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Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party's
Tshewang Tashi

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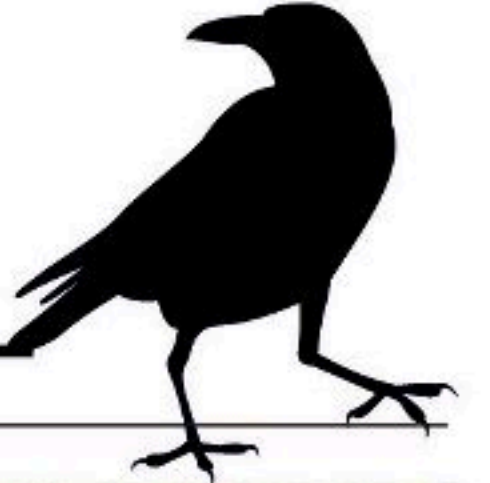
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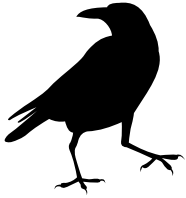
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NU 100
JANUARY 2013
ISSUE 3
VOLUME 1
www.ravenmag.com

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With Tshewang Tashi, who worked with Revenue and Customs

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir/Madam,

As president of the Hungarian Bhutan Friendship Society, I would love to receive electronic copies of *The Raven*. Is it possible? If so, can we distribute it to our members?

I really liked the interview with my friend Karma Phuntsho.

Zoltan Valcsicsak.

Got hold of the Raven, the latest one I guess, and flipped through the pages. Overall package is done well and very presentable and comparable to any in the region. While congratulations are in order to the team, I'd like to suggest few points to be taken note of. The interviews, regardless of how much sense it made, are too interminably long; the glossy pictures cheapen the efforts nearly resembling filmy magazines; the subject covered are minimal. Get more contributors on different subjects from different Dzongkhags. Overall personal ratings: 6/10.

Karma Tenzin, Author, Bhutan.

Just reading the issue of *The Raven*, it is a fabulous magazine, great journalism.

Trish Nicholson, Australia.

Just went through a copy of the second issue. Well done! Love the article on Karma Phuntsho-Loden. Very inspirational. Great job!

Sonam Choden Dorji.

The overall design of *The Raven* is excellent but the style of reporting, I must say, leaves much to be desired. It would be better if the writer left out his/her opinions while writing the stories. Nevertheless, I am confident that with each issue, the quality will only go on improving. Good luck.

Jigme Palden, Thimphu.

The articles carried by your magazine have been impressive and therefore, I have immense respect for your team. I hope you all will carry on your good work and soon start going in depth with the stories. So far, *The Raven* doesn't seem to be tilted to any political party and I hope it stays that way.

Karma Pem, businesswoman, Thimphu.

The Raven has been providing different views to various issues. Of late, it has been nice to see different writers from different backgrounds contribute to the magazine. New voices always add new perspectives. Keep it up.

Norbu Chimi, Phuentsholing.

It is nice to see that your magazine is tackling issues that really matter. The articles not only make the reader think, they also cast new light on important topics.

Let's just hope that your content each month only gets better. And that will eventually help the magazine gain ground among the readers. Keep at it.

Sonam Gyaltshen, Paro.



KUZUZANGPO!

The end of 2012 is not like that of any other year. It is significant because it brings to a close the term of Bhutan's first democratically elected government, which came into power in 2008. Through the trials and errors, successes and failures of the Druk Puensum Tshogpa party, we hope that politicians thinking of, or hoping to assume office in 2013 will have learned that the Bhutanese people expect much from their elected leaders. It is hoped that they will understand and take seriously their roles and responsibilities as representatives of the people.

DPT's term in office in the last few years became increasingly mired in cases of corruption, abuse of power, and lack of transparency through accusations brought against them by the media and by critics. This created a very contentious environment between the opposition and some members of the media and the ruling party. As is normally the case, this also created strong fault lines and divisions within society. Some felt that both sides were dealing with the issues unhealthily, causing concern that Democracy was not really working for us.

This was all brought to a close on National Day in December, when His Majesty the King graciously recognized both the Prime Minister and the Opposition leader for their work in building Bhutan's fledgling democracy. They were awarded the highest honor - The Druk Thuksey medal – for their contributions. His Majesty the King, whose speech stirred the nation, was seen as the unifying factor amidst this contentious political climate. With 2013 here and yet another election upon us, let us not forget the words of His Majesty the King:

“Remember, achieving democracy is not the goal. The real fruits of our efforts should be that democracy brings greater unity, harmony and prosperity to our Nation. Democracy must be able to fulfill the aspirations of our People.”

While political issues are important, so are social ones. The recent death of a two-year old hit by a gate in the park is not a case of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Neglect and irresponsibility to finish work properly; be it gates, buildings, roads, or bridges, often result in deaths of young children and other innocent citizens. A 5-year old drowning in a pool of water at a construction site, a child falling into a septic tank and drowning, people hit by traffic because there are no stop signs or cross-walks, should all tell us that we need accountability. These are not mere freak accidents, they are caused by neglect and lack of concern that people will get hurt or killed.

With 2013 here, let us take the opportunity do our bit to act, speak, work, and behave responsibly. It is never too late, and we are never too young or old to try. In the words of the Buddha: “No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again.”

Wishing each and every one of you a Happy New Year!

Sonam Ongmo
Editor-at-Large



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WRITE TO US



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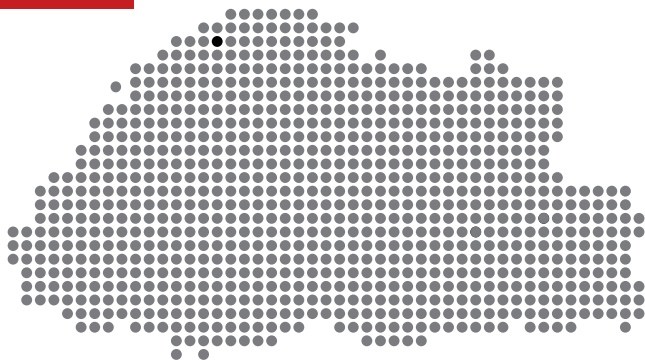
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Printed at: Kuensel Corp. Thimphu.

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DEC



THIMPHU

International Anti-Corruption Day

Some 200 people turned up to pledge against corruption on December 10 - the International Anti-Corruption Day. The pledge book was opened for the public at the clock tower square, centenary farmers' market and in front of Lugar theatre in the capital. The day was themed 'ACT: Against Corruption Today'.

THIMPHU

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa applies for registration

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, the first of the new political parties to be heard of, was also the last to submit its application for registration with the election commission. During a press conference, following submission of their application, the party said they had submitted to the election commission names of its 15 members. The party spokesperson said the party would soon invite all supporters, candidates and members from across the dzongkhags and the various constituencies for an annual general convention.

TRONGSA

Missing teacher returns home

The officiating principal of Chendebje primary school, who had gone missing on the evening of December 18 returned home after two days. The teacher returned back unharmed but he doesn't remember how he reached home. Around 200 people including police and residents from nearby villages had combed the forest and the Chendebji riverbank looking for the 28-year old teacher. The teacher had parked his car and left his cell phone in his room. He had then latched the door and gone missing. Since then, his relatives were performing rituals continuously to appease the local deities. Locals said that several people have lost their lives in similar incidents in the past and that people do not walk in the area, where he went missing, in the evenings.

DAIFAM

Patrolling for safety

After a Bhutanese forester accidentally shot a resident of Kumiholing village in India bordering Bhutan last month, men of Jomotsangkha (Daifam) markets have been night patrolling the area for the past few weeks. Civil servants, shopkeepers, private employees and hoteliers consisting of at least 20 men in each group patrol at night for security reasons.

THIMPHU

Two senior hydropower officials and two National Council members honoured

In recognition of their dedicated services to the nation, Yeshi Wangdi and Phuntsho Norbu were awarded red scarves on the 105th National Day. Dasho (Dr) Sonam Kinga and Dasho Karma Yezer Raydi from the National Council were also awarded red scarfs.

PUNE

Bhutanese Karate team ranked third

Bhutan's karate team ranked third in the three-day SkSi's International Karate Championship that was held in Pune, India from December 7. The Indian team ranked first and the team from Hongkong came second. Other countries in the competition were Sri Lanka, Hongkong, Bangladesh and Dubai.

The Raven



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Email: karmawangchuk@ravenmag.com



quotes



I believe that the Golden Throne is not a Throne of wealth, power and prestige. The Golden Throne of Bhutan is a unique Throne of Destiny to serve our People and Nation.

On the challenge to measure happiness the answer is that we do not measure happiness.



It's important that we make available USA facilities in Delhi to help young Bhutanese understand their opportunities in the United States, including the kind of financial aid available.

The NC candidates should be able to give constructive criticism to the government.



A party must find its confidence and strength within itself. It must be prepared to take the responsibility, if given the mandate to serve the country.



HIS MAJESTY THE KING

in His address to the nation on the 105th National Day.



DASHO KINLEY DORJI

Secretary, MoIC.



AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE

on his recent visit to Bhutan.



THARCHEN

an aspiring National Council candidate from Trongsa.



DR. TANDI DORJI

the founding member of Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa at a press conference in Thimphu.



HEARD AROUND

After the award



I will try to become a better human being and work to better the lives of our people and their life chances so that in collective well-being and peace, we actualize the kind of just, equal and prosperous society envisioned for us by our beloved king: *Dasho (Dr.) sonam Kinga on face book*

On rupee shortage



17.2B Rupee overdrafts is costing our exchequer over 39 lakhs per day in interest costs alone. We have a scary situation in our hands:

Lekey Dorji on facebook

On media



Media is a business, of course, and decent profits can be made from it. But quality journalism requires considerable investments and tends not to produce windfall earnings. Problems arise when businessmen regard the media as akin to any other industry.

Rabi Dahal via facebook

The Raven



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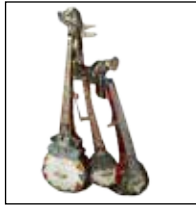
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CINEMA



BOOKS



MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

highlights

KEY • Date • Time • Place • Venue

SPORTS

SHOOTING COACHING CAMP

- JAN 22 - FEB 4
- THIMPHU

Bhutan Shooting Federation will be organizing a winter coaching camp. The camp is especially organized for the youth to keep them engaged during their winter vacation.

BADMINTON COACHING CAMP

- JAN 15 - 30
- SARPANG, SAMTSE & SAMDRUP JONGKHAR

Organized by the Bhutan Badminton Federation, the two-week long coaching camp will be conducted in three different Dzongkhags.

TABLE TENNIS COACHING

- DEC 30 - JAN 12
- PHUENTSHOLING

The Bhutan Table Tennis Federation will be organizing a winter coaching camp for table tennis enthusiasts at Phuentsholing.

WORKSHOP

WRITE RIGHT WORKSHOP

- JAN 7 - 20
- THIMPHU

Organized by the Institute of Management Studies (IMS), the write right workshop for young learners will include students from classes 5-10 to strengthen their writing skills.

SMART GURU'Z

- JAN 7 - 21
- THIMPHU

Rigsum Institute of IT and Management is conducting a two-week workshop on Smart Guru'Z by a group of experts. The workshop is aimed at generating courage, hope, enthusiasm, confidence, trust and faith among the youth.

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

MINDFULNESS TRAINING CAMP

- JAN 5 - 12
- JIGME NAMGYEL POLYTECH, DEWATHANG

To help Bhutanese educators express mindfulness in their everyday roles as teachers and community leaders, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has encouraged Lhomon Education to initiate a Winter Mindfulness Training Camp. The week-long mindfulness program will be practice-oriented with discussions about strategies for Bhutan's spiritual education.





FIVE YEARS ON: *A REVIEW OF THE RULING PARTY*

The Raven's Tshering Dorji provides an analysis of the DPT government, and postulates on how its performance in the last five years might impact the upcoming elections in 2013.

The New Year is upon us, and with the Druk Puensum Tshogpa government's term coming to a close this might be the perfect time to review its performance in the past five years.

In hindsight, the DPT party's journey to ruling government has been filled with trials and errors. There were numerous successes as well as failures. After all, it was the first time that we have had a fully Democratic government, one that was elected by the people. It is understandable that everybody was learning as we went along. However, could the government have performed better? Were some of the parliamentarians who were voted into office inexperienced, incompetent, and even lacking an understanding of their responsibilities? Did many of them know what it meant to hold such an office? Will their lackadaisical attitude towards voters cost future DPT votes? Was the Prime Minister a good enough captain of his ship? Are the party members, clear of what the DPT ideology is after all this time?

These, and many more questions, will be on the forefront in the minds of citizens as they head for the polls.

Five years ago the DPT party came into being with over-riding, overwhelming, and resounding success in a landslide victory defeating the People's Democratic Party. The Bhutanese parliament was probably the only one in the world that had the smallest opposition – two members. The Prime Minister was seen as a promising leader, and his party a strong one, given that many party members already had a long-standing record serving in the old government. Many had great hopes that Bhutan would continue to make great progress. Apart from development, growth and improvements on the socio-economic front, the Bhutanese people hoped to see their basic rights

enshrined in the constitution, and their civil liberties enhanced under the new democracy. But as the years went on, it seemed that while there was not much difficulty proceeding with implementing development projects the government confronted many on the socio-economic and civilian rights front.


Officials from the old government and members of parliament who barely understood their roles saw that traditional ways to dealing with the people were no longer acceptable. Officers who were traditionalists and seemed so used to functioning without any resistance from the public on implementation of policies were confronted with numerous road blocks. Some would say that it was a good five years of confusion.

In an overall estimate, however, the government seemed to have done well in meeting its commitments. Providing electricity to rural homes and villages, achieving telecom connectivity and primary school enrolment saw considerable success. Progress was also made in agriculture, education, health, foreign affairs, and the hydropower projects.

Internationally, thanks to the Prime Ministers great oratory skills and eloquence and his experience in foreign relations, Bhutan's profile was uplifted in the international arena as never before. GNH gained popularity worldwide, the UN adopted happiness as a Millennium Development Goal and the brand of GNH, Happiness and Bhutan were established.

But despite all these successes even this area of relative accomplishment was blemished.

Its progress in providing examples of democratic functioning, and establishing a democratic culture seems to have been less impressive. Some examples are passing of the draconian Tobacco Act law, Pedestrian Day, and the government's struggle with the Media that re-



IT APPEARED TO BE A COMMONLY HELD VIEW THAT THE RULING GOVERNMENT WAS ALWAYS ACTING IN LOCO PARENTIS AND OFTEN TAKING THE LIBERTY OF MAKING DECISIONS FOR ITS CITIZENS.

lies heavily on government ad-revenue.

It appeared to be a commonly held view that the ruling government was always acting in *loco parentis* and often taking the liberty of making decisions for its citizens telling them what to eat, not to smoke, when to walk, and even what to think.

While the ruling government's strength in 2008 was supported by the civil servants, such overbearing policies, often implemented with little consultation and in undemocratic ways, could affect support for DPT in the new year.

The ruling government was also seen to be veering towards opacity by how it mismanaged transparency on a number of controversial issues. For one, the lack of response or explanation to the public for the longest time on

the Gyelpoizhing land case, that brought to the public's notice the involvement of senior party members and cabinet ministers, left the public in the dark and with many questions. Other land cases including Chang Ugyen and the Denchi compensation also raised concerns and disappointment when there was little information and explanation from the government and people responsible were not held accountable.

There was even more public distrust with the introduction of the land bill which gave land kidu powers to the cabinet. Public backlash eventually allowed the bill to be postponed.

In private sector development, the government took off its thinking cap and entrusted that responsibility to multi-national consultants like McKinsey, paying a multi-million dollar fees in the process. While the

IT DID NOT HELP THE DPT'S IMAGE WHEN ACCUSATIONS OF NEPOTISM AND CORRUPTION WERE THROWN AGAINST ITS MINISTERS IN CASES.

government loosened its purse strings, it zealously restricted public access to McKinsey's final report. This, obviously, was viewed with suspicion, and, as the economic recession later proved, there was little gained from such expenditure.

It did not help the DPT's image when accusations of nepotism and corruption were thrown against its ministers in cases dealing with the mining sector, education city, and Trowa Theatre. Recently, the Thimphu city bus tendering process was also questioned and scrutinized by a growing number of cynics and critics.

The existing Indian rupee problem, the harsh measures that came consequently, and limited financial accessibility were also issues that the government failed to grapple with smoothly. Many thought the ruling government did too little, too late on the issue, thus causing the current liquidity and debt issue.

But opposing observers maintained that the government was not to blame and that the public's insatiable appetite for excessive consumption based on borrowed money is actually the main cause. Blame is also being heaped on the liberal lending policies of the banks.

