.

To get the real Lisbon experience, eating out at the “casa de Fado” or Fado restaurants is absolutely essential. There are many in Bairro Alto a silent residential area by day that transforms into a sprawling party place at night. Countless little

bars stay open through the night keeping the bar hoppers happy.

Even though it’s a small city, there are plenty of options to find good food in Lisbon. The experience of being here is incomplete without trying the famous custard tarts from Belem. Deliciously soft and sweet, Pasteis de Nata or custard tarts are a cult by itself in Lisbon. Few things can match the experience of eating a Pasteis de Nata sprinkled with cinnamon with the “25th of April Bridge” behind me at Belem. Grilled fish, sea food, spit roast chicken, great vegetable soups makes food a joy in Lisbon. The good news is that eating out is cheap compared to many other cities in Europe. A visit to the Ginginha liquor store in Lisbon is another travel experience with

TRAVEL DETAILS



By Flight

Via New Delhi to Lisbon.
Flight Cost: 500-550 Euros (Delhi-Lisbon)



Accommodation

Hotel: 60-80 Euros, though there are cheaper places. For a longer stay, renting a two bedroom flat will cost between 600- 1000 Euros, depending on the location.



Climate

Best time to travel (March-May, September & October).

lines of people waiting for their turns to take a shot of the bitter sweet traditional drink.

Lisbon is a colorful city which doesnt shy away from fun. It feels like stepping back in time, yet it offers this unique and amazing combination of the cosmopolitan air with an old charm. This makes it difficult for any one to make a list of things to do in Lisbon. From the Cascais beach to the pretty suburb of Belem, from custard tarts to the castles of Sintra, Lisbon has something for everyone. Mindless walks turn into adventures, and though there were many spots I may have missed, all the places that I wandered and stumbled into hold memorable experiences. 🐦

A Phone Call

By KARMA SINGYE DORJI



The Mountain Mirror was a beehive of activity by the time Diamond got there. There were reporters heading out the door, anxious to hijack whatever car or van was left in the parking lot before the others got to them. The GM was watching the flurry of cars and drivers and bustling staff reporters, his considerable paunch hanging below his crossed arms. Now and then he uncrossed his arms and chewed the bristly hair on his upper lip before signing a vehicle movement order thrust in his face by a desperate-looking reporter.

“You’re late again,” the GM said, shaking his head as Diamond pretended not to notice and headed for the steps instead. Apologetic but frantic staff from the printing section elbowed past him, at the top of the steps to the office, holding double sided centre spreads for the coming week between thumb and forefinger with the ink still wet on them. As he pushed his way through the swinging glass doors leading to the cubicles, the few reporters who remained at their desks now had small smirks forming at the corners of their mouths as they saw him walk in.

It was clear the weekly Monday morning roundtable was long over. He groaned inwardly at the realization that all the stories would have been assigned. The aggressive, more ambitious, young reporters would have taken all the important news of the day. Also taken would be the promising feature articles, the splashier interviews with the more famous people and high ranking officials, people who provided opportunities for subsequent name-dropping that worked like a charm for loosening up sources who, otherwise, did not like to talk to reporters. Nothing worked better with an uncooperative junior officer than the subtle hint that you might have already interviewed his minister or the head of his department.

The only things left now would be police news briefs, the tedious litany of pickpockets, lost or stolen items, petty embezzlement and missing persons or “absconders,” (a term some bright bulb in the Royal Police Force had recently coined). Or, worse, the drudgery of working through the slush pile of badly written “Press Releases” from government agencies and businesses around the capital, all of which invariably ended with the aggravating statement: “For Your Kind Consideration and Necessary Action Please!” The phrase always made Diamond want to strangle the neck of whichever dull-headed back-office cipher had written it. Not the kind of steely-eyed square-jawed journalism that he had signed up for when he joined the MM, Diamond thought wearily.

Still bleary-eyed from the weekend he made his way to his cubicle and sat down with an

It was here
the poor
devils who
had some-
how slipped
through
the cracks
showed up,
heads bowed
and scruffy.

audible squish on the pneumatic swivel chair, one among the hundreds the office had just purchased through funding from the Project for Free Media. The eggshell white of the composite industrial ply-board cubicle separators hurt his eyes and gave him a dull ache in the back of his head.

He turned on the computer and the screen flickered to life with an electronic whine that sounded like a complaint. He opened the document he had been working on for the past couple of weeks, in between the press releases and trips to the RPF “Central Box,” a phrase that, in plainer words, meant, simply “the City Jail.” It was where the poor devils who had somehow slipped through the cracks showed up, heads bowed and scruffy in slept-in clothes courtesy of the government hospitality they had enjoyed the evening before so that the ambitious O.C. could ring the MM news desk with a chirpy: “Hello, I have important news for your front page!” Invariably, it was always Diamond who took those calls, requiring him to show up at the fortress-like compound whose walls were topped with shards of broken glass to deter interlopers. Although, Diamond thought, who would ever want to scale those forbidding walls to enter a police compound “to commit miscreancy”—as the O.C. put it—was anybody’s guess. Invariably, the friendly O.C. with his shiny belt buckles and the black polished boots suggested his name should appear on the front page, winking at Diamond to show he was only half-joking. Diamond always bore these tedious encounters with fake smiles, knowing that even publicity grabbing police officers might come in handy for a real story some time in the future. He was always careful not to burn his bridges with these often overlooked but ambitious mid level officials, people he categorized as the “footmen of history.” The people, whose accounts could, in Diamond’s opinion, light up a story and make true journalism shine.

Diamond looked at the screen again and shook his head. There was only one line. It read The Missing Colonel. God, he hadn’t even been able to muster a more original headline! But how could he? He had nothing so far on which to hang the kind of investigative story he was thinking of. All he had so far was a fragmented collage of rumor, myth and gossip, none of which added up.

The cursor blinked expectantly as if challenging him to take up the keyboard. But his mind was a blank. Without time to research the story adequately, without the voices of the people who could shed light on the mysterious and now seemingly hushed-up collection of incidents surrounding the Colonel’s disappearance, he had no story. He wondered if he would ever get the approval to interview the military officials he had in mind, the people who had known the Colonel and perhaps been closest to him.

A loud buzz from the phone on his desk interrupted his thoughts. He put the receiver to his ear and heard the voice he least wanted to hear this morning.

“Did I just see you walking in late again?”

“Sorry Chief I...”

The line went dead.

Almost instantly the Editor-in-Chief’s PA sashayed in with a tight smile that Diamond read as you, my friend, are in deep shit. Aloud, she only said “Chief wants to see you in his office.”

He pushed his chair back and, feeling defeated, walked slowly toward the “other office” at the end of the hallway. The door was closed when he got there. The curtain was brocade and in a four square design with embroidered eternal knots at each of the four ends. He knocked on the door timidly. When he got no response, he tried the door and it opened a crack. He let himself in quietly. Chief was huddled in his chair, with the phone to his ear. Diamond couldn’t hear what was being said from the other end of the line but Chief nodded gravely several times, seemed to be making an argument, then apologies before nodding again. Then, Chief put the phone receiver back down and looked up at him. In the long silence that followed, Diamond struggled to but failed to meet his editor’s gaze.

“It seems you’ve made some people very angry,” the Chief said finally. “You are being accused of stirring up old conspiracy theories about the Colonel’s disappearance.”



HAPPENINGS

Old Songs Light the Way

*In the early morning dawn...
the sun rises over the golden pinnacle of the temple*

-lyrics to Nima Dolma

By JANET HERMAN, Ph.D.
PHOTOS By JANE HANCOCK

Because her beloved adoptive mother called her “Nima,” likening her to the sun, Aum Nimchu Pem’s favorite song is *Nima Dolma*. She believes that singing it brings her good fortune, and she has been doing so for six decades, often beginning the day with it as she walks to her fields in the small village of Sengbji, Trongsa. It is an old song, a beautiful example of *dangrem*, the extended, elaborately ornamented songs native to Bhutan. *Dangrem* contain references to Buddhism and the natural landscape that, like the song’s slow, mesmerizing tune and the singer’s supple, plaintive voice itself, are singularly and unmistakably Bhutanese in nature.

It was the desire to record and archive this accomplished singer and her unusually rich repertoire of songs that impelled a small crew to travel to Sengbji in October 2008. Led by renowned musician Kheng Sonam Dorji, the joint Bhutanese-American team camped near Aum Nimchu Pem’s house for several days, recording songs and interviews. For Sonam Dorji, the experience was so rewarding that he knew he had found a calling. Soon after, he established the Music of Bhutan Research Centre (MBRC)

in Thimphu, a non-governmental organization in Bhutan solely devoted to the research, documentation, preservation and promotion of the country’s traditional music. *Journey to Sengbji: The Songs of Aum Nimchu Pem* (2009) became the Centre’s first published CD recording.

“Traditional songs are the soul of Bhutanese identity,” says Sonam Dorji. In their artistic form and content, the songs carry and distil the accumulated wisdom, longings and sensibilities of centuries of Bhutanese life. “Historically we have been an oral culture,” he notes, “and it is our inherited



songs that connect us to our past and to the timeless emotional truths of Bhutanese people.” Now that Bhutan is facing so many societal changes, he feels it is essential that these precious songs, in many cases known only by a few aging singers born in the pre-modern era, are recorded before they vanish.

Although MBRC is little more than four years old, its accomplishments under Sonam Dorji’s direction are remarkable. To date, he and his crew have recorded over sixty elder vocalists and musicians. He has established an archive in Thimphu to house tapes and transcripts from field

sessions, with an adjacent editing studio for producing video documentaries from the raw footage - MBRC most recently completed videos on two unique, music-filled village festivals of remote Lower Kheng and Mongar. The archive also includes historical artifacts such as dance costumes from the Royal Court and musical instruments such as the first yangchen (hammered dulcimer) built in Bhutan and a fascinating array of regional instruments made from local natural materials - giant pod shakers from Kheng are but one example.

In 2010 MBRC produced *Masters of Bhutanese Traditional Music, Volume One*, the first book to profile

Bhutanese musicians (ten are included), along with a sampler CD recording. This publication, along with Aum Nimchu Pem’s recording, is now available in shops throughout Thimphu as well as worldwide through the MBRC website. Also in 2010 the Centre established the Druk Norbu “Living Treasure” Award in partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan to honor lifetime achievement in traditional music. Recipients have included Aum Thinlem (2010), Ap Tsheten Dorji and Aum Tshewang Lham (2011) and Drimpen Sonam Dorji and Aum Nimchu Pem (2012).

