

DIWA DILEN
WITH UGYEN WANGDI

LIVING WITH
A BARBER
p.38

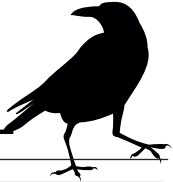
ARTICLE
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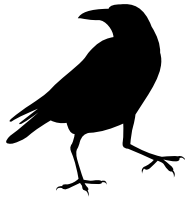


**A TIME TO ACT,
NOT JUST REFLECT,**
AS CHILDREN SEEM TO
FIND NO WAY OUT.



NOT
Suicide is ~~always~~ an option

Image courtesy: www.idioprag.com



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Director Ugyen Wangdi talks to *The Raven* on pioneering filmmaking in Bhutan and its challenges.

LETTERS + TWEETS TO THE RAVEN

Fantastic piece on the complicated & often misunderstood lives of Bhutanese youth (July/August issue) ~
S. Carolyn Barnes PhD student in Cultural Anthropology at Washington University, scholar of Bhutan.

Looking through write-ups on modern art in The Raven. Some very nice things there. Would be great to see a longer piece on it ~
Andrew Quintman, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Yale University.

Thanks for publishing this piece (article by Tshering Tashi, July/August issue) on the disguised pundit mapping the Himalaya ~
Michael Sheehy, Head of Literary Research at Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC)

Friday Reads, The Raven, Bhutan's Magazine "Youths are not the future- they are the present" excellent article from The Raven ~
Trisha Nicholson Writer/Photographer/Anthropologist, New Zealand

Thanks to The Raven for the free magazines, been reading all the issues till date. Next time I will buy it ~
Kinley Wangchuk Radio Valley, Thimphu

I got hold of a copy only today and my Saturday was good with The Raven. The July/August issue is worth taking home. You have the perspectives of diverse groups and backgrounds. Keep it up. ~
Karma Choden, Education.

Received my copy of The Raven. Fantastic mix of social and political issues....a must read! ~
Tashi, Education



KUZUZANGPO!

As the election dust settles and the country moves on ahead, we continue to confront the challenges of a society in flux. A traditional society struggling to modernize and develop always has more than its fair share of difficulties. But when they start taking a toll, in the form of lives, it is time for us not just to sit and reflect, but also to act.

The socio-economic conditions of the people are taking a toll on some of the most vulnerable sections of our society – our children. Suicide, as experts will say, is the last resort for those who see no way out – those who have no hope.

If an increasing number of young people are feeling this way, it means that we seriously need to address where it is that we are going wrong. And as educated people, as decision makers, as parents, educators, as officers and as adults, we should feel this responsibility seriously and do our bit, even if it is just to give a word of encouragement to a child or show concern. The other would be to put proper policies in place that would help reverse this trend.

For a society that has prided itself in being associated with “peace” and “happiness” to have to see a surge in suicides should tell us that there is a real need for us to reassess how we deal with and reach out to our children. And by that I don’t just mean our biological children, or the children of our relatives. Of course home is where we start, but it is the overall attitude of society towards the young that accounts for how the youngest are treated and how secure they are made to feel in their surroundings.

Last year at this time The Raven was launched. The magazine made its entrance into an environment that has not been the best for the media on all fronts. Like most publications our future is still shaky, but we would like to keep our hopes up with the support of those who value us for what we do.

On a brighter note, it is hard to believe that it is already two years since the Royal Wedding. The Raven would like to take this opportunity to wish their Majesties - His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and Her Majesty the Gyaltshen - a very happy anniversary!

With the first session of the parliament over, may we also wish the new government and the opposition every success in their work for the Tsawa Sum.

Sonam Ongmo
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WRITE TO US



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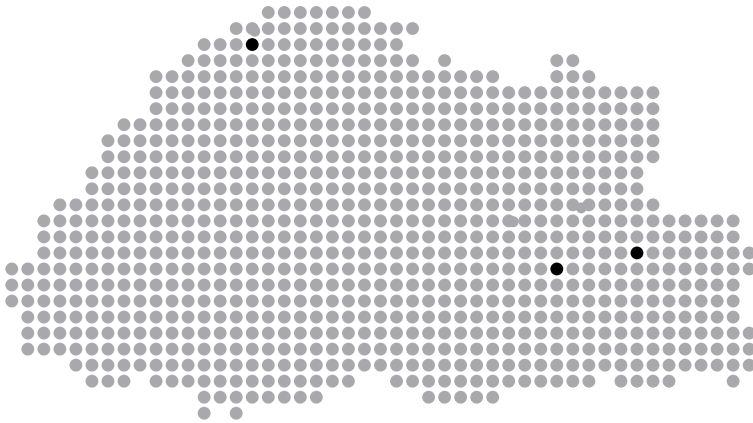
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THIMPHU

National Graduates Orientation Program

The National Graduate Orientation Program (NGOP) for 2013, themed 'In Quest of Productive Citizen' was conducted from September 29 to October 7 in the capital. This year 2,404 university graduates (1,344 males and 1,060 females) attended the NGOP. 1,105 students are from colleges in Bhutan and 1,299 from colleges outside. The event inaugurated by the Labor Minister also had the Prime Minister Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay addressing the graduates during the course of the program. The objective of the NGOP is to orient graduates on government policies.

Japanese Rotary Club donates US\$ 3,000 to promote Judo

The Bhutan Olympic Committee received a donation of US\$ 3,000 for promotion and development of Judo in Bhutan on the 4th of October.

The fund raised by Rotary Clubs of Kobe Seishin, Akashi South and Akashi West in Japan to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the foundation of the Kobe Seishin Rotary Club will be used to purchase Tatami mattresses for the youth to practice Judo at the Pelkhil Judo Club in Thimphu.

First session of second Parliament concludes

The closing ceremony of the first sitting of the second parliament on October 1 was graced by His Majesty the King.

The MPs of the two houses gathered around the golden throne to offer Tashi Moenlam for the health and long life of His Majesty the King, the security and sovereignty of the country, and peace and prosperity for the people.

The two week long session of the parliament saw endorsement of the 11th Five Year Plan and the annual budget. Members also deliberated on the Tenancy Act 2004, RTI bill and annual reports of Audit and Anti-Corruption Commission.

The National Assembly, National Council and Local Government Acts were also amended and reviewed to streamline the resignation of elected members.

BUMTHANG

Archery game to celebrate Royal Wedding anniversary

Quarter finals for the ongoing Royal Wedding Open Archery Tournament began on October 4. The archery tournament is an annual event organized to commemorate the Royal Wedding of 2011.

A total of 35 teams from Bumthang, Trongsa, Gelephu, Thimphu, Trashigang, Monggar, Lhuentse and Zhemgang are taking part in the tournament.

The finals will be played on October 13 coinciding with the Royal Wedding Anniversary.

ZHEMGANG

LG members concerned over delayed budget

The Local Government (LG) members are worried about planned developmental being delayed due to release of budget for the 2013-2014 financial year.

This was a most highlighted discussion in the two-day Dzongkhag Tshogdu meeting held in Zhemgang.

The LG leaders said the execution of works were already delayed by almost three months due to which allocated budget might return to the government. Zhemgang being a least developed dzongkhag, the developmental works carry huge importance.

The Raven



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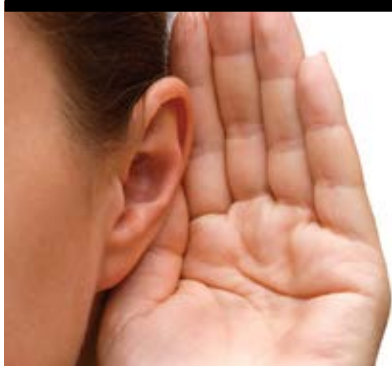
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quotes



“The bottom line is we need to work harder. We need to grow our own food and build our own homes.”



LYONCHEN TSHERING TOBGAY
in a recent article in the New York Times



On stigma

Why do parents still have that stigma in them? He/she's a Haap/Parop/Lhotsampa/Sharchop... so u can't marry him/her... #weNeedChange we are Bhutanese! *MuGey (@Ap_MuGey) Twitter*



On youth

For a country proclaiming happiness i am appalled looking at the state of our youth. No understanding, no support but full of potential. *Tenzing Lamsang (@TenzingLamsang) Twitter*



On democracy

We (Industry, Government, and Academics) have to work together and harder. Otherwise democracy will not succeed with a weak media.



On RTI

The enactment of #RTI law as promised, will also indicate the will and the ability of the government in getting things done *NC MP Sangay Khandu (@Sangay Khandu) Twitter.*



DECHEN WANGMO, CANDIDATE REPLACING FORMER PM JIGMI Y. THINLEY IN PEMAGATSHEL

On being nominated as replacement and her probabilities of winning the bye-election



LEKEY WANGDI
on GNH



SONAM DEMA BBS

“He has always been a father figure and source of inspiration for me. All I have to do is ensure that vision is converted into reality, which I shall at all costs. If at all I falter, I can turn to him for advice and guidance.”



“No individual or party should take ownership of GNH. The wisdom and essence of GNH gets diluted in the midst of political and individual cloud.”



“I have never been abused in my entire life.... as much as I get abused over the phone answering BBS newsroom landline. Some simply call to abuse.”

Snow Leopard

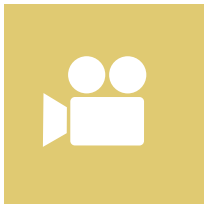
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CINEMA



BOOKS



MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

highlights

KEY ● Date ● Time ● Place ● Venue



LAUNCH

Her Royal Highness Ashi, Sonam Dechan Wangchuck, launched an educational research book titled, "Raise Your Hand: Bhutan's First Elected Women Leaders", in the capital at KCD Production's event 'Bhutan Women Forward.' It has been designed as a supplementary resource book for high school students on the important subject of women's participation and leadership in politics and governance.

The book was designed by KCD Productions

FESTIVAL

JAMBAY LHAKHANG DRUP

● OCT 18th - 21st

Jambay Lhakhang is said to be one of the 108 temples built by the Tibetan King Songtsen Goeppo in 659 AD on a single day to pin down an ogres to earth forever. A supine demoness was causing obstruction to the spread of Buddhism and the temples were constructed on her body parts that spread across Tibet, Bhutan and the border lands.

PRAKAR DROMCHOE.

● OCT 18th - 21st

Attend the popular Dromche in Bumthang as you breathe in the fresh Bumthang air. The dzongkhag is virtually a place for pilgrimage as it has many holy sites blessed by Guru Rinpoche. And for visitors the place proves to be a most beautiful sight-seeing experience.

CONFERENCE

FIRST HIGH-LEVEL MEETING TO MOVE BEYOND GDP IN ASIA

● OCT 8th - 10th

The International conference in Bangkok will examine ways to calculate the value of nature for national accounting purposes. Statisticians, economists, ecologists and policy makers from across Asia will meet in Bangkok to define ways of calculating the value of natural resources that could reshape the way country success is measured.

INTERFACE BETWEEN NEWS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

● OCT 4th

Media professionals, bloggers, active social media users and a parliamentarian attended the SAFMA conference to discuss the emergence of social media as a compelling force in these times.

It was generally agreed among participants that it would be impossible to regulate social media and in any case regulation was not be considered an option.

Participants agreed that with the incredible pace at which Facebook and Twitter are picking up among users the need to educate people on the positive and negative effects of social media is very important.

PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION OF SECOND PARLIAMENT CONCLUDES

● OCT 1st

His Majesty the King graced the closing ceremony where members of parliament offered Tashi Moenlam for the long life of His Majesty the King, the security and sovereignty of the country, and peace and prosperity for the people.

The 11th Five Year Plan and annual budget was endorsed during the two week long session. The Tenancy Act 2004, RTI bill and annual reports of Audit and Anti-Corruption Commission were also discussed.

In addition the National Assembly, National Council and Local Government Acts were also reviewed and amended to streamline resignation procedure for elected members.

EVENTS

● OCT 8th - 10th

FORIEGN ARTISTS IN THE COUNTRY TO PERFORM OPERA

About 76 musicians, singers and stage-performers from the University of Texas at El Paso in the US, Canada, Italy and Australia reached the capital on October 7 to perform Opera, a western classical music tradition .

A TIME TO ACT, NOT JUST REFLECT, AS CHILDREN SEEM TO FIND NO WAY OUT.

Niraj Gautam was a vibrant 18-year-old Bhutanese student in Canada. He came from a loving family with two older brothers, and loving parents. Although his father was often away because of his work they spoke frequently via Skype and always made it a point to spend quality time together.

They had just vacationed together in South Africa and the family was looking forward to another vacation this time at home in Bhutan after Niraj graduated from high school. Niraj contacted his friends in Bhutan and told them that he was looking forward to it.

But that never happened. Instead, Niraj decided to take a trip on his own without the family. In March, a month before graduation, he left the world for good after he hung himself in their garage.

While that happened to a Bhutanese youth at the other end of the world, this reality is something we are grappling with even here in Bhutan. Young people killing themselves are no longer incidents that happen millions of miles away. It is happening even here in our schools and homes, within our boundaries, to our children.

With the spate of suicides amongst children, some as young as nine years old, many have been left questioning what it is that we are doing wrong, and what is it that we can do to help.



I set out in search to get some semblance of, if not understanding, this sad malaise plaguing our youth and children.

Changzamtok lower secondary school is abuzz with the joyful chatter of children out of class during lunch break. Given the cheerful chatter, the place seems full of life and promise, just the way any school environment would.