In the sphere of the economy, another failing of the government has been in the Foreign Direct Investment sector. For example, many are already saying that the government's IT park is simply a white elephant since no major investments have occurred. Bhutan has not been able to attract too many investors since 2010, when the FDI policy was endorsed. To date, only about 30 projects have

LET US NOT FORGET, HOWEVER, THAT 2013 WILL SEE THE COUNTRY'S FIRST PRIMARY ROUND OF ELECTIONS.


FORMIDABLE OPPONENTS
Opposition Leader
Tshering Tobgay with his
party MP Damcho Dorji



been approved. This is mainly due to the strict restrictions that have to be followed in complying with GNH parameters.

But while such issues may tarnish the ruling government's image and its prospects in 2013, it has to

be noted that these issues are few; and there are prevailing views that the issues do not reflect the present government's performance as they date back to before the ruling government was elected.

In fact, a study revealed that voters are looking for leadership qualities,

integrity, an excellent track record, charisma, and oratory skills. With many viewing the prime minister as having these qualities, it is a given that he will attract substantial votes for himself and his party candidates in 2013, despite recent failings and what critics say.





Let us not forget, however, that 2013 will see the country's first primary round of elections. It is expected that DPT will make it through that first hurdle, but then again, who can say? PDP was expected to be a sure winner in 2008. The general elections, however, will definitely not be a

walk in the park for DPT. Change is a powerful motivator and the DPT's "core three" will have been ministers for 15 years by then. In that respect, a good chunk of the non-DPT voters from the primary round would probably turn towards the DPT's opponent in the general elections. Even if

**HIS MAJESTY
THE KING AND
HER MAJESTY
THE GYALTSUN
INTERACTING
WITH MEMBERS
OF PARLIAMENT**

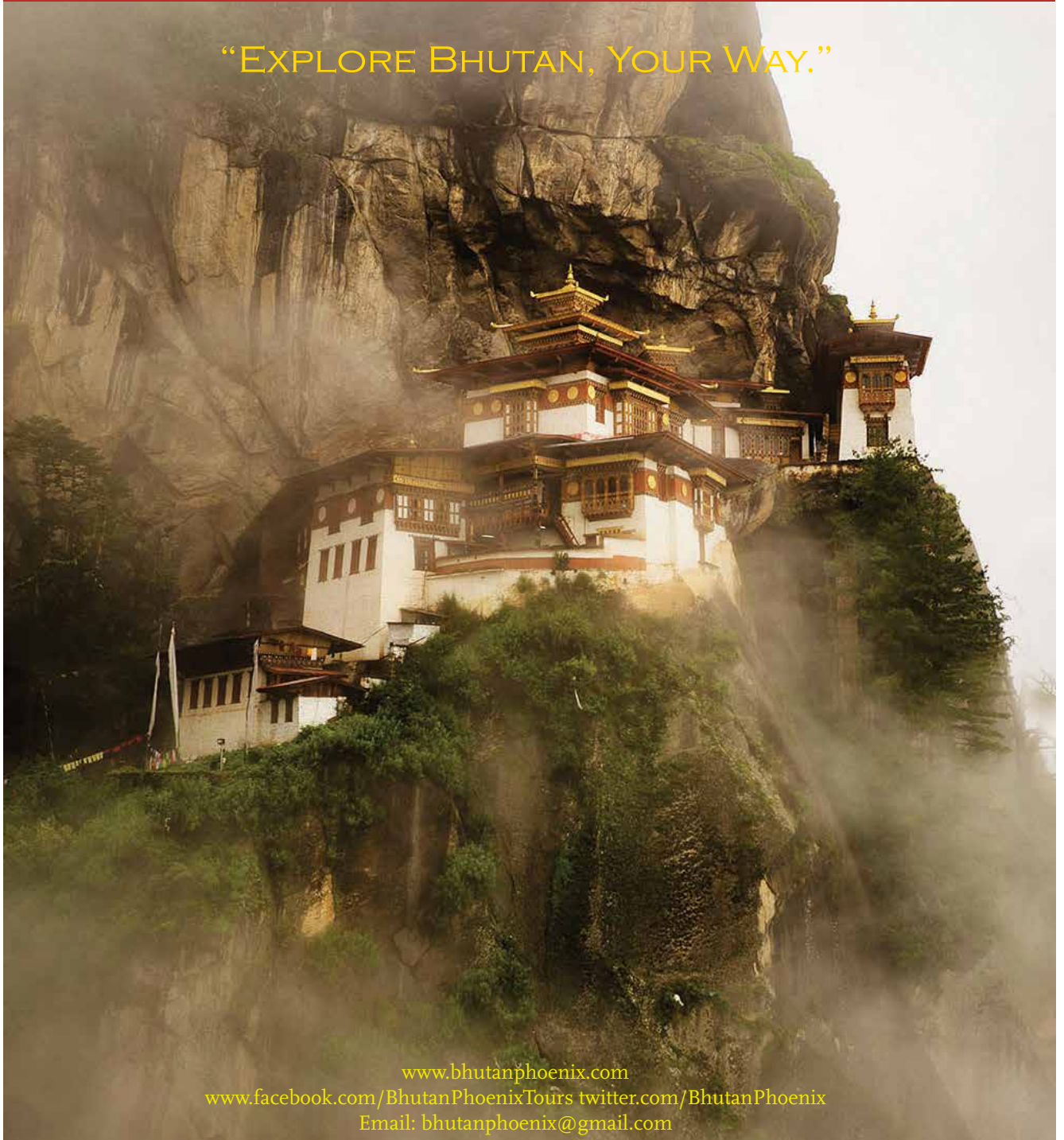
we assume that the DPT wins in the end, one thing is for certain: there will not be another landslide victory of the proportions we saw the last time.



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What Lessons Can We Learn From The Gun Massacre In America?

By SONAM WANGMO

Imagine this: a disturbed young man forces his way into the primary school where your child attends kindergarten. Imagine then: that he is armed with a semi-automatic weapon and enters your child's classroom. Imagine now: that he pulls the trigger....

This is every parent's worst imagined fear, but this horrific nightmare occurred on Dec 14, 2012, in the world's most powerful nation - America. Despite its economic might, America is unable to stop massacres by guns, such as the one in Newtown, Connecticut and shootings that happen daily, because guns are deeply embedded in American culture.

For loved ones of the 20 children and six adults massacred by Adam Lanza, a young man diagnosed with a developmental disorder, their world came to an end in the instant when a police officer announced to them that there was no hope. The entire nation and the world were in disbelief and it was not long before leaders of the Democratic party -- at least as a first step -- called for a complete ban on semi-automatic weapons, the kind used by Lanza on his shooting spree.

What was prominently featured in Obama's speech at the interfaith vigil was a call for change: change in the gun culture of America, how mental

health is practiced, parenting and education.

While this incident sent shockwaves throughout America, the Bhutanese included with the rest of the world, were equally disturbed by the events.

A shooting of this scale certainly cannot be compared to other crimes or situations, and definitely not one in a small society like ours, but Bhutan has recently experienced its own tragic incident, where a life was lost because of a gun.

Such a tragedy so close to home, should get us thinking about our own gun laws. According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) Bhutan's gun ownership is 3.5 guns per 100 people and a total of 22,000 people in the entire country. But how accurate a picture this paints is hard to tell because we do not know how good our monitoring systems are or whether there is a proper gun registration system in place.

that all schools have fire drills and safety drills. This prepares faculty and the children to remain calm and know what to do during times of such emergency situations that would prevent chaotic ones resulting in more casualties.

We may not think it is necessary

Also in the U.S it is mandatory in Bhutan, but it is always better to be safe than sorry.

In the U.S, fighting gun control is an uphill battle. UNODC and small arms survey reports that America has the highest civilian casualty to guns in the entire world. There are 88 guns for every 100 people.

The right to bear arms, the tenet of the Second Amendment is a symbolic right of freedom that almost half of Americans cherish. According to National Public Radio (NPR at npr.org), 42% of respondents still believe - after the incident at Sandy Hook - that the rights to bear arms trumps gun control. However 65% of people who participated in the same survey responded positively to a ban on semi-automatic weapons.

In the U.S the National Rifle Association (NRA) has huge lob-



Atlantic magazine, the Violence Policy Center estimates the firearms industry donated \$38.9 million to the NRA in 2011. It is therefore in the NRA's interest to use their lobbyists at the State and Federal government to stop the ban on semi-automatic

bying power. According to The weapons, and the tightening of background checks. In the NRA's most recent response to the massacre, Mr. LaPierre, the CEO of NRA brazenly called for more armed security at schools and scolded the video game industry and media for the increased violence among youth. Mr. LaPierre's speech is poorly timed, disrespectful, and insensitive, and far from the compromising tone America was expecting. His speech signals that the NRA is going to put up a fight to any gun control laws Obama and his government are going to try and pass.

Although I do not agree with Mr. LaPierre's inability to take some of the responsibility and the poorly timed tone of his speech, I do agree that incessant viewing of violent video games, unfiltered media -- and this is where I differ from him -- combined with the free flow of guns, and also easy access to drugs and alcohol, unemployment, a gap in the mental health institutions, something lacking in the education system


and bad parenting, are all factors that contributes to creating a society of violence.

Gun culture is strong in America, but violence in our modern world is universal -- from China where men slash school children with knives, to Afghanistan and Pakistan where young suicide bombers blow themselves up regularly, to India where men horribly rape and assault young women on buses with iron rods; and to our very own treasured Bhutan. Bhutan is now part of the modern fold, where lives are lost because of guns, violence, alcohol and drugs. Violent crimes committed by displaced young people are not uncommon anymore.

What we need to ask ourselves are the following questions: Are incidents in Bhutan just isolated or are they symptomatic of needs that are not being met as more of our lives change rapidly from a deeply traditional and rural setting to one that is more modern, urban and complex? What can we learn from the gruesome tragedy in America? And what can we learn from other nations already

on the beaten path of development and its side effects?

I believe that the trouble with youth and violence in Bhutan are no longer isolated incidents. Bhutan's society has changed and some of our institutions may not be prepared to respond to the challenges that come with modernity. From America, we can learn that we need a multi-pronged approach, one that addresses gaps in our education and guided regulations for violent video games, television shows and movies. Most importantly, we need to establish mental health institutions that address mental health issues commonplace to our rapidly changing environment. From many countries around the world we learn that displaced and jobless youth go hand-in-hand with increased violence.

In the meantime, we as parents need to take better care of our children by being involved in our children's lives, empathizing with them, accepting them for who they really are, and meeting not only their material, but also their emotional needs. 

The writer is a mother of two. She worked at Chemonics International Open Society, and Asia Society. She now works on her writing craft at Grub Street in Boston.




BUSHMASTER A-15

The (same make) assault weapon was used by Adam Lanza in the Connecticut school shooting.

PHOTO ESSAY



The stadium in Changlimithang, Thimphu, is packed to its capacity as the 105th National Day celebrations are underway.



LHENDUP, A FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST, SPECIFICALLY CHOSE THESE PHOTOGRAPHS BECAUSE HE SAYS MOST TIMES HE IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF SCENES THAT UNFOLD UNPREDICTABLY AND OFTEN, SPONTANEOUSLY.



His Majesty the King accords the Druk Thuksey (Institutional Award) to the leader of the opposition.



A typical Bhutanese game, the bar-pillow fights are a major draw during celebrations, as contestants try and out-fox each other with wit, craft and strength.



De-sups or the Guardians of Peace, live up to their motto of unity, harmony, integrity, duty and courage.





Almost 80% of the Bhutanese population depends on agriculture and livestock. As Bhutan is self-sufficient in maize and wheat imports are relatively small, food self-sufficiency is focused on rice. Bhutan consumes approximately 100 thousand tonnes of rice annually.



Eleven rice cultivating dzongkhags, beginning June 2013, will be mandated to protect at least 15,000 hectares of rice cultivating land.





Paro has the highest number of power tillers in the country – 482. So far, Bhutan has received 2,323 power tillers from Japan over a period of 28 years.



“There’s only one road that winds around the mountains; you’re pretty much on your own but the odd one that sprouts up on a bend can be a memorable one,” an English guide who leads tours to Bhutan.



52% of the Bhutanese populace is either in their early twenties or younger.



Since the beginning of the history of Bhutan, weaving has been considered among the highest forms of artistic and spiritual expression.



Thimphu, each year, produces more than 18,000 tonnes of waste amounting to 50,000 kg of waste every day. The City Corporation spends almost Nu 10 million a year on waste collection.



Layaps – a nomadic community from Laya and Lunana in Gasa dzongkhag live at some of the highest habitable altitudes. Legend goes that the conical hats were a privilege accorded to the nomads by Guru Rinpoche.



Of the estimated population of nearly 700,000 people, 244,000 of the Bhutanese populace is illiterate. Life expectancy at birth is 66 years for women and 65 years for men.



The history of lhakhangs, gonpas and nyes dates back to the 7th century when the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo built 108 temples throughout the Himalayan region to subdue a demon.





Trends

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EXPLORE MORE

Learning to Love Work

By MICHAEL RUTLAND

Some may feel the comments in this article are unfairly critical of our education system. Can I therefore begin by paying a sincere and heartfelt tribute to the quite remarkable progress made in education in Bhutan over the last forty years. Remember Bhutan began to educate its young population from what in effect was virtually nothing – at least in terms of conventional education. Forty years ago the total pupil number was in the hundreds. Today it's well over a thousand times more. No mean achievement! Recently I was at a Parent/Teachers afternoon at a large Thimphu Secondary School and was so impressed by the hard work and dedication of the staff and wide range of activities going on. We have very many highly dedicated and sincere teachers whose work is at last being given public recognition. Some may say the quality of education has fallen over the years – but all too often those who make that comment have given little real thought to the issue – they repeat it as a 'mantra' because they've heard someone else say it! However, I do feel there needs to be some changes in the 'system' and in the curriculum at the national level to cope with Bhutan's needs in the 21st Century, and that's what I want to talk about.

What is 'education'; if you know, then skip this first paragraph. Certainly we spend a lot of money on it, and the education industry gives employment to a lot of people. I suppose 'to educate' in its purest sense is to encourage the development of the intellect, to stimulate the mind, to pass on knowledge, to enhance skills of analysis and synthesis, and to bring out the best in a person; I never like the phrase beloved of educationists 'to allow each person to achieve their potential'

because we cannot know what somebody's potential actually is so how do we know when someone has achieved it! But I suggest there is another fundamental purpose of education, less philosophical and more practical, more concerned with the individual as a member of society than with just the individual as an individual; a more social aspect to education – it's about 'putting in' as well as 'bringing out'; it's about 'giving' as well as 'receiving'. It's about the individual as part of a larger whole called society. The education provided for young people should equip them to live their lives in society, to contribute to society, to allow them to provide for their families, to contribute to the common wealth of society. Education should provide a person with the means to 'give' to society by earning their daily bread through productive work. Does our education system give enough emphasis to the 'giving' or is it too much about 'getting' – a pass certificate, a degree, yet another degree. Educationists, those whose profession is 'education', sometimes give insufficient value to this second purpose and devalue it by calling it 'training'. Do you remember the days of 'Passed for Training', which to most students and parents and teachers was interpreted as 'failed'? Perhaps they forgot that we talk of a 'trained' doctor, not an 'educated'



doctor, a 'trained' lawyer, not an educated lawyer! And I would rather drive over a bridge designed by a 'trained' engineer than just an 'educated' engineer! When formal education was first introduced into Bhutan it had a very clear purpose – to create the nucleus of Bhutan's Civil Service. It was elite in its approach in that the purpose was to train a body of highly



educated graduates who could lead Bhutan on its new path of development. The education provided was primarily to equip students to go on to University. Appropriately, it was academic in its approach, style and content. It served Bhutan well in those early days. However, the total

number of students in schools was numbered in the hundreds. Now times have changed. Firstly, instead of a few hundred, there are now around 150,000 students in schools. Secondly, today there is arguably a surplus of University graduates being produced. Yet the approach, style and content of

↑
**STUDENTS IN
BUMTHANG
ENJOYING THEIR
WALK TO SCHOOL**

the education system has hardly changed in its fundamentals. What was suitable for a few hundred potential university entrants in 1965 is neither suitable nor appropriate for a large proportion of students in Bhutanese schools today. It could be argued that the education provided today will un-

FEATURE

intentionally create unemployment in the Bhutan of the 21st Century! Graduates from Class 10 and 12 have not been equipped with the skills needed for employment – they have been equipped primarily to go on to College, and emerge as yet more graduates seeking an employment status which they feel is deserved by their qualifications but which is increasingly in short supply. They have been equipped to go onto a job market where there are too few buyers! The human resource needs of Bhutan today have changed from forty years ago – has the education system anticipated this change and reacted to it? Way back in 1982 a new Draft National Education Policy was produced by a Working Party which included late Father Mackey and late Dasho Lam Penjor. It included many strategies to address some of these problems, but unfortunately the Policy was never implemented. Today, too many students still see the only road to success as Class X, Class XII and a University degree of some sort. Is it not true that for many young graduates who join the Civil Service, their first thought is ‘Where can I get funding to do my Masters’! Fundamentally, the problem is not really the students’ mindset. The problem lies with the parents’ and the society’s mindsets. Why do so many parents make enormous and often unreasonable financial sacrifices which they can ill afford to send their children to private schools and to universities in India and other countries in the mistaken belief that it will necessarily improve their childrens’ job prospects. But their job prospects may well be significantly better if they had carried out some form of training more connected to the actual needs of the job market in Bhutan.