In 2011 MBRC organized an ambitious two-week reunion of twenty-six master dancers and singers who served together in the 1960s court of the Third King, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, a monarch who particularly loved music and surrounded himself with the best artists from throughout Bhutan and trained the Royal Bodyguard in singing and dancing. MBRC filmed and recorded the artists, who for the most part had not seen each other in forty years, as



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1. First Field Expedition of MBRC, Sengbji Village, Trongsa, 2008. L to R - Aum Nimchu Pem, Kheng Sonam Dorji, Janet Herman, Cheku.
2. MBRC and YDF World Music Camp in Thimphu.
3. Aum Nimchu Pem.
4. Druk Norbu “Living Treasure” award recipients: L to R - Aum Thinlem (2010), Aum Nimchu Pem (2012), Drimpen Sonam Dorji (2012), Ap Tsheten Dorji (2011).

they reconstructed rare choreography and influential songs from the era. The group had the high honor of performing for the wedding celebration of the Fifth King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The artists were also among those featured at the first stage-style National Folk Music Festival founded that same year by MBRC in Thimphu. The festival traveled to Paro in 2012 and is planned for Punakha in October 2013.

This last year was another busy one

for MBRC, which received coveted Civil Service Organization status from the government and three years of operational support to pursue more fieldwork and archival projects. Plans are now in the works for documenting all the varieties of *zhey* and *zheym* - songs performed by men and women, respectively, that date to the time of the great unifying leader Zhabdrung Nagwang Namgyal's arrival to Bhutan in the seventeenth century.

While the research and docu-

mentation of traditional music remains the Centre's primary focus, MBRC also has recently increased efforts to promote Bhutanese music globally and initiate programs of cultural exchange. In 2012 Kheng Sonam Dorji was a featured soloist in a pan-Asian ensemble led by Arun Ghosh at the BT River of Music Festival in London for the Summer Olympic Games.

In Germany in 2012, Pemba Drukpa, traditional musician and teacher at Etho Metho School, Sonam Chopel, visual artist and member of VAST, and Jane



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5. Shaman for an ancient Bonn Festival in Kheng, 2008 Expedition.

6. Pemba, Jane Hancock, and Sonam Chopel during a cultural presentation in Leipzig, Germany.

7. Reunited master dancers and singers from the court of the Third King at the Bhutanese Folk Music Festival in Thimphu, 2011.



Sonam Dorji at the London Olympic Music Festival, 2012.

Hancock of MBRC presented lectures and demonstrations of Bhutanese music, art, and culture in Cologne, Berlin, and the Grassi Museum of Musical Instruments in Leipzig. The Germans were quite intrigued by Bhutanese culture. Pemba and Sonam had the opportunity, as well, to experience the best of European classical music and art and hope to share their experience with groups throughout Thimphu.

In 2012 MBRC also sponsored two World Music Camps for school-aged children in Santa Cruz, California, U.S.A., and at Youth Development

Fund (YDF) in Thimphu. At these camps almost 100 children had the opportunity to learn traditional music and dance from Bhutan and the Pacific Islands of Hawaii, as well as play ukulele (a small Hawaiian stringed instrument), recorder (a Western wind instrument) and learn about European classical music. The children discovered commonalities between the compassion-based values of Buddhist Bhutan and the Hawaiian value of “lokahi”- unity and harmony for all.

It has been an amazing journey for Kheng Sonam Dorji and the Music of Bhutan Research Centre since the first expedition to Aum Nimchu Pem’s fields. Sonam Dorji says his passion for preserving and encour-

aging traditional music is undiminished, however, and his work has only just begun.



Janet Herman is a researcher and writer with the Music of Bhutan Research Centre. Jane Hancock is a photographer and voice-over specialist with the MBRC.

Both Dr. Herman and Ms. Hancock participated in the first MBRC expedition to document AUm Nimchu Pem.

For more information about the Music of Bhutan Research Centre, please visit www.musicofbhutan.org.



Sonam Wangmo is a mother of two. She worked at Chemonics International Open Society, and Asia Society. She now divides her time between her family and developing her writing craft at Grub Street in Boston, U.S.

THE ART OF WRITING IS THE ART OF LEAPING AND LETTING GO

I must confess; I never want to go bungee jumping. But I have experienced the overwhelming feeling of sheer fright and exhilaration, when one leaps with complete abandon into the unknown. Submitting my piece of fiction – labored over hours in front of a computer screen – to a group of fine eyes, is like throwing myself into the dark, with only a rope at my ankles to keep me from complete obliteration. There are psychologists, social workers, lawyers and sharp yummy mummies in my writing group. Surely they will rip into my writing!

And they do. But I am a better writer-in-progress because of that. Here's what I've learned over the course of writing and rewriting:

Explore and Discover: "Write about what you don't know, about what you know," says Eudora Welty, a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist. Pick a writing inspiration - images, characters, memories - that is familiar to you, and you are curious about. That desire to know more than you know will energize your stories.

Character, Want and Conflict: Your character/protagonist is the king of the story. Plot, narrative arc and climax are second to your character's wants. The meat of your story is how your protagonist's desires are conflicted (internally), or come into conflict because the external world won't allow it.

Hook the Subconscious and not the Conscious Mind: Suzette Martinez Standring, a syndicated columnist explains it like this: You need to hypnotize the readers. Keep the person in a trance, as if in a dream, by appealing to the feeling, and not the analytical part of the readers. You do that through images and simple details that drive right to the point. And John Gardner in the "Art of Fiction" makes no bones about saying that in bad fiction, one "snaps" out of the dream when the reader is "forced to think of the writer and the writing." In other words, writers do step aside, unless you are Nabokov (in *Lolita*).

Active, Simple and Direct Language: To keep the readers engaged and in that lucid dream, use simple and direct language. Energize your story by using active words. Cut out the adjectives and adverbs, and get at what you want to say in the most direct way

possible. Use language that your characters would use.

Show and Tell: Writing is not just showing, but showing and telling. It is the mix of exposition, summarized dialogue and dialogue. Often we are told: show, don't tell, but good writing is a combination of showing and telling.

Sentiment and not Sentimentality: Sentimentality is when you force sentiment. When your characters have not earned the right to feel rage, sorrow and unbridled happiness, your readers will taste its overly sweet juices and become sickened by it. Sentimentality is Bollywood on steroids. I love Shahruxh Khan, but don't you cringe when he overacts? Similarly, when your characters explode with clichéd emotions in clichéd situations, you have not connected with the characters of your story at a deeper level. Sentiment is connecting with your readers through reaching the inner depths of your character's emotions.

Revise, Revise, and Revise: The first draft is just the beginning. Your real story will come to you at revision (unlike Arundhati Roy, who wrote *God of Small Things* in one mighty sweep without revisions). Jumpa Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist says, "All the revision I do — and this process begins immediately, accompanying the gestation — occurs on a sentence level. It is by fussing with sentences that a character becomes clear to me, that a plot unfolds." Your unique and exact way of looking at things happens, when you've written your sentences over and over again.

Read, Read, Read: To become a better writer, you have to read. And read obsessively. Examine sentences, dissect them, and reread the words of your favorite writers, so you can learn how they create magic on the page.

Create a Routine and Join a Writing Circle: Sitting on the chair at the same hour every day is essential to writing. And don't keep your writing to yourself. A writing group will propel your work forward to a higher level.

It is not just talent, but your stubborn persistence on the page, laboring hour-by-hour, sentence-by-sentence that will land you with a finished manuscript ready for publishing.

Writing is similar to the art of Mandala painting in colored sand. Like the lamas, you've worked many hours with close attention to painstakingly create a beautifully detailed novel. And now you must abandon it, let it go. The sand mandala is swept away and disintegrated into tiny pieces for distribution into the universe; similarly, you will release your written work into the world.

May your written words heal and enlighten the people who read it. And may you leap into the unknown, drive through the dark and let the words come through you, as if in a vivid dream. 

 It is not just talent, but your stubborn persistence on the page, laboring hour-by-hour, sentence-by-sentence that will land you with a finished manuscript ready for publishing.



A LETTER TO THE TEEN-TRASTROPHIC ELEMENTS

By TASHI PELYANG LHENDUP

“We can’t escape pain; we can’t escape the essential nature of our lives. But we do have a choice. We can give in and relent, or we can fight, persevere, and create a life worth living, a noble life. Pain is a fact; our evaluation of it is a choice.” - Jacob Held

Dear youth of Bhutan who are out of your element 24/7. This is me, a young man working hard 24/7 to make a living, looking back on my own youth and trying to analyze, address and advise you, who could easily have been me. Don’t get me wrong, I am not a bliss-ologist trying to force theories of happiness or a remedy for your lives down your throat.

I am not ignorant about your lives, nor do I intend to belittle your problems, but I see how little regard you have for yourselves, your parents, your families, and even for society.

I am aware that as teens your brain is not capable of the kind of reasoning that allows most grown-ups to make rational decisions. I am also aware of your anger, your constant mood swings, slammed doors, and rash decisions. These feelings and emotions are part and parcel of being an adolescent and raging hormones in puberty induces some pretty odd behaviors at that age. Believe me, I am totally aware because I was once you and I had very much the same inclinations. But this behavior, if left unchecked is detrimental not only to yourselves, but also to your families and to society at large. It, therefore, requires a serious reassessment of what you want out of life, your beliefs, your values and to channel it all in the right direction. I, therefore, intend to give you youngsters the benefit of my experience, as I am someone who often finds myself at odds to remain sober. Times have changed, and in this day and age when tolerance is doled out carefully and in moderation you might not come across many people sensitive to your plight. Not many are in a situation to be sympathetic to the issues you confront and don’t blame them for that. Like you, we are a society still emerging and learning so they don’t know any better. These old people also haven’t had the opportunities you have today. Yes, times may be tougher for a youth, but it depends on how you look

at it. The older folks never had the opportunities you have today, times were tough then, too. So it might do you good to go through the following lines.

I know that in most cases, choice is a luxury that people of your financial means cannot afford. No matter how hard you try to quell that feeling of deprivation, it resurfaces with renewed fury, especially so when you see your schoolmates or classmates being dropped off in the latest SUV’s, while you have to walk to school. A sense of lacking when you see them wearing trendy clothes and hanging out in cool places with their latest gadgets and gizmos, while you have to make do with whatever fits your parents’ meager budget.

