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"FREE"

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OF NIGHT HUNTING

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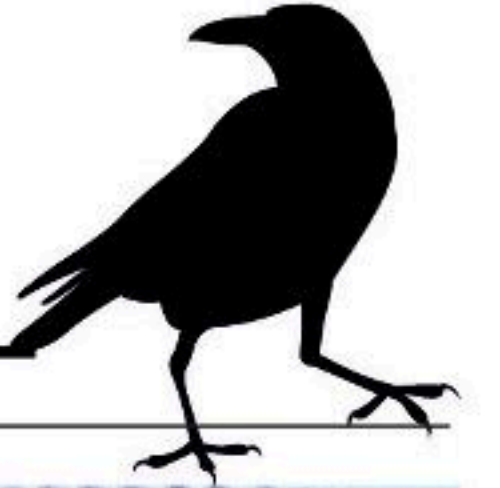
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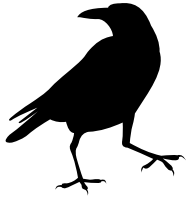
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The Raven

Your
Monthly
Guardian



A VICTORIOUS BHUTANESE TEAM
AT THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir/Madam,

I have been informed that *The Raven* is about the only magazine that focuses on the real issues that Bhutan faces. I'd be interested to subscribe to the magazine if it delivers what it promises. Would you be able to send me an electronic sample?

Kind regards,

Karin Meichtry (Ms.)

My name is Kitso Wangdi, a Bhutanese student studying at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. I have heard great reviews from most Bhutanese [about *The Raven*] and I am dying to get my hands on the magazine. A Huge Congrats on both the first and second [magazine] publications!

I am writing to you to inquire about the possibility of subscribing. I tried looking online but it seems you can only acquire it from home (Thimphu). Is there a way of subscribing to it online or is there any other way?

I would be most grateful if you could kindly give me [some] information on it.

Naaame Saame Kadinche!

Kitso Wangdi

I am a regular reader of *The Raven*, and I must say that the magazine is getting better with each issue. I hope it will sustain and establish a clearer identity for itself.

Having said that, I would like to add that most of the articles are Thimphu-centric. If issues from rural areas can be given more importance, it would bolster the magazine even further.

Best wishes for the team.

Namgay, Thimphu. Email: namgay86@gmail.com

The Raven is a wonderful read because it contains some in-depth, well researched and well written articles covering various issues.

However, the issues are not available in Trashigang, and Samdrupjonkhar. I would appreciate if you could broaden your reach in order to gain further ground.

Pema Wangda, Mongar. Email: pwandga@yahoo.com



Letters to the Editor or to *The Raven* will be edited for clarity and space and can be published, unless specifically asked not to.

KUZUZANGPO!

Before we even know it, the elections will soon be upon us. But aside from DPT, the other parties have barely had time to put together their team, leave alone introduce them to us. Indeed there has been very little time for the people to be familiarized with the candidates, and the media has hardly had time to grill them about the issues. This makes one realize that the time given for campaigns and familiarization is too short, which is not good if we truly want good and competent people in office.

There are many things flawed about the whole process; like requirements that a civil servant has to resign in order to join politics, necessity of a college degree, and the time span for campaigning.

Although it is too late to hope for any change to occur in the process this time, we hope to cover some of these issues as we gear up towards the big day so that it will be something to think about in the future.

One important issue for whichever party wins this time is that of their support for a free and independent media. Achyut Bhandhari, a former government official, has raised this concern in his column by highlighting the grave situation the media houses in Bhutan, including *The Raven*, faces today. If the intent for the government is to build strong democratic institutions, it has to realize and understand that a fair media policy regarding advertising and subsidies has to be seriously considered. This is because the media – even though it is not perfect – is one area where private citizens do the work of strengthening the institutions of a free press and free speech, and if the government truly believes in that principle, whether it agrees or disagrees with what is reported, it will find ways to support it.

We have a great collection of articles this month covering a range of issues – youth -unemployment, an interview with one of Thimphu’s much admired social workers, events, and reviews. But our cover story on Special Education takes us to another area that has languished on the back burner for a long time. It is good to know that the Education Ministry has taken immense initiatives despite a lack of resources to initiate this program. It has a long way to go and might even be helped by wealthy private individuals in Bhutan who can take up causes and support these programs. Volunteerism and Philanthropy are picking up in our society, but as Aum Chime P.Wangdi from Tarayana Foundation pointed out recently in her interview with BBS, we need more people to give to “people causes” rather than just to the gods. There was a great outpouring of contributions for the Wangdiphodrang Dzong when it burnt down. If only that kind of support could also be rallied for a “people cause” – disadvantaged people’s cause – and if our people would be as generous, imagine how much could be done to better human lives; better our own society. We have to move past waiting for funds only from other people, from outside, especially for these causes.

Sonam Ongmo
Editor-at-Large



Post

Letters to the Editor
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WRITE TO US



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Achyut Bhandari served for 30 years in the civil service before retiring as the Managing Director of Bhutan Post. He is currently the Vice President of Bhutan Nyamrup Tshogpa.



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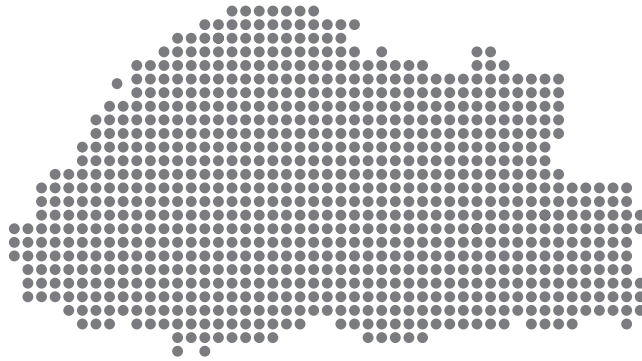
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NEWS IN BRIEF

FEB



HAA

Haa experienced heaviest snowfall

Five western Dzongkhags recorded between 5cm and 22cm snowfall between February 16-17. According to data officials from the meteorology division gathered, Haa experienced the heaviest snowfall - 22cm, followed by Gasa with 20cm and Thimphu 8.5cm. Bumthang and Paro recorded 5cm of snow cover each.

THIMPHU

Domestic violence prevention bill endorsed

National Council members endorsed the Domestic Violence Prevention bill on February 18. Of the 20 members present at the session, 19 voted for the bill. The National Assembly presented the bill to the lower house after its adoption during the ninth session of Parliament last year.

WANGDUE

Truck runs over a nine-year-old boy

A nine-year-old boy was killed at Bijitshukha on the Wangdue-Tsirang highway when he came under the tyre of a reversing tipper truck. The incident occurred at Bijitshukha under Daga geowg in Wangdue, around 26 km from Wangdue Zam. Police report said the left tyre had completely crushed the boy's head. The 22-year-old driver from Dagana in his statement to the police said that he did not see the boy behind the truck when he was reversing.

THIMPHU

Raise in perks for LG members

Gups, mangmis and tshogpas will now get a raised annual allowance equal to a month's basic salary for official tours within the gewog. This was announced on February 6, at the closing of the seventh annual gup's conference in Thimphu. Local government officials are paid the allowance or thue instead of travel and daily allowances (TA/DA), mileage and porter and pony fares that are paid to civil servants.

TRONGSA

Mangdechu electro mechanical works

An Indian manufacturing company, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL), has been, once again, awarded the electro mechanical works for the 720MW Mangdechu project in Trongsa. The company based in Bhopal and Bangalore had also installed electro mechanical equipments in the hydropower projects in Chhukha, Kurichhu, Tala, Punatsangchhu I and Punatsangchhu II.

TRASHIGANG

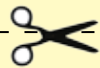
Chorten vandels apprehended

Trashigang police detained two men for vandalising seven chortens at Lengkhar and Chali in Khamdhang, Trashiyangtse, on January 17 and 18. The suspects from Khamdhang in Yangtse and Yangnyer in Trashigang were arrested in Lengkhar and Chali on January 30. Trashigang superintendent of police Major Dorji Khando said the suspects confessed to the crime. He said they had vandalised chortens in Mongar, Trashigang and Bumthang in the past.

The Raven



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The Raven 

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quotes



The confidence and stature we enjoy as a unique nation today were born from the hard work of generations of Bhutanese, complemented by the extraordinary friendship we have with India.

We've learned the hard way that we can't be a GNH bubble in a GDP world and that we can't build a GNH society in one corner of the Himalayas surrounded by a world obsessed with accumulation of material wealth at all costs.



Bhutan can just stay quiet, stay happy and get on with its own life, why should Bhutan take on its shoulders the responsibility for saving the world.

The issue of how Bhutan builds its relationship with other countries or the rest of the world is a matter for Bhutanese people to decide.



The biggest problem I see in politics, is that there are no role models.



HIS MAJESTY THE KING

during the Indian Republic Day State Banquet hosted for Him by the President of India.



PRIME MINISTER JIGMI Y. THINLEY

to the International Expert Group, working on the New Development Paradigm.



HUNTER LOVINS

professor of sustainable business management at Bainbridge graduate institute and Bard College, in an interview with local media.



RANJAN MATHAI

Indian Foreign Secretary during his visit to Bhutan.



DORJI CHODEN

Bhutan's first female engineer who will contest the 2013 elections as a Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa candidate.



On NC elections

It's a privilege for me to share with you my intention to seek nomination as a candidate of Tashigang for the NC elections. *Dasho Sonam Kinga via twitter.*



On Political Parties

Considering political parties- remember folks; the more ostentatious their plans and policies- the less likely its gonna be true. *Jurmi chhowing on twitter.*



On disability

We can't ignore any section of our society. There is an urgent need to address the problems faced by the disabled. PDP has plans for them. *PDP via twitter.*



On Politics

Learn Dzongkha in 5 years, you get paid too. Become an MP. *Tashi Gyeltshen on twitter.*

The Raven



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PLAY



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ART

highlights

KEY → Date ● Time ● Place ● Venue



SPORTS

FOOTBALL

- MARCH 2-7
- ▼ CHANGLIMITHANG STADIUM

Indian league football club Sikkim United will play a friendly match with Drukpol club on March 2, Zimdra FC on March 5 and Yeedzin FC on March 7. Baichung Bhutia, will be representing Sikkim United.

BASKETBALL

- MARCH 15
- ▼ THIMPHU

With 12 basketball clubs registered, the first Thimphu basketball league is scheduled for March 15. Winners of the league will get the opportunity to represent the country in the annual South Asian Basketball Association (SABA) Club Championship.

FESTIVAL

PARO TSHECHU

- MARCH 23-27
- ▼ RINPUNG DZONG

The prestigious Paro Tshechu is held in honor of Guru Padmasambhava. It was first initiated by Paro Penlop, Gragpa Gyatsho in the 17th century.

GOMKORA TSHECHU

- MARCH 20-22
- ▼ GOMPHUKORA, TRASHIGANG

The festival draws people from all cross section of society in eastern Bhutan. A special visit is made by the Dakpa tribe from Tawang in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh (India). Many nomadic tribes from Merak and Sakten also come to witness the Tshechu.

EDUCATION FAIR

THE GREAT INDIA EDUCATION FAIR

- MARCH 9-10
- ▼ CHANGLIMITHANG STADIUM

The exhibitors - with a wide range of education and admission related information - will aid Bhutanese students with hundreds of college options in India. Over 100 colleges and schools have shown their interest to participate.

MEETING

BHUTAN INSURANCE SHAREHOLDERS MEETING

- MARCH 8
- ▼ TARAYANA CONFERENCE HALL, THIMPHU

During the 4th Annual General Meeting of Bhutan Insurance Limited, shareholders and board members will consider the Audited Accounts and declare dividends.

EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS IN BHUTAN

By
TSHERING
DORJI

Dorji Phuntsho nearly had a nervous breakdown caring for his son who suffered from scoliosis and a speech disorder since birth. Every day of the past 13 years had been a challenge for Dorji and his wife who have two other children. Scoliosis is a disorder that causes an abnormal curving of the spine. The spine runs down the back, hence known as the backbone, naturally curving a little. But people who suffer from scoliosis have a spine that curves too much like the letter C or S. A few years ago, the father of three reluctantly enrolled 13-year-old Jigme in Changangkha Lower Secondary School, Thimphu.

Three years on, Jigme is beginning to show signs of improvement. His back may not be straight, but his speech has improved steadily. This has all been made possible by a little known pilot project, initiated in the lower secondary school by the education ministry in 2001, which introduced “Special Education” to children with special needs.

Though still small even after a decade of its introduction, the project in Changangkha School is helping 35 children like Jigme overlook and perhaps overcome their disabilities. It is a start in

that it is providing the basic opportunity we can to such children who otherwise do not have a place in our schools.

Eight Special Schools have been introduced across the country and this could eventually change the lives of hundreds of children who are disabled and developmentally challenged. Right now the only place for them is in hospitals, while others stay confined at home with parents and without the medical support and care that is required.

“Things are different today,” Jigme’s father, Dorji Phuntsho, said of his son. “He’s like a different person now as he doesn’t have to be constantly monitored like we had to in the past.”

While there are success stories like Jigme’s and the introduction of Special Education has undoubtedly benefited so many of these children, critics (including some teachers dealing directly with these children) worry that those with severe disabilities are not getting the proper care they need even in these special schools or in hospitals around the country.

“The project has put greater pressure on us because it is an extremely demanding job and we don’t have the proper training



to coach children with developmental problems,” said a teacher assigned the responsibility of teaching disabled children in a Thimphu school. Come to think of the challenges that teachers have ordinarily with normal children. Caring for and trying to provide instruction and lessons to children that are developmentally challenged requires an extraordinary amount of effort to help



them make progress.

“I’m worried that in the future these projects will still remain the way it is at present, and not move forward,” he said, referring to the lack of resources at the education ministry.

The debate is about whether these otherwise healthy, but disabled, children are being provided the right kind of teachers, facilities and medical services, not just

to make their lives meaningful, but also to help sustain themselves in the future.

Although modern education was introduced to Bhutan in the 1950’s there was no school or institution that catered to any form of disability till 1973.

Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuck a school for the visually impaired came up in Khaling,



A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
in a classroom at Changankha School

Trashigang, in 1973. And so began Bhutan’s initiative to include disabled children to participate in the education process.

Today, the Special Education program is looked after by a committed Division under the Department of School Education. It was initially set up as a unit in 2000 but it has over the years grown into a full-fledged division.

Special Education in Bhutan,

COVER STORY

as it is elsewhere, is designed for students with special educational needs, which requires additional support services in the form of trained teachers, teaching approaches, equipments, and special care within and outside the classrooms.

But even though Special Schools have sprung up across Bhutan boasting enrollment of 343 students with various disabilities, a lack of funds and trained specialized teachers continues to remain a serious challenge. “My son even after a year in school finds it very difficult to cope because he often says that the teachers lose their patience with him,” said one parent on condition of anonymity.

Teachers, on the other hand, feel, they are doing their best with whatever little is provided to them.

One of the problems seems to be that these children with developmental disabilities are in classrooms meant for regular school children. In the west, special education costs a fortune and the teachers are specialized to teach only special needs classes. So to expect normal school teachers to cater to children with special needs is putting a little more of an onus on them.

“We cannot give them special care just because they are different from other kids. And the fact is that it is very difficult to teach children with special needs, especially so if you have to multitask and teach regular students at the same time,” one teacher said.

So far, there has been no effort to design a separate curriculum for children with developmental disabilities in the country



or to create a separate special needs class. The problem with putting a child with special needs in a classroom with normal children can have only downsides. It not only holds the teacher back from teaching the rest of the children if he or she gives too much to the child, or the child with special needs can go ignored because the teacher doesn't have the patience to deal with having to spare the extra energy and time

HER MAJESTY THE
GYALTSUN PRESENTS
AN AWARD TO
A CHILD WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS

for that child.

“Special Education is a complex process because of the diverse nature of disabilities,” said Pema Chopel, program officer for Special Education. “The ministry is doing its best but it does not have the capacity or the resources.”

He maintains that the National curriculum should be the goal and within that there should be accommodation, adaptation



THE PROBLEM WITH PUTTING A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN A CLASSROOM WITH NORMAL CHILDREN CAN HAVE ONLY DOWNSIDES.

and flexibility.

In Bhutan, the National policy on Special Educational needs, defines a child, as “having Special Educational Needs if he/she has a significant difficulty in performing any activity compared to the majority of children of the same age; has a barrier which prevents or hinders her/him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in school.”

That notwithstanding, there is a subtle but obvious discrimination against the disabled in Bhutan. People label them as “Shou”, lame or cripple, or “Tshagay” which could have connotations of endearment, but largely mean being an idiot or lacking intelligence. People even look at them unpleasantly, even if it is unintentional. As a result, only a few of them go to schools, while many are left to their fate in their

↑
TEACHERS
INTERACTING WITH
THE STUDENTS

villages and homes.

Others try to go to school, but make it only so far because they are physically unable to. There was a story in one of the papers several years ago in eastern Bhutan about a young disabled boy who was carried to school by his friend, everyday without fail. But after a few years as the boys got older, the friend was unable to carry him anymore so the disabled boy had to drop out.


Sonam Pelden, a mother of a young girl who is mentally and developmentally challenged said she preferred to keep her daughter at home rather than sending her to school. “My daughter is 15, but functions at the mental level of an 11 year old. I do not want to put extra stress on her and further complicate matters.”

COVER STORY

Although there are a lot of schools catering to specific disabilities like the Khaling School for the blind, or the Drugyel School for the deaf in Paro, the reality is that the Special Education program in Bhutan is only designed for children with mild to moderate disabilities like Speech Disorders, Autism, Down Syndrome, Scoliosis and Blindness.

The Special Educational needs policy was drafted in line with the principles of educating for Gross National Happiness, an initiative supported and promoted by the Education Minister himself to promote Green Schools for Green Bhutan, and to promote the Child Friendly School concept.

“The elements of Green School encompass the multiple dimensions of the learners’ lives - natural, intellectual, academic, social, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic and moral dimensions,”



SOME PARENTS ARE OF THE OPINION THAT A LOT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE TO HELP CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL AND PHYSICAL DISABILITIES.

the minister, Lyonpo Thakur S. Powdyel has said.

Yet, some parents are of the opinion that a lot still needs to be done to help children with developmental and physical disabilities.

“The Special Education division has to expand its activities. And, it should establish separate schools for special children and not club them together in schools with regular kids,” said a 42-year-old parent whose only child suffers from Autism. “Such children have different learning needs and individual learning capacities which require more attention from the teachers and they can’t get that in regular schools.”