The pressure from parents and society to succeed in academic exams is an appalling burden for many students, for whom the academic route is simply inappropriate. We have seen a dichotomy grow in Bhutan; on the one side ‘academic’ education, and on the other ‘vocational’. The latter has become seen as second-class, undesirable, unattractive, of lower status. And where on earth did the awful phrase ‘blue collar job’ come from; surely not Bhutan, where people don’t wear collars, blue or otherwise! Was it a foreign import? And ‘drop out’, as in Class X ‘drop out’! The phrase ‘drop out’ is exceeding insulting in the English language. Why not say ‘Passed Class IX’ or ‘Passed Class X’ – use positive language instead of negative words! I would like to shoot (metaphorically speaking) anyone who talks about a young person who may

have worked so hard to pass Class IX as a ‘drop out’!

So my first argument is that there needs to be a profound change in Bhutan’s education policy to better cater for that majority of students who need to be educated for work rather than further studies. I realise this statement may shock many people, but never mind.

Such changes in fundamental policies and attitudes will certainly take time and the rate of growth of unemployment surely calls for more immediate measures to create more employment opportunities for young Bhutanese. Currently we talk mainly of unemployment among young school-leavers; but rapidly this is becoming a problem for university graduates too.

Standard Keynesian economic theory suggests that an increase in economic activity in a nation increases employment opportunities. Is this the case in Bhutan? There has certainly

been an increase in economic activity; one only has to look at the rapid rise in construction, be it apartment blocks, road building or hydropower projects. But it’s enough just to drive past a construction site to realise that much of this increased economic activity in the last few years has provided only a marginal increase in employment – of Bhutanese – the vast majority of the employment generated is taken up by expatriate workers, at every level;

and is this not one of the causes of the current Rupee supply problem? Surely this calls for determined Government policies to reduce Bhutan’s dependence on expatriate labour. Only then will increased economic activity result in more employment for young Bhutanese coming on to the job market in increasing numbers. Of course, this is not an easy course to follow. We are all aware of the constraints. That is why it requires genuinely bold – some might say brave - actions at the Government level, and an acceptance that though this will probably increase the costs of construction, it will in the end be of overall benefit to the nation.

One might say that there needs to be ‘right’ economic development where ‘right’ means the sort of development which really does provide employment for Bhutanese rather than an expatriate labour force. Perhaps as well as a ‘GNH Filter’, Government and private sector policies should pass through an ‘employment filter’ – acknowledging that this is surely one of the most effective ways to implement GNH. How much employment - for Bhutanese - is provided by some of the major high-profile projects underway or planned? Has any analysis been carried out on the impact on the employment situation - for Bhutanese – of the massive increase in both Government and private expenditure during the last few years?

Let’s try our hardest to make our young people feel proud of doing any and every sort of job.



Why cannot some of the major multimillion dollar construction projects be required to set up training schools to produce the sorts of skilled manpower required in that project – and then be required to employ the output from that training. It is certainly my impression that the private sector does not at present play its full role in creating the skilled manpower the nation needs now and in the future. I would, for example, like to see all construction projects in both the private and public sectors, whatever the size, be subject to a ‘training tax’, the proceeds of which are hypothecated for use only to provide training opportunities for young Bhutanese. This is not unusual in many other countries. In the Bhutan context it could be levied as a special tax payable for each expatriate worker employed by that project – but not payable for Bhutanese employees. This

would serve the dual purpose of supporting training and encouraging the employment of a greater proportion of Bhutanese nationals. It would of course cause howls of outrage from the private sector, both large and small, and certain other quarters too! The private sector could earn exemption from the tax by setting up their own training facilities. And think of the long term benefits to the nation. Then perhaps the concept of ‘right livelihood’ – one of the elements of The Buddha’s Eightfold Path - needs to be promoted more actively. If society in general were more aware of this, perhaps many currently despised occupations might be seen as more meritorious and worthy than some to which we now give those adjectives. The Lord Buddha did not seem to give too much regard to making money or to material possessions or university

 **SCHOOL CHILDREN
LINE UP FOR THE
MIDDAY MEAL IN
GASA**

degrees or ‘white cuff’ jobs – or the size of your vehicle! Perhaps a greater emphasis on the basic principles of Bhutan’s ancient Buddhist religion might enhance the perception of what really is worthwhile work among both parents and students. Perhaps our society needs to become less status-conscious in thought, action and outward show. Let’s try our hardest to make our young people feel proud of doing any and every sort of job; an old English saying (modified for Bhutan!) says ‘A real gentleman treats his servant like a Dasho, and a Dasho like his servant’. He shows both jobs equal respect.

Finding solutions, short term and long term, to Bhutan’s growing youth unemployment problem is surely the most fundamental and challenging job the Government has to face. Education (in its very widest form) has a crucial role to play. But so have society’s attitudes – and this is something we adults have to understand. It is the case in every country in the world that unemployment, especially when it most effects the young, is corrosive and rapidly destructive of society’s stability – it was after all the fundamental cause of the Second World War. In a demographically young country such as Bhutan the problem is especially dangerous – and it’s up to us adults to address the problem, to help secure the future of this unique and marvelous Kingdom. 🐦

The writer is an educator by profession. He has taught at Oxford, England, and at the Ugyen Wangchuck Academy in Paro. He is currently the Honorary Consul of Bhutan to the United Kingdom.

The Ultimate Experience

By *MANAN KARKI*

It wasn't until the first few seconds prior to the jump that I felt the first tinge of fear, of panic, of terror. Now, I've always been terrified of heights – I get queasy every time I have to stand close to the edge of anything more than thirty feet high; and here I was – on the edge of a suspension bridge, with one

of the world's wildest rivers - the Bhote Koshi, frothing angrily some 530 feet below! Until then I had been congratulating myself heartily over my equanimity. Now I was just about clinging to a rapidly fraying sense of self-possession. "Don't think. Don't look down. Look at the mountain straight ahead," I was repeating the jump master's instructions

to myself, when seemingly far away, his voice like something out of a dream, I heard him begin the countdown: "Three... two...." "Just like diving into a swimming pool," I told myself as I felt a light nudge on my back at the count of three and proceeded immediately to fling myself off the jumping platform.





And then I found myself free-falling headlong towards the foaming river below, my heart in my throat, and an indescribable sense of ecstasy mingling with the sheer panic and terror. “This is not quite how I expected it to be,” was my first thought, followed immediately by: “This is even better than I expected it

to be!”

It was a rush, all right – of falling, flying, hurtling through the air, the wind whistling past my ears, its sibilance like a wall impervious to all sounds – even that of the roaring wash of water now getting closer; getting too close too soon; getting so close so soon that the ecstasy was rapidly

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**THE JUMP IS AT A
HEIGHT OF 160
METERS**

giving way to raw panic.

It was just then that I felt the rope and the harness grow taut around my ankles and my waist and I was suddenly pulled back up. Before the jump I’d imagined myself screaming wildly the moment I leapt off the bridge, but it was only now that I found the voice to cry out – the scream an

TRAVEL

expression as much of a sense of relief and catharsis as of exhilaration. So, I was pulled back up and the force of the jerk sent me falling back down again. And again. And again, a human yo-yo, bobbing up and down, the Bhote Koshi raging below, and far above me the bridge from where I'd jumped not too many moments ago.

And then, after the bobbing was done with, it was time to turn into something approximating a human pendulum, the rope swinging a little from side to side while I dangled around at the bottom of it, spinning. These moments, as I descended ever so slowly downwards, were definitely the most harrowing of the entire experience. As I was left dangling without any support whatsoever, midway between the bridge and the safety of the thin strip of dry land beside the river, my immediate thought was that I was stranded there; that somehow or the other I had finished my jump too high. It wasn't until I saw a barrel serving as a counterweight ascend slowly up towards the bridge that I breathed a sigh of relief. The final moments were spent trying to negotiate the descent with as little discomfort as possible, a feat that for all intents and purposes may be considered next to impossible.

Spinning around without control, I first tried looking up towards the bridge, and then, upon finding that position impossible to maintain, tried looking straight down towards the river, joining my palms together as if I were diving. Needless to say, this made me feel extremely queasy, so, finally, I just crossed my arms in



front of my chest and submitted myself to the whirl of river, sky, hills, and forest. I cannot describe the palpable sense of relief I felt when my fingers finally grasped the bamboo pole held out by the crew at the landing station.

Lying prostrate on the bed beside the river, as the crew removed the harnesses, the first thing out of my mouth was a question addressed to one of the staff: "Do you have a cigarette, dai?"

The answer was negative, and I cursed myself upon being told that I could have sneaked one through instead of having followed the instructions with absolute thoroughness and emptied

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**THE LAST RESORT
IS THE PERFECT
DESTINATION
FOR ADRENALIN
JUNKIES**

my pockets completely. So, in lieu of the smoke I craved for, I had to satisfy myself with the bottle of water that I was handed. Which, in hindsight, was not too bad a trade off, given that I had to walk back up to the resort, a climb that does much to rid one of the every vestige of adrenaline, and can be quite an ordeal if one is unfit.

At a height of 160 metres, the jump at the Last Resort, apart from being among the highest in the world, is also quite possibly one of the most spectacular. The jumping platform itself is in the middle of a custom-built suspension bridge that links the resort to the Arniko (Kathmandu-Lhasa) highway, which lies on the other




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THE JUMP PLATFORM

side of the deep gorge carved out by the Bhote Koshi river. Flanked by the lush green hills of the mighty Mahabharat range, the river rushes on far below, turquoise during the dry months, but in the monsoons muddy with silt. It is hard to imagine a more pristine setting.

And while the bungee, and the swing, are undoubtedly the star attractions of what is billed as “Asia’s Premier Adventure Playground”, the resort offers a wealth of adventure sport opportunities, including canyon-

ing, and kayaking and rafting expeditions on the raging waters of the Bhote Koshi. Offering rapids ranging up to the Grade VI variety, the river offers what is considered by many to be the best short distance rafting experience in the world.

And even if adventure sports are not quite your cup of tea, a trip to the resort is still a worthwhile experience, if for nothing, for the quite spectacular drive from Kathmandu. While the dry seasons – with the panoramic view of the Himalayas and that

of the sea-green rivers threading their way by the highway – are the best times to make the journey, a drive during the monsoons too has its attractions: namely, the numerous waterfalls that cascade in torrents down the hills that the winding highway threads its way through. 

Manan Karki is the author of The Memory of Leaves. He is a Nepali citizen and lives in Kathmandu.

TRAVEL DETAILS



By Flight
 From Paro Druk Air has direct flights to Kathmandu.



Car
 Three-hour drive from Kathmandu.



Stay
The Last Resort. The resort provides state-of-the-art amenities at affordable rates.



Climate
 Best time to go - the dry season (Oct to May).

Revenge

By KARMA SINGYE DORJI



The Colonel fought for everything in his life. As a boy, he had always been driven by the brooding absence of his father, the eventual cruelty the old man had perpetrated on his mother. The Governor, who was indifferent to her at first, had, toward the end of their lives together, taken to beating his wife. It was as if each of the many indignities he inflicted on her, the countless infidelities left unchallenged, instead of appeasing him, only made him angrier.

As a result the Colonel had often watched his mother, cowering in the dark, as the Governor returned home from nights of debauchery, a dark, hulking figure at the door. The door would smash open and, as his father stepped forward into the light, the Governor's glittering eyes under hooded brows were the first things the boy saw from his place on the floor next to his mother. Strangely, the Colonel never remembered being afraid, even as a boy. He had only felt the consuming hatred he learned to hide behind cold, dead eyes that revealed nothing of the fires blazing within. As the shadow of his father's hand rose and fell, rose and fell, repeatedly pummeling his poor whimpering mother, the Colonel swore he would be strong. He promised he would never be so weak again that he could not protect the only woman he loved. Yes, in the beginning he had followed his instinct, and pounded helplessly against the dark mass of his father, flinging himself repeatedly at the behemoth that seemed

He would rather have died than have his father see him cry.

intent on destroying the limp figure on the floor. Always, he was flung away, like a useless old rag, impotent in his biting, scraping rage. Eventually, though, he learned to carefully tend the flames of his hatred, not letting them dissipate in all that useless flailing. He learned to feign indifference to the Governor's bouts of cruelty, waiting for them to pass like unpleasant storms without shedding a single tear. He would rather have died than have his father see him cry. There was not a single chink in his armor that he wanted the hardhearted old man to see.

But, finally, he did cry. In the final moments of his life, the Colonel cried like a baby. The floodgate of tears opening, his teardrops falling like rain, as he remembered his mother's gentle gaze, suffused with her unfathomable love for him.


She had told him once that she had known the exact moment of his conception. "I dreamed that a shower of rainbow-colored flowers fell from the sky," she had said. At the time, she took the vision to mean her unborn child would have a life unblemished by existential troubles. Given the later tumult of his life, she could not have been further from the truth.

A month or so before the Colonel was born, a blue-green blob of a baby, she had had another dream. She was drinking sweet aqua tinted glacier water with both hands cupped together to form a bowl, standing beneath the sacred village prayer wheel. The water splashed out happily below the water driven prayer wheel, emerging from a stone spout some long forgotten ancestor from the village had carved by hand in the shape of a giant penis. The stone penis had been around so long it had slipped into the stuff of myth. "It's the old man's 'thing,'" the young girls of the village tittered like the bulbuls in the fields as they splashed and drank from the spout, referring to guardian deity of the valley. According to the valley's myth, the old bald-headed mountain that rose above the Colonel's mother's village was actually the old deity scowling down on his people; the rigid stone penis a symbol of his fertility. The water from the spout, splashing down into a wide pool that fed the valley's main irrigation channel, gave credence to the myth at least in one respect. It fed the ancient fields where the stalks of hardy red rice ripened in the fall and the villagers prayed and made annual sacrifices to the cranky old spirit to make sure the crops would never fail.

In her dream, the Colonel's mother tasted the sweet, clear water but the spout ran dry before she was done. "That was a sign," she said to her wide-eyed boy many years later, "that I would have only one son." It was always like this with his mother, the Colonel thought many times over. Everything in her dreams had at least half a chance of being right. She was ingenious about finding the half-truths that lurked within the visions that haunted her.

"First he blessed me, then he changed his mind," she often told the Colonel complaining about the guardian of the valley. "But what can you do? This is the way of gods and spirits. If they do not always hold something back who will honor them?"

Then, switching tempo, she would add: "And that's why you have no control as well. Your frustrations come spilling out the moment they enter your mind...because you are the product of an ill-tempered old man!" The Colonel never knew if she was talking about the old village deity or his biological father. He had to agree, though, many years later, as he sat mulling over the biggest errors of his life. He did have a tendency to do and say things he sorely regretted later. It was a pattern he had repeated with his friends, his wife, his children and, most of all, his superiors in the Royal Guards.

It was this lack of self-restraint that had finally caught up with him. 

The Raven



January

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2 - Nyilo
12 - Traditional Day of Offering

February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

11-12 - Losar
21-23 - Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the King

May

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

2 - Birth Anniversary of Third Druk Gyalpo
25 - Lord Buddha's Parinirvana

June

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

18 - Birth Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche

September

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	10 - Thimphu Drubchoe 14 - 16 Thimphu Tsechu 21 - Blessed Rainy Day				

October

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

14 - Dassain
26 - Descending Day of Lord Buddha

Water Female Snake Year 2013

2013

March

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

April

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30		20 - Zhabdrung Kuchoe		

July

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	12 - First Sermon of Lord Buddha		

August

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1 - Coronation Day of His Majesty the King 11 - Birth Anniversary of Fourth Druk Gyalpo & Constitution Day						

December

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31		17 - National Day		



Namgay Zam has been an anchor and producer with the Bhutan Broadcasting Service since 2009. She enjoys writing on her blog www.metanamgay.wordpress.com



SOCIAL ME: TO BE OR NOT TO BE?



Hello! I am a questionable Bhutanese with treason running through my veins! If my genealogy drafted by a most enterprising troll is anything to go by, every story in my life could begin as dramatically, and all of you would be hooked! My career would definitely not suffer the worst for it. Bhutanese are very polite people - in person, definitely, but I do not think that is true when it comes to our online avatars. It is as if being in social media space means having the license to be as uninhibited as we can, to the point of being rude and even crude, if you like. Social Media is definitely empowering, and it does allow us tremendous freedom of expression, but I do not think a lot of us (Bhutanese) are using it in the best manner, we can.