You allow your insecurities and shortfalls to make you miserable. You begin to doubt your worth as a human being. Despondency prevails; it pisses you off like nobody’s business. Life feels unfair, unjustified. Life sucks. Either that or you are hurting from your parents coming on ‘too hard’. Whatever the reasons may be, deep down you are afraid and embarrassed to be the proverbial nail that sticks out. You may feel anger when life is not providing you the things you want or going the way you think it should. Sometimes, you have a right to be angry, we all are at some point in our lives. But how we channel this anger is the key to our future. Over the past few years we have witnessed enough proof of where this anger has been channeled. We are all appalled by how quickly aggressive you and your knife-wielding buddies become over trifling matters. Anger in combination with alcohol and other substances becomes a lethal combination that will not lead you out of that unjustified life. The only thing you are doing is digging a hole for yourself and your loved ones. You may or may not want to be rich, but ultimately you want to be happy and have a meaningful life. But your pursuit of happiness ends before it even begins if you don’t give that life a chance.

It is not an abundance of gel to spike your hair, wearing the latest jeans, listening to the latest music, wearing the coolest Che Guevara T-shirt, or smoking dope, that will get you places. Yes, at this age, these may or may not be important for your image. Your image, if you really want to know, depends on who you are. Don't let the bad-boy image confuse you with the character. An image is merely that – an image. It is

what is underneath the image that counts. And underneath that image should be a character that – no matter how angry, rebellious, or pissed at the world – will take it upon him or herself to find a way to change things meaningfully. You want to change the world? Do something – change yourself first, be the change. Surely you don't want a world in which young people walk around in drunken or drugged stupors lashing out at

random people, hurting strangers and loved ones alike; a world where young people wind up behind bars for stupid, un-thought actions. Sadly only solid academic credentials can bring about a change for the better in our society, but following your passion, putting your energy to what you love doing - what you do best – always leads you to a better place. No young person like yourself wants to hurt another being unnecessarily or indulge in violence. Believe in yourself, even if others don't. Don't choose the free prize at the bottom of every whisky or beer bottle, or a chemical substance to solve your problems. Drugs and alcohol, these are momentary reliefs. You will get no more out of it than the millions of others who tried the same before you. Perhaps going out of your way to talk to one of them might even help you see the light. Because you can judge from

their conditions whether it solved their problems or worsened it. Young people's brains are wired differently than adults and because your brain is still developing and in the formative stages of its growth substance abuse has much more dire implications on your young brain than an adult one. The earlier you start drinking, doping or taking drugs, the easier it is to become an addict and the harder it becomes to wean

yourself off it. This is because your brain is re-wiring itself to get used to these intoxicating substances and increasing dependency. It is harder for a person who starts drinking in his older age to become easily addicted.

If you take a low dose, you will not get the 'full trip', it will be no fun; and if you want the full trip you will wind up on a 'rag trip' or-over dosing. This is how it goes: drinking a bottle of Corex, popping a few Spasmo Proxyvon or Relipen for good

measure, to ensure that you get a 'full trip' which winds you up on a 'rag trip'. Then popping a few Nitrosun tablets to neutralize the effect and finding out that suddenly you are too hyper. Then, the only option is to smoke a few joints for a 'downer effect' and eventually ending up not very different from a zombie.

Trying to make up for your insecurities and shortfalls might lead you to hang out with people you shouldn't be hanging out with, and doing things that you shouldn't be doing, just so you can blend in. But know this - seeking refuge amongst unruly friends is a no-brainer option. The last time I checked, seeking out the well trodden trouble spots in town, places where whiffs of marijuana abound and shady deals in chemicals are carried out only gets you into more trouble. It may be said without any exaggeration that there is a



horrible prevalence of lamentable immaturity amongst your generation. You have made it explicitly clear that you choose to be more curious than cautious. Have you ever heard the saying “curiosity killed the cat?” Sometimes unnecessary investigation or experimentation kills you and it is very true for alcohol and drugs.

Where do you think that the gloomy disposition brought about by the lack of your usual ‘quota’ and a stunted sense of morality is going to get you? Why do you not want to live your life and look back at a lifetime of achievement, challenges met and obstacles overcome?

I am pretty sure that people with the propensity for chemical conduction who go through this write-up have

experienced the phenomenon of other people getting a tighter grip on their wallets and mobile phones the moment you walk in. This is an irrefutable fact; people high on Nitrosun – tend to be kleptomaniacs. In that state you invariably need the means to support your habits and this comes from stealing from friends and family, as well as strangers. A friend of mine, who was an addict, once told me that when he was high on N-10, he heard voices in his head telling him two things repetitively. It was either hir kai de... hir kai de...hir kai de (hit him ..hit him...hit him) or chor de...chor de... chor de (steal it...steal it...steal it).

Believe me when I say that I have personally witnessed acts that are irrefutable testaments to the aforementioned fact. In a fight you will, because of your intoxicated state, be clobbered badly as your confidence becomes disproportionate to your abilities in matters of aggression. Or you will steal, in which case you are bound to get caught as you will not be as sober and nifty as you think you are. In any case I don't see how drugs and alcohol and pummeling people into oblivion will help eliminate your reasons to be unhappy. Happiness is not being somewhere, doing something or being someone. Happiness lies not out there, but within, and if you are still not happy even after realizing this then it probably means you need to search harder, or more importantly seek help. You could be suffering from depression – which goes undiagnosed as an illness in many societies because feeling hopeless, worthless, sad, and insecure are not looked upon as health issues. Don't let the fact that it is stigmatized as a mental health issue, or a sign of weakness, prevent you from seeking help. No body is as important as you, and

I am pretty sure that people with the propensity for chemical conduction have experienced the phenomenon of other people getting a tighter grip on their wallets and mobile phones the moment they walk in.

nobody will do anything for you if you don't do it for yourself. Don't let what others say rule your life. Live your own life and do what is good for you – seek help.

Addiction is a serious problem and it allows for behavior that you do not wish to engage in, but cannot help because of your addiction. There is nothing to be ashamed of in acknowledging you have a problem and that you need help. Asking for help for such a problem, instead, is a sign of immense courage.

Right now, the influence of drugs and alcohol might make you feel that you have achieved a monumental victory. You are very happy, completely content, and without a care in the world. Years later, if you are not already dead

by then, it will occur to you that you wasted precious time in your life, and hurt the people you love most. These ‘agreeable sensations’ are but fleeting, they do not last. The more you use them the more your body becomes immune to them. The initial high or ‘trip’ tends to become more and more elusive. That is the moment when you find the demon of addiction rearing its ugly head towards you. Eventually, over time your blood will be so corrupted that even the mosquitoes that bite you are probably going to end up getting high.

My dear young people, I was young once and if only I could have my youth back again, don't waste

your precious life on drugs and alcohol. This is the age when you should be paving the way to your future. And even if you have made mistakes, know that there are ample opportunities for redemption. We all make mistakes, but mistakes are only helpful when we allow ourselves to learn from them. Otherwise we remain fools for the rest of our lives. Just remember that it is our mistakes that make us who we are. Learn from them. Salvage whatever is left of your sanity. Re-orient yourself and then plough on ahead. Forge your identity, because there is only one you. Do not look for excuses to blame someone else for your life. Life is never fair. Accepting this Koan of life will be a good starting point. Don't let others – people, police, drugs and alcohol - live and determine your life for you. Find a way to live it yourself. 

The writer works in the Corporate Performance Department of the Tourism Council of Bhutan. He can be contacted at tpeyang7@gmail.com.

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Trends

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Khangkhil, Thimphu



NU.
2,500

Bundle up in this neutral jacket
Forever 16, ChangLam, Plaza

NU.
1,350



Brighten up your greys with this stylish coat
Forever 16, ChangLam, Plaza

Tattoo Artist

Yeshey Nidup, known as **Chakox**

How many tattoos so far? I have done close to 500. **What is life?** Life is about opportunities and creating new things. **What are you eating now?** Mostly junk food and burgers. I have bad food habits. **What do you hope for?** To be the best at my art. I also want to start a custom car painting service in Bhutan. **Entertainment to you.** Music and basketball. I was a musician and a darn good basketball player. **What is love?** It's very important. **What is responsibility?** Supporting my four younger siblings' education so they have the opportunity I didn't. **What is interesting now?** The emerging tattoo and video game culture. **Your sense of style?** Battle/biker chic. **Dislike?** Alcohol. I don't drink and don't like alcohol-induced behavior. **What is weird?** Getting locked up for donning a lizard mohawk once. **Quirk?** My compulsive need to coordinate my outfit the night before. I think I drive my family crazy.



BHUTAN TAKIN PARTY: “WE KEEP TAKIN’ WHAT WE CAN AND PARTY”

Prof. Langdon deconstructs Bhutanese parties and their symbolic gambles and shambles.

By JURMI TALISMAN CHHOWING



PLAYERS 2013



The cranes roost in muck and slime as parties with multi-personality flowers, rainbow rings, colored balls and other paraphernalia of mass consciousness and meaning, containing both transitory and deep metaphors, are generously registered by the ECB- the Election Circus of Bhutan. For those less inclined with the workings of the august body, they have Facebook accounts and Twitter pages so the circus has done the penultimate round of registrations.

The latest arrival on the Bhutanese political landscape, circa 2103, is the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa. Its registration as a bonafide party offering “new ideas for new times” was hailed as a

coup d’état by keen political observers suffering from a myopic sense of foresight, but well compensated with culinary nasal senses. So much so that, in the words of one well known headless bum who manages to confound all and sundry watching those BBS sanctioned roundtable panel discussions “everyone looks bereaved and cheated” on account of that Hollywood flick “2012” - that did not end the world as promised by the studios.

The point being the party’s registration was deemed a milestone in terms of furthering the kitchen-ties between Amazing Thailand and our own good old *ema-datsi* recipes with the kind of partying names now served for your palette

and politicking pleasure.

They pointed out to the prior registration of the Bhutan Kuen-Yam Party, which would now go a long way in first remembering and then being able to intelligently tell apart the dishes of Amazing Thailand, such as the universally acclaimed Tom Yam Soup and its independent relationship to a fruit suspiciously known as the Yam. The Druk Chirwang Tshogpa made clear the day they were registered that the party had nothing to do with either “Chir”- denoting a certain species of fauna found abundantly in the regions where the plant is allowed to grow legitimately. Nor does the party, it equivocally stated, have anything to

do with “Wang” - a suspicious sounding Chinese dude parading as an authentic Bhutanese by frequenting Buddhist sites of empowerment in a bid to disempower the franchised lot, already auctioned off to the alpha-logo in the parties’ “War of the Telling Symbols”.