But calm and cheerfulness it may be in appearance and on the surface one can still feel an unease and sadness that weighs heavily on the minds of the students and teachers here.

For them, the memory of the suicide of a 11-year-old class vi

student Tshering, still haunts them and has left many of them with unanswered questions.

Tshering was known amongst his friends to be a good performer in both academics and extra-curricular activities. He was a cheerful child according to friends and teachers.

But however so he was in life, it has left those around him confused and sad.

“As far as we were concerned we saw he had no family problems, like separated parents, and he did not display any abnormal behavior, nor was he challenged in any medical ways,” said his class teacher Kinga.

“ ... he did not display any abnormal behavior, nor was he challenged in any medical ways

A day before he killed himself, Tshering had attended a poetry recitation in class and had even performed brilliantly. But there is more to these things in life than meets the eye. Nobody knew how much he was suffering inside.

Earlier this summer, the Royal Thimphu College (RTC) was also left asking the same questions when a 21-year-old student decided to end his life similarly.

The young student was popularly known not just in college but also outside given that he was a talented singer and his music had gained a large following.

His friends and family reveal that they too struggle with, and are left with the same questions.

He was known to be mentally stable but there was the issue of a lack of attendance that might have not allowed him to sit for his examinations, which could have led to or added to some other stress that he was undergoing. But

would that warrant taking one's life?

In the aftermath of suicides, loved ones fail to see reason in their action and wonder how something that they can easily handle would lead them to end their lives. However the answer is never simple and the reasons are not always what they seem.

"He had every reason to continue life than to end it. He was just so immensely talented with huge hopes for a bright future," says one of his close friends. According to them, they did not detect any signs of depression. "We sometimes even met up for basketball and we hung out together in town," one of them says, wondering if he could have picked up clues.

The question "Why" is something that friends and family always cannot answer, and probably something that even the person who killed him/herself will be unable to answer. And even if there was an answer to the Why, then most of the time it doesn't make sense.

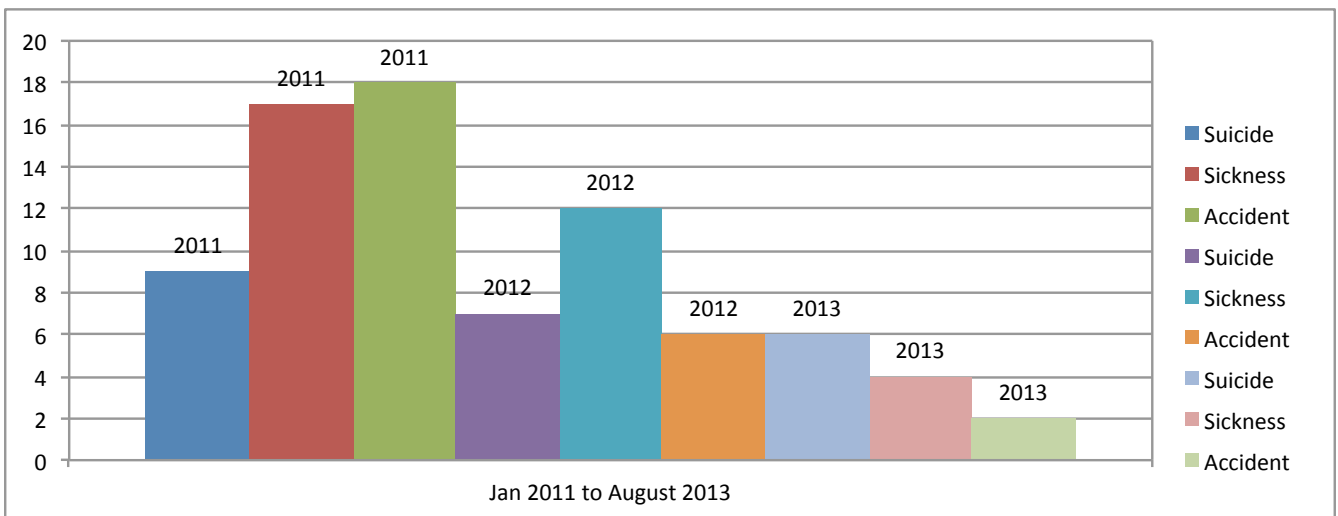
It doesn't, because as the health experts tell us, it is complicated and it is

deep. What we should also remember is that for the person who commits the act, it is done as a last resort, because they see no way out. This is a problem, therefore, that concerns all of us, and our children, and some of the solutions also lie with us.

The first thing to understand is that this is a problem of national concern and needs address.

In 2011 alone there were 10 student suicide cases recorded with the concerned authorities. In 2012, seven cases were recorded, and as of August 2013, five student suicides have been recorded. Official figures have reported 11 cases.

In addition to some of the cases we mentioned this year there were others. In February and March this year, two students in Samtse, a class x and a class viii student committed suicide. While the tenth grader was living with her parents, the class viii student was in boarding school. In July, an 18-year old student from Tsebar in Pemagatshel committed suicide. Consultant Psychiatrist at the Thimphu national referral hospital (JDWNRH), Dr. Chencho Dorji explains that mental health issues, like severe depression and





stress, are at the center of this. Dr. Chencho says that about 15% of people with depression land up committing suicide, 10% of those with alcoholism issues also tend to commit suicide while 10% of those people who are psychotic or insane commit suicide.

In the case of the youth and children it is mostly to do with their inability to handle stress and conflict, the pressure they feel is so immense that they see no way out other than ending their life.

Looking at the way society is

changing and evolving, Dr. Chencho says, "Young people are mostly a lost generation."

He explains that children today are exposed to much more than we were before. With technology at the click of a button young minds have access to and are inundated with so much information, entertainment, advertisements etc. These instill high expectations and emotions in young minds who do not know, are not advised, and lack the ability to cope wisely or normally with some of the developments and disap-

“
children today are exposed to much more than we were before.

pointments if they are not met.

“Parents, teachers and society also fuel these expectations,” says Dr. Chencho referring to the academic performances, good grades in exams, expected behavior and obedience, great professional career or a good government job. Other reasons cited by the Doctor are that people in order to dissociate or run away from problems and to escape the angst in their lives end up with suicidal thoughts. Suicidal ideation and behavior in children usually reflect serious and chronic problems in the child’s

life, either at home or at school.

In the case of Niraj Gautam, his parents said he was an A+ student even having won an outstanding performance award and a full scholarship in Ottawa to pursue studies in computer science or medicine. However Niraj spent a lot of time on the computer and it was becoming evident that he was being bullied and victimized online. His family was aware of it and his brothers even intervened

However, the cruelty inflicted by

“

Experts on suicides will tell you that a child who attempts suicide usually does so as a last resort

peers and others sometimes can be so detrimental it is difficult to understand how it impacts the child. Increasingly many of the suicide cases in the west are being attributed to cyber-bullying incidents on Facebook and other social media outlets, where children are publicly shamed and taunted. Could some of this be happening in our schools?

In Bhutan there may be some small element of this at play too. Nevertheless judging by the cases that have been reported and the scenario of corporal punishment and severe discipline issues with parents and teachers that still exist despite it being outlawed, the reasons for suicide here may be more than cyber. Teaching through punishment and humiliation is nothing new. If Corporal punishment has been outlawed milder forms of punishment still exist. And in a world where children are becoming increasingly aware of their individualism, their emotions and see how other children are increasingly being loved and cared for, their world of neglect and shame only becomes worse.

Then there are other reasons. In the case of youth, Dr. Chencho says some may be infatuated and act in ways to seek attention, or impress their peers or romantic interests. Among such actions some children resort to slashing their wrists, making multiple cuts on their hands or resorting to drinking harmful liquids like toilet cleaners. In all this, however the child hopes to come back to life after having displayed this daring act and achieved the attention of the girl or boy, or even negligent parents.

Culture and spiritual values, which played a huge supporting role in the past, are also deteriorating within families and society leaving children vulnerable and directionless. An erosion of family values leaves young children struggling to find ways to cope with negligent and sometimes ruthless parents and teachers, and sometimes channeling all these emotions. For example, with urbanization families are increasingly becoming nuclear and with that, old values



are being lost in the process, generation gaps come into play while the new age media that strongly encourages consumerism and different attitudes create a disconnect between the older and the younger generations and between traditional ways and attitudes of dealing with problems.

This is further worsened as rural-urban migration is on a rise and young villagers and families move to urban centers in hope of better lives. They end up living in small quarters and packed apartments where the atmosphere on a daily basis is not at all conducive for peace of mind. This is veritably an explanation that elders and their counsels, their value-rich discourses lead to building a stable mind that can tell apart wrong and right decisions in situations and problems that suddenly crop up in the world outside the walls of one's own homes.

"It is more important to talk to children, talking to them everyday spending quality time," says Dr. Chencho.

He feels Bhutan needs to have a national registry in relation to suicides so that

the causes can be known and addressed.

Experts on suicides will tell you that a child who attempts suicide usually does so as a last resort. Even if the suicidal behavior is seen as a gesture and not genuine effort to end life, it must always be seen as a desperate attempt on the part of the child and must be taken seriously. It is important to remember that children who attempt suicide later go on to commit suicide. A suicidal gesture should be seen as a psychiatric emergency.

In a recent study of suicidal behavior in children aged 6 to 12, it was found that a child's suicidal potential correlated significantly with a sense of depression, hopelessness, and worthlessness and with a belief that death is temporary and pleasant. Suicidal adolescents, on the other hand, understand the meaning of death. Usually these youngsters are seriously troubled, suffering from depression or stress. The adolescent may feel overwhelmed and desperate. Most attempts represent the need for extrication from impossible situation resulting either from internal or external stress.

Educators and policy makers are concerned about these developments and the issue

now takes center-stage in daily dealings.

"Children need not die. But our children don't understand. Whenever I get the opportunity, I tell them about this," the Director of Adult and Higher Education Karma Yeshey says. "Children do 'that' because they think troubles, problems are bigger than life itself. As adults we know better that ending their lives doesn't solve anything."

He says parents, teachers, and adults all have a role to play in ensuring that children are not stressed or neglected to resort to such harmful measures.

"There may never be foolproof measure in place but we can prevent it. Everybody is trying but fallouts happen," says Karma Yeshey. He cited the August death case of a class I student in Tsirang who while attempting to enact the act of suicide in front of her friends wound up losing her life in the process.

At a time when this is happening frequently or widely, parents and teachers should talk to the children and discuss this issue and let them know that it is not the end of the world; that there is always a tomorrow.

They should also encourage children to

Data from Education Department

Summary sheet of death & suicide cases for 2011 - 2013													
Month	Year	Dzongkhag	Death case		Month	Year	Dzongkhag	Death case		Month	Year	Dzongkhag	Death case
Jan - Dec	2011				Jan - Dec	2012				Jan - Dec	2013		
		Bumthang	1				Bumthang	3				Paro	2
		Chukha	1				Chukha	5				Pemagatshel	3
		Dagana	3				Dagana	1				Samtse	2
		Lhuentse	1				Monggar	4				Tsirang	1
		Monggar	1				Paro	1				Trashigang	1
		Paro	7				Pemagatshel	4				Sarpang	1
		Pemagatshel	1				Punakha	1					10
		Punakha	1				Sarpang	1					
		Samtse	4				T/Yangtse	1					
		Sarpang	4				Wangdue	3					
		S/Jongkhar	6					24					
		Trashigang	6										
		T/Yangtse	4										
		Thimphu	1										
		Wangdue	5										
			46										

talk and discuss their emotions and feelings with friends and people they are comfortable with rather than suffering in silence. These conversations, about the need to share their problems, should be had frequently and they should be reassured that there is always a way out.

“We should be alert always there is no room for complacency,” said Karma Yeshey, the education director.

The Education Department is trying to deliver and help where it can. It has stationed 32 full-time counselors under in different schools and an additional 29 will join soon.

The feedback they have received is that it is having some impact in helping children outside the classroom through guidance and counseling.