In 2007, the parents of children with Special Needs formed a Parent Support Group. And although the support group fell through a few years later, they have once again come together to form an NGO called “Ability Bhutan Society”.

A member of the NGO said that the Special Education program in Bhutan has a few drawbacks, in that it does not cater to those who are severely disabled.

Nevertheless, the pilot projects being carried out in all the eight schools have been possible because of Rudolf J. Laager, president of LuKaDa International that has been supporting the program through the initiative of Bhutan foundation for the past five years.

Laager, who lives in New York, is a father of a child with Down Syndrome. But, unlike in Bhutan where there are no specialists to deal with such children, his son, Daniel, is now in the sixth grade because of the state-of-the-art facilities in the U.S. He can watch his favorite movies on You-Tube and even knows how to read and write.

So far, more than 400 teachers have been trained and sensitized through workshops conducted by Laager’s foundation in collaboration with the education ministry.

“We not only fund but also contribute knowledge to guide the program,” he said. “In the U.S. Special Education is demanded by the parents. But, here, it is encouraging to see that the government has taken the first move. Having said that, a lot more needs to be done.”

What may seem like a beacon of hope is that the foundation is rendering help to the Royal University of Bhutan in initiating a Masters program on special education.

“We will continue our support and we will try to establish a Special Education component in every school in Bhutan,” said Laager.

Laager is the son-in-law of Ms. Lisina Hoch, who was a classmate of the Her Highness the Royal Great Grandmother while they were students in Switzerland. He and his wife, Alix Laager, are committed to do all they can knowing that there are many parents in Bhutan who have the same challenges they do.

On a cold evening in New York on December 17, 2012, after the National Day celebrations of Bhutan, the family got together with their friends and some members of Bhutan Foundation and toasted to Bhutan. “We have given all our support to the Ministry of Education and we are very impressed with how much they are doing, but there are many challenges, and initiating something like this is never easy,” he said. “What is important is that



they have started it and everybody has to give their support to this initiative.”

According to a survey carried out by the National Statistics Bureau and UNICEF Bhutan in 2011, about 30 percent of Bhutanese children aged between two to nine years have at least one form of disability or the other. And more than one out of five children in Bhutan have a mild disability. There is a higher prevalence of disabilities among those living in rural areas at 23.1 percent compared with 14.1 percent in urban settings.

The findings of the report states that young children can also exhibit developmental disabilities or acquire the onset of other conditions, which can affect functioning in various domains: gross motor, fine motor, vision, hearing, speech, cognition, behavior and seizures.

A doctor in the pediatric department of the Jigme Dorji

Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu said his unit has recorded an increase in the number of pediatric cases with neurological disorders.

“Disabled children have different physical and mental needs. And while physical therapy may have somewhat come of age in Bhutan, other therapies are nonexistent,” he said. “We do not have the adequate equipment and facilities and to make matters worse, there is a shortage of trained staff.”

With support, guidance and facilities, like the one provided to disabled children by the Drak-Tsho Vocational Training Center, what heights these children can reach is amazing.

Twenty-seven year-old Palden with Mild Learning Disability has shown that if the right teachers can put them on the right course, anything is achievable. Palden won two gold and two silver medals at the special state-level sports

PALDEN WITH HIS TEAMMATES AT THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS HELD IN ATHENS, 2011

meet for the disabled in Sikkim, India, last year. In the same event, Bhutanese children suffering from disabilities did the nation proud by bringing home 16 medals altogether. Palden and his friends had, in 2011, put Bhutan in the number one spot in the Special Olympics in Athens.

“Give us the chance and we will show you what we can achieve,” Palden said, with a smile. 🐦

| Special Schools | No. of students |
|---|-----------------|
| Drukgyel L S S (Deaf Education Unit) | 73 |
| Drukgyel L S S | 62 |
| National institute for visually impaired, Khaling | 42 |
| Khaling L S S | 13 |
| Jigme Sherubling H S S | 13 |
| Changangkha M S S | 54 |
| Zhemgang L S S | 13 |
| Mongar L S S | 63 |
| Tendu H S S, Samtse | 10 |
| Total | 343 |

FEATURE



Deconstructing the Chibdrel & Marchang Ceremonies

By Sunny Tobgay

It's a sight we witness at any given scenario in Bhutan – the promotion of a high ranking official, during a visit by a head of state, other ceremonial events and even during the Royal Wedding. It seems like the scale of occasion doesn't matter; a *Chibdrel* and *Marchang* ceremony can make one small event as significant as the other with this simple, yet deep in content, ceremony. Many of us have probably stood by without even understanding why that man takes a ladle out of the pot to be blessed, what that white flag stands for, or make head or tail of those chants. And what about the little pieces of fruit and doma that we are handed out? The staid decorum and etiquette, common as it may be, surprisingly leaves many aghast when jostled about the actual significance. Just what is the story behind the riderless horse, the wine-dipping standup and those colorful dancers lining up an important guest?

The quest for the trails leading to these practices leads us back in time, far back as the 16th Century with the arrival of the Zhabdrung in Bhutan. It also has ties to events from the time of the historical Buddha.

To delve on, under Bhutan's unique code of conduct and etiquette, known as *Driglam Namzhag* is the Zhugdrel Phuensum Tshogpa ceremony. The ceremony comprises the *Chibdrel* and *Marchang* ceremonies amongst others.

Back in 1937, the Zhabdrung's visit to Punakha was marked by great reverence not only from the people of Bhutan but also from India and Nepal. He was so impressed with the gathering and what was offered to him that he said the gathering was a good omen, and named the place Punathangkha, meaning the Mouth of the Plain of Gathering.

The Zhabdrung instructed everyone to be seated in rows and served food items of droma (kaser), drizang (saffron), suja (butter tea), dresi (fried sweet rice), doma pani (beetle nuts and leaves) and a variety of fruits, while special prayers dedicated to his spiritual lineage were recited.

From that day onwards, the auspicious day of gathering became the origin of what is today the Zhugdrel Phuensum Tshogpa in Bhutan.

The Chibdrel Ceremony

Chibdrel in simple parlance is a ceremonial procession of men and horse. Chib means horse and Drel means line in uniformity.

According to religious texts, when the Buddha was imparting teachings in heaven, earthly monks and nuns wanted to invite the Buddha as people had not seen him for a long time. They approached a man called Mougyl whose son had mystical powers to ascend to Heaven. The son in turn went to invite the Buddha who agreed to come to earth. The son then came back and urged people to make preparations to receive the Buddha.

However, the people questioned whether the Buddha would appear magically or if he would walk down the road? The concern was that if the Buddha appeared magically, people would not be able to see him. And if he descended walking down the stairs, the Mutigpas (anti-buddhists) would feel that the Buddha possessed no magical powers.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the people, the Buddha agreed to walk down. So, the people built three staircases made of gold, pearl and glass.

It was in Udumvara where the Buddha descended. People came for the reception with various tokens – flowers

such as the lotus and coral, incense, unworldly crops and even a duck with a melodious voice. Following them were the precious gems, expensive embroidery and religious instruments.

The other incident that marks the importance of the *Chibdrel* was when King Zugchen Nyingpo of Magada brought a piece of the Buddha's robe back to earth from heaven.

King Zugchen Nyingpo was immensely wealthy and he had a close friend, King Utrayana of Dradrongna, who was equally wealthy. The two friends decided to use their wealth for a good cause. A Dramze (a pious renunciate) requested King Nyingpo to draw an image of the Buddha. Thus the king had to ascend to heaven to meet the Buddha with precious gems. He then requested the Buddha for a piece of cloth from his robe where he would draw the image of the Buddha.

On his return to earth, King Zugchen Nyingpo summoned the best artists to draw the Buddha's image. But the artists could not as they had not seen the divine one. The king then asked them to stretch the cloth and miraculously, the Buddha's image was formed. So, on that image, the artists painted.

The sacred image was sent to King Utrayana. King Utrayana, in order to receive the image, beautified his kingdom. He planted fragrance trees and flowers. Finally, when the time for the reception of the image came, he did so with different colored scarves and a *Chibdrel* ceremony.

Coming back to Bhutan, there are three types of *Chibdrel* processions – high, medium, and lesser levels depending on the importance

FEATURE

of the person. The longer ceremony takes over 45 different particulars with religious items carried by monks and earthly items carried by ordinary people. An ideal *Chibdrel* process is carried out with quite a number of fillers.

The procession occurs on an auspicious day designated for a special occasion such as high-profile promotions, marriages or major religious functions. It is led by a person, someone designated by astrological findings who represents and possesses a clean mind, body, luck and intelligence. He carries a white scarf that displays the emanation of Nyimo Delek (auspicious day) and Tashi Dargye (eight auspicious signs).

Following him is a white stallion, riderless. Its forehead is decorated and on its back is laid a white scarf displaying prints of Nyimo Delek and Tashi Tagye. On the scarf are placed three jewels. The stallion at the head of the procession signifies good omen as it is believed to have powers to resist evil.

In the religious legend, Changshay Balaha, a white horse manifestation of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) is said to have rescued many people from the underground and carried them back to earth. Thus symbolizing auspiciousness with the power to drive away evil spirits and install longevity.

Behind the white stallion, men walk dressed in red ghos beating drums and ringing bells. Two men in green ghos blow small horns. Then there are people carrying the Chogdar (directional flag), Tsendar (flag associated with a deity), Rudar (coy flag) and Gyaldar (victory banner). In the procession are people in armor and *Pa Chham* dancers followed by high profile officers. Behind them are people carrying various religious items like alter covers, Mandala (mystic circle), Zegyed (eight lucky articles), Gyalsid Naduen (the seven precious emblems), statues, stupas and incense.

In the group are also people holding earthly objects like Thrikheb (throne cover), Soelchu Jandum (water container), Chagsil Pangkhep (hand wash lap cover), Chitala (spit pot), Doma Bathra (doma pani container).

Finally followed by the Kudrung (monk prefect) whipping the ground, are the chief guests, body guards and attendants. Processing on either side of the *Chibdrel* are the Pawo dancers.

These days, the *Chibdrel* procession does not start all the way from the house of the person being honored as it was done back in the day. He travels in a car until the entrance to the venue and the procession begins from there.

However, an exemption is the promotion of the monastic elites where a *Chibdrel* process is not necessary as they reside within the Dzong.

When the *Chibdrel* procession arrives at the venue, people carrying Chogdar, Tsendar, Rudar and Darna Nga should stand behind the official who is promoted. Dancers and singers, office people and divisional heads should stand on the right side. On the left stands the escort team and people carrying the official's belongings. The promoted official will stand in the middle of the line. And so begins the *Marchang* ceremony.

The *Marchang* Ceremony

There is a belief in Tantric Buddhism that at the earth's beginning, the oceans churned so much that it led to the formation of a black smoke, the moon and the holy water. The gods and goddesses then rushed to drink the holy water which satisfied and rejuvenated their beings. From then on the holy water was considered an elixir by divine spirits. Today, the holy spirits are invoked in the form of wine during the *Marchang* ceremony.

In the olden days, visiting guests were received on half-way by the host with wine, serving as refreshment and

energy for the travelers. These days, after receiving the guests, only the chief guest pretends to taste the wine – a symbolic gesture on behalf of everyone present.

In the ceremony, the important deities invoked are Mahakala and Mahakali, the main guardian deities of the country. The glorious teacher, the four assemblies of deities, the Daka and Dakinies of the three worlds, the dwellers of carnal grounds and the guardians of directions are also significantly mentioned in the prayer. The prayers appease the deities for good luck and the successful completion of the occasion.

The ceremony is usually conducted for inauguration of new structures, promotions, marriages, archery tournaments and major school or institutional functions, and therefore they can vary in levels.

This ceremony is also conducted during the National Day and during His Majesty the King's dzongkhag



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tours. The ceremonies are always conducted outside in the open.

During the ceremony, a mat is spread in front of the chief guest's seat, on which a Chogdrom (low carved wooden table is placed and covered with a clean cloth, never black). The Changthro (wine bowl) placed on the right end of the Chogdrom and the Chemar (floor butter) on the left, with Phuechog (wine offering) on the middle.

The wine bowl is filled with freshly fermented grain with a bamboo-knit filter in it. Fixed on the rim of the bowl are three horns made of ivory or wood called Yangdrons. With one facing the server, the other two take on the server's right and left positions. The Yangdrons never face the chief guest. The Kuchu (ladle) is placed into the Changthro with the handle on the server's right.

At a level where the King is present, the offering of the Chemar is made by an astrologer (Tsilop), Phuechog by the Gyalzin and the Marchang by the Dzongda. Standing in order of the offerings, as soon as the Gyalzin picks up the Phuechog from the table, the Tsilop and Dzongda offer the Chemar and Marchang at the same time.

As the grace recites "Zhenyang Yulchog", the Phuechog and the ladle of the Chemar are put back in their respective places. The Marchang server

draws up fresh wine and passes in to the middle person, who then walks outside and throws it away. While coming back, the person makes a sign of tasting the freshly drawn wine and indicates and offering to the chief guest. Then he goes outside to throw it away. Returning, he carries a ceremonial flag which is offered to the chief guest. He then leaves from the right side of the Chogdrom, while the other two servers pick up the Chogdrom and the bowl, and follow.

The Details

The person serving Marchang stands near the Changthro, lowering and opening the left palm, while the right hand holds the ladle. As the wine grace "Om Ah Hung" is recited three times, he simultaneously offers the wine, lifting up the ladle and pouring the wine into the Changthro at every recitation of "Om Ah Hung".

As the grace reaches "Choedo Phued Thamched Kyi Ngadag..." the Marchang server offers the wine, lifting up both hands to shoulder level. Then at every recitation of "Zhaldu Pantsa Amrita Pauza Khahi" he pours the wine into the Changthro.

At the end of the fourth offering, as the grace recites "Zhan Yang Yulchog Di Nyid La Neypa La Sog Lhama Sin Degyed..." he draws fresh wine from the



While taking the Darshing to the chief guest the lower part of the Darshing should not be raised high but placed in the right hand of the chief guest who then says a prayer.

Changthro and throws it outside. He then draws wine again and offers it in front of the chief guest and walks out, turning from the right side.

After handing over the ladle to the person holding the Thugmon Darshing at the backyard, he stands near the Changthro with the Darshing's lower part resting on the outstretched left hand and the upper part resting on the right shoulder.

While taking the Darshing to the chief guest the lower part of the Darshing should not be raised high but placed in the right hand of the chief guest who then says a prayer.

After the prayer is finished, the bottom of the Darshing is lowered and the server should leave the place turning from the right side of the Chogdrom. After the Marchang sever leaves the place, the Chagep is distributed, followed by the prayer of auspiciousness (Phuensum Tshogpai Zhaldon). 🐦

The writer is a freelance journalist. He was the former editor of Bhutan Youth.

PHOTO ESSAY



Still Devotion

⬇ Prayer flags at Bhonte La pass (4,890m), enroute to Jumolhari.



⬅ A devotee with prayer beads renews her faith in the Buddhist dharma.

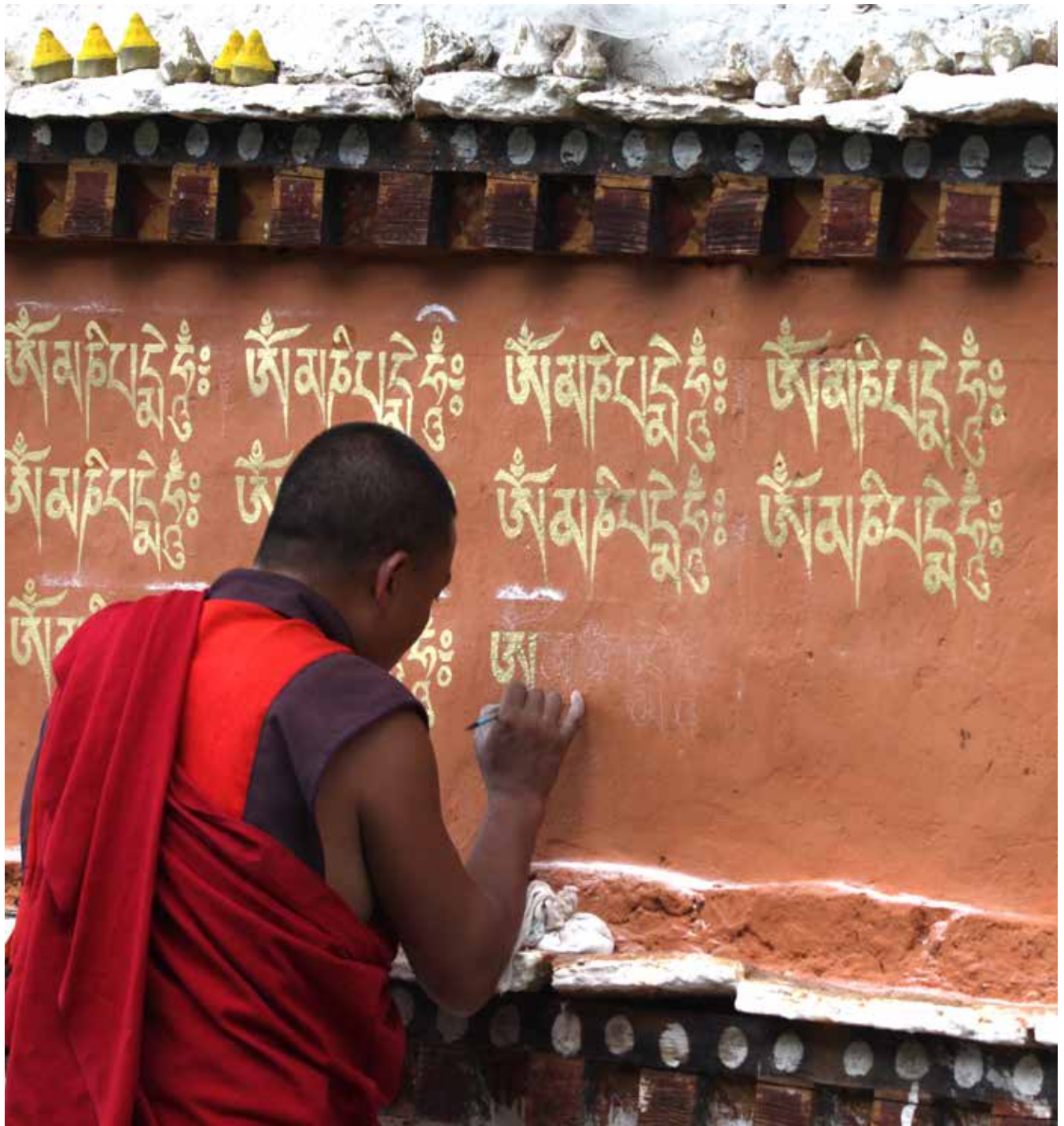


AZHA KEZA, A FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST AND TRAVEL GUIDE, PROVIDES A GLIMPSE OF VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM, ALSO KNOWN AS TANTRIC BUDDHISM, PRACTICED IN BHUTAN

Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Bhutan. Although originating in Tibet, the type of Buddhism practiced in Bhutan has developed into its own unique forms with different traditions and practices in its rituals, liturgy, and monastic organization. Practiced by two thirds of the total population, the government

supports the state religion through annual subsidies to monasteries, shrines, monks, and nuns. Both monks and nuns keep their heads shaven and wear maroon robes. Their secluded days are spent in study and meditation. Then there are lay practitioners and common people who practice the religion in their own way. For everyday folk it is more in the approach to life

and in everyday living – in thought, speech and action and performing sacred acts like visiting a monastery, sponsoring prayer recitations and lighting butter lamps. Annual pilgrimages on holy dates (8, 10, 15, 25, 28 and 30) every month to sacred sites, erecting prayer flags on mountain tops are some other ways of displaying their faith.