The ruling party, the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, had MPs gathered in an obvious photo-op in the marshlands of its symbolic colors of the Black Naked Cranes who swallowed collective chuckles at the mention of the new entrants of parties they said sounded suspiciously like “Soup.” The President of one, they said, looked as if the person had been designed to evoke the inherent Bhutanese sentimentality with the famed American country legend Dolly Parton. Yet another had a sinister look a la Dr No of the James Bond edition of the same name, Dr No. And the president of the freshly minted party of branches and twigs? Well, he possessed a “Look of misguided sense of self-entitlement” - all questionable motives they declared in unison.

On their own incumbent PM and Party President’s long suffering look of tragic entitlement to the Bhutanese dowry as pointed out by the three aforementioned presidents, the well drilled DPT

cadre declared via an appointment and then in a blitzkrieg of spontaneously planned statements to the press, that their chief honcho’s look was bereft of any wrongdoing whether by “Hook or Crook”.

The look of the PDP head had been well observed and made, and this was one profile on which all the parties’ concerned said unless he suddenly started sprouting hair and looking good, that there was nothing to cook.

Getting back to the symbiotic, the well-clad emperor-like statured members of the DPT pointed out to the DNT’s floral arrangement as an essential ingredient (borrowed from the Japanese, they claimed) and an unknown herb of immense benefit for its crème de la crème qualities. This quality led to the ubiquitous Nyamrup no one had yet tasted, as it brings reminders of a cross-bred recipe between a regional Bhutanese specialty and a Burmese noodle, and its closer than you think bonds with the BKP’s Kuenyam, another delicacy founded on the unknown laid eggs of four-even and round eggs with a slight oval-hint to it, said to be laid by a mammal with reptilian looks and cold-blooded tendencies.

As far as the DCT’s symbol was concerned, the look of smugness swelling to fats of obesity, the DPT hawkers said it was a mistress-stroke akin to a Chinese Wanton Soup wherein they had taken a single lotus flower with a cracked personality of hangovers of a water-lily, a single egg of high yolk resembling a singular-wish-fulfilling jewel and in a stroke of genius-finality, had those images compounded by a swan with a phoenix hangover.

A spokeswoman of the DCT said this further cemented their claim and their earnest assertion that their symbolic signage had nothing to do with either pines of Chir or a suspicious looking fella named “Wang” - whether of the empowered or the disempow-

ered kind. Although the party, she said, would do everything within its swan-arising-from-the-ashes a la phoenix of the Egyptian myth, or as a protein-rich egg-yolk of the singular-wish-fulfilling kind, and of course, the water-lily disguised as a lotus. The point people must take home and ponder on and remember is that the party will “Empower as intelligently as they have managed to empower their logo of a thousand literals and ten thousand meta-physicals.”

Observers noted the early resurrection and demise of the Druk Mitsers Tshogpa, which had the audacity to depict a man toiling about with a plough and a pair of bulls with no sight of any kind of fields - whether they be rice, potato, or corn fields, or even a grassless football field, as nimbly pointed out by Prof. Langdon of the Da Vinci Code notoriety.

The enigma of the Bhutanese political parties’ adoption of psychic-imagery has made Dan Brown’s fictional creation, Professor Robert Langdon, now officially come unto his own as a non-fictional expert on all things related to symbols and more so in regard to the imagery shaping the kingdom of Bhutan. He is now considered the foremost authority on symbols ranging from Manchester United’s Devil holding a Pitchfork to the Chinese obsession for cordyceps as aphrodisiac self-medication among both the critic at large and hallowed academia everywhere. It is as if the bulls had gored the farmer to death for his apparent lack of imagination or more pointedly, lack of fertility as the enthusiastic professor noted with delight, or the absence of power-tillers, he later observed. Prof. Langdon referred to the 2008 elections, the first ever in what was then the youngest country to enter the firing fray and boiling cauldron of symbology when eventually the losing party, the People’s Democratic Party, unfurled its fateful logo of a young, wild and a vi-



It’s a very interesting notion. But only time will tell who has the best telling metaphor and who sells that metaphor in a language the masses can relate to.

IN THIS FRAME

brant stud of an unsaddled horse, tragically confined within a circle of doubt rather than trust, which he said was further embellished with the paradoxical slogan "Walk the Talk"- obviously the galloping horse could not even take a strut let alone walk, gallop or neigh the message in the slogan. The majority of the masses gave the horsing Ferrari a thumb-down when the ballots opened. The professor said the new reworked logo of the party wherein the circle of confinement and distrust, along with a new-saddle bestowed upon a more domesticated horse that now has a trot rather than a Ferrari gallop could go down well within a population that is still coming to grips with the senseless horsing around four-years ago, as much as they do so with the flightless migrations of the ruling roost.

Hence as far as the three black naked cranes of the incumbent ruling party of the DPT is concerned, the professor reckoned the 2008 elections were a result of what is known as the

"Negative Vote"- meaning that the folks voted not so much for the flight of the birds upon closer inspection, nor for the three day-dreaming leg-less trio of Black Naked Cranes in-flight without a thought for the rest of their flock. They flew rather against the horse of confinement that should ideally have been let loose to gallop, and the unforgivable missed opportunity of not having used "Wild Horses" by the Rolling Stones as their campaigning soundtrack that cost them the votes of negativity.

In a candid confession, Prof. Langdon said given the platter of new parties, and their symbolic avatars hinting at certain culinary dishes and the general images of ring-a-ring-a roses and colored balls, of dying twigs with a leaf or a bouquet of poverty-stricken wildflowers, a horse on a trot minus a rider with a saddled rein begging the question "Who's the rider?" Or the unchanged trio of Black Naked Cranes still at large from the flock they abandoned with synonyms of "Equity and Justice"

taking on its antonyms along with allusions that the three cranes are the three bird-brains of the party, namely Tom, Dick and Harry and the curiosity of what cranes would taste like with red rice and *suja*.

The professor said he'd been intrigued four years ago by the legless crane and the reined-in horse, and now with the entrant of the new images, it was indeed "symbolic times" he would definitely keep on a keen pair of eyes and a raised keen pair of ears to see whether the imagery of the symbolism is overrated or as the case might be, underrated.

Another party in the offing still trying to gauge the political landscape is the Bhutan Takin Party. Still underground, the party's goal seems to border on the notorious rather than anything based on actual-power. A spokesman for the party said once they get rejected by the circus, of which they are utterly confident, they'll come out clean. For now they are making silent waves with their unabashed claim that the symbol for their party is the Takin, the national animal of mythical components as it was believed to have been put together from many other animal parts by the legendary and beloved Lama Drukpa Kinley, also known as the Divine Madman for his unusual teaching practices. The slogan of the party is "We keep Takin what we can and party. So come and join the Takin party."

The professor is most intrigued by the Takin Party. "It's a very interesting notion. But only time will tell who has the best telling metaphor and who sells that metaphor in a language the masses can relate to in the worst possible manner."



HEY THERE! THE NAME IS KIN...TAKIN. AND I'M HERE TO ENDORSE THE TAKIN PARTY. WE TAKE WHAT WE CAN AND PARTY. GO ON TAKIN! CHEERS!



Felicitation



**We at The Raven would like to wish His Majesty the King
a very Happy Birthday**

KNOW YOUR FOOD

Buckwheat



Buckwheat helps stabilize the blood sugar level by fighting against a toxic glucose analogue called alloxan.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutritional value per 100g serving	
Saturated fat	0.67 g
Calories	335 KCAL
Sodium	11 mg
Carbohydrate	70.5 g
Sugar	2.6 g
Dietary Fiber	10 g
Fat	3.1 g
Protein	12.6 g

ENERGY

A great source of energy, nutrients and carbohydrates.

FAT

Rich in saturated fat.

VITAMINS

Contains vitamin K; thiamin or vitamin B-1; riboflavin or vitamin B-2; niacin or vitamin B-3; vitamin B-6.

MINERALS

Contains minerals like folate, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus; zinc, iron, copper and manganese.



Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) popularity hit the West only in recent times when it was discovered as healthy flour alternative for an increasing number of people with gluten intolerance (Celiac disease). But in Central Bhutan – a non-rice growing region – Buckwheat has been a staple in their diet for centuries. As a hardy plant, the Buckwheat is native to high altitudes and Bhutan grows two kinds of species: the sweet buckwheat and bitter buckwheat. Though considered a poor man's food, it has risen in popularity due to its versatile quality, rich in nutrients, and great source of energy.

Although many mistakenly think Buckwheat is a cereal grain it is actually ground from the grain-like seed harvested and eaten after the hard outer husk has been pulled away. The flour has a rich, nutty flavor and is dark brown in color and is mostly enjoyed by the Bhutanese as a khuli -a pancake, or puta - noodles that resemble soba. It is high in fiber and protein compared to white flour and is a high-energy source due to its high content of carbohydrates. A cup of buckwheat serving provides more than 10 percent of the daily value

of four minerals like magnesium and phosphorus that helps you build strong teeth and bones. As a rich source of manganese it helps stabilize the blood sugar level and fights against a toxic glucose analogue called alloxan, which destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. These qualities make it a welcome diet addition for diabetic patients. Buckwheat also provides the much needed copper and iron, both of which are important for the production of red blood cells.

Buckwheat also provides the daily value of three B vitamins like thiamin and niacin, which helps in healthy blood circulation as well as support your nervous system, and B-6 that helps absorb fats and protein. It seems a good idea to replace white flour consumption for buckwheat since it is known to increase "overall sensory quality" and found to have the most nutritional benefits for Celiac patients who are gluten intolerant. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder of the small intestine with symptoms of frequent diarrhea, bloating, and upset stomachs. These symptoms can also occur for irritable bowel syndrome which is a different illness altogether. Some people can have celiac and not have these symptoms. The danger with not

↑
A poor man's food
Buckwheat is rich in nutrients and rich in fibre

getting diagnosed is that the gluten damages the insides of the intestine and prevents absorption of nutrients. Buckwheat makes for an excellent food as it is easy to cook and easily available in Bhutan. It can combat high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which is always welcome news for the meat-consuming Bhutanese. It also contains the eight essential amino acids and important flavonoids like quercetin and rutin. Quercetin supports healing in the body while rutin may inhibit cancer while strengthening the capillaries and circulation resulting in reduction of painful varicose veins.

Traditionally the tender leaves of buckwheat are used as leafy vegetables and the straw is used as cattle feed and bedding materials. In the past, the bitter buckwheat has also been used to treat livestock suffering from foot and mouth disease. A special ara, known as menchang (medicinal alcohol) is distilled from a the mixture of both species of buckwheat. So go ahead and try out the traditional puta with buttermilk or sip menchang to experience your taste buds come alive. 🐦

By KARMA CHODEN



REVIEW RESTAURANT



The Chew

The recently opened multi-cuisine restaurant, The Chew, is a perfect setting for dates, hanging out with friends, or for family gatherings. The interior is simple, yet attractive, a little formal, but somewhat romantic. It has about it a clean modern touch with napkins, matching white linen tablecloths, multi-colored dim lights and soft music which are as good as appetizers in itself. The two verandas provide great views of the newly tarmacked Changlingmithang stadium and might be a fun spot to hang out in the summer with friends and beer.