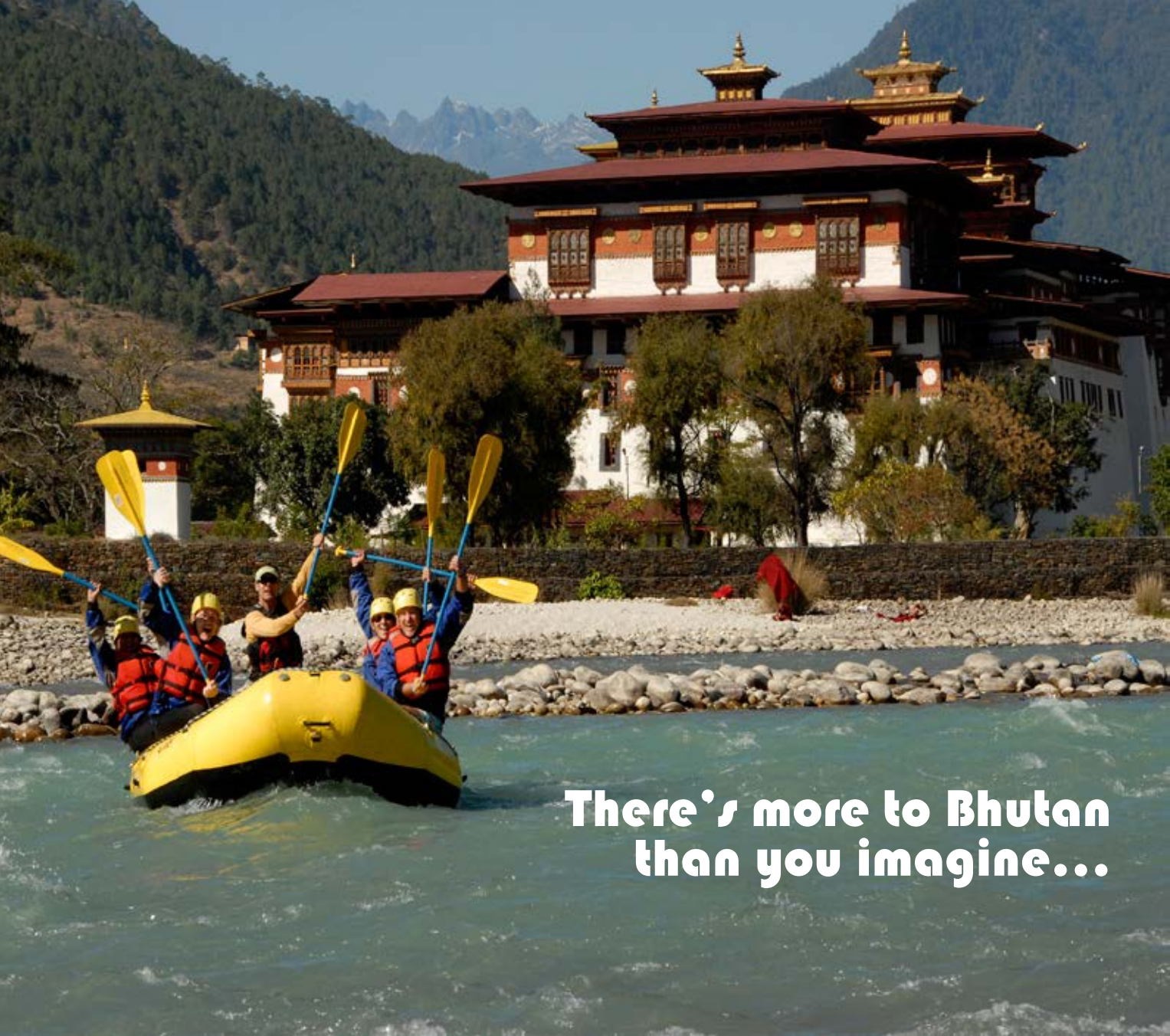


Sonam Pelvar

BY MONTH		Cause of incident for the year - 2011				
Sl. No.	Month	Death case	Suicide	Illness	Other reasons	Remarks
1	January	1			1 Elephant attack	10 students were boarders in the schools 8 students were dependents
2	February	2		2 Headache		
3	March	2	1 suicide case	1 Cough & cold		
4	April	2			1 drowned & 1 washed away	
5	May	6	2 suicide case	2 sickness	2 unknown case	28 students were with parents
6	June	5	2 suicide case	1 sickness	1 drowned & 1 accident	
7	July	7	2 suicide case	3 sickness	1 drowned & 1 washed away	
8	August	4	2 suicide case	1 sickness	1 drowned in water	
9	September	3		2 sickness	1 accident	
10	October	7			5 vehicle accident, 2 accident	
11	November	1		1 Blood cancer		
12	December	4		4 All sicknesses		
Grand Total		44	10	17	19	46

BY MONTH		Cause of incident for the year - 2012				
Sl. No.	Month	Death case	Suicide	Illness	Other reasons	Remarks
1	January					2 students were boarders in schools
2	February					
3	March	1	1 suicide case			
4	April					
5	May	2	1 suicide	1 sickness		1 student was dependent 22 students were with parents
6	June	2		2 sickness		
7	July	7	1 suicide	2 sickness	2 accident, 2 washed away	
8	August	1	1 suicide			
9	September	4	2 suicide	2 sickness		!"
10	October	4	1 suicide	2 sickness	1 accident	
11	November	4		3 sickness	1 electrocution	
12	December					
Grand Total		25	7	12	6	!"

BY MONTH		Cause of incident for the year - 2013				
Sl. No.	Month	Death case	Suicide	Illness	Other reasons	Remarks
1	January					1 12
2	February	1	1 suicide			
3	March	1	1 suicide			
4	April	1		1 Blood cancer		
5	May	2		2 Health problems		
6	June	1		1 Sickness		
7	July					
8	August	3	3 suicide		1 washed away	
9	September					
10	October					
11	November					
12	December					
Grand Total		9	5	4		1 12



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The Raven SEP-OCT 2013 17

www.bhutanfound.org

LISTEN TO THOSE SILENT SCREAMS OF OUR CHILDREN CRYING OUT FOR HELP

“A 15-yr old student in Sibsoo committed suicide by hanging himself early this morning. That’s the 11th suicide case in last 10 months,” tweets @BHTFLASHNEWS on Tuesday, September 10 - World Suicide Prevention Day 2013.

There is no graver news than that of a child killing himself, what makes it worse is when it happens on the very day chosen to advocate on suicide prevention. Depressed, I posted a status on my Facebook wall “These are the grim realities of our world where a day is being marked as International Suicide Prevention Day and we see one coming...Today is the day to create awareness on depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and all other emotional problems that lead to the execution of the so called suicide we have been hearing every single day. Isn’t it time that we come together and act against this very disease that is engulfing our society?” Over this discussion with a colleague I was told that in another incident a Class VIII boy had hung himself from an apple tree in the very orchard that he grew up playing. The reason for his suicide? He had failed miserably in his mid-term examinations and was too scared to face his father. He had shared the results with his mother who only told him that the father would deal with it. Before he committed suicide he had actually called his father, who was then at the archery ground. The boy informed his father of his results and the response he got was, “You wait there! We will deal with it when

I reach home.” That was the last conversation the father had with his son. The principal of a school tells me that there is a boy who doesn’t want to study. But he is forced to stay because the father had warned him that he would be removed from the family census and sent out of the house if he doesn’t stay in that school. The boy is believed to have told the principal that he is fed up of his dad’s constant nagging and belittling him, and even confessed to resorting to suicide attempts several times. Just two months back a Class XII student hung himself in his lone rented room. He was known to be lively, always laughing and joking around with his friends. The Principal and teachers say he never showed any sign of depression or any problem of being disturbed. Later, it was discovered that he was in love with a girl to whom he could not confess his feelings. Her name was found written on the wall of his room.

There are many instances where our children today go through fears, peer pressure, stress from studies, relationship issues, and lack of attention from parents and teachers in the schools, that lead to emotional instability and lack of self esteem. Their needs and feelings are dismissed as being unimportant and often ignored. Most of our youth suffer from symptoms of lack of attention and love at home, and many of their emotional problems manifest in different ways. Some resort to abusing drugs, some indulge in gangs and fights, some turn into loners. Some girls

suffer through teenage pregnancy and unhealthy abortions at the border; and there are some who resort to suicide. So where are we going wrong? Is it in parenting and upbringing? Is it the school system? Is it the outcome of modern day life styles? Is it a trend? There may be countless questions that every individual needs to ask oneself. As a parent: are we doing enough in terms of upbringing and helping our children in their adolescence and the complex phase of growing up? Are we trying to figure out the needs and fears of our children? Do we hold our children’s hands and let them know that they are not alone fighting the lone battle in this modern day? Do we tell our kids often that we love them? Do we tell them that their fears and tears are ours too? Are all the children getting the love, care, support and attention at home? Do we expect to bring up our children the way we were brought up some three to four decades ago? The times have changed, social settings have changed, and so have the needs of our children. It is imperative then, that as parents, we too need to change with the changing pace of time and adapt our ways of dealing and handling children to suit their needs. And the same for our school systems. At a time when we are talking of preventing our children from getting into many social problems, thus leading to issues like suicide, our school system should put in place ways and means to provide emotional security to our children. It is believed that schools are the second homes and teachers are

“

There are many instances where our children today go through fears, peer pressure, stress from studies, relationship issues, and lack of attention from parents and teachers in the schools, that lead to emotional instability and lack of self esteem. Their needs and feelings are dismissed as being unimportant and often ignored

the second parents. Many a time schools may trigger off the problems unintentionally. Children may come to school with lots of emotional baggage, at the verge of bursting off. It is important that schools have the system of knowing every child, their strengths, weakness, fears, needs, and accordingly provide support that deal with each area of concern.

Times have gone where we disciplined our children with threats and thrashing. It is no longer a world where stinging nettles can be applied to better classroom management. Proactive programs need to be put in place and instituted in the school

system to understand the needs of children and help them become better human beings. At the end of the day we should know that every single life is precious and it is the duty of parents and schools to help our children appreciate their lives better, rather than enabling them to resort to suicide.



- Karma Choden
works with the Private Schools
Division of the Ministry of
Education

“A GOLDEN OCTOBER”



A photo story celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of the Royal Wedding of The Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the Gyaltshen, Jetsun Pema Wangchuck

The Royal Wedding took place at the Punakha Dzong, the Palace of Great Bliss, on 13th October 2011. The ceremony was presided over by the Je Khenpo for the *Zhabdrung Dag Nangma* prayer with 100 monks reciting *Tshepa Mey* prayers (prayers of long life). The King then received the *Dar Na Nga*, five silk scarves in the five auspicious colors, as well as the Raven Crown of the Wangchuck Dynasty. His Majesty then received another *Dar Na Nga* for his bride and bestowed it on her, along with the crown of the Druk Gyaltsuen. This was followed by a formal proclamation of Ashi Jetsun Pema Wangchuck as the Queen of Bhutan.



The proclamation was followed by the *Tashi Ngasoel* ceremony at the Grand *Kuenra*. During this ceremony, the Je Khenpo chanted the *Ngoedrup Langwa* prayers for the accumulation of spiritual and worldly virtues. Following this ceremony, representatives of civil and religious authority presented the King and Queen symbolic gifts. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a traditional presentation of felicitations was followed by a public celebration in Punakha.



Azha Keza
(Freelance Photojournalist)

PHOTO ESSAY



THE ROYAL COUPLE GREETES AND MEETS THE PUBLIC.



THE ROYAL COUPLE, AFTER RECEIVING ALL SACRED NUPITAL BLESSINGS FROM THE MACHEN WHERE ZHABDRUNG'S EMBALMED BODY IS KEPT, GREETES AND POSES FOR THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA.





SCHOOL CHILDREN WAITING ALONG THE HIGHWAY TO GREET THE ROYAL COUPLE





↑ SCHOOL CHILDREN WAITING ALONG THE HIGHWAY TO GREET THE COUPLE

↓ WELL-WISHERS BUYING TASHI KHADAR (CEREMONIAL WHITE SCARF) TO OFFER TO THE COUPLE



PHOTO ESSAY



A BOY OFFERING
TASHI KHADAR TO
HIS MAJESTY

PEOPLE QUEUED UP WITH GIFTS FOR
FOR THE ROYAL COUPLE





WELL WISHERS FROM AS FAR AS LADAKH CAME TO WITNESS THE HISTORIC ROYAL WEDDING



TASHI LEBEY, THE DANCE OF AUSPICIOUS ENDING



THE WHOLE NATION CELEBRATED AS THE ROYAL COUPLE KISSED.



A women-orienting event

The KCD Productions organized an event titled 'Bhutan Women Forward' at the Terma Linca Resort in Thimphu on Saturday October 5. Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechen Wangchuck was the Chief Guest at the event.

A book titled 'Raise Your Hand - Bhutan's First Elected Women Leaders,' was launched by Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechan Wangchuck. The book has been designed as a supplementary resource book for high school students on the important subject of women's participation and leadership in politics and governance.

Recognizing the importance of sound leadership, male or female, in any form of government, and the potential of youth to become good leaders, this book takes a special look at leadership drawing inspiration from the country's monarchs.

The book also documents, for the first time, the stories of Bhutan's first elected women leaders from the 2008 Parliamentary and 2011 Local Government elections and their personal journeys to become leaders.

Using their stories and drawing from lessons around the world, and in particular, from Denmark, this book examines the challenges and socio-cultural barriers (such as gender stereotypes) that prevent women from taking an active part in leadership.

More importantly, the stories and lessons also show that women can also be leaders, that women are equally capable as men and

that the entire country benefits if both men and women are productively engaged to the best of their capabilities.

Given the dearth of women in politics, this book aims to inspire young girls to come forward and aspire for leadership starting today in schools, 'by raising their hands – to voice their opinions, to participate in extra-curricular activities; to say no to gender stereotypes and yes to themselves.'

In addition, DVD copies of the latest film from this project as well as copies of the "La, Aum Lyonchhen" Lessons from Denmark and "Nangi Aums to Gothrips" or Housewives to Leaders documentaries were included as reference materials for students.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

With the support of the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy, KCD Productions has produced a documentary on the Parliamentary elections. This documentary captures the Primary and General Elections as well as the National Council Elections with a focus on women candidates.

Although, with an increased participation of women candidates, the election results are disappointing as only 7% representation of women make it to Parliament. However, the appointment of Bhutan's first female Minister is an important step forward in inspiring young girls and women.

The women's stories are an important documentation of the long journey ahead of women candidates.

After the program, guests witnessed a photo exhibition of the Inspiring Girls movement to La, Aum Lyonchhen till date (2011-2013).



WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

51% of the population are women.

But women make up only...