← The 169ft tall Buddha Shakyamuni sits on a Vajra Throne, called the Buddha Dordenma at Changri Kunsel Phodrang, Thimphu, giving the capital city its first standing landmark.

↓ The tradition of circumambulation continues even as more than 50% of the country's lhakhangs and chhortens have been vandalized and its relics stolen.



← The Kangyur or Translated Words, consists of works supposed to have been said by the Buddha. Tengyur or Translated Treatises, is the section to which were assigned commentaries and Abhidharma works (both Mahayana and Theravada). The Tengyur contains 200 Volumes and the Kangyur, 100 Volumes.

→ It is common to see the elderly doing the rounds of a temple or a monastery, prayer wheels and mani (counting beads) in hand.



PHOTO ESSAY



Before the introduction of Buddhism, Bön – a more shamanistic practice that existed in Tibet – was also prevalent in Bhutan. It is believed that the persecutions of Bön practitioners by Buddhists, when Buddhism made its advent to Tibet, led many of them flee-

ing Tibet for other parts in the region. Buddhism flourished and Bön went underground. It was a practice looked down upon by Buddhists who did not believe in animal sacrifice and other practices that came with it. By the eleventh century, however,

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A nun with folded hands circumambulating what is known as Guru Rinpoche's paradise.

there was a renaissance, and Bönism resurfaced in a transformed religious practice very similar to Buddhism while maintaining its own special traditions. It now no longer incorporated animal sacrifice. Its founder Toenpa Shenrab was depicted like the Buddha himself.



↑ **Brothers in robes**
An older monk helping
a younger one.

But the renaissance may not have touched practitioners in many far-flung places where the earlier Bönpas had escaped to, because pockets of Bhutan still practiced this animistic religion with animal sacrifice. Decades ago the Je Khenpo, Chief Abbot, issued an

edict prohibiting animal sacrifice in the villages that practiced it. The majority of Buddhists in Bhutan are adherents of the Kargyupa School (whispered lineage or oral transmission) one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. 🐦

Food for Thought

It's not the clothes you wear, the ceremonies you perform, or the number of times you sit on your mat silently in meditation. It's not what you eat, what you drink, or what you wear. It's whether you agree with the four fundamental discoveries the Buddha made under the Bodhi tree, and in so doing conduct your life accordingly to renounce the five poisons – desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy, and envy – then you can call yourself as following the Buddhist path. One is well onto that path if he or she accepts the following four truths:

1. All compounded things are impermanent.
 2. All emotions are pain/suffering.
 3. All things have no inherent existence.
 4. Nirvana is beyond concepts.
- But that is just the beginning....

An excerpt from *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* - By Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse.

ARTICLE

Young Minds That Dare Self-Employ, Can Change Themselves, Their Societies & Even The World.

By K.C. JOSE

Global growth starts with local expertise - Rabobank Netherlands



Youthfulness is brimfulness – of energy, of intensity of ideas, ideals, and passion. When these feelings and sensitivities are properly tapped and carefully channelized, it can become a dam of energy generating power for a group of people, for a generation and for humanity. The volume of ideas initiates snowballing projects that can benefit and touch not just our

selves, but also mankind. Well developed and mobilized ideas of the youth can become realistic possibilities, not just something to dream about. Left unattended, however, youthfulness deviates and vitiates into frustration and potential evil. Put differently, the youth unemployed, or underemployed is equivalent to youth gone astray and youth turned into social misfits. Thus, youth employment should be

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**GRADUATES
ATTENDING THE
ORIENTATION
PROGRAM IN
THIMPHU, 2012**

a cardinal concern in social engineering.

In the construction of a healthy society, social engineers plan youth projects and youth employments as prime priorities. In order that we build a stronger and more responsible society the youth should be given an opportunity to partake in building it; they should be given basic education in not just academic skills, but more importantly in life

skills. Most world communities are beginning to see the importance of investing in their youth. Sadly, not grapple with and are confronted with this issue: Are the educated youth gainfully employed? If not, what are the stakes in this fatal scenario called 'educated unemployment'? Thus there emerges a plethora of social issues in relation to youth and employment – can and should any government ensure employment for its young citizens? Can the citizens self-employ? Is the system of 'unemployment wages' a commendable practice? Are the youth wings of the political parties a desirable and effective means of employing the unemployed youth? Let us explore this a bit:

'Government, the job-provider' – too ideal to be real

Generally, the graduates being pumped out from the training centers, both government and private, outnumber the demand in the job market. The result is evidently unemployment. In fact, it is too ideal for social engineers to have a one-on-one correspondence between the number of graduates and that of the employment slots available. Such an ideal situation, if it ever exists, begets maladies such as: i) youths getting more dependent on the government ii) Creation of rigid rules governing professional training facilities.


On the other side of the coin is the total, and apparent, delink between professional training and job market requirements. A case in point could be the unmonitored production of trained manpower without considering

the degree of saturation of the same in the job market and vice versa – inadequate skilled manpower in certain sectors in contrast to the surplus in others.

Youth self-employment is a centripetal force to nation-building

Here is a partial solution to the above scenario – let the qualified unemployed self-employ. Self-employment is the mantra of 'centripetal' nation-building – the initiative is to be from the grassroots to the centre, not necessarily vice versa. The great message of being proactive in getting employed is echoed in John F Kennedy's inaugural speech of 1961: 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.'

But the environment for such engagement and interaction and self-employment has to be made conducive by the government, by authorities and by society. Creativity doesn't flow when imagination, ideals and ideas are bound by rules and limitations set by a society that looks upon the youth as trouble-makers. By nature of being who they are - young people are rebellious, they can be anarchic, and anti-authoritarian. This shouldn't be looked upon as harmful to society. If these emotions are not allowed to be unleashed creatively, they will be done so in more harmful ways – vandalism, drug abuse, violence and crime. This then brings to question, how much of unleashing should be permitted. Right now, private sector is bound by rules and regulations that make it extremely difficult for new ideas to flow. Anything that is seen as rebellious, or that doesn't fit the norm; the cookie-cutter business, or non-profit organization,



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it is easy to be looked upon with suspicion and hard to get the permission to operate.

The history of successful entrepreneurship, to name a few, has such self-employing examples in Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple Computers), Mark Zuckerberg (facebook) and N R Narayana Murthy (Infosys) etc., who did not wait for their governments to offer them jobs. But then again, these people operated in environments that allowed free flow of ideas, pushing boundaries, and being allowed to dabble with their curious nature – even if it meant breaking some laws. Steve jobs discovered his business acumen as a teenager when he first made money by selling "blue boxes" that allowed its buyer to make long distance phone calls for free. The free phone calls were a possibility because he and his friend Steve Wozniak had hacked lines of legitimate phone companies. "At the age of approximately fourteen, it was a technical challenge, not a challenge to be able to break the law," Jobs wrote in a document filled out for a background check to give top security

ARTICLE

clearance by the FBI. Had jobs been penalized and never allowed to run a business, this world would never be the same.

Likewise, a young man named N R Narayana Murthy believed in what he could do and cofounded the indomitable corporate giant in India, the Infosys Technologies Limited. The founding capital was started with a meager Rs. 10,000/- from pawning his wife's jewellery.

Our examples at home may not be big as Steve Jobs or Mr. Murthy, but a young man who didn't qualify for college built a business in Bumthang by recycling garbage. He went around the valley collecting everyone's unwanted scrap and took it to Jaigaon, where he made about Nu.30,000 a month. documentary on this young man made by Dechen Roder.

Advantages of self-employment: cessation of corporate dependence.

Following the "dependencia theory" of the Neo-Marxist school of the 1960s, parochial capitalism was once so tailored and operated that the

third world countries continued to be dependent on the capitalist countries. This begot a malaise called "learned helplessness" or "acquired dependence". A similar "acquired dependence" operates at the international, national, corporate and individual levels. Parents' looking at the white collar jobs as the only employment worth the while in their children's lives, is a product of such an 'acquired dependence' attitude. People have long been locked up in that stereotypical thinking – only governments employ and only a government job can provide the security and good life. And, the learned helplessness is the inability to dare think – "I can employ myself" even if it is a struggle.

Proactive governments and forward-looking administrations encourage such daring thinkers and entrepreneurs. One may cite some examples of the youth-empowering efforts initiated by the Ministry of Labour. A result of these is that most of the employments then happen in the villages and the village youth are gainfully employed. As a result, this has some bearing on slowing down rural to urban migration. The NRTI trains the youth in manning piggery, mushroom and fish cultivation etc. Local electricians and plumbers, who are trained at village levels, are gainfully employed and in fact are of great service to the rural settlements. The only bigger benefit to making these jobs more respectable and profitable is to privatize them. For the government to hold on to skilled workers with government electricians, plumbers etc. limits their performance and scope for growth in the private sector.


It is not only men who get trained

and employed. Women too should be the beneficiaries of such trainings and job opportunities. An LFS (Labour Force Survey) indicates that unemployed women in Bhutan are double the number of unemployed men. In order to empower our young women, the Kerala model could be a good example.

In Kerala, the unemployed women are put together at the village level under 'Neighbourhood Groups' (NHG). The NHG's form the higher ADS (Area Development Society) and CDS (Community Development Society). These groups form co-operatives, self-help collaborations with regular mini-deposits of money so as to form an informal banking system. Loans are given to enterprising women to start short projects such as: Cow/Goat rearing and Dairy, small restaurants, Basic Health Centres, Internet Cafes, Clean Village Task Force, Early Learning Centres, Orphanages and so on. The NHG approach for the young women has been a huge success such that it is one of the biggest womens movements in Asia with membership to the tune of 3600,000.

Self-employment is not the same as, but better than autarky

As a spin-off of the cold war of 1945-'63, the US and the USSR blocs espoused political ploys such as isolationism and autarky (a nation or entity that is self-sufficient). Shut cosily behind their iron curtains, they designed and developed their policies solo and moved more or less in an "anti-globalisation" direction. Though self-employment is autarky in a sense, where you are your own boss, total isolationism is not



PEOPLE HAVE LONG BEEN LOCKED UP IN THAT STEREOTYPICAL THINKING – ONLY GOVERNMENTS EMPLOY AND ONLY A GOVERNMENT JOB CAN PROVIDE THE SECURITY AND GOOD LIFE.



possible here. Instead, one needs others ideas, advice, cooperation and reciprocal engagement in business. This self-employment autarky is open and receptive, and above all highly “globalised”.

Self-employment is self-discovery and personal growth

The biggest advantage of self-employment is that one conducts one’s business in full concentration as if it were meditation. It is a rare venture in which the employer and the employee merge and gradually one discovers oneself – the biggest discovery comes in experience and in learning. Such a meditative, mindful business is sure to succeed. And, nothing succeeds like success; that is if you don’t define success just by profit alone. Thus, the country develops at a quicker pace with self-discovered, and highly experienced persons with

high self-esteem.

Unemployment wages

Commendable as it is, self-employment may receive unexpected setbacks. Despite the fact that the most motivated youth can be self-employed, failure factors strike his/her business unawares. As a safety net to such setbacks is the scheme called ‘unemployment wages’. This is the giving away of nominal amounts of money to such enterprising youth in an interim period between the loss of job and the discovery of a fresh job. This way, the beneficiary does not lose the entrepreneurial spark and is inspired to explore new avenues. When administered wisely, unemployment wages is a ploy of salvaging the sagging talent.

On the other side of the coin, unemployment wages are disbursed in another social

engineering move. First, the government pools in village/area wise, as reflected in the ‘unemployment registers’, all the unemployed youth. Then, village-level development activities such as road making, dairy running, old age/non-formal education, cottage industries such as weaving and soap manufacturing etc. are set up by the local government bodies for which these youth – preferably one adult per family - are engaged and paid. In the event of the government failing to provide the youth these jobs – which are short term ones – it gives the youth unemployment wages. The philosophy is that the potential youth ready to do jobs should be recognised at least through some incentives. However, such moves should be very carefully planned and orchestrated.

Social engineering to respect and recognise the youth may, however, better discourage the trend of involving the unemployed youth in active political activities. Youth in politics is a great potential; but politics should not be viewed as a career option for the unemployed. As it happens elsewhere, such employments of the youth may lead to Shellyean ideas being desperately experimented with or the youth being misused for muscle power and money – mix in the corridors of power politics. Both desecrate the sanctity of democracy, whereas the brimful youth should be contributing to nation-building along the lines of ‘What I can do for my country...’

The writer is a lecturer at the Samtse College of Education.



STUDENTS ATTENDING THE JOB FAIR IN THIMPHU

HAPPENINGS

BLOSSOMING FRIENDSHIP

After a devastating earthquake and Tsunami left Japan shaken to its core, the little town of Miharu saw an outpouring of support from around the world. Amidst the many who sympathized with the people of Japan, this little town was particularly moved by the gestures of their Majesties, the King and Queen of Bhutan, who paid a personal visit eight months after the tragedy to what was left of the decimated town.

Mayor Yoshinoru Suzuki, a farmer turned politician, said that scenes of Their Majesties praying with the people of Miharu was broadcast on Television during their visit there, many residents and viewers were moved to tears. "Every time I remember the scene of the prayers by the Ocean, [I] have difficulty containing my tears," said Mr. Yuge who was present at the occasion of Their Majesties visit in November 2011.

As a gesture of their gratitude for the Royal visit and an extension of

➔
TAKI-SAKURA CHERRY TREE, believed to be over one millennium old, is located in Miharu Town, Fukushima Prefecture.



their friendship to the people of Bhutan, the mayor led a delegation of six to Thimphu recently and brought with them a special gift - a dozen saplings of the Taki-Sakura (waterfall cherry). With the collective goodwill of Miharu, which lies within the Fukushima Prefecture, a Fukushima Taki-Sakura Bhutan Project has been launched. Although still in its very early stages the project is exploring ideas of farming cooperatives or private farming business management relations with Bhutan. Apparently the

Taki-Sakura committee has been discussing the matter with a number of actors in the field, both in Fukushima and Tokyo, who overwhelmingly supported the idea. Discussions and research is also under way to locate and identify a company and/or cooperative in the field of food processing in Fukushima. The rich and underutilized resources in Bhutan, such as buckwheat, would encourage them to locate a simple, low cost plant near the cultivation areas in Bhutan, where they can train the local people and process products for export markets near Bhutan, as well as Japan. We have potential names already, and will continue talks with them in the coming weeks.

"In the near future, we expect a number of cooperation projects will be launched, such as pursuing transplanting high value-added Fukushima fruits to Bhutan, coupled with training of Bhutanese farmers and farm managers in Fukushima. These will be mutually benefitting in many ways," said a press statement released to The Raven.

The tradition of extending cherry saplings/blossoms to explore and establish lasting friendships is neither new, nor uncommon for the Japanese.



⬆️ **TAKI-SAKURA STANDS 12 METERS HIGH,** sitting on the main trunk which measures 3 meters in diameter. It spreads 22 meters east-west, and 18 meters north-south, with the heavy, stretched-out branches being supported by a number of wooden pillars.



HAPPENINGS

BHUTAN GETS ITS FIRST LAW JOURNAL

The Bhutan Law Review, which was launched on February 21, coinciding with the birth anniversary of His Majesty the King, is perhaps a much-needed publication today in Bhutanese society.

It is a journal that will help shed light on many facets of the Bhutanese law, cases, and legal issues that Bhutanese society grapples with. We are fast changing from a society that was used to customary and traditional laws that were not well defined or even written. But since we became a Democracy there have been new laws and acts pumped out regularly, moving legislations from customary to statutory.

The average Bhutanese citizen has hardly been able to keep up with these changes resulting in a lack of understanding the implications of it. Consequently many have wound up paying a heavy price with incarceration for their ignorance of these new laws and legislations. We have seen this with the age-of-consent law, the tobacco act, labor laws, properties, banking and many others.

In light of that, and the fact that Bhutan lacks any source of information available to the public in an area that is so important to their very freedoms and to the institution of democracy, the advent of a Law Review is indeed welcome news.

Pema Wangchuk who is the Director of the Bhutan National Legal Institute said that the “Bhutan Law Review” was the vision of Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechan Wangchuck who founded the Institute and currently serves as President. Her Royal Highness has a Master’s in Law, majoring in constitutional law, from Stanford and Harvard University.

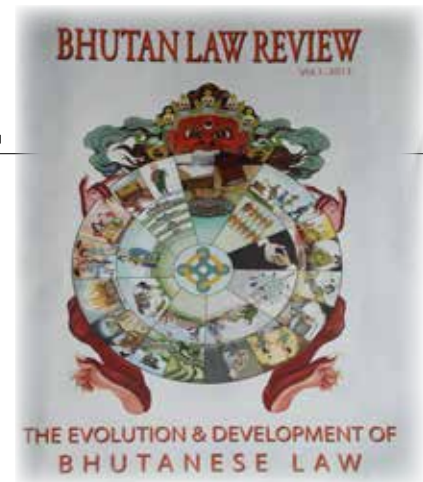
“The Mandate of the Institute is to

provide pre and in-service continuing legal education,” said Pema Wangchuk, “and the publication will attempt to help educate the public on all issues and aspects of the law through articles highlighting stories on legal issues and important judiciary cases. This is a means to pass on information on law and it also provides a forum for people to express their concerns on anything to do with it.” For instance in the first issue, he said, there is an article on the Tobacco Act. “The article does not say whether this is wrong or right, but we try to weigh both sides of what such a law does and the social consequences of it.”