Bhutanese love to talk, and we love gossip. It is an interesting situation when a conversation spiced with gossip ends up online. It becomes almost definitive because it has been written! When gossip and the written word marry, they give birth to mercurial sentences. If there ever was a need to describe the state of a Bhutanese online, I think “mercurial” should suffice. Maybe we are all little anarchic Mercurys?

Gossip is normal and it happens in all societies. But combine gossip and small society and then put the tool of social media like Twitter into the hands of those who thrive by it; you have nothing but trouble. People say there are no secrets in Bhutan, and that may be true. You may try to hide and deny the reality of things but everyone knows about everyone’s

business - if not now, then eventually. So for some to hide under the mask of anonymity and take potshots at those who have no way of knowing who they are, is cheap, lowly, cowardly and immoral behavior. It is also cheating.

There are Bhutanese, both known and anonymous, who contribute intelligence, wit, humor, and eloquence, and then there are the trolls. Sadly, the trolls appear to be multiplying faster than you can say “It”! Could the numbers be increasing because Bhutanese have their behavior, officially, regulated officially through our Driglam Namzha? Our code of conduct is mainly about humility and respect, quite simple actually, not! Years of having to be polite out of custom, instead of spontaneity may finally be causing the unexpected explosion of vitriolic sentiments online. There are rarely any restrictions online, and hardly any consequences, ever; so I can imagine why a person would find such a situation ripe for plunder.

Social Media is Bhutan’s Mount Etna: a very active volcano. Everything comes out in this space: the good, the bad, and definitely, the ugly!

For an observer, Bhutanese online are very entertaining. When you are in the thick of it, though, it is quite complicated. Just like our young democracy is experiencing her teething problems, Bhutanese are definitely experiencing growing pains with Social Media. A lot of us are still

figuring out what/how we want to use this wonderful online power: do we want to make a difference? Do we want to be clever and funny? Do we want an audience?

I began my blog because it gives me space outside of my professional boundaries to be the person that I am, to share my own opinions with people who know that I am not just Namgay Zam, a news anchor from BBS (the Bhutan Broadcasting Service). I was naïve to believe that they would be the only people reading my blog. A certain film director took issue with me for criticizing his film on my blog, and he felt I had to remove my criticism because I work for BBS- that I cannot have an opinion of my own.

Our Constitution grants us freedom of expression, but many of us are yet to grasp the full meaning of such a phrase, it seems.

Also in Bhutan, we suffer the “small society syndrome”: everyone knows everyone, so please never be honest in public! Unfortunately, in Bhutan this “public” also extends to social media. Therefore, the hundreds of anonymous online Bhutanese people and blogs.

I was “public” about my criticism, and my honest opinion took a severe beating. Several people online who have been opinionated and not anonymous have also been viciously attacked by anonymous people and trolls. Cases of cyber bullying are rare, but the Bhutanese online world is vulnerable. There are potential bullies lurking behind

those malicious tweets.

The effect of negative online interactions is not only draining, it is very disorienting and toxic for anyone involved. Depression and suicidal tendencies are known to have been brought on by such interaction.

Cyber-bullying is rampant since the onset of social media but it is something that happens a lot with teenagers and school children. While it is not ok even for children to do this, it is understandable that teens and children are immature and do not comprehend the severity of how a malicious tweet or post will be received by young, vulnerable minds. Adults may be better at dealing with it but even there it takes

viciousness and superciliousness. I had so much hope for the Bhutanese online world, that we could collectively use Social Media to our advantage, and in the process learn to have healthy arguments, that could in turn translate into productive action. But, no, we are reduced to personal spats, online groupism, and alienating anyone who has a different opinion. I was, once, so inspired by Bhutanese in the online world that I even wrote on my blog about “The Argumentative Bhutanese” a few months back. I may have, unfortunately, been too much of a romantic to have believed that Bhutanese could be a powerful online force.

I saw Social Media as a savior because

down
fifteen principles:

- Treat others as you would wish to be treated.
- Never forget that the person reading your message is a human being whose feelings can be hurt.
- Behave online just as you would in real life.
- Help maintain a healthy and informative environment for public debate.
- Share your knowledge with the community.
- Make sure both your opinions and your contributions are friendly, courteous, polite, patient and respectful—this is also a good rule of life.
- Respect the privacy of third parties—ganging up on another person is wrong.
- Respect the time and bandwidth of other people.
- Show your good side online—don’t encourage gossip, smear campaigns, or intolerance.
- If you write everything in capital letters, people will think you are shouting.
- Respect the opinions of others without insulting them; your replies should be polite and considerate and reflect the truth.
- Be objective about topics that are of personal concern to you but not necessarily of general interest.
- Respect religious beliefs as well as sexual, ideological, and political orientations.
- Be tolerant of people whose opinions you do not share.
- Do not use hurtful or derogatory language, and do not violate the personal integrity of others.

The effect of negative online interactions is not only draining, it is very disorienting and toxic for anyone involved.



its toll. The American singer, Leann Rimes, is among many celebrities who has openly sought treatment to help improve their coping mechanisms against such negative online interactions. Bhutanese may need help in the same department, soon. The need to go anonymous for the sake of providing constructive criticism to the government may have allowed some to discover that they could indeed get away with much more – attacking people personally simply because they don’t like them. It is a little saddening for me, this huge wave of online

I thought it could finally deliver us from our “small society syndrome”, and finally be an egalitarian space for discussion: no arguments would ever be personal, but precedence has been set in a totally different and unproductive direction. I may be dystopic about the current conundrum, but I also do nurse that little hope that things can improve for the better.

Ecuador, just this month created an Electoral “Code of Conduct” for Social Media, basically advising users on their online behavior.

The Ecuadorian Code of Conduct lays

The Election Commission of Bhutan has its Social Media Policy, and I believe that it is a step in the right direction. I am not for total control over what we do online, but I do believe in regulation that encourages positive behavior in a space that could be anarchic, otherwise.

Sometimes, it is better to have on a life-jacket to stay afloat than to reject the jacket and hysterically swim to stay above water, and risk drowning. 🐦

A young Buddhist monk in maroon robes is captured in a dynamic pose, splashing water with his right foot. He is wearing a red shawl over his shoulders and a yellow sash. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with other monks in maroon robes. The text "A MOMENT FOR SELF REFLECTION" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

A MOMENT FOR SELF REFLECTION

By
TASHI
PELYANG
LHENDUP

We are a land distinct in culture, cuisine, conviction, costume and custom. But more importantly, we are the last purely Mahayana Buddhist kingdom. The Bhutanese population is largely Buddhists; Buddhism and its values are inherently visible as one travels in and around the country. People from all walks of life seem to bear the stamp of being a devout Buddhist. Frequent sights of a toddler feeding a loft of pigeons, an adolescent visiting a temple, an adult gleefully working for some charity purpose or an elderly person circumambulating a religious monument leaves very little doubt that the principles of Buddhism have indeed penetrated the hearts of many a Bhutanese. Every other hilltop, mountain or ridge has a monastery built on it by some revered religious figure, and almost all of them bear baffling accounts of how they came to be. These monasteries are home to exceptionally rare objects of veneration, some of them so sacred that ordinary folks are forbidden to even look at them.

In Bhutan, every house shelters an altar room where deities of the Buddhist pantheon in the form of sculpted images are venerated on a daily basis. Offerings in the form of butter lamps, fruits and flowers are made every day and rituals are conducted periodically. And then there is also the frequent recital of profoundly heartfelt prayers accompanied by backbreaking prostrations for the benefit of all sentient beings, to enable them to attain Buddha hood - the end of suffering, the point of absolute enlightenment with no stopovers in the intermediate realms. Most Bhutanese either pray for the happiness and well-being of their

fellow sentient beings or take to doing whatever they can in terms of physical assistance, to alleviate the plight of the less fortunate ones. These include saving the lives of animals which are on the verge of being slaughtered, donating clothes and necessities to the deprived, and being a part of some other illustrious charitable activity like contributing physical labor or financial remuneration for the construction of a religious monument. Some take up meditation in their leisure time while most live a life following a simple basic principle, 'do good and be good', which is somehow in line with what the Buddha taught. Most Bhutanese continue to live their lives embracing the Buddhist principles and morality with immense dedication. Despite that many years having passed since the advent of Buddhism and modernity having set in, Buddhist ideologies still appear seemingly rich and strong in most parts of the country. But then this is where the Chinese Yin and Yang holds true. With the good there is also the bad. Not all is seemingly well. There are always the exceptions.

There are some among us who are an embarrassment to Buddhism. They are the ones whose perception seems to have been distorted either due to their sins in the past lifetime or due to their massive ignorance in the present. In this decadent era, along with the pious lot we also have amongst us, a handful of misanthropic and egoistic people who seem to live by the notion that life is a race for riches. The worst part is that even those in the ecclesiastical garb are no exception to this maxim. Those in the ecclesiastical garb are what I like to call the 'merchants of faith', the ones who thrive on the common man's regard for them as the all time

dispenser of wisdom. The ordinary folk are straitjacketed by their notions as to what is right and what is wrong whilst those of the 'religious order' are fattening on the herd mentality of the general populace. Being the cynic that I am, I find everything that they preach (the ones who might be decked up like men of faith but deep down, are personalities seduced by the illusions of money and power) to be nothing short of phenomenal bullshit. Their relentless lip service and empty rhetoric fails to convince me; empty rhetoric can only deliver crumbs at the most. Their personal examples show us that their 'laws and guidelines' are meant to be praised in theory, but breached in practice. And the really sad thing is that one doesn't have to try hard to seek out such examples displayed by the very people who preach us the 'laws and guidelines.' The many designations such as 'Rimpoche', 'Khenpo', 'Trulku' do have a magical resonance to it and their efforts at convincing the rest of us that materialistic pursuits are futile whilst they themselves busily engage in all matters of money making are indeed commendable. I do admit that being the pious souls that they are supposed to be, they must have genuinely altruistic sentiments. But judging by their actions, one just cannot help concluding that those feelings are often outmuscled by feelings of insatiable greed. Though their actions and conduct runs squarely against the philosophy of Buddhism, one almost admires them for their business acumen; their ability to capitalize on the most lucrative opportunity is indeed impeccable. The ordinary people rely upon these 'holy souls' to guide them towards the higher realms but there is no shred of truth in this.

ARTICLE



Truth be told, given the current state of affairs, expecting something good out of all this just means being a delusional optimist - the chances of deliverance are, if you are not a good person to begin with, staggeringly low. Not exaggerating but

after bearing witness to their hypocritical full-bodied pursuit of wealth, I have lost count of the number of times I have had to ask myself if we have finally reached the pinnacle of decadence. No matter how hard I try to engage in serious suspension of

disbelief in the reality of the baseness of their conduct, my efforts are in vain because of the obviousness of facts. As long as the financial incentives are there everything else is basically out of focus. When one thinks about it, they can't really be blamed. After all they are human

and these days it is a bit difficult to restrain oneself with the television beaming all sorts of desirable objects at us 24x7.

But the fact does remain that all these extraordinary deterrents to our Buddhist mandate and those begging to differ are most welcome to strategically place their lips upon my posterior and repeatedly kiss it. Forgive me for my trespasses of gross generalizations but my intent here is just to prick the conscience of those guilty souls who will doubtlessly resent and deny the truth in the reality that exists.

Then there are the rich and affluent; those with a healthy bank balance. The rich live a life of extravagance, totally oblivious to the fact that death, the inevitable finale of every living being, is just as real as the latest SUV that they have bought. Their wants never seem to cease and their ego and needs are directly proportional to the amount of money that they make. It is painfully obvious that the more riches they accumulate, the more their greed and egoism grows. It never occurs to them that sponsor-


I have lost count of the number of times I have had to ask myself if we have finally reached the pinnacle of decadence.

ing or being a part of an altruistic activity might actually do them good or at least make them feel good about themselves. We have a few exceptions, and there are people who are doing their bit, but those are few and far in between.

Finally we come to the pretentious lot; the ones who are self-centered deep down, but successfully manage to put up the façade of being devoutly religious and humane. They frequent monasteries on every auspicious day in the Bhutanese calendar but know very little about compassion, kindness and other genuine altruistic emotions. Some of these people are often sighted at charity gatherings as sponsors but to the discerning eye their hidden motives appear vivid - yes, it's the good reputation that they are after. We live in a such a small society, we all know. They want to be talked about as 'the person who was involved in this humane project' or builder of that monastery. Apparently these people are so busy in their pursuit for this reputation that they do not even have the time to take a breather to sit alone in a room and delve within themselves to reflect upon their actions and what it means to be a true Buddhist. They do not understand that it is not the number of times one circumambulates the Chorten, or the number of times one prostrates, or the number of times they chant mantras that matter. They overlook the core aspect of the teachings of the Buddha. Most of these people tend to, in the words of a highly revered Tibetan master, Patrul Rinpoche, 'leave the elephant at home and look for its footprints in the forest.'

Every person desires to live a life of dignity, a life enveloped by happiness but not many dare to question themselves as to where things are going wrong. As life is shrouded in secrecy, we Bhutanese tend to leave everything to fate; a perfect approach to have oneself ensnared by the webs of Samsara. Buddha came, he taught and he left.

Every person desires to live a life of dignity, a life enveloped by happiness but not many dare to question themselves as to where things are going wrong.

He pointed out that it is up to us to follow his teachings and attain enlightenment or continuously endure the cycle of suffering. Materialism is like deadly poison while altruism, the unsurpassed cure, is a stairway to enlightenment. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness." So, it is up to us to decide whether we want to bear the burden of constructing humungous buildings when we know very well that ultimately a four by four funeral pyre is more than enough for our onward journey. 

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For the Love of Music

The Music of Bhutan Research Centre (MBRC) was founded in Thimphu in late 2008 by renowned

Bhutanese musician, Kheng Sonam Dorji, to document, preserve, and promote the traditional music of Bhutan. MBRC professionally researches, records, and archives the many musical traditions of the country's diverse regional, linguistic and ethnic groups, and documents the finest living master musicians in performance and interviews.

Through training programs and the production of CD recordings, videos, and other educational materials, MBRC hopes to foster renewed appreciation of and involvement in traditional music within Bhutan, and to introduce this rich, profoundly beautiful music to a global audience. Also there is an independent U.S. support arm of MBRC, a non-profit organization based out of Santa Cruz, CA and headed by Dr. Janet Herman, ethnomusicologist and Jane Hancock, music educator and photographer.

Some of the recent accomplishments of MBRC include the establishment of the annual Bhutanese Folk Music Festival, the annual Druk Norbu Award, in collaboration with the ministry of culture, for lifelong achievement in traditional music and dance, and important documentaries on rare sacred festivals focusing on the music and dance.

A recent project supported by



↑ **SONAM DORJI AND KINZANG CHOPEL INTERVIEWING A MASTER DANCER FROM THIMPHU**

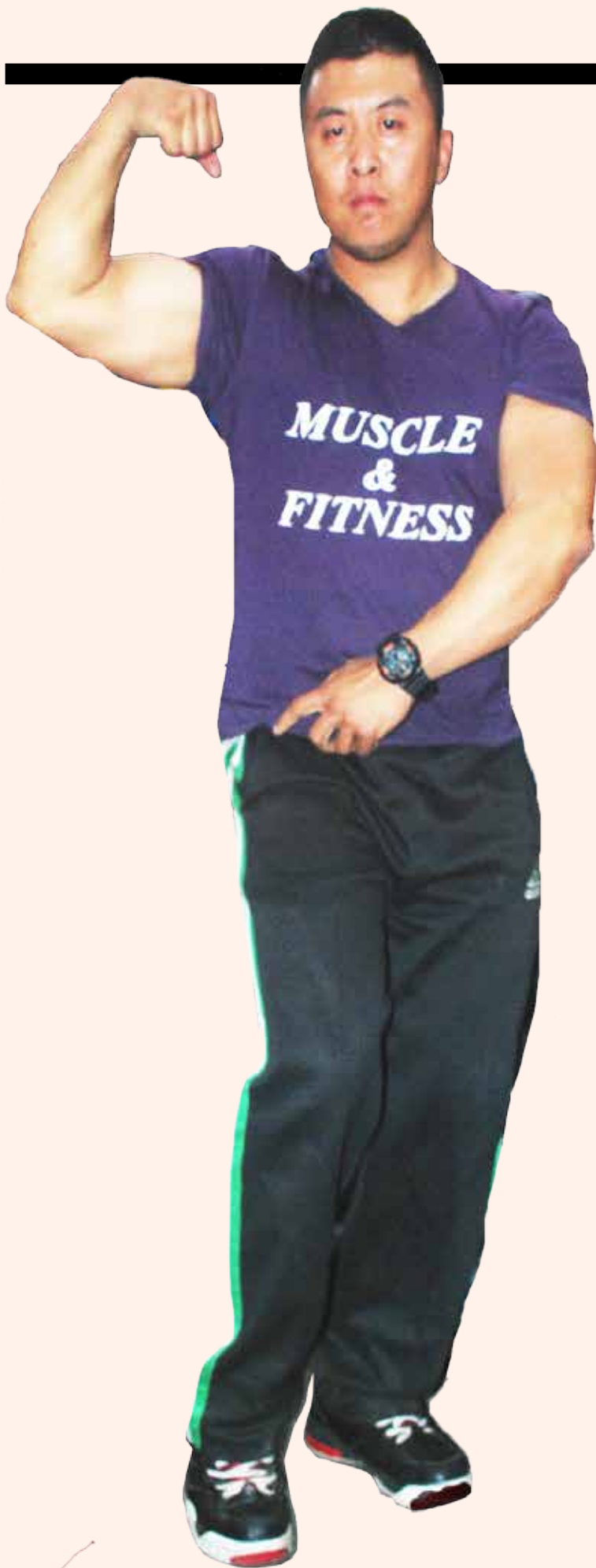
↓ **COURT DANCERS FROM THE REIGN OF THE THIRD KING DANCING A ZHUNDRA AT CHILELA, HAA**

the U.S. organization was a tour of Germany featuring Pemba, a traditional musician, and Sonam Chopel an aspiring artist and member of Vast. This was a cultural exchange where Bhutanese music and art traditions were presented in various German cities as well as Pemba and Sonam experiencing the best of Western art and classical music. 🐦

For more information please go to: www.musicofbhutan.org.