SILENCED GENDER GAP IN THE 2012 ELECTION COVERAGE



46%
Russia

24%
Europe

25%
China

31%
Turkey

14%
India

5%
Japan

32%
ASEAN

28%
South Africa

24%
Australia

28%
New Zealand

Courtesy: Grant Thornton International Business Report 2012





AS THE NATION COMES TOGETHER
IN CELEBRATION OF THE 2ND
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL WEDDING, THE RAVEN
TEAM WOULD LIKE TO OFFER OUR HEARTIEST FELICITATIONS
AND PRAYERS TO THEIR MAJESTIES THE KING AND THE QUEEN



PAINTS AND THEIR TRUE COLORS

By SONAM PELVAR



Which color do you want to choose? Choose carefully

All that color and hue surrounding you is fine as long as they are in nature or up above in the sky. On the other hand the gorgeous array of red, blue and green shades of paints that adorn the interiors and exteriors of houses beg the question of extreme caution.

And this would come to be because these beautifying gels or fluids are composed of components that while enhancing the looks of a structure may at the same time pose the single greatest risk to the very people who reside in and out of these residences and its compounds.

The evil in question here is the

'lead content in paints.' And since paints are refurbished and refurbished on every structure that forms the network of houses, office buildings, shopping complexes, residents inside every one of these given structures is exposed to its risks.

To break it gently to the masses, lead content in paints have no benefits for those human and breathing other than serving as a neurotoxin (poison that acts on nervous systems and put people's health to grave risks). On its own part however, it is said to give a good finish to the paint job undertaken.

Lead as constituent, if found to be in higher levels in paints that adorn

“
Regulations are not in place to check the lead in paints”

walls of houses and structures can affect growth in children and cause retarded development while for adults it may come to pass as a process of slow poisoning.

Most definitely, there should be regulations and enforced legislations on this bit of starkly available information. The answer's however shockingly 'no' as regulations are not in place to check the lead in paints. If this doesn't bring down the house then people will be equally saddened to know that in other countries, the use of lead has been phased out or has been restricted in many consumer products because of the serious health impacts on children and fetuses.

The World Health Organization (WHO) country office's Dr. Nima Wangchuk says that 'there is no known level of lead exposure that is safe.'

Advanced nations like the United States of America have a limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) in paints, while closer home India has set a voluntary limit at 1,000 ppm but does not have any mandatory norms.

The WHO official says currently there are no such 'permissible limits' set for paints in the country. Not in the least bit comforting, one should say especially given that lead poisoning is very much real and in prevalence.

Director General of the health ministry Dr. Ugyen Dophu says that the national referral hospital in Thimphu JDWNRH sees 2-3 patients a year affected with lead toxicity. These individuals mainly happen to be painters who frequently come into contact with paints.

Nonetheless, Lead Pollution could be in action anywhere to affect people as a greatest source of environmental lead is gasoline-exhaust from Automobiles and it's no point of relief that lead exposure may occur through drinking water from lead pipes, chewing lead paints or toys (in case of small children).

A small point of relief in Bhutan's case taking children into consideration is that it is normally the adults who are affected because unlike in other countries small children are not employed in workshops or generally as painters. However, coming to terms with all that without lifting a finger to address it would be

plainly unwise for any country.

The WHO Bhutan has not done any advocacy works as it is not responsible as a technical body. However, it has already secured SAICM funding and will help the health ministry (MoH) and National Environment Commission (NEC) to conduct the high level advocacy for policy makers (scheduled in November) followed by public sensitization.

Dr. Nima Wangchuk says that the issue will be discussed soon at a policy level also and a first move in this line would be to update the National Chemical Profile to find out what sort of chemicals are coming into the country and what chemicals are actually produced within Bhutan.

"People will be trained on the chemical safety including lead poisoning," said Nima Wangchuk. The WHO has identified lead as one of ten chemicals of major public health concern, needing action by Member States to protect the health of workers, children and women of reproductive age.

WHO is currently developing guidelines on the prevention and management of lead poisoning, which will provide policy-makers, public health authorities and health professionals with evidence-based guidance on the measures that they can take to protect the health of children and adults from lead exposure.

Since leaded paint is a continuing source of exposure in many countries, WHO has joined with the United Nations Environment Programme to form the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. This is a cooperative initiative to focus and catalyze efforts to achieve international goals to prevent children's exposure to lead from leaded paints and to minimize occupational exposures to such paint. Its broad objective is to promote a

phase-out of the manufacture and sale of paints containing lead and eventually eliminate the risks that such paints pose.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint is an important means of contributing to the implementation of paragraph 57 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to resolution II/4B of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

On the ministry's front it has an occupational health and safety program. This program conducts advocacy or sensitization drives for the people and advises on Personal Protective Equipments.

The paints that come into the country are the ones brought in by the local vendors who have no knowledge of lead contents and their visible harms. They pay a 10% tax on products that are brought in but no strict regulations apply to them if specifically the hazardous element is to be taken into account.

"My work is to only sell paints. I have no idea about ppm regulation in paints and the health hazards that the paints poses to human beings," a local vendor Tandin says.

"When we bring in paints officials check the bills and see if the paints are the exact manner as listed in the bill and that is all.

Tandin's shop brings in Nu 70,000 to Nu 80,000 worth of paints in a month depending on customer demands. Depending on the need or demands shops in town bring in around four to five tons of paint in totality. While at the time shops may only have just five to six liters of paint if orders are not in place.

The common brands brought in by the shops are Berger paints, Shalimar, Nerolac and Asian paints.

The National Housing Development Corporation (NHDC) in Thimphu that looks over government constructions and their mainte-

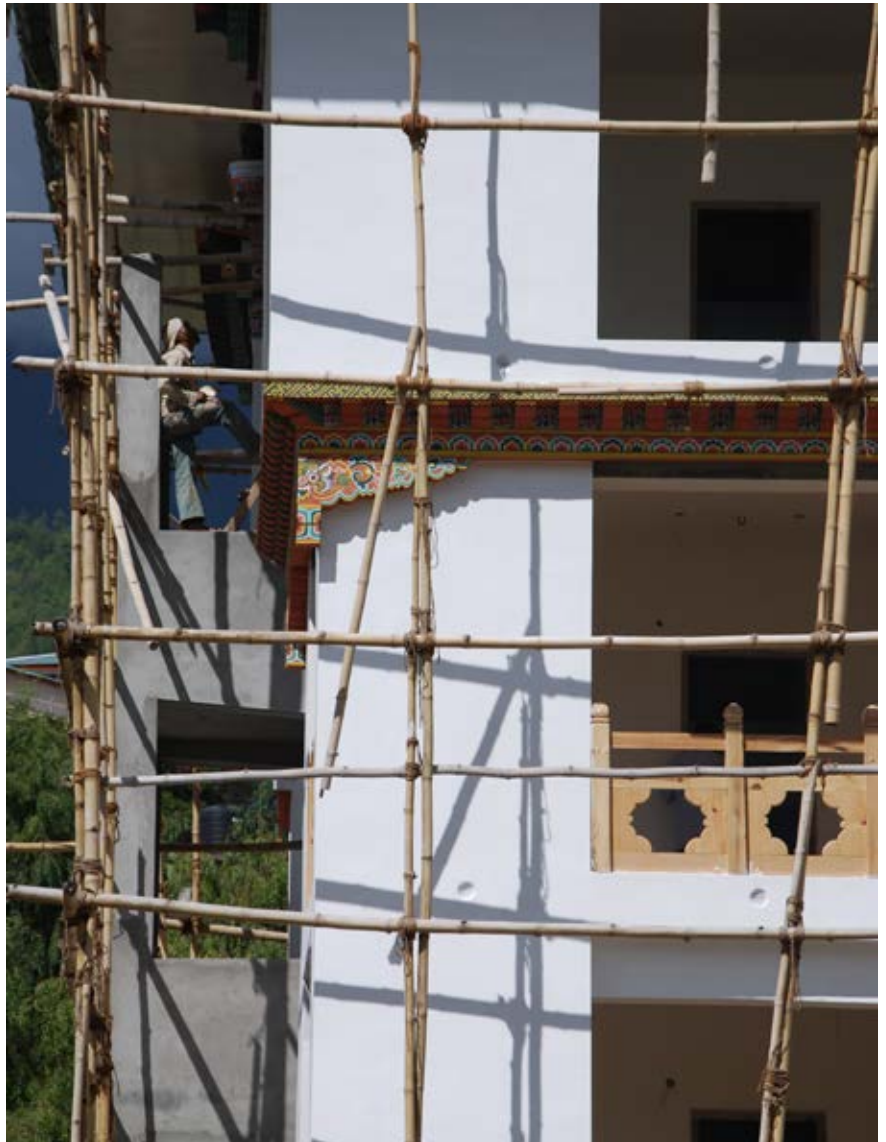
ARTICLE

nance works don't have chemical composition on mind but says it uses or procures locally available paints on the premise that local dealers are all authorized and certified by concerned authorities.

"We have this annual quotation system through which we buy paints from local vendors. It is however a very good move to inform and educate people on the harms of such hazardous content in paints," says Officiating Managing Director Tenzin Thinley.



“
My work is to only sell paints. I have no idea about ppm regulation in paints and the health hazards that the paints poses to human beings,”
a local vendor



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LEAD POISONING

Key facts

- Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children.
- Childhood lead exposure is estimated to contribute to about 600 000 new cases of children developing intellectual disabilities every year.
- Lead exposure is estimated to account for 143 000 deaths per year with the highest burden in developing regions.
- About one half of the burden of disease from lead occurs in the WHO South-East Asia Region, with about one-fifth each in the WHO Western Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean Regions.
- Lead in the body is distributed to the brain, liver, kidney and bones. It is stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time. Human exposure is usually assessed through the measurement of lead in blood.
- There is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe.
- Lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Lead is a naturally occurring toxic metal found in the Earth's crust. Its widespread use has resulted in extensive environmental contamination, human exposure and significant public health problems in many parts of the world.

Important sources of environmental contamination include mining, smelting, manufacturing and recycling activities, and, in some countries, the continued use of leaded paint and leaded gasoline. More than three quarters of global lead consumption is for the manufacture of lead-acid batteries for motor vehicles. Lead is, however, also used in many other products, for example pigments, paints, solder, stained glass, crystal vessels, ammunition, ceramic glazes, jewellery, toys and in some cosmetics and traditional medicines. Drinking water delivered through lead pipes or pipes joined with lead solder may contain lead. Much of the lead in global commerce is now obtained from recycling.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead and can suffer profound and permanent adverse health effects, particularly affecting the development of the brain and nervous system. Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage. Exposure of pregnant women to high levels of lead can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight, as well as minor malformations.

Sources and routes of exposure

People can become exposed to lead through occupational and environmental sources. This mainly results from:

- Inhalation of lead particles generated by burning materials containing lead, e.g. during smelting, informal recycling, stripping leaded paint and using leaded gasoline; and
- Ingestion of lead-contaminated dust, water (from leaded pipes), food (from lead-glazed or lead-soldered containers).

The use of some traditional cosmetics and medicines can also result in lead exposure.

Young children are particularly vulnerable because they absorb 4–5 times as much ingested lead as adults from a given source. Moreover, children's innate curiosity and their age-appropriate hand-to-mouth behavior result in their mouthing and swallowing lead-containing or lead-coated objects, such as contaminated soil or dust and flakes of decaying lead-containing paint. This route of exposure is magnified in children with pica (persistent and compulsive cravings to eat non-food items), who may, for example pick away at, and eat, leaded paint from walls, door frames and furniture. Exposure to lead-contaminated soil and dust resulting from battery recycling and mining has caused mass lead poisoning and multiple deaths in young children in Senegal and Nigeria.

Once lead enters the body, it is distributed to organs such as the brain, kidneys, liver and bones. The body stores lead in the teeth and bones where it accumulates over time. Lead stored in bone may be remobilized into the blood during pregnancy, thus exposing the fetus. Undernourished children are more susceptible to lead because their bodies absorb more lead if other nutrients, such as calcium, are lacking. Children at highest risk are the very young (including the developing fetus) and the impoverished.



A Barber

When one sets out to new terrains for better fortunes or just a source of livelihood, it is on very few occasions that an immigrant gets to meet the head of state, leave alone go on to work for him/her. But such fortunate chance encounters happen, and when it is a meeting with the king of the land who has a job for you, nothing can be better.

One such amazing story is that of Domi Thakur who, as a young 16-year-old Indian boy, entered Bhutan in the late 70's like many other Indian's for a better shot at life. Around that time, Bhutan had just crowned a new King no older than himself – also a teenager.

Domi Thakur was a traditional Indian barber- the kind who gives you a shave by lathering up your face and then uses a blade; he buzz cuts your hair and tingles your senses with a palm-clenched massage at the end, beating you mercilessly at times.

The barber shop that he and some other Indians worked at was also owned by another Indian and located in town. Today, Domi Thakur is no more, but his son Kamlesh Thakur has stepped into the shoes of this humble, yet very important pro-

fession, because he is not just any barber, he is also the King's barber.

The story of Domi Thakur becoming the King's barber began one day when Domi Thakur found himself alone at the barbers shop.

"A team of soldiers and people came into the shop and asked for the barber who usually cut the kings hair, but nobody else was there" said Kamlesh, his son. "My father was at his wits end because the owner and the barber who usually cut the Kings hair were not around.

They asked if my father could cut hair, and he told them he did.

He was immediately whisked away," Kamlesh remembering how his father simply lucked out to become the chosen one. "I remember my father recalling how nervous he was that day.

He was so nervous he could barely keep the scissors steady in his hand." But Domi must have done a good job because thereafter the King only asked for him. In the following years, Domi developed a great relationship with the King, to the point that the King gifted him his own barber shop, located in the Yarkay Plaza and beside Pelwang Photo Studio.