Many other countries have Law Reviews and Law Journals. They are usually academic publications written by students of law or law professionals. There are also publications from the legal field that are mainly verdicts rendered, and commentaries provided by court reporters who write summaries of cases. Judges also write their opinions on some of the high-profile cases they’ve had to rule over. These get filed in journals for reference. In many cases recording such information has had great advantage to the justice system and the executioners of the law because lawyers, citizens and anyone who wants to understand the law, gets vital information on their respective cases from these archives. In the west some of these publications date back hundreds of years.

Then there are also other publications on laws that are not scholarly (not written by academics) but general commentaries and opinions on cases written by the public and the media.

The Bhutan Law Review seems to be a mix of both. It carries articles or reviews of laws and legal cases written by both legal experts and contributors.



However, a team of legal experts from the Bhutan National Law Institute guides the contributors to explain, interpret, and understand legal terminologies.

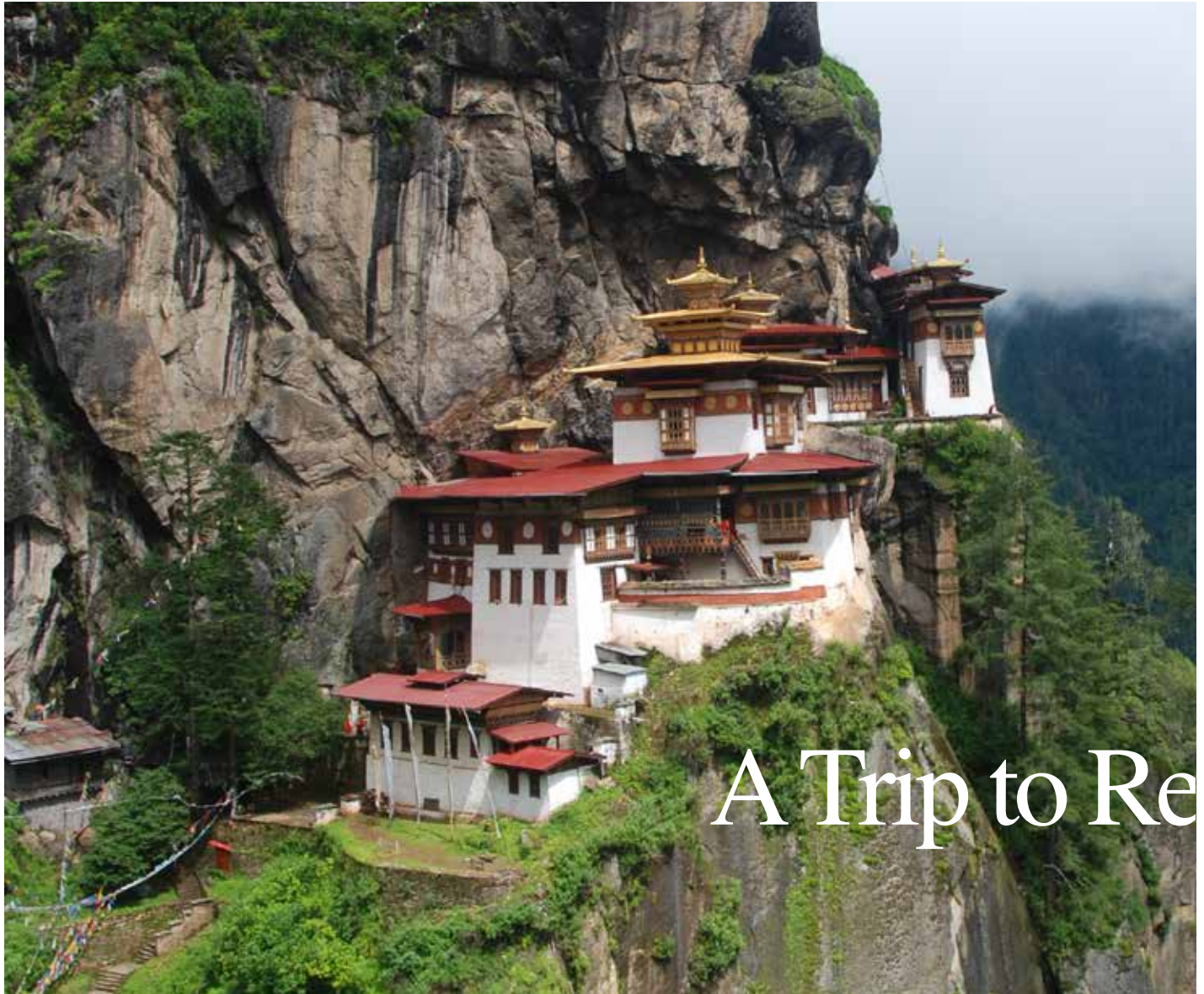
“We are not restricting this to legal persons only,” the Director said, “It is open to the public to write about a case in court, their experiences in the court, how they felt, what are their concerns. We want to be a resource and act as a reference for people who want information on past cases and issues, and for research.”

It might be important for citizens to know that since legal representation is allowed, there are about a 192 professional lawyers in the country, both private and government, and about 260 paralegals or Jabmis as they are known locally. Altogether there are about 10 legal firms all operated by professional lawyers and some by retired magistrates. Even then, keeping oneself informed and educated might be helpful while maneuvering the paths of the justice system.

The Institute has also issued pamphlets that provide crucial information on new legally binding laws, how to make a death will, how to file petitions to court and other vital information that a citizen should be armed with. The information including the Law Review will be available on their website; www.bnli.bt.

This is a great public service that comes to us for free. It can only be hoped that with such services comes the ability for better execution of the law and more citizens understanding their rights within the constitution.





A Trip to Re

We had come to the last leg of our travels in Bhutan, and we were now ready to end it with the highlight of it all – a hike to Taktsang, the Tigers Nest. There it was, like a crowning jewel amidst the many great historical and architectural pieces in the country, and an icon,

no doubt, amongst many Buddhist sites around the world.

Taktsang -Tigers Nest, was named after Guru Padma Sambhava, also known as Guru Rimpoche, who meditated here in a cave in the 8th Century. Legend has it he flew (or rode) here from Khenpajong in Tibet on the back of a Tiger. The temple is located at about 9480 feet/3000 meters

 **TAKTSANG - THE TIGER'S NEST**

above the ground and was originally built in 1692 around the cave where the Guru originally meditated. Over the centuries Taktsang grew into a cluster of different tiered monasteries all perched precariously atop the face of sheer cliff.

“...white specks way above us that appear to hover in mid-air in swirls of morning mist



member

By SONAM ONGMO

– a hallucination rather than a destination, it looks impossible to reach,” a travel writer, Trish Nicholson, described Taktsang in her book, “Journey to Bhutan: Himalayan Trek in the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon.”

We set out early morning – a bus full of excited visitors – to the foot of the hill from where we would start the hike. There was

a time, some of us may recall, when a good quarter of the day was consumed in making that walk alone – to the foot of the hill – from the main road. Now it took a mere 15 minutes by bus.

The ponies were waiting and part of the group, mostly children, mounted and rode on ahead. I was left with Bill and Mary who were both in the 70’s. Bill had just overcome the odds of prostate cancer, so walking to Taktsang was definitely a challenge he wanted, and knew he could live up to.

It was a quiet and still July morning; quiet enough to revel in the soft sound of the water-chorten bells tinging, the chirp of happy sparrows, and the call of a dove or two, all of which couldn’t be taken for granted. They created the perfect morning against the backdrop of a sun flitting in and out of light clouds. It was warm, not hot, even though it was July, and the pine needles in the forest glistened as they shimmered with light gusts of movement in the air.

But no sooner than we were five minutes into the walk, the serenity of the peaceful morning so idyllically created by nature, came crashing all around us. This was hardly going to be a contemplative walk, let alone a peaceful one. Two groups of Chinese tourists, easily numbering to about 20 or more, suddenly made their appearance.

It wasn’t that they were Chinese, or that their presence was bothering us. But when you have walkers vying for narrow walking space with a constant stream of ponies, it becomes a problem. We were now constantly making way for not one, but a caravan of

tourists perched atop ponies, sizes too small for some of them. If ever there were legends of flying ponies too! There was another issue with us having our hike coincide with this large group – the issue of noise. Had they just silently appeared, it might have been less of an annoyance.

There were numerous signs along the hillside, hand painted and prepared carefully, that asked you to drop your garbage in the respective trash bins, or to help keep the “environment clean.” I now longed for at least one sign that would’ve said that shouting and yelling on the hillside was also polluting the environment, or that silence was equally important in making a trip to a monastery. Garbage may be dirtying the paths to many of our monasteries, but given the increasing number of tourists every year, it looks like noise can also be added to this menacing category. It is no joke to suggest that similar signs on yelling and shouting should also go up alongside those for garbage and trash. After all these are places of worship where there are people and pilgrims in meditation and at prayer. And whether Buddhist or not, noise is disrespectful in general and so it would be polite to refrain from yelling. If garbage needs reminders, so should noise.

The much-anticipated quiet reflective walk with a discussion on Buddhist philosophy was now left to the winds. Our hike was spent the entire time listening to the cacophony of a foreign language spoken in volumes. The whole hillside was reverberating from the din.

If Bill and Mary were crestfallen, they didn’t show signs of

TRAVEL

it, not until the point we got to the monastery. A slow drizzle had started by the time we crossed the waterfall and reached the bottom of the monastery. Taktsang has been a stop for me almost every time I have guests in the country so it was rather surprising to see that a small checkpoint had gone up before entering the monastery. Nothing wrong with checkpoints, but when you ask a tourist or visitor to leave their expensive cameras and binoculars behind in cubbies with no locks, and told rather curtly, “at your own risk,” it is unprofessional on the part of responsible agents overseeing this. The policeman gave no reassurance that he was going to be there to keep an eye on the equipment, but rather waved us off saying, “at your own risk.” Even though it was and it is safe, you could see some of the tourists were a little flustered and hesitant – Monastery or camera?

At 74, Bill’s eyesight isn’t that great. He doesn’t need glasses, but he had been hoping to take in the great view that is accorded from Taktsang with the aid of his small binoculars. After having his binoculars snatched from him, he was even more surprised when one of the policemen followed him and abruptly stopped him in front of other tourists, in the rain, and without saying a word patted him from top to bottom, just to make sure he wasn’t hiding another set of binoculars? It had to be explained that a language barrier may have prevented the policeman from saying, “Excuse me Sir, but you are not allowed to take those binoculars in, and just to make sure that you don’t have anything else on you I need to pat you down?” But even without English, there is a polite and


effective way of communicating through the guide or the person accompanying the guest.

Last year alone Bhutan won three awards for Tourism, one from Wanderlust, the World Travel and Tourism Council and another at the Korean Travel Fair. Bhutan has also been mentioned on the “Top 2013 hot list” by National Geographic, on the list of “Places to see and to be seen in 2013,” by Sunday Times, ranked “#2 in 10 Bucket Trips for 2013” by the Forbes Travel Guide, and ranked “#5 out of 46 places to go in 2013 by The New York Times.

Official TCB figures show number of tourists in 2011 was 100,833 and in 2012 about 105,414. There have been suggestions that we aim to have at least about 200,000 in coming years. As our popularity as a destination grows, and the number of tourists grows and hard currency grows, it will be imperative for the Tourism Council of Bhutan to see that the services provided are up to mark. If Bhutan wants to continue being a top travel destination, these are little things we have to invest in. Training people, not only tour guides, but partnering with other agencies like the police to provide orientation to those who are required to interact with guests/tourists. This is just an example. If the tourists that day were disappointed by the camera cubbies and the rude policeman, I was rather embarrassed when a monk at one of the monasteries demanded payment for the blessed sunkeys (threaded talismans). It cost a dollar each, he said. Since when? At another monastery, to my relief, the caretaker handed the sunkeys for free and pointed to a box where contributions could be made.

On our way back from the monastery, not too far from it, someone had set up shop, selling handicrafts and the odd knick-knack. What had Taktsang turned into? My first visit to this monastery was in 1988 or 89. A trip to Taktsang truly felt like you had left the world behind, even if just for the day. The 15-minute bus ride to the foot of the hill may have cut short that trip, but it now made it easy for not just cacophonous groups to get there in hordes, but even the odd pedlar. For sure a trip today couldn’t and shouldn’t be compared to one from decades ago, but is there a way that we can maintain the charm?

Has tourism changed us? How so? At a prayer wheel outside Chimme Lhakang, Bill had attempted to take a picture of an old man sitting and chanting with prayer bead in hand. You could see Bill liked the image. But as soon as the old man saw his picture being taken he indicated by rubbing his forefinger and



The policeman gave no reassurance that he was going to be there to keep an eye on the equipment, but rather waved us off saying, “at your own risk.”



thumb at Bill that he needed to be paid. When Bill turned away, the man became upset and angry. Bill explained to me that he did not want to encourage people from asking for money.

As a Bhutanese we are very proud of our country and its natural beauty. We are also proud of the people, their innocence, and how untainted we are by the outside world. We have been showered with awards, heaped on with never ending praises. We can, therefore, say that a few disappointments shouldn't destroy the larger and better image that we have, after all nothing is perfect. But where things can be corrected, they should. There is nothing we can do to change how that old man felt about his picture being taken, but we can change and prevent people selling wares on the hillside, monks

charging for sunkeys, policemen behaving rudely, or cubbies with no locks. And maybe, perhaps maybe, there is also something we can do about noisy tourists descending onto one hillside in droves?

More information on Taktsang

The original temple built in 1692 by Gyalse Tenzing Rangye around the cave where Guru Padmasambhava meditated, is called the Guru mTshan-brgyad Lhakang (Guru Tshen Gyay) also known as the temple of the Guru with eight names). Guru Rimpoche is famously known for having established the Nyingmapa school of Mahayana Buddhism in Bhutan and has been considered its patron saint or protector.

It is said that from the 11th Century many revered and


eminent saints from Tibet came to Taktsang to meditate. Amongst them are Milarepa, Pha Dhampa Sangay and the Tibetan Yogini Machig Labdron and Dupthob Thanton Gyalpo.

There is a monastery dedicated to Machig Labdron that is located on the opposite hill of Taktsang.

In 1998 there was a fire at the Monastery that killed the caretaker monk and destroyed many ancient artifacts. However, this did not stop the Fourth Druk Gyalpo from pouring in resources to restore the monastery to its original glory.

An interesting fact is also the birth of Geshe Gaduen Rinchen Bhutan's 69th Chief Abbot in 1926 in a small cave on the way to Taktsang. As a child, he said to have been nicknamed Dragphugpa, cave man. In roles reversed the Je Khenpo was said to have traveled as a young adult to Lhodrak Lhalung in Southern Tibet, Drigung in Central Tibet and then onto Samye Monastery one of Tibet's famous universities.

Upon returning to Bhutan he became the Abbot of Tango Monastery, also a University for Buddhist Studies, where he wrote commentaries on Buddhist philosophy, sutras and tantras. In 1990 he was enthroned as the 69th Je Khenpo. He passed away in 1997.

A popular festival that has received much attention called the Paro Tsechu is held in honor of Guru Padmasambhava in Paro in March/April. During this festival one of the highlights is the unfurling of the Guru Thongdrel, the world's largest handmade mural of the Guru, at dawn. 

TRAVEL DETAILS



Accommodation
Tourism Council of Bhutan has a fixed tariff for all tourists: \$ 250 a day. This covers your hotel (not exclusive hotels outside the TCB list) meals, car, gas, driver, and guide.



Climate
Best time to travel (March-April September & October).

DISGRACE



By KARMA SINGYE DORJI

The Colonel ran wild in those days before he was sent to the Federal Defense Academy. When he was barely a teen, he had already learned to befriend the torrid jungles that vexed the old man who prided himself a man of the world. He disappeared for days on end from the city center, the seat of his father's influence, wandering into forests filled with mortal danger, carnivorous beasts, muscular climbing creepers, and the dense foliage of overwrought trees. On certain days it seemed to the boy that an implacable buzzing electricity emanated from the forests and hummed just beneath the surface din of the overactive insects. In his mind the primal electric buzz of the jungle mirrored the barely-contained crackling static of anger and resentment hidden just beneath the surface of his skin.

Many times he had lain under the vast sheltering canopy of the giant trees whose leaves were like the ears of elephants, bitten to a delirium by red ants and an unholy host of insects. It seemed then, that as he lay there in the twilight zone of consciousness, cold, glittering snakes with thick snub heads had opened their mouths and hissed at him, revealing fangs dripping with venom. They had slithered over his body and wrapped themselves in coils around his torso, staring into his very soul with their coal-black reptilian eyes. Sometimes he thought he smelled the cat stench of a leopard, standing in outline just beyond the rim of his vision, growling a deep otherworldly growl that made his entire being vibrate to the sound. Once or twice he could have sworn, as he sat with his back supported by the trunk of a giant tree covered by foliage, that he had come face to face with a great striped beast whose head seemed to fill the very edges of the cosmos. He had also lain spent, released from the grip of whatever fever had run its course through his body like a freight train, staring up at the ink-black bowl of the night sky, dusted over with millions of silent stars. On those nights it seemed to him that he had left the physical plane and was floating high among the twinkling lights that, more often than not, turned out to be a vast sea of fireflies floating through the jungles on an ancient errand of the instinct.

Once, having regained consciousness, he found himself at the very edge of a precipice far above the rocky banks of the river Mao, where the white froth of the water made swirling galaxies on the surface of the ink-black whirlpools. Under the surface, now and then, were




The woman with whom he had been caught *el flagrante* was the wife of the Auditor General of the Colonies, a vindictive man.

the looming shapes of fishes grown to monstrous size, rising up from the unseen depths. He saw emerald flocks of fast-flying squawking parrots streaking by, saw black and white striped hornbills taking to the air from trees on the opposite bank, the branches still waving long after the birds had taken flight and spread their wings like prehistoric sovereigns of the air.

Each time he emerged from one of these these visionary trances, he felt stronger and less fearful in the overpowering presence of his father. It was as if each time he walked unharmed out of the ferocious unforgiving jungles that his father feared and hated, he was more able to keep the cruelties of his father at bay. He was still not in open rebellion then, but the growing confidence of the strapping young man was becoming apparent. After all he had finally mastered something that the old man feared and abhorred. It made him something of a freak to his father who, it seemed, was beginning to transfer all his fears about the jungle on to his son.