WHAT'S YOUR QUIRK



Tshewang Penjor
Businessman.

Age
I am 33 years old.

Place
I am from Paro but I was born and brought up in Omdingkha, Samtse, where the Indo-Bhutan-China border is, since my father was stationed as an army officer there. Now, as my business is here in Thimphu, I have been living here for the past nine years.

Life
Life for me is a mixture of sweat, tears and blood yet pleasant nonetheless.

Career
I am in the textile business. Other than that, my passion lies in bodybuilding although some feel it is a narcissist sport. I have been lifting weights for over four years now. And, if I may add, I am a certified bodybuilding judge by the World Bodybuilding Federation.

Food
As a bodybuilder, I prefer tuna, beef, chicken, sushi and tomyam kom.

Vision
I am determined to represent Bhutan in the Mr. Asia bodybuilding championship.

Entertainment
The kid in me never dies therefore I like to play video games while listening to western rock and Bhutanese music.

Love
My wife and children are not only my support group, they mean the world to me.

Interest
I like playing the guitar. Sometimes, in between my busy schedule, I play bass guitar for a local rock band.

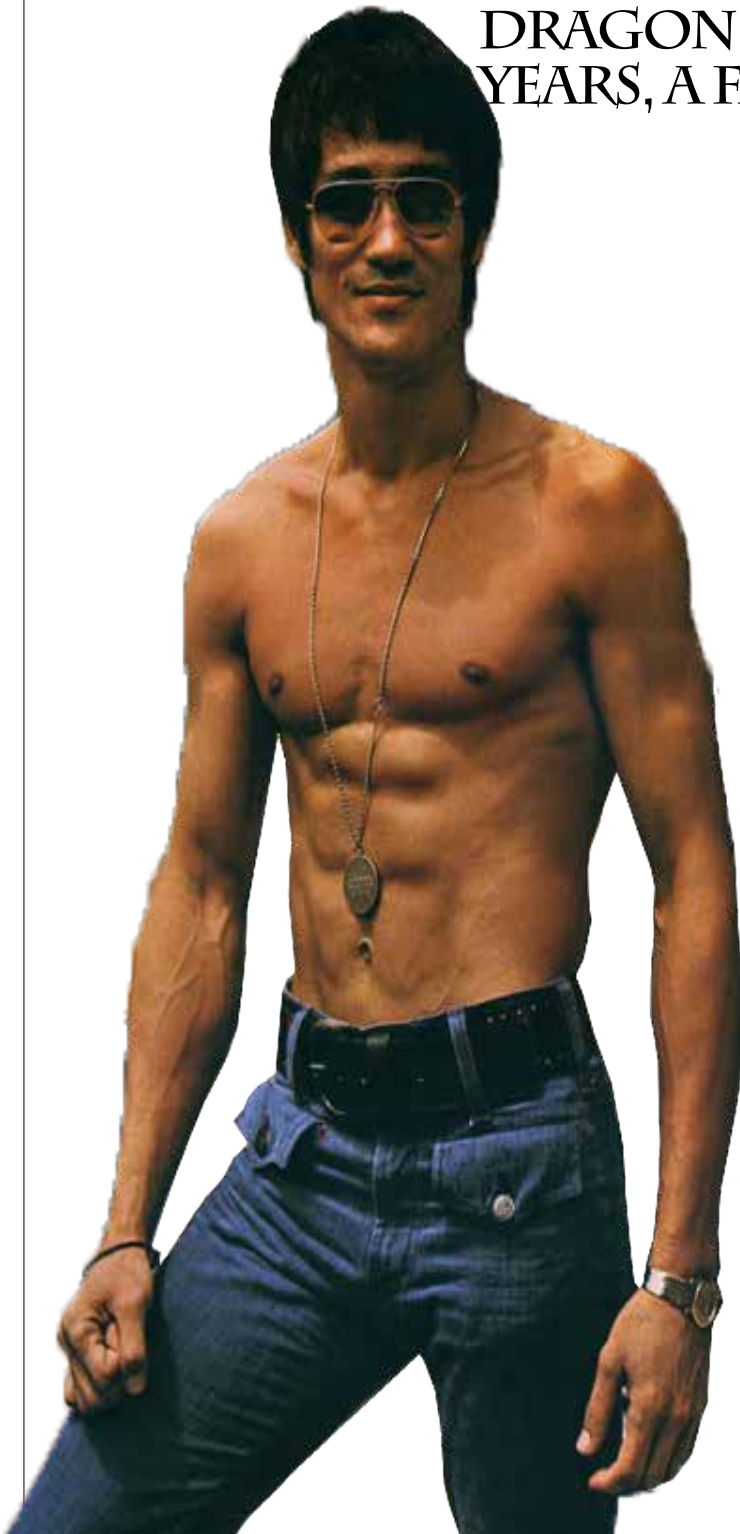
Style
I feel most comfortable in tracks. But because I feel that tight shirts reveal my personality, I wear them a lot. I feel bolder in them.

Dislike
Funny, I know, but I dislike coriander. Also, I dislike people who are discouraging and those who mock bodybuilders.

Quirk
I like pain because I've made friends with it. Therefore, I push myself really hard in the gym. I believe in the saying: Train heavy or go home.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ETERNAL DRAGON: EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, A FAN STILL REMEMBERS

By JURMI CHHOWING



A charming young man with a disarming smile, deep humility and cocksure bravura once said the following: “The key to immortality is to first live a life worth remembering.”

Amongst many other notable quotations spanning all of the thirty two years he spent on this planet kicking ass, teaching others how that kick-ass art could be cultivated pragmatically in various ways and means in the eternal quest for that stickler called ‘peace’. And becoming one with that monkey on the back - and yeah, getting even with those high school bullies were genuine reasons in that other vital need and requirement, together with its daily sustenance and maintenance – sanity in the vanity. “My goal is to make the fastest action motion picture ever made” was how he put it and moved about in his quest to blow your senses to kingdom come in his pursuit of the truth, a sort of ‘as in life, so in the movies.’

By now you have probably guessed the identity of the mysterious individual in the spotlight. Water as an element and in its lesser metaphysical avatars was what quenched his thirst in becoming the complete fighter and martial artist, as well as in shaping the kind of man he became both on and off the silver screen. “Now you look at water. You put water into a teapot it becomes the teapot. You put water in a cup it becomes the cup. Now water can drip, flow or just crash. Be water my friend.” Yes ladies and gentlemen, we are indeed referring to none other than Bruce Lee, the man who inspired and influenced millions, and the man who lived and packed more punches in his thirty two years than millions of us ever will in one lifetime. He was the ultimate bomb; a shooting star that still illuminates countless new generations, able to leap over color, caste, creed, class, boundaries and borders prepped with that unique mass appeal and universality

which endeared the man and his philosophy all across the globe. It's a name that enables people to break into big grins and warm smiles. It's the perfect icebreaker, and a bridge that creates strong yet human bonds without the bondage. And how appropriate! As in life so it was with the films he made - a central theme and a running parallel to his own life and the times in which he lived and grew up in, Bruce fights bondage more than anything. This innate sense of miscarried justice and blatant suppression of what he called the "little man" drove him to right the wrongs and to bring about a sense of 'ground lost to the bullies.' An epitaph he worked on stands over the cross in a grave by a cemetery. It reads: "In memory of a once fluid man now distorted by the classical mess." I've always dug Bruce. There is no sense of 'hatred' in Bruce as we understand the word and the emotion. If one is in a mood for poems and recitals, YouTube Bruce Lee and watch the poetry come alive in motion. Or you could simply go for the double whammy - watch and listen to the man himself talk about his art in that priceless footage from the show "Around the World with Pierre Berton". Bruce was not just merely an exceptionally well-gifted proponent of the martial arts but a true 'philosopher-warrior' and a man well aware of his flaws and shortcomings. He left no room for accusatory fingers or jabbing jaws, preferring to enjoy that pleasure himself. There is constant reiteration on the need and relative lack of

the idea, practice and cultivation of 'Truth' and its dialogue and interplay with one's sense of self. In the course of that legendary interview, Bruce tells Pierre: "Being true to yourself. Not lying to oneself. To express myself honestly. Now that [big infectious Bruce grin] is not easy." This is what makes and sets Bruce Lee apart from the herd and makes him the endearing enigma everyone and anyone could connect with and understand. He never bought the hype and the hoopla surrounding his person and image. On the contrary, he was the very antithesis of that projection as he took a position of mocking irony and oxymoron on the terrain wherein many lose the footing and the grounding to discover one-way tickets down the sudden, steep and rapid declines unto oblivion and quite often, personal tragedy. If the dead talked, we would have some rousing tales, inconvenience regretted notwithstanding. Talking about the quest for truth and living the honest life with yourself as Bruce did: "To me, ultimately, martial arts means honestly expressing yourself. Now, it is very difficult to do. It has always been very easy for me to put on a show and be cocky, and be flooded with a cocky feeling and feel pretty cool and all that. I can make all kinds of phony things. Blinded by it. Or I can show some really fancy movement. But to experience oneself honestly, not lying to oneself, and to express myself honestly, now that, my friend, is very hard to do." And then he kicked ass again with the surety of who he was: "To hell with circumstances; I create opportunities."

I Am Bruce Lee

Probably "the best Bruce Lee documentary ever made," this autobiographical-documentary features rare and never-seen-before footage and photographs about the legendary actor-martial artist. 'I am Bruce Lee' features brand new interviews with those closest to him, particularly with Bruce's wife and daughter. It has lots of never seen before archive footage including rare footage from "Enter the Dragon" and clips from his appearance in the TV series "Here Come the Brides". The filmmakers have also managed to get their hands on previously unreleased (and believed to be lost) color footage of Bruce at Ed Parker's Long Beach Karate Tournament.

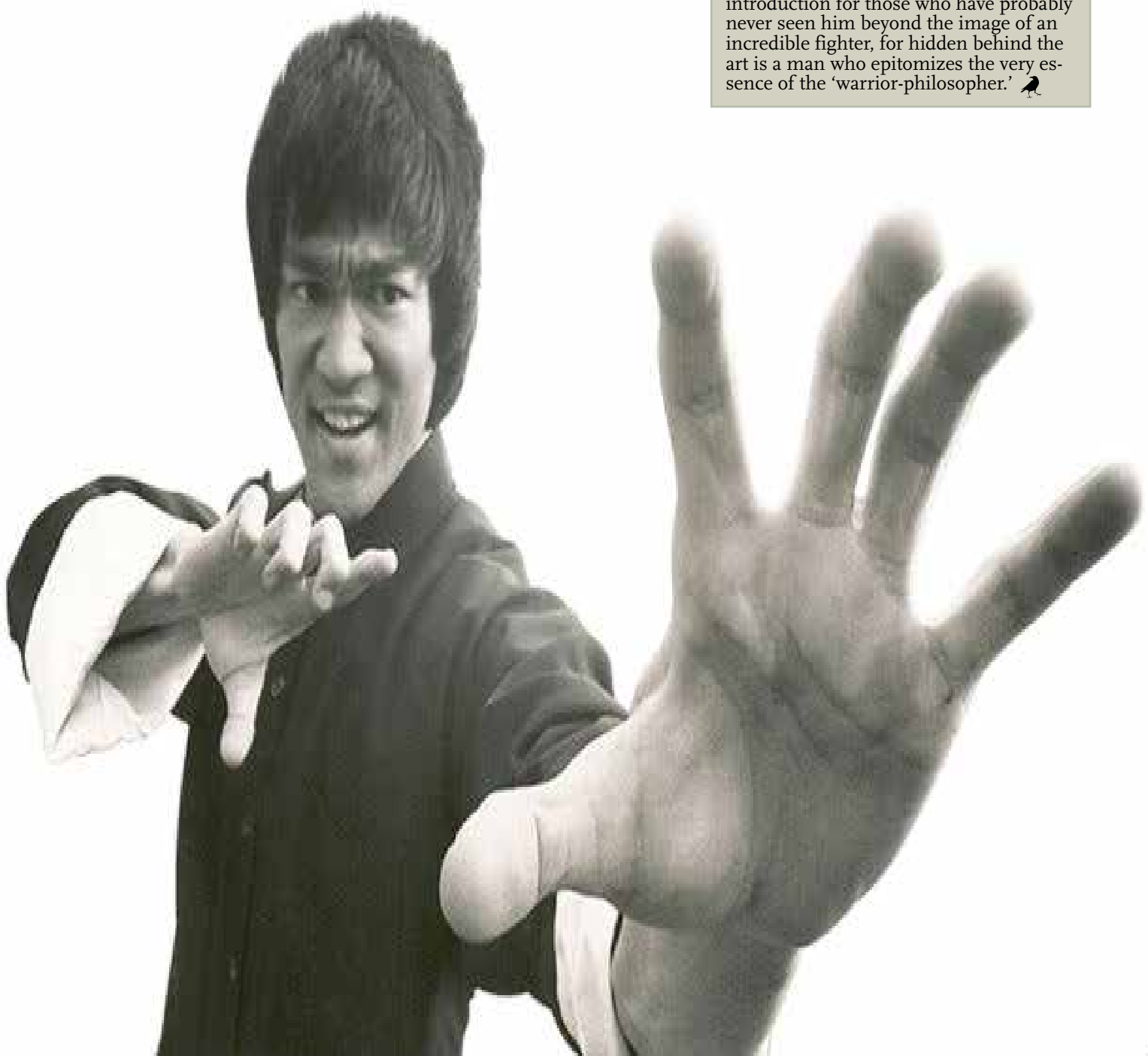
Despite his tragic and sudden death on 20th July 1973 at the age of 32, Bruce Lee's enormous influence on martial arts, entertainment and popular culture lives on to this day. Utilizing rare archive footage, photos, movie clips and brand new interviews with members of his close family, as well as with numerous stars from the worlds of sport, music and acting who have been inspired by Lee's legacy, I Am Bruce Lee goes more deeply into the true story behind the legend than any ever before. The film also examines Bruce's connections to the establishment of Mixed Martial Arts as we know them today; acknowledging that if Gene LeBell is considered the Godfather of MMA then Bruce is without doubt the modern-day Father of MMA.

The film also shows extensive footage of Bruce training in the back garden of his Bel Air home in Los Angeles and at Bruce Coburn's house (including Chi Sao training in Wing Chun that have never been seen before) and the first official release of Bruce in Seattle practicing Chi Sao.