The Chew specializes in Bhutanese and Indian cuisine, but also serves a variety of international and Chinese food at affordable prices. The crispy Chew fried chicken has an uncanny resemblance to KFC's, but it is different in that it is spicier. The Bhutanese Combo which comes at Nu. 250 is a treat for natives who never tire of eating Bhutanese cuisine and the smell of the Indian Thali can invoke memories of eating in the dhabas – if you've ever eaten there. The mixture of food from Northern India: Chicken tandoori, rice and raita with freshly baked rotis and delicious rasgullas should be tried.

The highlight of The Chew comes on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. This is when The Chew's special treat of mouth-watering meals is served. The slow-smoked sliced beef with sweet and sour sauce is a worthy meal. Yes, I am talking



WHERE
Above Mojo Park, Thimphu

SPECIAL
Barbecue

TIMING
9 am – 10:00 pm

CONTACT
77429737

EXTRA
Karaoke



THE DINING

I don't think anyone who wants to come to a place like The Chew should be in a hurry. This is a place to eat, drink and be merry at one's leisure.

about the barbecue that comes at Nu 200 per head. Affordable and succulent, it is a must for foodies.

After the hearty barbecue, thali, or the regular Bhutanese meal, you may want to saunter over to the bar to indulge in a little bit of crooning – depending on how much you've had to drink by then.

The karaoke at The Chew has a

large collection of English and Bollywood numbers to keep the spirit of an outing going.

Something to bear with, however, the service is not the fastest, but then I don't think anyone who wants to come to a place like The Chew should be in a hurry. This is a place to eat, drink and be merry at one's leisure. 

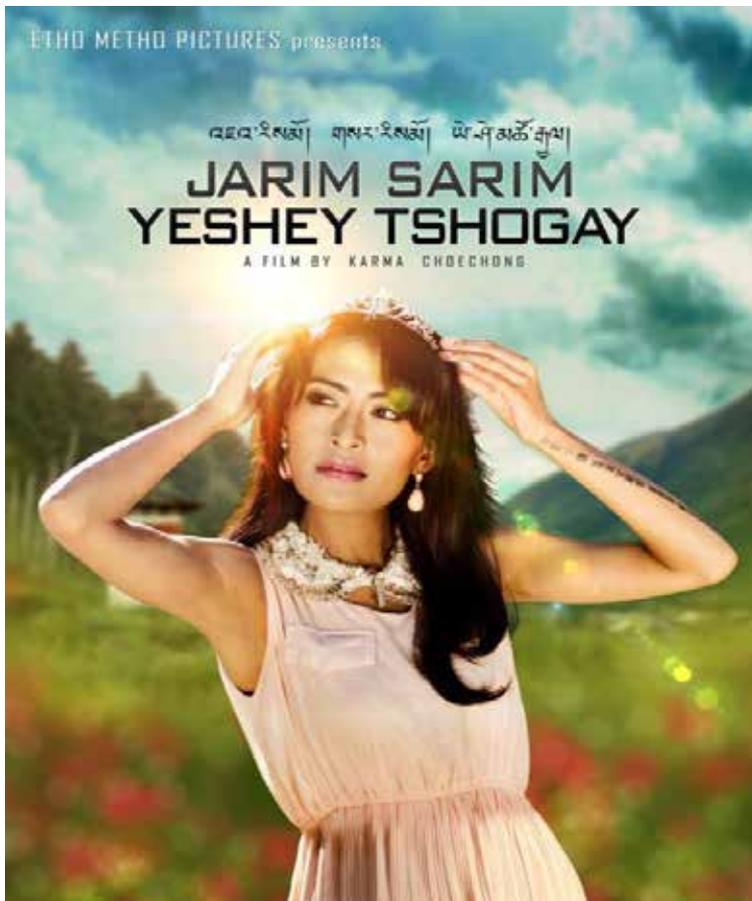
By *TSSHERING DORJI*



BARBECUE



REVIEW MOVIE



DIRECTOR

Karma Choechong

CAST

Tshokey Tshomo Karchung, Ulap Lekey, Phurba Thinley

Synopsis

Jarim Sarim Yeshey Tshogay is about a poor school girl who dares to dream of becoming Miss Bhutan one day.

Jarim Sarim Yeshey Tshogay

No matter what, pursue your dreams once you have dared to dream. Jarim Sarim Yeshey Tshogay is a poor school going girl who does just that despite an alcoholic father who stands in the way of her dreams. He fails her in every way, even to the extent of neglecting to pay her school fees. Yeshey, however, gains the sympathy of the principal of her school, and continues with her education. Driven by an inner determination, Yeshey manages to perform well in her studies. She is popular at school and she thrives in her social life there. She nurtures her dream to become Miss Bhutan one day, but this doesn't go down well with her father when he learns of her desires and disparages her.

In some ways Yeshey Tshogay's story may not be different from that of many young girls in Bhutan. Pursuing their passions, which may not necessarily be what their parents want – despite the parent's absence in providing the guidance to them in their early formative years – can lead to not only an unfulfilled and unrealized life, but also unhappiness.

The story poignantly portrays what might be the state of many girls in the country who often wind up sparing their dreams for the cause of their family or because of overwhelming disapproval to what they want to achieve. The strong underlying message in the



The story poignantly portrays what might be the state of many girls in the country who often wind up sparing their dreams for the cause of their family or because of overwhelming disapproval to what they want to achieve.

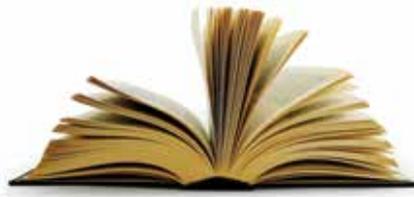
movie is that empowering young girls and women can help them become who they want to be.

In some ways it is ideal that the character assuming Yeshey Tshogyal's role is none other than Tshokey Tshomo Karchung, who was herself the first to win the Miss Bhutan contest when it was initiated in 2008.

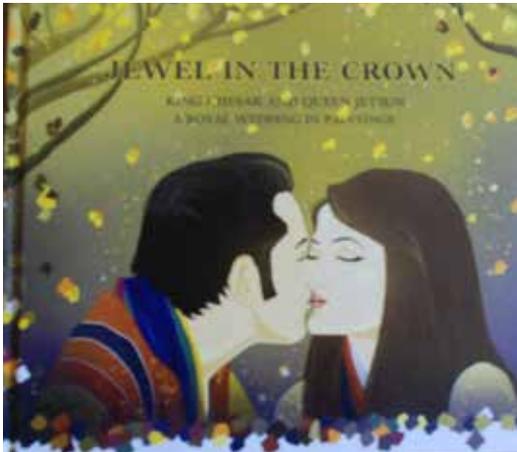
Ulap Lekey, meanwhile, gives a great performance in his role as a transgender and the chemistry between Tshokey and Ulap Lekey is palpable. This production by Etho Metho Pictures, with established actor Karma Choechong behind the cameras as director, is well worth the watch.



By *TSHERING DORJI*



REVIEW BOOK



A picture book, *Jewel in the Crown* is Bhutan's own story of the King and Queen that beats any fairy-tale.

As a little girl, or even a little boy who fancied fairy tales, reading and thumbing through story and picture books of Kings and Queens, Prince and Princesses, might have been something you enjoyed in your childhood. But like all other books that we grew up reading, these were tales from a foreign land and although we did learn a great deal about the world and other cultures, there was very little to read or learn of ours, because there were no books from or on Bhutan.



PRICE
Nu. 1,200

PUBLISHER
BMC Pvt. Ltd

This is not the same today for the younger Bhutanese generation. The *Jewel in the Crown*, a book of illustrations about the royal wedding, is one such example of how it has changed for the new generation of Bhutanese. A picture book, *Jewel in the Crown* is Bhutan's own story of the King and Queen that beats any fairy-tale, because it is based on real events. For Bhutanese, this book can be likened to the classics of the Brothers Grimm, but while fairy-tale like in theme, it is even more special because it is a true story capturing moments from that historical event.

Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen launched the book to much acclaim, for the book is a delectable collection of graphic paintings of the three-day celebrations of the Royal Wedding in October of last year. It captures this beautiful memory without being text heavy, and the colors of Bhutan are perfectly captured by

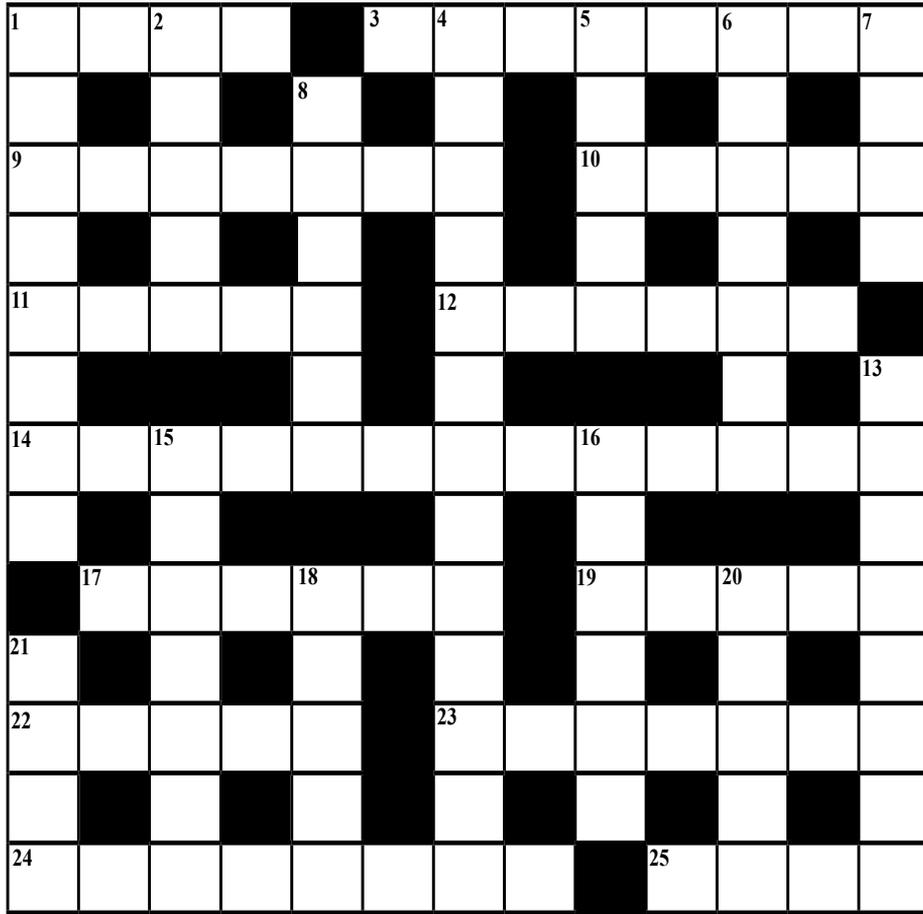
artist, Sharon Rani. The style manages to move away from the more traditional methods of painting that we are used to, without losing the Bhutanese flavor and nuances. The paintings are digital illustrations done using Wacom Cintiq, an interactive drawing tablet.