The governor, his father, had seen something of the world, and tasted its delightful fruits before an indelicacy on his part resulted in his transfer to the distant border outpost he now ruled with an iron hand. The woman with whom he had been caught *el flagrante* was the wife of the Auditor General of the Colonies, a vindictive man, as the governor was to discover, a man who sat closer to the fiery blaze of political power than even himself. As was his custom, he had charmed himself into the bed of the beautiful young socialite with intense bursts of focused flattery, delivered whenever he was able to catch her alone during the capital's annual soiree for leaders in the government. With his thick head of hair, coal-black lashes, wide, prominent cheekbones and the serious attentive manner, he could be attractive when he wanted to. He could also, when raising himself to his full height, stand head and shoulders above the crowd like a giraffe gazing across the veldt. After weeks of furtively snatched conversations, a tryst was arranged. The husband would be gone all week to attend important matters of the palace. She would let him in. Unfortunately, after frolicking all night, they were still in bed when the auditor returned inexplicably and began banging on the door. With no way out, he leaped out the window, barely escaping grievous injury, but not before the angry husband broke down the door, tore across the room, and coming to the open window, got a good look at the interloper. Eventually, a truce was brokered, the result of which was that he would be removed as far away as possible from the "injured party" who, in this case, was identified as the Auditor General.

One of the first people to greet the governor when he arrived in that distant forgotten corner of the colonies was the flamboyant owner of the local sugarcane plantation. The old plantation owner was a former army general who had been gifted vast swathes of what were initially believed to be worthless jungle. The canny old man had clear-cut all the hardwood trees on his heavily forested estate and sold the valuable lumber across the border where they were snapped up at a premium to fuel the construction of newly burgeoning cities. With the sizeable profits from that first venture, the old General proceeded to build a large distillery that employed over 500 workers. They produced the best whiskey, rum and brandy for thousands of miles around. The workers were kept in line by an army of his former subalterns, junior officers and the non-commissioned soldiers he had lured to the region with promises of great riches. He quickly discerned the religious fervor with which the people across the border drank their sticky sweet afternoon tea and thus were born his second and third investments: the sugar plantation, and the first mechanical sugar mill the border regions had seen.

The old plantation owner had once been a "Birdwatcher," one of the undercover agents of the royal guards. He would, in time, play a crucial role in changing the direction of the Colonel's life. 

Love On the Sly? A Brief Enquiry into the Culture of Night Hunting

By Dekey Choden Gyeltshen

*"...Look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight,
Though hell should bar the way"*

These lovelorn words from the Highwayman to Bess, the landlord's "black-eyed" daughter, in Alfred Noyes' famous poem: "The Highway Man." Sure he came to her by moonlight, but instead of the honorable Highwayman with his smart spurs, rapier, velvet and bunched up lace at this throat, it was a honey-tongued cement agent from Trongsa.

Yet to Tshomo* he may as well have been the romantic Highwayman, or some local incarnation at least. Until she discovered the truth.

"I feel such a fool for not seeing through his smooth talk!" she says, staring at her feet. "He shared my bed by night and promised me the world for two



years, until the village headman finally told me about his wife and two children in another district." Tshomo was just 16, discovering her charms with men when the dashing and sophisticated (in her eyes) cement agent swept her off her feet in Yangkhar village. Today, unlike Bess of the Highwayman, she stares with sad

eyes as she speaks of a broken heart and shattered dreams. The embarrassment, parental expectations and community gossip weighs on her mind, making her seem older than her 20 years.

It is a well-known fact that for centuries young Bhutanese men and women have found love by the dark of the moon.



Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on which side of the haystack you may be laying on, the traditional practice of night hunting is becoming a relic of the past.

An earthy rite of passage for adolescents with raging hormones, these nighttime trysts often cemented lasting relations resulting in marriage.

Whether it ended in domesticity or simply the pleasure or pain of a one night stand it became a way of life, sometimes euphemistically and often salaciously referred to as “night-hunting”.

Men usually perceive it as a fact of life, a safety valve in a society where sexuality is expressed in the most pragmatic terms. An increasing number of young urban women tend to see women as the sufferers, silenced by a shame and guilt they did not choose.

My own admittedly quick survey shows there are no easy conclusions for feminists, sexists or traditionalists alike. What I did find was a bittersweet trail of betrayal, the unwanted, and perhaps unexpected responsibility of children and, yes, even true love.

At 17, Kuenga Wangchuk is an angry young man, himself the age when young men would be out nights, prospecting. “My father must be a shameless creature to leave us like this,” he says. “My mother said my father died when I was a young boy. Yet I always wanted to know and pestered her with questions, until some friends told me the truth.”

The words Kuenga’s mother, Chemo, chose to console him with tell us of the courage many of these women have in letting their children confront the harsh reality. It is truly revealing. “My mother told me not to let my father’s treachery embarrass me,” Kuenga says. “She says that I am

not alone. That there are other people like me in other villages too.”

Chemo herself admits that she will not entirely blame the man who fathered her child. She admits she was an equal partner in the nightly trysts that conceived her son. And, in the end, she decided to raise him alone, rejecting the offer from the man’s family to abort the unborn child.

And what of true love?

Here are two stories Shakespeare of Romeo and Juliet would have loved.

“The first few times we just made shy and awkward conversation,” Choki Wangmo reminisces. “I had faith in him because he walked four hours every night, simply to speak to me.” Finally, after their passion was consummated and a protective father emerged on the scene, Choki and her lover were married.

Tragically, her husband died in an accident after only eight years of what Choki describes as a “happy and successful” phase of her life, leaving her the beautiful legacy of two lovely daughters.

Kinley, an automobile driver by trade, practically glows when he describes his first meeting with his wife several years ago. “She was young and beautiful and fragile, and I was utterly lost,” he says. “I never thought about night hunting or even wanted to try until the day I saw Lhamu.”


Having found his motivation Kinley finally decided to join his friends on one of their nightly jaunts. “My friends were always getting drunk and chasing girls,”

he laughs. “But I did it my way, by speaking to her younger brother and asking him to intercede on my behalf.”

The young couple met clandestinely near the village Chorten until Lhamu’s parents found out and a marriage was promptly arranged. “It was my fate,” smiles the now happily married man.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on which side of the haystack you may be laying on, the traditional practice of night hunting is becoming a relic of the past.

There are modern laws to complicate matters and an unwanted pregnancy can easily result in an ugly legal suit or, worse, imprisonment for sexual assault.

So, for all you aspiring Highwaymen and Romeos, here’s a friendly word of advice. The phrase “night hunting” no longer means you can pick your cherry as you choose. You may be lucky if you come back with just an injured head! 

The writer works in the office of the Prime Minister as a media attache. She is a former journalist.



Achyut Bhandari served for 30 years in the civil service in various capacities before retiring as the Managing Director of Bhutan Post. He is currently the Vice President of Bhutan Nyamrup Tshogpa.

THE MEDIA MUST BE “FREE”

The purpose of mass media or all forms of communications is to inform, educate and to entertain. While this is done through various kinds of reports, articles and news through print, TV and now through the Internet, the government keeps the people informed of its activities through public announcements, advertising and marketing. In Bhutan the term media is generally understood to be largely the print media, broadcasting (radio and TV) and public and commercial advertising.

Up until the 70's the media in Bhutan was synonymous with “Kuensel,” the one and only publication in the country. Thereafter, radio NYAB (National Youth Association of Bhutan) was introduced. This eventually became the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). TV was added in 1999. Then in 2006, just before Democratic elections took place in 2008, it was announced that there would be freedom of press and speech allowing for the spawning of several independent newspapers.

The media has the responsibility to provide unbiased information to the people so that a fair and just public opinion can be shaped. And a well-informed public opinion is extremely vital in choosing a government to lead a given term in office. There is thus a close relationship between the government, the media and the electorate. In a way, the media forms the bridge between the people and the ruling government.

The role of the government is to provide a level playing field for all media agencies, laying down rules and regulations that promote the freedom of speech and opinion for the effective functioning of a society. It is imperative for the government to do this because this is how the Democratic Institution of Free Speech and a Free Press is built. Democratic governments must honor the principles of transparency and accountability in their work and the media must objectively report on government operations so that the people are informed correctly. In this sense, just as the government can be irresponsible at times, so can the media. But it is the elected government that bears the larger onus of exercising utmost caution in ensuring that they do not curb, through whatever means, a citizen, journalist, or media's right to say what it wants.

Once we claim to have a free press or freedom of speech, it means just that. It is not free, if there are restrictions to what can or cannot be said. Sure the responsibility of how it is said, how much of the truth is said lies with the citizen, the journalist or that particular media outlet, but it is not the government's. While misinformation and biased reporting can be harmful to a government, individual or to certain sections of the society, it is one of the dangers or hurdles that we will confront in trying to build a free society. But what we can learn from this is that society is eventually very good at discerning the truth and although some may get swayed by certain false information, in the end nothing can outdo the truth and the credibility of media outlets are quickly established. Sometimes it can take longer for the truth to emerge, but to bring it to light sooner – whether it

be from the government's side or the media's – it has to be through making all aspects of information available to the public.

Occasionally, the DPT government has been critical of the way some events have been reported by the media. The media has, in turn, complained of lack of transparency in government and difficulties in obtaining information.

Here, we need to distinguish between transparencies of the executive government from that of the bureaucracy. The Prime Minister has been trying to share information through its monthly press conferences, but it might be more helpful if all ministries had spokespeople who could field questions and clarify policies relating to their specific ministries.

At the same time, the government must direct the bureaucracy to be more cooperative and forthcoming with information. The mere designation of information officers in the ministries is inadequate. They must be made to generate information on a regular basis. In a way, such a situation may not be uncommon in a new democracy where both the elected government and the media are learning and adapting to the changed political system.

The Bhutanese media has come a long way. Though it is not fully matured, it is playing a constructive role in informing the public. However, there is a serious problem with regards to their sustainability due to a small market. While it is easy to say this is not the responsibility of the government, Bhutan's situation is unique.

The playing field is not level when the private publications have to compete with a heavily subsidized semi-government newspaper "Kuensel." It not only has a monopoly over the printing press, but they are given much of the governments advertising revenue. If it is a subsidized paper then

Kuensel should not get any government advertising. Why? Because the government is taking away competition for other newspapers to exist and by doing that the government is indirectly suffocating the fledgling free press. It may not be a perfect free press, but if the government believes in strengthening democratic institutions it must help the free press by developing policies that will help sustain it.

Bhutanese generally do not have good reading habits. The 2008 Media Survey finds that 48% of the respondents could not read, and the gap is higher in rural areas. Accordingly, newspapers are the least important source of information and entertainment - the radio and TV, BBS in particular, being on the top. Circulation of newspapers is costly due to high cost of transportation. Income from advertising is extremely limited as the government is the only major source. Though our printing industry has come of age, a lot of printing works are still done outside the country to ensure quality and timeliness. These are some of the reasons why the newcomers in the market are critical of Kuensel, which is thought to have undue advantage over other newspapers in getting advertising business from government agencies. While circulation is one of the main criterias for an advertisement to reach as wide an audience as possible, how much of that is in operation can be questionable. There is no clear-cut central agency of the government from which the advertisements are handed out. It still seems to be that Ministries and Departments are individually responsible for placing their announcements and advertisements. If that is the case, then it seems personal relationships between a particular newspaper and the specific ministries will be an advantage and that would mean corruption. If advertisements and notices are based on circulation, Kuensel will always be on top. Kuensel being a semi-government agency shouldn't even be in the playing field with all the other subsidies they receive. That said new entrants must also be innovative in increasing their circulation and expanding their readership.

Just as the government can be irresponsible at times, so can the media.



There is an element of dichotomy between the objective of making profit and ensuring objectivity in reporting. There is a thin balance between public responsibility and generating profits. This is perhaps one reason why most newspapers run allied businesses like printing presses to cushion their low returns from circulation. If the government wants to avoid an independent media from deteriorating from a lack of resources and desperation for revenue; if they want to support objective reporting, they have to re-think the media policy, especially on distribution of advertising revenue.

The media survey cautions the media on over sensationalism, commercialism and credibility. Some degree of sensationalizing the news can and should be expected as the media has to deliver information in an interesting manner to its readers and stir the public to act on change when it comes to certain behavior. However, excessive sensationalism can be counterproductive to that particular media outlet itself. But then again, in a free press it should not be up to the government to determine how the news or information is delivered, otherwise we don't call it "free." Commercialism is also a part of the media industry for it has to make profits to stay in business. It has to work to achieve a delicate balance to remain credible and fulfill its social responsibility. These issues can best be tackled by developing professionalism in the industry, an area in which the government can provide greater support.

People make news. They hold public opinion as they are interested in governance and democracy. The extent and ability of shaping public opinion depends on the reach of the media and literacy rate.

Media literacy is itself a subject requiring promotion among our people at all levels. Political awareness is relatively low in Bhutan and, as such, the government can take advantage of this situation. It is thus necessary to educate the people on the positive role of the media as a watchdog in furthering democracy in an accountable and transparent manner. The government alone cannot assume this responsibility. Nor has the government taken notable initiatives in this area excepting a legislation and policy statement. Civil society organizations and NGOs have to complement those efforts and take a lead role in this regard. We will have to wait for some time for such organizations to come up for which the government should facilitate their growth through easier registration

process. The role of an informed electorate and civil society is central in nurturing our new democratic system, a point articulated so passionately by His Majesty the King in the last National Day address.

Another issue of concern is the concentration of media in the hands of a few which can distort the news coverage to serve the interest of the owner. There is a risk of collusion between media owners and the government especially if a media house becomes powerful. So, media ownership must be as diverse as possible. It is time that one or two private TV stations come up in Bhutan to give healthy competition to BBS TV. Mergers and acquisitions can also be damaging, as democratic power can be lost in the process. Fortunately, apart from TV, the media is quite dispersed in Bhutan and there is no fear for the present on its concentration. However, the government must remain vigilant on this matter and prevent such developments for the sake of objectivity in media reporting.

For the media to be effective, the government must ensure freedom of press and right to information, which are provided as our fundamental rights by our Constitution. On the other hand as a body influencing public opinion, the media must uphold a high level of credibility, integrity and honesty. It must not only be responsible, but also accountable like any other branches of government as the prime minister reminded us recently.

This is an interesting period for the development of media in Bhutan. Appropriate policies and strategies can transform media and make it a dynamic force in democratization of polity and society. But ultimately, it is the people who can make a difference in the way the media and government function and strengthen our nascent democracy. 🐦

Political awareness is relatively low in Bhutan and, as such, the government can take advantage of this situation.



LEISURE

Calvin & Hobbes



Beau Peep



Beetle Bailey



COMMENTARY

China takes over its Pakistani pearl

In a move seen by the US and India as a critical tactic in the dominance of the waters of the Indian Ocean, Bhutan's northern neighbor happily takes over a coveted pearl, and the move comes in the wake of China pushing for a greater influence in South Asia.

By GOPILAL ACHARYA

A big South Asia geostrategic story this month has been China's ultimate grab of one the pearls in its so-called "string-of-pearls" strategy. As Pakistan formally handed over the operation of the Gwadar Port to China on 18 February 2013, one of Indian government's worst geostrategic nightmares finally came true.

While there were emergency meetings within the military and intelligence circles in New Delhi, the Indian defence minister, A.K. Antony, publicly expressed concern over China's takeover of the Port.

The concern is that China might now build a state-of-the-art naval base at the Port. Reports say the Chinese takeover of the Port has not only unsettled India but also the US, given that the Port in western Pakistan is one of the most strategic areas in the world.

The Gwadar Port is one of the pearls in China's so-called "string-of-pearls" strategy. The ports in the string that the Chinese state-owned corporations have financed are Hambantota and Colombo ports in Sri Lanka, the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh and the Sittwe and Kyaukpau ports in Myanmar.

The Gwadar Port is a deep-sea port located on the Arabian Sea

at Gwadar in the volatile Baluchistan province of Pakistan. It's a veritable gateway to South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Its close location to the Straits of Hormuz makes it a vital energy and trade corridor connecting the oil-rich Gulf across Pakistan to western China. About 20% of world's (and 60% of China's) oil passes through the Straits of Hormuz.

The agreement for handing over the operations of the Port to China Overseas Port Holding Authority (COPH) was ratified at Aiwan-e-Sadr (Presidency). The Port, owned by the state-run Gwadar Port Authority, was until now operated by Singapore's Port Authority International (PSA) Pte. Ltd. The PSA had signed a 40-year agreement with the Pakistani government in February



2007 to further develop and operate the tax-free port and duty-free trade zone.

However, it was just a matter of time before Pakistan handed over the Port to China given that it had provided about 75% of the initial US\$ 250 million funding for the construction of the Port. The former Pakistani president, Pervez Musharraf, chose the initial deal with Singapore to appease the US.

China has so far kept silent over the question of whether it has plans to build a naval base at the Port, although the “string-of-pearls” strategy, as understood today, would mean Bhutan’s northern neighbor does have a naval base on mind. And Pakistan wants a naval base at Gwadar.

Chinese media have quoted Lin Boqiang, director of the China Centre for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, as saying that China agreed to take over the Gwadar Port despite security risks due to its strategic value and not for commercial purposes.

However, others say China’s energy interests cannot be overruled either. Energy security is high on agenda for a country whose economy has been rapidly booming in the past decade. China’s other agenda is to build a road that would link the Port with Pakistan’s north-south Indus Highway, facilitating overland transport from Gwadar to far western province of Xinjiang, an area that has often seen simmering revolts in the recent times.

Many Gwadar watchers agree that without further investment in ground logistical infra-



structure, the commercial use of the Port would remain a distant dream. Moreover, Pakistan has failed to build the road network it promised to link the Port to the rest of the country. Thus, the only immediate interest for China would be a military one.

Chinese scholars have pointed out that Gwadar’s close



THE GWADAR PORT

proximity to one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes also means “it provides the perfect location for China to develop a maritime listening post to monitor U.S. and Indian naval movements in the area.”

Nevertheless, the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Liu Jian, has dismissed speculation that



The primary function of these pearls, with their diplomatic and military shades, is to ensure perpetually secure access to energy resources.

his country would use the Port for military purposes. He also rejected India's concerns. "No third country should have reservations about the bilateral arrangement, which is in the economic interest of the peoples of China and Pakistan," he told the media.

What exactly is the "string-of-pearls" strategy?

The phrase was first used in an internal US Department of Defense classified Booz-Allen Report 'Energy Futures in Asia' in 2005. Today, the "string-of-pearls" strategy is generally understood as China's attempt to establish naval bases and intelligence stations throughout littoral South Asia thereby encircling the subcontinent. This would mean expanding Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean.