When he wasn't cutting the King's hair, Domi ran his business as usual in a small

box of a room, as low key as any barber shop. Kamlesh will never forget how proud his father was to put up the sign-board "Indrapuri Salon" over the doorway of the shop when he managed to own his own business thanks to the King.

As the years went by Domi fell sick, and yet again it was the King who took care of Domi Thakur's hospital referrals to larger hospitals in India, as well as all his funeral rites when he passed away.

For Domi, the relationship with the King didn't just end there, his son Kamlesh continues to keep it alive. Today the salon has been renamed Beshni Devi Salon.

Kamlesh recalls his own encounter with the Fourth King. "The first time I entered the door of the palace I couldn't believe I was in the presence of the King of Bhutan.

He asked my name and no words would come out of my mouth. My throat was dry and repeated attempts did not yield any success to utter an answer. "I could not say a word," he recalls, that it was a second 'heavenly voice' who answered that saved the day for him.

"No need to worry about anything. Just relax and calm down," said the voice. It was none other than the Queen and she was so calming and soothing, he automatically felt himself feel at ease. "They were so humble and calm it was



hard to believe that I was in the presence of a King and Queen and that I was going to put my hands on his head!”

As time went on, Kamlesh says he became very comfortable and that the King even started joking with him.

“He has the ability to make you feel comfortable and human. My father told me that he knew everything about our family because he enquired and he was interested in our lives.”

He still asks after my family every time I am with him,” says Kamlesh fondly.

For that reason Kamlesh can't help but boast to his fellow barbers in town. He is normally summoned two or three times a month.

And just like his late father, he often cuts the hair of many other Royal Family members as well.

Kamlesh believes he was chosen as the king's barber not entirely because his late father served the fourth Druk Gyalpo, but because he had earned some divine merits in this life to deserve such an opportunity.

“There is no probability that my child will become a barber like me. I cannot force him to, so there is no guarantee that the Thakur legacy will continue, but I am grateful for the opportunities two generations of my family have received,” he says.

Kamlesh wants to do his own little good deeds to show gratitude to the society and the country that has given him so much.

“I am so grateful to the King and country, so I don't charge the old people who come here for a haircut. It is the least I can do,” he says.



Karma Wangchuk



“

He has the ability to make you feel comfortable and human. My father told me that he knew everything about our family because he enquired

THE HAPPY TOURIST FROM BHUTAN

On July 1st 2011, I left the hills of Bhutan to study in Spain with a grant from the ERASMUS MUN-DUS SCHOLARSHIP, which allowed me to pursue a Master's program in International Humanitarian Action Studies. I took a two-year leave period from work. Who would have known that my destiny to pursue a 24 months Masters course would change my attitude and perspectives towards life? My host city was Bilbao. Yes, this is the city of the football club, Athletic Bilbao. have numerous stories and a lot that I would like to share. That one opportunity opened up so many others to forge my travels out into the world beyond Spain. As a result of that one chance I got to visit 10 different countries and several cities across Europe. I

My journey begins from my host city in Bilbao. Bilbao is a place that differentiates itself from Spain. In fact, they don't want themselves to be called SPANISH – at least that is what I have learned from them. They have a distinct culture and a unique mode of life. They call themselves as inhabitants of the Basque and the language they speak is originally known as Euskera. The symbols in Euskera and Castellano might be the same, but they are totally different when used or written. They say that Euskera is a difficult language that needs quite an effort to handle compared to Castellano. But quite ironically, most of them speak Castellano, the Spanish language. The difference in their cultura is pinned in the political crisis when Spain saw Franco as its leader. The brutality that the Basque suf-

MANY WOULD AGREE
WHEN WE SAY THAT
DESTINY IS NOT ONLY A
MATTER OF CHANCE BUT
IT'S A MATTER OF CHOICE.

fered is still warm and vehement.

Another distinct culture that the people of Bilbao preach is that people are affectionate towards raising dogs. One can see various breeds of dogs all over the city – in fact, in every nook and corner. I have heard people say that they respect their dogs as much as their women.

Through my studies I had the pleasure of meeting and interacting with humanitarians from across the world. And when I told them that I came from Bhutan, people were curious and wanted to know more about it. Many would tie Bhutan with Gross National Happiness and were very curious to know more about this philosophy. This was the norm. On my trip across Europe, I came to be known as the Happy Tourist from Bhutan. It was amazing how people only knew of this tiny nation through this beautiful philosophy of ours. I came to be known as the “UNOFFICIAL AMBASSADOR OF BHUTAN TO SPAIN” – at least for myself and embarked about imparting all that I knew. I felt rather privileged to narrate this and I was even interviewed by three media channels. Furthermore, I was also invited for various round table meetings to initiate and take part in discussion related to it. And I did my best to enlighten them

TRAVEL
DETAILS

Travel tips:

Travelling all the way to Spain from Bhutan can be tiring if you are not a long flight lover.

By Train.

- Board a train from Hasimara, NJP or Alipurduar to New Delhi

- You have to take the route via Phuentsholing to board from NJP, Hasimara or Alipurduar. You may choose to board from Guwathi, but via Phuentsholing is more feasible.

- Phuentsholing to NJP around 2 hours and 27 minutes

- Phuentsholing to Alipurduar around 1 hour 5 minutes

- Once you board a train from these stations, the next step is to board a flight from New Delhi.

as much as I could on this subject. I proudly display a link to this interview on my Facebook page.

My next journey took me to Southern Europe. Southern European countries are well known for rich food and its wine culture I found myself in Pamplona, famous for its Bull festival, popularly known as San fermin in Spanish. If you have ever wanted to know what it feels like to be running for your life, you will find that answer here. Yes, this can only happen in Spain. It was quite an experience, a kind of spiritual one in some respects, because it really made you understand what your life means to you. The running festival is a weeklong and it witnesses people from different regions. There are rules in this festival though, and it starts with the dress code. One has to wear white pants, a white shirt with red belt and a hat. Lucky me, I survived to see my next destination, France, and live to tell the tale! I have heard it from my friends in France that France approximately gets around ten thousand tourists every day. And most of them can be found like every tourist does, cir-



Fig: Pamplona and the bull fight



MATTEO MIEL

clinging to the Eiffel tower. I am now one in one of those figures too! It is not just the Spanish that love food and wine. The French cheese and wine are some of the important contributions to the world when it comes to cuisine. So, thanks to my friend Francois that I celebrated Christmas with his family. He lives in a small village called Pau. As I already told you earlier that I had proclaimed myself as the unofficial ambassador of Bhutan to France, the next exciting agenda that came across my stay with Francois was cheese making. One could see bits and pieces of Bhutan-France friendship growing rapidly because French love cheese as much as we Bhutanese do, although how it is consumed varies and also the French have many, many varieties as opposed to ours – the fresh cheese *zoedhoe* (rotten cheese). This friendship was stretched further when they even gave me the opportunity to herd cows with his family. I don't think

many Bhutanese would have that in mind when they think of visiting France, but for me it was something that made me feel like I was back in Bhutan and I was happy. Known as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, my next destination was Prague in the Czech Republic. Starting from the remnants of the First and the Second World Wars, this city has valuable heritage. For chocolate lovers, Belgium is the place for you. The country has the best quality chocolates to offer you and I had my fair share of them. On the other hand The Netherlands seemed to attract tourists because of its legality of the use of marijuana and prostitution. But once you are there, you come to learn that The Netherlands is not only about dope and prostitution. I was captivated by the country life of the Dutch. With my guide and friend Heilke, I was able to learn so much about Dutch and its glorious history. What I found most curious is that time waits for no men (even women) when it comes to

TRAVEL DETAILS



By flight

Paro -New Delhi or Bagdora -New Delhi (both flights about 2 hrs 30 mins)

- Economy 1 adult – USD 315

- Economy fchild – USD 211

- Economy flight infants (0 -2 years) – USD 32

- Business 1 adult – USD 380

- Business 1 Child – USD 255

- Business Infants – USD 38

Bagdora -New Delhi (2 hours 11 min)

- Depending on the airline you choose, fares can vary. The cheapest at the time Spice Jet INR 8,349

The more expensive option, Air India INR 25,700

New Delhi - Spain via Frankfurt

A. New Delhi - Frankfurt

- New Delhi to Frankfurt – 8 hours, 25 min

- Economy INR 32,461

- Business flex INR 62,066

B. Frankfurt - Bilbao, Spain

- 2 hours, 10 min

- Economy €811

- Business €2012

their dinner. They eat at six o'clock! Talking of dinner, some of the best food I have ever had was in Italy. I cannot even begin to cover all there is to see in Italy, but I can tell you that you will never have a bad meal in this country. This is Italy's soft power – pizzas and pasta. I met up with an old friend, Matteo Miel, who lived for around two semesters in eastern Bhutan teaching at Sherubtse College in the School of Social Sciences. He taught Political Science. So, it was like meeting my fellow country man again. He took me to some of the old and finest restaurants and it was in those vicinities that I learnt what real Italian pizzas tastes like. From Italy I hopped on to Portugal and then to Berlin.

Once you are in Europe, flying across European Nations is much cheaper. Ryan Air is the cheapest mode of Airline. www.ryanair.com was my flight guide.

TRAVEL DETAILS

€

Accommodation

Hotels are very expensive - 150 per night on approximation (depending on the places)

One can also choose hostels. They can be expensive too though. For a night, it can cost 50€–80€. I used this website – www.hostelworld.com as my hostel finder guide.

Look for hostels with kitchens attached. They can be cheap. This is how you can cut down on expenses if you want to save the cash for festivals in Europe.



PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CITIES IN EUROPE, MY NEXT DESTINATION WAS PRAGUE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC. STARTING FROM THE REMNANTS OF THE FIRST AND THE SECOND WORLD WARS, THIS CITY HAS VALUABLE HERITAGE



Tashi Chopel is a lecturer at the Royal University of Bhutan Sherubtse College. He can be reached at tashichop.druk@gmail.com



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- Resist sharp object puncture, no recap, no flat tire.
- Suitable for most weather conditions.
- Extend tire life.
- No recap, no flat tire.
- Environmental friendly.



A. Low Tire Pressure Hazards



B. Experiment Performance

Lower standard pressure	More fuel consumption	Shorten tire life
10%	2%	15%
20%	4.5%	28%
30%	6.25%	37%

C. Statistics

(1) According to statistics, 90% automobiles are running at insufficient tire pressure for long-term. The tire pressure of 25% automobiles is 40% lower than the standard ones. (2) In USA, 75% of traffic accident is concerned with tire pressure insufficiency. (3) In Germany, 80% of tire blowout is concerned with air leakage. (4) In China 70% of highway accident comes from tire blowout. (5) From the international traffic accident statistics, it was found out that 12 million people were killed, 50 million were injured, and USD\$18 billion economic loss happened per year.



RBP

From the 3rd - 29th September 2013, the Royal Bhutan Police, Division II, Punakha, conducted a sensitization program titled Youth In Conflict with the Law and It's Penal Provisions in Middle Secondary Schools and Higher Secondary Schools in Punakha Dzongkhag and Gasar Dzongkhag.



Twitter

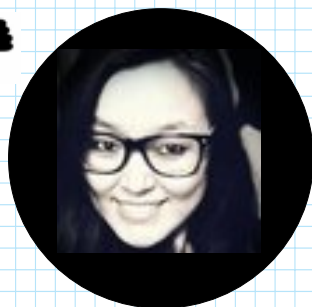
Karma Choden (@476Kaycee) I am quite surprised 2 hear some of the MPs saying it's not necessary 2 fulfill all the pledges they made during their campaign. What was their campaign for then?



Twitter

BHT-FLASHNEWS (@BHT-FLASHNEWS)

The Divisional Forest Office in Paro caught another illegal sandalwood consignment. Following a tip-off, officials were able to seize a sandalwood smuggling consignment weighing 554 kilogram's carried on 25 horsebacks.



Twitter

Yangchen C. Rinzin (@ycrinzin) An MP at the parliament said "Promise during campaign is normal and not necessary to fulfill all the promises"



PHPA

The Punatsangchhu hydroelectric project I (PHPA I) authority formally approved delay of the project endorsed additional cost of Nu 3.5B for remedial purposes at the damsite in a meeting of the authority of the hydropower projects on October 6.



Bhutan's population could be about 100,000 lower than projections of the national statistical bureau (NSB), according to figures maintained by the home ministry's department of civil registration and census



The 720MW Mangdechhu hydroelectric project authority in Trongsa incurred additional financial implications of Nu 780 million due to major changes in the detailed project report (DPR) during execution of the project



Land commission secretary Ldasho Sangay Khandu sometime in September said the commission did not approve the 1,000-acre Education City land and that the commission was not informed about the project. However officials of the project say they had the commission's approval and were only left with the final registrations



The Chumethang MSS in Pasakha which moved to a new site as a solution to pollution has now come into problems as it has become too far for students. Dungkhag officials who agreed on the problems caused by distance are yet to receive the parents' petition.



According to the project authority, works on the 720MW Mangdechhu hydropower project in Trongsa will be completed within the estimated cost and on schedule.