'I am Bruce Lee' is directed by the award-winning documentary filmmaker Pete McCormack whose previous films include Facing Ali and Uganda Rising. Among those being interviewed are Linda Lee Cadwell (Bruce Lee's wife), Shannon Lee (Bruce's daughter), JKD instructor and close friend of Bruce, Dan Inosanto (Game Of Death), world champion kickboxer Bob Wall (Way Of The Dragon; Enter The Dragon; Game

LEGENDS

Of Death), Richard Bustillo (a former JKD student of Bruce Lee), actors Mickey Rourke (*The Expendables*; *Iron Man 2*; *The Wrestler*) and Ed O'Neill (*Modern Family*), NBA All Star Kobe Bryant, Taboo from Black Eyed Peas, actress and MMA fighter Gina Carano (*Haywire*), legendary stuntman and former wrestling and judo world champion Gene LeBell and UFC World Champion Jon Jones. It's a gem of a treat for the Bruce fan and a wonderful introduction for those who have probably never seen him beyond the image of an incredible fighter, for hidden behind the art is a man who epitomizes the very essence of the 'warrior-philosopher.' 🐉



Questioning the Quality of Education



By LP TASHI

Of late there has been a barrage of criticism, ranging from intensive press coverage to “educated” views hurled at the education sector on the perceived decline in the quality of education in Bhutan. Some of these views are expressed out of concern, some in jest, and some, simply to ridicule. However, in view of the incessant scrutiny and indiscriminate emotional outpour of thoughts and opinions, it would be worthwhile pondering on what the big fuss is all about. As the editorial page of one newspaper stated, all the voluminous observations on the supposed decline in the quality of education “have to be a superficial analysis at best. It is not based on a substantive study.” It would also be worth while bearing in mind that we are talking quality of education against the backdrop of ‘national apathy’ for teachers and working conditions of teachers that sometimes border on the primitive. Quality education needs quality teachers who are human beings after all! Unless basic issues confronting teachers and schools are addressed first, such accusations will only serve to demoralize the teachers and kindle the flame of despair.


The recent incidents of abuse that have been highlighted in the press should not overshadow the hard work of the rest in this

sector. People should not pass a blanket judgment over the entire Education System simply based on these few incidents. Surely we cannot forget or dismiss these incidents, but rather learn from them. What we also have to understand is that like every sector, despite all the advancements we will make in Education, there will also be setbacks.

Quality is defined as “the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it - how good or bad something is.” If we use this definition to gauge the rise or decline in the quality of education, then a comparative analysis with a time-tested yard stick might have to be used and will be more accurate. How do we then measure the present standard of education? All the accusations against the ‘perceived’ decline in the quality of education are hypothetical at best and over-zealous at worst. When we say that there is decline in the quality of education, we use certain pointers, certain yardsticks, as it were, and do a comprehensive analysis before arriving at such a convenient conclusion. A comprehensive study, if one were taken, would have to look into the present system of education that goes far beyond the four walls of the classroom. With emerging and re-emerging educational philosophies and studies, the scope and horizon of schools as

societies and places of learning have undergone dramatic changes. The once accepted model of teaching/learning is simply inadequate and does not address the changing needs of the students and the society. Hence there is the need for diversified programs and activities, whether academic or extra-academic, to address the growing and developmental needs of the learners. In that sense, the quality and variety of educational programs have increased and widened. The focus on basic rudimentary skills notwithstanding, the fluency over language and arithmetic have shown an upward rise. Teachers struggle with all these, day in and day out, while the rest of us are busy dedicating and rededicating ourselves to the service of the Tsa-Wa-Sum from our revolving chairs.

At the ground level, at the frontiers, the educational programs today are well packaged to meet the changing needs of the students and the society. Development of life skills, holistic growth of students, encompassing all forms of intelligences, are topics that are being taken very seriously by the Education system in Bhutan. (I just thought it sounded too light and not serious enough by saying it offered on the menu like a restaurant.)

In the final analysis, besides the ability to read and write - incidentally all that talk on declining standard of education is based purely on this premise, there are a whole lot of aspects that holistic education needs to encompass. And our schools, and teachers, are well on their way to providing just that - preparing students for life. 

*The writer works in the Ministry of Education.
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KNOW YOUR FOOD

Guli



Eating avocado is a great way to stay healthy.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutritional value per 100g

Calories	160 KCAL
Energy	670 kJ
Cholesterol	0mg
Carbohydrate	8.53 g
Sugar	0.66 g
Dietary Fiber	6.7 g
Fat	14.66 g
Protein	2 g

ENERGY

A great source of energy and carbohydrates.

FAT

Rich in monosaturated and polyunsaturated fat.

VITAMINS

Contains Vitamin B6 0.257 mg (20%) Folate (vit. B9) 81 µg (20%) Vitamin C 10 mg (12%) Vitamin E 2.07 mg (14%) Vitamin K 21 µg (20%).

MINERALS

Contains minerals like Calcium 12 mg (1%) Iron 0.55 mg (4%) Magnesium 29 mg (8%) Phosphorus 52 mg (7%) Potassium 485 mg (10%) Zinc 0.64 mg (7%).



Avoid animal and butter fat this season, and instead indulge in the goodness of natural fat from avocados. Avocado (*Persea Americana*) to most Bhutanese is the small round wild fruit available in the sub-tropical and tropical regions of Bhutan, which is not the genetically cultured large fleshy fruit now available in the market. In the earlier times before the genetically engineered products were available, I am sure many of you can recall the times when we would rub these wild avocados (also known as criollo) on rocks to soften the thin layer of yellow fat inside, which in turn would be scraped out using our teeth and then relished like butter melting in our mouths. Today, one just has to peel the fruit without all that energy wasted.

Primates in the wild enjoy this fruit as much as we do, and for good reasons. Avocados provide the much needed calories (138 calories and 14.1 g fat in half a fruit) and contain a high percentage of both soluble and insoluble fiber, which aids in keeping the digestive system running smoothly, as well as help with diarrhea and dysentery. For people who are watching their weight, the soluble fiber slows the breakdown of carbohydrates in the body, thus giving a fuller feeling for a lon-

ger period. The oleic acid, a fat in avocado, also activates the part of our brain to make us feel full and also helps in reducing cholesterol levels, which is good for the heart. It has been shown that healthy unsaturated fats containing oleic acid produce a greater feeling of satiety than its less-healthy saturated fats and trans-fats found mostly in processed foods.

For people working on computers the whole day, a frequent intake of avocado provides much needed lutein, a carotenoid that works as antioxidant and helps protect against eye disease. Avocados also contain other carotenoid like zeaxanthin, alpha-carotene and beta-carotene as well as vitamin E which are great to protect against different forms of maladies. But the great thing about avocados is that they help you get more of these nutrients from other foods, since carotenoids are lipophilic, meaning they are soluble in fat and not water and help our body absorb these nutrients from other fruits and vegetables.

For expectant mothers, a cup of avocado provides nearly a quarter of recommended daily intake of folate, a vitamin which minimizes the risk of birth defects. For those who have a history of heart diseases in the family, a daily intake of avocado is recommended as the folate



Wild or not
Avocado
lowers risks of
heart disease

and potassium content reduces and lowers the risk of heart attacks and stroke. It had been used in ailments of epilepsy, anemia and exhaustion. Even the leaves of the avocado supposedly indicate efficacy as being anti-diabetic, anti-arthritis and anti-inflammatory.

Apart from the wild avocados widely available, Bhutan has also begun to produce the genetically cultured avocados. Bacon and Hass avocados are now being planted in few places like Lingmithang, Tsirang, and Bajo. The Bacon variety is hardy, more oval and the fruit is darker green with a white flesh. The Hass variety is pear shaped with a light green color and the flesh is also white. Avocados are known to fruit most of the year with proper irrigation facilities.

It might be interesting to note that the Avocado tree is native to Central Mexico. They have a famous recipe called "guacamole". This is simply mashed avocado, which is often added to a spicy salsa, nothing different from our native *Aezay*. So, go ahead and relish in the unique flavor this fruit has to offer by adding it to our own condiments. 🐦

By KARMA CHODEN



REVIEW RESTAURANT

SALSA FIESTA MEXICAN RESTAURANT

THIMPHU, BHUTAN

EMAIL: SALSAFIESTARESTaurant@GMAIL.COM

WEB: WWW.SALSAFIESTARESTaurant.COM

PHONE: 17698592

CATERING | TAKEOUT | DELIVERY



WHERE

Etho Metho Plaza, Thimphu

SPECIAL

Mexican Food

TIMING

9 am - 9:30 pm

CONTACT

17698592

EXTRA

WiFi, Books, Magazines

As of April 2012, Thimphu has had its very own Mexican restaurant. The first of its kind in Bhutan. Ole! Owned and managed by the ever-affable Simran Chetri, Salsa Fiesta serves up authentic Mexican food with a kick. Originally located at another smaller location, it soon grew too popular for its small 12-seat space and moved in September this year to a much larger venue. Salsa Fiesta is now located at the very top of the Etho Metho Plaza, in the heart of Thimphu. With lots of seating, a well stocked bar, and chips and salsa to munch on, it's a nice place just to hang out. And if you are in the mood, the pineapple margaritas are delicious!

There are the traditional burritos, tacos or enchiladas (veg or non-veg) as well as bean or beef chilli with rice, and patatas bravas (spicy potatoes in gravy).



PATATAS BRAVAS

While trying to stay true to the Mexican roots and appeal to the local crowd, the menu is ever expanding. There are the traditional burritos, tacos or enchiladas (veg or non-veg) as well as bean or beef chilli with rice, and patatas bravas (spicy potatoes in gravy). You have your choice of individual pieces or a full meal served with rice, beans and salad. The tacos are lovely soft flour tortilla shells filled with lots of flavour. And the enchiladas come out of the oven covered in a rich and spicy tomato sauce and heaps of gooey cheese. Recently, Simran has also introduced fried chicken and tortilla soup to the menu. Finish off your meal with delicious caramelized Bananas with Ice Cream and you will go home happy.

New to the menu in December 2012 is fresh Guacamole – while avocados are in season. Salsa Fiesta also makes their own homemade Sour Cream that is served with most meals, including the Bumthang cheesy Nachos. Depending on your preferences you may want to specify how much chili you want in your food. The spicy chicken can be especially hot. Often they have several different kinds of salsa available to accommodate everyone's palate. Don't be surprised if there is mango in your salsa one day and cilantro the next. The menu will change depending on what is available in the market.



THE EVER-AFFABLE
SIMRAN CHETRI

Overall, the menu would benefit from the use of some real Jalapeno peppers and a few other spices and ingredients that are difficult to obtain in the country. But the service is pleasant and the ambiance relaxing. At the front of the restaurant are a few comfortable wicker chairs and small tables, where one can relax with a hot drink while waiting for the rest of your party to show up. Might we recommend the hot apple juice with cinnamon while the weather in Thimphu remains freezing cold. 🐦

By KESANG P. DORJI



REVIEW MOVIE



Say You Love Me



DIRECTOR

Tshering Wangyel

CAST

Tandin Sonam, Tandin Bidha, Phurba Thinley

SYNOPSIS

Say You Love Me is a romantic drama with multiple themes conveying varied messages. The story revolves around the life of a young man and his love for a beautiful lady.

Yet another commercially successful movie by award winning director Tshering Wangyel, 'Say You Love Me' has been screening for more than a month in theaters and is still running - creating a record of sorts in the Bhutanese movie industry.

The plot of the movie fluctuates from the modern era to olden times and then back again. The movie is just right for the Bhutanese audience, in that it contains all the right ingredients a moviegoer here would want in a feature film - romance, suspense, humor, action, and some good dance numbers mingled with peppy songs.

The movie is just right for the Bhutanese audience, in that it contains all the right ingredients a moviegoer here would want in a feature film.

➔
TANDIN SONAM & TANDIN BIDHA
- IN A STILL FROM THE MOVIE

The later half of the movie transports the viewer to the period of the civil war. In all, even if the actions scenes have been inspired by various Hollywood blockbusters, they have been executed well, and the costumes are well designed.

Actor Tandin Sonam also explores his singing talents in the movie apart from producing it. Both Tandin Sonam and Tandin Bidha have delivered excellent performances. But, what keeps the audience laughing is the usual dose of comedy from veteran comedians Phurba Thinley and Gem Tshering.

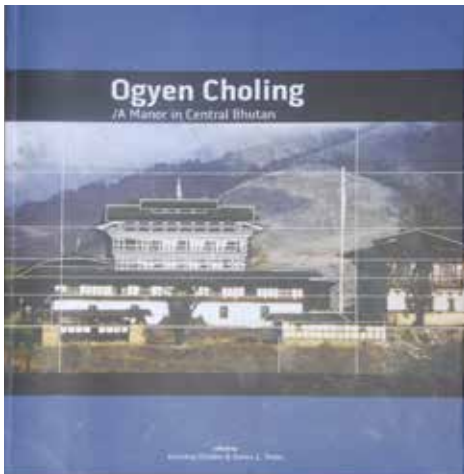
Mostly shot in Paro, the movie features many faces common across most of Tshering Wangyel's movies but the characters in this particular one are well thought out and better developed. As the audience anticipates one thing, the suspense draws out but to a different end. 🐦

By TSHERING DORJI





REVIEW BOOK



The book serves as a reminder of how Bhutan functioned in an era of serfdom; how landed families protected communities that came under its diocese.

There is an old manor that still exists in Central Bhutan. The ancient building is a testament to much of a prominent family history in Bumthang, Central Bhutan.

In “Ogyen Choling/A Manor in Central Bhutan” the authors attempt to compile the memories brought alive by the members of the Ogyen Choling descendants and elders.



AUTHOR

Kunzang Choden, F. Pommet, P. Pichard, U. Rinzin

PUBLISHER

Riyang Books

The book deftly brings forth the social structure prior to political changes in Bhutan, along with a rich architectural account of the manor itself. The beautiful building which is a standing example of ancient Bhutanese craftsmanship tells the story of how it was central in Bhutanese politics, whilst the inhabitants within changed to adapt as the years went by.

The book serves as a reminder of how Bhutan functioned in an era of serfdom; how landed families - this being one of the many - protected communities that came under its diocese. It also relays the changes brought about on such families and communities by the abolition of serfs; families that gradually became less influential and then politically obsolete though still commanding a cultural status.

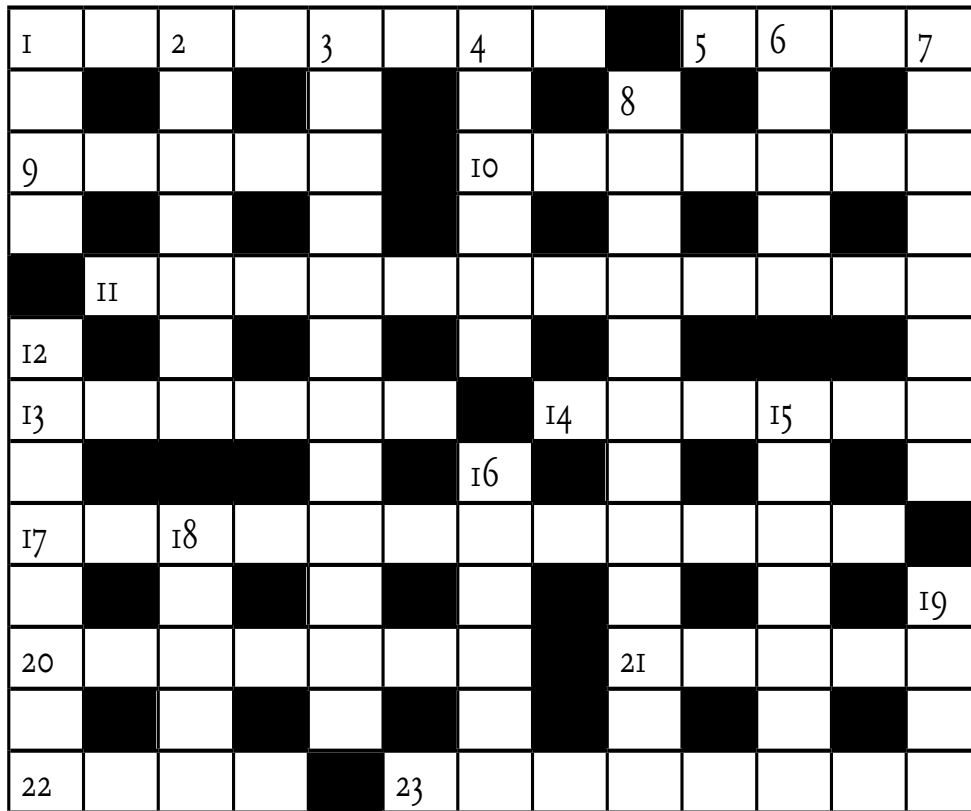
The architectural reference by Pierre Picard, a French architect specialized in conservation shares his knowledge on the structural design, landscape and layout of the manor;

“Interestingly, while the front, eastern elevation of the utse is perfectly symmetrical, its central door is not aligned with the entrance of the manor. Instead, the whole building is slightly shifted northward. This configuration of avoiding strict alignments of doors appears to be the norm in Ogyen Choling, and can likewise be seen in many ancient Bhutanese buildings.”

The chapter on the construction techniques offers details of Bhutanese architecture under the rubric and how it was implemented. Though it was prevalent that buildings were built without drawings, a great deal of collective practicality was usually applied. The illustrations offer a complimentary visual guide throughout the book. Now converted into a museum, it caters to provide both local and international clients an understanding on the origins, functions and significant roles that old landed households played in the history of the nation and the region. 