Currently, China's 'pearls'

consist of an upgraded airstrip on Woody Island in the Paracel archipelago, a container shipping facility in Chittagong in Bangladesh, the deep water ports in Sittwe and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, an intelligence gathering facilities on islands in the Bay of Bengal near the Malacca Strait and the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka. According to Christopher J. Pehrson, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, "the string-of-pearls describes the manifestation of China's rising geopolitical influence through efforts to increase access to ports and airfields, develop special diplomatic relationships, and modernize military forces that extend from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, across the Indian Ocean and on to the Persian Gulf."

Scholars who have studied the strategy say China establishes these pearls through various methods: infrastructure development, financial assistance, seeking convergent interests with host states and of course its multi-pronged diplomacy whose hallmark is non-interference in the host country's domestic and international affairs.

The primary function of these pearls, with their diplomatic and military shades, is to ensure perpetually secure access to energy resources. It is understood that the strategy is also a tool for exploring and identifying new markets for Chinese goods. Reports say China is working on at least 120 different projects in the South Asian countries.

Another pearl, for example, is the development of the

deep-sea port at Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, which includes a crude oil storage facility. In September 2010, following a meeting between Burma's General Than Shwe and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing, the two countries declared that they will build two crude oil and natural gas pipelines stretching from the coastal town of Kyaukpyu to the town of Shweli on the Chinese border in Shan State. These pipelines will not only transport natural gas from Burma's lucrative offshore Shwe project to refineries in China, but also the Chinese imports of crude oil from the Middle East, Africa and South America. This would effectively provide China with secure access to the Indian Ocean.

Therefore, in the long run,



Whether China's "string-of-pearls" strategy is a long-term tactic to gradual military domination or is simply a roadmap to its energy security remains to be seen.



Photo Courtesy: <http://alshijit-surayunwishi.blogspot.com/> <http://jarm4.saufiglickr.com>

this “encirclement” strategy not only seeks to expand China’s sphere of influence in South Asia, but also challenge India’s predominance in the region. Traditionally, India looks at South Asia as its sphere of influence, while China more or less sees Southeast Asia as its sphere of influence. However, both have tried to test the uncharted waters and spread their spheres of influence further. Therefore, China, in the recent times, has been spreading its feelers across South Asia mostly through economic investments and infrastructure development.

Indian policymakers are wary of this string of strategically located ports built by Chinese companies in its neighborhood. Indian security advisers have said that China’s strategy is to “counterbalance and undermine” India’s natural influence in the region. Thus, India has also started seeking and expanding its military clout in the region. For example, China recently appeared provoked as the military dimension of the ‘Look East Policy’ became more pronounced with India seeking closer military ties with Vietnam and Japan.

Nevertheless, whether China’s



PIPELINES THAT TRANSPORT NATURAL GAS FROM BURMA TO REFINERIES IN CHINA

“string-of-pearls” strategy is a long-term tactic to gradual military domination or is simply a roadmap to its energy security remains to be seen. Only time will tell whether China’s long-term imperialist scheme or its addiction to imported oil is at the heart of this incredible strategy.



The writer is an independent consultant based in Thimphu. He is the former editor of The Journalist and Bhutan Times.

WHAT'S NEW

Trends

KEY

Brand Where to buy Contact



- Easy sofa - triple seater
- Wood Craft Centre Limited, langjophakha Thimphu, 975-2-323186, 323187, 331791

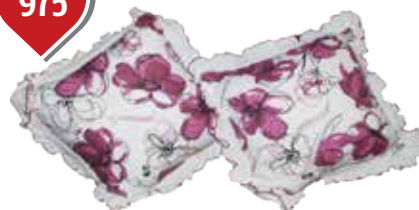
NU. 34,970



NU. 1,840

- Bring out the adventurer in you in these army green cargo pants
- Sonam Yangkhil, Yarkay Central, opp Norling, 17621881

NU. 975



- Cushions and cushion covers
- Music Palace, Olakha Centre, 17678189



NU. 10,880

- Podium
- Wood Craft Centre Limited, langjophakha Thimphu, 975-2-323186, 323187, 331791



NU. 2,475

- Add a little color to your winter blues
- Sonam Yangkhil, Yarkay Central, opp Norling, 17621881



NU. 1,840

- Timberland - for the semi formal look
- Sonam Yangkhil, Yarkay Central, opp Norling, 17621881



NU. 2,985

- Coffee table
- Wood Craft Centre Limited, langjophakha Thimphu, 975-2-323186, 323187, 331791

WHAT 'S YOUR QUIRK



Beautician/Actress

Dechen Phurba, popularly known as Dechen Selden

Age. I'm 21. **Where are you from?** I'm from Wangduephodrang but I live in Thimphu. **How do you define life?** It's like a pendulum, swinging between joy and sorrow. **What are you eating now?** Mostly Bhutanese food. I just relish anything Bhutanese. **What do you hope to achieve?** I want to earn a good name for myself along with fame. **Entertainment to you.** I love dancing and going out with guys. **What is love?** When a person understands how deeply you feel for him, I guess it's called love. **Your interests?** Hanging out with boys. **Your profession?** I'm a beautician. But, because I am passionate about acting I want to pursue it seriously. So far I've acted in two films - Lhazin & Chemla. **One thing you'd like to change about yourself?** I talk too much. I want to change that. **Your role model?** My mum. **Your favorite celebrity?** Tshokye Tshomo. Simply because she's got a good sense of style. **Like?** Boys. **Dislike?** Cleaning customers' nails. **Quirk?** I am proud to be a transvestite and I hate people talking about us in a demeaning manner.

ONCE UPON A KING

By JURMI CHHOWING

Once upon a time is such a pleasant beginning. It fills in receptive ears and welcoming hearts that are warm and willing to receive. It evokes timelessness and stories that have endured the ravages and consequences of time, bringing us melancholic memoirs and nostalgic reflections. But time itself is nothing but a marker in a calendar reminding us of the passage of things, and in time, all things must pass. Having said that, it is that very reason that makes life what it is; tragic, celebrated, and bittersweet. At once touching, and forever endearing. It's an epitaph that makes us pause and ponder awhile and almost always gives us the strength to move on in the face of adversity as well as in triumph.

The passage of that time in space is like the shooting star; a celestial brief that makes us smile and wonder. A rainbow that makes us forget the vagaries of life and the ruins of time. And no matter how brief and fleeting, it stills and calms our flash-floods. As George Carlin, that genius of a comic with a sharp insight for life's absurdities put it so succinctly: "Life is not the amount of breaths you take it's the moments that take your breath away." Without that sense of bewilderment, happiness becomes just another shallow entity we might spell without ever tasting its true essence.

"Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!" So said a boy named Siddhartha when he became The Buddha at the tender age of thirty five and



like all the Buddhas of the past, present and the future, he sought and realized enlightenment and passed away on the Full Moon of the Fourth Lunar Month at the ripe old age of eighty one.

I do not know if there are

still stories being told; around warm hearths, out in the breezy dusk-lights on hot summer days, around a bukhari in cold winters, or to the sound of rains drumming the roof and the ground during monsoon days; on

Image Courtesy: VAST

renewed spring blossoms while going out on a stroll or hand in hand during gold-leafed autumn days.

In the end we are all stories, and the passage of every being is both natural and sad, but happiness and joy abounds when stories are told of times gone by.

The beautiful branch is that when we tell stories, there are no such things as sinister villains, conniving communities or deplorable countries. All of that vanishes and what remains and surfaces buoyantly are memories of beings that lived and strived to be happy in their own way; no matter in what way, shape or form the choices were made the pursuit for happiness in the best sense of the word was always on, as it still is.

The bird may be caged to the skies, but it still flies above fences, walls, boundaries and borders. It transcends the delusional divisions and the remnants are purified. The residue is thus a fond memoir.

On occasions such as these, we all become a little more aware of the precious boons we have been granted and been endowed with. It makes our hearts that much more open, and appreciative, wherein a sense of gratitude arises as spontaneously.

At the time of writing, the day is indeed a special day- February 21, and it is indeed an occasion to celebrate the beloved birthday of a beloved monarch. Today His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namg-

yal Wangchuck turns thirty three and the festivity in honor of a monarch of the masses, for the masses and by the masses is indeed an event every Bhutanese is proud to partake in. The fact that His Majesty chose to spend this day with those that matter the most again reinforces the ceaseless care he always seem to carry with such great mindfulness and naturalness. The following two stories illustrate that point simply yet embedded with a profound sense of care and foresight towards his people that His Majesty loves and serves with such care and attention. Here are some beautiful excerpts from the event's news coverage:

"On the occasion of His Majesty's 33rd birthday, His Majesty the King, accompanied by Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen, visited Dechenphodrang Monastic School and offered Nyendar and prayers for the continued peace and prosperity of the nation. His Majesty met the monks and granted soelra at the school. The monks offered prayers for His Majesty. Later, Their Majesties visited the Paediatric Ward at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital and spent time with the children there. They shared a cake and presented them with toys and other gifts." "Their Majesties also visited the Patient's Guest House and met with the patients and their relatives staying there. The Patient's Guest House accommodates long-term patients who do not have a place to stay in Thimphu and also those patients who have no one to take care of them." "His Majesty the King awarded gallantry and service medals to 239 Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Bhutan Police, and Royal Body Guards personnel, Desuups and civilians. The 10 senior most officers of the Armed Forces were awarded the Crown Jewel of the Armed Forces – gold (Drakpoi Rinchen Tshuktor) medal. Two hundred twenty nine others received the Light Treasure of the

Armed Forces - silver (Drakpoi Norbu Yoedsel) medal. This included 218 officers and personnel of other ranks from the armed forces including three posthumous awards. Nine De Suups were also awarded the medal along with two civilians. The medals were awarded in recognition of the meritorious and distinguished service to the Tsa Wa Sum and exemplary acts of patriotism and sacrifice in service of the Nation.

His Majesty the King expressed his appreciation to the recipients for having served the nation with unwavering loyalty. His Majesty also said that they should continue serving the country with the same dedication.

And then this feeble attempt of a haiku struck me:

"The Tathagatha,
And the Eight-Fold Noble Path-
What else do you need?"

A rhetorical question of an attempted haiku I'd put out to bedazzle myself! There are no definitives to anything but having said that, to some things, there are certain definitives; such as a monarch and a monarch with the qualities of a Dharma King is indeed a precious blessing for both people and country.

Such a monarch is a blessing beyond words in times of hard realities and ever-increasing uncertainties but in our Druk Gyalpo, the Bhutanese people were blessed.

Now I've not been able to sleep as much as I'd have liked, on account of being rather too acquainted with the nocturnal life but this night, which slowly dawns outside the windows, keeps me awake for reasons other than my usual wanderings. The attic I've lived in since I returned back to my roots during the Wangchuck Dynasty's Centennial Celebrations in 2008 has been my window to this kingdom of the thunder dragon and the dragon kings that have been more like our benevolent protectors rather than kings, and that is why every



The beautiful branch is that when we tell stories, there are no such things as sinister villains, conniving communities or deplorable countries.

IN THIS FRAME



HIS MAJESTY THE KING AND HER MAJESTY THE GYALTSUN TALK TO A CHILD IN THE PAEDIATRIC WARD

Bhutanese loves and cherishes the kings that have served them for more than 100 years. Not to partake in such a joyous occasion would have been a personal disaster. I'm excited this day and apart from my son's birthday, I do not get all excited as I do this day every year. It's an opportunity for us to show our gratitude, and in writing this, I hope to show a little token of my own appreciation to a dearly beloved king who has all but given his being to the kingdom he calls home and the citizens he calls fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. Coming back, this attic has a square transparent sheet on the roof; a see-through with a view to the sky. There are pigeons and now they coo. Now they stir from their nests. I hear the chirps of other winged feathers and the odd wee-hour sounds of vehicles revving up their engines for another day's chores. But there is an air of festivity, and the pigeons' coos' rings of joie de vivre.

But I have been lost for words the last couple of weeks and days leading up to this day and what it really means. Sometimes thanking a being you owe so much leaves you speechless, and often, wordless. There was a jam in my head. Now I see how I was trying too hard.

Anything that comes from the heart and is fed with a sense of gratitude cannot be mulled over too much. It takes away from the sacredness of the occasion we will be absorbing and celebrating. I'd not realized that I'd already celebrated the proceedings even as I was logged and jammed in a myriad maze of thoughts ad infinitum.

You see, something happens every February on His Majesty's birthday. I believe it's a result of becoming really affected in a positive way and getting the shivers as to how best can one live and express this day.

The pictures of His Majesty accompanied by Her Majesty spending time with the sick and those at the vanguard of our nation's defense makes one swell with pride, of the right kind, as well as the bursts of emotions that erupt to remind you of the meaning of selflessness and duty. Anyhow I grinned and smiled as I gazed quiet and contemplative. I began thinking that if ever a bond was forged without bondage, it is every time we are fortunate enough to partake in the evolving birthdays of a monarch who is every bit the People's King and more.

Once upon a time isn't just a begin-

ning, it's a process in itself- rooted and embedded through many Karmic ties without being blinded but rather freed and strengthened.

May Your Majesty always remain as pure and as flawless as the lotus that sprouts without a speck of dust yet stays wisely rooted in the complexities of life and in doing that, epitomizing the meaning of simplicity as Siddhartha did. The sun now beams its rays through the windows in the attic I live in, providing me with light and a chance to live another day as best as I possibly can... May Your Majesty be like the light that shines in, through the cracks of life, providing vision where there is darkness, wisdom where there is ignorance, optimism where there is hopelessness, courage where there is failure, and love where there is none.

And may Your Majesty become the very beacon that tells lost souls "This Is Home and You Have Arrived..." And may Your Majesty always arrive there safely, even as we are guided by that light... with Her Majesty by your side, and the Protector Deities of Our Beloved Kingdom and its folks, who celebrate this beautiful day of your birth, and give thanks that we have in our midst a caring and compassionate monarch we will always love and who will reciprocate that back a hundred fold.

This is a story I'm telling my son, and a story someday he'll pass on to his son.... a story that will be told manifold; around a warm hearth, out in cool meadows on hot summer evenings and around campfires in cold wintry months and to the music of the monsoon raindrops, the renewing spring and in gold-laden autumn days.

"Once upon a time;
Is such a beautiful line-
May it never end!"
A Heart Felt Happy Birthday Your Majesty.



An Ode to My King



Your Majesty, I cannot paint.

If I could, I'd portray your glorious being; since I cannot, I draw inspiration, in the many wise manifestations of your compassionate and skillful ways and means... with the reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

I cannot sing Your Majesty.

If I could, I'd chant the virtues you so naturally embody; since I cannot, I attempt to sing my songs of gratitude and homage in worded paeans... with the reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

Your Majesty, I am not an artiste.

If I were, I'd act out your persona; since I cannot enact your persona, I try and perform upon the guidance and confidence Your Majesty displays and endows upon us... with the reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

I'm not an architect Your Majesty.

If I were, I'd construct avatars of the qualities you display and the counsel you provide; hence I try and imbibe them in stories... with the reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

Your Majesty, I'm not a scientist.

If I were I'd invent innovations based on your visions and aspirations; hence I try and communicate those ideas and ideals... with the reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

I'm not a spiritual mendicant, Your Majesty.

If I were I'd practice meditation; and realize the paramount importance of Your Majesty's constant reminder, above all else, of the importance of being a good human being.

These are but mere words Your Majesty, and since I'm not even a wordsmith, I cannot express what my gut feels and my heart pounds and my head contemplates; but I'm deeply aware that wherever I am, I am but a proud and humble subject of Your Majesty, and a conscious bearer of the light of Your Wisdom...

Your Majesty, I'm no philosopher.

And philosophy leaves me confounded; but when I hear Your Majesty's words, I begin to understand that the most complicated things can easily become the simplest of actions.

Deep is the bond that Your Majesty has planted, nurtured and rooted, and given loving care and attention. Fortunate are we to call ourselves your subjects, and in being the kind of king you are, blessed indeed is this realm, and the borders beyond.

If I were to offer a prayer and a wish, the list is an inspired subject's attempts to grasp some of your gems and try to pry open their open and deep revelations.

May your reign be an inspiration for others.

May your being be a mirror for self-reflection.

May your personification of the Dharma King be an example for the ages; now and forever.

May the natural elements in Your Majesty keep expanding from strength to strength; giving life to all it touches, bringing light upon darkness, strength upon weakness, confidence upon doubts, assurance upon insecurity, simplicity upon complexity and love upon hate.

In conclusion, may Your Majesty always remain, the moral compass when we are lost; as constant as the Northern Star, as solid as our mountains, as spacious as the skies, as deep and absorbing as the oceans, and come back in as many infinite lifetimes, as our beloved Druk Gyalpo! And may your subjects rise to, if not above your altruistic expectations.

Long Live Your Majesty! Tashi Delek Gakey Phuensum Tshogpa!



KNOW YOUR FOOD

Bhutanese Red Rice



Because of its high iron and zinc content Red Rice can boost your blood-forming iron and strengthen ones immunity.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Nutritional value per serving 1/4 cup | (48g) |
| Calories | 150 |
| Calories from fat | -0 |
| Total Fat | 0g (0%) |
| Saturated Fat | 0g (0%) |
| Cholesterol | 0mg (0%) |
| Sodium 0mg | (0%) |
| Total Carbohydrate | 36g (12%) |
| Dietary Fiber | 2g (8%) |
| Sugars | 0g |
| Protein | 3g |

ENERGY

Great source of energy as it contains carbohydrates and fiber which prolongs the digestion

FAT

It does not contain any fats

MINERALS

Contains angiotension II, which lowers blood pressure and helps declog fat-coated arteries. It has five times more iron, three times more zinc and twice as much fiber than white basmati rice. It is also said to contain manganese, magnesium, phosphorus, and molybdenum.



Bhutanese Red Rice has been grown for thousands of years at high altitudes irrigated with glacial water, rich in mineral content. By retaining its outer bran layer it will entice you with its complex, rich, nutty and earthy flavor.

It has been the staple diet of the Bhutanese people, particularly those residing in western Bhutan, where it is abundantly grown. Sometimes known as the Himalayan rice or the red Japonica rice, it became available in United States in mid-1990s when Lotus foods, a California based company, began importing it from Bhutan. After discovering its many health benefits, it has become a much sought after grain by Delicatessans and other Fine Food chains in the west that cater to consumers who are realizing its immense health benefits.

Because it can be expensive, about \$5 for a quarter pound, people often cook it by mixing it with white rice.