Trends

KEY Brand Where to buy Contact



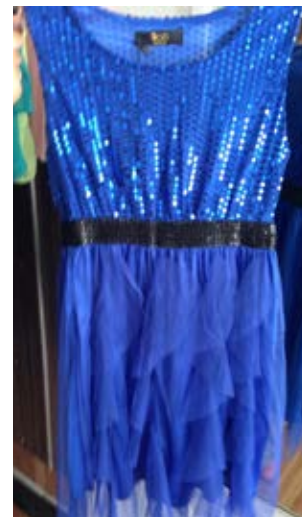
NU.
1500

Faux Fur Trim Hooded Coat, Chang Lam (Next to Sonam Palden Ent)



NU.
700

Lace & Satin, Peplum Top



Sequined Dress, Embellished Waist



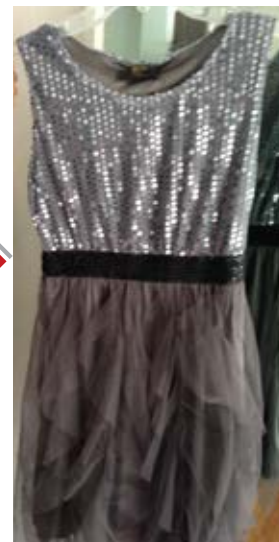
Raw Silk Cocktail Dress

NU.
750



Crochet and Cotton Tunic

NU.
700



NU.
750

NU.
4995



Nike Sneakers, Legends, Chang Lam

WHATS YOUR QUIRK

UGYEN PANDAY

Age?

- I am 27.

Where are you from?

- I am from Bartsham, Trashigang.

How do you define life?

- Life will be worth living if you do something worthwhile.

Define Love?

- I am not a very expressive person, so it's hard to explain, but for me love is simply what I feel for my family and friends. I know I love them even when I am angry or sad.

Your Profession?

- I am a Recording Artist and Freelance Singer.

What/Who inspires what you do?

- My inspirations comes from my family's love and support. Because of their faith in me, I learnt to believe in myself.

Your favorite genre of music?

- I love slow rock.

What do you hope to achieve?

- A different music scenario and a bigger platform in future. I hope my music has a lasting and more holistic influence on listeners.

What are your other interests?

- I love cooking up new recipes.

Who is your Role Model?

- The best role model is the inner you.

One thing you'd like to change about yourself?

- I would love to stop or, at least reduce, my habit of chewing a whole lot of Doma (Beetle nut).

What are you obsessing on right now?

- I have mad love for my son, Dugu. I'm obsessed with his laughter.

Like?

- I like snacking.

Dislike?

- I dislike the fact that sometimes I'm too busy to eat.

What's your Quirk?

- I play basketball in Jeans. I also carry a note pad and a pen with me all the time, but don't ever get around to writing anything in it at all.





Mahesh



Mahesh has a Masters in Ceramics from India
Mahesh is re-introducing/reviving the TRADITION of CERAMICS in Bhutan
He has worked in collaboration with the Tarayana Foundation as a Volunteer and traveled in the rural areas exploring the value of ceramics in rural Bhutan.
He aims to re-establish the work of Ceramics so that the young Bhutanese does not forget our own culture
He has a long term goal to inhibit such skills of Ceramics to the Youths of Today by working in collaboration with the VAST
He says that financing and sustaining is a difficult task but he is positive that his initiative to impart such invaluable knowledge will be an asset to Bhutan's socioeconomic development.

The Raven takes a proper look at this much loved cane

KNOW YOUR FOOD

PATSHA



If you have acquired a taste for bitter food, patsha may be just up your alley of exotic food from Bhutan. Patsha (*Plectocomia himalayana griffith*) is a widely valued edible cane that has a distinct bitter taste, which goes really well with sikam and as a dense soup. The bitter taste of the Patsha is tempered deliciously by the creaminess of sikam and cheese. Patsha is a clustering climbing cane that has dual purposes; the young stem, which is the top portion of the cane, is prized as a forest vegetable, and the hard cane is used for making durable ropes, rudimentary baskets and split to ties fences. If the mature stem is strong enough, it may also be harvested to make cane furniture. It is easily identified by its black-brown needle like spines arranged in irregular spirals on the leaf sheath, which can be peeled off till the soft pith inside. Nowadays, the weekend vegetable markets stock Patsha to cater to the Bhutanese taste buds. Some people prefer to soak the sliced patsha in water to reduce the bitterness. But for a creamy texture and more flavorful soup, it is best to directly slice the patsha into the pot.

THOUGH PATSHA IS AN ACQUIRED TASTE, IT IS KNOWN TO LESSEN BODY ACHE AND NAUSEA.



EASY PATSHA WITH SIKAM RECIPE

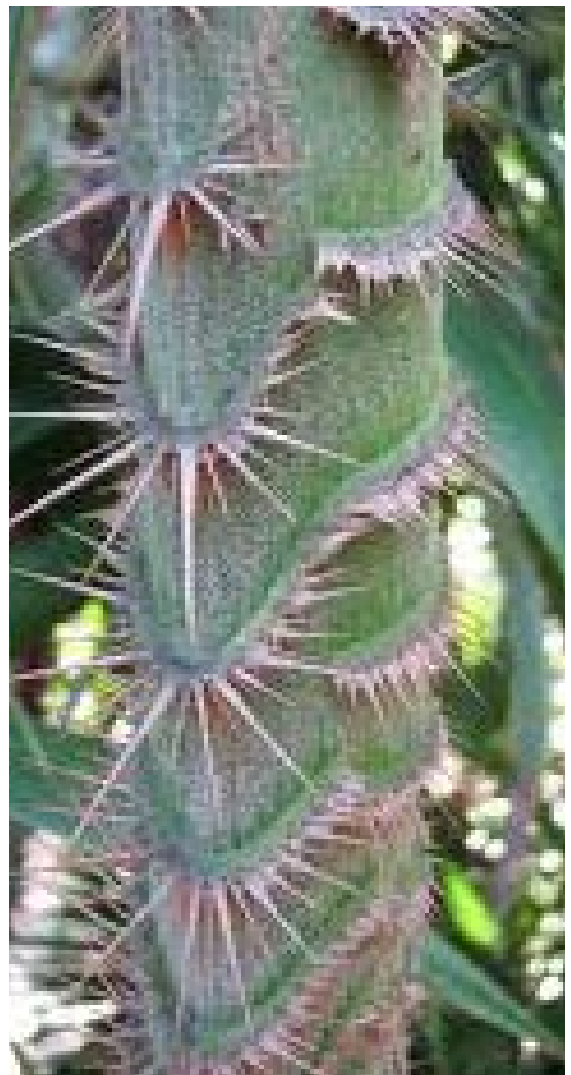
2 canes of patsha- peeled and ready to be sliced
 Sikam- chopped about 1 cm.
 2 chillies- sliced and halved
 4 cloves of garlic (big garlic) - peeled and roughly chopped
 1 teaspoon chili powder for garnishing (optional)
 Local cheese- 1 small cup/ can also alternate with cheddar
 cheese- reduce quantity by 1/4
 Oil- 4 tablespoons
 Salt- 2 teaspoons
 4 bowls of water

In a deep dish, add sikam, garlic, oil and salt- cook till soft or about 30-35 minutes. Add the patsha (already sliced). Cover the dish and boil at medium heat for another 30 minutes. Stir and add the chili with the cheese, cover and cook for another 10 minutes. Vigorously stir the cheese, till the cheese stick to the chili and the gravy gives a milky consistency. Add the chili powder to garnish. Your patsha with sikam (Dried Pork) is ready to be served.



**↑ WIDELY AVAILABLE,
BUT STILL A DELICACY.**

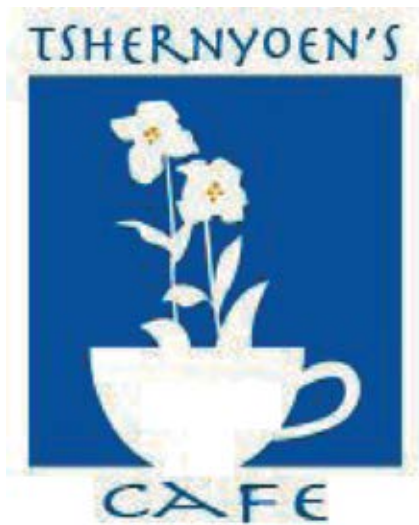
Patsha is one of the most common cane species available in Thimphu, Wangdue, Bumthang, Mongar, Zhemgang and Sarbhang regions between June and August. It grows among broad leaved forest from 1500-2500 meters of altitude and needs relatively more sunlight than other species. It is generally advised that the harvesting of the edible portion and the lower usable cane should not coincide. The water collected in the patsha stem is drinkable and provides respites to travelers. Though the properties of patsha are not widely known, some believe that it helps to lessen body ache and nausea.





REVIEW

Café



Tshernyoen's Café



WHERE

Behind Peljorling Hotel, Tsongdue

SPECIAL

- Custom Wedding & Birthday Cakes on Order

- Delivery within Paro & Thimphu

TIMING

10 am – 7 pm

CONTACT

+975-7725-2426 / +975-1760-4033 / +975-1717-0455

If you've just landed in Paro or happen to visit Bhutan from elsewhere, chances are you won't know where to go for a quick bite, don't have time to wait and order food or you just don't know your options. Most Bhutanese rather opt for a spicy, salty take on anything. So if you're leaning more toward a sweet treat, your options honestly, are limited. The good news is we found that singular, quaint little café tucked away in the heart of Paro Town, that has just that and more.

Bakery wise, Paro has little to offer, unless you go to one of the few hotels there that have their own in-house pastry chefs. But this rare gem of a café in Paro, Tsongdue is the answer to all your sweet-tooth woes. A café that, until now, has mostly gone unnoticed, because of its location. Although in the heart of town, this well kept secret has been involuntarily tucked away in a very discreet back corner, behind a section of small businesses that starts one of the two strips of what makes up the little town of Paro, Tsongdue.

Tshernyoen's Café is owned and run by Ugyen Wangmo, better known as 'Tshernyoen', a very bubbly, as colorful as the icing on her cakes personality, who started baking as a hobby and eventually turned it into a business in 2009.

Some of her cakes are pieces of culinary art and they taste as good as they look. The flavors are kept simple - Chocolate, Vanilla, Strawberry, Blueberry and Butterscotch, for now. She also makes muffins and is the only place in Paro Town to serve REAL coffee. The price list for whole Cakes range between Nu.600 - Nu.8000 and Nu.60 – Nu.110 per slice. And if you don't have much of a sweet tooth, there's also a small menu of French Fries, Hot Dogs, Sandwiches and Seasonal Salad.

Tshernyoen, sadly enough for Paro, plans to move the café to the capital early next year. Meanwhile, she also takes orders and will deliver to Thimphu.



Kesang P. Dorji





REVIEW MOVIE



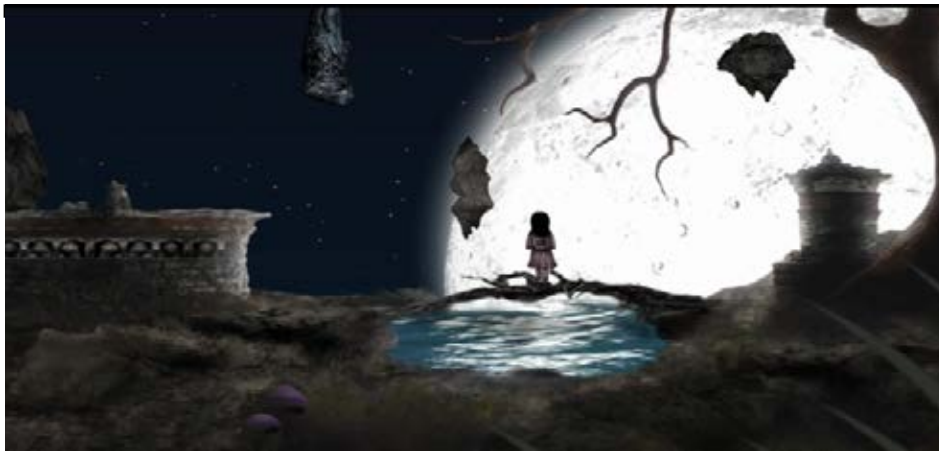
BeskopTshechu (Film Festival)

In recent years, the Bhutanese Art scene has made leaps and bounds. When people are free to create, it is amazing what wonderful works of art – whatever the genre may be, whatever the medium – can be produced. It was heartening to see this during the BeskopTshechu (2013), a festival for short films of all genres from all over the world. It is through events like these that we come to see and understand how Bhutanese society and people are not only yearning for our own examples, and our

own stories, but that we have many. In an 8 minute Dzongkha documentary titled “My Paralympic Dream,” Karma Gyeltshen poignantly captures the life of Pema Tshering, a man crippled by his disability and struggles in life. Pema Tshering’s life is an inspiration in many respects. He has weathered not just the struggles of his physical disability, but also being neglected by his parents as a child. A man like him, one would think, would have little hope to carry on, but Pema Tshering has much more

than hopes. He is a survivor, a fighter and he has dreams. Despite the fact that his hands are useless and his feet are weak, so much so, that he can’t walk, he has discovered the use of his feet – to care beautiful artifacts from the world – the Happy Feet in Bhutan. The film addresses a pertinent issue within Bhutanese society, the neglected and often overlooked group – people suffering from disabilities. The fiction genre also addressed some important and pressing issues that Bhutanese society is facing today. While in the film the protagonist is an old lady, the challenge of balancing a traditional way of life against a fast modernizing one, is a struggle for both young and old. In the 6-minute film titled “Rents and Grains” we found an old woman sets out from her village to collect food. As she ventures out she finds herself in a new and terrifying world and returns home empty handed confused and devastated.