By KARMA CHODEN

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Relevant (8)
- 5 Elderly (4)
- 9 Boudicca's people (5)
- 10 Japanese flower arranging (7)
- 11 Female singing voice (5-7)
- 13 Steering apparatus (6)
- 14 Coders (anag) (6)
- 17 Cheers! (4,3,5)
- 20 Molasses (7)
- 21 Longest French river (5)
- 22 Garden tool (4)
- 23 Racing tie (4,4)

Down

- 1 Without water (4)
- 2 Feign (7)
- 3 Drink stirrer (7,5)
- 4 Yorkshire racecourse (6)
- 6 Pear-shaped tropical fruit (5)
- 7 Card suit (8)
- 8 Wearing glasses (12)
- 12 One to whom money is owed (8)
- 15 Get (7)
- 16 Wipe out (6)
- 18 Edible marine snail (5)
- 19 Retained (4)

Solution: next month

LIVING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY



By
Tshering
Dorji

Dechen is an 18-year-old single mother working to support her young child. She comes from a broken family. She has gone through one cruel experience after another, yet in life she remains grounded, with a heart both magnanimous and humble.

Dechen has had more than her fair share of troubles in life. She knows very well what the term neglect means. As a little girl her mother left her with her father to start a new life. She grew up without ever knowing what it was like to have a mother, a friend, who would guide her through puberty, through her emotional ups and downs.

Her father who was but a simple soldier never thought about sending his little girl to school. Instead he raised her by himself in the Royal Bhutan Army encampments, where they lived.

Then, in 2003, misfortune struck. She lost her father to rebel fire during the Flush Out operation in the Southern borders.

Only 12, Dechen went to live with relatives in Samdrupjongkhar. There, her life was largely confined to taking care of cattle often herding them into the jungles in Martsala. And, just as she was getting accustomed to her lifestyle and routine, Dechen met

a soldier in his early 20's, and fell in love with him. She had now turned 15.

Leaving behind her old life while looking forward to the new, she married the soldier. The following year, at 16, Dechen found herself pregnant. Suddenly, she was not only confronted with the daunting task of mother-hood, but also a cheating husband. The father of her child-to-be abandoned her for another woman.

"I was very young and I didn't even think of taking him to court, nor did I have a strong family to support my decision if I did," she says.

Just like her mother had left her, Dechen was once again neglected at a time when she needed someone by her side. She never ever saw the person who was supposed to be there for her at a vulnerable period in her life.

Teenage pregnancy, also referred to as adolescent pregnancy, is one that occurs from puberty to the age of 19. Teenage

pregnancies should be of great concern to a society because it has great implications on the social problems that emanate from it. Not only are there additional medical and health concerns for the young mothers and the babies but social implications on young parents who are often unemployed, lead to many socio-economic issues. Babies delivered by teenagers also have several risk factors. Premature birth, birth of underdeveloped child, delivering a baby with low birth weight, blood pressure problems, low iron level in blood, threats of sexually transmitted diseases and hypertension are common risk factors regarding teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy has higher rates of mortality for both mother and infant because of all the health complications that can come from a young body. The psychological impact of such a pregnancy on a young mother – especially one that lacks the emotional, psychological, and health support can have lasting and damaging impacts on both mother and child.

There is also the issue that a large number of teen parents often wind up as single parents. The children, in turn, land up being raised by single parents who struggle to provide them with a decent life. Studies have shown that children coming from single parent homes struggle and face more difficulties in coping with adolescent issues, leading to numerous youth-related and social issues.

Unfortunately for Dechen, she didn't even carry full term. Probably because of a lack of proper prenatal care, Dechen went into

premature labor in her home and delivered a baby girl there, all by herself. With assistance from a few friends she went to the hospital and the baby was kept in the Intensive care unit (ICU) till it fully matured.

Today, Dechen's little girl is two, and fortunately has turned out healthy like any normal child. However, her only concern is that she did not breast-feed the child. Her concerns for her daughter's health looms large, as their surroundings of where she lives and works are not the healthiest for a little girl. Dechen found a job at a car-wash at Olakha in Thimphu and so her daughter spends her time playing amidst the filth and dust using the workshop and garages as her play area. The mechanics tools are her toys. The workshop provides her free accommodation and that eases things for Dechen and her daughter.

She understands fully that the workshop is an inappropriate and dangerous place for a little girl to be playing in. And so, when she can, Dechen tries to drop Kalden, her little girl, off at a friend's place. But there is only so much friends can do, and Dechen finds herself torn between the need to put food on the table through a regular income and the need to care for her little one.

Dechen earns Nu 5000 a month washing cars and she makes sure that even though she can hardly make ends meet, she puts away some of her earnings to an account she has set up for her little daughter.

"I wish to educate her and give her the opportunities I never had," she says, with a strong determination in her voice. "I do my best to bring up my child, and fortunately, for me, my girl has never once asked about her father."

Teenage pregnancy in Bhutan



I was very young and I didn't even think of taking him to court, nor did I have a strong family to support my decision if I did.

is comparatively high in the eastern dzongkhags. According to officials from the health ministry, 15 percent of the deliveries in the Mongar hospital were teenagers.

A report by Save the Children revealed that, annually, 13 million children are born to women under the age of 20 worldwide. And more than 90% of these births occur to women living in developing countries.

In Bhutan, while 80 percent of women in urban areas give birth in hospitals or clinics, in rural areas 45 percent do so. And teenage pregnancy is twice as common in rural pockets as in urban areas.

Utilization by and access to contraceptives for teenagers, is a large part of the problem.

Educating and creating awareness amongst teens on the risk of teenage pregnancy would be the answer. But for teenage mothers like Dechen, these lessons have had to be learnt the hard way. If we can ensure that we make free contraception easily accessible to teenagers all over the country, it will save not one but many lives from the mistakes, the struggles, and the suffering that teen-pregnancy brings upon our young people. 🐦

TÊTE À TÊTE



Tshewang Tashi is not your typical politician or woman, instead living life on her own terms and having learnt from it, she believes being politically correct all the time is immaterial in politics. Claiming a high degree of intolerance for injustice, she says she will run for office to pave a way for “clean” politics. She talked with Karma Choden on her journey – her experience in the civil service and what trepidations she carries forth as she prepares for the 2013 elections.

Were you always interested in politics?

Never in the conventional, accepted way. My late father, my idol, was a man who believed in doing what was right and in working for common good even if that meant suffering personal loss. And it naturally follows that I emulate his good example. Because I do believe that politics is the area where one can do good nationwide, I had thought of grooming a group of people who thought ‘country first’ for the 2018 elections because I would never want to be in a group/party with a different commitment and where I would have to succumb to the designs of the greater number.

Why Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party?

Because of my inherent intolerance for injustice, I had seriously considered a career as a civil activist. Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party believes in redefining politics as an area where the most important attribute of a politician is having a heart that is totally committed to the country and where your conformity to the expected image

of a politician - eloquence, street smartness and always doing and saying the politically correct things - is immaterial. This offered me the opportunity to indulge both my desire to be an activist and to initiate good changes in the country. I couldn't have asked for more out of life.

What do you think is the difference between a civil activist and a politician?

I think as a civil activist, one would be more involved with issues and problems - up against the authorities and trying to bring justice and fighting for what is right. Politics in a way is the same. But politics involves a lot more things, has greater ramifications and covers a larger area of concern. So in a way, politics is the better option to create awareness and make far-reaching changes in the country.

Does this mean that you are not happy with how the present government has been functioning?

My dissatisfaction with the



functioning of the government organizations started a long time before the present government came into existence. What happened since 2008 does not seem to have brought any major changes and I strongly feel that we have yet to witness true democratic governance. There are a lot of things in Bhutan we can do properly as a country and that can be done. These are manageable because of our small population. So some things that to me seems so obvious, which would make lives much more easier, are not happening.

Could you be more specific, in what areas is the government not doing the obvious?

Maybe because we are donor dependent, we seem to bend a lot to what the donor agencies insist on- like international best practices, which may not always apply to Bhutan. I wish people would think more in the lines of what we need that can be done here. That will be more effective.

Women make up a very small percentage of Bhutanese politicians. Do you, as a woman, think you will be able to make your mark in politics?

More than as a gender representative, I am confident of being able to value-add because of my mental make-up. I always question what I do and once I believe in something, I put my heart and soul in it. However, I hope that my life's experiences help destroy what I believe to be a myth, discrimination against women in Bhutan. I have personally never experienced gender-based discrimination and have seen that what matters are your own competence and attitude. I would like to tell the women of our country that I see great potential in them and there is nothing that cannot be achieved

with some self-confidence. I think that the traditionally matriarchal social system - the lady of the house made all the major decisions in the family, controlled the purse strings and inherited all the property- has something to do with this strength in our women.

One of the current topics appears to be introduction of a quota system for women. While I agree that we need to see more women participation, especially in politics, I do not find it a strong enough argument for establishing a system that many around the world now find too cumbersome. The quota system has been known to induce others to regard the beneficiaries with disdain and the beneficiaries themselves to suffer from loss of self-confidence/ regard vis-à-vis the deprecatory behavior of others. The quota system involves a lot of trial and error, runs where competent people are sidelined to make way for less competent or incompetent candidates. These inappropriate persons are then introduced into public offices causing irreparable damage. In the long run, this kind of system tends to be misused by incompetent people, to advance themselves thereby destroying healthy competition - inducing, general apathy and cynicism and reluctance of the general public to participate actively in democratic processes.

A system, once established can prove very difficult to remove and wreak havoc in its wake. It would be better to induce women participation through other encouraging means like equipping our women with skills focused on public office, awareness programs drawing on success stories and removal of obstructions.

You certainly are a woman who wants to do things differently and have always made your own path?

How has that helped you in your career in the civil service?

It's not so much about wanting to do things differently, but I think it's about caring- giving your heart and soul to whatever you are doing. And then for me to do anything, I have to believe in the work. I always question a lot, even with rules and regulations- I am always asking about the logic behind it, and it has to make sense. Maybe some people find it easier not to rock the boat, but my concern is not about whether the system is stable or not, but whether it makes sense or not. In the process, [perhaps] I may come across as somebody doing things differently.

I want to go back to your college days in Sherubtse, Kanglung. Even then you were known to push the boundaries of what was accepted norm for the girls and decided to do exactly the opposite. I believe you are the one who initiated dancing without waiting for the boys to ask you, and eventually that put an end to the trend where girls needed a boy to ask them for a dance. When you do things like that, how difficult does your life get?

The way I see it, how I function is uncomplicated. I need to see reasons- I am always looking for one. Because people expect girls/women to behave in certain ways- be shy, not to be the one to actually start a relation- for me, it did not make sense. If I like a guy, why shouldn't I be the one to tell him, he may never know and go off with some other girl. Why should I miss the chance? It also did not make sense to wait for boys to come up and ask us to dance, especially when the music was good and I wanted to dance. Why should my wanting to enjoy the music depend on a guy? Why can't I just get up and dance? I



TSHEWANG TASHI

was so busy enjoying my life that I didn't even notice if anybody had issues with what I did. It [Kanglung] has been very interesting that way.

So you are responsible for every choice you make or don't make?

Everything has to do with yourself, with your attitude basically. You can't control what other people do or say. Most of the time, it's how you react that defines your own life, and not the other way around.

In hindsight, do you think girls were more critical of you than boys? Did you feel alienated at all?

I don't think I was alienated in college. I thought I had quite a fan following back then. I did what I felt like doing and maybe secretly the other girls wished they could also do the things I did. Even the ones who appeared to be disapproving, I am sure they wanted to be in my shoes. I have never really bothered about what other people think.

You blazed your way through life. How has that great sense of humor helped you along the way? An anecdote, perhaps.

My life is full of anecdotes anyway. My supposed sense of humor has really helped me, especially during difficult moments in my life. Even in the worst of circumstances, I would find something to laugh about and that would help me spring back. It has always helped me get back on track. Otherwise, it could lead to depression. I think it's very important that we make fools of ourselves once in a while, to remind ourselves not to take life or ourselves too seriously.

You went on to join the civil service, which was rather a male dominated environment for a long time. And you managed to carve out a successful career. What in your experience are the challenges a woman faces in the current civil service?

In fact, being a woman actually has its advantages. When you need things done, men don't usually argue with a woman.

Maybe I have had it easier than most women. There are advantages to being a woman. It brings about a softer side from men, less resistance and makes it easier to do your job.

Yet, there are the stereotypes within the service? What do you think?

I have personally never faced those stereotypes in my career. In fact, I have been picked for difficult assignments because my superiors felt I was capable to see it through.

There is the notion that a woman boss is always tougher than a male boss? What do you think?

I don't know so much about tough, but yes I have been very exacting as the person in-charge. Also there has been a lot of understanding and feelings that comes with being a woman and that has made me a better manager.

For me, it was all about self-discovery. I talk to myself in the mirror- if people saw me they would think I am a little off. But understanding myself more has actually helped me understand others more. The book by Dalai Lama, "Ancient Wisdom, Modern World," has had a profound effect on me on compassion for others. I used to be quite intolerant with staff who were incompetent at their work. After reading the book, I began to look at situations from their point of view and it has always helped me a lot.

You represent the generation that heralds the 'new woman' in Bhutan- a woman who has embraced new responsibilities in society, while continuing with the conventional roles as well. Personally, how difficult is it?

A lot of people ask me this, how do I balance this. For me, it came naturally- I never felt it was a problem. With my children, I have given them few rules in life, which they have followed, and we have been more friends rather than parent and child and sharing a very good rapport. As long as my children turn out to be good human beings, I would have

Because of my inherent intolerance for injustice, I had seriously considered a career as a civil activist.

done my job. And I think I have done a good job. Even in the success of a career, it largely depends on how good you can be as a human being, which is the most essential thing in life whether you are a mother, a boss, or a subordinate.

Now that you are embarking on a new journey, what is your biggest fear?

As a person I feel I will remain the same. But politics, I feel will push certain things on me since there are other factors and people involved. I have this inborn intolerance for injustice, which can sometimes bring out the worst in me. As a politician, I am not sure if I will be able to indulge in those sorts of things. But, politics provides a platform to reach out to many like-minded people. In my job also I have always wanted to do what was for the common good of the people, but you have certain boundaries and areas where your sphere of influence reaches and there is a limit to how much change we can bring. Now politics has inextricably become the deciding factor of where the country is headed, so the changes can be far-reaching. Though I had my trepidations thinking I might be a minority, with Kuen-Nyam, I have found my group.

Isn't that a danger in itself- finding only like-minded people, keeping in mind politics is about contradictions, discourses and dialogue and compromise?

When I mean like-minded, I do not



mean with the same views, but that we are all very committed to bringing positive change in the country. We are ready to make sacrifices if we see that it is [the] only logical way to protect the future of our children. Once we have this essential ingredient, every other thing falls in. We are very diverse in our experience and thought process but we are very passionate. We are sometimes at loggerhead on [certain] issues but we reach a consensus in the end- we all agree because of our conviction.

What changes are you personally aiming for?

I want to carve out a way for clean politics where the voters understand that a politician should represent greater good, rather than submit to personal agendas. I look forward to be able to demonstrate what benefits a selfless service can have for all. I frequently find that the reason why sound policies have gone awry was the presence of personal agendas. Personal and public interests do not always go hand-

in-hand at certain levels but pursuing public interests regardless of personal sacrifices will ultimately benefit all, including oneself. Happiness lies in making others happy....

If you are successful running for office, will you really halve the salary of members of parliament?

Yes, of course. We have had a lot of criticism about this clause in our manifesto – thinking that we are too idealist, but we are being realists. If the average salary of a member of parliament is Nu. 80,000, halving it will mean you still get to take home Nu. 40,000. How many people in Bhutan earn that much? We have people living on Nu. 5000 a month, and surviving. Why can't we live with Nu.40,000? To stay rooted with the people, and really know what is going on with the population, it is necessary that you do not remove yourself by ways of large salary packages.


Do you think politicians in Bhutan are short-sighted and are looking only to

win elections? How different is Kuen-Nyam going to be?

I have seen that happen a lot where till the elections they are with the people, and after they win they move away. We at Kuen-Nyam, I am quite confident, will never do this. We want to spend time with our own constituency. Voters don't vote to find somebody who can lord over them, but are looking for somebody who understands their collective needs and represents them. Democracy is the voice of the people, so in a sense we have 700,000 people that should be telling what the 47 in the parliament what it is that they need. The 47 are not supposed to decide what is good for the 700,000, but they should hear, listen, empathize and translate these into good policies and make sure it's implemented effectively.

Living life on your own terms has its consequences and rewards, what have those been for you?