Red Rice gets its color from the high content of anthocyanin

and proanthocyanidins, plant pigments, which gives some plants a red or purplish color. These pigments are said to be rich in antioxidants. Studies published in publications dedicated to Alternative Medicine from research of proanthocyanidins on diabetic rats revealed that this compound reduces cholesterol and hyperglycemia in type-1 and type-2 diabetics. The high fiber content in red rice is also said to help regulate weight, clean the colon of toxins, soak up cholesterol and feed the good bacteria in the intestines.

Because of its high iron and zinc content Red Rice can boost your blood-forming iron and strengthen ones immunity. The iron contributes to the production of myoglobin and hemoglobin. Myoglobin and hemoglobin deliver oxygen to muscles and tissues, keeping your energy levels high. You also need iron to boost cell growth.

Bhutanese red rice is rich in carbohydrates and dietary fiber, which can take more than two hours for your body to digest, pro-

↑
The high fiber content in red rice is said to help regulate weight

viding a prolonged sense of fullness. A diet rich in dietary fiber also promotes a healthy digestive system and lowers your risk of heart disease and other obesity-related conditions.

The rice does not contain fat or cholesterol, which makes it a heart-healthy addition to your plate. Nutritionists says diets low in fat help prevent clogged arteries and aid in weight maintenance. With each serving of Bhutanese rice, you consume two percent of your recommended daily allotment for iron, 80 percent for manganese, 20 percent for magnesium, 20 percent for phosphorus, 35 percent for molybdenum and six percent for zinc.

It is also a good food source for people with Celiac disease who are allergic to wheat.

Natives usually eat red rice daily with vegetables or meat cooked as curries. They sometimes also make a porridge called Thuep made from the red rice by adding meat, or chunks of dried cheese in it.



By TSHERING DORJI



REVIEW RESTAURANT

The Oriental



WHERE
Etho Metho Plaza

SPECIAL
Karaoke

TIMING
9 am – 10:00 pm

CONTACT
17665116

EXTRA
Latest movies inside a private room



It was Christmas Eve when I visited The Oriental, a colorful, casual and contemporary restaurant located in the heart of Thimphu town. It was a good time to wander in as The Oriental is said to observe all special occasions with 50 percent off the whiskey and free snacks with your wine. There was a set buffet dinner, free fruit punch and cocktails at an affordable rate. If you drank two beers you got a third free. There are house games on these occasions and that evening they even gifted winners with hampers. Diners seemed to dig the fun and excitement these raffles provided.

Although the name sounds grand, The Oriental's understated decor makes for an ideal place for a casual hang out on normal days. The menu is delectable so it's best to come after working up an appetite.

There is a semi-luxurious, contemporary dining room, with expansive floor-to-ceiling windows. Overall, the interiors




THE DINING AT THE ORIENTAL

The Oriental's understated decor makes for an ideal place for a casual hang out on normal days. The menu is delectable so it's best to come after working up an appetite.

also make for a pleasant experience and this, I am told, is to be credited to an Indian interior designer. I liked the design of the bar and the lightings particularly because it was not over the top, but simple. The menu offers both traditional and experimental flavors from India, China and Thailand. The lunch menu has a mix of tasty South-East Asian noodles and spaghetti, and some Indian dishes. And of course how could they forgo Bhutanese Dishes? There is a set menu consisting of one non-veg, two veg items, rice and dal for Nu

130 per person.

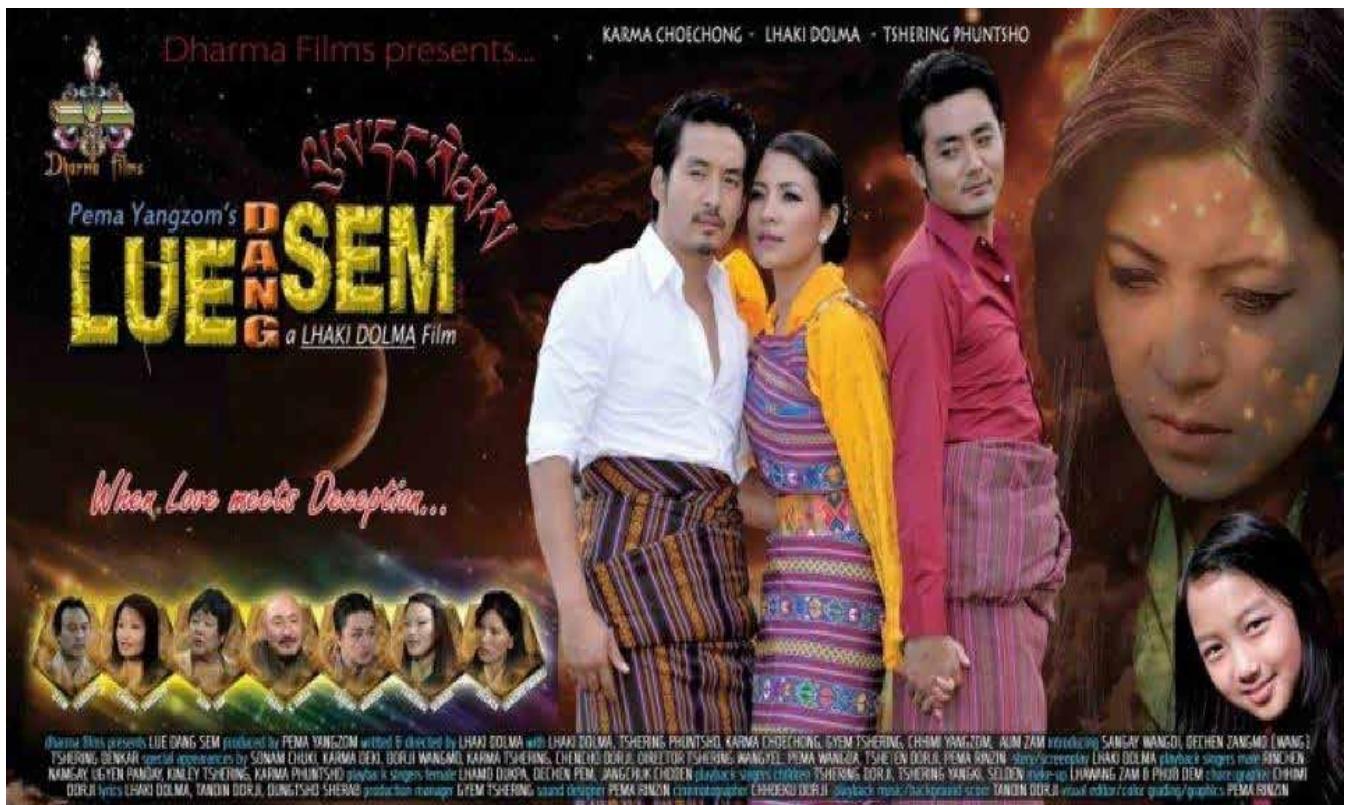
I would recommend their biryani which I really liked and I will say they make a good butter naan. If you are fond of Indian dishes, this is a place worth visiting.

The portions are a good size, not too small and not too large to be wasted. The service was also good, although I did have to wait a little longer than I had hoped to. You can also watch the latest movies inside a private room for an extra Nu.100. 

By TSHERING DORJI



REVIEW MOVIE



DIRECTOR

Lhaki Dolma

CAST

Lhaki Dolma, Tshering Phuntsho, Karma Choechoong, Gem Tshering

Synopsis

The plot revolves around the life of a journalist who wants to make a difference in society. The story takes a twist when her passion for the job backfires on her personal life

Lhaki Dolma gives an impressive comeback in *Lue Dang Sem*, a movie dedicated to journalists. Her talents in this movie are writ large as writer of the script, lyricist, director and as actress.

Lue Dang Sem portrays passion, deception, regret and vengeance. A little simplistic in its plot,

the movie is about a passionate Journalist played by Lhaki herself, who is thriving in her career and who has a lot to be content about. But as everyone knows, journalism is not the most smooth-sailing career option and it is just a matter of time when one can learn how mentally challenging such a profession can turn out to be, especially if the environment is not conducive for



THE CAST - TAKING A BREAK FROM SHOOTING

Lue Dang Sem portrays passion, deception, regret and vengeance. A little simplistic in its plot, the movie is about a passionate Journalist.

protecting free speech. And it is no different for the journalist when her zest for uncovering truth and corruption takes its toll.

The journalist's investigative stories winds up putting quite a few people behind bars including some influential ones. As a result, sometimes she is threatened and people try to bribe her to conceal the facts. But she keeps moving forward without compromising her ethics. But as fate will have it, she pays a heavy price while the victims of her publications seek revenge on her. She is then shattered, completely broken

when the son of a wealthy contractor (who gets sentenced to prison) deceives her and even dis-owns the child she conceives with him. The movie has a happy ending and justice prevails when the law takes its course.

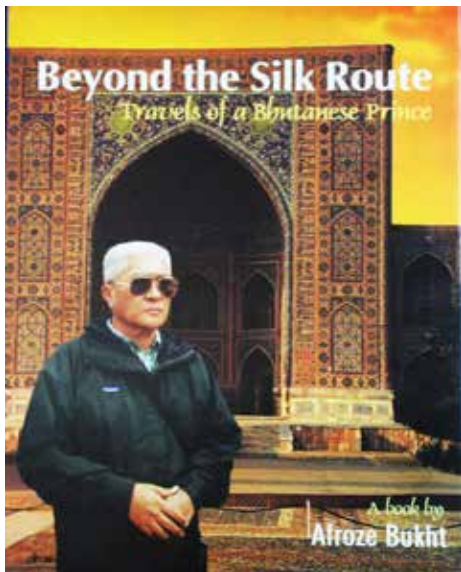
Amongst the other characters in the film, Karma Choechong, gives a great performance in negative role and Tshering Phuntsho as Managing Director of the news agency Druk Neytshuel.



By TSHERING DORJI



REVIEW BOOK



The book is enjoyable in that it takes the reader with the prince, every leg of the journey, through the various landscapes.

Beyond the Silk Route – Travels of a Bhutanese Prince, may be one of Bhutan's first travel books. Afroze Bukht, the author, has managed to provide the reader with a curious mixture of frivolous banality and historic events that are interwoven, or carefully constructed revealing the mandala of a life of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuck. The book transports the reader in quick succession, sometimes into the ancient days of Alexander the Great and Constantinople, and sometimes, into the medieval era of Genghis Khan and his Golden Hordes.



PRICE
Nu. 1,600

AVAILABLE AT
Junction Book Store, Thimphu

The long and arduous journeys undertaken by His Royal Highness through different continents by rail and road over 30,000 kilometers with historical backdrops, anecdotes and encounters has been brilliantly captured by the author with erudition and humor.

Perhaps the rumors that His Royal Highness dislikes air-travel so much that he never flew are true after all. And for this traveller, a great dislike for one thing surely boded well for something else, a rich collection of ever-changing sights, sounds, smells and even temperatures that only overland travel can render.

What makes this book a great collectible is the narration that is spiced with His Royal Highness'

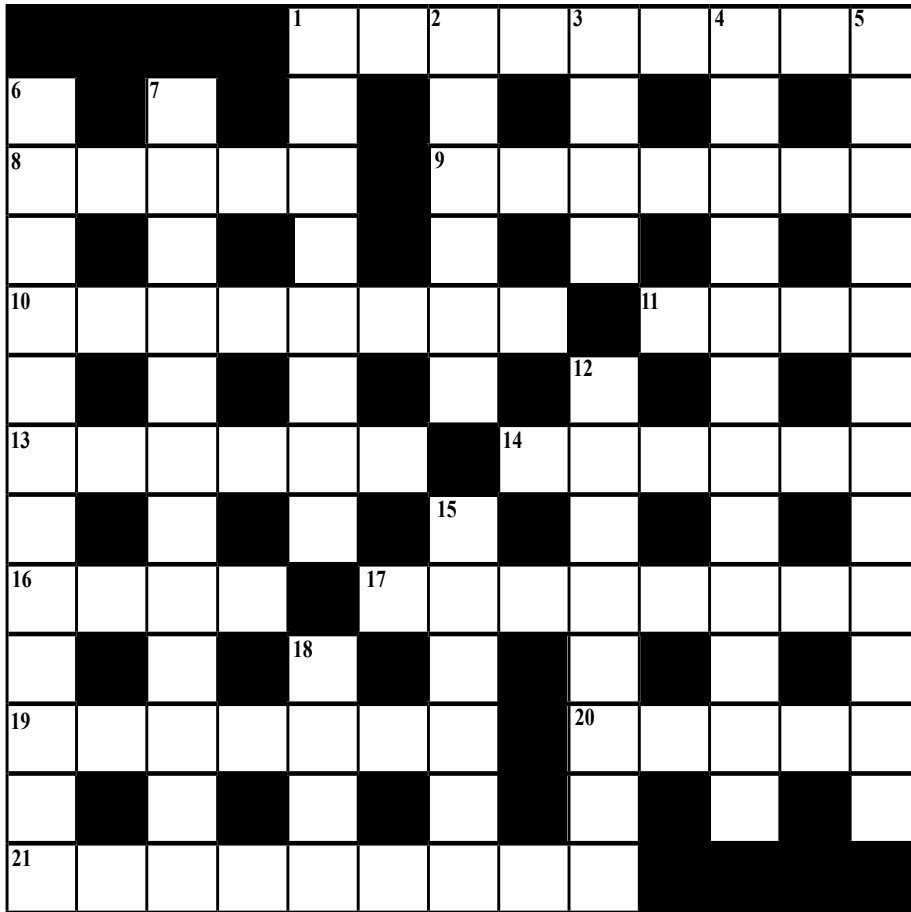
charm and grace which never fails to win the hearts and minds of all those who come in contact with him.

Beyond the Silk Route is an account of one of His Royal Highness' many travels abroad, where the affable Prince is seen as a keen and observant traveller, taking in the sights and absorbing the culture and traditions of the people with more than just a curious eye of a casual tourist. The book is enjoyable in that it takes the reader with the prince, every leg of the journey, through the various landscapes. And, with every change, one begins to see the world in a different light, never once leaving the delightful company of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuck.



By MITRA RAJ

QUICK CROSSWORD



Last Month's Solution

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P | E | W | S | 3 | S | 4 | P | I | 5 | T | E | 6 | F | 7 | U | L |
| L | A | A | E | A | A | I | A | I | A | I | A | I | A | I | A | I | A |
| 9 | A | T | F | A | U | L | T | 10 | D | E | N | S | E | | | | |
| Y | E | R | E | A | A | S | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | B | O | R | N | E | 12 | R | E | L | A | T | E | | | | | |
| A | K | F | I | P | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | L | A | C | K | A | D | A | I | 16 | S | I | C | A | L | | | |
| L | R | M | T | E | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | B | O | N | 18 | S | A | I | 19 | R | I | 20 | J | A | | | | |
| 21 | P | Q | A | L | I | W | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | U | S | U | A | L | 23 | I | N | F | A | N | T | A | | | | |
| M | E | O | A | E | E | N | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | A | S | T | O | N | I | S | H | 25 | W | R | I | T | | | | |

Solution Next Month

Across

- 1 One bringing a lawsuit (9)
- 8 More pleasant (5)
- 9 Citizen army (7)
- 10 South Australia's capital (8)
- 11 Perfunctory kiss (4)
- 13 Hang loosely (6)
- 14 Celebrity (6)
- 16 Indian dress (4)
- 17 Opposite of digital (8)
- 19 Weave — interlace (7)
- 20 Narcotics (5)
- 21 Habit of being late (9)

Down

- 1 Designed to be carried (8)
- 2 Fleet of ships (6)
- 3 Invalid — not binding (4)
- 4 Eventually (2,3,4,3)
- 5 One of the gifts of the Magi (12)
- 6 Glowing with heat (12)
- 7 Film script author (12)
- 12 Scottish or Irish singing or dancing parties (8)
- 15 Sternutation (6)
- 18 The South of France (4)

We have heard of and read about newspaper delivery boys; jobs that little boys take on the side to make a little pocket money. But when it is the bread-earning job of a 75 year-old man, it begs a story to be told.

By TSHERING DORJI

As dawn breaks and the first morning light trickles through his one-room makeshift apartment, it's time for the old man to wake up.

No time to waste. His first priority is to reach the Kuensel office in Changbangdo. He quickly gets into his clothes, worn out from so much use, washes his weather beaten face, ties his blue scarf around his head and downs his cup of morning tea. He maintains the same routine come winter or summer. No weather conditions are reason enough for him to stop getting his wrinkled hands on the newspapers that have to be delivered on time.

"I am a devoted newspaper delivery man," the 75-year-old said, "and my profession is my passion."

Harkadan Rai, son of road laborers Run Bahadur and Gan Maya of Samtse, grew up on the roads, in a chain of shifting labor camps. Forget sending him to school, his parents could barely get someone to look after him and so his childhood was confined to the roadsides while his parents worked day in and out. There was no way out and so it was only natural that he too would end up as a road laborer.

Harkadan grew up appreciating hard work, and the people who had those ethics. To work hard, no matter what the job, to provide for themselves and their children. He appreciated honesty, a quality that made him just like his parents. He has laboriously crushed the stones that lay the foundation to the smooth blacktopped roads that our cars glide on and while some can be embittered by that fact, Harkadan admits this with pride. When I came of age I was able to help my parents make ends meet, he said.

"The work of a laborer may not be something most people aspire to but, for me, it was something my family did. And although there is not much of a choice I did what I had to do with sincerity and I worked hard at it," he said.

As an illiterate who never had the opportunity to go to school, or even the childhood pleasures that other children may have, Harkadan spent much of his life like his parents. But then when he hit 70, there was only so much physical hardship that his decrepit old body could take. There was also no one to look after him so he had to find an alternative. Fortunately there was a nephew, Krishna, with whom Harkadan



HARKADAN RAI



now lives, who recommended the job of deliveryman.

Although a step up in some respects, and without a doubt, physically much easier than breaking stones, there comes the challenge of stepping up and taking on a job that is unfamiliar in everyway to you. And at 75, it may not be breaking stones, but it is still a job that needs to be done.

Very soon, however, he was familiar with his route and the people around him. Familiar enough to be called “Bajay” by the shopkeepers of Thimphu who dealt with him.

Harkadan aka Bajay is energetic as ever and takes his job very seriously. His sense of responsibility when it comes to work – even though it is just delivering papers – is strong. No doubt the age factor sometimes proves troublesome to work but the determination he has enables him to work like a youngster.

It pains Harkadan to talk about his life after growing up on the roads and before he retired from it to delivering papers. He was once happily married and was a “dutiful and reliable” husband who led a poor, but peaceful and content life. But this was all short-lived when his wife Gan Maya, died from stomach cancer. That was about 33 years ago. “She left me a souvenir, a beautiful daughter,” he said.