A philosophical animation by Chand Bhattarai was uniquely done in that there was no dialogue but moving images only. Those 4 minutes took us into the abyss of an enchanting world of realms, time and space, keeping us aware that somewhere, sometime in our lifetime we should let go. We humans tend to count the stars and in that journey we lose track of the moon. The director tactfully conveys the message that life is important, but to “live” it is far more important. These films were all winners in their categories – Bhutan Animation, Bhutan Documentary, and Bhutan Fiction. Beskop Tshechu saw its birth during the Royal Wedding Festivities in 2011 when a group of filmmakers came together and initiated the project. Since then the festival has seen an increasing number of entries and participants from around the world. This year alone



there were films from Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan and the USA. The event was sponsored by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Bhutan with endorsement from the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC). The festival came alive with live musical performances by local bands.



Karma Wangchuk



NO WHERE

DIRECTOR
chand Bhattarai
GENRE
Animation

SYNOPSIS

Abys of an enchanting world of realms, time and space, keeping us aware that somewhere, sometime in our lifetime we should let go.



MY PARALYMPIC DREAM

DIRECTOR
Karma Gyeltshen
GENRE
Bhutan Documentary

SYNOPSIS

Despite the fact that his hands are useless and his feet are weak, so much so, that he can't walk, he has discovered the use of his feet – to care beautiful artifacts from the world – the Happy Feet in Bhutan.



RENTS AND GRAINS

DIRECTOR
Loday Chopel
GENRE
Bhutan Fiction

SYNOPSIS

The challenge of balancing a traditional way of life against a fast modernizing one, is a struggle for both young and old.



REVIEW BOOK



MANJUSHREE THAPA

FORGET KATHMANDU
An Elegy for Democracy



AUTHOR
Manjushree Thapa

PUBLISHER
Penguin Books, New Delhi, India

As a small Himalayan nation, we often like to compare ourselves with none other than our next-door neighbor Nepal, and we take great pride in the fact that we are nothing like that nation – considered a failed state by most accounts. While it is only natural that we do this – make comparisons – is it fair?

Yes we are both small Himalayan nations, we both emerged from monarchy and had/have monarchs, and now we both have democratic forms of government – although how we got it and where we are with it, are two different stories. While the similarities may be many, it is an unfair comparison on many fronts.

Nepal first of all has 27.47 million people, while Bhutan has less than a million. Nepal has 90 odd castes and ethnic minorities that speak 71 different languages and dialects, and have Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or some other religious background. Bhutan, on the other hand, has about 3 main ethnic groups speaking about a dozen languages or dialects, and follow about 3 main religious groups.

The challenges of maintaining peace within such a large population with such diverse ethnic identities and religious groups are immense for Nepal and if Bhutan were to have the same, we would surely be no different from where Nepal is. Judging by the contentious elections we have just come through, getting less than a million people to agree on issues, or to reconcile on party differences, we have learnt, is no easy task. But while there may be many differences that should keep us from comparing ourselves with Nepal, we cannot ignore the similarities mentioned before, especially when it comes to us both being kingdoms and the geo-political realities with India and China. So it might serve to our own advantage if we looked to Nepal as a lesson and tried to learn from their experience. Many people in Bhutan claim that we are in a position to learn from others, especially Nepal, but some-

times that might be something easier said than done. Learning comes from understanding, so it might do us all some good if we attempted to understand how the political developments and failures next door could help us make better decisions.

Forget Kathmandu, *An Elegy for Democracy* by Manjushree Thapa, one of Nepal's leading writers, chronicles Nepal's turbulent journey to Democracy, which started in the 90's, and the suffering the people have endured over the course.

While the book may not be so important to many in the world, for those of us in South Asia and particularly the Himalayas, it should be indispensable reading because it helps us understand the political complexities at work given our similar backgrounds. Written in a very easy to read style, the personal memoir/travelogue/analysis, provides great insight into the events that have shaped Nepal into what it is today with its schizophrenic politics.

The book opens with the June 2001 massacre of Nepal's Royal Family and the cloud of uncertainty created by a lack of transparency by government officials, the royal family, and the media. Thapa then goes on to trace and record the history of Nepal from its earliest Democratic movement, which started as early as the 70's, and the chaos that Nepal descended into with the surge of the Maoists and the many short-lived governments thereafter. She is careful in not taking sides or appearing sympathetic to one player or the other – The palace, the royalists, the Maoists, or the political parties.

Her ability to separate fact from fiction in a society where rampant rumormongering persists and where even the media is rarely able to discern and grasp the truth, allows her to narrate her story in an unbiased fashion. Her observations of how the elite in Kathmandu carried on unperturbed, while the countryside was being torn by violence also makes you wonder how people get alienated and divorced from reality. But forget the Nepali elite, even the world at large, from the very beginning failed to give notice to a country the way it would if it had oil. "To the world, Nepal looked like an idyll. Cat Stevens was famously singing about Kathmandu, tourists were flocking to the low-budget guest houses and hash dens of Freak Street, and starry-eyed dharma seekers were gathering around their chosen gurus at the temples and monasteries." And even as people were being butchered by the hundreds, nobody was being held accountable, and the international community failed to understand what was going on. "...limited in their social interactions to hobnobbing with the traditional elite, they could not understand what the intelligentsia was jabbering about." Some of her observations resonate with life in Bhutan, "When

my generation of thirty-somethings was growing up, anyone who strayed from the government line risked being branded an 'anti-national element.' People spoke evasively, in broad generalizations, resorting to adages and clichés that sounded catchy but meant little. Ferreting out the truth was next to impossible." In another, "Yet, in the cacophony of public discourse, statements of significance were easily drowned out by time-pass chatter. Public understanding still lagged behind events – especially at times of crisis."

In all this, the shortsightedness of politicians, political parties and some Royal Family members, putting their vested interests before the people, their incessant bickering over small, petty issues while losing sight of the bigger picture, cost Nepal dearly.



Sonam Ongmo

QUESTION AND ANSWER *with Ugyen Wangdi*

Although Television was introduced only in 1999 in Bhutan, it will be surprising for many to know that the Bhutanese were already familiar with the art of the moving image way before that. That same year, one of Bhutan's first documentarians, Ugyen Wangdi won several awards for his film *Yonten Gi Kawa* (Price of Knowledge) for best documentary at the International Film Festival in Nuoro, Italy, a Certificate for Merit from the San Francisco International Film Festival, and an Award from Indienko International Film Festival, South Korea. It was also shortlisted to the last two documentaries to contend for the Japan Award Prize. The audience rated it as the 12th best out of 200 documentaries, a film that has touched audiences around the globe for its powerful message, its simplicity and its images. A story of a young village boy who walks six hours every day to school and the challenges of rural life in Bhutan is the reality that Ugyen brings home to many.

Ugyen Wangdi is a known name in Bhutan. After all, he also produced and directed the first featured Bhutanese movie, *Gasa Lamai Singye* (Singye of Gasa's Lama) a story etched into the memories of many Bhutanese. The movie has also been reproduced in contemporary versions as *Gasa Lamai Singye 1*, *Gasa Lamai Singye 2* and *Singye Nga Een* (I am Singye). His stint with movie production preludes the time when filmmaking was new in Bhutan and the number of people behind the camera could be counted on the five fingers. Ugyen's family told him that he was crazy when he first took up the art. Acknowledging his invaluable contributions, this makes him the first branded movie director in Bhutan.

Today, he has brought a new life into filmmaking and he does it through his documentaries. He focuses on demonstrating the power of non-fiction to inspire reflection and positive action towards the social life of Bhutan. He does this through the large chunk of rural traditions that he had been preserving over the years. In this process of modernization and urbanization, Ugyen Wangdi doesn't want viewers to forget the daily struggles beyond the urban curtains – life in the isolated rural vicinities, a tradition that continues to endure.

How did you get into making documentaries and what drove you?

I screened my first documentary in 1974 about the coronation of the fourth King of Bhutan. I was only a class 8 student then studying at St. Josephs College, North Point in Darjeeling. The following year I left school. As a student, I was already exposed to the wide angles of filmmaking because the school had various extra-curricular activities and my passion drove me to the Photography Club. I got exposed to a lot of black and white movies and unfortunately, at that point of time, we did not have sophisticated technologies like we have now. Lagging in terms of video graphics, I insisted that my movie be

sent to Australia and process it in a better format. I wanted to show my Bhutanese friends back in Darjeeling the movie I had made but the Principal and the Sister insisted that I should broaden my audience to not only the Bhutanese but to all the students. I took their suggestion. After my movie was screened, there was a huge applaud. Then, the Principal gave me a camera and I became the official school photographer. I spent a lot of time and resources during those days in black and white photography.

I completed my cinematography course from the Film and Television Institute in Pune, India. The Institute where I studied was a three hour drive from Bombay Film Institute and we

used to be fed with assistance from Bombay. When I completed my studies, they insisted that I stay back and work with them. There was good money and everything but it was more important for me to come back home as I was the first amongst the Bhutanese to have boarded on such a journey. I told them that I have to do something for my country and my people.

How many documentaries/films have you made so far? Which one do you like the most and why?

See, there are types of documentaries that you make. One of them is educational documentaries and the other, creative documentaries. Most documentaries are not creative and it becomes a narrative documentary because the filmmaker

produces those movies that the clients want. These are corporate videos and the particular organization wants to talk about them.

Creative documentaries are expensive but if one can do it then you get chunks of appreciation. Since I already had a firm ground on film making much earlier than any Bhutanese, I knew how to startup and meet the ends. I knew how to play with the structures. I have directed almost 50 educational documentaries. The subjects are vast; I have covered issues on Health, Education, Agriculture and many other issues.

Shifting to the side towards my creative documentaries, I have not been a champion on that. I have directed around three to four movies and those are the ones that have won International Awards. I have worked practically more with Japanese documentary film makers. When you don't have enough money on your part, the best thing that one can do is to help others who are doing it. For the foreigners, it is expensive to spend \$200+ a day. We know the technique and we are familiar with the facts about Bhutan. In a constructive and collaborative manner, what happens here is that they give us the data and we process it.

For me, Creative documentaries are much better. They are closer to one's heart and they have a lot of meaning in them. Spooling back to 1995 – 1996, I was working on a project to find out what the health conditions and activities on such were like in Merak Sakteng. I was the first filmmaker to travel to Merak Sakteng. There



were challenges filming from within the Indigenous community but the experience was interesting. Once the filming was over, it travelled its way towards the International Donor Agencies for developmental activities and I must say, the response was invaluable.

Your film, Yikhel Gi Kawa (Price of a Letter) has won five International awards. Tell us something about that film and about the experience of winning those awards? What does it mean to you?

If you look at the cover picture of the movie, you can see a young boy along the hills, carrying a small bag on his back walking somewhere. “Neither snow nor rain, nor heat nor gloom of night”, applies most vividly to the four day trek postal runner Ugyen Tenzin takes to reach Bhutan's capital every month. Lingshi is a mountainous village situated at an altitude of 12,000 feet in the Great Himalayan region of Bhutan. It is a four-day trek through the wilderness from Bhutan's capital city, Thimphu. 49 year-old Ugyen Tenzin has been Ling-

shi's postal runner for 26 years. This documentary follows his journey in the winter when the route is snow-bound and in mid-summer when the monsoons lash out. Ugyen spends twelve to fifteen days of the month traveling. Despite the risks and the tiring ascents and descents in the mountains, he plans to continue until he retires. Ugyen Tenzin served as a mail runner for 36 years and retired at the age of 56 in January 2010.

It is what happens along this trail; the human endeavor to sustain and challenge, that captivated me the most. I pinned my decision that this is my chance and I have to capture it with my lense. This gave me the platform to get a head start and thoughts saturated me then and there, to make this into a movie. This is how the idea was born.

Now, let me tell you about the International recognition of this movie. Price of letter was shot in 2004 and since then it has won five International awards in total. The Jury Award Le festival International du

film d'Environment in Paris in 2004 was its first success in the International market. Followed by the Special Prize Trento Film festival in Italy 2005, Diane Seligman Award (Best Documentary) at Brooklyn International Film Festival in June 2005, Planet In Focus International Environmental Film and Video Festival, Mark Haslam Award 2006 in Toronto and Grand Prize 20th Tokyo Global Environment Film Festival. It means a lot to me for the film to have won all these International Awards and I must say that I have earned it to call myself the Unofficial Ambassador of Bhutan to the International Market of film making. I aim to achieve an International niche in the market, to have intercultural interaction and to let people know how Bhutan and the Bhutanese are, in short. But the experiences back home are not the same as it is in the International Market.

What do you think you achieve from making such films?

What is more important here is not what you achieve from filmmaking but what you can do in society by way of such films. I pursued my career in filmmaking from India quite a long time ago and I am continuing my passion. This is what has driven me over the years – the endeavor to show that one's work matters. One of the International viewers happened to ask me this when he completed the movie, "Did you shoot those scenes by yourself?" I had a smile on my face and told him that "Definitely these are all real shots and I filmed it all. Who will do it if I didn't?" I know he asked me this question, because the documentary involved a lot of challenging scenes, especially the difficult mountain terrain. My team and I actually have been going to difficult locations and leech infested areas so that the geography adds more to the film, and so that you get the best shot in the end. It is all about strong motivation

The movie, Price of Letter was houseful when it was screened in Japan. The movie went all the way to Italy and Australia – Italy even broadcasted it on their state TV. It even reached theatres in Bulgaria, Algeria and Iceland and has been subtitled into French, Japanese and Chinese. I have made a firm hold on International markets and a platform for other Bhutanese filmmakers. For Bhutanese in general and for policy planners and implementers, it is an opportunity to learn more and to get to know about the rural hardships and conditions. And this opportunity has been beneficial. That way, I think I have already achieved a lot.