I have been made to feel that I was too idealistic because I would refuse to give in to ground realities but if the ground realities are far from ideal, should not one strive towards better realities? I have been refused posts because the interview panel saw that I was not one to sit on a job but would most certainly 'rock the boat'. It is amazing how many people are afraid of change even if they see that it is for the better.

As for rewards, I can feel no better satisfaction than in the thought that if I were to die today, I would go peacefully in the knowledge that I have not let societal norms and expectations stop me from indulging my curiosities and I will not be asking myself 'what if.....?' on my death bed. All my experiences, good and bad, have taught me a lot and helped in shaping the person I am now. I try to be as good a human being as is humanly possible and strictly adhere to the rule: 'if you cannot help others, try not to harm.' 

Bhutan Shortlisted for Sustainability Award

Bhutan has been shortlisted for a Sustainability Award along with two other nations – Finland and Costa Rica. The award is given by Germany’s largest private non-profit foundation, the Bertelsmann Foundation, which is active in political, social, economical, educational, cultural and health-related issues.

According to Andreas Esche, who works for the foundation, the award is considered prestigious in Europe, and Bhutan was shortlisted along with Costa Rica and Finland based on innovative and highly successful sustainable development strategies, policy approaches and action at the national and regional/state levels. Countries have to meet certain criteria, which include four fundamental dimensions of inquiry:

- i) strategy quality
- ii) implementation potential
- iii) forms of participation, and
- iv) successes.

A case study on Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness philosophy, which seemed to fulfill most of the criteria, is what helped it become one of the finalists. However, according to Mr. Esche, a small team will come to Bhutan in January to study how effective this philosophy has been at the policy level and in implementation.


This award was started in 1988 and called the Carl Bertelsmann Prize given to groundbreaking projects in important issues. In 2011, it was renamed the Reinhard Mohn Prize after the foundation’s founder. Information released from the foundation says that the prize, €150,000, is used to

highlight good examples and successful strategies and help stimulate debate on shaping and implementation of sustainable policies in Germany and around the world.

According to the Bertelsmann Foundation, “the term sustainability remained long restricted to the realm of ecological discourse. Since the end of the 1980s, however, a new, more comprehensive conception of sustainability has developed. The modern approach brings the long-term survival of global human society into the foreground. No longer focused solely on ecological issues, this integrated approach expands its purview to include economic and social systems. At its core is the demand that political and societal development be aligned with the goals of comprehensive intergenerational equity and fair development and participation opportunities for all people on earth. The groundwork for using the current concept of sustainability as a guiding political principle was laid by the report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987. For the first time, that commission linked the issue of global society’s ecological survival capacity with the social aspect of worldwide poverty reduction. The commission also addressed the issue of intergenerational equity. Following the 1987 report, sustainability is conceived in the current project as a process of continual change, with the goal of ensuring that the “exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet

human needs and aspirations.”

The Brundtland Report was expanded upon by the Agenda 21 agreement, which was adopted at the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The signatories to Agenda 21 pledged to accept “sustainable development” as a core guiding principle of global action, and to develop national sustainable development strategies by 2002. These strategies were expected to define economically efficient, socially just and ecologically sustainable development as a goal

A small team from the Bertelsmann Foundation will visit Bhutan in January to see how effective the philosophy of Gross National Happiness and its policies have been on the ground. 





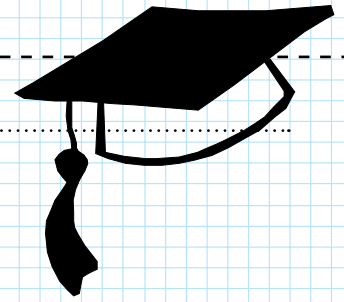
Dungsam Cement

The delayed Dungsam Cement Project which is already facing a Nu 2.3B cost overrun, has missed its revised deadline to start clinker production - a byproduct of cement.



7th BCCI President

Dasho Ugyen Tshechup Dorji, the seventh president of the BCCI wants to make the chamber credible by representing all kinds of businesses in the country, small and big.



Energy consumption in Thimphu averages around 41 MW, almost double its summer consumption which is around 20MW.



Books Donated

Sonam Wangmo, who lives in Boston, met with Brookline Library and they generously donated 450+ books - for young children. Sonam then arranged shipment from USA to Bhutan.



Sexual Harassment

Dorji Tshering, a tour operator allegedly assaulted and sexually harassed a 29-year-old Australian tourist - his own guest- in a drunken state.



The Personal Income Tax increased by Nu 220M to Nu 925M during the last fiscal year.



In the past seven years, households in urban Thimphu increased by 3,013 which comes to around 430 every year.



G4S Secure Solutions

G4S Secure Solutions, the country's first private security firm, has lost more than half of its employees in six and half years of its existence because of salary issues. The guards are paid Nu 12 for every hour of overtime they do.



Order of Merit

Sher Bdr Pradhan, 58, and his son Kumar Pradhan, 33, received the National Order of Merit (Gold) on the 105th National day, for their dedicated services. Both father and son are teachers.



The National Pension and Provident Fund (NPPF) suffered a revenue loss of around Nu 22M in the 2011-12 fiscal year, as a result of the liquidity crunch faced by financial institutions.



Bidung gewog in the eastern district of Trashigang could not put together 12 women dancers for the annual dzongkhag *tshochu* this year, highlighting another shortage that is becoming a part of rural Bhutan. The gewog managed only eight dancers.

This year the urban population has slightly decreased to 30.5 % from 31.5 % in 2011.

Experience

E-Reader VS book for the Bhutanese reader



A book lover's choice is always a book, so when the wave of alternate and new ways of reading slowly crept into Bhutan, like most Bhutanese I thought I would never, and I mean never, go that route. Experiences of reading on a laptop had not yet been banished, that the mere thought of an e-reader was blasphemy, perversion to the 'natural' order.

Call it the sway of technology or the success rate of advertising firms, here I am today with my first ever e-reader. The novelty of finally becoming the newest member in the New Age Readers Club brings in a certain satisfaction, which eventually wears off when I find out that I need to register and share my non-existent credit card information. Free books are available, but to e-readers that are registered. Solution- But if you can work around the credit card issue by bullying relatives, parents or friends studying/working abroad, then it's a simple straight on process. The free library offers English language classics as well as children's stories, free applications and games.

The second damper is that e-books are not cheap, in fact sometimes more expensive to the real deal/books. The bestselling and award winning books is

always more than Nu. 600; and online transaction is a hassle if you don't own a credit card (here your previously bullied family/friends will not comply with you spending their hard earned cash). Solution- So as an option, download PDF version of popular books, available on many file sharing sites, and use free online convertor to turn them to EPUB or Mobi format.

The (soon to be) third disappointment is that if ever your e-reader has a problem, there is no way in Bhutan that our technicians can fix it. A plausible solution is ship it back, but not really; that is an even longer and dreary prospect.

But the reading experience is great- the backlight makes it comfortable to read at night, and you can move away from the lamp. It gives you the option to change font as per your liking- which give the individual some leeway to customize. However, the dictionary is the best thing about the e-reader; if you come across an unfamiliar word, you can look it up by holding your finger on the word- it's that fast, especially for lazy readers. It has the potential of being a very good travel companion; it would provide much needed respite in long transit hauls and lousy movies. Since an entire library can be maintained, carrying any number of books is not an issue.

For finicky readers who are daunted by the size of the book, e-reading may be an option. Since the thickness never registers, it provides for more opportunities to reading thicker books. The experience of e-reading is fun, especially as most e readers double up as your music and video player.

However, the real book experience is therapeutic; nothing beats the smell of books straight from the press, the feel of paper on your fingers, the rustling of pages, and the pages you re-visit to read one more time a poignant piece. The pleasure of reading a book in a coffee shop is the ultimate definition of leisure, but with an e-reader, it's left to guesses- the proliferation of games will do that.

I say no matter how big e-reading gets elsewhere in the world, for Bhutan there is still time. Maybe one day when we have accessibility to credit card and online shopping, it might be a thing to possess. For now, we should still use bookmarks to mark our 'real' book pages.

For some early birds, it will remain an alternate choice to reading, even with the green revolution. In the race to digitalize reading, after all what e-readers do is emulate a real-book. And you only emulate what you admire. 🐦

Popular e- Reader	How To Get Your book
1. Amazon's Kindle Fire.	1. For those who own an iPad, you could download the Kindle or Nook software to begin reading.
2. Barnes & Noble Nook Tablet	2. Nook Tablets are only available in the USA. I got mine through somebody who was coming back for a study break. Accessories for Nook is not available either in Europe or South East Asia, Thailand vendors have no clue what Nook is.

By KARMA CHODEN

MOST DISCUSSED NEWS

A toddler died from head injuries he suffered when an iron gate at the Centenary Children's park in Thimphu fell on him on the evening of December 22.

The child was walking with his babysitter to the park, when the roller gate, which had come out of alignment, and was supported on the park's mesh wire, fell on him, when another boy - playing in the park, pushed it

Paediatrician Dr Kinley Tshering said the baby was brought in unconscious to the emergency unit around 5pm. A CT scan by the surgeon showed that the baby suffered multiple fractures on the skull, and internal bleeding.

The incident has raised the issue of who should be held responsible for it. The baby's relatives, who are still mourning, said, while they do not blame anyone, it is an issue of safety, as most parents in Thimphu take their children to the park.

Thimphu Thrompon Kinlay Dorjee said it was an unfortunate incident, and he would ensure that such incidents do not occur again. "We'll make sure that the gate does not come out of the alignment."

Park Gate Claims Life



Bodoland Territorial Council Dy. Chief Reassures People of Gakiling Gewog



The Deputy Chief of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Kampa Borgoyari, visited Gakiling gewog on December 22, in connection with the two abduction cases in Sarpang Dzongkhag.

He said the incidents that happened were unfortunate and apologized to the Bhutanese people and the government on behalf of the BTC.

He met with the villagers and assured them that the miscreants involved would be arrested and dealt with accordingly.

The first abduction case of a taxi driver was reported in October, when the driver went missing from Dekiling in Gelephu. He was released only after a ransom was paid, 18 days later.

The second case was reported in November when a 60-year-old man was abducted at gunpoint in Gakidling. His family too had to pay the ransom money for his release.



Burglars Target Tusks and Rhino Horns

Thirteen elephant tusks and a rhino horn were stolen from six different lhakhangs in the country within a year's time.

The series of burglaries in monasteries has made the Royal Bhutan Police announce a reward of Nu 100,000 to anyone who provides information that would lead to detection of the tusks and horn.

The first burglary was reported on November 30 last year, when a pair of elephant tusks and a rhino horn was stolen from Yami gonpa in Punakha.

On September 29, this year, Shoba lhakhang in Wangduephodrang was relieved off a pair of elephant tusks. Pangkha gonpa and Masipokto lhakhang, also in Wangduephodrang, were also burgled off three elephant tusks in November this year.

A pair of elephant tusks was also stolen last month from Pugmola lhakhang, which is a three-hour walk from Phajoding in Thimphu. The most recent was the burglary of four elephant tusks from Ugyen Tsemo lhakhang, above the Taktshang monastery in Paro on the night of December 20.

Police spokesperson said that there were many cases of monasteries being robbed, and that was because the caretakers were living away from the monasteries, and some were not present during the burglaries.



A 23-year-old Bhutanese Girl Molested in Bangalore, India

A 23-year-old Bhutanese woman was allegedly molested by a bus conductor and a driver in Bangalore on December 26.

The older sister, who was present at the scene, said they had taken a Volvo bus to work when the incident occurred. The conductor, she said, misbehaved with them, so they got down near the Tin factory - hoping to catch an auto rickshaw, but the conductor and the driver followed them. They then dragged the younger sister into the bus, closed the door, and molested her, she said. 🐦

MOST DISCUSSED

12,106

divorcees in 20 dzongkhags. Thimphu has the highest divorce rate of 13.3 percent, followed by Punakha with 12.75 percent, according to the Labour Force Survey, 2012.

26,049

electricity metered consumers under Thimphu division that stretches all the way from Paga (Chapcha gewog) to Tango.

700

students are taking part in the 8th phase of police-youth partnership program. The program is expected to make youth understand the law, penalties and provisions.

33

entities avail tax holidays, including media houses, colleges, resorts and the Bhutan Development Bank.



Featuring Artist: SONAM CHOPHEL

The Piece: *A Happy Place*

This work in acrylic on canvas features a house in rural Bhutan. Its significance is the realism of the artist's brush strokes depicting a true representation of Bhutanese architecture and rural setting. The fence in the foreground is rustic and offers a polite barricade to intruders, yet the house itself stands proud and well maintained.

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



TERTON
GALLERY

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His Majesty the King's Address to the Nation on December 17, 2012

On the occasion of the 105th National Day, it gives me much happiness to address our People of the 20 dzongkhags. This National Day is of special significance. The powers offered by our People to the King in 1907 were, after hundred years of Nation building, returned in 2008 to our People by the Druk Gyalpo. It was in that year that we held the first elections under democracy and adopted the Constitution. Today we are nearing the end of the term of the first Parliament we elected in 2008 and the culmination of the tenth and largest 5-year plan. So much work lies ahead and such immense responsibilities rest on our shoulders as we approach 2013.

Yet, with capable and dedicated citizens who have great love for our country; with the guidance of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and; with the ever-stronger bonds between People and King, I have great confidence that we shall achieve our goals.

Our People of Bhutan are unique. We have a sense of family, community and brotherhood that inspires us to come together in times of need. I have seen this following natural disasters and most recently in the way in which all Bhutanese came forward to offer whatever little we could afford to rebuild the historic treasure, Wangduephodrang Dzong.

In other nations, difficult moments in their history are met with strife, violence and conflict as people sacrifice national interest in order to achieve individual ambitions. In Bhutan such acts and events have never occurred. Our way of life, our heritage, loyalty and values remain strong in the hearts of our People and our People stand ready, even in times of great personal hardship, to place Nation above Self. I am so proud of our People and offer my deep gratitude for the love you have shown for your Nation. It is during times of prosperity and success that we must remind ourselves of the work that lies ahead. We have made a good start in our transition to democracy but much remains to be done. Our Nation has seen great socio-economic growth but it is more important that we have growth with equity. We must raise, with all our effort, the less fortunate so that they may, at the earliest, begin to partake in the opportunities brought by modernization and progress.

The government has provided education to our youth. But for the nation to prosper for all time, a sound education must be succeeded by access to the right jobs and responsibilities, so that our youth may bloom as individuals and at the same time serve their Nation well.

The recent Rupee shortage is a serious problem. I feel it is a reminder that, as a Nation, we must exercise our traditional sense of caution and work even harder as we address the challenges of the time. For no matter what challenges lie ahead, it is only the Bhutanese citizen who can protect and safeguard Bhutan.

Today, the most important duty for us is the upcoming 2013 Parliament elections. I would like to say that we - all of us - are new to this democratic transition. We have all equally acquired four and a half years of experience in democracy. Experience comes with participation, so I urge you all to come forward as candidates, members of parties and voters for 2013.

Remember, achieving democracy is not the goal. The real fruits of our efforts should be that democracy brings greater unity, harmony and prosperity to our Nation. Democracy must be able to fulfill the aspirations of our People.

Many hundreds of years ago, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal unified the nation, established the dual system and laid the foundations on which a unique Bhutan was born. This new nation was then further strengthened over the course of history by fifty-four Desis and generations of Bhutanese. The last hundred years, the Wangchuck dynasty, further strengthened the foundations laid by the Zhabdrung and handed over a special Nation to our People in 2008. All of this was possible because our People have lived as one small family, true to the ideals of the Zhabdrung and the foundations of a unique and special Bhutanese identity.

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

In 2008, our democratic transition and the wholehearted participation by the people including the 80% voter turnout were lauded by the world. I urge you all to exercise your right to vote – it comes but once in 5 years – for it is an act of great benefit to the Nation.

With the Blessings of the Triple Gem and our Guardian Deities and the good fortune of our People, I am confident we will conduct the second elections under democracy successfully in 2013.

For me, I hold sacred the endeavors begun by my father, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. I have committed myself to bringing to fruition all the noble endeavors begun in his 34 years of service and sacrifice. I also hold sacred my duty to ensure the success of democracy and I shall work to lay the strongest foundations for a vibrant democracy within my reign.

Above all, I believe that the Golden Throne is not a Throne of wealth, power and prestige. The Golden Throne of Bhutan is a unique Throne of Destiny to serve our People and Nation.

As King since 2006 I have always served with complete dedication and integrity. Sometimes I may have erred. Yet, you my people, have given me even more love and support and placed your complete faith and trust in me. To our People of the 20 Dzongkhags, I offer my heartfelt gratitude and pledge that I shall give everything to be of service to you and Bhutan. In this land blessed by Guru Padmasambhava, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and our Fourth Druk Gyalpo, I pray that there shall be everlasting peace, prosperity and happiness.