Raising a child as a single parent working the roads was not easy and, he says, he tried his best to give his daughter a decent life. School was also something he couldn’t afford, so once again, another generation went without the opportunity.

His daughter married and moved away with her husband to

another town. And, sadly, he hasn’t been able to visit her for four years. He cries when he talks about it.

Krishna is the son he never had. He is the one who takes care of him. Together they make about Nu 7,000 a month (\$104) a sum that can barely get you anywhere in Thimphu. But like Bajay, there are many who live within this income bracket.

“Hard work is what we need to achieve our goals,” said Bajay. “This is my philosophy and I put my heart in whatever work I do.”

He says delivering newspapers is tiring work for an old man like him. He has been doing this for seven years now. He begins his day at seven in the morning. After getting ready he heads to Kuensel and carries over a hundred papers in his tattered green army bag and begins walking to the bus terminal at Lungtenzampa. After most of the buses have departed and nobody is interested in buying papers anymore, he moves to apartment buildings. He then goes down to the taxi stand and the vegetable market. He is out all day and this can be tiring for an elderly man. “Sometimes I am too exhausted to walk back home so I simply lie down on the streets and sleep there. Quite often, well-meaning folks offer me a drink or two, and I don’t refuse,” he said.

At the end of the day the proceeds are all dropped off to the Kuensel office. He earns one ngultrum for every copy sold. On a good day, when he manages to sell all he carries, he earns about Nu 150 in total.


The story of Bajay is probably the story of many children like himself who grew up on the roads of Bhutan, never having had the opportunity to go to school or even see the inside of a classroom. Road workers in Bhutan may fare far



No doubt the age factor sometimes proves troublesome but the determination he has enables him to work like a youngster.

better than laborers in India, Nepal or other countries in the region, because they are paid a regular salary, provided with accommodation and even get a monthly food ration like rice and oil. But it is still hard to see that they and their children’s lives are doomed to the road, a vicious cycle of poverty. Luckily for Bajay he got out, although a little too late. On the other hand, this is also the story of many of our old people who have little or no means to support themselves. Lacking a social security network, many have to toil away into their old age either on roads, farms, or other forms of labor, or rely on the goodwill of their children and relatives.

Perhaps this is something to think about for the future of the country. What happens to our old people – especially those who do not have a family, relatives or someone kind enough to care for them? Should there be some form of social security benefit for them?

Meanwhile, oblivious to the fact that these are social obligations a nation has to its people, our old people toil away at whatever it is that will sustain them. Amongst them, you may just see that familiar old man while you are out on the streets next time. He will be ever ready to serve you the nation’s news fresh of the press, right out of his bag. 



Lovingly known as **ASHA KAMA**, this artist is the winner of the prestigious National Order of Merit and a torch-bearer of Contemporary Art in Bhutan. Kama won a scholarship from the British Government to study western art at the Kent Institute of Art and Design, Maidstone, University of Kent in England in 1991. He has an enduring fascination for textures, movements and many symbols in Bhutanese culture and has been exploring aspects ranging from temple walls to spiritual horses that we see on prayer flags. His works are available at *Terton Gallery*.





TERTON
GALLERY

BY KELLY DORJI

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





Lama Shenphen Zangpo has spent more than 25 years practicing and studying Buddhism in different parts of the world. He spares a moment to talk to *The Raven* about the youth and substance abuse in Bhutan.

Q) We are witnessing, increasingly, a great deal of problems with our young people especially in Thimphu and other urban areas. How serious would you say this problem is?

From my experience with the youth in Thimphu, I would say that the overwhelming majority of so called “unruly” kids are just lacking good guidance and also, perhaps, a clear vision of how to move forward and make positive changes in their lives. With timely and appropriate help and support, the majority can become well-adjusted and decent adults.

Q) What advice would you offer to parents, and guardians, with regard to raising kids in an urban environment?

Spend time with your children. Read to them when they are young. Take them cycling or hiking when they are older. Also, parents need to realize that children are precious human beings who deserve their full attention, love and devotion. They are not inanimate objects that can be abandoned when we tire of taking care of them.

In addition, if a parent wants their son or daughter to become a caring, confident and responsible adult, they

must exhibit these qualities themselves. It is unreasonable to expect a child to develop in a healthy way if they grow up in a household where one or both parents are having extra-marital affairs, abusing each other, drinking excessively, or spending every evening in bars or clubs.

Basically, from the moment that a couple has a child, they need to understand that they have a shared future. It is no longer about them as individuals, but about them as a family and as part of the community. Personal wants and desires should take second place to the needs of their child. When done with compassion, wisdom and commitment, parenting can be one of the most rewarding and precious experiences in life.

Q) You have given much off yourself, and dedicated your time working with addicts in Thimphu. You must find it frustrating at times; do you ever feel like giving up?

I sometimes run out of options, but, no, I never feel like giving up.

Q) What keeps you going?

Well, as a Buddhist I know that everyone naturally possesses basic goodness. This is our

natural state when purified of defilements. Take a diamond buried in mud as an example. No matter how thick the dirt, or irrespective of how long the diamond has been buried, it is never tarnished or tainted by the mud. Once the diamond has been dug out and washed, it appears in its natural, pristine state. In this example, the diamond represents our pure



mind, while the mud is the ignorance that causes us to do harmful action.

Now, if the mud could somehow enter the diamond and permanently contaminate it, then there would be no point in washing it, but this is not the case. That is why a diamond hunter seeks diamonds in soil and mud. He knows that the dirt is not part of the diamond and can be washed away.

It is the same with addicts. The addiction was not there at birth and any negative action that is being committed is a result of their addiction or other circumstances. Consequently, like the soil on the diamond, it can be washed away.

Of course, if someone is a danger to themselves or others, they may need to be isolated from society or placed in a safe location, but we should never give up on them. In the same way that a diamond caked with thick mud might take longer to clean than a diamond covered with a thin layer, we understand that a person with a long history of addiction or anti-social behaviour might require more attention and support than a short term user. Yet, in both cases, the dirt or ignorance can still be cleansed away to reveal a pure and untainted essence.

For real-life examples of people who did negative things but finally became good, we need look no further than our own Buddhist tradition. Both Milerapa and Angulimala killed many people, but when 'cleansed' of their ignorance, they became

masters of the Dharma who have offered countless generations a shining example of human goodness.

So, to return to your original question, I do not give up because I know that even the most confused and lost person possesses basic goodness. And that through guidance, that goodness can shine through.

Also, I try to see all interactions with a non-discriminating view. For example, from morning until night we have to do something, right? We cannot leave the planet, and so if I am working with a person who has relapsed for the tenth time or a person who got clean the first time and is doing well my physical effort is the same. It is my mind that clings to a positive result and rejects a negative one. And so if I am feeling frustrated and agitated with the relapsed case, I need to recognize that the problem lies with my own expectations, not the person himself. Therefore, to effectively address these feelings, I need to go directly to the source – my own mind. Giving up on someone is not an option.

Q) What do you think are the main causes for the increase in drug use and how can it be effectively addressed?

Well, as Buddhists, we know that many causes and conditions are required to create a specific situation. We know that weeds, for example, only develop when the conditions, such as soil, sunlight and moisture, are favourable to their growth. It is the same with social problems. They do not arise suddenly and at random, but also

develop through a number of causes and conditions.

To put it in another way, babies around the world do not have a greater propensity to become an addict now than they did thirty or fifty years ago. What has changed is the environment in which they are raised. Therefore, in order to effectively address drug problems, it is necessary to deal with the environment, not only the user. Like a farmer who adds fertilizer to his soil or adjusts the level of irrigation when his crop is showing signs of weakness, [world] leaders need to take a long hard look at their societies and to show the courage and resolve to make any necessary adjustments to counter a rising trend of anti-social behaviour.

Q) Are there any good models, or programs, around the world for dealing with addiction problems?

Well, there have been many attempts to deal with the problem, but, no, I don't think that there have been any outstanding success stories.

I do not give up because I know that even the most confused and lost person possesses basic goodness. And that through guidance, that goodness can shine through.



LAMA
SHENPHEN
ZANGPO





Countries that presently don't have major drug problems, such as Taiwan and Japan, didn't have them originally. It is not that they have been especially successful in dealing with them. However, I am aware that Taiwan does not criminalize people caught taking drugs, but instead supports them to undergo rehab treatment. In this way, the addicts are considered patients and not criminals and, as a result, receive treatment for their underlying problems, not punishment for their action. Perhaps the Taiwan approach is worth exploring.

Q) If we have an addict friend or family member, how should we see them?

As a valued and precious human being who is in desperate need of help.

Furthermore, we should understand that their erratic or anti-social behaviour is a result of their drug use and will stop once they are free of addiction. Basically, if we really want to help an addict, we first need to make them understand that they have a problem. This may take time as most addicts are in denial.

However, once they accept that they are addicted, they should be persuaded to meet one of the psychiatrists at the Thimphu Referral Hospital and admitted to the psychiatric ward for a ten day detox programme. After successful detox, they can enter Serbithang Rehab - although there may be a waiting list of around one month to six weeks for a bed. Alternatively, the addict can be taken directly to a rehab in India. Sahayata in Siliguri and Goodwill in Darjeeling are popular options for Bhutanese. The Drop In Centre (above the taxi parking in Thimphu) can offer support and advice, as well as give information about support groups in other parts of Bhutan.

Q) What advice can you offer anyone who may be suffering with addiction problems themselves?

Seek professional help. In the same way that toothache or any other disease cannot be eliminated by the power of mind, so addiction cannot be stopped through will power. It is not your fault. It is just the nature of the disease. Likewise,

there is nothing to be ashamed of. There is not a single person in the world that has never made a wrong decision in their lives. Taking drugs was just a mistake – a wrong turning in the road. Now it is time to get back on track. Also, know that help is available. I am always personally ready to meet with anyone who is suffering with addiction problems and will do my utmost to help in any way possible. Otherwise, you can seek advice and assistance at Drop-in-Centres around the country.

Q) On a concluding note, would you like to add anything?

Please do not think of an addict as just an addict. They are also someone's son or daughter and a precious human being. Like us, addicts have dreams and want to be free of their suffering and pain. They have just made a mistake in life. That is all. In this respect, they need and deserve our help and compassion, not our condemnation. 🐦

If you have a relative or friend who has an addiction problem you can seek help at any of these numbers:

↑
**LAMA SHENPHEN
ZANGPO TEACHING
MEDITATION TO
CHILDREN**

Drop-in-Centres:
Thimphu: Nazhoen Pelri - (02) 333-303,
Chithuen Pendhey: (02) 333-111
Jakar: (03) 631-627
Mongar: (04) 641-217
P/ing: 17680293

Rehabs in India:
Siliguri (Sahayata): +91 9609996661, +91
7872984122, +91 9641349393
Darjeeling (Goodwill) +91 9800794736, +91
9679198219



Gelephu Dungkhag

Despite it being almost three months since Gelephu dungkhag officials declared that different timings have to be adhered for men and women visiting the hot spring, it hasn't been put to practice yet .



Jambay Kinley

For three consecutive merit awards from His Majesty the King. Jambay Kinley from Dagapela MSS seized the top position in the BSCE 2012 examinations for class X.



A total of about 4,052 babies were born in the dragon year according to records with JDWNR hospital. In the previous year, 2396 babies were born.



Bhutan

For successfully demonstrating sustainable tourism and making to the top three on the list of finalists for Tomorrow's Destination Sewardship Award.



Paro Residents

For sneaking at dusk to dump their wastes in every possible corner as they say the mini green waste bin is too small to dump their wastes.



Of the 8,967 students, who appeared for the Bhutan Higher Secondary Examination Certificate (BHSEC) in December last year, 7,781 passed taking the overall pass percentage up by 0.73 percent, as compared with the previous years.



Police officer

Major by rank but alleged to have raped his 16-year old housemaid.



Lyonpo Ugyen Tshering

Foreign Minister Ugyen Tshering for being honored by the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He was awarded the 'Friends of Liberation War Honor'.



The Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Library saw a decrease in membership from 2,000 in the previous year to 1,500 this year.



Druk Air's one-way flight from Paro to Bathpalathang now costs Nu 4,200, taxes excluded, Nu 4,980 less than the initial airfare of USD 170.



After the Gelephu town was classified as a class A town, it will be provided with Nu 1,100M budget for the 11th FYP .For the 10th plan, it was allocated with Nu 170M.

MOST DISCUSSED NEWS

New parties fishing for candidates

With the introduction of eight more candidates on feb 19, the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) spokesperson said they have 40 confirmed candidates.

“the rest of the candidates will be introduced at a later date,” he said.

The DNT also revealed their first first female candidate, Dorji Choden, 53, who will contest from Thrimshing-Kangpara Constituency in Trashigang.

Another new party, the Druk Chirwang Tshogpa, has also identified 46 candidates. Of that, 25 candidates have been confirmed to contest from the various constituencies including sixty-year-old Dr. Chenkyo T Dorji.

Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party on the other hand has confirmed 39 candidates so far.



New parties to tour constituencies



In a move to ensure a level playing field in the upcoming parliamentary elections, the Election Commission has given the green signal for political parties to make their presence felt in the constituencies. Chief Election Commissioner DASHO KUNZANG WANGDI said it was necessary for the new parties to put their organization together in the dzongkhags, among others.

The decision was arrived at after some parties had approached the Commission seeking permission to conduct familiarization tours. However, a notification the Commission issued stated that while there was no official policy that necessitated such a tour, it found it essential that new parties visit and hold meetings in the dzongkhags, gewogs or chiwogs with the electorate.

“The parties can introduce themselves, set up the party dzongkhag offices, address organizational issues, register new members and consult with local members,” stated the notification.

The notification also directs the parties to refrain from carrying out any activity that may generally be understood to be in the nature of conducting election campaign.

As for the two old political parties - the ruling and the opposition - the Commission has advised them not to schedule any activity henceforth that could reasonably be construed as electioneering under section 300 of the Election Act.



Parliament to dissolve early

The first democratically elected government proposed the dissolution of the National Assembly before its term expired on April 20, this year.

The Prime Minister has submitted a proposal to His Majesty for early dissolution considering the “national interest”.

The Constitution says premature dissolution of the National Assembly may take place on the recommendation of the Prime Minister to the Druk Gyalpo.

At the opening ceremony of the tenth Parliament session yesterday, graced by His Majesty and the Gyaltshen, the speaker said the assembly would face some inconvenience in the next election if “the house was not dissolved before its five year term”.

“Moreover, if the assembly does not dissolve earlier than its term, the next election would fall sometime in July this year, during the monsoon,” he said.

The National Council will, however, complete its full term.

The government’s move to dissolve the assembly ahead of schedule has the new political parties in the fray worried.



11 cars vandalized

Police are yet to arrest suspects involved in vandalizing 11 cars on February 5 at Olakha, Thimphu.

Two Prados, five Santa Fes, a Tata Hilux, an i20, a Wagon R and a Swift Dzire were vandalised. Car owners reported the incident to police around 8 am on February 6.

From one Prado, the miscreants had taken a laptop, an ipad, two digital cameras and Nu 35,000. A Santa Fe was robbed off Nu 5,000 while a camera was stolen from the Swift Dzire.

The miscreants used stones to break down the glasses of the cars. Police have collected fingerprints and are investigating the case.

MOST DISCUSSED

10

Nu 2M a day was the estimated interest paid in early 2012, when rupee borrowings were around Rs 10B.

19

Twenty percent of the GDP was contributed by the agriculture sector in the past few years. It came down to 19 percent in 2010, and 18 percent in 2011.

30

30M USD will be provided by the ADB for the energy sector in Bhutan.

400

400 people were deployed for the Kingathang forest fire in Phobjikha, which carried on for two days and nights, damaging over 6,000 acres of blue pine forest.

6

Six contenders from Tsirang have declared to contest the National Council elections

LAST WORD

In 2008, a few days before the general election, a veteran journalist walked into Bhutan Times – the newspaper I was working for then – and was asked the obvious question: Which party did he think would win? His answer was interesting. He felt the DPT could lose because the party’s poll pitch, throughout the campaign period, had been nothing but preachy, with more or less the same sermons being delivered in all the Dzongkhags, by one man the party heavily relied on.

In the aftermath of the landslide DPT victory, that observation begs the question: Why did PDP’s strategy fail so miserably while DPT’s ‘approach’ succeed so overwhelmingly?

My view. The PDP did what any new political party would, assuring voters that their young new candidates would help villages and communities prosper. But, that assurance somewhat fell short. Their strategy overlooked the rural distress that had over the years been steadily on the rise. To return to the well-worn cliché of that time, city folks were prospering while those in rural pockets were left behind.

DPT did things differently. Right from the onset of their campaign, they seemed more sensitive to the needs of the grassroots. Without mincing words, it was made clear that the party would address issues that had for long been plaguing them. In short, they provided people with a sense of belonging – more than PDP had managed to do. People, in almost all the gatherings all over the country, were convinced that being part of the ‘DPT family’ would ensure their progress and perhaps put an end to their woes. So when the elections came around, the Bhutanese countryside was, in the true sense of the word, ‘decided’. Even urban dwellers backed DPT because most have their roots in the villages.

Of course, the problems in Bhutan’s villages are far from over. And many would argue that the rural programs of the DPT government didn’t work as well as expected. But what is important is the fact that the DPT was seen as willing to help. That certainly appears to have translated into votes. PDP too had plans for the countryside. But while it mainly focused on infrastructure development, DPT targeted people. The assurance of building schools and sorting out the tiresome procedure of obtaining No Objection Certificates for instance, directly touched hundreds of people.

All this, however, doesn’t imply that rural Bhutan has progressed tremendously in the five years. The crisis of unemployment and diminishing returns from agriculture need a more comprehensive strategy and sustained injection of resources. But the DPT government made a start. Today, as the elections loom large once again, with five political parties in the fray, it will be interesting to see which party defies cries of populism to address issues that really need to be addressed. It will be interesting to see which party will reach further and connect with the common people. Be careful not to promise things that one can’t deliver, because everything is easier said than done and five years do pass quickly. If we have to learn anything from the first elections, it is that the political pundits, pollsters, and even politicians (aspirants et al) shouldn’t be too sure about predicted outcomes. It is easy to see things in hindsight, but not necessarily now. So play right, be truthful about what you can deliver.

Politicians and diapers should be changed frequently and all for the same reason - José Maria de Eça de Queiroz, translated from Portuguese.



Mitra Raj Dhital