This is a gem of a book. It allows readers particularly to own a part of an event that is usually elusive and happens only in far-away, fairy-tale lands. It also allows them to understand the traditions involved in the Royal Wedding celebrations, because from the pages they are able to grasp the spirit of Bhutan as a nation and people at a historic time. For once, children and adults in Bhutan can own their own fairy tale, which they can share it with friends outside Bhutan. Though priced at a steep Nu. 1,200, the 60 pages book would be great for any collection.

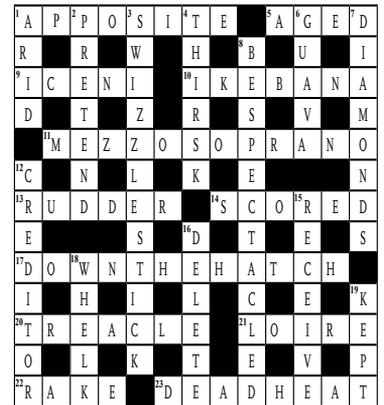


By KARMA CHODEN

QUICK CROSSWORD



Last Month's Solution



Solution Next Month

Across

- 1 Church benches (4)
- 3 Vindictive (8)
- 9 In the wrong (2,5)
- 10 Thick — compact (5)
- 11 Endured (5)
- 12 Tell (6)
- 14 Languid and ineffectual (13)
- 17 Art of dwarfing trees (6)
- 19 Wine from northern Spain (5)
- 22 Customary (5)
- 23 Spanish princess (7)
- 24 Amaze (8)
- 25 Legal document (4)

Down

- 1 Co-operate (4,4)
- 2 Thin crisp biscuit (5)
- 4 Father as head of the household (13)
- 5 Ebbing and flooding (5)
- 6 Zealot (7)
- 7 Terminological inexactitudes (4)
- 8 "I've found it!" (Archimedes) (6)
- 13 Enjoyable (8)
- 15 Game played on a lawn (7)
- 16 Conflict (6)
- 18 Hairdresser's establishment (5)
- 20 Proprietor (5)
- 21 Mountain lion (4)



We, the staff and the Management of Thimphu Thromde would like to extend our warmest wishes to His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck on the joyous occasion of his 33rd Birthday.

Nima Dorji speaks out on his harrowing journey of how drugs transformed his life from bad to worse in a very short period of time and what it now means to be a recovering addict.

At the age of 14, Nima Dorji was filled with a sense of admiration at how the senior and some of the wealthier boys in school sauntered around in a state of overbearing confidence, owning the very space they occupied. On the other hand, he was a kid unsure of himself, and the very ground he walked on. Socio-economically he belonged to the lower-income group with his parents running a small paan-shop to sustain a living for the family. He hadn't come unto his own, as yet, and wanted desperately to overcome his insecure self and be like them. Add on his diminutive stature to an already crippling low self-esteem, and the environment was ripe for trouble.

Nima, in many ways, was no different from any teenager. He wanted to be cool, he was trying to discover his identity, and he was vulnerable and impressionable. Appearances are very important to many children at this age, and they are often misled by what they see. Peer pressure and wanting to belong; a lack of guidance from parents, who owing to their own lack of exposure and ignorance fail to instill in their children a sense of confidence no matter what their background;

parents who don't have the time or relate to the emotional struggles of their children. These are often reasons that lead them to go astray.

In the school system, he found himself lost. Teachers seemed to notice only the kids who were academically strong, or loud enough to get noticed. Shy children like him disappeared or faded into the background with nobody really noticing how badly they were performing, and even if they did, they probably couldn't monitor so many children. He was a weak student and he feared his teachers who were used to openly reprimanding and punishing students. For students like him there was nothing to look forward to in school apart from hanging out with friends. Nothing motivated or stimulated learning.

The big boys flaunted their bad-boy image into the faces of innocents like Nima, who wanted nothing but to emulate their behavior. All of a sudden smoking seemed pretty cool. Even though Nima didn't like it much at first, he found himself working at acquiring that image and soon he was puffing a stick or two to mask his inhibitions. Pretty soon, he was beginning to feel quite



like them – the cool kids. This boosted his self-image and what he thought, his sense of self. He began hanging out with the older boys who seemed to maneuver their way around school pretty well.

Nima can barely recall when the transition from cigarettes to smoking marijuana occurred, but it was fast. As an extremely shy kid, who had little supervision from home – even though his parents were still together they were busy working hard – and struggling academically at school, smoking seemed to work wonders at helping him forget his emotional struggles and to overcome his shyness.

When he walked into his classroom, he could now feel his earlier fear of teachers slowly dissipate and be replaced by nonchalance. Marijuana seemed to alleviate his mood and was something he “enjoyed immensely.” Studies from NIDA (The National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens) reveal the impact early drug use has on a developing brain, re-wiring its communication system and sometimes causing irreparable damage. One thing is clear that the earlier the substance abuse, the stronger the addiction and the harder it becomes to get off these substances.

The main ingredient in cannabis (marijuana) is the delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol, commonly known as THC which produces a “high” and a general feeling of well-being. With cannabis, Nima experienced feelings that life was finally becoming better for him. But long-term use of marijuana can lead to respiratory problems

and an increased risk of cancer as cannabis smoke contains numerous carcinogens. According to NIDA, the first time people use drugs, it’s usually a conscious decision they’ve made. But once people become addicted, they are dealing with a brain disease. Each drug of abuse has its own individual way of changing how the brain functions. But in most cases, it doesn’t really matter which drug a person is addicted to; many of the effects it has on the brain are similar.

There have been references to marijuana as a “gateway” drug, and although the debate on whether smoking marijuana leads to other drug use, it could also be that some personalities or chemical make-ups are more prone to abusing harder drugs once they start smoking marijuana, while for others it may not. But combine that personality with a teenage brain and yearning for something harder will be the course. Soon Nima was not content with just smoking cannabis. His desire and yearning to try other forms of drugs became strong. Cannabis was his staple but he would alternate between chemicals and alcohol throughout his addiction. The chemicals or prescription pills that he took were widely available across the borders and was being smuggled in by drug users for trade or personal consumption. Nima found the drug of choice was Nitrosunio, Relipin, and SpasmoProxyvon- drugs that seemed to help “alter chemical levels in the brain impacting mood and behavior”.

“My progression from cigarettes to cannabis and chemicals was so rapid that before I knew it,



My progression from cigarettes to cannabis and chemicals was so rapid that before I knew it, I was helplessly hooked.



I was helplessly hooked,” Nima said. With cannabis, he felt he was cruising through life, but with the chemical drugs he felt invincible. This landed him in trouble with his school management, the police and eventually his parents.

“I was locked up by the police about 13 to 14 times. I wouldn’t know what happened at nights, but in the morning my wrists would be hurting. I hated the mornings, especially because my whole body felt different and I would be filled with guilt and shame.” It became a routine of self loathing every morning when he would promise himself to quit drugs, but by evening his resolve would have melted away as he began hunting for his next high.

Nima’s relationship with his family deteriorated. It hurt him to see how much pain and anguish he put his family through, but now there was nothing he could do to avoid it. He had become an addict and everybody was rendered helpless. In an attempt to stop him, his family tied him



NIMA DORJI

up, locked him in the house, and even beat him. But, instead of giving up drugs, Nima began alienating his family instead, because that, he found, was easier. His father eventually gave up and slowly shut Nima out of his life. On the other hand, he emotionally manipulated his mother into giving him money to sustain his habit.

For him his priority was to get his daily dose rather than plan on how he could stop. His situation was so bad that he started the day by popping 3-4 pills in the morning progressing as the day went on. He stole from his parents and had reached the stage of doing anything when he needed to get his pills. His friends and family were at a loss on how to deal with his situation. He was keeping company with people like himself. It didn't matter if he liked the person or not, as long as drugs were involved and available. Emotionally he had become incapable of caring for anyone, as he slowly became a slave to the only thing he cared about. "I remember there was a girl whom I liked but she wanted me to stop drugs. I didn't care for her that much to stop drugs. For me drugs were more important, otherwise life seemed meaningless."

Long term drug use can lead to decreased libido, anxiety, blurred vision, sleep disruption, headache, nausea, agitation as well as an increased risk of psychotic symptoms like schizophrenia. Inevitably Nima suffered from severe paranoia and hallucinations, where he felt that someone was out to "get him." Loud noises triggered panic attacks

causing him to run around turning off all the lights to hide from his attackers. Other times he felt extremely lonely and empty. "I hated the feeling of loneliness and it was during these episodes that I would vow to stop once and for all."

Nima lacked the courage and the self-will to acknowledge his problem and to seek help. And so it was a shock when he found himself at REWA, an erstwhile rehabilitation centre in Thimphu. His friends had put him at this facility while he was completely wiped out one day. He couldn't deal with it and after a month found himself back on the streets popping pills.

There was a second attempt and he stayed in for six months, but he relapsed within a fortnight. As a renewed feeling of desperation and guilt hit him, he went back again a third time. "This was the first four months of my life where I truly believed I could live without drugs." He fortified his resolve with promises to become a better son to his suffering mother and slowly began his recovery. That was seven years ago.

Nima successfully weaned himself off drugs and although he had a great deal to be proud of, having beaten the odds, he was now confronted by another problem. Having dropped out of school and not worked a day in his life, Nima didn't know where to start. In the first few years of his recovery he was filled with a sense of accomplishment, but there was a worry about what he could do with his life next. This could have all gone up in smoke if he allowed himself to get



I hated the feeling of loneliness and it was during these episodes that I would vow to stop once and for all.