What inspired you to direct the movie Gasa Lamai Singye? What was the response from the public?

It was in 1988 when I first directed the movie. For me, it was a complete disaster because it was totally new and what made it worse, was that people thought that I was crazy. My own family thought that I was running into financial disaster but I had to do it because my motivation and passion was engraved in filmmaking. I had completed my studies in cinematography by then.

What do you think of the movie making business in Bhutan? We have lots of movies, but not enough documentaries, don't you think?

I must tell you that we started with an audience who grew with no knowledge and information about films and cinema. The first encounter had been India and since then Bollywood has been a great influence on Bhutanese movies. The sad part is that, that influence has established a pattern, largely to sustain according to the mass appeal and preferences. As a result, it has given the local film industry little chance to evolve.

What we have here is documentaries and plenty of movies. Now you see, even documentaries are a new concept to the Bhutanese because of the very same reason that I stated above. Making a breakthrough is going to be a difficult task in a society that has been heavily influenced by Indian cinematography.

The movie, Price of a Letter managed to secure a houseful in Tokyo, but it won't be the same in Bhutan. The movie was screened in the Universities on the East Coast of USA. It even touched theatres in Australia and Italy. But it won't be the same in Bhutan. Another form of movies with rising influence in Bhutan today are the Korean Drama series and Korean TV channels. They have a sense of social message in it. But there is a large creative angle to documentaries. There is a different way of telling a story and much more fascinating is that International Film Festivals provides one with variety of storytelling. There is a unique style in documentary, the style and the geography. There is a lot of subject in documentaries and the characters views are graciously served. What is important is that documentaries have a larger shelf life. Movies on the other hand often lag on this. However, as mentioned earlier, making a breakthrough will be a difficult task in Bhutan.

Which genres are you more interested in and why?

I have got a lot of exposure into International Films and the ones that captivates me the most are the ones that comes from East Europe – Hungarian, Polish, and Czech movies. There are many good filmmakers from Eastern Europe. If they had the opportunity they would migrate to the United States and work in Hollywood.

In many parts of the world, society has

always used art as the medium to address many of their social and political issues, and we can see that you attempt to address some of these problems and also just to show to the world the daily struggles of the average Bhutanese man, woman and child. In that light do you think that the Bhutanese film industry is doing enough? Do you think that we are given enough freedoms to explore these ideas and be creative?

When I first made my film, I had no idea that the film would last for a long time. Without the aid of any external forces, the movie *Gasa Lamai Singye* (the Romeo and Juliet of Bhutan) has become a cultural icon. If one happens to travel to Punakha, there you can still find the house where the real Galemlived. The Dzongkhag has preserved it saying that it is of cultural importance. If you visit Gasa, the place where Singye, her lover, and the Lama (abbot) lived has still been preserved with the same message – it is of cultural importance.

I am very happy that the legacy of my movie still lives. There has been an excellent precision to this movie, but quite disturbing is the fact that it is repeated again, again and again. This is the reason why we have sagas of *GasaLamaiSingye*. The sad part is that people have not explored other opportunities into legends and myths, of the kind. I can tell you that there are 101 different stories like this in Bhutan and not only *GasalamaiSingye*. What needs to be done is exploring other avenues of providing social message to the people and the society at large.

There are restrictions when it comes to publicizing Bhutan. The govern-

ment would charge approximately \$10,000 – \$15,000 for International documentary film makers. For feature films, it can cost as high as \$25,000. They say that it is royalty to improve the local film industry but there I see no progress in Bhutanese film industry. People who wanted to come and work in Bhutan have already turned their back because it is very expensive. If you look at the arts and creativity in Bhutanese market, we have tremendous potential but somehow there are always restrictions. For local filmmakers in Bhutan the restrictions are not vast. They only have to put forward a proposal and have it approved by BIC-MA. These procedures should have been rooted long before though. But what is important is that the ones who have the money are the International filmmakers. What can be done is that the Government can collaborate with the International filmmakers and waive off the tourist fees in Bhutan to these groups of people. Co-productions should be encouraged and then only we will have more people investing. Half of the publicity and marketing of tourism is already completed here. In this sense, we will have more local people involved in filmmaking and in turn, employment opportunities would gear up automatically.

There was a time when Buddhist movies were in the rise. Some of the famous ones are *Seven Years in Tibet* and *the Little Buddha*. But we see that such films do not come to Bhutan anymore. We had one recently, directed by *DzongsarJamyangKhen-tseRinpoche*, *Travellers and Magicians*, but that was about it. I would say that it would be better if we have a FILM INDUSTRY in Bhutan but that can be very ambitious. There will be many people who will be keenly interested in this business then.

What do you think needs to be done in order for the Bhutanese film industry to grow?

Like my earlier comments, Bhutanese film industry need explorations and developing originality. Filmmakers need strong motivation so that there is a strong social message to the viewers. When I filmed the *Price of a letter*, my crew and I went through many difficult scenarios in the process. This helped to disclose the planners what the conditions are like in such regions. It needs to be more than just a film and the visuals in the movie should tell us everything. It has to be such that without having to narrate it, the movie says it all. It has to be such that we show the movie not just for the sake of showing it, but for various reasons like evoking a reaction.

Do you have another film in the works?

Yes, *Price of Rice* was my next film but circumstances have made me to not go forth with it. The third sequel is not coming out because *Lunana* was a very different place back then. It is not the same *Lunana* as it used to be during the times when technology and science had not been [introduced] in *Lunana*. Think about someone carrying a bag of rice on their back while travelling way back home in and half of the quantity of rice is already consumed along that way. My plan was to show another child, who in real life used to carry a bag of rice and walk for days. This is not the same anymore.

I have been travelling to different places in and around Bhutan in my filmmaking journey. I must tell you that this has helped me to document a tremendous amount of Rural Bhutan. I am working more on theatrical arenas and the script. These rural archives have been there in the shelf from a long time, almost a decade, now. I have already

diffused all these scripts into CD and now it's ready to encrypt onto hard disk. But there is a lot to decipher and it consumes tremendous amount of time. But once it is done, it will be invaluable. I am just looking for an excellent opportunity. The work produced from traveling to such difficult terrains, with generators and batteries along with my camera and me, documenting those places is surely going to be a treasure because things are not the same as it used to be before. Now, if you visit those places, you will see that those documented in my lenses are long dead. Normally, we are aware of our traditional tshechus (festival on the 10th Day of the Bhutanese calendar) and other nationally celebrated festivals but we have lost the rural traditions and culture. We have lost to keep track of what actually happens and what used to happen in rural Bhutan. Once my work is released into the market, it can be something of utmost importance for researchers.

Tell us about the challenges and the rewards of film production in Bhutan.

My documentaries have shown to packed halls overseas, but it will not be the same case in Bhutan. This is the main challenge here, to link documentary making to the audience. And this could be done through starting a new Cinematic Knowledge with the audience. The predominance of Indian style cinematography is a major challenge for a small nation like Bhutan. Distribution and finance is another difficult task. I lost my jackpot [opportunity] in the United States because they demanded a theatre wide screen video format,

which I could not produce because it was expensive. Film making in Bhutan could not aid me financially so I had to pursue tourism and trekking to sustain my livelihood. I have been thinking about teaching documentary lessons to the budding generations because there are tremendous talents that I can see in them. A lama once told me that I am becoming selfish by not teaching my skills to the future generations. For various other reasons, I would like to continue travelling up the hills and mountains and document what's there because it is better to do it now. We have to know that things are changing very fast. Alongside this enthusiasm, I have my children and my promising parents that I have to care for. And financially, film making is increasingly challenging

What advice do you have for aspiring and upcoming film producers in Bhutan?

What we need is originality and motivation. Not many of the filmmakers come and seek my suggestions or feedback. This is because the kind of movies that they want to show to the public and the ones I make are completely different. As we know that the Bhutanese audience have grown with no knowledge about films and cinema, they will always take the ones that they have been fed. Even for you all, journalists and writers, you need to move out into the country side of Bhutan and write stories about different people. Like I said, there are a 101 stories waiting to be told.



Ugyen Wangdi has made many corporate, industrial and educational videos in the past. He studied cinema in India. Another interest has been the documentation of village customs and traditions of Bhutan which are disappearing due to modernization. A large archive of it is in his possession.



Calvin & Hobbes

LEISURE



Beau Peep





MOST DISCUSSED

633,607 or 733,004?

is the question of discrepancy of the total number of population in Bhutan.



4.9KG

of Ketamine was found in Bhutanese women's luggage at Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok. She is charged with smuggling illegal drug.



147,244

job seekers will enter the job market. According to the Ministry of Labors projection, 50,000 will be employed in various sectors. 3,567 students have signed up for the Preliminary Examination (PE) to appear for the BCSE (Bhutan Civil Service Examination) and 1614 passed the prelims. There are 538 vacancies in the Civil Service.



4TH

Tour of the Dragon one-day mountain bike race, considered to be one of the difficult cycling tracks in the world started from Bumthang on the morning of September 7 and end in Thimphu. The race of 270 km long and passed four mountain passes (3,937ft. to 10,958 ft.)



23

various courses, particularly designed for senior executives from the Civil Service, Armed Forces and Government-owned Corporations under The Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies (RIGSS) will be launched coinciding with the Royal Wedding.



1ST Session

of the Second Parliament comes to an end. The next session is scheduled to start by winter.



Nu 34.2 B

has been endorsed as budget for the 2013 – 14 fiscal year of the 2013 – 2018 Five Year Plan.



5 billion

Budget endorsed as Economic Stimulus Plan under PDP (People's Democratic Party). 4 billion will be injected in the banks to curb the Rupee Crisis and 1 billion will be used for other development purposes.



4 – day

free consultation for kidney patients at JDWNRH (Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital). It is organized by Bhutan Kidney Foundation and the Health Ministry.

21 September

Department of Disaster Management conducted a five-day refreshers training on Search and Rescue Team (NaSART) members in Thimphu that ended on September 21.



Nu 410 Million

for Constitutional Development Grant (CDG) was under debate and questioning in the Parliament. The new government has pledged to allocate Nu 2 Million annually to every gewog.



By June 2015

two wind turbines are expected to run in full at Rubesa in Wangduephodrang. A pre-bid meeting with contractors interested in supplying and installing the wind turbines for the Wind Power Pilot Project was held on September 12 in Thimphu. The power plant will have a capacity of 250 KW pilot wind turbines.



82,179

September 21 witnessed the popular Thru bab or Blessed Rainy Day. According to the astrologers, the holy water will descend for 7 days until September 28. Blessed Rainy Day marks the end of the rainy season on the Bhutanese Calendar.



1000+

People from Chukha, Phuentsholing and Thimphu have gathered at Chukha for the annual moenalm chenmo (Ceremony of countless prayers). The week long prayer ceremony was presided by His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

23rd September

Agriculture Minister Yeshey Dorji inaugurated the new SAARC Forestry Centre at Taba, Thimphu. The building was built with funds from Gol.

September 30

Foreign Minister Rinzin Dorje addressed the 68th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

33.90 %

Foreign Minister Rinzin Dorje addressed the 68th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.



0-12

Bhutan loses to Tajikistan in the second match of the 2014 AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers



3

Sentenced For land scam in Nanglam, Pemagathsel. The Court seized 44.16 acres of land and restituted to the Government. The three convicts were imprisoned for one to three years for illegal encroachment into government land between 2005 and 2010.



2.30 am

September 21 witnessed the popular Thru bab or Blessed Rainy Day. According to the astrologers, the holy water will descend for 7 days until September 28. Blessed Rainy Day marks the end of the rainy season on the Bhutanese Calendar.



LAST WORD

Something is always wrong when something so difficult like dying becomes unusually easy. In this complex web of life and living many are those who get by with whatever bits and pieces life gives and what they manage to grasp in order to continue life as it is.

Dying is something many prepare for, but nobody wants. So when it becomes an option for people then it is cause for grave concern.

With an increase in the number of suicides in recent times, this has become the topic of conversation and discussion amongst many. People are deep in thought and wonder what it is that is leading to such tragic stories amongst the youth.

This was not the state of affairs in this happiness-promoting nation back in the day or even some until a few years ago. So why then are we experiencing these dismal new developments when the country is supposedly on a track to greatness in terms of democratic transformations, incoming modern conveniences and comforts?

It would come to appear from experts and logical deductions that on the path to modernization we will confront many complex developmental issues. Society will pay a price for it if we do not make ourselves aware of these negative developments.

For example, in the age of the internet and technology there is an information overload. Social media like Facebook and Twitter, add to that the cable television, inclusive of its multiple channels, inundate the minds of young people day and night. Young people put their lives online and share it with complete strangers and allow them into theirs.

If not taken in the right sense with every touch of moderation or a touch of sensible realistic perspective, they can wind up exposing their vulnerable selves in ways that could be very harmful. Cyber-bullying, negative and harmful criticism can take a toll on young minds. But aside from the internet, it is also in daily dealings that kids are finding themselves confronted with new emotional challenges and unprepared to cope with them.

The role of caregivers, teachers and parents in society has to develop with the needs of young people. Today it is important for adults to teach children how to fend for themselves not just physically but mentally and emotionally too. It is reassuring to know that the Prime Minister has instituted a committee to specially discuss and address this issue head on. However, at the end of the day, what we should keep in mind is the irony of our times. In an age where we have sophisticated tools and means for communication we may not be communicating enough and more effectively. Or, that the valuable messages that we want to impart to our children through words uttered face to face, are being lost because our tools of communication and entertainment take us away from being face to face with them.

Sonam Pelvar 