HELP DETAILS

If you know anyone or have a loved one suffering from an addiction problem you should contact one of the rehabilitation centers in Thimphu, or the contacts given below:

Dr. Chencho
PABX - 325245
Extension - 2362

Dr. Nirula
Extension - 2363

Youth Drop In Centre
Ph. No. 334751

Lama Shenphen
Email: shenphen-zangpo@yahoo.co.uk

depressed by the fact that there were no jobs for him. These are hard truths that many addicts are confronted with, and many aren't always strong enough to deal with it. But Nima was lucky to find himself in a very fulfilling and purposeful role that he carved out for himself by counseling others like himself. The Drop-In Center for addicts is run by the Youth Development Fund, and Nima feels good that he is able to make something out of his life for others who are struggling with the same issues he once battled.

"The seven years, in some ways, have been more difficult because as a recovering addict and now a productive member of my family, I am responsible for my own survival and every day is a challenge," he said.

Nima is now 29 years old and may be starting out a little late in life, but better late than never. He hopes to start his own business. "I can only become a better man now," he says smiling. "A voice tells me that I will be in the service of other people." 

By KARMA CHODEN



Pasakha Industry

A few power intensive industries at the Pasakha industrial estate are turning off their gas cleaning plants (GCP) at night to cut down costs.



Bhutan

Bhutan- ranked 33 out of 176 countries in the corruption perception index.



Warehouse rents have been shooting through the roof in Phuentsholing. Two years ago, the same space of about 2,000sqft, which cost Nu 15,000 had today soared to Nu 30,000 a month.



Ugyen Dema

The National Women Cricket Team's captain, for being the player of the match in the ACC Women's Championship in Thailand.



Samdrup Jongkhar

For the most disappointing and the poorest of performances among the 20 dzongkhags.



The Bhutan Kuen-Nyam party (BKP) introduced three candidates from Zhemgang, Dagana and Punakha, taking the total of their candidates, including their president, to 14.



Money supply in the economy in the last fiscal was recorded at 5.8% as compared with 23.6% in the 2010 fiscal year.



B-Mobile

Despite installing measures to improve cellular services in Punakha, during the Chakarasamvara last month, B-Mobile users were still unable to connect their calls.



Tourism Council of Bhutan

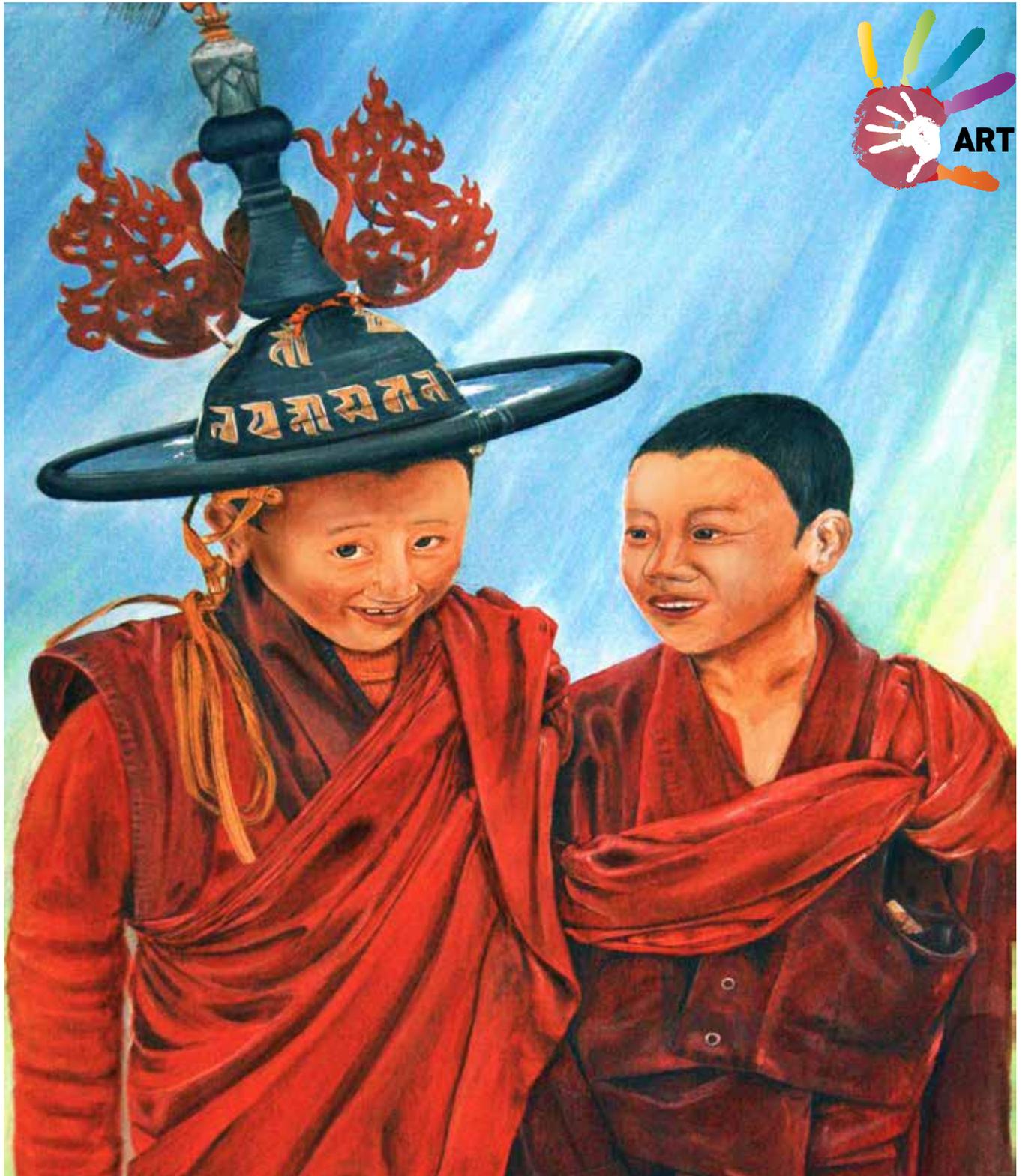
For meeting its tourist arrival target of 100,000 for 2012. A total of 105,414 tourist visited Bhutan last year.



The energy sector's contribution to the government exchequer, was expected to be less by Nu 500M this year.



Fines collected from traffic rule offenders increased threefold last year, compared to 2011. More than Nu 31M in fines were collected in 2012, Nu 10M more than the amount collected in 2011.



The Piece: Innocent Smiles. Medium: Acrylic

"I believe in the need for everyone to express themselves, be it in any form."

Sonam Chopel, Artist.

This and other works of art may be viewed at the *Terton Art Gallery*, Thimphu.





TERTON
GALLERY

B Y K E L L Y D O R J I

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tertonbhutan@gmail.com
5th floor, Zimchu apartments,
Wongzin Lam, PO Box 354, Thimphu, Bhutan





In an interview with the RAVEN, the party spokesperson of Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, **Tenzin Lekphell**, told The Raven about the party's democratic ideals and its Nyamrup spirit for a new future.

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa was the first new party to declare its interest to participate in the 2013 elections. Yet, you were the last to register with the ECB. Why the delay?

Just because we were the first one to declare doesn't mean that we have to be the first to register. It is always better to take time and [understand] the consultative wisdom of the people of different backgrounds. We are establishing a political institution that will define Bhutanese democracy for generations and change the landscape of Bhutanese politics. Therefore it's better to take time and do things in full awareness. We needed time to build a committed and strong team to contest the 2013 elections. Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, as a political institution, must deserve to contest the election and the people at large.

So DNT's ideologies is actually based on consultation with the people and their needs? Do people really know what they want?

Consultation with the people is a must in the process of democracy. Every voice counts. We will take the consensus of the majority but will never forget the humanity of the minority. A chain is as good as its weakest link. A nation is as good as

how we treat our poorest section of the society, how we treat our senior citizens with respect and dignity and how we maintain our values of Tha-dam-tsig Lay-jum-day. We believe that we are because of who we are. We are in this journey together. That is the Nyamrup spirit.

Your party seems to emphasize change and continuity. Don't you feel the two contradict each other? What change then?

Change is the essence of life. Whether we like it or not change will happen and we must embrace change positively and change for the better. Change will only come if we challenge the status quo. We cannot move forward without [a] vision for the future which should be shaped by the values and wisdom of the past. Goethe said, "we must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden". We must modernize and adapt economically, culturally and socially to the needs and habits of the time while keeping alive the cohesive core value structure that binds the society. Demographically the youth population is more than 60 percent. Our belief systems, ideas, attitudes, customs and institutional arrangements must be reinterpreted in the light of new



changes and collective current wisdom. A common denominator must be found and [we must] express ourselves accordingly. That also includes leadership. As someone said “life, not seminars, moulds leaders”. We have leaders from among the common people who have experienced life and know the pulse of the people, not who arrogantly believe to rule.

DNT as a political institution will follow the principles of democracy first within our own political setup. We will bring in change according to the needs of the people. We cannot reveal everything right now. For example our citizen’s dividend program is a noble reform but it’s important to put it on the stage of national debate. When we say continuity and change - continue with what is good for the people and the country, and change that is perhaps detrimental to the country and the people.

Although the DNT seems to portray itself as a united front in the media, there has been talk about core members of DNT sparring with each other. How true is this?

We are different and yet we are the same. We have fiery debates and discussions but at the end we know it is about our country, our people, and our end goal is the same. It’s always healthy and we are always open for arguments and discussions which will lead us to realization of our goal. Towards the end we come to a consensus. The great art of democratic practice must be first embraced within our own political setup. Now that

the storming phase is over, we are working together in [the] Nyamrup spirit as a team.

Your slogan revolves around “New times, New ideas”. Please explain.

New times always demands new innovative and creative ideas. If we look at the history, every civilization has moved forward on innovative and creative ideas. We must put fresh energy and new perspective and wisdom into the national leadership. We will not want Bhutan only in the museums and bask on the past glories. We will promote the culture of innovation and creativity. We cannot depend on the world to create and innovate for us. We must play our own role in the global sphere.

What is the party doing to involve people at the grassroots to participate in the democratic process?

Right from starting with the nomination of our candidates we have consulted with the people of that particular constituency. Our candidates are the choice of the people. This is democracy functioning at the grassroots level. Without the involvement of the people from the grassroots level democracy will never function.

It has been alleged that the new parties to come to the fore do not have time to build trust with the Bhutanese voters. Many feel that it is the civil servants who will make all the difference. What is your take on that?

Whatever time we have we will work towards building trust with the people. Trust must be the

starting point of every relation, be it with our own family members or between the people and politicians. Democracy must go beyond elections and politics. Without the trust and blessings of the people the system will not be democratic in the first place and secondly it will create a vacuum of mistrust and misunderstanding. So far, the civil servants have always been the spine of our society and even in our political setup. We have one of the most educated and refined civil servants and of course their decisions and wisdom must influence our national decision. We are confident that our civil servants will make the right decision. So, it’s understandable of their influence and we must work towards it.

Funding is a big problem in Bhutan. The same parties are going to the same set of people to explore funding. It is a rule that only members can participate. Does that pose a challenge?

We know that funding is a problem but when was it not a problem even in the context of national development? It’s about using whatever available in the best possible and judicious way.



We must put fresh energy and new perspective and wisdom into the national leadership.



TENZIN LEKPHELL



We are not here to force change by dictating it. We are not here to defend the corrupt and not here to force the moral principle of the few on the majority.

What is DNT's gender composition? And how important is it to lead by example to maintain gender sensitivity for the party?

As much as we have been trying to get more women to come out as candidates and supporters, it is a real challenge to get more women candidates. However, Nyamrup has a few good women of substance and social standing who will run as candidates. We may even have a woman leading Nyamrup in these new times.

There are five political parties registered as of now. How is DNT any different from the rest?

We are different in many ways. Fundamentally, our core values are based and formed on the social democratic principles of freedom, justice and solidarity. Nyamrup is not based on individual leadership but ideology-based. We believe that we are providing an alternative and recognize ourselves as a party that shall embrace and support good past policies and programs and bring in new thoughts and new ideas that need reform in the changing times.

Is there a possibility of parties merging before the elections?



Did any of the other parties approach DNT for a merge? What are your views on horse trading?

As of now, we have not discussed about any merger. However, if we should lose the primary and our candidates are stronger and invited by other parties, that possibility can be explored.

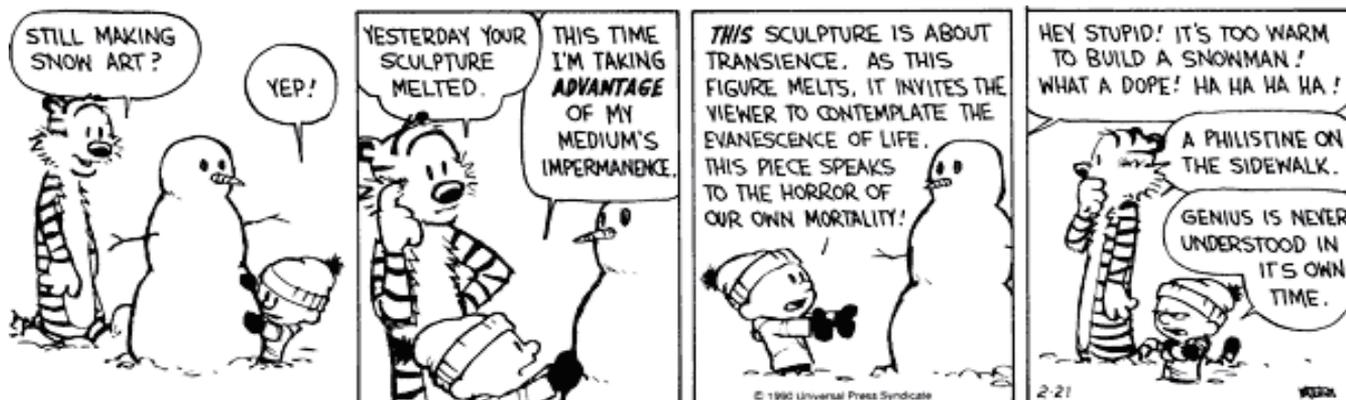
Since DPT was the first political party to govern and carry on the transition. In your view, did they do a good job? How differently would the DNT do things?

In hindsight, everything will be different and can be done differently. But we believe that to end it well we have to start well. It's about setting up a good precedent. As we begin the journey of democracy it's very important to instill and promote the right values and the noble principles of democracy because democracy is our future.

We are here not to take power but to empower people. We are here to inspire change and together to lead and power the change. We are not here to force change by dictating it. We are not here to defend the corrupt and not here to force the moral principle of the few on the majority.

We believe that Freedom, Justice and Solidarity must be the core values of the Nyamrup narrative. We believe that the spirit of democracy must prevail at the end and the way is the Nyamrup spirit. 🐦

Calvin & Hobbes



Beau Peep



Beetle Bailey



Cranes Vs Farmers

In an attempt to preserve the feeding ground for the Black Necked Cranes, the farmers of Bayuling and Bhimkhar under Trashiyangtse were asked to leave their fields fallow during winter.

A vast portion of roosting ground of the cranes in Bumdeling, Tashiyangtse was damaged during the 2004 flood. Since then, the cranes have been flying to Bayuling and Bhimkhar, near Tashiyangtse town, to feed during the day.

The villagers said they had to do away with winter farming activities under a lot of pressure from the Dzongkhag and Park officials.

They said they were promised compensation by the Dzongkhag administration and Park officials but nothing of that sort has materialized so far.

In order to protect the cranes, people have been restricted from installing barbed wires for fences and the ones that are already up have been asked to be brought down.

The issue is likely to prolong until the Dzongkhag and farmers come up with a solution, favorable to both cranes and farmers.



Vehicle dealers hit hardest by the rupee crises



The import of vehicles in the country has come down by half, compared with last year, making the automobile dealers the worst hit by the Rupee shortage. The transportation loan and imports was suspended by mid-March last year as a measure to address the Rupee crunch in the country.

Samden, a distributor of TATA vehicles in the country, earlier sold about 60 vehicles - both commercial and passenger, in a month. But after the ban came into force, they have been unable to sell more than three to four vehicles a month. The dealer still has around 43 vehicles in stock.

The State Trading Corporation of Bhutan (STCBL) also shares a similar fate. To sustain itself, the company will now focus more on servicing and spare parts supply. The employees in the sales department have been reduced to four from 25. Twenty one of them were transferred to other departments.

35 employees from Zindra Automobiles have been laid off beginning last month. Most of them were working in the sales department.

The Management said they were asked to leave because the business had slowed down ever since the vehicle import ban was imposed in March last year.

With the indication they were getting from the government that the ban would continue they had no option but to let the employees go.

According to the Royal Monetary Authority's Deputy Governor, Pushpa Lal Chettri, the suspension of vehicle import could continue for another six to seven months.



Tobacco law defaulters on the rise

Despite efforts to educate the public by the Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency, 32 tobacco related cases were filed in November last year. The cases resulted in arrest of 45 people. Not a single case of acquittal has been reported.

Over 68,300 sticks of cigarettes, 23,600 sticks of Bidis and 400 kilograms of chewing tobacco were seized in November last year.

An Official of the Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency said it has become important for media agencies to actively engage in informing the general public on tobacco laws as part of a social responsibility. Media advocacy would ultimately reduce people from indulging in illegal possession, transport, supply, distribute or sale of tobacco products, he said.



18 year-old abducted

An 18-year-old boy from Sarpang town was abducted at gunpoint in broad daylight on January 4. Residents said the kidnappers fired shots in the air to scare the crowd that had gathered.

The boy's guardian, a hotelier in Sarpang, said his children were in the reatarant, when the two men came and asked for beer. They then asked the boy at the counter to follow them to the kitchen from where they kidnapped him at gunpoint.

After 10 days in captivity, the kidnappers released Kiran Kumar Chhetri on January 13 for a ransom of Rs 500,000.

On January 14, the Kokrajhar district police, in the bordering Indian state of Assam, claimed that the two people involved in the kidnapping were killed in an encounter with the police. The Kokrajhar superintendent of police, Sunil Kumar, said the two men killed, aged between 25 and 30, belonged to a militant group called the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Kiran was the third person to be abducted in a span of a few months in Sarpang dzongkhag.

MOST DISCUSSED

770

Bhutan's foreign currency reserve stand as of June 2012 is US\$ 770 M.



14

bridges in the country have been constructed through a grant from the Japanese government.



19

fire incidents in the capital were caused by short circuit. This out of 63 reported cases in the past five years.



72

years, it will take to degrade all the land in the country, if land degradation continues at the current rate.



276

households with 1,726 families will be affected, from five gewogs under Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhag by the construction of the Ammochhu hydropower project.



There is no denying the new openness where the subject of politics is concerned. More people are discussing it today than ever before. More articles have been written on the subject during the past five years than in the last decade. Television talk shows discuss hitherto uncharted topics such as government policies with the naturalness that was earlier reserved for educational subjects such as preparing for an earthquake or washing hands while dealing with poultry products. People on social media forums have dropped traditional inhibitions regarding matters of politics and assert bold opinions and advice with the matter-of-factness previously adopted for subjects such as fighting tuberculosis. The old bashfulness has been replaced by a newfound smugness that takes on delicate political matters straight on.

'Taking a potshot' is a phrase that is now equally familiar to those active on online discussion forums as 'potluck' once was. The few that wrap themselves around their anonymity in a supposed blanket of wit also strive to go beyond the badly-sketched caricatures and pun-intended write ups to talk about pressing problems that concern the masses. The Gyelipoishing Land case and the PM's travels abroad continue to dominate the discussions but, in all that, there is also the periodic article that talks about the land case, for instance, in fairly serious terms.

These recent waves of development have sufficient critics to contain them and perhaps keep the at bay. Conservative elements resort to pressure tactics and convoluted arm-twisting. Political sentiments are often doled out to educate the masses and get them to differentiate between right and wrong, and self-styled intellectuals ramble away on television about whether we should adopt a western approach - simply because precedence needs to be set - quite forgetting that the worst examples of failed democracies can be found not far from here. The very fact that political discussions are no longer confined to closed circles is reason enough to celebrate. But as we continue to be obsessed with the trivia, we must also continue to focus on the larger picture. And who better to remind us of that than His Majesty the King:

"As we approach the elections of 2013, we must keep in mind the foundations of our Nation and prevent all ethnic, religious or political divisions. We must participate in democracy with the spirit of harmony and fraternity."

Flirting with politics thus far, chances are we will walk into the next elections much more enlightened. And, in future, democracy and politics may well be viewed as meaningful, not dirty. It is this hope that drives this magazine.

I should mention an exchange I had with one of my colleagues a year or so ago. I'd been writing political stories continuously at that point and had got somewhat tired of the subject. So I told him that I didn't think anyone was interested in or affected by politics anymore. "Bull!" he exclaimed politely. "Everything we do in our daily life is either a reflection or the result of our own, or somebody else's politics. Make no mistake about that."



MITRA RAJ